



# TRAINING CD LESSON PLAN

The following Lesson Plan includes the spoken and written statements appearing in the CD as well as additional supplemental information. The Lesson Plan will follow the CD's module sequence and is meant to complement the CD presentation rather than replace it.

## DVERT'S MISSION

Reduce the incidence of domestic violence by partnering with community agencies to:

- Increase the safety of victims of domestic violence and their children
- Ensure the appropriate containment of domestic violence offenders
- Detect and respond to system deficiencies

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# INTRODUCTION

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## **Introductory Statement by Detective Howard Black, DVERT Program Director:**

*“Because of DVERT  
and how everyone  
pulled together, my life  
was saved.”*

– Victim of  
domestic violence

On behalf of the Domestic Violence Enhanced Response Team, I would like to thank you for taking this time to view this training presentation. We hope it will provide you with some useful insights into the value of multidisciplinary collaboration in combating domestic violence.

In 1996 DVERT was created in a response to the high number of domestic violence incidents in the Colorado Springs area. Through community partnerships and collaborations, we sought a unique approach to achieving three objectives: First, increasing the safety of victims and their children. Second, holding perpetrators accountable for their actions. And finally, holding the system accountable for its frequent *inaction*.

*“DVERT has placed  
safety and justice for  
battered women and  
children first and fore-  
most.”*

– Barbara J. Hart,  
Associate Director  
of the Battered Women’s  
Justice Project

It has been a struggle developing an approach that would enable us to meet these objectives, but I believe we’ve made great progress toward that goal. We don’t claim to have found the one true way to develop an effective collaborative approach to domestic violence, but I do believe that what we have learned can be of considerable value to others struggling with this problem. I hope in viewing this presentation you will come to the same conclusion.

## **Introductory Statement by Janet Kerr, Executive Director of the Center for the Prevention of Domestic Violence:**

Fifteen years ago when I started doing domestic violence work, not only did the systems not speak to each other, but they didn’t like each other. There was absolutely no trust between advocates and police officers, D.A.s, caseworkers from the Department of Human Services. We as advocates did not believe that those systems-people had the best interests of victims in mind. They were so focused on their own systems that they didn’t step back and take a look at how their behaviors and their actions were really revictimizing victims. And as a result we didn’t like them, and we didn’t trust them.

But five years ago when DVERT was developed, that really changed. And as those relationships of trust began to build on themselves, we began to realize that we really all had the same goal in mind: all of us wanted families in our communities to be safer. And that’s what we have now in Colorado Springs, and we’re very proud of that.

## **Introductory Statement by Lorne Kramer, Chief of Police, Colorado Springs Police Department:**

You know, we were pretty traditional in the way we handled domestic violence as a law enforcement agency. What DVERT has done for us is it has allowed us to really identify the most lethal cases, those that usually put the victim at the highest risk, and deal with them very specifically in the system.

# INTRODUCTION

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It also has allowed us to bring together over 26 agencies that previously didn't talk to one another, didn't look for a solution and what's in the best interest of the particular family. And then in addition to that, certainly bringing all of those agencies together that generally have uncommon objectives but in the area of domestic violence have a very common purpose, and having them sit down and actually collaborate and work towards problem-solutions has been a tremendous asset for us."

## Supplemental Information:

In 1996, the Domestic Violence Enhanced Response Team (DVERT) was developed in response to the high number of domestic violence incidents reported by law enforcement and social service agencies in the Colorado Springs area. The beginning of DVERT involved three traditionally adversarial disciplines—law enforcement, prosecution, and victim advocacy—working together to develop a new, more comprehensive approach to domestic violence. It is generally recognized that agencies working with domestic violence victims and offenders do not readily communicate with one another, the result being either in duplication of efforts or cases “slipping through the cracks.”

DVERT emerged as agencies in the Colorado Springs area began to recognize that they were serving the same populations, and that by sharing information and coordinating resources, families experiencing domestic violence could receive far more effective attention. Law enforcement, aware that 45-55% of the calls requiring officers to return to a site were for domestic violence cases, saw the benefit in joining with other community agencies in addressing the most chronic cases. All partners also recognized that in chronic cases, it was not appropriate to concentrate on the offender and victim alone, but that the children, too, had to be a focus of concern.

DVERT now consists of 27 agencies ranging across more than a dozen disciplines. The DVERT “model” has been referred to at various times as “police-coordinated,” “victim-focused,” “offender-focused,” and “a hybrid.” While its “model” continues to be a work-in-progress, the last designation is probably the most accurate description of DVERT. It sees the problem of domestic violence as being so multi-faceted that only a multi-faceted response and structure is equipped to combat it. This, of course, makes it difficult to pin down or categorize DVERT, but the collaboration is more concerned with securing the safety and welfare of victims of domestic violence and their children than with conforming to settled understandings of what a domestic violence collaboration should be.

## DVERT Partner Agencies

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CASA of Colorado Springs	Fort Carson Family Advocacy Program
Children's Advocacy Center	Fort Carson Military Police
City of Calhan Police Department	Fort Carson Social Work Service
City of Colorado Springs Police Department	Fourth Judicial District Attorney's Office
City of Fountain Police Department	Fourth Judicial District Probation Department
City of Manitou Springs Police Department	Humane Society of the Pikes Peak Region
City of Monument Police Department	Memorial Hospital
City of Woodland Park Police Department	Teller County Sheriff's Office
Colorado Legal Services	TESSA, formerly The Center for Prevention of Domestic Violence
Colorado Springs School District 11	Town Green Mountain Falls Marshal's Office
Community Corrections	Town of Palmer Lake Marshal's Office
Community Partnership for Child Development	United States Treasury Department, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms
El Paso County Department of Health and Environment	University of Colorado at Colorado Springs
El Paso County Department of Human Services	
El Paso County Sheriff's Office	

# CASE STUDY: Initial Intervention

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## **Statement of Jan Hatcher, school principal and domestic violence victim:**

*“Until DVERT came along, I never knew anyone who understood domestic violence. They were like the cavalry who showed up and knew what the war was about.”*

– Victim of  
domestic violence

*“DVERT’s intensive advocacy and support services, as well as its follow-up investigations, increase victim safety and offender accountability.”*

– Debby Tucker, Executive Director, National Training Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence

Initially I went to the Center to get help for my son. I realize in retrospect that I was actually looking for help for myself as well. What I noticed in my child was a reflection of what was going on in myself. And although at the time I was too close to the actual forest to see the trees, I can look back now and realize that it wasn’t just about him. It was about our whole family being sick and needing help. And despite the embarrassment and the bureaucracy and the time and all those other things that come into play, I realize now that it was the right thing to do.

## **Statement of Jill Jones, community-based victim advocate:**

I decided to refer this case to DVERT for several reasons. This victim came in and she was minimizing the abuse to herself. She focused a lot on her son, her 16-year-old son that she wanted services for. She talked about a pretty extensive history of domestic violence, but really downplayed it as not being important to her. When the focus is shifted towards the children, even a seemingly adult-child, 16 years old, it causes red flags to rise: What’s really going on in the home? And it caused me to be very concerned for the safety of this victim in her home. She also talked about the offender escalating. He started drinking a lot more. He was not showing up to work. He might be losing his job. And she didn’t want a restraining order. She didn’t want to take safety measures to protect herself. And that’s really what had me frightened.

DVERT can offer a more wraparound approach to this case and I was afraid if that victim walked out the door that she wouldn’t be back to see us. With DVERT, they bring those services to her, to her home. She was very afraid that people would know that she was in her talking to us. She didn’t want the stigma attached to her of being a client of ours and coming back, going to court, getting a restraining order, that kind of thing. And that again is a service that DVERT offers. They go to her in the privacy of her own home, bring these services to her, and I think she needed more of that ongoing support and advocacy that they can bring.

## **DVERT Home Visit:**

Thursday, April 12, 3:17 p.m.: The DVERT multi-agency team visits the victim in response to the victim advocate’s referral.

## **Synopsis:**

Responding to the referral from victim advocate Jill Jones, the DVERT team—a police officer, a victim advocate, an animal welfare officer, and a Child Protective Services caseworker—visit Jan Hatcher and her son, Michael Hatcher. Though Mrs. Hatcher is reluctant to condemn her husband’s abuse of her, she does recount his past domestic violence convictions and mentions her son’s

# CASE STUDY: Initial Intervention

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efforts to protect her. She further remarks that her husband is on probation for these prior offenses and, because of his drinking, is supposed to be on Anabuse—though she doubts he takes it. The animal welfare officer observes that Mr. Hatcher had in the past been charged with cruelty to animals and asks Mrs. Hatcher if this behavior was continuing. Mrs. Hatcher says there have been no recent incidents. Before the team leaves, the Child Protective Services caseworker speaks to Michael alone, and the animal welfare officer examines the family’s dog for injuries.

Comment by Erin Howard, DVERT community-based victim advocate:

Being there as a team was very helpful because we could do three things at once. While I was speaking with the victim, the Department of Human Services worker was speaking with the child and the Humane Society officer was checking out the animal. Also, we could all be there to listen to the victim talk about some of the things going on, and since we were all there at once she didn’t have to repeat her story three or four times to us. Having several people ask questions at the same time is very helpful, also, because there may be things that they’re catching that you’re not or they may say something that will trigger a question that I need to ask.

## Staff Meeting

Monday, April 16, 9:30 a.m.: Everyone assigned to the DVERT unit reviews outstanding cases and coordinates their activities for the week.

## Synopsis:

Following a summary of the week’s home visits, offender contacts and other DVERT team activities, the meeting turns to the Hatcher-Hatcher case. The victim advocate notes that in filling out the lethality-assessment report, Mrs. Hatcher checked off every form of abuse except biting and strangling to unconsciousness—though she did acknowledge her husband had strangled her in the past, just not to unconsciousness. The Child Protective Services caseworker reports that while the son, Michael Hatcher, did not report any recent violence, he is clearly protective of his mother and likely to intervene on her behalf. The animal welfare officer observes that even though Mr. Hatcher has a prior animal cruelty conviction, the family’s dog seemed in good health and well cared for. Finally, the rotation officer on the scene notes that Mr. Hatcher is on probation on a domestic violence conviction and expressed concern about the fact that apparently Mr. Hatcher had been seen around his son’s school. The concern here was not only for Michael but for the other students as well.

## Comment by Det. Howard Black, DVERT program director:

The staff meeting allows us to communicate across sections. And sometimes when you have a unit of 27, and when you count our part-time folks we are 37 people, sometimes it’s very difficult to hear at all levels of our units and what our operations might be for a particular week. It allows people to jump cross-sections. It allows the advocates to have a conversation with the police officer, or the police officers to talk to the caseworker. The caseworker can talk to the prosecutor. It’s so important to keep those lines of communications open.

## Comment by Jayne Seeley, DVERT community-based victim advocate:

It helps me a lot. For one thing I find out what they’ve got scheduled for this week. We’ve got Department of Human Services caseworkers in there that have a lot of court appearances, I’ve got advocates that

# CASE STUDY: Initial Intervention

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have to go for court support, I've got officers that are involved in different activities throughout the week. I think it's highly important that we get together and plan our schedules for the week.

**Comment by Jim Franklin,  
DVERT deputy district attorney:**

That's the primary function in many ways of a staff meeting: To hold everyone accountable and to make life easier for each individual who participates in the staff meeting. It sort of spurs on...I don't want to say competition, because it's not really competition, but it's encouragement. It generates ideas. It helps individuals think about what they're doing and gives them ideas on how they can improve on what they do. I know that's what it does for me.

