

Domestic Violence Offender Management Board Implementation Committee: Pueblo Project

Introduction & Background

The Domestic Violence Offender Management Board (DVOMB) convened the Implementation Committee in December of 2014 with the intent of exploring how the board could improve its capacity to train, engage, and receive feedback from communities statewide. The Implementation Committee sought to define a process by which open and ongoing communications between the board and local communities could support, continue, and replicate high quality services. Through the use of implementation science,¹ the Implementation Committee identified a local, operational, effective, and inclusive community treatment team to engage in this process. The decision to pilot this process in an established community aimed to first gather valuable information regarding how their treatment team was formed and what factors help it to operate efficiently. The community Domestic Violence Treatment Team (DVTT) in Pueblo was selected due to its high level of collaboration and coordination among professionals existing relationships with DVOMB staff, and willingness to engage in a process for improving the adherence to and implementation of the Standards.

Outreach and Engagement Process

The Pueblo Domestic Violence Treatment Team (DVTT) meets once per month and membership consists of treatment providers, treatment victim advocates, probation officers and supervisors, district attorney staff, and occasionally judges from the district. The Implementation Committee approached the community by way of their DVTT in June of 2015. This meeting was dedicated to the following items: (1) explaining the DVOMB's desired goals in working with the DVTT; (2) a semi-structured group interview intended to gauge community strengths and concerns as they relate to the standards; (3) and a discussion of the next steps we would take together should the DVTT determine they were interested in engaging in this work.

The DVTT was given the next two months to discuss what a partnership with the board could look like and their interest in such a partnership. During this time, the Implementation Committee drafted a general work proposal consisting of potential goals and recommendations based on the information learned from this exploratory meeting with Pueblo's DVTT. This work proposal was presented to the Pueblo DVTT during their September, 2015 meeting and included a discussion of general goals, which included strengthening the DVTT's alliance with the board and further strengthening alliances within the local community.

The DVTT agreed with the potential goals proposed by the Implementation Committee and that creating a smaller subcommittee would be the most efficient way to generate and work toward objectives to meet these goals. The DVTT Subcommittee was formed between

¹ Implementation Science is the systematic study of specified activities designed to put into practice activities or programs of known dimensions.

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meetings on a volunteer basis and consisted of eight members: the probation supervisor, two probation officers, a deputy district attorney, two treatment providers, and two treatment victim advocates. At least one representative of the DVOMB also attended each of these meetings to facilitate, document, and guide this work.

In October of 2015, the DVTT Subcommittee convened for the first time to refine scope of work, review and augment objectives as necessary, determine frequency of meetings, and establish initial time frames for the partnership. The following seven objectives were formulated as more measurable ways to track progress on the partnership goals:

1. Increase comfort with and ability to engage in more individualized treatment with clients and determine leeway with overrides,
2. Identify contributing factors, steps, and processes that led to the successful operation of the Pueblo DVTT to inform other Colorado communities,
3. Identify areas in which to improve communication and relationships within the DVTT,
4. Gain Public Defense representation on the DVTT,
5. Formalize a process for raising concerns and bringing issues to the DVOMB,
6. Create a liaison process between the DVOMB and the Pueblo DVTT, and
7. Raise awareness of community resources available to victims and identify gaps.

The DVTT Subcommittee then elaborated the scope of work for each of the objectives and prioritized where to begin. Monthly meetings for the DVTT Subcommittee were scheduled from November, 2015 to March of 2016 and would follow after the normal DVTT meetings in order to ease logistical limitations for those who live farther away. Action steps were delegated to individuals or teams within the subcommittee to begin addressing these objectives and an agenda was generated between meetings based on the prioritized objectives.

The four meetings following this initial meeting consisted of a check-in on previous action steps, an introduction of the objective(s) to be addressed that day, discussion of topic(s) and brainstorming ideas, delegation of action steps based on the discussion, and a selection of items for the following meeting. Due to cancelled meetings around the holiday season, limitations of travel based on inclement weather, and larger DVTT meetings being cancelled, the sixth and final meeting occurred in June of 2016 and consisted of eliciting feedback from the DVTT Subcommittee on the process in terms of the following: (1) how it has been beneficial; (2) what worked well for them; (3) what could be improved and how; (4) and if they felt the partnership has addressed everything we had determined and that it is appropriate timing to cease regular DVOMB involvement. This content was ultimately explored over three separate meetings. The originally scheduled meeting was cut short and sparsely attended, so a second meeting was scheduled to complete the agenda. This follow-up meeting was ultimately attended solely by probation representatives, so other members were invited to schedule time for a phone conversation to ensure an inclusive perspective on the process developed. Details on the elicited feedback are catalogued in a subsequent section of this report.

