



**BALTIMORE CITY COUNCIL
PUBLIC SAFETY AND
GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
COMMITTEE**

Mission Statement

On behalf of the Citizens of Baltimore City, the Public Safety and Government Operations will be responsible for matters concerning public safety, including, but not limited to; emergency preparedness, police services, fire/EMS, and the executive, administrative, and operational functions of the city government and libraries.

**The Honorable Mark Conway
Chairman**

PUBLIC HEARING

**Wednesday, June 30, 2021
1:00 PM**

**Council Bill: 21-0041R
Informational Hearing –
Domestic Violence in Baltimore City**

CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEES

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James Torrence
Staff: Richard Krummerich



BILL SYNOPSIS

Committee: Public Safety and Government Operations

Bill 21-0041R

Informational Hearing – Domestic Violence in Baltimore City

Sponsor: Councilman Mark Conway

Introduced: April 19, 2021

Purpose:

For the purpose of inviting representatives from the Baltimore City State’s Attorney’s Office, the Baltimore Police Department, the Mayor’s Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement, the Health Department, the Sheriff’s Office, as well as community advocates fighting against domestic violence to share their expertise with the Baltimore City Council and the general public and to discuss programs available to victims of domestic violence.

Effective: N/A

Agency Reports

Mayor’s Office of Children and Family Success	
Department of Law	
State’s Attorney’s Office	
Police Department	
Mayor’s Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement	
Health Department	
Sheriff’s Office	

Analysis

Background

The National Commission on Covid-19 and Criminal Justice issued a report recently that examined the impact that stay-home restrictions had on domestic violence trends. The report was based on a systematic review of multiple studies that compared changes in the number of domestic violence incidents before and after jurisdictions put lockdown restrictions in place. Some of the potential contributing factors associated with the rise in cases are listed below:

- Based on a review of 12 U.S. studies, most of which included data from multiple cities, shows that domestic violence incidents increased 8.1% after jurisdictions imposed pandemic-related lockdown orders;
- While the precise dynamics driving the increase are unclear, lockdowns and pandemic-related economic impacts likely exacerbated factors typically associated with domestic violence, such as increased male unemployment, stress associated with childcare and homeschooling, and increased financial insecurity.

As domestic violence cases have gone up in the past, many communities have responded in a number of ways. There have been pushes to expand and strengthen social services. Some police departments have engaged in a policy of mandatory arrest, which takes offenders into custody whenever there are indications that a domestic assault has occurred. Most jurisdictions implemented risk assessment tools such as the Lethality Assessment Program which is a research based lethality screening tool to enable first-responders to identify and help victims of domestic violence.

Focus Deterrence Program

In 2011, after experiencing a significant increase in the number of domestic related homicides, the City of High Point, North Carolina implemented the focused deterrence crime strategy to reduce the number of incidents that were occurring. The focus deterrence model was developed in Boston in the early 1990's as a way to stop gun violence among gangs. Under the strategy, officers would target a specific criminal behavior committed by a small number of chronic offenders, such as gang members; offer them various forms of assistance, such as help earning their GED; and threaten them with sanctions and punishment if the behavior did not stop. In a five-year research review of the High Point Police Department's implementation of this model it proved to be so successful that other departments across the country implemented it and reduced their numbers.

The High Point Police Department was success with this approach because they implemented a 4 Tier System:

- **Level 1** – On domestic dispute calls for service, the primary aggressor would receive a follow-up visit from a patrol officer with a letter from the police departments District Commander letting them know that they are being added to the district's level 1 watch list;
- **Level 2** – On domestic assault calls for service where an arrest is made, those individuals would receive a follow-up visit from a detective in the Special Investigation Section. Those detectives provided the arrestee with a letter from the commander of that unit letting them know they are being added to the units watch list. If the incident occurred in the residence of the victim, an alert flagging that location would be added to the Computer Aided Dispatch

system in case a future call for domestic violence occurs. The police department played a critical role at this level because they provided support to other criminal justice partners by conducting follow-up visits to assist with pre-trial safety of the victim, and supervision of the defendant to ensure they don't re-offend.