**Comment by Terri Anderson,  
DVERT CASA case coordinator:**

The most important thing for DVERT is communication. All of the different agencies that are working within DVERT are working toward the same goal. But representing all these different aspects of that goal? Without the communication, there's no way for us to be on the same page.

**Comment by Jill Jones,  
community-based victim advocate:**

Without the team interaction at this meeting, we wouldn't have known about the criminal history, or the history with the Humane Society, the history with the child. The information that was presented is normally not shared in a manner such as this, and so finally the whole picture came together. Having all the information from the various team members is the most important part of moving these cases forward. And without the information from the various team members, there wouldn't have been enough information to make that decision.

# CASE STUDY: Collaborative Response

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## Statement of Jan Hatcher, school principal and domestic violence victim:

*“DVERT is the best thing that could have happened in the situation.”*

– Victim of  
domestic violence

*“Experience clearly confirms that collaborative programs, like DVERT’s, are the best hope for the reduction and prevention of violence against all vulnerable victims. Agency collaboration enhances surveillance, the first critical step in any attempt to address family violence.”*

– Frank Ascione,  
Professor, Department  
of Psychology, Utah  
State University

When I first became involved with DVERT, it seemed almost overwhelming. Only because there were so many things going on within me personally at the time, to add interaction with all the various agencies, even though I was contacted by a single victim advocate, it just felt like overkill. Like I’m not worth this. Now what happened as I worked with them and they began to enlighten me and the process began to unfold, and I saw my husband held accountable, I gained more confidence – both in myself and in the DVERT team.

The people I dealt with were very professional, and obviously they were willing to dedicate their time and their energy to helping me. And that in itself kind of planted the seed in my head that perhaps I should put forth the same effort.

### Independent Case Review Meeting

Monday, April 16, 1:00 p.m.: Outside experts from partnering agencies meet to determine if a domestic violence case merits DVERT’s full resources.

### Synopsis:

The titles and disciplines of those in attendance, besides the DVERT team members involved with the Hatcher case, are:

- Supervisor – Child Protective Services
- Associate Director – Victim Advocacy
- Physician – Medical Facilities
- Psychotherapist – Corrections
- Detective – Local Law Enforcement
- The referring victim advocate

Jill Jones, the victim advocate who referred the case to DVERT, reports her reasons for doing so: a fairly prolonged history of abuse to a victim who nonetheless did not want to take out a restraining order and spoke only of concern for her son. The participants in the home visit then report their findings. At the conclusion of their presentations, Howard Black, the DVERT program director, asks the outside experts to vote on whether the case should be added to DVERT’s “Ongoing” caseload. All vote that it should, noting their primary concerns in the case: Mr. Hatcher’s prior history of domestic violence and alcohol abuse, Michael’s willingness to take on the role of his mother’s defender, and reports that Mr. Hatcher had visited his son’s school. Det. Black voices his agreement with the experts’ judgment and asks the DVERT officers to follow up on the case by determining whether or not Mr. Hatcher is in

# CASE STUDY: Collaborative Response

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violation of his probation. He also notes that it is not clear if Mr. Hatcher has weapons, so he asks the staff to contact ATF and the police Weapon Detail to see if there is a record of Mr. Hatcher possessing a weapon. Finally, he asks that Michael's school be informed of the situation. The meeting concludes with the attendees determining what additional safety and support measures should be provided to the victim.

*DVERT screens for the most lethal cases using the following categories/teams:*

- ***Intake:*** *The point of entry for nearly all DVERT cases*
- ***Assessment :*** *Cases requiring only time-limited interventions and investigations*
- ***Ongoing:*** *Cases with high lethality-potential requiring intensive, long-term case management*

**Comment by Det. Howard Black,  
DVERT program director:**

What we're looking for is that outside exposure for a case that has really been closed within DVERT. So we get this outside perspective as to whether this case should go to the Ongoing team or not. We're dealing with a limited number of slots. In Colorado Springs, we respond to between 15,000 and 20,000 domestic violence cases each year, and on average we make about 3,800 arrests. Our issue in Ongoing: the maximum number of cases that we can take in is capped at 150.

# CASE STUDY: Emergency Intervention

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## Emergency Call Out:

*“DVERT is a great program. Without the advocate, I would not have gotten a restraining order or followed through on the charges. I would probably be six feet under right now.”*

– Victim of domestic violence

*“The impact on a victim’s life is tangible when you’re on the scene and you’re actually seeing what has occurred and what the response is from the victim and the victim’s children.”*

– Doug Miles,  
Chief Deputy District Attorney, 4<sup>th</sup> Judicial District

Wednesday, June 26, 1:24 p.m.: After patrol has responded to a 911 call from the victim’s home and determined that probable cause exists that a domestic violence crime has been committed, it contacts DVERT, which proceeds to the victim’s residence.

## Synopsis:

The DVERT team—two detectives, a victim advocate, a Child Protective Services caseworker, a deputy district attorney, a probation officer, and an animal welfare officer—arrive at the Hatcher residence in response to the patrol officer’s notification. Before Jan Hatcher is taken to the hospital, she informs the victim advocate that Mr. Hatcher had strangled her to unconsciousness. Mr. Hatcher has been arrested and taken to jail. The DVERT officers and the deputy district attorney assess the situation to determine, with the patrol officer, what the appropriate charges should be in the case.

## Comment by Jayne Seeley,

### DVERT community-based victim advocate:

This case, pre-DVERT, would have probably come to a standstill once the officers went to the original call-out. Possibly he [Mr. Hatcher] would not have even been charged with 2<sup>nd</sup> degree attempted murder. The officers, when we first responded to that call-out, were looking at a 3<sup>rd</sup> degree assault, which is a misdemeanor, a fairly minor charge. Had we not had an advocate there to pave the way for law enforcement and enable the victim to feel more comfortable disclosing what she had to eventually disclose to us, the case could have gone a whole different direction.

## Comment by Matt Shoaf,

### DVERT detective:

We have all the disciplines involved. We make an immediate response. We meet with that victim, and we immediately find out what’s going on in that case. And we have the D.A. there, we have probation involved. We can make a better judgement and decision on where we need to go with the case.

## Comment by Melanie Graham,

### DVERT child protection caseworker:

Had this case been done, oh, let’s say 10 years ago, from a Child Protection standpoint we would have been called out on the scene, but it would have been much later. And we would have just been responding to the *immediate* risk to the child. So we would miss the victim talking with the victim’s advocate, we would miss the criminal piece of it, which would really...just so much information would be lost without the multidisciplinary team approach and the immediate response.

# CASE STUDY: Emergency Intervention

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**Comment by Jim Franklin,  
DVERT deputy district attorney:**

Working with DVERT, I get a chance to go to the scene. I get to see the evidence, things that are tangible. I can see the bloody weapon, or I can see the strangulation marks. This to me is very meaningful. It gives... it's so much better than reading a police report, makes it easier to prosecute, communicate what happened to a jury.

**Statement of Jan Hatcher,  
school principal and domestic violence victim:**

When DVERT was called out to our house during this incident, I was probably at the bottom of my rope for being humiliated. My mind and my body were not communicating at all. I was in a lot of pain, both emotional and physical, and the embarrassment was almost too much to bear. I remember waiting on the paramedics and thinking about suicide rather than having to deal with the aftermath of what was going on. The embarrassment and amount of repair that I needed was probably going to need an army of people versus a single friend, a clergyman, one individual. It was a bigger problem than that. And even though I wasn't thinking straight at the time, the people I dealt with were patient with me. No one got angry, no one made me feel worse than I already felt, although at the time I didn't think that was possible. I was dealt with in a very kind manner. And I saw all the different players come into this picture in the middle of my crisis.

## **Supplemental Information:**

### **Additional Emergency Call-Out Response Practices**

DVERT is aware that it typically takes domestic violence victims 7-9 attempts before they are finally able to leave an abusive relationship. They generally will take small steps to see if others—especially the authorities—will be there for them. Usually they aren't, and this fact, combined with the victim's isolation, financial need, or desire to “keep the family together,” often makes it unlikely that the victim will assist with an investigation or with the prosecution of the offender. Therefore, it is critical that collaboration members responding to a domestic violence incident follow certain investigative procedures beyond those noted later in the Lesson Plan:

- DVERT always views a domestic violence site as a *crime scene*. Consequently, it puts great importance on videotaping, photographing, and otherwise documenting the scene of the incident. Merely interviewing the victim and offender, which is all most patrol officers do, is usually ineffective in providing evidence for an effective prosecution.
- Since investigators get more information if they strike while emotions are high rather than two weeks later, DVERT has tight response-time requirements in place to ensure that investigations are carried out promptly.
- DVERT detectives make it a point to interview the *first* responding officer since he often has seen more (such as an individual leaving the site) than later arriving officers.
- DVERT detectives review the tapes of 911 calls to obtain more information as to what really happened during the incident.
- The DVERT coordinator on the scene (who may be an advocate rather than an officer) will call in other agencies, like ATF, that might be able to assist with the case.

# CASE STUDY: Emergency Intervention

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- Even though the victim is not required to speak to the investigators or victim advocate, DVERT will insist on speaking to any children in the home. With a CPS caseworker on its team, it is entitled to make this demand.
- DVERT officers are trained to locate and press the maximum number of charges so as to provide prosecution with the tools needed to hold the perpetrator accountable.
- In interviewing perpetrators, DVERT detectives make a point of controlling the interview, continually interrupting and challenging the perpetrator, who invariably will try to portray himself as the “true” victim in the case. In interviewing the victims, however, the detectives are trained to listen more and question less.

These investigative practices increase the chance that an “evidence-based” prosecution will succeed and that the victim and children’s safety can be secured without their involvement in the prosecution.

# CASE STUDY: Accountability

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*“I really thank God for DVERT. They pulled me through.”*

– Victim of domestic violence

*“Prosecution gains an advantage by being a member of the DVERT partnership by getting better cases. Our cases are more thoroughly prepared, more thoroughly investigated, and there’s help for the victims coming through court.”*

– Jeanne Smith,  
District Attorney,  
4<sup>th</sup> Judicial District

## Call Out Debriefing:

Thursday, June 27, 8:30 a.m.: DVERT members share their findings from the emergency call-out and suggest courses of action.

### Synopsis:

The team that responded to the emergency call-out reports to the rest of the DVERT staff on what occurred. The lead DVERT detective notes that Mr. Hatcher has been charged with 2<sup>nd</sup> degree murder, 3<sup>rd</sup> degree assault, harassment, child abuse, cruelty to animals, and since he was on probation, violation of probation. The victim advocate reports that Mrs. Hatcher is still in the hospital. Once she is out of the hospital, the victim advocates intend to discuss obtaining a restraining order with her. The Child Protective Services case-worker reports that Michael is in a temporary foster home with other adolescents his age. The animal welfare officer notes that the family dog’s leg was broken by Mr. Hatcher. The animal was treated by a veterinarian and will be housed at the Humane Society until Mrs. Hatcher is released from the hospital. The deputy district attorney remarks that it is important that the charges in the case be fully pursued since the perpetrator already has a history of domestic violence convictions. The DVERT detective indicates that once Mrs. Hatcher is released from the hospital, he will be asking her to do a videotaped re-enactment of what occurred on the night of the incident.

## Victim Reenactment:

Saturday, June 29, 9:57 a.m.: While DVERT staff record her, the victim walks through the events immediately preceding the call-out.

### Synopsis:

The DVERT detective videotapes Jan Hatcher as she walks through, step-by-step, the events leading up to the incident of domestic violence. She notes how Mr. Hatcher’s anger and violence steadily escalated and how he prevented her from leaving the room. The detective prompts her to provide ever more details as she relates the events.

