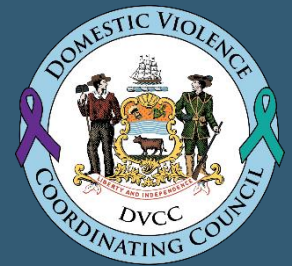


FATAL INCIDENT REVIEW TEAM
2020 ANNUAL REPORT

State of Delaware
Domestic Violence Coordinating Council



The 2020 Fatal Incident Review Team (FIRT) Annual Report provides a summary of the Review Team’s activities and accomplishments over the last year. This report contains statistical data for the domestic violence fatalities that occurred in calendar year 2019, as well as information and recommendations from the fatal cases reviewed by FIRT in 2019. This report is a supplement to the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council’s Annual Report, which is published in the fall of each year.

In 2019, the review team held three domestic violence fatality reviews. In addition to the reviews, a DVCC staff member represented Delaware at the National Domestic Violence Fatality Review Initiative (NDVFRI) Summit in June 2019 in Flagstaff, Arizona. The summit focused on work being done on the national level to create a uniform reporting method (system) for domestic violence fatalities. The DVCC will continue contact with the NDFVRI as the national initiative progresses.

| | |
|--|---|
| Fatal Incident Review Team _____ | 2 |
| 2019 Domestic Violence-Related Deaths _____ | 3 |
| Intimate Partner Data _____ | 5 |
| Non-Intimate Partner Data _____ | 6 |
| Suicide Data _____ | 6 |
| FIRT Follow Ups, Recommendations & Responses _____ | 7 |

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. FIRT members are dedicated professionals who conduct examinations of State agencies and private organizations that had contact with the victim 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. In 2009, the General Assembly granted FIRT the authority to conduct near-death reviews. These reviews enhance the team's ability to improve Delaware's response to domestic violence with the wealth of knowledge that can be gained from speaking directly with the domestic violence survivor about the incident, the history of violence, system involvement, and awareness of resources.

FIRT Co-Chairs

The Honorable Vincent J. Poppiti
The Honorable Jan R. Jurden
Professor Dana Harrington Conner

FIRT Members:

In accordance with 13 Del. C. §2105, in addition to the co-chairs, the Review Team shall consist of:

- The Attorney General or the Attorney General's designee;
- The Chief Defender or the Chief Defender's designee;
- The Director of the Division of Family Services or the Director's designee;
- The President Judge of the Superior Court, or the President Judge's designee;
- 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;
- The Commissioner of the Department of Correction or the Commissioner's designee;
- A law-enforcement officer to be appointed by the Delaware Police Chiefs' Council;
- A treatment provider from a certified batterers' intervention program appointed by the Council;
- Two victim advocates appointed by the Council;
- A victim of domestic violence appointed by the Council; and,
- A licensed health-care professional knowledgeable in the screening and identification of domestic violence cases appointed by the Council.

