

Public Safety Institute

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Assessment of the Scott County, Tennessee Family Safety Center and Coordinated Community Response

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Dr. Amaia Iratzoki
Research Director

James McCutcheon
Senior Research Developer
Public Safety Institute



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OVERVIEW

The University of Memphis Public Safety Institute (UofM PSI) was previously funded to establish a domestic violence task force to design and implement a strategic plan to coordinate community responses to domestic violence in Shelby County, Tennessee. There are many challenges in bringing together different community stakeholders across the criminal justice system, social services, and broader community organizations and nonprofits. Coordinated community responses (CCRs) to domestic violence are a unique way to incorporate criminal justice, social service, and other realms in responding to domestic violence. This role is distinct from the role the local family justice center (FJC) may play in coordinating response to individual cases. The CCR formalizes the relationships between agencies at a macro-level, while the FJC looks to provide a seamless response at the victim level.

While the CCR and FJC are naturally interconnected, in some cases the FJC leads the CCR in drawing agencies together in partnership at the micro-level (coordinating cases) and at the macro-level (coordinating agency responses). Tennessee's Office of Criminal Justice Programs (OCJP) has identified Scott County, a rural county in East Tennessee along the Kentucky border, as seemingly successful in modeling both the micro- and macro-level relationships between services and agencies in responding to domestic violence. The University of Memphis Public Safety Institute (UofM PSI) has been involved with prior efforts to facilitate macro-level relationships between agencies while an earlier iteration of a FJC was operational in Shelby County, where the UofM PSI is located. However, the Shelby County FJC closed in March 2025, and the UofM PSI has been leading the CCR in isolation in the absence of any FJC.

Drawing on the seeming success of the Scott County model and to learn from their strengths and weaknesses, UofM PSI has teamed up with Scott County to evaluate their FJC and CCR models. The strength of the UofM PSI as an academic partner is its ability and training in designing and conducting rigorous evaluation; previous

evaluations funded by OCJP have prompted the funding of subsequent projects over the past decade, as well as other federal, state, and local funding.

The current evaluation will aim to serve two purposes: one, identify and highlight what could be "best practices" of a functioning FJC and larger CCR, which would allow Scott County the opportunity to seek additional state and federal funding to expand their capacity; and two, provide a template that could be adapted for Shelby County, but also for subsequent evaluations of FJCs and CCRs across the state.

TENNESSEE'S FAMILY JUSTICE CENTERS

The State of Tennessee currently has thirteen operating family justice centers across the state, in the counties of: Brownsville/Haywood, Anderson, Sullivan, Chattanooga, Claiborne, Henderson, Johnson City/Washington, Knoxville, Davidson, Jackson, Scott, Overton, and Putnam. The state's Office of Criminal Justice Programs (OCJP) maintains a general list of guidelines for a family justice center (FJC) to operate within the state. Entities that cooperate with these guidelines and are supported by their community are eligible for funding through a Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) program grant to startup the FJC, run through the State of Tennessee.

While some FJC's can deviate to some extent from the general guidelines of the state model, key elements include:

- 1) Assigned staff from key criminal justice and social service partners to operate out of the FJC building on a part-time or full-time basis;
- 2) A coordination of services between entities, as facilitated by an FJC director or equivalent;
- 3) A focus on victims, and victims specifically of domestic or intimate partner violence, including sexual assault and child or elder abuse, stalking, or human trafficking;

- 4) Memoranda of Understanding (MOU's) with participating entities, which must include (at least) law enforcement, city/county government, victim service providers, the County District Attorney's (DA) Office, and some type of civil legal representation (Tn.gov)

Under the TN FJC model, the FJC must also operate or participate in a CCR team that focuses on interagency collaboration and relationships. Whether as leader or member, the FJC as part of the CCR must:

- 1) Hold regular meetings to track progress of participating agencies;
- 2) Work in partnership with one another and victims in coordinating services for the FJC's partners and CCR members at large;
- 3) Develop and implement policies and procedures for the CCR to function and aid in assessment and intervention.

In sum, the FJC and CCR are together a unified, multilevel approach to domestic violence. However, TN's FJC's and their corresponding CCR's all look very different- some locations are rural, while others are urban or suburban; in some areas, the CCR is led by the local judge or law enforcement official; and the physical location of the FJC can either be co-located in a criminal justice complex or in a different site altogether. How each location incorporates the elements of the FJC and CCR, then, may look different, as well, and produce varying levels of success. Understanding common, shared characteristics of these success stories, as well as their failures, can do well to provide a comprehensive understanding of how and why FJCs work (or don't work) in the State of Tennessee.

HISTORY OF SCOTT COUNTY'S DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RESPONSE

The Scott County Family Justice Center (FJC) opened in 2018 through the momentum of Judge James Cotton, the primary judge at the time who handled domestic violence cases. The Scott County FJC operates out of a physical building separate from the county justice center, and houses one director, a navigator, and a CCR specialist as staff, in addition to partners from participating criminal justice and social service agencies, as space allows. The FJC director serves as the point-of-contact for all partners on- and off-site. Partners remain on-site so that victims can enter the facility and, after working with FJC staff, have access to shelter, civil legal assistance, counseling, employment and housing assistance, support groups, and safety planning, as well as referrals to law enforcement, prosecution, and substance abuse treatment. The FJC typically operates during business hours Monday through Friday each week, but the FJC director remains on-call to provide immediate support to victims via phone through an officer-made connection, or by traveling to the hospital that the victim is transported to via law enforcement, as needed. However, victims are also able to directly access the building and enter of their own accord during business hours, without referral.

Scott County's FJC is also involved in several legal initiatives outside of their coordination of services for individual victims. One notable example is the change of its firearms form that is used when perpetrators either convicted of a domestic violence offense, or those for whom have a one-year or lifetime Order of Protection imposed against them, are legally required to give up owning firearms. In Scott County, a recent ProPublica story highlighted how the new form requires perpetrators to specifically name an individual they are giving up their guns to and have that individual sign to verify the transfer of possession (Pfleger, 2024).

