



The Honorable Thomas McNamara
Mayor
City of Rockford, Illinois
425 E. State Street
Rockford, IL 61104

April 25, 2019

Dear Mayor McNamara and the Allied Agencies of the City of Rockford and Winnebago County,

It was great to have you and your team at the 19th Annual International Family Justice Center Conference. You are all poised to lead the way in the State of Illinois!

It was an honor for our Alliance for HOPE International (Alliance) Technical Assistance Team to participate in the two-day Rockford, Illinois Study Tour on February 26-27, 2019. The Study Tour process was an opportunity for the Alliance team to learn from key stakeholders, service providers and survivors. The focus of the Study Tour was to identify the current strengths and gaps in Winnebago County's various service delivery systems, help fortify your most valuable resources, identify processes that present challenges to survivors in accessing comprehensive support, and determine how the Alliance can best support your efforts toward the creation of a Family Justice Center in Rockford. As part of our Study Tour, the Alliance team gathered information about your community in pre-planning meetings, anonymous partner surveys, online research, stakeholder meetings, focus groups with survivors, and court observations. **We believe that Rockford/Winnebago County is poised to move forward with the planning process to create a dynamic Family Justice Center framework.**

Background About the Alliance

For more than a decade, the Alliance has been leading the effort to break down silos by integrating and coordinating services using the Family Justice/Multi-Agency (FJ/MA) Center framework. Our collective community impact model creates a collaborative approach that comes alongside survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, elder abuse, and human trafficking to break generational cycles of family violence. The Alliance is one of the leading systems and social change organizations in the country, creating innovative, collaborative, trauma-informed, hope-centered approaches that meet the needs of survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault and their children. The Alliance and its allied FJ/MA Centers serve between 150,000 and 200,000 adult and child survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault each year in the United States.

The mission of the Alliance is to create pathways to hope for women, children, and men who are victims of domestic violence and related sexual assault through collaborative,

integrated multi-disciplinary centers, teams, and initiatives in order to break the generational cycle of violence and abuse in families across the United States and around the world. We were pleased to learn more about Rockford's alignment with that mission and its commitment to strengthening collaboration and implementation of effective strategies that better serve survivors and their children.

Our Team

The Alliance team that visited Winnebago County consisted of: Casey Gwinn, Esq., President; Michael Burke, Director of Community Engagement; and Rylie Shore, Family Justice Center Alliance Program Assistant. During these two days, we met with many stakeholders to learn more about the community's response to domestic violence, child abuse, elder abuse, sexual assault, and human trafficking.



Stakeholders included health care professionals, members of law enforcement, attorneys, judges, survivors, faith leaders, staff at both Remedies and the Carrie Lynn Children's Center, Rockford Sexual Assault Counseling, Inc, Rockford Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation, the Fire Department, advocates, and professionals from additional allied agencies. The Alliance team observed an unparalleled level of commitment by elected officials,

community partners, and policy makers to increase collaboration amongst service providers in order to streamline the complex network of services survivors must navigate in Winnebago County. We were honored to work closely on the planning of the entire Study Tour with the Mayor's Office on Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking Prevention including Jennifer Cacciapaglia and Sierra Kellen.

The Community Forum

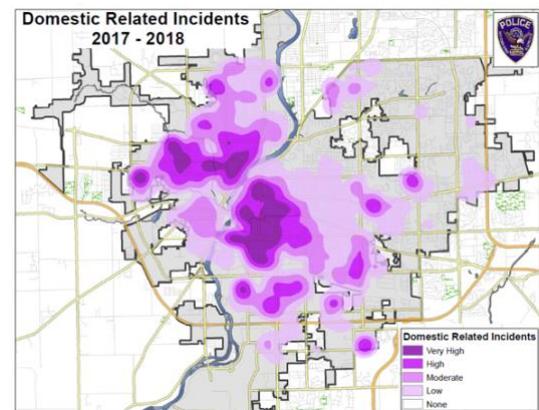
The Study Tour began with a Community Forum and comments from Mayor McNamara, Judge Rosemary Collins, Project Manager Sierra Kellen, Lieutenant Kurt Whisenand, and the Manager of the Mayor's Office of Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking Prevention, Jennifer Cacciapaglia. Your quote, "It is humbling to see the city of Rockford stand up and say we need to put survivors first," was very impactful on every attendee and on our team.

