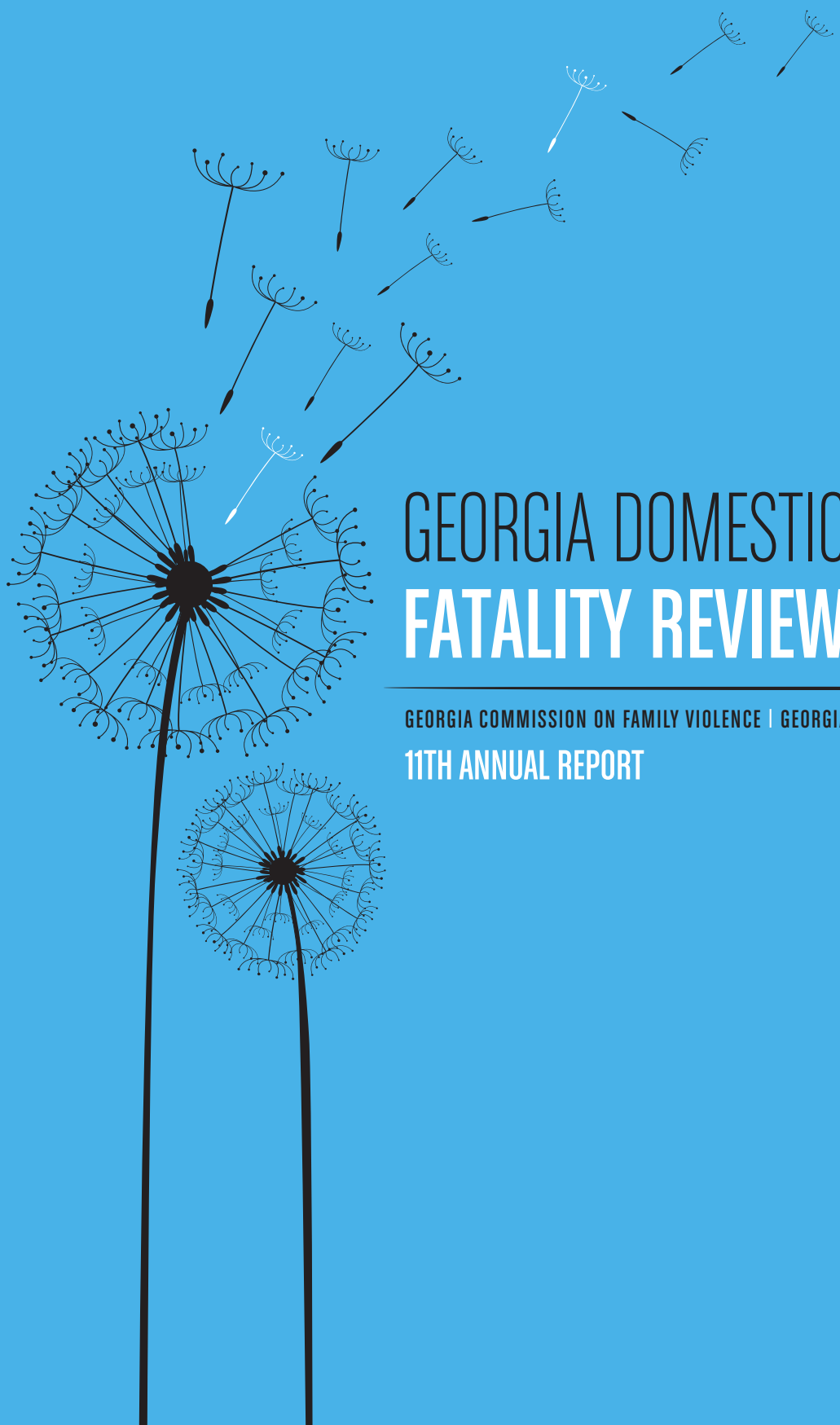


GEORGIA DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FATALITY REVIEW PROJECT

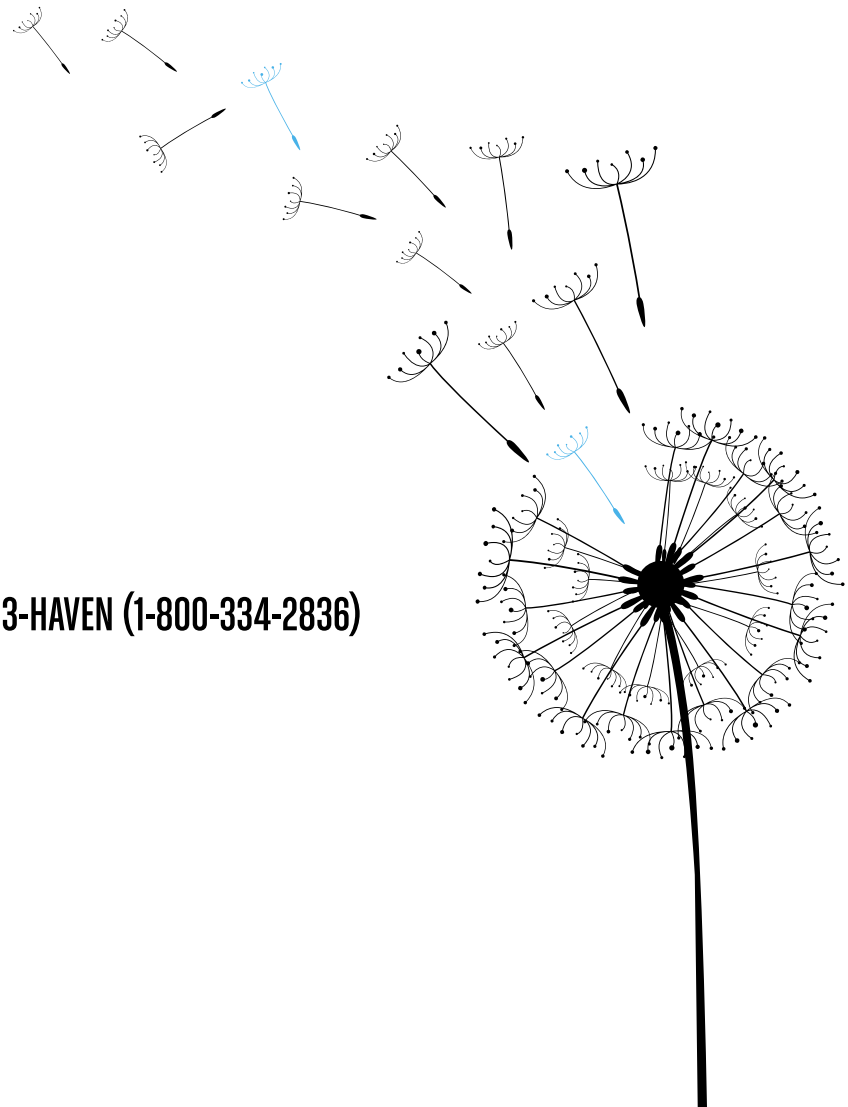
GEORGIA COMMISSION ON FAMILY VIOLENCE | GEORGIA COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE | 2014

11TH ANNUAL REPORT

A NOTE ON GRAPHIC DESIGN

Dandelions appear on the cover of this Report and throughout its pages. Dandelions are widely known as a symbol of hope and good fortune. They also represent strong unions, which in the context of our work may represent successful collaborations. With roots still firmly planted, the seeds of the dandelion take flight. Blown by the wind, these seeds propagate and become more, not less. Seeds of change have taken root across our entire state, often through local community collaboration and new, innovative ideas. Much of this change has been grassroots in nature and organic — growing out of local relationships and partnerships.

To reflect the various communities comprising our state, you will see different landscapes depicted throughout this Report — from the mountains of North Georgia to the coastal plains in the South. These landscapes are included to showcase the diversity of communities in Georgia where innovative change is happening. There also is great diversity in the systems change work accomplished around the state. Different communities and different collaborations have different approaches, but are led by a common thread: creating safer communities for all people in our state.



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Regarding Gender Language in this Report

According to the Bureau of Justice, women account for 85% of victims of intimate partner violence and men account for the remaining 15% (Bureau of Justice Special Report, Intimate Partner Violence, 1993–2010, November 2012). The majority of domestic violence homicides in Georgia tracked by the Project involve men killing women in heterosexual relationships. The language we use in this report reflects these realities. However, it should not be construed to suggest that all victims are women and all perpetrators are men. We acknowledge that men are abused by women in intimate partner relationships and are sometimes killed by them. Domestic violence also impacts same-sex relationships at the same rate (or higher) as heterosexual relationships, and lives are also lost.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the 2014 Georgia Domestic Violence Fatality Review Project Annual Report. This Report is intended to be used as a tool for change in any community, whether or not its members have participated in the Georgia Domestic Violence Fatality Review Project (hereafter called "the Project").

> **We are at a critical juncture where the knowledge gleaned from fatality reviews must be turned into action.**

In our 11 years of conducting fatality reviews throughout the state, we have identified unmistakable trends, learned universal lessons, and made clear recommendations for necessary change. Each of the recommendations put forth by the Project are supported by case examples and hold great potential to increase safety and choices for victims and also strengthen mechanisms for holding abusers accountable — all with the ultimate goal of reducing the number of domestic violence incidents and related deaths.

In the 2013 Report, we summarize 10 key findings drawn from 10 years of conducting fatality reviews. We focus on areas that were repeatedly identified as significant in reviewed cases and which, if addressed, could have a significant positive impact in the lives of domestic violence victims and reduce the number of domestic violence-related deaths in Georgia. These key findings include: Children Exposed to Domestic Violence; Teen Dating Violence; Economic Abuse; The Role of the Criminal Legal System; Civil Protective Orders and the Courts; Firearms and Domestic Violence Fatalities; Family, Friends and the Faith Community; Detachment, Separation and the Risks of Leaving; The Suicide-Homicide Connection; and Barriers to Accessing Services.

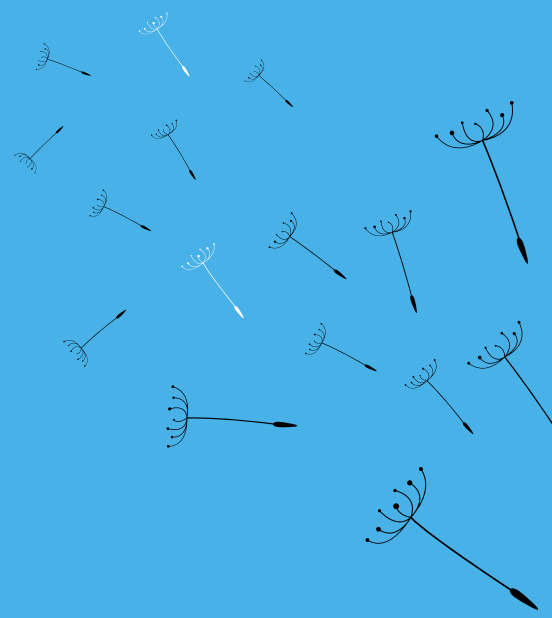
Each section in last year's Report contains clear recommendations for change coupled with resources for implementation. These recommendations were written with the intention of guiding our work for years to come. The Project has since shifted its focus from reviewing new cases to implementing recommendations made from previously reviewed cases. While select Fatality Review Teams still review new cases, the Project now also focuses on supporting communities in their work to make lasting change in their local areas. This supports the Project's intended purpose: Honoring those who have lost their lives and changing outcomes for future victims.

This year's Report builds upon the 2013 Report in a very important way: Following this same format, the Report is divided into chapters aligned with the 10 key findings and highlights work being done by Family Violence Task Forces, Fatality Review Teams, domestic violence programs and other collaborations in Georgia communities which address recommendations. We have asked the highlighted communities, partnerships and programs to share their highs and lows, their lessons learned and their advice for others interested in doing similar work.

> We hope you will draw **inspiration and encouragement** from these examples and realize change is possible in your community, too.

We know we have not highlighted all of the fantastic systems change work being done around the state in this Report. As we move forward, we will be looking at new ways to network communities who are doing similar work and to broadly share ideas from around the state — not just in the Report, but in other ways throughout the year. Please reach out and let us know how you have used the recommendations from the Reports so we may share with others.

FATALITY REVIEW PROJECT SURVEY RESULTS



In fall 2014, the Project released an **online survey seeking feedback** from constituents.

Its questions were designed to help guide future issues of the Report, solicit suggestions for future focus areas of the Project, and allow users to reflect on what is valuable to them, share how they are using the information in the Report, give their opinions on shortcomings, and express what changes could support their needs.

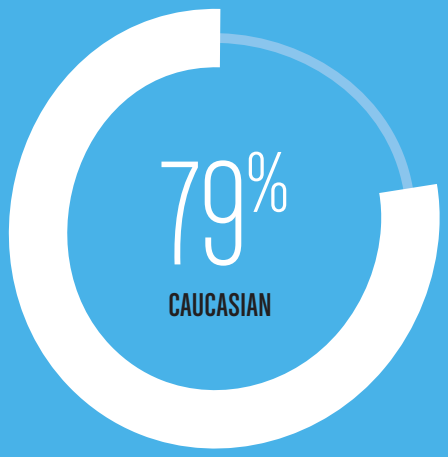
WE HAVE REOPENED THE SURVEY TO CONTINUE RECEIVING FEEDBACK FROM READERS. WE ENCOURAGE ANY READER TO PLEASE VISIT WWW.GCFV.ORG TO COMPLETE THE SURVEY AT YOUR EARLIEST CONVENIENCE.

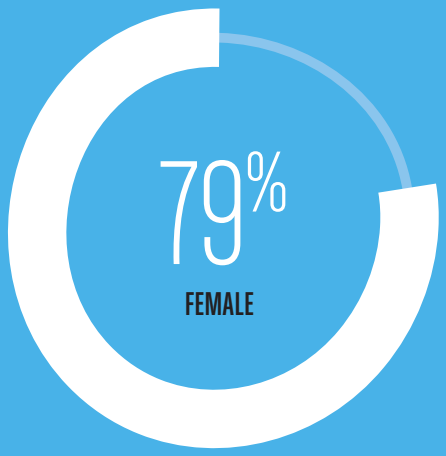
Respondents to the survey were mostly Caucasian (79%) females (79%) located in the Metro Atlanta (25%) or northern (49% combined) areas of the state. Most respondents (55%) work as domestic violence advocates, in criminal justice systems (21%) and community advocacy programs (18%). Notably lacking from the respondents is diversity in (1) regional representation of the central and southern areas of the state, (2) racial identities and (3) faith-based organizations, medical providers and school systems.

ETHNICITY OF RESPONDENTS:

79% Caucasian
13% African-American
4% Latino or Hispanic
1% Asian/Pacific Islander
1% Multi Racial
1% Other

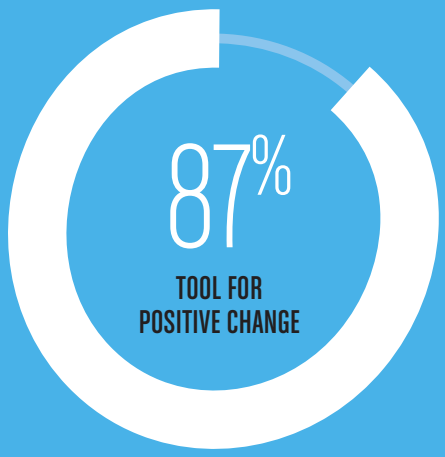
SURVEY RESPONDENTS

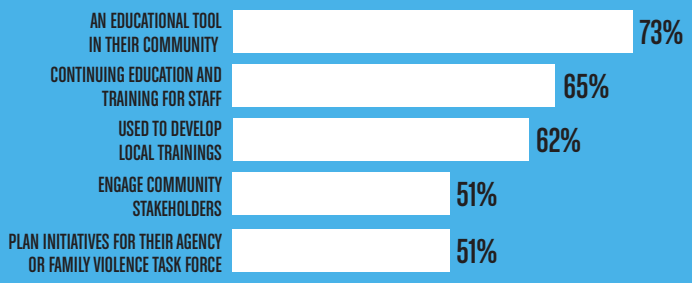




FATALITY REVIEW PROJECT SURVEY RESULTS

HOW ARE RESPONDENTS USING THE REPORT?





Overwhelmingly, we received positive feedback about the usefulness of the Report as a tool for positive change (87%), as relevant to domestic violence work in Georgia (90%), and as effectively informing readers of new research and data in each issue (88%). When asked about availability and delivery preferences, a clear majority (65%) said they prefer a print copy with access to a PDF document online, so they can reprint particular pages or refer the Report to others.

Another area of focus in the survey was the length of the Report. Though various options were offered, such as shorter reports released more frequently, or larger reports on a less-than-annual basis, most respondents (80%) said they prefer the Report as it is currently produced. We also received favorable feedback on ideas such as quarterly newsletters on what other communities do, or webinars about how other communities implement recommendations. When asked how they use the Report, most respondents said they use it as an educational tool in their community (73%) and for continuing education and training for staff (65%). Others said the Report is used to develop local trainings (62%), as well as to engage community stakeholders (51%) and plan initiatives for their agency or Family Violence Task Force (51%).

Several questions in the survey were designed to elicit open feedback. The answers given in these sections revealed large segments of respondents struggling with implementation of fatality review recommendations on some level. Often these struggles were due to lack of participation by or conflicting priorities among key Family Violence Task Force members. Others struggled with outreach, education, training and funding issues.

SOME SUCCESSES SHARED BY RESPONDENTS:

"Our task force uses the Report to guide our focus for systematic changes. We determine training topics and audiences to train based on recommendations from the Report. Our agency has revised internal tools such as safety plans and intake forms to screen for acts of violence we had not historically included on our forms."

"We have begun to forge alliances with the faith-based community and have provided information to pastors to assist in their work. One pastor recently dedicated an entire sermon to domestic violence and our Board attended the service so the members would be able to put a face with a name in case they ever needed help."

"Our agency partnered with the local Family Violence Task Force to provide roll call trainings for law enforcement and provided materials to Deputies that could be given to victims on-scene. Additionally, we cast a wider net in placement of awareness brochures to attempt to make more of the community aware of available services."

SOME CHALLENGES SHARED BY RESPONDENTS:

"Funding is a constant issue making it challenging to tackle recommendations."

"There are challenges in our area due to agencies not collaborating as they should. Too many entities see themselves as the only stakeholder and lessen the value they place on other community stakeholders and agencies."

"Most of our difficulties stem from funding problems and lack of time available from stakeholders to participate."

When asked what types of training the Project could provide to best support them, respondents answered they wanted more training on the implementation initiatives developed by the Project (66%), including the Roll Call Training Manual, Safe Sacred Space, and Domestic Violence in the Workplace. The next most commonly selected areas of needed support were training on creating change in systems (47%) and building team dynamics (33%).

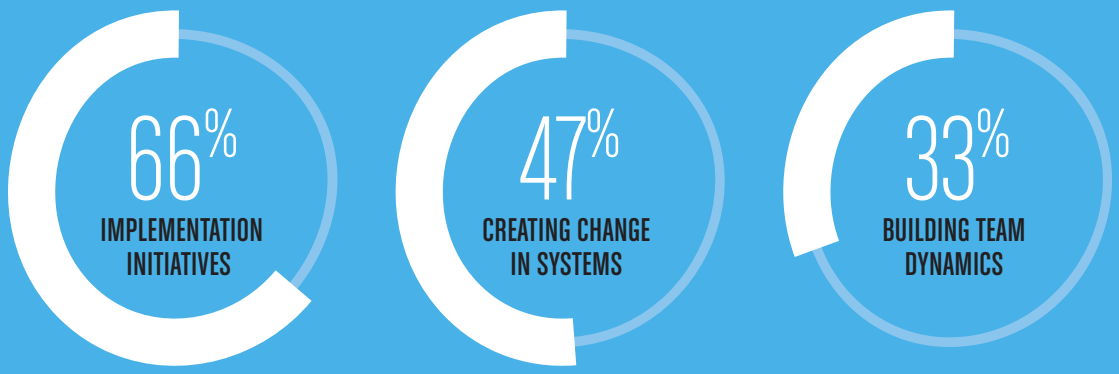
WE HEARD YOU!

The results from the survey have already influenced the work of the Project. In November, we hosted a one-and-a-half-day training in Macon to assist Fatality Review Teams in their work to create change and implement fatality review recommendations in their communities. The training addressed several areas of need identified in the survey, including an overview and best practices for implementing the three training initiatives developed by the Project for the faith community, law enforcement and the workplace. The training, facilitated by Catherine Perry (founder of InwardBound Center for Nonprofit Leadership), also addressed masterful leadership skills, leading through change and conflict, and team dynamics within the context of Fatality Review Teams.

We also created a new website to provide quick access to our Reports, key findings and other resources available to support implementation of recommendations. The new website has allowed us to increase our online distribution for the Report, freeing Project funds for other initiatives. Moving forward, keep an eye out for more trainings and online webinars directed to support training needs as identified by survey respondents.

Learn more at www.georgiafatalityreview.com.

TYPES OF TRAINING PREFERRED



camila's story

Camila and Javier were natives of Mexico. They were in a relationship for 16 years and had three children. Javier immigrated to the U.S in 1996 and moved near several of his family members. He worked in textile mills and construction. Javier's employer told the homicide investigators he was able to understand instructions in English without an interpreter. However, it was apparent from the interview transcript that Javier did not speak or understand English well.

Camila immigrated to the U.S. a couple of years after Javier. She brought their second child (Jesus) with her, while their eldest child chose to stay in Mexico. Camila gave birth to their youngest child in the U.S. and found work in a factory. Jesus attended the local public middle school where he learned to speak English. It appears Jesus often interpreted for Camila because she did not speak English.

Camila's first documented contact with law enforcement occurred 8 months prior to the homicide. The officer's report noted there was a language barrier preventing him from understanding exactly what was going on. Jesus told the officer his father had beat his mother several times recently and held a gun to her head. Camila showed the officer bruises on her arms and on her back. The officer escorted her and the two children to a homeless shelter for women and children, where he took pictures of her injuries. Javier was not home at the time.

The following day, Camila went to the police department to give a full statement. Due to the language barrier, the officer spoke with Camila as her son interpreted for her. Camila again told officers Javier beat her several times recently. He accused her of cheating on him and held a gun to the head of one of the children, telling her he would kill the child if she did not tell him who she had been seeing. She also stated he had been drinking alcohol and usually became violent when drunk. The officers took more pictures of her injuries, scheduled an appointment to interview her further and secured warrants for Javier's arrest. Additional charges were added after Javier's arrest and he was ultimately charged with Family Violence Aggravated Assault, Cruelty to Children and misdemeanor Battery.

After she left the police department, Camila filed for a Temporary Protective Order (TPO) petition with help from the legal advocate at the domestic violence program. Her TPO petition read as follows:

> *"The Respondent came home from work and pulled a gun out and accused the Petitioner of cheating on him. She began crying and he calmed down. Two days later, he came home from work and said again that she was cheating on him. He was drunk and told her, 'For every time I think you slept with him, I will hit you.' He began punching her, resulting in the bruising on her arms. The youngest child started screaming for him to stop when he kicked her in the ribs. He held a gun to her arm and also grabbed the oldest boy and held the gun to his head and told her he would kill the boy if she did not tell who it was she was cheating with. [During] the past 16 years, this relationship has been violent. He has sexually abused her often. He drinks and when he is drunk he becomes violent. He will beat her up if she rejects his sexual advances. He verbally abuses the children as well as herself. He slaps her face, punches her with his fist, and kicks her. He has threatened her with a knife in the past."*

The Judge granted her request for a TPO and a second hearing was scheduled for three weeks later. The Judge ordered the Sheriff's Department to retrieve all of Javier's weapons, which were located at his cousin's house. He had taken four handguns there three days before the police were called and asked the cousin to hold onto them for him.

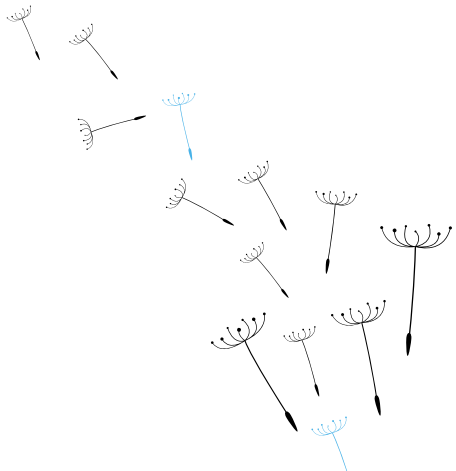
Three weeks later, Camila's request for a six-month protective order was granted. Javier was ordered to stay 300 yards away from her and the children. She was awarded temporary custody of the children and Javier was ordered to pay $80 per week in child support. The order also specified law enforcement was to maintain possession of Javier's weapons. Unable to make bond, Javier remained in jail for four months. The criminal charges against him were eventually *nolle prossed* and he was released from jail.

Five months to the day after he was released from jail, Javier hid in the bushes outside the apartment where Camila was living with her children and new boyfriend. Javier

confronted the new boyfriend outside of the apartment as he returned home from work. Javier pointed his gun at him and demanded he open the door to the apartment slowly, without entering. After he opened the door, Javier shot him repeatedly in the back. Javier then entered the apartment through the living room where their two children were asleep on the sofa. He found Camila in her bedroom and shot her repeatedly while she was in bed. The sound of gunshots awakened their son and he saw his father fleeing the residence. He called the police and told them he was afraid his father would come back to the house and kill him, too. Both Camilla and her new boyfriend died from their injuries.

Javier was later found by police officers and found guilty of two counts of murder and one count of aggravated stalking. He was sentenced to life in prison with the possibility of parole.

