

**THE KILLING
MUST STOP:
DEATH AT THE
HANDS OF THE
PERSON YOU LOVE**

FINDINGS AND
RECOMMENDATIONS
OF THE LOUISIANA
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
FATALITY REVIEW PROJECT

**KAMI E. GEOFFRAY FOR THE
LOUISIANA COALITION AGAINST
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

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***Dedicated to those who have
lost their lives or loved ones
to domestic violence***

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Project Partners

Baton Rouge City Court Probation Department	Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals, Office of Public Health	Louisiana District Attorneys Association
Chez Hope Domestic Violence Program	Louisiana Department of Justice, Office of the Attorney General	Louisiana Foundation Against Sexual Assault
Gateway Church	Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections	Louisiana Protective Order Registry
Lafourche Parish Sheriff's Office	Louisiana Department of Social Services, Office of Community Services	Louisiana State Bar Association, Access to Justice Program
Louisiana Association of Chiefs of Police		Sixteenth Judicial District Court of Louisiana, Division C
Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement		

Advisory Committee Members

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Judy Benitez, Louisiana Foundation Against Sexual Assault	Kathy Guidry, Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement	Mary Sigrist, Louisiana Department of Social Services, Office of Community Services
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Local Team Members

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Valerie Bowman, Ouachita Parish Co-Chair	Dr. David Holcombe, Rapides Parish	Sharon Russo, Iberia Parish Co-Chair
Annie Brown, Rapides Parish	Bernadette Huey, Union Parish	Maranda Schoenberger, Union Parish
Kim Brown, Ascension Parish Co-Chair	Wanda James, Union Parish Co-Chair	June Scott, Ascension Parish
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Finally, the DVFR would like to extend its appreciation to the staff of the **Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence**, and to its Executive Director, **Beth Meeks**.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Domestic violence fatality review refers to the process of identifying domestic violence fatalities and examining the systemic interventions into known incidents of domestic violence occurring in the family of the deceased prior to the death for the purpose of improving systemic response to prevent future domestic violence fatalities and developing recommendations for coordinated community prevention and intervention initiatives.

The **Domestic Violence Fatality Review (DVFR) Project** defines a **domestic violence fatality** as a fatality that arises from an abuser's efforts to seek power and control over his intimate partner. Using this broad definition, domestic violence fatalities would include:

- All homicides in which the victim was a current or former intimate partner of the perpetrator
- Homicides in which the victim was someone other than the perpetrator's intimate partner, but which occur in the context of domestic violence or in the context of a perpetrator attempting to kill an intimate partner (i.e., friend, family member, new intimate partner, law enforcement)
- Homicides occurring as an extension of or in response to ongoing intimate partner abuse (i.e., revenge killing of children)
- Suicides, other than the abuser's, which may be a response to domestic violence¹

This report examines two sets of data on domestic violence fatalities:

- 1) All identified domestic violence fatalities occurring between January 1997 and December 2009²
- 2) Domestic violence fatalities reviewed in depth by DVFR teams in Ascension, Iberia, Ouachita, Rapides, St. Mary, and Union Parishes

¹ As the DVFR Project currently has access to limited public records, identifying domestic violence related suicides was a particularly difficult task.

² As identified through Uniform Crime Report data, reports submitted by Louisiana's Family Violence Programs, and media accounts.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE LOUISIANA DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FATALITY REVIEW PROJECT

NEED FOR PROJECT

Each year, the Violence Policy Center issues a report entitled *When Men Murder Women*, examining FBI Supplementary Homicide Report data detailing homicides committed against women. Since 1997, Louisiana has consistently ranked within the top five states among female victims killed by male offenders in single victim/single offender incidents. In the latest report, analyzing 2007 data, **Louisiana was ranked first in the nation**, with a homicide rate of 2.53 per 100,000 for females murdered by males—**nearly double the national average** of 1.30 per 100,000 females. Although the data does not focus solely on domestic violence related homicides, the majority of female homicide victims in Louisiana were killed by intimate partners, and it is probable that the number of females murdered by males is comparable to the number of domestic violence victims murdered by domestic violence perpetrators. It is therefore reasonable to infer that Louisiana also has the highest rate of domestic violence related homicides in the nation.

HISTORY OF PROJECT

In 2005, the Louisiana DVFR Project was created to address the need for a community-wide analysis of the existence of systemic gaps that hinder victim safety and perpetrator accountability.

An Advisory Committee consisting of representatives from state level organizations that reflect the diverse systems, agencies, organizations and individuals that respond to or serve domestic violence victims was tasked with developing the structural and operational policies, procedures, and guidelines for the DVFR Project. The DVFR Advisory Committee developed the DVFR Project Quality Assurance Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines Manual and selected six parishes for participation in the DVFR Project based upon community need and program involvement.

Local DVFR team co-chairs were responsible for assembling and training a local team consisting of representatives of the following organizations and agencies:

- Coroner
- District attorney
- District court
- Family violence program
- Law enforcement
- Local faith community
- Office of Community Services
- Office of Mental Health
- Office of Public Health
- Probation and Parole
- Sexual assault program

With the assistance of the Advisory Committee, local DVFR teams conducted fatality reviews, completed the data collection forms, and submitted findings and recommendations to DVFR Project staff for inclusion in this report.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following six parishes participated in the Domestic Violence Fatality Review (DVFR) Project: Ascension, Iberia, Ouachita, Rapides, St. Mary, and Union.

Local DVFR teams were asked to review domestic violence related homicides in which all legal proceedings were completed or domestic violence related murder-suicides, and were encouraged to complete two fatality reviews. In total, nine cases were reviewed by the six local teams.

FINDINGS

The small number of cases limits the degree to which the findings can be generalized from the study sample to the entire population. Additionally, the available data was not collected for research purposes; nor was it collected in a systemic or consistent manner as investigating and reporting procedures vary by jurisdiction. For these reasons, readers are cautioned from drawing firm, predictive conclusions from this data.

CIRCUMSTANCES OF FATALITY

- **Type of Incident:** Four cases involved a single victim, three involved a single victim/suicide, and two-involved multiple victims.
- **Victim/Perpetrator Relationship:** The nine cases reviewed involved a total of thirteen victims. The domestic violence perpetrator murdered the domestic violence victim in eight cases; in the remaining case, the perpetrator murdered his mother-in-law. One perpetrator murdered his former intimate partner and her new intimate partner. Another perpetrator murdered his current spouse, their minor child, his mother-in-law, and a family friend.
- **Agent of Injury:** As in the larger sample of domestic violence fatalities, firearms were the primary agent of injury, followed by knives and sharp objects.
- **Location of Fatality:** Approximately two-thirds of the domestic violence fatalities reviewed occurred in a home, and the remaining one-third occurred in a public space.