Scott County is distinct in how it operates its coordinated community response (CCR) to domestic violence. The FJC employs and houses the CCR specialist to centralize the CCR in Scott County, which includes entities from the FJC but also outside entities in the social service, healthcare, and criminal justice sphere. Although the number of individual agencies has varied slightly over time, the CCR includes representatives from roughly thirteen areas of response to domestic violence, including the District Attorney's Office, Scott County Shelter Society, Children's Center of the Cumberland, SAI Sexual Assault Services, Scott County Domestic Violence Court, Oneida Police Department, Legal Aid Society, Winfield Police Department, Scott County Sheriff's Office, Judicial Magistrates, Legal Advocacy, Circuit Court Clerk's Office, Batterer's Intervention Program, and other nonprofits in the area.

While CCR meetings are directed by the local domestic violence court judge, the CCR specialist collects monthly tracking data from all participating entities. Entities who do not submit data or attend for more than six months may be considered for removal from the CCR by proposal from one of its members and reviewed by the CCR. The CCR holds monthly meetings to review ongoing progress, new business, and information sharing, and also coordinates these meetings with the FJC board monthly meetings, the sexual assault services subgroup, and the elder CCR, as many of the members are involved in multiple initiatives.

Scott County was selected as the initial site for evaluation as one of the thirteen Tennessee FJC locations. As the FJC and CCR in Scott County are so intertwined, the PSI was asked to evaluate the efficacy of Scott County, in several key areas:

1. Identify the processes and timeline of the direct service referrals and the micro-level relationships between agencies in facilitating a "warm handoff" for victims of domestic violence in receiving services across a variety of forums, including social services, law enforcement, and the courts.

2. Track the utilization of FJC services by victims, partner referrals, and case flow month-by-month since the FJC's 2018 open.
3. Identify key areas that can be generalized to FJCs and CCRs across the state.

The PSI was asked to take on the evaluation because Shelby County, where the PSI is located, has not been exposed to the “best practices” of a functioning CCR or FJC. This evaluation may serve two purposes: one, identify and highlight what could be “best practices” of a functioning FJC and larger CCR, which would allow Scott County the opportunity to seek additional state and federal funding to expand their capacity; and two, provide a template evaluation framework that could be adapted for Shelby County, but also for FJCs and CCRs across the state.

STUDY PLAN

The assessment relied on a mixed qualitative and quantitative approach to identify “what works” in the FJC and CCR models in Scott County. Mixed methodologies provide a multifaceted understanding of the impact of a treatment through the lived experiences of those directly involved from a qualitative approach, while also providing tangible, measurable metrics of impact through quantitative methods. In the current study, the qualitative research employed individual and group interviews with staff and partners from the FJC, while the quantitative research drew on FJC data on metrics related to new clients, OP orders requested and granted, and overall case trends. Each of these approaches, their methodologies, analysis, and results are described in further detail below.

Qualitative Assessment Plan

The qualitative assessment relied on interviews with members of the Scott County FJC and CCR to provide a timeline of the work in Scott County, its successes, and areas

for improvement. All members of the FJC and CCR were asked to participate, with some individuals and agencies involved in both the FJC and the CCR. Email requests for interviews were sent via email by the lead researcher and FJC director and followed up with verbal appeals at the monthly CCR meetings. Participants were offered the choice to meet in person during the researchers' site visits, or virtually via Teams. Interviews were held for up to one hour whether the interview was with an individual participant or with multiple participants within a single or across multiple agencies. In addition, a focus group with FJC clients was also held in September 2025. No incentives were provided for any of the participants who agreed to interviews.

In total, 8 individual and group interviews were conducted with participants between September 2025 and April 2026. In several of the interviews, multiple participants from the same agency, or from multiple agencies coordinating services, were interviewed together. In the interviews, participants were asked the following series of questions:

1. What type of services, if any, does your agency directly provide to victims/survivors and/or their family members? Approximately how many individuals receive your services in a month? Is there anything you feel your agency could utilize to better assist victims/survivors and their families?
2. Does your agency make referrals to other services and how many clients, on average, do you refer in a month? What agency/agencies do you refer to?
3. Do you feel your location has enough service providers to effectively meet the needs of domestic violence victims, including the needs of their families? Why or why not?
4. Does your agency collect and maintain all necessary client data required to effectively assist victims, to evaluate our effectiveness, and to demonstrate accountability to funders and the community? Does your agency regularly analyze the data collected and utilize the results to improve performance?

5. Do you feel that the FJC is the main source of referrals to service providers in Shelby County? If no, is there another agency that you feel is currently the main source of referrals?
6. Do you get a great deal of satisfaction from your job? If you feel stressed and/or overwhelmed in your job, what may be some of the causes? Is your job mentally draining?

Clients of the FJC were asked a separate series of questions, including:

1. How did you get connected to the FJC?
 - a. Were you already familiar with the FJC? If so, how did you know about it?
2. Prior to visiting the FJC, did you ever have to use any other resources for DV survivors before?
 - a. Which other agencies or service providers and for what types of things?
3. If law enforcement was involved in responding to your victimization, what did you think of the officer(s) and how they handled the situation?
 - a. Did they seem concerned?
 - b. [Did they provide helpful information or otherwise try to assist you?
 - c. What could law enforcement have done differently that would have been more helpful?
4. Was the person who harmed you arrested?
 - a. If so, did you understand what would happen next? (i.e., were all options explained to you, such as emergency/temporary orders of protection?)
 - b. If not, do you feel that you are still connected to useful services?
5. If the person who harmed you was arrested, did anyone from the prosecutor's office contact you about how the case would proceed?
 - a. If so, did they seem concerned?

- b. Did they explain the process to you so that you understood and otherwise try to assist you (i.e., refer you to any service providers)?
 - c. Did they communicate with you regularly to keep you informed about your case? What was the outcome?
6. What, if anything, would you change about your experience with the FJC?

