

2021
Annual Report

Domestic Violence Homicide in Nashville

Domestic Abuse Death Review Team
Nashville - Davidson County, TN





The events and incidents described within this report are derived from the following sources: The Metro Nashville Police Department homicide report relating to the homicide in question and additional reports from the police, witness interviews, and other Nashville organizations related to the victim and/or perpetrator. Some of these details and descriptions are the opinions of those witnesses or third parties, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Domestic Abuse Death Review Team, the Metro Nashville Office of Family Safety, or the City of Nashville.

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Cover Photo by Paul Brennan via Public Domain Pictures



Metro Office of Family Safety

Nashville – Davidson County, TN 2021 Annual Report


PREPARED FOR

The Honorable Mayor John Cooper,
The Davidson County Metro Council,
& The Metropolitan Government Office of Family Safety
Advisory Committee

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**Domestic Abuse
Death Review Team**



"There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about."

– Margaret J. Wheatley

This report is dedicated to the eleven 2021 victims of domestic violence homicide in Nashville and those who mourn their tragic loss of life. These individuals were family members, neighbors, and friends of our community. We will continue to remember their experiences and learn lessons from their abuse histories that will help others. To those still living in fear, we hope to introduce you to a supportive community dedicated to helping survivors each day.

You are not alone.



Dedication

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Nashville Domestic Abuse Death Review Team (DADRT or Team) would like to thank Nashville's Mayor John Cooper and Metro's Council members for their support of the Team's work in examining domestic violence fatalities. The Team would also like to express its gratitude to the Metro Government Office of Family Safety's (OFS) Advisory Committee for its guidance and support.

We are incredibly grateful for the many Team members who dedicated time out of their busy schedules to thoughtfully review the selected 2021 case. The dedication and expertise that DADRT members bring to each meeting are invaluable in identifying the gaps in domestic violence homicide prevention.

Finally, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to all individuals that volunteered their time identifying and providing insight into warning signs and possible points of intervention.

Our Team hopes that this report will lead to a better understanding of domestic violence in our community, the strengths and weaknesses in our response systems, and the steps that we must take in the future to improve victim safety and offender accountability.



Meet Us at the Bridge, 2018



Dear Mayor Cooper,

The Nashville-Davidson County Domestic Abuse Death Review Team (DADRT) would like to share our 2021 annual report. DADRT is managed by the Metro Office of Family Safety (OFS) and meets monthly at Nashville's Family Safety Center (FSC) with partners from criminal justice and victim services agencies.

Under the authority of Executive Order 022 (2016) and following National Fatality Review best practices, the Team performed an in-depth review of a domestic violence vehicular homicide. In this case, a man with an unreported history of severe physical violence against his eventual victim ran over his girlfriend with his car.

The Team hopes that this report will highlight areas of potential improvement in Nashville's domestic violence response and prevention services. Ultimately, our goal is to identify ways to reduce domestic violence homicides in our community and make Nashville the safest city for women and families.

Sincerely,

Diane Lance

Department Head, Office of Family Safety

Commander Rickey Bearden

2021 DADRT Sub-Chair, Metro Nashville Police Department

Contents

P. 01 – Executive Summary

P. 02 – Data & Statistics

P. 08 – Case Review

P. 09 – Timeline of the Murder

P. 11 – Findings & Recommendations

P. 12 – Public Awareness

P. 14 – DV Screening & Education for Low-
Level Offenders

P. 15 – Relational Risk Transfer

P. 17 – Implementation Plan

P. 20 – Conclusion

P. 21 – Appendices

Tennessee Code Establishing Death Reviews

Mission, Responsibility, & Authority of Team

References

Executive Summary

Tennessee currently ranks 11th in the nation for the rate of women killed by men. This is the first time since 2007 that Tennessee has ranked outside of the top ten and only the fifth time out of the top ten in the past 25 years. In 2021, Nashville accounted for 13% of domestic violence homicides in Tennessee, according to the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation's 2021 Domestic Violence Report.

