



City and County of San Francisco

Department on the Status of Women

Mayor Gavin Newsom

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THE COURAGE TO CHANGE

Final Report of the Domestic Violence Victim Safety and Accountability Audit Implementation Committee

Executive Summary

May 2010

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I. Background

The Justice and Courage Oversight Panel, a committee of the Commission on the Status of Women since 2002, seeks to create a seamless criminal justice response to domestic violence. To this end, the Oversight Panel conducted an audit of the system in 2006 using highly collaborative research methods to discover gaps in San Francisco's response to domestic violence. In March 2007, the Oversight Panel issued the report *Safety for All: Identifying and Closing the Gaps in San Francisco's Domestic Violence Criminal Justice Response*, identifying 5 significant areas for continued work.

- **Gap 1: Risk Assessment**
- **Gap 2: Stalking**
- **Gap 3: Language and Cultural Competency**
- **Gap 4: Batterer Accountability**
- **Gap 5: Complex of Risk**

The Audit Team developed 68 recommendations for the criminal justice departments and other City agencies to help close the gaps identified in the report. Some recommendations were system-wide and others were department-specific. The Oversight Panel created the **Audit Implementation Committee** to work collaboratively with criminal justice departments and community providers to develop innovative solutions to the gaps identified in the Audit.

Since the release of *Safety for All*, the Committee has many success stories to its credit. Though the work must continue in order to close all the gaps, the full report details the courage of agencies and the power of collaboration, as well as the dedication of the San Francisco community to create a safer city.

II. Major Accomplishments of the Audit Implementation Committee

A. New Protocols Developed

Stalking Protocols Implemented: All criminal justice departments have developed new internal protocols to ensure that stalking cases are identified as such and directed to the appropriate channels for investigation and prosecution. The Department of Emergency Management programmed 2 new call

types, 646 for stalking and 646DV for domestic violence stalking, and trained all dispatchers on their use. New police officers now receive training about stalking at the Police Academy and during officer training courses. Additionally, the District Attorney's Office restarted the Stalking Task Force, which meets quarterly with criminal justice and community participants to train about stalking and analyze current trends. The District Attorney's Office also released the Stalking Resource Guide in 2009 to provide tips and resources to victims and advocates.

Improved Batterer Accountability Measures: The Adult Probation Department significantly updated and strengthened its protocols to ensure batterer accountability. This included instituting new mechanisms for communication between batterer intervention programs, the Courts, and Adult Probation Department staff; developing a field protocol for officers to use when making site visits; improving data tracking measures to analyze trends among probationers; and instituting a more rigorous evaluation component for batterer intervention programs to carry out with each probationer.

Court Protocols Reviewed: The Domestic Violence Court Judge developed a bench book for new judges to understand the protocols for domestic violence cases, distributed to bench officers in 2009. Additionally, the Domestic Violence Court Committee held several community meetings in 2008 and 2009 to assess San Francisco's compliance with the Administrative Office of the Courts' *Recommended Guidelines and Practices for Improving the Administration of Justice in Domestic Violence Cases*.

B. Assessing and Addressing Risk

Premise Hazard Alert: The Department of Emergency Management collaborated with the Police Department to implement a Premise Hazard flag in the dispatch system to alert responding police officers about potentially high risk crime scenes.

Risk Assessment Training for Police Officers: Victim Advocates from La Casa de las Madres assigned to the Police Department's Domestic Violence Response Unit (DVRU) are certified in the Jacquelyn Campbell Lethality Assessment tool and have begun training police officers in the use of this tool.

Probationer Assessment Tool: Adult Probation adopted the Correctional Assessment and Intervention System (CAIS), which identifies probationer needs and risks, and officers perform the assessments during the intake session for each probationer.

Safety Measures at Family Court: The Family Court developed a partnership with the Sheriff's Department to provide escorts to victims when entering or leaving the court. Additionally, the Family Court adopted a 15-minute hold policy to allow the petitioner to leave 15 minutes ahead of the respondent to promote safety at the Court.

C. Training Practices

Domestic Violence Response Cross-Training Institute: The Department on the Status of Women received funding to develop and conduct the Domestic Violence Response Cross-Training Institute, training over 430 criminal justice personnel over a 2-year period through an innovative curriculum that addressed the gaps found in the Audit.

