

2025

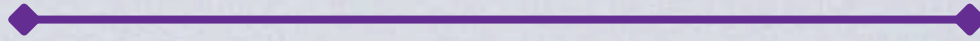
FATAL INCIDENT REVIEW TEAM ANNUAL REPORT

Prepared by Lauren Cuevas



Domestic Violence Coordinating Council
State of Delaware

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The 2025 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 deaths and near-deaths that occurred in calendar year 2024. This report is a supplement to the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council’s (DVCC) Annual Report, which is published in the fall of each year.

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THE FATAL INCIDENT REVIEW TEAM



Overview

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 tasked to "investigate and review, through a review panel, the facts and circumstances of all deaths and near deaths that occur in Delaware as a result of domestic violence." (13 Del. C. §2105).

Domestic violence fatality reviews are a deliberative process of identifying and examining the circumstances of both homicides and suicides caused by domestic violence with the goal of averting future domestic violence related deaths. 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.

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 FATAL INCIDENT REVIEW TEAM



What are Domestic Violence Related Deaths?

Insight from National Domestic Violence Fatality Review Initiative (NDVFRI):

“Intimate partner homicide usually involves a man killing his female partner, often after a long and escalating pattern of abuse. When women kill male partners, they typically do so in self-defense, although such defense may not qualify as such in a court of law. However, deaths attributable to domestic violence far transcend intimate partner killings. Non intimate partner family members also kill each other in so called ‘family homicides’.”

“Men sometimes kill other men over a woman they sexually compete for. These ‘sexual competitor killings’ are much smaller in number than either intimate partner or family homicides.”

“Many more Americans die from suicide than homicide. Most of these suicides involve male victims, some of whom kill their female intimate partners before taking their own lives. Research suggests that a significant number of women who commit suicide each year do so because of their violent victimization at the hands of an intimate male partner.”

- [NDVFRI Website](#)

FIRT tracks and reviews both fatal and near-fatal incidents related to domestic violence, including a large range of case types. Those case types include intimate partner & non-intimate partner (familial, sexual competitor, etc.) homicides, homicide/suicides (in which the perpetrator of a homicide commits suicide), suicide only cases (in which an individual commits suicide that is traceable to domestic violence), and attempted homicides/other domestic violence incidents resulting in life threatening injuries.

THE FATAL INCIDENT REVIEW TEAM

Important Definitions

- **Domestic Violence Related Death:** A death that occurs as a result of domestic violence or is traceable to domestic violence. This includes both homicides and suicides that are related to domestic violence.
 - **Intimate Partner Homicide:** A homicide in which the victim and perpetrator are current or former intimate partners. This could include current/former spouses, dating partners, or individuals involved in a romantic or sexual relationship.
 - **Non-Intimate Partner Homicide:** A homicide that occurs in a domestic violence context but does not involve an intimate partner. This could involve a family member, such as a parent killing a child, or vice versa, or a sexual competitor.
 - **Familial Homicide:** A homicide in which the victim and the perpetrator are family members, including parents, children, siblings, or other relatives.
 - **Sexual Competitor Homicide:** A homicide that occurs due to jealousy or rivalry over a sexual or romantic partner. Typically, the perpetrator kills someone whom they view as a "competitor" for their partner's attention or affection. Though not directly an intimate partner homicide, this is a form of homicide where the motive revolves around possessiveness or controlling behavior over a past or present intimate relationship.
 - **Murder/Suicide or Homicide/Suicide:** An incident in which the perpetrator commits homicide (usually against an intimate partner or family member) and then kills themselves.
 - **Perpetrator Suicide:** A suicide by a person who has committed an act of domestic violence (such as homicide or assault) before taking their own life.
 - **Domestic Violence Related Suicide:** A suicide that is traceable to or influenced by domestic violence, such as a victim taking their own life due to the abuse, control, manipulation, or mental and emotional distress caused by domestic violence.
- **Domestic Violence Related Near-Death:** An incident in which a victim survives but is critically injured or in immediate danger of death due to domestic violence. Our statute defines "near-death" as "a victim who has suffered life-threatening injuries."

THE FATAL INCIDENT REVIEW TEAM



Membership

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.

THE FATAL INCIDENT REVIEW TEAM

Current Membership

Co-Chairs

Dana Harrington Conner
Professor Widener Law
DVCC Member

Jenna Milecki
Deputy Attorney General
Department of Justice

Lisa Hudson
Sussex Operations Administrator
Department of Correction

Members

Katelyn Will
Staff Attorney
Superior Court

Addie Asay
Director of Legal Affairs
Family Court

Gerald Ross
Magistrate Judge
Justice of the Peace Court

Dr. Dyanne Simpson
Chief of Psychiatry
Division of Substance
Abuse & Mental Health

Vicki Pierce
Assistant Public Defender
Office of Defense Services

Trenee Parker
Director
Division of Family Services

Ann Altemus
Program Director
CHILD, Inc.

Stephanie Rodriguez
Program Director
Turning Point

Veronica Colombo
Victim Services Manager
Delaware State Police

Marvin Mailey
Executive Director
DE Assoc. of Chiefs' of Police

Marcey Rezak
Survivor of DV, appointed
by Council

Amy Stier
Forensic Nurse Examiner
Christiana Care

Cpl. Andrea Warfel
Delaware State Police
DVCC Member

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RELATED DEATHS & NEAR-DEATHS

