

8+4+9=21 deaths

Domestic Violence: Uncovering the Facts and Learning from the Deaths

**Henrico County Family Violence Fatality Review Team
2015 Report**

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Acknowledgements

The Henrico County Family Violence Fatality Review Team is pleased to present its 2015 report, *Domestic Violence: Uncovering the Facts and Learning from the Deaths*. This project, commenced in 2012, would not be possible without the support of many persons and agencies throughout the process of convening the team, reviewing domestic violence homicides and drafting this report. On behalf of the Henrico County Family Violence Review Team, we wish to recognize the efforts of the Henrico County Department of Human Resources for logistical support, the Virginia Office of the Chief Medical Examiner for technical assistance, and the Henrico County Police Division and Henrico County Commonwealth's Attorney's Office for facilitating the process.

Executive Summary

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

The Henrico County Family Violence Fatality Review Team reviewed nineteen events resulting in twenty-one deaths. These homicides occurred between 2003 and 2013.

The most significant trend identified during our case review process was that in sixteen of the nineteen cases (84%), multiple other adults were aware of prior abuse occurring. This was an increase from 64% (fourteen out of twenty-two cases), seen in the prior 2008 fatality review report. The Henrico County Family Violence Fatality Review Team strongly recommends that Henrico County develop a position to employ a Domestic Violence Outreach and Community Educator or provide enhanced funding for this purpose to Safe Harbor, an existing victim services partner whose primary service area is Henrico County. The team recognizes that there are many projects that could be developed that any one single agency does not presently have the time or resources to dedicate. The team also realizes the paramount need for a coordinated response and collaboration among multiple County agencies for the development, implementation, and evaluation of these projects to be successful. Having an individual person dedicated to spear-head efforts such as the ones recommended below would result in significant improvement in the coordination of resources and ultimately enhance the health and safety of our community.

The 19 cases reviewed fell into three categories:

- I. Child Homicides (3 cases / 4 deaths)
- II. Intimate Partner Violence Homicides (9 cases / 9 deaths)
- III. Non-Intimate Partner Family Member Homicides (7 cases / 8 deaths)

Recommendations were made based on the information in each of the three categories.

In all child homicide cases reviewed, there was a history of neglect and/or physical abuse by the offenders that was not reported to authorities, and multiple adults, most often family members were aware of the abusive history. A recommendation was made by the Henrico County Family Violence Fatality Review Team to expand the Code of Virginia to include every adult as a mandated reporter of child abuse and neglect. Eighteen states currently require any adult with knowledge or suspicions of child neglect or abuse to make a report but Virginia is not one of them.

Financial stressors such as significant debt or unemployment were significant factors present in the majority of intimate partner violence homicide cases. A recommendation followed that Henrico County agencies should regularly distribute financial assistance resources and financial counseling referral information to Henrico County citizens when correspondence

pertains to public financial assistance, utility or other billing for payments, eviction notices, or property tax assessments.

There was a stark contrast between decedents and offenders in the non-intimate partner family member homicides cases. In all of the cases, the decedents appeared to be in good health and living a “successful” and stable life. The offenders however had in most cases dropped out of high school at some point and also had unstable housing situations. It became apparent to the Henrico County Family Violence Fatality Review Team that there is a lack of resources for parents who have adult children or step-children living in their household and dependent on them for finances and living arrangements. It was recommended that resources be developed to recognize risk and protective factors in these situations as well as offer assistance to Henrico County citizens in these situations.

Finally, it is important to note that Henrico County Family Violence Fatality Review Team recognizes that the advocacy and criminal justice responses to domestic violence have significantly improved over the last ten years and that Henrico County is clearly committed to successful interventions in cases of domestic violence whenever possible.

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, Fairfield, Three Chopt, Tuckahoe, and Varina.

The 2013 population estimate for Henrico County was 318,943 people, comprising 134,063 households, and the average household size was 2.49 people. The racial makeup of the county was:

- 55.6% White
- 30% Black or African American
- 7.6% Asian
- 5.3% Hispanic
- .05% other
- 2.2% listed two or more races

Females accounted for 52.8% of the population and males accounted for 47.2% of the population. Also, 23.6% of the population was under eighteen years and 13.4% was sixty-five years and older. Of residents over twenty-five years, 90.1% were high school graduates and 39.7% had a bachelor's degree or higher education. The median income of households was \$61,048. Lastly, 10.7% of people were living below poverty level.