Casey Gwinn gave an overview of the Family Justice Center (FJC) framework and provided an overview of the science of HOPE to the 180+ members in attendance. Casey explained the development of the FJC framework, shared photos of Centers from around the world, and encouraged community members to create a Family Justice Center that provides hope and healing to survivors and their children. You can view a copy of the presentation [here](#).

“This is not just about doing what we’ve always been doing a little better and a little nicer. This is about rethinking how we do things and asking the question: How can we eliminate domestic violence related homicides in this community? **How can we break the cycle of family violence in this journey together?**”

Casey Gwinn, President of Alliance for HOPE International

Mayor McNamara emphasized the urgency of opening a Family Justice Center in Rockford, somberly acknowledging that the day before the Community Forum there was another domestic violence related homicide, where Charles McLellan shot his wife Heather McLellan before taking his own life. Mayor McNamara also shared a heartfelt moment about a visitation he recently attended for Jennifer Lindsey, a domestic violence homicide victim. Finally, he highlighted that of the 10,000 calls to the Police Department for services, one third are domestic violence-related.



Lieutenant Kurt Whisenand presented a map pinpointing the dozens of stops across the County that a survivor must currently make to receive support, further highlighting the complexity of accessing services in Rockford.

“What does it take for a victim to become a survivor? The answer is access to services, and the sooner they can get that, the sooner they become a survivor. We want to be one stop, one place, for all of the available resources.”

Lieutenant Kurt Whisenand

Project Manager Sierra Kellen noted that Rockford is well positioned to improve services for survivors and decrease homicides in the community. In the past few years, the County has gained momentum by co-locating police department and advocate offices in 2016, launching the Lethality Assessment Program in 2017, and establishing the Mayor’s Office of Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking Prevention in 2018. Kellen shared that in 2018, 41% of survivors (1,611) screened in Rockford/Winnebago County using the Lethality Screen disclosed being choked (strangled) by their partner. With the development of a Family Justice Center, the accessibility of services will drastically increase, bringing with it a notable drop in homicide rates across Winnebago County.

QUOTES FROM THE COMMUNITY FORUM

“This is a community problem, and as a community **we need to work together**. We still have crime in our community, but with the Family Justice Center, we continue to move forward as we respond to domestic violence. **We know we can change the cycle of violence in our lifetimes.**”



Judge Rosemary Collins



“I am not here to work on something that will take 5 to 10 years. We do not have 5 to 10 years. We owe it to every person in our community to say **enough is enough**. We know **we can stop this**. This is on us. We have the tools. We know what can be done to stop this.”

Mayor Tom McNamara

“We are at the bottom of the mountain looking up, but we are so excited to establish a Center where victims feel safe and heard and **where they find hope.**”

Project Manager Sierra Kellen



“When we think about what domestic violence looks like and who is affected, the answer is all of us. **It affects everybody**. It crosses all racial, ethnic, socio-economic groups.”

Lieutenant Kurt Whisenand



“**We will not do this work without survivors**. We will stand with them and allow their voices to be the **liberation of this movement.**”

Manager of the Mayor’s Office of Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking Prevention, Jennifer Cacciapaglia

“My experience could have been much better when I was looking for help. **Having more resources closer to home, having someone to talk to, and having support to figure out what the next step is would have made all the difference.**”

Survivor

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE STUDY TOUR

The Alliance team had the pleasure of meeting with frontline staff and leaders from a wide variety of agencies across Winnebago County. The discussions and insights shared by professionals who are currently handling domestic violence and sexual assault cases helped to illuminate the current state of collaboration in the County. While there is some collaboration between advocates, healthcare professionals, mental health services, and law enforcement agencies, there remains a significant amount of siloing across agencies handling cases. The community survey results demonstrated that prosecution and faith communities had the lowest amount of collaboration surrounding domestic violence cases in Rockford.