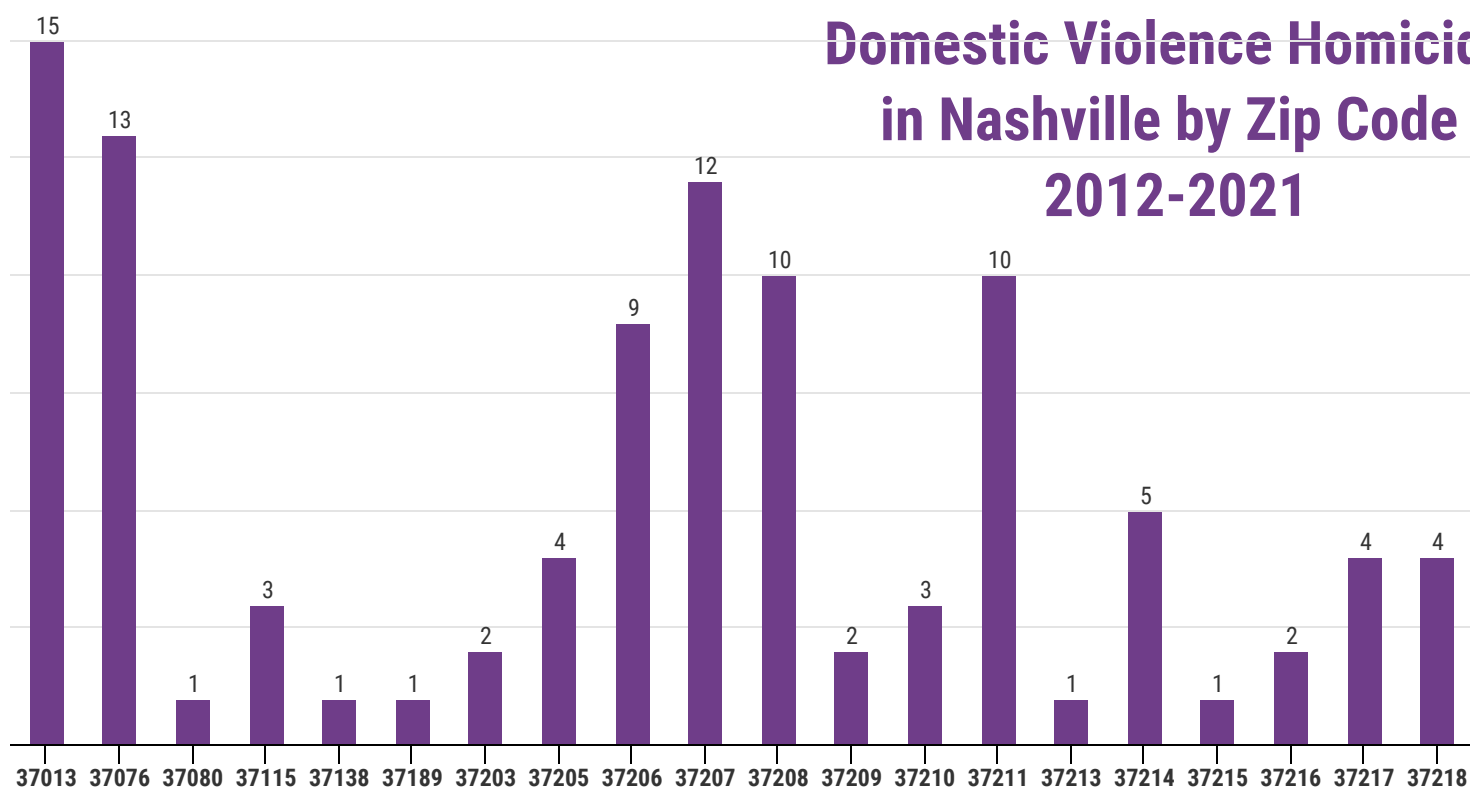
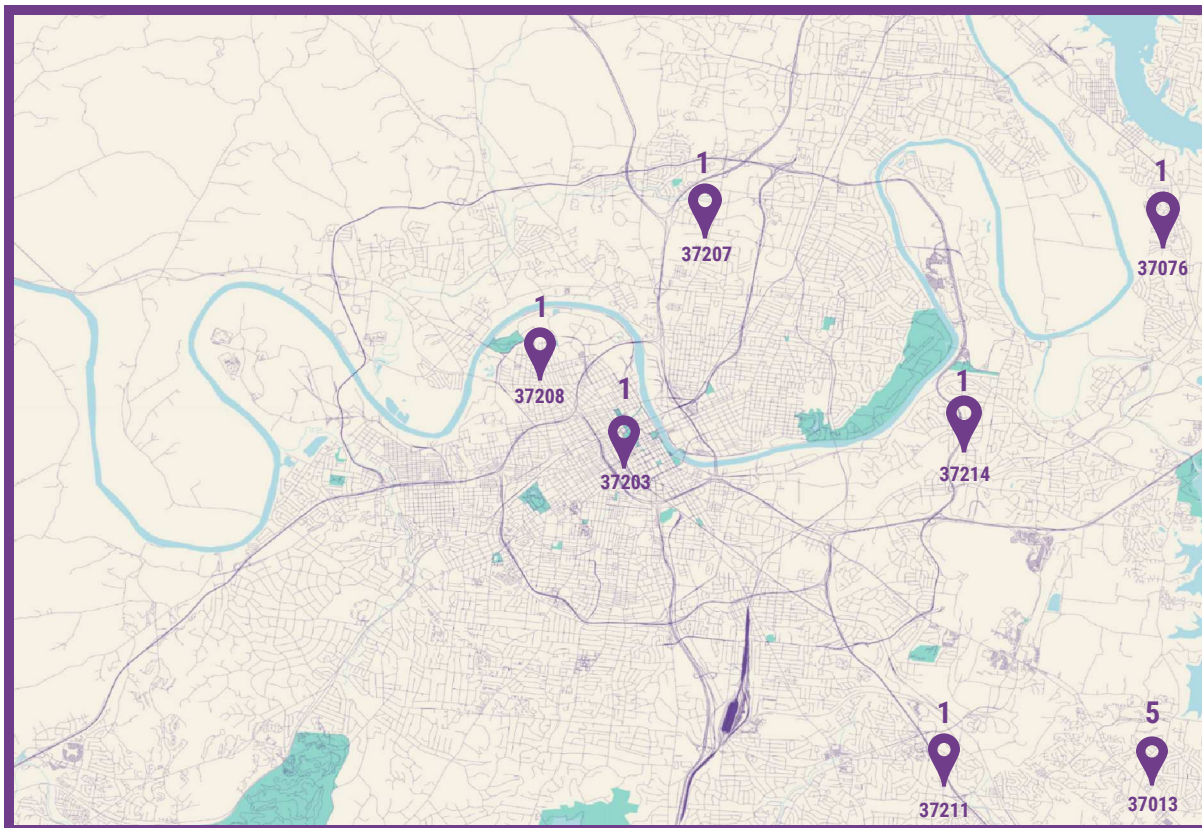
In 2021, DADRT reviewed a homicide case in which a 35-year-old mother of three was run over by a car driven by her boyfriend. The DADRT's research into this case revealed a history of escalating violence that ultimately culminated in her murder.

The Domestic Abuse Death Review Team identified three finding areas that may have contributed to the victim's level of risk or impacted the support that she and her family received before her murder:

- 1. Public Awareness:** Available services such as police, shelters, and Nashville's family justice centers were not utilized by the victim despite her multiple interactions with medical providers due to injuries sustained within her relationship, potentially indicating a lack of widespread public awareness impacting access to the multiple resources available in Nashville to assist her.
- 2. Domestic Violence Education and Screening for Low-Level Offenders:** The victim had several arrests for minor drug charges. The implementation of an abuse screening tool for low-level drug offenses could have the opportunity to identify victims and survivors of abuse and connect them to supportive services.
- 3. Relational Risk Transfer:** The victim was in another violent intimate partner relationship prior to being involved with the man who would eventually kill her. When a victim has experienced abuse in previous relationships, they may become normalized to abusive behaviors within future relationships, which could increase their risk of experiencing escalating levels of abuse.

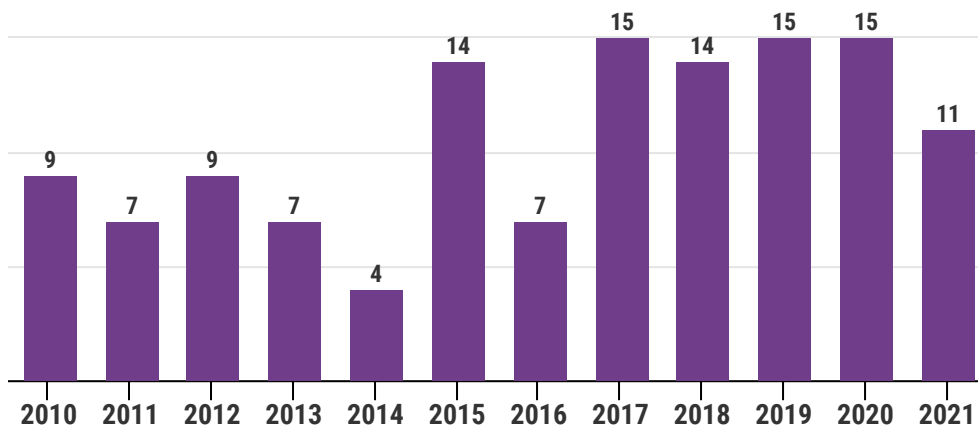
Data & Statistics: Location

Map of 2021 Nashville Homicides



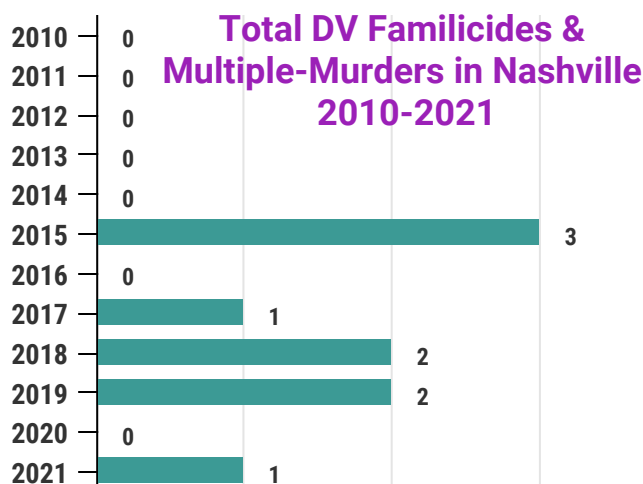
Data & Statistics: Homicide Types & Rates

