MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCACY SERVICES

3255 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 902
Los Angeles, CA 90010
Phone 213-389-2077 Fax 213-389-2595
www.mhas-la.org

A nonprofit organization protecting and advancing the legal rights of people with mental disabilities.

To: Judge Groman
From: Alejandro Pacheco, Law Clerk at Mental Health Advocacy Services, Inc.
Date: August 15, 2013
Re: Addressing Child-on-Parent Abuse

ABSTRACT

Perpetrators of abuse are typically understood to have greater legal, social, and economic power than their victims, making *child-on-parent abuse* counterintuitive. In most communities, including Los Angeles County, cases of child-on-parent assault have either been ignored or addressed by the courts in the same way any other assault would be addressed. Ignoring incidents of child-on-parent abuse allows the abuse to escalate, while the traditional punitive response does nothing to address underlying causes or repair broken families. This paper will identify alternative practices that have arguably been successful in reducing child-on-parent violence and will specify steps that can be taken in Los Angeles and other communities to address the problem. A successful approach should have mechanisms for early intervention, specialized courts, probation units, and service providers to intervene appropriately, and consistent follow-up and supervision. Juvenile courts can play a major role in shaping these solutions.

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ISSUE PRESENTED

What steps can social service providers, law enforcement agencies, and courts take to effectively address violence perpetrated by minors against their parents?

BRIEF ANSWER

An effective response to child-on-parent violence must give social service providers, law enforcement officers, and probation officers the tools to identify at-risk populations and intervene as early as possible – preferably before abuse has escalated to the point where a minor is arrested for child-on-parent violence and the pattern has become difficult to reverse. Early and appropriate intervention would be facilitated by providing community-based mental health treatment and training law enforcement officers to identify and properly refer cases of child-on-parent abuse.

If intervention must occur after arrest, a specialized court that hears only cases of family violence can order more appropriate interventions and offer more potential for reducing recidivism and fostering healthy family relationships. Juvenile courts have the broad discretion to order appropriate probation conditions and participation in appropriate programs. A specialized probation unit, capable of effectively investigating cases of child-on-parent abuse, can ensure that appropriate minors are sent to the family violence courts. A specialized probation unit could also order appropriate interventions before the court intervenes.

In terms of the programs that courts and probation departments use to deal with child-on-parent violence, specialized programs proven to be effective in preventing future incidents of child-on-parent violence have in common intensive supervision, court reviews, and strict probation conditions. Therapeutically, they generally are designed to address substance abuse, mental health, and family problems, which are common in populations of parent batterers.

ANALYSIS

This paper seeks to identify specific steps that communities can take to address the problem of child-on-parent abuse. Part I introduces the problem of child-on-parent abuse and the unique challenges it poses. Part II explains how juveniles are typically processed when they commit a crime in California and identifies the areas where law enforcement and the courts have the statutory discretion to try different approaches. Part III identifies current practices in Los Angeles County for dealing with child-on-parent violence. Part IV describes particular approaches that communities have taken to address child-on-parent abuse and the effectiveness of these approaches. Part V sets forth general conclusions on best practices in response to child-on-parent violence. Part VI provides recommendations for next steps that can be undertaken in Los Angeles County to begin to address the issue locally.

I. PARENT ABUSE

Traditionally, perpetrators of abuse are understood to have greater legal, social, and economic power than their victims.[1] This perception makes *child-on-parent abuse* – a pattern of child behavior that uses verbal, physical, emotional, or financial means to exert control over a parent – counterintuitive. Parents themselves often deny the seriousness of the problem and only seek help once the pattern of abuse has become too serious to ignore and they feel powerless to change it. Their sense of powerlessness is exacerbated by the fact they have not heard of child-on-parent abuse and are not prepared for it.[2] Law enforcement officers and social service workers are often dismissive of the abuse, or blame the parent.

Unfortunately, the most recent nationwide surveys of family violence are unreliable, due to very low response rates and non-probability sampling methods, resulting in misleadingly high

[1] AMANDA HOLT, ADOLESCENT-TO-PARENT ABUSE: CURRENT UNDERSTANDINGS IN RESEARCH, POLICY AND PRACTICE 23 (2006).
[2] *Id.* at 49.

or low prevalence rates.[3] The most statistically reliable measures of national prevalence come from older surveys – for example, a 1975 National Family Violence Survey finding that 20% of mothers and 14% of fathers reported being hit by their child in the previous year.[4] There are, however, localized studies that provide recent and reliable data on family violence and parent abuse.

A 2006 Study of Santa Clara County and San Francisco County court-based intervention programs for juvenile family violence offenders (2006 Study) – a broad category of juvenile offenders who abuse any family member – found that 54% of family violence victims were the mother or stepmother of the offender and 17% were the father or stepfather.[5] An overwhelming 73% of all family violence victims were female and the mean age for all victims was 37 years. Since 71% of juvenile-perpetrated family violence cases involved abused parents, the findings of the 2006 Study for family violence cases will be used as a proxy for discussing the child-on-parent violence problem here.

The 2006 Study also addresses juvenile-perpetrated domestic violence – violence against a romantic partner – which is a category distinct from family violence. An anecdotal finding of staff involved with initiating the Santa Clara court program discussed below was that a relatively small number of cases seen involved domestic violence as compared to family violence. Also, youth engaged in domestic violence tended to be older than youth involved in family violence, who were younger and typically had a history of mental health problems or abuse as a child.[6]

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[3] *Id.* at 27.
[4] *Id.* (citing Ullman, A. and Straus, M.A. *Violence by children against mothers in relation to violence between parents and corporal punishment by parents*, JOURNAL OF COMPARATIVE FAMILY STUDIES, 34, 41-60 (2003).
[5] BRENDA UEKERT, ET AL., NATIONAL CENTER FOR STATE COURTS, JUVENILE DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE: THE EFFECTS OF COURT-BASED INTERVENTION PROGRAMS ON RECIDIVISM 52 (2006) (17% of victims were the father or stepfather, 13% a sister, 7% the brother, 6% other persons, and 2.4% a parent's cohabitating partner).
[6] BRENDA UEKERT, ET AL., IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE FOR JUVENILE JUSTICE AGENCIES: STARTING A SPECIALIZED JUVENILE DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE COURT PROGRAM 7 (2006).

The 2006 Study found that family violence offenders processed in the juvenile justice system shared similar characteristics and family histories:[7]

- **Perpetrator Characteristics**
    - 63% were male (the trends below did not differ between male and female offenders)
    - Perpetrators had an average age of 15.
    - 64% had been diagnosed with a mental illness.
    - 46% had a prior juvenile delinquency charge, with a mean 2.5 prior referrals.
- **Family History**
    - 40% of perpetrators had been abused as a child.
    - 37% had parents with a history of domestic violence.
    - 41% had parents with a criminal record.
    - 43% had parents with a substance abuse problem.

Child-on-parent abuse usually starts with less severe forms of verbal abuse – such as the child yelling at the parent or using derogatory and insulting names – and develops gradually, over months, into physical and/or emotional abuse.[8] When taking part in a study that asked them to rate the seriousness of verbal, physical, and emotional abuse, parents unanimously rated emotional abuse – using parent's emotional weaknesses to hurt them, threatening harm or death, threatening to run away, threatening suicide, calling 911 and making accusations, or having the parent arrested – as "most serious."[9] The study, which included empirical data and interviews, indicates that the parents were often more distressed that an emotional or physical attack *came from their child* than they were from the threat of harm itself.[10]

The costs of child-on-parent abuse extend beyond the victim and beyond the family unit. Parents often report that their abusers are also abusive towards their siblings, and even

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[7] UEKERT, et al., *supra* at 49.
[8] HOLT, *supra*, at 44.
[9] *Id.* (citing Eckstein, N.J., *Emergent issues in families experiencing adolescent-to-parent abuse: a communicative analysis of conflict process present in the verbal, physical, or emotional abuse of parents*, ETD Collection for University of Nebraska – Lincoln, paper AAI3045512, http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/dissertations/AAI3045512).
[10] *Id.* (one mother explained: "I wasn't that it bothered me that I would wake up dead, but it bothered me that he would do that to me").

witnessing abuse can have a negative impact on siblings. Parent abuse can lead to conflicts between parents and make it difficult for single parents to develop relationships with new partners. Some parents have also reported a distancing from neighbors and withdrawing from social activities and relationships. Mental health and physical health problems are also exacerbated, leading to higher healthcare costs for parents and lower productivity at work.[11]

Having no court or law enforcement response to child-on-parent abuse would obviously leave victims helpless and allow the impact of the abuse to extend beyond the home. It is also clear that, once the child-on-parent abuse has escalated to a consistent pattern of serious physical and emotional abuse, a purely legal or punitive response will not sufficiently address the underlying causes of the abuse. The case studies discussed below also indicate that *even a holistic response* to parent abuse does little good for juveniles who already have a history of perpetrating abuse or being arrested for any crimes. An effective societal response to child-on-parent abuse must be able to identify at-risk populations and intervene early, regardless of which agencies are responsible or what their specific approach is. Before discussing specific interventions, it is important to lay out the legal framework that perpetrators will have to navigate.

II. CALIFORNIA JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM AND DISCRETIONARY SENTENCING

The following sections will describe the traditional process for dealing with juvenile offenders and options for diverting minors from that traditional adjudication process. Juveniles may be diverted to specialized programs before the juvenile court gets involved, or the juvenile court may order formal or informal probation for juveniles who are found to have battered a parent.

[11] *Id.* at 51-3.

