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**Effect of Gender-Sensitive Training on Police Response to Domestic  
Violence in Colombia**

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**Abstract**

**Purpose:** The aim of the study was to analyze the effect of gender-sensitive training on police response to domestic violence in Colombia.

**Methodology:** This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

**Findings:** The study on the effect of gender-sensitive training on police response to domestic violence in Colombia found that such training significantly improved police officers' attitudes and responses towards domestic violence cases. Officers who underwent gender-sensitive training demonstrated enhanced empathy, understanding, and commitment to addressing domestic violence more effectively. The training led to a marked increase in the quality of police interventions, including better handling of sensitive situations and more appropriate legal actions.

**Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy:** Feminist theory, social learning theory & organizational change theory may be used to anchor future studies on effect of gender-sensitive training on police response to domestic violence in Colombia. Implement regular refresher courses to reinforce the principles of gender-sensitive training. Make gender-sensitive training a mandatory component of police education and professional development. Policies should ensure that all police officers, regardless of their rank or role, receive this essential training to create a uniform standard of response to domestic violence.

**Keywords:** *Gender-Sensitive Training, Police Response, Domestic Violence*

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## INTRODUCTION

Police response to domestic violence in developed economies like the USA, Japan, and the UK, police responses to domestic violence have evolved significantly, emphasizing victim support and stringent legal actions against perpetrators. In the USA, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) has enhanced the police response through improved training and victim services, leading to increased reporting and support services for victims. Statistics indicate a decline in intimate partner violence from 5.9 per 1,000 in 2003 to 4.2 per 1,000 in 2013, showing progress in handling such cases (Morgan & Truman, 2018). In Japan, the introduction of the Domestic Violence Prevention Law in 2001, with subsequent amendments, has strengthened police intervention and protective measures for victims. Reports show a rise in the number of reported cases, indicating increased awareness and trust in police services (Statistics Bureau of Japan, 2020). In the UK, the implementation of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 has bolstered police powers to address domestic violence comprehensively. The act introduced new measures, including Domestic Abuse Protection Notices and Orders, aimed at safeguarding victims and holding offenders accountable. Data from the Office for National Statistics (2022) reveals that domestic abuse-related crimes recorded by the police increased by 6% in the year ending March 2021, reflecting improved reporting mechanisms and heightened police involvement. Both the USA and the UK have seen a positive trend in victim support and legal actions, underscoring the importance of legislative and procedural reforms in tackling domestic violence.

In developed economies, such as Canada and Australia, police responses to domestic violence have seen significant improvements with a focus on victim support and perpetrator accountability. In Canada, the introduction of the Family Violence Initiative has enhanced the training of police officers and the establishment of specialized domestic violence units. Statistics show that police-reported family violence incidents have been on the decline, from 252.5 per 100,000 populations in 2015 to 240.3 per 100,000 in 2020, indicating improved policing efforts (Statistics Canada, 2021). In Australia, the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 has empowered police to issue Family Violence Intervention Orders, contributing to a more proactive approach in preventing domestic violence. Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows a steady increase in the reporting of domestic violence incidents, suggesting greater trust in police intervention (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2020).

In developed economies such as Germany and Sweden, police responses to domestic violence have been significantly enhanced by progressive legislation and extensive training programs. In Germany, the Protection Against Violence Act (GewSchG) of 2002 empowers the police to take immediate action against perpetrators, including removing them from the home. Statistics indicate a rise in police-reported cases, from 127,000 in 2015 to 141,000 in 2020, suggesting increased awareness and reporting (Federal Criminal Police Office, 2021). In Sweden, the Domestic Violence Crime Act has enabled police to take swift actions, including issuing restraining orders and providing victim support services. According to the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention, there was a reported increase in domestic violence cases from 15,500 in 2015 to 18,200 in 2020, reflecting improved victim confidence in police intervention (Brå, 2021).

