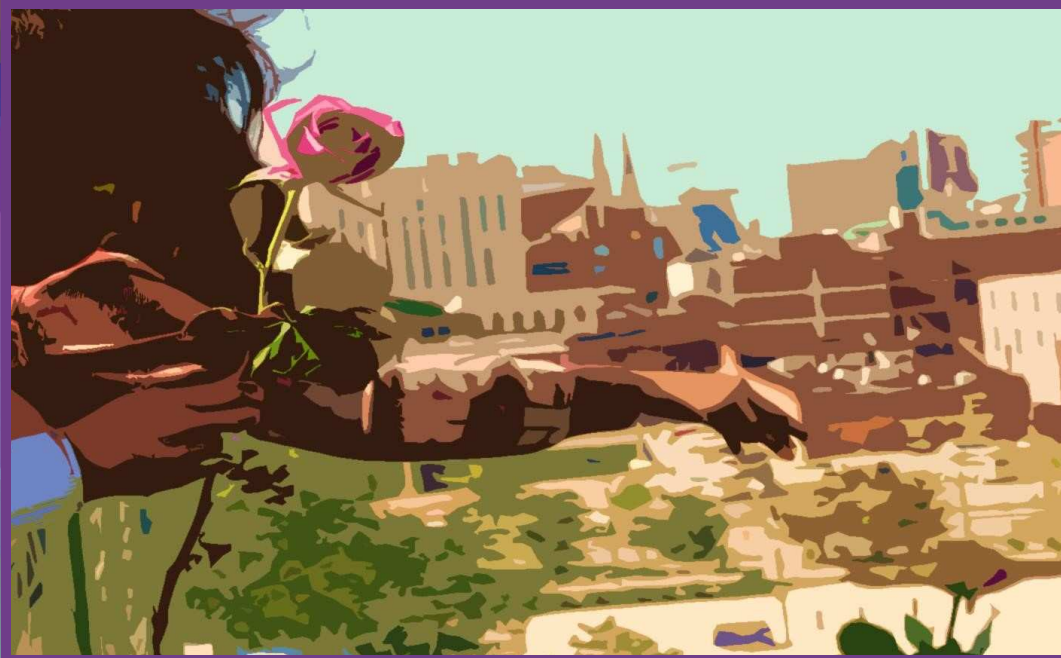


2017  
Annual Report

# Domestic Violence Homicide in Nashville

Domestic Abuse Death Review Team  
Nashville – Davidson County, TN



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Cover Image: 2015 'Meet Us at the Bridge' Event hosted by the Nashville Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV). Meet Us at the Bridge is an annual event recognizing outstanding individuals and groups that use their time and talents to combat domestic violence and to honor those who have lost their lives to domestic violence.

Meet Us at the Bridge is held in October during Domestic Violence Awareness Month on the west side of the John Seigenthaler Pedestrian Bridge.

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# Metro Office of Family Safety

## Nashville – Davidson County, TN 2017 Annual Report

### PREPARED FOR

**The Honorable Mayor David Briley**

**&**

**The Metropolitan Government Office of Family Safety  
Advisory Committee**

### PREPARED BY

**Diane Lance**, *Department Head*

**Becky Owens Bullard**, *Senior Director of Programs*

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of the

Metropolitan Government of Nashville-Davidson County,  
Office of Family Safety

**Domestic Abuse  
Death Review Team**

“When traumatic events are of human design, those who bear witness are caught in the conflict between victim and perpetrator. All the perpetrator asks is that the bystander do nothing. He appeals to the universal desire to see, hear, and speak no evil. The victim, on the contrary, asks the bystander to share the burden of pain. The victim demands action, engagement and remembering.”

— Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence*

This report is dedicated to each victim of domestic violence homicide in Nashville in 2017 and those that mourn their tragic loss of life. These individuals were family members, neighbors, and friends of our community. We will continue to remember and learn lessons that help others from their histories of abuse. Finally, 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 Mayor David Briley for his support of the Team's work in examining domestic violence fatalities. The Team would also like to thank Metro Government's Office of Family Safety's (OFS) Advisory Committee for its guidance and support.

We are extremely grateful for the many Team members who dedicated time out of their busy schedules to thoughtfully review the selected 2017 case. The dedication and expertise that DADRT members bring to each meeting is invaluable for identifying the gaps in domestic violence homicide prevention.

Lastly, we would like to express our appreciation to all individuals that volunteered their time identifying and providing insight into case specific warning signs and possible points of intervention. Most importantly, we are especially grateful to those family and friends who suffered a painful loss but were willing to share their loved one's story with us in order to help Nashville better serve future victims of domestic violence.

It is the hope of our Team 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 suggested steps to improve victim safety and offender accountability.



*Meet Us at the Bridge, 2017*





# Dear Mayor Briley,

The Nashville-Davidson County Domestic Abuse Death Review Team (DADRT) would like to share its 2017 annual report.

Following National Fatality Review guidelines and best practices, the Team performed an in-depth review of one case of intimate partner homicide. The homicide selected for 2017 review involved multiple contacts with the criminal justice system. The selected case also involved an extensive history of abuse of the victim committed by the perpetrator. This case is indicative of the increase in incidents of domestic violence-related murder-suicide that took place in Nashville in 2017 and across the state.

It is the Team's hope that this report will highlight areas of needed improvement by identifying safety and accountability gaps in Nashville's response and prevention services. Ultimately, it is the Team's goal to identify ways to reduce domestic violence homicides in our community and make Nashville the safest city for women and children.

Sincerely,

*Diane Lance*

*Department Head, Office of Family Safety*

*Bonnie Beneke*

*DADRT Chair, TN Dept. of Children's Services*

*Captain Michelle Richter*

*DADRT Sub-Chair, Metro Nashville Police Department*

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# Executive Summary

The Domestic Abuse Death Review Team or DADRT is an interagency team that has met informally since 1995 and was formalized by Executive Order in 2002. The purpose of the Team is to review Nashville's domestic violence homicide cases and identify opportunities to close gaps in Nashville's response to domestic violence that may leave victims vulnerable. Tennessee ranks **5th in the nation** for the rate of women killed by men, and Nashville accounts for more than 20% of domestic violence incidents in the state.



22%

**There were 45,703 incidents of domestic violence in Tennessee during 2017. Twenty two percent of those (9,902) occurred in Nashville.**



14%

**There were 111 homicides in Nashville during 2017. Fifteen of those, or 14%, were related to domestic violence.**

The 2017 case selected for review was a murder-suicide involving a firearm. Criminal justice records and interviews with family and co-workers painted a picture of a nearly decade-long relationship characterized by severe physical, emotional, and financial abuse and coercive control.

The DADRT identified three key findings in the case that contributed to the victim's continued risk of violence and ultimately her murder:

1. Suicide risk factors, which included suicidal ideation and threats of suicide by the perpetrator, were not identified or used to assess this victim's level of risk.
2. The perpetrator was convicted of domestic assault twice and should not have possessed a firearm under federal law, but firearm dispossession procedures failed in this case and the victim was murdered using a gun.
3. The victim was murdered at her place of work, and the lack of workplace policies and training on domestic violence likely increased her risk.

In addition to these key findings, the DADRT identified further opportunities for improvement. The victim's minimal participation with the courts and the lack of wrap-around advocacy may have put her at greater risk. Lack of resources for her pets potentially delayed her leaving and prevented her from seeking formal services. A history of financial abuse and coerced debt created barriers to the victim's safety and presented a clear warning sign of abuse that went largely unrecognized. The perpetrator faced criminal charges and probation that included a mandatory batterers' intervention class. The DADRT found that a lack of stringent certification requirements for Batterers' Intervention Programs (BIPs) may have contributed to the BIP's ineffective intervention in the perpetrator's violence and increased the victim's risk.

This report will detail recommendations crafted by the DADRT and expert consultants for addressing these areas of risk.



# 2012–2017 Domestic Violence in Nashville Data & Statistics

## Domestic Violence Homicide Types

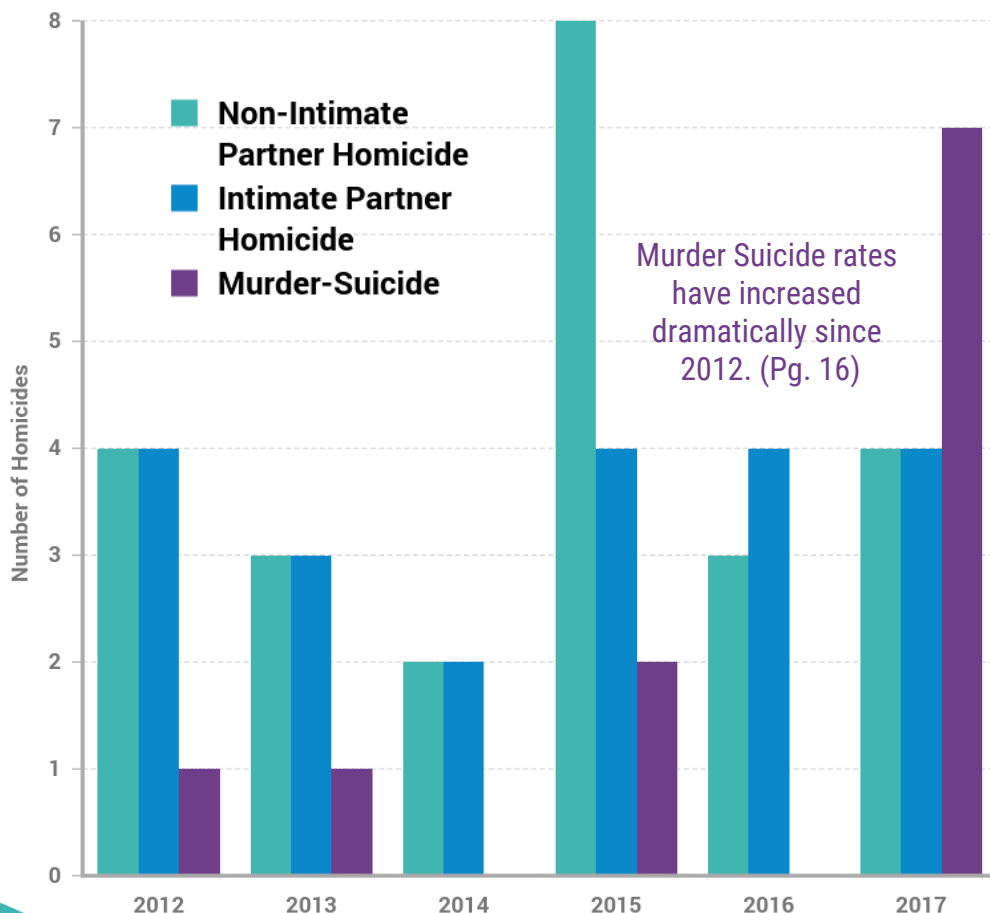
### Domestic Violence Defined:

In Tennessee, **Domestic Violence (DV)** is defined by law as assault committed against a:

- Current or former spouse;
- Cohabitant/Roommate;
- Dating or sexual partner;
- Blood or adoptive relative;
- Current or former relative by marriage; or
- Adult or minor child of any of the above individuals.

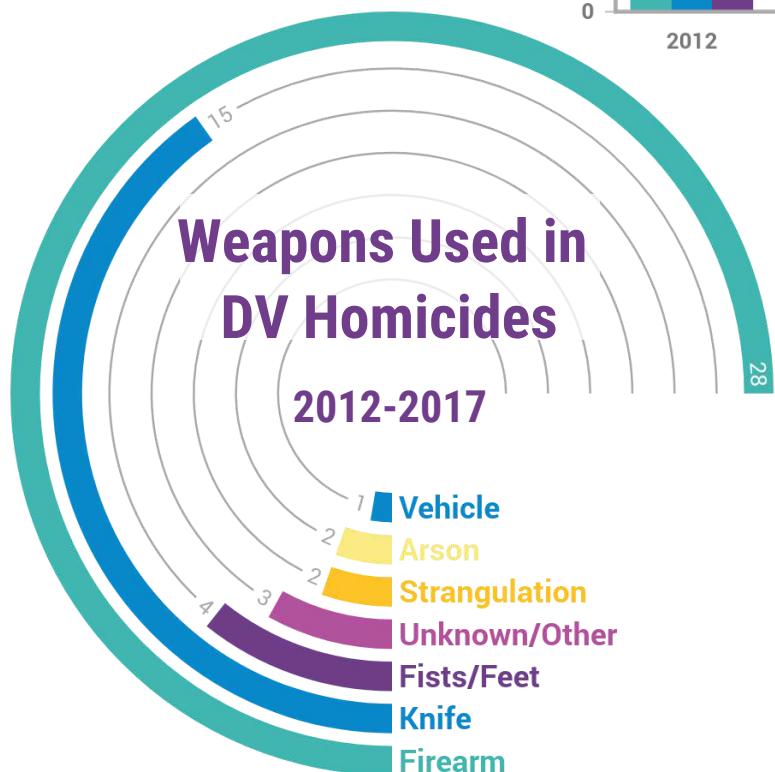
**Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)** is domestic violence committed against a current or former romantic partner.

**Non-Intimate Partner (NIP)** is DV committed against someone on the list above who is not a current or former romantic partner. This includes roommates, family members, and children.



