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International Association of Chiefs of Police

ENHANCING COMMUNITY TRUST:
Proactive Approaches to Domestic and Sexual Violence

Agency Self-Assessment

Community Assessment

Sample Outreach Letter

Action Planning Guide

Additional Considerations and Resources

About this Project

This toolkit contains an agency self-assessment, community assessment, sample outreach letter, action planning guide, and additional considerations and resources to support enhancing agency response to victims. The process is designed to assist law enforcement agencies with evaluating current practices, successes, and areas that present opportunities for improvement in responding to gender-based violence in their communities. Implementing comprehensive and research-driven department policies, practices, and training ensures that an agency is prepared to effectively respond to, investigate, and develop these cases for prosecution, augmenting the safety of the community.

The resources contained within this toolkit were developed with funding from the Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women as part of the *Enhancing Community Trust: Proactive Approaches to Domestic & Sexual Violence* initiative. The purpose of this initiative is to strengthen law enforcement responses to, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

For the purposes of this assessment, domestic/dating violence refers to intimate partner violence, and an intimate partner is generally defined as a person with whom one has a close personal relationship that could involve ongoing contact, emotional connection, sexual behavior, identity as dating partners, and/or familiarity with each other's lives, such as current or former spouses, boyfriends or girlfriends, dating partners, or sexual partners. For the purposes of this document, status as an intimate partner is not dependent upon marital status or cohabitation, though the legal definition of an intimate partner may vary regionally. Additionally, throughout this assessment, all descriptions regarding gender-based violence, including domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking, are specific to crimes involving adult victims.

Related projects, resources, and training are available at **theiacp.org/genderbasedviolence**.

Agency Self-Assessment:
Proactive Approaches to Domestic & Sexual Violence

About the Agency Self-Assessment

This assessment is designed to assist agencies (including, but not limited to police departments, sheriffs' offices, campus police and security, tribal police, state police) in comprehensively evaluating their responses to and investigation of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Through this assessment, and in conjunction with the accompanying community assessment, law enforcement agencies can:

- **EVALUATE** internal strengths and gaps when responding to and investigating crimes of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking;

- **IMPROVE** awareness of implicit and explicit gender bias and how it impacts victims, officers, effectiveness of investigations, agencies, and communities;

- **DEVELOP** and enhance partnerships that promote collaboration and strengthen trust among stakeholders; and

- **APPLY** information learned from the agency self-assessment and community assessment to develop and implement strategies and procedures that improve law enforcement response; increase victim involvement in investigations; improve case outcomes; support victim healing; and foster greater community confidence in law enforcement approaches to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

Agency Self-Assessment and Community Assessment Tools

The self-assessment asks agencies to review their policies, practices, training, data collection, hiring, promotion, and supervision regarding the agency's and individual officers' responses to and knowledge of these crimes.

The community assessment is intended to be shared with as many community-based organizations as possible within the agency's service area. This assessment asks about the organization's background, its interactions with the law enforcement agency, and its viewpoints about the agency's crisis response and investigatory approaches.

Conducting the Agency Self-Assessment

At the outset of the agency self-assessment process, it is important to determine the individual or team who will be responsible for facilitating completion of the self-assessment. This team or individual should be overseen by a member of the agency's senior leadership. It is helpful for this team to consist of people from various divisions and positions within the agency, if possible, as the assessment calls for information across agency practices, policies, and data. Units and personnel that provide victim services are important partners for this assessment; however, to get the most comprehensive response agency-wide, it is not recommended that the assessment process be delegated to victim services personnel. The senior leader overseeing this process should be responsible for driving efforts around the evaluation process, action planning, and implementation.

The first section of this resource contains the *Agency Self-Assessment*, which is a set of questions collected into sections on Policies & Practices, Hiring & Promotion Practices, Training, Data Collection & Analysis, Culture & Accountability, and Collaboration to help guide agencies in thinking critically about current practices and identifying areas with opportunities to update and enhance services provided to the community. The assessment can be completed all at once, or in individual sections. Agency leaders and project team members should answer questions openly and candidly, and not shy away from identifying both organizational strengths and opportunities for improvement.

Step 1
Assign responsibility and senior leadership oversight of the self-assessment process.

Step 2
Ensure all departments, divisions, and units of agency are aware of the self-assessment, so they can prepare and provide pertinent information.

Step 3
Compile the information in the assessment.

Step 4
Review the results of the assessment.

Step 5
Use the action planning guide to develop strategic priorities.

Step 6
Use the Additional Considerations and Resources section and work with partners to identify training and technical assistance, as well as model policies and practices.

Policies & Practices

Focus: How agency policies and practices for responding to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking incorporate promising practices and are designed to ensure a trauma-informed, equitable, effective, and professional response to these crimes.

Note: There is a comment box at the end of this section that can be used to provide additional clarification or context to any of the questions in this section.

1. Does the agency have stand-alone, comprehensive policies that address each of the following?

	Response to sexual assault		Response to agency member-perpetrated sexual assault and misconduct[i]
	Response to domestic violence		Response to agency member-perpetrated domestic/intimate partner violence
	Hate crimes		Response to stalking
	Sexual assault kits		Witness intimidation
	Language access plan,[ii] for response to calls involving individuals with limited English proficiency or are Deaf/deaf/hard of hearing.[iii]		Responding to members of the LGBTQ+ communities

> These categories are high-level topics for policies. There are many other subtopics within the broad categories listed in this assessment. For detailed recommendations of policy content, review the IACP's *Sexual Assault Response Policy and Training Content Guidelines* and *Intimate Partner Violence Response Policy and Training Content Guidelines*.

2. Does the agency have the following materials for these crimes?

	Crime-specific investigative form	Crime-specific checklist	Other
a. Sexual violence			
b. Domestic/intimate partner violence			
c. Strangulation			
d. Stalking			
e. Witness intimidation			

2.1 For any specialized forms that are used, are there boxes or other areas on the form to indicate any of the following language access information?[iv]

a. If an involved individual is limited English proficient	
b. If an involved individual is Deaf/deaf/hard of hearing	
c. If an interpreter is being used	
d. If a bilingual officer is interpreting[v] or interviewing the individual in a language other than English	

3. Do the agency's policies on domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking (if applicable) outline guidance on the following?

	Sexual Assault	Domestic Violence	Stalking
a. Information and referrals that first responders can give to victims to help them gain victim assistance?			
b. Contacting a victim advocate at the scene/during the investigation?			
c. Providing victims with follow-up information on victim advocate services?			
d. Advising victims of their rights?			
e. What to do if the victim wishes to remain anonymous?			
f. Addressing victim safety, confidentiality, and privacy concerns?			
g. Collecting and preserving all relevant and corroborative evidence, including sexual assault kits?			
h. Submitting forensic evidence to a crime lab for analysis, including sexual assault kits?			
i. Notifying victims of results of forensic evidence analysis, including sexual assault kits?			
j. Consequences of violating the policies or failing to act in accordance with policy?			
k. What to do if the victim knows the suspect, but does not want to provide their name?			
l. Strangulation as a co-occurring crime?			
m. Predominant aggressor determination?			
n. Firearm confiscation/surrender?			
o. Use of a risk/lethality assessment?			

p. Safety planning with victims?			
q. Agency members who are respondents on protection orders?			

4. Do the agency's policies outline guidance on responding to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking?

Note: In the items below, agency member refers to both sworn and non-sworn personnel.

	Sexual Assault	Domestic Violence	Stalking
a. by a member of the agency within the agency's jurisdiction?			
b. by a member of the agency in another jurisdiction?			
c. by a member of another law enforcement agency within the agency's jurisdiction?			
d. when the victim is an agency member?			
e. by an agency member when the victim is also an agency member?			

5. If the agency has a policy on the use of body-worn cameras, does it provide guidance on victim safety, confidentiality, and privacy concerns?

6. Do agency policies and procedures outline responsibilities for each role for the following (where applicable)?

	Dispatch/ Telecom.	Responding Officers	Field Supervisors	Investigators	Investigative Supervisors	Victim Services Personnel	Command Staff
a. Sexual assault							
b. Domestic violence							
c. Strangulation							
d. Stalking							
e. Agency member-perpetrated sexual assault/ misconduct							
f. Agency member-perpetrated domestic violence							

g. Agency member-perpetrated stalking							
h. Prevent misuse of law enforcement resources by agency personnel[vi]							
i. Witness intimidation							
j. Sexual assault kits							
k. Victim services connection/ referral							
l. Hate crimes							
m. Language access plan							
n. Responding to members of the LGBTQ+ community							
o. Firearms on scene							
p. U Visa Certifications and T Visa Declarations							

7. **Does agency policy specifically outline details for classifying sexual assault reports[vii] in the following ways?**

	Unfounded - baseless		Unfounded - false		Cleared by arrest
	Inactivated		Information report		Cleared by exceptional means
	Other: [enter here]				

7.1 If yes, does agency policy specifically outline who has the authority to make that designation?

	Yes		No

7.2 If yes, does agency policy specifically outline whether there is a provision for review of such designations?

	Yes		No

8. Do the agency's policies permit an advocate or other support person to be present during all victim interviews?[viii,ix]

	System-based advocate		Family/friend
	Community-based advocate		Other professional support person

9. If the agency uses polygraph, computer voice stress analysis, or other similar instruments during interviews, does policy prohibit the use of these instruments with victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking?

	Yes		No
	N/A		Other

10. Does the agency follow a prescribed schedule (annual, biennial, etc.) to review policies and make updates as needed?

	Yes		No
	N/A		Other

11. Does your agency have a specific written bias-free policing, impartial policing, or other similar policy?

11.1 If yes, does this policy prohibit behaviors (including jokes, slurs, discriminatory treatment, etc.) that reflect prejudice on the basis of any of the following?

	Race		Sex[x]
	Religion		Gender[xi]
	Immigration status		Gender identity/expression
	National origin		Sexual orientation
	Age		Disability
	Other: [enter here]		

11.2 Does this policy prohibit sexual harassment of colleagues and community members?

12. Does the agency's code of conduct (rules and regulations) specifically prohibit the following? (The broad umbrella of "conduct unbecoming an officer" or similar is not sufficient.)

	Sexual assault and sexual misconduct		Domestic violence
	Stalking		Misuse of law enforcement resources by agency personnel (National Crime Information Center (NCIC), vehicle records, the agency's internal records management system, etc.)

13. Does agency policy mandate concurrent administrative/internal affairs investigations and criminal investigations?

	Yes		No

14. Provide any context or clarification for the above questions on policies & practices in the space provided below. [enter below]

Hiring & Promotion Practices

Focus: How agency staffing practices prioritize hiring, retaining, and developing a diverse, qualified workforce. How the agency engages in practices to promote the most qualified personnel into supervisory/leadership roles.

Note: There is a comment box at the end of this section that can be used to provide additional clarification or context to any of the questions in this section.

15.   Do recruit screening processes involve the following?

	Criminal background checks		Civil background checks		Psychological evaluations

15.1 Do recruit screening processes, performance reviews, and promotion evaluations include questions to identify candidates with a history of perpetrating the following?

	Recruit screening	Performance review	Promotion evaluation
a. Sexual assault			
b. Sexual harassment			
c. Domestic violence			
d. Strangulation			
e. Stalking			
f. Respondent in a current or past protection order[xii]			

16.   Do you believe that the questions the agency is posing identify and eliminate candidates who possess explicit and/or implicit biases that would result in disparate treatment of community members?

16.1 If yes, please provide examples: [enter below]

17. **Do officer assignment and promotion processes include scenario-based questions on responding to the following crimes?**

	Officer assignment	Promotion processes
Sexual assault		
Stalking		
Domestic violence		
Strangulation		

18. **Does the agency seek to hire officers who are diverse and demographically representative of the community that the agency serves?**

   18.1 **If yes, please describe the agency's strategy:** [enter below]

19. **Does agency leadership compare employee demographics across position levels, salary grades, and retention rates to analyze whether opportunity and compensation are given to all employees equitably?**

	Position level		Salary grade
	Retention rates		Other: [enter here]

20. **Does the agency conduct exit interviews to determine reasons employees are leaving (e.g., sexual harassment, gender bias, lack of equal opportunity)?**

21. **Do promotion processes involve a diverse panel of decision makers, to include the following?**

	Non-sworn agency personnel (professional staff)		Community partners
	None of the above		Other: [enter here]

22. Do promotion deliberations and decisions include consideration of the applicant's effective, thorough, and appropriate response to reports of the following?

