

## **OVW Fiscal Year 2018 Improving Criminal Justice Responses on Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, and Stalking Grant Program – Pinellas Criminal Domestic Battery Response Improvements Project Narrative**

### **Purpose of Application**

1. Description of the Community - The Sixth Judicial Circuit is Florida's third largest trial court. Sixty-nine judges – 45 circuit judges and 24 county judges – hear cases in the Sixth Judicial Circuit, comprised of Pasco and Pinellas counties on the Central West Coast of Florida. Pinellas County measures 280 square miles and is bordered by Tampa Bay on the east and the Gulf of Mexico on the west. Thirty-two circuit judges and 14 county court judges are situated in Pinellas, which has a total of seven courthouses in five locations. The major court facilities in Pinellas County are located in Clearwater and St. Petersburg.

Below is a profile of Pinellas County compared to Florida and the U.S.

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Pinellas County</b>	<b>All of Florida</b>	<b>United States</b>
Population ( )	938,098	19,893,297	318,857,056
Caucasian/White (2013)	83.4%	78.1%	77.7%
Black/African American (2013)	10.8%	16.7%	13.2%
Hispanic/Latino (Non-White) (2013)	8.6%	23.6%	17.1%
Mixed Races (Two or More) (2013)	2.0%	1.9%	2.4%
Language Other Than English Spoken	13.2%	27.4%	20.7%
Persons Below Poverty Level (2009-2013)	14.1%	16.3%	15.4%
Unemployment Rate (February 2015)	5.2%	5.6%	5.4%

An estimated 17.4 percent of all Pinellas County residents age five and over have a disability. (DisabilityPlanningData.com) According to the 2013 Limited English Proficient (LEP) Mapping Tool at [www.lep.gov/maps/](http://www.lep.gov/maps/) , 5.25 percent of the Pinellas County population is LEP.

About 7.7 percent of the population identifies as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered. (Florida Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered Democratic Caucus, 2006) This number is closer to 10 percent in St. Petersburg, which is in the southern portion of the county.

([http://www.sptimes.com/2006/08/07/Southpinellas/How\\_a\\_city\\_grows\\_gay\\_.shtml](http://www.sptimes.com/2006/08/07/Southpinellas/How_a_city_grows_gay_.shtml)) Pinellas County also has seen, says Pinellas Sheriff Bob Gualtieri, a troubling amount of human trafficking cases in recent years. (<http://www.tampabay.com/news/publicsafety/crime/in-pinellas-troubling-cases-of-human-trafficking-teen-prostitution/2154797>)

2. Need for the Project – In the five years since Pinellas launched a new civil Domestic Violence Court, significant strides have been made to enhance victim safety and offender accountability on the civil side. However, many of the same problem areas that existed in civil injunction cases continue to be problem areas for the criminal domestic violence court, as well as some specific to the county's criminal responses. While the County benefits from a strong collaborative environment, much remains to yet be addressed in county criminal to improve defendant rates of Batterers Intervention Program (BIP) enrollment and completion. Many who have been convicted of a misdemeanor charge or domestic violence who pick up new charges or violations of probation, or who are sentenced to a jail term, are often wait listed for in-jail BIP programs, programs that they often never get into while the court retains jurisdiction over the case. Those out on probation are given 20 days to get started in a BIP program by the Judge, which helps with getting BIP started timely. From May 1, 2017 through February 6, 2018, 113 offenders had BIP as a condition of probation, 15 completed classes (13%), 8 did not complete, 10 were in active warrant status, and 80 offenders were active. Of the 80 active probationers, 43 were in violation under court supervision. The low rate of completion means the court is not currently able to demonstrate the kind of accountability the stakeholders feel is appropriate. The Pinellas

Domestic Violence Collaboration – a collection of stakeholders that advise court on ways to improve the court's response to domestic violence - believes that in order to improve BIP completion timely before the court loses jurisdiction, the group needs to be able to engage these defendants during their jail stays when they violate. Pinellas currently has two male BIP groups available in the jail per week and none for females. At the time of this application, there were 56 defendants on the jail BIP wait list going back to October. The judge for the misdemeanor domestic violence cases says that she has limited her orders to attend BIP in the jail because of the length of the waitlist and inability to treat timely, even when the defendants says they want to do the programming while in jail.

