



# Sentinel Event Review

*Update June 2025*

Review led by the Milwaukee Homicide Review Commission,  
Domestic Violence Review Team

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# Purpose



Understand risk factors and circumstances



Consider the event and the history leading up to the event



Identify prevention opportunities



Focus on prevention of future incidents



Focus on identifying gaps and opportunities for process, policy, practice, or system change

## Review Process

Discuss case information

Identify risk factors

Recommend system improvements

Identify prevention opportunities

Be a catalyst for community action

Report back on progress of recommendations

# Background

- Incident
- Initial response
- Request for review
- Convening of multi-disciplinary team
- Multiple meetings
- Development of recommendations
- Review, prioritization, and adoption of recommendations

Alma Center	Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office
Benedict Center	Milwaukee County Medical Examiner's Office
City of Milwaukee Fire and Police Commission	Milwaukee Homicide Review Commission
City of Milwaukee Mayor's Office	Milwaukee Police Department
City of Milwaukee Common Council	Safe and Sound
Medical College of Wisconsin	Sojourner Family Peace Center
Milwaukee Community Justice Council	The Asha Project
Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services, Behavioral Health Services	Wisconsin Department of Corrections

# Recommendation Structure

- Recommendations were reviewed by the team
- Opportunity to provide input on wording
- Prioritized based on potential reach and impact
- Grouped into both categories and tiers
- Specific order in the report is not reflective of the priority
- Input on the complexity to implement
- Recommendation structure includes:
  - Description
  - Status
  - Funding needed
  - Difficulty/complexity
  - Context

## Priority Recommendation Updates: Resources

**Priority Recommendation 1:** Expand the resources for the Domestic Violence High-Risk Team (DVHRT) to increase capacity for the number of cases staffed by the team longer-term and to support resource needs of the DVHRT agencies.

**Status:** In process – Initial funding was received from the Governor’s Office initially and was projected to end in March 2025. Additional funding has been secured that is anticipated to continue the current work through December 2026. This funding supports the higher number of cases reviewed (30 per week) and the resources from multiple partner agencies.

**Funding needed:** Yes

**Difficulty/Complexity:** Medium

## Priority Recommendation Updates: Resources

**Priority Recommendation 2:** Consider a rapid response model to create a team with specific expertise, including either advocates or individuals with lived experience with DV/IPV, that could be part of the direct co-response to incidents at the same time as the law enforcement response. This should also consider response teams including agencies with culturally specific expertise.

**Status:** In process – A pilot started in District 4 with a co-responder model as a collaboration between Sojourner Family Peace Center, MPD, and the Milwaukee County District Attorney’s Office (MCDAO) with a forensic nurse, advocate, DA representative, and officer to provide on-scene response. Primary hours of operation are approximately 10/11 am to 6/7 pm. Data is being collected to evaluate the outcomes and effectiveness of this model. A challenge is the hours of operation and is a resource-intensive process. Additional districts now have an in-house DV advocate and some also have a Domestic Violence Liaison Officer (DVLO).

**Funding needed:** Yes

**Difficulty/Complexity:** High

# Priority Recommendation Updates: Resources

**Priority Recommendation 3:** Consider an expansion or reallocation of resources for all law enforcement agencies in Milwaukee County to focus on locating and apprehending individuals with a DV/IPV history who have absconded from community supervision or have active felony warrants. This may include identifying ways to escalate attempts to find an abuser if additional incidents are reported.

**Status:** In process – Changes have been made to enhance the follow-up with cases are flagged and the information is going both the DOC and to the Milwaukee Collaborative Offender Re-entry Program (MCORP) and action is often being taken even before the DVHRT staffing (currently the focus is on DVHRT cases). More follow-up is occurring to locate individuals when reports are coming in and DOC is updating warrants and there is a higher level of response if it is updated to a violent offense of some type (versus just absconding from supervision for example). Also, if the new charge is a felony, the individual can be extradited. There has also been an enhancement with the Marshals Fugitive Taskforce and more direct contact between the DOC/DCC agent and the Marshals. Criteria have been established to identify high risk DV offenders to include with the focused apprehension list discussed weekly at public safety review. A similar recommendation has also come from other DV case reviews.

**Funding needed:** Yes

**Difficulty/Complexity:** Medium



## Priority Recommendation Updates: Resources

**Priority Recommendation 4:** Explore additional funding opportunities specifically focused on housing options (short- and long-term) for emergent situations to provide safe and secure shelter for those experiencing DV or IPV victimization.

