

Fatality Review Bulletin

Editor's Introductory Comments

This is the first newsletter in over a year. The gap is not due to lack of activity or interest, but the more mundane problems of funding. We bring news of progress and success from around the country. Matthew Dale reports on the best practices and trends in fatality reviews in the U.S. and Canada. David Adams summarizes his important new book, Why They Kill. And Sue Rovi and Erica Olson describe the successful regional conference hosted by the New Jersey Domestic Violence Fatality and Near Fatality Review Board last December. Please do consider contributing an article or suggesting topics for the newsletter E-mail Kathleen.Ferraro@nau.edu

The NDVFRI Welcomes Leah Gatlin as the new Grant Coordinator



Born in rural, northeast Oklahoma, Leah Gatlin first became affiliated with the NDVFRI in September of 2005. After graduating from Baylor University's Honors College with a degree in International Studies in May 2006, Leah joined NDVFRI full-time. In August of this year, she became the Grant Coordinator.

Outside of her work with the Initiative, Leah volunteers in her church's preschool department. When not chasing after children or curled up with a good book, she also enjoys learning languages. Besides being conversant in Spanish, she has studied German, Arabic, and Swahili.

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National Domestic Violence Fatality Review Initiative

Fall 2007

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NDVFRI Activities

At least one NDVFRI consultant gave presentations at each of the following events:

Northern Arizona Domestic Violence/Rural Health Forum, Flagstaff, AZ, October 2, 2006

8th Annual Regional Domestic Violence Luncheon, Lake Havasu City, AZ, October 3, 2006

Annual Peacekeeper Symposium, Dayton, OH, October 6, 2006

Rural Domestic Violence Conference, Emporia, KS, October 26, 2006

2006 Family Law Seminar, Des Moines, IA, October 27, 2006

State Fatality Review Team Meeting, Clearwater, FL, November 3, 2006

Domestic Violence Fatality Review Training, New York, NY, November 13, 2006

Domestic Violence Fatality Review Training, Syracuse, NY, November 15, 2006

Yavapai County, Fatality Review Team Meeting, Prescott Valley, AZ, November 21, 2006

Ending Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Conference, Lexington, KY, November 28-30, 2006

Orientation Meeting for New Arrest Grantees, Washington, DC, January 8-9, 2007

California's Domestic Violence Death Review Team Regional Training, Oakland, CA, February 8, 2007

Behind Closed Doors: Breaking the Silence, Lake City, FL, March 13-16, 2007

Louisiana Domestic Violence Fatality Review Project: The Killing Must Stop, Advisory

Committee Meeting, Baton Rouge, LA, May 2-3, 2007

California's Domestic Violence Death Review Team Regional Training, Anaheim, CA, June 7, 2007.

Circuit Clerks Conference, Lexington, KY, June 20-22, 2007

Milestones and Momentum: Strengthening Community Responses to Violence Against Women, St. Paul, MN, June 25-27, 2007

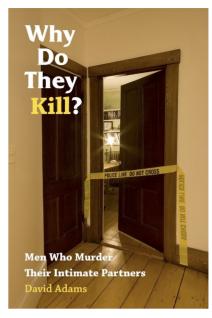
2007 Joining Hearts and Hands Conference, Baton Rouge, LA, September 3-5, 2007

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Why Do They Kill?: Men Who Murder Their Intimate Partners, David Adams, Ed.D.

Vanderbilt University Press, 2007 Summary by David Adams, Ed.D.

This book is the culmination of over 12 years of work researching domestic homicides. I am especially proud to be sharing this book with my 'kindred spirits' in the fatality review field. Who better than you understand what it is like to hear the terrible details that make up such tragic stories? Much like conducting fatality reviews, my book provides a postmortem of 31 homicides and 20 near homicides. By conducting extensive interviews with the killers, I sought to identify more than the immediate triggers to homicide. I sought to learn about the long term factors that led to the crimes by moving backwards through time through their lives. I was particularly interested in the perpetrator's patterns of behavior in intimate relationships, not only with the woman they killed but also with past partners as well. Having worked at Emerge, an abuser education program, for 30 years, I am experienced in doing what we call "relationship histories" with abusive men. When conducting these, we ask abusive men fourteen



questions about *each* of their relationships with an intimate partner, including their most immediate victim. These questions include:

- ♦ What was your age, and her age, when you first started dating?
- ✦ How did you meet?
- ★ What did you find attractive about her?
- ★ What did she find attractive about you?
- **→** When did you first have sex?
- → Did you pressure her in any way?
- ✦ How long were you involved?
- **→** What were her biggest complaints about you?
- ♦ What did you argue about?
- → Were you abusive or controlling toward her, and if so, how?
- **♦** What were the effects of this behavior on her?
- ✦ How did you respond to those effects?
- ✦ How did the relationship end?
- **♦** What was your response to this?

