

Improving Services to Sexual Assault Victims in Olmsted County

Evaluation Report

FISCAL YEAR 1998-1999

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Prepared by:

Corinna Roy and Ronnie Higgins

Wilder Research Center
1295 Bandana Boulevard North, Suite 210
St. Paul, MN 55108

651-647-4600
fax: 651-647-4623
www.wilder.org

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Summary

Background

Wilder Research Center contracted with the Rochester Police Department to conduct an evaluation of Olmsted County's Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council's implementation of an eight-step process for developing a protocol for handling incidents of sexual assault. The Rochester Police Department is the principal sponsoring agency of Olmsted County's Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council. The Olmsted County Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council began its work without formal ties to the Model Protocol: Test Site Project, which funds several test sites in Minnesota currently implementing the eight-step process. Connections with the Model Protocol Project were strong, however, as Project Administrators are housed in Olmsted County Victim Services. These administrators have also provided formal and informal support to the Olmsted site in the past fiscal year to help succeed in implementing the eight-step process. It was initial work done in Olmsted County on a multidisciplinary protocol in the early 1990's that led Olmsted County Victim Services to apply for funding to develop and administer the Model Protocol Project.

Brief program description

Olmsted County and the other Model Protocol Project test sites are using an eight-step model protocol development cycle,¹ developed by Boles and Patterson. The intent of the eight-step process is to help community agencies, particularly law enforcement, medical providers, advocacy agencies, and prosecution, work together to develop a more victim-centered protocol for serving victims of sexual assault.

Program evaluation

The Olmsted Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council was interested in monitoring attitudinal shifts in agency personnel as well as finding out about victims' perspectives on the systems, with particular interest in any barriers they experienced in accessing various systems. They also compiled some background information, so that Wilder Research Center had the opportunity to consider both process data and baseline data. The baseline data will serve as a point of comparison for the results of future data collection efforts to get an idea of the effectiveness of the Council's efforts.

Baseline data

Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council members collected agency statistics for the 1997 or 1998 calendar year and the Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council site coordinator compiled them. While the differences in these agencies definitions of sexual assault or contact with sexual assault victims make detailed comparisons of these statistics suspect, Victim Services appears to touch more sexual assault victims than any of the other agencies represented on Olmsted's Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council.

Olmsted County Sexual Assault Inter-agency Council contracted with Wilder Research Center to assess system personnel's awareness of and attitudes about the Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council's intent and efforts in Olmsted County. To gather this information Wilder Research Center held four focus groups on June 9 and 11, 1999 in Olmsted County with staff from agencies represented on the Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council, but who are not themselves members of the Council.

Highlights from Wilder Research Center's analysis of agency staff's attitudes are as follows:

- The agency staff who attended these sessions were generally sympathetic to the plight of victims of sexual assault and accepting of the protocol process.
- These participants may have been more sensitive to the issue of sexual assault than their absent colleagues.
- They had a generally positive response to the concept of being victim-centered as long as it did not interfere with what they needed to accomplish at the scene of the crime, during the investigation or in the court process.
- Some participants hoped that the protocol would resolve problems that they have in their jobs related to confidentiality and victim cooperation.
- Some participants pointed out that they already have a protocol, and defended the status quo.

This indicates that making fundamental changes in the system's approach to handling incidents of sexual assault will be challenging. Staff appreciate the need for training to increase their understanding of the inner workings of other agencies. They also understand the need for other systems people to be aware of what their agency does and why. However, they are suspicious of the need for procedural changes. This is due, in part, to concerns that changes in procedures may jeopardize cases in which the perpetrator is a public health risk. Finally, participants' perception that the court system fails victims supports a notion initially raised by focus group recruits – that enforcing existing laws is enough to improve the system.

Process data

The Olmsted Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council planned on conducting Victim Experience surveys in year 1. However, the process did not go smoothly, so rather than conducting an analysis of the results, Wilder Research Center collected process information by interviewing those involved in implementing the survey.

The Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council and the Victim Experience Survey implementation team faced two primary barriers:

- Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council members' perceptions of data privacy constraints limited the sample selection to victims who had been served by advocacy.
- Advocacy was under the false impression that it would be easy to draw a sample from their records with the technical assistance of a county employee from another department.

Wilder Research Center recommends that advocacy take advantage of the technical assistance guaranteed by the county, and conduct an effective query which captures, as well as is possible, a sample of past clients who received more extensive service than a single contact. In addition, slight changes in their record keeping methods, such as using clients' exact ages or dates of birth, rather than age categories would improve the quality of their data. The director of the advocacy organization should encourage advocates to attempt to collect complete information on clients for the file. They should code cases that were single contacts as such, so that they are quickly evident. Other characteristics can be deceptive. For example, they could appear to be extensive simply because they were closed several months after the initial contact when the victim initiated no further action. Finally, if future follow-up studies are desirable, agencies should attempt to implement procedures that would make it easier to contact former clients. Getting victims' consent to contact them in the future would be helpful, as would getting the name and telephone number of someone, with whom they are likely to stay in contact, such as a parent or friend. This cuts down on the number of people who cannot be located because they have moved or changed their numbers. Wilder Research Center has successfully used this technique in studies of victims of domestic abuse. In addition, the staff should have a working knowledge of Access Database, because they may need to add other pieces of information for future analysis.

To assess Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council members' perceptions of the value of the process and how they think it is going, Wilder Research Center distributed an electronic self-administered survey. The site coordinator sent the survey via e-mail to all Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council members. To protect confidentiality, Sexual Assault Inter-

Agency Council members returned their completed surveys via e-mail¹ to Wilder Research Center.

The results were a positive reflection on the commitment of the representatives from advocacy and law enforcement. However, many members are concerned that the other two core agencies, prosecution and medical, do not appear to be as committed to the process. This is clear from the comments of survey participants, who were from a mix of core and non-core agencies. In addition, neither prosecution nor medical staff completed any surveys. This could be a serious barrier to accomplishing a system-wide shift from a case-centered to a victim-centered response to sexual assaults.

Issues to consider

Olmsted County's Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council embarked on a very challenging task when they committed to implementing the eight-step process without the assistance of Model Protocol Project administrators or funds. Their commitment was not enough to get the process moving at a steady pace. This past fiscal year, the Olmsted Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council received funding that allowed them to hire a site coordinator and an evaluator. The Model Protocol Project administrators have also provided some support to the Olmsted group, which increased throughout the year to reach the same level of support that other sites received. The contributions of the site coordinator and project administrators have improved the speed and efficacy of the team as a whole. The two primary challenges that the Olmsted Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council faces in the future are engaging all participant agencies in the process and developing a plan to deliver culturally competent service to victims of sexual assault.

¹ All of the SAIC members have access to e-mail.

