

Denver Metro Domestic Violence Fatality Review Report

Denver Domestic Violence Coordinating Council

Denver Metro
Domestic Violence
Fatality Review
Committee
(DMDVFRFC) is a
program under the
Denver Domestic
Violence
Coordinating Council
(DDVCC).

EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR:
Dora Lee Larson

DMDVFRFC
COORDINATOR:
Christine Garcia

PHONE:
303-522-0932

EMAIL:
dvfrfc@hotmail.com

WE'RE ON THE
WEB! VISIT US AT:
[www.denverdv
council.org](http://www.denverdv
council.org)

DMDVFRFC 2011 IN REVIEW

Greetings Kindred Spirits – As 2011 ends, we want to share with professionals across Colorado, the successes and accomplishments that came from the Denver Metro Domestic Violence Fatality Review Committee. As many of you know the full committee is comprised of many stellar professionals, who add their

expertise at every case review and meeting (see the full DMDVFRFC list on the DDVCC website). We are so fortunate to have committee representation from prosecutors and line staff, battered women's service programs, offender treatment providers, Departments of Human Services / Child Protection Services, probation, survivors, children's

programs, judiciary, academic researchers, DVOMB, et al. One of our newest members comes from the Colorado Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV), Nancy Olson, whose organization will be extremely helpful in advancing our collaborative efforts statewide.

(con't on page 2)

RED FLAGS CHECKLIST USED DURING CASE REVIEW

The DMDVFRFC utilizes a Red Flags Checklist when reviewing each fatality case. This checklist helps the Committee identify red flags that were present in each case to better inform practice when working with victims and survivors of domestic violence.

Some of the red flags items are research based and some are theoretically based on the cases reviewed; they are separated into these 2 categories. The information is then reviewed through a research database to help the DMDVFRFC identify red flags that consistently arise in

fatality cases. This information has been used by those working with both victims and perpetrators of domestic violence to better understand the potential for lethality. The DMDVFRFC wants to be clear that this is NOT considered a validated lethality or risk assessment.

2011 in Review Con't from pg 1.



"Domestic violence flourishes because of silence. Therefore the problem stays hidden and in some subtle but powerful way, acceptable."

We view DMDVFRC as one of many components of a total Coordinated Community Response, albeit a very integral part in that we exist in part to speak for victims who have suffered the worst of all fates, death at the hands of their most intimate partner. The combined expertise brought by this

amalgam of consummate professionals is astounding and has resulted in some state-of-the-art work and product. We have had the distinct privilege to collaborate with several entities (organizations, groups) across the state in many forms. We met several times with Jackie Sievers, Latimer House /

Hilltop Community Resources. These meetings resulted in a 2nd formal presentation to the Mesa County Domestic Violence Task Force regarding the feasibility of creating (establishing) a type of "satellite" DMDVFRC on the Western slope. Discussions are still undergoing regarding the actual structure and/or format of the "satellite".

Did You Know ? *

- Female perpetrated homicides are more likely to occur at her own residence while males were more likely to kill at the victim's residence or their joint residence.
- 71% of male perpetrators of intimate partner homicide had experienced a history of separation from the victim compared to 37% of the female perpetrators.
- Females were the *only ones* convicted of conspiracy to commit murder.
- Victims of female perpetrated intimate partner homicides were 3 times more likely to have prior DV arrests and about 8 times more likely to have prior DV convictions.

*Please note that the above information is gleaned directly from the DMDVFRC research & case reviews.



DMDVFRC Beginnings

In 1995, Terry Petrosky was murdered by her estranged husband, Albert Petrosky when she arrived at the grocery store where she worked. In addition to shooting her, he also murdered Dan Suazo her supervisor, when he attempted to help Terry. He then turned his murderous rage on Jeff Co. Sheriff's Sgt. Timothy Mossbrucker in the store's parking lot.

This case was the turning point in Denver's domestic violence prevention community. We quit talking about a domestic violence fatality review committee and launched one. In 1996, Denver was one of the first communities to implement a

Domestic Violence Fatality Review Committee (DVFRC). Three members primarily responsible for starting the committee all still serve as members of its Executive and Review Committees: Denver County Court Judge, Brian T. Campbell, Denver District Attorney's Office DV Early Intervention Manager Margaret Abrams, and Denver DV Coordinating Council Executive Director DoraLee Larson.

The most significant strength of the Denver (Metro) DVFRC is that membership includes varied professions and agencies from Advocacy to law enforcement to prosecution to forensic

psychology and (offender) treatment providers. Our mission statement says it best: *"The purpose of this committee is to investigate domestic violence related fatalities. Information is then collected, correlated and shared to create better understanding and education in the dynamics of domestic violence for future prevention.*

*It is recognized that **offenders** are ultimately responsible for the death of victims. Thus the goal of DMDVFRC is **not to place blame on anyone else** but rather to better understand the dynamics when death is involved to help prevent future tragedy.*



DMDVFRC Research

The CU Principal Investigator for the DMDVFRC is Dr. Joanne Belknap, Professor at the University of Colorado, Dept. of Sociology. She has assisted the DMDVFRC since its beginning, with the crucial research aspect of DV fatality review and has helped since 1999 to train employees to enter data and/or conduct the data analysis and write-ups of the data so that the Denver Fatality Review Committee can report on patterns in local DVFs. Although the data set does not include a comparison group of intimate partner abuse cases where there is no homicide (and there is the obvious problem of not knowing which ones will become DVFs), the data are useful in describing the Denver metro intimate partner homicides cases. Ideally, knowing more about these cases will allow police officers, prosecutors, victims advocates, judges, and even health professionals can better intervene in potentially lethal cases. The data the Denver FRC has collected, and continues to collect, is very impressive, yet there has been minimal ability to showcase these data and to conduct the appropriate analyses.

Please feel free to contact us if you're interested in seeing the full membership list which delineates the professional affiliations necessary for DMDVFRC to succeed. www.dvfrc@hotmail.com

"If you don't think you are affected by domestic violence, you could be dead wrong."

DMDVFR Committee Goals:



The goals of the Committee are:

- To cultivate and maintain committee membership of multidisciplinary expertise and can access information required for a productive review of domestic violence related fatalities.
- To create and maintain a comprehensive data base of the fatalities, assessing victim and perpetrator demographics, relationship history, prior abuse history, prior interventions and resources utilized, in order to further understand domestic violence homicide, and analyze what may provide more effective intervention.
- To develop a risk assessment model, that would assist a broad spectrum of professionals in better identifying potentially lethal domestic violence perpetrators.
- To identify trends and patterns for policy recommendations regarding better communication and collaboration among agencies, and to develop earlier and more effective interventions in such cases.
- To develop and disseminate training materials to justice system personnel, domestic violence professionals and the

community at large (such as clergy, attorneys, physicians, and employers) to help better assess dangerousness and identify effective intervention strategies.

I want to thank the OVP / VAWA folks for providing most of the funds that support DMDVFC (11-VW-2-10). Thanks also to the Denver and Anschutz Foundations for their gifts. Much appreciation to SafeHouse Denver for their contribution of space & supplies for DMDVFC over the years!

A huge thanks to our Advisory Committee members and those that have participated in full case reviews. This is very hard work but it is so very important! Bless you all!