

# Domestic Violence Coordinating Council

2013

Annual Report  
&  
Fatal Incident Review Team Report



# **Domestic Violence Coordinating Council**

## **2013 Annual Report**

**And**

## **Fatal Incident Review Team Report**

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To:

Honorable Jack A. Markell  
Governor, State of Delaware

Honorable Myron T. Steele  
Chief Justice  
Supreme Court  
State of Delaware

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# Domestic Violence Coordinating Council

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## **Chairs**

Hon. Patricia M. Blevins  
Member of the Senate  
Council Chair

Ms. Dana Harrington Conner  
Member-at-Large  
Council Vice Chair

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## **Members**

Hon. Michael Barbieri  
Member, House of  
Representatives

Hon. Joseph R. Biden, III  
Delaware Attorney General

Warden Wendi Caplé  
Member-at-Large

Hon. Catherine Cloutier  
Member of the Senate

Hon. Robert M. Coupe  
Commissioner,  
Dept. of Correction

Ms. Dawn Culp, MSN, RN  
Member-at-Large

Ms. Diane Glenn  
Member-at-Large

Matthew Hoffman, M.D.  
Representative, Health Care  
Community

Chief Jeffrey Horvath  
Representative, Law  
Enforcement Community

Hon. Deborah Hudson  
Member, House of  
Representatives

Hon. Chandlee Johnson Kuhn  
Chief Judge, Family Court

Hon. Brendan J. O'Neill  
The Public Defender

Hon. Vincent J. Poppiti  
Member-at-Large

Hon. Jennifer B. Ranji  
Secretary, Dept. of Services for  
Children, Youth and Their Families

Ms. Margaret Reyes  
Member-at-Large

Hon. Lewis D. Schiliro  
Secretary, Dept. of Safety and  
Homeland Security

Hon. James T. Vaughn, Jr.  
President Judge,  
Superior Court

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## **DVCC Staff**

### **Contact Information**

Bridget V. Poulle  
Executive Director  
Bridget.Poulle@state.de.us

Patricia Kwetkauskie  
Trainer/Educator  
Patricia.Kwetkauskie@state.de.us

Karen Ewing  
Administrative Specialist  
Karen.Ewing@state.de.us

Cindy Mercer  
Senior Administrator  
Cindy.Mercer@state.de.us

Aimee V. String  
Project Coordinator  
Aimee.String@state.de.us

DVCC Agency Main Number  
302-255-0405

The Mission of the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council is to reduce the occurrence of domestic violence and abuse in all its forms.

## Who We Are/What We Do

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The Domestic Violence Coordinating Council is a State agency legislatively created in 1993 to improve Delaware's response to domestic violence. The Coordinating Council brings together domestic violence service providers and policy-level officials to identify and implement improvements in system response through legislation, education, training and policy development.

### **Delaware Code, Title 13, Domestic Relations, Chapter 21**

The Domestic Violence Coordinating Council:

- Studies court services and procedures, law enforcement procedures and protocol, and criminal justice data collection and analysis, as it relates to domestic violence.
- Effectually coordinates among agencies, departments, and the courts with victims of domestic violence and abuse.
- Promotes effective prevention, intervention, and treatment techniques based upon research and data collection.
- Recommends standards for treatment programs for perpetrators of domestic violence to the Department of Health and Social Services; Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families; and the Department of Correction.
- Reviews, drafts and comments upon legislation relating to domestic violence introduced in the General Assembly at the request of any member of the General Assembly or on its own initiative; and
- Improves the response to domestic violence and abuse to reduce the incidents thereof.

Much of our work is done through subcommittees made up of Council members, staff, first responders, service providers, policy-level officials, and community members. This collaborative approach has helped us establish supportive ties in the community for victims of violence identify areas of need and implement policies and procedures that respond to those needs.

## Message from the Chairs

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Hon. Patricia M. Blevins  
State Senate  
Chair



Dana Harrington Conner  
Member-at-Large  
Vice Chair

As Chair of the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (DVCC), I would like to personally thank the Honorable Carl C. Danberg for contributing his time and talent as Vice Chair and welcome Dana Harrington Conner as our new Vice Chair. We thank all of our Council members for their leadership and service and welcome our newest members: Senator Catherine Cloutier; Cabinet Secretary Jennifer B. Ranji, Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families; Commissioner Robert M. Coupe, Department of Correction; Diane Glenn, Director Victim Services Dover Police Department; Dawn Culp, MSN, RN, Bayhealth.

This fall marks the twenty-year anniversary of the founding of Delaware's Domestic Violence Coordinating Council. During the past twenty years, new systems have been put in place and existing systems enhanced in order to improve Delaware's response to domestic violence. Although much has been accomplished, work remains to be done as victims continue to be abused and killed as a result of domestic violence. The DVCC will continue to work to maintain existing programs, to identify gaps in services and to develop solutions to address those gaps.

In the upcoming year, DVCC will expand its focus to include sexual assault issues. Research reveals that under-reporting is a significant issue in the area of sexual assault. Consequently, many victims go unaided due to fear of intrusive court proceedings or other factors such as self-blame, embarrassment or fear that the system will respond with skepticism. We look to our partners in law enforcement, the advocacy community, the courts, healthcare, community agencies and others for their continued support and thank them for their ongoing efforts in responding to these important issues.

## Message from the Executive Director

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Bridget V. Poulle  
Executive Director

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This year, the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (DVCC) observes its 20-year anniversary. Back in 1993, Delaware was the only state in the country that did not offer the option of a civil protection order to victims of domestic violence. The rising number of domestic violence cases both locally and nationally prompted leaders in the Courts, the General Assembly, law enforcement and the advocacy community to join efforts to address this serious issue. In 1993, the DVCC was established by statute to improve Delaware's response to domestic violence.

Over the past two decades, the work of Coordinating Council has greatly benefitted from our continued partnerships with law enforcement, the advocacy community, the courts, and the Department of Justice. As our understanding of the complex issue advanced, so too did our partnerships which now also include the Division of Family Services, health care providers, hospitals, community agencies, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Education, middle schools, high schools, technical schools and universities.

The increased communication and collaboration among agencies has truly enabled Delaware to build a strong system of response to domestic violence, and while not perfect or complete, our combined efforts have produced a strong coordinated community response. As we prepare for the next decade, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the DVCC staff for their extraordinary work and dedication, the Coordinating Council Chairs and Council Members for their strong leadership, the members of the DVCC Subcommittees for their support and guidance, and many thanks to all of those who work to protect the safety of victims and their families.

# DVCC Subcommittees & Other Committees

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## **Children and Domestic Violence**

Chairs: Hon. Deborah Hudson and Hon. Jennifer Ranji

Staff: Cindy Mercer

## **Criminal Justice**

Chairs: Hon. James T. Vaughn, Jr., Chief Jeffrey Horvath and Hon. Brendan O'Neill

Staff: Cindy Mercer

## **Elderly and Domestic Violence**

Chairs: Hon. Joseph R. Biden, III and Hon. Lewis Schiliro

Staff: Patricia Kwetkauskie

## **Executive**

Chairs: Hon. Patricia M. Blevins, Hon. Deborah Hudson, Dana Harrington Conner,  
Margaret Reyes and Dawn Culp, MSN, RN

Staff: Bridget V. Poulle

## **Immigration**

Chair: Margaret Reyes

Staff: Aimee V. String

## **Legislative Drafting and Review**

Chairs: Hon. Patricia M. Blevins and Hon. Joseph R. Biden, III

Staff: Bridget V. Poulle

## **Medical**

Chair: Matthew Hoffman, M.D. and Dawn Culp, MSN, RN

Staff: Aimee V. String

## **Public Awareness/Education**

Chairs:

Staff: Patricia Kwetkauskie

## **Treatment**

Chairs: Hon. Brendan O'Neill and Hon. Robert Coupe

Staff: Bridget V. Poulle

## **Other DVCC Committees**

Batterers' Intervention Certification Panel (Staff: Aimee V. String)

Downstate Domestic Violence Committee (Staff: Aimee V. String)

Fatal Incident Review Team - Chairs: Hon. Vincent J. Poppiti, Hon. James T. Vaughn, Jr. and Dana Harrington Conner (Staff: Cindy Mercer)

Law Enforcement Training Work Group (Staff: Pat Kwetkauskie)

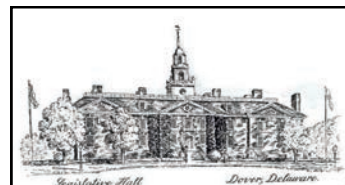


# Legislative Updates—State of Delaware

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## **Senate Bill 70**

### **AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 13 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COORDINATING COUNCIL.**



This bill adds a seat for the Court of Common Pleas to the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council. This increases the number of Council members from nineteen to twenty. The Court of Common Pleas handles a significant domestic violence caseload and participates in the work of the Coordinating Council.