We find that revealing patterns of coercion emerge from abusive men's responses to these questions. In effect, their answers make up a fascinating first hand account of how these men perfect their coercive and abusive styles over time.

Seeking to discern similarities as well as differences in these patterns, I asked the same questions during my five-hour interviews with each killer. However, this investigation would not have been complete without the critical perspective of victims of attempted homicide (standing in for murder victims) who survived shootings, stabbings and strangulation. These women provide rich testimony about their partners' escalating patterns of child abuse, sexual violence, terroristic threats, and stalking. The book includes compelling accounts of how these women coped with abuse and sought help for themselves and their children.

From my interviews with victims and perpetrators, it became evident that intimate partner homicides are not random acts or 'crimes of passion' as commonly portrayed in the media. Rather, they are culminations of longstanding grievances on the part of abusive men. It appears that these kinds of killings are the end result of an interaction between the perpetrator and the victim. From the victim's perspective, there were fairly clear turning points in the relationship. These began with the first appearance of violence and the abuser's initial apologies and promises that it would not happen again. This was followed by the reappearance of

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violence. By this stage, many perpetrators had stopped apologizing and instead began blaming their victims. In response, many victims expressed dissatisfaction and talked of ending the relationship. This seemed to trigger increased monitoring, and particularly for the jealous types of perpetrators, stalking of the victim. And while most victims had already been subjected to rape and sexual humiliation prior to separation, some said that this became more severe afterwards.

Besides exploring the killer's adult lives, I also wondered whether there were common elements in the childhoods that foretold that they would kill their partners. I saw no strong predictors in the men's upbringings that they would grow up to murder their partners. There were, however, strong omens of their future violence. In most cases, their upbringings seemed indistinguishable from those of other abusive men I've counseled. As with most abusive men, the seeds for their abusive behavior were planted by abusive fathers, and in some cases, abusive mothers. The intergenerational roots to domestic violence have been well established by prior research. It appears that early exposure to domestic violence by one's father provides a powerful role modeling for boys, though clearly many men do not follow this example as adults. Men's behavior in intimate relationships is mediated by a variety of other influences in their lives and is further influenced by their own personalities. Depending on these other factors, early exposure to domestic violence can become a negative or a positive example over time. I have known of many men who grew up with abusive fathers who ultimately recognized the negative example and followed a different path. In contrast, some of the killers I interviewed talked of coming to admire or love the fathers that they once feared. These men said that they conquered their fear by developing an aggressive and tough exterior.

Other researchers have suggested that boys exposed to domestic violence are more likely to be attracted to and influenced by violent social peers. Many of the killers in this study, particularly those classified as substance abusers and career criminals, said that most of their peers were also violent toward their partners. A shared distain for women was strongly evident among many of the killers, particularly the materially motivated men and the career criminals. Even more prevalent among the killers, especially the jealous ones, was a strong distrust of women. For the most part, this distrust seemed only to increase over time and to inspire increasing levels of surveillance and violence. This distrust could well have its origins in family upbringings. Experts on children who are exposed to family violence say that one common effect of such exposure is the development of insecurity and anxiety about intimacy. This in turn can lead to difficulty establishing relationships that rely upon intimacy and trust. Most of the jealous killers appeared to have been perpetually vigilant toward their intimate partners, and this only seemed to escalate over the course of their relationships.

I hope that my findings add to the important work of fatality reviews by providing a framework to give meaning to the otherwise seemingly random behavior of serious perpetrators of abuse and by providing clues to both the immediate and the long-term triggers to their violence. Over the past twenty-five years, domestic violence has emerged from behind closed doors, but many women continue to be severely abused in broad daylight. With better intelligence about chronic abusers, we will be better able to identify and stop those most likely to kill.

