A Conceptual Framework for Measuring Criminal Justice Success in Responding to Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Crimes:

Research Agenda

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT | MEASURING EFFECTIVENESS INITIATIVE

JRSA
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Introduction and Overview

The *Measuring Success in the Criminal Justice System's Response to Domestic/Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, and Stalking* pilot project was commissioned by the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) to research, pilot, evaluate, and recommend outcome measures that OVW grantees can use to measure the success of law enforcement's (LE) response to domestic/dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking (Violence Against Women Act crimes, or VAWA crimes). A full description of that project, including the conceptual model that guides the work, can be found in the final Conceptual Framework report. During this project, we identified several high priority concepts where further research could provide greater precision and insight, and that would be worthy of attention for all interested in the field of violence against women and, particularly, the law enforcement response to it. This document outlines a portfolio of research recommendations to answer these concepts. Research in the proposed areas could:

- Expand the knowledge underpinning several assumptions of how law enforcement practices should produce certain results;
- Provide information to increase precision in data collection and reporting and provide more meaningful outcome measurement for the field; and,
- Be used to develop metrics that can measure progress of VAWA programming toward complex, long-term goals as well as shorter-term outcomes.

We propose a research agenda consisting of four topical categories that align with our conceptual model (see Figure 1). The recommendations are summarized in Table 1. Each is then described in detail, including potential research questions and data sources that researchers could use to answer them. Some of these might first be addressed by conducting systematic reviews on the current state of inquiry on certain topics, and then by funding studies to address specific gaps. We also make recommendations in a fifth category related to key methodological issues encountered in previous work that cut across multiple topics.

This Research Agenda supports the final Conceptual Framework. Throughout this document we reference two additional accompanying reports: the Literature Review and Dataset Inventory.

Table 1. Research Opportunities to Advance Knowledge on Law Enforcement Serving Victims of VAWA Crimes

Conceptual Model Category	Outcome Areas Affected		Potential Data Sources (See accompanying Dataset Inventory for detailed descriptions of national sources. Abbreviations defined in text.)	Research Gap
	Victim	**LE**		
1. Victim Outcomes and Wellbeing				
Increased safety	X		Crime data (UCR) and Victimization Data (NCVS/NISVS) for national trends. Local LE data (crime reports, records of services provided) and victim service provider (VSP) data for local agencies.	Reduced prevalence (first-time victimization, revictimization, and homicide). Also includes offender accountability (reduced recidivism) and restoration of safety to victims (impact of safety planning, protective orders, etc.)
Firearm laws, policies, & practices	X	X	Legal Statutes and incident-level crime data	Impact of laws or policies and practices around firearms involved in VAWA crimes or possessed by an offender on above outcomes
2. Agency (LEA) Culture and Accountability				
Role of LE agency culture	X	X	Records of leadership participation/communication of priorities, training pre/post-tests, victim outcome data	Impact of agency culture on adoption of training objectives and victim outcomes
Long-term impacts of VAWA Training	X	X	VAWA crime training pre/posttests combined with victim outcomes	Impact of training on specific VAWA crimes (facts, myths) on reducing bias, especially when dealing with VAWA crimes
Trauma-informed (TIC) policies and procedures				
Most critical policies	X	X	Policies and Procedures, Training materials, local victim outcome data	Policy analysis framework comparing impacts of different TIC policies on victim outcomes
Most effective trainings	X	X	TIC training pre/posttests combined with local victim outcome data. Could be scaled up to evaluate a national training program	Identify key training elements and content that lead to greater impact on victim outcomes
Clearance methods and rates				
Systematic literature review on LE clearance practices for VAWA crimes	X	X	Academic and "grey" literature	Impact of LE agency clearance rates/types on victim outcomes
Agency practice and use of exceptional clearances	X	X	Workforce/staffing records (LEMAS for national, local records for agency level), records of leadership participation/communication of priorities (local only), UCR/local crime data on clearances, victim outcome data (NCVS for national, LE Advocate and VSPs for local)	Impact of staff turnover on case clearances, victim outcomes. Impact of agency culture on case clearances

Table 1. (continued)

