

# DALLAS POLICE DEPARTMENT

## INTIMATE PARTNER DOMESTIC VIOLENCE REDUCTION PLAN

### Background

Domestic violence (DV), and in particular intimate partner domestic violence (IPDV) is a multifaceted problem that calls for a multidisciplinary approach to reducing its prevalence and harmful effects. Because domestic assaults primarily occur indoors, they are not amenable to high visibility policing strategies or even passive surveillance (e.g. cameras) used to monitor public places. Moreover, as both a public safety and a public health problem, domestic violence is difficult to treat, and many treatment or prevention programs have not proven successful at reducing serious domestic violence by chronic or severe batterers (Buzawa & Buzawa, 2003; Sampson, 2013).

There are no easy solutions to reducing IPDV because it is rooted in socioeconomic and structural conditions that are long-standing in many American cities, including Dallas. Risk factors for IPDV include **age** (16-24 at highest risk), **gender** (mostly women), **poverty** (the poorest women and those receiving government assistance most at risk), **race** (victimization 35% higher among African-American women compared to Whites; Native-Americans also at higher risk), **prior victimization**, **alcohol use**, **impulsivity**, and **physical abuse** experienced in childhood (Sampson, 2013; Schafer et al., 2004). Thus, while the Dallas Police Department (DPD) plays an important role in responding to domestic violence calls, arresting offenders, enforcing protective orders, and protecting victims, it should be viewed as one component of a system-wide approach required to address the needs of victims, hold offenders accountable, and reduce the structural conditions associated with domestic violence.

It is important to note that the Dallas community has already done much work to address domestic violence in the city. Established in 1987, the Dallas Domestic Violence Task Force is focused on the prevention and eradication of DV, preventing lethality, and helping to coordinate city and NGO responses to domestic violence across the city (DV Task Force, 2021). In addition, Dallas County maintains a DV Fatality Review Team that conducts system-focused reviews of intimate partner homicides and murder-suicides in the Metroplex. Finally, The DV Task Force itself is composed of elected officials and representatives from DPD, city and county prosecutors, courts, corrections, advocacy groups, service providers, religious organizations, and volunteer groups. The Task Force has been focused on DV in Dallas for more than 30 years and produces annual reports on DV trends and responses in the community. Over the the past several years, the Task Force has made a number of policy recommendations to improve DV response and reduce victimization. Below is a representative list of suggestions drawn from annual Task Force reports (DV Task Force, 2015-16, 2018, 2020):

- Improve the tracking of and response to DV within the LGBTQ+ community
- Improved training for DPD on the linkage between DV and animal abuse
- Better training on the use of the lethality assessment tool
- Better implementation of the firearms surrender program

- Improved emergency transportation options for victims
- Increase shelter and transitional space
- Creation of a dedicated problem-solving court for protective orders
- Faster service of DV-related warrants
- Faster prosecution of DV cases
- Count, study, and support survivors of near-lethal domestic violence assaults
- Provide the lethality assessment profile (LAP) to magistrate judges and probation officers
- Audit the LAP annually
- Reform the DV bond process

The remainder of this DPD strategy document builds upon the work done by the Task Force, Fatality Review Team, and the many stakeholders who have worked tirelessly for over 30 years to reduce domestic violence in Dallas. While the document is appropriately focused on DPD's role in enforcing the law, preventing DV where possible, and reducing DV victimization, it begins with a recommendation to systematically track the implementation and impact of the reform recommendations included in the annual Task Force reports.

## **Goals**

- Lower IPDV recidivism and overall reported IPDV in Dallas
- Reduce IPDV-related calls for service
- Reduce IPDV-related homicides and victim injuries

## **Strategies**

### **Track and Evaluate Implementation of Task Force Recommendations**

Since 2015, the Dallas Domestic Violence Task Force has produced periodic annual reports that, among other things, contain recommendations for improving domestic violence response and reducing victimization. However, it is not clear that the Task Force is tracking its recommendations, assessing their implementation, or evaluating their impacts. The annual reports are filled with useful suggestions and recommendations that potentially could go a long way in reducing the prevalence and harm caused by DV in the community, but there does not appear to be a mechanism in place for tracking their implementation or impact.

For its part, the DPD will commit to reviewing all DPD-related Task Force recommendations from the annual reports (since the inaugural report in 2015-16) to determine whether they have been implemented by the DPD and/or to identify barriers to implementation. DPD will report its findings from this internal review to the Task Force and produce any data or documents needed to assess the impact of the DPD-related recommendations on their intended outcomes. Moving forward, the Task Force should annually report the extent to which its recommendations from previous years have been implemented by affected agencies/organizations, and it should undertake a formal impact evaluation of at least a subset of its recommendations based on

stakeholder input. DPD will assist and facilitate those evaluations whenever possible and will act upon their results as needed or appropriate.

