

Virginia Department of Health: Office of the Chief Medical Examiner

# Virginia Domestic Violence Fatality Review Newsletter

## 12 Localities Share Ideas at DVFR Meet & Greet Event

27 individuals representing 12 localities from across the state met in February to share ideas, experiences, and resources on Domestic Violence Fatality Review (DVFR). Established, new, and hopeful team members discussed strategies to overcome challenges in reporting, team-building, and community buy-in. Attendees shared recent successes in their communities, and made connections with fellow colleagues.

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## New Reports and Resources

**A Comprehensive Approach for Community-Based Programs to Address Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and Perinatal Depression:** The [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#) published a new toolkit in January, providing research and statistics, assessment tools, and strategies for addressing co-morbid IPV and Postpartum Depression.

**The Attorney General's National Task Force on Children Exposed to Violence's [December, 2012 Report](#)** examines current data on children exposed to physical, sexual, intimate partner, and community violence, and outlines recommendations for identifying, assessing, and treating children exposed to violence.

## New in Research

### IPV Worsens Response to Cancer Diagnosis

A study published in the [Journal of Women's Health](#) found that while women newly diagnosed with cancer tend to have higher rates of depression and anxiety, women who had experienced intimate partner violence were significantly more likely to report depression at the time of cancer diagnosis.

### Inconsistent Outcomes for Domestic Violence Asylum Cases

An article for the [Hastings Women's Law Journal](#) analyzed 206 cases of U.S. asylum requested by domestic violence victims from 1994-2012, finding that while some adjudicators are acting consistently with recent changes to U.S. Asylum Law, many others are failing to follow these developments—and still others are acting

in error or ignorance in failing to grant asylum to victims of domestic violence. The authors call for the development of more binding regulatory norms to ensure consistent decision-making by adjudicators.

### Exposure to IPV Associated with ADHD in Children

Study results appearing in [JAMA Pediatrics](#) indicate that preschool-aged children whose parents suffer from intimate partner violence are at greater risk of developing attention deficit hyperactivity disorder by the age 6, and are more likely to take medication for behavioral and mental health issues later in life.

### Improved Screening and Counseling of IPV Victims Needed

Survey data published in the journal [Women's Health Issues](#) revealed that despite growing attention to screening and intervention

for domestic violence, only about 1 in 5 women experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV) are asked or counseled by a health care provider about the abuse. Researchers identified victims of IPV, and then followed-up two years later to find that only 20% of victims had received counseling, and 11% had discussed the abuse with a health care provider.

### Low Socio-Economic Status Increases Risk for IPV

A study in the U.K. published in the [American Journal of Public Health](#) found that women's rates of intimate partner violence (IPV) were associated with low income housing, lower level of education, social deprivation, and lower income. Women with a history of abuse were more likely to live in disadvantaged communities and experience more severe forms of IPV over time.

**Welcome to the newest DVFR Team to be established in Virginia!**

*“In June, 2012, Bedford County Board of Supervisors approved the establishment of a Family Violence Fatality Review Team. Although in its developing stages, the team seeks to examine fatal family violence incidents to create and offer recommendations to the community services in Bedford City and Bedford County that will ultimately benefit the community and improve public safety. As a team we are hopeful that new protocols will be established from these tragic incidents and are ready to start the review process.”*

-Malerie Everhart  
Bedford Team Coordinator

**Legislative Update**

The following bills related to Domestic Violence were signed into law this month by Governor McDonnell, and take effect July 1st:

**HB2211 and HB1981**

Strengthen accountability for stalking perpetrators

**HB2120/SB1006**

Authorizes licensed health care providers to perform a PERK exam on a person unable to provide informed consent

**HB1643/SB1016**

Exempts from stay a protective order pending appeal due to violation of a previous order

**Technical Assistance in Case Review: Keeping it Confidential**

Confidential fatality review is both a right and a responsibility. Code of Virginia §32.1-283.3 provides protections for local and regional DVFR teams to conduct in-depth case reviews, but these protections mean little without a network of agencies and individuals exercising mutual trust and respect for confidential information.

Let’s break down parts of the statute, and the best practices for upholding the integrity of DVFR:

*“...Information and records shall be used by the team only in the exercise of its proper purpose and function and shall not be disclosed.”* Records compiled for case review should never be shared with entities outside of the team, including agencies who contributed to the review. Individual agencies’ records should be returned to them or destroyed at the end of the review.

