

1997 DOMESTIC MORTALITY REVIEW REPORT

**SUBMITTED BY THE DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE INTERVENTION SUBCOMMITTEE
ON DOMESTIC HOMICIDE**

ON DECEMBER 10, 1997

**SHAUNA WRIGHT, DIVISION CHIEF
SPECIAL ASSAULT UNIT
STATE ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
COMMITTEE CHAIR**

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

**DONNA ASKEW, STATE ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
GORDON BASS, JACKSONVILLE SHERIFF'S OFFICE
PATTIE MALLON, HUBBARD HOUSE, INC.**

The 1997 Domestic Mortality Review Report was sponsored by the Domestic Violence Intervention Project Committee (DVIP).

1997 DVIP COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON

Laura Havey Baer, Director, State Attorney's Office, Special Assault Unit

1997 COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Donna Askew, State Attorney's Office

Gordon Bass, Jacksonville Sheriff's Office

Tina Bernardi, State Attorney's Office

Stella Bohaning, Clerk of Court

Loretta Brienza, Salvation Army

Linda Darton, Salvation Army

Sandy Jones, Mayport Family Advocacy

Pattie Mallon, Hubbard House

Brian J. Maxson, Hubbard House

Judge Linda McCallum, Administrative Chief of County Court

Beverly Parker, Legal Aide

Judge David Wiggins, Administrative Chief, Family Law Division

Shauna Wright, State Attorney's Office

FACTORS REVIEWED

In order to look at a comprehensive, community services base to prevention, the following factors were investigated by committee members:

1. Prior police reports involving the victim and offender.
2. Department of Children and Families Referrals.
3. Shelter hotline calls.
4. Shelter services.
5. Prior and current Injunctions by victim and offender.
6. Criminal record of victim and offender.
7. Current and past State Attorney cases involving victim and offender.
8. Batterer's Intervention Program Attendance.
9. School records of children of both victim and/or offender.
10. HARK Attendance by children of both victim and/or offender.
11. Medical records of victim and offender.

COMMITTEE GOALS

The Domestic Mortality Review Subcommittee (DMR) was formed by Jacksonville's Domestic Violence Intervention Project to study domestic homicides occurring in Jacksonville in 1997. The purpose of the study was to look at these homicides to determine if our community could have helped these women, men and their families to prevent the homicide.

The goal of the DMR was to improve our community's intervention in the area of domestic violence by studying these homicides. Research on domestic violence informs us that these crimes are progressive; therefore, early intervention may prevent mortalities from occurring. Further research also suggests that many women who kill their partners do so after being victims of abuse and kill in an act of self-defense. Six of the cases in our study involve women as the offenders.

The DMR obtained a baseline study case from 1996 and then studied nine domestic homicides from 1997. These cases are the number of domestic homicides that have occurred in Jacksonville to date in 1997.

Due to the confidential nature of these cases, no names have been used in our report. The 1996 case we studied will be referred to as the base case. All 1997 cases will be named by letters of the alphabet in correspondence with the date they occurred (A, B, C, D...).

Basic facts of each case will be discussed in the report. These facts will include the date of occurrence, sex and relationship between victim and offenders, children in the home and their sex and ages, general circumstances surrounding the offense, weapon of choice, and arrest status of the offender.

Because our study involves 1997 cases, disposition information is not available since most of these cases are still pending in criminal court. The focus of our study was on dynamics occurring in the lives of the victim and the offender before and at the time of the homicide.

Note: The homicides reviewed in this report occurred from January 1, 1997 until December 1, 1997 for purposes of preparation of report for committee on December 10, 1997.

BRIEF SUMMARIES

The following is a brief summary of each domestic homicide.

Base Study:

This homicide occurred on 01/27/96. The victim, a 31 year old black female, was shot and killed by her estranged husband, a 32 year old black male. The offender was a police officer in another city. There was a prior history of domestic violence. The offender had committed a battery on the victim after she separated from him the week prior to the murder. The victim had an Injunction for Protection against the offender at the time of her death. The victim had four children. Three were school age at the time of the murder. The victim and her children had recently moved from Daytona Beach to Jacksonville. The offender resided in Daytona. The youngest child was the child of both the victim and the offender. None of the children witnessed the homicide. The offender threatened suicide after he committed the murder, but he was taken into custody by the Daytona Beach Police SWAT team before he harmed himself.

The children are now living with the maternal grandparents in another state.

The offender had been arrested previously for an Aggravated Assault and later was found not guilty after a jury trial in another city in Florida.

Case A:

This homicide occurred on January 17, 1997. The victim, a 25 year old black male, was stabbed to death by his girlfriend, a 21 year old black female, during an argument at the victim's residence. The victim and the offender were not living together at the time of the murder and had no children.

