

Cuyahoga County Coordinating Council Fatality Review Committee Annual Report 2012

Acknowledgement:

The 2012 Cuyahoga County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council Fatality Review Committee (CCDVFRC) Report highlights the magnitude of and trends in intimate partner homicide within Cuyahoga County and identifies recommendations to prevent such tragedies in the future.

Summary: No report this brief can adequately honor the victims' lives. Even a study far more in depth would fail to make such tragedies fully comprehensible. Of necessity and limited to readily available public information, we have attempted to construct as complete and accurate a description as possible of key events related to each homicide and the lessons they can teach us about prevention of future similar losses. The goal of fatality review is to identify recommendations for changes in services, resources, policy, and training with the purpose of preventing future incidents of domestic violence and domestic violence related deaths.

The focus of this year's report will be the education of the professionals surrounding a victim of domestic violence. In addition we examine the costs associated with the investigation of a homicide compared to the prevention of such an incident.

Domestic violence is always a choice of the perpetrator but it is important to recall that we are complex beings influenced by a variety of elements in our lives. Many factors affect a person's decision to engage in violence directed toward their partner. When seeking to explain domestic violence homicides we must consider the environment within which the victims and perpetrators are living. A better understanding of the environmental context of these incidents may assist in identifying new lethality factors.

During this review we discovered one case that could be traced back to a risk factor of loss of physical health. Diagnosis of a life threatening illness, or even the perception that it is life threatening, can affect a caregiver emotionally as well as physically and generate feelings of depression, rage, and fear. It appears that depression may play in critical role in this type of homicide.

In 2012, the Committee identified twelve 2010 homicides for initial review. A careful screening process allowed the committee to review each of those cases. Each case fits within the statutory definition of domestic violence in the Ohio

Revised Code, and this Committee has determined to limit its purview to intimate partner homicide.

As a group, the cases could be described as follows:

- 75% of the victims were female
- The largest per month number of homicides occurred in March; no domestic violence homicides were reported in April, May, June, September, November, or December.
- 33% of the homicides occurred outside the City of Cleveland in the surrounding suburbs.
- In 17% of the cases a child or children were present at the time of the homicide.
- 75% of the incidents took place at the victim's residence
- 3 of the cases involved the use of a handgun
- 7 of the cases involved the use of a knife
- 2 homicides were a result of strangulation.
- No perpetrator or victim was under the age of 18, and only one victim and one perpetrator were over the age of 60.

Data and Methods:

For each case, the CCDVCCFRC reviews records including indications of all parties' involvement with the criminal justice and court systems, all parties' involvement with the Division of Children and Family Services, substance abuse issues, mental health issues and previous incidents of intimate partner violence.

Key Findings:

The Committee's findings highlighted several issues of concern, including a lack of medical insurance, the issuance of handguns without thorough background investigations, and the enforcement of protection orders. However, this year there appeared to be one common theme that was an issue in the majority of the cases reviewed: a potential of missed opportunities for an intervention due to a lack of education of bystanders, both professional and non-professionals, particularly involving the dynamics of power and control leading to domestic violence.

Recommendation:

This year the Committee's recommendation is to the engage criminal justice professionals and the business community to increase the reporting of domestic violence.

The economic stability that comes from earning personal wages is essential to living a safe, independent, violence-free life. Turmoil caused

by abuse puts survivors at increased risk for further financial problems. One way that abusers maintain control is to prevent their partners from securing or maintaining employment. Job performance can be significantly impacted by the abuser showing up or threatening to show up, making harassing phone calls, or engaging in other stalking behaviors. The lack of income can greatly reduce the survivor's ability to leave the relationship; most abusers know this and thrive on this type of financial abuse.

Employers are uniquely positioned to link survivors to support and resources, as the time at work may be the only time away or free from the abusive partner's direct influence. If an employer can make reasonable accommodations for people experiencing domestic violence they will often find they can develop a very loyal employee.

Talking about domestic violence in the workplace may give the opportunity to save someone's life. Among the effective talking points to consider are costs.