Bridges to Freedom Language Fluency Project: The Department on the Status of Women, in partnership with the Office of Civic Engagement and Immigrant Affairs, conducted the language fluency training program *Bridges to Freedom* in 2010 to train City personnel in legal and domestic violence terminology in Chinese and Spanish. This program was funded by the Zellerbach Foundation and the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Collaborative Criminal Justice Trainings: In 2009, the District Attorney's Office partnered with the Police Department to create and conduct a 4-hour training program about responding to scenes of domestic violence. This training, presented at 2 of the 10 police stations to date, clarified issues of evidence collection to assist with prosecution of domestic violence cases.

Community-Based Trainings Offered: The Mayor's Office of Housing received a 3-year federal grant to engage a community provider in training 500 police officers and other criminal justice staff about domestic violence in later life. Additionally, many community-based providers routinely provide free training to criminal justice agencies about domestic violence and their services.

D. Technology and Resources

Language Interpretation Tools: The City Administrator secured a master contract with Language Line Services, a highly-rated translation service that can supply translators in over 175 languages. This contract pairs with a donation of mobile phones from AT&T in 2007 that officers can use in the field to connect with Language Line Services when responding to a victim who is limited-English proficient or monolingual. All criminal justice departments now have clear protocols for ensuring that limited-English proficient survivors of domestic violence receive language-appropriate services.

Community Resources and Referrals: Through the Family Violence Council, the Department on the Status of Women has created and distributed a Family Violence Resource Sheet. This guide will be distributed to each of the criminal justice agencies whenever it is updated to better link first responders with community providers.

III. Recommendations to be Implemented

Of all the recommendations remaining to be fully implemented, the Audit Implementation Committee considers the following recommendations essential for increasing the safety of victims and the accountability of batterers. Progress on implementation has been made on a number of these remaining high-priority recommendations, but there remains work to do to bridge the gaps in safety. Though some may be complex and beyond the immediate scope of the Committee or the Oversight Panel, the following recommendations have immediate implications for the safety of victims, and should be addressed within the next 12 to 18 months.

A. Create a City-wide Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

Though not a recommendation of the Audit Report, Mayor Gavin Newsom's Executive Directive issued in July 2007 recommended creating a City-wide MOU to formalize the City's response to domestic violence. This document would institutionalize certain reforms that have been implemented, and address high-level issues that bridge multiple agencies.

B. Create a Written Protocol for Emergency Protective Orders (EPOs)

Though both the Courts and the Police Department have protocols for the issuance and data entry of EPOs, there is no protocol for communication between agencies for times when problems arise. Additionally, though the Courts have a San Francisco Restraining Order Database, the Police Department does not have access due to technology limitations. It is imperative for victim safety that these issues be addressed.

C. Create a Comprehensive, System-wide Stalking Protocol

This comprehensive protocol could be developed either as part of the Stalking Task Force or by a separate group, and should include a systematized way of ensuring that all identified stalking victims are identified as such despite the level of crime charged (e.g., misdemeanor or felony) and are connected with community-based advocacy services.

D. Ensure Criminal Justice Staff Receive Comprehensive Domestic Violence Training

All criminal justice agencies must work together to identify and allocated adequate funding for quality domestic violence, stalking, and cultural competency training. Trainings must be ongoing, and should addresses domestic violence, cultural competency, serving monolingual or limited-English proficient victims, underserved and underrepresented communities, and LGBTQ victims of domestic violence and stalking.

E. Ensure the Safety of Victims at the Hall of Justice

For victims to be safe at the Hall of Justice, agencies must provide confidential and secure interview rooms for the Police Department's DVRU and the District Attorney's Office, including space for victim advocates to meet with victims, and safe waiting areas at the Domestic Violence Court and the DVRU.

F. Refurbish the Domestic Violence Court

Though some refurbishments and repairs have been made, the Domestic Violence Court at the Hall of Justice continues to have significant structural problems. Though the Courts have stopped any facilities projects for the next 2 years, this recommendation is a top priority due to the message the disrepair sends to both victims and perpetrators.

IV. Conclusion

The success of the Audit Implementation Committee depended upon open communication, cross-departmental cooperation, and the support of the Mayor, Department Heads, and other stakeholders. The degree to which departments have been willing to open their doors to inspection and critique and the trust displayed by the staff and administration of these departments has been of unquestionable importance to the Committee's work. The guidance of the Justice and Courage Oversight Panel and the leadership of the Department on the Status of Women have carried the partnerships to new levels. All players in this work are to be commended and honored for their dedication to creating a safer City and a stronger system of accountability.

The remaining recommendations merit the same dedicated response. The Committee charges the Oversight Panel and the City and County of San Francisco with making the safety of survivors of domestic violence and the accountability of those who batter a priority. Though resources are limited, San Francisco now has a strong framework to build upon to address the needs of the City's most vulnerable: survivors of domestic violence.