Predicting Legal Resolutions in Domestic Violence Cases

Marny Rivera, André B. Rosay,
Darryl S. Wood, and Katherine TePas

Introduction

The adoption of such policies as mandatory arrest, pro-arrest, and no-drop prosecution has changed the arrest and prosecution practices in domestic violence cases. Pro-arrest refers to arrest being preferred, but not required. No-drop prosecution allows the prosecutor, with or without the cooperation of the victim, to decide if the evidence merits going forward. Prosecution and conviction practices were the focus of a meta-analysis by Joel Garner and Christopher Maxwell in *Criminal Justice Review* 34(1) in 2009. They looked at 135 published reports emphasizing prosecution and/or conviction of intimate partner and other forms of domestic violence. These researchers found that 34 percent of reports to law enforcement of intimate partner violence (IPV) were prosecuted, and 59 percent of arrests for IPV were prosecuted. Overall, 51 percent of prosecuted cases resulted in conviction. They concluded that prosecution for IPV was not rare, but acknowledged that prosecution rates varied considerably across jurisdictions. They also acknowledged that the data in their 2009 study did not provide enough

---

**HIGHLIGHTS
INSIDE THIS ISSUE**

- **An examination of attrition in criminal justice processing of cases of intimate partner violence against women (page 2).**

- **A summary of two sets of recommendations to reduce violence against women in Alaska (page 5).**

- **A look at the relationship between animal abuse and domestic violence (page 6).**

- **A comparison between leading causes of death in the U.S. and Alaska among different age groups (page 7).**

---

information to identify factors that predict prosecution and conviction of IPV. Identification of such predictive factors is important because these factors may explain jurisdictional variation in the prosecution of domestic violence cases, and may also suggest policies and practices for enhancing prosecution rates.

A recent analysis of prosecution for assaults in domestic violence incidents reported to Alaska State Troopers (AST or Troopers) found that prosecution rates in Alaska were even higher than the national average prosecution rates reported by Garner and Maxwell. Data from the study of assaults in domestic violence incidents reported to AST included detailed characteristics associated with these incidents, as well as prosecution data from the Alaska Department of Law. These data allowed for the computation of prosecution and conviction rates, as well as an analysis of characteristics predicting prosecution of domestic violence assaults. The results of those analyses are presented here following a summary of domestic violence statutes in Alaska and descriptive statistics for the characteristics examined as predictors of prosecution and conviction.

Summary of Alaska's Assault Statutes

The findings here come from a study of 1,281 Trooper reports (not including reports to local or municipal police) of assaults in domestic violence incidents in 2004 that resulted in at least one assault charge. Alaska's criminal code defines assault in terms of first, second, third, and fourth degrees (Alaska Statutes §§11.41.200, 11.41.210, 11.41.220, and 11.41.230). First, second, and third degree assault are class A, B, and C felonies, respectively, and fourth degree assault is a class A misdemeanor. The main

Table 1. Number of Cases by Stage, for Cases with only One Suspect and One Victim

Stage	N	% of reported	% of referred	% of accepted
Reported	1,095	100.0 %	—	—
Referred	874	79.8	100.0 %	—
Accepted	753	68.8	86.2	100.0 %
Convicted	591	54.0	67.6	78.5

Source of data: Alaska State Trooper data (2004)

distinctions between the degrees of assault relate to the level of intent and seriousness of resulting physical injury.

In this study we focus on assaults in domestic violence incidents between household members. *Household member*, as broadly defined in Alaska Statue §18.66.990, includes adults or minors who are current or former spouses, living together or who have lived together, dating or who have dated, engaging in or who have engaged in a sexual relationship, related to each other up to the fourth degree of consanguinity, related or formerly related by marriage, or who have a child together. Unrelated individuals residing together as roommates, and live-in caregivers, also fall under this definition.

The Sample

A subsample of 1,095 cases involving one victim and one suspect was used to conduct analyses to predict legal resolutions. Of the 1,095 cases, 874 (80%) were *referred* for prosecution and 753 (86% of referred cases) were *accepted* for prosecution. The conviction rate was 54 percent for reported cases, 68 percent for referred cases, and 79 percent for accepted cases. (See Table 1.)

Report Characteristics

Several report characteristics were examined as predictors of prosecution: time between the assault incident and the report

Attrition in Cases of Violence Against Women Reported to the Alaska State Troopers

Darryl S. Wood, André B. Rosay,
Marny Rivera, and Katherine TePas

The statutory requirement that arrests be made for all crimes involving domestic violence (Alaska Statute 18.65.530) is an important dimension of the state's efforts to reduce violent victimization occurring among intimate partners. This policy is rooted in research that suggests mandatory arrest has a specific deterrent effect in cases of misdemeanor assault committed by males against their female intimate partners. Although there is reason to believe mandatory arrest may reduce re-victimization in its own right, the impact of the policy upon further criminal justice system intervention is largely unknown. On the one hand, it is possible that caseload pressures make it difficult for prosecutors to continue with zero-tolerance in intimate partner violence (IPV) cases. But it is also possible that mandatory arrest sets the tone for continual rigorous enforcement of IPV assault cases throughout the remainder of the criminal justice process. In this article we consider police, prosecutor, and court decision-making about IPV cases initially dealt with by the Alaska State Troopers (AST or Troopers) in 2004.

Information gathered from AST and Alaska Department of Law (DOL) case files was analyzed for this article to examine IPV assault case processing decisions. Two basic types of analyses were conducted. We first charted the processing of IPV assault cases as they made their way from the Troopers through the court system. We also used commonly employed categories (i.e., Alaska Native vs. Non-Native and isolated location vs. non-isolated location) to determine if there were variations in the processing of IPV cases relative to the victims' race or geographic location. Together, these analyses allow us (1) to understand how likely it is that IPV assault cases from the Troopers' area of responsibility are fully prosecuted, and (2) to begin to determine if particular aspects of the criminal justice environment have an impact upon the likelihood that IPV assault cases are dealt with fully.

The results presented in this article allow us to consider the attrition of cases of IPV assault reported to the Troopers and prosecuted by the DOL. For our purposes here, *case attrition* refers to the manner in which criminal cases are screened out of the criminal justice process as they are considered at successive decision making points. By definition, for a specific offense type, the number of cases resulting in conviction is smaller than the number of prosecutions which, in turn, is smaller than the number of arrests. Put another way, the greater the proportion of cases screened out of the process, the higher the rate of case attrition.

