

# Remembering and Responding

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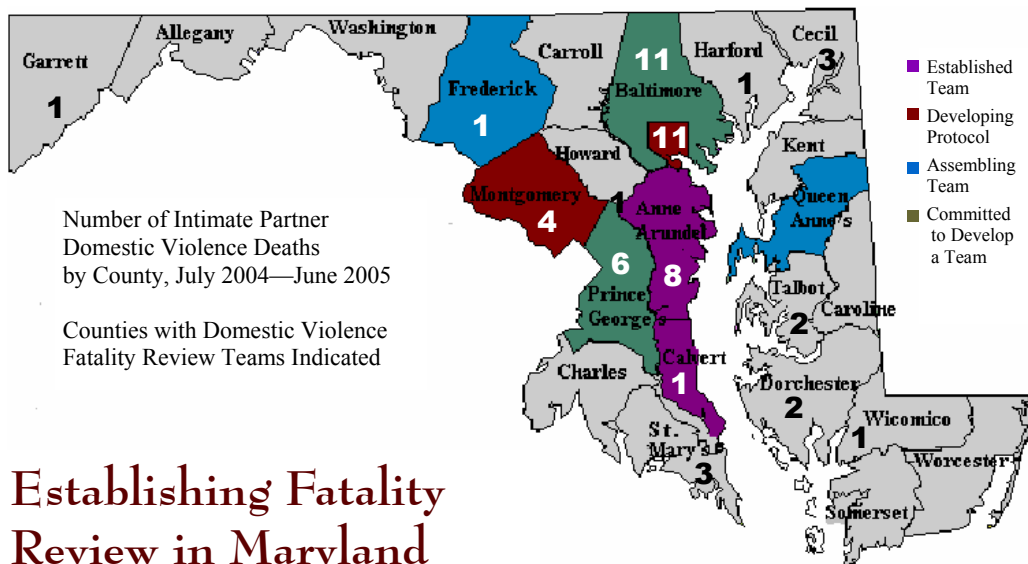
## Maryland Domestic Violence Fatality Review Newsletter

### Why Review Domestic Fatalities?

Each year, the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV) compiles a record of those who died because of domestic violence, based on information from the Maryland State Police, media reports, and information from local domestic violence service agencies. In the year July 2004 through June 2005, 55 persons died as a result of intimate partner domestic violence in Maryland. The breakdown of these deaths provides some insights:

- 16 women were killed by their husbands
- 15 women were killed by their boyfriends
- 2 men were killed by their girlfriends
- 1 woman was killed in a same-sex relationship
- 7 "third parties" (4 men and 3 women) were killed by abusers (all male)
- 1 male abuser was killed by police responding to a domestic violence call
- 13 male abusers committed suicide following domestic violence incidents

While these numbers are eye-opening, they cannot tell us what agencies or communities can do, or do differently, to help avoid future tragedies. Only by hearing victims' stories can we begin to recognize missed opportunities and obstacles faced by victims which we can work to address. Domestic violence fatality reviews provide a forum for developing such understanding.



### Establishing Fatality Review in Maryland

Anne Arundel and Calvert Counties, with the assistance of the MNADV, organized the first domestic violence fatality reviews teams in Maryland, in 2003 and 2004, respectively. These teams found that their ability to share information and make valuable recommendations would be enhanced with legislated confidentiality and liability protections. Accordingly, the MNADV fashioned a bill, modeled after the existing child fatality review statute, that would allow team members to share otherwise confidential information within the setting of a team review, require team members to honor the confidential nature of team reviews, and protect members from liability and from being subpoenaed to testify in civil and criminal cases about information provided during the course of team reviews.

**HB 741, "Local Domestic Violence Fatality Review Teams," was enacted July 1, 2005, and codified in Title 4, Subtitle 7 of the Family Law Article.**

### New Quarterly Newsletter

This newsletter is a product of the Maryland Domestic Violence Fatality Review Council. The Council provides support for current DVFRTs, encourages jurisdictions to consider establishing a team, discusses relevant issues, and offers recommendations for change. The Council consists of the chairpersons, vice-chairs, and other representatives of Maryland review teams, and is assisted by the MNADV.