### **Develop Tailored Police Responses to IPDV Based on Offender and Victim Risk**

Experts are generally in agreement that because of the complexity of the domestic violence problem, comprehensive and collaborative responses to reducing DV are necessary. A single intervention strategy is unlikely to work, and even integrated strategies may not be sufficient to deter persistent batterers (Sampson, 2013). Comprehensive strategies involve focused education or public awareness campaigns<sup>1</sup>, enlisting the help of peers and neighbors to call the police, screening for DV in hospitals and physicians' offices, referral of victims or those at-risk by health care professionals, clear messaging to both offenders and victims about consequences of DV, lowering barriers to obtaining protective orders, arrest when warranted, meaningful pretrial release conditions to reduce the likelihood of recidivism and re-victimization (e.g. home visits, electronic monitoring), prosecution even without victim cooperation, and evidence-based treatment programs for offenders (Sampson & Scott, 1999; Sampson, 2013).

From a policing perspective, evidence from the UK and the U.S. over a 20-year period suggests that a tiered response strategy has the greatest promise for reducing repeated DV victimization (Hanmer et al., 1999; Sechrist & Weil, 2017). In the Yorkshire, England Killingbeck Project, police, working with researchers, implemented a three-tiered approach used with both offenders and victims after each subsequent police response to the same address. Offenders were subjected to increasingly intense police/prosecutorial responses, and victims were provided increasing levels of protection in cases of repeated victimization. The Project consisted of four operational elements:

- Equal focus on victims and offenders
- Involvement of all officers
- Low resource requirements
- Interagency involvement

An evaluation of the Project found a statistically significant and substantively meaningful reduction in repeat victimization after implementation, and more women received police assistance in the first instance (after the first police response) than in the year prior to implementation (Hanmer et al, 1999).

In the U.S., an innovative adaptation of the Killingbeck strategy has been successfully used to reduce domestic violence-related measures in High Point, North Carolina and later replicated in Lexington, NC (Sechrist et al., 2016). Adapted from the focused deterrence literature and High Point's success in using focused deterrence to reduce violent crime more broadly, the High Point Police Department, working with researchers from the University of North Carolina Greensboro,

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<sup>1</sup> These could include school-based DV education/awareness classes or public information campaigns such as social media advertising or messaging in bars, restrooms, buses, police vehicles, or other highly visible public places likely to reach potential victims in targeted geographic areas.

implemented a tiered response strategy to address persistently high rates of domestic violence in High Point, despite large decreases in violent crime throughout the city. Offenders were classified in four tiers – A through D – and were treated differently depending upon their assigned levels. The most serious offenders (A level) typically had three or more prior domestic violence charges, other non-DV violent crime convictions, and were convicted felons. These offenders were prosecuted immediately, and sometimes federally when federal charging criteria were met, and the highest charges carrying the maximum sentences were sought. A community-based domestic violence coalition – the High Point Community Against Violence (HPCAV) – would often be present at the offender’s initial court appearance, and prosecutors would seek high or no bail to incapacitate the offender and protect the victim prior to trial (Sechrist et al., 2016).

B-level offenders were those facing their second DV charge and were often on probation from a previous DV conviction. They were invited (or required as a condition of probation) to attend a community meeting with law enforcement, prosecutors, and HPCAV representatives where they were confronted and put on notice that DV would no longer be tolerated. At these meetings, resources were made available to them help them turn their lives around, and they were encouraged to take advantage of them. They also were provided a custom “notification letter” that spelled out their unique legal exposure and what would happen to them if they continued to engage in violent behavior with an intimate partner. C-level offenders were first-time DV offenders. They received verbal notification of the consequences of further DV through one-on-one notifications by DV detectives and HPCAV representatives within 48 hours of arrest. Subsequently, they were monitored by DV detectives for all new offenses, but particularly violent offenses or new DV-related incidents, which would result in their upgrade to B-level offenders. Finally, D-level individuals were those involved in a DV-related call for service where no arrest was made. They were placed on a “watch list” and were monitored for future DV by specialized DV detectives. They also were contacted by specialized DV officers the next day and provided a letter notifying them of the High Point DV strategy and their placement on the DV watch list. Any subsequent arrest for DV would result in upgrading the individual to a C-level offender (Sechrist et al., 2016).