2024 Incident Summary

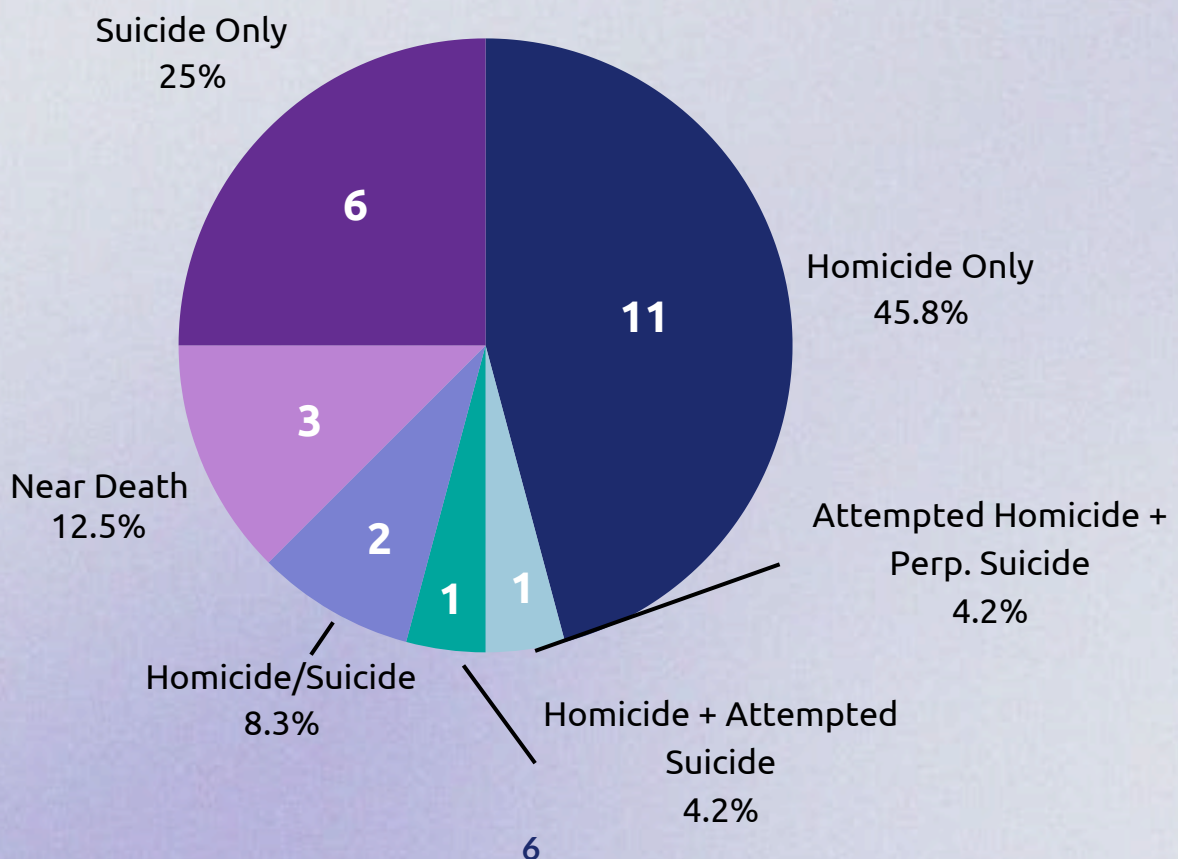
In 2024, there were a total of **twenty-four** domestic violence related death and near-death incidents tracked.

Eleven of those incidents were homicides, **two** were homicide/suicide incidents, and **one** case was a homicide with an attempted perpetrator suicide. That is a total of **fourteen** incidents involving a homicide.

There were **three** near death only incidents and **one** near-death incident where the victim of the attempted murder survived but the perpetrator committed suicide. There were **six** suicide only incidents tracked.

All together, Delaware saw a total of **twenty-five** deaths and **six** near-deaths related to domestic violence in the twenty-four incidents tracked in 2024.

Breakdown by Incident Type



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RELATED DEATHS & NEAR-DEATHS

2024 Victim Summary

There were a total of **sixteen** victims of domestic violence homicide in 2024. There were **nine** domestic violence related suicides, **three** of which were perpetrator suicides following the commission of a homicide or attempted homicide and **six** were suicide only incidents.

There were **four** victims in near-death only incidents and **two** additional near-death victims that occurred in relation to a homicide, for a total of **six** near-death victims. All together there were a total of **twenty five** deaths and **six** near-deaths related to domestic violence in Delaware in 2024.

At least **fourteen** children in Delaware were directly impacted by domestic violence related deaths in 2024, including **one** child victim of homicide and at least **thirteen** who were present when a homicide occurred.

Breakdown by # of Victims

25 DV RELATED DEATHS



16 DEATHS BY HOMICIDE



9 DEATHS BY SUICIDE



13 CHILD WITNESSES



6 DV RELATED NEAR-DEATH VICTIMS



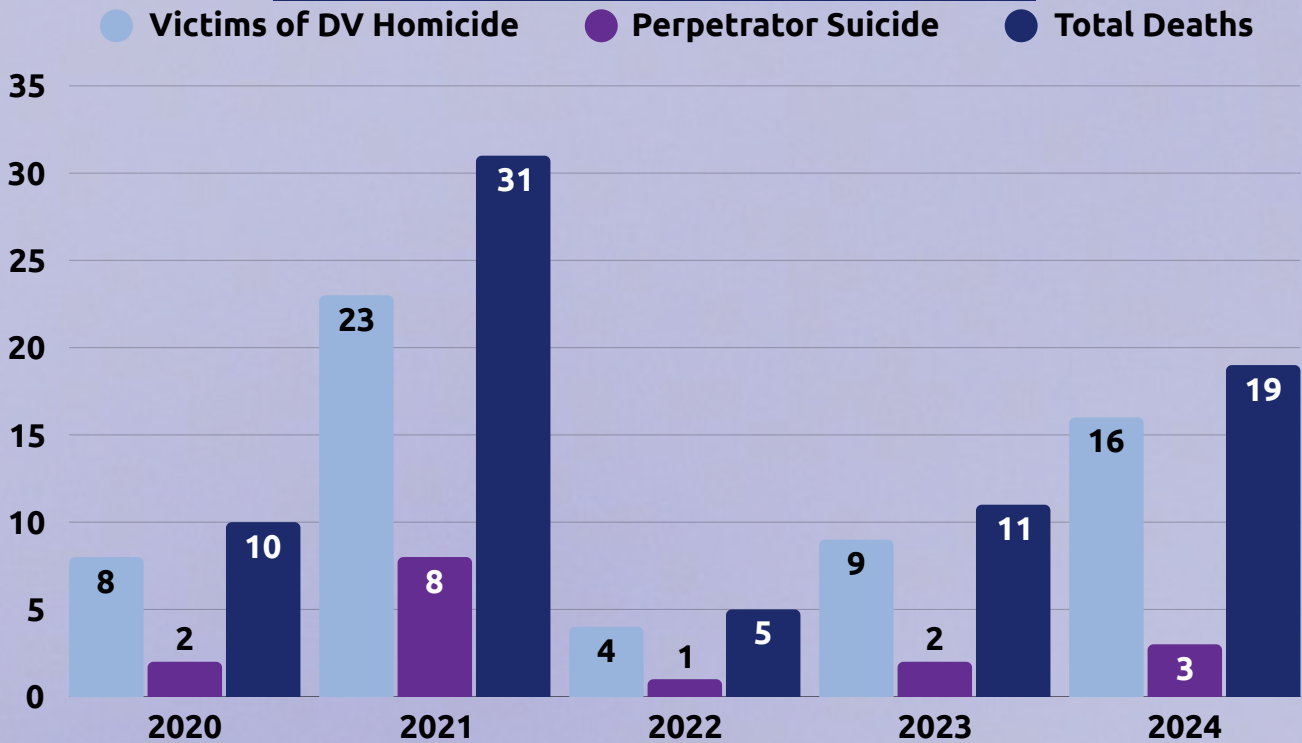
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RELATED HOMICIDES

Comparing to Previous Years

In 2024, there were **fourteen** incidents involving a domestic violence homicide (**eleven** homicide only, **two** homicide/suicides, and **one** homicide with an attempted perpetrator suicide). Two of the homicide incidents involved more than one victim, for a total of **sixteen** victims of homicide in 2024. This is a **77.8%** increase from 2023. There was **one** additional perpetrator suicide resulting from an attempted murder/suicide where the victim survived but the perpetrator did not (this case was tracked as a near-death incident, but the perpetrator suicide is included here) for a total of **three** perpetrator suicides. Perpetrator suicides increased by one compared to last year.