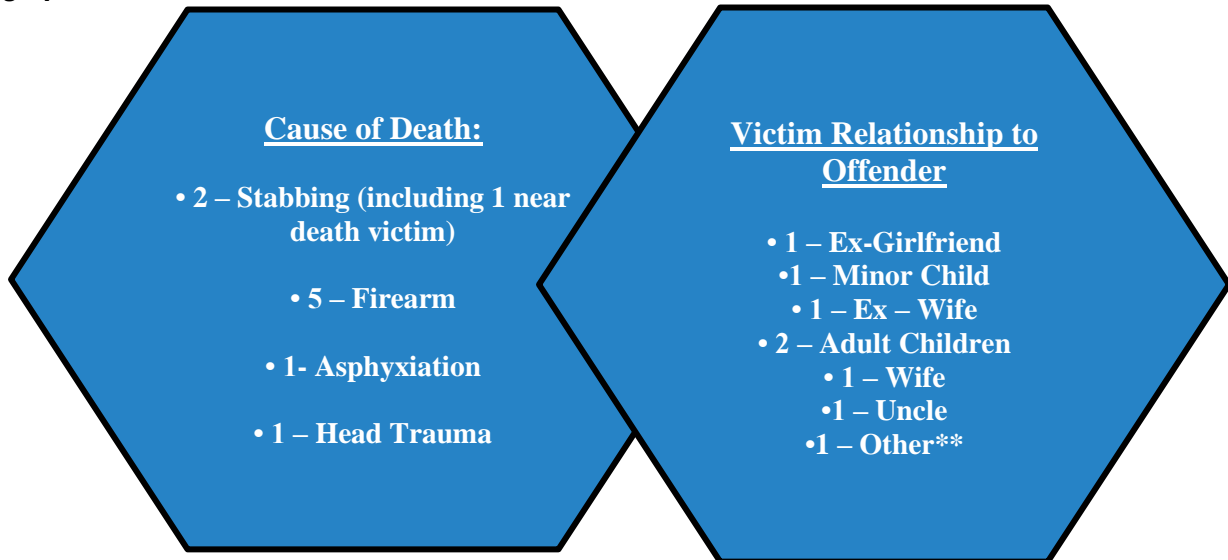
All members of the Review Team, as well as other individuals invited to participate, are considered part of the review panel for a particular case or incident. The Review Team frequently invites law enforcement personnel to participate in any case in which the agency investigated the death, near-death or had involvement with the victim prior to the domestic violence incident under review. The Review Team may also invite the participation of individuals with particular expertise that would be helpful to the review panel, or representatives from organizations or agencies that had contact with or provided services to the individual prior to the individual's own death or near-death, that individual's abusive partner or family member or the alleged perpetrator of the death or near-death.

Domestic Violence-Related Deaths

The DVCC tracks domestic violence-related deaths that occur throughout the State of Delaware. These domestic violence-related deaths include victims, perpetrators, or by-standers if the death was a result of domestic violence, either intimate partner violence or between family members.

| | 2019 | 2018 | 2017 | 2016 | 2015 |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|
| Incidents of domestic violence related deaths | 9 | 7 | 6 | 9 | 6 |
| Victims of domestic violence homicide (plus one near death victim) (excluding by legal intervention) | 8 | 10 | 6 | 9 | 6 |
| Homicides by legal intervention (responding law enforcement) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| All domestic violence-related homicides | 8 | 10 | 6 | 9 | 7 |
| Perpetrator suicide (excluding by legal intervention) | 4 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 1 |
| Total deaths (victim and perpetrator) | 12 | 15 | 8 | 13 | 8 |

*The demographics of the 8 domestic violence homicide victims and 1 near death victim in 2019 were as follows:



Victim

Perpetrator

- Race**
- 3 Caucasian
 - 4 Black
 - 2 Hispanic

- Gender**
- 4 Female
 - 5 Male

- Age**
- 1 age 1
 - 2 ages 16 to 25
 - 3 ages 26 to 35

- Age**
- 1 age 36 to 45
 - 1 age 46 to 55
 - 1 age 76 to 85

- Race**
- 3 Caucasian
 - 4 Black
 - 2 Hispanic

- Gender**
- 8 Male
 - 1 Female

- Age**
- 1 age 16 to 25
 - 1 age 26 to 35
 - 3 ages 36 to 45
 - 2 ages 46 to 55
 - 1 age 56 to 65
 - 1 age 76 to 85

•These cases have not been reviewed by the Fatal Incident Review Team•
 **Other can be defined as a man who killed his female partner’s former boyfriend.

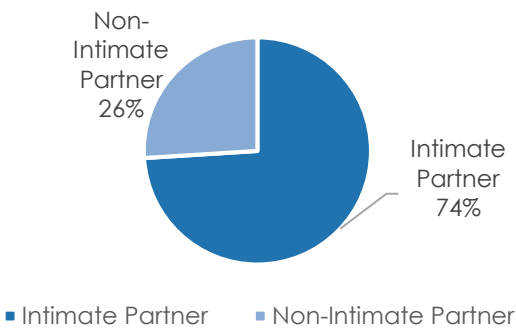
Domestic Violence-Related Deaths

This portion of the report is a collection of data from 140 domestic violence fatal incident reviews conducted by FIRT between 1996 and 2019. These reviews included cases where prosecution was completed by the Department of Justice and the Department of Justice authorized FIRT to conduct a final review. The cases reviewed do not reflect all domestic violence homicides or near-deaths in Delaware since 1996. Of the 140 fatal incident reviews, there were 175 domestic violence-related deaths and 3 near-deaths.