Victims of DV also were notified of the strategy and provided resources prior to when offenders were notified. As with offenders, notification and monitoring of victims varied according to four similar victim levels (A through D). A-level victims, however, received no specialized notice on the theory that they had already been made aware (and probably multiple times) of how to avail themselves of community resources for victims of DV. B-level victims were contacted by a victim service provider prior to the offender receiving the call-in notification and re-contacted within a week of the offender notification meeting. Those still in a relationship with their abusers were re-contacted at 30-day intervals up to 90 days later. Risk assessments of these victims were performed and referrals made to Family Services and/or domestic violence shelters. C-level victims were provided victim notification letters by patrol officers. C-level cases also were screened by DV detectives for severity or likelihood of repeat DV and referrals were made as warranted. D-level victims received similar notification letters from patrol officers but were not followed-up with by DV detectives (Sechrist et al., 2016).

The High Point Offender focused Domestic Violence Initiative (HPDVI) aimed to reduce intimate partner domestic violence (IPDV) offender recidivism rates for new domestic violence offenses, reduce victim injuries and DV-related homicides, and reduce DV-related calls for service and repeat calls for service at the same location. An evaluation of HPDVI found that the program was largely successful in reducing IPDV-related calls for service (-20%) compared to pre-intervention levels and reducing reported victim injuries (-20%). The volume of IPDV-related arrests also declined by a similar percentage. The evaluation did not document a reduction in IPDV-related recidivism, but that likely had to do with data shortcomings and the inability of the evaluation team to establish a reliable baseline of pre-intervention recidivism. The one-year post-intervention recidivism rate in High Point of 15.3% was nevertheless quite low compared to typical IPDV recidivism rates reported in the literature, which range from a low of 30% to a high of 80% (Sechrist & Weil, 2018).

### ***IPDV Focused Deterrence in Dallas***

A focused deterrence strategy similar to those implemented in High Point and Lexington, NC is a natural extension of the focused deterrence strategy that makes up the long-term violence reduction component of the 2021 Dallas Violent Crime Reduction Plan. Research demonstrates that chronic domestic batterers also are frequently involved in violence outside the home and that efforts to reduce violence in the community likely will have secondary benefits in reducing domestic violence within targeted communities (Sampson, 2013). Thus, DPD intends to extend its community-based focused deterrence strategy to include an intimate partner domestic violence deterrence strategy based on the Killingbeck (UK) and High Point models. Working with the Dallas Domestic Violence Task Force, Dallas District Attorney, and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Texas when appropriate, DPD will implement a risk-based approach to IPDV offenders and victims based on prior domestic violence history, history of violence outside intimate partner settings, and the lethality assessment protocol. The goals of the strategy are to classify offenders and victims based on risk, clearly and unequivocally communicate to offenders the consequences of future IPDV, use every available resource to prosecute and incapacitate the highest risk offenders, connect IPDV victims to appropriate community-based resources (shelters, transportation, child care, etc.), and consistently follow-up with offenders and victims to message deterrence (offenders) and support (victims and offenders) in an effort to reduce IPDV recidivism, calls for service, and IPDV-related homicides and injuries.

To carry out this strategy, the DPD will develop protocols for classifying IPDV offenders and tailoring responses based on their classification. The highest risk offenders will be arrested and bail will be opposed or a high bail requested consistent with Texas or federal law. For these offenders, DPD will work with county and federal prosecutors (as part of its community-based focused deterrence efforts) to determine where best to file charges and which charges will carry the maximum possible sentences for these chronic offenders. For those with prior IPDV arrests and/or convictions but who are not in the highest risk categories, DPD will work with the Dallas Domestic Violence Task Force, District Attorney, and federal partners to conduct call-in sessions for offenders where they will be educated about the damage caused by IPDV to victims and their families. They will be provided with individualized letters detailing their legal exposure and the likely result of conviction for IPDV-related crimes, and DV detectives will follow-up with them

for a period up to six months<sup>2</sup> after notification to continue the deterrence messaging. At the notification meetings, they will be offered available community-based services appropriate to their circumstances, which may involve counseling, substance abuse referrals, job placement or job training referrals in an effort to help them break the cycle of violence.

Lower risk offenders (those with no or a single prior IPDV arrest) will be provided notification letters by patrol officers and contacted by DV detectives within 48 hours of arrest. They will be tracked by DV detectives and moved up to higher risk categories if they commit further acts of IPDV. Likewise, victims of IPDV will be offered services and support initially by responding patrol officers but also on a follow-up basis by DV unit detectives and/or community-based service providers depending upon risk level. Those involved with higher risk offenders will be tracked and contacted monthly for a period of up to six months while lower risk victims will be followed-up with at least once within 48 hours of calling the police. Referrals will be made for all victims initially by responding patrol officers and also by DV detectives based on lethality screening assessment.