Total Domestic Violence (DV) Homicides in Nashville 2010-2021

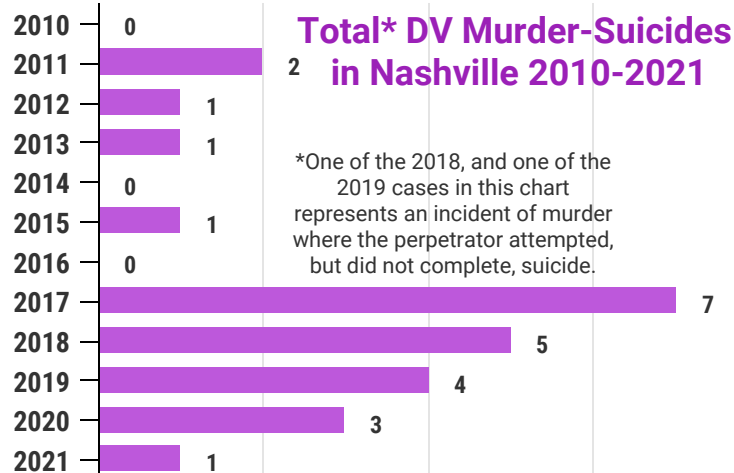


While overall domestic violence homicides in Nashville decreased by nearly a third over the past year, the percentage of DV homicides perpetrated by intimate partners increased by 60%

Total DV Familicides & Multiple-Murders in Nashville 2010-2021



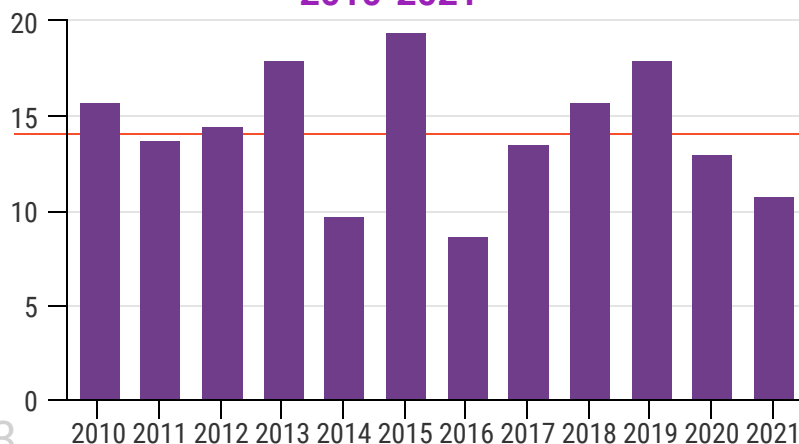
Total* DV Murder-Suicides in Nashville 2010-2021



*One of the 2018, and one of the 2019 cases in this chart represents an incident of murder where the perpetrator attempted, but did not complete, suicide.

The annual number of DV murder-suicides has continued to decrease steadily since 2017.

Percent of Nashville's Total Homicides that were Related to DV 2010-2021



The red line on the chart represents the average percent of Nashville's homicides that were related to domestic violence (DV) across the decade - approximately 14.2%.

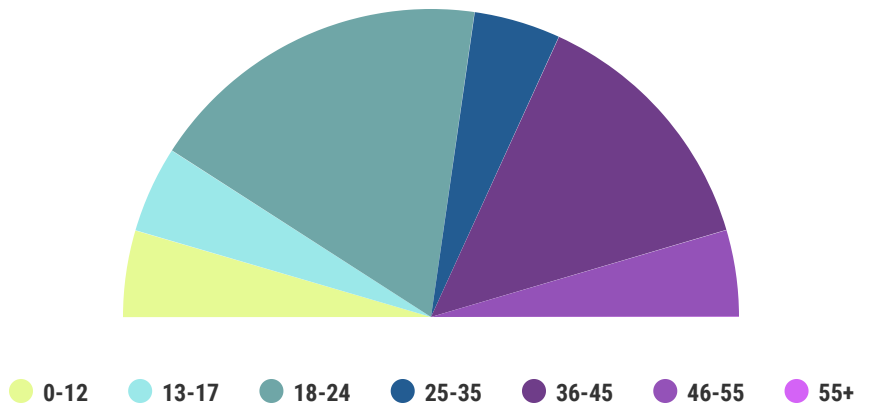
In 2021, 10.8% of Nashville's homicides were related to DV, the lowest number since 2016.

