

Justice Reinvestment Initiative: Reducing Violent Crime by Improving Justice System Performance in Vermont

Intercept 1: Law Enforcement

Third Presentation to the Domestic Violence Response
Justice Reinvestment Working Group

February 24, 2022

The Council of State Governments Justice Center

Vermont Department of Public Safety

The Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence



Justice Center
THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS



**Justice
Reinvestment
Initiative**
Vermont

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**Justice
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Vermont

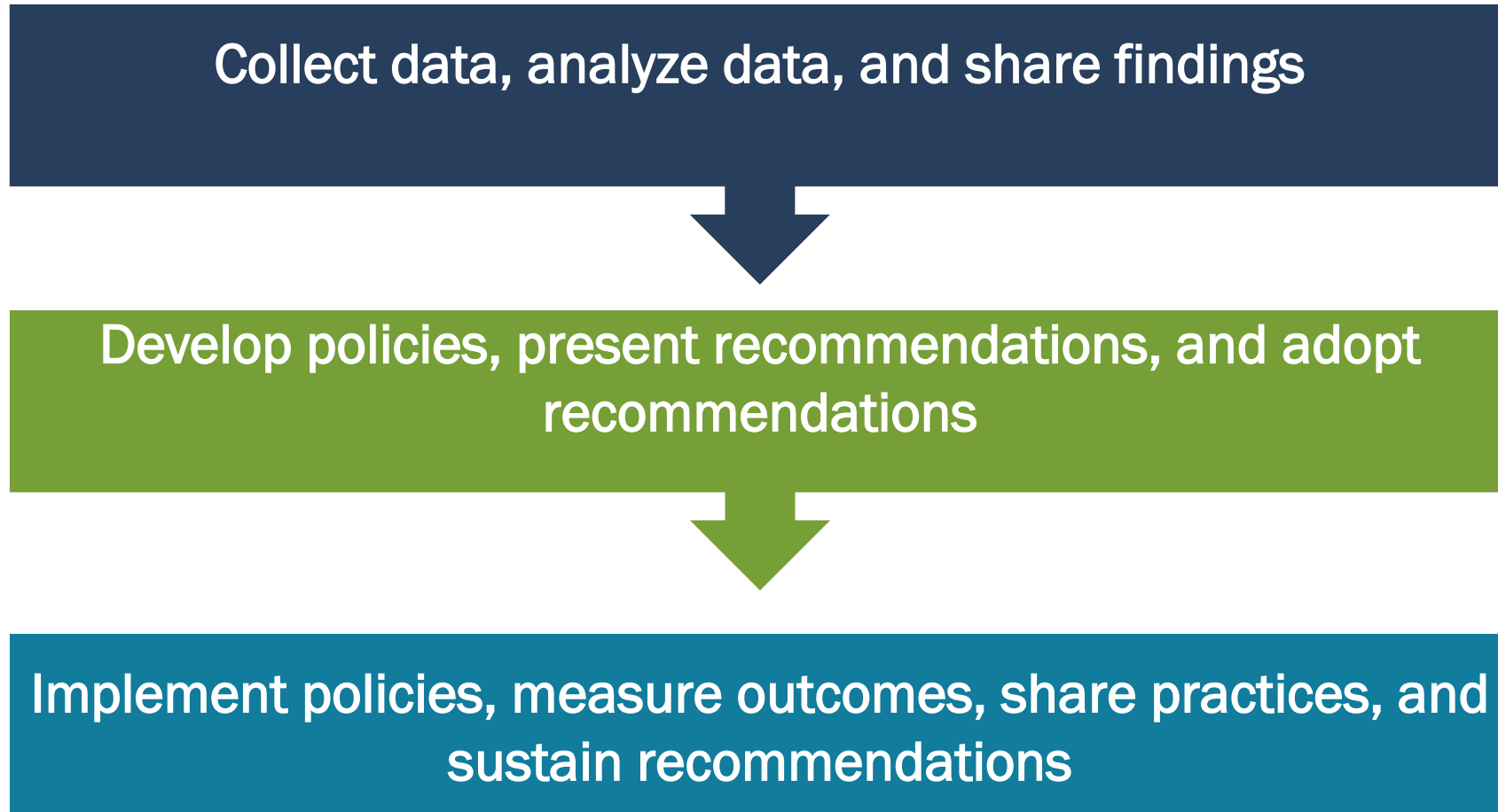
Overview

- 1** Intercept 0 Recap
- 2** Intercept 1
- 3** Law Enforcement-Identified Domestic Violence Incidence
- 4** Themes
- 5** Further Interrogation and Next Steps

Intercept 0 Recap

1

The Justice Reinvestment approach utilizes data to understand and improve domestic violence responses across Vermont.



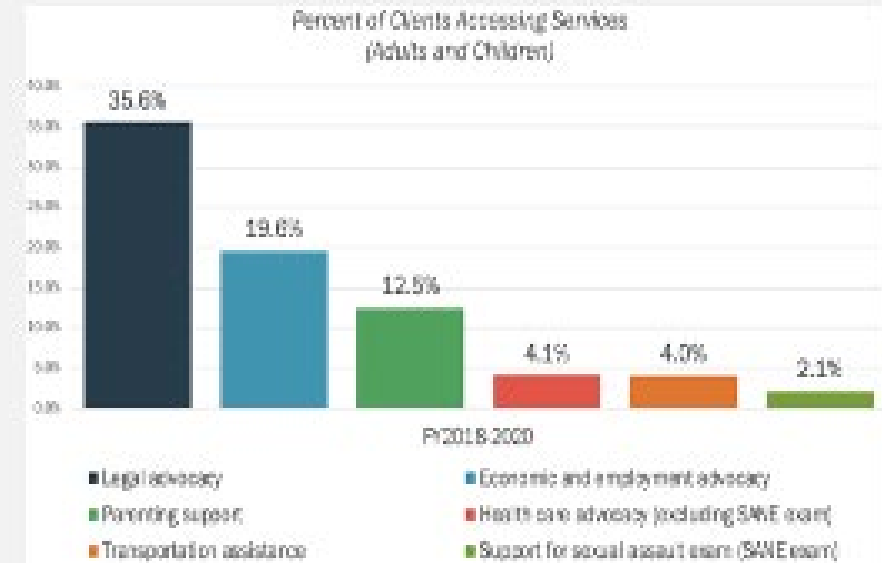
★ We are here

Intercept 0 examined community service responses to domestic violence.

Four key themes were identified through a series of conversations with advocates and community service providers.

- 1 Advocates are working with victims to address multiple, complex needs related to intimate partner violence.
- 2 Domestic violence service providers and community organizations report barriers to adequately meet the needs of domestic violence victims and survivors.
- 3 There is a need for increased education on recognizing and responding to domestic violence in ways that are responsive to trauma among social service, legal, and public safety agencies, as well as in the broader community.
- 4 Improved intra- and interagency communication and coordination is needed to better support victims and survivors.

Intercept 0 Presentation

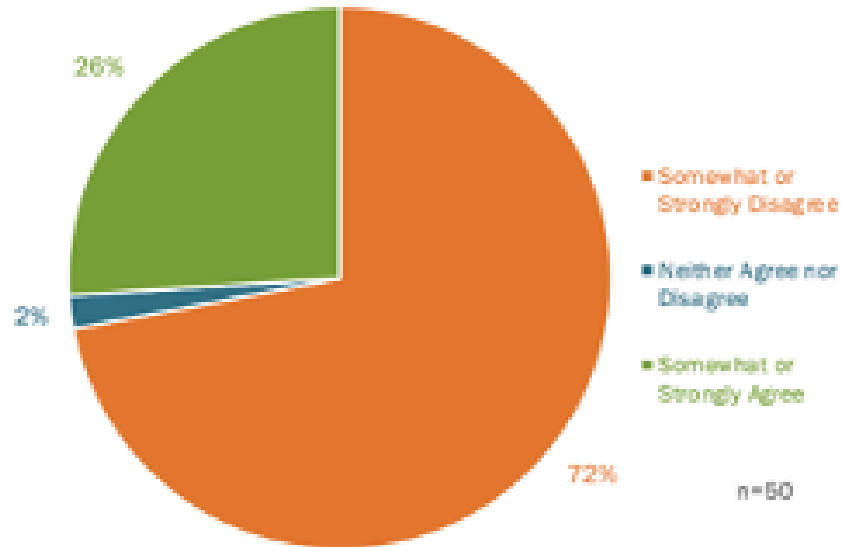


Advocacy agencies offer multiple types of services, ranging from legal advocacy to forensic medical exams, in order to address the complex needs of the victims they work with.