Frontline staff perspectives are also crucial when examining service delivery effectiveness, and our team met with various service providers, including Remedies, the Carrie Lynn Children's Center, Rockford Sexual Assault Counseling Inc., Rockford Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation, and youth-based services. Each of these meetings allowed us to identify strengths and challenges, and we found a great deal of interest from service providers to create a more collaborative, integrated service delivery approach for adult and child survivors in Rockford. The Carrie Lynn Children's Center in particular expressed great eagerness for co-location, and the organization is already well connected with law enforcement and the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). "We always hope for co-location. My dream would be a huge place where we can all be housed together. I have seen what it can be, and it is definitely exciting," said Kathy Pomahac, Director of the Carrie Lynn Children's Center

The Alliance held discussions with interested community leaders, including elected officials and faith leaders. These discussions raised important questions on how public and private organizations can play a role in violence prevention and mitigation.

"We have a problem with domestic violence in our community. It leads to a lot of calls and a lot of crime. For our community to take a proactive approach to create one place with one intake for survivors is a positive and needed change."

Matt Knott, Division Chief, Rockford Fire Department



We identified three key themes throughout the Study Tour:

- 1) Victims have a hard time identifying and accessing services (and transportation is a major barrier);
- 2) Well-intentioned, committed, caring agencies frequently operate in silos rather than collaborating to provide services;
- 3) Many key agencies and community partners are heavily invested in the development and success of a Family Justice Center in Rockford to reduce victimization in the community.

There was a great deal of dialogue on these issues throughout the Study Tour and we were pleased to see the willingness of both individuals and organizations to collaborate on solutions and pathways to overcome these challenges. “We aren’t strong in resources to provide the care needed to abate the effects of trauma, especially for low income families and people who don’t have resources. The Family Justice Center could be the needed shift in culture,” said Chris Overton, Director of Stepping Stones.

KEY THEMES FROM MEETINGS WITH PARTNERS



The meetings with potential partners resulted in helpful input about the benefits and challenges of a Family Justice Center model. Below are the themes expressed by those participating in meetings with the Alliance.

Identifying the Need for a Center

- Survivors do not currently experience integrated service delivery and they want coordinated and co-located services in Winnebago County.
- The geography of Winnebago County can be challenging for survivors; they may need to travel many miles to multiple locations in order to access basic services.
- In the focus groups, survivors expressed that they view Remedies as a drug and alcohol resource, more than a domestic violence resource. Additionally, some

survivors shared a frustration with their ability to access services in a timely manner. They shared that having more services together in one place would have helped them navigate their situations.

Current Strengths

- Winnebago County has the buy-in, the resources, and the community support necessary to create and implement a Family Justice Center framework.
- Leaders in law enforcement, including Chief Daniel G. O’Shea, Lieutenant Kurt Whisenand, and Sheriff Gary L. Caruana, have expressed their investment in the success of the Family Justice Center.
- SA/DV professionals displayed significant interest and support for the FJC.
- Survivors from the focus group unanimously agreed that the FJC framework would have mitigated their stress in accessing services.
- Law enforcement has already enhanced their response to high-risk cases through a recently implemented Lethality Assessment Program, laying the groundwork for a similar approach for specialized law enforcement responses in an FJC.
- The Carrie Lynn Children’s Center is an irreplaceable resource for child victims and an excellent potential partner for the Family Justice Center.
- The public safety tax, implemented to build restorative programs, could be a potential funding stream for the Family Justice Center.
- Spiritual leaders from a variety of faith communities expressed interest in being involved in a chaplaincy program at the Rockford Family Justice Center.
- Rockford has a dedicated Family Justice Center Project Manager, Sierra Kellen.
- There are strong collaborative partnerships between private and public agencies.
- There is strong survivor involvement in the planning process.
- The Chamber of Commerce and the business community in Rockford support the development of a Family Justice Center.
- The judicial system is heavily involved in the planning of the Family Justice Center through the commitment of Judge Rosemary Collins and her former colleagues.
- The Fire Department is invested in the success of the Family Justice Center and expressed an interest in being able to refer community members to a Family Justice Center for wraparound services.
- The Mayor has a dedicated office on domestic violence and human trafficking prevention that seeks to identify and address gaps in the current system.
- There was a strong presence of medical professionals who are eager to explore partnerships with the Family Justice Center.