- **Level 3** – If an individual listed as a Level 2 offender commits another assault, and they are not sentenced to prison, that individual would be required to participate in frequent “face-to-face” meetings. They would meet with members from the city’s domestic violence coordinating committee, a group that consisted of law enforcement and prosecutors, social service agencies, non-profits, and community partners. This group communicated to the offender the serious nature of their behavior and outlined the road ahead for them. That road would consist of rehabilitation services, or serious penal consequences.
- **Level 4** – This group consists of individuals who participated in the “face-to-face” meetings and reoffended. Those individuals who were identified in their 5-year data search of having had a history of repeat offenses, a serious violent offense, or who had current cases pending for violent domestic offenses would be added to this category. Those individuals were recommended to receive a no-bail status upon arrest, and prison time upon conviction.

Family Justice Center

Another approach that the City of Baltimore should consider is looking into the establishment of a Family Justice Center. The first such location was established in 2002 in San Diego, California, and it was hailed as a major step forward in addressing domestic violence in a more collaborative way. Closer to home, there is a Family Justice Center located in Montgomery County.

The Family Justice Center is a co-location of agencies and organizations that serve as a “one-stop shop” for domestic violence survivors to receive critical, wraparound services. Under the auspices of the Montgomery County Sheriff’s Office, this collaborative center serves as the central hub for domestic violence services in the county, serving more than 1,500 individuals per year. The Family Justice Center model, now considered a best practice by the U.S. Department of Justice in service delivery to families affected by domestic violence, continues to grow both nationally and internationally.

Additional Information

Fiscal Note: Not Available

Information Source(s): Agency Reports, Governing Magazine, Montgomery County website, National Institute on Justice, National Commission on Covid-19 and Criminal Justice

Analysis by: Samuel Johnson
Analysis Date: June 30, 2021

Direct Inquiries to: (410) 396-1091

**CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 21-0041R
(Resolution)**

Introduced by: Councilmembers Conway, Porter, Middleton, Ramos, Bullock, McCray,
Torrence, Burnett

Introduced and read first time: April 19, 2021

Assigned to: Public Safety and Government Operations

REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: City Solicitor, Baltimore Police Department, Baltimore
City Health Department, Mayor’s Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement,
Mayor’s Office of Children and Family Success, Sheriff’s Office, State’s Attorney’s Office

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **Informational Hearing – Domestic Violence in Baltimore City**

3 FOR the purpose of inviting representatives from the Baltimore City State’s Attorney’s Office,
4 the Baltimore Police Department, the Mayor’s Office of Neighborhood Safety and
5 Engagement, the Health Department, the Sheriff’s Office, as well as community advocates
6 fighting against domestic violence to share their expertise with the Baltimore City Council
7 and the general public and to discuss programs available to victims of domestic violence.

8 **Recitals**

9 **WHEREAS**, Domestic violence (which, for the purposes of this resolution, encompasses
10 intimate-partner violence) has been a serious issue across the country and globally since long
11 before the COVID-19 pandemic;

12 **WHEREAS**, Domestic violence can encompass a wide swath of behaviors, including physical
13 violence, sexual violence, stalking, or psychological harm by a current or former partner or
14 spouse;

15 **WHEREAS**, Anyone can be a victim of domestic violence and the controlling and
16 manipulative behavior that frequently accompanies it – no age, gender, or race is immune;

17 **WHEREAS**, Research shows members of vulnerable communities, such as the LGBTQ
18 community, are at an equal or higher risk for domestic violence;

19 **WHEREAS**, As feared, incidents of domestic violence increased 31% in the past year as
20 pandemic restrictions have kept more people isolated at home and unable to access resources that
21 could help them leave an unsafe situation;

22 **WHEREAS**, In Baltimore City, more women and girls were the victim of violence in 2020
23 than in any other year;

EXPLANATION: Underlining indicates matter added by amendment.
~~Strike out~~ indicates matter deleted by amendment.