Another major shortfall of the current misdemeanor domestic violence process is the lack of adequate support for the victim. The State Attorney looks out for the state's interest and may prosecute with or without the victim's consent. The county has two domestic violence service centers, one in south county and one in north county. However, the limited staffing coverage by paid staff and volunteers prevents in-court support for many victims who appear for advisories, adjudication hearings, motions, and trials. This misses important opportunities to provide not only morale support, but to inform survivors of available help as well. Making survivors more aware of resources in their community can help them recognize domestic violence and its impact on them and their families.

Finally, the Court and Probation Office would like to improve many of its policies and processes regarding the handling of misdemeanor domestic violence cases. These procedures include handling of weapon and ammunition surrender, frequency of defendant drug testing, identifying and serving specialty populations such as trafficking victims other sexual abuse

victims, addressing the special needs of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBTQ) population, and improving compliance to all terms of probation, including completing BIP.

3. Service Area – The service area for the proposed project is Pinellas County, Florida. Pinellas County, on Florida's West Coast, is a 280-square mile peninsula bordered by the Gulf of Mexico and Tampa Bay. The County from tip to tip is 38 miles long and 15 miles wide at its broadest point. The current population of Pinellas County is 938,098. With a mild, sub-tropical climate and miles of white sand beaches, the county is the most popular tourist destination on the Gulf of Mexico, drawing nearly six million tourists annually. A service area map is enclosed.

4. Target Population – The population of focus for the proposed project is adult parties (defendants and victims) of all ages, races and ethnicities who are parties to misdemeanor domestic battery, domestic assault, stalking, and other related domestic violence charges. This court also hears all violations for violations of injunctions for protection against domestic violence, dating, repeat, sexual, and stalking or cyberstalking cases. In 2017, the misdemeanor court handled 1,798 cases involving 2,278 charge counts. Over the grant's three-year period, the court would serve defendants and victims in over 5,000 cases.

5. Problems to be Addressed – For reasons discussed under Need for the Project at #2 above, the Project calls for increasing the availability of BIP in the Pinellas County jail from two groups per week to six, including two groups for women.

Second, the Pinellas DV Collaboration aims to augment efforts to provide early access to advocacy and services by providing needed intervention when a victim is engaged in a misdemeanor court proceeding. Written materials will be provided early to ensure that victims are aware of resources available to them, including emergency shelter, crisis assistance, legal assistance, long-term counseling, transitional housing, economic assistance, substance abuse

programs, services for children, court assistance with accommodations for disabilities or with interpreters for non-English speaking persons, and other community outreach programs. A review of this function and these resources will be conducted by project stakeholders to ensure that petitioners are provided a safety plan with adequate information to meet their safety needs and that there are no significant impediments to accessing these resources. There will be augmented efforts to link victims and their children to services while the case is ongoing, and efforts will be made to ensure that victims know their options, are aware of resources, know the status of their case and are informed of offender compliance with court-ordered services. Efforts will also be undertaken to share and update information regarding resources countywide.

Domestic Violence advocates will make an effort to reach out to the elderly, deaf and communities of color to bridge logistical and cultural issues related to domestic abuse. Also, in order to provide the necessary human services and supports to persons who have been charged with criminal activity as a result of being a victim of domestic violence, qualified/ certified domestic violence professionals must work with them to make appropriate community referrals such as to legal services, develop safety plans, and support them as they work toward independent lifestyles for themselves and their children.

Third, the Domestic Violence Court stakeholder group as a whole does not have a comprehensive understanding of the specific needs and community resources available to special victim populations, particularly the LGBTQ population and trafficking victims. The Court and related stakeholders are seeking training on identification of trafficking victims and LGBTQ issues in cases of domestic violence. Collaboration partner Gulfcoast Legal Services can assist with representation of trafficking victims, but to date, this resource remains underutilized within the domestic violence court system. The Collaboration seeks to utilize this service as well as

identify further community services available to address the needs of both of these populations.

