

Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children

Learning to End Abuse



Western
Education



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Evaluating Risk: Who Needs to Know
What, When & How Do You Get It

VAW and CAS Collaboration – September 19, 2013

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Children Living with Domestic Violence: Progress in the Field

- Psychological harm & trauma from exposure
- Overlap with other forms of child maltreatment
- Impact on infants, children & adolescents
- VAW-CAS on the road to collaboration
- Emerging Issue - Risk of homicide - “retaliating filicide”- child being killed to punish a spouse (Bourget et al., 2007)

Complex Research Conundrum



Limits and Benefits of Risk Assessment

Limitations

- Retrospective rather than prospective studies
- Propensity towards “false positives”
- Risk is dynamic rather than static

Benefits

- Development of common language across systems
- Assists in the prioritization of limited resources
- Assists with safety planning strategies - may save lives

Preventing Tragedies

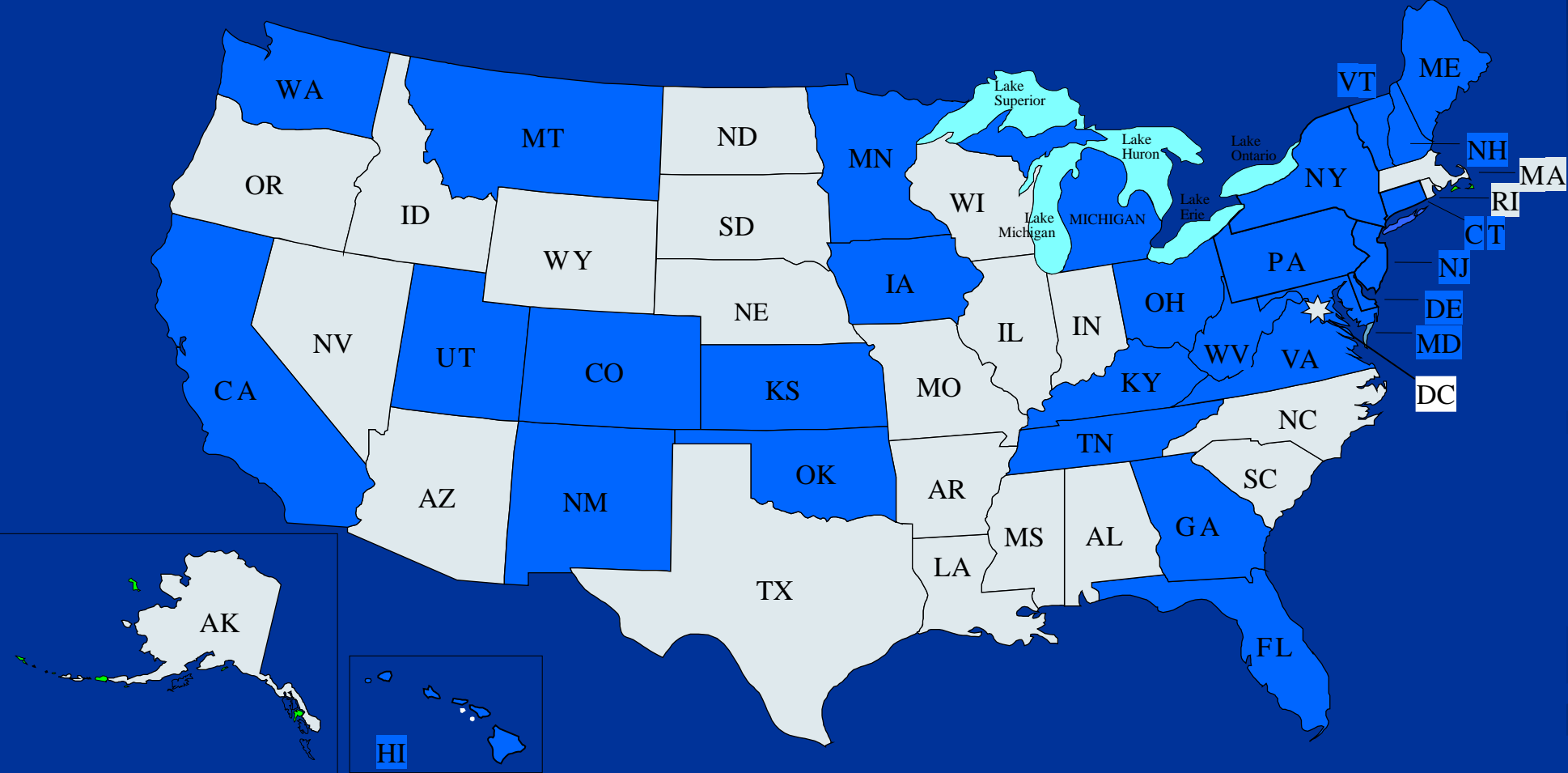


Ontario Chief Coroner's Office Domestic Violence Death Review Committee

“We Speak for the Dead to Protect the Living”



Active DVFRTs



DVDRC Purpose

To assist the Office of the Chief Coroner in the investigation and review of deaths of persons that occur as a direct result of domestic violence, and to make recommendations to help prevent such deaths in similar circumstances.

DVDRC Objectives

- Confidential review of DV deaths
- Offer expert opinion to Chief Coroner
- Create / maintain a comprehensive database
- Identify trends, risks and patterns
- Identify systemic gaps and shortcomings
- Make recommendations

Are DV Homicides Predictable & Preventable?

- 84% of the cases had at least 7 risk markers