That is a total number of **nineteen** deaths (homicide victims & perpetrator suicides) related to domestic violence homicide & attempted homicide incidents in 2024, which is a **72.7%** increase from last year. While we cannot say with certainty what accounts for the increase, it is worth noting that efforts to improve case tracking over the past year could be a factor.

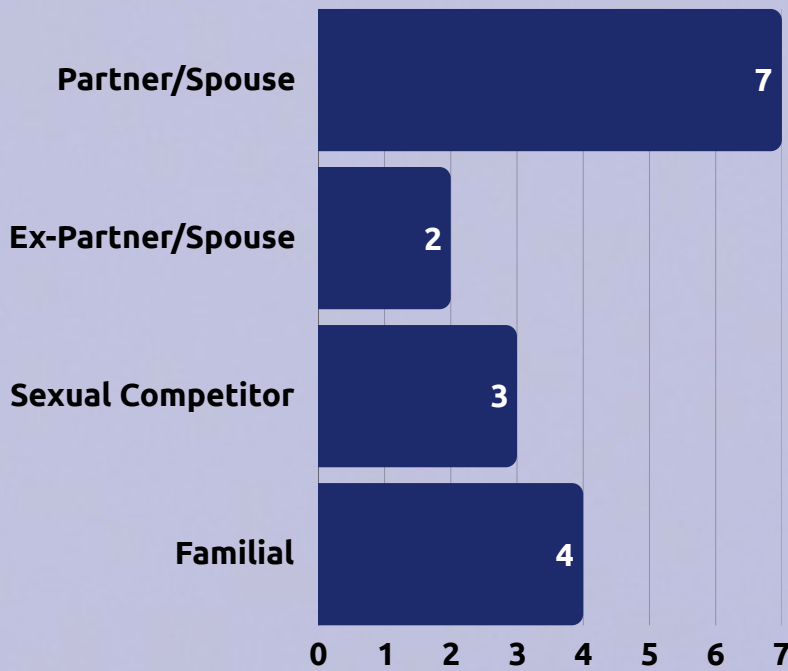
Homicide Related Incident Deaths 2020-2024



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RELATED HOMICIDES

2024 Victim & Perpetrator Data

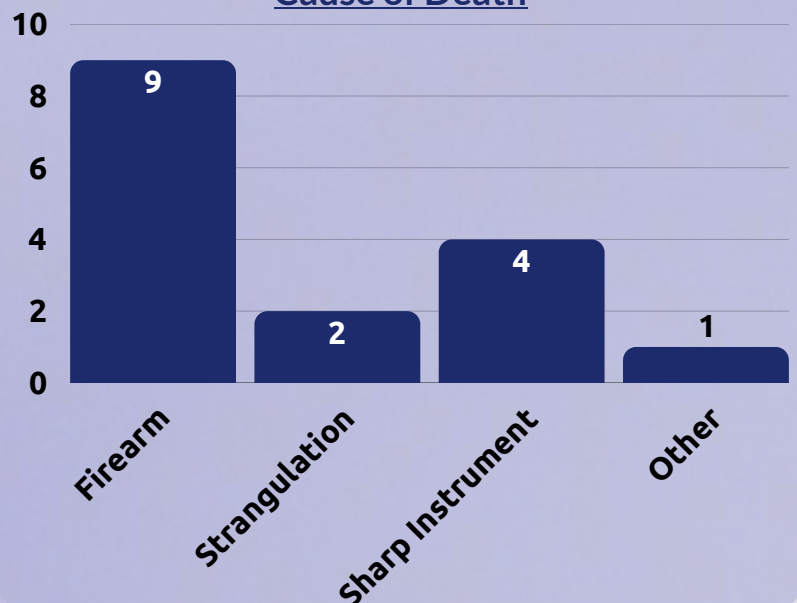
Victim & Perpetrator Relationship



The chart to the left depicts the relationship between each of the **sixteen** homicide victims and the perpetrator who killed them. **Seven** victims were killed by their current intimate partner. **Two** victims were killed by a former intimate partner. **Three** victims were potential “sexual competitors” to the perpetrator; they were new partners (or potential partners) of the perpetrator’s ex-partner. **Four** victims were killed by a family member, including **one** child killed by her father, **one** adult stepchild killed by her stepfather, and **two** victims killed by adult sons of their partners (i.e. the perpetrators killed their mothers’ boyfriends).

Firearms continue to be the leading cause of death in domestic violence related fatalities. This year, **nine** homicide victims were killed by firearms. **Two** deaths were caused by strangulation. **Four** deaths were caused by a sharp instrument (i.e. stabbing) and **one** death was caused by severe physical beating and strangulation.

