

PROGRAM
PROFILE

Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation

PROGRAM

Tribal Victim Services Program

Since 2001



TRIBAL ACCESS TO
JUSTICE INNOVATION



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Rebekah Jones, The Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation, and the Tribal Victim Services Program for their hard work, innovation, and heartfelt contributions to their community.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1

TRIBAL DEMOGRAPHICS

Location
Land Characteristics
Population

2

BACKGROUND

Problem to be Addressed
Target Population
Program History

3

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Goals and Objectives
Program Design

Administration
Case Flow Process

4

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Funding
Technical Assistance
Partnerships

Factors Contributing
to Success
Challenges
Lessons Learned

5

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Number Served
Program Effectiveness
Community Response

Success Stories
Documents
References



SUMMARY

The Tribal Victim Services Program addresses issues of abuse and violence within the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation. Program staff advocate for victims and organize specific projects and services to address sexual assault, domestic violence, and elder abuse. The program offers educational presentations, adult and youth group sessions, a batterers intervention program, and art therapy classes. In addition, the program also operates a Sexual Assault Forensic Examination, Support, Training, Access and Resources (SAFESTAR) site program. The Tribal Victim Services program has won several awards for its various projects.

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ONE TRIBAL DEMOGRAPHICS

1. LOCATION

The Pascua Yaqui Tribe is headquartered on the Pascua Yaqui Indian Reservation in Tucson, Arizona. The reservation is known as “New Pascua,” a reflection of the fact that the tribe has several other communities throughout southern Arizona, many of which are older than the reservation itself. These communities include Old Pascua (also in Tucson), Barrio Libre (in the City of South Tucson), Marana (northwest of Tucson), and Guadalupe (southeast of Phoenix).



TWO BACKGROUND

1. PROBLEM TO BE ADDRESSED

Before the creation of the Tribal Victim Services program, the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation struggled with high rates of domestic violence and had no institutional means of addressing it. The only services available were a Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) located off the reservation and two shelters in cities many miles away. To address the silent and pervasive presence of domestic violence within the community, and to help tribal members who were seeking safety and support, the tribe applied for grant funding to hire a program coordinator for victims services.

2. TARGET POPULATION

Though the program is primarily focused on addressing issues of domestic violence and sexual assault, program staff work with all kinds of crime victims, including tribal members and non-members who live within the service area.

3. PROGRAM HISTORY

In 2000, the Tribal Social Services Department felt that there was a need to address domestic violence and sexual assault within the tribe. At the time, the closest victim services provider was located many miles off the reservation at the local Young Woman's Christian Association (YWCA). Social services staff decided to reach out to the tribal victim advocate at the YWCA to see if she would help the tribe develop a domestic violence program. The tribe ultimately hired the victim advocate to assist with this project.

As she began planning the Victim Service Program, the victim advocate quickly realized that many community members were uncomfortable talking about domestic violence. Even when people in the community knew of family or friends living with domestic violence, those individuals were often unwilling to come forward and



share their stories with program staff. She recognized that program staff needed to build more trust in the community around issues of domestic violence in order for the program to succeed.

THREE

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

1. PROGRAM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Tribal Victim Services Program seeks to end domestic violence and help members of the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation return to traditional ways, a time when women were valued and abuse was not



tolerated. In Potawatomi culture and tradition, women were important decision makers who were consulted before the tribe could organize war parties. The program would like to help the community return to its customary ways by acknowledging the strength and value of its women.

2. PROGRAM DESIGN

The Tribal Victim Services Program takes a holistic approach to serving the needs of men, women, and children who are experiencing family violence and/or sexual assault. In addition to providing general victim advocacy services, the program also has several other focus areas that allow it to respond to the diverse needs of its community. The Tribal Victim Services Program has six staff members, each of whom, in addition to providing general advocacy services, has at least one other area of specialty. The program's focus areas include:

- Victim Advocacy Services
- Elder Services
- SAFESTAR
- Batterers Intervention Program
- Save Visit/Safe Exchange

- Criminal Justice Coordinating Unit
- Community Outreach and Education
- Healing through Arts

Victims Services: The program responds to participants' needs by providing immediate and robust interventions for those who are seeking safety. The program has a 24-hour hotline and arranges a coordinated crisis response with law enforcement in order to respond effectively in urgent situations. Although the program is designed to work with all victims of crime, program staff work primarily with victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

All program staff are victim specialists who work with victims of crime to identify safety concerns and assess individual needs. They ensure that victims are aware of their rights and have access to pertinent information and referral services. Victim Specialists will work with participants to develop a work plan that addresses their needs. This can include safety planning, legal advocacy, crime victim compensation, orders of protection, court accompaniment, temporary financial assistance, community resources, medical care, housing, and spiritual/cultural concerns. The staff also act as advocates for participants by helping them manage areas of their lives that have been impacted by their victimization, such as speaking with employers or school personnel, handling transportation to and from appointments, and other activities related to their personal care.