Primary Sponsor: Senator Patricia Blevins  
SB 70 was passed by the General Assembly on July 1, 2013.

## Domestic Violence Coordinating Council Initiatives

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### **PFA Survey**

The Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (DVCC) in collaboration with Widener University School of Law developed and conducted a survey of 168 Protection From Abuse (PFA) petitioners. The purpose of the survey was to gather information about their experience with the PFA process as well as the criminal justice response. The DVCC is working with the Statistical Analysis Center to analyze the data.

### **PFA Information Sheet**

The DVCC developed a PFA information sheet entitled “*What You Should Know When Filing for a Protection From Abuse Order*”. The document was developed in collaboration with the Domestic Violence Task Force, the Victim’s Rights Task Force and other advocates to ensure widespread usefulness. The one-page document contains dynamics of domestic violence, court based advocacy services, and community resources and is currently available in Family Court Self Help Centers statewide.

### **DVCC 20th Anniversary**

This year marks the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the establishment of the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council. In order to commemorate the occasion, a 20 year report was released.

## Trainings

Training fulfills an important function by increasing public awareness about domestic violence and the resources available to assist victims and their families. Since last year's Annual Report, a total of 1,056 persons were trained. Training was delivered in a variety of methods including: on-site training for healthcare and other professionals; conducting conferences and trainings for law enforcement, probation and parole officers, schools, and members of the community. The DVCC collaborates extensively with community partners statewide by participating in public awareness and training efforts. A list of these training efforts and collaborations is below:

- (New) Judges/Commissioners - Family Court
- Alpha Kappa Alpha Debutantes
- Baylor Women's Correctional Center
- Bethel Villa - Christiana Care
- Christiana Care Domestic Violence Forum
- Christiana Care Health Ambassadors
- Delaware Adolescence Program, Inc. - Georgetown & Wilmington
- Delaware School Wellness Professionals
- Foster Care Cluster - Georgetown
- Hazel D. Plant Women's Treatment Facility
- Mental Health Conference
- Springfield Collaborative Domestic Violence Conference
- Springfield College of Human Services
- St. Francis Hospital
- Teen Dating Summit
- Thomas Edison Summer Camp
- Wesley College
- Whitney Lights Youth Ambassadors
- Wilmington University
- YWCA Domestic Violence Program
- YWCA Home Life Management Center



Domestic Violence Awareness Month Conference in collaboration with the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council, Delaware Commission for Women and Springfield College - School of Human Services.

## 2012 Events



**Domestic Violence Awareness Month Proclamation Signing**  
Governor Jack Markell, Senator Patricia Blevins, Domestic Violence Coordinating Council  
Members and Community Advocates



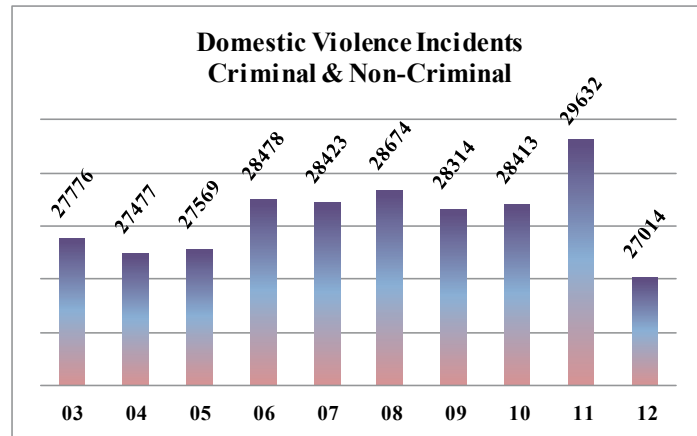
**Domestic Violence Coordinating Council Outstanding Community Service Awards**  
Governor Jack Markell, Neda Biggs,  
Victim Immigration Attorney, La  
Esperanza, Senator Patricia Blevins



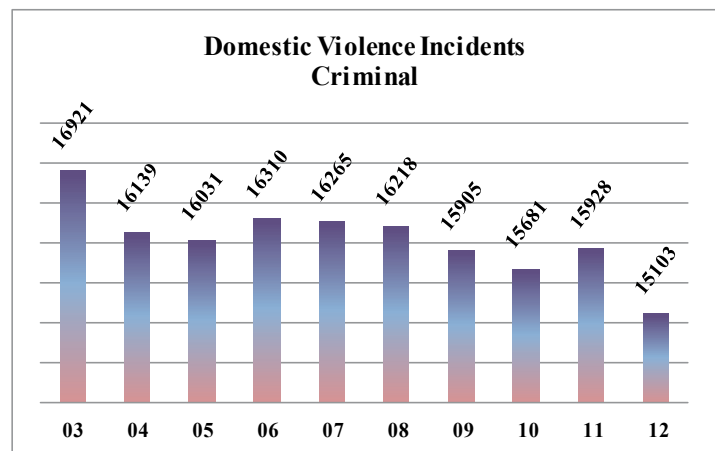
Governor Jack Markell, Debra Reed,  
Director of Victim Services, Delaware  
State Police, Senator Patricia Blevins

# Domestic Violence Statistics

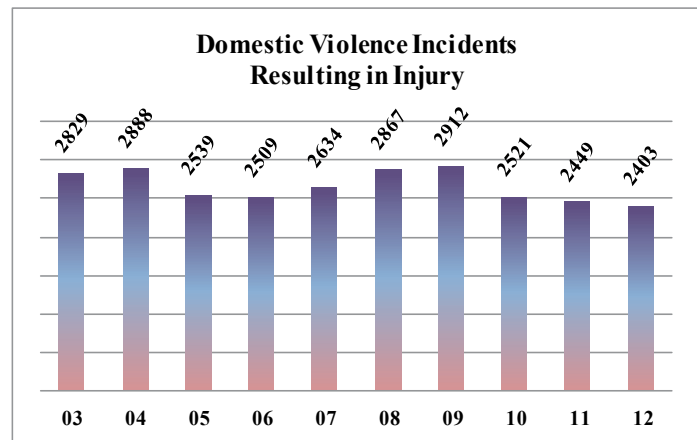
In calendar year 2012, per the State Bureau of Identification, the total number of domestic violence incidents reported in Delaware was 27,014 (combined criminal and non-criminal).



Criminal domestic violence incidents are those incidents where a crime is committed or alleged. Non-criminal domestic violence incidents are those in which there is police contact, but no crime was committed or alleged. For example, a verbal argument in which no threats are made. In calendar year 2012, the total number of reported domestic violence criminal incidents was 15,103.



Of the 15,103 reported criminal incidents, 2,403 (16%) resulted in physical injury to the victim.



# Protection from Abuse (PFA)

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## What is an Order of Protection From Abuse?

An Order of Protection From Abuse is a fully enforceable order issued by Family Court ordering someone to stop abusing another person, and may include other relief, such as surrender of firearms, ordering the abuser to stay away from the person being abused, exclusive use of the home or possessions, temporary custody, child support or support for the Petitioner, payment of expenses, offender treatment, and other relief that may help to prevent future violence.

## Who can file for Protection From Abuse?

Spouses, ex-spouses, family members, persons who lived together when the abuse occurred, persons living together as a couple, with or without a child/children in common, or persons living separate and apart with a child/children in common, or persons (including same sex) in a current or former substantive dating relationship may file for an Order of Protection from Abuse. Also, the Division of Family Services acting in the interest of a minor child may file a petition alleging domestic violence; or the Division of Adult Protective Services acting in the interest of an infirm adult may file a petition alleging domestic violence; or parents/guardians may file a petition on behalf of their teens who are in abusive relationships.

