

Bellingham-Whatcom County
Commission Against Domestic Violence

Strategic Plan 2015-2018



Providing leadership in our community's
efforts to end domestic violence

The DV Commission partners with local agencies, government institutions, and individuals to achieve best practices in the community response to and prevention of domestic violence. We provide community-wide education campaigns, project implementation, resources, and professional training.

The Domestic Violence Commission was created in 1998 by a joint resolution between the City of Bellingham and Whatcom County. In 2006, all of the other municipalities of Whatcom County passed ordinances of support for the Commission and its efforts.

The Domestic Violence Commission is made up of 28 members from a variety of community sectors. DV Commission members are leaders in their agencies and disciplines and use their expertise and influence to improve the community response to domestic violence.

Domestic violence is not acceptable in Whatcom County.

We can end domestic violence.

- No one should live in fear or be hurt.

We address domestic violence as a community.

- We come to the table with separate voices; we leave as one voice united against domestic violence.

We are making a difference in domestic violence in our community.

- The DV Commission represents our community's commitment to ending domestic violence.

**Everyone has a role to play in ending
domestic violence.**

a community safe from physical, emotional, and sexual violence

We believe that no one in our community should live in fear or be hurt, especially by their intimate partner. We know that domestic violence hurts everyone in the community, socially and economically.

We believe that we will end domestic violence and achieve a safe and non-violent community by bringing the problem and its solutions into the light – through ensuring everyone is aware of the impact of domestic violence on our community, and actions they can take to end domestic violence.

victim safety and offender accountability

We create community responses to domestic violence that ensure safe, empowering, and accessible alternatives for people who have been victimized, including children. We also promote community efforts to hold perpetrators accountable for abusive actions while providing them with options for long-term change.

holistic, community-based solutions

Everyone needs to be a part of ending domestic violence and our local governments, agencies, and businesses support our efforts with staff participation. We recognize that these partnerships are essential to achieve success; individually, we cannot achieve the change we seek. Together, we are more powerful than any single person or entity. We “work smarter, not harder” to achieve results.

We achieve best-practice responses to domestic violence through collaboration with a multitude of disciplines including civil and criminal justice, health care, social services, schools, faith based, businesses, and the media, as well as with the general community. The Commission, through its efforts, inspires others to act in their areas of influence.

cultural competency and relevancy

Recent research from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show that racial and ethnic minorities are disproportionately affected by intimate partner violence. Whatcom County is a diverse community; it is home to a wide range of individuals and cultures. All victims, children, and perpetrators deserve to experience sensitivity, understanding, and respect for their unique culture as part of our community response to domestic violence. We believe that it is vital to promote cultural competency and relevancy in our community awareness, prevention, and response efforts.

our

As a movement to end domestic violence, we need to re-frame the problem as a community movement that affects everyone – and to build the case that we could truly end domestic violence with the right dedication, ideas, and actions.

It can be difficult to engage community members and ignite the passion and actions required to create a community free from domestic violence. This lack of passion for ending domestic violence, and an accompanying complacency about fully addressing the problem, is the greatest challenge facing the movement today. This is true nationwide, and also true in Whatcom County.

Economist Milton Friedman once said that, “Only a crisis – actual or perceived – produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around. That, I believe, is our basic function: to develop alternatives to existing policies, and to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes the politically inevitable.”

This is the role of the Domestic Violence Commission in upcoming years. It is time to ensure that everyone in our community knows that domestic violence is a problem; and to help find the answers we need to end it.

challenge

We need to create dialogue demonstrating that the existence of domestic violence at any level, but especially at its current epidemic levels, constitutes a crisis for our communities. We need to generate and promote new ideas – ideas that are exciting, creative, and even seemingly impossible – by engaging individuals, families, communities, and institutions county-wide. If some of these ideas seem impractical or naïve, then we need to remind everyone that the radical and far-fetched are exactly what we need, because the status quo won't eliminate domestic violence.

The Domestic Violence Commission needs to facilitate ideas and inspire change until what seems impossible becomes inevitable. Then we can finally live in a community safe from physical, emotional, and sexual violence and coercive control.

Engage the community to prevent domestic violence through increasing public consciousness of its impact, local resources, and effective interventions

Promote best practices in the community response, with a focus on high risk and high lethality domestic violence

Goals for
2015-2018

Increase capacity in the community to address domestic violence as it impacts children and youth

Explore an expansion of our mission to include sexual violence that occurs outside of an intimate partner relationship

Goal: Engage the community to prevent domestic violence through increasing public consciousness of its impact, local resources, and effective interventions

Strategies:

1. Coordinate outreach and engagement activities during Domestic Violence Awareness Month
2. Conduct annual presentations for elected officials in all jurisdictions within Whatcom County
3. Implement an ongoing community education campaign
4. Develop and publicize annual reports with local domestic violence data each year

Target Outcomes:

The Domestic Violence Commission will increase public consciousness of domestic violence to achieve:

- Increased knowledge of local resources for victims, children, and perpetrators of domestic violence
- Increased community knowledge about how to intervene with a family, friend, or neighbor who is impacted by domestic violence
- More informed community dialogue related to domestic violence

Annual work plan activities for this goal could include:

