



STUDY TOUR REPORT

COBB COUNTY, GEORGIA

2021



Prepared by The Family Justice Center Alliance, a program of Alliance for HOPE International
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COBB COUNTY

INTRODUCTION

Our Family Justice Center Alliance (FJCA) Technical Assistance Team, a program of Alliance for HOPE International (Alliance), was honored to facilitate a Community Forum and Study Tour to support the development of a Family Justice Center in Cobb County, Georgia on August 17-18, 2021. The Community Forum and Study Tour process was an opportunity for the Alliance to provide information about the Family Justice Center framework and meet with key stakeholders, service providers, and survivors of domestic violence to learn about the services available in Cobb County. Our team was able to identify current strengths and potential barriers in the county's various service delivery

systems, gain insight on specific concerns about the framework, and determine how the Alliance can best support ongoing efforts toward the creation of a Family Justice Center. The Study Tour allowed the Alliance team to gather feedback and information about your community through pre-planning meetings, anonymous partner surveys, online research, stakeholder meetings, and a virtual survivor focus group. Our team agrees there is tremendous support for a Family Justice Center in Cobb County; however, work remains to bring agencies from all service delivery systems together to create a better understanding of the Family Justice Center framework to support a robust planning process for a dynamic strategic planning event in 2022.



BACKGROUND

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 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.

THE ALLIANCE TEAM conducting the Study Tour consisted of Raeanne Passantino, Director of Technical Assistance for the FJCA, Michelle Morgan, Vice President and Director of One Safe Place in Fort Worth, TX, and Dr. Denise McCain,

Executive Director of the Prince George's Family Justice Center in Upper Marlboro, MD. Over the course of the two-day event, the team met with many stakeholders to learn more about the community's response to domestic violence, child abuse, elder abuse, sexual assault, and support of immigrants in Cobb County.

THE HISTORY

Cobb County was one of three counties in Georgia awarded a VOCA grant through the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) for the planning of a Family Justice Center. Cobb County is the third largest county in the state, with a population of over 750,000 residents. The application process included required applicants to demonstrate a readiness and willingness to work collaboratively with their community partners on domestic violence, sexual assault, and child and elder abuse.

The community showed its dedication to working with victims and families of domestic violence through the existence of a Domestic Violence Task Force, a certified Child Advocacy Center, and having an emergency and extended housing program for victims of domestic violence that needed housing. Through a pre-Study Tour community assessment, partners from various agencies agreed that there was a need for a Family Justice Center, and they committed to working collectively in the planning and implementation of the Center. The Family Justice Center in Cobb County is a government model housed under the Office of the District Attorney who has been a major supporter and advocate for the development of the Center.

THE STUDY TOUR

The Study Tour began with a Community Forum held at the Cobb Police Academy, in Austell. The 25 in-person attendees, who braved the remnants of Hurricane Henri-related weather challenges, were warmly welcomed by Family Justice Center Coordinator Tanesha McAuley, District Attorney Flynn Broady, Jr., Assistant County Manager Jimmy Gisi, Cobb County Sheriff Craig Owens, Sr., Cobb County Police Chief Tim Cox, Chief Assistant Solicitor General Chris Lanning, and Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) Director Jay Neal.

Each set of welcoming remarks confirmed the overwhelming support of the Family Justice Center framework, especially the positive impact it will have on addressing trauma experienced by survivors in the county.

"It's important that we show our community that this is important for victims - being able to minimize trauma and restore their lives. A Family Justice Center will make sure that we address trauma and allow them to live a better life without focusing on the trauma. Partners, you are the people to help victims get through trauma. In partnership, we can move this community forward and do some great things."

DISTRICT ATTORNEY BROADY

The complete presentation for Cobb County Study Tour can be accessed through [this link](#).

PHOTO ON THE RIGHT: **TANESHA MCAULEY, FJC COORDINATOR**

"I'm optimistic this endeavor will help in the healing of trauma. I anticipate that this is an endeavor the Cobb County Police Department will lead, and we will be sure that this will be successful."

