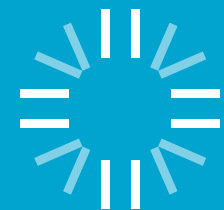


A training curriculum for law enforcement and child protective professionals

HONOR VIOLENCE AND FORCED MARRIAGE



ahafoundation

WHAT IS HONOR VIOLENCE?

Honor violence is a form of violence against women committed with the motive of protecting or regaining the honor of the perpetrator, family, or community.

Victims of honor violence are targeted because their actual or perceived behavior is deemed by their family or community to be shameful or to violate cultural or religious norms.

Honor violence involves systematic control of the victim that escalates over a period of time and may begin at a young age.

Honor violence can be perpetrated by one individual or can be a group campaign of harassment and violence committed by an entire family or community.

Honor violence can take many forms, including verbal/emotional abuse, threats, stalking, harassment, false imprisonment, physical violence, sexual abuse, and homicide.

Honor Violence occurs in various cultural and religious communities that have roots in tribal or other conservative traditions.

Cases of honor violence in the West have involved families from various countries, such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Egypt, Bangladesh, and India.

**HOW IS HONOR VIOLENCE
DIFFERENT FROM
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?**

Familial v. Intimate Relationship

HONOR VIOLENCE

Honor violence is committed against any family member whose behavior is determined to be unacceptable to the family.

Wife

Child

Sibling

Cousin

Niece/Nephew

Grandchild

Daughter/son-in-law

Sister/brother-in-law

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

In a traditional domestic violence scenario, the perpetrator of violence is in an intimate or romantic relationship with the victim.

Wife

Girlfriend

Mother of a child in common

Ex-wife/girlfriend

Single v. Multiple Perpetrators

HONOR VIOLENCE

Multiple family or community members may be involved in a campaign of oppression and/or violence against the victim.

- > Father may be physically violent*
- > Mother may engage in emotional manipulation, such as the silent treatment or threats of suicide or divorce*
- > Sibling may play the role of enforcer at school and report back to the parents*

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence generally involves violence committed by a single perpetrator without the support of family or community.

Perception of Criminality

HONOR VIOLENCE

Perpetrators of honor violence do not believe that they are committing a crime.

They believe that their conduct is warranted—and perhaps even required—because of the victim’s behavior.

This attitude is supported by deeply held cultural and religious beliefs.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Perpetrators of domestic violence typically understand that they are committing a crime.

In the cycle of violence, the perpetrator often feels guilt and/or a fear of being caught or discovered as an abuser.

Support of the Perpetrator

HONOR VIOLENCE

A perpetrator's belief that his conduct is justified by the victim's behavior is often shared by his family and community, both men and women. He may also have the support of his religious leaders and community.

He may even have the support of the victim's family, who also object to her behavior.

He may be celebrated for his actions.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

A perpetrator of domestic violence will not typically enjoy the support or encouragement of either his or the victim's family. His abusive conduct is not usually condoned by family or community.

He will likely go to great lengths to hide his violent behavior.

Ostracism of the Victim

HONOR VIOLENCE

A victim of honor violence is likely to be shunned by her family and community because of her “dishonorable” behavior.

Because she was raised in an honor-based culture, she may believe that she deserves the abuse she is suffering.

She will face immense pressure to change her behavior so as to bring peace to the family and restore the family’s honor.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

A victim of domestic violence may have an extensive support network of family and friends, all of whom encourage the victim to leave the abusive relationship and offer assistance and support.

While a victim of domestic violence may internalize the abuser’s message that she deserves the abuse because of her conduct, this perception will not be reinforced by her family and community.

Religious Coercion

HONOR VIOLENCE

Honor violence often occurs in conservative religious families of a variety of faiths. The victim may fear religious repercussions for going against the family and may face pressure from religious leaders to change her conduct.

Any victim of honor violence may feel this religious pressure to submit, including daughters.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Some religious leaders in traditionally conservative religions may pressure an abused spouse to remain in a domestic violence situation to avoid a divorce, which may be contrary to religious doctrines.

However, religious coercion in this context does not generally extend to non-spouse victims of violence.

