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Chapter 4

History of the Domestic Violence Coordinating Committee: 1987-2000

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Introduction

This chapter describes the emergence of an entity dedicated to improving inter-agency coordination in domestic violence service delivery, the Domestic Violence Coordinating Committee (DVCC), then charts its work and activity level from its formation in 1987 to the time this research was conducted in 2000. In addition to an overview of the history of the DVCC, this chapter includes a discussion of the factors found pertinent for success and failure of DVCC, and a concluding section where these themes are drawn into an analytical framework. Special attention is given to the role of the police department and its relationships over time with the DVCC and with the individual agencies in the domestic violence service community.

The aim is to identify and present local lessons with broader applicability to the policing of domestic violence. The target audience is police chiefs as well as officials from government and community agencies involved in inter-agency domestic violence collaboration. The central lessons are summarized as follows:

1. *Leadership:* Dynamic and committed leadership by one key individual added enormous strength and momentum to the inter-agency effort from inception until the DVCC was well established.
2. *Membership:* (1) Early and steadfast police involvement was critical to the productivity of the effort. When this support was withdrawn and ties between the police and the DVCC lessened, the DVCC's effectiveness was substantially compromised. (2) A wide representation of agencies was important to achieving systemic improvement to domestic violence response. (3) The DVCC was most

successful when members held sufficient rank within their respective agencies to make decisions and mobilize resources. The DVCC became ineffectual when members were relatively low level.

3. *Structure:* Initially the DVCC benefited from an informal structure that allowed the group's enthusiasm to flourish productively. Over time the structure solidified, but because the group was located advantageously where it was autonomous yet supported by a prestigious city office it continued to thrive. When it was relocated to a low-profile service provision agency, it declined.

To some readers, it may appear that these conclusions are self-evident. But this does not mean that stating them and exploring the circumstances in which they emerged is unimportant.

Although perhaps self-evident, the DVCC still fell victim to these pit-falls.

Further, the apparent obviousness of these lessons does not make them less significant. These ideas were critical to the inter-agency effort discussed here and are probably relevant to similar efforts elsewhere. Until such apparently simple issues are overcome, it is unlikely that agencies will have the opportunity to address the more nuanced issues impeding the efficiency of inter-agency collaborations. In other words, the basics are important and need to be addressed first.

Background

Domestic violence is a crime that has gained considerable attention in the last three decades.

Prior to the 1970s, domestic violence was barely a public concern. The victims', women's, and civil rights movements could be viewed as components of an overall social movement, through which domestic violence became a major concern for public policy.

Domestic violence emerged as an important part of policing as a result of the increased recognition of wife abuse as a public policy problem in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Advocates began calling for the police to be more attentive and sensitive to victims needs and to respond in a way that would hold batterers accountable for their actions (Hirschel & Hutchison, 1992; Jolin & Moose, 1997; Steinman, 1990). At this time, mutli-agency work toward solutions for specific crime problems such as domestic violence was a fairly new concept. In 1973, the U.S. National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals endorsed multi-agency work in their report entitled “A National Strategy to Reduce Crime,” which presented recommendations to police, courts, corrections, and community crime prevention on implementing new crime-reducing strategies within each area. In the chapter entitled “Police,” a specific section is devoted to recommendations on coordination with other criminal justice agencies, which reads in part,

No element of the criminal justice system completely discharges its responsibility simply by achieving its own immediate objectives. The police, the prosecutor, the courts, and probation, parole, and corrections agencies must cooperate with each other if the system is to operate effectively. This requires an effort on the part of each element to communicate with the other elements (National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals, 1973, p. 89).

The earliest example of a coordinated, comprehensive response to domestic violence was initiated in Duluth, Minnesota in 1980. This effort, known as the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP) coordinated the domestic violence response of nine law enforcement, criminal justice, and human services agencies. The purpose was to provide a uniform response to domestic violence calls by creating and implementing a common set of policies and procedures that not only limited the discretion of individuals handling the cases, but also held them to a

minimum standard (Jolin & Moose, 1997; Pence, 1983; Shepard & Pence, 1999; Steinman, 1990). Limiting individual discretion in this way was considered an important component of ensuring that services were provided consistently.

