Linking Adult & Child Domestic Violence Related Deaths

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A Fatality Review Team was established in Miami-Dade County in 1998 to study domestic violence related deaths.

Miami-Dade was one of four teams selected in Florida by the Governor’s Task Force to be part of an initiative to create multi-disciplinary teams with the purpose of identifying and closing system gaps that would prevent future tragedies.

There are 16 such teams now in Florida.

In September, 2000, the child death review process was merged into the function of the team. This is unique to Miami-Dade County.
Audiotape of 911 call

- Six-year-old female witnessing her mother and mother’s boyfriend fighting.
- Any Questions?
In 20% of 2003 cases reviewed in Miami-Dade County, children witnessed the fatal incident, either visually or by earshot.

Nationally, 75% of battered women say their children are physically or sexually abused.

There is an overlap of 30% to 60% between violence against children and violence against women in the same families.

Over 3 million children are at risk of exposure to parental violence each year.
More Facts

- Domestic violence has been shown to occur disproportionately in homes with children under five.
- Children under five are at the highest risk of death due to abuse or neglect.
- A child’s exposure to the father abusing the mother is the strongest risk factor for transmitting violent behavior from one generation to the next.
- Children who witness domestic violence are six times more likely to commit suicide.
Critical Need to Interface Child & Adult Fatality Reviews

- Co-occurrence of child abuse and domestic violence. Witnessing domestic violence is a form of child abuse. Children may also be physically hurt during a DV incident.
- Child and adult advocates should work together in addressing safety needs for the family as a whole.
- Members of DV Fatality Review Teams need to be knowledgeable of child maltreatment issues. In most domestic violence homicides children have either witnessed the incident and/or are left behind.
- From the child abuse and neglect standpoint, those studying child deaths need the knowledgeable of domestic violence.
- Findings from a team that interfaces child and adult victim issues are more effective in making recommendations for the prevention of FAMILY VIOLENCE.
SECOND HAND ABUSE

- Children of abuse learn to harm themselves
- Abused children learn extreme behavior
- Battering causes damage & distress to the fetus
- Battering adversely affects infants & toddlers
- Older children see & hear violence
- Violence creates constant anxiety
- A violent home means powerless feelings
- Battering creates low self-esteem
- Family violence results in behavioral problems
- Battering means emotional abandonment
- Battered children take on adult roles prematurely
- A battered home means constant tears
- Violence results in depression, flashbacks, & stress
- Battering creates isolation
- Children of abuse learn how to abuse others
Case Studies

- Countless cases where there was a history of domestic violence and the paramour/step-father or father is the perpetrator of the child’s death, mother’s death, mother and child deaths or where children witnessed the mother’s murder.

- Perez Case
- Blash Case
- Rodriguez Case
- Conde Case
- Gonzalez Case (name changed)
- Landie Case (name changed)
Suggested Members

- Law Enforcement
  - Homicide Unit
  - Domestic Violence Unit
  - Child Exploitation Unit
  - Victim/Witness Advocates
- State Attorney/District Attorney
  (same divisions as above)
- Court Personnel
- Child Protection Teams
- Child Protective Services
Suggested Members Continued

- School System
- Medical Examiner’s Office
- Health Department
- Medical (adult and pediatric)
- Mental Health
- DV Shelter Staff
- Batterer Intervention Programs
- Community Corrections/Probation