

*Chesterfield County
Intimate Partner and Family Violence
Fatality Review Team*

87
87

10
10

28
28

14
14

HOW MANY MORE ?

25
25

7
7

4
4

39
39

*Findings & Recommendations
Edition II
July 2006*

**Chesterfield County Intimate Partner and
Family Violence Fatality Review Team
Findings and Recommendations
Edition II, July 2006**

The Chesterfield County Intimate Partner and Family Violence Fatality Review Team was established in December 2001 to conduct reviews of intimate-partner and family-violence fatalities in an effort to prevent future family-violence related deaths. Team members represent 14 county and community agencies and organizations that provide domestic violence services. The team reviews intimate-partner homicide cases to identify trends in domestic homicides and to improve the system's response to families experiencing domestic violence. The team also works to support Chesterfield County's strategic goal of being the safest and most secure community of its size in the United States.

In October 2004, the team produced a lengthy report on cases reviewed from 1997-2001 (copies of this report are available by calling (804) 706-1272). Since that time, the Chesterfield County Intimate Partner and Family Violence Fatality Review Team reviewed six additional cases that resulted in nine victims. This update is a synopsis of the information acquired during the review of those six cases and a comparison of all the cases the team has reviewed.

Case Demographics

1997-2004 Cases Reviewed

17 intimate partner homicides, which resulted in 25 victims.

Ten of the cases (59%) were homicides/suicides, where the perpetrators killed the victims and then killed themselves.

Sex of Victims

Female	17 (68%)
Male	8 (32%)

Race of Victims

Caucasian	15 (60%)
African American	7 (28%)
Middle Eastern	2 (8%)
Asian	1 (4%)

Average age of the 18 adult victims: 39

Seven of the victims killed were under the age of 18.

Gender of Perpetrators

Male	14 (82%)
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Female 3 (18%)

Race of Perpetrators

Caucasian 13 (77%)

African American 4 (24%)

Average age of perpetrators: 42

Marital Status of the Parties

Married 9 (53%)

Engaged 1 (6%)

Boyfriend/girlfriend 6 (35%)

Divorced 1 (6%)

Risk Factors

Use of Firearm

In 13 cases (76%), a firearm was used to perpetrate the homicide.

History of Physical and Emotional Abuse

In 12 cases (71%), there were histories of mental and emotional abuse towards the victim. In nine cases (53%), there were histories of physical abuse towards the victim.

Victim Reported the Abuse to Someone

In ten cases (59%), the victims reported the domestic abuse, usually to a family members or a friends.

Criminal History

In ten cases (59%), the perpetrators had criminal histories. Five of these cases involved domestic violence arrests. Only one of the perpetrators had been convicted of a domestic violence related crime.

Recent Separation

In nine cases (53%), the victims had either recently separated from the abusers or were planning to leave the abusers.

Substance Abuse

In seven cases (41%), the perpetrator used drugs and/or alcohol. In five cases (29%), the victim used drugs and/or alcohol.

Prior Police Calls

In seven cases (41%), the police had been called to the homes to intervene in domestic situations.

Mental Health Services

In seven cases (41%), the perpetrators had received mental health services. In three cases (18%), the victims had received mental health services.

Threats to Kill the Victim

In six cases (35%), the perpetrators had threatened to kill the victims.

Prior Protective Orders Issued

In five cases (29%), the victims had received family abuse protective orders prohibiting contact with the perpetrators. None of the victims had protective orders in place when they were killed.

Domestic Violence Family History

In five cases (29%), there were histories of domestic violence in the victim's family of origin. In two cases (12%), there was a history of domestic violence in the perpetrators' families of origin.

Pending Criminal Charges

In four cases (24%), there were pending criminal charges against the perpetrators. Three of those cases involved pending domestic violence charges.

Recommendations

After considering the six additional cases, the team did not have any additional findings or recommendations from those offered in October 2004. Included in this section are some examples of how team representatives have implemented the original recommendations within their agencies.

- 1. Fact:** 73% of the cases involved homicides/suicides. In these cases, the perpetrators killed their partners and then killed themselves. All of the perpetrators were males.

Recommendation: Increase training on awareness and suicide risk factors for families involved with domestic violence.