Following the implementation of the “Duluth Model,” coordinated responses began to form that included arrest, aggressive pursuit of prosecutions, and the inclusion of the victims in the investigation and sentencing processes. According to one researcher, this type of collaborative effort provided police with an opportunity to implement their most effective response to domestic violence in the history of this country (Gelles, 1993). Active participation of the police is an integral part of any effective multi-agency response to domestic violence. This is especially true in terms of the ability of the police to provide information and expert advice in relation to a crime problem. In some areas, local police were instrumental in the initial creation of a more coordinated response (Liddle and Gelsthorpe, 1994b). By the early 1990s, several coordinated interventions were in place around the country, in which police departments were key partners. These themes were especially relevant to the development and success of the subject of this chapter, the Domestic Violence Coordinating Committee.

Findings

The Emergence of the DVCC

In the late 1980s, a captain in the homicide unit of the city police department was considering how police resources could be most effectively used to reduce the city’s high homicide rate, which was a top priority of the police department. In reviewing data, he noted that domestic violence homicides were often preceded by multiple police visits to the location, and thus,

concluded that earlier intervention into domestic violence cases provided an opportunity to prevent these homicides. Serendipitously, his interest coincided with the inception of an inter-agency domestic violence initiative, the DVCC, which sought to enhance the coordination of agencies responding to domestic violence.

The DVCC was the crystallization of the city's concern about the violent crime rate, which had evolved into a focus on domestic violence. This focus gave rise to the DVCC in 1987 when the city created a new domestic violence coordinator position to supervise two domestic violence counselors based at court; undertake domestic violence public awareness, education, and training efforts; and to develop a 'coordinating council' relating to domestic violence issues in the city. It is this coordinating council that became the DVCC.

In 1988 the newly hired coordinator convened a meeting of 24 local agencies that were involved in domestic violence service delivery in the city to discuss locally available resources. These individuals (including the above mentioned homicide captain) began meeting regularly, and ultimately formed a coalition known as the DVCC. The DVCC's membership was broad and meetings were well attended. In addition to private attorneys, private clinicians, interested citizens, several domestic violence victims, and at least one judge, membership included representatives from:

- Police department
- Magistrate's office
- Prosecutor's office
- Department of social services
- Agency that ran the battered women's shelter (BWS)
- Planned Parenthood
- Department of public schools
- Victim/witness program

- Hospital
- Mental health department
- Substance abuse counseling agency
- Public housing department

From the start the DVCC had a strong presence in local domestic violence work because most of the participants were policy makers in their respective agencies, as well as personally motivated to address domestic violence. The fact that coordination of the DVCC was part of the paid position of a city employee was also an important factor in its early stability.

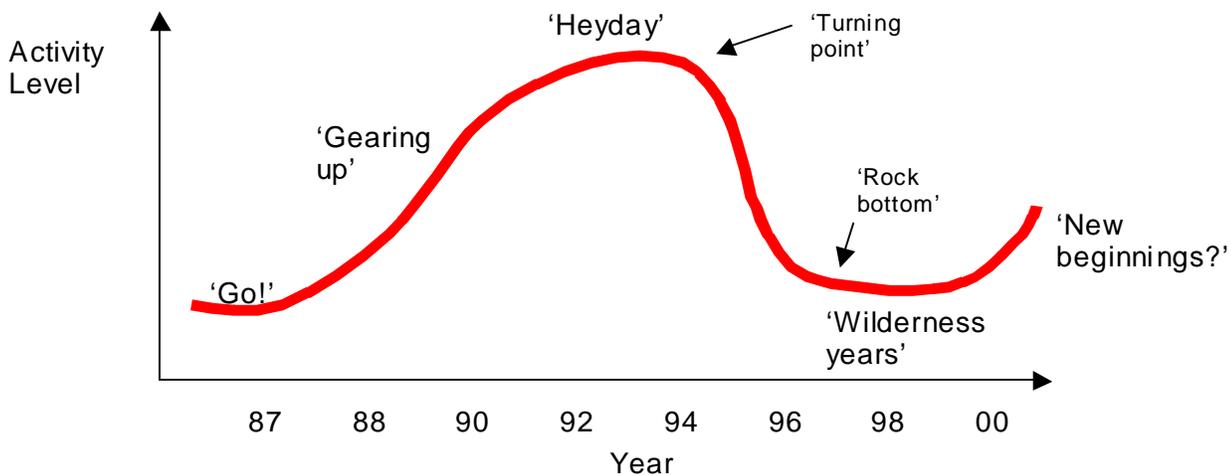
The original DVCC mission, as stated by one of the original members, was to “harness the efforts of community groups and agencies to identify and reduce the incidence of domestic violence,” and their strategy was to develop resources and to identify and address gaps in service. Another long-time DVCC member, who now runs a private batterer counseling organization, reported, “the point of the DVCC was to create a bumper so that anyone who entered the system at any point will receive services.” Establishing a continuity of service was a related goal of the DVCC. One of the initial areas of agreement between DVCC members was the need to improve service to victims by integrating the criminal justice/law enforcement response. Thus, the police department’s role in and cooperation with the group was identified as critical at the outset. The city police department was particularly active from the beginning, but as we shall see, over time the police role declined substantially.