## Criminal Case Supervision Meeting:

Wednesday, July 3, 9:30 a.m.: DVERT law enforcement and prosecution personnel evaluate the criminal acts in the case and determine prosecution’s investigative needs.

### Synopsis:

The DVERT victim advocate reports that Mr. Hatcher bonded out the prior night and that Mrs. Hatcher is quite frightened because he immediately tried contacting her—in violation of the restraining order. The DVERT detective

# CASE STUDY: Accountability

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confirms that Mr. Hatcher has bonded out and that it appears he has indeed violated his restraining order by attempting to contact Mrs. Hatcher; in addition, there may also be evidence he is stalking Mrs. Hatcher. The deputy district attorney observes that there appears to be reasonable cause for the filing of additional charges in the case. Det. Howard Black remarks that if there is probable cause for arrest, a high bail bond should be requested. He also asks that both Michael and Jan Hatcher's schools be notified that Mr. Hatcher is out of jail. The DVERT rotation officer notes that she has already been briefed by the victim advocate on Mr. Hatcher's actions since he got out of jail and feels she has enough evidence to have Mr. Hatcher immediately re-arrested.

**Comment by Melanie Graham,  
DVERT child protection caseworker:**

I think this case is a good demonstration of how perpetrators are held accountable here at DVERT because we're seeing immediate results. The police officers are communicating with the advocates, and the police officers are also communicating with the D.A., and we're seeing charges almost immediately.

**Comment by Jayne Seeley,  
DVERT community-based victim advocate:**

If DVERT was not involved we probably would not have had the contact right after he was released from jail. We were able to find out immediately that the offender had violated the terms of his restraining orders. Now we are able to send a team out for an immediate response on those new charges. I feel that from law enforcement through the prosecutor through probation, we are able to monitor all the steps that the offender should go through and whether or not he's actually meeting the terms he needs to meet in order to stay out of jail.

**Comment by Det. Howard Black,  
DVERT program director:**

One of the areas that we have put a tremendous amount of energy in is having equality around the table: Ensuring that the advocate has the ability to have that direct conversation with the detective if she's feeling as though the victim's wishes are not being heard—and that the detective has the ability to hold the caseworker accountable if it appears as though we're not dealing with the issues of the children in keeping them safe. It's that cross-communications that's so important in DVERT. And that really carries over into the larger system and how we deal with domestic violence in this jurisdiction.



**Doug Miles, chief deputy district attorney,  
summarizes the outcome of the case:**

The Hatcher case proceeded to trial about nine months after the incident in which DVERT was called to the scene. We ultimately were successful in the prosecution of the case. Mr. Hatcher was convicted on all counts. He was sentenced about a month after the trial to four years at the Department of Corrections. We consider this to be a notable success for DVERT.

The initial call out was an interesting one. The team responded because Mr. Hatcher was an ongoing identified DVERT perpetrator. When the street officer responded to the scene, he determined that there was probable cause for what we thought at that point was child abuse.

# CASE STUDY: Accountability

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Probably the most important break came in the case as a result of a discussion between the victim advocate and Mrs. Hatcher. And it was during that discussion that Mrs. Hatcher commented in passing that she had been choked. That was important information, and it was heard by the officer on the scene as well. And it was on that basis that we proceeded with the strangulation investigation.

Mrs. Hatcher was taken to the hospital. There was documentation of bruising around her neck. And what started out to look like it was going to be a misdemeanor child abuse case—because he had struck the 16-year-old in the course of his assault on Mrs. Hatcher—turned to actually be a 2<sup>nd</sup> degree attempted murder case.

Also, being at the scene provided a lot of additional information. Mrs. Hatcher had urinated on herself as a result of the assault on her. That was fully documented. We were also able to fully document her state of mind during her interview. She was extremely upset and traumatized, understandably so. And there were a number of people who could testify to her state of mind at the time and during the time she was making the statement to the officer.

This became very important in the proceedings because during the nine months between the time of the incident and the trial, Mrs. Hatcher reconciled with Mr. Hatcher, she chose not to cooperate in the prosecution of the case. But we were able to present evidence of her statements at the scene through the “excited utterance exception” to the hearsay rule—a very useful tool, but it does require specific documentation in order to be used in court.

Because Mr. Hatcher had a prior history of domestic violence, we were also able to introduce evidence of similar prior conduct on his part to show that this was not a mistake or accident, that this was conscious, intentional behavior on his part. His prior cases were admitted as what is known as “similar transaction evidence,” so the jury was aware that this was an ongoing domestic violence situation. Colorado recognizes “similar transactions” in these kinds of cases and allows for their introduction at trial, and it’s another extremely useful tool.

Ultimately, the case was prosecuted on the strength of the evidence that was collected by the team at the scene, by the strength of the “similar transaction evidence” that was collected prior to this incident, and on the strength of the “excited utterances” and the documentation that was needed to present that evidence to the jury.

Because we determined that this was in fact strangulation and not simply a misdemeanor child abuse case, there was medical evidence that was also gathered and, again, because in Colorado domestic violence injuries are not subject to physician-patient privilege, that evidence was also presented.

Ultimately, it was the culmination of an effort of an awful lot of people used to overcome some very specific problems in the prosecution of the case and to achieve a conviction and what we think is a significant jail sentence—which sends a message, not only to Mr. Hatcher but to the community as a whole, that this kind of violence towards intimate partners simply won’t be tolerated.

# CASE STUDY: Accountability

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**Statement of Jan Hatcher,  
school principal and domestic violence victim:**

When the time came to go to court, I backslid. I could not face the idea of sitting in a courtroom looking at my husband, having all of our personal mistakes become public. And I wanted no part of it. It didn't occur to me that that was part of the necessary process to move forward, to hold him accountable. I was thinking more of our history than I was of our future. It's very fortunate that the DVERT team and the Colorado legal system did not require my support during that process, because I wasn't strong enough to give it. I realize now looking back that my reaction was probably human and normal, but at the time I felt like I was letting everyone down. I just simply didn't have the strength to proceed.

Since then, because there has been accountability placed on my husband and I have seen the consequences for all of the hard work that everyone has done, including myself, I'm starting to notice healthy growth in my son. He's acting like his age again. He's laughing, he's having fun, he's being with friends. And watching him return to normal has helped me do the same.

I can't put into words all of the loneliness and the fright and the confusion that goes with this experience. But I can put into words my gratitude for all the things that have happened during the experience because my son will not be the next generation of offenders in domestic violence.

**Disclaimer:**

*The names, characters, and identities of the "Hatcher family" portrayed in the Case Study are fictional, and any similarity in the name, character or history of any person is entirely accidental and unintentional.*

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*“There is no doubt that the DVERT team was the most important element in keeping me safe in a dangerous situation. They provided the strength I needed.”*

– Victim of domestic violence

*With DVERT, victims and families have one organization that can link them to literally all of the services that they really need at a time when it is perhaps most difficult—emotionally and psychologically—to access those services.”*

– Pam Shockley-Zalabac, Researcher and Vice Chancellor, University of Colorado at Colorado Springs

## POSSIBLE DISCIPLINE PARTNERS AND THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE NEEDS THEY ADDRESS



### **Animal Welfare**

Domestic violence need addressed: *To detect warning signs of domestic violence through animal cruelty cases.*

The benefits of including Animal Welfare in a domestic violence collaboration are so many and so compelling that it is surprising the idea is still considered controversial. Evidence that the person who kicks the dog is frequently one who punches the wife and beats the child accumulates daily. DVERT has noted that some 40% of its caseload shows evidence of animal abuse, which is why it routinely inquires about animal welfare when making domestic violence calls. Similar experience has led Child Protective Services to view animal cruelty as a crucial indicator of a child-threatening environment. And several jurisdictions are considering requiring cross-reporting between agencies charged with animal and child welfare because the link between animal cruelty and child abuse has become too obvious to be ignored.

Experience demonstrates that someone who abuses an animal is not dissipating violent emotions, as some naively believe, but rather fueling them. However, it is usually not momentary rage that leads domestic violence offenders to engage in animal cruelty; it is rather a calculated desire to intimidate and control their victims. It is a way of saying: See what might happen to you if you don't do as I say? Since so many domestic violence victims see their animals as their only friends, this form of control can be horribly effective.

Once this link between animal cruelty and domestic violence is recognized, a collaboration will find there are a number of specific ways in which Animal Welfare benefits it in detecting and preventing domestic violence:

- The evidence of animal cruelty acquired by animal welfare officers is often a critical factor in successful domestic violence prosecutions. A number of D.A.s have noted that juries often seem to identify more with animals than with domestic violence victims. Since they view animals as necessarily “innocent,” they are more willing to believe that the offender’s acts of violence are wanton and unjustified once they’ve been presented evidence of animal abuse. This is one reason why DVERT always looks for opportunities to press animal cruelty charges in domestic violence cases.
- Animal welfare officers in most jurisdictions can enter private property without permission or warrant. This gives them exceptional opportunities to look for and report evidence of child abuse or domestic violence, in addition to animal abuse. This is something more and more animal welfare officers are trained to do.
- Many Humane Society facilities track and save all calls relating to animal abuse. This database can be of considerable diagnostic value to police officers investigating reports of domestic violence.

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- Animal welfare facilities included in a domestic violence collaboration are often willing to house victims' animals while they are either in a safe house or involved in prosecution. This can be of great comfort to them and can increase their willingness to make some difficult decisions about how to proceed against the offender.

Given the above benefits Animal Welfare has to offer, it seems certain that eventually *all* domestic violence collaborations will have Animal Welfare as a partner.

✓ **Child Advocacy Centers**

Domestic violence need addressed: *To develop nonthreatening means of securing children's testimony in the prosecution of domestic violence cases.*

It is a shameful fact that until very recently children were often an afterthought in domestic violence cases. Victims and perpetrators received whatever community attention and resources were available, and child victims of domestic violence were often given little or no consideration. Child Advocacy Centers have helped reverse this tendency by allowing children to have a voice in the proceedings that so profoundly affect their lives.

Whether to have children testify in a domestic violence case is always a difficult and wrenching decision for everyone involved. This is one reason why Child Advocacy Centers (CAC) are such a valuable community resource. They provide a child-friendly environment where children who have been traumatized can feel free, under the calm and patient direction of a specially trained forensic interviewer, to relate what they've witnessed. CAC facilities are equipped with hidden cameras and rooms where police, advocates, and other interested parties can observe the interviews unseen by the children. From these rooms follow-up questions can be unobtrusively relayed from the observers to the interviewer. The resulting videotaped testimonies are often decisive in settling domestic violence and abuse cases before they ever go to court. Thus, CAC not only protects children from the often harsh nature of the legal system, but it often ensures that children will only have to tell their story once.

With CAC integrated into a collaborative team, family members traumatized by abuse are made to feel as though they are dealing with one cohesive unit rather than being passed from one agency to another. The increased comfort they feel as a result of this coordinated approach increases the likelihood of the collaboration acquiring the testimony and cooperation needed to hold offenders accountable and to keep family members safe.

✓ **Child Protective Services**

Domestic violence need addressed: *To intervene to protect child victims of domestic violence from further brutality.*

No agency directly involved with children in domestic violence and abusive situations has as much legal authority as does Child Protective Services (CPS). There are three basic approaches CPS takes in such cases: 1) Risk Assessment – The CPS caseworker will investigate reports of child abuse or domestic violence to determine the probable level of threat, if any, to children's safety. If there is no clear evidence of threat, the caseworker will nonetheless present the children with a plan for protecting themselves should violence occur in the home. The caseworker will also provide the parents with educational material and

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research demonstrating the harm witnessing domestic violence does to children. 2) Protective Supervision – Here evidence of harm is such that while the children are allowed to stay in the home, CPS supervises their welfare. CPS commonly requires the parents to follow a CPS treatment plan or risk losing their parental rights. 3) Removal of children from the home - This is generally done only in the most serious and intractable situations, where the children’s physical safety is seriously in question.

