



# Oklahoma Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board

**ANNUAL REPORT  
2023**





This publication was prepared by Program Staff at the Office of the Attorney General on behalf of the Oklahoma Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board (DVFRB). The DVFRB annual report was supported by Subgrant No. 2022/23-VAWA-OAG-VSU-00026 awarded by the Oklahoma District Attorney's Council for the S.T.O.P. Violence Against Women Act Formula Grant Program, Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the District Attorney's Council or Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.

2024

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Introduction

The purpose of the Oklahoma Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board<sup>1</sup> is to reduce the number of domestic violence related deaths by identifying gaps in the domestic violence prevention and protection system and proposing recommendations aimed at improving the coordinated response of the individuals, organizations, and agencies that comprise the domestic violence prevention and protection systems in Oklahoma.

This annual report is prepared in compliance with 22 O.S. §1601, which mandates the DVFRB to submit an annual statistical report on the previous year's domestic violence fatality trends in Oklahoma, as well as a set of policy recommendations on how to improve the state's domestic violence protection and prevention system. The recommendations are drawn from discussions of the cases the Board reviewed in the leadup to this publication.

## Domestic Violence Statistical Findings for 2022

The DVFRB and Program Staff annually identify, review, and report on domestic violence-related fatalities that occurred in Oklahoma during the previous calendar year. A fatality is classified as domestic violence-related if it falls into one of the following broad categories: intimate partner homicide (IPH), family homicide, triangle homicide, bystander/good Samaritan, and roommates. The table below outlines the most recent domestic violence-related fatality totals DVFRB staff compiled for the 2022 calendar year.

Variables	2022 Total
<b>Homicide Cases</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>Murder-Suicide Victims</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Domestic Violence Homicide Victims (All Categories)</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>Intimate Partner Homicide Victims</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Child Victims (&lt; 18)</b>	<b>17</b>

The 2022 total of domestic violence-related homicide victims marks four consecutive years where the DVFRB has identified more than 100 victims who were killed due to domestic violence in our state. DVFRB research shows that Oklahoma has averaged 114 domestic violence homicide victims between 2019 – 2022. In contrast, the average between 2011 – 2018 was 90. The average number of intimate partner homicide victims has remained generally consistent between 2011 – 2022, with an average of 40 victims being killed every year by their intimate partners. The majority (332; 69.2%) of IPH victims were women, while their killers were almost exclusively men. This aligns with national research placing Oklahoma as second in the nation for women being murdered by men in single victim/single offender incidents when analyzing 2020 homicide data<sup>2</sup>. Further analysis of state rankings shows Oklahoma has consistently ranked in the top 10 of states of women being murdered by men since 1996<sup>3</sup>.

The average number of victims being killed by family members has also increased over the last four years. The state averaged about 52 victims killed by family members during 2019 – 2022. This is a 33.3% increase from the average of 39 between 2011 – 2018. In addition, the number of victims killed in domestic violence-related murder-suicides in 2022 (26) marks four consecutive years where more than 20 victims were killed in this type of incident. Crime data submitted to the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation (OSBI) by law enforcement agencies in Oklahoma has shown that domestic abuse crimes have been on an upward trend since 2011. Finally,

<sup>1</sup> Referred to interchangeably as the DVFRB or the Review Board.

<sup>2</sup> When Men Murder Women: An Analysis of 2020 Homicide Data. Published September 2022, by the Violence Policy Center. Source: <https://www.vpc.org/studies/wmmw2022.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> When Men Murder Women: A Review of 25 Years of Female Homicide Victimization in the United States. Published October 2023, by the Violence Policy Center. Source: <https://www.vpc.org/studies/wmmw2023.pdf>

protective order filings in Oklahoma have consistently risen between 2016 – 2022, with the most recent filing total in 2022 being 6.1% higher when compared to 2021.

## **2023 DVFRB Recommendations**

In 2023, DVFRB case reviews and discussions predominantly revolved around: 1) the need for the state to play a more prominent role in funding domestic violence and sexual assault victim services; 2) the need to strengthen domestic violence laws prosecutors rely on to hold abusers accountable; 3) the need for domestic violence related training for 9-1-1 telecommunicators. The recommendations are summarized below, but more detailed explanations on their rationale can be found in the recommendations section of this report.

### **Recommendation One**

*In response to increasing domestic violence and sexual assault (DV/SA) crime rates in Oklahoma and decreasing federal funding geared towards assisting DV/SA victims in our communities, the Oklahoma Legislature should take appropriate legislative action to increase the funds allocated to Oklahoma Attorney General (OAG) certified DV/SA programs to \$16.1 million. This allocation would strengthen and ensure the provision of direct services to victims being served by OAG-certified DV/SA service providers.*

### **Recommendation Two**

*The Oklahoma legislature should take appropriate legislative action to strengthen several areas in the Oklahoma statutes so that prosecutors across the state are better equipped to hold domestic abusers accountable in court. This will help enhance the safety of victims, their families, and the community at large.*

*The recommended statutory changes are briefly outlined below and further explained in the rationale section of this recommendation:*

- 1. Amend 21 O.S. §644 so that Oklahoma prosecutors are not limited to being able to file Domestic Assault & Battery (A&B) with a Deadly Weapon charge only if there was a firearm present. This would eliminate the discrepancy between Domestic A&B with a Deadly Weapon and its non-DV counterpart, which can be filed if an offender committed a crime by means of any deadly weapon, such as a firearm or knife, or any other means likely to produce death.*
- 2. Amend 21 O.S. §13.1 so that it includes domestic violence crimes outlined in 21 O.S. 644 as 85% crimes.*
- 3. Amend 21 O.S. §644 to increase the range of punishment for first time Domestic Assault & Battery by Strangulation. A broader range, such as 1 – 10 years, would allow appropriate sentencing based on the severity and facts of an individual incident.*
- 4. Amend 57 O.S. §571 so that Domestic Assault and Battery Subsequent Offense and Domestic Assault and Battery on a Pregnant Person are statutorily considered violent crimes in the State of Oklahoma.*

### **Recommendation Three**

*In light of the recent passage of the Haiden Fleming Memorial Act, which mandates new 9-1-1 telecommunicators in Oklahoma hired after January 1, 2024 to complete at least 40 hours of training on basic call handling and dispatch services within six months of their hiring date and other annual training requirements, the Oklahoma 9-1-1 Management Authority should take appropriate action to include courses in their training program that teach domestic violence (DV) related education and best-practices when answering domestic violence-related emergency calls placed by DV victims, family members, and/or their children.*

*This should be done to ensure an effective trauma-informed response to those being impacted by domestic violence and calling 9-1-1 for help as well as to safeguard law enforcement personnel being dispatched to these calls for service.*

## Conclusion

This 22<sup>nd</sup> edition of the DVFRB report showcases the bleak domestic violence outlook facing Oklahoma. The statistics show domestic violence-related deaths and crimes have consistently increased over the last decade. A significant amount of work is needed to ensure those who are currently being victimized have access to resources and that abusers are being held accountable. Steps must also be taken to try to prevent the cycle of abuse before it begins. The recommendations in this report provide an actionable roadmap for agency stakeholders and Oklahoma state lawmakers about how to address serious issues negatively affecting the Oklahoma domestic violence protection and prevention system.

Our hope is that this report will encourage and guide Oklahoma's legislature, systems, agencies, organizations, communities, and citizens to continue developing and implementing best practices and policies that strengthen our state's comprehensive and coordinated response to those who continue suffering from the effects of domestic violence.

# INTRODUCTION



## From the Desk of the Attorney General

Thank you to the members of the Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board for your commitment to addressing domestic violence homicides in our state. Your work is essential and plays a key role in the fight to end domestic violence altogether. We must continue raising awareness about this horrific crime and find new ways to stop the cycle of domestic violence.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'Gentner Drummond'.

Gentner Drummond  
Oklahoma Attorney General  
January 2024

## Oklahoma Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board

The purpose of the Oklahoma Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board is to reduce the number of domestic violence related deaths by identifying gaps in the domestic violence prevention and protection system and proposing recommendations aimed at improving the coordinated response of the individuals, organizations, and agencies that comprise the domestic violence prevention and protection systems in Oklahoma.

This 22<sup>nd</sup> edition of the DVFRB Annual Report is published on the heels of two consecutive years where domestic violence-related murder-suicides in Oklahoma consistently made headlines across the country. The brutality of these murders, sometimes occurring just a few weeks apart and often involving the killing of children, have shocked the public and placed a spotlight on how pervasive the issue of domestic violence is in Oklahoma.

The increased media attention has led many in the media and some lawmakers to question why these homicides seem to be occurring more frequently and to wonder what can be done to combat domestic violence in our state. The sad truth is that the data has clearly shown for years that these homicides, and non-fatal domestic violence cases in general, have been increasing for years in Oklahoma. There is no doubt our state faces a domestic violence epidemic and more must be done to empower and protect victims, ensure abusers are being held accountable for their actions, and prevent the abuse from happening in the first place.

This year's edition of the DVFRB Annual Report marks 22 years since the Review Board started publishing reports on domestic violence fatality trends in Oklahoma. Since 2002, the DVFRB has been able to identify 2,241 domestic violence fatalities stretching back to 1998. Dozens of recommendations have been crafted and published based on hundreds of cases reviewed by the Board. Our hope is this report will encourage and guide Oklahoma's legislature, systems, agencies, organizations, communities, and individuals to continue developing and implementing best practices and policies that strengthen our state's comprehensive and coordinated response to those who continue suffering the effects of domestic violence.

# Oklahoma Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board Members

Below are the members serving on the Review Board through June 2024. The selection process for and composition of the Review Board is established in Title 22 [O.S. §1602](#).

Eric Pfeifer, MD Celia Cobb, MD (Primary Designee) Jarred Michalski, MD (Alternate Designee)	Chief Medical Examiner
Gentner Drummond, JD Karen Cunningham, Director of Victim Advocates (Primary Designee) Sarah Samples (Alternate Designee) Melissa Van Duyne (Alternate Designee) Susan Laib, Victim Advocacy & Services Unit Chief (Alternate Designee)	Oklahoma Attorney General
Keith Reed, RN, MPH, CPH Jackie Shawnee, Chief of Staff (Primary Designee) Jill Nobles-Botkin (Alternate Designee)	State Commissioner of Health
Tracy Wendling, Ph.D. Brandi Woods-Littlejohn, MCJ (Primary Designee) Emily Nicholls (Alternate Designee)	Chief of Injury Prevention Services Department of Health
Samantha Galloway Jennifer Postlewait, MSW (Designee) Marissa Belase, MSW (Alternate Designee) (Vice-Chair) Leslie Hargis (Alternate Designee)	Director Department of Human Services
Aungela Spurlock Beth Green, Captain (Primary Designee) Heather Cropper (Alt. Designee)	Director State Bureau of Investigation
Victoria A. Friesen Melanie Ferguson, LCSW (Primary Designee)	Commissioner Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services
Jeffrey Cartmell, J.D. Constanzia Nizza, MPA (Designee) Natascha Ferguson, J.D. (Alternate)	Executive Director Office of Juvenile Affairs
Mike Booth, Sheriff, Pottawatomie County (Designee) Scott Hawkins, Lieutenant (Alternate Designee)	Oklahoma Sheriffs' Association
Chief Don Sweger, Guthrie Police Department	Oklahoma Association of Chiefs of Police
Julie L. Goree, J.D.	Board of Governors Oklahoma Bar Association
Laura Thomas, J.D. DA, District 9 Sean Webb, J.D. ADA, District 9 (Alternate Designee)	District Attorneys Council
Sarah Coffey, D.O.	Oklahoma Osteopathic Association
Martina Jelley, M.D., M.S.P.H.	Oklahoma State Medical Association
Janice Carr, Ph.D., RN	Oklahoma Nurses Association
Hon. Sheila Stinson, J.D. District Court, Oklahoma County	Oklahoma Supreme Court
Laura Kuester, M.A., LPC Angela Beatty, CDSVRP (Alternate Designee)	Oklahoma Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
Brandon Pasley, CDSVRP (Chair)	Oklahoma Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (Survivor)
Shelly Harrison, J.D.	Native Alliance Against Violence
Tania Bardin, B.A.	Native Alliance Against Violence (Survivor)

# 2023 RECOMMENDATIONS

Each year the Review Board proposes recommendations intended to increase prevention efforts and improve the overall domestic violence response of the agencies and organizations that constitute Oklahoma’s prevention and protection system. Each recommendation is accompanied by suggested target systems and aligns with the Review Board’s continuous goal of reducing domestic violence fatalities in Oklahoma. The three recommendations made below are the direct results of the discussion and analysis from in-depth case reviews by the Review Board in 2023.

## Recommendation One<sup>4</sup>

*In response to increasing domestic violence and sexual assault (DV/SA) crime rates in Oklahoma and decreasing federal funding geared towards assisting DV/SA victims in our communities, the Oklahoma Legislature should take appropriate legislative action to increase the funds allocated to Oklahoma Attorney General (OAG) certified DV/SA programs to \$16.1 million. This allocation would strengthen and ensure the provision of direct services to victims being served by OAG-certified DV/SA service providers.*

### Target Systems

Oklahoma Legislature, DV/SA Victim Services Agencies

### Purpose

To call on the Oklahoma legislature to play a more prominent role in the funding of DV/SA victim services in response to consistently high DV/SA crime rates across Oklahoma. This should also be a response to alarming cuts to, and in some instances consistently stagnant, federal grant funding to programs geared towards assisting victims of crime and/or responding to DV/SA in Oklahoma communities. More state funding will help strengthen Oklahoma’s DV/SA protection and prevention system and promote the expansion of services and initiatives geared towards improving victim safety and well-being.

### Rationale

#### *Introduction – Domestic Abuse in Oklahoma*

In the last two years, several brutal domestic violence-related murder suicides consistently brought increased media attention to Oklahoma’s domestic abuse problem. These brutal murders, often just a few weeks apart, and in different parts of the state, have repeatedly made headlines and led many to wonder why these incidents appear to be occurring more frequently, and what is being done to help victims and combat what is, in fact, a domestic violence epidemic in our state.

The sad reality is that these kinds of domestic violence homicides and crimes have been occurring more frequently, more people are certainly being killed because of it, and this has been an ongoing problem for decades now. Oklahoma has consistently been ranked in the top 10 of states of women murdered by men in single-victim/single-offender incidents since 1996<sup>5</sup>. The most recent state rankings placed Oklahoma as second in the nation for women being killed by men when analyzing 2020 homicide data<sup>6</sup>. This means that in 2020 more women were killed per capita in Oklahoma by men than in 48 other states in the country. Overall, crime statistics

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<sup>4</sup> This recommendation was written with technical assistance from Oklahoma Attorney General (OAG) Grants Administrator Stephanie Lowery. Ms. Lowery is currently assigned to the OAG Victim Services and Advocacy Unit (VASU). She previously worked as the Director of the Federal Grants Division at the Oklahoma District Attorneys Council (DAC).

<sup>5</sup> When Men Murder Women: A Review of 25 Years of Female Homicide Victimization in the United States. Published October 2023, by the Violence Policy Center. Source: <https://www.vpc.org/studies/wmmw2023.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> When Men Murder Women: An Analysis of 2020 Homicide Data. Published September 2022, by the Violence Policy Center. Source: <https://www.vpc.org/studies/wmmw2022.pdf>

published by the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation (OSBI) also show that domestic abuse crimes in general have consistently increased over the last decade. The state is undoubtedly facing a domestic violence epidemic and more must be done to increase access to services to ensure that those who are being victimized get the help they need.

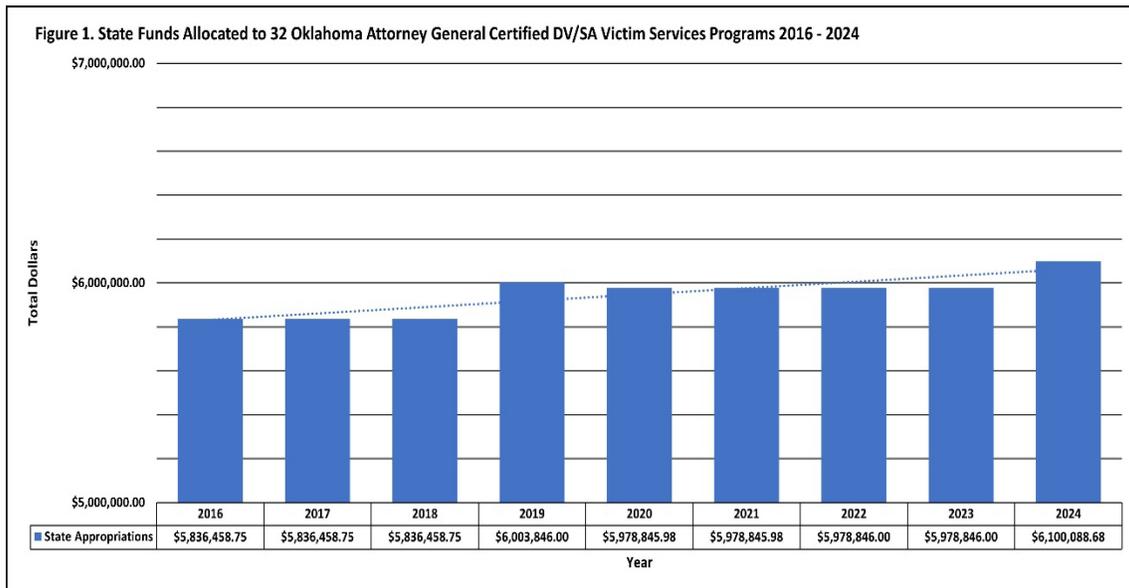
### *2023 Interim Studies on Domestic Violence at the Oklahoma Legislature*

A series of interim studies have been convened over the years at the Oklahoma legislature to discuss domestic abuse issues and try to pinpoint what can be done for victims and what steps can be taken to prevent the abuse from happening in the first place. The most recent ones were [IS23-051](#) and [IS23-091](#) and these were held in October 2023 at the Oklahoma House of Representatives. In IS23-051 experts, service providers, law enforcement personnel, and victims repeatedly stressed the fact that the state must invest more in victim services and prevention if we want to help more of our fellow Oklahomans who are victims of domestic abuse. The overall theme was that state funding geared towards victim services and domestic violence prevention in Oklahoma, at its current levels, is not enough for the kind of domestic violence epidemic our state faces.

### *Current State Funding*

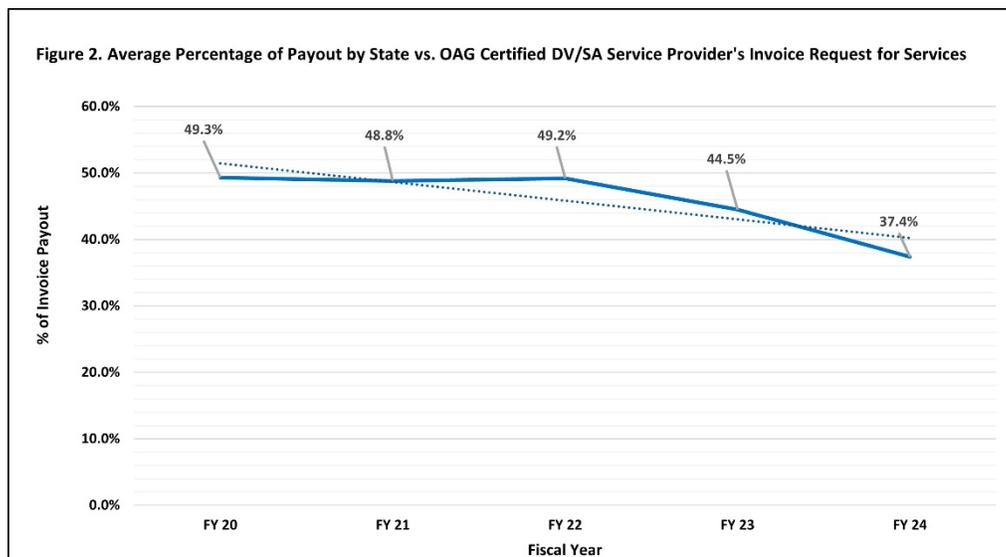
The repeated mention that more funding is needed by domestic violence professionals in IS23-051 echoed the historical position the DVFRB has taken on the matter since 2002. In previous editions of this report, the board has repeatedly called for increases in funding to different areas of the domestic violence protection and prevention system in Oklahoma. During the early and mid-2000s, the Board called for the expansion of services available to victims in a “variety of geographical locations” [[2002](#), [2003](#), [2007](#), [2008](#)]. These recommendations sought to emphasize the need for more victim advocates and other services that can help victims seeking to leave abusive relationships and/or navigate the criminal justice system. These repeated calls were grounded in research backing the effectiveness of victim advocacy in getting victims to engage with the criminal justice system more often and increasing the likelihood of them reaching out to community-based service providers offering intimate partner violence (IPV) services. This research has consistently suggested that facilitating access to community resources ultimately decreases the likelihood of recurring abuse and ultimately IPV-related homicide.

The DVFRB has also previously made calls to the Oklahoma legislature to appropriate funding to agencies involved in direct services to victims of domestic violence at a level adequate to maintain, at a minimum, baseline services to all those seeking them [[2007](#), [2012](#)]. These recommendations sought to urge the state to play a more prominent role in the funding of direct domestic violence prevention and intervention services. Funding, however, has for years remained almost entirely stagnant even though the need for services has significantly increased. For example, annual funding towards Oklahoma Attorney General (OAG) certified DV/SA programs has averaged \$5,947,632 during 2016-2024. And although we commend the legislature in prioritizing the appropriation of an additional \$3 million for programs in 2023 and 2024, unfortunately once these funds were divided equally among the 32 certified programs, they only served as a slight increase to an otherwise historically underfunded area. In addition, the Board recognizes the ongoing efforts by the OAG to recraft the current funding formula used to distribute funds due to legislator’s concerns in recent years about the equity of the existing formula. The work is currently ongoing, but the signs are stakeholders are committed to improving the current formula to address the Legislature’s concerns on this matter.



Source: Office of the Oklahoma Attorney General, Victim Advocacy and Services Unit.

These stagnant levels of funding are jeopardizing the operations of service providers around the state. This is evident when analyzing invoice data of payouts by the state for services provided by OAG certified DV/SA organizations versus their invoice request for actual services provided. Since payouts are capped due to the limited availability of funding, the result is that costs of services far exceed the state’s contribution. Between fiscal year (FY) 2020 and 2024 the state on average only paid out about 45.8% of the total actual requests for services provided (Figure 2).



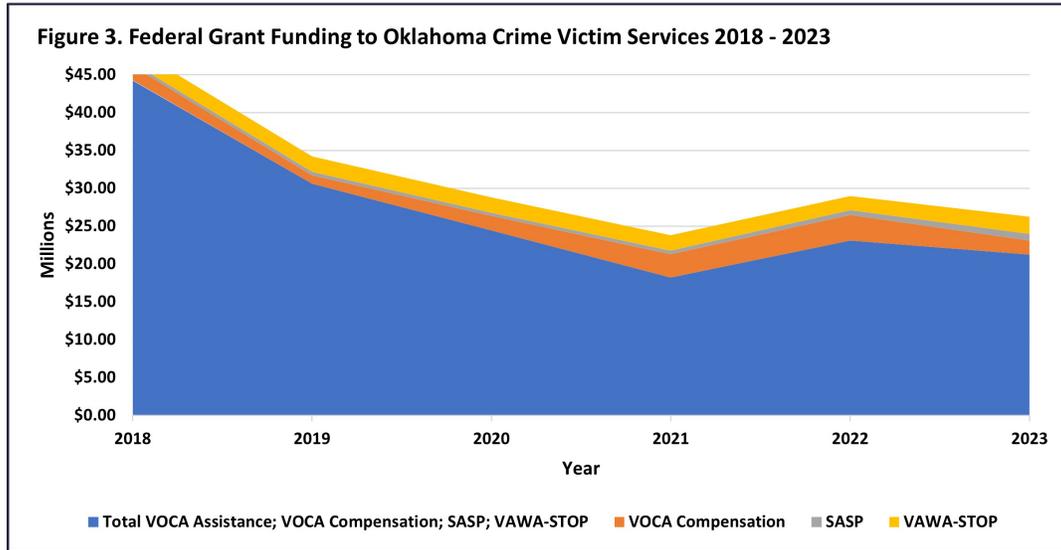
Source: Office of the Oklahoma Attorney General, Victim Advocacy and Services Unit.

On average the state payouts decreased annually by -6.4% and the difference between FY20 and FY24 equals a -24.2% decline. The steep drop between FY23 and FY24 can likely be attributed to rising costs of providing services.

Overall, the data shows that the State of Oklahoma should do more to support the organizations providing direct services to an ever-increasing number of victims. Funding levels, where they currently stand, jeopardize the availability of current services, and prevent more victims from being helped.

*The Decline of Federal Funding*

The bleak funding outlook for victim services in Oklahoma has also been exacerbated in recent years by steep federal cuts to grants supporting DV/SA intervention services in Oklahoma. This is alarming because most of the government funds geared towards supporting DV/SA specific initiatives and services have historically come from federal grant dollars. This reliance on federal funds has meant our state has been dramatically impacted by federal cuts to grants Oklahoma DV/SA service providers rely on to serve victims in our communities. **Figure 3** and **Table 1** showcase the alarming decline in total federal grant dollars allocated towards programs and initiatives geared towards combatting DV/SA and serving victims in Oklahoma.