All participants agreed to be recorded, and transcriptions of these recordings were used in a subsequent thematic analysis for the assessment. Thematic analysis is a flexible approach which allows researchers to identify and organize patterns found across qualitative data collected (Braun & Clark, 2006). For each transcript, the research team used a multi-phase analysis approach beginning by reading the transcript and/or listening to the audio recording, generating initial codes, formulating a codebook, developing initial themes based on codes, and finalizing and naming themes across samples. As only one victim focus group was held during the assessment period, the transcript from their session was considered within the group of the transcripts of the interviews with service providers and practitioners to preserve anonymity of their responses.

Qualitative Results

The qualitative interviews yielded a number of themes grouped under strengths of the FJC and CCR, as well as weaknesses or areas of improvement. Figure 1 provides a visual breakdown of the strengths identified by service providers, practitioners, and victims. Larger bubbles represent multiple times a topic or related topic was mentioned; smaller bubbles represent fewer mentions over the interviews.

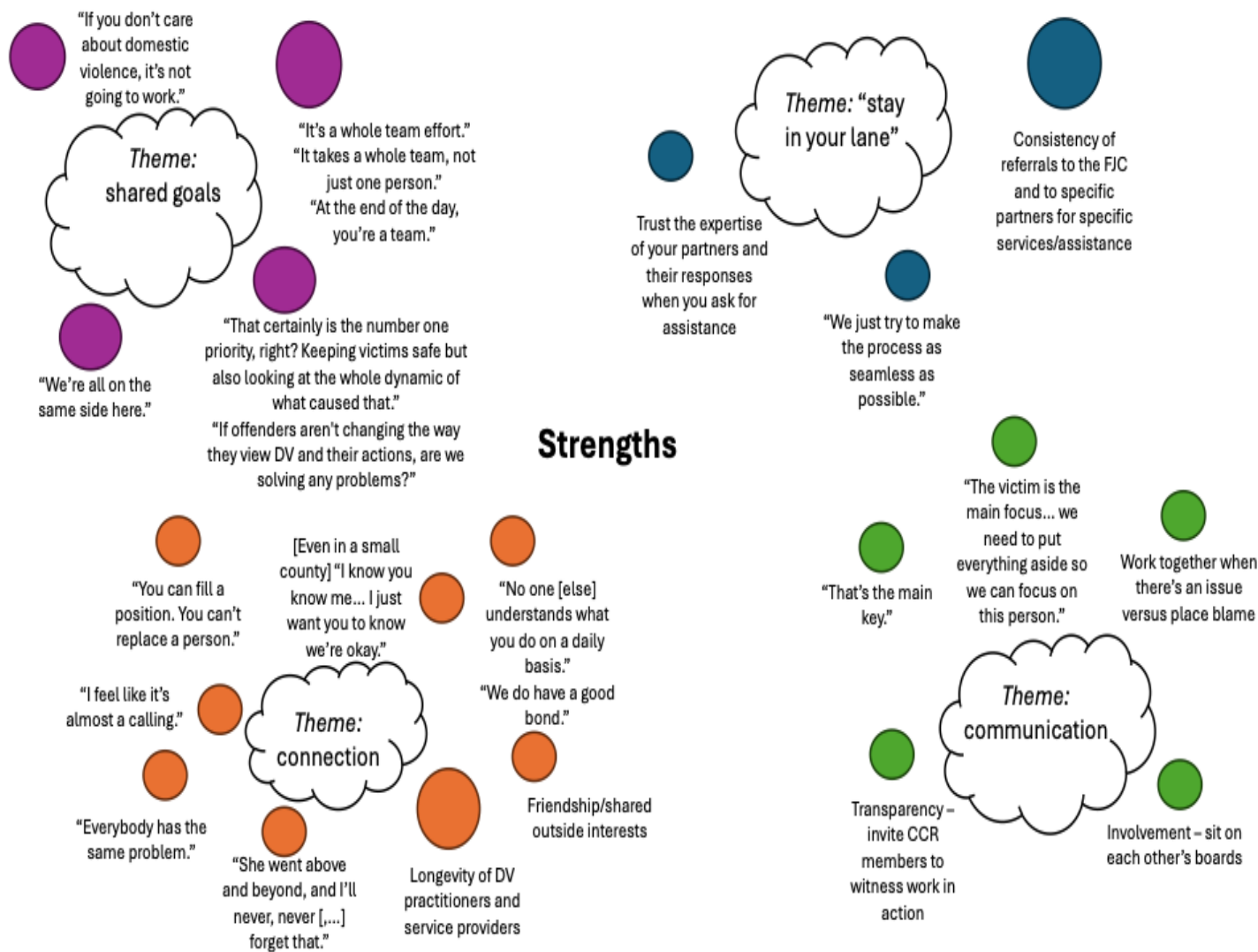


Figure 1. Qualitative Results: Strengths of FJC and CCR

Under strengths, four primary themes were revealed: 1) shared goals; 2) connection; 3) communication; and 4) “stay in your lane.” Within the shared goals theme, participants who were service providers and practitioners primarily identified commonality between partners in caring for both victims as well as properly handling perpetrators of domestic violence. One participant commented that “if you don’t care about domestic violence, it’s not going to work,” in being able to do their job individually and as part of the collaborative. Related to the collaboration between entities, participants universally agreed that their largest strength was their ability and effectiveness to work as a team. Multiple interviewees talked about the CCR working as a team, rather than relying on any one person. In particular, they also noted that this effort was made easier because everyone was focused on the same issues. Multiple participants talked simultaneously about addressing the needs of the victim while also addressing the root causes of domestic violence, particularly with the use of the batterers intervention program mandated through Scott County domestic violence court.

However, in contrast to the reliance on the team versus the individual, multiple CCR members highlighted the particular strength of the FJC director in uniting everyone and keeping both the FJC and CCR on task and moving forward. Perhaps not surprising given the small, close-knit community of Scott County, the feedback from participants indicated that it is the relationships Christy Harness, the FJC director, fosters in her role that provide the basis for all other connections to exist and be sustained.

