

Milwaukee Homicide Review Commission

Community Service Provider Homicide Reviews

How to Prepare for a Homicide Review Meeting

Here are a few helpful activities to help you prepare for your next homicide review meeting.

Tip #5 is the most important!

1. **Review the “List of Cases,”** an Excel spreadsheet sent 1-2 weeks prior to the meeting. The spreadsheet includes a list of victims, known suspects, and witnesses; demographic information on each person involved (such as age, race, sex, date of birth, and home address), information about the incident (such as date, time, location), and a brief summary of the case.
2. **Think about the case and implications the case might have for your organization and/or program, as well as implications the case might have for public policies** affecting specific target populations, neighborhoods or communities, and/or issue areas (e.g., such as substance abuse or mental health).
3. **Search online** for more information on the case and persons involved. Depending on when the case occurred, you might find articles about the trial and possibly the outcome of the trial. “Sensational” cases are given extensive coverage; other homicides receive 1-2 line descriptions. Three sources might also include:
 - a. **The Journal Sentinel** has a webpage dedicated to homicide victims, including a list of all victims at <http://data.jsonline.com/News/HomicideTracker/>.
 - b. **Milwaukee Inner City Congregations Allied for Hope (MICAH)** also tracks homicides on its website at <http://www.micahempowers.org/vigil.html>. MICAH holds a prayer vigil for each homicide victim.
 - c. **The Milwaukee Community Journal** is also a good source for information on Milwaukee homicides at <http://www.communityjournal.net/>.We don’t expect you to be an expert in every issue area or an expert on every affected population. It helps to “brush up” before the meeting but this is not expected and most participants can fully participate without this extra step.
4. **Determine if your organization or program served any of the individuals involved in the case or provided services to the neighborhood where the incident occurred.** The demographic information provided in the List of Cases should help you identify past and present clients. We try our best to get accurate information about the individuals involved (such as correct spelling of names and accurate dates of birth) but sometimes the information we have is inaccurate or simply outdated. Please contact us if you need more information in order to determine if your organization provided services to any of the individuals involved in the homicide. We can usually provide an alternate spelling of a person’s name, other aliases, or past home addresses.
5. **If your organization served someone involved in the case or the incident area, please prepare a summary of the information to share during the homicide review discussion.** Participants are asked to share this information in a verbal presentation to the group during the meeting. No

written report is needed. Sometimes participants “read from the case file” if that is available. All participants should follow their organization’s confidentiality policies. Sharing information about the victim, suspect, or other persons involved, as well as the neighborhood, helps Homicide Review Commission meeting participants better understand the events leading up to the homicide and develop appropriate prevention recommendations. There is no hard fast rule about the kind of information that will be useful to the review. We have found the following to be helpful in identifying the problem and possible solutions but strongly urge you to seek out other information that will help the group understand why the homicide occurred and what can be done to prevent similar homicides in the future from a systems perspective. Some information that might be helpful to prepare:

- a. What services were provided by your organization? What were the anticipated benefits of those services and how did the person/family/neighborhood respond to services? Was the intervention successful/unsuccessful? Completed or in progress at the time of incident?
- b. Were there any gaps in service or unmet service needs? What were the reasons for those gaps?
- c. What were the initial results from the intake (if applicable). How would you describe the person or neighborhood’s strengths or assets at the time services were provided?
- d. What are the neighborhood’s characteristics? What services/programs were being offered in the area during the incident?
- e. What public policies (such as criminal justice, health, economic, and social welfare policies) were most likely impacting the individuals/neighborhoods involved in the homicide at the time of the incident?
- f. What do you see that might have changed in the individual or the neighborhood that might have contributed to the homicide?

6. **Take notes.** It is okay to take notes of the discussion and write down observations during the review. To protect the homicide victim and suspect’s privacy, we do not distribute the PowerPoint presentation to participants but you should feel free to take notes like any other meeting.
7. **If you agreed to work on a recommendation, action item, or follow up activity from the last meeting, please be prepared to share a short update on that work at the beginning of the meeting.** This helps us all stay accountable to the process and to each other (and it makes the meeting action-oriented!).
8. **Plan to stay a few minutes after the review to meet other participants.** It’s a good networking opportunity and an opportunity to continue the discussion with other colleagues. We usually run late so that’s another reason to add a few minutes to the meeting time.
9. **If you cannot participate in the review, please send an appropriate representative from your agency and let us know** so that we can send that person a list of cases and other materials if needed. Share this tip sheet with that person(s).

Community Service Provider Homicide Reviews

How to Prepare for a Homicide Review Meeting (for Law Enforcement Participants)

Here are few helpful tips to help you prepare for your next Community Service Provider meeting:

- 1. The Community Service Provider Homicide Review (Level 3) is different from the Criminal Justice Homicide Review (Level 2) and this has implications for your successful participation in Level 3 reviews.** Community service providers typically look “upstream” and seek to identify opportunities for prevention that might have occurred 5-10 years prior to the incident. Community service providers typically do not look for ways to arrest or incarcerate the individuals earlier on in their life – that is, before they became a homicide victim or suspect - since incarceration is not usually considered true prevention among community service providers. As a result, most of the recommendations identified during a Level 3 review won’t involve the use of surveillance tactics, etc.
- 2. It is important for law enforcement participants to think about the intersections between the criminal justice sector and the community service sector and offer recommendations that are reflective of that relationship.** This is especially important since the discussion at Level 3 meetings emphasizes human service programs and policies (just as Level 2 meetings emphasis criminal justice programs and policies). There are many important ways that law enforcement participants can work with community service providers that go beyond arrests, issuing of citations, or surveillance.
- 3. Law enforcement officials are at the frontlines of many societal issues.** For example, Community Liaison Officers are in an excellent position to refer high risk residents to local services and alert community services providers to new crime trends in their area or among the target population they serve.
- 4. Learn about the community service provider participants (such as their population, services, theory of change, or organizational values) to better understand how they approach homicide prevention.** This is especially important since community service providers use radically different (but sometimes related or similar) theories, frameworks, and assumptions that drive their analysis of the problem and possible solutions.
- 5. Community service providers may share confidential information about a client or recent trend in the neighborhood and are not expecting officers to request this information to arrest or issue a citation as a result of the homicide review.** Providers may share identifying information such as the names of other individuals involved or identify specific areas affected by a particular homicide. This information is being shared for the purpose of discussion; to collectively identify opportunities for preventing similar homicides or the events or conditions that lead to homicides. It is always helpful to offer to follow up with (i.e., investigate or “check on”) an individual, house, or neighborhood and that strategy should be presented during the discussion as one way to address the problem.

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