

VICTIM SERVICES IN BOZEMAN, MT



4/29/2022

Montana Board of Crime Control State and Tribal Victim Liaison Project

Data collected from a roundtable discussion with victim service providers who support Bozeman, Gallatin County, and the surrounding areas.

Victim Services in Bozeman, MT

MONTANA BOARD OF CRIME CONTROL STATE AND TRIBAL VICTIM LIAISON PROJECT

PARTICIPANTS

Thank you to County Attorney Lambert and Victim Services Director Stacy Wesen for assisting us with connecting victim service providers and allied partners in the Bozeman and Gallatin County community and for providing us the space to have this enlightening discussion. We were fortunate to share the space with many individuals who work together regularly. Those participating in the roundtable included:

- HAVEN
- Sexual Assault Counseling Center; Help Center, Inc.
- Bozeman Deaconess Health
- Bozeman City Police Department
- Gallatin County Court Services
- Gallatin County Victim Services
- Gallatin County Attorney's Office
- MSU VOICE Center
- Gallatin County Sheriff's Office

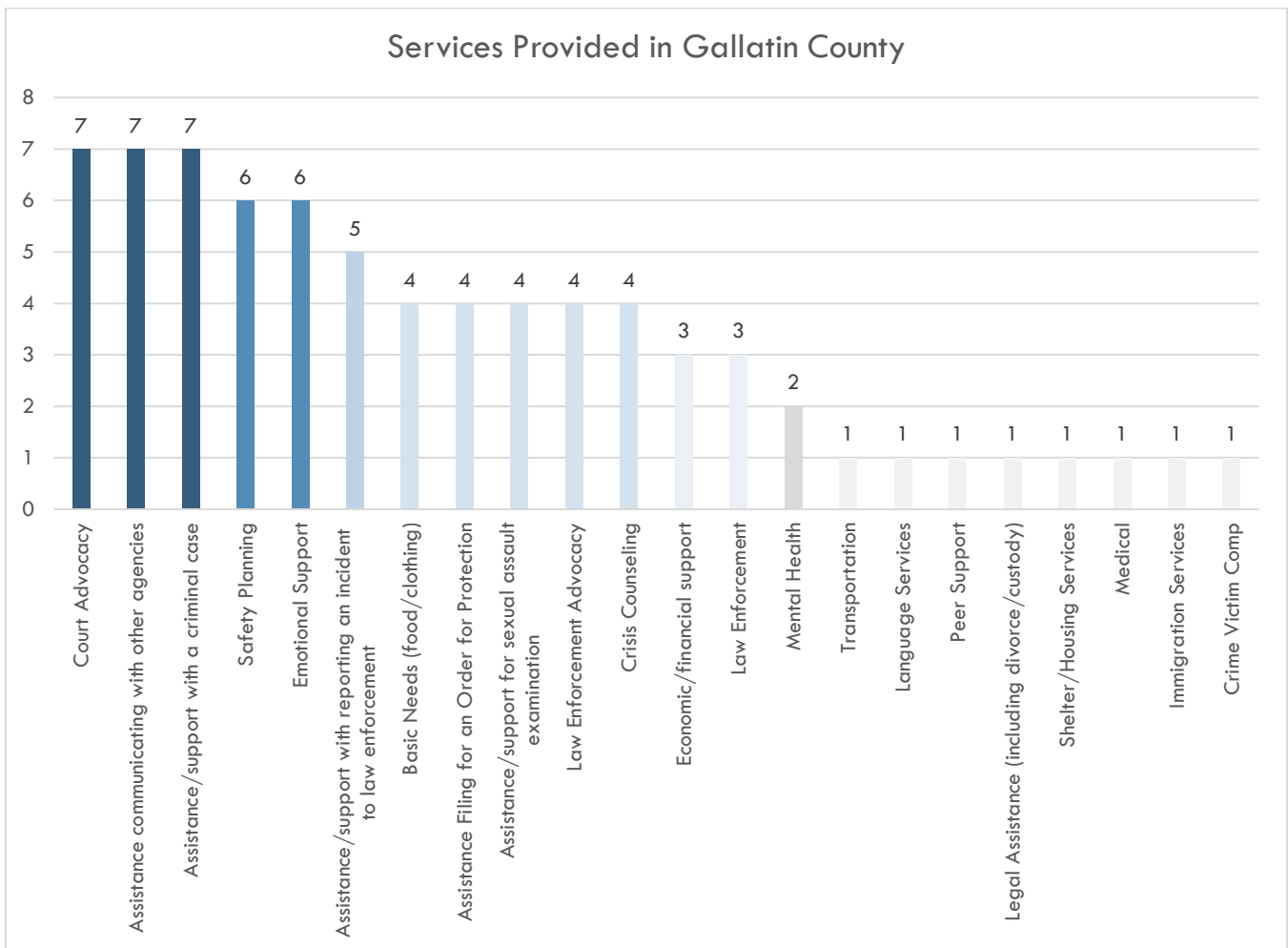
Services Represented

Following our gathering in the Bozeman area, service providers for the Bozeman and Gallatin County areas completed short surveys addressing the services they provide.

The following list and graph represent the services that are provided in Bozeman, Gallatin County, and the surrounding areas. One of the most unique aspects of the services provided in this community is the communication between agencies and continuity of care. This community has worked to assist victims from beginning to end of the system by communicating with other agencies and ensuring that victims do not fall through the gaps. As can be seen, assistance communicating with other agencies is one of the top identified services provided. This allows for victims to make connections and have warm hand-offs so they build better rapport with service providers. This also allows us to see where there are less services offered related to legal assistance and medical assistance.

| | |
|---|---|
| <i>Assistance communicating with other agencies</i> | 7 |
| <i>Assistance Filing for an Order for Protection</i> | 4 |
| <i>Assistance/support for sexual assault examination</i> | 4 |
| <i>Assistance/support with a criminal case</i> | 7 |
| <i>Assistance/support with reporting an incident to law enforcement</i> | 5 |
| <i>Basic Needs (food/clothing)</i> | 4 |
| <i>Court Advocacy</i> | 7 |
| <i>Crime Victim Comp</i> | 1 |
| <i>Crisis Counseling</i> | 4 |
| <i>Economic/financial support</i> | 3 |
| <i>Emotional Support</i> | 6 |
| <i>Immigration Services</i> | 1 |