This article focuses upon IPV rather than *domestic violence* because the former is more indicative of the particularly pernicious power-based relationship violence that police and prosecutors have perpetually struggled against and that has served as the impetus for mandatory arrest policies. Under Alaska state law (§18.66.990), domestic violence is inclusive of all violent offenses committed by one household member against another household member where *household members* are broadly defined to include individuals who are related to one-another through common ancestry or marriage, unrelated individuals who are roommates or live-in caretakers, and individuals who are or were intimate partners (i.e., suspects and victims involved together in marital, dating, and/or sexual relationships). From a conceptual standpoint, it makes sense to consider IPV assault separately because it is qualitatively different compared to other types of violence that fall under the umbrella of domestic violence (e.g., child abuse, elder abuse, teenage brothers engaged in fisticuffs) in terms of its etiology and in terms of the nature and severity of official responses.
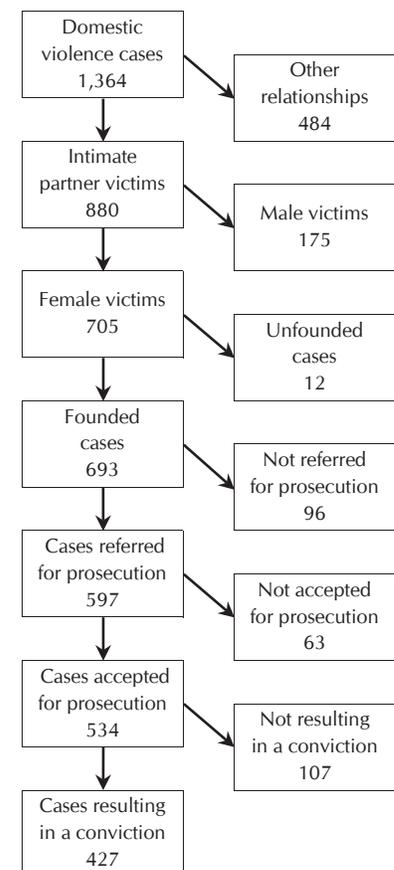
Likewise, the results presented below focus only on assault cases involving female victims because of the dissimilarities in the IPV assault committed against men compared to that committed against women. (IPV is not a purely heterosexual phenomenon. The analyses presented below include the cases of three women who reported being assaulted by their female partners.) Even though both women and men are violent toward one another when in intimate relationships, the character of women's violence against their male partners is substantially different than men's violence against their female partners in terms of its purpose and its potential for physical harm. Generally speaking, men are much more likely than women to employ physical violence in an instrumental fashion, using it as one method among many to maintain power and control over an intimate partner. Furthermore, the likelihood of physical harm is substantially higher in IPV assault against female victims relative to that of male victims because of the physiological differences between the sexes in terms of size and strength. Given these differences we would expect the victim's sex to have a differential impact on the probability that cases would be screened out during the criminal justice process.

Overall Attrition of IPV Cases

In Figure 1 we consider IPV assault cases reported to AST in 2004 as they made their way through the criminal justice process. First, we see that IPV assault cases made up a majority of the assaults classified as domestic violence. Roughly two-thirds of reported domestic violence cases (65%) involved an assault by one member of an intimate relationship against another member. The remainder of the domestic violence cases included victims and suspects that were connected by some other form of

Figure 1. Processing of Cases of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women Reported to the Alaska State Troopers, 2004

Domestic violence cases 1,364	Other relationships 484
Intimate partner victims 880	Male victims 175
Female victims 705	Unfounded cases 12
Founded cases 693	Not referred for prosecution 96
Cases referred for prosecution 597	Not accepted for prosecution 63
Cases accepted for prosecution 534	Not resulting in a conviction 107
Cases resulting in a conviction 427	

household membership. Of the IPV assault cases reported to police, the large majority (80%) involved a female victim.

Nearly all of the IPV assault cases against female victims that came to the Troopers' attention were *founded* (i.e., deemed to have actually occurred and classified as "crimes known to the police"). Less than two percent of the time was an IPV assault case against a female victim classified as unfounded after further investigation by AST. Some comparison figures are found in Alaska Department of Public Safety data, *Crime Reported in Alaska, 2004*. When compared to the founding rates for all assault cases reported to AST in 2004 regardless of victim-suspect relationship, IPV assault cases against female victims were more likely than simple assaults to be founded (87%) and just as likely as aggravated assaults to be founded (97%).

After establishing that an assault did occur, the next two steps in the process involve decisions about carrying a case forward for prosecution. An investigating Trooper first has to decide whether to refer the case to DOL and then, once referred, a DOL attorney has to choose to accept the case and proceed with prosecution. We see in Figure 1 that a large majority (86%) of IPV assault cases that were known to AST were referred to DOL for prosecution and a slightly larger proportion of those referred cases were accepted by DOL attorneys for further adjudication. Ultimately, of the cases that DOL attorneys accepted for prosecution, most (80%) resulted in a conviction.

To put these rates of prosecution and conviction into context, comparisons can be drawn with similar rates found for other U.S. jurisdictions as published in a recent meta-analysis by Joel Garner and Christopher Maxwell in *Criminal Justice Review* 34(1) in 2009. By any measure, it appears that there is substantially *less* case attrition for IPV assaults reported to AST than any other place in the U.S. where it has been studied. For example, across the studies considered by Garner and Maxwell, the proportion of IPV assault cases known to the police that were not accepted for prosecution was 72 percent. In comparison, only 23 percent of the IPV assault cases known to AST in 2004 were not accepted for prosecution. When the basis of comparison is acquittals per prosecutions, we see that DOL attorneys were much less likely to lose IPV assault cases than what has been reported elsewhere; only 20 percent of the IPV assault cases

prosecuted by DOL resulted in acquittal while, on average, half of the cases prosecuted elsewhere in the U.S. did not result in conviction. Overall, of the IPV assaults known to the police, the cases dealt with by AST and DOL were much more likely to result in conviction than what has been found in other U.S. jurisdictions. In 2004, 61 percent of all IPV assault cases known to AST ultimately resulted in a conviction whereas the average conviction rate for founded cases in Garner and Maxwell's meta-analysis was 14 percent. Comparatively speaking, the AST/DOL conviction rate in 2004 was four times greater than is typical in the U.S. With such an extreme difference, it is no wonder that the prosecution and conviction rates shown in Figure 1 rank among or above the highest rates found in individual studies reviewed by Garner and Maxwell. While the DOL rate of prosecuted cases resulting in conviction was surpassed in a few jurisdictions, the AST/DOL rate of prosecutions per founded case and the AST/DOL rate of convictions per founded case were higher than what was reported in any of the American studies considered by Garner and Maxwell. Based upon these comparisons, it is fair to say that the case attrition rate of IPV assaults dealt with by AST and DOL in 2004 was among the lowest anywhere in the U.S.

Comparisons of Attrition by Victim Race and Location

To consider disparities in prosecution rates, we made comparisons of case attrition in terms of the victims' race and in terms of the geographic location where the IPV assault took place. Given the scrutiny placed on the State of Alaska's response to violence against Alaska Native women in

rural villages (e.g., *AITC v. Alaska,* 110 P.3d 947, 2005 or Amnesty International's *Maze of Injustice*), these comparisons were made between the cases of Alaska Native and non-Native victims and between the cases that occurred in isolated villages versus cases that occurred in places that are less remote. These results have been used to argue that there is unequal enforcement by the State of Alaska in cases of IPV assault against Alaska Native women.

