



To: Lethality Assessment Program Partners

From: Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence

Re: Revised statistics information

Date: October 2014

Over the last several months, the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence realized that some of the statistics that we've been using in training or in our materials are not accurate to the research we were citing. We've also noticed that others paraphrased our interpretations of the research, making it doubly-distorted. We've been working closely with Dr. Jacquelyn Campbell and Dr. Jill Messing to make sure that we fully understand the research and are not paraphrasing the statistics inaccurately.

With this memorandum we hope to clear up any confusion over what the correct statistic is, and provide everyone with the correct citation so that our partners can find and read the original research. We will be using these statistics and citations in our written documents, presentations, and trainings moving forward.

Formerly-used statistic: *In 50% of DV-related homicides, officers had previously responded to a call on the scene.*

The article analyzed the number of perpetrators who had been arrested in the year prior to the homicide, not how often officers had been on the scene of a domestic violence incident prior to a domestic violence homicide. The perpetrators were arrested for a number of different crimes (including domestic violence, other violent crime, and non-violent crimes) and the published article does not analyze how often perpetrators had been arrested for domestic violence or for crimes committed against the homicide victim.

Further, the article states that 44% of perpetrators of domestic violence homicide had been arrested in the year prior to the homicide. Dr. Campbell explained that the 50% (as compared to the 44% in the published article) is the most accurate analysis of the data, as the article went to press before all the sites had finished submitting data.

In writings and presentations, we want to use published statistics. Therefore, the revised statistic we will use is:

In the year prior to the homicide, more than 44% of abusers were arrested, and almost one-third of victims contacted the police.¹

This statistic communicates that intimate partner homicide is preventable. These contacts with the system demonstrate missed opportunities for perpetrators and victims to be assessed. Regardless of whether an arrest is made or whether probable cause is established, the LAP empowers police officers to help victims of intimate partner violence by allowing them *discretion* to use the Lethality Screen when they sense that an assault has occurred, or that the perpetrator of a crime (not

¹ Sharps, P. W., et al. (2001). Health care providers' missed opportunities for preventing femicide. *Preventive Medicine* 33, 373-80.

necessarily a DV-related crime) exhibits controlling behavior toward his/her partner.

Formerly-used statistic: *There is a 60% reduction in risk of severe assault when victims utilize the services of a DV program.*²

We asked Drs. Campbell and Messing for clarification on where this statistic was published, and whether “services” was comprehensive (including the residential and non-residential services of a DV program). Dr. Messing shared a new analysis, which Dr. Campbell agreed with, of RAVE data, in which the data suggests that *shelter* is protective. The new analysis is not yet published, and so we are not going to cite it. We will wait for its publication to use the information from the new analysis, or will look to other research to show that domestic violence services/shelter are protective of victims.

Formerly-used statistic: *Only 4% of victims of actual or attempted intimate partner homicides had utilized the services of domestic violence programs in the year before they were killed.*

Dr. Campbell clarified that the 4% refers only to *actual* homicide victims who had been abused (physically assaulted, harassed, or stalked), and that “services” was defined as hotline or shelter on the proxy informant questionnaire. Further, the study asked whether services were accessed in the year prior to the homicide: not whether services had ever been accessed.

Moving forward, we will say:

Only 4% of abused victims had used a domestic violence hotline or shelter within the year prior to being killed by an intimate partner.³

While we know that services are protective, we also know that those who are perhaps at the greatest risk of death are not reaching out for help. The LAP connects High-Danger victims who might not have otherwise reached out for assistance with emergency safety-planning services and local resources.

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² Roehl, J., O’Sullivan, C., Webster, D., & Campbell, J. (2005). Intimate partner violence risk assessment validation study, final report (“RAVE Report”). *U.S. Department of Justice*.

³ Sharps, P. W., et al. (2001). Health care providers’ missed opportunities for preventing femicide. *Preventive Medicine* 33, 373-80.