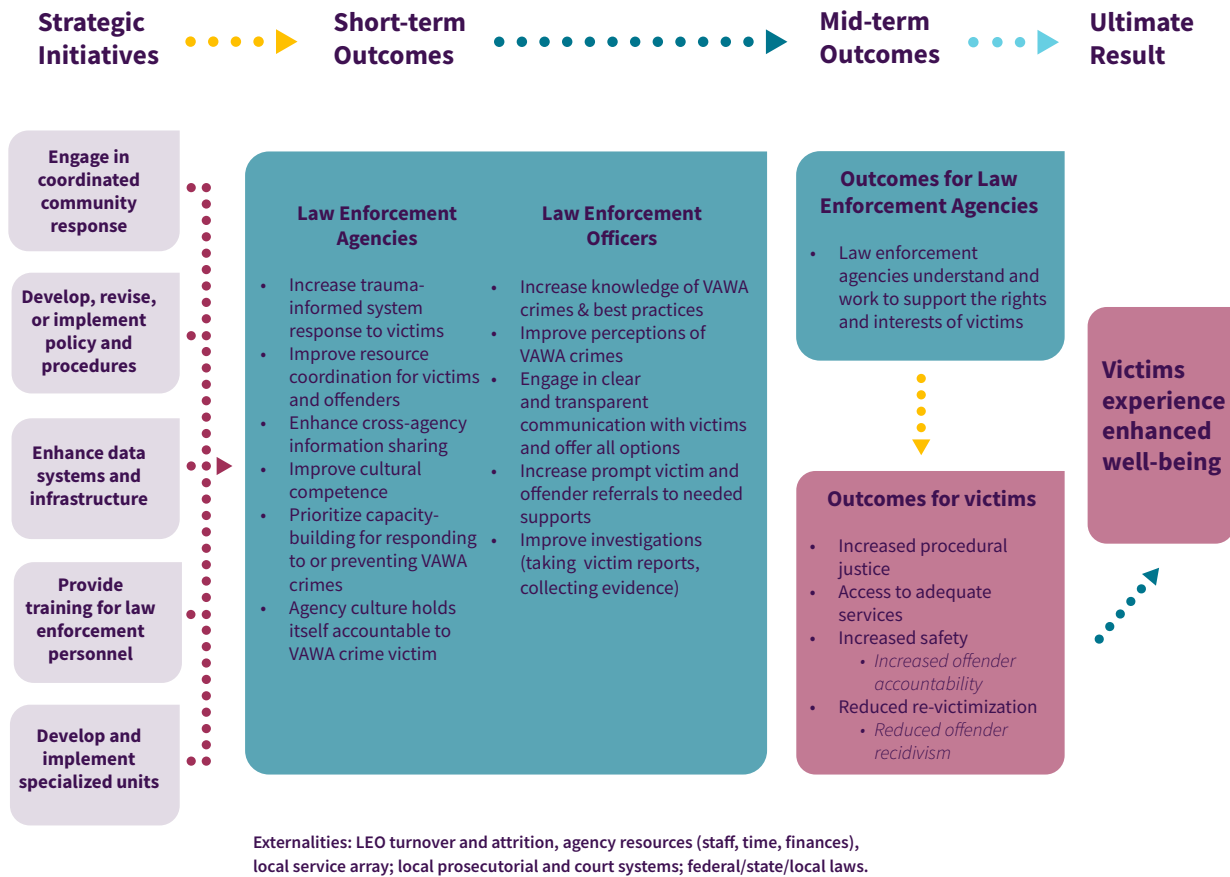| Conceptual Model Category	Outcome Areas Affected		Potential Data Sources *(See accompanying Dataset Inventory for detailed descriptions of national sources. Abbreviations defined in text.)*	Research Gap
	Victim	LE		
3. Law Enforcement Officer (LEO) Practices				
LEO Accountability	X	X	Records of case review procedures, documentation on mistake correction/ process improvement	Impacts of accountability mechanisms on increasing officer use of best practices on case and victim outcomes.
Victim Reporting/ Help-seeking	X	X	Combine NCVS and NISVS data (national trends) with local data (LE/VSP agencies)	Impacts of LE practices on patterns of victim help-seeking at state/local levels and/or for specific sub-populations, including future reporting to police or seeking help from VSPs or other sources.
Use of LE-provided victim recovery services				
Factors influencing service utilization	X	X	NCVS or NISVS data combined with local VSP and/or LE victim advocate data	Factors that increase the likelihood of victims using support services provided
Victim perceptions of engagement with LE	X	X	National: NCVS. Local: LE victim satisfaction surveys, records of victims maintaining contact with LE as case progresses (possible trust indicator), VSP/Advocate service use data	Impact of level of trust in LE and feelings of respect on the likelihood that victims will use service referrals provided by LE
4. Coordinated Community Response (CCR) Effectiveness				
Most effective trainings	X	X	Program activity data, meeting minutes, case records, VSP victim follow-up data (victim outcomes), crime data and agency records (LE Outcomes)	Identify impacts of specific aspects of coordination carried out by CCRs on long-term victim outcomes: what components are most critical to improving victim response?
5. Cross-cutting methods concerns				
Concept definitions and operationalizations	X	X	Literature, practitioner and scholarly subject matter experts (including victims). Then informed by definitions, test various operationalizations using field data for validity, reliability, and feasibility.	Specify definitions and measurable components of LE accountability, CCR effectiveness (including cooperation and collaboration), and trauma-informed.
Obtaining data from victims	X	X	Test new tools in development, such as the iMPRoVE tool about to be implemented by OVC, for ease of use and validity	Develop methods for more regular, standardized collection of data from victims that ensures confidentiality and captures more long-term outcomes