The latter effort does not specifically address the OVW Trafficking Priority Area, but it is training and awareness work preliminary to a more comprehensive approach in the future.

Finally, the DV Collaboration will review and make recommendations to the Court regarding policies to ensure firearm and ammunition surrender by abusers, increasing the drug testing of abusers, monitoring and enforcing compliance with BIP probation provisions, as well as other policies and practices identified by the Collaborative during the project. The Collaboration has already developed policies to protect victim confidentiality and to address information sharing among the stakeholder members.

6. Current Services Offered – The Pinellas Domestic Violence Collaboration has primarily addressed improvements to its civil domestic violence injunction process to date. The criminal process runs according to Florida statute, but has not undergone a review by the Collaboration for efficacy in addressing domestic violence.

7. Gaps in Services – As discussed above, there is insufficient access to BIP groups in the jail, there are inadequate probationary resources to effectively drug screen abusers, victim advocacy lacks comprehensiveness, policies to address abuser compliance requires review and improvement, and the Collaboration seeks training in the identification and needs of specialty populations.

8. Previous Efforts to Address the Proposed Project Targets – Pinellas County previously received OVW grant funding to start its new civil domestic violence court and to add a new compliance monitoring effort. These efforts were continued with Justice for Families funding in 2014. The new civil court has provided more time to address intimate partner cases, better addressed child issues, implemented new protocols to protect petitioners, initiated new firearms

surrender policies, and grew its compliance monitoring function to about 700 cases at any given time. Community collaboration with the Courts, which was largely absent in 2011, is healthy and continually working to improve the Pinellas response to domestic violence. The Collaboration now seeks to turn its attentions to the misdemeanor criminal domestic violence proceedings.

9. Complement to Florida STOP Violence Against Women Implementation Plan - The State's STOP Violence Against Women Plan uses the five percent set-aside for courts for use in another Florida jurisdiction targeting adult victims of domestic violence attempting to maneuver and deal with overlapping issues in a dependency drug court system. While the five percent set aside also funds a statewide domestic violence summit, this training opportunity is limited to five people covering both Pinellas and Pasco counties and occurs only once per year.

10. Other FY2018 Grant Funding Opportunities – Pinellas County and the Sixth Judicial Circuit also applied for a new OVW Justice for Families grant to continue improvements to the civil injunction process. This criminal proposal will complement what Pinellas County is doing to address domestic violence and does not duplicate it because these different kinds of cases are handled in separate courts with different statutory requirements and processes.

11. Descriptions of Community Victim Populations to Be Served – Last year, Pinellas County had 6,829 reported domestic violence offenses, an average of 18.7 domestic violence offenses per day. Eleven victims were killed by their abusers. Of the last 145 fatalities, only 14% of the victims had contact with a domestic violence center. Pinellas County has a 51% higher rate of reported offenses than neighboring Hillsborough and actually had *429 more offenses than Hillsborough* even though that county has 400,000 more people. Whether due to better reporting or a more severe problem, there is more stress put on agencies working on domestic violence issues.

Annually, the local domestic violence centers serve about 1200 justice involved clients annually. In south county, the population served is about 40% Caucasian, 41% African-American, 90% low income, and the majority of adults are women. In north county, the population served over 1,000 more clients. The north county population is about 60 percent Caucasian, 18 percent African-American, and 16 percent Hispanic. Seventy-one percent of the clients were women. Many do not have anywhere else to go, have no marketable job skills, and may have substance abuse or mental health issues as a result of trauma. It is not uncommon for victims of domestic violence to have been controlled by their abuser, having been made to take drugs as part of that control, or to break the law as part of that control, or to not leave the house as part of that control. They are often ill-equipped for independent living, which includes accessing community resources.