Intercept 0 Presentation

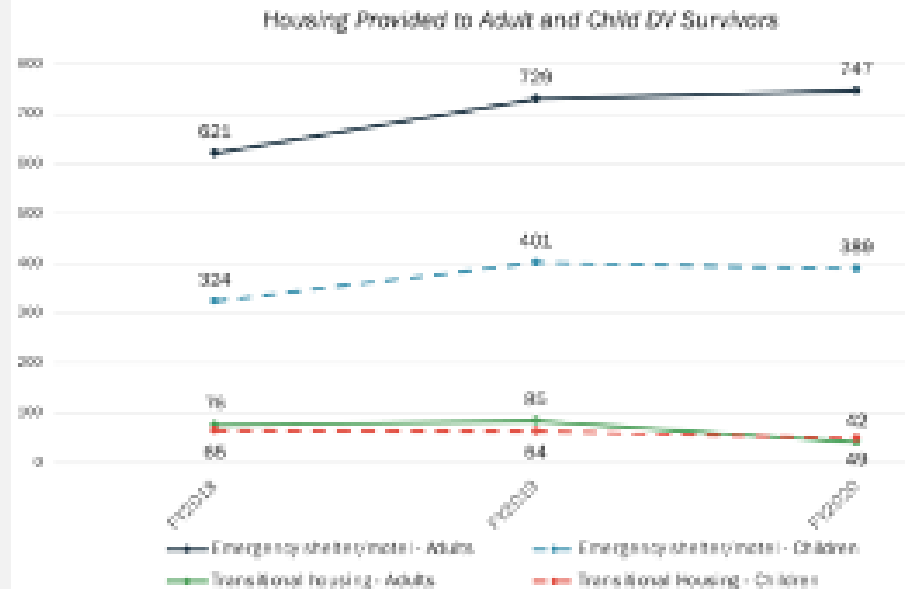
Service providers face many barriers to service provision, with lack of housing being the most cited barrier.

Domestic Violence Service Providers' Responses to the Statement, "I have the Resources to Meet the Needs of the Victims and Survivors I Work with."



Intercept 0 Presentation

Each year, emergency and transitional housing support is provided to hundreds of adult and child survivors of domestic violence.



Intercept 0 Presentation

Analysis revealed opportunities for improved collaboration and information sharing among Intercept 0 stakeholders.

Variations in resources by region challenge statewide resource sharing.



Providers and organizations reported an overall lack of familiarity with resources outside of their region.



Varying resources by locality challenges legislative or programmatic implementation in some areas.



There are missing feedback loops between statewide and local-level partners related to programming implementation and resourcing.

Intercept 0 Presentation

DV service providers and community-based organizations could benefit from greater partnerships.



Community-based organizations and agencies outside of the domestic violence arena expressed a desire for training and resources on domestic violence screening practices.

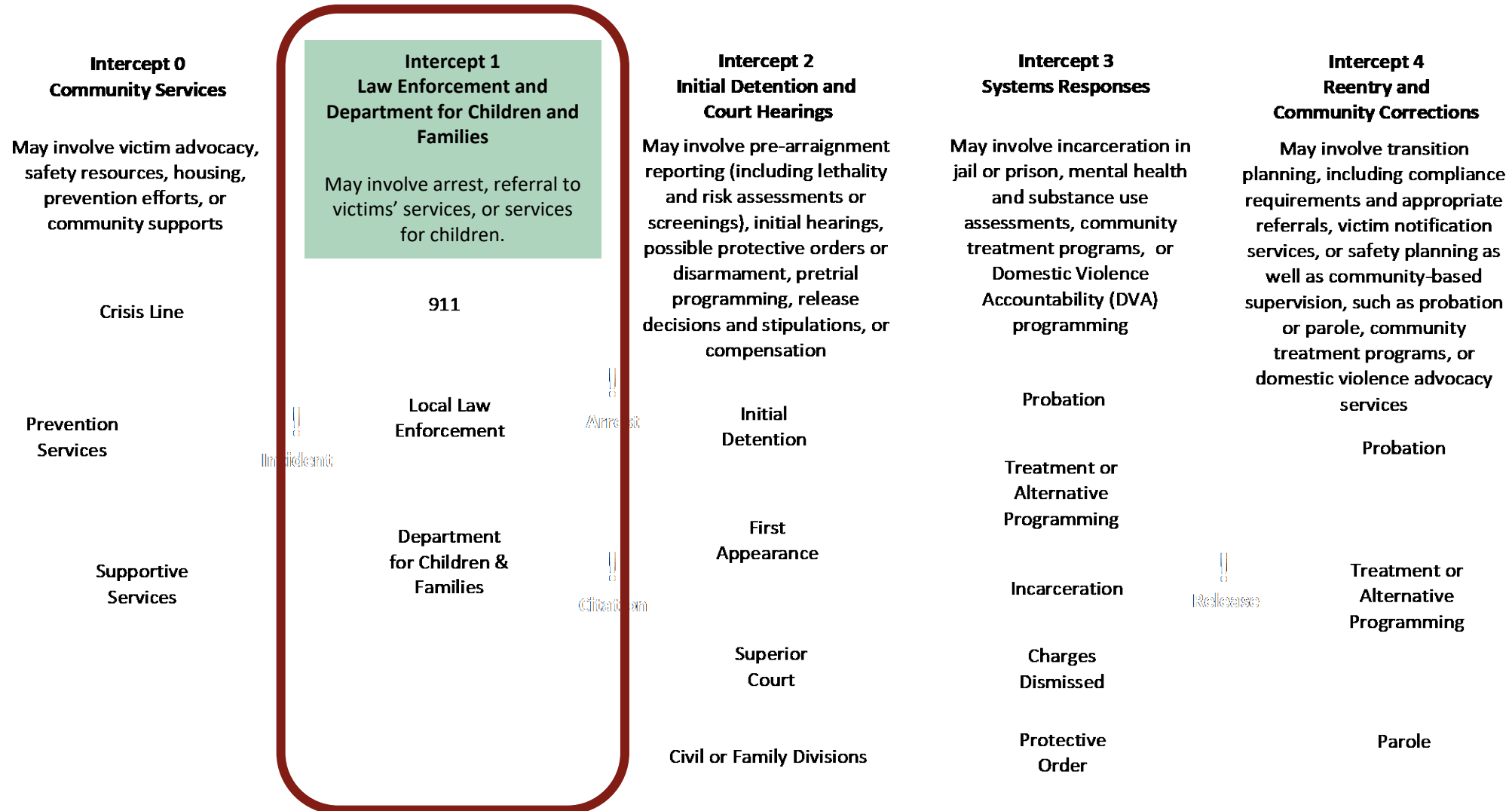


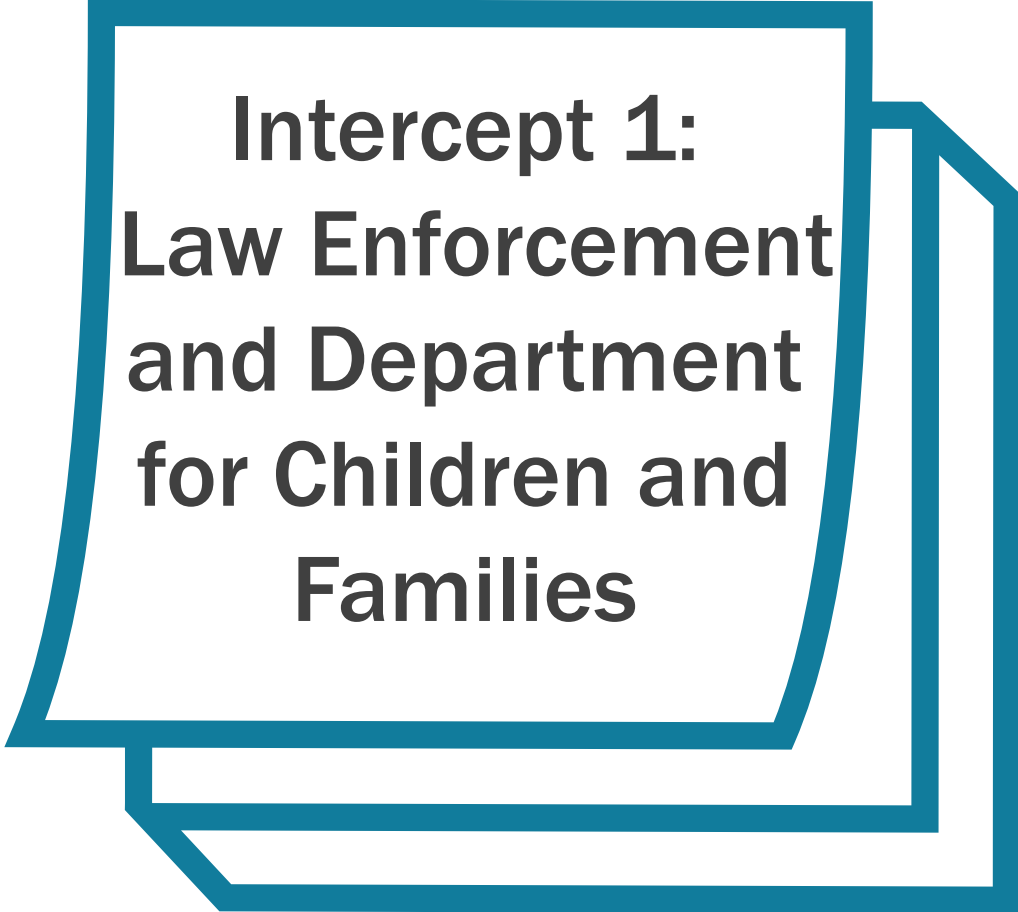
Demographically specific organizations report that domestic violence victims and survivors in their communities are often not able to receive demographically specific services, despite domestic violence service providers' attempts to meet these needs.

