

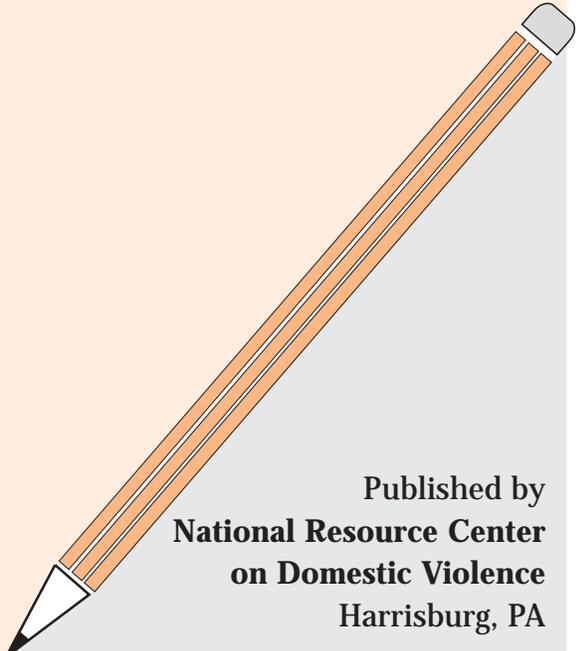


A Practical Guide to Evaluating Domestic Violence Coordinating Councils

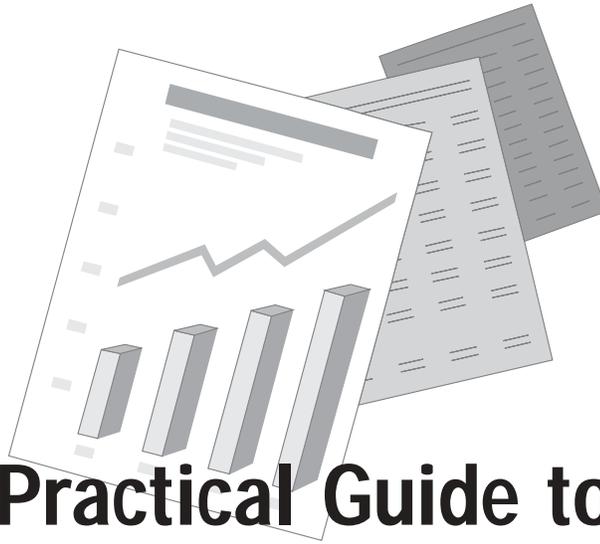
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An illustration of a pencil, oriented diagonally from the bottom right towards the top left. The pencil is orange with a white eraser at the top and a sharp lead tip at the bottom. It is positioned in the bottom right corner of the page, overlapping the publisher information.

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Published by

National Resource Center on Domestic Violence

National Resource Center on Domestic Violence

The National Resource Center on Domestic Violence (NRCDV) was founded in 1993 as a key component in a national network of domestic violence resource centers established through the Violence Against Women Act and funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

As a source of comprehensive information, training and technical assistance on community response to and prevention of domestic violence, the NRCDV supports the capacity of organizations and individuals working to end violence in the lives of women and their children. The NRCDV's first priority is to proactively support the work of national, state and local domestic violence programs. It also places an emphasis on increasing organizational responsiveness to the needs identified by communities of color and other traditionally underserved populations. The NRCDV is a project of the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence, a pioneering leader in policy development, training and technical assistance in the movement to end domestic violence.

This paper is one of a series prepared for the Public Education Technical Assistance (PE) Project of the NRCDV. The PE Project was initiated with funding from the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to support the public education efforts of state coalitions, community programs and others working to end domestic violence. A major activity of the project includes coordination of a series of demonstration projects to develop new approaches for domestic violence public education.



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The points of view expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the CDC.

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The contents of this publication may be reprinted with the following acknowledgement:

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A Practical Guide to Evaluating Domestic Violence Coordinating Councils, by Nicole E. Allen, Ph.D., and Leslie A. Hagen, J.D.

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MDVPTB is pleased to share this manual with others.

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Introduction

Domestic Violence Coordinating Councils, Task Forces and Committees (herein referred to as councils) have become common vehicles for the implementation of a coordinated community response to domestic violence. Numerous stakeholders from a variety of community sectors have come together to increase women's safety and batterer accountability by improving relationships and linkages between the agencies responding to domestic violence, educating community members about domestic violence, and implementing new policies and programs.

While councils are becoming increasingly common, we still know very little about how effective they are in creating a coordinated community response. In fact, only a few councils systematically evaluate their activities and effectiveness in creating desired changes in the community. There is a good reason for this – evaluation is challenging! Evaluating coordinated community response efforts is especially challenging given that the responses communities develop are often multi-faceted and involve change across *many* organizations and individuals.

The goal of this manual is to make evaluation a little easier by providing some practical strategies for evaluating the work of your council. For the purposes of this manual, we focus on four critical parts of council effectiveness. These are: 1) the quality of the *internal working climate* of the council (e.g., the degree to which council members have a shared mission), 2) the quality of the council *infrastructure* (e.g., the degree to which the council formed clear goals and objectives), 3) the breadth and nature of council *activities* (e.g., what activities has the council undertaken?), and 4) the shorter-term *outcomes* associated with the councils' collective work (e.g., to what degree has the council improved communication among key stakeholders?).

While we provide you with some information about how to approach evaluation questions and how to analyze the information you collect, this manual is not meant to be an exhaustive overview of how to evaluate collaborative efforts.¹ It is meant to provide you with ideas about how and where to start and is the only resource available so far that focuses specifically on councils responding to domestic violence. Our hope is that this manual will provide a springboard for your evaluation initiatives. Remember, every council is different and there is *no* single way to evaluate your work. While we provide specific examples in this manual, they are meant only as a guide. We hope that you will use this information in a way that best supports current efforts in your community. Also, please see the end of the manual for additional resources regarding evaluating the work of councils.

Finally, we would love to hear from you. We welcome your questions and/or feedback. Please fill out and send us the form provided at the end of the manual. It is our goal to update this manual in the future to make it more useful for you.

¹ A list of other evaluation resources is provided at the end of the manual. Please note that some of them are available via the Internet at no cost.

Organization of the Manual

This manual is organized in three sections.

- ◆ Part I: *Evaluating Domestic Violence Coordinating Councils Effectiveness*, provides you with a brief introduction to evaluation (Chapter 1), a brief overview of why evaluation is important (Chapter 2), and more extensive detail regarding the types of information you could gather to examine the effectiveness of your council (Chapter 3). The goal of Part I is to give you specific ideas about how to conceptualize and evaluate council effectiveness.
- ◆ Part II: *Focusing Your Evaluation*, introduces you to an important tool called the logic model (Chapter 4). Logic models help you link your desired longer-term outcomes to shorter-term outcomes and specific council activities. The goal of Part II is to provide you with a tool for focusing an evaluation of the effectiveness of your council.
- ◆ Part III: *Collecting, Analyzing and Presenting Data*, provides you with information about issues you should consider when conducting an evaluation (Chapter 5), the “nuts and bolts” of collecting data (Chapter 6), and how to analyze and present your data (Chapter 7).

PART I

Evaluating Domestic Violence Coordinating Council Effectiveness

Chapter 1 – What is Evaluation?

Chapter 2 – Why Evaluate Coordinating Councils?

Evaluation Provides Checks and Balances

Evaluation Highlights Next Steps

Evaluation Fulfills an Ethical Responsibility

Chapter 3 – What Can be Evaluated to Examine Council Effectiveness?

Evaluating the Internal Working Climate of the Council

Evaluating the Adequacy of the Council Infrastructure

Evaluating Council Activities

Evaluating the Outcomes of Council's Collective Work

Chapter 1

What Is Evaluation?

To begin, we want to make sure that you have a basic understanding of evaluation. Evaluations can take many different forms and have many different levels of complexity. Our goal in this manual is to present you with evaluation tools that you can use in your communities even without the assistance of an evaluator. We feel such a resource is important given that often councils may receive a mandate or develop a desire to evaluate their work, but may not have adequate resources to do so. Before proceeding, it is important to become familiar with a few terms that we will use throughout the next sections.

Evaluation refers to the **systematic investigation** of the merit, worth or significance of a project or effort (adapted from Milstein & Wetterhall, 2001).

Outcome Evaluation assesses the **impact** of your efforts on the community. Outcome evaluation helps you monitor what you are achieving. Outcome evaluation addresses questions like:

- ◆ To what degree have we achieved our goal to _____?
- ◆ What changes have resulted from our actions?

Process Evaluation assesses how your program or initiative is being implemented and the degree to which your program or initiative is being implemented as intended. This might include asking questions like (adapted from Sullivan, 1998)²:

- ◆ What (exactly) are we doing?
- ◆ How are we doing it?
- ◆ Who is receiving our services?
- ◆ Who is **not** receiving our services?
- ◆ How satisfied are program participants (or service providers, law enforcement, etc.)?

Asking questions that are “process oriented” allows you to carefully examine the connection between what you are offering and what outcomes you hope to achieve.

Shorter-term Outcomes are those changes that occur during a shorter period of time or those that may lead to desired longer-term changes.

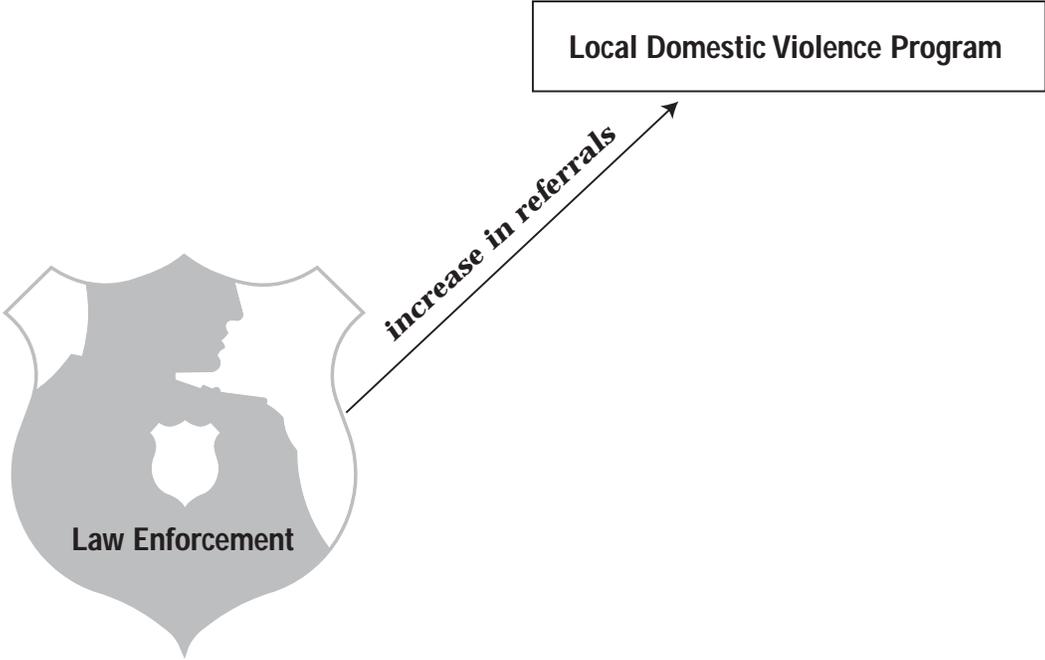
Longer-term Outcomes are those changes that take a longer time to come to fruition, but that typically reflect what you hope will ultimately occur.

For example, your council might have the longer-term outcome of increasing safety for survivors of domestic violence and their children. One way you hope to achieve this longer-term outcome is by improving relationships and communication among those involved in the community response to ending domestic violence (shorter-term outcome).

² This material was adapted from the publication, *Outcome Evaluation Strategies for Domestic Violence Service Programs: A Practical Guide*, published by the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence and authored by Cris M. Sullivan, Ph.D., 1998.

Indicators are those areas of change that will help you identify the degree to which your efforts are having an impact. They should be **measurable, clearly defined and accessible**. Examining indicators of shorter-term outcomes is more realistic when you are evaluating your own work without the help of an outside evaluator. Identifying and examining the indicators of longer-term outcomes is resource-intensive and may be beyond the scope of your internal efforts.

For example, **one indicator** of improving relationships and communication among those involved in the community response to ending domestic violence might be an **increased number of referrals from law enforcement to the local domestic violence shelter program**. That is, this increase in referrals would be one indicator that agencies are working together more effectively.



Chapter 2

Why Evaluate Coordinating Councils?

Many times practitioners feel overwhelmed by the thought of evaluating their work. This is not surprising given that evaluation is increasingly a requirement of funding, but adequate resources are not always provided for evaluation.

Evaluation can feel even more challenging for coordinating councils creating a coordinated community response to domestic violence because they are working to create change in **many different agencies** and **across multiple community sectors** (e.g., criminal justice system, religious community, health care system). This may necessitate a focus in multiple areas or on the relationships between organizations, which can be more challenging.

As we said in Chapter 1, evaluation is a way of systematically evaluating your actions and accomplishments. Really, we are **always** evaluating our efforts. We make comments like, “That did not work!” or “We should do this again, it was a success!” But, how do you know? How can you be certain that your **impressions** are accurate? Evaluation is simply a more formalized, step-by-step process of looking at what you are doing, how you are doing it and what you are achieving. While there are costs associated with doing an evaluation, we believe the benefits far outweigh them. Here are a few of the ways we think this happens.

Evaluation Provides Checks and Balances

First, when you are systematic in your evaluation, you learn more about what is **really** happening. Sometimes we think we are offering a particular service one way, but when we take a closer look, we see that this service was not being implemented as intended. Evaluating your work provides a system of checks and balances. That is, it becomes clearer where your initiatives are in place as intended and where they are not.

Evaluation Highlights Next Steps

Second, evaluation provides you with a lot of information about what should stay the same and what should change. So, your next steps become more obvious. In fact, the results from your evaluation may help you prioritize goals and the allocation of resources when you have multiple tasks to complete.

Evaluation Fulfills an Ethical Responsibility

Finally, we have an ethical responsibility to evaluate our work. Otherwise, we do not know how the policies and practices we are implementing affect the lives of survivors and the overall incidence of domestic violence. In a way, we are all experimenting with new programs and policies without a firm knowledge base about what works and what does not. Evaluating our work provides us with critical information about how to proceed in our communities.

Example

In Peaceful Valley, the local coordinating council was focusing their efforts on increasing survivors' access to orders of protection. Here is an example of how it used an evaluation to measure the effectiveness of the order of protection program it put into place.

Evaluating an Order of Protection Program in Peaceful Valley

The Peaceful Valley Domestic Violence Coordinating Council was interested in the effect of a special program designed to assist survivors with filing orders of protection in their community. They wanted to know how effective the program was (outcome evaluation), but also to understand more about how the program was working (process evaluation). They decided to evaluate the following: 1) who uses the services of the office (process), 2) the referral source to the new program (process), 3) how often orders of protection of those served by the new program are granted (outcome), and 4) differences in the number of orders filed and granted prior to the program beginning and one year after its inception (outcome). Gathering this information would highlight how well the office is working, but it would also highlight where things work and where they do not.

Council members found that that the program was only serving survivors who first had contact with the shelter or police. They also found that they had a steady stream of referrals from police officers and the shelter program, but that individuals within the County Clerk's Office never referred anyone. Regarding their effectiveness, they found that 87% of survivors using the program were granted orders of protection and that there was a 35% increase in the volume of orders being processed by the courts, and that overall orders were being accepted at a higher rate than they were in the year prior to the office opening (77% compared to 43%). This evaluation suggests that those who are accessing the services offered by this program are likely to successfully get an order of protection. However, the process evaluation highlights that there may be a whole segment of the community that is not served because they have not come into contact with the police or the local shelter program. As a result, the council decided to focus on community education efforts to publicize the office and reach a broader group of survivors. The council also decided to revisit the protocols in place in the Clerk's Office to attempt to increase the referral rate from that source.

Please note this is only an illustration, **not** a presentation of actual data.

Chapter 3

What Can Be Evaluated to Examine Council Effectiveness?

There are many ways that you can track the degree to which your council is effective. As you know from your own work, there are many different parts of a coordinated community response that can be evaluated. Given that many communities are relying on coordinating councils, task forces and committees to coordinate their efforts, this manual focuses on **four parts of council effectiveness**:

- 1) the quality of the council's **internal working climate**,
- 2) the quality of the council's **infrastructure**,
- 3) the breadth and nature of council **activities**, and
- 4) the outcomes associated with the council's **activities**.

Evaluating the Internal Working Climate of the Council

The internal working climate of a council refers to the nature and quality of relationships among members of the council and the degree to which the council membership has developed a shared mission. For the purposes of this manual, we focus on three important aspects of the council's internal working climate, including: the presence of a shared mission, the degree to which all members influence the direction of the council and the decisions made, and the degree to which conflict is handled effectively on the council.

Why Focus on the Internal Working Climate of your Council?

- ◆ Research suggests that the internal working climate that councils foster is an important part of their success (Allen, 2001a). For example, there is evidence to suggest that councils handling conflict effectively are more likely to generate creative solutions (Gray, 1989; Jones & Bodtker, 1998), encourage needed changes (Bitter, 1977), and avoid “groupthink” (Burnett, 1993).
- ◆ Addressing your council's internal working climate is a part of process evaluation because it tells you how your council is functioning. Understanding your council's climate can provide you with important information about how council members feel about your setting. You might find that many members do not feel that conflict is handled effectively or that they do not view the council as having a shared mission. This provides important information about where changes can be made to improve your council's functioning. It is essential that this information be collected in a way that maximizes confidentiality so that all members feel free to share their feelings about the internal climate of the council.

Sample Evaluation Questions

- 1) To what degree do members feel their input informs council decision-making?
- 2) To what degree has your council developed a shared mission?
- 3) To what degree are disagreements handled effectively when they arise?

Sample Evaluation Question 1

To what degree do members feel their input informs council decision-making?

As part of an evaluation of your council's internal climate, you can assess the degree to which members view the decision-making and direction-setting of councils as **shared** (i.e., decisions about goals and activities incorporate input from all members). Table 1 provides a set of statements regarding the degree to which the council includes all members' input. To assess the degree to which this is true of your council, you can ask members to rate your council and then calculate the average score to examine the overall rating. It is important to pay attention to the range of scores members provide. If it is very large, this would indicate that members do not agree about the degree to which decision-making is shared. It may be important to address this difference because it could reflect that certain members do not feel they have adequate input on council decisions.

Table 1: Sample Items to Assess Shared Influence in Decision-Making

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The input of all active council members influences decisions the council makes.	1	2	3	4	5	6
When making decisions, the council is responsive to all of the viewpoints represented on the council.	1	2	3	4	5	6
The council does not move forward until all input is heard.	1	2	3	4	5	6
If a council member shares a dissenting opinion at council meetings, his/her perspective is considered important.	1	2	3	4	5	6
The general membership has real decision-making control over the policies and actions of the council.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Sample Evaluation Question 2

To what degree has your council developed a shared mission?

Finding common ground, or developing a shared mission, is often identified as an important part of successful collaboration (Butterfoss, Goodman, & Wandersman, 1993). Table 2 provides you with a set of items that can help you assess the degree to which your council has a shared mission. Again, you can look at the mean rating of your council and also look at the range of scores. You might find that some members agree that the council has a shared mission while others do not. Paying attention to the range of scores is particularly important, because your council has probably not achieved a shared mission if members do not agree.

Table 2: Sample Items to Assess the Presence of a Shared Mission

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My council has developed a mission that is shared and supported by all council members.	1	2	3	4	5	6
Council members have a shared vision regarding what changes are needed in the community's response to domestic violence.	1	2	3	4	5	6
Council members have a shared understanding of domestic violence.	1	2	3	4	5	6
Council members are working together to achieve a common goal.	1	2	3	4	5	6

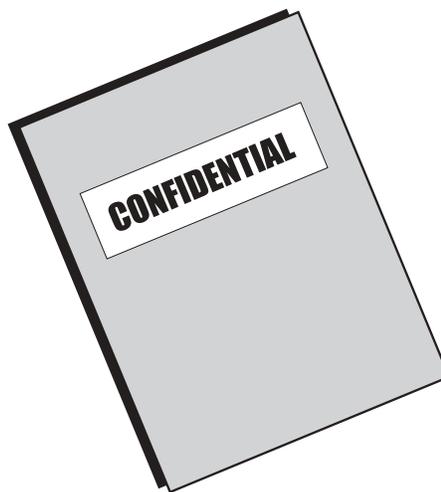
IMPORTANT TO NOTE

Protecting the confidentiality of participants is a very important part of getting reliable information from participants (see Chapter 5). If you want to evaluate the internal working climate of your council, you could distribute surveys without any identification numbers or other identifying information and ask members to mail them back or drop them in a box at a meeting. This way all participants will remain anonymous. It is important to be sure that the entire spectrum of viewpoints is captured in an evaluation. If your council is large enough to ensure relative anonymity, you might want to record demographic information (e.g., organizational role, age, gender, race or ethnicity). Such information can sometimes help you better understand differences in perceptions among council members and provide you with information about how your council is operating. For example, if members from a particular subgroup (e.g., women, law enforcement) tend to rate the council differently from others, it may reflect their having a different experience as council members. Looking for differences across subgroups is more difficult when your council has a smaller number of members.

Sample Evaluation Question 3

To what degree are disagreements handled effectively when they arise?

Often when diverse stakeholders work together, they have different perspectives and vantage points. While such diversity is an asset for councils, it is important for councils to be able to positively and effectively handle disagreements that arise. There are many different ways that disagreements can be handled. In general, getting to the root of the issue is thought to be the most effective strategy. Compromising or “agreeing to disagree” are commonly employed, but are not always effective. Ignoring or avoiding conflict is generally considered problematic because it leaves issues unresolved. Table 3 provides you with a set of statements that can help you assess how disagreements are handled on your council.