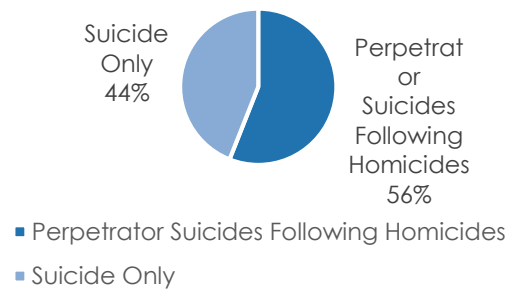
Domestic Violence-Related Deaths and Near-Deaths

| | |
|--|-----|
| Homicide Victims | 121 |
| Perpetrator Suicides Following Homicides | 30 |
| Suicide Only | 23 |
| Undetermined Victim Deaths* | 1 |
| Near-Death | 3 |

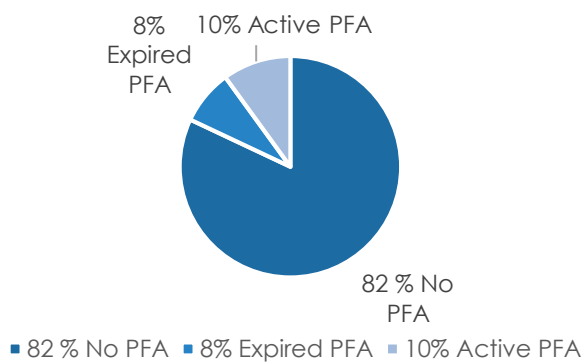
Homicide Victims 1996-2019



Suicide Deaths 1996-2019



Victims with Protection from Abuse Orders



In the 140 cases reviewed by FIRT, 124 children lost a parent to domestic violence homicide and two children were impacted by the near-death of a parent.

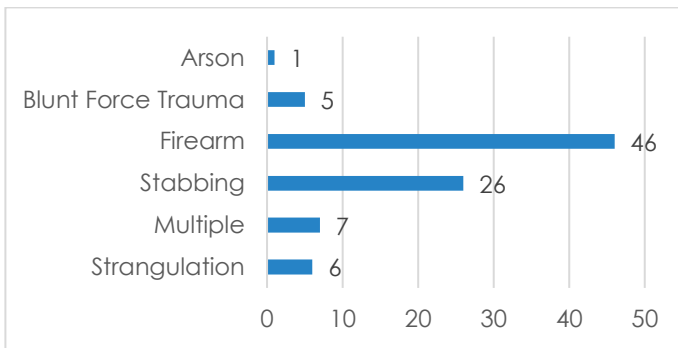
* If a case lacks a clear indicator as to whether or not the death was intentionally caused by another or accidental, the case will remain suspicious in nature and the exact manner of death will be undetermined.

Intimate Partner Data

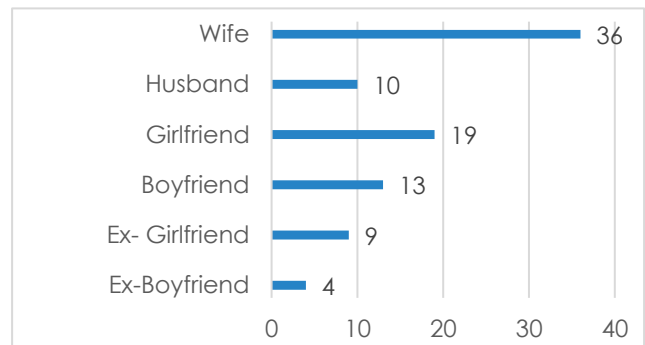
Of the 121 homicide victims and 3 near-death victims reviewed by FIRT, 91 victims or 73% of the homicides occurred in a past or present intimate partner relationship. The term “intimate partner” includes current and former spouses, current and former dating couples with or without a child in common, and teen dating couples. Intimate partners may be of the same gender.

Out of 88 intimate partner homicides or near-deaths, 49% of the homicides occurred when a victim attempted to leave or had ended a relationship with the perpetrator.