VICTIM AND PERPETRATOR DEMOGRAPHICS

- **Sex:** All cases reviewed involved at least one female victim and a male perpetrator.
- **Age:** Victims ranged from 2 to 54 years of age. Perpetrators ranged from 22 to 53 years of age.
- **Race:** Approximately two-thirds of victims and perpetrators were African-American. The remaining one-third of victims and perpetrators were White/Non-Hispanic.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Local fatality review teams were also asked to submit recommendations for systems changes based upon the themes and problems identified in the cases under review.

The following themes emerged from the recommendations: (1) Education; (2) Law enforcement; (3) The Court System; (4) Family violence programs; and (5) Coordinated Community Response.

EDUCATION

Most local teams recommended continued training for those organizations and agencies servicing domestic violence victims, with a special emphasis on law enforcement and the court system.

These reviews found that domestic violence victims and perpetrators were most likely to interact with law enforcement agencies and the court system. In addition to knowledge of the laws relating to domestic violence, we believe it is essential that law enforcement officers, judges, hearing officers, and prosecutors have an understanding of the dynamics of domestic violence.

Victim advocates could also benefit from continued training that addresses the dynamics of domestic violence, Louisiana's domestic violence laws, and Louisiana's criminal justice system. Additional training is needed for victim advocates that plan to conduct trainings for law enforcement officers, judges, hearing officers, and prosecutors.

Education is also recommended for other community members, such as mental health and medical professionals, first responders, and faith community leaders.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Frequently, a law enforcement officer is the first contact a domestic violence victim has with the criminal justice system. This report includes recommendations for law enforcement agencies seeking to improve their response to domestic violence.

THE COURT SYSTEM

Louisiana has already provided judges, hearing officers, and prosecutors with excellent tools to prevent and respond to domestic violence. This report includes recommendations for improved handling of domestic violence cases in civil, criminal, and juvenile proceedings.

FAMILY VIOLENCE PROGRAMS

In addition to providing comprehensive services to victims, family violence programs promote public awareness of domestic violence through community outreach initiatives. This report includes recommendations for those family violence programs seeking to improve victim services and community relations.

COORDINATED COMMUNITY RESPONSE

The DVFR Project is advocacy-based and adheres to the basic principle that communities must work together to provide safety for victims—a coordinated community response. This report includes recommendations for those agencies, organizations, and individuals that provide services to domestic violence victims.

After reviewing the findings and recommendations of the local fatality review teams, the DVFR Advisory Committee also made recommendations for statewide systems change to achieve the ultimate goal of reducing the incidence of domestic violence, and decreasing domestic violence fatalities, throughout Louisiana:

- **Establish an Approved Domestic Violence Training Curriculum for Members of the Civil, Criminal, and Juvenile Justice Systems**
- **Establish a State Domestic Violence Fatality Review Panel**
- **Establish Additional Local and Regional Fatality Review Teams**
- **Enact Legislation Enabling the Domestic Violence Fatality Review Panel to Effectively Conduct Reviews**
- **Develop Protocols for Law Enforcement Agencies and Medical Examiners**
- **Develop a Centralized Database for Domestic Violence Fatalities**
- **Establish a Statewide Violence Against Women Task Force**
- **Promote Systems that Facilitate Criminal Justice Information Sharing**

The DVFR Advisory Committee and the Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence remain committed to the goals and methods of domestic violence fatality review and will seek the funding and support required to implement these recommendations. The information presented in this report will inform our work and assist us in planning for the future.

Readers are encouraged to use this report as a tool in analyzing past agency responses to domestic violence fatalities for the existence of systemic gaps that hinder victim safety and perpetrator accountability.

THE LOUISIANA DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FATALITY REVIEW PROJECT

In 2005, the Louisiana Domestic Violence Fatality Review (DVFR) Project was created to address the need for a community-wide analysis of the existence of systemic gaps that hinder victim safety and perpetrator accountability. The Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement (LCLE) received funding through the Grants to Encourage Arrest Policies and Enforcement of Protection Orders Program and the Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence (LCADV) was chosen to lead the project, in partnership with other state organizations and agencies that reflected the community systems serving domestic violence victims.

The DVFR Project is advocacy-based and adheres to the basic principle that communities must work together to provide safety for victims—a coordinated community response. The goal of the DVFR Project is to reduce the incidence of domestic violence, and decrease domestic violence fatalities, throughout Louisiana using the following methods:

- Promoting cooperation, communication and collaboration among agencies, organizations, and individuals investigating and intervening in domestic violence
- Identifying patterns in domestic violence fatalities
- Formulating recommendations regarding the investigation, intervention, and prevention of domestic violence
- Creating a statewide database of domestic violence fatalities to identify trends and patterns of perpetrator actions and community responses

An Advisory Committee consisting of representatives from state level organizations that reflect the diverse systems, agencies, organizations and individuals that respond to or serve domestic violence victims was tasked with developing the structural and operational policies, procedures, and guidelines for the DVFR Project. Due to the effects of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the DVFR Advisory Committee did not begin meeting regularly until early 2007. At the inaugural meeting of the DVFR Advisory Committee, Dr. Neil Websdale, Professor of Criminal Justice at Northern Arizona University and Director and Principal Project Advisor of the National Domestic Violence Fatality Review Initiative, and Matthew Dale, Executive Director of the Montana Department of Justice's Office of Victim Services and Montana Domestic Violence Fatality Review Coordinator, conducted an extensive training on the fatality review process. This training provided the foundation for the DVFR Advisory Committee to develop the DVFR Project Quality Assurance Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines Manual. Upon completion, the DVFR Advisory Committee selected six parishes for participation in the DVFR Project based upon community need and program involvement.

In February 2009, the DVFR Advisory Committee hosted a training for local DVFR team co-chairs, conducted by Matthew Dale. The local DVFR teams were provided with a timeline for completion, the DVFR Project Quality Assurance Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines Manual, and the data collection forms to be completed following each review.

Each local DVFR team was assigned two Advisory Committee members to assist with the completion of fatality reviews.

Local DVFR team co-chairs were responsible for assembling and training a local team consisting of representatives of the following organizations and agencies:

- Coroner
- District attorney
- District court
- Family violence program
- Law enforcement
- Local faith community
- Office of Community Services
- Office of Mental Health
- Office of Public Health
- Probation and Parole
- Sexual assault program

Each team selected up to two cases for review, subject to the approval of the Advisory Committee. Local DVFR teams were asked to review domestic violence related homicides in which all legal proceedings were completed or domestic violence related murder-suicides.