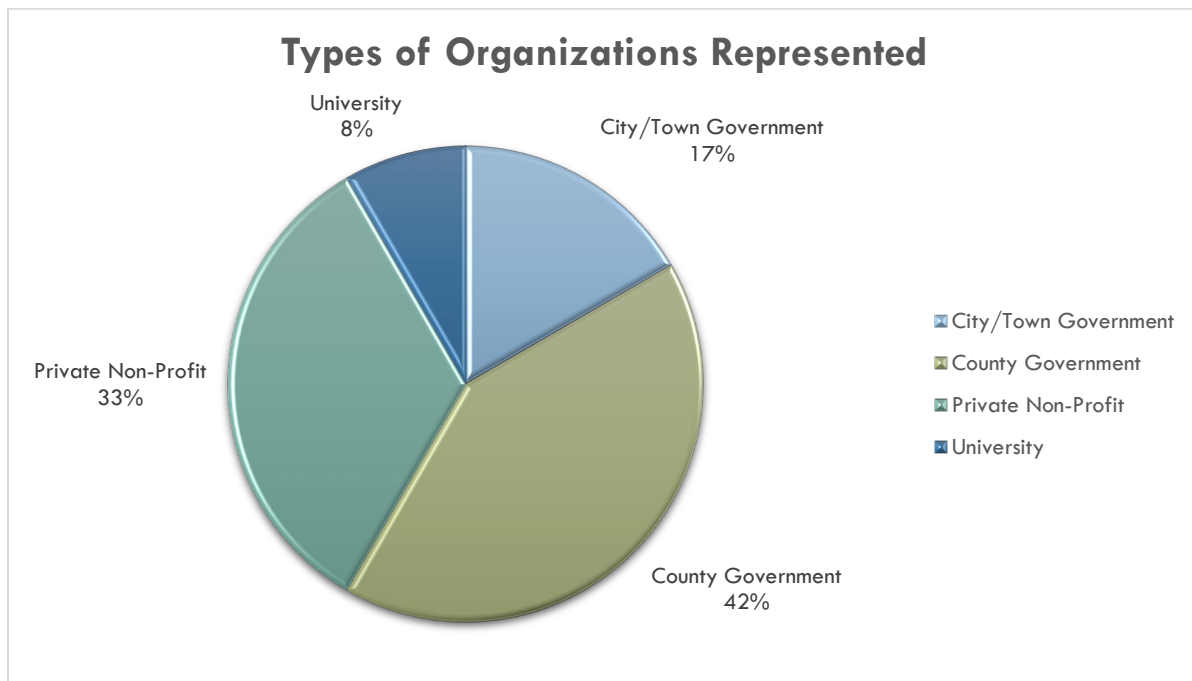
| | |
|--|-----------|
| Language Services | 1 |
| Law Enforcement | 3 |
| Law Enforcement Advocacy | 4 |
| Legal Assistance (including divorce/custody) | 1 |
| Medical | 1 |
| Mental Health | 2 |
| Peer Support | 1 |
| Safety Planning | 6 |
| Shelter/Housing Services | 1 |
| Transportation | 1 |
| Grand Total | 74 |



Types of Organizations Represented

The next set of data represents the types of organizations that attended the roundtable discussion. This data allows us to differentiate the type of organizations that are providing services, but see where those different organizations overlap or collaborate to provide services to victims of crime and survivors. The differences in organizations also allows us to see who is providing services and where we may have gaps in services.

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----------|
| <i>City/Town Government</i> | 2 |
| <i>County Government</i> | 5 |
| <i>Private Non-Profit</i> | 4 |
| <i>University</i> | 1 |
| Grand Total | 12 |



Gaps Discussed

Victim/Survivor Gaps:

- Secondary Traumatic Stress – the toxic stress impact on children in chronic domestic violence situations and lack of services related to this.
- Lack of options for survivors when it comes to testing and allegations.
- Everything is on the victim.
- Juvenile services for victims and offenders are limited.
- Services for minors are not supportive services as most require mandatory reporting. There are no confidential services available for minors.

Service Provider Gaps and Needs:

- Referrals from law enforcement through victim services. There's an online system and handwritten. Ensuring a consistent system of referrals.
- Restitution process is lacking instruction.
- Staffing – it is hard to hire, train, and re-train.
- Lack of access to legal services.

Training Needs:

- Lack of education/programming for perpetrators.
- Making funding for trainings accessible wherever it's at and/or making training accessible.

Justice System Gaps:

- Parenting plans and the lack of information through the different aspects of the system that impact families and children.
- Unavailable expert testimony for domestic violence (non-medical).
- Length of process (transition from medical to attorney's office through court). Delay in court works to benefit of offender in domestic violence and sexual assault cases. Works against the victim and survivor.
- State crime lab delays and having to testify in person.
- Rotating detectives to decrease burnout and for promotions, takes away detectives that have built rapport and understanding for victims. (VAWA detectives and training are rotated).
 - It doesn't do any good if detectives are rotating out because experience is lost.
- The differences in consistency and work of law enforcement officers from rural areas versus more urban areas.
- When it comes to mental health, services are lacking and there are no psychiatric emergency services. However, this is being built into healthcare in Bozeman.
- Lack of available, accessible, or easy to use translation services. For the translation services that are available, they may not be appropriate for victim services or criminal justice related matters (e.g. forensic interviews).
- Lack of understanding regarding the intersection of human trafficking with sexual assault and domestic violence.

