



Wicomico County Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team

The Wicomico County Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team, was established in 2009. Its mission is to prevent deaths related to, and to remember those who have died, as a result of domestic violence. This case review is the second completed review conducted by the team since its inception. The team is comprised of members of the community who play key roles in working with victims, offenders and their families. The primary purpose of the team is to prevent deaths related to domestic violence by promoting a coordinated community response among agencies that provide services related to domestic violence, identifying gaps in service and recommending changes to improve coordination between agencies and the response to domestic violence.

2017 RECOMMENDATIONS

Key Finding:

- Numerous red flags of domestic violence were present, however, the victim was not aware and did not identify them as signs of an unhealthy relationship. The perpetrator's behavior included jealousy, possessiveness, attempts to isolate, stalking, and anger and control issues. Additionally, his behavior escalated when he lost control of the relationship but the victim believed that she could control his behavior by allowing him to believe there was still hope for the relationship.
- Age may have been a factor in the victim's and/or her friends' inability to identify the red flags.

Other Findings:

- There were no prior calls to the Suicide hotline or the Domestic Violence hotline.
- There were no prior calls to local law enforcement.
- Evidence of mental health issues were unacknowledged by the perpetrator and went untreated.

DVFRT MEMBERS

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Recommendations:

Accordingly, the Team makes the following recommendations:

Wicomico County is home to several high schools, a community college with enrollment of over 4,000 students, and a public university with enrollment of over 7,000 full-time students. Both high school and college students should be educated to recognize the signs of an unhealthy relationship.

To include:

1. Ensuring counselors are trained and know the signs of an unhealthy relationship and who to contact if they have questions or concerns.
2. Requiring that middle and high schools teach students the signs of an unhealthy relationship and who to contact to ask for help or learn more about their options. Encourage students to “say something if they see something”.
3. Educating students about suicide and related mental health concerns and on unhealthy relationships at freshman orientation for the University and before important high school events such as prom through presentations, flyers or brochures.

Plan of Action:

The Team will reach out to the Superintendent of Schools and provide them with this report, as well as information for the implementation of training counselors and students about the signs of an unhealthy relationship and what to do if they or someone they know is involved in one. A possible resource which was identified was One Love Foundation.

Salisbury University was identified as having a One Love Foundation program in place and the Team will make contact with them to provide this report and assist them in implementation at the university and secondary education level.