Council Bill 21-0041R

1 **WHEREAS**, Some of the most disturbing instances of violence in recent years have possibly
2 been committed by an intimate partner of at least one of the victims, such as the murder of
3 Shiand Miller (who was pregnant) and her 3 year-old daughter Shaniya Gilmore – police have
4 charged the father of Miller’s unborn child with first-degree murder in this case; and

5 **WHEREAS**, The City Council cannot single-handedly legislate away domestic violence, but it
6 has a duty to highlight the issue and investigate additional ways for City government to support
7 people in vulnerable situations.

8 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE**, That the City
9 Council invites representatives from the Baltimore City State’s Attorney’s Office, the Baltimore
10 Police Department, the Mayor’s Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement, the Health
11 Department, the Sheriff’s Office, as well as community advocates fighting against domestic
12 violence to share their expertise with the Baltimore City Council and the public and to discuss
13 programs available to victims of domestic violence.

14 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Baltimore City
15 State’s Attorney, the Police Commissioner, the Director of the Mayor’s Office of Neighborhood
16 Safety and Engagement, the Health Commissioner, the Sheriff, community advocates fighting
17 against domestic violence, and the Mayor’s Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

**PUBLIC SAFETY AND
GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
COMMITTEE**

AGENCY REPORTS

CITY OF BALTIMORE

BRANDON M. SCOTT,
Mayor



DEPARTMENT OF LAW
DANA P. MOORE, ACTING CITY SOLICITOR
100 N. HOLLIDAY STREET
SUITE 101, CITY HALL
BALTIMORE, MD 21202

Honorable President and Members
of the City Council of Baltimore
c/o Natawna Austin, Executive Secretary
Room 409, City Hall
100 N. Holliday Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

June 25, 2021

Re: City Council Bill 21-0041R- Investigative Hearing- Existing Alternatives to Policing Strategies

Dear President and City Council Members:

The Law Department has reviewed City Council Bill 21-0041R for form and legal sufficiency. This resolution is for the purpose of inviting representatives from the Baltimore City State's Attorney's Office, the Baltimore Police Department, the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement, the Health Department, the Sheriff's Office, as well as community advocates fighting against domestic violence to share their expertise with the Baltimore City Council and the general public and to discuss programs available to victims of domestic violence.

In general, Art. III, Sec. 9 of the City Charter and Art. 1, Sec. 1-4 gives the City Council authority to call before it, department heads and other City officials to inquire about the operation of City agencies and to investigate complaints and allegations regarding City operations.

Council Bill 21-0041R is an appropriate resolution to initiate this process and request appropriate officials to attend to discuss efforts and measures being taken to investigate and consider alternatives to policing strategies for the City.

The Law Department approves Council Bill 21-0041R for form and legal sufficiency as it is a valid method of inviting City officials to discuss this matter.


Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Elena DiPietro".

Elena R. DiPietro
Chief Solicitor

Cc: James Shea, City Solicitor

Darnell Ingram, Deputy Solicitor
Stephen Salisbury, Chief of Staff
Natasha Mehu, Director. MOGR
Nina Themelis, Mayor's Office of Government Relations
Matthew Stegman, President's Office
Nikki Thompson, President's Legislative Liaison
Ashlea Brown, Special Solicitor
Victor Tervalo, Chief Solicitor
Hilary Ruley, Chief Solicitor
Dereka Bolden, Assistant Solicitor
Avery Aisenstark

FROM	NAME & TITLE	Tisha Edwards, Director	CITY of BALTIMORE MEMO	
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	Mayor's Office of Children and Family Success		
	SUBJECT	City Council Resolution 21-0041R – Domestic Violence		

DATE:

TO

The Honorable President and
 Members of the City Council
 City Hall, Room 400

June 28, 2021

Position: Favorable

The Mayor's Office of Children and Family Success (MOCFS) has been asked to respond to City Council Resolution 21-0041R introduced by Councilmembers Conway, Porter, Middleton, Ramos, Bullock, McCray, Torrence, and Burnett.

Background

This Resolution calls for an informational hearing to discuss programs available to victims of domestic violence.

While the Mayor's Office of Family & Children Success does not have specialized programs or services for women who have experienced domestic violence, we strongly support and when appropriate make referrals to the services provided by the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety & Engagement and the Mayor's Office of Homeless Services.