POLICE CHIEF COX

Tanesha McAuley followed the welcoming comments with a presentation that described the current landscape of domestic violence in Cobb County. She focused on the reasons a Family Justice Center is needed now by sharing current domestic violence data, the impact of intimate partner violence in the United States and concluded with an illustration of a victim's journey to receiving services. Tanesha is very passionate about the success of this Family Justice Center and is the right person to keep this project moving forward over the next several months.



THE STUDY TOUR

“The Family Justice Center model is a best-practice and Public Safety Model that provides wrap around services for victims, survivors, and families of domestic violence, child and elder abuse, sexual assault, and human trafficking. The opportunity for our community to engage in formal strategic planning and community needs assessment will result in a cohesive and community supported plan for implementation of Cobb's Family Justice Center.”

KIM MCCOY, DIRECTOR OF VICTIM WITNESS UNIT

“The Study Tour was a great opportunity for our Cobb community to learn how important community partnership is for the development and implementation of an inclusive FJC that instills hope in the lives of victims and survivors of DV.”

TANESHA MCAULEY, FJC COORDINATOR

“None of us were guaranteed a perfect world . . . It's up to us to determine how we deal with it. It's incumbent upon us to do it better, that's what the Family Justice Center is about. This is what we need in Cobb County, so victims don't have to tell their stories more than once. Being able to have our caregivers in one place is what victims need.”

JIMMY GISI, ASSISTANT COUNTY MANAGER

“Cobb County is a very diverse community. This center is going to be so impressive to us and Cobb County Sheriff's Office is going to stand behind it 100%. We will provide the resources needed to make sure it's successful.”

CRAIG OWENS, SR., COBB COUNTY SHERIFF

“We created a domestic violence unit that has a full-time staff that reviews all domestic violence cases and handles the most serious assisting victims in those case. We are thrilled to be a part of this endeavor, thrilled to be here from the ground up. This is going to have an immeasurable impact on victims and the community from the ground up.”

CHRIS LANNING, CHIEF ASSISTANT SOLICITOR GENERAL

“I am excited to be here along with several of our team members. We're excited about the Family Justice Center initiative coming to Cobb County. This model is the future of victim services. This is an opportunity for all these agencies to come together and provide the best victim services possible. There's so much that comes out of a Family Justice Center model, and we're excited that this is taking place in Cobb County. We're partners, we're here to support you and will do everything that we can to make sure this is successful. I am confident that Cobb County will be better because of the Family Justice Center.”

JAY NEAL, CJCC DIRECTOR

MEETINGS

The Alliance Team met with a variety of key stakeholders that included staff and leaders from agencies across Cobb County who care deeply about the work they are doing to support survivors and their families. The Study Tour invitation was announced in the local paper and on the Cobb County District Attorney Office's social media pages. Over 300 community partners received the invitation with 50% confirming their attendance. Unfortunately, many were unable to join the opening session of the Study Tour or missed the event all together due to severe inclement weather that took place on the day of the Study Tour. This, combined with ongoing COVID pandemic restrictions, lowered the overall in-person turnout and attendance of partners.

Study Tour planning meetings focused on the creation of a two-day agenda that included meetings with the following:

Cobb Collaborative

Cobb County Board of Commissioners

Cobb County District Attorney's Office

Cobb County Domestic Violence Task Force

Cobb County Elder Abuse Task Force

Cobb County Information Services

Cobb County Police Department

Cobb County Sheriff's Department

Cobb Department of Public Safety

Cobb Division of Family & Children Services (DFCS)

Cobb Legal Aid

Cobb Magistrate's Office

GA Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD)

Kennesaw Wellstar College

LiveSafe Resources, Inc.

Mission Acts International

SafePath Children's Advocacy Center

Smyrna Police Department

Cobb County Solicitor General's Office

Survivors

The Center for Family Resources



NOTABLE MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

COBB COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

The District Attorney's Office is the CJCC grant awardee and organization that is spearheading the development of the Family Justice Center. Domestic violence is a priority for DA Broady's office and is something in which he has invested a great deal of resources to date. While there is full engagement of the District Attorney's Office at this time, there are preliminary discussions on whether the Family Justice Center will remain with the District Attorney's Office or transition to Cobb County government. In the meantime, DA Broady is very committed to bringing the Family Justice Center to Cobb County.



GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES (DBHDD)

DBHDD Community Services Board Member Stephen George felt strongly that DBHDD should be an onsite partner of the Family Justice Center because he has seen firsthand what it is like for someone in need of mental health services to fall between the cracks. He believes the multi-disciplinary model is what is needed to help victims.

"I've always advocated for a more collaborative model. You want to include police, health care, the faith-based community and pull them all together. This is a natural extension. I like the one-stop-shop approach.... Mental health issues are more common than you realize. Many people in abusive relationships are dealing with PTSD, co-occurring conditions: bi-polar, schizophrenia, substance abuse. We can help them. We have access to a long list of services. It might even be a mother, who is a victim of abuse with an autistic child who needs help but can't get it or is too stressed because of the abuse to think about services for the child or even know where to begin to get them. These are things that should be considered in this model."

STEPHEN GEORGE, DBHDD BOARD MEMBER

THE STUDY TOUR

SOLICITOR GENERAL'S OFFICE

Assistant Solicitor Rachel Plevak expressed excitement about the establishment of the Cobb County Family Justice Center and felt the probability of its success was very high. She welcomed the opportunity to operate with a collaborative service delivery approach and talked about the establishment of the domestic violence unit because her office did not think survivors were getting the type of resources that were needed.

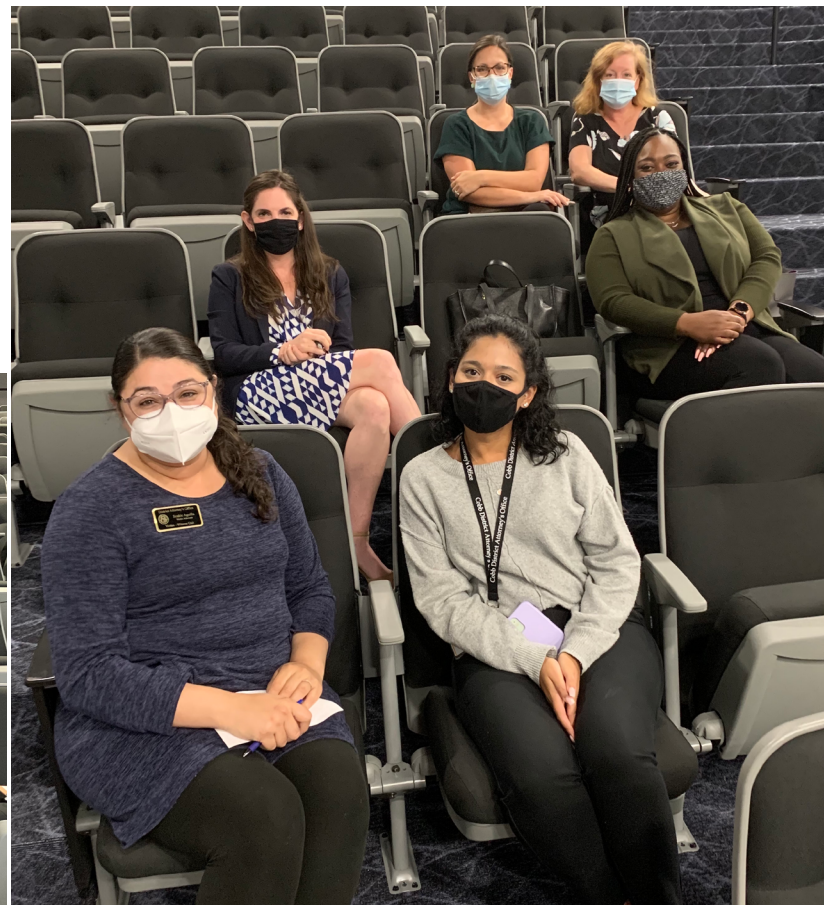
"We struggle with some of the same things that victims do, we try to piecemeal many of the same things that they do. Survivors need more specialized services that we can't provide for them."