## Weapons Used in DV Homicides

2012-2017



Firearms are, overwhelmingly, the cause of death in most DV Homicides. (Pg. 19)

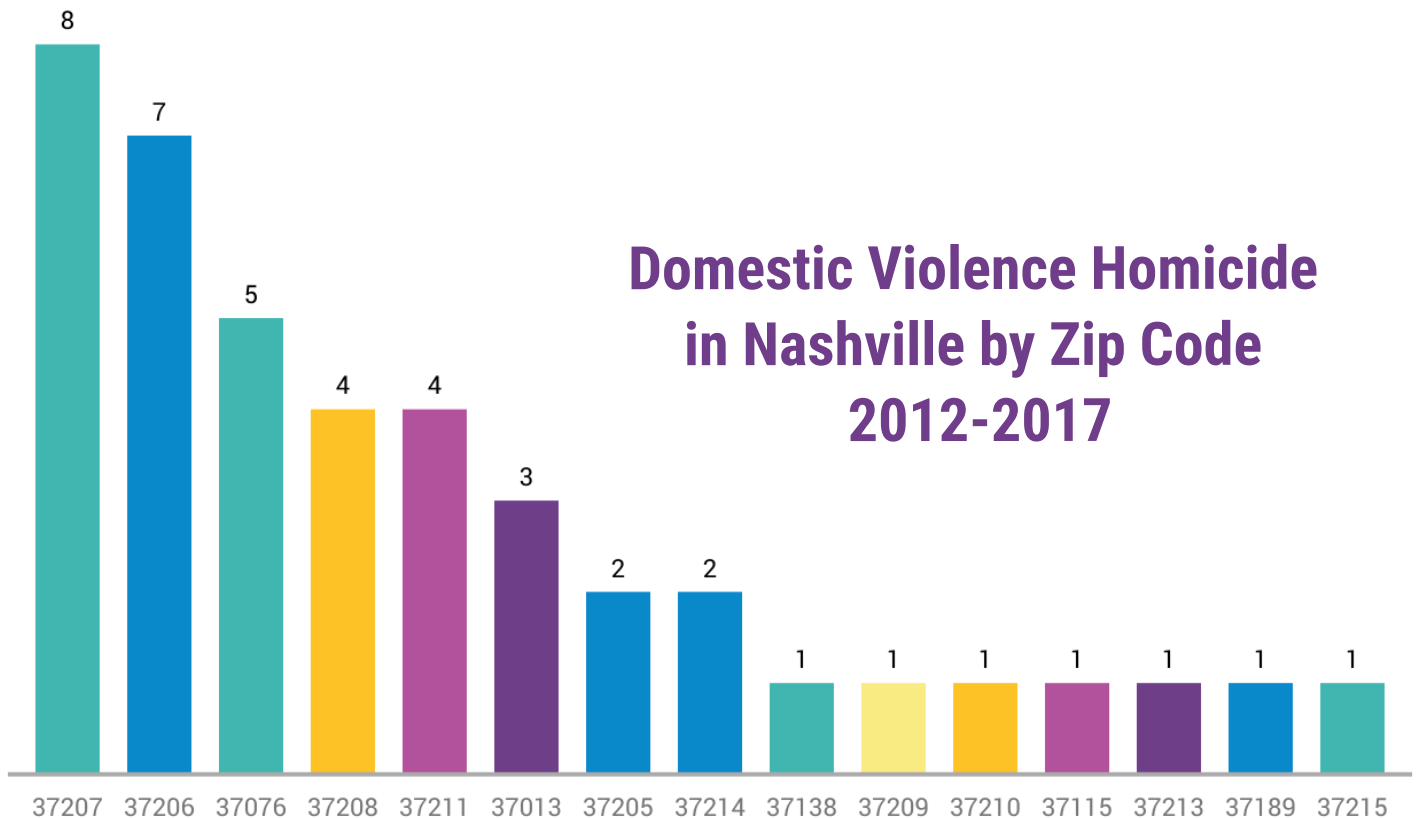
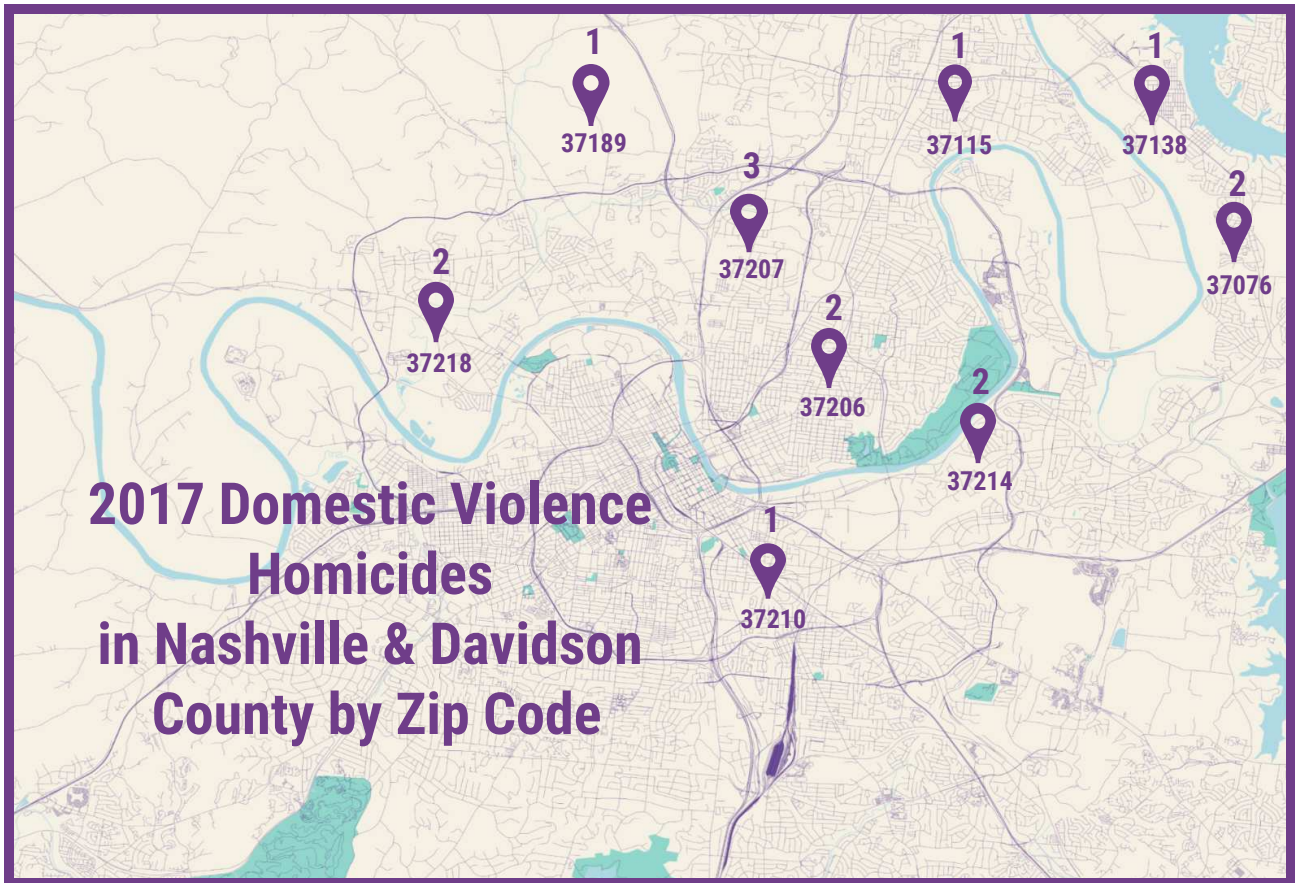
## Children's Experiences of DV Murder

2015-2017



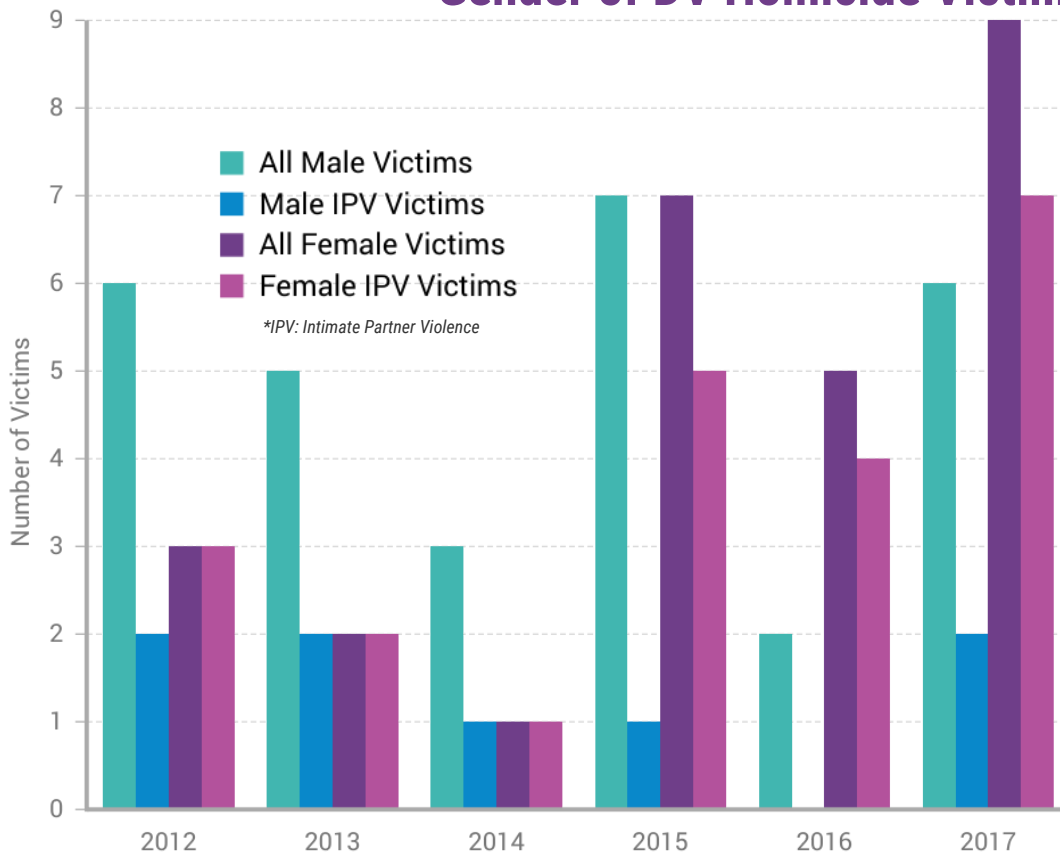
Children who are Secondary Witnesses may hear the incident take place, discover the crime scene, or otherwise become present on the scene after the events of the homicide.

# 2012–2017 Data & Statistics: Location



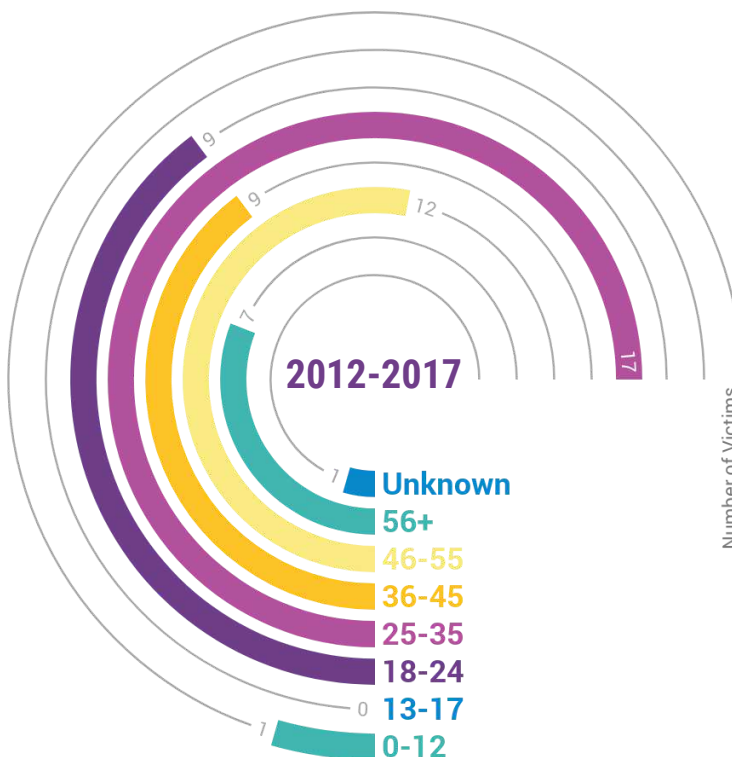
# 2012–2017 Data & Statistics: Victims

## Gender of DV Homicide Victims

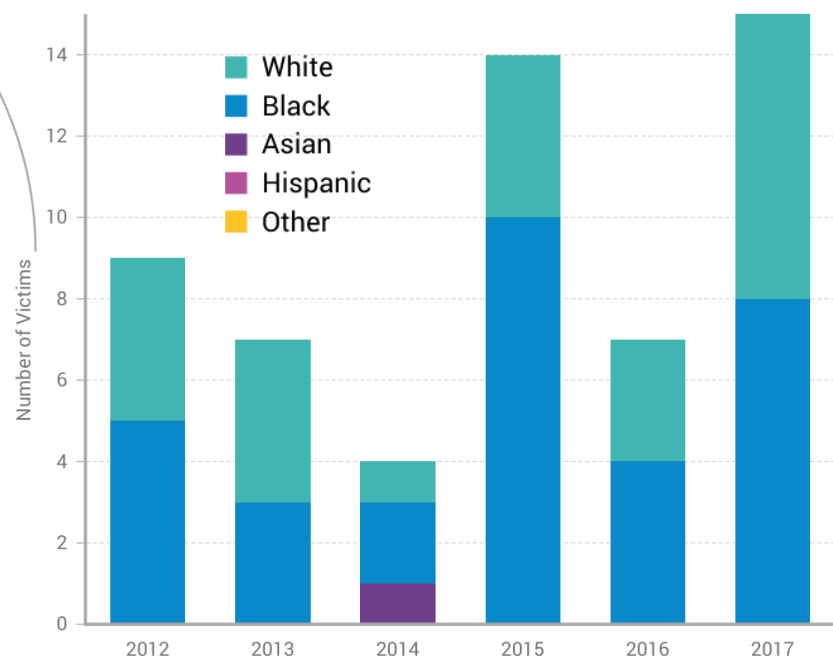


While the average number of male and female domestic violence homicide victims have been roughly equal over the past six years, it is important to note that female victims are far more likely to be killed by an intimate partner, while men are more likely to be victims of non-intimate domestic violence (this includes roommates, familial homicides, and homicides where a perpetrator kills their victim's current partner).

