



**Family Violence Death Review Committee:
Case Review Public Report No. 7**

July 2019

Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	2
Incident	3
Background.....	3
Key Findings / Analysis.....	3
Analysis	3
Best Practices	3
Main Themes that Emerged.....	3
Recommendations	5

Incident

In 2012, a female victim was found by the police deceased in her home from multiple stab wounds. The perpetrator was later found in a different location, having died as a result of suicide.

Background

The victim and perpetrator had been in a dating relationship for several years, and had maintained separate residences.

Key Findings / Analysis

Analysis

The perpetrator and victim had not sought any system intervention during the course of their relationship. Information reviewed for this case indicated that the victim was most likely unaware of the perpetrator's criminal history or history of spousal assault.

Best Practices

RCMP was quick to respond with a check on welfare for the victim once concerns arose that the victim might have been harmed, and to mobilize resources to locate the perpetrator once police discovered the victim had been killed.

Main Themes that Emerged

Behaviour Patterns and Cumulative Trauma

The perpetrator had a long history of committing violence against his female partners, including serious assaults and uttering death threats, and had been convicted in the past of the attempted murder of a previous partner. He was described as controlling, jealous, and manipulative, as well as emotionally and physically abusive towards his partners. The perpetrator admitted to having used illegal drugs and steroids continuously throughout his adult life, and records indicate he had pervasive mental health issues. Police noted that the perpetrator was indiscriminating with his violent behaviours, assaulting and threatening both men and women alike.

The perpetrator had previous dealings with Alberta Children's Services related to a former partner, and had been deemed to be high risk due to his long history of violent assaults. Historically, the perpetrator had no-contact orders imposed on him by the court to protect nearly every long-term partner he had been in a relationship with—with the exception of the victim. In every case, the perpetrator consistently violated the no-contact orders. The Alberta Community Corrections and Release Branch considered the perpetrator to present "an unacceptable risk to persons close to him."

The perpetrator was reported to have been a victim himself of severe childhood abuse, and it was posited by professionals involved with the perpetrator that his childhood history was a significant contributing factor to his violent behaviours and the continual abuse of his female partners.

While the perpetrator participated in numerous corrections-mandated programs to address anger management and family violence, the programs did not reduce or appear to have deterred the perpetrator's abusive behaviours. Only in recent years has family violence programming for victims and perpetrators begun to actively examine and address the effects of cumulative trauma.

Bystanders

The perpetrator had an extensive social network of family, friends and acquaintances. Many individuals reported being aware of the perpetrator's abusive behaviours towards his partners, and in several cases, reported also being aware of the severity and regularity of the perpetrator's abuse towards his partners. Several of the individuals had commented that they were astonished by the fact that the perpetrator's partners continued to stay with the perpetrator and "put up with" the degree of abuse inflicted by the perpetrator, even though the individuals in question had been fully aware that the perpetrator regularly threatened to kill his partners, and in some cases, members of the partner's family, if the women ever terminated the relationship.

Despite the surprisingly large number of individuals who appear to have been aware of the perpetrator's abusive and controlling behaviour towards his partners, few people intervened or reported the perpetrator to authorities. Further still, several individuals later reported having seen or heard substantial evidence to suggest that the perpetrator had either grievously injured or killed the victim, yet did nothing because they "didn't want to know."

Despite the significant personal and societal consequences of family violence, and the number of programs and services available, most individuals still lack basic knowledge and education around the issue of family violence.

Recommendations

1. To Alberta Community and Social Services, the Family Violence Death Review Committee (FVDRC) recommends:
 - a. The development of a public awareness strategy targeting educating and empowering bystanders of family violence to promote Albertans understanding of:
 - where and how to get help with family violence; and
 - what constitutes 'high risk' as it relates to family violence, abusive behaviours and warning signs.
2. To Alberta Community and Social Services, the FVDRC recommends:
 - a. To explore best practices and implement a coordinated services model to address family violence in Alberta, focusing on effective and early responses, and which include the capacity to address cumulative trauma for both victims and perpetrators.
3. To Alberta Justice and Solicitor General, the FVDRC recommends the development and implementation of dedicated additional supports for perpetrators to address:
 - a. The cumulative trauma and complex needs of perpetrators who have been victims of abuse themselves; and
 - b. The need for enhanced, ongoing supports to assist perpetrators and their families with continued rehabilitation once involvement with the justice system has ended.

The FVDRC also supports Alberta Justice and Solicitor General's current work on restorative practices with respect to family violence.
4. To Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services, in collaboration with relevant Alberta government ministries, the FVDRC recommends the development of additional services to address the following gaps in Alberta's health services related to family violence, trauma and mental health:
 - a. The further development of enhanced individualized treatment services targeting the complex needs of family violence victims;
 - b. The further development of enhanced individualized treatment services targeting the complex needs of family violence perpetrators; and
 - c. Increase equitable access to health supports through Alberta's health system, in order to address the shortages of health services and to ensure Albertans have equitable access to mental health services and treatment in a less cost-prohibitive manner.