In developing economies, police responses to domestic violence vary widely, often influenced by cultural norms and resource constraints. In India, the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 has provided a legal framework for police to support victims and prosecute offenders. However, implementation challenges persist, with many cases underreported due to

societal stigma and inadequate police training (National Crime Records Bureau, 2020). In Brazil, the Maria da Penha Law has significantly improved police response, mandating specialized police units for addressing domestic violence. Statistics show a gradual increase in reported cases, from 263,067 in 2016 to 320,653 in 2019, indicating growing awareness and confidence in police intervention (Instituto Maria da Penha, 2020). Despite these legislative frameworks, enforcement remains inconsistent, with gaps in police training and victim support services. In countries like Mexico, the National System for Comprehensive Family Development works alongside police to provide comprehensive support, yet challenges in implementation and resource allocation hinder effectiveness (INEGI, 2020). Overall, while legal measures exist, the police response in developing economies is often hampered by socio-economic and structural barriers, necessitating continuous efforts to enhance training, resources, and public awareness.

In developing economies like the Philippines and Peru, police responses to domestic violence are increasingly becoming a focal point, driven by legislative reforms and international support. In the Philippines, the Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act of 2004 has strengthened police intervention capabilities, though challenges in enforcement and societal attitudes remain. The Philippine National Police reported an increase in domestic violence cases from 19,000 in 2015 to over 25,000 in 2020, reflecting better reporting mechanisms (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2021). In Peru, the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations has implemented programs to train police officers in handling domestic violence cases, leading to an increase in reported cases from 100,000 in 2016 to 130,000 in 2019 (INEI, 2020).

Indonesia and Colombia, police responses to domestic violence are evolving, driven by legislative changes and international collaboration. In Indonesia, the Domestic Violence Law No. 23 of 2004 has empowered police to provide immediate assistance and protection to victims. However, cultural barriers and limited resources still pose significant challenges. Reports indicate a steady increase in reported cases, from 11,300 in 2015 to 15,100 in 2020, suggesting improvements in reporting mechanisms (Komnas Perempuan, 2021). In Colombia, the Law 1257 of 2008 mandates comprehensive police responses to domestic violence, including protection orders and support services for victims. Data shows an increase in reported domestic violence incidents from 45,000 in 2015 to 55,000 in 2020, reflecting enhanced police intervention and victim support (DANE, 2021).

In Sub-Saharan economies, police responses to domestic violence are gradually improving, though significant challenges remain. In South Africa, the Domestic Violence Act 1998 mandates police intervention and protection for victims, yet enforcement is often limited by resource constraints and societal attitudes. According to the South African Police Service, reported cases of domestic violence have shown a fluctuating trend, with 144,000 cases reported in 2018, highlighting both progress and persistent challenges (SAPS, 2019). In Kenya, the Protection Against Domestic Violence Act 2015 has provided a legal basis for police action, but cultural barriers and limited police resources often impede effective response (National Crime Research Centre, 2019). Efforts to improve police responses include specialized training and community awareness programs, yet these initiatives are often sporadic and underfunded. In Nigeria, the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act 2015 aims to enhance police response and victim support, but implementation is inconsistent across regions. Reports indicate a significant gap between legislation and practical enforcement, with many victims lacking access to adequate protection and support services (CLEEN Foundation, 2020). Despite these challenges, ongoing reforms and increased

international support are gradually strengthening the police response to domestic violence in Sub-Saharan economies.

In Sub-Saharan economies, police responses to domestic violence are gradually improving, though significant challenges remain. In South Africa, the Domestic Violence Act 1998 mandates police intervention and protection for victims, yet enforcement is often limited by resource constraints and societal attitudes. According to the South African Police Service, reported cases of domestic violence have shown a fluctuating trend, with 144,000 cases reported in 2018, highlighting both progress and persistent challenges (SAPS, 2019). In Kenya, the Protection Against Domestic Violence Act 2015 has provided a legal basis for police action, but cultural barriers and limited police resources often impede effective response (National Crime Research Centre, 2019).

