

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE INTERVENTION

OVERVIEW

The National Network for Safe Communities (“National Network”) at John Jay College of Criminal Justice launched in 2009 under the direction of David M. Kennedy. The National Network focuses on supporting the implementation of strategies proven to reduce violence and improve public safety, minimize arrest and incarceration, and strengthen relationships between law enforcement and distressed communities in cities across the country. The National Network’s strategies operate along the following guiding principles (see Appendix A for the full text):

- First do no harm
- Strengthen communities’ capacity to prevent violence
- Enhance legitimacy
- Offer help to those who want it
- Get deterrence right
- Use enforcement strategically

These principles have informed a variety of evidence-based interventions with rapid and dramatic impact on violence (see Appendix B for more background on the National Network). The National Network has long been committed to expanding the use of the model and there is now reason to believe that this framework holds great promise for reducing the pervasive problem of intimate partner violence.¹

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Intimate Partner Violence Intervention (IPVI) uses the National Network principles that have informed effective interventions against homicide, gun violence, drug markets, and other critical public safety problems and applies them to intimate partner violence.

Through a partnership between law enforcement, community members, social service providers, and victims' advocates, the IPVI strategy aims to remove the burden of preventing IPV from victims; intervene early in the repeat victimization process; make it clear to even low-level offenders that IPV will not be tolerated; and take special action to deter and, if necessary, incapacitate the most dangerous offenders. The strategy includes close partnership with victims' advocates to ensure that victims have access to safety and support structures and are not exposed to unintended harm.

Beginning in 2009, police and community partners in High Point, North Carolina worked with National Network Director David Kennedy and others to test whether this approach could work to reduce IPV. An evaluation of the implementation has found dramatic reductions in IPV homicide and in reoffending among notified offenders, and reductions in calls for service and victim injuries.²

The National Network believes that High Point's IPVI work and its results may provide a framework for communities across the country looking for a way to address IPV.

CONSIDERING INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

The national problem

Intimate partner violence remains an enormous problem nationally. This violence drives deep harm to victims, their children, and their extended families and frequently involves long cycles of control and psychological abuse, repeat victimization by multiple offenders, offenders repeatedly victimizing multiple victims, intergenerational cycles of violence, and many associated impacts.

Intimate partner homicides make up 40 to 50 percent of all the murders of women in the United States.³ It ranks among the top calls for service to police departments and the effects of IPV are profoundly damaging to communities.⁴ This violence also drains the resources of employers, health care providers and the criminal justice system as a whole.

Issues with current approaches

Traditional police and criminal justice policies have placed an undue burden on victims to take action—often asking that they leave the relationship; relocate their children; enter shelters; resituate their lives and finances; and take affirmative criminal justice steps, such as participating in legal action against their partners, that put them and their children at further risk. The dominant criminal justice measures available to address offenders—such as mandatory arrest—have, in fact, often been criminogenic and left victims vulnerable to offenders following their release. Treatment options typically offered for

rehabilitating the most serious offenders were largely ineffective. Moreover, the most innovative and promising criminal justice frameworks—community policing, problem-oriented policing, intelligence-led policing, etc.—have not been applied to IPV.

The Intimate partner violence problem in High Point

Like many cities across the country, High Point, North Carolina, has grappled with a seemingly intractable IPV problem for many years, with a third of the city’s murders occurring between intimate partners.⁵ Between 2004 and 2009 there were 17 intimate partner homicides in High Point.

Between 2010 and 2014, High Point averaged more than 5,000 calls a year related to domestic disturbances. Statistics from 2009 revealed that after handling 5,134 domestic calls for service, averaging 25 minutes per call and always involving two officers, HPPD had spent 6,295 hours on domestic disturbance calls that resulted in 424 arrests. While the department’s approach led to high arrest numbers, common use of protective orders, and aggressive prosecution strategies, IPV persisted. Between 2004 and 2008 IPV was the single greatest driver of homicides in High Point, accounting for 32% of the city’s total. Reflecting on the problem, then-Chief of Police Jim Fealy said: “Sometimes over half of our homicides had been domestic violence-related...I know that statistically we are well above the national average. We are well above the state average. That is unacceptable. We can do better than that...we have not put our best efforts forward.”⁶