With the assistance of the Advisory Committee, local DVFR teams conducted fatality reviews, completed the data collection forms, and submitted findings and recommendations to DVFR Project staff for inclusion in this report.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FATALITIES IN LOUISIANA

NOTE ON METHODOLOGY

The DVFR Project defines a **domestic violence fatality** as a fatality that arises from an abuser's efforts to seek power and control over his intimate partner. Using this broad definition, domestic violence fatalities would include:

- All homicides in which the victim was a current or former intimate partner of the perpetrator
- Homicides in which the victim was someone other than the perpetrator's intimate partner, but which occur in the context of domestic violence or in the context of a perpetrator attempting to kill an intimate partner (i.e., friend, family member, new intimate partner, law enforcement)
- Homicides occurring as an extension of or in response to ongoing intimate partner abuse (i.e., revenge killing of children)
- Suicides, other than the abuser's, which may be a response to domestic violence³

Louisiana does not maintain a statewide database of domestic violence fatalities. In an effort to collect data on these fatalities over the past decade, the DVFR Project consulted the following sources:

- **Remember My Name Project:** The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence collects information on incidents of women who have been killed by an intimate partner for its Remember My Name Project. Although all Family Violence Programs in Louisiana are asked to submit a standardized form and attach documentation each time a fatality occurs in their program area, participation in the Remember My Name Program is inconsistent.
- **Local media:** LCADV monitors media reports of domestic violence fatalities. The media may fail to report on a fatality, or to correctly classify a fatality as domestic violence related. A fatality may be covered only by local media and not picked up by regional newspapers.
- **Supplementary Homicide Reports:** Data on intimate partner homicides is available through the FBI Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program. While helpful, the voluntary nature of the UCR Program results in incomplete data.⁴ Law enforcement agencies participating in the UCR program are required to submit Supplementary Homicide Reports (SHR). Any data submitted that fails to comply with reporting requirements is not included in the FBI's annual publication, *Crime in the United States*. Among those homicides reported, victim/offender relationship data is often incomplete or inaccurate.

³ As the DVFR Project currently has access to limited public records, identifying domestic violence related suicides was a particularly difficult task.

⁴ According to the Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement, in 2007, only 144 of 320 Louisiana law enforcement agencies reported all 12 months of UCR data to the FBI, as required for inclusion in UCR Program publications.

- **When Men Kill Women:** Domestic violence advocates frequently cite the Violence Policy Center's annual report, *When Men Kill Women*. Over the past decade, the Violence Policy Center has ranked Louisiana within its top five states with the highest homicide rates among female victims killed by male offenders in single victim/single offender incidents. In 2007 (the last year that data was available), Louisiana was ranked first. This study does not specifically focus on domestic violence homicides, however, and examines only those instances involving one female homicide victim and one male offender.

As indicated, each source contains its limitations. In addition, such a fragmented method of data collection leads to a possibility of undercounts of domestic violence fatalities; however, this methodology has provided the best available data on these deaths in Louisiana since 1997.

The tables and charts which follow analyze all domestic violence fatalities, as defined by the DVFR Project, which were either listed in the Supplementary Homicide Reports or were documented in the media.⁵ Note that the DVFR Project does not include justifiable homicides or perpetrator suicides in its definition of domestic violence fatality. Efforts were made to determine the status of any criminal prosecution resulting from the domestic violence fatality, and all homicides where criminal prosecution was resolved by way of dismissal or acquittal were omitted.

⁵ Detailed SHR data for 2009 was not available at time of publication. All data pertaining to 2009 domestic violence related fatalities was compiled solely through media research.

AN OVERVIEW OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FATALITIES IN LOUISIANA (1997-2009)

From 1997 through 2009, the DVFR Project identified 797 incidents resulting in at least one domestic violence fatality, as defined above. In total, 892 individuals died in these incidents. Due to the significant limitations in data collection, these totals should be considered conservative estimates.

Table 1.1 sets out the percentage of total homicides that were domestic violence related. Percentages ranged from 9.56% in 2003 to 14.29% in 1998.

TABLE 1.1: PERCENTAGE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FATALITIES (1997 - 2008)⁶

	Total Homicides	DV Fatalities	Percentage DV Fatalities
1997	682	89	13.05
1998	560	80	14.29
1999	468	57	12.18
2000	560	78	13.93
2001	501	66	13.17
2002	593	69	11.64
2003	586	56	9.56
2004	574	80	13.94
2005	450	64	14.22
2006	530	63	11.89
2007	608	73	12.01
2008	527	68	12.90
Total	6639	843	12.70

Table 1.2 breaks down domestic violence fatalities by parish.⁷ The majority of fatalities occurred in Louisiana's three largest metropolitan areas—Baton Rouge, New Orleans-Metairie-Kenner, and Shreveport-Bossier City.⁸

⁶ UCR data for 2009 was not available at time of publication; therefore, 2009 homicide data is not included in Table 1.1.

⁷ Detailed SHR data for 2009 was not available at time of publication. All data pertaining to 2009 domestic violence related fatalities was compiled solely through media research and cannot be deemed conclusive.

⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division. (2009, August 19). *Metropolitan and Micropolitan Statistical Areas and Components, November 2008, With Codes*. Retrieved January 4, 2010, from U.S. Census Bureau: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/metroareas/lists/2008/List1.txt>.

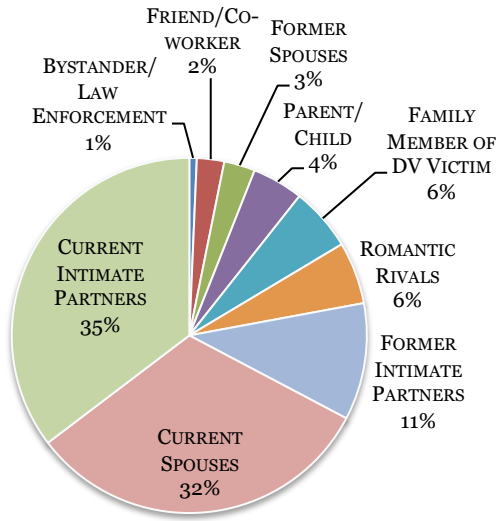
TABLE 1.2: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FATALITIES BY PARISH