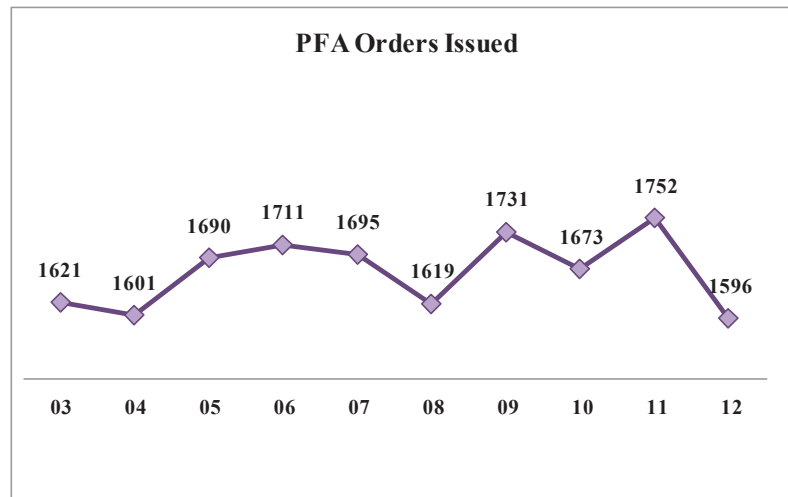
## How a Protection From Abuse Order is Issued

A Protection From Abuse Order is issued when the Court finds by a preponderance of evidence that domestic violence has occurred, or if the respondent consents to the entry of a protective order. The Family Court of Delaware defines abuse in 9 Del. C. § 1041. Included in the conduct which constitutes abuse is: Injuring or attempting to injure another person; engaging in a course of alarming or distressing conduct which would likely cause fear, emotional distress or provoke a violent or disorderly response; or any other conduct which a reasonable person under the circumstances would find threatening or harmful.

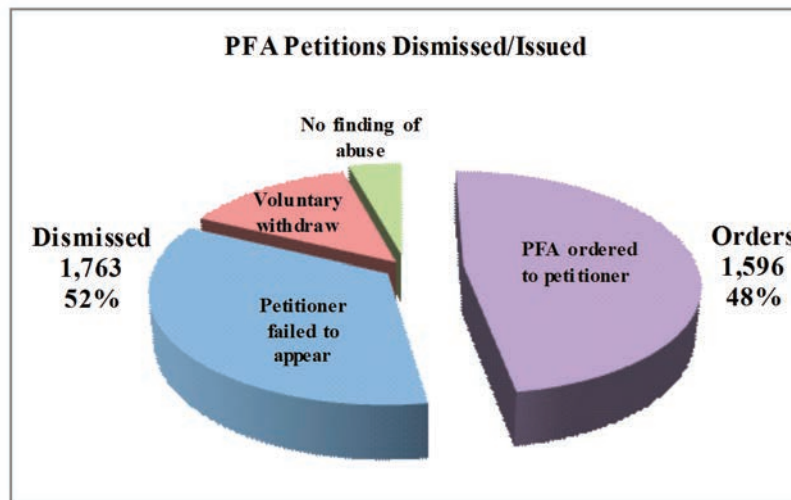


# Protection from Abuse Statistics

Statewide, Family Court processed 3,359 Protection From Abuse Petitions (PFA) in 2012. 1,596 (48%) Final Protection From Abuse orders were issued statewide. The remaining 1,763 (52%) petitions were dismissed.



In 2012, 1,596 (48%) Final Protection From Abuse orders were issued statewide. The remaining 1,763 (52%) petitions were dismissed.



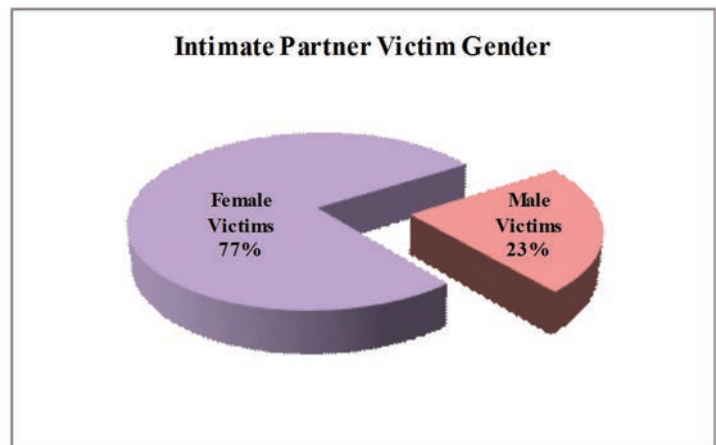
A Protection From Abuse petition dismissal can occur one of three ways:

- The Petitioner fails to appear for the hearing (1,164 or 35%),
- The Petitioner voluntarily withdraws the petition before the hearing (455 or 14%),
- Following a hearing in which abuse was not found by a preponderance of evidence (144 or 4%).

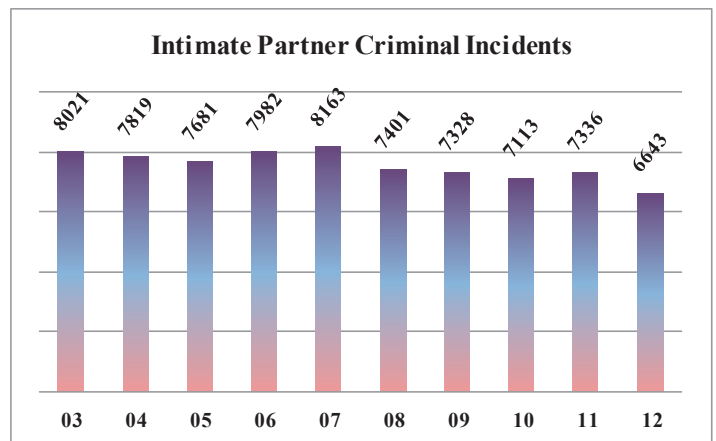
# Intimate Partner Statistics

The term “Intimate Partner” includes current and former spouses, current and former dating couples with or without a child in common and teen dating couples. Intimate partners may be the same gender.

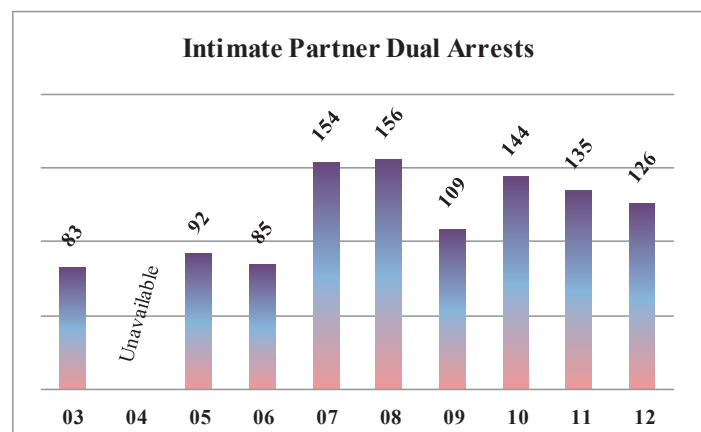
In 2012, 44% of all Domestic Violence Incidents reported took place between intimate partners. In the intimate partner incidents reported, 77% of the victims were female.



The State Bureau of Identification first began tracking intimate partner violence cases separately from all domestic violence cases in 2003. In 2012, there were 6,643 criminal incidents that occurred between intimate partners.



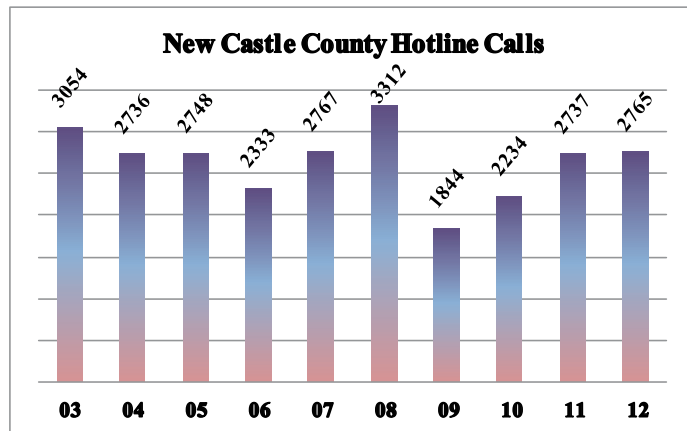
Dual Arrests are when law enforcement arrests both intimate partners involved in a domestic violence incident. In 2012, there were 126 dual arrests made statewide. This is less than 2% of all intimate partner criminal domestic violence incidents.



