vela BY E74 CASE STUDY

DASACC
domestic abuse & sexual assault crisis center *of warren county*

DOMESTIC ABUSE & SEXUAL ASSAULT CRISIS CENTER (DASACC)

Washington, NJ

Type of Program: Dual domestic violence & sexual assault program. Serving approximately 100 survivors per month.

Your Role: Isela Arras**,** Executive Director – 23 years in advocacy.

How long have you been using Vela? 6-12 months.

What were the biggest challenges before Vela? One of the most significant challenges was the lack of alignment between the data we were required to collect and the reporting requirements of various funders. Much of the data we gathered was developed internally or loosely guided by funders, rather than being grounded in consistent, funder-specific requirements. This resulted in overly broad, vague, and duplicative data points that often didn't translate well to more rigid systems like HUD or VOCA, which require precise and structured inputs. Additionally, our former database program was not designed to manage HUD-specific data effectively. This created additional barriers when trying to reconcile our internal data with external reporting obligations, often requiring time-consuming manual workarounds to meet compliance expectations.

What areas of your program were most impacted?

- Grant reporting
- Stress level and job satisfaction
- Organizational health and culture
- The survivors we serve

What made you realize you needed a change? Last year, we were really struggling to pull a HUD CAPER report for DCA. We had been waiting for months for a functioning HUD module from our previous program — which never came. They insisted we needed to upgrade to an entirely new package, but their system had never been reliable for HUD reporting in the first place. We were completely stuck and couldn't produce the CAPER. That experience made it clear we needed a change. We switched to Vela and had just three weeks to transition our team and data in order to produce a reliable report — and we made it happen. Fast forward to now: just this week, a funder requested a CAPER, and I was able to pull it within 30 minutes with no issues. The only minor delays came from occasional staff data-entry errors, which took just an hour or two to correct. That kind of speed and reliability was exactly what we were missing before.

What made you choose Vela? I championed the transition to Vela in Kentucky for all 15 domestic violence programs and played a key role in creating a statewide structure to support its implementation. I saw firsthand how Vela could resolve longstanding issues with documentation, reporting, and accountability. So when it came time to improve our systems here, I knew it was the solution that could bring clarity, consistency, and better outcomes for both staff and survivors.

What tools or features of Vela do you use most?

- Activity time tracking
- Flex reports
- One-click reports
- Service Tracking
- Custom forms
- Enrollments
- Hotlines

How did the Vela onboarding process go for you and your team? The onboarding process itself went smoothly — Vela provided helpful tools and guidance. The transition, however, was challenging, though that's not a reflection on Vela. Any time you make a major shift in how people document and manage their work — especially when it's implemented immediately — there's going to be an adjustment period. The challenges we faced were typical of any system change, and we're already seeing the long-term benefits of having made the move.

In which areas has Vela changed the way you work the most?

- Vela has changed the way I report to funders.
- Vela has changed the way I document my work.

How has using Vela affected your ability to help survivors? We now have timesheets that feed directly into our financial system, and that data is then used in the financial and programmatic reports we submit to funders. It creates a clear, traceable line from our daily work to how we report outcomes and justify funding. When documentation is strong, everything lines up correctly—or will—across payroll, grant reporting, and service tracking. This kind of alignment keeps us accountable, protects our funding, and shows the real impact of what we do every day. We have one-click reports that turn the work of HOURS into minutes now.

Vela has impacted you personally? Having a clear structure also helps establish routines, which are proven to reduce stress and increase trust — both among staff and with the survivors we serve. Routines bring predictability to our work, help us stay organized, and make it easier to manage competing priorities. They also help clients know what to expect and build confidence in our support. When everyone knows their role and how to follow through, it creates a calmer, more focused environment where both staff and clients can thrive. As the agency director, it also gives me confidence to focus on other areas of the agency that need my attention, knowing that operations are running consistently and reliably — and that we will have data ready to produce at the end of each reporting period.

What has been the MOST meaningful change that Vela has brought to your work? The most meaningful change has been the reliability of our reporting. We can now pull accurate, consistent data with confidence — whether it's for internal tracking, funder reports, or grant applications. That reliability strengthens our credibility, supports better decision-making, and saves time across the board.

Describe what Vela has meant to you and your work? Vela has made our work more organized and reliable. We can track what's happening, pull accurate reports quickly, and make sure we're meeting expectations. It's a tool that actually works the way we need it to.

If a fellow advocate asked whether they should use Vela, what would you tell them? Do it. Vela is built for the kind of work we do. It won't fix everything overnight, but it provides the structure and tools to manage services, document them properly, and meet funder requirements without constant workarounds. Just remember that not all data is the same — some reporting requirements are loosely defined, while others are very specific and non-negotiable. Understanding that hierarchy is key to getting the most out of Vela. Once your team accepts that, Vela's capacity becomes incredibly valuable.

By Advocates For Advocates™

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