

**Enhancing Systems' Response to  
Children Exposed to Domestic  
Violence (CEDV):**

**An Evaluation of the California  
Children's Justice Act CEDV  
Programs**

***Process Evaluation Report***



*Submitted to:*

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# **Enhancing Systems' Response to Children Exposed to Domestic Violence (CEDV):**

## **An Evaluation of the California Children's Justice Act CEDV-Specialized Response Programs**

**2013**

### *Process Evaluation Report*



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*Informing policy, improving programs*



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**C**hildren Exposed to Domestic Violence (CEDV)—Specialized Response program grants, funded by the California Children’s Justice Act Taskforce and administered by the California Office of Emergency Services, sought to create multidisciplinary collaborations involving law enforcement, community-based domestic violence advocacy agencies, and child protection services to provide more effective immediate response and ongoing services for children exposed to domestic violence and their families.

In June 2013, an evaluation team from NPC Research conducted site visits with five previous CEDV grantees and interviewed 36 individual staff members from the agencies participating in the collaborations, including law enforcement officers, domestic violence agency advocates, child protective service workers, Victim-Witness advocates, and representatives from District Attorneys’ Offices. Qualitative data were gathered regarding law enforcement’s response to domestic violence cases with children present, the form and functioning of the CEDV collaboration, and perceived impacts of the CEDV program.

### General Impressions of the CEDV Program

Interviewees resoundingly touted *strong benefits of the multidisciplinary CEDV collaboration*. They thought the CEDV program greatly improved their individual agencies’ pre-existing ability to reach and respond to violence-exposed children. They reported establishing effective inter-agency partnerships, strengthening the overall system’s response to violent families with children, and feeling confident that the coordinated response made a difference for their clients.

The *training and support offered to law enforcement officers* by the collaboration strongly influenced their perceptions and handling of domestic violence cases with children, by increasing their understanding of the complex dynamics of domestic violence, its impact on children, and the specific needs for the successful prosecution of cases.

*Emphasizing the impact on children* had sweeping effects for domestic violence casework, such as better officer compliance with reporting protocols, stronger motivation for parents to accept services, better prosecution outcomes, and better unification of effort among CEDV partners.

### Implementation of the CEDV Program

**Collaboration Partners.** In every case, interviewees described strong and effective working relationships among the staff from key partner agencies of *law enforcement, child protective services, and a domestic violence advocacy agency*. They also noted the importance of broader coalition partners such as the District Attorney and Victim-Witness Program.

- Identifying a *dedicated CEDV staff person at each agency* facilitated the collaboration by creating trusting relationships among interagency staff that ultimately transferred more broadly throughout the organizations.
- By increasing trust and access, CEDV teams turned *loose interagency connections into truly collaborative relationships*.
- *Combining the strengths of the individual partner agencies* supported the overall investigation and delivery of services. Interviewees felt that working in the context of this multidisciplinary and cooperative team made them more effective at their jobs.

**Communication and Team Functioning.** All grantees described developing CEDV teams that were highly communicative, well trained (in domestic violence and in each others' processes), cooperative, effective, and unified in their purpose.

- Team members described being in *constant, informal communication* with each other.
- *Regular team meetings provided an important structure* for the collaborative effort and key opportunities for information exchange and service coordination among partners.
- Despite the constant communication, CEDV teams experienced *challenges with cross-agency information sharing* due to the confidentiality protocols of individual agencies.
- *Co-location enabled substantial efficiencies*, such as streamlining communication, keeping all staff current on cases, allowing continual informal cross-agency training, and, importantly, fostering trust and a team identity among CEDV staff from different agencies.
- *Understanding each agency's roles and responsibilities* improved collaborative efforts and interagency relationships, regardless of whether formal trainings were provided. This education was beneficial for CEDV team members and for law enforcement generally.
- Most grantees reported *challenges creating a local, shared database*, including issues related to design and development, staffing, data security and storage, and confidentiality.

**Leadership.** Strong, invested leadership—in all partner agencies, but especially law enforcement—was a critical ingredient for program success and sustainability. Leadership support was needed at the level of program functioning (i.e., oversight and guidance of daily operations) and at higher management levels (i.e., decision-making about budgets, policies, administration).

**Sustainability.** There was considerable variability in the extent to which CEDV activities continued after the grant funding ended. Generally speaking, the sites that successfully integrated elements of the CEDV program into regular agency functioning were able to sustain more than those that sourced program activities externally (e.g., solely using over-time).

- *Most often sustained*, in whole or in part, were law enforcement reporting and training protocols, staff co-location, and interpersonal relationships among staff.
- *Least often sustained* were regular team meetings, joint interagency response protocols, dedicated staff for domestic violence cases, and local shared databases.

## Perceived Impact of the CEDV Program

Interviewees perceived several benefits of the CEDV program. General responses included:

- *Improvements in law enforcement officers' understanding of domestic violence generally and its impact on children specifically.* Traditionally, law enforcement officers have attended to children during domestic calls only when they were victims of abuse. CEDV programs newly emphasized the effects on children of exposure to interadult violence in the home. This new understanding, enhanced protocols for reporting and evidence gathering, and access to services through the CEDV partners gave officers the tools to handle domestic violence cases in a more compassionate and effective way.
- *Improvements in the prosecution of domestic violence cases.* Having detectives focused solely on domestic violence cases enabled more comprehensive and competent investigations and more streamlined communication with the District Attorney.

- ***Improvements in connecting victims to services.*** CEDV grants established either joint emergency response or joint post-incident notification, so key partner agencies received timely information about cases. Agencies were then able to identify and contact victims quicker, start services faster, engage them in the criminal justice process from the beginning, and create rapport immediately in the wake of the crisis incident.
- ***Improved interagency communication and functioning.*** Aligning professionals from distinct backgrounds, who often have felt at odds with each other, behind a common goal and seeing a true team emerge was considered a substantial success by some.

## Perceptions of Existing Need

Interviewees reported several areas of improvement for systems' response to children exposed to domestic violence. Generally, these included: (1) establishment of more ***Family Justice Centers***; (2) resources to support ***joint emergency response*** teams; (3) provision of ***specialized training in domestic violence*** to staff and officers; (4) development of ***community awareness campaigns*** about domestic and teen dating violence; and (5) ***increased funding and resources*** available to provide fundamental services to victims, children, and offenders.

## Advice for Future CEDV Grantees

Interviewees offered several suggestions to future grantees: (1) seek out supportive ***leadership***; (2) choose ***appropriate staff*** for the CEDV team; (3) establish thorough and effective ***communication*** channels; and (4) consider ***sustainability*** plans from the beginning.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The virtues of the CEDV grants were unanimously extolled by interviewees. Regardless of agency affiliation, staff reported that their CEDV programs resulted in dramatic and impactful improvements in the systems' response to children exposed to domestic violence and that the collaboration enhanced their individual efficacy to serve their clients and augmented their agencies' ability to reach and serve at-risk families. Each grantee reported to have established highly effective, multidisciplinary, interagency collaborations characterized by constant communication, good understanding and respect of each other's processes, unified goals, trusting staff relationships, and true collaborative spirit. Everyone lamented the program's end.

Data were used to delineate the ***key elements for a successful CEDV program***, which are listed in the last section of this report. Recommendations and points of consideration for the design, development, management, funding, and sustainability of CEDV and similar programs are also described in the last section of this report. This information is intended to assist and support funders and grants administrators such as the California Children's Justice Act Taskforce and California Office of Emergency Services, as well as future grantees and other entities implementing similar programs.



## PROJECT BACKGROUND

Millions of children are exposed to violence in their homes each year in the United States.<sup>1</sup> Children do not have to be eye-witnesses to the violence to experience emotionally difficult or traumatic reactions to it.<sup>2</sup> Overhearing a violent episode (e.g., yelling, hitting, throwing objects) or seeing the consequences of one (e.g., injuries to a parent, a parent taken away in an ambulance or a police car, broken toys or disheveled rooms) can be similarly traumatic. Because domestic violence often represents a pattern of behavior, children in violent families are frequently exposed to such scenes repeatedly and such exposure has been associated with a variety of emotional and behavioral difficulties.<sup>3,4</sup> Further, children in families characterized by interadult violence have a higher likelihood of being directly abused than do children in nonviolent homes.<sup>5</sup>

*Roughly 1 in 10 children have witnessed one family member assault another family member during the past year, and more than 25% of children have been exposed to family violence during their lifetime.<sup>1</sup>*

Law enforcement officers are frequently the first responders to domestic violence incidents and the first point of contact for victims,<sup>6</sup> which often include children exposed to the violence. However, not all officers are routinely trained to document the presence of children in violent homes, much less to respond to the complex needs of adult and child victims. The Children Exposed to Domestic Violence—Specialized Response program grants sought to create multidisciplinary collaborations involving law enforcement, mental health clinicians, social workers, and child protection workers to provide more effective immediate response and ongoing services for these children and families.

Children Exposed to Domestic Violence (CEDV)—Specialized Response program grants are funded by the California Children’s Justice Act (CJA), which, in turn, receives funds from the federal Children’s Justice Act. The overall goal of the federal CJA is to identify the need for systemic changes in the area of investigating child maltreatment that will reduce the system-related trauma suffered by victimized children. Overseen by the California CJA Taskforce and the California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES), the CEDV program grants exemplify this initiative. The goal of the CEDV program, as stated in the Request for Proposals disseminated by Cal OES, is “to reduce exposure and suffering of children of all ages exposed to do-

*Exposure to domestic violence can cause a wide range of emotional and behavioral difficulties for children, as well as increase their likelihood of becoming involved in a violent relationship as adults.<sup>3,4</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Finkelhor, D., Turner, H., Ormord, R., Hamby, S., & Kracke, K. (2009). Children’s exposure to violence: A comprehensive national survey. Bulletin. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. (<http://www.justice.gov/defendingchildhood/facts.html>)

<sup>2</sup> Kitzmann, K.M., Gaylord, N.K., Holt, A.R., & Kenny, E.D. (2003). Child witnesses to domestic violence: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 71, 339-352.

<sup>3</sup> Evans, S.E., Davies, C., & DiLillo, D. (2008). Exposure to domestic violence: A meta-analysis of child and adolescent outcomes. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 13, 131-140.

<sup>4</sup> Stith, S.M., Rosen, K.H., Middleton, K.A., Busch, A.L., Lundeberg, K., & Carton, R.P. (2000). The intergenerational transmission of spouse abuse: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 62, 640-654.

<sup>5</sup> Appel, A.E., & Holden, G. W. (1998). The co-occurrence of spouse and physical child abuse: A review and appraisal. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 12, 578-599.

<sup>6</sup> To align with a law enforcement approach, this report uses the term “victim” to denote the person involved in the domestic violence incident who was not the dominant aggressor. Because this is most often a woman, the pronoun “she/her” is also used. However, the authors understand and acknowledge that violent relationships take many forms, that men and women can be both perpetrators and victims, and that the term “survivor” is preferred by some.

mestic violence and [to] track the response of the criminal justice and social service systems...to improve the criminal justice system's response to children exposed to domestic violence and to provide immediate and coordinated services for these victims.”

CEDV grants are awarded to local law enforcement agencies. As part of receiving CEDV program funds, grantees are required to:

- (a) establish a collaborative **partnership** with a community-based domestic violence advocacy agency and the county-level child protective service (CPS);
- (b) develop a **protocol** outlining how the collaborating partners will work together, including the coordinated response to domestic violence calls with children present as well as procedures for cross-agency communication, information sharing, and training;
- (c) implement the **collaboration**;
- (d) develop a joint **database** to collect and share information about the CEDV cases;
- (e) conduct site-level **evaluation** of their progress toward program goals.

In 2003, two pilot sites—Riverside County Sheriff-Lake Elsinore and Stockton Police Department—were funded. In 2009, another three sites were funded, comprising the first formal cohort of CEDV grantees: National City Police Department, Los Angeles County Sheriff-Palmdale, and Fresno Police Department. In 2013, the second cohort was funded, which included three more sites: the Police Departments in Bakersfield, Citrus Heights, and Napa. Grants are designed to extend for 3 years, with each yearly renewal dependent on current compliance with requirements. One grantee had obtained funds for 2 years beyond the originally contracted period.

