

Victim Advocacy:
Who, What, Where, When and How

Scenario #1:

Mary, a victim of domestic violence, lives in a small rural Utah community with her husband of 14 years, Dan. Dan is a law enforcement officer with the local city police department. Mary is fearful of reporting the abuse because Dan told her no one would believe her word over his. Her best friend, Debbie, is the local women's shelter director, but Debbie warned Mary it would compromise the other residents' safety if she stays there.

Dan becomes enraged one evening as he is dressing for work and begins strangling Mary and yelling, "I could kill you!" Sally (8) starts kicking her father and he back hands her across the room, bouncing her off a wall. Trevor (12) reaches for his father's service revolver in defense of his mother. In the scuffle, the revolver discharges, striking Trevor in the chest.

Sally calls 911 while Dan flees the scene. Mary is hysterical and clearly indicating signs of shock. Trevor is not showing any signs of life when paramedics and the only other city officer on duty, Officer Jim, arrive on scene. Officer Jim asks dispatch to summon the law enforcement victim advocate and child protective services. As he secures the scene, he requests additional backup from the county sheriff's office.

Advocate Ann arrives and immediately asks Officer Jim if Officer Dan is okay. After checking on co-worker Dan's welfare, she takes June (18 mos.) outside as paramedics are treating Mary, Sally and Trevor. The press is gathering and asks for a statement. Ann provides them with what few details of the incident she has ascertained and asks for assistance in locating the suspect, Officer Dan.

Sally asks if she can go to her friend's house for the evening because she can't stand the sight of her brother on the floor and her mother crying. Advocate Ann explains that she has a guest bedroom and her mother, sister and she may spend the night at her house.

Steve from CPS arrives along with an Intern, Ina, and approaches Mary. He asks, "Mary, why did you let it escalate to this level?" Ina takes one look at Trevor and runs from the house in tears. Steve follows Ina out and tells her she needs to buck up and get back inside and help him. He advises her that she needs to face the situation head on and build up a resistance to this type of exposure or choose a different career path. Ultimately, CPS takes June and places her with a family member while Mary and Sally are treated at the hospital where Trevor was pronounced DOA.

The following morning, Mary and Sally are compassionately greeted at the CJC by child advocate, Cindy. Cindy explains to Mary police procedure when and if Dan is apprehended and the subsequent jail booking protocol. She suggests that Dan will most likely be kept in solitary confinement to prevent retaliation from other inmates due to his law enforcement status. In addition, she provides counseling referrals and assists in filling out and submitting a reparation claim form.

After explaining the purpose of the forensic interview and making Sally as comfortable as possible, an investigator from the sheriff's office meets with Sally. While the interview is being conducted, Pearl, the prosecuting agency victim advocate, sits down with Mary and explains her role in the judicial process and how she will be assisting Mary and her daughters in the event of any criminal proceedings. Mary is alarmed at the prospect of having to testify against Dan, whom she believes the community perceives as a hero. Pearl reassures her by saying, "Don't worry about it now. We will cross that bridge when we come to it. Many of these situations are resolved without a trial. Besides, if Dan were smart, he has probably used that gun on himself by now to spare his family anymore grief!"