About 7.7 percent of the overall Pinellas County population identifies as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered, and the collaboration is aware that this population is heavily affected by trafficking and sexual violence, particularly if they are in or aging out of the foster care system. Our collaboration aims to learn more about how to identify and assist both trafficking victims and victims who identify as LGBTQ who are involved in Pinellas domestic violence proceedings.

### **What Will Be Done**

1. Goals and Objectives - The proposed project will address (Purpose Area 5) Strengthen legal advocacy service programs and other victim services, (Purpose Area 6) Educate judges, courts and court-based and court-related personnel, (Purpose Area 16) Develop and promote local policies that enhance best practices, and (Purpose Area 22) Develop multidisciplinary high-risk teams focusing on reducing domestic violence and domestic violence homicides. Pinellas County



Government will work with the Sixth Judicial Circuit Court, Community Actions Stops Abuse (CASA), Religious Community Services (RCS) Pinellas, and the Pinellas County Sheriff to enhance the Pinellas Misdemeanor Domestic Battery Court. The project proposes to: **1) expand availability of Batterers Intervention Program** groups available in the jail for those offenders who have been arrested, violated probation or been sentenced to jail time for domestic battery to increase program completions; **2) advocate for and help victims through services and training** - provide early access to advocacy and services through two local domestic violence service providers to help provide needed intervention and support during all domestic violence proceedings and to coordinate service referral; **3) provide for more frequent substance abuse testing** of defendants during probation for misdemeanor domestic battery, **4) review firearm surrender** policies and adopt new procedures to better ensure compliance; and **5) train stakeholders** to identify and address the specialized needs for LGBTQ victims and victims who are sex trafficking victims. The Pinellas Misdemeanor Domestic Violence Court and its collaborative partners are strongly committed to addressing the safety of victims and to the strong enforcement of Florida law addressing domestic violence.

## 2. Specific Tasks and Activities –

**BIP Expansion** - The grant will allow the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office (PCSO) to add four Batterers Intervention Program (BIP) groups at the jail: two for women and two for men. At present, only two male groups are offered and both have a significant wait list. One group is facilitated by a contractor and the other facilitated by a BIP certified PCSO Social Worker. With an OVW grant award, the Sheriff's Office will be able to contract for the additional sessions while working to enable its internal social work staff to become properly trained and certified to continue these sessions after grant funding ends. A second PCSO Social Worker is matriculating through the BIP certification process and is expected to become fully certified by the end of the calendar year. A third PCSO Social Worker will initiate BIP certification during the second year

of the grant. Funding will also support professional development for PCSO Social Workers to attend Domestic Abuse Intervention Program's (DAIP) training in "The Duluth Model" and purchase "Creating a Process of Change for Men Who Batter" curriculum for use at the jail. DAIP curricula are grounded in the Duluth Model, a constantly evolving philosophy based in DAIP's work to end men's violence against women through coordinated community response. The philosophy and concepts that guide the material can be challenging for both new and experienced facilitators. Training provides important opportunities for participants to understand the curriculum and the process of facilitation, to examine their motivation for doing batterer-intervention work, and to examine their beliefs about men who batter and women who are battered. DAIP strongly encourages anyone who is using early versions of the curriculum, or parts or adaptations of more-recent versions, to complete a training program.

### **The Duluth Model Approach**

- A commitment to shift responsibility for victim safety from the victim to the community and state
- A shared collective mission and strategy regarding intervention that is based on a number of core philosophical agreements
- A shared understanding of how interventions are to be accountable to victim safety and offender accountability
- A shared understanding of how each agency's (practitioners') actions either support or undermine the collective goals and strategy of intervention
- Shared definitions of safety, battering, danger and risk, and accountability
- Prioritizes the voices and experiences of women who experience battering in the creation of those policies and procedures