In 2013, the CJA Taskforce and Cal OES contracted NPC Research to conduct an evaluation of the 2003 and 2009 grantees, to inform the CEDV grant program implementation and evaluation efforts going forward. This report presents the findings from the process evaluation of those five grantees.

## PROCESS EVALUATION GOALS AND METHODS

**C**EDV grants were intended to change the way law enforcement functioned with respect to domestic violence cases involving children by establishing collaborations with supportive social service agencies. Therefore, the expected outcomes of the CEDV program implementation were not necessarily at the individual level, such as reduced numbers of children being exposed to domestic violence, although one could theoretically assume that this may happen over the longer term as a result of a more effective system response. Instead, the immediate expected outcomes were at the agency level, such as changes in the infrastructure, capacity, and response protocols of the collaborating organizations.

To investigate any such agency-level changes, a process evaluation was conducted. Process evaluation is fundamentally concerned with how a program is being implemented. This examination involves determining how closely the actual implementation aligns with the original plan and whether the components identified as critical to the success of the program are present. The current process evaluation explored, for example, the representation of various agencies in the CEDV collaboration, how these partners communicated and coordinated service provision, how staff were identified and trained to work on the program, and to what extent CEDV processes differed from business as usual for the collaborating agencies.

### Goals

The goals of the process evaluation were to better understand the CEDV implementation strategies across the grantees and the various successes and challenges they encountered. The study sought to explore the structure and goals of grantees' individual CEDV programs and to better understand what worked and what did not, where success came easily and where progress was difficult. The goals of gathering such information were threefold:

1. To inform the CJA Taskforce and Cal OES about the utility of the CEDV funding—specifically, what grantees were able to accomplish with the grant money;
2. To provide current and future CEDV grantees with “lessons learned” from prior grantees so that they are better prepared for common challenges and can build on the success of earlier cohorts;
3. To define some “key elements” of a successful CEDV program, which could prove useful for the CJA Taskforce and other funding agencies, for current and future CEDV grantees, and for other organizations attempting to develop similar programs.

### Evaluation Methods and Activities

The process evaluation relied primarily on qualitative data collected directly from CEDV program staff from current and previous grantees. The evaluation team contacted the lead law enforcement agency personnel (i.e., the primary contact for the grant) at each site, explained the nature of the evaluation activities (i.e., that it was not an audit), and requested the names and contact information for CEDV-affiliated staff at that site. The evaluation team worked with the lead law enforcement contact at each grantee to schedule a two-day site visit during which all of the available members of the CEDV team would be interviewed. Requests for copies of the CEDV protocol, the development of which was a requirement of their grant award, were sent to each site. These documents were reviewed by the evaluation team prior to the visit.

## SITE VISITS AND INTERVIEWS

In total, five grantee sites were visited. Two were pilot sites—Riverside County Sheriff-Elsinore Station and Stockton Police Department—whose original funding period spanned from 2003-2005. The other three sites comprised the first formal cohort of CEDV grantees—National City Police Department, Los Angeles County Sheriff-Palmdale, and Fresno Police Department—whose original funding period spanned from 2009-2011. One of these grantees had extended its grant period for 1 year, and another had received 2 additional years of funding. Thus, at the time of the site visits, four of five sites were not currently receiving CEDV funds. The period of time between the end of their CEDV grant and the site visit ranged from 1 to 8 years.

At each site visit, the evaluation team sought to interview, at a minimum, the core CEDV team including the law enforcement officer who supervised CEDV project operations, the detective who most often handled CEDV cases, affiliated staff person(s) from Child Protective Services (CPS),<sup>7</sup> and affiliated staff person(s) from the local domestic violence advocacy agency. This effort was possible in all sites except one, whose funding had been over for several years and all affiliated staff from the domestic violence/mental health agency and CPS were not reachable. Some grantees had established a broader CEDV collaboration that included staff from other entities, such as the District Attorney's Office, Victim-Witness Program (a department within the District Attorney's Office that provides assistance to and advocacy for crime victims), and Parole and Probation. The evaluation team made the effort to interview staff from all partnering agencies whenever possible. In cases where staff turnover had occurred for key positions, efforts were made to interview both current and prior staff. When staff were unavailable during the site visit, but were reachable and willing to participate, follow-up phone interviews were conducted.

### Participants

Across the five sites, a total of 36 people were interviewed. The majority were from law enforcement. All sites but one had a CPS worker and a representative from the collaborating domestic violence advocacy agency interviewed. In three sites, someone from the District Attorney's Office was interviewed, and in one site, representatives from Victim-Witness were interviewed. These numbers are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Number of Interviews by Site and Agency**

Agency	Site A	Site B	Site C	Site D	Site E	Total
Law Enforcement	4 <sup>S,D</sup>	2 <sup>S</sup>	3 <sup>S,D</sup>	4 <sup>S,D,P</sup>	7 <sup>S,D,P</sup>	20
Child Protective Services	1 <sup>C</sup>	--	2 <sup>S,C</sup>	1 <sup>C</sup>	1 <sup>C</sup>	5
Domestic Violence Advocacy Agency	1 <sup>C</sup>	--	1 <sup>C</sup>	2 <sup>S,C</sup>	2 <sup>S,C</sup>	6
District Attorney's Office	1 <sup>S</sup>	--	--	1 <sup>C</sup>	1 <sup>C</sup>	3
Victim-Witness Program	2 <sup>S,C</sup>	--	--	--	--	2
<b>Total Number of Interviews</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>36</b>

Note. S = Supervisor; C = Case worker/Advocate; D = Detective; P = Patrol Officer/Deputy

<sup>7</sup> Counties had different names for the government agency that oversaw cases related to child welfare and protection (e.g., Child Protective Services, Department of Child and Family Services, Child Welfare Services). In this report, "Child Protective Services" ("CPS") is used generally to encompass these agencies across all sites.



### *Protocols*

A comprehensive site visit protocol was developed specifically for this project. As part of the protocol, multiple interview instruments were developed specific to each collaboration partner. The interviews inquired about a wide range of implementation issues, such as:

- *Law enforcement's typical response to a domestic violence call with children present.* This set of questions included asking how incidents were reported, how the presence of children was handled, whether/how other agencies were involved in the response, whether/how any follow-up occurred, as well as describing how the CEDV response differed from the typical response before the grant was in place.
- *Form and functioning of the collaboration.* This set of questions included identifying the key partners and the roles they played, as well as describing the perceived effectiveness of the collaboration, the ways in which they partnered, how well and often they communicated, whether and how they shared information (e.g., routine meetings, shared databases), whether and how they implemented co-location or cross-agency trainings, how leadership influenced the program, and whether and how any CEDV activities have been sustained after the grant.
- *Perception of the CEDV Program's Impact.* This set of questions included whether the CEDV program changed law enforcement officers' general perceptions about domestic violence and children, perceptions of the biggest impact of the program, opinions about what other changes/resources are needed to improve the overall system's response to children exposed to family violence, and any advice for future CEDV grantees.

Interviews were conducted privately with each participant, so that respondents would feel comfortable expressing their opinions honestly. The interviews were conducted by one or two members from the evaluation team, who typed notes as the interview progressed. Whenever possible, interviews were also audio recorded for later transcription.

### *Analysis*

The 37 interviews yielded a substantial amount of qualitative data. These data were reviewed and summarized, for each site, by a pair of researchers familiar with the grantees. This process required the aggregation of data across the multiple partners at each site to develop an overall program profile for each grantee. The data were then reviewed by the project director, coded for main emergent themes, and summarized across all five grantees. All codes and themes were discussed among the team of three researchers, and any discrepancies were clarified by, first, reviewing the interview transcripts for more detail, and next, if necessary, conducting a follow-up phone call with the interviewee to ensure an accurate interpretation of the comments. Findings are presented in the following section.



## PROCESS EVALUATION FINDINGS

This section presents the general themes that emerged across the CEDV interviews, such as staff and partners' general impressions of the program, perceptions of the implementation at their site, thoughts about the impact of their program and the existing needs of children exposed to domestic violence, and advice for future CEDV program grantees.

### General Impressions of the CEDV Program

#### BENEFITS OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION

Interviewees across all sites resoundingly touted strong benefits of the multidisciplinary approach inherent in the CEDV collaboration. They felt as though their CEDV program had greatly improved their individual agencies' pre-existing ability to reach and respond to violent families with children. They felt as though they had established effective interagency partnerships, strengthened the overall system's response to violence-exposed children, and felt confident that the coordinated response had made a difference for the families with whom they had worked.

Some grantees had limited partnerships in place before the CEDV grants, but others did not.

Those that did not have such partnerships noted that, prior to CEDV, it was infrequent for law enforcement, child protective services, and domestic violence advocates to see themselves as part of the same team. More often, these agencies presumed to have different agendas and staff were beholden to the supervision and policies of their home agency that seemed in opposition to other agencies'. At worst, they viewed each other with distrust and antagonism, as though they impeded each other's progress toward their own agency's goals. However, these interviewees described that the CEDV teams helped to break down these barriers, find common ground, and create true and effective collaborations. One law enforcement interviewee said, *"We broke down barriers with CPS that they thought would never come down."*

*"CEDV was one of those programs that you come across in your career and feel like, 'This is a good thing. This really works. This can really help people.'"*

– Law enforcement lieutenant

Overall, interviewees strongly felt their sites had been successful in establishing an effective cross-agency collaboration, raising awareness of the impact of domestic violence on children (especially among law enforcement officers), and streamlining the provision of important services to victims and their families. An interviewee from a domestic violence advocacy agency summarized her perceptions of her team's achievements: *"If (at the beginning of the grant) I had to come up with what I wanted to see at the end of the grant, I would have wanted to see (1) close cooperation between the partners, (2) an increase in [domestic violence] calls to the police department, (3) a change in attitude and response to domestic violence by police officers, and (4) good attendance at group [counseling] sessions. I think all of these things happened during the grant."* A law enforcement lieutenant commented, *"I don't think this program was anything but positive. You had three independent county departments that came together to achieve a common goal. We were really unified by a common goal."*

## CHANGES WITHIN LAW ENFORCEMENT

One of the most impactful byproducts of the multidisciplinary collaboration was the training and support it offered to law enforcement officers, which impacted their perceptions and handling of domestic violence cases with children. Some law enforcement interviewees acknowledged the difficulties that these domestic violence cases can present for officers, both practically (e.g., victims recanting statements and hindering prosecution) and emotionally (e.g., grim abuse against adults and children, multiple calls to the same house), and the need for a specialized response—that is, an approach different from what is used for other general crimes. These interviewees noted that having a dedicated domestic violence detective and close collaborators from other agencies helped law enforcement enhance its response to these families. One law enforcement lieutenant explained, “*Domestic violence cases are very*

*“We are much more aware of the needs of the family and the children involved. It has opened a lot of eyes. Officers now look at domestic violence victims differently than robbery victims.”*

– Law enforcement sergeant

*frustrating. So many times victims aren’t cooperative. The CEDV grant afforded us a [dedicated] detective who could go the extra mile, ask the extra questions, and not get caught up in going to her next call. Although patrol may have listed in the report that the children didn’t see anything, that doesn’t mean they didn’t. The grant afforded us a three-pronged approach to actually communicate with the children and understand what was really going on in the family. That was something that was lost when you are looking at a straight patrol function.”*

Perhaps most importantly, having an immediate connection to service-provision agency personnel opened the door for patrol officers (typically the first responders) to handle domestic violence calls with children more comprehensively. Several interviewees perceived that, before the CEDV grant, patrol officers might be reluctant to open a conversation with a victim or a child because they did not have the resources to meet their needs. However, with the CEDV grants came accessible personnel from agencies that could provide direct services to the victims and children, and this streamlining of referrals ultimately increased officers’ comfort responding to these cases and dealing with adult victims and children. An interviewee from a domestic violence advocacy agency commented, “*Before the grant, [officers] didn’t like to go to these calls. It’s extra paperwork. The officers will tell you that they don’t want to see the kids. They just want to do their business [arresting] and they don’t want to feel like, ‘Oh my gosh, what did these kids just see?’ It opens a different part of them. Now, realizing that they can connect the family with a domestic violence victim advocate makes them feel better about it.”*

One site shared how their team’s collective perception of domestic violence changed as a result of the CEDV grant. When the grant started, the domestic violence unit supervisor (the police officer overseeing the CEDV team) identified a high-crime portion of the city as the target area for the CEDV response. Within the first year of implementation, however, the team realized that CEDV cases were not highly clustered in this zone so they expanded CEDV service boundaries to the entire city. All team members found this a valuable learning experience—that children are exposed to domestic violence across all socio-economic and cultural groups.