A. Juvenile Institutions and their Jurisdictions

Under the California Welfare & Institutions Code (WIC), juvenile courts have jurisdiction over minors who violate any state or federal law or who are "habitually disobedient or truant." [12] California has 58 superior courts, one for each county, and each superior court has a juvenile court division.[13] Each county also has a probation department, functioning under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court, responsible for recommending sanctions to the court, enforcing court orders, operating correctional institutions, incarcerating youth determined to be "delinquents", and providing rehabilitation services.[14] The district attorney (DA) is the highest officeholder in the legal department of a jurisdiction and represents the government in the prosecution of criminal offenses.

B. Interventions Occurring Before Juvenile Court Involvement

The specialized interventions taking place before the courts get involved can basically take place in one of three ways: (1) the police officer refers the minor to an informal program in response to an incident; (2) probation officer orders the minor to an informal program in lieu of filing petition to get the court involved; (3) the DA orders the minor to an informal program in lieu of filing petition to get the court involved.

1. Options for Police Officers

When a police officer arrests a minor for breaking the law,[15] the officer has the options of warning and releasing the minor, ordering the minor to appear before a probation officer, or delivering the minor directly to a probation officer.[16] With respect to allegations of family violence, some counties, like Santa Clara, have law enforcement protocol requiring all suspected

[12] CAL. WELF. & INST. CODE §§ 601, 602.
[13] *Id.* §§ 245, 246.
[14] *Id.* § 270.
[15] *Id.* § 625.
[16] *Id.* § 626.

family violence offenders to be brought to juvenile hall, and minors are typically arrested and detained until they appear in court for a detention hearing. Other counties, like San Francisco, allow law enforcement to bring less serious cases to the attention of various community agencies for informal intervention, before the minor is even arrested.[17]

2. Options for Probation Department

When a minor is ordered by a police officer to appear in juvenile hall or arrested and taken to juvenile hall, the probation department and DA's office can choose to file a petition to get the court involved. The probation department may file a 601 petition when a minor did something that was against the law because of the minor's juvenile status– skipped school, broke curfew, or disobeyed parents.[18] In lieu of filing a petition, the probation officer may – with consent of minor and minor's parent or guardian – order informal supervision.[19]

3. Options for District Attorney

The probation department may also take the case to the DA to consider filing a 602 petition when the minor broke the law in a way that would be a misdemeanor or felony had it been committed by an adult; battery of a family member would fall under this category.[20] The DA may file the 602 petition in juvenile court or agree to informal supervision.[21]

C. Juvenile Court Detention, Fitness, and Jurisdiction Hearings

Before the juvenile court can rehabilitate or punish a minor, it must decide whether to detain the minor, whether or not the minor should be tried in juvenile court, and whether the minor is guilty of breaking the law. If the probation officer determines that the minor should remain in custody, the officer must serve the minor with a copy of a 601 or 602 petition and

[17] UEKERT, et al., *supra*, at 25.
[18] CAL. WELF. & INST. CODE § 601.
[19] *Id*. § 654.3.
[20] *Id.* § 602, 654.
[21] *Id.* §§ 654, 654.2.

notify the minor of a time and place for a detention hearing, where the juvenile court judge will decide if the minor can go home before the next hearing. [22] If a 602 petition (minor broke the law in a way that would be a misdemeanor or felony had it been committed by an adult) has been filed against a minor, when he or she was 16 years of age or older, the juvenile court must determine whether the juvenile is "fit and proper subject" to be dealt with in juvenile court, as opposed to adult court.[23] Assuming the minor is appropriate for juvenile court, the juvenile court will then decide in a jurisdiction hearing whether the minor committed the crime.

D. Juvenile Court Discretion in Disposition Hearing

If the juvenile court finds that a minor has committed an offense,[24] it holds a disposition hearing to decide proper rehabilitation or punishment. The court can place the minor on probation for six months, whether or not the minor is declared a ward of the court.[25] The court is vested with broad discretion to place the child on probation and impose reasonable probation conditions that serve justice and enhance the youth's rehabilitation.[26] The probation conditions merely have to bear some relationship to the offense or be reasonably related to future criminality.[27] The court may also order the minor to complete counseling or education programs within six months and dismiss the petition if services are completed. San Francisco, for example, favors the latter approach.

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[22] *Id.* § 630
[23] *Id.* § 707 (based on (A) degree of criminal sophistication; (B) whether minor can be rehabilitated during juvenile court's jurisdiction; (C) minor's delinquent history; (D) success of previous attempts by court to rehabilitate minor; and (E) the circumstances and gravity of the offense alleged); Additionally, juveniles 14 years of age or older who commit crimes specified in § 602(b) and § 707(b) will be prosecuted as adults.
[24] *Id.* §§ 601, 602.
[25] *Id.* §§ 654, 725.
[26] *Id.* §§ 725(a), 730(b).
[27] CAL. JUDGES BENCHGUIDES, JUVENILE DELINQUENCY DISPOSITION HEARING, § 119.31

III. LOS ANGELES COUNTY CURRENT PRACTICES FOR HANDLING FAMILY VIOLENCE ALLEGATIONS

A. Juvenile Court Intervention

In Los Angeles County, minors charged with child-on-parent violence are generally processed with no specialized tools or protocols for identifying these cases, assessing the potential for intervention, and alerting the court to options. With respect to these kinds of cases, limited formal information is available on the experience of juvenile hearing officers in Los Angeles County. Informal inquiry has netted information from one hearing officer that he probably sees these types of cases on average about twice a month, with the mother being the victim in about three-fourths of cases. The typical charges are battery, assault with a deadly weapon or deadly force, or threatening to commit a crime that would cause death or serious bodily injury.[28] All charges are filed as misdemeanors or felonies. The minor is generally detained for about 12 days until the pre-plea date in court and then released home to parent. Parents are not mandated to participate in counseling and the hearing officer has no way of knowing how many similar cases are diverted before they get to court. While the frequency with which these cases appear in courtrooms around the county may vary, it is likely, based on the limited information available, that the experience in other courtrooms is similar.

B. Informal Interventions

While Los Angeles County does not appear to have taken formal steps within the judicial and probation systems to develop specialized approaches to child-on-parent violence, some local mental health providers are looking at the issue and developing therapeutic responses specifically designed to meet the needs of youth and families dealing with these issues. These approaches

[28] Juveniles are charged under CAL. PENAL CODE §§ 242 (battery), 245 (assault with a firearm, other deadly weapon, or deadly force), or 422 (threatens to commit a crime which will result in death or great bodily injury to another person, with the intent of the statement being taken as a threat, even if there is no intent of actually carrying out).

are likely to focus on early intervention. For example, Hathaway-Sycamores (Hathaway), a respected Los Angeles County provider of mental health services to children and families, anticipates launching a program with one of its community clinics to provide specialized, culturally-sensitive responses to family violence issues. The experience reported to date by Hathaway staff is consistent with challenges noted in the studies cited herein. It appears that, when parents do call the police for assistance, responses vary from the police calling child protective services, detention of the youth for assault, or no formal response. Families working with Hathaway have a safety plan when emergency situations arise, but parents remain fearful of formally reporting these types of problems. Sometimes parents will report these issues to parent mentors who are part of the case management team, but often they make no report for fear the greater abuse or that their child will be detained.

The new program proposed by Hathaway, called Safe Generations, would provide culturally-specific trauma services for Latino families impacted by family violence and living in Northeast Los Angeles.[29] If funding is obtained, the program will provide children and their families a variety of site, school and community-based support services including: community outreach and education; evidence-informed trauma treatment services; intensive case management; emergency supports such as food, utilities and housing; peer-based empowerment groups; and linkages to community partner agencies to help make sustainable connections that will support a more resilient family structure. [30] This service approach will directly address the unique needs and cultural barriers experienced by Latino families who have been exposed to

[29] Services would be available to indigent families who do not qualify for MediCal. Eligible families that we are not able to provide services to because of reaching our service capacity will be referred to one of Hathaway-Sycamores' other mental health programs.

[30] Safe Generations will offer evidence-based psychotherapy models to address the impact of trauma and restore functioning through evidence-based or promising trauma-informed practices. The program also plans to expand community partnerships, building on the expertise of our field capable staff and seeking to establish integrated cross referrals with physical health and other specialty services.

domestic violence by providing services that are culturally appropriate, grounded in scientific evidence and trauma intervention best practice, as well as use innovative implementation methods that promote the effectiveness and sustainability of services. [31]

IV. JUVENILE COURT INTERVENTIONS – EXISTING MODELS

This section will discuss the approaches of Santa Clara and San Francisco counties to juvenile-perpetrated family abuse, their effectiveness, and the factors affecting recidivism of juvenile parent abusers. While Santa Clara favors a formal court-based probation program, San Francisco favors an informal court-based probation program and non-court-based interventions.

A. Specialized Probation Program - Santa Clara County

In 1999, the Santa Clara County Juvenile Domestic and Family Violence Court was established in the large urban county of about 1.7 million people.[32] Santa Clara is known for having strong law enforcement and prosecution response to crime and primarily practices a "formal probation" model for family violence offenses. Accordingly, it takes less severity than in other counties for an incident to be dealt with formally – 93% of family violence or domestic violence offenders receive formal probation.[33]

In Santa Clara County, this innovative court program grew out of data collected by a local domestic violence council and judicial activism. The local domestic violence council had

[31] Challenges faced by many Latino families include residing in high crime neighborhoods, immigration status, language barriers, transportation challenges, fear of government and legal systems, poverty, multiple family households, low labor skills, high transiency, and marginal literacy. The program will also utilize technological supports such as tablets, screen readers and software to compensate for limited language proficiency and literacy among some in the target population.

