



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
Office of Justice Programs

**CATEGORICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRESS REPORT**

**FILE**

The information provided will be used by the grantor agency to monitor grantee cash flow to ensure proper use of Federal funds. No further monies or other benefits may be paid out under this program unless this report is completed and filed as required by existing law and regulations (Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements — 28 CFR, Part 66, Common Rule, and OMB Circular A-110).

1. GRANTEE Niagara County Sheriff's Department		2. AGENCY GRANT NUMBER 97-DD-BX-0058	3. REPORT NO. 6
4. IMPLEMENTING SUBGRANTEE N/A		5. REPORTING PERIOD (Dates) FROM: 01/01/2000 TO: 06/30/2000	
6. SHORT TITLE OF PROJECT Closing the Gaps in Domestic Violence Enf.	7. GRANT AMOUNT \$137,236	8. TYPE OF REPORT <input type="checkbox"/> REGULAR <input type="checkbox"/> SPECIAL REQUEST <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FINAL REPORT	
9. NAME AND TITLE OF PROJECT DIRECTOR Inspector James A. Wesolowski	10. SIGNATURE OF PROJECT DIRECTOR <i>James A. Wesolowski</i> Inspector	11. DATE OF REPORT 7/2/01	

12. COMMENCE REPORT HERE (Continue on Blank Pages)

This is the final progress report of the Niagara County Sheriff's Department for the grant *Closing the Gaps in Domestic Violence*. In our application we had several goals and objectives, listed below is an accounting of them.

- o *To enhance domestic violence investigation capabilities.*
  - o *Providing deputies with an additional four hours of advanced domestic violence training relating to evidence collection and victim empowerment.*

We found that officer performance was directly linked to training. The quality of Domestic Incident Reports (DIR) substantially improved after training and this quality tended to diminish over time. The quality of the DIR's was used as a measure of the quality of the police investigation and services rendered. Not only did we provide our officers with the initial four hours of training we have added domestic violence training a part of yearly in service training supplemented with regular training memorandums.

- o *Institute a screening process to review all incoming New York State Domestic Incident Reports within 72 hours of the initial complaint, flagging those that are in need of follow-up investigation and support services.*

All DIRs continued to be screened a daily bases. It was found that not only does this identify victims that need service but also helps maintain quality of investigation and prevent cases from slipping through the cracks.

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 JUL 10 2001  
 OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL  
 COUNTY OF NIAGARA

13. CERTIFICATION BY GRANTEE (Official Signature) <i>Thomas A. Beale</i>	14. DATE 7-2-01
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*° Creating multidisciplinary teams made up of the initial responding deputy, a victim advocate and an Assistant District Attorney to provide follow up on the original complaint*

The original plan was to use a Community Policing Philosophy by teaming the initial responding officer with an advocate in an effort to provide continuity to the case and service. We found this to be a logistical nightmare. It was nearly impossible to coordinate the officers and advocates schedules and remain victim focused. Currently the advocate is the lead contact with the victim and the officer or investigator available at the time is teamed up with the advocate. The victim remain the focus, we adjust to their schedule and needs.

*° Purchasing Digital Imaging Cameras (32) for every criminal officer to document the scene upon arrival at a domestic violence call as well as any apparent injuries.*

All 32 cameras have been purchased and made operational. Several major problems arose from the use of digital cameras. The first is that we did not have an adequate database in which to store the images. We have since added a digital darkroom in which the Kodak's Quick Solve software serves as the database manager. Several of our local criminal court were reluctant to admit digital images into court. This has been resolved. As with most technology the cameras are now obsolete, they do not capture images at an acceptable resolution level.