Though the program does not have a shelter, the staff work to ensure that victims and their families can find safe and affordable housing. The closest shelter is in Topeka, which is about 30 miles away, and it is frequently full. If program staff are unable to enroll their participants in the Topeka shelter, they will help them access the next closest shelter, in Atchison, about 45 miles away. However, because this shelter is located so far away, it can be difficult for victims to attend to their daily responsibilities on the reservation. If a participant's daily life make it impossible to relocate to Atchison, program staff will work with them to help identify friends or family where they can stay. In certain situations, the program will offer limited financial assistance to help their participants cover the cost of hotels or other temporary housing while they look for a more permanent arrangement.

Elder Services: The program has a staff member assigned to work with elders in order to address elder abuse. In addition to carrying a general victim services caseload, the staff member engages in several projects to ensure that elderly and disabled individuals continue to feel supported and connected, and have access to professional services. Projects include attending senior meal events or viewing Native-themed films with elders and then facilitating a discussion afterwards. There is also a monthly art group that is held at senior meal events, and art lessons can be offered to other elders who reside in assisted living locations off the reservation at the request of a senior's social worker.

Additionally, program staff conduct monthly drop-ins where they visit elders and the disabled in their homes to have friendly conversations. This enables program staff to ensure that the individuals are having their needs met and have access to appropriate programs and necessary services. Meeting with individuals in their homes helps to reduce isolation, which in turn prevents abuse and allows for earlier identification of problematic or exploitative relationships. Some elders have even disclosed past sexual abuse to staff. Even if these elders are not interested in receiving services, being able to disclose previous trauma to a trusted, non-judgmental person can be very healing.

For World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, the program hosts an annual community breakfast in partnership with other social services programs. This annual breakfast helps to raise awareness of Elder Abuse in the community and also creates an opportunity to honor elders in the community.

“We recognize the elder population is particularly vulnerable and we incorporate outreach specifically to elders in our regular activities.”

– PROGRAM STAFF

SAFESTAR: The Sexual Assault Forensic Examinations, Support, Training, Access and Resources (SAFESTAR) project run by the Tribal Victims Services is one of five SAFESTAR programs in the United States (<http://www.swclap.org/safestar/>). The SAFESTAR initiative is a model of care developed by the Southwest Center for Law and Policy that trains volunteers from the community to respond to sexual assault. The 40-hour intensive training teaches volunteers to deliver emergency first aid to sexual assault victims, to properly collect forensic evidence “rape kits,” and to provide health care referrals. The training also discusses federal and tribal laws on sexual assault and prepares volunteers to advocate against sexual violence in their communities.

The Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation Victim Services Program was the second program in the country to implement in this model. It now has six tribal members who have been trained as SAFESTARS and are actively assisting in sexual assault cases. Recently, the program was recognized for its SAFESTAR initiative by the Kansas Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence, a statewide network of twenty-nine advocacy groups. The Coalition honored the Tribal Victims Services Program with a “Project of the Year Award” for its successful implementation of SAFESTAR. The program hopes to train ten more members of the community, including one male, to assist victims of sexual assault.

“As a result of the SAFESTAR program we’ve made it our goal to reclaim that ‘1 out of every 3 Native women’ statistic. Our goal is to assure, in this community, 1 in 3 Native women are trained to recognize sexual assault, call it for what it is, and respond helpfully to those that experience it.”

“The greatest benefit we’ve seen so far is the increase in like-minded women in the community—they’ve become advocates for our program. They’ve become empowered.”

Batterers Intervention Program: The Batterers Intervention Program is called T.R.A.C.K.S, which stands for “Traditions, Respect, Accountability, Change, Knowledge, and Safety.” The program is based upon a model used by the Family Peace Initiative, a program located in Topeka. The program incorporates some elements of the Duluth model—such as control logs and vignettes—but is significantly more trauma informed. The T.R.A.C.K.S. model acknowledges that participants’ early traumas can contribute to shaping their beliefs and behaviors in their present relationships. At the same time, the T.R.A.C.K.S. model also holds participants accountable for owning and changing those beliefs and behaviors in the futures.

