

6+6+14=26 deaths

Domestic Violence: Uncovering the Facts and Learning from the Deaths

**Henrico County Family Violence Fatality Review Team
2008 Report**

Acknowledgements

The Henrico County Family Violence Fatality Review Team is pleased to present its 2008 report, *Domestic Violence: Uncovering the Facts and Learning from the Deaths*. This project, commenced over six years ago, would not be possible without the support of many persons and agencies throughout the process of creating the team, reviewing family violence homicides and drafting this report. On behalf of the Henrico County Family Violence Fatality Review Team, we wish to recognize the efforts of the Henrico County Department of Human Resources, for providing logistical support, and the Henrico County Division of Police, for facilitating the process. We also wish to acknowledge the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner and the many individuals who provided technical assistance with editing and graphic design. Lastly, the Henrico County Family Violence Fatality Review Team wishes to acknowledge Virgil R. Hazelett, P.E., Henrico County Manager, and the Henrico County Board of Supervisors for creating the opportunity to make this important project possible.

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Executive Summary

The mission of the Henrico County Family Violence Fatality Review Team is to constructively examine the circumstances of past family violence fatalities and make recommendations to prevent abuse between family members and intimate partners from occurring and escalating into murder or murder-suicide. Increasing coordination and communication among agencies, departments, systems, and the community can lead to effective intervention in domestic violence cases.

In 1999, the Virginia General Assembly enacted §32.1-283.3 of the Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, providing for the establishment of local/regional Family Violence Fatality Review Teams and the creation of a surveillance system for the detection and analysis of family violence. The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) serves as a clearinghouse of information and provides technical assistance to localities that choose to review family or intimate partner fatalities.

Virginia Code §32.1-283.3 (C), in part, provides: any county or city, or combination of counties, cities or counties and cities may establish a family violence fatality review team to examine fatal family violence incidents and to create a body of information to help prevent future family violence fatalities. The team shall have the authority to review the facts and circumstances of all fatal family violence incidents that occur within its designated geographic area.

All of the information discussed in a fatality review is confidential by statute. By design, the Code of Virginia provides extraordinary confidentiality protection to the review process, thus allowing frank discussion that can lead to insights and interventions in hopes of preventing these types of fatalities or similar fatalities in the future.

The Henrico County Family Violence Fatality Review Team was formed in March 2001. Membership on the team consists of the following professionals: law enforcement officers, court staff, magistrates, attorneys, probation officers, social workers, health professionals, mental health providers, victim services, batterer intervention providers, and school personnel.

The Henrico County Family Violence Fatality Review Team reviewed 22 cases. Fatalities occurred between July 1997 and June 2004. Twenty-six people were murdered as a result of domestic violence. Six were men, 14 were women, and six were children. Through the case review process, it became clear that these deaths made an impact on our community and reinforced that domestic violence is a community issue.

Education and timely intervention are crucial to preventing future family violence. For intervention to be effective in domestic violence cases, interagency efforts should institutionalize procedures that centralize victim safety, offender accountability, and change the community climate to one of intolerance of domestic violence.

The team made several recommendations based on case findings. We examined deaths that occurred in each magisterial district and formed specific recommendations for each jurisdiction. We have highlighted significant findings below.

- A biological father or stepfather murdered all of the child victims. Sixty-seven percent of the child victims were of elementary school age and 33 percent were under the age of 13 months.
- All of the murder-suicide cases involved a male perpetrator using a firearm. Fifty percent of these male perpetrators were known to be suicidal at some point prior to committing murder.
- Seventy-three percent of the perpetrators were abusing substances. Forty-three percent of the victims were abusing substances. Twenty-seven percent of perpetrators and of victims were under the influence of a substance at the time of the murder.
- More than 65 percent of the perpetrators and adult victims were employed at the time of the murder.
- In 64 percent of the cases, family members, friends, co-workers, neighbors, or other acquaintances were aware of existing domestic violence issues.
- Forty-five percent of the cases involved firearms. The majority of the perpetrators who used firearms were not legally permitted to transport, possess, or purchase a firearm due to a criminal history.

There are many future directions that can be taken from the Henrico County Family Violence Fatality Review Team's recommendations. It is our hope that Henrico County citizens, leaders, and businesses will read our recommendations and begin to implement changes to save lives.

The County of Henrico

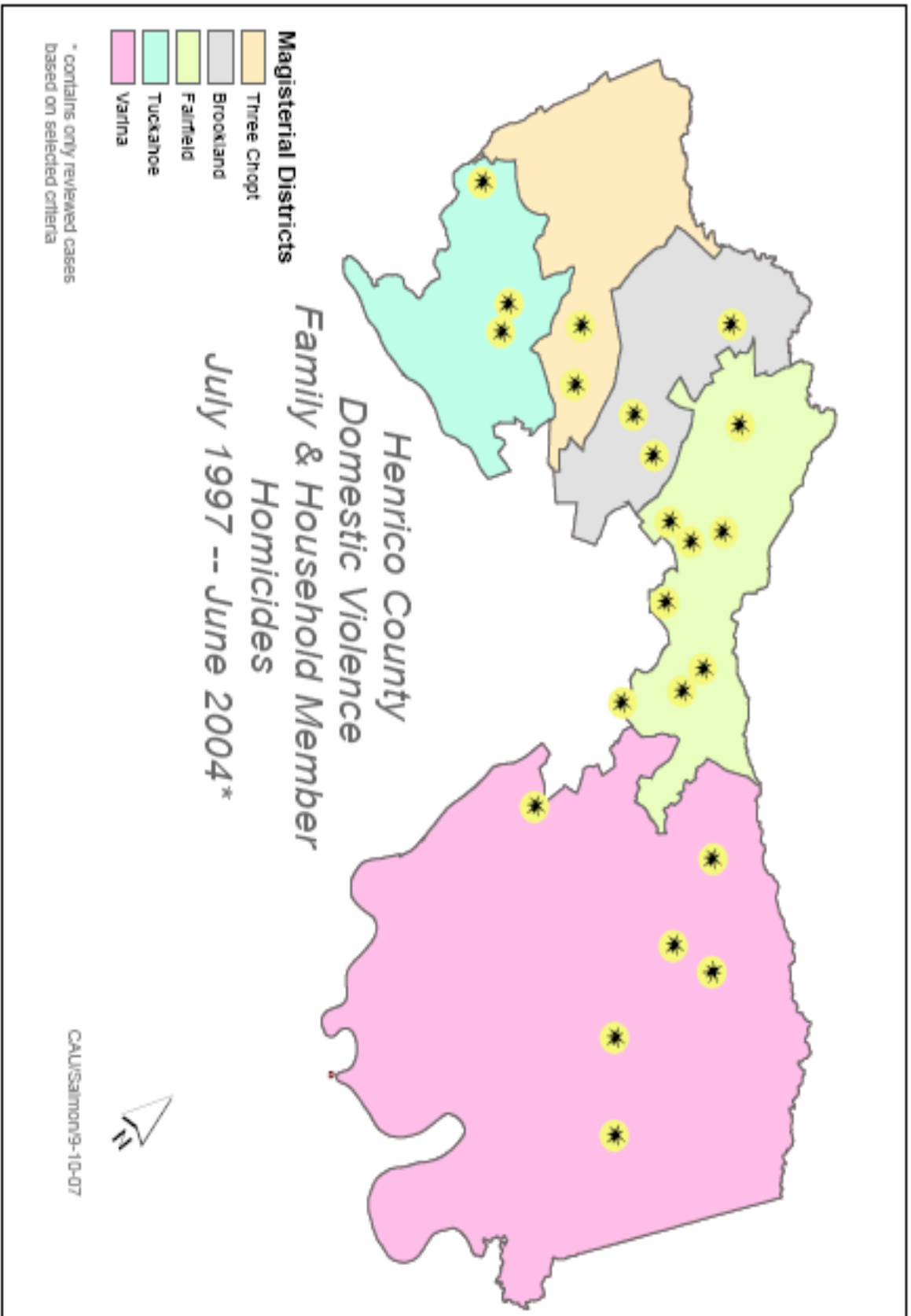
Henrico County is located in the Commonwealth of Virginia in the United States. Positioned in the Richmond-Petersburg region, Henrico County is a portion of the Richmond Metropolitan Statistical Area. Founded in 1634 as one of Virginia's eight original shires, Henrico is one of the oldest counties in the United States. Henrico County has five magisterial districts: Brookland, Varina, Three Chopt, Tuckahoe, and Fairfield.