APPLYING THE NATIONAL NETWORK’S PRINCIPLES TO INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

In general, the National Network’s model identifies a particular serious crime problem; assembles a partnership of law enforcement, community leaders, and social service providers; conducts research to identify the small number of people driving the majority of serious offending; responds to continued offending by “pulling levers” with a variety of creative and non-traditional sanctions; focuses services and community resources on offenders; and directly and repeatedly communicates to the small, high-risk group. This communication includes a moral message from the community against offending, prior notice of the legal consequences for further offending, and an offer of help. In the context of IPV, strategically tailored help and community resources are also offered to survivors and victims of IPV, while ensuring their confidentiality and safety.

The IPV structure is designed to address all IPV offenders known to the criminal justice system with a focus on the most vulnerable victims harmed by the most dangerous offenders; make it clear to low-level offenders that IPV will not be tolerated; and take special, escalating action to deter and, if necessary, incapacitate offenders who are not deterred by lower level sanctions. The process of designing the intervention was infused from the outset with a deep consciousness that—unlike any of

the work the partners had done together previously—in this case intervention carried real potential to put victims at further risk. Putting offenders on notice could spur them to further abuse and control victims (which could look like “success,” as victims stopped calling police). With their central focus on ensuring that they would do victims no harm, High Point enlisted the expertise of victims’ advocates with special experience in supporting and protecting victims at highest risk. No action would be taken until the partners had addressed and planned for these critical concerns.

One of the essential elements identified in High Point was the ability to focus on offenders at early stages of offending before violence escalates, and to create strong community norms against IPV, and clear expectations for consequences, from the beginning. The structure aims to change responses to IPV, show offenders early on that IPV is a priority, and counter the “experiential effect”—the psychological process by which offenders learn from their experience with the justice system that offending will be tolerated and that they will get away with it. A parallel structure notifies victims and matches them with services and support at each level of offending.

Analysis

A detailed analysis of High Point’s IPV and HPPD’s handling of the problem revealed important facts about offenders and IPV dynamics and helped show why their traditional approach was not sufficient to protect the most vulnerable victims from the most dangerous offenders and hold those offenders accountable.

In analyzing the problem, the multidisciplinary working group—including academics and researchers, law enforcement officials, victims’ advocates, community leaders, and social service providers—relied on academic studies, expert knowledge, and critically, research on HPPD’s arrest data. The first step was an analysis of ten years of data that indicated high rates of intimate partner violence and revealed certain characteristics of chronic offenders. While IPV was spread equally across the city geographically and demographically, minorities and low income families suffered disproportionately from IPV homicides. The IPV homicide offender profile was 86 percent minority, 93 percent unemployed, and virtually all low income. Analysis found that IPV homicide offenders in High Point averaged 10.6 prior arrests, with assault as the predominant charge—all offenders had an offense history beyond IPV incidents. Further, between 2000 and 2010, 1,033 people were charged with a domestic-related offense in High Point, totaling 10,328 distinct charges.⁷ Most had lengthy criminal histories with frequent contact with the justice system.

The working group’s main discoveries were that they did not, but could, track the number of IPV calls separately from domestic disturbances; that IPV offenders were not different from other violent

offenders and that their crimes were not secret; that controlling the offender would be more realistic in cases where the victim continued to be involved in the relationship; and that they could take advantage of early intervention in an effort to deter further offending. They also discovered that they did not, but could, coordinate efforts between law enforcement, community members, social service providers, and victims' advocates to increase interagency knowledge of offending, improve the process of early intervention, and address particular IPV cases.

Intervention Design

High Point's analysis had several implications for designing an intervention. Not all IPV offenders, including seriously violent IPV offenders, are known to law enforcement. However, there is a class of seriously violent IPV offenders, disproportionately involved with the most vulnerable class of victims, who are known to law enforcement and readily identifiable. They believed this class of offenders might be vulnerable to a focused, deliberate intervention, while a deterrence regime could be designed for lower level offenders.

