



Maryland Domestic Violence Fatality Review

Domestic Violence Fatality Review Council Annual Meeting August 30, 2017 Lanham, Maryland

Attending: Joan Stammnitz, Rae Leonard (Anne Arundel), Audrey Bergin (Baltimore County), Jennifer Morton (Calvert), Jeff Spaulding (Carroll), Gary Pierce (Cecil), Tammy Fitzgerald (Harford), Amy Hott (Howard), Matt Barba, Tricia Bent-Goodley (Prince George's), Jason Dubard, Yvonne Dawkins (St. Mary's), Abby Marsh (Wicomico), Alicia Bickoff, Michael Cohen, and Hiba Ahmed (MNADV).

I. Introductions

Thank you all so much for coming. We appreciate your effort in coming today, your commitment to fatality reviews and the statewide collaboration. We bring everyone together at least one time per year to coordinate and collaborate. Most of the evaluations from last year's meeting, as well as your responses to our recent training and TA needs assessment indicated that what is most helpful is hearing each other's input. We are going to do a quick review of MNADV's efforts in the past year and our goals for next year. We will then have everyone else share.

II. Ice-Breakers - What did your team do well this year and what is something that your team wants to work on?

- a. **Carroll County** is proud to have been able to re-energize the team at the Westminster Police Department.
- b. **Cecil County** was able to begin building a stronger relationship with the State Attorney's Office. They would like to work on more unified team involvement.
- c. **Harford County** felt proud that they helped to empower a victim by inviting her to share her story while they were reviewing a near-homicide, assault case. She seemed to have a positive experience. They would like to have more team involvement.
- d. **St. Mary's County** would love to expand their resources and encourage greater involvement from the St. Mary's County community.
- e. **Prince George's County** is proud of the updates that have been made to their department protocol. They also offered a training this year and received good feedback. They are working on a mapping project for fatalities in the area. Local partnerships have

been very helpful in this initiative as well as others. Generally, more resources would be helpful to get everything done.

- f. **Anne Arundel County** is proud of the amount of progress that they have made in recent years after a period when there has been a lot of turn over and there has been a lack of commitment from the team overall. The main priority has been to try to reacquaint and train new members.
- g. **Wicomico County** has been working hard to invigorate the community since participation is really down. The team would like to bring in a local judge and other partners that were originally part of the team to make it more efficient while dealing with cases. They would like to find a way to learn how to function as a team in a manner that is more efficient.
- h. **Baltimore County** often receives numerous homicide cases. They have been working on better managing the timeline and reviewing cases in more detail. The team has recently drafted more recommendations and also did a 5-Year review of their homicides. There has also been a lot of turnover and burn out from the last case.

III. 2016-2017 Progress

- a. There have been 3 Electronic Updates sent with information about trainings the MNADV can do, our recent statewide training, and due dates. The 4th will be sent before September 30.
- b. There was one statewide training on the criminal justice system from a DV prosecutor's perspective. This training was intended to create a baseline – a foundational understanding of how the prosecution process should work, why and how decisions are made and why outcomes may result as they are.
- c. Since January, we have attended 14 DVFRT meetings. We attend meetings to provide information from statewide and national resources that may be helpful. We also attend to learn from you and your teams, and to be able to take those lessons to the other teams throughout the state.
- d. The Annual DVFRT Statewide Report was developed and released for 2015. This report pulls together the recommendations of the past year, illuminates trends between teams and reviews past recommendations as well. The 2016 report is being worked on and will be out before the end of the year.

IV. Goals for 2017-2018

- a. We have submitted an application to GOCCP to continue this work into the coming year. Our hopes are to continue attending DVFRT meetings, sending updates and increase the statewide meetings, trainings and forums that we have.

V. Self-Care

- a. Reviewing the life and deaths of other human beings can be an emotionally taxing process. Although self-care is frequently discussed in the DV field, it is infrequently applied to DVFRTS. Team members may react differently to the details that surface during death reviews and it is important for teams to anticipate this. Teams may want to establish a process of “taking care” of each other and discuss the impact fatality reviews are likely to have on them emotionally.
 - i. Pictures - some reviewers are openly disturbed by evidence such as crime scene photographs. Members may want to opt out of this portion of a review or teams may give them warning by putting them in folders, labeling the electronic documents accordingly, etc.
 - ii. Interviews - Allowing team members to have a preview of interviews with family members so they can determine whether they want to conduct the interview or not.
 - iii. Labeling what is in a file so that team members can prepare themselves.
 - iv. Making meetings long enough to take breaks.
 - v. Prince George’s County also has a more social or relaxed meeting after they complete a case to give everyone a break. Many teams also take breaks over the summer.