**Victim Advocacy** - The Collaboration aims to augment efforts to provide early access to advocacy and services by providing more advocacy resources through two local domestic violence service providers in the Pinellas County Justice Center to help provide needed intervention and support during all misdemeanor domestic violence proceedings. Written materials will be provided early to ensure that petitioners are aware of resources available to them, including emergency shelter, crisis assistance, legal assistance, long-term counseling, transitional housing, economic assistance, substance abuse programs, services for children, court assistance with accommodations for disabilities or with interpreters for non-English speaking

persons, and other community outreach programs. A review of this function and these resources will be conducted by project stakeholders to ensure that petitioners are provided a safety plan with adequate information to meet their safety needs and that there are no significant impediments to accessing these resources. There will be augmented efforts to link victims and their children to services while the case is ongoing, and efforts will be made to ensure that petitioners know their options, are aware of resources, know the status of their case and are informed of offender compliance with court-ordered services. Efforts will also be undertaken to share and update information regarding resources countywide.

***Increased Substance Abuse Testing of Abusers*** – The misdemeanor probation office, operated by the Pinellas County Sheriff, will increase substance abuse testing of domestic violence probationers from current five or six times annually to twice monthly. The probation officers feel that the current lack of resources necessary to do frequent testing permits many probationers to continue using alcohol and drugs that may exacerbate their propensity to use violence to exert power and control over their victims. While on probation, these abusers will be held more accountable for their actions, and their sobriety will better affect their BIP completion, which will help prevent future domestic violence. Those who fail the increased drug screens will return to the domestic violence court to account to the judge for their violations.

***Firearm and Ammunition Surrender/Other Policies*** – The Civil Domestic Violence Court successfully implemented measures to further ensure the surrender of firearms and ammunition for the duration of the protection orders. The misdemeanor court to date has not. While the adjudication orders specify that the defendant cannot possess a gun or ammunition, this is the extent of the surrender efforts. The Pinellas Collaboration plans to work together to more

comprehensively inquire about and monitor the surrender of weapons and ammunition to ensure a greater level of protection for victims.

The Misdemeanor Domestic Violence Judge will chair a domestic violence advisory group comprised of members of Pinellas County Government, Domestic Violence Service Providers, the Clerk of Circuit Court, Sheriff, community law programs, treatment providers, and other domestic violence prevention advocates, collectively called the Pinellas County Collaboration to Prevent Domestic Violence. This collaboration will enable Pinellas to further hone procedures that promote victim safety, ensure accountability for domestic violence perpetrators, and enhance informed, educated judicial decision making. The Collaboration will advise regarding implementation of this project; participate in inter-disciplinary training; determine how to meet trafficking victim, sexual identity and ethnic needs; and advance a continuation funding strategy. The Collaboration will meet periodically throughout the project to provide multi-disciplinary input.

***Training of Stakeholders and Response to Sex Trafficking*** - All relevant stakeholders currently get trained in the basics of domestic violence. The Project will aid in training on identifying victims who are also trafficking victims and training on the special needs of LGBTQ individuals in domestic violence cases. The identification of victims will be done according to evidence-based or promising practices currently available. The assigned judge(s), court-based personnel and other domestic violence project subrecipients will participate in about three trainings – one for each of the issues identified above. These training opportunities have never been offered before by the collaborative. Collective partner agencies have already expressed a need for this training as well as a willingness to participate.

The Collaboration has recently learned of a resource through DV Collaboration partner Gulfcoast Legal Services (GLS) that the project can leverage for victims of sex trafficking and other severe forms of trafficking. GLS has a cooperative agreement with the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, to offer free legal assistance to citizen and immigrant victims of human trafficking. The project is supplemented by additional VOCA funding from the Florida Attorney General's Office. With these resources, GLS provides to trafficking victims not only assistance with obtaining protection orders and victims assistance, but it also offers immigration assistance to allow victims to obtain legal resident status and help to have criminal records related to the trafficking removed from victims' records to help them rebuild their lives with a clean foundation. GLS refers survivors to other case management providers as well as for help accessing benefits such as food assistance, healthcare, and a variety of other services. GLS also provides free technical assistance regarding general information and consultation on specific cases of human trafficking, including participating in systemic impact, class-action cases against traffickers. GLS leads trainings (at no cost) for government agencies, other legal providers, law enforcement, and local organizations tailored to increase participants' understanding of the dimensions of human trafficking, relevant laws, and benefits available to survivors.