Intercept 0 Presentation


Intercept 1 | 2

A systems-wide analysis using Sequential Intercept Mapping continues with Intercept 1.





Intercept 1: Law Enforcement and Department for Children and Families



Analyzing Intercept 1 means looking at policies, procedures, and experiences of **911 call-takers/dispatchers, law enforcement, and Department for Children and Families (DCF)** to understand responses to domestic violence incidents.

Law enforcement and Department for Children and Families (DCF) are integral to a coordinated community response to domestic violence.



Supported by decades of evaluation, a **coordinated community response (CCR)** is vital for providing a collaborative response to domestic violence across agencies and systems.



National estimates suggest that **less than half of domestic violence incidents are reported to law enforcement.** Victims typically **suffer multiple assaults prior** to involving law enforcement, with **increasing frequency or severity** being reasons they may decide to involve law enforcement. In these incidents, law enforcement officers are often the first on the scene to respond and can provide safety and resources to victims and survivors.



DCF works with families to identify and respond to domestic violence, recognizing that domestic violence has long-term mental, physical, and socioemotional **impacts on children.**

Vermont defines domestic violence in statute and mandates continued training for law enforcement beyond their initial training at the Vermont Police Academy.

15 V.S.A. § 1101: Definitions

(1) “Abuse” means the occurrence of one or more of the following acts between family or household members:

- (A) Attempting to cause or causing physical harm.
- (B) Placing another in fear of imminent serious physical harm.
- (C) Abuse to children as defined in 33 V.S.A. chapter 49, subchapter 2.
- (D) Stalking as defined in 12 V.S.A. § 5131(6).
- (E) Sexual assault as defined in 12 V.S.A. § 5131(5)

(2) “Household members” means persons who, for any period of time, are living or have lived together, are sharing or have shared occupancy of a dwelling, are engaged in or have engaged in a sexual relationship, or minors or adults who are dating or who have dated. “Dating” means a social relationship of a romantic nature.

20 V.S.A. § 2365: Domestic violence training

(b) Law enforcement officers shall receive domestic violence retraining every two years in a program approved by the Vermont criminal justice training council.

The Intercept 1 analysis has five objectives.

1

Describe law enforcement officer-identified domestic violence incidence.

2

Assess the **training, policies, and procedures** of members of law enforcement, 911 call-takers, and DCF, **highlighting any disparities.**

3

Explore the experiences of these entities in responding to domestic violence.

4

Contextualize the **relationships, coordination, and information sharing** of entities within a broader community response.

5

Identify **barriers and gaps** in responding to domestic violence.

Staff at the CSG Justice Center and the Vermont Network connected with stakeholders across Intercept 1.

Stakeholders represented members of:

911 call-takers/dispatchers

Crime Research Group

Law enforcement, including the Vermont State Police, Victims Services, and county and municipal law enforcement agencies

Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services

Vermont Department for Children and Families, including the Domestic and Sexual Violence Unit, and family service workers

Vermont Police Academy Training and Curriculum Development Staff

Directly impacted victims and survivors*

The assessment entailed multiple surveys, interviews, focus groups, and quantitative data analysis.

> 8,000

Domestic violence crime incidents were analyzed using Vermont National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) data for 2015–2020

≈ 240

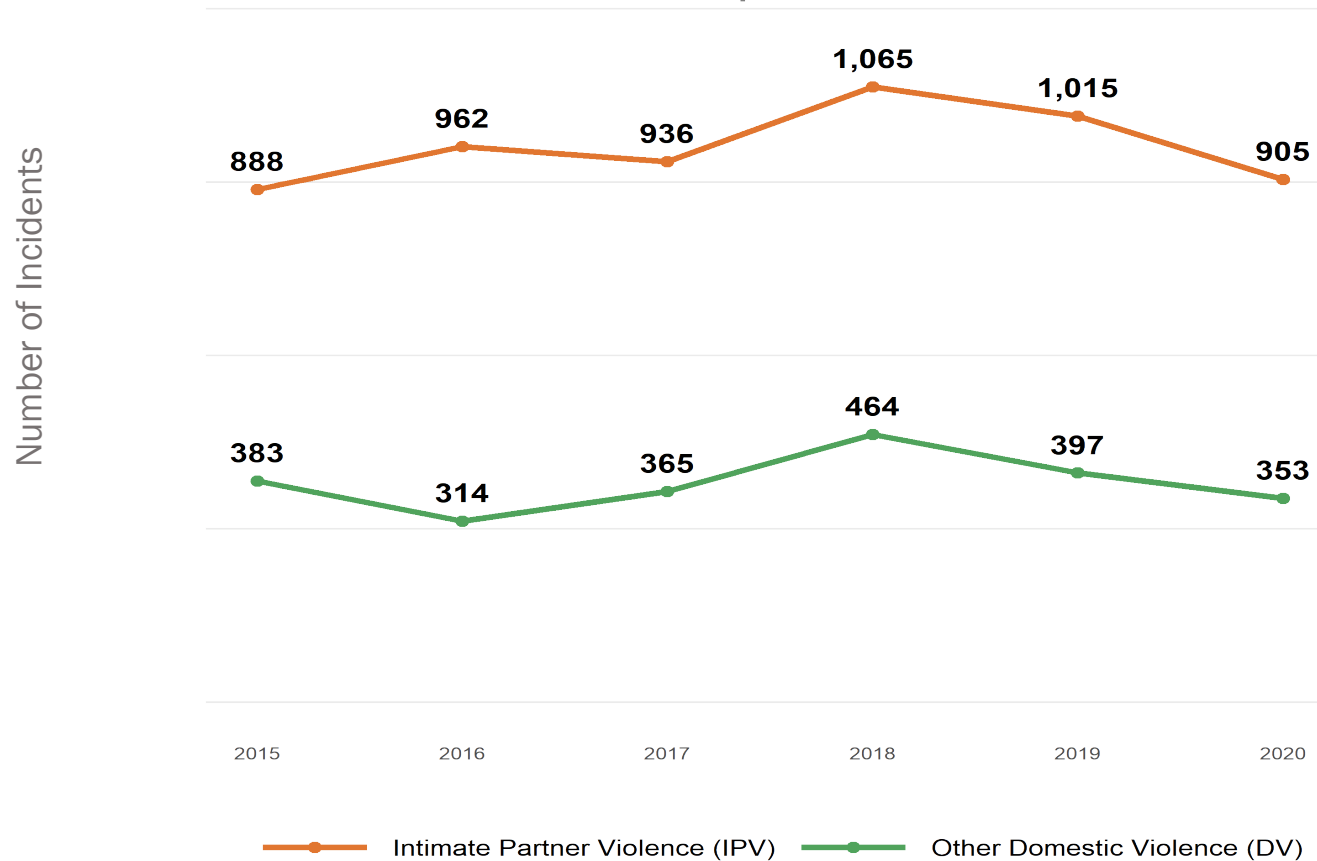
Individuals were interviewed or surveyed for this intercept

Law Enforcement- Identified Domestic Violence Incidence

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On average, there are 1,341 domestic violence incidents reported to police each year in Vermont, and the vast majority of incidents are intimate partner violence (IPV).