The connection between FJC and CCR members was echoed in both their connections with one another but also in how those connections translated to service delivery. Among the service providers and practitioners interviewed, many mentioned how long they had been serving in that particular role, or in a related role serving domestic violence cases, victims, or perpetrators. One participant commented their view that “domestic violence shows no respect to another person,” and it was clear

amongst participants that they all felt strongly how important was that domestic violence was to be addressed as an issue in their county. Participants also discussed that, over time, people working together formed bonds, particularly those who had a passion for the work and felt it to be almost a calling, and that these shared experiences led to deeper understanding of the role everyone plays in the process.

On the victim side, multiple victims highlighted the connection they felt to the FJC or other service providers in how they received assistance; one victim commented that someone helping them went above and beyond – “I’ll never, never [...] forget that.” Another recounted an experience some time after they had received services where they encountered a service provider in a social setting. Even though Scott County is a rural area where people are more likely to know and come into contact with one other more frequently than in an urban setting, the victim stated that the service provider did not visibly demonstrate their prior knowledge of the victim. Rather, the victim voluntarily approached the service provider and told them that “I know you know me... I just want you to know we’re okay [now]”, and they hugged.

The strength of connection was also visible in the theme of communication. Multiple participants remarked how easy it was to reach another CCR or FJC member when needing assistance on a case, and how open each entity was towards providing support. Partly, they noted that transparency in being able to show other CCR members the work they were doing allowed CCR members to feel secure about making referrals to their organizations. Similarly, others noted that some CCR members will sit on each other’s agency boards, to get a better sense of how the program operates. Relationally, multiple participants indicated that while most members got along naturally, even when conflict occurred, they worked together when there was an issue, rather than placing blame. Indeed, one participant commented that “the victim is the main focus... we need to put everything aside so we can focus on this person.”

Finally, multiple participants reiterated the idea of “stay in your lane” and to trust each other to do the job they were hired to do. Rather than view each other as competitors, they had to trust the expertise of one another and their responses when giving assistance. This also was highlighted in the number of participants who referred to the FJC as the “hub” for Scott County and how they trusted the FJC to be the entity to provide further information or referrals for victims. As one participant commented “we just try to make the process as seamless as possible,” which is aided by the lack of duplication of services and competition for resources.

While all participants, including service providers, practitioners, and victims, felt positively about the FJC and CCR, they still highlighted some issues, mainly in the lack of resources rather than issues with existing resources. It should also be noted that the propensity for participants to indicate weaknesses with the FJC and CCR was itself in some ways a strength of the group and its commitment to transparency. All members wanted their work to continue, but as one noted, “we can’t grow if we stay still.” All were appreciative of an outside evaluator to identify areas for improvement and were energized to see ways in which they could adapt operations to be more successful.

Toward that end, four themes emerged from these discussions, including 1) lack of trained individuals; 2) lack of additional systemic resources; 3) lack of consistent funding; and 4) lack of consistency across partners in how data are collected. Figure 2 provides the visual representation of the overall themes and the individual topics mentioned during the interviews.