## Victim Age

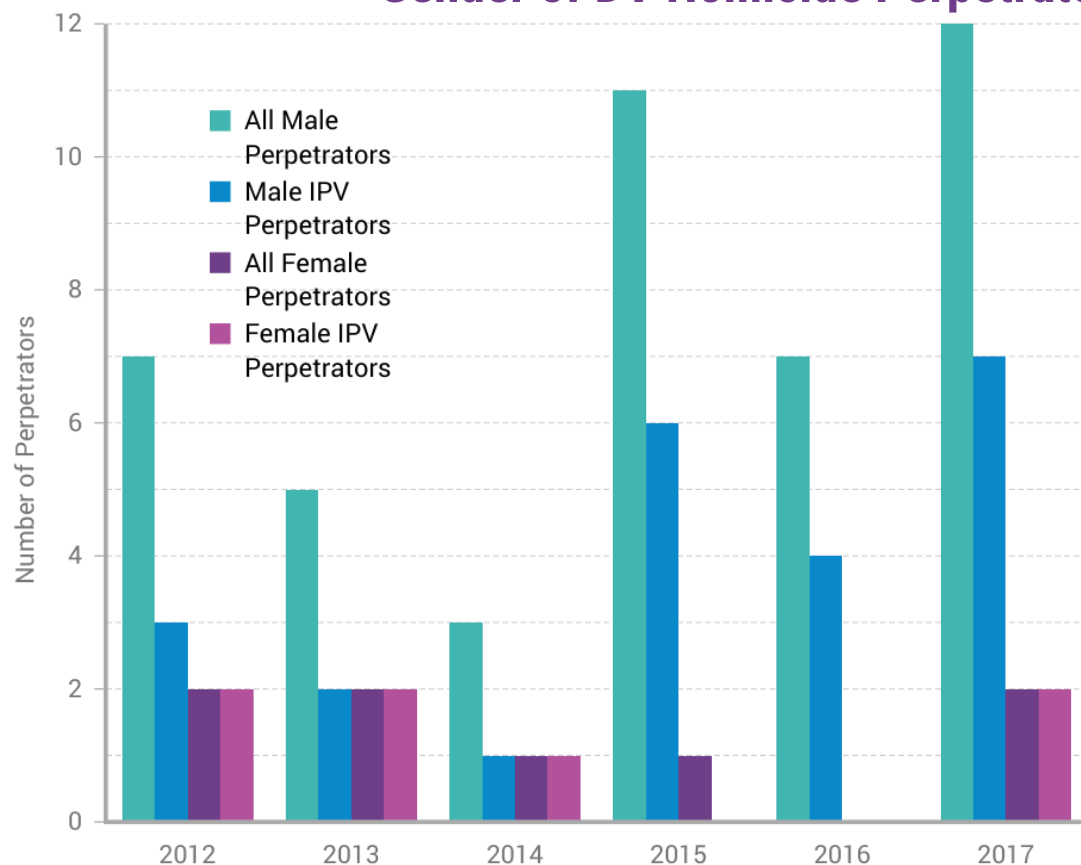


## Victim Race



# 2012–2017 Data & Statistics: Perpetrators

## Gender of DV Homicide Perpetrators

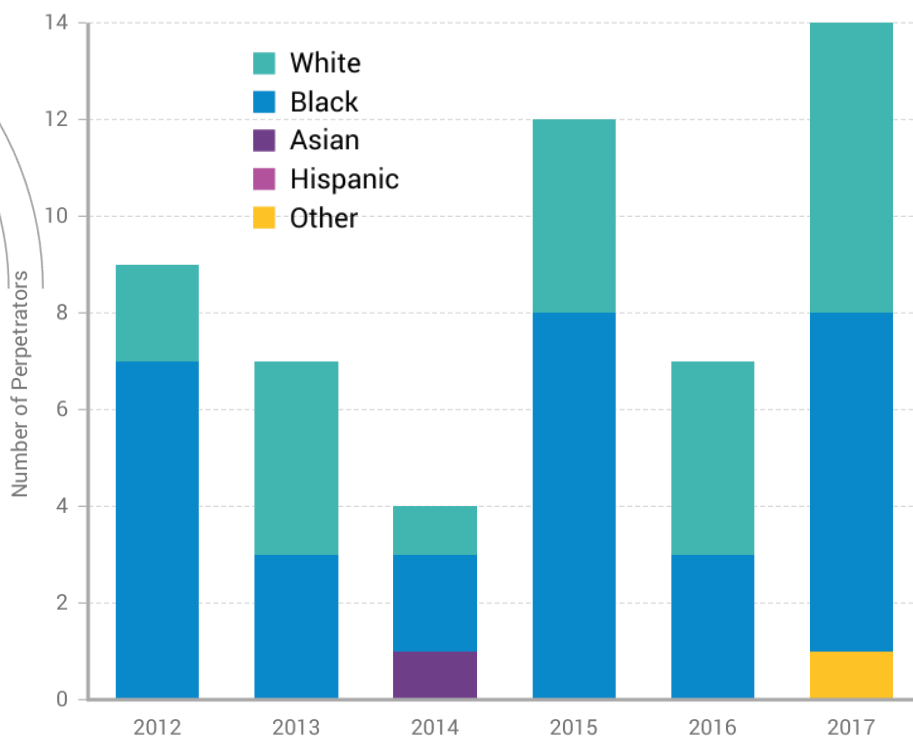


Nashville domestic violence homicide data echoes nation-wide statistics, suggesting that perpetrators of this crime typically kill members of their own race.

## Perpetrator Age

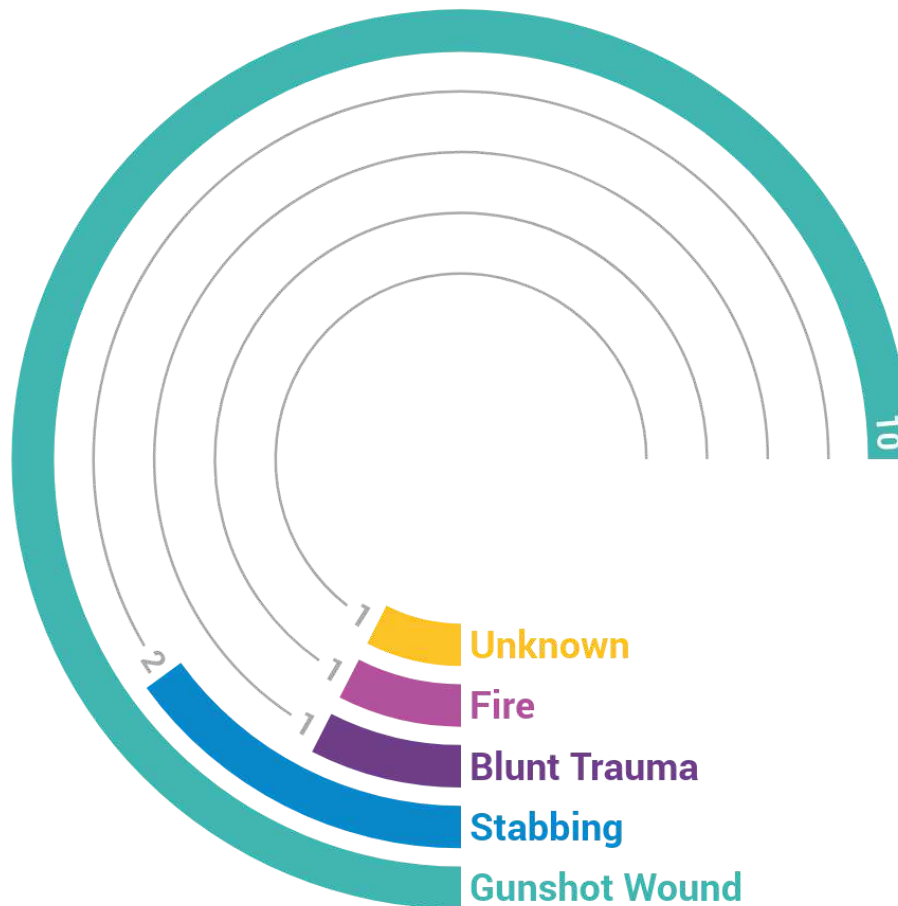


## Perpetrator Race



# 2012–2017 Data & Statistics – Firearms

## Weapons Used in 2017 DV Homicides



17%

Percent of Nashville intimate partner homicides in 2017 perpetrated by firearms while an **Order of Protection** was in place.

67%

**Percent of Nashville intimate partner homicides in 2017 perpetrated by firearms.**

33%

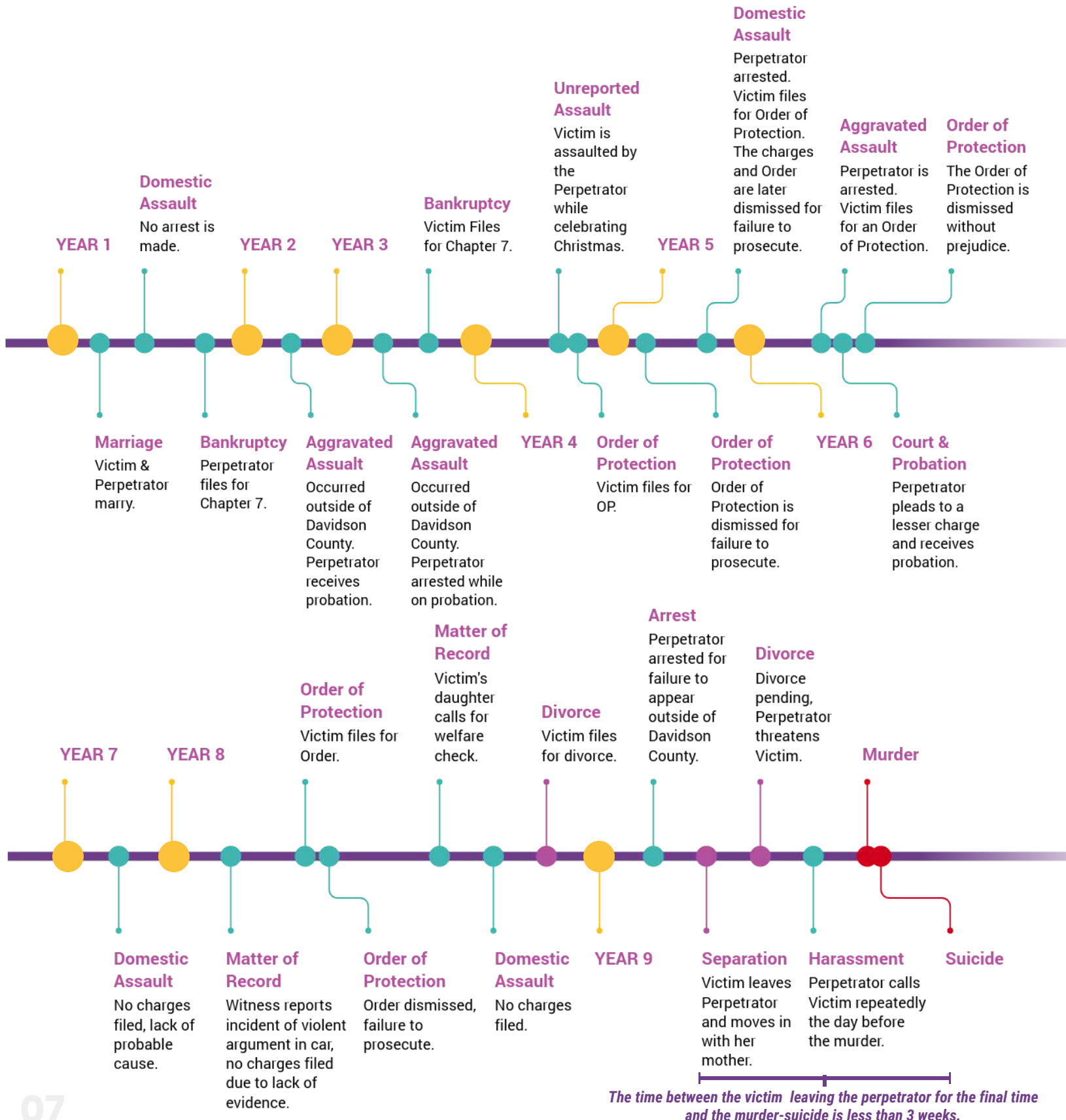
Percent of 2017 intimate partner homicide victims who received LAP screenings received more than one screening stemming from **multiple incidents of domestic violence**.

*It is important to note that it is unlawful for a person with a domestic violence conviction or an active Order of Protection against them to possess a firearm.*



# Relationship Timeline

On this page is a timeline of the relationship of the victim and perpetrator studied in Nashville DADRT's 2017 case review. This timeline includes significant events leading up to the murder-suicide.



### The Victim

The victim was described by family and friends as “sweet and friendly.” She had a “normal, happy childhood.” She was very close with her brother and the “light of her mother’s life.” She was a good student, smart and affable, and a hard worker. She married her first husband at eighteen and they were married for nearly twenty years. The couple had three daughters before their divorce. The victim’s daughters were adults and away from home by the time she met the perpetrator a year after her divorce. At the time of her death she had worked at a medical office for nearly a decade, was well liked by both clients and colleagues, and had a loving relationship with her family and children.

Prior to her marriage to the perpetrator, the victim had no recorded criminal history or history of experiencing abuse. The victim retained steady employment throughout her adult life, including during her marriage to the perpetrator. She never experienced financial difficulties prior to the marriage that the Team was made aware of, however during the marriage there were six judgements made against the victim and perpetrator to the sum of \$51,516, including one \$13,000 debt incurred by the perpetrator for which the victim’s wages were garnished. The victim filed for bankruptcy three years after they were married.

### The Perpetrator

The perpetrator had a turbulent childhood. It was rumored that his stepfather was abusive, withholding food and locking him out of the house. According to a witness, there are rumors that when the perpetrator was a child he attempted to burn down his house after a fight with his mother. Multiple witnesses report hearing about his abusive behavior toward his first wife during their marriage, including during her pregnancy. While the perpetrator has no history of arrests for physical abuse prior to his marriage to the victim, he was arrested in the early 1990’s for making threatening statements to his first wife.

At age 19, the perpetrator was arrested on two counts of passing worthless checks. This began a pattern of financial crimes, including fraud and forgery that lasted nearly 32 years, until the perpetrator’s death. The perpetrator declared bankruptcy a year after he married the victim. The perpetrator also had a history of traffic violations, wrecks, and vehicular crimes, many associated with driving under the influence. He often boasted about his former career playing professional basketball and his friendships with many famous athletes, but there is no proof that such a career or friendships existed. Witnesses described the perpetrator as outgoing and even charming, but boastful and hyper-focused on his appearance, reputation, and status.

### The Relationship

The victim and perpetrator dated for only a year until they were married. Witnesses reported to the Team that the perpetrator “treated her like a queen” and was very charming in social situations but became a “different person” behind closed doors. These same individuals stated that the verbal, mental, and physical abuse started within a few months of their marriage and continued for nearly 10 years. This included frequent threats to kill the victim’s mother and one of her adult children.

In the aftermath of violent incidents the perpetrator would be apologetic, professing his love and sorrow for his actions. Family and friends described repeated incidents of this emotional manipulation, attempts to keep the victim from leaving, and from disclosing the abuse she was enduring. The perpetrator often controlled and manipulated the victim by withholding food from her and giving her gifts that he would take away as punishment. Strangulation and threats with weapons were present in nearly every reported assault experienced by the victim.

Once, after discharged from surgery, the perpetrator would not allow the victim to eat and refused to help her change her bandages. This was one of many incidents in which the victim called upon her family to intervene and help her get away from her perpetrator. The victim’s family reported knowing of the abuse almost from the beginning, although none knew the full extent of his violence against her. The victim’s family was a constant source of support, and although they expressed their concerns to the

victim, they never tried to force her to leave the perpetrator for fear of alienating her. On the many occasions the victim reached out to her family to help her leave the perpetrator or to provide a temporary safe place to live, they were always supportive.

## The Workplace

The victim's employer and coworkers also knew of the abuse. Signs of the abuse included missing work for days or weeks at a time in the aftermath of particularly violent incidents and always wearing long sleeves to work regardless of the weather. When the abuse could not be hidden due to hospital visits, court dates, and plainly visible injuries, the victim would share bits and pieces of the abuse she was experiencing with co-workers. There was no workplace domestic violence policy or training in place, and although co-workers tried to help her, colleagues didn't know what to do. On one occasion, co-workers took photos of her injuries as documentation. Eventually the victim stopped talking about her abuse altogether when her employer warned that he might have to let her go for "putting them all in danger."