	Sexual assault		Domestic violence
	Strangulation		Stalking

23. During the promotional testing process, does the process include scenario-based evaluation of the candidate's response to reports of the following?

	Sexual assault		Agency member-perpetrated sexual assault and sexual misconduct
	Domestic violence		Agency member-perpetrated domestic violence
	Stalking		Agency member-perpetrated stalking
	Strangulation		

24. Does the agency select officers for assignment to specialized units that address domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking based on merit (including past performance and perceived ability to excel in the specialized area)?

Sexual assault	Domestic violence	Stalking

25. Are reviews of complaints against the individual by other agency members, community members, or community partner agency members part of the promotional process?

26. Provide any context or clarification for the above questions on hiring & promotion practices in the space provided below. [enter below]

Training

Focus: Whether the agency adequately trains all agency members on responding effectively and equitably to reports of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

Note: There is a comment box at the end of this section that can be used to provide additional clarification or context to any of the questions in this section.

27. Are the following topics (including review of agency policy and practices) regularly incorporated into in-service training and/or roll call training:

	In-Service Training	Updated in Last Year	Roll Call Training	Updated in Last Year
a. Response to sexual assault				
b. Response to domestic violence				
c. Response to strangulation				
d. Response to stalking				
e. Response to agency member-perpetrated sexual assault and misconduct				
f. Response to agency member-perpetrated domestic violence				
g. Response to agency member-perpetrated stalking				
h. Misuse of law enforcement resources by agency personnel (NCIC, vehicle records, the agency's internal records management system, etc.)				
i. Predominant aggressor determination				
j. Lethality or risk assessment program				
k. Domestic violence and officer safety				
l. Understanding explicit and implicit bias				
m. Victim and offender dynamics				
n. Impacts of trauma/victimization				
o. Trauma-informed interviewing				
p. Witness intimidation				
q. Recognition of danger both in cases where the offender is known and unknown to the victim				
r. Vicarious trauma				
s. U Visa Certifications and T Visa Declarations				

28. Does training content on domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking include the following?

	a. Screening for co-occurrence due to the overlapping and interconnected nature of these crimes
	b. Impact of these crimes on individuals, families, communities, and agency personnel
	c. Recognition of danger both in cases where the offender is known and unknown to the victim

29. Does the agency analyze and compare the data it collects to inform the following training practices?

	Yes	No
a. Does the agency compare in-service training hours spent on gender-based violence-related subjects with hours spent on other training topics?		
b. Does the agency consider current trends in case data, research, and promising practices for training on domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking in the development of in-service and roll call training plans?		

30. Does training content include instruction on methods and strategies for effective, fact-based report writing?

31. Does training content include research-based education on physiological, emotional, and behavioral effects of trauma and victimization?

32. Does training content include a trauma-informed approach to reduce the impact of trauma on victims and avoid re-victimization?

33. Do training sessions include non-sworn agency members (professional staff)?

a. In-service training	
b. Roll call training	

34. Does the agency require specialized units/personnel who handle investigations of the following to complete advanced training (beyond what is standard for all officers or agency members), such as in the use of digital forensics, trauma-informed interviewing, eyewitness identification procedures, etc.?

a. Sexual assault	
b. Domestic violence	
c. Strangulation	
d. Stalking	
e. Officer-perpetrated sexual assault	
f. Officer-perpetrated domestic violence	
g. Officer-perpetrated stalking	

35. Does the agency conduct training or education or engage in discussions on how prejudicial or biased language or behaviors about gender, sex, gender identity/expression, and sexual orientation can

	a. be damaging to personnel morale and the agency or unit as a whole?
	b. negatively influence agency response and investigation, even if unintentionally?

36. Do supervisors of specialized units/personnel receive at least an equivalent level of specialized training as the personnel they supervise?

37. Do supervisors receive specialized training on their supervisory responsibilities, such as reviewing reports and providing counseling on job performance to those they supervise?

38. Does the agency provide specialized training for its public information officer(s) on accurate terminology and victim-informed language when communicating about domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking?

39. Provide any context or clarification for the above questions on training in the space provided below.
[enter below]

Data Collection & Analysis

Focus: How leadership makes informed, strategic decisions about cases, policies, practices, staffing, supervision, and training.

Note: There is a comment box at the end of this section that can be used to provide additional clarification or context to any of the questions in this section.

40. Does the agency track the following in a searchable database?

	Yes, in a searchable database	Yes, but it is not searchable	No, we do not track this	No, because of limited capacity
a. Crime classification (i.e., type of crime)				
b. Length of elapsed time between initial report and assignment to an investigator				
c. Whether an ex parte order of protection was granted or requested (as applicable)				
d. Case disposition (i.e., type of closure)				
e. Length of elapsed time of investigation from initial report to disposition				
f. Whether a case was referred for prosecution				
g. Whether a referred case was declined for prosecution				
h. Length of elapsed time from referral to prosecutor to charging decision				
i. Victim demographic characteristics				
j. Perpetrator demographic characteristics				
k. Victim and perpetrator relationship (i.e., spouse, ex-spouse, boyfriend/girlfriend, sister, brother, otherwise known, acquaintance)				
l. Specific to domestic violence reports, whether a suspect was questioned				
m. Specific to domestic violence reports, whether an arrest was made				
n. Whether dual arrests were made in a domestic violence crime				
o. Number of homicides				
p. Domestic violence crimes involving firearms, regardless of whether a weapon was fired				
q. Domestic violence crimes involving strangulation/choking				
r. Sexual assault crimes involving strangulation/choking				

s. Lethality or risk assessment program[xiii] data				
t. Calls involving a limited English proficient individual[xiv]				
u. Calls involving the use of a qualified interpreter[xv]				
v. Case assignment to internal victim services personnel (as applicable)				
w. Referral to community-based victim services agency (as applicable)				
x. Sexual assault kit processing				

41. Does the agency evaluate the percentage of homicides connected to the following crimes individually?

	Yes	No
a. Sexual assault		
b. Domestic violence[xvi]		
c. Strangulation		
d. Stalking		

42. Does the agency track the following in a searchable database for every civilian complaint about law enforcement response and internal affairs investigation?

	Agency member name	Nature of complaint or investigation	Case type from which the complaint or investigation originated
a. civilian complaints about sworn law enforcement response			
b. civilian complaints about non-sworn (professional staff) law enforcement response			
c. internal affairs investigations			

43. Does the agency analyze and compare the data it collects to inform the following policies and practices?

	Yes	No
a. Does the agency compare the rate and reason of case closure types among different case types to identify data patterns or trends (including gaps and inequities)?		
b. Does the agency compare how many domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking reports are referred for prosecution, relative to other types of cases?		
c. Does the agency compare the proportion of homicides with connections to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking, relative to the proportion of homicides without those connections?		

44. If specialized units exist for domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking, do staffing decisions for those units take into consideration?

	Yes	No
a. the proportion of those crimes within the agency's overall case volume?		
b. the proportion of homicides connected to those crimes?		

45. Does the agency analyze and compare the data it collects to inform the following leadership & supervision practices?

	Yes	No
a. Does the agency conduct random audits or reviews of cases to determine how they were classified and closed?		
b. Does the agency analyze data on internal investigations and civilian complaints about law enforcement response to identify behavioral trends of concern?[xvii]		
c. Does the agency require that a supervising officer review gender-based violence cases before they can be listed as unfounded or cleared by exceptional means?		

46. Does the agency leadership regularly meet to evaluate data patterns and trends and their implications for agency operations and policies?

	Yes		No
	Other: [enter here]		

47. Provide any context or clarification for the above questions on data collection & analysis in the space provided below. [enter below]

Culture & Accountability

Focus: How agency leadership fosters a climate that is supportive of victims of crime (including victims employed by the agency itself); and how agency leadership is committed to responding appropriately to all victims of crime and holds agency members accountable to that value.

Note: There is a comment box at the end of this section that can be used to provide additional clarification or context to any of the questions in this section.

48. **Is the agency's organizational motto, philosophy, and mission consistent with and reflect the prioritization of victims of gender-based violence?**

49. **Does the agency have dedicated victim services personnel?**

50. **Does the agency make specialized resources available to agency members who have experienced domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking?**

Sexual assault	Domestic violence	Stalking

51. **Does the agency provide an online forum for the public to submit the following?**

	Misconduct complaints against agency members		Commendations of agency members

    51.1 Is there an option to submit complaints anonymously?[xviii]

52. **Does the agency have an internal procedure or process for agency members to submit complaints about colleagues?**

    52.1 Is there an option to submit complaints anonymously?[xix]

    52.2 Is there an option to submit complaints confidentially?[xx]

    52.3 Does the agency have a policy that protects agency members from retaliation when filing a complaint or concern about another agency member?

53. Does the agency conduct climate surveys to gauge whether agency members feel comfortable speaking up against prejudicial, harassing, or biased language and behaviors, if observed?

54. Does the agency engage in any of the following practices to promote sexual assault units, domestic violence units, victim services, or other similar units as elite, coveted assignments?

	Sexual assault unit	Domestic violence unit	Victim services unit	Other unit
a. Awards or commendations specific to work related to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking				
b. Awards or commendations given to community partners at the recommendation of a specific unit				
c. Issuing press releases highlighting the importance of the good work that was done on a gender-based violence case and/or the investigative challenges these cases present				
d. Profile the units on the agency website				
e. Other recognition				

55. Does the agency monitor investigators' caseloads (number of cases)?

	Yes		No
	Other: [enter here]		

55.1 Does the agency compare investigator caseloads within and across individual units (e.g., robbery, sex crimes, homicide)?

	Yes		No
	Other: [enter here]		

56. Does a supervisor review every report of the types listed below to evaluate for the following?

	Investigative thoroughness	Adherence to agency policies & standards of practice
a. Sexual assault		
b. Domestic violence		
c. Strangulation		
d. Stalking		
e. Agency member-perpetrated sexual assault/misconduct		
f. Agency member-perpetrated domestic violence		
g. Agency member-perpetrated stalking		

57. Do the agency's supervisors remand for revision or follow-up any case report that does the following?

a. Contains biased or discriminatory language	
b. Indicates gaps in compliance with agency policies	
c. Indicates that there are investigative steps that were not conducted (without valid reason for deviation provided)	

58. If an agency member frequently has reports remanded for revision or follow-up, is that agency member provided remedial training and/or mentoring?

59. Do performance evaluations specifically include appraisal of the individual's response to reports that involve the following?

	Sexual assault		Domestic violence
	Strangulation		Stalking

60. Does the agency proactively identify areas of risk and liability through the following?

a. Conducting periodic background checks for all sworn personnel	
b. Conducting periodic background checks for all non-sworn personnel	
c. Employing an early identification system/early warning system to track officer misconduct and behavioral concerns and provide early interventions	

61. Does the agency use administrative orders of protection for officers suspected of the following?

a. Sexual assault	
b. Sexual misconduct	
c. Domestic violence	
d. Stalking	

62. Does the agency have an MOU (memorandum of understanding) or letter of agreement with any neighboring jurisdictions to address crimes perpetrated by each respective agency's officers in the other agency's jurisdiction?

63. Provide any context or clarification for the above questions on culture & accountability in the space provided below. [enter below]

Collaboration

Focus: Whether the agency prioritizes relationships with multidisciplinary community partners, and whether agency responses to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking reflect that value and include meaningful communication.

Note: There is a comment box at the end of this section that can be used to provide additional clarification or context to any of the questions in this section.