Between 1988 and 1989, the inter-agency group took shape officially as the DVCC, initiating several domestic violence education projects as it did so. After its initial development as an informal group, the DVCC obtained official status as a non-profit organization on November 10, 1988.

History of the DVCC 1987-2000

There has been significant variation over time in the number of active committee members, the vitality, nature of activities undertaken, and the extent of the DVCC's influence on the local community. A graphical characterization of the DVCC's history is shown as Figure 1, where the distinct phases of its history are described in language intended to capture the essence of these periods, such as 'heyday' and 'rockbottom.'

Figure 1: Characterization of the History of the Domestic Violence Coordinating Committee (DVCC): 1987-2001



At its peak, the coalition claimed a plethora of active members working as an influential force in the community, while at its low-point, the coalition was all but dormant. Throughout, the DVCC has been a community body comprised of an array of local agencies that provide service to domestic violence victims and offenders. Because the lessons from the DVCC's times of strength *and* weakness may usefully inform the work of agencies and similar coalitions

elsewhere, we present a chronology of the life of the DVCC, and explicate the factors associated with its productive as well as its dormant periods.

*A. 1987-1988: Background to, Birth of, and 'Gearing Up' of the DVCC
Strength through Informality*

Describing the early stages of the DVCC, the founder and first coordinator commented about membership and organizational strength:

I think the reason it was as strong as it was, for as long as it was, is because it was a very inclusive organization – we had no power and no money, so we didn't have to be exclusive. We did not have to set up an artificial hierarchy with a board of directors and so on. We could invite the world, and have everybody who showed up be equal. It was truly a democratic model for how to run a community-based organization. It involved everyone who could possibly be identified as a stake -holder – organizationally and individually. We made a really consistent attempt to have constituent involvement, and we did have battered women themselves come in and out of the organization.

The first police representative on the DVCC was a captain when he first became involved with the newly forming DVCC, and remained an active DVCC member until his retirement as assistant chief six years later. His comments on the initial successfulness of the DVCC echoed those of the first coordinator. He suggested that the DVCC's productivity was perhaps because there was very little in-between ideas and action, as the group did not have any internal or external bureaucratic hoops to jump through prior to taking action.

Early and consistent police involvement

In describing the strength and effectiveness of the DVCC, several interviewees explicitly attributed much of the success to the strong presence of the Police Department. This support lent political legitimacy as well as practical value to the DVCC's efforts. The homicide captain, later assistant chief, was the man widely recognized as responsible for initial police interest because

he was involved from the beginning and ultimately served for years on the DVCC's board of directors. His initial motivation for involvement, as noted by himself and others, was a professional desire to reduce domestic violence homicides and a belief that working collaboratively with domestic violence service agencies was an effective means to that end. Many interviewees opined that he had the combination of rank, personal zeal, and professional commitment to produce a powerful leverage of police department resources. One significant contribution was enlisting the support of the police chief.

This now-retired police official referred to the police department as one of the original "movers and shakers" in the DVCC. Although reducing the homicide rate was the impetus for the police department's involvement with the DVCC, the department's interest grew over time into a general commitment to improve domestic violence service delivery. The strong role of the police throughout the early and most active years of the DVCC was exemplified by donations of meeting room space, funds for printing material, and collection and sharing of crime data. In addition, police management exerted pressure on officers to take domestic violence seriously and make arrests. For example, supervisors reportedly reviewed officers' domestic violence reports and followed-up on cases where arrests were not made.

