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Family Violence Units

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In a recent study sponsored by the National Institute of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Tjaden & Thoennes 1998), approximately 25 percent of females and eight percent of males reported being either raped or physically assaulted by a current or former spouse, cohabiting partner, or date. Clearly, when one-third of the population has been a victim of family violence, this crime is a significant social problem. As first responders to calls-for-service, law enforcement is perhaps the component most impacted by family violence incidents. In the past decade, police departments have become more responsive to family violence incidents by developing arrest preferred policies and establishing specialized family violence units. The need to assess improvements prompted this Bulletin which examines the extent and nature of police response to family violence among law enforcement agencies in Texas, reviews the history and background of police response to family violence, and reports the findings of the survey.

History and Background

In less than 25 years, the role of the police in family violence (also referred to as domestic violence or spouse abuse) incidents has changed dramatically. Where it was once considered to be a civil and family matter between the participants, police officers typically chose the least intrusive alternative available when responding to incidents, unless a felony had been committed (Bolton & Bolton 1987; Klinger 1995). Arrest was seen as the last alternative as it was believed that it would break up the family unit (Parnas 1972). Today, however, arrest is increasingly becoming a more common response. This is due in large measure to pro-arrest and mandatory arrest policies adopted by police departments and through legislative mandates. This change was brought about through lawsuits, research, and women's and victims' movements.

Class action lawsuits in New York City and Oakland, Calif., claimed that the arrest-avoidance approach to family violence practiced in these cities denied women equal protection [*Bruno v. Codd* 47 N.Y. 2d 582 (1979); *Scott v. Hart* C76-2395 N. Cal. (1976)]. These lawsuits resulted in both agencies re-writing their family violence response policies to include pro-arrest approaches (Walker 1993). Other lawsuits followed, including one filed against the City of Torrington, Conn., that alleged police officers stood by while a husband assaulted his wife leaving her paralyzed. The police were found liable for the injuries sustained by the victim [*Thurman v. City of Torrington* 595 F. Supp. 1521 D. Conn. (1984)]. These lawsuits and similar ones resulted in police agencies examining their responses to family violence incidents, enforcing protective orders, adopting policies emphasizing arrest, and providing protection to the victim.

Another catalyst for change was the Minneapolis Domestic Violence Experiment (Sherman & Berk 1984) which consisted of assigning officers dispatched to family violence incidents one of three options: advising/mediation, separation, or arrest. Follow-up on the offenders and victims revealed that arrest was more effective in deterring subsequent abuse. This experiment was replicated in Milwaukee, Omaha, Charlotte, Atlanta, Colorado Springs, and Dade County, Florida with mixed results. Media coverage of the Minneapolis Experiment resulted in state legislatures

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mandating and many police departments adopting pro-arrest policies in domestic violence incidents (Hirschel et al. 1999).

Women's and victims' movements focused on domestic violence and the need for the criminal justice system to respond as it would to any violent crime (Friedman & Shulman 1990). In fact, women and victim rights groups were active in filing lawsuits against police departments that did not respond accordingly. Additionally, these groups criticized the family violence crisis intervention team approach, pointing out that police officers were ill-equipped to perform family crisis intervention, that approaches for verbal abuse incidents were inappropriately applied to incidents involving physical abuse, and that the criminal and arrest aspects of the incident were de-emphasized (Langley & Levy 1977; Loving 1980; Stanko 1992). The involvement of social movements brought family violence to the forefront and established a need for a different response to family violence by the community and the criminal justice system.

Police agencies began to take steps to ensure that officers treated family violence as a serious offense, including officer training, adoption of preferred or pro-arrest policies, and development of family violence units. In doing so, police departments acknowledged that family violence was a crime and that special treatment for victims must be incorporated to stop the cycle of violence and reduce police liability (Friedman & Shulman 1990). These changes in the police response to family violence have not escaped Texas law enforcement agencies with many developing family violence units.

The Survey

Surveys were sent to 50 of the largest law enforcement agencies in Texas to ensure that departments most likely to have a designated family violence unit (defined as two or more employees dedicated solely to family violence offenses) were contacted. Thirty-five surveys were returned. However, a completed survey from the Department of Public Safety was excluded from the analysis as their officers primarily assist other agencies in family violence incidents. Thus, 34 agencies were included in this study.