The 2006 population estimate for Henrico County is 284,399, comprising 115,000 households. Families made up 64 percent of households and the average household size was 2.4 people. The racial makeup of the county was:

- 65 percent White
- 28 percent Black or African American
- 5 percent Asian
- 3 percent Hispanic
- 1 percent some other race
- 1 percent from two or more races

Females accounted for 52 percent of the population and males accounted for 48 percent of the population. The median age was 37.4 years. Twenty-four percent of the population was under 18 years and 12 percent was 65 years and older.

The total school enrollment in Henrico County was 72,000 in 2006. Of residents over 25 years, 88 percent were high school graduates and 38 percent had a bachelor's degree or higher education. The median income of households was \$57,195. Eight percent of people were in poverty.



The Henrico County Family Violence Fatality Review Team

Virginia Code §32.1-283.3 (C), in part, provides: “Any county or city, or combination of counties, cities or counties and cities may establish a family violence fatality review team to examine fatal family violence incidents and to create a body of information to help prevent future family violence fatalities. The team shall have the authority to review the facts and circumstances of all fatal family violence incidents that occur within its designated geographic area.”

A core group of Henrico County professionals began holding organizational meetings in March 2001 to form a fatality review team consisting of representatives from a variety of agencies and departments. The core group consists of representatives from the following agencies and departments:

- Henrico County Division of Police, Domestic Violence Services
- Henrico County Division of Police, Domestic Violence Investigations Unit
- Henrico County Commonwealth’s Attorney Office
- Henrico County’s Attorney Office
- 14th District Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court, Court Services Unit
- Henrico County Department of Social Services, Child Protective Services

The core group focused on obtaining county government support and approval for the project, developing local policies and procedures and outlining a plan for implementation.

After a resolution was created establishing the fatality review team, informational letters were sent out to all relevant public and private agency and department heads inviting them to an orientation meeting. In addition, agency and department heads were asked to submit the name of a potential team member or a point of contact who would act as the agency’s or department’s representative. This person provided information as needed from the identified agency at the fatality review meetings.

The Henrico County Family Violence Fatality Review Team consists of the following structure:

Co-chairs: two core group members who shall be asked to serve as co-chairs for the term of the fatality review team; their role shall be to coordinate the fatality review team meetings and provide all administrative functions, as set forth in the policies and procedures portion of the team’s operating guidelines.

Core group: consists of representatives from the agencies and departments listed above.

Other participants were invited to assist the team. Their roles are as follows:

Facilitators: objective representatives from the Henrico County Department of Human Resources were invited to participate in fatality reviews to provide meeting and process management.

Case-specific participants: individuals or representatives of agencies, who may, on a case-by-case basis, be invited to partake in specific reviews if determined to have information that may be pertinent to the case. In addition, private and public agencies were sought out for representation in specific fatality reviews based on their involvement with specific cases or their ability to make contributions to the review process.

The Henrico County Family Violence Fatality Review Team developed a mission, objectives, and guiding principles in keeping with state law that permits the formulation of local fatality review teams.

The mission of the Henrico County Family Violence Fatality Review Team is to prevent abuse between family members and intimate partners from escalating into murder or murder-suicide. The team supports the mission by: constructively examining the circumstances of past and future family violence fatalities, by making recommendations arising out of these fatality reviews; and increasing coordination and communication among agencies, departments, and systems.

Objectives for the Henrico County Family Violence Fatality Review Team are listed below:

- To identify and describe trends and patterns of family and intimate partner violence related deaths in the County.
- To increase coordination and communication between agencies providing services to families and intimate partners experiencing family violence.
- To identify interventions aimed toward system improvements and change.

Guiding principles for the Henrico County Family Violence Fatality Review Team are listed below:

- To recognize that the perpetrators of family violence are ultimately responsible for the deaths of victims.
- To promote a community response focusing on safety, not blame.
- To maintain the dignity and integrity of the victims and their surviving family members while abiding by strict rules of confidentiality.

Case Selection and Review

The Henrico County Family Violence Fatality Review Team selected cases for review from a database of homicides compiled by the violent crimes component of the Henrico County Division of Police Criminal Investigations Section. Once it was determined that a homicide met the parameters set by the Henrico County Family Violence Fatality Review Team, the case was reviewed by the co-chairs of the team and a summary was forwarded to all team members to assist them in preparing for the case review meeting. During the meeting, all team members possessing data relevant to the case presented their information.

Parameters of our case selection are as follows:

- No case shall be reviewed until all associated criminal investigations and/or prosecutions have been exhausted.
- Any member of the fatality review team may bring a case to the co-chairs for consideration. The co-chairs shall verify that all criminal investigations and prosecutions have been exhausted. After the verification is completed, the case shall be scheduled for review. If the case is determined ineligible for review, a co-chair shall notify the referral source by letter of the reason for ineligibility.
- Homicides in the cases selected should have occurred after July 1997. New legislative bills were enacted in July 1997 including increased penalties for offenders and mandatory arrest laws in domestic violence cases. Hence, the team decided that this would be a good starting point for case review.
- Sources from which potential review cases may be identified include, but are not limited to the following: agency or department records, knowledge/memory of individual members, newspaper articles, and other forms of news media.
- The relationship of the victim and their perpetrator had to meet the family or household member definition as defined by Virginia Code §16.1-228.

