

Reducing Domestic Violence Homicide in Milwaukee

Adapted in part from *End Abuse Wisconsin's Coalition Chronicles*¹

As we mark the fourth anniversary of the Azana Spa tragedy (a mass shooting at a Brookfield spa perpetrated by the husband of one of the employees), Sojourner remains committed to transforming lives impacted by family violence. An important element of our work is partnering with other agencies in an effort to reduce domestic violence homicide. With our combined expertise in the fields of family violence, law enforcement, mental health, child safety, and criminal justice, Sojourner and our partners are making great strides in addressing domestic violence before it leads to homicide.

According to the Milwaukee Homicide Review Commission, mid-2016 data shows that intimate partner homicides are up 100% (from four to eight)



Carmen Pitre, Sojourner President and CEO and Captain Aimee Obregon, Milwaukee Police Department

in Milwaukee compared to 2015. In this same timeframe, intimate partner shootings increased 700% (from one to eight).² All of the couples impacted by these homicides and shootings had a history of domestic violence, either in a current or past relationship. Also, it is important to note that this data doesn't

include domestic violence homicides or shootings involving family members such as children or bystanders. While the numbers are still in the single digits, the loss of a single life is unacceptable.

We recognize that we may never be able to prevent every homicide, though we can take steps to

identify potential homicide situations. This collection of short articles outlines the work Sojourner and our partners are doing to address this very tragic community issue. Together, we can attempt to intervene, to stop something that seems inevitable before another life is lost and a family suffers.

¹ http://www.endabusewi.org/sites/default/files/resources/chronicles-33-3_2.pdf

² <http://city.milwaukee.gov/ImageLibrary/Groups/cityHRC/reports/2016Mid-Year.FINAL.pdf>

Who was Sojourner Truth?

Our crisis housing facility for women and children, Sojourner Truth House, is a tribute to "Belle," a woman born into slavery in 1797. In 1843 she walked onto the pages of history when she became Sojourner – God's pilgrim. A second name – Truth – came to her "in a voice as true as God's is." Sojourner Truth traveled widely, speaking about slavery and women's rights and the dignity of all people.



The Milwaukee Homicide Review Commission

Many states and localities have developed a homicide review team to identify missed opportunities that may have been available to save a life prior to a homicide. The City of Milwaukee Homicide Review Commission (MHRC) examines every homicide and gives special attention to domestic violence-related homicides. Established in 2005, the MHRC is a central component of the City of Milwaukee's violence prevention efforts. Sojourner has been actively involved with the MHRC since its inception.

Drawing on public health and criminal justice resources, it was designed to gain a better understanding of homicide through strategic problem analysis. The team is also tasked with developing innovative and effective responses and

prevention strategies, and helping to focus available prevention and intervention resources.

After multiple homicide reviews, the team identifies and analyzes common themes or trends in the cases, and provides strategic recommendations for systems and service providers that could help reduce lethality risk in the future.

Through our work with the MHRC, we are elevating the conversation among all service providers (advocates, health care professionals, law enforcement, educators, and so on) about what we can do better, and how we can create and change policies and procedures that reflect our commitment to better address lethality in our community.

During a review, the Milwaukee Homicide Review Commission looks at:

- The timeline of events leading up to the tragedy.
- Agencies and community entities that were involved.
- The degree of coordination and communication among the agencies and community entities.
- Anything that could have been done differently to improve the systemic and/or community partnership for the victim and/or perpetrator.

Milwaukee's Lethality Assessment Program – the Largest Grant-Funded Implementation in the Country!

In 2015, Milwaukee implemented a Lethality Assessment Program (LAP) initiative, an innovative strategy to prevent domestic violence homicides and serious injuries. It provides an effective, objective method for law enforcement and community professionals to identify victims who are at the highest risk of serious injury or death by their intimate partners. These high risk cases are immediately connected to Sojourner for follow up. The LAP intervention uses a standardized assessment tool and a referral protocol to help first responders quickly identify and refer victims according to their degree of risk.

Thanks to funding support from the Wisconsin Department of Justice, countywide implementation occurred by June 2015 and continued through January 2016. Because of Milwaukee County's leadership and assistance, LAP expanded statewide in September 2016.

How Does the LAP Work?

The LAP is initiated when any Milwaukee County police officer arrives at a domestic violence call. The officer asks the victim eleven questions known as the Lethality Screen for First Responders. Questions on the screening tool gather information about the offender's access to weapons, past threats, any stalking behaviors, and the victim's assessment of his or her personal safety.