Research Agenda

Before we describe these research opportunities, the key outcomes for victims and for law enforcement developed in the conceptual model bear repeating (see Figure 1). The research topics proposed here are meant to provide more clarity and precision around certain of these concepts.

Key victim outcomes from the conceptual model for VAWA-funded LE programs include procedural justice experienced during law enforcement interactions (and hopefully during prosecutions of their offenders), access to adequate services to promote recovery, increased safety, reduced harm, and reduced revictimization.

Key law enforcement outcomes fall into two categories: outcomes for law enforcement officers (LEOs) and outcomes for law enforcement agencies (LEAs) (see again Figure 1). Outcomes for LEOs include increased knowledge of VAWA crimes and best practices for handling them, improved perceptions of VAWA crimes, clear and transparent communication with victims about their cases and options, prompt victim referrals to needed supports, and improved investigations (taking victim reports, collecting evidence, and providing solid cases for prosecution). Outcomes for LEAs include increased trauma-informed system responses, improved resource coordination for victims, enhanced cross-agency information sharing, improved competence in meeting the differing needs of victims from various cultures or groups, prioritization of capacity building to respond to or prevent VAWA crimes, and building an agency culture that holds itself accountable to VAWA crime victims and meeting their unique needs. Outcomes are also defined for Coordinated Community Responses (CCRs) that involve both law enforcement and community partners.

All of the LEO and LEA outcomes, if achieved, are intended to support the rights and interests of VAWA crime victims who interact with the police, and, ultimately, enhanced well-being for victims.

Figure 1. A conceptual model for Law Enforcement activities to improve the response to VAWA crimes.

Strategic Initiatives ▸ **Short-term Outcomes** ▸ **Mid-term Outcomes** ▸ **Ultimate Result**

Engage in coordinated community response

Develop, revise, or implement policy and procedures

Enhance data systems and infrastructure

Provide training for law enforcement personnel

Develop and implement specialized units

Law Enforcement Agencies

- Increase trauma-informed system response to victims
- Improve resource coordination for victims and offenders
- Enhance cross-agency information sharing
- Improve cultural competence
- Prioritize capacity-building for responding to or preventing VAWA crimes
- Agency culture holds itself accountable to VAWA crime victim

Law Enforcement Officers

- Increase knowledge of VAWA crimes & best practices
- Improve perceptions of VAWA crimes
- Engage in clear and transparent communication with victims and offer all options
- Increase prompt victim and offender referrals to needed supports
- Improve investigations (taking victim reports, collecting evidence)

Outcomes for Law Enforcement Agencies

- Law enforcement agencies understand and work to support the rights and interests of victims

Outcomes for victims

- Increased procedural justice
- Access to adequate services
- Increased safety
  - *Increased offender accountability*
- Reduced re-victimization
  - *Reduced offender recidivism*

Victims experience enhanced well-being

Externalities: LEO turnover and attrition, agency resources (staff, time, finances), local service array; local prosecutorial and court systems; federal/state/local laws.