The T.R.A.C.K.S. model acknowledges several different types of batterers and the different risks that may be associated them. Facilitators are trained to understand that power and control may not be the only motives that lead people to use violence in their intimate relationships. The 32-week curriculum includes an assessment and two orientation sessions. The program has also begun incorporating healing by including art in some group sessions.

Safe Visit/Safe Exchange: The Safe Visit/Safe Exchange program is located in the same building as the Batterers Intervention Program. This setting—away from the court, social services, and law enforcement—is meant to feel welcoming, non-threatening, and “homey.” The idea is to bring family members together in a safe and comfortable environment. The program uses an approach based on the Safe Havens guiding principles (<https://safehavensonline.org/>) and is victim centered. The Safe Visit/Safe Exchange coordinator completes an orientation with both parents and the children prior to allowing any visits. This approach allows the coordinator to identify safety risks and concerns from the onset. During visits, the coordinator focuses on detecting abusive behavior being used by batterers, documenting it, and intervening when appropriate.

Community Justice Coordinating Unit: The staff member for the Criminal Justice Coordinating Unit is an advocate who shares her time between the Tribal Law Enforcement Department, the Tribal Prosecutor’s Office, and the Victim’s Services Office. She follows up on all police reports involving an identifiable victim within 72 hours of the report being made. During her telephone follow up call she asks about the victim’s satisfaction regarding how the Law Enforcement Office responded to the case. This call is an opportunity to ensure that the victim has a chance to ask questions and get answers regarding any issues they may have.

Immediately after an incident, many victims are not in the mental state to receive and retain information they are presented with, especially about legal processes. Waiting a day or two before reinitiating contact with the victim can give them time to calm down and better think through their situation in order to determine the best course of action. In particular, program staff have found that the question of whether or not a case will go to state or tribal court is particularly confusing, and therefore stressful, to victims. Being able to help victims think through what to expect can alleviate some of the victim's stress and increase their ability to exercise their rights and participate in the legal process, regardless of what jurisdiction they may end up in.

Additionally, the advocate can respond on scene, if Law Enforcement request her presence. The staff member also assists with completing and following up on family violence risk assessments, and coordinating and preparing victim witnesses for court, whether it be state or tribal. The coordinator is currently working on a community needs assessment to identify and address gaps within the program's delivery systems.

Community Outreach: The Tribal Victim Services program places a strong emphasis on outreach. When the program first launched, many community members were distrustful of the program and unwilling to use its services. Program staff made it a priority to establish credibility and trust by creating a visible presence within the community. The program would send staff to as many community events as possible, including events with no apparent connection to domestic violence, in order to interact with community members. These efforts make the program more visible and create a positive image of their program and the work it does. In fact, program staff often sit on planning committees for tribal events to ensure that their organization will be offered space at the events to table.

“We seek to build relationships everywhere—anyone and everyone.”

“The kids know us, trust us, and they leave us feeling good, which is what we want.” At these community events, program staff set up tables, hand out information, and spend time with members of the community. The program also offers face painting for children at their tables. Face painting has been an integral aspect of their outreach, as it allows program staff to approach community members in a non-threatening way and establish friendly relationships with women and their children. Staff can even inquire about health and safety without attracting suspicion from potential abusers. The program sends at least two staff

members to events so that while one, or more, of the staff members paint the children's faces, another staff member can talk to the parent.

“People do not want to just sit and talk about domestic violence, sexual assault, or the impacts of trauma. Instead, we create events where we are collaborating with different programs to deliver family-centered activities.”

As part of outreach, program staff also give presentations to other organizations, generally about domestic violence and about their services. They are also willing to offer presentations on other subjects at the request of the organization. In the past, for example, the program has been asked to present on suicide prevention. As suicide is intrinsically linked to violence and is often the result of unaddressed trauma, program staff felt they would be able to contribute meaningfully to the topic.

The program also presents to youth on prevention topics, sometimes in partnership with others, like the Boys and Girls Club or Haskell Indian Nations University. During these presentations, program staff hold separate conversations with groups of boys and girls to discuss healthy relationships.

Over time, the program has expanded its presence in the community to include several large initiatives, including the “Walk a Mile in Their Mocs Domestic Violence Awareness Walk,” the “Take Back the Night Sexual Assault Awareness Walk,” and the “Splatters that Matter Art Half Marathon for Domestic Violence.” Additionally, the program organizes events, such as their 80's Prom Night Community Dance, an annual Trunk or Treat Event, an annual New Year's Eve Sobriety Pow Wow, and monthly Movies in the Park Family Night, in order to be considered an indispensable part of planning and participating in community events.

