



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Partner Agreement- OVW Fiscal Year 2023 Improving Criminal Justice Responses to Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, and Stalking Grant Program

Page | 1

Strangulation Team Operations for Prosecution Initiative (S.T.O.P.)

The **City of Columbus, Franklin County, The Center for Family Safety and Healing and Mount Carmel Forensics** collaborated on this FY 2023 Improving Criminal Justice Response Grant Program application and agree to partner on defined project activities if funded. Total award request = \$800,000.

The **City of Columbus** will serve as lead applicant. The **Columbus City Attorney's Office** will serve as the Grant Award Administrator. The service area for this project is Franklin County, Ohio with specific focus on **City of Columbus** residents.

Background: Research shows that women who experience non-fatal strangulation with an intimate partner are seven times more likely to be killed by that partner. On April 4, 2023, Ohio adopted legislation making strangulation of an intimate partner or household member a felony crime (Ohio Senate Bill 288). Charging these high-risk cases as felonies allows the system to hold dangerous offenders accountable while also creating opportunities for victims to understand the seriousness of their situations and link with the resources needed to interrupt cycles of violence--violence interrupters that will save lives.

While this legislation is a big win for victims and public safety, the code changes will more than double the number of felony charges filed and felony cases prosecuted in Columbus (from just over 300 to an estimated 700+ per year), therefore our system must work cross-agency to develop and deploy a coordinated strangulation response. Prior to this legislation passing, the bulk of what will now be considered low-level felony offenses were misdemeanors handled by the City's specialized Domestic Violence Prosecution Unit. This team prosecutes over 4,000 domestic violence cases each year and employs nineteen victim advocates. Staff members are trained in the power and control dynamics of partner violence and clearly understand the increased dangers associated with strangulation. They are trained in trauma responsive communication. The unit works closely with 911, law enforcement, the jail



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

and community control to ensure they have access to the evidence needed to move cases forward with or without victim involvement. They takes great pride in the work done on these high-risk cases.

Page | 2

For these reasons, the City Attorney Klein proposes establishing a Strangulation Working Group to leverage the knowledge and experience of the Domestic Violence Prosecution Unit and work alongside law enforcement, county prosecutors and advocacy teams to quickly, but intentionally, develop and deploy strangulation response strategies that are sustainable and victim-centered.

Goal: Reduce domestic violence homicides.

Objective 1: By January 1, 2024, the Columbus City Attorney will establish the Blueprint for Safety: Strangulation Working Group. Representatives from the Columbus Division of Police, Franklin County Prosecutor's Office, the City Attorney's Domestic Violence Prosecution Unit, The Center for Family Safety and Healing and Mount Carmel Forensics will work with the group.

Objective 2: By July 31, 2026 the City of Columbus Strangulation Working Group will produce and implement model response directives, best practice training curriculum and clear justice procedures supporting effective implementation of the [Ohio Senate Bill 288](#) code revisions related to strangulation.

The City proposes using 2023 ICJR grant funds to support the group objectives by investing in staff, training and resources to develop sustainable response capacity. Through the three year award period, the group will produce and implement model response directives and training curriculum and work with justice partners to adjust staffing practices that accommodate increased caseloads for police detectives and prosecutors and to ensure felony victims have access to advocacy supports at municipal court arraignment.

I. Proposed Project Activities

- 1) Establish a City of Columbus Strangulation Working Group. The group will be a multidisciplinary team focused on reducing domestic violence and dating violence homicides through the effective implementation of Ohio's new felony strangulation legislation. Implementation practices will incorporate direct referrals to victim support services.



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

- 2) Establish a Coordinator position. The trajectory of criminal strangulation cases start with law enforcement's response and evidence collection practices, therefore the coordinator position will be a **Columbus Division of Police** officer. Candidates must have a clear understanding of special victim crimes and the lethality associated with strangulation. The coordinator position would be an expansion of the Domestic Violence Detective Unit and be offered, per the collective bargaining agreement, to members of the unit by seniority. ICJR funds would support the working group coordinator position. If a Domestic Violence Detective accepts the assignment, the vacated position within the Division would be filled by another officer. The candidate selected for the working group would serve as coordinator through the grant cycle.