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**A study by the Tennessee Economic Council on Women reported that the cost of violence against Tennessee's women in 2012 was at least \$886,171,950. That includes the cost of investigating, charging, and incarcerating perpetrators. It also includes the cost of medical and mental health treatment for victims and work hours victims lose when they can no longer hold down a steady job due to the abuse.**

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## Law Enforcement & Legal Allegations

The first record of an assault where law enforcement responded came in the spring a year after the victim and perpetrator were married. This was a case of a cross-complaint, where the perpetrator attempted to place blame on the victim. Neither party had visible injuries and no arrest was made in this incident. The perpetrator was arrested for domestic assault in Williamson County less than a year and a half later when the perpetrator pushed the victim into a wall, shoved her to the floor, and prevented her from leaving. He was placed on probation for this incident. While his probation was still in effect, he was arrested again for aggravated assault for punching the victim and leaving her with a black eye. During their fourth year of marriage, while out-of-state for Christmas, the perpetrator assaulted the victim again. This incident included verbal abuse, threats, and shoving the victim to the ground. Out of fear, the victim refused to drive home with the perpetrator and flew home instead. Shortly afterwards, the victim filed for an Order of Protection for the first time. That Order was dismissed a month later when she failed to show up for court.

The following spring, after the probation ended for the Williamson County assault, the perpetrator grabbed the victim around the neck and said, "Tonight is the night you're gonna die. I'm gonna take a knife and cut your throat." In the police report the victim said that she was afraid the perpetrator would shoot her and mentioned guns in the home. The case was dismissed for failure to prosecute after the victim did not appear in court.

Just over a year later, the perpetrator was again arrested for aggravated assault against the victim. During this incident the perpetrator strangled the victim, broke her ribs (resulting in hospitalization), displayed a gun, and threatened to kill her and then himself. He pleaded guilty to a lesser charge of domestic assault and was convicted and placed on probation for eleven months and twenty nine days. This was the second time the perpetrator was given probation for his abuse of the victim. As a condition of probation, the perpetrator was ordered to attend a 26-week Batterers' Intervention Program and was no longer allowed to own, purchase, or possess firearms. He was also ordered to stay away from the victim. The Stay Away Order was lifted one month later, at the request of the perpetrator, and the Order of Protection petition associated with the incident was dismissed after the victim failed to appear in court.

Seven years into their marriage, an acquaintance who was in the car with the couple reported an assault committed by the perpetrator against the victim. Police responded but no charges were filed due to lack of evidence. Less than six months later, police were called when the perpetrator refused to let the victim leave their home, calling her names and making threats. A Matter of Record (MOR) Report was made and the police were able to facilitate her leaving. She filed for an Order of Protection, including asking for custody and protection for her animals. The order was dismissed when the victim didn't appear in court. Another MOR was filed when one of the victim's daughters called for a welfare check after hearing the perpetrator threaten to shoot the victim while speaking to the victim on the phone. The police advised them to separate and the victim was offered counseling services.

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**"Witness intimidation is the one crime in which only unsuccessful attempts are ever reported or discovered. When the crime of intimidating domestic violence victims and witnesses is successful, victims and witnesses don't call 911, don't go to court, and don't use services; the domestic violence in their lives stays hidden."**

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Rhonda Martinson, National  
Domestic Violence Fatality Review

Eight months before the homicide, the perpetrator was charged with simple assault. The perpetrator strangled the victim after learning she had called a divorce attorney. While the victim officially filed for divorce only days later, the simple assault charge was eventually dismissed when she did not appear in court. Since this incident, laws have been created to increase the severity of charges related to strangulation based upon the increased lethality risk of strangulation victims. Unfortunately, those laws were not in place at the time of this case.

### Leaving the Perpetrator

While the victim did not appear in court on the strangulation assault, two months after that case was dismissed the victim called her mother and told her that she wanted to leave the perpetrator for good. She stayed with her mother for the last three weeks of her life.

The victim expressed that leaving was like a "huge weight was lifted." The victim's mother described the victim as happier, feeling free for the first time in years, and even looking for her own place. Despite these positive feelings, the victim remained cautious. The divorce was almost final and the perpetrator had made threats to kill her. Because of these safety concerns, the victim parked her car in the garage, drove a different car anytime she went out, and ignored all calls from the perpetrator. The day before the murder, the perpetrator called her repeatedly.

### The Murder-Suicide

On the day of her murder, the victim left for work smiling and telling her mother not to worry. She arrived before 7AM to open the office, and settled behind the reception desk to eat her breakfast. Minutes later the perpetrator entered the victim's place of work and shot her five times before fleeing. Close to 7AM, a client came into the office and not seeing anyone at the reception desk took a seat in the waiting room. Shortly after 7AM, the victim's employer arrived and noticed the victim's uneaten breakfast, walked around the desk, and found the victim's body on the floor with five fatal gunshot wounds.

Immediately after the murder, the perpetrator went to the victim's mother's house, possibly to try and secure her vehicle's title. According to the victim's family and police reports, after killing the victim, the perpetrator contacted someone about selling a vehicle. After that the perpetrator left Tennessee, and police reports say he spent a few hours gambling. At 3PM that same day, while driving, the perpetrator hit another car head on and fled the scene. Police caught up with him about a mile away from the crash site. The perpetrator shot himself in his vehicle as law enforcement approached.

## Power & Control

The Team identified the perpetrator's use of many power and control elements as outlined in the Duluth Model's Power & Control Wheel. This wheel was created using the input and experiences of victims to illustrate the types of control and abuse that they experienced most often, revealing common tactics and manipulations by perpetrators present among the victims' stories. You can view a copy of the wheel on page 45. The following pages describe specific Duluth Model power and control behaviors the perpetrator inflicted against this victim.

### Intimidation

- Witnesses described the perpetrator hitting or hurting their shared pets as a punishment for the victim.
- The perpetrator had an extensive history of threatening the victim with physical harm or death, often using weapons in these threats.

### Emotional Abuse

- There were repeated incidents of the perpetrator refusing to let the victim eat or letting her eat only salads. He "didn't want her to eat much" because she might "gain weight." As a result, the victim would eat "big meals" at work.
- The perpetrator often bought the victim lavish presents only to take them away and sometimes even sell them as a form of "punishment". This included her wedding rings.
- The perpetrator used manipulative apologies in the aftermath of violence in order to keep the victim from leaving.
- The perpetrator often called the victim cruel and demeaning names and put her down. In one reported incident the perpetrator exposed himself to the victim while calling her vulgar names and preventing her from leaving their home.

### Isolation

- She was described as being kept "in captivity" and any friends they did have contact with were "his choice."
- The perpetrator would take away the victim's purse, phones, and keys in order to keep her from leaving.
- The perpetrator "hated" the victim's mother and "didn't like it when they talked."
- The victim was alienated from her friends. She was fearful of what would happen if the perpetrator found out she reached out to them.

### Minimizing, Denying, Blaming

- The perpetrator used excuses and apologies to deflect from his actions, often blaming his violence on "drinking too much."
- The perpetrator was charming to outsiders and typically treated the victim very well in public, changing behind closed doors.

### Using Children

- The perpetrator often threatened to kill one of the victim's adult daughters as a way to control the victim.
- The perpetrator would isolate himself whenever the victim's adult children were around, and refused to interact even with his own adult daughter, to the point that the victim stopped inviting her to visit.

### Economic Abuse

- The perpetrator would often sell the victim's property, including her car, securing the title in his name by threatening her with a gun.
- The victim was forced to miss large amounts of work due to the abuse she experienced, resulting in lost wages. A witness reported that the victim was fired from a job early in the marriage after the perpetrator fraudulently took money from the victim's employer.
- The perpetrator accumulated debt in the victim's name resulting in her wages being garnished.
- There were multiple civil judgments against the victim and perpetrator during their marriage and they both declared bankruptcy.



### Coercion and Threats

- The perpetrator poured gasoline on the victim at least once, and threatened to set her on fire on another occasion.
- The perpetrator made multiple threats against the victim with firearms.
- The perpetrator threatened to kill the victim's mother and other family members to prevent her from leaving or communicating with them.
- The perpetrator threatened to kill the victim and himself.

### Lethality Assessment Program (LAP)

The LAP is a lethality screening tool for intimate partner violence victims recognized by the U.S. Department of Justice as a "promising practice" in intimate partner homicide prevention. The LAP in Nashville began in late 2016, and was not in place at the time of this homicide. The Metro Nashville Police Department (MNPd) currently administers the LAP screening on every intimate partner violence case it responds to.

Victims who screen in as high risk are immediately connected with a YWCA hotline crisis counselor. Depending on their level of risk, LAP cases may also be reviewed by Metro's High Risk Intervention Panel (HRIP), a multidisciplinary team.

By allowing officers to learn about prior, potentially lethal, incidents the LAP gives police an evidence-based tool to evaluate the victim's future danger and to encourage them to access resources. In 2017 there were 7,399 total LAP forms collected. Of those cases, 52 percent were labeled high risk. This is an average of 20 LAP screenings per day.

The following are the eleven questions asked on the assessment to determine lethality risk. A "Yes" answer to questions 1, 2, or 3 is an automatic "high risk" designation. Even with "No" responses to Questions #1-3, a "Yes" to at least four of the remaining questions creates a "high risk" designation.

The Team determined that if the LAP had been in place at the time of the homicide, the victim would have answered "yes" to all the statements highlighted in purple below.

- 1. Has he ever used a weapon against you or threatened you with a weapon?**
- 2. Has he threatened to kill you or your children?**
- 3. Do you think he might try to kill you?**
- 4. Does he have a gun or can he/she get one easily?**
- 5. Has he ever tried to choke you?**
- 6. Is he violently or constantly jealous or does he/she control most of your daily activities?**
- 7. Have you left him or separated after living together or being married?**
8. Is he unemployed?
9. Has he ever tried to kill himself/herself?
- 10. Do you have a child that he knows is not his/hers?**
- 11. Does he follow or spy on you or leave threatening messages?**

Given these answers, this victim would have clearly been designated as "high risk" by law enforcement and been encouraged to speak at the scene with a YWCA crisis counselor, as well as having her case referred to Nashville's High Risk Intervention Panel (HRIP). Although neither the LAP nor HRIP had been implemented when this murder took place, this gives us an important glimpse into not only the risk factors the victim experienced, but also the ways in which policies have changed and programs have been adopted in Nashville to prevent cases like this one from escalating to murder.

## Lethality Indicators

A second risk assessment tool utilized by advocates today, but not at the time of this victim's death, is the Jacquelyn Campbell Danger Assessment. This more detailed assessment tool lists common factors often present in fatal or near fatal domestic violence incidents of intimate partner violence. The Team determined that if the Jacquelyn Campbell Danger Assessment had been in place, the victim would have answered "yes" to all the statements highlighted in purple below.

- **Use of a weapon in the most recent event by the perpetrator\***
- **Escalation- increase in severity and/or frequency of violence by the perpetrator\***
- **Perpetrator has harmed or threatened to harm the victim\***
- Sexual assault of the victim\*
- **Perpetrator has ever tried to choke (strangle) the victim\***
- **Perpetrator has ever threatened to kill the victim\***
- Stalking of the victim by the perpetrator\*
- **Obsessive/jealous behavior toward the victim\***
- **Recent separation\***
- Perpetrator has ever threatened to harm or kill children\*
- **Perpetrator has ever harmed or threatened to harm or kill pets or other animals\***
- **Perpetrator has ever harmed or threatened to harm or kill other family members**
- **Isolation**
- **Controlling behaviors**
- **Perpetrator has access to weapons\***
- **Perpetrator has ever threatened or tried to commit suicide\***
- Perpetrator has depression or other mental health issue\*
- **Perpetrator drug/alcohol misuse/abuse\***
- Perpetrator is unemployed
- **Financial difficulties**
- Perpetrator has breached court orders
- Perpetrator is currently on bail or parole in relation to violent offenses
- Perpetrator has history of violent behavior beyond domestic violence
- The perpetrator's family poses a risk to the victim
- Victim pregnancy/new birth
- Victim attacked while holding a child
- Children present in the home
- Children from previous relationship in household
- Child contact or residency (custody) issues

\*Starred factors indicate the highest lethality indicators.

# Findings & Recommendations

Nashville's Domestic Abuse Death Review Team (DADRT) identified three Priority Findings during their 2017 case review. The Priority Findings are:

1. Murder-Suicide
2. Firearms Access
3. Workplace Violence

The Team has also made five additional findings to improve victim safety in Nashville.

Recommendations are made under each finding and assigned to a variety of agencies and organizations in Nashville, both within and outside of the Metro government.

**Throughout the next sections you will find the following color-coded labels to identify what progress has already been made on each recommendation:**

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

# A Note on Existing Resources

It is important to note that at the time of this incident there were several domestic violence response systems not yet in place. The following programs are currently active but were not in place at the time of the murder:

- **Office of Family Safety's Jean Crowe Advocacy Center (JCAC)** is a court-based Family Justice Center that provides court advocacy, safety planning, and needs and danger assessments for individuals with court cases and/or seeking orders of protection (established in September 2014).
- **Lethality Assessment Program (LAP)** screen is administered by law enforcement to all victims of intimate partner violence who call for law enforcement assistance. Victims that screen in as high risk are connected on-scene with the YWCA's crisis hotline (implemented December 2016).
- **High Risk Intervention Panel (HRIP)** reviews the highest risk domestic violence cases to improve coordination between agencies and ensure victim safety and offender accountability (established in 2012).
- **District Attorney's Domestic Violence Unit** is a specialized unit that exclusively prosecutes domestic violence cases (reestablished in 2012).
- **District Attorney's Office Early Intervention Meetings (EIM)** are meetings scheduled with DAs, Victim Witness Coordinators (VWCs), and the victim ahead of a court date to reduce attrition in victim case involvement. DAs and VWCs contact domestic violence victims with 48 hours of an incident. . (Implemented in January 2016).
- **Office of Family Safety's Civil-Legal Advocacy Program** is a collaboration between the Metro Nashville Office of Family Safety and the Legal Aid Society to provide free civil legal representation to high risk victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking who file Orders of Protection (began in December 2015).
- **Training on Strangulation & Trauma for MNPD Officers** was provided through in-person training from a national expert on strangulation and a video training on how trauma affects victims of domestic violence (occurred in 2016).
- **Nashville Family Safety Center (FSC)** Nashville's community-based Family Safety Center, located at the intersection of Murfreesboro Road and Foster Avenue, is scheduled to be completed in January 2019. Walk-in clients will be able to identify what services they are seeking, sit down with an advocate for a brief screening process and risk assessment, and then proceed into the building to meet with staff from various partner agencies on an as-needed basis. The FSC is designed to make service provision for clients as seamless as possible, serving as a "one stop shop" for clients to meet a number of needs in one safe, centrally-located building. The co-located model encourages robust agency relationships in an effort to reduce delays and confusion for clients around inter-agency referrals.