In this Bulletin, family violence is defined as an act by a member of a family or household against another member of the family or household that is intended to result in physical harm, bodily injury, assault or sexual assault, or a threat that reasonably places the member in fear of imminent physical harm, bodily injury, assault or sexual assault. Family members include individuals related by consanguinity or affinity, marriage or former marriage, the biological parents of the same child, or who have cohabited together (*Family Code* 1999).

Characteristics of the sample. Classifying the departments by the number of sworn officers revealed that 13 were in "small" departments (150 or less sworn officers), 15 represented "medium" size departments (151 to 499 sworn officers), and six surveys were returned from "large" departments (500 or more sworn officers). Fifteen responding departments (44%) have a designated family violence unit. As expected, specialized family violence units were located in the medium and large departments. Of the 19 departments without an established unit, seven assign one full-time investigator to address family violence incidents.

Family Violence Incidents and Homicides from 1996 to 1998

Agencies were asked to report the actual or estimated number of family violence incidents that resulted in written reports and the number of family violence-related homicides for 1996, 1997, and 1998. Little variation occurred across the three year span for each individual category of department size.

When the *average* number of written family violence incident reports are summed from all responding agencies, a five percent increase occurred from 1996 (73,490) to 1997 (77,183) and a two percent increase in 1998 (78,907) from 1997 (see Figure 1). This is in contrast to the trend recorded by the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) as part of the Uniform Crime Reporting Program for those same years. In 1997, 181,773 family violence incidents were reported statewide, compared to 181,443 in 1996, a decrease of two percent. During 1998, 175,725 family violence incidents were reported to DPS, an approximate three percent decrease from the previous year's reported incidents (Texas Department of Public Safety 1998; Texas Department of Public Safety 1999).

Figure 2 shows the number of family violence-related homicides for 1996, 1997, and 1998 by department size. The findings suggest that family violence-related homicides declined across the three years in small or medium size departments. The total number of family violence homicides reported by all 13 small departments were seven in 1996, six in 1997, and three in 1998. The aggregate number of family violence homicides among the 15 medium size departments were 29 in 1996, 26 in 1997, and 25 in 1998. Yet, family violence-related homicides appear to have increased in areas served by the Dallas Police Department, El Paso Police Department, El Paso Sheriff's Office, Harris County Sheriff's Office, Travis County Sheriff's Office, and Austin Police Department. Specifically, the total number of family violence-related homicides for the responding six large departments was 46 in 1996, 52 in 1997, and 57 in 1998.

