

Mecklenburg Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team

Presentation to:
North Carolina Domestic
Violence Commission

December 13, 2013

Recap: Session Law 2009-52

An act establishing a domestic violence fatality prevention and protection review team—ratified 6/1/2009

- Session Law 2013-70 reauthorized the Team and added teams in Pitt County and Alamance County
- Made minor changes to composition of Teams
- Removed sunset provision
- Requires every Team to issue a report to county commissioners, NC DV Commission and Governor's Crime Commission by 6/15/2014 and every 3 years thereafter.
- Session Law 2013 – 270 authorized a Wake DV Fatality Review Team

Mecklenburg Team Current Membership:

Community Support Services is lead agency (through Women's Commission Division) with representatives from:

- **Domestic Violence Shelter**
- **Victim Assistance**
- **DV Court Judge**
- **District Attorney's Office**
- **Medical Examiner's Office**
- **Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools**
- **Carolinas Health Care System and Novant Health**
- **DV Survivors**
- **Local Social Services**
- **Local Health Department**
- **Local Area Mental Health Authority**
- **Magistrate's Office**
- **Sheriff's Office**
- **N.C. Div. of Probation and Parole**
- **Faith Community**
- **Central Piedmont Community College**
- **Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police**
- **Huntersville Police**

Team Structure:

- Chair, Retired DV District Court Judge
- Vice-Chair, Manager Community Care Services, Novant Health
- Nominating Committee
- Term Limits

Operations:

- Team reviews four deaths annually using a facilitator
- Cases must be cleared by D.A. prior to review
- Team develops findings and recommendations for each case, and sends summary letters to agency directors
- Team seeks out opportunities to implement recommendations.
- Team has four administrative meetings to: strategize about implementation of recommendations, improve Team case review process, learn about new DV initiatives, and develop needed Team protocols.
- Team develops and presents annual report to BOCC, NC DV Commission, CJAG, Advisory Boards.

Third annual report: “Don’t Shoot Me”

- Why this title? Four out of four (100%) of the homicides reviewed this year were committed with guns. This is similar to the nation-wide experience of DV fatalities.
 - 2011 25%
 - 2012 50%
 - 2013 100%
- Not seeking new laws. Seeking better enforcement of existing laws, better training of staff to know what is needed to remove weapons from the hands of people who, by law, are prohibited from possessing weapons.
- Three of the killers had criminal histories that should have prevented them from having firearms

Observations Over Three Years

- Firearms used (7 of 12)
- Children in the home (6 of 12)
- Substance Abuse (10 of 12)
- Family, friends, co-workers aware of the violence (11 of 12)
- Victim gender: 10 females, 2 males.
- Victim and/or perpetrator was an immigrant (3 of 12).

Accomplishments:

- Lethality Assessment Project implemented in November 2012 and sustained
 - Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Huntersville, and Davidson
 - 62% of lethality screens revealed high danger
- Public awareness campaign re effects of DV on children—partnership with Justice Initiatives /WAXN.
- Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools adopted DV in the Workplace policy in autumn 2013

Accomplishments

- Say eNOugh violence campaign implemented to increase DV awareness
- Supervised Visitation/Safe Exchange grant planning underway
 - Target date for opening summer 2014
- County funded 4 positions to work in collaboration with Youth and Family Services staff when there is evidence of or suspicion of DV.

Accomplishments

- Mecklenburg County HR and CSS/WOC developed an on-line DV in the Workplace training for County employees.
- Mecklenburg County CSS/WOC is providing guidance to Wake, as requested, in developing their DV Fatality Review Team.

Selected Recommendations from “Don’t Shoot Me”

- Firearms
 - Increase training on all legal means to seize firearms on DV calls including: seeking consent to search, pursuing warrants, and contacting Probation for a warrantless search.
 - Advocate that state and federal prosecutors prioritize DV-related possession of firearm cases for federal prosecution.
 - Explore with SBI whether probation /parole status and post-release supervision can be added as an automatic query .

Selected Recommendations Cont'd.

- Substance Abuse
 - Encourage local hospitals to review procedures for identifying and treating patients who use the ED for chronic pain to ensure they are counseled re accessing substance abuse evaluations and treatment when indicated.

Selected Recommendations Cont'd.

- Information Sharing
 - Synchronize law enforcement, prosecutorial and judicial record-keeping to enable federal prosecution of firearms cases when there has been a qualifying misdemeanor crime of DV.
 - Develop and publicize an electronic “ready/go” packet that can be shared with local employers to assist employees who are experiencing DV.

Selected Recommendations Cont'd.

- Children
 - Request the NCGA to enact an additional aggravating factor for felony structured sentencing if the defendant knew the offense was witnessed by a person under the age of 16 who was not involved in committing the offense.

Coordinated Community Response

- Domestic Violence Community Leadership Team (DVCLT)
 - Convene community leaders to gain commitment for strategic initiatives in three priority areas
 - Safe Visitation/Safe Exchange
 - Prevention
 - Criminal Justice recommendations from DVFRT

How can the DV Commission support the work of DVFRT?

- Share our report across the State with other communities.
- Support legislative expansion to other counties.
- Support any State-wide recommendations.

Wrap-up

- Questions?
- <http://tiny.cc/tubjkw> to read the full report.