# Hotline Statistics

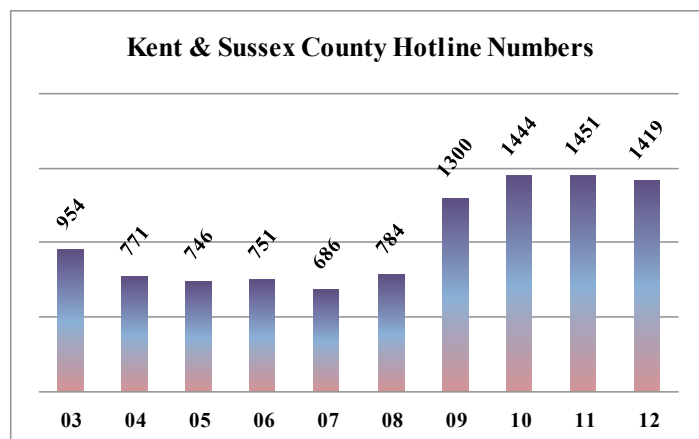
In 2012, there were 2,765 calls to the Domestic Violence Hotline in New Castle County.

This is an increase of 28 calls from 2011.



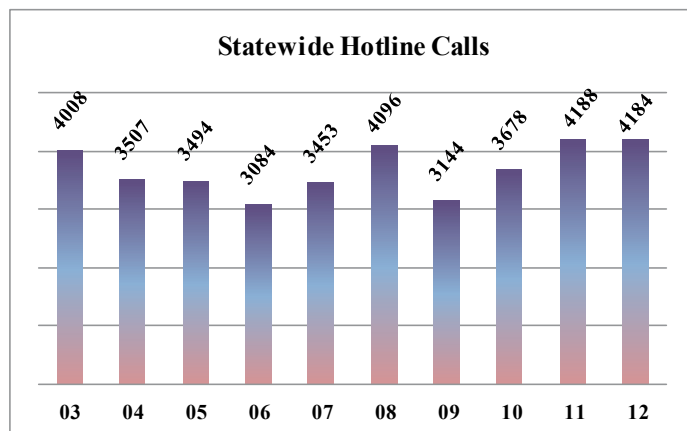
In 2012, there were a total of 1,419 calls to Domestic Violence Hotlines in Kent and Sussex Counties.

This is a decrease of 32 calls from 2011.



In 2012, there were a total of 4,184 calls received by Domestic Violence Hotlines statewide.

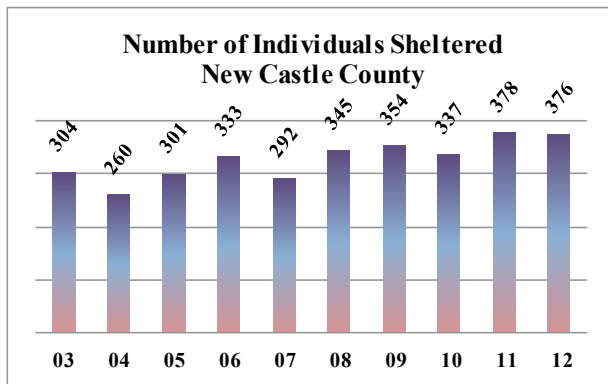
The average number of hotline calls over a ten year span is 3,684 per year.



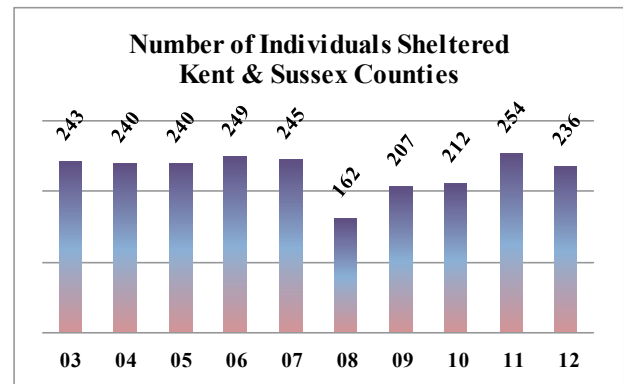


# Shelter Statistics

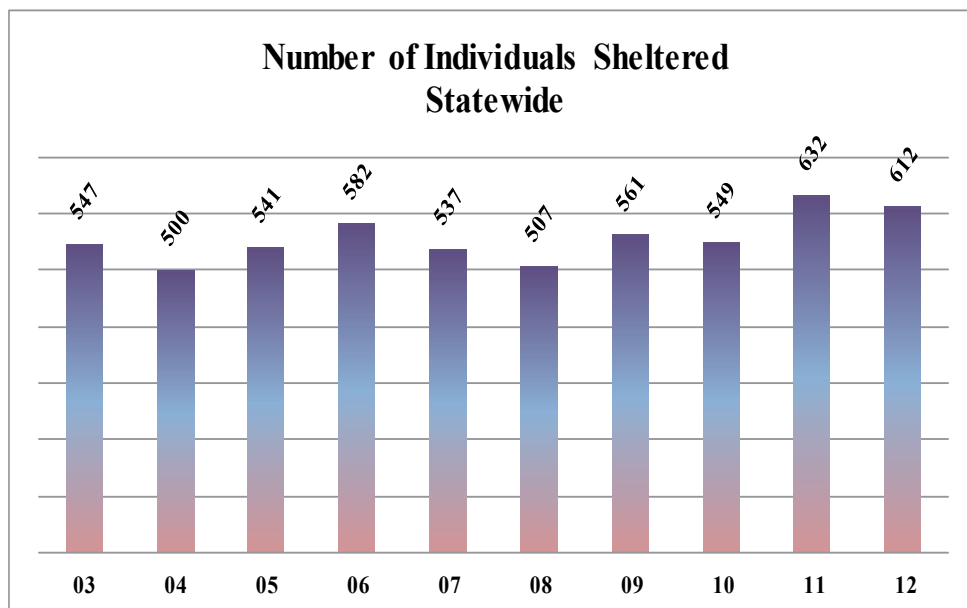
In 2012, there were 612 women and children sheltered statewide (353 women and 259 children). This is a decrease from the total of 632 women and children sheltered in 2011.



In New Castle County, 376 individuals were provided shelter in 2012. Of the 376 individuals 231 were women and 145 were children.



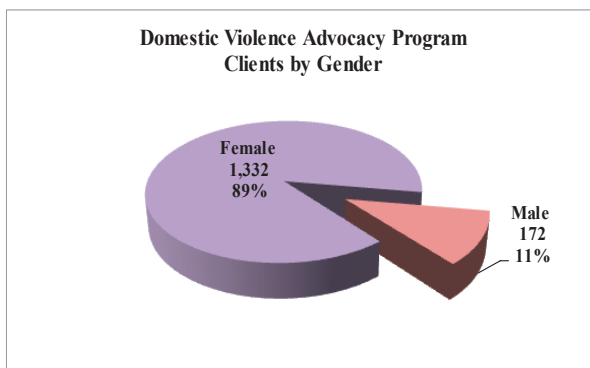
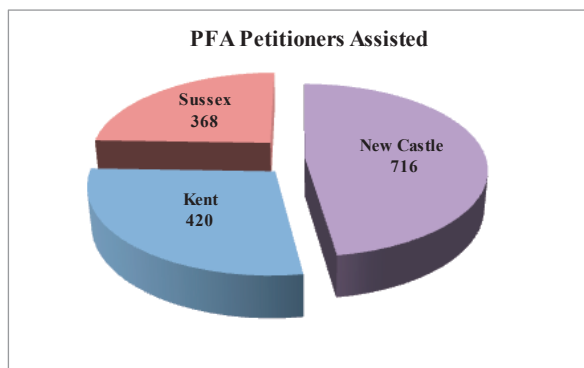
In Kent and Sussex Counties, the total number of individuals sheltered in 2012 was 236. Of the 236 provided shelter, 122 were women and 114 were children.



# Agency Statistics

## Domestic Violence Court -Based Advocacy Programs

The Domestic Violence Advocacy Programs of CHILD, Inc., provides free services to help victims of domestic violence navigate their way through the court system. Trained advocates assist victims with safety planning, answer questions about the court process, assist in filing petitions and provide a supportive presence at court hearings. Services are provided in Family Court in all three counties. In 2012, there were 1,504 unduplicated domestic violence victims served by the court-based advocacy program.