“Look at how we are located geographically. We need to work on breaking down the cycles of working together. Sometimes we have the same victims and the same bad guys, and we start siloing. **The more we work together to get the siloes broken down, we become more successful as law enforcement.**”

Sheriff Gary Caruana

Current Challenges

- Civil legal services don't currently meet all the needs of survivors due to understaffing and high caseloads.
- During our court observation, we noticed that many intimate partner violence cases are being dismissed due to an inability to locate the victim.
- The current civil court setup, with a layout that places the petitioner and the respondent together, is unsafe for survivors who must sit in close proximity to the perpetrator.
- If survivors need to access their police report, it takes seven days to receive records.
- Survivors with children are reluctant to access services because they are fearful that DCFS will remove their children.
- Agencies are siloing from each other, leaving clients with the responsibility of finding and navigating different service providers in order to receive support.
- Very few agencies interact with prosecutors, though many express the need for better relationships and increased accountability.
- The State's Attorney's office has one victim advocate who is responsible for every survivor in the courtroom, totaling 500-600 cases at any given time.
- Judges experience a high volume of domestic violence cases, and many judges expressed that survivors recant or do not show up to court.
- Per feedback from survivors in the focus groups, law enforcement follow-up on domestic violence cases could be increased.
- No feedback is given to law enforcement on the cases they have worked on once those cases go through court.
- Law enforcement feel that their follow-up on cases matters more when it is connected to effective prosecution from the State's Attorney's office. Many detectives express frustration that they work hard on cases and do not see follow through once the cases get to the State's Attorney's office.
- Probation officers have caseloads of 40+ juveniles. This includes home visits, school visits, placements, agency contacts, transportation, etc. We recognize that probation officers are dedicated and hardworking, but due to the high volume of cases, juveniles are not getting the level of support that they need to break the cycle of violence.

- There are three felony prosecutors and one misdemeanor prosecutor in Rockford – understaffed for the volume of cases being handled. The County is supposed to have 52 attorneys, but they are currently staffed in the 30s.

“The Mayor’s Office is getting calls every week from victims who are in crisis looking for services, and it’s very sad because they don’t feel like they have anywhere else to go.”

Mayor Tom McNamara



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE FOCUS GROUP WITH SURVIVORS

Our focus groups with survivors was one of the highlights of our Study Tour in Rockford/Winnebago County. The Alliance team learns the most from the lived-experiences of the survivors we speak with and Rockford was no exception. Survivors in Rockford discussed the hurdles they experienced when accessing services and they **unanimously expressed the need for one centralized, safe location to access services**. They described the difficulties they had accessing support due to intimidating courtrooms, being arrested after domestic violence incidents, unclear contact information for the DV shelter, and slow responses from their attorneys. Because of their victimization, many survivors also had their children removed by DCFS. As a group, **survivors emphasized the importance of a community that hears their voices, believes their stories, and supports them consistently after the crisis**. Each of the survivors from our focus groups experienced high levels of violence. Many had to access healthcare for their survival as well as call law enforcement for help. Most accessed some domestic violence services through Remedies and interacted with the court system. Nearly all of those with children interfaced with DCFS.



The Legal System

Many survivors struggled with the length of time required to file orders and receive hearing dates. One survivor shared her frustration with the court process taking five years after she had been shot six times by her abuser. During our court observation, our team noted that many cases had been open since 2016 or 2017 and were still being delayed or dismissed.

There was also common frustration across the focus groups over the financial instability and debt incurred after long and trying custody battles. Multiple survivors exhausted their bank accounts and lost partial or full custody of their children who remain in the custody of their abusive partner. One survivor shared that her ex-husband won full custody of their children, and within one month of the hearing committed suicide with both of their children in the home. Another survivor shared, **“Last year on my birthday, the judge granted custody to my ex. The judge said he believed me that there was domestic violence in my home but that my ex had a more stable job and was more financially stable.”**

An additional theme from survivors was confusion and anxiety when going to court for orders of protection or hearings. Many shared that the court jargon made it unclear what would happen to them or the perpetrator throughout the legal process. They collectively expressed the feeling that the courts often minimize their safety concerns, and they questioned whether the nature of their abuse was fully understood.

Law Enforcement

One survivor expressed gratitude for the officer who helped her the morning after a bad incident, stating that he listened, wrote everything down, and recommended she go to court to get orders of protection. Another survivor shared her devastation at being arrested by law enforcement after her ex-husband dragged her

through the front yard by her hair: “Law enforcement told me nothing about domestic violence. They just arrested me.” We heard from many survivors that law enforcement was not a barrier and provided excellent services, but responses seemed to vary by officer.