If a victim's responses indicate an increased risk for homicide, the officer phones the Sojourner 24-hour Domestic Violence Hotline to seek advice, and encourages the victim to speak with a Sojourner Advocate. Speaking with an Advocate is always the victim's decision. By initiating this connection, victims in these high risk cases receive advice and

support within a few hours of their emergency call, and are more likely to follow through to enter shelter or acquire further services from Sojourner or another agency.

What Other Benefits Has the LAP Created?

The LAP has improved partnerships and collaboration among law enforcement officers and other community practitioners and advocates. New guidelines were created for Sojourner Hotline Advocates who speak to victims and special protocols have been developed for health care providers. LAP best practices now include follow-up telephone calls, team officer-advocate home visits with high risk victims to provide support and encouragement to use services, and screening of victims in court in conjunction with temporary protective order hearings.

Milwaukee County Leads Homicide Prevention Efforts

by Cudahy Police Chief Thomas D. Poellot and Assistant Wisconsin Attorney General Peter M. Tempelis



Chief Thomas Poellot

Family violence homicide directly impacts the community at its foundation. In addition to an offender's intimate partner, victims often include their children and bystanders within

the community. In recognition of the toll that homicide and near-fatal domestic violence takes on families and the community, Milwaukee County law enforcement, prosecutors, and Sojourner Advocates implemented the Lethality Assessment Program (LAP), which became the largest grant-funded implementation in the country.

The effort began in December 2012 after discussion about the effectiveness of the Chronic Offender Outreach Program, a successful 2010 pilot partnership between the Milwaukee Police Department and the District Attorney's Office. The initiative provided elevated service, including advocacy, to those in high risk relationships, and improved

What is the basis for the LAP?

1. Studies have shown that the support services of domestic violence programs can save lives and reduce re-assaults, yet programs continue to be under-utilized. There is a 60% reduction in risk of severe assault when victims utilize domestic violence services. ¹

2. Only 4% of abused victims had used a domestic violence hotline or shelter within the year prior to being killed by an intimate partner. ²

3. In the year prior to the homicide, more than 44% of abusers were arrested, and almost one-third of victims contacted the police. ³

¹ Campbell, Jacquelyn and Jill Messing. Interview by Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence, 2014

² Sharps, P. W., et al. (2001). Health care providers' missed opportunities for preventing femicide. Preventive Medicine 33, 373-80

³ Ibid

accountability for offenders. The countywide partners hoped to expand that model with a research-based approach. LAP provided the answer.



AGA Peter Tempelis

LAP is a two-step process in which the responding officer performs a lethality assessment screen to determine whether a victim is high risk, and then refers such victims directly to a hotline for

advocacy service. The screen, which was validated last year, identifies risk factors for homicide. It is based on Dr. Jacquelyn Campbell's decades of research of 4,000 attempted and completed homicides in ten diverse metropolitan jurisdictions.

For police officers, family violence incidents can be the most dangerous calls for services to which they respond. In some cases, police return to the same home multiple times, leaving officers feeling frustrated and helpless. The LAP provides law enforcement with a standardized response to family violence situations that are known to be dangerous. By elevating their understanding of risk in an intimate relationship, officers can offer a higher level of response and intervention.

responding to clients in extreme danger. More importantly, it helped victims feel validated when describing how afraid they were and allowed responders to see their situation through a different lens.

A Beneficial Tool



Michelle Coppens

by Michelle Coppens, Sojourner's Manager of Special Projects

I have worked in the field of domestic violence for 17 years, and the last 12 of those have been with Sojourner. I remember

distinctly the first client I ever lost to homicide. The days following the news of her death consumed me with sadness, devastation, and wonder. I asked myself over and over, what I could have done differently? I am an advocate, after all—I am trained to respond to crisis and my job is to help. In that moment, though, I felt utterly helpless. The reality of the work that I do, and the dangers faced by my clients, became more evident than ever before.

Sadly, in the years since her death, other clients have been lost. Each and every time, my feelings returned.