Evaluating the Adequacy of the Council Infrastructure

The council infrastructure refers to:

- ◆ how the council is organized
- ◆ the membership of the council
- ◆ the leadership of the council

Examining a council's organizational structure is important because councils that are more formally organized are sometimes found to be more effective (Gottlieb, Brink & Gingiss, 1993; Kegler et al., 1998), as are those that have a more representative membership (Gray, 1985), and those with effective leadership (Kegler et al., 1998; Kumpfer et al., 1993). Thus, in this section, we focus on evaluating the following aspects of council infrastructure:

- ◆ organization
- ◆ membership
- ◆ leadership

Sample Evaluation Questions

- 4) To what degree does the council employ adequate organizational tools (e.g., committees, problem-solving processes) to support their efforts?
- 5) To what extent is council membership diverse?
- 6) To what degree is council leadership adequate?

Sample Evaluation Question 4

To what degree does the council employ adequate organizational tools (e.g., committees, problem-solving processes) to support their efforts?

Certainly, the degree to which councils are formally or informally organized can vary depending on what is appropriate for a particular community, but basic organizational tools (e.g., using an agenda and keeping minutes) can be vital elements in being organized and efficient in your collaborative work. To assess your council's organizational structures and processes, you can first identify which organizational tools are currently in place. Table 4 includes a thorough inventory adapted from Butterfoss' (1998) Coalition Effectiveness Inventory (CEI) Self-Assessment Tool. These items assess the degree to which councils are employing numerous organizational structures and processes, including using an agenda, taking minutes, using formal processes to make decisions, and encouraging member accountability.

To gather this information, you could have one council member (e.g., a coordinator or the chair) assess whether or not each organizational tool is being used and the degree to which it is used effectively. As an alternative, you could also ask each council member to rate the degree to which these tools are effectively used.

Table 4: Sample Chart to Assess Organizational Tools³

Organizational Tools	Please circle YES or NO for each	To what degree is this tool utilized? 1. Not at all 2. A little 3. Somewhat 4. Very much N/A Not Applicable
Does the council...	YES NO	
have a written agenda?	YES NO	
record and distribute?	YES NO	
have bylaws/rules of operation?	YES NO	
have a misuse statement in writing?	YES NO	
have goals and objectives in writing?	YES NO	
have regular meetings?	YES NO	
have an organizational chart?	YES NO	
have written job/role descriptions?	YES NO	
have a core planning group?	YES NO	
have subcommittees or workgroups?	YES NO	
have established processes for decision-making?	YES NO	
have established processes for problem-solving	YES NO	
and conflict resolution?	YES NO	
have established processes for resource allocation?	YES NO	
have established mechanisms for process and impact evaluation?	YES NO	
have a mechanism established for accountability of members completing assignments in a timely manner?	YES NO	
have a mechanism in place to encourage accountability among member organizations?	YES NO	
have a mechanism in place to encourage accountability among non-member organizations in the community?	YES NO	
have a mechanism for new member orientation?	YES NO	
have a mechanism for training new and old members?	YES NO	
have an advisory group made up of domestic violence survivors?	YES NO	

³ Adapted from Butterfoss' (1998) Coalition Effectiveness Inventory. Butterfoss (1998) uses a scale to assess the use of each of these structures and processes (0=characteristic is absent; 1=characteristic is present, but limited; 2=characteristic is present; N/A=characteristic is not applicable at this stage of coalition development). You might consider using this scale or one that is similar, given that sometimes it takes considerable time to put a particular organizational tool into place (e.g., 0=no; 1=yes, but not complete or consistently used; 2=yes, complete and consistently used.)

Sample Evaluation Question Number 5

To What Extent is Council Membership Diverse?

You could assess the degree to which membership is diverse and representative by identifying those stakeholders you want as council members and then assessing whether they are currently official members (i.e., they have accepted an invitation to join the council) and the degree to which they are active members (i.e., whether or not they attend council activities, including meetings). You could simply ask as a yes or no question about whether they are an active member (see table 2) and/or to assess the degree to which they are an active member (see table 3). Table 5 on the following page provides a sample format for compiling this information. This information could be gathered by a single council member, based on meeting minutes.

You could also ask members to self-assess the level of their involvement directly. This can give you an important look at which stakeholders are actively engaged, which ones might require special attention to foster participation and also gauge the level of commitment stakeholders have to fulfilling council goals.

For example, you could ask:

Organization you represent: _____

In the last year, how many council meetings have you attended? _____

Approximately how many **hours per week** have you **spent on council activities outside of council meetings**? Please check one.

- 0 to 3
- 4 to 6
- 7 to 9
- 10+

Table 5: Sample Format to Assess Membership

Organization	Current Official Member	Active Member	To what extent has the member organization actively engaged in council activities in the last six months? 1. Not at all 2. A little 3. Somewhat 4. Very much
Batterer Intervention	YES NO	YES NO	
Child Protective Services	YES NO	YES NO	
Circuit Court (Judge)	YES NO	YES NO	
District Court (Judge)	YES NO	YES NO	
Domestic Violence Shelter/Service Provider	YES NO	YES NO	
Health Care Organizations	YES NO	YES NO	
Legal Aid	YES NO	YES NO	
Business	YES NO	YES NO	
Police Department	YES NO	YES NO	
Mental Health Organization	YES NO	YES NO	
Religious or Faith-based Organization	YES NO	YES NO	
Probation	YES NO	YES NO	
Prosecuting Attorney's Office – Prosecuting Attorney	YES NO	YES NO	
Prosecuting Attorney's Office – Victims' Rights Advocate	YES NO	YES NO	
School Administrator Educator	YES NO	YES NO	
Social Services Agency (e.g., FIA)	YES NO	YES NO	
Other:	YES NO	YES NO	
Other:	YES NO	YES NO	
Other:	YES NO	YES NO	
Other:	YES NO	YES NO	

Sample Evaluation Question 6

To What Degree is Council Leadership Adequate?

Given that leadership is so central to council effectiveness, you might be interested in assessing your members' perceptions of the effectiveness of your leadership. Table 6 provides a set of items adapted from Butterfoss' (1998) Coalition Effectiveness Inventory (CEI) Self-Assessment Tool. This scale provides you with information about the degree to which leadership is organized, knowledgeable about domestic violence and efficient, as well as the degree to which they engage and gather input from all council members.

Table 6: Sample Items to Assess the Quality of Leadership⁴

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Council leadership is committed to the council's mission.	1	2	3	4	5	6
Council leader(s) provide leadership and guidance to the council.	1	2	3	4	5	6
Council leader(s) have appropriate time to devote to the council.	1	2	3	4	5	6
Council leader(s) plan effectively and efficiently.	1	2	3	4	5	6
Council leader(s) have knowledge in the area of domestic violence.	1	2	3	4	5	6
Council leader(s) are flexible in accepting different viewpoints.	1	2	3	4	5	6
Council leader(s) promote equality and collaboration among members.	1	2	3	4	5	6
Council leader(s) are adept in organizational and communication skills.	1	2	3	4	5	6
Council leader(s) work within influential political and community networks.	1	2	3	4	5	6
Council leader(s) are competent in negotiating, solving problems and resolving conflict.	1	2	3	4	5	6
Council leader(s) are attentive to individual member concerns.	1	2	3	4	5	6
Council leader(s) are effective in managing meetings.	1	2	3	4	5	6
Council leader(s) are adept in obtaining resources.	1	2	3	4	5	6
Council leader(s) value members' input.	1	2	3	4	5	6
Council leader(s) recognize members for their contribution.	1	2	3	4	5	6

⁴ Adapted from Butterfoss' (1998) Coalition Effectiveness Inventory (CEI) Self-Assessment Tool.

You can also ask a more general question about the effectiveness of the leadership style:

Overall, to what extent is your leader's style effective for your council?

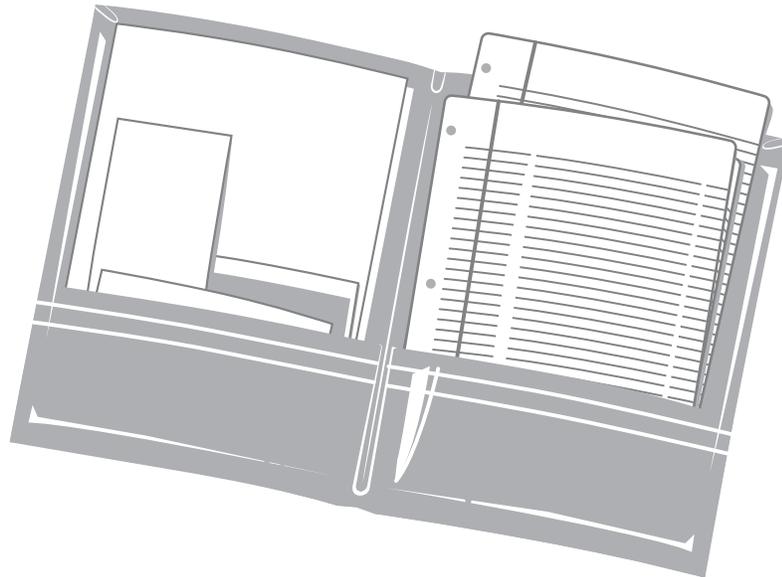
1
Not at All

2

3

4

5
Very Much



Evaluating Council Activities

Another critical part of **process** evaluation of council effectiveness is to track council activities in detail and to monitor member satisfaction with the breadth and nature of council activities. This section will provide two examples of the process evaluation of council activities: 1) the use of a Domestic Violence Handbook, and 2) the degree to which the council has had an **internal** versus **external** focus.

Creation of a Domestic Violence Response Handbook

In Logic Model B (see Chapter 4), one of the council activities listed is the development and distribution of a Domestic Violence Response Handbook with information on resources for survivors, law enforcement, service providers and other key stakeholders. If your council was to engage in this activity, it would be important to monitor both the usage of the handbook and its usefulness as part of a process evaluation. This type of process evaluation is an essential part of ensuring you are implementing activities as intended and can be applied to other activities as well.

To assess **use of the handbook**, you might:

- ◆ record the number of handbooks that have been distributed.
- ◆ review how the handbooks were distributed (e.g., mail, meetings, requests).
- ◆ record who has received the handbooks (e.g., council members, agencies, etc.).
- ◆ examine who is using the handbook and who is not.
- ◆ examine whether the handbook is less “user friendly” for certain groups.

To assess the **usefulness of the handbook**, you might:

- ◆ determine how frequently the handbook is being used.
- ◆ examine how clear and complete the information is.



To begin to address some of these questions, you could ask varied stakeholders who have received the handbook the following:

In the last six months, how often have you used the handbook to make a referral to or for a survivor?

- not at all
- 1 to 2 times
- 3 to 4 times
- 5 or more times

How useful has the handbook been in helping you identify needed resources?

- not at all
- a little
- somewhat
- very useful

How easy is it to understand the information in the handbook?

- not at all
- a little
- somewhat
- very easy

Is there any information missing? If yes, please specify: _____

Internal Versus External Focus of Council Activities

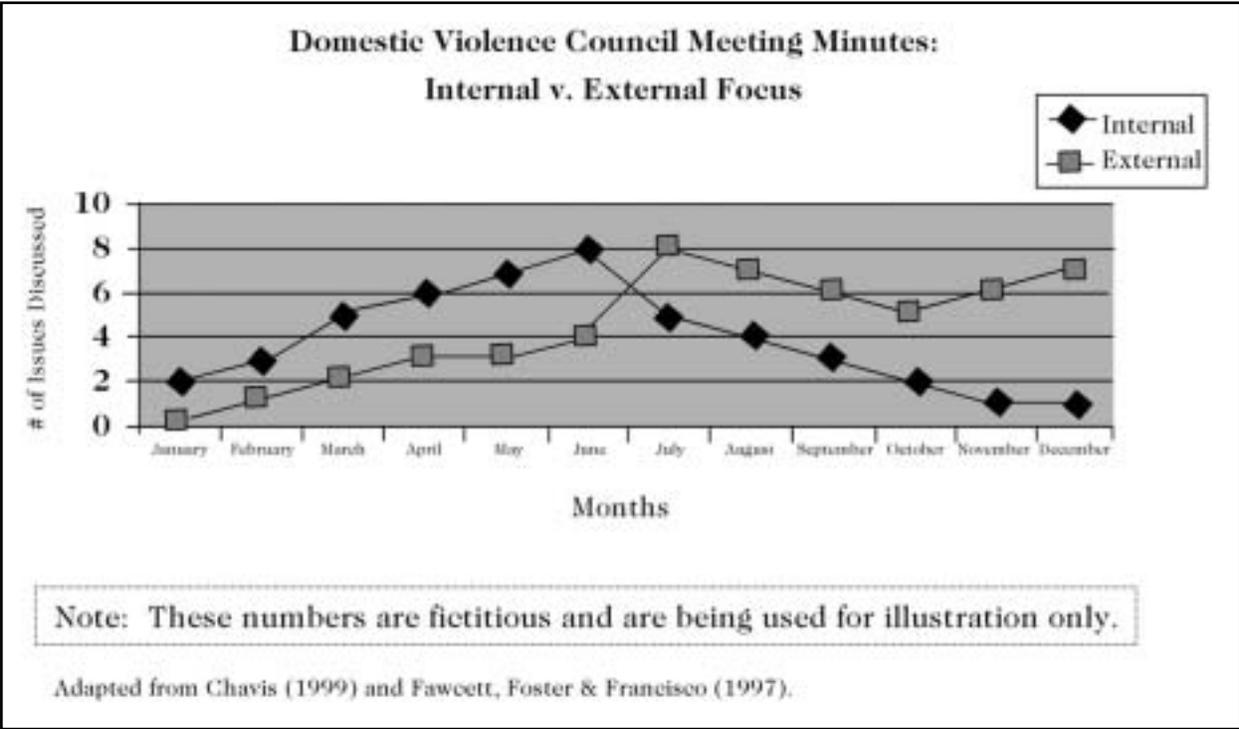
When councils are working together they engage in a range of activities. Some of these activities are internally focused and some are externally focused. Internally-focused activities are those that concentrate on the internal workings of the council, like expanding membership or hiring a coordinator. Externally-focused activities are those that pertain to actually making change within the community. When a council focuses only on internal activities, members can become bored and impatient. When a council focuses only on external activities, they may be ignoring important issues that will ultimately undermine the council's functioning. The balance will vary from council to council, but tracking your internal versus external focus is a useful tool to understand your productivity over time. You can gather this information from meeting minutes (i.e., a summary of each meeting's events) or from direct observation of your council meetings.

Thus, the graph in Figure 1 depicts the focus of agenda items. Internal focus represents discussions about the coalition (e.g., its goals and objectives, how it functions, how it is structured, membership, recruiting participants). External focus represents discussions about the council’s activities and actions in the broader community (e.g., conducting trainings, creating a new protocol, identifying weaknesses in the community response, identifying grants for new programs). Gathering this information and creating a graph of your council’s focus can help you examine the degree to which you are balancing an internal and external focus regarding council activities.⁵

IMPORTANT TO NOTE

Meeting minutes, agendas and annual reports are all great sources of data to complete process evaluations of your council’s activities.

Figure 1: Internal vs. External Activities



⁵ Source: Chavis (1999); Fawcett, Foster, & Francisco (1997).

Evaluating the Outcomes of Council's Collective Work

While it is important to examine the internal working climate of your council and the adequacy of your infrastructure, it is also essential to monitor whether or not desired changes are occurring in your community. The changes you monitor should be linked to the areas in which the council is attempting to effect change.

When conducting a self-evaluation, you will most likely focus on measuring the degree to which shorter-term outcomes have occurred. Thus, the focus of this manual is on such outcomes. Remember, shorter-term outcomes refer to those changes that occur during a shorter period of time but that are expected to lead to desired longer-term outcomes. Below we provide an example of how you could assess each of these shorter-term outcomes. While you may not be able to definitively link your council actions to desired shorter-term outcomes, you should be able to examine whether or not desired outcomes are occurring. (Chapter 4 will help you conceptualize how council activities are related to specific shorter-term outcomes). You should feel free to adapt this material to assess the unique initiatives of your council and the shorter-term outcomes you identify.

Sample Evaluation Questions

- 7) To what degree have council efforts increased collaboration and communication among stakeholders?
- 8) To what degree have council efforts increased exchange of information, resources and/or clients?
- 9) To what degree have council efforts increased knowledge of and access to community resources?
- 10) To what degree have council efforts improved the criminal justice system response to domestic violence?
 - a) To what degree have council efforts improved law enforcement response?
 - b) To what degree have council efforts improved prosecution response?
 - c) To what degree have council efforts improved judicial response?
- 11) To what degree have council efforts stimulated positive changes in the community response to domestic violence?

IMPORTANT TO NOTE

This is **not** an exhaustive list of shorter-term outcomes. For example, you might also be interested in evaluating the degree to which you have improved the health care response or the response of child protective services to women with abusive partners. In Chapter 4 we will cover how you can use logic models to identify which shorter-term outcomes and indicators of those outcomes are relevant in your community.

Sample Evaluation Question 7

To what degree have council efforts increased collaboration and communication?

Increasing communication and collaboration of multiple stakeholders is an important shorter-term outcome. While the degree to which collaboration is occurring can be assessed in many ways, one approach is to ask council members directly about the degree to which they view the council as effective at increasing members' communication and collaboration. For example, Table 7 provides a set of items that assess the degree to which member involvement on the council has increased stakeholders' knowledge of each other's organizations and respect for each other's work.

Table 7: Sample Items to Assess Member Perceptions of Collaboration and Communication Among Stakeholders

The council has:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
increased the ability of organizations to coordinate their efforts.	1	2	3	4	5	6
increased members' knowledge about each other's organizations.	1	2	3	4	5	6
increased members' respect for each other's work.	1	2	3	4	5	6
increased members' knowledge of other members' roles and limitations.	1	2	3	4	5	6
resulted in agencies working together more efficiently.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Sample Evaluation Question 8

To what degree have council efforts increased exchange of information, resources and/or clients?

Often, creating a coordinated community response involves effort to increase the exchange of information, resources and clients (i.e., referrals) across stakeholders involved in responding to domestic violence. As part of an evaluation of these linkages, it can be helpful to create a **visual representation** of connections among council members and/or council member organizations. Such a representation is referred to as a **sociogram**.⁶ That is, a sociogram is a picture that represents the degree to which individuals and/or stakeholder groups or organizations connect with one another.

⁶ Chavis (1999).

Figure 2 is a sociogram illustrating the number of times information was exchanged over a six-month period between the stakeholder groups (or organizations) represented in the figure. This sociogram indicates that CPS (child protective services) has contact with law enforcement, but with no other stakeholder groups. This sociogram also indicates that the faith-based group represented in this sociogram has no contact with any of the stakeholder groups represented here. Figure 3 includes the same organizations six months later. Basically, you can create a “snap shot” of the level of connection between organizations in your community, or look at multiple points in time to see how your connections change.

To create a sociogram, you can ask representatives of organizations to directly record and report the number of contacts they have had with a variety of other organizations in the community. If you are interested in whether people are linking at an individual level, you can make a map of the contact among individuals. If you are interested in whether organizations are linked with one another, you can ask representatives from each organization to track their contact with people from other organizations. You can then create a visual map of the degree of connection among organizations on a variety of issues (e.g., sharing information, exchanging resources or making referrals).