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Completed Work

In working through the DVTT Subcommittee meeting structure outlined above, the DVTT was able to complete, make progress on, or obtain the tools needed to address all of our mutually determined objectives.

Individualized Treatment/Leeway with Overrides

The Pueblo DVTT stated that they often have concerns if what they are doing or would like to do with certain clients is in alignment with the DVOMB Standards. Two examples raised that represented the primary concerns of the DVTT were determining how long they could put a client on hold for DV treatment when other issues require more immediate attention (such as mental health), and how they could keep a client with a mold allergy engaged in treatment when he was unable to enter the treatment building. Through this discussion, it appeared the group was underestimating the level of discretion their MTT had in making decisions around holds and terminations. This information was relayed to the Pueblo DVTT Subcommittee and the focus shifted to empowering MTTs to use discretion where the standards deemed appropriate.

In cases comparable to the mold allergy, if something like this was predicted to be an ongoing issue, we discussed the variance process as an existing method for requesting a slight deviation from standards. The DVTT Subcommittee reported that most of them were unfamiliar with the variance process, while others expressed concerns over the length of time a variance can take based on previous experiences. These concerns were vetted and the DVTT Subcommittee was able to assist in recommending modifications to the variance process to be more user-friendly and expedited (See Appendix A). This modified variance process was approved by the DVOMB.

Process of DVTT Formation and Elements of Functionality

Due to Pueblo's DVTT being a high functioning group that meets regularly, understanding the process that went into forming their DVTT and the elements that keep it running holds value for other communities that may lack this type of multidisciplinary communication and collaboration. Through discussions with their larger DVTT, the DVTT Subcommittee, and observations of their meetings, elements of the group's formation and productivity were recorded along with potential implications and action steps for communities interested in creating or improving a DVTT (See Appendix B). These components are intended to serve as a guide for the creation and sustainability of DVTTs as opposed to being an exhaustive or set list of elements, as each community has individual factors that require different approaches and responses to engagement with the DVOMB.

Improving Community Communication and Relationships

This objective was meant to help identify lingering and less visible issues that could exist within a functional DVTT. Once the DVTT Subcommittee focused on this area, it became apparent that roles between professionals could occasionally blur within the larger DVTT and

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individual MTTs in the community. This was exacerbated by their report that communication between probation officers and treatment providers was sometimes strained by each feeling the other was not respectful of their knowledge regarding DV offenders. This was explored as a group and communication strategies were exchanged between the groups in terms of who is generally better suited to make which decisions and how to approach the other side with a concern or question. For example, probation officers stated they are trained on the DVRNA and understand how it works and often have questions about how clients score as a result. When these questions are raised, probation feels treatment providers are defensive about their scores and do not like to discuss it openly. Treatment providers, on the other hand, feel like probation officers are approaching them to tell them to change a score and subsequently call into question their area of expertise. By allowing this underlying concern to surface and talking about it, both parties were able to see one another's perspective and were determined to change these patterns of communication systemically and individually.

Gaining Public Defense Representation

As noted, the Pueblo DVTT consists of a broad representation of professions. One organization identified by the DVTT as missing was the Office of the Public Defender (PD). While the DVTT was interested in engaging them, there was some trepidation regarding how to include them because of their role in preventing their clients from having to be put through DV services and supervision in the community. In discussing the benefits of PD involvement, the DVTT Subcommittee determined that the perspective and information the PD could add and understanding they could take away and disseminate to their office held great value and was worth exploring. As a result, the group was able to reach out to the PD's office and a representative attended the March 2016 meeting. The DVTT Subcommittee reported that the arrangement was mutually beneficial and that an invitation is sent each month for PD participation.