RACHEL PLEVAK, ASSISTANT SOLICITOR

Ms. Plevak added that it would be important for the Solicitor General's Office to have the ability to be at the Family Justice Center a couple of days per week. Chief Assistant Solicitor Lanning is also very committed to the establishment of a Family Justice Center in Cobb County and could be a good ally in efforts to secure County funding and buy-in from the Board of Commissioners.

MAGISTRATE COURT

Chief Magistrate Brendan Murphy and Court Administrator Tahnicia Phillips support a Family Justice Center framework in Cobb County. They talked about the different options available to victims of domestic violence (i.e., filing a protection order or a domestic violence warrant) and how confusing it can be for someone unfamiliar with the steps for either. They agree having a centralized person to help navigate the system would be helpful and think the Family Justice Center is the right place for this to happen. They support e-filings and virtual hearings for warrants and ex parte hearings and suggest creating a way for police reports to be made at the Center. They also encourage the Center to consider providing help with child support and cash aid as well.



STRENGTHS AND BARRIERS

Meetings with the community partners listed above helped the Alliance team learn more about what is in place now and what potential barriers exist regarding the development of a Family Justice Center framework in Cobb County, and how the framework would enhance existing service provision for survivors and their children. The following strengths and potential barriers were identified:

STRENGTHS

- High degree of support from grant funder, Criminal Justice Coordinating Council
- High support and engagement from criminal justice agencies
- The Cobb County Solicitor General’s Office is very committed to the establishment of a Family Justice Center in Cobb County and will be a key player in ongoing discussions
- District Attorney Broady publicly stated his support for the establishment of a Family Justice Center in Cobb County
- Strong interest by the Georgia Department of Behavioral and Developmental Disabilities to be an onsite partner of the Family Justice Center
- District Attorney Victim Witness Advocates are very committed to serving victims and being part of the Family Justice Center
- Cobb Legal Aid is fully onboard and the fact they are not a Legal Services Corporation-funded civil legal agency will increase their reach and ability to assist more clients
- Court staff sees the benefits of filing ex parte temporary protection orders from the Family Justice Center
- More streamlined provision of services in Cobb County for clients in one place
- Opportunity to develop new programs, such as a High-Risk Domestic Violence Team
- Family Justice Center framework provides an opportunity to create goodwill by including partners in grant applications and leveraging resources
- An opportunity, if marketed correctly, to increase trust of law enforcement within the community
- Family Justice Center will allow more direct, regular contact with law enforcement to help expedite cases
- After participating in stakeholder meetings to learn more about the Family Justice Center framework, partners were more understanding and open to the model, primarily around the decision to co-locate and share resources
- Family Justice Center will provide a resource for law enforcement who see themselves as having to be advocates
- Family Justice Center creates an opportunity for 24/7 support
- Family Justice Center organizers have great rapport with law enforcement who are invested in the establishment of an FJC in Cobb County

POTENTIAL BARRIERS

– Some District Attorney staff think survivors may be reluctant to seek services if the Center is located at the District Attorney's Office due to fearing an association with the courts or prosecutors

– Dependent on where the Cobb Family Justice Center will reside, transportation needs could present some challenges for clients

– More involvement from diverse community groups is needed to be more representative of the populations served

– Some organizations view the Family Justice Center as a competitor

– There is an urgent need to address racial tensions, fears, and concerns of people of color who do not feel comfortable accessing certain services in Cobb County, such as law enforcement

– The possibility that police would be a deterrent and barrier to survivors accessing services due to national media attention on law enforcement and how this could impact community support and buy-in for a Family Justice Center with onsite law enforcement



KEY QUESTIONS

Each of the meetings convened during the Study Tour included very insightful conversations about what is working very well and what is not, as well as concerns about the current system of service delivery being able to support a Family Justice Center framework at this time. Very thoughtful questions were asked during the meetings and include:

- What role does the faith-based community play in the Family Justice Center framework?
- Agencies informed on no associated costs with co-locating staff that desire to work as an onsite partner with the FJC
- Where will the Family Justice Center be located?
- Who will be the lead agency?
- Will there be after-hours services at the Family Justice Center?
- What will the Cobb County Domestic Violence Task Force’s role be at the Family Justice Center?
- Could the Family Justice Center assist the Cobb County Domestic Violence Task Force to conduct fatality reviews? Where would the fatality review live?
- Should the Family Justice Center create a high-risk domestic violence team?
- Why is the focus on strangulation investigation/prosecution so important?
- Should law enforcement anticipate an increase in domestic violence reports once the Family Justice Center is open?

KEY THEMES

From our meetings with community partners and survivors, we identified four main themes throughout the Study Tour:

- Proper messaging about the Family Justice Center to immigrant communities is crucial.
- Key stakeholders and community partners need more education on the Family Justice Center framework to create buy-in and remove incorrect assumptions of the purpose of the Center.
- Community partners are very interested in creating systems that honor and support diversity and inclusion.
- More providers that work with underserved populations are needed in the Family Justice Center planning and implementation process.

These key questions and themes helped guide our recommendations provided in the Highlights section.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE COMMUNITY PARTNERS SURVEY

Prior to the Study Tour, community partners throughout Cobb County were invited to participate in a [Community Partners Survey](#). The data collected from the survey allows the Alliance team to better understand the current state of interdisciplinary collaboration and identify potential hurdles to co-location. The survey is intentionally designed to pinpoint any sources of apprehension, which then helps the Alliance teamwork with your community to mitigate any projected challenges of a Family Justice Center.

Unfortunately, the Community Partners Survey was completed by only 20 community partners, indicating a strong

need to resend the survey to a broader audience to capture information from those missing from the partner meetings. This small data set does show there is belief partners and staff will gain new knowledge about services and programs and will develop valuable relationships because of the Family Justice Center. The data also revealed drawbacks because of co-locating with the Family Justice Center that include frustration or aggravation and anticipated diversion of time and resources away from other priorities or obligations. It will be very important to revisit this data after more community partners complete the survey to get a clearer picture of what Cobb County really believes.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE FOCUS GROUP WITH SURVIVORS

"My greatest achievement is that I have not raised future abusers."

SURVIVOR

Of all the work done to gather input on the development of a Family Justice Center in any community, obtaining the opinions of survivors is the most important. If a Family Justice Center does not reflect what survivors want, they will not come for services – plain and simple. They know exactly where the Center should be located, which community partners need to be there, what programs will be most helpful, and even the best name for the Center. The Study Tour process typically includes at least one in-person survivor focus group, but no survivors were available while the Alliance team was in Austell, so a focus group was conducted virtually instead.

This virtual focus group consisted of three survivors: one survivor had been shot several times, leaving her paralyzed from the waist down; one has used her experience to help others; and another is still engaged in managing her case. Each group participant brought very valuable insights into the challenges they experienced when they first reached out for services.

A common theme shared by these survivors was not being believed by police officers when they first reached out for help. They reported feeling dismissed, brushed off, and reported officers often made incorrect assumptions about domestic violence during their response to calls. Additionally, there is a negative response to domestic violence within faith-based institutions. The feeling is the faith community is ill-equipped to have a dialogue about domestic violence. Another theme was lack of adequate resources. This ranges

from not receiving any information at all to being given blanket resources and then left to manage on their own. The most helpful resource received by each focus group participant, however, was counseling, especially for their children.

*"It is my prayer, it is my hope,
that once established,
the Family Justice Center
will have a space to be assisted
by faith-based work."*

SURVIVOR

Two of the three participants were very engaged in the focus group and showed their video, while the third joined late, did not want to show her video, and was resistant and unsure of why she was there. As the conversation progressed and the others began acknowledging her and offering their support, she started to blossom; the transformation was powerful! Her voice grew stronger as she shifted from sadness and despair to a someone who felt heard and supported. She became an active contributor to the brainstorming aspects of the focus group and at the end of the session she turned her video on to reveal a beautiful, confident woman who was excited to be part of this groundbreaking project for Cobb County, thus illustrating the magic and importance of conducting survivor focus groups throughout the ongoing development of the Family Justice Center process: to hear what survivors want and do not want, and to elevate their voices in the process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following list of recommendations is presented for your consideration as you move forward with planning for a Family Justice Center in Cobb County.