Intimate Partner Violence and Other Domestic Violence Incidents Reported to Police



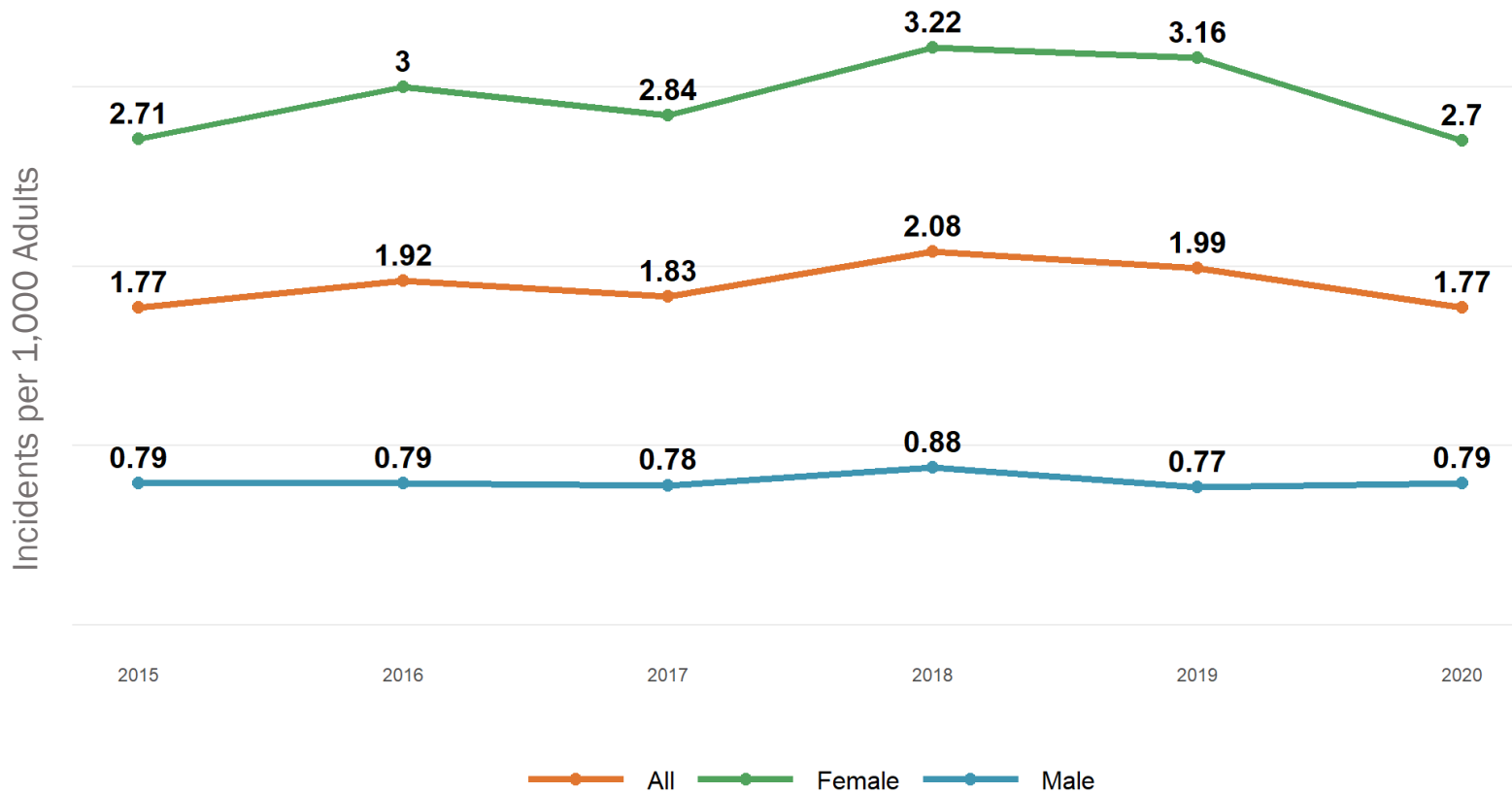
IPV includes incidents occurring between a current or former intimate partner, whereas DV includes violence between any family members.

Over 70 percent of all DV incidents are intimate partner violence.

These numbers are likely just a portion of all DV/IPV in the state, as national research shows that only about 41 percent of intimate partner violence victimizations are reported to police.

Annually, the rate of IPV incidents is 3.7 times higher among adult women than adult men in Vermont.

Intimate Partner Violence Incidence Rate
Among Adult Vermonters, by Victim Gender



The incidence rate is the total number of incidents that occur per year, divided by the population.

Simple assault and aggravated assault were the most common IPV offenses.

The gender disparity documented here aligns with national research, which shows that women face far greater risk of IPV than men.

On average each year, victims known to police had the following demographic characteristics.

80.0% of victims self-identified as **women**, compared to 50.5 percent of the general VT population.

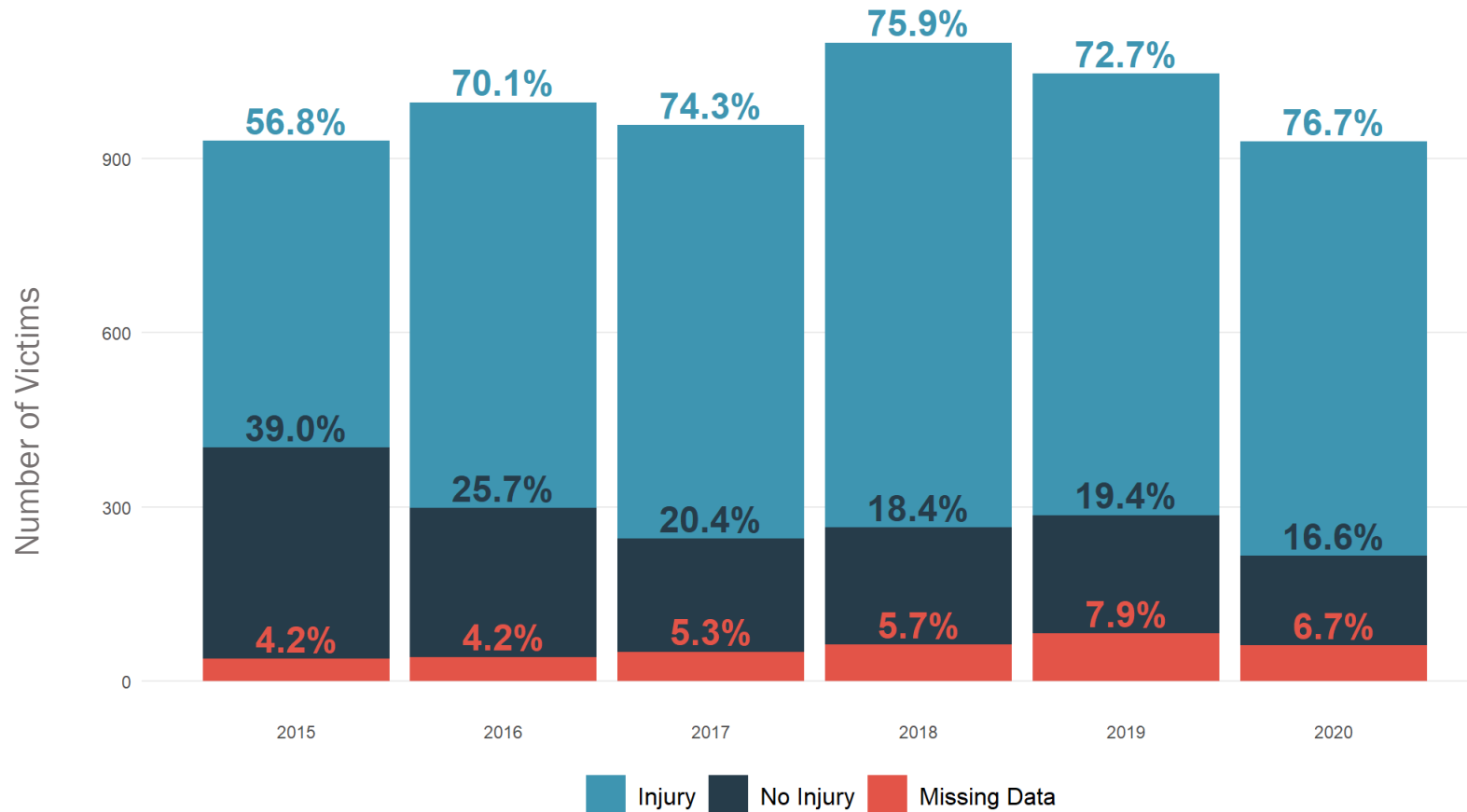
78.6% of victims were **adults ages 18 to 44**, compared to 35.5 percent of the general VT population.

6.6% of victims self-identified as **Black, Asian, or another racial or ethnic minority**, compared to 5.8 percent of the general VT population.

5.7% of victims were identified as having a **same-sex current or former intimate partner and may identify as LGBTQ+**. Although there is no direct statewide comparison for this statistic available, 5 percent of the adult VT population identifies as LGBTQ+.

Each year, over 70 percent of victims known to police are physically injured as a result of an IPV incident.