Cause of Death



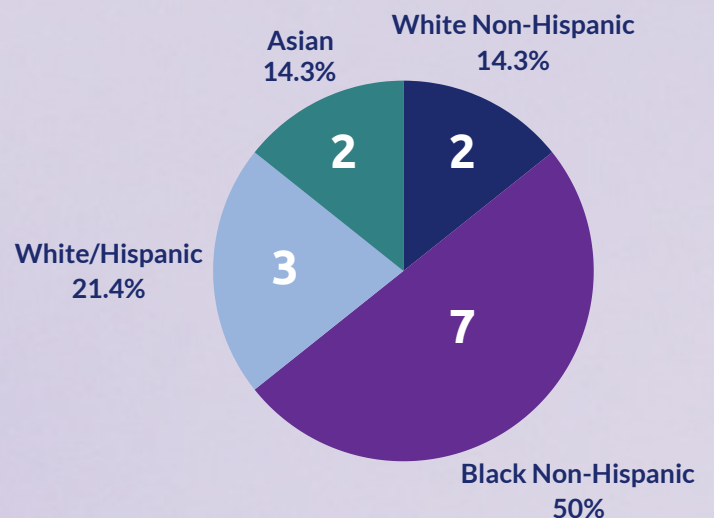
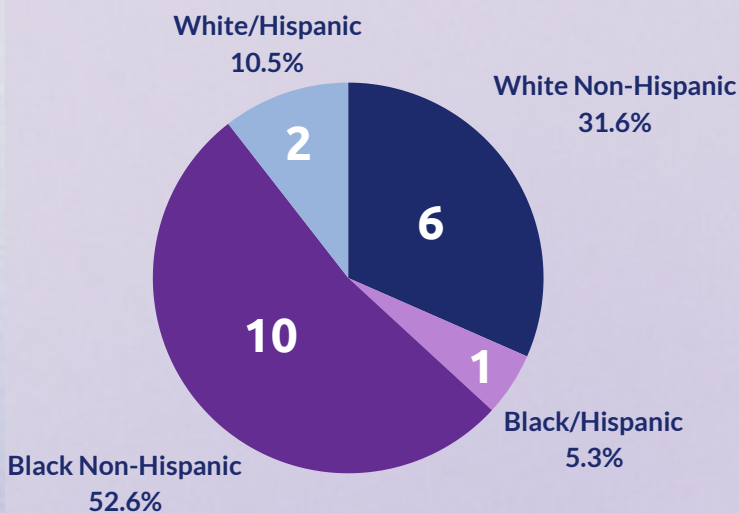
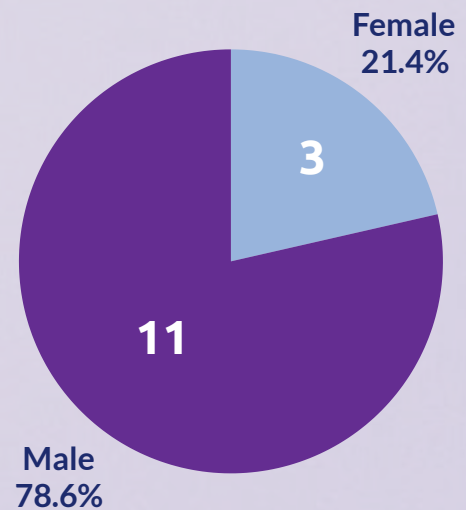
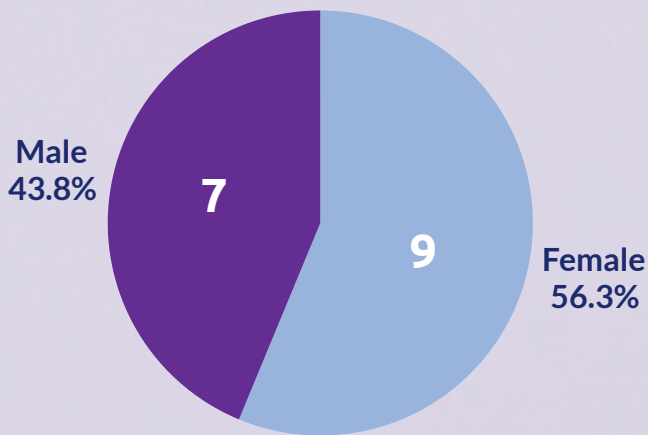
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RELATED HOMICIDES

2024 Victim & Perpetrator Data

The demographics of the **sixteen** homicide victims and **fourteen** homicide perpetrators in 2024 were as follows:

Victim Sex, Race, Ethnicity

Perpetrator Sex, Race, Ethnicity

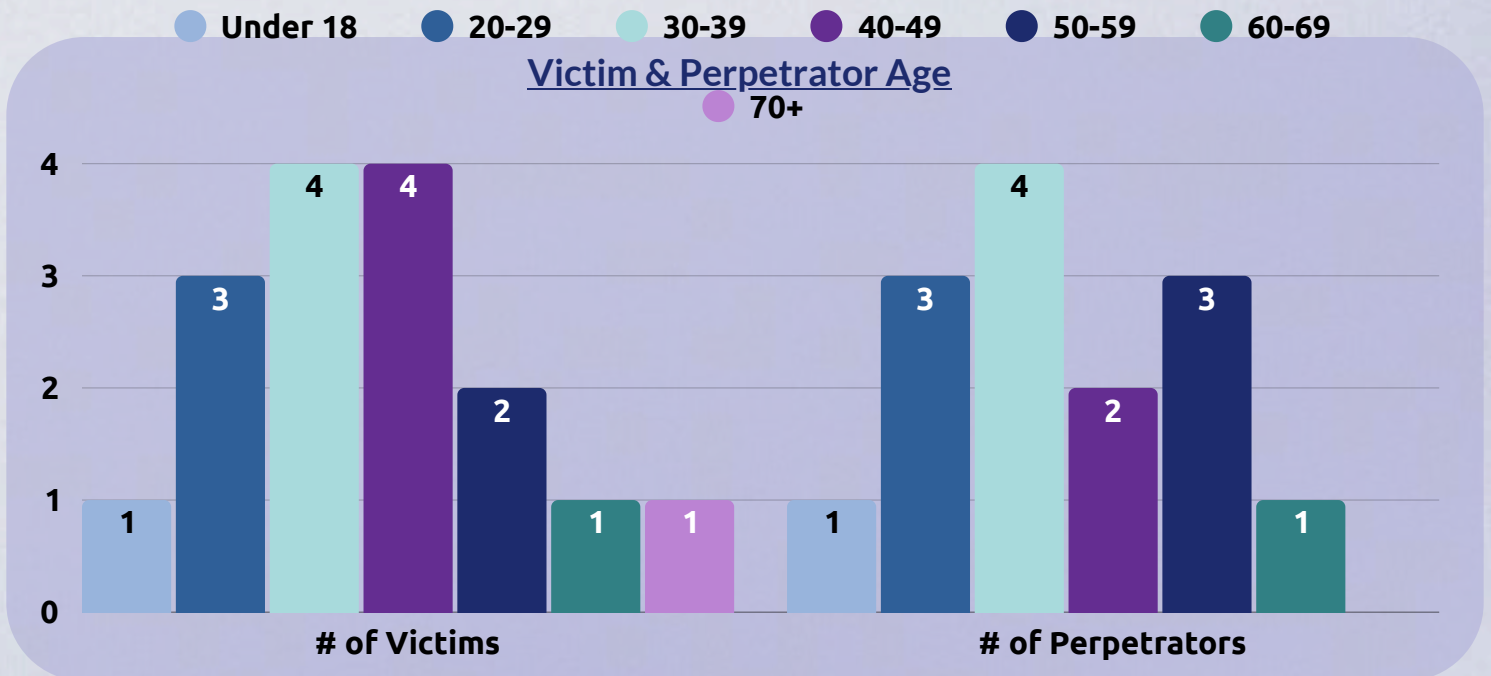


DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RELATED HOMICIDES

2024 Victim & Perpetrator Data

Limitations in Demographic Data Collection

Demographic data including sex, race, and ethnicity are gathered from police and medical examiner reports. This data may not accurately reflect every victim or perpetrator's gender identity or how they classify their race/ethnicity.