64. Does the agency have an MOU (memorandum of understanding) or letter of agreement with one or more local community-based victim service providers?

65. Does the agency allow community-based victim advocates to accompany victims when engaging with the agency during the following times?

On Scene	First Interviews	Follow-Up Interviews

66. Does the agency partner with local community partners to provide training to and/or receive training from?

	Provide training to	Receive training from
a. Victim advocates		
b. Culturally specific agencies		
c. Local prosecuting attorney's office		
d. Local prosecuting attorney's office: specialized units		
e. Healthcare providers, including emergency healthcare providers, forensic examiners, mental health professionals		
f. Forensics/crime lab personnel		
g. Dispatch/telecommunications personnel		
h. Investigators with child/adult protective services		
i. Partners in other law enforcement agencies		
j. Schools and colleges/universities		
k. Other relevant community partners, as needed		

67. Does the agency conduct cross-training between its sworn and non-sworn personnel (professional staff), including victim services, dispatchers/communications personnel, chaplains, staff psychologists, records personnel?

68. Do local community partners (victim advocates, prosecuting attorney's office, forensics, etc.) participate in the following?

a. Audits of the agency's unfounded cases	
b. Policy development and review	
c. Hiring and promotion panels	

69. Does the agency actively participate with specialized personnel in one or more multidisciplinary teams, task forces, or coalitions (Sexual Assault Response Team/SART, Family Justice Center/FJC, Domestic Violence Coalition, etc.) to provide coordinated services to support victims?

70. Does the agency coordinate with internal victim services unit/personnel to ensure support and resources are available to victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking?

71. Does the agency coordinate with community-based victim services providers to ensure support and resources are available to victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking?

72. Does the agency provide resources either from the agency itself, criminal justice partners, or community-based organizations on the following topics?

	Regularly provided on scene	Available on agency website
a. Sexual assault		
b. Domestic violence		
c. Strangulation		
d. Stalking		
e. Victim Information Notification Everyday (VINE), if available in jurisdiction		
f. Victim Rights		
g. Information and numbers for local community-based resources		
h. Civilian complaint process		

73. Does the agency have any colleges or universities within its jurisdiction?

73.1 If yes, does the agency have an MOU or letter of agreement in place with each college/university to assist in a coordinated response to reports of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking?

Note: This includes MOUs/letters of agreement with campus law enforcement, public safety, and/or campus administrators such as Title IX Coordinators and Student Conduct personnel.

	Yes, we have MOUs/letters of agreement with all colleges/universities in our jurisdiction.
	We have MOUs/letters of agreement with some colleges/universities in our jurisdiction.
	No, we do not have an MOU or a letter of agreement with any colleges/universities in our jurisdiction.

74. Does the agency meet regularly with partners from the local prosecuting attorney's office to increase collaboration and provide/solicit feedback to improve case outcomes?

75. If the agency has an FTO manual, does it specifically include information on responding to the crimes of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking?

75.1 Do FTOs get specialized and advanced training on domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking?

76. If the agency has a victim services unit or has victim services personnel, are they formally involved in the following?

	Policy development		Executive meetings (e.g., CompStat meetings)
	Internal agency training		External agency/community training
	Data collection		Hiring and promotion processes
	Form and resource development		Other: [enter here]

77. Provide any context or clarification for the above questions on collaboration in the space provided below. [enter below]

Notes

i The phrase "sexual misconduct by law enforcement" is defined by the IACP's *Addressing Sexual Offenses and Misconduct by Law Enforcement: Executive Guide* as "any behavior by an officer that takes advantage of the officer's position in law enforcement to misuse authority and power (including force) in order to commit a sexual act, initiate sexual contact with another person, or respond to a perceived sexually motivated cue (from a subtle suggestion to an overt action) from another person. It also includes any communication or behavior by an officer that would likely be construed as lewd, lascivious, inappropriate, or conduct unbecoming an officer and violates general principles of acceptable conduct common to law enforcement." See "Policies & Practices" in the *Additional Considerations* section for additional information.

ii Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence(API-GBV), Interpretation Technical Assistance & Resource Center, *Developing a Language Access Plan for Your Agency*, tip sheet, 2015, https://www.api-gbv.org/resources/language-access-plan/; API-GBV, Interpretation Technical Assistance & Resource Center, "Language Access Policy Template," 2015, https://www.api-gbv.org/resources/language-access-policy-template/; "'Deaf' (with an upper case 'D') refers to an identity with its own culture, language, and diverse communities; 'deaf' (with a lower case 'd') refers to a physical condition/impairment. Deaf and hard of hearing protections most often appear as a disability issue rather than a language access issue. However, many in the Deaf community see it as language access – not a disability – issue." *Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence, Interpretation Technical Assistance & Resource Center*

iii Purvi Shah, *Language Access: Considerations and Recommendations for Advocates Supporting Survivors of Violence*, technical assistance brief (API-GBV, Interpretation Technical Assistance & Resource Center, 2014), https://www.api-gbv.org/resources/language-access-considerations-recommendations-advocates-supporting-survivors-violence/.

iv Documenting this information can assist not only with a better understanding of the community that agency members are interacting with, but also with tracking when interpreters are being used and if further interviews will require interpretation. These can be important metrics for the purposes of language access and budget planning. See Purvi Shah*, Language Access: Considerations and Recommendations for Advocates Supporting Survivors of Violence* for more information.

v While the needs of each agency and community vary and bilingual officers are an important part of providing robust services to the widest range of community members, it is important to note that a bilingual officer is not the same as a qualified interpreter or translator. A qualified interpreter is a trained professional who is a *neutral third party* with the requisite language skills, experienced in interpretation or translation techniques, and knowledgeable in specialized content areas and technical terminology in order to effectively facilitate communication between two or more parties who do not share a common language.

vi Including the National Crime Information Center (NCIC), vehicle records, the agency's internal records management system, etc.

vii See "Training" in the *Additional Considerations* section for a discussion of these terms.

viii In some jurisdictions, victims have a legal right to have an advocate or counselor present in interviews with law enforcement. Consult applicable state and local laws.

ix Morgan Walton and Jane Palmer, "Legal Considerations on a Sexual Assault Victim's Right to an Advocate," *Sexual Assault Report* 18, no. 1 (September/October 2014): 1-6.

x The term "sex" is defined by the IACP's *Responding to Sexual Violence in LGBTQ+ Communities: Law Enforcement Strategies and Considerations* as "a biological term referring to the genitalia and reproductive anatomy a person has at birth."

xi The term "gender" is defined by the IACP's *Responding to Sexual Violence in LGBTQ+ Communities: Law Enforcement Strategies and Considerations* as "a societal construct, defined by expectations of the ways men and women should behave, including but not limited to the way individuals dress, talk, or act."

xii See "Hiring & Promotion Practices" in the *Additional Considerations* section for an important discussion on the role of protection orders in applicant screening.

xiii   Lethality and risk assessment programs are designed to assist law enforcement in determining if victims of intimate partner violence are at risk of being killed or seriously injured by their partners. While questions and procedures differ between different models, each typically involves gathering a set of data about the abuser and the relationship and provides guidance on what indicators should prompt further action.

xiv   A limited English proficient individual is any individual whose primary language is not English, and has limited or no ability to speak, understand, read, or write English. - *Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence, Interpretation Technical Assistance & Resource Center;* Shah, *Language Access*.

xv   Interpretation is the process of orally rendering a spoken or signed communication from one language into another language. A qualified interpreter is a trained professional who is a neutral third party with the requisite language skills, experienced in interpretation or translation techniques, and knowledgeable in specialized content areas and technical terminology in order to effectively facilitate communication between two or more parties who do not share a common language. - *Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence, Interpretation Technical Assistance & Resource Center;* Shah, *Language Access*.

xvi   Including new partners of domestic/intimate partner violence victims.

xvii   Note that ability to implement this practice in some jurisdictions may be impacted by applicable local laws, bargaining agreements, policies, or other relevant regulation.

xviii Note that the ability to implement this practice in some jurisdictions may be impacted by applicable local laws, bargaining agreements, policies, or other relevant regulation.

       Anonymous reporting allows victims to "disclose that [they] have been the victim of sexual violence without identifying [themselves] or providing sufficient information to determine [their] identity or requesting any specific action." See University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, "Anonymous and Confidential Reporting" for more information.

       University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, "Anonymous and Confidential Reporting," 2019, https://uwm.edu/titleix/make-a-report/anonymous-and-confidential-reporting/.

xix   Note that the ability to implement this practice in some jurisdictions may be impacted by applicable local laws, bargaining agreements, policies, or other relevant regulation.

xx   This may not be possible in some jurisdictions based on applicable law or labor agreements; it is important to consider how the greatest degree of confidentiality or sensitivity can be afforded to the involved parties.

Acknowledgements

About the Community Assessment

This assessment invites community organizations that provide support, services, advocacy, and resources to victims of domestic violence[i], dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking[ii] to (1) assess the law enforcement responses to incidents of gender-based violence and (2) provide feedback on community confidence in the law enforcement responses to gender-based violence. Through the information gathered as part of this assessment, and in conjunction with the agency-self assessment, law enforcement agencies can:

- **EVALUATE** internal strengths and challenges when responding to and investigating incidents of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking;

- **IMPROVE** awareness of implicit and explicit gender bias and how it impacts victims, officers, agencies, and communities;

- **DEVELOP** and enhance partnerships that promote collaboration and strengthen trust among stakeholders;

- **SOLICIT** feedback from the community's perspectives on the strengths and challenges regarding the agency's responses to and investigation of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking; and

- **APPLY** lessons learned from the agency self-assessment and community assessments to develop and implement strategies and procedures that improve law enforcement response, increase victim involvement in investigations, improve case outcomes, and foster greater community confidence in law enforcement approaches to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

This assessment is not intended to capture all ways in which agencies and organizations can work together to support victims and respond to crimes of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. This tool is intended to start a dialogue between community-based organizations and agencies.

Self-Assessment and Community Assessment Tools

The self-assessment asks agencies to review their policies, practices, training, data collection, hiring, promotion, and supervision regarding the agency's and individual officers' responses to and knowledge of these crimes.

The community assessment is intended to be shared with as many community-based organizations as possible within the agency's service area. This assessment asks about the organization's background, its interactions with the law enforcement agency, and its viewpoints about the agency's crisis response and investigatory approaches.

Conducting the Community Assessment

As a companion to the agency self-assessment, community-based organizations within the jurisdiction of the agency are asked to complete a brief external assessment. This companion assessment can help provide perspective and discussion points for ways to strengthen the agency's community partnerships.

Thoughtful outreach to community-based organizations is imperative to obtaining comprehensive feedback from a community assessment. Those organizations that work closely with the agency, as well as those without an existing partnership, can provide valuable input on the agency's strengths and areas for improvement in the response to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Agencies should send the assessment to as many community-based organizations in the jurisdiction as possible, including but not limited to the following:

- **Sexual assault and/or domestic violence coalitions**
- **Domestic violence direct service providers**
- **Sexual assault direct service providers**
- **Culturally specific service providers (e.g., race, ethnicity, nationality, language, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity)[iii]**
- **Religious and spiritual organizations and leaders**
- **Civil legal service providers**
- **Shelter/housing providers**
- **Victim compensation office**
- **Forensic nurses/medical personnel**
- **Local colleges/universities including Title IX representatives**

Agencies should also consider any community-based organization that provides any of the following services in the community:

- **Mental health services**
- **Children's advocacy**
- **Supervised visitation services**
- **Family/protection order assistance**
- **Housing advocacy**
- **Batterer intervention programming**
- **Substance use disorder counseling**
- **Elderly and aging advocacy**

Step 1

Assign responsibility and senior leadership oversight of the community assessment process.

Step 2

Identify the organizations that work on gender-based violence in the agency's jurisdiction. Multidisciplinary teams and partners can assist in identifying additional organizations.

Step 3

Send the community assessment to the identified agencies and organizations. A letter providing context to the request can be helpful guidance.