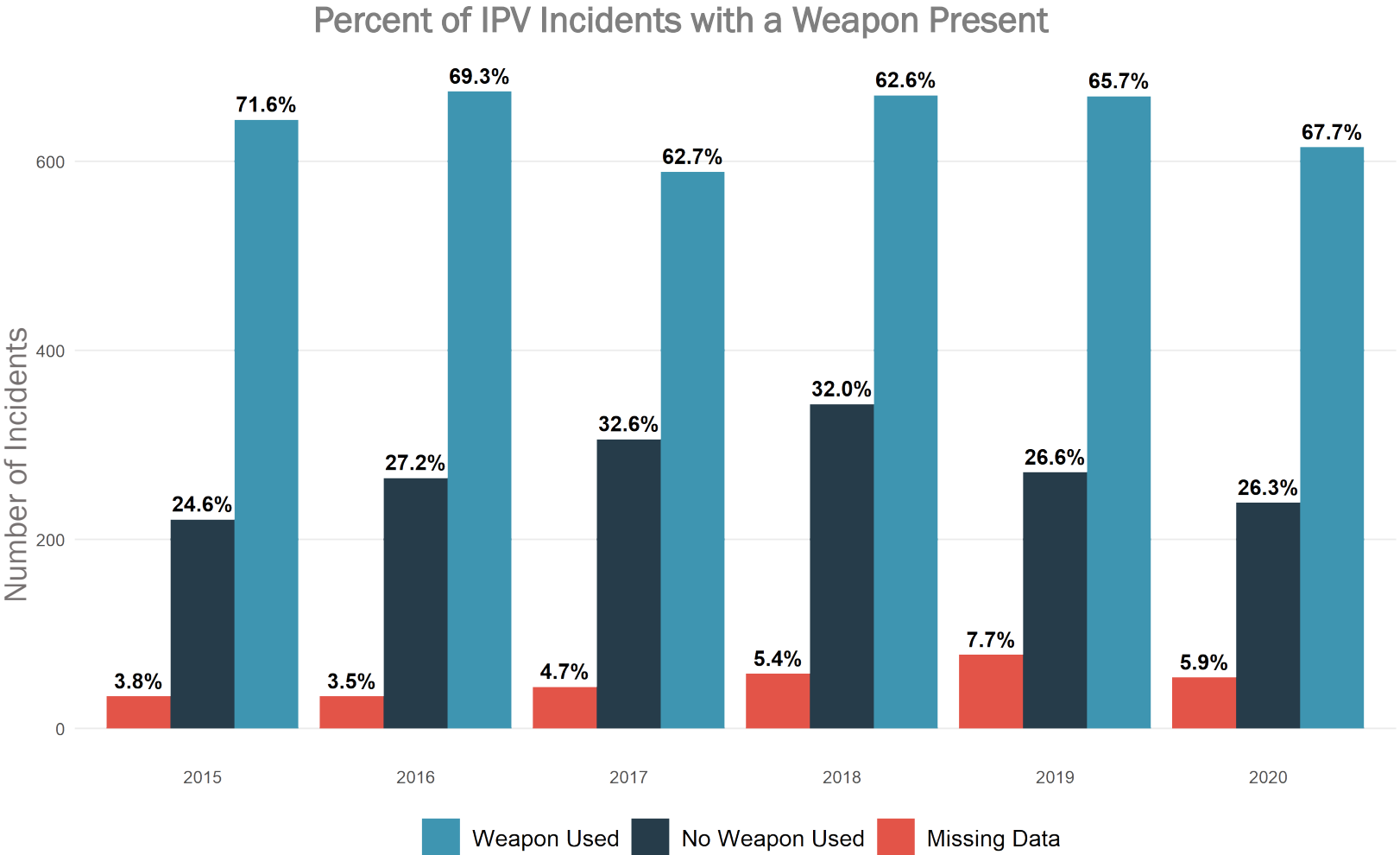
Percent of IPV Victims Facing Injury



In NIBRS, injuries are defined as the most serious injury impacting the victim; identification of an injury is based on the perception of law enforcement.

Ten percent of all injuries reported were classified as major. This means law enforcement identified a deceased victim, broken bones, loss of teeth, severe laceration, unconsciousness, or other major injuries. Ninety percent of injuries reported were classified as minor.

On average, a weapon is present in 66.6 percent of IPV incidents each year.

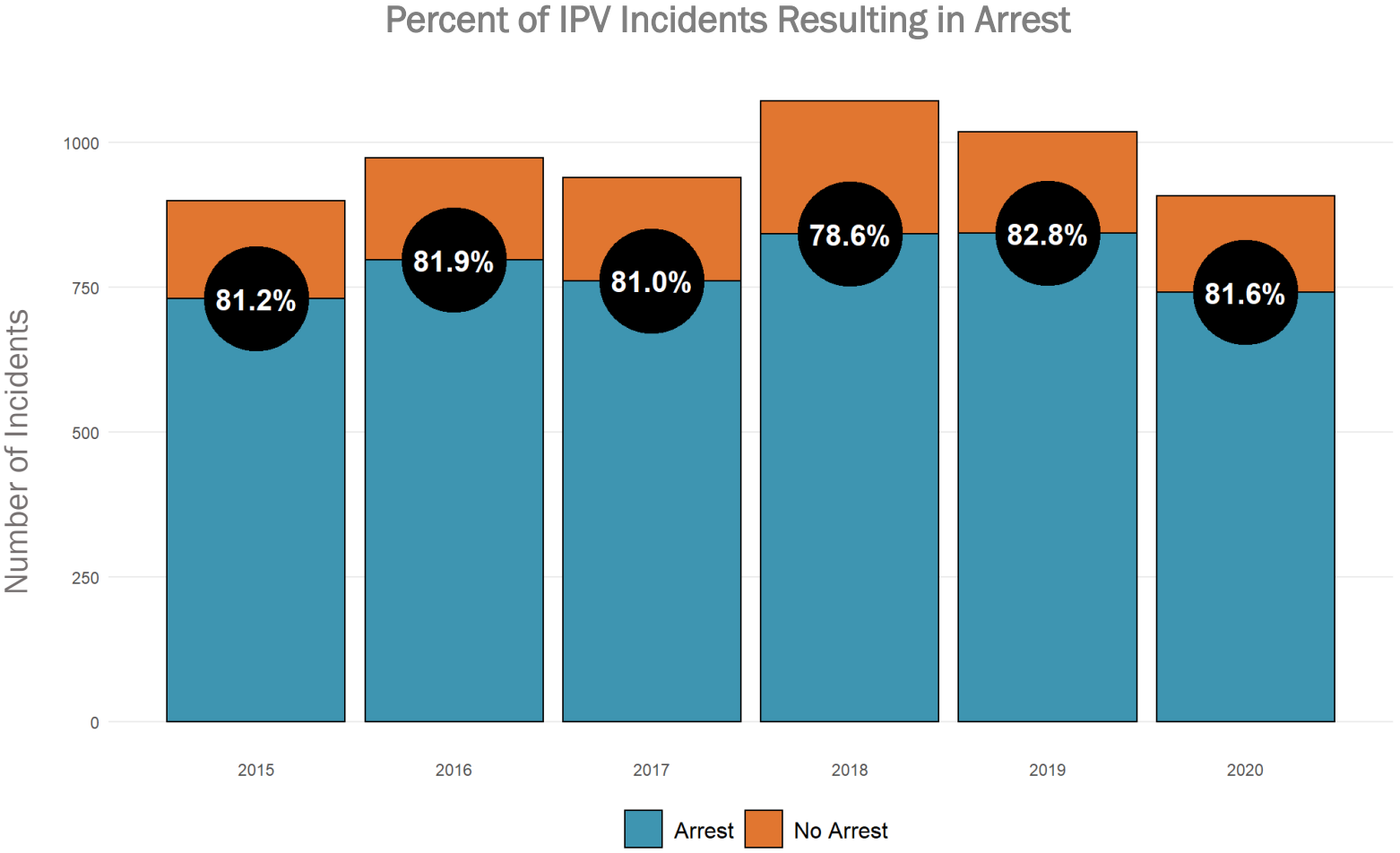


In NIBRS, weapon information is recorded if a weapon was present; it does not necessarily need to have been used.

The most common weapons reported include personal weapons (e.g., hands, fists, feet), knives, blunt objects, and firearms.

National research indicates that when a violent intimate partner has access to a firearm, the risk of intimate partner homicide increase substantially (specifically, the odds of homicide are five times higher).

On average, over 81 percent of incidents lead to an arrest each year.



In 2020, 81.6 percent of IPV incidents resulted in an arrest.