The victim in this case had an outstanding capias for Violation of Probation for a charge of Domestic Battery on his offender. The sentence he had initially received was four months probation, Batterer's Intervention Program, and no violent contact with the

victim. The victim also had several misdemeanors involving non-violent crimes on his record. The offender had no record. There were past police reports by the offender written in 1993, 1994 and 1996.

There were no past or current Injunctions filed by either party at the time of the murder.

Case B:

This homicide occurred on March 1, 1997. The victim, a 38 year old black male, was shot by his live-in partner, a 37 year old black female, during an argument at their residence. There were no children present during the homicide.

The victim had a record of several non-violent misdemeanors. The offender had a record of one violent misdemeanor.

There were no current or past Injunctions filed by either party at the time of the homicide.

Case C:

This homicide occurred on March 8, 1997. The victims were killed by their adult son. There were no current or past Injunctions for Protection filed by any of the parties. The victims had no criminal record.

Case D:

This homicide occurred on March 26, 1997. The victim, a 45 year old white male, was shot and killed by his wife, a 34 year old white female, at their residence. The offender's 14 year old son was present in the home when the murder occurred. The homicide occurred after the victim told the offender he was leaving her and moving in with his girlfriend. The couple had been married for seven years.

The victim had a prior history of domestic violence on the offender. The offender had filed an Injunction for Protection on the victim in 1995. The victim had a record of

two Domestic Batteries, 1991, and 1995, committed on the offender. He also had out of county arrests for Kidnapping, Aggravated Assault, and Battery. The victim was sentenced both times to probation with Batterer's Intervention Program. He attended Hubbard House First Step Program from April, 1995 through October, 1995. The assessment from Hubbard House states he had a drinking problem in his past. The victim had two police reports written for domestic violence in 1997 prior to his murder.

Their child is now in custody of Department of Children and Families and is living at a residential drug treatment program.

Case E:

This homicide occurred on March 31, 1997. The victim, a 50 year old black male, was stabbed to death by his girlfriend, a 35 year old black female, at her residence. The victim and offender were not living together at the time of the murder and no children were involved in the incident.

The victim had a record for Stalking on the offender in 1994. He received a suspended sentence and a fine. The offender had a record of two non-violent misdemeanors and one non-violent felony. The offender had an HRS referral for child abuse and neglect in 1995 that was classified unfounded. Her son is now a victim of neglect by his natural father who has custody because offender is incarcerated.

There were no current or past Injunctions filed by either party at the time of the murder.

Case F:

This homicide occurred on May 18, 1997. The victim, a 25 year old white male, was shot and killed by his wife, a 25 year old black female, in their residence. The couple's one-year old female child was present in their home at the time of the murder.

The victim was a convicted felon and had a record of several Worthless Check charges and Auto Theft. The offender had no record.

There were no current or past Injunctions filed by either party at the time of the murder.

The parents were listed as suspects in a 1996 HRS referral for child neglect due to drug use in the home. The case was closed without any action taken. The children now live with the offender's mother.

Case G:

This homicide occurred on October 18, 1997. The victim, a 36 year old black disabled female, was shot and killed by her 36 year old black male husband. Her husband had become angry and jealous over a co-worker who was friends with the victim. Two young black female stepchildren of the victim witnessed the murder. They are presently living with grandparents.

There was a prior history of domestic violence by the offender on the victim. He was sentenced to a Batterer's Intervention Program in 1996 after committing a Battery on the victim. He also had convictions for Armed Robbery. There were no current or past Injunctions filed by either party. The victim had a police report for domestic violence in 1997 prior to her murder.

Case H:

This homicide occurred on October 23, 1997.

The victim, a 32 year old black male, was stabbed to death by his live-in partner, a 28 year old black female, at their residence. There were no children present. The victim and the offender had no criminal record. There were no current or past Injunctions filed by either party at the time of the murder. The victim had one prior police report for domestic violence in 1997.

Case I:

The victim, a 35 year old black female, was shot and killed by her boyfriend, a 46 year old black male, in a convenience store parking lot. The offender has shot and killed his stepfather in 1994. He had several convictions for Armed Robbery. The victim had no criminal record. There were no children present. There were no current or past Injunctions filed by either party at the time of the murder.

CONCLUSIONS

The research on domestic fatalities provided us with many leads into this mortality review project. Research on women who kill their intimate partners demonstrates how the majority are driven to such violence as a final act of self preservation. Indeed, the majority of women who kill their abusers do so in self defense or defense of their children. Men who kill their intimate female partners usually do so as the culmination of a battering history in which the men commit acts of battery and women resist in whatever ways they are able. Homicide-suicide involves the killing of one or more persons followed soon after by the suicide of the perpetrator. It is usually men who kill their wives, ex-wives, lovers and ex-lovers, sometimes in combination with their children.¹

National trends show that female and male offenders in domestic homicides are usually either equal in numbers or men outnumber women as the killer.²

Our research indicates that Jacksonville shows an aberration from the national trend because in six out of the nine cases we reviewed, the female was the killer.