The average age among the sixteen homicide victims was **thirty-eight**.

The youngest homicide victim was **three** years old, and the oldest victim was **seventy-two**.

The average age among the fourteen homicide perpetrators was **thirty-nine**.

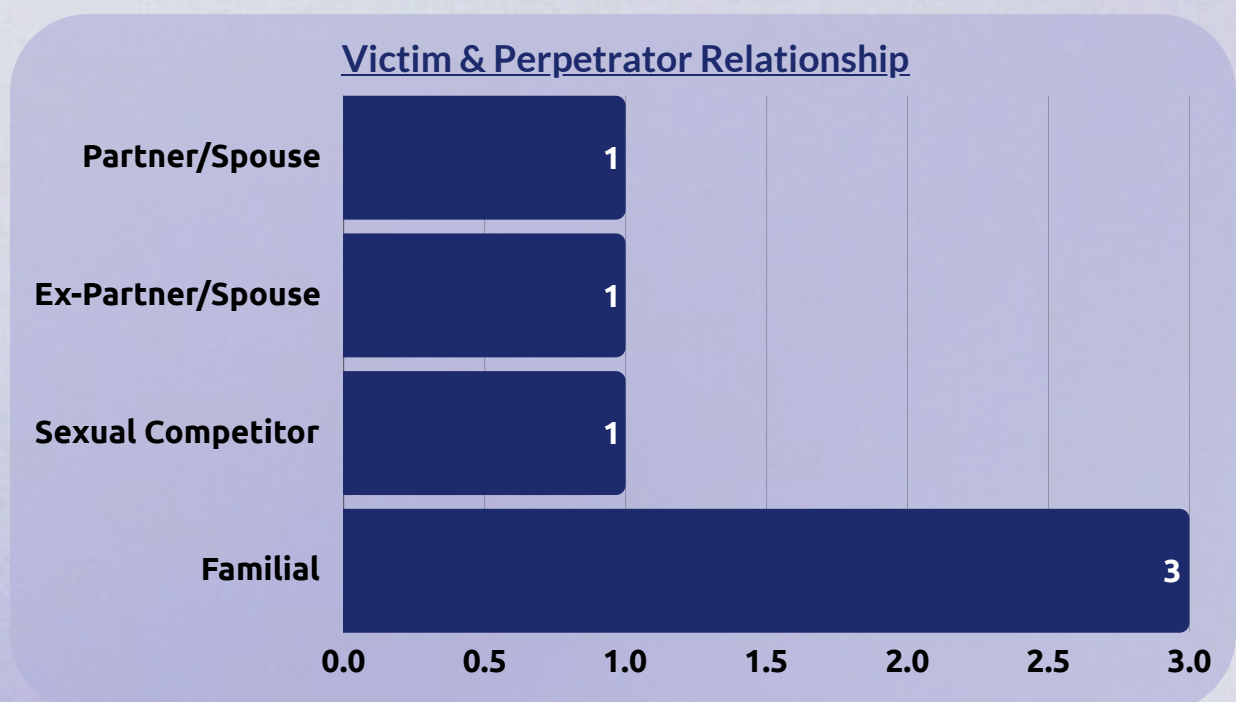
The youngest homicide perpetrator was **seventeen** years old, and the oldest was **sixty-three**.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RELATED NEAR-DEATH INCIDENTS

2024 Victim & Perpetrator Data

There were **four** cases tracked as domestic violence related near-death incidents in 2024, including an incident in which the perpetrator committed suicide after severely injuring the victim. In addition to the four near-death only incidents in 2024, there were **two** victims who suffered life threatening injuries in relation to one of the homicide incidents, meaning there were two homicide cases that involved an additional victim who did not die but was severely injured. In total, there were **six** near-death victims.

The chart below depicts the relationship between each of the six near-death victims and the perpetrator who injured them. **One** victim was injured by their current intimate partner. **One** victim was injured by a former intimate partner. **One** victim was a potential “sexual competitor” to the perpetrator (perpetrator’s ex-partner’s potential new partner) and **three** were injured by family members, including **one** adult stepchild injured by his stepfather, **one** victim injured by his stepfather-in-law, and **one** mother injured by her son who then committed suicide.

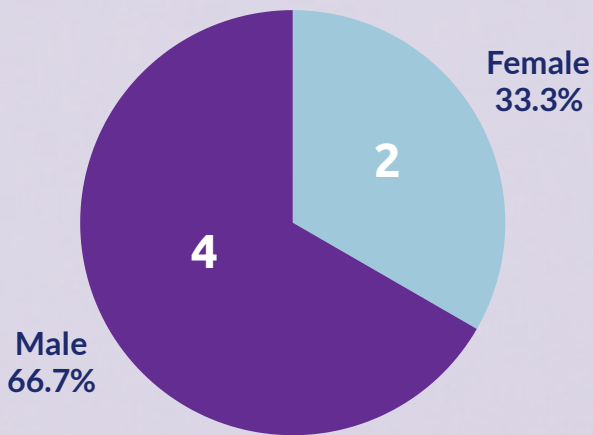


DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RELATED NEAR-DEATH INCIDENTS