- Critical information held by family, work colleagues, front-line professionals
- Children are the victims in a number of ways
- Critical need to collaborate between child protection and VAW services as well as the justice system (criminal and family court)

DVDRC 2002-2012

- 164 cases (90 homicides and 74 homicide-suicides)
- 251 tragic deaths involving intimate partner violence
- Victims: 80% Female, 12% Children, 8% Male

Challenges in DVDRC

- Creating a climate of trust and understanding rather than shame and blame
- Access to all relevant information
- Engaging each sector and discipline
- Gender analysis – context and meaning of violence
- Auditing implementation of recommendations

Children Killed in the Context of Domestic Violence

Based on DVDRC reports (US/Canada) 3 situations in which children were killed within the context of domestic violence

1. Indirectly as a result of attempting to protect a parent during a violent episode
2. Directly as part of an overall murder–suicide plan by a parent who decides to kill the entire family
3. Directly as revenge against the partner who decided to end the relationship or for some other perceived betrayal.

Paternal Filicide in the Context of Domestic Violence

- The Problem – Often Ignored
- Risk Factors?
- Risk Assessment Tools?
- Response of the Criminal Justice System
- Response of the Family Justice System – Child Protection & Child Custody

Are Paternal Filicides Predictable & Preventable?

- 76% of the cases had at least 7 risk markers
- Critical information held by family & friends, work colleagues, front-line professionals
- Children are the victims in a number of ways
- Collaboration amongst professionals & agencies is critical - including the justice system (criminal and family court)

Common Risk Markers

74% - Prior history of domestic violence

72% - Actual or pending separation

56% - Obsessive behavior (including stalking the victim)