Source: United States Census Bureau (2013) Henrico County, Virginia. Retrieved from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/51/51087.html>

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.”

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

A representative from the Henrico County Police Division and the Henrico County Commonwealth’s Attorney’s Office served as co-chairs. Their role was 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.

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

Members attended from the following Henrico County agencies:

- Adult Protective Services (APS)
- Commonwealth’s Attorney’s Office
- County Attorney’s Office
- Child Protective Services (CPS)
- Community Corrections Program
- Fire Division
- Crisis Intervention Team (CIT)
- Mental Health & Developmental Services
- Police Division
- Public Health
- Public Schools
- Sheriff’s Office
- Victim/Witness Assistance Program

As well as the following state/community agencies:

- Commonwealth Catholic Charities
- Juvenile Court Services Unit – 14th District
- Office of the Magistrate
- Probation and Parole – District 32
- Safe Harbor

This is the Henrico County Family Violence Fatality Review Team’s second report. The first report, published in 2008, entitled *Domestic Violence: Uncovering facts and Learning from the Deaths*, includes cases reviewed between 1997 and 2004.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Henrico County Family Violence Fatality Review Team is to prevent abuse between family members and intimate partners from escalating into homicide or homicide-suicide. The team supports the mission by: constructively examining the circumstances of past and future domestic 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 homicides in the County.
- To increase coordination and communication between agencies providing services to families and intimate partners experiencing domestic 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 offenders of domestic violence are ultimately responsible for the deaths of decedents.
- To promote a community response focusing on safety, not blame.
- To maintain the dignity and integrity of the decedents 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 Police Division Criminal Investigations Section and ruled by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner as a homicide. Parameters of our case selection include exhaustion of all associated investigations and/or prosecutions and appeals, and the relationship between the offender and the decedent had to meet the family or household member definition as defined by Virginia Code §16.1-228. The fatal event in all cases selected for review occurred between 2003 and 2013. When a homicide case meets the parameters set by the Henrico County Family Violence Fatality Review Team, the case is prepared by a co-chair of the team and a summary is forwarded to all team members to assist them in preparing for the case review meeting. During the case review meeting, team members possessing data relevant to the case presented their information and/or lent a professional perspective based on their expertise.

One of the tasks of fatality review is to study the facts and circumstances surrounding the homicide 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 decedent 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.

Statistics

The Statistics and Significant Findings and Recommendations sections of this report provides data and demographics from cases reviewed, significant findings, and the team's recommendations base on our findings.

Case Demographics (19 cases)

The Henrico County Family Violence Fatality Review Team reviewed 19 cases that occurred between 2003 and 2013 with 21 people murdered as a result of domestic violence.

Nineteen of the homicides occurred at a residence. The remaining two deaths were during the same event and occurred in a vehicle.

Two of the cases reviewed were classified as homicide/suicides.

In eight of the cases reviewed there was a telephone call placed to 911 within a year prior to the homicide.

In eleven of the nineteen cases, the offender had previously been physically abusive towards the decedent and in thirteen of the nineteen cases; the offender had been verbally abusive towards the decedent.

In sixteen of the nineteen cases, someone else, most often a family member, was aware of previous domestic violence.

Decedents' Demographics (21 decedents)

11 were male
10 were female

Decedents' ages ranged from 2.5 months to 71 years.

Race: Black – 9
White – 9
Other - 3

Adult Decedent Demographics (17 decedents)

Number of cases reviewed in which the decedent had:

Prior mental health issues – 6
Prior suicidal ideation or attempts – 4
Prior alcohol or other substance abuse issues – 4
Separated or prepared to leave the offender – 5
A prior protective order against the offender - 5

The education of the adult decedents ranged from general education degree (GED) to a doctor of philosophy degree (Ph.D).

Child Decedent Demographics: (4 decedents)

3 were male
1 was female

All child decedents were under the age of four years.