## EMPHASIS ON THE CHILDREN

All sites emphasized how putting the focus on the children had sweeping effects for their work, including better officer compliance with reporting standards, stronger motivation for adult victims to accept services, better prosecution outcomes, and better unification of

*“It put a child’s face on domestic violence.”*

– Domestic violence agency advocate

effort among the CEDV partners. The goals of ensuring the safety and well-being of children in violent homes and of stopping the intergenerational transmission of violence united staff from various agencies and bolstered their implementation of a coordinated response.

## CEDV Program Implementation

### PROGRAM STRUCTURE

As per grant requirements, all grantees developed their own CEDV program protocol, with representatives from each collaborating agency participating in the process. None of the CEDV protocols fundamentally changed the existing internal protocols for any agency. The only exception was that law enforcement protocols about reporting whether children were present at domestic violence calls were either newly established or re-emphasized (some grantees admitted that officers were supposed to document the presence of children, though this was rarely done in practice). Otherwise, all staff continued to follow their internal procedures at their respective agencies. Instead, the CEDV protocols specifically outlined the parameters of the collaboration and the how each agency would coordinate its particular services with the others.

#### *Generalized Description of Response Protocols Across Sites*

CEDV grantees established a protocol for ***coordinated interagency response*** for domestic violence cases involving children and assigned at least one detective whose time was dedicated to only CEDV cases. Grantees' program structures varied, but followed a general pattern. Most often, a 911 call would dispatch patrol officers to the scene. Patrol officers were trained to document the presence of any children at the home, at the incident, or children who lived in the home but were not present at the incident (these guidelines varied a little by law enforcement agency). These reports were typically flagged somehow in law enforcement's database (and some additional paperwork was needed) and then routed to the supervising sergeant. The sergeant reviewed the reports for eligibility and then sent them to the CEDV team, including the CEDV detective, the CPS worker, and the domestic violence agency advocate (and any other key partners, like Victim-Witness). Police reports automatically went to the District Attorney. In one site, the sergeant routed the reports to the CEDV detective and domestic violence advocate, but the CEDV detective reviewed the reports for those appropriate for the CPS worker. At that point, the CEDV team would work together to investigate the case and provide services.

*"We had to change the whole culture of the law enforcement department to respond to DV calls differently—to pay attention to the kids and to the history of the family when at the call. Then we would roundtable it with our CEDV group, and there could be a coordinated response. The process was streamlined and gained steam and momentum."*  
— Law enforcement sergeant

In a couple of sites, the CEDV team would conduct home visits (post-incident) as a group. This process helped in terms of coordinating services, keeping the victim's story aligned, and letting the victim understand how the team was working together to help her. Oftentimes, the CEDV detective would be in plain clothes and the team would use an unmarked car to minimize any potential intimidation that might be felt by the victim or children. When responding as a team, staff would typically consult their respective databases for information on the family, meet at the police station, and then go to the scene together, briefing each other on the way.

In some cases, patrol officers could call the CEDV team directly for ***joint emergency response*** to the crime scene. In most sites, this coordination was possible during working hours, when the team members were already available. In three sites, this type of emergency response was also

available after hours. One site's protocol indicated that joint emergency response was always available between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m., but it was unofficially available for egregious cases during all hours. Patrol officers knew this and used the resource as necessary (some used it more than others). One site's protocol was based entirely on a model of 24/7 joint emergency response. Unlike the other sites that used the grant dollars to fund all or some of staff salary, and therefore had limited time that staff were "on the clock," this site used the grant funds to support over-time pay for staff who volunteered to be on-call for CEDV call-outs whenever they occurred. A third site had a pre-existing arrangement for 24/7 emergency response with a rotating group of domestic violence agency staff (but not with CPS), which formed the basis of their CEDV protocol. Most grantees felt that, ideally, an on-call multidisciplinary emergency response team was the optimal approach for crisis response and service delivery to these families. However, most also felt that this kind of response was too resource-intensive to sustain.

One grantee that had an existing domestic violence police unit with relatively robust response procedures and programming aimed some of its grant dollars toward the development of additional program components. These included:

1. *Public Safety Checks* during which the CEDV detective used a few over-time hours to visit families of recent CEDV calls with the domestic violence agency advocate and CPS worker. The team would talk with victims about service utilization, check for additional family needs, assess occurrence of any new crimes, follow up with safety planning and assessment, answer victim questions, and provide updates on the criminal process.
2. *Domestic Violence Apprehension Team* through which, every other month, the domestic violence unit organized a sweep, where officers would go into the field and attempt to apprehend wanted domestic violence offenders.
3. *Domestic Violence Repeat Offender* notification program, which used the CEDV database to compile a list of the top 10% of repeat domestic violence offenders with whom the CEDV detective would attempt contact, notify in writing that they have been identified as repeat offenders, inform that the District Attorney's office will take a zero-tolerance approach to prosecution for any future domestic violence crimes, and provide a list of resources (anger management, counseling, etc.).

#### *Importance of Dedicated Detective for Domestic Violence Cases*

Two grantees had detectives dedicated to domestic violence cases prior to the CEDV program. However, CEDV funds allowed the other three law enforcement agencies to assign a dedicated detective, which was an impactful infrastructure change. Because domestic violence cases differ from other criminal cases, interviewees felt that it was particularly important to have an officer who understood the dynamics of violent relationships and the mindset and circumstantial realities of victims, held compassion toward victims and families, and knew what was needed for prosecution. All grantees felt that cases received significantly better attention if there was a detective who was solely responsible for CEDV cases. This person was also frequently perceived as the cornerstone of the collaboration, providing the connection point for the partner agencies.

*"Domestic violence is the most difficult type of case you will deal with in law enforcement. You have to find a detective who is teachable and can handle kids and tough people. It's not for everybody. You also need to have a dedicated supervisor that is knowledgeable about domestic violence."*  
—Supervising lieutenant



The dedicated CEDV detective also played an essential role inside law enforcement. This person served as a resource for other officers regarding domestic violence cases and typically took on the responsibility of training officers in appropriate response and investigation tactics for domestic violence cases. Interviewees, both inside and outside of law enforcement, emphasized how critical this role was in terms of shifting the attitudes and reporting practices of officers. One lieutenant commented, *“When you have someone dedicated, she could go to briefings and get personal with the patrol deputies. If they failed to write something in a report, she would do it professionally, but she wouldn’t let them get away with it.... It was constant education. Most cops are there to bring down the robbers and burglars, and domestic violence—even though it is the one that is going to kill [someone]—always falls on the back burner. She didn’t let that happen. If you have a special detective for domestic violence, that’s what you get.”*

## COLLABORATION PARTNERS

### *Key Partners and Broader Collaborative Partners*

**Key partners** are defined as those agencies that were part of the daily operations of the grant, such as being in constant communication with each other about cases, in attendance at the regular team meetings, and involved in the protocol development. All grantees’ CEDV teams included core staff from three key partners: **law enforcement, child protective services, and a domestic violence advocacy agency** (in one case, the domestic violence advocates were from a county mental health agency that provided services for families). In nearly all cases there were one or two assigned staff from each agency, but in a few cases, there were several staff that rotated through the CEDV position and were available to respond. One grantee also counted the Victim-Witness Program and District Attorney’s Office personnel among their key partners; whereas other grantees had these agencies associated more loosely (described below).

In every case, interviewees described strong and effective working relationships among the staff from key partner agencies. A couple recalled some initial friction when the agencies were first learning how to work with each other, but explained that these growing pains quickly subsided and were replaced by impactful and valued partnerships.

When asked about the relationship between his agency and law enforcement, a supervisor from one of the domestic violence agencies highlighted the good working relationship that had developed between the dedicated CEDV advocate from his staff and the dedicated CEDV detective: *“The relationship between the detective and our response staff was dynamite. That piece of the project worked really well. One, having staff located at the police department—that worked really well. Two, the detective—the way in which he brought our advocates into the family. He would bring them to roll call, he would introduce them to other detectives and officers, he would be there during the trainings. What he communicated was that we were one of them, that we weren’t an outside entity coming in. He reinforced what we were trying to do with the grant. He helped break down barriers. Law enforcement is a closed group and not open to outsiders coming in. He and [domestic violence advocate] had open and frequent communication.”*

*“Working with [DV advocate] and [CPS worker] was awesome! I had them come to court to be present with the children at times. [CPS worker] would sit with the child and be support. [DV advocate] would sit with the victim. This unloaded a huge burden for me and provided the best level of support to the family.”*

– CEDV Detective

Grantees also had **broader collaborative partners**—that is, agencies that were affiliated with the overall CEDV effort but not necessarily involved in the day-to-day program activities. Four of

the five grantees reported the District Attorney's Office was part of their broader CEDV collaboration, but not necessarily a key partner. Two sites described having this looser affiliation with the Victim-Witness Program. One site included Parole and Probation and one involved area non-profits and shelters that aided women in crisis. One grantee mentioned having a liaison with the Family Courts system for a short period. This relationship was relevant because there was otherwise no cross-over between the family and criminal court systems. For example, a family court judge, who is in the process of determining custody cases, may not know about several domestic violence charges against one of the parents. The broader CEDV collaboration provided a place for some of this information to be shared.

#### *Benefits of Dedicated Staff: Increased Collaboration*

Identifying a dedicated CEDV staff person at each agency was key for the efficiency of the collaboration. Interviewees commented that, before the grant, there were no direct lines to trusted colleagues; there were just the systems interacting with each other, which was impersonal and inefficient. Having a point person enabled staff to directly call someone they knew and to get their questions answered immediately, rather than having to negotiate tedious and time-consuming standard referral channels and protocols. Most importantly, assigning a point person from each agency facilitated collaboration by creating personal relationships between interagency staff. These personal relationships helped established trust, which ultimately transferred more broadly throughout the organizations.

*"[CPS worker]'s relationship with [CEDV detective] was paramount to make the process smooth. She would provide information and communication to our social workers...and [detective] would provide information to the deputies. The two of them were the connection points for the overall system."*

– CPS Supervisor

#### *Changes in Interagency Relationships: Increased Trust and Access*

Interviewees at all sites acknowledged that professional relationships had technically existed between partners before the grant; however, in most cases, these relationships were limited and the interactions were primarily conducted through patrol officers in emergency situations. For example, if patrol handled a case where child abuse was obvious or the need for childcare was apparent (i.e., both parents arrested), he would call CPS. This connection existed, but it was more a service referral than a partnership. In another site, where a relationship existed between law enforcement and an area domestic violence advocacy agency, officers were often reluctant to call an advocate to the scene because they felt it hindered the investigation. Interviewees at all sites reported that the CEDV grants changed these connections into truly cooperative relationships. There were better channels of communication and collaboration. Staff at partnering agencies could be called for consultation and prevention rather than just emergency interventions, and partners grew to appreciate the services provided by their counterpart agencies. As one CEDV detective put it, *"We were constantly around each other (with all the team meetings and the co-location). We got to really know and trust each other, which was huge, because our agencies didn't have a history of doing that very well."*

A notable byproduct of the CEDV collaboration and associated change in interagency dynamics was that, in some sites, the door was opened for CPS to become involved in domestic violence cases generally. As noted above, before the CEDV grant, patrol officers would only refer to CPS if a case involved children who were physically abused or child removal was necessary. Officers would not have considered the mental/emotional effects of witnessing domestic violence as abusive or worthy of intervention or referral, and CPS would otherwise not have had a way to identi-



fy or access these at-risk families. During the CEDV grant, CPS was able to operate in a more preventive capacity. A CPS caseworker described her experience: *“Before [when I got a call from police], I used to always take a car seat with me, because in most cases, I knew I was taking the child with me, but with the CEDV grant, I’ve seen my numbers drop dramatically. Since I also work with [domestic violence advocacy agency], we collaborate and try and figure out how to quickly wrap a family with services so that I don’t have to take the children. I think I can count on one hand the number of children I’ve removed from a home in the last 3.5 years, and it’s usually because of other factors outside of domestic violence (drugs, living conditions, etc.).”*

#### ***Benefits of the Multidisciplinary Team: Drawing on Strengths From Each Agency***

Each agency brought different strengths to the table that supported the overall investigation and delivery of services. For example, some families may be reluctant to engage with law enforcement, but may respond immediately to CPS (often out of fear of having their children removed). One interviewee explained, *“We would all go out together and knock on the door to check in on the situation.... CPS would jump in to be ‘the hammer.’ It was interesting to see the response. No one was afraid of the big detectives and probation officers, but parents would really respond to the CPS worker.”* Alternatively, CPS and/or the domestic violence advocate may be uncomfortable going out to houses where their help is warranted but they feel unsafe (due to gang activity, drug activity, the suspect not in custody, etc.), and having police escorts makes service delivery possible. Further, the domestic violence agency advocate, who may have more detailed information from the victim due to the nature of the confidentiality agreement, could collaborate with Victim-Witness advocates, who could lobby the District Attorney to court order, for example, treatment for the offender.