Conclusion

The Mayor's Office of Children and Family Success supports this resolution with a favorable position.

The Mayor's Office of Children and Family Success thanks the Public Safety & Government Operations Committee for the opportunity to respond to Council Resolution 21-0041R and stands ready to answer any questions the committee may have.

cc: Natasha Mehu
 Nina Themelis



BALTIMORE POLICE DEPARTMENT



Brandon M. Scott
Mayor

Michael S. Harrison
Police Commissioner

June 30, 2021

Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
Room 400, City Hall
100 N. Holliday Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

RE: City Council Bill #21-0041R
Informational Hearing: Domestic Violence in Baltimore City

Dear Council President Mosby and Members of the City Council:

The Baltimore Police Department (BPD) has reviewed Council Bill 21-0041R for the purpose of inviting representatives from the Baltimore City State's Attorney's Office, the Baltimore Police Department, the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement, the Health Department, the Sheriff's Office, as well as community advocates fighting against domestic violence to share their expertise with the Baltimore City Council and the general public and to discuss programs available to victims of domestic violence.

Thank you so much for allowing BPD to respond to this resolution. The Department takes domestic violence seriously and we recognize that the community is impacted significantly when domestic violence occurs. To ensure that these crimes are addressed swiftly and with the seriousness they deserve, BPD has developed a comprehensive approach toward investigating these crimes and supporting victims. Within the body of this letter, we will provide some brief insight into how the Department addresses domestic violence and we look forward to providing more details during the hearing.

Within the Special Investigations Unit there has been a unit established that is tasked with addressing the most heinous of crimes that can occur in a household: the Family Crimes Unit. This unit takes a victim centered and trauma informed approach that ensures that all officers and detectives conduct comprehensive investigations and display the utmost regard for the victim's physical and emotional well-being. We understand that a consistent response will also improve the public's perception of BPD as a thorough, caring and skilled department which further increases BPD legitimacy in the eyes of the community and the victims.

Family Crimes Unit

The policy of the Baltimore Police Department Family Crimes Unit is to vigorously investigate domestic violence incidents, to seek protection for the victim, offer advocacy services, censure the criminal behavior and deter further violence. To meet these goals, the Unit will initiate investigations in a non-traditional manner to locate and identify households where domestic violence may be occurring. This is accomplished through:

- Review of certain categories of calls for service
- Review of incident reports
- Referrals from community associations, victim advocates, other government agencies

c/o 242 West 29th Street • Baltimore, Maryland 21211-2908

A domestic violence incident is defined as any violent acts between current or former intimate partner relationships between husband/wife, boyfriend/girlfriend and LGBTQ partners. In order to accurately identify and track domestic incidents, a computerized victim/assailant database has been established and is maintained to include the following information: central complaint numbers, crime/incident descriptions, date/location of the occurrence, relationship between the victim and abuser, victim's name, suspect's name and arrest information.

Recognizing that victims of domestic violence are frequently unwilling to testify against their abuser, cases are prepared so as to enable the State's Attorney's Office to proceed with or without the victim's testimony. To that end, investigation files include the following information:

- Prior incidents
- Photographs of visible injuries
- Identification of witnesses
- Medical records
- 911 audio
- Documentation of "excited utterances"
- Video-taped statements from the victim
- Positive identification of suspects
- Weapons retrieved

To further support the victim, BPD Victim Advocates provide the following services:

- Provides crisis counseling
- Helps victims with obtaining Protective Orders by assisting with paperwork and accompanying victims to court throughout the entire process
- Accompanies detectives to the homes of victims to assist with follow up and the offering of services
- Helps the victim obtain emergency shelter and housing
- Transports victims to counseling sessions, social services and any other organization to assist the victim in becoming independent of their abuser
- Assists victims with signing up for VINE, Maryland Safe at Home address confidentiality program and the application for assistance from the Criminal Injury Compensation Board
- Provides each victim with a dangerousness/lethality assessment which was designed by nationally recognized expert, Jacqueline Campbell, PhD, of Johns Hopkins Hospital.