[32] There were already some similar programs outside of California for juveniles committing domestic violence, family violence, or sexual assault. For example, in 1997, the King County, Washington, Department of Judicial Administration and the Prosecuting Attorney's Office established the Step-Up Program, a domestic violence, family violence, and sexual assault unit, in its juvenile court. The intervention program targets 13 to 17 year olds who batter their parents or dating partners, and also offers a support group for abused parents. The court orders youths meeting target criteria to attend the program, while parents' participation in the support group is voluntary. HOLT, *supra*, at 129; Sarah M. Buel, *Why Juvenile Courts Should Address Family Violence: Promising Practices to Improve Intervention Outcomes*, 53 JUV. & FAM. COURT J. 1, 6 (2002); http://www.kingcounty.gov/courts/step-up/Curriculum.aspx.

[33] UEKERT, et al., *supra*, at 6.

established a death review committee that periodically reviewed domestic violence-related deaths. The findings of this committee, coupled with the advocacy and leadership of a hearing officer who was committed to combatting domestic violence in adolescents, resulted in inter-agency collaboration that brought about the court-based intervention program under discussion here.[34] The DA's Office, Public Defender's Office, and law enforcement agencies participated in developing protocols for case referrals and processing for juvenile domestic and family violence cases.[35]

The program works under the assumption that early formal intervention is the best way to prevent further incidents of juvenile domestic or family violence.[36] When a law enforcement officer brings a juvenile perpetrator of family violence to the detention facility, a special domestic and family violence unit immediately receives the referral for review and retains the case if it warrants specialized attention. After the court decides in a detention hearing whether the juvenile should be released or not, the probation officer commences an in-depth investigation of the juvenile's home situation. Once a petition alleging domestic or family violence is filed by the DA, the case is assigned to the specialized court, with a dedicated docket, that hears cases once a week. Both the DA's office and the Public Defender's office have specially trained attorneys to handle juvenile domestic and family violence cases.

If the petition is sustained at the adjudicatory hearing, offenders are typically assigned to the specialized probation unit, ordered into appropriate treatment and intervention programs, and

[34] The committee found that a substantial number of domestic-violence related deaths occurred in relationships that started when the victim was underage. Two years later, a judge who was similarly inspired by domestic violence problems in San Francisco County, launched a similar program in the San Francisco County Superior Court, using protocols already established in Santa Clara. UEKERT, et al., *supra*, Att. C, at 7

[35] UEKERT, et al., *supra*, at 22.

[36] UEKERT, et al., *supra*, at 25.

required to return to court for review hearings every 30 to 60 days.[37] Probation conditions can include the following:

- Protective or "stay away" orders;
- Restitution to the victim for any losses related to the offense;
- Prohibition against weapons possession or the presence of weapons in the offender's home;
- Search of the person or place of residence or business of the minor and seizure of any items prohibited by conditions of probation at any time of the day or night, with or without probable cause, and with or without a warrant;
- Drug and alcohol testing;
- Mandatory school, employment, or vocational training attendance;
- Fines and fees to hold the offender accountable; and
- Strict curfew

In addition to intensive supervision, court reviews, and strict probation conditions, Santa Clara offers minors programs to address mental health, substance abuse, and family dynamic issues.[38] Santa Clara has three to four different mental health providers who run specialized programs for teen batterers; minors and/or parents are required to pay $15 per session, while the county pays the rest of the expenses. Victims are also offered direct and confidential victim advocacy, support groups, legal assistance, court accompaniment, assistance with victim/witness claims, and resource referrals.[39] Other programs include:

- 26-week batterer intervention programs;
- Parenting Without Violence classes if the youth has a child;
- Counseling and education if substance abuse issues are present;
- Special education accommodations when necessary; and
- Psychological or family counseling

B. Informal Probation under Court Supervision – San Francisco County

In September 2001, San Francisco began a new specialized domestic/family violence court program, sharing many similarities to the Santa Clara program – a specialized docket,

[37] *Id.* at 24.
[38] *Id.*
[39] For example, probation officers provide parents with educational material, describing how to obtain a protective order and file a police report if abuse occurs again. Buel, *supra*, at 8.

review hearings, specialized probation unit, designated DA and public defender, intensive supervision, victim services, and offender programs – but the program favors an informal probation model over the Santa Clara formal probation model.[40] The court dismisses petitions after successful completion of a specialized program, which is supposed to provide an incentive for juveniles to successfully complete the program. This program was inspired by the Santa Clara County program and initiated by the efforts of a San Francisco County judge who wanted to address these domestic and family violence issues with his/her county.[41]

There is no law enforcement protocol requiring all suspected domestic or family violence cases to be brought to juvenile hall for assessment by a specialized probation intake unit.[42] Instead, law enforcement has the option of bringing less serious cases to the attention of various community agencies for informal supervision. The caseload is, therefore, much smaller in San Francisco than Santa Clara and the judge can devote much more time to each case. Because the specialized court only meets every other week, however, many cases are also referred to the regular delinquency calendars.[43]

C. Effectiveness of Santa Clara and San Francisco Programs

The 2006 Study of the Santa Clara and San Francisco court-based intervention programs, which analyzed juvenile family and domestic violence cases from those two counties and Contra Costa County (which does not have a court-based intervention program), found that the programs arguably had a deterrent effect on first-time offenders, which lasted up to two years following the

[40] San Francisco County uses informal probation 68 percent of the time, while Santa Clara County only uses it five percent of the time. UEKERT, et al., *supra*, at 61.
[41] UEKERT, et al., *supra*, Att. C, at 7.
[42] UEKERT, et al., *supra*, at 25.
[43] *Id.* at 26.

date of the original incident.[44] The programs had little effect on juveniles with prior records or those who failed to complete the programs.

In Contra Costa, 16% of juveniles with no prior juvenile delinquency were re-arrested within 6 months of their first offense, while in San Francisco it was 10%, and in Santa Clara 3%. Within 24 months of the first offense, 32% of juveniles in Contra Costa were re-arrested, compared to 11% in San Francisco and 15% in Santa Clara. Though the philosophies behind the San Francisco and Santa Clara Counties programs differ – San Francisco favoring informal probation and giving juveniles incentives to avoid being formally processed, and Santa Clara favoring formal probation and taking a tougher approach from the beginning – both had positive results compared to the county with no specialized program.

D. Variables Influencing Probability of Recidivism

There were five variables that most influenced probability of recidivism (measured as the percentage of juveniles who were arrested for domestic or family violence after their first arrest) in San Francisco and Santa Clara Counties: i) offenders who failed to successfully complete the program were 2.2 times more likely to recidivate; ii) each probation violation increased the odds of recidivism by 1.5 times; iii) each prior referral to juvenile court increased the odds of recidivism by 1.5 times; iv) juveniles committing violence against female partners or family members were 2.5 times more likely recidivate than those who committed violence against males; v) having been abused as a child or having parents with a history of domestic or family violence increased the odds of recidivism 2.1 times; and vi) perpetrators of family violence were 30 percent more likely to recidivate compared to domestic violence offenders.[45]

[44] The study, published in 2006, started three years earlier when the National Institute of Justice gave the National Center for State Courts – in partnership with the American Probation and Parole Association and Dr. Inger Sagatun-Edwards of San Jose State University – a grant to study the effectiveness of court-based intervention programs.
[45] *Id.* at 87.

V. BEST PRACTICES IN RESPONSE TO CHILD-ON-PARENT VIOLENCE

Best practices in responding to child-on-parent violence appear to have the following characteristics in common: 1) intervention is early; 2) when court involvement is required, specialized courtrooms adjudicate cases and provide consistent supervision and court review; and 3) programs serving the offending youth involve specially-targeted, multi-disciplinary therapeutic responses that address substance abuse, mental health issues and family dynamics.

A. Early and Appropriate Intervention

Early intervention strategies include development of community-based, culturally-sensitive mental health programs that utilize tools to screen clients for indications of family violence problems before these matters ever involve the police or courts. Additionally, early interventions strategies include training for law enforcement and the courts on how to identify these cases. Such training would include development of meaningful tools, such as protocols, to enable law enforcement, probation, and hearing officers to hone in on family violence issues.

1. Community-based Mental Health Treatment

As indicated in Section I above, the available studies indicate that there is a lack of understanding of child-on-parent violence generally. This misunderstanding or lack of understanding of the issue, together with fears of further abuse or arrest of the minor, contribute to parent unwillingness to talk about the issue or seek help. Since studies also indicate that early intervention before court involvement increases the likelihood of changing the youth's behavior, it is important that the mental health programs that see families are aware of the issue and develop programs targeted to identifying the issue early and providing specialized treatment responses. Public outreach and education on the issue is an important component of early intervention.

As indicated in Section III above, there appears to be a growing awareness in the mental health community in Los Angeles of the need for targeted programs for early response to family violence issues. As an example, Hathaway (described in Section III) has sought funding to implement the Safe Generations program that will strive to support families who experience family or domestic violence and face significant barriers accessing mental health and other supports because of unidentified needs related to cultural factors, individual characteristics, residency in high crime neighborhoods, immigration status, language barriers, transportation challenges, fear of government and legal systems, poverty, multiple family households, low labor skills, high transiency, and marginal literacy.