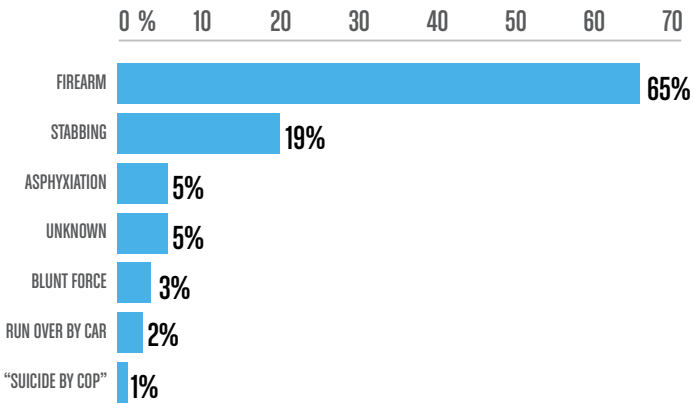
** Pseudonyms used*



1 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE-RELATED DEATHS IN GEORGIA 2014

COUNTY	NUMBER OF DEATHS
Appling	1
Bibb	3
Brooks	2
Bulloch	1
Calhoun	1
Candler	2
Carroll	3
Chatham	4
Chattooga	1
Cherokee	3
Cobb	8
Coweta	1
DeKalb	8
Dooly	2
Douglas	5
Franklin	3
Fulton	15
Glynn	2
Gwinnett	9
Hall	3
Henry	1
Houston	1
Jackson	1
Liberty	1
Lowndes	2
McDuffie	1
Meriwether	2
Muscogee	7
Newton	1
Paulding	4
Peach	1
Pierce	1
Richmond	3
Spalding	1
Sumter	2
Tattnall	1
Thomas	2
Tift	1
Towns	2
Union	2
Walker	1
Walton	1
Warren	1
TOTAL	117

2 CAUSE OF DEATH IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE-RELATED DEATHS IN GEORGIA 2014



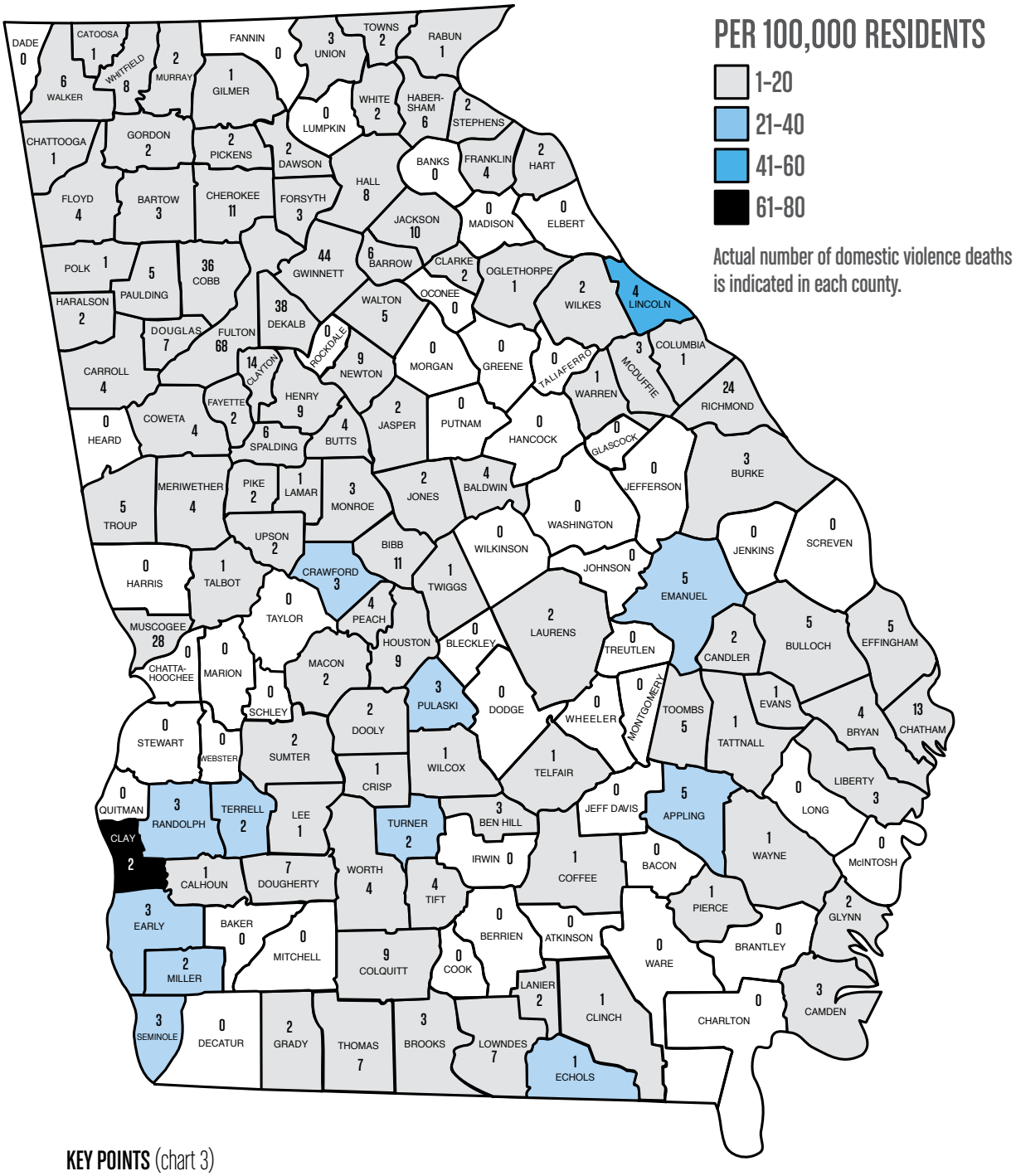
KEY POINTS (charts 1 & 2)

Chart 1 includes only Georgia counties in which a domestic violence homicide is known to have occurred in 2014. Chart 2 captures the cause of death in those homicides. In 2013, the Project began including deaths in which perpetrators were killed by law enforcement officers after acting in a threatening way, often when officers were responding to a domestic violence call. This is often referred to as "suicide by cop."

A note on undercounts: We do not have complete information for all cases and acknowledge our data is an undercount of the true number of domestic violence-related fatalities in the state, in particular from the following areas: children killed by domestic violence abusers as part of an ongoing pattern of abuse in the home, same-sex relationships, homicides mistakenly classified as suicides or accidents, missing women and unsolved homicides, and suicides of domestic violence victims.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DEATHS IN GEORGIA

3 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DEATHS IN GEORGIA BY COUNTY 2010–2014



KEY POINTS (chart 3)

Chart 3 shows both the per capita homicide rate and the actual numbers of deaths by county known to have occurred between 2010–2014. Statistics were compiled by GCADV and GCFV using media-monitoring services and information collected from domestic violence programs statewide; the information was normalized using 2010 Census data. This count represents all the domestic violence-related deaths known to us at the time of this Report, including intimate partners and related persons, such as new relationship partners, children and other family members. To show the full scope of loss of life due to domestic violence, the statistics also include alleged perpetrator deaths, most of whom committed suicide after killing or attempting to kill the victim(s).

4 AGENCIES AND SERVICES KNOWN TO BE INVOLVED WITH VICTIMS OR PERPETRATORS IN THE FIVE YEARS PRIOR TO THE FATALITY 2004-2014

	AGENCY / SERVICE / PROGRAM	VICTIMS		PERPETRATORS	
		#	% total cases	#	% total cases
JUSTICE SYSTEM AGENCIES	Law enforcement	76	79%	80	83%
	Prosecutor	37	39%	52	54%
	Superior court	29	30%	36	38%
	Magistrate court	29	30%	37	39%
	Civil court, including juvenile court	23	24%	22	23%
	State court	21	22%	36	38%
	Protection order advocacy program	16	17%	1	1%
	Court-based legal advocacy	14	15%	2	2%
	Probation	11	11%	36	38%
	Municipal court	6	6%	9	9%
	Legal Aid	4	4%	0	0%
	Parole	1	1%	9	9%
SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCIES	Child protective services (DFCS)	12	13%	11	11%
	TANF or food stamps	6	6%	3	3%
	Child-care services	5	5%	2	2%
	WIC	5	5%	0	0%
	Medicaid	4	4%	1	1%
	Homeless shelter	2	2%	1	1%
	PeachCare	1	1%	0	0%
HEALTH CARE AGENCIES	Private physician	22	23%	15	16%
	Hospital	23	24%	19	20%
	Emergency medical care	20	21%	8	8%
	Emergency medical service (EMS)	14	15%	8	8%
	Mental health provider	10	10%	21	22%
	Substance abuse program	2	2%	5	5%
FAMILY VIOLENCE AGENCIES	Community-based advocacy	17	18%	4	4%
	Domestic violence shelter or safehouse	15	16%	0	0%
	Family Violence Intervention Program (FVIP)	2	2%	12	13%
	Sexual assault center	1	1%	1	1%
MISCELLANEOUS AGENCIES	Religious community	30	31%	20	21%
	Immigrant resettlement	2	2%	1	1%
	English as Second Language (ESL) program	1	1%	0	0%
	Anger management	1	1%	5	5%

KEY POINTS (chart 4)

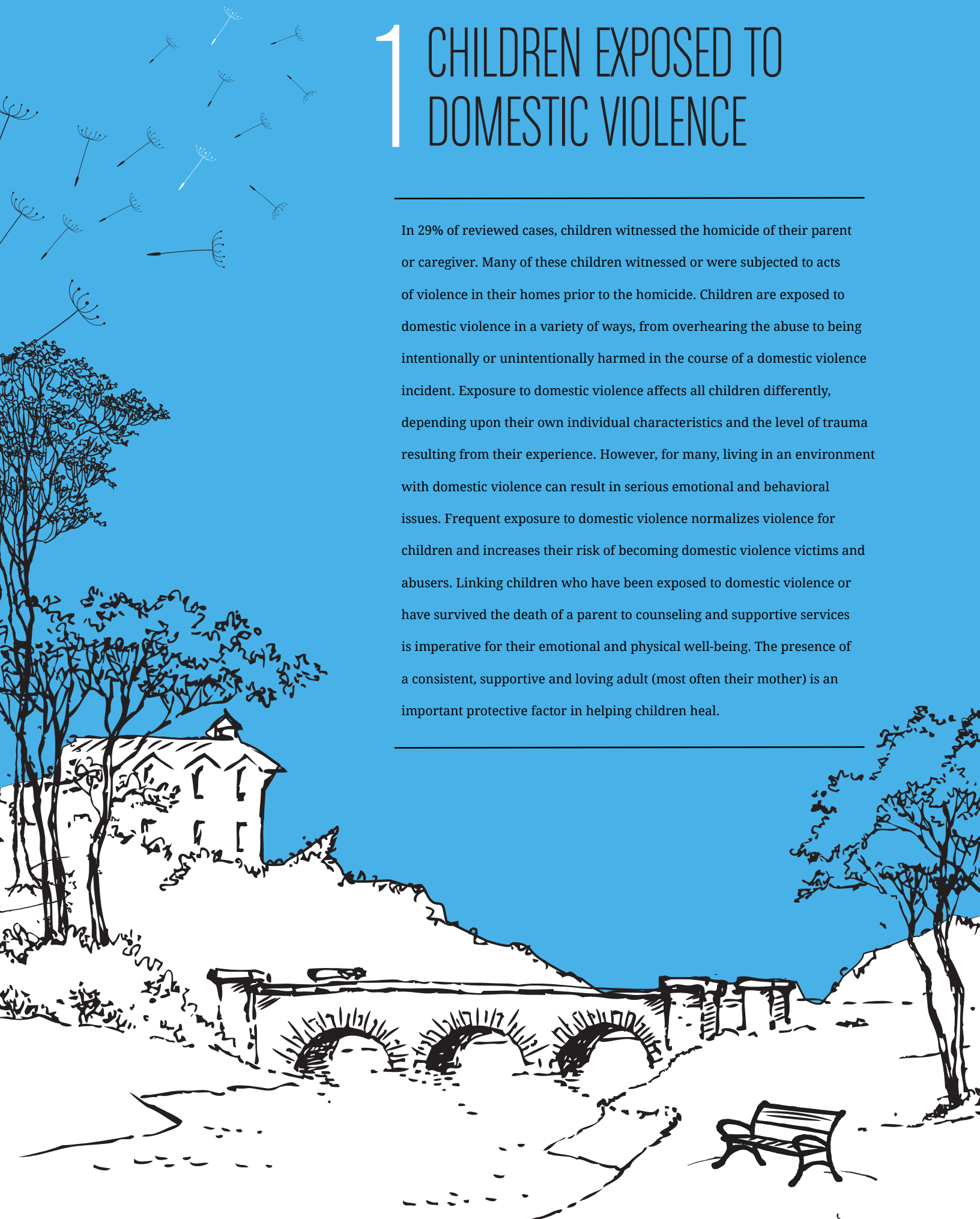
Law enforcement had the most contact with both victims (79%) and perpetrators (83%) five years prior to the homicide. Fatality review teams identified a much smaller number of victims in contact with a domestic violence program (16%) five years prior to their death. Law enforcement agencies should take proactive steps to ensure all victims they interact with are made aware of the full range of services available at the local domestic violence program. Continued law enforcement training on the dynamics of domestic violence and how and where to refer domestic violence victims for services is needed. Find out more about law enforcement trainings happening in Georgia on page 32.

In turn, domestic violence programs should take proactive steps to ensure their full range of services are known to other community agencies and community members, including friends and family members. It is important that services are accessible to victims from marginalized communities, and are culturally relevant and inviting to all victims. Learn more about steps programs are taking to make their services more accessible on page 63.

A significant number of victims (31%) and perpetrators (21%) interacted with a religious community — church, temple or mosque etc. — within five years prior to the homicide. Faith communities have great potential for offering resources, referrals and safety to congregants. Find out more about what faith communities can do on page 51.

1 CHILDREN EXPOSED TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

In 29% of reviewed cases, children witnessed the homicide of their parent or caregiver. Many of these children witnessed or were subjected to acts of violence in their homes prior to the homicide. Children are exposed to domestic violence in a variety of ways, from overhearing the abuse to being intentionally or unintentionally harmed in the course of a domestic violence incident. Exposure to domestic violence affects all children differently, depending upon their own individual characteristics and the level of trauma resulting from their experience. However, for many, living in an environment with domestic violence can result in serious emotional and behavioral issues. Frequent exposure to domestic violence normalizes violence for children and increases their risk of becoming domestic violence victims and abusers. Linking children who have been exposed to domestic violence or have survived the death of a parent to counseling and supportive services is imperative for their emotional and physical well-being. The presence of a consistent, supportive and loving adult (most often their mother) is an important protective factor in helping children heal.



CHILDREN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TOOLKIT FOR SCHOOL STAFF

Recommendations addressed through this initiative:

+ Develop relationships with and build capacity of school staff to provide resources and programs regarding children witnessing abuse at home
+ Coordinate efforts and build rapport between law enforcement and service providers to serve children exposed to domestic violence
+ Provide information about the Georgia Crime Victims Compensation Program to victims who witness domestic violence
+ Develop resources to effectively serve children exposed to domestic violence

In early 2014, the Cherokee County Domestic Violence Task Force set out to make a difference for children exposed to domestic violence in their community — and ended up creating a resource having the potential to affect the entire state. Seeing a need to prepare and inform school counselors and resource officers with information on domestic violence and the effects it has on children, the Task Force came up with the idea to create toolkits for school staff. They applied for and received a mini grant from the Georgia Commission on Family Violence and the Verizon Wireless Foundation to support their initiative in March 2014.

Leveraging existing partnerships within the Task Force, the Cherokee Family Violence Center and the Cherokee County District Attorney's Office took the lead on the project. Subcommittee members Lisa Williams and Heather Chamblee from the District Attorney's Office and Tommie DeGonzague, Lyndsey Little and Niki Lemeshka from the Family Violence Center quickly got to work turning their vision into a reality. At their first subcommittee meeting, they reviewed their goals, divided and assigned tasks to members, and identified strategic ways to accomplish each task. They called upon the connections they had developed with the local school system through previous teen dating violence presentations and secured the support of the local School Superintendent for assistance with dissemination of the toolkits.

The toolkits are set for distribution to every school counselor and school police officer in Cherokee County in 2015. The finalized toolkit includes the following information:

- fatality review findings related to children exposed to domestic violence
- warning signs of abusive relationships
- domestic violence dynamics and a "power and control wheel" illustration
- strangulation as a lethality indicator and its effects on the brain and body
- effects of witnessing family violence and its effects on student behavior
- safety planning with adults and children
- resources including information about the Georgia Crime Victims Compensation Program

For those interested in doing something similar, the subcommittee recommends starting small and capitalizing on available resources. A significant amount of content was developed free of charge by pulling a curriculum together from presentations already created by partner agencies. The subcommittee adapted these presentations to fit their purposes, which saved time and resources. Forming a focused subcommittee with clearly identified goals, delegating tasks with timelines, and regular communication are essential to success. They recommend others "be flexible with their timelines. Your goal doesn't have to change, but your timeline may need to."

Currently, the subcommittee is developing a process to keep the information in the toolkit current while also accounting for turnover rates in the local school system. They hope to use this project as a way to open a dialogue with school system personnel, sharing the goal of closing gaps in system responses to teen dating violence and children witnessing domestic violence. Subcommittee members reported that seeing a large amount of content drafted by a small group of individuals has encouraged them to take on (and conquer!) larger projects in the future.

For more information, contact Tommie DeGonzague at Tommie@cfvc.org or 770-479-1804.

CAMINAR LATINO: A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO CHILDREN, TEEN AND YOUNG ADULT SERVICES

Recommendation addressed through this initiative include:

+ Dedicate resources to effectively serve children exposed to domestic violence

In 1993, Caminar Latino launched a youth program to provide support for children of the women they were serving, many of whom had been exposed to domestic violence. The youth program was developed in response to challenges the larger program faced during its first three years, when mothers bringing their non-school-age children along to support group meetings realized the children needed services, too.

Caminar Latino responded by creating a sharing group, open to children of all ages. They quickly noticed the effect the youth program had on the women's program: More women returned to group because their children were also receiving supportive services. As the children in the program got older and their need for age-specific services increased, the program grew to provide four sharing groups, for different age brackets. Just three years ago, Caminar Latino added a fifth support group for young adults ages 16–24 because several participants aged out of the youth program but still wanted ongoing support.

Currently, one night per week, Caminar Latino facilitates eight separate groups at once: five youth sharing groups, two women's support groups, and at least one Family Violence Intervention Program group. Necessary to accomplish this feat is the generosity and partnership Caminar Latino has established with Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church for space to conduct the groups and the more than 35 trained volunteers who ensure these programs run smoothly. Many of the volunteers are connected to Caminar Latino through partnerships with nearby colleges and universities. Volunteers for the youth program are provided with specialized training regarding the effects of domestic violence on children.

Participants of the youth program must meet one criterion to participate: One or both of the young person's parents must also participate in the supportive and intervention services offered through Caminar Latino. The purpose of the youth sharing groups is to provide a supportive and safe environment for children to talk about issues faced by all youths: bullying, self-esteem, healthy relationships, children's educational rights and academic performance, and other issues particularly affecting Latino children, such as the impact of immigration policies on their families. The youths gain knowledge of safety skills, nonviolent problem-solving, coping and emotional awareness skills, and an increase in self-confidence as they develop relationships with other children in similar situations. Although domestic violence is not addressed every week, youths ages 8 years and older have an individualized safety plan, made in partnership with their mothers, should violence occur in their households.

> *"Caminar Latino has made a difference in my life in a way that helped me think. Before, I wanted to run away from my problems but now I know that there are other people with similar issues. Knowing that there are people here for me actually just helps me think about what my reactions are."*
> *— Youth participant*

A vital part of the organization's success is the longevity of its programming in the Latino community. During the past 25 years, Caminar Latino has developed strong and lasting relationships within not only the Latino community, but also the broader community, including many local school systems, the Department of Family and Children Services, and Atlanta Legal Aid. These partnerships allow Caminar Latino to holistically address issues facing Latino families in Georgia and link family members with the appropriate service providers if Caminar Latino is unable to provide the services themselves.

Executive Director Jessica Nunan says the biggest success of the youth program is watching youth participants realize their own strengths, take advantage of the possibilities that lie before them, and give back to the community at large. Because of the longevity of Caminar Latino's services and

its ability to work with families for an extended period of time, Caminar Latino staff and volunteers have witnessed incredible resiliency in many of the children, despite the challenges they face. During the past two decades, she has seen many children progress through the youth program — first as children, struggling to make sense of the violence they have witnessed, to young adults asking for help with college applications, résumé development and interview skills.

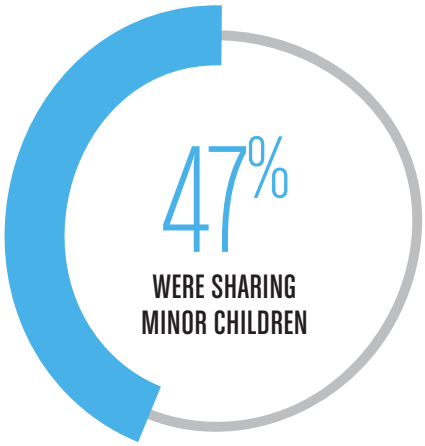
The youth program participants have created several ways to give back to the Latino and broader communities. In 2006, in partnership with the Department of Psychology at Georgia State University, members of the adolescent group La Voz Juvenil de Caminar Latino ("Youth Voice of Caminar Latino") began to conduct their own participatory action research about domestic violence and their experiences. The youths conducted five different studies about issues of relevance and interest to them, including how they dealt with the violence in their homes as well as how community agencies, such as law enforcement and the Department of Family and Children Services, responded to domestic violence. The youths' work has garnered widespread acclaim among scientific, legal, justice and social service professionals across the U.S. and the youths have presented at 11 different trainings and conferences. The work of this group led to one youth participant being awarded a four-year scholarship to Georgia State University. In another program led by Georgia State, many of the young adults have volunteered as interpreters with migrant farm workers in the southern part of the state.

Caminar Latino's next steps are to develop a leadership program for youth participants mirroring the leadership program developed for adult women, Lideres Comunitarias (Community Leaders). They hope to formalize this skill development by creating an institute to reach youths in the community outside of weekly group meetings. To make this happen, Caminar Latino needs funding, time, resources and a coordinator.

Jessica's advice to those who are interested in doing work with youth is to listen to the community. What are they telling you they need and want? Next, ask young people the same questions. Invite them into the conversation about what would be most beneficial for them. This will increase their buy-in for the program you develop and increase the likelihood they will participate. Also key: Patience with the families as they gain your trust, she says. Finally, start small and grow your program over time as the need increases for your participants. She also reminds you to be gentle with yourself and don't be afraid to grow.

For more information, contact Jessica Nunan at JNunan@caminarlatino.org or 678-492-5580.

5 PERCENTAGE OF CASES WHERE THE PERPETRATOR AND VICTIM SHARED MINOR CHILDREN 2004-2014



KEY POINTS (chart 5)

In 47% of cases, the perpetrator and victim had at least one minor child together. Sharing children can significantly increase victims' barriers to safety, including their decision to leave the relationship, their ability to support themselves and their children away from the abusers, and continued interactions with the abusers regarding custody arrangements. In some cases, the homicide or murder-suicide occurred in the presence of the children during a custody exchange. Supervised visitation and safe exchange locations are important options for maintaining the safety of victims and their children. To learn more about how to support victims who are in contact with the other parent of their children, see page 55.

CREATING SAFE HAVENS IN GEORGIA

In 2011, the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) partnered with Supporting Adoption and Foster Families Together (SAFFT), Forsyth County Family Haven, and No One Alone (NOA) in Dawson County to create a coordinated community response to domestic and dating violence in the context of child custody. The partners received funding from the state through Safe Havens: Supervised Visitation and Safe Exchange Grant Program through the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW). They are only the second recipient of this grant in the state of Georgia. The OVW application requires (at minimum) the participation of a direct service provider for supervised visitation and exchange, a domestic violence provider and a government representative.

Together, the partners established a supervised visitation and exchange program specializing in serving families in Forsyth, Hall and Dawson counties involved in child custody disputes where domestic or dating violence and/or sexual assault are a factor. A core consulting committee was established to create the protocols and procedures governing the visitation program sites in Dawsonville and Cumming. The centers launched in early 2014 after receiving approval from OVW. Since its launch, the program has filled many gaps in service delivery. For example, prior to the collaboration, the domestic violence victims SAFFT served generally did not access domestic violence services, leaving many to navigate child custody visitations and exchanges without the assistance of domestic violence counseling or safety planning.

Potential danger exists for all victims who share a child with their abuser. The Bell Forsyth Judicial Circuit saw a need for specialized services to address these risks based on lethal incidents involving custody exchanges. In June 2011, a man murdered his ex-girlfriend in front of their young children during a custody exchange that took place in a secluded parking lot. The couple was exchanging the child in north Fulton County, though they resided in Forsyth County. Over a year prior, in February 2010, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported on the dearth of supervised visitation services for custody cases in which domestic violence is a factor. The article was published following a wave of murders involving domestic violence victims who were killed while exchanging their young children with their former partners in Gwinnett County — the jurisdiction just south of Bell Forsyth.

Further supporting the community's need to address child custody exchange issues in the context of domestic violence is the number of case filings in local Superior Courts. In 2009, there were 437 family violence case filings in the Superior Courts located in the Bell Forsyth and Northeastern Judicial Circuits. In the same year, there were another 1,210 child custody filings in these circuits. In total, family violence and child custody cases represent 12% of all cases filed in these circuits. Although these statistics do not specify what proportion of the custody cases filed involved domestic violence, based on past research, CJCC projects that approximately 20% of the child custody filings will be contentious, of which up to 75% may involve domestic violence — which may warrant supervised visitation or exchange services for the victims' and children's safety.

In addition to the filings in Superior Court, domestic violence and child custody issues may arise as part of the TPO process. Victims who share a child with their abuser may require assistance from supervised visitation providers to help with either safe exchanges or fully supervised visits to comply with no-contact provisions in their protective orders. In 2009, there were 1,536 family violence incidents in the counties the local SAFFT Visitation Center serves. These incidents involved 1,729 victims, of which 46% were the former spouse, present spouse or child of the aggressor. Moreover, in 2010, 682 TPOs were filed in the service areas, of which 42% involved a provision for visitation or custody of a child the parties shared in common. In total, CJCC and SAFFT project that up to approximately 469 families per year in this community may need supervised visitation or exchange services, given the volume of Superior Court cases and TPOs.

The collaboration would not be possible without the support of the OVW's 2011 Safe Havens award, which also enabled the support of training and technical assistance (TTA) provider Vera Institute of Justice. Further, the ongoing support of

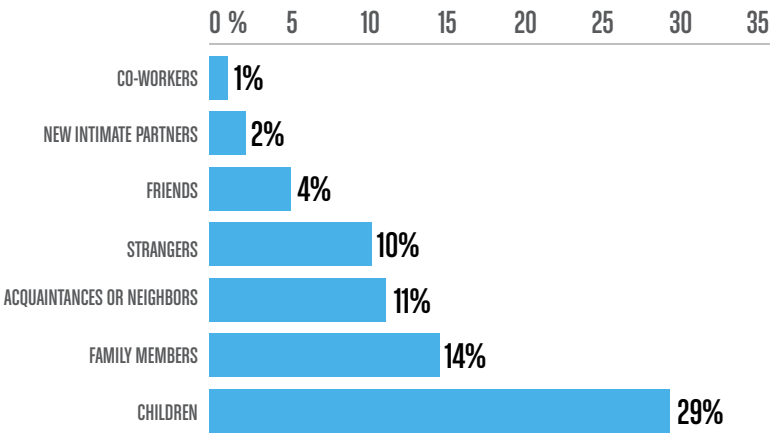
Superior Court judges in the Bell Forsyth and Northeastern Judicial Circuit has created buy-in from current and potential consulting committee members. Thankfully, community members and the Boards of Commissioners in the counties served have rallied to help meet gaps in funding such as finding safe sites, securing affordable rental space, and furnishing the rooms.