- The annual cost of domestic violence to the U.S. economy is more than 48.3 billion; this includes cost of medical care, mental health services, and lost productivity; per the U.S. Department of Justice.
- The U.S. Department of Justice estimates that 1 in 4 Americans will experience domestic violence in their life time. As women make up nearly one half of the workforce, it is fair to assume that this will have a significant impact on productivity.
- Domestic violence is a wellness issue. Health care costs are typically higher for survivors of domestic violence. The Academy on Violence and Abuse estimates that survivors spend out of pocket at least \$439 more a year for health care, than non-victimized individuals.

One way the committee has determined that employees could be reached is through COSE. Perhaps a partnership could be developed through the health insurance carriers and the Domestic Violence and Child Advocacy Center to sponsor a prevention drive to create a connection with employers and encourage them to begin addressing domestic violence in their workplace. The level to which they become involved would be tailored to their existing culture. Some suggestions may include

- The placements of posters in the Human Resource office, or in the restrooms.
- Have cell phones available for the survivor to call resource agencies without any fear.

- Provide training to managers to recognize the physical and subtle signs of domestic violence.
- Develop, implement, and enforce a domestic violence policy in the workplace policy.

If the above suggestions are put into effect, the costs to the community could be substantially reduced for example; to incarcerate an offender costs no less than \$25,000 a year. In each of the cases reviewed, no perpetrator received less than a 10 year prison sentence, equaling no less than a quarter of a million dollars. In contrast, offering someone residential drug treatment may cost \$5250.00 and one year probation may cost \$1500, both of which are a substantial savings compared to the costs of investigating and incarcerating an offender. The costs of prevention are far less and the trickle down effects of the homicide are also prevented. In each homicide we noticed that a number of individuals were affected, including extended families, fellow employees, and professionals who carried the weight of the homicide, leading to further costs. Included in those costs are days off work, counseling, and the financial burdens of the families left behind.

As in earlier years it is not surprising that of all of the systems were involved in the lives of victims of homicides. Law enforcement agencies had considerable contact. It is clear that law enforcement plays a crucial role in the dissemination of information to domestic violence survivors about community resources and the availability of such resources. It is imperative that law enforcement and defense attorneys are aware of the resources that are available. Such trainings can be accomplished by:

- Connecting law enforcement and domestic violence agencies through roll call trainings.
- Connecting defense attorneys through trainings with Domestic Relations Court, and a contact person that is available during business hours.

Progress toward the Implementation of Previous Recommendations:

It is imperative to follow up from last year's report. The Committee is still supportive of the **Defending Childhood Initiative**, which continues to build on the positive results of the Children Who Witness Violence Program and other services provided to children exposed to violence in their homes, schools, and communities. Defending Childhood places the lens of violence over current systems' practices and provides training and resources so that systems and service providers become more trauma-focused in their practices.

At the end of this review year a protocol was approved by the Committee to begin interviewing the family members of domestic violence homicide victims.

The information obtained from this interview could be used to enhance any type of Lethality Tool and may also uncover gaps in the delivery of services that are not evident through the analysis of documentation from official agencies.

Objectives for the upcoming year:

The committee has made a commitment to continue working toward the following: These objectives are in addition to the recommendations contained in the report. The following objectives are the committee's desire to stay current and be on the cutting edge with the new endeavors in Cuyahoga County.

- To develop a web site that could be used by members to enter research and by the public to access data to ensure that the Committee's work is as transparent as possible.
- To work in conjunction with the Family Justice Center to obtain information from victim focus groups in an effort to delivery a better quality service.
- To continue to research lethality tools and to potentially recommend one tool that could be used by all local professionals, including those in the criminal justice, health care, and advocacy communities

The Cuyahoga County Fatality Review Committee is committed to the goal of turning grief into action; no victim should perish without a review as to how we as a community can prevent such a tragedy. In addition, we continue to be guided by the voices of survivors, and will continue to work to bring about social change by identifying and addressing the root causes of such violence.