While CPS has considerable statutory power when it comes to deciding what is in the best interests of children in abusive situations, it also has significant statutory limitations—and usually an overwhelming caseload. This is why Child Protective Services and domestic violence collaborations can be of such profound assistance to one another. There are several obvious mutual benefits to this relationship:

- CPS can work with the collaboration in educating domestic violence victims as to the effects of domestic violence on children and of ways to increase their safety through planning.
- The collaboration partners can often provide the CPS caseworker with considerably more information about a particular family situation than the caseworker might otherwise have the time or resources to obtain.
- CPS can serve as an additional referral source for the collaboration since it occasionally encounters situations indicating the presence of domestic violence of which the collaboration may not be aware.

For DVERT, with its particular mission and operational policies, there are additional mutual benefits to this relationship that are perhaps less commonly recognized:

- The CPS caseworker can work with the collaboration’s victim advocate to help domestic violence victims make the appropriate safety-enhancing choices—rather than have the system make them for them—so that their children are not taken away from them. Both disciplines would prefer to see the home situation made safe for both the victim and the children rather than have the children removed from the home.
- Since DVERT deals with the most lethal cases and is strongly committed to ending the cycle of abused children becoming abusers, it works with CPS in filing child abuse charges against offenders whose children have witnessed them in a serious domestic violence incident. This initiative reflects the fact that DVERT and CPS are just as concerned about the *emotional* maltreatment of children as about the physical.

Some will be uncomfortable using the statutory authority invested in CPS as a lever to exact changes in a family afflicted by domestic violence. However, DVERT has found that by collaborating with CPS in using this lever, it has been able to alter violent situations so that not only are the children afforded greater protection, but so is the non-offending parent.

## ✓ **Corrections**

Domestic violence need addressed: *To closely monitor sentenced domestic violence offenders.*

Communication between Corrections and a domestic violence collaboration is critical to ensuring that convicted domestic violence offenders do not further endanger or intimidate their victims. There are several key ways in which Corrections and a collaboration can assist one another:

- Each can inform the other when evidence is received indicating that the offender is making telephone calls or sending letters to the victim with threatening or otherwise banned communications in them.

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With this information, appropriate containment action can be taken by both the collaboration and Corrections.

- When Corrections receives information that the offender is attempting to enlist a third-party on the outside to threaten or even attack the victim, it can relay this information to the collaboration, knowing that by doing so all the appropriate agencies will be informed of the situation.
- When offenders are on work-release, the collaboration and Corrections can inform one another if they have reason to believe the offender may be making impermissible efforts to contact the victim.
- Although Corrections is required to issue a “notification of release or escape status” to the victim of the released or escaped offender, this notification often fails to get through. By including the collaboration in its notification, Corrections greatly increases the likelihood that the victim will be promptly notified

As many victims know, the threats and intimidation—and even sometimes the violence—do not necessarily end when the offender has been convicted and incarcerated. This is why cooperation between Corrections and the collaboration is critical in securing the safety and peace of mind to which victims are entitled.

## ✓ **Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)**

Domestic violence need addressed: *To advocate for the best interests of the child in civil cases that include accusations of domestic violence.*

Since many domestic violence victims wish to have the perpetrator back in the home, it is crucial that the children involved have someone who will advocate for *their* interests. This is the indispensable role provided by CASA. Judges appoint CASA volunteers to investigate matters relating to the safety and welfare of children in divorce cases, custody disputes, and child neglect actions. CASA volunteers then report their findings to the court and offer their assessment of what is in the best interests of the child. CASA volunteers are well-trained community members who, because they generally carry only one or two cases, are able to devote the time and attention needed to truly ascertain the circumstances in which a child lives. Their sole aim is to obtain safety and permanency for children affected by abuse or divorce. This is why courts have found CASA such an invaluable resource: It is doubtful that anyone in the end knows as much about a family involved in a civil action as does the CASA volunteer.

This singular focus and thoroughness of investigation makes CASA a key partner in a domestic violence collaboration. The CASA volunteers’ frequency and duration of contact with families enables them to acquire information—such as accounts of domestic violence or drug abuse within the home—that might otherwise remain unknown. When CASA volunteers become part of a collaboration, there are additional services they can offer that would otherwise be beyond the scope of their court-directed responsibilities, such as providing children in domestic violence situations with a safety plan specifying what they are to do to protect themselves when violence erupts in the home.

CASA benefits from its membership in the collaboration by being able to acquire information from many different agencies and perspectives about conditions in homes with a history of domestic violence. This information, when incorporated into the report presented to the court, can have a decisive effect on the judge’s disposition of the case. Because CASA volunteers often monitor a case for several years, having the collaboration as an information resource provides continuing benefits for CASA. The collaboration also assists CASA by providing police escort to CASA volunteers when making home visits on cases

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involving particularly dangerous offenders. Finally, being in a domestic violence collaboration allows the participating CASA staff member to advocate for *all* the children on the collaboration's caseload—without court appointment.

Children are the most vulnerable people in homes afflicted by domestic violence. With CASA as a member of a domestic violence collaboration, children at last have someone who will listen to them, provide a voice to their distress, and help secure the conditions that will ensure their safety and welfare.

## ✓ **Federal Law Enforcement**

Domestic violence need addressed: *To ensure compliance with federal domestic violence laws.*

Probably no resource is more underutilized in the effort to contain domestic violence offenders and hold them accountable than is Federal Law Enforcement. For instance, the federal law banning anyone subject to a restraining order or with a domestic violence conviction from possessing a firearm is one that is frequently violated but seldom prosecuted. The same applies to federal laws prohibiting the crossing of state lines to stalk or continue abusing a spouse or partner.

One reason violations to these laws are so seldom prosecuted—even though the cases are often relatively straightforward and carry federal mandatory minimum sentences—is that there is so little coordination between local domestic violence organizations and Federal Law Enforcement. Without this coordination, federal authorities are often unaware federal crimes have been committed, and on the other side, local organizations are often not aware that they are observing activities that constitute chargeable federal offenses. This is especially unfortunate since so many domestic violence offenders are known to make frequent moves, often across state lines.

By developing a partnership with Federal Law Enforcement—particularly with the FBI and ATF—a domestic violence collaboration can greatly enhance the arsenal of weapons available to it for containing the most dangerous domestic violence offenders and ensuring the safety of their intended victims.

## ✓ **Legal Services**

Domestic violence need addressed: *To ensure that victims have prompt access to legal resources for protection orders, child custody hearings, and other civil matters.*

When a domestic violence victim makes the difficult and often dangerous decision to leave an abusive relationship, she usually incurs a series of pressing legal needs. The first is usually the acquisition of a protective restraining order, but this is sometimes followed by divorce and child custody proceedings.

Victims with few financial resources are frequently revictimized in these proceedings by perpetrators who often have more money and better attorneys—resources they don't hesitate to use in attempting, for instance, to gain custody of the children. This is why state Legal Services programs are valuable partners in a domestic violence collaboration. The collaboration can help prevent this revictimization by alerting Legal Services to the situation and obtaining its involvement in meeting the legal needs of a low-income victim. Legal Services, in turn, benefits from the information the collaboration can provide the attorneys—as well as the support and services it can offer the victim—as the legal actions proceed.

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## ✓ **Local Law Enforcement**

Domestic violence need addressed: *To apprehend and deter domestic violence offenders.*

No organization deals as directly or as frequently with domestic violence as does Local Law Enforcement. Consequently, any collaborative effort to reduce domestic violence must begin by including it as a key partner. This is particularly critical in communities where many officers are still following unsuccessful practices in addressing domestic violence. While officers will commonly spend one or two hours on a DUI incident, the national average for a domestic violence call is only 12 minutes. Often this lack of time and attention results from the view held by some officers that domestic “spats” are a “private” family matter. Consequently, officers will often do little more than separate the victim and perpetrator—though they sometimes make no distinction between the two—to calm them down. Then, once they seem relatively quiet, the officers leave. In more violent and contentious situations, they might arrest one or both parties to bring matters under control. But after the arrestees have bonded out the next day, the situation is usually back to where it was the day before, if not worse.

This endless cycle—and the recognized ineffectiveness of many traditional police practices in addressing it—has become a focus of concern for many police departments, particularly as they’ve witnessed the impact domestic violence has on children. Many child victims of domestic violence go on to be either perpetrators or victims of domestic violence themselves, or engage in other violent criminal activities. Unfortunately, in many communities Law Enforcement has had few relationships with organizations that might be able to assist it in breaking this cycle of violence and in meeting the needs of domestic violence victims and their children. Nonetheless, there is growing recognition by Law Enforcement, as well as by other community agencies, that Law Enforcement must be integrated into a community collaboration if either Law Enforcement or the collaboration is to effectively combat domestic violence.

In considering how Law Enforcement might partner with a collaboration, DVERT’s experience can be instructive. It has evolved over the years a number of practices in relation to Law Enforcement that could benefit other communities as much as they’ve benefited the Colorado Springs area:

- Once a patrol officer, concerned about the level of danger in a domestic violence situation, refers the case to DVERT, officers assigned to DVERT will make an initial home visit. This visit will always be in the company of a victim advocate and often also with either a Child Protective Services case-worker, a CASA volunteer, or when there is report of animal abuse, an animal welfare officer. The officers will meet with both the victim and the perpetrator, letting them know that DVERT’s full resources are now being directed to them and what that signifies. Both often find this information startling since they are accustomed to a legal system that usually works slowly and inefficiently.
- When a home is labeled a DVERT case, it is tagged in the police department’s computer-aided dispatch center, which alerts officers responding to a call to that residence that the DVERT team may need to be alerted if it is determined that another domestic violence incident has occurred.
- If the DVERT team is called out, the officers on the team will assist the responding officer in collecting evidence while the other team members make additional inquiries of the victim and the children involved. The team will also provide the victim with referrals and information on such matters as how to obtain a restraining order.
- Law Enforcement officers assigned to DVERT work out of DVERT’s offices and are in daily contact with assigned staff from other disciplines—Victim Advocacy, Child Protective Services, Prosecution, CASA, Animal Welfare, and more. This daily contact helps erode the misperceptions and hostilities that often exist between Law Enforcement and the other disciplines.

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- Officers who have worked for DVERT on rotation and gone through its training program often become, when they return to their departments, a source of guidance and information for fellow officers struggling with domestic violence situations.

The DVERT collaboration has also worked with Law Enforcement in developing more effective investigative practices for domestic violence cases. These practices flow from the conviction that the site of a domestic violence incident is in every respect a crime scene—and should be treated as such during the investigation. Both in the training DVERT provides Law Enforcement and in the assistance its rotation officers and full-time detectives offer to police responding to domestic violence calls, DVERT’s officers stress the importance of attaining certain investigative objectives, among them:

- Determine who is the primary aggressor – To do this, officers must be trained on how to distinguish between “offensive” and “defensive” wounds—and how generally to get beyond the initial appearances of a domestic violence scene. Also, it is important to know how to cut through an offender’s claim to be the victim in the situation.
- Record everything – DVERT and DVERT-trained officers thoroughly photograph and videotape a domestic violence scene. They also have the victim do a video walkthrough of what transpired. Seeing the victim describing the event in context is often a very compelling form of testimony for judges and juries. Finally, these officers are trained to return a few days later to take pictures of the victim’s bruises when they are most visible. Since many cases do not go to trial for as long as a year after the incident, by which time the victim can be completely healed, it is critical that the scope of the injuries are carefully documented near the time of the incident.
- Insist that the victim get medical care – This not only serves to document the extent of the injuries, but also ensures their prompt treatment. Many victims are thoroughly unaware of how badly injured they are.
- Press all charges – DVERT-trained officers know the importance of pressing all possible charges against the perpetrator. This not only provides bargaining power to the district attorney, it also alerts the jury as to the scope of the violence.
- Call for high bail bonds – Particularly in the most violent cases, taking prompt action to extend the incapacitation of the perpetrator will increase the time the victim is safe and will send a powerful—and immediate—signal to the offender that his violent behaviors will not be tolerated.