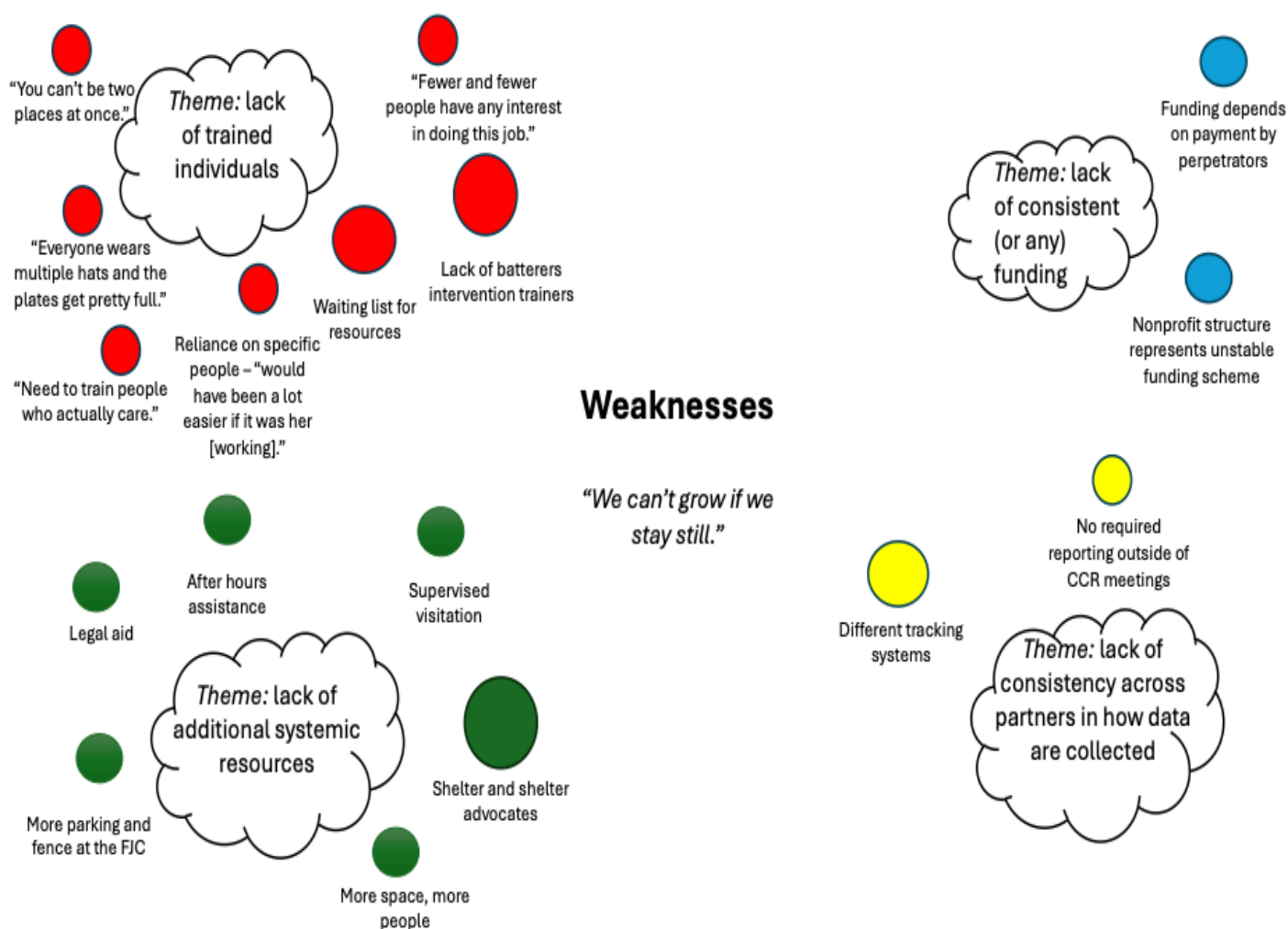


Figure 2. Qualitative Results: Weaknesses of FJC and CCR

First, participants noted that while their caseloads were relatively small compared to larger jurisdictions, they stayed busy, with one noting that "everyone wears multiple hats and the plates get pretty full, and another noting that "you can't be in two places at once." Multiple participants highlighted the absence of individuals limited the capacity of the organization to function to its fullest extent, particularly the batterers intervention program. In Scott County, the mandated 26-week sessions for convicted offenders is notable, as reports from literature range from 10 sessions to 32 (Wilson, Feder, & Olaghere, 2021). However, the Scott County program currently only has 2 trained individuals to run programming, and CCR members reported a significant backlog in offenders waiting for treatment.

Despite this, participants all agreed that it was not simply more numbers that would help them out, but that there is a “need to train people who actually care.” While the individual participants were satisfied with the quality of work their partners put into the services victims and clients received, participants also noted the absence of more qualified individuals to support their work overall. Quality, then, over quantity, was more sorely desired – and not just by the providers themselves. Victims in their own focus group reported a reliance or preference for specific people working in law enforcement, with one noting that “it would have been a lot easier if it was her [working]”, as well as victim services. Again, the connection and the bond between individuals, whether as colleagues or as providers, appears key to the success of the Scott County system.

Participants also stressed how key resources would enable their agencies and partnerships to be even more successful. Perhaps most notable was a call for larger shelter space, as well as an increased number of advocates around the shelter. The current shelter advocate also goes to the FJC and domestic violence court, and participants expressed a wish that there could be an advocate permanently on-site at the shelter in addition to this individual. Similarly, the theme of “more space” was repeated in the call for more parking and fencing at the FJC by client victims, as well as the call for “more people” in terms of having expanded legal aid and supervised visitation. Participants also noted that while the FJC director, Christy Harness, was voluntarily available for after-hours assistance, this was an unfair burden placed on her, and they called for a specific individual assigned to after-hours assistance.

Finally, the participants in different ways highlighted how lack of consistent, or any, funding sources limited their work. For example, funding for batterers intervention relies on payment made by perpetrators, who may be low-income and unable to make consistent payments. Overall, however, most of the social service agencies involved in the CCR particularly are nonprofits. The nonprofit structure inherently represents an unstable funding scheme as it relies on grants and donations to sustain

operations. Participants within these organizations, as well as their criminal justice government-funded partners, expressed a need for consistent and long-term grant funding that could keep their doors open.

A related weakness was not highlighted so much in what participants identified but in what they did not report in their discussions. One of the interview questions asked FJC and CCR members how they collected data for reporting purposes. While all agencies reported service utilization metrics to the CCR during their monthly meetings, there was a lack of consistency across partners in how data were collected and reported for other purposes. For example, each criminal justice agency utilizes a different case management system, and the FJC uses its own program management software (Apricot) that operates based on manual input of data. Similarly, while some participants reported that they kept case management, service utilization, and/or referral data due to their own grant reporting requirements, other agencies, particularly those who were nonfunded, did not keep any official metrics, particularly over time. As was noted at the outset of this evaluation, Scott County requested and welcomed the assessment, as a formal evaluation lends the ability to seek additional state and federal funding, by being able to show evidence of efficacy. In the case of these other organizations, that ability becomes unfortunately more limited, in the absence of quantifiable data.

Quantitative Assessment Plan

The second stage of analysis involved quantitative assessment. A variety of Scott County data and metrics were requested by the researchers from the FJC director. A quasi-experimental design was utilized to examine changes and ongoing trends of the Scott County Family Justice Center (FJC) since its origin in 2018. Administrative data were obtained from Scott County and included annual Orders of Protection (OP)

filed and granted from 2011-2012 through 2024-2025. Pre-implementation years (2011-2012 through 2017-2018) were compared to post-implementation years (2018-2019 through 2024-2025) to assess for overall trends over time.

Additional analyses examined FJC client utilization and law enforcement referrals. Monthly data were collected on total clients served, new clients, and law enforcement domestic violence/sexual offense referrals. Due to inconsistencies in early reporting practices, analyses of referral effectiveness focused primarily on November 2022 through March 2026, when data collection procedures became more standardized.

Descriptive statistics were calculated for all measures. Independent samples t-tests were conducted comparing pre- and post-FJC means for Orders of Protection filed and granted. Given the small sample sizes and observational nature of the data, results should be interpreted as exploratory indicators of program impact, and in concert with the qualitative results providing context for program implementation metrics.

Quantitative Results

Figure 3 provides a year-by-year count of the FJC's filed and granted Orders of Protection (OP's) before and since their opening. Prior to implementation of the FJC, an average of 101 Orders of Protection were filed annually (SD = 24). Following implementation, the annual average increased to approximately 149 filings per year (SD = 28), representing a 47 percent increase. The purple line denotes the transition between the orders filed and granted since the FJC's open date. A comparison of pre- and post-implementation means suggests a substantial increase in filings ($t = 3.3$, $p < .01$), indicating significantly greater utilization of protective order processes following implementation of the FJC. Prior to implementation, an average of 8.7 orders were granted annually. Following implementation, the average increased to approximately 71 orders of protection granted per year. This significant increase in granted orders of

protection suggests that the FJC, as they directly work with clients on the OP process, have significantly increased the success rate of navigating the court process in obtaining Orders of Protection.