Social Services

One of the strongest focus group themes was a negative experience with DCFS. Multiple survivors felt that DCFS treated them as perpetrators, even though they were the victim, and many had their kids removed immediately after DCFS was involved in their case. One survivor put it this way: **“They take women who have been victims of domestic violence and create a scenario that is almost impossible for them. They have so many hoops to get through to see their kids because they ‘allowed’ domestic violence to happen in their home.”** Another survivor shared that none of her children were ever offered counseling or services after witnessing their father shoot her.

Advocacy

Some survivors expressed frustrations at the difficulty of trying to contact Remedies for resources, identifying their website as vague. Others shared that a barrier to accessing services at Remedies is its co-location with the drug and alcohol treatment facility, making survivors fearful that they may encounter their perpetrator while accessing services for domestic violence. We did not have the opportunity to evaluate the likelihood of this situation occurring. One survivor shared, “Remedies was wonderful to me,” explaining that her advocate walked her through her entire journey with an abusive partner

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE PARTNERS SURVEY

Prior to the Study Tour, our team invited Winnebago County community partners to participate in a survey. This data helps us to understand the current state of interdisciplinary collaboration and identify potential hurdles agencies may face when co-locating. The survey is also designed to identify sources of apprehension, which helps our team work with your community during Strategic Planning and follow-up technical assistance to mitigate any projected negative outcomes of co-location. We received a record 198 responses from a variety of agencies with no substantial majority in any particular discipline, leading us to believe that responses reflect countywide patterns and are representative of providers in the community.



Collaboration

Respondents were asked if they worked closely with a number of service providers:

- Three of the listed organizations received affirmative responses of “yes” at 50% or more – government agencies, health care, and mental health services.
- Healthcare systems had the highest percentage of “yes” responses at 73%.
- Prosecution and faith-based organizations were outliers, with “yes” responses below 30%.

To what extent do you work closely with the other services and organizations to accomplish your work

	NO (I WORK RARELY/NOT AT ALL WITH THIS SERVICE)	YES (I WORK FREQUENTLY/CLOSELY WITH THIS SERVICE)
Law Enforcement/Police	57.54% 103	42.46% 76
Prosecution	75.43% 132	24.57% 43
Community-based domestic violence programs	60.23% 106	39.77% 70
Shelter programs	58.19% 103	41.81% 74
Government Agencies	45.45% 80	54.55% 96
Healthcare systems	26.52% 48	73.48% 133
Mental Health services	44.38% 79	55.62% 99
Faith-based community	76.30% 132	23.70% 41
Other	79.69% 51	20.31% 13

These statistics align closely with the feedback from the Study Tour that emphasized the lack of consistent and adequate services and support from the State’s Attorney’s Office and the existing gaps between domestic violence-focused and faith-based organizations.

Training

The responses on cross-training showed that over 50% of those across all disciplines have not had any cross-training with other organizations in the past 12 months, demonstrating that training is either unavailable or insufficient in frequency and accessibility.

Hopes and Fears

- The strongest responses on anticipated benefits were for “Development of valuable relationships” and “Gain new knowledge about services, programs, or people in the community”.
- “Gain additional financial support” received the weakest response, which is very normal skepticism in communities developing a Family Justice Center. Agencies tend to fear losing resources and support in the Family Justice Center framework though in most communities the opposite occurs as agencies work together to pursue financial support.
- “Diversion of time and resources away from other priorities or obligations” received the strongest response for the question addressing anticipated drawbacks.

- Despite this common fear of capacity loss, 67% of respondents do not share this concern, and responses addressing other concerns were highly optimistic—very few people anticipate inter-agency tension, insufficient influence, damage to reputation, or conflicts between current responsibilities and FJC responsibilities.

“Yesterday Casey Gwinn said, ‘If you don’t get anything else out of this, it is all about relationships.’ We, as the faith community, are not very good at that. You also said, ‘If you are not willing to collaborate, it won’t work.’ And again, as a faith community here, we are not very good at that.”

Gary Scherwin, Executive Director at Bridge Ministries



RECOMMENDATIONS

At the conclusion of our Study Tour, our team met with most of the Steering Committee to debrief our visit. Below is a list of our recommendations for your consideration as we move forward with the Family Justice Center planning process and host the community-wide Strategic Planning event on May 29-30, 2019.