Interviewees felt that the integration of these roles and abilities helped ensure a stronger and more comprehensive “safety net” of informed service providers. All team members felt like they could do their job better working in the context of this multidisciplinary and cooperative team structure. One law enforcement interviewee remarked, *“The relationships helped flesh out the details. If a victim did not open up to law enforcement, she might open up to the domestic violence agency advocate, or vice versa. Then, as a team, when we debrief, we know what’s going on.”* Interviewees felt that the multidisciplinary team approach was critical to getting the full story on families and linking them up with needed resources (including specialized investigators and interviewers for children, which hold up better in court). This teamwork supported comprehensive service provision and also helped see cases through prosecution.

#### ***Benefits of Involving the District Attorney***

Four of five grantees noted the importance of a collaborative relationship with the District Attorney’s Office, even if they were not a key partner. Understanding what is necessary to convict an offender, and how best to support the victim to comply during that process, is key to successful prosecution. In this regard, the relationships between the District Attorney and CEDV partner agencies were symbiotic. If law enforcement knew from the District Attorney what kinds of evidence best supported prosecution (e.g., recorded statements from victims), then they would do a better job collecting it. If the District Attorney knew the details and background on a case (i.e., information known by CEDV partners), then they could augment their prosecution strategy and increase the chances of conviction. If the domestic violence advocate (or Victim-Witness advocate) understood the legal proceedings and was updated on the case’s status, then she could more effectively help the victim navigate the process. If the victim was less afraid and more aware of

the process (i.e., she knew what to expect and felt supported by system), she would be more likely to engage with the detective and District Attorney to meet the needs of the investigation.

## COMMUNICATION AND TEAM FUNCTIONING

All grantees indicated that the communication between the key CEDV partners was unprecedented and critical for the success of the program. Interviewees were asked about a few specific aspects of interagency communication and team functioning, including regular team meetings, information sharing, co-location, cross-agency trainings, and use of a shared database.

### *Regular Meetings*

All sites reported that, during the CEDV grant, the core team of key partners met every other week (more often as caseloads demanded). For all sites, these regular meetings included staff from law enforcement, CPS, and the domestic violence agency, and for one grantee, it also included the District Attorney and Victim-Witness advocates. At two sites, these meetings involved only the front-line staff working the cases; at three sites, the supervisors from each key partner agency also attended regularly. For those sites where the supervisors did not attend the biweekly team meetings, monthly meetings were held that included these representatives and other partners as necessary. For all teams, these regular meetings centered around detailed case review, giving all team members the opportunity to provide information and insight on each family and to stay current on the status of each case in terms of the investigation, court processes, service provision, and general needs and well-being.

*"I think the interagency communication was the best part of the collaboration, because in the end it served the public better and we were able to get things done that otherwise would have been lost in the shuffle."*

– Deputy District Attorney

Three grantees described broader coalitions regarding domestic violence in their area that met on a less frequent basis and in which the CEDV team participated. These coalitions included, for example, a county-wide domestic violence taskforce and multidisciplinary roundtables of domestic violence related agencies from various areas, such as community service agencies, Superior Court, parole and probation, Sheriff's Office, and immigration. In contrast to the CEDV team meetings that focused on front-line work, these broader coalition meetings tended to be wide in scope and to lean toward policy creation and agency-level partnership development.

Two grantees established unique meetings to meet certain needs. For example, one grantee had a quarterly meeting of key partner agency supervisors and the grant administrator to ensure that grant requirements were met and sufficient administrative buy-in and oversight existed within each agency. Another grantee organized semi-annual "meet-and-greet" events with the CEDV team and the Deputy District Attorneys assigned to domestic violence cases in the county, which are positions that rotate regularly. Having a scheduled time to touch base helped alleviate any problems that may have otherwise occurred from the staff turnover due to the rotation.

At all sites, when CEDV funding ended, regular meetings of key CEDV staff also ended. At the time of the site visits, only the one site with remaining grant funds was holding team meetings.

### *Backbone of Cross-Agency Communication and Collaboration*

All interviewees indicated that the regular team meetings were critical to keeping everyone on the same page and to fostering a true sense of teamwork. According to one supervising sergeant, these meetings "helped get rid of the silos." The joint discussions at these meetings helped part-

ners better understand the totality of the case and their role in it and to better manage overall service provision.

Grantees emphasized the substantial amount of communication that happened outside of the meetings. At most sites, the core team members were in constant (often daily) communication with each other about cases. One CEDV detective stated, *“I loved my team; all of us. Everyone was open and honest. If I couldn’t reach them at their desks, I could shoot them a text message and they would respond quickly. There was terrific communication. Nobody was unwilling to work on a case.”* At sites where the daily communication was less consistent, the team meetings were especially important opportunities to get feedback and insight from partners.

These meetings helped to solidify relationships between staff at the different agencies. Interviewees acknowledge that after the CEDV grant ended, these relationships still existed, which was really helpful, but the overall collaboration did not continue to function in the same way. Several interviewees, even those at sites where interagency co-location was maintained after the grant, described a decline in the active collaboration and a trend toward staff working in relative isolation again. They attributed the early communication patterns to the CEDV grant requirements (e.g., regular meetings, case reviews) providing a structure that held the collaborative functioning together. One sergeant, whose agency maintained co-location with its CEDV partners for years after the grant, described how staff now works on the same domestic violence cases alongside each other but with minimal coordination. In this environment, he said, collaboration is *“hit-and-miss.”*

#### *Effective Means of Cross-Agency Training and Education*

The regular meetings provided a space for partners to learn and clarify what each agency did and what their respective roles and responsibilities were. One CEDV detective commented that, before the grant, law enforcement officers would have a general understanding of services, make a referral, and then not know anything. With the CEDV team, she learned exactly what services were available and how referrals would be handled, and she was given follow-up information from the other agencies about how victims were doing. She felt that this knowledge helped her do her job better because she knew how the victims were doing and what services they were receiving—so, for example, if one victim was fully engaged with the domestic violence advocate, but another was not, the detective could focus her energies on supporting the unserved victim rather than duplicating efforts with the woman already receiving services. She felt this kind of communication and education helped reduce the duplication of effort across agencies in general.

*“Officers rarely know about follow-up on cases. So, when we hear the domestic violence advocate say, ‘The victim is getting services,’ we feel good. The meetings validated for us that the team approach was working.”*

– Law enforcement lieutenant

The exchange of information, and associated benefits, was not unidirectional. One law enforcement interviewee remarked that the meetings gave officers the opportunity to educate CPS and the domestic violence advocates on criminal justice processes. This helped partners to better understand, for example, why a case would be dropped and how they may be able to better support the prosecution efforts with other clients. In all cases, CEDV team members could bring what they learned about their partners back to their home agencies. When this transfer was done well, there was a constant flow of information and education throughout the system.

One lieutenant summed up the importance of the team meetings for cross-agency education and the evolution of an effective collaboration: *“We communicated well. We all understood each*

*other's roles and what services we could provide and how far we could go. For example, CPS and the domestic violence advocate have confidentiality issues that law enforcement doesn't have, so we knew what areas to cover and what not to. We had to learn this, though. We didn't know each other's roles well to begin with, and we learned where the boundaries were by stepping on them. Once we learned what we could share and how we could best work together, we did great. CEDV helped us to better understand what each entity did, what their roles and responsibilities were, what they needed to do their job well. We really learned a lot."*

### **Information Sharing**

Despite great communication among key partners, all grantees reported considerable challenges with cross-agency information sharing due to the confidentiality protocols of individual agencies. In general, police reports are publicly accessible and could be freely shared with partners, but CPS and domestic violence advocacy agencies had policies that disallowed staff from sharing information with any outside entity. Interviewees understood the sensitivity but felt that the collaboration was frequently hindered by this limitation. One officer noted, *"I could give them a copy of the police report, but we couldn't discuss things that were important about the victim. We were on the same team, but our hands were tied regarding sharing information."* A couple of interviewees expressed concern about potentially harmful effects in certain cases, such as when the domestic violence advocate cannot tell the detective that the victim is in shelter or that victim has disclosed additional crimes, or when CPS cannot disclose information about abuse/neglect cases, even if it includes a mother who has a history of abuse toward children other than her own who is staying at the domestic violence agency shelter. Each site seemed to develop its own solution for these obstacles. Two grantees implemented an agency-level Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that allowed certain information to be shared. Some interviewees indicated that these MOUs were not as comprehensive as was necessary, but still helped considerably.

Another site did not implement a formal MOU but spent substantial amounts of time repairing a historically contentious relationship between law enforcement and CPS. Supervisors from both agencies, when interviewed separately, told a similar story about the history between their agencies being adversarial and there being a substantial amount of red tape in the way of an effective collaboration. Both credited the CEDV collaboration with ironing out those issues and paving the way for more collaborative communication. The law enforcement supervisor commented, *"At the beginning, there were barriers due to oversensitive blockage, rules, and protocols. We had no communication with CPS. Our communication was always negative. Once we were able to communicate with them openly, things happened much faster. The communication completely changed after trust was established,"* and the CPS supervisor noted, *"I have been here for 20 years. Our communication with law enforcement was very different as far as being able to get information as it came out. The CEDV detective was key at keeping us updated on the prosecution of the perpetrator and the safety of the victims. Prior to CEDV, many incidents did not get reported to us through law enforcement channels."*

### **Considerable Hurdle**

Information sharing and negotiating individual agency confidentiality protocols was clearly one of the largest hurdles for grantees. Sites appeared to work their way around the biggest obstacles to keep the collaboration functioning, through both formal channels (implementing an MOU) and informal ones. Interviewees at a couple of sites revealed that sometimes staff shared confidential information informally because they felt that the resulting benefit to the family outweighed the potential policy violation. In all cases, grantees' strong work in developing con-

sistent and effective communication channels among their key staff seemed somewhat hindered by agency policy about what could technically be communicated. In this way, the CEDV grants appeared to have broken new ground in terms of interagency communication and collaboration and perhaps could end up being a driving force for policy review and/or revision.

### *Co-Location*

Four of five grantees implemented some manner of co-location during the CEDV grant, meaning that staff from different agencies had offices in the law enforcement building. Two grantees had staff from all key partners co-located at the police station, and two grantees had staff from one partner co-located with law enforcement (one had a CPS worker and one had a domestic violence advocate). All four sites had some sort of co-located arrangement with at least one partner prior to the CEDV grant. Three of the four sites augmented their co-located staff when the CEDV program started, and one did not change. One grantee did not formally implement co-location, although all interviewees independently reported that team members from both CPS and the domestic violence agency were in the police station at least twice per week.

### *Increased Efficiency*

Interviewees from sites that implemented co-location extolled the efficiencies it enabled. They described how being situated so closely to one another streamlined communication, increased the ability to keep everyone updated on cases, and provided for continual on-the-job informal cross-agency training. Co-location also made joint response easier, because staff were immediately available to jump into the car together. Everyone agreed that joint response, when it was possible, was most effective. Co-location also granted partner agency staff quicker access to information, specifically police reports and victim information, which importantly shortened the time from incident to first contact. One interviewee felt that co-location was the most impactful aspect of the CEDV grant and felt that the team would struggle to maintain the high caliber of services without it.

