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Decades of change

I think the biggest changes over the last 14, or 15 years have been in the way we look at evidence, in the way we look at the prosecution in its entirety. And I think the other remaining huge change has occurred in how we've been able to address the issue *visa vi* the public. And in terms of putting information out to the public in a way that allows people who are experiencing domestic violence to find avenues to break the isolation that they experience. So raising that awareness on a large scale and creating safe places where victims of domestic violence could come, and discuss what's going on, and learn about what choices, and options, they have for themselves, and their kids, I think has been a real sea change in terms of those three areas. And along with those three things have been different forms of collaboration, both within government and the advocacy community that has allowed a lot of those changes to take place in a much more comprehensive way than if any one entity on its own were trying to bring about change.

Witnesses not ready to prosecute

I have to confess, I was a little bit concerned about how I would feel about having witnesses in criminal prosecutions that weren't ready to prosecute. And to me it seemed in the beginning, it seemed -- I was interested in seeing how one might go about prosecuting cases where your chief witness wasn't really many times interested or ready to have the prosecution go forward. So, it was a little bit of a, I would say for me, it was a very steep learning curve.

A case of coordinated support

We had a case involving a woman who came from a very insular, Arabic family. And she was in this country without legal documents, and she was living in a home that was owned by the batterer's family, and she had no support system whatsoever. In the city of New York, in the United States of America, for that matter. And he was able to, not only isolate her, because she had no outlet, no one to talk to, but he also exerted a tremendous amount of economic control over her, and over the children. And he physically abused her quite, quite extensively. And when she first came to us, there was really no way that she could actively participate in the prosecution. She had no other avenue to, of support in terms of family support. She had no housing she could go to. She had no way of legally working in the United States. Her kids were putting tremendous pressure on her, as were some of her family members, not all of them, to stay in the relationship. So, by our collaborations with an Arabic support group in the community, that we were able to address some of her concerns, connecting her with immigration lawyers. By using community support to get her safe housing, all while we were putting evidence together

to prosecute the case, was literally the only way we would have been able to have any sort of success out of that case, and get her to actually participate in the prosecution.

Larger view of justice

If we had not been able to get her the kind of larger view of justice, the larger access to justice, then she would have remained in that relationship, and we would not have, chances are not have been able to go forward with any sort of a prosecution. As it was she still was not actively participating in the prosecution, but she was engaged with us enough because of the support and the help that she was getting, that initially we were able to get a guilty plea from the offender and after the guilty plea he violated the terms and conditions of the order of protection. But then, by that point she had gotten so much help and so much support. Family members were brought from her country of origin here to Brooklyn. She was able to get housing. So, she was able for the violation of the order of protection case to actually actively participate in the prosecution.