This conceptual model illustrates the logical progression of the efforts and outcomes of OVW-funded work toward the ultimate result that victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking experience enhanced well-being. Reading from left to right, the model depicts the ways in which grantee-funded activities improve outcomes for law enforcement agencies and officers; the subsequent results chain illustrates how these short-term outcomes connect to victim well-being in the longer term.

From here, we present detail on the research recommendations described in Table 1 above. Each category will begin with a general description followed by research gaps identified and the outcome area(s) the proposed research would inform (Victim and/or LE).

1. Victim Outcomes and Wellbeing

Impacts of LE practices on increasing victim safety (Victim). The safety concept here includes reduced offender recidivism and reduced revictimization. Previous research has shown that domestic violence (DV) cases often get more serious and dangerous over time, which makes early intervention important for increasing safety. Please see accompanying Literature Review for more detailed information. There is a need for greater research to establish strong causal linkages between LE practices and stated goals of increasing victim safety/reducing victim harm, reducing (re)victimization, and reducing offender recidivism. Previous research falls short of establishing concrete causal relationships.

Activity and outcome concepts under increased safety include *safety planning* (activity of helping a victim plan for what to do when facing danger), *case progression* (the steps a case goes through as it moves from reporting through the criminal justice process), *reduced prevalence*, and *reduced recidivism* (stopping or lessening repeat abuse and/or the offender is arrested for fewer repeat offenses). These concepts can be defined differently by different researchers and practitioners, so it will be important to consult the most recent research for currently accepted definitions and operationalizations of those concepts.

As detailed in the corresponding Dataset Inventory, the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) captures detailed information on victim injuries suffered and their costs, property damage and loss, impacts on employment, and self-protection employed by victims (safety planning). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey [NISVS]) is another possible national survey capturing these victimizations. These data sources could be combined with Unified Crime Report data (UCR, which contains incident-based [NIBRS] and summary crime counts) to establish national trends and answer such questions as whether increased enforcement or other policy responses result in better victim outcomes at the community level. Additional variables should include survey questions on poly-/multi-victimization, as a large proportion of DV victims suffer multiple types of victimization at the hands of their abusers.

The above data sources can also be used to measure changes in the prevalence of reported VAWA crimes more generally, and the UCR supplementary homicide reports could be added to map national trends and hotspots and analyze whether communities receiving VAWA funding experience lower rates of VAWA crimes generally and DV homicides in particular.

Local programs might use insights from this research with national datasets to frame analysis using local LE and/or victim service provider (VSP) data to assess improvements in victim safety and healing. One way to do that might be to look at the proportion of simple assault cases involving DV that are followed by an aggravated assault case involving the same victim-offender pair and compare to see whether fewer victim-offender pairs are involved in escalating offenses over time. Local agencies might expand their analyses of local data by using some of the small area estimates produced from national data sources like the NCVS, but it is not usually possible to isolate specific individual jurisdictions using those. However, grantees could use subnational estimates from these surveys alongside their local LE and VSP data to assess how their locality compares to their general area.

Firearm involvement in VAWA crimes (Victim, LE). While this could be considered a sub-topic under victim safety and reduced harm, research on firearm involvement in VAWA crimes merits special attention. Pilot sites from this project were extremely interested in the components of successful laws, policies, or practices related to handling firearms in VAWA crime-related cases related to the involvement of a firearm in an incident and to possession of a firearm by an offender. Several states have passed laws prohibiting DV offenders from possessing a firearm and others are investigating the impacts of gun laws or regulations to reduce intimate partner homicides. However, these laws vary widely between states and several LEAs indicated that they could not implement the law or store that many guns even if they wanted to. Training and accountability were also cited as issues, as was the ability to track sufficient firearms data in existing systems for accountability or reporting purposes. Finally, while some research indicates a connection between confiscation of firearms and increased victim safety (Zeoli, et al., 2016), the causal link between implementing firearm laws and improved victim safety requires more support via replicating existing studies and comparing the effects of different laws and policies on victim safety.