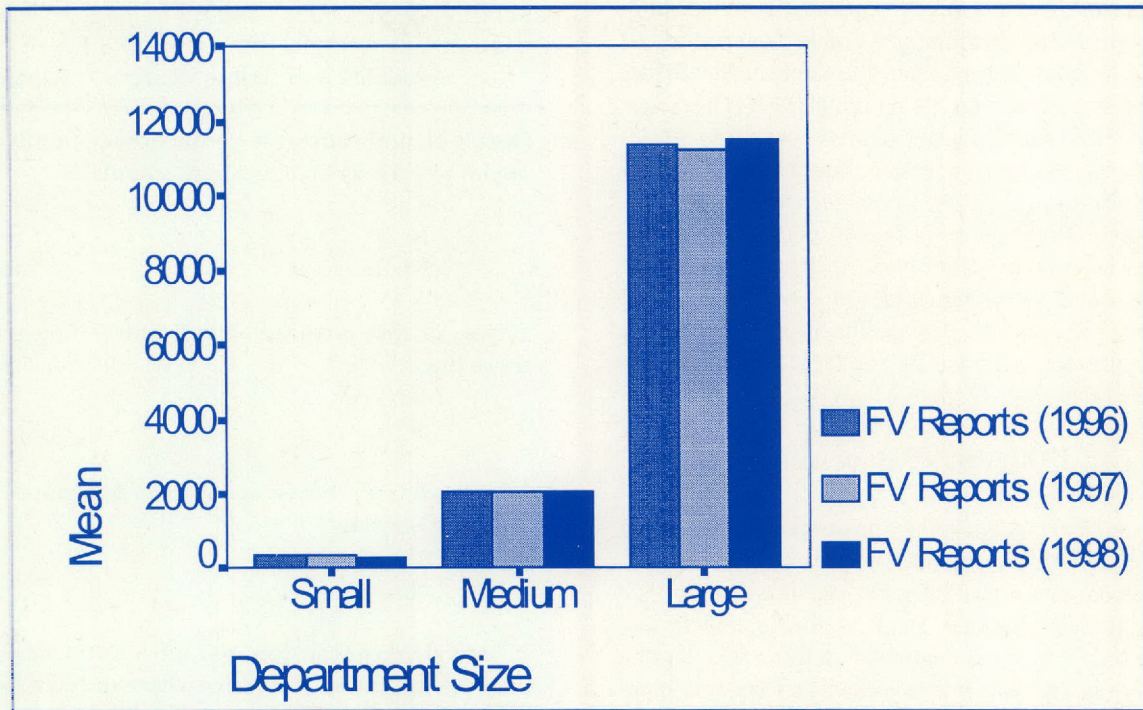


Figure 1

Average Number of Family Violence Written Reports for 1996, 1997, and 1998 by Department Size

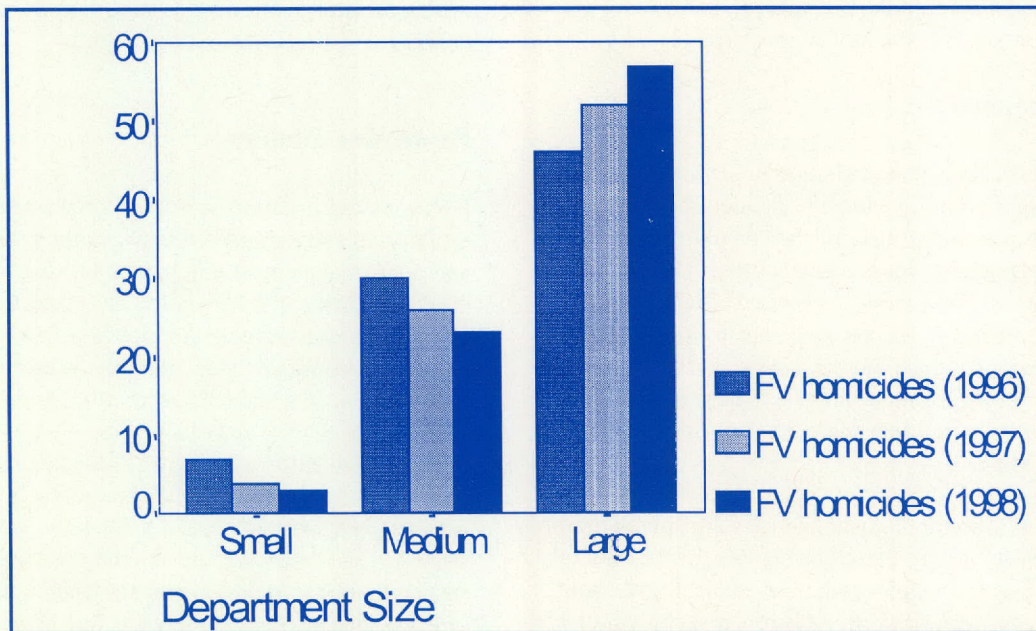


Figure 2

Family Violence-Related Homicides for 1996, 1997, and 1998 by Department Size



Based on the results of this survey, it appears that jurisdictions served by small and medium size police departments are continuing the national trend where the number of homicides by intimates decreased from 1976 through 1996 (Greenfield et al. 1998). When examining the number of overall homicides in Texas during 1998, an increase occurred from 1997 after experiencing a drop since 1991 (Texas Department of Public Safety 1999). The increase in family violence homicides reported by large police departments may have contributed to the increase in overall homicides in Texas during 1998. This, however, does not explain the increase in family violence homicides reported by the large departments in 1997.

Agency Use of Victim's Advocates

Often the victim of family violence fears increased retaliation and violence when the offender is released following an arrest; therefore, contact with a victim's advocate can provide information concerning alternatives, available services, and protective orders to avoid continued violence (Goolkasian 1986). As the criminal justice system has become more aware of the need for these services, advocates are engaged to support victims. Eleven of the responding agencies employ a full-time victim's advocate who is responsible for contacting every family violence victim when a written report is made (see Table 1). Of those departments without a full-time victim's advocate, 17 refer victims to an advocate located outside the department. It is important to note that five departments without a victim's advocate do not refer victims to one outside the department. This points to the need for greater collaborative working relationships between law enforcement and victim service providers.