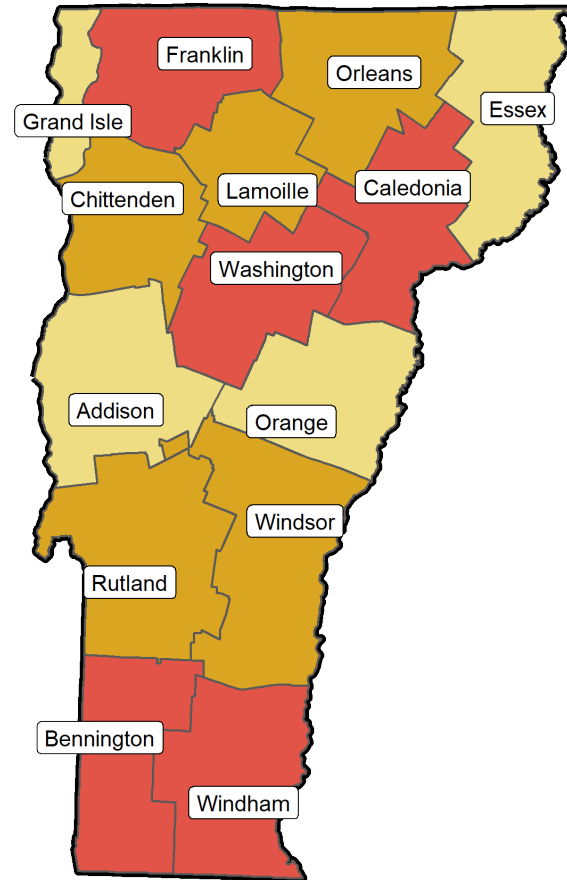
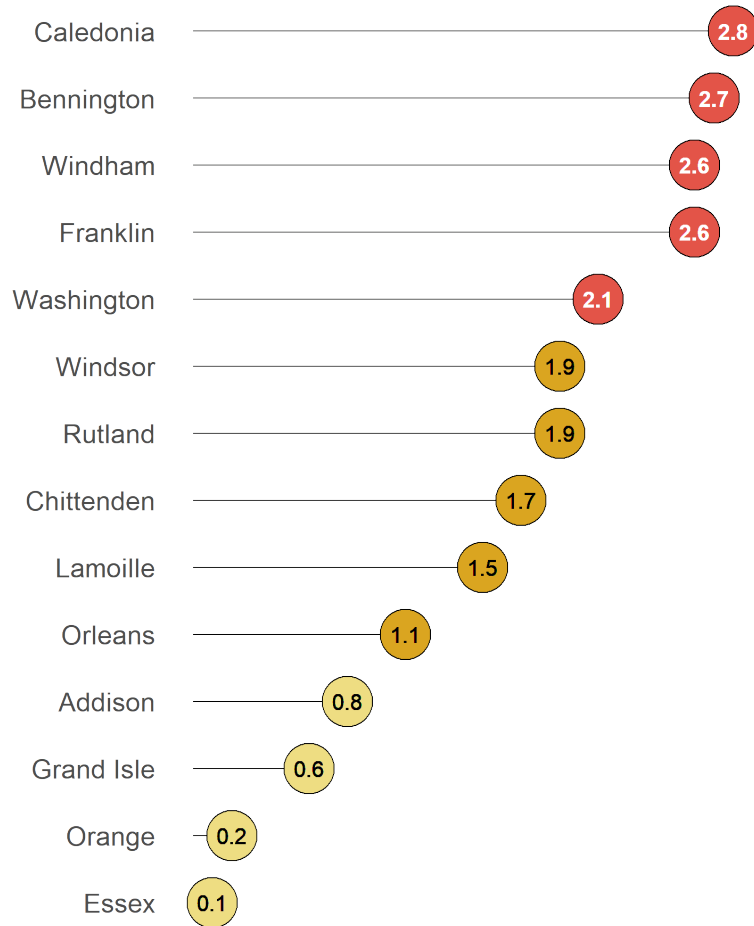
In Vermont, an arrest is recorded in incidents where a custodial arrest is made or a citation is issued.

Vermont appears to have a higher arrest rate than other communities with NIBRS data. In a study of over 5,400 jurisdictions in 36 states and the District of Columbia, 47.7 percent of IPV incidents resulted in arrest.

CSG Justice Center analysis of VT NIBRS data, 2015–2020; David Hirschel, Philip D. McCormack, and Eve Buzawa, “A 10-Year Study of the Impact of Intimate Partner Primary Aggressor Laws on Single and Dual Arrest,” *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 36 (2021).

There is substantial variation in where IPV occurs in Vermont, even after accounting for population.

Average Annual Adult IPV Incidence Rate, by County (2015–2020)



County IPV incidence rates were developed by dividing the total number of NIBRS incidents per year by the total population.

Many factors can contribute to geographic disparities in IPV. National research has shown that communities with fewer resources—including police and social service providers—tend to have higher rates of self-reported IPV. Further analysis could examine whether a lack of such resources is associated with higher IPV rates in Vermont counties.

CSG Justice Center analysis of VT NIBRS data, 2015–2020; U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Estimates of the Resident Population by Sex, Age, Race, and Hispanic Origin, April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2019; Min Xie, Janet L. Lauritsen, and Karen Heimer, “Intimate Partner Violence in U.S. Metropolitan Areas: The Contextual Influences of Police and Social Services,” *Criminology*, 50 (2012).

Survey data from 137 members of law enforcement and 911 call-takers/dispatchers reflect quantitative findings.



Most law enforcement officers (86 percent) and 911 call-takers/dispatchers (70 percent) surveyed agreed that **domestic violence is a problem in their area of the state.**



A majority of law enforcement officers (84 percent) and 911 call-takers/dispatchers (79 percent) surveyed agreed that they **often answer repeat domestic violence calls from the same individuals.**



This reflects national data, which reveals that victims of intimate partner violence experience a **greater percentage of repeated violent victimization** (33 percent) than victims of other types of violence.

Let's Pause.

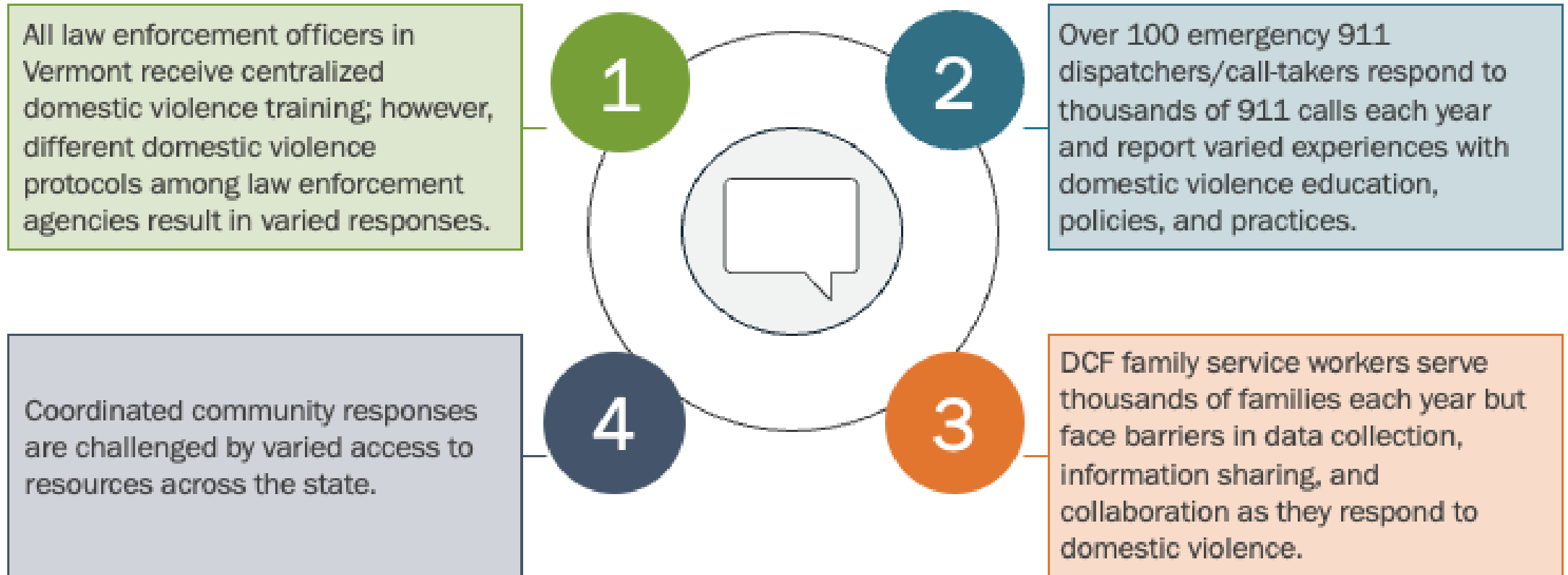


What questions or comments do you have about **law enforcement-identified domestic violence incidence?**

Themes

4

Four key themes were identified through survey data and conversations with law enforcement, 911 call-takers, and Department for Children and Families employees.





1

All law enforcement officers in Vermont receive centralized domestic violence training; however, different domestic violence protocols among law enforcement agencies result in varied responses.

