

**SACRAMENTO COUNTY  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COORDINATING COUNCIL  
ANNUAL DVDRT REPORT  
OCTOBER 2016**

**INTRODUCTION**

The Sacramento County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (DVCC) is presently chaired by District Attorney (DA) Anne Marie Schubert, represented by Assistant Chief Deputy DA Paul Durenberger.

The DVCC has three active committees: the Community Subcommittee, the Law Enforcement Subcommittee and the Domestic Violence Death Review Team (DVDRT). Each subcommittee is comprised of agency and/or community representatives with expertise in these distinct areas. The committees work independently and are multi-disciplinary in nature.

**DVCC SUBCOMMITTEE ACTIVITIES**

**The Community Subcommittee** known as the **Domestic Violence Prevention Collaboration (DVPC)** continues to remain very active in addressing the needs of domestic violence victims in Sacramento County. The DVPC has been a strong supporter of the creation of the Sacramento Regional Family Justice Center.

Phase I of the Sacramento Regional Family Justice Center (SRFJC), the Legal Help Center, is open for business. It is located inside the Sacramento Regional Family Courthouse at 3341 Power Inn Road. A “soft” opening occurred on July 11, 2016 and since that time the center has provided services for more than 230 clients in its first 8 weeks of business. After many meetings with community based organizations in the Sacramento Valley region, the SRFJC has developed a strategy focused on two primary goals: reducing systemic barriers for victims of interpersonal violence, including family violence, human trafficking, and elder abuse; and creating a collaborative framework to enhance community partners and relationships which will lead to positive social and systemic change. The SRFJC believes this focus is the most effective approach to reach underserved communities.

To assist the SRFJC in meeting goals, it applied for and received funding through two grants. This funding will be used to establish a mobile team that will provide civil legal services and limited transportation and case worker support for victims at SRFJC and partner agency locations. This will enhance partner agencies, provide more convenient services for victims in underserved communities, promote collaboration and begin positive systemic change for victims in need of services.

Phase II of the SRFJC program will soon begin construction across the street from the Sacramento Family Courthouse at 3701 Power Inn Road. Plans are underway to include the Child Safety Center into this location which will increase collaborations between Sacramento County DHHS, law enforcement and community groups.

**The Law Enforcement Subcommittee** has met several times during the year to discuss issues they currently face. The DA's Office has updated its domestic violence training; it is available for all local patrol and detective law enforcement personnel. Law enforcement agencies regularly attend the other subcommittee meetings.

**The Domestic Violence Death Review Team (DVDRT)** is a subcommittee of the Sacramento County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (DVCC). The DVDRT is authorized to exist pursuant to Penal Code Section 11163.3. Formed in the spring of 1998, the team meets on a monthly basis.

This is the DVDRT's 17<sup>th</sup> annual report. The first report was released in the fall of 2000. The reports are released in October, to coincide with Domestic Violence Awareness Month. The team is presently chaired by DA Anne Marie Schubert, represented by Keith Hill, supervisor of the DA's Domestic Violence Unit.

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of the DVDRT is to bring together a multi-disciplinary team to review domestic violence related homicide cases (including homicide-suicide cases) in Sacramento County. The team meets to develop strategies, policies and procedures to improve regional system responses to domestic violence in an effort to reduce and prevent future incidents of domestic violence related homicide-suicides and injuries. Domestic violence continues to be a widespread problem in our county. In the last 12 months, approximately 4,898 fresh arrests were made for domestic violence and 2,477 warrants were requested, for a total of over 7,375 cases reported to law enforcement. The DA filed and prosecuted over 2,609 cases in that same time period; 66.4 percent of those cases were fresh arrests and the other 33.6 percent were warrant arrests. The principal reason a case was handled by warrant rather than fresh arrest was that the perpetrator fled the crime scene before law enforcement arrived, preventing immediate arrest. This often requires law enforcement to conduct follow-up investigations.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Pursuant to Penal Code Section 11163.3, the meetings of the DVDRT are confidential. Every representative of a constituent agency or institution who attends DVDRT meetings signs an agreement of confidentiality.