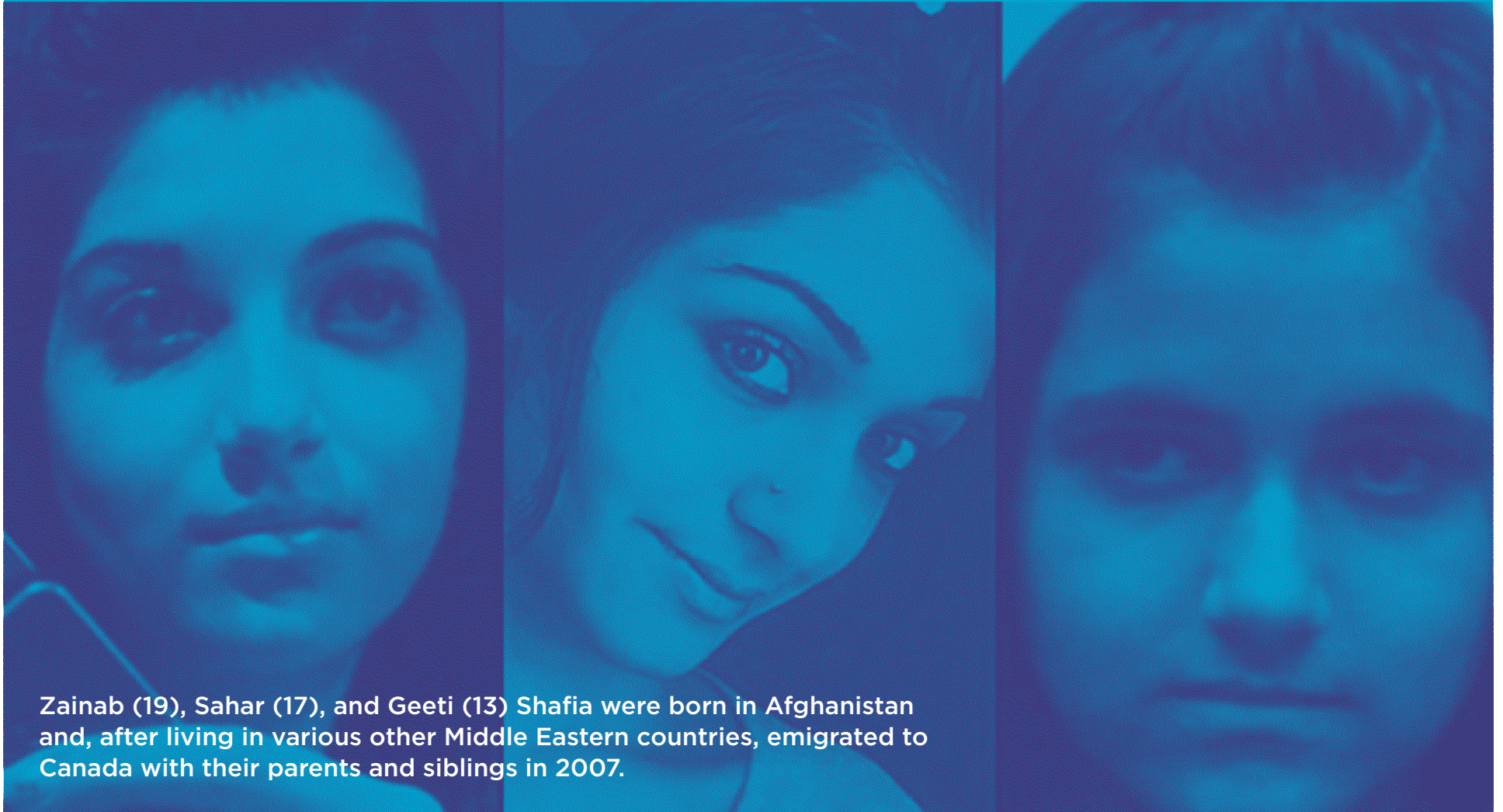
MALE VICTIMS

While victims of honor violence are often female, males may also be targeted by this kind of oppression and violence for a number of reasons:

- > Actual or perceived homosexuality*
- > Dating outside of the cultural community*
- > Resisting an arranged marriage*

HONOR VIOLENCE CASE EXAMPLE:

The Shafia Sisters



Zainab (19), Sahar (17), and Geeti (13) Shafia were born in Afghanistan and, after living in various other Middle Eastern countries, emigrated to Canada with their parents and siblings in 2007.

Zainab, Sahar, and Geeti easily adopted Western culture and became typical Canadian teenagers. They wore Western clothing and make-up, went to the mall with their friends, and the two older girls had boyfriends.

