

What is your definition of success?

Certain offenses are often chronic. Victims of family violence and human trafficking are rarely victimized one time before they disclose or report their abuse. Chronic abuse creates complex victimization, and this is why it is essential that these offenses are addressed in a multi-disciplinary manner. Victims (and sometimes suspects and witnesses) need services provided by law enforcement, but may also need assistance from medical, mental health, social work, and other providers. A multi-disciplinary response leads to the best holistic outcome for a victim.

However, with a holistic approach we sometimes must re-define our definition of success. More importantly we need to understand that a lack of success related to our discipline does not necessarily constitute a failure. In these cases, success for law enforcement should be a thorough solid investigation in every case. This is why we are developing a standardized web-based reporting tool to assist officers in completing a thorough investigation every time, regardless of experience (please visit www.safvicsystems.org for more info). Ideally if an offense is found to have occurred an arrest and prosecution is expected and a complete, trauma-informed investigation is the best way to achieve this.

Unfortunately, this does not always occur, but this does not necessarily constitute a failure. For a variety of reasons victims in these types of cases have unique vulnerabilities. Addiction, mental health, poverty, immigration, housing/placement, and social stigmas are just a few factors that may influence a victim. Addressing these issues through a holistic, multi-disciplinary, trauma informed approach can lead to successes. Having a victim feel empowered and confident enough to report their abuse is a success. If a victim is an addict and rehab is made available, sobriety (even partial sobriety) is a success. If a lack of housing enables an abuser, providing housing or social services that allows a victim to leave that situation is a

success. These are just a few examples. Remember, chronic problems require complex solutions. These situations did not occur overnight, and the solutions will not either. Celebrate victories when they come and do not be discouraged by perceived failures just because they don't look like success.