The collaboration is applying for continuation funding this year. With secured funding, they hope to improve their services in a variety of ways to serve more families in the future. Specifically, they want to focus on increasing communications and relationships with the courts and attorneys and to address transportation barriers in Hall and Dawson counties. They also plan to enhance cultural competency and improve work with fathers and men who abuse, to help them transform into nonviolent family members.

For others wanting to do this work, Betty Bernard, Planning and Policy Development Specialist at CJCC, says that it's important to take an approach focused on victims' needs and safety, and to understand child custody cases in the context of the dynamics of domestic violence and sexual assault. CJCC encourages you to reach out for their help and support; they can leverage statewide resources and relationships and build bridges with federal funders and TTA providers.

For more information, contact Betty Barnard at Betty.Barnard@cjcc.ga.gov or 404-654-5691 or Ashley Anderson, SAFFT's Executive Director, at information@safft.org or 770-886-9505.

6 PERCENTAGE OF CASES WHERE OTHERS WITNESSED THE HOMICIDE 2004-2014



KEY POINTS (chart 6)

In 29%* of cases, children witnessed the homicide. Often, if the child(ren) did not directly observe the homicide, they were the first to find their deceased parent(s) or caregiver(s). There is a critical need to assist children dealing with the traumatic effects of witnessing a homicide, losing one or both parents or caregivers, and witnessing domestic violence. In particular, the Project has found that children and surviving family members of murder-suicides are not made aware of available resources, such as the Crime Victims Compensation Programs, through the prosecutor's office because there is no case to be prosecuted.

*Chart note: The percentage has increased from last year due to adjustments in how the cases from 2004 were entered into our database.

2 TEEN DATING VIOLENCE

In half the cases reviewed by the Project, the victim began her relationship with the person who eventually killed her when she was between the ages of 13–24. Teen dating violence does not discriminate based on gender, sexual orientation, race or culture. Like domestic violence, teen dating violence is widespread and is based on one partner gaining and maintaining power and control over the other person. However, there are several unique barriers to safety existing for teens that relates to the school environment, social networking, peer influence, and the support (or lack thereof) of their parents. These barriers can be compounded by teen pregnancy, a decreased likelihood to complete high school and an increased risk for substance abuse.

ADDRESSING TEEN DATING VIOLENCE THROUGH THE TEEN MAZE PROGRAM

Recommendation addressed through this initiative:

+ Develop relationships with and build capacity of local school boards, teachers, faith communities with youth groups, after-school programs, camp counselors, coaches and teen-parent program staff to provide resources and programs on healthy dating relationships

A Teen Maze is best described as a life-size board game conveying vital information about health and educational issues to teens in fun and creative ways. It provides teenagers with a hands-on learning activity to help them understand the consequences of a wide range of risky behaviors in an environment where the effects are not permanent. In Troup County, the Teen Maze is targeted toward 9th graders and covers a variety of topics, such as alcohol and drug abuse, driving while intoxicated, getting arrested and serving jail time, economic and emotional hardships of unplanned pregnancy and childcare, sexually transmitted diseases, and the impact many of these decisions have on future career choices — including the ability to graduate high school on time, if at all.

In Troup County in 2008, the local Family Connection Authority formed a committee of local programs to address low graduation rates attributed to substance abuse and unplanned pregnancy. The District 4 Health Department took the task of researching innovative programs to bring to Troup County to increase graduation rates while providing teenagers opportunities to examine the results of daily decisions. They came across the Teen Maze program and presented the idea to the committee. The committee approved the idea and they got to work. In 2009, the first Teen Maze activity took place in Troup County.

After a successful first year, the organizing group received feedback from teen participants that the program was missing a vital component: dating violence. The teens shared that they were experiencing and witnessing dating violence among peers and wanted information on what to do. The following year, with the help of the local domestic violence program, Harmony House, the Teen Maze expanded to include a segment on teen dating violence. The segment is composed of a skit between a boyfriend and girlfriend at a party. In the skit, the boyfriend takes the girl's cellphone and checks her messages. He tells her whom she can talk to at football games and parties and then grabs her by the arm and pulls her away from a group of friends. She is completely embarrassed and angry with him before he apologizes profusely to her for his behavior. After the skit is over, teens participate in a facilitated discussion of what they saw. Results will be available in 2015 to compare the outcome of the students who were not exposed to the teen dating violence component of the Teen Maze and those who were.

Community partnerships have been vital to the success of the Teen Maze in Troup County. The Teen Maze committee consists of representatives from a wide range of local programs: District 4 Health Department, LaGrange College, Columbus State College nursing program, West Georgia Health System's marketing and nursing programs, Troup County School System, Department of Family and Children Services, First Choice Women's Center, Troup County Family Connection, Troup County Prevention Coalition, Twin Cedars Youth Services, all law enforcement agencies, Department of Labor, Certified Literacy Community Program, State and Municipal Court judges and Harmony House.

All of the agencies work together in Troup County, but the District 4 Health Department takes the lead to bring the Teen Maze to the community. Planning the Teen Maze takes a considerable amount of time; the planning committee meets 10 months out of the year to prepare the event. All of the tasks needed to make the Teen Maze a success are performed in addition to the job responsibilities of organizers and volunteers, resulting in a 60–80 hour work week for many people. In October 2014, the County Commissioners approved funding for a full-time employee to take on most of the responsibilities of the Teen Maze. This development will allow for increased recruitment of volunteers, communication and community awareness of the Teen Maze program.

Local school system and community participation has steadily increased during the past few years. The budget has also steadily increased. In 2014, the Teen Maze operated from a $10,000 budget provided by the United Way of West Georgia, Wal-Mart Distribution Center and Verizon Wireless Foundation in partnership with the Georgia Commission on Family Violence and the support of more than 300 volunteers.

Michele Bedingfield, Executive Director of Harmony House, said she was contacted by four different students (three young women and one young man) within a week after the Teen Maze in 2014. They all said they had not realized prior to the Teen Maze that abuse does not have to be physical. They also wanted more information on how to leave an abusive relationship. After watching the skit on dating violence, one young woman saw several of the same patterns in own her relationship being played out in front of her. She realized how much her values and goals had changed while dating her boyfriend. She told Michele her main focus was preventing her boyfriend from getting angry and "losing it" when he accused her of things she didn't do. She made a plan with advocates from Harmony House for safely ending the relationship. Since then, Harmony House advocates continue to meet with the young woman on a weekly basis.

Michele Bedingfield is proud of the impact the Teen Maze has on participants, and she hopes she can expand it by continuing to engage the students and parents throughout the year after the Teen Maze event. Currently, Harmony House advocates meet with students through afterschool activities and sports teams. The program would ultimately like to provide monthly or quarterly follow-up sessions to continue to engage students on issues affecting their lives.

There are several communities in Georgia who implement an annual Teen Maze program; visiting them could be helpful for those wishing to implement something similar in their area. Michele advises gathering community support to develop possible topics to address through the program. Providing data specific to your community to support the program's topics can also help with securing grants, funding and community buy-in. Approaching the city and county government can also help to build a base of support for the program in your community. Most importantly, Michele says, don't "sugarcoat" the issues. The youth need to be exposed to the real-life consequences of issues addressed through the Teen Maze.

For more information, contact Michele Bedingfield at MLB@harmonyhousega.org or 706-882-4173.

TEEN TEXT LINES: BREAKING THE SILENCE OF TEEN DATING VIOLENCE

Recommendation addressed through this initiative:

+ Develop relationships with and build capacity of local school boards, teachers, faith agencies with youth groups, after-school programs, camp counselors, coaches, and teen parent program staff to provide resources and programs on healthy dating relationships

Launched in December 2012, Project Safe's teen text line is a separate hotline initiative called Breaking Silence, which targets teens and young people. The text line is operated by trained interns under close staff supervision and is an important complementary service to the extensive dating violence and healthy relationship educational programs Project Safe conducts at middle and high schools in Clarke, Oconee, Madison and Oglethorpe counties. The success of the text line is due to the partnerships Project Safe has developed with these school systems as well as the various departments at the University of Georgia who supply student interns to operate the text line. Verizon Wireless Foundation also provides funding for printed materials.

Under the direction of a dedicated staff person at Project Safe, Breaking Silence was created in response to overwhelming statistics on teen dating violence but low numbers of teens calling the main hotline. Young women ages 16–24 are most vulnerable to intimate partner violence, at a rate almost triple the national average (Bureau of Justice, 2001). Yet less than 25% of teens say they have discussed dating violence with their parents (Liz Claiborne Inc., 2000). According to some studies, only a third of teens who have experienced dating violence have told anyone about it (Tolman and Molidor, 1997).

During the past two years, the text line has revealed that a vast majority of the teens are more willing to process what they're experiencing through texting, rather than seeking specific services in person. Teens also seem to want to interact with someone they can trust. Project Safe's live response through Breaking Silence addresses both of these realities. Interns answering the text line identify themselves by their first name and the name of the program, Breaking Silence. Since the text line is mobile, when interns are in class and they receive a text, they respond, "I'm in class right now, I'll text you back when it's over." This approach helps to create a relaxed atmosphere and lets texters know they are corresponding with someone close to their own age. At the conclusion of the conversations, many texters share they've never talked to anyone about the issue before and are appreciative and thankful for the help and advice they received.

A review of the conversations in 2014 reveals texts from both teenage guys and girls facing a wide array of topics and situations. Interns received texts on subjects ranging from physical violence and sexual assault to sexting, cutting, suicide and even how to tell parents about a failing grade. Many of the texts dealt with potentially abusive behavior, such as jealousy and sexual pressure. Other texts fall into what Project Safe calls the "should I" category, wherein texters ask for specific advice for a situation they are facing. For example, "should I break up with my bf?", "should I send a nude selfie to this guy I really like?", "should I go out with my best friend's ex?", "should I tell my friend how worried I am about his/her relationship with someone who's abusive/scary/older/crazy?"

Project Safe originally faced moderate challenges regarding types of texts they received from teens they were not expecting, which they addressed by modifying their training to include cutting and suicide. Additionally, the volume of text conversations on the text line in 2014 has quintupled since the first year of operation in 2013. Project Safe received a Family Violence and Prevention Services Act (FVPSA) mini grant from the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council to expand the text line into 32 counties as a pilot project in 2015 to see if the model is feasible for eventual statewide expansion. They are currently addressing how to manage the volume of texts they expect to receive and are exploring different ways to handle the issue without sacrificing the heavily publicized current text line number.

Project Safe's Breaking Silence program can be accessed via the text line at 706-765-8019 or at teensbreakingsilence@gmail.com.

GEORGIA LEGAL SERVICES TEEN DATING VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND AWARENESS PROGRAM

Recommendation addressed through this initiative:

+ Develop relationships with and build capacity of local school boards, teachers, faith communities with youth groups, after-school programs, camp counselors, coaches, and teen-parent program staff to provide resources and programs on healthy dating relationships

In 2011, the Georgia Legal Services Program (GLSP) created the Teen Dating Violence Prevention and Awareness Program. The agency had identified a need for safe places for teens to talk about dating dynamics and learn about available resources. Since 2011, GLSP has had great success with their Teen Dating Violence (TDV) initiative: They have conducted TDV Prevention and Awareness Programs at middle schools, high schools and colleges in the 23 counties they serve across the state. Partnerships with the local domestic violence programs and Family Violence Task Forces keep the project moving forward.

References

1. *Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2001). Special report: Intimate partner violence and age of victim, 1993-1999. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs. Retrieved from http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/ipva99.pdf*
2. *Liz Claiborne Inc. (2000). Study of teens 13-17. Conducted by Applied Research and Consulting LLC.*
3. *Molidor, C. & Tolman, R. M. (1998). Gender and contextual factors in adolescent dating violence. Violence Against Women, 4, 180-194.*

GLSP also tries to partner with local school districts, although they have faced challenges in securing support. Many schools do not actively seek presenters to speak on healthy relationships and dating violence. However, Tomieka R. Daniel, Supervising Attorney at GLSP and primary coordinator of the TDV programs, has found the schools tend to soften once she shares the goals of the project with them: to increase the knowledge and awareness of young people regarding the issues of dating violence and available resources. She also assures the administration the TDV program will not interfere significantly with class time and the information will be pertinent and interesting to the students. After each of her presentations, school administrators' responses are overwhelmingly positive; they have all shown surprise at how well the students respond to the information. Tomieka says young people have stopped her in the street to tell her the positive effect her presentations had on them. Some teens even say they have been able to offer help and advice to friends experiencing TDV.

GLSP's success and commitment to this initiative has led to recognition by a local school system and to the growth of their signature event, Secrets & Stilettos. In 2012, Secrets & Stilettos began as a domestic violence awareness program for women but has grown to include teen girls and boys. Since 2012, they have reached more than 500 people. Key to the event's success is GLSP's commitment to making programs exciting and informal by providing free prizes and food and recruiting presenters who are engaging and relevant to students. They partner with local domestic violence programs, Family Violence Task Forces and District Attorney's offices to keep the events free to the public.

In 2015, the keynote speaker for "Secrets & Stilettos: Real Talk About Healthy Dating Relationships" will be Judge Glenda Hatchet. GLSP's goal is to have at least 300 young people and parents attend the event.

Due to recent conversations on domestic violence in national sports leagues, GLSP will feature a "Locker Room Chat" for local sports teams and coaches to participate in a discussion on dating and domestic violence with young men. Athletes from local sports teams have been invited to lead these discussions. GLSP hopes to create a safe space so men can talk openly and honestly about both experiencing and perpetuating dating violence.

Tomieka's advice to others wanting to do this work is to "Do it now!" There is a tremendous need in Georgia communities for both teens and their parents to learn about dating violence, services available and how to develop healthy relationships.

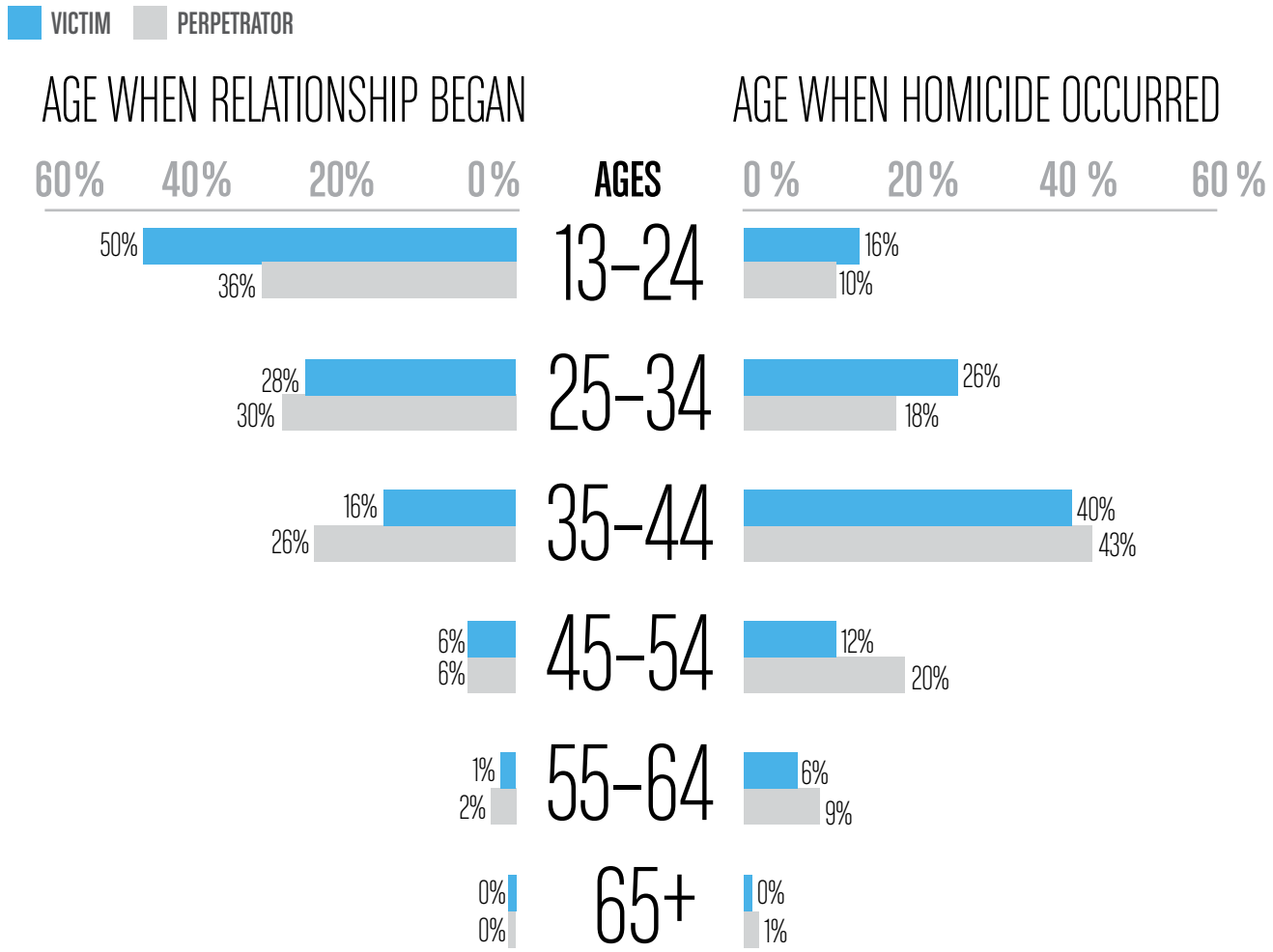
For more information, contact Tomieka R. Daniel at TDaniel@glsp.org or 478-751-6261.

GCADV: EMPOWERING YOUTH AND COMMUNITIES TO END TEEN DATING VIOLENCE

GCADV's approach to TDV work has been to empower domestic violence programs through tools, resources and materials they can use to speak to their communities. In an effort to bring together a point of reference for programs, GCADV released a TDV resource guide in 2014. The guide was designed to be a resource for those working with or seeking to work with teens in their local communities, school systems or other youth-based organizations. The guide includes information on dynamics of TDV, factors that may influence teens and their response to or perceptions of TDV, approaches to consider when obtaining buy-in from other community stakeholders and information on domestic violence programs conducting TDV efforts of some kind. Additionally, the guide lists a number of resources such as websites, classroom activities, conversation guides, curricula comparison charts, model school polices and other resources.

For more examples of how other communities in the state of Georgia are reaching out to teens, please download "Empowering Youth & Communities to End Teen Dating Violence" from www.gcadv.org.

7 AGES OF VICTIMS AND PERPETRATORS IN REVIEWED CASES 2004–2014



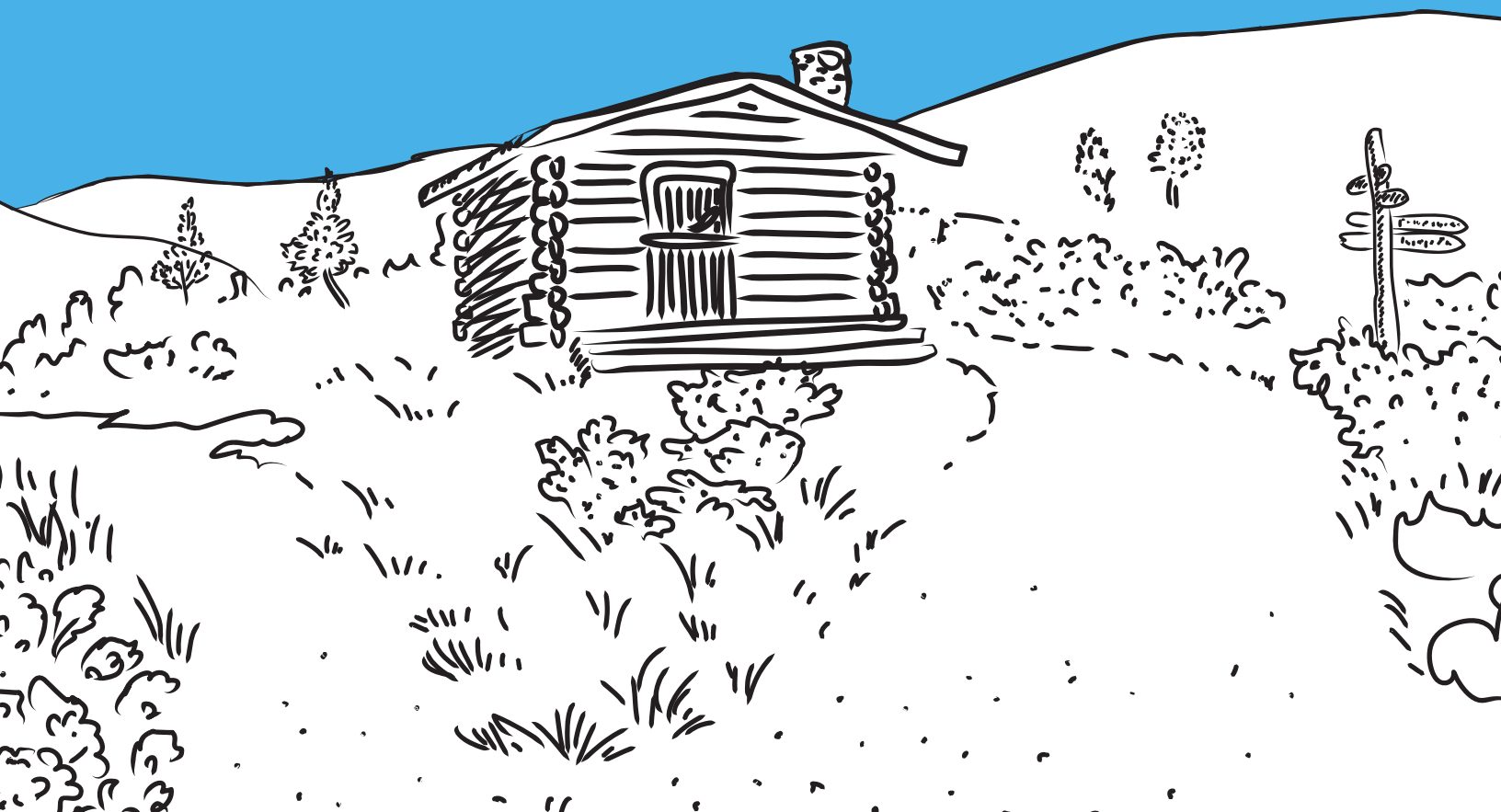
KEY POINTS (chart 7)

In reviewed cases, the majority of victims (50%) began their relationships with the person who eventually killed them when they were between the ages of 13–24. 25% of victims were between the ages of 13–19 years old. 4 of the victims were just 15 when their relationships began, one victim was 14, and another victim was 13. Although a large number of relationships started when the victim was young, many of these relationships spanned several years. 40% of victims were killed when they were between the ages of 35–44.

These numbers demonstrate that many of the relationships lasted well beyond 10 years and highlight the need and opportunity for early intervention for teens experiencing unhealthy relationships and dating violence. Moreover, many of the victims suffered years of abuse, which escalated immediately prior to the homicide. A majority of these victims were making emotional and physical preparations to leave the relationships when they were killed. See page 55 for more information on separation.

3 ECONOMIC ABUSE

Poverty and domestic violence are interconnected. Although domestic violence does not discriminate based on income, significant numbers of low-income women experience domestic violence. Poverty can exacerbate domestic violence by reducing or eliminating many of the options available for survivors seeking a violence-free life. Financial stability, or lack thereof, can significantly affect whether a survivor stays in an abusive relationship or returns after leaving. Access to money and financial support increases mobility and is often a critical component in survivors' efforts to secure physical and psychological safety. Without financial security, survivors often face financial obstacles that are difficult to overcome, especially if she is financially dependent on her abusive partner. If a victim decides to leave the relationship, separation can involve expensive life changes such as moving or divorce. Leaving the relationship may also require a survivor to financially support herself and her children, a daunting task for many women healing from the trauma of domestic violence.



"MAKING CHANGE" FOR SURVIVORS IN DEKALB COUNTY

Recommendation addressed through this initiative:

+ Increase emphasis on services and strategies supporting long-term economic stability and well-being beyond temporary emergency funds

Advocates at the Women's Resource Center to End Domestic Violence Inc. (WRC) in Decatur recognized the complexity of economic abuse and financial security in the lives of the women they serve. In particular, they saw the ongoing financial needs of their clients through their direct financial services, which include assistance with utilities, changing locks, security deposits and Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) transportation cards. Month after month, women came back needing assistance in order to make ends meet. The advocates felt they were only addressing the problems temporarily; they wanted to do more for survivors to help them break the cycle of poverty and economic insecurity.

The advocates at WRC knew a lot of work was needed to address the root causes of poverty, much of which involves larger systemic and societal changes that can be overwhelming. Wanting to help survivors in real time, they began brainstorming more tangible ideas they could accomplish through their program. They reviewed several existing financial literacy curricula and programs, but none of them were a good fit — they simply did not feel relevant to the women they served in DeKalb County. Ambitiously, they set out to create their own financial literacy program called "Making Change."

In 2008, the Atlanta Women's Foundation funded the first two years of "Making Change," allowing WRC to develop the curricula and successfully pilot the program. WRC relied on the extensive knowledge and experience of two longtime staff members to write a workbook and facilitators' guide. During the development phase, they collected stories and experiences from the women in the program about their financial experiences and challenges, which greatly enriched the curriculum. The curriculum includes 15 chapters designed to help participants explore their strengths, make clear and realistic goals, gain a better understanding of what might be keeping them from accomplishing their goals, explore different ways of thinking about money, and create their own roadmap to safety and stability.

> *"Although the primary focus of our work is ending domestic violence, we understand that it isn't sufficient to limit our attention to that single problem. Many women experiencing domestic violence are also juggling multiple challenges. Excluding these challenges from our advocacy usually results in a one-dimensional service model that fails to engage survivors on a level that clears viable paths to stability."*
> *-Excerpt from the "Making Change" facilitator's guide.*

One of the key goals of "Making Change" is to attend to the stigma of talking about money and to address the deeply rooted feelings and beliefs about money all people have. Discussions are led by trained peer facilitators, who create a safe space to talk about money. They offer support that is informed, yet not hierarchical. The peer-led model is based on the principle of reciprocity and the belief that women are the experts on their own situations. This model sets the stage for mutual support and information-sharing, which allows participants of "Making Change" to see themselves as connected to others through common experiences.

WRC offers the "Making Change" program three times per year in the safehouse and three times per year in the community office. Like many programs, WRC struggles with attendance at these community meetings, but the agency is committed to offering this program to women outside of the safehouse. Many women simply are not ready or able to take a hard look at their finances while dealing with the immediate trauma of domestic violence. Once women have achieved a modicum of stability, they are invited to come back and participate in the program in a community setting where they can benefit from the support of other women in a similar situation.

The classes in the safehouse are voluntary; about half of the women who stay in the safehouse participate in the program. In addition to the group meetings, the safehouse sessions of the program include a savings-match component. Through supportive grants, WRC is able to provide a 50% savings match, up to $1,000. This also applies in situations where the program participant is paying off debt or working on credit-repair issues. Participants are able to provide feedback on

the program to WRC regarding their comfort level with issues addressed through the curriculum, such as creating a budget or talking with a new partner about money. WRC also tracks quantitative measures of success, such as reduction in debt, increased savings and improved credit scores.

