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Committee urges Children's Aid Society to boost efforts; DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: In a case where two children were killed, the CAS could have done more to recognize the risks and intervene, a new report reveals

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Just because a parent loves his children doesn't mean he won't kill them.

That simple harsh fact -- surfacing more and more in the latest research -- must be stressed to Ontario's Children's Aid Societies and policy makers, a report on domestic violence released yesterday says.

"We have thought that as long as a child was not abused, he was not at risk. We are recognizing now a number of children killed with no history of abuse by their parents," said Peter Jaffe of London, a founding member of Ontario's Domestic Violence Death Review Committee.

The committee released its sixth annual report, an examination of 15 cases of domestic violence causing death.

In two cases, including one where two children were killed, the CAS could have done more to recognize the risks and intervene, the report says.

The committee recommends more training and more teeth in the policies that back up CAS workers, especially in getting men into batterers' programs before allowing unsupervised visits with children.

But the CAS is hardly singled out in the report. The committee directs 33 recommendations to nine provincial ministries and agencies.

Preventing deaths from domestic violence takes an effort from family, friends and professionals in many different fields, Jaffe said.

That's one reason for the first Canadian Conference on the Prevention of Domestic Homicides, starting Sunday in London. More than 500 people from a wide range of professions are expected to attend and learn from each other, Jaffe said.

"We are trying to shift from a culture of blame to a culture of understanding and change."

Domestic violence experts say much more can be done to prevent deaths.

"We now monitor or assess some 39 risk factors for their presence in each of the cases," said William Lucas, chairperson of the death review committee.

"In 86% of cases, we have found that seven or more risk factors exist, suggesting strongly that with appropriate training and experience, others may be able to recognize the truly high risk cases and potentially intervene to prevent subsequent deaths," he said in a written release.

Established in 2003, the committee makes yearly recommendations to the Ontario's chief coroner.

To date, the committee has reviewed 77 cases of homicides or homicide/suicides involving partners and their children.