All law enforcement recruits undergo domestic violence training at Vermont's Police Academy.

Officers receive different domestic violence training based on part- or full-time status. **Level II Officers (part-time)** involves **8 hours of domestic violence** training; **Level III Officers (full-time)** entails **12 hours of domestic violence** training, **2 hours of strangulation awareness**, **2 hours of stalking awareness**, and **12 hours on sexual assault** investigation.

When a victim calls law enforcement, **they do not know if they will receive a Level II or Level III officer**, who have differing training backgrounds and scopes of authority, which ultimately impact the domestic violence response.

The **curriculum is comprehensive**, addressing dynamics of trauma and domestic violence, barriers for victims and survivors, and best practices for responding to a domestic violence scene. It **could benefit from enhanced discussion** of law enforcement-involved domestic violence, domestic violence beyond physical assault, safety planning practices, and more training hours to standardize education between Level II and Level III of law enforcement.



77 percent of law enforcement officers who responded to the survey agreed that they felt prepared to respond to their first domestic violence call based on the training they received.

Most law enforcement officers surveyed (**91 percent**) report that their agencies have written procedures related to domestic violence response.

However, procedures are not explained consistently across all agencies.

**Most Commonly Explained
Domestic Violence
Procedures**

Completing a report (**84 percent**)

Conducting on-scene investigations (**82 percent**)

Determining when to make an arrest; providing resources to victims (**78 percent**)

**Least Commonly Explained
Domestic Violence
Procedures**

Cases involving stalking (**57 percent**)

When law enforcement officers use violence (**58 percent**)

Approaching the scene (**62 percent**)



Recent changes to lethality assessment protocols and practices could help streamline approaches to escalating forms of domestic violence.



Danger and lethality assessments help law enforcement identify victims in domestic violence situations who are at a **high risk for escalating forms of domestic violence, including homicide**, and can support with **safety planning**.



Researchers have also found that victims who received support through the Lethality Assessment Protocol (LAP) report **higher satisfaction with police response**.



Of law enforcement officers surveyed for this intercept, 30 percent **did not report assessing for dangerousness or lethality** when responding to victims of domestic violence, and 48 percent **did not report completing safety planning** with victims.

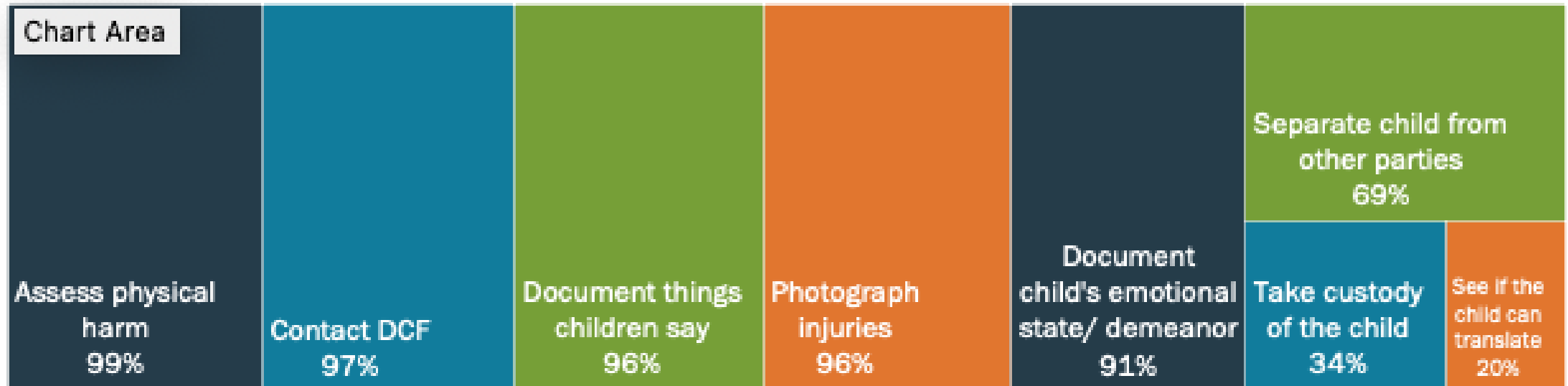


The **LAP will be required for all Vermont State Police agencies before 2023**; however, this does not impact municipal or county law enforcement agencies, whose procedures remain unstandardized.

75 percent of law enforcement officers surveyed reported that their agency's domestic violence protocol discusses how to respond when children are present.

Reported practices are typically in line with Vermont's Model Protocol for law enforcement response to children at the scene of a domestic violence incident.

"What procedures do you use when responding to child witnesses of domestic violence?"



However, a fifth of officers surveyed reported using a child to translate if an adult is Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or doesn't speak English.

Let's Pause.



What questions or comments do you
have about **Theme 1**?



2

Over 100 emergency 911 dispatchers/call-takers respond to thousands of 911 calls each year and report varied experiences with domestic violence education, policies, and practices.

Training of 911 dispatchers/call-takers differs in length, breadth, and opportunities for follow-up.

Of the **62 percent** of survey respondents who reported receiving domestic violence-specific training:



66 percent received training **more than three years ago**.



37 percent reported **0–2 hours** of training, while 34 percent reported **more than 8 hours** of training.



32 percent reported **opportunities for continued training**.



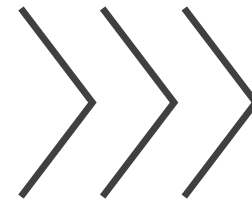
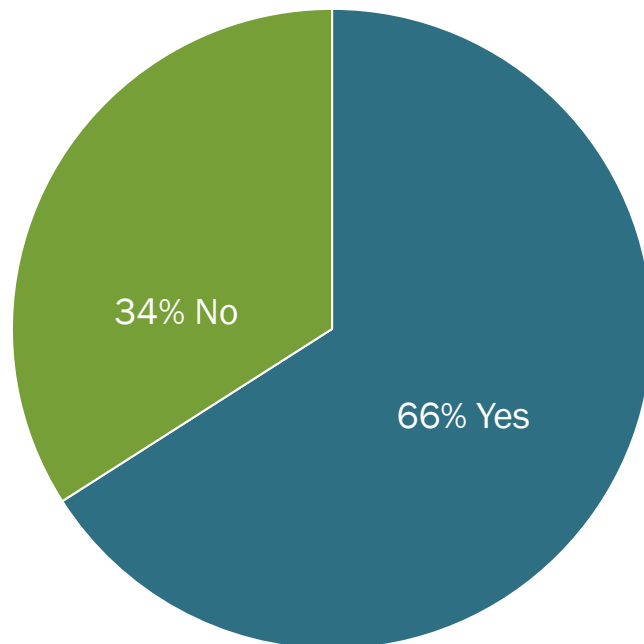
72 percent have **not received training specific to when strangulation** is reported.



62 percent **felt prepared to respond to their first domestic violence call** based on the training they received.

Most 911 dispatchers/call-takers surveyed report that their agencies have procedures for responding to domestic violence calls, though they aren't always clear.

“Does your agency have written procedures for how to respond to domestic violence service calls?”



51 percent of survey respondents reported that their **agency's policies and procedures for handling domestic violence calls are clear.**

911 dispatcher/call-takers reported engaging in multiple, complex activities while handling a domestic violence call.

Many activities reported by survey respondents reflect best practices.



Asking about the presence of weapons (98 percent), drugs or alcohol (94 percent), and children (89 percent)

Verifying the safety of officers at the scene (94 percent)

Checking databases for protection orders (92 percent)

However, certain activities that highlight extreme risk are not routinely conducted.



Asking about stalking (15 percent)

Assessing lethality factors (30 percent)

Asking about strangulation or choking (45 percent)

Let's Pause.