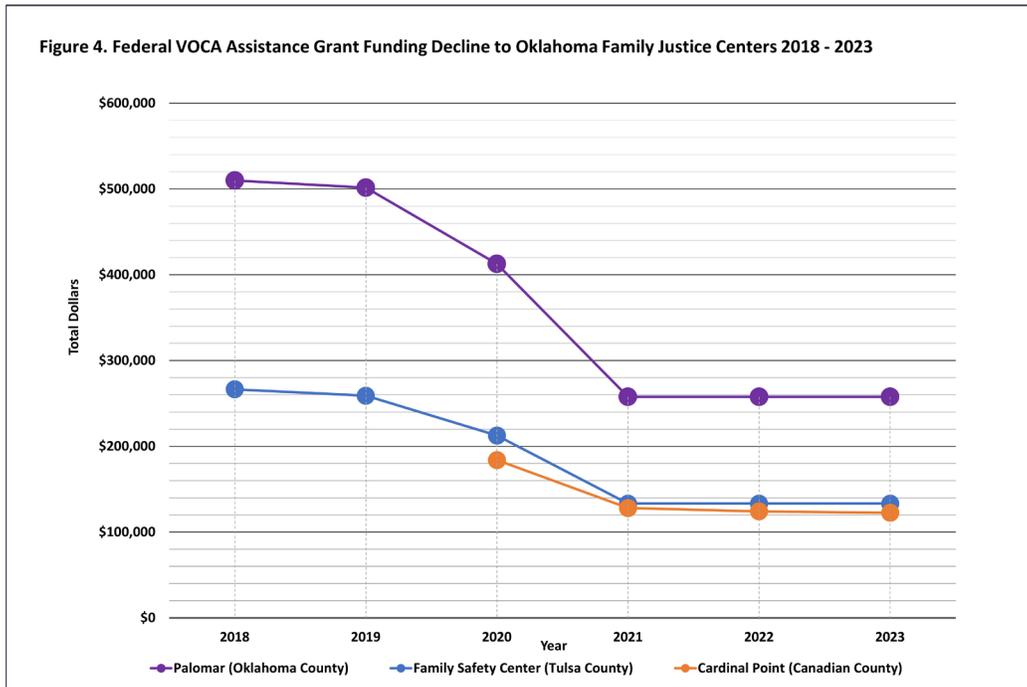
**Table 1. Federal Crime Victim Assistance Grant Funding Allocations to Oklahoma 2018 – 2023**

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>VOCA Assistance</b>	<b>\$39,885,767</b>	<b>\$27,033,125</b>	<b>\$20,068,992</b>	<b>\$12,620,084</b>	<b>\$17,225,254</b>	<b>\$16,287,983</b>
<b>VOCA Compensation</b>	<b>\$1,917,000</b>	<b>\$1,112,000</b>	<b>\$1,904,000</b>	<b>\$3,077,000</b>	<b>\$3,382,000</b>	<b>\$1,830,000</b>
<b>SASP</b>	<b>\$396,961</b>	<b>\$425,261</b>	<b>\$430,950</b>	<b>\$475,353</b>	<b>\$612,421</b>	<b>\$885,548</b>
<b>VAWA-STOP</b>	<b>\$2,032,235</b>	<b>\$2,031,320</b>	<b>\$2,019,340</b>	<b>\$2,024,912</b>	<b>\$1,867,394</b>	<b>\$2,244,003</b>
<b>Total All Grants</b>	<b>\$44,231,963</b>	<b>\$30,601,706</b>	<b>\$24,423,282</b>	<b>\$18,197,349</b>	<b>\$23,087,069</b>	<b>\$21,247,534</b>

Source: Oklahoma District Attorneys Council, Federal Grants Division

Funding data from the Oklahoma District Attorneys Council (DAC) shows that total federal allocations to Oklahoma in 2023 to four victim services-related federal grants was -52.0% less than it was in 2018.

Federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Assistance funds in particular have declined dramatically in recent years. This is due to VOCA being funded by fines and assessments on criminals prosecuted by the federal government and not federal taxpayer dollars. In recent years, the number of federal prosecutions that would result in large fines and assessments that would ultimately go towards VOCA have dwindled. Absent that money, the fund has steadily decreased, and the projections are that it will likely get worse in the coming years. The 2023 VOCA Assistance fund total is -59.2% less than its peak level in 2018. This steep decline has strained service provider budgets and jeopardizes the provision of direct services, such as advocacy, to victims across Oklahoma. VOCA Assistance funds allocated towards Family Justice Centers (FJC) in our state for example, where thousands of victims go to seek services every year, have declined by -36.5% since 2020. These VOCA funds for FJCs have on average decreased by -12.3% every year since 2020. These steep decreases are alarming considering FJCs currently do not receive funds from the state. Their main source of government money comes from federal grants like VOCA, the county and/or municipality where they are located, and private fundraising.



**Table 2. Victims of Crime Assistance (VOCA) Funds Allocated to Oklahoma Family Justice Center 2018 – 2023**

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Palomar	\$509,870	\$501,617	\$412,567	\$257,796	\$257,796	\$257,796
Family Safety Center	\$266,434	\$259,046	\$212,478	\$133,208	\$133,208	\$133,208
Cardinal Point	-	-	\$183,976	\$128,094	\$124,084	\$122,464
Annual Total	\$776,304	\$760,663	\$809,021	\$519,098	\$515,088	513,468

Source: Oklahoma District Attorneys Council, Federal Grants Division

*The DVFRB’s Position: Where do we go from here?*

Considering increasing DV/SA rates and insufficient resources to meet the needs of victims in Oklahoma, the DVFRB once again recommends that the state allocate more funding geared towards victim services. This is necessary to safeguard, strengthen, and expand the domestic violence protection and prevention system in Oklahoma.

This recommendation is grounded in extensive fatality review discussions on how the limited availability, and in some areas of our state the complete lack of resources, ultimately contributes to victims staying in abusive relationships. This ultimately compromises their safety and in many instances that of their children. At a minimum, the state must do more to bolster current services and encourage their expansion so that more victims can get the help they need.

Consequently, the DVFRB recommends Oklahoma lawmakers take into consideration the following proposals in future budgetary plans:

1. Allocate a total of \$16.1 million to Oklahoma Attorney General (OAG) certified DV/SA victim service providers. An analysis by the OAG Finance Division estimated this would be sufficient to fund 100.0% of invoices billed to the state for DV/SA services provided by certified programs. This would close the gap illustrated in Figure 2.
  - Intended positive outcome if done:
    - The allocation would ensure the provision of core victim services provided by certified OAG programs. It would fund the programs for services provided by 100.0%.
    - The bolster and expansion of victim advocacy and/or shelter operations of existing services providers. This would lead to more victims being able to access shelter services.

- Might incentivize the creation of new service providers without undercutting the funding of existing organizations. Currently, there are barely enough funds to adequately support existing providers, and as a result, supporting new ones would come at the expense the ones already in place.
2. Consider allocating recurring funds to support all Family Justice Centers in Oklahoma. These include Palomar in Oklahoma City, the Family Safety Center in Tulsa, and Cardinal Point in El Reno.
    - Intended positive outcome examples if done:
      - The bolster and expansion of victim advocacy and services offered at these organizations.
  3. Consider creating and funding new state grants mirroring federal ones like those offered through the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), among others.
    - Intended positive outcome:
      - Offset significant cuts (e.g., VOCA Assistance) or bolster stagnant (e.g., VAWA) federal grants supporting victim services and our criminal justice system's response to domestic violence.

## Implementation

The implementation of this recommendation hinges on the Oklahoma Legislature appropriating more funds to victim services through the budget process. Below we outline some steps the legislature could take to implement what was described above:

1. The Victim Advocacy and Services Unit (VASU) at the Oklahoma Attorney General's Office (OAG) contracts DV/SA and offers pass-through funding from the state to help pay for DV/SA core services. The legislature would need to allocate the \$16.1 million to VASU so they can then be distributed to certified programs accordingly.
2. There is no current mechanism for the state to directly support Family Justice Centers (FJC) in Oklahoma. An appropriate state agency could potentially be designated so that pass-through state monies can reach FJCs. For example, line itemed funds specifically for FJCs could be pass-through VASU at the OAG as it is currently done for the OAG certified programs.
3. The state currently has no laws mirroring federal statutes like the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), and others that support victim services initiatives through competitive grants. The legislature should consider creating and funding state grants statutorily so that local organizations, law enforcement, and other stakeholders can apply to and receive funding to support victim services or law enforcement initiatives aimed at serving victims or combatting domestic violence in our communities.

Finally, Oklahoma elected officials and DV/SA service provider organizations should urge our federal congressional delegation to advocate for more federal support to DV/SA intervention and prevention initiatives. The steep cuts to federal crime victim services grants have dramatically impacted our state and limit our ability to respond to our domestic violence epidemic. More support is needed from all levels of our government if we are serious about doing something to address the current levels of family violence in our state.

# 2023 RECOMMENDATIONS

## Recommendation Two

*The Oklahoma legislature should take appropriate legislative action to strengthen several areas in the Oklahoma statutes so that prosecutors across the state are better equipped to hold domestic abusers accountable in court. This will help enhance the safety of victims, their families, and the community at large.*

*The recommended statutory changes are briefly outlined below and further explained in the rationale section of this recommendation:*

- 1. Amend 21 O.S. §644 so that Oklahoma prosecutors are not limited to being able to file Domestic Assault & Battery (A&B) with a Deadly Weapon charge only if there was a firearm present. This would eliminate the discrepancy between Domestic A&B with a Deadly Weapon and its non-DV counterpart, which can be filed if an offender committed a crime by means of any deadly weapon, such as a firearm or knife, or any other means likely to produce death.*
- 2. Amend 21 O.S. §13.1 so that it includes domestic violence crimes outlined in 21 O.S. 644 as 85% crimes.*
- 3. Amend 21 O.S. §644 to increase the range of punishment for first time Domestic Assault & Battery by Strangulation. A broader range, such as 1 – 10 years, would allow appropriate sentencing based on the severity and facts of an individual incident.*
- 4. Amend 57 O.S. §571 so that Domestic Assault and Battery Subsequent Offense and Domestic Assault and Battery on a Pregnant Person are statutorily considered violent crimes in the State of Oklahoma.*

### Target Systems

Oklahoma Legislature; District Attorney Offices & Prosecutors

### Purpose

To eliminate discrepancies between domestic abuse and non-domestic crimes in Oklahoma statutes so that prosecutors are better equipped to hold abusers accountable in court.

### Rationale

In recent years, the Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board (DVFRB) has reviewed cases where homicide perpetrators had a history of domestic violence (DV) charges being filed against them. This includes prior charges for abusing the intimate partner homicide victim or other individuals who, in the past, had been in a relationship with the perpetrator and were also subjected to severe abuse but survived. In many situations, charges were either dismissed or, if the prosecution was able to secure a conviction, the perpetrator served little to no time in custody or was given a plea-deal in the form of a deferred or suspended sentence.

These situations frequently led to DVFRB discussions on how not holding abusers accountable ultimately emboldens them to continue their abusive behavior from one relationship to the other and often leads them to escalate to more lethal forms of violence that can result in the killing of their partner, family members, and bystanders. Indeed, in recent years, the Board has identified and reviewed cases where intimate partner homicide perpetrators engaged law enforcement officers with gunfire in the immediate aftermath of killing their partner. In other words, the dangers associated with intimate partner violence (IPV) are not just confined to the home where it is happening, but easily spill-over outside the home and threaten the safety of entire communities.

As a result, it is important that Oklahoma district attorneys and their prosecutors have the right tools at their disposal so they are better equipped to secure outcomes in court that both enhance the safety of victims and their families, and also guarantees that punishments to abusers actually leads to significant time in jail or prison. These concerns were recently echoed at a interim study ([IS23-051](#)) heard at the Oklahoma House of Representatives. The study featured a presentation about structural issues surrounding domestic violence sentencing that hinder holding abusers accountable<sup>7</sup>. Some of the issues highlighted during the presentation mirrored the DVFRB's concerns about the current legal landscape we rely on to prosecute domestic abusers. This recommendation aims to give legislators a roadmap of areas in the Oklahoma statutes that could potentially be improved to strengthen the state's ability to respond to domestic violence crimes more effectively.

### *Discrepancies between Domestic Violence (DV) and Non-DV Crimes*

Oklahoma prosecutors often have difficulty holding abusers accountable due to discrepancies between DV and non-DV crime statutes and their range of punishments. A noteworthy example are differences between non-DV Assault and Battery (A&B) with a Dangerous or Deadly Weapon outlined in [21 O.S. § 652](#) and its domestic violence-related counterparts in [21 O.S. §644](#). For example, an offender can be charged with a non-DV A&B with a deadly weapon, if they committed the crime by means of **any** deadly weapon, such as a firearm or knife, **or any other means** likely to produce death. This carries a range of punishment of up to life in prison and is an eighty-five percent (85%) crime. This means that offenders must serve at least 85% of their sentence before being eligible for parole. In contrast, a DV-related A&B with a deadly weapon charge can **only** be filed if it was committed with a firearm. In addition, the range of punishment, although it is up to life in custody like its non-DV counterpart, is **not** an eighty-five (85%) crime. This presents a significant barrier to prosecutors.

First, the fact that DV-A&B with a *deadly* weapon can only be filed if the firearm element was present means prosecutors often have to rely on the less severe DV-A&B with a *dangerous* weapon charge. Therefore it might help prosecutors if DV-A&B with a deadly weapon is not restricted to only when a firearm is present. This change would place severe weapon-involved domestics on the same footing as non-domestic charges. For example, if changed to comport with the broader language of simple A&B with a Deadly Weapon, a domestic involving a knife or other sharp weapon, could be charged as Domestic A&B with a Deadly Weapon, carrying up to life in prison. It should also be made an 85% crime like its non-DV A&B counterpart. As it currently stands, non-domestic A&B with a Deadly Weapon is an 85% crime. Domestic A&B with a Deadly Weapon is not.

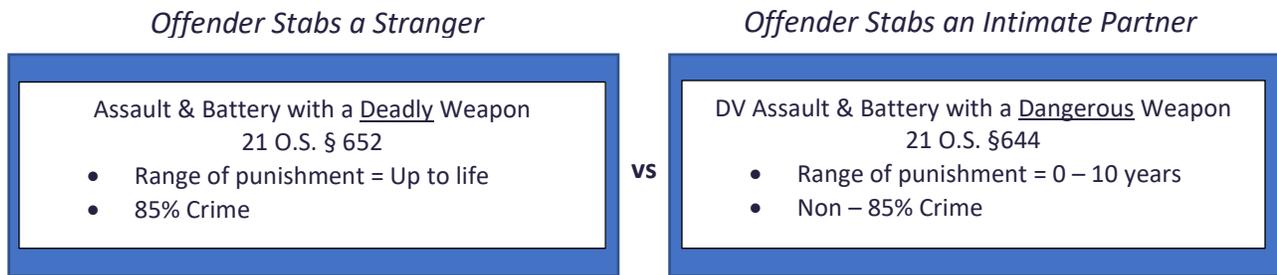
Thus, despite the recidivism trend involved in domestic violence, those convicted of Domestic A&B with a Deadly often serve a significantly more minimal percentage of their sentence than those convicted of simple A&B with a Deadly Weapon, solely based on their relationship status with their victim. Changing this would put both crimes on equal footing in terms of severity and potential consequences defendants face for their actions. **Overall, the goal should be to not have a statutory landscape where there are less consequences for domestic abuse, particularly intimate partner abuse, than if the same crime is committed against a stranger.** If these changes are enacted, it would send a message in Oklahoma that the consequences for domestic violence crimes are no longer less than non-domestic crimes.

An example of these discrepancies would be the different charges at a prosecutor's disposal when facing two hypothetical stabbing scenerios where the only difference is that in one the victim is a stranger and in the other it's an intimate partner. *Figure 5* illustrates the difference:

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<sup>7</sup> The presentation was titled *Domestic Violence Sentencing and Survivor Services* and it was led by Assistant District Attorney (ADA) Ashley Nix. She is currently the Director of the Special Victims Unit at the Tulsa County District Attorney's Office. DVFRB staff partnered with ADA Nix to write sections of this recommendation.

**Figure 5. Example - Hypothetical Scenerio: Non-DV Related vs. DV-Related Crime Discrepancy**



*Issues with First-Time Strangulation Offense Range of Punishment*

A first-time Strangulation defendant faces a range of punishment of one (1) to three (3) years. The first obstacle regarding the current statute is the lack of range in terms of sentencing. Strangulation cases range in severity and, like many cases, the appropriate punishment is fact-specific. There is not room for discretion in terms of sentencing, nor does it have a wide enough range to appropriately address many of the cases. Ultimately, three (3) years simply is not an appropriate amount of time, whether it is time in custody or probation, to address the severity of many cases. A broader range, such as one (1) to ten (10) years, would ensure adequate sentencing and would more appropriately address a wider range of cases based upon the facts. Further, there are many property crimes or financial crimes that carry a wider range of punishment than one faces for strangling their partner (Table 3):

**Table 3. Range of Punishment Examples for Several Property and Financial Crimes**

Statute	Range of Punishment
<b>21 O.S. § 1436: Burglary 2<sup>nd</sup> Degree</b>	0 - 7 years
<b>21 O.S. § 1451. Embezzlement &gt; \$1,000</b>	0 - 8 years
<b>21 O.S. § 1531. False Personation of Another</b>	0 - 10 years
<b>21 O.S. § 1578. Forged Instrument &gt; \$1,000</b>	0 - 8 years
<b>21 O.S. § 1705. Grand Larceny</b>	0 - 8 years

These are just a handful of dozens, if not more, examples. Ultimately, the laws currently treat certain financial or property crimes, and **even the abuse of an animal (21 O.S. § 1685. Animal Cruelty – 5 years)**, more seriously than strangling an intimate partner. Additionally, as a non-85 % crime, there is a huge disincentive to pleading a defendant to time in custody, even if the crime warrants it, given an offender will be released fairly fast, if not almost immediately upon arriving at Lexington Assessment Center once in DOC custody. This can occur for various reasons like for example having credits from time in jail. Specifically, as a result of being a non-85% crime, it is oftentimes the case that defendants become parole eligible after a matter of months, despite serving minimal time in custody. Thus, even if a prosecutor offers the maximum of three (3) years, which likely means they will not resolve the case with a plea, an offender is going to serve barely any of that sentence in custody and will be released. This further incentivizes probation pleas, even if the crime warrants prison time, because at least with a suspended probation sentence, they will have to serve the full sentence term on probation. Additionally, deferred probation sentences, which can be expunged upon completion, can be extended beyond the statutory limit of three (3) years. The result being that more Strangulation offenders are given probation, including deferred sentences, even when the crime warrants more significant punishment, because the limited range of punishment and the fact it is a non-85% crime often limits what prosecutors can do to hold offenders accountable.

### *The Need to Make all Domestic Violence Offenses Violent and 85% Crimes*

Currently, Domestic Assault and Battery Subsequent Offense and *Domestic Assault and Battery on a Pregnant Person* are considered statutorily non-violent. It seems illogical that certain felony domestic violence offenses are statutorily violent, but those crimes, particularly one encompassing those who have recidivated are “non-violent.” The notion that a multiple-time offender’s conduct would be considered “non-violent,” simply because the abuser did not strangle them or use a weapon against them, contradicts logic and runs afoul to the facts and data that demonstrate high recidivism and increased lethality in serial domestic violence offenders. Moreover, the message sent to survivors and their perpetrators are that if the offender is already a convicted domestic abuser, or the survivor happens to be pregnant, the perpetrator’s violent action against them is not considered a crime of violence.

Another issue is that, currently, none of the domestic violence crimes in [21 O.S. § 644](#) are 85% crimes. Thus, even if an offender gets prison time, there is no statutorily prescribed minimum they are required to serve. This is a concern for prosecutors, who are left with little to no insight on when an offender will be released, thereby making it difficult to gauge what the appropriate sentence should be. Offenders are then further emboldened by the lack of accountability as the result of minimal time served. This incites significant anxiety and fear for survivors, who, despite knowing their offender pled to years in prison, have truly no idea when will be released. This inhibits the security of an in-custody sentence all together and increases safety concerns upon an unpredictable release date. Moreover, it erodes their faith in the criminal justice system, and undermines the justice meant to be served by the sentence altogether. Ultimately, the laws need to reflect to both offenders and survivors that the State of Oklahoma takes domestic violence seriously, and that it will be dealt with accordingly.

Additionally, by domestic violence remaining a non-violent crime pursuant to 21 O.S. §571, a person’s charge and conviction could be expunged based on 22 O.S. §18. By being reclassified as a violent crime, the charge could not be expunged and allow the public to remain on notice of the person’s prior convictions.

### *Addressing the Unintended Consequence of the Wrongful Criminalization of DV Victims*

With the strengthening of criminal laws, there is always a justifiable concern it will result in unjust outcomes and sentences. Oftentimes, due to the nature of domestic violence, specifically the “cycle of violence,” there are instances in which the victim perpetrates violence as well or “mutual combat” is an issue. Unfortunately, there are times in which a victim may be wrongfully accused of being the perpetrator.

The strengthening of or even weakening of domestic violence laws will not remedy those scenarios. It is the responsibility of those prosecuting on behalf of the State of Oklahoma to properly apply their discretion and dispense of justice accordingly, in every type of case. The term “prosecutorial discretion” exists because that is the heavy responsibility of each and every prosecuting authority in the State. With that comes the critical step of always evaluating cases, particularly involving domestic violence, from all angles, and staffing cases with fellow prosecutors to gain additional perspective. This also requires taking into account all surrounding circumstances, the documented history between the parties, as well as what direction the evidence ultimately leads. For example, if the historical perpetrator accuses the historical victim of domestic violence – a scenario that is sometimes seen when a perpetrator has pending charges for domestic violence – it is particularly important to look at every facet of the evidence, such as whether the reporting party’s injuries would be consistent with the accused historical victim trying to fight them off. While there are a plethora of other examples and steps to prevent the wrongful prosecution of domestic violence victims, the responsibility largely falls on those who prosecute on behalf of the State to properly screen and evaluate cases and apply their discretion accordingly.

While wrongful prosecution is a valid concern, it should be considered that the weaknesses in the current domestic violence laws potentially contribute to this precise issue. Survivors whose abusers are facing

prosecution for these crimes often grapple with the feeling that no one can adequately protect them, not even the criminal justice system. Thus, they revert to survival tactics such as reuniting with the perpetrator to appease them. When abusers face unjustly light sentences, it affirms their lack of faith in the criminal justice system. Survivors are disincentivized from reporting abuse or cooperating and become more reluctant to escape domestic violence. What often results is continued violence between the parties, if not an escalation, increasing the likelihood of homicide or a victim being wrongfully accused. There is no precise remedy to prevent wrongful prosecution, but weak domestic violence laws are certainly not the solution and more likely a contributing factor to this concern.

The concern of wrongful prosecutions also underscores how critical it is for Oklahoma to explore a variety of other response options and approaches in our domestic violence response toolbox; in addition to those already provided by our carceral and criminal legal systems. This might include things like exploring how to best strengthen our Batterer Intervention Program (BIP) system and other areas that can address violence from its early onset before it escalates to the extreme physical abuse that often characterizes cases reviewed by the DVFRB. The idea should be to work towards laying the groundwork along multiple fronts so that systems can better respond to the multifaced nature of domestic violence.

## Implementation

Implementing this recommendation would require the Oklahoma legislature to revise and amend several Oklahoma statutes. For example, to eliminate the discrepancies in sentencing ranges between non-domestic and domestic violence crimes, 21 O.S. §13.1 would need to be amended so it includes domestic assault and battery with a deadly weapon as a eighty-five percent (85%) crime. The outline below provides a roadmap to the statutory changes needed to implement this recommendation:

1. Amend 21 O.S. §644 so that Oklahoma prosecutors are not limited to being able to file Domestic Assault & Battery (A&B) with a Deadly Weapon charge **only** if there was a firearm present. This would eliminate the discrepancy between Domestic A&B with a Deadly Weapon and its non-DV counterpart, which can be filed if an offender committed a crime by means of **any** deadly weapon, such as a firearm or knife, or any other means likely to produce death.
2. Amend 21 O.S. §13.1 so that it includes domestic violence crimes outlined in 21 O.S. 644 as 85% crimes.
3. Amend 21 O.S. §644 to increase the range of punishment for first time Domestic Assault & Battery by Strangulation to 1 – 10 years.
4. Amend 57 O.S. §571 so that Domestic Assault and Battery Subsequent Offense and Domestic Assault and Battery on a Pregnant Person are statutorily considered violent crimes in the State of Oklahoma.

# 2023 RECOMMENDATIONS

## Recommendation Three

*In light of the recent passage of the Haiden Fleming Memorial Act, which mandates new 9-1-1 telecommunicators in Oklahoma hired after January 1, 2024 to complete at least 40 hours of training on basic call handling and dispatch services within six months of their hiring date and other annual training requirements, the Oklahoma 9-1-1 Management Authority should take appropriate action to include courses in their training program that teach domestic violence (DV) related education and best-practices when answering domestic violence-related emergency calls placed by DV victims, family members, and/or their children.*

*This should be done to ensure an effective trauma-informed response to those being impacted by domestic violence and calling 9-1-1 for help as well as to safeguard law enforcement personnel being dispatched to these calls for service.*

### Target Systems

Oklahoma Police Departments, Oklahoma Sheriffs' Offices, Oklahoma 9-1-1 Communication Centers, Oklahoma 9-1-1 Management Authority

### Purpose

To improve the 9-1-1 emergency call-taking response when victims of domestic violence, including child witnesses, call emergency services for assistance; as well as to ensure it considers the unique dangers these calls for service pose to first-responders' safety.

### Rationale

#### *Background*

The DVFRB has previously recognized the importance of 9-1-1 telecommunicators and dispatchers being trained to recognize domestic violence risk factors and signs of escalation. Previous publications of the DVFRB report shows the Board's call for more training and the development of best practices for emergency telecommunicators. For example, the Board on two occasions called for dispatchers to be trained on the signs of escalation in domestic violence situations [2005, 2008]. The DVFRB then went a step further when it called for the exploration and development of training materials for dispatchers on domestic violence, specifically strangulation screening and response [2012].

The Board is once again making a recommendation targeting this system after a case review revealed a troubling interaction between a 9-1-1 telecommunicator and a child who had just witnessed the killing of family members in an intimate partner-related homicide. The interaction included instances where the operator on more than one occasion yelled, called the child a liar, and even threatened to hang up the phone.

Law enforcement eventually made it to the home and were able to get the child safely out of the house. However, the further traumatization of the child by a first responder was more than evident and led to discussions about systemic issues in the 9-1-1 emergency communications system in Oklahoma.