VI. Recommendations

- a. In working with your teams over the past year, we have heard a lot about the challenge of creating recommendations and then turning those recommendations into actionable, impactful outcomes.
- b. It is important to remember that there are lots of substantive and important outcomes to DVFRTs even if they do not result in a major policy or legislative change.
- c. Among the informal products are:
 - i. Better educated and trained team members as the team review is an intensive and in-depth learning process. Very often, team members incorporate what they have learned into improving their daily jobs as well as improving training programs.
 - ii. Team member awareness about others’ jobs expands; team members begin to appreciate the duties and responsibilities of other system and agency players and this can help improve communication between them outside of the review.
 - iii. Greater collaboration on other projects like grant applications, policy initiatives or advocacy for resources.
- d. Among the formal products are:
 - i. Annual reports.
 - ii. Data and other aggregate information.
 - iii. Legislation and other reform.

VII. Summary of Recommendations

a. Anne Arundel County Recommendations:

- i. To continue investigating resources regarding clean-up of crime scenes.
 - 1. Currently, there is no access to crime scene clean-up for survivors and their families. The certifications, laws, and regulations in place today are very limited. Most regulations are limited to ensuring a sanitary situation, but, otherwise there are a lot of holes in the system. There is no consistency with language in insurance companies. Anne Arundel County has researched into what other institutions do to handle this, but they are looking to the best next steps.
- ii. To reach out to military branches in Anne Arundel County regarding documentation of domestic violence history.

b. Baltimore City Recommendations:

- i. To create a mechanism to notify victims of the outcome of an initial appearance hearing, specifically whether the defendant was held, released and any special conditions of release that the Court issued.
- ii. To train police and staff in recognizing the indicators of traumatic brain injury and the unique challenges of serving intimate partner violence victims who have experienced traumatic brain injury.
- iii. To create a specialized training for Baltimore Police Department and domestic violence service providers to address the unique challenges of working with victims of intimate partner violence who use substances.
 - 1. Baltimore City was not able to attend the meeting. But, the overarching theme from their report is that often the focus is on the dynamics of DV without consideration to the overlaying circumstances in the victims' lives e.g. substance use, etc. Efforts should be made to educate practitioners on the layers of a survivor's life and experience.

c. Baltimore County Recommendations:

- i. To investigate and educate about the intersection of domestic violence and gambling.
 - 1. Team members were not familiar with the intersection between DV and gambling. They wanted to research and look into understanding it more. The first step was to define gambling and what it consists of as well as if it is more prevalent in specific geographic parts of the county. They were also going to create a presentation for it for the upcoming local conference.
- ii. To offer resources regarding domestic violence, including trainings, in local OB/GYN clinics and offices.

1. It was clear that in the case that brought this need to light, the victim was not screened during her OB/GYN appointments. This is very concerning and shows the need for greater awareness to doctor's offices. Steps have been made to begin researching into screening more in OB/GYN offices. The goal was to create a fact or resource sheet for signs of DV and its relationship with pregnancy for doctor's offices.
 - iii. For their recommendations, Baltimore County has created an action item list and assigns tasks to team members to help with due dates and encourage ownership. This is a great example of turning recommendation into action.
- d. **Carroll County Recommendations:**
- i. To develop an awareness and education campaign about domestic violence for employers.
 1. In a recent case, the employer took no action despite potential signs of abuse and the employer was the only one who saw the signs collectively. Carroll County would like to develop greater awareness within the business community. They have reached out to local nonprofits and the Chamber of Commerce. They have developed printed material to be distributed at doctor's offices and created a plan to pass it out to other institutions as well (maybe gyms and fitness centers).
 2. *Outreach Efforts:* how can we reach the public more broadly?—Maybe billboards, Cable TV, Electronic Programming, Media? The development phase for this initiative is still in progress.
 - ii. To develop an awareness program for Middle School students.
 1. The issue stems from a need to address family violence and dating violence in schools. The team wanted to create a curriculum and connect it with public school counselors.
- e. **Cecil County Recommendations:**
- i. Cecil County DVFRT recommended that community education take place to teach children about domestic violence at a young age within the school system.
 - ii. Cecil County has had a lot of push back while working on this initiative. But, through trial and error, greater steps are now being made with more efficiency. They are currently working on developing a curriculum that might be best suited for the audience. Overall, they are making strides, but much of it is still in progress.
 1. St. Mary's County relates with the struggle but has made progress. The effort has been directed to use peers to educate kids, since they will be more receptive than if the information came from adults. They are currently working with the Board of Education to bring this effort into fruition.