Recent Developments

- The Chesterfield County Domestic Violence Task Force (CCDV Task Force) sponsored public/interagency training on suicide and domestic violence, which was presented by the Chesterfield County Mental Health Support Services Department.
- The Chesterfield County DV Task Force sponsored public/interagency training on findings and recommendations of Fatality Review Team Report for the public.
- The Chesterfield County Police Department enhanced recruit training and in-service training on suicide and domestic violence.
- Chesterfield County Community Corrections Services notifies Mental Health Support Services when a probation officer detects any indication of suicide/homicide concerns with clients.

2. **Fact:** 82% of the perpetrators had histories of psychologically, emotionally and verbally abusing their victims; 55% used physical abuse against their adult victims. Victims often do not self-identify as being a victim of domestic violence.

Recommendation: Increase families' awareness of signs and symptoms of domestic violence. Resource material and hotline numbers should be made more available to family members in public places, i.e. small businesses, grocery stores, ABC stores, pharmacies, salons, medical establishments, attorneys' office, churches, movie theaters, restaurants and car repair shops. Victims should be strongly encouraged to participate in services that would increase their safety and knowledge of domestic violence patterns.

Recent Developments

- The Chesterfield County Domestic Violence Task Force distributes information about domestic violence to the public.
- The Chesterfield County Domestic and Sexual Violence Resource Center printed domestic violence awareness literature in English and Spanish.
- The Chesterfield County Domestic and Sexual Violence Resource Center increased community presentations covering on such topics as power and control, domestic and sexual violence awareness, mild brain trauma, and healthy relationships.
- The Chesterfield County Health Department increased its diligence in watching for signs of domestic violence during physical screenings.
- The Chesterfield County Domestic and Sexual Violence Resource Center and the Chesterfield County Victim/Witness Assistance Program advocates provide resources and safety planning information to all victims requesting court-issued protective orders.
- Community Corrections Services provides information regarding the dynamics of domestic violence to offenders, victims, and their families and friends.

3. **Fact:** 73% of the victims were killed with a firearm.

Recommendation: Increase awareness about the connection between having access to firearms and deaths by domestic violence. There is a greater risk of domestic violence deaths if guns are available. If a victim is threatened or assaulted by a firearm, he/she should immediately contact police or a domestic violence hot line. All service providers should assess for availability of firearms, when working with families who experience domestic violence. Service providers should be educated about the laws regarding domestic violence and firearms and should use the law to the fullest extent to increase safety for victims and families.

Recent Developments

- The Chesterfield County Police Department and the Chesterfield County Commonwealth's Attorney's Office increased training on firearms and domestic violence.
- The Chesterfield County Sheriff's Department increased its vigilance with regard to assessing abusers' access to firearms when serving protective orders.

- 4. Fact:** 55% of victims were recently separated or planning to separate from the perpetrator.

Recommendation: Increase awareness of lethality risk factors including those associated with separation. Service providers should perform lethality risk assessments that include questions about separation and focus on the risk associated with separation to enhance victim safety.

Recent Developments

The following agencies have improved lethality assessments with families experiencing domestic violence: Victim/Witness Assistance Program, Police Department, Commonwealth's Attorney's Office, Sheriff's Department, Child Protective Services, Domestic and Sexual Violence Resource Center, Health Department, and Community Corrections Services. Mental Health Support Services has begun to implement lethality assessments.

- 5. Fact:** In 55% of the cases, children younger than 18 were living in the home. Four of the nine children (44%) in these homes were killed.

Recommendations: Provide domestic violence education and training within the school system for staff and all adults working with children. Make resource materials more readily available in schools. Explore including healthy-relationships information in classroom curriculum at all grade levels. Training should include how to recognize when children are impacted by domestic violence and when to report this to Child Protective Services.

Recent Developments

- The CCDV Task Force sponsored a public/interagency training on children and domestic violence which was presented by Mental Health Support Services.
- The CCDV Task Force monitors the DELTA Project, which provides information about healthy relationships via after school programs.
- The Chesterfield County Domestic and Sexual Violence Resource Center provides information regarding teen dating violence to students and staff at schools throughout the county.
- Community Corrections Services coordinates supervision of domestic violence offenders with social workers from Child Protective Services to ensure child safety.
- Victim Witness enhanced communication with Child Protective Services social workers to ensure child safety.

- Child Protective Services created a Domestic Violence Team to enhance responses to children impacted by domestic violence.
- The CCDV Task Force distributed information to all school personnel on the effects of domestic violence on children

6. Fact: In 55% of the cases, the perpetrators had histories of alcohol and/or drug use. In 36% of the cases, the victims had histories of alcohol and/or drug use. There was a significant relationship between domestic violence and substance abuse in the reviewed deaths.