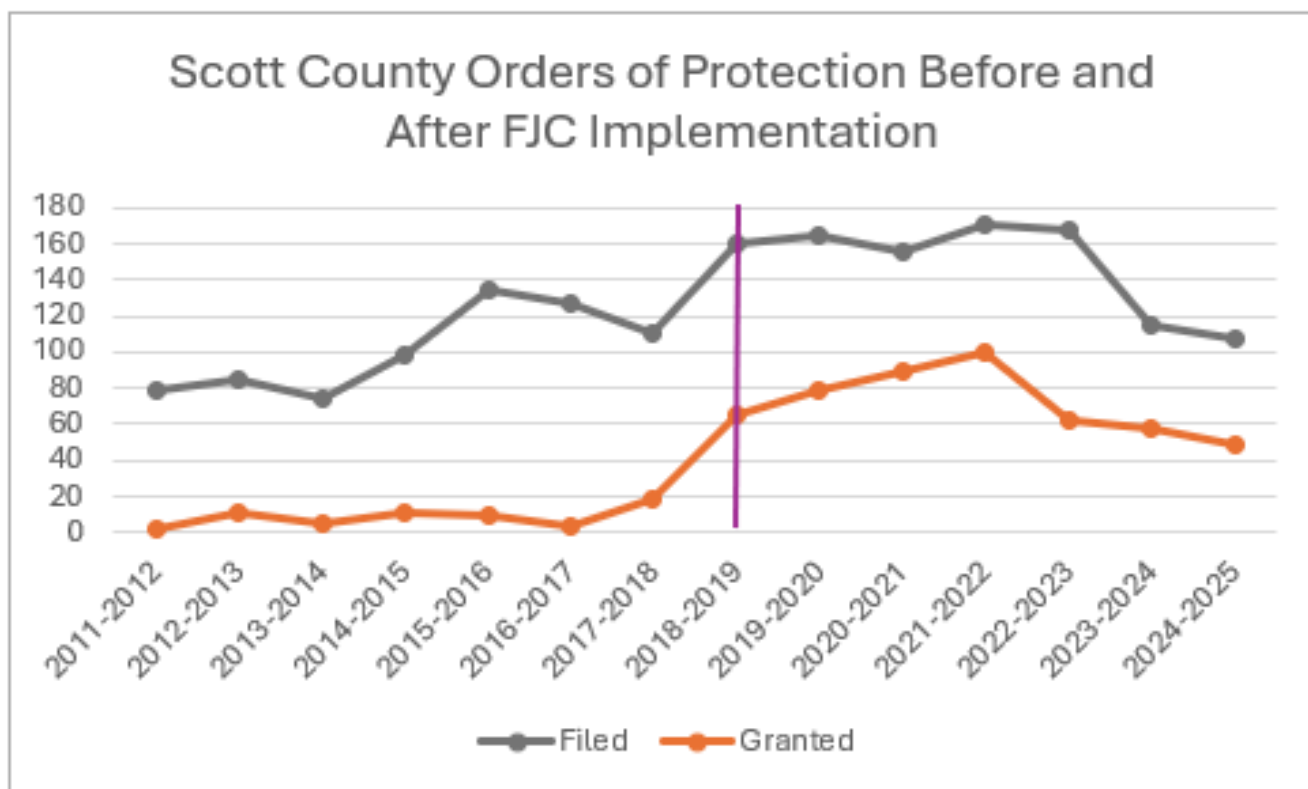


Figure 3. Orders of Protection Data Over Time

Figure 4 provides a visual representation of the number of new clients to the FJC relative to calls to law enforcement for DV cases. Between November 2022 and March 2026, the Scott County FJC averaged approximately 12.9 new clients per month, while law enforcement averaged 19.3 domestic violence or sexual offense charges per month. These figures indicate that new FJC clients represented approximately 67 percent of law enforcement-generated cases during the period. Considering that not all victims report incidents to law enforcement, multiple victims may be associated with a single criminal event, repeat victimization occurs, and only new clients were

counted, these numbers represent a conservative estimate of the sustained increase in the FJC survivor network.