Victim Cause of Death



Victim Relationship to Offenders



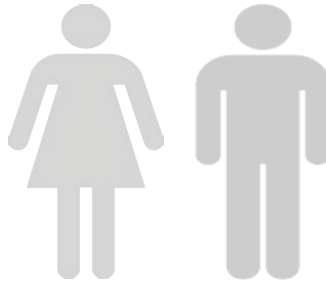
Victim & Perpetrators by Gender

Female Victims

69 (75 %)

Female Perpetrators

23 (25 %)



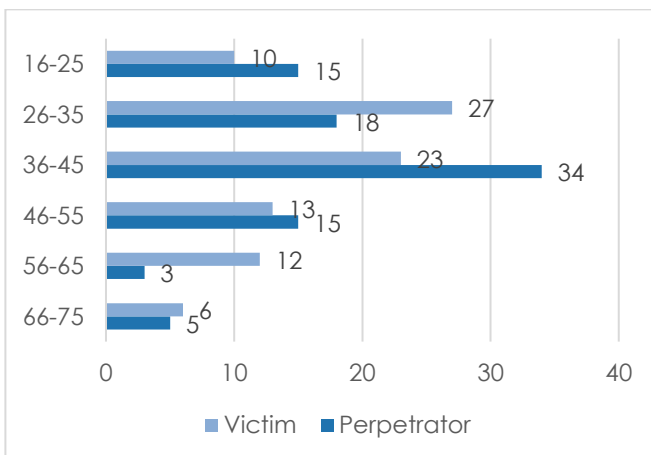
Male Victims

22 (25 %)

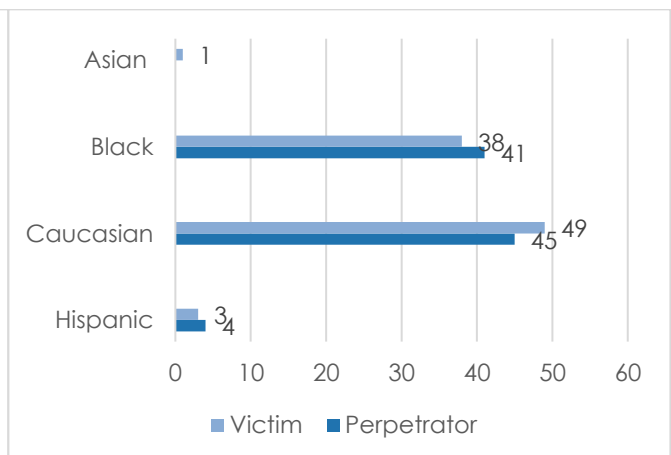
Male Perpetrators

67 (75 %)

Victims & Perpetrators Age at Time of Incident



Victims & Perpetrator by Race

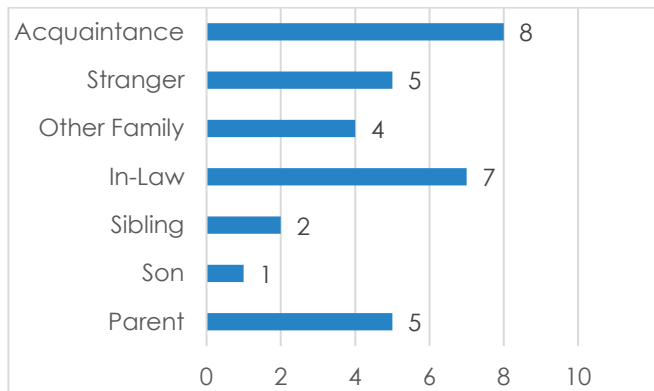


Non-Intimate Partner Data

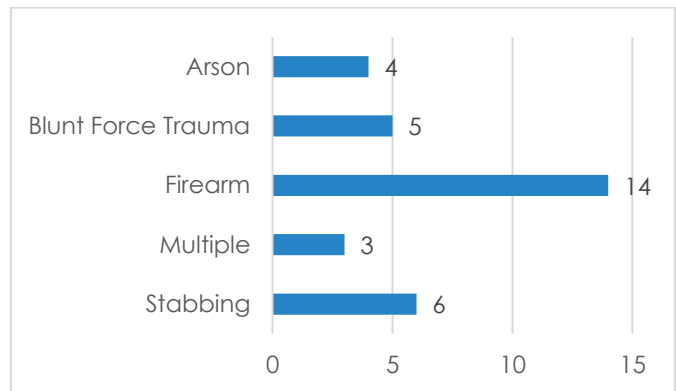
Domestic violence-related deaths between non-intimate partners include individuals with a familial relationship such as parent/child or sibling relationship.