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Acadia	3			1			1
Allen					3		
Ascension	1		4	1	1		1
Assumption	3			2			
Avoyelles		1		1	1	1	
Beauregard				1			
Bienville	1		1				1
Bossier	1		2	2	2	3	
Caddo	3	2	1	14	6	5	4
Calcasieu	2	3		1	1	1	3
Caldwell		1					
Cameron							
Catahoula						1	1
Claiborne				2			1
Concordia		1					
De Soto						1	1
East Baton Rouge	15	13	5	11	6	8	3
East Carroll					1	1	2
East Feliciana	1						
Evangeline	1	1	1	2		3	3
Franklin						1	
Grant	1						
Iberia	1		1				
Iberville		2					1
Jackson							1
Jefferson	11	8	5	11	5	3	9
Jefferson Davis				1	1		
Lafayette		3	1	2	2	2	
Lafourche	4		1		2	1	
La Salle				1			1
Lincoln			1				2
Livingston	1			1			
Madison	1			3			
Morehouse		2					
Natchitoches	2	1	1	2		1	1
Orleans	13	8	13	7	12	8	5
Ouachita	3	5	3	5	2	4	3
Plaquemines		1					
Pointe Coupee		1		1			
Rapides	1	4	3		2	3	1
Red River							
Richland						1	
Sabine	2	2	1				
St. Bernard		1	2		1	1	
St. Charles					1		1
St. Helena					1		
St. James					1	1	
St. John the Baptist	1		2	1	1	4	
St. Landry		1	2		1	5	1
St. Martin	2		1	1			
St. Mary				1			
St. Tammany	5	5	1	1	6	7	2
Tangipahoa	4	4	1	1	5		3
Tensas							
Terrebonne		3			1	1	1
Union	1	1				1	
Vermilion							
Vernon	3	6	3	1	1		
Washington						1	
Webster	1						3
West Baton Rouge	1		1				
West Carroll							
West Feliciana							
Winn							
Total	89	80	57	78	66	69	56

Domestic Violence Fatalities in Louisiana

2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Total	
		1			1	7	Acadia
	1					4	Allen
4	4	1	2	1	1	21	Ascension
1						6	Assumption
			1			4	Avoyelles
		1				2	Beauregard
						4	Bienville
1				4		15	Bossier
4	5	4	5	3	5	61	Caddo
2	1	1	4	1	2	22	Calcasieu
						1	Caldwell
			1			1	Cameron
						2	Catahoula
						3	Claiborne
1		1		2		5	Concordia
			2			4	De Soto
6	3	12	11	11	6	110	East Baton Rouge
	1				2	7	East Carroll
1						2	East Feliciana
	1	1	1		1	15	Evangeline
					1	2	Franklin
2					1	4	Grant
2	1	2		4	1	12	Iberia
	1	1	2		1	8	Iberville
						1	Jackson
6	7	4	5	6	8	88	Jefferson
2	1	1	1			7	Jefferson Davis
4	2	2	2	2	1	23	Lafayette
2	2	1	1	2		16	Lafourche
						2	La Salle
1			2		1	7	Lincoln
2	2	3	3	1	3	16	Livingston
			2			6	Madison
		2	3			7	Morehouse
	1					9	Natchitoches
9	7	4	4	5	3	98	Orleans
2	1	5		4		37	Ouachita
1		2			1	5	Plaquemines
	1	1	2	2	1	9	Pointe Coupee
4	3		1	3	1	26	Rapides
	1	1				2	Red River
				2		3	Richland
	1					6	Sabine
1	2			2	1	11	St. Bernard
	1	2				5	St. Charles
1						2	St. Helena
	1	1				4	St. James
2				1	1	13	St. John the Baptist
1		2	1	2		16	St. Landry
1					1	6	St. Martin
1	2	1		1		6	St. Mary
2	1	1	6			37	St. Tammany
	1		6	3	2	30	Tangipahoa
			1			1	Tensas
7	4		2		1	20	Terrebonne
1						4	Union
						0	Vermilion
2						16	Vernon
		3		1		5	Washington
3	4	1				12	Webster
			2	2		6	West Baton Rouge
1				3		4	West Carroll
	1	1			1	3	West Feliciana
					1	1	Winn
80	64	63	73	68	49	892	Total

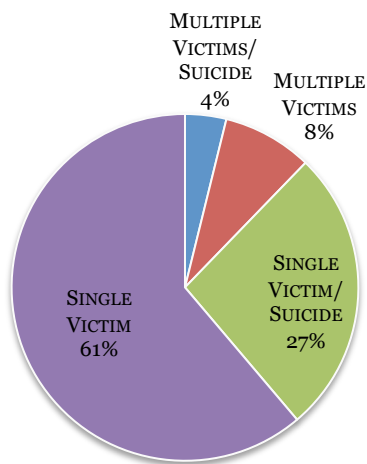
CHART 1.1: VICTIM/PERPETRATOR RELATIONSHIP



RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VICTIM AND PERPETRATOR WAS IDENTIFIED IN 885 OF 892 FATALITIES

Current spouses or intimate partners perpetrated approximately two-thirds of domestic violence related fatalities, as illustrated in **Chart 1.1**. The remaining one-third of domestic violence related fatalities involved: Former intimate partners; romantic rivals; family members of victims; parents and children of perpetrators; former spouses; friends and co-workers; bystanders; and responding law enforcement officers.⁹

CHART 1.2: TYPE OF INCIDENT



TYPE OF INCIDENT WAS IDENTIFIED IN 572 OF 797 INCIDENTS

⁹ Two victim suicides were also identified.

Four types of domestic violence related fatalities were observed: Single victim; single victim/suicide; multiple victims; and multiple victims/suicide. As illustrated in **Chart 1.2**, the majority of fatalities involved a single victim and nearly one-third were single victim/suicide incidents.¹⁰

CHART 1.3: AGENT OF INJURY

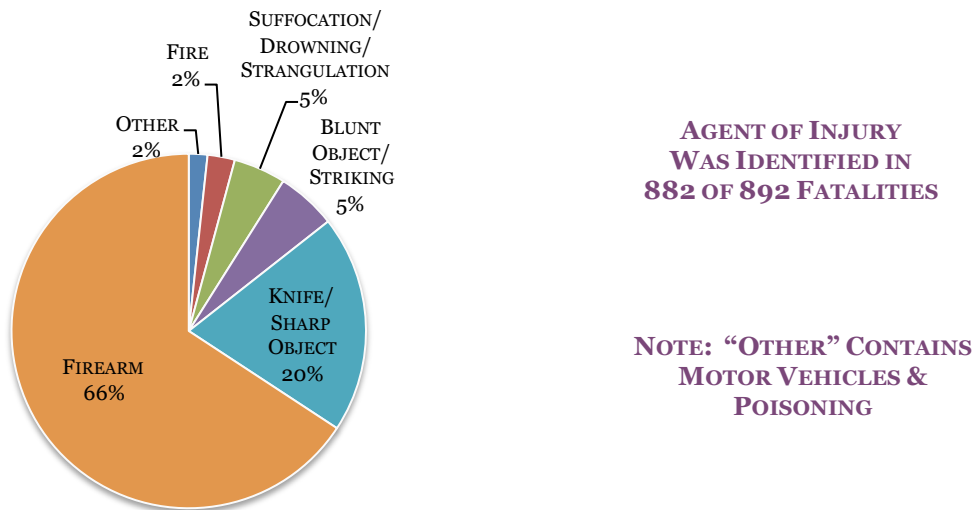


Chart 1.3 analyzes the agent of injury used in each domestic violence related fatality. Firearms were used in over two-thirds of fatalities, with a knife or sharp object ranking as the second most common agent.