Data & Statistics: Victims

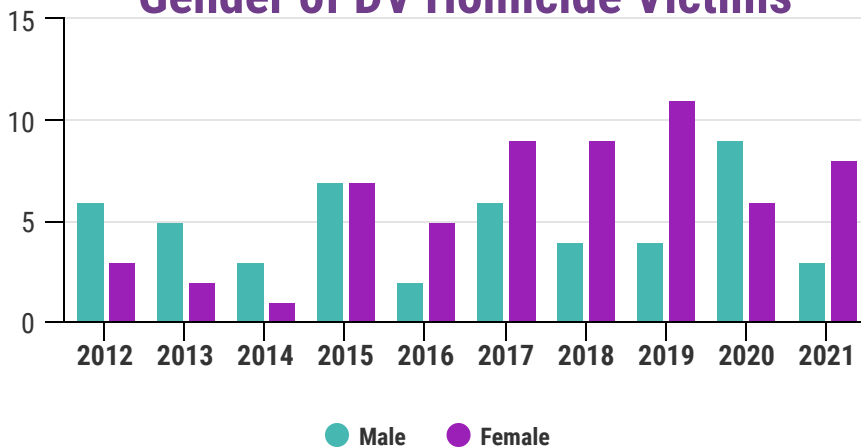
Child Victims



Victim Ages 2021



Gender of DV Homicide Victims



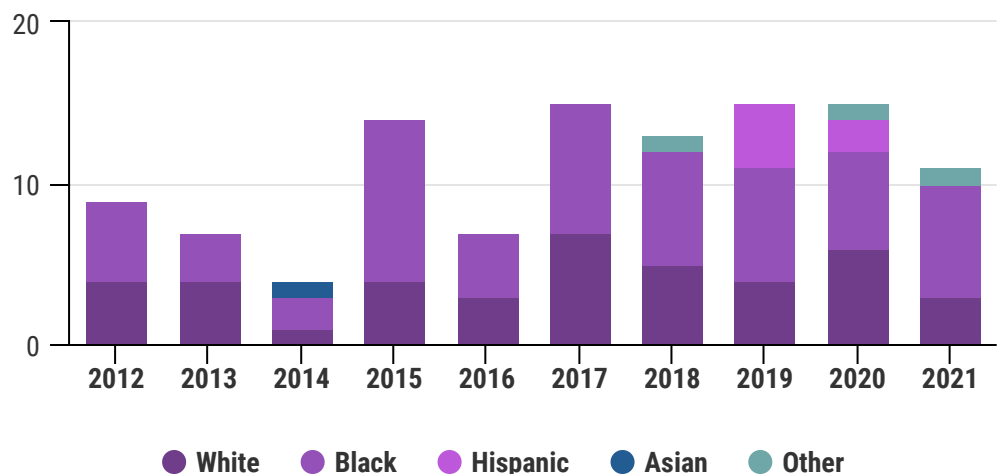
Women are far more likely to be killed by an intimate partner, while men are more likely to be victims of non-intimate domestic violence.

73% of the victims of domestic violence homicide in Nashville in 2021 were female, correlating to the significant increase in percentage of intimate partner homicides as compared to 2020.

Victim Race

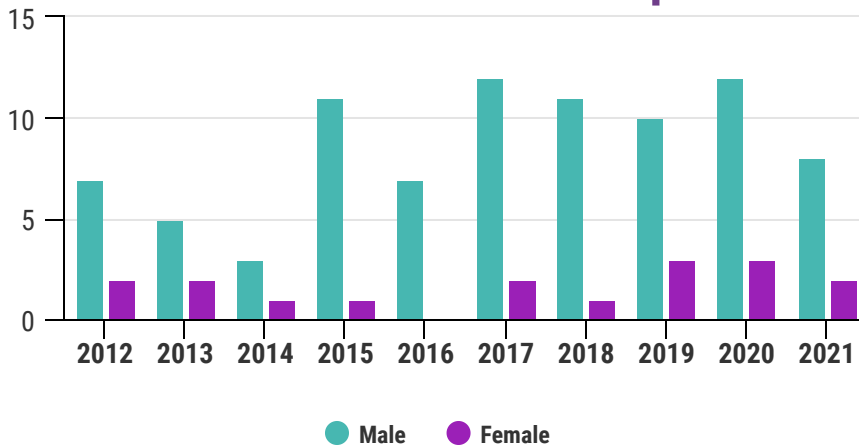
Despite making up only 28% of Nashville's population, black people account for over 50% of Nashville's DV homicide victims.

Black women are at a greater risk of DV homicide than any other population in Nashville.



Data & Statistics: Perpetrators

Gender of DV Homicide Perpetrators

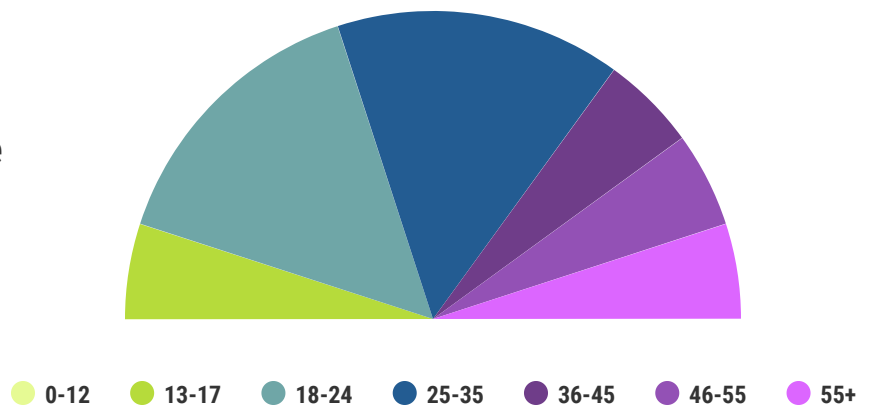


In Nashville, men perpetrate domestic violence homicides at far higher rates than women.

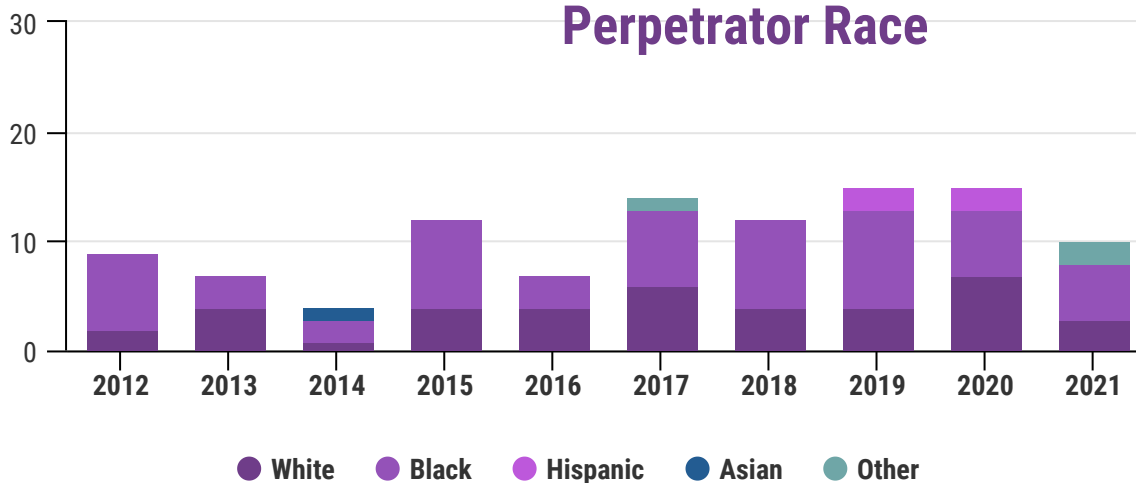
Men have perpetrated 84% of intimate partner homicide cases in Nashville since 2010 and 80% of overall DV homicides.