To test this assertion, we first examined the differences in case attrition of cases of Alaska Native victims compared to cases of non-Native victims. The first two rows of figures in Table 1 allow comparisons between the cases of female Alaska Native and non-Native IPV assault victims in terms of the proportion of all cases reported that were founded, that were referred for prosecution, that were accepted for prosecution, and that resulted in a conviction. With a lack of statistically significant differences between the two groups, it appears that Alaska Native victims' reports of IPV assault are just as likely as non-Native victims' reports of IPV assault to be founded and referred for prosecution by AST, to be accepted for prosecution by DOL, and to result in conviction in state court. In the third and fourth rows of Table 1 the two groups are compared in terms of the proportion of founded cases that resulted in referral for prosecution, acceptance for prosecution, and conviction. Although there was little difference between the referral and acceptance rates for founded cases reported by the two groups of victims, founded IPV assault cases against Alaska Native victims were actually more likely to result in a conviction relative to founded IPV

Table 1. Attrition of Cases of Intimate Partner Assault Against Women Reported to the Alaska State Troopers, Alaska Native vs. Non-Native Victims, 2004

Total possible cases		Number & percent founded		Number & percent referred		Number & percent accepted		Number & percent convicted	
Alaska Native	Non-Native	Alaska Native	Non-Native	Alaska Native	Non-Native	Alaska Native	Non-Native	Alaska Native	Non-Native
All cases reported									
333	372	325	368	275	322	251	283	213	214
100.0%	100.0%	97.6%	98.9%	82.6%	86.6%	75.4%	76.1%	64.0%	57.5%
Founded cases									
325	368			275	322	251	283	**213**	**214**
100.0%	100.0%			84.6%	87.5%	77.2%	76.9%	**65.5%**	**58.2%**
Referred cases									
275	322					251	283	**213**	**214**
100.0%	100.0%					91.3%	87.9%	**77.5%**	**66.5%**
Accepted cases									
251	283							**213**	**214**
100.0%	100.0%							**84.9%**	**75.6%**

Note: **B**old type indicates difference between Alaska Native and non-Native victims is statistically significant at the p < .05 level.

Attrition
(continued from page 3)

assault cases against non-Native victims. The fifth and sixth rows of figures in Table 1 let us compare the rates of acceptance for prosecution and conviction for those cases that were referred by AST to DOL for prosecution. Once again, the difference in the acceptance rates of referred cases was not statistically significant whereas the conviction rates of the referred cases of Alaska Native victims was higher than the referred cases of non-Native victims. A similar result is found in the bottom two rows of Table 1 in which a greater proportion of cases of Alaska Native victims that were accepted for prosecution resulted in conviction when compared to the corresponding proportion for non-Native victims. Overall, the results of Table 1 indicate that Alaska Native and non-Native IPV assault victims' cases are processed at similar rates and that the only exception is that IPV assault cases are more likely to result in a conviction when the victim is Alaska Native.

To consider the effect of geographic isolation on case attrition, we made comparisons in terms of whether the IPV assault occurred in a village that was difficult for AST to reach to conduct an investigation. Villages were considered isolated if they did not have a local AST post or if they could not be reached by the Troopers from a post via automobile. The results of these comparisons are made in Table 2. In many ways, the results for an isolated/non-isolated comparison mirror the results presented in Table 1 regarding the differences in the processing of Alaska Native and non-Native victims' cases. First, the results indicate that isolation did not have an effect on the proportion of cases that were founded or that were referred for prosecution. In other words, it appears that the difficulty of reaching a village to make an investigation did not make it less likely that an IPV assault case would be carried forward by AST to DOL for prosecution. Next, there is some indication that DOL is more likely to accept IPV assault cases that occurred in isolated villages as compared to those cases that occurred in non-isolated locales; we see in Table 2 that there was a statistically significant difference in the proportion of cases referred by AST that were accepted for prosecution and that it was the cases from the isolated villages that were least likely to be screened out at

that point. Finally, the results in Table 2 indicate that the conviction rate for cases that occurred in isolated villages was higher than for cases from non-isolated villages for all possible bases of calculation (i.e., convictions per reported case, convictions per founded case, convictions per case referred for prosecution, and convictions per case accepted for prosecution). Taken as a whole, it appears that the isolation of a village where an IPV assault occurs does not increase the likelihood of case attrition. If anything, these results indicate that IPV assault cases from isolated villages are not neglected by the State of Alaska but are instead more likely to be fully prosecuted.

Conclusion

Although Alaska's mandatory arrest law is the only policy specifically requiring official response to IPV cases, it appears that the law's spirit of full-enforcement guided other decisions regarding IPV cases as they continued through the criminal justice process in 2004. And while attrition still occurred in the IPV cases handled by AST and the DOL, it happened at a rate that was

substantially less than what has been found outside of Alaska. By most standards, the fact that at any given decision point there was less than a one-in-five chance that a case would be screened out of the criminal justice process is an indication that IPV is taken seriously in rural Alaska and that AST and the DOL are willing and able to deal with the cases brought to their attention. Furthermore, this appears to be as true for Alaska Native victims as it is for non-Native victims and it does not seem to be affected by the difficulties of travel to conduct investigations.

Darryl Wood is an Assistant Professor at Washington State University Vancouver. André Rosay is the Director of the Justice Center. Marny Rivera is an Assistant Professor of the Justice Center. Katherine TePas is a Program Coordinator with the Alaska State Troopers.

Table 2. Attrition of Cases of Intimate Partner Assault Against Women Reported to the Alaska State Troopers, Victims from Isolated vs. Non-Isolated Communities, 2004

Total possible cases		Number & percent founded		Number & percent referred		Number & percent accepted		Number & percent convicted	
Isolated	Non-isolated	Isolated	Non-isolated	Isolated	Non-isolated	Isolated	Non-isolated	Isolated	Non-isolated
All cases reported									
221	484	215	478	179	418	170	364	**149**	**278**
100.0%	100.0%	97.3%	98.8%	81.0%	86.4%	76.9%	75.2%	**67.4%**	**57.4%**
Founded cases									
215	478			179	418	170	364	**149**	**278**
100.0%	100.0%			83.3%	87.4%	79.1%	76.2%	**69.3%**	**58.2%**
Referred cases									
179	418					**170**	**364**	149	278
100.0%	100.0%					**95.0%**	**87.1%**	83.2%	66.5%
Accepted cases									
170	364							**149**	**278**
100.0%	100.0%							**87.6%**	**76.4%**

Note: **B**old type indicates difference between victims from isolated and non-isolated communities is statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Table 3. Prosecution and Conviction Rates for Cases of Intimate Partner Assault Against Women Reported to the Alaska State Troopers in 2004 vs. Rates Reported in National Meta-Analysis.*

Case source and outcome	AST/DOL rate	U.S. rate	Range of U.S. rates
Known assaults accepted for prosecution	77%	28%	3% to 62%
Prosecuted assaults resulting in conviction	80%	50%	8% to 99%
Known assaults resulting in conviction	61%	14%	4% to 31%

*Adapted from H. Garner, J.H. & Maxwell, C.D. 2009. Prosecution and conviction rates for intimate partner violence. *Criminal Justice Review*, *34* (*1*), 44-79.
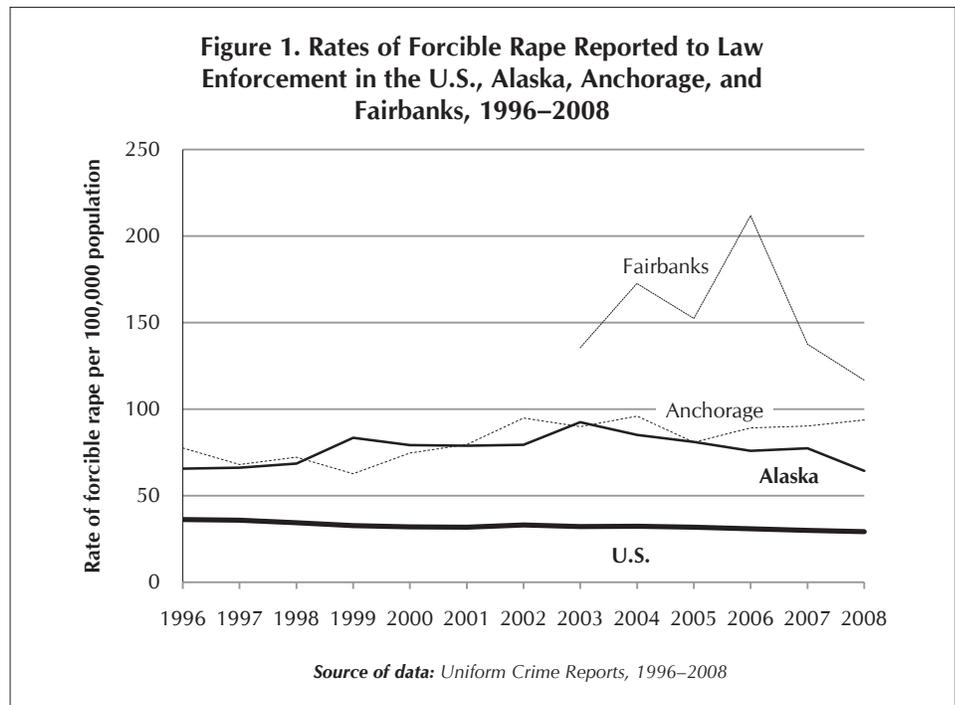
Reducing Violence Against Women in Alaska