### **MEMBERSHIP**

The DVDRT is a multi-disciplinary, broad based organization which reviews information from law enforcement, public health, social services, coroner, child welfare, public and private medical organizations and domestic violence advocacy organizations. The current participating organizations are:

- Sacramento County District Attorney's Office
- Sacramento County Coroner's Office
- Sacramento County Sheriff's Department
- Sacramento City Police Department
- Sacramento County Probation Department

- Elk Grove Police Department
- Citrus Heights Police Department
- Law Enforcement Chaplaincy- Sacramento
- California Attorney General's Office
- Sacramento County Department of Health and Human Services
- Sacramento County Counsel
- Kaiser Permanente
- University of California, Davis Medical Center
- Sacramento County Child Protection Services
- Sutter Health
- Sutter Medical Center
- Dignity Health
- WEAVE, Inc. (Women Escaping a Violent Environment)
- My Sister's House
- A Community For Peace
- Child Abuse Prevention Council

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

To fulfill its mission, the DVDRT:

- Reviews domestic violence homicides in the county to determine if any systemic improvements should be made;
- Develops and recommends strategies to reduce and prevent domestic violence related homicides and homicide-suicides;
- Develops and recommends strategies to deal with the aftermath of domestic violence and domestic violence deaths;
- Acts as a multi-agency and multi-disciplinary team with regular meetings;
- Operates with the confidentiality principles outlined in Penal Code Section 11163.3 (requiring a signed statement of confidentiality for all team participants).
- Maintains a database of all records reviewed;
- Interacts with agencies and community based organizations to help achieve its goals, using the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council as a point of contact and interaction.

### **SELECTION AND REVIEW OF CASES**

The process by which the DVDRT selects cases for review has evolved over time. Currently, any member who has knowledge of a domestic violence related death in Sacramento County (that is not currently being prosecuted by the DA) may ask for the case to be reviewed. Most cases are referred by either law enforcement or the DA. The DVDRT chair selects which of the referred cases will be reviewed. If a case is being prosecuted by the DA's Office, the team waits until the case is sentenced and the prosecution is completed.

Once a case is selected, the DA's Office provides identifying information to the other members of the team regarding the victim, the perpetrator, and any biological or custodial children that either party had prior to the homicide. Each committee member is responsible for reviewing the

records of their agency to identify relevant information regarding the case and/or parties involved. At the time of review, the DA or law enforcement agency describes details of the homicide and each member agency provides any additional information they may have about the case.

In some cases, the DVDRT may extend an invitation to the prosecutor, law enforcement detective or victim advocate assigned to the case. When necessary, a member of the group may be assigned to contact members of the victim's or perpetrator's family to develop a better understanding of the underlying relationship. In some instances, family members and witnesses have been asked to attend DVDRT meetings to give direct input to the team.

With the limitations of the selection process, the time constraint placed on the team to ascertain records and the inability of the DVDRT to gather information from every possible source, the database of cases reviewed cannot be considered exhaustive or statistically representative. Nonetheless, the data collected can reveal significant concerns or insufficiencies which are evaluated by various experts, representatives from local agencies and members of the team, who then make recommendations.

### **CASES REVIEWED**

In 2015-2016, the team reviewed nine different homicides (chart below) involving two homicide-suicide victims. Each case required complex scrutiny by the team to evaluate all of the issues. The murder-suicide cases, where no criminal prosecution was possible, required even more effort to gather essential family history information since police agencies are generally not inclined to conduct an investigation into the background factors of a case when prosecution is not possible. Below is a chart identifying the number of cases reviewed by the DVDRT for the 2016 annual report by supervisorial district. A map is also included depicting the geographical locations of cases reviewed within each district.

**DVDRT Cases Reviewed in 2016 By Supervisorial District**

	<b>District 1 Serna</b>	<b>District 2 Kennedy</b>	<b>District 3 Peters</b>	<b>District 4 MacGlashan</b>	<b>District 5 Nottoli</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>2016</b>	1	5	1	1	1	<b>9</b>

### **CASE SUMMARIES**

The review of our nine cases this year reaffirms the DVDRT conclusions from years past. Domestic violence cuts across all age ranges, races, religions and economic levels of society. The main truism that can be gleaned from these cases is that a domestic violence homicide victim or perpetrator can be either male or female, and abusers come from all walks of life.

#### **Age Ranges:**

The victims ranged in age from 27 to 51 years old. The perpetrators ranged in age from 28 to 55.

**Education Levels:**

Education levels of victims and perpetrators ranged from high school dropout to college graduate.