BPD fully supports City Council Resolution 21-0041R and looks forward to a robust discussion on this important issue. Thank you for allowing us to comment on this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,



Michelle Wirzberger, Esq.
Director of Government Affairs

cc: Natwana Austin, Executive Secretary of the Baltimore City Council
Natasha Mehu, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations
Nina Themalis, Special Assistant and Legislative Liaison, MOGR
Eric Melancon, BPD Chief of Staff
Andrew Smullian, BPD Deputy Chief of Staff

F R O M	Name & Title	Dr. Letitia Dzirasa, Commissioner	Health Department AGENCY REPORT	
	Agency Name & Address	Health Department 1001 E. Fayette Street Baltimore, Maryland 21201		
	Subject/ Position:	21-0041R – Informational Hearing – Domestic Violence in Baltimore City FAVORABLE		

To: President and Members
of the City Council
c/o 409 City Hall

June 30, 2021

The Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) is pleased to have the opportunity to review Council Bill #21-0041R, entitled, “Informational Hearing – Domestic Violence in Baltimore City.” This resolution seeks a discussion regarding “programs available to victims of domestic violence.”

BCHD Services and Care Coordination

Screening is a critical tool used by BCHD’s Bureau of Maternal and Child Health (MCH). Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2022, many of BCHD’s MCH programs have been using telehealth, which has presented multiple challenges for completing intimate partner violence (IPV) screenings. Across all MCH programs, there has been a decline in the number of completed IPV assessments. Notably, clients appear to feel more at risk during a telehealth visit and program staff are not always 100% certain that a client is able to speak privately. As a result, some programs have established guidelines and helpful resources with details on establishing and maintaining safety. Nevertheless, IPV screening is a major priority for the MCH system in FY22 as programs begin back in person.

BCHD’s first point of universal screening is through HealthCare Access Maryland (HCAM) either after receipt of a prenatal risk assessment or a postpartum infant and maternal referral from a hospital after a baby is delivered. The screening is completed by trained nurses and/or social workers.¹ If screening results are positive, a HCAM outreach staffer starts a conversation around safety and resources. HCAM often refers many pregnant and postpartum women into home visiting (HV) services within MCH. Moreover, clients and patients are often referred to House of Ruth.

¹ The questions were recently updated with the AHC project based on CMS recommended questions, including:

1. How often does anyone, including family and friends, physically hurt you?
2. How often does anyone, including family and friends, insult or talk down to you?
3. How often does anyone, including family and friends, threaten you with harm?

The answer options include: **Never Rarely Sometimes Fairly often Frequently**

Additionally, the Youth Services and Advocacy Project (YSAP) housed within BCHD provides services to primary and secondary victims of violence between ages 11 and 24.² Since October of 2020, YSAP has provided services for 119 victims, of which 29 (24 percent) were identified as domestic violence/intimate partner violence victims.

For all victims of crime, a Confidential Intake/Background Assessment Packet is completed which includes the following (*Note: this is not an exhaustive list*):

- Client Information (demographics)
- Housing Stabilization Determination
- Rental Assistance Determination
- Types of Victimization
 - Abuse and Neglect
 - Violent Crime (domestic and family violence)
 - Property Crime
 - Human Trafficking
 - Hate Crime
 - Other (i.e, bullying, stalking harassment, identity theft, etc.)
- Medical Health History
- Trauma history
- Substance use
- Mental health diagnosis
- Social and Community Support
- Social Needs
- Service Plan
- Referrals
- Consent
- PTSD Assessment
 - Youth and Adult

YSAP has provided funds toward relocation as well as partnered with agencies that provide job training with daycare that gives guaranteed employment at the end of the training. YSAP supports and service linkages include, but are not limited to, the following fields:

- Mental health services and supports
- Employment opportunities
- Housing assistance
- Transportation assistance
- Educational services
- Trauma-focused peer support groups

Partners providing referrals or services have been provided with a YSAP brochure of services as well as a one-pager providing an overview of the program. YSAP has received referrals from the following municipal agencies and community-based organizations with specific focus on