2. The Governor's Family Violence Council is working on collaborating with the Board of Education, but it is extremely hard and there is a lot of pushback. Many school systems will not open up about what they might already be doing. But, passing out information brochures at schools might help and start the process.

f. Charles County Recommendations:

- i. To create or improve the mechanism to monitor individuals on parole and probation that transfer between states;
- ii. To develop a national parole and probation data system; and
- iii. To include drug/alcohol screening on domestic calls for service.
 1. As a result of their recent meetings, they came up with these recommendations.
 2. The aim is to create an 8-step action plan to put strict guidelines in place and create structure. Ideally, they would like to create a substance use screening. But, for the sake of simplicity, they would like to add to the Lethality Screen. But, currently, it does not include anything in relation to alcohol, substance, or drug use from a DV lens.
- iv. MNADV received this recommendation. The Lethality Screen does not include a question regarding drug and alcohol abuse because the original committee that reviewed the research of Dr. Jacquelyn Campbell and created the tool did not include it. Although alcohol use is included in the Danger Assessment, it was not determined by the committee to be most predictive of intimate partner homicide.

g. Frederick County DVFRT Recommendations:

- i. The Frederick County DVFRT made a recommendation to look into funding opportunities to promote safety when a victim is attempting to leave an abusive relationship, specifically involving the costs of home safety (e.g. changing locks, reinforce doors and windows, etc.) and legal process serving.

h. Howard County DVFRT Recommendations:

- i. To revise the Maryland Sentencing Guidelines to prioritize and identify domestic violence cases on sentencing guidelines worksheets.
 1. If an abuser has a significant history, a team or the public might ask: Why was he in jail and why was he out of jail? – Maryland Sentencing Guidelines may be the reason. Howard County recently did a presentation on Sentencing Guidelines to bring everyone up to speed.
 2. They would ultimately like to work on revising Maryland Sentencing Guidelines and create a fact sheet to pass out to individuals.
- ii. To require additional judicial education on domestic violence related issues.

1. There is very little education offered on domestic violence or the cycle of control & coercion. Judges come from very different backgrounds and they are not required to attend certain trainings, but rather select their own topics. This is concerning because they often do not know much about DV when working on DV cases.
- iii. To provide expanded enforcement of the no-contact order while a defendant is awaiting trial or serving a sentence.
 1. If there is a no-contact order as a term of probation, the defendant can contact the victim while in jail because the probation or protective order only starts when they leave jail. Leading up to that time, they can violate the no-contact order without restriction.
- iv. To create a statewide Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team to facilitate discussion and exchange of ideas.
 1. Is there a way for us to know the progress of other departments or counties without having to wait for the annual or monthly meetings?
 2. The desire would also be to trouble shoot issues together and bring issues forward on a statewide basis without having to wait a year.
- v. To require continued education for attorneys admitted to the Maryland Bar on domestic violence issues.
- vi. Efforts to effectuate recommendations
 1. Provide education to team members:
 - a. They decided to prioritize suicide and how to spread awareness. Howard County always encourages outside individuals to collaborate and discuss what is going on. For suicide in particular, they asked people to talk about their agency's work with suicide and offer a brief presentation on the suicide framework that is being dealt with in the area.
 2. They have reached out to their county official to address things that were discussed at last year's meeting. Their next step is to go to the county council and then move to the governor. They are giving a presentation to these higher-up individuals to bring awareness to what is going on. Howard County also plans to spread the word through a media release. The Chair created a PowerPoint which she is happy to share with other teams.
- i. **Prince George's County DVFRT Recommendations** (from a subset of local homicide cases to focus the team's review efforts.)
 - i. Recommendations:

1. To, as a community, make the time and financial commitment to learn more about a victim's danger and lethality risks when separating from their abusers and apply that information to policies, practices and actions;
2. To, as a community, become educated about the predictors of domestic violence murder/suicides and provide that information to County 211, service provider websites, social networking sites, as well as posting the information in prominent places, such as courthouses, police stations, courthouses, community centers, etc.
3. For the County Executive to appoint and convene a Task Force to study the procedure and effectiveness of the emergency evaluation process for assessment of suicidality and domestic violence.
4. To educate judges, court commissioners, prosecutors and attorneys on the latest research pertaining to domestic violence dynamics and help-seeking behaviors as it relates to cultural context, with the goal of better evaluating the respective risks each victim and perpetrator present, and enhancing awareness of how bystanders can respond.
5. For the County Executive to coordinate the county-wide adoption of a protocol to provide immediate services to children who are present during a domestic violence-related homicide, including MOUs to delineate responsibilities for intervention and follow-up. This recommendation already has been effectuated by the team.
6. For legislators to strengthen firearm laws to prohibit the possession of firearms by any perpetrator convicted of a domestically-related crime and for judges to include a similar prohibition in probation terms.
7. To educate judges, police, court commissioners, lawyers and policy makers on the increased risks that women face of being killed by an intimate partner.
8. For agencies, social service and mental health providers, criminal justice organizations and community members to increase education around healthy relationships and the serious implications of jealousy.
9. To, as a community, become educated about the predictors of domestic violence and suicidality.
10. For domestic violence service agencies, social services agencies, mental health providers and criminal justice organizations to conduct outreach and provide services to communities in culturally appropriate and relevant ways, specifically to address domestic violence, violence predictors and suicide warning signs. Funding should also be secured for those efforts.