Figure 2: Exchange of Information over Past Six Months (Time One: Baseline Data)

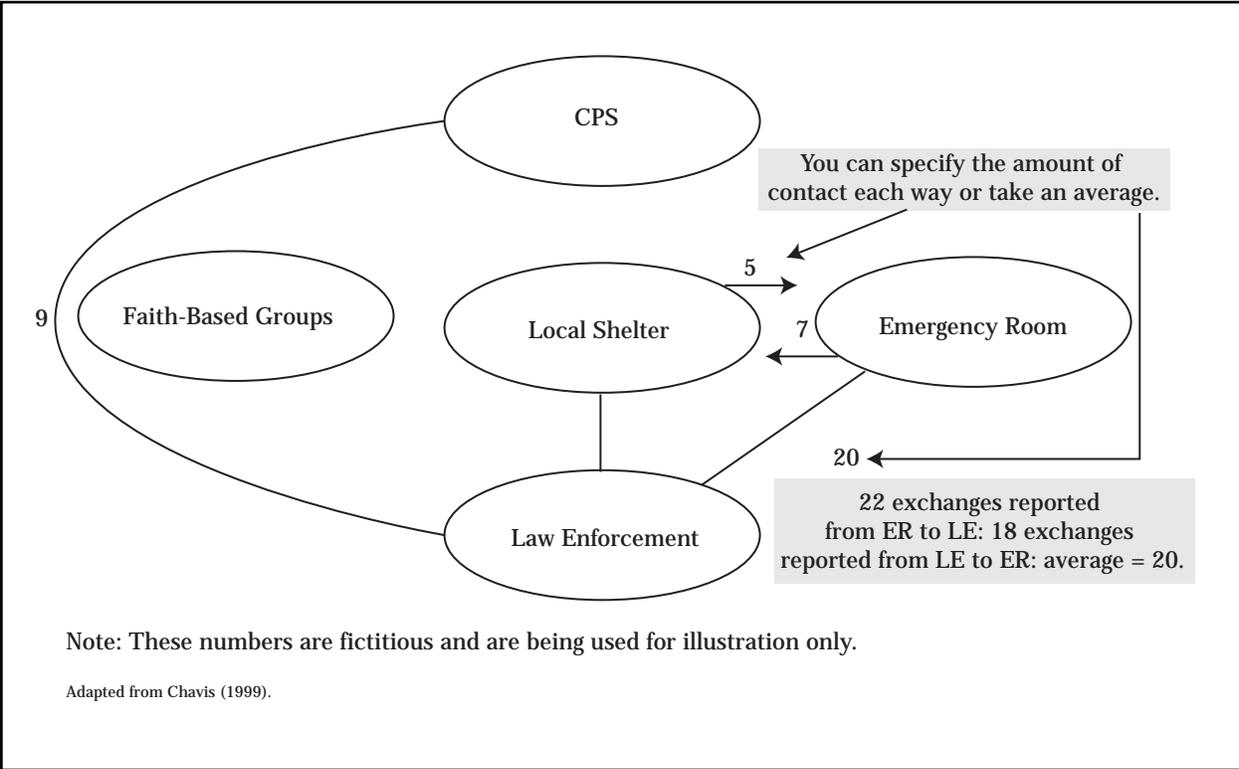
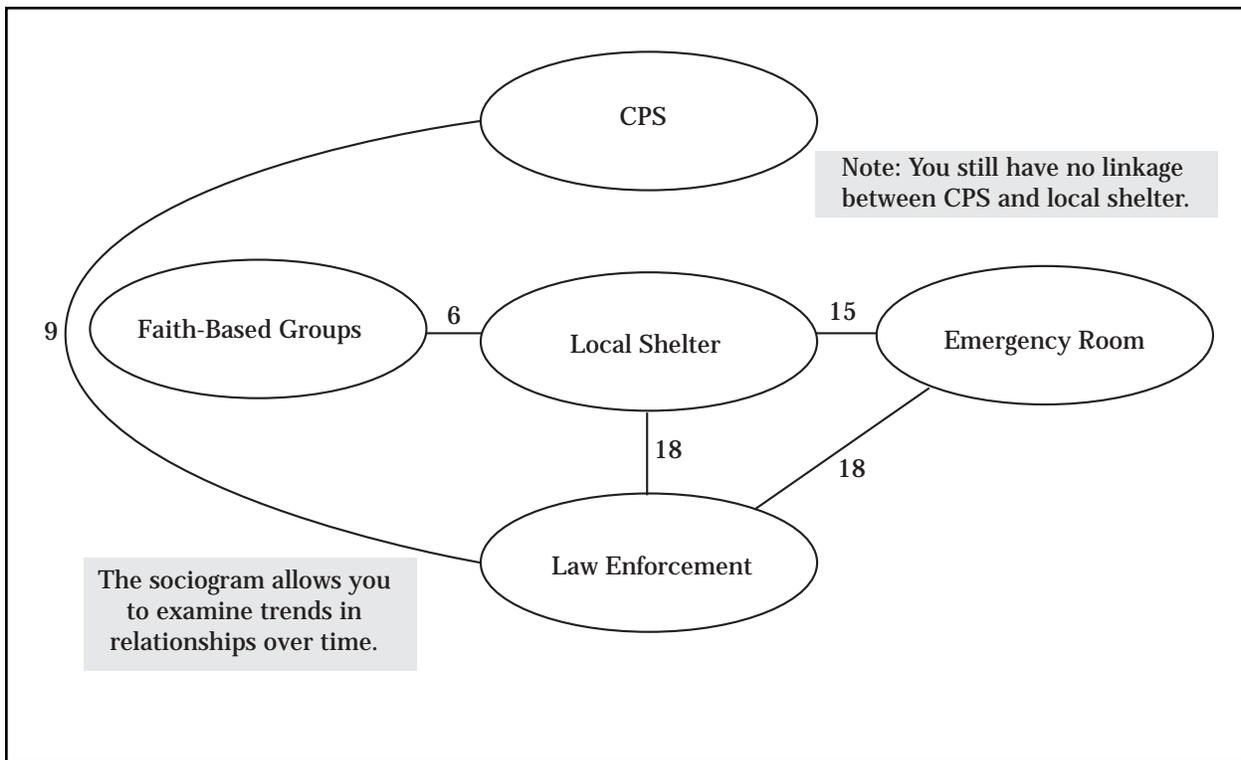


Figure 3: Exchange of Information Six Months Later (Time Two)



Again, one way to collect the information necessary to create a sociogram is to ask only one person within an organization to record and report their connection with people in other organizations. A second way is to ask multiple members of an organization to record and report their connections with people in other organizations. In either case, the best way to gather information regarding contact between organizations is by using a grid that includes the names of all relevant stakeholder groups or organizations. See Table 8 for an example of one of these grids.

Table 8: Sample Grid to Gather Information on Exchange of Information, Resources and/or Clients

Your Agency Name	On average, in the last six months, how many times per week have you...		
Agency Name	exchanged information with the _____? ⁷	made a referral to the _____?	received a referral from the _____?
Local Domestic Violence Shelter Program			
Local Church			
Law Enforcement Agency			

Having multiple members from each organization fill out the grid may provide a more accurate picture of how frequently agencies are communicating with one another. This may be especially important if you are attempting to increase communication among many stakeholders.

If you use information from **multiple members** of Organization A, you can **take the average** of their scores regarding their contact with Organization B. Then, you can calculate the average contact reported by Organization A and Organization B and put that number on the line of the sociogram.⁸ See the illustration provided for calculating contact with multiple informants on the following page.

⁷ You can provide specific response options rather than have participants provide an exact number (e.g., 1=never, 2=once/year, 3=twice/year, 4=monthly, 5=weekly, 6=daily) or use ranges (e.g., 3 to 4 times per week, 2 to 3 times per month, etc.). The ranges should make sense for your community.

⁸ When you have many stakeholders, sociograms can begin to appear very complex. If you have access to researchers at a local college or university, you may want to ask for assistance. Specifically, ask if they can help you by using a more sophisticated technique called network analysis. Please feel free to contact Nicole Allen for more information about how to get assistance with this method.

Illustration

Calculating Contact with Multiple Informants

Law Enforcement Agency A

Police officer A reports 5 contacts with the local domestic violence shelter program

Police officer B reports 4 contacts with the local domestic violence shelter program

Police officer C reports 6 contacts with the local domestic violence shelter program

Average contact with local domestic violence shelter program = 5

Local Domestic Violence Shelter Program

Domestic violence advocate A reports 4 contacts with law enforcement agency A

Domestic violence advocate B reports 8 contacts with law enforcement agency A

Average contact with law enforcement agency A = 6

Average contact between Law Enforcement Agency A and the local domestic violence shelter program = 5.5

You must decide how much contact is desired between organizations, based on what is needed in your community. For example, if a police officer responds to twenty 911 calls regarding domestic assaults and reports only 2 instances in which he or she made a referral to the local domestic violence shelter program, you might expect or want the referral number to increase as a result of coordinating your efforts.

It is important that you clarify what information you are seeking from each question in your instructions. For example, what would “count” as exchanging information or making a referral in your community? It is important that everyone completing the form understands what you are looking for. For example, would you “count” a police officer giving a survivor a card with the domestic violence shelter program’s number on it at the time of her batterer’s arrest as a referral to the shelter? Or would this interaction require the officer telling the woman about the shelter and directly suggesting she call to count as a referral? Making decisions about how you are defining terms will make things easier for those filling out your survey later. These definitions should be provided in the instructions that accompany the grid.

Sample Evaluation Question 9

To what degree have council efforts increased knowledge of and access to community resources?

There is evidence that the degree to which survivors have access to needed community resources is related to their safety over time (Sullivan, 2000; Sullivan & Bybee, 1999). Table 9 provides a set of items that could be used to ask survivors whether or not they needed a particular resource, the degree to which they knew where to access it, and the degree to which they were able to acquire what they needed (see Chapter 5 for special issues to consider when including survivors in evaluation efforts).

If survivors did not access a particular resource, you could ask, "If you needed _____ in the future, how much of a problem do you think it would be to obtain?"

Table 9: Increased Knowledge of and Access to Community Resources (Survivors)⁹

Community Resources	In the last four months, did you need _____? Please indicate Yes or No below.	[If yes] Did you know where to get _____? 1. No idea where to go 2. A little bit of a problem 3. Somewhat of an idea where to go 4. Certain where to go	[If yes] How much of a problem was it to get _____? 1. Not a problem at all 2. A little bit of an idea where to go 3. Somewhat of a problem 4. Very much of a problem
Emergency Shelter			
Housing			
Food			
Clothing			
Material Goods			
Financial Assistance			
Legal Aid			
Childcare			
Counseling			
Social Support			
Transportation			
Medical Assistance			
Order of Protection			
Other:			
Other:			

⁹ To conserve space, these items are presented in table format and could be used this way, if this information was collected via interview. However, if using a survey, you might consider listing the question separately outside of the table format.

This set of items could also be reworded (see Table 10) for use with other stakeholders. This would provide information about various stakeholders' degree of knowledge of what is available in the community and how often they were able to actually connect survivors to a particular resource. If the stakeholder had tried to access resources for multiple survivors in the preceding four months, they could fill out the questions thinking about their typical experience across survivors.

Table 10: Increased Knowledge of and Access to Community Resources (Other Stakeholders)

Community Resources	In the last four months, did you need to access _____ with or on behalf of a survivor? Please indicate Yes or No below.	[If yes] Did you know where to get _____? 1. No idea where to go 2. A little bit of a problem 3. Somewhat of an idea where to go 4. Certain where to go	[If yes] How much of a problem was it to get _____? 1. Not a problem at all 2. A little bit of an idea where to go 3. Somewhat of a problem 4. Very much of a problem
Emergency Shelter			
Housing			
Food			
Clothing			
Material Goods			
Financial Assistance			
Legal Aid			
Childcare			
Counseling			
Social Support			
Transportation			
Medical Assistance			
Order of Protection			
Other:			
Other:			

Sample Evaluation Question 10

To what degree have council efforts improved criminal justice system response to domestic violence?

Very often, creating a coordinated community response to domestic violence involves creating reforms in the criminal justice system. In one study of domestic violence coordinating councils, 100% were engaging in at least one activity to address a needed reform in the criminal justice system (Allen, 2001b). Given the complexity of this system, there are **many** different indicators that you could measure to evaluate the degree to which your council is stimulating positive changes in the criminal justice system response. The following three sections address each shorter-term outcome related to the criminal justice response presented in Logic Model C, including:

- ◆ improved law enforcement response
- ◆ improved prosecutor's response
- ◆ improved judiciary response

Of course, there are many ways to evaluate these outcomes and you will need to determine what makes the most sense in your community. Keep in mind that in this case, we are suggesting you evaluate the degree to which the response has **improved**. This implies that you track change over time. It is essential that you collect **baseline data** (time one data, or data reflecting what was happening before changes were implemented) as soon as possible and **before** you are initiating changes in policy or protocol. However, collecting data for any period of time would provide you with a snapshot of your community response, which could also inform your next steps.

Sample Evaluation Question 10a

To what degree have council efforts improved law enforcement response?

The law enforcement response to domestic violence involves many different investigative functions and may involve many different individuals. Some indicators of the degree to which the law enforcement response to domestic violence is improving include the following:

- ◆ The number of dual arrests has declined.
- ◆ Police reports are routinely forwarded to the prosecutor's office within one or two business days of responding to a domestic violence incident, regardless of whether or not an arrest occurred.
- ◆ Police reports routinely document a history of violence between the victim and the defendant including incidents that occurred outside the jurisdiction where the current offense is reported.
- ◆ Police demonstrate a nonjudgmental attitude when talking to domestic violence victims.
- ◆ Police thoroughly investigate all domestic violence cases as though they are a potential homicide and gather all evidence needed for an evidence-based prosecution.¹⁰

¹⁰ For the purposes of this manual, evidence-based prosecution is used to illustrate one approach a community might employ to improve criminal justice response. Evidence-based prosecution focuses on the assailant's criminal behavior. Thus, in some jurisdictions, police and prosecutors work to build a case with such things as physical evidence, a 911 call, photographs of injuries, witness statements and hearsay exceptions (excited utterances). If some or all of this evidence is available, the prosecutor takes the case to trial – even if the victim is not expected to appear or is expected to testify on behalf of the assailant. However, it is critical to note that there is no one-size-fits-all criminal justice response strategy; each strategy has pros and cons that must be considered and weighed by community members. Other prosecution models exist and your community must develop an appropriate strategy for protecting victims and holding batterers accountable. If you would like more information on prosecution strategies, please feel free to contact the authors. (See contact information on page iii.)

Some judge the success of a community's response to domestic violence by the ability to convict batterers – even when the victim is not in the courtroom. Those who have a lot of experience working on domestic violence cases know that often victims fail to appear at trial, or testify on behalf of the defendant, or do not want/are afraid/are unable to testify at trial. Thus, police need to investigate cases and gather evidence as if the victim will not be at trial. The law enforcement response and investigation are critical to the success of prosecution. Consequently, we will focus on how you might gather data to examine the last shorter-term indicator regarding the quality of police investigation of domestic violence cases.

Things that the prosecutor will need for an evidence-based prosecution include the following:

- ◆ 911 tape
- ◆ hearsay exception statements like:
 - excited utterances.
 - present sense impressions.
 - statements made to medical personnel for purposes of medical treatment
- ◆ photographs of injuries and property damage
- ◆ statements of the victim, defendant, and other witnesses
- ◆ evidence of prior bad acts on the part of the defendant which can form the basis of a 404(b) motion by the prosecutor
- ◆ expert witness testimony on the characteristics of battered women

How can we examine whether these types of evidence are being collected? As part of a **process** evaluation, an initial step could include examining the police department's **written policy or protocol** on responding to domestic violence calls. Some states require by law that every department has a written policy on responding to domestic violence. Moreover, many insurance companies require that departments have written policies that are reviewed by employees. These policies are often detailed and list the type of information that must be gathered at the scene or during a follow-up investigation.

A second step would be to ascertain whether the police departments in your jurisdiction use a standardized reporting form for domestic violence cases. You could then examine what type of evidence the form requires to be collected and documented. If you found that some key evidence was not listed on this form, you could take action to remedy this. A simple change in this standardized form could then help to address gaps in evidence gathering.

A third way to collect data in this area is to review a sample of police reports (see the Sample Coding Form of Police Records in Chapter 6). These reports should be from a variety of shifts and also cover a predetermined span of time (e.g., three months). The police reports could be reviewed to examine information included or omitted and the timeliness of completion and forwarding to the prosecutor. Reviewing police reports in active cases will require a cooperative agreement between you and the head of the department. However, when a case is closed, reports often are available under the Freedom of Information Act. Because costs are associated with reproducing documents under the Freedom of Information Act, it would be best if you could negotiate an agreement.

A fourth way to gather information is via direct observation. For example, “ride-alongs” are one way to observe the police in action and can provide valuable information about gaps in the implementation of policies and protocols.

A final way to evaluate the thoroughness of police investigations may be to conduct interviews with law enforcement and/or prosecutors. For example, prosecutors are the best judge of whether the reports they receive are complete and if they are getting information that allows for a successful prosecution. Prosecutors also would know first-hand if the reports are being forwarded to their office in an expedited manner.

Law enforcement may be sensitive about having outsiders review their reports. It is critical to frame this as examining the system’s response to the crime of domestic violence and not the ability of any one officer or department. Who knows, your examination of police investigations may lead to an innovative refinement in process that both streamlines the investigation and increases the prosecutor’s ability to proceed in cases without the victim. Or, you may find that police are doing a fine job in documenting critical information needed for prosecution, but that the prosecutor is hesitant in proceeding without the testimony of the victim. This could then lead to evaluation in another area: prosecution.

Sample Evaluation Question 10b

To what degree have council efforts improved prosecution response?

The effort of the prosecutor (district attorney) is one area of the criminal justice system that is often discussed when a community examines their response to domestic violence. The prosecutor, as chief law enforcement officer in the county, certainly plays an integral role in determining how domestic violence cases are handled. The prosecutor not only creates and institutes policy and procedure for his/her own office, but often has a sizable say in how police respond to and prioritize these cases. Police are more apt to aggressively investigate allegations of domestic violence where the prosecutor, too, has taken a firm stand against domestic violence and is willing to try cases in court without the victim.

Evaluating the prosecution response may be more difficult than evaluating other professional responses. The law provides the prosecutor with a tremendous amount of discretion in determining which cases to investigate and to bring charges. Also, the prosecutor has immunity from liability for decisions made on cases handled by his/her office. And, finally, the position of prosecutor is an autonomous one with no supervisor or “boss.” The prosecutor is subject only to the voice of the electorate. Not even the court can tell the prosecutor how he or she should run their office. If you are gathering information from victims as part of your evaluation, this last point may factor greatly into the data you receive. Many domestic violence (as well as other crime) victims erroneously believe that the prosecutor is their personal attorney. This is not true. In fact, the victim, while often critical to the viability of the case, is merely another witness. Thus, you may receive information from victims that is colored by this misconception.

One additional point when evaluating your prosecution efforts is that one jurisdiction may actually have several separate and distinct prosecutors. If, for example, you want to examine the prosecution statistics in your county, it may not be enough to examine just the numbers for the county prosecutor. Your jurisdiction may also have a city or

municipal attorney that makes charging decisions in ordinance cases for that municipality. Many areas have a county prosecutor, elected by the voters, who enforces state law. A city may hire their own attorney, who also has similar charging authority, except he/she is enforcing a city or municipal ordinance/law. These two separate criminal justice officials may have no knowledge about the caseload of the other. Therefore, you must very carefully identify all prosecution entities appropriate for your evaluation and develop data collection tools that will be appropriate for either system.

How do we measure the success of the prosecutor? This is a difficult question in domestic violence cases. If your prosecutor is willing to consistently pursue evidence-based prosecution – that is without the victim’s cooperation or even presence in court – he/she may not have a very good win/lose record. Holding batterers accountable and keeping victims safe may not always occur by way of a criminal conviction. Below is a list of indicators of the effectiveness of your prosecutors’ approach to domestic violence cases, which may assist you in evaluating the prosecution effort in your jurisdiction. These are merely suggestions and this is in no way an exhaustive list.

- ◆ Your prosecutor meets with the victim prior to making any plea offer in a case.
- ◆ Your prosecutor does **not** require a victim to sign the complaint and warrant before charges will be issued.
- ◆ Your prosecutor meets with a victim or has a lethality assessment done before agreeing to the lifting of a no-contact order.
- ◆ Your prosecutor aggressively pursues an evidence-based prosecution.
 - consistent use of 911 tapes at trial
 - consistent use of excited utterances or other hearsay exceptions at trial
 - consistently seeks to admit 404(b) evidence (prior bad acts) at trial, if it exists
 - consistently identifies and endorses an expert witness at trial to testify about the characteristics of battered women
- ◆ Your prosecutor trains local law enforcement about evidence-based prosecution and how to build a successful criminal case where the victim may not testify or may recant at trial.
- ◆ Your prosecutor regularly reviews written law enforcement policies regarding domestic violence.
- ◆ Your prosecutor ensures that all requirements of the Crime Victim Rights Act are being fulfilled in domestic violence cases.
- ◆ Your prosecutor asks for and receives from the police evidence of a defendant’s prior domestic violence convictions under local ordinance or municipal law.
- ◆ Your prosecutor charges and seeks to convict domestic violence defendants, where possible, of more than a misdemeanor.
- ◆ Your prosecutor regularly makes victim referrals to the local domestic violence service provider agency or other social service agencies.

You may be thinking, given this extensive list of indicators, where does one start to gather this type of information? One possibility is to compare law enforcement arrest statistics with the number of criminal charges filed by the prosecutor. While there are many legitimate reasons why an arrest does not result in a criminal charge, you may be able to discern a pattern to the prosecutor's charging practices. For instance, you could examine police reports (see the Sample Coding Form to Examine Police Records in Chapter 6) and try to examine particular patterns regarding whether the prosecutor charges. For example, you might find that your prosecutor has a practice of never charging a domestic violence case where the victim had used alcohol prior to the assault. This finding would provide you with information about where further education is required. You might also be able to get charging information from the prosecutor. But remember, unlike law enforcement, there may be no statewide central repository for prosecutor records – including charging decisions. However, criminal charges are filed in court, so your local district court or magistrate office may be able to provide information about the number of domestic violence cases filed in a given time period.

Some of the above indicators may also be examined by looking at the number of cases and charges filed versus final disposition of the case. Again, this type of examination comes with a number of caveats – domestic violence cases sometimes **must** be dismissed because there simply is insufficient evidence to take to trial if the victim recants. And, many times juries fail to convict defendants of domestic violence – even if the prosecutor uses a 911 tape, injury photos and 404(b) evidence. This type of comparison is suggested only to look for patterns where cases are **always** reduced to non-assaultive offenses, or to examine whether the prosecutor **never** proceeds with a case after receiving notice that the victim will recant or not honor her subpoena.

Interviews with law enforcement, defense attorneys, judges and victims may also provide essential information about the performance of the prosecutor's office. Again, we want the evaluation to focus on the system's response to domestic violence – not the performance of any one lawyer. Try to frame your interview questions in terms of the “prosecutor's office” and the “policies and procedures of the office.” However, judges, police, and defense attorneys know very well which prosecutors are willing to try a case and which prosecutors prefer to “plead their cases out.” Thus, you will have to be vigilant in working to keep personalities out of the evaluation and remain focused on process. This is essential given that you want to change the **protocols** and **internal policies** in place as a way to reduce inconsistency based on individual variability.