Process for Raising Concerns/Issues with the DVOMB

After the DVOMB approved the modified variance process, the DVTT Subcommittee was provided education to increase awareness in the Pueblo DVTT regarding how to use that process. By discussing this process with the DVTT Subcommittee and allowing them to participate in the revision process, the DVOMB was able to utilize a valuable feedback loop in the community and allow real barriers to practice in the field inform a responsive policy shift. This served not only to improve a policy, but also improved the image of the DVOMB with the Pueblo DVTT, as the process engaged them in a way that felt like the two entities were doing something together as opposed to the DVOMB doing something to them.

Liaison Process between the DVOMB and Pueblo

As one of the earliest action items addressed during this process, one of the DVTT Subcommittee's treatment providers volunteered to begin attending board meetings as a liaison. She attended a couple of meetings and was able to participate in applicable discussions by acting as a voice for the Pueblo DVTT, however she was not able to attend regularly due to logistical restrictions related to travel and workload. The DVTT Subcommittee also reported that they felt a lot of the information discussed during board meetings did not always feel exceptionally relevant to the Pueblo DVTT. The DVTT

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Subcommittee proffered some suggestions to allow for smoother feedback loops between the DVOMB and their DVTT. One idea is to post a DVOMB meeting agenda that could be accessed by anyone a few weeks prior to the meeting so any community could determine if there was something relevant for them that would be discussed or enacted. Another thought was to make the DVOMB meetings accessible to the field via teleconference or phone call. This would ease the logistical difficulties associated with traveling to the meeting in person. Together, these suggestions allow community members to decide whether or not they would like to attend the meeting and for what agenda items.

Raising Awareness of Community Resources for Victims

Treatment Victim Advocates (TVA) that were a part of the DVTT Subcommittee expressed concerns that there was a large gap between what resources are available in the field and what TVAs may be aware of. The TVAs shared anecdotes of advocates sending victims to resources that no longer existed and stated that all advocates have separate ways of tracking what resources are available. They were determined to engage the advocates in the community in a process to centralize a resource bank and increase their communication with one another to better serve their clients. They took the charge to create a monthly TVA meeting in which they could begin generating this resource list and discuss how to keep it updated and available.

Victim Advocacy Continuity of Care

In addition to the objectives the DVTT Subcommittee set out to address, one unexplored opportunity was uncovered. The deputy district attorney discussed some frustration regarding continuity of care for DV victims between the DA and TVA. Upon hearing this, one of TVAs inquired about the process and the two resolved to discuss after the meeting how to create a better transition and possibly involve the TVA on the front end. This area came up because the meeting took place in a smaller group than the full DVTT that openly discussed difficulties, which has implications for further improving communication in the larger DVTT in Pueblo or any other similar group across the state.

Feedback from Pueblo DVTT Subcommittee

Through the process of eliciting feedback from the DVTT Subcommittee, some limitations did not allow for all subcommittee members to offer their thoughts and suggestions. As a result, one TVA and one treatment provider were not able to provide feedback at the time of this report's generation, though there is a standing offer for them to provide feedback either by email or by scheduling a phone meeting.

The DVTT Subcommittee expressed a desire to continue meeting though we had reached the end of our mutually determined six month commitment. This sentiment was universal and the group determined that meeting on a less frequent basis may be best to ensure that there are topic areas in need of exploration and that the meeting does not exist simply for the sake of existing. A lot of progress the group made was attributed to having a DVOMB representative attend the meetings to create a neutral environment for the different

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disciplines meeting, so the DVTT Subcommittee requested that a representative remain part of the meetings regularly. The group decided that at this juncture, they would like to meet every four months to allow time for various topic areas to arise in the larger DVTT, creating an agenda for this subcommittee. If this is not frequently enough, that could be addressed at the next DVTT Subcommittee meeting scheduled for October, 2016.

The primary reason identified for the DVTT Subcommittee's utility and effectiveness in working on identified objectives was the smaller group creating a safer environment to have open discussion. The presence of a DVOMB representative also provided a resource to clarify some questions the community had in real time, which allowed them to disseminate information to the larger DVTT in a more expedited manner.