These practices are all intended to ensure that charges “stick” and that the investigation goes well beyond merely collecting statements from the parties involved. One of the chief benefits of the practices outlined above is that it enables Prosecution in many cases to pursue an “evidence-based” prosecution—that is, one not requiring the testimony of the victim or the children. Of course, many of these investigative practices are time-consuming and expensive, but not nearly as time-consuming and expensive as repeatedly—and ineffectually—prosecuting the same violent offenders.

## ✓ **Medical Facilities**

Domestic violence need addressed: *To obtain information and documentation on injury cases indicating domestic violence.*

Most domestic violence incidences are never reported. However, the most serious ones often have the potential to become known to authorities because the victim requires medical treatment. This is why Medical Facilities can be such a valuable partner in a domestic violence collaboration. Once physicians

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and nurses have been properly trained to recognize the signs pointing to a domestic assault and learn what the relevant laws require, they can serve as key front-line sentinels in the effort to detect the most injurious incidences of domestic violence.

Having a relationship with Medical Facilities that enables the collaboration to provide training on these matters is particularly important in mandatory-domestic-violence-reporting states like Colorado. It gives the collaboration not only an opportunity to present information about the nature of domestic violence, but also to inform medical staff about the community resources that are available to victims. With this information, even when medical staff do not feel certain enough that an injury was a result of domestic violence to report it, they will still be able to address their suspicions by providing the injured party with references to organizations assisting domestic violence victims. Finally, by having Medical Facilities as a collaboration partner, physicians and nurses' awareness of domestic violence will likely increase and thus their willingness to make the reports that are so critical to activating early intervention in the most brutal domestic violence cases.

## ✓ **Mental Health/Substance Abuse Services**

Domestic violence need addressed: *To assist victims and offenders in overcoming the mental and substance abuse problems often linked to domestic violence.*

High rates of substance abuse and psychological problems among perpetrators and victims of domestic violence is a well-documented fact. Consequently, perpetrators are often required by courts to obtain psychological counseling or to enroll in alcohol and substance abuse treatment programs, while victims are frequently encouraged to take advantage of the same resources.

Communication and cooperation between these mental health programs and the collaboration provides benefits in two ways. First, it keeps the collaboration informed as to whether the perpetrator is following through on his treatment plan. If he is not, this information can be critical in addressing some major concerns, such as whether it is safe to return children to the home. Secondly, mental health providers are aided by the collaboration's efforts to keep them informed of events or actions involving perpetrators that may be relevant to the treatment provided to the perpetrator. Both benefits help keep perpetrators accountable for completing their treatment plans.

## ✓ **Probation**

Domestic violence need addressed: *To closely monitor sentenced domestic violence offenders.*

Probation is an essential partner in ensuring that released domestic violence offenders do not further endanger their victims. Probation's involvement with the collaboration can produce several important benefits to the collaboration and to victims of domestic violence:

- Probation can provide unequaled access to the offender. For instance, probation officers have authority to enter the offender's residence at will and conduct a search. Such searches are known to often produce weapons and drugs.
- Probation can establish curfews for offenders and monitor drug and alcohol use.
- Probation officers can provide important information to the collaboration partners as to the offender's activities and apparent state of mind.

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- Probation has direct access to the courts and can immediately initiate actions should the offender violate probation.

Probation obtains benefits from its involvement with the collaboration as well, the two most prominent of which are:

- Receiving information from the victim advocate regarding any prohibited contact between the offender and the victim.
- Obtaining greater access to Law Enforcement and Prosecution and the information they have on an offender's activities.

Clearly, conviction and incarceration do not necessarily mean the end of all threats of harm by offenders to domestic violence victims. Probation's involvement with a domestic violence collaboration, however, is an important step in greatly decreasing this potential for harm and for increasing the level of accountability for offenders.

## ✓ **Prosecution**

Domestic violence need addressed: *To hold domestic violence offenders legally accountable for their actions.*

Prosecution's role in providing accountability for domestic violence offenders is too obvious to require comment. However, less obvious is one new way Prosecution can better fulfill this role in domestic violence cases: assign a deputy district attorney full-time to a domestic violence collaboration. The resulting partnership between Prosecution and the other community agencies combating domestic violence can have far-reaching benefits for all concerned. One major benefit for Prosecution is that the collaboration enables it to develop far stronger cases than would otherwise be possible. There are several reasons for this:

- The early cooperation in a case between the prosecutor and police assigned to the collaboration ensures that the appropriate evidence will be gathered promptly.
- The prosecutor is able to have direct contact with the victim and thus be able to develop a relationship that may increase the opportunities for acquiring critical information. With the assistance of the victim advocate, this relationship can also improve the chances the victim will testify in court.
- During the police interview of the suspect, the prosecutor is able to observe and make an assessment of the nature and attitude of the defendant.
- The prosecutor is free of the usual dauntingly heavy and diverse caseload.
- Crucial information and evidence can be obtained quickly from the other collaboration partners.
- In time, the consistent strength of the cases that result from this collaboration establishes credibility with judges and provides leverage with defense.
- By participating in emergency domestic violence call-outs, as DVERT's prosecutor does, the prosecutor is able to see first-hand the reality to be presented in the courtroom. The experience is not only highly motivating, it often helps the prosecutor vividly convey the reality of the crime—and thereby sway juries.

Besides being the beneficiary of the prosecutor's knowledge of the law and of the requirements of preparing a convincing case, the collaboration benefits from this relationship in other ways:

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- It enables the collaboration to provide the D.A. with information that will have considerable value—particularly in cases involving highly dangerous offenders—in deciding whether to plea bargain or to allow a bail bond to be lowered.
- The collaboration can help structure a prosecution process that is more respectful and considerate of victims and their children than would ordinarily be the case.
- By its assistance to the prosecutor, the collaboration can help put away the most dangerous domestic violence offenders rather than having them cycle endlessly through the system.

While the collaboration and prosecutor have to be prudent in structuring their relationship—during case screening meetings, the deputy D.A. should not be present since this would raise discovery issues—there is no question that both benefit from it. It is thus both unfortunate and surprising that so many communities have difficulty obtaining the cooperation of the district attorney in establishing such a relationship.

## ✓ **Research**

Domestic violence need addressed: *To systematically study patterns of domestic violence to determine the most effective responses to it.*

Combating domestic violence is such a complex undertaking, and the emotional and professional investment that disciplines make in their approach to it is often so profound that unless there is objective outside assessment of how well these initiatives are performing, any domestic violence collaboration is likely to stumble about in the dark. Given that a collaboration must experiment with various approaches to determine which ones are most effective for its community, it is important that it enlist the aid of university or private researchers to assess the strengths and weaknesses of those approaches.

Since DVERT has been focused from the beginning on the most dangerous cases, it has made research on lethality and risk assessment a top priority. For collaborations with other objectives, the research goals will be different. But the value of research remains the same: providing direction to the collaboration by determining as objectively as possible which initiatives are working and which ones aren't.

Research also prevents collaborations from lapsing into the conviction that because it has worked out a set of practices that are acceptable to all partner disciplines, it must therefore be meeting the needs of domestic violence victims and their children. Policies and practices that ensure inter-agency harmony may not, unfortunately, be meeting the needs of domestic violence victims. Research is the collaboration partner that holds the *collaboration* accountable in meeting those needs.

## ✓ **School Districts**

Domestic violence need addressed: *To detect and address the intergenerational effects of domestic violence, including dating violence.*

School Districts are key collaboration partners in preventing or lessening the harm domestic violence does to children. There are three prominent benefits School Districts can provide a domestic violence collaboration:

- Alerting the collaboration when information becomes available indicating the presence of domestic violence in a student's home

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- Notifying the collaboration and the police when domestic violence offenders under a restraining order—or who are considered to be dangerous—are seen loitering near their children’s school
- Informing the collaboration how students from families with a history of domestic violence are fairing in and out of class so that the collaboration can determine what additional services might need to be provided to that family—or what additional sanctions might need to be enforced against the domestic violence offender

The benefits that a collaboration can offer School Districts are just as vital:

- Informing School Districts about students coming from domestic violence families so the School Districts can provide the additional assistance and intervention that such students may require
- Helping School Districts keep students safe by notifying them of situations where there is a possibility that a violent offender may, in violation of a restraining order, come to a child’s school
- Providing programs that inform students about dating violence and how to prevent it

While the inclusion of School Districts in a domestic violence collaboration is a fairly recent objective, its value is no longer in question.

## ✓ **Victim Advocacy:**

Domestic violence need addressed: *To provide victims of domestic violence with support, information, and advocacy.*

## ✓ **System Advocates**

Although their employment by criminal justice agencies imposes strict demands and boundaries on System Advocates, they are still able to provide victims with substantial services and benefits. Since System Advocates only make contact with victims once a domestic violence arrest has been made, the first benefit they offer victims is providing support and explanation as the perpetrator’s case proceeds through court. This is not a negligible benefit: victims, like most people, are apt to find the legal proceedings bewildering and highly intimidating. System Advocates are also an important source of general encouragement and of referrals to community agencies that can assist victims.

Since System Advocates work for criminal justice agencies, they have no confidentiality privileges. Anything victims relate to them can, and will, be reported to police and prosecutors—a fact made clear to victims at the outset. Indeed, gathering information from the victim is one of the System Advocate’s chief obligations. However, most System Advocates do not see this function as clashing with their obligation to advocate for the victim’s interests. Indeed, most view both obligations as pointing to the same objective: protecting the victim. This objective can be fulfilled by directing victims to resources that can assist them in escaping dangerous situations—and by containing perpetrators and holding them accountable.

## ✓ **Community-Based Advocates**

Probably no discipline, other than Local Law Enforcement, is more central to the success of a domestic violence collaboration than is Community-Based Victim Advocacy. Certainly no other discipline offers to domestic violence victims more services and support:

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- Crisis Lines – This 24-hour crisis intervention service is often the first outside contact for domestic violence victims in search of help. It provides information and referrals to other resources that can aid victims.
- Safehouses – These not only provide emergency shelter and food for abused women and children, they also provide family therapy, children’s programs, and contacts with other agencies that can further assist victims and their children.
- Advocacy – Providing assistance with the temporary restraining order process, domestic violence education, and court support are three ways in which this service is made available.
- Counseling – There are several forms this service can take: individual counseling, adult and adolescent support groups, and programs for the partners of men in perpetrator treatment.
- Community Education – Victim advocates often speak to community groups and news organizations to increase awareness of both the cause and effects of domestic violence.

Victim advocates, in short, make every effort to empower victims even while recognizing that victims themselves must take the initiative to benefit from these services.

As a member of a collaboration, the community-based advocate usually becomes the single point of contact between the victim and the collaboration. This is because the advocate has usually established a relationship of trust with the victim, particularly if their communications are privileged, as they are in most states. Indeed, the advocate is often the first point of contact for the victim, either as a result of a hotline call, a hospital referral, or the victim walking into the advocate’s organization. The development of this relationship is frequently the key to victims finally reporting domestic violence incidents—and even to their recognizing that they *are* domestic violence incidents. Many victims often minimize the level of violence they’ve experienced and its consequences until a victim advocate is able to provide them with a sounder perspective.