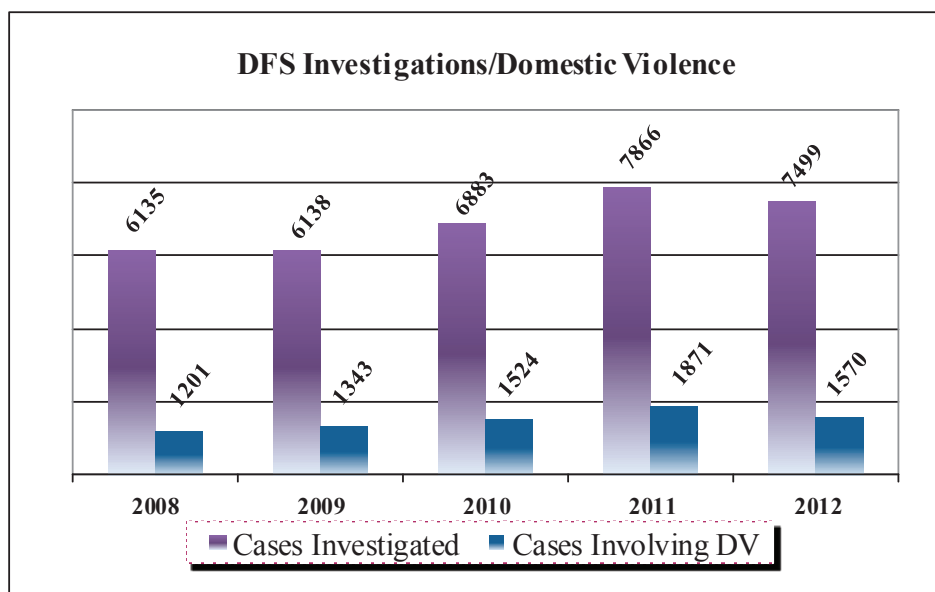
## Family Visitation Centers

Delaware's Family Visitation five Centers are a collaborative project between the State's Division of State Service Centers and two private non-profit organizations; CHILD, Inc. and People's Place. The Family Visitation Centers help address safety issues in families with a history of domestic violence by offering a program that provides safe exchange of children between parents for off-site visits and on-site supervision of visits, when necessary. In 2012, the centers statewide provided the following services:

	CHILD, Inc. New Castle County	People's Place Kent & Sussex County	Statewide
Visitation Exchanges:	333	806	1,139
Group Visits:	1,076	628	1,704
Individual Supervised Visits:	683	987	1,670
Children Served:	175	199	374
Parent/Caregivers Served:	252	128	380

## Agency Statistics

The Division of Family Services screens for domestic violence when a report of child abuse or neglect is made, during an investigation, and when a case is active in treatment. These statistics represent the total number of child abuse, neglect and dependency reports that met the criteria for investigation and that also alleged domestic violence. Of the 7,499 reports accepted for investigation by DFS in 2012, 1,570 or 21% included allegations of domestic violence. Of those, 1,104 or 70% cases were substantiated for domestic violence.



Since 2002, Domestic Violence Advocates, employed by CHILD, Inc. and the SAFE Program of People's Place, have been co-located within DFS to assist victims referred by DFS. These DFS Liaisons provide safety planning and advocacy services and continue to work with the victims on an ongoing basis as needed.

### New Castle County

#### CHILD, Inc.

Victims Served by  
DFS Liaisons: 101

### Kent County

#### People's Place

Victims Served by  
DFS Liaisons: 97

### Sussex County

#### People's Place

Victims Served by  
DFS Liaisons: 50

In 2012, DFS Liaisons served 248 victims statewide.

## Agency Statistics

### Services to Children Exposed to Domestic Violence

Trauma-informed therapeutic services are essential to help children who have witnessed domestic violence in their families recover from the trauma it causes. Some children have lost one or both parents to domestic violence. Counselors providing these clinical services use age appropriate techniques, including play therapy for younger children. Safety planning, working through feelings related to the violence, and developing skills to break the intergenerational cycle of violence are the focus of this healing therapy. In New Castle County, services are provided by CHILD, Inc. In Kent & Sussex Counties, People's Place and Crossroads of Georgetown provide these services.

#### New Castle County

##### **Helping Children Heal (CHILD, Inc.)**

Children/ Adolescents Served:	82
Parent/Caretakers Served:	<u>68</u>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>150</b>

#### Kent & Sussex Counties

##### **Turning Point (People's Place)**

Children/ Adolescents Served:	106
Parent/ Caretakers Served:	<u>39</u>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>145</b>

##### **Crossroads of Georgetown**

Children/ Adolescents Served:	32
Parent/ Caretakers Served:	<u>30</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>

### CD-CP Program

The Child Development Community Policing (CD-CP) Program provides immediate post-trauma counseling and referrals to children who have been impacted by witnessing homicides, rapes, assaults, domestic violence and other life threatening events. The CD-CP provides its services through collaboration between the Wilmington Police Department and the State's Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services.

In 2012, the CD-CP Program provided services to 52 children. Of those, 25 received services for domestic violence-related incidents. Some families referred to the program declined services or were already receiving clinical services. All of the families received written information about reactions to trauma as well as information about resources.

# Agency Statistics

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## Department of Correction Probation & Parole Supervised Domestic Violence Offender Data

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The philosophy of the Probation & Parole DV Unit is to hold the offender accountable and to maintain victim safety. In addition to specialized DV Probation Officers, each office has a Domestic Violence Victim Liaison. Probation & Parole has a specialized DV Unit in each county. Domestic violence cases are assigned to the DV Units based on criteria, including offenses, victim/offender relationships, and active PFA orders.

### New Castle County Domestic Violence Supervision

Number of DV Offenders Supervised:	374
Number of Probation Officers Assigned to DV Cases	8
Probationer/Probation Officer Ratio	47:1
Number of Victims Served by Victim Liaison:	125

### Kent County Domestic Violence Supervision

Number of DV Offenders Supervised:	389
Number of Probation Officers Assigned to DV Cases	6
Probationer/Probation Officer Ratio	65:1
Number of Victims Served by Victim Liaison:	153

### Sussex County Domestic Violence Supervision

Number of DV Offenders Supervised:	233
Number of Probation Officers Assigned to DV Cases	4
Probationer/Probation Officer Ratio	58:1
Number of Victims Served by Victim Liaison:	95

# 2012 Year in Review

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## **Domestic Violence Statistics**

- The number of domestic violence related deaths in 2012 identified by the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council is eight. There was one murder/suicide resulting in 2 of the 8 deaths. The remainder were all homicides.
- The total number of reported DV incidents in Delaware was 27,014; a decrease from 29,632 in 2012.
- The total number of reported DV criminal incidents was 15,103; a decrease from 16,329 in 2012.
- The total number of reported DV criminal incidents that resulted in physical injury was 2,403; a slight decrease from 2,449 in 2012.

## **Intimate Partner Statistics**

- 44% of all domestic violence criminal incidents reported took place between intimate partners.
- There were 6,643 reported criminal incidents of intimate partner domestic violence; this is a decrease from 6,964 incidents in 2012.
- There were 126 dual arrests made statewide, this means that less than 2% of all intimate partner criminal domestic violence incidents resulted in dual arrests.
- In the intimate partner incidents reported, 77% of the victims were female.

## **Protection From Abuse Order Statistics**

- Family Court processed 3,359 Protection From Abuse (PFA) Petitions.
- There were 1,596 Protection From Abuse final orders issued statewide. This number is a decrease from 1,752 issued in 2011.
- 144 PFA petitions were dismissed because abuse was not found by a preponderance of the evidence following a court hearing.
- 455 PFA petitions were dismissed because the petitioner voluntarily dismissed them.
- 1,164 PFA petitions were dismissed when the petitioner failed to appear for the hearing.

## **Hotline Statistics**

- There were a total of 2,765 Domestic Violence hotline calls received in New Castle County.
- There were a total of 1,419 Domestic Violence hotline calls received in Kent and Sussex Counties.
- Statewide, there were 4,184 Domestic Violence hotline calls received.

## **Shelter Statistics**

- In New Castle County, 231 women and 145 children were sheltered for a total of 376 women and children.
- In Kent and Sussex Counties, 122 women and 114 children were sheltered for a total of 236 women and children.
- Statewide, 612 women and children received shelter services. This number is a 3% decrease



# Delaware Fatal Incident Review Team Report

2013



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# Introduction

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The Domestic Violence Coordinating Council's Fatal Incident Review Team (FIRT) was established by statute in 1996 and became the first statewide team in the country. There are eleven other statewide teams today.

Domestic violence continues to be a devastating problem and deaths resulting from this crime are the ultimate acts of abuse. This report contains information from 115 cases reviewed over 17 years. In some of these cases, the victims had taken steps to protect themselves and their families. Despite their efforts, some victims and/or the people they loved died at the hands of the abuser.