Existing research on mandatory arrest suggested that IPV offenders with "a stake in conformity" could be deterred by relatively early, low-level criminal justice responses.⁸ In the case of known chronic IPV offenders, the High Point partners' research showed that virtually all of them also had extensive criminal histories across other crime categories. Thus, many of them did not need to be addressed solely through IPV and related offending. Instead, law enforcement could "pull levers" on any actionable offense, many of these more legally meaningful than their IPV offending, such as a drug trafficking or possession offense, a probation or parole violation, a drunk driving offense, a weapons charge, a nondomestic assault, or the like. These increased legal risks could be communicated to offenders, along with clear moral standards from their community against IPV, to deter further offending. Those who did not respond to this message could, if necessary, be incapacitated.

The High Point partners' intention to address all offenders, across different levels of severity, required a four-level approach (see Offender Categories at Appendix C.). After offenders were identified during the research phase, they were assigned to one of the four levels, each of which received a tailored message.

Low-level suspects for whom there was an IPV call for service but not probable cause for an arrest were assigned to the "D-level." Within a day of the call, an officer would hand-deliver a letter, signed by the chief, that let them know they were being monitored for IPV offending, conveyed a community moral message against IPV, and gave customized notice of their personal legal consequences for further offending.

Offenders who had picked up a first IPV arrest since the strategy began were assigned to the “C-level.” In jail, a detective would visit them, explaining the new approach and giving them a notification in person that included warnings about heightened consequences, such as increased bail, enhanced prosecution, and tightened probation conditions. Police also added the names of C-level offenders to their alert system so officers would know they were dealing with a special offender if they stopped that person or responded to a call. Interagency coordination through the working group meant that police representatives would flag C-level offenders to prosecutors and judges for prioritization and potentially for enhanced bail or supervision.

“B-level” offenders, those with a history of IPV who went on to commit another offense, were mandated to attend a “call-in” meeting, where community members and law enforcement joined together to directly engage with the offenders and clearly communicate 1) a credible moral message against IPV, 2) a credible law enforcement message about the consequences of further IPV, and 3) a genuine offer of help for those who want to change. The law enforcement message included an explicit warning about the enhanced agency attention the offenders were now exposed to and that the partners would if necessary seek “pulling levers” options discussed above – drug charges, probation or parole violation, weapons charges, etc. – if offenders committed a further IPV offense (Rob Lang, North Carolina’s Middle District Assistant U.S. Attorney, put a particularly fine point on this, telling the assembled offenders, “I will send somebody to buy drugs from you”).

Those with a history of severe IPV offending were assigned to the “A-level,” arrested immediately, and held up to other offenders as deterrent examples, and occasionally incapacitated using non-IPV charges, such as unrelated stranger assaults, that often carried heavier sanctions than the most current IPV incident (see Notification Type by Offender Category at Appendix D).

High Point began its implementation by focusing on A-level offenders, the most violent, who were initially identified in 2009 and targeted as examples. Notifications for the B-, C-, and D-level offenders began later, in 2011, with the first call-in in early 2012 (for purposes of tracking homicide High Point generally marks 2009 as the start of the intervention; for other purposes, the city usually looks to 2011). At the “call-in,” communication with the B-level offenders explained the targeted IPV offenses and gave prior notice of what the legal consequences would be. This communication was especially important to High Point’s implementation because the strategy established new rules and opportunities for offenders: certain offenses that may have been overlooked in the past were being prioritized; sanctions that typically would not have been tied to the violence against their intimate partner were reviewed more closely and prioritized for prosecution; and new resources and programs were made available to offenders. The call-in also mobilized the “community moral voice,” a message from respected

community members against IPV, with the aim of elevating informal social control that discourages further offending.

This method of direct communication gives offenders the information they need to stop committing the target offenses and avoid legal consequences. Additionally, by notifying offenders in advance, the High Point IPVI partnership began to reverse community and offender perceptions that law enforcement applies punishments arbitrarily or based on personal prejudice, and thereby contributed to improved perceptions of law enforcement legitimacy. Critically, High Point's call-ins reinforced to the offender that this and any future actions against them were led by law enforcement and were not initiated at the request of the victim—an important measure to ensure victim safety.