Relationship of the offender to the child decedent:

Mother – 2 children

Father – 1 child

Mother's boyfriend – 1 child

Offender Demographics (20 offenders)

15 were male
5 were female

Offender's ages ranged from 19 years of age to 58 years of age.

Race: Black – 9
White – 9
Other – 2

Number of cases reviewed in which the offender had:

Prior mental health issues – 8

Prior suicidal ideation or attempts – 6

Prior alcohol or other substance abuse issues – 14

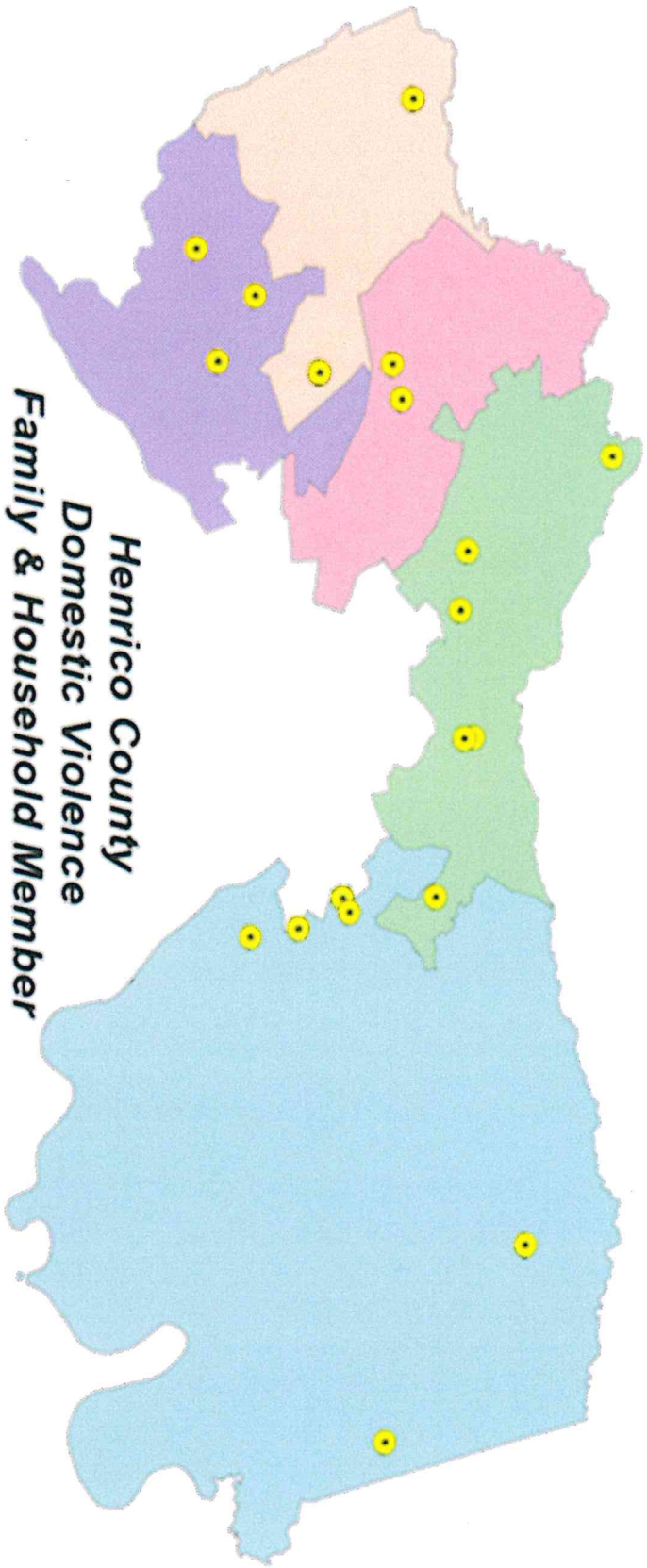
Engaged in stalking behavior – 7

A prior domestic violence conviction – 6

The education of the adult offenders ranged from a high school dropout to a graduate level education.