The Fatal Incident Review Team members are dedicated professionals who conduct system audits of State agencies and private organizations that had contact with the deceased victim and/or the perpetrator to assess the system's response. Although domestic violence fatality reviews are retrospective in nature, their purpose is prospective. Reviews focus on identifying trends, patterns and obstacles in services, assessing agency interventions, and most importantly, developing practical recommendations aimed at improving the system and preventing future injury and death.

Delaware's FIRT team has had the authority to conduct near fatality reviews since 2009 when HB 146 w/SA2 was passed on 6/29/09 amending Title 13 of the DE Code to allow, but not require, Near Death reviews by the Fatal Incident Review Team. These reviews can enhance the Team's ability to improve Delaware's response to domestic violence. There is a wealth of knowledge that can be gained from hearing from the domestic violence victim about the history of violence, system involvement, and awareness of resources as well as information about what happened on the day of the incident. Sometimes, victims want to participate in the process of preventing future domestic violence homicides.

In 2012, the FIRT Team reviewed its first Near Death case, which included information acquired from a victim interview conducted by a FIRT Team Member and DVCC Staff. The Team did not complete this review until 2013, and therefore data and recommendations from this case are not included in this report.

Legislation mandates confidentiality requirements in the review process and any records created therein are exempt from the provision of the Freedom of Information Act. Therefore, all records of the reviews are confidential and are maintained in the DVCC office and may only be used by the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council in the exercise of its proper function. More information can be found at: 13 *Del. C.* § 2105.

# Team Members, Confidentiality & Participation

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## **Co-Chairs**

Honorable Vincent J. Poppiti, Domestic Violence Coordinating Council  
Dana Harrington Conner, Domestic Violence Coordinating Council  
Honorable James T. Vaughn, Jr., Domestic Violence Coordinating Council

## **Members**

According to 13 Del. C. § 2105, in addition to the co-chairs, the Review Team shall consist of 7 other core members:

- The Attorney General or the Attorney General's designee,
- The Director of the Division of Family Services or the Director's designee,
- A victim advocate appointed by the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council,
- The Chief Judge of the Family Court or the Chief Judge's designee,
- The Chief Magistrate of the Justice of the Peace Courts or the Chief Magistrate's designee,
- The Director of the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health, or the Director's designee,
- A law-enforcement officer to be appointed by the Delaware Chiefs of Police Council.

## **Participation & Confidentiality**

All members of the Review Team, plus other individuals invited to participate, shall be considered part of the review panel for a particular case or incident. The Review Team shall invite other law-enforcement personnel to serve and participate as full members of a review panel in any case in which a law-enforcement agency has investigated the death or near death under review or any prior domestic violence incident involving the decedent or near death victim. The Review Team may also invite other relevant persons to serve on an ad-hoc basis and participate as full members of the review panel for a particular review. Such persons may include, but are not limited to, individuals with particular expertise that would be helpful to the review panel, representatives from those organizations or agencies that had contact with or provided services to the individual prior to that individual's own death or near death, that individual's abusive partner or family member and/or the alleged perpetrator of the death or near death.

Each Review begins with the signing of a Confidentiality Agreement by each participant. This Agreement informs and reinforces that the confidentiality of case specific information is required by statute. All aspects of the review, including discussion of the case and information from the records must remain confidential.

# Domestic Violence Fatal Incident Cases

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The information contained in this report represents data collected from 115 fatality case reviews conducted by the Delaware Fatal Incident Review Team (FIRT). The fatalities reviewed occurred over a period of 17 years. The 115 cases contained in this report occurred between 1996 and 2012. However, because cases cannot be reviewed until prosecution has been completed and the review is authorized by the Department of Justice, not every domestic violence-related fatality that occurred between those years appears in this report (13 Del. C. § 2105).

**This report contains data on  
115 Domestic Violence Fatal Incident cases  
which resulted in 148 deaths.**

**Some cases resulted in multiple deaths.**

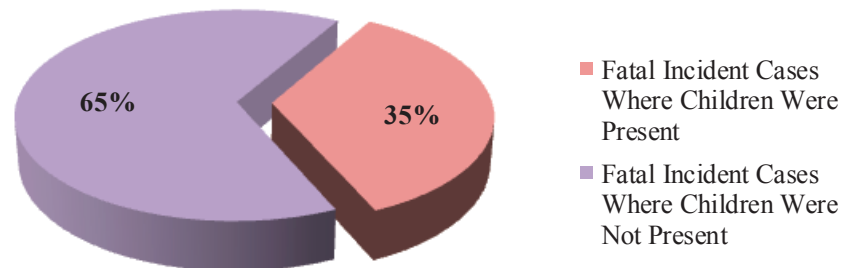
Homicide Victims	Perpetrator Suicides Following Homicides	Suicide Only	Undetermined Victim Deaths
98	27	22	1

## Impact of Domestic Violence on Children

Domestic violence affects every member of the family, including children. Family violence creates a home environment where children live in constant fear. The ultimate form of domestic violence – homicide – has devastating life-long effects on those children left behind.

According to Delaware law, a child can be a witness to an act of domestic violence by sound as well as sight, acknowledging that a child may have only heard the violent act from another room, but nonetheless be a witness who is emotionally impacted by it.

**Children Present During DV Fatalities**



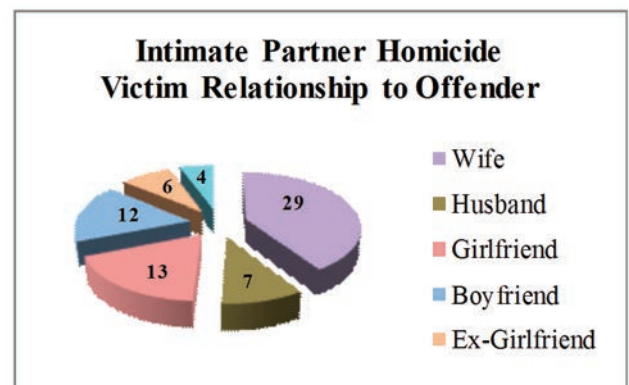
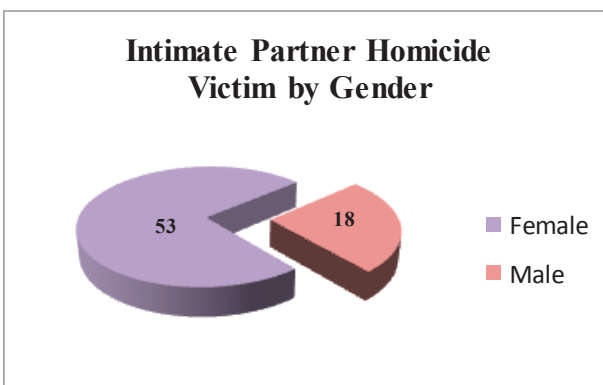
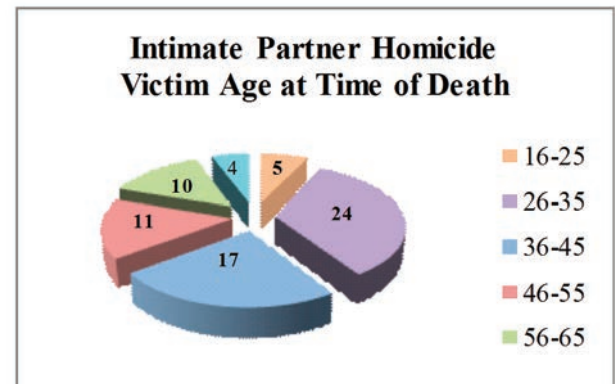
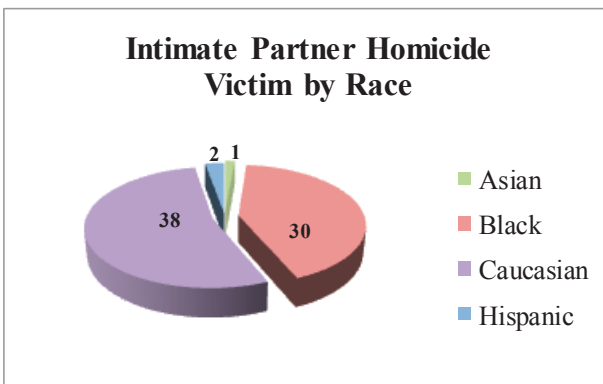
### Children Who Lost a Parent

- **In 35% of the 115 cases in this report, children experienced the loss of a parent.**
- **In FIRT cases reviewed to date, 106 children have lost a parent due to domestic violence.**
- **Many children also lost a parent to imprisonment following the homicide.**

# Intimate Partner Data

The term “Intimate Partner” includes current and former spouses, current and former dating couples with or without a child in common and teen dating couples. Intimate partners may be the same gender.