*“Co-location of all the partner agencies was a big change. It allowed for more collaborated response and more convenient and streamlined communication. It got us all on the same page. We were more colleagues, versus two separate agencies working with the same family.”*

– CEDV detective

### *Built Trust and Team Identity*

Several interviewees noted that, beyond the efficiencies, co-location created a true feeling of teamwork and camaraderie and served to bond the CEDV team members. Perhaps most importantly, it fostered the development of trust among the key staff from different agencies. Some interviewees noted that these relationships often extended beyond the CEDV program to foster interagency collaboration in other areas. Consultation and referrals could now more easily go in both directions—that is, if CPS got a child abuse case with drug or gang crimes listed on the record, they could ask for law enforcement help, and if law enforcement received a non-CEDV case that entailed suspected child abuse or neglect, they could reach out to the CPS worker for help. One supervisor noted the importance of identifying appropriate staff, as not all social workers can comfortably function in a police environment.

*“You get to know the people you work with. When you are co-located, they become your co-workers.”*

– CPS caseworker



### Reasons for Not Co-locating

When co-location was not implemented, supervisors most often cited staff time allocation and space appropriateness as the rationale. Specifically, when partner agency staff were only 50% on the CEDV grant and 50% on other tasks at their agency, it was not always feasible to break up their time in large blocks. It often made more sense for them to be at their office, attending to their usual duties with the flexibility to respond to CEDV calls as they came up. Appropriateness of the space also mattered, as some supervisors noted that the police station did not always have adequate areas for private client meetings or counseling sessions.

### Cross-Agency Trainings

Formal cross-agency training for CEDV team members was infrequent. One grantee reported implementing formal trainings among all partnering agencies at the start of the grant and any time there was staff turnover. However, all other grantees indicated that the training of the core CEDV team members primarily happened informally through team meetings and consistent conversation and case coordination. All interviewees felt that this informal on-the-job education was comprehensive and beneficial. One law enforcement interviewee commented, *“Learning about each other’s processes and goals was key. We get locked into our processes and can’t see another point of view. We all came to understand that the perspective of each agency is different and that flexing helps and enhances what is possible for the collaboration.”*

*“We received glowing responses from the officers about how [these trainings] improved their ability to respond in a more sensitive manner. It increased their awareness of the dynamics that take place in violent relationships. The officers were able to better respond to the victims because they had a better understanding of domestic violence.”*  
– Domestic violence advocate

In contrast, all grantees had key partner agencies conduct roll call trainings with patrol officers (i.e., brief trainings provided to patrol officers while they are gathered immediately prior to their shift). Two grantees also had the District Attorney train patrol officers, and one had Victim-Witness present information about available services for victims. Most grantees emphasized the responsibility of the CEDV detective and/or supervising sergeant/ lieutenant to continually train patrol officers with regard to the CEDV protocol specifically and domestic violence cases generally. This training occurred in most sites by incorporating domestic violence modules into existing training protocols, including new officer training and Advanced Officer Training. Such training typically addressed adequate evidence collection and CEDV reporting protocols, stressed the importance of listing children in the report and interviewing child witnesses, provided officers with a deeper insight into victims’ state of mind and the reality of their circumstances, and offered an overview of the services available through the CEDV team.

The CEDV detective at one site conducted a formal training for the case workers in the county CPS office. The CEDV detectives at two sites conducted formal trainings for the staff of the affiliated domestic violence advocacy agencies, and one presented to the victims residing in one of the shelters. In these instances, the detectives explained the law enforcement response and legal/prosecution process for domestic violence cases.

### Necessity of Cross-Agency Trainings

Formal trainings on domestic violence and on the needs/perspectives/services of partner agencies were necessary for patrol officers, because patrol represented a critical piece of the program process that existed outside of the immediate CEDV team. The entire CEDV response hinged on

patrol officers understanding and following through on the correct reporting and evidence collection protocols and communicating with the supervising sergeant. Simply put, the CEDV response was only triggered for a family if patrol indicated the presence of children. If patrol did not include children in the report, the team never knew about the opportunity to intervene. Because patrol officers were not part of the core collaboration, they did not have the benefit of the constant communication and informal education among partner agencies; thus, formal training and ongoing reminders for them were necessary.

In contrast, most interviewees did not think that formal cross-agency trainings were necessary among the immediate CEDV team. This perspective was because the key partners were in constant contact with each other and shared substantial information through these informal channels. One interviewee mentioned that the regular team meetings provided mini-trainings all the time.

### *Shared Database*

Four of the five sites were able to build a local, shared database that was useable by staff from their key partner agencies. One site was never able to implement a shared database, but was able to track the relevant indicators with the existing law enforcement database and supplement the grant reporting with data kept separately by their partners.

### *Information Sharing Difficulties*

All of the CEDV databases had similar structures. They were all housed by the law enforcement agency for their site, because making them Web-based and accessible to staff in other offices presented insurmountable security challenges. The systems extracted data directly from the police reports (e.g., case number, date of incident, address, involved parties, penal codes), which was an efficient measure. However, due to issues of confidentiality, none of the CEDV systems were ever able to link directly to the existing databases of the key partner agencies. Thus, staff from CPS and domestic violence agencies (and any other collaborators, such as Victim-Witness advocates) needed to manually enter their data into the CEDV database, while still using their home agency's system for their casework. Data they entered into the CEDV database was limited and pertained specifically to the grant objectives, such as service referrals made, services provided to victims, dates and methods of contacts, and, in some cases, updated demographic and contact information on victims and children (ages, schools attended, etc.). All of this information was already logged into their home agency's database, so manually entering it into the CEDV database was perceived as duplicative effort, time-consuming and burdensome, that usurped time they could be providing services to families.

*"The goal was that everyone would just use the CEDV database, that it would be a one-stop shop for everyone working on these cases. However, that didn't happen because there were too many proprietary issues for each agency and the data they entered. It was my hope that it would eliminate the redundancy, but it didn't ever get to that point. It was too hard to do. There were a lot of barriers to sharing data or changing the database used by each of the systems. It's not in use anymore."*

– Supervising sergeant

### *Database Sustainability*

Of the four grantees that constructed a shared data system, two were no longer in use at the time of the site visits. Interviewees at these sites explained that, once the grant funds ended, there were no personnel available to keep up with the data entry and that the utility of the database reports (which were geared toward the grant reporting requirements) was limited for law enforcement. Of the two grantees with still functioning databases, one site had adapted it for use with

another domestic violence grant program. Interviewees at this site explained that because the current grant was not focused on children, the database fields pertaining to the CEDV program were no longer utilized, and the data collected were used solely for the purpose of grant compliance reporting (i.e., not for collaborative case management and tracking). The other site had current CEDV grant funds, so the database was still operating as part of the program.

All grantees described the difficulties inherent in creating the database. Most had several challenges getting the system up and running, including issues of staffing (some grantees had internal staff who could build it, others had to subcontract the work), security, and data storage. Because it took grantees some time to get the system functional, but they needed to report on numbers that reflected the grant period, they had to back-enter data from the early part of the project. This task was expensive and time-consuming for most teams.

### *Impact on CEDV Team Functioning*

Most interviewees noted that the shared database did not strongly impact the work of the CEDV team. It did not change how cases were handled by any of the agencies (they all followed their same protocols anyway), and because the key partner staff were attending frequent team meetings and remaining in constant contact between meetings, the database did not noticeably augment team communication. However, a few interviewees noted that the database did help keep a current tab, accessible by everyone, regarding what services victims were getting and where cases were in prosecution. It was more a reference resource (i.e., staff could look up recent activity) than an active collaborative instrument. One law enforcement supervisor explained, *“Not having a database didn’t impact the day-to-day communications of the CEDV team. They were really in touch and collaborative. The database would have really helped with data retrieval, because no one could keep the details of hundreds of cases accurately in their heads. When we start asking, ‘What happened on this? How many times were they contacted? etc.,’ we had to check 10 different places to find out what happened. It would have been easier to have one place to go for all of that information. Retrieval and reporting would have really been improved.”*

Interviewees from a few sites commented that, if the database were to be functional over the course of years, it could provide good insight into families over time. The ability to track longitudinal developments in families—specifically, tracking recidivism—would be a strong asset for the partners, including the District Attorney. However, most noted that the design of the current database did not render it useful enough to keep alive after the grant.

*Single Case Example: One Grantee’s Data System.* One grantee had a shared database that was functional at the time of the site visit. As described above, the system was housed by law enforcement. The CPS workers and domestic violence advocates did not use the shared database for case management purposes. For confidentiality reasons, they had to use their own databases and perform some duplicative data entry into the shared CEDV system, which was burdensome. This system linked to the larger law enforcement database and extracted data on domestic violence cases since well before the CEDV grant (2002 to present), which allowed the tracking of cases and families over time. Further, the CEDV detectives used this system for case management purposes, so it included more than just data on the initial incident and it was continually updated with information on the investigation and prosecution, therefore becoming a viable source of current information for key partners. Additionally, this grantee had multiple domestic violence detectives (most other grantees had only one) and felt that cases benefitted from a rapport between victims and detectives. So, the CEDV supervising sergeant would use the CEDV database to assign cases to detectives, specifically so that families with repeat occurrences had



the same detective each time. This grantee also used the data in this system to identify the top percentage of repeat offenders for targeted follow-up purposes. It remains to be seen whether this data system will sustain after the CEDV grant ends, but it is worth noting the extent to which this grantee incorporated the system into law enforcement's typical processes, whereas most other sites saw the system primarily as a means to meet grant requirements.

## LEADERSHIP

All grantees agreed that effective leadership was a critical ingredient for program success and sustainability. Strong leadership was important from all partner agencies, but especially important within law enforcement because patrol officers were the starting point for the process and committed detectives were frequently the cornerstone of the collaborating agencies. If officers were not empowered and encouraged to handle domestic violence cases in a comprehensive manner, such a response would not be possible. Grantees varied in their experience of project leadership. Some reported having supervising lieutenants and sergeants who vocally advocated the importance of police response to domestic violence cases, and in these sites, the CEDV staff felt supported. In contrast, sites with supervisors who were less engaged or frequently replaced (i.e., staff turnover) had to struggle within their environment to accomplish tasks in ways that other sites with more supportive supervisors did not have to.

*"Now that the grant has ended, there is no more requirement to continue with the meetings or the other activities that were so helpful. The lead sergeant is the key to success, but the impact of leadership is even above him. It goes to the level of chief, who dictates what is prioritized and what gets sustained and done. If that person is not bought-in, it won't happen. Consistency is hard to maintain with staff turnover, especially at the top."*

– Supervising sergeant

Having strong leadership within law enforcement meant that the CEDV team could focus on cases and maximizing program implementation, instead of spending time on administrative and bureaucratic issues. One site in particular reported struggling against the different agendas and priorities of people up the chain of command. Despite having an invested CEDV detective who, by all interviewee accounts, was the cornerstone of the collaboration, the team suffered from persistent red tape that hamstrung their progress. For example, innovative ideas about education and outreach programs never materialized because of the bureaucratic hurdles that they could not surmount without an advocate in the upper managerial levels.

Interviewees noted that, aside from funding, leadership was the most important factor in terms of program sustainability. If the supervisors of the agencies were not willing to support the continued incorporation of the collaborative protocols and to maintain training and education for staff, then the team efforts would eventually dissipate. This characteristic especially applied to law enforcement, in terms of sergeants continually training and pushing patrol officers to maintain the CEDV reporting and referring protocols.

## SUSTAINABILITY

Of the four grantees whose funding had ended, varying levels of the CEDV program had been sustained post-grant. Generally speaking, the sites that successfully integrated elements of the CEDV program into regular agency functioning were able to sustain more than those that sourced program activities externally (e.g., solely using over-time). However, even among those sites that sought to integrate CEDV into their typical functioning, there was considerable variability in the extent to which CEDV activities continued after the grant.