**Employment:**

In the cases reviewed this year, employment for victim's ranged from unemployed to a hairdresser to a business analyst. Employment for perpetrators ranged from unemployed to a firefighter to a tax board employee. The incomes of the victims and perpetrators ranged from middle income to low income.

**Murder-Suicides and Murders Witnessed by Family:**

One of the nine cases was a murder-suicide. In one other case, the perpetrator murdered not only his wife, but two of their children as well.

**Premeditation and Deliberation:**

In five of the nine homicides, there was evidence of calculated pre-planning by the perpetrator.

**Prior Domestic Abuse:**

There was evidence of prior abuse, both physical and verbal; in five of the murders where the DVDRT was able to get detailed histories of the relationships. Although the prior history showed multiple incidents of less severe conduct, there was not a clear progression of escalating violence preceding the murders in all cases.

**Alcohol/Drugs or Prescription Medications:**

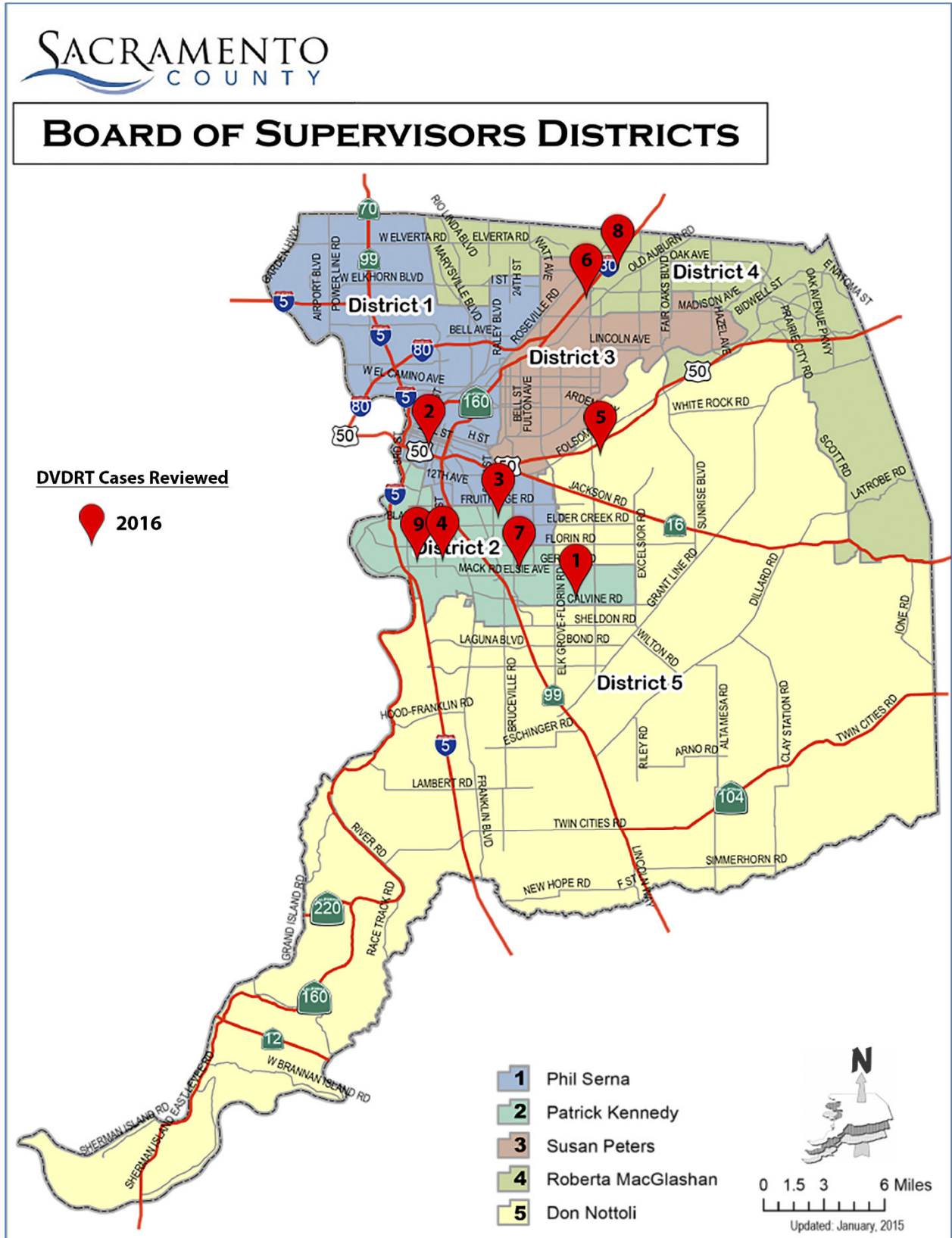
Alcohol and/or illegal drug use was a contributing factor in eight of the cases. Of significance was the predominant involvement of alcohol and methamphetamine.