¹⁰ Although not included in its definition of domestic violence fatalities, the DVFR Project did identify 174 perpetrator suicides.

CHART 1.4: SEX OF VICTIM

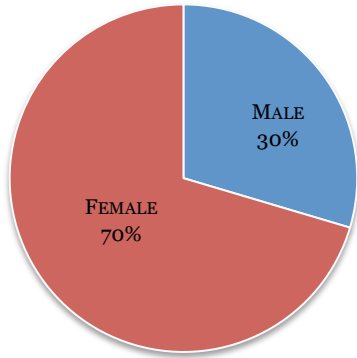


CHART 1.5: SEX OF PERPETRATOR

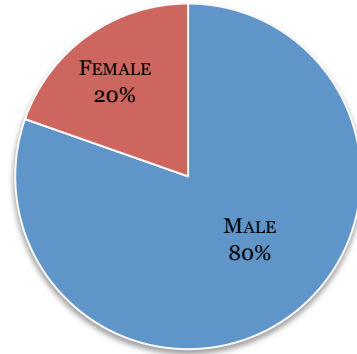
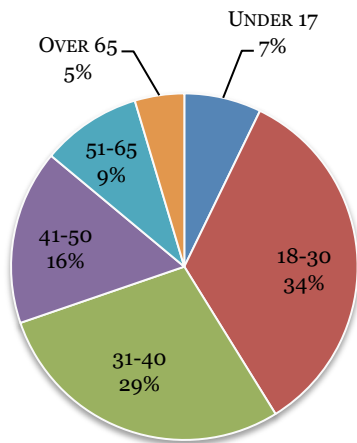
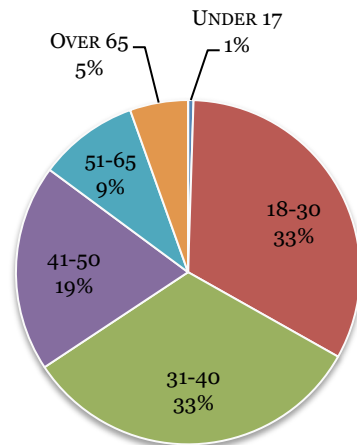


CHART 1.6: AGE OF VICTIM



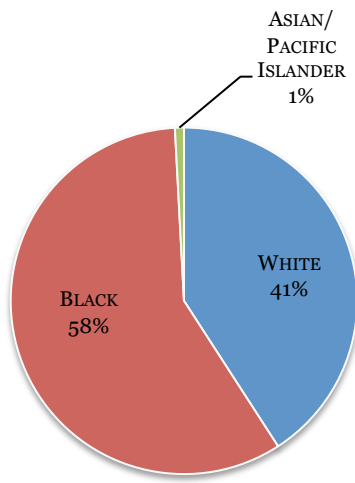
**AGE UNKNOWN FOR
3 OF 892 VICTIMS**

CHART 1.7: AGE OF PERPETRATOR



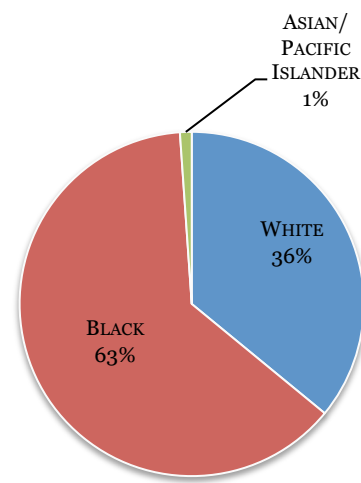
**AGE UNKNOWN FOR
8 OF 795 PERPETRATORS**

**CHART 1.8: RACE OF VICTIM
(1997 – 2008)**



**RACE UNKNOWN FOR
125 OF 843 VICTIMS**

**CHART 1.9: RACE OF PERPETRATOR
(1997-2008)**



**RACE UNKNOWN FOR
114 OF 751 PERPETRATORS**

Demographics of victims and perpetrators are outlined in **Charts 1.4** through **1.9**. **Charts 1.8** and **1.9** include only those incidents reported in UCR Supplementary Homicide Reports.^{11, 12} The vast majority of victims are female, age 18-40, while the vast majority of perpetrators are male, age 18-40.

African-Americans account for a disproportionate number of fatalities. Although African-Americans currently comprise 32% of Louisiana’s population, nearly two-thirds of fatalities involved an African-American victim.

Taking all of these facts into consideration, the **most common scenario** for a domestic violence fatality can be characterized as follows:

**AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALE PERPETRATOR, AGE 18-30
KILLS HIS CURRENT INTIMATE PARTNER OR SPOUSE
AN AFRICAN-AMERICAN FEMALE, AGE 18-30
WITH A FIREARM**

¹¹ Detailed SHR data for 2009 was not available at time of publication; therefore, 2009 homicide data is not included in Charts 1.8 and 1.9.

¹² The UCR Program employs only four racial designations: (1) White; (2) Black; (3) American Indian; and (4) Asian/Pacific Islander. Additionally, the voluntary nature of the UCR Program often results in incomplete data.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following six parishes participated in the Domestic Violence Fatality Review (DVFR) Project: Ascension, Iberia, Ouachita, Rapides, St. Mary, and Union.

Local DVFR teams were asked to review domestic violence related homicides in which all legal proceedings were completed or domestic violence related murder-suicides, and were encouraged to complete two fatality reviews. In total, nine cases were reviewed by the six local teams.

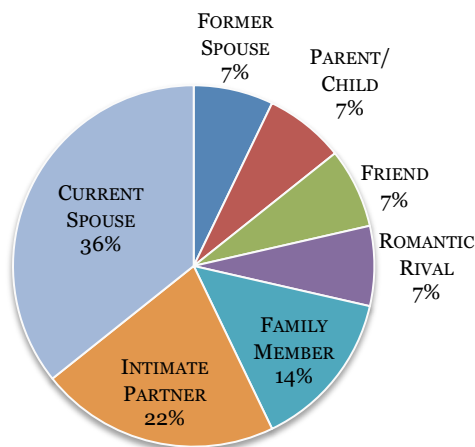
NOTE ON METHODOLOGY

Local fatality review teams were required to complete a data collection form. The primary source for data was court records, which typically included some of the following documents: coroner’s reports, court transcripts, police incident reports, protective orders, warrants, witness statements, and victim impact statements. Media reports were also consulted and some local teams conducted interviews.