Step 4

Compile the results from the community assessment.

Step 5

Review the results of the community assessment.

Step 6

Use the action planning guide to develop strategic priorities.

Step 7

Use the resources and considerations section and work with partners to identify training and technical assistance, as well as model policies and practices.

Use of Findings

The responses provided will be shared directly with the agency. Your response, along with the responses of other community-based organizations, will be used to identify strengths, as well as opportunities for improvement and possible collaborative efforts for the agency.

Instructions

Please fill out the community assessment to the best of your knowledge. There may be some questions that do not directly apply to your work or you do not have information about. For these instances, please indicate as such in the space provided by writing unsure, not applicable, do not collect, etc.

These assessments are intended to be used for internal purposes only as a complement to the agency-self assessment. Thoughtful feedback that speaks to both strengths and areas for enhancement provides helpful insight to the law enforcement agency requesting your input.

These assessments are:
■ an external perspective, which provides feedback to the law enforcement agency about its approach to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking

These assessments are not:
■ a supporting document for a grant
■ a letter of support
■ research

Organization and Community Background

1. **Organization Name:** [enter below]

2. **Organization Mission:** [enter below]

3. **How does your organization work with the law enforcement agency that sent you this assessment?** [enter below]

4. **How often does your organization interact with the law enforcement agency that sent you this assessment? You can provide this answer in estimated times per day, week, month, year.** [enter below]

5. Please indicate which option(s) best describes your organization [check all that apply]:

	Coalition		Mental health services provider
	Domestic violence direct service provider		Children's advocacy program
	Sexual assault direct service provider		Health care/medical services provider
	Shelter/housing provider		Elder advocacy program
	Compensation program		Culturally specific service provider
	Legal services provider		Faith-based organization
	Educational institution		Criminal justice system agency
	Other: [enter here]		

6. What kind of services does your organization provide [check all that apply]:

	Domestic/dating violence advocacy/assistance		Stalking advocacy/assistance
	Sexual violence advocacy/assistance		Strangulation advocacy/assistance
	LGBTQ-specific services		Culturally specific services
	Civil legal services		Criminal court accompaniments and other victim/witness support
	Batterer intervention program		Policy/legislation analysis/advocacy
	Shelter (emergency or temporary)		Education and awareness
	Trauma services for children		Counseling on public benefits
	Family/protection order assistance		Housing advocacy
	Mental health services/counseling		Medical assistance
	Substance use disorder counseling		Other: [enter here]

7. How many victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking did your organization serve annually in each of the last three (3) years? If you are unsure or do not collect these data, indicate in the space provided for each item. In instances where co-occurring data are collected, please count each crime/victimization separately. (For example, if a client is a victim of sexual assault and strangulation, the instance would be counted under both crime categories.)

Note: Please consider the confidentiality of the victims when answering this question. If you cannot answer this without inadvertently revealing victim information that may impact victim confidentiality and safety, please skip this question.

	Sexual Violence	Domestic/Dating Violence	Strangulation	Stalking	Total Number of People Served
Last Year					
2 Years ago					
3 Years ago					

8. **Of the domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking victims you served in the last twelve (12) months, <u>approximately</u> what percentage made a report with law enforcement for the crime of which they were a victim?**

Percentage (%)	Sexual Violence	Domestic/Dating Violence	Strangulation	Stalking
0 – 10				
11 – 25				
26 – 40				
41 – 50				
51 – 75				
76 – 100				
Unknown				
Not applicable				

9. **Of the domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking victims your organization served in the last twelve (12) months, <u>approximately</u> what percentage have had a criminal investigation lead to prosecution?**

Percentage (%)	Sexual Violence	Domestic/Dating Violence	Strangulation	Stalking
0 – 10				
11 – 25				
26 – 40				
41 – 50				
51 – 75				
76 – 100				
Unknown				
Not applicable				

10. Based on your interactions with victims, how would you rate the law enforcement response in each of the following categories:

With respect to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking, the officer(s)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Strongly Disagree
Demonstrated specialized expertise					
Demonstrated understanding of lethality factors					
Used respectful language					
Explained the role of an advocate (system-based advocate, community-based advocate, or both)					
Permitted advocates (system-based advocate, community-based advocate, or both) to remain during victim interviews					
Knew about and offered additional appropriate support, resources, and referrals					
Provided information on how to contact the agency member assigned to the case					
Followed up in a timely manner					
Treated the matter with a sense of urgency and importance					
Demonstrated trauma-informed interviewing skills					
Effectively responded to non-physical coercive control (e.g., psychological abuse, emotional abuse, financial control)					
Demonstrated culturally appropriate interactions					
Offered interpreters, when needed					

11. In general, is there anything you would like to add about the experiences described in the prior questions? [enter below]

Collaboration

12. Do you currently collaborate with the law enforcement agency being assessed?

Yes	No (skip to Question 14)

13. With respect to collaboration with this agency, please respond to the following:

The agency being assessed works with our organization in the following ways:	Frequently	Sometimes	Never	Unsure	Not applicable
Receives roll call trainings/briefings on sexual violence, domestic/dating violence, stalking, and/or strangulation					
Participates in a coordinated community response with a multidisciplinary team on domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and/or stalking, such as a SART, DVRT, etc.					
Participates in a fatality review team					
Participates in cross-training on domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and/or stalking					
Provides referrals					
Has a memorandum of understanding (MOU) or letter of agreement					
Receives support or training to enhance culturally appropriate law enforcement response, including language access					
Receives support or training to improve law enforcement outreach to communities, especially to underserved populations					
Receives support or training to help law enforcement incorporate trauma-informed[iv] practices					
Has regular meetings or engagement with the victim services personnel of the agency being assessed					
Participates in our organization's events, including prevention and outreach effort					

14. **Please provide any additional comments on collaborative efforts.** [enter below]

15. **Does the agency being assessed have one or more specialized units to address domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking?**

	Yes		No (skip to Question 17)		Unsure

16. **If yes, in your experience has the specialized unit(s) provided a trauma-informed, victim-centered response? Please list the unit(s) and describe the response(s).** [enter below]

17. **Does the agency being assessed have full-time victim services personnel on staff?**

	Yes		No		Unsure

18. With respect to the collaboration with the agency being assessed, please add any additional information or impressions you would like to provide: [enter below]

Community Confidence

19. With respect to the agency being assessed, overall the individuals who receive services at our organization:

	Sexual Assault	Domestic/ Dating Violence	Strangulation	Stalking
Demonstrate confidence in calling for assistance with cases of				
Consider law enforcement a safe and helpful option in cases that involve individuals who identify as LGBTQ in cases of				
Know the process for making a report (or where to find information) in cases of				
Consider the law enforcement response appropriate and timely in cases of				
Believe that law enforcement officers have specialized expertise in cases of				
Trust that law enforcement will follow up and follow through in cases of				
Believe law enforcement will support prosecution efforts in cases of				

20. Please provide any additional comments on community confidence. [enter below]

21. **Based on your organization's experience with serving victims, describe the strengths of the agency's immediate response to calls for assistance from victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.** [enter below]

21.1. **Based on your organization's experience with serving LGBTQ+ victims, describe the strengths of the agency's immediate response to calls for assistance from LGBTQ+ victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.** [enter below]

22. **Based on your experience, please provide details of what you believe the opportunities are for the agency to strengthen its responses to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.** [enter below]

22.1 Based on your experience, please provide details of what you believe the opportunities are for the agency to strengthen their responses to cases of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking that involve the LGBTQ+ population. [enter below]

23. Are there any recent incidents that have impacted your organization's and/or the community's impressions of the agency being assessed, in terms of its responses to, and investigations of, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking? If so, please describe the nature and impacts (positive and negative): [enter below]

Notes

i   For the purposes of this assessment, domestic/dating violence refers to intimate partner violence, and an intimate partner is generally defined as a person with whom one has a close personal relationship that could involve ongoing contact, emotional connection, sexual behavior, identity as dating partners, and/or familiarity with each other's lives, such as current or former spouses, boyfriends or girlfriends, dating partners, or sexual partners. For the purposes of this document, status as an intimate partner is not dependent upon marital status or cohabitation, though the legal definition of an intimate partner may vary regionally.

ii   Throughout this assessment, all descriptions regarding gender-based violence, including domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking, are specific to crimes involving adult victims.

iii Pursuant to 34 U.S.C. § 12291(a)(7), culturally specific services are community-based services that include culturally relevant and linguistically specific services and resources to culturally specific communities.

iv   "Trauma-informed" services understand and recognize the physical, psychological, and behavioral effects of trauma and create and provide services that are sensitive and responsive to those effects.

Acknowledgements

Sample Outreach Letter:
Proactive Approaches to Domestic & Sexual Violence

[Date]

Agency Head Name
Title
Agency Name
Address
Address Line 2

Dear [Recipient Name]:

[AGENCY NAME] is currently seeking input from both our current partners and those organizations that we do not presently collaborate with to gather information that will assist us with strengthening our response to victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. You are receiving this because of the support, services, advocacy, or resources that you provide to adult victims of these crimes.

As a community organization in our jurisdiction, we are inviting you to provide feedback regarding our responses to and investigations of crimes of gender-based violence to assess the extent to which victims of violence trust [AGENCY NAME] and to provide insight into collaborations and relationships between community organizations and our agency.

I hope your organization will consider contributing insights and information about your experiences with the agency as a part of this assessment. I invite you to reach out to me with any questions or concerns.

Thank you,

[agency leadership signature]

[agency leadership name]
[agency leadership email]
[agency leadership phone]

Action Planning Guide:
Proactive Approaches to Domestic & Sexual Violence

About the Action Planning Guide

The Action Planning Guide can assist agency leadership in creating a plan to address areas of opportunity identified through the agency self-assessment and community assessment. This guide walks through the steps of goal development, implementation of goals, and sustaining change so that agencies can set and achieve both short- and long-term objectives to enhance their approaches to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking.[i]

Developing Goals

With agency self-assessment results in-hand, the first stage of developing an action plan is to identify and develop the long-term goals of the organization. While these goals may vary to suit each individual organization and its situation at the outset of the change effort, overall your agency's goals should seek to project where your agency would like to be in the future with respect to its practices and policies related to gender-based violence.

1. Review the results of your agency self-assessment.

Each question of your agency self-assessment is designed to contain a recommended promising practice. For those questions on which your agency answers "no," "none of the time," "some of the time," or similar answer, list out the suggested practice contained within. For example, if you agency answers "no" to the question *"Does your agency have a stand-alone, comprehensive policy that outlines your agency's response to stalking reports?"*—list *"Develop and implement a stand-alone, comprehensive policy that outlines your agency's response to stalking reports"* as the suggested practice.

2. Create goals from identified suggested practices.

Each suggested practice statement listed during step 1 is a great launching point for goal development. Goals should be concrete and specific enough to be meaningful and should include not only what your agency intends to accomplish, but also *why* it intends to do so. For example, instead of *"To commend officers for properly responding to sexual assault calls,"* a more specific and meaningful goal might be *"To implement a commendation system for officers who effectively respond to sexual assault calls in order to recognize excellence and set a standard for the team members to better support victims."* Goals also need to be clearly defined; if the successful completion of the goal cannot be measured, it requires additional clarification and specificity.[ii]
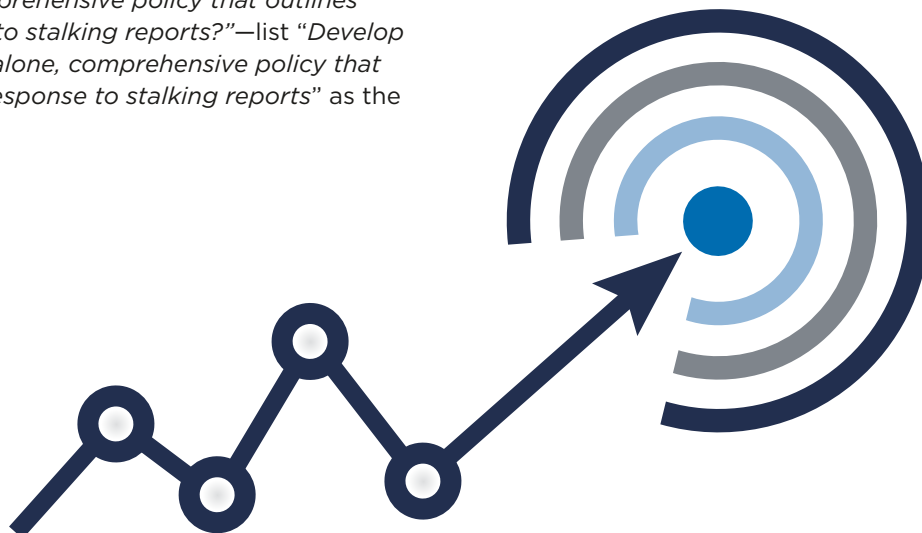
Implement & Sustain

Developing agency goals is only the first stage in moving from assessment to action; next, your agency must create a plan to prioritize and implement those goals.

action on even a single goal is progress toward improving responsiveness to victims and ability to hold offenders accountable.

