



**CALIFORNIA FAMILY JUSTICE NETWORK CONFERENCE/ADVOCACY
DAY
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**Approaches to Severity of Violence:
Strangulation, Hidden Homicides & Preventing Domestic Violence Deaths**

Presented by:

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Why Is Violence Increasing?

Understanding Severity of Violence

Strangulation – One Of The
Greatest Predictors Of
Homicide

Why Victims Often Minimize Strangulation



Hidden Homicides

The 10 **Red Flags** Of A Suspicious Death

History of domestic violence or coercive control

Prior strangulation or threats to kill

Pending separation or custody conflict

Escalating stalking or obsessive behavior

Access to firearms or prior weapon threats

Victim previously expressed fear for their life

Sudden death during relationship conflict

Inconsistent statements from offender or witnesses

Prior suicide threats made by the offender toward the victim

Victim had unexplained injuries or prior near-lethal assaults

HIGH-RISK ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Tools such as:

- The Danger Assessment
- Strangulation assessment protocols
- Lethality indicators
- Stalking assessments
- High-risk team reviews

These tools help us identify victims at highest risk for homicide.

What Professionals Can Do

So, what can we do differently?

Hope, Prevention & Systems Change

From Awareness To Action

- What We Are Doing In Sacramento

Sacramento County
Domestic Violence High-
Risk Team

Hidden Homicide Initiative

We recognized that some deaths classified as accidents, overdoses, suicides, or unexplained circumstances may warrant a closer review.

As a result, we launched our Hidden Homicide Initiative.

The initiative focuses on:

- Education
- Case review
- Awareness
- multi-disciplinary collaboration

Our goal is simple:

To ensure that warning signs are not missed and that victims do not become invisible after death.

This work has led to increased awareness, new investigations, and improved conversations about domestic violence-related fatalities.

SB 989 – Educating Law Enforcement

Another critical prevention strategy is training.

In California, SB 989 has strengthened awareness regarding domestic violence deaths and suspicious fatalities.

To support implementation, the Sacramento Regional Family Justice Center partnered with law enforcement and community stakeholders to develop educational resources, including roll-call training videos.

These brief trainings help officers recognize:

- High-risk indicators
- Strangulation concerns
- Coercive control
- Hidden homicide warning signs
- Evidence-based investigation strategies

Every officer who understands these warning signs becomes another opportunity to save a life

Building Community
Expertise:
The 56-hour Advocate
Academy

Hope MD – Expanding Access To Healthcare And Mental Health Services



What Can Every Community
Do?

Remember This:

Domestic violence homicides rarely happen without warning signs.
The warning signs are often there.

The question is:

Do we recognize them? Do we respond to them? Do we collaborate around them? And do we act quickly enough?

Every professional in this room has the ability to interrupt violence.

Every conversation matters. Every safety plan matters. Every danger assessment matters. Every strangulation screening matters. Every collaborative meeting matters.

And sometimes—your response may be the reason someone survives.

Thank You
Comments/Questions

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