One of the tasks of fatality review is to study the facts and circumstances surrounding the violent death of an intimate partner or family member. All of the information discussed in a fatality review is confidential by statute. By design, the Code of Virginia provides extraordinary confidentiality protection to the review process in order to facilitate frank discussion that can lead to insights and interventions that might prevent these types of fatalities or similar fatalities in the future.

Virginia Code §32.1-283.3 (F) All information and records obtained or created regarding the review of a fatality shall be confidential and shall be excluded from the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (§2.2-3700 et seq.) pursuant to subdivision A54 of §2.2-3705. All such information and records shall be used by the fatality review team only in exercise of its proper purpose and function and shall not be disclosed... upon the

conclusion of the fatality review, all information and records concerning the victim and the family shall be returned to the originating agency or destroyed. However, the findings of the fatality review team may be disclosed or published in statistical or other form which shall not identify individuals. All team members and persons attending closed team meetings...shall execute a sworn statement to honor the confidentiality...violations of this subsection shall be punishable as a Class 3 misdemeanor.

Findings and Recommendations

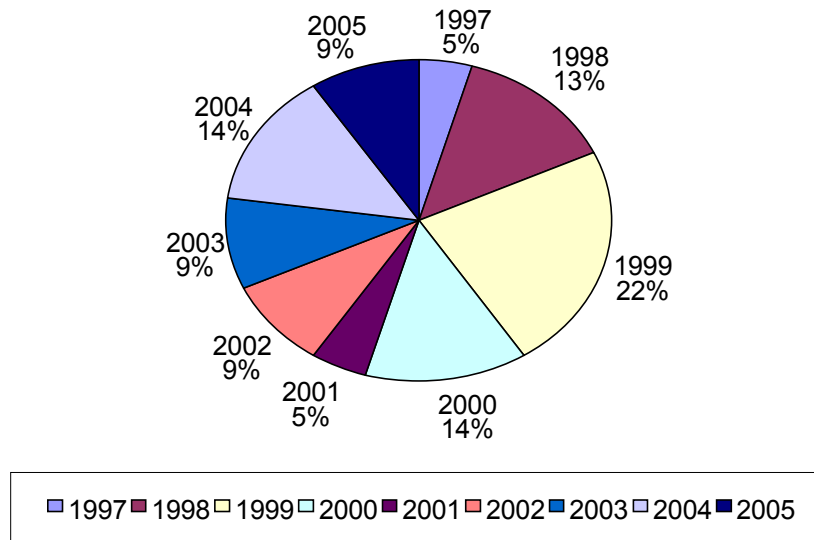
The Findings and Recommendations section of this report provides data from cases reviewed, significant findings, and the team's recommendations base on our findings. This section is broken into six components: County of Henrico, Tuckahoe District, Three Chopt District, Brookland District, Fairfield District, and Varina District.

The County of Henrico Twenty-six people were murdered as a result of domestic violence.

Case Demographics

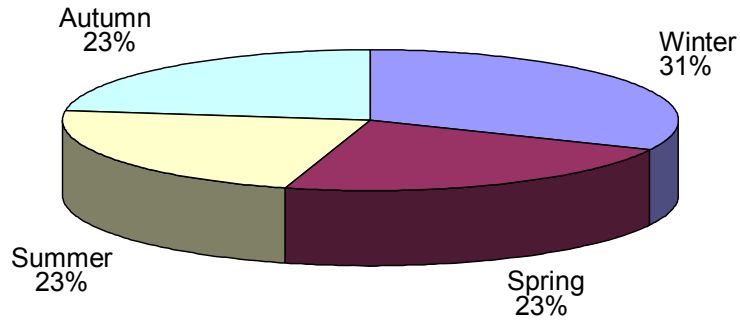
The Henrico County Family Violence Fatality Review Team reviewed 22 murders that occurred between July 1997 and June 2004.

Graph 1: Percentage of Domestic Murders by Year



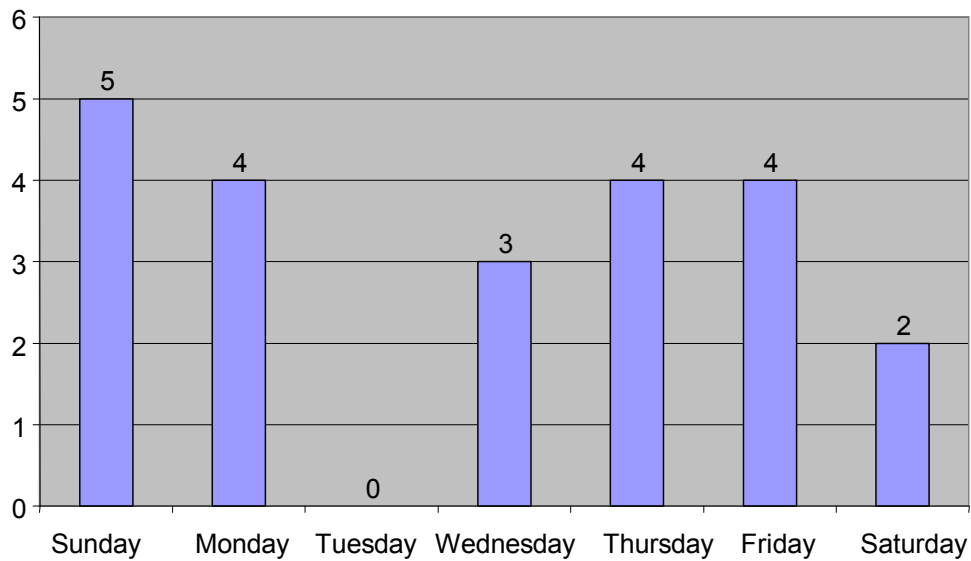
Twenty-three percent of the fatalities occurred in the month of February and no fatalities occurred in November. Thirty-one percent of the murders occurred during the winter season with the remaining occurring equally in the spring, summer, and autumn seasons.