3. Expected outcomes – Expected outcomes for this three-year project are to: 1) attain higher completion rates (35 percent or better) and increased enrollees (300 or more) for Batterers Intervention programming through the expansion of opportunities to engage in BIP sessions in the jail, thus eliminating existing wait lists as well as accommodating defendants who want to get BIP sessions started while in the jail; 2) effectively advocate for and ensure coordination of community resource referrals for victims through the increased attendance and support for

victims of advocates from the local domestic violence centers for misdemeanor proceedings in which they are involved; 3) increase monitoring of abusers for aggravating factors such as substance abuse through more frequent drug testing – about 18 more tests per probationer; 4) ensure the surrender of firearms and ammunition in the possession and control of abusers through improved compliance monitoring; 5) learn to identify victims who are also victims of trafficking and provide necessary interventions; and 6) learn about the needs of the LGBTQ community to more effectively respond to these cases.

4. Timeline - The project activities and timeline are proposed as follows:

<b>Activities:</b>	<b>Targeted Completion Date:</b>	<b>Person(s) Responsible:</b>
Convene the Pinellas County Collaboration to address implementation of project activities and measure progress. The Collaboration will also make recommendations for further improvements as needed.	October 2018; Meetings at least quarterly; Collaboration members already identified	Michelle Ardabily, Chief Deputy Courts Administrator and Misdemeanor Domestic Violence Judge Holly Grissinger
Pinellas County contracts with subrecipients CASA, RCS; enters into agreement with Sheriff	October- November, 2018	Deborah Berry, Dir. of Justice Coordination
CASA and RCS hires and trains advocates	October – November, 2018	Suzanne Horn (CASA), Erica Wiedemann (RCS)
Attend OVW grantee orientation	As scheduled by OVW	Ardabily
Coordinate OVW Technical Assistance with assigned/selected provider	Years 1, 2 and 3	Ardabily
Institute a data collection plan	Upon implementation of enhancements	Ardabily and Criminal Administration Coordinator Stephanie Lorch
Sheriff enters into new three-year expanded contract to add 4 more groups in the jail	November- December 2018	Program Services Supervisor Ramona Jubar Schaefer and Sheriff Bob Gualtieri
Begin increasing referrals to BIP in the jail	January 2019	Judge Holly Grissinger

Begin drug testing of dv probationers twice monthly	January 2019	Sergeant Richard Bailey
2 Sheriff Social Workers attend curriculum training for “Creating a Process of Change for Men Who Batter – Comprehensive” and Sheriff’s Office purchases curriculum	September 2019	Schaefer
Collaboration subcommittee takes on community resource review and makes recommendations for protocol changes	Initiated in Jan 2019; Initial Review Completed by April 2019; Implemented by June 2019	Ardabily coordinates with oversight by Collaboration
Team, including judges, attends training on identifying trafficking victims	January 2019	Ardabily
1 Sheriff Social Worker attains BIP certification	September 2020	Schaefer
1 Sheriff Social Worker attends curriculum training for “Creating a Process of Change for Men Who Batter – Comprehensive”	September 2021	Schaefer
Stakeholders sent to Basic DV Training, as needed	Year 1, 2, or 3	Ardabily
Team, including judges, attends training on LGBTQ issues in DV cases	October 2019	Ardabily
Court issues new firearm surrender protocols	June 2019	Grissinger and Ardabily
Court team will make trafficking victim referrals to GLS as identified	Year 1, 2, and 3	Grissinger and Ardabily
Send five judges, staff and other stakeholders to OVW-approved trainings	Year 1, 2 and 3	Ardabily, Berry and Helinger
Submit OVW financial and programmatic reports	Per OVW schedule	Ardabily and Berry