With its proposed program to address family violence, Hathaway strives to ensure cultural sensitivity and to build upon successful strategies it has used in other programs, as well as rely on evidence-based therapeutic practices. Hathaway plans to use technology to compensate for client challenges with language proficiency and literacy, such supports to include tablets, screen readers and software. Hathaway also sees the importance of community collaboration to respond to these issues and will expand its community partnerships to build expertise and establish strong referral networks for needed physical health and specialty services. It has used peer mentorship successfully in the past and, based on emerging practices in the field of violence prevention, Hathaway plans to include peer based supports as part of its response as such supports have shown promising outcomes throughout the United States. Hathaway will use evidence-based or promising trauma-informed psychotherapy models to address the impact of trauma and restore functioning. It is anticipated that the program will also increase awareness of intergenerational patterns of family violence and provide opportunities and resources for intervention through intensive case management.

One unique aspect of the Hathaway approach to reach its target Latino client base will be the use of *promotoras* (promoters). *Promotoras* will be recruited from the targeted community and trained to provide linkage to community resources. These partners know the community well and can help families overcome barriers to access and provide support to navigate the systems. The principal goals of the Safe Generations program will be to increase health education about risk factors associated with family violence and increase access to systems of care in the primarily Latino population of its service territory and, as a result, reduce the impact of trauma related to family violence.

2. Training Programs for Law Enforcement

An effective response to child-on-parent violence must include efforts to give law enforcement officers the tools to identify at-risk populations early so that they may intervene appropriately. Once a juvenile has a history of arrest for child-on-parent violence – a good indicator that the abuse has escalated – the chances of recidivism become higher, even when the juvenile completes the same programs proven effective for first-time offenders. Intervention can take the form of referring the juvenile to a specialized probation unit, or diverting the juvenile to informal intervention before arrest. Law enforcement will require formal training to ensure the capability of identifying family violence cases and making appropriate referrals. Screening protocols may be useful as well.

3. Specialized Probation Units

Specialized family violence units within the probation department would be able to investigate home situations more effectively than non-specialized units and would be able to order appropriate intervention or send juveniles to the appropriate court. In Santa Clara County, for example, a special domestic and family violence unit immediately reviews referrals of child-

on-parent violence. The unit retains the case if it warrants specialized attention and commences an in-depth investigation of the juvenile's home situation. The development of specialized probation units, with attendant training and screening tools, may be appropriate.

B. Specialized Court for Family Violence Cases

Assigning specially-trained judges to hear family violence cases would allow the juvenile courts to efficiently order the most appropriate intervention. Santa Clara County, for example, has a specialized court, with a dedicated docket, that specifically hears domestic and family violence cases once a week. The court can order participation in appropriate programs and appropriate conditions for probation. An important aspect of court oversight of these cases proven to be effective in preventing future incidents of child-on-parent violence is to undertake intensive supervision, frequent court reviews, and strict probation conditions.

C. Comprehensive Programs for Youth that Address Substance Abuse, Mental Health, and Family Dynamics

Specialized probation programs proven to be effective for family violence are multi-disciplinary in approach. They address substance abuse, mental health, and family problems, which are common in populations of parent batterers. Specialized programs used in other California jurisdictions include i) 26-week batterer intervention programs; ii) Parenting Without Violence classes if the youth has a child; iii) counseling and education if substance abuse issues are present; iv) special education accommodations when necessary; and v) psychological or family counseling. The therapeutic aspects of the program, as well as the work involving family dynamics, might be very similar in nature to the Safe Generations program that Hathaway seeks to implement, which is more fully described above.

The Step-Up Program, which was established with the juvenile court of King County, Washington (described in Section IV), also addresses the underlying problems common to

populations of parent batterers. [46] Once admitted into the six-month program, the juvenile is taught what behavior constitutes abuse, to identify rationales used to excuse violence, to isolate triggers of violence, to carry out non-violent alternatives, and how to empathize with the victim. The juvenile must attend mandatory weekly sessions, maintain a log of possible triggers, write a "responsibility letter" to the victim that is shared in the weekly group, write an "empathy letter," report positive and negative behaviors toward family members, and engage in a role-playing of respectful family interactions.

Before children or parents participate, a specialist in the Step-Up Program carries out a comprehensive intake session with the parent and child, interviewing each person separately and screening for family violence, medical or substance abuse, mental health issues, and school problems. Mothers and fathers are also separated because 65% of juveniles report witnessing domestic violence between their parents, with the father usually identified as the abuser.

VI. NEXT STEPS

While mental health clinicians, probation officers, police and judges are aware that issues of child-on-parent violence exist in Los Angeles County, unlike the affirmative approaches adopted in San Francisco and Santa Clara Counties, it appears that no formal investigation has been undertaken on a countywide basis to determine how extensive the problem is or to identify best practices for responding to the issue when it does arise.

Since the data that does exist suggests that early intervention holds the best potential for restoring family stability and reducing recidivism, strategies that involve early intervention within the therapeutic community as well as specialized court or probation programs for response would seem appropriate.

[46] Buel, *supra*, at 7; http://www.kingcounty.gov/courts/step-up/Curriculum.aspx.

A framework for developing an effective program is thoroughly discussed in Attachment C to the 2006 Study, Implementation Guide for Juvenile Justice Agencies: Starting a Specialized Juvenile Domestic and Family Violence Court Program. (The Implementation Guide is attached here as Attachment A.) Based on the guidance found in the Implementation Guide, the following next steps are suggested to begin to address the issue in Los Angeles County:

1. **Identify the Problem**: The first step to development of any new program is assessment of the scope of the problem and its effects on the juvenile justice system. A task force of mental health professionals, hearing officers, probation staff and police professionals must be established to share information, collect data, identify the range of current responses within the County, and gather information about model programs that could offer a framework for local program reform.[47]
2. **Build the Team**: Once the magnitude of the problem has been identified, strategies for response might include:
    a. Identify key figures that will need to be recruited to support the need for a specialized program. In addition to key leaders, line staff who will be charged with implementation should be recruited to provide expertise on implementation strategies and logistical support as well as to champion the program within their respective service communities. Judges are effective recruiters of these key leaders. Providing a consistent response to juvenile offenders is necessary for reducing child-on-parent violence. A consistent response is only possible with committed participation by all relevant agencies, which can only occur if there is strong, cohesive team to begin

[47] BRENDA UEKERT, ET AL., IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE FOR JUVENILE JUSTICE AGENCIES: STARTING A SPECIALIZED JUVENILE DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE COURT PROGRAM 7 (2006).

with.[48]

b. Engage the interdisciplinary task force in development of a specialized approach that would fit within the legal culture of Los Angeles County. Santa Clara County has a post-adjudication model, requiring offenders to admit their guilt and take responsibility for their actions, and San Francisco County has a pre-adjudication model that forbids such admission in the court of law and uses the possibility of dismissing the petition as an incentive for the minor to complete the informal probation program. Though the two approaches appeal to fundamentally different legal philosophies and cultures, they have the same practical effect of addressing underlying causes of the violence.[49]

c. Develop a work group of county mental health professionals to clarify current treatment practices, identification strategies, and areas in which treatment expertise exists. Coordinate with existing programs within Los Angeles County, such as Hathaway, that may have programs under development to serve the target population.

3. **Draft a Response Protocol**: Taking into account the legal culture of Los Angeles County as discussed above, the team must agree on a specific goal (i.e. reducing violence, rehabilitating youth, protecting community, hold offenders accountable, restoring community) for its family violence program.[50] Once that goal is identified, the team must:

a. Establish procedures to identify cases of family violence. Intake centers should have forms in place to document relevant data.

b. Designate specialized probation units, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and judges to handle family violence cases efficiently and provide consistency. Section V discusses in greater depth the benefits of specialized staff. The specialized staff must also have

[48] *Id.* at 12.
[49] *Id.* at 13.
[50] *Id.* at 16.

specific procedures in place to provide consistency.

c. Avoid policies that can negatively affect momentum. For example, turnover from a rotational system can make it more difficult to maintain enthusiasm, consistency, and effectiveness.

d. Establish probation conditions and offender programs (examples discussed in Section IV). Having families pay to participate has the benefit of perhaps making them more committed due to the financial burden, but also has the possibility of pricing out participants who would benefit. A balance should be found.

e. Determine how to serve victims. In Santa Clara and San Francisco counties, for example, victims are offered direct and confidential victim advocacy, referral to support groups and other community resources, legal assistance, a support person in court, and assistance with resolution claims. While in some domestic violence cases parties may choose to simply separate permanently, family members do not have that luxury, making reconciliation and mutual cooperation particularly important.

f. Develop probation supervision procedures. The protocol should address the level of supervision. There may be some difficult financial choices. Capping the number of individuals probation officers work with can help make them more effective, but may also result in populations who would benefit from specialized intervention remaining without resources.

g. Review protocols annually, since political climate, laws, staffing, and budget can change on an annual basis. There is the added benefit of all agencies coming together to review and revisit aspects of the protocol and share new knowledge with one another.

4. **Provide Services and Secure Funding:** Services must be appropriate to the type of violence being addressed and must address underlying mental health and family dynamic issues. Of course, services cannot take place without funding. In Santa Clara, the Board of Supervisors originally funded additional probation officers for a specialized domestic and family violence unit, the Superior Court agreed to a weekly domestic and family violence calendar, and a grant from the state funded some of the intervention services. Subsequent loss of additional county and state grant funds, combined with a budget crisis, made the program difficult to sustain. While grants work very well to fund start-up costs, they cannot be counted on for long-term sustainability. In San Francisco County, however, internal funds were used to shift resources to the specialized court and caseloads, and the public health sector has assisted with the provision of services.[51] With finite financial resources, services must be geared first towards those who would benefit the most. For example, if there are not enough resources to target every case and the evidence shows that first-time offenders are more likely to reform than repeat offenders, programs might prioritize first-time offenders. Though this kind of cost-benefit analysis may seem harsh, it may be necessary financially and perhaps even politically. Initial success would also make it more likely for the program to survive and even expand.
5. **Communicate Regularly:** Regular communication, on the programmatic and individual case level, between organizations is necessary to maintain the integrity and consistency of the program. Meetings between specialized staff serving a particular community will be more efficient than meetings between staff who have varying knowledge and interest in the particular problem.[52]

[51] *Id.* at 23.
[52] *Id.* at 25.

