

CITY OF SAN ANTONIO COMPREHENSIVE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PLAN

SUMMARY OF GAPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the Spring of 2019, several events converged, generating an increased sense of urgency to respond to domestic violence in San Antonio. Several high-profile news stories highlighted the increase in domestic violence-related murders. As requested by Councilwoman Shirley Gonzales and Councilman Manny Pelaez, the Department of Human Services and Metropolitan Health District are conducting a structured assessment of domestic violence-related services. The evaluation includes currently available services, systems of data collection and analysis, and community response to family violence incidents, including law enforcement, social services, judicial, and education. In addition to documenting baseline status, an analysis of gaps in service and system improvements related to incident reporting and follow up.

SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

After nearly forty years of steady declines in domestic violence-related homicides, the trend in the United States has reversed. Since 2015, murders by an intimate partner has been increasing in the United States and Texas. The

Table 1 Domestic Violence Related Homicides, SAPD and BCSO		
Year	Total	Women
2019 <i>YTD 7/31/19</i>	20	10
2018	35	21
2017	30	18
2016	24	10
2015	19	8
2014	22	11

2018 Texas Council on Family Violence Honoring Victims Report shared the stories of the 174 women killed by male intimate partners in 2018, the highest number of women killed in Texas the last ten years. As presented in Table 1, San Antonio mirrors this trend with murders of women by men in domestic violence-related homicides increasing from 2015-2018. Four years is not a sufficient period to determine if there will be a sustained trend; however, any increase in deaths is tragic and cause for concern. Thankfully, the majority of people who experience domestic violence will not be murdered. But this also means it's unclear an increase in murder indicates an overall increase in violence or an increase in the *lethality* of domestic violence. In Texas, in 2018, 59% of perpetrators of

domestic violence-related homicide used a firearm to kill their partner. From 2016 – 2019, 58% of women killed in domestic violence incidents in San Antonio were murdered with a gun. When additional sources of data, including arrests, calls for assistance, and community interviews are combined with DV related deaths, the overall story is one of an increase in domestic violence and a widespread, urgent problem.

Gaps identified through the assessment are described below by the intervention level. Recommendations for addressing identified gaps follow the statement of need. Intervention marked with a ** have been selected for implementation by the Collaborative Commission on Domestic Violence or will be implemented by the City of San Antonio.

PRIMARY PREVENTION

Primary Prevention means preventing violence before it happens

Gap: Child, youth & family prevention programs are insufficient to meet community needs.

- Promote to adoption and implementation of comprehensive, evidence-based parenting education programs to reduce the incidence of child abuse, including the Triple P Parenting Program.**

Gap: Community norms nurture domestic violence, and the community is generally unaware of services.

- Develop a community-wide media campaign across multiple types of media and communication channels, including large employers to saturate the San Antonio market.**
- Expand school-based prevention and engagement of service providers to reduce violence through the implementation of evidence-based violence prevention programming and structured partnerships between schools and community service providers.**

Gap: Populations uniquely vulnerable to experiencing domestic violence require additional specialized outreach.

- Develop outreach services to LGBTQ+, homeless people, people with disabilities, and the immigrant community

SECONDARY PREVENTION

Secondary prevention also aims to prevent violence from occurring but targets high-risk individuals or populations.

Gap: Resources and evaluation are not consistently coordinated between agencies and sectors.

- Promote opportunities for cross-sector partnerships and coordination to support the implementation of best practices
- Implement an assessment of system processes using an evidence-based tool such as Praxis International Blueprint for Safety.**
- Improve data collection and develop data-driven strategies to evaluate community initiatives and increase transparency and accountability of community services.**

ACUTE RESPONSE

The acute response occurs during the 48 hours around an event.

Gap: Evidence based tools to identify survivors with a high risk of death or severe injury are inconsistently implemented.

- Expand access to forensic nurse examination programs**
- Pilot a Domestic Violence High-Risk Team**
- Provide enhanced training to first responders on specialized topics including trauma-informed interviewing, LGBTQ+, and immigration
- Ensure that lethality assessments are used appropriately and result in action**

Gap: Services for survivors of domestic violence are scattered, and entry points are unclear.

- Develop a central entry point into supportive services that can triage, refer and follow up to ensure the first call is enough
- Augment survivor services with expansion of child-centered programming

TERTIARY PREVENTION

Tertiary approaches aim to reduce the risk that an individual or community continue to experience incidents of violence after they have already occurred.

Gap: Housing and legal services are stretched and need additional capacity.

- Address the Long-Term Housing Needs of Survivors
- Expand the capacity for legal services, including non-attorney legal advocates**

Gap: Services and accountability for offenders do not sufficiently remove weapons and provide treatment to break the cycle of violence.