Graph 2: Percentage of Domestic Murders by Season



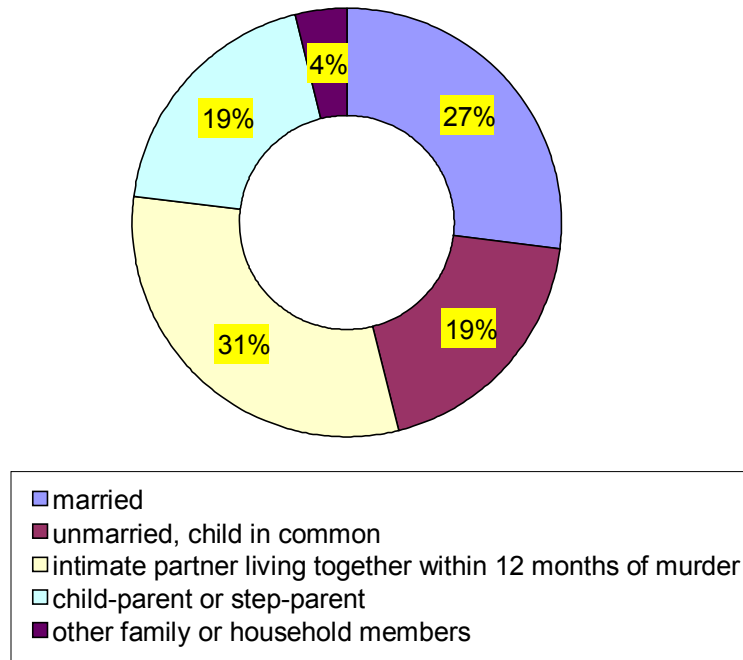
The majority of murders occurred on Sunday, with none occurring on Tuesday.

Graph 3: Number of Domestic Murders by Day of the Week



Eighty-six percent of the murders occurred in residences, nine percent on public roadways, and five percent at workplaces. In the cases reviewed, the relationships between the victims and the perpetrators can be categorized as follows: 31 percent had a child-parent/step-parent relationship; 27 percent were married couples; 19 percent had a child in common; 19 percent were living with an intimate partner within 12 months of the murders; and four percent were other family or household members.

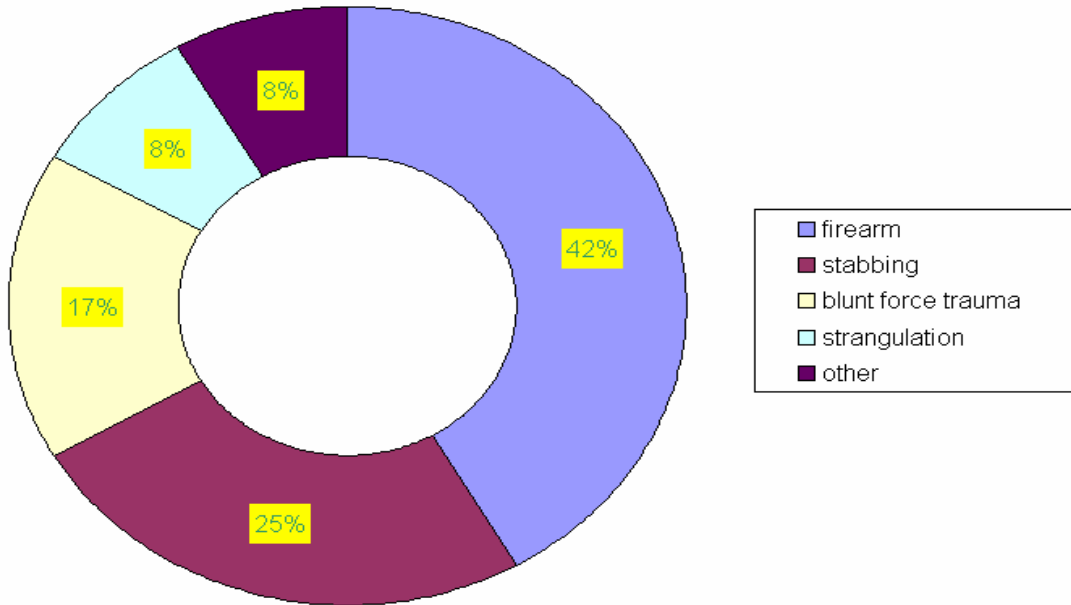
Graph 4: Relationship between Victim and Perpetrator



In the majority of the cases reviewed, there was a recent separation between the victim and the perpetrator. In 73 percent of the cases, verbal abuse was present in the relationship and in 59 percent of the cases there was a history of physical abuse. In 32 percent of the cases, a protective order was issued; however, all of the orders expired prior to the victims' death. In 41 percent of the cases reviewed there was a telephone call placed to 911 within a year prior to the murder.

Eighteen percent of the cases involved murder followed by suicide, all with male perpetrators. The manner of death varied, but 45 percent of cases involved firearms. Other manners of death included stabbing, blunt force trauma, and strangulation.

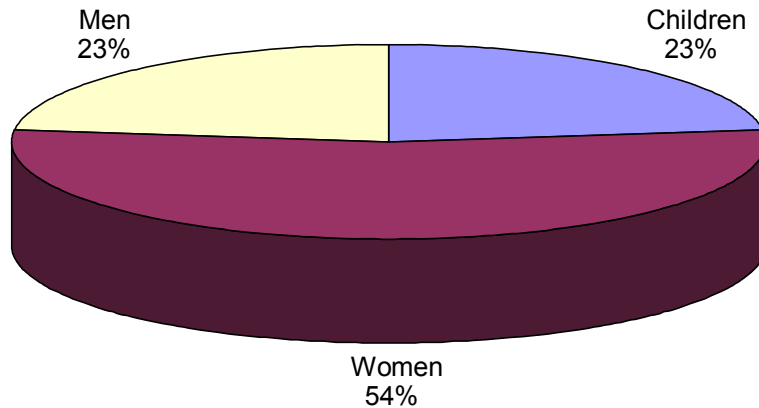
Graph 5: Manner of Death



Victim Information

Twenty-six people died. Six were men, 14 were women, and six were children.

Graph 6: Domestic Murder Victims' Demographics

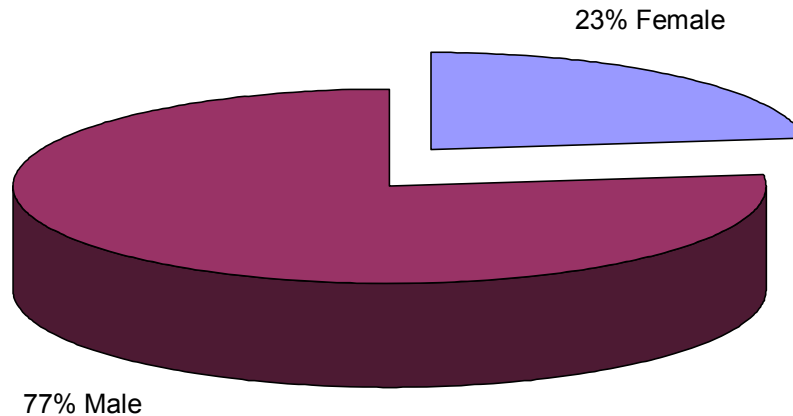


Biological fathers murdered 83 percent of the child victims, and stepfathers murdered 17 percent of such victims. Victims ranged in age from eight months to 73 years. Fifty-four percent of the victims were African-American and 46 percent were Caucasian. Nineteen percent of the victims had a history of mental health intervention services; four percent were noted to be suicidal. Four percent of the victims had previous convictions for assault and battery. Two of the victims were pregnant at the time of their deaths.