The program also tries to engage in creative outreach projects such as their care bear drive, where they partnered with tribal law enforcement to seek donations of stuffed animals. Through their efforts, one hundred stuffed animals were donated to the tribal police department. The stuffed bears are given to children who have experienced some form of trauma to provide comfort.

“We've taken a non-conventional approach to outreach.”

Healing Through Arts: Tribal Victims Services runs a Healing Through Arts program, which encourages victims of crime to express their emotions using different art therapies in group sessions. Through art, participants are able to address issues of abuse and trauma while promoting healthy relationships. The program offers one class for women and a separate class for families. If lack of childcare prevents a woman from attending the women's group, staff will allow her to bring her family into the women's group. Many of the kids who attend the family sessions are in the child welfare system or are involved in foster care, and staff work with them as part of their court-mandated case plan. In addition to these group sessions, the program has recently begun integrating healing through art sessions as part of the Batterers Intervention Program.

Tribal Victim Services organized a project called the Community Story Tree, in which victims of crime painted panels and then combined the panels to form the image of a large tree. The tree ultimately consisted of 72 panels that represented the hopes and dreams of each participant for the community. The Community Story Tree was awarded the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) 2013 Professional Innovation in Victims Services Award.

Culture and Tradition: Prairie Band members follow a diversity of religious practices, including the Native American Church, several types of Protestantism, Catholicism, and Mormonism. Some families even integrate traditional tribal practices, such as sweats and drumming ceremonies, into their other religious practices. With this diversity in mind, Tribal Victim Services Program is flexible when it comes to addressing culture and tradition as part of the healing process. Program staff are themselves diverse in their religious beliefs and often act as resources to clients who are seeking to strengthen their religious and cultural bonds while healing.

3. PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

The Tribal Victims Services Program has six full-time staff. Along with the regular caseload as victim specialists, each staff member engages in community outreach and facilitates group sessions. With the exception of the program director, each staff member also has a specialty area with responsibility over different initiatives to combat abuse and violence in the community.

The program's primary office is located within the Tribe's Social Service Department. However, the program also has one satellite office located at the Tribal Police Department. Additionally, the Batterer's Intervention Program, and the Safe Visit/Safe Exchange Program, operate in another location within the reservation.

4. CASE FLOW PROCESS

Eligibility Criteria: The program can serve any individual who requests assistance, but its primary focus is to work with Native Americans. As all four tribes in Kansas fall within the service area of the program, program staff often work with members of many different tribes. The program generally refers non-Native individuals to another provider unless there is a Native child in the family. However, program staff look for ways to “say yes” to potential clients and try to find ways to help a participant qualify for services.

Referral Process: Referrals for the program come from several sources: the tribal social services department, tribal law enforcement, tribal court, and the county district attorney’s office. The program also accepts referrals directly from the community.

Termination Criteria: A client relationship ends at the client’s discretion. However, after 60 days of no activity, their case is made inactive. Even if a client willingly terminates contact with program staff, the client is welcome to return at any point in the future.

FOUR PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

1. THE TRIBAL FUNDING

In 2001, the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation was awarded a STOP Violence Against Women grant from the federal Office on Violence Against Women to implement a victim services program. This grant allowed the tribe to hire a coordinator and several staff for the Family Violence Prevention Program, which was housed under the Social Services Department. In 2006, the tribe received a grant from the federal Office for Victims of Crime, which they used to create a separate Tribal Victims Assistance Program, which was housed under the Tribal Police Department. Both programs were eventually consolidated into the Tribal Victims Services Program under the Social Services Department. In 2013, the program was awarded another grant from the Office on Violence Against Women.

In addition to federal grants, the program receives supplemental funding from the tribal council. These funds are allocated on an annual basis to help the program fill any gaps. For example, the tribal council provided funding to hire the first program coordinator until the STOP Violence Against Women grant was awarded.

2. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The Tribal Victim Services Program has worked with two technical assistance providers. During the planning of the program, Unified Solutions Group (<http://www.unified-solutions.org/>) helped to set up the program's organizational structure and create a safety assessment for victims. Unified Solutions Group also helped to provide training on working with victims.

Through its work with SAFESTAR, the Victim Services Program requested technical assistance from the Southwest Center for Law and Policy, which conducted a 40-hour training for volunteers as well



as training for tribal justice system staff and partners. Staff also attend trainings offered by the Southwest Center for Law and Policy to maintain their edibility as lay legal counsel for program participants in tribal court.

3. PARTNERSHIPS

Community outreach and partnership with community organizations is an essential element of the Tribal Victim Services Program. Partners have included local, state, and federal agencies. Program staff joke that their goal is to ensure that no organization can host an event without thinking that they have to invite the Tribal Victims Services Program.

4. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SUCCESS

There are numerous factors that have contributed to the program's success, including support from the tribal council and partner organizations, grant funding, and enthusiastic and dedicated advocates. However, program staff generally point to two extremely important factors that contribute to their success:

- ***Diverse program staff:*** The program is unique in that it has two male advocates and three female advocates. In part, the program's success can be attributed to its strong male presence. Though having men work in victim services can present challenges, the male advocates have been an invaluable part of the team, as their perspective brings balance to the work. In addition, program staff have a diverse set of strengths and backgrounds, which they use to engage in a range of projects that resonate with their diverse clients. Because the staff is diverse in age, tribal affiliation, religious beliefs, gender, and upbringing, they are able to identify with their clients and refer them to a wide-ranging set of programs and services across the various communities.
- ***Community Investment:*** Although the program initially had trouble getting referrals from the community, they were able to shift community perception through sustained and visible community outreach. Staff participated in numerous community gatherings and events and began to receive support for their work, which has been essential to their success. Program staff stress the importance of creative and effective outreach for building trust and becoming an integral part of the community.

“We recognize the value in incorporating men into our work with victims—male advocates offer valuable perspectives on life, manhood, boyhood, womanhood, girlhood, family, gender roles, sexual respect, community, and every other aspect our work encompasses.”

Culturally, having both the masculine and the feminine energies present is conducive to balance—it is life. In order to have a healthy life, balance is key.

5. CHALLENGES

One of the greatest challenges for program staff is the risk of burnout and the effects of secondary trauma. Burnout can also lead to high rates of staff turnover. For these reasons, the program has emphasized self-care. The staff members are very supportive of one another and encourage each other when the work gets particularly trying. One of their most important tools for combating burnout is laughter—they feel that it is vital to find moments to laugh and find joy especially in emotionally trying times. This approach has helped the staff keep their hearts and minds healthy so they have the strength to take care of their clients and each other.

6. LESSONS LEARNED

One of the first issues the program faced was generating community buy-in. Domestic violence is frequently stigmatized, and many people are unwilling to speak about it openly. In order to build community trust, the Tribal Victims Services staff devoted a tremendous amount of effort to creating a community presence. This was initially difficult with few staff members, but as the program hired more advocates and spent more time in the community, they noticed a change in the community’s response. Community members began to recognize program staff at events, and the program established a good reputation for maintaining confidentiality and providing services. As a result, community members began opening up, sharing stories, and referring their friends and family to the program.

FIVE PROGRAM OUTCOMES

1. NUMBER SERVED

The Tribal Victim Services Program works with about 30 clients each month and 120-150 clients annually. This number does not reflect the substantial amount of work that program staff invest in community outreach, nor does it include the assistance they offer people who approach them for other types of help. For example, many people see the program as a way to learn about other resources available in the community at large, and program staff often refer people to different programs across the community.

2. PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

The program has not had either the time or the funds to conduct research on their effectiveness. They are in process of exploring software that can help track data, but at this time all of their program documentation is contained in paper files.

3. COMMUNITY RESPONSE

The Tribal Victim Services Program has relied heavily on community outreach as a key component of its work. Program staff interact with the community regularly through classes, workshops, and outreach projects. As a result, staff members are well known in the community and are often invited to community events, so that they can paint faces while they table. Program staff often joke that they are known not as the domestic violence team, but as the “face painters.” Program staff believe that engagement in these community projects has contributed strongly to their positive image within the community.

4. SUCCESS STORIES

The Tribal Victim Services Program has won several awards for its innovative projects. One award was for their Community Story Tree



project, in which crime victims painted 72 individual panels and then assembled them into a large tree representing the hopes and desires that each of the participants held for their community. The Community Story Tree won the 2013 Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) award for Professional Innovation in Victims Services.

In addition, the program's Sexual Assault Forensic Examination, Support, Training, Access, and Resources (SAFESTAR) program was recognized as the 2014 Program of the Year by the Kansas Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence.

5. DOCUMENTS

- [Tribal News Article](#)
- <http://online.wsj.com/article/PR-CO-20130423-917455.html>
- <https://ovcncvrw.ncjrs.gov/Awards/AwardGallery/gallerysearch.html>
- http://www.pbpindiantribe.com/upload/pdf/PBP_Spring_2014_News.pdf
- Photos
- Would be willing to talk with other tribes about this work (and do presentations)
- Program forms
- Risk Assessment

6. REFERENCES

- [Tribal News Article](#)
- <http://online.wsj.com/article/PR-CO-20130423-917455.html>
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