In addition to investigating crimes as assigned, this position will coordinate planning sessions, trainings and quarterly Strangulation Working Group meetings. They will guide the development and facilitation of a comprehensive strangulation curriculum (80 hours) for Division detectives and thirty to fifty street officers on best practices for operationalizing new felony statutes. The strangulation curriculum will cover the technical aspects of the law and include modules on report writing, evidence collection, the lethality of strangulation, trauma informed interviewing and victim support resources. **The City Attorney's Domestic Violence Prosecution Unit** and **Franklin County Prosecutor's Special Victim Unit** will partner with **Columbus Division of Police** to develop and facilitate content related to prosecution. **The Center for Family Safety and Healing** and **Mount Carmel Forensics** will partner with **Columbus Division of Police** to develop and facilitate modules on the lethality of strangulation, trauma informed interviewing and victim resources. **Mount Carmel Forensics** will also train officers on how to use strangulation evidence collection kits in the field.

These trained street officers will then become part of the Division's S.T.O.P initiative (Strangulation Team Operations for Prosecution). S.T.O.P. officers will do felony investigation and prosecution packets for F3-F5 strangulation cases. The coordinator will actively support S.T.O.P. in the field and serve in a quality control role. They will review and provide feedback on felony packets compiled by S.T.O.P officers before reports are sent to their chain of command for approval. Detectives and S.T.O.P officers will also



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

have access to **The Center for Family Safety and Healing** co-responder victim advocates. These advocates work hand and hand with Columbus Police and provide onsite advocacy and safety planning--increasing access to justice and resource supports for survivors. The coordinator will ensure S.T.O.P. officers and detectives are trained on Division protocol for calling for advocacy support.

Page | 4

- 3) Create 1.5 new Victim Advocate positions in the **City Attorney's Domestic Violence Prosecution Unit**. Advocate will identify felony cases scheduled for municipal arraignment; compile case information; document criminal histories for bond consideration; and contact victims before municipal court arraignment. Advocates meet with survivors before arraignment to help with Temporary Protection Orders and safety plan then do warm handoffs to advocates in the **Franklin County Prosecutor's Special Victim Unit** for guidance after felony cases are indicted.

The advocates will also monitor F3-F5 strangulation cases with a companion misdemeanor Domestic Violence and/or Assault charge. In these cases, if the low-level felony is indicted, the misdemeanor charges will be dropped. If the felony is not indicted, City Prosecutor will move forward with the misdemeanor. Advocacy support for felony victims at municipal court arraignment is currently a HUGE gap in our system. Misdemeanor victims are contacted by an advocate before arraignment but there has been no proactive engagement with felony victims until after the case is indicted. Earlier engagement with victims is a good safety practice and best practice for increasing survivor engagement in felony prosecution.

- 4) Provide Forensic Experiential Trauma Interview (FETI) training for law enforcement, prosecutors and victim advocates. **The Center for Family Safety and Healing** will coordinate FETI training.
- 5) The **City Attorney's Office** will coordinate with grant partners to ensure project data is collected for VAWA MEI and fiscal reporting. The office will ensure program and fiscal reports are submitted on time according to Department of Justice grant standards.



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

II. Partner Agency Information

1) **City of Columbus:**

Columbus City Attorney Domestic Violence Prosecution Unit: \$325,753

The City prosecutes domestic violence misdemeanors through its Domestic Violence Prosecution Unit. The unit facilitates prosecution and provides education, support, counseling, crisis intervention and overall assistance to victims of domestic violence and stalking. The unit employs one Director, four specially trained Assistant Prosecuting Attorneys and nineteen Victim Advocates. The team works in tandem with liaisons from The Center for Family Safety and Healing, CHOICES for Victims of Domestic Violence, Southeast Mental Health Services, Legal Aid, Franklin County Job and Family Services and Franklin County Children's Services to provide comprehensive, wraparound support.