**Prior Awareness of Abuse by Others:**

In several of the cases, the victim had either told someone about prior abuse, or family members knew about prior abuse and/or fear of future abuse. In some of the cases, the victim thought they could control the situation. This incorrect judgment on the part of the victim (i.e. the victim of abuse believing he/she would have time to make a determination about the danger, and take appropriate steps before the violence turned lethal), turned out to be a deadly error.

In most of the cases reviewed, the friends or family members who knew or were concerned for the victim's situation failed to realize there was a possibility the violence could end in murder. Repeatedly, friends or family talked about signs of abuse they had witnessed, and in the next breath, expressed shock about the homicide. This insight into the potential lethality of domestic violence was also lacking in many of the victims, who were certain they could control their environment and escape serious injury, as they had in the past.

The following map and chart summarizes the location in the County and some of the key factors seen repeatedly in domestic violence homicides:



DVDRT CASES REVIEWED IN 2016

Case	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9
Age of Victim	27	34	45	48	28	51	46	34	32
Age of Perp	57 M	34 M	55 F	51 M	32 M	54 M	47 M	39 M	28 M
Kids Together?	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Children - V	1	0	1	4	0	0	6	2	0
Children - P	2	0	1	0	1	0	6	1	3
Kids Witness Violence?	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Relationship Status	Dating	Dating	Dating	Married	Married	Married	Married	Dating	Dating
Weapon Used	Knife/ Hands	Gun	Heavy Object	Box Cutter	Knife	Plastic Bag/ Hands	Gun	Gun	Metal Safe
Facts	V was stabbed 4x in the head neck and chest and strangled after fighting over relationship.	V was shot in the chest after arguing over her going out without him.	V struck in the head with a ballast and garbage bag placed over his upper body with duct tape.	V stabbed multiple times in the neck with a box cutter.	V stabbed in the chest and back 7 times with a kitchen knife.	V had a plastic bag tied around her head with painter tape and had blunt trauma head injuries.	D shot his wife during a DV incident and also shot their two sons who tried to intervene.	D shot the V in the head and then shot himself in the head. Recorded on video.	D smashed the V's head repeatedly with a metal safe.

V = Victim  
P = Perpetrator  
D = Defendant  
BF = Boyfriend  
GF = Girlfriend  
Unk = Unknown

DVDRT CASES REVIEWED IN 2016 cont.

Case	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9
Prior DV History	No	No	Yes	Unk.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Prior Suicidal Ideation	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Unk.	No
Education - V	Unk.	Unk.	Unk.	Unk.	Unk.	Unk.	Unk.	Unk.	AA Degree in Nursing
Education - P	Fire Academy	Nursing School	Graduate	Graduate	College Degree	1 year college	No HS degree	Unk.	GED
Mental Health Diagnosis	No	No	Depression & Anxiety	Schizophrenic	No	No	Bipolar/ Schizophrenic	Unk.	Bipolar/ Schizophrenic
Employed? V	Prior Escort	Business Analyst	No	Unk.	Hairdresser	No	Unk.	No	No
Employed? P	Firefighter	No	No	No	Franchise Tax Board	No	No	No	No
Drugs/ Alcohol	Norco/MJ/ Cocaine	Alcohol	MJ	Meth	Alcohol	Alcohol	Meth/Alcohol	Meth	Alcohol/Meth/ Ecstasy/ MJ
Race	White	White	Asian	Black	Asian	White	Asian	White	White

V = Victim  
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## **FINDINGS**

### **Attempting to leave a relationship can place a victim at serious risk for bodily harm or homicide.**

In over half of the cases reviewed this year, the victim was attempting to break up with the perpetrator, leave the relationship or gain some form of independence from the perpetrator. It did not appear that any of the victims had reached to others for help or had any type of safety plan for their future. The end result was an explosive situation that resulted in the death of the victim and in one case the death of children witnessing the domestic violence.