Perpetrator Information

There were 22 perpetrators. Seventy-seven percent were male and 23 percent were female.

Graph 7: Gender of Perpetrators



The perpetrators ranged in age from 21 to 63. Fifty-five percent were African-American and 45 percent were Caucasian. Forty-one percent of the perpetrators had a history of mental health intervention services and 45 percent reported suicidal ideations at some point prior to committing murder. Twenty-three percent of the perpetrators had a previous conviction for domestic assault and battery.

Significant Findings and Recommendations

Significant finding one:

A biological father or stepfather murdered all of the child victims. Sixty-seven percent of the child victims were of elementary school age and 33 percent were under the age of 13 months.

- 1.1 Elementary schools and after-school programs should provide students with age-appropriate detailed instruction on identifying and building healthy relationships.
- 1.2 Law enforcement officers, health care professionals, daycare providers, teachers, school administrators, administrators of after-school programs, coaches, leaders, volunteers, and agency employees working with elementary school children should have mandatory training on the impact of domestic violence on children.
- 1.3 These professionals, and others aware of children witnessing domestic violence, should be strongly encouraged to report incidents to Child Protective Services and/or domestic violence counselors.

1.4 Child Protective Services should strongly consider establishing a full-time position to respond to reports of children witnessing domestic violence, particularly in cases involving male caregivers.

1.5 Virginia legislators should be strongly encouraged to fund domestic violence prevention efforts.

Significant finding two:

All of the murder-suicide cases involved a male perpetrator using a firearm. Fifty percent of these male perpetrators were known to be suicidal at some point prior to committing murder.

2.1 Mental health services for men contemplating suicide should be easily accessible, affordable, and provided in a timely manner.

2.2 Counselors and other mental health professionals should routinely inquire about possession and access to firearms in cases involving male clients who have expressed thoughts of suicide and/or murder.

2.3 Hotlines for individuals, particularly men contemplating suicide, should be readily available and promoted through media campaigns, schools, workplaces, places of worship, and other community organizations.

2.4 Domestic violence advocates should routinely ask victims if their perpetrator is suicidal as part of a lethality assessment.

Significant finding three:

Seventy-three percent of the perpetrators were abusing substances. Forty-three percent of the victims were abusing substances. Twenty-seven percent of perpetrators and of victims were under the influence of a substance at the time of the murder.

3.1 Evidence-based substance abuse prevention programs in schools should continue to be expanded.

3.2 Substance abuse prevention, early intervention, and treatment programs should be readily accessible in workplaces and in the community. These programs should collaborate with batterer intervention programs to address anger management techniques.

Significant finding four:

More than 65 percent of the perpetrators and the adult victims were employed at the time of the murder.

4.1 Employers should have current resource information on domestic violence posted in restrooms and break rooms.

- 4.2 For the safety of employees, workplaces should develop, implement, and revise sound domestic violence policies that comply with the general duty clause of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Employers should ensure that all employees are informed of the policy.
- 4.3 Human resources staff and employee assistance programs are strongly encouraged to collaborate with domestic violence professionals to educate management and employees about the impact of domestic violence.

Significant finding five:

In 64 percent of the cases, family members, friends, co-workers, neighbors, or other acquaintances were aware of existing domestic violence issues.

- 5.1 The media should periodically report on the availability of domestic violence resources and encourage family members, friends, co-workers, neighbors, and other acquaintances to become involved in preventing domestic violence.
- 5.2 The County should raise public awareness of the impact of domestic violence on the community through collaboration with the faith community, businesses, and media.

Significant finding six:

Forty-five percent of the cases involved firearms. The majority of perpetrators who used firearms were not legally permitted to transport, possess, or purchase a firearm due to a criminal history.

- 6.1 Courts, Commonwealth's Attorneys and law enforcement officers should take advantage of existing firearm laws, including the use of search warrants to confiscate firearms from any person who is not legally permitted to transport, possess, or purchase a firearm.
- 6.2 The Virginia General Assembly should strongly consider amending Virginia §18.2-308.1:4 to include language, resembling federal law, which would prohibit possession of a firearm by a person who is the subject of a protective order or who has been convicted of a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence.
- 6.3 Probation and batterer intervention services should continue to seek methods for identifying firearm possession by perpetrators. Law enforcement agencies should establish protocol to address safe firearm relinquishment by domestic violence perpetrators.

Tuckahoe District

Four people were murdered as a result of domestic violence. In one case, the perpetrator was acquitted on a claim of self-defense.

Case Demographics

The Henrico County Family Violence Fatality Review Team reviewed three cases in the Tuckahoe District that occurred between July 1999 and October 2003. Two incidents occurred at a residence, and the third occurred at a workplace.

Two cases involved a murder followed by suicide, and one case involved a murder, but no suicide. The manners of death included stabbing and shooting.

In two cases, the parties involved had children in common. There had been a recent separation in the adult relationship in two cases. Family members and neighbors were aware of domestic violence; verbal and physical abuses were present in each of the cases.

Court personnel and law enforcement officers had prior involvement with all families. The court issued emergency protective orders in all cases, but no order was in effect at the time of the fatalities. Telephone calls were placed to 911 within a year prior to two of the fatalities.

Victim Information

Four people died. One was a man, one was a woman, and two were children. The age of the victims ranged from seven to 33. Two victims were African-American and two were Caucasian. The children were siblings murdered by their father.

One victim abused substances, but no victim was under the influence of a substance at the time of death. None of the victims had a known history of receiving mental health intervention services.

Perpetrator Information

Two perpetrators were male and one was a female. The perpetrators ranged in age from 23 years to 35. Two perpetrators were African-American and one was Caucasian. All were employed. Each abused substances, but none was under the influence of a substance when the victim was murdered. No perpetrator had a known history of receiving mental health intervention services. One perpetrator reported suicidal ideation prior to committing murder. Another perpetrator had a previous conviction for domestic assault and battery. There were no murder convictions; two perpetrators committed suicide and the third was acquitted on a claim of self-defense.

Findings

- All of the cases involved a history of verbal and physical abuse.
- All of the cases involved the issuance of emergency protective orders.
- All of the perpetrators were substance abusers.

- All of the perpetrators were employed.
- All of the cases involved family members who were aware of existing domestic violence issues.

Three Chopt District Two people were murdered as a result of domestic violence.

Case Demographics

The Henrico County Family Violence Fatality Review Team reviewed two murders in the Three Chopt District that occurred between July 1999 and July 2005. Suicide was not a factor. Both murders occurred at a residence, and both couples were married. Both couples had recently separated and reunited just prior to the murders.

One case involved a stabbing and the other a shooting. The perpetrator using a firearm was legally permitted to transport, possess, and purchase firearms.