### *More Likely to Be Sustained*

The CEDV program components that were most likely to be sustained, in whole or in part, pertained to the law enforcement reporting structures, co-location arrangements, training protocols, and interpersonal relationships. As part of the CEDV program, some grantees changed **reporting protocols** for patrol officers, specifically by implementing a means to record whether and how children were present at domestic violence calls. Interviewees at these sites indicated that those reporting structures were still in place, but several interviewees (from law enforcement, CPS, District Attorney) felt that officer compliance had waned since the grant ended.

Two sites were able to maintain at least a portion of their **co-located staff**, most of whom had also been co-located prior to the CEDV. Co-location seemed to be sustained when both agencies felt there was a continued benefit for their own goals—i.e., one domestic violence advocate who remained co-located stated that her supervisors wanted her to stay because having a physical presence at the police station allowed her quick access to information and recent victims that was not possible for workers situated elsewhere—and when alternative funding was available to support that staff member’s position. However, interviewees noted that co-location alone was not sufficient to keep an effective collaboration. One law enforcement supervisor commented, *“They all know each other, but they are working in relative isolation.”*

All grantees mentioned that, during CEDV, their officer **training protocols** had been expanded to include some specific education regarding domestic violence and that this adaptation to the training protocol was a lasting change. Though the periodic roll call trainings were not generally sustained, most sites were able to fold the CEDV protocol into training for new officers and/or Advanced Officer Training modules. One site went as far as to have its CEDV protocol added to the domestic violence section of their bureau’s “General Orders,” which outlines the basic guidelines for officers to handle cases. These procedures, taken directly from the CEDV protocol, now include requirements that children should be listed in the report and guidelines for taking statements from children 5 years and older. Law enforcement interviewees report that these changes in training materials and content are likely to be sustained over time, although they also expressed concern about the absence of supervisory follow-through necessary to enforce compliance and to support skill development and adoption, particularly among newer officers. One lieutenant commented on the impact he perceived when the roll call trainings and supervisory follow-through waned, *“Since I had the opportunity to work until the end of the program, I could see the differences. With the absence of regular training and reminders, there was no motivation from the officers. A lot of things we were practicing fell by the way side unless the officer took an interest in domestic violence. You can see the quality of the program fade away. It was like torture to see after putting so much work into the CEDV.”*

The **interpersonal relationships** that developed between key partners on the CEDV team were generally sustained. Interviewees described having truly collegial and trusting relationships with each other, and they felt that they could still easily contact one another. However, since many of them were relocated when the grant funding ended, these relationships were not as effective as they had been. Their ability to function as the key point people for their agencies to cooperate was diminished, as was the overall vitality of the collaboration. One interviewee lamented that the relationships would fade after awhile, especially with turnover, if there was nothing in place to reinforce or re-establish them.

### *Less Likely to Be Sustained*

The CEDV program elements that were less likely to be sustained included regular team meetings, dedicated personnel, joint emergency response, and the shared database. No grantee was able to sustain **regular team meetings** after the grant ended. All interviewees commented that this change presented a significant loss to the team-oriented effort. Even in sites where co-location was maintained, without the team meetings, the sense of collaboration was lost. One supervising sergeant, whose agency maintained some co-location, commented, *“During the grant, when I was in charge, there was a more coordinated response than there is now. We had informal daily meetings and formal weekly meetings. These were very important to keep the agencies coordinated and reduce duplication of effort. Now, everyone is back to doing their own thing. They are back to the silos with some redundancies. During CEDV, we had more emphasis on the coordination of services. Currently, they are not meeting to discuss cases or anything; the coordination has gotten lost. The meetings are critical for the coordination of the response. The meetings (set time to discuss cases) weren’t sustained, which has impacted everything. Since it’s not an active grant now, people don’t see the need to do that.”*

The CEDV grant enabled grantees to **dedicate staff** (one detective, one CPS worker, and one domestic violence advocate) to cases. Prior to the grant, two law enforcement agencies had detectives dedicated to domestic violence cases; this existing structure helped in terms of sustainability because the focus remained. However, the other three agencies did not have dedicated detectives prior to the grant; domestic violence cases were spread across multiple detectives, intermingled with other crimes such as robbery, burglary, and homicide. These agencies suffered a significant loss when the CEDV funds ended. In some cases, that detective lost his/her position entirely (i.e., his/her salary was a budget line item that was lost), and in others, detectives went back to being generalists and domestic violence cases were once again sporadically assigned to whomever had space on their caseload. CPS and domestic violence advocacy agencies also suffered the loss or re-assignment of personnel when additional funds could not be found to continue the CEDV positions. Unfortunately, the collaboration and coordinated team approach was often diminished by staff attrition. One interviewee from CPS described how this loss impacted her work, *“There’s been a drop. We don’t get as many calls from law enforcement regarding domestic violence because the CEDV grant is no longer running. It’s been difficult to maintain communication between each agency because the tools have been taken away. Now that they’re gone, we’re back to how we normally did it before the grant: a lack of services and communication in general. We relied on the grant to get a lot of information from the Sheriff’s station. Now we don’t have access to the documents or information that we used to. We don’t have a personal contact anymore. Things that took a matter of minutes take much longer now.”*

*“We don’t have the resources that we did to get in and help the children and victim right away. Having a dedicated deputy and the workers was what made the program work. We still talk with CPS but it’s not as open and consistent like it used to be. We don’t have a detective who can directly call them. There is always going to be that trust issue.”*

– Supervising lieutenant

**Joint response** has also not been sustained by any of the agencies. Interviewees from the grantee that functioned entirely on over-time reported that their model was not financially sustainable without a continual (and, given budget cutbacks, external) source of funding. Respondents from other grantees that, through the constant communication among partners, were able to quickly mobilize their team to respond to calls together also were unable to sustain their joint response

efforts. The ability to coordinate and implement active joint emergency response disappeared with the grant dollars.

### *Other Factors Impacting Sustainability*

All grantees reported that sustainability efforts, and their work in general, had been complicated by difficult economic times. Drastic budget cuts and staff layoffs resulted in reductions in available personnel, which left many teams short-staffed and with increasingly high caseloads. This economic reality impacted the police forces in that there were fewer detectives covering more cases. In this context, the emphasis on the importance of CEDV and on the completeness of reports has waned. As the economy gains momentum, new personnel can be hired. This recovery helps in terms of increasing available person power, but presents the challenge of introducing a large proportion of untrained staff into the field. For example, the police force can grow in numbers but with new officers who are not experienced with domestic violence and who were not around for the more intensive training available during the CEDV program. A substantial amount of institutional knowledge gets lost with widespread turnover.

Two grantees expressed some difficulty with Cal OES's grant administration process that may have impacted their ability to sustain grant activities. Interviewees at one site described some confusion regarding the requirements and ability to obtain extended funding. This group believed they were on track to receive an additional year of funding and felt that the messages from their project officer confirmed this belief. This additional funding was central to their plan for sustaining program activities, and they were surprised and saddened to discover later that they were ultimately not eligible for such an award. The loss of the funds, and inadequate time to create an alternative sustainability plan, led to them having to disband their CEDV team. This grantee and another described encountering challenges as a result of multiple turnovers in their Cal OES project officers. They felt they received inconsistent information across people, which created some confusion about the funder's expectations with regard to appropriate expenditures and strategies.

## **Perceptions of CEDV Program Impact**

### **BIGGEST OVERALL IMPACT**

When asked about the biggest overall impact of the CEDV program, interviewees provided multiple responses. Generally, they centered around:

- ***Improvements in law enforcement officers' understanding of domestic violence generally and its impact on children specifically.*** Traditionally, law enforcement, CPS, and the courts were primarily concerned with the physical abuse of children. CEDV programs put new emphasis on the effects on children of mental and emotional abuse and of exposure to violence between adults in the home. Some interviewees felt that having CEDV protocols integrated into the existing law enforcement training and guidance materials was an indication of the strong impact the program had exerted on the police force and were optimistic about that impact becoming institutionalized. Further, due to this new understanding and to having access to services through the CEDV partners, interviewees felt that law enforcement officers were likely to attend to domestic violence cases in a more compassionate and effective way.
- ***Improvements in the prosecution of domestic violence cases.*** Having law enforcement detectives focused solely on domestic violence cases enabled more comprehensive and competent investigations and more streamlined communication with the District Attor-

ney. One District Attorney explained the impact this focus had on prosecution, *“Having one detective specialized in this, and being the central person to talk to, was very helpful. He would call us and let us know that ‘it was a great case although it may look bad on paper.’ He would give us the feel of the case. There was a lot more communication that helped with the work on the case....I have four different police agencies that come here regularly, and we don’t have that kind of communication with a detective at any of them. This program got us speaking together and got the investigations to work more smoothly.”* The collaboration also strengthened the prosecution by facilitating the process. From one District Attorney’s perspective, having CPS and Parole/Probation on board helped motivate victims and offenders to cooperate with the criminal justice process.

- ***Improvements in connecting victims to services.*** From the perspective of the non-law enforcement partners, one of the biggest changes was the dismantling of prior barriers to the referral process. Before the CEDV program, law enforcement officers would refer only those cases they felt were appropriate for services (e.g., CPS would be called when child abuse was obvious or child removal was needed; Victim-Witness would be called when a victim was particularly in need). During the CEDV grant, there was either joint emergency response or joint post-incident notification, so all key partners received information about cases immediately, and each agency could assess which victims may benefit from their services. Further, the CEDV collaboration dramatically reduced the response time for services. Agencies were able to identify and contact victims more quickly, which started services faster, engaged them in the criminal justice process from the beginning, and created rapport immediately in the wake of the crisis incident. Advocates noted the critical nature of the timing of the response; if the referral took a few days to reach the advocate, the victim and the offender may have reconciled by then and it would be too late to intervene. One domestic violence advocate stated, *“We could get the child services much quicker. I was able to talk with the parents right away, rather than waiting for the District Attorney to refer. There was a decreased wait time. I didn’t have to wait until the court saw the family and mandated treatment. I didn’t have to wait for referrals.”*
- ***Improved interagency communication and functioning.*** Some interviewees noted that the establishment of an effective interagency collaboration was the most impactful change. Aligning professionals from distinct backgrounds, who often have felt at odds with each other, behind a common goal and seeing a true team emerge was considered a substantial success by some. One CPS worker described the biggest change as *“...understanding what the domestic violence advocacy agency, CPS, and law enforcement roles are and how we can complement each other rather than fight each other. Most agencies have a lot of tunnel vision regarding procedures and that’s the way it goes. We’ve learned a lot about each other’s procedures.”* These interviewees recognized the importance of the interagency communication, education, and collaboration for the health of the overall system and for the communities they serve.

Some interviewees also offered their opinions on elements of the CEDV program that had the biggest impact on program effectiveness. These included: (1) co-location, which some interviewees felt streamlined communication in a unique and effective way; (2) impeccable and unbiased communication to keep all partners on the same page at all times; (3) identification of key CEDV staff who had specific knowledge about domestic violence and were keenly motivated to intervene with this special class of victims; (4) assignment of one dedicated CEDV staff person within each agency so that there is a point person in each collaborating entity who becomes a



trusted colleague; and the most frequently noted factor, (5) a dedicated domestic violence detective in the law enforcement agency. Interviewees from all agencies saw enormous benefit to having a dedicated detective, someone who was educated about and invested in domestic violence intervention, who understood the detailed needs for successful prosecution, who could be the point person for all of the collaborating agencies, and who could facilitate the way for partners to establish trust and credibility within the law enforcement culture.