Background

Wilder Research Center contracted with the Rochester Police Department to conduct an evaluation of Olmsted County's Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council's implementation of an eight-step process for developing a protocol for handling incidents of sexual assault. The Rochester Police Department is the principal sponsoring agency of Olmsted County's Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council. The Olmsted County Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council began its work without formal ties to the Model Protocol: Test Site Project, which funds several test sites in Minnesota currently implementing the eight-step process. Connections with the Model Protocol Project were strong, however, as Project Administrators are housed in Olmsted County Victim Services. These administrators have also provided formal and informal support to the Olmsted site in the past fiscal year to help succeed in implementing the eight-step process. It was initial work done in Olmsted County on a multidisciplinary protocol in the early 1990's that led Olmsted County Victim Services to apply for funding to develop and administer the Model Protocol Project.

When the Model Protocol Project solicited applications for communities interested in becoming a test site, Olmsted County did not apply. Project Administrators and local contacts felt that it might be a conflict of interest to pursue an Olmsted County site at that stage of the project. However, the Model Protocol Project welcomed a multidisciplinary team from Olmsted to the training of the original test sites in November 1997. The Olmsted group's work continued after that with only informal connection to the Model Protocol Project.

In the Spring of 1998, the team decided to pursue funding from the Minnesota Center for Crime Victim Services to enable them to hire a site coordinator. The Rochester Police Department applied for the funding. It now serves as the fiscal agent for the Olmsted County Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council and houses the site coordinator. When funding was awarded to Olmsted County, Minnesota Center for Crime Victim Services requested Project Administrators of the Model Protocol Project to work with the Olmsted County Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council to provide consultation and technical assistance with their work.

Brief program description

Olmsted County and the other Model Protocol Project test sites are following an eight-step model protocol development cycle,¹ developed by Boles and Patterson. The intent of the eight-step process is to help county agencies work together to develop a more victim-centered protocol for serving victims of sexual assault. The steps in the process are listed below.

1. Inventory of existing services
2. Victim experience survey
3. Community needs assessment
4. Write protocol
5. Renew interagency agreements
6. Training agency staff on protocol
7. Monitoring protocol compliance
8. Evaluation of protocol efficacy

One of the tenets of the eight-step process is that sponsorship must be obtained from law enforcement, medical providers, advocacy agencies and prosecution. Several members of agencies within these disciplines were recruited to be on the Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council in Olmsted County. Current Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council members have varying degrees of influence in the agencies they represent.

Program evaluation

The Olmsted Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council was interested in monitoring attitudinal shifts in agency personnel as well as finding out about victim's perspectives on the system with particular interest in the barriers sexual assault victims face when accessing the system. The Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council also compiled some background information, so that Wilder Research Center had the opportunity to consider both process data and baseline data. The results of the baseline data analysis will serve as a point of comparison for the results of analyzing data that the group will collect in the future to get an idea of the effectiveness of the Sexual Assault Council. Following are the sources of data that the Rochester Police Department and Wilder Research Center agreed upon to evaluate the process and program:

- Compilation of demographic information related to the racial breakdown of Olmsted County
- Unstructured interviews with staff responsible for completing the Victim Experience Surveys
- Self-administered electronic surveys completed by Olmsted County Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council members
- Review of background research procedures and research results that contribute to the Olmsted County community needs assessment.
- Four focus groups to assess attitudes of agency personnel who are not on the Olmsted County Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council prior to project implementation

Research results

Demography of Olmsted County

Wilder Research Center conducted an analysis of data on the demographic composition of Olmsted County. The most current county-wide demographic data were the 1990 Census data. However, school district data were available for the 1998-99 school year. Therefore, more recent demographic data has also been compiled on younger Olmsted residents to help describe the current population in Olmsted County.

Figure 1 presents the distribution of Olmsted residents by age and racial category based on 1990 census figures. As Figure 1 shows, the population of Olmsted County in 1990 was predominantly white (96%). The largest proportions of people are in the 35 to 64 (33%) and 18 to 34 (29%) year age ranges, followed by 6 to 17 year olds (17%), 0 to 5 year olds (11%) and seniors who are 65 or older (10%). If one considers the proportions of whites relative to Asians, it is evident that the proportions of Asians is inversely related to age, while the proportion of white residents decreases with youth. This is consistent with other areas in Minnesota that have large populations of Asian immigrants.

1. OLMSTED COUNTY, 1990 CENSUS DATA

	0-5 years N=11,155	6-17 years N=18,329	18-34 years N=18,329	35-64 years N=31,173	65+ years N=35,188	Totals N=106,474
American Indian	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Asian	5%	4%	3%	2%	1%	3%
Black	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%
Other	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
White	94%	95%	95%	97%	99%	96%
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Figure 2 presents the school district data for roughly the same period as the 1990 census data. The distribution of elementary and high school children from the left side of Figure 2 should correspond fairly well with the distribution of 6 to 17 year-old children in Figure 1. The data from the two figures are fairly close although Asians and “other” non-whites² are slightly underrepresented in the census data. In addition the proportion of high school age youth have been presented for comparison with the 1998-99 data. High school age youth represented approximately 28 percent of all school-aged youth in 1990.

² Members of the Hispanic community are included in this category.

2. 1989-90 SCHOOL DISTRICT DATA

	Elementary through High School			High School		Total N=5,358
	Male N=9,715	Females N=9,173	Total N=18,891	Males N=2,702	Females N=2,656	
American Indian	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Asian	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%
Black	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%
Other	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%
White	94%	94%	94%	93%	94%	94%
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Figure 3 presents the distribution of youth in the major Olmsted School Districts by Race. Data have been included for all elementary through high school students as well as for high school students alone. In 1998-99, high school students represented 30 percent of all elementary through high-school students.

A comparison of the data from Figure 3 with the data from Figure 2 show that the population has continued to diversify in Olmsted county since 1989-90. The proportion of white students has decreased from 94 percent to 88 percent. The proportions of black, Asian, and “other” non-white persons have contributed the most to growth in the proportion of non-white Olmsted residents. Since the incidence of sexual assault is generally higher among adolescents and young adults, this should be an issue that Olmsted County considers when developing services for their diverse residents.

3. OLMSTED 1998-99 SCHOOL DISTRICT DATA

	Elementary through High School			High School		Totals N=6,819
	Males N=11,453	Females N=10,807	Total N=22,260	Males N=3,521	Females N=3,298	
American Indian	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Asian	6%	6%	6%	5%	7%	6%
Black	4%	4%	4%	2%	2%	2%
Other	2%	2%	2%	3%	3%	3%
White	88%	88%	88%	89%	89%	89%
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

The Olmsted County Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council was also interested in diversity by region within the county. The following map, “Olmsted County by Census Tract” displays the proportions of non-white residents within the county and within the

Agency statistics

Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council members from each of the participating agencies collected statistics for the past year on the number of sexual assault victims with whom they had contact. They also collected demographic data on these victims. Some agency personnel collected additional information about the nature of the assault, the perpetrator and case information. This additional information has not been presented in this report, it can be accessed in the community needs assessment report produced by the Olmsted County Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council. Figure 5 shows consolidated demographic information about victims from 1998.