For more information on the new Family Safety Center, email [FSCINFO@jjs.nashville.org](mailto:FSCINFO@jjs.nashville.org).

*A rendering of the front of the new Family Safety Center.*

# Priority Finding 1: Murder–Suicide

**Priority Finding 1: Suicide risk factors such as suicidal ideation or threats of suicide by the perpetrator were not identified or used to assess this victim's level of risk.**

## THE IMPACT

The number of domestic abuse related murder-suicides in Nashville and Davidson County jumped from zero in 2016 to seven in 2017. This was a red flag to the Team as it reviewed this case and the Team could see a similar trend arising in surrounding Tennessee counties as well. A study by the Violence Policy Center on murder-suicides in the United States placed Tennessee among the top ten states with the highest murder-suicide rates, with 11 incidents in the first half of 2017 alone, resulting in 24 deaths.[1]

## Murder-Suicide Nationally

Murder-suicides are estimated to be the cause of between 1,000 and 1,500 deaths annually. A 2015 study estimated 11 murder-suicides per week in the United States, with 72% of all murder-suicides involving intimate partners. Ninety three percent of murder-suicide victims were female. The majority of murder-suicides occur within the home and commonly take place in the bedroom. Murder-suicide perpetrators are overwhelmingly male, with 11% being female. According to one study, 30% of men who have killed their partners go on to kill themselves.[2] Most murder-suicides occur during or after a failed reconciliation attempt by the offender.[3] Prior domestic violence and prior threats of suicide are the two greatest risk factors in domestic violence cases.[4]

## Suicide and Domestic Violence

Men with a history of threatened or attempted suicide have been shown to be more violent during battering incidents and to perpetrate a greater severity of domestic violence overall.[5] Victims of domestic violence have an increased risk of attempting or completing suicide[6], with as many as 23% of survivors having attempted suicide compared to 3% among populations with no prior domestic abuse exposure. One in five adult female victims of domestic violence have threatened or attempted suicide.[7] Additionally, according to the CDC, one in 10 American men experience physical violence, rape or stalking by an intimate partner and these male victims are also at increased risk for suicide.[8] Furthermore, abusers often use threats of suicide as a means of gaining or maintaining control over their victims. Many abusers threaten suicide if their victim leaves them, or use these threats as a tool of emotional manipulation to avoid accountability for the abuse they perpetrate.[9] While these are power and control tactics, Richard McKeon, PhD, Chief of the Suicide Prevention Branch at the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) warns that, “such threats indicate a genuine risk of harm to both perpetrators and their victims.”[10]

## Suicide in Tennessee

In 2016, suicide claimed more lives in Tennessee than motor vehicle accidents and is among the top ten causes of death in every age group aged ten and above. Tennessee ranks 22nd in the nation for rates of suicide, a problem that seems to be only increasing with time. The number of suicide deaths in Tennessee has steadily risen since 1981. In fact, Tennessee's suicide rate for 2016 was the highest it's been in the past 35 years.[11] Nearly 10% of Tennessee suicides in 2016 occurred in Davidson County.[12]

## Suicide and Firearms

Access to lethal means, particularly firearms, and threats with a weapon are significant risk factors for both suicide and murder-suicide.[13] The Violence Policy Center and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) both recommend reducing access to firearms for people who have been convicted of a crime related to intimate partner violence, or who have an Order of Protection against them, as a means of reducing the risk of intimate partner homicide and murder-suicide.[14] Despite Tennessee having such laws in place, this perpetrator was not dispossessed of a weapon either time he was placed on probation after two separate convictions of domestic assault against the victim. Mentions of firearms were present in two assault incident reports against the perpetrator: one where the victim said she “was afraid the perpetrator would shoot her because he had guns” and another where the perpetrator threatened the victim with a shotgun saying she was “going to die



# Priority Finding 1: Murder–Suicide

today. I don't have anything to lose. I'll kill you and then myself." The incident with the shot gun resulted in the perpetrator's second domestic assault conviction and probation where he was ordered to surrender all firearms. No firearms were ever turned in by the perpetrator and official paperwork to declare or deny ownership of a firearm was not provided by the perpetrator.

## CASE FACTS RELATED TO THIS FINDING

The following are suicidal behaviors\* exhibited by the Perpetrator:

- **Access to means (firearms):** The victim identified both during police reports and in two of the four Orders of Protection she filed that the perpetrator possessed firearms.
- **Loss of close attachment/relationship (divorce):** The victim filed for divorce nine months before the murder-suicide and took action to finalize the divorce less than three weeks before.
- **Financial loss/economic instability:** The perpetrator had a history of financial judgements, fraud, bankruptcy and other financial crimes and difficulties both before and throughout their marriage.
- **Relational or social loss/humiliation (divorce/separation):** The victim filed for divorce and the perpetrator knew that the victim's family was aware of the abuse he perpetrated against her.
- **Alcohol abuse:** The perpetrator was reported to have been drinking during several incidents of assault against the victim. As part of his probation in 2009 he was ordered to submit to alcohol treatment.
- **Aggressive tendencies and/or history of violent behavior:** The perpetrator was twice convicted of domestic assault against the victim, with seven total police reports and two Matters of Record filed regarding violent assaults by the perpetrator.

\*Based on risk factors associated with an increased occurrence of suicidal behavior identified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network (TSPN).

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**Most murder–suicides occur during or after a failed reconciliation attempt by the offender. Prior domestic violence and prior threats of suicide are the two greatest risk factors in domestic violence cases.**

American Roulette: Murder–Suicide in the United States, Violence Policy Center, 2015  
Bernie Auchter, Men Who Murder Their Families: What the Research Tells Us, NIJ Journal 266, 2010

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## Prevention

The Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network suggests that, although there is a need for additional research on murder-suicide, increasing established suicide prevention efforts are among the best strategies we have to help begin reducing the rate of murder-suicides.

Research cited by the CDC in its most recent report on intimate-partner violence suggests that suicide prevention programs may have the added benefit of reducing domestic violence. Evaluations of an Air Force-based suicide prevention program "showed a 30 percent reduction in moderate family violence (exposure to repeated instances of emotionally abusive behavior, neglect, or physical or sexual abuse) and a 54 percent reduction in severe family violence," the CDC report found. "The program also significantly lowered rates of suicide." [15]

# Priority Finding 1: Murder–Suicide

**RECOMMENDATION A-1:** Improve the identification of suicidal indicators for those serving and responding to domestic violence victims and perpetrators.

**-Training and Outreach:**

- Partner with TSPN & MDH to include information on suicide and murder-suicide as a part of regular community suicide and domestic violence education and provide specialized community training and outreach events on the intersection of suicide and domestic violence
- Batterer's Intervention Program staff should attend the suicide prevention training programs Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) or Counseling on Access to Lethal Means (CALM).
- Domestic violence victim services professionals should attend, at minimum, the suicide prevention training program QPR as part of their staff orientation.
- Law Enforcement personnel should attend Mental Health First Aid and QPR training as part of their initial academy training requirements.

**-Print Resources:**

- Work with TSPN to create a specialized brochure outlining the intersections of suicide and intimate partner violence, which includes murder-suicide.
- TSPN can provide posters, brochures, and other print resources to any interested agencies including providing specialized resources on firearms and suicide to certified gun shops and dealers.

**-Collaborate with TSPN's Gun Safety Project (for more, see recommendations regarding firearms on page 19)**

**Success:** In response to newly released data showing that three Nashvillians die by suicide every week, Mayor David Briley has announced a partnership with the Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network (TSPN) to offer suicide prevention training, QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) for all Metro employees in an effort to help identify and provide assistance to persons in crisis.

**Success:** OFS is currently collaborating with both TSPN & MDH to create awareness and education events highlighting the intersections of suicide and DV.

**RECOMMENDATION A-2:** For the DADRT to consistently collect and report local information relating to murder-suicides to improve prevention efforts.

- DADRT to track and report the number of murder-suicides in Davidson County
- DADRT and the Office of Family Safety to collect state-wide information on murder-suicides, looking for trends and risk factors
- DADRT and the Office of Family Safety to share data and findings with the Mayor, Family Justice Center Partners and the State's Office of Criminal Justice Planning.

**Success:** Metro OFS is now tracking murder-suicide incidents across the state and is leading the State's project to create a statewide fatality review team that will gather data on domestic violence fatality, including murder-suicides, from across Tennessee.

*OFS consulted with Joanne Perley, MPH, Director of Statewide Initiatives & Development with the Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network and Simone Sibley of the Metro Nashville Public Health Department on this finding.*

# Priority Finding 2: Firearms Access

## Priority Finding 2: The perpetrator was a convicted felon and should not have possessed a firearm under federal law.

### IMPACT

One in seven unlawful gun buyers who are prevented from purchasing a firearm by a federal background check is a domestic abuser.[16] States that prohibit individuals subject to DV-related restraining orders from possessing firearms, and also require firearm dispossession, are associated with a 10% lower rate of total intimate partner homicide and a 14% lower rate of intimate partner firearm homicide.[17]

### Firearms & Victim Risk

The presence of a gun in a domestic violence situation increases a woman's risk of being killed by five times.[18] On average, 50 American women are shot to death by intimate partners each month, and many more are injured.[19] Nearly 1 million women alive today have been shot, or shot at, by an intimate partner.[20] More than 60% of the domestic violence homicides in Davidson County in 2017 were perpetrated with a firearm. Nearly half of all DV homicides in Davidson County from 2012-2017 were committed with firearms.

### Firearms & Officer Risk

In addition to the increased risk firearms pose for victims, domestic violence calls are among the most dangerous crimes for police to respond to. A report from the U.S. Department of Justice and the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund examined officer deaths in the line of duty from 2010 through 2014 and found that domestic dispute calls led to more fatalities than any other kind of call. In all but one of the cases, the responding officers were killed with a firearm.[21]

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**The vast majority, 93%, of murder-suicides involve some type of firearm and 19% involve a handgun.**

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American Roulette: Murder-Suicide in the United States, Violence Policy Center, 2015

### CASE FACTS RELATED TO THIS FINDING

*The following highlights why the perpetrator should not have possessed a weapon:*

Three of the Orders of Protection filed by the victim during her marriage to the perpetrator indicated that the perpetrator owned a firearm. Each of these Orders of Protection were dismissed when the victim failed to appear in court. During the fifth violent incident that was reported to the police, the perpetrator used a shotgun to threaten the victim and was charged with Aggravated Assault, a Class C Felony. The perpetrator pled guilty to a lesser charge of Domestic Assault (a Class A Misdemeanor) and was placed on probation for eleven months and twenty nine days. Due to this conviction, the perpetrator was prohibited from possessing any type of firearm by federal law. The language on the perpetrator's probation order was as follows:

"Standard Conviction: It is a federal offense for a person convicted of domestic violence to purchase or possess a firearm. From the moment of conviction of such an offense, you will never again be able to lawfully possess or buy a firearm of any kind." [22]

However, in spite of this provision, and the fact that a firearm was used in the offense he was convicted for, the probation paperwork listed that there were no weapons to be surrendered by the perpetrator. There was no sworn affidavit completed by the perpetrator swearing he no longer possessed a firearm. Because of the time that has passed since this conviction, we have no way of knowing exactly what the offender told his probation officer about his possession of a weapon, but this type of trust in the word of an offender is common across the state and fatally flawed. Only three years later, the perpetrator used a firearm in this murder-suicide. It is unclear whether the gun used in the murder-suicide was one the perpetrator previously owned or one that he purchased later. Either scenario should have been prevented based on the perpetrator's domestic violence conviction.

# Priority Finding 2: Firearms Access



47%

Percentage of Nashville DV homicides from 2012-2017 in which firearms were used.



63%

Percentage of Nashville DV homicides in 2017 in which firearms were used.



30%

Nashville DV homicides in 2017 where firearms were used despite the perpetrator's previous DV/Felony conviction.



10%

Nashville DV homicides in 2017 where firearms were used by an underage perpetrator.

## **RECOMMENDATION B-1: Metro courts must follow the current laws on firearms dispossession to the fullest extent. Legislation to close safety gaps in the current law is needed.**

- A process needs to be in place to ensure that perpetrators who are not allowed to possess a firearm complete and file the necessary firearm dispossession forms.
- When there is a history of firearm possession and/or threats with a firearm, courts need to pursue the truth of firearm possession rather than trusting the perpetrators word.
- The option for perpetrators to dispossess their firearm to a third party (e.g. family member or friend) is riddled with risk that the firearm will be returned to the perpetrator and needs to be eliminated.
- If the third party option for dispossession cannot be eliminated legislatively, Courts should require the third party to swear under oath that the firearm has been dispossessed to them and make that third party aware of the legal consequences of returning that firearm.
- A clear process for dispossession to a certified firearm dealer needs to be created.
- A clear process for dispossession to law enforcement and a process for storage, disposal or return needs to be created.
- A process needs to be in place to identify all domestic violence criminal cases and Orders of Protection where firearms were used or are owned by the defendant/respondent for purposes of actions relating to dispossession.
- Upon conviction or granting of an OP, courts should ensure that all defendants/respondents are informed that they are no longer allowed to possess a firearm and are questioned under oath about whether they own a firearm. Courts should include victims where appropriate to provide their knowledge of perpetrator's firearm possession and access.
- Courts should hold offenders accountable when they fail to comply with dispossession laws.
- Implement a model dispossession procedures in Nashville-Davidson County in order to evaluate these procedures in preparation for state-wide roll-out.
- Provide appropriate funding for Metro staff responsible for identifying firearms cases, processing dispossession paperwork, facilitating return dockets, and other tasks outlined above.

**Success:** Metro's Office of Family Safety has coordinated a multi-disciplinary domestic violence and firearms task force that has researched best practices on dispossession and created a draft dispossession protocol for all relevant agencies.

## **RECOMMENDATION B-2: Increase awareness around the connection between firearm possession, domestic violence homicides and suicide.**

- Firearm safety and handgun carry classes should mention both domestic violence and suicide as part of their curricula.
- Partner with Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network's Gun Safety Project to provide training for gun store and firing range owners on suicide and domestic violence red flags and prevention. Ensure gun store and firing range owners are displaying and distributing suicide and domestic violence prevention materials.