Of the 121 homicide victims included in this report, 32 victims were “non-intimate partners.” Also included in these homicide numbers are victims who were bystanders (acquaintances or strangers).

Victim Relationship to Offender

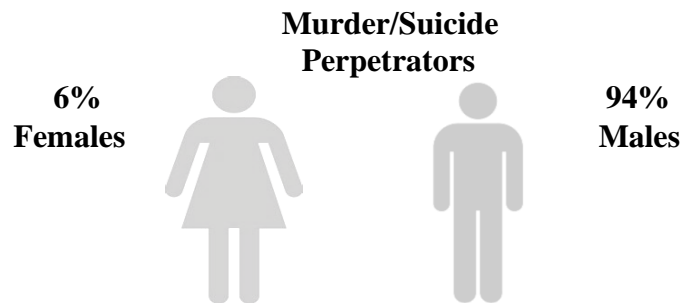


Victim Cause of Death



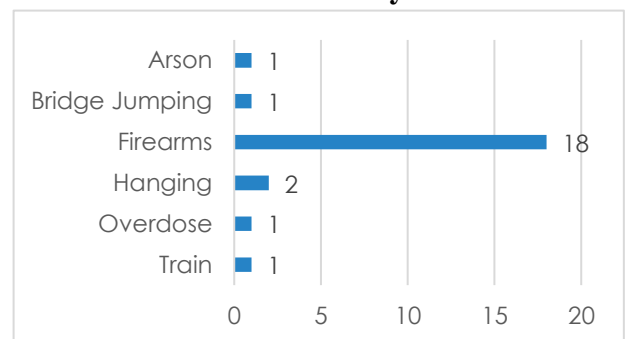
Suicide Data

Of the 175 domestic violence-related deaths included in this report, there were 30 perpetrator suicides following a homicide or murder/suicide. Out of the 30 murder/suicide cases reviewed, 28 of the perpetrators were male and 2 were female.



“Domestic violence-related suicides” are counted separately from the murder/suicide cases. The suicide only cases are victims or perpetrators who have taken their own lives and have a significant history of abuse by or toward their partner. There was a total of 24 domestic violence-related suicides, including one undetermined death where it could not be concluded if it was accidental or a suicide.

Cause of Death Suicide Only



FIRT Follow Ups, Recommendations & Responses

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

The 2020 FIRT recommendations were sent to the relevant agencies. Prior year FIRT recommendations are also listed in the report with 2020 updates. The responses to the recommendations are listed in the report in **BOLD**.

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

2020 Recommendation

Department of Justice

Encourage the attorneys to offer a proffer of the underlying facts of a case to the sentencing Judge to provide the Court with a more complete picture.

Response:

1. The State Prosecutor will instruct all Deputy Attorneys General in the Criminal Division to offer a proffer of the basic underlying facts to a sentencing judge prior to sentencing a defendant in a criminal case.

2. The Criminal Division in the Delaware Department of Justice will conduct a statewide training related to effectively prosecuting a domestic violence case for all criminal Deputy Attorneys General. The training will consist of the following topics:

- (1) recognizing domestic violence;**
- (2) understanding the cycle of violence and how it effects a criminal prosecution; and**
- (3) the available resource for victims and defendants to address underlying issues of domestic violence.**

2020 Recommendation

Family Court

Family Court consider the addition of a cover page to the Protection from Abuse petition that provides victim resources including the Domestic Violence Advocacy Program and legal resources.

Response:

Family Court is drafting a Resources for Domestic Violence Victims cover page that will be attached to the Protection from Abuse Petition. The cover page will include information on the Domestic Violence Advocacy Program, legal assistance resources, the Domestic Violence Intervention Program, and the E-Courtroom.