5. OLMSTED COUNTY SEXUAL ASSAULT STATISTICS FOR 1998

	Total Number of Sexual Assaults	Adult Victims	Percent Female	Percent Persons of Color
Law enforcement ^a Rochester Police and Olmsted County Sheriff	215	31%	-	-
Medical	54	-	-	-
Prosecution	134	-	-	-
Victim Services ^c	348 ^b	37%	87%	14%
Corrections ^a	64	-	-	-

^a 1997 data

^b Count of all victims served, not necessarily new clients. However, 3645 contacts were made in 1998.

^c 17% to 19% of the data on the age and race of victims was not available.

Reviewers should consider these statistics independently. These agencies have different definitions of what constitutes a sexual assault, therefore some agencies with more restricted definitions of sexual assault will report a lower incidence of sexual assault than agencies with broader definitions of sexual assault. Furthermore, victims contact agencies at different points in their lives. They may be reporting past incidents that they recently recalled, or that they chose to postpone reporting for other reasons. Some victims choose to report to one agency and some choose to report to multiple agencies. Therefore, in future data collection endeavors, these baseline measures will be comparable to themselves, rather than any aggregate figure of assault incidents. All of the Minnesota test sites have been challenged by the differences in the participating agencies' sexual assault data collection practices. Therefore, Olmsted, like the other sites has the opportunity to develop more consistent data collection practices across agencies.

Despite these caveats, the data indicate that victims in Olmsted County are most likely to contact advocacy. This is consistent with the behavior of victims at other Model Protocol Project test sites. Law enforcement had the second most contact with victims, followed

by prosecution and corrections and medical providers. Advocacy and law enforcement were the only two agencies to provide statistics on the age of the victim. Both agencies reported that about one-third of the victims were adults, the rest were classified as under 18 or juveniles.

Victim Services was the only agency to report the gender and ethnicity of victims, although there was a substantial amount of missing information. According to their records, of the victims for which they had complete data, 87 percent were female and 14 percent were persons of color.

Staff awareness of and attitudes about protocol

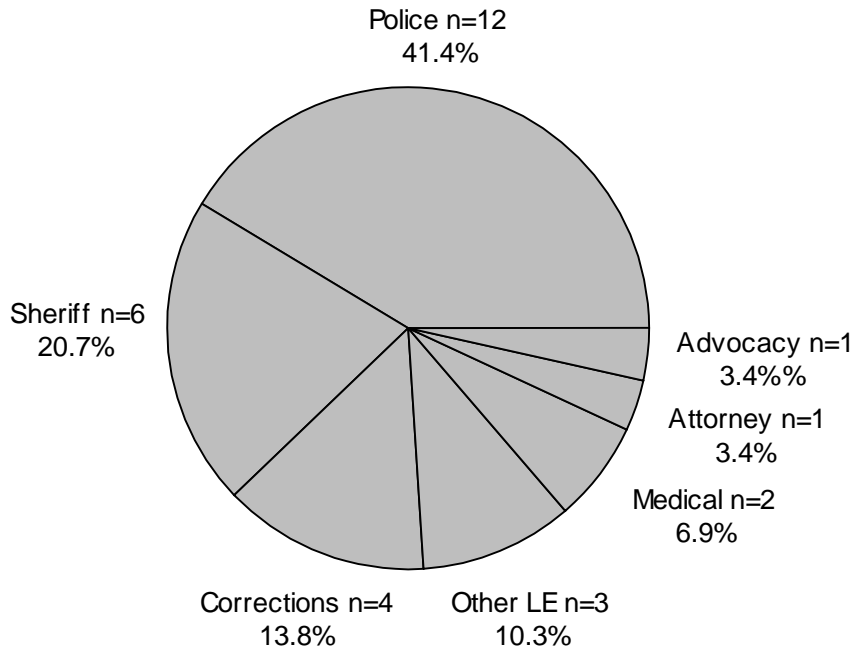
Methodology

Olmsted County Sexual Assault Inter-agency Council contracted with Wilder Research Center to assess sexual assault response system personnel's awareness and knowledge of the efforts and intent of the Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council. In addition, Wilder Research Center was asked to explore staff attitudes about the feasibility, plausibility and value of the Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council's intent and efforts. To gather this information Wilder Research Center held four focus groups on June 9 and 11, 1999 in Olmsted County with staff from agencies represented on the Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council, but who are not themselves members of the Council. A second set of focus groups after the protocol has been in place for some time will help to determine how staff awareness and attitudes have changed.

The Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council in Olmsted County has representation from law enforcement, advocacy, corrections, prosecution, medical providers, public health, the Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association, and social services. Wilder Research Center received and recruited focus group participants from lists of personnel from the four core agencies and corrections. Figure 6 presents the distribution of staff who attended the groups by agency. As the chart shows, most participants (n=21) were from law enforcement, represented by the Rochester Police Department (n=16), the Sheriff's Department (n=6) and other law enforcement professionals who serve both departments (n=3). Two participants each were from corrections and the medical field (nurses). One attorney and one advocate attended.³ The ratio of participants from each agency is appropriate, given the number of staff from each agency who may have contact with victims.

³ The low turnout from advocacy was due to a miscommunication about how advocates were to be notified about the groups rather than their small staff size. Advocacy was notified very late about the groups which made it impossible for more than one of the 6 advocates on staff to attend.

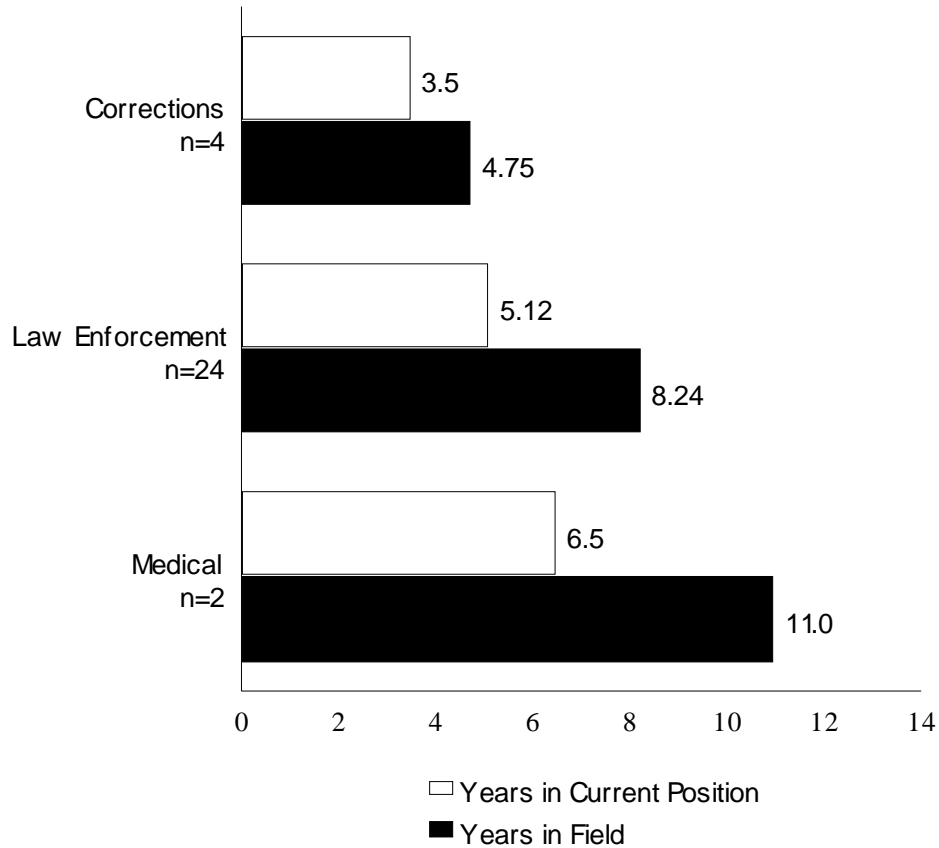
6. DISTRIBUTION OF FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS



Each of the participants also filled out a form describing their role or title, length of time in current position, and length of time in their field of work (i.e. law enforcement, advocacy, etc.). Figure 7 presents the distribution of the number of years these participants spent in their jobs and in their professional field. In order to protect participant confidentiality, the figure does not give averages for agencies with only one participant.

As Figure 7 shows, on average, participants have been in their field of work for eight years or more and most have been in their current position for about five years. The medical average is for two people with very similar tenures, and the basis for the average for corrections professionals is the tenures of four participants. The corrections participants had similar tenures in their fields, but their tenures in their current positions had a 10 year range.

7. STAFF TENURE BY DISCIPLINE



The law enforcement participants had the largest sample and the widest range of tenures for both time in their current position (1 to 21.5 years) and time in the field (2 to 30 years). Further analysis of the agencies that make up law enforcement revealed that participants from the Sheriff's Department had the longest tenures in their field (18.9 years), participants from the Rochester Police Department had the shortest tenures in the field (9.9 years) and persons who work for both departments were in the middle (16.0 years). There was representation from all levels of law enforcement which included one or more dispatchers, records personnel, 911 telecommunications officers, patrol officers, sergeants, captains, investigators, detectives and lieutenants.

Despite a random recruitment process, focus group participants did not represent all of the divisions within law enforcement. Wilder Research Center began recruiting focus group participants after supervisors had notified all officers that they could take part in this study. However, there was a delay in the dissemination of this communication, and at least one division declined en mass to participate. The Sergeant responsible for this division offered the following three explanations: (1) The awkwardness surrounding the startup of the calling process made his division's personnel wary about taking part in the focus groups. (2) The division did not have enough resources to cover its duties and take

part in the focus groups. (3) Division personnel believe that the best way to improve sexual assault would be to enforce existing laws, not to write new protocols.

It is possible that a self-selection process resulted in higher representation from staff with greater interest in and sensitivity to sexual assault. It is also possible that after the leaders in various agencies and divisions attended the first group, they may have excused their staff from attending later groups. Twelve representatives, largely high-level professionals, attended the first group. Seven somewhat less senior participants attended each of the second and third groups and five were in the last group. In general, participants' responses were consistent across all four groups.

Results

Staff awareness of protocol

The first question addressed participants' awareness of the Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council and the agencies and personnel who are involved, as well as the protocol process that the Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council is undertaking. Most participants were not aware of the Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council at all or the process that the Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council is undertaking. A handful (6 or 7) had heard of the Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council or the issue of a new protocol being developed. A few participants (1 to 3) were very familiar with the Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council and the process. These were people who had work or personal relationships with Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council members, or had attended one of the public hearings on the system's response to sexual assault held by the Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council, or both.

At least one of the participants, who was familiar with the concept of the protocol and the Council members, was somewhat skeptical of the process. This person described the victim-centered approach as putting a square peg in a round hole.

Staff attitudes

After being queried about their knowledge of the Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council and the eight-step process, the focus group facilitator informed participants which agencies are involved in the Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council, the goal of the Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council (to improve the system's response to incidents of sexual assault) and explained the eight-step protocol development process. These participants were asked if they felt that the process was worthwhile, what benefits they saw to developing a protocol, whether or not they thought their organization would buy into the process and what barriers they thought might derail the process or make it less effective.

Most participants were initially receptive to the goal of the protocol and identified some broad benefits, such as "*it will make the system smoother for victims.*" When pressed for

more detail participants described problems with the system that they often implicitly or directly identified as the types of issues that they believed the protocol should address. Participant's responses have been categorized into the following themes:

- The structure of the system
- Staff knowledge
- Legal Issues
- The Courts
- Resources

The structure of the system

Many participants felt that the protocol was worthwhile but were doubtful about the ability of the system to truly change. For example, one participant pointed out that *“the medical system is very slow to change policies and procedures. Line staff are more likely to cooperate than the powers that be—they often hold up the process.”* This sentiment was reiterated by participants from law enforcement who pointed out that *“decisions are made by people who do not provide direct service.”* They went on to say, that direct service staff respond to changes in policy all the time, so that is not a barrier, however, getting the policy change in place might be difficult.

Staff knowledge

One of the primary benefits of the protocol identified by participants in every focus group was the potential for each agency to better understand the needs, expectations and general practices of other organizations, so that all staff could *“be on the same page.”* For example, law enforcement participants thought that it would be useful for advocates to know why they need to do things in a certain way to ensure the integrity of the evidence. Several people mentioned how useful it would be to have a consistent response to sexual assault across agencies. Many focus group participants were critical of how cases are handled in the prosecutor's office.

Focus group participants suggested that some strained relationships might be repaired, and new relationships built between agencies and agency personnel involved in this process. This would be advantageous to the agencies and to the victims they serve by making the process of going through the system more fluid and hopefully more sensitive to their needs. The fear was that the relationships would be strong between the Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council participants, but that their work might not carry over to the agencies as a whole, so that training and sharing of information with all staff potentially involved would be an important feature of the protocol.

Many of the focus group participants thought that training staff internally on a protocol could be very useful. One officer recalled a sexual assault incident to which he had responded. While he felt that he did his best given his knowledge of sexual assault, he wondered for years if he had said something wrong, or been insensitive in any way. He felt that he would have benefited from training prior to this incident. While the value of training was not disputed, many participants felt that it would be difficult to keep officers up to date as staff turnover is high and new recruits come in regularly.