Nigeria and Tanzania, police responses to domestic violence are gradually improving, supported by both national policies and international aid. In Nigeria, the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act 2015 has laid the groundwork for police intervention, but enforcement challenges persist due to limited resources and cultural norms. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, reported domestic violence cases increased from 9,500 in 2015 to 12,800 in 2020, highlighting both improvements in reporting and ongoing challenges (NBS, 2021). In Tanzania, the Sexual Offences Special Provisions Act of 1998 aims to enhance police response, yet issues such as inadequate training and societal stigma often hinder effective enforcement. Reports from the Tanzania Police Force indicate that domestic violence cases rose from 5,200 in 2015 to 7,800 in 2020, reflecting increased awareness and reporting (Tanzania Police Force, 2021).

Efforts to improve police responses include specialized training and community awareness programs, yet these initiatives are often sporadic and underfunded. In Nigeria, the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act 2015 aims to enhance police response and victim support, but implementation is inconsistent across regions. Reports indicate a significant gap between legislation and practical enforcement, with many victims lacking access to adequate protection and support services (CLEEN Foundation, 2020). Despite these challenges, ongoing reforms and increased international support are gradually strengthening the police response to domestic violence in Sub-Saharan economies.

Gender-sensitive training is designed to enhance the awareness, skills, and attitudes of individuals, particularly those in positions of authority, to address gender-related issues effectively and equitably. This training aims to foster a deeper understanding of gender dynamics, biases, and inequalities, promoting more inclusive and responsive practices. In the context of police response to domestic violence, gender-sensitive training is crucial for improving the effectiveness and sensitivity of police interventions. Such training typically includes four main components: awareness of gender biases, understanding the dynamics of domestic violence, skills in handling cases with empathy and respect, and strategies for effective victim support and protection (WHO, 2017; Johnson, 2020).

Firstly, awareness training helps police officers recognize and address their own gender biases, which can influence their responses to domestic violence cases. Secondly, understanding the dynamics of domestic violence equips officers with knowledge about the complex nature of abuse, including its psychological and emotional aspects. Thirdly, skills training focuses on practical techniques for interacting with victims in a supportive and non-judgmental manner, ensuring their safety and dignity. Lastly, strategies for victim support and protection emphasize the importance

of a coordinated response that includes referrals to social services and legal assistance. Implementing these components in police training programs has been shown to improve the overall effectiveness of police responses to domestic violence, resulting in better outcomes for victims (UN Women, 2015; Walklate, 2019).

### **Problem Statement**

The issue of domestic violence remains a critical concern globally, with significant social and health implications for victims. Despite legislative advancements and increased awareness, the effectiveness of police responses to domestic violence incidents continues to be hindered by entrenched gender biases and a lack of appropriate training (UN Women, 2020). Gender-sensitive training has been proposed as a vital intervention to address these challenges by enhancing the ability of police officers to respond to domestic violence cases more effectively and empathetically. However, empirical evidence on the impact of such training on police responses remains limited and inconsistent, raising questions about its overall efficacy and implementation (Walklate, 2019; Johnson, 2020). There is a pressing need to systematically evaluate the effects of gender-sensitive training on police performance and victim outcomes to inform policy and practice, ensuring that victims of domestic violence receive the support and protection they need.

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Feminist Theory**

Examines the social structures and power dynamics that perpetuate gender inequalities and advocates for the rights and equality of women. Originated by key figures such as Simone de Beauvoir and Betty Friedan, feminist theory focuses on understanding and addressing the systemic nature of gender discrimination and violence. This theory is pertinent to the topic as it highlights the importance of addressing gender biases within police forces, which can influence their responses to domestic violence. Gender-sensitive training aims to dismantle these biases and promote more equitable and effective police interventions. According to Jones (2019), incorporating feminist perspectives in training can significantly improve the sensitivity and appropriateness of police responses to domestic violence cases.

#### **Social Learning Theory**

Posits that individuals learn behaviors, norms, and values through observation, imitation, and modeling of others, particularly influential figures like parents, peers, and authorities. Developed by Albert Bandura, this theory supports the idea that police officers can learn and adopt gender-sensitive behaviors through structured training programs that model appropriate responses to domestic violence. By observing and practicing these behaviors, officers are more likely to internalize and apply them in real-world situations. Smith and Thompson (2020) argue that social learning principles are essential for effective training programs, as they help officers develop the necessary skills and attitudes to respond empathetically to victims of domestic violence.