# Priority Finding 3: Workplace Violence

**Priority Finding 3: The victim was murdered at her place of work where a lack of workplace policies and training on domestic violence failed to support the victim and increased her risk.**

## IMPACT

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, while only about 7% of workplace homicides are identified as being related to domestic violence, more than 40% of women killed in the workplace are killed by a relative or domestic partner.[23] A study reported that 64% of domestic violence victims have had their ability to work impacted by the violence they experienced.[24] Up to 60% of victims have lost their jobs entirely, either by being forced to quit or by being fired due to the abuse.[25, 26] The Department of Labor reports that victims of domestic violence lose nearly 8 million days of paid work per year in the US. This is the equivalent of 32,114 full-time jobs each year and results in a \$1.8 billion loss for employers and about \$52,000 in lost wages for the individual victim.[27, 28]

According to the Journal of Management and Marketing Research, “Domestic violence can no longer be considered by businesses as a ‘private’ issue that is of little or no concern to employers with no impact on the workplace...it is clear that domestic violence is a major public health problem in the United States and a serious workplace issue that employers cannot afford to ignore.”[29] The American Bar Association’s Commission on Domestic and Sexual Violence agrees, “looking at [domestic violence] from a business perspective, employers have financial, in addition to ethical and legal, incentives to proactively address the needs of employee-victims and employee-perpetrators.” [30] Yet 65% of companies don’t have a formal workplace domestic violence prevention policy and only 20 percent offer any training for staff on domestic violence, according to research conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management.[31]

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**According to the Tennessee Economic Council on Women’s 2012 report, the economic cost of domestic violence in Tennessee is equivalent to a full year of salary for 20,608 Tennessee residents.**

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## CASE FACTS RELATED TO THIS FINDING

As is common in cases of domestic violence, the victim found herself receiving both support and blame from her place of employment. Although there were many sincere offers of support, fear and frustration towards the victim were also expressed, possibly leaving her feeling guilty and worried about the safety of her peers and fears of being let go. Given the location of this murder, both the victim and the employer had real cause for concern. If her employer had been provided with workplace domestic violence education, the victim may have received resources and referrals to more formal services.

**RECOMMENDATION C-1: Provide education and outreach on domestic violence in the workplace to interested organizations in Nashville in order to equip employees and employers with the knowledge and resources necessary to access services for themselves or provide help to their coworkers/employees.**

- Provide domestic violence education and resource training for all Metro employees.
- Share and make easily accessible domestic violence policies and curriculum with other Nashville employers.

**Success:** Mayor David Briley approved a comprehensive policy in October 2018 to address and prevent domestic violence inside Metro Government and for the City’s workforce. The policy will help Metro employees better identify and support domestic violence victims in the workplace and provide vital work accommodations to these staff members while they obtain supportive services. The Metro Office of Family Safety created an HR-approved domestic violence training curriculum for all Metro employees and supervisors as part of this policy.



# Additional Finding: Separation

**Finding: The victim was murdered after separating from the perpetrator. The risk of domestic violence homicide is at its peak during periods of separation.**

## IMPACT

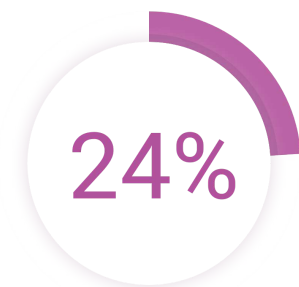
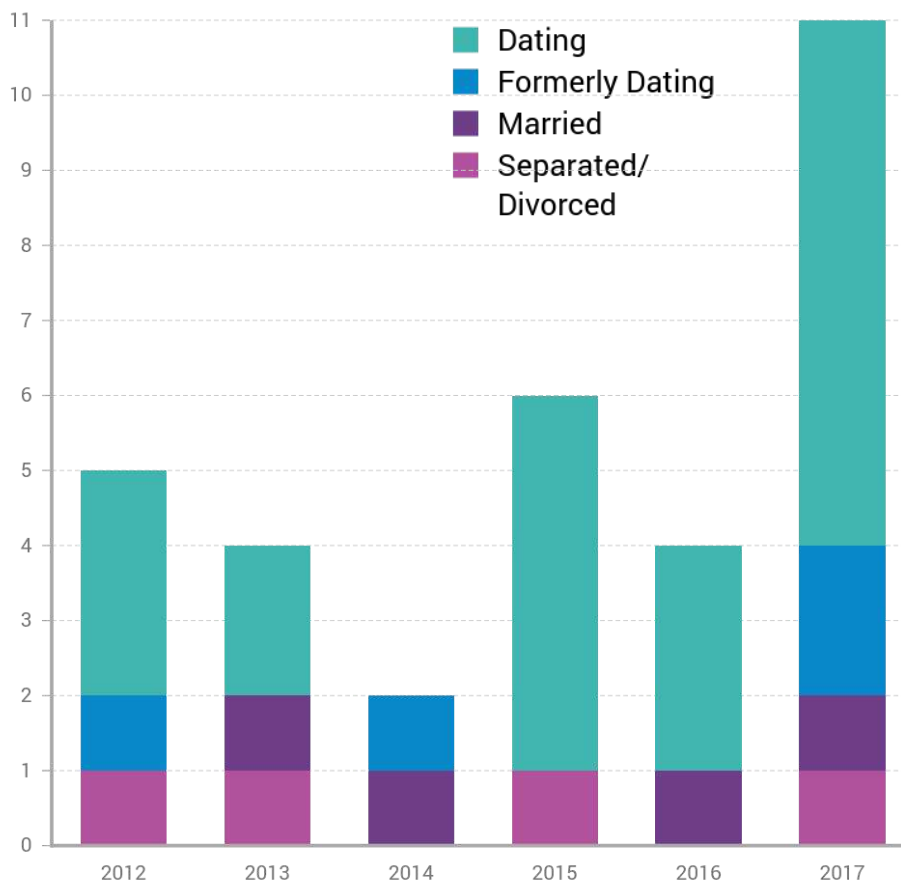
Although victims may stay in violent relationships for a variety of reasons, many stay due to threats or fear that the violence will escalate upon leaving.[32] This fear is not baseless. Studies suggest that separating from an abusive partner is the factor with the strongest effect on women's risk of experiencing intimate partner violence.[33] Additionally, there are other, often-overlooked, risks that victims face when they separate from a violent partner, including but not limited to mental and physical health problems, increased concern for child safety, and economic, structural, and social barriers to help-seeking.[34] Research has shown the risk of domestic violence homicide is at its peak during periods of separation. [35]

## CASE FACTS RELATED TO THIS FINDING

The following highlights this victim's increased risk when separating from the perpetrator:

A review of the relationship timeline shows that the victim physically separated from her perpetrator just 13 days prior to the murder, and that their divorce was almost finalized. According to the victim's family, the victim also disclosed to her divorce attorney her fear of the perpetrator. Noteworthy, this perpetrator also made threats to kill the victim to her attorney.

## Relationship Status of Nashville Intimate Partner Homicide Victims & Perpetrators



Percentage of victims and perpetrators who were separated or divorced at the time of the murder. (Nashville 2012-2017)

# Additional Finding: Separation

## **RECOMMENDATION D-1: Increased training of Family Practice attorneys on domestic violence, high risk indicators, and referral resources.**

- At the time of divorce filing, provide the victim with written information on domestic violence and local resources.
- The Tennessee Bar Association should mandate Continuing Legal Education opportunities for Family Practice attorneys that include recognizing the warning signs of domestic violence, recognizing risk and protective factors in their clients, safety planning, and appropriate resource referrals.
- Post domestic violence information on the bathroom stall doors of the courthouse on the floor where divorce proceedings are handled as well as places visible to attorneys such as clerk's offices and work areas outside of the courtrooms.

## **RECOMMENDATION D-2: Ensure that domestic violence education includes sufficient information on the victims' experience and risk when leaving a domestic violence situation.**

- Service providers and other professionals should be open and transparent with victims about the risks they face leaving violent relationships, particularly when encouraging separation. Separation can be an important strategy for victim safety, but victims cannot appropriately plan for safety in separation without a complete description of their potential risk.
- Advocacy and safety planning with victims who are leaving their perpetrator should include resources and strategies to address risks not directly generated by the perpetrator, such as child custody, economic anxiety, and mental health. This can help limit or prevent opportunities for the perpetrator to have access to, or contact with, the victim and lessen the likelihood of the victim returning to the relationship.
- Community education on domestic violence should include discussion of barriers survivors encounter when leaving an abusive relationship as well as emphasis on the increased risk survivors face post-separation.

**Success:** The Tennessee Domestic Violence Shelter Best Practices Manual includes information and tools for safety planning in scenarios where victims are leaving their abusers. The manual can be accessed at <https://www.tncoalition.org/tn-state-shelter-manual>.

# Additional Finding: Animal Abuse

**Finding: Lack of resources for animals potentially increased the victim's homicide risk by delaying her leaving or preventing her from seeking services.**

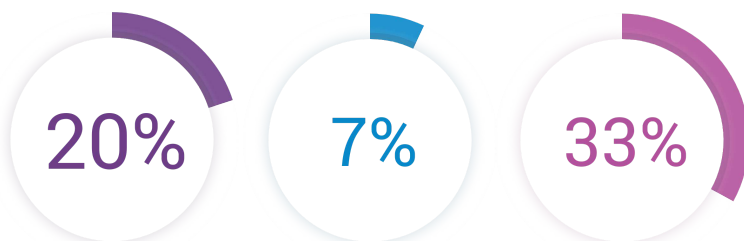
## IMPACT

According to the Humane Society of the United States, 13% of all reported cases of intentional animal abuse involved domestic violence. Up to 50% of victims who delay leaving their abusers report doing so, at least in part, out of fear for the safety of their animals. Many victims never try to leave at all for this reason. [36] The use or threat of violence against family pets is a common part of the dynamic of domestic violence. [37] Although Tennessee includes pets in Order of Protection petitions, there is still a significant gap in services to transport, house, and care for the pets of victims seeking shelter. The YWCA shelter in Nashville works to help house pets belonging to their shelter residents with foster families, and they are actively working to strengthen their animal program to include on-site housing for animals at the shelter. However, there is little assistance available for victims with pets who do not enter shelter, and fostering is limited.

## CASE FACTS RELATED TO THIS FINDING

It was reported to the Team that the perpetrator may have abused their family pets when angry, privately and in the open. One witness reported that the perpetrator shot and killed another dog that was in a fight with one of his dogs. Prior to her murder it is clear that the victim was becoming increasingly concerned for the safety of her dogs. In the victim's final Order of Protection she included a request for custody of the animals. Shortly before the murder, when working to finalize her divorce from the perpetrator, the victim told her attorney, "she only wanted her car and the dogs."

## Nashville Intimate Partner Homicide Victims' Orders of Protection 2012-2017



- **Twenty percent** of Nashville's Intimate Partner homicide victims filed for an Order of Protection against their perpetrator.

- Only **seven percent** of the Orders were granted.

- **Thirty-three percent** of perpetrators also had Orders of Protection against them from another victim at one time.

- Team members believe that the normalization of violence in these prior relationships may have contributed to the rapid escalation to deadly violence in these cases. This is a troubling dynamic the Team has designated a **"relational risk transfer."** The Team continues to gather data regarding this trend.

## Orders of Protection & Animals:

Under Tennessee's Domestic Abuse Act, "abuse" includes inflicting, or attempting to inflict, physical injury on any animal owned by an adult or minor. Section 606(9) allows the court to assign the care of the animal. Further, in no instance shall the animal be placed in the care of the perpetrator, but shall instead be placed in the care of the victim or in an appropriate animal foster situation.

*T. C. A. § 36-3-601*

**The Red Rover Grant, PetSmart Charities, Petco Foundation, The Bissell Pet Foundation, and the ASPCA all offer various grants that can assist with shelter pet programs.**

# Additional Finding: Animal Abuse

## **RECOMMENDATION E-1: Ensure community advocates provide safety planning and needs assessment with survivors including resources, strategies, and information regarding animal safety.**

- Ensure advocates are trained to ask about pets during their first contact with a survivor to ensure a full and complete picture of the survivor's potential need.
- Train service providers to include strategies for pet safety in their needs assessment and safety planning with survivors.
- Encourage shelters to have strategies in place to accommodate victims with pets including fostering, temporary boarding, and emergency financial assistance.
- Provide specialized training on the intersections of animal abuse and domestic violence for staff of Metro Animal Care & Control.

**Success:** OFS has provided training to Metro Animal Control staff in the past and is collaborating with Metro Animal Care & Control to continue this training on a recurring basis.

**Success:** Jean Crowe Advocacy Center staff are trained to ask victims about their pets when helping with Orders of Protection and Safety Planning.

**Success:** OFS is working with the University of Tennessee's Middle Tennessee H.A.B.I.T. Program to include the presence of certified support animals at the Family Safety Center to provide support to clients and prompt the discussion of pet well-being with victims.

## **RECOMMENDATION E-2: Partner with the University of Tennessee Veterinary Social Work program to identify a technical assistance provider to help shelters and other victim service agencies create or strengthen animal programs.**

A technical assistance provider working on this issue would provide:

- Training and education to victim services staff on the links between animal abuse and domestic violence, the barriers to safety caused by a lack of animal safety and housing options, and best practices in creating pet/animal programs within these agencies;
- Strategies and resources for creating safe and appropriate spaces for animals within victim service facilities;
- Strategies and opportunities to secure funding for supplies, facilities, vet care, etc;
- Strategies for housing or finding resources for non-traditional pets;
- Strategies for the transportation of pets to or between shelters or other locations survivors have identified to flee their abusers;
- Strategies for cultivating outside community support networks including vet care, fostering, animal training, supply acquisition, etc;
- Assistance in crafting policies and procedures to formalize the agency's animal program;
- Cultivate a state-wide resource list of pet friendly shelters, fostering, transportation assistance, financial assistance, etc. to form a state-wide net of resources that survivors, family members, and victim service providers can tap into.

*OFS consulted with Dr. Bethanie Poe, LMSW, Middle Tennessee H.A.B.I.T Coordinator with the University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine and Veterinary Social Work Programs, as well as Susan Baker, Animal Control Officer Supervisor with the Metro Nashville Office of Animal Care & Control on this finding.*

# Additional Finding: Economic Abuse

## Finding: A history of financial crime & coerced debt created barriers to the victim's safety.

### IMPACT

More than 90% of domestic violence survivors have reported experiencing some type of economic abuse as part of their victimization. [38]

“Coerced debt wreaks havoc on credit scores, which is particularly problematic because the use of credit reports is no longer confined to traditional lenders. Employers, landlords, and utility companies all make extensive use of credit scores when screening potential customers.”

Angela Littwin, Assistant Professor at the University of Texas School of Law

### CASE FACTS RELATED TO THIS FINDING

**Financial Exploitation-** occurs when abusers use their victims to generate financial resources which perpetrator has sole possession and control of. This includes coerced debt and identity theft, things which can occur or continue even after separation or divorce. *During this case the perpetrator used a pattern of financial exploitation to create debt in the victim's name.*

**Financial Control-** occurs when the perpetrator has complete control of financial matters within the relationships. *In this case, financial control manifested in the perpetrator taking the victim's possessions to sell or pawn.* Financial control can also include the acts of stealing, damaging, or destroying the victim's property, or spending household money on things like gambling or drugs.

