

Intimate Partner Violence Intervention (IPVI)

High Point Police Department

Summary

Since 2009, the National Network for Safe Communities (NNSC) and partners in High Point, NC have been piloting an Intimate Partner Violence Intervention (IPVI), based on the now-familiar but evolving focused deterrence framework. For years, the city struggled to control its IPV problem. Despite efforts to address the problem, IPV rates remained steady and fully a third of the city's murders occurred between intimate partners.

High Point had been applying focused deterrence for 15 years and effectively addressing individual violent offenders, group violence, overt drug markets, and other serious crimes. They believed that, using the same framework, they could do better to protect the most vulnerable women from being hurt or killed. Beginning in 2009, High Point police and community partners worked with NNSC Director David Kennedy and others to design a new approach that would take the burden of preventing IPV off victims; intervene early in the repeat victimization process; make it clear to even low-level offenders that IPV would not be tolerated; and take special action to deter and, if necessary, incapacitate the most dangerous offenders.

“For decades we’ve been making women responsible for their own victimization,” Kennedy says. “We ask them why they love him, why they won’t leave, to take the kids and leave the house and the job and go into a shelter, to bear the burden of a nearly always

ineffective criminal justice process. Mandatory arrest doesn't work and often puts the most vulnerable victims at further risk. Batterer treatment doesn't work. We were all but teaching the most serious, chronic offenders that they were going to get away with it. None of the new, creative policing and criminal justice frameworks had been brought to bear on intimate partner violence. There was simply no doubt in my mind that we were failing victims. And most fundamentally, when someone whose name we know is victimizing someone else whose name we know, we should make him stop. We just weren't doing it.”

Law enforcement, victims' advocates, social service providers, and community members worked together to design and implement an unprecedented intervention, known locally as the Offender Focused Domestic Violence Initiative (OFDVI). IPV offenders responded: over the course of five years, the city has shown consistently positive results. IPV homicides have dropped dramatically, alongside low recidivism, reduced victim injuries, fewer repeat calls for service, and positive responses from victims.¹

Description

Scanning

Intimate partner violence remains an enormous public health problem for communities nationwide. Intimate partner homicides currently constitute 40 to 50 percent of all murders of women in the United States.² Studies continue to show that intimate partner violence ranks

¹ Sumner, M. A. (2014, September). A Different Response to Intimate Partner Violence. *Community Policing Dispatch* 7(9). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. Retrieved from http://cops.usdoj.gov/html/dispatch/09-2014/a_different_response_to_ipv.asp

² Campbell, J.C., et al. (2003). Assessing risk factors for intimate partner homicide. *NIJ Journal*, 250, 14–19.

among the top calls for service to police departments and that its effects are profoundly damaging to communities.

Like many cities across the country, High Point, North Carolina, has grappled with a seemingly intractable intimate partner violence problem for many years, with a third of the city's murders occurring between intimate partners.³ 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, intimate partner violence persisted. Between 2004 and 2008 intimate partner violence 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."⁴

Most importantly, they recognized that this violence was driving deep harm to victims, their children, and their extended families; cycles of control and psychological abuse; repeat

³ Buntin, J. (March 2016). How High Point NC Solved its Domestic Violence Problem. *Governing*.

⁴ Sechrist, S.M., Weil, J.D.L., & Shelton T.L. (2016). *Evaluation of the Offender Focused Domestic Violence Initiative (OFDVI) in High Point, NC and Replication in Lexington, NC*. Executive Summary for Community Oriented Policing Services. Washington, DC: US Department of Justice. Version A.

victimization by multiple offenders; offenders repeatedly victimizing multiple victims; intergenerational cycles of violence; and many associated impacts. This violence was also draining the resources of employers, health care providers, and the criminal justice system as a whole.

The partners were motivated by a deep desire to do better at stopping the most serious harm to women, their children, and their families; intervening early in cycles of victimization; teaching men they would not get away with IPV offending; and, particularly, removing the burden of addressing offenders from women and placing it onto the criminal justice system. To further understand the problem, HPPD began by working with research partners at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) to scan and analyze ten years of arrest data. This research showed that, although intimate partner violence is often considered fundamentally different from other types of violence, it follows similar patterns. The most serious and lethal offending is driven by a very small number of truly exceptional offenders. It also showed that repeat IPV offenders typically engage in a variety of nondomestic offenses and have extensive criminal histories apart from their intimate partner related offenses.

Traditional police and criminal justice policies placed an undue burden on victims to take action—often asking that they leave the relationship, relocate their children, 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—often left victims vulnerable to offenders following their release. Treatment options typically offered for rehabilitating the most serious offenders were largely ineffective.

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 the deep dive into 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 offender profile was 86 percent minority; 93 percent unemployed, and virtually all low income. Analysis found that the domestic violence 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.⁵ Most had lengthy criminal histories with frequent contact with the justice system.