No Drop Policies

When police officers chose mediation or separation as the preferred action at family violence incidents, the victim would often refuse to press charges or would request that they be dropped once the victim perceived that the immediate danger had passed. To remove the burden of requiring that the victim file charges, and possibly not follow through, policies were adopted that held the state—not the victim—responsible for filing criminal charges. This procedure also makes it clear to offenders that the state treats family violence as a crime.

Although Texas law enforcement agencies are not required to adopt a "no drop" policy, the majority (56%) of responding departments have written procedures. As reflected in Table 2, there is less variation in decision-making among departments having "no drop" policies, with the vast majority (74%) referring requests to the district attorney's office. In departments without a "no drop" policy, numerous possible

Table 1

Availability of Crime Victim's Advocate

Does a victim's advocate contact every family violence victim when a written incident is made?	
Yes	11
No	22
No Response	1
If yes, is this advocate a full-time employee of the department?	
Yes	10
No	1
Is this victim's advocate a state-designated "Crime Victim's Liaison"?	
Yes	8
No	3
If your department does not have a full-time victim's advocate, is one available elsewhere to refer victims.	
Yes	17
No	5

procedures were reported. This suggests that having a "no drop" policy may streamline decision-making and, therefore, may also reduce departmental liability by limiting the alternatives available to individual employees and creating a departmental position concerning victims' requests to drop charges.

Protective Orders

For protective orders to be fully enforced, a network must be established and maintained between the police department and appropriate courtroom personnel (Buzawa & Buzawa 1996). In Texas, the legislature has taken steps to enhance protective orders and collaboration between law enforcement and court personnel. Most recently, these include: (1) the development of a standard format for protective orders so that they are concise and easily understood by peace officers attempting to enforce the order (Texas Legislature 1999d); (2) increasing the duration of emergency protective orders issued by magistrates from 30 to 60 days (Texas Legislature 1999c); (3) increasing the magistrate's responsibility to suspend a license to carry a concealed handgun if a protective order related to family violence has been issued (Texas Legislature 1999b); and (4) increasing the maximum time, from 24 hours to a period not to exceed 48 hours, that a magistrate can order a person to be held after bond is posted

Table 2

Department Responses When Victim Requests to Drop Charges

Does your department have a "No Drop" policy?	
Yes	19
No	15
How does your department handle family violence cases when the victim wants to drop charges?	
Departments With A "No Drop" Policy	
Refer the case to the district attorney's office	14
If an arrest is not made, the victim signs an Affidavit of Non-Prosecution	2
The victim is urged not to drop charges but if not done, the victim signs an Affidavit of Non-Prosecution	1
Victim signs an Affidavit of Non-Prosecution and a Release of Liability	1
Departments Without A "No Drop" Policy	
Victim signs an Affidavit of Non-Prosecution and the case is referred to the district attorney's office	3
Victim is referred to the district attorney's office	3
The case is judged on merits, but the victim is usually allowed to drop	1
Victim signs a drop form, talks with a counselor, and completes a mosaic questionnaire	1
Victim signs an Affidavit of Non-Prosecution	1
Depends on the frequency and severity. If frequent and/or severe the department files	1
If charges are filed, the case is referred to the district attorney's office	1
Check for past outcries and may or may not proceed	1
One drop is allowed with a valid reason	1
Track with computer and prosecute for subsequent offenses	1
Charges will not be dismissed within 72 hours of arrest, even if an Affidavit of Non-Prosecution is filed	1
Depending on circumstances and evidence, the case may still be referred to the district attorney's office	1
If there is physical evidence, the case is sent to the district attorney's office. The victim is asked to complete an Affidavit of Non-Prosecution if there are injuries but he/she does not want to file	1

if arrested without a warrant on a charge resulting from family violence (Texas Legislature 1999a). Although not directed at law enforcement *per se*, these changes may affect the recording, maintenance, and enforcement of protective orders.

