

FINAL REPORT

STRATEGIC ALLIANCE TO END FAMILY VIOLENCE



FEBRUARY 2021



City of Tacoma
W A S H I N G T O N



Pierce County
Human Services

Strategic Alliance to End Family Violence Report

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Introduction

The City of Tacoma (City) and Pierce County (County) are partnering to strengthen family violence prevention services in Pierce County and improve coordination and delivery of domestic violence victim services through an integrated, client-centered service model.

The City and County are committed to supporting efficient and effective family and domestic violence prevention services, through systemic and continuous examination and improvement. The intended outcomes of this partnership are to:

- Assess efficiency and effective use of limited resources;
- Make recommendations to minimize or eliminate gaps and redundancies in service; and
- Coordinate delivery of domestic violence victim services through an integrated, client-centered service model.

The following steps have been taken to achieve the goals of the project:

- Engaged the Pierce County Commission Against Domestic Violence and other stakeholders;
- Indexed services offered across Pierce County;
- Developed flowcharts of system pathways for individuals and families;
- Analyzed City and County funding for domestic violence services and programs; and
- Surveyed clients and providers.

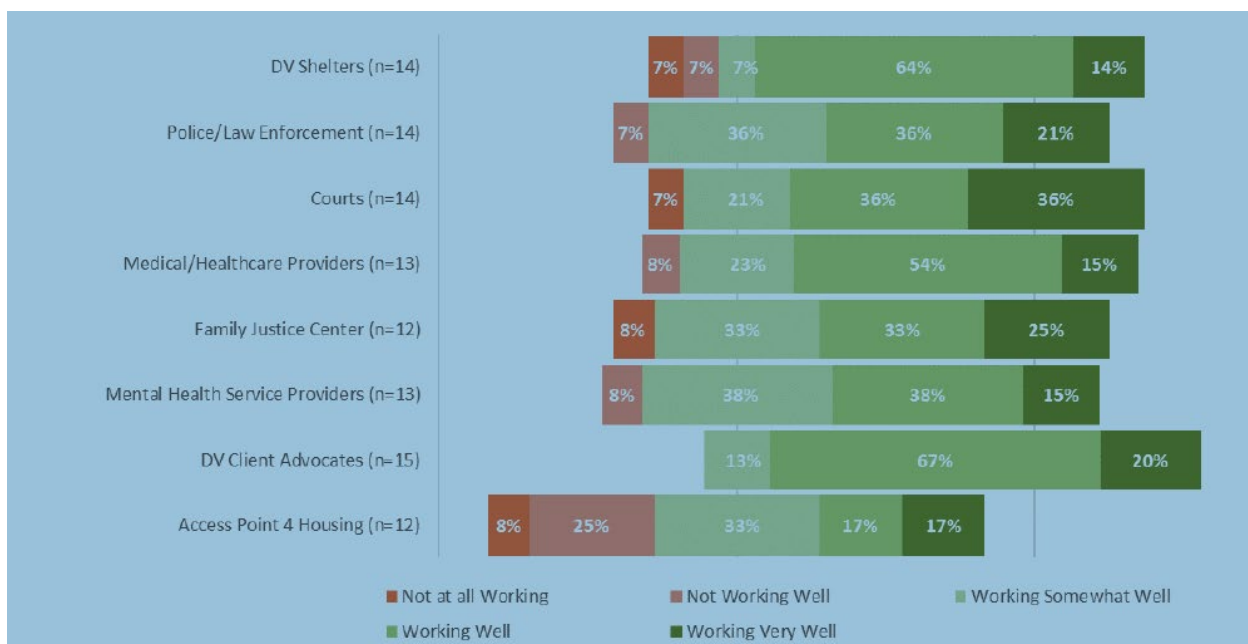
The last section of this report includes recommendations for how the County and City can more strategically and cooperatively align funding priorities to better serve victims and their families.

Section 1 - 2018 CITY OF TACOMA DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ASSESSMENT

In 2018, the City of Tacoma surveyed providers who offer services to victims and survivors of domestic violence across Pierce County. At the time, 17 different organizations in Pierce County provided services specifically designed for survivors of domestic violence.

Fifteen respondents were asked to rate collaboration with other providers with respect to their perception of how well it is working. In all but one case, the majority of survey respondents said that things are working well or very well. The outlier was regarding “Access Point 4 Housing” (now referred to as Coordinated Entry): while 34% said it was working well or very well, 33% said it was not at all working or not working well. The results are shown in Exhibit A below.

