Effectively Tracking Problems and Improving Procedures

Tracking
Does a problem trend exist? E.g., Does a reduced plea impact recidivism?

Monitoring
Are established policies or procedures improving over time? E.g., Are police routinely asking risk questions?

Tracking and Monitoring Methods
- Reading reports
- Court observation
- Creating and reviewing spreadsheets
- Specialized domestic violence database
Tracking and Monitoring provides data to System Advocates

- Trends
- Identify system gaps
- Adherence to new policies and procedures
- Service to partner agencies
- Improves advocacy for battered women and children

Tracking and Monitoring Requires:

Relationships
- Understand what you need
- Understand what partner agencies need
- Building allies through shared objectives
- Integrity, responsibility and honesty

Agreements
- Be clear what you will and won't do with reports
- Clearly state how the reports will be handled
- Draft Memorandums of Understanding

Monitoring Requires:

Reports
- How will they be selected?
- Draft vs. final reports
- Who will make them available?
- Who will pick them up/schedule?
- Do they get distributed interagency?
- How will the reports be stored/locked?
What to Monitor? - Basics

Police incidents:
- offender and victim, and the relationship between them
- whether there is a child in common
- date and incident address
- jurisdiction and case number
- police area, beat, etc.
- whether the incident was a dual arrest
- any reason no arrest was made
- case status
- offense level
- charge(s)
- court case number, once it goes to court
- responding officers and what type of reports they filed

Monitor Risk

Whether:
- the victim was pregnant
- a child witnessed an assault
- the offender was using alcohol or drugs in the incident
- the offender uses alcohol or drugs in general
- a weapon was involved
- the offender is under stress
- the offender is obsessed with the victim
- the offender has access to weapons, and is likely to use them
- the offender threatened to kill the victim, and whether the victim believes this is possible
- the offender threatened suicide
- the violence is becoming more severe or frequent
- there is a recent or impending separation

Monitor Policy

Whether:
- officers referred victim to a shelter, and whether they contacted the shelter about the incident
- officers asked the victim specific questions establishing the level of risk
- if it appears that both parties used violence, did officers assess for self-defense or predominant aggressor before making an arrest or issuing charges?
- if the victim alleged that she was choked, did officers assess for strangulation?
- and more …
For example, what happens to cases in Criminal Court?

- How quickly do cases move through the system?
- What pleas are made?
- Do Probation Officers hold offenders accountable, and are offenders routinely being ordered into the batterers program?

For example, in Civil Court:

- How often are protection orders granted when requested?
- If orders are denied, why?
- Are Judges consistently issuing CLEAR no-contact orders?

For example, how are victims treated throughout the CCR process?

- Do Police Officers conduct (or at least attempt) the same level of investigation with intoxicated victims as with sober ones?
- Do pre-trial release conditions and bail settings help ensure victim safety?
Tracking and Monitoring is:

- Following up on specific cases
- Using a database to follow trends

What To Do With Data - Internal

- All data reports start internal
- Create a review process for all data reports that will be shared with other agencies
- Data is always designed and used to improve the response

What To Do With Data - External

Meetings

- Multidisciplinary
- Single agency
- A tool for agency supervision (controlled access)

Other uses

- State reporting
- Grant funding/reporting
- Specialized query requests from criminal justice system
Numbers inform discussions at interagency meetings

For example: What is the effect of the 2005 felony domestic assault by strangulation charge in Minnesota?

- How many cases have included this charge?
- How many of these have gone to court?
- How many convictions have there been?

Tracking

The path to tracking is integral to your response

- Advocate’s work with battered women shows us the questions we need to track
- System advocates refine questions and develop query
- Data specialist constructs a query and checks back with team to ensure the query matches the question
- Data specialist monitors every report for this item
- Data specialist produces draft report on a predetermined date for review
- Draft report is reviewed and refined by team for external use

Following up on specific cases

- Contact law enforcement if there are questions about how officers handled an incident.
- At the same time, monitor incident reports for law enforcement. They want to know whether they’re following their own procedures.
In 2009, DAIP entered:
- 487 law enforcement reports
- 1682 criminal court hearings
- 308 protection orders (including some harassment orders involving partner relationships)
- 141 protection order modification documents

This takes about 10 hours per week

Numbers can keep us from looking foolish

We had the feeling that Judge Smith was dismissing a disproportionate number of protection orders, but then we ran the numbers ....
Concerns with Data

- We need to be constantly circumspect, asking: Whom would these figures affect? Could they do unintended damage?
- Figures should always be presented in a way that provides as complete a context as possible, so that they not be misused.

One CCR member asking for database information just for herself, outside of discussion with others.

People asking for police reports on their friends, because they know we have access to reports.
Integrity is EVERYTHING

The constant responsibility to respect each agency’s confidentiality and public image