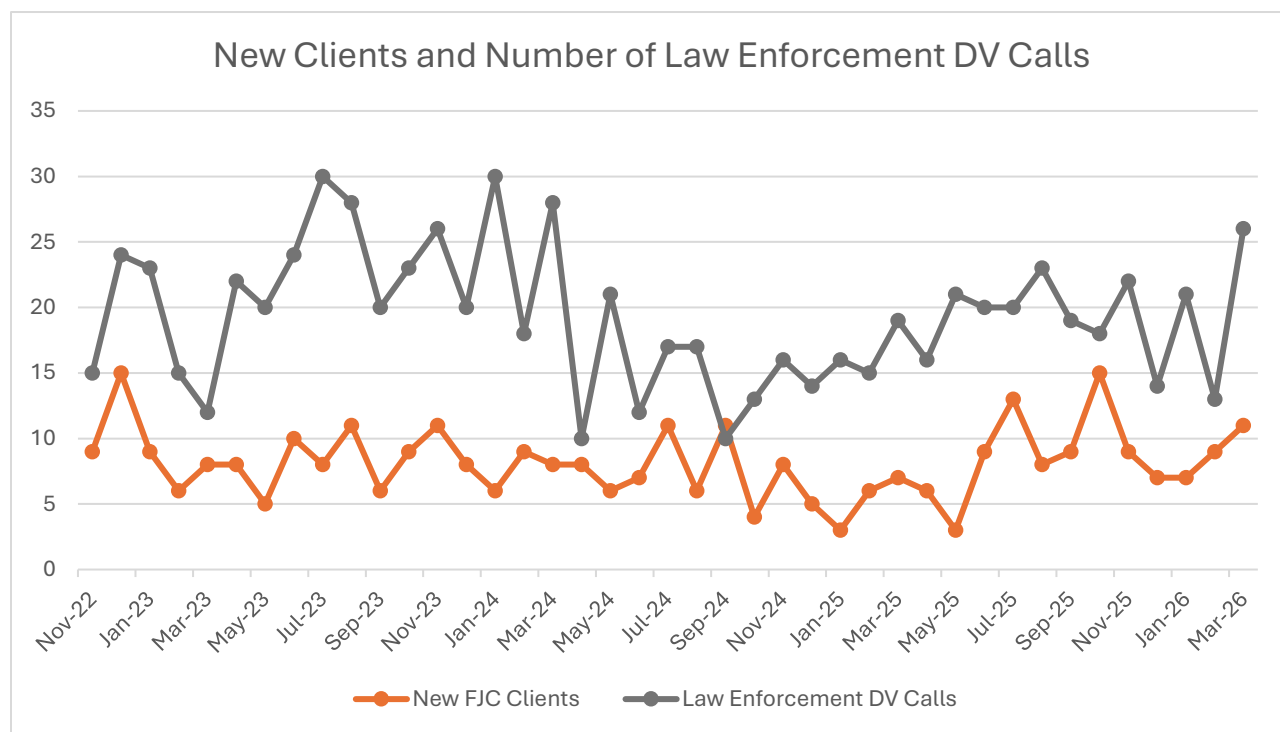


Figure 4. FJC New Client Data

Figure 5 tracks the sum of FJC referrals from their 2018 open through to recent years. Annual referral counts to the Scott County FJC varied over the study period. During the first year of operation (2018-2019), the center recorded 388 referrals. Annual referrals subsequently declined to 376 in 2019-2020, 319 in 2020-2021, 294 in 2021-2022, 223 in 2022-2023, 191 in 2023-2024, and 145 in 2024-2025. Collectively, the FJC received 1,936 referrals during its first seven years of operation, 8.6 percent of Scott County's total population (22,761, U.S. Census, 2025). Although annual referrals decreased over time, the Scott County FJC continued to receive new clients throughout the observation period. Referral activity remained consistent across all years examined, indicating continued utilization of FJC services by victims within the community.

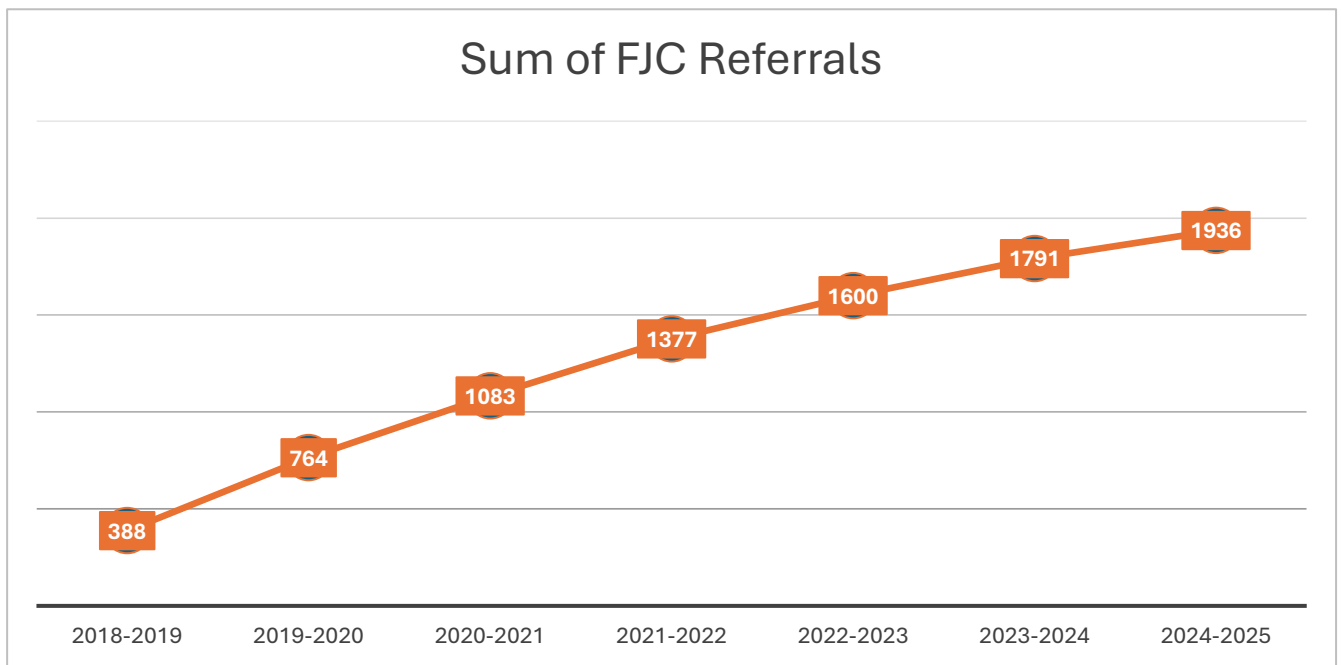


Figure 5. FJC Referrals Summed Over Time

CONCLUSION

Scott County's assessment plan looked to track efficacy in several key areas: 1) to identify the processes and timeline of the direct service referrals and the micro-level relationships between agencies in facilitating a "warm handoff" for victims of domestic violence in receiving services; 2) to track the utilization of FJC services by victims, partner referrals, and case flow month-by-month since the FJC's 2018 open; and 3) perhaps most challenging, identify key areas that can be generalized to FJCs and CCRs across the state.

Taken together, the findings suggest that Scott County's success is attributable not only to adherence to the FJC model itself, but also to the alignment between the model, local population size, staffing levels, geography, and community characteristics. Future implementation efforts should focus on replicating the

underlying principles of coordinated victim services, multidisciplinary collaboration, and accessibility while adapting organizational structure and staffing capacity to the needs of each community and locale. However, there are a few key points to note here about Scott County particularly.

Success of Processes

First, the element of process was explored through the qualitative interviews conducted with service providers, criminal justice practitioners, and victims. Overall, those involved with domestic violence response in Scott County report great success in the ability of the FJC to provide a “warm handoff” for victims, coordinate referrals to various agencies, and to participate in the CCR as a partner rather than a competitor. The main limitation of Scott County, even in a smaller, rural area, is that more and more qualified people and consistent funding would make the greatest difference in seeing their success continue.