Charts and Graphs

The following charts and graphs demonstrate the homicide locations and time occurrence, relationship between the offenders and the decedents, and manner of death. Information contained within these visuals reference the cases reviewed based on selected criteria.



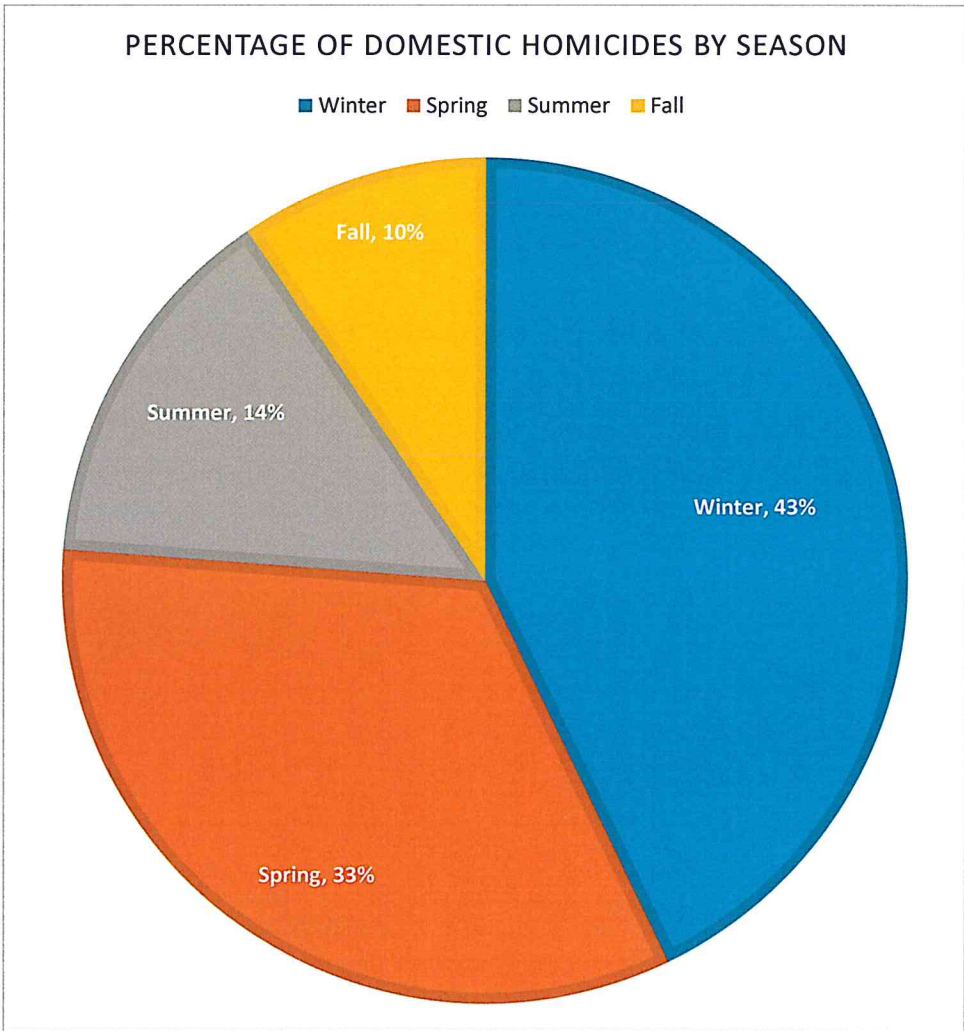
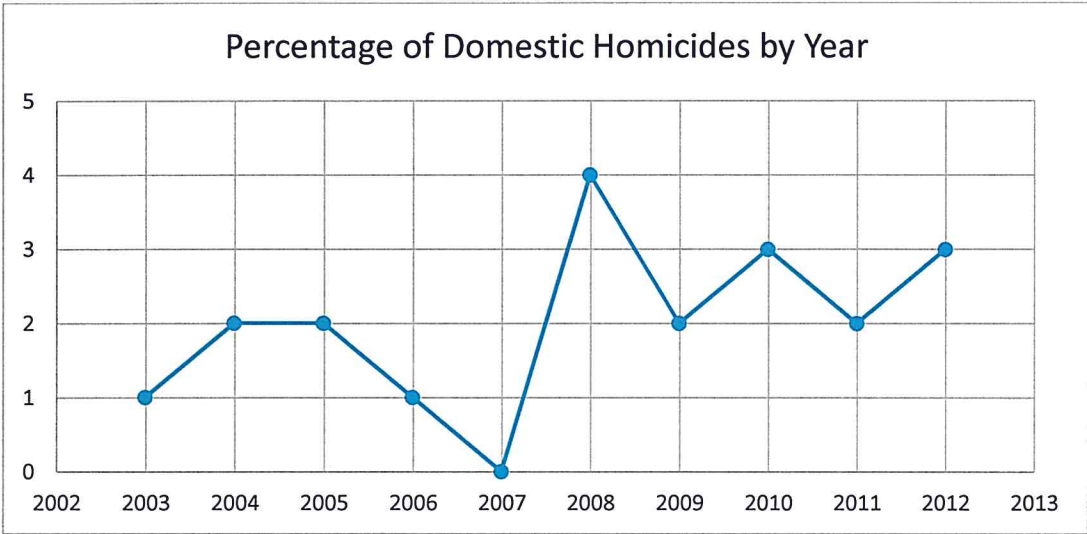
**Henrico County
 Domestic Violence
 Family & Household Member
 Homicide Locations
 May 2003 - May 2013 ***