Another benefit identified by the DVTT Subcommittee was an increased sense of cohesion between different professions represented in the group. While the larger DVTT functions well, it can be more difficult to have open communication regarding existing issues between disciplines than in this smaller subcommittee. This increased communication and clarity has prompted the DVTT Subcommittee members to take some concepts from the smaller meeting (i.e. generating minutes, elaborating on agenda items, establishing ground rules, etc.) and port them into the larger DVTT meetings to attempt to replicate the sense of safety felt within this subcommittee.

Some potential improvements to the process offered by the DVTT Subcommittee involved having the DVOMB representative attend the larger DVTT meeting more frequently to help reinforce some of the positive aspects of the subcommittee noted above. This would also allow for some continuity in messaging from the DVOMB to any given community and help to build relationships with more individual members of the DVTT. Another suggestion was to ensure the subcommittee meetings remain action oriented. While most of our meetings involved delegated action steps, some of the less tangible objectives (such as improving the quality of communication within the larger DVTT) were difficult to attach action attach actions to. By more purposefully drawing attention back to the more concrete aspects of even the more abstract objectives, the group would feel more productive and have a more solid outcome to bring back to the larger DVTT.

Future Steps/Direction

Through this process with the Pueblo DV community, various paths have been revealed in how the DVOMB and Implementation Committee can work to support the Colorado DV community in its concerted endeavor to reduce victimization and create a safer community. In identifying a successful process for creating a cohesive DVTT and the elements that currently allow that group to function effectively, we now have a framework for assisting interested communities in starting a DVTT of their own or bolstering the efficacy of an existing DVTT. One way to accomplish this task with a broader audience is through the use of regional round table discussions to disseminate information about functional DVTTs, dynamically respond to the needs of present parties, and potentially select communities on a basis of need to engage with on a deeper level.

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Additionally, the process used to engage Pueblo's DVTT can act as a model for collaborating with communities in depth. By conducting broad round table discussions regarding DVTT group functioning, interest in working with the DVOMB in this capacity could be generated and further inform relevant selection criteria. Pueblo DVTT Subcommittee members have all agreed to write a brief testimonial regarding their experience in partnering with the board, which could be useful in building interest around the state. Some of these individuals are also interested in being involved in the round table discussions to both learn from and share with other communities. This kind of intercommunity collaboration would allow for more comprehensive problem solving around the state and help to empower communities to better utilize the autonomy that is authorized by the DVOMB Standards.

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Appendix A

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE OFFENDER MANAGEMENT BOARD

Policy and Procedure for

PRACTICES THAT VARY FROM THE STANDARDS

Revised March 11, 2016

STEP ONE: When an Approved Provider is faced with barriers to implementing the *Standards for Treatment with Court Ordered Domestic Violence Offenders*, he/she may submit a proposal via email or postal mail to the Application Review Committee (ARC). The proposal should be identified as an **Alternative Treatment and Containment Plan** and must include the following components:

1. An overview of the unusual circumstance including why compliance with a specific Standard is not achievable. (Cite the specific standard)
2. A design for the proposed variation on the Standards.
3. This design shall address the following:
 - a. Victim safety
 - b. Offender containment
 - c. Offender ongoing assessment, including risk assessment
 - d. Time frame for this variation, and
 - e. Written verification that MTT consensus has been obtained for this proposal

STEP TWO:

DVOMB Staff and at least one ARC member will perform an initial review of the request. If the request is acceptable, they will authorize temporary/preliminary acceptance of the plan with stipulations that the ARC will conduct the final review. If the request is not acceptable, the ARC member and the Staff will work with the Provider to come up with an acceptable solution OR, if needed, bring the request to the next ARC meeting. The provider or MTT will be notified expediently and in writing.

STEP THREE:

The request will then be fully reviewed by the ARC at its next meeting. The ARC will review the Preliminary acceptance and offer any needed stipulations to strengthen plan. The ARC will create a plan for periodic review of the request.

The Committee has the authority to set forth specific program conditions during the time frame of the Alternative Treatment and Containment Plan. This may include requiring the provider to submit periodic documentation to the DVOMB regarding how the Alternative Plan is working, identifying any benefits and or challenges.