Due to the importance in preventing further family violence and the police officer's responsibility to enforce protective orders, agencies were asked about procedures for recording and filing protective orders. Agencies were also requested to provide the number of protective orders they record each year. As shown in Table 3, protective orders in 25 jurisdictions are entered into TCIC by the agency itself rather than by court or district attorney's office personnel. After receiving a protective order, 28 agencies reported keeping them in the dispatch area providing immediate access to current orders. Two responding agencies keep the orders in the records area, while the remaining four keep them in other units of the department.

The estimated number of protective orders filed during the past year by each agency ranges from less than 30 to over 300. In fact, some of the largest agencies reported filing thousands of protective orders in 1998. Given the numbers, keeping up with protective orders is not a small task and could create a substantial workload for many departments.

Table 3

Handling of Protective Orders

Who enters protective orders to TCIC for your department?	
County Attorney's Office	1
District Attorney's Office	2
Police Department	25
District Clerk's Office	2
Sheriff's Office	2
Primary area where protective orders are kept on file	
Dispatch	28
Records	2
Other	4
Estimated number of protective orders kept per year	
1-30	7
31-50	6
51-100	5
101-300	9
301+	4



Departments with Family Violence Units

The 15 departments that have a family violence unit are examined in the following section. Areas discussed include personnel training and funding issues.

The highest-ranking supervisor in 13 agencies with a family violence unit is a sergeant. Of the remaining two departments, one unit is supervised by a lieutenant, and a detective supervises the other unit. As shown in Table 4, the number of full-time sworn employees assigned to the family violence unit range from zero to 20. Three agencies employ two full-time sworn employees and three agencies have four employees. Full-time non-sworn employees range from zero to 15. Five units employ two non-sworn personnel in the unit, and three agencies have one.

Table 4

Full-Time Personnel in 15 Family Violence Units

Number of full-time SWORN employees assigned specifically to family violence units	
Zero	1
One	1
Two	3
Three	1
Four	3
Five	1
Six	1
Eight	1
Twenty	1
Number of full-time NON-SWORN employees assigned specifically to family violence units	
Zero	3
One	3
Two	5
Three	1
Eight	1
Fifteen	1
Highest ranking supervisor in family violence unit	
Sergeant	13
Lieutenant	1
Detective	1

Unit personnel training. Many departments do not require training before appointment to a specialized unit but do require on-the-job training after the appointment. Domestic violence units are no exception. Twelve of the 15 departments do not require specialized training of full-time personnel prior to being assigned to the unit. However, once assigned, nine agencies require full-time employees to undergo some on-the-job training. The number of training hours required varies from less than 10 to more than 91 (see Table 5). Table

5 also shows the number of on-going, in-service training hours required of family violence unit employees.

Table 5

Training for Full-Time Personnel in Family Violence Units

Is training required prior to assignment to a family violence unit?	
Yes	3
No	12
How much additional training is required? On-The-Job Training	
Zero	2
1-10 hours	3
11-30 hours	2
31-60 hours	--
61-90 hours	--
91+ hours	3
Depends on experience	1
No response	4
In-Service Training	
Zero	1
1-10 hours	4
11-30 hours	4
31-60 hours	2
61-90 hours	--
91+ hours	2
No Response	2

Funding. Developing or expanding policing programs is contingent upon economic and personnel resources. Nearly three-quarters of the departments with specialized family violence units receive some type of funding (see Table 6). Interestingly, more than one-half of the family violence units were established without specifically designated "start-up" funding.

While the vast majority of departments with family violence units receive continued funding, primarily from city budgets, most receive additional funding from state and/or federal sources. Over \$1 million in state funds and almost \$2 million in federal funds have been awarded to departments with family violence units. Nearly \$3 million in state and federal funds were given to ten agencies responding to this survey. While most funding is for a one year period, some departments have received grants for up to five years.

Table 6 also lists potential sources of funding to assist law enforcement agencies in issues related to family violence. Three surveyed agencies receive federal funding from "Grants to Encourage Arrest Policies" (www.window.state.tx.us/localinf/lials/016590). This source has funded projects nationwide with an average range from \$50,000 to \$2.5 million.