Alaska has long been plagued by astonishingly high rates of violence against women. National statistics on forcible rapes reported to law enforcement provide one example. Relative to the average U.S. rate from 2003 to 2008, the average Alaska rate was 2.6 times higher, the average Anchorage rate was 2.9 times higher, and the average Fairbanks rate was 5.0 times higher. Alaska has the highest rate of forcible rape reported to law enforcement out of all U.S states. While changing these trends is a daunting task, several initiatives are currently being considered. In chronological order, they include recommendations from the Alaska Senate Judiciary Committee and initiatives from Governor Sean Parnell.

Alaska Senate Judiciary Committee Recommendations to Reduce Sexual Assault in Alaska

Four major areas are outlined in the recommendations: (1) getting better data on sexual assault, (2) increasing the number of successful prosecutions, (3) addressing the alcohol and sexual assault nexus, and (4) reducing recidivism by known sex offenders.

A brief summary of the recommendations follows:

- Improve data systems to track sexual assault cases statewide from report to conviction.
- Fund a victimization study to determine the actual rates of both reported and unreported sexual assaults.
- Increase the number of villages with local law enforcement through the Village Public Safety Officer (VPSO) program.
- Consider grant funding for local hospitals to provide qualified Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANEs) and continue to support the cost of existing programs.
- Review ways to increase the State Crime Lab's ability to process DNA evidence in a timely way.
- Continue to support, as a state, programs and policies to reduce alcohol consumption.
- Address alcohol use specifically, and its potential negative impact on personal safety, in education programs about sexual assault awareness and prevention.
- Continue to fund and expand Alaska sex offender management programs.
- Expand Alaska's Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force which locates offenders who are looking for victims using the internet.

Figure 1. Rates of Forcible Rape Reported to Law Enforcement in the U.S., Alaska, Anchorage, and Fairbanks, 1996–2008

Source of data: *Uniform Crime Reports, 1996–2008*

Governor Sean Parnell's Initiative to Reduce Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

Three major areas are outlined in the initiative: (1) putting abusers behind bars, (2) helping victims heal, and (3) preventing abuse.

A brief summary of the recommendations follows:

- Launch a public education campaign encouraging Alaska's men to "Choose Respect."
- Increase law enforcement presence in every community that desires it, with new Village Public Safety Officers (VPSOs) and Alaska State Troopers.
- Fund specialized domestic violence/sexual assault training across multiple disciplines.
- Toughen penalties for sexual assault crimes, and toughen guidelines for prosecutors.
- Strengthen sex offender registry requirements.
- Expand prisoner re-entry programs to reduce recidivism among offenders.
- Increase support for victims of abuse including funding for shelters and the availability of *pro bono* legal services.
- Create a position within the Alaska Department of Law to coordinate state,

federal, tribal, and non-profit domestic violence and sexual assault programs.

- Work with youth, community leaders, private sector, and religious organizations to raise awareness and develop prevention strategies.

For additional information, see the UAA Justice Center's violence against women webpage: (http://justice.uaa.alaska.edu/vaw/), the Alaska Senate Judiciary Committee's "Report and Recommendations: Reducing Sexual Assault in Alaska" (http://www.aksenate.org/french/101609_Senate_Judiciary_report_on_sexual_assault.pdf), and Governor Sean Parnell's "Choose Respect" Initiative (http://gov.state.ak.us/pdf/DVSA%20Fact%20Sheet%20final.pdf).

Visiting Faculty

Dr. Adrienne Freng, Associate Professor in the Department of Criminal Justice at the University of Wyoming, joins the Justice Center as Visiting Faculty for the Spring 2010 semester. Dr. Freng received her Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Her research areas include juvenile justice, gangs, Native American justice issues, and research methods. Dr. Freng's experience includes serving as a counselor in a group home for delinquent boys and as an intern probation officer.

Animal Abuse and Domestic Violence

Concern that acts of animal abuse are connected with or are predictors of domestic violence prompted a number of specific research studies in the 1990s. This early work focused on describing interviews with women in battered women's shelters and highlighted the frequency with which women reported abuse of pets by their partners. The interviews documented a high rate of pet abuse and appeared to indicate that animal abuse in the home and concern for pets affected *if* and *when* a woman sought assistance at a shelter—particularly because shelters did not normally accept pets.

As more attention was given to animal abuse and its impact in the context of domestic violence assaults, additional studies were undertaken. Frank Ascione discussed the limitations of some of these past studies in his article, "Emerging Research on Animal Abuse as a Risk Factor for Intimate Partner Violence" in the Civic Research Institute's 2007 publication, *Intimate Partner Violence*. He noted that although twelve different studies found (1) a high rate of pet ownership by domestic violence victims in shelters, (2) a substantial rate of children's exposure to pet abuse, and (3) clear indications that domestic violence victims' concern for pets affected their decision to stay in or leave a relationship with a batterer, more research is needed that includes women in domestic violence situations who have not chosen to go to a shelter, in addition to women in shelters. In response to the concern expressed by battered women for their pets, many areas developed "safe haven" programs for free fostering of pets of victims of domestic violence. Anchorage is currently the only area in Alaska with a "safe haven" program. It is administered by Friends of Pets, a local nonprofit animal welfare group, in collaboration with the Abused Women's Aid in Crisis (AWAIC) shelter. Another local nonprofit, the Eva Foundation Pet's Program, provides post-shelter transition services to domestic violence victims and their pets.

In addition, since 2006 ten states have enacted domestic violence protective orders covering pets: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Louisiana, Maine, Nevada, New York, Tennessee, and Vermont.

Research involving a larger sample population of women was reported by Ascione, et al. in 2007 in *Violence Against Women*, "Battered Pets and Domestic Violence: Animal Abuse Reported by Women Experiencing Intimate Partner Violence and Nonabused Women." The findings of this study agreed with earlier research about the high rate of pet abuse reported by victims of intimate partner violence (IPV). Responses showed that women in domestic violence shelters were nearly 11 times more likely to report that their partner had engaged in pet abuse than women who said they had not experienced intimate partner violence. This study again stressed the need for further research on co-occurring pet abuse and IPV with larger and more diverse populations, i.e., urban, suburban, and rural victims of intimate partner violence, as well as non-victims of IPV.

