

Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children

Learning to End Abuse



Western
Education



Peter Jaffe, Western University

Lessons Learned from Tragedies

**Children Exposed to Domestic Violence :
London ON: September 19, 2013**

learningtoendabuse.ca

Complex Research Conundrum



Preventing Tragedies



Ontario Chief Coroner's Office

Domestic Violence Death Review Committee

“We Speak for the Dead to Protect the Living”



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 2002-2012

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

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)

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.

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

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%

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)

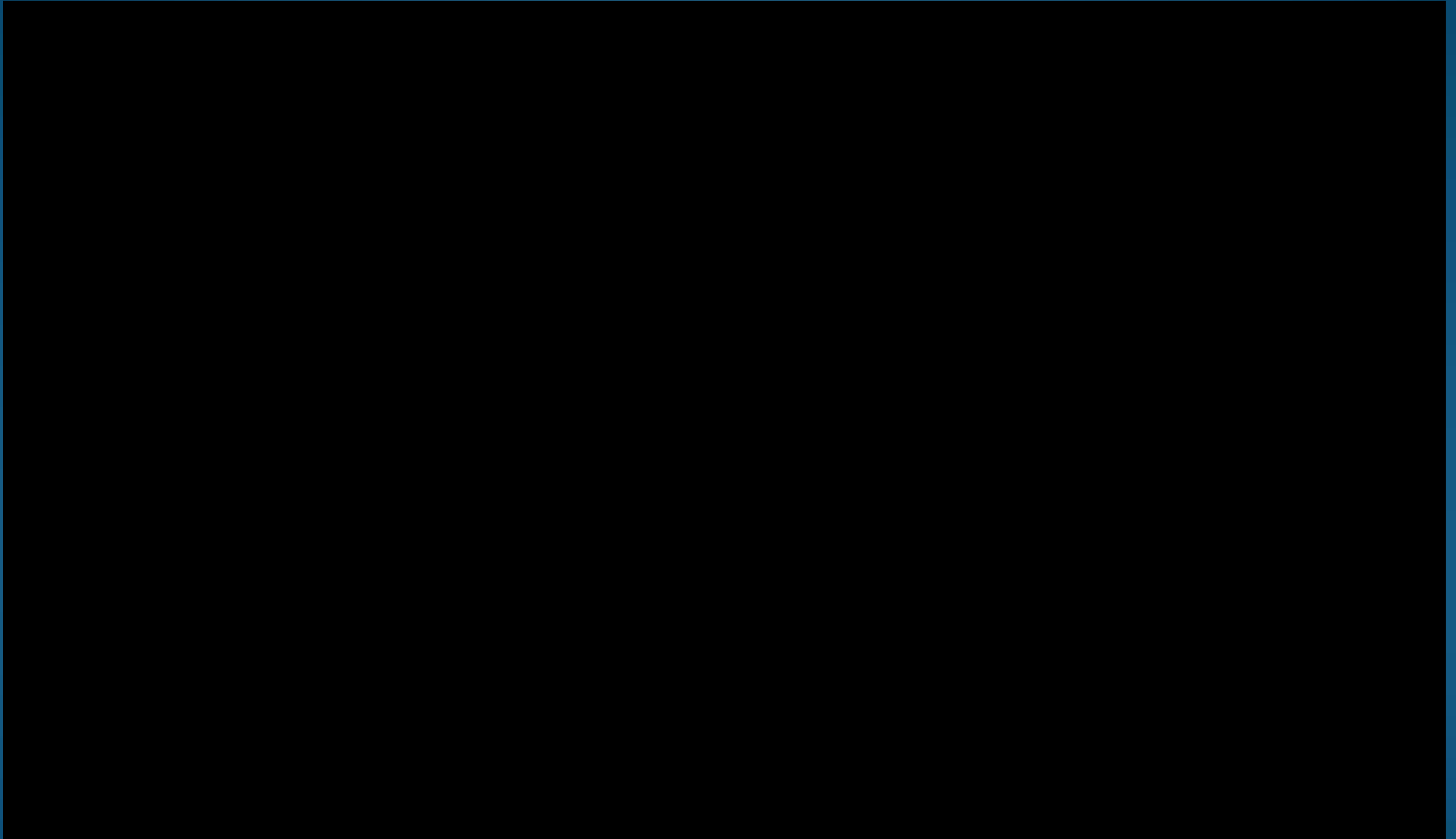
Risk Assessment Tools?