Legal issues

Participants listed several legal barriers to having a protocol. These are barriers that they currently face and would like to overcome, which may reflect some inter-agency issues that need to be addressed before instating a consensual protocol. One of the issues was the collection of evidence from medical providers. Because of patient's rights laws, hospitals face lawsuits if they share confidential patient information; therefore, it is standard for the police to subpoena client's medical records. This has made case-handling less timely and effective. Confidentiality laws in general have created barriers for different agency personnel to share information. The participants thought that the eight-step process might address some of the confidentiality issues, which would be beneficial.

Court system

The court system received the most criticism from focus group participants. One participant suggested that any protocol that did not have buy-in from the judicial branch would be ineffective. *“Judges won't buy into the protocol if it doesn't meet the legal tests and if judges don't like it, it won't work.”* Other participants agreed, and one added that *“[members of] the judicial system are not well educated about sex-offenders and victims.”* Many focus group participants felt that judges allowed guilty defendants to get by with weak plea bargains.

The participants were also critical of how the prosecutor's office handles cases. The issues they brought up were the limited number of cases that get prosecuted, the length of time that cases take, and the compromises made through plea agreements. This is particularly frustrating to law enforcement because they feel it undermines the work they put into a case, and may discourage them from making the same effort in the future. Finally, one participant summed up the detrimental effect that the courts can have on service-providers' ability to help victims of sexual assault – victims do not seek help. This comment and five others are included below:

“The county will only take strong cases with the others referred to the city, which results in less chance of a good outcome.”

“Delays in court—sometimes as much as two years.”

“Investigation sends cases to prosecution that get whittled down through pleas, which is frustrating.”

“When victims get to probation they don’t complain about law enforcement or medical it’s the judicial system that’s the problem.”

“In the court system the accused has more rights than the victim.”

“Medical has a large number of victims that advocacy never sees. Some don’t want an advocate because they think if they tell the advocate, the advocate will tell law enforcement and then they’ll have to go to court.”

Resources

One of the critical issues that many of these agencies face is the scarcity of needed resources, including staff, money and time. The insufficiency of staff to cover schedules and attend the groups hindered the initial recruiting of focus group participants. Many of the participants mentioned that they were coming in on their days off. Due in part to the small size of the office, time constraints, and work loads only one participant was available to represent the prosecutor’s office in the focus groups. Although a few members of the prosecutor’s office were interested in attending the sessions, they decided that having one person from that office speak for the group was adequate. In addition, participants admitted that their criticism of the court system could be explained, to some degree, by case overload. The representative from the prosecutor’s office verified the problem of case overload. However, participants also suggested that if the prosecutor’s office had enough support to handle more sexual assault cases there would be a bubble effect resulting in case overload for corrections and law enforcement.

Many participants cited community education as one of the benefits of the protocol. They felt that if the community saw that these diverse agencies were working together they might become more aware of the issues surrounding sexual assault. While participants did not explicitly make this political connection, Wilder Research Center notes that increased public awareness and interest in problems like sexual assault often lead to the allocation of additional resources to treating that problem.

One participant made the point that agencies need more culturally diverse, bilingual and multi-lingual staffs to serve Olmsted County’s increasingly diverse communities with sensitivity. For example, in the Somali community female victims of sexual assault would be uncomfortable telling their story to a male, even if he were from the Somali community. (A few participants mentioned that it would be ideal if at least one female officer could respond to all incidents of sexual assault.) However, given the demand for bilingual workers in many areas of the economy, and the wage differentials often provided to these workers; the funds needed to recruit and retain bilingual workers may be a barrier to developing a diverse staff. Olmsted County may lack the critical mass of incident reports from any particular race or ethnic group that would allow agencies to provide culturally appropriate services cost effectively.

Despite the apparent weaknesses in some agencies that serve victims of sexual assault, it appears that Victim Services has reached the broader community in Olmsted County. According to statistics that Victim Services reported for 1998, 14 percent of the victims they served that year were persons of color. This is consistent with the demographic composition of school-age youth in the community reported in Figure 3 of this document. According to Figure 3, 11 percent of school-age youth in 1998-99 were persons of color.

Victim-centered versus case-centered

Participants explained their understandings of the differences between victim-centered and case-centered approaches to handling incidents of sexual assault. Most participants, other than the advocacy representative, pointed out that to do their job, they had to be case-centered, and that their work focused on dealing with the perpetrator or defendant, rather than the victim. However, they did suggest some ways that the sexual assault response system could be victim-centered, and they described some problems with being victim-centered.

Participants' positive comments about victim-centered practices were somewhat similar to the benefits they associated with having a protocol. Participants pointed out that sexual assault is an emotionally damaging event and that to be victim-centered staff must respect victims' feelings and listen to their needs. They also mentioned regular training of agency staff, staying in contact with the victim throughout her or his contact with the system, providing ongoing advocacy support to the victim, having a better understanding of what other agencies do and need, and having a diverse staff at all agencies. Following are some specific comments made by participants.

"Don't ask her to tell more than she's able."

"Make system as responsive as possible to her needs, but must keep case in mind."

"If advocacy explained the whole process up front, that might be more victim-centered."

"Maybe law enforcement could be more victim-centered during court proceedings by explaining what's going on because some advocates don't know, but time is a constraint there."

"Better explanation from the beginning if victim can and wants to hear."

"Need to educate the community that all agencies are cooperating on this and it may educate the public and juries too."

On the other hand, some participants were unreceptive to the concept. While they realized that there were things that they did in the way they handled cases that were not victim-centered, they felt that these things were necessary. They suggested that, in the end, an effective handling of the case is to the victim's benefit. Three of their comments have been included below:

“Case-centered is more ‘what Johnny did’ than ‘how it affected Suzie,’ which is kind of hard because we mostly work with defendants rather than victims. My caseload (corrections) is case-centered.”

“They may have to tell their story four times, once to the advocate, then to medical then the police and then to investigators because there are different focuses to the interviews—different things that they want to get out of them.”

“There are multiple people handling several different aspects of case just within law enforcement: dispatch getting facts, line officers secure scene and evidence, then turned over to investigator”

Summary

The agency staff who attended these sessions were generally sympathetic to the plight of victims of sexual assault. They were also fairly accepting of the protocol process. In fact, one participant said vehemently, *“We not only want this but we demand it [a better response]! We need to do better.”* However, these participants may have been more sensitive to the issue of sexual assault than their absent colleagues. Several of them mentioned that they knew of others in their agency who they did not believe would adequately or respectfully interact with a victim of sexual assault.

Despite these participants’ sensitivity to victims of sexual assault, they also felt that it was important to maintain the integrity of their jobs. They had a generally positive response to the concept of being victim-centered as long as it did not interfere with what they needed to accomplish at the scene of the crime, during the investigation or in the court process. Some participants hoped that the protocol would resolve problems that they have in their jobs related to confidentiality and victim cooperation, which is not what the protocol is intended to do. Finally, some participants pointed out that they already have a protocol, and defended the status quo.