Catherine Simmons and Peter Lehman addressed some of these issues in a 2007 *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* article, "Exploring the Link Between Pet Abuse and Controlling Behaviors in Violent Relationships." In their study of 1,283 women who owned pets and were sheltered at an urban domestic violence center in Texas between 1998 and 2002, they concluded that "[m]en who abuse the family pet appear to be more dangerous than men who do not." The authors did not find that pet abuse was always a form of controlling behavior in incidents of domestic violence assault. However, they did conclude:

> Despite the limitations of this study, it is clear that animal cruelty is an important factor for domestic violence workers to address in assessment and treatment of both victim and perpetrator populations. Batterers who also abuse their pets are both more controlling and use more dangerous forms of violence than batterers who do not. Therefore, addressing whether pet abuse has occurred in the home can help workers in the domestic violence field better understand the behavior of the batterer and the overall risk they present to their partner.

Animal abuse is one factor in the complex dynamic of intimate partner violence, and can be used by law enforcement and domestic violence advocates in assessing risk. In 2008, the Anchorage Police Department (APD) began a program to target animal abuse and to look at its connection to domestic violence. Detective Jackie Conn was assigned as the liaison to the Anchorage Animal Care and Control Center and received training from the Law Enforcement Training Institute National Cruelty Investigations School and from the First Strike program developed by the Humane Society of the United States to raise awareness about the connection between animal cruelty and other violent crime. Detective Conn now trains APD personnel in recognizing animal abuse, and relating it to the possible presence of other types of abuse in the home. She works closely with Alaska Department of Law Assistant District Attorney Joan Wilson who is regularly assigned the prosecution of animal abuse

Further Reading about Animal Abuse and Domestic Violence

Arkow, Phil. (Summer 2007). "Expanding Domestic Violence Protective Orders to Include Companion Animals." *American Bar Association Commission on Domestic Violence ENewsletter* 8. (http://www.abanet.org/domviol/enewsletter/vol8/expertArkow.html).

Ascione, Frank R. (2007). "Emerging Research on Animal Abuse As a Risk Factor for Intimate Partner Violence." In Kathleen A. Kendall-Tackett and Sarah M. Giacomoni, editors, *Intimate Partner Violence*, pp. 3-1 – 3-17. Kingston, NJ: Civil Research Institute. (http://amrric.org/sites/default/files/docs/resources/Chapter%203%20Intimate%20Partner%20Violence%20Ascione.pdf)

Ascione, Frank R.; Weber, Claudia V.; Thompson, Teresa M.; Heath, John; Maruyama, Mika; and Hayashi, Kentaro. (Apr 2007). "Battered Pets and Domestic Violence: Animal Abuse Reported by Women Experiencing Intimate Violence and by Nonabused Women." *Violence Against Women* 13(4): 354–373. (http://vaw.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/13/4/354).

Ascione, Frank R.; Weber, Claudia V.; and Wood, David S. (1997). "The Abuse of Animals and Domestic Violence: A National Survey of Shelters for Women Who Are Battered." *Society & Animals: Journal of Human-Animals Studies* 5(3). (http://www.psyeta.org/sa/sa5.3/Ascione.html).

Faver, Catherine A. and Strand, Elizabeth B. (Dec 2003). "To Leave or to Stay: Battered Women's Concern for Vulnerable Pets ." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 18(12): 1367–1377. (http://jiv.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/18/12/1367).

Lockwood, Randall. (2006). *Animal Cruelty Prosecution: Opportunities for Early Response to Crime and Interpersonal Violence*. Alexandria, VA: American Prosecutors Research Institute. (http://www.ndaa.org/pdf/animal_cruelty_06.pdf).

Simmons, Catherine A. and Lehman, Peter. (Sep 2007). "Exploring the Link Between Pet Abuse and Controlling Behaviors in Violent Relationships." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 22(9): 1211–1222. (http://jiv.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/22/9/1211).

cases. For the period 2002–2009, 121 misdemeanor animal cruelty cases under Alaska Statute 11.61.140 and 11.61.145 were referred and 94 prosecuted. During the same period, one felony case was referred and prosecuted. Case statistics are also being compiled to better understand the relationship between domestic violence and animal abuse.

Leading Causes of Death

A look at recent data on leading causes of death in Alaska and the U.S. shows that malignant neoplasms (cancer) and heart disease rank as the top two causes. Although intentional self-harm (suicide) and assault (homicide) do not rank in the U.S. top ten leading causes of death, they have ranked as leading causes of death in Alaska for many years. A comparison of rankings of suicide and homicide as causes of death for specific age groups in Alaska and the U.S. reveals some similarities in trends.

In 2008 in Alaska, suicide was ranked number 6 among the top ten causes of death for the entire population. Suicide has been ranked number 5 or 6 consistently for the past decade. Homicide has been reported as the number 8 cause of death in 1999, number 10 in 2001, and number 10 again in 2007. The rankings for the leading causes of death by specific age group in Alaska show that suicide and homicide are in the top five for each age group up to the age of 44. In Alaska, and the nation as a whole, people aged 15–34 are more likely to die in an accident, at the hands of another, or by suicide, than by cancer or heart disease. For the period 2005–2007, suicide and homicide were the second and third leading causes of death for both 15–24 and 25–34 year olds. Suicide was the second leading cause of death for 35–44 year olds, and homicide was fifth. Among 45–54 year olds, suicide was the fourth leading cause of death.

Nationally, suicide and homicide are not among the ten leading causes of death according to the most current final data available: 2006. However, suicide ranked number 11 in causes of death for the overall population for 2006; homicide ranked 15.

In the U.S. in 2006, homicide and suicide were the second and third leading causes of death, respectively, for 15–24 year olds, while for 25–34 year olds, suicide ranked second and homicide third. Suicide was the fourth leading cause of death for 35–44 year olds, and the fifth leading cause for 45–54 year olds. These rankings mirror those of Alaska for those aged 15–44, where both suicide and assault were in the top five leading causes of death. Suicide was one of the top five causes of death for 45–54 year olds.

This high ranking of suicide as a cause of death for 15–44 year olds is also seen globally. According to the World Health Organization, suicide is among the top three leading causes of death in 15-44 year olds. For the worldwide population, the top two leading causes of death are coronary heart disease, and stroke and other cerebrovascular diseases.

The leading causes of death for the overall population continue to be related to diseases of the body; however, the growing rate of suicide among young people and the suicide rate among other age groups, as well as the rate of homicide, are the focus of national and international study and prevention programs.

