



Domestic Violence Services Assessment: Uintah County

Short Report



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Project Partners

Transforming Communities Institute (TCI)

The Utah State University Transforming Communities Institute (TCI) exists to bring Utahns together to build knowledge and create solutions for social issues that matter to their communities. TCI's approach to community engagement centers on the Framework for Collaborative Community Action on Health to address and create meaningful change with communities on issues they prioritize.

Uintah Basin Domestic Violence Coalition

The Uintah Basin Domestic Violence Coalition is a community-driven organization dedicated to addressing and combating domestic violence in the Uintah Basin region, which includes the areas of Uintah, Duchesne, and Daggett Counties, as well as the Ute Indian Tribe of the Uintah and Ouray Reservation. This organization comprises a diverse group of professionals who work collaboratively to raise awareness, provide survivor support, engage in professional networking, and implement preventive measures across the tri-county and reservation service areas. The efforts of the Uintah Basin Domestic Violence Coalition also helped to bring about the creation of Friends Against Family Violence, the area's domestic violence services provider.

Project Summary

Through this project, TCI collaborated with Uintah Basin Domestic Violence Coalition (UBDVC) and Friends Against Family Violence (FAFV), a nonprofit that provides domestic violence services in the Uintah Basin area, to conduct a human services assessment focused on domestic violence services in the Uintah County area during 2023.

Background

In Utah, recent data from Duchesne, Uintah, and Daggett counties – known as the Uintah Basin area – indicated higher than state averages in poor family management, family conflict in the home, family history of antisocial behavior (fighting, stealing, arrests, etc.), and guns in the home that are not locked (Utah Student Health and Risk Prevention [SHARP], 2021). Similarly, over the past two years, the domestic violence services provider for the Uintah County area – FAFV – has seen an increase in monthly averages in monthly crisis calls (27.2 to 37.17), monthly case management services (69.25 to 293.33), and monthly days of service (67.52 to 92.5). There has also been an increase in victims needing services outside of the shelter (7.1 to 20.83 monthly; FAFV, 2023).

Physical isolation due to lack of reliable and affordable internet services, transportation, and cultural and social norms further compound the difficulties faced in this rural community. Along with limited access, 11.9% of the population is considered to be living in poverty, as of 2022 (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.).

The Uintah Basin is also home to the Ute Tribe of the Uintah and Ouray Reservation. Approximately 7.5% of the population of Uintah County identify as American Indian or Alaska Native (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.).

Project Goals

- assessing available services related to domestic violence;

- identifying gaps in the domestic violence service network/coalition;
- uncovering organizational capacity issues in domestic violence organizations/services; and
- understanding the relationship and communication dynamics between domestic violence services.

Executive Summary

The two-phase research initiative offers a comprehensive examination of domestic violence service provider network from the perspectives of both providers and survivors.

Methodology

Phase 1: Online human services assessment survey that was distributed to local services providers (n=28). The goal of this survey was to ascertain the availability of DV resources, identify service gaps, and understand organizational dynamics within the service provider network.

Phase 2: Qualitative interviews with domestic violence survivors (n=14) to understand their experiences within the service network. Interviews focused on resource availability, service gaps, and barriers to accessing support.

Key Findings

Phase 1: There are several, robust service currently available in the area. There are, however, significant gaps in childcare services, transitional housing, and other specialized supports. Challenges also include funding, staffing, space, and inter-organizational communication.

Phase 2: Highlighted survivor experiences, emphasizing improved service availability, but still experiencing significant barriers to access. Barriers included: lack of awareness, negative interactions with law enforcement, and the need for more coordinated services between providers.

Strengths

- Comprehensive Service Availability
- Organizational Capacities and Collaboration

Areas of Growth

- Service Provision Gaps
- Organizational and Communication Challenges

Key Recommendations

1. Enhance Education and Awareness
2. Improve Service Access and Collaboration
3. Build Trust and Knowledge Among Service Providers
4. Continuous Evaluation and Adaptation

Phase 1 Summary

There are three research questions that the findings of Phase 1 informed.