1 FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER

COORDINATION: Tanesha McAuley is perfectly suited to coordinate the development of the Family Justice Center in Cobb County. As such, we suggest reminding community partners to reach out to her directly as part of a coordinated planning process. In addition, consider ongoing training opportunities and regularly scheduled meetings to educate everyone on what the Family Justice Center framework is, and is not. This includes key stakeholders such as the Board of Commissioners, law enforcement, the District Attorney's Office, Probation, the courts, sexual assault, child abuse, elder abuse, human trafficking, the community-at-large, etc. Many people with whom we met were still not aware of the framework or how it works.

2 COMMUNITY PARTNERS SURVEY:

We strongly recommend resending the Community Partners Survey to as many community partners as possible prior to Strategic Planning, whether they will become an onsite partner of the Family Justice Center or not. Many people with whom we met were unfamiliar with the current planning process and had not completed the survey as a result. Just as the voices of survivors play an important role in this process, the voices of governmental and community-based organizations also play a key role - the more engagement, the stronger the buy-in and support of the planning process. [Link to the survey.](#)

3 SURVIVOR ENGAGEMENT:

As mentioned above, survivor voices are central to the success of the Family Justice Center framework and their inclusion is an essential ingredient in the development of your Center. More survivor focus groups are needed between now and Strategic Planning in 2022. This includes focus groups in Spanish, as well as other predominate languages as identified by community partners providing services to immigrant survivors of domestic violence. We recommend adopting the Alliance's protocol on survivor focus groups, and engaging all potential partner agencies in conducting additional focus groups using the Alliance [Focus Group Toolkit](#) to assist with this process. It is important that a large, diverse group of survivors is invited to provide input regarding their experiences with current systems and agencies, along with their ideas for a Family Justice Center framework in Cobb County. Survivors should be asked about the type of services they want co-located in the Family Justice Center, as well as the overall design and layout of the building itself. Finally, consider starting a VOICES Chapter as a mechanism to bring more survivors to the planning process to continue the momentum through Strategic Planning. One survivor from the virtual focus group asked for more information about creating a VOICES Chapter in Cobb County. [The VOICES Toolkit can be accessed here](#) for guidance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

4 CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE:

A number of people with whom we met identified the need for a culturally responsive approach to the development of the Family Justice Center that addresses the concerns of survivors of color and those who are immigrants who may be reluctant to seek services from the Center. The Alliance's technical assistance includes a focus on ensuring Centers look like the community in which they serve. This includes, but is not limited to, the Executive and Steering Committees, frontline services and programs, etc. In addition, a focus should be placed on how the Cobb County Family Justice Center will message services to the community around onsite criminal justice agency partners to reduce fears and increase accessibility.

5 EXECUTIVE COUNCIL:

Consider reducing the size of your current Executive Council of 30 agencies by half. The remaining agency representatives can then form the Planning Committee whose focus will be on the day-to-day activities needed to keep momentum moving forward and carry forth the goals and action steps created during Strategic Planning in 2022. The Executive Council (aka, Steering Committee) is better suited as a smaller decision-making group made up of key stakeholders from a variety of governmental agencies and community-based organizations, including the chairs of the Work Groups identified during the Strategic Planning preparation process. As a starting point, we recommend all committee members read [Dream Big, Start Small](#) and [Hope Rising: How the Science of HOPE Can Change Your Life](#).

Some committees in other communities have divided up the chapters of each book, each taking the lead on a few, and then the committees come together to start dialoguing on the key steps toward developing the Family Justice Center.