Anecdotal accounts from Board members suggests that, based on experiences from colleagues who regularly listen to 911 calls in domestic violence-related court cases, instances where emergency telecommunicator's interaction with victims fall short of professional standards does happen more often than we would want to believe in Oklahoma. This led to discussions on what kind of training, if any, telecommunicators complete before they start answering 9-1-1 calls and dispatching emergency services.

Further research by the DVFRB found that for decades Oklahoma 9-1-1 telecommunicators have had no mandatory training requirements upon being hired by a communications center. It has historically been individual agencies' responsibility to train their staff as they saw fit. Some agencies make sure new telecommunicators are trained in basic call-taking and their jurisdiction's geography before they are ever released to answer calls on their own. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for some agencies to hire someone and have them immediately start answering emergency calls with little to no training or supervision.

### *The Haiden Fleming Memorial Act & New 9-1-1 Training Standards in Oklahoma*

Recent legislation has worked to address these issues as the state moves towards next generation 9-1-1 systems. Oklahoma House Bill 1590 was recently passed and enacted as the Haiden Fleming Memorial Act. This new law slightly increases the fee for all devices that can call 9-1-1, moves the state towards a new next generation 9-1-1 system, and for the first time, mandates, training requirements for all 9-1-1 telecommunicators in Oklahoma. The law requires new emergency telecommunicators hired after January 1, 2024, to complete, either in-person or virtually, a 40-hour state-recognized training course for basic call handling and dispatch services within six months of their hiring date. In addition, the law also designates the Oklahoma 9-1-1 Management Authority as responsible for establishing annual training requirements on a yearly basis.

This new emphasis on telecommunicator training underscores the important role they play in connecting citizens with emergency services. When it comes to crime victims, their first contact with the criminal justice system is often when they call 9-1-1 or their local law enforcement agency directly to ask for help or report that something has happened. Emergency telecommunicators, often called call-takers, are responsible for answering phone calls, talking to the caller to get information on what is happening, and most importantly getting an address or approximate location of where the emergency is/was happening. A dispatcher then relays the information to patrol officers, who are then dispatched to the scene to contact the crime victim or the reporting party (RP). In some smaller centers, one person can be working as both the call-taker and dispatcher at the same time for an entire shift. As a result, both call-takers and dispatchers play an important role in getting citizens the police, fire, or ambulance emergency services they need. According to the Oklahoma 9-1-1 Management Authority, emergency 911 calls in Oklahoma are answered by 126 centers across the state, and it is estimated that about 2.6 million 911 calls are placed each year to these centers.

### *Domestic Violence & 9-1-1 Emergency Telecommunications*

Domestic violence victims often call 9-1-1 for a variety of reasons. Some call law enforcement because they want to report the abuse after a serious physical altercation. Others want to report the abuser for violating the terms of an active protective order (PO). Sometimes other people, such as children or family members, call to report an ongoing verbal or physical altercation. In other instances, a victim's family calls because they want a welfare-check done on their loved one because they are aware of the violence that happens in the home. In the worst of scenarios, child witnesses or other family members may call to report the killing of their loved one by an abuser, who in some cases might still be on the scene.

Due to the nature of domestic violence, which usually occurs over an extended period of time, a single call is rarely the extent of a 9-1-1 center's interaction with a victim and offender<sup>8</sup>. Victims may place repeated calls to 9-1-1 because of ongoing intimidation, threats, and violence. Neighbors who hear loud yelling and altercations may also place emergency calls requesting welfare checks. As a result, telecommunicators must work towards establishing continuing engagement to better reflect the ongoing nature of the crime and contribute to the long-term safety of victims, their children, and responding officers<sup>9</sup>. Consistent and genuine engagement should try to guarantee a steady flow of information about changing dynamics within the household. This ultimately should help with identifying immediate and long-term threats to the safety of victims and law enforcement personnel. Underlying this should be an understanding that abusers can kill a victim at any given moment and some of these

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<sup>8</sup> Blueprint for Safety: Chapter 2 – 911 Emergency Communications Center: <https://praxisinternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Blueprint-Chapter-2-911-v3-21.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

killers have no qualms about engaging law enforcement with gunfire or other weapons in the aftermath of killing their intimate partner or family member.

### *The DVFRB's Recommendation*

To address the issues outlined above, the DVFRB recommends that basic education on the dynamics of DV and trauma-informed best-practices be incorporated to the new mandatory basic call-handling training curriculum. Training should emphasize best-practices when handling DV calls involving victims, family members, and/or child witnesses. The training should cover areas such as DV lethality risk indicators like strangulation, the presence of firearms or other weapons, and the importance of controlling the call and not the caller so that operators handle these calls without minimizing the severity of what is happening, regardless of whether the victim is a repeat caller or not. Additional training will also encourage consistency across law enforcement jurisdictions and will aid in fostering a more conscientious response to domestic violence in an area that is, most often, the initial point of contact a victim has with the criminal justice system.

Finally, the training should also be incorporated into annual continual education requirements set by the Oklahoma 9-1-1 Management Authority. This will help maintain a minimum DV awareness standard throughout the 9-1-1 system in Oklahoma, which is incredibly important considering these are some of the most frequent and dangerous calls to which law enforcement personnel on patrol respond. The hope is that more training will help the state work towards raising emergency telecommunication standards when answering domestic violence calls. It will also hopefully help prevent similar situations to what was described with the child earlier from happening anywhere in our state. Finally, it will train telecommunicators on how domestic violence dynamics present unique safety risks to both victims and first responders. By having a better understanding of these dynamics, they will be better equipped to adjust their call-taking approach to effectively assess how much danger a victim is in and forward vital officer-safety information to law enforcement being dispatched to the scene.

## **Implementation**

Implementing this recommendation hinges on the Oklahoma 9-1-1 Management Authority requiring the 40-hour basic call handling and dispatch services telecommunicator training set forth in [63 O.S. § 2872](#), and any other annual education requirements, include a training component on domestic violence education and best practices when answering domestic violence-related emergency calls. The Authority would ideally seek input from national and Oklahoman trauma informed experts and resources, such as the DVFRB, other state agencies and even victim service providers. These stakeholders can assist with seeking out or designing appropriate domestic violence training that could potentially be incorporated into the curriculum they are mandated to create, maintain, and certify by state law.

# STATEWIDE OVERVIEW

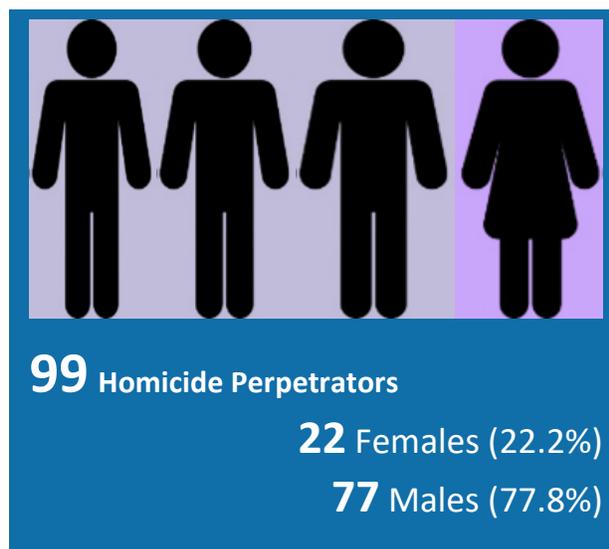
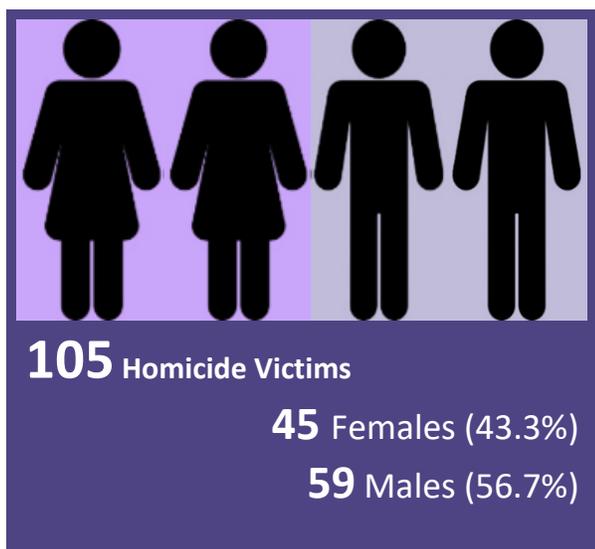
## Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board Homicides

The Review Board and Program Staff annually identify, review, and report on domestic violence-related fatalities that occurred in Oklahoma during the previous calendar year. A fatality is classified as domestic violence-related if it falls into one of the following broad categories:

- Intimate Partner Homicide (IPH)
- Family Homicide
- Roommates
- Bystander / Good Samaritan
- Triangle

Other deaths included in this report are perpetrators who die due to law enforcement intervention, bystander intervention, or by suicide. It is important to note that for the purposes of this report the term *victim* refers to the individual(s) killed in a domestic violence homicide event; the term *perpetrator* refers to the individual(s) who committed the homicide, even if they perished as well. ***This use of terms is not intended to correlate to roles in any existing victim/perpetrator domestic violence dynamic.***

### 104 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOMICIDE CASES



In 2022 there were 92 incidents, also known as cases or events, identified by DVFRB Program Staff in which one or more people were killed in a domestic violence-related homicide. There were 105 victims and 99 homicide perpetrators, 17 of whom died, for a total of 122 Oklahomans who died due to domestic violence (*Table 4*).

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Homicide cases	86	86	89	89	75	82	97	106	104	92
Total homicide victims	90	93	94	95	82	88	114	119	118	105
IPH victims only	43	39	36	37	37	44	43	45	26	43
Child victims <18	14	18	24	15	11	14	17	13	19	17
Homicide perpetrators	89	91	100	95	83	85	108	112	110	99
Homicide perpetrators who died / were killed	10	14	17	10	9	17	19	19	16	17

## Statewide Observations

From 2013-2022, Oklahoma averaged about 90 domestic violence (DV)-related homicide cases per year. There was a significant increase in 2019 and since then the state average increased to about 99 DV homicide cases per year. The number of victims has also increased in recent years. The average between 2013 and 2018 was about 90 DV homicide victims per year. Since 2019 the state average increased to about 114 DV homicide victims per year. The same has happened with the total number of deaths, which is the sum of both victims and homicide perpetrators who died or were killed. On average about 103 individuals died in domestic violence related homicides from 2013 to 2018 but starting in 2019 this increased to approximately 131 victims annually.

The number of perpetrator deaths increased in recent years and have stayed relatively consistent. This is alarming because perpetrator deaths are often associated with DV-related murder-suicides and are frequently some of the most violent murder cases. Between 2017 and 2020 perpetrator deaths doubled in Oklahoma from a decade low of 9 in 2017 to 17 in 2018 and then 19 deaths in both 2019 and 2020. Notably, despite perpetrator deaths slightly decreasing the last two years, data suggests more victims are dying per murder-suicide event than in previous years.

## By County

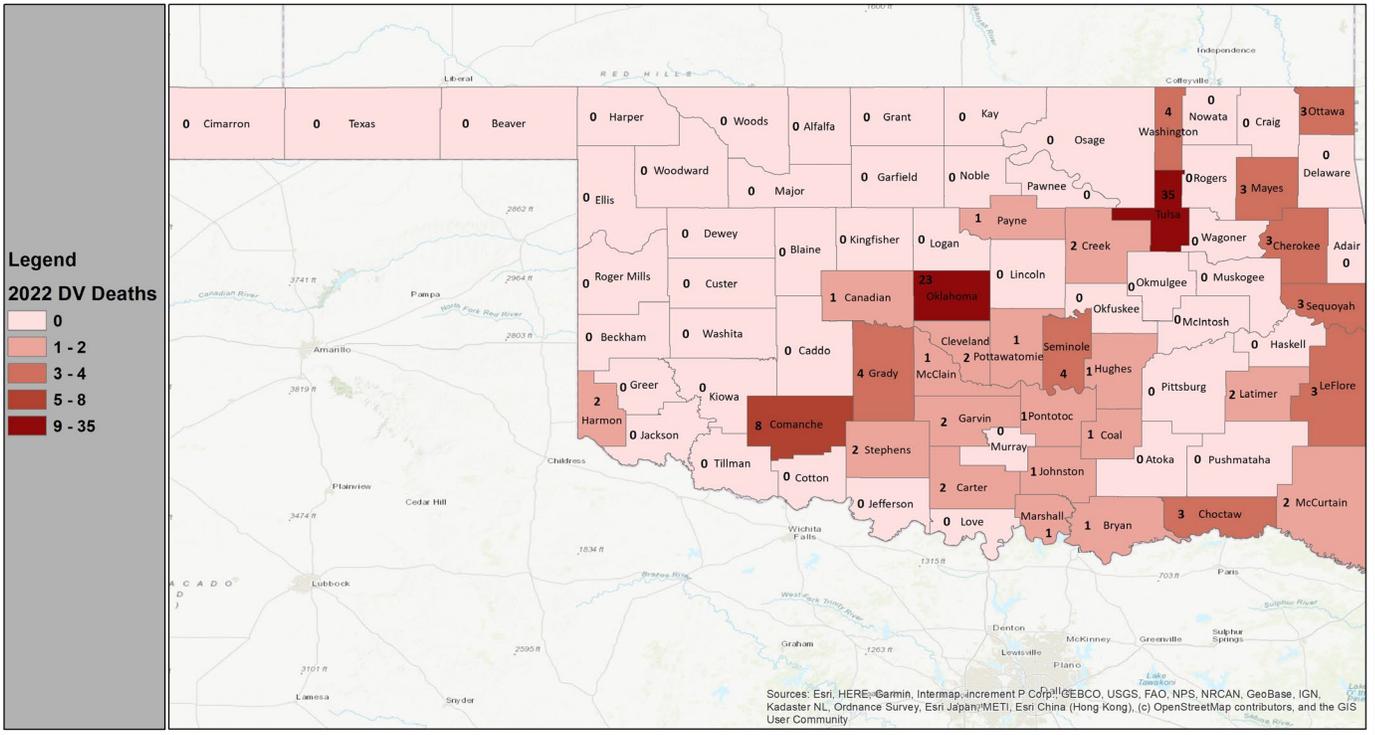
A total of 122 victims (105) and perpetrators (17) were identified by staff as having died in domestic violence-related fatalities during 2022. This resulted in a death rate of about 3.1 per 100,000 for the entire state. Consistent with prior years, the highest numbers of domestic violence-related deaths were concentrated in Oklahoma and Tulsa Counties (*Map 1*); a total of 58 people lost their lives to domestic violence in those two counties alone, comprising 47.5% of the total number of deaths. The higher share of deaths in Oklahoma and Tulsa Counties are most likely due to their high population, a combined 37.0% of Oklahoma's population resides in those two counties.<sup>10</sup> The death rate in Oklahoma County slightly decreased from 4.6 per 100,000 citizens in 2021 to about 3.0 in 2022. In contrast, the rate in Tulsa County increased from 4.6 per 100,000 people to 5.2. Meanwhile, the death rate in the remaining 75 other counties combined was about 2.5 per 100,000.

At least one domestic violence-related homicide occurred in 30 out of Oklahoma's 77 counties (39.0%) in 2022 (*Map 2*). This is a decrease of five after two consecutive years where at least 35 counties had a least one homicide. The 2022 total is consistent with the 2015-2019 annual average of about 31 counties experiencing at least one homicide during that time. Notably, even though the number of counties decreased, the number of Oklahoma district attorney (DA) districts with at least one homicide remained unchanged from the previous year. These homicides occurred in 19 (70.3%) of the 27 Oklahoma DA Districts.



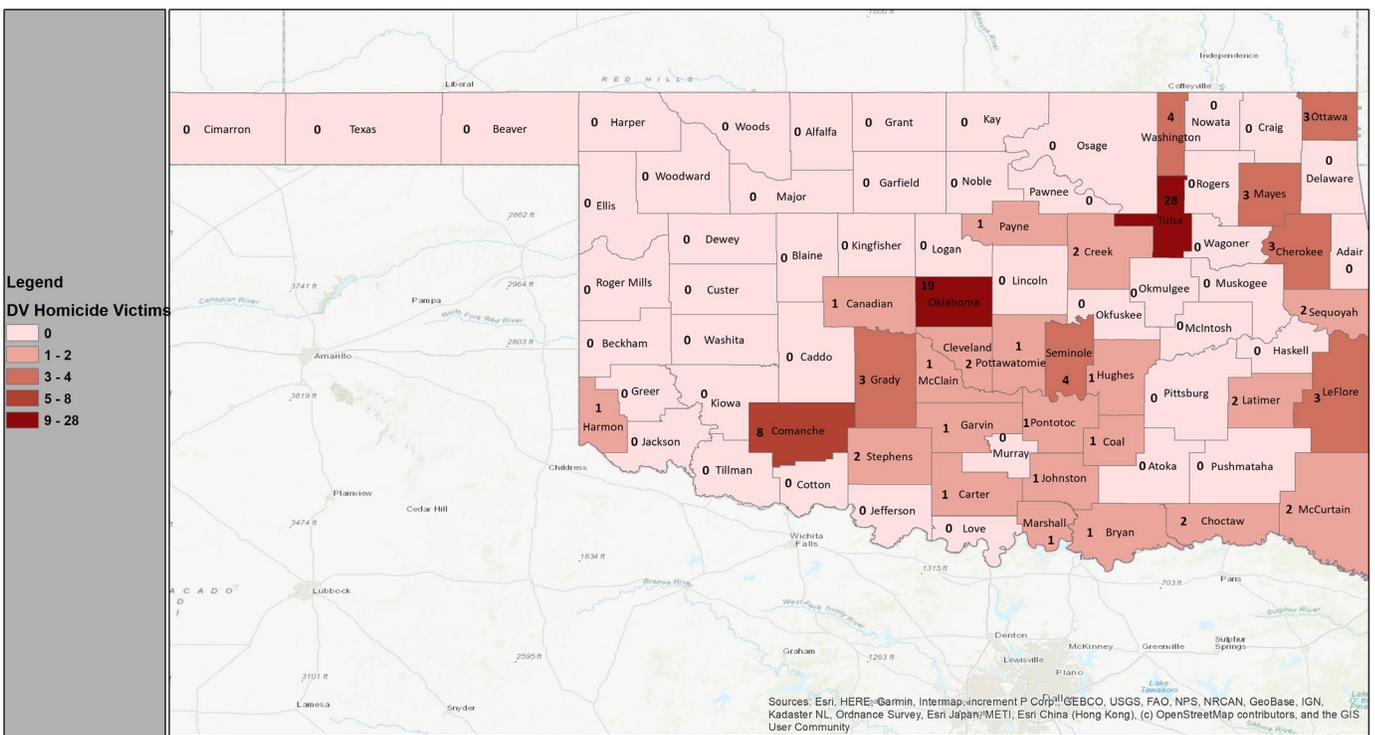
<sup>10</sup> Based on the U.S. Census Bureau's 2022 American Community survey, found at [https://www.oklahoma-demographics.com/counties\\_by\\_population](https://www.oklahoma-demographics.com/counties_by_population).

**Map 1. 2022 Total Domestic Violence Related Deaths**



Note: Data for this map was collected by DVFRB staff and is current as of January 2024. The data may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that may not have been accounted for during the 2023 data collection process.

**Map 2. 2022 Total Domestic Violence Related Homicide Victims**



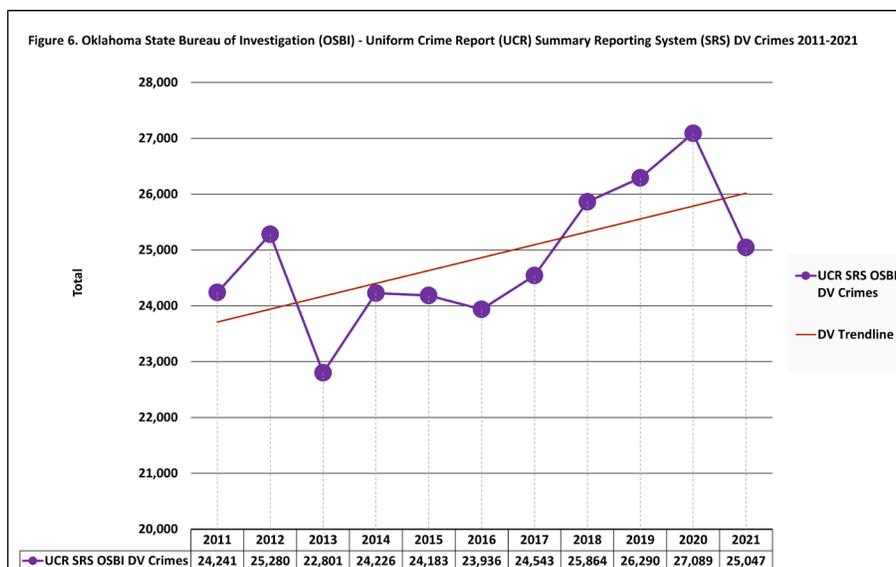
Note: Data for this map was collected by DVFRB staff and is current as of January 2024. The data may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that may not have been accounted for during the 2023 data collection process.

# Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation Domestic Abuse Data

## Oklahoma Uniform Crime Report (UCR) 2011-2020 Domestic Abuse Trends

Since 1973, the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation (OSBI) has issued an annual *Crime in Oklahoma* report. This report publishes the most accurate and current crime information available for Oklahoma on a variety of reported crimes to law enforcement agencies in Oklahoma. From 1973 to 2020, OSBI's *Crime in Oklahoma* was a compilation of crime statistics drawn from Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) data received from local law enforcement agencies across the state via the Summary Reporting System (SRS)<sup>11</sup>. Reports include the most accurate and current crime information available for Oklahoma and includes offense, arrest, and clearance data. UCR offense data is reported by event and may include multiple offenses, more than one offender, and/or multiple victims.<sup>12</sup> The OSBI has included UCR Domestic Abuse data in their reports for years and between 2011-2020 it included disaggregated data to the county level. This is once again included in this annual report to provide a broader picture of domestic violence in Oklahoma in recent years (*Figure 6*).

From 2011-2020 the OSBI defined domestic abuse statutorily as *threatening, causing or attempting to cause serious physical harm between family or household members* to gather the data when it used the UCR system. It further divided domestic abuse crimes into four offense categories: murder, sex crimes, assault, and assault and battery. For purposes of reporting, the OSBI considered family or household members as current or former spouses; persons in dating relationships<sup>13</sup> or who have a child together; parents, foster parents, children, or persons otherwise related by blood or marriage; or people living in the same household or who formerly lived in the same household.



Note: The annual 2011-2020 UCR data was obtained from the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation (OSBI) *Crime in Oklahoma 2020* annual report. The 2021 UCR total was provided by the OSBI Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) at the request of DVFRB staff.

During 2011-2020, when OSBI used the UCR system, domestic abuse offenses generally increased. There were decreases in three of the years, including two consecutive years of decline from 2015-2016. Overall, from 2011-2020 domestic abuse crimes reported to law enforcement increased an average of 1.3% per year. From 2011-2020 an average of 24,845 domestic abuse crimes were reported per year. In 2020 the number of domestic abuse crimes reported to law enforcement peaked at 27,089. This record number of crimes reported to law enforcement in 2020 also coincided with a record number of domestic violence homicide victims identified by DVFRB staff. However, it is important to note that annual totals are likely lower than the actual number of

<sup>11</sup> The statistics published in upcoming editions of *Crime in Oklahoma* will be drawn utilizing the Oklahoma State Based Incident Reporting System (SIBRS). This is due to state crime reporting transitioning from the UCR, Summary Reporting System (SRS), to SIBRS in compliance with new federal crime reporting standards.

<sup>12</sup> OSBI, 2021.

<sup>13</sup> Defined as courtships or engagements.

domestic abuse incidents in Oklahoma as they are based on police reports and victims of domestic abuse may not contact law enforcement for a myriad of reasons.

The crime statistics published by OSBI in *Crime in Oklahoma 2021* in February 2023 were drawn utilizing the new Oklahoma State Incident-Based Reporting System (SIBRS). Due to SIBRS and UCR SRS data having different reporting criteria it is not ideal to compare totals obtained via one reporting system and the other. At the request of program staff, however, OSBI provided 2021 UCR domestic abuse data for Oklahoma counties.

The 2021 UCR SRS total was 25,047 domestic abuse crimes reported to law enforcement. This was 2,042 (-7.5%) fewer crimes than those reported in 2021. Despite the decrease it is important to note that most of the decrease was driven by Tulsa County, which saw their total number of reported crimes drop by 2,047 (-24.2%). The total number of crimes in Tulsa County decreased from 8,446 in 2020 to 6,399 in 2021. The data also reveals that 22 of the 44 counties that saw decreases in reported crimes only saw marginal decreases of 15 or less offenses when compared to the previous year. The average decrease in these 22 counties was only about seven less crimes than in 2020. In contrast, a total of 32 counties saw increases and 17 of those saw increments of 15 or more reported crimes than the previous year. The average increase in those 17 counties equaled approximately 54 more crimes than in 2020.

Overall, these numbers suggest that although there may have been an overall decrease in crimes in 2021 after the 2020 peak, it may well have been because of the Tulsa County outlier. As a result, the overall picture is bleak and mostly unchanged as the 2022 numbers will illustrate in the next section.

## **Oklahoma State Incident-Based Reporting System (SIBRS) 2021-2022 Domestic Abuse Trends**

### **Data Transition Statement**

The 2021 Crime statistics published by the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation (OSBI) in their most recent edition of their *Crime in Oklahoma* report were drawn utilizing the new Oklahoma State Incident-Based Reporting System (SIBRS). This was due to recent changes by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), which has transitioned to only accepting incident-based data compatible with the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) and is no longer accepting Uniform Crime Report (UCR) data via the Summary Reporting System (SRS). Due to these federal changes, local law enforcement jurisdictions in Oklahoma have transitioned from reporting data via the Oklahoma SRS UCR to the new SIBRS, which is also maintained by OSBI along with the SRS.