Because of the savings match, nearly 100% of WRC's safehouse residents participating in the program have seen an increase in savings. Even women who have admitted having no previous success or experience with saving have saved money. Additionally, no program participants have been completely reliant on agency funds when the time has come to transition out of the safehouse. This includes women with a self-reported family history of poverty and/or reliance upon social programs. WRC believes this reflects both the savings match and the application of the lessons taught by the program. Additionally, about 85% of women use match funds to pay off some or all of their debt, which in turn increases their credit scores. Improved credit scores have a direct impact on women's short- and long-term housing and employment options.

WRC is most proud to have developed this program from scratch, relying on in-house knowledge and based on what the women in the program identified as their needs. The program is successful because it was created on the real-life experiences of the women in their community.

For more information, contact Amber Harris at 404-370-7670.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE INITIATIVE

Recommendation addressed through this initiative:

+ Develop policies to help employees who are domestic violence victims maintain their employment

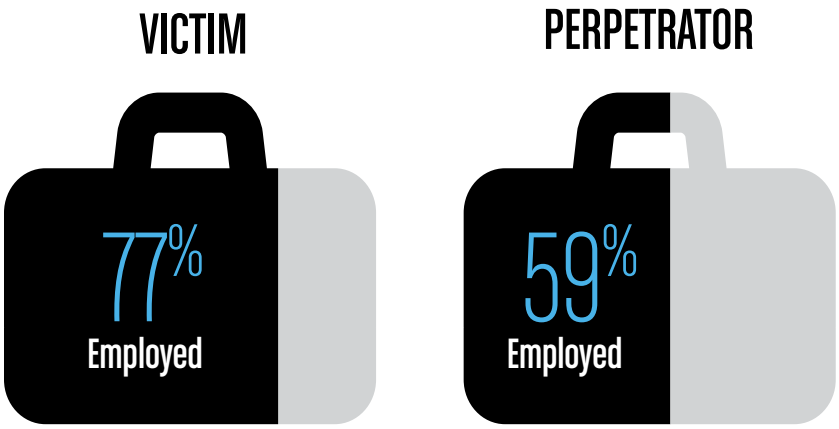
Engaging the business community to end domestic violence is an important component of addressing the economic impact domestic violence has on survivors. Fatality Reviews have revealed that most businesses do not have policies addressing domestic violence, nor are they prepared to respond effectively to those who are experiencing the effects of domestic violence and economic abuse. Businesses can play a vital role in helping victims to gain or maintain independence from their abusers.

> **The economic stability from earning personal wages is essential to living a safe, independent and violence-free life. Additionally, employment provides survivors with access to healthcare, employee assistance programs, wellness programs, job skills, a sense of self-sufficiency and independence, and support from co-workers.**

Because domestic violence often follows victims to work, they can be particularly vulnerable to losing their jobs. One clear way this happens is through the tactics abusers use to prevent their partners from securing and maintaining employment. Abuse happening at home can affect the victim's ability to perform her job duties, such as inflicting visible injury, turning off the alarm clock, keeping the victim awake all night, sabotaging transportation or refusing to help with children or provide childcare. Abusers may also harass victims at work by showing up to their place of employment, repeated phone calls and text messages and other stalking behaviors. All of these behaviors, both on and off the jobsite, jeopardize the victim's ability to perform her job duties and succeed at work. They may also be late frequently or use sick time due to either injuries or illness resulting from the abuse. These factors can lead to disciplinary action or even firing.

Employers are uniquely positioned to have a direct effect on victim safety and economic autonomy, especially if they are trained to recognize and respond to domestic violence. There are multiple, practical ways employers can support an employee who is experiencing domestic violence — including, but not limited to: changing job schedules, workstation locations and phone extensions; updating emergency contacts; helping to document all contact from an abuser including phone calls, text messages and emails; and providing referrals such as the local domestic violence program. Additionally, employers can utilize existing policies creatively to support victims of abuse through flex scheduling, sick leave, compensatory time, vacation leave and unpaid leave.

8 EMPLOYMENT STATUS AND SOURCES OF INCOME 2004-2014



EMPLOYMENT STATUS	VICTIM	PERPETRATOR
	%	%
Employed	77	59
Unknown	9	14
Unemployed student	2	6
Retired	1	1
Disabled	5	3
Unemployed	5	17

KEY POINTS (chart 8)

Unemployment rates of perpetrators (17%) are more than triple those of victims (5%) in reviewed cases. In 2014, Georgia's unemployment rate was one of the highest in the nation (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). Many families and individuals are experiencing the pressure of higher living expenses and lower or stagnant income. The added stress of financial difficulties in families and dating relationships can affect a perpetrator's use or increased use of physical violence or other controlling behaviors within a relationship. Domestic violence is more than three times as likely to occur when couples are experiencing high levels of financial strain versus lower levels (Benson and Fox, 2002). Women whose male partners experienced two or more periods of unemployment during a five-year study were almost three times as likely to be victims of intimate violence as were women whose partners were in stable jobs (Benson and Fox, 2004).

Conversely, at the time of the homicide, 77% of victims were employed and 59% of perpetrators were employed. From fatality reviews, we have learned coworkers often had some idea domestic violence was occurring, but they weren't always aware of the extent of violence or how to help. These conversations, as well as other research, also revealed most businesses do not have policies addressing domestic violence, nor are they prepared to respond effectively to those who are experiencing the effects of domestic violence and economic abuse.

"After getting help from my supervisor, I worked so hard. I think I gave back as much as I could to her. The fact that they had been there for me through the rough stuff gave me a sense of commitment to the work. If you just stick it out, what a loyal employee you get in the end!" — A survivor who received support from her employer

Employers are also uniquely positioned to hold employees who are violent accountable for their behavior. There is a business cost associated with employees who commit acts of domestic violence and stalking against their partners by using workplace resources, such as work time, phones, email, computers, company vehicles or other means to threaten, harass, intimidate, embarrass or otherwise harm another person. Many model policies on domestic violence in the workplace require anyone who is arrested for a domestic violence-related charge or subject to a Family Violence Protective Order notify the Human Resources department immediately. In turn, the Human Resources department has the discretion to launch its own investigation. If it is determined that the employee engaged in acts of domestic violence or stalking, then the employee is subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination. The employee might also be required to participate in counseling or other remedial measures, such as completing a Family Violence Intervention Program.

In order to help Family Violence Task Forces, Fatality Review Teams and others interested in training the business community, the Project developed the Domestic Violence in

the Workplace Toolkit. The toolkit contains resources and materials designed to assist those conducting education and awareness programs for the business community including exercises, handouts, marketing materials, a PowerPoint presentation and trainer notes. The materials can be adapted for different types of events — such as a half-day or full-day workshop, or a keynote address for professional association meetings, lunch-and-learn meetings or staff meetings.

The goals of this initiative are to help employers:

- recognize the scope and prevalence of domestic violence and its effects on individuals
- realize the business costs associated with domestic violence and the economic consequences of failing to establish adequate policies and protocols
- create policies and protocols that aid and support survivors and create a safer workplace for all employees
- provide ongoing training of supervisors and managers
- develop connections with advocates, shelters and other resources in the local area
- serve as community allies in preventing domestic violence

These goals can be accomplished by providing trainings in short, simple formats as well as larger formats such as full training for Human Resources (HR) personnel and supervisors/managers, and by providing employers with sample model policies and resource materials.

> **A note on best practices: Train managers, supervisors and HR prior to providing information to employees. It is important to make sure people in these positions are prepared to respond when employees start coming forward.**

Convincing the business community that domestic violence is an important issue they can and should be addressing is a big hurdle. When talking with business owners, you are persuading both hearts and minds, assuring them a proactive approach to domestic violence is good for business and for people.

Here are some additional talking points to help get their attention:

- Talent retention
- Return on investment (ROI)
- Improved employee engagement
- Promoting a respectful workplace
- Corporate wellness
- Increased corporate social responsibility
- Increased workplace safety
- Creating loyal employees
- Potentially saves lives

To request a copy of the Domestic Violence in the Workplace Toolkit you may contact Taylor Tabb at 404-209-0280 or TTabb@gcadv.org.

If you are interested in learning more about programs supporting workforce development skills for victims of domestic violence and/or homeless people, here are just four examples we collected to highlight.

re: loom is a program employing and empowering low-income individuals through weaving beautifully designed products out of recycled materials. It is a program of Initiative for Affordable Housing (IAH), a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization in Decatur. Founded in 1990, IAH's mission is to provide permanent, affordable housing to homeless and low-income families in metro Atlanta. Their rigorous, holistic social services program empowers individuals to reach personal goals and achieve independence. Learn more at http://www.reloom.org/ourstory.

Sweet Haven is a bakery from the kitchen of Help and Emergency Response Inc., a domestic violence shelter in Portsmouth, VA. All products are prepared through a workforce development program for survivors of domestic violence and homelessness who are starting a new life. Trainees learn kitchen management, food handling and job skills that will help them gain experience and employment. Each purchase made goes back to the work and programs of the shelter. Learn more at http://www.hershelter.com/#/sweet-haven.

Cup O'Karma: Community Café for a Cause is a workforce development and job training café located in Mesa, AZ. The shop is staffed by volunteers and abuse survivors looking to gain new skills. All proceeds go to support National Advocacy and Training Network (NATN). Cup O'Karma is a meeting place for various agencies and groups. They provide a host of resources and a safe environment for at-risk community members. Learn more at http://www.natn-az.org/cup-okarma.

Thistle Farms is a social enterprise run by the women of Magdalene, a residential program for women who have survived lives of prostitution, trafficking, addiction and homelessness in Nashville, TN. Thistle Farms employs almost 60 Magdalene residents or graduates who hand-make natural bath and body products. Purchases of Thistle Farms products directly benefit the women who make them. While working at Thistle Farms, women learn skills in manufacturing, packaging, marketing and sales, and administration. It is a supportive workplace where women acquire the skills they need to earn a living wage. Employees have the opportunity to put a percentage of their earnings in a matched savings account provided by Magdalene. Learn more at http://www.thistlefarms.org.

REACHING YOUR PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

The organizations listed below are national associations with local chapters. Most of these associations have regularly scheduled meetings and other ways they communicate with each other, such as newsletters and email groups.

1. **Chamber of Commerce**
2. **Society of Human Resource Managers**
3. **Employee Assistance Professionals Association (EAPA)**
4. **American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE)**
5. **American Association of Occupational Health Nurses (OHNs)**
6. **Soroptimists**
7. **Civic organizations, such as the Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions and Optimist Clubs**
8. **ASIS international (security professionals)**

List adapted from Johnny Lee of Peace@Work. http://peaceatwork.org/

carla's story

Carla and David were married for 15 years. During the course of their marriage, they separated at least twice due to his violent temper. He was a two-time convicted felon for charges related to theft and drugs. At the time of her death, Carla had two adult children from her previous marriage.

Carla endured years of verbal, mental and physical abuse from David, including him threatening to kill her and burn their house down on several occasions. About five years before the murder, David bought Carla a Smith and Wesson .38. On one occasion, he put the gun to Carla's head and said, "I should blow your brains out." Family, friends and neighbors were aware of and witnesses to David's violent behavior. One friend witnessed David grab Carla by the hair and hit her in the face, leaving visible bruising near her eye. On another occasion, friends witnessed David slap Carla so hard her glasses landed on the other side of the room. Carla's brother also witnessed David push her.

David's violence and threats were not limited to Carla. When her son was a teenager, he was often the target of David's verbal abuse and threats. Carla separated from David on at least two occasions because of David's abuse of her son. Later, after her son was married, his wife called the police because David had made several threats to her; however, no arrest was made nor charges filed. On another occasion, Carla's daughter-in-law went to the police department to make a complaint that David had tried to kill her, but the charges were dropped. When David was unable to locate Carla, he would call her daughter and harass her. Carla often gave in to David's demands to see him so he would stop harassing her children.

After their second separation, David convinced Carla to meet him at their house so he could pick up his personal belongings. While they were at the house and Carla was sitting in her truck, he pulled the bed liner out of her truck, burned her leg by flipping a lit cigarette into her truck, and again threatened to burn the house down. He cursed at her, called her names and pulled her hair out by the roots. Carla called the police to report this incident but no report was taken. After she left, he called her family and harassed them. He also called and harassed Carla and threatened to kill her. At one point, she advised him she was taping their phone conversation to record his threats.

Following this incident, Carla filed for a TPO and a divorce. David retained an attorney and contested the divorce. The divorce was finalized nine months later. As part of the divorce settlement, she was encouraged by her attorney to dismiss the TPO, which she did.

Even after the divorce was finalized, **David's abuse continued.**

One weekend, Carla went out of town to visit her daughter where she did not have cell phone service. David called her repeatedly and became belligerent and enraged because he could not reach her. When she returned home, she found David had left foul messages on her cell phone and home phone lines. On another occasion, Carla went on vacation with a friend and David called her repeatedly on her cell phone, accusing her of being with another man.

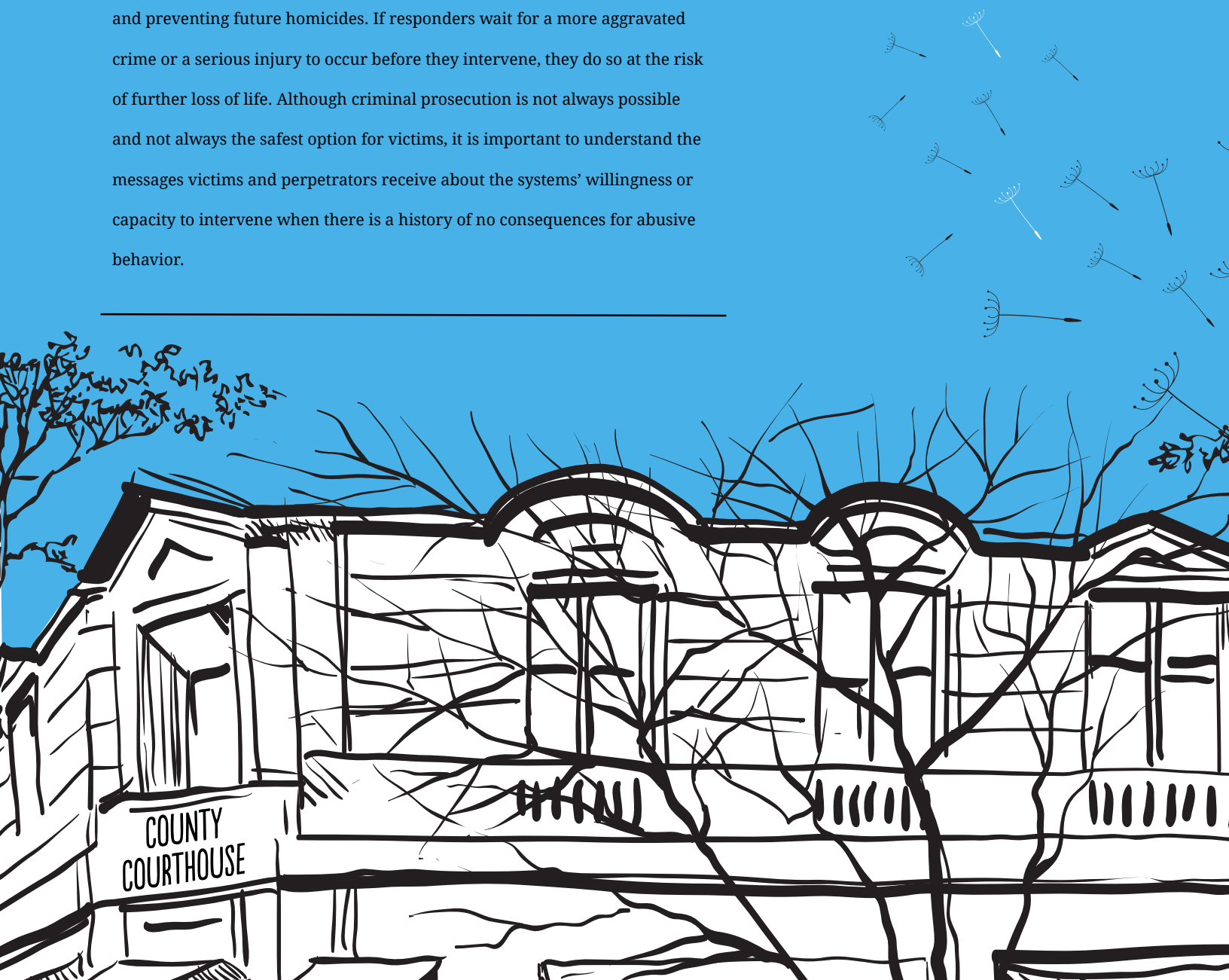
Four months after their divorce was finalized, Carla received a phone call from David on her cell phone while she was at her friend's house. He told her to come home because he was at her house. Carla wanted to keep him from getting angry, so she left to go meet him. At some point, David shot and killed Carla. She was found in her car by her neighbor, who called 911.

David was indicted for murder, felony murder, aggravated assault, possession of a firearm by a convicted felon and tampering with evidence. He was found guilty of murder and sentenced to life in prison.

** Pseudonyms used*

4 THE ROLE OF THE CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEM

The Project has found a surprisingly low number of misdemeanor arrests of the perpetrator, made prior to the homicide, which actually resulted in a conviction. Acts of lower-level violence resulting in a misdemeanor charge provide an opportunity for the system to prosecute and sanction perpetrators while providing support to victims with the goal of de-escalating the violence and preventing future homicides. If responders wait for a more aggravated crime or a serious injury to occur before they intervene, they do so at the risk of further loss of life. Although criminal prosecution is not always possible and not always the safest option for victims, it is important to understand the messages victims and perpetrators receive about the systems' willingness or capacity to intervene when there is a history of no consequences for abusive behavior.



If responders wait for a more aggravated crime or a serious injury to occur before they intervene, **they do so at the risk of further loss of life.**

JUSTICE IN ROCKDALE'S FAMILY VIOLENCE COURT

Recommendation addressed through this initiative:

+ In communities where the caseload is large enough to warrant it, specialized units and dockets should be created using national models for detectives, prosecutors and judges. This approach should focus expertise, improve interagency cooperation and provide a system better prepared to hold offenders accountable

In Rockdale County, past fatality reviews and observations by the Rockdale County Task Force identified several issues in the criminal legal system, including elements of apathy, lack of accountability and lack of desire to make family violence cases a priority. These concerns led the Rockdale County State Court to create several new protocols aimed at changing the way things were being done locally. The Court saw a need to restore the confidence in the criminal legal system by elevating the priority of family violence cases through ensuring compliance with bond conditions, eliminating a backlog of cases and reducing the timeframe of both arraignment and case disposition.

To achieve these goals, the Court implemented a dedicated Family Violence Court focused on misdemeanor family violence cases. The Court maintains a dedicated docket on the first Thursday of each month to hear Status, Arraignment, Pleas, Motions and Revocation dockets. The Court begins oversight of these cases after defendants receive bond with family violence conditions. The Compliance Officer of the Family Violence Court initiates contact with defendants and victims to ensure both have an understanding of bond conditions. Then, they schedule the defendant for a Status Hearing within 30 to 60 days to monitor compliance of those conditions. The Court Coordinator also works with prosecutors to expedite arraignment and continues to supervise the case until the final disposition.

The Court's first attempt to begin a Family Violence Court was initiated in February 2010 under an Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Administration Grant through Georgia's Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC). The grant funded a dedicated prosecutor, investigator and victim assistance advocate tasked with reducing the backlog of family violence cases and creating a dedicated Family Violence Court. This team was able to eliminate the backlog, but still did not achieve all the desired results. If anything, the Court discovered through this first process that funding did not solve all the problems they were facing; they needed participation and buy-in from all parties. In 2011, the Court applied for new funding from the Office on Violence Against Women Court Training and Improvement Program, only to be denied — due to a lack of participation from all the necessary partners and a clear demonstration of how the program could enhance existing initiatives.

The Court reapplied in 2012 after addressing the deficiencies of the initial grant proposal. The agency successfully secured a three-year grant for implementation of a Family Violence Court. After a six-month implementation process, the Court has had dedicated family violence dockets for 16 months. The Court program has since been able to:

- eliminate the backlog of pending cases
- implement a process for enforcing compliance of bond conditions and reach an 85% rate of compliance
- expedite the arraignment of new cases while averaging 60 days or less from arrest
- reduce the average timeframe for case disposition to less than six months

Implementing a dedicated Family Violence Court requires many community partnerships. In Rockdale County, the group faced several hurdles to developing relationships, including

overcoming past conflict and achieving consensus around goals of the Court. However, State Court Judge Nancy Bills has led the way by setting and managing expectations around participation levels for all the community partners involved. The partners of the Rockdale County Family Violence Court include, but are not limited to, the District Attorney's Office, the Public Defender's Office, the Clerk of the Court, Victim Assistance Programs, a Magistrate Court Judge, Certified Family Violence Intervention Program providers and Project ReNeWal, the local state-certified domestic violence program.

Even though implementation of the current model feels like a success, the Court still faces challenges. All the needed participants are engaged for the purpose of the Family Violence Court, but some participants aren't specialized in family violence issues. The Court has identified a need to train all participating partners on the dynamics and complexities of family violence, assessing for primary aggressor, dual arrests and lethality assessments — all these affect the manner in which cases are charged, accused, diverted and presented before the Court. Further, the Court identified the need to sharpen participants' focus on potentially high-risk family violence cases. In the next year, the Court hopes to audit and evaluate procedures and results to identify gaps in services. These partners are dedicated to making their community healthier and safer overall and hope to serve as an example to other jurisdictions.

The Rockdale County State Court's advice to others interested in implementing a dedicated Family Violence Court is to observe existing courts and seek assistance with dockets, procedures, forms, etc.

> **There is no need to "re-create the wheel" because many resources are available from the Georgia Commission on Family Violence, the Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the Prosecuting Attorney's Council of Georgia, the Judicial Council of Georgia's Administrative Office of the Courts and the Office on Violence Against Women.**

The Court recommends you conduct an analysis of your current court operations, caseload and service providers. There needs to be an understanding that change is going to occur, often with "baby steps," and the Court and its partners must remain flexible in order to continue to adapt to the changes.

To learn more, please contact Derek Marchman at D.Marchman@comcast.net.

CONNECTING COMMUNITY RESOURCES WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT (CCRLE): A STATEWIDE RESPONSE TO FATALITY REVIEW FINDINGS

Findings from the Project have revealed tremendous disparity among victims in contact with law enforcement agencies in our state and those connected to domestic violence programs. In an effort to close this gap, the Project created the Connecting Community Resources with Law Enforcement (CCRLE) Roll Call Training Manual in 2011 with the assistance of a retired law enforcement officer, Mike Mertz. The CCRLE manual consists of six sections corresponding with fatality review findings and includes PowerPoint presentations and suggested delivery scripts.

The CCRLE manual was originally designed for local Family Violence Task Forces to implement independently. However, in 2012, the Project received several requests for assistance to conduct the trainings in rural areas of the state. In response, the Georgia Commission on Family Violence used the CCRLE manual to develop a six-hour POST certified training program for law enforcement officers. After a successful pilot training in the South Georgia Judicial Circuit, the program was promoted around the state.

Law enforcement is the targeted audience of this training initiative; however, the trainings are multidisciplinary to increase communication and relationships between local community agencies. Local domestic violence advocates are included as presenters in all trainings and inform law enforcement of local resources available to victims. Local prosecutors are also invited to attend trainings and to address the officers.

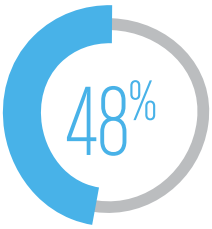
After a year of successfully collaborating and conducting 15 trainings for roughly 300 officers in 2013, the initiative received federal funding through Georgia's Criminal Justice Coordinating Council to conduct 15 trainings in 2014. The project has also received continued funding for 2015. If you are

interested in hosting a training in your area, contact Jennifer Thomas at the Georgia Commission on Family Violence at 404-463-1662 or Jennifer.Thomas@georgiacourts.gov.

The CCRLE trainings have greatly increased access to family violence training for many officers, especially those in rural areas, and have increased officer knowledge of Georgia Family Violence laws, including primary physical aggressor identification and arrest policies. A pre- and post-training test administered to 500 law-enforcement officers during 13 sessions conducted in 2014 revealed the magnitude of learning and relationship development occurring there. Results included a 35% increase in the number of officers who knew the name of a local advocate in their service area, a 48% increase among officers who saved the domestic violence program's number in their phone, a 19% increase in officers who defined "primary physical aggressor" as the dominant physical aggressor versus the first physical aggressor, and a 13% decrease in the number who believed Georgia family violence law requires the arrest of both parties if both have used violence.

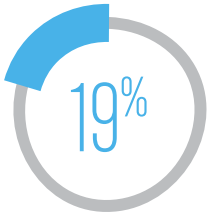
The Connecting Community Resources with Law Enforcement (CCRLE) Roll Call Training Manual is available for Family Violence Task Forces who are interested in implementing trainings with their local law enforcement personnel. A free copy of the manual can be ordered from www.gcfv.org.

CCRLE TRAINING HAS RESULTED IN:



INCREASE IN OFFICERS WITH THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAM NUMBER PROGRAMMED INTO THEIR PHONES

INCREASE IN OFFICERS WHO KNOW THEIR LOCAL ADVOCATE BY NAME



INCREASE IN OFFICERS WHO UNDERSTOOD THE DEFINITION OF "PRIMARY PHYSICAL AGGRESSOR"

GOING BEHIND THE BARS: HOW ONE PROGRAM IS PROVIDING SUPPORT IN JAILS

Recommendation addressed through this initiative:

+ Ensure accessibility of services to victims with criminal histories, particularly when they have been identified as perpetrators or are being prosecuted

Eight years ago, the state-certified domestic violence program in Fayetteville, Promise Place, recognized a trend in the lives of many of the women they served: A great number had served time in jail. The community outreach coordinator at the time, Helen Branch, had previously been an Intensive Parole

Officer, an experience which provided insight on potential opportunities to support women in local jails.

In 2006, Promise Place staff met with Warden Edd Sanders of Women's Probation at the West Central Probation Detention Center to discuss the possibility of partnering to provide supportive services for women in the facility. They shared with the Warden their thoughts on women returning to jail due to unresolved past trauma and giving them the opportunity to develop new coping skills. The Warden quickly recognized a need for such services and the partnership formed with relative ease. A key component of the partnership was that Promise Place was able to provide these supportive services at no additional cost.