6. **Train Staff:** The implementation of an effective program requires a core of dedicated staff who are trained to deal specifically with family violence *at the juvenile level*. The unique challenges posed by child-on-parent family violence, discussed in Section I, require training distinct from training for adult domestic or family violence, which is more prevalent.[53]

7. **Evaluate the Program:** Evaluation is valuable as an internal tool to refine and improve the specialized program and as a way to encourage professional accountability and improvement. Positive evaluations of the program can also be used as marketing tools to secure external funding. The 2006 Study of the Santa Clara County and San Francisco County programs, discussed extensively throughout this paper, was established with an evaluation component that was carried out by researchers from San Jose State University. The evaluation program needs to focus on victim characteristics and background, the nature of the violence, probation conditions and violations, and subsequent arrests and convictions.[54] There should be a control groups with similar characteristics and without specialized programs. The 2006 Study, for example, measures recidivism rates in Contra Costa County as well. Ideally, the initial assessment of the problem (Step 1) should measure arrests and convictions before specialized interventions take place. The lack of recidivism rates before the specialized programs studied makes the 2006 Study less persuasive than it could be.

VII. CONCLUSION

In order to effectively address child-on-parent violence, communities must intervene as early as possible, before patterns of abuse become more ingrained. Public education and

[53] *Id.* at 27.
[54] *Id.* at 27.

outreach are necessary to increase awareness of, and reduce stigma of, this form of violence. Specialized staff in the community and in the court system need to be able to identify indicators of the abuse and provide appropriate interventions that address underlying mental health, family dynamic, and substance abuse problems. Programs should be geared towards the population in terms of socio-economics and culture, and they must also be compatible with the local legal culture. Courts, probation departments, and police departments should develop strong ties with community service providers so that they may all benefit from shared knowledge and make references efficiently. Probation programs and alternatives must have mechanisms in place to supervise often and consistently. More than anything, the program must be sustainable on a practical level, which may require tough choices on what services to provide and who to target for inclusion.

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Attachment C: Implementation Guide for Juvenile Justice Agencies

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National Center for State Courts
300 Newport Avenue
Williamsburg, VA 23185
800-616-6109
www.ncsconline.org

Implementation Guide for Juvenile Justice Agencies

Starting a Specialized Juvenile Domestic and Family Violence Court Program

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Brenda K. Uekert, Ph.D., National Center for State Courts
Inger Sagatun-Edwards, Ph.D., San Jose State University
Ann Crowe, Ed.D., American Probation and Parole Association

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> *It's everyone—police, judges, probation, the community—giving the perpetrator the same message so he knows there's no way out for him. That we as a community, won't tolerate domestic violence.*
>
> —Judge Eugene Hyman, Santa Clara County Superior Court[23]

In the last decade, specialization has become the norm in larger jurisdictions in the *adult* justice system—particularly in the area of domestic violence. Many metropolitan areas now have special teams of domestic violence law enforcement officers, prosecutors, probation officers, victim advocates, and even courts. For the most part, this trend has not impacted the nation's juvenile justice system, where domestic and family violence often goes undetected and untreated.

In California, two court-based programs have led the effort to reform the traditional juvenile court response to domestic and family violence. In 1999, the Santa Clara County Juvenile Domestic and Family Violence Court was established in San Jose, California—the first of its kind in the nation.[24] In September 2001, a similar program began operating in San Francisco County's Unified Family Court. The courts address both the problem of juvenile "domestic violence" (violence perpetrated by a youth against an intimate, such as a spouse, girlfriend/boyfriend, or a date) and "family violence" (physical abuse perpetrated by a youth against a parent, sibling, or family member).[25]

The Santa Clara County and San Francisco County juvenile domestic/family violence court programs share several features. First, the courts have a designated judge who oversees a

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23 Quoted from Michelle Guido, "County tries to break cycle of domestic violence early, Pioneering justice system gives special attention to juveniles who batter," *San Jose Mercury News*, March 25, 2000.

24 The program was partly funded by the Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Branch of California's Office of Criminal Justice.

25 Santa Clara County has a population of about 1.7 million people—San Jose is the largest city. The population of San Francisco County is 776,733, based on data from the 2000 census.

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specialized calendar that features periodic review hearings. Second, the probation departments have specialized units with intensive supervision of domestic and family violence offenders. Third, the programs are highly collaborative, with participation from local law enforcement, probation, courts, district attorneys, public defenders, victim assistance, and service providers. Fourth, community service providers play a critical role in the intervention programs.

Despite their similarities, the Santa Clara County and San Francisco County court programs differ in their philosophy, with the Santa Clara County court program having a law enforcement protocol requiring all juvenile domestic and family violence cases to be delivered to the Juvenile Hall, and the court favoring declaring the minors a ward of the court with formal probation. The San Francisco County court program does not have a law enforcement protocol and favors ordering the minor to complete services within six months and dismissing the petition if services are completed, or placing the minor on probation for six months with petitions dismissed if the minor completes all court-ordered conditions in a six month period (Deferred Entry Judgment). Both counties include a number of intervention/treatment programs aimed at preventing further juvenile and domestic violence.

The purpose of this implementation guide is to outline the general steps required to set up a similar approach in communities across the country. The content of the guide is based on interviews conducted in 2004 and 2005 by staff from the National Center for State Courts, the American Probation and Parole Association, and San Jose State University. While the Santa Clara County and San Francisco County programs have different orientations, they offer lessons in how programs can be adapted to "fit" the legal culture of the larger justice community.

The Santa Clara County and San Francisco County specialized court programs were initiated by juvenile court judges. These types of specialized programs can be developed under

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the leadership of other agencies, such as the prosecutor's office or probation/community corrections, but will need the approval of the juvenile court judge(s) if cases under court supervision are involved. Ultimately, the courts and all key agencies must collaborate to develop a program that provides a consistent message to juvenile offenders and their victims. Success of a program is more likely with the leadership of judges as all parties are more likely to attend meetings when called by a judge.

Seven steps can be followed to implement a similar type of program in your jurisdiction: (1) identify the problem, (2) build the team, (3) draft a response protocol, (4) provide services, (5) communicate regularly, (6) train staff, and (7) evaluate the program.

Step 1: Identify the Problem

The first step in the development of any new program is to recognize the extent of juvenile domestic and family violence and how it impacts the justice system. Most cases do not come into the system pre-labeled as domestic violence (e.g., intimate partner violence) and family violence (e.g., sibling and parental violence). Rather, they are brought into the system as violations of specific juvenile codes, such as assault, battery, and threats of violence. In fact, a number of states define domestic violence as a crime between adults, thereby ignoring violence among intimates and family members at the juvenile level. Other states may exclude minors based on cohabitation relationship and children in common restrictions.[26] The underlying basis of the problem may never be addressed by anyone in the juvenile justice system.[27]

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[26] Many states, such as California, now include dating violence in their domestic violence penal codes.

[27] However, to some extent, domestic and family violence is addressed in family courts and dependency courts. In these cases, the juvenile is most often considered the victim, not the offender. Some in-take juvenile justice assessment protocols now also include questions about a family violence or child abuse history.

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Most courts and justice agencies are responsive by nature, not proactive. Consequently, very often it is a particular incident or event that catapults action. In Santa Clara County, findings from the Domestic Violence Council's Death Review Committee helped launch the specialized program in the juvenile court. The Committee, which has periodically reviewed all domestic violence-related deaths in the county since 1993, found that many of the total domestic violence-related deaths occurred in relationships that started when the victim was underage. These findings, coupled with a judge who was strongly committed to combating domestic violence among adolescents, initiated communication across agencies and the development of a court-based intervention program. Two years later, a similarly inspired judge, using the protocols already established in Santa Clara County, launched a comparable program in the San Francisco County Superior Court.

The Santa Clara County and San Francisco County courts address both domestic violence and family violence cases that involve adolescent offenders. When the Santa Clara County court began operations, staff were surprised by the relatively small number of domestic violence cases compared to the family violence cases—about two-thirds of cases involve family violence. In addition, the dynamics and background of domestic violence offenders are much different than family violence offenders. For instance, domestic violence offenders tend to be older adolescents, whereas family violence offenders are younger and often have a history of mental illness and/or abuse as a child. In order to develop a plan, the extent of the problem should first be documented. This can be done by selecting certain types of case files, documenting the number of cases that involve a domestic or family relationship, and reviewing sample cases. This information can then be used to determine the area of focus (domestic and/or family violence).

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Determine the Extent of the Problem

A review of case files is an excellent tool to determine the extent of domestic and family violence in the community. The review will involve the following:

1. Determine which code violations are likely to include an incident involving a domestic or family violence relationship.
2. Pull case files from a specific period of time.
3. Identify incidents that involved a domestic or family relationship.

