

LEAP: The Law Enforcement - Advocate Partnership

Meeting a Critical Need for Victims of Domestic Violence

Victims of domestic violence who receive services from a domestic violence program like DAIS are at a significantly decreased risk of homicide.

- There is a 60% reduction in risk of severe assault when victims utilize the services of a domestic violence advocacy program (9th International Family Violence Research Conference, Portsmouth, NH, July 2005).
- Only 4% of victims of actual or attempted intimate partner homicide had utilized the services of domestic violence programs (Campbell, 2004).

However, there are multiple and complex barriers for victims to reach out for those services (examples include fear of the abuser finding out, or not knowing the program exists). **By proactively reaching out to victims, LEAP ensures that victims are offered DAIS support services that are critical to increasing their safety and reducing their risk of homicide.**

Program Overview & History

- When a police officer responds to a domestic violence-related call and the suspect will not be in contact with the victim (because a 72 hour no-contact order has been issued or the suspect is in custody), the officer completes a LEAP referral form with the victim and notifies the victim that a DAIS advocate will be contacting them by phone.
- When the DAIS advocate contacts the victim, s/he provides information about DAIS services and other community resources, domestic violence, and the criminal process.
- In early 2011, DAIS and MPD's South District partnered to pilot the LEAP program, which is modeled after a successful program in Milwaukee.
- The LEAP Pilot program ended in March, 2012, with the ending of the JAG grant which funded it. The program is currently on hold while DAIS pursues funding options.

Program Success

Analysis of data from the pilot program shows promising results, including:

- 59% of victims contacted and surveyed by an advocate stated they were not aware of DAIS prior to the LEAP referral.
- 79% of victims DAIS contacted and surveyed reported increased safety and increased awareness of community resources.
- LEAP increases victims' understanding of the criminal justice system response, an important indicator for contacting law enforcement in the future. 90% of victims contacted and surveyed had more information or no further questions regarding why the police took the actions that they did. In many instances, the victim's negative feelings toward the officer or the criminal process decreased during the conversation with the advocate.
- One additional success is that LEAP clearly strengthened the partnership between DAIS and MPD, a partnership that can only improve the community's response to domestic violence.

The Future of LEAP in Madison

- There is a great deal of interest in reviving and expanding the LEAP program to all five MPD districts. The only barrier to doing so is a stable source of funding, which would be an investment with a significant return.
- The addition of a full time LEAP Advocate at DAIS would allow for partnership development, law enforcement training, program implementation, and service provision to referred victims. The cost to continue the program would be \$55,000-\$57,000 per year, which includes salary and benefits, program supplies, and operating expenses. Through LEAP, early intervention will engage victims in critical services provided by DAIS that are proven to increase safety.