1. Prioritize goals.

Incremental implementation of desired goals is likely to be more attainable than an abrupt, immediate transition across multiple areas, practices, polices, etc., of the organization; thus, the next phase in the action process is prioritization. As part of prioritizing your ideas for action, acknowledge steps your agency has already taken to enhance response to victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. All the other strategies you choose to implement will build on those efforts. The weight given to the various factors and the final order of the list of goals will be unique to each agency, but considerations might include urgency, practicality, complexity, and projected length of time for each item. An agency may choose to consider the following criteria when evaluating its list of goals for prioritization:

Need for change	■ Time urgency ■ Perceived importance
Ease of implementation	■ Compatibility with agency philosophy and organizational culture ■ Extent to which strategy builds on agency strengths
Required resources	■ Funding and other resources required ■ Officer and/or community partner buy-in
Scope of impacts	■ Anticipated short-term "wins" ■ Expected long-range impacts ■ Overall timing of results

Your agency's goals will likely include both short-term and long-term objectives; as the project team considers the prioritization of its various goals, also consider how the goals may build off of one another toward long-range goals and fit into your agency's overall long-term strategic plan. Most important, ***this is not an all-or-nothing effort***;

2. Create the action plan.

For each goal statement, identify potential challenges, outside partners, and tools needed—and break the overall goal out into smaller action steps. The specific action steps identified will depend largely on each agency's unique situation at the time of goal-setting; in the example above about implementing a commendation system, the list of action steps will look differently for one agency that has no existing commendation system at all, than an agency that does have a commendation system that does not currently include recognition of response to sexual/gender-based violence calls.

- **ACTION STEPS** should be specific and measurable, and each goal should include a sufficient number of action steps needed to complete the goal in its entirety.

- For each action step, there should be a specific, articulable **ANSWER** to the question, "how will we know when we have completed this step?"

- For each individual action step, your agency should **IDENTIFY** responsible parties and a time frame in which the step should be completed.

- **IDENTIFY** what results are expected in the short and long term.

- **ENHANCE** your strengths; don't simply maintain them. For example, if your agency is already perceived as communicating well with the public, look for creative ways to augment that communication.

- **SELECT** a few strategies that are likely to have positive impacts in the short term to help sustain momentum and encourage internal buy-in.

- **ESTABLISH** timelines and dates for your goals. When should implementation begin, and how long it is expected to take? Your timeline may incur delays, so remain flexible.

- **ASK** leadership team members to take accountability for specific elements of your plan. You do not want to have to guess what people are willing to contribute.

- **IDENTIFY** required resources and where they might be obtained.

See next page for a sample goal broken down into action steps.

Topic: Department Standards		
Goal: To develop and implement agency policy on agency member–perpetrated sexual misconduct in order to establish standards of practice and ensure fair process for all involved parties.		
Action Steps	**Responsible Parties**	**Time Frame**
1. Develop policy drafting committee with representatives from city attorney and city human resources offices, local sexual violence service agency, prosecutor's office, and the police union	Chief of Police, Sex Crimes Unit Supervisor, Internal Affairs/Professional Standards Bureau Supervisor	1 month
2. Review model policies and research implications of relevant existing laws, policies, bargaining agreements, etc.	Drafting Committee	1 month
3. Draft policy and release for internal comment	Drafting Committee, Chief of Police	4 months
4. Review by partners identified in Step 1 to gain buy-in	Drafting Committee	1 month
5. Finalize policy and distribute with signed acknowledgement of personnel	Chief of Police, Drafting Committee, Supervisors	1 month
6. Conduct in-service training highlighting officer and supervisor responsibilities regarding policy	Training Supervisor	1 week prep, 1 day in-service
Outside Partners	**Tools Needed**	
City attorney's office	Model policies and policy development resources, relevant state and federal laws, agency policies, collective bargaining agreements, etc.	
City human resources office		
Local sexual violence service agency		
Prosecutor's office		
Police union		
Target Date for Completion: November 20XX		

3. Implement the action plan.

As a group, the project team and agency leadership should choose strategies and plans of action for implementation based on your agency's individual makeup. In the development of the action plan, incorporate strategies and follow through with policy development or revision that will encourage and sustain internal and external buy-in.

Strategies for achieving internal buy-in may include:

- **ASKING** for and providing credit for ideas;
- **LISTENING** and responding to concerns;
- **ACKNOWLEDGING** challenges;
- **CONTINUOUSLY REINFORCING** the benefits of enhancing victim response; and
- **KEEPING** personnel and stakeholders informed about the positive impacts of their efforts.

Concerns about mission and role shifting can be addressed with encouragement such as memoranda to staff and Question and Answer sheets to reassure personnel that their primary mission remains protecting and serving civilians. Victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking are community members, and enhancing your agency's response to them will improve the ability to accomplish this critical mission. Leadership may also choose to communicate with individual staff members in a variety of ways to highlight the many benefits of enhanced response to victims and personally engage staff at all levels in the effort.

Strategies for achieving buy-in from external partners may include:

- **INVOLVING** partners early in the process—consider inviting key stakeholders to be a part of the project leadership team;
- **INVITING** stakeholders' ideas and responding to their concerns;
- **COLLABORATING** to resolve problems; and
- **KEEPING** victim service providers informed about the results of joint efforts and expressing appreciation for their work to support and assist victims.

4. Celebrate successes.

It is essential not only to track accomplishments, but also to publicize them internally within your agency as well as externally. Keeping personnel and other stakeholders informed about the positive results of your agency's efforts will reinforce their commitment and may help to mobilize additional funding and other essential support.

Publicizing progress and accomplishments

Internally	Externally
Staff meetings	Press releases and letters to the editor
Roll-call trainings	Public meetings
Memoranda and letters	Victim service provider forums
Meeting records	Training events with partners
Internal databases	Civilian academies
Intranet	Annual reports, newsletters

5. Reevaluate goals as necessary.

Action planning is a continuous process of assessment, learning from missteps, building on successes, and identifying new areas in which your agency can improve its response to victims. Promising practices in the response to gender-based crimes have evolved over time as the field has learned new information and gained new resources in order to better serve victims and hold offenders accountable; if a better way of doing things emerges in the field, don't be afraid to evolve and update goals.

6. Modify strategies as necessary.

As issues emerge, you may need to modify your strategies to adapt to changing circumstances. Your efforts are part of a new way of doing business, not a project with a deadline or completion date.
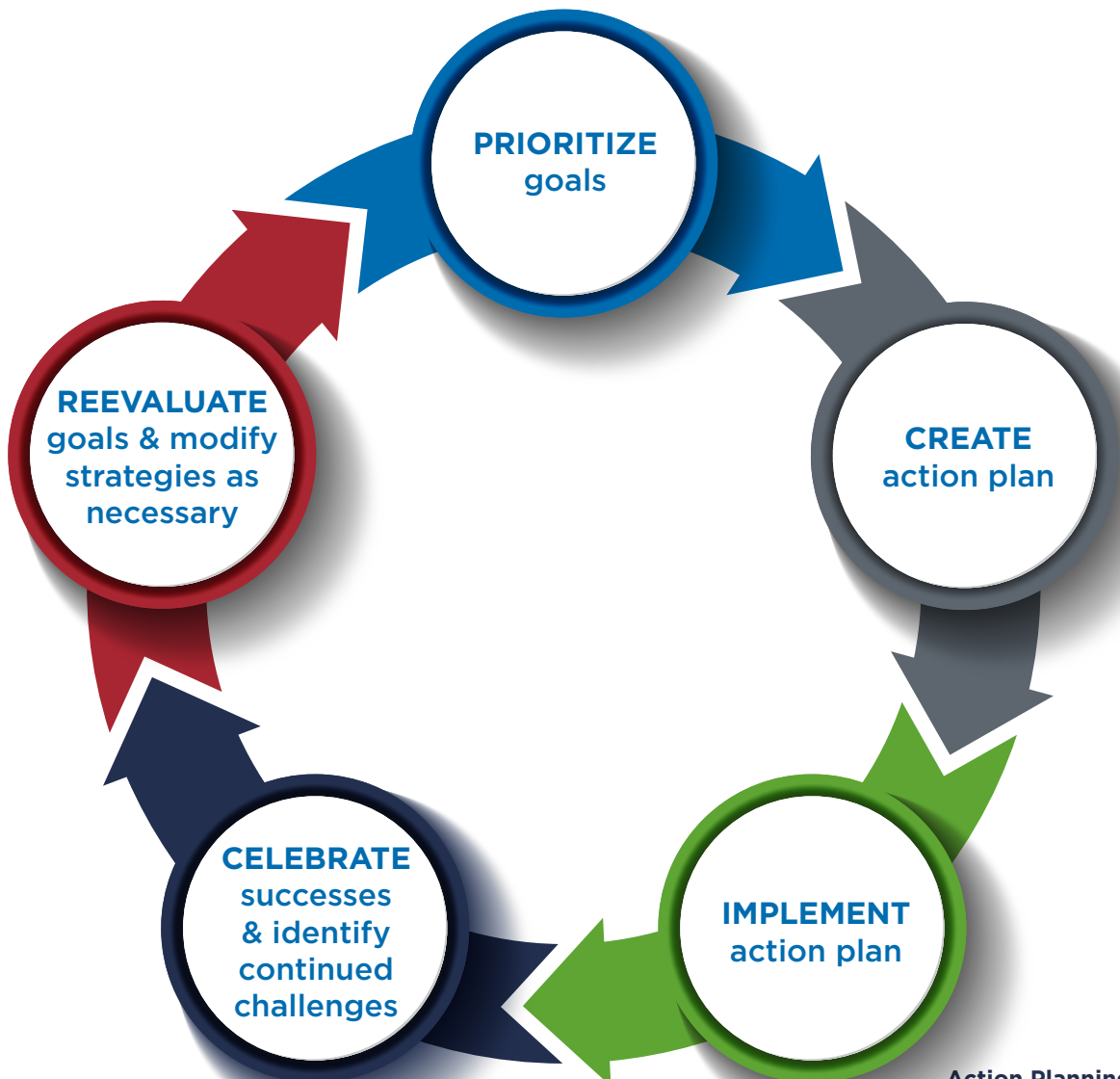
The Action Planning Process

Develop Goals

REVIEW results of your agency self-assessment

CREATE goals from identified suggested practices

Implement & Sustain

PRIORITIZE goals

CREATE action plan

IMPLEMENT action plan

CELEBRATE successes & identify continued challenges

REEVALUATE goals & modify strategies as necessary

Notes

i   International Association of Chiefs of Police, *Enhancing Law Enforcement Response to Victims: Implementation Guide*, 2009, https://www.theiacp.org/resources/document/2-enhancing-law-enforcement-response-to-victims-implementation-guide.

ii   John R. Austin, "Initiating Controversial Strategic Change in Organizations," *OD Practitioner* 41, no. 3 (2009): 52-57.