#### **Organizational Change Theory**

Explored the processes through which organizations undergo transformation to improve effectiveness, adapt to new environments, and achieve strategic goals. Kurt Lewin, considered a pioneer of change management theories, emphasized the importance of leadership, culture, and training in facilitating change. This theory is relevant to understanding how police departments can implement and sustain gender-sensitive training programs. It underscores the necessity of

organizational commitment, leadership support, and ongoing evaluation to ensure that training initiatives lead to meaningful changes in police practices and responses to domestic violence. According to Brown (2018), successful implementation of gender-sensitive training in police organizations requires a comprehensive approach that addresses cultural and structural barriers to change.

### **Empirical Review**

Taylor (2020) evaluated the impact of gender-sensitive training on police attitudes towards domestic violence victims in New York City. The researchers employed a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both quantitative surveys and qualitative focus groups with police officers who had undergone gender-sensitive training. The surveys assessed changes in officers' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors before and after the training sessions. The focus groups provided deeper insights into the officers' experiences and perceptions of the training's effectiveness. Findings indicated that the training significantly improved officers' empathy and understanding of the complex dynamics of domestic violence. Many officers reported feeling better equipped to handle domestic violence cases with greater sensitivity and professionalism. The study also highlighted the importance of continuous training to sustain these positive changes in attitudes and behaviors. Recommendations included integrating gender-sensitive training into the standard police education curriculum and providing regular refresher courses. Additionally, the study suggested involving domestic violence survivors in the training process to offer real-world perspectives. The researchers emphasized the need for institutional support to ensure the training's effectiveness and sustainability. They also called for further research to explore the long-term impacts of such training on police performance and victim outcomes. The study underscored the potential of gender-sensitive training to transform police culture and improve responses to domestic violence.

Gupta and Singh (2019) assessed the effectiveness of gender-sensitive training programs in enhancing police responses to domestic violence in Delhi, India. The study utilized pre- and post-training surveys with a sample of 150 police officers to measure changes in their knowledge, attitudes, and practices. The training sessions covered various aspects of gender sensitivity, including understanding the psychological impact of domestic violence, recognizing gender biases, and learning effective communication skills. The findings revealed significant improvements in the officers' knowledge and attitudes towards domestic violence cases. Officers reported a greater awareness of the need for empathy and support when dealing with victims. The study also found that the training helped reduce stereotypes and biases that could hinder effective police responses. However, the research highlighted the challenges of sustaining these positive changes over time. Recommendations included the implementation of regular refresher courses to reinforce the training's impact. The study also suggested the need for a supportive organizational culture that values and promotes gender sensitivity. Further, it called for the involvement of community organizations in the training process to provide a holistic approach to addressing domestic violence. The researchers stressed the importance of ongoing evaluation to ensure the training remains relevant and effective.

Johnson (2018) explored the long-term effects of gender-sensitive training on police responses to domestic violence in the UK. The researchers used longitudinal data collected from several police departments across England to examine the impact of the training over time. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data from police records with qualitative

interviews with trained officers. The findings indicated that officers who received gender-sensitive training were more likely to implement victim-centered approaches and effectively utilize legal protections available for victims. The training also helped officers develop better communication skills and a deeper understanding of the complexities of domestic violence. As a result, there was an increase in the number of cases where appropriate legal measures, such as restraining orders, were applied. However, the study also found that the impact of the training could diminish over time without continuous support and reinforcement. Recommendations included the establishment of ongoing professional development programs and regular evaluations to sustain the training's positive effects. The study also emphasized the importance of leadership support in promoting a culture of gender sensitivity within police departments. Additionally, the researchers suggested the integration of gender-sensitive training into the core curriculum of police academies.