*“No person who participated in the review...shall be required to*

*make any statement as to what transpired during the review...”* An agency’s representative to the team has no obligation to share review details with his or her supervisor—indeed, there should be no reason to disclose to agency colleagues any information except aggregate findings and recommendations.

These and other best practices ensure that DVFR is conducted in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust, and under full statutory protection.

**GA Considers DV Gun Control Measures**

The 2013 General Assembly regular session ended in February, and several bills were considered that related to the protection of victims of domestic violence (DV). Two such bills addressed firearm possession by DV perpetrators:

**HB1410**: Prohibits any person who is convicted of DV from possessing, transporting, or carrying a firearm or any other weapon for a period of 5 years following conviction.

**SB864**: Prohibits any person subject to an EPO from physi-

cally possessing a firearm while in the residence of the alleged victim or transporting a firearm while such order is in effect.

Each was tabled by a voice vote in the house, but advocates hope to see similar legislation reintroduced in 2014.

**Henrico County Releases Annual DV Statistics**

This quarter Henrico County released statistics on domestic violence for calendar year 2012.

Highlights include:

- Henrico County Division of Police responded to 5,293 domestic violence-related calls for service, 1,036 resulting in arrests for domestic assault and battery
- The Henrico County Commu-

nity Corrections program received 644 referrals for Assault on a Family Member, and subsequently made 246 referrals to anger management counseling and 217 referrals to DV counseling

- Henrico County Victim/Witness Assistance Program provided 1,193 victims of domestic violence with services, including assistance

with protective orders

- The Henrico County Magistrate’s Office issued 1,133 emergency protective orders for family abuse and 331 for stalking/serious bodily injury
- Safe Harbor provided services to over 900 survivors of sexual and domestic violence, including nearly 3,000 nights of shelter.

## What the Numbers are Telling Us: Comparing Findings from National Surveys on IPV

The [National Resource Center on Domestic Violence](#) released a paper last quarter comparing the characteristics and findings of three national surveys on intimate partner violence (IPV):

- **National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS)** was launched in 2010 and found that 81% of women who experienced IPV reported significant long-term impacts related to the violence, such as being fearful, PTSD symptoms, and injury—while only 35% of male victims reported such impacts.
- **National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)** was initiated in 1972 and found re-

cently that from 1993 to 2010, the overall rate of IPV in the U.S. declined by 64%, but has begun to stabilize in the last 10 years, while the overall violent crime rate continues to decline.

- **National Violence Against Women Survey (NVAWS)** was a one-time study conducted in 1995-1996, and found that nearly 1 in 4 women are raped and/or physically assaulted by a current or former intimate partner in their lifetime.

The paper highlights methodological and contextual differences between the three studies, which help to explain how different data sets produce disparate findings.

## What's in the News: Recent State and National Headlines

### Task Force Recommends Routine Screening for DV

The [U.S. Preventive Services Task Force](#) issued new recommendations in January for physicians to screen all women of childbearing age for signs of domestic violence and to provide referrals if needed. The new recommendation could provide the basis for more standardized screening protocols and for funding through the Health Care for America Plan.

### U.S. DOJ Awards \$2.3M for DV Homicide Prevention

The [Domestic Violence Homicide Prevention Demonstration Initiative](#) was announced in March, providing funding to 12 jurisdictions in states across the country. The initiative is mod-

eled after the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence state program to reduce fatal domestic violence.

### NCADV to Provide a National Database for DV Programs

The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence is partnering with a software development company to expand the [Domestic Violence Information System](#) to provide data tracking and reporting capabilities to domestic violence programs across the U.S.

### U.N. Adopts Declaration Condemning Violence Against Women

The United Nations' [Commission on the Status of Women](#) in March agreed upon a declaration

calling for an end to violence against women and girls. The consensus came after two weeks of negotiations with conservative Muslim countries and the Vatican over references to sexual and reproductive rights.

### Governor McDonnell Releases PSA on Domestic Violence

In January the Virginia Office of the Secretary of Public Safety along with the Virginia Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control spearheaded the release of a new campaign to increase awareness about domestic violence. The 60-second video, "[Stop the Silence, Stop the Violence](#)" features the Governor urging victims to reach out for help and provides Virginia's 24-hour hotline number.