In 2013, I was part of a team from Milwaukee sent to the Driving Change Conference in Boston. There, we learned of the Lethality Assessment Program (LAP) and returned to Wisconsin to begin the work of making the LAP a reality for our own community. In April 2015, every law enforcement agency in Milwaukee County began use of the LAP, making us the largest jurisdiction in the United States utilizing this tool, and the only jurisdiction with 100% participation from law enforcement. Finally, I felt like I had found the tool and the ability to respond to high-risk situations that minimized the helplessness I would feel

When I speak with a victim now, the conversation is different. The LAP has been a game changer for my advocacy. I now know immediately when a victim is facing life-threatening abuse. This requires difficult and complex conversations about the risk of homicide, but it also opens up the doorway to talk about danger in a different way that is more effective.

Domestic abuse homicides are the most predictable homicides that occur. What is predictable can be prevented. The LAP has given us one more tool to use in our efforts to save lives. I am confident this tool has helped me help others understand the danger they faced in their intimate relationship and has helped them avoid becoming a homicide statistic.

Simple. Powerful. Gratifying.

As the generosity of the season begins, we ask for your partnership. Regardless of how you celebrate, you can be the beacon of light for others this season by participating in the Sojourner Holiday Giving Program.

Each year we work to secure holiday gifts such as toys, gift cards, housewares, and baby items for families in need. We give these items to families who seek Sojourner services and can't afford to purchase them on their own.

We have two options—our Adopt-a-Family program and Gift Drive. Both are designed to capture the essence of your holiday spirit. Whether you make a personal donation or inspire a group to participate, Sojourner families will benefit from your generosity.

Please let us know how we can assist you, your family, your workplace, or your place of worship in contributing to the Sojourner Holiday Giving Program. If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Lily Grant, Sojourner Volunteer and In-Kind Gifts Coordinator 414-810-1826 or LilyG@familypeacecenter.org.

Thank you for your generosity and your commitment to transforming the lives of the families we serve.

Sojourner staff and volunteers are available to assist in your donation drop-off at the following times.

Business Hours

November 28 – December 16, 2016
Monday – Friday, 9AM – 5PM

Additional Evening Hours

December 12 – 14, 2016
5 – 8 PM

Weekend Hours

December 10 and 17, 2016
Saturday, 10 AM – 5 PM

Deliveries are accepted at

**619 W. Walnut Street
Milwaukee, WI 53212**

Please enter the parking lot gate on 7th Street by using the intercom to request entry. Park near the door marked "Education Center." Sojourner staff and volunteers will assist you.

Sojourner Wish List on Amazon.com

It's now easier than ever to support the Sojourner Gift Drive through our wish list on Amazon.com. Simply enter our name—Sojourner Family Peace Center—into the search bar at Amazon.com, select the items you would like to donate, and add them to your cart. Once you have purchased the items, Amazon will ship them directly to our facility! Our wish list includes our most up-to-date needs from gifts to diapers to school supplies. Please include your name and address in the notes sections so we can properly thank you.

Thank you for helping families transform their lives.

Sojourner Gift Drive **Wish List**

Families

Dish sets
Pots and pans
Utensils
Small appliances (microwave, toaster, coffee pot, crockpot)
Gift cards for gas, Target, Kohl's, Walmart, Pick 'n Save
Gift cards for activities (movies, bowling)
Books and gift cards to book stores (Half Price Books, Barnes & Noble)

Women

Gift Cards: Boston Store, TJ Maxx, spa services, nail salons, iTunes
Restaurant Gift Cards: Subway, Cousins Subs, Applebee's, Chipotle
Gift Sets: makeup, bath, cologne, stationery sets
Sleepwear: bath robes (size M-3XL), pajamas (size M-3XL) and non-skid slippers (size M-XL)

Men

Body wash, shampoo, deodorant
Winter gloves, scarves, coats, hats
Gift cards for gas, Target, Walmart, Pick 'n Save, Kohl's
Socks
Blue jeans for men
Cologne
Sports-themed apparel

Tween and Teen

Sports equipment: basketballs, footballs, skateboards
Active wear
Sports-themed clothing
Gift Cards: iTunes, Forever 21, Charlotte Russe, Discovery, American Eagle, DSW, Old Navy, Burlington Coat Factory, Kohl's, TJ Maxx, Target, Walmart
Board games, puzzles, playing cards

Children

Learning Shop: toys or gift cards
Dolls: American Girl, Build-a-Bear, Barbie—especially dolls of color
Model and craft kits
Art supplies: jewelry making kits, painting sets
Play Sets: kitchen sets, doctor sets, building sets, science kits, lego sets
Personal music devices and handheld video games
Headphones and earbuds
Sleepwear

Infants and Toddlers

Toddler toys: busy boxes, push toys, building blocks
Infant formula
Pull-ups, disposable diapers (Newborn, 1, 2, 3)
Baby wipes
Pacifiers and rattles
Bottles and sippy cups
Baby lotion and shampoo

Along with the families we serve, we are grateful for your gifts. Thank you!

