



SCOTT MILLER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

Why Coordinated Community Responses Matter

Scott Miller is the Executive Director of the Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs in Duluth, MN. The DAIP has been a leader

in the work to coordinate community-based responses to domestic violence around the world for over four decades and was recently given an international award from the World Futures Council for the best approach to protecting women and girls worldwide.

Scott writes the following:

Domestic violence is a deeply historical and socially constructed problem that is epidemic around the world. After over 40 years of work developing responses to this problem, we don't have all the answers but we do have many.

We know that we need to move away from the notion that intimate partner violence is a result of "fights" between individual couples. The problem is too widespread, and the dynamics are too similar around the world to understand this as a problem with a few individuals. Instead of responding to each incident, we need to approach this as a public health crisis that affects women, children and men. If widespread domestic violence is a public health crisis, there needs to be a layered approach to responding and hopefully solving the problem.

With a problem like intimate partner domestic violence, we have learned how essential it is for the community to intentionally coordinate across government and nongovernmental entities to make it safer for victims and easier to hold those who commit the violence accountable.

Governments can't solve this problem alone. Advocacy agencies cannot solve this problem alone. Communities need government agencies, community-based agencies, the health and social support sectors, religious leaders and involvement from diverse agencies to work together in such a way as to complement the work of all agencies involved.

What we need then is a coordinated response that brings together the community in such a way that it shifts the

tolerance for this behavior. Survivors need to believe that if they call, they are not just calling 911 but a community who is willing and ready to respond to what they need.

Offenders need to understand that if they want to live in this community, beating and abusing their family into submission will not happen with impunity. If violence is being used to subjugate their partner and children, consequences will follow with opportunities to rehabilitate.

To develop this coordinated community response, government and nongovernmental agencies much develop specialized responses to this problem. To develop specialized responses, an understanding of how survivors experience this violence in each community is essential. Those who experience the violence should have a hand in changes that impact their lives.

Coordination will also require transparency between agencies that includes sharing information, building policies and protocols and reviewing past, current and proposed responses through the lens of an intentional community partnership.

If we as a society find a way to solve the problem of intimate partner domestic violence, it won't be because one agency did great work. Instead, history will tell of how communities understood the social, generational nature of the problem and developed widespread, community-based interventions that gave survivors the space to live free of violence and the perpetrators the opportunity to change.

We know what we are doing in most communities isn't working. If we continue to stay in our agency-defined silos and don't coordinate our work, we know what the future holds. We also know that if we work together, coordinate each agency's work with the next and partner on addressing this crisis, we can make our communities safer and save the lives of our relatives, co-workers and neighbors. If there is a purpose to building community, this is what it should be.

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A DISCUSSION WITH DAVID J. H. GARVIN, MSW, NMCADV

Real Progress is Possible

David J. H. Garvin, MSW, is the Battering Intervention Program and Systems Response Specialist for NMCADV. He began his work in the anti-

domestic violence movement by developing a battering intervention program in the mid 1980's in Northern Ohio and shortly thereafter brought that program to his hometown, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

"Now that I am in New Mexico, I am thrilled to be in this beautiful place and am excited about the wonderful people I am getting to know," said Garvin. According to Pam Wiseman, Executive Director of NMCADV, "We are so fortunate to have been able to bring in a person of David's caliber to partner with us on improving our DV responses. It is already making a difference."

The following is a discussion with David about the need for a community that is informed, responsive and coordinated.

According to David, despite decades of real progress, the world in which we live still promotes, tolerates and even, celebrates all kinds of violence. Fortunately, there are people who have dedicated their whole lives to changing that sad fact and they do it by working with others: Our mutual, community-wide goals are therefore to promote survivor safety, promote community intolerance of domestic violence and hold those who cause harm and perpetrate violence accountable. "It takes a village to change a village", he said. "That's the only way".

According to Garvin, domestic violence is mostly a set of purposeful behaviors, designed to bring about an outcome. It is a method to control someone and may or may not include actual violence. There are many co-existing problems in the lives of people who cause harm, such as alcohol and drug addiction, mental health, trauma, employment issues, etc. and we are working to further develop services to take those conditions into account. However, most importantly, we know that while those issues are often a part of domestic violence, and people need help dealing with them, they are not the sole cause of domestic violence. We must address them but that alone is not enough. So what to do beyond services and programming? What else do we have in our tool box?

Garvin explains that swift and consistent community responses to domestic violence and abuse are a known, effective intervention. Accountability for violence, which does

not necessarily mean jail, (there are numerous other alternatives, including battering intervention programs), is a proven way to reduce further violence. When a community, including the criminal justice system sends the message that domestic violence is not tolerable, people who commit violence DO listen. They hear that message and often change their behaviors to be in accordance with what the community believes about it.

In fact, the most compassionate and effective intervention a community can provide to people who have committed domestic violence, is to hold them accountable. The shorter the duration between arrest, conviction and engagement into a battering intervention program will provide the best opportunity for change. Long delays between the commission of violence and a consequence make future violence more likely.

All of the above are the reasons the NMCADV undertook a series of trainings on developing coordinated community responses. Beginning this fall, and ending in late 2021, hundreds of people attended the training series, representing disciplines such as prosecution, probation, the judiciary, law enforcement, battering intervention program staff and domestic violence advocates.

The attendees universally ranked the training very highly and expressed excitement about the prospect of becoming a more unified and coordinated group for the benefit of New Mexicans.

Here is an outline of the series:

