

TRANSFORMATION IS POSSIBLE:

Recommendations from the City of Seattle Community Responses to Domestic Violence Workgroup

A project of the City of Seattle Office for Civil Rights and the Accountability Communities Consortium.

With

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Executive Summary

TRANSFORMATION IS POSSIBLE is a report of the Community Responses to Domestic Violence (CRDV) workgroup, part of the Criminal Legal System (CLS) Project led by Seattle's Office for Civil Rights. The CLS Project focuses on eliminating systemic racism in the criminal legal system and advancing social justice by involving communities that have been negatively impacted by criminal legal policies in advising the City's efforts for change. The workgroup brought together local domestic violence advocates, survivors, and policy experts with experience intervening in domestic violence outside of the criminal legal system. The primary aim was to identify and make recommendations to expand community response to domestic violence. Additional information about the workgroup formation can be found in Appendix A.

Domestic violence (DV) is a pervasive social problem; most Seattle residents will directly experience or be close to someone experiencing DV in their lifetimes. Seattle expends significant resources on criminal legal responses to DV, yet this strategy fails to address the scope and root causes of the problem. Many DV survivors do not wish to involve law enforcement and most people abusing their partners do not come into contact with the criminal legal system. In fact, some survivors are deterred from seeking out community-based services due to concerns about unwanted police involvement. Community responses to DV have long been practiced in communities where survivors have been neglected, marginalized, and criminalized within the criminal legal system, including Black and Indigenous people and other people of color, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people, people who are immigrants and refugees, people with disabilities, and those living at the intersections of these experiences.

It is time to transform the public response to domestic violence in alignment with Seattle's stated commitments to racial and social justice. Seattle is well positioned to lead nationally given a robust network of survivor-centered community organizations working on the frontlines to develop community responses to domestic violence. *TRANSFORMATION IS POSSIBLE* identifies this work and provides the next step recommendations for Seattle toward a broader vision for social change. We highlight the need for political leadership and durable funding streams that support community-owned and community-led efforts to prevent violence before it escalates, motivate change through healing and transformation, and provide pathways for accountable relationships and communities.

Workgroup Recommendations:

1. Establish durable public funding streams for community responses to domestic violence that reach people outside the criminal legal system who are engaging in patterns of abuse.

2. Invest first in strategies developed by survivors of domestic violence and practiced in Black and Indigenous communities, and other communities of color (BIPOC), Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) communities, by immigrants and refugees, and other communities who have been systematically harmed by criminal legal responses to domestic violence.
3. Start with a pilot phase that guarantees sufficient funding for independent development, implementation, and evaluation.
4. Protect community-ownership over responses to domestic violence.
5. Demonstrate public leadership and transparency in the adoption of community responses to domestic violence.

Acknowledgements

The Seattle Office of Civil Rights initiated the Community Responses to Domestic Violence (CRDV) workgroup in collaboration with the Accountable Communities Consortium. The project was supported by the Seattle City Council 2021 Budget Action adding funds to the Seattle Office for Civil Rights (CBA OCR-002-A-001).

Accountable Communities Consortium supports people, organization and communities to be in right relationship through organizing, facilitation, training and consultation. The Accountable Communities Consortium team for this project is Shannon Perez-Darby, Marci Taitt-Lamar, and Sid Jordan.

Shannon Perez-Darby is an anti-violence advocate, author, and consultant working to create the conditions to support loving, equitable relationships and communities. With nearly 20 years of experience Shannon Perez-Darby centers queer and trans communities of color while working to address issues of domestic and sexual violence, accountability and transformative justice.

Marci Taitt-Lamar is a domestic violence advocate and consultant whose work in the field has focused on research, best practice, and training and technical assistance. Marci brings a wealth of experience working in grassroots LGBTQ organizations and movements and is committed to capacity building work that centers the liberation of QTPOC survivors.

Sid Jordan is an anti-violence researcher and educator, and has advocated for queer and trans survivors in the greater Seattle area for 25+ years. He collaborates with community groups to use participatory research and planning processes to advance gender, racial, and economic justice. He is an assistant professor at Portland State University School of Social Work.

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Key Terms

For the purposes of this report, we define the following terms or concepts as described below.

Community-owned: Refers here to non-governmental groups who maintain responsibility and autonomy for decision-making including budget authority, governance, project structure, program delivery, protection of data, and evaluation.

Domestic violence: Refers here to a pattern of asserting power and control in a relationship in a way that limits the other person's agency and safety,

Survivor of domestic violence: a person whose agency and safety is compromised by a pattern of power and control.

Person being abusive: a person asserting a pattern of power and control.

Victim/Survivor defendant: refers to a survivor of domestic violence who is criminally charged.

Introduction

Domestic violence (DV) is a pervasive social problem that impacts every member of our community. Despite several decades of public funding and policy efforts focused on domestic violence relief, DV remains one of the most prevalent forms of interpersonal harm and an insidious driver of preventative injury, housing insecurity, educational disruptions, chronic health problems, and premature death.¹ National studies suggest that 1 in 3 women, transgender and nonbinary people, as well as 1 in 4 men, have experienced severe physical abuse by an intimate partner.² These numbers increase when including other forms of abuse such as stalking, manipulation, economic control, or reproductive coercion, and other forms of family or household violence, such as child, elder, or sibling abuse.³ Taken together, it can be assumed that most Seattle residents will directly experience or be close to someone experiencing DV in their lifetimes. It also means that most of us know someone who has engaged in abusive or controlling behaviors.

This report focuses on people who have been abusive in the context of romantic, sexual, and/or spousal relationships (also referred to as intimate partner violence). We define DV as the dynamic of exerting power and control over another person in a way that undermines that person's agency and safety. This *contextual* understanding of DV is broadly accepted by survivor advocacy groups but is notably distinct from criminal legal definitions. In Washington State, domestic violence is statutorily defined to include certain criminal offense categories (e.g., assault, reckless endangerment, coercion, kidnapping) when they are committed by and against an intimate partner, family member, or household member.⁴ Whereas elements of a criminal offense are generally defined by singular intentional acts, the contextual definition of DV focuses on dynamics. Thus, the criminal legal definition may erroneously include acts that survivors carry out to escape or survive an abusive dynamic (sometimes referred to as a victim/survivor defendant or criminalized survivor) and leave out acts of abuse or control that do not fit the criminal legal standard.

¹ Leemis, Ruth et al. "The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2016/2017 Report on intimate partner violence." (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022); See also, Pavao, Joanne et al. "Intimate partner violence and housing instability." *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 32, no. 2 (2007): 143-146; Petrosky, Emiko et al., "Racial and ethnic differences in homicides of adult women and the role of intimate partner violence—United States, 2003–2014." *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 66, no. 28 (2017): 741.

² Leemis, et al., "National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey," 2022. See also, Peitzmeier, Sarah et al. "Intimate partner violence in transgender populations: Systematic review and meta-analysis of prevalence and correlates." *American Journal of Public Health* 110, no. 9 (2020): e1-e14.

³ Leemis, 2022.

⁴ Revised Code of Washington, tit. 10, § 99.020.

Domestic Violence Impacts the Entire Community

Domestic Violence fundamentally disrupts the lives and life chances of its victims, survivors, and their families. At its most severe, domestic violence can be lethal. An estimated 64 people in Washington State die in domestic violence-related events each year, a figure which includes targeted victims as well as people being abusive.⁵ Far more often, DV causes preventable physical and psychological injuries. By one national estimate, more than 4.1 billion dollars is spent annually on DV-related medical and mental health care.⁶ In King County, there were at least 530 DV-related emergency room visits reported in the three-month period of December 2022 to February 2023.⁷ Survivors of intimate partner violence experience higher rates of traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and chronic disease and pain than those who have not been directly impacted.⁸ Survivors also sustain economic harms ranging from lost wages and career opportunities to medical and legal debt.⁹ The deleterious effects can extend to witnesses, especially children, including the effects of chronic stress, educational disruptions, and social isolation.¹⁰

Although less discussed, there are also many negative repercussions for people who are being abusive. This can include social alienation, lost housing, interrupted employment, termination of parental rights, incarceration, and medical and legal debt. Engaging in abusive behaviors against intimate partners is associated with preventable health problems, such as post-traumatic stress, depression, and cardiovascular disease, and can lead to acute injury and premature death from self-inflicted harm, survivor self-defense, and law enforcement interventions.¹¹ When taking into account

⁵ “Domestic Violence Fatalities and Homicide Rates in Washington State.” (Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 2022).

⁶ “Costs of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in the United States.” (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2003).

⁷ “Domestic Violence & Child Abuse Demographic Data.” (King County Public Health, 2023).

⁸ Campbell, Jacquelyn C. "Health consequences of intimate partner violence." *The Lancet* 359, no. 9314 (2002), 1331-1336. Bacchus, Loraine et al.. "Recent intimate partner violence against women and health: a systematic review and meta-analysis of cohort studies." *BMJ Open* 8, no. 7 (2018): e019995.; Trevillion, Kylee et al.. "Experiences of domestic violence and mental disorders: a systematic review and meta-analysis." *PloS One* 7, no. 12 (2012): e51740.

⁹ Pavao, “Intimate partner violence and housing instability.” See also Peterson, et al., "Lifetime economic burden of intimate partner violence among US adults." *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 55, no. 4 (2018): 433-444.

¹⁰ Bair-Merritt, Megan et al., "Silent victims--an epidemic of childhood exposure to domestic violence." *The New England Journal of Medicine* 369, no. 18 (2013): 1673-1675.

¹¹ Shorey, Ryan et al., "The prevalence of mental health problems in men arrested for domestic violence." *Journal of Family Violence* 27 (2012): 741-748.; Kafka, Julie et al., "Intimate partner violence victimization and perpetration as precursors to suicide." *SSM-Population Health* 18 (2022): 101079.

that people who cause DV are also often past survivors or witnesses of violence, the cumulative consequences of DV on communities is brought into sharper focus.¹²

DV has significant consequences on communities and public welfare systems. This includes the direct costs of services for survivors, including emergency shelter, advocacy, health care, and legal services, and indirect costs to health and human services systems due to its long-term impact. CRDV workgroup members described how existing public funding grossly underestimates the true costs of domestic violence. Many survivors turn to family and families to meet their basic needs, and many DV advocacy organizations rely on philanthropic and charitable donations to maintain operations.

The costs of domestic violence to the public also include expenditures for criminal legal interventions such as emergency police response, enforcing civil protection orders, prosecution, courts, probation, and corrections. A comprehensive analysis of Seattle's DV-related expenditures on criminal legal interventions is not currently available. However, the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs estimated that nearly half of the state's law enforcement responses to "crimes against persons" in 2021 were DV related.¹³ In 2022, more than half of assault charges referred from law enforcement to Seattle's City Attorney's office were domestic violence-related, and DV accounted for nearly one-third of all charges referred.¹⁴ Given the size of the city's public safety budget relative to its DV-related human service commitments, the criminal legal system represents the city's single largest investment in domestic violence response.

Dominant Policy Approaches Have Failed to Curb Domestic Violence

Policy approaches to domestic violence include the combination of regulations and funding for advocacy services and legal interventions. Policymakers have generally favored funding community-based supports for survivors and state-based penalties for people who have engaged in domestic violence. One reason that both approaches have failed to prevent or significantly reduce the rates of domestic violence is that they are largely responsive to individual instances of violence. Similar-scale investments of public funds have not been made in community-level prevention strategies or efforts to intervene in controlling behaviors before violence escalates.

¹² Roberts, Andrea et al. "Adulthood stressors, history of childhood adversity, and risk of perpetration of intimate partner violence." *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 40, no. 2 (2011): 128-138.

¹³ "The Crime in Washington 2021 Annual Report." (Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs, 2022).

¹⁴ Swanson, Per-Olaf. "Criminal Division Quarter IV, Report" (City of Seattle, City Attorney's Office, 2023).

Community-based supports for survivors

Community-based domestic violence advocacy organizations focus on the needs of survivors. Survivor-run and survivor-centered programs provide emergency shelter, basic needs support, legal aid, and advocacy services, among other kinds of support. As workgroup members attest, survivors routinely report that community-based advocacy services have been useful, if not critical, to their sense of safety and self-determination. Community-led survivor-centered strategies have been associated with increased levels of social support and improved mental health, and in some cases reduced partner aggression.¹⁵

These organizations have also helped change the ways that communities and policy-makers understand intimate partner violence. Community-based domestic violence advocacy groups have worked to simultaneously address the immediate needs of survivors and work toward broader social transformation. Yet, in a current climate of deepening economic inequality, inflation, and public funding austerity, service-based organizations in under-resourced conditions have increasingly focused on meeting the immediate basic needs of survivors. Public funding tied to direct service provision has further stagnated organizational efforts to lead prevention and social change efforts.¹⁶ A 2020 report published by the Coalition of Gender-based Violence in King County highlighted the need for dedicated funding sources to support prevention, calling especially for investments in community-level and culturally-relevant approaches of BIPOC-led organizations.¹⁷

State-based responses for people being abusive

Criminal legal interventions for people causing domestic violence are rooted in theories of deterrence, removal, retribution, and rehabilitation. A primary flaw of the criminological approach to domestic violence is that it misidentifies the problem as individual anti-social behavior. DV is a widespread and frequently socially-sanctioned behavior that manifests in relation to social power hierarchies. Further, most instances of DV never come to the attention of law enforcement.¹⁸ The current practice of highly

¹⁵ Ogbe, Emilomo et al., "A systematic review of intimate partner violence interventions focused on improving social support and/mental health outcomes of survivors." *PLoS One* 15, no. 6 (2020): e0235177.

¹⁶ Mehrotra, Gita, Ericka Kimball, and Stéphanie Wahab. "The braid that binds us: The impact of neoliberalism, criminalization, and professionalization on domestic violence work." *Affilia* 31, no. 2 (2016): 153-163.

¹⁷ Alcantara-Thompson, DeAnn. & Sid Jordan. "Mapping Prevention: Lifting up transformative approaches to domestic and sexual violence prevention." (Coalition Ending Gender-based Violence, 2021).

¹⁸ Thompson, Alexandra, and Susannah N. Tapp. "Criminal Victimization, 2021." Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2022. Note: National BJS figures indicate that 51% of intimate partner victimization was reported to law enforcement in 2021. However, these figures are based on

selective prosecution grossly underestimates the problem and undermines a potential deterrent effect. Further, DV arrests tend to follow existing patterns where those most likely to face criminal penalties are people in communities already under surveillance or in contact with law enforcement. **In the City of Seattle, where an estimated 7% of the population is Black, the City Attorney’s most recent Criminal Division report indicates that approximately 42% of the referrals for domestic violence-related offenses involved Black suspects.**¹⁹

Criminal legal interventions are often contradictory to what DV survivors want and ask for. While survivors generally want the violence to stop, many make efforts to avoid interactions with law enforcement due to fears of reprisal, escalated violence, and a desire to protect themselves or a loved one from criminal penalty or deportation.²⁰ According to the City Attorney, “a large proportion of domestic violence declines [i.e., decisions not to prosecute] are related to the victim not wanting or being able to assist the prosecution.”²¹ As discussed below, this is especially the situation of survivors who belong to communities that have been historically and presently marginalized by and harmed within the criminal legal system.

Criminal Legal Responses Have Come at the Expense of Marginalized Survivors

Some of the most devastating consequences of domestic violence have been facilitated by the criminal legal system itself. These consequences are levied most heavily on survivors who belong to historically and presently marginalized groups, including Black and Indigenous people, and other people of color (BIPOC), lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ+) people, immigrants and refugees, people with disabilities, and especially those living at the intersections of these identities. This includes documented patterns of survivors being ignored, disbelieved, and discredited

criminal legal definitions of DV. Further, research conducted by the National Domestic Violence Hotline suggests the figures are much higher, see Logan, T. K., and Roberta Valente. "Who will help me? Domestic violence survivors speak out about law enforcement responses." (National Domestic Violence Hotline, 2015).

¹⁹ “Quick Facts, Seattle city, Washington.” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). Referral rates calculated based on Quarter IV reports in Swanson, “Criminal Division Quarter IV,” 2022, as well as personal communication with Damon Agnos regarding corrections in reporting, Seattle Office for Civil Rights, April 3, 2023.

²⁰ Richie, Beth, *Arrested Justice* (New York University Press, 2012).; Goodman, Lisa, et al. "Informal Help-Seeking in Moments of Acute Danger: Intimate Partner Violence Survivors’ Emergency Outreach Efforts and the Forces That Shape Them." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 38, no. 5-6 (2023): 4742-4767.; Jordan, Sid, Gita Mehrotra, and Kiyomi Fujikawa. "Mandating inclusion: Critical trans perspectives on domestic and sexual violence advocacy." *Violence Against Women* 26, no. 6-7 (2020): 531-554

²¹ Swanson, “Criminal Division Quarter IV,” 2022.

as victims and witnesses.²² It also includes survivors facing arrest, detention, and penalty for not behaving “appropriately” as a victim, and for activities carried out under duress of an abuser or in the course of trying to escape or avoid further abuse.²³ For those facing criminal charges, the effects of trauma and economic hardship can jeopardize the ability to mount an effective legal defense. The vast majority of women currently incarcerated in the U.S. are DV survivors, and they are disproportionately BIPOC and LGBTQ people.²⁴

For survivors and for people who have caused domestic violence, a criminal conviction compounds the health and economic consequences of DV. For example, a conviction can negatively influence child custody proceedings, inhibit employment and economic opportunities, and limit access to housing and human services. Heightened state surveillance as a condition of probation or parole can contribute to the accumulation of charges and further periods of confinement. At the same time, there is inconclusive evidence to date that court-mandated treatment programs are effective for those that have caused DV.²⁵

Equitable & Accountable Relationships Are Possible

Survivors tend to turn to their friends and family members first when experiencing a pattern of power and control. Some may seek support from a trusted therapist, counselor, clergy member, teacher, healthcare provider, or neighbor. Some contact a confidential hotline or reach out to a community advocacy organization. As discussed above, many survivors do not desire contact with the law enforcement or involvement in criminal proceedings. This pattern of help-seeking has led many domestic violence advocates to regard friends and family members as “first responders.” A crucial aspect of creating a safety plan, for example, is identifying friends, family members, and

²² Richie, *Arrested Justice*. 2012 See also, Ritchie, Andrea J. *Invisible No More: Police Violence Against Black Women and Women of Color* (Beacon press, 2017). See also, Guadalupe-Diaz, Xavier and Jana Jasinski. ““I wasn’t a priority, I wasn’t a victim”: Challenges in help seeking for transgender survivors of intimate partner violence.” *Violence Against Women* 23, no. 6 (2017): 772-792.

²³ Goodmark, Leigh. “Gender-based violence, law reform, and the criminalization of survivors of violence.” *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy* 10, no. 4 (2021): 13-25.