The new incident-based reporting system has several advantages compared to its UCR counterpart. The UCR data for example only collected data for eight crimes and included a Hierarchy Rule to determine which offense was reported when more than one crime was committed<sup>14</sup>. For example, if a Robbery and Murder happened in the same incident, the Hierarchy Rule dictated that only the Murder be reported<sup>15</sup>. In contrast, the data collected via SIBRS collects information for 52 unique Group A offenses and 11 Group B offenses and allows for the reporting of up to 10 offenses in a single incident<sup>16</sup>. Notably, it is also able to collect incident-specific information such victim(s) and suspect(s) demographics, victim-to-offender relationships, premise types, and type of injuries, etc.<sup>17</sup>

The *Crime in Oklahoma 2021* report was the first OSBI crime statistics annual publication that entirely used data drawn from the new incident-based reporting system. It included domestic abuse data collected using SIBRS and, for the first time, statistics on the individuals involved that were not available in previous *Crime in Oklahoma* publications. SIBRS data for 2021-2022 will be presented in the next section to provide the most up to date snapshot of the domestic violence landscape in Oklahoma.

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<sup>14</sup> OSBI, 2023

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

## Disclaimer

The 2022 data presented in the next section was provided to DVFRB staff in advance by our partners at the OSBI Statistical Analysis Center (SAC). The data will be published later this year in the upcoming *Crime in Oklahoma 2022* report. As a result, due to SIBRS being a live database, the tallies presented below might differ slightly from the ones that might appear in the upcoming OSBI report. DVFRB staff have therefore included notes in all relevant figures or tables depicting OSBI SIBRS domestic abuse data with the date the data was queried by staff at the OSBI SAC.

## SIBRS Unique Domestic Abuse Incident, Victim, and Arrestee Trends 2021-2022

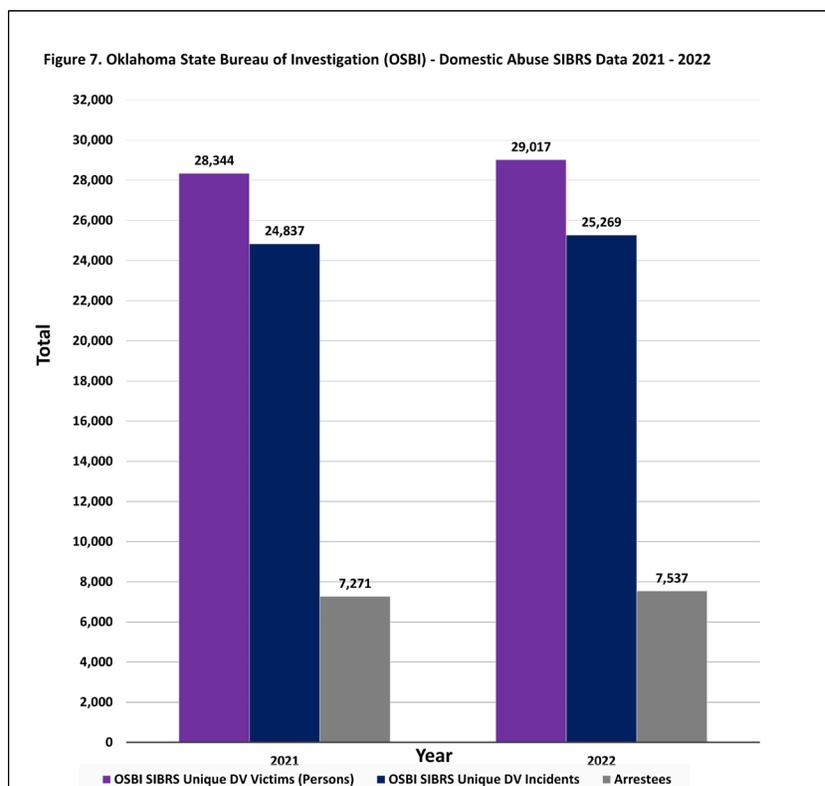
The definition that OSBI uses to collect domestic abuse crime statistics utilizing the new state incident-based incident reporting system (SIBRS) is:

*“Any act of physical harm which is committed by an adult, emancipated minor, or minor child thirteen (13) years of age or older against another adult, emancipated minor or minor child who is currently or was previously partner, family, or household member.”*

Using this definition, domestic abuse offenses collected by OSBI include: Murder and Non-Negligent Manslaughter, Justifiable Homicide, Forcible Rape, Forcible Sodomy, Sexual Assault with an Object, Forcible Fondling, Aggravated Assault, Simple Assault, Intimidation, and Kidnapping/Abduction.

In 2022, a total of 452 Oklahoma law enforcement agencies contributed data to the SIBRS. These agencies reported 25,269 **unique incidents** that had a domestic abuse offense and a domestic relationship. The 2022 total was 432 (+1.7%) more than the 2021 SIBRS total of 24,837. (Figure 7)

In addition, there were 29,999 unique victims (e.g., individuals, businesses, society, etc.) involved in these incidents in 2022, and of those victims, 29,017 were reported to be individual persons. The 2022 total of individuals persons is 495 (+1.7%) more than the 2021 SIBRS total of 28,344. Law enforcement also reported 7,537 unique domestic abuse arrestees in 2022. This is 266 (+3.7%) more than the SIBRS total of 7,271 reported to have been arrested in 2021.



**Table 5. Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation – Domestic Abuse SIBRS Data 2021 - 2022**

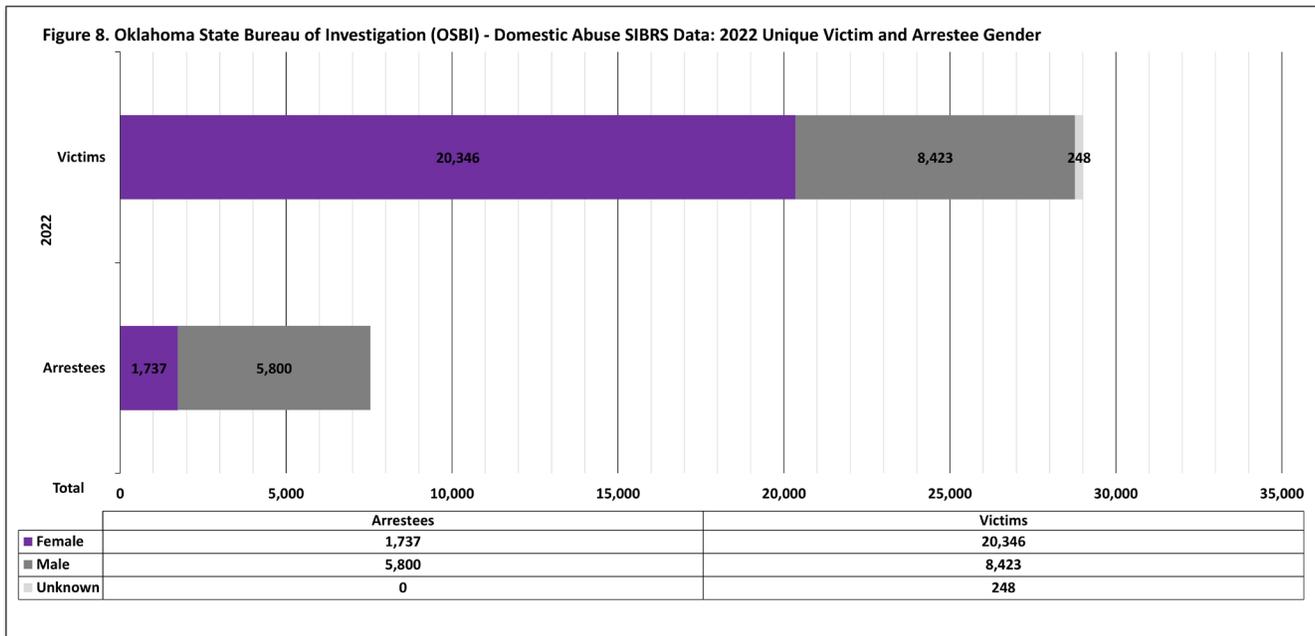
	2021	2022
SIBRS Unique Incidents	24,837	25,269
SIBRS Unique DV Victims (Persons)	28,344	29,017
SIBRS Unique DV Arrestees	7,271	7,537

Note: The 2021 SIBRS data was obtained from the domestic abuse section found in the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation (OSBI) *Crime in Oklahoma 2021* annual report. Data in that publication was current as of August 18-24, 2022. The 2022 data was provided by the OSBI Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) at the request of DVFRB staff. The 2022 SIBRS incident data is current as of January 9, 2024. Please note that the data may be subject to change due to SIBRS being a live database.

## SIBRS Unique Domestic Abuse Victim and Arrestee Demographic Trends 2022

### Gender

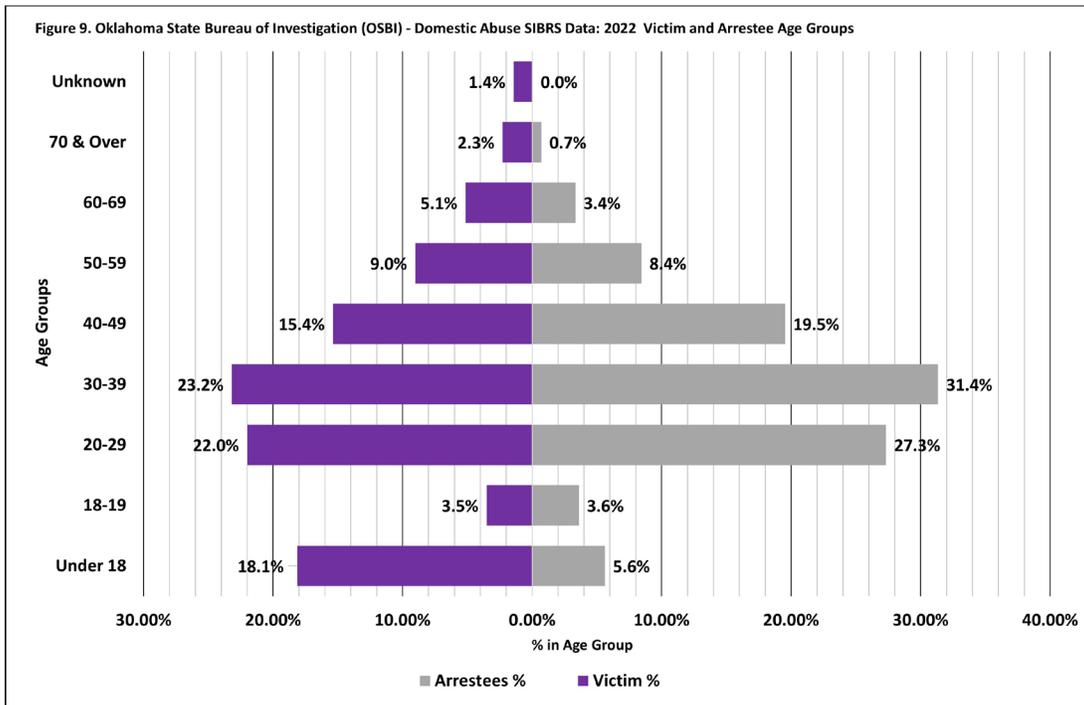
An advantage of SIBRS data is that it collects demographic information on the victims and arrestees associated with domestic abuse incidents. Of the 29,017 unique victims in 2022 a total of 20,346 (70.1%) were female and 8,423 (29.0%) were male. The gender was unknown for 248 (0.9%) victims. Of the 7,537 arrestees a total of 1,737 (23.0%) were female and 5,800 (77.0%) were male (*Figure 8*).



Note: The 2022 domestic abuse SIBRS data was provided by the OSBI Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) at the request of DVFRB staff. It is current as of January 9, 2024. Please note that the data may be subject to change due to SIBRS being a live database.

### Age

SIBRS also compiles data on the age of unique victims and arrestees involved in reported incidents. In 2022, the most common age ranges for victims were: under 18 (18.1%), 20 – 29 (22.0%), and 30 – 39 (23.2%). A total of 63.3% of all victims fell within these three age groups. In the case of arrestees, the most common age ranges were 30 – 39 (31.4%), 20 – 29 (27.3%), and 40 – 49 (19.5%). A total of 78.2% of all arrestees fell within these three age groups (*Figure 9*).



**Table 6. Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation – Domestic Abuse SIBRS Data: 2022 Domestic Abuse Victim and Perpetrator Age Ranges 2022**

Age Range	DV Victims	%	DV Arrestee	%
Under 18	5,258	18.1	424	5.6
18 – 19	1,017	3.5	272	3.6
20 - 29	6,380	22.0	2,060	27.3
30 – 39	6,726	23.2	2,363	31.4
40 – 49	4,459	15.4	1,472	19.5
50 – 59	2,617	9.0	636	8.4
60 – 69	1,489	5.1	253	3.4
70 & Over	658	2.3	54	0.7
Unknown	413	1.4	3	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>29,017</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>7,537</b>	<b>100.0</b>

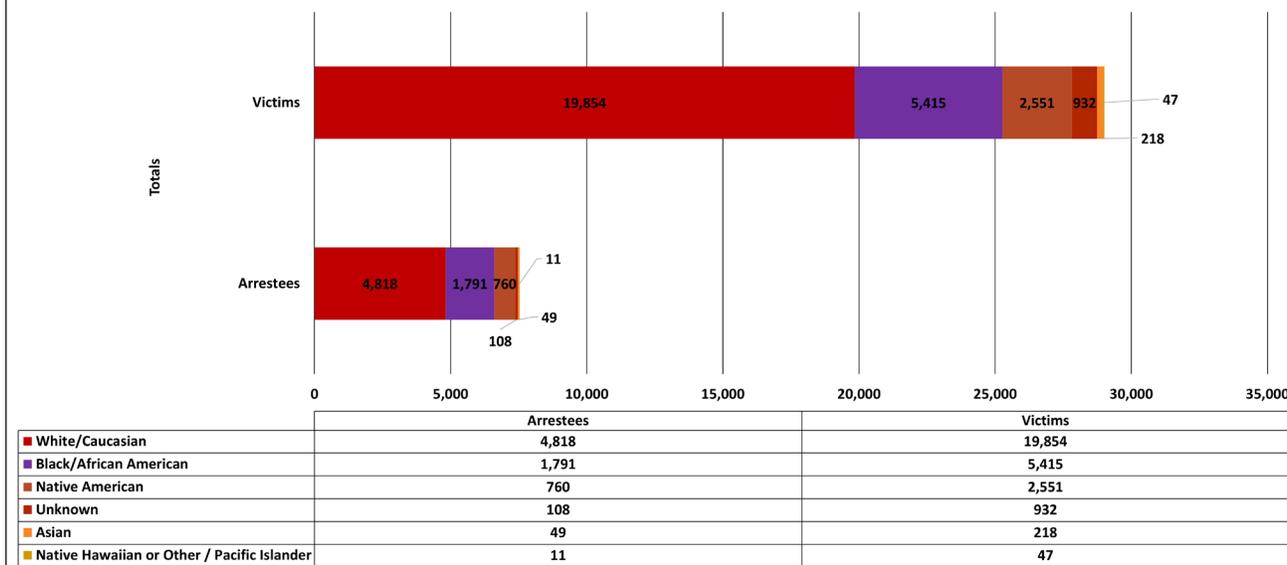
Note: The 2022 domestic abuse SIBRS data was provided by the OSBI Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) at the request of DVFRB staff. It is current as of January 9, 2024. Please note that the data may be subject to change due to SIBRS being a live database.

## Race and Ethnicity

Notably, SIBRS compiles victim and arrestees' race and ethnicity information. Of the 29,017 unique domestic abuse victims, 19,854 (68.4%) were White, 5,415 (18.7%) were Black, 2,551 (18.7%) were American Indian/Alaska Native, 218 (0.8%) were Asian, and 47 (0.2%) were Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. The race was unknown for 932 (3.2%) victims. In terms of ethnicity, 1,517 (5.2%) victims were Hispanic and 13,588 (46.8%) were non-Hispanic. Ethnicity information was unknown for 13,912 (47.9%) victims (*Figure 9*).

In contrast, of the 7,513 arrestees, 4,818 (63.9%) were White, 1,791 (23.8%) were Black, 760 (10.1%) were American Indian/Alaska Native, 49 (0.7%) were Asian, and 11 (0.1%) were Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. Finally, a total of 612 (8.1%) of arrestees were Hispanic and 4,737 (62.8%) were non-Hispanic. Ethnicity information was unknown for 2,188 (29.0%) arrestees (*Figure 10*).

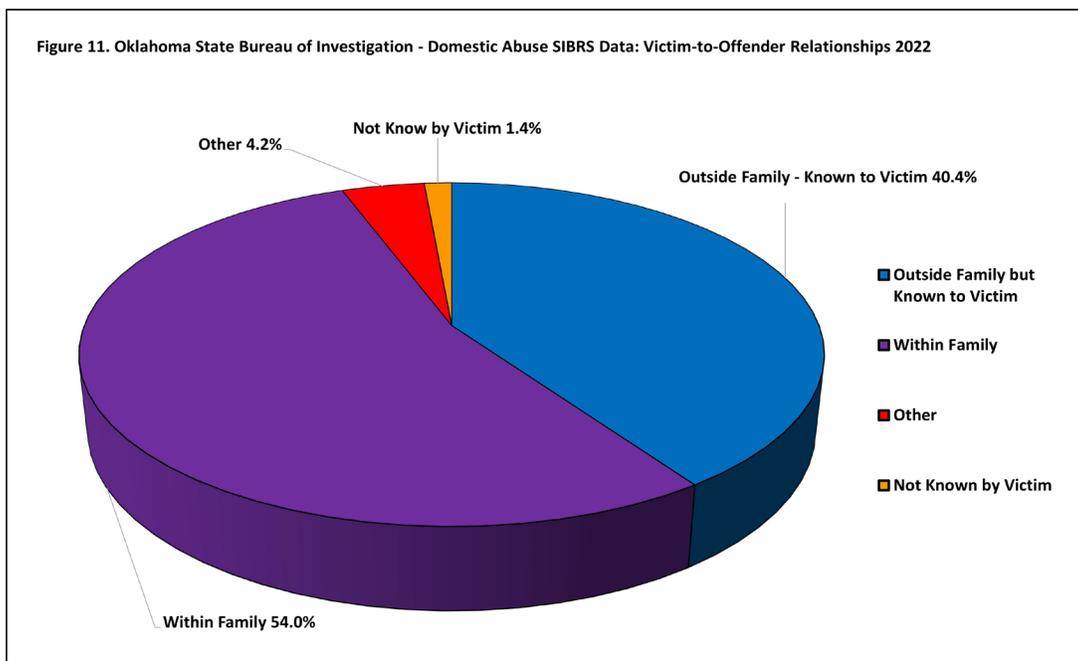
Figure 10. Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation (OSBI) - Domestic Abuse SIBRS Data: 2022 Victim and Arrestee Race



Note: The 2022 domestic abuse SIBRS data was provided by the OSBI Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) at the request of DVFRB staff. It is current as of January 9, 2024. Please note that the data may be subject to change due to SIBRS being a live database.

## Relationship Types for Domestic Abuse Victims 2022

SIBRS also compiles information on the number of victim-to-offender relationships found in domestic abuse incidents. This provides a snapshot on who is perpetrating the violence and who is being victimized. Overall, there were 32,115 victim-to-offender relationships identified. Victims categorized as being Within Family (17,352) outnumber the Outside Family but Known to Victim (12,961) category (*Figure 11*). Notably, 14,502 relationships across the categories appear to have involved intimate partner violence (IPV)<sup>18</sup>.



Note: The 2022 domestic abuse SIBRS data was provided by the OSBI Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) at the request of DVFRB staff. It is current as of January 9, 2024. Please note that the data may be subject to change due to SIBRS being a live database.

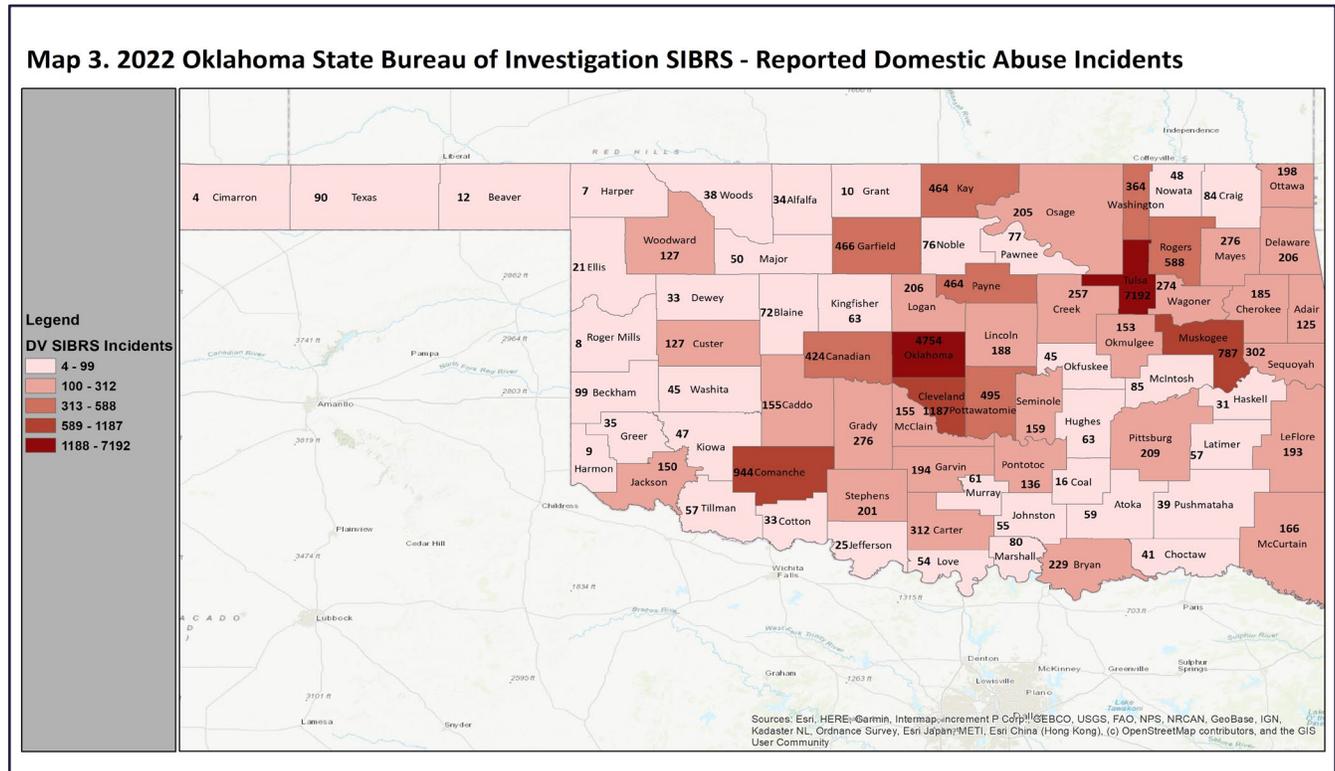
<sup>18</sup>This number was obtained by adding the Spouse and Common-Law Spouse entries in the Within Family category and the Boyfriend/Girlfriend, Homosexual Partner, Ex-Spouse entries within the Outside Family but Known to Victim category.

**Table 7. Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation – Domestic Abuse SIBRS Data: 2022 Victim-to-Offender Relationships**

Relationship Types	Count	% Of Category	% Of Total
Spouse	3,951	22.8	12.3
Child	3,422	19.7	10.7
Parent	2,346	13.5	7.3
Other Family Member	2,145	12.4	6.7
Sibling	1,885	10.9	5.9
Biological Parents of Same Child	1,019	5.9	3.2
Stepchild	562	3.2	1.7
In-Law	532	3.1	1.7
Stepparent	322	1.9	1.0
Grandchild	321	1.8	1.0
Grandparent	311	1.8	1.0
Common-Law Spouse	242	1.4	0.8
Stepsibling	130	0.7	0.4
Adoptive/Foster Child	84	0.5	0.3
Adoptive/Foster Parents	80	0.5	0.2
<b>Totals Within Family</b>	<b>17,352</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>54.0</b>
Boyfriend/Girlfriend	8,793	67.8	27.4
Ex-Spouse	1,150	8.9	3.6
Roommate	811	6.3	2.5
Otherwise Known	700	5.4	2.2
Child of Boyfriend/Girlfriend	533	4.1	1.7
Homosexual Partner	366	2.8	1.1
Acquaintance	365	2.8	1.1
Spouse of Ex-Spouse	87	0.7	0.3
Friend	58	0.4	0.2
Neighbor	56	0.4	0.2
Ex-Roommate	31	0.2	0.1
Babysitter	6	0.0	0.0
Employer	3	0.0	0.0
Employee	2	0.0	0.0
<b>Outside Family but Known to Victim</b>	<b>12,961</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>40.4</b>
Relationship Unknown	271	60.5	0.8
Stranger	177	39.5	0.6
<b>Not Known by Victim</b>	<b>448</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1.4</b>
Victim was Offender	1,110	82.0	3.5
Unfilled	244	18.0	0.8
<b>Other</b>	<b>1,354</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4.2</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>32,115</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## Domestic Abuse Incidents and Victims by County 2022

In total 25,269 unique domestic abuse incidents were reported by law enforcement agencies in 2022. A total of 39 counties had more incidents than the previous year. Tulsa and Comanche County saw the greatest increases with the former having reported a total of 7,192 (+671 = +10.3%) and the latter 944 (+126 = +15.4%) incidents in 2022. In contrast, 38 counties had decreases in the number of incidents reported. Delaware and McCurtain County saw the biggest decreases with the first having reported a total of 206 (-109 = -34.6%) incidents and the second 236 (-70 = -29.7%) in 2022. The state incident rate was 636.4 incidents per 100,000 people. (Map 3)



Note: The 2022 domestic abuse SIBRS data was provided by the OSBI Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) at the request of DVFRB staff. It is current as of January 9, 2024. Please note that the data may be subject to change due to SIBRS being a live database.

