

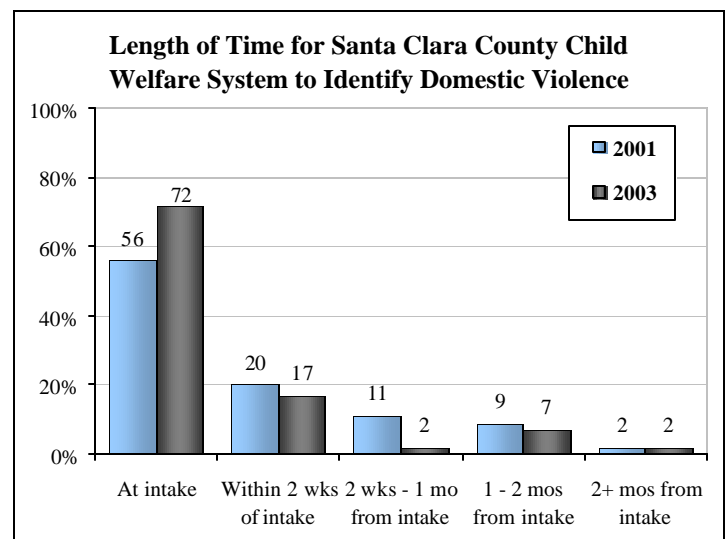
The Greenbook Demonstration Initiative: Changes in policy and practice among family-serving agencies enhance safety and well-being

Over the past five years, the *Greenbook* recommendations have been implemented in six US counties, resulting in significant effects on the communities' response to child maltreatment and domestic violence and on the victims of that family violence. These advances in community policy and practice have been made possible through a collaborative effort between several agencies in the Departments of Justice and Health and Human Services, a national network of technical assistance providers and evaluators, and a number of family-serving agencies and organizations in the community. These historically separate and often at-odds organizations in the demonstration counties have been working together to ensure that families in their community are safe, accountable, and empowered. These counties continue to address tough issues such as batterer accountability, reduced blaming of the non-offending parent, and enhanced advocacy and safety for all victims of family violence – yet they have already seen changes in outcomes for families involved in one or more of the community's systems as a result of the co-occurrence of child maltreatment and domestic violence. The Greenbook national evaluation examines the impact of demonstration activities on system- and community-level changes. A small sampling of these changes – evidenced through local evaluation data and national evaluation interviews and surveys – is highlighted below.

► **Primary partner agencies and organizations have implemented new procedures to screen for all forms of family violence.**

Traditionally, domestic violence service providers have focused primarily on the adult victim of domestic violence, and child welfare agencies have concentrated on the effects of family violence on the child to the exclusion of other family members. The demonstration communities, however, have significantly challenged these practices. There is evidence of increased routine screening for domestic violence in child welfare agencies, both at intake

and throughout the family's involvement with the system. For example, Santa Clara County saw an increase in screening for domestic violence at intake into the child welfare system (from 62% of intake cases screened for domestic violence in 2001 to 88% in 2003). Furthermore, when domestic violence was present, child welfare staff were identifying it earlier in the life of the case.



Source: Applied Survey Research, 2004

Across the six demonstration counties, Greenbook activities implemented in the child welfare system led to new protocols for screening, a greater understanding of the dynamics of domestic violence, changes to petition language that minimize blaming of the non-offending parent, and declining use of finding “failure to protect” when domestic violence is present in the home, but there is no indication of child maltreatment. The result: ***“Child welfare is doing a much better job of investigating cases and making people feel safe.”***

Domestic violence service providers are also completing child behavior checklists at intake, and initial assessment practices have been revised at probation and parole offices and batterer intervention providers to identify *all* family violence victims. Increased identification of child maltreatment and domestic violence can pose problems if

the community is not equipped to respond effectively. The activities underway in the Greenbook communities, however, have ensured that families are safe and empowered as they negotiate the various resources and systems serving victims of family violence in their communities.

► **Systems are focusing on the safety and well-being of all family members.**

Domestic violence service providers are creating and implementing guidelines for identifying child maltreatment and reporting it to child welfare organizations. In many cases, this represents a radical departure from traditional domestic violence service provider practice. They are also including the child in the development of safety plans that in the past had primarily focused on the mother as the domestic violence victim.

Domestic violence service providers are now screening for child behaviors related to domestic violence, and are addressing them by creating a child advocate position, a youth program director to provide counseling and other interventions for children, and/or special children's programs at domestic violence shelters.

Community members feel that ***“judges are making better decisions for women and children.”*** Judges are more informed in their decisionmaking because they are presented with information from all relevant cases involving the family. Some demonstration counties have created a position to track and present this information to judges, while others have required existing clerks to collect it. Child advocates can now file for orders of protection to remove batterers from the home, enhancing the safety of the child and his/her mother while also reducing the burden on the domestic violence victim.

Law enforcement agencies as first responders have changed their reporting forms to ensure confidentiality of victims. They are also promoting the safety of victims at court by patrolling waiting rooms and other locations where victims may come in contact with their batterers.