Exhibit A:



Forty-seven percent of survey respondents reported that domestic violence victims were very willing to access services related to food and other basic needs, and 41% were very willing to access transitional housing. Close to one-third of providers reported that domestic violence victims were very willing to access housing or transportation related services. Several survey respondents noted that domestic violence victims were, on average, less willing to access services related to mental health or chemical dependency treatment.

More than half the providers surveyed referred to decreased funding in the past five years, and reported that reductions in funding have made it difficult to retain adequate staff and exacerbated existing needs for several services, particularly case assessment. From the perspective of the provider community, given the increasing need for culturally competent staff, stable or diminished funding has meant that providers have had to do more with less.

In terms of race and ethnicity, survey data indicate that a relatively larger number of DV clients are non-white (51%) than represented in the population overall. Differences in the prevalence of domestic violence among individuals of different racial and ethnic backgrounds may also be related to the willingness of victims to disclose this violence. Social, demographic, and environmental factors play a role in this as well. Providers also cited underserved populations including transgender individuals, immigrants and refugees, especially undocumented immigrants, and people with limited English proficiency as affected by domestic violence.

Providers unanimously cited safe, stable housing as the highest priority need for domestic violence clients. Victims of domestic violence who want to leave abusive homes and establish new ones often face a difficult set of circumstances. When they can't find an affordable place to live, victims are often forced to return to violent homes. While providers cited a need for additional shelter capacity across the board, individuals with disabilities, mental or physical health challenges, undocumented immigrants, individuals with limited English proficiency, and individuals aged 17 and under with no guardians were specifically cited as underserved by the current system. Providers also reported that large families tend to be underserved because most shelters are configured to comfortably fit a maximum of four people in a family room/unit. For example, it would be challenging to find space for a mother with seven children, because she would need two rooms instead of the usual one.

Providers stressed the need for trauma-informed care and mental health services specifically tailored for domestic violence clients. A number of factors specific to domestic violence clients (need for safety, economic dependence on the perpetrator, presence of children) can impact both access to treatment and treatment outcomes. Consequently, mental health services that incorporate the specific needs of domestic violence clients are important.

Other needs identified:

- Providers serving immigrant clients experiencing domestic violence raised the need for transportation assistance, either through donated cars or driving lessons for their clients. Access to transportation can affect the ability to find and sustain jobs and safe, supportive housing options.
- Support for incarcerated and recently released survivors was cited as an important need by a few providers.
- Food and clothing were cited as needs by a couple of providers. Providers reported that domestic violence victims often arrive with few personal possessions other than the clothing on their backs, making basic needs such as clothing important.
- Several providers cited the need for childcare, since a substantial proportion of domestic violence victims are women with children

Since the City of Tacoma's Domestic Violence Assessment was completed in 2018, there have been nominal changes to the domestic violence system due to the impacts of COVID-19 and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines for social distancing¹.

Section 2 – SUPPORTING DATA CONSIDERED IN CREATING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS REPORT

1. 2019 Strategic Alliance Stakeholder Survey
2. 2020 Client Satisfaction Data
3. National Trends and Current Research in DV, including during the COVID-19 pandemic

2019 Strategic Alliance Survey

To supplement the City of Tacoma's 2018 domestic violence assessment, an additional survey was conducted to gain more in-depth knowledge of the current services from providers.

Pierce County and the City of Tacoma requested assistance from members of the Pierce County Coalition Against Domestic Violence to distribute the 2019 Strategic Alliance Survey to stakeholders. Overall, the survey represents a **small sample** (282 responses), with low response rates to most of the individual questions. Only about 23% of the survey respondents identified as clients (15% clients and 8% both provider and client).

The providers who responded are concentrated in Tacoma, suggesting a need for more investment in services outside Tacoma's city limits. **The most common need** again reported for victims of domestic violence **is safe and stable housing**. There is a strong reliance on informal support networks (family, friends, and coworkers) and a distrust of the judicial/legal systems.

Clients were reported as predominantly white (68%), with next largest groups reporting as black (45%), Hispanic/Latino (40%), and two or more races (43%). Most respondents' clients are ages 25-44 (78-83% of their clients), with the next largest client groups in the 18-24 age range (50%) and 45-54 age range (44%). Respondents reported 81% of clients are female.