About the Additional Considerations and Resources

The agency self-assessment and community assessment are intended to be comprehensive in the breadth of subjects they cover; however, agencies may want to incorporate other factors during their process of self-assessment and evaluation of policies and practices. A discussion of additional considerations for each section of the assessment and a list of additional resources on gender-based violence from the IACP and the broader field follow and are provided to assist with the analysis necessary for the transition from assessment to action planning and implementation.

Further Considerations

Data Collection & Analysis

Informed, strategic decision-making about cases, policies, practices, staffing, supervision, and training related to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking are critical to the ability of a law enforcement organization to effectively respond to and investigate these crimes. Engaging in active maintenance and review allows for the development of data-driven strategies, which is a promising practice for law enforcement leaders to ensure their agencies operate in the most effective and equitable way.

Examination of case data can assist agency leadership with the regular management tasks of law enforcement agencies, as well as potentially illuminate practices that are inconsistent with the agency's policy or mission.

Practices that are inconsistent with policies and current research can erode public trust and present challenges to an agency's legitimacy and ability to effectively enforce the law. Examining and analyzing agency data are helpful to ensure that operations are running smoothly and to rapidly diagnose and address problems. A searchable database capable of statistical analysis and reporting is a powerful tool for law enforcement leaders to create a high-level view of what is happening across the agency for decision-making purposes. Ideally, a records management system (RMS) is capable of producing a variety of ad hoc reports,[i] which are needed in order to allow agency leadership to obtain meaningful output for diagnostic reviews of the agency's performance.

Comparative rates across crime classification and disposition are an example of the useful diagnostic measures that can assist agencies in understanding trends, patterns, areas of success, and areas of concern from a high-level, agency-wide view. Consider two characteristics of sexual assaults derived from research that tracked and analyzed these data: 1) according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, in most jurisdictions, the rate of sexual assaults typically exceeds the rate of homicides;[ii] and 2) false reporting of sexual assaults is generally estimated to be between 2 and 10 percent.[iii] Therefore, if an agency's homicides exceed sexual assaults or a high proportion of sexual assaults are classified as false reports, agency leadership may want to reflect upon whether victims of sexual assault are reporting these crimes. Secondly, the agency may want to review and revise their policy regarding identification, classification, and closure of sexual assault cases, and whether this policy is widely followed.

Data can also reveal patterns in the co-occurrence of crimes, providing valuable insight useful to planning strategic and multipronged approaches to reducing crime and ensuring adequate personnel and resources for thorough response and investigations. For example, domestic violence often involves a pattern of escalating violence over time and the occurrence of nonfatal strangulation sharply increases the risk of future major assaults or attempted or completed homicide.[iv] Documenting these elements of an offense not only helps to ensure complete, thorough information is available during the present investigation, but will also help to establish an accurate record of the offender's history and provide critical context for first responders and investigators on future crimes. Creating better mechanisms to identify the co-occurrence of multiple offenses and

manage subsequent co-occurring investigations can help to improve the victim's experience and participation, increase efficiency, and produce improved case outcomes. Moreover, calls related to domestic violence are some of the most unpredictable and unsafe calls for responding law enforcement due to the nature of the crime. An accurate record of an offender's history better equips responding officers to protect both their safety and the safety of the victims, offenders, and others on scene.

Tracking contextual details in a searchable form, such as how case disposition was determined and by whom,[v] can also help an agency keep comprehensive records on the outcomes and decision-making process. This practice can help pinpoint specific areas in which policy and practice revision or additional training would benefit the agency's operations. Similarly, recording details about internal affairs investigations and civilian complaints in formats that allow easy searching and reporting enhances the ability of agency leaders to identify and address concerning patterns of behavior.

Regular diagnostics and active analysis of data help to maintain the health of a law enforcement agency. By proactively identifying aberrations or areas of concern, agency leadership is in a better position to intervene and course-correct before any large errors are made or harm is done. Even simple data analysis is a valuable tool for assessing an agency's decisions on response and investigation policies, staffing decisions, supervision, and training— and for developing evidence-based strategies for addressing identified weaknesses. However, while data may point to a potential issue, understanding the root of it is often understood only by looking underneath the numbers at the case files. Often, multidisciplinary community partners are helpful allies in the process of reviewing data and understanding solutions. For more information on working with partner organizations, see the Collaboration section below, and for more information on using data to create a stronger law enforcement organization, see Additional Resources.

Policies & Practices

Equitable, effective, professional responses to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking must start with effective, professional policies and practices. Clear and comprehensive procedures for trauma-informed, victim-centered, multidisciplinary response and investigation that are aligned with relevant local, state, and federal laws can be reinforced with accountability plans and measures. Policies designed for equitable service to community members also explain the roles and responsibilities of all agency members throughout the process, including specific details on the involvement of internal or external victim service providers, while also keeping in mind the responsibility to support victims, conduct thorough investigations, hold offenders accountable, and prevent future acts of violence. These policies highlight strategies that suspend judgment from

agency personnel regarding the validity of a case until a thorough investigation is completed and illustrate methods to minimize further physical and psychological trauma to victims by creating a respectful, objective response.[vi]

Developing comprehensive, stand-alone policies that address each distinct issue acknowledges the deep complexities of these cases and the challenges that agency personnel are met with in their response and investigation. Individual policies provide a platform for adequate guidance and send the message internally to employees and externally to the community that the agency has thoughtfully considered each issue. Comprehensive policies on domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking aim to enhance public confidence in the reporting and investigative processes, thereby encouraging all victims of these crimes to report them to law enforcement.

The unique complexities that may be present in cases of gender-based violence are vast and varied and, therefore, require that unique consideration be given in creating policy and practice guidance. This can include ensuring specialized services are available for victims, through referrals to community-based advocates and/or system-based services, as well as referrals to other service providers. It may include outlining guidelines for evidence collection and preservation for forensic medical exams, documenting victim injuries at the time of the crime and afterward, identifying and documenting psychological evidence (such as evidence of trauma), identifying and interviewing all possible witnesses and suspects, identifying and addressing witness intimidation, and determining when evidence such as forensic exam kits and ballistics must be submitted to a crime lab for analysis. Codifying these practices into written guidance encourages greater use of these investigative resources, benefiting the victims and agency alike. Other considerations can include guidance on reviewing reports for investigative thoroughness and accuracy and neutrality of tone, and the establishment of procedures specific to the additional complexities present in the event that an agency member is a party to the crime as a victim, witness, or suspect.

As referenced throughout this resource, "officer-involved sexual violence and misconduct" is defined by the IACP's Addressing Sexual Offenses and Misconduct by Law Enforcement: Executive Guide as *any behavior by an officer that takes advantage of the officer's position in law enforcement to misuse authority and power (including force) in order to commit a sexual act, initiate sexual contact with another person, or respond to a perceived sexually motivated cue (from a subtle suggestion to an overt action) from another person. It also includes any communication or behavior by an officer that would likely be construed as lewd, lascivious, inappropriate, or conduct unbecoming an officer and violates*

general principles of acceptable conduct common to law enforcement….

The various forms of officer-involved sexual violence and misconduct, some of which are criminal acts, may be directed at colleagues, civilians, detainees, juveniles, and crime victims or witnesses. Forms may include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. sexual contact by force (e.g., sexual assault, rape);

2. sexual shakedowns (e.g., extorting sexual favors in exchange for not ticketing or arresting a civilian);

3. gratuitous physical contact with suspects (e.g., inappropriate or unnecessary searches, frisks, or pat-downs);

4. officer-initiated sexual contacts while on duty;

5. sexual harassment of colleagues/co-workers;

6. engaging in civilian-initiated sexual contact while on duty;

7. sexual behavior while on duty (e.g., masturbation, viewing and/or distributing pornographic images, sexting);

8. voyeuristic actions that are sexually motivated (e.g., looking in windows of residences for sexually motivated reasons);

9. unnecessary contacts/actions taken by officers for personally and/or sexually motivated reasons (e.g., unwarranted call backs to crime victims, making a traffic stop to get a closer look at the driver for non-professional reasons); and

10. inappropriate and unauthorized use of department resources and/or information systems for other than legitimate law enforcement purposes.[vii]

Any form of sexual misconduct or gender-based violence committed by a law enforcement agency member violates public trust and tarnishes the noble reputation of the profession that so many thousands of dedicated, ethical, sworn and non-sworn personnel tirelessly work to maintain. It is imperative that law enforcement abide by a high moral and ethical standard that is consistent with the rule of law they are sworn to uphold.[viii] It is equally imperative that leaders establish clear expectations and hold agency members accountable if they fail to meet those standards. Clearly delineated policies can be advantageous to reduce risk for charges of liability against the agency.[ix] Similarly, policies designed to maintain high ethical standards of conduct will also provide written guidance on the responsible access to and use of police resources such as records management systems, vehicle records databases, National Crime Information Center, etc. This acceptable use policy may address general appropriate and lawful use of confidential resources, but must also specifically articulate the impropriety and illegality of taking advantage of them to conduct surveillance of or gather information about an intimate partner or other individual with whom the employee has or desires to have a personal or social relationship. Clear, strong written standards can also act as a preventive measure by signaling what the consequences of misconduct will be before it ever occurs.

Aside from policy language, law enforcement agencies also benefit from implementing practices that advance the goal of providing thorough, trauma-informed, and victim-centered response to crime. For example, establishing a regular schedule (annually, biennially, etc.) to review policies for their alignment with laws and leading practices that have evolved over time can enhance the agency by keeping it current with an ever-changing field and legal landscape. Further, inviting representatives from partner organizations in the local community to that review process also adds value through the inclusion of diverse input and increased support from stronger community relationships. Similarly, implementing specialized supplemental reporting forms can strengthen an agency's response practices by guiding agency personnel in conducting necessary investigatory steps, obtaining complete information, and documenting any additional circumstances or rationale that could prove to be critical to successful charging and prosecution. Supplemental reporting forms for domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking can also prompt responding officers to offer specific types of information and referrals to victims as needed, which can enhance the victim's experience with the agency and build trust in the community.

Finally, while strong policies outline the expectations agency commanders have of agency members, it is strong, consistent leadership that guides agency members to abide and adopt the spirit of the agency's policies. As an international leader in creating tools and resources for law enforcement professionals, the IACP has published a wide library of materials to support agencies with developing outstanding policies, procedures, and training programs for their officers and employees. See the Additional Resources section below for a guide to IACP resources, including policy and training content guidelines, investigations resources, sample policies and forms, training videos and webinars, and additional guidance.

Hiring & Promotion Practices

An agency that more closely represents the community it exists within can enhance the agency's relationship with that community, and increasing representation of the groups that most frequently experience gender-based

violence creates greater opportunity to build trust with those groups, encouraging them to see law enforcement as a helpful and compassionate resource, which improves public safety for all.[x]

Women and sexual/gender minorities experience the highest rates of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking[xi] and are also historically underrepresented in law enforcement. At present, women make up just over half of the U.S. population[xii] but only about 12 percent of the country's law enforcement.[xiii] There is very little research available on numbers of law enforcement personnel who are "out" in their workplace, but data indicate that overall about 4 percent of the U.S. population identifies as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender.[xiv] Research also suggests that the proportion of LGBTQ+[xv] individuals in sworn and non-sworn law enforcement positions are likely lower than in the general population.[xvi] While hiring decisions should not be based on gender or sexual orientation – and employers should never ask or require employees or prospective employees to disclose their sexual orientation – creating programs designed to increase the participation of individuals from these groups in the criminal justice field can greatly benefit the agency.