A small jurisdiction might have the capacity to review all juvenile cases that enter the justice system over a specific period of time. But larger jurisdictions should start by selecting specific code violations that may involve a case of domestic or family violence. For instance, the California codes most relevant to juvenile domestic/family violence are:

> Penal Code 273.5 – willfully inflicting upon a person who is his or her spouse, former spouse, cohabitant, former cohabitant, or the mother or father of his or her child, corporal injury resulting in a traumatic condition.
>
> Penal Code 243(e) – battery committed against a spouse, a person with whom the defendant is cohabiting, a person who is the parent of the defendant's child, former spouse, fiancé, or fiancée, or a person with whom the defendant currently has, or has previously had, a dating or engagement relationship.
>
> Penal Code 245 – assault upon the person of another with a deadly weapon or instrument other than a firearm or by any means of force likely to produce great bodily injury.
>
> Penal Code 422 – any person who willfully threatens to commit a crime which will result in death or great bodily injury to another person, with the specific intent that the statement, made verbally, in writing, or by means of an electronic communication device, is to be taken as a threat.

Additional penal code offenses, such as terrorist threats, stalking, and vandalism of property, are also often included as qualifying offenses for the specialized juvenile and domestic violence courts if the offense is related to a girlfriend/boyfriend or a family relationship.

Once the relevant codes have been selected, begin pulling case files. Generally, probation department files are more likely to have background information that law enforcement

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or court files often lack. Use the files that contain the best information. Then select a time period. Smaller jurisdictions might pull cases from the last six months; larger jurisdictions might draw on a one month sample. Once the cases are pulled, the following information should be documented:

How many cases were pulled?	_____	**Percent of Total Cases**
Over what time period?	_____	
How many incidents involved a domestic offender-victim relationship (intimate partner, spouse, girlfriend/boyfriend, date)?	_____	_____%
How many incidents involved a family offender-victim relationship (parent, sibling, or family member)?	_____	_____%

Upon completing this exercise, you will have a very good sense of the extent of the problem in your jurisdiction and how many cases pass through your agency without intervention geared toward domestic or family violence. You will also learn what proportion of cases are domestic violence versus family violence.

Review Sample Cases

If you have staff who can review case files and record information from those that involved a domestic or family violence incident, you may want to document some key variables (e.g., age, relationship, nature of incident, case outcomes, provision of services, sentences). But if you are short-staffed and stretched for time—typical of most justice agencies these days—pull out a few of the recent cases that involved a domestic or family relationship. Review the cases and document the following:

1. What was the nature of the incident?
2. What were the backgrounds of the offender and victim? Pay particular attention to previous encounters with the justice system, family background, school status, mental health, and substance abuse issues.

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3. What was the outcome of the case? In cases where the offender was adjudicated, what dispositions and services were ordered?

The review of sample cases will accomplish two things. First, the review will result in greater awareness of the nature of the violence and backgrounds of the parties involved. Second, the review will show how the current justice system responds to domestic and family violence cases, and whether current interventions take into account the relationship dynamics. The immediate job is to make a convincing case of the seriousness of the problem and the potential role of a specialized court-based program.

Determine Area of Focus

Domestic violence does not involve the same dynamics as family violence. Domestic violence among juveniles seems to mirror adult domestic violence—power and control issues are prevalent. Family violence cases are, in some ways, more complex. Although both juvenile violence and family violence juveniles may have a family history of parental violence and child abuse, it is even more common for family violence offenders to have been, at one time, a victim of child abuse or neglect as reported to social service agencies. Mental health issues are also more common in family violence than in domestic violence. Consequently, interventions should be modeled to meet the specific needs of the offenders and victims.

The Santa Clara County court program offers an example of how the area of focus may evolve over time. Originally, juvenile domestic violence, or teen dating violence or relationship violence, was the social issue of most concern to the court. But when the program was designed, family violence was folded into the mix. A single protocol was designed to address both domestic and family violence. The interventions were based on the Duluth batterer intervention

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model—domestic and family violence offenders participated in group programs.[28] But in 2005 the high volume of cases, combined with a budget crisis and recognition of the differences in the two types of violence, led to family violence cases no longer being included in the specialized probation unit.

While at least some elements of an intervention program can address both domestic and family violence cases—careful consideration should be given to the uniqueness of each type of case. Several questions may guide you in determining the area of focus.

1. Which of the two types of violence is most prevalent in the jurisdiction?
2. What resources are available to address each problem?
3. What is the political climate? Is there greater incentive/motivation to address domestic violence or family violence?
4. What types of local services are available in the areas of domestic and family violence for juveniles?

Success is critical to the endurance of any program. To increase the chance of success, use the strengths of the community to develop an intervention program. On the one hand, if you have excellent service providers in the domestic violence area, then you may want to initially concentrate on domestic violence cases. The advantage of this approach is that the caseload should be manageable, as the volume of cases is small compared to family violence cases. On the other hand, it may make more sense for you to address family violence cases, at least initially. Perhaps your community mental health and social services agencies have stellar programs that can be incorporated into the design of your program. Write down the advantages and disadvantages of each option to determine the approach that best fits your community.

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[28] The Duluth model is based on the feminist theory that patriarchal ideology, which encourages men to control their partners, causes domestic violence.

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Step 2: Build the Team

The second step is to build your team. The courts and probation/community corrections are logical starting points in most communities. Team-building will require participation from key players, which will require an understanding of local legal culture. The goal of the program should be consistency, and to establish that consistency, you'll need a number of agencies operating from the same playbook to achieve necessary buy-in.

Recruit Key Players

Most jurisdictions are now familiar with problem-solving or specialized courts. Certainly, with the widespread use of drug courts nationwide, justice agencies should have some familiarity with specialized courts. However, agencies may be less aware of such courts offered at the juvenile level and may have little knowledge of the extent of domestic and family violence in the youth population. Furthermore, in many jurisdictions, the juvenile courts have been treated as little more than a training ground for inexperienced justice staff. These factors present challenges to building a team that can implement innovative programming at the juvenile level.

Key players—with decision-making powers—must be recruited to support the concept of a specialized program for juvenile domestic and/or family violence. Additionally, the team will need to include line staff who will "champion" the implementation of the program and provide logistical support. In nearly every jurisdiction, judges have a great deal of authority and can recruit local leaders quite easily. In both Santa Clara County and San Franciso counties, a juvenile court judge led the charge to develop a specialized court program. But the courts and judges are not always proactive, so leadership may come from a different corner. For instance, the prosecutor's office may be particularly proactive in some jurisdictions; in others, it might be community corrections that has welcomed innovation. The identity of the leadership agency(ies)

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is less important than their ability to recruit key players. While line staff may embrace a new approach, it is key decision-makers who must lend their support, and quite often office resources, to the implementation of a new program. Judges can play a pivotal role in such efforts. Judges must be involved if cases are referred to the court system and placed on formal probation or informal probation with court supervision (as in San Francisco County).

The goal of any intervention program should be consistency. The juvenile offender must receive a consistent message from each agency that his or her behavior is unacceptable. The victim/survivor should be offered and provided services from all relevant agencies. Agencies that must participate in developing a consistent program include law enforcement, prosecution, public defenders, court, probation/community corrections, victim assistance, and offender services—it is important to have the involvement of both policy-making and line staff from these agencies. But these programs require input from the community as well. In addition to getting agencies on board, outreach to social service providers, batterer intervention programs, mental health agencies, and schools can go a long way toward developing an effective intervention.

Consider Local Legal Culture

There may be pockets of resistance to the development of a domestic or family violence intervention program for juveniles. Some agencies have a history of resistance to new ideas and may oppose the development of a specialized court program for any number of reasons (e.g., budgetary impact, the insignificance of the problem, lack of support of specialized programs). But the primary challenge to the development of problem-solving programs is the traditional adversarial legal culture that pits prosecutors against defense attorneys.

The Santa Clara County and San Francisco County experiments offer a rich contrast in how similar programs can be developed in very different legal cultures. The issue of debate in

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the creation of a specialized program at the juvenile level is one of adjudication and formality. In general, although there are exceptions, the Santa Clara County court program can be labeled a *post-adjudication* model. There is a coherent law enforcement protocol that requires bringing domestic/family violence suspects to Juvenile Hall, the case is typically brought to the district attorney to issue a petition, and the minors tend to be made a ward of the court with formal probation. The court views juvenile domestic and family violence as a very serious issue that needs a strong justice system reaction. In San Francisco, the court favors a *pre-adjudication* model, in which the offender "volunteers" to participate in a program without finding the minor a ward of the court. If the juvenile fulfills the conditions of the court, the petition is dismissed with the minor having no delinquent record for this offense.

Each approach has advantages and disadvantages. There are two aspects that should be seriously considered. First, in the *post-adjudication* model, offenders are required to admit their guilt and take responsibility for their actions—often considered a first step in accepting help in a batterer intervention program. In contrast, the *pre-adjudication* model does not require, and even forbids, such an admission in a court of law. Second, the *post-adjudication* model is more punitive in nature; it is a law enforcement approach that results in an official record that can impact a juvenile's career opportunities.[29] The other alternative—the *pre-adjudication* model—is more therapeutic in nature, although in both models treatment and intervention are integral parts of the court programs. There is no single "right" or "wrong" approach. Each of the programs involves periodic court reviews, high levels of supervision, and treatment/intervention services and is a reflection of the larger justice system context. In general, Santa Clara County

[29] Juvenile records in California may later be sealed or destroyed upon application.

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has long had a tradition of a strong law enforcement and active prosecution of crime[30]; a similar strong law enforcement model simply would not fit into San Francisco's much more liberal legal culture. A careful consideration of the local legal culture, and identifying the advantages and disadvantages of multiple approaches, should help agencies develop a program that has "buy-in" from all key agencies.