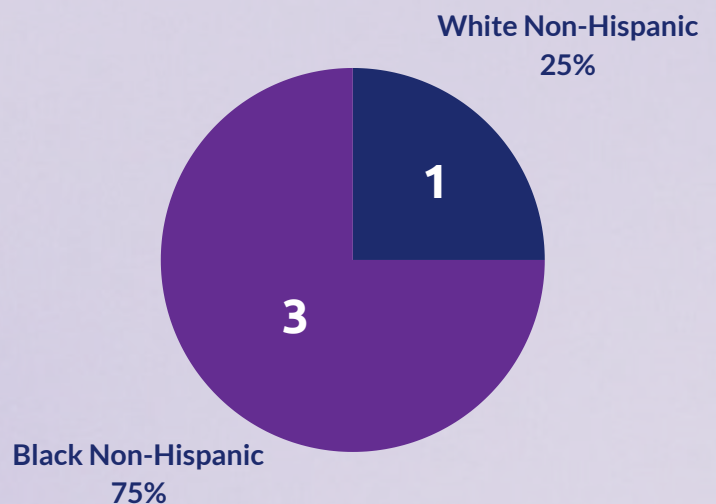
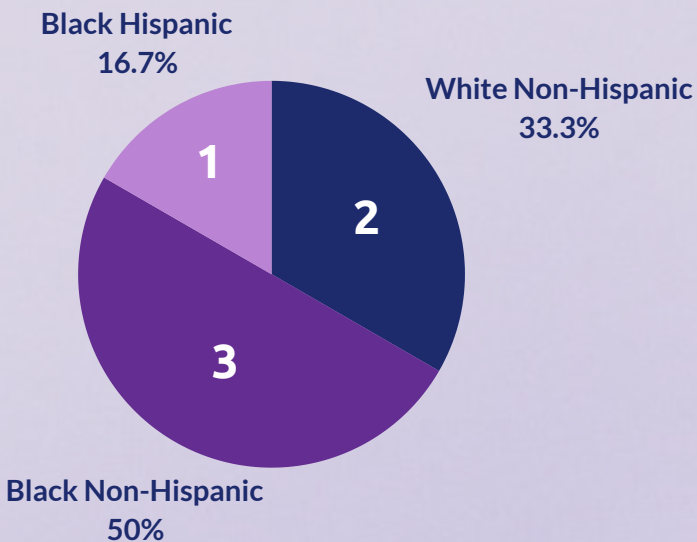
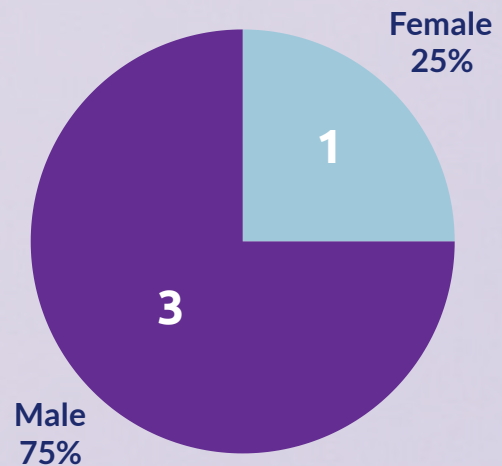
2024 Victim & Perpetrator Data

The demographics of the **six** near-death victims and **four** near-death perpetrators in 2024 were as follows:

Victim Sex, Race, Ethnicity



Perpetrator Sex, Race, Ethnicity

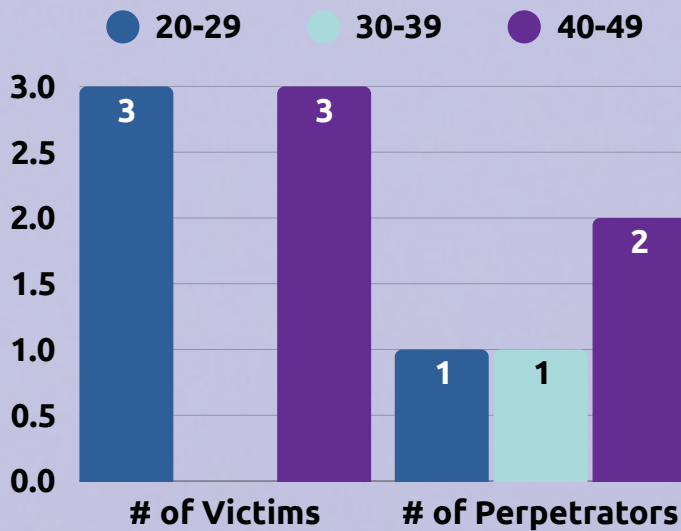


DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RELATED NEAR-DEATH INCIDENTS

2024 Victim & Perpetrator Data

The demographics of the domestic violence related near-death incidents in 2024 were as follows:

Victim & Perpetrator Age



The average age among the six near-death victims was **thirty-four**.

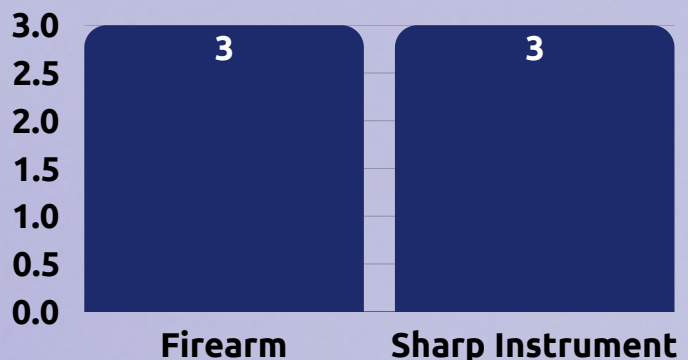
The youngest victim was **twenty** years old, and the oldest victim was **forty-eight**.

The average age among the four near-death perpetrators was **thirty-four**.

The youngest perpetrator was **twenty-two** years old, and the oldest was **forty-three**.

This year, **three** near-death victims were injured by firearms and **three** were injured by a sharp instrument (i.e. stabbing).

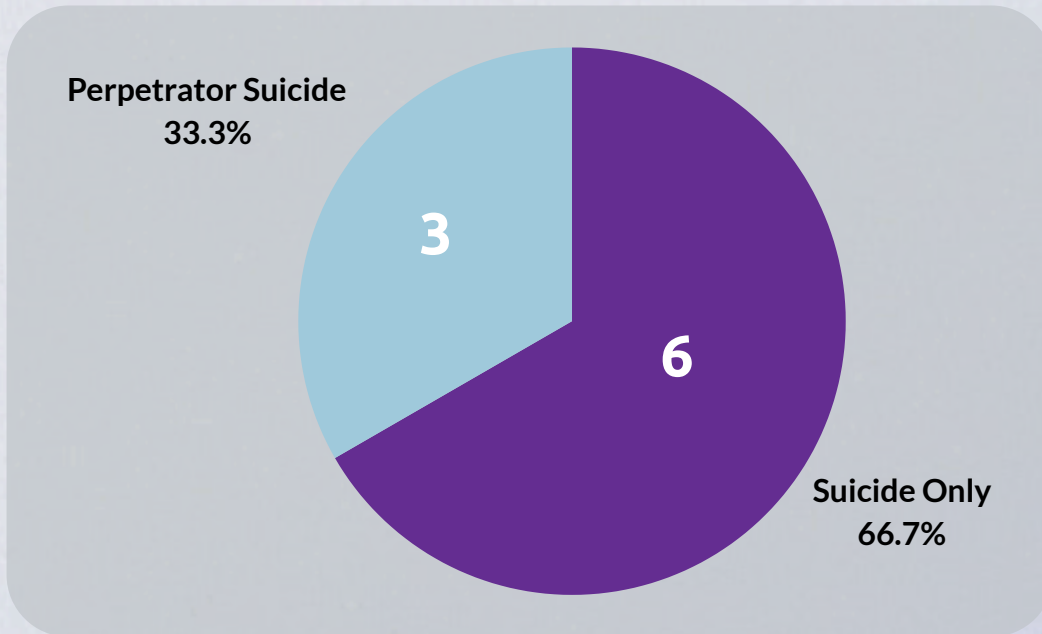
Cause of Death/Injury



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RELATED SUICIDES

2024 Victim Data

The demographics of the domestic violence related suicide incidents in 2024 were as follows:



Of the **nine** domestic violence related suicides in 2024, **three** were perpetrator suicides following the commission of a homicide or attempted homicide and **six** were suicide only incidents.