David Adams is co-founder and co-director of Emerge, one of the oldest and most respected batterer's intervention programs in the country. He has spent 29 years working with men who batter and is a nationally recognized trainer and researcher. He has also served as a consultant for the NDVFRI.

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Sharing Lessons Learned: The 1st Regional Domestic Violence Fatality Review Conference hosted in New Jersey in December 2006 Submitted by Sue Rovi, PhD and Erica Olson, MSS, MLSP

On December 8 and 9, 2006, the New Jersey Domestic Violence Fatality and Near Fatality Review Board (NJ DVFNFRB) hosted the First Regional Domestic Violence Fatality Review Conference in Princeton, NJ. Representatives came from the surrounding states of Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland and the District of Columbia. We also had two of Georgia's two state coordinators join us. By all accounts, our intimate group of 32 participants declared the conference a success. It is our hope that such meetings of regional teams might become an annual event. We hope the following information about the conference, including our details about our planning, will benefit other DVFR teams and encourage continued networking.

At the end of August 2006, members of the NJ team were planning a training for our Board. We decided to invite Jacquelyn Campbell, PhD, RN, a nationally and internationally known expert on domestic violence to present her research findings on femicide, provide training on the use of her Danger Assessment tool, and explore how this tool might be applied to assist with our Board's review of fatalities. We then thought about how other states might benefit from this meeting. And so, the 1st Regional Domestic Violence Fatality Review Conference was launched.

Since our team had intended to have the training in early December, the planning committee called on several members of our Board to identify and reach out to teams in each state within our region. We used the National Domestic Violence Fatality Review Initiative's Database on State Fatality Review Teams as one source of contact information. Initial responses from regional team representatives were promising and the planning commenced. We decided early to make it a two-day conference because regional representatives from the states would most likely be driving to the conference, and we felt that an overnight stay would also provide more time for networking. A preliminary agenda was developed and a budget sketched out.

Funding for the conference was crucial because like other DVFR teams and boards around the country, much of our work is done by volunteers committed to reducing DV fatalities. Fortunately, we had funding earmarked for training. Erica Olson, Director of the NJ Board, sought out a good location with reasonable costs for conference rooms and meals for attendees. After a number of calls and emails, the December dates worked for Dr. Campbell, the NJ Board, and at least preliminarily, for many of the state contacts in the region. Funding covered Dr. Campbell's stipend, rental of the conference rooms, audio-visual equipment and meals. Staff at the Westin Princeton accommodated our needs and arranged one large room with equipment and work tables in one-half of the room and four large round tables in the other half of the room for meals and informal discussions/ networking. This design maximized interactions among attendees. The conference began with lunch on Thursday, December 7 and ended at 3:00PM on Friday. These times were designed to facilitate travel for attendees coming from the other states as well as our own members, some of whom travel several hours because of the length of NJ. The only costs to attendees were for travel and one night's lodging, which we felt was reasonable (and unfortunately were outside the parameters of allowable funding expenditures). To stay within our budget, we had to keep the number of attendees under 50, and asked states to send no more than five representatives. Accordingly, there were from one to five representatives from the invited states.

At noon on the first day of the conference, Anna Trautwein, RNC, Chair of the NJ DVFNFRB and a founding member, provided opening remarks that included a moving story of how Anna's work as a nurse was instrumental in the development of her resolute commitment to reduce DV deaths.

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Janice Kovach, the Director of NJ's Division on Women, also welcomed attendees, including a greeting from the Commissioner of Community Affairs, Susan Bass Levin, both strong supporters of the work of the NJ DVFNFRB. Dr. Jackie Campbell, our keynote presenter, began with an audio clip, in which Jamie, a young child, calls 9-1-1 to get help for her mother, while witnessing her battering and death. We also heard the words of other victims that provided a poignant backdrop for the research findings Jackie presented on femicide and on interview protocols for victims/survivors and their friends and families. After a break of Jersey shore treats including warm soft pretzels, ice cream, drinks and salt water taffy, Jackie proceeded with a discussion of how we might structure our case reviews, such as by using the lens of Danger Assessment.

(See http://www.dangerassessment.org/) Notably, Dr. Campbell also provided tips on how to be cautious consumers of research. Following her presentation, many attendees made their way to the lobby's reception area for networking opportunities including more informal chats with Jackie.