⁵ 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>

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.

The analysis had several implications. 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 that this class of offenders might be vulnerable to a focused deterrence intervention.

Response

The NNSC began working with High Point in 2009 to design and implement such an approach. The partnership included David Kennedy and the NNSC, HPPD, state and federal prosecutors, probation and parole officers, victims' advocates, social service providers, and community representatives. The resulting approach came to be known locally as the High Point Offender Focused Domestic Violence Initiative (OFDVI)—or more broadly the Intimate Partner Violence Intervention (IPVI).⁶

⁶ See Appendix A.

A structure was devised that would address all IPV offenders known to the criminal justice system; make it clear to low-level offenders that IPV would not be tolerated; and take special, escalating action to deter and, if necessary, incapacitate offenders who were not deterred by lower level sanctions. One of the structure's essential elements was the ability to focus on offenders at early stages of offending before violence escalates, and to create strong community norms against intimate partner violence, and clear expectations for consequences, from the beginning. A parallel structure was created to match support services to victims.⁷ 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.

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 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

⁷ See Appendix E.

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).

“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 IPVI partnership recognizes that IPV offending occurs at different levels of severity⁹ and engages each level of offender with a specific approach. After offenders in High Point were identified during the research phase, they were assigned to one of four categories, 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-list.” 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-list.” 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-listers 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-list offenders to prosecutors and judges for prioritization and

⁹ See Appendix B.

potentially for enhanced bail or supervision. “B-listers,” 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 intimate partner violence, 2) a credible law enforcement message about the consequences of further intimate partner violence, 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 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, “A-listers,” were 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.¹⁰

High Point began its implementation by focusing on A-list offenders, the most violent, who were initially identified in 2009 and targeted as examples. Notifications for the B-, C-, and D-list 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-list offenders explained the targeted IPV offenses and gave prior notice of what the legal consequences would be. This

¹⁰ See Appendix C.

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 formal message from respected community members against intimate partner violence, 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.

High Point structured, in parallel, protective measures for victims that corresponded to each phase of offending. Following a D-list offense, the victim receives a letter detailing available services; a C-list offense is followed by in-person victim outreach to offer services; when B-list offenders are called in, social services and victims' advocates make direct contact with associated victims to ensure victim safety and get feedback on offender's post-call-in behavior; and A-list offenses are followed by direct outreach by victims' advocates to offer all

available support and safety planning structures.¹¹ Victims of B-list offenders were also offered “cocoon watch” 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 intimate partner violence 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.

Central 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—that met weekly for the first six months of implementation and focused exclusively on the strategy. During this crucial initial period, the working 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: addressing issues with system function and coordination, sharing updates on particular cases and coordinating to prioritize high-risk ones, developing methods to communicate important

¹¹ See Appendix D.

information for victim safety while keeping confidentiality concerns at the fore, and maintaining momentum and buy-in from partners.

Taken as a whole, High Point's focused deterrence 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.

Assessment

The success of High Point OFDVI was measured by assessing 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, dramatic reductions in intimate partner homicide. It also found reductions in reoffending among notified IPV partner violence offenders and city-wide reductions in IPV calls for service and victim injuries.¹² While the NIJ estimates recidivism rates as high as 80 percent among domestic violence offenders nationally, the one

¹² 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>

year recidivism rates among those notified in High Point are 16.6 percent among D-listers; 16 percent among C-listers; and 16.7 percent among B-listers.¹³

The reduction in homicide has been dramatic: there were 17 in the five years prior to implementation (2004 to 2008) and two in the seven-plus years since (2009 to year-to-date 2016).¹⁴ The first was arguably not IPV – an honor killing within a recent immigrant family – and the second was IPV within a couple passing through the city and staying in a local motel. At a lower, but still critical, level of seriousness, calls for service were reduced by 20 percent over three years¹⁵ 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.¹⁶ Intimate partner violence 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 intimate partner violence 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 intimate partner violence and enhanced victim safety, the IPVI strategy has helped facilitate a cultural shift in perceptions of intimate partner violence. “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

¹³ Sechrist, S.M., Weil, J.D.L., & Shelton T.L. (2016). *Evaluation of the Offender Focused Domestic Violence Initiative (OFDVI) in High Point, NC and Replication in Lexington, NC*. Executive Summary for Community Oriented Policing Services. Washington, DC: US Department of Justice. Version A.

¹⁴ Sechrist, S.M., Weil, J.D.L., & Shelton T.L. (2016). *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. Version B.

¹⁵ Sechrist, Weil, & Shelton, 2016 A.

¹⁶ Sechrist, Weil, & Shelton, 2016 A.