Of the 83 respondents who answered the question, black and Hispanic clients appear to be over-represented as compared to their relative percentage of the Pierce County population. Yet, less than half (40%) of the providers who responded to the question report that their services are "equitable and inclusive." **This result suggests a need for further exploration of the availability, accessibility and appropriateness of services for these specific minority populations.**

When asked an open-ended question about what system improvements can and should be made in the domestic violence prevention system, respondents gave answers such as:

- Provide more affordable housing;
- Align and coordinate services;
- Improve services to ensure child safety;
- Provide more funding;
- Provide more domestic violence shelters; and
- Provide client-centered, trauma-informed care.

When asked how providers identify and address service needs, respondents indicated they:

- Seek client feedback;
- Provide trauma-informed care;
- Encourage client self-determination;
- Hire bilingual advocates;
- Analyze data;
- Develop toolkits with partners;
- Increase funding; and
- Create more efficiencies.

To stay apprised of best practices and innovative approaches to identifying service needs, respondents:

- Look to other providers;
- Think outside the box;
- Partner with state and national organizations;
- Attend conferences and training; and
- Use survivor feedback.

Respondents reported clients relied mostly on family and friends if they didn't turn to formal domestic violence resources when needed. Other sources of informal support indicated were coworkers and medical professionals.

2020 Client Satisfaction Data

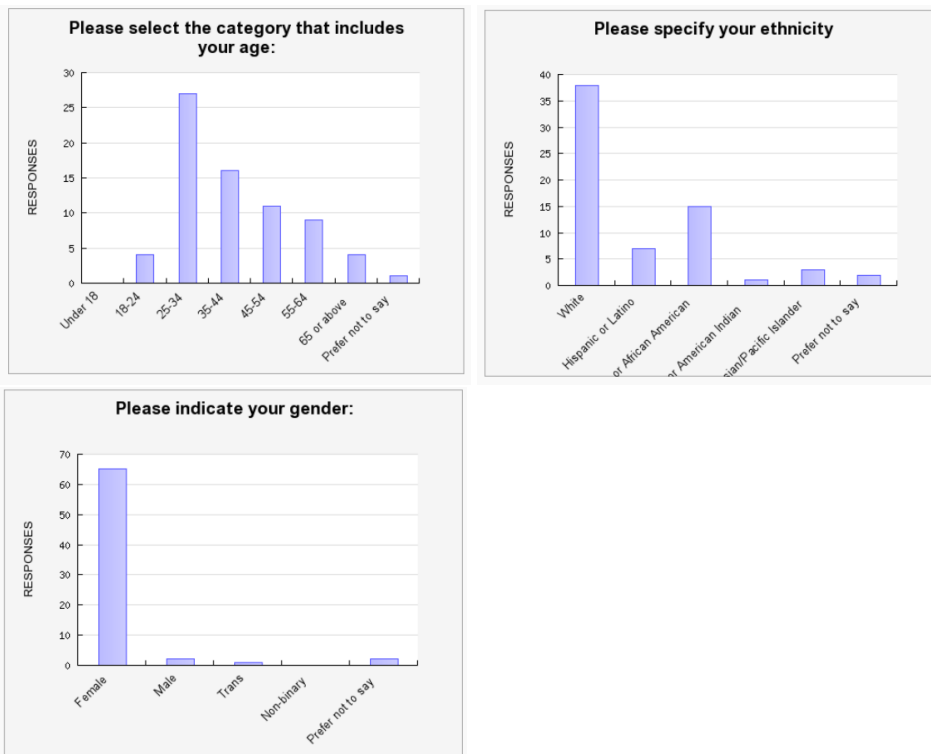
During the COVID pandemic, the project team was unable to conduct in-person client focus groups as originally intended, so conducted a survey instead. The County and the City jointly designed a Client Satisfaction Survey for the eight domestic violence providers who received CARES Act funding, and directed them to administer the survey to a minimum of 20% of the participants enrolled in their program. The survey was offered in two formats: online and on paper. The goal of the survey was to evaluate client satisfaction with the services provided, assess availability of the services, and identify other needs not met by the providers.

As of December 31, 2020, 97 responses have been received (74 in English and 23 in Spanish).

- Over 95% of responders indicated that they were either extremely satisfied or somewhat satisfied with services received and felt heard and understood by staff.
- 95% of responders stated that the services they wanted were available and they felt supported through the legal system by staff from the agency.
- 97% of responders indicated that the agency that served them was able to address their cultural needs.
- 83% of responders thought the domestic violence support system was easy to navigate.

