Program Report Card: Domestic Violence Prosecution (Division of Criminal Justice)

Quality of Life Result: Allow for Connecticut residents to live lives free from fear and abuse.

Contribution to result: Utilizing the best practices of vertical prosecution, along with a coordinated community response, the DCJ breaks the cycle of violence by holding offenders accountable, monitoring them closely; and ultimately increasing the safety of victims, their families and the community.

Partners: A coordinated community response ensures that DCJ work with many partners, especially Judges, our local state's attorneys (prosecutors), both community based and state advocates, public defenders and private attorneys, both state and local law enforcement agencies, family relations officers, DCF case workers and investigators, probation and parole officers, DMHAS mental health diversionary personnel, and Judicial Department contracted program providers.

Data Development Agenda: Track cases and compile data by use of a comprehensive, electronic criminal case management system.

Story behind the baseline: Currently the only way to perform statistical analysis of performance measures is by hand research of written records, working with data collected by separate agencies for other purposes, or relying on dated academic studies.

Proposed action to turn the curve: Fund and implement an electronic case management system that captures criminal investigation and prosecution data, allowing DCJ to measure the success of programs, allocate appropriate resources, and gauge the overall effectiveness of its operations.

Performance measure 1: Number of superior courts (Part B) utilizing vertical prosecution and coordinated community response.

Story behind the baseline: There have been no recent studies of results before and after domestic violence docket specialization. A study commissioned by the USDOJ, OVAW (2001)[i] examined the effectiveness of the Bridgeport Domestic Violence Docket before and after all aspects of best practices were implemented (dedicated docket, prosecutor, judge, team meetings, and victim centered prosecution.) That study, published in July of 2001, showed that the domestic violence conviction rate went from 8% before best practices to 32% with all aspects of best practices, in less than a year. There is a need for a current, comprehensive study of how Connecticut adjudicates domestic violence crimes.

Proposed action to turn the curve: Work with the Judicial Branch to increase the number of dedicated domestic violence dockets utilizing best practices so that Connecticut's criminal justice response to

domestic violence crimes is consistent and effective.

Performance measure 2: Successful completion by offenders of court ordered batterer intervention / behavior modification programs.

Story behind the baseline: Successful completion of court ordered batterer intervention programs reduces recidivism. Judicial monitoring, as seen on dedicated domestic violence dockets, ensures success through sanctions for non compliance. A 2005 study prepared by the UCONN School of Social Work[ii] showed that men who successfully discharged from the 26 week EVOLVE program in Bridgeport had a 12 month recidivism rate of 16.6%, as compared to 41.7% for men who did not complete the program.

Proposed action to turn the curve: Work to establish specialized dockets and prosecutors. Work with the Judicial Branch to identify treatment programs to meet the needs of special offender populations. Exercise judicial oversight of offenders in programs by structuring sentences that keep offenders before the court for longer periods, thus monitoring their progress in programs.

Performance Measure 3: Increase digital photographic evidence available for use in prosecution.

Story behind the baseline: DCJ worked with OPM to obtain funding for 400 Domestic and Sexual Violence Investigation Kits[iii] to be distributed to 27 law enforcement agencies. The Kits (including digital cameras) were developed by multi-disciplinary subject experts, and should increase consistency of investigations, increase the amount of evidence collected, and facilitate victim accessibility to resources. Photographic evidence can speak for victims when they are unable to speak for themselves. The program will be evaluated with a series of surveys completed by law enforcement supervisors, first responders and prosecutors.

Proposed action to turn the curve: The 27 agencies will receive their kits in January 2010. Because of an overwhelming response, additional DOJ - Violence Against Women funding has been identified to expand the program later this year.

---

[i] STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN – Project Evaluation, July 2001, Lori K. Sudderth, The Center for Applied Research & Evaluation Inc. Funded by USDOJ/OVAW WF-VX0009

[ii] ADVANCED ADVOCACY INTERVENTION – Final Report, April 2005, Dr. Elanor Lyons, UCONN School of Social Work, funded by USDOJ/NIJ/OJP.

[iii] USDOJ/OVAW Grant # 2005-VW601DCJ1