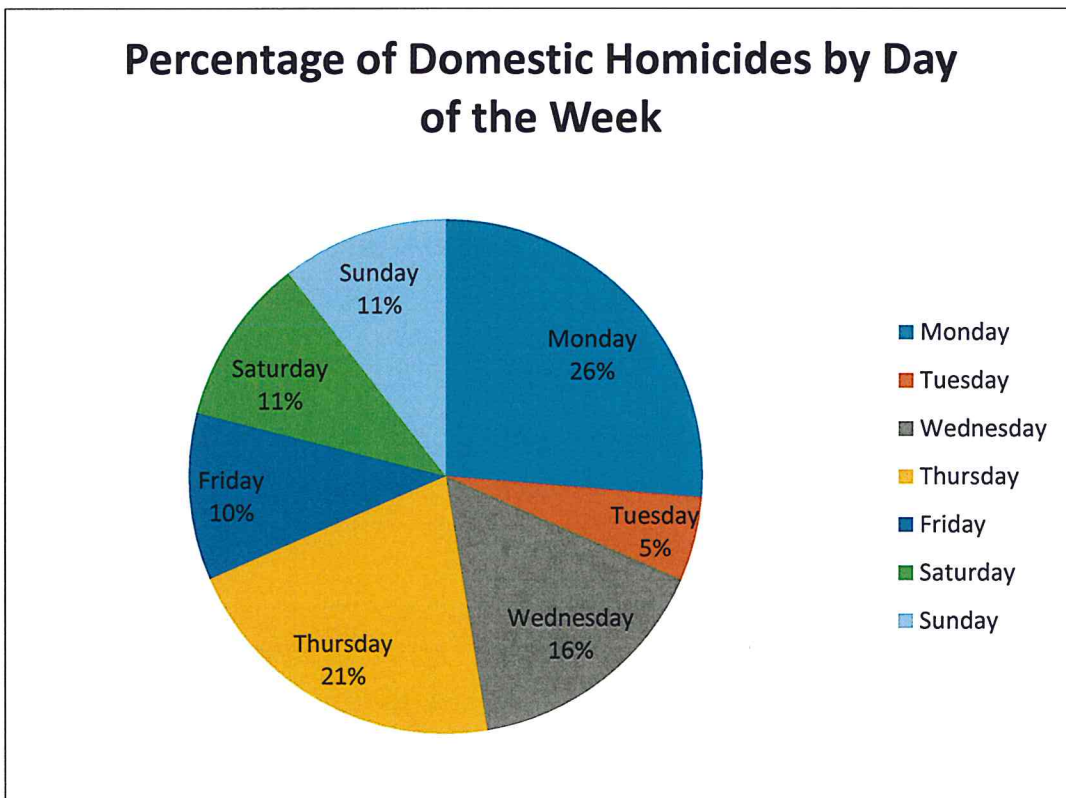
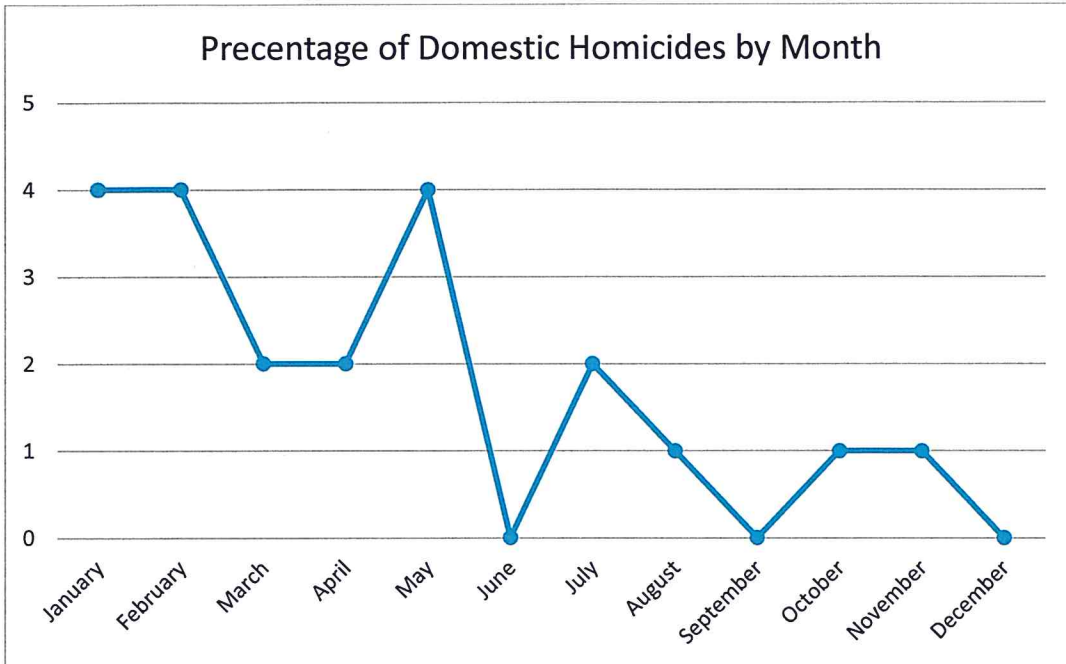
- Magisterial Districts**
- Brookland
 - Fairfield
 - Three Chopt
 - Tuckahoe
 - Varina