In total 29,017 unique domestic abuse victims (persons) were reported by law enforcement agencies in 2022. A total of 37 counties had more victims than the previous year. Notably, 20 of those 37 saw their number of reported victims increase by 15 or more. Tulsa and Comanche County saw the biggest increases with the first reporting 6,784 (+713 = +10.5%) and the second 938 (+144 = +15.4%) total incidents in 2022. In contrast, 39 counties saw decreases in the number of reported victims. Of those 39 a total of 21 reported a decrease of 15 or more victim than the previous year. The state domestic abuse rate for reported victims was 730.8 victims per 100,000. (Map 4)



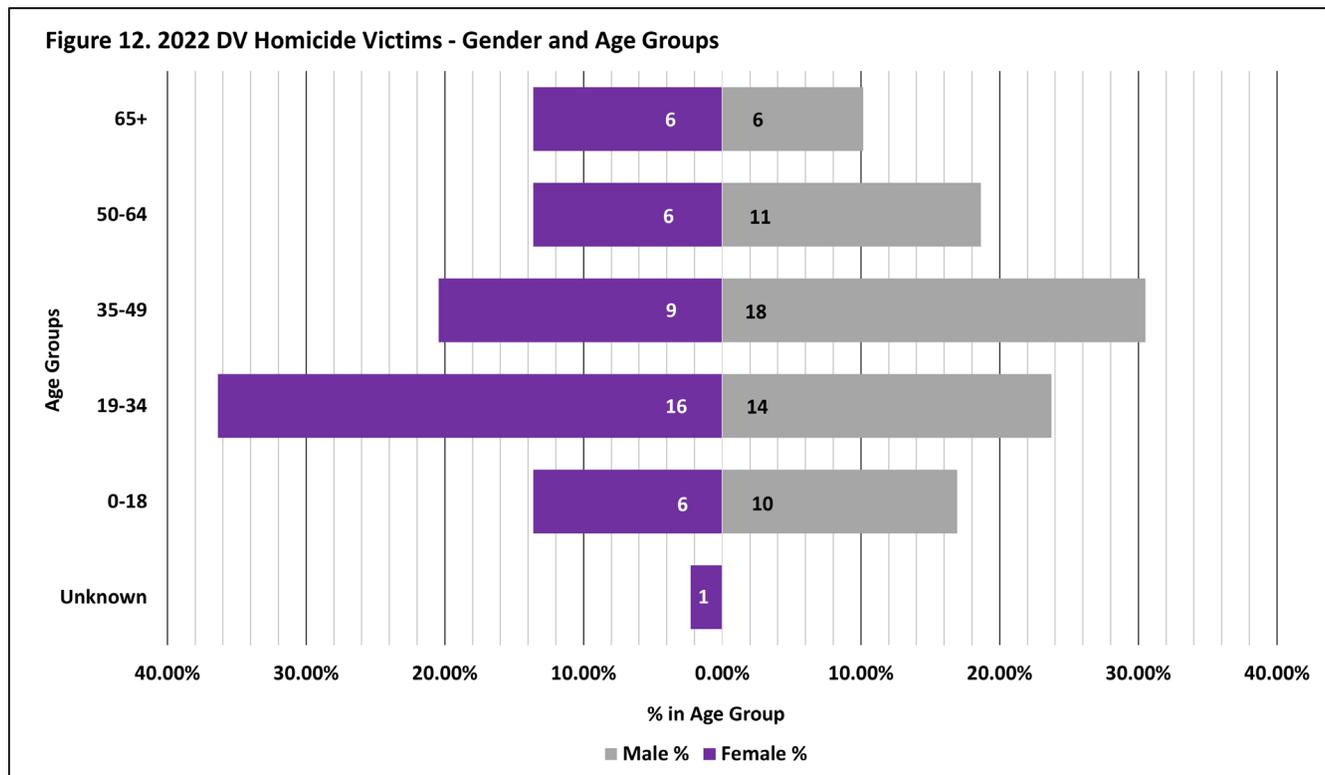
# HOMICIDES - KEY FINDINGS FOR 2022

## Victim and Perpetrator Demographics

The demographics presented in this section of the report include intimate partner homicide (IPH) and non-intimate partner homicides (non-IPH) identified by the Review Board occurring in calendar year 2022. Non-IPH cases include family members, triangle victims, roommates, bystanders, and Good Samaritans.<sup>19</sup>

### Gender

Program staff were able to determine the gender of 104 (99.0%) of 105 domestic violence homicide victims. Of the 104 homicide victims where the gender was identified, 45 (43.3%) were female and 59 (56.7%) were male. Staff identified 38 adult<sup>20</sup> female victims, 36 (94.7%) of which were determined to have been killed by male perpetrators. Forty-nine (49) adult male victims were also identified, 35 (71.4%) of which were killed by male perpetrators and 12 (24.5%) were killed by female perpetrators. It was not possible to determine the primary perpetrator for two (4.1%) male adult victims. Staff were able to identify the gender of all 99 domestic violence homicide perpetrators. The overwhelming majority of the 99 perpetrators were male (77.8%). There were 22 female perpetrators, 12 (54.5%) of whom killed or were implicated in the killing of their current or former intimate partner. (Figures 12 and 13)



Note: This data was collected by DVFRB staff and is current as of January 2024. The data may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during the 2023 data collection process.

### Age

Program staff were able to determine the age of 102 (97.1%) of the 105 total victims<sup>21</sup>. The 102 victim's ages ranged from two months old to 78 years old. About 56.0% of all victims killed fell between the ages of 19-49

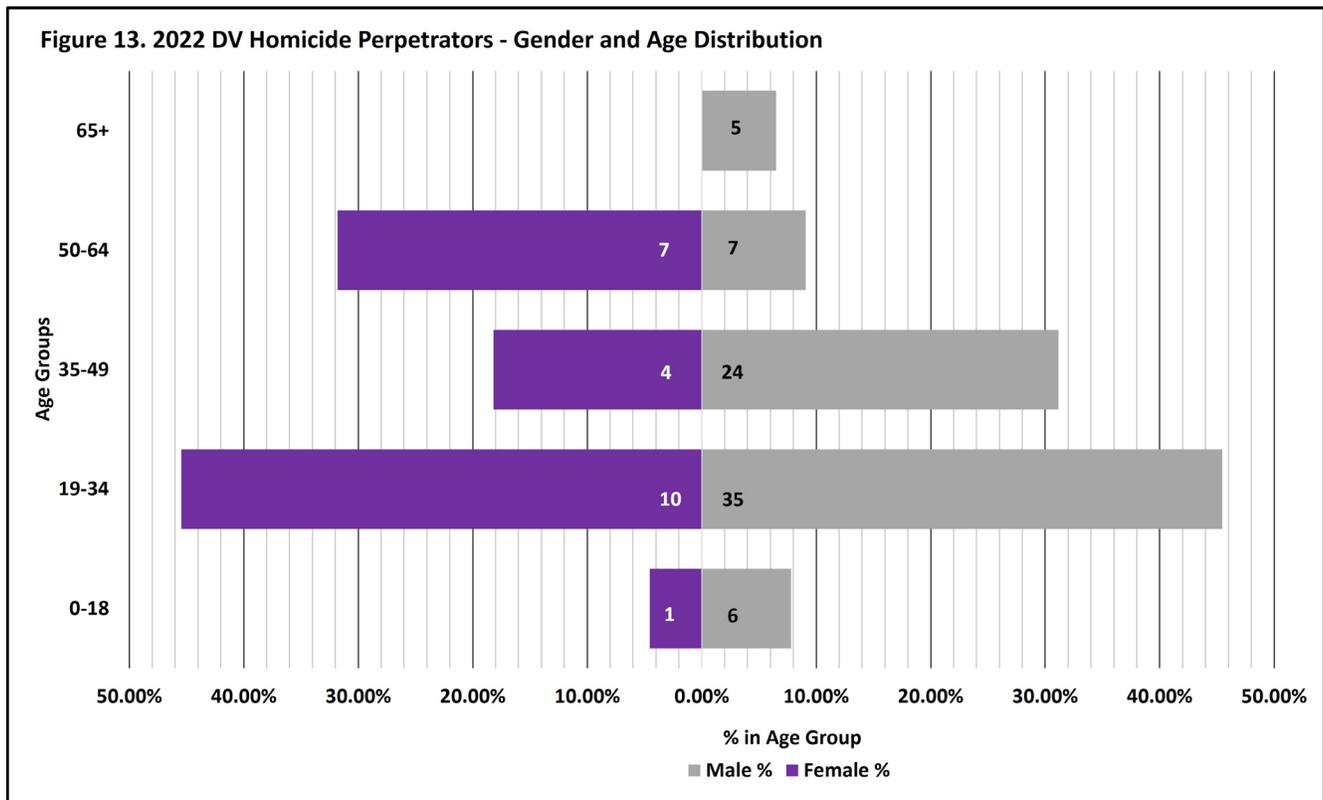
<sup>19</sup> See Appendix E: Data Methodology and Limitations for a more detailed description about how the Review Board categorizes the different relationships between homicide perpetrators and victims.

<sup>20</sup> Adult is defined as an individual aged  $\geq 18$  years old at the time of the incident.

<sup>21</sup> The age of the unborn victim was not calculated due to not having a date of birth to make the customary calculation.

years; 29.4% were between the ages of 19 and 34 years old and 26.5% were between the ages of 35 and 49 years. The average age of adult victims was 44.0 years. Of the 17 juvenile victims,<sup>22</sup> nine (56.3%) were under the age of five, two (12.5%) were less than a year old, and one was an unborn child. The average age of the 102 victims where staff were able to obtain information to calculate their age was 37.9 years old.

Staff were able to calculate the age for all 99 perpetrators. Those between the ages of 19 and 34 years old (73.7%) represented the largest age group. The youngest perpetrator was 14 years old, and the oldest perpetrator was 80 years old. The average age of all perpetrators was 36.8 years old, with the average age of adult perpetrators being 38.2 years. Six (6) perpetrators (6.1%) were juveniles under 18 years old (*Figure 13*).



Note: This data was collected by DVFRB staff and is current as of January 2024. The data may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during the 2023 data collection process.

### Race and Ethnicity

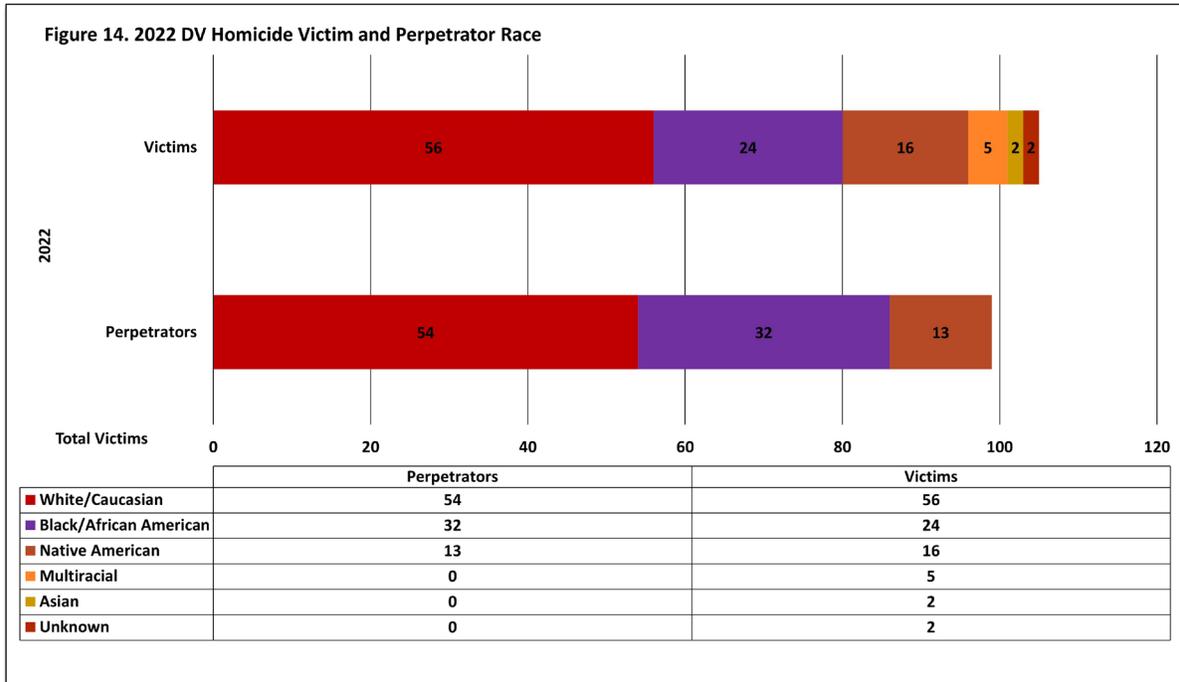
Program staff were able to obtain racial and ethnicity information for 103 of 105 domestic violence homicide victims. Of the victims whose racial information was obtained, 56 (54.4%) were identified as White/Caucasian, 24 (23.3%) were Black/African American, 16 (15.5%) were Native American, two (1.9%) were Asian, and five (4.9%) were identified as Multiracial (*Figure 14*). A total of five (4.9%) were identified as of Hispanic/Latino descent.

In 2022, the number (56) of White/Caucasian victims decreased by two in comparison to 2021 figures (58). The number of Black/African American victims decreased from 33 in 2021 to 24 in 2022. The total number of Native American victims decreased by five. Two Asian as well as five Multiracial victims were also identified. It must be noted that there was evidence suggesting three of the Multiracial racial victims were both Native American and Black/African American.

It is important to note that the DVFRB has continued identifying higher number of Native American victims in recent years. The increase in the identification of Native American victims is likely due to two factors. First, the U.S. Supreme Court’s 2020 decision in *McGirt v. Oklahoma* required more thorough identification of Native

<sup>22</sup> Juvenile is defined as an individual aged <18 years old at the time of the incident.

American individuals involved in crimes. Second, Program Staff have implemented a methodology whereby three sources are utilized to validate the race and ethnicity of victims and perpetrators.



Note: Data for this map was collected by DVFRB staff and is current as of January 2024. The data may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that may not have been accounted for during the 2023 data collection process.

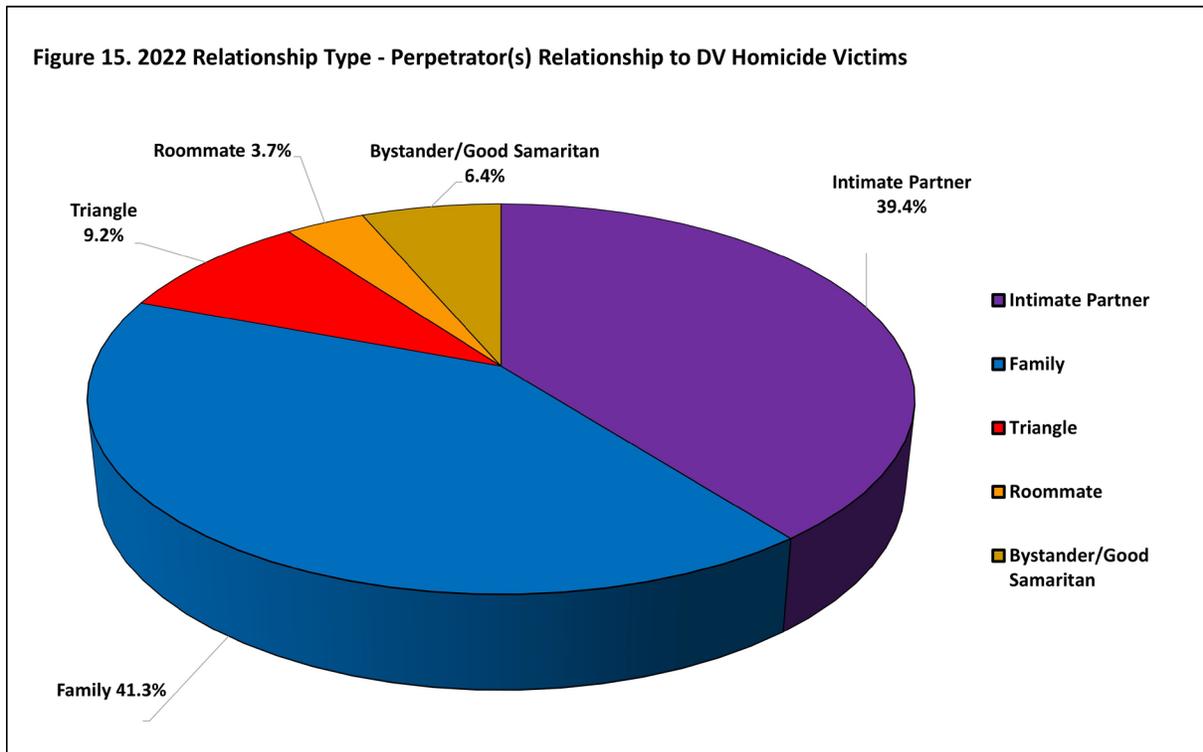
## Relationship Types

The Review Board collects and compiles data according to the type of relationship that existed between the victim(s) and the perpetrator(s) (*Table 8* and *Figure 15*). Historically, Program Staff have compiled this statistic utilizing a one-to-one relationship between perpetrators and homicide victims so that the number of relationships matches the number of victims. In recent years, Program Staff have identified several cases where there are two perpetrators with different domestic relationships associated with one victim (two-to-one relationship). Naturally, this means that the number of relationships can outnumber the total number of victims. As a result, contrary to previous years, the totals below will outnumber the total of victims.

Relationship Type	Totals	%
Intimate Partner	43	39.4
Family	45	41.3
Triangle	10	9.2
Roommate	4	3.7
Bystander / Good Samaritan	7	6.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

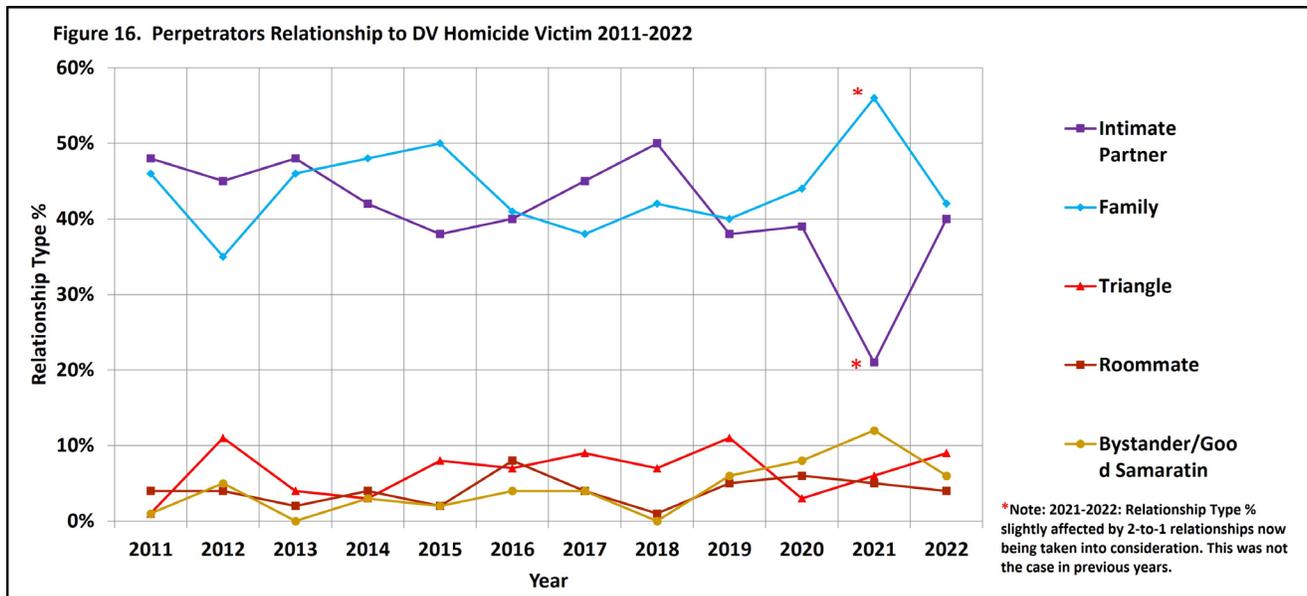
In 2022, a of 109 different relationship types were identified to exist between perpetrators and homicide victims. This includes fathers, stepfathers, mothers, mother’s boyfriends, son, stepsons, grandparents, grandsons, brothers, and other relatives. A total of 43 perpetrators were identified as current or former intimate partners of victims, including current or former spouses and current or former dating partners, which represents an increase of 65.4% when compared to the 2021 total of 23.

Triangle relationships, in which a former spouse or intimate partner kills the current spouse or intimate partner of their former or current spouse or intimate partner, were identified 10 times. Triangle relationships increased by three in 2022. Four victims were killed by a roommate, two less than in 2021.



Note: This data was collected by DVFRB staff and is current as of January 2024. The data may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during the 2023 data collection process.

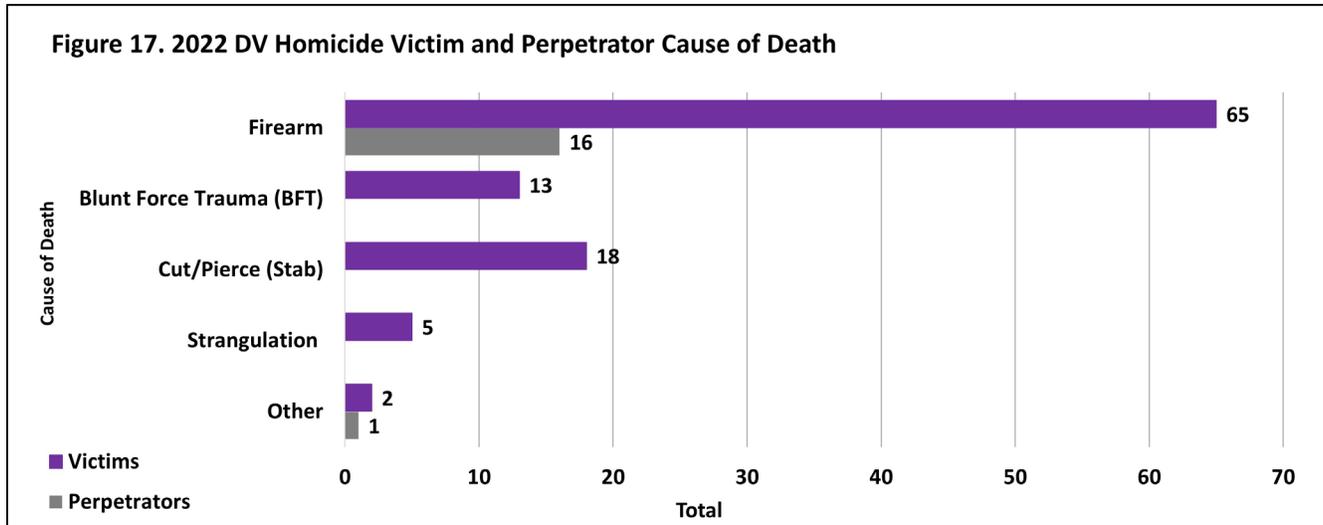
From 2011-2022, family and intimate partner homicides made up the largest categories of domestic violence-related homicides each year, though which represents the largest category of victims may vary from year to year (Figure 16).



Note: The 2022 data was collected by DVFRB staff and is current as of January 2024. The data may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during the 2023 data collection process.

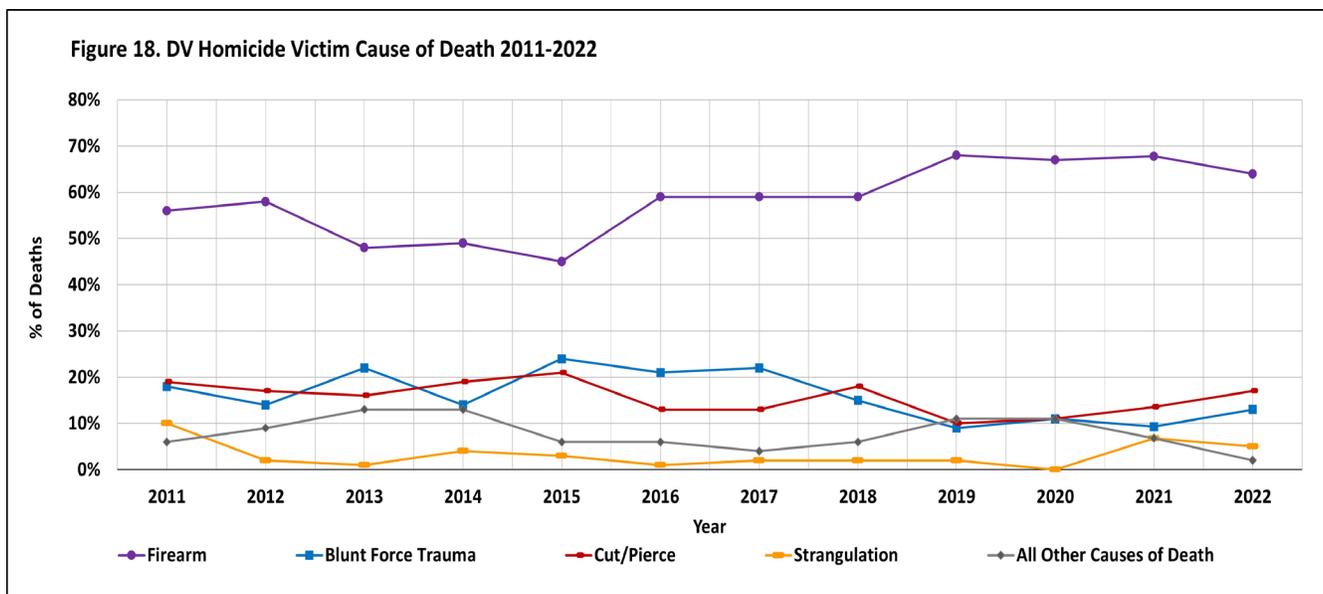
# Cause of Death

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner of Oklahoma (OCME) investigates sudden, violent, unexpected, and suspicious deaths and conducts medico-legal investigations related to the death. The Review Board draws from data obtained from the OCME that includes a determination as to the cause and manner of death of individuals who die in domestic violence related incidents (*Figure 17*). Program staff were able to determine the cause of death for 103 (98.1%) of 105 homicide victims and for all 17 perpetrators who died in a murder-suicide.