- 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%)

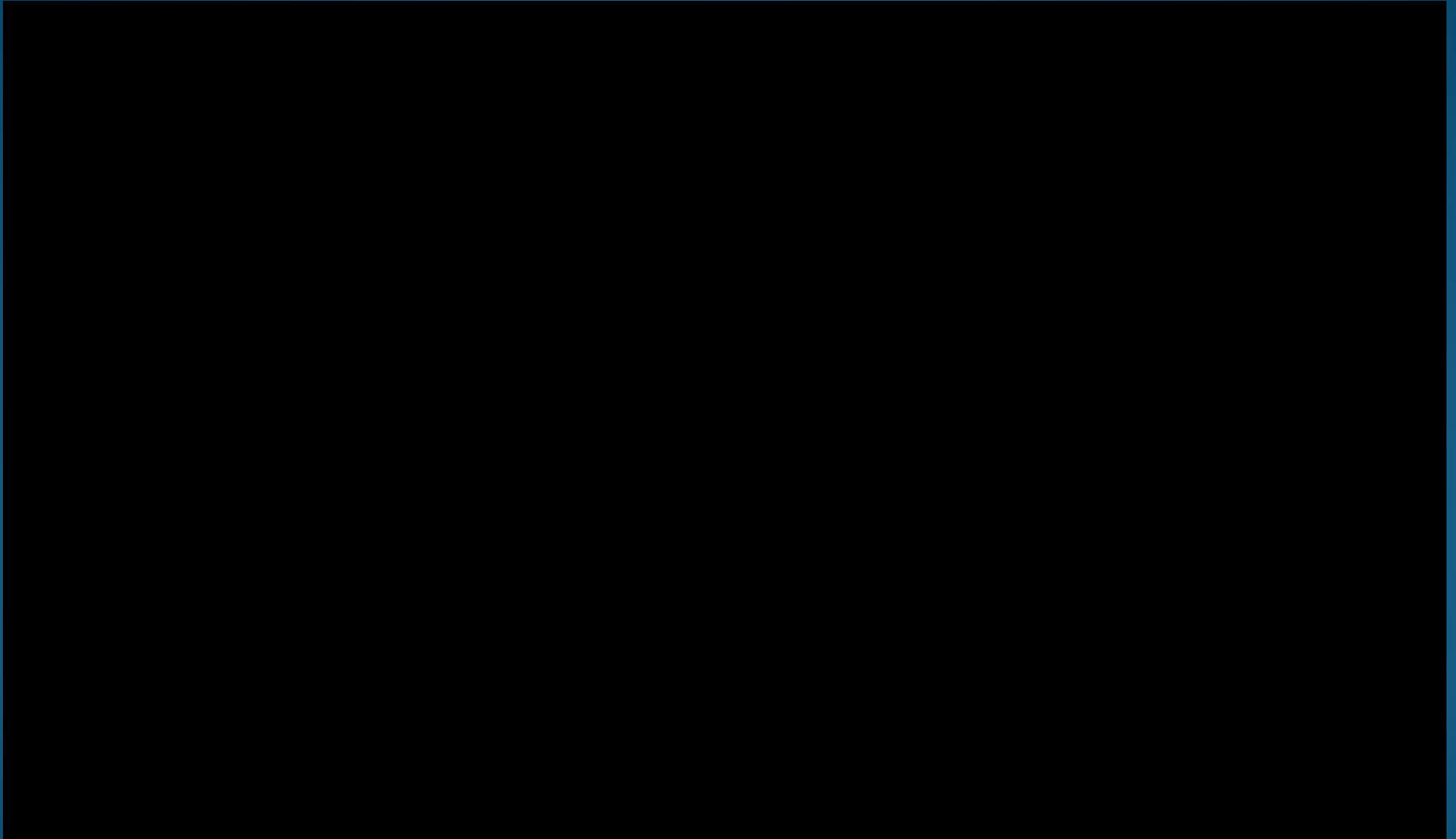
Recommendations

- 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

Risk Assessment & Risk Management Scenarios



Risk Assessment & Risk Management Intervention





Thank You!

Peter Jaffe

pjaffe@uwo.ca

- 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