The close relationship between the Police Department and the DVCC was manifested in several ways notably that the DVCC provided training for the police department, at several points in its history. First, in 1988, the DVCC provided in-service domestic violence training to police department officers, and the department encouraged participation by offering officers continuing education credits to attend. The DVCC again trained city police officers between 1990 and 1991

after a presumptive arrest law went into affect in the state. During this two-year span, the DVCC provided in-service training on the new law for all city Police officers (at that time there were about 600). The training was an intense half-day session that included in-person testimony by domestic violence victims.

B. 1989-1994: The DVCC's 'Heyday'

The DVCC became more secure in 1990 when the city manager's office obtained a grant to fund an employee dedicated to violence prevention. The woman hired to, among other duties, develop a domestic violence coordinated council (what became the DVCC) accepted the position and continued her role on the DVCC, melding responsibility for coordinating the group into her new position. Several interviewees attributed the DVCC's success in becoming central to local domestic violence service delivery to her skilled leadership. In addition, the new position within the city manager's office, provided status, security, and funding to the DVCC.

From 1989 to 1994 the DVCC was extremely active and visible in the community. Ongoing activities included producing domestic violence education materials to insert into utility bills, producing and distributing domestic violence resource directories, successfully launching a new, coordinated approach to domestic violence, training police officers, YWCA volunteers and clergy, producing a video for training police recruits in handling domestic violence, co-sponsoring a lobby day with a local non-profit domestic violence group, publicizing domestic violence awareness month, and hosting "mini-conferences." In addition, members represented the DVCC at various anti-domestic violence educational/publicity events and appearances around the city.

Mini conferences

Each year the DVCC put together a series of half-day conferences on a range of domestic violence-related topics. Each mini-conference included speakers and workshops around a specific domestic violence-related topic. Conference fees were minimal, and conferences were always well attended, usually by 25 to 30 people. At least one conference had almost 70 attendees. Some conferences aimed to enhance participants' understanding of the effects and implications of domestic violence upon different populations. Other conferences aimed to assist professionals meet the needs of domestic violence victims and batterers, by offering training in recognizing victimization and information about services available in the city.

Domestic Violence Initiative (DVI)

For the first part of the DVCC's existence, members focused on domestic violence education and advocacy. As they collaborated together in new ways, questions about domestic violence services and response emerged, such as: What accounted for the disparity between the high number of "domestic trouble" calls to which the police department reported responding each day and the low number of similar cases heard at juvenile and domestic court each day?; What guidelines should magistrates use to determine release times and bond levels?; Why did warrant and protective order decisions depend on which magistrate was petitioned?; Are batterer counseling programs effective at reducing recidivism, and what was the best way to measure results? Once the DVCC was "geared up," it was prepared to tackle these questions, as it strove to fulfill its original purpose: enhancing inter-agency, domestic violence collaboration.

With many issues and shortfalls to efficient integrated domestic violence response identified, the DVCC set about effecting the improvements they believed were needed. This took the shape of a new effort called the Domestic Violence Initiative (DVI). The DVI was launched in 1990 by DVCC member and non-member agencies, with the DVCC at the helm. The effort was comprised of three main activities:

- Ensuring that each facet of the law enforcement/court system including police, magistrates, prosecutor's office, court intake, judges, and service providers, had written domestic violence policies and procedures in place.
- Training for personnel employed in each branch of the criminal justice system.
- Development of a feedback system for evaluating the effectiveness of the policies and procedures.

Many, if not most, of the key city agencies took part in the DVI, and in doing so, made important changes in their domestic violence policies and procedures. These changes are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Changes in Agency Policies and Procedures, c. 1991