On the second day, attendees sat down for breakfast at tables where NJ DVFNFRB staff had placed networking topic questions to facilitate the sharing of information on common issues teams face (e.g., interviewing victims and their families, conducting research, and models of case review). Our next presenter was our own NJ longtime advocate, Lillian 'Lil' Corcoran, LPC, DVS of Shelter Our Sisters. Lil teaches safety planning to advocates and others based on the work of Jill M. Davies who authored Safety Planning for Battered Women: Complex Lives / Difficult Choices. Lil's session emphasized victim safety for fatality review teams' work in formulating and proposing recommendations for systems changes. Putting attendees to work, Lil separated us into smaller groups, and provided a brief scenario about a victim named Erica, her child and the abuser. The smaller groups and then the larger group discussed safety plans for Erica. Lil provided additional information about Erica's situation for the groups to discuss suggestions to help Erica and her family. Groups concluded that to ensure victim safety, recommendations that stem from case reviews must take into account the complexity of domestic violence and the individuality of victims' circumstances.

Again lunch provided more time for attendees to mingle and share information. Our final presenter, Kelly Watt, MA, a graduate student from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, provided preliminary findings from her study of DVFR teams throughout the country. For her PhD dissertation, Kelly interviewed and collected data on at least one active team from every state or province where teams were currently operating. With the exception of one team in Canada, Kelly told us that DVFR is unique to the US. Kelly's presentation included information about the goals, structures, processes and tensions of the teams. She reported on 32 teams from 26 states and 1 Canadian province, of which 66% were authorized through legislation, 59% had some funding but 41% had none. A team's base varied and included a state's Attorney General's office, DV advocacy organizations, and a Medical Examiner's office, among others. Most teams met monthly or bimonthly for an average of two to three hours. Kelly provided many more of her findings, but because they are preliminary we will refrain from sharing more details about her work as we all look forward to hearing more from Kelly's study. To heighten your anticipation, Kelly's research also categorized various team tensions, which will most likely be of interest to all teams.

As stated initially, by all accounts, the 1st Regional Domestic Violence Fatality Review Conference was successful. Written anonymous evaluations were requested of conference attendees. Of 32 participants at the conference (31 on Thursday and 29 on Friday), 21 completed an evaluation (excluding the authors), or over two-thirds. On a scale of 1 (poor) to 4 (excellent), eight questions were asked about the presentations made by Jacquelyn Campbell, Lil Corcoran, and Kelly Watt. Mean scores of the eight questions combined were above 3.7. General questions about the conference facilities, registration, and opportunities to network received an overall mean of 3.7; and four questions about the networking panel resulted in a mean of 3.6. These mean scores all support the response to the last item that asked 'how well did this conference meet your expectations?' Overall,

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42% responded that it exceeded expectations, 58% said it met expectations. None indicated that it did not meet their expectations. Most took the time to provide comments. These included that they found the small group atmosphere and ability to network beneficial, the presentations dynamic and inspiring and that the conference allowed attendees to learn from others' experiences and be able to compare and contrast the various state teams. Several suggested that they would have liked greater representation from other states and more discussion about making recommendations. One sentiment sums up these participants' comments best: do it again.

The New Jersey Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board was officially established by Executive Order in 2000, and in 2004, the NJ Domestic Violence Fatality and Near Fatality Review Board was authorized under New Jersey statute. The Board is housed in the NJ Department of Community Affairs' Division on Women and is under the supervision of Carol Vasile, MA, Supervisor of the Office on the Prevention of Violence Against Women. Erica Olson is no longer the Director, so for inquiries, please contact Carol Vasile. Funding for the work of the Board has come from the United States Department of Justice STOP Violence Against Women Formula Grants Program administered through the NJ Department of Law and Public Safety, Division of Criminal Justice, State Office of Victim Witness Advocacy and the NJ Department of Community Affairs, Division on Women, Office on the Prevention of Violence Against Women. For more information about the NJ Board, visit our website: http://www.state.nj.us/dca/dow/dvfnfrb.shtml.

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Erica Olsen was the Program Director of the NJ DVFNFRB from Aug 2004 - December 2006. She is currently an independent consultant on gender and social justice issues and a volunteer member on a new program advisory council of Women for Women International.