5. How funding will address identified needs – The requested project funding is needed to meet the need to expand batterers intervention programming in the jail and provide a mechanism for the county to provide sustainability for this expansion. With this critical piece filled, the team can begin to improve its accountability monitoring with hopes of enforcing completion. Funds

for increased drug testing is also important to emphasize the misdemeanor court's commitment to accountability. The victim is often unrepresented and alone during the criminal proceedings, so the requested funding would enable the County to give more support to victims while also encouraging them to have a voice in the process, providing them more autonomy, and connecting them to needed services. More funding for training will also enable the County stakeholders to begin understanding and addressing specialty populations such as the LGBTQ community and victims of sex trafficking. While this effort does not specifically address the OVW Trafficking Priority Area, the project partners see this training and awareness work preliminary to a more comprehensive approach in the future. Funding will also help reimburse Pinellas County for performing the fiscal agent duties and assuring all grantee requirements are met.

6. Tangible products to be created – No tangible products are planned at this time other than potential court forms like affidavits or defendant instructional forms.

7. How Pinellas County is currently addressing victim safety and autonomy – Pinellas County's Misdemeanor Domestic Violence Section R hears domestic cases all week. Judge Holly Grissinger listens to victim testimony in considering each case. Probationers are ordered to complete Batterers Intervention. The local domestic violence centers try to provide assistance to the victims, but coverage is not comprehensive for this court, as current volunteers and staff also must provide assistance to victims in felony cases as well as civil cases heard in the Unified Family Court divisions in the same building. The Pinellas DV Collaboration has worked together for five years under OVW grant funding to create a civil domestic violence court for intimate partner cases that hears proceedings in a different courthouse in the north and south portions of the county. The Collaboration worked to achieve new civil improvements dedicated to victim safety and autonomy by completely reviewing court security protocols, instituting



comprehensive assistance at intake, referring clients to community services as desired, hearing related child matters at the same time that the final injunction is granted and initiating abuser compliance monitoring. This proposal aims to work on similar efforts to address victim safety and autonomy in the Pinellas County misdemeanor domestic violence court as it is perceived that the criminal process is lagging behind the county's civil process in many respects – monitoring and enforcing compliance; providing victim advocacy, outreach and referral to needed services; and involving stakeholder collaboration to bring different perspectives to bear as the County works to institute best practices. The Circuit is also discussing the future possibility of instituting an integrated domestic violence court -- one domestic violence court for both criminal and civil offenses, and this project would work to get both courts to similar standards following OVW guidance and identified best practices.

8. How Proposed Project will be Accessible – This project will provide comprehensive services to survivors living in ethnically and racially diverse, mostly urban, Pinellas County. The Collaboration will assemble available informational materials to highlight the community resources, including legal resources. Information regarding these services will also be provided to all members of the Pinellas County Collaboration for the Prevention of Domestic Violence who serve victims. Key to outreach will be the judicial advocates and volunteers who attend the misdemeanor domestic violence proceedings to support victims. They will ensure that vital information regarding critically needed, free service is provided to all petitioners.

The project will serve individuals with disabilities, deaf individuals and persons with limited English proficiency. The Circuit utilizes a system of notification to all parties that have disabilities which explains how to request accommodations for their disabilities when receiving court services. Persons who are deaf can request an American Sign Language interpreter or other

accommodation, as necessary, which the Court will supply at no cost to the litigant. The court notification language also addresses how to request foreign language interpreters. The Court provides Supreme Court certified or registered language interpreters in domestic violence cases.