## CHANGE IN OFFICERS' RESPONSE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES WITH CHILDREN

### *Change in Officers' Perceptions*

Interviewees thought that the CEDV program helped shift law enforcement officers' perception of domestic violence cases. In particular, they thought the CEDV trainings helped officers better understand the complex dynamics of violent families and the mindset of domestic violence victims. As one domestic violence agency advocate explained, *"They are more understanding about the dynamics of domestic violence, instead of being not very understanding and supportive of the victim. They are more apt to advocate for the client."* This shift included an increased understanding of the impact of domestic violence exposure on children. Whereas historically many officers may have ignored a child in the home who was not a direct victim, the CEDV program enlightened officers about the negative effects of violence exposure on children and how to best handle children during the response and investigation, as children can be viable witnesses. An interviewee from CPS stated, *"I think [officers] were attentive and responsive to children, but I think that the understanding of what the incident does to children wasn't there. The training they received during the grant was a huge help."*

*"Before CEDV, we would just arrest the guy and be done. During CEDV, a whole different atmosphere developed. There was a genuine concern for child functioning and family well-being—being able to provide services was the key. I'm sure we really impacted some of those families."*  
— Supervising lieutenant

Interviewees felt this education, combined with the partner agencies' support, helped officers demonstrate increased empathy for victims and children, a transition from their typical criminal focus. One supervisory lieutenant remarked that the CEDV program succeeded in getting officers to perceive the event of domestic violence differently. Instead of just seeing the criminal element, as they did before the grant and are generally wont to do, they started looking at the overall picture of the family—e.g., the condition of the house, whether there is food in the cabinets, the well-being of the children. The CEDV program pushed officers to develop a larger awareness of the family context, gave them resources to offer the victims, and put the emphasis on the children, which provided additional motivation for officers to intervene effectively. It changed the goal from getting an arrest to breaking the cycle of violence in these homes. As one interviewee noted, officers starting being "less cop-like" and using a more compassionate approach to these cases.

Interviewees noted that these changes in perspective and awareness ultimately impacted how cases were handled. For example, officers better understood how to engage victims and children in investigations and how to report and collect evidence. One CEDV detective stated, *"Officers never used to charge/prosecute misdemeanor child abuse for the emotional side before. If the kid is just standing there in the corner, crying because he saw daddy beat up mommy, they weren't attended to. But after we got the grant, we realized that was something we needed to focus on. Now we have the DA's office on board and if there's a kid present, they're always added to the report and it's flagged as a domestic violence case with kids involved."* One domestic violence

advocate had received feedback that the CEDV program had increased victims' comfort discussing their situations with officers. Another interviewee said, *"We had the opportunity to educate the officers about the dynamics of domestic violence, which had the largest effect on officers. Now they understand why it's important to document and be thorough with their investigations."*

### *Change in Officer Protocols*

Interviewees at each site mentioned the importance of the changes in officer protocols. A couple of grantees noted that, even if an officer's perception of domestic violence did not change, the revised protocols would still positively impact the handling of those cases. Grantees explained that the CEDV program put a strong emphasis on including children in the reports and on interviewing child witnesses. Patrol officers became more thorough about reporting who was in the house and recording signs of ongoing domestic violence. There was also increased emphasis on prosecution, which changed standards for evidence gathering. In one site, the CEDV detective trained all officers to take a video/audio recorded statement from the victim (and others) at the scene, which would hold up better in court if the victim recanted. One interviewee noted changes she observed in officers' interactions with victims, *"Law enforcement was trained better in documentation in regard to injuries. Previously, pictures were not taken when injuries occurred. I saw [officers] take the time to come back later and take pictures. The documentation with children's statements also improved. The non-criminal side of things—like assisting someone getting a restraining order, which is not a quick or easy thing to do—before CEDV, no one would take the time to do that."* One sergeant noted the emotional impact these protocol changes had on victims, *"Before CEDV, I can't really tell you what happened to the children after the call. I know that when law enforcement enters the home, children are often very scared, but now with CEDV, once the detective shows up, in plain clothes, and CPS sit down and talk to them and explain that the kids weren't the cause of the problem, you really see the children calm down and open up."*

*"Domestic violence is hard for officers. It's so repetitive. It gets hard to respond repeatedly and not see any change. It's hard because often the victim doesn't want to do anything. So the officers feel stuck. They feel better about pushing a little harder now because they feel they can help the children."*

– Supervising lieutenant

Interviewees at a couple of sites noted the impact of the changes in officer protocols that engaged partner agencies. One site reported how every domestic violence case is now immediately referred to Victim-Witness and the domestic violence advocate, which means that more victims are getting services faster.

### *Change in Interagency Relationships Impacted Officer Response*

At most sites, the CEDV program fundamentally changed (or initiated) law enforcement's relationships with CPS and the domestic violence advocacy agency. Through CEDV, officers came to see both agencies as assets to their cases and investigations, as well as critical sources of follow-through support. The CEDV grants also helped establish communication channels through which law enforcement could directly call a CPS worker or a domestic violence advocate who would respond without resistance. Having a point person to contact opened the door for patrol officers to get answers they needed to handle the case effectively. Before CEDV, not having a point person to call, officers would not want to waste time sitting on the CPS hotline, for example. With the CEDV partnerships, officers were more inclined to confront the real issues with domestic violence cases and to try to get victims the help they needed. Being able to link up with

partners who could actually provide ongoing and follow-up services to victims seemed to ease law enforcement officers' burden. They were more likely to intervene, even when they knew intervening could create more work for them, if they felt that support and help could be accessed from someone who could give it. One domestic violence advocate noted, *"[Patrol officers] know what to look for in terms of victim services—they're more aware. Usually by the time we get there, the officer has already asked the victim if they need a safe place to stay, if they need diapers, etc., and then they give us a synopsis so that we know exactly what services to provide. They are so much more aware of it now in terms of what we need and what we're looking for. It's very apparent when we get in there and they give us a break-down of what has happened."*

*"Through CEDV, we in law enforcement learned that we could do our jobs better. We could offer services instead of just crime fighting. We would not have learned that without the CEDV grant. We would not have known that better was an option."*

– Supervising lieutenant

## Perceptions of Existing Need

When asked how they thought the system could be best improved to meet the needs of children exposed to domestic violence, interviewees noted several areas.

- Interviewees from two grantees advocated for the ***Family Justice Center*** model. These interviewees felt that the efficiencies and connections enabled by such a model were the best possible response to domestic violence. These centers are "one-stop shops" where victims can access counseling, child care, legal help, and assistance in multiple domains (e.g., housing, food stamps, immigration, etc); where law enforcement could stay engaged with the families in a supportive atmosphere; and where the multidisciplinary teams were all housed under one roof, enhancing collaboration. These interviewees felt strongly that the formation of such centers best served the victims and families and best met the needs of the system.
- A few interviewees felt that these families would be best served by the implementation of ***joint emergency teams***, whereby a member from law enforcement, CPS, and domestic violence advocacy agency would jointly respond to every domestic violence call with children present. This model would be ideal in terms of getting the victims services most promptly and efficiently and keeping the multidisciplinary team engaged and coordinated from the beginning. The immediacy is important because victims (and offenders) are most likely to accept help at the time of the incident. Interviewees noted this kind of integrated emergency response as a hypothetical ideal, because most could not work out a way to sustain it financially over time.
- A couple of interviewees emphasized the importance of providing ***specialized training in domestic violence*** for staff. Because domestic violence involves unique and complex dynamics, it should not be assumed that staff from any agency would understand the intricacies well enough to respond adequately without specialized training. Interviewees noted this training was critical for the responders from all agencies. Further, an interviewee at one site saw a need for a designated District Attorney who focused solely on domestic violence cases with children. This role could result in cases being more adeptly handled and more thoroughly prosecuted, as well as allow for more efficient communication with detectives and more time with victims, which would likely increase compliance with prosecution needs.



- A few interviewees indicated the need for broader **community education and awareness campaigns** about family and relationship violence. This suggestion included public awareness campaigns and prevention education programs in communities and middle/high schools that cover the effects of domestic violence on adults and children, cultural differences in domestic violence, and dating violence.
- Some interviewees acknowledged that, in general, **increased resources** were necessary to effectively attend to the needs of victims, children, and offenders. This funding would include helping families with fundamental needs beyond counseling and psychosocial support, such as providing money, housing, food, and transportation. One domestic violence advocate described the necessity of additional resources and a more compassionate approach, by stating that the system needs “...more supports available to agencies like mine and CPS to help families be more successful. More resources are needed. [We have to] have a different approach that isn’t a penalizing stance and looking at how can we help you so we don’t have to remove your kids.” Another interviewee noted that domestic violence survivors need support post-prosecution, when most services end. A couple of interviewees recognized the need for better services for batterers. In general, they felt that the existing 52-week batterers’ course was not sufficient and did not work for everyone.

## Advice for Future CEDV Grantees

When asked what advice they had for future CEDV grantees, interviewees gave a range of responses that generally fell along the following themes:

### *Leadership is Key.*

Grantees explained that solid leadership, all the way to top, in each of the partnering agencies was critical for program success. Notably, the administrative entity in each agency needs to be bought-in for the program to receive the necessary resources and support to function efficiently and for it to sustain post-grant. Some interviewees suggested that new grantees ensure that people in decision-making roles know the successes and impact of the program so they will support it. Strong leadership was also deemed necessary for the institutional support necessary to facilitate broader culture change within the agencies. A couple of interviewees noted that this cultural shift was especially needed within law enforcement, and good leadership from within would help supply officers with education and training about the intergenerational transmission of violence and how collaboration with other agencies can support the law enforcement process.

### *Pick the Right Team.*

Nearly all interviewees emphasized the importance of properly selecting personnel—specifically those who genuinely understand and care about domestic violence and whose personalities blend well. One respondent said, “*Get the right team—people who want to do it, who are experienced and mature, and who can orient around the same goal.*” Having a reliable colleague in each agency, who will advocate for the program within their own agency, is necessary.

A couple of interviewees mentioned the specific importance of having a dedicated law enforcement detective who understands domestic violence, can be a point person and work cross-disciplinarily, and whose response to the families will be rooted in compassion, not just crime-fighting. One law enforcement supervisor explained the importance of this role: “*If we didn’t have the right person to propose, we probably wouldn’t have done it. Once [detective] heard about it, he was adamant about doing it, even though the bureau wasn’t sure we wanted to. He did a great job as far as interacting with the people he needed to, going to meetings, working*

*with the domestic violence advocate, the CPS worker, the officers, and the clients. He was very involved and effective. If you have somebody do this assignment, they need to be someone that is passionate about it and wanting to do it, someone who believes in it.”*

***Collaboration Depends on Communication Among Partners.***

All interviewees emphasized that the collaboration needs to be solid, which is best served through constant communication, thorough cross-agency training/education, and fundamental trust- and relationship-building. A cohesive team in which each member understands the roles and responsibilities of the other members is critical. In this vein, the importance of the regular team meetings was highlighted, as was the necessity of maintaining sight of the larger picture and the common goal. One law enforcement supervisor stated, “*We need to get beyond the ‘mine, mine’ proprietary mindset over cases. We need to really engage a collaborative spirit for these cases.*” He felt that teams will be best served if they understand that the collaboration will improve each member agency’s services individually and that working together on CEDV will establish good partnerships that will improve agencies’ work on other kinds of cases, too, like homicides and property crimes, among others. Additionally, a few interviewees mentioned that new CEDV teams should address domestic violence through a culturally competent lens.

***Have Sustainability in Mind from the Start.***

Some interviewees suggested that new grantees keep the longer term in mind throughout project functioning, even during the start-up phase. Creating a plan for the project to be sustained once the funding dollars disappear was a point of pain for some of the interviewees, as they described experiencing sadness and disappointment when they perceived the CEDV activities that they had worked so hard to implement fading with funding cuts. They felt grantees should consider this goal initially. A couple of respondents suggested possible ways to make sustainability possible, such as:

- ***Creating broader collaborations*** so that the program is integrated into several agencies in the community,
- ***Obtaining buy-in from administrative and higher-level people*** who have decisional power about funding allocation and program prioritization, and
- Identifying a way to ***track outcomes and recidivism*** so that they would have hard data to support maintaining the program.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusions

As a result of the CEDV funding, grantees experienced a variety of benefits. They reported witnessing improvements in *law enforcement officers' understanding of and response to domestic violence calls* with children present whereby officers were more knowledgeable and more compassionate; in the *prosecution of domestic violence cases*, including enhanced evidence collection, interagency cooperation, and perceived rates of conviction; and in the *prompt, coordinated, and comprehensive service provision* to victims and children. All interviewees reported that their CEDV programs resulted in dramatic and impactful improvements in the system's response to violent families with children.

Notably, this sentiment was shared by staff across all agencies at all sites. All partnering agencies felt positively about their participation in the CEDV project. They agreed that the collaboration enhanced their individual ability to serve their clients and augmented their agencies' efficacy to reach and serve at-risk families. Interviewees unanimously felt that the CEDV collaboration constituted a more effective and more compassionate systemic response to children exposed to domestic violence.