Victim Safety

High Point structured, in parallel, protective measures for victims that corresponded to each phase of offending. Following a D-level offense, the victim received a letter detailing available services; a C-level offense was followed by in-person victim outreach to offer services; when B-level offenders were called in, social services and victims' advocates made direct contact with associated victims to ensure victim safety and get feedback on offender's post-call-in behavior; and A-level offenses were followed by direct outreach by victims' advocates to offer all available support and safety planning structures (see Victim Services & Contact By Offender Category at Appendix E.). Victims of B-level offenders were also offered safety-planning and third-party reporting opportunities in which neighbors, family members, friends, co-workers, and the like were mobilized to report directly to police if they had reason to believe the victim was at risk or being harmed and could not themselves contact police. (This measure was later connected to several successful critical-incident interventions for victims at immediate and extreme risk.) Having a strong partnership with the IPV advocacy community, independent from its law enforcement partners, has given the High Point partnership a unique perspective on the risks and challenges of their work and better equipped them to protect victims.

Interagency Working Group Process

Integral to accomplishing these goals was High Point's move to establish an unprecedented interagency working group—including police, prosecutors, probation and parole, victims' advocates, family services, social service providers, and community members. The group met weekly for the first six months of implementation and focused exclusively on the strategy. During this crucial initial period, the group dedicated itself to operational concerns: ensuring implementation fidelity, focusing on responses to high risk people and situations, coordinating to keep victims safe, coordinating agency action on enforcement, and planning offender notifications. As implementation has continued, the working group has moved to biweekly meetings and focuses increasingly on refined aspects of continued

implementation. The High Point partners believe this process has been central to the effectiveness of the strategy as a whole. It allows them to address issues with system function and coordination, share updates on particular cases and coordinate to prioritize high-risk ones, develop methods to communicate important information for victim safety while keeping confidentiality concerns at the fore, and maintain momentum and buy-in from partners. “The interagency working group is critical to the success of our strategy,” says High Point Police Captain Timothy Ellenberger, the officer in charge of the intervention’s daily operations. “The group is able to close gaps, change processes, and focus on solutions because we all recognize everyone else’s expertise. For example, the cops are good at dealing with the bad guys, but not so great at dealing with the victims. The advocates are good at dealing with the victims, but not experienced at dealing with the bad guys. So, with a comprehensive group of abilities, we can come up with a solution to just about any problem.”⁹

Taken as a whole, High Point’s response includes measures to protect the most vulnerable women from dangerous abusers; shift the burden of addressing abuse from victims to law enforcement and the larger community; focus the strategy on the most dangerous, chronic abusers; counter the “experiential effect,” or the lessons offenders learn from their and others’ experience with the lack of legal consequences; take advantage of the deterrence opportunities provided by offenders’ many and various offenses; and avoid putting victims at additional risk.

RESULTS AND LESSONS FROM HIGH POINT

The assessment of High Point’s pilot has been extremely encouraging, showing changes in offender behavior and victim harm. The University of North Carolina Greensboro (UNCG) functioned as research partner throughout the implementation process and produced a report on the first years of implementation. That report found, most centrally, major reductions in intimate partner homicide. It also found reductions in reoffending among notified IPV offenders and city-wide reductions in IPV calls for service and victim injuries.¹⁰ While the NIJ estimates recidivism rates as high as 80 percent among domestic violence offenders nationally¹¹, the one year recidivism rates among those notified in High Point are 16.6 percent among D-level offenders; 16 percent among C-level offenders; and 16.7 percent among B-level offenders.¹²

The reduction in homicide has been dramatic: there were 17 in the five years prior to implementation (2004 to 2008) and three in the seven years since (2009-2016).¹³ The first, an honor killing within a recent immigrant family, was arguably not IPV. The second was IPV within a couple passing through the city and staying in a local motel—i.e., they had not been exposed to High Point’s new approach. The third involved a couple who had lived in High Point for a short period of time and had not been notified through the intervention or had previous IPV contact with HPPD.

At a lower, but still critical, level of seriousness, calls for service were reduced by 20 percent over three years¹⁴ while the proportion of arrests where there was injury to the victim has decreased significantly: between 2011 and 2014, in the period since the first call-in notification, reported victim injuries in High Point decreased from 66.8 percent of incidents to 47.3 percent.¹⁵ IPV victims have reported satisfaction with the approach in High Point and both victims and the larger community have reported an increase in their trust that law enforcement will take action against IPV perpetrators. These figures suggest that the harm done to victims has decreased since the initiative's inception.