- Implement a program to remove firearms from high-risk offenders**
- Develop a joint drug and domestic violence court
- Expand access to trauma-informed interventions for offender programs

NEXT STEPS

Assessment findings and gaps identified will be presented to community stakeholders in August and September 2019 at the Commission on Collaborative Strategies to Prevent, Combat, and Response to Domestic Violence. Stakeholder subcommittees and the San Antonio & Bexar County Domestic Violence Task Force will identify areas of responsibility and strategies to implement. The final report, including strategies selected by community partners, will be completed by October 30, 2019.

The DV Comprehensive Plan was written under the direction of Dr. Colleen Bridger through a close collaboration between the department of Human Services, Metro Health, and SAPD.

A gap analysis identified places in the current system that needed additional support and improvement. The data that informed the following plan was collected through five sources:

- 1) Survey of domestic violence survey providers on scope and scale of services provided
- 2) Surveys of attendees at Domestic Violence Congressional Townhall
- 3) Interviews of key community leaders in San Antonio and Texas
- 4) Interviews with experts in domestic violence and evidence-based prevention approaches
- 5) Data provided by SAPD, Texas Courts, the Texas Council on Family Violence, 211, and community service providers

Recommendations address gaps identified through the analysis and include evidence-based strategies.

The Commission on Collaborative Strategies to Prevent, Combat, and Respond to Domestic Violence is a joint City/County commission that will be implementing portions of the domestic violence comprehensive plan selected by Commission Chairs over the next three years.

A Special Order signed and entered on July 30, 2019, by Local Administrative District Court Judge Peter Sakai created the first-of-its-kind *Commission on Collaborative Strategies to Prevent, Combat, and Respond to Domestic Violence*. Co-Chaired by Assistant City Manager Dr. Colleen Bridger and 150th District Court Judge Monique Diaz, the Commission held its first meeting on Friday, August 16, 2019, and is the first in Bexar County to formally convene local leaders in government, the judiciary, law enforcement, prosecution, non-profits, and health care agencies with one shared vision: reduce domestic violence in Bexar County.

Committees

- Prosecution – District Attorney Joe D. Gonzales, Chair
- Judicial – Judge Mary Lou Alvarez and Judge Ron Rangel, Co-Chairs
- Healthcare – George Hernandez (UHS) and Jelynn Burley (Center for Healthcare Services), Co-Chairs
- Law Enforcement – Chief William McManus and Sherriff Javier Salazar, Co-Chairs
- Non-Profits – Patricia Castillo (Peace Initiative), Marta Palaez (Family Violence Prevention Services), and Julia Rodriguez (Texas Rio Grande Legal Aide), Co-Chairs
- Policy – Jeff Coyle (CoSA) Chair

Each committee is responsible for developing a one-year workplan to address programs and processes that can be improved to prevent domestic violence and better serve survivors.

The City of San Antonio has proposed \$1,000,000 of new funding to address domestic violence in the FY 2020 budget in addition to enhancements in the San Antonio Police Department.

Triple P Parenting Program - \$250,000

Triple P (Positive Parenting Program) is a parenting support/education curriculum and community campaign delivered at multiple levels of intervention: individual face-to-face, individual online, group, seminar, and community outreach. This proposed improvement seeks to implement all levels of Triple P utilizing internal and contractual resources to improve parenting support and prevent incidence of child abuse, adverse childhood experiences, maternal depression and anxiety, and domestic violence.

School Based Violence Prevention Program - \$80,000

Metro Health will be implementing the Too Good for Violence program in SAISD Schools. The Too Good for Violence is an evidence-based social emotional learning curriculum show to decrease bullying and youth violence. In addition to implementing an evidence-based youth violence prevention curriculum in San Antonio schools, the San Antonio Police Department has developed the Handle with Care program and is expanding support to provide specialized training to school campus personnel.

Domestic Violence Communication Campaign - \$170,000

The domestic violence communication campaign is being developed in close partnership between SAPD, Metro Health, and DHS. The campaign has two main messages: Violence should never be a part of a relationship, and help is available. The campaign will combine traditional media with grassroots outreach to reach as many sectors of the community as possible. The City of San Antonio will also be working closely with the Chamber of Commerce to help share the message in businesses.

A competitive grant process will award the remaining \$500,000 this Fall. The competitive grant process will support the implementation of the comprehensive plan. Each Commission Sub-Committee is identifying the priority strategies for their area of responsibility. The strategies selected will inform the priority areas to be funded through the competitive grant process.

In addition to the \$1,000,000 in new domestic violence related funding, the San Antonio Police Department (SAPD) will add 16 positions focusing on domestic violence, ten new community policing officers, and six new sergeants.

Domestic violence is a preventable public health problem.

Children who grow up in homes with domestic violence are more likely to experience or perpetrate domestic violence as adults. The Comprehensive Plan, developed by CoSA, joins immediate actions to meet the needs of survivors today with long term strategies to stop violence before it starts. The complex challenge of reducing domestic violence will require a sustained, coordinated effort engaging city, county, and community resources and wisdom. The newly formed Commission is a crucial step in developing a coordinated Community response to domestic violence in the City of San Antonio and Bexar County.

For more information, please contact Jenny Hixon at Jennifer.hixon@sanantonio.gov