Other services needed for clients included: recommendation of ways to avoid abusers and various ways to grow past the damage caused, such as help lines, a list of government resources and how to access them (i.e. website applications, locations), support around getting new identification and legal representation, parenting plan, and rental/utility assistance or other housing help.

The demographics of 2020 survey respondents are shown below:

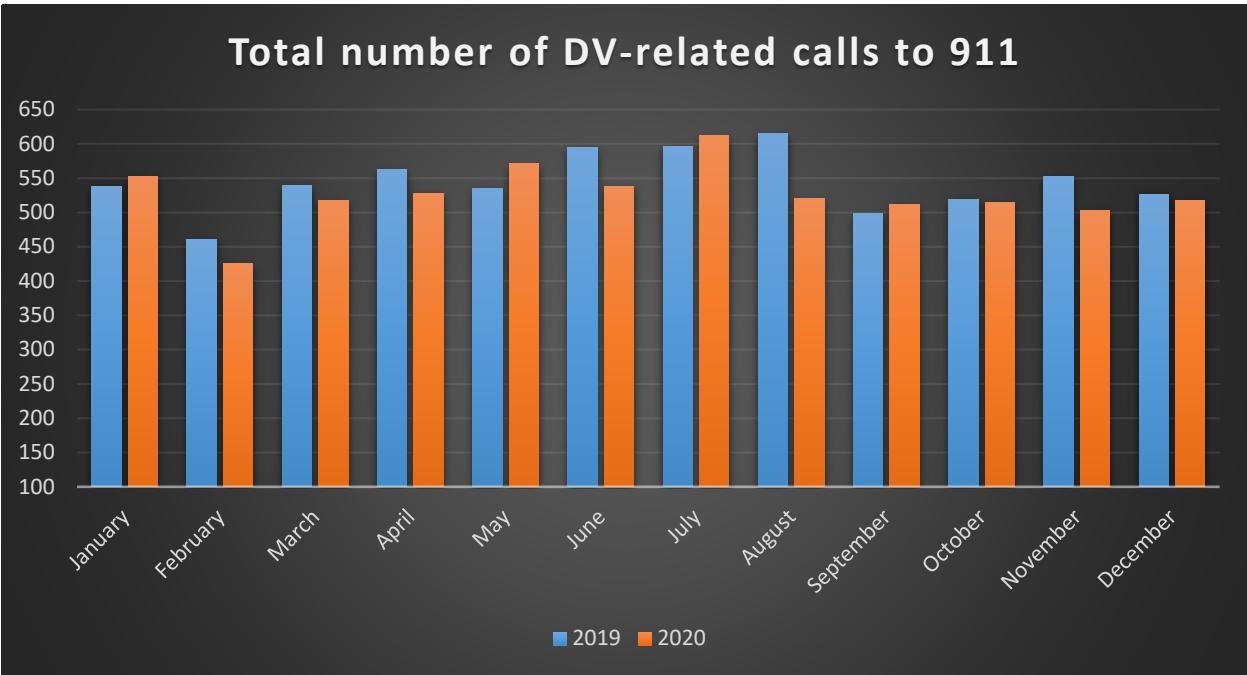
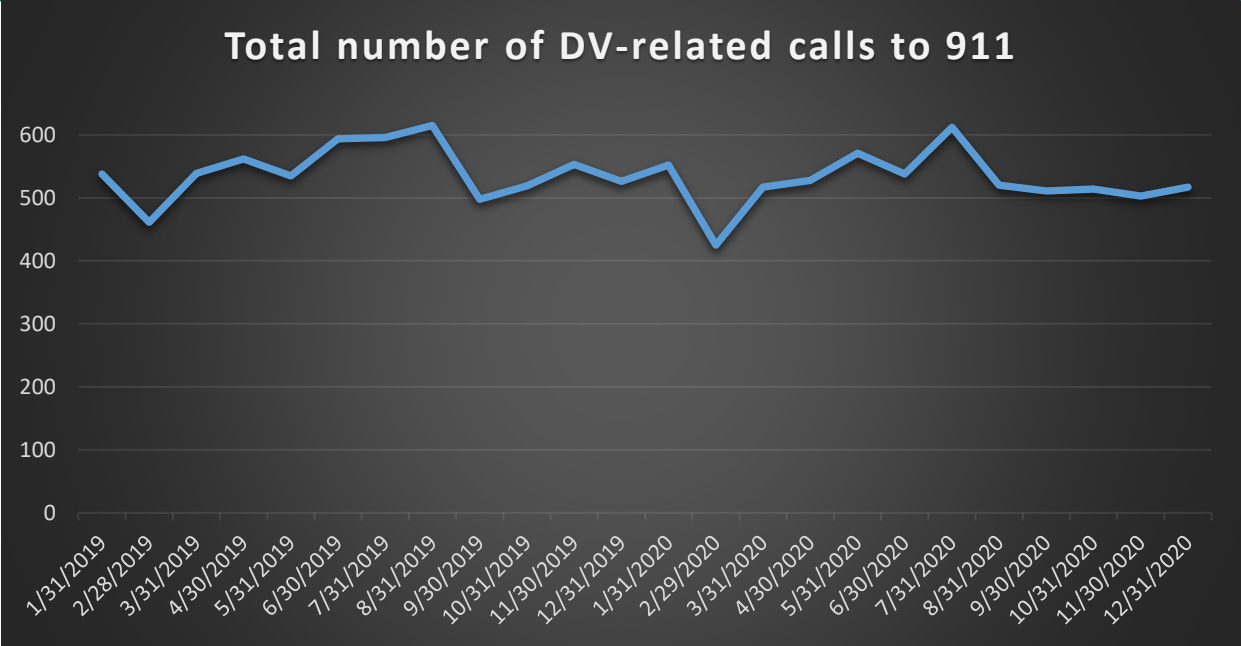