² For more information and/or support: 410.396.2206

domestic/intimate

partner

violence:

- State's Attorney's Office Victim Services
- House of Ruth
- ConneXions: A Community Based Arts School
- Renaissance Academy
- Keys Development
- Homeless Shelters (Michelle Smalls)
- Baltimore City Health Department - Internal Referrals
- Local Care Teams
- Self-referrals

YSAP has provided outgoing referrals to House of Ruth and the Rebuild, Overcome, and Rise (ROAR) Center at the University of Maryland for legal support. Additionally, all OYTS staff have been trained by the Governor's Maryland Safe at Home program on how to make proper referrals. The program protects the identity of domestic violence victims from their abusers and any agency or organization including the courts knowing where the victim resides.³

Altogether, BCHD believes domestic/intimate partner violence is a serious public health threat. BCHD welcomes a discussion of its programs and urges a **favorable** report for Council Bill #21-0041R.

³ Maryland Safe at Home, <https://sos.maryland.gov/ACP/Pages/default.aspx>



June 28, 2021

Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
City Hall, Room 400
100 N. Holliday Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

**RE: City Council Bill 21-0041R
Informational Hearing – Domestic Violence in Baltimore City**

Dear Council President Mosby and Members of the City Council:

The Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (MONSE) has reviewed City Council Bill Resolution 21-0041R, which seeks to invite agency leaders and community-based organizations to discuss programs available to victims of domestic violence. We gladly accept this opportunity to discuss MONSE's efforts to prevent domestic violence and provide trauma-informed services to survivors.

MONSE is deeply concerned about the increase in violence against women and committed to preventing intimate partner violence and sexual violence. Reducing domestic violence will require a collaborative approach which utilizes evidenced-based indicators and tools to assess the risk of homicides and connects victims at elevated risk of lethal violence to immediate crisis intervention, ongoing advocacy, and referrals to comprehensive services. We welcome this conversation about how city agencies and community partners can adopt a trauma-informed, healing-centered, and partnership-based approach to preventing violence and co-producing public safety.

Intimate Partner Violence

Numerous recent studies have confirmed what domestic violence experts feared about the impact of COVID-19 on the prevalence of intimate partner violence (IPV) and its victims nationwide. The pandemic has fostered increases in a range of stressors including unemployment, financial instability, and parental stress; all of which are associated with IPV. Rising tensions and persistent confinement as the result of stay-at-home orders can be a pressure cooker for explosive behaviors resulting in increased exposure to serious harm or death.

Historically and absent a pandemic, IPV victims are often hesitant or reluctant to reach out for services or contact law enforcement for fear that nothing will be done or fear that something will be done that is averse to their wishes and/or cause further harm and instability for their family. Bystanders often contemplate whether to support a victim's desire to seek services, particularly in communities of color. Systemic racism, fear of oppressive behavior, or simply not being believed have been contributing factors as to why victims of color state they do not seek assistance and simply "endure."

Due to the rising frequency and severity of abuse occurring since the start of the pandemic, Baltimore City is seeing a change in the help-seeking behaviors of victims. A recent academic analysis comparing law enforcement and emergency hotline calls for domestic violence during COVID-19 (March 9, 2020-October 31, 2020) for seven jurisdictions reflects that there has been a sustained increase in both domestic violence related calls for service to police per day and domestic violence related emergency hotline calls per day for Baltimore. In fact, Baltimore was one of only two cities to see an increase in both IPV-related police calls for service and IPV-related emergency hotline calls.

These concerning trends demand a strong coordinated community response and dedicated workgroup in Baltimore City focused on analyzing IPV efforts. Reducing IPV homicides requires increasing awareness and coordination between survivors and agencies focused on minimizing risk and increasing safety, as well proactive measures to ensure that the systems focused on offender accountability are synchronized.

Recognizing the need for more robust and coordinated responses to violence against women in Baltimore, MONSE applied in March for a grant from the Office on Violence Against Women in partnership with the Baltimore Police Department, House of Ruth, and Mercy Medical Center. We will be notified in October 2021 if we will be awarded \$750,000 to support a multi-disciplinary team focused on reducing intimate partner violence (IPV), sexual assault, and dating homicides.