Table 1. Five Leading Causes of Death by Age Group, U.S. (2006) and Alaska (2005–2007)

	U.S. (2006)			Alaska (2005–2007)			U.S. (2006)			Alaska (2005–2007)	
Rank	Cause	Deaths	Rank	Cause	Deaths	Rank	Cause	Deaths	Rank	Cause	Deaths
	0–4 years						**45–54 years**				
1	Congenital anomalies	6,334	1	Conditions originating in the perinatal period	68	1	Malignant neoplasms	50,334	1	Malignant neoplasms	328
2	Short gestation	4,841	2	Unintentional injury	49	2	Heart disease	38,095	2	Diseases of the heart	204
3	Unintentional injury	2,757	3	Congenital malformations	43	3	Unintentional injury	19,675	3	Unintentional injury	184
4	SIDS	2,323	4	SIDS	18	4	Liver disease	7,712	4	Intentional self-harm (suicide)	78
5	Maternal pregnancy complications	1,683	5	Assault (homicide)	7	5	Suicide	7,426	5	Chronic liver disease and cirrhosis	59
	5–14 years						**55–64 years**				
1	Unintentional injury	2,258	1	Unintentional injury	48	1	Malignant neoplasms	101,454	1	Malignant neoplasms	546
2	Malignant neoplasms	907	2	Congenital malformations	6	2	Heart disease	65,477	2	Diseases of the heart	309
3	Homicide	390	3	Malignant neoplasms	5	3	Chronic lower respiratory disease	12,375	3	Unintentional injury	93
4	Congenital anomalies	344	4	Intentional self-harm (suicide)	4	4	Unintentional injury	11,446	4	Chronic lower respiratory diseases	73
5	Heart disease	253	5	Assault (homicide)	3	5	Diabetes mellitus	11,432	5	Diabetes	69
			5	Diseases of the heart	3						
	15–24 years						**65+ years**				
1	Unintentional injury	16,299	1	Unintentional injury	150	1	Heart disease	510,542	1	Malignant neoplasms	1,347
2	Homicide	5,717	2	Intentional self-harm (suicide)	101	2	Malignant neoplasms	387,515	2	Diseases of the heart	1,249
3	Suicide	4,189	3	Assault (homicide)	34	3	Cerebrovascular	117,010	3	Cerebrovascular diseases	390
4	Malignant neoplasms	1,664	4	Malignant neoplasms	14	4	Chronic lower respiratory disease	106,845	4	Chronic lower respiratory diseases	358
5	Heart disease	1,076	5	Diseases of the heart	10	5	Alzheimer's disease	71,660	5	Alzheimer's disease	179
	25–34 years						**Total population**				
1	Unintentional injury	14,954	1	Unintentional injury	162	1	Heart disease	631,636	1	Malignant neoplasms	2,341
2	Suicide	4,985	2	Intentional self-harm (suicide)	72	2	Malignant neoplasms	559,888	2	Diseases of the heart	2,055
3	Homicide	4,725	3	Assault (homicide)	29	3	Cerebrovascular	137,119	3	Unintentional injury	979
4	Malignant neoplasms	3,656	4	Malignant neoplasms	19	4	Chronic lower respiratory disease	124,583	4	Cerebrovascular diseases	506
5	Heart disease	3,307	5	Diseases of the heart	17	5	Unintentional injury	121,599	5	Chronic lower respiratory diseases	467
	35–44 years										
1	Unintentional injury	17,534	1	Unintentional injury	161						
2	Malignant neoplasms	13,917	2	Intentional self-harm (suicide)	85						
3	Heart disease	12,339	3	Malignant neoplasms	82						
4	Suicide	6,591	4	Diseases of the heart	68						
5	HIV	4,010	5	Assault (homicide)	26						
			5	Chronic liver disease and cirrhosis	26						

Homicide   Suicide

Source of data: National Vital Statistics System, National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control (2006); Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics (2005–2007)

Table 2. Coding for and Frequencies of Report Characteristics Predicting Legal Resolutions

Variables	Reports N	%	Variables	Reports N	%
Time to report			**Time to case closure**		
One or more days = 0	175	16.1 %	Twenty or more days = 0	538	49.2 %
Zero days (day of incident) = 1	914	83.9	Zero through median of 19 days = 1	555	50.8
Person reporting the assault			**Total charges per report**		
Victim = 0	639	58.4 %	One = 0	659	60.2 %
Other = 1	456	41.6	More than one = 1	436	39.8
Detachment			**Number of witnesses per report**		
Other (A, E, or I) = 0	190	17.4 %	Zero = 0	464	42.4 %
B, C, or D = 1	905	82.6	One or more = 1	631	57.6
First agency notified					
AST = 0	870	79.5 %			
VPSO, VPO, local police or other = 1	225	20.5			

Source of data: Alaska State Trooper data (2004)

DV cases
(continued from page 1)

of the incident to law enforcement, person reporting the assault, Trooper detachment area receiving the report, agency reported to, time to case closure, total charges per report, and number of witnesses per report. The majority of cases (84%) were reported on the same day as the incident and the victim reported the incident in 58 percent of cases. Most reports (83%) were made in Trooper detachments B (Southcentral Alaska), C (Western Alaska), or D (Interior Alaska). In

80 percent of cases, AST was the first agency notified of the domestic violence assault. In the remaining 21 percent of cases the report was most often received by a Village Public Safety Officer (VPSO) or Village Police Officer (VPO), and less often by a local police department. (Percentages may total to more than 100% due to rounding.) Over half (51%) of the cases were closed between zero and 19 days (the median time to closure for all cases). The majority of domestic violence assaults (60%) involved a single charge, and in 58 percent of cases there was only one witness. (See Table 2).

Victim Characteristics

In over half of the cases, the victim was Caucasian (52%) and under 32 years of age (52%). The victim was female in 73 percent of the cases. Most victims (66%) did not use alcohol or drugs prior to the assault in domestic violence incident. Seventy-three percent of the victims contacted no one prior to reporting the assault to law enforcement. In the majority of cases (96%), the victim was present upon Trooper arrival. The victim was interviewed in 97 percent of cases, and most victims (86%) cooperated with the AST investigation. In 60 percent of cases victims suffered documented injuries as a result of the assault in domestic violence incident, but in 40 percent of cases victims did not suffer injuries or their injuries were not documented in the report. (See Table 3.)

Suspect Characteristics

Just over half of the suspects (52%) were Caucasian. Seventy-nine percent were male and 52 percent were in the 12 to 32 years age group. Fifty-eight percent of suspects used alcohol or drugs prior to the assault. Most suspects (77%) were present upon the Trooper's arrival at the scene and were interviewed as part of the Trooper's investigation. The suspect admitted guilt or gave a full confession in 57 percent of cases. In 7 percent of cases the suspect was known to have violated a Domestic Violence Protection Order (DVPO), conditions of release, or conditions of probation. (See Table 4.)

Victim-Suspect Characteristics

In terms of victim-suspect relationship, 67 percent of assaults in domestic violence

Table 3. Coding for and Frequencies of Victim Characteristics Predicting Legal Resolutions

Variables	Reports N	%	Variables	Reports N	%
Race of victim			**Present upon Trooper arrival**		
Minority = 0	527	48.1 %	No = 0	43	3.9 %
Caucasian = 1	568	51.9	Yes = 1	1,038	96.1
Victim gender			**Victim was interviewed**		
Male = 0	802	26.6 %	No = 0	32	2.9 %
Female = 1	290	73.4	Yes = 1	1,056	97.1
Age of victim			**Victim cooperated with Troopers**		
33 or older = 0	520	47.9 %	No = 0	151	14.1 %
Infant to 32 = 1	566	52.1	Yes = 1	920	85.9
Victim used alcohol or drugs			**Victim suffered injuries**		
No = 0	687	66.1 %	No = 0	439	40.1 %
Yes = 1	353	33.9	Yes = 1	656	59.9
Victim consulted someone prior to assault					
No = 0	794	73.1 %			
Yes = 1	292	26.9			

Source of data: Alaska State Trooper data (2004)

Table 4. Coding for and Frequencies of Suspect Characteristics Predicting Legal Resolutions