1. **Law Enforcement Engagement and Feedback:** Consider a task force model for the Family Justice Center to bring all of your law enforcement agencies into the framework. Identify resources and strategies to follow up on each domestic violence case within two to four days in order to gather and submit additional evidence to prosecutors. When investigators follow up on domestic violence calls, 70% of the time the cases can be proven even without victim testimony, based on the Alliance’s national research and experience. Additionally, providing acknowledgement and commendations to officers for conducting timely and trauma-informed investigations can build morale and improve responses. Currently, no such case feedback occurs.
2. **Legal Services:** Legal Aid suffers from understaffing and insufficient training. Consider bolstering civil legal services by analyzing a legal incubator model that has been adopted by several Family Justice Centers to provide more representation to victims in civil legal matters. The Alliance can provide more information on this model during the Strategic Planning event.

3. **Shelter and Emergency Housing:** Remedies provides stable and consistent housing but according to local agencies and survivors, its onsite proximity with drug and alcohol services can be a barrier to accessing shelter. By being co-located with a Family Justice Center, we feel that more survivors would seek services due to perceptions of a safer environment for them and their children.
4. **Judges/Court System:** Consider implementing e-filing onsite. Victims could receive services in a safe and secure space new Family Justice Center, as they wait for their protection orders and/or trials instead of entering the courthouse. This would prevent witness intimidation and waiting in the courtrooms with their offenders. Video conferencing can be utilized for protection order hearings and other court procedures where information is needed from the victim. The Alliance also recommends gathering information about batterers' programs: How effective are the programs? How do they measure success? How are offenders signing up for treatment? Are treatment providers providing clear, accurate, timely feedback to the court?
5. **Strangulation:** If a victim is strangled one time, she is 750% more likely to later be killed by her abuser. To improve your response to non-fatal strangulation cases, consider sending a multi-disciplinary team to the Alliance's advanced strangulation prevention training in order to better understand the risks, lethality, signs, and best practices for treating and prosecuting strangulation crimes. The next course is May 7-10, 2019 in Fort Worth, Texas. It would also be a great opportunity to see one of the leading Family Justice Centers in the country. Consider challenging all Police Chiefs and the Sheriff to mandate completion of the Alliance's free online course available at <https://www.strangulationtraininginstitute.com/training/online-strangulation-training> and/or hosting a strangulation investigation and prosecution training.
6. **Co-Chairs for Strategic Planning:** Begin to identify community stakeholders to serve as co-chairs for the Work Groups during the planning process: 1) Governance and Facilities; 2) Funding and Sustainability; 3) Service Delivery and Operations; and 4) Community Engagement and Outreach. Once Co-Chairs are recruited, arrange for a webinar/phone call with the Alliance and the anticipated Work Group Chairs to discuss roles and responsibilities of the Chairs, purpose of the Work Groups, and their role in the Strategic Planning process.
7. **Survivors:** Consider adopting the Alliance Protocol on Survivor Focus Groups and engage all Family Justice Center partner agencies in conducting additional focus groups with survivors. The Alliance has a [Focus Group Toolkit](#) for your use. It is best for as many survivors as possible to provide input regarding their experience with current systems and agencies, along with ideas for a countywide Family Justice Center framework. Survivors should also be asked about the types of services they want co-located in the Family Justice Center during the start-up phase and at later stages in development of the larger Center framework.