Victims can be questioned about the amount and kind of contact they had with the prosecutor or his/her employees. You can also inquire if the prosecutor clarified his/her role with the victim, how much information they received about their case and the court process, whether the prosecutor discussed plea offers with the victim prior to case disposition, whether the prosecutor or an advocate in the office met with the victim prior to her having to testify, and whether the victim felt that all of her questions were answered. Sometimes the most valuable information we receive is from the consumer herself. In this same vein, employees of shelter programs and other social service agencies can also speak with authority on many of the indicators detailed above. When gathering information on the prosecutor's response, no single individual or group should be overlooked as a possible source of relevant information.

Sample Evaluation Question 10c

To what degree have council efforts improved judicial response?

The judiciary receives significant attention whenever a domestic violence coordinating council examines their criminal justice system's response to domestic violence. This focus on judges and their staff is with good reason. Judges are responsible for making many decisions in criminal cases that affect the safety of victims and the degree to which defendants are held accountable. The following is a list of actions that the court could be involved with in a criminal domestic violence file:

- ◆ determination of bond and the conditions attached to bond
- ◆ enforcement of bond at violation/revocation hearings
- ◆ setting the schedule for court hearings
- ◆ ruling on motions for adjournment/continuance by either the defense or the prosecution
- ◆ rulings on motions in limine where the prosecutor seeks to admit at trial certain evidence (404(b) motions, expert witness motions, motions to admit excited utterances, etc.)
- ◆ decides if the prosecution proved the case beyond a reasonable doubt
- ◆ determines the defendant's sentence if he is convicted or pleads guilty
- ◆ determines which batterers' intervention programs will be used by the court
- ◆ rules on alleged probation violations by the defendant
- ◆ determines whether the victim is entitled to an order of protection or other type of restraining order
- ◆ rules on alleged protection order violations by defendant

While this list is not exhaustive, it clearly shows the tremendous impact judges can have on domestic violence cases. The actions listed above are the responsibility of the judge. However, courts employ many other personnel who also have significant input on domestic violence cases. For instance, clerical staff in the clerk's office may be responsible for providing forms and instruction to victims seeking an order of protection. Obviously, there is wide variation in how this function is performed. A bad experience by a victim while attempting to get an order of protection may inhibit her from accessing community resources to protect herself from abuse.

Probation officers, in many circumstances, are also employees of the court. The ability of probation officers to adequately respond to domestic violence cases is, in part, directed by the judge. Resources are precious and scarce everywhere, therefore, courts are forced to allocate resources and prioritize cases just like every other segment of the criminal justice system. If a probation officer is carrying a caseload of 500 probationers, decisions will have to be made about how that probation officer can effectively monitor individual batterers for violations of probation. These same court employees often have contact with domestic violence victims. This contact may come in the form of a pre-arraignment lethality assessment to provide information to the judge before a bond order is issued. Or, probation officers may have contact with the victim prior to sentencing. Certain crime victims, by law, are entitled to make a statement to the court before the judge passes sentence. A victim may have experienced financial losses that are recoverable as restitution. Probation officers

sometimes coordinate this information and statement-gathering process. Finally, probation officers may question victims throughout the defendant's probationary period to monitor compliance with the terms and conditions of probation.

The discussion so far deals with the role of the judiciary in criminal cases. It is commonly known that only the very "tip of the iceberg" of criminal cases are reported to police and result in charges. Just as many civil cases with issues of domestic violence end up in other types of court action; for example, many domestic relations (divorce) actions contain allegations of domestic violence. Paternity, child support, guardianship and involuntary commitment proceedings are examples of different civil actions that could possibly involve domestic violence. Domestic violence coordinating councils need not limit their efforts to working on criminal justice system issues. Therefore, do not rule out evaluating your council's response to other issues confronting battered women, like available legal representation in divorce actions, etc.

The following list of indicators may provide you with information on how well your judiciary is responding to the challenges provided by domestic violence cases:

- ◆ Judges have a lethality assessment of the defendant completed before rendering a bond order.
- ◆ Judges routinely order the defendant out of the family residence and order no-contact with the victim as conditions of bond.
- ◆ Judges have an interview/lethality assessment done with victims prior to terminating a no-contact order.
- ◆ Judges inquire as to the wishes of the victim before agreeing to an adjournment of a hearing or trial date, even if stipulated to by the defense and the prosecution.
- ◆ Judges maintain a safe environment for victims who are in the courthouse by providing a waiting area separate from the defendant.
- ◆ If your state has mandatory or statutory requirements for the minimum acceptable standards of batterers' intervention programs, your judges ensure that batterers' intervention programs used by the court meet and maintain those minimum standards.
- ◆ Judges make the supervision of batterers a priority for their probation officers.
- ◆ Judges provide training on issues related to domestic violence for all court employees, like counter staff in the clerk's office and probation officers.

How can you collect this type of information? Because judges make their decisions based on the facts of a specific case, they often do not have a written policy on how to respond to a particular crime. Courts typically take administrative direction from the state supreme court. The supreme court also requires statistical information from the trial courts to monitor docket flow and related issues. Some of this general information may be useful in an evaluation. Also, court files are generally reviewable by the public. For the most part, in a criminal case these files will not include many specifics about the parties beyond their names and addresses. Similarly, specific facts of the case will not be contained in the file unless those facts are included in the charging document or in motions/pleadings filed by either party. Evaluations of bond determinations and sentencing decisions will be easy with a review of the file. Courts use standardized forms developed by the state court administrator or by judicial personnel in their own jurisdiction. Thus, the majority of forms reviewed should contain the same type of information. This will allow you to focus on the specific information sought as part of your evaluation.

Another source of data would be the many professionals who appear in the courtroom. Prosecutors, defense attorneys, probation officers, victim/witness advocates, therapists, police officers, other social service personnel who work with battered women – all would have tremendous insight into how well the current system works to keep battered women safe and to hold batterers accountable. Some people may be apprehensive about speaking out for fear of appearing in front of a discontented bench. These fears can be allayed by focusing on the “system” and not the individual decision-maker/judge and by taking steps to protect the confidentiality of evaluation participants.

Court proceedings, absent a special ruling otherwise, are open to the public. Thus, another way to evaluate the judicial system’s response to domestic violence may be to sit in the courtroom and hear how individual cases are handled (court watch). You can directly observe many behaviors that will inform you about the quality of the judicial response in your community. For example, are victims spoken to before a trial is adjourned? Remember, you may have previous knowledge regarding the criminal justice system – most crime victims do not. If what you hear is confusing to you, or seems to move too quickly, just imagine how it must seem to the victim. Or for another example, is there one particular batterers’ intervention program that gets all the referrals from the court? If you had information that one particular program is used again and again, you could then find out more about the program. What is the program’s admissions and discharge criteria? What is its philosophy? It is critical that our consumer, the crime victim, understands how the system works and what impact she can have on it. Council members, as fresh sets of eyes and ears, may prove an interesting and inexpensive way to evaluate how well the judicial system responds to domestic violence.



IMPORTANT TO NOTE

Tracking Criminal Justice Statistics

As we emphasized previously and as this chapter reveals, there are **many indicators** of the effectiveness of the criminal justice response to domestic violence. You can monitor the degree to which these indicators are consistently implemented and track these changes over time.

Also, keep in mind that in your community some statistics may already be systematically recorded. Charts 1, 2, 3 and 4 provide you with illustrations of some basic criminal justice statistics (arrest rates, prosecution case dispositions, sentencing and batterers' intervention completion). Tracking these statistics can help you understand trends occurring in your community over time. Looking for trends is an important part of understanding where policies and protocols are in place in your community and where they are not.

For example, Chart 2 details prosecution rates over a four-month period. You can see from this chart that while the number of cases going to trial is steadily increasing, the number of trial convictions has not increased for three months. This chart also shows a dramatic decrease in dismissals from February to March. Chart 4 demonstrates a dramatic increase in the number of batterers being referred for treatment and also a steady increase in those who are completing treatment. Still, this chart demonstrates there is a significant number of batterers who are referred, but not completing treatment. When examining these types of charts, ask yourself:

What does this suggest about what is working well in our community?

What does this suggest about where we need to continue to create change?

What might explain the trends we are seeing?

What role has our council played in effecting these changes?

When tracking statistics you want to **do so for an appropriate amount of time**. Movements from one month to the next can be subject to many extraneous factors and may not be indicative of lasting change. Thus, you want to determine trends over a more extended period of time (e.g., six months or longer).

Chart 1: Arrest Rates

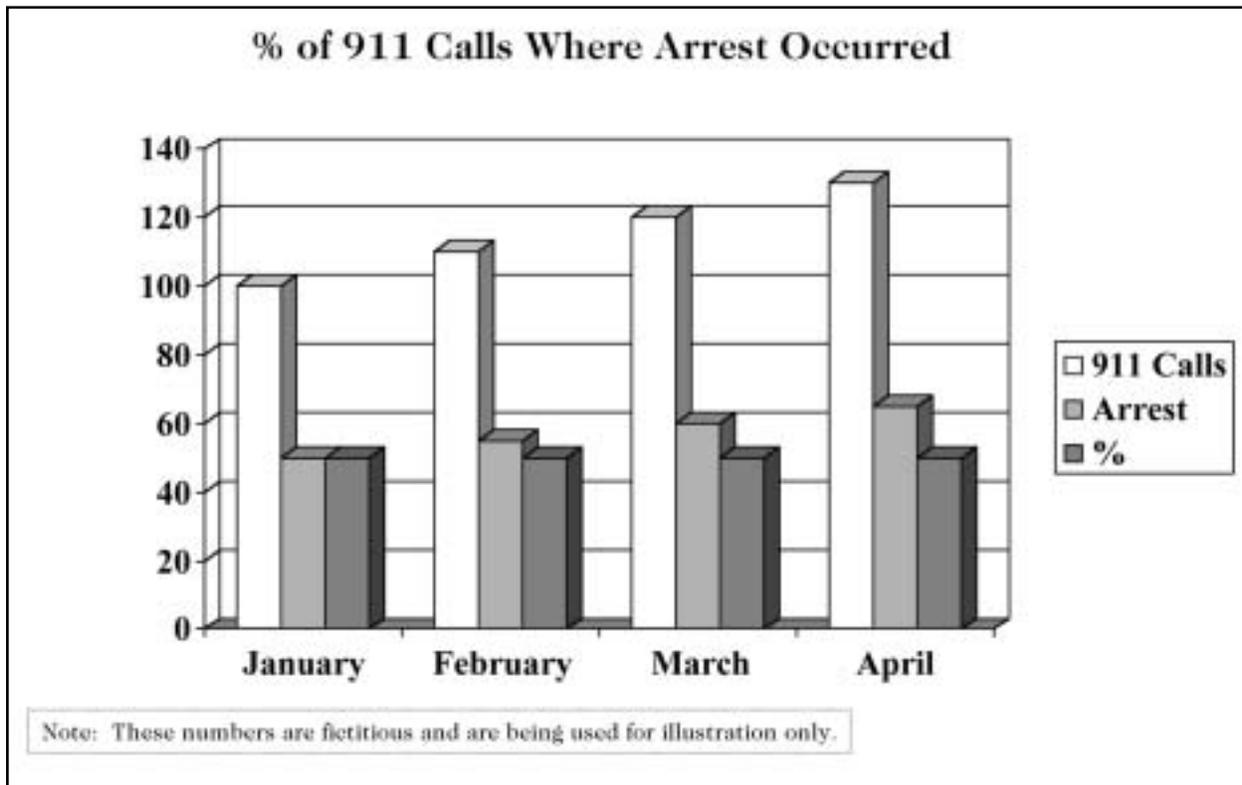


Chart 2: Prosecution Rates

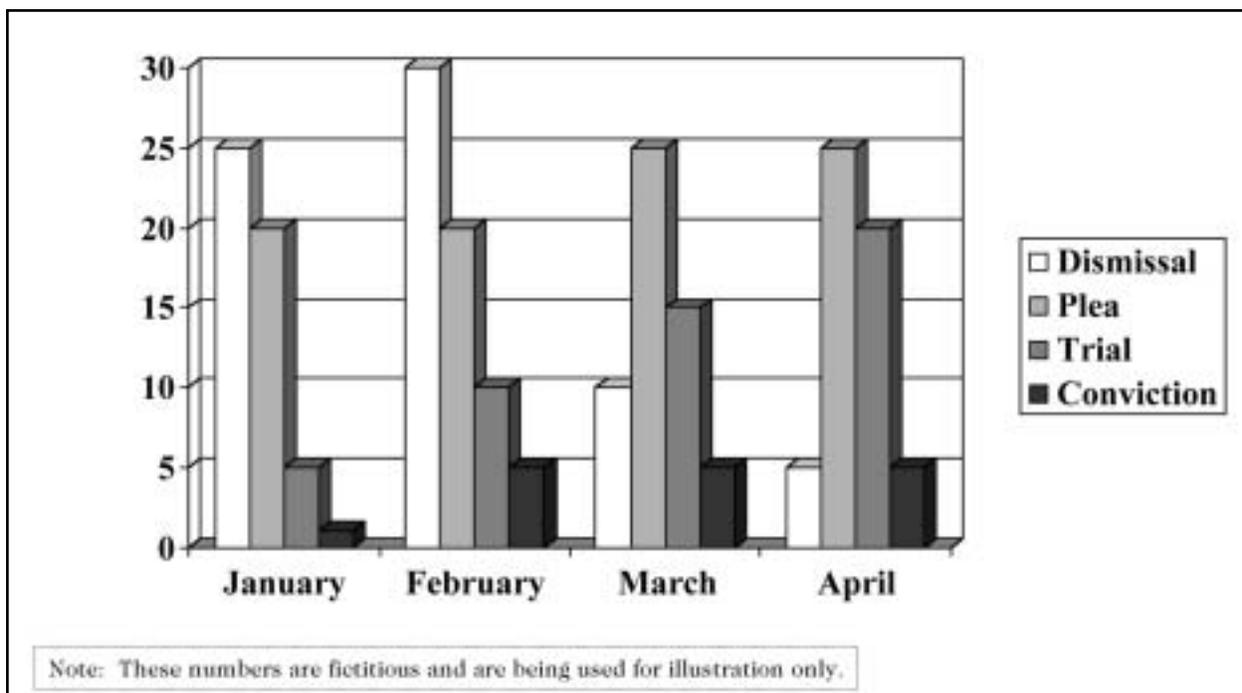


Chart 3: Sentencing

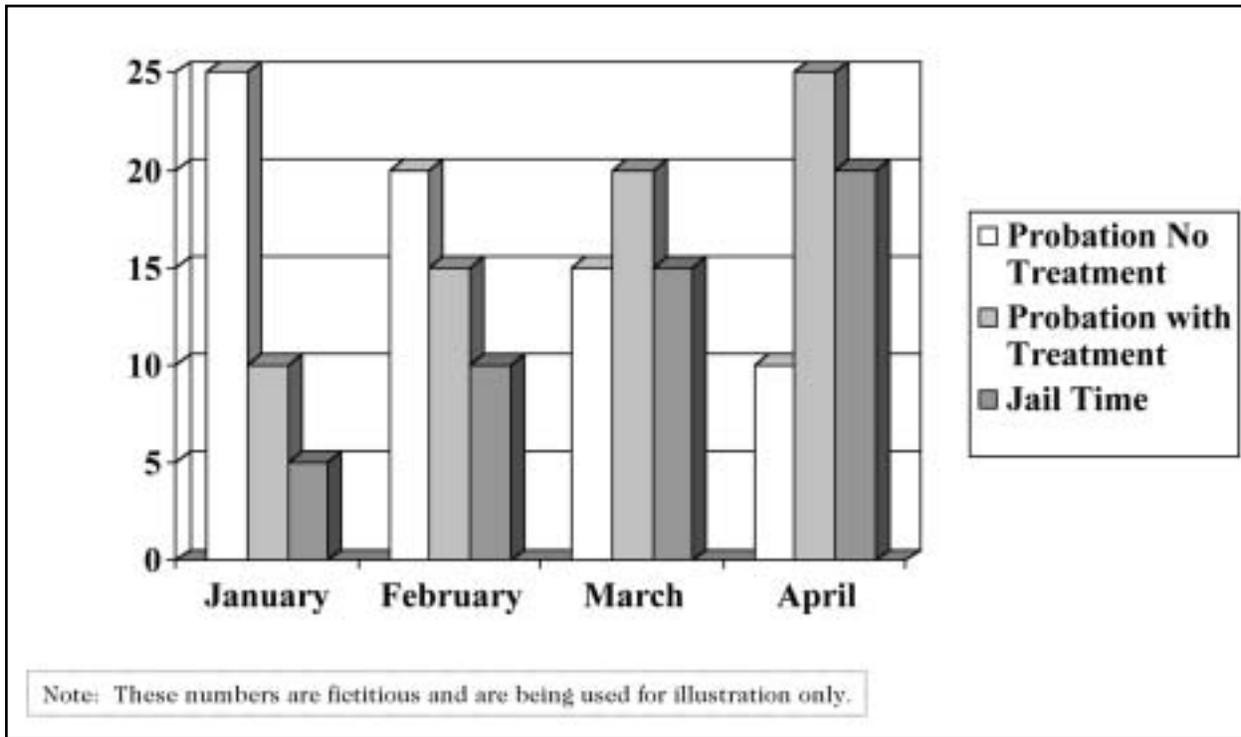
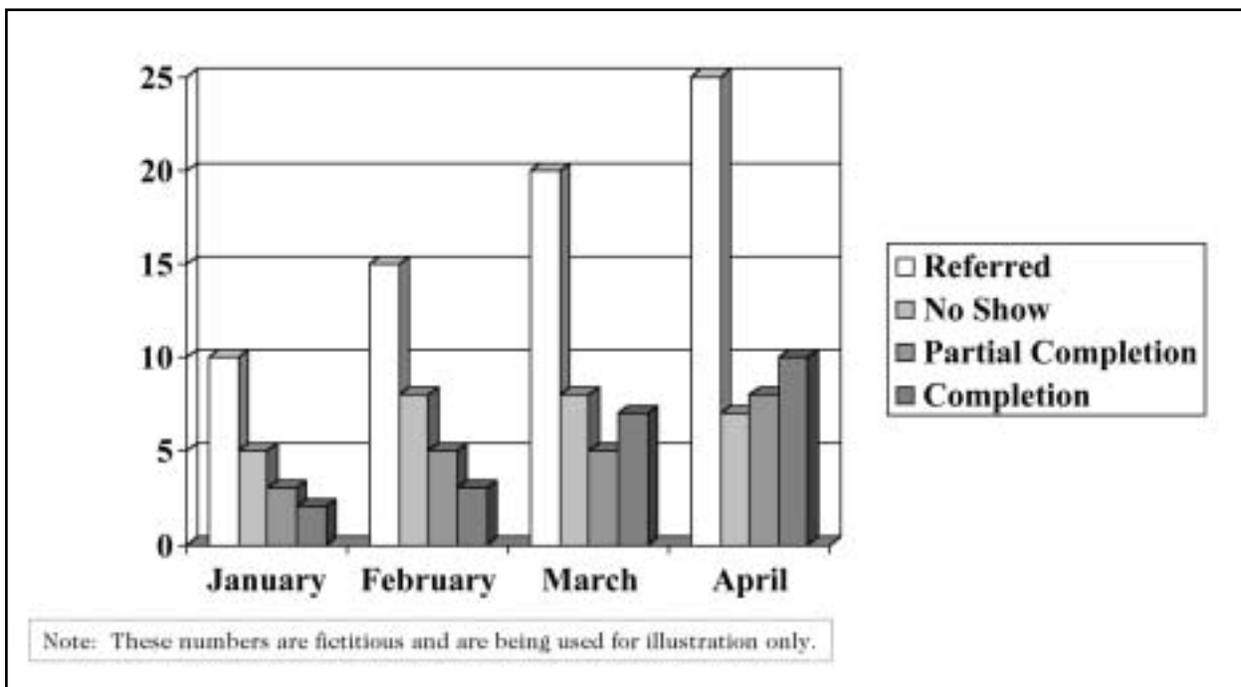


Chart 4: Completion of Batterers' Intervention



Sample Evaluation Question 11

To what degree have council efforts stimulated positive changes in the community response to domestic violence?

In addition to directly evaluating the criminal justice, human service and/or healthcare system, you might also want to ask council members to reflect on the degree to which they feel the work of the council has fostered positive changes in the community response. This approach is important because it is very difficult to link community level changes to the work of councils directly. That is, you may find positive trends in the community, but will never be absolutely certain those are directly related to your coordinated efforts. The perceptions of council members provide another source of data about the usefulness of your council as a change agent in the community. Table 11 provides a series of items to assess the degree to which the work of the council has resulted in community change.

Table 11: Sample Items to Assess Member Perceptions of the Degree to Which the Council Has Facilitated Community Change

The council has:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
addressed shortcomings in practices in community agencies regarding their response to domestic violence (e.g., police, probation, prosecution, domestic violence shelter program).	1	2	3	4	5	6
influenced the policy of agencies regarding their response to domestic violence.	1	2	3	4	5	6
influenced changes in practice in community agencies that have increased batterer accountability.	1	2	3	4	5	6
influenced changes in practice in community agencies that have increased women's safety.	1	2	3	4	5	6
been effective at facilitating needed changes in our community regarding our response to domestic violence.	1	2	3	4	5	6
stimulated policy changes within my agency regarding our response to domestic violence.	1	2	3	4	5	6
got people talking about domestic violence.	1	2	3	4	5	6
influenced changes in practice in community agencies that have increased for women and their children's safety.	1	2	3	4	5	6
consistently moved toward meeting its goals.	1	2	3	4	5	6
been productive in accomplishing what it set out to do.	1	2	3	4	5	6

IMPORTANT TO NOTE

Appendix A includes all of the measurement instruments included in **Chapter 3**, including instructions. These can be more easily photocopied if you wish to use or adapt any of the material in this chapter.