For questions or to submit an *Alternative Treatment and Containment Plan*, please contact:

The Application Review Committee, Domestic Violence Offender Management Board
c/o DVOMB Standards Coordinator
700 Kipling Street, Suite 1000
Denver, Colorado 80215
303-239-4536, sharon.behl@state.co.us

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Appendix B

Characteristics of a Functional DVTT as Identified by Pueblo

*Red Text = potentially portable learning points

*Green Text = potential action steps

- Mutual acceptance of one another's expertise and knowledge within the DVTT
 - Welcoming culture with defined roles based on expertise
 - Establish mutually agreed upon group norms and expectations
 - Define roles and expertise of each represented profession
- Intrinsic desire and drive to do better for clients, and therefore the community
 - Sense of mutual purpose and common goal
 - Explicitly discuss and determine a common purpose among the group
 - learning culture existent
 - Outwardly make space for and encourage curiosity and questions
- Willingness to look at the process and challenge it based on knowledge and experience in a way that is productive and generally non-confrontational
 - Healthy level of challenge combats complacency and influences learning
 - In establishing the group's norms, discuss how to handle disagreements/conflict
 - Normalize disagreements as being a way to understand other perspectives by exploring the points raised by both sides
- Collaboration is higher in this community as evidenced by the willingness of those on the DVTT to explain their professional decisions with one another, such as treatment level placement.
 - Collaboration with client's best interests as a focal point
 - Regularly bring the client's needs into the conversation when discussing decisions that will inevitably affect him/her.
- Knowledge of roles amongst agencies, but compromise and meet in the middle by educating one another.
 - Role clarity
 - Clearly define roles of each represented group
 - Space to debate in a healthy way when hybrid issues arise (e.g. public safety v. treatment)
 - Encourage open discussions with all attendees contributing when possible
 - When strong debates arise, break into smaller, diverse groups to discuss the issues, then reconvene as a large group to consider all angles
- Culture of loyalty, passion, and purpose; there is a sense of being welcomed and valued in an environment of safety and respect.

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Intrinsic motivation

- - Check in occasionally on what keeps people working with this population
- Welcoming culture that expresses value in each of its members
 - Seek input from each member regularly to ensure all voices are heard
- Strength in numbers for members of a discipline voicing disparate opinions/views
 - A sense of camaraderie within disciplines is also important to team functioning
 - Hold regular meetings for each discipline to discuss issues relevant to that group (e.g. treatment providers, probation, victim advocates, etc.)

Historical Aspects of Pueblo's DVTT Development and Evolution

- Started formally as a small group meeting at a treatment provider's location. Ultimately moved to probation to create a more neutral environment.
 - Start small to establish direction, then expand
 - Begin with fewer members (e.g. one from each discipline), then add more as direction becomes clear and established
 - Neutrality has a valuable place in the team dynamic
 - Hold meetings in neutral locations and avoid taking a power position or "pulling rank" as individual members
- Born out of an intrinsic interest of all involved to provide greater services for their community.
 - Intrinsically motivated to serve community
 - Discuss early and regularly why it is important for the group to exist and function effectively
 - Mutual, self-determined vision
 - Revisit the group mission/vision occasionally and amend as necessary
- Equal power among all members of the group is valued to keep the environment safe and build trust.
 - Attempt to establish egalitarian power dynamics
 - If having a chair/co-chair is necessary, keep the roles as administrative as possible (i.e. creating and sending agendas, securing space to meet, sending reminders, facilitating the conversation, etc.)
 - Cycle any leadership position somewhat frequently and between disciplines to establish checks and balances
 - Trust and safety influence the productivity of the group
 - Mutual goals and group norms can help to establish this along with agreements to hold group members accountable to these components
- The group tries to not take anything personally and keep high levels of communication to ensure they do their best for their clients.

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- Professional communication integral; personal attacks unwelcomed by the culture
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 - If/when comments feel personal, metacommunicate (i.e. explicitly identify the perception of safety being lost work to reestablish group norms)
- Motivation to improve client outcomes and community safety
 - Revisit the group mission/vision occasionally and amend as necessary
- Food being involved in the meetings has traditionally helped to keep engagement higher.
 - Some extrinsic motivators to increase engagement, particularly early in the process, can be beneficial
 - Make early meetings potlucks and continue them regularly (quarterly or otherwise), have certain disciplines pick up bagels any given month, etc.