When women are killed in either multiple or single victim domestic fatalities, it is usually the final event in an abusive relationship of long standing. When men are killed by other men, or by women, it is rarely the end-product of an abusive relationship in which the men are the victims of abuse. When men are killed by other men in domestic situations, it is often because the two men are involved in a love triangle with a woman who has, in many cases, been victimized by one of the men. Three quarters of all adult male domestic fatalities were perpetrated by men. Only one quarter of the men who died were killed by women.

1 Florida Mortality Review Project: Executive Summary, 1997

2 Dr. Christine Rasche, Professor, University of North Florida

Research demonstrates that women who kill men usually do so out of self-defense, or less often, the defense of their children. These women have frequently been pushed to the brink of human endurance by the batterers who they eventually kill. While the killing of batterers by the long standing victims of battering may not qualify as self-defense in a court of law, the act of defensive or preemptive violence by women is qualitatively different from the offensive acts of violence perpetrated by men against women.³

3 Florida Mortality Review Project: Executive Summary, 1997.

PATTERNS

OUR LOCAL FINDINGS DEMONSTRATE THE FOLLOWING TRENDS OR PATTERNS:

- Six of the homicides were committed by women who killed their male partners. One was committed by an adult male who killed his parents. Two were committed by men who killed their female partners.
- Five of the homicides were the result of gunshot wounds. Three of the homicides were the result of stab wounds.
- Six of the victims were black; three were white; seven of the offenders were black; two were white.
- Three of the parties were married at the time of the homicide; three were partners who were not currently cohabitating; two were cohabitating.
- Children were eyewitnesses to two of the murders. In one other murder, a one year old child was present in the home.
- None of the victims had used local shelter services.
- One family had an HRS referral for child neglect before the murder. Two referrals to HRS occurred after the murder when the children needed placement after the mothers had murdered their partner. In one of these cases, no relatives would take the teenage child because he was described as ungovernable. He had witnessed his mother kill his stepfather. This child also had a school referral to a residential drug treatment program with a self-contained school.
- No children attended the HARK Program.
- One man in our study attended the Batterer's Intervention Program. He was murdered by his wife a year later.
- There were no previous medical records from University Hospital for anyone.

- Seven of the victims in our study had a criminal record; two of the offenders had criminal records.
- One male victim in our study had an outstanding capias for domestic battery at the time of his murder.
- Four of the male victims had criminal records of domestic violence. None of the female offenders had criminal records of domestic violence. One male offender had a criminal record of domestic violence.
- Two of the male victims had been previously sentenced to a Batterer's Intervention Program; one of the male offenders had been sentenced to the program. Records indicate that one of the male victims was the only one to attend the program.
- Four of the victims had prior police reports written for domestic violence; one of the offenders had two police reports written.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is important to note the findings from this study should be interpreted with considerable caution. Our data was based on information we received from several agencies. The results are not scientific in nature, but rather should serve to provide recommendations to improve community response to domestic violence situations.

Agencies providing services to victims of domestic violence should continue to be aware of red flags including the following: a) prior history of domestic violence; b) threats to kill; c) attempting to break away from the perpetrator; d) prior police calls to the residence; and e) prior criminal histories of victims and perpetrators.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE DOMESTIC MORTALITY REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE:

1. A follow-up study on the 1997 cases be completed by DVIP when the cases reach disposition. The purpose of the follow-up is to include interviews of family, clergy, and other contacts in the community that cannot be conducted while a criminal prosecution is pending.
2. Interview Jacksonville Homicide detectives assigned to the 1997 cases after criminal disposition to gain more information on family dynamics, drug and alcohol abuse prior to and during the fatal incident, and any other potential red flag that may have prevented the homicide.
3. Assign a liaison from the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office Homicide Unit to screen all 1998 cases for domestic violence factors. This would allow the committee to expand the definition of domestic violence to include parties who have had a love relationship in the past and same sex partners.
4. Establish a link with Animal Control and the Humane Society to note families where animal abuse is occurring.
5. Continue to monitor Batterer's Intervention enrollment and attendance by offenders sentenced to the programs.
6. Expand outreach by Shelter Services to victims of domestic violence after police response, or misdemeanor and felony battery cases occur.

1997 DOMESTIC HOMICIDES

1996 01/27/96
 Base Study
 Husband Kills Wife

Case A 01/17/97 Girlfriend kills boyfriend	Case B 03/01/97 Live-in girlfriend kills boyfriend	Case C 03/08/97 Adult son kills adult parents	Case D 03/26/97 Wife kills husband
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Case E 03/31/97 Girlfriend kills boyfriend	Case F 05/18/97 Wife kills husband	Case G 10/18/97 Husband kills wife	Case H 10/23/97 Live-in girlfriend kills boyfriend
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Case I
 11/07/97
 Boyfriend kills girlfriend