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CASE STUDY

MICHIGAN PROGRAM – Anonymous Participant

Type of Program: Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Program
Serves Approximately 600 Survivors per Month

Your Role: Operations & Quality Assurance Administrator with 20 Years in Advocacy

How long have you been using Vela? A Little Over 2 Years

What were the biggest challenges before Vela? Reporting was a big challenge because our system was not set up to run all reports the way we needed, so a lot of time went into pulling information and calculating data manually. A significant amount of time was also spent on client paperwork. We did have our hotline paperwork developed within the system, which made that aspect easier, but program documentation and file maintenance were very time-consuming and inefficient. The services provided through the database were not easily understood because information was not entered in a way that communicated across programs, similar to reviewing a client file. All notes were completed on paper and stored in client files, making them difficult to access across the board for clients working with multiple programs. From an operations standpoint, there were many inefficiencies in the client file process and in communication among direct service staff regarding client services, which created a significant amount of extra work and time.

What areas of your program were most impacted?

- Grant Reporting
- Organizational Health & Culture
- The Survivors We Work With

What made you realize you needed a change? For years, we dreamed of having a fully digital system—something that could collect data efficiently, reduce redundancy, and truly reflect the depth of our work. It was our "if dreams came true" item at the very top of the wish list. But the reality was much different. Our existing database company had grown increasingly unresponsive to our needs, creating more barriers than solutions. Every new reporting cycle became a challenge, and every customization request felt like shouting into the void. The real tipping point came when we learned we would be required to have an HMIS-compliant database. That mandate forced us to confront the truth: our current system couldn't evolve with us. We needed a change—and fast. But change required resources, and the kind of transformation we envisioned meant finding a way to fund a system that truly worked for us. For months, we worked alongside our state coalition on an advisory committee, meeting with various database companies to find one that could meet the needs of agencies across Michigan. We thought we'd found the solution—until the development process revealed that what had been promised and what was being delivered were two very different things. It became clear that waiting for someone else to create the perfect fit wasn't going to work. As an agency, we decided to take matters into our own hands. That's when we discovered Vela. We scheduled a demo meeting, and within minutes, we were in awe. The system seemed to check every box—clean, intuitive, responsive, and designed for the kind of data collection we had only imagined. Honestly, it felt too good to be true.

So, we did our homework. We reached out to other agencies already using Vela, asked our toughest questions, and braced ourselves for the usual mixed reviews—but instead, we heard resounding praise and saw outcomes that aligned perfectly with what we wanted to achieve. That was the moment everything shifted. We turned our ship hard and fast, pooling resources and building the financial support needed to make it happen—not just to adopt a new database, but to invest in "one-click" state reports and a system that finally worked for us, not against us. It was the realization of a long-held dream and the start of a new era of efficiency and clarity for our agency.

What made you choose Vela?

- It addressed specific issues we had with our former system
- Its one-click reports
- Its reporting features are tailored to DV/SV program needs
- It helps ensure accountability and consistency across staff and programs
- It includes outcome tracking
- It improves data collection and reporting
- It offers better flow from client intake to service documentation

Vela has impacted you personally? Vela has had a positive impact on my stress levels. Reporting in and of itself is stressful. Our state reports are plentiful and complex across multiple reporting platforms. Developing the one click state reports and having the flex reporting ability has changed the level of stress and time going into doing these reports.

In general, how much time does Vela save you per week? 6-8 hours.

Describe what Vela has meant to you and your work? For me personally, it has meant that I can accomplish monthly, quarterly, semi-annual and annual reporting in the time frames needed and without added stress that data reporting has inherently build in. It also gives me a clear path to dig in and find where the data error is coming from and get either something corrected or staff trained correctly. Vela has also provided such a smooth and easy system for client file management and form creation that simplifies the reality of client records.

Looking ahead, how do you hope to continue using Vela in your work? We really hope to be able to get better at using our data now to do our storytelling and inform program decisions and funding needs more clearly. Our direct service team is consistently providing feedback to me to forward on to Vela for "wish list" features/options.

Is there anything else you would like to share about your Vela experience? The support Vela provides is top notch. The responsiveness is amazing and follow-up is consistent. Even when I can't think of how to clearly articulate the issue I am having, they are able to help sort it out with me and get to the root of the issue and understand what's happening. The fact that we can put wish list items for database development/design is amazing and the fact that regular updates and response to these things happen consistently is incredible!

By Advocates For Advocates™

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