

Annual Report from the Allegany County Fatality Review

The Allegany County Fatality Review Team met four times in FY 2009 for the purpose of identifying systemic issues and missed opportunities for intervention in homicide and near homicide cases. At each review, team members presented relevant information from their perspective regarding each case.

The primary purpose of the case reviews is to prevent deaths in domestic violence cases by:

- Promoting a coordinated community response among agencies that provide services related to domestic violence.
- Identifying gaps in services.
- Recommending changes, plans, and actions to improve.

The team made the following recommendations:

The Lethality assessment form should be “flagged” for the court to take into consideration when setting bond. There should a way to alert the court that the defendant is currently already out on bond.

In Anne Arundel County the court includes the lethality assessment as part of the bond hearing process.

A signed, written or taped statement for the victim(s) should be taken immediately following an incident.

Victims should always be given information about victim services that are available.

Note: the case reviewed took place prior to law enforcement participation in the lethality assessment program.

Expand the local Lethality Assessment Program participation to include CPS and Child Welfare workers, emergency room staff and other medical personnel and other service providers.

Because the Fatality Review Team is part of the Family Violence Council, this recommendation was presented to the full board and is one of the Council's goals for the upcoming year.

Other discussion for further consideration included:

The use of Expert Witness testimony.

Placement of surviving children after a homicide.

A mental health counselor should be made available to survivors immediately following a homicide and to insure that survivors know where to get follow-up counseling in the days and weeks following a homicide.

Funding for the Domestic Violence Response Team and Law Enforcement to continue to do follow-up visits after a domestic violence incident.