### Maryland Review Teams

**Anne Arundel County**  
Operating since 2003. David Cordle, Chairperson; Sgt. Kenneth Arbaugh, Vice-Chair.

**Calvert County**  
Operating since 2004. Janet Scott, Chairperson; Jennifer Morton, Vice-Chair.

**Montgomery County**  
Operating since December 2005, developing its protocol. Laura Chase, Chairperson; Hannah Sassoon, Vice-Chair.

**Baltimore City**  
Operating since January 2006, developing its protocol. Cristina Mator, Coordinator.

**Frederick County**  
Preparing for initial briefing for agency heads. Major Gary Morton, Coordinator.

**Queen Anne's County**  
Preparing for agency head briefing. Michelle Mayoral, Coordinator.

**Prince George's County**  
Committed to establishing a team in 2006.

**Baltimore County**  
Committed to establishing a team in 2006.



*A meeting of the Calvert County Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team in 2005*

## First Statewide Meeting Held

On February 23, 2006, following the Montgomery County DVFRT meeting, the chairpersons, vice-chairs, and representatives from five DVFRTs met to discuss the formulation of a coordinating group. The purpose of this new group, the Maryland Domestic Violence Fatality Review Council, will be to support operating DVFRTs, encourage the organization of new teams, discuss issues, and offer recommendations. The Council will meet semi-annually, and it will meet next on September 7, 2006 in Annapolis.

## Reviewing “Near-Fatalities”

The enabling legislation provides that the confidentiality protections afforded review teams applies to reviews of fatalities, suicides, or “cases of serious physical injury.” (FL §4-704) The standard for reviewing near-fatalities is that the case constituted a felony assault. The inclusion of these cases should be particularly helpful to counties which have not recently experienced many domestic fatalities.

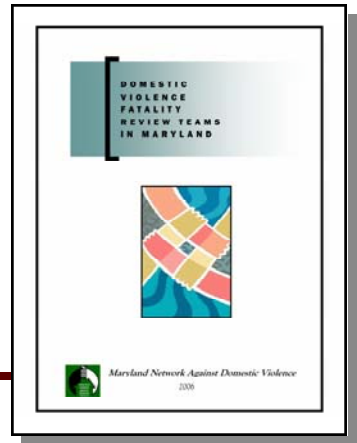


*“Silent Witness” memorial silhouette.  
See [www.silentwitness.net](http://www.silentwitness.net).*

## Remembering the Purpose of Fatality Review

*From the MNADV Start-Up Kit—*

“This model protocol seeks to facilitate team operations to enable teams to review the life and death of a victim of domestic violence. Toward that purpose, for example, the model protocol addresses administrative processes, but developers should remember that the point of a review is to “humanize” the victim’s life and death so that the best possible findings and recommendations will result. The protocol, and all the administrative and other processes, should work toward that end.”



*Learn more at the website of the National Domestic Violence Fatality Review Initiative, [www.ndvfri.org](http://www.ndvfri.org).*



## The Growth of Fatality Review

We hope that all counties will see the value of domestic violence fatality review and undertake to establish teams. You have the support of the MNADV, the new Maryland Domestic Violence Fatality Review Council, and the National Domestic Violence Fatality Review Initiative, and carry the hope of all victims of domestic violence in your part of Maryland.

## If You Would Like to Establish a Team

Please contact the MNADV. We will provide you with:

- 1) A **Start-up Kit** containing a step-by-step discussion of how to start and maintain a team, and a sample work binder. The binder suggests a method for organizing work materials and offers sample documents.
- 2) The model protocol, which gives teams a start on their operating framework.
- 3) **Support** in walking through each step of the development process.

### **Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence**

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*Remember  
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