- Organize at least 3 activities for Domestic Violence Awareness Month in October
- Conduct a total of 7 presentations for elected officials in each of the local jurisdictions in Whatcom County
- Create a pilot toolkit with accompanying training and resources for faith communities to respond to people who are perpetrators of domestic violence; support implementation of this toolkit in at least 10 local congregations
- Utilize the media at least 1 time each month to promote public consciousness of domestic violence
- Develop and publicize reports with local domestic violence data

Goal: Promote best practices in the community response, with a focus on high risk and high lethality domestic violence

Strategies:

1. Lead efforts to implement best practice risk assessment and management tools within the legal, child protection, health care, and other systems
2. Develop and implement a community plan to effectively respond to the highest risk domestic violence cases within a variety of disciplines
3. Support community efforts for the provision of effective and accessible domestic violence perpetrator treatment
4. Research and consider other areas to improve the community response to domestic violence based on identified need, opportunity, and organizational capacity

Target Outcomes:

The Domestic Violence Commission will achieve:

- Full implementation of the Lethality Assessment Program (LAP) within all Whatcom County law enforcement agencies, Child Protective Services (CPS), St. Joseph's Hospital Emergency Department, and Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services (DVSAS)
- Full implementation of the DV High Risk Team in Whatcom County
- Development and implementation of a community plan to ensure best-practice responses to domestic violence cases involving strangulation
- Participation in community visioning and action plans related to ensuring accessible and effective domestic violence perpetrator treatment

Annual work plan activities for this goal could include:

- Ensure that 80 percent of high-risk victims identified by the LAP are connected with a domestic violence advocate
- Monitor 30 high-risk offenders through the DV High Risk Team
- Facilitate the development of policies and procedures to identify and respond to the seriousness of strangulation in at least 10 local agencies
- Partner with Western Washington University to conduct research and evaluation related to domestic violence perpetrator treatment in Whatcom County

Goal: Increase capacity in the community to address domestic violence as it impacts children and youth

Strategies:

1. Expand efforts to address the response to and prevention of dating and sexual violence in local schools and school districts
2. Provide education and training to the community on responding to and serving children impacted by domestic violence
3. Collaborate with local agencies serving children to support best-practice efforts within their organizations

Target Outcomes:

The Domestic Violence Commission will provide technical assistance and support to community agencies to achieve:

- Full implementation of the pilot program in the Ferndale School District to address dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking in the middle and high schools, including program evaluation
- Expansion of the pilot program in the Ferndale School District into the elementary, middle, and high schools in other Whatcom County school districts
- Increased education and training for community professionals who work with children impacted by domestic violence
- Full implementation of the Child Witness Case Consultation process

Annual work plan activities for this goal could include:

- Ensure that 80 percent of Ferndale School District staff know the protocol for responding to student victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking
- Host a local conference to provide 100 community professionals with high-level training about the impact of domestic violence on children, and how to provide best-practice responses
- Facilitate the sharing of information and resources through consultations on 10 cases involving domestic violence and children to ensure best practice responses
- Identify and resolve 3 systemic barriers to serving children exposed to domestic violence

Goal: Explore an expansion of our mission to include sexual violence that occurs outside of an intimate partner relationship

Strategies:

1. Outline the similarities and differences between domestic violence and sexual violence, and identify the range of conduct that would fall within the Commission's scope
2. Develop a decision-making process through which the DV Commission will be able to clearly understand and consider a mission expansion
3. Conduct research and develop recommendations from the DV Commission to the Whatcom County Executive and Council and the City of Bellingham Mayor and Council

Target Outcomes:

The Domestic Violence Commission will achieve:

- Identification of how the role of the Commission would change with a mission expansion
- Facilitation of a discussion and decision by DV Commission membership
- Development of recommendations from the Commission to Whatcom County and City of Bellingham

Annual work plan activities for this goal could include:

- Provide a presentation to the DV Commission membership on the similarities and differences between domestic and sexual violence, and the range of conduct that would fall within the Commission's scope
- Ensure that Commission members vote on the mission expansion at a membership meeting
- Present Whatcom County and City of Bellingham elected officials with the DV Commission's research, decision, and recommendations
- Update the DV Commission's name, mission, values, and logo
- Identify initial projects to ensure best-practice community responses to sexual violence

The DV Commission will continue to conduct the following core activities:



For a full list of DV Commission projects go to:
www.dvcommission.org/resources

acknowledgements

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Karen Burke

Clifford Cook

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Mary Dumas

Bill Elfo

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Gary Jensen

Michael Knapp

Christina Kobdish

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Dave McEachran

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Darlene Peterson

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Manuel Reta

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Peter Ruffatto

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We believe in a community that is free from all forms of domestic violence and are charged with providing county-wide leadership to individuals, agencies, and communities to facilitate its elimination.

This strategic plan provides us with a roadmap to achieve that vision; it shows us the large amount of work still to be done, and the areas that most need to be addressed. It also provides us with goals and strategies for how to get there. Each year, the Domestic Violence Commission will create an annual work plan to determine how best to achieve these broad goals and strategies, and each of those work plans will be evaluated for their success.

We will use this strategic plan and the accompanying work plans to guide us as we create and implement innovative ideas and effective actions to end domestic violence in Whatcom County.

Our mission is to provide leadership in our community's efforts to reduce and prevent domestic violence.

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1407 Commercial Street, Bellingham, WA 98225
360.312.5700 | www.dvcommission.org