



The Judicial Oversight Demonstration Initiative

City of Boston / Dorchester Municipal Court

PARTNERS

Criminal Justice Partners

Boston Police Department

MA Probation Service/Dorchester Division

Suffolk County District Attorney's Office

United States Attorney's Office

Defense Partner

Committee for Public Counsel Services

Advocacy Partners

Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence

Association of Haitian Women in Boston

Casa Myrna Vazquez, Inc.

Center for Community Health Education,
Research and Service (CCHERS)

Northeastern University School of Law's
Domestic Violence Institute

Batterer Intervention Partners

Common Purpose, Inc.

Community-Based Agency Partners

Close to Home

Boston Public Health Commission

Safe Havens Interfaith Partnership Against
Domestic Violence

Background

During fiscal year 1999, Dorchester District was one of three national demonstration sites selected to participate in the five-year Judicial Oversight Demonstration Initiative (JODI). Funded and managed by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs' Office on Violence Against Women and the National Institute of Justice, JODI tests the idea that a coordinated community response to domestic violence with a focused judicial response and a systematic criminal justice response can improve victim safety and increase offender accountability.

Mission

In order to ensure victim safety and enhance offender accountability, JODI aims to:

- Provide victims with services that promote safety for them and their children, including information on how to successfully navigate the court system;
- Identify high-risk offenders and remove them from the community and/or provide them with appropriate services to change their behavior;
- Identify offenders at risk of becoming domestic violence defendants and provide them with information and interventions.

Collaboration

Collaboration among all JODI partner agencies is the cornerstone of the project. The JODI Advisory Board, comprising representatives from each partner agency, is charged with continuously monitoring JODI policies and practices and revising them as needed. Members participate in subcommittees formed to address specific issues, concerns, and practices. The dedicated domestic violence session at Dorchester Municipal Court is the hub of this collaboration.

JODI works with community-based and culturally specific programs to strengthen informal community support networks to help victims, their children, people who are physically abusive, and families in general. Its partnership with culturally diverse programs helps fulfill JODI's commitment to the provision of services that are linguistically and culturally appropriate for the entire Dorchester community, including the African American, Latino, Haitian, Vietnamese, and Cape Verdean communities.

Each JODI partner agency participates in a national evaluation. With funds from the National Institute of Justice and implemented by the Urban Institute, data derived from the national evaluation will be used to develop "best practices" on how to eliminate domestic violence and ensure victim safety and offender accountability.

For more information, contact:

Deirdre Kennedy, Project Director
Judicial Oversight Demonstration Initiative
City of Boston/Dorchester Municipal Court
617/288-9500 ext. 305; kennedy_d@jud.state.ma.us

PARTNER ACTIVITY

Dorchester Municipal Court

The impact of JODI is especially evident in the court where increased collaboration among partners has streamlined procedures to better insure victim safety and offender accountability. Judges, assistant district attorneys, probation officers, police officers, and advocates routinely share information. Three judges staff the dedicated domestic violence session which started in September 2000 as a result of JODI. In addition to adjudicating all civil restraining order, arraignment, bail, dangerousness, pretrial, and probation surrender hearings, judges instituted probation reviews at 30, 60 and 120 days after sentencing to better monitor defendants' status.

Boston Police Department

The police department is the lead fiscal agent for JODI. Three domestic violence detectives and an advocate were assigned to each of the three police precincts serving Dorchester under JODI. Detectives were trained on domestic violence and dominant aggressor issues and new domestic violence report forms were developed and distributed to patrol officers. The department designed a database to track high-risk and repeat offenders and shares this with the district attorney's office and probation. In addition, the police department works closely with the district attorney's office to continually improve evidence collection.

District Attorney's Office

Five attorneys, two victim witness advocates, a paralegal, and an investigator make up the domestic violence unit in the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office. As a result of JODI, assistant district attorneys see each case through from beginning to end (vertical prosecution) and work closely with the unit investigator to ensure optimal evidence collection. The victim witness advocates assist victims with navigating the court system and with referrals to advocacy and support services in the community.

U.S. Attorney's Office

The U.S. Attorney's Office has been a formidable presence in the Boston domestic violence community. Since the implementation of JODI, the Boston Police Department, the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office and U.S. Attorney's Office have established a formal referral system for cases that may be subjected to federal prosecution. In addition, a representative from the U.S. Attorney's Office regularly participates in project activities.

Probation Department

Under JODI, the probation department doubled the size of its domestic violence unit by adding four officers. As a result, probation officers have increased contact with victims and are better able to accurately monitor conditions of probation. Officers are in close contact with batterer intervention programs, substance abuse treatment providers, and other collateral service providers. Officers report findings to judges at regularly scheduled probation reviews. Two assistant probation officers were hired to assist judges in the domestic violence session with criminal records, intakes, probation paperwork, defendant restraining order briefings, and data collection.

Victim Services

In addition to the victim witness advocates employed by the prosecutor's office, four community-based victim service agencies house advocates in the court. As a result of JODI, these court-based advocates work together to ensure victim safety by providing a full range of linguistic and culturally competent services to victims including safety planning, guidance with the restraining order process, assistance with other civil legal advocacy, issues at probate and family court, and referrals to community-based agencies.

Batterer Intervention Services

Judges typically order domestic violence offenders to one of several community-based programs that provide intervention services. As a result of JODI, batterer intervention providers have developed stronger links with one another and have initiated much stronger communication and reporting systems with probation. Representatives from batterer intervention train probation officers and others involved in JODI on the dynamics of battering.

Defense Bar

Members of the defense bar actively participate in advisory board and subcommittee activities. In conjunction with victim services, the defense bar and probation committee members designed the "defendant outreach program." Outreach workers meet with defendants involved in civil restraining order cases to explain the conditions of each order and the consequences of violating an order. This was designed as a protective factor for victims to help diffuse defendants' anger and help them strategize ways to stay in compliance with restraining order conditions.