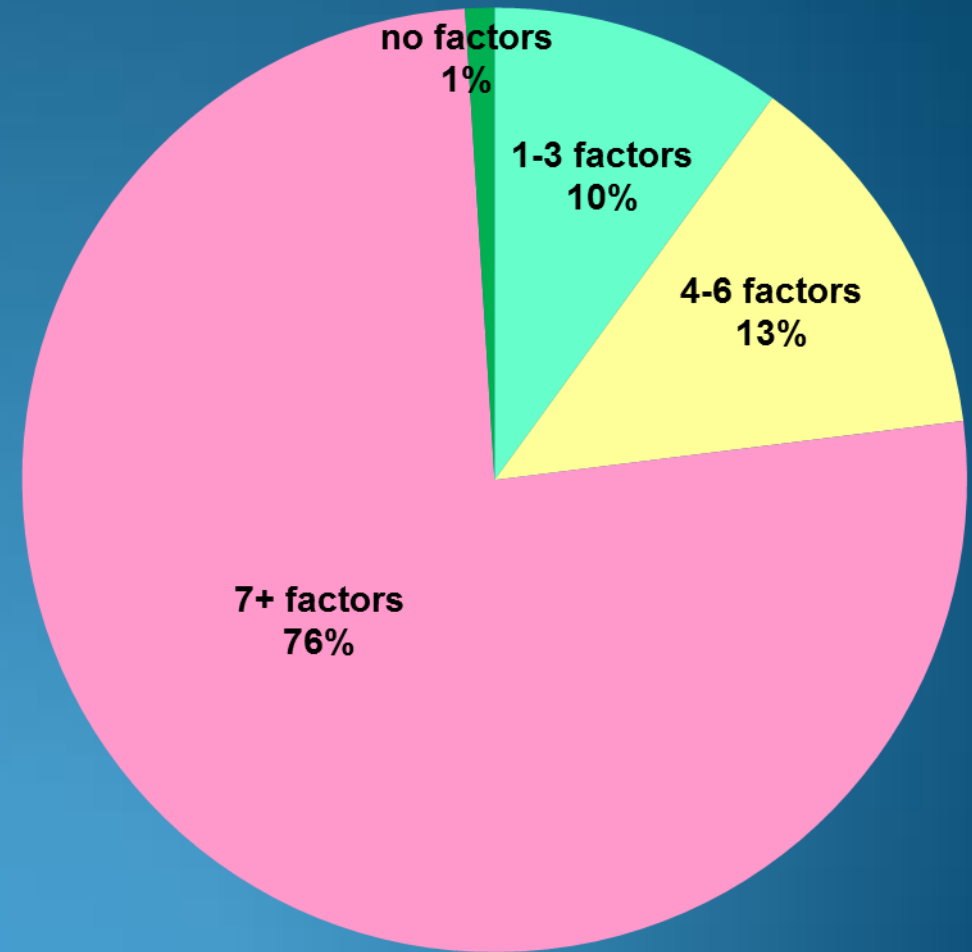
56% - Depression (or other mental health problems)

51% - Prior threats to commit suicide or attempt

47% - Escalation of violence

Multiple Risk Factors

- 1) History of Domestic Violence
- 2) Actual or pending separation
- 3) Obsessive behaviour displayed by perpetrator
- 4) Perpetrator depressed
- 5) Prior threats/attempts to commit suicide
- 6) Escalation of violence
- 7) Victim had intuitive sense of fear
- 8) Prior threats to kill victim
- 9) Perpetrator unemployed
- 10) Prior attempts to isolate victim



Research on Risk Factors for Child Homicide in the Context of Domestic Violence

- Perpetrator unemployment, separation, psychological instability, substance abuse & prior history of DV (Marleau et al. 1999; Brandon, 2009)
- Antecedents include history of child abuse, prior family involvement with agencies & domestic violence in the family (Websdale, 1999)
- Often child victims are 4 years of age or younger (Division of Criminal Justice Services Office of Justice Research and Performance, 2008)

Characteristics of domestic homicide cases involving child deaths

(Based on 10 cases reviewed by the Ontario DVDRC between 2003 and 2009)

- 50% homicide-suicide cases; 50% homicide cases
- 80% of the homicides were perpetrated by a male
- 80% of the cases had 7 or more risk factors
 - Most common risk factors: prior history of DV; separation; obsessive behaviour; and depression

Who Knows What?

- Family 73%
- Friends 65%
- Police 57%
- Lawyer 42%
- Co-workers 33%
- Medical 22%
- DV agency 15%
- CAS 10%
- Clergy 4%

Agency Involvement in Domestic Homicide Cases With and Without Child Victims

Category	No Child In Home (n=44)	No Child Target (n=27)	Child Target (n=13)
All Agency Contact**	4.07	6.30	9.31
Perpetrator Only**	2.75	4.52	6.69
Victim Only*	2.57	3.37	5.77
Perpetrator & Victim**	1.25	1.89	3.31
Children	n/a	0.52	1.08
**p<.001 *p<.01	Data based on 84 domestic homicide cases reviewed by the Ontario DVDRC from 2003 to 2009		

Hamilton, L.H.A., Jaffe, P.G. & Campbell, M. (2013). Assessing children's risk for homicide in the context of domestic violence. *Journal of Family Violence*, 28(2), 179-89.