### **Who Will Implement the Project**

Pinellas County Government and the Sixth Judicial Circuit will be responsible for implementing the project. The project, entitled the **Pinellas Criminal Domestic Battery Response Improvements Project**, involves the Collaboration of Pinellas County Government, the Sixth Judicial Circuit, Community Action Stops Abuse, Inc. (CASA – a domestic violence services provider), Religious Community Services (RCS) Pinellas (a domestic violence services provider), and the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office (jail programming and misdemeanor probation). These partners, who have worked together since the new civil DV Court was being planned in 2011, have identified their roles for this project as follows:

Sixth Judicial Circuit (Pinellas) – The Sixth Judicial Circuit Court will be responsible for implementing the project. Judicial Leadership for the Domestic Violence Court is provided by County Judge Holly Grissinger. Judge Grissinger was appointed to the County Bench in 2014 where she has served continuously hearing misdemeanor domestic violence cases. Prior to her appointment, Judge Grissinger worked 13 years in the State Attorney's Office handling primarily crimes against children. The Court's Chief Deputy Court Administrator Michelle Ardabily shall be assigned to serve as project coordinator. Ms. Ardabily will ensure that all grant responsibilities are fulfilled and help coordinate trainings and meetings of the Pinellas Collaborative. Ms. Ardabily previously provided project direction for an OVW Court Training and Improvements Project, a Justice for Families Project, and a previous Safe Havens Supervised Visitation and Safe Exchange grant. Ms. Ardabily currently serves on the Center for Court

Innovation Domestic Violence Training Fundamentals work group as well as other past CCI domestic violence-related workgroups. Ms. Ardabili has worked for the Circuit for over 29 years.

Pinellas County Government - Pinellas County's Office of Justice Coordination shall serve as the fiscal agent for the grant and will electronically submit all grant fiscal and programmatic reports and oversee all provider contracting. Pinellas County has extensive experience successfully applying for and managing grants, both federal and local.

Community Action Stops Abuse, Inc. (CASA) – CASA, providing services to south Pinellas since 1977, provides shelter, substance abuse treatment, a rapid re-housing program, legal advocacy, a child welfare program and community outreach programs for battered women, men and their children. CASA supplies justice advocates in the St. Petersburg Clerk's Office and the Pinellas County Justice Center to provide advocacy interventions to survivors and their children, including but not limited to crisis intervention, safety education, information and referrals, and advocacy. CASA justice advocates also attend hearings and trials in support of victims. Under this project, CASA has agreed to provide a full time dedicated Justice Advocate in an effort to provide more comprehensive coverage of efforts to enable early access to advocacy and service to victims of domestic violence and help keep them informed throughout their involvement with the Domestic Violence Court proceedings.

Religious Community Services (RCS) Pinellas – RCS, located in north Pinellas, provides shelter, transitional housing, legal advocacy, legal referral, support groups, and community outreach programs to battered women and their children. RCS volunteer and staff justice advocates in the Clearwater Clerk's Office and the Pinellas County Justice Center to provide advocacy interventions to survivors of domestic violence and their children, including but not

limited to crisis intervention, safety education, information and referrals, and advocacy. RCS justice advocates also attend hearings in support of victims. Under this project, RCS has also agreed to provide a full time dedicated Justice Advocate in an effort to provide more comprehensive coverage of efforts to enable early access to advocacy and service to victims of domestic violence and help keep them informed throughout their involvement with the Domestic Violence Court proceedings.

Pinellas County Sheriff – The Pinellas County Sheriff's Office is primarily responsible for law enforcement and public safety. The Sheriff is also responsible for service of all legal process (writs, warrants, subpoenas, and other legal documents) directed to them by the courts or the county commissioners, and in Pinellas County is the sole keeper of the county jail and provider of court security. In Pinellas County the Sheriff also provides several other countywide services including Sexual Predator and Offender Tracking (SPOT), Flight, Civil Process, Misdemeanor Probation and Child Protection Investigation. The Misdemeanor Probation Unit monitors and enforces compliance to court ordered conditions on offenders sentenced to probation for misdemeanor offenses. In addition to post-sentencing case management, the unit provides referrals to relative community resources, which promotes higher success rates.

The Jail provides a number of substance abuse prevention, anger management, GED, criminogenic centered programming, discharge planning assistance, and other self-improvement opportunities through the Program Services Section and various community providers. More than 400 program groups and classes are scheduled monthly.

The human trafficking training portion of this proposal does not specifically address the OVW Trafficking Priority Area, but is training and awareness work preliminary to a more comprehensive approach in the future.