Family members, friends, and neighbors were aware of domestic violence and verbal abuse between the victims and their perpetrators. One case involved a history of physical abuse. None of the parties had ever placed a telephone call to 911 or sought a protective order.

Victim Information

Two people died. One was a female and one was a male. The victims were 25 and 50 years old respectively. Both victims were Caucasian, employed, abusing substances and under the influence at the time of death. The female victim had a history of mental health intervention services and was noted to be suicidal. The female victim was pregnant at the time of her death.

Perpetrator Information

There were two perpetrators. One was a male and one was a female. The perpetrators were 26 and 63 years old respectively. Both were Caucasian. The male perpetrator was employed and the female was retired. The male perpetrator abused substances. The female perpetrator had suicidal ideations prior to committing murder and had a history of mental health intervention services. Neither perpetrator had a previous conviction for domestic assault and battery.

One of the murders resulted in a conviction of first-degree murder with a sentence of 28 years; the other resulted in a conviction of first-degree murder with a life sentence.

Findings

- All of the victims were employed.
- In all of the cases, family members, friends or neighbors were aware of existing domestic violence.
- All of the cases involved a recent separation and reconciliation between the victim and perpetrator just prior to the victim's death.
- All of the cases involved a history of verbal abuse.

- All victims were abusing substances and under the influence at the time of their death.

Brookland District

Four people were murdered as a result of domestic violence.

Case Demographics

The Henrico County Family Violence Fatality Review Team reviewed three murder cases in the Brookland District that occurred between March 2000 and June 2004. All murders occurred in residences. Two of the three cases involved parties with children in common. All of the cases reviewed involved murder; suicide was not a factor.

The manners of death varied: stabbing, vehicular murder, and blunt force trauma were factors in the cases reviewed; firearms were not used.

Family members, friends, neighbors, and workplace employees were aware of domestic violence issues between the victims and the perpetrators. The victim and the perpetrator, in two of the cases, had separated recently. In two of the cases, verbal abuse was present in the relationship; in all of the cases there had been a history of physical abuse. In one case, a preliminary protective order had been obtained; however, the order had expired before the murder was committed. In 67 percent of the cases, there had been a telephone call placed to 911 within a year prior to the murder.

Victim Information

Four people died. Three were female and one was a male. The age of the victims ranged from 21 to 61. One victim was African-American and three victims were Caucasian. Three victims were abusing substances and two were under the influence of a substance at the time of death. Three of the victims had received mental health intervention services.

Perpetrator Information

The three perpetrators were all males. The perpetrators ranged in age from 21 to 25. One perpetrator was African-American and two were Caucasian. All of the perpetrators were abusing substances and two-thirds of the perpetrators were under the influence of a substance when they murdered their victims. All of the perpetrators had a history of intervention services received for mental health issues. Sixty-seven percent of the perpetrators reported suicidal ideation at some point prior to committing murder. One perpetrator had a previous conviction for domestic assault and battery.

Convictions ranged from involuntary manslaughter with a sentence of 11 years confinement to first-degree murder with a sentence of two life terms.

Findings

- In all of the cases, family, friends or co-workers reported awareness of domestic violence problems within the relationship.

- In all of the cases there had been a history of physical abuse.

- All of the perpetrators were abusing substances and two were under the influence of a substance when they murdered their victims.
- One hundred percent of the perpetrators and 75 percent of the victims had received intervention for mental health issues.
- Seventy-five percent of the victims were abusing substances and 67 percent were under the influence of a substance at the time of their death.

Fairfield District
Ten people were murdered as a result of domestic violence.

Case Demographics

The Henrico County Family Violence Fatality Review Team reviewed eight murder cases in the Fairfield District that occurred between July 1997 and May 2004. Thirty-eight percent of the murders occurred during the winter season.

Relationships between the parties involved in these cases were: 30 percent child-parent or stepparent; 30 percent intimate-partners living together within 12 months of the murder; 20 percent married; 10 percent other family or household members; and 10 percent had a child in common.

Seven of eight murders occurred at a residence and one occurred on a public roadway in Henrico County. The manner of death was evenly divided: 25 percent of the cases involved blunt force trauma; 25 percent involved strangulation; 25 percent involved stabbing; and 25 percent involved firearms which were used to commit a murder and suicide. The perpetrators using a firearm were not permitted to transport, purchase, or possess a firearm due to a criminal history. In 50 percent of the cases, there was a recent separation between the victim and perpetrator. In 50 percent of the cases, family members or friends were aware of domestic violence issues between the victim and their perpetrator. In 75 percent of the cases, verbal abuse was present in the relationship and in 63 percent there had been a history of physical abuse. In two of the cases, emergency protective orders had been obtained; in both cases the orders had expired before the murders were committed. In 50 percent of the cases, there had been a telephone call placed to 911 within a year prior to the murder.

Victim Information

Ten people died. Six were women, one was a man, and three were children. All children murdered were less than 12 years old. A stepfather murdered one child and biological fathers murdered two children. The victims ranged in age from eight months to 73 years. Nine victims were African-American and one was Caucasian. Three victims were abusing substances. Two victims, who were not abusing substances, had been given a substance by their perpetrator just prior to being murdered. None of the victims had received intervention services for mental health issues. One of the victims had a previous conviction for domestic assault and battery. One of the victims was pregnant.

Perpetrator Information

There were eight perpetrators. Seven were male and one was a female. The female perpetrator committed murder with a male co-perpetrator who was not a family or household member of the victim. The perpetrators ranged in age from 21 to 52. Seven of the perpetrators were African-American and one perpetrator was Caucasian. At least 50 percent of the perpetrators were employed at the time they committed murder. Four of the eight perpetrators were abusing substances. Three perpetrators were under the influence of a substance when they murdered their victims. Three perpetrators had received intervention services for mental health issues. At least 50 percent of the perpetrators were

suicidal at some point prior to murdering their victims. Three of the nine perpetrators had a previous conviction for domestic assault and battery. At least 50 percent of the cases involved a perpetrator who committed infidelity while in a relationship with their victim. Convictions ranged from voluntary manslaughter with a sentence of 10 years confinement to first-degree murder with a sentence of two life terms.

Findings

- Fifty percent of the child victims were murdered in the Fairfield District. All of these victims were under the age of 12.
- Fifty percent of the perpetrators were abusing substances and 38 percent of the perpetrators were using substances when they murdered their victims.
- Family members and friends were aware of domestic violence issues between the victim and the perpetrator in 50 percent of the cases.
- In 50 percent of the cases, there was a recent separation between the victim and the perpetrator.
- Fifty percent of the perpetrators had committed infidelity while in a relationship with their victim.
- In 50 percent of the cases reviewed there had been a telephone call placed to 911 within a year prior to the murder.

Varina District

Six people were murdered as a result of domestic violence.

