Joseph A. Masters
Commissioner
Department of Public Safety
State of Alaska

André B. Rosay
Director
Justice Center
University of Alaska Anchorage

NCJA Evidence Based Policy and Practice in Action
West Regional Meeting
April 7 and 8, 2010
CHOOSE RESPECT
Alaskans Ending the Epidemic of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
Alaska State Trooper Detachments

Source: http://www.dps.state.ak.us/maps.aspx
Summary of Research Base

• Strong researcher-practitioner partnerships funded by:
  • Alaska Department of Public Safety
  • Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
  • National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice
  • University of Alaska Anchorage

• Work collaboratively to define and execute research

• Most importantly, rely on each other’s strengths for dissemination and to impact policy and practice
Sexual Assault Case Processing

Sexual Assault Case is Reported to Law Enforcement

46% are Referred

28% are Accepted

22% Result in a Conviction

Data include 989 sexual assaults reported to Alaska State Troopers in 2003 and 2004.
Assaults involving Domestic Violence

Domestic Violence Case is **Reported** to Law Enforcement

- 80% are **Referred**
- 68% are **Accepted**
- 54% Result in a **Conviction**

Data include 1,281 assaults involving domestic violence reported to Alaska State Troopers in 2004.
Factors that Impact Investigation Difficulty

- Many victims are young
  - 80% of sexual assault victims were under 21
  - 24% of domestic violence victims under 21

- Many suspects are family members
  - 35% of sexual assault victims were assaulted by family members
  - 91% of domestic violence victims were assaulted by family members

- Many victims and suspects have used alcohol
  - 27% of victims and 43% of suspects used alcohol in sexual assault cases
  - 32% of victims and 57% of suspects used alcohol in domestic violence cases
Age of Sexual Assault Victims

Number of Sexual Assaults Reported to AST by Victim Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Number of Reports</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 to 5</td>
<td>112 (11%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 12</td>
<td>268 (25%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 to 15</td>
<td>303 (29%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 to 17</td>
<td>91 (9%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 to 20</td>
<td>74 (7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 to 30</td>
<td>101 (10%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 or older</td>
<td>110 (10%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Victim-Suspect Age Combinations

Five Most Common Age Combinations in AST Sexual Assault Cases (48%):

1. Victims 0-12 years old, suspects 31+ years old
2. Victims 13-15 years old, suspects 16-20 years old
3. Victims 13-15 years old, suspects 21-30 years old
4. Victims 13-15 years old, suspects 31+ years old
5. Victims 31+ years old, suspects 31+ years old
Importance of Data and Research

• Data can correct misconceptions:
  • Cases from rural areas are NOT less likely to be prosecuted

• Data can identify why investigations are difficult:
  • victim age, alcohol use, and relationship to suspect
  • Unfortunately, there is nothing that reactive law enforcement responses can do about these factors

• More importantly, research can identify how we can overcome difficulties in investigation

• As a result, we are no longer in a position to request money because we have a problem. We are now in a position to request money because we have solutions.
Village Public Safety Officer Presence

- A solution to sexual assault and domestic violence that is data-driven and research-supported

- Reduces rates of serious injury caused by assault by 40%

- Increases likelihood of prosecution in sexual assault cases by 3.5 times

3/13/09 graduation; photo courtesy Alaska State Troopers
Governor Parnell’s Initiative

- Public education and prevention to promote a culture of respect that does not tolerate violence against women and children
- Deter, segregate and manage sex offenders
- Ensure victims have a safe place to go and the services they need to heal

Source: http://gov.alaska.gov/parnell/priorities/choose-respect.html
Governor Parnell’s Initiative

• Establish a law enforcement presence in every community that desires one to improve public safety:
  
  – 15 new Village Public Safety Officers (VPSOs) every year for 10 years

• Coordinate and streamline effort among all stakeholders to more effectively combat violence against women and children

Source: http://gov.alaska.gov/parnell/priorities/choose-respect.html
American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

- FY09 Recovery Act Justice Assistance Grant (JAG)

- Five state troopers
  - 1 trooper investigator in technical crimes unit (internet crimes against children)
  - 4 trooper investigators (2 in Palmer and 2 in Fairbanks)

- One administrative assistant

- One prosecuting attorney to Department of Law

- Increase successful prosecution of sexual assault, sexual abuse and internet crimes against children
Using Data to Develop and Define Initiatives

- Agency acknowledgement and understanding that research is critical to developing policies and informing practice
- Recognition of value of research by key stakeholders and administrators
- Participating in research development and dissemination
- Willingness to be evaluated (critiqued)
Using Data to Develop and Define Initiatives

- Key findings from UAA research partnerships aided in defining key aspects of Governor Parnell’s initiative

- Conviction rates are often low
- High rate of child victimization
- Investigations are often difficult:
  - Alcohol use
  - Age of victims
- Having the time and resources for investigation makes a difference!

- “Sexual assault cases with adult victims that were originally reported to police paraprofessionals (e.g. VPSOs) were 3.5 times more likely to be prosecuted than sexual assault cases originally reported directly to the troopers.”
New Researcher-Practitioner Partnership

- Support the governor’s initiative to end the epidemic of sexual assault and domestic violence and to make Alaska the national leader in fighting these scourges

- Perform a comprehensive evaluation of the impact of VPSOs on the public safety and health of Alaska Native communities

- Build and enhance strong partnerships, where researchers and practitioners work together and learn from each other

- Document and evaluate relevant accounts of the researcher-practitioner collaboration

For information, contact Brad Myrstol (bmyrstol@uaa.alaska.edu)
Statewide Victimization Survey

• Modeled after the CDC National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Surveillance System (NISVSS) survey

• Designed to generate accurate and reliable estimates of:
  • Intimate partner violence (physical aggression, psychological aggression, and sexual violence)
  • Sexual violence (unwanted sexual situations, abusive sexual contact, completed or attempted sex without consent)
  • Stalking

• Designed as a statewide and local surveillance system that facilitates the evaluation of DV/SA initiatives

• Can examine what causes differences in reported rates:
  • Differences in victimization and/or in reporting
Critical Partners for Governor’s Initiative

- Alaska Department of Public Safety
- Alaska Department of Law
- Alaska Department of Corrections
- Alaska Department of Health and Social Services
- Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
- Alaska Native Justice Center
- Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium
- Victims Service Providers (Tundra Women’s Coalition)
- Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
- University of Alaska Anchorage Justice Center
Sustainment Strategy

- Support from public and private sectors:
  - Governor Parnell and Commissioners
  - Legislators

- Budgeted funds for programs/services, research/evaluation
  - Replacing federal funds with state general funds (GF)
  - Governor’s request for initiative evaluation funding
  - Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
    - Statewide victimization survey (UAA Justice Center)
    - Victim service programs

- Maintain ability to seek and apply for grant funds
- Maintain established relationships with UAA Justice Center
Benefits of Research

- Informed policy and practice
  - Resource allocation (staffing and equipment)
  - Improvement of training

- Research based data necessary for:
  - Advocacy at state and local government levels
  - Obtaining grant funding

- Position statements to the general public regarding our issues
  - Aids development
  - Provides definitions

- Opens communication between state and private sectors
Acknowledgments

Research in this presentation was funded by:

- Alaska Department of Public Safety
- University of Alaska Anchorage
- Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
- National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice

Points of view in this presentation are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the Alaska Department of Public Safety, the University of Alaska Anchorage, the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, or the U.S. Department of Justice.