Because of this relationship of trust, roughly 99% of victims in DVERT’s experience will permit the advocate to disclose to the rest of the collaboration the information the victim has provided. This information is always critical in clarifying what resources the collaboration must bring to a case. It also helps counteract the often superficially plausible accounts perpetrators frequently give to law enforcement officers. With the victim’s information and the advocate’s ability to help interpret its significance, many potentially lethal situations that might have received little consideration from the criminal justice system or other community organizations become the focus of heightened concern and formidable collaboration resources. The end result is often a domestic violence victim who, with her children, can at last find safety and support.

The central role a community-based victim advocate plays in bringing about this result is one reason why DVERT gives its advocates special authority in specifying which cases merit the collaboration’s greatest attention and resources.

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## Supplemental Information:

While the list of disciplines discussed in this section is fairly comprehensive, there are other *non-discipline* partners with whom collaborations should consider establishing relationships. Depending upon the community, these could be military installations, the Human Resources departments of prominent local employers, pastors, victim-survivor panels, or any other group that can provide assistance in detecting and combating domestic violence.

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*“When I was with the DVERT team, I could feel their unified strength. I knew they would not let me slip through the cracks.”*

– Victim of domestic violence

*“We have to let loose of some of our old ways of doing business, let loose of always following the old bureaucratic patterns, and come together around what is truly going to make a difference in the lives of our families.”*

– David Berns,  
Executive Director,  
El Paso County  
Department of  
Human Services

*Through its own experience and the experience of other communities that have attempted to develop a domestic violence collaboration, DVERT has derived the following...*

## 12 FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES FOR A SUCCESSFUL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COLLABORATION

✓ **Single Leader** - *The collaboration must have one operational leader.* Probably no Foundational Principle is as controversial as the claim that a collaboration must have a single leader of operations, but probably no principle is as crucial to the success of a domestic violence collaboration as this one. The reasons for this have emerged in DVERT’s discussions with communities whose efforts to develop a collaboration have failed. Their experiences have demonstrated that:

- Where there is split supervision or where agency heads retain supervisory authority over employees assigned to the collaboration, inter-agency conflicts will inevitably work their way up the respective agencies’ chain of command. There they will be addressed—if they are addressed at all—by top officials who often have no firsthand knowledge of the circumstances involved in the dispute. Every collaboration is imperiled, especially at the beginning, by inter-agency disputes over approach, authority, practices, and priorities. If there is no one who knows the domestic violence cases first-hand and can referee these disputes—helping the partners work toward an operational common ground—such disputes will in time bring the collaboration down.
- No organization can succeed if it lacks clear lines of accountability and authority. Without one individual being ultimately responsible for the collaboration’s performance, the source of failure can be—and usually is—ascribed to the other agencies involved in the collaboration. One of the chief aims of a collaboration is, of course, to get out of the “blame game.” However, there is almost no chance this will happen if the collaboration does not have a single leader with ultimate decision-making authority.
- Confusion generated by frequent inter-agency disputes can have terrible consequences for domestic violence victims if the collaboration lacks a leader to resolve them. Otherwise, as the bureaucratic wheels grind toward dispute settlement, domestic violence situations that should be receiving active and joint attention can spin out of control. Since time is not a friend to those dealing with domestic violence, decisions must be made promptly and disputes resolved quickly if victims and their children are to be spared further violence.
- Finally, the collaboration needs an advocate and representative to advance its approach to domestic violence. Without a sustained and well-promoted vision from the top, the collaboration begins to lose focus—and, ultimately, support.

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Of course, as noted elsewhere in the Foundational Principles, this leader must be willing to listen, allow for considerable initiative by collaboration partners, and be guided by clear and agreed upon policies, procedures, and goals. That said, there still is no avoiding the need for one operational leader.

✓ **Support from Top** - *The collaboration director must be supported from the top.*

Developing a cohesive collaborative approach to domestic violence involves much trial and error. Obviously, during this process there are bound to be collaboration staff who will feel momentarily slighted or who will oppose certain decisions. This will often be the case as lines of authority and supervisory roles are established. If the collaboration's director is not backed by the collaboration's top agency officials, a disgruntled team member could use influence with one of these officials to intervene in the collaboration's decision-making. Once this is done, not only is the authority of the collaboration's leader fatefully undermined, so is the integrity of the collaboration as a whole. Consequently, it is essential that the director—and the director's full decision-making authority—be supported by the collaboration's agency leaders.

It is also critical that others in the community recognize this high-level support for the collaboration and its director. This is especially so since it is not possible for a collaboration to take action in some domestic violence cases without encountering objections from powerful or influential members of the community.

Naturally, it does not follow from this principle that the collaboration leader should be permitted to act willfully and arbitrarily. But if the director's actions do not conflict with the goals, practices and procedures agreed upon by all agencies at the establishment of the collaboration, then high-level support of the collaboration's leader must be forthcoming if the collaboration is to succeed.

✓ **Communication** - *Leadership must communicate and listen to all partners, and allow them to take initiative.*

The collaboration's leader must be able to listen and respond intelligently to the collaboration's various disciplines—especially at the outset when the difficult work of blending often contradictory and antagonistic approaches to domestic violence must occur. If the leader does not carefully consider the various disciplines' perspectives and skillfully arbitrate the internal conflicts that inevitably emerge early on, it is quite likely that collaboration members will lose faith both in the leader and in the very idea of a collaboration. For this reason alone, an ability to listen and effectively communicate may be the primary requirement of a successful collaboration leader.

While much of the focus in establishing a collaboration must be on its formal properties and relationships, there is no avoiding the fact that much of the collaboration's success depends upon the personal relationships that develop between the director and the team members—and between the team members themselves. If there is not a foundation of open communication and concern, it is unlikely that the collaboration will be able to bear the inevitable stress and emotional turmoil of dealing with domestic violence cases.

✓ **Separate Identity** - *The collaboration must establish its own site and identity.*

While this Foundational Principle is one that many communities will find difficult to accept, a separate site and identity for a collaboration is critical to its success. As has been frequently noted, most potential

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partners in a domestic violence collaboration come from very distinct cultures—ones with strong, competing views as how best to combat domestic violence. Without a separate site and identity, there is little hope that a collaboration will find the means to reconcile these divergent outlooks into a cohesive approach.

Researchers evaluating DVERT have noted that much of its success can be traced to its having established a separate culture—one whose vision transcends that of any single member agency. And a key to establishing this separate culture has been having all the collaboration staff located in a separate building. This separate site has allowed for the development of relationships, cooperation, mutual respect, and understanding that is essential in breaking down the walls that commonly exist between disciplines. Without this constant contact, the possibility of collaboration partners being able to transcend their agencies' outlook and become integrated into an effective collaborative approach is fairly small.

The idea here is not that members of the collaborative team should cut all ties with their parent agencies. On the contrary, it is vital that collaboration partners maintain close contact with their home agencies—both to receive guidance and to provide their agencies with important feedback on the collaboration. Rather, the concern is that members of the collaborative team be able to move beyond these agency loyalties to jointly develop the policies and practices that are at the heart of a successful collaboration. Daily contact in a separate site is an indispensable element in achieving this aim.

✓ **Release Control** - *Parent agencies must relinquish control of employees assigned to the collaboration.*

Certainly the most difficult task for the heads of a collaboration's partner agencies is to release control of an employee assigned to the collaboration. And yet they must if the collaboration is to succeed.

Experience indicates that if staff people assigned to a collaboration are always needing to ask their parent agencies for approval of a specific action, the collaboration will not only cease to evolve, it will cease to exist. The individuals assigned to a collaboration must be free to develop new approaches to combating domestic violence and not be required to merely carry out the settled practices of the parent agency, expecting the other partners to readily conform to these practices. It is not surprising that the release of control is difficult for many agency heads—particularly in the disciplines of Law Enforcement, Victim Advocacy, and Child Protective Services. But unless it occurs, a collaboration will never be able to transcend the limitations of its member agencies.

Of course, no agency head should be expected to release control of a staff member unless clear and sensible policies have first been established for the collaboration. These policies must be incorporated in a "memorandum of understanding" that all partner agency heads are willing to sign. It is also crucial that the collaboration's director and supervisors meet with the leaders of partner agencies every few months to set general policy. But once general policy has been set and accepted, heads of partner agencies must relinquish control of staff assigned to the collaboration if the collaboration is to develop the practices that most effectively meet the needs of domestic violence victims and their children.

✓ **Clear Expectations** - *Goals, roles, policies, voting powers, and internal relationships must be clearly and formally defined.*

It is widely recognized that most partners in a domestic violence collaboration come from disciplines having distinct cultures and strongly-held views on how best to combat domestic violence. Unless a

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collaboration begins with clear goals, policies, and roles, the clash of these institutional cultures will almost certainly cancel any hope of developing a successful collaboration.

Selecting the collaboration's primary goal, of course, will drive all subsequent decisions on policies and roles. DVERT selected as its primary goal the addressing of the most lethal cases; other communities have chosen other goals, such as contacting every known domestic violence victim. But whatever the primary goal, all collaboration partners must agree to it.

Once the primary collaboration goal is in place, there is often a decrease in the intensity of inter-agency conflict as partners work to resolve the other policy questions. In this process of working toward consensus on roles, policies, and other goals, it is useful for the partners to keep the benefits of such agreement in mind:

- The provision of a stable institutional structure that helps direct and contain the conflicts that inevitably accompany a domestic violence collaboration.
- Clarity on who has final say on—and bears ultimate responsibility for—the collaboration's day-to-day operations.
- Well-defined roles for each discipline, enabling participants to pursue their disciplinary responsibilities without fear of having other partners infringe upon them.
- The harmonizing of diverse agency employment practices and work schedules to increase operational efficiency and workplace harmony within the collaboration.

It is worth noting that many communities—recognizing the strength of conflicting agency views on domestic violence—attempt to establish a collaboration by avoiding many of the contentious questions that must be addressed. There is no denying that developing a consensus at the outset of a collaboration is often a difficult and emotional process, but it cannot be avoided. Attempting to do so will result in the unresolved disagreements finding expression in the conduct of personnel within the collaboration. This, in turn, will eventually undermine the mutual cooperation that is vital to a collaboration's success.

Finally, the agreement on goals, policies, and roles should be set down in “a memorandum of understanding” and signed by the head of each partner agency. This agreement will certainly evolve over time as the partners collectively work through the challenges faced by the collaboration. But it should at all times be clear, comprehensive, and publicly accepted by every partner.

✓ **Start Small** - *The collaboration must start small, with no more than three or four disciplines.*

In developing a collaboration, harmonizing conflicting approaches to domestic violence with three or four disciplines is a supremely difficult and stressful task; attempting to do this with *more* than three or four disciplines is nearly an impossible one.

The success of any collaboration is dependent upon the quality of communication that attends it. In turn, the quality of communication relies heavily upon the sense of comfort participants feel with their partners and upon the personal relationships that develop among them as discussion proceeds. Fewer disciplines at the table helps secure both these conditions, making it easier for participants to speak freely and frankly as they work to resolve their disagreements in structuring the collaboration. If more than three or four disciplines are involved at the outset, each additional discipline increases the possible points of contention and decreases the level of personal contact among the discipline members.

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Finally, developing and clarifying relationships within a founding nucleus of disciplines is crucial in establishing the continuity and consistency of focus that an effective collaboration requires, especially as its circle of participants later expands.