Although this is an important topic, data on firearms is not collected or reported consistently by law enforcement to the federal UCR program either. Agencies may report that a firearm was involved in a crime, but not whether it was fired or what injury it caused (unless the victim died). Pilot sites in this project were not able to consistently report data on firearms seizure, though in interviews they described variation in how and when firearms are seized. Causes for this lack of data tracked or reported may be related to capacity, regulations, or agency culture. Nevertheless, funders may wish to sponsor research in this area that also includes funds to increase agency capacity to collect and report specific firearms information. It may be that other LEAs decide to expand their capacity once the causal link between firearm confiscation and safety is better established and effective policies and laws can be identified.

2. Agency (LEA) Culture and Accountability

Two important themes that emerged throughout our literature review, expert interviews, advisory board consultations, and pilot test interviews were agency culture and accountability among LE for their use of best practices in handling VAWA cases and interacting with victims.

A key overarching driver of officer behavior, attitudes, and procedures for handling VAWA crimes is agency culture, and that culture is influenced by offering and implementating training. LEAs with a culture of accountability may incorporate practice elements from the training into annual officer evaluations and/or ensure that training is reinforced on the job and by leadership. Four major opportunities for targeted research into agency culture and accountability practices were identified during this project.

Impacts of LE professional/agency culture (LE, Victim). More research is needed on the impacts of the attitudes/beliefs of LEOs on victim and case outcomes. This involves the impact of leadership direction as well as the adoption of training objectives, which can be interrelated. A significant body of research on officer attitude and beliefs was covered in the literature review; here, we recommend specific evaluative research of officer and agency leadership attitudes and beliefs on victim and LE outcomes identified in the conceptual model (Figure 1). Effective research here could utilize local LEA and VSP case files to evaluate a single jurisdiction at different points in time or could involve multiple sites to compare different approaches.

We recommend that this research be situated within the larger dialogue around policing and alternatives to criminal legal responses to sexual/domestic violence, particularly LE responses occurring in Black, Indigenous, and POC communities (see Hanson, 2017 for a discussion). This would provide additional context for research on Coordinated Community Responses (more on CCRs below), where desired victim wellbeing outcomes may result from allowing individual victims to choose victim assistance services without criminal legal involvement. A LEO facilitating this course of action when desired by the victim may be a positive outcome that OVW would wish to measure in addition to traditional arrest and prosecution measures.

Long-term impacts of LE training (LE, Victim). Outside of self-reported post-training evaluations or tests that suggest that training has helped officers increase their knowledge, there is little research examining *sustained* impacts of training on VAWA outcomes (see, e.g., Russell & Sturgeon, 2019). There is even less research on whether changes in officer knowledge result in lasting changes in officer attitudes and behavior, and in turn, in sustained improvement in victim and case outcomes. Agencies can often report on the former, but not the latter. Long-term training impacts are also difficult to isolate because there are many potential outside influences on results that occur over time and would be hard to quantify. Ideally, such evaluation designs would involve randomized assignment to training treatment and control groups and a pre-post-post design. However, if some of the studies recommended here can also include measures of long-term change and add control variables for leadership influence, especially if turnover is an issue, recommendations to improve training can still be strengthened.

Trauma-informed (TIC) policies/procedures. (LE, Victim). As demonstrated in the literature review, there is an extensive body of research on trauma and trauma-informed practices, although definitions of trauma vary and evaluations of trauma-informed practices are still few as of this writing. Two particular veins of research are recommended to support the work of LEAs and to inform better metrics for reporting:

a. *Most critical policies* (LE, Victim). Which policies have the most influence on improving victim outcomes? In cases where an agency can focus on changing only one policy at a time, such knowledge is critical for decision-making. TIC policy options to examine might relate to victim screening, officer training, victim privacy, interview practices, or giving victims a choice about processes such as having a female officer conduct a search. We recommend a study using a policy analysis framework to compare the impacts of different types of policies related to trauma-informed practice on key victim outcomes. This could provide agencies that are asked to report on trauma-informed policies and procedures with research-backed examples of effective policies and procedures, including language and content.

b. *Most effective TIC training* (LE, Victim). Relatedly, evaluations comparing TIC trainings for the greatest impact on victim outcomes are also needed. A randomized control trial (RCT) with a pre-post-post design is recommended here to capture long-term learning retention and application of training in practice. That design could also be scaled up to evaluate a national training program.

c. *Clearance methods and rates*. (LE, Victim). As discussed in the literature review, exceptional clearances are often overused in VAWA crime-related cases. Use of exceptional clearance without sufficient reason, or sufficient explanation and offer of other options, is often taken by victims as an indication that police do not take their victimization seriously. This can increase their trauma; see the accompanying Literature Review for a more detailed explanation.