6 EXPAND THE PLANNING COMMITTEE:

For the Family Justice Center to be a successful, dynamic, sustainable framework, it must include ideas of all key community leaders, partner agencies, and survivors. Ensure a diverse Planning Committee by including members of law enforcement, faith leaders, prosecutors, medical professionals, judges, survivors, underserved populations, social workers, etc. Once the Planning Committee has been organized, it is recommended that the committee meets monthly to continue moving toward the creation of the Center by following the guidance of the Executive Council and ultimately the Work Groups that will be identified as part of Strategic Planning in 2022.

7 COMMUNITY PARTNERS:

As mentioned above, many community partner voices were noticeably missing from the Study Tour due to inclement weather and COVID concerns. It is recommended that community partners who were not currently part of this Study Tour activity be invited to join the Planning Committee and are invited to the 2022 Strategic Planning event. Consider a vetting process to help identify partners that will support the current planning process to fill gaps in current service delivery representation and align with the goals and objectives created by the Executive Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS

8 STRANGULATION TRAINING:

In response to the key question, “Why is the focus on strangulation investigation/prosecution so important?”, based on the Alliance’s national research and experience, 70% of cases can be proven without victim testimony when law enforcement investigators follow up on domestic violence calls with comprehensive investigations. The most at-risk victims are those who have been strangled. If a victim is strangled one time, she is 750% more likely to later be killed by her abuser, yet per the Community Partners Survey, only one-third of the service providers in Cobb County have received training on strangulation assault within the last 12 months. To improve your response to non-fatal strangulation cases, consider sending a multi-disciplinary team, emphasizing law enforcement and medical and emergency room staff, to the Alliance’s [strangulation prevention trainings](#) to better understand the risks, lethality, signs, and best practices for treating and prosecuting strangulation crimes. There are also a variety of tools and resources on our [Resource Library](#) that will assist with better supporting survivors of near and non-fatal strangulation assault.

9 TOUR FAMILY JUSTICE CENTERS:

It is recommended that members of the Executive Council and Planning Committee tour a variety of Family Justice Centers across the country. There are strong Family Justice Centers in your neighboring states of Louisiana (New Orleans Family Justice Center), Texas (One Safe Place, Fort Worth), Oklahoma (Palomar - Oklahoma City’s Family Justice Center, and the Family Safety Center, Tulsa), and Tennessee (Family Safety Centers, Nashville). Touring multiple

Family Justice Centers will provide your community with creative ideas on how to develop a Center that will uniquely meet the needs of survivors in Cobb County.

10 AFFILIATION GUIDELINES:

Consider becoming familiar with the basic requirements for becoming an Affiliated Center with the Alliance. The affiliation guidelines will help you identify the core fulltime onsite partners that Centers must have to be affiliated in the category of Family Justice Center. These guidelines will also prepare you for the baseline documents and operational procedures to have in place when your doors open. The core fulltime partners include law enforcement, prosecutors, civil legal, and a community-based domestic violence program, along with a centralized client intake process.

11 CHAIRS FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING WORK GROUPS:

Begin to identify community stakeholders to serve as chairs and co-chairs for the work groups that will be created during the Strategic Planning process in 2022. Suggested work groups include Governance and Facility; Funding and Sustainability; Service Delivery and Operations; Community Engagement, Outreach and Volunteers; and Data, Research, and Evaluations. Consider adding a sixth work group focused on Law Enforcement to help navigate various logistical challenges involved with bringing different jurisdictions together under one roof. Once the chairs and co-chairs have been recruited, arrange for a Zoom call with the Alliance and 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.

RECOMMENDATIONS

12 HIGH RISK TEAMS: Consider having the Cobb Domestic Violence Task Force resume domestic violence fatality reviews and discuss how the review process fits into the Family Justice Center framework. In addition, begin talking about what a High-Risk Domestic Violence Team at the Family Justice Center would look like, including methodology, partnership agreements that address information sharing and confidentiality, and opportunities for clients to opt out if they choose.

