

# STRATEGIC PLAN

## 2012 - 2014

### **VISION**

The Bellingham-Whatcom County Commission Against Domestic Violence envisions a safe and non-violent community in which all people are free from physical, emotional and sexual abuse. Until that vision becomes a reality, we will assure the community makes the safety of domestic violence victims and their children a priority, while holding perpetrators of violence accountable and providing them with options and long-term support for change. We will promote understanding, sensitivity and respect within our diverse community to create non-violence through holistic, community-based solutions that empower the community to help and care for itself.

### **MISSION & PURPOSE**

In accordance with the City of Bellingham and Whatcom County ordinances that established the DV Commission, the Bellingham-Whatcom County Commission Against Domestic Violence provides leadership in our community's efforts to reduce and prevent domestic violence.

To fulfill this vital mission, we:

- Develop, implement and monitor a comprehensive domestic violence plan.
- Increase community awareness and understanding of domestic violence.
- Serve as an advisory body regarding domestic violence issues to local governments, service agencies and the community as a whole.
- Develop community benchmarks to monitor change.
- Promote collaboration and coordination among all institutions, systems and services that respond to victims, children, offenders and others who are impacted by domestic violence.
- Serve as a community forum on domestic violence and create a mechanism for identifying issues, concerns, needs and resources.

### **GOALS**

To guide our work and respond to the urgent challenges facing our community in responding to and ending domestic violence, the DV Commission will focus on the following initiatives:

- Enhance the community response to children impacted by domestic violence.
- Conduct a formal fatality review of recent intimate partner homicides.
- Ensure follow-up on past DV Commission projects.
- Conduct a perpetrator systems review.

## **ACTION STEPS**

### **Enhance the Community Response to Children Impacted by Domestic Violence**

- Form a DV Commission work group to focus on enhancing the community response to children impacted by domestic violence.
- Research screening and referrals for domestic violence in child protection and custody cases, and provide recommendations for improvements, such as training and promotion of the Whatcom County Coordinated Response Protocol, if applicable.
- Research the need for expanded intervention and prevention efforts and, if applicable, develop a plan to address these needs.
- Consider projects related to supervised visitation and the model school policy as able.

### **Conduct a formal Fatality Review of recent intimate partner homicides**

- Use the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WSCADV) as a consultant to design and lead a formal fatality review process in Whatcom County.
- Form a fatality review team, ensuring the participation of representatives from a variety of disciplines as well as representatives from the DV Commission.
- Conduct a fatality review of 2 – 3 recent intimate partner homicide cases in Whatcom County.
- Write and release a report with findings from the review and recommendations for changes to improve victim safety and offender accountability in high lethality domestic violence cases.
- Implement recommendations from the fatality review report.

### **Ensure follow-up on Past DV Commission Projects**

- Use the DV Commission's Law & Justice Committee to prioritize and, as necessary, follow up on: recommendations from Safety Audits, and funding for the Domestic Violence Specialist position.
- Work together as a full DV Commission to prioritize and, as determined necessary, follow up on: Domestic Violence in the Workplace, and the Healthcare Survey Project.

### **Conduct a Perpetrator Systems Review**

- Form a DV Commission work group to review the systems response to perpetrators.
- Conduct an information-gathering review of the current response to perpetrators in the civil and criminal justice systems and perpetrator treatment.
- Identify improvements needed to achieve perpetrator accountability and decrease barriers to access to perpetrator treatment as applicable.
- Work together as a full DV Commission to recommend change as needed.

In addition to these strategic initiatives, the DV Commission will continue on-going projects including:

- Coordination of Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM).
- Compiling and publishing the Benchmark Report, including additional benchmarks as needed.
- Updating and publishing the Dating and Domestic Violence Resource Manual.
- Providing annual presentations to the City and County Councils of Whatcom County.

All DV Commission efforts will focus on the following tactics:

- Accomplishing systems change using the influence of DV Commission members.
- Providing high-level professional trainings and conferences.
- Raising community awareness, including collaborating with the media.
- Reporting out to local governments on changes needed and accomplishments made.
- Ensuring consideration of cultural competency in all DV Commission projects.

## **APPENDIX A: DV Commission Accomplishments: 1998 - 2011**

### **Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM)**

- Increased promotion and visibility of DV month events, transitioned Vigil to a major public event, and established annual DV Outstanding Achievement Award.

### **Domestic and Dating Violence Resource Handbook**

- 1999 and 2003 • First and second editions published, 5000 copies distributed widely to health care and social service providers.
- 2007 • Third edition posted online.

