

## Frederick County Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team (FCDVFRT) 2014 Recommendations

### 2013 Recommendations Overview:

#### *Obstacle addressed: Increased awareness of Domestic Violence in the OB/GYN community*

In 2014, Heartly House worked closely with Frederick Memorial Hospital (FMH) to increase awareness of domestic violence services by placing door hangers throughout FMH and its satellite location. These door hangers are discrete enough to be placed in bathrooms (where they can be accessed by both patients and staff), and provide domestic violence statistics and information on how to access Heartly House's services. In addition, various doctor's offices have also been equipped with these hangers, which can be given out to patients and also increase staff awareness at these facilities. Heartly House is in the process of creating these door hangers in Spanish as well, in order to reach a wider population.

#### *Educate partnering agencies about the dynamics of domestic violence and resources available*

Heartly House's outreach team was very active in the community this year. In 2014, Heartly House presented to numerous colleges and schools, including Hood College, Frederick Community College, Mount St. Mary's University, Frederick High School, and Saint John's Catholic Prep. They also utilized the *Cut It Out* Program to educate several local hair salons on recognizing and addressing the issue of domestic violence. Additionally, they have presented to numerous partnering agencies and organizations, including the Child Advocacy Center, Department of Social Services, The United Way of Frederick County, the Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA), and the Frederick Women's Civic Club. They have also done outreach at Neighborhood Advisory Committee meetings, and with numerous members of the faith community. They regularly do continuing education efforts with Frederick Memorial Hospital and Fort Detrick, and worked to increase awareness of domestic violence with downtown businesses and establishments.

During 2014, the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (DVCC) in Frederick got re-invigorated for the purpose of raising awareness in the Frederick County Community. As a result, the Frederick County Sheriff's Office collaborated with the DVCC and presented its first annual conference "1 in 4: It is Your Business." This conference was presented to local human resource professionals to understand the dynamics of domestic violence, explore workplace policy, and learn about local resources available to them.

The DVCC will be reaching out to other agencies to include in our efforts to continue to raise awareness. This year, the Asian American Center has been added to our group to help raise awareness amongst different cultural groups.

## *Increased Follow-Up with Children Whose Parents Were Victims of Intimate Partner Violence/Homicide*

This recommendation will still continue to be reviewed. However, Heartly House has provided training to the Frederick County Department of Social Service (including Family Preservation and Child Protective Services) in regards to the expansion of the Lethality Assessment Program. As of October, 2014, all departments of DSS have begun implementing the Lethality Screen, in order to connect high-danger domestic violence victims with life-saving resources.

In addition, members of the Frederick Police Department and Frederick County Sheriff's Office were invited to talk about the dynamics of domestic violence to the Family Preservation Unit within Department of Social Services. Stemming from this training, an increased amount of communication has started surrounding families dealing with domestic violence. In the year to come, the Frederick County Sheriff's Office will begin planning the "1 in 4" Conference for 2015, in which the primary focus will be on children who witness domestic violence.

### **2014 Recommendations:**

#### *Interagency Communication*

**Obstacle #1:** Frederick County, MD, is comprised of 5 different law enforcement agencies. At any time, any one of these law enforcement agencies can receive a call for a domestic dispute or assault. Due to the make-up of the county, in some of the cases reviewed, there were multiple interactions with different law enforcement agencies. In addition, if charges were filed, communications were then beginning with the State's Attorney's Office, as well as Parole and Probation. Thus, the history of offenses might not be fully recognized due to different agency involvements.

**Recommendation:** Work with all agencies to increase knowledge of and communication about high-risk offenders and victims.

**Action:** The FCDVRT will meet to discuss the possibility of creating a law enforcement sensitive list of high-risk domestic violence situations. In addition, the Frederick County Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team will invite all local law enforcement agencies to attend and participate in the FCDVFRT.

#### *Public Awareness*

**Obstacle #2:** After reviewing all fatality and near-fatality cases from 2014, it was recognized that victims of domestic violence do not solely turn to Domestic Violence Agencies in order to seek support and resources.

**Recommendation:** Increase awareness amongst local therapists, counselors, social workers, and family law attorneys on recognizing and addressing domestic violence.

**Action:** Collaborate with Heartly House to create a training which will specifically discuss dynamics of domestic violence, safety planning, options to increase safety and/or leave an abusive relationship, and local resources.