Beyond statistics demonstrating reductions in incidents related to IPV and enhanced victim safety, the IPVI strategy has helped facilitate a cultural shift in perceptions of IPV. "I do think that what we have done is a way to change every part of why domestic violence has persisted for my 30-year career," said former High Point Police Chief Marty Sumner. "The victims' attitude, the cops' attitude, the prosecutors, the judges, the victims' advocate, everybody who had any responsibility with domestic violence and victims, we have changed how they view it and now advocates are no longer reluctant to share things with law enforcement."¹⁶ That progress has not gone unnoticed by victims, including a woman whose partner was addressed in an OFDVI replication in Lexington, NC. "Until Lt. Carter reached out to me I felt like I was screaming and no one could hear me. I now know that I do have a voice."¹⁷ These anecdotal shifts in attitude indicate a promising approach that has united essential partners from disparate backgrounds.

The results in High Point suggest an approach that holds great potential for other American cities seeking a new way to address serious IPV. As a result of the successful pilot implementation, the NNSC was awarded a two-year, \$1.6 million grant from the Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) to support expanded implementation in three cities nationally and to make the underlying logic of the intervention available to both law enforcement and victim advocate communities. The National Network is encouraged by the early success of IPVI and believes the basic model provides a way forward to address this problem.

APPENDIX A. National Network for Safe Communities

First do no harm. Criminal justice is strong medicine: it can help, but applied too heavily or in the wrong way, it can hurt. It's now clear that too much incarceration; aggressive, disrespectful policing; and other missteps can damage individuals, families, and communities and undermine relationships between neighborhoods and law enforcement. Law enforcement should do its work in ways that do not cause that harm.

Strengthen communities' capacity to prevent violence. Community norms and actions – not law enforcement – do most of the work of crime control. Community members can establish expectations for nonviolence and intervene directly with the few people at the highest risk. Direct communication through “call-ins,” “custom notifications,” and other practical steps can focus and amplify community crime control. Using this approach strengthens neighborhoods and keeps people out of jail.

Enhance legitimacy. Most people obey the law because it's the right thing to do, not because they're afraid of being arrested. Even criminals follow the law most of the time. Communities need to see law enforcement, especially the police, as fair, respectful, and on their side. Police should conduct themselves in ways that model their caring and respect for the communities they serve. Where legitimacy goes up, crime goes down.

Offer help to those who want it. Many of the people at highest risk don't like how they're living and want a way out. Communities should meet them where they are and do everything possible to support them.

Get deterrence right. When law enforcement needs to act, it's usually best to let someone know that enforcement is coming, so they can step aside, rather than to arrest, prosecute, and incarcerate. The creative use of existing law, combined with direct communication with high-risk people, can make deterrence work and head off both violence and actual enforcement.

Use enforcement strategically. When arrest, prosecution, and incarceration are necessary, law enforcement should use them as sparingly and tactically as possible. Profligate enforcement can have terrible collateral consequences, alienate communities, and undermine legitimacy. Law enforcement should apply the minimum that is compatible with ensuring public safety.