Columbus Division of Police: \$429,417

The Columbus Division of Police has over 1,800 officers and 300 civilian employees. The Division covers 20 precincts across the greater Columbus metropolitan area serving over 900,000 residents. In 2015, the Division worked with the City Attorney's Office and CHOICES for Victims of Domestic Violence to bring the validated Lethality Assessment Program to Columbus, Ohio. LAP is now standard protocol for first responders responding to domestic violence incidents. The Division also has a Domestic Violence Unit. The unit employs ten detectives providing 24 hour investigative support for felony cases. The unit works with Franklin County Sheriff's Office detectives and City Attorney domestic violence prosecutors to review misdemeanor domestic violence cases for potential felony enhancement.

2) **Franklin County, Ohio:**

Franklin County Prosecutor: \$0.00, in-kind

Franklin County prosecutes domestic violence, dating violence and sexual assault felonies through its Special Victims Unit. The Special Victims Unit employs of one Director, one Senior Assistant Prosecuting Attorney and six Assistant Prosecuting Attorneys who handle specialized cases from indictment through conviction. This team has access to advocates in County's Witness Assistance Unit. The Witness Assistance



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Unit employs eleven Victim Advocates. Advocates provide courtroom accompaniment, resource referrals and assistance in filing protection orders for adult victims of felony crimes.

Page | 6

3) **The Center for Family Safety and Healing: \$44,830**

The Center for Family Safety and Healing was established in 2011 to address all aspects of family violence, including child abuse and neglect, teen dating abuse, domestic violence and elder abuse. From its inception, the center took a multi-disciplinary approach to addressing the complicated issue of family violence. The center works in partnership with law enforcement, child protective services, prosecution and a variety of community resources to ensure victims have access a wide range of supports. The center also focuses on expanding public awareness for family violence through education, advocacy and ongoing research.

4) **Mount Carmel Forensics: \$0.00, in-kind**

Mount Carmel Forensics provides forensic nursing services to victims of sexual assault and domestic violence. Forensic nurses provide physical and psychological care to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and other violent crimes. While the wellbeing of patients is the primary objective for forensic nurses during their examinations, examination results serve as powerful evidence in criminal prosecution. Examination results are thorough, objective and based in medical science--tough for a judge or jury to disregard.

III. Partner Agency Contributions to Local Domestic/Intimate Partner Violence Initiatives...

The partners named on this project have a longstanding dedication to best-practice domestic violence/intimate partner response protocols, prosecution practices and trauma responsive services. As examples, Columbus Division of Police worked with the Columbus City Attorney's Office to incorporate the Maryland Lethality Assessment Program (LAP) into domestic violence response directives county-wide. LAP allows officers on-scene to assess domestic violence/intimate partner danger and link victims with advocacy supports and transport to shelter if needed. LAP scores are then included



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

in police reports and made available to prosecutors, pretrial/probation officers and judges to inform bond and supervision decisions. The City Prosecutor's Office has a dedicated Domestic Violence Unit staffed with specially trained prosecutors and victim advocates. The Franklin County Prosecutor's Office, also, has a Special Victims Unit with trained prosecutors who have access to victim advocates. These prosecution teams communicate daily on misdemeanor cases eligible for felony enhancement. Mount Carmel Forensics is in ongoing engagement with law enforcement, prosecutors and advocates to provide training on the value of forensic examinations and serve as expert witnesses in criminal cases, and leads The Central Ohio Domestic Violence Forensic Nursing Collective.

All project partners are active members of our local coordinated community response team. This team is referred to as the Blueprint for Safety team and collaborates daily on high-risk cases and meets monthly to discuss larger strategic initiatives. The Blueprint team was formed through an OVW grant to bring the evidenced-based Blueprint for Safety Interagency Domestic Violence Response model to Franklin County. Through that project, a multi-disciplinary team of justice practitioners and victim service organizations (pre-cursor to our coordinated response team) completed a justice system safety audit. The team is now using audit results to develop a written Franklin County Blueprint for Safety Interagency Domestic Violence Policy. The Columbus Division of Police and The Center for Family Safety and Healing launched a domestic violence/intimate partner co-response pilot where victim advocates respond with law enforcement on scene. And, this application is one more example of our commitment to collaboration and to building a justice system that holds offenders accountable and keeps victims safe.