Sue Rovi, PhD, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Family Medicine at New Jersey Medical School at UMDNJ in Newark, NJ. She is the Research Consultant / Principal Investigator for the NJ DVFNFRB.

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New Trends & Best Practices in Fatality Review Matthew Dale

The practice of domestic violence fatality review has matured and expanded over the past 10 years. Approximately 35 states now have review teams and at least one Canadian province is reviewing domestic violence deaths as well. There is even some talk of instituting homicide review in the United Kingdom. While there are similarities in how teams conduct their work regardless of their geographic region, a review of recent state reports highlights significant differences as well.

Most teams release annual or biennial reports as mechanisms for distributing their information to local governments and interested citizens. These summaries, ranging from fewer than 10 to more than 100 pages, are a means to share the team's work with wider audiences. The reports summarize data related to the reviewed homicides but also lay out recommendations for improving or expanding the locale's approach to domestic violence. The reports are written both to inform and motivate the reader.

A recent review of 14 of these reports* reinforces that while many elements of domestic violence homicide have not changed, team's approaches to reviewing those homicides have expanded. Summary documents remind readers of common elements and encourage team members to look for new ways of gaining and interpreting relevant information.

Factors related to domestic violence homicide that cut across geographic regions and rural or urban settings include: the majority of victims continue to be female and perpetrators male; the most common scene of the death remains the family home; the most common weapon is either a firearm or knife; and, the most dangerous period for a victim is at the point of separation from the relationship.

In spite of these similarities, however, no two murders are the same and no two teams conduct reviews in the same way. A review of state reports points out how differently teams across the country approach their work. These idiosyncrasies, these differences in focus, provide rich opportunities for teams to learn from one another.

This summary highlights new initiatives from across Canada and the U.S. that teams might consider adapting to their own work. Additional positive, forward-thinking suggestions appear in other state reports. Each state report that NDVFRI is aware of is posted on our website, www.ndvfri.org. These summaries are excellent sources of best practices in the field and tremendous resources for teams looking to inject their work with new ideas.

For instance, the Canadian province of **Ontario** has implemented a specialized domestic violence bail pilot program. The program was informed by fatality review findings of heightened danger once law enforcement becomes involved in some cases and the importance of including victims at all phases. It attempts to ensure safety for victims at the point in the criminal justice process where bail is set for the abuser. Once the perpetrator is arrested, a team that includes representatives of victim-witness services, law enforcement and the crown attorney interviews the victim. A checklist is used to identify risk factors related to: a) the history of the relationship, b) family composition [questions pertaining to the children], c) issues of power and control, d) the victim's perception of risk, and e) revisiting the Risk Factor Checklist previously completed by the police.

During the pre-bail interview, support, education and immediate safety planning are covered and the victim is given the opportunity to voice concerns. Additionally, information is gathered as to the perpetrator's past convictions, access to weapons and any other relevant information. Perhaps

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most refreshingly, "The program acknowledges that the victim is the one who holds information about the history of the relationship and its potential lethality" (Ontario Report, p.47).

Initial reports (the first model program was instituted in 2002 and now has spread to six new sites) are extremely positive. "Both anecdotal and empirical evidence indicate that the program enhances victims' feelings of safety, as well as increases their physical safety" (Ontario Report, p.47).

Massachusetts and Wisconsin review teams have instituted similar programs that focus on how domestic violence homicides are covered by the media. Teams in these states, along with those in **Rhode Island**, **Florida and Washington**, are challenging media outlets when insensitive or inaccurate language is used to describe the murder and events leading up to the deaths. The teams are driven by beliefs that the media can "educate and inform the public, rather than promote myths and stereotypes" (MA report, p.17).

Specifically, these teams watch for and document

- Sensationalized, victim-blaming headlines that do not identify domestic violence as the root of the homicide. For example, out of 186 articles evaluated by the Wisconsin team, only six included "domestic violence" or a related term in the headline (WI report, p.11). In the Massachusetts study, none of the 123 articles examined did so (MA report, p.18).
- Infrequent use of domestic violence advocates as sources for articles. The Massachusetts team noted that in media stories they examined, the percentage of articles quoting prosecutors (45%), law enforcement (36%), and neighbors (28%) dwarfed those quoting domestic violence advocates or shelter staff (2%) (MA report, p.20).
- Domestic violence services for readers who might be motivated to end a violent relationship are seldom mentioned in homicide articles. Of all articles written about the 17 Massachusetts deaths, only five included background information on domestic violence, provided referral sources or recommended that victims or perpetrators seek help (MA report, p.18).