**Status:** In progress – Dr. Erin Schubert from Sojourner wrote a report [Homelessness, Housing Instability, and Intimate Partner Violence](#) that addresses the intersection of housing stability/needs and DV/IPV. There was also a panel discussion held on this topic. The report emphasized that there is a significant demand for emergency shelter housing that there is not current capacity to meet in Milwaukee. For example, Sojourner served 322 individuals in the 53-bed emergency shelter in 2023, which was only 6% of the adults who requested emergency shelter that year. Over three-quarters of survivors who were interviewed had been homeless at some point in their lives. The report reinforced how critical housing stability is for survivors and their children and that this continues to be a critical funding need across a variety of types of housing from emergency shelter to transitional housing and more affordable housing units. The report also emphasized the importance of continuing to train advocacy staff and potentially develop housing specialist positions to assist survivors in navigating existing housing resources. This continues to be a high-priority funding need.

**Funding needed:** Yes

**Difficulty/Complexity:** High

## Priority Recommendation Updates: Response Coordination

**Priority Recommendation 6:** Explore a system for distributing DV hotline calls coming in to include agencies with a specific culturally specific approach or population of focus.

**Status:** In progress- Sojourner has been exploring potential technology changes to the hotline to modernize and increase the capabilities for how calls are received and routed. In addition, they have added an option to their regular texting to share information on *We Are Here MKE* as part of their initial response and this has been implemented and is on-going. Sojourner is also exploring other ways to enhance partnerships with other agencies providing culturally sensitive resources across Milwaukee. A similar recommendation has also come from other DV case reviews.

**Funding needed:** Not yet known

**Difficulty/Complexity:** Medium

## Priority Recommendation Updates: Research and Evaluation

**Priority Recommendation 10:** Examine the impact of MPD conducting a second outreach to victims who decline referrals to DV resources to identify how often this is leading to consent to share information with advocacy organizations. This recommendation is connected to Marsy's Law.

**Status:** In process – MPD has continued to conduct follow-up with individuals if the initial offer of connection to resources is not taken. Data are being collected to identify whether there has been an increase in the number of victims consenting to share with the follow-up contact. Although there are some data limitations, estimates are that approximately 23% of individuals that initially did not consent to connection to resources are consenting after the follow-up call.

**Funding needed:** No

**Difficulty/Complexity:** Low

## Priority Recommendation Updates: Research and Evaluation

**Priority Recommendation 11:** Examine the impact of the newly created position through expanded DVHRT funding from the Governor's Office to attempt connection of suspects of DV to services and support and seek additional longer-term funding.

**Status:** In process – the position has been hired and operating as part of the DVHRT and as part of the DV fatality review process. The position conducts outreach to clients involved in high risk DV situations (phone or in person), offers Open Men's Group sessions to clients with the goal of working toward the Journey Toward Legacy (dv education/trauma/healing focused care), facilitates the curriculum, makes connections with other community organizations, prepares self-care plans for each client being released into the community, works to find reliable housing resources for clients.

**Funding needed:** Yes

**Difficulty/Complexity:** Medium

## Priority Recommendation Updates: Research and Evaluation

**Recommendation 12:** Further research the interface of those perpetrating DV/IPV who have histories of firearm possession or use and the propensity to go on to commit DV/IPV offenses while armed.

**Status:** In process – initial focus is to further understand the existing literature to understand the relationship between individuals with DV/IPV history who also have prior firearm-related offenses (regardless of whether or not it is DV/IPV related) and the likelihood of future involvement in DV/IPV incidents with a firearm. This is being developed as a research project and expanded to include the question of how often individuals who are involved in DV/IPV incidents are also involved in community violence situations with an initial focus on Milwaukee.

**Funding needed:** No

**Difficulty/Complexity:** Medium

## Priority Recommendation Updates: Emergency and Law Enforcement Response

**Priority Recommendation 14:** Create a protocol with a focus on ensuring persons reporting DV or IPV to law enforcement do so in an environment and manner that is trauma informed and most conducive to eliciting ongoing cooperation from victims.

**Status:** In process – MPD received funding to make changes to multiple district stations starting to provide a private space or “soft room” for individuals reporting DV/IPV situations in person. There has also been a focus on incorporating artwork through Project Beloved. There continues to be the option to go to Sojourner for reporting as well. Currently, the Sojourner soft room is being improved in collaboration with a nonprofit.

**Funding needed:** No

**Difficulty/Complexity:** Low

## Priority Recommendation Updates: District Attorney Response

**Priority Recommendation 17:** Explore what procedural changes need to be in place to help improve reporting and documentation of evidence to improve the likelihood of charging and prosecuting DV cases.

**Status:** In process - The DA's office has provided DV specific trainings to law enforcement (including MPD) over the past year to improve investigations. This has initial evidence that it has increased the charging rate for DV offenses of approximately 10% in recent months.

**Funding needed:** No

**Difficulty/Complexity:** Low

## Priority Recommendation Updates: Corrections Response

**Priority Recommendation 18:** Improve current processes to ensure DOC is aware of new incidents or law enforcement contacts (calls, reports, arrests, etc.) involving those on supervision, particularly those with a DV/IPV history.

