



## Working Across Disciplines to Protect Victims

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## Objectives

- Collaborate with agencies and advocates to ensure victim access to services.
- Educate allied professionals about domestic violence and your role in the system response.
- Identify evidence and witnesses that are necessary to keeping victims safe and holding offenders accountable.

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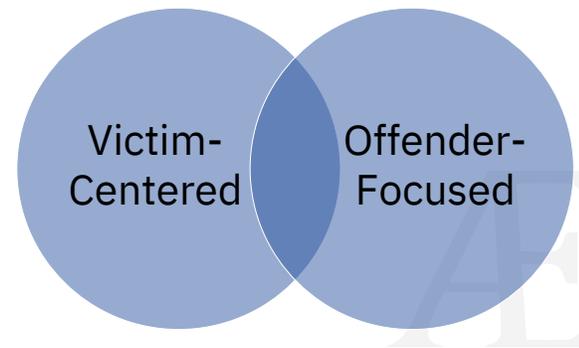
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## Mission



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## State v. Adams

*Additional Information*

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## Additional Information

Assume that Eva disappears 3 days before trial and cannot be located. The officer assigned to the case wants you to call the local shelter to determine if Eva is “safe” or whether she is the possible victim of foul play. You are the prosecutor and you know the victim has been working with a particular community advocate. When you contact the community advocate, she will not tell you whether or not Eva is at the shelter. When you contact the shelter, it also will not confirm whether or not Eva is there.

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## Poll & Discussion

Who do you call next?

- A. Law enforcement
- B. The victim’s mother
- C. The defense attorney
- D. The community advocate (again)

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## Victim-Centered Approach



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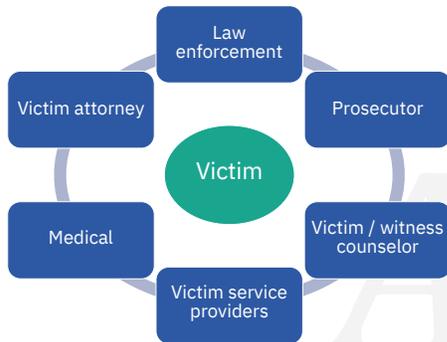
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## Victim-Centered Approach



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## Victim-Centered

- Awareness of the central role victims / survivors play in the process
- Consideration of their safety, privacy, and well-being throughout the process
- Ensures access to services and information

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## Victim-Centered

Cont'd

- Don't assume that the victim is lying because the allegations seem implausible
- Appreciate how difficult it is for a domestic violence victim to come forward
- Give victims the benefit of the doubt and conduct a thorough investigation
- Believe the victim unless, and until, the investigation shows otherwise

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## Victim-Centered

Cont'd

- Don't blame victim for the fact that they were abused
- Create a non-judgmental atmosphere that promotes truthful disclosure
- Consider immunity or amnesty policies to address collateral consequences

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## Encourage Truthful Disclosures

- Create an environment where victims feel safe
- Develop policies for how to address crimes that are disclosed during interview, such as
  - Alcohol offenses
  - Possessory drug offenses
  - Child abuse
  - Crimes associated with sexual exploitation and trafficking

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## The Decision to Participate

The Story of Rachel

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## Discussion

- What were all the collateral consequences to Rachel calling the police that day?
- Do you think Rachel expected all of this to happen?
- How could the system have made it easier for Rachel to participate?

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## Understand Barriers

- Victims face barriers, both systemic and batterer-created, which may reduce their ability to participate
- Prosecutors have a role in breaking down barriers to facilitate victim participation and safety
- Victim participation and safety may be mutually exclusive

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## Meeting the Victim's Needs

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## Coordinated Community Response (CCR)

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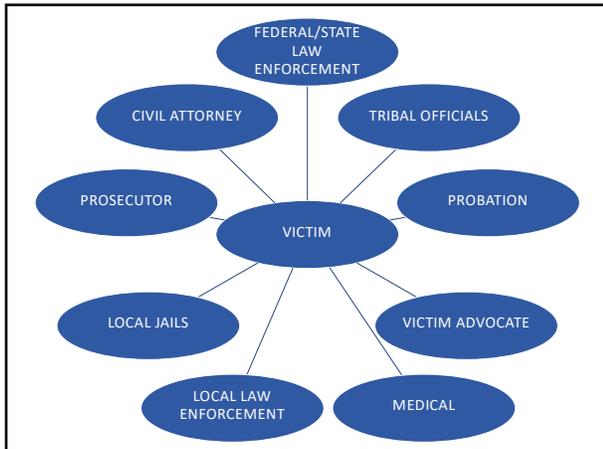
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## Possible Intersections