Teams note that follow-up articles allow for more accurate, detailed accounts of what occurred. Domestic violence advocates, shelter staff and volunteers can press for these opportunities or respond through letters to the editor or editorial pieces. Florida team members do just this, writing to educate both editors and readers on the dynamics of domestic violence that contribute to intimate partner homicides (FL report, p.30).

Two excellent resources exist for teams interested in working with local media: *Domestic Violence: A Hand-book for Journalists*, published by the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence, and *Covering Domestic Violence: A Guide for Journalists and Other Media Professionals*, published by the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Both resources will be available on the NDVFRI website as they become available in an electronic format.

As the above teams illustrate, annual reports can be excellent vehicles for calling attention to new resources. **Oklahoma's** report does an outstanding job of this by including:

- * "Domestic Violence Safety Planning Across the Disciplines", an article highlighting best practice safety planning information [and a model safety plan] for district attorneys, judges, social workers, health care workers [including home health], mental health professionals and domestic violence advocates.
- ♦ SAFE TOOL [Strategic Assessment of Firearms Enforcement], a guide that takes victims and/or advocates through an inventory of firearm concerns in domestic violence situations.
- "Civil Attorney's Responsibility to Screen Clients for Domestic Violence", by Gail Stricklin, an attorney who believes a domestic violence screening by attorneys during the initial interview is *ethically required*. Gail also highlights the excellent resources available through the American Bar Association's website: www.abanet.org/domviol.

New Jersey's Fatality and Near Fatality Review Board has developed a model policy to address special issues and concerns when domestic violence occurs within a law enforcement family. "The policy recognizes that victims abused by law enforcement partners may be especially isolated and especially fearful of

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reporting abuse to authorities because reporting could result in retaliation and/or loss of employment of the officer" (p.3 of the policy, available on the NDVFRI website under state reports, New Jersey). Topics include pre-hire screening and investigation, education and training, early warning and intervention responsibilities, incident response protocols, seizure of weapons, and victim safety and protection.

Finally, **New York City** has implemented perhaps the greatest number of changes in recent years and its Fatality Review Committee has used their report to highlight these expanded services to victims. While some of these initiatives may be beyond the capacity of smaller communities, they can perhaps be considered in a reduced form. At a minimum, the City's commitment to keeping victims safe and holding batterers accountable can be held up as a standard.

The most expansive resource is the Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence website: http://www.nyc.gov/html/ocdv/html/home/home.shtml. The site contains a wealth of information, including the review committee's 2006 report. The use of electronic resources to augment fatality review work is itself a positive trend. The New York site goes further, serving as a clearinghouse for the city's services, initiatives, statistics and opportunities for involvement.

New initiatives identified in the team's report and highlighted on the website include:

- The creation and dissemination of two guides for medical practitioners: the *Clinician's Guide for Identifying, Treating & Preventing Family Violence* and the *Medical Providers' Guide to Managing the Care of Domestic Violence Patients within a Cultural Context.* In spite of the key role health care providers are expected to play in intervening in domestic violence cases, resources such as these are difficult to find. As soon as the guides are available electronically, they too will be posted on NDVFRI's website.
- A language line that allows officers on the street immediate access to interpreters in over 150 languages to assist immigrant victims of domestic violence.
- A digital 911 system that allows judges to hear high quality digital recordings of victims' 911 calls at arraignments before bail is set.

While no fatality review team can take credit for all new initiatives created in its area, a team's structure lends itself to increasing awareness and implementation of new services. It is essential that fatality review reports include not only information on gaps in services but also potential solutions. Reports that include both, rather than those which merely restate previously identified concerns, stand to receive a much more positive response from community members.

*(Alameda County, CA - 2005, Florida - 2006, Georgia - 2006, Kansas - 2006, Massachusetts - 2006, Macomb County, MI - 2006, Montana - 2007, New Jersey - 2006, City of New York - 2006, Ohio - 2006, Oklahoma - 2006, Santa Clara County, CA - 2005, Wisconsin - 2003, Ontario, Canada - 2005)

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