Promise Places uses a curriculum created specifically by Helen Branch: the "Healthy Relationships and Positive Lifestyles Program." Groups are held once a week for an hour and participation is voluntary. Sessions address safety, relationship dynamics, self-love and self-respect. Other topics include goal planning for the future, enhancement of self-esteem, effective communication, anger issues, employment strategies, addiction issues, making positive life changes, and positive and productive re-entry into the community. Other topics are presented as needed or as the participants request them. Regardless of the topic, there is always a focus on positive thinking and developing coping skills for when they are released from incarceration.

Promise Place staff quickly realized just how necessary their services were for the women in jail. Many identified themselves as survivors of trauma; most had experienced abuse as children from caregivers and/or domestic violence as teens and adults and never knew a domestic violence program existed in the community. The trauma these women had experienced ranged in longevity and severity, but it was clear to the staff of Promise Place that the trauma-related issues many of these women were facing would take significant time to work through and overcome. Promise Place was committed to supporting them along the way.

Healing takes place in many ways for participants, as evidenced in responses to surveys Promise Place distributes at the conclusion of the groups. Promise Place receives letters and notes which capture the gratitude many inmates feel, and the positive impact the groups have on their ability to heal and learn new ways of coping. Many of the women want to continue to work with Promise Place upon their release. The participants are not the only ones who benefit from the work. Vanessa Wilkins says the staff of Promise Place, as well as the jail staff, find the program to be a rewarding experience for all involved.

"I have learned to change the way I think and it will change my whole outlook and the negative results. I learned how to break a generational cycle and keep bad traits from passing to my son."
— Group participant

"I never sought any help or guidance to help me cope with abuse in my past. This has opened my eyes to identifying patterns, behaviors and choices to be aware of in my everyday life."
— Group participant

Due to the success of their first partnership, Promise Place later expanded the program to the women at the Spalding County jail in 2009 and created a men's program at the Spalding County jail in 2010. Like the previous partnership, this program formed with relative ease due to the support of Captain Tony Crews. In the men's program, discussions turn to men's responsibilities toward families and children and being a positive role model to younger men. Through these conversations, a few men have disclosed to Promise Place staff that they, too, had been victims of child abuse and domestic violence; others admitted abusing their partners and children. Promise Place staff took advantage of these opportunities to provide services as well as discuss family violence dynamics and hold the men accountable. "There were many teaching moments," said Executive Director Vanessa Wilkins.

Vanessa believes in order to have a successful program, you must have the right person to facilitate each of the groups. This person possesses firm boundaries, knowledge of domestic violence and how it impacts society as a whole, good listening skills, a strong and charismatic personality which allows him or her to see behind the façade into what is really going on inside another person, and if possible, someone with

experience working within a jail. These qualities help to foster an environment that is supportive for the participants of the program, as well as a beneficial relationship with the jail staff. Providing support requires a significant amount of time, especially when the groups aim to cover the breadth of issues many of the participants want to discuss. The right person must also be committed to the completion of the program, but open to change based on the feedback of participants. Also, she warns, on a practical note, this type of program requires a great deal of paper to print the information and resources for the participants. Buy in bulk!

Vanessa says the support and skills gained through the groups prepares participants for life after incarceration, something that is important for all inmates but in particular survivors of domestic violence.

> **She sees the work Promise Place is doing in the jails as something that is necessary in every community — not only to help the individuals heal from trauma and learn new skills, but for the contribution these women can make in their local communities.**

For those interested in starting a similar program in their local jails, Vanessa suggests setting goals from the very beginning for what you hope to accomplish, as this will help you stay focused on the work. She recommends having two dedicated people trained to facilitate the groups to ensure stability and continuity, which are vital to building trust. Also, have a plan for safety concerns of staff — Promise Place had to temporarily stop providing groups at the men's jail due to an increase in gang activity.

For more information, contact Vanessa Wilkins at Vanessa.Wilkins@promiseplace.org or 770-461-3839 x 152.

RESOURCES FOR WORKING WITH WOMEN IN JAIL OR PRISON

Issues to Consider When Facilitating Groups with Battered Women in Jail or Prison: This 59-page resource explores issues advocates should consider when facilitating (or thinking of facilitating) a group with battered women in jail or prison. In particular, it addresses the realities of working inside correctional facilities and with incarcerated women, and the importance of understanding and considering these challenges when developing and/or running groups within prisons or jails.

Working with Battered Women in Jail (A Manual for Community-Based Battered Women's Advocates): This 74-page manual is written for community-based battered women's advocates who are interested in working with or are already working with battered women in jail.

IMPLEMENTING THE STRANGULATION LAW: AN EXAMPLE FROM CHATHAM COUNTY

Strangulation has been identified as one of the most lethal forms of domestic violence; unconsciousness may occur within seconds and death within minutes. In 10% of cases reviewed, perpetrators killed the victim by strangling her or causing asphyxiation. Non-fatal strangulation is also a significant risk factor for homicide. In 23% of cases, perpetrators were known to have strangled the victim prior to the homicide, although the percentage is likely higher due to underreporting. These findings support existing research indicating most perpetrators strangle victims to demonstrate they can kill them and later use a firearm or other methods to commit the murder.

In 2014, the Georgia General Assembly unanimously passed a bill adding "strangulation assault" as a separate felony to the existing aggravated assault statute. Supporters of the bill included the Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the Georgia Commission on Family Violence, the Georgia

Association of Solicitors-General, District Attorneys' Association of Georgia, and the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police. The law went into effect on July 1, 2014. Prior to this change in the law, strangulation was most often charged as a simple battery or simple assault, which was punishable as a misdemeanor and carrying a sentence not matching the seriousness of this crime. Clarifying strangulation as a specific felony offense under the aggravated assault statute has enabled prosecutors to successfully prosecute this crime and allows for sentencing commensurate with the seriousness of this type of assault. By making strangulation assault a separate felony, a conviction carries a minimum prison sentence of three years with the maximum being 20 years.

The Major Crimes Division in the Chatham County District Attorney's (CCDA) Office took a special interest in non-fatal strangulation cases long before the changes in the statute came about in 2014. Due to the way the old statute was written, non-fatal strangulation presented huge challenges for prosecution but the CCDA's Office worked hard to prosecute these high-risk cases. When the changes to the law went into effect, the CCDA's Office was excited to have another way to hold perpetrators of domestic violence who strangle their partners accountable. In 2014, Assistant District Attorneys Jennifer Parker Guyer and Frank Pennington II attended a training conducted by the Training Institute on Strangulation Prevention in San Diego, CA. This training, coupled with the change in Georgia's law, renewed their passion for this issue.

When ADAs Guyer and Pennington returned from the training, they identified their next step as improving the local criminal legal systems' response to strangulation incidents. They focused on updating law enforcement officers on the changes to the law and training them on the signs and symptoms of strangulation. They also wanted to include a training section on documentation of injuries to help strengthen non-fatal strangulation cases.

Their efforts began by utilizing existing relationships and training opportunities already existing in their community. For example, the District Attorney's office already had a training program called "Adopt a Precinct." Under this program, ADAs are assigned to work with individual precincts and provide training for them, typically in a roll call format. After the change in the law, ADA's Guyer and Pennington trained the other ADAs on the information they learned from the Training Institute on Strangulation Prevention so they could train their assigned precincts in turn. Additionally, strangulation training has been added to the legal update portion of the regular block training officers receive as part of their continuing education every year.

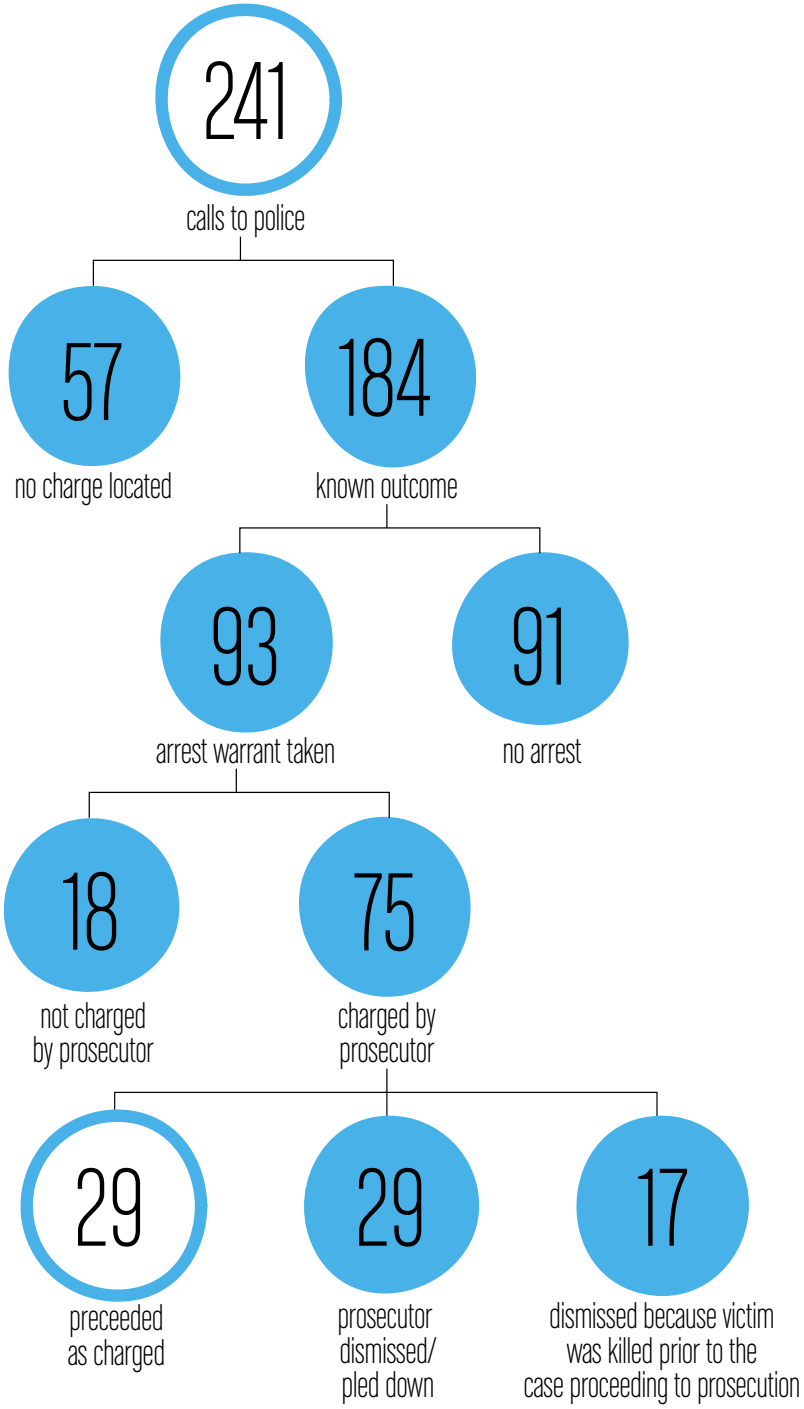
> **As a result of this work over the past year, the CCDA's Office has seen more non-fatal strangulation cases charged and officers conducting more thorough investigations on-scene.**

Moving forward, the CCDA's Office plans to continue including strangulation training in their existing trainings, whether or not they are specifically domestic violence trainings, and to be creative about how the information is disseminated to key criminal justice partners. The CCDA's Office also hopes to provide strangulation training and information to the local medical community, such as nurses and hospitals. The medical community is a key partner in providing victims of non-fatal strangulation the appropriate medical attention and documentation of their injuries, which can significantly help prosecutors build stronger cases.

For more information, contact Frank Pennington II at 912-652-7308.

More information and training on strangulation can be found at the Training Institute on Strangulation Prevention, http://www.strangulationtraininginstitute.com.

9 DETAILS OF INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION OUTCOMES



KEY POINTS (chart 9)

A review of the case histories reveals calling law enforcement does not always result in increased safety, justice or perpetrator accountability.

241 calls were made to law enforcement regarding a domestic violence incident prior to the homicide. Law enforcement is often a victim's initial contact with the criminal legal system. Because of this distinctive position, officers have a unique opportunity to significantly impact a victim's safety and continued use of the legal system for help. It is crucial for law enforcement officers to respond to domestic violence calls and make effective referrals and appropriate arrests on-scene.

The Project was only able to locate outcomes for 76% of calls made to law enforcement, indicating a gap between written policy and practice in many law enforcement agencies regarding officers writing family violence reports after every call of alleged domestic violence to which they respond.

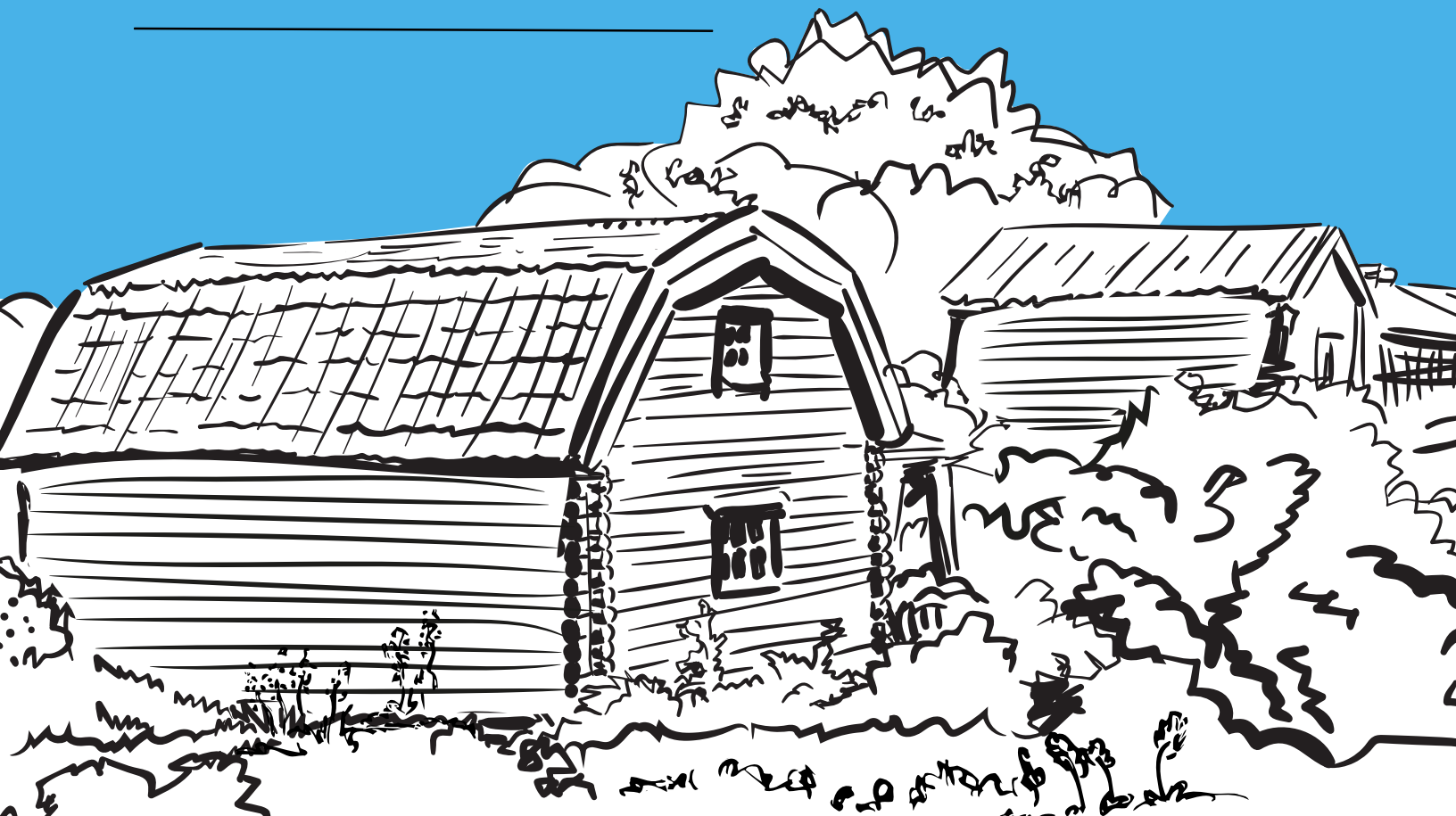
In the 184 known outcomes, 49% showed no arrest was made by law enforcement or there was no record of charges against the accused abuser. Most often, arrests were not made by officers because they did not find probable cause or they applied for a warrant because the perpetrator had fled the scene. 37% of victims were advised to apply for their own arrest warrant, a practice which increases barriers and risks for victims. Sometimes officers undercharged qualifying family violence crimes as disorderly conduct.

Of the cases where law enforcement was called and an arrest was made or a warrant was taken, the prosecutors pursued a majority (81%) of family violence arrests. However, of those cases where charges were filed by prosecutors, a significant number (39%) were later dismissed or pled down. In 37% of cases dismissed by the prosecutor, charges were dismissed because the victim was killed prior to the case proceeding to prosecution.

Please see the 2013 Annual Report for further discussion on the issues, barriers and opportunities discussed above.

5 CIVIL PROTECTIVE ORDERS AND THE COURTS

Temporary Protective Orders (TPOs) can be an important part of victim's safety plan. Yet, for some victims, risk increases during the process of obtaining a TPO, during the service of the order to the respondent, and at subsequent court dates. Unfortunately, many victims are not connected to domestic violence advocates who could conduct risk assessment and safety planning when applying for a TPO. This lack of advocacy undermines the effectiveness of the court's order because victims do not get the help they may need to thoroughly evaluate how a TPO could affect their safety or how the respondent might react to the order.



Another gap undermining the effectiveness of TPOs is the lack of compliance measures for respondents. Even though Georgia law requires respondents of TPOs to complete a Family Violence Intervention Program (FVIP), it is not always enforced in the courtroom. And when respondents are referred to FVIPs, there is often no follow-up to ensure they have completed the program. Further, there are often no compliance measures concerning firearms surrender. Even when the court has ordered the removal of firearms, many communities report not having a protocol in place for retrieval, storage and return of firearms once the TPO has expired. Please see page 42 for more discussion regarding the challenges of firearm removal.

TPOs Filed in Georgia, 2011–2014

2014	22,574
2013	23,010
2012	23,086
2011	22,428

TPO data provided by the Georgia Bureau of Investigation

DEKALB COUNTY TPO COMPLIANCE COURT

Recommendation addressed through this initiative:

+ Set timely compliance hearings for TPO respondents

For nearly a decade, DeKalb County Magistrate Court Judges were designated to hear all family violence and stalking order cases for eight of the 10 Superior Court divisions. When Chief Magistrate Judge Berryl Anderson became Chief Magistrate Judge in 2010, the DeKalb County Magistrate Court was given authority to hear all family violence and stalking order cases in all 10 divisions within DeKalb County. The Court staff looked closely at procedures and realized there were no mechanisms in place to ensure compliance when a TPO was issued. Also, judges were not regularly ordering respondents to take the state-mandated FVIP classes. The Court quickly realized that conducting compliance hearings would provide a consistent way to ensure respondents were following Georgia law by enrolling in and completing mandated FVIP classes. With the help of community partners, the Court submitted an application to the Office on Violence against Women (OVW) to fund the Compliance Project. In 2010, they were awarded funding for two years (with a one-year no-cost extension) and in FY 2013, funding was awarded again for three years.

The first calendar the Court created was a standalone TPO Compliance Calendar with the purpose of holding respondents accountable and increasing victim safety after a 12-month Family Violence Protective Order is issued. At the 12-month hearing, TPO respondents are assigned to a compliance officer. The compliance officer monitors FVIP enrollment, class attendance, weapon surrender and the court-ordered employment search requirement. The TPO Compliance Calendar was not difficult to implement due to the longstanding collaborative partnerships existing between DeKalb County Magistrate Court and many community partners, including the Women's Resource Center to End Domestic Violence, Tapestri, DeKalb Volunteer Lawyers Foundation, Caminar Latino, Men Stopping Violence and Raksha. Other important partners necessary to the success of the Compliance Calendars have been the DeKalb County Sheriff's Office DV Unit, DeKalb County Probate Court, Nia's Place (domestic violence supervised visitation center), and DeKalb County State Probation.

Advocates who partner on the grant play an active role in the TPO Compliance Calendar. Advocates notify the compliance officer when there has been a violation of the TPO and the compliance officer informs the judge. Advocates assist victims with additional court filings, such as a motion for contempt, a permanent order, or if needed, a warrant application. They also follow up with the compliance officer after hearings to find out if the respondent appeared in court, enrolled in FVIP classes, and how many classes they have attended. Advocates do not appear for compliance hearings but they are present at 12-month hearings.

The second dedicated domestic violence calendar is the Misdemeanor Warrant Application Calendar. The purpose of this calendar is to provide a more efficient and safe response in cases involving allegations of domestic violence. Previously, warrant application and TPO hearings were conducted

10 TEMPORARY PROTECTIVE ORDERS 2004-2014

KEY POINTS (chart 10)

In 16% of cases, the domestic violence homicide victims had a Temporary Protective Order in place at the time of their death. Some victims had no TPOs in place at their death because the judge dismissed the petition. In one case, the judge dismissed the domestic violence victim's TPO petition at the second hearing, two months before she was killed, claiming she failed to establish a preponderance of the evidence. Several other victims had TPOs at some point prior to their deaths but not in place at the time of the homicide.

11 DIVORCE STATUS 2004-2014

KEY POINTS (chart 11)

In the cases where the victim and perpetrator were married, 27% had a divorce pending at the time of the homicide. Many victims either filed a divorce action pro se or sought counsel from a family law attorney. In these instances, the victim was rarely connected with a domestic violence advocate to discuss safety planning. It was even more complicated for those seeking a TPO and a divorce simultaneously, as the court often tried to combine the TPO and divorce action, which severely limits the provisions available in TPOs and prevents entry into the Georgia Protective Order Registry.

simultaneously in two different courthouses. This new calendar alleviates potential scheduling conflicts that may force victims to choose between a criminal remedy and a civil remedy. It also eliminates the need for a Victim Advocate to monitor proceedings in two separate courtrooms.

> **One of the biggest challenges the Court faced was ensuring indigent respondents enrolled in and completed FVIP classes.**

The Court overcame this challenge by developing a relationship with the Georgia Department of Labor and the DeKalb County Workforce Development to create an employment search requirement. The judge orders respondents to enroll in the employment search requirement (ESR) program and submit documentation to their assigned compliance officers twice a week or bring documentation when they return to court. Other challenges include respondents who relocate to another part of the state or move to another state. In these cases, the respondents are responsible for identifying an FVIP program in the state or county to which they have relocated.

The project is still a work in progress, and the partners routinely reevaluate ways to improve their processes and procedures, look for system gaps, hold batterers accountable and increase victim safety. Implementing the calendar required strategic, focused planning to develop goals and collaboration among all partners. Prior to launching the project, all Magistrate Court judges in DeKalb County received specialized training in domestic violence through the National Council of Family and Juvenile Court Judges. In addition, judges, compliance officers and support staff routinely attend and participate in local domestic violence in-house trainings as well as statewide domestic violence trainings.

For more information, contact Judge Berryl Anderson or Lakesiya Cofield at 404-371-7071.

THE GEORGIA DOMESTIC VIOLENCE BENCHBOOK: A VALUABLE RESOURCE FOR OUR STATE

The Georgia Domestic Violence Benchbook (GDVB) serves as a free resource to all those who seek to understand issues related to domestic violence in our state. It is a compendium of state and federal law and law-related material relevant to domestic violence. It was originally created in 2005 when the idea for a domestic violence chapter in the existing Superior Courts Benchbook grew into a standalone resource. The first five editions of the GDVB were edited by Nancy Hunter. Since 2010, Joan Prittie, Executive Director of Project Safe, has served as editor.

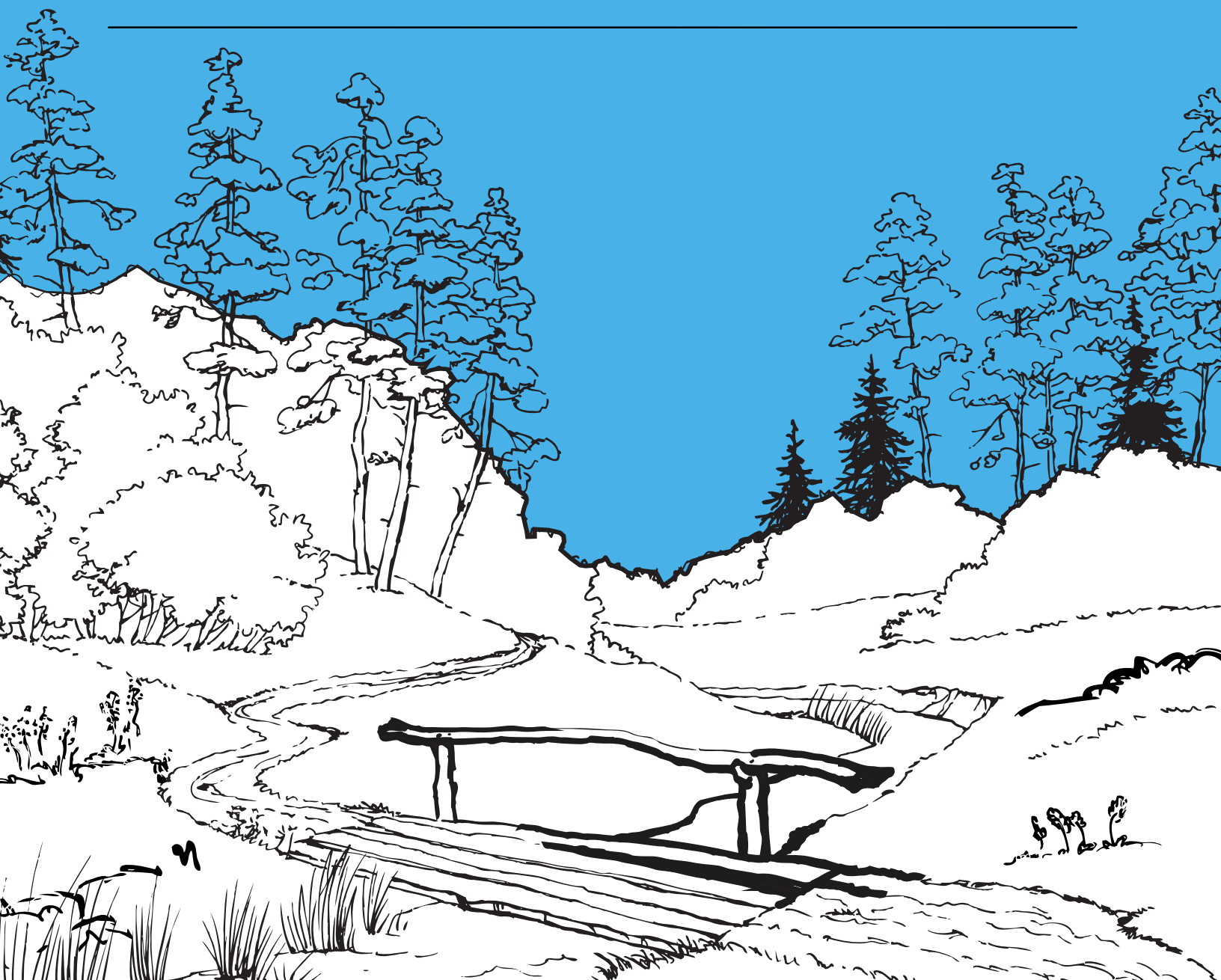
The GDVB comprises five chapters, which cover civil protective orders; jurisdiction and procedure; remedies, settlements, and orders; criminal law; and evidence. In addition, there are 21 appendices including information on a wide range of topics including the dynamics of domestic violence, mediation, lethality factors, judicial compliance hearings, children exposed to domestic violence, restitution, victims' compensation, public benefits and more.