Two of the perpetrator suicide incidents were homicide/suicide incidents. Both homicide/suicide incidents involved more than one homicide victim; one in which the victims were the perpetrator's ex-partner and her new partner, and one in which the victims were the perpetrator's ex-wife's adult child and child's spouse. **One** perpetrator suicide incident involved the attempted murder of the perpetrator's mother.

All three perpetrator suicides were committed by men, one who was White, one who was Black, and one who was Asian.

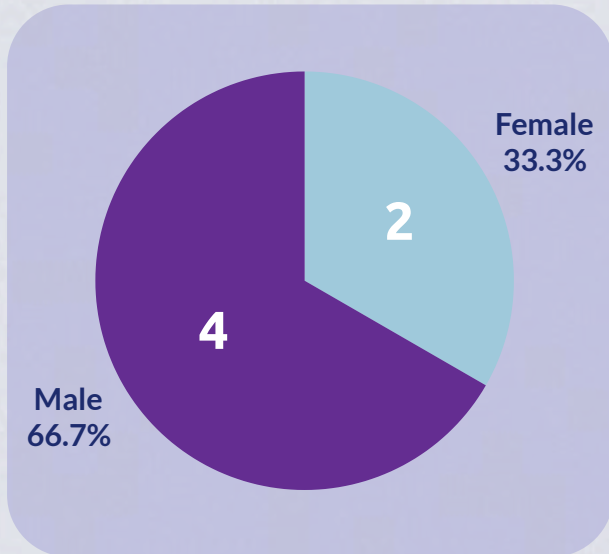
All three perpetrator suicides were committed using a firearm.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RELATED SUICIDES

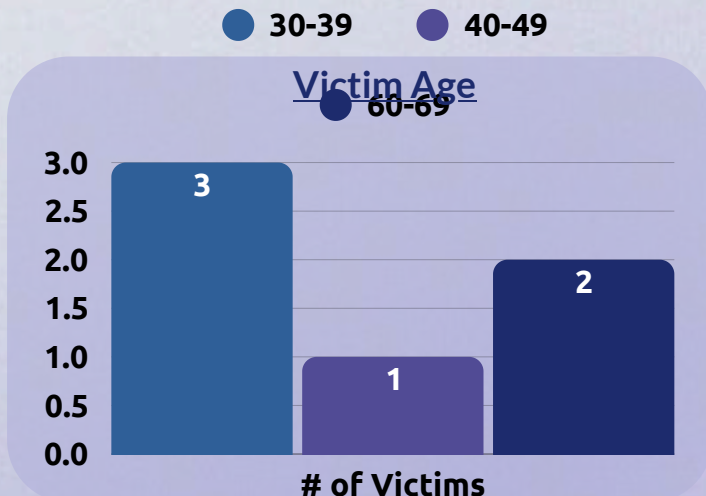
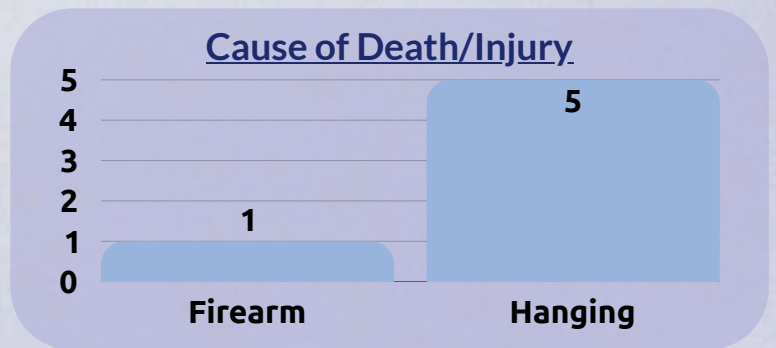
2024 Victim Data

Of the nine domestic violence related suicides in 2024, **six** were suicide only incidents.

Four of those suicides were committed by men and **two** by women. The four men all had documented histories of being perpetrators of domestic violence and/or threats made to their intimate partners about committing suicide. The two women both had documented histories as victims of domestic violence and/or prior suicide attempts following domestic violence incidents.



Five of the six suicide only incidents were committed by hanging, and **one** by firearm.



The average age among the six suicide victims was **forty-seven**.

The youngest victim was **thirty-three** years old, and the oldest victim was **sixty-nine**.

2024 CASE REVIEWS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

CASE REVIEWS

FIRT held two case reviews in 2024. One was of a multiple murder/suicide case and one was a near-death case. Both cases were intimate partner violence related. The team issued a total of three recommendations following these reviews.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FROM NDVFRI

On August 29, 2024, members of the team had the opportunity to meet with national experts in the field of domestic violence fatality reviews. Dr. Neil Websdale and Mark Perkovich from the National Domestic Violence Fatality Review Initiative (NDVFRI) delivered technical assistance and a presentation titled “Fatality Review: The State of the Art” to team members virtually. Their insight and answers to questions was a good refresher for long-standing team members and a comprehensive introduction for new members.

NDVFRI CONFERENCE

Members of the team were invited by NDVFRI to attend their annual conference in Arizona on October 14 and 15, 2024. The conference highlights the important work of fatality review teams and covered a range of topics such as: the latest national and international developments, the work of experienced and newly formed teams, implementing recommendations, confidentiality & ethical issues, mental health, suicidality and fatality review, and more. NDVFRI graciously sponsored four Delaware representatives to attend the conference in person, including the DVCC Senior Administrator Lauren Cuevas, FIRT member Dr. Dyanne Simpson, FIRT Chair Jenna Milecki, and a Deputy Attorney General in the Domestic Violence Unit of the Attorney General’s office. Dr. Simpson also served as a panelist during a mental health panel presentation.