Agency	Changes in Policy or Procedure
Police Department	Produced cards to give to domestic violence victims that included police officer information, and other information on legal and social services assistance.
	Instituted reporting form to be used for tracking domestic violence and ensuring that officers took appropriate action.
	Began feeding information on domestic violence incidents to the battered womens' shelter for follow-up.
	Attempted to institute presumptive arrest policy, but could not because other agencies did not have similar policy.
	Launched academy and in-service training for officers in domestic violence and victimology.
Magistrate's Office	Policy was amended so that arrest warrants were issued for all acts of violence.
Prosecutor's Office	Institutionalized training for all attorneys in victimology and in assisting victims with the court process.
	Policy changed to prosecute all misdemeanor domestic violence cases and not to drop cases at complainants' request.
	Policy changed to refrain from prosecuting complainants for refusal to testify.
	Procedure changed to meet with complainants before hearings to help them understand process and hear their concerns.
Juvenile and Domestic Court Services	Training for intake workers implemented.
	Policy changed to consolidate cases involving the same individual into one hearing, where possible.
	Complainants seeking protective orders are prioritized over other cases.
Battered Womens' Shelter	Began contacting domestic violence victims to offer services and assistance, using information provided by police
Men's Abuse Control Program	Changed batterer counseling programs to require a fee instead of being free, since experiences suggest that perpetrators take groups more seriously when they have to pay.

Reviewing progress of the Domestic Violence Initiative

In order for the DVI to be effective, the DVCC believed that regular and systematic reviews and documentation of its progress were important, and the requirements to do this were explicitly established at the outset. Members of the DVCC assessed and documented the work of the initiative in several ways. First, in 1992, they compiled the details of the initiative into a bound written volume. The volume included background information about the DVCC and detailed descriptions of each participating agency's role in the initiative.

In 1993 a review of the DVI was held where officials of participating agencies convened to monitor, assess, and summarize progress so that participants could see who had done what and with what results. The review was attended by influential representatives from key agencies, such as the police homicide captain, the chief of police, several judges, the chief magistrate, and a variety of local service agencies. Members convened and reviewed areas where community services had increased, and agency representatives discussed changes in their agencies. Police representatives discussed the filling out of reports, judges talked about their annual training sessions, and magistrates reported policy changes. It is unclear for how long these changes endured. As will be seen in the next section, the DVCC's vitality dropped off precipitously in the few years after the first DVI review.

In sum, the DVCC began with the appointment of a committed and able leader who had the ability to organize members as well as to effectively handle public relations. Once funding was secured from the city manager's office the DVCC had financial security and political clout. Many local agencies became involved and continued their involvement. In particular, the police played a prominent role. The DVCC sponsored a range of educational activities and became a central figure in the domestic violence service delivery community. At the pinnacle of the DVCC's strength, it launched the DVI, which was a multi-agency effort to improve city-wide policies and responses to domestic violence. In sum, the formation and success of the DVCC was accomplished by a small group of committed actors working at the grassroots level, whose efforts were supported by many city agencies.

C. 1994 – Turning Point

Around 1994-1995 the DVCC's momentum and membership began to wane. There are several competing, but not mutually exclusive, explanations about what broke the DVCC's stride and then perpetuated its decline. The contending explanations are:

(1) leadership problems, (2) departure of several key members and internal competition, and (3) a bureaucratic change within the city that detached the DVCC from the purview and status of the city manager's office. Together it is likely that these factors came together to produce a 'turning point' (c.f. Gladwell, 2001) resulting in the rapid downturn of the DVCC and inter-agency domestic violence work in the city.

Leadership problems

In 1992, the original chairperson left the city for personal reasons, and responsibility for coordinating the DVCC shifted across a series of members elected by the DVCC membership. This was a major set-back to the DVCC because all at once it lost two of its most important assets: a dedicated, well-connected, and beloved leader, and its explicit connection to the city manager's office, which had provided funding and status. From this time on, the DVCC did not have anyone whose paid job description included coordinating the DVCC. Further, the DVCC's status was marginalized after it was no longer under the protective wing of the city manager's office.

The original DVCC chairperson was well connected within the city and commonly recognized as a dedicated and charismatic leader with ample political savvy to build an effective DVCC underpinned with strong community and government support. She was also the only person to

hold this position as part of paid employment. It may be in large part due to an unavoidable comparison with her that none of the three subsequent chairpersons escaped criticism from interviewees. Each of them and their role is described in turn below.

The second DVCC coordinator was purported to be a good leader, but overwhelmed by the work. This coordinator lasted one year. The third was an active and longtime DVCC member who was said by interviewees to have proved herself again and again, both as hardworking and dedicated to the DVCC, and to the cause of addressing domestic violence. Unlike the first chairperson, neither the second nor third was mandated to undertake the work as part of their paid employment. Hence, in retrospect, it was almost inevitable that the time, energy, and commitment they could offer were at a lower level. Nonetheless, this coordinator worked diligently for the DVCC both internally within the group and externally by representing the DVCC at various media events. Ostensibly, the group remained strong throughout her term, though its ties to the city were becoming more tenuous.