The GDVB is a useful tool for many professions working with domestic violence victims and perpetrators, not just judges. For instance, the section on TPOs can be particularly helpful to legal advocates as they help victims navigate the civil legal system. The sections on criminal law and evidence are an excellent resource for prosecutors.

The GDVB can be downloaded from the Institute of Continuing Judicial Education website at http://icje.uga.edu/domesticviolencebenchbook.html

6 FIREARMS AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FATALITIES

Firearms are responsible for the majority of domestic violence deaths in Georgia, accounting for 66% of all domestic violence fatalities in 2014 and 56% of reviewed fatalities from 2004–2014. Federal law prohibits those convicted of domestic violence misdemeanors and those subject to a qualifying TPO from possessing firearms and ammunition. A violation of either of these provisions of the Gun Control Act carries a maximum prison term of 10 years. Federal law requires enforcement at the state level, and several states have passed clarifying legislation assisting in the implementation of the Gun Control Act and issues surrounding the collection, storage and release of firearms. However, Georgia is not one of these states, and law enforcement and some courts may not consistently enforce the federal law to the fullest extent possible.



JUDICIAL NOTIFICATION OF FIREARM PROHIBITION SURVEY RESULTS

In an effort to learn more about the challenges regarding firearm prohibition notification and removal in Georgia, GCADV and GCFV partnered in August of 2014 to conduct a survey of judicial circuits. The survey asked specific questions about policies and procedures for judicial notification of family violence misdemeanor defendants and protection order respondents about the law prohibiting their purchase and possession of firearms and ammunition. Survey links were sent out to agency contacts in each judicial circuit and respondents were given almost four weeks to complete the survey. Representatives from 30 of Georgia's 49 circuits responded to the survey, resulting in a 61% response rate.

SURVEY RESULTS ON NOTIFICATION IN CRIMINAL CASES

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES: 37% of survey respondents said their judicial circuit has policies and procedures to notify domestic violence misdemeanor defendants of the federal firearms prohibition. 20% said no specific policy regarding notification exists in their jurisdiction; 37% said they were unsure.

JUDICIAL NOTIFICATION: Thirty percent of survey respondents reported most or all judges in their circuits provide notification of the federal firearms prohibition in most or all family violence misdemeanor cases; 20% reported some judges provide notification in most/all cases; 27% reported some judges provide notification in some cases; and 23% reported no judges in their circuit provide notification of the federal firearms prohibition.

VERBAL AND WRITTEN NOTIFICATION: Most judges who notify misdemeanor defendants of the federal firearms prohibition make verbal notification from the bench (40% use a standard script; 33% use no standard script). Some use a specific form to provide written notification (27%). A small number (3%) write the notification into existing forms.

WHEN NOTIFICATION IS HAPPENING: Judicial notification of the federal firearms prohibition takes place at multiple points of the prosecution process: 33% of survey respondents reported judges notify misdemeanor defendants during the issuance of bond/pretrial release; 30% reported notification during arraignment; 33% reported notification during conviction; and 53% reported notification at sentencing.

FIREARM REMOVAL: Seventeen percent of survey respondents reported there is both a policy in place in their jurisdiction regarding removal of firearms from those convicted of qualifying domestic violence misdemeanors and it is being followed; 3% reported they have a policy but it is not being followed; 10% of respondents reported they are currently working to develop a firearm removal policy; 57% stated they did not have a policy yet but they see potential in their circuit for developing one; and 7% said they did not have a firearm removal policy and they did not think it was something that could happen in their judicial circuit.

SURVEY RESULTS ON NOTIFICATION IN CIVIL CASES

Georgia's standard Family Violence Protective Order (TPO) forms currently provide written notification to respondents of the federal firearms prohibition.

VERBAL NOTIFICATION: Sixty percent of respondents said most judges provide verbal notification in most/all TPO cases; 3% reported some judges make notification in most/all TPO cases; 13% reported some judges make notification in some TPO cases; and 17% responded no judges make verbal notification. In circuits where judges make verbal notification, 37% do so using a standard script read out loud; 40% reported judges use no standard script.

FIREARM REMOVAL IN CIVIL CASES: 43% of survey respondents reported their circuit has a protocol for removing firearms from TPO respondents and it is being followed; 3% reported they have a protocol but it is not being followed; 40% reported their circuit does not have a protocol but they thought it could happen; and 7% reported they do not have a protocol on firearm removal and they do not think it is something that could happen in their circuit.

CHALLENGES FACING COMMUNITIES ON FIREARM NOTIFICATION AND REMOVAL

Overall, the most-cited challenge for communities regarding both notification and removal of firearms are strong beliefs around 2nd Amendment rights held by community partners. Many respondents said these beliefs have been present for a long time and changing mindsets on firearm possession, especially in domestic violence cases, is challenging. Specifically in TPO cases, survey respondents cited many judges in their circuit believe a weapon should not be taken from a TPO respondent until he has been convicted of a crime.

The second-most-cited challenge for communities was a high level of confusion in their jurisdiction regarding the enforcement of federal firearm laws.

> **Due to this confusion, many respondents felt there is a need to train law enforcement agencies, prosecutors and judges statewide on federal firearm laws regarding enforcement and removal processes.**

Many communities have not been able to achieve consensus with community partners on protocols for firearm prohibition notification and removal. Often, there is confusion on which agency or agencies should enforce the removal, as well as where the firearms should be stored, inventoried or disposed. In many communities, there is a lack of follow-through after notification is made to enforce the order and actually remove the firearm. Further, if firearms were not used in the family violence crime being prosecuted, many judges are reluctant to directly address the prohibitions regarding firearms.

Similarly, many judges are not initialing the standard provision regarding firearms on TPO forms, especially when there are no allegations of firearm use. Some judges are not signing the "no weapons order" on the TPO because it is already against the law to have weapons if a TPO is in effect. However, unless it is specifically stated in the "Further Ordered" section of the TPO form, many law enforcement officers will not remove firearms. Survey respondents cited an overreliance in their jurisdiction on TPO respondents to read the Orders themselves regarding the firearm prohibition. Some judges are allowing TPO respondents to give their firearms to family members for "safekeeping," a practice allowing many abusers easy access to their firearms.

Further, survey respondents said when law enforcement is in support of removing firearms from TPO respondents, they face challenges regarding storage, inventory and other logistical issues for returning the firearms when a TPO expires. Moreover, when officers do attempt to remove firearms from TPO respondents, they often encounter difficulty in seizing weapons, due to the officer's inability to search a home when a TPO is served.

If you did not take the survey and would like to, or if the results are not reflective of your community, please contact Allison Smith at ASmith@gcadv.org for a link to the survey.

For more information or training on firearm removal, storage and return under existing law for law enforcement and the courts:

1. National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, DV Division: http://www.ncjfcj.org/our-work/domestic-violence
2. National Center on Protection Orders and Full Faith & Credit: http://www.fullfaithandcredit.org
3. AEquitas, The Prosecutors' Resource on Violence Against Women: http://www.aequitasresource.org

IMPACT OF *UNITED STATES V. CASTLEMAN*

On March 26, 2014, the Supreme Court of the United States unanimously ruled in *United States v. Castleman* that federal law makes it a crime for people convicted of misdemeanor domestic violence offenses, however minor, to possess firearms. This decision enhances the ability of federal prosecutors to keep guns out of the hands of batterers.

In 1996, Congress enacted 18 U.S.C. §922(g)(9) (the Lautenberg Amendment), which bars any person convicted of a "misdemeanor crime of domestic violence" from possessing a gun. This law closed a dangerous loophole in federal gun control laws: Those convicted of felonies face gun ownership prohibitions — but a majority of abusers were not affected by this because most domestic violence convictions are for misdemeanor assault and battery. However, federal authorities have faced challenges enforcing this law because federal circuit courts were split on how severe the force used in a domestic violence offense needed to be to qualify as a "misdemeanor crime of domestic violence" under the federal statute.

However, in Castleman, the Supreme Court issued a broad interpretation of the term "misdemeanor crime of domestic violence," holding that any convictions involving "bodily injury" or "offensive touching" could qualify under the statute. Justice Sonia Sotomayor, writing for the majority, recognized "'[d]omestic violence' is not merely a type of 'violence'; it is a term of art encompassing acts one might not characterize as 'violent' in a nondomestic context." The Court further stated that, although a squeeze of the arm that causes a bruise may not be able to be described as "violence" in every context, "an act of this nature is easy to describe as 'domestic violence,' when the accumulation of such acts over time can subject one intimate partner to the other's control."

Castleman recognizes the nature of the charge, not the state law under which it was convicted, determines its eligibility under the ban. In Georgia, the impact of Castleman could mean the firearm ban may apply even when a crime of domestic violence is not charged and convicted under Georgia's Family Violence Act (i.e., as a Family Violence misdemeanor).

> **With this decision, the Supreme Court confirms what we know all too well — guns should not be in the hands of perpetrators of domestic violence.**

Abusers use guns to control their partners through intimidation, threats, coercion and injury. But most startling are the statistics we know about domestic violence homicides. Women in abusive relationships are five times more likely to be killed when their abuser owns a firearm (Campbell, 2003). In Georgia, women who are killed by their intimate partners are more likely to be killed with a gun than any other method. Limiting access to guns saves lives: In the states requiring a background check with every handgun sale, there are 38% fewer women killed by guns than in states that do not (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010).

With Castleman, the Supreme Court recognized the power and control dynamics putting victims of domestic violence in danger, particularly when coupled with access to guns.

> **We urge State of Georgia legislators to align state firearm forfeiture laws with federal law to clarify law enforcement's authority to remove weapons and establish penalties for the possession of firearms by TPO respondents and those convicted of domestic violence misdemeanors.**

Until this happens, we urge Georgia's judges, community partners and criminal legal agencies to work together to develop policies and procedures to ensure TPO respondents and those convicted of domestic violence misdemeanors are at the very least notified of the federal prohibition to own and/or be in possession of firearms and ammunition. The lives of Georgia citizens depend on it.

This section was adapted from the Office of Violence Against Women's Blog, found at http://www.justice.gov/ovw/ovw-blog.

References

1. *Campbell, J.C. et al. (2003). Risk factors for femicide in abusive relationships: Results from a multisite case control study. American Journal of Public Health, 93(7), 1089-1097.*
2. *U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation. Supplementary homicide reports, 2011. Retrieved from http://bit.ly/V1GvFe (excludes New York due to incomplete data).*

DEKALB COUNTY FIREARM SURRENDER PROTOCOL

Recommendations addressed through this initiative:

- Develop countywide protocols to establish how each agency will cooperate to restrict access to firearms by domestic violence offenders and protective order respondents
- Ensure firearms restrictions and surrender are specifically incorporated into the terms of probation and enforced
- File a petition to revoke probation when an offender refuses or fails to surrender firearms or ammunition, or is found with a firearm or ammunition in possession

Efforts in DeKalb County around firearm removal from misdemeanor defendants first began in the mid-2000s under the leadership of Betsy Ramsey, who was involved with the local DeKalb County Family Violence Task Force and the DeKalb County Solicitor-General's Office. Betsy called together a large meeting of community stakeholders to discuss national and local trends of firearms in the hands of family violence misdemeanor offenders. Her efforts lead to advocacy for Georgia state law on firearms and movement to develop judicial forms to enforce accountability. Unfortunately, several key stakeholders at that time were not on board and the project lost momentum in 2006.

When Betsy retired in 2010, DeKalb County Probation Officer Jennifer Waindle (whose passion regarding removing firearms from misdemeanor offenders mirrored Betsy's) inherited several draft documents that came out of Betsy's work on this issue. Officer Waindle picked up right where Betsy left off. From 2010–2014, she spent time talking to stakeholders in the community about removing firearms from the hands of batterers.

A key moment of collaboration came in 2012 when Officer Waindle partnered with Jenni Stolarski, Chief Assistant Solicitor-General in DeKalb County. With the support from DeKalb County Solicitor-General Sherry Boston and DeKalb County Chief Probation Officer Willie E. Hopkins, Jenni and Officer Waindle met every other month and continued to push the initiative forward, focusing on updating the forms Betsy had created and incorporating language from TPO forms into probation forms. Together, they created a form titled "Firearms/Ammunition Notice," which probationers must sign immediately after sentencing, requiring probationers to answer a series of questions on firearm and ammunition ownership and possession. Probationers must swear that either they do not possess these prohibited items, or they will turn them in within 24 hours post adjudication.

Officer Waindle continued her conversations with stakeholders in the DeKalb County community. While creating the protocol and documents, she called local law enforcement agencies, such as the DeKalb County Sheriff's Department and DeKalb County Police Department, and let them know this was something she cared about. She pitched the idea of creating a process to remove firearms from misdemeanor offenders — something, she was sure to add, already being done with TPO respondents in DeKalb County who turn in their firearms to the Sheriff's Department.

> **However, Officer Waindle, and those who supported and contributed to this initiative, kept running into the same issue: storage of the surrendered weapons.**

The solution finally came in April 2014, when Officer Waindle proposed an idea to her Chief: Use the DeKalb County Probation Department's storage vault to store the firearms and ammunition. Once Probation had custody of the firearms and ammunition and the habeas expired, the department could destroy the firearms at a recycling location in Gwinnett County. Her Chief was supportive and they moved forward with pitching the idea to local judges. Because of Officer Waindle's earlier work in gauging the interest of several judges, she knew many of them would support the plan. All DeKalb County State Court judges were in agreement and the protocol regarding surrender of firearms and ammunition was launched. The protocol includes clear instructions for probationers on how to surrender firearms and ammunition to the DeKalb County State Court Probation Department.

One of the biggest accomplishments of this protocol is it allows Probation Officers to request warrants and arrest those probationers who are in possession of a firearm and/or ammunition that violates the firearms provision. During the first few months the protocol was in place, the Probation Department had three firearms turned in, some ammunition, and a few magazines. A few probationers provided receipts showing they had sold their guns to pawnshops. As of publication of this Report, no arrests have been made for family violence misdemeanor probationers being in possession of a firearm after swearing they were not.

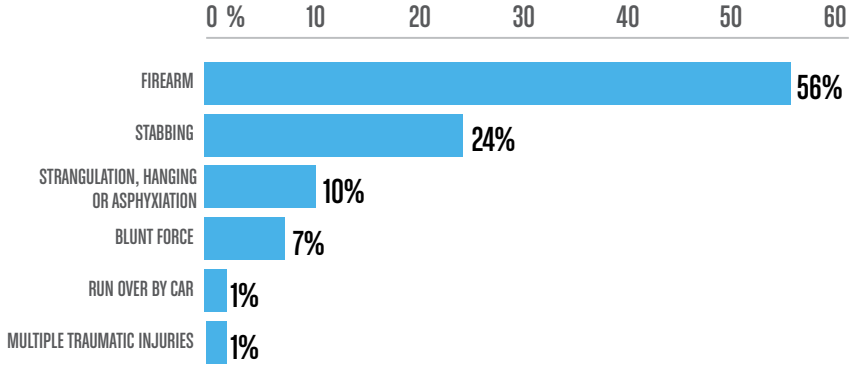
This initiative has fostered many relationships in DeKalb County between judges, prosecutors, clerks and advocates, who all came together to make this initiative a success. For those interested in creating a similar protocol, Officer Waindle's advice is: Brainstorm with a variety of stakeholders, including prosecutors and law enforcement, on how to address barriers to removal and storage of firearms and ammunition. Above all, she implores, don't go silent on this issue. She believes her persistence in talking to all who would listen in her community pushed the initiative towards success.

DeKalb County's Family Violence Task Force went through a rebuilding period while Officer Waindle was working on this initiative, so she found it beneficial to work outside it. However, she believes Family Violence Task Forces can be a very beneficial place to begin some work on this issue. If one doesn't exist in your community, don't let it deter you from moving forward.

Challenges still exist in DeKalb County and across the state because Georgia has not yet aligned state firearm forfeiture laws with federal law to clarify law enforcement's authority to remove weapons and establish penalties for the possession of firearms by TPO respondents and those convicted of domestic violence misdemeanors. Officer Waindle hopes one day soon we will get there. In the meantime, she wants protocols such as the one in DeKalb County to spread to the 51 government misdemeanor probation agencies and 100+ private probation agencies across Georgia — and she's committed to helping make that happen.

For more information, contact Officer Jennifer Waindle at JLWaindle@dekalbcountyga.gov or 404-371-3240.

12 VICTIM CAUSE OF DEATH 2004-2014



KEY POINTS (chart 12)

Greater than all other methods combined, firearms are the leading cause of death for victims in reviewed cases (56%). This finding indicates the urgent need to use all legal means possible to remove firearms from the hands of domestic violence abusers. The presence of a gun in domestic violence situations, no matter who technically owns it, increases the risk of homicide significantly.

7 FAMILY, FRIENDS AND THE FAITH COMMUNITY

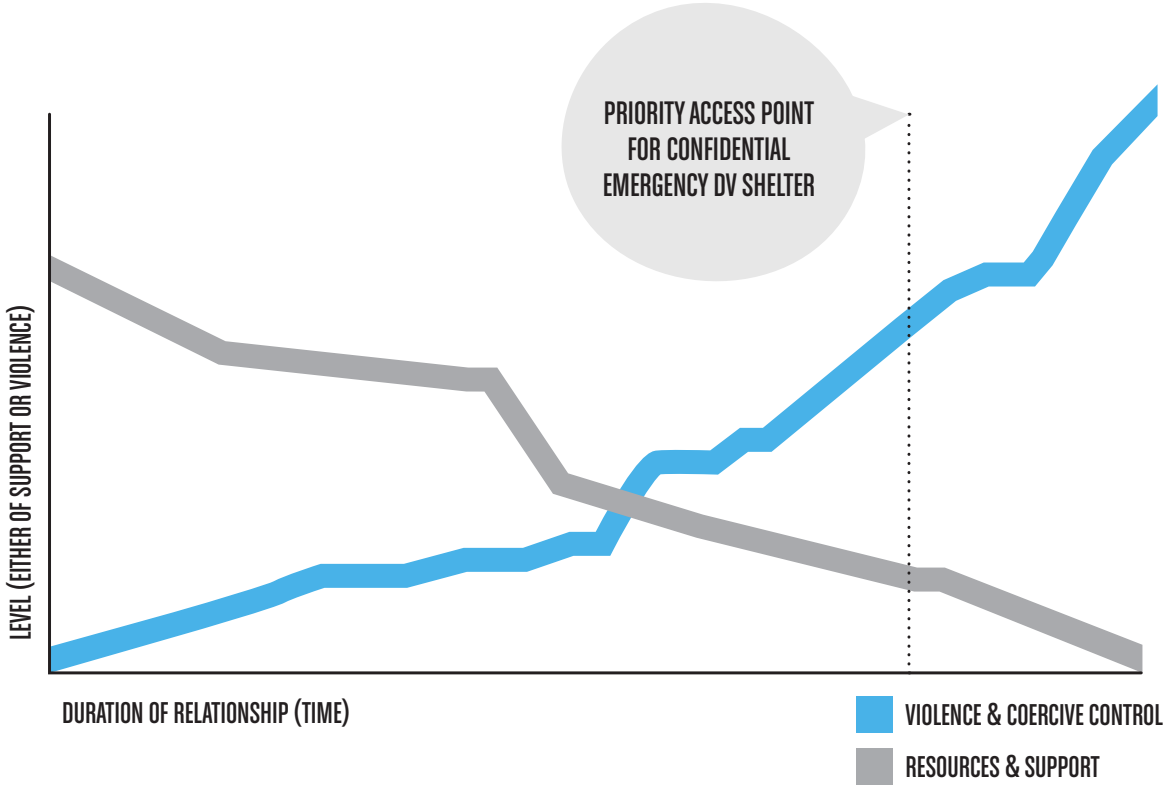
Engaging the support systems of survivors is paramount to breaking the isolation many domestic violence victims experience and yet, overwhelmingly, the Project has found there are usually multiple missed opportunities to empower social networks and link people to the help they need while holding abusers accountable. People experiencing domestic violence often turn to their informal support systems—their friends, family members, faith community, co-workers — before they turn to law enforcement, the courts or an advocate. However, interviews with friends and family of deceased victims have revealed they often have the most information about the history of the relationship and the scope of the violence but they are usually the least prepared to support their loved one in ways that were truly beneficial. Friends and family of deceased victims have shared they wanted to help but they often did not know how. At times, the help they offered was actually not helpful at all and further isolated the victim from her social network.

In the cases studied during the past 11 years, 94% of calls to the police prior to the homicide had no major injury documented in law-enforcement reports. In 75% of prior calls, no visible injuries were documented. This suggests that although serious and visible injury is a predictor of future and possibly lethal violence, it will not always be present in all cases where victims are later killed. Acts of lower-level violence provide an opportunity for friends, family members and domestic violence agencies to intervene, even if the criminal legal system does not. Unfortunately, friends and family members may not recognize these lower levels of violence as domestic violence. Waiting for more aggravated crimes or serious injury to occur before intervention comes at the risk of loss of life.

WE ARE MISSING OPPORTUNITIES TO INTERVENE AND PROVIDE SERVICES

The chart below demonstrates the typical course of abusive relationships over time: Violence tends to escalate while survivors' resources and social supports are damaged and depleted. When people first meet someone who will eventually batter them, they usually have some degree of resources and social support. However, these resources and social supports gradually decline as the abusive relationship continues. The following examples might sound familiar to anyone who has worked closely with victims of domestic violence: The abuser punches a wall, harming her rental agreement. The abuser purchases a bunch of items on her

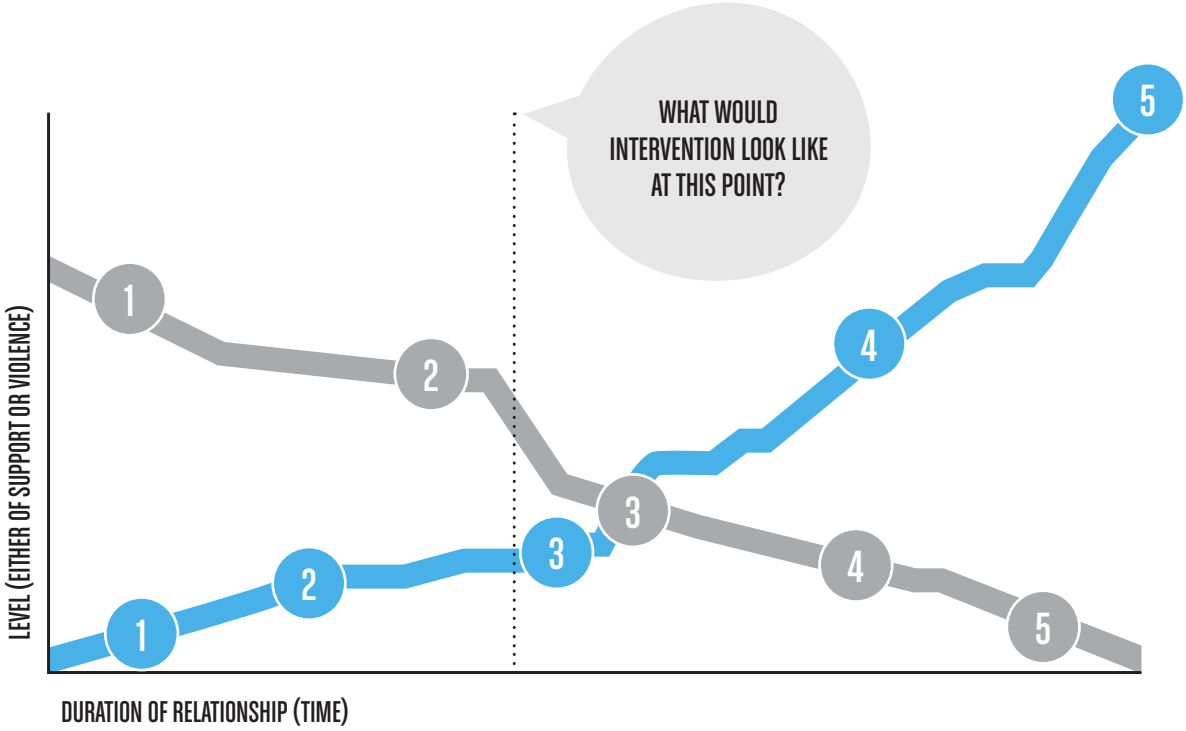
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A SURVIVOR'S ACCESS TO FRIENDS, FAMILY & RESOURCES AND ABUSER'S LEVEL OF VIOLENCE & CONTROL



Reference

Chart and content adapted from:

Burk, Connie. (2012). Essay: "Rethinking a movement icon: From shelters to centers." The NW Network, Seattle, WA.



EXAMPLES OF LOSS OF RESOURCES & SUPPORT

1. Friendship loss
2. Damaged rental property
3. Job and insurance loss
4. Sister stops speaking to her
5. Can't afford car repairs

EXAMPLES OF ESCALATION OF VIOLENCE & COERCIVE CONTROL

1. Checking her voicemail
2. Kicking in apartment door
3. Stalking at her job
4. Misdemeanor battery arrest
5. Strangulation

credit card and then she can't make the payments, ruining her credit rating. The abuser embarrasses her at a party and now she doesn't want to engage with that social group. She gets in a fight with her relative because the family member doesn't understand why she keeps going back to him. She loses her job because she showed up late to work for the third time in a row due to depression and lack of sleep.

The chart on the left also maps when intervention by mainstream domestic violence service providers usually happens – as lethal violence is intensifying and a survivor's network of support and resources are dwindling. Intervention at this stage is crucial and necessary for victims fleeing violent relationships. By this point, many victims don't have anywhere else to stay and their resources are usually completely depleted. It is often much harder for victims to heal once this level of violence is reached due to the level of isolation, number of complicated barriers and potential trauma.

CHANGING OUR INTERVENTION STRATEGIES AND OUTREACH

Often, when people experiencing abuse still fall on the left side of the chart above — when resources are relatively high and violence is low, they may not identify with the words we typically use to describe their experiences, such as "domestic violence" and "victim." Because of this, they may not feel the services of domestic violence programs are designed for them. If a person does contact a domestic violence program when levels of physical violence are low, they are usually not seen as high priority by domestic violence programs, which have limited resources. These restrictions set up a dynamic where mainstream domestic violence programs are limited in the services they can offer until the violence escalates.