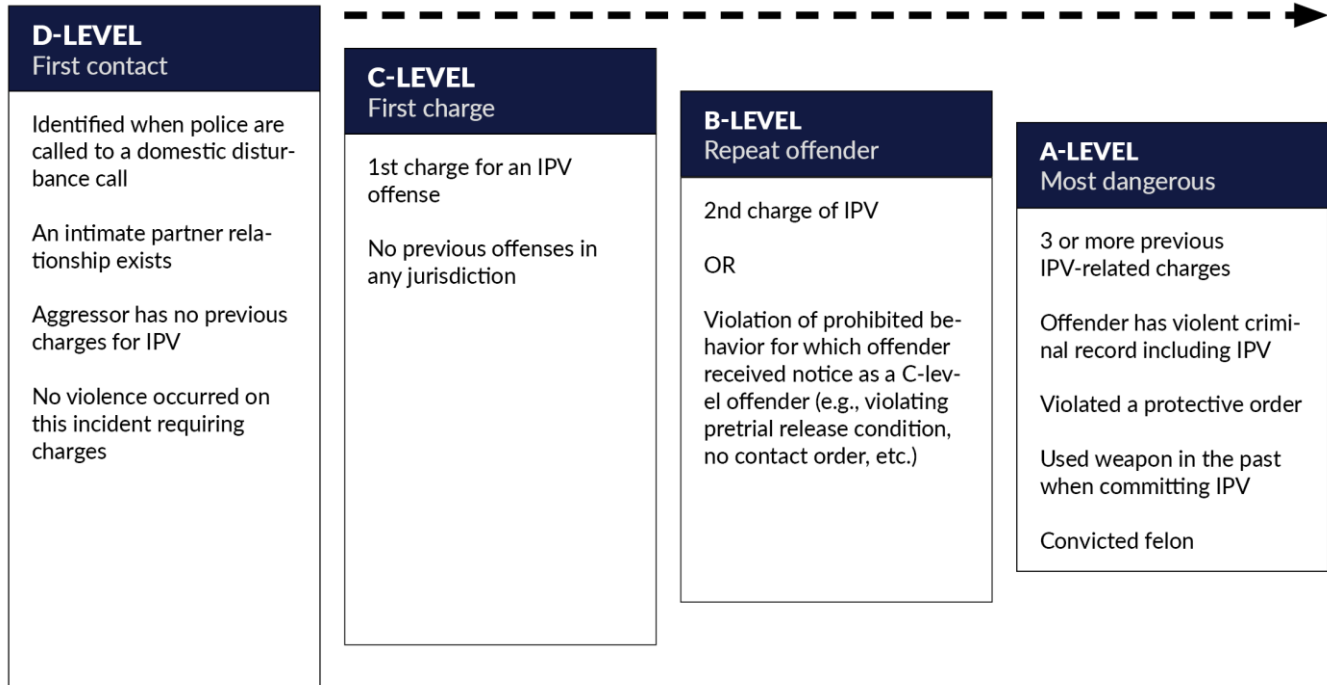
APPENDIX B. National Network Background

The National Network’s principles have informed a variety of evidence-based interventions, of which the Group Violence Intervention (GVI) is the most seasoned. First implemented in Boston as “Operation Ceasefire,” the GVI produces rapid and substantial reductions in homicide and serious violence in America’s most troubled communities by communicating directly with street groups. A long and growing record of impact makes it one of the most powerful responses available to address this core problem.¹⁸ This work is spreading nationally and many of the cities that have seen historic violence reduction over the past few years—including Chicago, New Orleans, Oakland, and Stockton, CA—are using this strategy or its basic framework. Cities such as Detroit, Birmingham, and Kansas City have also begun to use the GVI with promising results.