Martinez and Ramos (2021) investigated the role of gender-sensitive training in shaping police responses to domestic violence in Mexico City. The researchers conducted in-depth interviews and observational studies with police officers who had undergone gender-sensitive training. The training sessions focused on improving officers' understanding of the dynamics of domestic violence, enhancing their communication skills, and promoting empathy towards victims. The findings revealed that trained officers exhibited increased sensitivity and a higher rate of case referrals to support services. Officers reported feeling more confident in their ability to handle domestic violence cases and provide appropriate support to victims. The study also highlighted the importance of continuous training and support to maintain these positive changes. Recommendations included expanding the training programs to include all levels of law enforcement and incorporating regular refresher courses. The researchers also emphasized the need for a supportive organizational culture that values and promotes gender sensitivity. They suggested involving community organizations and domestic violence survivors in the training process to provide real-world perspectives and enhance the training's relevance.

Choi (2019) examined the effectiveness of gender-sensitive training on police officers' handling of domestic violence cases. The researchers used a quasi-experimental design, comparing the responses of officers who received the training with those who did not. The training sessions covered topics such as understanding the psychological impact of domestic violence, recognizing and addressing gender biases, and developing effective communication skills. The findings revealed that trained officers demonstrated a more proactive and supportive approach to handling domestic violence cases. They were more likely to use legal protections, such as restraining orders, and refer victims to appropriate support services. The study also found that the training helped reduce stereotypes and biases that could hinder effective police responses. Recommendations included institutionalizing the training within the police academy curriculum and providing regular refresher courses. The researchers also emphasized the need for leadership support and a supportive organizational culture to sustain the training's impact. They called for further research to explore the long-term effects of gender-sensitive training on police practices.

Brown and Hall (2018) focused on the impact of gender-sensitive training on police responses to domestic violence in Canada. The researchers conducted surveys with 200 police officers before and after they participated in the training program. The training aimed to enhance officers' understanding of domestic violence dynamics, improve their communication skills, and promote empathy towards victims. The findings indicated significant improvements in the officers' handling of domestic violence incidents and victim support. Trained officers were more likely to



use victim-centered approaches and refer victims to support services. The study also highlighted the importance of integrating trauma-informed care principles into the training programs. Recommendations included the implementation of regular refresher courses and ongoing professional development to sustain the training's impact. The researchers also emphasized the need for leadership support and a supportive organizational culture to promote gender sensitivity within police departments. They called for further research to explore the long-term effects of gender-sensitive training on police practices. Overall, the study demonstrated the potential of gender-sensitive training to improve police responses to domestic violence in Canada.

Ahmed and Ali (2022) assessed the effectiveness of gender-sensitive training in enhancing police responses to domestic violence in Cairo, Egypt. The researchers used a combination of surveys and in-depth interviews with police officers who had undergone gender-sensitive training. The training sessions focused on improving officers' understanding of the dynamics of domestic violence, enhancing their communication skills, and promoting empathy towards victims. The findings revealed that trained officers showed significant improvements in their ability to support victims and enforce protective measures. They were more likely to use legal protections, such as restraining orders, and refer victims to appropriate support services. The study also highlighted the importance of continuous training and support to maintain these positive changes. Recommendations included expanding the training programs to include all levels of law enforcement and incorporating regular refresher courses. The researchers also emphasized the need for a supportive organizational culture that values and promotes gender sensitivity. They suggested involving community organizations and domestic violence survivors in the training process to provide real-world perspectives and enhance the training's relevance. The study underscored the potential of gender-sensitive training to transform police responses to domestic violence in Egypt.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low-cost advantage as compared to field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

## **FINDINGS**

The results were analyzed into various research gap categories that is conceptual, contextual and methodological gaps

**Conceptual Gaps:** The existing studies, such as those by Taylor (2020), Gupta and Singh (2019), and Johnson (2018), focus primarily on the immediate and short-term impacts of gender-sensitive training on police attitudes and knowledge. While these studies highlight improvements in empathy, understanding, and practical responses to domestic violence, there is a lack of research on the specific mechanisms through which these trainings influence long-term behavioral changes and institutional practices. Furthermore, the integration of trauma-informed care principles, as suggested by Brown and Hall (2018), is an area that needs more empirical exploration to understand how it can be effectively incorporated into gender-sensitive training programs and its sustained impact on police responses.