### SUCCESSSES AND CHALLENGES

Despite the slight differences in program parameters across sites, there was substantial commonality regarding the perceived barriers and facilitators of implementation. Staff across all grantees felt that they had been successful in creating an effective collaboration of committed partners. Across all sites, this team included law enforcement, child protective services, and domestic violence advocacy. In three sites, the District Attorney was also involved, at some level, and those teams felt that connection was valuable.

All interviewees acknowledged the strong benefits of the collaboration for the families and children on their caseloads. They felt that a combination of coordinated services best met the needs of their clients. Importantly, the partner agencies also recognized the strong benefit of the collaboration for each of their individual agencies. Participating staff members came to understand that their respective roles were enhanced and their jobs were made easier by the inclusion of their CEDV partners. These symbiotic relationships existed between the core team members who jointly responded to calls, all the way up to the broader collaboration involved with the prosecution of the case. Using a team approach and accessing the skills, resources, and perspectives of each partner strengthened the work of everyone around the table.

All grantees characterized their CEDV collaborations as having constant and open communication among key partners, through both formal and informal channels. Key CEDV staff developed trusting and cooperative relationships with their cross-agency counterparts, and these relationships laid the foundation for better communication between the agencies more broadly. Development of these relationships was furthered by co-location and the cooperative efforts were strengthened by regular team meetings.

Even very well functioning collaborations struggled with the logistics of information sharing. Contending with the confidentiality requirements and data security protocols of each agency posed challenges for the efficient sharing of information. This barrier was particularly the case

for information collected by child protective services and the domestic violence agencies. In both cases, strict confidentiality requirements, while understandable, made effective cross-agency coordination difficult. This challenge arose squarely as grantees attempted to construct shared databases, which amounted to a more formal and obvious interchange of confidential information. It appeared that no grantee was able to completely surmount this hurdle, as CPS workers and domestic violence advocates still used their own agencies' databases for their casework. The work-around adopted by most sites resulted in these staff having to duplicate effort (double data entry of the sharable pieces of information), which was not ideal or sustainable.

Interestingly, the CEDV protocol development was not highlighted by interviewees as impactful; most team members did not remember the process. It seems that developing a protocol is a necessary part of designing the site's individual CEDV program, by defining the shared goals and the roles of the partnering agencies and providing a point of reference to serve as a guiding document. However, the perceived importance of the protocol was overshadowed by the perceived importance of the actual work getting done by the partners. Once the processes were in place, the team got to work and their focus remained on the families and children that needed their help rather than the more administrative aspects of the project.

### *Sustainability*

Grantees were able to meet the majority of required CEDV program components adequately, and they felt these activities provided the infrastructure necessary for successful and effective collaborations. While funded, CEDV teams felt that they were able to employ these activities consistently. Nonetheless, of the four grantees whose funding had ended at the time of the site visits, all had experienced a significant deterioration (or, in some cases, a complete halt) in CEDV operations upon the grant's end. The lack of sustainability does not appear to be a reflection of program efficacy; instead current difficulties with sustainability may have more to do with the broader economic downturn than with specific aspects of the program. Thus, it is imperative that future grantees dedicate time to developing and implementing sustainability plans and that the funder supports this process in any way it can, to ensure that system changes resulting from program funding are maintained.

### **KEY ELEMENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL CEDV PROGRAM**

Across grantees, there was striking concordance regarding the key ingredients for a solid collaboration and smooth implementation. The elements most often acknowledged as contributing to CEDV program success include the following:

- ***Training and Support for Law Enforcement.*** Officers benefitted from training relative to domestic violence and relative to the roles and services of other involved agencies. Training in domestic violence can help officers better understand the dynamics of violent relationships, the mindsets and circumstantial realities of victims, and the impact of violence exposure on children. Training on partner agencies' roles may include awareness of the services available to victims and children from community-based agencies, information relevant to the case from CPS, and guidelines for effective evidence collection for prosecution from the District Attorney. Training officers in these aspects improved their handling of domestic violence cases and the functioning of the collaboration.
- ***Dedicated Detective for Domestic Violence Cases.*** Having one detective assigned to all domestic violence cases streamlined communication with partnering agencies, including

the District Attorney. A dedicated detective who was knowledgeable about domestic violence could handle investigations adeptly, provide ongoing training to patrol officers regarding appropriate incident response and reporting protocols, and act as an internal resource for other officers regarding domestic violence related issues.

- ***Assignment of Appropriate Staff who are a Good Fit.*** Having one CEDV-dedicated staff member within each partner agency greatly increased the efficiency of the collaboration and the depth of the relationships among core CEDV team members. Appropriate staff needed to be individuals who understood domestic violence, could be advocates for the program within their own agency, and felt comfortable working with interdisciplinary teams and in law enforcement contexts.
- ***Regular Team Meetings.*** Interagency communication and coordination were strongly aided by the performance of regular team meetings that involved case review with all relevant parties. These meetings established coherence of efforts and provided the structure for the informal communication that occurred consistently. Additional meetings (with agency leadership, with broader coalitions, etc.) were also helpful.
- ***Frequent, Informal Communication Outside of Team Meetings.*** Consistent informal communication (e.g., telephone, email, text messages, impromptu discussions) was essential for the day-to-day functioning of the team. Having constant and easy access to each other built trusting relationships, unified the CEDV team as an entity, and armed staff with the most current information and cooperative approach to best meet the needs of victims and children.
- ***Cross-Agency Training Protocols.*** Developing a solid understanding of each agency's roles and responsibilities was critical to collaboration functioning. Such training, conducted through formal and informal channels, was necessary to reduce duplication of effort, raise awareness about the legal process and the services available to victims, and strengthen overall cross-agency coordination. This training was useful for agency staff beyond the CEDV team members.
- ***Cross-Agency Memorandum of Understanding / Release of Information.*** CEDV collaborations would benefit from identifying and addressing, early on, the potential challenges to information sharing posed by individual agency policies that limit what can be communicated to external partners. Establishing MOUs or ROI procedures early in the collaboration development that formalize the capacity for information sharing—perhaps making it a required part of the protocol development—would help alleviate later obstacles to communication and service coordination.
- ***Co-location.*** When feasible, the adoption of co-located office environments enabled the interdisciplinary CEDV staff to cultivate trusting and respectful collegial relationships and to foster a true team identity. It also facilitated quick and easy communication and joint response.
- ***Capacity for Joint Emergency Response.*** Most grantees felt that, ideally, an on-call multidisciplinary emergency response team was the optimal approach for crisis response and service delivery to violent families. Though a 24/7 emergency response team was not sustainable, co-location, constant communication, and flexible schedules allowed for key team members to quickly mobilize a joint emergency response, when needed.

- ***Supervisor Follow-through and Oversight.*** Team functioning was facilitated by having engaged supervisors in each key partner agency who were knowledgeable about domestic violence, invested in the CEDV program, supportive of the unique needs of their key CEDV staff, and willing to advocate for the program to those in managerial positions. No matter how committed the CEDV team member was, if s/he was not supported by her/his immediate supervisor, struggle was inevitable.
- ***Leadership at the Top.*** Supportive leadership, especially within law enforcement, undergirded the entire venture. Having the support of higher ranking managers within each agency (i.e., those with decisional power concerning budgets, policies, and administration) greatly increased the likelihood of institutional support and sustainability.
- ***Integration into Regular Agency Operations.*** Integrating CEDV operations into regular agency functioning aided uptake and increased the likelihood of sustainability (even of just certain program aspects). For example, adding CEDV protocols to formal guidance documents, such as the General Orders, and institutionalizing reporting protocols can help aspects of the CEDV program become part of regular law enforcement functioning. Similarly, incorporating children's exposure to domestic violence as a regular training topic for case workers can help establish a foundation for CEDV efforts within CPS.

#### *Appropriateness of Existing Program Requirements*

The CEDV program model varied across the five grantees in terms of its specific implementation parameters. Despite the slight differences in program design, grantees adhered to the required program components outlined by the CJA Taskforce and Cal OES in the RFP, which included:<sup>8</sup>

- (1) Establishing a partnership between law enforcement and social service. At a minimum, this requirement included a community-based domestic violence advocacy agency and the county Child Protective Service agency;
- (2) Training staff across the partnering agencies to better understand their unique roles, responsibilities, and limitations in responding to children exposed to domestic violence;
- (3) Developing a protocol that outlines the collaborative response to domestic violence cases involving children;
- (4) Engaging in active collaboration, which included holding regular bi-monthly (at least) case consultation meetings; implementing co-location, if possible; and identifying a multidisciplinary team from law enforcement, domestic violence advocacy, child protective service, mental health, probation, and relevant attorneys;
- (5) Establishing a database to collect and share information about cases across the partnering agencies.

These program elements align well with the findings of this process evaluation, suggesting that they were well conceived by the CJA Taskforce and Cal OES and remain relevant to the programs the CEDV grants seek to establish. Staff across all agencies and sites mentioned some or

<sup>8</sup> One additional program component outlined in the RFP—that sites should employ an evaluator to document their progress—was not directly addressed in this process study. However, during the site visits, a few grantees did offhandedly comment that this task was challenging for them to implement well.

all of these components as being critical successes in improving their work with children exposed to domestic violence.

## Ideas and Recommendations

Below are some points of consideration for the CJA Taskforce, Cal OES, and CEDV grantees as they contemplate the design and development of CEDV programs and formative grant materials. These suggestions are offered with an eye toward program sustainability, a notable challenge for most previous CEDV grantees.

- ***Institute formal cross-agency trainings for staff beyond CEDV team.*** The general lack of formal cross-agency trainings seemed relatively inconsequential for the functioning of the key partner staff. However, one cannot help but wonder if such training to the broader agencies' staff would have helped mitigate the impact of the grant's end. Perhaps if the broader agency staffs were trained on each other's roles, then they would have been less reliant on the few individual people that had direct contacts in the other agencies.
- ***Consider ways to institutionalize regular interagency meetings with front-line staff.*** The regular team meetings and consistent case review provided an essential framework for the collaborative efforts. Even those sites that sustained co-location lost some of their collaborative edge when the meetings stopped.
- ***Engage a higher-level conversation about cross-agency information sharing and confidentiality protocols.*** Grantees' groundbreaking work forging open interagency communication channels was hindered by agencies' policies about what could be shared externally. In this way, CEDV grants have highlighted areas where policies designed to protect clients may have the unintended effect of limiting the effectiveness of service provision by constraining multidisciplinary service teams. It is possible that CEDV programs could lay fertile ground for policy review and/or revision.
- ***Explore the feasibility of sustained joint emergency response.*** Most grantees felt that, ideally, an on-call multidisciplinary emergency response team was the optimal approach for crisis response and service delivery to these families. However, most also found that this kind of response was too resource-intensive to sustain. Exploring successful models—those used by CEDV grantees and those used for other emergencies, such as suicide, for example—or considering a merger with an overall crisis response team (present in some communities) may open new avenues of implementation.
- ***Investigate the feasibility and utility of a shared database.*** Most grantees experienced challenges developing a shared database, and the added benefit of such a system for the immediate team was unclear. Theoretically, however, it does seem that a shared, secure data management system would augment the efficiency of casework and investigation, and the ability to track cases (as well as individual victims, offenders, and children) over time would elucidate program impact and ongoing community needs. For these reasons, exploring the feasibility of a shared database—including the potential of a larger cross-site database that would link across CEDV program sites—would be worthwhile.
- ***Advocate for structural changes to law enforcement.*** Interviewees emphasized the clear benefits of having a dedicated detective for domestic violence cases. Of the five law enforcement agencies, two had dedicated domestic violence detectives before and after the CEDV grant; the other three lost these positions once the grant funding ended. The bene-

fits of a dedicated detective extended beyond facilitating the CEDV collaboration (though that was a powerful impact) into the perceived general functioning of law enforcement. Because domestic violence presents unique challenges to officers, assigning these cases to a detective who understands the complex dynamics of violent families and the specific needs of the prosecution would likely result in overall better handling of these cases.

- ***Recruit support from personnel at high levels of management.*** As indicated by interviewees, strong leadership was key to a successful program. An intention to change the functioning of the broader system requires engaging people with decision-making power, in addition to those on the front lines.