Making fundamental changes in the system’s approach to handling incidents of sexual assault will be challenging. Staff appreciate the need for training to increase their understanding of the inner workings of other agencies. They also understand that people in other agencies need to be aware of what their agency does and why. However, these participants do not recognize as much of a need for procedural changes. This is due, in part, to some participants’ suspicion that changes in procedures may jeopardize cases in which the perpetrator is a public health risk. Finally, participants’ perception that the court system fails victims supports the notion initially raised by some focus group recruits – that enforcing existing laws will do a great deal to improve the system. Participants felt that prosecution and the judicial system could address this issue by taking on more cases, processing them more quickly, charging them at higher levels, reducing the number of pleas, and increasing the level of the sentences that are handed down.

Process data

Olmsted victim experience survey process analysis

The most difficult step that the three original test sites faced in their first year of implementing the eight-step process was the Victim Experience Survey, and Olmsted County's Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council had the same experience. Constraints of data privacy practices that exist to protect victims made the process problematic. The only agency willing to attempt to overcome these constraints was advocacy. Other agency staff reported that accessing this information from their agency was too difficult because of data privacy and a lack of electronic databases.

Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council members felt that advocacy provides services to more victims than any other agency, and that their former client lists would overlap advocacy's enough to draw a good sample from advocacy's list alone. The data compiled from agency statistics do appear to confirm this. Furthermore, advocacy was under the impression that sampling from their records would be easy with the technical assistance of a county employee. However, they had problems getting the technical assistance when they needed it. As a result, the process was delayed.

Victim Services keeps track of their past clients with a Microsoft Access database. While staff are familiar enough with this system to enter data, they did not know how to access this data using the data query program. Advocacy was under the impression that they could get technical assistance from a county employee in another department. This person volunteered to help them with the query, however an overload of work did not permit this person to complete the task in a timely fashion. When the query was finally done, three months had passed.

The Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council had decided to interview persons 16 years of age or older, however, the tracking system only keeps client data in age categories that are consistent with statewide reporting requirements – 13 to 17 and then 18 and older. Thus, Victim services decided to exclude 16 and 17 year olds rather than include 13 to 15 year old victims.

The technical assistant queried Victim Services' Access database towards the end of the fiscal year with the following constraints: Use only cases that were opened at or before 7/1/98, and closed by 7/15/98 and involved victims who were 18 years old or older. This query produced an unmanageable list with thousands of entries. A quick review of this list revealed that many of the entries were incomplete, they lacked first or last names, addresses and/or phone numbers. Thus, they refined their query to include only complete records. This query produced a list of 70 clients.

Advocates then reviewed these cases to determine if it was prudent to contact these victims. They disqualified cases for the following reasons: (1) The victim had only made one contact with advocacy, most often a call, but did not receive any more in-depth service. (2) The victim called just to get a referral, for things like counseling. (3) The victim was incarcerated. (4) The victim was suicidal or had mental health issues. (5) The victim had moved or was unreachable (no phone, wrong number, no current number). Law enforcement attempted to provide assistance to the advocates in locating hard to find people, however they were not successful. In addition, some victims who met the advocates qualifying criteria declined to participate because they did not want to relive their experience. Some advocates felt uncomfortable contacting victims with whom they had not been previously involved. This may have contributed to a higher refusal rate.

Many of the sampled victims were disqualified because they were single contacts. This caused some concern about the sample being representative of Victim Services client base. For example, none of the clients served by the advocate who had worked there the longest were in the sample. Given these sampling concerns and low number of completed surveys, Victim Services asked the advocates to attempt to get interviews with any victims they could. They looked through their files themselves by hand, rather than relying on the query process. Unfortunately they had only a couple of days to do this at the end of the fiscal year. Several advocates had other pressing things they had to attend to and did not try to add cases when the parameters were opened up because they did not have enough time. In the end only four victims completed the survey.

Wilder Research Center recommends that Victim Services take advantage of the technical assistance they are now guaranteed by the county, and conduct an effective query which captures, as well as is possible, a sample of past clients who received more extensive service than a single contact. In addition, Victim Services should consider changing its record keeping methods slightly. For example, they should consider recording clients' exact ages or dates of birth, rather than her or his age category. The agency should also encourage advocates to attempt to collect complete information on clients for the file. The agency should also consider coding cases that were single contacts as such when they close them. Otherwise, advocates may mistake them for more extensive cases simply because they were open for several months, although no one had further contact with the victim.

Finally, if Victim Services intends to survey victims in the future, the agency should try to get victims' consent to contact them in the future and obtain the phone number of someone such as a parent or friend with whom they are likely to stay in contact. This helps in locating former clients who have moved or changed their numbers. Wilder Research Center has successfully used this technique in studies of victims of domestic abuse. Victim Services staff should have a working knowledge of Access so that they

can add other data elements as they become more aware of information needs that the protocol project may create.

Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council reflections on the eight-step process

To get an idea of Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council members' perceptions of the value and progress of the eight-step process, Wilder Research Center designed a self-administered survey that the site coordinator sent via e-mail to all Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council members. To protect confidentiality, Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council members returned their completed surveys to Wilder Research Center via e-mail.

The survey included questions about why respondents became involved in the process, how they felt about its progress and the feasibility of the process resulting in change. It also asked about their understanding of the terms victim-centered and case-centered, their feelings about other participants and agencies, the barriers they have faced and foresee, the successes they have accomplished, the lessons they would like to pass on to others, and their perceptions of their Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council's cultural competence. A copy of the questionnaire is included in the appendix of this report

Participants' comments reveal that most feel that the mission guiding the process is important, and that the process has led to discussions about important changes and the formation of new relationships. However, the process has not been as smooth or broad-reaching as many would like.

Only 8 of 17 active Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council members completed the survey, despite several reminders from the site coordinator. Law enforcement professionals from the Rochester Police Department and the Olmsted County Sheriff's Office completed four of these surveys. One representative from Social Services, one person from the refugee crime victim service organization Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association and two people from Victim Services of Olmsted County completed a survey. Unfortunately none of the Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council members from the three medical providers or corrections or the Southeast Asian Sexual Assault Program completed surveys. The respondents who did complete the survey gave a variety of responses that are generally positive in relation to the work that they are doing. However, they have some concerns about the overall system and community buy-in to the process.

Respondents first explained why they became involved in the process. Most people reported that it was part of their job and that they had a personal interest in making the system better. A few respondents pointed out that they saw a clear need for this kind of a change.

In answer to questions about how they felt about the project, and whether or not they thought it was worthwhile, all of the respondents remarked that it is a worthwhile

project, and many of them explained why. They cited issues like inter-agency communication, accountability, and improvement in the sensitivity and consistency of the response of system personnel to incidents of sexual assault. Several of their responses are included below.

It is a time-consuming project, however it is worthwhile.

The project will be helpful for consistency and accountability to victims and to the community.