13 OFFENDER ACCOUNTABILITY: Consider commencing conversations with government agencies and victim service providers focused on offender accountability. This includes an examination of offender accountability through all local criminal justice systems from arrest, prosecution, and sentencing and probation. This also includes training and consultation around the differences between domestic violence offenders, sexual assault offenders, and child abuse offenders. Directors of Family Justice Centers around the country agree there must be a focus on addressing offenders, but this must be done thoughtfully and safely to support survivors who want to keep their family intact while ensuring their partner is held accountable and receives help.

14 DATA COLLECTION AND BENCHMARKING: The Alliance recommends that all participating agencies identify and document local domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse statistics to benchmark the progress of your collaboration, including: 911 calls; police reports; charged, negotiated, and/or dismissed criminal cases; recidivism rates; homicides; and temporary and permanent protective orders. Consider conducting a “mini safety audit” of your

systems by gathering, randomly, and then de-identifying (prior to analysis) ten police reports, ten protection order files, ten cases from domestic violence court, and ten 911 tapes. The Alliance often assists in analyzing this information for communities, but members of the local planning team, such as faculty from higher education institutions, are likely the best people to conduct this evaluation.

15 TRANSPORTATION: Consider transportation as a factor when thinking about the location of the Family Justice Center. Several community partners identified lack of access to transportation as a significant barrier, especially for immigrants. Reach out to the Alliance for information and ideas on how other Centers across the country have responded to this very common issue.

16 IMPROVE LONGTERM SUSTAINABILITY SOLUTIONS: Implement component that will engage Cobb County leadership in learning how critical FJC's are in reducing and eliminating homicide-related DV, positively impacts the lives of victims and families of DV, SA, Child/Elder Abuse, Human Trafficking, & Stalking.

17 ATTEND THE 22ND ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER CONFERENCE: Register a multi-disciplinary team to attend the 22nd Annual International Family Justice Center Conference in San Diego, CA on May 25-27, 2022. Consider fundraising to cover registration of multiple staff from the Cobb County District Attorney's Office and coordinate with additional staff from partner agencies to attend the Conference as a developing team.

RECOMMENDATIONS



18 COMMUNICATION: Consider a plan to keep the public and community informed on the planning process of your Center on a regular basis, such as a website. [See this website](#) created by a community in North Carolina as an example.

19 GUIDING PRINCIPLES: Review, share, and consider formally adopting the following Alliance’s Guiding Principles at the Strategic Planning event:



20 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.

21 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 our online [Resource Library](#) for access to the library and more information about Family Justice Centers. Attend the Alliance’s monthly Directors Calls for developing and operating Centers. They are held the 2nd Wednesday of every month.

TIMELINE

ACTIVITY	NOV '21	DEC '21	JAN '22	FEB '22	MAR '22	APR '22	MAY '22	JUN '22	JUL '22	AUG '22	SEP '22	OCT '22	NOV '22	DEC '22	JAN '23	FEB '23	MAR '23	APR '23	MAY '23	JUN '23	JUL '23
Finalize Study Tour Report	█																				
Implement Recommendations		█	█	█	█	█	█														
Begin planning for Strategic Planning				█	█	█	█														
Conduct Strategic Planning event						█															
Utilize 6 months of Alliance TA							█	█	█	█	█	█									
Implement Strategic Plan and Prep for Opening							█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Ribbon Cutting																					█

CONCLUSION

It is evident that the hearts of Tanesha McAuley and District Attorney Broady are in the right place to spearhead the development of a Family Justice Center in Cobb County. Their passion and commitment of the Cobb County Family Justice Center, and that of community partners, will keep the momentum moving toward planning a hope-centered Family Justice Center. Implementation of the

recommendations above will play an important part in bringing folks together to continue conversations started during this Study Tour. There is no time like the present to begin dreaming BIG about your Family Justice Center, so long as you do not forget to focus on the little details along the way. Survivors and their families are counting on you to provide a dynamic space that creates pathways to hope and healing.



WE ENCOURAGE COBB COUNTY
TO **DREAM BIG** AND
START SMALL

Casey Gwinn & Gael Strack

ALLIANCE for
HOPE
INTERNATIONAL

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