But their parents—particularly their father—did not approve of this behavior.

The Shafia sisters told numerous authorities that they were afraid of their parents and their brother, Hamed, who served as disciplinarian in their father's absence.

The girls made numerous attempts to alert authorities to violence in their home.

MAY 2008

- > *Sahar tells a teacher about physical violence against her by Hamed at her parent's behest and emotional abuse by her mother.*
- > *CPS is called and conducts an interview.*
- > *Two days after the initial CPS interview, Sahar was wearing a hijab and claimed things had improved at home.*
- > *CPS deemed the complaint "founded" but the case was closed because Sahar stopped cooperating.*

APRIL 2009

- > *Zainab fled to a women's shelter to escape abuse at home.*
- > *Sahar and Geeti called 911 because they were afraid of their father's reaction.*
- > *During the police interview conducted away from their parents, the girls reported physical abuse the previous week because they came home late from the mall.*
- > *Geeti reported that their father often threatened to kill them.*
- > *Both girls told police that they were afraid of their father and wanted to leave home.*
- > *CPS arrived and interviewed the girls in front of their parents. They stopped talking and recanted some of their previous allegations of abuse.*
- > *After subsequent interviews, CPS closed the file.*

MAY 2009

- > *Sahar attempts suicide.*
- > *CPS conducts an interview, during which Sahar reports violence by her brother. The caseworker noted that she was crying profusely and was “obviously extremely scared.”*
- > *Sahar reported that her parents had not spoken to her for months and that she was being pressured to wear a hijab and was being held out of school.*
- > *But, after learning that her allegations would be reported to her parents, Sahar stopped cooperating.*
- > *During a subsequent interview, Sahar minimized the previous allegations and said things were better at home.*

JUNE 2009

- > *A teacher notices that Sahar was missing school and coming in late and asks her what is going on.*
- > *Sahar said that she was afraid of her father, who was due to return from a trip to Dubai. She was afraid that her brother was going to tell him that she was a whore.*
- > *The teacher calls CPS and asks for Sahar’s caseworker from the previous report.*
- > *CPS says there is no caseworker assigned and advises the teacher to find a shelter in the community.*

JUNE 30, 2009

The bodies of Zainab, Sahar, and Geeti (along with their polygamous father's first wife) are discovered in a car submerged in a small canal.

In January 2012, the girls' father, mother, and brother are convicted of murder. They were each sentenced to life in prison.

The girls' father had this to say about his daughters after their death:

“God’s curse on them . . . May the devil shit on their graves. Is that what a daughter should be? Would (a daughter) be such a whore?”

“They betrayed humankind; they betrayed Islam; they betrayed our religion and creed; they betrayed our tradition; they betrayed everything.”

“Even if they hoist me up onto the gallows, nothing is more dear to me than my honour. Let’s leave our destiny to God and may God never make me, you or your mother honourless.” [to Hamed]

“I am happy and my conscience is clear. They haven’t done good and God punished them.”

HONOR VIOLENCE CASE EXAMPLE:

Noor Almaleki



Born in Iraq, Noor emigrated to the U.S. with her family at the age of 4.

Noor grew up to become a typical American teenager, wearing Western clothing and make-up, listening to rock music, and socializing with boys.

Noor's parents—particularly her father, Faleh Almaleki—strongly disapproved of her lifestyle.

In 2007, Noor was tricked by her family to travel to Iraq, where she was reportedly forced to marry a cousin. She returned to the U.S. with her family and continued living in their home.

Tension within the family continued to escalate, and after repeated altercations, Noor moved into her own apartment. She feared her parents to such a degree that she obtained a police escort to retrieve her belongings.

Noor attempted to support herself with various restaurant jobs, but was forced to quit each position when her parents learned where she was working and harassed her at work.

Unable to maintain a job in the face of this constant harassment, Noor returned home for a brief period, then went to live with another Iraqi family whom she had known since childhood.

Noor's family was enraged by this move and began harassing her and the family, once to the point that the police were called.

OCTOBER 20, 2009

Four months after moving in with Amal Khalaf and her family, Noor and Amal spotted her father at the local welfare office where Noor was helping Amal apply for benefits.

Noor texted her friends that she had seen her father, describing him as “evil” and saying that seeing him made her feel “so shaky!”

Faleh left the office without incident and a short while later, Noor and Amal also left and began walking across the parking lot.