8. **Fatality Review Team:** Establish a fatality review team to identify the gaps in services that led to the deadly encounter. Fatality review teams lower homicide rates by providing those working on cases with a more comprehensive understanding of all the factors that lead to domestic violence-related homicides.
9. **Advertise Strategic Planning Event:** Advertise the event and coordinate all details with the Alliance team as soon as possible. We recommend 100-125 participants for the two-day Strategic Planning event. This could include:
- Leaders of agencies and direct service providers (front-line workers)
 - Representatives from all law enforcement agencies (including the Sheriff's Department)
 - Faith community leaders
 - Business leaders
 - Educators (middle school, high school, and college level)
 - Civil legal service providers
 - Social services providers
 - Professionals from the affordable housing sector
 - Law schools
 - City and County officials
 - Potential Funders
 - Survivors
 - Local architects
 - Leaders from other community groups such as tribal leaders, Latino community, etc.
 - Criminal and civil justice system agencies (including prosecutors, judges, magistrates, and clerks)
 - Local Bar Association
10. **Data Collection and Benchmarking:** The Alliance recommends all participating agencies continue identifying and documenting local domestic violence and sexual assault statistics to benchmark the progress of your collaboration, including 911 calls, police reports, charged, negotiated and/or dismissed criminal cases, and temporary and permanent protective orders, recidivism rates, and homicides. Consider conducting a "mini-safety audit" of your system by gathering, randomly, and then de-identifying (prior to analysis) 10 police reports, 10 protection order files, 10 cases from DV Court, 10 private warrant cases, and ten 911 tapes. The Alliance often assists in analyzing this type of information for communities, but members of your local planning team are likely the best people to conduct this evaluation after the Strategic Planning event.
11. **Protocols:** Begin collecting all existing protocols for child abuse, domestic violence, sexual assault, elder abuse and human trafficking to assess how to begin developing an integrated protocol and/or determine which protocols will need to be updated to describe how cases and victims will be handled when the Family Justice Center is operational.
12. **Camp HOPE America:** Engage with John Hamilton, Director of Camp HOPE America at Alliance for HOPE International, to explore developing our evidence-

based camping and mentoring program focused on children exposed to trauma and abuse.

13. **Communication:** Consider a plan to keep the public and community informed on the planning progress of your Center on a regular basis, such as a website. See, for example, [one site](#) recently created in North Carolina.
14. **Quotes:** Collect quotes from stakeholders, including video interviews and letters of support to be used in various venues, grants, and promotional materials.
15. **Case for Support:** Consider developing a Case for Support for your Family Justice Center in preparation for writing grants and/or seeking funding from donors. The Strategic Planning document can assist in this, but a great deal of work can be done prior to the Strategic Planning Report. [Sample business plans](#) are available on our website or by request.
16. **Guiding Principles:** Review, share, and consider formally adopting the [Alliance's Guiding Principles](#) at the Strategic Planning event.
17. **Shared Sustained Funding Policy:** Review and share the Alliance's [Shared Sustained Funding Policy](#) with all potential partners during the planning process for feedback and potential adoption.
18. **Training:** Identify additional training needed for core team members during the development process of the Family Justice Center including: privacy issues, confidentiality, and information sharing procedures; identification of or creation of clear dominant aggressor policies; handling of forfeiture hearings (Crawford v. Washington); handling of high-risk victims including a High-Risk Team protocol; and multi-disciplinary team approaches to address near-fatal strangulation cases.
19. **Resources from the Alliance:** Become familiar with the Alliance's Online Resource Library funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women, which includes toolkits, webinars, sample protocols and forms. Visit www.familyjusticecenter.org for access to the library and more information about Family Justice Centers. Attend the Alliance's monthly calls for developing and operating Centers. They are held the 2nd Wednesday of every month.

“In these meetings for the Family Justice Center, I've met people I didn't know existed, and that is so interesting because we are the only child service providers in Rockford. No one knows what anyone else is doing.”

Shannon Krueger, Pediatric Nurse Practitioner

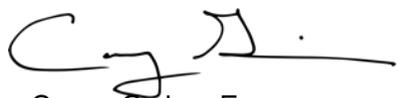
CONCLUSION

We look forward to being with you May 29-30, 2019 to conduct the formal visioning process. Winnebago County is poised to move forward with an exciting community collaborative in the coming months building on the current and collective work of government and community-based agencies and the clear presence of committed leaders. The Mayor's Office on Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking Prevention is uniquely positioned to lead this effort forward.

The Alliance is committed to doing all we can to support your planning and development process and we look forward to the day we can celebrate a Grand Opening and see a Family Justice Center framework emerge to serve victims and their children in Rockford and Winnebago County.

We encourage you to DREAM BIG! But cautiously remind you to start small because survivors in your community need all of you working together to create pathways to hope and healing.

With Great HOPE,



Casey Gwinn, Esq.
President



Michael Burke
Director of Community
Engagement



Rylie Shore
Program Assistant



ROCKFORD STUDY TOUR IN PHOTOS



[For more study tour photos...Click here!](#)