Note: This data was collected by DVFRB staff and is current as of January 2024. The data may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during the 2023 data collection process.

Firearms have consistently remained the most prevalent cause of death in domestic violence homicide cases since the DVFRB began tracking cases in 1998. In 2022, firearms were the identified cause of death in 67.5% of all domestic violence-related fatalities for both victims and perpetrators who committed suicide. From 2011-2022, firearms were the cause of death in an average of more than 58% of domestic violence homicide victim deaths (*Figure 18*). About 67.0% of all victims have been killed with firearm in the last four years (2019-2022) alone.



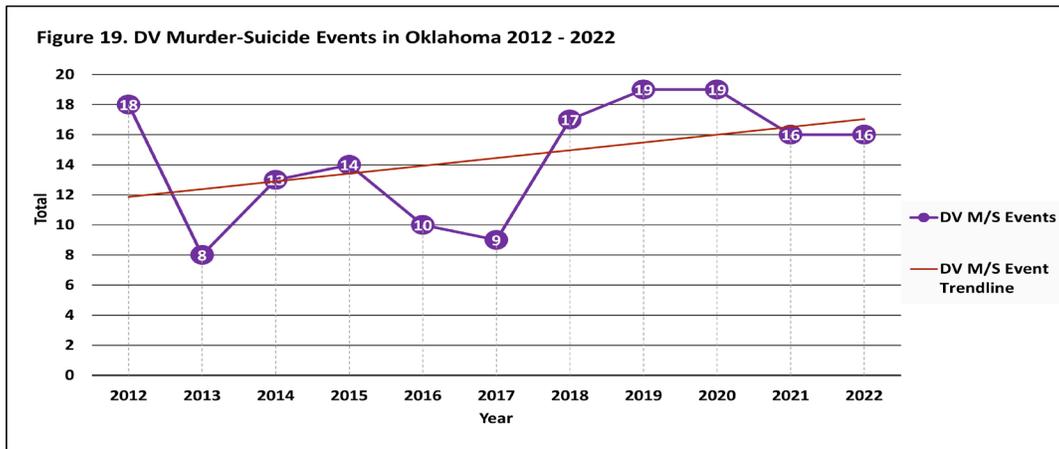
Note: The 2022 data was collected by DVFRB staff and is current as of January 2024. The data may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during the 2023 data collection process.

# Homicide/Suicide

An event is defined as a homicide-suicide<sup>23</sup> when someone murders an individual and then kills himself or herself, usually within 72 hours following the homicide, or is killed in a confrontation with law enforcement or by bystander/good Samaritan intervention in the aftermath of killing of victim.

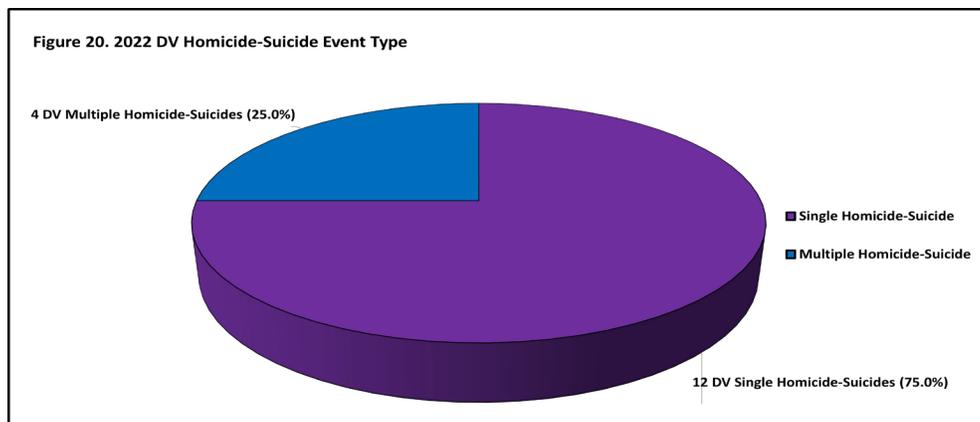
In 2022, the Review Board identified 16 homicide-suicide cases resulting in the death of 26 victims (Figures 19 and 20). Notably, 2022 marks two consecutive years where the number of murder-suicide events have totaled 16 after totaling 19 in both 2019 and 2020. Although this represents a slight decrease (-3) in the number of cases, the total number of victims being killed in these kinds of events have stayed consistent.

Notably, the total number of children killed in homicide-suicide events in 2022 was 12. This is seven more than the 2021 total and is the highest number since 2019 when there were eight child murder-suicide victims. It is also the highest number between 2011-2022.



Note: The 2022 data was collected by DVFRB staff and is current as of January 2024. The data may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during the 2023 data collection process.

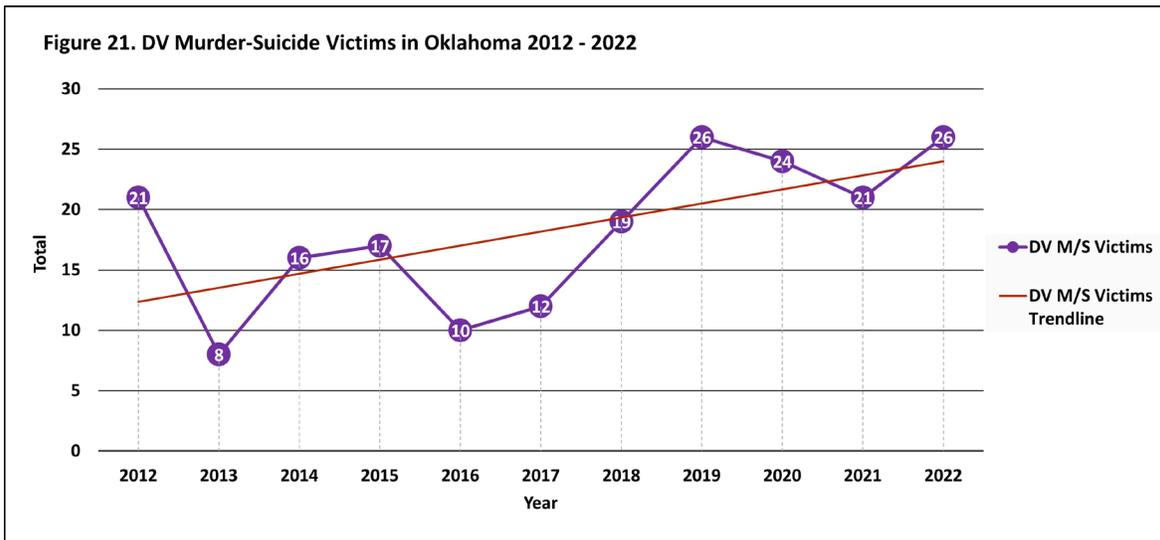
Of the 16 homicide-suicide cases identified, 12 (75.0%) were classified as *single homicide-suicide* events, in which there was one homicide victim and one homicide perpetrator who completed suicide or was killed due to law enforcement or bystander intervention. Four of the 16 homicide-suicide cases (25.0%) were *multiple homicide-suicide* events, in which the perpetrator killed more than one victim before dying by suicide or by being killed by law enforcement or bystander intervention (Figure 20). Due to the nature of multiple homicide-suicide events, there are typically more homicide victims than there are events and/or perpetrators.



Note: The data was collected by DVFRB staff and is current as of January 2024. The data may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during the 2023 data collection process.

<sup>23</sup> Homicide-suicide and murder-suicide are often used interchangeably in research literature.

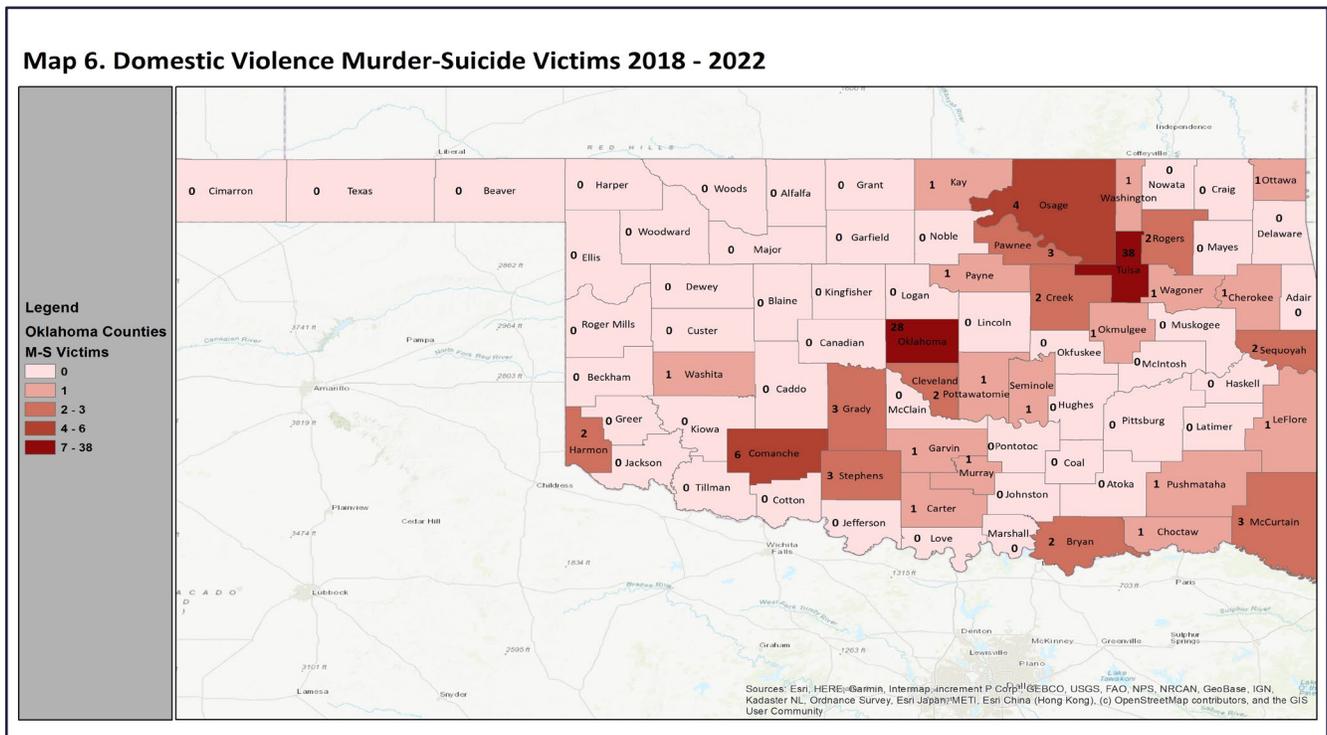




Note: The 2022 data was collected by DVFRB staff and is current as of January 2024. The data may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during the 2023 data collection process.

The number of victims killed in domestic violence-related murder-suicides have steadily increased in recent years. After 21 murder-suicide victims were identified in 2012, the state averaged about 12 murder-suicide between 2013 – 2017. Since then, the state has averaged about 23 victims killed in domestic violence related murder-suicides annually from 2018 – 2022.

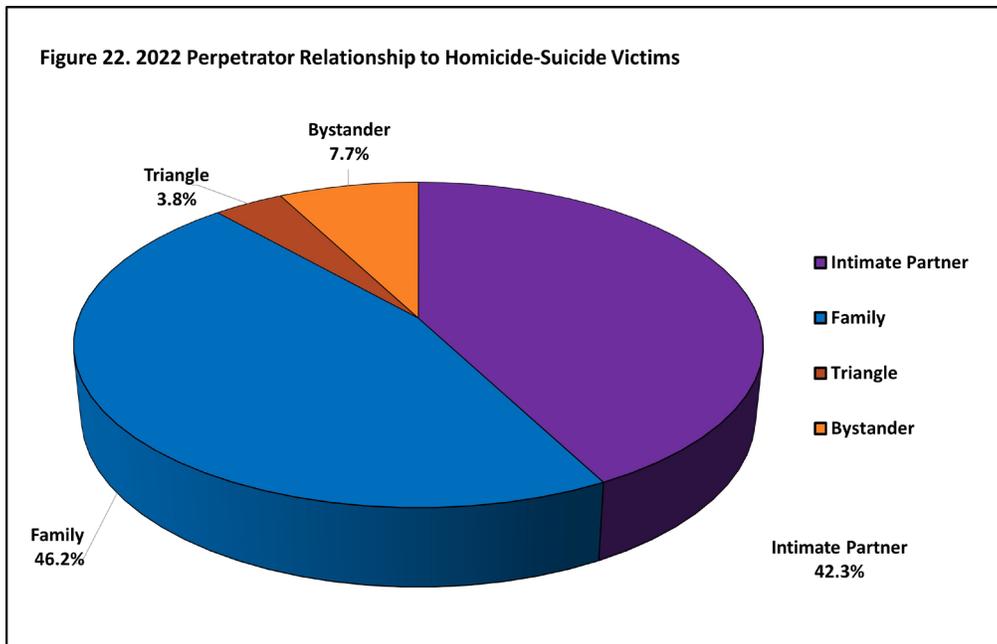
Tulsa County leads the state in the number of victims (38) killed in domestic violence related murder-suicide events during 2018 - 2022. Oklahoma County is second with a total of 28 victims killed during the same period.



National research finds that homicide-suicide cases most often involve intimate partners; usually a man killing his current or former intimate partner and then himself.<sup>24</sup> In 2022, the Review Board found that 11 (44.0%) of the 25 homicide-suicide victims were killed by current or former intimate partners. A total of 11 (68.8%) murder-suicide events happened in the context of an intimate partner (IP) homicide. Ten (91.0%) of them were IP single homicide suicides and one (9.0%) was an IP multiple homicide suicide event. Men were the perpetrators in 100% of all intimate partner homicide-suicide cases.

Of the 26 victims who died in homicide-suicide events, 11 (44.0%) were killed by their current or former intimate partner. Two additional victims were killed in the context of an IPH, bringing the total number of murder-suicide victim deaths associated with IPH events to 13 (50.0%). It must be noted that two additional victims were killed in a triangle situation where the perpetrator killed the former intimate partner of his current girlfriend and an innocent bystander because he believed she had cheated on him with them. In another situation, the perpetrator killed three of his children to punish their mother for leaving him. And in a final instance a perpetrator failed to kill his current intimate partner but managed to kill her child before committing suicide. This means that intimate partner violence (IPV) was the driving force behind the death of 19 (73.1%) murder-suicide victims. All the perpetrators in IPV related murder-suicides were men.

Relationship Type	Count	%
Intimate Partner	11	42.3
Family	12	46.2
Triangle	1	3.8
Roommate	0	0.0
Bystander/Good Samaritan	2	7.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

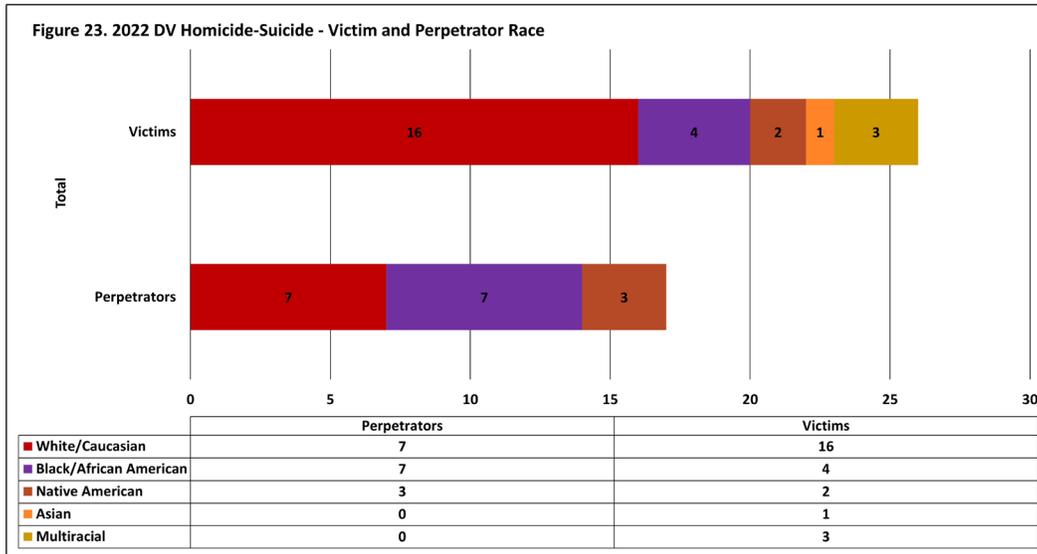


Note: This data was collected by DVFRB staff and is current as of January 2024. The data may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during the 2023 data collection process.

Most victims and perpetrators of domestic violence homicide-suicides were White/Caucasian; 16 (61.5%) victims and seven (41.2%) perpetrators were White. Of the remaining victims, four (15.4%) were Black/African

<sup>24</sup> Marzuk, Tardiff, & Hirsch, 1992

American; two (7.7%) were Native American; one (3.8%) was Asian and three (11.5%) were Multiracial. All three Multiracial victims were identified as being Native American, Black/African American, and Asian according to records obtained by staff. Only one victim was identified as being of Latino/Hispanic ethnicity. Among the remaining perpetrators, seven (41.2%) were Black/African American and three (17.6%) were Native American. No murder-suicide perpetrators were identified to be of Hispanic/Latino descent. (Figure 23).



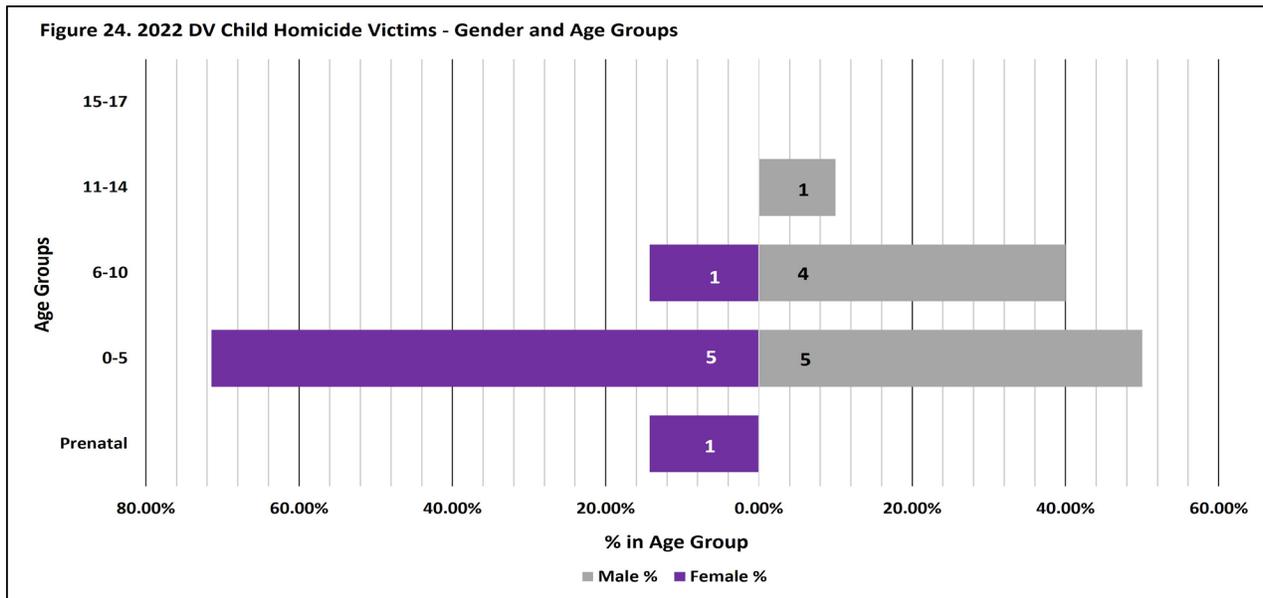
Note: This data was collected by DVFRB staff and is current as of January 2024. The data may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during the 2023 data collection process.

A total of 24 (92.3%) homicide-suicide victims in Oklahoma during 2022 were killed with a firearm. This finding aligns closely with previous national research, which posits that a majority of murder-suicides are committed with firearms.<sup>25</sup> All murder-suicide perpetrators except one died as a result of a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

## Domestic Violence Fatalities and Children

The Review Board focuses on child homicides and does not review cases of children who die due to negligence. The Oklahoma Child Death Review Board reviews child death cases resulting from neglect. Child homicides include, but are not limited to, deaths in which children are killed by parents, stepparents, foster parents, grandparents, siblings, uncles, aunts, or cousins. In 2022, the Review Board identified ten domestic violence-related incidents in which 17 children were killed. Of the 17 children, ten were male (58.8%) and seven were female (41.2%) (Figure 24 and Table 10).

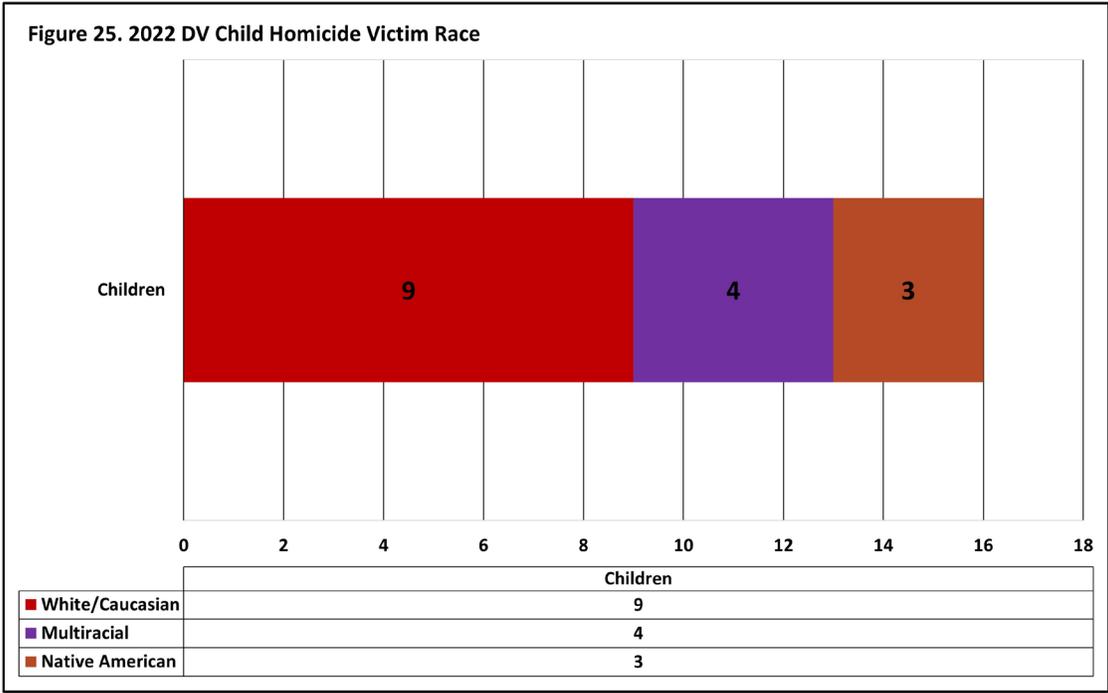
<sup>25</sup> Logan, Hill, Black, Crosby, Karch, Barnes, & Lubell, 2008



Note: This data was collected by DVFRB staff and is current as of January 2024. The data may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during the 2023 data collection process.

Table 10. 2022 Child DV Victims by Gender and Age		
Gender	Count	%
Female	7	41.2
Male	10	58.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Age Group (in years)	Count	%
Prenatal	1	5.9
0 - 5	10	58.8
6 - 10	5	29.4
11 - 14	1	5.9
15 - 17	0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

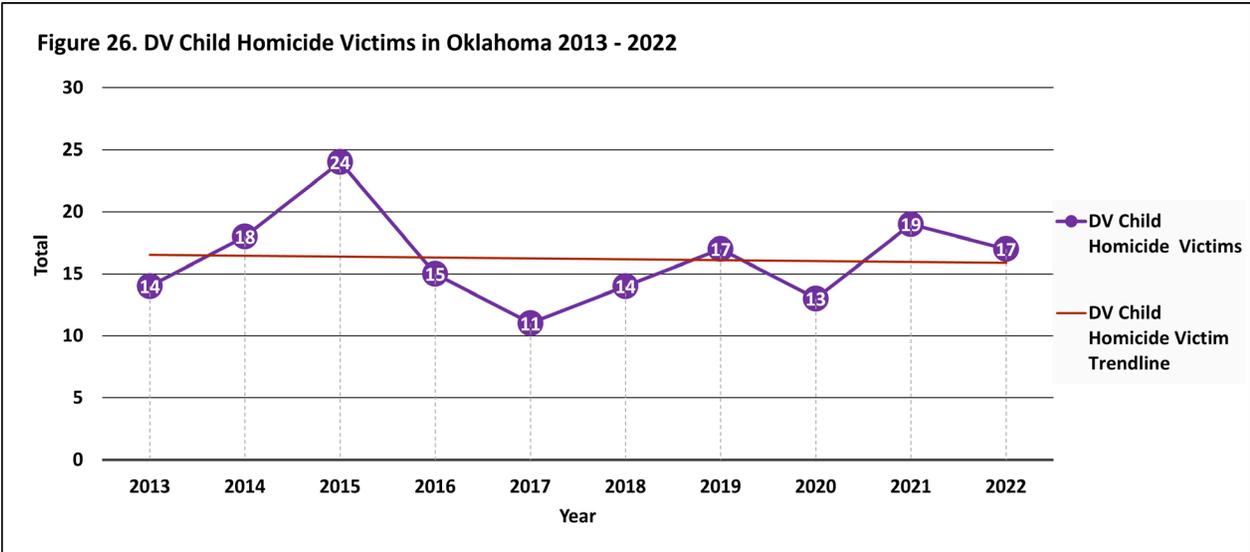
Program staff were able to obtain racial and ethnicity information for 16 of 17 child victims. Of the children whose racial information was obtained, nine (56.3%) were White/Caucasian, three (18.8%) were Native American, and four (26.7%) were Multiracial (Figure 25).



Note: This data was collected by DVFRB staff and is current as of January 2024. The data may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during the 2023 data collection process.