Case Demographics

The Henrico County Family Violence Fatality Review Team reviewed six murder cases in the Varina District that occurred between October 1998 and September 2005. In 50 percent of the cases, the murder occurred in February. Sixty-seven percent of the murders occurred during the winter and 33 percent of the murders occurred during the autumn.

The relationships of the parties involved were: 50 percent married; 33 percent intimate partners living together within 12 months prior to the murder; and 17 percent child-parent relation. Eighty-three percent of the murders occurred at a residence and 17 percent occurred on a public roadway. None of the cases reviewed involved a murder-suicide. The manner of death in 17 percent of the cases was hypothermia and in 83 percent of the cases the manner was shooting. In 60 percent of the cases involving a firearm, the perpetrator was not permitted to transport, purchase, or possess a firearm due to a criminal history.

In fifty percent of the cases, there was a recent separation between the victim and perpetrator. In 33 percent of the cases, family members were aware of domestic violence issues between the victim and their perpetrator. In 50 percent of the cases verbal abuse was present and in 17 percent of the cases there had been a history of physical abuse. None of the victims or perpetrators had a prior conviction for domestic assault and battery. In one of the cases, a preliminary protective order had been obtained, but had expired before the murder was committed. In 17 percent of the cases reviewed, there had been a telephone call placed to 911 within a year prior to the murder.

Victim Information

Six people died. Three were women, two were men, and one was a child. The age of the victims ranged from 12 months to 42 years. Two victims were African-American and four were Caucasian. Three victims were abusing substances and one was under the influence of a substance at the time of his death. One victim had received intervention services for mental health issues.

Perpetrator Information

There were six perpetrators. Four were male and two were female. The perpetrators ranged in age from 22 to 58. Two of the perpetrators were African-American and four were Caucasian. Eighty-three percent were employed when they committed murder. Eighty-six percent were abusing substances; however, no one was under the influence when they murdered their victims. Thirty-three percent of the perpetrators had received intervention services for mental health issues. Thirty-three percent of the perpetrators had suicidal ideations at some point prior to murdering their victims. None of the perpetrators had prior convictions for domestic assault and battery. Convictions ranged from second-degree murder with a sentence of six years confinement to first-degree murder with a sentence of life plus three years.

Findings

- In 86 percent of the cases, the perpetrators abused substances.
- Eighty-three percent of the perpetrators were employed when they committed murder.
- In 83 percent of the cases, a firearm was used. In 60 percent of these cases, the perpetrator was not permitted to transport, purchase, or possess a firearm due to a criminal history.
- In 50 percent of the cases, there was a recent separation between the victim and the perpetrator.
- In 50 percent of the cases reviewed, the perpetrator and the victim were married.

Limitations and Barriers

Throughout the fatality review process, the team was able to identify limitations and/or barriers which affected the review process. These limitations and barriers are described below:

- The review process was time-consuming and required long-term commitment from all stakeholders.
- There was sporadic attendance by representatives from agencies involved in the process, making it difficult to determine if all aspects of the cases were disclosed.
- Due to attrition, the leadership and membership of the committee changed from time to time.
- Reportedly there was a conflict of interest which prevented judicial representation on the team.
- In some cases, information had been purged prior to the review; therefore, not all information was available to the team.
- Information from other jurisdictions regarding relevant history of the cases was not available to the team.
- Members of the core team had a legal or a criminal justice background, which precluded input from persons with other expertise.
- Confidentiality laws and restrictions impacted the ability to obtain information.

Accomplishments and Future Directions

Many positive goals in the area of providing domestic violence prevention and intervention have been accomplished in Henrico County:

- Pro bono legal representation is made available to all protective order petitioners through a program created by the Henrico County Bar Association in conjunction with the Henrico County Victim/Witness Assistance Program.
- Domestic violence perpetrators are appropriately being referred to Batterer Intervention Programs for services.
- Law enforcement officers are receiving significant training in the area of domestic violence and in recognizing the impact that domestic violence has on children. As a result, there is improved collaboration between law enforcement officers and the Henrico County Department of Social Services when family members are exposed to domestic violence.
- Safe Harbor, Henrico County's non-profit agency serving victims of domestic violence, has expanded services to provide shelter, safety planning, court advocacy, crisis intervention and counseling services for victims and children exposed to domestic violence in the community. Safe Harbor administers financial assistance for victims of domestic violence through a designated victim compensation fund.
- The Henrico County Division of Police employs a full-time domestic violence coordinator to provide training to law enforcement officers, review domestic incident reports, and make recommendations for domestic violence related policies.
- I-CAN, an online resource, outlines procedures for obtaining a protective order in Henrico County, and provides forms for this process in English and Spanish. This online program enhances access for persons with disabilities.
- The Henrico County Department of Social Services developed a Fatherhood Support Group which meets weekly to promote responsible behavior and relationships between husbands and wives, children, and loved ones.

While many accomplishments have been made, it is necessary to review fatalities related to domestic violence and support the development of specialized review teams in order to prevent future deaths. Death reviews can assist in resource allocation by identifying community and system trends, loopholes, and needs.

It is evident in our findings that domestic violence fatalities have a widespread impact on our community. Community problems require community responses. Prevention must be the primary focus of domestic violence programs throughout the community. Prevention will be most effective in the areas of public awareness and education.

Several of the findings in this report have identified factors that may increase the risk of a violent death. As a community, we need to respond to these risk factors by developing skills, policies, environments, and attitudes that will ensure domestic violence is eliminated before additional murders occur. The following spectrum, from the work of Marshall Swift, PhD at Widener University, demonstrates ways in which a community can develop protective factors. Making change involves assertive efforts by everyone in the community: policy makers, neighbors, employees, service providers, educators, and individual citizens.

The Spectrum of Prevention

Influencing policy and legislation
Mobilizing neighborhoods and communities
Changing organizational practices
Fostering coalitions and networks
Educating providers
Promoting community education
Strengthening individual knowledge and skills

Adapted by Larry Cohen, of the Contra Costa County (CA) Prevention Program, from the work of Marshall Swift, PHD, Widener University.

Domestic Violence Community Resources

Animal Neglect and Cruelty: 804-501-5000 or 804-652-3360

Report acts of animal neglect and cruelties to either of these phone numbers.

Batterer Intervention Programs (BIP)

Commonwealth Catholic Charities: 804-285-5900

Frank D. Manners and Associates, Inc: 804-673-4578

Domestic Violence Interventions, Inc: 804-355-6341

Groups are offered for both men and women. The program is usually court-ordered, although some programs take voluntary participants. BIP groups are a minimum of 36 hours over 24 weekly classes. Programs also offer anger management classes that are not domestic violence specific. Fees are required.