Several interviewees reported that the fourth coordinator was also an extremely diligent and driven worker who was passionate about the cause; however, those interviewed felt that her strident and caustic manner alienated many would be allies and committee members. At a time when the DVCC needed a well-connected leader to mitigate the damage of losing the high-status parent of the city manager's office, they were led by a woman who focused on community outreach and education. With the DVCC drifting and losing momentum, interviewees reported that the DVCC was "an unproductive way to spend your time." This may explain why many agencies, the police included, began to withdraw from activities and meetings. It did not take

long until DVCC attendance and membership hit an all time low of four or five members in 1997-1998.

Key members move on and there is internal competition among members

Concurrent with the departure of the first coordinator, several additional central members also moved on for various reasons. One of these was the previously discussed police official, who moved to become a police chief in another city. He was the primary connection with the police department since the outset of the DVCC, and his absence created a void that was never filled.

The director of BWS and the chief magistrate also terminated their involvement with the DVCC. Losing these members who were knowledgeable about, interested in, and committed to the DVCC, was a set-back; however, this could have been mitigated if their replacements were of comparable stature. Unfortunately for the DVCC, this did not occur. A police sergeant replaced the assistant chief. BWS did not designate a definite replacement representative, but instead sent staff to the DVCC meetings depending on who was available. The chief magistrate ceased his involvement, apparently due to conflicts in the DVCC pertaining to questions about whether his agency was responding adequately to domestic violence. Purportedly, he was frequently taken to task in DVCC meetings for the unresponsiveness and inconsistency of the magistrates in issuing protective orders and warrants. As a consequence of what he felt were personal attacks, he terminated his involvement.

While these developments were in and of themselves harmful to the DVCC, they were indicative of a larger problem – a lack of commitment on the part of agencies. A police official familiar

with the police department's history with the DVCC noted that, "for any group to be successful, there needs to be buy-in from the department heads. I think that's what the DVCC was lacking." and other interviewees also referred to "lack of ownership" and "lack of support" as severe problems.

Another membership issue, mentioned several times in interviews, was personality conflicts and competition among members. One member reported:

Lack of ownership was the beginning of the downfall. Then the differences in philosophy and ideas about the purpose of the group continued that. Personality conflicts did not help either.

Several interviewees commented specifically about the problem of individual agendas, one referring to the deteriorating situation as a "push – my – own – agenda game." Determining which of these dynamics instigated or played the largest role in the decline of the DVCC is difficult. As often with such events, the specific sequence of events, or direct consequences of any one event, remained unclear even after many in-depth interviews. It is hypothesized that many of these factors were inter-related, and the decline due to a combination and confluence of them.

Bureaucratic changes set DVCC adrift

Initially the DVCC was supported by a funded coordinator position, and a safe location within a city agency. Two years after its inception, it gained status and legitimacy when responsibility for coordinating the committee was transferred to a new and advantageous location within the city government, the city manager's office. In 1992, when the original DVCC coordinator resigned her position, the strength of the relationship between the DVCC and the city was diminished, because her position was not filled, and thus the DVCC no longer had a paid coordinator or an

explicit connection to the city manager's office. This office still supported the DVCC, however, by paying for mailings and was still informally connected to the DVCC via an active committee member who was employed therein. Time gradually eroded this tenuous connection until late 1995 when a new city manager reorganized portions of the city's bureaucratic structure, and in doing so, severed the last functional connection between the DVCC and the city. At this point, there was no longer anyone in the city manager's office who was affiliated with the DVCC, much less paid to coordinate it. When interviewed for this study, an original member and ex-coordinator stated that the DVCC "could not continue when separated from the city manager's office."

Police department involvement after the turning point

After the exit of the assistant chief, police department involvement in the DVCC declined. The sergeant tasked to represent the police department on the DVCC worked at the training academy, and, for the duration of her time on the DVCC, the committee continued to hold its meetings there. When this sergeant was transferred within the police department in 1997, the DVCC no longer met in police facilities, and police attendance at DVCC meetings ceased.