In some cases, children were killed by perpetrators in the context of an adult intimate partner homicide (IPH) or an attempted IPH. There were two IPH events in 2022 where a child was also killed. In another situation the perpetrator injured the intimate partner but managed to kill her child. It is also not uncommon for some perpetrators to kill their children as a way to punish their mother for leaving the relationship. There was one such instance in 2022 that claimed the lives of three children. In one 2022 case, an adult IPH victim was pregnant, and the child was killed in utero. This means that intimate partner violence was a driving force in the death of six children.

Notably, a total of 11 children were killed in murder-suicides. This is the highest number of children killed in murder-suicide events for the years 2011-2022. This is six more than the 2021 total and is the highest number since 2019 when there were eight child murder-suicide victims.



Note: The 2022 data was collected by DVFRB staff and is current as of January 2024. The data may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during the 2023 data collection process.

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
# Of Child Homicide Victims	14	18	24	15	11	14	17	13	19	17
# Of Victims ≤ 5 years old	12	14	16	12	10	9	10	9	14	11
Age of Youngest Child <sup>26</sup>	5 mo.	< 1 day	2 mo.	< 1 mo.	< 1 mo.	3 mo.	2 mo.	2 mo.	2 mo.	2 mo.
Age of Oldest Child	14	17	15	17	6	17	17	17	17	13

Children aged five years and younger consistently represent the largest age group of children killed in domestic violence-related incidents in Oklahoma (*Table 11*). In 2022, 11 of the children killed were age five years or younger (64.7%), which was three less than in 2021. One unborn child was also killed after no such deaths the previous year. In 2020 there were two unborn children who died when their mother was killed in a domestic violence homicide. This means there has been at least one pregnant woman killed because of domestic violence in two of out of the last three years (2020-2022). All such cases have been intimate partner homicides committed by men.

In the period 2013-2022, there were 162 child victims and 72.2% of the children killed were age five years or younger. In 2022, the average age of children five years or younger (excluding unborn child) was three years old. The average age for children between the ages of six and ten was a little over eight and a half years old.

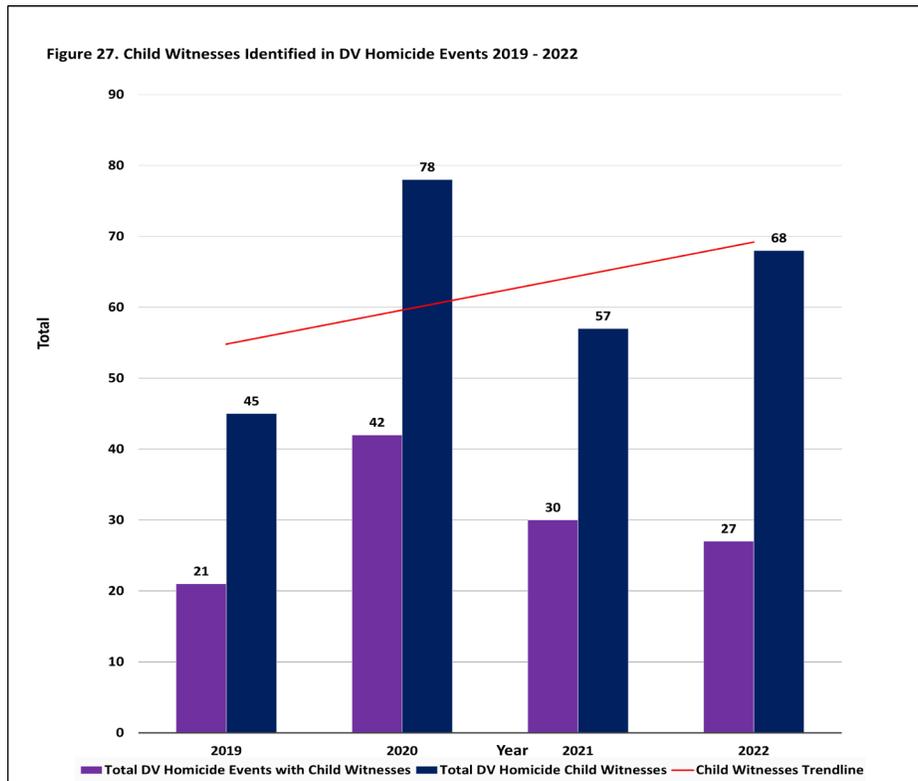
Relationship Type	Count	%
Father	11	57.9
Father's Girlfriend	1	5.3
Mother	2	10.5
Mother's Boyfriend	3	15.8
Grandmother	1	5.3
Unknown	1	5.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

As with other domestic violence-related fatalities, there may be more than one perpetrator in a child's death, or more than one child may be killed by the same perpetrator. This can lead to the number of victims and perpetrators not being identical. In 2022, 13 perpetrators were identified in child deaths. Eight (61.5%) of perpetrators were men and five (38.4%) were women.

In addition to being killed in domestic violence-related incidents, children also bear witness to such events. In 2022, program staff identified 68 children who witnessed or were in direct proximity to 27 separate domestic violence fatalities at the time they occurred. This means children were present in 29.3% of all domestic violence-related events in 2022 (*Figure 27*). Witnessing acts of domestic violence, particularly an act as severe as

<sup>26</sup> Excluding prenatal victims.

homicide, can result in short-term reactions such as generalized anxiety, sleeplessness, aggression, difficulty concentrating, nightmares, high levels of activity, and separation anxiety in children<sup>27</sup>. The long-term impact of witnessing domestic violence as a child includes being three times more likely than peers to engage in violent behavior<sup>28</sup> and being more likely to become the victim or perpetrator in their own future intimate partner relationships.<sup>29</sup>



**Table 13. Domestic Violence Homicide Child Witness Data 2019 - 2022**

	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total 2019 - 2022
<b>DV Homicide Event with Child Witnesses</b>	21	42	30	27	120
<b>Child Witnesses</b>	45	78	57	68	248

Note: The 2022 data was collected by DVFRB staff and is current as of January 2024. The data may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during the 2023 data collection process.

The overall trend of domestic homicides witnessed by children has continued to trend slightly downwards after reaching a high of 42 in 2020. While the number of homicide events witnessed by children is lower at 27, compared to 30 in 2021, and is an overall decrease from 42 in 2020, it is still higher than 2019’s 21. A more concerning trend is the increase in the total number of witnesses, with the implication that the data is pointing to an increase in the number of child witnesses per domestic homicide. The increase in child witnesses per event suggests a potential trend with homicides occurring in larger family settings, or in the context of public areas with numerous children. Overall, DVFRV research has found that approximately 30.0% of all domestic violence homicide events have had child witnesses during 2019 – 2022.

<sup>27</sup> The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

<sup>28</sup> Fantuzzo & Mohr, 1999

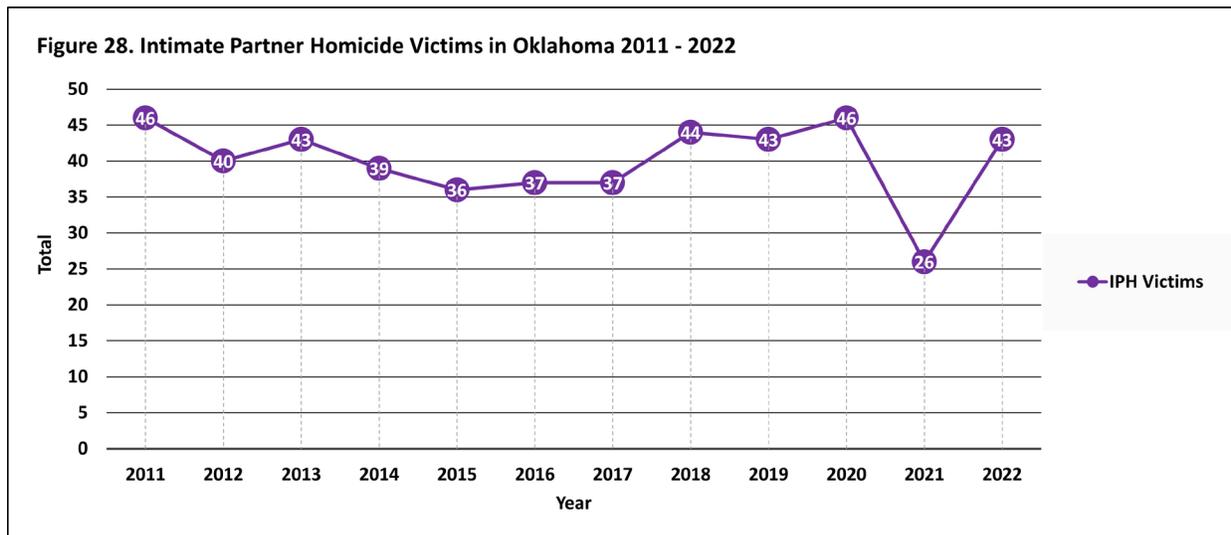
<sup>29</sup> Stith, et al., 2000

## Juvenile System Interaction

The Review Board also collects data on systems contact with the family prior to the fatality event. Program staff collected information on prior victim and perpetrator contact with the Department of Human Services Child Welfare Services (CWS) for 2022 child homicide victims. Of the 16 child homicide victims staff obtained information on, CWS had contact with the families of five (31.3%) of the child victims prior to the homicide. Staff were also able to determine whether child welfare had contact with the perpetrators when they were children for 11 of the 13 perpetrators. Six (54.5%) of them had some form of CWS contact themselves as children. Finally, four (36.4%) child homicide perpetrators had prior CWS history as adults.

## Intimate Partner Homicides

In the United States, women are more likely to be killed by an intimate partner than by any other group of people.<sup>30</sup> A study conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention analyzed data from 18 states (including Oklahoma) between 2003 and 2014 and found that domestic violence was involved in 55% of 10,018 female victim homicides. In the same study, adult female victims ( $\geq 18$ ) were killed by current or former intimate partners in 93% of the cases.<sup>31</sup> The Review Board collects data related to intimate partner homicides (IPH) in Oklahoma. Intimate partners are current or former spouses and current or former dating partners, including same sex partners.



In Oklahoma, 43 (46.7%) of the 92 total domestic violence-related incidents in 2022 involved an IPH, with 43 victims, or 41.0% of the total number of victims, being killed by their current or former intimate partner (*Figure 26*). There were three IPH cases (7.0%) in which at least one victim was killed in addition to the intimate partner for an extra three deaths, resulting in a total of 46 victims (43.8%) killed in the context of an IPH.

The 2022 IPH total suggests the decline seen in 2021 was a statistical outlier. From 2011 – 2020, Oklahoma consistently averaged about 40 IPH victims every year until the brief decline in 2021. The 2022 IPH total can be seen as the resumption of an otherwise consistent trend in the last 12 years.

## Gender

In 2022, consistent with previous years, women were more likely than men to be killed by an intimate partner. Of the 43 IPH victims, 32 were female (74.4%) and 11 were male (25.6%) (*Figure 29*). Of the 434 victims killed between 2012 and 2022 by a current or former intimate partner, 304 (70.0%) were female and 130 (30.0%) were male (*Figure 16*). On average, 28 women and 12 men were killed each year in Oklahoma by an intimate partner

<sup>30</sup> Petrosky, et al., 2017

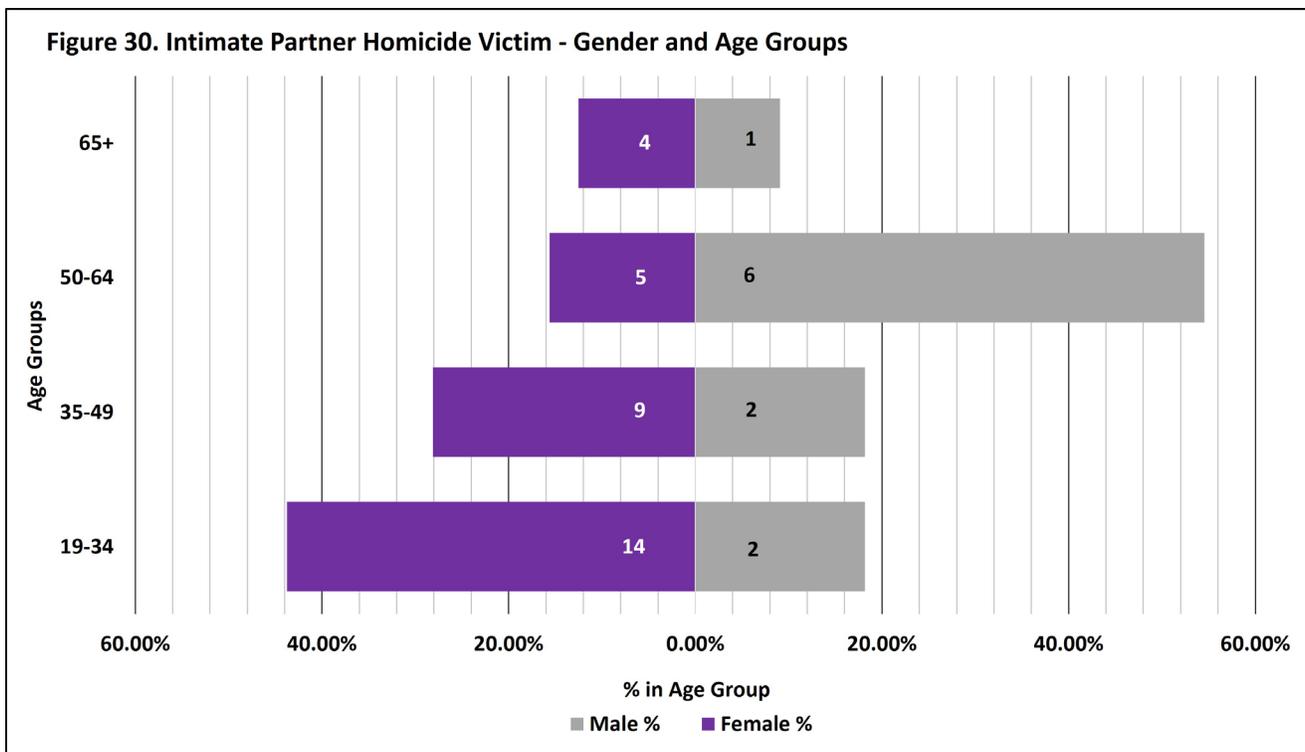
<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

for the period from 2012-2022. Also consistent with previous years, more than two-thirds of IPH perpetrators in 2022 were male and men were three times more likely to be IPH perpetrators than women, with 72.7% of IPH committed by men (*Figure 29*).

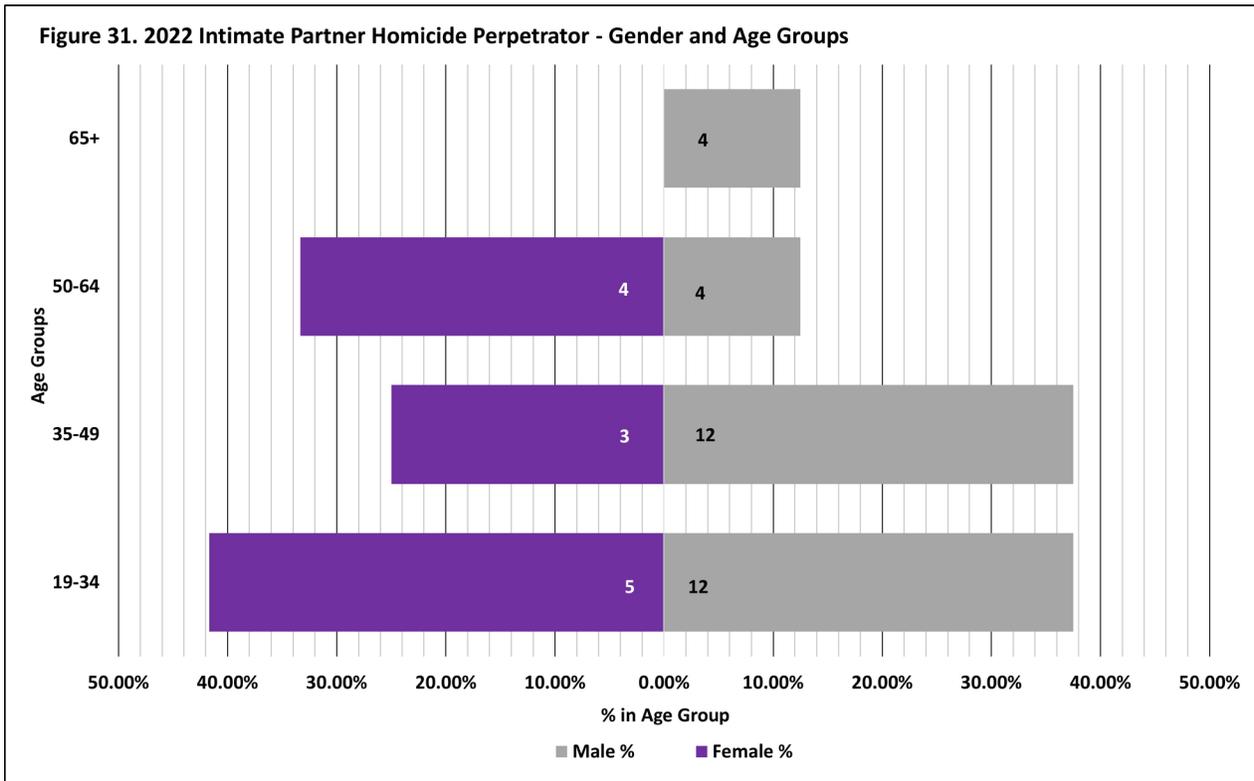


## Age

The average age of the 43 intimate partner homicide (IPH) victims was 40 years old. The youngest IPH victim was 21 years old and the oldest was 78 years old. Most IPH victims were between the ages of 19-34 years (36.4%). The same number of victims were between the ages of 35-49 years (25.0%) and 50-64 (25.0%). Most female victims were between 19-34 years old (42.4%) and the majority of male victims (54.5%) were between the ages of 50-64 years (*Figure 30*).

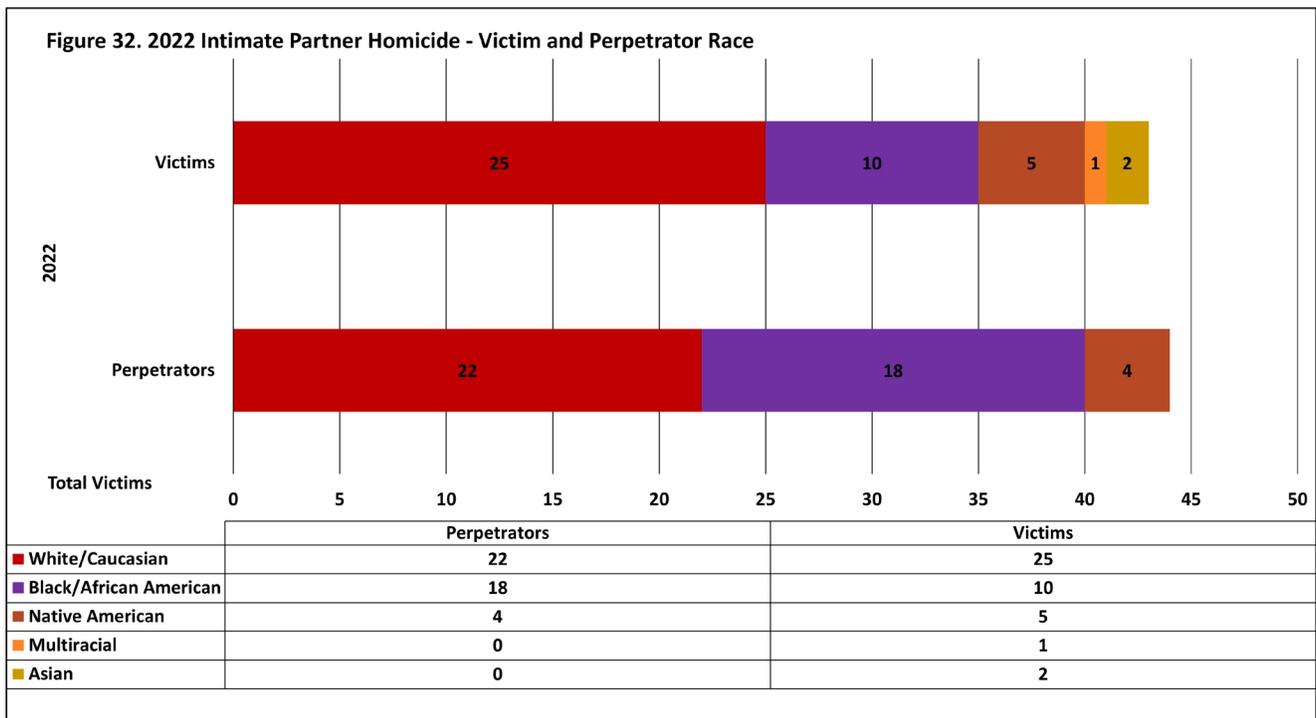


The average age of IPH perpetrators was 41 years old. The youngest IPH perpetrator was 19 years old, and the oldest was 80 years old. As with IPH victims, most IPH perpetrators (38.6%) were between 19-34 years old. Most female perpetrators (41.7%) were between the ages of 19-34 and most male perpetrators (37.5%) fell into the 19-34 age range or the 35-49 age range (*Figure 31*).



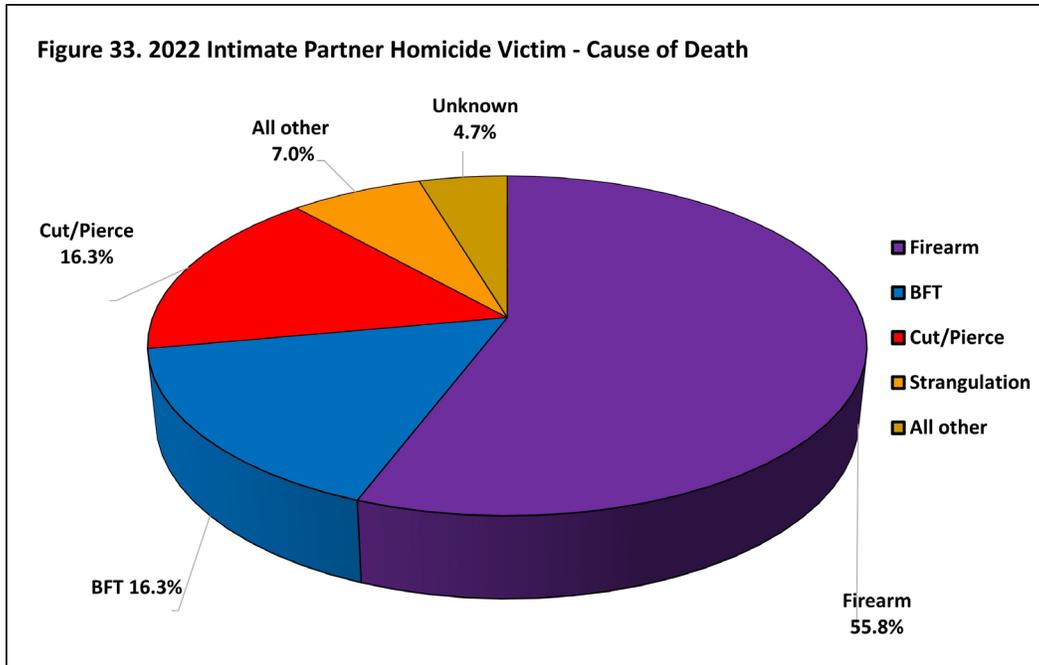
### Race and Ethnicity

Of the 43 IPH victims, 25 (58.1%) were White/Caucasian, 10 (23.3%) were Black/African American, five (11.6%) were Native American, two (4.7%) were Asian, and one (2.3%) was Multiracial. Three victims (6.98%) were identified as having a Hispanic/Latino origin. White/Caucasian perpetrators represented the majority with 50.0%, followed by Black/African Americans with 40.9%, and Native Americans with 9.1%. Finally, three perpetrators (6.8%) were of Latino/Hispanic ethnicity (Figure 32).



## Cause of Death

Aligned with national research,<sup>32</sup> Oklahoma’s data shows firearms to be the most used weapons in intimate partner homicides (IPH), typically surpassing the total of all other causes combined. In 2022, 24 IPH victims in Oklahoma (55.8%) were killed by firearms (*Figure 33*). This is a slight increase in total fatalities from 2021, when 18 of the 26 total IPH victims were killed by firearms (69.2%), but a decrease in the proportion of homicides committed with firearms.



Of U.S. firearms, handguns are the most used weapon by males to murder females in single victim/offender murders.<sup>33</sup> In one study, females were more likely to be murdered by their intimate partners with firearms than by all other causes combined.<sup>34</sup>

Cause of Death	Count	%
Firearm	24	55.8
Cut/Pierce	7	16.3
Blunt Force Trauma (BFT)	7	16.3
Strangulation	3	7.0
All other	2	4.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Other research analyzing risk factors for femicide in abusive relationships found that an abused woman is five times more likely to be killed by her abusive partner when her partner owns a firearm.<sup>35</sup> In addition, there appears to be a link between *non-fatal* intimate partner violence, firearm ownership, and a perpetrator’s likelihood of using the gun to threaten the partner.<sup>36</sup> Perpetrators of intimate partner violence use guns as tools

<sup>32</sup> Zeoli, et al., 2018

<sup>33</sup> Violence Policy Center (VPC), 2019

<sup>34</sup> Campbell, et al., 2003

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Rothman, Hemenway, Miller, & Azrael, 2005

of intimidation and psychological control of the intimate partner, most often as means to threaten and instill fear.<sup>37</sup>

### **Relationship Status**

All statistics reported on behavior and activities present in the intimate partner relationship prior to death are underreported from actual occurrence, as the Review Board relies on police reports, various agency reports, case notes, documentation, and witness statements/interviews for this information. Therefore, capturing all the prior behavior is impossible because the victims and perpetrators are not in a position to reveal all past behaviors.

Table 15 outlines the types of relationship IPH victims had with their homicide perpetrator. Overall, most victims were either the perpetrator’s current intimate partner (44.2%) or spouse (42.0%). Male perpetrators were almost equally likely to kill their current spouse or intimate partner. Female perpetrators meanwhile either killed their spouse or current intimate partner evenly.