Clearly, funding is available at both the state and federal level in addressing family violence. For many departments, however, because the grant proposal process can be a daunting task, this may be a drawback in requesting funding. Fortunately, there are sources available to assist agencies in writing grant proposals. The Texas Governor's Office of Budget and Planning State Grants Team provides this service to state agencies on a cost-sharing basis, and the Bill Blackwood Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas (LEMIT) at Sam Houston State University will host at least two grant-writing workshops during the year 2000. Other agencies available to assist in the grant writing process are listed on the following page.

At the state level, departments are encouraged to contact the Criminal Justice Division (CJD) of the Governor's Office. This agency makes available funds for a wide range of projects designed to reduce crime and improve the criminal and juvenile justice systems. CJD also allocates funds under the S.T.O.P. Violence Against Women Grant Program as well as other similar grants. Funding sources may also be identified through research on the Internet and by contacting the United States Department of Justice and the Texas Governor's Office. Since funding is available at the state and federal level for developing family violence units, hiring and training personnel, and program operation and expansion, law enforcement departments are encouraged to seek assistance.

Table 6

Funding Issues and Source of Funding for Family Violence Units

Has your department ever applied for funding for a family violence unit?		
Yes	11	73.3%
No	4	26.7%
Did your department receive "start up" funding?		
Yes	7	46.7%
No	8	53.3%
Does your department receive continued funding?		
Yes	11	73.3%
No or missing	4	26.7%
Does your department receive continued funding from the city budget?		
Yes	11	73.3%
FUNDING SOURCE FOR GRANTS RECEIVED		
State Grants	Funding Period	\$ Amount
Texas Violence Against Women Act	12 months	311,775
Texas Violence Against Women Act	12 months	80,000
Texas Violence Against Women Act	12 months	75,138
Texas Violence Against Women Act	12 months	72,982
Texas VOCA Grant	18 months	458,591
Texas VOCA Grant	36 months	61,036
Texas VOCA Grant	18 months	19,000
Texas CJ Planning Fund	n/a	n/a
Texas Violence Against Women An/a	n/a	
Total Texas State Grants for Family Violence Units		\$1,078,522
Federal Grants		
COPS to Combat Domestic Violence	12 months	191,260
COPS to Combat Domestic Violence	12 months	148,480
COPS to Combat Domestic Violence	12 months	90,000
Grant to Encourage Arrest Polices	18 months	714,535
Grant to Encourage Arrest Polices	60 months	158,000
Grant to Encourage Arrest Polices	12 months	97,000
Violence Against Women Act	36 months	300,000
"Other" Federal Grant (not specified)	24 months	21,000
Total Federal Funding		\$1,720,257
Total Reported Funding for All Departments		\$2,798,7799



Funding Information Resources

State Grants Team: www.governor.state.tx.us/State_Grants_index.html—The State Grants Team, located in the Governor's Office, operates as a clearinghouse on funding information and provides services to assist agencies, units of government and other entities seeking federal, state or private grant funds. The Grants Team maintains web pages within the Office of the Governor's home page. Web pages include information about the types of services provided, proposal writing training schedule, list of team members, the Federal Grant Alert, and the Texas Grant Alert Network. The Federal Grant Alert, posted twice weekly, lists information about current federal, state and private grant funding opportunities. Telephone: 512-463-1778.

Texas Grant Alert Network: www.governor.state.tx.us/State_Grants/grants_network.html—The Grant Alert Network, a project of the State Grants Team, provides links to government and private funding information for non-profit organizations, state agencies, local governments and individuals.

Criminal Justice Division (CJD): www.governor.state.tx.us/CJD/cjd.html—The Criminal Justice Division (CJD) of the Governor's Office provides more than \$100 million annually in grant monies to help Texans at the forefront of the fight against crime. CJD funding is from a variety of sources and for a variety of purposes, but is administered with the same goal in mind—to encourage programs that make Texas a better and safer place. Telephone: 512-463-1929

Office for Victims of Crime (OVC): www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc—OVC was established by the 1984 Victims of Crime Act to oversee diverse programs that benefit victims of crime. OVC provides substantial funding to state victim assistance and compensation programs. The agency also supports training designed to educate criminal justice and allied professionals regarding the rights and needs of crime victims. The OVC web pages include information about funding opportunities, training and technical assistance, and information resources of interest to professionals working in the victim assistance arena. Telephone: 202-307-5983