PART II

Focusing Your Evaluation

Chapter 4 – Using Logic Models

The Value of the Logic Model as a Planning Tool

Sample Logic Models

How to Create Logic Models

Chapter 4

Using Logic Models

The Value of the Logic Model as a Planning Tool

Logic models are a logical sequence of statements that link actions to the shorter-term and longer-term outcomes your council hopes to achieve. Logic models are useful not only for focusing your evaluation efforts, but for developing a shared mission and purpose regarding the work of your council.

They help you think through:

- ◆ what you hope to achieve (vision/goals)
- ◆ what steps you need to take to achieve your goals (activities)
- ◆ whether the steps you take will lead to desired outcomes
- ◆ which indicators will help you track the degree to which you are taking intended actions (process evaluation) and meeting your goals (outcome evaluation)

Sample Logic Models

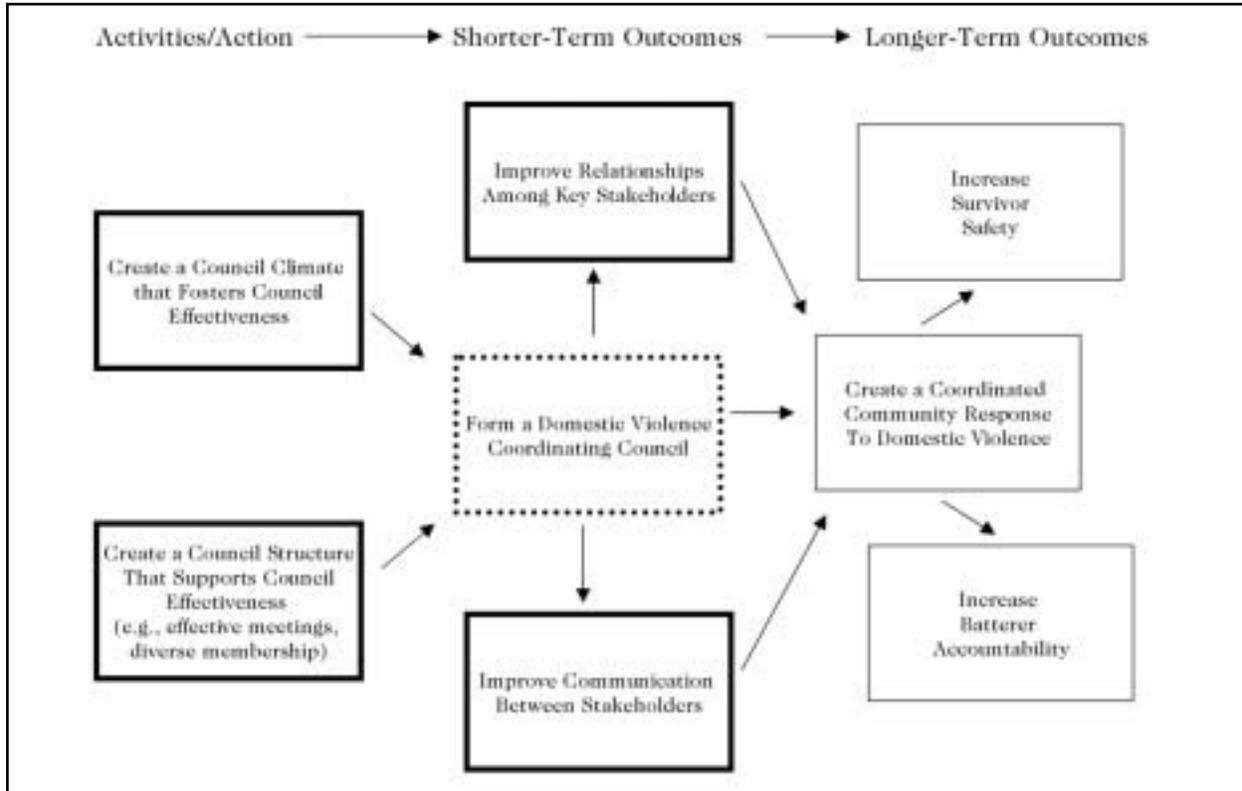
To get you started we have included three sample logic models. Each of these models includes the shorter-term outcomes targeted in Chapter 3. The first (Logic Model A) focuses on relationships among stakeholders. The second (Logic Model B) focuses on creating changes regarding knowledge of and access to resources outside of the criminal justice system (e.g., health care and human service). The third (Logic Model C) focuses on creating changes within different segments of the criminal justice system. Some of the shorter-term outcomes and activities in these models may be a part of your coordinated community response efforts. However, these logic models are not meant to provide you with suggestions about how to proceed. Every community is different. These logic models are only meant to illustrate how models can be useful tools for organizing evaluation efforts.

How to Create Logic Models

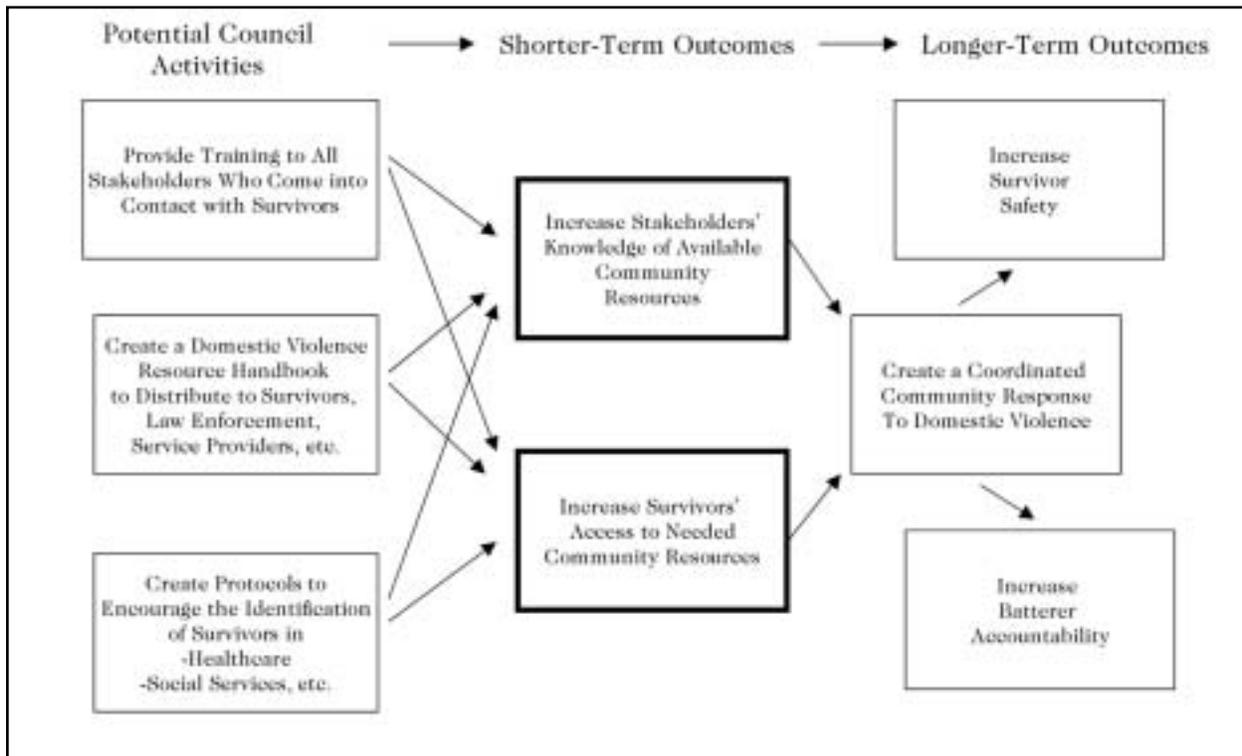
To create a logic model, ask yourself a series of questions. For each question, map out your answer using boxes and arrows. When doing this with a group you might want to get a large piece of paper to put on the wall and colored markers. This will make the process more dynamic and inclusive of all group members.

It is easiest to work backwards. So, start on the right of the page (see Sample Worksheet A on page 48) with your longer-term outcomes and work backwards (to the left) by identifying shorter-term or intermediate outcomes and then increasingly specific activities that will lead to your desired outcomes. This will become clearer as we go through the steps in this process. While the steps detailed here are presented in a step-by-step fashion, do not feel you **must** approach this task in a linear fashion. You may want and need to skip around. Remember, this is a way to map out your thought process; So do what works best for you as a group.

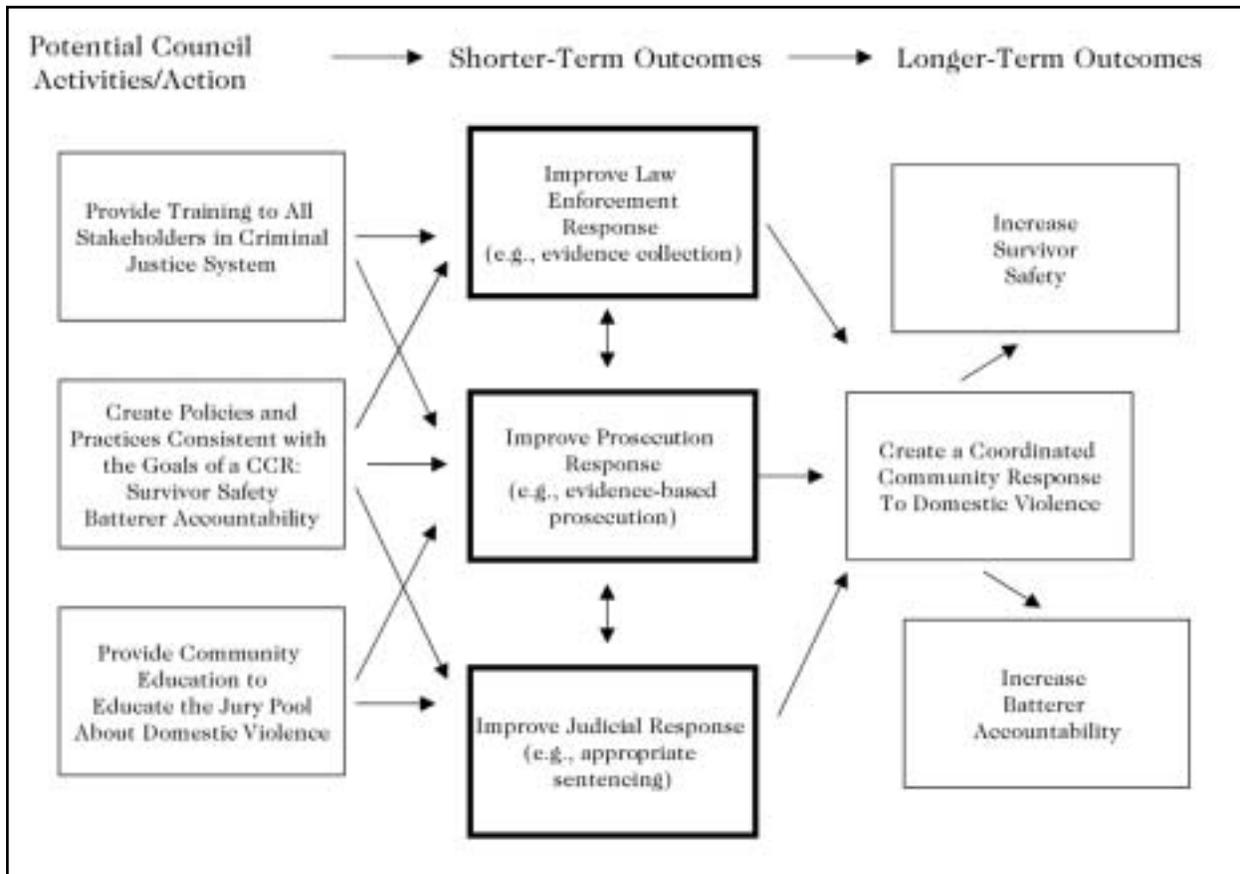
Logic Model A: Creating Changes in Relationships Among Stakeholders



Logic Model B: Increasing Knowledge and Access to Community Resources



Logic Model C: Creating Change in the Criminal Justice Response



Refer to Sample Worksheet A (on the following page) and go through the steps detailed below. When you are done, try to create a model on your own using Worksheet A.

1) What is the problem or challenge we are trying to address?

Write this as a clear statement on the top of the page. Sometimes identifying the problem you are trying to address is not as straightforward as it seems. Beginning here makes sure everyone is “on the same page.” This is also a way to connect to what your **overarching** goals or objectives are. With regard to creating a community response to domestic violence, the statements or the challenges might be to enhance the safety of battered women and their children and increase batterer accountability.

2) What are the longer-term outcomes we hope to achieve?

Longer-term outcomes are those you hope to **ultimately** achieve. They may feel like they are a long way off, but they represent your **vision** of where you want to be.

3) What shorter-term outcomes may lead to these longer-term outcomes?

This helps you focus on the **intermediate** outcomes you need to achieve en route to your longer-term outcomes. Shorter-term outcomes can be thought of as the steps along the way. These are the outcomes you expect to see change in more quickly. Given that it is difficult to track longer-term outcomes, these shorter-term outcomes will most likely be the focus of your evaluation.

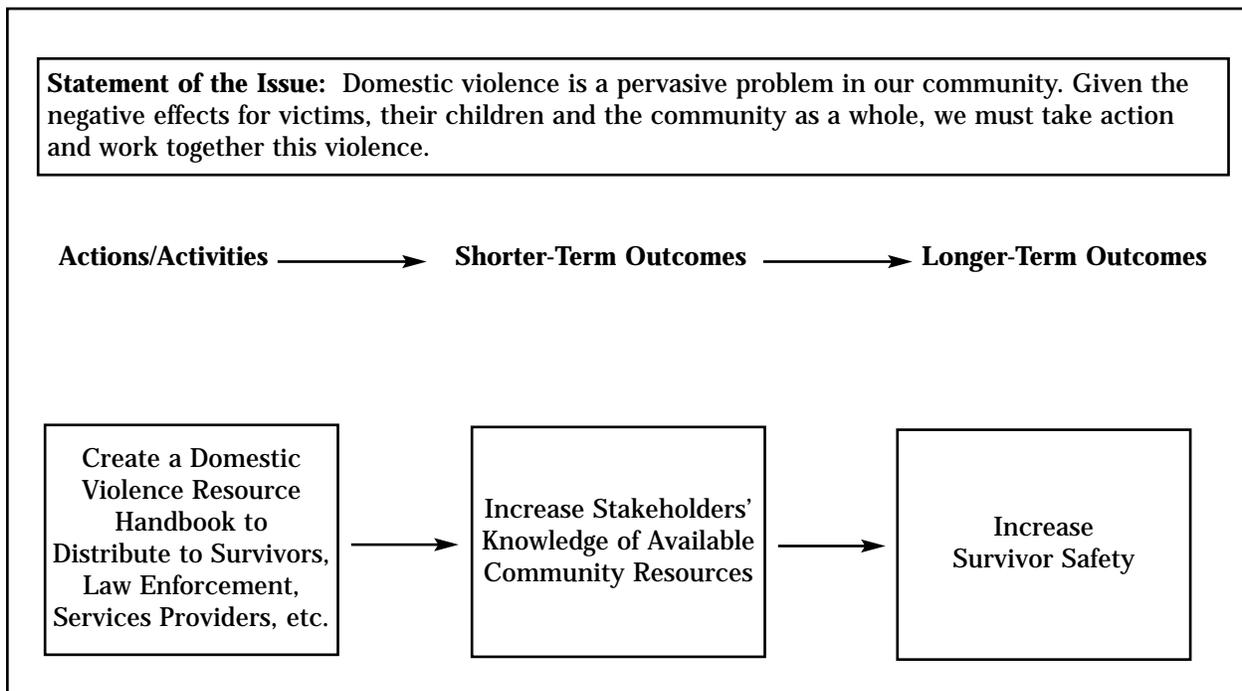
4) What activities must we engage in to achieve these shorter-term and longer-term outcomes?

Be specific! You may find that you start off with general activities. For example, you might decide you need to **form a subcommittee**. This is a first step in identifying your activities, but you want to be even more specific. For example, you may need to **make telephone calls to potential subcommittee members, gather information from other councils about their use of this particular subcommittee**, etc. So, you want to be clear about the specific activities required to meet your shorter-term outcomes.

5) Stop working on creating the model and check your assumptions.

It is best if you check your assumptions the whole time you are creating the model. That is, any time you draw an arrow from one box to another (i.e., from a shorter-term outcome to a longer-term outcome or from an activity to a shorter-term outcome) you are suggesting that one leads to another. Ask yourself, “Is it true that this shorter-term outcome leads to this longer-term outcome?” For example, if you were creating Sample Logic Model B, you might ask yourself, “Will increasing access to resources really lead to women’s safety?” “How do I know this?” “Is there any evidence to support this?” The answer here is yes. There is evidence that increased access to needed community resources increases survivors’ safety (see Sullivan, 2000; Sullivan & Bybee, 1999).

Sample Workdheet A



Worksheet A

Statement of the Issue:

Actions/Activities → **Shorter-Term Outcomes** → **Longer-Term Outcomes**

You must also ask yourself, “Am I making assumptions that are based on myth rather than reality?” This is **very** important because the logic model shows you how you are thinking about what needs to happen to create change. For example, you might suggest the following: Survivors End Relationship ☹ Increased Safety. Unlike the above, this assumption is false. In fact, there is evidence to suggest women’s risk increases when they leave the relationship and that physical and psychological abuse persist for a significant number of women long after the relationship has ended (American Psychological Association, 1996; Browne & Bassuk, 1997; Fleury, Sullivan & Bybee, 2000; Mahoney, 1991). Thus, a focus on survivors ending their relationships with abusers is not an effective shorter-term outcome when the longer-term outcome is an increase in survivor safety.

6) Take a break!

Logic models can begin to look really wild with boxes and arrows everywhere! It is important to remember that even though they may look messy in the beginning, they actually represent what each council member is thinking. Getting these thoughts on paper will help you with the next steps and make your evaluation efforts easier.

7) Revisit and revise your model as needed.

After you have had a break, revisit your model. Decide what you will keep and what you will change. Make sure that all group members have had an opportunity to provide input on the model. It is important to be aware that a member being quiet does not necessarily imply agreement. Create a process by which each member can provide his or her input on the model.

8) Choose a focus for your evaluation.

This can be difficult and you do not need to make a final decision right away. Just choose a place to start. At this stage, you will identify **indicators** for each shorter-term outcome.

Recall that **indicators** are those areas of change that will help you identify the degree to which your efforts are having an impact. They should be **measurable, clearly defined and accessible**. Again, examining indicators of shorter-term outcomes is more realistic when you are evaluating your own work without the help of an outside evaluator.

So, at this stage, choose the shorter-term outcome(s) on which you want to focus; then for identify an **indicator** that will help you evaluate the degree to which the outcome is achieved.

For example, from Sample Worksheet A, you would be interested in identifying an indicator of increased knowledge of community resources among stakeholders. One indicator of this shorter-term outcome is simply that stakeholders **report** increased knowledge of available community resources (recall the material presented in Chapter 3). Another potential indicator is that referrals to community resources (e.g., the order of protection office or domestic violence shelter program) have increased.

Table 12 lists all of the shorter-term outcomes from Sample Logic Models A, B, and C along with a sample indicator for each.

Of course, it is important that you develop your own logic model and that you find your own indicators. Those provided here are only guides. To help you get underway, please use Indicator Worksheet B. There is no “correct” number of shorter-term outcomes or activities when you are completing a logic model. Your best bet is to focus on what is right for your community and use the logic model as a tool to develop your evaluation plan.