As they walked, Faleh drove headfirst into them, striking both women with his Jeep. He then fled the scene and, with assistance from his wife, son, and other family members, fled the country. He was apprehended in London nine days later.

Amal survived with serious injuries and Noor died 13 days later.

In February 2011, Faleh Almaleki was convicted of second degree murder, aggravated assault, and leaving the scene of an accident.

He was sentenced to 34 1/2 years in prison.

In taped conversations with Noor's mother while he was in jail, Faleh had the following to say about his daughter:

“For an Iraqi, honor is the most valuable thing... No one messed up our life except Noor... No one hates his daughter, but honor is precious... and we are a tribal society. I didn't kill someone off the street. I tried to give her a chance.”

FORCED MARRIAGES

A forced marriage occurs when an individual is forced, coerced, threatened, or tricked to marry without her informed consent.

Forced Marriage is Not Arranged Marriage

In many cultures, it is customary for families to arrange meetings between their children in the hopes of fostering a voluntary relationship that will lead to a marriage. In such situations, while the initial meetings are arranged by the families and a marriage is encouraged, the ultimate decision regarding whether to marry remains with the couple and both parties consent.

Motives for Forced Marriages

- > Cultural and religious traditions*
- > Controlling unwanted sexuality, including perceived promiscuity*
- > Eradicating perceived or actual homosexuality, or being transgendered*
- > Controlling unwanted behavior, particularly conduct that is “too Western”*
- > Preventing “unsuitable” relationships, such as those outside a particular ethnic, cultural, or religious group*
- > Promoting and protecting family status, solidarity, or honor*
- > Securing immigration status for the spouse and family*
- > Enhancing the economic status of the family (i.e. dowry)*
- > Securing care for a disabled family member via the new spouse*
- > Domestic servitude*
- > Paying for a wrong committed by another family member*

Common Tactics

- > Physical violence or threats of violence*
- > Emotional blackmail (e.g. mother threatens suicide if the girl does not consent to the marriage)*
- > Removal from school*
- > Isolation and confinement in the home (false imprisonment)*
- > Ostracism from family and community*
- > Economic threats*
- > Threats to younger siblings*
- > Taken abroad and left there until the marriage occurs*
- > Conducting a marriage ceremony abroad without the victim being present*

A note about coercion and force

Family members may believe that they are merely encouraging an arranged marriage and may not realize that their conduct has crossed the line into forcing or coercing the individual to acquiesce to the marriage.

A party's "yes" to a marriage is only as good as his/her ability to say "no."

Consequences of Forced Marriage

Being forced into a marriage is often the beginning of the victim's suffering.

- > Repeated violence and physical abuse within the marriage*
- > Repeated sexual abuse and rape within the marriage*
- > Abuse of children of the marriage*
- > Social isolation*
- > Forced withdrawal from school or employment*
- > Psychological consequences, such as anxiety and depression*
- > Self-harm or suicide*

Intersection with Honor Violence

Families upset with a child's "shameful" behavior may threaten the victim with a forced marriage as a way of controlling and ending that behavior.

Resisting an arranged marriage may lead to honor violence and therefore transform an arranged marriage into a forced one.

Intersection with Human Trafficking

There may be an element of forced marriage in some human trafficking scenarios.

- > Sex Trafficking: Girls sold into a marriage for a dowry or immigration benefit, then repeatedly raped by the husband*
- > Labor Trafficking: Girls forced to marry and then forced into domestic servitude*

HONOR VIOLENCE & FORCED MARRIAGES

*Best Practices for Law Enforcement
and Child Protective Professionals*

**BEST PRACTICES
FOR WORKING
WITH VICTIMS**

1

TAKE ALLEGATIONS OF HONOR VIOLENCE SERIOUSLY

Victims may report incidents that seem minor or insignificant, such as a parent being upset about clothing or a boyfriend.

Resist the instinct to minimize the victim's fear.

Seemingly small incidents can escalate quickly to serious violence.

The victim is taking a big risk in reporting the violence and her allegations should be taken seriously. The first contact may be the only opportunity to provide help.

Don't let concerns about cultural sensitivity interfere with taking action to protect the victim.

2

BE WARY OF FAMILY MEMBERS

Remember that multiple members of the family may be involved in a campaign of honor violence or forced marriage.

Although the victim may only report physical violence by one individual, other members of the family (including mothers) may condone and encourage that violence.