Perpetrator Age 2021

In 2021, 60% of perpetrators were between the ages of 21 and 31



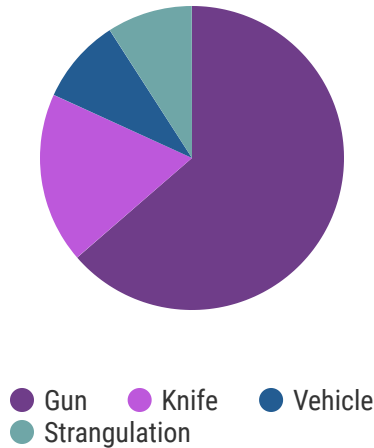
Perpetrator Race



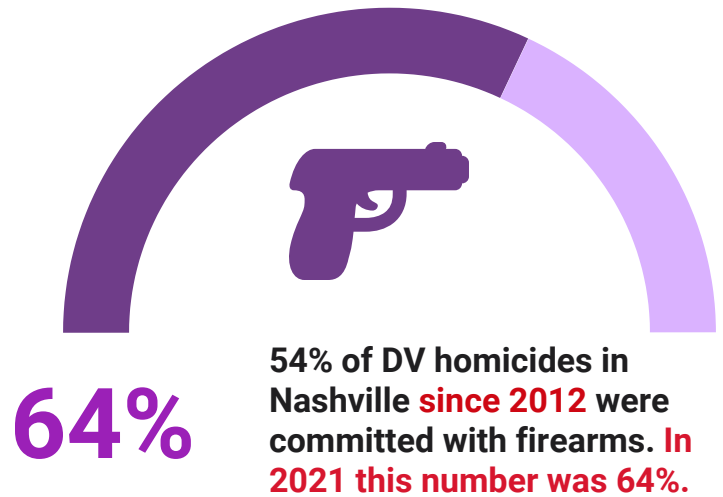
The majority of perpetrators commit homicide, and other forms of violence, against victims of their own race.

Data & Statistics: Nashville DV Homicides

Methods Used in 2021 DV Homicides



Firearm Use



Should not have had access to firearms.

In 2021, at least 50% of DV homicide perpetrators who used firearms to kill their victims had past domestic violence or felony convictions. These convictions meant that by state and federal law they were barred from owning or possessing a firearm.

OFS Firearms and Strangulation Flagging

Beginning on **June 24, 2019**, the Office of Family Safety began reviewing the criminal affidavits, LAPs, defendant case histories, and Order of Protection (OP) petitions of all defendants and respondents whose cases were being heard in Nashville's DV or OP Courts. Each case was screened for the use of strangulation and the possession or use of firearms against a victim.

Of the 11,975 cases screened in 2021:

- 6,824, or 57%, were flagged for either strangulation or owning or having used a firearm.
- 5,311, or 44%, were flagged as owning or having used a firearm.
- 4,469, or 37%, were flagged as having strangled the current victim or a past victim.
- 2,956, or 25%, were flagged for both owning or having used a firearm and being stranglers.

Emerging Issues: Nashville DV Homicides

Lethality Assessment Program (LAP)

The Lethality Assessment Protocol (LAP) is a lethality screening tool for intimate partner violence victims. The Metro Nashville Police Department (MNPd) administers the 11 question assessment to victims of each domestic violence report they receive. For more information on the LAP see page ##.



The only 2021 intimate partner homicide victim who received a LAP screening was screened twice, related to multiple domestic violence incidents reported to the MNPd, and chose not to answer the questions on one of those occasions.

In the instance where the victim did choose to answer the LAP questions, they screened in as high-risk, answering "YES" to eight out of eleven questions, including questions about strangulation and threats with a firearm.

Outreach & Seeking Help

In 2021, none of Nashville's intimate partner homicide victims had contact with victim's services agencies and only 14% had contact with law enforcement or the courts.



Case Review

Although the Domestic Abuse Death Review Team (DADRT) reached out to several of the victim's and perpetrator's family members, the DADRT did not receive a response and could not include them in the background interviews. What is known about the victim and perpetrator has been pieced together from available news reports, government records, and Metro Nashville Police Department (MNPD) reports.

The perpetrator had several arrests for minor drug and traffic offenses, including three convictions, but had never been charged with a violent offense prior to the homicide. The victim had several convictions for misdemeanor theft and drug charges both before and after she met the perpetrator. The victim and perpetrator met approximately four years before the homicide. Prior to meeting the perpetrator, the victim was in another relationship in which she was assaulted by her then-boyfriend as well as two of the boyfriend's family members.

The victim and perpetrator had no children in common, but the victim had three young children from previous relationships. After the homicide, a family member of the victim sought custody of the children. The victim was described by loved ones as being a "strong and caring mother and person" and having a "beautiful smile."

According to a family member of the victim, the victim and perpetrator met about four years prior to the homicide. The family member reported that the perpetrator was severely physically abusive toward the victim in the years leading up to the homicide. The victim was hospitalized multiple times, and used a back brace for several months as a result of the abuse. The severe physical abuse had a significant impact on the victim's health and during her time with the perpetrator she began seeing a doctor for a newly present seizure condition, possibly as a result of head trauma from repeated abuse. None of these incidents were ever reported to the police and the victim had no known interactions with victim services providers.

On the date of the homicide, the victim and perpetrator spent the day together at the victim's home. The perpetrator reported to police that the two used drugs together and got in an argument. The perpetrator began to leave the home and reported to police that the victim somehow became trapped underneath his car as he was leaving. The perpetrator made no attempt to call 911 and fled on foot when a family member of the victim attempted to assist her and called 911. The victim was taken to the hospital and died from her injuries a week later. The perpetrator was eventually convicted of reckless homicide.

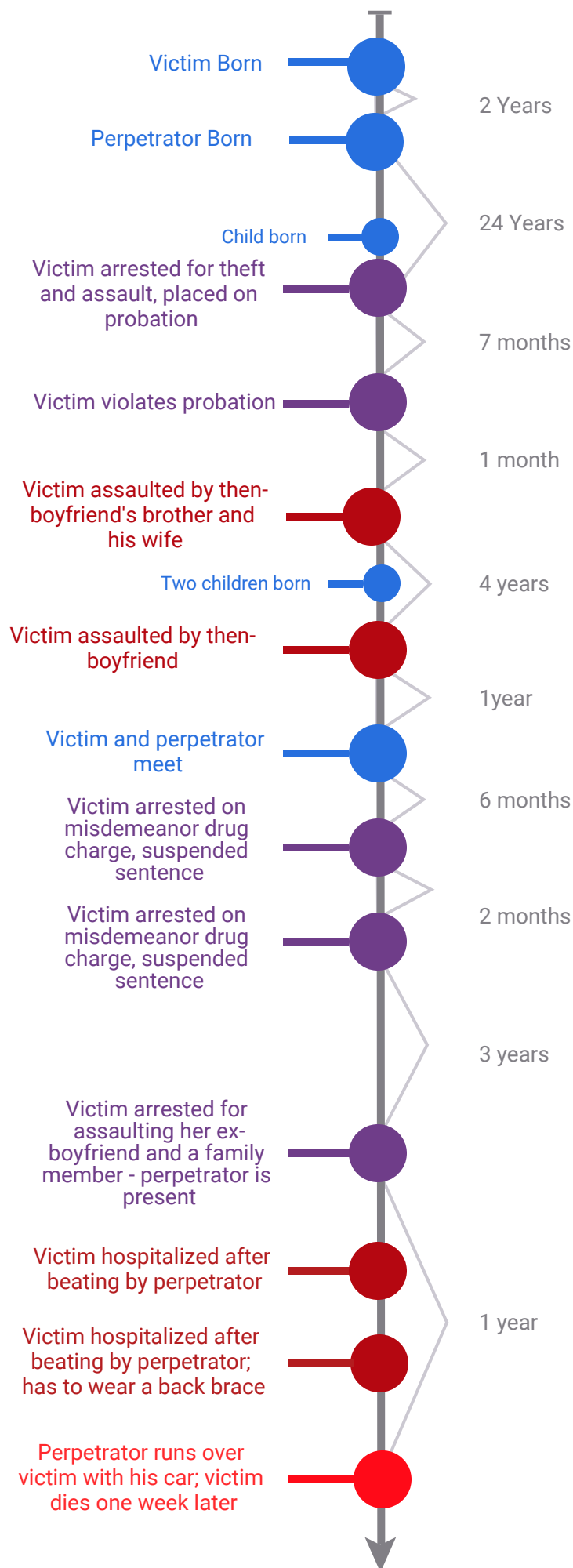
On the following page you will find a timeline of the victim's life and relationships up until her murder. Since the Team was unable to interview people who knew the victim, many specifics of the timeline are unknown.