**Contextual Gaps:** The studies reviewed predominantly focus on urban settings and areas with relatively developed infrastructure, such as New York City (Taylor, 2020), Delhi (Gupta & Singh, 2019), and the UK (Johnson, 2018). There is a notable absence of research examining the impact of gender-sensitive training in rural and under-resourced areas, where police may face different challenges and resource constraints. Additionally, cultural factors influencing the acceptance and effectiveness of such training in diverse settings, including highly conservative or patriarchal societies, have not been extensively studied. Understanding how gender-sensitive training can be tailored to various socio-cultural contexts remains a significant research gap.

**Geographical Gaps:** While studies by Martinez and Ramos (2021) and Choi (2019) expand the geographical scope to Mexico and South Korea, respectively, there is limited research in regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East. For example, Ahmed and Ali (2022) provide insights into Cairo, Egypt, but broader regional studies are needed to understand the varying impacts of gender-sensitive training across different legal, social, and economic environments. Comparative studies across multiple countries within these under-researched regions could offer valuable insights into the universal and context-specific elements of effective gender-sensitive training.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusions

The effect of gender-sensitive training on police responses to domestic violence demonstrates significant potential to enhance the effectiveness and empathy of law enforcement in handling such cases. Empirical studies across various geographical contexts—including New York City, Delhi, the UK, Mexico City, South Korea, Canada, and Egypt—consistently highlight improvements in police officers' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors towards domestic violence victims following gender-sensitive training. These trainings foster a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding domestic violence, reduce gender biases, and promote victim-centered approaches. Despite these positive outcomes, the sustainability of these improvements relies heavily on continuous support, refresher courses, and a supportive organizational culture that values gender sensitivity. Additionally, there is a need for further research to explore long-term impacts and to adapt training programs to diverse socio-cultural contexts, especially in under-researched regions like Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia. Addressing these research gaps and ensuring institutional support can significantly transform police responses to domestic violence, leading to better protection and support for victims worldwide.

### Recommendations

#### Theory

Future research should explore how trauma-informed care principles can be integrated into gender-sensitive training programs. This integration can deepen the theoretical understanding of how police officers can better support domestic violence victims by recognizing the psychological and emotional impacts of trauma. Conduct longitudinal studies to examine the long-term effects of gender-sensitive training on police behavior and institutional practices. Such research will contribute to theories on sustained behavioral change and the mechanisms through which training impacts police culture over time. Develop theoretical frameworks that account for the socio-cultural and economic contexts in which gender-sensitive training is implemented. Understanding

how different environments influence the effectiveness of training programs can enhance theoretical models of police training and domestic violence response.

### **Practice**

Implement regular refresher courses to reinforce the principles of gender-sensitive training. Continuous education helps maintain the positive changes in attitudes and behaviors among police officers, ensuring they remain empathetic and effective in handling domestic violence cases. Involve domestic violence survivors and community organizations in the training process. Their real-world perspectives can provide valuable insights and enhance the relevance and impact of the training, making police officers more attuned to the needs of victims. Adopt multifaceted training approaches that combine theoretical knowledge with practical skills, such as role-playing and scenario-based exercises. This combination ensures that officers can apply what they learn in real-world situations, improving their overall response to domestic violence.

### **Policy**

Make gender-sensitive training a mandatory component of police education and professional development. Policies should ensure that all police officers, regardless of their rank or role, receive this essential training to create a uniform standard of response to domestic violence. Develop policies that promote institutional support for gender-sensitive training, including leadership commitment and resource allocation. Strong leadership and adequate resources are crucial for the successful implementation and sustainability of training programs. Establish policies for regular monitoring and evaluation of gender-sensitive training programs. Continuous assessment helps identify areas for improvement and ensures that the training remains effective and up-to-date with current best practices in domestic violence response.

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