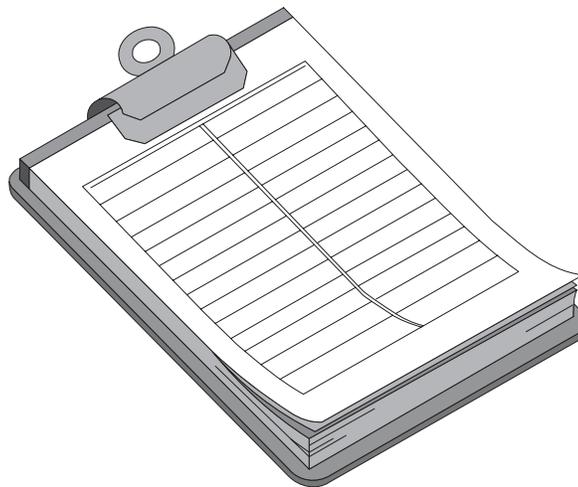


Table 12: Indicators of Shorter-Term Outcomes from Logic Models A, B and C

Shorter-Term Outcomes	Possible Indicator(s)	Possible Data Collection Methods	Source of Information
Increase Stakeholders' Knowledge of Available Community Resources	Stakeholders report increased knowledge of available community resource for survivors of domestic violence	Written questionnaires Interviews Archival data collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survivors • Domestic Violence Advocates • Law Enforcement • Healthcare Practitioners • Service Delivery Records
	Increased referrals to available community resources (e.g., order of protection office, domestic violence shelter programs)		
Increase Survivors' Access to Needed Community Resources	Survivors report they are receiving the support they need from the community	Written questionnaires Interviews Archival data collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survivors • Service Delivery Records
	Service providers indicate they are consistently able to access resources on behalf of survivors		
Improve Relationships Among Key Stakeholders	Stakeholders report improved relationships with others responding to domestic violence	Written questionnaires Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic Violence Advocates • Service Providers • Law Enforcement • Healthcare Practitioners
Improve Communication Between Stakeholders	Increased referrals and/or exchange of information and clients across agencies responding to the needs of survivors of domestic violence	Written questionnaires Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic Violence Advocates • Service Providers • Law Enforcement • Healthcare Practitioners

continued on next page

Table 12 (continued)

Shorter-Term Outcomes	Possible Indicator(s)	Possible Data Collection Methods	Source of Information
Improve Law Enforcement Response (e.g., identifying primary aggressor)	Police reports contain detailed information including, for example, statements from victims and alleged perpetrators	Interviews Archival Data Collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Law Enforcement • Prosecuting Attorneys • Survivors • Police Reports
Improve Prosecution Response (e.g., evidence-based prosecution)	Prosecuting attorneys consistently charge and try cases when there is sufficient evidence, with or without victim participation	Interviews Archival Data Collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prosecuting Attorneys • Survivors • Domestic Violence Advocates • Case Disposition Records
Improve Judicial Response to Domestic Violence Cases	Judges consistently sentence assailants to appropriate batterers' intervention programs, with probation periods that cover the entire intervention period	Interviews Archival Data Collection Direct Observation (e.g., court watch)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic Violence Advocates • Prosecuting Attorneys • Judges • Probation Officers • Sentencing Records

PART III

Collecting, Analyzing and Presenting Data

Chapter 5 – Considerations When Evaluating

Privacy, Confidentiality and Safety

Special Issues when Involving Survivors in Evaluation

Involving Multiple Stakeholders

Framing Evaluation as Informative, Not Threatening

Focusing on Evaluating Systems and Programs, Not Individuals

Creating a Plan for Evaluation Consistent
with Resources, Reality and Philosophy

Choosing a Focus

Chapter 6 – Collecting Data

Collecting Data from Individuals

Collecting Data from Files and Records

Collecting Data Using Direct Observation

Who Should Collect and Handle Data

Cautions when Handling Data

When to Collect Data

Informed Consent

Chapter 7 – Analyzing, Interpreting and Presenting Findings

Analyzing Findings

Interpreting Findings

Presenting Findings

Mapping Critical Council Events

Using Evaluation Findings

Conclusion

Glossary of Terms

Evaluation Resources

References Cited

Chapter 5

Considerations When Evaluating Councils' Work

There are many issues to think about before you begin evaluating your council and throughout the process of collecting, analyzing and presenting your findings. These include:

- ◆ ensuring participants' privacy, confidentiality and safety
- ◆ involving multiple stakeholders
- ◆ framing evaluation as informative not threatening
- ◆ focusing on evaluating systems and programs not individuals
- ◆ creating a plan for evaluation that is consistent with resources, reality and philosophy
- ◆ choosing a realistic focus

Privacy, Confidentiality and Safety

First and foremost, you need to think about how you will ensure the privacy, confidentiality and safety of evaluation participants. It is important that all participants feel they can provide input without penalty. There may be power differences or personal relationships among council members that make it especially important to protect participants' confidentiality to get accurate data.

Now, of course, each community will have to determine what is right for them with regard to ensuring safety and respecting privacy, but we provide some guidelines here to help you accomplish this goal.

- ◆ **Do not** ask questions of a personal nature that are not critical to your evaluation efforts. It is sometimes necessary to ask about difficult topics, but depending on the focus of your evaluation, some sensitive information may not be necessary. Before you begin, ask yourself these questions (adapted from Sullivan, 1998):
 - Why do we need to collect this information?
 - How will this information be used?
 - How will our findings be reported?
- ◆ Be careful with the data you collect. Be sure you are collecting this information anonymously or with great attention to how confidentiality will be maintained. Remind participants not to put their names on surveys and provide a drop box or return envelope for them to be sent back. Keep the surveys or interviews in a locked filing cabinet separate from any information that distinguishes participants or links participants to identification numbers. Never share your findings in a way that a particular individual can be identified.
- ◆ If your council membership is very small, it may be more challenging to protect confidentiality. If you are asking members to provide feedback on issues that have been sensitive (e.g., how conflict is handled or the direction of the council), you may want to involve someone who is not a member to handle the data you collect and/or provide you with feedback regarding evaluation findings.

Special Issues when Involving Survivors in Evaluation

The majority of suggestions provided in this manual involve acquiring feedback from service providers and criminal justice officials. However, there may be circumstances where you also want to gather feedback from survivors (e.g., regarding access to resources). Survivors' feedback is central to assessing the degree to which your efforts are effective, yet it is critical not to inadvertently jeopardize their safety to acquire feedback. When involving survivors, there are some additional issues you must keep in mind regarding their safety, privacy and confidentiality.

- ◆ Avoid making **initial** contact with survivors via phone or mail. You never know who will pick up the phone or read the mail. If you have not made special arrangements to contact a survivor, this can be risky. Many survivors are involved in nonresidential services through local domestic violence shelter programs. This may provide an avenue for eliciting their feedback. In fact, you might consider creating an advisory board of survivors to inform council activities on a regular basis.
 - If telephoning is the only way you can contact a survivor, come up with a plan regarding if/how you will leave messages and how you will conduct yourself on the phone. For example, some questions you should ask yourself include: How will we identify ourselves? What will we say was the purpose of our call? What questions will we ask or avoid, if the survivor does not answer? Also, always ask women if it is a good time to talk before you begin discussing a project or other information with them.
 - Contacting survivors via mail is **not** advisable. If sending a mailing is the only way you can contact a survivor and you determine that the benefits of initiating such contact outweigh the costs, you must take precautions to avoid violating the survivor's confidentiality. For example, be careful about what you use for a return address. Using the shelter program address could indicate to those who see the mail that this individual has been a resident or received services from the program. Also, assuming that the assailant will open the mail, be mindful of what you include in the content of the letter.

Involving Multiple Stakeholders

While it can be challenging, you will often have greater success if you engage many different stakeholders in the planning and implementation of evaluation. A broad range of stakeholders may be involved in or affected by the creation of a coordinated community response to domestic violence including, for example, individuals from multiple community sectors (e.g., health, criminal justice, social service, business, religious community and media), survivors and the families and friends of survivors.

- ◆ Why is it important to engage multiple stakeholders?
 - First, **each group is an expert on itself**. If you want to know how to keep survivors safe, engage them in your evaluation team and ask their advice. If you want to know what type of survey works best with law enforcement, ask someone from law enforcement. Talking with people from multiple groups will also help you focus on key issues and approach data collection in the most effective way. It is essential that you pay special attention to the degree to which you have included the voices of those stakeholders **most directly affected** by the actions your council will take.

- Second, you will also increase “buy in” and ownership of the evaluation process when you have included multiple groups. Generally speaking, people value knowing that they had a representative who spoke up for their interests. Now, you are not necessarily going to make **everyone** in a particular stakeholder group happy, but including their perspective is a step in the right direction.
- Third, involving multiple stakeholders from the start may **increase their commitment to creating needed changes based on your findings** later on. If you collect information without the involvement of those stakeholders whom you expect to take action based on your findings, you might face a great deal of resistance when you are trying to create needed changes.

Framing Evaluation as Informative, NOT Threatening

Evaluation can feel threatening to some groups. Often, some may feel they are under the microscope and that their activities will be picked apart. It is important that you make it clear that this is not the intent of your evaluation. An **informative** evaluation should improve the council’s understanding of what is working well in your community, what could be working better and what you need to do to meet your community goals of increasing survivor safety and encouraging batterer accountability. Ultimately, this should make everyone’s work easier, even if it does require some initial change and flexibility.

The potential for evaluation to feel threatening underscores the importance of involving multiple stakeholders. In fact, it might be especially important to involve those stakeholder groups you fear will be skeptical about or threatened by your evaluation activities. Stakeholder groups may be more willing to participate when you have incorporated their input into the design of an evaluation and included questions important to them.

Focusing on Evaluating Systems and Programs, not Individuals

In order to make participants feel less threatened, it is important to focus on **systems** and **organizations** rather than individuals. While you may change an **individual’s** attitudes and behaviors in the process of creating a coordinated community response, you are ultimately concerned with changing the system. People **within** a system come and go, but the system (e.g., the policies, practices and protocols) dictates how the people within it operate.

- ◆ For example, your council may want to evaluate how well a protocol developed by the council and adopted by the prosecuting attorney’s office is working. The council expects that with the adoption of this protocol more cases will be charged and pursued, even without victim involvement. The expectation is that the prosecutor’s office will consistently charge cases where there is sufficient evidence. However, since your evaluation is not about monitoring individual attorneys, it must focus on the degree to which the protocol is adequate to encourage its consistent implementation. Thus, if you find that attorneys are not charging cases you must examine what needs to change in the protocol to encourage its uniform implementation. You may need to provide additional information to attorneys or create a process where prosecutors can consult with an expert on domestic violence when they are not sure how to proceed.

Creating a Plan for Evaluation that is Consistent with Resources, Reality and Philosophy

It is critical that your plan for evaluation is not out of step with your resources, including both time and money. You will set yourself up for failure if you take on too much. You will be more successful if you do what you can with the resources you currently have. That may mean beginning with a smaller evaluation than you had originally anticipated, but remember that some evaluation effort is generally better than no evaluation at all.

Choosing a Focus

When evaluating a coordinated community response, it is difficult to decide where to focus. You are likely trying to create **systems** change, but it is most likely beyond the scope of your evaluation to take such a broad and encompassing perspective. It is best to evaluate specific initiatives and understand the outcomes of those efforts well, than to try to cover too much and only have a cursory understanding of what (if anything) has changed. A good rule is to focus your evaluation on your **main** goal or vision. So, if your council is focusing heavily on community education, your evaluation should also focus on this area. While the scope of your evaluation may feel somewhat narrow, it will provide you with a good place to start.



Chapter 6

Collecting Data

While we have provided you with many examples of the types of information you might want to gather to assess council effectiveness (Chapter 3), we also want to provide you with general information about different data gathering techniques and to define some key terms.

You are most likely going to collect data from individuals involved in or affected by community efforts to create a coordinated response from files or records (i.e., archival information) or from direct observation. We will briefly cover these types of data collection. We will also discuss important reminders regarding how to identify participants, how to handle data and when to collect data.

Collecting Data from Individuals

When gathering information from individuals (e.g., council members, service providers, law enforcement), you can conduct interviews or ask individuals to complete written questionnaires.¹¹ Interviews involve gathering information in person or via the phone where an interviewer asks the participant questions and records their responses. It is important that the interviewer does not have another role with the participant. For example, it would be inappropriate for a service provider's supervisor to conduct her/his interview or the counselor of a survivor of assault to conduct her/his interview.

Unlike interviews, written questionnaires are usually completed by participants directly. Keep in mind, however, that some individuals might require support in completing a questionnaire because of a language barrier or illiteracy. Special accommodations should be made so participants are not excluded. Questionnaires can be mailed or distributed by hand. However, without previous arrangement, mail surveys should be avoided with survivors.

There are different strengths and weaknesses associated with interviews and surveys and you should consider these when deciding how to collect information. These strengths and weaknesses are summarized below.

Interviews¹²

- ◆ Advantages include the opportunity to:
 - explain questions to respondents
 - clarify responses that seem unclear
 - gather additional information that was not asked about directly in the interview, but arises during the course of the interview
- ◆ Disadvantages include:
 - less privacy for the participant
 - potential for participants to respond more favorably because it is difficult to complain to or share difficult information directly with an interviewer
 - long interviews with talkative participants
 - bias of the interviewer who is recording the information

¹¹ You can also conduct focus groups. For an excellent resource on how to conduct focus groups see Richard Krueger's Focus Group Kit (Sage Publications) or his book entitled Focus Groups : A Practical Guide for Applied Research.

¹² Adapted from Sullivan (1998).

Written Questionnaires¹³

- ◆ Advantages include:
 - require fewer resources (e.g., interviewer time) to administer
 - more confidential. Participants can fill them out and return them anonymously
 - could be less threatening or embarrassing if personal questions are being asked or if the issues addressed are controversial
- ◆ Disadvantages include:
 - participants must be functionally literate to complete the questionnaire without assistance
 - no opportunity to clarify the meaning of questions or of participants' responses
 - method may seem less personal and may result in lower participation rates

Types of Questions

When you are deciding what information you want to gather, it is important to decide whether you want to ask **closed-ended** or **open-ended** questions, or a combination of both. Closed-ended questions are generally used when you are collecting quantitative data while open-ended questions are used when you are collecting qualitative data.

Closed-ended questions have specific response options from which the participant must choose.

Closed-ended Example:

If you wanted to gauge council members' perceptions of council effectiveness, you might ask:

On a scale of one to six, one being not at all satisfied and six being completely satisfied, how effective would you say your council has been at achieving its goals? _____ (1 to 6)

Open-ended questions do not have specific response options. Participants can answer with whatever information they feel is pertinent.

Open-ended Example:

To gauge members' perceptions of council effectiveness you could ask:

Tell me the ways in which the council has been effective in meetings its goals.

There are pros and cons to both types of questions. Closed-ended questions can be quantified (counted) more easily. That is, you are dealing with numbers so you can calculate the mean response from participants and easily look at the range of responses to a particular question. From the example above, you might be able to calculate that the mean response to the question was 5.2 and that 80% of council members rated the council with a score of five or higher. However, this would not tell you much about why they gave this high rating, what they like the most or what they would like to see changed.

¹³ Adapted from Sullivan (1998).

Open-ended responses can provide very rich information that is sometimes not captured by closed-ended questions. For example, a member might respond to the question above: “I think the most effective action that the council has taken is to try to change the policies and practices in each member organization. We are helping each other create these changes and communicating in a way we never did before.” This tells you that this member thinks the focus on policy and practice is important as is the help that members are providing one another in making such changes. As you might imagine, it typically takes longer to go through open-ended responses, identify the common themes and ideas that arise with participants and present these in a way that does not reveal the identity of the participant.

Identifying Participants

There are many different stakeholders involved in domestic violence coordinating councils and even more involved in the coordinated community response. So, there may be many different individuals to target when considering who you should approach to gather information for your evaluation. This choice should be driven by the following questions:

- ◆ What do we want to know?
- ◆ Which group(s) of individuals can provide the information to answer our questions?
- ◆ With whom do we need to speak to make sure we are capturing the varied perspectives that may exist regarding our questions?
- ◆ Which group(s) can we safely access to gather this information?¹⁴

The next issue is how many individuals with whom you will try to speak. One option is to contact a cross section of individuals from a particular group. Another option is to identify a small number of **key informants** (individuals who are particularly well-suited to provide the information you need) from multiple groups. You may also decide to collect information from **everyone** within a particular group or across multiple groups. When deciding how many individuals to contact, consider the following questions:

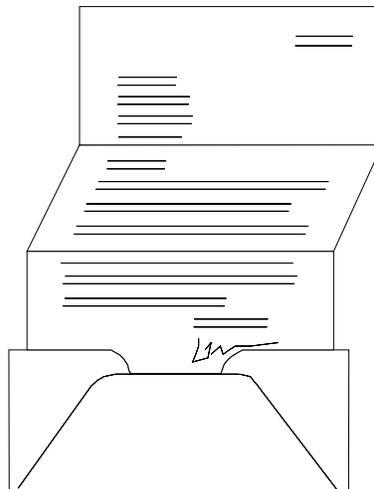
- ◆ Are there likely to be diverse viewpoints and perspectives regarding this information?
 - An answer of yes to this question suggests you should target a larger cross section of stakeholders.
- ◆ What will your resources allow?
 - Fewer resources may necessitate a key informant approach to data collection. Still, you want to speak to an adequate number of key informants to provide a realistic picture of what is happening.

¹⁴ Remember, it may not be safe to collect data from survivors who are no longer residing in shelter unless previous arrangements regarding how they could be contacted have been made.

Contacting Participants

Your procedures are likely to vary depending on which individuals you want to contact. Generally speaking, after you develop a measurement instrument (survey or interview) and identify participants, you need to contact them to ask if they are willing to participate. Typically, you would provide the following information when you contact them:

- ◆ **The purpose of the evaluation.** This would include one or two sentences about what you are evaluating. For example,
 - “We are interested in learning more about service providers’ knowledge of resources for domestic violence survivors in the community.”
- ◆ **What participation would require.**
 - “The [survey or interview] will take about an hour to complete. [If survey] We will mail it to you and provide a self-addressed envelope for you to return it to us anonymously. [If interview] We would come to your (office or home or whatever location is convenient).”
- ◆ **Your desire to have them participate.**
 - “We were hoping that you would be willing to [complete a survey or be interviewed]. Would you be willing to be [surveyed or interviewed]?”
- ◆ **A statement that their participation is not mandatory and that there is no penalty for not participating.**
 - “We understand if you cannot participate and it is no problem at all. When we present results from our evaluation, we will not say who did and did not participate.”



If you are using a survey, you may not need to make phone calls at all. You can simply distribute the survey at a council meeting or via mail with a cover letter that includes the above information. Please see the sample letter below:

[Date]

Dear [Domestic Violence Coordinating Council Member or Other Stakeholder]:

Our community is undertaking efforts to facilitate a coordinated community response to end domestic violence. The Domestic Violence Coordinating Council has a number of initiatives to facilitate this response. We are interested in learning more about the effect we are having and would like your feedback. The purpose of the enclosed survey is to learn how community members feel about the work of our council. As a member of a council/task force in your area, you are being asked to complete this survey.

There are two primary purposes for this survey: 1) to learn more about the effect, if any, we have had so far, and 2) to improve our work together.

The survey asks you as a council/task force member to reflect on your experiences working on the council, including your perceptions of the practices, accomplishments and needs of the council/task force in your community.

This survey should take 30-40 minutes to complete. Your participation is completely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will in no way jeopardize your involvement in your council or task force or any other domestic violence initiatives in the state. You may discontinue your participation at any time.

Any information you provide **will be held in the strictest of confidence**. Only the council coordinator will have access to the surveys. All results of the survey will be confidential and participants will remain anonymous in any report of evaluation findings. The information collected in this survey will be used to provide feedback to the council regarding what effect we have had to date on policies and practices in the community response to domestic violence and how we can improve our efforts. The information in any report produced will be summarized across people. No individuals will be identified and nothing you say will be attributed to you directly.

If you have any questions concerning this survey, please contact [Council Coordinator] at [phone number].

Please use the self-addressed stamped envelope to return the survey to us by [due date]. We greatly appreciate your time and input.

Sincerely,

[Chair Name]

[Organizational Role]

[Organizational Affiliation]

The information included in the survey cover letter on this page (or its equivalent) should be read aloud to participants when you are conducting interviews. This way information about the evaluation's purpose and participation is always clearly conveyed.

Collecting Data from Files and Records

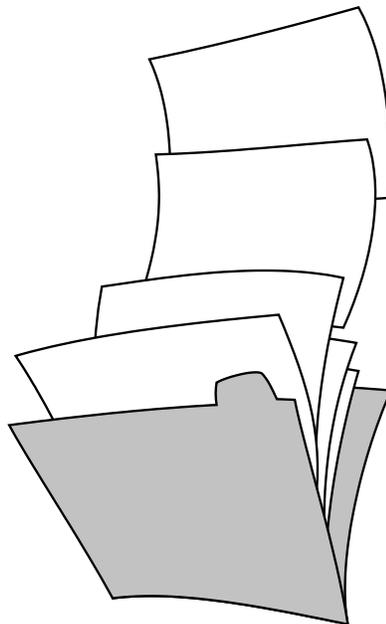
You might find that the questions you are most interested in being answered require you to examine files and/or records. This is referred to as **archival data collection**. This type of data collection involves identifying a set of information that you want to extract from files and systematically collecting this information. Typically, you develop a form called a **coding form** that includes questions (can be closed- or open-ended) covering everything you want to record from the file.

For example, using police reports and records from the prosecuting attorney's office, you might use a coding form to gather information on what factors were related to whether or not cases were charged by the prosecuting attorney over a certain period of time. See the Sample Coding Form to Examine Police Records on the following page.

Collecting Data Using Direct Observation

There are a number of aspects of the community response to domestic violence that can be evaluated, at least in part, by **direct observation**. Similar to archival data analysis, this type of data collection involves identifying information that you want to observe and collect. Again, you develop a coding form that includes everything you want to record while you are doing your observation.

For example, you might be interested in conducting a court watch to evaluate the effectiveness of the judicial response. Similarly, with the permission of law enforcement, you might observe the police response during "ride alongs." When you are working in a community where you do not have the full participation of all stakeholders involved in responding to domestic violence, systematic direct observation can be an important way to gather data about where changes need to occur. This can help you make a case for a more coordinated response, if it does not currently exist.



Sample Coding Form to Examine Police Records

Case Reference Number: _____	Criminal Tracking Number: _____
Date of Arrest: _____	Arresting Police Department: _____
Dual Arrest: YES NO	
Alleged Perpetrator: _____	Victim: _____
Age: _____	Age: _____
Gender: _____	Gender: _____
Race/Ethnicity: 1. African American	Race/Ethnicity: 1. African American
2. Asian American	2. Asian American
3. Latino/a	3. Latino/a
4. Native American	4. Native American
5. White/Caucasian	5. White/Caucasian
6. Other: _____	6. Other: _____
Children Present:	YES NO
If yes, how many:	
Weapon Used:	YES NO
If yes, please specify:	
Use of Alcohol by:	
1. Defendant	YES NO
2. Victim	YES NO
Use of Other Controlled Substances by:	
1. Defendant	YES NO
2. Victim	YES NO
Evidence Gathered:	
Statements taken from:	
1. Defendant	YES NO
2. Victim	YES NO
3. Child Witnesses	YES NO
4. Other Witnesses	YES NO
Excited Utterances Recorded	YES NO
With Sufficient Detail	YES NO
Preservation of 911 Tape	YES NO
Photographs of Injuries to Victim or Defendant (circle one or both)	YES NO
Prior History of Domestic Violence Recorded	YES NO
1. With this Victim	YES NO
2. With a Different Victim	YES NO
Defendant's Criminal History other than Domestic Violence Recorded	YES NO
Location and Description of Injuries Recorded	YES NO
1. Victim(s)	YES NO
2. Defendant	YES NO
Existence of PPO against Defendant with	
1. Victim as Petitioner	YES NO
2. Another Victim as Petitioner	YES NO
Weapons or Property Impounded	YES NO
If yes, please describe:	
Medial Attention:	
Medical Attention Received	YES NO
1. Victim(s)	YES NO
2. Defendant	YES NO
Existence of Hearsay Statements Admissable for the Purpose of Medial Treatment	YES NO
Referrals:	
Victim Referred to Shelter or Other Advocacy Agency	YES NO

Who Should Collect and Handle Data

When doing self-evaluation, it is essential to decide who will collect data (e.g., distribute surveys, conduct interview, review files, conduct observations), handle the data (e.g., enter the data), and compile results. The most important issues regarding who collects and processes data are related to confidentiality and objectivity. That is, those responsible for handling data must take precautions not to violate the confidentiality of participants and must report findings in an even-handed way (e.g., we cannot ignore the findings we do not like).