### ***Federal Prosecution***

In 2018, the Western District of Oklahoma (WDOK), as part of its implementation of Project Safe Neighborhoods, began focusing on the enforcement of federal gun laws as a response to domestic violence incidents involving a firearm. 18 U.S.C. § 922 makes it a federal crime for any person subject to a domestic violence-related protection order or prior misdemeanor conviction for domestic violence to possess a firearm. The offense is normally punishable by up to 10 years in prison or up to 15 years without parole if the offender has three or more prior convictions for violent felonies. In partnership with Oklahoma City law enforcement agencies, the county district attorney's office, and a local victim services provider, the WDOK U.S. Attorney's office began prosecuting eligible DV offenders in federal court as a means to break the cycle of violence and protect victims. As of May 2020, 85 individuals had been convicted under the program with an average sentence length of 83 months and 154 firearms had been seized (CNA, 2020).

As part of the risk-based domestic violence reduction strategy outlined above, the DPD intends to partner with the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Texas (NDTX) to implement a similar federal prosecution program for the most serious domestic violence offenders in Dallas who used or were in possession of a firearm at the time of the offense. DPD DV detectives will be trained to work with federal law enforcement partners and the NDTX U.S. Attorney's Office to identify and prepare appropriate cases for federal prosecution, and DPD will enlist the NDTX U.S. Attorney's Office as an active partner in its efforts to reduce domestic violence and incapacitate serious DV offenders.

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<sup>2</sup> Research indicates that offenders are at highest risk for re-offending within the first six months after notification (Sechrist & Weil, 2018).

### ***Implementation and Evaluation***

The goals of the Dallas IPDV Reduction Plan to lower IPDV recidivism, reduce IPDV-related calls for service, and reduce IPDV-involved homicides and victim injuries call first for a robust analysis of IPDV patterns in Dallas to target limited DPD resources on the populations and places where they will be most impactful. Based on known risk factors, IPDV is not uniformly distributed throughout Dallas. As the first step in implementing this Plan, DPD will work with its UTSA research partners to analyze patterns of IPDV offending and victimization in the city over the past three years. Accurately identifying the IPDV patterns in Dallas is critical to implementing the plan in the most impactful parts of the city and within the highest risk populations.

Based on this analysis, the DPD expects to begin fully implementing the IPDV Reduction Plan by summer 2022. This timing will coincide with the beginning of the long-term, focused deterrence component of the overall DPD Violent Crime Reduction Plan, and the two will work in complementary fashion. Over the next six months, DPD also will begin developing protocols with the NDTX U.S. Attorney's Office for identifying and potentially transferring appropriate IPDV cases for federal prosecution. At the same time, the UTSA research team will work with DPD crime analysts and data personnel throughout fall 2021 and spring 2022 to ensure that appropriate data fields are being captured that will allow for the establishment of baseline outcome measures (repeat offending and victimization, injury documentation, and IPDV calls for service) against which change can be measured once the IPDV plan is implemented.

Sampson (2013) provides useful suggestions for specific process and outcomes measures that should be tracked. A representative list includes:

#### ***Process***

- Increased number of chronic/severe batterers incarcerated
- Increased percentage of victims using referral services
- Increased percentage of IPDV calls made by victims rather than others
- Increased follow-up with repeat victims and offenders

#### ***Impact***

- Reduced number of IPDV incidents
- Reduced number of repeated IPDV calls involving repeat victims
- Reduced number of repeat offenders
- Reduction in IPDV-related homicides
- Reduction in IPDV-related injury frequency and severity

UTSA researchers will lead the process and impact evaluations of the DPD IPDV Reduction Plan and will produce reports for public release detailing process implementation, baseline measures, and change over time. The ongoing process evaluation will be used to identify obstacles to implementation and will include recommendations for adjustments to the strategy as needed.

## **Conclusion**

This document serves as the Intimate Partner Domestic Violence Reduction Plan for the Dallas Police Department, and it supplements the overall DPD Violent Crime Reduction Plan published in May 2021. Domestic violence is a complex social problem that is not amenable to easy solutions or quick fixes. As noted above, domestic violence responses that are comprehensive and multidisciplinary have the greatest chance for success. The DPD efforts outlined here, which include risk-based offender and victim responses designed to deter IPDV recidivism and incapacitate chronic and serious offenders, are evidence-based and patterned after successful police and prosecutorial strategies used in other settings; they will be most impactful if previous and future recommendations made by the Dallas Domestic Violence Task Force also are implemented and their effects evaluated. Ultimately, improving the social, economic, and structural determinants of IPDV is key to permanently lowering the incidence of IPDV in Dallas.



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