- 11. For arrest warrants to be issued and bail to be considered for all new crimes involving perpetrators of domestic violence to reflect the risks of danger to the victim and the public.
- ii. Prince George's DVFRT does not do a report every year (Their last report was in 2012, and then more recently in 2016). It was based on 9 cases (with a focus on homicides and suicides), Prince George's County looked at social service systems and community recommendations. They discovered, among other things, that only one of the 9 victims reached out for DV services and only 4 have tried to obtain protective orders. The timing of the report and large volume of homicide/suicide cases recently opened up conversations that were not had before.
 - 1. The team also wanted to address why they are seeing so many cases and the trends within cases e.g. an increase in violence (even with kids). They started mapping out certain facts or circumstance to determine trends e.g. days of the week, any substance abuse, mental health, etc.
- iii. They have consistently been working with the Family Justice Center and DVCC. When the 2016 report was sent out, many other initiatives/teams were able to use the data to help fund programs and leverage their work.
 - 1. There has also been some work done with A Call to Men. They have also received funding to educate schools.
 - 2. Furthermore, with the help of collaborations, they are working on spreading bystander education and how to recognize red flags as well as trainings on culturally specific content.
 - 3. Recently, WUSA9 News has used their report as well. The news reporter was shocked by the information and she has also spread the word.
 - 4. Overall, a lot more progress has been made recently than in the past since the 2016 report has been released.
- iv. Their team is not burnt out yet, probably because they are collaborating with a lot with local programs. Using the county mapping techniques to figure out where to focus certain needs, services, education, or help, has been very handy. They have a very strong team. They often have an annual lunch and try to keep meetings very light, even though they are doing emotional work. Also, they try to make sure to have a summer break, which helps reduce burn out significantly.
 - 1. A heavily interconnected community and outreach is extremely important. A lot of partners are so willing to chip in to what is going on and help out. They do not have much funding. But, they are the ones who are planting the seed and letting many know how serious things are.
- j. Wicomico County DVFRT Recommendations:**
 - i. The Wicomico County DVFRT recommended that high school and college students should be educated to recognize the signs of an unhealthy relationship, the

resources available when they have questions; encouraging them to say something if they see something; and mental health concerns.

1. There was a serious DV assault case that occurred recently and what they noticed was that the victim did not know anything about the DV dynamics of her case. She also had no prior contacts to help her either.
 2. The idea of a community education sounds extremely critical. They would like to work on finding a way to educate college students or high school students. The hope is to ultimately show victims that their situation is not normal and is indeed neither healthy nor safe.
 3. Education is the overarching goal. Their hope is to start a peer group similar to One Love.
 - a. Ultimately, they would like to establish a similar idea to “See Something - Say Something”
- ii. Wicomico County is fascinated by the idea of a statewide team.
 - i. Their cases appear to face the same challenges that have been voiced by other counties.

VIII. Questions and General Discussion

- a. Are there any national efforts in the works for the education systems, in communities, and everywhere else?
 - i. One Love is trying to help college students. Many smaller organizations are trying to make strides from different avenues.
- a. Having a statewide council for DVFRT might help with this. There would be a much broader voice on a broader scale. The governor would hear our case more than trying to reach out as individuals
 - a. They're building stronger communications/relationships with education systems.
- b. Many school systems think that Title 9 is limited to sexual assault and that this is all that their focus should be. Schools appear to struggle with DV and dating violence. OVW has heard the need and are offering trainings on stalking, DV, and dating violence (Not many, but it is a start).
 - a. Students appear to have a hard time reaching out outside of the parameters of their communities or college campuses. Different communities will react to the information in varied ways. Wicomico County believes when working on this initiative, we all need to develop protocols that are unique to the potential audience.
 - b. Often on campuses, departments may focus on their own lenses and tries to tackle things based on what they have the knowledge and capacity to do. It may be more responsive to ask communities what their need is rather than force ideas upon

them e.g. asking people what their level of risk is. Each person has their own idea of what action gets their attention. (A slap? A bruise? Death? Etc.)

IX. Next Steps and Wrap up

- a. There will be an update coming out with minutes, PowerPoints from Howard and Carroll Counties and an update about what the Family Violence Council is doing with regard to education.
- b. 2016 report will be coming out soon.