The timeline you see here is a reflection of those incidents which the Team could place firmly on a specific date based on the evidence presented in the law enforcement homicide report and other official reports.

Therefore, the incidents of abuse presented on this timeline do not reflect a complete picture of the abuse suffered by the victim.

Timeline Key

-  Significant Events
-  Victim's Arrests
-  Incidents of Abuse
-  The Homicide



Nashville's Domestic Abuse Death Review Team (DADRT) identified three Findings during their 2021 case review. The Findings address 1) Public Awareness, 2) DV Education and Screening for Low-Level Drug Offenders, 3) Relational Risk Transfer.

The Team has made specific recommendations to address each finding and remove associated barriers to victim safety. The recommendations are assigned to various agencies and organizations in Nashville, both within and outside the Metro government.

Color-coded labels identify what progress that has already been made on each recommendation:

- **No Progress**
- **Some Progress**
- **On Target to Complete**
- **Complete or Active**

SUCCESS/PROGRESS: Items identified as successes or progress made toward goals are coded in teal. These are things already being implemented throughout Nashville that address some aspects of the findings in this report.



Finding: Public Awareness

The victim in this case did not reach out to law enforcement or victim service providers for assistance, potentially indicating a lack of widespread public awareness that impacted access to the multiple resources in Nashville available to assist her.

CASE FACTS RELATED TO THIS FINDING

In this case, as in many of Nashville's domestic violence homicides, DADRT found that the victim did not reach out to law enforcement or victim service providers for help. Despite experiencing severe physical abuse by the perpetrator that resulted in multiple hospitalizations, the victim did not report any incidents to law enforcement. A family member of the victim reported that the victim and perpetrator had known each other for about four years prior to the homicide and that physical abuse had been present in the relationship for several years.

THIS FINDING'S IMPACT ON NASHVILLE

In 2021, none of Nashville's intimate partner homicide victims had any contact with victim service agencies and only 14% of these victims had contact with law enforcement. Between 2016-2021, nearly half, or 47%, of intimate partner homicide victims in Nashville had no contact with either law enforcement or victim service providers. In 2021, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic may have made victims less likely to seek assistance for fear of exposure to the virus. Although the Office of Family Safety and many other service providers developed the capacity to assist victims remotely in response to the virus, stay-at-home guidelines may have made victims fearful to seek support in-person or remotely. Medical facilities could be a crucial connection point for victims who may not be aware of formal domestic violence services available in Nashville but may be seeking medical treatment for any reason.

RECOMMENDATION: City-Wide Awareness Campaign. The campaign should involve:

- Consistent, unified, and collaborative messaging from Nashville's victim service providers. Each service provider currently has its own outreach and awareness programming. Consistent messaging across service providers could help victims more clearly see how these agencies work together to provide a full spectrum of services.
- Layered messaging platforms, i.e.: social media, billboards, and traditional news media that connect with individuals and inform them about services through multiple avenues, increasing the likelihood of message retention.
- Culturally diverse messaging, including a variety of languages and varied representation.
- Educating social workers and medical providers at hospitals and clinics across the county.
- Partnering with Metro Parks community centers and libraries and their many locations for awareness opportunities and remote advocate assistance.
- Emphasizing that many service providers are able to offer remote services, i.e.: orders of protection can be filed over the phone in many cases.
- Using available data to pinpoint areas of Nashville that have the highest volumes of domestic violence incidents and targeting these areas with outreach efforts.
- Placing information on Nashville's domestic violence victim services in highly visible areas of medical facilities.

Finding: Public Awareness

PROGRESS

- Metro's Office of Family Safety (OFS) has outreach specialists stationed at a Hispanic community center in Nashville to provide resources for community members who are part of a marginalized population that may not be comfortable seeking help in a more formal setting.
- OFS has hired two community advocates who will provide crisis advocacy services in community settings for clients who may not be able to come into one of the Nashville family justice centers. These community advocates will be placed in high-volume areas for domestic violence incidents, including North Nashville and Southeast Nashville.
- OFS is providing trainings on recognizing and screening for the signs of domestic violence to medical providers at Health Department clinics in Davidson County.
- OFS has provided specialized training on strangulation to medical professionals across Davidson County.
- MNPD's Domestic Violence Division and Family Intervention Program regularly attend community events to provide resources and information for community members.
- MNPD's Domestic Violence Division has begun more heavily utilizing social media to create videos on domestic violence topics that can be shared by community partners in order to spread awareness.

Finding: DV Education and Screening for Low-Level Offenders

The victim in this case had several arrests for minor drug charges and did not receive any education about domestic violence as part of her involvement with the criminal justice system.

CASE FACTS RELATED TO THIS FINDING

The victim in this case was arrested six times on minor offenses, including two low-level drug charges that occurred after she met the perpetrator. The victim was sentenced to probation three times, and was not identified as a domestic violence victim during the course of her interactions with the criminal justice system. The victim may have been reluctant to report her abuse to police due to her criminal history, but participating in screenings through drug court or her probation officer may have felt like a safer option for her. Had she been identified as a victim of domestic violence during this time, resources could have been offered to assist her.

THIS FINDING'S IMPACT ON NASHVILLE

Substance abuse does not cause domestic violence; however, substance abuse is one of many risk factors for both perpetration of and victimization by domestic violence. Similarly, both perpetrators and victims of domestic violence are more likely than the general population to abuse substances. A majority of the perpetrators of domestic violence homicides in Nashville since 2016 had prior convictions for other crimes, such as theft, child abuse, or evading arrest. Of these perpetrators, over one third had drug offense convictions. Studies show that between 45-90% of women accessing substance abuse treatment have been victims of intimate partner violence [1].

RECOMMENDATION: Substance abuse treatment providers and the criminal justice system should screen individuals convicted of low-level drug offenses to determine whether they are involved in abusive relationships.