Missed Opportunities for Community Intervention

- Number of agencies involved with child homicide cases significantly higher (9.31 vs. 6.30 vs. 4.07) - higher number of agencies for perpetrator and victims
- Almost no risk assessment or safety planning for child and/or adult victim

(Hamilton, Jaffe & Campbell, 2012)

Risk Assessment Tools?

- Study on effectiveness of Danger Assessment, Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment, Spousal Assault Risk Assessment for 13 child homicides vs. 27 adult DV homicide
- No overall differences – when mothers were at risk, children were at risk
- Individual factors – “prior threats to harm children” from DA (69% vs. 37%) and “intimate relationship problem” from SARA (77% vs. 33%)

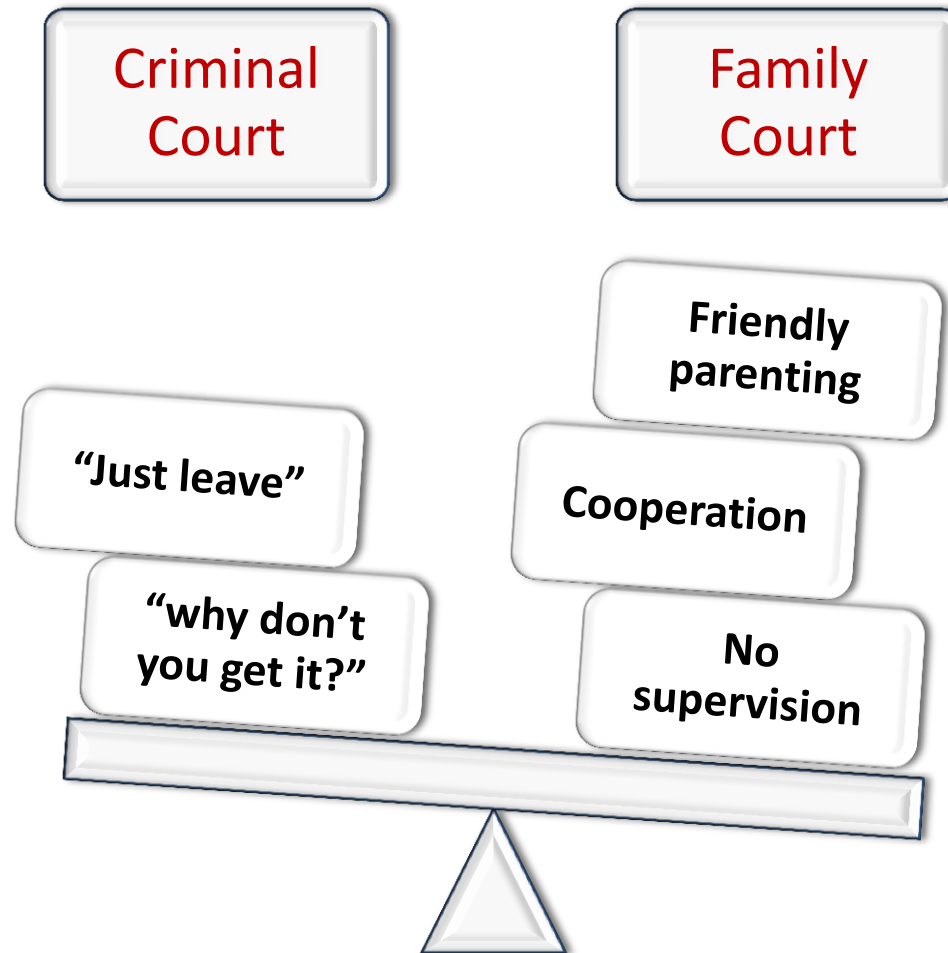
Who, What, When & How?