Screening out applicants who do not exhibit the ethical characteristics necessary for the profession is equally important to the integrity of the organization and its hiring processes. Any applicant determined to have a history of committing domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking is not well suited for service in either a sworn or non-sworn position with a law enforcement agency. Many abusers manipulate the civil justice system and obtain at least a temporary order against a victim as another form of abuse and control. Therefore, the fact that an individual at one time was the respondent in an order of protection should not be a sole disqualifier for a position within a law enforcement agency, but rather indicate the need to take a closer look at the circumstances surrounding the order. Officers or applicants who are the respondent in a *current* order of protection should also be evaluated for their capacity for duty. While the federal law prohibiting any person subject to certain qualifying orders of protection from possessing a firearm has an exception for law enforcement who possess the firearm for official purposes, agency leadership should carefully consider the risk management implications during policy development.[xvii] Any individual who has been convicted of a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence, however, is prohibited by federal law from possessing a firearm on or off duty and would therefore be disqualified for service as a law enforcement officer.[xviii]

Application, testing, and interview processes should include direct questions about gender-based crimes such as "Have you ever been involved in or even accused of a sexual assault or rape?" and should also include questions that approximate the legal definitions of these crimes without using terms that might evoke a defensive response, such as "Have you ever had sexual intercourse with someone who was unconscious or who did not want to have sex at the time?" or "Have you ever punched, kicked, or slapped someone with whom you were in an intimate relationship?"[xix] When considering experienced personnel for hire from other agencies, the hiring agency should require candidates to sign a full-disclosure waiver that enables previous places of employment to provide in-depth references and copies of the officer's complete internal affairs file and all employment files, including details contained in any nondisclosure agreement and the circumstances surrounding separations from service. This practice can prevent experienced officers who are facing potential charges from moving to another agency prior to being disciplined or terminated. Additionally, agencies should contact the state licensing boards or Police Officer Standards and Training boards[xx] in the states where the officers previously worked to determine whether the officer had been disciplined.[xxi]

Another consideration for selecting new agency personnel is to screen for attitudes and beliefs that would prohibit the employee from equitably and effectively performing their duties in responding to gender-based crime, such as the belief that domestic violence is a private family matter more so than a crime, or that an individual who is raped while intoxicated is responsible for their victimization. While all people have personal opinions and beliefs, the authority entrusted to law enforcement personnel require that they be able to set those opinions aside to objectively perform their duties.

These efforts to craft an agency that is well-equipped to handle gender-based violence through the recruitment and hiring processes can be fortified through promotion and supervisory practices. Supervisors can have an extraordinary impact on the success of an investigation; those who are motivated and interested in the work and are well-trained on the subject matter can enhance response and investigation through their decisions and actions, but those who are not well-suited for the position in demeanor, interest, or technical knowledge can cause significant harm to the investigation, the agency's integrity and reputation, and worst of all, the victim's well-being. Furthermore, supervisors have an integral role in promoting safety for responding law enforcement. Considering the risky nature of calls related to gender-based violence, particularly domestic violence, those supervisors who are not well-versed in these safety considerations can put law enforcement at risk. As with all advanced and specialized positions throughout the agency, thoughtful consideration of how the candidate's skills and knowledge align with those required of the position will better situate both the individual and the unit for sustained success.

Culture & Accountability

An internal culture in which all members of the agency feel respected and valued for their contributions, function as a team, have equal opportunity for growth

and advancement, and hold each other accountable is a culture that is prepared to provide responsive and effective services to victims of gender-based violence, but this cannot be achieved without active and skillful management. Where practices intended to develop agency personnel and their careers as described in Hiring and Promotional Practices (such as mentorship programs, counseling on career advancement, and opportunities for recognition and constructive feedback) already exist in an agency, periodic evaluation of those practices can help to ensure that they continue to function meaningfully and that all eligible agency members have an equal opportunity to benefit from them.[xxii] For example, do female employees receive equal opportunity, mentorship, and encouragement to prepare them for specialized assignments or promotion to their male peers? Do leaders and supervisors thoroughly understand how the decisions they make to address internal culture intersect with the agency's readiness to effectively respond to gender-based violence?

While women enter the profession for similar reasons as their male colleagues, they more frequently leave because of climate issues not typically experienced by male peers or not experienced by male peers to the same degree, such as lack of promotional opportunity and training, sexual harassment, gossip about their personal lives or professional competencies, and other gender-based reasons.[xxiii] The internal climate of an agency extends beyond just its effects on employees; the tone of agency members' interactions with one another also influences the tone of agency members' interactions with victims, furthering the need for an internal climate of respect, equity, and professionalism.

Leading law enforcement agencies must not only set a standard of compassionate and comprehensive service to victims of gender-based violence, but also hold their members accountable to that standard every day and in the future. As with all facets of policing, quality assurance can help further the professionalization of law enforcement by increasing efficiency and ensuring a consistent, uniform level and quality of services rendered evenly across very large agencies.[xxiv] Building quality assurance methods not only helps to increase accountability, it also builds the consistency and reliability of the agency in the view of the community it serves. When an agency's service is reliably equitable across its sectors and for all civilians in its community, a greater level of trust and mutual respect can be invested in that agency.

Day-to-day accountability includes thorough writing and subsequent review to ensure that reports are comprehensive, detailed, and capture the totality of what occurred. Report review is a critical checkpoint in the quality assurance process because it requires verification that all applicable and appropriate investigative steps have been taken up to that point; that the actions of agency personnel, as detailed in the report, are in alignment with applicable laws and agency policies and procedures; and that the writing is clear, detailed, professional, and

free of inappropriate editorial statements and opinions. To accomplish these goals effectively, supervisors tasked with this report review responsibility must have adequate training for the role. When an agency increases its standards for effective report review, it will produce reports that allow for more successful investigations and prosecutions.[xxv] The IACP provides several free training resources and leadership tools, listed in the Additional Resources from the IACP section; among them are supervisor review checklists for reports of sexual assault, domestic, stalking, non-lethal strangulation, and protection order violation.

Long-term accountability includes hiring and retaining well-qualified, ethical agency members as discussed in the Hiring and Promotional Practices section and continues with holding agency members accountable to ethical standards throughout their tenure with the agency. Doing so not only demonstrates leadership and responsibility as stewards of a safe community, but also reduces risk and liability for the agency and its individual members and promotes good optics in an era of increased mistrust of law enforcement authority. Measures to maintain long-term accountability include periodic checks to verify that agency members are not compromised in their ability to continue to serve or currently subject to any order of protection that could have implications for their ability to fulfil the functions of their position (such as being prohibited from carrying a firearm), a process not dissimilar to periodic randomized drug testing for agency employees.

Establishing accessible methods for community members and colleagues to submit complaints about an agency member's conduct provides a mechanism for long-term accountability. By increasing the amount of information available about where agency standards are not being met, leadership is in a better position to quickly and responsibly take corrective action when needed. Efficient flow of this information to leadership allows for better long-term personnel management. For example, while some conduct might not warrant significant discipline on its own, a broader, ongoing history of complaints could indicate that there is merit for more progressive mentoring or discipline. Any platform through which the agency receives complaints against agency employees should have an option for anonymous submission to encourage reporting without fear of confidentiality being compromised or retaliation.

Creating effective channels of communication with the community about services available to victims of gender-based violence is important for fostering an environment in which victims feel supported—increasing the likelihood that they will report to law enforcement and remain engaged throughout the investigation.[xxvi] As first responders, law enforcement officers must provide victims with information about their rights and the resources available to them as well as future points of contact within the criminal justice process. If a case moves forward, law enforcement should assist in keeping victims apprised of the status of

the investigation and prosecution. Maintaining ongoing contact with victims also keeps them engaged, which increases the likelihood they will continue to participate in the prosecution, as well as providing an opportunity for law enforcement to learn about any witness intimidation that may be occurring and to respond appropriately. In the event a case does not result in an arrest and prosecution, keeping the victim informed of the case status may still contribute significantly to the healing process.[xxvii]

An agency-based or a system-based victim assistance personnel/advocate or unit focuses on fulfilling these functions for the agency and increases communication and coordination with any partner community-based advocacy organizations as well. Both community-based and system-based victim assistance serve important functions for supporting and providing information and additional referrals for victims of gender-based violence. Although there are important distinctions between the two, particularly in terms of confidentiality and scope of service, they fulfill similar functions.

Community-based advocates typically work with victims regardless of whether their victimization was reported to law enforcement and provide ongoing advocacy regardless of the timeline of an investigation and prosecution. Community-based advocates will often accompany their clients not only to meetings with law enforcement, but also to hospital visits and court dates, and provide access to support groups and therapy resources.

The assistance system-based advocates typically provide directly to individuals are more limited in scope, usually serving as a liaison between the victims and the various criminal justice system components. System-based advocates may work only with the victim and not with impacted third parties, such as the victim's family, and are typically limited to providing services to victims only while they are engaged in the criminal justice system. In addition to providing advocacy on the behalf of individual victims, system-based advocates also function to improve the overall response for all victims within the agency or criminal justice system, such as participating in the development of agency policy on gender-based violence or collaborating with other agency and community representatives in a multidisciplinary team or task force.[xxviii]

Community-based and system-based advocates also differ in the level of confidentiality they can legally maintain with their clients. The level of privilege any advocate can keep is dependent on state laws, but community-based advocates typically have legally protected counseling privilege that does not apply to most system-based advocates. Counseling privilege generally means that an advocate's communications remain confidential, with the exception that the victim may sign a time-limited release that specifies the information to be shared and with whom. By contrast, system-based advocates typically do not

have the ability to maintain this type of confidentiality; because they are employees of the government, any communications with or observations about the victim are typically provided to the prosecutor and are considered discoverable.

Both types of advocates offer services to victims of gender-based crimes to help with the often difficult and painful processes of reporting and participating in the criminal justice process. Regardless of whether the agency has a victim services professional or unit, it should also consider establishing a formalized relationship via a memorandum of understanding or a letter of agreement with community-based service providers to outline roles, expectations, and mutual support.

Even in circumstances where an agency-based advocacy program is not practical, there are additional ways an agency can enhance its responsiveness. One way is to ensure that information is available on the agency's website, including links to pages on any relevant agency units, local advocacy and national victim information resources, victim compensation programs, and other resources that may be relevant to the specific community. Active use of social media is also a great way to communicate the availability of these resources to the community. Any efforts an agency can undertake to provide more information to victims and the broader community about available services, the agency's values, and what happens when people make a report is a great service to individuals who might be hesitant about coming forward for lack of understanding about what to expect when interacting with members of the agency.

Training

Domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking can be psychologically traumatic for victims. That psychological trauma can be intensified through insensitive or uninformed response by family, friends, or first responders like law enforcement and advocates, but it can also be mitigated through compassionate, informed care and response. These approaches have a "trauma-informed" lens, which calls for training those who work with victims to understand and recognize the physical, psychological, and behavioral effects trauma can create and to provide services that help minimize further trauma for victims.[xxix] It is absolutely essential that training programs on gender-based violence are trauma-informed and prepare law enforcement personnel to provide ethical, compassionate, and evidence-based response and services that uphold the civil rights of victims.

Comprehensive training sharpens officers' ability to recognize the elements of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking in statements made by victims and to avoid errors in documenting or classifying a crime that can have significant, deleterious effects on the fate of a victim's report. Another source of case attrition that can be avoided through training

is the misunderstanding or misuse of the "unfounded" designation for closing reports.[xxx] As formally defined in the FBI's published guidance on Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR), unfounded is the disposition given to reports that are determined to be unfounded, false, or baseless because an "investigation shows no offense occurred nor was attempted."[xxxi] A baseless report is one in which the case does not meet the elements of a crime or was improperly coded as a sexual assault, and a false report is one in which evidence obtained through an investigation shows that a crime was not committed or attempted. A report does not automatically qualify as unfounded just for lack of substantiation, as the failure to prove that a crime occurred does not mean that a crime did not occur.[xxxii] Similarly, a report does not automatically qualify as unfounded because a victim is hesitant, has gaps in memory, or expresses any number of other behaviors consistent with trauma, which without training on trauma, can be misperceived as evasive behavior.