- If during the court process it is discovered that someone charged with a low-level drug offense has ever been the victim of domestic violence, defense attorneys, prosecutors, and judges should advise them to seek assistance from victim service providers in Davidson County.
- When someone is convicted of a low-level drug offense, such as simple possession, probation officers should administer a brief questionnaire to screen for the presence of any abuse history.
- Some specialized domestic violence drug court dockets utilize tools including the Danger Assessment, Domestic Violence Screening Instrument [2], and other brief assessments may include HITS [3], and the PMWI-SF [4].
- Probation officers should have educational materials available for anyone who screens in and should direct them to OFS and to other appropriate victim service providers.
- If it is determined that the person has been a perpetrator of domestic violence, the probation officer should offer information about Batterer's Intervention Programs (BIPs).
- Substance abuse treatment providers and harm reduction organizations, including methadone clinics, should routinely screen clients for the presence of abuse history and offer appropriate resources.

Finding: Relational Risk Transfer

The normalization of violence in prior relationships may have contributed to the escalation to deadly violence in the victim's relationship with the perpetrator.

CASE FACTS RELATED TO THIS FINDING

In the years prior to her murder, the victim was assaulted multiple times by a different intimate partner and by members of his family, but all of the criminal cases were dismissed. The lack of significant legal consequences for her earlier abusers may have given the victim the notion that domestic violence was something to be endured in relationships and may have led her to not report the much more severe violence perpetrated by the person who eventually murdered her.

THIS FINDING'S IMPACT ON NASHVILLE

Studies indicate that anywhere from 23-56% of women who terminate relationships with a violent partner go on to become involved in one or more subsequent violent relationships [5]. Over 80% of women in one study who had been in one or two previous violent relationships reported escalating violence in their current violent relationship [2]. While victims of intimate partner violence may feel that the danger is over once they have successfully left a violent relationship, they are at significant risk of becoming involved with an even more violent partner in the future. The DADRT has coined a term for the normalization of increasing abuse in one relationship that when transferred to another can accelerate risk and violence: relational risk transfer.

Of the female intimate homicide victims in Nashville between 2012-2022 who had domestic violence-related police interactions prior to their murders, **at least 42% were abused by more than one partner**. Our fatality review report from 2016 also examined a case in which both victim and perpetrator had previously been involved in abusive relationships before the perpetrator murdered the victim after a very short time together. The DADRT theorized that the normalization of violence over time and its escalation in previous relationships contributed to the quickly intensifying and fatal violence that eventually occurred [6].

RECOMMENDATION: OFS and other Nashville victim service providers should develop best practices for working with clients who have had multiple abusers to educate them on the increased risk they may face.

- Clinical interventions should address trauma history, which is strongly correlated with a greater number of abusive partners [7]; addressing and processing previous traumatic experiences may prevent victims from engaging in future violent relationships.
- Client intake should include questions around previous abusive relationships to increase identification of potential relational risk transfer.
- Information about increased risk from multiple abusers should be incorporated into existing materials or additional materials should be created if necessary.
- Staff at these agencies should receive training about the increased risks associated with victimization by multiple partners.

Finding: Relational Risk Transfer

RECOMMENDATION: OFS and other Nashville victim service providers should develop best practices for working with clients who have had multiple abusers to educate them on the increased risk they may face.

- Informational materials on identifying warning signs of abusers should be provided to victims accessing all service providers, especially shelters and transitional housing programs.
- OFS and victim service providers should develop trauma-informed practices for addressing the potential risks of becoming involved in another abusive relationship while working with victims who have left an abusive partner.

PROGRESS:

- OFS has created a video series covering many domestic violence-related topics, including warning signs of abusers, that are available on YouTube and the OFS website. Partner agencies are encouraged to use these videos when providing domestic violence education to their clients.

Implementation Plan

On the following pages you will find the collected recommendations listed in the previous findings. Each recommendation has a **suggested "Entity for Implementation"**. Each Entity for Implementation is encouraged to see the pages associated with their recommendations for more details on implementation. Each Entity for Implementation has been color-coded* as follows:

Overall No Progress on Recommendations

Overall Some Progress on Recommendations

Overall On Target to Complete Recommendations

Overall Recommendations are Complete or Active (Such as Training Programs)

*This color code is not intended to "grade" a particular agency but merely to show progress toward implementation.

Implementation Plan

Entity for Implementation – Metro Office of Family Safety (OFS)

- Assist Metro Nashville Courts, the District Attorney's Office, and probation in selecting or creating a screening tool that can be used by probation officers to identify potential victims of domestic violence who have been arrested for low-level offenses.
- Reach out to substance abuse treatment facilities to provide training on identifying signs of domestic violence.
- For a full list of recommendations related to this finding, see page 14.
- Coordinate a City-Wide Awareness Campaign through existing multi-disciplinary teams and committees regarding interpersonal violence with a consistent and unified message.
- Continue to partner with Nashville's medical providers for trainings on recognizing signs of abuse and high-risk victimizations including strangulation.
- Provide materials on Nashville's domestic violence service providers that medical providers can post in their facilities.
- For a full list of recommendations related to this finding, see page 12-13
- Develop best practices for working with victims who have had multiple abusers to educate them on the increased risks they may face.
- When working with victims who have successfully left an abusive relationship, include information on warning signs associated with potential abusers so that victims may be less likely to enter another abusive relationship in the future.
- For a full list of recommendations related to this finding, see page 15

Entity for Implementation – Metro Nashville Courts

Partner with the District Attorney's Office, the Public Defender's Office, and probation to identify potential victims of domestic violence who have been arrested for low-level drug offenses.

- For a full list of recommendations related to this finding, see page 14

Entity for Implementation – Metro Nashville District Attorney's Office

Partner with Metro Nashville Courts, the Public Defender's Office and probation to identify potential victims of domestic violence who have been arrested for low-level offenses.

- For a full list of recommendations related to this finding, see page 14

Entity for Implementation – Metro Nashville Public Defender's Office

Partner with Metro Nashville Courts, the District Attorney's Office, and probation to identify potential victims of domestic violence who have been arrested for low-level offenses.

- For a full list of recommendations related to this finding, see page 14

Implementation Plan

Entity for Implementation – Metro Nashville Probation

Partner with Metro Nashville Courts and the District Attorney's Office to identify potential victims of domestic violence who have been arrested for low-level offenses.

- Implement a screening tool to identify low-level offenders who may be victims of abuse
- For a full list of recommendations related to this finding, see page 14

Entity for Implementation – Nashville Victim Service Providers

- Collaborate on a City-Wide Awareness Campaign regarding interpersonal violence with a consistent and unified message.
- For a full list of recommendations related to this finding, see page 12-13.
- Develop best practices for working with victims who have had multiple abusers to educate them on the increased risks they may face.
- When working with victims who have successfully left an abusive relationship, include information on warning signs associated with potential abusers so that victims may be less likely to enter another abusive relationship in the future.
- Informational materials should be provided to victims accessing shelters and transitional housing programs.
- For a full list of recommendations related to this finding, see page 15

Entity for Implementation – Nashville Substance Abuse Treatment Providers

- Identify clients seeking treatment for substance abuse who may be victims of abuse and direct them to appropriate resources.
- For a full list of recommendations related to this finding, see page 14

Entity for Implementation – Nashville Medical Providers

- Post information on Nashville's domestic violence services in highly visible areas of medical facilities.
- Continue to partner with the Office of Family Safety for ongoing trainings, particularly around recognizing the signs of abuse and high-risk victimizations including strangulation.
- For a full list of recommendations related to this finding, see page 12-13

Conclusion

The findings and recommendations from this report highlight areas for continued growth and improvement in Nashville's domestic violence prevention services and response that can be addressed within our government, non-profit, and for-profit sectors. The Metro Nashville Office of Family Safety (OFS) and the Domestic Abuse Death Review Team (DADRT) are committed to working on the recommendations and implementation plan from this review in conjunction with our partner agencies.