✓ **Continuity** - *There must be continuity in key roles.*

While it is essential that a collaboration have detailed policies, clearly defined roles, and a shared goal, the health and success of a collaboration depends upon more than what is set forth in signed documents. It depends also on the development of largely unacknowledged habits and traditions. These are vital to a collaboration's ability to smooth conflicts, clarify expectations, and develop the "culture" or sense of separateness that helps sustain morale. The prerequisite to developing these habits and traditions—this culture—is continuity in the collaboration's key leadership and management roles.

It is impossible for a vision or for settled practices to take hold if there is too much turnover in key positions. When the thread of leadership continuity is broken:

- Each new team must begin anew, and the collaboration ceases to evolve effective approaches in meeting the changing needs of victims and their children.
- New staff members have no support or settled structure in which to assimilate, so they revert to the practices and approaches they learned from their home agency. Inevitably, these bring them into conflict with the collaboration's other disciplines.
- In time the collaboration begins slowly to dissolve into an assemblage of competing philosophies and agencies—before disappearing altogether.

Consequently, the need for continuity in key roles requires that partner agencies be willing to dedicate skilled employees to the collaboration—and for a considerable length of time.

✓ **Civilian Supervisors** - *Supervisory powers must be given to advocates and other civilians, not just to law enforcement and prosecution.*

When DVERT was first being developed, two facts became quickly evident: First, police and prosecutors did not have all the answers in dealing with domestic violence. Second, the collaboration would never become effective unless greater equality were established between "system" and "nonsystem" partners. Law Enforcement and Prosecution, recognizing that other disciplines had unique knowledge and expertise concerning domestic violence, further granted that these disciplines should be included in the collaboration's management structure. Therefore, with the approval of the Colorado Springs police chief and district attorney, DVERT was organized so that many supervisory positions went to civilian personnel, often with authority to direct police officers and deputy district attorneys. This decision, though difficult for some in Law Enforcement and Prosecution, has been central to DVERT's success.

Having supervisory staff that generally reflects the collaboration's range of disciplines enables DVERT management to integrate its various disciplinary cultures into a cohesive and mutually-supportive approach to domestic violence. If any one discipline had insisted on being in charge, the collaboration would almost certainly have failed. This is why it is misleading, if technically correct, to say that DVERT is "police coordinated." For while it does have a police detective as its director, "police coordinated" fails utterly to capture the shared and collaborative nature of DVERT's decision-making and management structure. DVERT is essentially a hybrid organization, one that has found much success by investing with

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authority not just police and prosecutors, but also members of such “nonsystem” disciplines as Victim Advocacy and Court Appointed Special Advocates.

✓ **Joint Training** - *All training must be cross-training and be conducted jointly with a law enforcement officer and a civilian.*

An effective training program is indispensable to the establishment of a successful domestic violence collaboration. In the early period of its evolution, DVERT experienced considerable employee turnover and inter-agency rivalry. Critical to reducing both problems was the institution of a two-week training regime with the following features and benefits:

- *Joint training* – All training is conducted jointly by a police officer and, usually, a victim advocate—the two most prominent representatives of “system” and “nonsystem” responses to domestic violence. This joint presentation sends a powerful message to new staff about how a true collaboration works: it in a sense *embodies* the lessons the trainers provide.
- *Cross-training* – Training must be multidisciplinary. All new DVERT staff are required to go on calls with Child Protective Services, victim advocates, police, animal welfare officers, and other collaboration partners. These “ride-alongs” have been invaluable in helping new staff understand the unique challenges faced by their partner disciplines—and in recognizing these disciplines’ expertise in meeting these challenges. In a further effort at cross-training, DVERT now requires its trainees to visit the other agencies’ sites. For instance, police officers and other trainees must spend a four-hour shift at the community’s safe house.
- *One per discipline* – DVERT makes it a policy to accept one person per discipline at a time into its training program and collaboration. This is to help entering staff resist peer pressure from their home agencies, thereby aiding them in their efforts to enter into the collaboration’s unique culture and to adapt to its practices.
- *Cross-disciplinary mentoring* – DVERT has found that assigning a mentor from a different discipline to each new staff member is an effective means of integrating the collaborative approach into a key post-training relationship. This practice helps sensitize the members of one discipline to the struggles and needs of members of another discipline—much to the collaboration’s operational benefit.

The overall value of an effective training program is, therefore, to make each collaboration participant aware of the roles and strengths of the partner disciplines and to show how the participant fits into the overall collaborative structure. An accompanying benefit of this training is to help new collaboration staff develop a sense of being on the same team, of being partners in a well-conceived and important enterprise.

✓ **Respect** - *Members of each discipline must respect the expertise and responsibilities of the members of the other disciplines while remaining true to their own training.*

An attitude of mutual respect among discipline members is indispensable to a collaboration’s success. There is no denying that all across the country, members of certain disciplines dealing with domestic violence have entrenched—and frequently negative—views of members of other disciplines addressing domestic violence. If some participants in the collaboration are unwilling to relinquish these disapproving attitudes and enter into a mutually respectful relationship with the other partners, they will never be able to make a positive contribution to the collaboration. Being able to work toward the same goal with various disciplines depends upon members respecting the unique professional backgrounds and abilities of the other disciplines’ members.

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A key benefit of this mutual respect is that it empowers disciplines to take initiative. The respect extended to a discipline by the collaboration's leader and membership presents that discipline with the moral support needed to pursue its own innovations in combating domestic violence. Conversely, concern for the views and needs of the director and the other collaboration members imparts both direction and boundaries to those disciplines developing such initiatives.

It should be understood, finally, that one aspect of respect is a willingness to address conflicts with other disciplines directly, without lapsing into sulking silence. Respect should not be seen as being synonymous with agreement. It is instead a recognition that the beliefs and practices of one's collaboration partners merit regard and consideration, even if they do not necessarily merit assent.

✓ **Committed Participants** - *Not just the right discipline, but the right people from the discipline must be selected.*

It is fairly evident that not everyone is able to work in a fluid, collaborative structure. Many feel disoriented when taken out of their discipline's culture—with its settled assumptions and outlooks—and compelled to work with people who share few, if any, of these assumptions and outlooks. Consequently, even though an agency as a whole and its director may be completely behind the collaboration, it cannot be assumed that all of an agency's employees share the same enthusiasm. This is why it is imperative that the collaboration's management take great care in selecting from the participating disciplines the individuals who are to staff the collaboration.

There are several attributes to look for in potential collaboration participants:

- A profound commitment to reducing domestic violence
- A basic understanding of the nature of domestic violence
- A genuine concern for victims of domestic violence and their children
- An openness to new approaches to combating domestic violence
- A willingness to reexamine widely-accepted assumptions
- An ability to feel comfortable with many different types of people
- A capacity to exercise sound judgment in stressful situations
- A readiness to speak up when in disagreement, but to do so constructively

And, obviously, a sense of humor wouldn't hurt.

It is unlikely that a collaboration will find many people possessing *all* of these attributes, but to the degree that a collaboration can find people possessing *most* of them is the degree to which the collaboration will be successful.

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## DISCIPLINE RELATIONSHIPS

Certain inter-agency relationships within a collaboration have unique features that merit further comment:

*“Research has consistently shown that a good relationship between police and victim advocates is a key component of successful domestic violence collaborations.”*

– Maryanne  
Wanca-Thibault,  
researcher and professor  
of communications at  
University of Colorado,  
Colorado Springs

*“Once we saw that law enforcement officers had the same goal we had—to keep victims of domestic violence safe—trust started to build, and we were able to overcome many difficulties.”*

– Janet Kerr,  
Executive Director,  
Center for the Prevention  
of Domestic Violence

### Local Law Enforcement – Victim Advocacy

Probably no other relationship in domestic violence collaborations is more often fraught with tension than that between Community-Based Victim Advocates and Local Law Enforcement. DVERT was not immune to the conflicts that invariably attend this relationship; indeed, working through them absorbed much of the collaboration’s time and effort in its first year.

Some of the ways DVERT was able to overcome these obstacles are touched on in the 12 Foundational Principles:

- Officers and advocates began training and going on calls together, thus enabling each to realize the unique contribution the other had to offer
- Victim advocates were given supervisory positions, sometimes over police officers
- Clear policies were developed—and agreed upon—as to what the role of each discipline would be in the collaboration

Motivating both disciplines to make the effort and compromises needed to resolve deep-seated cultural differences were:

- 1) the recognition by the leadership of Local Law Enforcement that the police will never be able to fully comprehend and effectively deal with domestic violence situations without the unique perspectives and information victim advocates can provide, and
- 2) the recognition by Victim Advocacy that without the efforts of law enforcement, many victims and their children will never be safe.

Advocates at DVERT play an important role in informing victims about what law enforcement can do for them and in influencing how they perceive the police. The problem that many victims have is that they are thoroughly isolated, and what they need more than anything else is support—both from the community *and the system*—to get out of an abusive relationship. With Law Enforcement and Victim Advocates working as a team, the victim comes to see that the necessary support is indeed there and begins to take the difficult, and often frightening, steps needed to leave a dangerous relationship.

DVERT wants officers to be sensitive to domestic violence situations and attuned to their unique dynamics; it also wants advocates to be knowledgeable of possible chargeable offenses in a case. However, that said, it is crucial that advocates keep thinking as advocates and police as police. Sometimes DVERT has been so successful in its cross-training and team approach that it has found members of the two disciplines taking on *too much* of the other’s perspectives.

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The occasional need to correct this tendency is one more reason why it is important to meet frequently as a group and to have clear role definitions.

This relationship continues to evolve at DVERT, but it has already proven its unique value to victims and their children.

*“Historically, when a prosecution was not successful, it was easy for prosecutors to blame the officers for the courtroom defeat. Officers, on the other hand, would feel they had done everything they were supposed to do and thus the prosecutor was to blame for the case’s failure in court. The benefit of a collaboration is you get out of the blame game. You get into a problem-solving mentality.”*

– Doug Miles, Chief Deputy District Attorney, 4th Judicial District

*“So many problems in domestic violence cases are really system-imposed problems: the right hand not knowing what the left hand is doing.”*

– Commander Rick Millwright, Colorado Springs Police Department

## Law Enforcement – Prosecution

*“Historically, when a prosecution was not successful, it was easy for prosecutors to blame the officers for the courtroom defeat. Officers, on the other hand, would feel they had done everything they were supposed to do and thus the prosecutor was to blame for the case’s failure in court. The benefit of a collaboration is you get out of the blame game. You get into a problem-solving mentality.”* – Doug Miles, Chief Deputy District Attorney

*“So many problems in domestic violence cases are really system-imposed problems: the right hand not knowing what the left hand is doing.”* – Commander Rick Millwright, Colorado Springs Police Department

DVERT began with three disciplines: Local Law Enforcement, Prosecution, and Victim Advocacy. While most of the initial difficulty in establishing a cohesive collaboration involved working through the advocates’ concerns regarding their “system” partners, the relationship between Prosecution and Law Enforcement had its own troubled areas.

Prior to DVERT, police would often investigate a domestic violence case, hand their findings over to Prosecution, and have little or no subsequent involvement with the case. This approach was inadequate for the prosecution of domestic violence cases for at least two reasons:

- Since much of the evidence in domestic violence situations is only available for a brief time, prosecutors and police officers needed to be working together from the very outset to ensure that the evidence most crucial to a successful prosecution was obtained.
- As issues came up throughout the prosecution of a case and prosecutors became aware of possible defenses, it was important that Law Enforcement be available to gather evidence that could be used to counter those defenses.