2020 Recommendation

Office of Defense Services

Encourage the attorneys to offer a proffer of the underlying facts of a case to the sentencing Judge to provide the Court with a more complete picture.

Response:

While we do not agree with the mechanism that the team is suggesting, our Attorneys, Mitigation Specialists, Forensic Social Specialists and Partners for Justice all attempt to determine the issues that led to our client's offenses and seek appropriate treatment both within and without the Court and Correctional systems. The mechanism being suggested by the Review Team, however, may be inconsistent with our professional responsibilities to our clients'.

**2020 Recommendation
Domestic Violence Coordinating Council**

1. The DVCC shall research potential links between substance abuse and domestic violence; particularly, potential resources available for middle school age children and their parents regarding substance abuse prevention and treatment.

Response:

The DVCC staff will present the recommendation to the Council at the March 2020 Quarterly Meeting.

2. The DVCC will send a letter to Superior Court, Family Court, Court of Common Pleas and Justice of Peace Court, the Office of Defense Services and the Department of Justice citing statistics of domestic violence offenses including offenses with deadly weapons and detailing the importance of identifying such offenses as it relates to recommending the DVCC certified treatment programs in domestic violence cases.

Response:

The DVCC staff will present the recommendation to the Council at the March 2020 Quarterly Meeting.

2019 Recommendation and Response

1. **2019 Recommendation:**

The DVCC shall explore opportunities for large scale public service announcements and promotion of domestic violence resources, especially to new or relocating residents in Delaware.

Response:

DVCC staff will research costs and develop a plan to implement a large-scale public service announcement and promotion of domestic violence resources throughout the state. The staff will prioritize and focus on areas targeting individuals relocating to Delaware.

2020 FIRT Report Update:

The Government Information Center (GIC) has highlighted a link to resources for domestic violence on the “Moving to Delaware” page on Delaware.gov.

The DVCC continues to explore opportunities and resources to support a large-scale public service announcement and promotion of domestic violence services in the state.

1. **2018 Recommendation:**

The DVCC shall implement and sustain ongoing training to the Medical Community (especially Women and Children as well as emergency care) on the issues relating to the impact of domestic violence and sexual assault.

Response:

The DVCC staff will work with the Medical and Training Committees to explore opportunities to provide training and education on domestic violence and sexual assault.

2019 FIRT Report Update:

The DVCC Medical Committee was reestablished in December 2018. The above mentioned FIRT recommendation will be forwarded to this committee.

2020 FIRT Report Update:

The DVCC Medical Committee is currently working on updating the Medical Manual. Once the Medical Manual is updated, a distribution and training plan will be created.

2. **2018 Recommendation:**

The DVCC should explore implementing and sustaining large scale awareness campaigns on domestic violence and sexual assault in multiple languages.

Response:

DVCC staff will explore various outreach campaigns and media campaigns that provide information and support around healthy relationships and abuse (to promote reporting options, hotline numbers, community resources, safety planning, etc.)

2019 FIRT Report Update:

The DVCC staff will research costs and develop a plan to implement and sustain a large scale awareness campaign on domestic violence and sexual assault in multiple languages.

2020 FIRT Report Update:

The DVCC staff will continue to research costs and develop a plan to implement and sustain a large-scale awareness campaign on domestic violence and sexual assault in multiple languages.

2017 Recommendation Follow Ups

1. **2017 Recommendation:**

The DVCC will explore opportunities for a Needs Assessment (including focus groups) with the Hispanic Community in Delaware.

Response:

The DVCC will explore the possibility of a Needs Assessment in the Hispanic Community in Delaware as it relates to services provided to those affected by domestic violence.

2018 FIRT Report Update:

The DVCC will explore opportunities for a Needs Assessment in the Hispanic Community through the DVCC Immigration Committee. This committee will include this topic on their March 2018 meeting agenda.

2019 FIRT Report Update:

The DVCC Immigration Committee meeting recently had a representative from La Colectiva of Delaware share some of the work that is being done with the Hispanic Immigrant population. One of the areas La Colectiva is concentrating on is research on the needs of those in the Hispanic Immigrant population. DVCC staff will consult with the group regarding its research findings.