Other:

- Cost of living for staff and victims and survivors. (Housing, childcare, need for multiple employment).
 - When a victim has to work multiple jobs and work around childcare, it is more difficult for them to participate in the system.
- Lack of nurses and funding for nurses.
- Referrals from urgent care are not trauma-informed.

Solutions Discussed:

Survivor/Victim Specific Solutions:

- Continued education for survivors and perpetrators on chronic stress and its impact.

Service Provider Specific Solutions:

- The ability to have an advocate available with Sexual Assault Examinations, supporting victim and SANE. (For both domestic violence and sexual assault cases).
- SANE training with law enforcement and emergency medical services.
- Availability of pediatric psychological services.
- More field advocates, or law enforcement-based victim specialists.
- Ensuring that we are putting survivors first.
- More defined roles in positions, creates respect and purpose in attending meetings.
 - No ego – people over process.
- Vertical advocacy.
- Having more availability of advocate credentialing.
- Attorney General as part of the process and knowledge of the work that's being done.

Justice System Specific Solutions:

- Making continued education available to law enforcement.
- Building "Victim Services 101" into law enforcement orientation.
- Training with judiciary, especially on parenting plans.
- More access to non-medical, domestic violence expert witnesses in court.
- Montana specific trainers and trainings.
- Free and/or cheap and easily accessible trainings.
- Trauma-informed training available.
- Forensic interview training available.
- Making more trainings mandated.
- Making trainings available locally and in the communities so people do not have to travel and is specific to their areas and needs.
- Funding that is available and specific for crime labs and interviews with victims and survivors.
- Making detective a rank so that detectives do not leave positions for promotions.
- More focus on partnerships, creation of teams, and collaborations.
- As Gallatin County has expanded, and significantly, the justice system now needs tools to expand as well
- Need for Sexual Assault Legal Services.
- Statutes for domestic violence and sexual assault that are modeled after the multi-disciplinary team statute so that agencies and providers can share information.
- Schools specific to human trafficker offenders, such as sex offender programming and domestic violence classes.
- More under 16 services, more availability.
- Programming specific to problematic sexual behavior.
- More accessible and available dating violence programming.
- Legislation related to juvenile offenders as they are unable to access resources as juveniles.

Broader Solutions:

- More nurses and more funding for nurses.

Conclusions reached

The discussions that were had in the county attorney's office in Bozeman were enlightening and educational. This community has spent many years developing strong relationships and multiple teams to best serve victims of crime and survivors. While many of the participants voiced that they sit on the same teams, they also explained that each of these teams serve a different purpose and they didn't feel there was too much duplication that the teams were obsolete. Some of the crucial teams in place include a multi-disciplinary team (MDT), sexual assault response team (SART), domestic violence response team (DVRT), and a high risk team (HRT). One thing that stands out about this community is that they have the resources and dedicated individuals to make these teams work. We discussed in length how this model has created significant cross communication and allowed for referrals and warm hand-offs.

While there are many positive things, the group was still able to identify vital gaps and barriers in their community. There has been a 161% in SANE exams from 2020-2022, without funding and training needed for more SANE nurses and without enough SANE nurses to keep up. Because there's a rotation in detectives so they can be promoted in rank, victim service providers are regularly having to work with new detectives in the SVU and build more rapport. They expressed how nice it would be to see a change in ranks so that the detectives in SVU don't have to transition out in order to be promoted.

This community has the ability to be a model for communities across the state. They've worked hard to build collaborations and continuity of care, areas that have been identified as gaps in other communities. They have also worked to establish strong trauma-informed training for law enforcement and ensured that many of the victim service providers are able to pursue additional professional training and be recognized as the professionals they are.

As always, we ran out of time and did not have as much of an opportunity to develop an action plan. Therefore, our plan moving forward would be to establish who is missing from the table, meet again, and start an action plan on how we can ensure the voices of victims are elevated and the services providers feel supported in their positions.