**Financial Sabotage-** involves abusers doing things to prevent the victim from securing employment or increasing their income, such as preventing the victim from holding a job, or engaging in behaviors that cause the victim to be fired from their job. Financial sabotage may also include causing the victim to default on payments or causing housing evictions. *In this case, the perpetrator systematically ruined the victim's credit through coerced debt, caused the victim to lose wages and threatened her job due to missed work as a result of his violence.*

See the Timeline of Economic Abuse on the next page for more case facts related to this finding.

#### **RECOMMENDATION F-1: Increased resources for survivors on financial empowerment.**

- Resources such as brochures and referral sheets should be provided to survivors of domestic violence on topics such as economic abuse, coerced debt, identity theft, and economic empowerment.
- Financial empowerment workshops or classes should be provided by victim service agencies in collaboration with local resources such as Legal Aid, credit unions, and Nashville Housing Authority.

#### **RECOMMENDATION F-2: Training for attorneys and victim service providers.**

- Advocates must be trained to provide resources and referrals to their clients navigating the aftermath of economic abuse. Training should include strategies for identity protection as well as general financial empowerment (credit scores, employment, housing stability) within the context of their needs assessment and goal/safety planning.
- CLE education should be provided to Nashville attorneys on consumer/financial law to provide attorneys with knowledge and resources to help serve survivors who have experienced economic abuse.

#### **RECOMMENDATION F-3: Legal assistance for survivors centering on financial justice.**

- Legal clinic for survivors dealing specifically with the aftermath of financial abuse, addressing issues such as debt collection, credit fraud, bankruptcy, taxes, eviction, and identity theft.



# Timeline of Economic Abuse

1980's

**August-** Perpetrator Arrested for 2 Counts of Worthless Checks

**January-** Perpetrator Arrested for Forgery

**January-** Perpetrator Arrested for Worthless Checks

**December-** Perpetrator Arrested for Forgery

**November-** Perpetrator Arrested for Forgery & Uttering Forged Paper

**November-** Perpetrator Arrested for Embezzlement- Received 6 Year Sentence

**December-** Perpetrator Arrested for Worthless Checks

**March-** Perpetrator Arrested for Worthless Checks

**October-** Perpetrator Arrested for Worthless Checks

1990's

The victim had no instances of financial problems prior to her marriage to the perpetrator, at which time he began amassing debt and credit in her name.

2000's

**August-** Perpetrator Arrested for Worthless Checks

**October-** Perpetrator Arrested for Worthless Checks

**December-** \$3,646 Judgement against Perpetrator

**January-** Victim & Perpetrator Married

**August-** \$596 Judgement against Victim

**November-** Perpetrator Files Chapter 7 Bankruptcy

**April-** Victim Files Chapter 7 Bankruptcy

**July-** \$24,999 Judgement against Victim & Perpetrator

**January-** \$3,000 Judgement against Perpetrator

**February-** \$2,000 Judgement against Victim & Perpetrator

**May-** \$11,623 Judgement against Victim & Perpetrator

**October-** Divorce Filed- As part of the claim the Victim stated that Perpetrator incurred \$13,000 debt, for which he allowed the holder to pursue the Victim & cause her wages to be garnished

**April-** \$9,298 Judgement against Victim & Perpetrator

**June-** Victim is Murdered by the Perpetrator

2010's

Total Sum of Judgements Against the Victim & Perpetrator from the Time of Their Marriage Until the Murder:

**\$51,516**

# Additional Finding: Systems Access

**Finding: Although the victim contacted law enforcement when in danger, her minimal participation with the courts and the lack of wrap-around advocacy may have put her at greater risk.**

*Note that the Jean Crowe Advocacy Center (JCAC), Nashville's court-based advocacy program, did not exist at the time of the murder. This is a vital program that may have increased her safety by giving the victim the support she needed to follow through with the criminal prosecution and Order of Protection hearings.*

## IMPACT

Research shows the importance of both formal and informal support systems to victims of domestic violence. Access to informal support systems, such as family members and friends, combined with formal supportive services (such as JCAC) can positively impact a survivor's ability to leave their perpetrator and maintain safety during separation.[40] This only serves to emphasize the need for more collaborative, holistic victim services as well as education and resources for families and loved ones.

## CASE FACTS RELATED TO THIS FINDING

Interviews with the victim's family indicate that her family was her closest support system. Access to a positive, loving familial support system helped the victim separate from her perpetrator in the weeks prior to her murder. The victim did not have an extensive history of interactions with the criminal justice system and no history with the organizations in Davidson County that provide professional supportive services to victims of abuse.

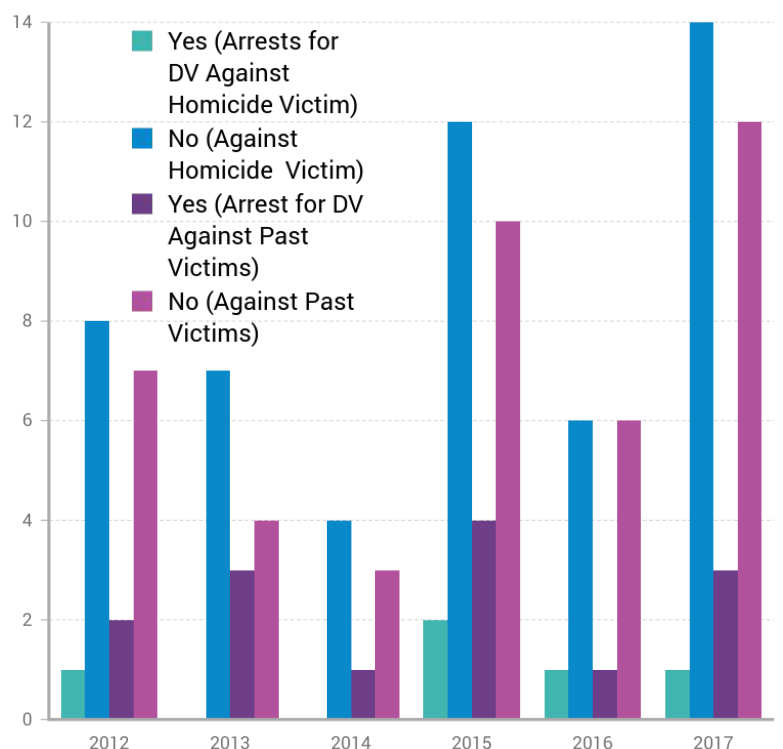
**The Vast Majority of DV Homicide Victims in Nashville have not had Contact with Law Enforcement or the Justice System.**

20%

6.6%

Only 20% of intimate partner homicide victims from 2012-2017 sought Orders of Protection against their abusers.  
Only 6.6% of those orders were granted.

## Has the Perpetrator had a Previous DV Arrest?



**The Vast Majority of Domestic Violence Homicide Perpetrators in Nashville have Never Been Arrested for DV.**

# Additional Finding: Systems Access

## **RECOMMENDATION G-1: Educate family members/loved ones about domestic violence.**

- Provide the public with identification tools for recognizing domestic violence warning signs in their loved ones. Brochures, pamphlets, or information cards specifically targeted toward family members and loved ones of victims and perpetrators should be distributed at locations frequented by the general public such as health departments, doctor's offices, schools, libraries, salons.
- Information about how to help a loved one who is being abused included in routine medical screenings for domestic violence.
- Increase emotional support for families and loved ones of victims by providing support groups for those who may know a victim and grief support for those who have lost a loved one to domestic violence.
- Provide the community with information about avenues of support for victims that are reluctant to access services. This may include informational workshops held at organizations and places where victims seek assistance and resource packets given to family members and loved ones when they accompany survivors to those places.

**Success:** The YWCA of Nashville and Middle TN provides support groups for family members and loved ones of victims. One of these groups is held at the Jean Crowe Advocacy Center (JCAC).

## **RECOMMENDATION G-2: Work with victim advocacy agencies to help them identify opportunities to provide more holistic, network-oriented services to victims.**

- As part of the referral and goal-planning process, advocates should employ strategies for helping victims connect with informal support systems in addition to formal services. This may include strategies for re-connecting victims with positive supports they have been isolated from or strategies and opportunities to cultivate informal support systems.

## **RECOMMENDATION G-3: Provide trauma-informed interventions to help increase victim's participation in prosecution and Order of Protection hearings.**

**Success:** Since the murder in this case took place, the following services related to this recommendation have been implemented in Nashville:

- Early Intervention Meetings between the District Attorney's Office and JCAC advocates
- Victim-centered prosecution
- Advocate-initiated post-court follow up
- High-risk intervention services
- Civil Legal Advocacy Program connecting victims in need with Legal Aid or other civil-legal representation
- Court accompaniment and a safe and supportive environment for victims to receive additional services while waiting for court (Provided by JCAC)
- Allow prosecutors to meet with victims in a private, safe location away from their perpetrator
- Facilitate increased collaboration between professional non-profit partners and government agencies that serve domestic violence victims
- Advocate assisted Orders of Protection and follow-up services
- Other helpful resources such as food bags, diapers, and referral services provided to victims who are engaged in the court system

For more information on the ways these trauma-informed interventions are currently being provided in Nashville, see the Look Back in the Appendix of this report.

# Additional Finding: Batterers' Intervention

**Finding: Batterers' Intervention Programs must be accountable for the tracking and disclosure of the outcomes of their participants and for adhering to stringent certification standards designed to help protect victims.**

## IMPACT

A Batterers' Intervention Program (BIP) refers to a program that batterers attend, often as part of a legal mandate in response to a charge of domestic violence, which seeks to intervene in and change abusive behaviors. A BIP's primary aims should be victim safety and offender accountability with an ultimate goal of rehabilitation for the offender.

The state of Tennessee has a legislated Domestic Violence State Coordinating Council (DVSCC) which was formed in 1995 in order to "increase the awareness and understanding of domestic and family violence and its consequences and to reduce the incidence of domestic and family violence within the state." [41] In 1998, the DVSCC was tasked with the monitoring and certification of Batterers' Intervention Programs, including the creation of certification regulations. [42] These regulations can be found in the Rules of Domestic Violence State Coordinating Council, Chapter 0490-1 Rules for Batterers' Intervention Programs. These regulations contain BIP accountability requirements.

## CASE FACTS RELATED TO THIS FINDING

The perpetrator was ordered to attend a 26 week Batterers' Intervention Program as part of his probation for his 2009 domestic assault conviction. The only record that exists regarding his participation in this program is a hand-written note in his probation paperwork that simply reads "Spoke w/ BIP. 26 BIP completed. 1/5/10." The BIP that the perpetrator completed was not a certified BIP at the time of the perpetrator's attendance.

**Although Batterers' Intervention Program certification standards have been in place in Tennessee since 1999, Tennessee does not require BIPs to be certified as a condition of operation.**



**Percentage of DV homicide perpetrators with prior domestic violence convictions which could have resulted in an order to attend a Batterers' Intervention Program.**  
2012-2017

## **RECOMMENDATION H-1: More stringent certification requirements for Batterers' Intervention Programs.**


- Ensure BIPs are conducted by staff experienced in group facilitation: require Bachelor's degree in a mental health-related field (e.g. social work, psychology, etc.) for both facilitators OR a mental health licensure for at least one of the group's facilitators.
- Ensure high standards for BIP curricula. If a program is not using one of the three pre-approved BIP curricula, its chosen curriculum should be demonstrably more intensive than those which are pre-approved.
- Ensure that those individuals who monitor BIPs for certification are experienced in group facilitation, preferably having a strong mental health background and demonstrated understanding of domestic abuse and power and control dynamics present in intimate partner violence.
- Consider a process of 'conditional certification' in which programs would have to be monitored in-person before receiving full certification.
- All certified BIP classes should be monitored, in person, at least once per year.


# Additional Finding: Batterers' Intervention

 **RECOMMENDATION H-3:** Legislatively require ongoing certification of all Batterers' Intervention Programs as a condition of their operation.

 **RECOMMENDATION H-3:** The Domestic Violence State Coordinating Council should collect and evaluate data regarding the effectiveness and accountability of BIPs in Nashville.

- Identify measurable outcomes expected of BIPs.
- Review these program outcomes to evaluate the effectiveness of the various workshop models used by BIPs.
- Ensure that BIPs in Nashville are appropriately consulting with shelters and other victim service agencies and undertaking prevention efforts as required in certification standards.
- Educate domestic violence shelter programs on BIPs and their responsibilities with regards to collaboration/consultation with victim service agencies.
- Ensure that BIPs are providing probation and parole with detailed and factual progress reports for each client. Create an objective and standardized criterion for determining and reporting a batterer's compliance with the program.

 **RECOMMENDATION H-4:** Encourage the Domestic Violence State Coordinating Council to abolish the provision in the Rules allowing former batterers to facilitate BIPs classes if they have not "committed acts of domestic abuse for a minimum of two years prior to employment"[43] which is currently verified only by "signed statements certifying that they have not committed acts of domestic abuse for two (2) years." [44] Instead, there should be a required background check for BIP facilitators as a requirement for certification and abusers should be excluded from acting as facilitators for these courses.

 **RECOMMENDATION H-5:** Nashville-Davidson County should work to reduce the chance that individuals may be prevented from attending court-mandated Batterers' Intervention Programs due to inability to pay, illiteracy, or language/interpretation needs.

 **RECOMMENDATION H-6:** Create an educational video to be played during an offender's 12 hour hold that includes domestic violence education, evidence-informed strategies for managing toxic emotions, and techniques for recognizing and preventing abusive behaviors.



# Implementation Plan

On the following pages you will find the collected recommendations listed in the previous findings. Each recommendation has a **suggested "Assigned Entity"**. Each Assigned Entity is encouraged to see the pages associated with their recommendations for more details on implementation. Each Assigned Entity 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.