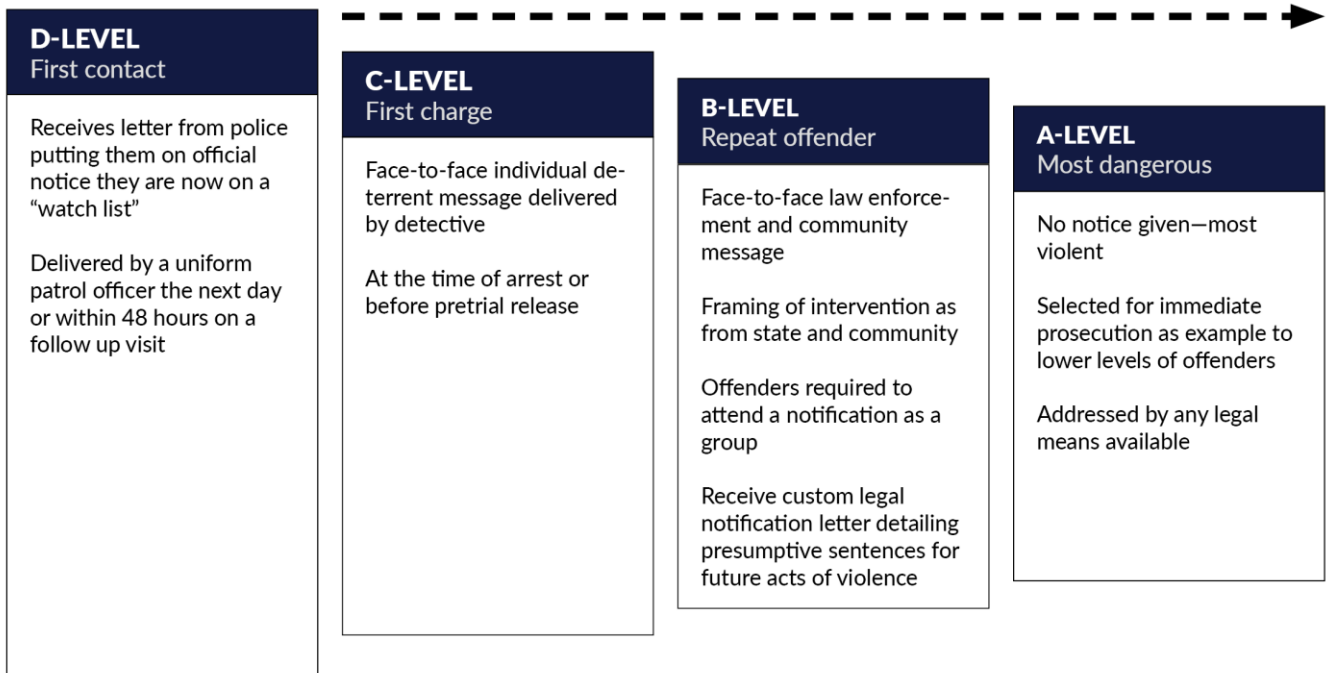
Real progress has been made in addressing violent crime using the National Network’s approach. That change has been driven by a deliberate set of ideas: that serious violent crime is driven by small numbers of exceptional offenders; that such offenders are responsive to clear signals from law enforcement; that some want to change their lives and will accept help in doing so; and that they will respect and comply with strong and clear community norms against violence.

This framework has also been used successfully to address overt drug markets through the Drug Market Intervention (DMI)¹⁹; individual violent offenders through “Chicago PSN”²⁰; and a host of other problem areas, such as robbery and prison violence. The National Network has recently seen indications from prosecutors’ offices nationally that they are open to contributing to violence prevention and reduction goals in accordance with the principles that underlie these strategies. Movement in this direction holds great potential to contribute to rapid and dramatic improvements in public safety and police-community relations.