* contains only reviewed cases based on selected criteria



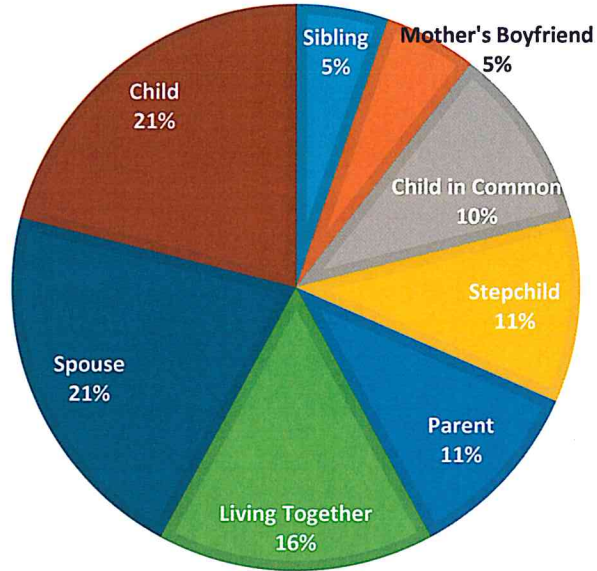
CASE/ Salmon/ 8-27-14





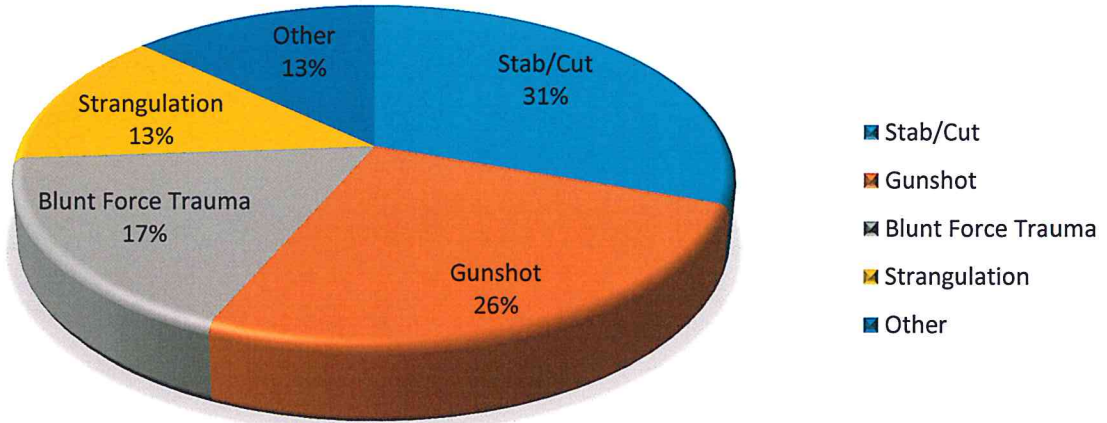
CASES BY PRIMARY RELATIONSHIP OF OFFENDER TO DECEDENT

■ Sibling ■ Mother's Boyfriend ■ Child in Common ■ Stepchild ■ Parent ■ Living Together ■ Spouse ■ Child



MANNER OF DEATH*

*SOME CASES INVOLVE MORE THAN ONE MANNER OF DEATH



Significant Findings and Recommendations

The most significant trend identified during our case review process was that in sixteen of the nineteen cases (84%), multiple other adults were aware of prior abuse occurring. This was an increase from 64% (fourteen out of twenty-two cases), seen in the prior 2008 fatality review report. The Henrico County Family Violence Fatality Review Team strongly recommends that Henrico County develop a position to employ a Domestic Violence Outreach and Community Educator or provide enhanced funding for this purpose to Safe Harbor, an existing victim services partner whose primary service area is Henrico County. The team recognizes that there are many projects that could be developed that any one single agency does not presently have the time or resources to dedicate. The team also realizes the paramount need for a coordinated response and collaboration among multiple County agencies for the development, implementation, and evaluation of these projects to be successful. Having an individual person dedicated to spear-head efforts such as the ones recommended below would result in significant improvement in the coordination of resources and ultimately enhance the health and safety of our community.

Our review included 19 cases that fell into three categories:

- I. Child Homicides (3 case / 4 deaths)
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- III. Non-Intimate Partner Family Violence Homicides (7 cases / 8 deaths)

The following findings are reflective of each category.

I. Child Homicides