Developing a Network of Survivors

Second, the utilization of FJC services was addressed in the quantitative assessment of FJC case data, referrals, and case flow throughout the system. By these metrics, the FJC has had a measurable impact on bringing in new clients, handing Orders of Protection, and referring them to services. One possible explanation for the observed decline in referrals over time is a saturation effect. FJCs frequently serve populations experiencing repeat victimization who have ongoing safety concerns tied to their long-term service needs. As the Scott County FJC matured, awareness of available services likely increased throughout the community, referral pathways became institutionalized among partner agencies, and that increased the number of victims who became familiar with the center's resources. Consequently, the pool of

individuals who had never previously interacted with the FJC may have gradually decreased. This understanding is supported by the distinction between total clients served and new clients. Although the number of new referrals has declined over time, the center continues to maintain service relationships with existing clients, suggesting that the organization may be transitioning from a period of rapid growth and outreach to one more characterized by sustained service delivery and case management. Under this interpretation, declining new referrals do not necessarily indicate reduced effectiveness but rather reflect a mature service system that has already established a large network within the target population.

FJCs are intended not only to respond to victimization but also to reduce future harm through coordinated services, advocacy, legal assistance, safety planning, and connections to community resources. In the early years of implementation, increased awareness and outreach often lead to increased reporting and referrals as previously unmet needs are identified. Over time, however, successful intervention may contribute to reductions in repeat victimization. If these mechanisms are functioning as intended, a decline in referrals may actually represent a positive outcome. In this context, the downward trend in new referrals could reflect a reduction in the number of victims requiring services rather than a decline in program reach. While causal conclusions cannot be drawn from the available data alone, the observed pattern is consistent with a model in which increased service utilization during the early years of the center's operation is followed by stabilization and eventual reductions in demand as community needs are addressed.

The Orders of Protection data provide us with a means for evaluating these competing explanations. If declining referrals were the result of reduced awareness, diminished community trust, or weakened service delivery, one would expect to observe corresponding declines in legal system engagement. Specifically, fewer

victims would be expected to file for Orders of Protection, and fewer protective orders would ultimately be granted. The available data indicates the opposite. Following implementation of the FJC, the number of Orders of Protection filed increased substantially, while the number granted increased dramatically. These findings suggest that community awareness of available services remains strong and that victims continue to access legal remedies at higher rates than before implementation. Consequently, the decline in referrals is unlikely to be attributable to reduced visibility or accessibility of the center. Instead, the combined evidence supports the interpretation that the FJC has maintained strong community engagement while simultaneously addressing victim needs through coordinated intervention.

Generalizability Of The Scott County Findings Across Tennessee

The final area the evaluation sought to tackle was the ability to generalize these results across the state of Tennessee. There are several concerns that prohibit generalizability. One, Scott County encompasses approximately 533 square miles and serves a population of roughly 22,700 residents. The county's geography is largely rural, requiring many residents to travel to access services. Even though the FJC is central in the county, depending on origin point, some residents may travel 25 to 35 miles or more to reach the FJC. While Scott County's staffing structure appears sufficient for a county of approximately 22,700 residents, population scaling suggests that substantially greater staffing resources would be required in larger metropolitan areas. However, more is not necessarily better, as the interviews here noted. Perhaps victim load may be a better indicator than county population for associated staffing. If an FJC, such as Scott County, is seen to be successful, the FTE capacity should be replicated based on victim load, while also accounting for all domestic violence crime to ensure quality of services per each victim. For example, a simple population-based

extrapolation would suggest that a community the size of Memphis or Nashville would require significantly more personnel to maintain comparable levels of service accessibility and client engagement.

Other factors to consider are geography and culture, as they both influence the scalability of the model. Scott County is relatively homogeneous in terms of culture, community identity, and service needs. In contrast, larger metropolitan areas frequently consist of multiple neighborhoods and communities with distinct demographic, cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic characteristics. Victims often seek services within areas they perceive as familiar, trusted, and accessible. Moreover, larger urban areas typically experience greater numbers of domestic violence incidents, higher service demand, and more complex case management requirements compared to smaller, rural communities.

Finally, the strength of Scott County's relationships is its biggest draw. While the FJC initially benefitted from the advocacy of Judge Cotton, Christy Harness, the director of the FJC, is the origin and reinforcement of all relationships in Scott County. It is her influence, connection to the community, and her decades of experience working in victim services that enable her to connect with victims, service providers, and practitioners alike. In short, the quality, experience, and care from the staff at an FJC matter to a greater degree than the quantity of personnel. For this reason, Scott County has been very successful due to the individuals who have dedicated their time and care to victims of domestic violence. In order to see the success of Scott County, one must be able to duplicate these efforts.

Consequently, the directions for future implementation of new FJC's, such as a proposed entity in Shelby County, are limited. Funding for a new FJC would have to rely on not just the state OCJP grant, but local funding from city and county government. This is especially clear with the number of staffing the Shelby County model would require. Scott County's FJC has 3 full-time employees serving roughly

150–400 referrals annually. To replicate these numbers, a rough staffing ratio of about 1 FTE per 100–130 annual referrals would be needed per jurisdiction. One alternative is that, rather than relying on one large, centralized facility, metropolitan jurisdictions like Shelby County may benefit from a hub and satellite model. Under this approach, a primary FJC would function as the coordinating hub while smaller satellite offices would provide localized services throughout the jurisdiction. Staffing levels at each satellite location could be adjusted according to local population size and service demands.

In turn, such a model would preserve the collaborative advantages of the FJC approach while increasing accessibility and responsiveness to neighborhood-specific needs. This model may also go towards a means of replicating the trust and collaboration in the Scott County model that came from familiarity and camaraderie with neighbors. Although a metropolitan area like Shelby County in many ways is a small-town masquerading as a big city, actually designating smaller boundaries and working to face challenges within them may present a more feasible approach than bridging the decades of distance between entities as currently stands.

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