

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FATALITY REVIEW TEAM  
OF  
CARROLL COUNTY, MARYLAND

Since 2011, the Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team of Carroll County has met on a regular basis to review fatality and near fatality cases that were a result of intimate partner violence. The team is comprised of key community partners that work with victims, offenders and their families. The goal of Carroll County's DVFRT is to identify policies, practices and strategies that could benefit from improvement in order to keep victims and families safe as well as to promote overall healthy relationships.

In 2015, the DVFRT of Carroll County reviewed two cases of near fatalities. In Carroll County, we are fortunate that we do not have a significantly high number of fatalities and go most years without a fatality to review. Because of this, we review cases that were considered very high danger and could have led to fatality. We met a total of five times in 2015 in order to review these cases.

**2015 RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. **Key Finding:** At this time there is no specific policy in place within the Carroll County 911 Center describing how call takers should handle incoming 911 calls where there is an indication of a disturbance or conflict in the background of the call, but the caller will not communicate with the call taker (open phone line).

**Recommendation:** The DVFRT recommends that the 911 Center establish a policy/practice of dispatching a police officer to check on the welfare of those at the scene of a 911 call when there is evidence of a disturbance or conflict on the line, but no communication with the caller.

**Evidence:** The DVFRT in Carroll County has reviewed the Carroll County 911 Center's Standard Operating Procedures relating to call taking. The instructions regarding calls where there is no identified person asking for help are specific to calls believed to be "accidentally" dialed. The dispatchers are instructed to call back the number and, if they are told things are 'fine' or they cannot get through on the line, they are instructed to take no further action. The guideline is not specific as to calls where there

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is evidence of a disturbance or problem on the line. It is noted that DV advocates at the local domestic violence agency (as do most centers across the state) have been instructing their clients to call 911 and keep the phone line open even if they cannot speak because they presumed that a police officer would be sent to the location of the call to check on the welfare of the caller. It appears that this has been an inaccurate assumption that the domestic violence agency has used to safety plan with adults and children.

**Action:** The DVFRT of Carroll County is reaching out with a formal letter to the Director of the Carroll County Office of Public Safety regarding the current 911 Center call taking policy. We are requesting that their policy be modified to provide call takers and dispatchers with clear guidance relating to the dispatch of a law enforcement officer to check on the welfare of callers in these circumstances. We are also requesting the opportunity to provide their staff with domestic violence training appropriate to their role within the 911 Center.

**Timeframe:** The letter has been mailed to the Director of Public Safety and a meeting is currently being planned to occur in February 2016. The DVFRT goal is to have both the modified policy and training scheduled by April 2016.

**Person(s) Responsible:** DVFRT Chair Jeff Spaulding has prepared and mailed the initial letter to the Director of Public Safety, Mr. Scott Campbell. A meeting will be scheduled as soon as practical involving Jeff Spaulding, Kelley Rainey (DVFRT Coordinator), Mr. Campbell and Mr. Jack Brown (911 Center Director).