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of the following findings. The small number of cases limits the degree to which the findings can be generalized from the study sample to the entire population. Additionally, the available data was not collected for research purposes; nor was it collected in a systemic or consistent manner as investigating and reporting procedures vary by jurisdiction. For these reasons, readers are cautioned from drawing firm, predictive conclusions from this data.

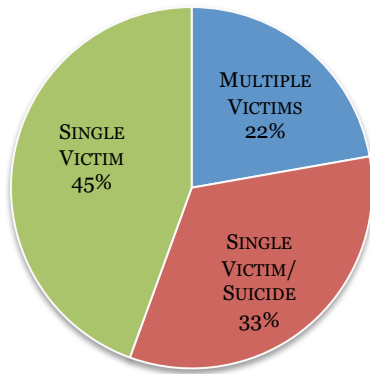
FINDINGS

CHART 2.1: VICTIM/PERPETRATOR RELATIONSHIP



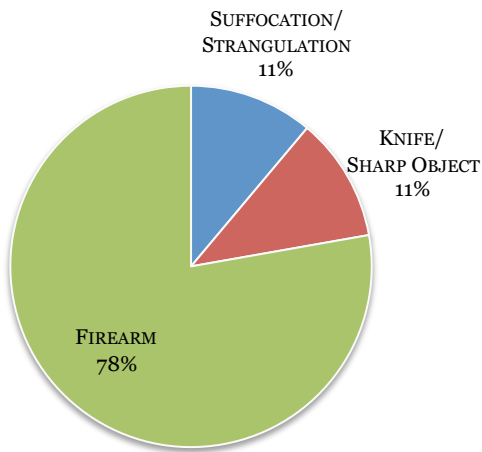
The domestic violence perpetrator murdered the domestic violence victim in eight cases; in the remaining case, the perpetrator murdered his mother-in-law. One perpetrator murdered his former intimate partner and her new intimate partner. Another perpetrator murdered his current spouse, their minor child, his mother-in-law, and a family friend.

CHART 2.2: TYPE OF INCIDENT



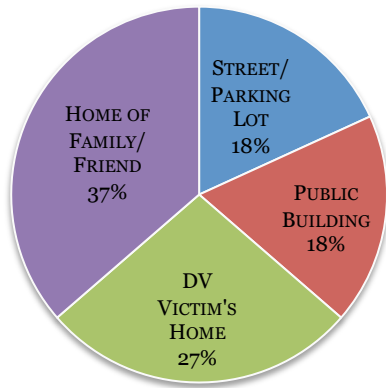
The nine cases reviewed involved a total of thirteen victims. Four cases involved a single victim, three cases involved a single victim/suicide, and two cases involved multiple victims.

CHART 2.3: AGENT OF INJURY



As in the larger sample of domestic violence related fatalities, firearms were the primary agent of injury, followed by knives and sharp objects.

CHART 2.4: LOCATION OF FATALITY



Approximately two-thirds of the domestic violence related fatalities reviewed occurred in a home, and the remaining one-third occurred in a public space.

CHART 2.5: SEX OF VICTIM

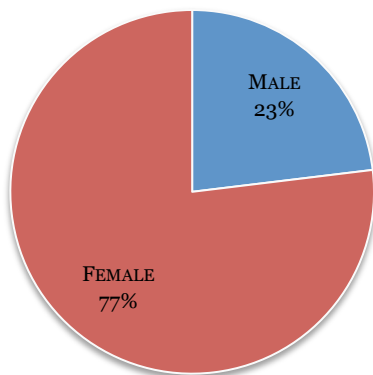
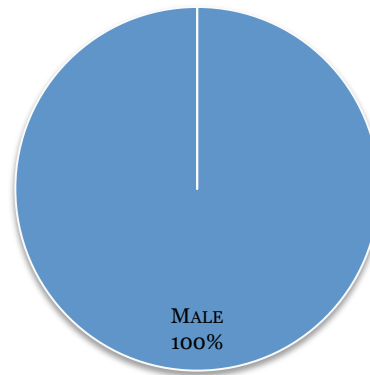
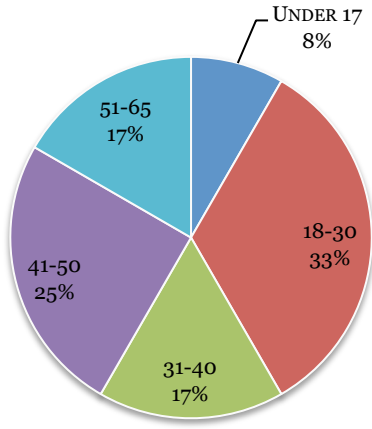


CHART 2.6: SEX OF PERPETRATOR



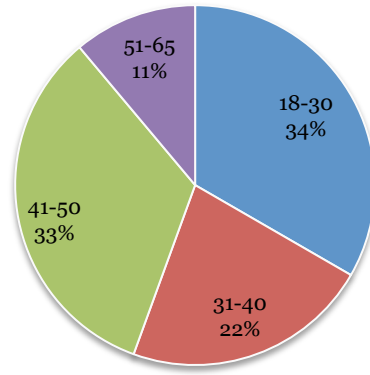
All cases reviewed involved at least one female victim and a male perpetrator.

CHART 2.7: AGE OF VICTIM



Victims ranged from 2 to 54 years of age.

CHART 2.8: AGE OF PERPETRATOR



Perpetrators ranged from 22 to 53 years of age.