## **Assigned Entity: Batterers' Intervention Programs (BIP)**

- Require staff to attend suicide prevention and response training and to provide print resources and referrals to perpetrators regarding suicide and the connection between suicide and domestic violence. (P. 18)
- Collect data regarding program successes and recidivism. (P. 31)
- Engage in an evaluation of services to identify successful practices and fill gaps that may leave victims vulnerable. This includes thoughtful and meaningful consultation with victim services agencies and accountability of participants through communication with the legal system. (P. 30-31)

## **Assigned Entity: Domestic Violence State Coordinating Council**

- Collect and evaluate data regarding the effectiveness and accountability of BIPs in Nashville and state-wide. An evaluation of services should identify successful/promising practices for victim safety and reducing offender recidivism. (P. 30-31)
- Ensure that BIPs in Nashville are appropriately consulting with shelters and other victim service agencies and undertaking prevention efforts as required in certification standards. (P. 31)
- Establish more stringent certification requirements for Batterers' Intervention Programs and standards for their facilitators. (P. 30-31)
- Educate domestic violence shelter programs on BIPs and their responsibilities with regards to collaboration/consultation with victim service agencies so that shelters can feel confident when providing letters of support to these agencies. (P. 31)
- Establish standards for those individuals who monitor BIPs for certification. (P. 31)

## **Assigned Entity: Domestic Violence Shelters & Advocacy Organizations**

- Ensure each staff member receives suicide response and prevention training. (P. 18)
- Provide victims with resources, strategies, and information regarding animal safety. (P. 25)
- Partner with the UT College of Social Work's Veterinary Social Work Program to assist agencies in creating or strengthening strategies for serving victims with animals. It may also be necessary to pursue grants to assist with the implementation of these programs. (P. 25)
- Help survivors navigate the aftermath of economic abuse. This should include seeking out training and community partnerships focused on economic safety and financial empowerment. (P. 26)
- Employ strategies for helping victims connect not just with formal services but also informal support systems. (P. 29)

## **Assigned Entity: Nashville Employers & Workplaces**

- Provide staff with training on suicide response and prevention. (P. 18)
- Provide education for employees and supervisors on domestic violence in the workplace. (P. 21)
- Create policies and procedures on domestic violence to better protect employees and organizations. (P. 21)

**Assigned Entity: Guns Shops & Firearms Training Facilities**

- Firearm safety and handgun carry classes should instruct on domestic violence and suicide as part of their curricula. (P. 18)
- Partner with the TSPN Gun Safety Project to train staff on how to discuss issues of suicide as it relates to firearms and display specialized resources on firearms and suicide. (P. 18)
- Partner with Metro Office of Family Safety and/or the YWCA to provide staff training on domestic violence and firearms. (P. 20)
- Licensed firearms dealers should provide a receipt for the courts to show that convicted DV offenders or those with active Orders of Protection against them have sold their weapon(s). (P. 20)

**Assigned Entity: Law Enforcement**

- Law enforcement personnel should attend Mental Health First Aid and QPR training as part of their initial academy training requirements. (P. 18)
- Law enforcement should be trained to discuss with victims the risks they face leaving violent relationships, particularly when encouraging separation. Partnerships with the OFS and/or YWCA can provide this training free of charge. (P. 23)

**Assigned Entity: Legislature**

- Eliminate the option for third party dispossession to family members or friends and create clear standards around dispossession in the form of sale to a certified firearms dealer. (P. 20)
- Create a clear process for the storage and return or disposal of weapons dispossessed to law enforcement. (P. 20)
- Establish a clear and effective firearm dispossession process for domestic violence offenders. (P. 20)
- Require that Batterers' Intervention Programs receive and maintain certification as a condition of their operation. (P. 30-31)

**Assigned Entity: Medical & Mental Health Organizations**

- Provide routine screening for domestic violence and suicidality within many types of health care settings. (P. 18)
- Provide brochures and display print resources and referrals to clients regarding suicide and domestic violence. (P. 18)
- Provide training for staff on domestic violence that emphasizes the increased risk faced by victims as they leave violent relationships and provide tools and education about appropriate referrals with these victims. (P. 23)

## Assigned Entity: Metro Nashville Courts

- Implement model firearm dispossession procedures in Nashville-Davidson County in order to evaluate these procedures in preparation for state-wide roll out. (P. 20)
- Create a clear process for identifying DV criminal cases and OPs where firearms were used or owned by the defendant/respondent. (P. 20)
- Ensure that defendants/respondents in DV and OP cases are informed about firearm dispossession requirements and are questioned under oath about their firearm ownership. (P. 20)
- Hold offenders accountable for failure to comply with firearms dispossession laws. (P. 20)
- Provide appropriate funding to task individuals with identifying firearm-involved cases, processing dispossession paperwork, facilitating return dockets, and other tasks related to firearms dispossession. (P. 20)
- Reduce the chance that individuals may be prevented from attending court-mandated Batterers' Intervention Programs based on inability to pay, illiteracy, or language/interpretation needs. Increase interpretation and accessibility resources for court-mandated programs, provide assistance for individuals who demonstrably cannot pay fees to attend for-profit classes, or increase availability of free BIP courses. (P. 31)

## Assigned Entity: Office of Family Safety (OFS)

- Provide updated data on murder-suicide trends to partnering organizations. (P. 18)
- Work with TSPN to create a specialized brochure outlining the intersections of suicide and intimate partner violence. (P. 18)
- Partner with TSPN & MDH to include information on suicide and murder-suicide as a part of regular community domestic violence education. (P. 18)
- Offer training for gun store and firing range owners on suicide and domestic violence red flags and prevention. (P. 18)
- Continue to build support and increase efforts around firearm dispossession. Work toward a clear and effective firearms dispossession process for domestic violence offenders. Build community collaboration around increased firearm safety. (P. 20)
- Provide education and outreach on domestic violence in the workplace to interested organizations in Nashville. (P. 21)
- OFS is creating a full domestic violence curriculum to assist in training individuals and organizations across Nashville starting in 2019. (P. 21)
- OFS plans to provide mandatory DV training to all unclassified Metro Nashville employees beginning in 2019. (P. 21)
- Work with the Tennessee Bar Association to create educational opportunities for Family Practice attorneys on DV and provide resources on DV for their clients. (P. 23)
- Provide specialized training on the intersections of animal abuse and domestic violence for staff of Metro Animal Care & Control. (P. 25)
- Create an educational video to be played during an offender's 12 hour hold that includes domestic violence education. (P. 31)

## Assigned Entity: Tennessee Bar Association and Nashville Attorneys

- Collaborate with Metro OFS to create educational opportunities for Family Practice attorneys on DV, provide Family Practice attorneys with materials and resources on domestic violence that can be provided to their clients, and connect Family Practice attorneys with local victim service programs as avenues for referral for clients in need. (P. 23)
- Provide CLE training for attorneys on domestic violence. (P. 23)
- Provide a legal clinic for survivors dealing with the aftermath of financial abuse and tools needed to address issues like debt collection, credit fraud, bankruptcy, eviction, and identity theft. (P. 26)
- Provide CLE education for Legal Aid staff and Family Practice attorneys on financial law to help serve survivors who have experienced economic abuse. (P. 26)

## Assigned Entity: University of TN Veterinary Social Work Program

- Identify a technical assistance provider to help shelters and other victim service agencies create or strengthen animal programs. (P. 25)
- Begin assessing what animal programs exist within victim services agencies and identify opportunities to strengthen them. (P. 25)
- Cultivate community support networks and craft policies and procedures to formalize shelters' animal programs. (P. 25)



# Conclusion

Since the time of the murder-suicide reviewed in this report, Nashville has undergone tremendous growth and progress in its work on domestic violence, particularly in the area of multi-disciplinary team work, danger assessment, and survivor support services. Nonetheless, the report findings and their subsequent recommendations still apply to the present. These findings and recommendations highlight areas for continued growth and improvement in our domestic violence prevention, services, and response that can be addressed within our government, non-profit, and for-profit sectors.

The priority findings that the Team identified as most critical to preventing domestic violence homicides similar to the case reviewed are as follows:

1) **Firearms Access:** The perpetrator was convicted of domestic assault twice and should not have possessed a firearm under federal law, but firearm dispossession procedures were not implemented and the victim was murdered using a gun.

2) **Murder-Suicide Risk Factors:** These factors, including suicidal ideation and threats of suicide by the perpetrator, were not identified or used to assess this victim's level of risk.

3) **Workplace Violence:** The victim was murdered at her place of work, and the lack of workplace policies and training on domestic violence may have increased her risk.

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 as well as conduct its annual in-depth case review to further glean information on how to improve our work. The OFS will work with partner agencies on the implementation of 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 statewide team. This statewide 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, 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 homicide that shared their experiences and insight with our Team and helped form these recommendations.

**"The more people who are trained and ready to respond when risk factors of suicide and domestic violence lethality appear around us, the more lives we can save. We can amplify our impact by using our voices and our willingness to speak out, to ask more questions and to address these issues in the lives of victims and perpetrators who are most at risk."**

2016 Georgia Domestic Violence  
Fatality Review Annual Report

# Appendices

# Supplemental Information

**The Tennessee Code pertaining to death review teams can be found at:**

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.

## **Project Spotlight: TSPN's Gun Safety Project**

TSPN's Gun Safety Project is a statewide program intended to help gun store and firing range owners and employees identify and address potentially suicidal customers. The products urge them to be alert for signs of suicide among family and friends, to know where to call for help and to make sure that guns are not available to those in a suicidal crisis.

This and other information on the Project can be found here: <http://tspn.org/gun-safety-project>.

**QPR and Mental Health First Aid are in-person trainings available through TSPN. CALM is a free, online training module.**

- o In-person trainings can be requested at <http://tspn.org/request-training-now>
- o CALM training can be accessed at <http://tspn.org/calm>

## **Resources for Loved ones of Victims:**

<http://www.thehotline.org/help/help-for-friends-and-family/>

<http://www.joyfulheartfoundation.org/learn/domestic-violence/resources/resources-family-friends-and-supporters>

<http://www.thehotline.org/2015/06/11/someone-i-know-is-being-abused-should-i-call-the-police/>

## **Opportunities for training exist nationally for attorneys:**

American Bar Association's Commission on Domestic & Sexual Violence [https://www.americanbar.org/groups/domestic\\_violence.html](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/domestic_violence.html)

National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma, & Mental Health's Trauma-Informed Legal Advocacy (TILA) Project:  
<http://www.nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org/trainingta/trauma-informed-legal-advocacy-tila-project/>

## **The following publication's exist for attorneys:**

Representing Domestic Violence Survivors Who Are Experiencing Trauma and Other Mental Health Challenges: A Handbook for Attorneys  
<http://www.nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org/publications-products/attorneys-handbook/>

Center for Judicial Excellence <http://www.centerforjudicialexcellence.org/resources/domestic-violence-child-abuse-resources>

Center for Court Innovation: <https://www.courtinnovation.org/areas-of-focus>

ABA Standards of Practice for Lawyers Representing Victims of Domestic Violence  
[https://www.americanbar.org/groups/domestic\\_violence/standards-of-practice.html](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/domestic_violence/standards-of-practice.html)

## **The following resources exist for economic abuse:**

The National Consumer Law Center offers a variety of trainings for legal professionals- <https://www.nclc.org/>

The Center for Survivor Agency & Justice hosts the Consumer Rights for Domestic and Sexual Violence Survivors Initiative which provides training and resources for advocates on economic justice and empowerment- <https://csaj.org/crdvsi>

# Outcomes & Successes: A Look Back

The Team has made many recommendations over its years of operation, prompting changes and improvements to the ways in which Nashville serves domestic abuse victims. In light of the 15th anniversary of the original executive order in 2002, we highlight the following recent successes as a celebration of the work of the Domestic Abuse Death Review Team.

**Finding Area:** Criminal Justice Response

**Finding Year:** 2005

**DADRT Recommendation:** The District Attorney's Office should receive funding in order to reestablish its specialized DV unit.

**Success:** On November 18, 2014, District Attorney General Glenn Funk announced the creation of a new investigative division to focus solely on domestic violence cases. The new division is called Domestic Violence Prosecution Support. Currently, all DV cases heard in General Sessions Court are exclusively handled by the DV Unit, which is comprised of 8 Assistant District Attorneys and 9 Victim Witness Coordinators.

**Finding Area:** Criminal Justice Response

**Finding Year:** 2008-2011

**DADRT Recommendation:** Police officers answering domestic violence calls who suspect that domestic violence is occurring should be required to complete the Lethality Assessment.

**Success:** The Lethality Assessment Protocol (LAP) was implemented in Nashville in November 2016 by Chief Steve Anderson. The LAP helped identify nearly 3,878 high risk domestic situations in 2017 alone. According to data collected by the Metro Office of Family Safety, in 2017 there were 7,399 total LAP forms collected. Of those cases, 52% were labeled high risk.

**Finding Area:** Victim Follow-through with Prosecution

**Finding Year:** 2016

**DADRT Recommendation:** Advocate-initiated outreach and increased interagency service coordination as part of Metro Nashville's Lethality Assessment Program (LAP) and the High Risk Intervention Panel (HRIP)

**Success:**

- LAP screening links victims to the YWCA domestic violence program while officers are on-scene, helping to connect the victims with shelter and advocacy services immediately.
- The YWCA is able to facilitate a "warm hand-off" call with the victim to the Jean Crowe Advocacy Center (JCAC) or Metro Police Department Domestic Violence Division (DVD) Counselor, helping clients to address their most immediate needs while also connecting them with services that can facilitate their involvement in prosecution.
- The YWCA can request that JCAC or DVD initiate follow-up with a victim, ensuring that the victim is receiving proactive contact from multiple sources.
- The High Risk Intervention Panel reviews the highest risk cases as determined by each of the HRIP partner organizations and helps to identify and address any service needs the victim may have. This can include helping to pinpoint which provider is the most appropriate to initiate outreach with the victim.

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44. Rules for Batterers' Intervention Programs 0490-1-.08 (2)(b)(7)(iv) CERTIFICATION AND MONITORING OF BATTERERS INTERVENTION PROGRAMS



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*If you have any questions about this report, please contact Becky Bullard (615-862-5158 or [beckybullard@jis.nashville.org](mailto:beckybullard@jis.nashville.org)), the Senior Director of Programs at the Metropolitan Government of Nashville-Davidson County Office of Family Safety.*

# MEMBERS OF THE DOMESTIC ABUSE DEATH REVIEW (DADRT)

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

**Joshua Blaisdell - LT Metro Police DV Unit**

**Whitney Blanton - Office of Family Safety**

**Chris Buford - District Attorney's Office**

**Becky Bullard - Office of Family Safety, DADRT Staff**

**Allison Cantway - YWCA**

**Tracy DeTomaso - No More, Formerly YWCA**

**Ana Escobar - District Attorney's Office**

**Nichelle Foster - Metro Public Health Department**

**Erica Gilmore - Metro Council at Large**

**Cathy Gurley - You have the Power**

**Gena Hull - Morning Star Sanctuary**

**Susan Kay - Citizen**

**Diane Lance - Office of Family Safety**

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

**Peter Macdonald - Citizen**

**Larhonda Magras - YWCA**

**James (Jim) McDowell - Davidson County Sheriff's Office**

**Chandler Means - Morning Star Sanctuary**

**Michelle Richter - Captain Metro Police DV Unit, DADRT Sub-Chair**

**Kristi Steel - YWCA**

**Shania Thompson - Legal Aid Society**

**Susan Tucker-Smith - DA's Office Victim Witness Coordinator**

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