Draft a Plan

Finally, gather the team and all the information you've just collected to draft a plan. Start by drafting a mission statement. Then write down all the local agencies and service providers that would contribute to the court program in an ideal world. Provide the data you collected on the anticipated caseload. Describe the types of cases and the current response. Explain why a specialized program is needed and how people will benefit. The "how to" part of the program (staffing, resources, protocol) should be a collaborative effort.

Step 3: Draft a Response Protocol

The third step in the process is to draft a response protocol. But before a protocol is drafted, the team must agree on a specific goal. For example, the Santa Clara County court program's priority is to protect victims and the community, to hold offenders accountable for their actions, and to prevent further violence. The specific goals of the program will guide the response protocols, which should address (1) referral and assessment, (2) specialized investigative and judicial procedures, (3) probation conditions and offender programs, (4) victim services and advocacy, and (5) probation supervision procedures.

[30] Santa Clara County's largest city, San Jose is recognized as the safest large city in the U.S. in terms of crime statistics.

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Establish Procedures to Identify Cases

Local law enforcement agencies are likely to have a protocol that guides their response to adult cases of domestic or family violence. But few agencies explicitly address domestic and family violence that involves a juvenile offender. For an intervention program to work effectively, law enforcement officers must physically transport juvenile offenders to Juvenile Hall or a similar intake center. Informal responses, such as warnings and separating the parties, will be counterproductive to creating a consistent response.

The Santa Clara response protocol for law enforcement requires officers to take minors into custody, not to cite and release them. At Juvenile Hall, the intake officer screens cases by first looking at the relationship between the parties—the parent-child relationship or the dating or prior dating relationship. If the case involves a domestic violence or family violence incident, the intake officer also does an extensive family history assessment in terms of parental family violence or child abuse. If the case qualifies as an act of domestic or family violence, it is sent to the specialized domestic/family violence probation unit for further risk assessment and to the District Attorney's Office for review. The San Francisco County court program works similarly; however, the program does not have a law enforcement protocol that requires officers to bring domestic/family violence offenders to Juvenile Hall. As a result, the San Francisco County court has far fewer cases than the Santa Clara County court, and those cases that come to the attention of the court may be more serious.

The risk assessment tools used in the two counties also vary. In Santa Clara County, the specialized court program has developed an extensive risk assessment protocol specific to the domestic and family violence cases, and all such suspected cases are sent to the specialized probation unit for further assessment. In San Francisco County the probation department uses a

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one-page assessment form that focuses on public safety issues and whether the suspect will fail to appear in court. Rather than relying on a formal instrument, the probation intake officers screen cases by examining the relationship between the parties and the nature of the charge. The screening officer may also use instruments that gauge mental health problems. The classification of a case as domestic or family violence is somewhat subjective and can be overridden by the courts or specialized staff. Additionally, there are no specialized and validated assessment instruments for juvenile domestic or family violence at this time.

Designate Specialized Staff

Specialized court programs require designated staff to provide consistency and efficiency. A response protocol must outline specialized procedures for each agency. Specialization is likely to involve the following agencies: courts, probation/community corrections, prosecutor's office, and the public defender's office. Both Santa Clara County and San Francisco County have specialized probation units and designated prosecutors, defense attorneys, and judges to handle domestic/family violence cases. A standing court order permits information exchange among all agencies collaborating in the court program.

The specialized courts use a dedicated docket to hear the cases. In Santa Clara County, review, jurisdictional, and dispositional hearings occur at a special court session held once every week, with detention hearings held every day. The frequency of hearings will be determined by both the volume of cases and the availability of the judge and courtroom. Timing is also likely to be a factor as juveniles who have been detained must have a detention hearing within two business days. In San Francisco County, the dedicated docket takes place once every two weeks. Consequently, detention hearings occur on a generalized docket, and some cases may not be assigned to the specialized court. While some jurisdictions may not have the caseload or

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resources to warrant specialized court programs, a number of these specialized procedures can be used to address domestic/family violence cases.

Dedicated and specialized staff introduce a cautionary aspect to the program. Staff turnover can have a huge impact on the programs. Most justice agencies use a rotational system in which staff typically spend a relatively short time in one unit before transferring to another. This rotational system can result in an ever-changing team and presents challenges to maintaining the enthusiasm, consistency, and effectiveness of a program. For instance, staff changes, in combination with budget problems, have led to a noticeable change in the momentum of the Santa Clara County and San Francisco County programs—the Santa Clara County court program has been downsized to exclude family violence offenders from the specialized probation caseload, while the San Francisco County program continues to include both.

Establish Probation Conditions and Offender Programs

The protocol should outline typical probation conditions and offender programs that will be used for this population. A sample of typical probation conditions and programs offered in Santa Clara County follows:[31]

- Protective or "stay away" orders;
- Attendance at 26-week batterer intervention programs;
- Frequent court review of the probationer for compliance with probation;
- Detention in a county facility, as well as placement services, long-term California Youth Authority alternative placement, or the California Youth Authority, to ensure safety and accountability;
- Parenting Without Violence classes if the youth has a child;
- Restitution to the victim for any losses related to the offense;

[31] The probation conditions reflect California codes; they may not be options in all states.

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- Prohibition against weapons possession or the presence of weapons in the offender's home;
- Search of the person or place of residence or business of the minor and seizure of any items prohibited by conditions of probation or the law by law enforcement, probation, or the offender's school teachers at any time of the day or night, with or without probable cause, and with or without warrant;
- Counseling and education if substance abuse issues are present and special education accommodations when necessary;
- Drug and alcohol testing of the offender at the request of any police officer or probation officer with or without probable cause, and with or without a warrant;
- Strict curfew, compliance with protective orders, and school attendance to prevent new law violations;
- Mandatory school, employment, or vocational training attendance;
- Fines and fees to hold the offender accountable;
- Gang orders (if applicable) to help prevent new criminal offenses; and
- Psychological or family counseling.

Graduated responses are common in specialized programs, with the intensity of sanctions or positive responses increasing with levels of compliance or noncompliance. The programs emphasize treatment and therapeutic programs. A key factor in developing protocol is the availability of programs in the community to serve domestic and/or family violence offenders and payment for services. In particular, there are very few teen-oriented battering programs, and the literature on the effectiveness of programs is sparse. Domestic violence batterers and family violence offenders were typically placed in the same program, even though the nature of the problem and offender backgrounds are quite different. Santa Clara County began to address this issue in 2005—by no longer assigning family cases to the juvenile domestic violence court program. Instead, family violence cases with a mental health problem are assigned to the mental health court calendar, while those without are assigned to regular court calendars and regular probation units. The problem with this approach is that these family violence offenders may no longer get the interventions specifically geared towards their family violence issues. In terms of

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implementing a new program, the team should assess the strengths and weaknesses of community programs before determining the types of programs that can be offered in an appropriate and effective fashion.

Offender programs must take into consideration gender issues. The vast majority of domestic violence offenders are male. However, in both counties, between 11 and 14 percent of the domestic violence offenders were female. Family violence is more often committed by both male and female juveniles. In San Francisco County and Santa Clara counties, almost 40 percent of family violence offenders were female. The offender programs, all of which include group therapy, must consider whether young men and women have similar issues that can be addressed in either a single group or separate groups. In both counties, male and female offenders are assigned to different batterer's intervention groups. The family violence offenders are also more likely to demonstrate mental illnesses and have a history of abuse as a child—all factors to consider when providing intervention programs to accommodate specific needs.

Payment for services must be addressed in a protocol and can be a major stumbling block. The Santa Clara County and San Francisco County experiences highlight the issue. San Francisco County has a considerable number of resources—many of those resources are provided through county public health funds. Through public health programs, the San Francisco County intervention program has been able to offer batterer intervention counseling at little to no charge to either the justice agencies or the offender. In Santa Clara County, public health does not cover the teen batterers' intervention program and only pays for referrals for mental health issues. Offenders were required to co-pay for each session ($15 per session) of a 26-week program, with the probation department paying for remaining costs of the program. The positive aspect of this arrangement is that minors and their families may be more committed

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to the program because they have to bear a financial burden; the negative aspect is that minors may be dropped from the program or drop out because of inability or unwillingness to pay. In 2005 county budget problems in Santa Clara County resulted in a crisis in the probation department, with service providers being compensated at minimal levels or incurring delays in payment.

There are advantages and disadvantages to requiring teens to pay for treatment and intervention services. In Santa Clara County, payment is seen as a way to gain commitments from offenders and for offenders to take responsibility for their actions. Yet the provision of interventions should not hinge on the ability to pay. In addition, parents or dating partners who have been victimized by a juvenile may end up paying on behalf of the youth. The protocol must take into consideration payment of services and how to accommodate those who cannot afford the fee.

Determine How to Serve Victims

Victim services and advocacy must be addressed in the protocol. In Santa Clara County and San Francisco counties, victims are offered direct and confidential victim advocacy, referrals to support groups and other community resources, legal assistance, a support person at court, and assistance with restitution claims. Specialized probation officers provide an important link to victims. Officers explain the value of protection orders and can help victims file a victims-of-crime claim. Probation officers can also contact the adolescent victim's family to explain the probation conditions and refer the parents to free advocacy services. But similar to adult domestic and family violence, few victims take advantage of such services.

Victim assistance notifies the victims, as required by law in California, of the offender's custody status, the charges, and pending court hearings and refers victims to domestic violence

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advocacy agencies. In Santa Clara County, Legal Assistance to Children and Youth (a non-profit organization run by the Santa Clara County Bar Association) offers free assistance to victims with children with a variety of legal matters, such as paternity, custody, visitation, and support orders. In San Francisco County, adolescent girls are referred to the SAGE program, which assists women and girls who have experienced sexual exploitation, assault, and trauma.