The reduced police involvement with the DVCC also corresponds to the tenure of a new police chief, appointed in 1995. When interviewed, the chief stated that he did not believe that police involvement with the committee was productive and expressed skepticism about police involvement in addressing domestic violence. Several other interviewees stated that the subsequent priorities of the police department did not appear to include domestic violence.

D. 1996-1998 – ‘Rock Bottom’ and ‘The Wilderness Years’

By 1996, DVCC membership had dwindled to four or five members. Some members had unrelated personal reasons for moving on. Others, however, simply felt that the group was no longer productive. One agency official noted that “the DVCC was basically a non-entity.”

While the DVCC was largely absent from the city’s anti-domestic violence community, a new initiative emerged, which we term, the “Family Violence Working Group” (FVWG). The police department was a leader of the FVWG, which had one purpose: to determine the most effective use of domestic violence funds received by the police department from the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services and to spend the funds accordingly. A police sergeant in charge of obtaining and administering grants led the group. Other participants included representatives from Social Services, the BWS, the Prosecutors Office, the police department, and the State Supreme Court.

Ultimately, the FVWG decided to produce several domestic violence education videos. One was to be used for training police recruits in the proper handling of domestic violence calls, and one was to help domestic violence victims understand the court process. Two public service announcements were also produced, one that warned against committing domestic violence and one that provided hotline numbers to victims. As soon as the project was completed, in 1999, the FVWG disbanded. In describing the impetus to launch the FVWG, one social services official stated: “Because we knew the DVCC was not capable of making any decisions, the public agencies at that time got together and started the [FVWG].” The scope of the FVWG was quite limited and the FVWG was never intended to lead to sustained inter-agency cooperation. Still,

its existence indicates that inter-agency domestic violence work continued in the city, on some level.

E. 1999-2001 – Resurgence

During 1999, the DVCC began a resurgence. The energy and dedication of several individuals with institutional memory of the past success and value of the DVCC lay behind this attempt. The revitalization was initiated by a supervisor at Department of Social Services with responsibility for domestic violence programming. Realizing that there was no longer a viable coordinated response, she tasked a domestic violence worker with leadership experience to “get the DVCC going again.” Subsequently, meetings were held almost monthly, and interest reemerged. Almost two years after the process began, the DVCC was on the verge of again being an active part of the domestic violence service delivery system.

While this development is promising, several interviewees expressed concerns about the newly emergent DVCC. When asked what made the DVCC weak, one interviewee stated: “We [the DVCC] don’t belong to anybody. There is no supporting agency to fund the group,” while another opined of the “lack of backing from the powers that be.” However, at the time of this writing, a wide range of agencies were participating in DVCC meetings, including the police department, along with individuals who had been committed to the DVCC throughout its history. One interviewee reported, “At this point the DVCC is 150 times better than it was.”

Discussion and Conclusions

While the scope of the study does not allow us to identify members' specific operational decisions and actions that affected the fortunes of the DVCC, it is possible to discern several distinct themes. These are that particular aspects to leadership, membership, and group structure were critical to making and breaking the DVCC. Most likely a combination of these factors converged to initially, make the DVCC successful, and later, after certain key changes, to bring about its decline. Initially the DVCC benefited from a skilled leader who was able to focus the energy of diverse individuals, into a productive and respected organization. Though the group had many dedicated members committed to the cause of addressing domestic violence, upon this leader's retirement, none were truly able to fill her shoes, and the void dragged down the forward momentum of the DVCC.

Membership was also an important ingredient in the DVCC's success. For the first several years of the DVCC's existence a broad range of agencies were represented in its membership, including law enforcement and other criminal justice agencies. While this was the case the DVCC was productive and was even able to launch an ambitious multi-agency effort to improve response to domestic violence, which involved many agencies engaging in additional training, updating policies, and working together toward a more seamless service delivery system. The police in particular were very active throughout these early stages. When a few key members, representing key agencies left the DVCC, and their agencies were either no longer represented or were represented by less committed and or low-status individuals then the momentum was further undermined.