²⁴ Dichter, Melissa E., and Sue Osthoff. “Women’s experiences of abuse as a risk factor for incarceration: A research update.” (National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, 2015). Mogul, Joey L., Andrea J. Ritchie, and Kay Whitlock. *Queer (in) justice: The Criminalization of LGBT People in the United States*. Vol. 5. Beacon Press, 2011. See also, Said, Neda, Sadé Lindsay, and Joanne Tien. “Punished by Design: The Criminalization of Trans & Queer Incarcerated Survivors.” (Survived and Punished, 2022).

²⁵ Wilson, David B., Lynette Feder, and Ajima Olaghere. “Court-mandated interventions for individuals convicted of domestic violence: An updated Campbell systematic review.” *Campbell Systematic Reviews* 17, no. 1 (2021): e1151.

community members who can provide aid and resources, and be involved in prevention and intervention strategies.

Friends, family, and community members can also be crucial first responders for those who are being abusive. Most people do not wish to hurt people that they care about. People who are being abusive often regret their actions even as they continue to enact them. **While domestic violence is a learned behavior, there are currently few identifiable resources for people to ask for help in unlearning these behaviors, whether by their own volition or at the urging of a survivor, their children, families, friends, or broader communities.** It is well established in other behavioral change contexts (e.g., substance use reduction) that self-motivation, community-based support and accountability play a crucial role in sustainable change. Yet, there are no widely available non-criminal options for people who need support in maintaining equitable and accountable relationships.

Accountability requires taking responsibility for one's choices and the consequences of those choices. True accountability is not something that can be mandated or bestowed. For people who are being abusive, accountability requires personal commitment and transformation to stop the harmful behaviors, understand the dynamics that lead to their abusive actions, and meaningfully attending to the harm they have caused. Abusive patterns of power and control are established over time and un-doing those harmful patterns also takes time. The process of recognizing and accounting for the harm caused can also be a long-term and time intensive process. Thankfully, more and more community-based organizations across the country are developing models for supporting people who have been abusive in accountability without relying on harmful criminal legal responses. Nationally, some of these organizations include the Ahimsa Collective, Project Nia, Just Practice, Interrupting Criminalization, H.O.L.L.A., SOIL, Life Comes From It and Spring Up, just to name a few.

While these models differ depending on geography, available resources and the communities impacted they share some common elements. These include:

- 1. They are community-owned and community led.** These exemplary programs are built by community members creating the resources and responses they need to prevent and respond to violence they are facing. The strategies are rooted in community building and focus on resourcing the people most impacted in practicing our own solutions.

2. **They are led by BIPOC, LGBTQ people, people with disabilities, immigrants and refugees.** Every single one of these programs is led by people of color with over half being founded by Black leaders, at least a third being led by people with disabilities, a third being led by people who are immigrants or refugees and nearly all of these with meaningful leadership from people who identify within the LGBTQ community.
3. **They engage in long-term relationships.** In the words of writer and organizer adrienne marie brown, these organizations “move at the speed of trust.”²⁶ The theory of change is rooted in the understanding that accountability work requires time and meaningful relationships. These organizations are driven to pace their efforts in alignment with their communities’ needs rather than external deliverables or budget timelines.
4. **They work outside the criminal legal system.** Organizations leading this work around the country have made strategic and explicit decisions to not partner with law enforcement. Many factors have gone into this decision, including learning from previous failed partnerships with the criminal legal system, a clear call from community members about the harms policing has caused their communities and a knowledge that partnership with the criminal legal system are always weighted to maintain that system’s power and will never result in more safety for targeted communities.

Several Seattle-area organizations have actively contributed to the development of community response models, building the skills of community members to prevent and effectively respond to domestic violence (examples of such organizations can be found in Appendices B, C and D). However, these efforts have largely been community supported rather than publicly funded. **The City of Seattle does not currently fund community, non-criminal responses focused on reaching people who are being abusive in a romantic, intimate or spousal relationship.**

²⁶ Brown Adrienne Maree, *Emergent strategy: Shaping change, changing worlds* (AK Press, 2017).

Assessment of existing interventions and resources for people who have engaged in domestic violence

Our region's response to domestic violence includes an array of strategies. This includes survivor-led advocacy services, youth-led and youth focused programming, prevention programs and court-based treatment. Described below is the workgroup's assessment of the Seattle Metro Area's existing responses to domestic violence.

Survivor-led services

Seattle has a large network of services for survivors of domestic violence. Built over many decades, this network includes community-based support for survivors navigating both emergency and long-term needs, including housing, medical and legal needs, advocacy-based counseling, support groups, transportation, childcare, employment, flexible financial assistance, and other basic needs support. A list of Seattle domestic violence survivor serving programs can be found in Appendix B. As a matter of practice, these organizations have not historically aimed to also offer services to people who have been engaging in domestic violence.