Variables	Reports N	Reports %	Variables	Reports N	Reports %
Race of suspect			**Present upon Trooper arrival**		
Minority = 0	530	48.4 %	No = 0	249	23.0 %
Caucasian = 1	565	51.6	Yes = 1	835	77.0
Suspect gender			**Suspect was interviewed**		
Female = 0	234	21.4 %	No = 0	248	22.7 %
Male = 1	860	78.6	Yes = 1	843	77.3
Age of suspect			**Suspect admitted guilt or gave a full confession**		
12 to 32 = 0	560	51.5 %	No = 0	360	42.8 %
33 and older = 1	527	48.5	Yes = 1	481	57.2
Suspect used alcohol or drugs			**Suspect violated DVPO, conditions of release, or probation**		
No = 0	415	42.0 %	No = 0	1,012	92.7 %
Yes = 1	574	58.0	Yes = 1	80	7.3

Source of data: *Alaska State Trooper data (2004)*

Table 5. Coding for and Frequencies of Victim-Suspect Characteristics Predicting Legal Resolutions

Variables	Reports N	Reports %
Nature of relationship		
Other family = 0	357	32.7 %
Intimate partners = 1	763	67.3
Living arrangements		
Common = 0	802	75.3 %
Separate = 1	263	24.7
Victim suspect race combination		
Intraracial = 0	925	84.6 %
Interracial = 1	169	15.4
Victim suspect age combination		
Intraage group = 0	447	41.2 %
Interage group = 1	638	58.8

Source of data: *Alaska State Trooper data (2004)*

incidents involved intimate partners while 33 percent involved other family members. Victims and suspects shared common living arrangements in 75 percent of cases. Most assaults in domestic violence incidents (85%) were intraracial—that is between a victim and a suspect of the same race—and 15 percent of cases were interracial—between persons of different races. In 59 percent of cases the victim and suspect were in a different age group. (See Table 5.)

Incident Characteristics

A number of incident characteristics were examined as predictors of prosecution. In 64 percent of cases the victim and suspect came into contact by invitation (either from the victim or the suspect) while in 36 percent of cases the suspect made a forced entry. In 41 percent of cases, a child was present at the time of the assault in domestic violence incident. Suspects used a weapon in five

percent of cases. Twenty-eight percent of victims responded aggressively to the domestic violence assault. Victims remained at the scene following 75 percent of assaults in domestic violence incidents. Alcohol and/or drug use was a reported precipitating factor that led to the assault in domestic violence incident in 22 percent of cases, and jealousy was a reported precipitating

Table 6. Coding for and Frequencies of Incident Characteristics Predicting Legal Resolutions

Variables	Reports N	Reports %	Variables	Reports N	Reports %
Method of contact			**Precipitating factors 1**		
By invitation = 0	93	63.7 %	Not alcohol or drugs = 0	743	77.9 %
Forced entry = 1	53	36.3	Alcohol or drugs = 1	211	22.1
Child present			**Precipitating factors 2**		
No = 0	487	59.0 %	Not jealousy = 0	824	86.4 %
Yes = 1	338	41.0	Jealousy = 1	130	13.6
Use of any weapon			**Location of assault**		
No = 0	1,032	95.5 %	Public = 0	139	12.9 %
Yes = 1	49	4.5	Private = 1	939	87.1
Victim response characteristics 1			**Physical assault**		
Not aggressive = 0	772	72.1 %	No = 0	120	11.0 %
Aggressive = 1	298	27.9	Yes = 1	967	89.0
Victim response characteristics 2			**Any stalking behavior**		
Stayed = 0	802	74.5 %	No = 0	1,022	93.3 %
Left = 1	275	25.5	Yes = 1	73	6.7

Source of data: *Alaska State Trooper data (2004)*

DV cases
(continued from page 9)

factor in 14 percent of cases. The majority of assaults in domestic violence incidents (87%) took place in a private location and involved physical assaults (89%). Stalking behavior was reported in 7 percent of cases. (See Table 6.)

Predicting Legal Resolutions

Several characteristics of domestic violence incidents were examined as potential predictors of referral, acceptance for prosecution, and conviction: reports to law enforcement of the domestic violence incident, suspects, victims, victim-suspect relationships, and incidents. The analyses involved a three-phase procedure for each type of legal resolution (referral, acceptance, and conviction). In the first phase, individual characteristics within each category were analyzed as predictors of the three legal resolutions using bivariate logistic regression. In the second phase, significant individual predictors of legal resolutions in each category (reports, suspects, victims, etc.) were analyzed using multivariate logistic regression. In the third phase, characteristics found to be significant predictors from phase two, were analyzed across all five categories using multivariate logistic regression to produce a full model of predictors.

Referral

Characteristics that did not predict referral of cases for prosecution. The full model used to predict referral of cases for prosecution included several predictor characteristics found to be significant when analyzed with other characteristics from their respective categories (i.e., reports, suspect, victims, etc.), but not all of these were found to be significant predictors of referral when examined individually and included in the full model. Characteristics analyzed in the full model that did not significantly predict referral of cases for prosecution included: the person who reported the incident (victim or other), the first agency notified (AST, VPSO, VPO, or local police department), the total number of charges associated with the report (one or more than one), victim use of alcohol or drugs, victim injuries, the racial combination of the victim and suspect (intraracial or interracial), the victim's response characteristic (stayed or left the scene), the type of assault (physical or not physical), and precipitating factors to the assault in domestic violence incident (did or did not involve alcohol and/or drugs, did or did not involve jealousy).

Characteristics significantly predicting referral of cases for prosecution. The characteristics predicting referral of domestic violence incidents for prosecution are presented in order of greatest impact to least impact on referral. Each of these characteristics was found to significantly predict referral of domestic violence incidents for prosecution when the other predictive characteristics included in the model were held constant. Cases where

the victim was interviewed by a Trooper were 5.8 times more likely to be referred for prosecution than cases where the victim was not interviewed by a Trooper. Cases involving domestic violence incidents that took place between a suspect and victim who were intimate partners were 2.9 times more likely to be referred for prosecution than cases where the victim and suspect were not intimate partners (i.e., family members such as siblings, parent/child, or extended family, etc.). When the suspect was reported to have used alcohol or drugs prior to the domestic violence incident, cases were 2.5 times more likely to be referred for prosecution than in cases with no report of a suspect's use of alcohol and/or drugs. Cases that were closed relatively quickly (less than or equal to a median of 19 days) were 2.3 times more likely to be referred for prosecution than cases that took longer to close. Cases in which the victim and suspect lived together were 2.1 times more likely to be referred for prosecution than cases where the victim and suspect were not cohabiting. Cases with relatively older suspects (older than the mean of 32 years) were two times more likely to be referred for prosecution than cases with younger suspects. (See Table 7.)

Acceptance

Characteristics that did not predict acceptance of cases for prosecution. Characteristics analyzed in the full model that did not significantly predict acceptance of cases for prosecution included: the time between the incident and the report (one or more days or the same day on which it occurred), the first agency notified (AST, VPSO, VPO, or local police department), the suspect's use or non-use of alcohol or drugs, the victim's gender (female or male), the victim's race (minority or Caucasian), the victim and suspect relationship (intimate partners or other family), the victim and suspect's living arrangement (common or separate), and a precipitating factor to the assault in domestic violence incident (did or did not involve alcohol and/or drugs, did or did not involve jealousy).