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.”¹⁷ 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.”¹⁸ 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 intimate partner violence. As a result of the successful pilot implementation, the NNSC was awarded a two-year, \$1.6 million grant from the 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.

¹⁷ Sechrist, Weil, & Shelton, 2016 B.

¹⁸ Sechrist, Weil, & Shelton, 2016 B.

Agency and Officer Information

Key Project Team Members

- David Kennedy, Director, National Network for Safe Communities
- Kenneth Shultz, Chief of Police, High Point Police Department
- Larry Casterline, Assistant Chief of Police, High Point Police Department
- Tim Ellenberger, Captain, Major Crime Deterrence and Prevention Division Commander, High Point Police Department
- Walter L. Jones, District Attorney, Guilford County
- Jerry Thompson, Detective, High Point Police Department
- Jim Summey, High Point Community Against Violence (HPCAV)
- Shay Harger, Supervisor, Family Services of the Piedmont
- Stacy Sechrist, University of North Carolina Greensboro
- John Weil, University of North Carolina Greensboro

Project Contact Person

Name: Timothy Ellenberger

Position: Captain, High Point Police Department

Address: 1009 Leonard Avenue

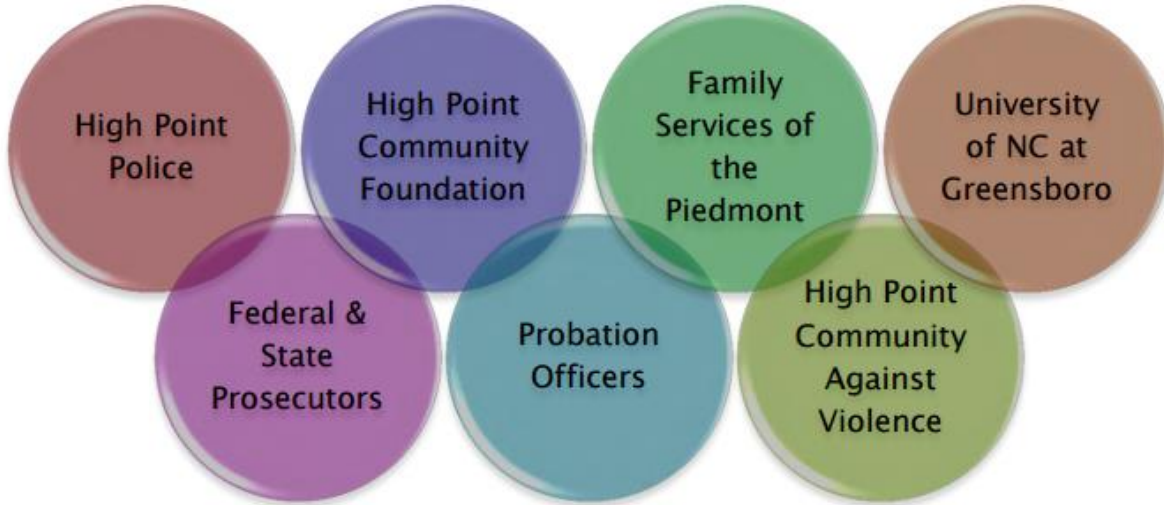
City/State/Postal code: High Point, NC 27260

Phone: 336-887-7820

Email: tim.ellenberger@highpointnc.gov

Appendix

A. The High Point OFDVI Partnership



B. Offender Categories

(Commit prohibited behavior or new charge moves up a level) →

D List	C List	B List	A List
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No previous charges for DV Repeat call involving the same aggressor Situation cannot be resolved by the first responding officer Officer believes the potential exists for violence Validated intimate partner relationship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1st charge for DV related offense 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2nd charge of DV related offense or Violation of prohibited behavior for which offender received notice as C list offender (violating pretrial conditions, contacting victim, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3rd or more DV charges Offender has violent record including DV Violation of 50B protective order Used weapon in DV Convicted felon

C. Notification Type by Offender Category

D List	C List	B List	A List
Receives letter from Police putting him on official notice At the scene or a call, by mail or during a follow up visit	Face-to-face deterrent message from Violent Crime Detective At the time of arrest, before pretrial release, probation visit or follow up visit by Detective	Law enforcement and community message face-to-face Offenders called to a notification perhaps quarterly or more frequent	Notified by Violent Crime Detective At time of arrest or indictment

D. Victim Services & Contact By Offender Category

D List	C List	B List	A List
Victim receives letter of services offered and explanation of the incremental approach to prohibited acts	Victim receives letter of services Direct contact with Safety Planner Follow with Detective	Victim receives prior notice the offender is being called in. Message reviewed with her first. Offer of cocooning Direct contact Post call-in (Dedicated prosecutor, Civil Attorney services, Victim Advocate)	

E. IPVI Logic Model

Logic Model