The best approach is to form an evaluation subcommittee to make these decisions. Ideally, you would have a council coordinator or other neutral party direct this subcommittee and include council members who have had previous experience with evaluation or a desire to assist with evaluation. It is essential that this group of people maintain confidentiality at all stages and that decisions about how data will be collected and who will do it are made based on the unique circumstances of your council and community.

Ask yourself the following questions to inform your decisions about who should handle data:

- ◆ Are there members who are particularly well-positioned to gather and compile the data (e.g., previous experience, viewed as neutral or unbiased)?
- ◆ What sensitive issues should we consider regarding who collects and handles the data (e.g., not have supervisors interview their supervisees)?
- ◆ Are there any neutral parties who could assist us with gathering or compiling the data (e.g., interns, volunteers)?

Who collects and handles data will also depend in part on whom you are collecting data from. If you are interested in gathering data from other council members, it may be important to find a neutral party – especially if the number of council members is small or the quality of relationships among members is questionable. However, if your council is interested in gathering information from stakeholders who are not currently council members, it may be fine for members to conduct interviews or distribute surveys.

For example, your council might survey service providers to evaluate the degree to which they are knowledgeable about community resources for survivors of domestic violence. You can have participants return surveys anonymously via mail and have a relatively low risk of breaching confidentiality. If you want feedback about the internal working climate of your council and you only have 10 members you may want to consider having an outsider collect data and compile results for you. Or, you might want to come up with an alternative way to explore your working climate (e.g., have someone facilitate a feedback session with everyone present).

Cautions when Handling Data

Again, whether you are collecting data directly from participants, from files or from direct observation, it is essential that you maintain confidentiality and/or anonymity. Here are some tips to help you with this task:

- ◆ Stress that participants do not have to sign their names on a questionnaire and that all information will remain confidential. Stressing and upholding confidentiality is particularly important when the interview method is used.
- ◆ Set up a box or other way to gather questionnaires in a way that will not identify participants.
- ◆ Always store participants' interviews or questionnaires in a separate location from any identifying information. This will protect the information from ever being linked to a particular participant's identity.
- ◆ Always present information that is aggregated or averaged across participants. Never present information in a way that it can be tied to a particular participant. This is especially important when your council is small and individuals may be able to guess who said what. In the case of small numbers, you may want to avoid using open-ended data.
- ◆ Be prepared to respond to requests regarding the data provided by a particular participant. It is best if you simply store no identifying information, making it **impossible** to link an individual participant's data with her/his identity.

When to Collect Data

There are no hard and fast rules about when to collect your data, but timing is very important. If you are interested in examining change over time, ideally, you would collect data **before** you implement a new initiative or program and then later at one point in time or multiple points in time. In this case, you are looking for change over time so it is essential that you capture **baseline data** before any change occurs. Sometimes, this is not possible and so your first data collection point should be as close to the beginning of a new initiative or program as possible.

When evaluating change over time, you should always leave enough time between the first data collection point and those that follow for the desired change to occur. For example, if you want to assess the effectiveness of a new program, you might need to wait four months or more to see the effects of that program. Collecting data too soon after you have gathered baseline data might result in you not detecting change over time, and erroneously concluding that a program is not effective. This is why it can be useful to collect data at multiple points in time (i.e., baseline, four months, eight months, etc.). That is, changes you did not see at four months may begin to show up at eight months.

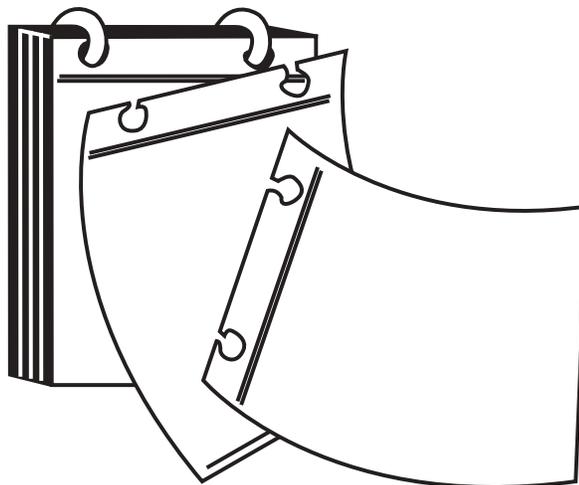
Other times, you are not concerned with tracking change over time but in assessing a moment in time or having individuals reflect on past events or experiences (e.g., over the past year or the last four months). Such data can be collected at one point in time. Still, you should be sure that you are collecting the data with the correct timing. For example, if you want to assess the degree to which the council is making a difference in the community, you should make sure that the council has been operating for a sufficient amount of time for

members to reflect on the council's work. For example, you would probably not ask council members to evaluate the effectiveness of the council in stimulating community change after only two months of operation. However, if you were interested in gathering information from council members about how satisfied they are with **the direction** the council has chosen (i.e., chosen goals and activities), you would probably want to gather this information soon after a purpose has been defined.

There are some aspects of council effectiveness that you may want to plan on evaluating periodically. For example, you may want to assess aspects of your council's internal working climate every six months. That way, you are consistently monitoring how you work together.

Informed Consent

It is critical that participants in your evaluation understand that they are under no obligation to participate, that they can discontinue participation at any time and they can refuse to answer questions. This information can be provided verbally or in written form (see the sample survey cover letter in this chapter). Further, they must be assured that there is no penalty (e.g., loss of services or work) for choosing any of the above.



Chapter 7

Analyzing, Interpreting and Presenting Findings

When you are evaluating your own work, you will most likely rely on **descriptive statistics** to present your findings. These include the mean and frequencies. These terms are defined below. It is essential that you use graphic representations of your findings whenever possible. Charts and graphs have been included throughout this section to illustrate the presentation of findings. Also, recall the criminal justice statistics charts presented in Chapter 3.

IMPORTANT TO NOTE

Keep in mind that you can download a free version of Statistical Profile for the Social Sciences (SPSS) – a commonly used statistical analysis software package. This software can perform all of the basic statistics described here. You might also consider using Microsoft Excel or another spreadsheet program to create graphic presentations of your data. It will greatly facilitate your analysis if you investigate available software.

Analyzing Findings

Mean

The mean is the mathematical average of responses.

For example, let's say you asked stakeholders to respond to the following question regarding knowledge of community resources:

Did you know where to get an order of protection?

- 1) No idea where to go
- 2) A little bit of an idea where to go
- 3) Somewhat of an idea where to go
- 4) Certain where to go

Participant #	Answer
1	1
2	2
3	1
4	1
5	1
6	3
7	2
8	4
9	3
10	2

To calculate the mean:

- 1) Add all of these responses.
 $[1 + 2 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 3 + 2 + 4 + 3 + 2] = 20$
- 2) Divide this total by the total number of participants who responded.
 $20/10 \text{ participants} = 2$

Your mean is equal to 2. This indicates that the **average** stakeholder had “a little bit of an idea where to go” to get an order of protection.

Sometimes you need to calculate a mean across multiple items in a scale and then across multiple individuals. This is called **aggregating data**. For example, if you were interested in the degree to which council members viewed the council as having a shared mission, you would 1) first calculate the mean score across items for each individual and 2) then calculate the mean across people.

Participant #	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Average Across Items 1 to 3
1	3	3	3	3
2	4	4	4	4
3	6	5	6	5.67
4	5	5	4	4.67
5	5	3	5	4.33
6	3	3	4	3.33
7	6	6	5	5.67
8	6	5	4	5
9	6	6	5	5.67
10	6	5	6	5.67

The average of the last column provides the average across participants (Mean = 4.7). This example indicates that, on average, members **agreed** that their council had a shared mission.

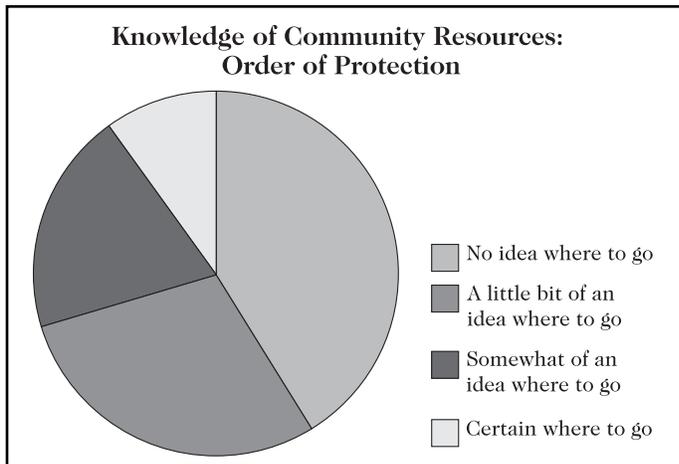
Frequencies

While the mean is a useful way to summarize our findings, we are also often interested in frequencies. **Frequencies** refer to the number (or percent) of participants who offered a particular response. From the example above (regarding knowledge of where to acquire an order of protection) with 10 participants the frequencies are as follows:

Response	# of Participants	% of Total
1. No idea where to go	4	40%
2. A little bit of an idea where to go	3	30%
3. Somewhat of an idea where to go	2	20%
4. Certain where to go	1	10%

This summarizes the findings, indicating that four participants chose response 1 (40%), three chose response 2 (30%), etc. This tells us which response was most common and provides somewhat more information than the mean alone. For example, we could report:

Most stakeholders who completed the survey indicated they had no idea where to go (40%) or only a little bit of an idea where to go (30%) to get an order of protection. Few indicated that they had at least somewhat of an idea where to go (20%) or that they were certain where to go (10%).



Pie charts (illustrated at left) are an excellent way to display frequencies. They provide a visual illustration of which categories were most frequently endorsed.

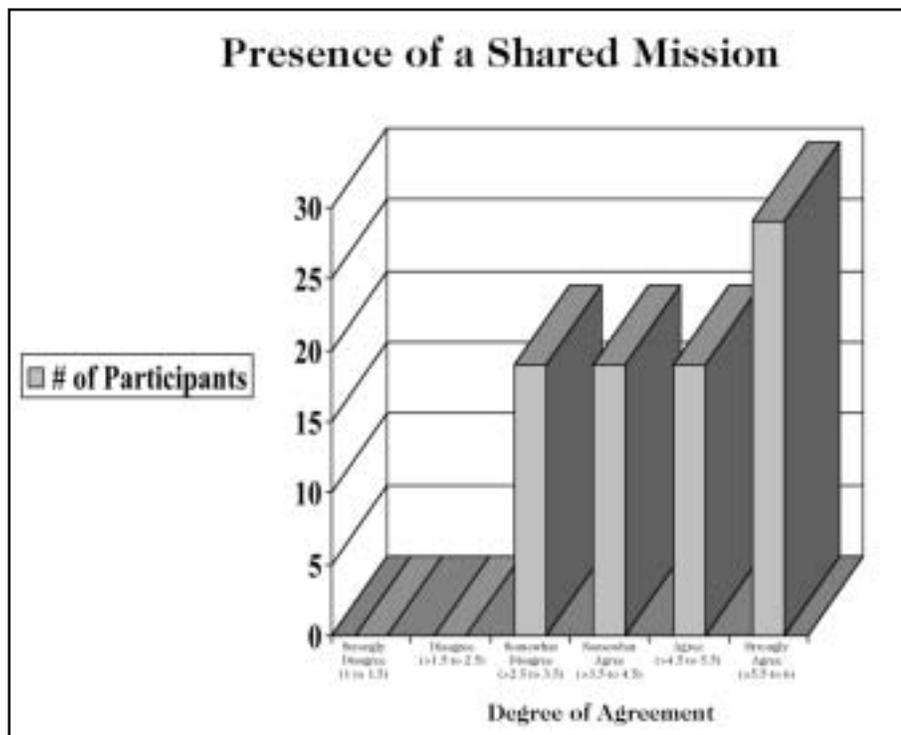
You can also examine frequencies for the number of scores that fall within a certain range. For example, when calculating the mean regarding the degree to which the council had a shared mission, members' scores were not uniform. The frequency table is as follows:

Response	# of Participants	% of Total
Strongly Disagree (1 to 1.5)	0	0%
Disagree (> 1.5 to 2.5)	0	0%
Somewhat Disagree (> 2.5 to 3.5)	2	20%
Somewhat Agree (> 3.5 to 4.5)	2	20%
Agree (> 4.5 to 5.5)2	20%	
Strongly Agree (> 5.5 to 6)	3	30%

These findings indicate that there is a relatively wide range of scores. While three members had average scores (i.e., across all of the shared mission items) that indicated they **strongly agreed** that the council had a shared mission, two members **somewhat disagreed** and two members only

somewhat agreed. This range of scores indicates different perceptions among members regarding the degree to which the council has a shared mission. Thus, while the mean is relatively high (recall it was 4.7), examining the frequencies more closely provides additional information.

Bar graphs (illustrated at right) can also provide useful displays of frequency data.



Interpreting Findings

In the example above, you might conclude that overall stakeholders had limited knowledge of how to acquire needed community resources (in this case an order of protection). However, interpreting findings is not always straightforward. You should always consider the following when interpreting your data:

- ◆ Have you examined **all** possible meanings?
- ◆ Do you have other information that can help you understand your findings?
- ◆ Have you been careful not to overstate your findings?

For example, based on arrest data, you might find a consistent reduction in batterer recidivism among those who attend batterers' intervention. Certainly, this could be a promising finding. However, take a moment and think about the explanations for this finding. One meaning is that batterers are assaulting their past or current partners to a lesser degree. However, another meaning is that batterers are still assaulting their partners, but avoiding arrest more successfully. It may also mean that they are engaging in fewer physical assaults, but persisting in harassing, stalking, threatening and verbally abusing their partners.

This is where additional information is important. If the evaluation also involved victims (if it was safe), they could be interviewed confidentially and separately from the batterer to assess the degree to which the batterer continued to engage in abusive behavior during and after the intervention. You might also interview batterers directly, but it is important to keep in mind that there is evidence that batterers tend to underreport their abusive behavior. When you have information from multiple sources you can use all of that information to understand what your findings mean.

Taking the full range of information and the limitations of your data into account is an important part of not overstating your findings. Therefore, you could state: "Batterers who attended and completed batterers' intervention were less likely to be arrested than those who were not referred. However, it is important to note that these findings only reflect arrest rates. The subset of batterers who **completed** treatment is not representative of those who were initially referred." This is a statement of findings, but it is cautious.

Presenting Findings

There are a number of important guidelines when presenting data.

- ◆ Remember the adage that a picture is worth a thousand words! Use charts and graphs as much as possible. Visual displays are often the easiest way to process information.
- ◆ Use descriptive language when summarizing descriptive statistics. For example, rather than report that "91% of council members strongly agreed that the council has a shared mission" you can report that "the vast majority of council members (91%) strongly agreed that the council has a shared mission." This way you are interpreting the data (i.e., highlighting that it was the "vast majority") and painting a picture as you report the findings. Sullivan (1998) provides examples of other descriptive language including: "The overwhelming majority indicated...", "A sizeable minority reported...", "Over half agreed...", "Very few," "Less than a third," and "Most police officers indicated."

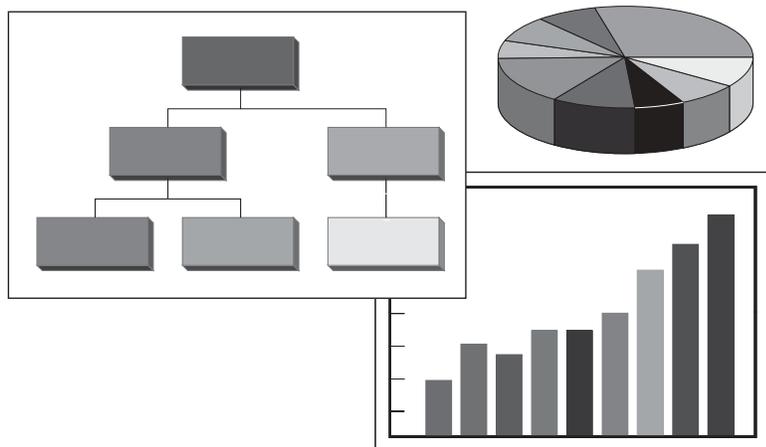
- ◆ Even when your evaluation findings are not what you hoped, you can frame your presentation of findings in a positive light. Sullivan (1998) suggests avoiding words like “problem,” “mistake,” “error,” or “failure” and, instead, using words like “obstacle,” “difficulty,” “challenge,” “unexpected,” and “complication.” In a report of findings, provide information about what you will be doing differently to avoid these results in the future. This is a critical part of using evaluation findings to fuel your future efforts.
- ◆ Make sure you have not revealed the identities of any evaluation participants. That is, be careful not to link particular feedback to particular council members.

Mapping Critical Council Events

Mapping critical events can be an excellent way to add meaning to your findings and better understand the context of the changes that do occur. Critical events refer to first time events; changes in resources; changes in staff or leadership; changes in policy, practice or policy implementation; and major activities (e.g., training or a media campaign, and/or public recognition).¹⁵ Keeping detailed records about these critical events can help you understand the context of changes in your community. This information can be gathered from annual reports of activity, including at least the nature of the activity and when it occurred. Once you have this information you can map it onto data that you have gathered over time.

For example, let’s revisit the figure we created to look at **internal** versus **external** activities. In Figure 4, you can see that external activities began to increase when critical stakeholders joined the council and that they peaked when the council received funding for community education.

You can also look at critical events in relation to other changes over time, including arrest rates and shelter usage (see Figures 5 and 6). Keep in mind, though, that mapping the critical event does **not** necessarily **explain why** an event occurred, but tells you that they coincided. While mapping critical events can help you explain your findings, they also must be interpreted with caution.



¹⁵ Source: Chavis (1999); Fawcett, Foster & Francisco (1997).