March 13th marked the release of a new branding campaign to unite DV advocates across the country. "[NO MORE](#): Together We Can End Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault" was launched as a symbol under which major prevention organizations and other advocates can unite their efforts to end domestic violence and sexual assault.

### Norfolk to Publish Study on DV 911 Calls as Evidence

The Norfolk Office of the Commonwealth's Attorney along with the William & Mary School of Law are publishing a study showing improved prosecutorial success when domestic violence victims' 911 call recordings are prepared for use in trial. The paper will appear this fall in the University of Kentucky Law Journal.

### Upcoming Conferences, Trainings, and Events

[National Women's Health Week](#)  
May 12-18

[National DVFR Conference: Global Possibilities](#)  
May 19-21, Phoenix, AZ

[World Elder Abuse Awareness Day \(WEAAD\)](#)  
June 15

[VSDVAA Biennial Retreat](#)  
June 18-20, Sweet Briar, VA

[Nat'l Training Institute on DV Offender Accountability](#)  
June 20-21, Buffalo, NY

## The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2010 Findings on Victimization by Sexual Orientation

The first survey to examine the national prevalence of sexual violence, stalking, and intimate partner violence (IPV) among gay, lesbian, and bisexual women and men released its findings in January, providing some insight on the experience of intimate partner violence among adults in the U.S.

While many prevalence estimates were based on numbers too small to be reliably reported, several findings reveal that individuals who self-identify as lesbian, gay, and bisexual experience rates of IPV equal to or higher than those who identify as heterosexual. Highlights from the 2010 findings include:

- 1 in 3 bisexual women (36.6%) and 1 in 6 heterosexual women (15.5%) have experienced stalking at some point during their lifetime
- Most bisexual and heterosexual women reported having only male perpetrators of IPV; two-thirds of lesbian women (67.4%) reported having only female perpetrators
- The majority of bisexual men (78.5%) and most heterosexual men (99.5%) reported having only female perpetrators of intimate partner violence; most gay men (90.7%) reported having only male perpetrators

## Community Highlight: Fairfax County

When Sandy Bromley took the position of County-Wide Domestic Violence Coordinator for Fairfax in 2012, the Fairfax County Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team had reviewed a total of four cases since its inception in 2008. The team had a well-established group of core stakeholders committed to the process, but was struggling with a framework for timely and organized case review.

As part of her new job description, Ms. Bromley was tasked with providing support to the team, and drew upon her experience coordinating DVFR in New Mexico. After implementing a new timeline to complete an entire year's cases in one year of meetings, the team quickly got to work on cases from 2009. In February, the Fairfax Team released its first ever annual report, summarizing findings from their review of all twelve deaths related to domestic violence that occurred in the county in 2009. The report garnered local media attention and was presented by the

team to the Board of Supervisors.

Team member Kathleen Kelmelis says of the team's transformation, "Sandy's coming on board has made an enormous difference in our team. Her focus and guidance have made the difference between marking time and accomplishing something."

Meeting bi-monthly for 3-hour case review meetings, the 14-person team has established a flow for their meetings which ensures that each member can participate to the best of their abilities: Staff prepares a case summary to be distributed at the beginning of the meeting; members review the demographic profile for the case, then take turns reading aloud the narrative. After members have the opportunity to share agency-specific records relating to the case, the group completes a feedback form to record findings and recommendations.

Among the team's findings in their recent report, more than half (57%) of all homicides

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*In 1999, the Virginia General Assembly enacted legislation authorizing family and intimate partner fatality review. The [Code of Virginia §32.1-283.3](#) provides for the establishment of local and regional DVFRs. It provides important statutory confidentiality protection, and directs the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner to provide technical assistance and training.*



committed in Fairfax County in 2009 were domestic violence-related, and half (50%) of the homicide perpetrators threatened to kill their victim prior to the fatal event. However, only 25% of that year's victims ever sought law enforcement intervention and none were known by local DV service providers. These findings and others guided the team in formulating their recommendations regarding training, education, and system improvement. The team next plans to create a plan for evaluating the impact of their recommendations on the Fairfax community.