RECOMMENDATIONS & RESPONSES

What are Recommendations?

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 work collaboratively to draft recommendations for improving the system response to domestic violence.



The Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (DVCC) 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.

RECOMMENDATIONS & RESPONSES



2024 Recommendations

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

The Department of Justice should explore the possibility of having Domestic Violence Unit prosecutors on call and available to officers statewide to make charging decisions. The goal of this recommendation is to reduce instances of dual arrest or mistakenly charging the victim in domestic violence cases.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COORDINATING COUNCIL

The Fatal Incident Review Team recommends the DVCC collaborate with Delaware Criminal Justice Information System (DELJIS) to explore accessibility to No Contact Orders and Protection from Abuse Orders for schools and daycares. The goal of this recommendation is to improve access to this information to reduce incidents of violence and violations of protective or criminal no contact orders.

DIVISION OF FAMILY SERVICES

The Division of Family Services should establish a workgroup to explore developing policies, procedures, and/or programs to address the long-term case management needs of children and their families who have been impacted by the death or life-threatening injury of a caregiver as a result of domestic violence.

RECOMMENDATIONS & RESPONSES



Responses to Previous Years' Recommendations

2023 RECOMMENDATIONS TO DVCC

The DVCC should explore ways to improve communication between the Department of Justice, Department of Correction, and community providers of DV treatment to better facilitate a multidisciplinary approach to high-risk cases.

The DVCC should collaborate with the Department of Correction to promote awareness of the Probation & Parole After Hours Domestic Violence Response Team as a resource to improve offender accountability.

RESPONSE

The Department of Correction began tracking additional data on domestic violence supervision cases in 2022 to raise awareness with law enforcement and other system partners. Since then, coordinated roll call trainings have been done with law enforcement and visual materials created for continued promotion of the DV On Call After Hours Program.

The Department of Justice, Department of Correction, and community providers of DV treatment have implemented means to have consistent, regular communication about cases and ensure a multidisciplinary approach to high-risk cases.

RECOMMENDATIONS & RESPONSES



Responses to Previous Years' Recommendations

2022 RECOMMENDATION TO DVCC

DVCC will work to provide centralized resources to the Delaware Bar to provide attorneys with the most up-to-date information regarding certified treatment providers.

RESPONSE

Members of the Treatment Committee have provided resources on up-to-date information regarding Delaware's Domestic Violence Intervention Standards and information regarding Delaware's certified Domestic Violence Intervention (DVI) providers to Delaware's legal community through training and printed materials. Specific statewide trainings have been done with the Delaware Bar Association and Deputy Attorneys General in Delaware.

In 2025, the Treatment Committee plans to update the DVCC website to make information on DVI more accessible to professionals and the public with the goal of creating a central source for all up-to-date information. Members of the Treatment Committee are also working on short informational videos about DVI to be housed on the DVCC website and partner agency websites.

RECOMMENDATIONS & RESPONSES



Responses to Previous Years' Recommendations

2022 RECOMMENDATION TO DVCC

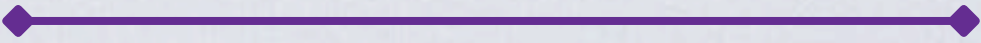
The DVCC shall explore and discuss collateral consequences of a potential change in legislation expanding the use of DVCC certified evaluation and treatment for IPV respondents in Protection from Abuse orders.

RESPONSE

While there have not been changes to legislation regarding expanding the use of DVCC certified evaluations and treatment for Protection from Abuse Order (PFA) respondents, the Treatment Committee has seen a significant increase in compliance with DVCC certified Intervention since the implementation of Family Court's Compliance Calendar in 2022.

In 2023, 52% of PFA respondents successfully completed a certified Domestic Violence Intervention (DVI) program compared to 38.8% compliance in cases tracked in 2018 (DVCC Annual Report FY 2024). With the implementation of the Compliance Calendar, Family Court and DVI Providers now have a process and resources to monitor PFA respondents ordered to DVI and have seen more success with case outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS & RESPONSES



Responses to Previous Years' Recommendations

2022 RECOMMENDATION TO DVCC & DOJ

Department of Justice (DOJ) and DVCC will coordinate to provide law enforcement with training on the dynamics of stalking and charges related to stalking behavior.


RESPONSE

The DVCC and DOJ have collaborated to deliver several trainings to law enforcement and other stakeholders on the dynamics of stalking and charges related to stalking behavior. For two years in a row (2024 & 2025) the DVCC has hosted “Collaborative Approaches to Stalking,” a training led by the DOJ’s Deputy Attorney General Jenna Milecki, that features an overview of stalking, stalking behaviors, stalking charges in Delaware, and a detailed case study of a Delaware domestic violence fatality with significant stalking involved. This training also featured a panel discussion that brought together system and community-based partners to discuss collaboration on stalking cases. Jenna Milecki is consistently engaged with DVCC’s initiatives/training efforts and demonstrates the DOJ’s commitment to addressing this topic.


In 2025, the DVCC also hosted a full-day virtual training called “Identifying and Responding to Stalking” which was delivered by the Stalking, Prevention, Awareness, and Resource Center (SPARC). This in-depth training covered dynamics of stalking, stalking’s co-occurrence with domestic violence, the use of technology to stalk, the use of risk assessments in stalking cases, and tools to plan for victim safety.

WHAT TO EXPECT IN 2025


LOADING ...



In 2025, the team plans to hold three full day, intensive reviews that prioritize reviewing diverse case types and factors.



In 2025, the team plans to finalize updated Rules & Procedures to more accurately reflect team function and objectives.



FIRT will continue to track domestic violence related deaths and near-deaths in Delaware to provide relevant statistics. FIRT will also continue to engage with national experts to remain up-to-date on best practices and training opportunities for team members.

2025

**IF YOU ARE IN DANGER,
PLEASE CALL 911**

Domestic Violence/Rape Crisis

New Castle County:

| | |
|-------------------|----------------|
| Domestic Violence | 302-762-6110 |
| Bi-lingual | 302-762-6110 |
| Rape Crisis | 1-800-773-8570 |
| TTY | 1-800-232-5460 |

Kent & Sussex Counties:

| | |
|-------------------|----------------|
| Domestic Violence | 302-422-8058 |
| Bi-lingual | 302-745-9874 |
| Rape Crisis | 1-800-262-9800 |
| | 1-800-773-8570 |

DVCC Main Office

900 North King Street, Suite 300

Wilmington, DE 19801

Phone: 302 255-1700

DVCC.DELAWARE.GOV



**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
COORDINATING COUNCIL**

DVCC.DELAWARE.GOV