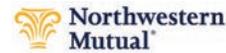
Celebrating 2016

Sojourner Tailgate for Peace Miller Park – Dew Deck

June 9, 2016

Thank you to Sojourner Tailgate for Peace 2016 sponsors, attendees, auction and raffle donors, volunteers, and committee members. Your participation allows us to provide services to families who have been impacted by domestic violence, so everyone can enjoy clear skies ahead.

Thank You to Our Generous Sojourner Tailgate for Peace Sponsors



Special Thanks to Our Sojourner Tailgate for Peace Matching Gift Sponsor: Baker Tilly Virchow Krause, LLP



Wish Us Luck in Heart of Canal Street

December 2016

Sojourner has once again been selected to be part of the random drawing for funding from Potawatomi Hotel & Casino's community program, Heart of Canal Street.

The Heart of Canal Street fund, which totaled more than \$1 million last year, is accumulated via Canal Street Bingo—half of each \$3 or \$7 Canal Street

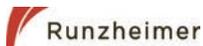
Bingo game played goes to the fund. It has raised nearly \$16 million for hundreds of area children's charities since 1994.

Share your heart by playing the Canal Street Bingo game now through Dec. 15. Visit paysbig.com/heart to learn more, and wish us luck on November 29!

Looking ahead 2017

Sojourner Safe & Healthy

24



We Are Doing it Again! Sojourner Safe & Healthy 24

Friday, March 24, 2017

We are so excited to announce Sojourner Safe & Healthy 24 in 2017! Your engagement and commitment to our mission in 2016 secured nearly \$150,000 in only 24 HOURS for our programs and services. You are truly transformational—your support is invaluable! We hope to count on your commitment again.

What is Sojourner Safe & Healthy 24?

Sojourner Safe & Healthy 24 is our 24-hour giving event to support our programs and services.

Join Us for the Party!

Dave Luczak and the WKLH Morning Crew will broadcast LIVE from the Family Peace Center for the second year in a row from 5AM to 10AM to kick off the event!

Ring the gong, sign your name to the donor board, celebrate with us on social media! Continental breakfast, drawings, and giveaways!

3 Ways to Donate

- In person at the Family Peace Center
619 W. Walnut Street, Milwaukee, WI 53212
- By phone at 414-810-1830 or 414-810-1826
- Online at www.familypeacecenter.org

All gifts made from 12:01 AM to 12:00 PM on March 24, 2017, will be matched. Your gift will go further!

SOJOURNER FASHION SHOW 2017

Milwaukee's Premier Fashion Event

See and Be Seen at the Sojourner Fashion Show!

May 2017

Community leaders, local celebrities, and top business professionals will model summer's trendiest styles on the Sojourner Runway. Before our highly anticipated runway show, you will enjoy a cocktail reception, complimentary champagne, passed hors d'oeuvres, exciting food stations, networking, and energizing music by live DJs.

Sponsorship Opportunities Galore, Additional Information

Maren McFarlane, Sojourner Events
and Public Relations Coordinator
MarenM@familypeacecenter.org
or
414-810-1825



619 W. Walnut Street
Milwaukee, WI 53212

Visit us at www.familypeacecenter.org

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Carmen Pitre
President & CEO

We need your help to sustain our essential programming.

Please make your gift today. Your contribution ensures that valuable programming continues through the end of the year.

Please make checks payable to:

Sojourner Foundation
619 W. Walnut Street
Milwaukee, WI 53212

Donate online at:
www.familypeacecenter.org

Connect Online

STAY CONNECTED WITH SOJOURNER FAMILY PEACE CENTER

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You are not alone.

If you are in an abusive relationship and need help, call the Sojourner 24-Hour Domestic Violence Hotline at **414-933-2722**.



Download our app - available on iPhone and Android phones.

Administration/ General Information

P: 414-276-1911
F: 414-276-1509

Sojourner 24-Hour Domestic Violence Hotline

P: 414-933-2722
F: 414-934-6079

TTY
414-727-2342