MONSE is also working to reconstitute the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC). Until the CJCC was disbanded in 2017, the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council was arguably its most productive committee. A domestic violence committee will be among the first CJCC committees established, with the goals of 1) increasing the capacity of Baltimore City to identify and respond to domestic violence risk factors across multiple pathways; 2) improving the City's efforts to reach more high-risk victims of domestic violence and connect them to coordinated services; and 3) improving the City's efforts to leverage more offender focused models to victim safety to reduce IPV related homicides and the percentage of IPV related crimes to total Part 1 crimes in Baltimore City. The committee will also focus on strategies to reduce domestic violence among high-risk populations, including African Americans and those within the LGBTQ+ community.

In addition to addressing the needs of victims, MONSE recognizes the need to invest in changing the behavior of perpetrators of domestic violence. The House of Ruth's Abuse Intervention Program aims to increase the safety of victims of intimate partner violence by holding batterers accountable and teaching non-violent, relationship skills. MONSE is committed to supporting and expanding similar trauma-informed programs focused on changing the behavior of domestic violence perpetrators and holding them accountable. MONSE also operates the Visitation Center, which provides safe and family-friendly supervised visitations and monitored exchanges to families impacted by domestic violence at no cost.

Lethality Assessment Program

In 2004, a model domestic violence policy for Maryland law enforcement was developed by the Baltimore Police Department, Maryland Chiefs of Police Association, Maryland State Police, and Maryland Sheriff's Association. It was updated in 2013 to include a Lethality Assessment Program (LAP) designed by renowned expert Dr. Jacqueline Campbell of Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing. BPD's Victim Advocates administer the Lethality Assessment and send the assessments to House of Ruth for follow-up. House of Ruth offers comprehensive services, including immediate access to services through a 24 Hour Hotline; Client Service Coordinators who work with victims providing safety planning, basic needs assistance, and resource referral; free legal services; individual and group counseling; therapeutic and enrichment services for children of victims; and Abuse Intervention through Gateway Project and Si Puedo programs to individuals who are emotionally, physically, or sexually abusing their partner.

While we recognize the dynamic nature of domestic violence risk, and that risk assessment tools are not the sole predictor of lethality, they can be effective in increasing self-protective actions by victims of IPV. The process of risk assessment with a survivor of IPV gives the service provider access to the gold standard of information about the violence in the relationship but also makes the survivors a partner in that assessment so that they assess for themselves the extent of their danger. In other words, the LAP's strength is not in providing a tool for law enforcement to make decisions for women, but in providing a tool to increase the information women have when making decisions for themselves.

MONSE coordinates a LAP workgroup, which will explore the role risk assessments currently play and should play as it relates to prosecutions, pre-trial release, probation conditions, repeat offenders, fatality case review, victim outreach, coordination of services, and agency protocols.

Sexual Assault

In 2011, Baltimore City established a Sexual Assault Response Team (SART). The SART coordinator position is housed within MONSE and is currently grant-funded through the Victims of Crime Act administered by the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth and Victim's Services. The SART team consists of members of law enforcement, advocates, hospital staff, and prosecutors. The team meets every other month to discuss trends, areas of concern and strengths. On alternating months, members meet and complete Case Reviews of all unfounded cases. As a result of the efforts of the BPD and the SART team, Baltimore's reporting of unfounded cases fell from a national high of 30% to 4% in 2019. As indicated in BPD's 2019 Sexual Assault Investigations Report, BPD had two sexual assault cases identified as unfounded as compared to 15 in 2018. This can be directly attributed to the SART's review process, which reviews each unfounded case to ensure the finding of unfounded is accurate.

MONSE is looking forward to working with the City Council, city agencies, and community partners to making Baltimore City a safer and healthier place for all.

Respectfully submitted,



Shantay A. Jackson
Director, Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement

cc: Sunny Schnitzer, Deputy Mayor, Public Safety
Nina Themelis, Legislative Liaison, Mayor's Office of Government Relations
Natasha Mehu, Director, Mayor's Office of Government Relations