Various reasons are discussed for the overuse of exceptional clearances, such as agency culture; officer knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs; and lack of TIC training, to name a few. However, more evidence is needed on the causal links between TIC training and reduced use of exceptional clearances—and then between reduced use of exceptional clearances and improved LE and victim outcomes. Measures capturing agency culture and accountability should also be included in those studies, as all three play a part in the prevalence of exceptional clearances. Two research opportunities are recommended to help establish this evidence base:

i. *Systematic literature review on LE clearance practices for VAWA crimes*. The topic of exceptional clearances is widely researched and has been approached from many angles. A systematic assessment of research specifically on agency factors influencing clearance rates and types and research on the impacts of exceptional clearance rates on agency performance for VAWA offenses is warranted. For example, do higher rates of victim reports investigated and reduced use of exceptional clearance improve victim outcomes, especially reductions in victim trauma caused by system engagement? This systematic review should identify gaps in understanding that remain about these practices.

i. *Agency practice and use of exceptional clearances.* After the systematic review is completed, researchers interested in national trends might combine NIBRS and NCVS data to fill some of these gaps. NIBRS captures reasons for exceptional clearances for incidents reported and the NCVS captures several victim outcomes. Local agencies and research partners might analyze local case records using a multivariate or sequential model of case progression to provide greater detail on these questions. Research is also needed on agency-wide practices or aspects of agency culture that support minimal use of exceptional clearances, and whether reduced use of exceptional clearance leads to more clearance by arrest and cases going to prosecution. Reduced use of exceptional clearances and higher clearance rates might indicate greater LEA support for investigating VAWA crimes and supporting victims.

3. Law Enforcement Officer (LEO) Practices

LEO Accountability (LE, Victim). Research needs associated with agency-level accountability were described above. Additional research should assess the impacts of officer accountability mechanisms within these structures. Do LEAs hold LEOs accountable when they do not execute on best practices for VAWA crimes expected by the department? Accountability mechanisms might include case review meetings and procedures, incorporation of adherence to policies and practices concerning VAWA victims into annual performance reviews, and/or a process for correcting mistakes and improving on processes. Evaluations should be conducted of these mechanisms and their impacts on LE and victim outcomes. Within-agency evaluations and cross-site or multi-policy comparisons are recommended. Such research projects may suffer from self-selection biases, as LEAs that do not have buy-in may choose not to participate, but one or two ground-breaking studies may encourage others to participate in future work.

Factors behind victim reporting decisions. Underreporting of crimes against women is well documented. To address this underreporting, LEAs need a broad understanding of the existing research regarding the factors that influence a victim's decision to report to law enforcement or otherwise seek assistance. It is believed that when police are viewed favorably by the community, more community members will trust the police enough to report victimization when they experience it. But, more evidence is needed to support this causal claim because many other factors also influence victims' decisions to report. Our review for this project suggests three opportunities to build on existing knowledge that would benefit our ability to measure and place into context the impact of VAWA programs on trends in victim reporting.

a. Systematic literature review on factors influencing victim reporting (Victim, LE). Victim reporting is a most commonly researched topic, which is why a systematic literature review focused specifically on the impacts of LEA/LEO practices on VAWA crime victims' decisions to report is recommended as the first step. Such a complete assessment was beyond the scope of this project. This systematic review should summarize the state of the field, common concept definitions, problems that can impact data collected, and agreement or disagreement on best practices for LE. It should then identify the specific research gaps that remain for this targeted area. This will assist in specifying the most fruitful research questions under the next two sub-topics.

b. Help-seeking (Victim). Many victims report not to the police, but they will report to medical providers, social services agencies, and/or friends and family. There is potential to combine NCVS and NISVS data to answer questions about victim decisions to seek help from other entities at the national and sub-national levels, as well as by specific subpopulations, including factors influencing decisions to avoid involving law enforcement. Agencies with analytical capacity might wish to combine data on national trends with local agency, VSP, and healthcare partner data to assess how they compare with others. Funders might also seek to combine performance data reported by grantees with one or more data sources to analyze questions of interest.

c. Use of victim recovery services (Victim). Police departments are recognizing the value of engaging internal or external victim assistants, particularly in responding to violence against women. These positions play a key role in identifying victim needs for support and linking them to community services. Referring victims to VSPs to assist them with various support needs is considered best practice and is a key principle of CCR activity as well.

