

## **FLORIDA DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FATALITY REVIEW E-NEWSLETTER**

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The Department of Children and Families (DCF) has received an award from the Grants to Encourage Arrest Policies and Enforcement of Protection Orders Program, administered by the Department of Justice, to partner with the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence (FCADV) to create a statewide domestic violence fatality review team. The two year grant will enable the statewide team to meet four times and to sponsor two statewide fatality review training institutes for local fatality review teams and other members of the community.

### **National Experts to Serve as Project Consultants**

Dr. Neil Websdale and Matthew Dale, national experts on domestic violence fatality review, have agreed to serve as consultants to Florida's statewide team. As project consultants, they will also develop the curriculum for and conduct two statewide domestic violence fatality review trainings tentatively set for April and September, 2009.

Dr. Websdale is Professor of Criminal Justice at Northern Arizona University and Principal Project Advisor to and former Director of the National Domestic Violence Fatality Review Initiative. He has published work on domestic violence, the history of crime, policing, social change, and public policy. Dr. Websdale has published four books including: *Rural Woman Battering and the Justice System: An Ethnography* (Sage Publications), 1998, which won the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences Outstanding Book Award in 1999; *Understanding Domestic Homicide* (Northeastern University Press), 1999; *Making Trouble: Cultural Constructions of Crime, Deviance, and Control* (Aldine Books, co-edited with Jeff Ferrell), 1999; and *Policing the Poor: From Slave Plantation to Public Housing* (Northeastern University Press), 2001, winner of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences Outstanding Book Award in 2002 and the Gustavus-Myers Center for the Study of Bigotry and Human Rights Award in 2002. He is currently working on a book tentatively entitled *Familicidal Hearts*, due to be published by Oxford University Press in 2008. His social policy work consists of helping establish a national network of domestic violence fatality review teams. He has also worked on issues related to community policing, full faith and credit, and risk assessment and management in domestic violence cases.

In October 2001, Montana Attorney General Mike McGrath appointed Matthew Dale as the first-ever Director of the Department of Justice's (DOJ) Office of Consumer Protection and Victim Services (OCPVS). In this position, Mr. Dale coordinates work around the state in the areas of dating violence, consumer protection, sexual assault and domestic violence. A key goal of the office is to consolidate and focus various programs within DOJ under a single management structure. Mr. Dale's work in the area of family violence includes staffing the MT Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team. This group of professionals visits communities that have experienced a recent death as a result of family violence. Team members work with their counterparts in the affected community (law enforcement, victim services, tribal governments, clergy, medical providers, CPS, batterers' treatment, courts, etc.) to identify gaps in services in an attempt to prevent future homicides. Mr. Dale has also served as a senior consultant for the National Domestic Violence Fatality Review Initiative and has given numerous presentations across the country on fatality review. He has published in the *Fatality Review Bulletin* and the journal *Violence Against Women*.

## **Second Meeting of Statewide Fatality Review Team**

The statewide team held its second meeting in Tallahassee on November 18, 2008. In attendance were representatives of DCF, FCADV, the Department of Corrections, the Office of the Attorney General, the Sheriff's and Police Chiefs Associations, the Florida Prosecuting Attorneys Association, the Department of Health, the Office of State Court Administration, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, the Department of Education, the child death review team, domestic violence centers, batterer's intervention programs, medical examiner, a survivor of domestic violence, and local fatality review teams.

Project consultants Dr. Neil Websdale and Matthew Dale facilitated the team's discussion at the meeting. The team identified the following general trends in Florida, which track trends nationally:

- The majority of domestic violence homicide victims did not call law enforcement for assistance prior to their deaths
- The majority of domestic violence homicide victims did not receive services from a domestic violence center
- The majority of domestic violence homicide perpetrators were not previously involved with law enforcement

The team members identified and discussed possible gaps in law enforcement, civil and criminal court, social services, education, and other systems in Florida that contribute to these trends.

Team members also discussed ideas for outreach to address prevention of domestic violence. The team identified the following populations as targets for outreach. Representatives of these groups also should be members of domestic violence fatality review teams:

- Women. They are the majority of domestic violence victims, and they should be the primary focus of outreach. Women need to hear that there are services available to help them.
- Men. The majority of perpetrators are male and it is necessary to bring men into the domestic violence advocacy movement and educate them to prevent domestic violence.
- Clergy/Faith Base communities: Research suggests that domestic violence victims did seek support from clergy.
- Youth/Teens, through education in schools.

Members also discussed the role of a statewide domestic violence fatality review team, and how the statewide team could assist local fatality review teams. The consensus was that the statewide team should provide technical assistance and guidance to local fatality review teams in a number of ways. The statewide team will seek survey responses from local fatality review teams to help guide the curriculum for the two training institutes in 2009.

The FCADV Fatality Review webpage is at, <http://www.fcadv.org/projects-fatality.php>

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