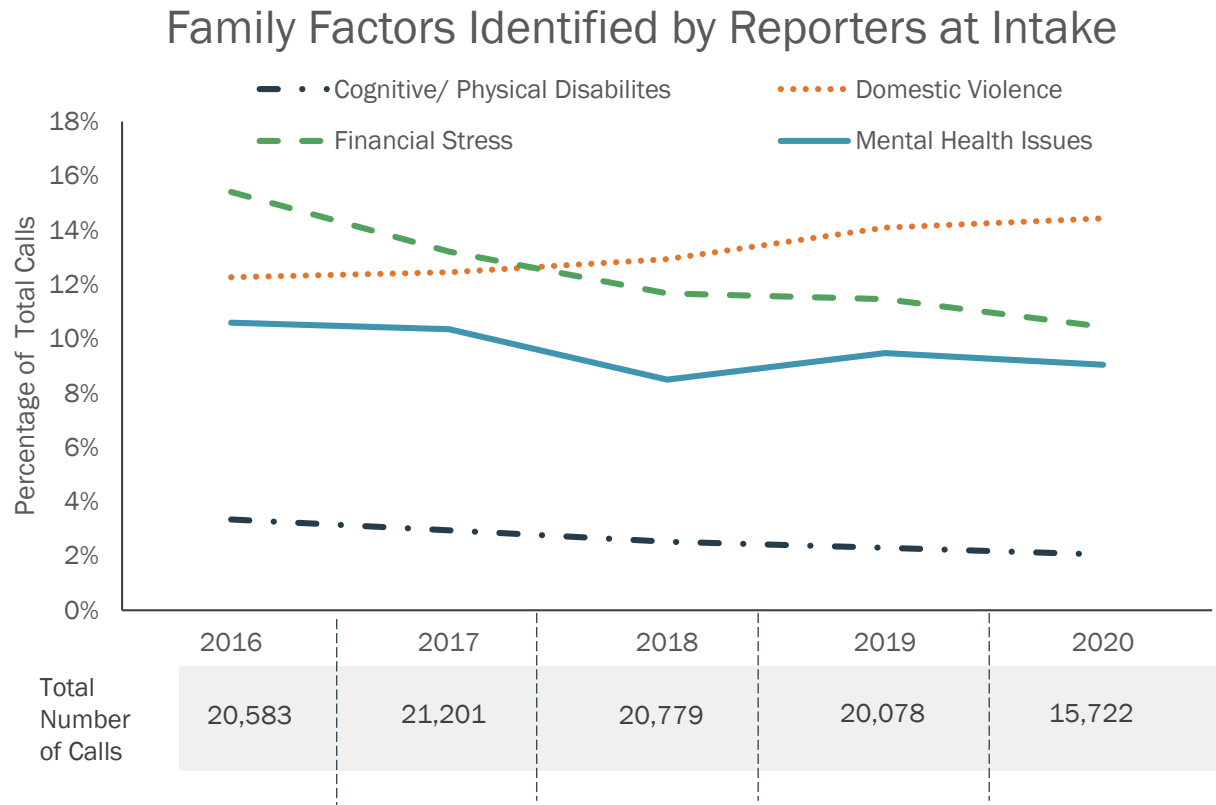
What questions or comments do you
have about **Theme 2**?



3

DCF family service workers serve thousands of families each year but face barriers in data collection, information sharing, and collaboration as they respond to domestic violence.

Domestic violence is reported as a compounding factor in thousands of reports to DCF each year.



The proportion of cases identified by reporters as involving **domestic violence** increased from **12 to 14 percent** from 2016 to 2020.

However, this number likely **underrepresents the true number** of cases involving domestic violence.

However, beyond this initial identification, **gaps exist in domestic violence data collection** and information sharing.



When a call is made to the DCF hotline and **domestic violence is flagged as a co-occurring factor** at intake, a domestic violence specialist is notified.



Though qualitative elements of domestic violence are noted during investigations, assessments, or ongoing work, **the number of cases substantiated for which domestic violence is co-occurring is not available and instead is estimated.**



Justice involved youth cases with co-occurring domestic violence factors, including peer relationship violence, **are not routinely flagged.**

Four domestic violence specialists provide consultation and trainings to the **hundreds** of family service workers collaborating with families across Vermont's **14** counties.



Domestic violence specialists educate family service workers on the utilization of the **Safe and Together Model**.

This evidence-based curriculum emphasizes partnering with the caregiver not using violence to keep them with the child as well as interventions for those who use harm.

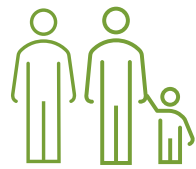


In addition to being notified when domestic violence is flagged in an intake, domestic violence specialists may be contacted by family service workers who **identify domestic violence in an ongoing case**.



Due to a **high level of need and limited capacity**, domestic violence specialists find it challenging to locate opportunities for early interventions or pre-crisis consultation with family service workers.

DCF family service workers report that their role in child welfare in domestic violence cases **does not always align** with the expectations of other agencies.



Agencies such as law enforcement and the courts do not always share DCF's **definition of domestic violence beyond physical harm** or the focus of keeping the child with the caregiver not using violence.



Timelines of DCF cases **do not always align** with law enforcement investigations or court cases, challenging the types of supports that DCF is able to provide to families.



Five counties offer opportunities for DCF and domestic violence youth advocates to **collaborate in regularly scheduled meetings** as recipients of the Rural Grant Program.

Let's Pause.



What questions or comments do you
have about **Theme 3**?



4

Coordinated community responses are challenged by varied access to resources across the state.

Victims and survivors present with complex needs; meeting these needs can be challenging when resources are not available.



64 percent of law enforcement officers surveyed agreed that they have **enough community resources** to provide to victims and survivors.

44 percent of law enforcement and 41 percent of 911 call-takers/dispatchers agreed they have the **training and resources** they needed to respond to a scene where the victim does not speak **English** or is **Deaf/Hard of Hearing**.

DCF family service workers and domestic violence specialists reported **varying access to partnerships and tangible resources** depending on their geographic coverage area, which can impact how they are able to meet the needs of families.

Like stakeholders in Intercept 0, stakeholders in Intercept 1 report a lack of options for people who use domestic violence.



Stakeholders report that there are **no community-based resources** for people who have used domestic violence and that individuals are hesitant to engage domestic violence accountability programming unless required, as it could be seen as an admission of guilt and impact pending legal cases.



There are a **lack of culturally and linguistically responsive** programming options for people who have used domestic violence.



Current programming is **not gender responsive**, offering no options for women, transgender, or gender nonbinary individuals who have used domestic violence.

Stakeholders report a desire for increased understanding of domestic violence responses both within and among agencies.

Individual Clarity



What is expected of someone in my role when responding to domestic violence?

Agency Clarity



Does everyone in my agency share the **same definition** of domestic violence?

What **resources** are available to my agency to respond to domestic violence?

Interagency Clarity

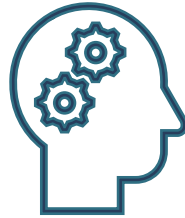


How can my agency **collaborate and share information with other agencies** to improve domestic violence responses?

What can I **expect of other agencies** in domestic violence responses?

What **resources** are other agencies using to respond to domestic violence?

Let's Pause.



What questions or comments do you
have about **Theme 4**?

Further Interrogation and Next Steps

5

Training and Procedures

1. How can Vermont's existing resources and national best practices be leveraged to address identified gaps and barriers in current domestic violence responses?
2. How can trainings within law enforcement, 911 call-taking/dispatch, and DCF be standardized and expanded?
3. How can opportunities for feedback on domestic violence responses be integrated into agency practice?

“We have not been given specific training from management on domestic violence polices, only the policy to read. We are not offered as a matter of practice trainings—we have to seek them out and request them; however, it’s not consistent on who gets to go.”



Coordination and Information Sharing

1. How can data collection and information sharing within and among agencies be streamlined?
2. Where across the state are CCRs most challenged, and what resources can be leveraged to improve collaboration?
3. How can opportunities for collaboration be identified, defined, and developed?

“I think the biggest issue is that no one has a strong understanding of what each agency is supposed to do. I think it would be helpful to know what each agency is responsible for in each area. Some areas do not have the same resources and agencies either don’t know or believe that someone else is handling it.”



Funding and Resources

1. What are the federal and state investments in law enforcement over the last five years?
2. How have these investments changed over time?
3. How can equity of resource availability and access be improved across the state?

“Counties have vastly different resources available which makes it [difficult] to adequately provide assistance to victims when the resources are not available in the area.”



The next analysis presentation in May 2022 will focus on Intercept 2, Initial Detention and Court Hearings.



Intercept 2 involves the domestic violence responses of initial detention and court hearings.



CSG Justice Center staff will analyze data from Vermont's district, superior, and family courts to better understand the volume and characteristics of domestic violence filed across Vermont's court system.



Interviews and focus groups will be conducted with attorneys, judges, legal advocates, and directly impacted victims and survivors.

Thank You!

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For more information, please contact Carly Murray cmurray@csg.org

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NIBRS Data (Analyzed for Graphics in Slides 18–24)

- CSG Justice Center staff analyzed over 8,000 domestic violence (DV) crime incidents, using Vermont National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) data for 2015–2020.
- NIBRS includes rich data on crime incidents reported to police, including information on violent crimes (crimes against persons).
- CSG Justice Center staff used NIBRS data from Vermont’s Crime Research Group, which is more accurate than publicly available versions.
- NIBRS is an excellent data source because reporting is uniform across the state; however, it has some limitations in assessing DV:
 - It can only be used to tell us about crimes known to police.
 - It can only be used to measure physical DV and is not designed to capture other forms of DV.
 - NIBRS offenses do not align perfectly with Vermont criminal code because they are designed to be consistent across the country, not for use in prosecution.