Characteristics significantly predicting acceptance of cases for prosecution. The characteristics that significantly predicted whether cases were referred for prosecution were *not* the same characteristics that predicted whether referred cases were *accepted* for prosecution. Each of the following characteristics was found to significantly predict acceptance of domestic violence incidents for prosecution when the other predictive characteristics included in the model were held constant. One of the strongest predictors of acceptance

Table 7. Characteristics Significantly Predicting Referral for Prosecution

Variable	b	SE(b)	P	Exp(b)
Victim was interviewed	1.757	0.603	0.004	5.794
Intimate partner relationship	1.071	0.205	0.000	2.918
Suspect used alcohol or drugs	0.905	0.226	0.000	2.473
Time to case closure less than or equal to median	0.826	0.199	0.000	2.284
Common living arrangement	0.722	0.239	0.003	2.058
Suspect 33 years or older	0.707	0.203	0.000	2.028

Log Likelihood = 621.10; χ^2 = 117.10; p < .05.

Source of data: *Alaska State Trooper data (2004)*

Table 8. Characteristics Significantly Predicting Acceptance for Prosecution

Variable	b	SE(b)	P	Exp(b)
Suspect admitted guilt or gave a full confession	0.784	0.327	0.003	3.114
Total charges greater than one	0.988	0.351	0.005	2.686
Person reporting was not the victim	0.841	0.351	0.017	2.318
Victim suffered injury	0.839	0.324	0.010	2.315
Child was present	0.825	0.354	0.020	2.282
Suspect male	1.136	0.381	0.016	2.191

Log Likelihood = 243.91; χ^2 = 64.02; p < .05.

Source of data: *Alaska State Trooper data (2004)*

for prosecution was whether the suspect admitted guilt or gave a full confession. Cases where suspects admitted guilt or gave a full confession were 3.1 times more likely to be accepted for prosecution, and cases with relatively more charges (cases with more than one charge) were 2.7 times more likely to be accepted for prosecution than cases with only a single charge. When the initial report of domestic violence was made by a person other than the victim, cases were 2.3 times more likely to be accepted for prosecution. Cases in which the victim suffered injury were 2.3 times more likely to be accepted for prosecution than cases in which the victim did not suffer injury. Cases in which a child was reportedly present were 2.3 times more likely to be accepted for prosecution than cases with no report of a child's presence. If the suspect was male, the case was 2.2 times more likely to be accepted for prosecution than if the suspect was female. (See Table 8.)

Conviction

Characteristics that did not predict conviction. One characteristic analyzed in the full model that did not significantly predict conviction was the suspect's age (12 to 32 years *or* 33 years and older).

Characteristics significantly predicting conviction. The characteristics that predicted conviction in cases of domestic violence incidents included some characteristics that predicted referral and acceptance. It is important to note that the term "conviction" used in this article refers to *any* conviction for *any* charge (not necessarily a domestic violence charge), and includes plea bargains, guilty pleas, and convictions resulting from a bench or jury trial. Each of the following characteristics was found to significantly predict conviction of domestic violence incidents when the other predictive characteristics included in the model were held constant. Cases first reported to a VPSO, a VPO, or a local police department were 2.4 times more likely to result in a conviction than cases first reported to AST. Cases in which the suspect was reported to have used alcohol or drugs prior to the domestic violence incident were 2.3 times more likely to result in conviction than cases with no report of a suspect's alcohol or drug use. Cases were 1.8 times more likely to result in a conviction if there was more than one charge involved, or if the suspect admitted guilt or gave a full confession. (See Table 9.)

Conclusion

Based on our analyses, a number of

Table 9. Characteristics Significantly Predicting Conviction				
Variable	b	SE(b)	P	Exp(b)
Reported to VPSO, VPO, or other	0.862	0.363	0.018	2.367
Suspect used alcohol or drugs	0.841	0.230	0.000	2.319
Total charges greater than one	0.584	0.237	0.014	1.794
Suspect admitted guilt or gave a full confession	0.561	0.228	0.014	1.752

Log Likelihood = 93.21; χ^2 = 33.57; p < .05.

Source of data: *Alaska State Trooper data (2004)*

report, victim, suspect, victim-suspect, and incident characteristics predict prosecution of assaults in domestic violence incidents reported to AST. The identification of these characteristics creates an opportunity to modify policy and/or practice in a way that enhances prosecution of these types of assaults. In the development of policy and/or practice changes, the impact of characteristics predicting prosecution at *each level* (referral, acceptance, and conviction) is equally important to consider: cases must progress through the initial stages of prosecution in order to result in conviction. Therefore, the majority of characteristics that predicted conviction also predicted acceptance or referral of cases.

The presence of certain characteristics seemed to increase the gravity of a case and heighten the likelihood of prosecution. Cases more likely to be prosecuted include those in which the victim was injured, there was more than one charge, and/or the report to law enforcement was made by someone other than the victim. Policies for investigation of assaults in domestic violence incidents should ensure extensive documentation of victim's injuries, corroboration of the victim's description of events, and discovery of all associated, justified charges. A victim's injuries and a report by someone other than the victim can corroborate the victim's description of events. Victim interviews and suspect admission of guilt also made prosecution more likely. Rates of victim interviews by Troopers were high (97%), but additional efforts could be made to interview a larger percentage of known suspects. (77% of suspects were interviewed.) It is important to train law enforcement officers to conduct thorough suspect interviews and interrogations and to employ reliable interviewing techniques that encourage suspects to admit guilt or give a full confession.

Other cases more likely to result in prosecution involved suspects who used alcohol or drugs prior to the assault in domestic violence incident. Therefore, it is essential for Troopers to document suspects' substance use every time it is indicated. Also, cases involving male suspects and assaults

between intimate partners who live together were more likely to be prosecuted than other cases. As noted previously, the definition of domestic violence in Alaska statute covers a range of relationships. Troopers make arrests for assaults in domestic violence incidents where the victim-suspect relationship is one of several identified in the statute. However, it is more likely that domestic violence assaults between intimate partners who live together will be prosecuted than assaults between persons involved in other statutorily defined relationships. This may suggest a tendency on the part of prosecutors to view intimate partner domestic violence as an offense warranting more urgent prosecution

UAA UNIVERSITY *of* ALASKA ANCHORAGE

Alaska Justice Forum
Justice Center
University of Alaska Anchorage
3211 Providence Drive
Anchorage, AK 99508

Return service requested

DV cases
(continued from page 11)

than other forms of domestic violence.

In terms of conviction, assaults in domestic violence incidents that took place in communities with a VPSO or a VPO had a greater likelihood of resulting in conviction than other cases. This supports similar findings identifying predictors of prosecution and conviction in sexual assault cases reported to AST, as well as findings noted by Wood, et al. (see "Attrition in Cases of Violence Against Women Reported to the Alaska State Troopers" in this issue), and findings by Wood and Rosay (see "Case Attrition of Sexual Violence Offenses:

Empirical Findings" in the Spring/Summer 2008 issue of the *Alaska Justice Forum*). Increased likelihood of prosecution and conviction for cases first reported to a VPSO or a VPO highlights the importance of the VPSO and VPO programs. This finding suggests that the resources provided by these first responders (i.e., reduced response time and enhanced investigation) increases conviction of assaults in domestic violence incidents. The impact of VPSO and VPO programs on conviction, as well as factors that make intimate partner violence different from other forms of domestic violence, should be examined further. Additional studies could assist in better understanding the variation in prosecution of domestic

violence assault cases and the policies and practices that enhance prosecution and conviction rates.

Marny Rivera is an Assistant Professor of the Justice Center. André Rosay is the Director of the Justice Center. Darryl Wood is an Assistant Professor at Washington State University Vancouver. Katherine TePas is a Program Coordinator with the Alaska State Troopers.