- On call prosecutors
- Task force or multidisciplinary team meetings
- Profile interviews
- Review discovery / *Brady* disclosures
- Communication on case updates
- Follow-up investigation
- Safety planning
- Pretrial interviews
- Trial strategy
- Case review / debrief

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## Criminal Justice Intervention

- Coercive control
- Power imbalance
- Other theories: safety and accountability framework
- Controlling illegal activity of the offender, not controlling victims

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## Enhancing Safety Through Accountability

- Cross-train; know roles of all partners
- Integrate non-governmental DV programs into your coordinated community response
- Establish policies on confidential information
- The prosecutor is one part of the monitoring process

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## Key Elements

- Broad concern for victim and community safety
  - Privacy
  - Confidentiality
  - Collateral consequences
- Thorough and thoughtful investigations
- Informed and accurate charging decisions
- Aggressive and ethical litigation

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## Role of Prosecutors

- Case Priority
- Prosecutor Assignment
- Designated Prosecutor Training
- Terminology
- Privacy

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## Role of Law Enforcement

- Protect the victim
- Facilitate criminal reporting process
- Attempt to apprehend the suspect
- Provide referrals to community resources

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## Role of Advocacy

Advocates offer victims information about the different options available to them and support victims' decision-making. Advocates do not tell victims what to do. Advocates are committed to maintaining the highest possible levels of confidentiality in their communications with victims.

*What is a victim advocate?* THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME, <https://www.victimsofcrime.org/help-for-crime-victims/get-help-bulletins-for-crime-victims/what-is-a-victim-advocate-> (last visited December 18, 2018)

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## Victim Service Professionals

(VSPs)

- Victim / witness counselor
- Victim service coordinator
- Victim advocate
- Victim specialist
- Case manager
- Medical professionals
- Lawyers

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## Victim Privacy

Privacy

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## Goals of the CCR

- Victim safety and autonomy
- Offender accountability
- System accountability and responsibility

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## An Effective CCR

- Written policies that centralize victim safety and offender accountability
- Practices that link intervening practitioners and agencies
- Entity that tracks and monitors cases and assesses data
- Interagency process that brings practitioners together to dialogue and resolve problems

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## Effective CCR

Cont'd

- Central role for victim advocates, shelters, and victims / survivors in the process
- Shared philosophy about domestic violence
- System that shifts responsibility for victim safety from the victim to the system

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## Examples

- Training for allied professionals on domestic violence dynamics
- Response protocols when a DV incident is reported
- Creative solutions to chronic systemic issues
- Fatality review when a DV incident results in death

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## Creating a CCR

- Work with system-based advocates to identify partners in your community involved with domestic violence
- Prosecutor's office can invite core group of allied professionals to meet and discuss working together to improve the system response
- Each core group member can give a brief presentation about the work they do at first meeting
- Each core member can identify system issues
- Develop mission statement, MOU's, next steps

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**JUSTICE**



**COLLABORATION**

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## Implications

- Do we have an interagency approach and collective intervention goals? Are we adhering to them with this particular intervention?
- Does our community build attention to context and severity of abuse into every intervention? Did we in this intervention?

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## Implications, cont'd

- Does our community recognize most DV is a patterned crime requiring continuing engagement with victims and offenders? Is this intervention an engagement?
- Does our community ensure sure and swift consequences for continued abuse? How does this intervention measure up?

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## Implications, cont'd

- Do we use the power of our justice system to send messages of help and accountability? What message did this intervention send?
- Do our interveners act in ways that reduce unintended consequences and disparate impact on victims and offenders? What about this intervention?

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## What does your CCR look like?

Does your jurisdiction have a CCR?

- Domestic Violence
- Sexual Violence
- DV / SV
- Child abuse
- Stalking

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## Going Forward

Collaborate with advocates and other allied professionals.

Develop victim-centered comprehensive protocols.

Provide multidisciplinary, all-inclusive, and continued training.

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