National Trends and Current Research in Domestic Violence, Including During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Domestic violence is a global issue with significant costs to individuals, health systems, and society. The statistics in the US alone are alarming:

- The U.S. Department of Justice estimates that 1.3 million women and 835,000 men are victims of physical violence by a partner every year;
- Every nine seconds a woman in the U.S. is beaten or assaulted by a current or ex-significant other; and
- Four out of every five women have been victims of crime.

The rates of domestic violence in Pierce County have been consistently high. Since 2005, the rate of domestic violence offenses reported to the Tacoma Police Department has averaged 200 percent higher than the average rate for Washington state. The number of domestic violence related calls to 911 is presented below. The average number of calls per month is over 500.



In times of crises or pandemics, research shows increased violence against women and spouses/domestic partners and, on top of that, school closures and quarantines further amplify familial abuse and exploitation.

In Washington, domestic violence has been on the rise during Governor Inslee’s Stay Home initiative. The pandemic creates new barriers for people in abusive relationships, and those relationships are becoming even more dangerous. Requesting and obtaining help is now even more difficult because clients know resources are not available and they don’t know what to expect. Even though some

agencies haven't seen an increase in calls yet, they are expecting a bigger spike once victims have more time apart from their abusers to reach out.

Domestic violence organizations have deployed new strategies to support victims under lockdown. Digital contact with victims has been very important during this time but it is still difficult for victims to call while at home with their abusers. New services have been developed using online chat or texting, making it easier for victims to seek out help while at home.

Section 3 - DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FUNDING

Both Pierce County and the City of Tacoma fund domestic violence services. Funding decisions are made through a biannual competitive process based on each Council priorities and community needs.

Below is a detailed breakdown for both agencies.

City of Tacoma Domestic Violence Services and Funding

Agency	Program	Services	2019-20	2021-22
Castele, William, & Association	Domestic Violence Perpetrator Treatment	Perpetrator treatment - offers court mandated treatment (Individual and Group)	\$60,000	\$60,000
Crystal Judson Family Justice Center	Essential Expenditures	Education/Training, Legal, Outreach, Support Groups	\$840,000	\$840,000
Exodus Housing	Rapid Rehousing DV	Rapid Rehousing for individuals and families fleeing domestic violence	\$63,350	\$41,688
Korean Women's Association	We Are Family Shelter Program	Shelter beds, Case management	\$100,000	\$120,000
Korean Women's Association	We Are Family Shelter Program	Shelter beds, Case management	\$40,000	\$21,000
New Phoebe House Association	AfterCare Relapse Prevention	Behavioral health services and rental subsidies to extremely low-income multi-trauma abused mothers	\$89,000	\$89,000
New Phoebe House Association	MHSUD Assessment & Treatment	MHSUD assessment and treatment, DV services (not all participants are DV victims)	\$43,552	\$40,000
New Phoebe House Association	Phoebe Family Reunification, Recovery, & Resiliency	Housing, case management, MHSUD services, parenting support, peer mentorship, education/job/life skills (not all participants are DV victims)	\$40,000	\$20,332