Significant Findings:

In all child homicide cases reviewed, there was a history of neglect and/or physical abuse by the offenders that was not reported to authorities, and multiple adults, most often family members were aware of the abusive history. In two of the three child homicide cases, children other than the decedents, resided part-time in the home or were living with another parent in Virginia.

Recommendations:

- A. The Code of Virginia should be expanded to include every adult as a mandated reporter of child abuse and neglect. Eighteen states currently require any adult with knowledge or suspicions of child neglect or abuse to make a report.
- B. The Virginia Department of Social Services should utilize existing resources to develop a bystander intervention campaign known as "IT's OK to Call" and publicize it to encourage reporting of suspected child abuse and neglect. The Henrico County Department of Social Services, Henrico County Police Division, Henrico County Commonwealth's Attorney's Office, and Henrico County Public Relations and Media

Services will collaborate with Virginia Department of Social Services to implement the program in Henrico County.

II. Intimate Partner Violence Homicides

Significant Findings:

In seven of the nine cases reviewed, other adults, often family members, were aware of prior domestic violence occurring. In particular, offenders engaged in prior power and control tactics such as stalking, threatening, and coercive behavior aimed at the decedents and abused their intimate partners emotionally, physically, and verbally. Financial stressors such as significant debt or unemployment were significant factors in seven of the nine cases. In four of the nine cases reviewed, the offender and decedent were parenting a total of 10 minor children. Fortunately none of these children directly witnessed the fatal event; however, the substantial impact on the lives of these children cannot be overlooked.