I think we (law enforcement and prosecution) focus too much on the suspect when investigating any crimes. In that process, we sometimes end up “hurting” victims as much, if not more, than we help them. I think this project is not only worthwhile, I think it’s absolutely necessary if we are to provide services that our customers really need.

Respondents were asked if they thought that change was feasible in their agency. All of the respondents thought that change is feasible, and many of them pointed out that agency staff are committed to providing the best service possible to victims, and if the Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council produces a better response to victimization, then they will be committed to the change. A few people mentioned the buy-in needs to be from the top down. This is an issue for some agencies on the Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council, that may not have the contributing support of agency directors. However, at least two agencies have the direct involvement of agency heads. While having this kind of support makes policy modification easier, the challenge will be to ensure that the change is made on the front lines with direct service staff. One person mentioned that the feasibility of any shift in service provision will be somewhat dependent on the demands that following a new protocol will put on staff. Three of their comments are included below.

I believe the staff of this agency understand and buy into the process. Staff are dedicated to the best outcome for victims of sexual assault and believe that the Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council may be a means to that end.

Law enforcement is the agency that hosts the grant for this project. This is indicative of their ongoing philosophical support of our goals. From the very top we have support. Our challenge will be to train all personnel at the Law Enforcement Center (LEC) and to ensure knowledge of the Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council spreads throughout the center and does not simply remain at the top.

I think it will depend on what demands are made of workers where the change will be made. Also supervisors need to feel it is necessary to make workers accountable to follow the protocol (whatever that may be).

A few themes were apparent in respondents’ descriptions of what they thought a shift from a case-centered response to sexual assault to a victim-centered response would mean. Several people felt that being victim-centered meant keeping victims better informed about and involved in the process as they go through the system. A few people

thought that a victim-centered response would be “sensitive to the needs of victims as human beings rather than numbers in a case.” However, no consensus emerged about the amount of influence victims should have in their case. Many of the respondents said that they already have a victim-centered approach to sexual assault. Two of these descriptions follow:

Victim-centered involves considering the victims’ rights and needs at each step of the process instead of only focusing on the defendant’s. It means remembering that the victim is a human being not a case number. It means taking into consideration that most people have little to no knowledge of the legal process and shouldn’t be treated like they should know what they don’t. Above all it means that a victim should be given the right to choose their own course and system people should be giving them the knowledge to do it.

A victim-centered approach would not mean that the victim got to “run the show” and would dictate what happens in the case. Instead it would mean that the professionals would get input from the victim and keep in mind the victim’s wishes when they were making decisions.

The survey also asked respondents to identify the barriers they expected to encounter in making the transition from a case-centered to a victim-centered response to sexual assault. Most of the barriers mentioned were immersed in strategies for protocol implementation that would prevent or minimize potential barriers. Participants said that different agencies’ staff need to build trust in each other, and they need time to get used to working. Another suggested strategy was to present the shift as a positive option rather than a mandate that would likely be resisted because of pre-existing demands on individuals and a fear of how change might impact people’s job effectiveness. At least one person mentioned that there is some denial that sexual assault is a problem and that turf issues might be a barrier to realizing the shift. A few of their responses are included below.

Although I feel I have always taken a victim-centered approach to my cases involving sexual assault, I feel this approach may seem quite foreign to others who operate within the system.

...this approach [needs to be] presented to the various disciplines as a tool that will help/streamline the respective disciplines’ roles rather than a new mandate that is “shoved down their throat.”

I think it will be difficult for [law enforcement] personnel to accept that a case can be properly investigated and prosecuted if a victim has more input into decisions about the case.

Participants’ varied in their level of comfort with the composition and commitment of the representation of the four core agencies. While they did not say that any agencies were particularly difficult to work with, they pointed out that a lack of buy-in from some members may make things difficult in the future, whereas the strong commitment of

other members is very helpful to the process as a whole. Many mentioned that the County Attorney's Office and the medical providers are not completely "on board" yet, and one respondent pointed out that probation and adult protection could be more involved. Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council members are concerned that the leaders within the medical providers are not involved and that the legal divisions of these providers might pose a barrier to protocol writing at a later date if this does not change.

Survey participants also pointed out that some individual members of the Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council from each of the core agencies are regularly involved in the process and tend to take on most of the work. The two agencies that are cited as being most involved are advocacy and law enforcement. Participants recognized the need to involve others to secure greater belief in the process.

Most participants said that their Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council has participation from agencies outside of the four core agencies, although, not all of them could name any of the additional agencies. The agencies that respondents were able to recall included the following: the Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association, Social Services, Probation, Child and Adult Protection, and the Women's Shelter. Participants were pleased that these additional agencies were involved so that they could develop better inter-agency understanding, particularly related to the participation of Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association. Rochester is becoming increasingly diverse, therefore the diverse cultural perspective of the Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association staff is extremely valuable to the Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council.

Survey participants identified barriers that they have faced so far in the eight-step process, and how they have dealt with these barriers. By and large the greatest barrier is the time required to get things done, particularly when people have heavy caseloads. This results in their not attending sessions and appearing to be uncommitted to the process because they fail to participate. It also delays task accomplishment, which does not help to get people motivated to participate in the system. As one member pointed out,

We have gone through phases where nothing seems to get done, and members get frustrated. We also have had members who have had problems within their agencies because of the amount of time they have spent on the project, or because their supervisor(s) don't believe the protocol is important.

To address this cycle of apathy to some degree the Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council has secured a site coordinator and involved additional agency personnel. However, the lack of a site coordinator early on clearly had an impact on the council's efficacy. In addition, all of the agencies involved do not share the same level of commitment to the project.

When asked whether the Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council had adequately addressed the system's response to the culturally diverse population in their county, almost all of the respondents felt that they had. Several people pointed to the involvement of diverse groups like staff from Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association in the protocol development process. They also mentioned plans to hold a public forum with diverse groups and/or refugees, and the enlistment of support from a diverse advisory group. One person did suggest that more could be done.

Finally, survey participants reflected on the most positive changes to the system or individual agencies that are related to the work of the Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council and on the lessons they learned that would be valuable to pass on to other sites. All of the participants who gave a response said that the most positive change was the improvement in the relationships of the participant agencies. They described improvements in communication and people's understanding of other agency staff's roles and values. At least one person felt that this would precipitate more sensitive treatment of victims and a greater willingness to change. However, none of them said that the process has changed yet for victims. Two of their comments are included below.

At this stage of the process, unfortunately, I don't think we've seen many tangible outcomes that we can directly attribute to the eight-step process.

Agencies are communicating with each other and therefore learning more about each other. This has led to more understanding and willingness to change. Individuals have become more sensitive to the needs of victims.

Most participants reported lessons related to ensuring that the participants are committed and active in the process. They also mentioned the importance of patience, staying focused on the goal, making time to participate, sustaining the initial burst of energy, being visible in the community and with agency staff not on the Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council, and having the support of a site coordinator. A few of their comments are included below.