Of course, disciplines’ staying involved with a domestic violence case from beginning to end is one of the key advantages of a collaboration, but it is particularly vital in the police-prosecutor relationship. It ensures that their efforts—all pointed to the same end: holding the perpetrator accountable—are coordinated, sustained, and effective.

Also, by requiring that its members defend their decisions and respond to more than just the pressures and demands of their own disciplines, the collaboration helps ensure general clarity as to what is possible, or advisable, in any given case. This is of particular value in Prosecution’s relationship with Law Enforcement since officers can often be frustrated by Prosecution’s case-handling

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decisions; conversely, Prosecution can be dissatisfied with officers' methods and scope of investigation. These mutual frustrations can often harm police-prosecutor cooperation in domestic violence cases if they are not addressed openly in a structured and collegial environment. By providing a venue where disciplines can at once challenge and educate one another, the collaboration helps ensure that this relationship, among others, continues to be a mutually supportive one.

*“The observational skills of animal welfare professionals can clearly aid in detecting children, women, and animals at risk of violent victimization.”*

– Frank R. Ascione,  
Professor, Department  
of Psychology, Utah  
State University

*“Animal abuse has a huge impact on our victims and their children. Perpetrators use animals in many different ways to intimidate their victims.”*

– Howard Black,  
Detective, DVERT  
Program Director

## **Law Enforcement – Animal Welfare**

When DVERT first considered asking the Humane Society to assign a person to work on its domestic violence cases, the idea met with widespread skepticism. However, DVERT's own research had convinced it that an Animal Welfare officer would be an invaluable member of its team—and of particular value to its Law Enforcement component.

In examining a sample of 400 of its most lethal domestic violence cases, DVERT found that in 40% of the cases there was documented history of animal abuse—and its later research pointed to a still higher percentage. This demonstration of the link between animal abuse and the most lethal sort of domestic violence was taken to heart by DVERT's Law Enforcement personnel.

Today, when DVERT receives a domestic violence case, it automatically requests from the Humane Society any history it has on animal abuse calls linked to the family or to the address in question. Since the Humane Society's database of such calls goes back over five years, it provides Law Enforcement with a useful resource for corroborating the likely presence of domestic violence in a home. It also alerts officers as to what additional signs pointing to the existence of domestic violence to look for in responding to calls to the residence.

Finally, since an Animal Welfare officer can enter private property without permission or a warrant, this officer can often encounter evidence of domestic violence, as well of animal abuse or other crimes, that Law Enforcement might otherwise never discover.

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*“There’s been quite a history of conflict between child protective services and victim advocates. However, by keeping the needs and safety of the entire family at heart, we can truly work together.”*

- David Berns, Executive Director, El Paso County Department of Human Services

*“When we all sit down at the table and focus on our goal, which is the safety of the family and the containment of the perpetrator, it becomes very easy to work through the problems and do what’s best for the family.”*

– Janet Kerr, Executive Director, Center for the Prevention of Domestic Violence

## Community-Based Victim Advocates – Child Protective Services

In most communities, the tension between Community-Based Victim Advocates and Child Protective Services is only slightly less intense than that between Victim Advocates and Law Enforcement. Victim Advocates are often reluctant to work with Child Protective Services because the threat of the latter taking away the victim’s children is seen as “revictimizing” the victim and, moreover, may cause the victim to cease cooperating with the advocate. Child Protective Services, on the other hand, often sees advocates as being willfully blind to the harm being done to children in domestic violence situations. While occasional conflicts between these two disciplines still emerge at DVERT, their occurrence has become relatively rare and brief.

One reason for this is that in the collaboration, Child Protective Services and Victim Advocacy have found that they can often use one another’s authority and relationship with the victim to address their own discipline’s concerns. This cooperative effort begins with the recognition that if the victim is not safe, neither are the children. Consequently, DVERT’s advocates have used the prospect of Child Protective Services becoming involved with the case to motivate victims to take out a restraining order on a violent husband or boyfriend when victims would otherwise be reluctant to do so. And when Child Protective Services sees that the advocates are working with the victim to ensure the protection of the children, it becomes willing to cooperate with the advocates in establishing the necessary conditions that enable the victim to keep her children.

Just as important in dealing with the painful and difficult questions of what must be done to protect children in domestic violence situations is the function served by the other collaborative partners. By requiring that Child Protective Services and Victim Advocates each make a well-reasoned and carefully documented case for a recommended course of action, the collaboration forces each discipline to address the victim and children’s welfare in a much broader context than might otherwise be the case. If under the concerned questioning of collaboration partners, either discipline fails to effectively address crucial concerns, its recommended course of action will not likely be taken. Thus, while these two disciplines are seen as serving two different “clients” whose interests can at times be viewed as in opposition, the other collaboration partners help “referee” the competing claims and resolve them into an informed course of action. Absent the collaborative context, these two disciplines, as noted above, will often be in determined and frequent opposition to one another.

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*“In the past, the focus of prosecutors has always been to effectively prosecute a case and get a conviction. Community-based victim advocates have educated us that what is really important is the safety of victims and their kids. We hope that in most cases aggressive, effective prosecution will result in safer victims. But that is not always the case.”*

– Doug Miles, Chief  
Deputy District Attorney,  
4th Judicial District

*“The advocate’s role is to be the voice of the victim and to provide support while she’s going through the extremely difficult process of a domestic violence prosecution.”*

- Janet Kerr,  
Executive Director,  
Center for the Prevention  
of Domestic Violence

## Community-Based Victim Advocates – Prosecution

In Colorado, communications between Community-Based Victim Advocates and victims are privileged. The information that the advocate obtains from the victim cannot be shared with Law Enforcement or Prosecution unless the victim signs a waiver permitting it. The existence of these privileged communications adds a special dimension to the Victim Advocate-Prosecution relationship.

Going through the prosecution of a domestic violence case is an excruciating experience for victims. Not only is the evidence usually embarrassing, but the victim can feel, sometimes rightly, as though she has been put in greater danger by the mere fact of prosecution. It is not surprising, therefore, that most victims back out of a prosecution. However, with the establishment of a confidential relationship with the Victim Advocate, many of the victim’s fears and concerns during the process can be addressed by someone with whom a relationship of trust has already developed. This is of great help to the victim since prosecutors often do not have the time or inclination to help victims through this painful process. Of course, the advocate’s support does not always ensure that the victim will continue with the prosecution, but it certainly increases the likelihood that she will. It is important to note, though, that the Victim Advocate’s focus is *not* on pushing victims through prosecution; it is rather on ensuring the safety of victims and their children—a concern that often unavoidably entails the prosecution of offenders.

Not surprisingly, for Prosecution it can be frustrating knowing that the Victim Advocate possesses information acquired from the victim that might be of help in a prosecution but which Prosecution cannot obtain. However, most prosecutors working on DVERT cases have come to recognize that the confidentiality privilege is seldom an obstacle—and is often an aid—to an effective prosecution. Not only does the support advocates provide help keep victims engaged in the prosecution, but the confidence this support instills also results, in the vast majority of cases, with the victim signing the waiver that allows the advocate to share prosecution-relevant information with the prosecutor.

So while the relationship between Prosecution and Victim Advocates has occasionally been difficult, it has over time proven its value to both disciplines as they pursue their distinct objectives.

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*“Often victims are not willing to do the things they need to do to protect themselves because they are afraid of what might happen to their animals.”*

– Dr. Wes Metzler,  
Director, Humane  
Society of the Pikes  
Peak Region

*“Animal abuse is becoming better understood as a precursor to many other types of violence. It should be no surprise to anyone that in families that have problems, those problems show up in many different ways.”*

– Jeanne Smith,  
District Attorney,  
4th Judicial District

## Prosecution – Animal Welfare

The relationship between Prosecution and Animal Welfare is a fairly new one and has emerged largely from the recent recognition of the link between animal abuse and domestic violence.

There are three distinct ways by which Prosecution benefits from the information provided by Animal Welfare:

- When an animal abuse charge is filed, it sends up a red flag indicating the likelihood of other forms of violence in the home. This in turn shapes Prosecution and Law Enforcement’s subsequent investigations.
- Animal abuse charges provide additional leverage with offenders in plea bargaining negotiations.
- Most importantly, animal abuse charges often have a powerful effect on juries. Strange as it may seem, jurors often react more strongly to abuse of animals than they do to the abuse of family members. Since animals are seen as necessarily “innocent,” jurors tend to view violence against them as *always* unjustified—which, sadly, they often do not in the case of spouses and children. Consequently, the evidence provided by the Animal Welfare officer to Prosecution helps convince reluctant jurors that violence in the home is indeed pervasive, intense, and unpardonable—and that there really are victims in the case.

Of course, Animal Welfare’s purposes are fulfilled by Prosecution’s efforts to punish those who brutalize animals.

## Supplemental Information:

### Common Collaboration Obstacles

In an ongoing study, researchers at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, have noted certain common barriers around the country to a multidisciplinary approach to domestic violence:

- Many law enforcement officers do not see domestic violence cases as *real* police work, but rather as social work. However, now that more states have mandatory arrest policies regarding domestic violence, officers are beginning to see the matter in a different light.
- Law enforcement officers often get frustrated with domestic violence cases because they take a long time to develop, and when they go to court the victims seldom testify.
- Few law enforcement officers understand the victim mentality, though with proper training, officers have often been able to connect with victims and to communicate a sense of understanding of their situation.

# COLLABORATION

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- Agencies' perceptions of one another are often rigidly hostile. As a consequence, communication between agencies can be nearly nonexistent.
- Nonprofit and governmental agencies are often in competition for funding, which limits their willingness to cooperate with one another. This is why more communities are attempting to acquire funding with the collaborative relationship already in place.
- Social welfare workers often resent the higher pay received by law enforcement officers and the inequality of power between them. In fact, unequal power is a problem across the board: agencies are commonly looking to see if some other agency has more power than they do.
- There is no agreement on a collaboration model. Many shelter-providers, for instance, would not join a collaboration that included law enforcement.
- Since no agency is able to weed out the ineffective members of another agency involved in the collaboration, participants often become frustrated.
- The internal policies of each agency within the collaboration can get in the way of the collaborative effort. Different overtime and vacation policies, and even different accounting systems and dress codes, can cause considerable friction within the collaboration.

Once collaborations are established in spite of these obstacles, the researchers found certain common reasons for collaborations' subsequent ineffectiveness or dissolution, among them:

- Reluctance to elevate the status of non-law-enforcement personnel
- Lack of agreed-upon definitions of roles and responsibilities
- Lack of regular meetings between partners
- Lack of formal multidisciplinary training and cross-training

### **Concluding remarks from Howard Black, DVERT program director, Colorado Springs Police Department:**

We at DVERT appreciate your taking the time to view this training presentation. We hope it has helped clarify the challenges and benefits of a multidisciplinary collaboration in combating domestic violence and perhaps provided some ideas and techniques that can be helpful to you in your community. Now we would like to hear from you. Your input will help us continue to improve the effectiveness of our training and communications.

Accessible from this screen is a brief survey that I invite you to fill out and e-mail back to us. In this survey are some additional questions regarding your community and its efforts to combat domestic violence, something we would appreciate knowing more about. From this screen you can also access our web site. There you will find a wealth of information, frequently updated, on domestic violence and the various efforts to combat it. Finally, if you are wrestling with the difficulties of establishing a DVERT type collaboration in your own community and would like to speak to someone about it, I invite you to call me directly. I would be happy to provide you with whatever assistance and encouragement I have to offer. Make no mistake: the obstacles to a successful collaboration are many. But the rewards of success—the increased safety and hope of victims and their children—are profound.

# CONCLUSION

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