However, although they are not usually reaching domestic violence programs, we know people experiencing abuse are in touch with friends and family members at much

higher rates. These loved ones are in a unique position to help intervene at an early stage of an abusive relationship and curtail the destructive toll abusive relationships can have in the lives of individuals, families and communities. Unfortunately, without preparation and training, friends and family members often don't know how to help. We can increase their helpfulness; we can teach them what to do and the most empowering ways to do it.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES CANNOT REPLACE A SURVIVOR'S SOCIAL SUPPORTS

Survivors and their families require deeply rooted, varied and complex support networks that cannot be replaced by any service system. In other words, the systems and interventions we currently have in place are not enough to meet survivors' long-term, complex needs. Survivors need personal connections in their lives to help with childcare, offer rides to work, give emotional support and provide a variety of other things people need from one another. This type of support is critical and beyond the scope of what domestic violence programs can do.

MOVING THE LINE OF INTERVENTION BACK MEANS WE HAVE TO EXPAND OUR REACH

Moving the line of intervention back, to a point where violence is at a lower level and victims still have connections to support—such as friends, family, the faith community and employment — could potentially prevent many cases of domestic violence from reaching the point of lethal violence and homicide. A key component to this framework is for domestic violence advocates to increase their work with the support systems of victims: friends, family members, employers, coworkers and faith communities. By including friends and family members as allies, we can change the culture supporting abuse. The work to end domestic violence is vast and complex. It requires supporting current victims and survivors while working to create the social change necessary to end violence on a broader level.

> **By educating the community — and thereby victim support systems — we are building allies not only to support individual victims, but to change the conversation about domestic violence.**

The Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence has developed the "Model Protocol on Working with Friends and Family of Domestic Violence Victims," which includes guidelines for domestic violence programs to begin considering this issue. The protocol includes examples of how programs can engage friends and families, a checklist for first steps with a range of service strategies, and additional resources. A copy of the protocol can be downloaded at http://www.wscadv2.org.

The Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence has developed a brochure titled "What To Do If Friends or Family Members Are Being Abused." This brochure contains tips for recognizing signs of domestic violence and suggestions for what to say to someone you suspect is being abused. Go to http://www.georgiafatalityreview.com to download the brochure or request copies.

ENGAGING FAITH COMMUNITIES IN THE WORK TO END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The cases reviewed by the Project have revealed that victims, survivors and surviving family members consistently turn to their faith communities for support and safety, whether they disclose abuse or not, often before they turn to traditional systems. Faith can be a critical resource for victims in many different ways, from a source of support to a connection to families and culture.

31% of homicide victims in reviewed cases were connected to a faith community within the five years prior to their death.

It is critical for domestic violence programs and faith communities to build relationships, because victims are more likely to turn to a place of worship for support than they are to turn to a domestic violence agency. For several communities, faith-based organizations offer a unique source of support for individuals experiencing domestic violence. In rural communities, a faith-based organization may be the only resource within miles of a victim's home. In refugee and immigrant communities, the faith community may be the only safe place victims can go to for help that understands their culture and language. For victims without access to money, the free counseling and advice available through a local congregation may be the only free services of which the victim is aware.

Faith communities are uniquely positioned to have a direct impact on safety, accountability, prevention and intervention. The response of the faith community can either be the biggest resource or, conversely, the biggest roadblock when it comes to ending violence and helping victims and their children achieve safety. There are many positive examples of faith communities in Georgia responding to domestic violence, but there remains great opportunity and need to train clergy and lay leaders so they can provide safe and effective guidance and resources to families experiencing domestic violence.

FAITH AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE INITIATIVE

In response to this issue, the Project launched the Faith and Domestic Violence Initiative in 2009. The work of this Initiative was guided by the Project Coordinators, the FaithTrust Institute, and the Faith Advisory Committee — composed of representatives from agencies with expertise in domestic violence, cultural competency and interfaith work. The initial goals of the Initiative were to develop resources for local communities, ensure faith leaders know what to do and who to call when they encounter domestic violence, support faith leaders in their efforts to take a vocal, visible and public stand against domestic violence, and provide tools to faith leaders so they may ensure their congregations are places where everyone is safe and victims of domestic violence can find help. The initial work of the Initiative involved hosting three interfaith trainings where representatives from all faiths were invited. Participant feedback revealed they enjoyed the interfaith perspective but, when it came down to developing a practical response for their congregation, they wanted more information related specifically to the practices and beliefs of their faith.

In an effort to expand the work of the Initiative statewide, the Project developed the Safe Sacred Space training materials in 2011 to assist anyone interested in training their local faith communities. These materials were designed to help Family Violence Task Forces and community programs provide local trainings, provide model protocols for responding to domestic violence within faith communities, dispel myths about domestic violence and service providers, and provide resources on services available. This content can be presented by domestic violence advocates and members of a Family Violence Task Force and is designed for faith congregations, faith leaders, clergy, lay leaders, women's groups, teen groups, social justice groups, social ministries, volunteer groups and seminary schools.

BREAKING THE SILENCE

Faith leaders are sometimes uncertain where to start and may feel overwhelmed. Here are some suggestions with varying commitment that can be offered.

- **mention domestic violence in prayers and newsletter articles**
- **preach about domestic violence and healthy relationships**
- **hang bathroom flyers on domestic violence services**
- **provide brochures and other literature and resources on domestic violence**
- **print hotline and referral numbers in every newsletter, bulletin and weekly service leaflet**
- **develop protocols for response to domestic violence within their congregation**
- **create plans for holding abusers accountable**
- **participate in community-wide events to address domestic violence**

CHALLENGES WITH ENGAGING THE FAITH COMMUNITY

Outreach to the faith community can be time- and labor-intensive; relationships may take years to develop. The Initiative has had success with interfaith trainings hosted in metro Atlanta, but it has proven challenging to gain access to many faith communities. Often, faith communities can be resistant to the idea of bringing in an “outsider” to train them on domestic violence. Sometimes, clergy believe domestic violence isn’t happening in their congregation because they have not heard about it. In reality, if victims are not talking about their experiences, it is usually because faith leaders have not created an atmosphere in which it is safe to disclose. After the silence surrounding domestic violence has been broken, faith leaders often begin to hear the stories of abuse that had been occurring in their congregations all along. One way to potentially alleviate their concerns around this issue is to frame domestic violence as a community problem affecting all kinds of communities, and that no one is immune.

Additional sticky areas encountered when talking with the faith community involve philosophical differences. Sometimes clergy and leaders will encourage spiritual solutions only, such as suggesting the victim “pray harder” or saying “forgiveness is the answer.” There may also be differences in beliefs about divorce and the roles of women and men in relationships. Without proper training and information, clergy and lay leaders may not recognize the seriousness of the situation and may minimize the abuse, possibly putting their congregants and children in danger.

The Sacred Safe Space materials can be downloaded at http://www.gcfv.org.

13 PERPETRATOR'S HISTORY AS KNOWN BY THE COMMUNITY 2004-2014

		% of cases where this factor was present
VIOLENT OR CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR	History of DV against victim	88
	Threats to kill the primary victim	54
	Violent criminal history	51
	Stalking	43
	Threats to harm victim with weapon	36
	Child abuse perpetrator	28
	History of DV against others	27
	Inflict serious injury on victim	27
	Sexual abuse perpetrator	23
	Strangulation	23
	Threats to kill children, family, and/or friends	18
	Harmed victim with weapon	14
	Hostage taking	9
CONTROLLING BEHAVIOR	Monitoring and controlling	56
	Isolation of victim	35
	Ownership of victim	28
MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE	Alcohol and drug abuse	52
	Suicide threats and attempts	35
	Depression	32

KEY POINTS (chart 13)

Often, friends and family members knew the most about the perpetrator's history of abusive and controlling behaviors but they were the least prepared to respond in ways truly supportive of the victim.

Chart notes: We define perpetrator as the individual who committed the homicide and the victim as the individual who was killed. These categories are not always reflective of the lived experiences of either person regarding domestic violence in the relationship. Eight women killed male partners; one woman perpetrator killed her female partner. One man killed his male partner, and one woman committed suicide. All remaining homicides were men killing women.

8 DETACHMENT, SEPARATION AND THE RISKS OF LEAVING

Leaving an abusive relationship is dangerous. In almost all of the cases reviewed by this Project, the victim was making some attempt to end the relationship, bettering her life through education or job promotions, or emotionally separating from the abuser. Leaving may trigger an escalation of a partner's violence and increase risks for children and bystanders. In previous Reports, we have discussed the need for increased safety planning for victims who are leaving their relationships. It is a vital form of support that helps a victim navigate safety concerns and risks that may escalate, sometimes for years, after she leaves.

LEAVING AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP IS DIFFICULT

For most victims, leaving requires substantial sacrifice and can increase hardships, despite the difficulties and pain that come with remaining in the relationship. Leaving can lead to further isolation, possibly requiring the severing of ties with faith communities and even the support of family and friends. Usually, leaving also means a significant loss of financial stability — including her home, income, job, health insurance and even immigration status (Davies, 2009). For many victims, leaving means facing an unsure future regarding how to feed their children or provide them healthcare. For victims living in poverty, there is often no real option to leave beyond facing homelessness, putting them at further risk of violence (see Economic Abuse section on page 23). In general, victims return to or stay in an abusive relationship if leaving will make their lives or their children's lives worse, if they have no real option or resources to leave, or if the benefits to staying outweigh some level of violence and control they might experience (Davies, 2009).

LEAVING AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP IS NOT ALWAYS THE BEST OPTION FOR A VICTIM

In our reviewed cases, there was a known history of domestic violence in **82% of cases.**

In last year's Report, we addressed the reality that many victims return to partners who have been abusive or they may even recant testimony. A multitude of reasons influence their decision. Often, it is not beneficial or even realistic for victims to break off all communication or contact with those who have abused them (Davies, 2009). Most victims are in contact with current or former partners, sometimes by choice and sometimes by necessity. When children are involved, communication and contact may be necessary for parenting responsibilities or may be court-ordered.

Other victims remain in contact with their former partners as a safety strategy — contact allows her to gauge his state of mind and perhaps keep him from escalating his violence if she were to cut off all communication.

It is also important to remember not all abusers pose the same level of risk to the victim and her children, which is why many victims decide some amount of contact is OK.

THERE ARE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF INTERVENTION STRATEGIES THAT FOCUS ONLY ON LEAVING

Despite our well-intentioned efforts to help victims safely end contact with their abusers, we have designed a system that blames the victim when she continues to remain in contact with her partner. Victims often face consequences when they access services and use tools to stay safe but remain in contact with their abusive partner. For example, many victims who have TPOs against their partner are reprimanded by judges and law enforcement and told they cannot have contact with the abusive partner. They are sometimes given false information that they themselves, as a petitioner, can violate a TPO and be arrested. Further, most domestic violence programs have strict rules prohibiting victims from having contact with their abusers. Sometimes domestic violence advocates struggle with how to create a safety plan for victims who stay in their relationships or return to the relationships after a period of separation.

VICTIMS WHO REMAIN WITH THEIR ABUSIVE PARTNERS DO NOT WANT TO BE ABUSED

Victims are just like anyone else — they make decisions in the context of their own lives, cultures and assessments of what is best for them and their children. Staying in contact or remaining in a relationship with an abusive partner does not mean a person likes the abuse nor does it mean they deserve any further abuse for their decision. The violent behavior remains the responsibility of the person who is violent and is never the fault of the victim (Davies, 2009). Our role is still to support victims experiencing abuse and help them stay safe.

WE CAN SUPPORT ALL VICTIMS BY MEETING THEM WHERE THEY ARE

> **All victims — not just those who have left a relationship or who are attempting to leave a relationship — deserve the resources and protection of domestic violence intervention and advocacy.**

The fundamental principles driving the movement to end domestic violence upholds the right of every victim to make decisions about her life and her family. This must be done in her own time and on her own terms. It requires us to listen to victims when they tell us what they need, what the most important safety risks are for her, and to acknowledge her as the expert of her own life as we support and enhance her ongoing safety. It also requires us to remove leaving as a precondition for services to ensure the full range of advocacy, options and resources are available for victims who stay.

We can preserve the right to leave and expand resources to pursue that right, while still providing services and support to those who stay.

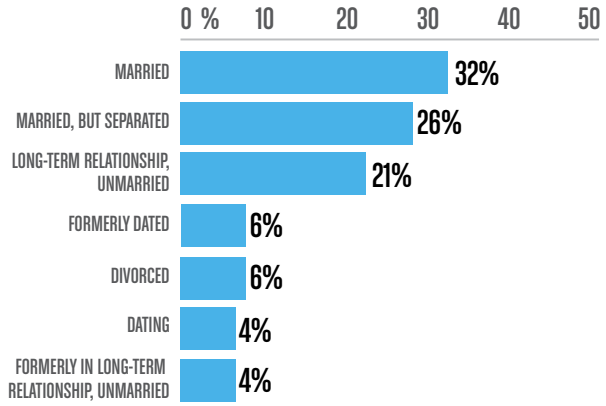
Jill Davies has done extensive work on advocating for battered women who remain in contact with their abusive partners. Her framework has been used to outline this section of the Report.

Advocacy Beyond Leaving Resources:

Davis, J. (2009). "Advocacy beyond leaving: Helping battered women in contact with current or former partners — A guide for domestic violence advocates." Family Violence Prevention Fund.

Rose, J. & Mederos, F. "Advocacy beyond leaving: Working with families in contact." Families Thrive. http://www.familiesthrive.org

14 RELATIONSHIP STATUS AT THE TIME OF THE HOMICIDE 2004-2014



KEY POINTS (chart 14)

In 57% of reviewed cases, the victim and abuser were in a current relationship at the time of the homicide — meaning they were married, in a long-term relationship (more than 6 months) or dating. In relationships where the victim and abuser were separated, the victim often remained in contact with the abuser for a variety of reasons.

This chart does not reflect the fact that almost all victims were contemplating leaving the relationship or taking steps do to so. Victims are at the highest risk of being killed by their abusive partners when they separate from them; both rates of and seriousness of physical abuse increase during periods of separation and divorce. Even when a victim's desire to leave is not spoken aloud, any increase in behaviors or steps to gain independence may signal to their partner they are losing power and control over them. Taking a new job, increasing social activities, saving money, and changing locks on doors can all signal to a domestic violence abuser the victim is serious about leaving and is actively taking steps to separate from them.

paula's story

Paula and John were together for six years. She had two children from a previous relationship, a 20-year-old and a 17-year-old. John was a Vietnam War veteran. John had served two sentences in prison, one for writing bad checks and one for forgery.

About four months prior to the homicide, Paula and John's life circumstances and relationship started to deteriorate. John lost his job and was not able to maintain steady employment thereafter. He was a diabetic and suffered a heart attack, which further compromised his health. One day, while John was away from the house, Paula moved her belongings out of the house with help from her sister. Not long after Paula moved out, John was admitted to the hospital for treatment of depression and suicidal ideation. Not much is known about who was part of Paula's support system beyond her sister or whom she told, if anyone, about the abuse. About four days prior to the homicide, Paula ran into a friend, who lived in the house next door to the couple's residence. Paula told her neighbor she had left John and he had received treatment for suicide and depression.

After his release from the hospital, John attempted suicide by overdosing on his antidepressant medication. Immediately after taking the pills, he called his doctor to let him know what he had done. He told his doctor he had no reason to live since he recently lost his wife, job and was losing his house. His doctor called police, who went to the parking lot where John was parked in his truck. The police noted he was in a deep stupor and he told them his recent stay in the hospital only depressed him more. An ambulance transported him to the hospital.

Shortly thereafter, Paula and John's residence was foreclosed upon and John, who had been living there alone since Paula moved out, was evicted by a sheriff's deputy. After the eviction, a friend of John's allowed him to live in an empty camper on his property. One day, a sheriff's deputy served a civil action on this same friend. While the deputy was at the location, the friend asked the deputy if he could speak about a problem with John. He told the deputy that John was having problems with his marriage and he had even lost his home because of his wife. He claimed John had made statements that if his wife did not "quit messing with [me]", he was "just going to kill her." He also said John told him he had a shotgun and he was going to shoot his wife. The officer did not make a report at this time and this information did not come to light until after the murder.

On the day of the murder, John called Paula and asked her to take him to get his prescriptions filled because his truck had broken down. She agreed and went to pick him up at the motel where he was living. According to a housekeeper, Paula went up to John's room when she arrived at the hotel. Prior to Paula's arrival, the housekeeper noticed John pacing on the balcony looking "frustrated and worried." After a short period of time, the housekeeper saw Paula leave the room and walk down the stairs to her car. John called out to Paula over the balcony then followed her down the stairs.

As Paula was backing her car out of a parking space, John shot her twice at close range with a shotgun. The housekeeper immediately called the front desk manager, who called 911. From her vantage point on the second floor of the hotel, the housekeeper could see Paula's car continue rolling backwards through the parking lot as John reached inside the car and put it in park. John was then confronted in the parking lot by the hotel manager, to whom he stated: "I think I just killed my wife." A patrol car was in the area and responded to the scene almost immediately. John was taken into custody without incident.

John was charged with murder and possession of a firearm during the commission of a felony. In a negotiated plea, John pled guilty to voluntary manslaughter. He was sentenced to 20 years in prison. The charge for possession of a firearm during the commission of a felony was dismissed.

** Pseudonyms used*

9 THE SUICIDE-HOMICIDE CONNECTION

Depression and suicidal ideation in domestic violence perpetrators are often overlooked by interveners as serious indicators of danger. The danger is not only for the intimate partner, but for other family members, bystanders and first responders. While screening for depression and suicidal ideation among batterers does not appear to be routine, the Project nonetheless found significantly high rates of both in reviewed cases. Service providers come into contact with many domestic violence offenders who present signs of the potential danger they pose. Service providers should be informed and able to identify indicators of depression and suicidal ideation, and trained to intervene as necessary. By understanding the role of depression and suicidal ideation, service providers can play a crucial role in identifying these high-risk cases and taking steps to intervene at the earliest possibility, with the hopes of preventing a homicide and/or a suicide.

Information regarding suicidal threats, attempts and depression in perpetrators is known to the Project from an open records review of civil and criminal records and interviews with the victims' family and friends. Due to the limitations of these information sources, it is likely the number of domestic violence homicide perpetrators who were depressed and/or suicidal at any point prior to committing murder and/or suicide was actually much higher.

In the cases tracked by the Project via media monitoring in 2014, we found the following related to intimate partner murder-suicides in Georgia:

- 51 lives were lost in 24 murder-suicides, which accounts for 44% of all domestic violence-related deaths
- in an additional eight cases, the perpetrator either attempted or committed suicide after killing or attempting to kill someone else
- three children and two bystanders were also killed during the course of a murder-suicide
- 96% of intimate partner murder-suicides involved the use of a firearm
- 92% of intimate partner murder-suicides were perpetrated by men
- the perpetrator and/or victim were over the age of 60 in 17% of murder-suicides

INTERVENTION STRATEGIES WHEN WORKING WITH ABUSERS

In 2007, the Project developed a proposed protocol of response for Family Violence Intervention Program providers (FVIPs). The Project targeted FVIPs first — since they are in contact with high-risk abusers on a regular basis — with intentions of creating similar proposed protocols for other service providers, including probation, public health and prosecution-based advocates.

The FVIP suicide protocol is that upon hearing or seeing any clear indicator of suicidal thoughts and/or threats to hurt oneself or others, FVIPs have a duty to warn the victim of immediate danger. Because contact between victims and FVIPs is generally prohibited, the FVIP need only to give a brief description of the concern and provide a referral to the Victim Liaison, 911, 1-800-33-HAVEN and/or the nearest domestic violence program.

The protocol also addresses ongoing best-practice responses for FVIPs. On an ongoing basis, FVIPs should:

- Ask about suicidal thoughts and threats to oneself or others during intake procedures and throughout the FVIP program. Ask directly: “Have you had any thoughts about hurting yourself? Others?” Recognize risk is not static and needs to be constantly reevaluated through the FVIP.
- Ask about depression. Upon hearing or seeing indicators of depression, investigate whether the participant is having suicidal thoughts by asking follow-up questions such as, “What does your depression mean to you?” and “Have you had any thoughts about hurting yourself? Others?”
- Develop an ongoing information-sharing relationship with mental health and chemical dependency treatment providers. Educate them about your role as FVIP and the special dangers of suicidal and homicidal thoughts and threats from domestic violence abusers.
- Get police reports and other relevant documents from participants at intake.
- Ensure your FVIP participant contract includes the required provision that weapons are removed from participants’ homes. Ask FVIP participants whether they have complied with this provision. Develop procedures with local law enforcement to enable FVIP participants to safely surrender their weapons.
- Educate your FVIP classes about homicide and suicide risk factors and about how risks increase when abusers feel they are losing “ownership” of a partner or ex-partner. Mobilize participants to serve as an alternative support and accountability system for a participant who is depressed or has expressed suicidal or homicidal thoughts or threats. For example, class members could be asked to call that participant frequently to check in.

For more information on implementing the protocol and to obtain a full copy of the protocol, contact GCFV at 404-657-3412.

INTERVENTION STRATEGIES WHEN WORKING WITH VICTIMS

Another key piece to addressing suicidal perpetrators is to make sure victims are aware of how this risk factor affects their safety. Therefore, a similar proposed protocol was developed for domestic violence advocates. The advocate protocol includes the following questions that can be used when working with victims of domestic violence.

Possible questions to ask the victim:

- Has your partner talked about taking his/her own life possibly in conjunction with making a threat to kill you?
- Has your partner attempted suicide?
- Has your partner struggled with depression presently or in the past? Difficulty sleeping? More irritable than usual? Big mood changes? Ever been on medication for emotional problems?
- Does your partner ever mention fantasies or dreams about death?
- Has your partner ever talked about a clear plan to end both your lives? If yes, has your partner talked about where, when and how it would happen? Has your partner talked about what would happen afterwards (i.e. go to prison, or that he would kill both of you so he wouldn't go to prison, etc.)? Note: If the threats are specific in time, place or method, or if the abuser has begun to think about what will happen afterwards, inform the victim this is extremely dangerous. Make a safety plan with her, and suggest going where the abuser cannot find her.
- What do these behaviors mean to you? If you've heard these things before from your partner, do they seem different now? How does what your partner is saying make you feel?

When a victim answers "yes" to these questions, this is an opportunity for advocates to let her know about several factors generally indicating increased risk for danger with abusive partners. One of these "red flags" is when an abusive partner threatens and/or attempts to commit suicide. Depression on the part of the abusive partner is something that can signal increased danger. This is especially true when an abusive partner has experienced some kind of loss. Perhaps an abusive person begins to feel like he or she is losing control over the partner or has "nothing left to lose"; the victim is taking steps to leave or has left the relationship; the abusive partner has recently lost a job, lost a loved one, or had a bad health diagnosis. These factors should come up in the course of routine risk assessment that advocates conduct with victims, and safety planning should be done accordingly.

For more information on risk assessment and safety planning and to obtain a full copy of the protocol, contact GCADV at 404-209-0280.

ADDRESSING THE INTERSECTIONS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND MENTAL HEALTH FOR VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS: AN EXAMPLE FROM THE CONASAUGA FAMILY VIOLENCE ALLIANCE

Recommendations addressed through this initiative:

+ Partner with substance abuse and mental health treatment providers to provide a holistic approach and support for all survivors of domestic violence
+ Collaborate with local domestic violence agencies to ensure appropriate services are available for victims of domestic violence with substance abuse and mental health issues

Based on the findings from local fatality reviews, recommendations in the 2012 and 2013 Georgia Domestic Violence Fatality Review Report and the Family Violence Task Force, Conasauga Family Violence Alliance decided to focus on mental health and domestic violence partnerships in 2014. Several of the Alliance members had worked with clients who experience mental health challenges, but there was no representation of the mental health service agencies at Alliance meetings. The Alliance members decided their first step was to educate themselves more thoroughly on available mental health agencies in the community, the services these agencies provide, and how the agencies respond to domestic violence victims and perpetrators.

A small subcommittee of the Alliance organized a panel discussion with several of the mental health agencies in the area. Recognizing that substance abuse is also connected to

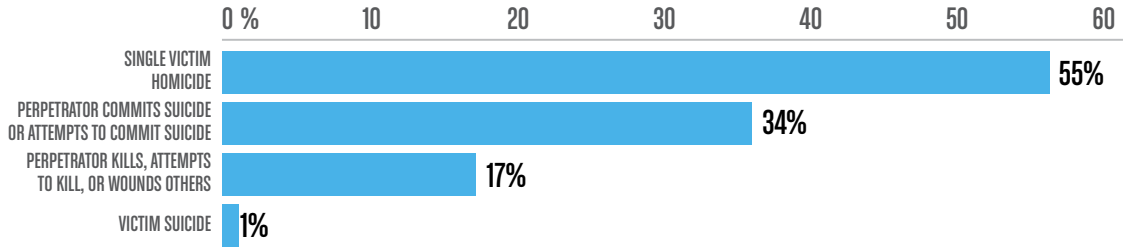
domestic violence and mental health, local substance abuse treatment providers were invited to attend. Each agency gave a brief presentation, answered questions from the group, and passed out their agency materials. The panel format sparked valuable and much-needed discussions in the community and kept many attendees engaged. In an effort to increase attendance and provide a draw for community members, lunch was also provided.

Despite the relative success of the panel discussion, the Alliance faces an ongoing challenge of bridging the gaps between local mental health service providers, substance abuse treatment providers and domestic violence advocacy agencies. They are unable to secure commitment from mental health and substance abuse treatment providers to attend their regularly scheduled meetings and stay engaged. This was a barrier when planning the panel discussion and still continues. However, the Alliance has not given up. As part of the fatality re-review process, they have committed to continue their focus on the intersections of mental health and domestic violence. Unfortunately, none of the invited representatives from the medical and mental health field attended their re-review meetings this year.

In 2015, Alliance members are scheduling a mental health stakeholders meeting to discuss services, gaps, and how they can all work together to keep victims safe and hold abusers accountable in their judicial circuit. The committee members acknowledge this work takes time and substantial effort; it's not something that can happen overnight. They remain committed to the goal of bridging the important gap between mental health services and domestic violence.

For more information, contact Marcy Muller at 706-272-2258.

15 TYPES OF INCIDENTS IN REVIEWED CASES 2004-2014



KEY POINTS (chart 15)

Depression and suicidal thoughts on the part of the abuser are risk factors for lethal violence, yet this fact is often not known to service providers. Training first responders, advocates, attorneys, parole officers, court personnel, social service providers and health care personnel on increasing vigilance and recognition of this risk factor is imperative for the safety of victims, bystanders and abusers.

Abusers do not limit their violence to their intimate partner. Often, other people close to the victim are targeted because they are with the primary victim at the time of the attack, or because the perpetrator intends to cause additional anguish to the primary victim by harming her friends or loved ones.