Incomplete investigations can result in the incorrect disposition of cases and inaccuracy in the agency's published crime statistics. Patrol, investigators, and supervisors should be well trained on the impact of trauma on victims, and practices should reflect that the validity of a case cannot be determined until a thorough investigation is completed.[xxxiii] Decisions on whether a case should be closed as unfounded should be based on careful analysis of evidence identified through a thorough investigation and should be reviewed and approved by a supervisor.[xxxiv]

Finally, conducting training on domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking—and the agency's policies on them—is not a single event, but an ongoing process. Extending this training to *all* agency employees (sworn and non-sworn), as well as providing refreshers on the dynamics of these crimes, investigative methodology, and the agency's related policies and procedures via regular in-service and roll call trainings can help to reinforce the objectives of the academy training. The standards for the way the criminal justice system responds to, investigates, prosecutes, and trains for these crimes have risen substantially over the past several years, and any agency's training programs should take these new expectations into account and strive to meet national promising practices. Training on gender-based crimes should also include instruction on report writing strategies designed to increase successful prosecution, as well as the overlapping and interconnected nature of gender-based violence with one another, as well as other types of crime. The IACP has a large library of training resources including written training and investigative guidelines, training videos, and executive guidance – see Additional Resources from the IACP. Among these resources, the IACP's Supervisor Report Review Checklists, Sexual Assault Response Pocket Tip Card, and individual segments of the Bringing Sexual Assault Offenders to Justice and Crime of Domestic Violence videos make a great basis for quick roll-call training topics.

Collaboration

Collaboration with community partners can enrich an agency's capacity through mutual training, greater working relationships, and diverse perspectives and approaches. These partners may include community-based victim advocates, healthcare providers, culturally specific[xxxv] agencies, crime lab personnel, other criminal justice system agencies, and more. The results of these partnerships are greater efficiency and communication, enhanced victim services, and increased public trust and legitimacy of the agency within the community.

Establishing and participating in one or more multidisciplinary teams or coalitions is a great way to create and sustain great working partnerships in the community. While multidisciplinary teams serve different functions in different communities, in general, they comprise representatives from several partner agencies who come together to meet on a regular schedule. Multidisciplinary teams generally aim to help each respective discipline (agency, service provider, community- and system-based advocate, etc.) provide more streamlined and compassionate services to victims of crime and increase public safety by holding offenders accountable through greater coordination with one another. There are many models of multidisciplinary teams or coalitions. Some models are streamlined to focus on serving victims of specific crimes, while others are more broadly-based. A Sexual Assault Response Team (SART), for example, may be composed of law enforcement, system- and community-based advocates, forensic medical examiners, prosecutors, and others and convene to meet regularly to discuss cases, identify issues, and recommend services only for victims of sexual assault. Family Justice Centers (FJCs) are another model of a multidisciplinary team. FJCs typically consist of representatives of multiple agencies co-located at a particular designated location ("center") designed to be a one-stop location for victims seeking services and support. An FJC will typically provide services to victims of many types of crimes such as domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking and include representatives from area law enforcement agencies, prosecutor's offices, medical personnel, and community-based organizations that provide victim services such as advocacy, therapy, legal services, medical services, family services, emergency shelter, and more. For more information on multidisciplinary teams, please see Additional Resources from the Field.
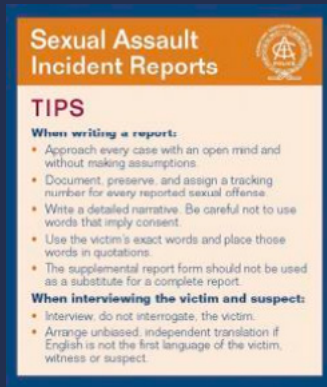
Additional Resources from the IACP

Related projects, resources, and training are available at **theiacp.org/genderbasedviolence**.
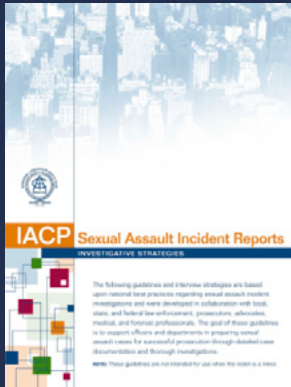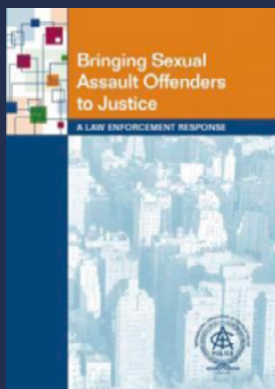

Sexual Assault Investigative Guidelines

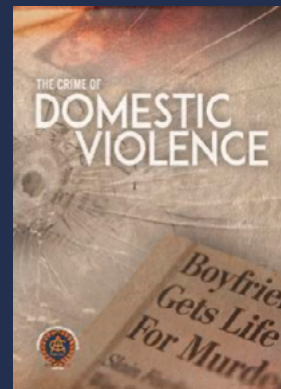**Sexual Assault Policy & Training Content Guidelines**

Sexual Assault Response Pocket Tip Card
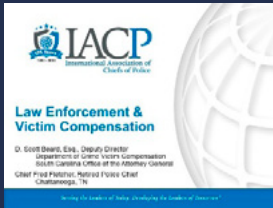

Sexual Assault Supplemental Report Form

Bringing Sexual Assault Offenders to Justice: Roll Call Training Video Series

The Crime of Domestic Violence: Roll Call Training Video Series

Additional Resources from the IACP

Supporting Access to Victims' Compensation:
Roll Call Training Video Series

The Crime of Human Trafficking:
Roll Call Training Video Series

Supervisor Report Review Checklists

Successful Trauma Informed Interviewing

Addressing Sexual Offenses and Misconduct by Law Enforcement

Officer Safety Considerations for Domestic Violence Calls (recorded webinar)

Additional Resources from the IACP
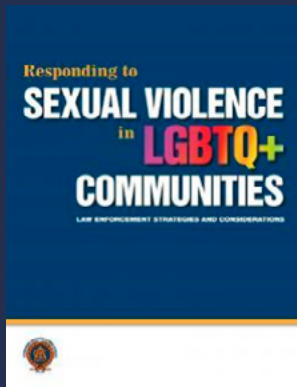
Responding to Sexual Violence in LGBTQ+ Communities

Intimate Partner Violence Policy & Training Content Guidelines

The Critical Need for Law Enforcement Agencies to Identify Gender Bias in Responses to Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence (recorded webinar)

Identifying and Preventing Gender Bias (infographic)

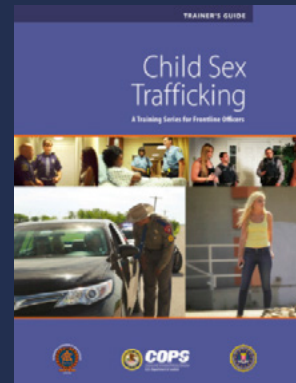**Development & Operations Roadmap for Multidisciplinary Anti-Human Trafficking Task Forces**
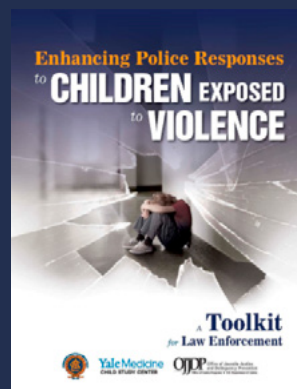
Enhancing Police Response to Children Exposed to Violence

Additional Resources from the IACP
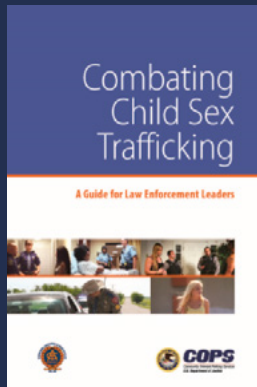
**Combatting Child Sex Trafficking:
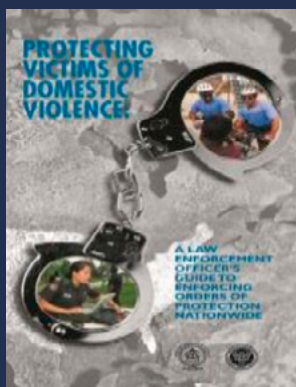A Guide for Law Enforcement Leaders**

**Child Sex Trafficking: Frontline Officer
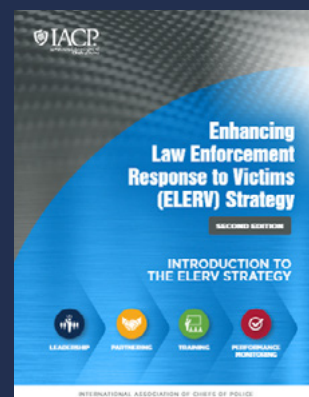Training Series**
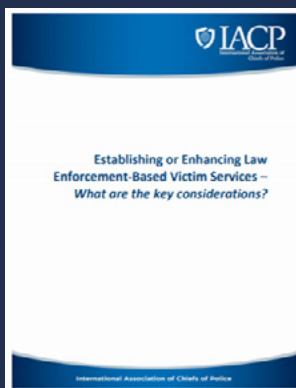
**Law Enforcement-Based
Victim Services Resources**

**Intimate Partner Violence: Body-Worn
Camera Program Considerations**

Protection Order Enforcement Nationwide

**Enhancing Law Enforcement's
Response to Victims Strategy**

Additional Resources from the Field

1. The Sexual Assault Kit Initiative provides support to multidisciplinary community response teams engaged in the comprehensive reform of jurisdictions' approaches to sexual assault cases resulting from evidence found in previously unsubmitted sexual assault kits. SAKI Virtual Academy, SAKI Toolkit, and multiple SAKI webinars are available.

2. University of Arkansas System, Criminal Justice Institute provides a variety of law enforcement education and training courses online and in person. Many online training courses, including instruction on sexual assault investigation and report writing, are available for free or at low cost.

3. National Sexual Violence Resource Center Online Learning Campus is a free e-campus with dozens of courses on sexual violence topics.

4. End Violence Against Women International Online Training Institute is a free e-campus with law enforcement–focused topics on gender-based violence.

5. Practical Approaches for Strengthening Law Enforcement's Response to Sexual Assault is an executive guidebook that features promising practices from the field.

6. Alliance for HOPE International provides training on strangulation for law enforcement and resources on family justice centers for multidisciplinary teams.

7. Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault, Sexual Violence Justice Institute includes resources and technical assistance to build and enhance SART teams.

   Highlighted resource: What Do Sexual Assault Cases Look Like in Our Community? A SART Coordinator's Guidebook for Case File Review

8. SART Toolkit contains resources for Sexual Assault Response Teams from the Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office for Victims of Crime.

9. Understanding the Neurobiology of Trauma and Implications for Interviewing Victims – End Violence Against Women International

10. The Neurobiology of Sexual Assault – Webinar by Dr. Rebecca Campbell, Michigan State University, for the Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice

11. Recruiting & Retaining Women: A Self-Assessment Guide for Law Enforcement – National Center for Women & Policing

12. Hiring & Retaining More Women: The Advantages to Law Enforcement Agencies – National Center for Women & Policing

13. Protecting Victims of Domestic Violence: A Law Enforcement Officer's Guide to Enforcing Protection Orders Nationwide – Battered Women's Justice Project, National Center on Protection Orders and Full Faith & Credit

14. Firearm Checklist for Law Enforcement: Considerations for the seizure of firearms related to misdemeanor crimes of domestic violence and protection order enforcement – Battered Women's Justice Project, National Center on Protection Orders and Full Faith & Credit

15. NICS Misdemeanor Crimes of Domestic Violence (MCDV) Brochure – U.S. Department of Justice

16. Misdemeanor Crimes of Domestic Violence and Federal Firearms Prohibitions – Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives

17. Protection Orders and Federal Firearms Prohibitions – Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives

Notes

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ix Oregon Association Chiefs of Police and Oregon State Sheriffs' Association, *Officer Involved Domestic Violence Policy Framework*, 2017, https://www.policechief.org/wp-content/uploads/OIDV-Policy-Framework-Final-B-1-16-2017.pdf.

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