### **Family and friends may be aware of ongoing domestic violence, but not recognize the continuing danger or know the best way to help a victim escape a dangerous situation.**

In multiple cases there were friends, family and housemates that were aware of ongoing problems between the perpetrator and the victim. However, it does not appear that any of the individuals were able to help the victim or intervene in a helpful manner. In one case, the 18 and 22 year old sons of the victim were also shot while trying to physically intervene.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The DVDRT recommends that the Board approve the following implementation plan:

### **Educational Recommendations**

The DVDRT believes prevention requires education. All members of the community need to be educated, including employees, family and friends. As the County leaders, the DVDRT respectfully requests the Board approve the following plans for promoting education on family and interpersonal violence.

#### **1. Promote Free Programs and Trainings Currently Available in our Community**

There are a number of free educational programs available within the county, but many family, friends and employees do not know they exist. WEAVE's program, "Silence Does Not Work Here," is a free program for employers in our community. A Community for Peace has the "Cares Program and Advocate Academy" and My Sister's house has a speaker's bureau that can provide specific cultural information that can be critical to ensure a successful safety plan. All three organizations also have intense 40 hour training programs for people interested in advocacy. These programs can and should be utilized by employees and neighborhoods as follows:

##### **A. Utilize the Family Justice Center as a Conduit to Distribute Information to Assist Victims, Families and Concerned Citizens Who are Subjected to Domestic Violence or are Trafficked or Want to Help Someone in Crisis**

Now that the SRFJC has begun its first phase of operations, it is hoped that it will quickly become known throughout the community as a resource that victims can access to obtain information when attempting to leave an abusive relationship. Not only will victims be able to walk in the front door and meet directly with community partners, but the SRFJC would like to implement an online resource toolkit available to help those who physically can't or won't come to the facility.

The online resource could contain a wealth of materials for victims of domestic violence to include information promoting free educational programs offered by partner agencies.

Material on how to create a safety plan, and what makes an effective safety plan should be available. It should include a danger assessment that could educate victims and family of the possible lethal danger they are facing.

Victims leaving a relationship often face tremendous difficulty with finding new housing, financial resources and credit repair. Contact information for those additional resources available through community partners should be included. Finally, the online resource would include additional information to help address issues of mental health, drugs and alcohol.

Recognizing that not only victims need to be educated about the dangers of leaving violent domestic relationships, it is recommended that these same resources be adapted and available to those on the outside looking in. Family members and friends can equally gain access to information to educate them on the warning signs that they should be looking for, including information on lethality factors in troubled relationships and resources they can reach out to help them understand the dangers a victim faces and arms them with the tools necessary to help.

**B. Use the County Website, Internal Employee Newsletter and County Social Media to Promote Awareness of DV Education Programs**

The County has the power to send out social media alerts and awareness messages that promote safety at work to their employees and to the general public. Including messages on these trainings, on website information and promoting education not just for victims but families, friends and employees could greatly increase education. To increase awareness, this issue could be highlighted during the month of October, Domestic Violence Awareness Month and repeated weekly throughout the year.

**C. Train One Person in Each County Agency Through the Free Programs Described Above so Each County Agency has a Point Person**

Training one person in each agency outside of human resources on family/interpersonal violence will demonstrate the County's prioritization of these issues and promote employee safety both at work and during their personal lives. This training would also educate county employees on the labor code protections for victims of violence. These trainings could be expanded to lunch time optional trainings for more employees.

**2. Promote Education and Safety Planning to Local Community Health Organizations that have Clients with Substance Abuse issues**

The connection between substance abuse and lethal violence is well documented. A majority of the fatal family violence episodes involve alcohol or other drugs with methamphetamine being the drug of abuse most documented over the last ten years of DVDRT reports.

The committee recommends that the DVPC and other DVCC and County agencies provide funding and/or work with agencies that help treat alcohol and illegal drug abusers to ensure they not only screen clients for family violence, but educate employees through free programs. This includes offering education and referral services to all employees and clients regardless of whether abuse has been disclosed.

**CONCLUSION**

The DVCC is continuing to actively work with a broad spectrum of domestic violence partners including law enforcement, community organizations, businesses, educators, faith based organizations and local governments in trying to better address the issue of domestic violence in Sacramento County. The SRFJC can now provide a unique opportunity to further advance the successful collaborative efforts it has developed to deal with issues surrounding domestic violence in the community. The DVDRT looks forward to continued support during the next year as it explores this exciting opportunity.