The family may have no history with law enforcement or child protective services and may appear professional and polite. Do not let these appearances undermine the allegations of violence.

Do not place victims in foster care with family members or individuals in the same cultural community. Even if they have not been involved in the violence, any family/community member could sympathize with the perpetrator and put the victim in further danger.

3

STAY INVOLVED

Victims of honor violence may be difficult to work with and may tell inconsistent stories, recant, or minimize previous allegations.

Factors such as cultural and religious pressures, the involvement of the entire family and community, fear of complete ostracism and isolation from family, concern over the welfare of younger siblings, and conflicted feelings of love for the offending family members may contribute to the victim's willingness to consistently cooperate with an investigation.

Continue to follow up with the victim even if she reports that things have improved at home. Give the victim a code word that she can use to alert you that she is in danger.

Keep the line of communication open and remind the victim that help is available.

4

TAKE ACTION IF A FORCED MARRIAGE APPEARS IMMINENT

Urgent action may be necessary if the victim reports that her family is threatening to send her out of the country to straighten out her behavior.

This is a warning sign that she may be at risk for a forced marriage.

Possible actions:

- > Find emergency safe housing (shelter or foster care)*
- > Contact local law enforcement to explore protective options*
- > Contact the Office of Overseas Citizens Services of the Department of State (888-407-4747) and alert them to the victim's situation. The Department of State may be able to help if the victim is taken abroad.*
- > Counsel the victim about how to achieve safety if she is taken abroad:
 - Discuss ways to alert TSA officers to her situation if she is taken to an airport, such as hiding a metal object in her clothing to obtain a private screening.*
 - Provide the victim with contact information for the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in the country she may be taken**

BEST PRACTICES FOR INVESTIGATIONS

1

DON'T EXPECT COOPERATION

A perpetrator of honor violence is unlikely to act alone. He may have assistance in planning or committing violent acts or in fleeing from law enforcement afterwards.

His family and community will likely create a wall of silence to impede any law enforcement investigation.

This is particularly true of mothers, who often side with the perpetrator of the violence and against their daughters.

Even the victim's friends and sympathetic family members may be afraid to cooperate with an investigation. The community dynamic may be similar to that in a gang-related investigation – there may be a great deal of fear in the community to assist in an investigation of a perpetrator of honor violence.

2

CONSIDER THE INVOLVEMENT OF OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS

When a victim reports an act of violence by one family member, consider whether other family members were also involved and committed crimes.

Examples of cooperation that may rise to the level of criminal activity:

- > Helping plan the violent act*
- > Assisting the perpetrator evade law enforcement*
- > Interfering with an investigation by intimidating witnesses*

3

BE CAUTIOUS WITH TRANSLATORS

Avoid using a translator that comes from the same cultural community as the victim and perpetrator.

There is a risk that the translator may sympathize with the perpetrator and interfere with the investigation, either through the translation process or by inappropriately revealing confidential information.

The victim may also be hesitant to speak freely using such a translator out of fear that he/she may report her allegations back to her family.

CONCLUSION

Where you look, you will find...

Honor violence and forced marriages are often hidden deep within families and communities, with the victims left to suffer alone.

Yet the murders of Noor Almaleki and the Shafia sisters demonstrate that violence and murder justified by perverted notions of family honor are happening here.

The victims are most often the young women who embrace Western culture with their entire hearts and souls. It seems little to ask in return that we protect them from suffering unspeakable harm, and even death, for doing so.

You can save lives!

As a child protective and law enforcement professionals, you are in a unique position to help victims of honor violence and forced marriages.

Be aware of these forms of violence and share this information with your colleagues.

Only by educating ourselves about honor violence and forced marriages can we start to find the victims and end the violence.

You may be the crucial lifeline to a victim in crisis.

*The AHA Foundation is
available to help.*

- > Contact us for more information about
honor violence and forced marriages.*
- > We are available to help locate services for victims.*
- > We can connect law enforcement professionals to
experts who can offer assistance in specific cases.*

help@theahafoundation.org
www.theahafoundation.org

“To me, it is not racist to demand,... ‘I will not accept little girls in my country to be forced into marriage, or their genitals to be cut, for them to be pulled out of school, for them to be condemned to a life of submission or violence or death through an honor killing.’... What you want for that girl is what you want for your own little girl.”

-AYAAN HIRSI ALI, FOUNDER OF THE AHA FOUNDATION