Recommendations:

- A. Accredited domestic violence agencies serving Henrico County should explore initiatives and/or develop an intervention and support program to provide information and resources to family members and friends seeking to assist someone they know in an intimate partner domestic violence relationship. Henrico County agencies should support these initiatives and assist in advertising them on relevant County websites.
- B. Henrico County agencies should regularly distribute financial assistance resources and financial counseling referral information to Henrico County citizens when correspondence pertains to public financial assistance, utility or other billing for payments, eviction notices, or property tax assessments.
- C. Henrico County school systems and social service entities should implement domestic violence prevention programming similar to *Hugs and Kisses*, a prevention program performed at private and public elementary schools that has been evaluated and proven to increase children's knowledge of prevention resources and health and safety techniques related to sexual abuse.

III. Non-Intimate Partner Family Violence Homicides

Significant Findings:

In all non-intimate partner family violence homicide cases the decedents were living a healthy and successful life. All but one decedent was over forty years old. They were all employed or retired and appeared financially stable. They were all connected to their community. The majority of the decedents were murdered by their adult son or step-son.

In stark contrast to the decedents, the offenders all were under fifty years old. Most of the offenders had dropped out of high school. Most offenders had unstable housing situations. Most offenders had alcohol or other substance abuse issues and approximately half of the offenders had mental health issues to include prior suicidal ideations or attempts. Half of the offenders were unemployed. And half of the offenders were unable to legally possess a firearm due to their criminal or mental health history.

Recommendations:

- A. Henrico County Public High Schools should develop early interventions for students who are delinquent, suspended, or given detention to include in-person interventions with a school psychologist, school social worker, school counselor, and a legal guardian. Early interventions should include making referrals and providing education on topics related to tutoring, life skills, goal setting, addictions, and healthy relationships.
- B. Henrico County Mental Health and Developmental Services should convene a group of community stakeholders to identify risk and protective factors and compile a resource list for parents who have adult children or step-children who are living in their household and dependent on them for finances and living arrangements.

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.

Decedent – the deceased victim in a homicide case.

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 or household member - Virginia Code §16.1-228 (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.

Homicide-suicide – the murder of another followed immediately by the offender of the murder committing suicide.

Hugs and Kisses– a program performed by Theatre IV in partnership with Prevent Child Abuse Virginia and the Virginia Department of Social Services that strives to prevent child sexual abuse through education.

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

Offender – 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.

Domestic Violence Community Resources

Animal Protective Services: 804-727-8800

Report acts of animal neglect and cruelties to the number listed above. Rabies clinics, care for rescued animals, and public education are services provided by Animal Protective Services.

Batterer Intervention Programs (BIP)

Commonwealth Catholic Charities: 804-285-5900

Frank D. Manners and Associates, Inc.: 804-672-8390

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.

Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court: 804-501-4688

This office can provide information about court dates, and information on where to petition for custody, visitation, support, or family abuse preliminary protective orders.

Magistrate's Office: 804-501-5285

This office may issue emergency protective orders and warrants.

Mental Health Services:

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.

Police:

Emergency: 911

Non-Emergency: 804-501-5000

Police Domestic Violence Coordinator: 804-501-5732

The Domestic Violence Coordinator provides referrals to victims of crime, and training and technical assistance to law enforcement officers. Community trainings on domestic violence and related subjects are also coordinated through the Domestic Violence Coordinator.

Safe Harbor:

24-hour regional helpline: 804-612-6126

Community Office: 804-249-9470

Services include: shelter, support groups for women and children, court advocacy, individual counseling, and educational presentations. Services are confidential and 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.

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:

24-hour helpline: 1-800-838-8238 (Family violence and sexual assault)

Helpline Monday –Friday 8am-8pm: 1-866-356-6998 (LGBTQ partner abuse and sexual assault)

The Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance is a nonprofit statewide coalition. They provide training, statistical and legislative information and helplines for victims of sexual and/or domestic violence.