### **Standard Domestic Violence Perpetrator Treatment Program Intake**

- 2001 • Facilitated multiple stakeholder development and buy-in of standard intake process for state certified DV perpetrator treatment providers. Court required use of this standard intake for any probation referrals. Conducted an audit and follow-up report on the standard intake for a few years to ensure use by treatment providers.

### **Community Survey Project: Factors that Influence Disclosure of Abuse to Providers**

- 2001 • Over 1,000 respondents in Whatcom County responded to a survey about barriers to disclosure of DV, as well as factors that would encourage disclosure. Used survey results to conduct extensive presentations to social service providers and health care providers on the need for routine DV screening.

### **Domestic Violence Safety and Accountability Audits**

- 2002 • Conducted first Safety & Accountability Audit of 911, Law Enforcement, and Jail Booking Response.
- 2005 – 2007 • Conducted Safety & Accountability Audit of Prosecution and Probation Response.
- 2005 – 2007 • Conducted Safety & Accountability Audit of City of Blaine (law enforcement, prosecution, probation, courts).
- 2009 – 2011 • Conducted Safety & Accountability Audit of Civil DV Order for Protection Process.

### **DV Risk Assessment Tool for Law Enforcement**

- 2003 – 2004 • Facilitated development of standard DV risk assessment tool for law enforcement with multiple stakeholders. The DV risk assessment tool was adopted by the Bellingham Police Department and Whatcom County Sheriff's Office. Provided training to all personnel in both agencies prior to implementation and use of new tool.
- 2005 – 2007 • Developed and implemented training for all small city law enforcement agencies on the DV risk assessment law enforcement tool. Assisted with adoption of new tool.
- 2005 – 2009 • Provided funding to expand DVSAS's 24-hour on-call advocacy service to the Whatcom County Sheriff's Office and to the five small city law enforcement agencies as part of risk assessment process.

### **Benchmark Reports**

- 2004, then annually • One-of-a-kind compilation of DV related data in Whatcom County.
- 2009 – 2011 • Published Small Cities Benchmark Reports, a compilation of DV related data specific to each of the small cities.

### **Elder and Vulnerable Adult Abuse Network (EVAAN)**

- 2004 • In partnership with the Northwest Regional Council, founded EVAAN. The group met monthly for 3 years. Goal was to help link DV issues/programs with elder abuse issues/services. EVAAN hosted a half day forum for the community on elder abuse and domestic violence.

### **DV and Firearms**

- 2005 • Hosted educational forum on DV and Firearms.
- 2008 • Through the Coordinated Judicial Response to DV Committee, assisted in the development of the Whatcom County Plan to Disarm Defendants model protocol .
- 2009 • Held half-day seminar to educate and train Whatcom County criminal justice personnel on implementation of the protocols.

### **Training and Technical Assistance**

- 2005 – 2007 • Developed and provided basic DV training for all staff at the Whatcom County Jail.
- 2005 – 2007 • Provided funds for the Whatcom County Sheriff's Office to purchase video cameras for DV Specialists.
- 2005 – 2011 • Sent three dozen personnel to national trainings sponsored by the Office on Violence Against Women – all expenses paid.
- Hosted cutting edge conferences in partnership with national organizations:
  - 2007 • *The Role of Probation and Prosecution in a Coordinated Community Response to Domestic Violence*, hosted in coordination with Battered Women's Justice Project.
  - 2009 • *Considering Context in Domestic Violence Cases: A Forum for Defense and Prosecution*, in coordination with Battered Women's Justice Project.
  - 2011 • *Improving the Domestic Violence Civil Protection Order Process: Safety, Access, Issuance, Service & Enforcement*, in coordination with National Council on Juvenile and Family Court Judges.
- 2007 – 2011 • Provided three educational forums per year for criminal justice personnel in the five small cities.

### **Domestic Violence School Policy**

- 2007 • Worked with Meridian School District to develop and adopt a school policy dealing with response to DV for both students and employees, the first of its kind in Washington State.

### **Domestic Violence Specialist Position**

- 2007 – 2009 • Secured funding, position development, hiring and supervision for newly created Domestic Violence Specialist position in the five small cities. Small cities had identified the need for a prosecution based DV advocate as a high priority.
- 2009 – 2011 • Funded DV Specialist for the 5 small cities (through City of Ferndale).

### **Whatcom County Triple Play**

- 2009 • Provided leadership in bringing together mental health, chemical dependency, and DV providers together, ultimately resulting in establishment of Whatcom County Triple Play.

### **DV in the Workplace Policy, Procedures, and Guidelines**

- 2009 • Created a model policy for DV in the Workplace, in coordination with human resource professionals.
- 2009 through present • Conducted outreach to businesses, organizations, and agencies to promote DV in the Workplace policy, procedures, and guidelines.

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