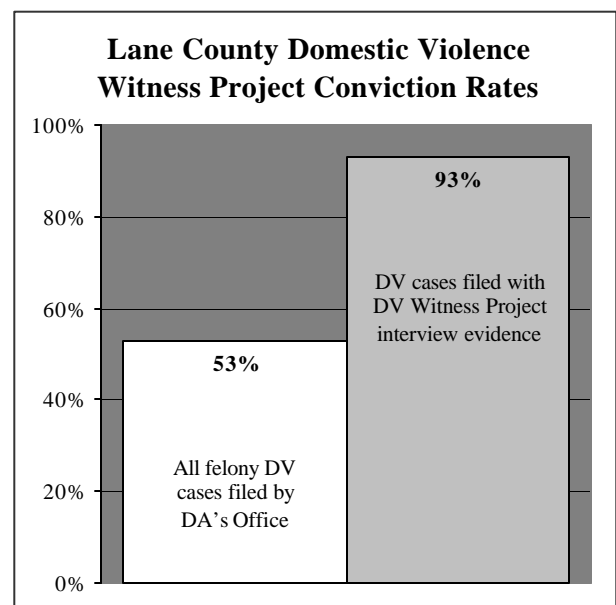
Child welfare agencies are creating separate case plans for adult victims of family violence, children, and batterers. In at least one agency, these separate plans are required even in cases when the family is still living together and/or when the domestic violence is denied by the family.

In the past, caseworkers often used “threat of harm” language to support a case for removal of a child from a home where domestic violence is present. Child welfare agencies are no longer using this language, and are now including batterers on petitions to the court rather than focusing solely on the mother and domestic violence

victim. Furthermore, dependency court judges are reframing their questions to put greater responsibility on the batterer. If they are presented with a “failure to protect” petition in a domestic violence situation, they are challenging the caseworker to show evidence of neglect in the absence of domestic violence. As a result, one community member noted that ***“victims perceive that court experiences have been more fair and respectful.”***

► **Multidisciplinary groups are serving child witnesses to domestic violence.**

In some communities, law enforcement agencies or other justice system staff are required to report a case to child welfare anytime a child is exposed to violence. The multidisciplinary team then takes action – initiating safety planning for all victims and ensuring perpetrator compliance while protecting confidentiality. Some programs complete a forensic interview with the child that can be used in court and provide counseling in a child-friendly and safe environment. Meanwhile, the multidisciplinary team members are also linking the domestic violence victim to shelter and counseling services, and advising the victim of legal options. Other partners, including law enforcement, Probation and Parole and the District Attorney's Office follow the case to ensure batterer accountability. The goal of these programs is to keep the child with the non-offending parent. One such program reports a 93% conviction rate in the cases it sees that are then filed in court.



Source: Child Advocacy Center of Lane County, 2003

► Traditionally at-odds systems now share staff.

Domestic violence specialists in the child welfare system attend multidisciplinary case planning meetings, link domestic violence victims to necessary services and resources, and help them negotiate government systems and community organizations. These co-located positions have resulted in more accurate identification of all family risk and protective factors, and increased victim use of available resources, such as services and restraining orders. Domestic violence advocates have a voice in the court system to help victims negotiate and understand court orders and the legal options available to them. One demonstration county also supported a co-located advocate from Probation and Parole in child welfare to facilitate communication on open cases in both systems. Stakeholders also noted that this shared resource enhances accountability and safety by conducting joint home visits.

► Systems have implemented new practices to hold domestic violence offenders accountable and include them in case plans.

The Greenbook communities have facilitated collaboration between child welfare agencies, domestic violence service providers, dependency and criminal courts, Batterer Intervention Programs, the DA's Office, and Probation and Parole to ensure batterer accountability. For example, one Greenbook-sponsored compliance monitor has seen more than 1100 cases in her 18 months on the job, and is widely viewed as responsible for the jump in compliance with court-ordered treatment from 5% to 85% (*Source: El Paso County Greenbook Initiative, 2005*). Across all sites, justice system staff are more informed of offenders' progress in treatment and other court-imposed sanctions and orders, and as a result, ***"judges are no longer taking a cookie cutter approach to the cases before them."*** Greenbook-funded staff have not only tracked compliance with court-ordered treatment, but have also served as a resource to batterers when they encounter obstacles in complying with court orders, and for victims to report non-compliance. Family-serving systems understand that families often remain together during and after domestic violence, and they are working together to promote safety and well-being within these families. Some

child welfare agencies now bear some of the costs of batterer intervention programs, and batterer intervention programs are including parenting and child witnessing issues in their curricula. Some programs offer counseling and other resources for each family member, with separate plans for batterers, domestic violence victims, and children.

Child welfare agencies are focusing on batterers when assessing risk and protective factors and including them in case plans. Some have hired a batterer intervention specialist to link these men with services and/or a fathering advocate to ensure safe and healthy relationships between fathers and their children.

► Community impacts are beginning to be realized.

The changes in the demonstration communities described above were realized with Greenbook-related activities still underway. The evaluation continues to collect and analyze evidence of the impact of screening and assessment, co-located staff, information sharing, and community collaboration on relevant organizations and the families they serve. One child welfare agency representative noted that ***"the difference between this grant and others is that we have focused on sustainability from Day 1."*** This focus has facilitated buy-in from agency staff who may be burned out on "just another new initiative," and has taken many of the community-level changes described above and infused them across the state. The communities are now focused on sustaining their efforts so that the impact on families will continue and expand after grant funding has ceased.

Community members saw significant **changes in child welfare agency policies and practices** from 2002 to 2004, including:

- ◆ Routine screening for DV
- ◆ Working with advocates and specialists to address DV through case planning and other means
- ◆ Having criteria to keep children with non-offending parents
- ◆ Holding regular training on the dynamics of DV
- ◆ Sharing resources with DV organizations

*For more information, please visit www.thegreenbook.info or contact Duren Banks at Caliber Associates
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