- Question 1: What are the domestic violence resources available in Uintah County? What are the gaps in the domestic violence service network in Uintah County?
 - *Strengths*: According to service providers, all identified types of service are available to survivors of the area. This demonstrates the impact of the efforts already present in the area.
 - *Areas of Growth*: The two most needed services are childcare and transitional housing, which aligns with similar studies done in Utah (Fukushima, 2022). Beyond these two service areas, it was also indicated that increased awareness of services is also needed. This was noted by both survivors and service providers. This area of growth is also related to inconsistent communication between providers across the network and general communication of services to the community.
- Question 2: What are the organizational capacity issues in domestic violence services within Uintah County?
 - *Strengths*: Internal communication within organizations, as well as access to technology, training opportunities, and well-developed organizational structures and policies were indicated as strengths. All of the qualities support the efforts of each organization and have the potential to build capacity further for programming success and funding opportunities.
 - *Areas of Growth*: Inadequate funding and staffing were highlighted as the primary areas of growth, with some concern raised around external communication. Concerns surrounding funding tend to also impact the hiring and retention of staff, leading to inconsistency in both areas.
- Question 3: What are the communication dynamics between domestic violence service providers in Uintah County?
 - *Strengths*: Internal communication was a demonstrated strength as each individual organization. External communication was identified as being present, but not entirely effective. Most communication was occurring during joint meetings and trainings between organizations.
 - *Areas of Growth*: While there are strengths associated with external communication, there are still many aspects of growth surrounding external communication. Communication issues impact all other areas of service provision, as well as accessing services from the survivor perspective. Issues of territoriality and competition will continue to impact the service provider network if trust and authentic collaboration are not achieved.

Phase 2 Summary

Phase 2 was analyzed through Journey Maps and thematic analysis. The journey maps developed through the interviews highlighted three major findings:

1. System Entry & Referrals: Survivors mostly entered through interactions with law enforcement or therapeutic services who then referred them to other services in the area.
2. Role of Victims' Advocates: Victim advocates were involved in the journey of 12 of the 14 survivors. However, survivors were only referred to a victim advocate from either an organization or a friend/family member twice.

3. Available Services: Comparing services available/utilized by survivors who went through the service system in years past to those more recent demonstrates an increase in service diversity and availability.

Through thematic analysis, there were three themes that stood out:

1. Access, Referrals, & Collaboration
 - a. Survivors described providers as having professional behavior and being easy to connect with for services. Survivors described helpful, compassionate, and knowledgeable service providers that protected their privacy.
2. Perceptions of Law Enforcement
 - a. A challenge for many survivors was their interactions with law enforcement. Inconsistent referrals to resource and services made it difficult for survivors to access support after their interactions with law enforcement. Survivors also indicated a general distrust of law enforcement and had fears of retaliation with their involvement.
3. Solutions for Improvement
 - a. Survivors indicated several areas for improvement including:
 - i. Family member education on supporting survivors in their family
 - ii. General community education about domestic violence and recognizing the signs
 - iii. Increase advertising of available services
 - iv. Start a local domestic violence support group
 - v. Easy-to-read pamphlets and other resources

The findings of phase two highlighted one major strength, availability of services with professional and compassionate service providers. The availability of a more diverse service system was noted by many survivors, and those providers impacted them in a positive way when they were able to access services.

The main areas for growth, as identified in phase two, are focused on the knowledge of providers and the community about services available. Information on services needs to be updated and accessible to both populations. Survivors specifically were unable to speak to collaboration efforts between agencies, which is likely due to mistrust and misinformation about services. Through the interview processes, it was seen that education efforts across all levels of the community and service provider network are needed.

Conclusions

This two-phase initiative helped to understand domestic violence services from the provider and survivor perspectives with the goal to determine strengths and opportunities for change or improvement. Through this effort it was determined that there were two main strengths:

- Service Availability and Accessibility
- Organizational Capacity and Collaboration

These strengths highlight that there are a variety of services that survivors can utilize based on their needs, and the providers that they visit will have the organizational capacity to meet their needs. This also shows that the community has a commitment to addressing domestic violence within their community.

As for areas of growth, this two-phase approach determined the following three areas:

- Gaps in Service Provision
- Organizational and Network Challenges
- Barriers to Accessing Services and Law Enforcement Perceptions

These areas of growth demonstrate that there is a need for more coordinated efforts between service providers. More collaborative service provision and organizational engagement across a micro, mezzo, and macro intervention can positively impact the effectiveness of services that will better support survivor's journeys to safety and recovery.

Recommendations

As service providers move forward to address the concerns both from other providers as well as survivors, it is important to recognize that “a one-size-fits-all approach to addressing IPV in rural locales will likely be unsuccessful and underscores the need for intervention and prevention efforts that are tailored to the community’s stage of readiness to address intimate partner violence” (Edwards, 2016, pg. 368). To develop and create solutions that work for the Uintah County community, service providers must work together to find research-informed solutions that align with the needs of their community.

Based on the findings, there are four general recommendations that may be informative directions to head toward through this process.

1. Education and Awareness
2. Service Access and Collaboration
3. Increasing Trust and Knowledge of Service Providers
4. Ongoing Evaluation

For further description of these four recommendations, please read the full report.