- Who?
 - All front-line professionals and neighbours, friends, family and co-workers
- What?
 - Presence of children & vulnerabilities – Risk Assessment & Safety Planning
 - ASAP
- When?
- How?
 - **Collaboration & Information Sharing**

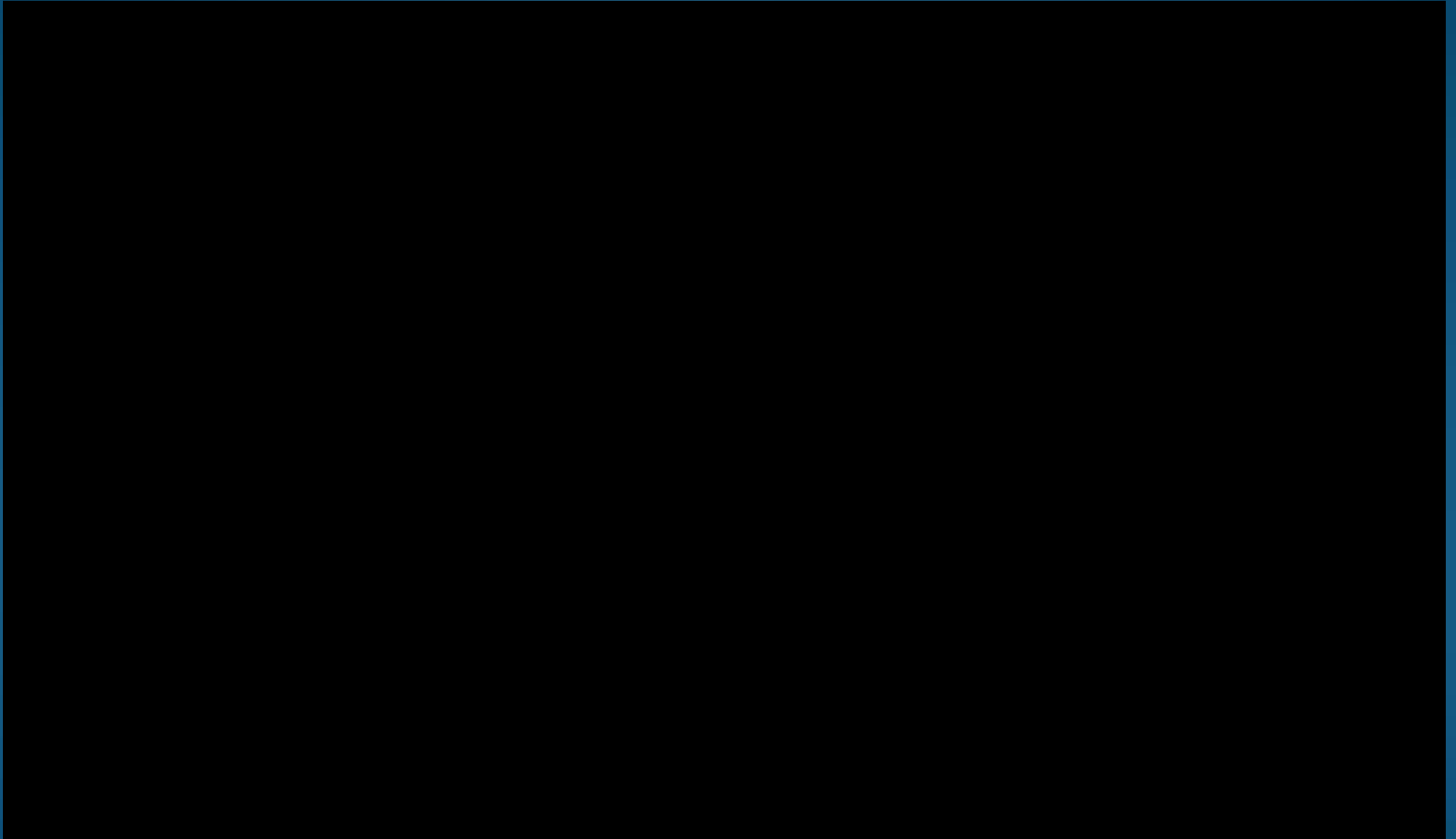
Recommendations

- Public & professional awareness of risks to children
- Risk assessment & safety planning
- Risk management & reduction with perpetrators – DV programs, focus on parenting
- Supervised or no access – even on interim basis in criminal and family law hearings
- Collaboration within family law – child protection and child custody hearing
- Collaboration with family and criminal justice systems