However, grantees in this project described challenges in their capacity to follow up and to report on whether victims were making use of service referrals. Evidence gaps also remain as to which referral procedures ensure greater uptake of help (e.g., "warm handoffs" vs. simply providing contact info), and which practices are most important for agencies that may lack the resources to conduct robust and continued follow-up. Two sub-topics here merit discussion and consideration for further research:

i. *Factors that influence referral utilization and follow-through* (Victim, LE). Research might be funded that uses NISVS or NCVS data to analyze national trends in VAWA victims' services usage and satisfaction that are not captured by performance measures. This might provide a richer picture of which supports serve victims effectively out of those to which law enforcement typically refers them. Reduced revictimization measures might also be included to examine how well various victim services contribute to increased safety or empowerment. This information may come from local law enforcement, calls for service, and court data; but also from victimization surveys or local VSP or healthcare provider records.

ii. *Victim perceptions of engagement with LE* (Victim). As described in the literature review, increased respectful and transparent communication (victim feels heard by LE, victims feel they were treated with respect by LE, victims perceive they were kept informed of case progression) are considered part of experiencing procedural justice. While the research on procedural justice is vast, the application of these concepts within this context could benefit from more research with tested measurement tools focused on victim experiences with LE. This concept also overlaps with LEO accountability—did victims feel they experienced procedural justice in their interactions with LE?

Research tailored for this purpose could examine the impact of level of trust in and respect from law enforcement on the likelihood that victims will follow through on service referrals provided by law enforcement. Analyses of national trends could use the NCVS for this purpose. Local researchers partnering with LEAs with robust recordkeeping might use LE-based victim satisfaction surveys, records of victims maintaining contact with LE as their case progresses (possible trust indicator), and VSP/LE-based advocate data to answer such questions.

However, local grantees in our pilot test—many of whom were in rural localities with limited resources—said that they did not have the capacity to collect and report data on these experiential victim outcomes presently. However, they also communicated a desire for standardized and validated tools they might use to capture these outcomes in the future. One such extensively-validated tool is the iMPRoVE tool about to be implemented by the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC); VAWA grantees might wish to try this tool in their own jurisdictions.

4. Coordinated Community Responses (CCRs): Impacts of Coordination

As described in the accompanying Literature Review, it is difficult to draw conclusions from research on coordination/ cooperation to date due to a lack of clarity and agreement about which *elements* of coordination impact which outcomes (Herbert, & Bromfield, 2019a, 2019b). While different CCRs may have different partners and different logic models, how partners approach coordination and work together matters for creating strong, effective partnerships. These are the elements of coordination for which we recommend more clarity of definition and evidence of effectiveness in facilitating desired victim and LE outcomes. These elements could include things like interagency MOUs, written rapid response protocols with clear role definition, and other formal mechanisms as well as less formal, but equally important elements such as how well parties that may have competing interests listen to and respect each other's expertise in meetings and support common goals (see Salas et al., 2008 and Salas et al., 2005 for discussions in the organizational studies field).

There is particular interest in longer-term program outcomes, such as improved victim wellbeing following disclosure of abuse, reduced rates of revictimization, and increases in the conviction of perpetrators—outcomes that are often influenced by external factors as well the programs in question (Herbert & Bromfield, 2019a). We recommend multi-jurisdictional studies that can compare CCR approaches using the same measures of the elements of coordination and the same outcomes, but control for differences in specific activities, jurisdictions, and external factors. This will allow for more rigorous evaluations of cooperation and coordination within CCRs that use definitions and measures based on some consensus among practitioners and researchers in the field. The objectives would be to provide evidence supporting which elements of coordination and cooperation have the greatest impact on victim and LE outcomes and to lend precision to any revisions in measures of CCR effectiveness that funders may wish to collect.

5. Cross-cutting Methods Considerations

Concept definitions and operationalizations. An issue across many of these research areas involved a lack of clarity or agreement on the definitions of various concepts, and/or valid and reliable ways to measure them (operationalization). The definitions and operationalizations used for any given concept can change what data are collected, the results, and the conclusions drawn from those results. Too much variance in definitions and/or poor operationalization can lead to non-comparable and potentially erroneous conclusions and recommendations across studies, which in turn can hamper the accuracy and application of research findings.