Of the 98 homicide deaths included in this report, 71 were the result of intimate partner homicide.

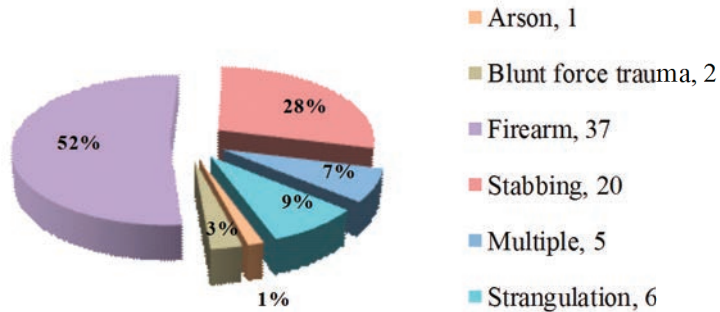


## Intimate Partner Data

### Location of these Intimate Partner Homicides:

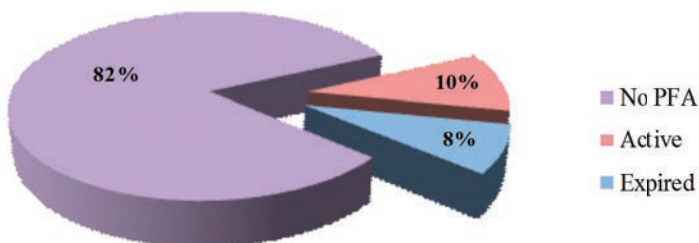
- 37 (or 52%) of the deaths occurred at the shared home
- 17 (or 24%) of the deaths occurred at the victim's home.
- 10 (or 14%) of the deaths occurred in the car, on the street, or a parking lot
- 5 (or 7%) of the deaths occurred in the perpetrator's home
- 1 (or 1.4%) of the deaths occurred in the victim's place of employment
- 1 (or 1.4%) of the deaths occurred at a friend's home

### Intimate Partner Homicide Victim Cause of Death



Of the 71 Intimate Partner homicides, 32 or 45% of the homicides occurred when the victim attempted to leave or had ended the relationship with the perpetrator.

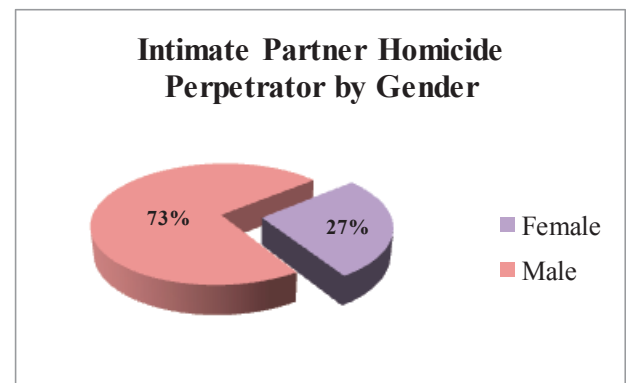
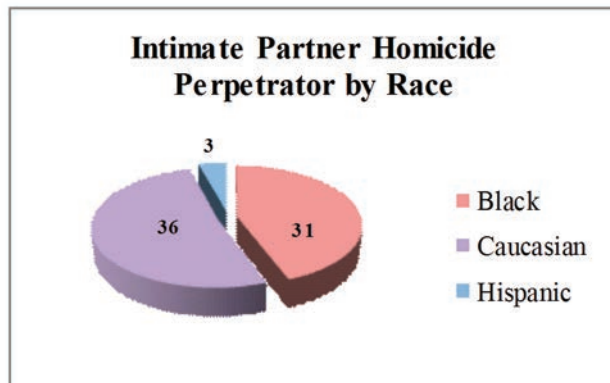
### Intimate Partner Victims with Protection From Abuse Orders



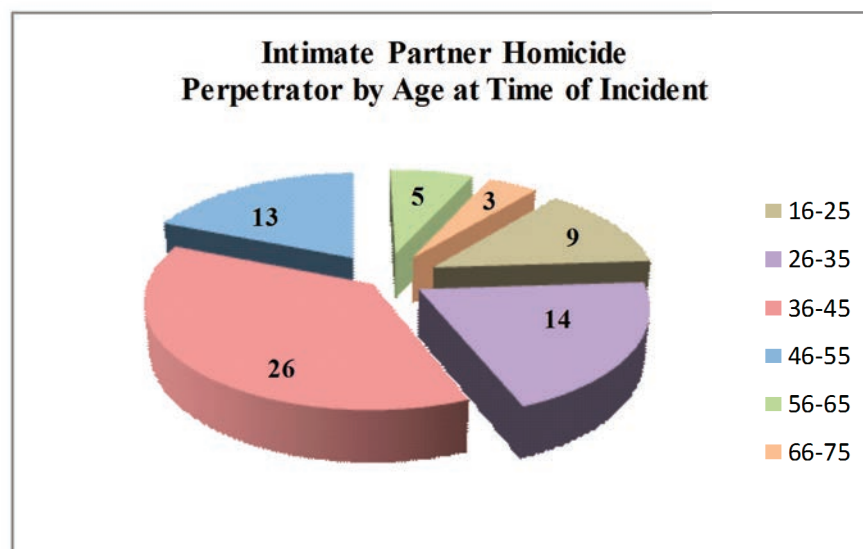
A Protection from Abuse Order (PFA) is issued by Family Court ordering someone to stop abusing another person. Of the 115 cases reviewed in this report, 82% of the victims never had a Protection From Abuse Order.

# Intimate Partner Data

There are 70 Intimate Partner homicide perpetrators in this report. Of those, 51 or 73% of the perpetrators were male and 19 or 27% of the perpetrators were female.



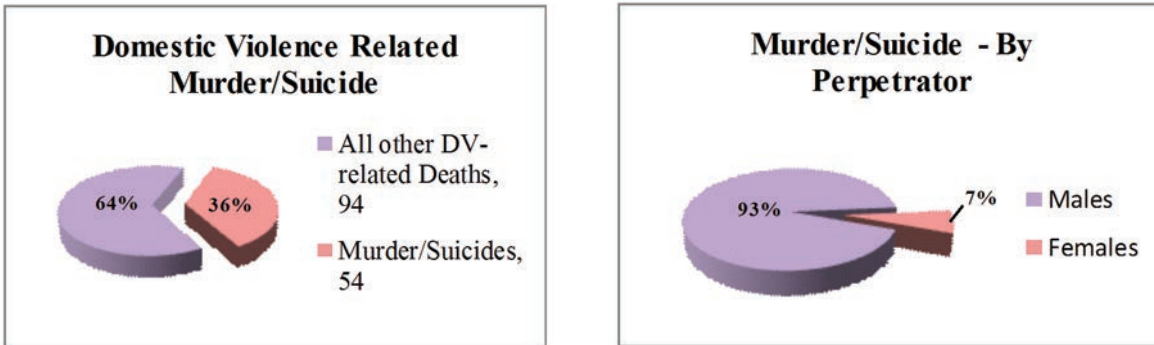
26 or 37% of the perpetrators were between the ages of 36-45 at time of incident.



## Suicide Data

The term “Murder/Suicide” refers to those cases where the perpetrator murdered the victim and then committed suicide.

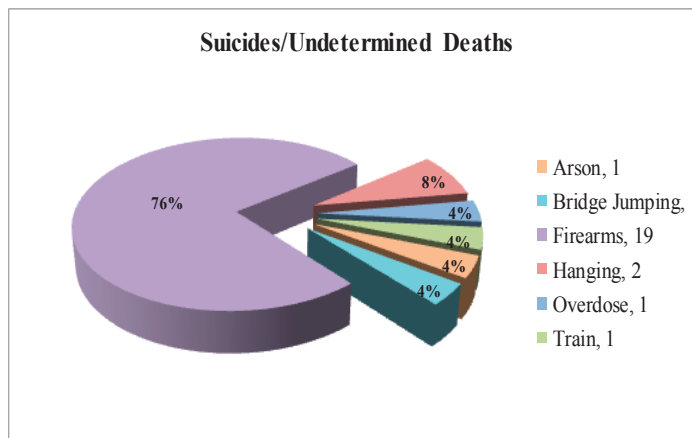
Of the 148 Domestic Violence deaths included in this report, 54 deaths (36%) resulted from murder/suicide. There were 27 murder/suicide cases. Of those, 25 (93%) of the perpetrators of these murder/suicides were male and 2 (7%) of the perpetrators were female.