City of Tacoma Domestic Violence Services and Funding, continued

Agency	Program	Services	2019-20	2021-22
New Phoebe House Association	Phoebe Family Reunification, Recovery, & Resiliency	Housing, case management, MHSUD services, parenting support, peer mentorship, education/job/life skills (not all participants are DV victims)	\$124,278	\$100,000
Tacoma Community House	TCH Domestic Violence Services	Improve the level of safety of immigrant victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and other crimes	\$82,800	\$82,800
YWCA	Insights DV Prevention	Education/Training	\$40,000	\$40,000
YWCA	Legal Services	Legal Advocacy	\$76,800	\$100,000
YWCA	YWCA Children's Program	Counseling/education	\$55,200	\$55,200
YWCA	DV Shelter Program	Shelter beds, Case management	\$40,000	\$20,332
YWCA	DV Shelter Program	Shelter beds, Case management	\$40,000	\$21,000
YWCA	DV Shelter Program	Shelter beds, Case management	\$117,000	\$127,000
			\$1,851,980	\$1,654,000

Digital Infrastructure Funding

The City of Tacoma awarded funds to provide digital infrastructure enhancements to domestic violence providers who were required to shift to digital platform in order to facilitate compliance with COVID-19 related public health measures and meet their contractual requirements with the City during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Agency	Funding
Castele, Williams & Associates	\$ 14,601.00
Tacoma Community House/REACH Center	\$ 19,690.00
YWCA Pierce County	\$ <u>36,020.00</u>
	\$ 70,311.00

Pierce County Funding

The regular Pierce County funding for 2019 and 2020-2021 budgets included the following programs and services:

Agency	Program	Services	2019 Budget	2020 - 2021 Budget
Crystal Judson Family Justice Center	MCE and Health Services Administration	Comprehensive domestic violence victim services	\$698,050	\$1,403,100
Exodus Housing	Rapid Rehousing – Bright Futures and Safe Choices	Rapid Rehousing to literally homeless households fleeing or trying to flee DV	\$609,312	\$891,628
Korean Women’s Association	Emergency Shelter and Rapid Rehousing – We Are Family Home DV Shelter; Pathway Home	Emergency shelter and support for literally homeless fleeing or attempting to free DV	\$373,280	\$723,328
YWCA of Pierce County	Emergency Shelter	Emergency support for fleeing or attempting to flee DV	\$185,055	\$122,137
			\$558,335	\$3,140,193

In July 2020, Pierce County awarded \$400,000 in CARES Act funding to eight agencies providing domestic and family violence prevention services. This funding supported domestic violence victims impacted by the pandemic and assisted local domestic violence services providers in response to the increased COVID-19 emergency. The priority of this funding was to support the needs of people experiencing domestic and family violence through the following activities:

1. Legal assistance services;
2. Access to technology and technology support;
3. Emergency vouchers for unique and emergent needs; and
4. Training, education and outreach efforts.

The following domestic and family violence services providers received funding to serve Pierce County residents in response to the COVID-19 crisis and recovery and provided services during the period of July through December 2020:

TACOMA PROBONO	Catherine Place	YWCA	KWA	Our Sister’s House	Exodus Housing	Tacoma Community House	Crystal Judson Family Justice Center
\$110,000	\$11,275	\$38,675	\$42,093	\$61,600	\$100,000	\$25,000	\$11,357

Section 4 – GAPS IN SERVICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The County and City found some gaps in domestic violence services. The recommendations listed below could help improve and strengthen the current system.

Recommendations for providers:

1. DV Resource Guide -- Create a regional resource guide to help victims understand the cycle of violence and refer them to specific services and organizations;
2. Safety Planning -- Provide victims safety planning information when they contact service providers;
3. Legal Services -- Expand legal services to help survivors navigate the court system;
4. Collaboration -- Work with Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), mental health, suicide prevention, substance abuse and healthcare providers to provide more coordinated and comprehensive services; and
5. Language Access -- Ensure comprehensive counseling services and support groups are available in different languages, in both online and in-person formats.

Recommendations for City of Tacoma and Pierce County as funding agencies:

1. Measurable Outcomes -- Incorporate measurable outcomes in all contracts for domestic violence services;
2. Funding Alignment -- Work across jurisdictions to align funding cycles, strategies, and final grant awards; and
3. Stable Housing -- Fund safe, stable housing and other accessible, culturally responsive and trauma-informed services responsive to a survivor's specific personal circumstances.