The CRDV workgroup supports a deep investment in survivor-led services and believes an ongoing commitment to survivor-centered supports is an indispensable part of our region's response to domestic violence. The CRDV workgroup funding recommendations outlined below are in addition to current survivor-focused funding. Domestic violence survivor service funding levels should not be impacted by expanded investments in community responses to domestic violence that are focused on people who have been abusive.

Culturally-Specific Community Organizing Groups

Seattle is an incubator for culturally-specific anti-violence organizations and groups seeking to prevent and respond to violence outside of the criminal legal system. These efforts often build on the knowledge and skill of survivors and their advocates, and focus on restorative, transformative, healing-based, and integrated approaches for preventing and intervening in domestic violence, especially in LGBTQ+ and BIPOC communities. An illustrative list of Seattle area culturally specific groups working on strategies that can help prevent domestic and sexual violence can be found in Appendix C.

Youth-Based and Prevention Programs

Our region has a vast network of youth-based and youth-led programming from after-school programs to skill development to community building programs. Programs that work directly with youth and young adults are an important part of our region's response to violence. Although our workgroup focused on the need for community responses to domestic violence in adult relationships, we view this network of youth-based support to be an essential part of the fabric of our region's response to domestic violence. Patterns of power and control are often easiest to address early in the cycle of violence and, even more importantly, before it ever occurs. Programs most successful at violence prevention are those that keep young people socially connected to a community and provide skills and resources for practicing accountable relationships. An illustrative list of additional Seattle area youth-based and prevention programs can be found in Appendix D.

Mandated Treatment

The Seattle Domestic Violence Intervention Project [DVIP] is a post-filing diversion program for those facing misdemeanor domestic violence charges, which includes court monitoring, group and individual counseling, and referrals to substance abuse or mental health treatment. In the DVIP model, a treatment provider conducts an intake assessment and confers with a Multidisciplinary Team consisting of probation, victim advocates, treatment providers, and community consultants. The team determines the appropriate level of treatment and any additional requirements, such as substance abstinence or parenting sessions. The DVI treatment levels range from Level 1 to 4. Level 1, 2, and 3 are admitted to the DVIP, while those assigned Level 4 are not admitted to the program. There have been 393 court referrals to DVIP since the first case was diverse in June 2018. In 2022, the Seattle Municipal Court referred 47 misdemeanor domestic violence offenders to the program, 16 of which have since completed by meeting the program requirements. Notable to the CRDV workgroup, the DVIP only works with heterosexual men and does not accept women and LGBTQ people facing misdemeanor domestic violence charges.

Sitting at the intersection of criminal legal, community-based and youth-based responses to violence is Gay City's *Access to Change* program. *Access to Change* is a pre-filing diversion program funded by the City of Seattle and hosted by Gay City, Seattle's LGBTQ Center. *Access to Change* utilizes a cohort-based advocacy model to provide support and stabilization to young people facing non-intimate partner domestic violence charges.

Workgroup Recommendations

The CRDV workgroup calls for building the capacity of community resources outside of the criminal legal system that are available to survivors, their families and loved ones, and those who are engaging in abusive or controlling behaviors long before crisis situations arise. Community responses to domestic violence are focused on the well-being, self-determination, and safety of survivors and uphold the dignity and potential for transformation of those who are engaging in DV, understanding that many times they are also survivors of violence themselves. Community responses to domestic violence require well-resourced organizational infrastructures to support individuals, families, and communities engaged in processes that promote lasting change.

The City of Seattle is uniquely positioned to be a national leader in investing in community responses to domestic violence in alignment with the city's broader commitments to racial and social justice. The following recommendations from the CRDV Workgroup are premised on a vision of equitable, affirming, and accountable communities supported through a fundamental transformation of the public approach to domestic violence response. Working toward this vision, the CRDV Workgroup provides the following recommendations for Seattle's strategic adoption of community-owned responses to domestic violence.

1. **Establish durable public funding streams for community responses to domestic violence that reach people *outside the criminal legal system* who are engaging in patterns of abuse.**

The CRDV Workgroup understands that there are currently no widely-available voluntary programs or resources for people who are abusive to access support to change, either on their own volition or at the prompting of their loved one, friends, family members, or other community members. The lack of resources and referral options outside the criminal legal system represents a significant gap in Seattle's domestic violence response. It is also a significant gap in Seattle's public safety plan given that most forms of domestic violence never come to the attention of law enforcement and many survivors work to avoid contact with the criminal legal system. A community-level response to domestic violence aims to reach people who are engaging in abusive or controlling behaviors who are and are not already in contact with the criminal legal system

to prevent the escalation of more serious forms of violence. Community responses to domestic violence are not alternative individual-level interventions that mimic criminal legal responses, but rather strategies that are based on a community-level theory of change.