- o *To enhance law enforcement and prosecution coordination in response to domestic violence arrests.*

*° Creating multidisciplinary teams made up of the initial responding deputy, a victim advocate and an Assistant District Attorney to provide follow up on the original complaint*

*° Conducting team meetings (ADA, deputy, advocate) both prior to the follow-up investigation and after the investigation is complete to discuss case strategies and create team plan.*

This objective was not fully realized as proposed. As stated above it was a logistical impossibility to coordinate the schedule of all parties concerned without compromising our focus on the victim. This was further complicated by the fact that most of the ADAs in the Town Courts were part-time. We made the following adjustments:

1. The District Attorney appointed a full-time ADA to serve as a coordinator of all the part-time ADA's and as the primary prosecutor on all serious domestic violence cases.
2. The District Attorney developed specific plea bargain policies to improve consistency and support the Countywide Pro Arrest Policy.
3. The initial responding officer is responsible for assembling an investigative case file. Advocates are responsible for insuring that all parties concerned receive a copy of the case file.

- *To improve victim cooperation with and participation in domestic violence prosecutions.*

*◦ Providing victim advocates with an additional four hours of training in victim empowerment, crisis intervention and managing hostile situations in the field.*

Training was provide to advocate and continues on an ongoing bases.

*◦ Dispatching a victim advocate with the investigating deputy to provide referral services and assists in interviewing victim/witnesses.*

Advocate is the primary contact with victim and obtains the additional follow-up services from investigators and/or officers as needed.

*◦ Increasing victim contacts from one call immediately following the incident to weekly throughout the course of the investigation/prosecution to ensure they remain informed and involved in the process.*

Victims are personally contacted according to the priority rating given to the case (priority 1 within 24 hours, priority 2 within 48 hours and priority 3 within 72 hours). On priorities 1 and 2 site visits conducted if telephone contact can not be made within the prescribed time limits. Many high priority cases are not closed and regular follow-up contact I made with the victim.

Even with a high level of interaction between the advocate and victim, victim cooperation still remains low. To combat the low cooperation rate of victims the Niagara County Sheriff's Department along with the District Attorney's Office has instituted victimless prosecution.

#### Program Statistics (January 1, 1999 to June 30, 2000):

	Jan. 1, 1999 to Jun. 30, 1999	Jul. 1, 1999 To Dec. 31, 1999	Jan. 1, 2000 to Jun. 30, 2000	Total
Domestics Cases Handled	352	353	446	1151
Arrests	37.8%	37.1%	29.4%	34.3%
Follow-ups	44.3%	11.6%	30.0%	28.8%
Defective DIRs	4.5%	3.4%	5.8%	4.7%
Victims Services	27.6%	8.5%	19.1%	18.4%
No Direct Contact	9.7%	2.3%	6.7%	6.3%
Refused Assistance	6.8%	.08%	4.3%	4.0%
Cases Gun Confiscated	3.1%	0.0%	2.5%	1.9%

**Program Goals:**

One of the major goals of the project was to improve the preliminary investigation completed by the initial responding officer. The quality of the investigation was to be measured by evaluating the Domestic Incident Report. An evaluation of the 1997 DIRs indicated that 56.9 percent were defective (incomplete report, undercharging, no victim services, etc.). A review of the last eighteen months of the study indicates that this goal was achieved, defective DIRs were reduced to 4.7 percent.

At first review it did not appear that we achieved our goal of increasing the percentage of arrest by 10 percent. The percentage of arrest for the eighteen-month period ending June 30, 2000 indicated that arrest occurred in 34.3 percent of the cases handled. That an insignificant improvement over the 1997 arrest rate of 32.4 percent. A closer look indicated that the number of domestic reports were remaining the same or increasing while overall crime reporting was going down. As a result of training officers are now classifying more incidents as domestic violence, many of which were previously considered minor incidents. This in turn kept the percentage of arrests from rising.

A survey of victims was conducted to reveal the impact of the program on them. Overall they felt safer after the intervention, there was an increase from 51.8 percent to 74 percent. This success was at the cost satisfaction with the police job performance. According to the victims the pro-arrest policy tended to make the police appear too aggressive. This negative opinion of the police was offset by the overall satisfaction with the outcome of their cases, an increase from 18.5 percent to 55.8 percent. This is a reflection on the success of the team approach.