

County Buncombe
Department of Social Services

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Project Title Domestic Violence Child Welfare Teams

Category Profiles in Community Collaboration
(Please select one)

Project Description and Summary

What did you do?

Describe your program or project. What did you do? What is the history behind the program/project? What did you hope to accomplish? What was your timeline? Your budget? How did you identify your objectives? How well did you use available resources?

County opened a Family Justice Center in July 2016, bringing together law enforcement, governmental agencies, and non-profits to provide comprehensive services to adult victims of domestic and sexual violence. Before the Family Justice Center, victims had to navigate a fragmented system to get the help they need. A survivor case study revealed that within the three days following an assault, a survivor of domestic violence had to jump through an overwhelming number of hoops to ensure they

received the services they need. Survivor focus groups showed that survivors often didn't know where to go or what to expect when seeking services. A best-practice model within the domestic violence field, a Family Justice Center integrates services from nonprofit partners, law enforcement, health care providers and government agencies into a multi-disciplinary service center that provides victim centered and trauma informed support. This model not only provides for a more supportive experience for victims, it also increases efficiency in service provision, reduces victim recantation, increases prosecution of offenders, and ultimately reduces crime.

Project Success and Impact

What was the outcome?

Was your program/project a success? What was the impact? How did you measure the impact? How widespread is the impact of your program/project? How were you able to overcome obstacles and challenges? Did your program/project meet your established objectives?

In the Family Justice Center's first year, 417 people accessed integrated intake from partner agencies. After meeting with an FJC Intake Specialist: 92% survey respondents indicated that they had a plan to keep themselves safe and they knew what to do if they were in danger and 71% of survey respondents reported a decreased fear and anxiety level. 51% of victims accessing integrated intake at the FJC connected with more than one agency in their first visit.

When asked what the most helpful part of their experience at the Family Justice Center was, survivors shared comments like: "getting the help and resources that I needed", "being able to talk through my situation with a person who listened", "everybody making me feel comfortable", "being able to talk with all the different agencies in one stop", "coordinating between staff and law enforcement", and "I could talk to the police without being scared."

April Burgess-Johnson, Executive Director of Helpmate (County's domestic violence prevention agency) says, "Domestic violence can have lasting impacts on a child's well-being. Improving safety for protective parents also increases safety for their children and helps promote long-term

healing from traumatic impacts. Helpmate is grateful for a strong partnership with the domestic violence teams at County's Child Protective Services. Adult and child victims of domestic violence served in our County can expect services that are empowering and offered by well-trained staff members who are committed to working together to ensure safety and healing."

Safe and Together Training: CPS Social Workers, Law Enforcement Officers and Helpmate staff were trained on the Safe and Together model for working with DV cases in CPS. The model includes three principals: 1. keeping the child safe and together with the non-offending parent, 2. Partnering with the non-offending parent as the default position and 3, intervening with the perpetrator to reduce risk and harm to the child. Offender Accountability DVCounty Health and Human Services has contracted with The SPARC Foundation to provide Batters Intervention Classes, Strong Fathers Classes and case management for individuals who are using violence or abusing their partners. These services help offenders recognize the impact of violence on their children and change their behavior.