2. **Invest first in strategies developed by survivors of domestic violence and practiced in Black and Indigenous communities, and other communities of color (BIPOC), Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) communities, by immigrants and refugees, and other communities who have been systematically harmed by criminal legal responses to domestic violence.** The CRDV Workgroup reflects the expertise of local domestic violence survivors, DV advocates, and community organizers who have practiced responding to domestic violence in communities where criminal legal responses have been disproportionately harmful. These communities have long experienced the burden of developing community responses to domestic violence. Public investments in community responses to DV should start with these communities of practice, and those who are least likely to benefit from efforts to reform services *within* the criminal legal system.

3. **Start with a pilot phase that guarantees sufficient funding for independent development, implementation, and evaluation.**

The CRDV Workgroup understands that the local organizations who have practiced community responses to domestic violence have lacked sufficient funding to develop, evaluate, and expand these efforts. A pilot program is recommended to build these field-generated practices, including program design, implementation, and independent evaluation. Funding level considerations should include:

- a. A minimum three-year pilot allowing for sufficient time for design, implementation and evaluation;
- b. Funding for at least three organizations with funding levels sufficient to support at minimum of two Full Time Employees (FTE) per organization (a minimum of 6 FTEs/year in total);

- i. Staffing rates should be funded at a level equivalent to a livable wage for staff living in the City of Seattle plus benefits;
- c. In addition to staffing support, funding levels should include sufficient funds to support operational and administrative costs at the rate of at least 10% of total program costs;
- d. Funding level should include sufficient funds for evaluation, design and implementation;
- e. Funding levels should include at minimum of \$100,000 per funded organization per year to support program participant stability needs. The CRDV Workgroup identified stabilization funding as an essential part of creating the conditions to support people who have been abusive and their families to create the conditions for the harm to stop and to allow program participants to engage in the long and important work of accountability. Stabilization fund requirements include:
 - i. Funding levels sufficient to support organizations with the cost of administering stabilization funds;
 - ii. Use of stabilization funds may include but should not be limited to transportation costs, childcare, interpretation, food, housing stability, educational support, employment stabilization, medical and mental health needs and accommodations for people with disabilities;
 - iii. To ensure integrity of a voluntary model, access to stabilization funds should not be structured as an incentive or reward for program participation.

Community input through the funding decision-making process is essential. Procurement and funding administration should align with community-informed process, including:

- a. The CRDV workgroup recommends that the funding be administered by the Seattle Office for Civil Rights. OCR has taken consistent leadership in addressing complex intersectional community needs and has both the framework and community relationships to maintain consistent, values-aligned administration of the pilot funding;

- b. Request for proposals should be vetted by community partners prior to release;
- c. Resources should focus on helping people stop abuse, understand the context of the harm caused, and work towards meaningful accountability. This can and does involve a range of activities;
- d. Funding should be available to a broad range of organizational structures and configurations including fiscally sponsored projects, non-professionalized community-based groups and other evolving structures;
- e. Funds should be made available to both established community-based programs with a history of working within their communities as well as new, innovative, or novel programs or services;
- f. Funding should be flexible so that organizations may meet a range of programmatic and participant needs.

2. **Protect community-ownership over responses to domestic**

violence. CRDV Workgroup members identified community-ownership as a crucial pillar for success, including: survivor self-determination, consent to participate, relations of trust, honoring confidentiality, and cultural alignment.

Funding strategies should clearly define community ownership to include:

- Independent leadership and decision-making related to all fundamental program qualities, design, and implementation;
- Sufficient resources for independent community-driven evaluation and improvement;
- Reporting requirements that reflect community-driven evaluation criteria, outcome measures and the collection and interpretation of data;
- Ensure that organizations can protect the confidentiality of individual participants when meeting reporting requirements for funding;
- Protect community leadership and stewardship over the evidence base.

3. **Demonstrate public leadership and transparency in the adoption of community responses to domestic violence.**

Elected officials and city leaders should be prepared to speak to diverse constituencies, agencies, and concerned groups about the need for community

responses to domestic violence, including: the current scale and consequences of domestic violence; the misfit of criminal legal approaches to the problem; and how public investments to support community responses strengthen Seattle's vision for community safety and racial and social justice. This may include working with local domestic violence programs for training and technical assistance, and the development of written materials, that strengthen understandings of dynamics of abuse and the disproportionately negative effects of criminal legal strategies in historically and presently marginalized communities.

Conclusion

It is time to transform the public response to domestic violence in alignment with Seattle's stated commitments to racial and social justice. Transformation is possible, but it will require political leadership and dedicated public resources. Seattle can be at the national forefront by investing in survivor-centered organizations developing community response to domestic violence. We can invest in community responses that prevent violence before it escalates, motivate change through healing and transformation, and provide pathways to people who are being abusive to be accountable in their own communities. This report provides recommendations on the next steps toward a broader vision where each member of our community can thrive in loving, equitable and safe relationships and communities.