The final factor identified as important to the DVCC is its structure. Initially, the DVCC capitalized on its informal structure by allowing the energy of the original members to generate and act on ideas. But this does not mean that maintaining this structure was necessary for the DVCC's continued success. In fact, the DVCC continued to thrive after the structure became more formalized, now benefiting from new advantages, such as a prominent location within the city's government where it was autonomous and supported. It was only when it was moved to a disadvantageous, non autonomous and non supported location within a service delivery unit when structure worked against it and further momentum was diffused.

Implications for Policing

In their review of inter-agency crime prevention efforts work, Webb and Laycock (2000) present telling summaries of the problems and pitfalls that inter-agency groups often encounter. Their insightfulness into 'partnership pitfalls' makes them worth revisiting in the present context, and their (vaguely satirical) typology is shown as Figure 2.

Figure 2: Laycock and Webb's Typology of Early Partnership Pitfalls

- Who's in charge here?
- It's not our job, it's yours
- Your priorities are not mine
- We'd like to help but it would reduce our profits
- We've got no money, can we have some of yours?
- I'm in from the local voluntary group – what can I do?

The Laycock and Webb (2000) analysis was based upon many years of effort implementing local inter-agency initiatives, and their discussion goes further than the typology shown here.

However, the relevance of the ‘pitfalls’ typology to the present discussion is evident: The DVCC in our case study thrived when it overcame the pitfalls, and declined when they gained prominence. Many of the specific aspects highlighted by the Laycock and Webb typology were evident in the present case study: Competing agendas and personalities, funding issues, leadership issues, individual abilities, and political clout, were among the key aspects that dictated the rise and fall of the inter-agency domestic violence committee. In the present study, it seemed that several of the issues were inter-related: as funding ended, leadership shifted leading to problems in the agenda and work of the DVCC. Yet the picture was far more complex than to simply conclude that funding is everything. It is important, but it is not everything. Rather, efforts need to be made to encourage the convergence of factors that ensure such an inter-agency effort becomes, and remains, productive, producing a tipping point. This should typically mean ensuring that high-level support is gained in key agencies, particularly the police and social services. Where that support is absent, it should be sought via different channels. A reluctant police chief might be nudged into action via different approaches: perhaps simply some basic lobbying through letters and calls from prominent players in other agencies.

Figure 3: Inter-Agency ‘Tipping Point’ Factors

A. Key Precursors to Development and Growth:

- Ability: leadership, coordination, knowledge, connections, dedication
- Motivation and ability to motivate others
- Other key motivated personnel
- Financing
- Political clout
- Police involvement

These positive factors were the precursors of a positive cycle of reinforcement that meant the DVCC went from strength to strength.

B. Key Precursors to Decline and Decay:

- Loss of leadership without equivalent replacement.
- Loss of financing
- Loss of political clout (the link to city manager’s office)
- Loss of police contact person without equivalent replacement
- New police chief with ‘old school’ views on domestic violence

These negative factors were the precursors of a vicious cycle of decline and decay that resulted in loss of direction of the DVCC, and ultimately in several years without credibility or much activity.

Stronger means could incorporate applications to the city manager’s or mayor’s office, who typically have influence upon the police department.

What are the implications of this study for police departments and anti-domestic violence policing efforts across the country? Figure 3 summarizes some of the findings from the present

study as key ‘tipping point’ issues that induced the ebb and flow, respectively, of anti-domestic violence efforts in the city.³

The summary factors shown in Figure 3 are taken from our case study of a single city. It shows the issues relating to the production of both the positive and negative ‘tipping points’ in relation to the inter-agency domestic violence work and policing. These issues almost certainly have a broader relevance to inter-agency domestic violence-related work and police work across the nation, as well, perhaps, to more general inter-agency crime control and policing efforts. Police departments can clearly benefit from the knowledge and expertise of other agencies in the community. At this point we have returned to the opening sentence of this report – inter-agency cooperation is a foundation of modern policing. However, we add to this statement the rider that the police should make efforts to ensure the convergence of positive tipping point factors, and discourage the convergence of negative tipping point factors. Inter-agency cooperation in policing needs to be tailored to the local context, individuals, and agencies for it to be productive. These are the significant broader implications of the present study for American policing.

³ The ‘tipping point’ concept is adapted from Gladwell (2000) who used it to refer to a convergence of factors, rather than a single factor, producing the momentum for the sharp reduction in the New York City crime rate during the 1990’s.

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