Violence Against Women Grants Office: www.ojp.usdoj.gov/vawgo—The Violence Against Women Grants Office administers the Department of Justice's formula and discretionary grant programs authorized by the Violence Against Women Act of 1994. Grant programs emphasize enhanced delivery of services to women victimized by violence. Telephone: 512-463-1919

Violence Against Women Office: www.usdoj.gov/vawo—The Violence Against Women Office leads a comprehensive national effort to assist states and localities in fighting domestic violence and other crimes against women. The office's web site includes hyperlinks to grant information, research on violence against women, publications of interest to professionals working in the domestic violence arena, and related federal web sites. Telephone: 202-616-8894

Partnerships Against Violence Network: www.pavnet.org—PAVNET Online is a "virtual library" of information about violence and youth-at-risk, representing data from seven different federal agencies. It is a "one-stop," searchable, information resource to help reduce redundancy in information management and provide clear and comprehensive access to information for states and local communities. Telephone: 301-504-5462

Cooperating Collections in Texas: www.fdncenter.org/collections/cctx.html

A list of funding information centers throughout Texas that provide a core collection of Foundation Center publications and a variety of supplementary materials and services useful to grantseekers. The core collections consist of foundation directories, resource information and special materials prepared by these centers to assist grantseekers in identifying private and corporate funding sources. It is recommended that one call the collection in advance of a visit to determine hours of operation and availability of staff to assist in a funding search. There are 15 centers in Texas; find the nearest center at the above web site or telephone 817-334-0228.

Bill Blackwood Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas (LEMIT) at Sam Houston State University will be hosting at least two grant-writing workshops during the year 2000. Contact LEMIT at 409-294-1670 for further information.

Council of Governments (COGS) conducts grant-writing workshops throughout the year. Contact your city or county administrator for the COGS nearest you.



Pasadena Police Department's Family Violence Unit's Goals and Objectives

REDUCE FAMILY VIOLENCE HOMICIDES AND FAMILY ASSAULTS—this is a long-term goal that will take time to send the message that law enforcement will not tolerate family violence and for the community to receive that message. It is hoped that police intervention will reduce homicides and assaults among families.

INVESTIGATE FAMILY VIOLENCE OFFENSES—this will be accomplished with the establishment of the Domestic Violence Unit.

SEND A CLEAR MESSAGE TO THE COMMUNITY THAT FAMILY VIOLENCE IS UNLAWFUL—this will be accomplished by teaching classes on family violence to all police officers. It is believed that the number of arrests for family violence will increase dramatically as a direct result following this education.

REDUCE WOMEN'S FEARS—upon learning a Domestic Violence Unit exists, female complainants will come forward for help as they now know it is available.

INCREASE CITIZEN SATISFACTION—will be accomplished and measured by the favorable letters received by the department and by the feedback received by unit members, feedback from criminal justice agencies and battered women shelters.

REDUCE CITIZEN COMPLAINTS—complaints of help not being available will be eliminated with the development of the unit.

REDUCE MUNICIPAL LIABILITY—lawsuits from across the country, including Dallas, have shown that police officers and police departments face liability for failure to take action on family violence offenses. Through the formation of the unit and in-service training of police officers, this risk should be substantially reduced.

INCREASE JOB SATISFACTION AS IT RELATES TO HANDLING FAMILY VIOLENCE CALLS—many officers have shared that taking the discretion out of family violence calls will make their job easier. Officers will find that the Domestic Violence Unit will make their work much easier because there will be a location where they may send the victims for law enforcement help.

IMPROVE THE WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER PARTS OF THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM—this will be an ongoing process through daily contacts with victims, The Bridge Over Troubled Waters, The Greater Houston Area Council on Family Violence, local area ministers, The Houston Area Women's Shelter and local hospitals.

INCREASE THE NUMBER OF WRITTEN OFFENSE REPORTS AND ARRESTS—through training and education that has been provided to the officers, the number of written reports and arrests will increase.

EDUCATE THE COMMUNITY ABOUT FAMILY VIOLENCE—through written media and public speaking engagements to raise the public awareness and knowledge about family violence.

INCREASE CRISIS INTERVENTION COUNSELING TO REDUCE REPEATED CALLS FOR SERVICE—family violence counselors will make proactive visits to homes where there is a history of violence and numerous calls for service. The counselors will speak with the family and work to educate them in the hopes of stopping the violence.

