

2-22-19

Strangulation Task Force Report to NM Crime Victims Reparation Commission from the NM Coalition Against Domestic Violence for NM CVRC VAWA Award #2018-WF-418, funding the expert national training of trainers, task force travel to meetings, and the provision of 21 trainings to law enforcement, SANE examiners, and medical facilities.

One of the greatest and most unexpected benefits from these trainings has been what they have meant for local communities throughout the state. Because our new strangulation law went into effect July 1, 2018 we put a lot of effort into reaching out to prosecutors, law enforcement and advocates who are such critical players. Where there were existing domestic violence/sexual assault CCR's or MDT's we trained all the members of these teams during their regular meeting and where there were no existing teams we encouraged District Attorneys to invite their local law enforcement and advocacy partners to the training they were hosting to encourage greater coordination in intimate partner strangulation cases going forward. This education, coordination and collaboration has already proven to be effective; one offender in a rural NM county has received a 15-20 year sentence for strangling his intimate partner, a truly rare occurrence. Our hope all along was that once professionals in local communities became trained that they would become the multidisciplinary experts in their area for the purpose of training, expert testimony, etc. I am happy to report that this is also happening. After the Santa Fe DA's office and the police department attended a STOP funded training together they committed to improving their response to cases of intimate partner strangulation by sending their own multidisciplinary team to the advanced training in San Diego and then changing their policies so that they now work together on these cases in a more trauma informed manner.

The STOP funding provided for these multi-disciplinary trainings (21) has been invaluable to New Mexico. When we began this effort to educate New Mexico professionals about the lethality of intimate partner strangulation and the long term medical consequences for those who survive, the advocacy community had tried multiple times unsuccessfully to pass a statute criminalizing this behavior. Due in large part to the hard work and commitment of our fantastic team of trainers, I am happy to report that last March 2018 the New Mexico legislature unanimously passed a statute which added the definitions of strangulation and suffocation to our criminal code, family violence act and child abuse and neglect civil code. Once we passed this new law it was even more critical than ever to train as many first responders, law enforcement and prosecutors as possible on intimate partner strangulation and our trainers did not let us down. This funding has allowed us to provide trainings to multidisciplinary audiences of domestic violence and sexual assault advocates, law enforcement officers, prosecutors, counselors, social workers, housing advocates, medical professionals and many others. These trainings happened in rural communities such as Taos, Farmington, Clovis, Portales and Carlsbad as well as in larger urban communities such as Las Cruces, Albuquerque and Bernalillo Counties.