The DADRT will continue to review each domestic violence homicide in Nashville Davidson County and conduct its annual in-depth case review to glean further information on how to improve our work. The OFS will work with partner agencies to implement the report recommendations that we hope will provide solutions to identified gaps and increase community awareness. The OFS Statewide Fatality Review Coordinator will continue to develop domestic violence fatality review teams throughout the state and convene Tennessee's first-ever state-wide Team. This state-wide Team will amplify the impact of Nashville and other jurisdictions' recommendations throughout the state.

The DADRT and Metro Nashville Office of Family Safety (OFS) are incredibly grateful for the support we have received from Metro Nashville-Davidson County Government, the Mayor, the Metropolitan Council, our Advisory Council, our state and federal funders, and our committed partner members for the support they have contributed to this report. Above all, we are grateful to the survivors of domestic violence that shared their experiences and insight with our Team and helped form these recommendations.

Appendix

2010 Tennessee Code

Title 36 - Domestic Relations

Chapter 3 - Marriage

Part 6 - Domestic Abuse

36-3-624 - Death review teams established Protocol Composition of teams Disclosure of communications

Authority to subpoena.

- (a) A county may establish an interagency domestic abuse death review team to assist local agencies in identifying and reviewing domestic abuse deaths, including homicides and suicides, and facilitating communication among the various agencies involved in domestic abuse cases.
- (b) For purposes of this section, "domestic abuse" has the meaning set forth in § 36-3-601.
- (c) A county may develop a protocol that may be used as a guideline to assist coroners and other persons who perform autopsies on domestic abuse victims in the identification of domestic abuse, in the determination of whether domestic abuse contributed to death or whether domestic abuse had occurred prior to death but was not the actual cause of death, and in the proper written reporting procedures for domestic abuse, including the designation of the cause and mode of death.
- (d) County domestic abuse death review teams may be comprised of, but not limited to, the following:
- (1) Experts in the field of forensic pathology;
 - (2) Medical personnel with expertise in domestic violence abuse;
 - (3) Coroners and medical examiners;
 - (4) Criminologists;
 - (5) District attorneys general and city attorneys;
 - (6) Domestic abuse shelter staff;
 - (7) Legal aid attorneys who represent victims of abuse;
 - (8) A representative of the local bar association;
 - (9) Law enforcement personnel;
 - (10) Representatives of local agencies that are involved with domestic abuse reporting;
 - (11) County health department staff who deal with domestic abuse victims' health issues;
 - (12) Representatives of local child abuse agencies; and
 - (13) Local professional associations of persons described in subdivisions (d)(1)-(10), inclusive.
- (e) An oral or written communication or a document provided by a third party to a domestic abuse death review team is confidential and not subject to disclosure or discoverable by a third party. Notwithstanding the foregoing, recommendations of a domestic abuse death review team upon the completion of a review may be disclosed at the discretion of a majority of the members of a domestic abuse death review team.
- (f) To complete a review of a domestic abuse death, whether confirmed or suspected, each domestic abuse death review team shall have access to and subpoena power to obtain all records of any nature maintained by any public or private entity that pertain to a death being investigated by the team. Such records include, but are not limited to, police investigations and reports, medical examiner investigative data and reports, and social service agency reports, as well as medical records maintained by a private health care provider or health care agency. Any entity or individual providing such information to the local team shall not be held liable for providing the information.

[Acts 2000, ch. 788, § 1.]

Appendix

Domestic Abuse Death Review Team Mission, Responsibility & Authority

Team Mission

In accordance with Executive Order No. 016 authorized by Tennessee Code Annotated §36-3-624, the Metropolitan Government of Nashville-Davidson County created the Domestic Abuse Death Review Team or DADRT to “establish an interagency domestic abuse death review team to identify and review domestic abuse deaths, including homicides and suicides, and to facilitate communication among the various agencies involved in domestic abuse cases in order to recommend improvements in the system of services to domestic abuse victims and their families, and to provide accurate information related to domestic abuse issues to the community.” Metro Government's Office of Family Safety is tasked with leading this team.

Responsibility and Authority of the Team

It shall be the responsibility of the Team to identify, review, and analyze fatal or near fatal incidents of domestic violence to better understand the dynamics of these fatalities or near fatalities and to facilitate communication among the various agencies involved in domestic abuse cases. It shall also be the responsibility of the Team to conduct an in-depth review of a minimum of one domestic violence fatal or near-fatal incident(s) per year. Selected cases must be considered “closed cases” by both the Police Department and the District Attorney’s Office. A minimum period of six months must have elapsed from the time of death in order to interview family members and other close associations of the victim and/or perpetrator.

Report References:

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If you have any questions about the report, please contact Clare Ryan (ClareKRyan@jishnashville.gov), Statewide Domestic Violence Fatality Review Coordinator or Heather Herrmann (HeatherAHerrmann@jishnashville.gov), Assistant Director of Education & Strategic Initiatives at the Metropolitan Government of Nashville-Davidson County Office of Family Safety.

2021 MEMBERS OF THE DOMESTIC ABUSE DEATH REVIEW TEAM (DADRT)

Rickey Bearden - MNP

**Bonnie Beneke - TN Dept. of Children Services,
DADRT Chair**

Ashley Cathey - Office of Family Safety

Chris Buford - District Attorney's Office

Becky Bullard - Office of Family Safety, DADRT Staff

Allison Cantway - Office of Family Safety

Savannah Flowers - Legal Aid Society

Nichelle Foster - Metro Public Health Department

Cathy Gurley - You Have The Power

Rachel Herman- AGAPE/Morning Star Sanctuary

Heather Herrmann - Office of Family Safety

Susan Kay - Citizen

Diane Lance - Office of Family Safety

Kevin Lovell - MNP

**Melanie Lutenbacher - Vanderbilt University School of
Nursing**

Peter MacDonald - Citizen

Chandler Means - AGAPE/Morning Star Sanctuary

Megan Lopez - Office of Family Safety

**Michelle Richter - Deputy Chief, MNP, DADRT Sub-
Chair**

Damien Talley - YWCA

Susan Tucker-Smith - District Attorney's Office

Katie Stone - Davidson County Sheriff's Office

Additional individuals may be invited to attend DADRT Meetings when they had involvement working with any of the parties in the case being reviewed.



**Metro Office of
Family Safety**