In 35% of reviewed cases, domestic violence homicide perpetrators were known to have either threatened or attempted suicide prior to the homicide. In 34% of cases, the perpetrator attempted or completed suicide at the homicide scene or soon thereafter. These findings support research by Dr. Jacqueline Campbell at Johns Hopkins Medical Center, who also found a correlation between suicidal thought and the subsequent killing of a family member.

10 BARRIERS TO ACCESSING SERVICES

Victims of domestic violence from marginalized and underserved communities face increased barriers when trying to access safety, services and justice. These communities include but are not limited to immigrants; people of color; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) persons; the elderly; those with disabilities; those who are poor; and those with criminal backgrounds. People from these communities and/or facing these challenges also commonly experience discrimination and may be reluctant to approach traditional systems for help as agencies may perpetuate the discrimination they experience.

Creating more accessible services has been addressed in Georgia in two ways: increasing cultural competency of established programs; and creating new services and organizations addressing the experiences specific to victims from particular marginalized and underserved communities. Both of these approaches are beneficial and vital to the continued work of our state to increase services available to all victims of domestic violence.

HABLAR EN SU PROPIO IDIOMA ("TO SPEAK IN ONE'S OWN LANGUAGE"): HOW ONE PROGRAM IS PROVIDING SUPPORT TO THE LATINO IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY

Recommendations addressed through this initiative:

- Build mutually beneficial relationships and partnerships with culturally specific community organizations
- Examine agency policies and practices preventing members of underserved populations from accessing your services
- Examine agency policies and practices preventing a culture of acceptance and equality for staff and victims from marginalized communities
- Learn about immigration relief available to survivors and educate immigrant survivors about their rights (including immigration relief for survivors), the U.S. court system, and available services
- Support survivors' connections to their cultural community and ensure their safety plan includes safety planning around immigration status and potential deportation

The Cherokee Family Violence Center began its journey to become more culturally competent in serving Latino victims of domestic violence in 2002. At the time, the Latino community was the fastest-growing demographic in the county but the program was not serving many Spanish-speaking clients. The Center's staff began to have conversations as an agency about how they could better reach and serve victims from the Latino community in Cherokee County. These discussions lead to an open and honest internal evaluation of the accessibility of the program's services and outreach to the Latino community. The Cherokee Family Violence Center discovered several examples of cultural incompetency, such as: a lack of Spanish-speaking advocates — including advocates and volunteers to answer the hotline after-hours; a lack of culturally appropriate food for clients; and minimal consideration for culturally diverse clothing options for women and children in the shelter. The conversations also turned to the barriers Latina victims faced in their local community due to the growing anti-immigrant sentiments that were present in Cherokee County.

> **In combination with the crushing isolation many victims experience, Cherokee Family Violence Center knew they were not reaching a large population of Latina victims in Cherokee County who were in grave danger.**

In response to these concerns and their commitment to increasing their accessibility for the Latino population, the Cherokee Family Violence Center first determined that they needed to provide services in Spanish, beginning with a 24-hour hotline. They quickly determined that hiring one person would not be sufficient to successfully provide all the services they wanted to offer. With no specific funding for their endeavor, the agency hired Belsie Gonzalez, whose first tasks were to find funding for bicultural and bilingual advocates, develop an outreach program and services, and build a base of volunteers to cover a local Spanish-language hotline.

By the end of 2003, the Cherokee Family Violence Center was able to secure critical funding through the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council and officially launched their Multicultural Program and a 24-hour local Spanish domestic violence hotline to serve domestic violence immigrant victims in Cherokee County. In the beginning, the Cherokee Family Violence Center struggled to gain the trust of immigrant victims. They were combating the fear many victims had of contacting law enforcement and other helping agencies due to threats of deportation. However, they stayed committed to the cause. As they began to help more and more immigrant victims, word spread that the Cherokee Family Violence Center was a safe place to seek help and the amount of calls and requests for services they received quickly increased.

Since those humble beginnings, the Multicultural Program at the Cherokee Family Violence Center has continued to grow under the leadership of Pilar Sarmiento and with the support of Vivian Keller. In 2011, the Cherokee Family Violence Center became the first and only domestic violence program in the state of Georgia to be certified by the Board of Immigration Appeals to directly assist victims of domestic violence with qualifying immigration remedies such as U-Visas and VAWA relief. The training necessary for this process transformed the agency and allowed advocates to more fully understand the barriers and hardships victims face in gaining immigration status. Then, in 2012, the program was awarded funding from the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women, to provide housing assistance and support services, such as childcare, transportation, housing, legal assistance and emotional support to immigrant victims of domestic violence and trafficking while they are seeking their qualifying immigration status relief. Currently, the Multicultural Program provides specialized advocacy services, leadership classes and Spanish-language support groups, housing assistance for those who are escaping abuse, and translation and interpretation services as needed.

At the publication of this Report, the Multicultural Program had assisted 346 families who came here from 56 countries. After a decade of learning about the needs of Latina survivors, gathering helpful resources to meet those needs, and providing more culturally competent services through their programs, the Cherokee Family Violence Center felt that they now had the infrastructure and experience in place to assist other shelters seeking to reach underserved Latino victims of domestic violence. In 2013, they were awarded a grant through the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council to provide a 24-hour hotline to Spanish-speaking victims of domestic violence throughout the state of Georgia. Funding from the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, along with close collaboration with the Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence, allowed the Cherokee Family Violence Center to make their vision a reality.

Officially launched in April 2014, Spanish-speaking victims can now access services in their own language by pressing “2” once they call the Statewide Hotline (1-800-33-HAVEN). Since its inception, trained bilingual and bicultural advocates have answered a total of 295 calls from local shelters, domestic violence programs, and law enforcement to provide domestic violence services to victims from 47 counties. Lorena Jacobo, Outreach Coordinator for the Cherokee Family Violence Center, visited 37 domestic violence programs to promote the Spanish-speaking hotline as well as other best practices when working with immigrant victims.

For other agencies wanting to increase culturally competent services, the Cherokee Family Violence Center says it’s important to listen to families you work with to guide your efforts towards the real necessities of their communities; these families are the experts of identifying their barriers to services, what needs to be implemented, and how success could be accomplished.

For more information, contact Pilar Sarmiento at Pilar@cfvc.org or 770-479-1804 x 202.

HEALTHY YOU! HEALTHY ME! HOW ONE PROGRAM IS REACHING THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY

Recommendations addressed through this initiative:

+ Examine agency policies and practices preventing members of underserved populations from accessing your services
+ Include culturally specific materials and resources in community outreach presentations and events, including teen dating violence

Lavon Morris-Grant, advocate, author, entrepreneur and survivor of domestic violence, is very familiar with the challenges of reaching the African-American community to address domestic violence.

> "In my community, there was no such thing as domestic violence. There was no language, there was no understanding, and there definitely was no talking about it. **And so I suffered in silence.** But I didn't know I was suffering. It was just a part of life. You made your bed; now lie in it."
>
> –Lavon Morris-Grant

Lavon's husband never hit her. Instead, he treated her as a "verbal punching bag." After years of enduring the abuse, she eventually left him and the city she called home.

Lavon drove two hours away to seek shelter at a domestic violence program with two of her three children, believing she would return home within two weeks. There, in a rural area of a neighboring state, Lavon encountered an environment foreign to her. No one looked like her, no one spoke like her, and no one spoke to her. The advocates at the program were helpful, but she realized they were not speaking the same language. Her experiences did not align with the other women's and, since she was not a victim of physical violence and her situation wasn't considered as dangerous, she left the domestic violence shelter. She rented a two-bedroom apartment for herself and her two youngest children in a poverty-stricken community.

Although Lavon was no longer living with her husband, they remained in contact to raise their children during a 10-month separation. One fatal Sunday morning, Lavon came over to the house to help her children get ready for their first week of school. She was downstairs with her children, doing her daughter's hair, when she went upstairs to retrieve barrettes. In an upstairs bedroom, her husband held a gun to her head and pulled the trigger. He then shot her several more times, hitting her in the foot, stomach and buttocks. With severe injuries to her head and body, including a broken foot, Lavon managed to run out of the house with her children. They made it to a neighbor's house where Lavon asked her neighbor to take her children out of the room so they did not have to watch her die. Lavon's husband then shot himself, and he died two days later at the hospital.

Miraculously, Lavon survived her injuries and has fully recovered. Since those dark days in the mid-1990s, Lavon has made it her mission to be "at the table" with advocates against domestic violence so she can share her story, be a voice to other survivors and a part of the work to reach other African-American women and, most importantly, save their lives. "Women are dying," she says, "and Black women are dying at higher rates than other women."

> **In 2012, Black women in the United States were murdered at a rate almost two and a half times higher than White women (2.46 per 100,000 versus 1.00 per 100,000) (Violence Policy Center, 2014).**

Through her own experiences and conversations with other African-American women, Lavon was aware of a rift between many members of the African-American community and Caucasian mainstream domestic violence providers. This division is largely attributed to the reality that many African-Americans do not identify with the language that mainstream advocates use to describe abuse, including the terms "victim" and "domestic violence." Many African-American women interpret the word "victim" as a threat to their personhood and their self-image as strong women. Further, many mainstream programs tend to focus on domestic violence

Reference

Violence Policy Center. (2014). When men murder women: An analysis of 2012 homicide data. Retrieved from www.vpc.org.

as the main threat in a woman's life and fail to address the multitude of other issues many African-American women face, including issues related to housing, childcare, healthcare and employment, which may take precedence over abuse they are experiencing.

Based on her experience of not encountering culturally specific services for African-American women, Lavon realized that to make a difference in the lives of African-Americans, the work had to start from the bottom up. She wanted to provide direct services to women to help them heal, but she wanted to create something entirely different from the mainstream services being provided. In 2013, she started her own nonprofit, MACOSH Healing Network. Her goal was clear: Empower and provide culturally specific services to African-American women, specifically those living in South Fulton County, an area where Black women are a large portion of the population.

> **When Lavon created MACOSH, she envisioned many creative ways to provide supportive services speaking to African-American women's experiences while fostering community through upbeat and positive activities.**

The programs she designed at MACOSH provide an out-of-the-box, nontraditional, holistic approach which addresses the emotional, physical, mental and spiritual needs of the community. Her programs offer healing tools for African-American community members while creating a safe space to talk about difficult issues. Her approach aims to meet women where they are and explore all facets of their lives and relationships, including trauma, stress and hardships. MACOSH also offers financial and entrepreneurial empowerment classes, teen dating violence prevention workshops, and referral and outreach services.

Lavon's innovative program called "Healthy You! Healthy Me!" provides support through three non-therapeutic programs — allowing African-American women to develop community, explore creative outlets and learn healthy new skills through classes in creative writing, culinary arts and hip-hop dance. Lavon chose these activities based on her own experiences, feedback from the community, and research. Vital to the success of her programs is the language used in outreach and programming, which is nonthreatening to the women of color she aims to reach. She doesn't use words such as "victim" and "domestic violence." She believes this gradual approach fosters a supportive healing process and prevents women from feeling overwhelmed.

These classes also focus on building community and trust between the participants so they can continue to provide and receive support for one another outside of the program.

Creative writing: As an author, Lavon found healing through writing her story in her journals and two books, which were later published. She uses her own experiences to craft writing assignments in her creative writing classes, where topics focus on life issues and early relationships, not just domestic violence. This allows the women to bring up the violence they have experienced in their own way, in their own time, on their own terms and in their own language.

Culinary arts: Lavon was struck by the staggering rates of obesity and diabetes affecting women of color. She also recognized the comfort many women seek in cooking and eating when faced with high stress, depression and traumatic experiences. Often, these comfort foods are unhealthy and are consumed in large portions. She worked with her partner, a culinary professional, to transform traditional comfort food recipes into healthier versions while still preserving flavor. In these classes, participants learn recipes and cooking techniques as well as nutritional tips regarding portion control. At the end of the class, participants come together to eat the meals they have made and discuss life issues.

Hip-hop dance: Led by her son, these sessions offer a fun outlet for women to learn new dance steps, move their bodies, and reduce the effects of stress they might be experiencing at home. It also provides increased cardiovascular exercise and builds community. These classes aim to create a positive environment celebrating women's bodies and abilities. At the beginning of each class, the staff members talk about the dynamics of abusive relationships

as a community problem and lets participants know they are free to talk about any issues they might be experiencing during the program.

In MACOSH's first year, the organization focused on securing community partners and building relationships with other agencies. The team focused on connecting with city council members and the mayors of nearby cities, a strategy which proved helpful for buy-in from the community. The excitement of the city councils and mayors allowed MACOSH access to their counterparts in neighboring cities and opportunities to develop relationships with other agencies, such as law enforcement departments and local prosecutors. Within the first year, the organization was given a Proclamation from the Mayor and Council Members of Fairburn praising its efforts.

The hard work and dedication by Lavon and her staff has greatly improved the trust between MACOSH and the African-American community, a necessary component to provide much-needed resources and education on domestic violence. Currently, MACOSH is working on building more partnerships and relationships within the African-American community in South Fulton County. They want to secure funding so they can expand the programs and build a base of committed volunteers to grow their capacity.

For others interested in reaching the African-American community, Lavon's advice is to spend time cultivating a true understanding of the varying dynamics of domestic violence and how it intersects with and affects so many other life experiences, including racism, sexism and other forms of oppression. She suggests you stay motivated by surrounding yourself with others who support your vision. Always stay open to change and allow input from the community and participants to shape the work. Don't be afraid, she says, to offer services from a culturally specific framework, as it may allow you to have a greater impact in the lives of those you seek to serve. Consider what resources are already available to you that could be transformed into a non-therapeutic program for people experiencing domestic violence. The components of her program, she says, are all interchangeable and can be adapted by other programs based on the communities they serve to include bowling teams, drawing classes, interpretive dance classes, etc.

For more information, visit http://www.macosh.org or contact Lavon Morris-Grant at info@macosh.org or 404-916-3796.

AQUI TODOS SON BIENVENIDOS ("ALL ARE WELCOME HERE"): REACHING THE LATINO LGBTQ COMMUNITY

Recommendations addressed through this initiative:

- Examine agency policies and practices preventing members of underserved populations from accessing your services
- Examine agency policies and practices preventing a culture of acceptance and equality for staff and victims from marginalized communities. For example, ensure agency benefits are inclusive for LGBTQ employees and their partners
- Ensure photos and language on agency literature and websites are reflective of all victims of domestic violence, including LGBTQ relationships.

In the past few years, Caminar Latino has seen an increase in the number of gay Latino men contacting the program for support.

> **Staff learned through conversations with these survivors that many of them chose to reach out to Caminar Latino because they felt more comfortable seeking services from a program understanding Latino culture than from programs only serving the LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer) community or only providing domestic violence services. Domestic violence services and support in the context of their own culture mattered a great deal to these men.**

Although Caminar Latino staff and volunteers provided services to these men to the best of their ability, they encountered several challenges along the way, including how to provide counseling and supportive services within the

current structure of the program. They reached out to national and local organizations to gain insight on best practices around these issues, including Georgia Equality, the Health Initiative, the Northwest Network of Bisexual, Transgender, Lesbian and Gay Survivors of Abuse (Northwest Network), Casa de Esperanza and Translatina. These organizations helped Caminar Latino increase cultural competency and better serve LGBTQ members of the Latino community.

Caminar Latino's approach to achieving cultural competency was two-fold: internal changes, including training, policy and procedural changes; and external changes, including outreach and marketing changes. First, they worked on internal changes. An important framework of Caminar Latino's work has been including all levels of staff and volunteers in their trainings to support changes to their agency at all points, from the reception desk to the front line. At the beginning of this initiative, they created a safe space for staff to openly discuss their own beliefs and share concerns about serving Latinos from the LGBTQ community. These discussions exposed several areas of opportunity for training and technical assistance, from terminology on intake forms to distinguishing victims from abusers. Questions specific to LGBTQ victims and immigrant victims also came up, including issues around separation and divorce for legally married LGBTQ victims as well as U-Visas and VAWA Petitions for immigrant LGBTQ victims.

All levels of staff and volunteers attended a training hosted by Casa de Esperanza, who provided the training in Spanish. This training focused on the intersections of domestic violence and LGBTQ individuals within the context of Latino culture. Caminar Latino then began changing agency policies and procedures. They sought the expertise of the Northwest Network through participating in their webinars to learn more about best practices around intake and screening processes. The information provided by the Northwest Network reinforced and expanded advocates' skills to assess callers' needs through strategic questions around patterns of behavior and intent. Caminar Latino adapted the Northwest Network's resources to Latino culture and changed intake forms to include gender-neutral terms, such as partner and significant other. They are updating their data management system to also reflect these changes.

Next, they addressed external changes. Caminar Latino expanded their outreach and visibility of their services in the LGBTQ community. They hosted a fundraiser in summer 2014 which provided a public platform to discuss their services available to the LGBTQ community with the specific goal of raising funds to cover the costs incurred from the training they received. They were able to meet their goal and the rest of the funds will be used to support their continued work on this issue. In July 2014, Telemundo Atlanta produced a three-minute segment on Caminar Latino's expansion of services to the LGBTQ community. And when anyone enters their program, they are greeted by a large rainbow sign with the words "Aqui Todos Son Bienvenidos" to make it clear to anyone, not just those who are LGBTQ, that services are available to people of all sexual orientations and gender identities at Caminar Latino.

> **Caminar Latino's work on this issue has just begun and they have already made a difference in the lives of many gay Latino men.**

The process hasn't been easy, says Executive Director Jessica Nunan, and there have been plenty of learning opportunities. She urges others interested in doing this type of work to expect mistakes to happen but to go easy on themselves. Always seek feedback and guidance from the national and state experts. The most important thing is to not let challenges hold you back from continuing to do this important work. Currently, Caminar Latino is continuing outreach to the Latino LGBTQ community. They hope in the future to host their first survivor support group for male victims of intimate partner violence as the need increases.

For more information, contact Leo Martinez at LMartinez@caminarlatino.org or 770-873-2534.

NONDISCRIMINATION GRANT CONDITION IN THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2013

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), first authorized in 1994, creates and supports comprehensive, effective, and cost-saving responses to the crimes of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking. VAWA programs, administered by the Departments of Justice and Health and Human Services, have dramatically changed federal, tribal, state, territorial and local responses to these crimes. VAWA was set to expire in 2011 but was reauthorized in 2013, continuing the vital lifesaving programs and laws it upholds. The reauthorized bill now provides extended coverage to immigrants, Native Americans, and gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender Americans. It requires all programs receiving funding under VAWA to provide services regardless of a person's actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. It also includes the LGBT community in the largest VAWA grant program, the "STOP Grant Program," which provides funding to providers who collaborate with prosecution and law enforcement officials to address domestic violence. The bill also sets up a grant program specifically aimed at providing services and outreach to underserved populations, including programs that provide care specifically for LGBT people.

For more information, visit the Office on Violence Against Women at http://www.justice.gov/ovw

LGBTQ VISIBILITY AND INCLUSION ORGANIZATION CHECKLIST

Often we only have a short window of time to communicate we are open and prepared to support a person who is experiencing domestic violence or sexual assault. Ensure your organization's commitment to supporting LGBTQ survivors is visible when people enter your organization and read your outreach brochures, as this can make all the difference. Take a few minutes to walk through your program and identify all the information you can find representing and relating to LGBTQ people, in either a positive or negative way. Identify areas of strength and areas where your organization can improve. Once you've thought over these questions and have a few areas you'd like to work on, visit the Northwest Network's website for more resources and training opportunities and visit Syracuse Cultural Workers' website for posters and materials with LGBTQ themes.

This framework can be used as a tool to evaluate the accessibility of your organization for any marginalized community, including religious and cultural identities.

WHAT PEOPLE SEE ENTERING THE FRONT DOOR OF YOUR AGENCY, OFFICE, SHELTER, ETC.

1. How would a person know that they were welcomed to be "out" as a lesbian, bisexual, transgender, gay or otherwise queer person?
2. What overt and covert information would tell a person that it is OK or not OK to be "out"?
3. How would a person know they were welcome to be "out" as a survivor or a person experiencing sexual or domestic violence?

YOUR AGENCY'S POSTERS, MESSAGES AND OUTREACH MATERIALS

1. What posters, signs and messages include images or information about LGBTQ people? About sexual or domestic violence in LGBTQ communities?
2. Would an LGBTQ person find their experience represented in outreach materials? In pictures or images on outreach materials?
3. Do agency materials name the issues of battering and sexual assault in LGBTQ communities?
4. Do agency materials use inclusive language (i.e., avoids pronouns or uses alternate pronouns for abusers)?
5. Have you identified your program as an ally to LGBTQ people and organizations?

YOUR AGENCY'S BOOKSHELVES

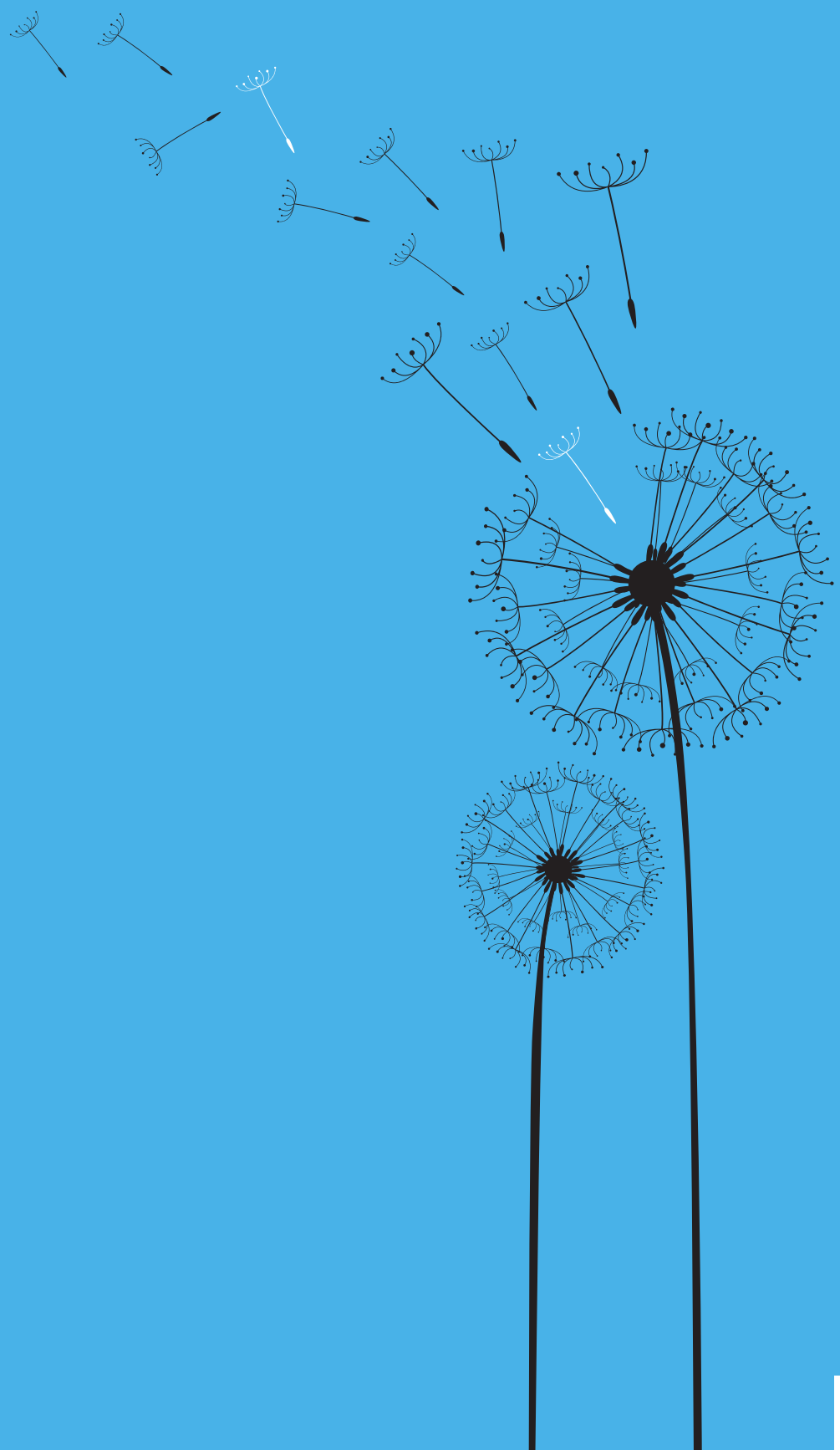
1. What books, magazines and videos include stories and information about LGBTQ people, history, liberation struggles, current events or community and cultural life? About LGBTQ people and the experience of domestic and sexual violence?
2. Are these materials integrated into other resources?

YOUR AGENCY'S POLICIES

1. Is discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation prohibited in service delivery, hiring practices and other organization business?
2. Are policies inclusive of sexual minority and gender-variant people?
3. Do recruitment efforts for staff, volunteers and governing body members (e.g., Board of Directors) actively recruit sexual minority and gender-variant people?

Adapted from:

The NW Network (2001). Quick organizational audit: LGBT visibility & inclusion checklist. Seattle, WA. Retrieved from www.nwnetwork.org.



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Fatality Review Project Staff

The 2014 Georgia Domestic Violence Fatality Review Annual Report is written by Project Coordinators Jenny Aszman, GCFV and Taylor Thompson Tabb, GCADV.

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Review Teams

We acknowledge the commitment of the Fatality Review participants from around the state who devoted their time, energy, and expertise to work towards creating safer communities. The teams listed below are those who reviewed a case this year and/or engaged in the re-review process.

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The Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence (GCADV) brings together member agencies, allied organizations, and supportive individuals who are committed to ending domestic violence. Guided by the voices of survivors, we work to create social change by addressing the root causes of this violence. GCADV leads advocacy efforts for responsive public policy and fosters quality, comprehensive prevention, and intervention services throughout the state. Being a coalition means working together for a common cause. We know now and in the years to come, we will be up against enormous challenges promise to test our capacity for conviction and perseverance. It is as vital as ever that we remember that the foundation for the future success of this Coalition lies in our hands, all of us, collectively. As we coalesce around our common cause, we do so with the voices of domestic violence survivors and their needs for safety always in the forefront of our minds. To learn more or get involved, please visit www.gcadv.org.

The Georgia Commission on Family Violence (GCFV) is a state agency created by the Georgia General Assembly in 1992 to develop a comprehensive state plan for ending family violence in Georgia. GCFV works throughout the state to help create and support task forces made up of citizen volunteers working to end domestic violence in their communities. In addition, GCFV conducts research and provides training about domestic violence, monitors legislation, and other policies impacting victims of domestic violence, certifies all of Georgia's Family Violence Intervention Programs, and coordinates the statewide Domestic Violence Fatality Review Project with GCADV. Please visit www.gcfv.org for more information.

Disclaimer: The views, opinions, findings, and recommendations expressed in the Georgia Domestic Violence Annual Report do not necessarily reflect the views of individual GCFV Commission members, all GCADV member programs, funders, or individual team members, and are the product of analysis by the joint GCFV and GCADV Project Team.

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