CHART 2.9: RACE OF VICTIM

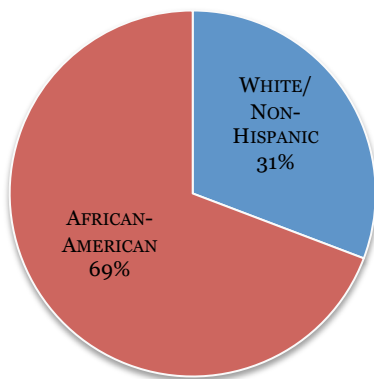
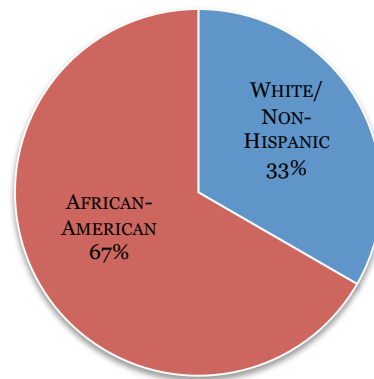
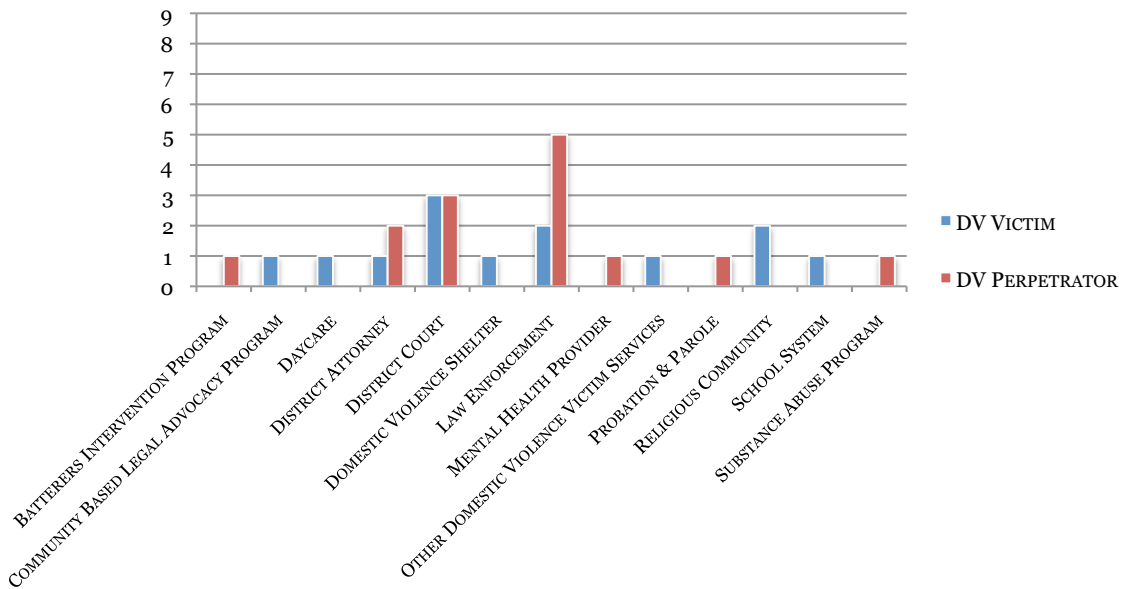


CHART 2.10: RACE OF PERPETRATOR



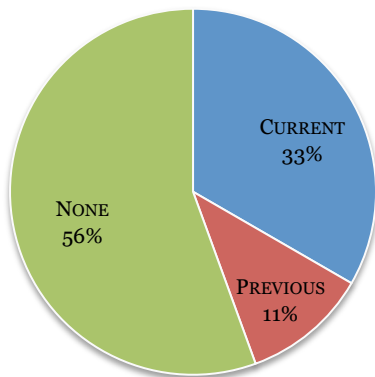
Approximately two-thirds of victims and perpetrators were African-American. The remaining one-third were White/Non-Hispanic.

CHART 2.11: AGENCY INVOLVEMENT WITH DV VICTIM AND PERPETRATOR 5 YEARS PRIOR TO FATALITY



The agencies most likely to have been involved with the domestic violence victim and perpetrator in the five years preceding the fatality were law enforcement, district courts, and district attorneys.

CHART 2.12: PREVIOUS OR CURRENT ORDERS OF PROTECTION ISSUED AGAINST PERPETRATOR AND TRANSMITTED TO THE LOUISIANA PROTECTIVE ORDER REGISTRY



A search of the Louisiana Protective Order Registry returned results in four of the nine cases reviewed. In three cases, the perpetrator was the subject of an active Order of Protection filed in the registry at the time of the fatality. In the fourth case, the perpetrator was the subject of an Order of Protection that expired prior to the fatality.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Local fatality review teams were also asked to submit recommendations for systems changes based upon the themes and problems identified in the cases under review.

The following themes emerged from the recommendations: (1) Education; (2) Law enforcement; (3) The Court System; (4) Family violence programs; and (5) Coordinated Community Response.

EDUCATION

Most local teams recommended continued training for those organizations and agencies servicing domestic violence victims, with a special emphasis on law enforcement and the court system.

These reviews found that domestic violence victims and perpetrators were most likely to interact with law enforcement agencies and the court system. In addition to knowledge of the laws relating to domestic violence, it is essential that law enforcement officers, judges, hearing officers, and prosecutors have an understanding of the dynamics of domestic violence.

Mandatory domestic violence training for law enforcement officers, judges, hearing officers, and prosecutors should include instruction on the following preventative measures:

Law Enforcement Officers

- Full compliance with all domestic violence laws, including but not limited to the duties of law enforcement officers and the laws governing arrest, enforcement of protective orders, and the crimes of domestic abuse battery, stalking, and violation of protective orders
- Improved evidence collection, enabling successful prosecution with or without the victim's cooperation
- Use of lethality assessment tools when responding to domestic violence calls

Judges, Hearing Officers, and Prosecutors

- Full compliance with all domestic violence laws relating to civil, criminal, and juvenile proceedings
- Use of lethality assessment tools
- Use of all available resources when making a bail determination, including arrest and conviction records and the records contained in the Louisiana Protective Order Registry
- Use of Uniform Abuse Prevention Orders as a part of the disposition, sentence or bail condition of a criminal matter
- Referral to Batterers Intervention Program
- Adequate monitoring of domestic violence perpetrators
- Implementation of best practices for handling domestic violence cases in civil, criminal, and juvenile proceedings

Victim advocates could also benefit from continued training that addresses the dynamics of domestic violence, Louisiana's domestic violence laws, and Louisiana's criminal justice system. Additional training is needed for victim advocates that plan to conduct trainings for law enforcement officers, judges, hearing officers, and prosecutors.

Education was also recommended for other community members, such as mental health and medical professionals, first responders, and faith community leaders.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Frequently, a law enforcement officer is the first contact a domestic violence victim has with the criminal justice system. The following recommendations were made for law enforcement agencies seeking to improve their response to domestic violence:

- Increase information sharing between law enforcement agencies to assist in identifying domestic violence perpetrators
- Fully comply with the Louisiana Public Records Act (La. R.S. 44:1, et seq.), which states that an initial police report is public record
- Release initial police reports for calls flagged as domestic violence to the local family violence program and district attorney's office
- Contract with local family violence program to provide support and assistance for victims

In order to insure the safety of both the domestic violence victim and responding officer, the following recommendations were made for law enforcement officers responding to a domestic violence call:

- Use all reasonable means to prevent further abuse
 - Arrest the domestic violence perpetrator, with or without a warrant pursuant to La. C.Cr.P. Art. 213, if a felony or a misdemeanor crime which endangers the safety of the abused person, whether or not the offense occurred in the presence of the officer
 - Use all reasonable means to enforce an Order of Protection, including immediate arrest of the violator
 - Arrest the predominant aggressor—not both parties—as determined using the factors listed in La. R.S. 46:2140(B)
 - Notify the domestic violence victim of the availability of community assistance for victims
 - Provide a carbon-copy referral slip with contact information for the local family violence program and document referral in report
 - Prior to leaving residence, and in addition to providing a referral slip, assist the victim in calling the local family violence program
 - Arrange, provide, or assist in the procurement of transportation for the domestic violence victim to the local family violence program
 - Notify the domestic violence victim of the right to initiate criminal or civil proceedings and of the availability of an Order of Protection
 - Provide and complete victim notice and registration forms in compliance with La. R.S. 46:1844(T)
- Have dispatch provide a detailed history of previous calls involving a domestic violence perpetrator and/or residence so that responding officers are aware of any risk factors they may encounter in their interaction with the perpetrator and victim
- Implement policies and procedures to prevent compassion fatigue

THE COURT SYSTEM

Louisiana has already provided judges, hearing officers, and prosecutors with excellent tools to prevent and respond to domestic violence. In addition to fully complying with all domestic violence laws, the following recommendations for the court system were made:

- Conduct a systems analysis for the purpose of identifying areas needing improvement
- Provide for specialized training in domestic violence, including lethality assessment
- Develop and employ best practices for handling domestic violence cases in civil, criminal, and juvenile proceedings
- Encourage increased communication between different members of the civil, criminal, and juvenile justice systems, including judges, law enforcement, district attorneys, and public defenders
- Utilize available resources when making a bail determination, including arrest and conviction records and Orders of Protection submitted to Louisiana Protective Order Registry
- Utilize LPOR Form 17 and include Criminal Order of Protection in bail restrictions, sentencing orders, and conditions of probation
- Encourage improved court security through the use of metal detectors, cameras, and other safety measures
- Encourage establishment of effective Batterers Intervention Programs in every jurisdiction
- Refer defendants to Batterers Intervention Program, rather than generic anger management program, and monitor progress

FAMILY VIOLENCE PROGRAMS

In addition to providing comprehensive services to victims, family violence programs promote public awareness of domestic violence through community outreach initiatives. The following recommendations were made for those programs seeking to improve victim services and community relations:

- Promote collaboration between local family violence programs, district courts, law enforcement agencies, coroners and district attorneys to provide more effective protection for domestic violence victims
- Increase community outreach and education initiatives
- Promote the use of release authorization forms, when a lethality assessment so merits, in order to disclose information that may be of use in the protection of a victim, prosecution of a perpetrator, or assistance in the fatality review process, in the event of a fatality
- Develop protocols for responding to a domestic violence fatality occurring in program's service area
- Improve media relations by providing members of the press with domestic violence training opportunities

COORDINATED COMMUNITY RESPONSE

The DVFR Project is advocacy-based and adheres to the basic principle that communities must work together to provide safety for victims—a coordinated community response. The following recommendations promote cooperation, communication and collaboration among agencies, organizations, and individuals that provide services to domestic violence victims:

- Establish a community support system for a domestic violence victim who has initiated contact with law enforcement
- Develop public service announcements to increase informational services for the community-at-large
- Develop accessible resources for the community-at-large on preventing and responding to domestic violence

CONCLUSION

The number of domestic violence related fatalities outlined in this report is staggering; these fatalities have touched every corner of this state.

While the present goals and objectives of the DVFR Project have been completed successfully, much remains to be done before the ultimate goal of reducing the incidence of domestic violence, and decreasing domestic violence fatalities, throughout Louisiana can be achieved. To that end, the DVFR Advisory Committee recommends the following measures:

- **Establish an Approved Domestic Violence Training Curriculum for Members of the Civil, Criminal, and Juvenile Justice Systems:** These reviews indicate that domestic violence victims and perpetrators are most likely to interact with law enforcement agencies and the court system. An approved curriculum for members of the civil, criminal, and juvenile justice systems, conducted by certified trainers, would ensure quality controls on domestic violence education throughout the state.
- **Establish a State Domestic Violence Fatality Review Panel:** A panel consisting of representatives of state agencies and organizations involved in the investigation, intervention, and prevention of domestic violence is essential for the development and promotion of policies designed to reduce domestic violence fatalities. The panel can be modeled upon the existing Louisiana Child Death Review Panel.
- **Establish Additional Local and Regional Fatality Review Teams:** The DVFR Project was able to provide six parishes with the opportunity to conduct fatality reviews and to collaborate with local agencies, organizations, and individuals investigating and intervening in domestic violence. Ideally, all parishes would have the opportunity to establish a fatality review team. The DVFR Panel could also authorize local and regional fatality review teams; alternatively, each parish should establish a Coordinated Community Response Team.
- **Enact Legislation Enabling the Domestic Violence Fatality Review Panel to Effectively Conduct Reviews:** Similar to the Child Death Review Panel model, legislation providing for confidentiality, authorizing access to records, and limiting liability will be required before the DVFR Panel (and local and regional teams) can effectively conduct fatality reviews. Unless the fatality review process is granted statutory exemption from the Louisiana Public Records Act (La. R.S. 44:1, et seq.), the DVFR Panel will be limited to reviewing those cases in which all criminal and civil matters have been resolved. Additionally, to conduct a thorough review the DVFR Panel will need access to documents that cannot be released unless so authorized by statute (i.e., medical records, coroner's reports).

- **Develop Protocols for Law Enforcement Agencies and Medical Examiners:** Data collection will continue to be inconsistent until improved methods for identifying domestic violence related homicides and suicides are developed. Protocols currently employed by the Child Death Review Panel may be of assistance.
- **Develop a Centralized Database for Domestic Violence Related Fatalities:** Statistics regarding domestic violence homicides will continue to be incomplete until a uniform data collection method is developed. Other states have employed the National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS), which includes an intimate partner violence module.
- **Establish a Statewide Violence Against Women Task Force:** Violence against women is a complex issue. Although domestic violence is considered the most common form of violence against women, multiple forms of abuse, including physical, emotional, psychological, and sexual, are interrelated. A multi-disciplinary task force on violence against women is essential for the development of comprehensive and interdisciplinary responses to the vast social and economic effects of violence against women in Louisiana.
- **Promote Systems that Facilitate Criminal Justice Information Sharing:** With increased mobility of criminals comes the need for data systems that are capable of linking information between and across agencies and jurisdictions. Louisiana has shown much progress with the development and implementation of the Louisiana Civil and Criminal Information Exchange (LACCIE) system. As technology continues to improve, Louisiana must continue to refine its information sharing systems.

The DVFR Advisory Committee and the Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence remain committed to the goals and methods of domestic violence fatality review and will seek the funding and support required to implement these recommendations. The information presented in this report will inform our work and assist us in planning for the future.

Readers are encouraged to use this report as a tool in analyzing past agency responses to domestic violence fatalities for the existence of systemic gaps that hinder victim safety and perpetrator accountability.



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