

WHAT IS A SWOT ANALYSIS?

SWOT Analysis is a powerful tool for understanding your court's Strengths and Weaknesses, and for looking at the Opportunities and Threats that relate to the court's response to domestic violence.

The activities involved with this analysis will provide your team with a clear picture of the internal and external context of your court and community's response to domestic violence and provide guidance on how to proceed in the planning process.

This tool will also help you determine how to use the court's internal strengths to manage threats (such as high caseloads or a shortage of accountability programs) and it will identify weaknesses to address. This process will increase the likelihood of success by identifying new strategies and opportunities for the court.

GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING A SWOT ANALYSIS

Your team has collected data on various aspects of your jurisdiction's present response to domestic violence in preparation for the creation of a specialized domestic violence court. Through this exercise, the team once again will review the information that has been collected and use it to identify and prioritize the gaps in practice. Analyze what you know across the following four areas:

Strengths Identifying your strengths is important for two reasons: It affirms the good work you are already doing and identifies assets upon which you can build. Examples may include an interested judiciary, a specialized probation supervision team, interagency collaboration, and specialized prosecution for domestic violence cases.

Weaknesses The weaknesses you identify are system gaps or areas for potential enhancement. These are the issues about which you should be most concerned, as they are the obstacles that stand between where you are now and where you want to be. Examples may include high case volume, excessive probation caseload, lack of batterer programs, inability of batterers to pay for programs, and victims not being notified of/receiving orders of protection/restraining orders.

Opportunities Your data collection efforts may have uncovered opportunities you had not yet considered. For example, you may have identified untapped resources, or discovered that your system is already operating efficiently at certain points in the court process. Examples of opportunities include training made available by victim service agencies and federal funding streams for new staff positions at probation or a victim service agency.

Threats It is also possible that you have identified threats to your work through your information collection process. For example, through your policy assessment you may have learned about case law of which you were unaware that impacts current practice, discovered best practice models that differ from your present policies, or you may encounter a political climate that is unfavorable toward your objectives.

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STEPS TO FOLLOW FOR SWOT ANALYSIS

You will want to consider each of these areas as you review what you know and identify your priorities for change. Use the steps below to guide your discussions.

- 1) Post four sheets of flip chart paper on the walls. Give each a separate label — “Strengths,” “Weaknesses,” “Opportunities,” and “Threats.”

- 2) Refer to each of your data collection reports and record the following on the appropriate flip chart pages:
 - Findings that reflect strengths in your system.
 - Findings that reflect weaknesses in your system.
 - Findings that reflect opportunities for your system.
 - Findings that reflect threats to your system.

- 3) Review the findings listed under “weaknesses.” Consider each and give team members a few minutes to indicate the items they deem of greatest importance. Have each person place a check mark on the flip chart next to the five findings they believe represent the greatest weaknesses in your current system. These priorities will become the first set of goals for your team. Keep the original list of weaknesses you may elect to pursue them later.

- 4) Be sure to keep the other lists produced through this exercise. You probably will want to revisit each as you continue to develop your goals and objectives. Refer to the lists of strengths and opportunities as you build strategies — use these as assets whenever possible. Continue to monitor the threats you have identified to make sure that they do not impede your progress.

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One of the most effective ways to develop an understanding of your current practices is to develop a system map. System mapping involves diagramming all the steps of court processes, beginning with either a filing or police contact and ending with the case being disposed. In addition to detailing the case processing, a system map should include the following pieces of important information:

- The major steps and key decision points in the system.
- The key decision makers at each point in the system.
- The amount of time it takes a case to move from one point to the next.
- The volume of cases moving through (or leaving) the system at each point.

Center staff will provide your team with a sample system map upon request.

GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING A SYSTEM MAP

Preparing to Develop Your System Map

- Have plenty of flip chart paper and masking tape available. Place several sheets of paper lengthwise on a long, blank wall.
- Select a facilitator to guide the team through the process.

Creating Your Map

- 1)** Identify the first step in the case-flow process from the time of the domestic violence incident. Place this at the beginning of the map inside the appropriate shape (see key and shape definitions below).
- 2)** Continue discussing and drawing each subsequent step (and placing them in the appropriate shape) until the entire process is diagrammed.
- 3)** Draw arrows from one step to the next. Use solid lines between those steps guided by formal policy or procedure. Use dashed lines between those steps guided by informal practices.
- 4)** Review each decision point on the system map. Note the decision makers involved at each point.
- 5)** Consult with others outside your team, if necessary, to complete the map. (This process may highlight key parts of the system not represented on your collaborative team.) If you need to consult outside sources, first complete as much of the system map as possible, given the expertise of the team, then identify others who can help fill in the gaps later.
- 6)** Label each step in the process with a consecutive number after the diagram is complete. This will make it easier to refer to individual steps when discussing the map.

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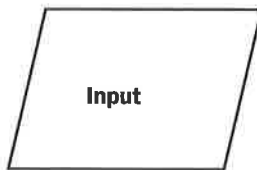
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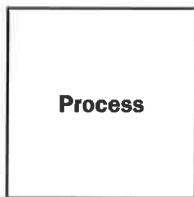
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- 7) Add quantitative information to your map after your case flow process is fully diagrammed. This quantitative information should consist of the volume of cases that pass through this system during a given time period and the average amount of time it takes for a case to move from one point to the next.
- 8) Deliverables: Type up your map when complete and finalized so it can be a useful planning tool.

Shape Key and Definitions



Input
The initial step in the process.



Process
Each step in the process that is not a decision point.



Decision Point
Steps in the process where more than one outcome is possible.



Terminus
The final step in a stream of activity that terminates all other actions (e.g., "case closed").

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