Figure 4: Mapping Critical Events

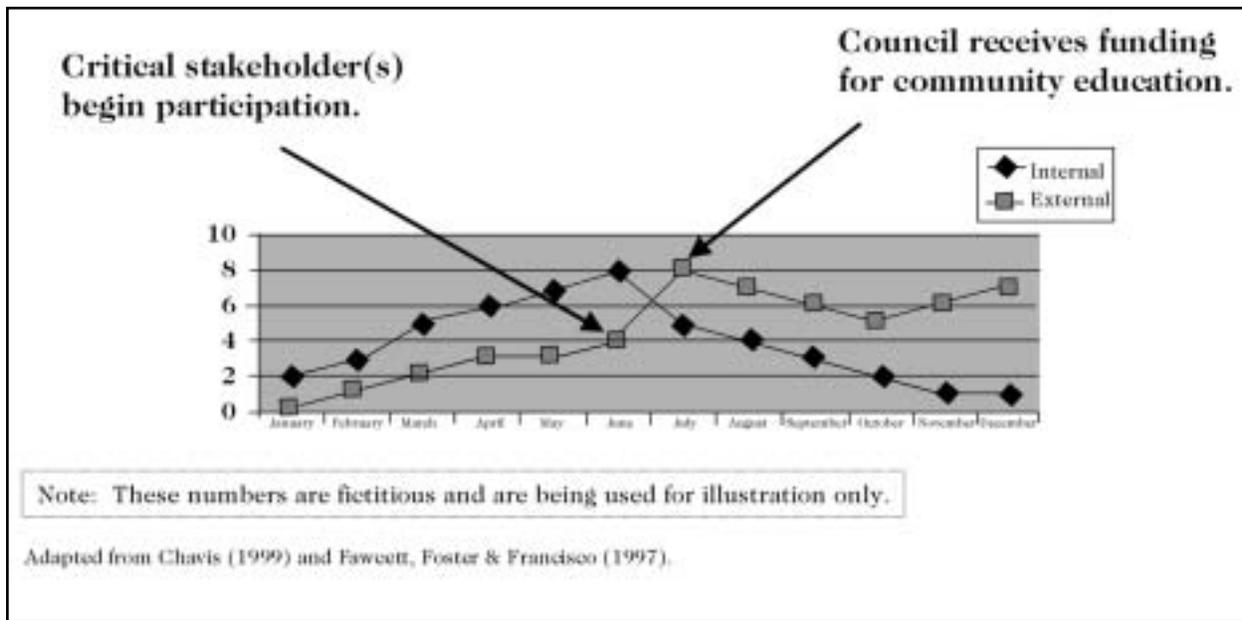


Figure 5: Mapping Critical Events

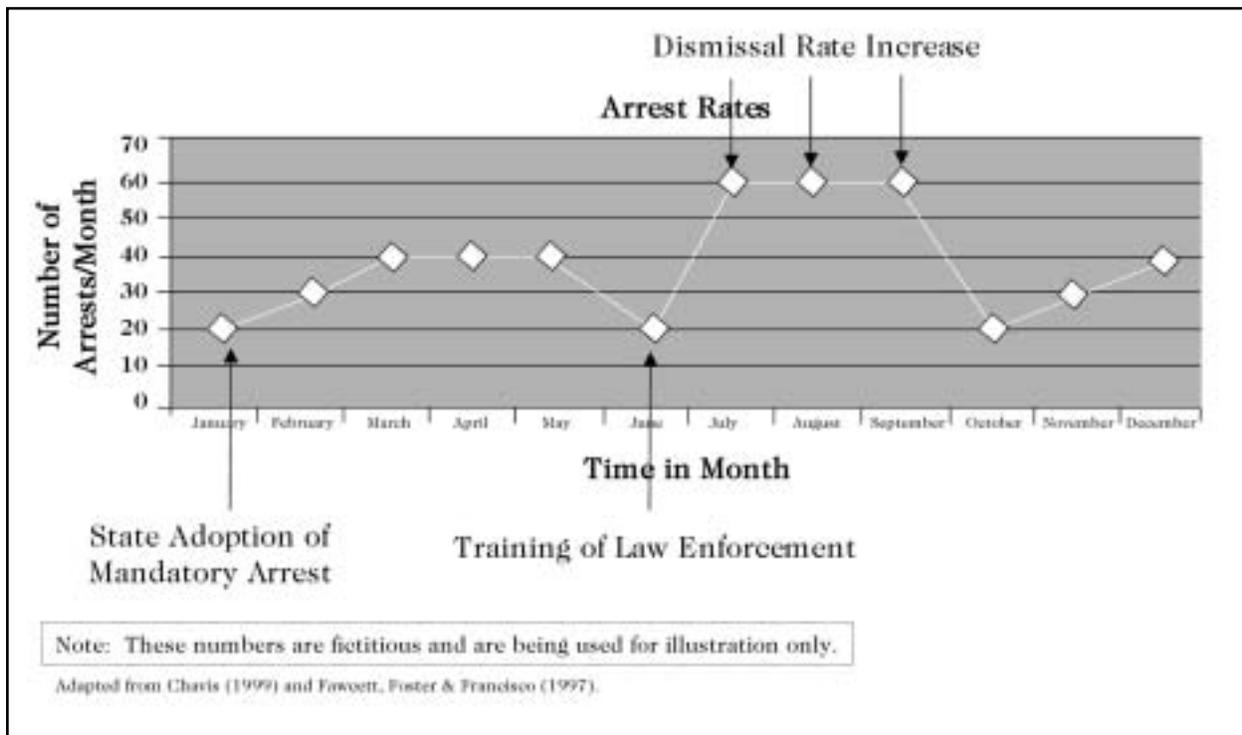
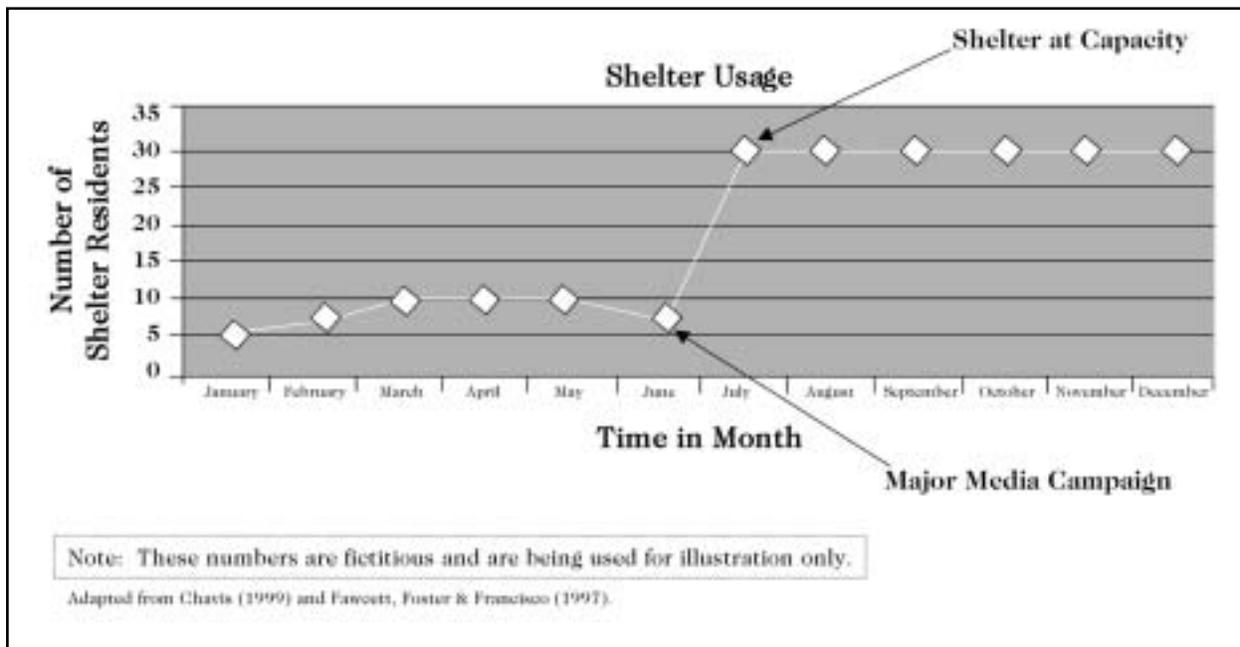


Figure 5: Mapping Critical Events on Shelter Usage



Using Evaluation Findings

There are many ways that you can use your evaluation findings. They can help you:

- ◆ Highlight ways to improve your coordinated community response efforts by identifying where you need to make changes. Remember, even seemingly disappointing or negative findings can be cast in a positive light because they provide you with information to guide your future direction.
- ◆ Validate your approach to creating a coordinated community response. You may find that your council is on the right track. Use these findings to encourage future funding, to attract new members and to get the attention of stakeholders who have the power to make changes in your community.

Conclusion

As a member of a domestic violence coordinating council, you are undertaking important steps to stimulate community change. It is important that you track your efforts. This manual provides you with an overview of some of the ways you can track council effectiveness including:

- ◆ the quality of the **internal climate** of the council (e.g., the degree to which your council has a shared mission, effective conflict resolution and shared decision-making)
- ◆ the quality of the council **infrastructure** (e.g., the degree to which your council has adequate organizational structures, membership and leadership)
- ◆ the breadth and nature of council activities
- ◆ the shorter-term **outcomes** associated with the council's collective work (e.g., the degree to which the council has improved communication among key stakeholders)

Evaluation in each of these areas can provide you with important information about your capacity to collaborate effectively, your collective action and what you have achieved. Keep in mind, while collaboration and self-evaluation can be overwhelming at times, the effort you put into each is likely to reap great benefits.

Glossary of Terms¹⁶

Aggregate data	The combined or total responses across individuals. Data are often aggregated by calculating a mean.
Anonymous	Unknown. In the case of outcome evaluation, this means you do not know who answered the questions. For example, questionnaires left in locked boxes are anonymous.
Archival data collection	Collecting data from previously existing records or written material (e.g., service delivery records, police reports).
Baseline data	Data that demonstrate how things were prior to a change being implemented; data collected before a program or policy is put into place (sometimes called time one data).
Closed-ended question	A question with a set number of responses from which to choose.
Coding form	A form used to systematically record information from files (archives) or during direct observation.
Confidential	You do know (or can find out) who the responses came from, but you are committed to keeping this information to yourself. A woman who participates in a focus group is not anonymous, but she expects her responses to be kept confidential.
Data	Information collected in a systematic way that is used to draw conclusions about process or outcome. NOTE: the word data is plural for datum (a single piece of information), which is why, when presenting results, sentences should read “the data were collected” instead of “the data was collected.”
Demographic data	Background and personal information (e.g., age, ethnicity, socio-economic status) gathered for evaluation or statistical purposes.
Descriptive statistics	Basic statistical information including the mean, median, mode, range of scores and frequencies.
Frequencies	Refers to the number (or percent) of participants who offered a particular response.
Direct observation	Systematically collecting information via observation.
Key informant	An individual who is particularly well-suited and representative of a broader group to provide you with information. Typically, an adequate number of key informants is chosen to represent a range of viewpoints or experience (e.g., people with different roles within organizations).
Measurement instrument	Also called “measure” or “instrument,” this is the tool used to collect the data. Questionnaires, face-to-face interviews, and

¹⁶ Adapted from Sullivan (998).

	telephone interviews are all measurement instruments.
Mean	The “average” response, obtained by adding all responses to a question and dividing by the total number of responses.
Median	The “middle” response, obtained by choosing the score that is at the mid-point of the distribution. Half the scores are above the median and half are below. In the case of an even number of scores, the median is obtained by taking the mean (average) of the two middle scores.
Mode	The response chosen by the largest number of respondents.
Open-ended question	A question that invites a reply from the participant in his/her own words; a question without set responses.
Outcome	An end (intended or unintended) result of a program. For purposes of evaluation, this needs to be a result that can be observed and measured.
Outcome evaluation	Assesses the measurable impact your program is having.
Process	How something happens; the step-by-step procedure through which something is accomplished.
Process evaluation	Assesses the degree to which your program is operating as intended.
Qualitative data	Information gathered in an “open-ended” fashion, where the respondent has the opportunity to provide details in her or his own words.
Quantitative data	Information gathered in a structured way that can be categorized numerically. Questionnaires and interviews involving response categories that can be checked off or circled are collecting quantitative data.
Sociogram	A visual map of connections among individuals and/or organizations. Can include information about the nature (e.g., sharing information, making referrals) and frequency of contact (daily, weekly and monthly).
Time one data	When data are collected at multiple points in time, time one refers to the first point in time when data were collected. Also see baseline data.
Verbatim	Word for word; in a participant’s own words.

Evaluation Resources

The “Community Tool Box” can be found at <http://ctb.lsi.ukans.edu>. This website provides a wealth of excellent information on evaluation, community development and community collaboration. You can use a search engine to troubleshoot problems and find useful information.

For evaluating domestic violence shelter programs, in particular, an outstanding resource is *Outcome Evaluation Strategies for Domestic Violence Programs: A Practical Guide*, published by the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence and authored by Cris M. Sullivan, Ph.D., 1998. Call (800) 537-2238 to order.

A detailed summary of evaluation strategies can be found in *Evaluating Collaboratives: Reaching the Potential*, published by the University of Wisconsin-Extension Office of Program Development and Evaluation. Print copies are available from 613 Extension Building, 432 North Lake Street, Madison, WI, 53706 for \$15. Free copies are available via PDF on the web at <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/evaluation/evaldocs.html>.

Butterfoss, F. (1998). Coalition Effectiveness Inventory (CEI) Self-Assessment Tool. Center for Pediatric Research; Center for Health Promotion, South Carolina, DHEC, 1994. This is a very useful inventory which includes items for assessing coalition participants, characteristics (leaders, members), structures, and processes as well as the stages of coalition development. To order this free inventory contact Dr. Fran Butterfoss via email fbutterf@chkd.com.

Fawcett, S., Foster, D., & Francisco, V. (1997) provide a great overview of some strategies that can be employed in their chapter “Monitoring and Evaluation of Coalition Activities and Success.” This chapter can be found in G. Kaye & T. Wolff (Eds.) *From the Ground Up: A Workbook on Coalition Building and Community Development*. To order this manual: http://www.compartners.org/order/from_ground_up.shtml.

The *Coalition Self-Assessment Survey: A Manual for Users* is available from Dr. Shoshanna Sofaer, P.h.D., School of Public Affairs, Baruch College, 17 Lexington Avenue, Box C-401, New York, NY, 10010. This survey is oriented toward substance abuse coalitions, but could be more broadly applied to coalitions with other purposes.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Measurement Instruments to Copy

Appendix B

Feedback Form

Appendix A

Sample Measurement Instruments to Copy (including instructions for each section)

Shared Influence in Decision-Making

Below are several statements about how decisions are made within councils. Circle the number to the right of each statement that shows how accurately you think each statement describes decision-making within your council.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The input of all active council members influences decisions the council makes.	1	2	3	4	5	6
When making decisions, the council is responsive to all of the viewpoints represented on the council.	1	2	3	4	5	6
The council does not move forward until all input is heard.	1	2	3	4	5	6
If a council member shares a dissenting opinion at council meetings, his/her perspective is considered important.	1	2	3	4	5	6
The general membership has real decision-making control over the policies and actions of the council.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Presence of a Shared Mission

Below are several statements about your council's mission. Circle the number to the right of each statement that shows how accurately each statement represents your council.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My council has developed a mission that is shared and supported by all council members.	1	2	3	4	5	6
Council members have a shared vision regarding what changes are needed in the community's response to domestic violence.	1	2	3	4	5	6
Council members have a shared understanding of domestic violence.	1	2	3	4	5	6
Council members are working together to achieve a common goal.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Organizational Tools

Please indicate whether or not your council currently employs each of the organizational tools listed below (in column 1) and the degree to which it is effectively utilized (in column 3).

Organizational Tools	Please circle YES or NO for each	To what degree is this tool utilized? 1. Not at all 2. A little 3. Somewhat 4. Very much N/A Not Applicable
Does the council...	YES NO	
have a written agenda?	YES NO	
record and distribute?	YES NO	
have bylaws/rules of operation?	YES NO	
have a misuse statement in writing?	YES NO	
have goals and objectives in writing?	YES NO	
have regular meetings?	YES NO	
have an organizational chart?	YES NO	
have written job/role descriptions?	YES NO	
have a core planning group?	YES NO	
have subcommittees or workgroups?	YES NO	
have established processes for decision-making?	YES NO	
have established processes for problem-solving	YES NO	
and conflict resolution?	YES NO	
have established processes for resource allocation?	YES NO	
have established mechanisms for process and impact evaluation?	YES NO	
have a mechanism established for accountability of members completing assignments in a timely manner?	YES NO	
have a mechanism in place to encourage accountability among member organizations?	YES NO	
have a mechanism in place to encourage accountability among non-member organizations in the community?	YES NO	
have a mechanism for new member orientation?	YES NO	
have a mechanism for training new and old members?	YES NO	
have an advisory group made up of domestic violence survivors?	YES NO	

Adapted with permission from Butterfoss' (1998) Coalition Effectiveness Inventory (CEI) Self-Assessment Tool. Center for Pediatric Research; Center for Health Promotion, South Carolina, DHEC, 1994.

Individual Member Participation

Organization you represent: _____

In the last year, how many council meetings have you attended? _____

Approximately how many **hours per week** have you **spent on council activities outside of council meetings**? Please check one.

<input type="checkbox"/> 0 to 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 7 to 9
<input type="checkbox"/> 4 to 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 10+

Council Membership

For each member organization below please indicate whether they are currently (1) an “official member” (i.e., they consistently participate in council meetings and activities). Then, indicate the degree to which they actively participate.

Organization	Current Official Member	Active Member	To what extent has the member organization actively engaged in council activities in the last six months? 1. Not at all 2. A little 3. Somewhat 4. Very much
Batterer Intervention	YES NO	YES NO	
Child Protective Services	YES NO	YES NO	
Circuit Court (Judge)	YES NO	YES NO	
District Court (Judge)	YES NO	YES NO	
Domestic Violence Shelter/Service Provider	YES NO	YES NO	
Health Care Organizations	YES NO	YES NO	
Legal Aid	YES NO	YES NO	
Business	YES NO	YES NO	
Police Department	YES NO	YES NO	
Mental Health Organization	YES NO	YES NO	
Religious or Faith-based Organization	YES NO	YES NO	
Probation	YES NO	YES NO	
Prosecuting Attorney's Office – Prosecuting Attorney	YES NO	YES NO	
Prosecuting Attorney's Office – Victims' Rights Advocate	YES NO	YES NO	
School Administrator Educator	YES NO	YES NO	
Social Services Agency (e.g., FIA)	YES NO	YES NO	
Other:	YES NO	YES NO	
Other:	YES NO	YES NO	
Other:	YES NO	YES NO	
Other:	YES NO	YES NO	

Council Activities: Domestic Violence Response Handbook

Please check the box that corresponds with your answer for each question below.

In the last six months, how often have you used the handbook to make a referral to or for a survivor?

- not at all
- 1 to 2 times
- 3 to 4 times
- 5 or more times

How useful has the handbook been in helping you identify needed resources?

- not at all
- a little
- somewhat
- very useful

How easy is it to understand the information in the handbook?

- not at all
- a little
- somewhat
- very easy

Is there any information missing? If yes, please specify: _____

Collaboration and Communication

Below are statements describing the effects a council may have on relationships among stakeholders responding to domestic violence. Please circle the number to the right of each statement that shows how accurately it represents the effect your council has had.

The council has:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
increased the ability of organizations to coordinate their efforts.	1	2	3	4	5	6
increased members' knowledge about each other's organizations.	1	2	3	4	5	6
increased members' respect for each other's work.	1	2	3	4	5	6
increased members' knowledge of other members' roles and limitations.	1	2	3	4	5	6
resulted in agencies working together more efficiently.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Exchange of Information, Resources and/or Clients

The purpose of the following table is to capture how frequently you have contact with the varied organizations. Three types of contact are being examined: (1) the exchange of information – any communication where you received or provided information regarding an ongoing domestic violence case or regarding the community response to domestic violence; (2) making referrals – instances in which you directed a survivor of domestic violence to contact the organization for assistance or information; and (3) receiving referrals – instances in which someone from the organization directed a survivor of domestic violence to contact your organization for assistance or information.

1. Write in your organization's name.
2. Indicate the number of times in the last month that you exchanged information, made a referral or received a referral, respectively, from each organization listed in the left column.

Your Agency Name	On average, in the last six months, how many times per week have you...		
Agency Name	exchanged information with the _____?'	made a referral to the _____?	received a referral from the _____?
Local Domestic Violence Shelter Program			
Local Church			
Law Enforcement Agency			

¹⁷ Before distributing this grid to evaluation participants to complete, add the names of stakeholder groups and/or organizations in your community among which you want to track connections. For example, you might include law enforcement agencies, faith-based organizations, local businesses, schools, etc.

Knowledge of and Access to Community Resources (Survivors)

Please answer the following questions regarding each of the resources listed below. Place your response in the box that corresponds with the question for each resource.

Community Resources	In the last four months, did you need _____? Please indicate Yes or No below.	[If yes] Did you know where to get _____? 1. No idea where to go 2. A little bit of a problem 3. Somewhat of an idea where to go 4. Certain where to go	[If yes] How much of a problem was it to get _____? 1. Not a problem at all 2. A little bit of an idea where to go 3. Somewhat of a problem 4. Very much of a problem
Emergency Shelter			
Housing			
Food			
Clothing			
Material Goods			
Financial Assistance			
Legal Aid			
Childcare			
Counseling			
Social Support			
Transportation			
Medical Assistance			
Order of Protection			
Other:			
Other:			

Knowledge of and Access to Community Resources (Other Stakeholders)

Please answer the following questions regarding each of the resources listed below. Place your response in the box that corresponds with the question for each resource. If you worked with multiple survivors in the last four months, respond with your average impressions across survivors.

Community Resources	In the last four months, did you need to access _____ with or on behalf of a survivor? Please indicate Yes or No below.	[If yes] Did you know where to get _____? 1. No idea where to go 2. A little bit of a problem 3. Somewhat of an idea where to go 4. Certain where to go	[If yes] How much of a problem was it to get _____? 1. Not a problem at all 2. A little bit of an idea where to go 3. Somewhat of a problem 4. Very much of a problem
Emergency Shelter			
Housing			
Food			
Clothing			
Material Goods			
Financial			
Assistance			
Legal Aid			
Childcare			
Counseling			
Social Support			
Transportation			
Medical Assistance			
Order of Protection			
Other:			
Other:			

Changes in Policy and Practice

Below are statements describing the effects a council may have on the community. Please circle the number to the right of each statement that shows how accurately each statement represents the effect your council has had.

The council has:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
addressed shortcomings in practices in community agencies regarding their response to domestic violence (e.g., police, probation, prosecution, domestic violence shelter program).	1	2	3	4	5	6
influenced the policy of agencies regarding their response to domestic violence.	1	2	3	4	5	6
influenced changes in practice in community agencies that have increased batterer accountability.	1	2	3	4	5	6
influenced changes in practice in community agencies that have increased women's safety.	1	2	3	4	5	6
been effective at facilitating needed changes in our community regarding our response to domestic violence.	1	2	3	4	5	6
stimulated policy changes within my agency regarding our response to domestic violence.	1	2	3	4	5	6
got people talking about domestic violence.	1	2	3	4	5	6
influenced changes in practice in community agencies that have increased for women and their children's safety.	1	2	3	4	5	6
consistently moved toward meeting its goals.	1	2	3	4	5	6
been productive in accomplishing what it set out to do.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Appendix B

Feedback Form

To continue to improve this manual we need your feedback! Please take a few moments to share you perceptions with us.

1. What did you find most helpful about this evaluation manual?

What would you keep the same?

2. What did you find least helpful? What would you change or add?

3. Would you recommend this manual to individuals working on other councils?
 YES NO

If yes, for what reasons would you recommend it?

If no, for what reasons would you not recommend it?

Please rate each of the following by circling the appropriate response:

To what degree was...	not at all	a little	somewhat	very much
information clearly presented?	1	2	3	4
an adequate range of topics included?	1	2	3	4
this material relevant to your evaluation activities?	1	2	3	4

Please mail to:

Nicole Allen, 603 E. Daniel Street, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Champaign, IL 61820

Or email your comments to allenne@uiuc.edu.

Thank you for your feedback.



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