Get letters of commitment and renew them periodically. Promote the activities of the council at any chance you can. Reward and encourage participation and coming to meetings. Having a coordinator early in the process is crucial.

Try to have everyone attend the training at the beginning of the process. Foster communication between agencies and expect disagreement. Go with the flow. The process is half of the education.

[T]he need for better communication within the participating agencies. Even if they aren't expected to be directly involved, all employees need to know what their agency is working on, and what changes are possible in how employees do their jobs.

These results are a positive reflection on the commitment of many of the members of the team. It is particularly uplifting to see the dedication of law enforcement in guiding this process. The leadership of the Rochester Police Department is clearly an active and

influential contributor to the group, which bodes well for a positive change to that agency's response to sexual assault victims. In addition, advocacy plays a significant role in guiding the eight-step process, which is appropriate as they are likely to have the most contact with victims as well as providing victims the most support. Many members are concerned that the other two core agencies, prosecution and medical, do not appear to be as committed to the process. This is clear from their comments and corroborated by the response to this questionnaire – there were no surveys completed by prosecution or medical staff. This could be a serious barrier to accomplishing a system-wide shift in response to sexual assaults.

Resolved and outstanding issues

1. Olmsted County's Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council embarked on a very challenging task when they committed to implementing the eight-step process without the assistance of Model Protocol Project staff or funds. Their commitment was not enough to get the process moving at a steady pace. This past fiscal year, the Olmsted Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council received funding that allowed them to hire a site coordinator and to conduct some evaluation activities of the process. They also have also become full participants in the Model Protocol Project in every except fiscal management by the end of the fiscal year. The contributions of the site coordinator and project administrators have improved the speed and efficacy of the team as a whole. This lesson should be considered in future implementations of the model.
2. Despite the recent influx of support to the Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council, concerns persist about the lack of commitment of some participants. They should address this issue for the next fiscal year. If partners do not contribute to the process, they will not take ownership of it, and it will be unlikely that they encourage compliance with the changes that are proposed. This process will only be successful if all of the core agencies are willing to work together for a system-wide change. This is particularly important given the attitudes of some agency staff. Few of them disputed the need to improve the system's response, however, they were not as willing to abandon existing policies and procedures with which they are comfortable.
3. The demographic composition of Olmsted County, does not appear to be extremely diverse based on census and public school data. However, there are growing communities of color that tend to be concentrated in the urban areas of the county. Members of these communities are largely composed of recent immigrants or refugees. They face many challenges in accessing services with which they are comfortable. This report has touched on a few of these issues, however further

investigation and planning is warranted to ensure that the system is prepared to respond to their needs.

4. The next steps for Olmsted's Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council are the completion of the community needs assessment, which is expected to be published in the next month. Then the group will need to write protocol and renew inter-agency agreements, followed by training agency staff and developing and implementing monitoring and evaluation plans for their site. Wilder Research Center recommends that a renewal of interagency agreements be conducted prior to the writing of protocol. This could be a less formal process than the original agreement, but it should include some guidelines about what is expected from participants, for example attendance at monthly meetings, or delegation of that attendance to an alternative representative from each agency. If Olmsted's Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council can get the same level of commitment from all participating agencies that they have from the site coordinator, law enforcement and advocacy, they will be in a position to implement real change in their community.

End notes

1. Boles, Anita and Patterson, J. *Improving Community Response to Crime Victims: an Eight-Step Model for Developing Protocol*. Sage, California: 1997.

Appendices

Key Informant Interview⁴

Respondents were asked to answer the following open-ended questions:

1. Why did you become involved in this process?
2. How do you feel about this project? Do you think it is worthwhile?
3. Do you think the change is feasible at your agency? Why or why not?
4. One of the goals of this process is to make the system more “victim-centered” as opposed to being “case-centered.” What does this shift mean to you?
5. What barriers do you expect to encounter in transitioning to a more victim-centered approach to handling sexual assault in your agency and community?
6. How comfortable have you been so far with the composition and commitment of the team in terms of representation from the four core agency types?
7. Have you had participation from agencies other than the four core agencies on your Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council? If yes, which ones?
 - a) How valuable has the participation of these other agencies been?
8. I would like you to think about the individual Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council team members, past and present.
 - b) Are there people who have particularly helpful? If so, from which discipline(s) did they come, and how were they helpful?
 - c) Have there been people who made the Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council’s work more difficult? If so, from which discipline(s) did they come, and how did they make the Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council’s work more difficult?
9. What are the biggest barriers you have faced so far in the eight-step process? How have you dealt with these barriers?
10. Have you adequately addressed the issue of the system’s response to a culturally diverse population in your county? If not, why not and what more do you plan to do?
11. What are the most positive changes to the system or individual agencies that you feel are related to the work of the Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council during the past year?
12. What lessons did you learn in the past year that you feel would be important to pass on to other sites that become involved in this process?

⁴ Self-administered survey conducted Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council members.

Focus Group Script⁵
Olmsted Model Protocol Development Project
Focus Group Guide for Agency Personnel

Date_____ Number of participants_____

Introductions:

I am with Wilder Research Center, we were hired to conduct these groups with you about the new protocol for dealing with sexual assault that is being developed by your county. All of your responses will be completely confidential. Anything that you say will not be connected to your name in any way. And out of respect for others in the group, we request that you not discuss other people's comments outside of this group.

To get started can I ask you to go around the room and introduce yourselves and tell everyone which agency you are from.

1. What do you know or have you heard about the decision to develop a model protocol for handling sexual assault?
 - 1.4. Do you know which agencies are in the SAIC?
 - 1.4.1. Do you know which people within these agencies are on the SAIC?
 - 1.4.1.1. What is your relationship with these people?
 - 1.4.1.2. What are your opinions of these people?
2. What do you know or have you heard about the 8-Step Process? (The process being used to develop a model protocol for handling sexual assault)
 - 2.4. Have you or any of your clients or co-workers had any input (either formal or informal) into this process?
3. How do you feel about this project? Do you think it is worthwhile?
 - 3.4. Do you think the change is feasible at your agency?
 - 3.5. Do you think it is realistic to expect all of the agencies involved in the process to work together to make this change happen?
 - 3.6. Do you feel that your agency as a whole is committed to this change?
4. One of the goals of this process is to make the system more "victim-centered" as opposed to being "case-centered." What do these terms mean to you?
 - 4.4. What barriers do you expect to encounter in transitioning to a more victim-centered approach to handling sexual assault in your agency and community?

⁵ Focus group script used with agency staff not serving on the Sexual Assault Inter-Agency Council.

6360-2
Olmsted Model Protocol Development Project
Focus Group Form for Agency Personnel

Name _____

Agency _____

Role or title in agency _____

Length of time in current position _____

Length of time in field of _____
(law enforcement, advocacy, medicine, etc.)