

CECIL COUNTY



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FATALITY REVIEW TEAM

ANNUAL REPORT

2016

PART I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **INTRODUCTION**

A representative from the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence contacted the Cecil County Domestic Violence Program and requested they start a Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team in Cecil County. MNADV was told that it seemed as though there was enough support to have a team in Cecil County. David Trolio and Gary Pierce identified agencies and organizations who come in contact with victims and/or perpetrators of domestic violence and who would be approached to serve on the Cecil County DVFRT.

On May 27, 2008, the Cecil County DVFRT met, under the guidance of the team consultant from the MNADV, to begin the process of reviewing and revising a draft protocol supplied by the MNADV, based on previous experiences with other team formations.

- **PURPOSE AND GOALS OF THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FATALITY REVIEW TEAM**

The purpose of the Cecil County DVFRT is to review deaths in which domestic violence has played a role, with the ultimate intent to prevent future fatal and serious physical injury occurrences. The review process is aimed at creating a climate in which organizations and individuals in Cecil County will commit themselves to an enhanced response to domestic abuse as a societal evil and a crime, and to victims that they might pursue a better quality of life.

Mission Statement

The Cecil County Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team (DVFRT) seeks to evaluate and better comprehend deaths or near death situations related to intimate partner violence. It is hoped that through identification of gaps in services and evaluating conditions that led to the tragic death, domestic violence and related homicides or near death situations can be prevented in the future. The review represents the pinnacle of collaboration among community-serving organizations.

- **PURPOSE OF THE ANNUAL REPORT**

Domestic violence is defined as a pattern of behavior used to establish power and control over another family member or intimate partner using fear and intimidation, often including the threat or use of violence. The purpose of the annual report is to give an overview of those domestic violence cases resulting in death or near-death and record the team's findings and recommendations.

PART II. TEAM AND PROTOCOL DEVELOPMENT

- **TEAM MEMBERSHIP STRUCTURE**

Each of the following agencies agrees to provide two members, one primary representative and one alternate (if possible), to attend meetings, review cases and assist in formulating recommendations.

- Cecil County Sheriff's Office
- Maryland State Police
- Elkton Police Department
- North East Police Department
- Rising Sun Police Department
- Cecil County Dept. of Social Services

- Cecil County Health Department
- Maryland Parole & Probation
- Local Family Violence Coordinating Council
- Union Hospital
- Upper Bay Counseling
- Domestic Violence/Rape Crisis Center
- Survivor of Domestic Violence
- Cecil County Public Schools
- Cecil County State's Attorney's Office

- **PROTOCOL DEVELOPMENT**

The MVADV provided the Cecil County DVFRT with a start-up binder which included the information to get the team organized. The Cecil County team used the draft protocol as a starting point to formulate our own protocol. The final protocol was finalized and adopted in August of 2008.

- **CASE SCREENING COMMITTEE**

The protocol indicates that the Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and a third party will make up the case screening committee. The case screening committee will meet between scheduled meetings and will look over homicide, suicide, and near death cases to determine which cases meet the criteria for domestic violence involvement and should be reviewed. In determining which cases to review, the protocol requires that the case screening committee meet at least four (4) weeks prior to the next scheduled DVFRT meeting. The Chairperson will then submit the victims and offenders names to the team members so that the representatives, who are responsible for reviewing the records of their agency, can identify any information related to domestic violence about the parties.

Progress of Findings in the 2014 Annual Report:

There were no cases reviewed in 2014, therefore there are no findings.

PART IV. OVERVIEW OF THE 2015 REVIEWS

- **INTRODUCTION**

The Cecil County DVFRT held review meetings on January 13, April 13, July 13, and October 12, 2016.

- **2015 REVIEWS**

- The team began to review a new case at the April 8, 2015 meeting. That particular review is still underway.
- This particular case was reviewed over several meetings. The case review was concluded at the July 2016 meeting. This case was a first degree assault. Male accused (age 49) Female victim (age 50).

- **STATISTICAL BREAKDOWN**

THE Cecil County Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team completed one (1) review that had begun in 2015. The following is a summary of facts.

Relationship Between victim and perpetrator

- The couple in question were involved in a heterosexual relationship
- The couple was not married, however lived in the same residence.

Prior Domestic Violence reports, arrests, or Protective Orders

- At the time of the incident there was no protective order in place.
- The victim had never sought a protective order.
- The victim had reported two (2) prior domestic violence incidents in the past involving the same perpetrator.
- The accused had been previously charged in one (1) case involving the same victim.
- The victim had never sought services from the local Domestic Violence Shelter prior to the last incident.
- The victim had no contact with the local Department of Social Services

Location of The First Degree Assault

- The assault took place at the victim/perpetrators residence

Means or Weapon Used

- Physical Force

Substance Abuse as a Factor

- Substance abuse was a factor.

PART V. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cecil County Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team was created to review domestic violence homicides and near death cases by assessing and analyzing individual cases in order to prevent future homicides or serious assaults. In the attempt to achieve this goal, the team agreed that we should work together to provide a more effective response to domestic violence situations holding the participating agencies accountable without placing blame.

The relationship between the perpetrator and the victim lasted for 20 plus years. There had been two previously reported assault involving both victim and accused. In one case the victim refused to file charges and in the other the victim indicated that the assault was accidental and the case was nolle prossed. The victim did obtain a peace order in January 2014. The accused subsequently violated that order and was charged however the case was nolle prossed in District Court in March 2014.

In 2008 the victim began treatment for PTSD and bi-polar disorder at Upper Bay Counseling, however did not complete the program.

The accused did have contact with the Sheriff's Department in the early 2000's as he has sold drugs to an undercover officer.

What we found was that the victim never followed through on any legal Possibilities.

The victim did receive a Lethality Assessment, but only after the last incident.

- **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- It was felt by the team that this was a problem with community education and perhaps learning about domestic violence at a young age, possibly in the school system. Our recommendation would be to attempt more education to middle/high school age children on the subject of domestic violence

PART VI. CONCLUSION

It is the hope of the Cecil County Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team that this report will in some way be helpful in making changes to the way that the community responds to family violence.

Respectfully submitted,

R. Gary Pierce
Chairperson
Cecil County Domestic Violence
Fatality Review Team