

ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY'S
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FATALITY REVIEW TEAM
ANNUAL REPORT
2016

DVFRT MEMBERS

Background

In October, 2003, the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV) received a grant from the State of Maryland, Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention. MNADV had received funding from the Federal Office on Violence Against Women to organize and develop a local pilot: Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team (DVFRT). Anne Arundel County, Maryland, was chosen to pilot the project that was only active for 5 years. The Team reconvened in 2013 and continued with the last case that had been reviewed in 2009. Beginning the third consecutive year, the focus includes domestic homicides, related suicides, and cases with high lethality.

Team Mission Statement

The mission of the Anne Arundel County DVFRT is to reduce the incidence of domestic violence, to prevent the occurrence of domestic violence fatalities, and to improve the quality of life for victims of domestic violence and their families. The team will pursue its mission by committing itself:

- to finding antecedent causes of domestic violence fatalities;
- by seeking to improve the coordinated community response to domestic violence;
- by holding abusers accountable for their actions;
- by recommending improvements in the criminal justice systems and civil systems that serve victims of abuse;
- by educating County institutions and citizens in the manner they should view domestic abuse;

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Anne Arundel County Public Schools

- and by seeking to ensure compliance with its recommendations.

In carrying out its mission of heightened community response, the Anne Arundel County DVFRT hopes to free victims of domestic abuse and their families from the cycle of violence and empower them to pursue their lives without the burden of abuse.

2015 RECOMMENDATIONS UPDATE

1. Recruit a representative from the Anne Arundel County Board of Education

Key Finding: Inadequate awareness and responsiveness regarding domestic violence in the Public School System. Survivors believe that the school system failed to identify indicators of abuse. After multiple attempts, the AA Co DVFRT and DVCC have so far not managed to recruit a representative from the Board of Education.

Recommendation: Board of Education Superintendent to appoint an employee from the Board to sit on the Anne Arundel County DVFRT and the Anne Arundel County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council.

Follow-up: Rachael Maconachy, Joan Stammnitz and Rae Leonard met with Dr. Gayle Cicero last spring. As of September 2016, Dr. Cicero is an active member of DVFRT; therefore we will close out this recommendation while leaving joint projects as a future option.

2. Crime Scene Clean-up

Key Finding: When a homicide is committed in a private home or on private property, survivors have the responsibility of cleaning up the crime scene. At best, we have heard of survivors receiving a business card or referral for an agency from first responders. There is no regulated response to ensure proper cleaning and removal of biohazards/unsanitary conditions. Information regarding costs, insurance coverage or other financial resources is not automatically provided. In addition, having to address the aftermath creates additional trauma.

Recommendation: Research current protocols and best practices from other jurisdictions to determine feasibility of implementing a new practice, policy and/or legislative agenda.

Follow-up: Information obtained will be used as the key findings in 2016 recommendations. Please refer to the following new recommendations.

2016 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Crime Scene Clean-up

Key Findings: Research recommendations from 2015 revealed there are few mandates protecting victims left with the responsibility of crime scene clean up. Except for California and Florida, there are no state laws or licensures for companies providing crime scene clean up, and personal licensure is not required. Research revealed deficiencies in three areas including: regulations & referrals, cost, insurance, and additional financial resources for payment. Here are the findings:

Regulations & referral sources

Crime scene clean-up companies do have organizations that provide certifications and best practices; but it is **not** a requirement to provide clean-up services. If the victim does not have any knowledge of industry standards, they can be faced with improper disposal of bio-hazards, price gouging or other scams.

It was also revealed that there was no consistent list of reputable companies used by first responders. Following are common sources and referrals they provide:

- Police/EMS/Fire
 - Sometimes provide company names or hand out business cards
 - Many refer to friend's businesses
 - Google
- Crisis response
 - Provide names of companies they have deemed reliable
 - Do not have written list
 - Insurance companies
 - Have list of referrals for policy holders

Nationally, California and Florida are the only states that require a certification process. Florida law requires a registration with Florida Department of Health Biomedical Waste Program (Ord. No. 2010-3679, § 1, 4-14-10). This does not regulate clean up or endorse companies. California law (California Health and Safety Code Chapter 9.5, Section 118321) requires an actual registration process.