Central Virginia Legal Aid Society: 804-648-1012

Central Virginia Legal Aid Society (CVLAS) is a non-profit organization providing legal assistance in the following areas: family law, elder law, employment and civil rights, disability and public benefits law, consumer law, and housing law. Low income or elderly individuals needing assistance in these civil matters are provided advice and/or representation by staff attorneys. Legal services are free to all clients who qualify.

Commonwealth's Attorney's Office: 804-501-4218

The job of the Commonwealth's Attorney's is to hold people who commit crimes accountable, obtain criminal redress for crime victims, and ensure that both victims and defendants receive a fair trial. The trial function includes interviewing witnesses, researching the applicable law, presenting legal and factual arguments to judges, preparing trial exhibits, presenting the testimony of witnesses, and cross-examining defense witnesses.

Community Corrections Program: 804-501-5188

Provide pre-trial and post-trial supervision and treatment options to offenders. Officers supervise treatment that may include batterer intervention groups, anger management classes, substance abuse treatment, and mental health counseling.

Hunton and Williams Church Hill Office: 804-775-2248

For a modest fee, which the firm donates to charity, the Church Hill office offers legal services in the following subject areas: family law, housing and real estate, and guardianships. The office also accepts (without fee) all uncontested divorce case clients from the general Richmond area who are referred by the Central Virginia Legal Aid Society.

Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court Intake Unit: 804-501-4692

Persons may petition for custody, visitation, support, family abuse preliminary protective orders and stalking preliminary protective orders.

Mental Health: 804-727-8484 (24-hour crisis) 804-727-8500 (general)
Mental health and substance abuse counseling provided to individuals and families.
Services provided based on a sliding scale fee schedule.

Safe Harbor: 24-hour hotline: 804-287-7877 Community Office: 804-249-9470
Services include: shelter, support groups for women and children, court advocacy, individual counseling, and educational presentations. The shelter is at an undisclosed location and offers eight beds for domestic violence victims only. A typical stay is four weeks although the stay may vary case by case. Victims can find out if shelter space is available by calling the hotline or by having an advocate or law enforcement officer call on their behalf. Services are provided free of charge.

Social Services: 804-501-4001
Provides financial assistance and social services programs that effectively assist individuals and families to meet their basic human needs, increase their capacity to function independently, and to provide protection for abused and neglected children, elderly and disabled adults.

Police: Emergency: 911 Non-Emergency: 804-501-5000
Police Domestic Violence Coordinator: 804-501-5732
The Domestic Violence Coordinator provides training and technical assistance to law enforcement officers. Community training, conferences, and events related to stalking, human trafficking, sex crimes, and domestic violence are also coordinated through the Domestic Violence Coordinator.

Magistrate's Office: 804-501-5285
This office may issue emergency protective orders and warrants.

Victim/Witness Assistance Program: 804-501-1680
Provides information to victims regarding criminal cases and civil protective orders, court accompaniment, referrals for crisis counseling, and notifies victims when their offenders are released from jail.

Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance: 1-800-838-8238
The Action Alliance is a nonprofit statewide coalition. They provide training, statistical and legislative information and a 24-hour hotline for victims of sexual and/or domestic violence.

YWCA: 24-hour hotline: 804-643-0888
Primary services provided include: shelter, crisis intervention, education, advocacy, case management, safety planning, support groups, and counseling. These services are offered to clients who are experiencing domestic and/or sexual violence. Services are provided free of charge.

Current Membership

Team Co-Chairs

Beth Bonniwell

Henrico County Division of Police

Christopher Eley

Henrico County Division of Police

Core Team Members

Kay Frye

14th District Court Services Unit

Ellen Fulmer

Henrico County Attorney's Office

Michael Huberman

Henrico County Commonwealth's Attorney's Office

Gretchen Icard

Henrico County Department of Social Services

Deana Malek

Henrico County Commonwealth's Attorney's Office

Team Members

Gillian Aiken

Henrico County Public Schools

Rhonie Butler

Commonwealth Catholic Charities

Richard Edelman

Henrico Area Mental Health & Retardation Services

Charles Elliot

Henrico County Juvenile Court Clerk's Office

Jane Hardell

Henrico County Community Corrections Program

Erica Johnson

Safe Harbor

Robin Kitt
District #32 Probation and Parole

Patricia Moore
Henrico County Sheriff's Office

Mandie Patterson
Department of Criminal Justice Services

Pam Sclar
Henrico County Health Department

Shelly Shuman-Johnson
Henrico County Victim/Witness Assistance Program

Matthew Zwerdling
Law Offices of Zwerdling, Oppleman, & Adams

Team Facilitators

Sheryn Holinsworth
Henrico County Department of Human Resources

Deborah Warner
Henrico County Department of Human Resources

Glossary

County stakeholders – representatives and citizens of the County of Henrico who have an interest in reducing the number of fatalities which occur in the County as a result of domestic violence.

Domestic assault and battery – any willful attempt or threat to inflict injury upon the person of another within a family or household coupled with the apparent present ability to do so, or the unlawful actual touching of another within a family or household which is without justification or excuse.

Domestic violence – a pattern of physically, sexually, and/or emotionally abusive behaviors used by one individual to maintain power over or control a partner in the context of an intimate or family relationship.

Family/household member - (i) the person's spouse, whether or not he or she resides in the same home with the person, (ii) the person's former spouse, whether or not he or she resides in the same home with the person, (iii) the person's parents, stepparents, children, stepchildren, brothers, sisters, half-brothers, half-sisters, grandparents and grandchildren, regardless of whether such persons reside in the same home with the person, (iv) the person's mother-in-law, father-in-law, sons-in-law, daughters-in-law, brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law who reside in the same home with the person, (v) any individual who has a child in common with the person, whether or not the person and that individual have been married or have resided together at any time, or (vi) any individual who cohabits or who, within the previous 12 months, cohabited with the person, and any children of either of them then residing in the same home with the person.

Homicide – the killing of a human being by the act, procurement, or omission of another. A person is guilty of criminal homicide if he/she purposely, knowingly, recklessly or negligently causes the death of another human being.

Involuntary manslaughter – the unlawful killing of a human being in the commission of an unlawful act not amounting to a felony. A second form of involuntary manslaughter is the unlawful, although unintentional, killing of a human being during acts of commission or omission of a wanton or willful nature, showing a reckless or indifferent disregard for the rights of others, under circumstances reasonably calculated to produce injury, or which make it not improbable that injury will be occasioned, and the offender knows, or is charged with the knowledge of, the probable result of his acts.

Lethality assessment – evaluation of an individual's proclivity and capacity to commit murder at a given point in time.

Murder – the unlawful killing of a human being by another with malice aforethought; either expressed or implied.

Murder-suicide – the murder of another followed immediately by the perpetrator of the murder committing suicide.

Perpetrator – the person who commits a crime.

Protective order – any order or decree of a court whose purpose is to protect a person from further harassment or abuse.