Funders can lead here in their solicitations by specifying the use of researcher/practitioner partnerships to establish these definitional agreements and to help determine which measures are useful and feasible for collection and reporting. We identified three key areas requiring definitional work to support the above research recommendations.

a. *Cooperation and collaboration.* Efforts should be made to establish definitional agreement on each key element of both coordination and cooperation as they relate to CCR or multidisciplinary teams (MDTs) addressing crime; much of the literature on cooperation comes from other fields. This research may consist of a systematic literature review, convening an expert working group, and possibly a national survey of CCRs and MDTs. This research would produce recommendations for improving the tracking and reporting of performance and implementation measures.

    Measuring "effectiveness" of coordination and cooperation. Once these elements of coordination and cooperation are defined with precision, this portion relates to what data should be collected to measure whether they have been effective in achieving desired victim and LE outcomes. These measures should capture whether each element is happening and how well it is being executed according to the CCR's strategic plan or logic model (fidelity measurement). These data could then be analyzed to determine their impacts on desired outcomes in an evaluation. This would enable agencies to understand whether their coordination and cooperation efforts were "successful" in improving victim outcomes, and which elements made them so.

b. *LE Accountability*. Before accountability for LE can be measured, it must be defined. As with coordination and cooperation, the elements of LE accountability for executing on best practices related to VAWA crimes must be specified and operationalized. This was the goal of creating our conceptual model; we recommend using that model as a starting place. The various concepts and measures recommended to capture them are described in the final Conceptual Framework report; however, these definitions could benefit from greater precision, as with coordination and cooperation. Accountability mechanisms for which agencies may desire measurement and evaluation may involve internal LEA quality control as described above and avenues for communities to hold their local LEAs accountable for taking VAWA crimes seriously; both objectives first require a consensus on the elements of accountability and on when they can be considered achieved.

c. *Trauma-informed.* As discussed in the accompanying Literature Review, achieving some agreement on the best, most accepted definition of trauma-informed is critical to enable consistency in practice and comparable evaluations. The implementation guide we developed for agencies involved in the pilot test in this project drew upon a definition of trauma-informed from the National Institute of Justice (2016): "policies and procedures that explicitly consider the impact of trauma on the health and well-being of the victim; attending to the victim's emotional and physical safety; and using resources, services, and support to increase the victim's capacity to recover." However, more agreement on the elements of trauma is needed in the field overall to be able to consistently measure whether policies on trauma-informed practices are contributing to reductions in trauma, on average, for victims.

Obtaining data from victims. The second cross-cutting methodological concern, touched on briefly above and expressed strongly by practitioners and grantees that participated in this project, address the ability to obtain outcome data from victims. This is especially important for capturing the range of victim perceptions and experiences—especially long-term outcomes that may occur after victims/survivors no longer wish to respond to a survey or follow-up. Pilot sites also shared concerns about victim confidentiality and safety when attempting to capture feedback, as well as a desire for more standardized tools for capturing this feedback when they do seek it. Current tools and procedures are often informal, inconsistent, not evidence-based/validated, and not comparable across agencies.

While many agencies record qualitative notes on victim experiences for internal use, it will be useful to develop more quantitative tools given the time, intensity, and expertise needed to code qualitative data. One such project nearing completion as of this writing is from an NIJ-funded study, Measuring the Impact of Victim Services: Developing the Victim Outcome and Satisfaction Survey Instrument and Platform; this is the iMPRoVE tool described above.

Final Thoughts

As supporting material for the Measuring Success in the Criminal Justice System's Response to Domestic/Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, and Stalking pilot project, this research agenda has identified and described high priority concepts where further research could provide insight in the impact of law enforcement's response to VAWA crimes. We hope that OVW finds this research agenda useful for designing future research solicitations and for internal use to strengthen outcome measurement development of and evaluations for VAWA-funded programs. We also hope that scholars and practitioners addressing the field of violence against women in general find it useful to spur research to increase the body of knowledge on law enforcement responses to VAWA crimes and survivors. We are grateful for the opportunity to present this agenda for consideration.

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