In conclusion of this report we would be remiss if we did not acknowledge that we lost a vital part of our committee this year. Janet Kronenberg passed this year unexpectedly and will be missed. For all of her years of support and hard work we would like to dedicate this report in her honor. The obituary from the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* has been attached because it sums up some of her accomplishments; which are too many to list.

“Janet L. Kronenberg helped victims and families.

Kronenberg, manager of the Cuyahoga County Witness/Victim Service Center, died June 1 at University Hospitals several days after a stroke. She was 64.

"She was an extraordinary advocate for women," said Rosemary Creeden, associate director of trauma services for the local Mental Health Services for Homeless Persons.

Ronald Adrine, administrative and presiding judge of Cleveland Municipal Court, said of Kronenberg, "You come up with a plan and ask her to take part, and it'll be done beyond what you had envisioned."

Before joining Cuyahoga County government in 2000, Kronenberg spent 21 years as partners with her brother, Jacob, in a family law practice downtown. She ran for public offices and helped to open a family shelter. She also helped to plan and find funds for a forthcoming Family Justice Center and the local branch of the federal Defending Children Initiative.

Kronenberg was raised in South Euclid and mostly Shaker Heights. She graduated from Shaker High, attended George Washington University, earned bachelor's and master's degrees at New York University and worked for a literary agency in New York.

Back in Ohio, she graduated from Cleveland-Marshall College of Law in 1978 and briefly worked for the Cuyahoga County treasurer's office. She also taught at Cleveland-Marshall.

Practicing mostly in the Midland Building, she helped clients win protective orders and child custody in cases that sometimes lasted years. She was also president of Northeast Ohio Health Services and of Women Together, helping the latter open a new family shelter in 1987 with 34 beds.

In the 1990s, Kronenberg won one of three Democratic primaries for county judgeships but lost the general election. In 1997, she lost a bid for party leaders' support for the vacant job of county recorder.

In 2000, she became a program officer of the Cuyahoga County Office of Justice Affairs. In 2007, she began to run the Witness/Victim Service Center. She helped clients learn their rights, get compensation, find therapy and more.

Kronenberg teamed with Adrine and others to plan the Family Justice Center, combining courts, police and social services. In a 2010 opinion piece for *The Plain Dealer*, she wrote, "Victims and their families are faced with such significant barriers to seeking assistance in times of crisis that they fail to come forward at all or abandon their involvement at some point."

She said a center would lead to "reduced homicides, increased victim safety, increased autonomy and empowerment for victims, reduced fear and anxiety for victims and their children, reduced recantation and minimization by victims, increased efficiency in collaborative services to victims among service providers, increased successful prosecution of offenders, and dramatically increased community support services to victims and their children."

Kronenberg also lobbied successfully for Cleveland to become an early site for the Defending Children Initiative, which seeks to minimize and mitigate violence.

She lived in Warrensville Heights, Cleveland Heights and Shaker Heights before moving to her final community, Richmond Heights, in 1998. She was often assigned as a guardian by the Cuyahoga County Domestic Relations Court. She was also a volunteer magistrate in juvenile diversion in Richmond Heights. She liked to attend theater and travel, especially to the Outer Banks.”

Agencies represented on the Committee

Cleveland Municipal Court Probation Department

Rocky River Municipal Court

Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court

Cuyahoga County Domestic Relations Court

Cleveland Police Department

Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner

Cuyahoga County Witness/ Victim

Cleveland State University

Cuyahoga County Children and Family Services

Cuyahoga County Adult Protective Services

Cuyahoga County Metro Hospital

ADAMHS Board of Cuyahoga County

Ohio Department of Rehabilitation

Cleveland Prosecutor's Office

Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office

Cuyahoga County Rape Crisis Center

Domestic Violence and Child Advocacy Center

Cleveland Clinic (SANE Nurses)

Peace in the Hood

Respectfully submitted by: Dean Jenkins

2012 Report of the
Cuyahoga County Domestic Violence
Coordinating Council's
Fatality Review Committee