Family violence cases require additional consideration when drafting restitutions protocols. When a case is adjudicated, the offender may be ordered to pay restitution. But what happens when the victim is the teen's sibling or parent? Do the parents end up paying restitution on behalf of their child? While restitution and victims-of-crime claims were created to enhance victims' rights, parents who are victims of violence committed by their children may ultimately be footing their own bill.

Develop Probation Supervision Procedures

The protocol should address the level of probation supervision afforded juvenile domestic and family violence offenders. In the Santa Clara County and San Francisco County programs, intensive supervision is used in these types of cases. Specialized officers enforce protective orders, review monthly reports from the batterer intervention program, provide referrals to rehabilitative, educational, and vocational services, and may make frequent unannounced visits at the offender's home, school, and work. The officers have the authority to make random searches for weapons and illegal drugs and can order drug testing.

Intensive supervision raises staffing issues, as it requires a lighter caseload for probation officers. For instance, in San Francisco County the caseload for the juvenile domestic violence probation unit is capped at 26 teens; in Santa Clara County, it is capped at 35 per probation officer. Specialized caseloads may prove difficult to maintain during lean budget years. In

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2005, Santa Clara County faced a budget crisis that led to a major staffing shortage in the probation department. In response, the probation department eliminated specialized probation officers to monitor family violence offenders, choosing instead to mix these cases into the general caseload handled by the geographic units.

Review Protocols Annually

The response protocols should be reviewed annually. Political climate, laws, staffing, and budgets change on an annual basis, and the protocols should be reviewed and modified as appropriate. All of the agencies should come together to review current operations and revisiting each aspect of the protocol. An annual review should also head off unilateral actions taken by a single agency that can disrupt or halt the entire program. While the annual review might be seen as a rather tedious task, it provides the opportunity for "cross-pollination" among agencies and community groups, especially those that rarely work together. Perspectives from different disciplines strengthen policies, procedures, and protocols and provide opportunities for team-building and an awareness of practices of other groups and disciplines.

Step 4: Provide Services

The fourth step in the implementation of an intervention program is to provide services. Services can be provided by an assortment of agencies, such as probation, victim assistance, and community-based service providers. The important factor here is that services are evidence-based—they are based on treatment/intervention literature, led by competent professionals, and appropriate to the clients they serve. In addition, there has to be funding to provide services.

Examine the Content of Programs

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The intervention programs should distinguish domestic violence from family violence. There are very few programs designed for juveniles, which limits the ability of the implementation team to set standards but not to specify desired outcomes. However, there is an abundance of information available on adult-based batterer intervention programs. Service providers that address power and control themes and modify the batterer intervention platform for teenagers are appropriate to domestic violence. In Santa Clara County, the batterer intervention program was originally based on the Duluth model. In San Francisco County, the program derives from the MOVE (Men Overcoming Violence) curriculum, which is an adult domestic violence program. In addition, the San Francisco County program works with SAGE to provide a life skills class for girls. Generally, the court-based programs are heavily oriented toward treatment/intervention services for offenders. Different providers offer special services, such as Spanish-language programs for domestic violence offenders only.

The greatest challenge may be to develop meaningful programs that address the problem of family violence. A particular concern is that family violence is often a function of the family unit—intervention should include family members, not just the juvenile. In fact, about four of every ten family violence offenders have a history of being abused as a child. In addition, about two of every three family violence offenders have a history of mental illness. Consequently, the provision of services in family violence cases could involve an array of programs that address the larger family unit and provide mental health counseling.

Finally, the ability to provide meaningful services may be compounded by the language and cultural heterogeneity of the community served. English may not be the native language of either victims or offenders; and the larger family unit may have limited English proficiency. In

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addition, there may be cultural gender stereotyping that may impact the effectiveness of a program that is designed without the diversity of the community in mind.

Secure Funding

Services cannot take place without some level of funding. The budgetary impact on justice agencies, as well as cost-benefits ratios, have not been measured by either the Santa Clara County or San Francisco County programs. In Santa Clara County, the Board of Supervisors originally funded additional probation officers for the specialized domestic/family violence unit, the Superior Court agreed to a weekly domestic/family violence calendar, and a grant from the state through San Jose State University funded some of the interventions and program evaluations. Subsequent loss of additional county and state grant funds, combined with a budget crisis, has led to difficulties in sustaining the full original program. In San Francisco County, internal funds were used to shift resources to the specialized court and caseloads. In addition, San Francisco County has been particularly innovative working with the public health sector to assist with the provision of services, especially in family violence cases.

It is reasonable to expect offenders to pay for some level of services. Few juvenile offenders and their families can afford to pay the entire cost of a program. While some level of offender co-pay may be required, a sliding scale must be used to ensure that all offenders have access to the services. The bulk of the program will have to be paid for through local funds or grants. Grants work very well in the short term, especially with start-up costs. But most grants are limited to a short amount of time, with the requirement that local agencies will have to develop a sustainability plan for the program to continue beyond the life of the grant.

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Step 5: Communicate Regularly

Regular communication between participating organizations is necessary to maintain the integrity and consistency of the program. As staff rotate in and out of the program, regularly scheduled meetings and events among staff provide a training ground as well as an opportunity to refine operations. In Santa Clara County, monthly meetings are convened by the judge, with regular attendance expected.[32] Attendance at the meetings has declined with staff changes but has recently experienced rejuvenation. In San Francisco County, court conferences are held prior to the biweekly court sessions to discuss each case. The court conferences include the judge, the district attorney, public defender, and probation officer. San Francisco County also has a tradition of an annual "retreat" to discuss the program.

Communication can occur at the programmatic or individual case level. Key agencies and service providers must be represented at meetings that discuss program operations. Meetings that focus on individual cases are best conducted in court conferences between those individuals serving on each case. The advantage of the specialized team is that court conferences can be held efficiently because all of the cases on the specialized docket are handled by the same people. The important factor is that the program offers a regular means to communicate. In addition, the meetings must include key members from the participating agency. The program will decline and staff will lose enthusiasm when an agency drops out of regular meetings or sends staff with little knowledge of the program to represent the agency. Those with decision-making authority need to be involved. The meetings must have an agenda and work to build a collaborative team.

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[32] Participation includes all probation officers assigned to the specialized unit, representatives from the district attorneys and public defenders offices handling the domestic/family violence cases, court personnel, all service

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Step 6: Train Staff

The final step is to train staff. There are a number of national, state, and local training programs that address domestic and/or family violence, but few address violence at the juvenile level. The Santa Clara County and San Francisco County programs primarily depend on internal agency training to maintain the quality of the program. The implementation of a new program requires a core of dedicated staff who have participated in highly regarded training programs. But training levels are very difficult to maintain as new staff rotate into specialized positions. Therefore, a mentorship program may be the most effective way to train staff. An internal mentorship program takes advantage of the skills and experiences of seasoned professionals and is a cost-effective way to train staff in the midst of deficient training budgets. In addition, staff should develop benchbooks and guides to retain program consistency.

Step 7: Evaluate the Program

Evaluation is an important tool. A properly conducted independent evaluation of the court program serves three essential purposes. First, the evaluation is an internal tool that can be used to refine and improve program operations. Second, the evaluation adds a level of accountability and allows staff to measure performance over time. Third, the evaluation serves as a valuable funding tool that can be used to justify the existence of a program and secure external funding.

The Santa Clara County program was established with an evaluation component—the evaluation was carried out by researchers from San Jose State University. The San Francisco program has only recently been evaluated by a research team led by the National Center for State

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providers, Victim Witness staff, juvenile hall, ranch and camp counselors, school officials, victim advocacy service groups, and researchers from San Jose State University.

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Courts. Program staff should work with independent evaluators to determine (1) specific measurable goals, (2) sources of data, and (3) factors that will affect goal attainment. In addition to collecting quantifiable data (e.g., number of probation violations, new arrests), the evaluation team should collect qualitative information from case files, which contain contextual information that may help explain program outcomes.

The evaluation component should focus on several areas, such as offender and victim backgrounds, the nature of violence, probation conditions and violations, and subsequent arrests and convictions. Ideally, a domestic/family violence court program will result in a lower recidivism rate in comparison to domestic/family violence offenders who did not participate in the court program. Realistically, lowering the recidivism rate may be an impractical goal for the simple reason that many of the program participants have long histories of delinquency and come from abusive or neglectful families—factors strongly associated with recidivism.

Conclusion

Both the Santa Clara County and the San Francisco County specialized juvenile domestic and family violence courts have proven to be innovative programs addressing a serious social issue. Case information demonstrates that many of the offenders assigned to these courts come from families with a history of parental domestic violence, child abuse, criminal behaviors, and substance abuse. Many of the minors have mental health issues. Most have prior histories of delinquency, and many already have children at a very young age. While the background of these minors makes it very difficult to effect change, the evaluation conducted by the National Center for State Courts found that the specialized court program had a deterrent effect for first time offenders and those that completed the entire court ordered programs. Minors with prior delinquency were less likely to complete the program, and more likely to recidivate.

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In order to break "the cycle of violence" it is important to initiate programs that address the pressing issues of juvenile domestic violence (teen relationship violence) and family violence. The two counties have found similar, yet different ways of doing so. In constructing such specialized courts, it is important to be cognizant of the problem of "casting too wide a net," especially in the family violence cases which often could be seen as status offenses (being beyond the control of parents). Our results showed that the interventions were most beneficial for younger and first time offenders. Care must be taken to initiate programs with age appropriate services and graduated sanctions.