“Domestic Violence related Suicides” are victims or perpetrators who have taken their own lives and have had a significant history of abuse by or toward their partner.

Manner of death is the classification of categories used to define whether a death is from intentional causes, unintentional causes, natural causes, or undetermined. If a case lacks a clear indicator as to whether or not the death was intentionally caused by another or accidental, this case will remain suspicious in nature and the exact manner of death will be undetermined.

There were a total of 25 domestic violence related suicides, including one undetermined death. Of those 25 domestic violence related suicides/undetermined deaths the victim’s death was a result of a firearm in 19 (76%) of the cases. Two of the deaths resulted from hanging. And one death each resulted from jumping from a bridge, suicide by train, overdose and arson.





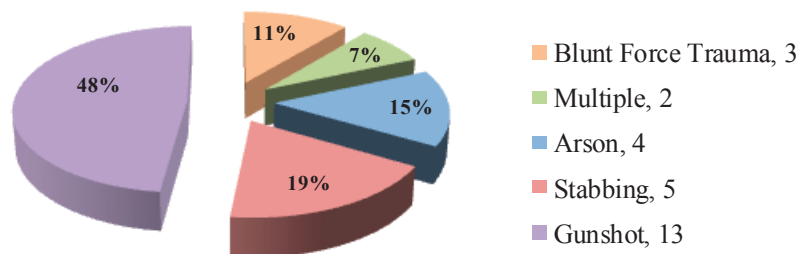
## Non-Intimate Partner Data

### Location of these Non-Intimate Homicides:

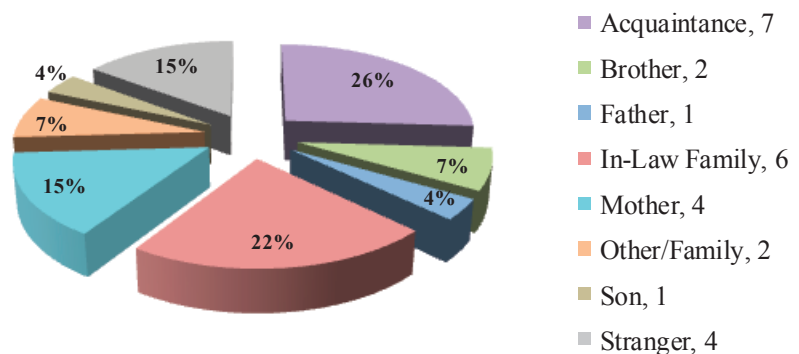
- 8 of the deaths occurred at the shared home of the victim and the perpetrator.
- 8 of the deaths occurred at the victim's home.
- 4 of the deaths occurred at the perpetrator's home
- 2 of the deaths occurred in a car, on the street or in a parking lot
- 2 at an acquaintance/friend's home
- 1 at the perpetrator's girlfriend's home
- 1 at the victim's place of employment
- 1 at the victim's boyfriend's home.

“Non-Intimate Partners” are individuals who are not intimate partners, but have a familial relationship, such as, mother/adult son, or brother/sister. Of the 98 homicides included in this report, 27 (28%) were “Non-Intimate Partner” homicides. Also included in these homicide numbers are victims who were bystander victims (friends, acquaintances or strangers).

**Non-Intimate Partner Homicide - Cause of Death**



**Non-Intimate Partner Homicide Relationship to Offender**



# 2012 Year in Review

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## **Children and Domestic Violence Fatality**

- Of the 115 cases in this report, in 35% of them, there were children present during the crime. Of the 115 cases in this report, there were 106 children who lost a parent due to domestic violence.

## **Intimate Partner Domestic Violence Homicide**

- 71 of the homicides recorded in this report were intimate partner homicides.
  - 75% of those victims were female victims.
  - Of those females, 41% were current or former wives of the perpetrator.
  - 34% of the female victims of Intimate Partner homicide were between the ages of 26 and 35.
- 45% of the intimate partner homicides included in this report occurred when the victim ended the relationship or attempted to leave.
- 76% of the intimate partner homicides included in this report occurred in the victim's own home or the shared home of the victim and the perpetrator.
- 73% of the intimate partner homicide perpetrators in this report were male.
  - Of those males, 61% were between the ages of 26 and 45.
- 36% of the deaths in this report resulted from murder/suicide.
- 93% of the perpetrators of murder/suicides included in this report were male.

## **Firearms and Domestic Violence Fatalities**

- 52% of the intimate partner homicides in this report were the result of a shooting.
- 48% of the non-intimate partner homicides in this report were the result of a shooting.
- 76% of the domestic violence related suicides in this report were the result of a shooting.
- Total 51% of 115 cases from homicides.

## **Domestic Violence Related Suicide**

- 80% of the domestic violence related suicides in this report were male DV perpetrators.
- 40% of the domestic violence related suicides in this report occurred in the victim's home.

## **Protection From Abuse Orders**

- **90% of the homicide victims in this report did not have an active PFA at the time of the fatality.**

# FIRT Recommendations & Responses for Improving System Response

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The ultimate purpose for reviewing domestic violence fatalities is to reduce the incidence of such deaths. At the end of each case review, following the presentation of information, team members are asked if they have any recommendations for improving the system response to domestic violence.

The 2012 FIRT Recommendations were sent to relevant agencies and organizations throughout the State. The Responses to those Recommendations are listed below in **BOLD**.

The Domestic Violence Coordinating Council is extremely grateful to the participating agencies for their commitment towards the mission to improve the system's response to domestic violence. We are fortunate to have the high level of cooperation demonstrated by the agencies' response to the Fatal Incident Review Team's recommendations.

## CHILD, Inc.

### Recommendation:

Family Court and the Domestic Violence Advocacy Program staff should continue to ensure compliance 16 *Del. C.* §§ 903 and 904, which require mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse and neglect to the Division of Family Services.

### CHILD, Inc. Response:

**CHILD, Inc. agrees with the recommendation of the Fatal Incident Review Team and will ensure that staff comply with mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse or neglect. Staff are provided information on reporting child abuse and neglect to the Division of Family Services when they become employed by the agency. Additionally, staff receive regular training on mandatory reporting from both internal and external trainers.**

## Family Court

### Recommendation:

Family Court and the Domestic Violence Advocacy Program staff should continue to ensure compliance 16 *Del. C.* §§ 903 and 904, which require mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse and neglect to the Division of Family Services.

### Family Court Response:

**Family Court's Internal Policy Memorandum 06-006 entitled "Mandatory Reporting Requirement under the Child Abuse Prevention Act of 1997" ensures that all employees are aware of their responsibilities as mandatory reporters of child abuse. In addition to the policy, the Court has an internal operating procedure entitled "Child Abuse/Neglect Reporting" that sets forth the requirements that staff must follow if they witness abuse or neglect, or a child discloses such abuse or neglect to the employee. This procedure also addresses referrals made by Judges and Commissioners. The Court's policy and procedure, and adherence to them, continue to ensure compliance with Delaware's mandatory reporting laws.**



Notes:

Notes:

Notes:

**If you are in danger, please call 911.**

## **Domestic Violence/Rape Crisis 24 –Hour Hotline Numbers**

### **New Castle County**

Domestic Violence	302-762-6110
Bi-Lingual	302-762-6110
Rape Crisis	302-761-9100
TTY	800-232-5460

### **Northern Kent**

Domestic Violence	302-678-3886
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### **Kent & Sussex**

Domestic Violence	302-422-8058
Rape Crisis	800-262-9800
Bi-lingual	302-745-9874

## **DVCC Main Office**

New Castle County Courthouse  
Suite 9425  
500 N. King Street  
Wilmington, DE 19801

Phone: 302-255-0405

Fax: 302-255-2236

[www.dvcc.delaware.gov](http://www.dvcc.delaware.gov)

## **DVCC Kent & Sussex County Office**

Milford State Service Center  
Suite 105  
13 S. W. Front Street  
Milford, DE 19963

Phone: 302-424-7238

Fax: 302-424-5311

[www.dvcc.delaware.gov](http://www.dvcc.delaware.gov)

# Domestic Violence Coordinating Council

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