Appendix A- CRDV Workgroup Overview

The Community Responses to Domestic Violence (CRDV) workgroup was an initiative of the Criminal Legal System project of the Seattle Office for Civil Rights (SOCR). The workgroup was established based on the recommendation of the SOCR's 2021 Community Task Force Report on the Criminal Legal System. In that report, the community task force identified the need for greater expertise on domestic violence. The Seattle City Council 2021 Budget Action added funds to the SOCR budget to convene this specialized workgroup. The purpose was to identify non-criminal legal system alternatives for people who are enacting patterns of power and control over their partners.

The CRDV workgroup was composed of survivors, advocates, and local leaders and representatives of community-based and culturally-specific organizations. The workgroup included people with experience working directly with people who have caused harm or engaged in patterns of abuse and control. The workgroup was convened in June 2022 and met monthly through March 2023 to develop the recommendations in this report. Workgroup members shared experiences with a wide-range of approaches including violence prevention and education programs, community-led processes of intervention, accountability plans, restorative processes, trauma-based modalities, and long-term personal transformation.

Appendix B- Domestic Violence Survivor Services in the Seattle Metro Area

Please note that this is a summary list of domestic violence survivor-based services in the Seattle metro area. Additional supports may be available even if not listed.

- Abused Deaf Women's Advocacy Services
- API Chaya (Serving Asian, South Asian, and Pacific Islander Survivors)
- Broadview Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing Program (Seattle)
- Consejo Counseling and Referrals Service (serving Latino/a Survivors)
- Domestic Abuse Women's Network (24 hours, South King County)
- DoVE Project (Vashon Island)
- Jennifer Beach Foundation
- Jewish Family Service Project DVORA
- LifeWire, formerly EDVP (24 hours, East King County)
- Mother Nation
- Multi-Communities
- Muslimahs Against Abuse Center
- New Beginnings (24 hours, Seattle)
- Northwest Family Life (Christian faith-based)
- NW Network for Bisexual, Trans & Lesbian Survivors of Abuse
- Refugee Women's Alliance Domestic Violence Program
- Salvation Army Domestic Violence Program
- Seattle Indian Health Board Domestic Violence Program
- Somali Family Safety Taskforce
- YWCA – East Cherry
- YWCA Downtown Seattle Shelter
- YWCA – South King County Domestic Violence Services

Appendix C - Examples of Culturally Specific Community Groups in the Seattle Metro Area

Please note, this is not a comprehensive list of Seattle Metro Area Community Organizing groups. This list is meant to be illustrative of the kind of community groups working in our region.

- Freedom Project
- UTOPIA Washington
- Collective Justice
- Lavender Rights Project
- Muslimahs Against Abuse Center
- East African Community Services
- Urban League
- West African Community Council
- Mother Africa
- Ingersoll Gender Center
- Gender Justice League
- Filipino Community of Seattle
- Casa Latina
- Sacred Community Connections
- Multi-Communities
- Rooted Reentry

Appendix D- Examples of Youth and Prevention Programs in the Seattle Metro Area

Please note, this is not a comprehensive list of Seattle Metro Area youth and prevention programs. This list is meant to be illustrative of the kind of community groups working in our region.

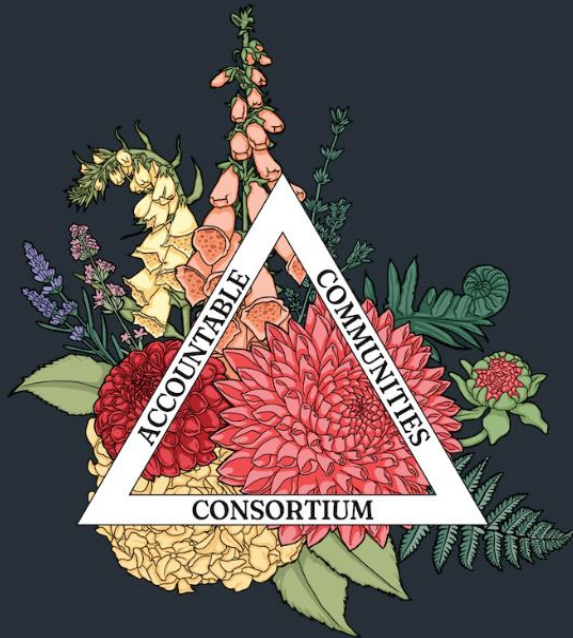
- All Girl Everything Ultimate Program (AGE UP)
- Asian Counseling and Referral Services
- Gay City Youth Programming
- Powerful Voices
- API Chaya Youth Programming
- Goodfoot Arts Collective
- Coalition Ending Gender-based Violence Transformative Justice Program
- Community Passageways
- FEEST
- Creative Justice
- the Service Board
- Muslimah's Against Abuse Center Teen Awareness Program

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