Cost, insurance and other financial resources

Crime scene clean-up costs can range from hundreds to a hundred thousand dollars. Estimates, however rough, cannot normally be obtained without scene inspection.

Homeowners insurance is the most common payment source. If the survivor has insurance they still may face denial of claims based on their contract. Some policies state that the crime cannot be caused by policy holder. So, if the policy holder commits homicide and/or suicide the policy may not provide coverage. Additionally, deductibles and risk of premium increases still apply.

Nationally, there are no services or agencies providing financial relief except for CICB. Each state has its own guidelines and range from Maryland maximum benefit of \$250.00 to New York's \$5,000 maximum compensation.

Other resources investigated were churches and community based organizations. While some may help a member, or volunteer time, it is not a consistently available resource.

Internet searches revealed a few stories of communities and volunteers helping victims restore their home but, most were stories of hardship and deceit. There are two national companies (Aftermath Inc. and Aftermath Services LLC) repeatedly cited in watchdog reports that led to formal state investigations by the attorney general.

Proper cleaning and disposal of bio-hazards

Crime scene clean-up companies have organizations that provide certifications and best practices; but it is not a requirement to provide clean-up services. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) provide limited guidelines on proper handling, disposal, and transport of infectious materials. It is not common practice for victims to receive information on proper clean-up or warnings of the hazards of attempting to clean up on their own.

Evidence: National organizations such as the Institute of Inspection Cleaning and Restoration Certification (IICRC) provide nationally recognized credentials and are helpful in identifying a reputable company; but these certifications are not required.

The EPA and OSHA require universal precaution training for employees who are exposed to and /or handle infectious waste (29 CFR1910.1030).

Information regarding insurance coverage was provided by Agents and Adjusters from several Insurance Companies: Allstate Insurance, State Farm, Progressive and Nationwide.

Although testimony of personal experiences can be subjective, it was important in developing an understanding of the current process and its impact on victims. Information was provided by several police officers and fire fighters from Anne Arundel County, Howard County, Montgomery County and Maryland State Police. A crisis response employee who is often first on the scene and two property managers of large apartment complexes also gave information.

Action: Meet with additional groups such as Homicide Survivor Network and Criminal Injuries Compensation Board to receive input on their experience and recommendations. Identify appropriate lobbyists and determine feasibility of creating legislation.

Time frame:

April 2017- Arrange meetings with Homicide Survivor groups and Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.

May 2017- Schedule meetings with one or more lobbyists to determine feasibility of creating legislation.

June 2017- Schedule meetings to review findings and create a workgroup

October 2017– Discuss potential policy changes and/or legislation.

Person(s) Responsible: Rae Leonard, Rachel Maconachy

2. Consistency in military reporting

1. **Key Finding:** Upon review of a homicide involving a military family, the team identified inconsistent reporting, communication failure, and a lack of follow-up to ensure compliance for

mandated counseling/separation. The perpetrator, an enlisted military member, had a history of abuse over the course of three marriages while on active duty. This history provided further support for our findings.

Important note: DVFRT has identified prior findings within the military and attempted to find support for resolutions. Although these efforts were unsuccessful in the past, the team is optimistic regarding new recommendations.

Evidence: Testimony provided by victim of domestic violence, which was backed by military records, court documents and police reports.

Action: Arrange to meet with a representative from each branch of the military stationed in Anne Arundel County to discuss consistent documentation relevant to the military and civilian systems. Introduce LAP Maryland model and explore potential for military incorporation.

Time frame:

April 2017- Identify and obtain contact information for representatives of Air Force, Navy and Army stationed in Anne Arundel County.

May 2017- Set meeting with identified representatives by August 2017.

September/October – Persons responsible will present outcomes of the meeting

Person(s) Responsible: Katie Schaible, Jonas Ignatavicius