**Status:** In process - Since this incident, there have been efforts by DOC to work more closely with MPD to ensure the timely identification of calls, reports, or arrests involving individuals on community supervision for a DV-related incident by having a team member proactively review reports to identify potential law enforcement contacts to facilitate proactive follow-up. Currently this is happening with MPD and DOC has liaison agents assigned to most suburban police departments in Milwaukee County. In addition, DOC receives information from the DVHRT, the District Attorney's Office by being included on the email for their charging decisions, and a list from the District Attorney's Office of suburban police department referrals that are being considered for charging.

**Funding needed:** No

**Difficulty/Complexity:** Low



## Priority Recommendation Updates: Corrections Response

**Priority Recommendation 20:** Improve the current DOC response to individuals on supervision who are also victims of DV/IPV.

**Status:** In process - DOC is made aware through the DA's office and/or DVHRT when a client is a victim in a DV situation. The agent, as well as the Region 3 victim advocate from Office of Victim Service and Programs (OVSP), will work together to meet the client's needs and establish a safety plan and connect the person to additional resources (such as filing restraining orders, etc). Ongoing supportive services are provided by the OVSP advocate.

**Funding needed:** No

**Difficulty/Complexity:** Medium

# Priority Recommendation Updates: Statutory/ Legislative

**Priority Recommendation 22:** Further explore the implications of IPV situations (such as a dating situation where the individuals are not living together and do not have a child in common) that do not meet the statutory definition of DV/DA and thus are not included many of the aspects of DV response. Then consider whether to recommend changes to the current DA statute.

**Status:** In process – Initial steps were to explore statutory language in other states. Initial research of surrounding midwestern states identified that each of these states (Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Indiana, Ohio, Iowa) all have some form of dating relationship outlined as part of their DV statutes. Variations include current or former intimate partners, individuals who have or had a dating relationship, individuals involved in a significant romantic or sexual relationship, etc. ***WI is unique among midwestern states in not having dating relationship included.*** Officers do have discretion to still refer individuals for resources and DVHRT will staff these cases, and one option would be to work to incorporate this as a standard operating procedure. The limitation is still that some of the additional legal components are not available for non-DA situations. Next steps are to further examine what the system impact would potentially be of such a change and how many incidents would likely fit this definition and potential other consequences of changing the statute (such as penalty factor implications). A working group will be developed and there has been some legislative interest in assisting with amending current language or proposing new language.

**Funding needed:** Not yet known, but likely

**Difficulty/Complexity:** Medium

## Priority Recommendation Updates: Statutory/ Legislative

**Priority Recommendation 23:** Further document the challenges associated with Marsy's law and based on those challenges, consider potential advocacy for changes.

**Status:** In process – Initial analysis has been conducted by Sojourner that gave an indication that a drop in law enforcement referrals occurred when Marsy's Law was initially implemented (although not enough at this point to indicate if it was the cause of the drop). While the purpose and value of the law are recognized, concerns are routinely raised about the impact the law has on coordinating resource connections for survivors. The documentation process has started and overall the initial challenges identified are related to the sharing of information for referrals and how this limits the ability for agencies to coordinate in providing resources to individuals. This also ties into recommendation 10 with the impact of additional follow-up upon initial refusal. May be additional opportunities for training with law enforcement, as well as understanding when individuals learn about Marsy's law and when they are notified of their rights. There have been discussions about proposed changes as well.

**Funding needed:** Not yet known

**Difficulty/Complexity:** Medium

# Additional Considerations

- Importance of DV/IPV focus
  - Additional attention is being given to DV/IPV as a particular form of violence that is distinct from community violence
  - This topic comes up repeatedly and has led to some specific action changes such as specific data reports being shared with VR-PHAST
  - Has led to some research questions around how often there is a connection between individuals involved in community violence and DV/IPV
- Funding:
  - Has become even more of an issue with reductions in funding for core services and the current status of some federal granting programs
  - Need to look at longer-term sustainable funding
  - As well as how to fund some of the newer initiatives
- Recommendations
  - Some of these are not “new” but came up as gaps or areas to address from the review
  - Also need to continue to look at other gaps that are identified through other mechanisms, situations, or collaborative efforts
  - Examples of recent changes: High risk advocates in all of the districts for MPD; change in focus on strangulation; having a

## Activities and Next Steps

- Significant changes over the last 5+ months are affecting funding opportunities and have impacted operational areas
- Developing some workgroups on a few of the specific recommendations as discussed
- Bringing new members in as people and positions change
- Also looking at other partnerships
- Aligning this review with the recommendations coming from the on-going DV fatality reviews
- Continuously refining some of the recommendations to assist with this process



# Sentinel Event Review *Questions/ Discussion*