

Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Inc.  
Domestic Violence Fatality Review Teams  
Position Paper

The Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ICADV) recognizes that domestic violence deaths in our state are a significant problem that should be analyzed and researched. Forty-eight women, men and children's deaths have been ruled due to domestic violence in Indiana during 1999-2000. ICADV believes there were probably other men, women and children who died because of domestic violence homicide or suicide that went undetected.

ICADV believes that Domestic Violence Fatality Review Teams (Teams) should be established statewide in Indiana to accurately depict the number of homicide and suicide related domestic violence deaths that occur each year.

ICADV believes that Teams would also be responsible for educating all law enforcement, coroners and victims advocates on how to determine if a death or suicide was the result of domestic violence.

ICADV believes that a clear understanding of domestic violence homicides and suicides would result in a more proactive approach to working to break the cycle of domestic violence in communities. Domestic violence is a crime that often escalates over time, increasing in severity and even death when the victim decides to leave her abuser.

ICADV believes that these Teams can be effective by focusing on the systematic response to domestic violence in order to avert future domestic violence deaths and by developing recommendations for coordinated community prevention and intervention strategies to eradicate domestic violence.

The Teams would be responsible for taking the lead in ensuring that policies and protocols among the local criminal justice entities are established for domestic violence. The teams would also ensure that the community is educated about the deadly ramifications of domestic violence, to curb additional homicides and suicides.

ICADV believes that the Indiana General Assembly should introduce legislation that would establish Domestic Violence Fatality Review Teams. Legislation would enable community or regional Teams to be formed throughout the state. This new law would ideally specify the make-up of the Teams, their specific duties, procedures for team investigations, and confidentiality issues.

ICADV believes that the Teams should include at a minimum the local domestic violence prevention and intervention provider as an expert on the team to assist other members in both identifying the specific case and assisting in educating the general public and media.

ICADV believes that the Teams can improve communication among the courts and agencies in time of crisis, provide accurate information to the media and general public, and suggest deliberate improvements in the system by addressing any and all weaknesses.

ICADV as the recognized leader on domestic violence prevention, asks that ICADV be given responsibility to serve as the clearinghouse for all reviews once completed.