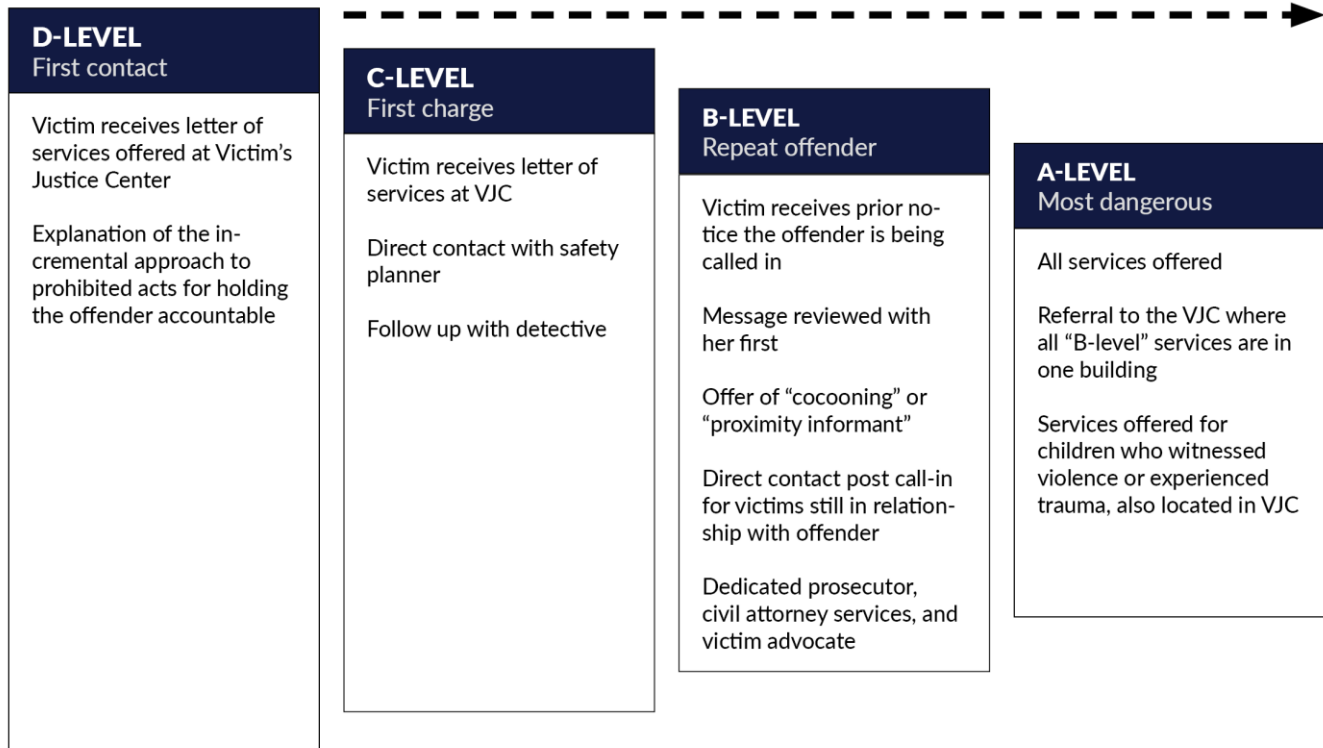
APPENDIX C. Offender Categories



APPENDIX D. Notification Type by Offender Category



APPENDIX E. Victim Services & Contact by Offender Category



ENDNOTES

- ¹ Historically, the term *domestic violence* has been broadly used globally to refer to intimate partner violence but it also encompasses family violence—child abuse, intra-family abuse, and elder abuse. *Intimate partner violence*, however, is more specific in scope, referring to physical, sexual, or psychological harm by a current or former intimate partner or spouse. While the terms are often used interchangeably, they are not always synonymous. Here and throughout all uses of *intimate partner violence* and *domestic violence* are intentional.
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- ⁵ Buntin, J. (2016, March). How High Point NC Solved its Domestic Violence Problem. *Governing*.
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- ⁷ Sechrist, S. M. & Weil, J. D. (2014, June). The High Point OFDVI: Preliminary Evaluation Results. In D. M. Kennedy (Chair), *Using Focused Deterrence to Combat Domestic Violence*. Symposium presented at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice International Conference. The Rule of Law in an Era of Change: Security, Social Justice, and Inclusive Governance, Athens, Greece. Retrieved from <http://ncnsc.uncg.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/2014-June-John-Jay-Conference-Evaluation-Presentation.pdf>
- ⁸ Sherman, L. W., & Smith, D. A. (1992). Crime, Punishment, and Stake in Conformity: Legal and Informal Control of Domestic Violence. *American Sociological Review* 57(5).
- ⁹ Ellenberger, T., personal communication, December 12, 2016.
- ¹⁰ Sechrist, S. M. & Weil, J. D., 2014.
- ¹¹ Klein, A.R. (2009, June). Practical implications of current domestic violence research: For law enforcement, prosecutors and judges (Special Report, NCJ 225722). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice.
- ¹² Sechrist, Weil, & Shelton, 2016 A.
- ¹³ Sechrist, S.M., Weil, J.D.L., & Shelton T.L. (2016 B). *Evaluation of the Offender Focused Domestic Violence Initiative (OFDVI) in High Point, NC and Replication in Lexington, NC*. Final Report for Community Oriented Policing Services. Washington, DC: US Department of Justice.
- ¹⁴ Sechrist, Weil, & Shelton, 2016 A.
- ¹⁵ Sechrist, Weil, & Shelton, 2016 A.
- ¹⁶ Sechrist, Weil, & Shelton, 2016 B.
- ¹⁷ Sechrist, Weil, & Shelton, 2016 B.
- ¹⁸ Braga, A. A., & Weisburd, D. L. (2012). The effects of “pulling levers” focused deterrence strategies on crime. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*.
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