2020 FIRT Report Update:

The DVCC Immigration Committee continues to discuss the best way to assess the needs of the Hispanic Community in Delaware.

2016 Recommendation Follow Ups

1. **2016 Recommendation:**

The DVCC shall continue to discuss the development of a Domestic Violence High Risk Team in Delaware to enable and enhance better communication and collaboration among stakeholders.

Response:

The DVCC has established a workgroup of stakeholders to explore the feasibility of developing a Domestic Violence High Risk Team in Delaware. The DVCC supports this effort to enhance communication and collaboration among stakeholders to help victims and survivors of domestic violence.

2017 FIRT Report Update:

The DVCC continues to meet with stakeholders to explore the creation of a Domestic Violence High Risk Team in Delaware. In March 2017, a Domestic Violence High Risk Team Ad Hoc Advisory Board was formed. This Advisory Board is tasked with examining memorandums of understanding, referral forms, and a means of tracking high risk domestic violence cases. The Ad Hoc Advisory Board will also research issues related to confidentiality for Domestic Violence High Risk Team members regarding information sharing across agencies as well as any possible statutory changes.

2018 FIRT Report Update:

The DVCC met with stakeholders to explore the creation of a Domestic Violence High Risk Team in Delaware. In March 2017, a Domestic Violence High Risk Team Ad Hoc Advisory Board was

created. This Ad Hoc Advisory Board examined a number of issues as it relates to the formation of a domestic violence high risk team. The Domestic Violence High Risk Team Ad Hoc Advisory Board concluded their work with a summary report and recommendations that have been presented to the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council, which is currently pending approval.

2019 FIRT Report Update:

The recommendations from the Domestic Violence High Risk Team Ad Hoc Advisory Board were approved by the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council. In addition, the DVCC was approved for Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding to contract a Domestic Violence High Risk Team Coordinator position. The DVCC anticipates this position being filled in the first quarter of 2019.

2020 FIRT Report Update:

The DVCC has hired a Domestic Violence High Risk Team Coordinator for the Kent County pilot. The policies and procedures for the high-risk team have already been established and the group has already begun meeting and screening high risk cases for Kent County.

2016 Recommendation Follow Ups

THE CLERK OF THE PEACE

1. **2016 Recommendation:**

The Clerks of Peace should provide domestic violence and blended family information and resources to marriage license applicants.

Response:

The Clerk of Peace offices in New Castle and Sussex County offices will have domestic violence and blended family information available, supplied by the DVCC, to applicants for marriage licenses.

2017 FIRT Report Update:

Members of the Fatal Incident Review Team are continuing to develop information on domestic violence and blended families for the Clerk of the Peace. Once completed, DVCC staff will provide the information to New Castle County and Sussex County Clerk of the Peace offices for distribution for marriage license applicants.

2018 FIRT Report Update:

The DVCC will provide the resources for the Clerks of the Peace that include domestic violence information that is applicable to blended families as well as other marriage license applicants.

2019 FIRT Report Update:

DVCC staff will provide a draft of the resource information at an upcoming FIRT meeting. Upon approval of the resource, it will be provided to the Clerk of the Peace offices for distribution to marriage license applicants.

2020 FIRT Report Update:

DVCC staff will provide a draft of the resource information at an upcoming FIRT meeting. Upon approval of the resource, it will be provided to the Clerk of the Peace offices for distribution to marriage license applicants.

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 | 1-800-773-8570 |
| TTY | 1-800-232-5460 |

Northern Kent County

| | |
|-------------------|--------------|
| Domestic Violence | 302 678-3886 |
|-------------------|--------------|

Kent & Sussex Counties

| | |
|-------------------|----------------|
| Domestic Violence | 302 422-8058 |
| Rape Crisis | 1-800-773-8570 |
| Bi-lingual | 302 745-9874 |

DVCC Main Office

Leonard L. Williams Justice Center
Suite 700
500 N. King Street

Phone: 302 255-0405
Fax: 302 255-2236

<http://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

<http://dvcc.delaware.gov>



Domestic Violence Coordinating Council
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