A detailed compensation breakdown for partners contributing to this project is provided in the budget detail section of the grant application.

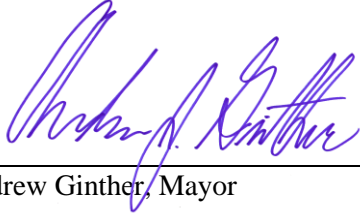
Each partner referenced above and named on the following signature page agrees to collaborate and provide services to victims as outline above and detailed in the grant program narrative.



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Partner Agreement Signature Page- OVW Fiscal Year 2023 Improving Criminal Justice Responses to Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, and Stalking Grant Program



Page | 8

City of Columbus  Andrew Ginther, Mayor Date: 4.21/2023	Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein, City Attorney Date:
Columbus Division of Police Elaine Bryant, Chief Date:	Franklin County Board of Commissioners Ken Wilson, County Administrator Date:
Franklin County Prosecutor's Office Gary Tyack, County Prosecutor Date:	The Center for Family Safety & Healing Nancy Cunningham, Interim President Date:
Mount Carmel Forensics Melisa Minier, Forensic Manager Date:	



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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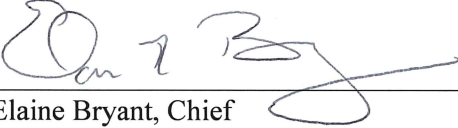
City of Columbus <hr/> Andrew Ginther, Mayor Date:	Columbus City Attorney  <hr/> Zach Klein, City Attorney Date: 4/23/2023
Columbus Division of Police <hr/> Elaine Bryant, Chief Date:	Franklin County Board of Commissioners <hr/> Ken Wilson, County Administrator Date:
Franklin County Prosecutor's Office <hr/> Gary Tyack, County Prosecutor Date:	The Center for Family Safety & Healing  <hr/> Nancy Cunningham, Interim President Date: 4/11/2023
Mount Carmel Forensics <hr/> Melisa Minier, Forensic Manager Date:	



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Partner Agreement Signature Page- OVW Fiscal Year 2023 Improving Criminal Justice Responses to Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, and Stalking Grant Program

Page | 8

City of Columbus	Columbus City Attorney
Andrew Ginther, Mayor Date:	Zach Klein, City Attorney Date:
Columbus Division of Police	Franklin County Board of Commissioners
 Elaine Bryant, Chief Date: 4/26/23	Ken Wilson, County Administrator Date:
Franklin County Prosecutor's Office	The Center for Family Safety & Healing
Gary Tyack, County Prosecutor Date:	Nancy Cunningham, Interim President Date:
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Melisa Minier, Forensic Manager Date:	



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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Page | 8

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<p>Andrew Ginther, Mayor Date:</p>	<p>Zach Klein, City Attorney Date:</p>
<p>Columbus Division of Police</p>	<p>Franklin County Board of Commissioners</p> <p><i>Kenneth N Wilson</i></p>
<p>Elaine Bryant, Chief Date:</p>	<p>Ken Wilson, County Administrator Date: 4/25/2023</p>
<p>Franklin County Prosecutor's Office</p> <p><i>G. Gary Tyack</i></p>	<p>The Center for Family Safety & Healing</p>
<p>Gary Tyack, County Prosecutor Date: 4/25/2023</p>	<p>Nancy Cunningham, Interim President Date:</p>
<p>Mount Carmel Forensics</p> <p>Melisa Minier, Forensic Manager Date:</p>	

Approved to form Date 4/25/2023

Jeanine Hummer

Franklin County Prosecutor's Office


First Assistant and Chief Counsel FCPO ANDREW J. GINTHER, MAYOR

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OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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Page | 8

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Mount Carmel Forensics	
<i>Melisa Minier, BSN, RN</i> Melisa Minier, Forensic Manager Date: 04.21.2023	