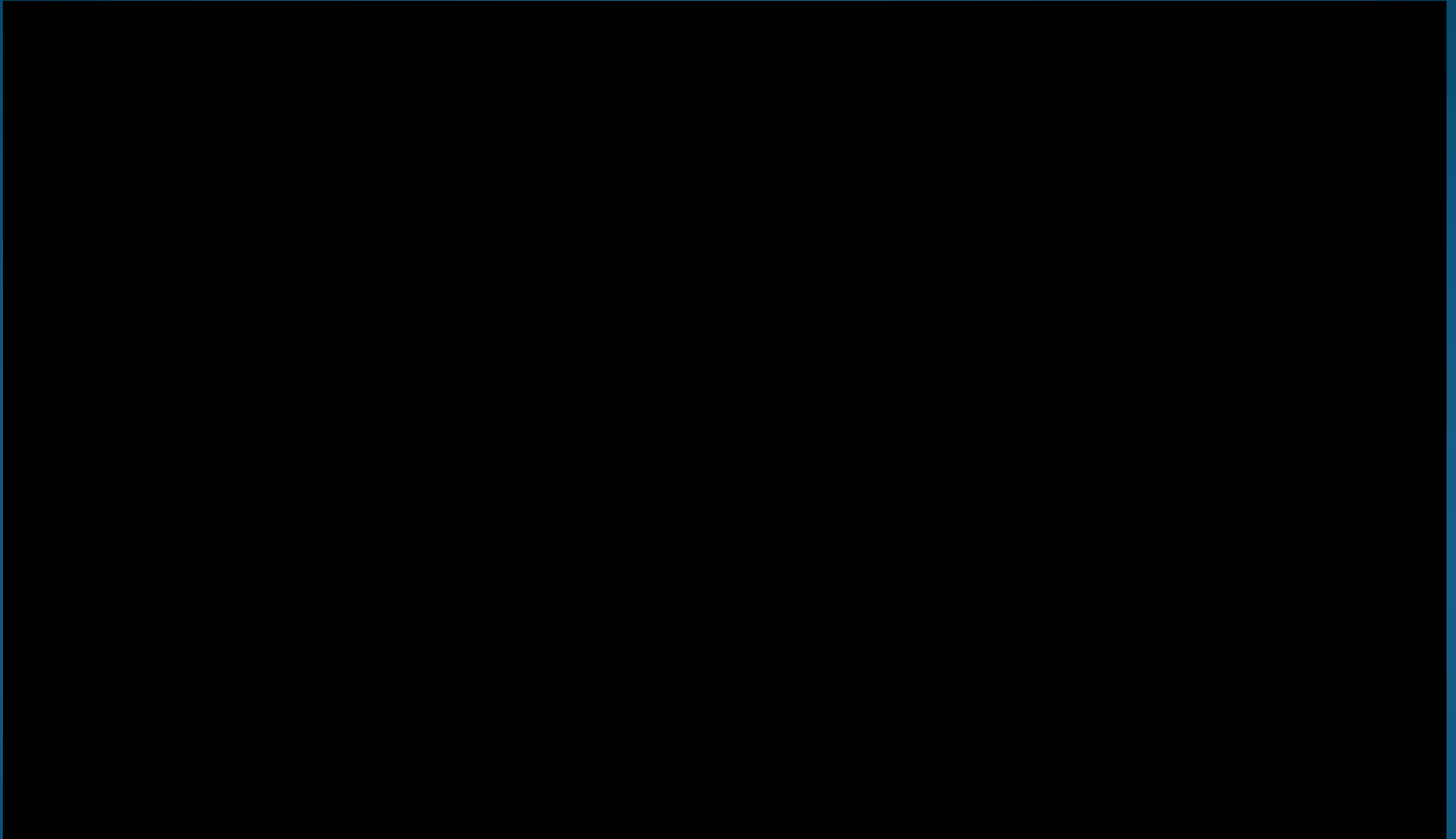
System's Mixed Messages to Victims



Risk Assessment & Risk Management Scenarios



Risk Assessment & Risk Management Intervention





Thank You!

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- Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children

www.learningtoendabuse.ca



- Learning Network: Education, Research & Resources on Violence Against Women

www.vawlearningnetwork.ca

- Domestic Violence Risk Assessment and Management Online Curriculum

www.onlinetraining.learningtoendabuse.ca

- Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Initiative

www.cdhpi.org