Policies for Officers who are Victims or Offenders of Family Violence

The final section of the survey asked about departmental policies concerning officers who are victims or offenders of family violence. Five agencies reported having a written policy regarding the treatment of officers who commit or are victims of family violence. Agencies were also asked what action the department takes if an officer is the victim of family violence. Ten departments treat the officer as any other victim and refer him or her to services. One agency investigates the complaint and refers the incident to Internal Affairs.

If the offender is an officer, the results are quite different. Eight agencies reported that an investigation is conducted and the incident is also referred to Internal Affairs. Other responses are shown in Table 7.

Table 7

Departmental Policy for Police Officers Involved in Family Violence

Does your department have a written policy regarding treatment of officers who commit or are victims of family violence?

Yes	5
No	29

Action taken if officer is a VICTIM of family violence?

Counseling	3
By law—investigate	8
Assess needs	1
Treat as any other victim and refer to services	10
Investigate and counsel	3
CID investigation	2
Investigate and send to Internal Affairs	1

Action taken if officer is a SUSPECT of family violence?

Counsel, suspend, dismiss, investigate, and/or Internal Affairs depending on incident	3
Investigate	6
Reassign or suspend	1
May be prosecuted and administratively disciplined	1
Treat like other family violence offender and have Internal Affairs investigate	8
Treat like other family violence offender and counsel	1
Relieved of duty pending administrative investigation or disposition of criminal case	1

Adoption of a written departmental policy and the action taken if an officer is suspected of being the offender in a family violence incident is surprising considering the 1996 amendment to the federal Gun Control Act of 1968 (commonly referred to as the Lautenberg Amendment). This amendment prohibits anyone who has been convicted of a felony or misdemeanor domestic violence offense from possessing or owning firearms or ammunition. Unlike most gun possession laws, the Lautenberg Amendment does *not* exempt police officers or members of the military. In 1998, the International Association of Chiefs of Police developed a "Model Policy for Police Officer-Involved Domestic Violence" after holding hearings throughout the nation and discovering the need for a comprehensive policy. A copy may be obtained from the IACP at 800-THE-IACP (800-843-4227).

Conclusion

During the past 25 years, law enforcement has changed its handling of domestic violence incidents by enacting pro-arrest policies and developing domestic violence units. Prevention of family violence has become an important issue as studies reveal that children who witness violence in the home have a greater risk of alcohol and drug abuse, involvement in family violence as teenagers and adults, and aggressive behavior (*Family Violence in America* 1998; Widom 1992). Through family violence units that support victims, provide education for officer response, and increase community awareness, police departments can reduce the number of family violence incidents. Further, these units conserve department resources, reduce future violent behavior, and make the community a safer place to live. Establishing goals and objectives for family violence units or investigations such as those adopted by the Pasadena Police Department provides a guideline and commitment to an agency-wide response to family violence.

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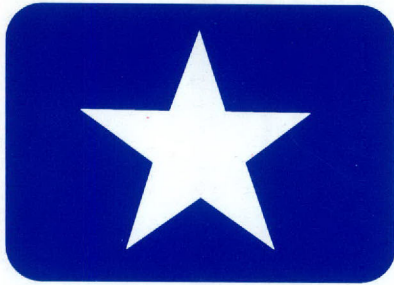
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Abilene Police Department
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 Carrollton Police Department**
 Corpus Christi Police Department
 Dallas Police Department*
 Deer Park Police Department
 Department of Public Safety
 Duncanville Police Department
 El Paso County Sheriff's Department**
 El Paso Police Department*
 Euless Police Department
 Garland Police Department*
 Grand Prairie Police Department*
 Harris County Sheriff's Department*
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 Laredo Police Department*
 Lubbock Police Department*
 Mesquite Police Department*
 North Richland Hills Police Department**
 Pasadena Police Department*
 Plano Police Department*
 Randall County Sheriff's Department**
 Richardson Police Department**
 San Angelo Police Department
 Texarkana Texas Police Department
 Travis County Sheriff's Department*
 Tyler Police Department
 Victoria Police Department
 Waco Police Department*
 White Settlement Police Department
 Wichita Falls Police Department

* Has a designated family violence unit

** Has full-time officer assigned to investigate family violence incidents

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