Recommendation: Families and friends need to be aware of the significant risk factors of domestic violence and substance abuse. Encourage substance abuse service providers, court programs, support groups and domestic violence programs to coordinate services. Substance abuse increases the risk of domestic violence occurring.

Recent Developments

- Community Correction Services (CCS), considers the correlation between substance abuse and domestic violence when conducting lethality assessments.
- CCS increased collaboration and cross training between domestic violence and substance abuse service providers.
 - The Chesterfield County Domestic and Sexual Violence Resource Center has established a working relationship with CCS/Dual Treatment Track in responding to instances of domestic and sexual violence when we have clientele in common or when resources are needed.
 - The Chesterfield County Victim Witness Assistance Program provides information regarding support groups for families and friends of substance abusers to victims.

7. Fact: In 64% of the cases, the perpetrators had a prior arrests. Almost half of these arrest records involved domestic violence arrests

Recommendation: Identify repeat offenders and assess for increased services and/or supervision needs, i.e. specialized probation services, safety planning for victims, outreach services for family members and stricter sentencing recommendations.

Recent Developments

- Police Department increased police documentation on repeat calls for service and domestic violence arrests.

Community Resources

Listed below are various Chesterfield County resources for families experiencing domestic violence. Please keep these phone numbers available to assist your clients and their friends and families. The hope is that if more information is available to the general community about domestic violence and the deaths caused by it, lives will be saved.

Police Department, emergency	911
Police Domestic Violence Coordinator	751-4113
Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court	748-1379
Victim/ Witness Assistance Program	717-6179
Commonwealth's Attorney	748-1341
Court Services Unit (protective orders)	748-1372
YWCA Women's Advocacy and Shelter (24 hour hotline)	796-3066
Mental Health (24 hour crisis line)	748-6356
Community Corrections and Pretrial Services	717-2250
Domestic and Sexual Violence Resource Center (DSVRC)	706-1272
Victim Advocate, DSVRC	706-1267
Victim Advocate, Spanish speaking, DSVRC	706-1281
Child Protective Services Business hours	748-1100
after hours	(800) 552-7096

If you are interested in more information about this report or domestic violence, please contact the Chesterfield County Domestic and Sexual Violence Resource Center at (804) 706-1272.

Acknowledgements

The Chesterfield County Intimate Partner and Family Violence Fatality Review Team is a strong collaborative effort of team members who care deeply about preventing future domestic violence homicides. Each member participated with purpose, commitment and insight. We are grateful to the following individuals who have served on this team since the publication of our first report in 2004.

Elizabeth Bernhard, Chesterfield County Victim/Witness Assistance Program
Dawn Morris, Chesterfield County Victim/Witness Assistance Program
Tisha Skinner, Chesterfield County Community Corrections Services
Elizabeth Smyers, Chesterfield County Commonwealth's Attorney's Office
Sharon Lindsay, Chesterfield County Police Department
Lt. Carol Woody, Chesterfield County Sheriff's Department.
Beverly McGary, Chesterfield County Health Department
Beth Bonniwell, Chesterfield County Domestic and Sexual Violence Resource Center
Courtney O'Hara, Chesterfield County Domestic and Sexual Violence Resource Center
Patricia Jones-Turner, Chesterfield County Domestic and Sexual Violence Resource Center
Chief Judge Lynn Brice, Chesterfield County Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court
Connie Brown, Domestic Violence Interventions Inc.
Cynthia Barnes, Chesterfield County Public Schools
James Bryant, Chesterfield County /Colonial Heights Department of Social Services
Cindy Duffus, Chesterfield County Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court Services
Capt. Karl Leonard, Chesterfield County Police Department
Kelly Fried, Chesterfield County Mental Health Supportive Services
Cindy Taylor, Chesterfield County University
Arlene Vassell, YWCA Women's Advocacy Program, Chesterfield Shelter

*The numbers on the front cover represent statistics from homicides in Chesterfield County, VA, from 1997 until 2005. There were **87** homicides committed. **Thirty-nine** of those cases were domestic violence homicides, of which were **28** intimate-partner homicides.*

*This report reviews the deaths of **25** victims killed in intimate-partner homicides, to include **14** women, **7** children and **4** men. **Ten** perpetrators committed suicide after killing intimate partners.*



Providing a FIRST CHOICE community through excellence in public service.

For more information, contact the
Chesterfield County Domestic and Sexual Violence
Resource Center at (804) 706-1272.