<b>When perpetrator was male, victim was:</b>	<b>Number of Cases</b>	<b>%</b>
Spouse	13	40.6
Ex-Spouse	1	3.1
Current Intimate Partner	14	43.8
Former Intimate Partner	4	12.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>When perpetrator was female, victim was:</b>	<b>Number of Cases</b>	<b>%</b>
Spouse	5	45.5
Ex-Spouse	0	0.0
Current Intimate Partner	5	45.5
Former Intimate Partner	1	9.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### **Living Arrangements**

The Review Board tracks information related to the living arrangements between the IPH perpetrator and victim at the time of the homicide. In 2022, known data indicated 33 IPH victims (77.3%) were living with their partner full-time or intermittently when the homicide occurred. Reports suggest that 10 IPH victims (22.7%) were not cohabiting at the time of their murders in 2022, compared to the 7.7% who were not in 2021.

For the 43 victims in 2022 for which the data could be found, a cohabiting spouse was more likely to be killed than any other group, comprising 41.9% of victims. Victims who were cohabiting with their current intimate partner perpetrators were the next largest group of victims, with 32.6%.

Men were more likely to kill a spouse with whom they lived, with 54.2% of cohabiting victims being in an intimate relationship (married) with the perpetrator at the time of the incident. A slightly lower percentage of victims (45.8%) were killed by their male intimate partners (unmarried). Overall, 75% of IPH victims killed by men were cohabiting with the perpetrator at the time of the incident. Of the 32 IPH committed by men, 31 victims were female, and one was male. Women were also more likely to kill a spouse with whom they lived, with 45.5% of victims being the female perpetrator’s spouse. 36.4% of female perpetrators’ victims were intimate partners (unmarried). Two incidents occurred where victim was killed while not cohabiting with the female perpetrator (18.1%). Overall, almost 81.9% of IPH victims killed by women were cohabiting with the

<sup>37</sup> Sorenson, 2017

<sup>38</sup> In cases of current or former intimate partner, the victim and perpetrator were never married.

perpetrator at the time of their deaths. Out of the overall 43 IPH victims there were 10 (23.3%) that were not cohabiting with the perpetrators at the time of their deaths.

## Separation

Of the 43 IPH victims identified in 2022, program staff was able to ascertain that of 35 victims (81.4%) were not separated from the perpetrator at the time of the homicide. Spouses make up 18 of these 35 cases (51.4%), with 17 of the 35 coming from non-married intimate partners (48.6%). In homicides with a female victim, 26 (81.3%) victims were not separated from their partner, compared to six victims who were separated from their partner before the homicide (18.7%). In cases with a male victim, nine of the victims were not separated from their partner (81.8%), while two victims had separated (18.2%).

## Prior Physical Violence

A history of prior physical violence in the relationship is difficult to ascertain. The Review Board relies on sources of information such as law enforcement reports, protective order petitions, prosecutorial records, hospital records, and information from family and friends. However, since many of the IPH cases from 2022 are not yet closed in the criminal justice system, complete prosecutorial records are not available for most cases at the time of this report. In addition, abuse in most intimate partner relationships is not reported to authorities, and victims may not disclose abuse to anyone prior to their deaths.

Despite these limitations, in 2022 program staff was able to uncover enough information in the records for 29 of the 43 IPH victims to determine if the victim experienced physical violence by the IPH perpetrators at some point prior to the homicide. Of the 29 victims, 22 (75.9%) were subjected to physical violence by the perpetrator prior to their death. Among the 22 IPH victims in 2022 who suffered physical violence by their perpetrator, current intimate partners (63.6%) were the largest group experiencing pre-homicide physical violence, followed by current spouses (36.4%).

## Criminal Justice

The DVFRB has historically tracked the status of cases against identified DV homicide perpetrators. For cases being prosecuted in the Oklahoma District Courts, open-source search engine tools such as those provided by the Oklahoma State Courts Network (OSCN) and On Demand Court Records (ODCR) are used to collect case information. Cases being prosecuted in Federal Court are tracked using the Public Access to Court Electronic Records (PACER) system.

Throughout 2022 and 2023, charges were filed in District or Federal Court against the 64 (66.0%) domestic violence homicide perpetrators or accomplices who survived (*Table 16 and 17*).

Status	Count	%
Ongoing	32	60.3
Conviction	18	34.0
Dismissed	2	3.8
Not Guilty	1	1.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>100.0</b>

As of December 2022, 53 domestic violence homicide perpetrators have been charged in Oklahoma District Courts. Of those 53 cases brought against perpetrators, 32 (60.3%) were still ongoing, 18 (34.0%) have resulted in a conviction, two (3.8%) have been dismissed, and one (1.9%) resulted in a not guilty verdict.

Table 17. Status of Federal Court Cases Against 2022 Homicide Perpetrators		
Status	Count	%
Conviction	8	72.7
Ongoing	3	27.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 18. Charges not Filed		
Status	Count	%
No Charges Filed - Death of Perpetrators	16	50.0
No Charges Filed - Self Defense or Other	16	50.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Program Staff were able to determine that charges were filed against eleven domestic violence homicide perpetrators in Federal Courts. Of those eleven cases against perpetrators, eight (72.7%) resulted in convictions and three (27.3%) are still ongoing.

Out of the remaining 32 perpetrators, 16 (50.0%) were not charged because the perpetrator died at the time of the incident, and 16 (50.0%) were not charged by prosecutors for reasons of self-defense or because the cases are still under investigation.

### ***Intimate Partner Homicide Cases***

Charges were filed against 31 (70.5%) IPH perpetrators in either District or Federal Court in 2022. A total of 28 IPH perpetrators were charged in Oklahoma District Courts. As of December 2023, a total of 21 (75.0%) cases are still ongoing while seven (25.0%) have resulted in convictions (*Table 19*).

Table 19. Status of District Court Cases Against 2022 IPH Perpetrators		
Status	Count	%
Ongoing	21	75.0
Conviction	7	25.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Three IPH perpetrators were charged in Federal Court, with all resulting in a conviction (*Table 20*).

Table 20. Status of Federal Court Cases Against 2022 IPH Perpetrators		
Status	Count	%
Conviction	3	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Out of the remaining 13 perpetrators, eleven (84.6%) were not charged because the perpetrators died at the time of the incident, and two (15.4%) were not charged (*Table 21*). One was not charged because prosecutors determined the perpetrator acted in self-defense while no charges were located for the other.

Table 21. Charges not Filed Against 2022 IPH Perpetrators		
Status	Count	%
No Charges Filed - Death of Perpetrators	11	84.6
No Charges Filed - Self Defense or Other	2	15.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100.0</b>

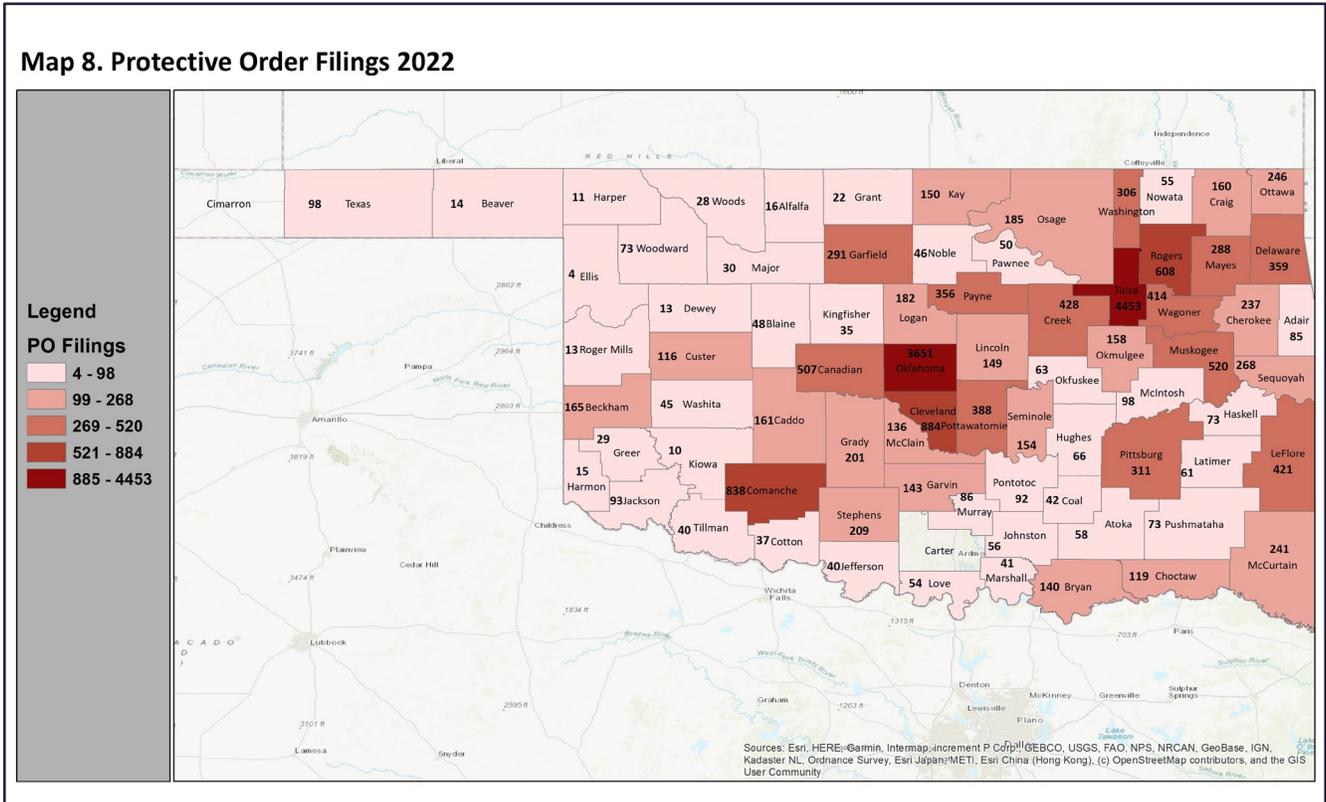
# PROTECTIVE ORDERS

Staff at the Office of the Attorney General are directed under 22 O.S. §1603 to collect data on the number of victim protective orders (VPOs) issued and the number of protective order violations in each county. The statute further indicates the data collected shall be provided to the Review Board and the Administrative Office of the Courts. DVFRB Program Staff are the instinctive choice to collect this data, given the goals and mission of the Review Board. However, collecting the protective order data necessary to fulfill this obligation meets with a myriad of challenges.

Currently, there is no central repository where information regarding Protective Order filings, issuances, and violations is stored. Protective orders filed in District Courts must be entered into the Oklahoma State Courts Network (OSCN); however, determining if a PO has been issued requires a manual search of every PO case filed in each county. Determining if a PO has been violated would likewise require a manual search of every criminal misdemeanor and felony case filed in the District Court for each county. In both cases, the work necessary would be incredibly time-consuming and still may not yield accurate results.

Despite these challenges, program staff have been able to closely monitor the number of VPOs being filed in Oklahoma utilizing the OSCN Case Search webpage. Staff obtain a total count of VPO filings by determining the last VPO filed on a given calendar year per county. This is done because each new VPO has a unique identifying number (e.g., PO-202X-XXXX) per county where the first four digits are the given calendar year, and the last digits are the total of VPO filings at that courthouse at that given time.

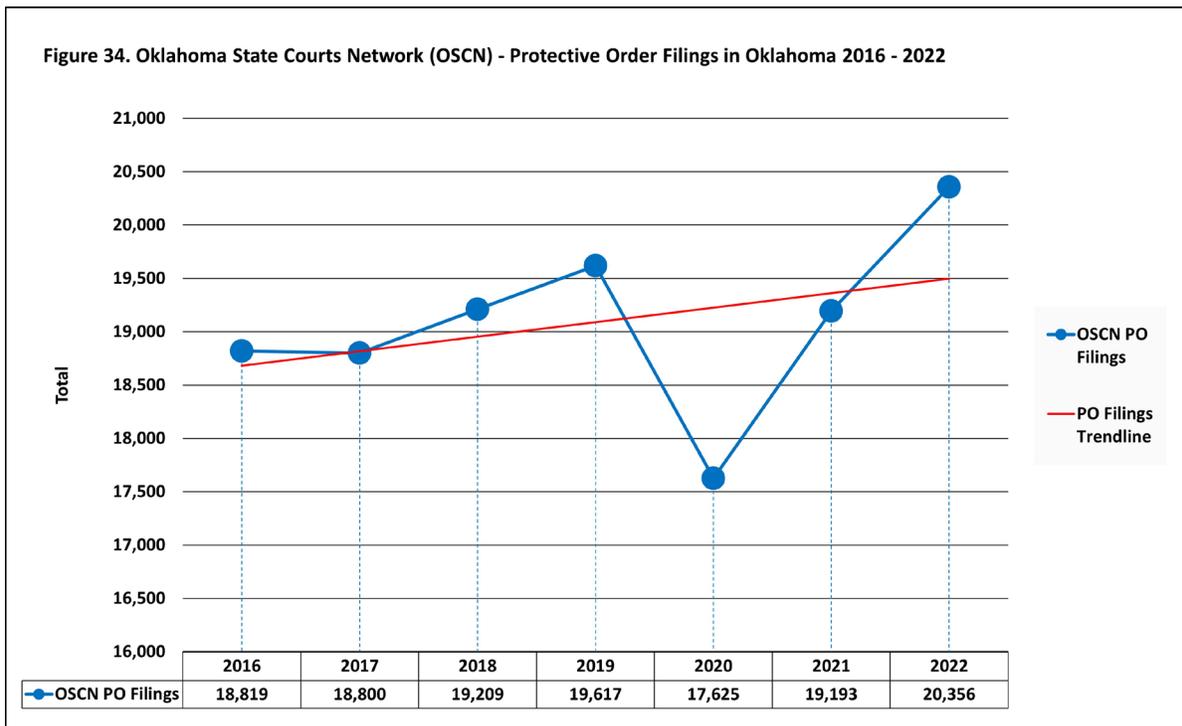
Utilizing the method described earlier, staff found that a total of 20,356 VPOs were filed in Oklahoma in 2022. The 2022 total is about 6.1% higher than the one found in 2021. County VPO filing totals are visualized in *Map 8*.



48 (64.0%) counties saw increases in VPO filings; 25 (33.3%) saw decreases; and two had the same number of filings as the previous year.

Counties (26) with an increase of 20 or more VPO filings saw on average about 47 (+20.4%) more VPO filings than in 2021. In contrast, counties (22) with an increase of less than 20 VPO filings saw on average about eight (+15.9%<sup>39</sup>) more filings than the previous year. Tulsa County in particular saw 4,453 VPO filings, which is 222 (+5.2%) more than in 2021. A total of 3,651 were filed in Oklahoma County, which saw 58 (+1.6%) more filings than the previous year.

Counties (7) that saw a decrease of 15 or more VPO filings saw on average about 24 (-20.4%) less filings than in 2021. Counties (18) with a decrease of less than 15 VPO filings saw on average about five (-14.0%) less filings. The biggest difference was seen in Wagoner County, where their 414 total in 2022 was 43 (-9.4%) less than in the previous year. This was followed by Choctaw County, which saw their 2021 total decrease by 37 (-23.7%) for a total of 119 filings in 2022.



The 2022 total continues the increasing trend in VPO filings after the 10.2% decrease in 2020. The 2022 total is 15.5% more than the one recorded in 2020. Although it is difficult to pinpoint the exact cause of fluctuations in VPO filings the statistics suggest that filings have resumed the increasing trend that started in 2018. The decrease in 2020 may have likely been influenced by the public health concerns and unique challenges brought about by the COVID-19. The numbers suggest the increasing trend has resumed as the state has continued to move on from the COVID-19 pandemic.

<sup>39</sup> Excluding one outlier where the total went from 1 to 9 and hence it was a 900% increase.

# REVIEW BOARD MEMBER ACTIVITIES

Review Board members and DVFRB Program Staff broaden the reach of the DVFRB by engaging in activities aimed at improving the domestic violence prevention and protection system. Some members participated in the following activities in 2023:

- **Laura Kuester, M.S., LPC**, designee for the Oklahoma Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (OCADVSA), developed and presented trainings on domestic violence, sexual assault, and the lethality assessment protocol to law enforcement agencies across the state. Throughout 2023 she regularly conducted television/newspaper interviews and made presentations to various community organizations and system partners to raise awareness of findings from the Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board.
- **Brandon Pasley, CSDVRP**, designee for OCADVSA, DVFRB Vice-Chair, and **Angela Beatty, CDSVRP, MSW candidate**, alternate designee for OCADVSA, provided training to the Guardian ad Litem Institute on domestic violence and children. Pasley and Beatty hosted multiple sessions on victim advocacy services at the Cherokee Nation’s Families are Sacred Summit in April 2023, and both presented on Batterer’s Typologies and Coercive Control at the Partners for Change Conference in September. Throughout the year, they also provided training on domestic violence and strangulation to staff and leadership in the Mercy Hospital Health System, as well as to the Integris Health’s behavioral health team.
- **Melanie Ferguson, MSW**, designee for the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (ODMHSAS), provided trainings related to domestic violence to a wide array of behavior health providers across the state. Approximately 180 providers attended DV 101 trainings on Coercive Control, and 140 providers attended DV 201 trainings on Risk Assessment and Safety Planning. She provided trainings to approximately 120 victim services providers on how to better support survivors experiencing mental illness, substance use, and/or suicidality. Ms. Ferguson continued to oversee a network of 60-80 domestic violence liaisons across the state who are embedded in behavioral health agencies and facilitated ODMHSAS efforts to raise awareness about domestic violence and using 988 as a recourse for domestic violence survivors. She also continued to partner with Palomar in their efforts to provide services to victims of abuse and violence.
- **Brandi Woods Littlejohn, MCJ, and Emily Nicholls**, primary and alternate designees for the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH), Injury Prevention Service (IPS). Ms. Woods-Littlejohn worked on creating and presenting “Healthy Relationships: Violence Prevention in Oklahoma” at Interim Study IS23-051, Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Nurses, hosted by Representative Ross Ford on October 4, 2023. Ms. Nicholls provided training to over 221 professionals who serve domestic violence survivors on how to recognize signs of potential brain injury and how to accommodate survivors in their services. She was able to present the training at several conferences, including the Partnership for Change Conference and Cherokee Nation’s Families Are Sacred Summit. Ms. Nicholls also collaborated with the OSDH’s Nursing Service to train staff on building confidence and skills to serve patients experiencing gender-based violence.

IPS has been working to create four Oklahoma-specific tools about partner-inflicted brain injury to educate and support advocates and survivors by adapting materials from The Center on Partner-Inflicted Brain Injury at the Ohio Domestic Violence Network. The OSDH IPS has worked on administering the Rape Prevention and Education Grant, a sexual violence prevention program, by funding six DV/SA programs across the state to implement comprehensive prevention strategies tailored to the needs of their local communities. The IPS has also functioned as the convening organization for the Oklahoma Prevention Leadership Committee. In addition to hosting three statewide collaborative meetings, the IPS supported members of the Youth Advisory Subcommittee who providing training to professionals at the Adolescent Health Summit hosted by the Maternal and Child Health Service.

- **Martina Jelley, MD, MPSH**, designee for the Oklahoma State Medical Association, works with a team at the University of Oklahoma College of Medicine to assess and enhances the teaching of trauma informed

care in undergraduate medical education, using surveys and literature review to revamp the current curriculum for medical students. They plan to introduce a curricular thread throughout all four years of medical school that will help students be prepared to care for patients who are experiencing or have experienced trauma and abuse.

- **Jill Nobles-Botkin**, alternate designee for the Oklahoma State Commissioner of Health, has been working with the Maternal and Child Health Services division to provide annual training on Domestic Violence to the Oklahoma State Department of health employees and contractors. The training teaches employees and contractors about Mandatory Reporting requirements for child abuse, neglect, and human trafficking, and best practices they can do in response.
- **Melissa Van Duynes**, alternate designee for the Office of the Attorney General, serves on the PARB (post Adjudication Review Board) since December 2023. The mission of the PARB is to assess services and placement offered to each child in the juvenile court system. In her role on the PARB, Melissa attends court hearings to advocate for better outcomes for children and families. This year was the first year Melissa undertook the planning and coordination of the Partners for Change Conference. This annual multi-disciplinary conference brings contemporary and innovative trainings to Oklahoma in support of a coordinated community response of allied professions involved in Violence against Women work. Melissa also attended the Oklahoma Victim Assistance Academy, a week-long intensive course of study for crime victim service providers with less than 5-years of experience and designed to improve the quality and consistency of victim services in Oklahoma.

## DVFRB Program Staff Activities

**Anthony Hernández Rivera**, MA, DVFRB Program Manager, and **Nicholas Massey**, MA, Research Analyst, constitute the DVFRB Program Staff. In addition to maintaining an annual list of people who die due to domestic violence and collecting information related to those deaths, Anthony and Nicholas are responsible for the administrative aspects of the DVFRB. This includes preparing case-related information for the DVFRB's monthly review meetings; collecting and analyzing data relevant to domestic violence, domestic violence-related deaths, and protective orders; and authoring the DVFRB annual report.

In 2023, Anthony took steps to advocate for and implement the 2022 DVFRB Report recommendation regarding the Oklahoma Lethality Assessment Protocol (LAP). He held conversations with the Oklahoma Association of Chiefs of Police (OACP), the Oklahoma Sheriffs' Association (OSA), and the Council on Law Enforcement Education and Training (CLEET) to discuss ways to increase the implementation of the LAP. These discussions led to partnerships to raise more awareness about the protocol by providing more training at different law enforcement conferences and gatherings of Oklahoma Police Chiefs and Sheriffs.

These partnerships helped facilitate conference presentations on the LAP at the 2023 OSA Annual Conference, the 2023 Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation Major Crimes Conference, and at the 2023 Spring OACP New Chiefs Training. Anthony also presented the training to a class of Oklahoma City Police Department cadets and for cadets enrolled in the Peace Officer Certification Program at the Oklahoma City MetroTech.

Anthony and Nicholas also led a workshop at the 2023 Oklahoma District Attorneys (DAC) Summer Conference titled *The Domestic Violence Landscape in Oklahoma – Ascertaining Statewide and Local Trends Using Data*. They led two workshops at the 2023 Oklahoma Partners for Change Conference on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault (PFC) in September. The workshops were an overall review of domestic violence statistical trends in Oklahoma, and a Domestic Violence Fatality Mock Review that walked participants through the process of doing a fatality review. Finally, Anthony led a presentation titled *Oklahoma Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board Recommendations & Oklahoma Domestic Violence Crime Trends* at Representative Ross Ford's interim study (IS23-051) on domestic violence held at the Oklahoma House of Representative in October 2023.

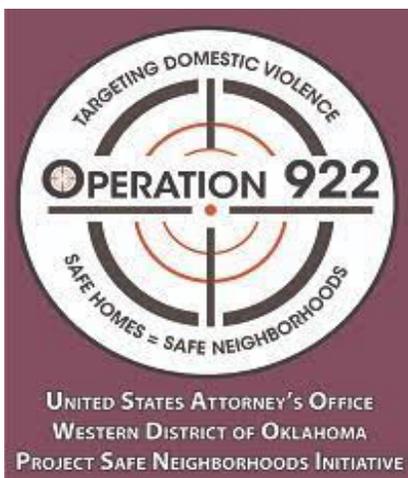
# Spotlight on Homicide Prevention Initiative in Oklahoma

## An update on “Operation 922”

In the [2019 DVFRB Annual Report](#) a spotlight was given to the homicide prevention initiative “Operation 922,” a program administered by the United States Attorney’s Office for the Western District of Oklahoma as part of the Justice Department’s Project Safe Neighborhoods initiative.<sup>40</sup> This spotlights aims to give readers an update on the effectiveness of the program since it was created.

This program was started in November 2017 upon the realization that although many defendants charged in state court were violent offenders of multiple crimes, prior prosecutions had not resulted in meaningful sanctions. Operation 922 seeks to fill the void in state law and holds the abuser in domestic violence cases accountable without forcing the abuse victim to testify.<sup>41</sup> Working through the initiative, state and tribal police departments and District Attorneys throughout the Western District of Oklahoma have access to federal prosecutors who can review domestic violence-related cases for potential federal prosecution.<sup>42</sup> The initiative focuses on the population centers of Oklahoma City, Midwest City, Del City, Moore, Edmond, El Reno, and Yukon.<sup>43</sup>

Operation 922 prioritizes the prosecution of federal firearms offenses in domestic violence incidents. Whenever police officers respond to domestic violence situations, state and federal prosecutors work closely with detectives to determine whether firearm charges or other federal charges can be applied to the situation. The overall goal of the program is to focus on individuals who are repeat domestic abusers and/or particularly violent offenders who violate federal firearms laws. Federal charges applied in these situations include illegal possession of a firearm or ammunition by a person (1) previously convicted of a felony offense, (2) previously convicted of a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence, or (3) subject to an active Victim Protective Order.<sup>44</sup>



During fiscal year 2022 the Department of Justice prosecuted 561 defendants, an 88% increase from fiscal year 2017’s 298. The same year the DOJ saw the prosecution of 233 violent crime defendants, an increase of 364% from the FY2017 total of 64. Based on current prosecution numbers, the Department of Justice is on pace for similar numbers of prosecutions in FY2023 as FY2022.<sup>45</sup>

Because of Operation 922, hundreds of violent offenders who otherwise would have faced lesser charges in state court, have instead been charged for serious gun related offenses in federal court. This is especially important in the realm of domestic violence, where prosecutions face challenging circumstances, including evidentiary issues, victim reluctance to prosecution, and other factors such as increasing prosecutorial caseloads and the limitations of state law.

<sup>40</sup> Operation 922 a proven tool to fight county domestic violence. Published October 28, 2021, by the Yukon Review. Source: <https://www.theyukonreview.com/yukon-review/news/operation-922-proven-tool-fight-county-domestic-violence>

<sup>41</sup> Federal prosecutors use initiatives to curb violent crime in Oklahoma. Published July 24, 2023, by Oklahoma’s News 4. Source: <https://kfor.com/news/local/federal-prosecutors-use-initiatives-to-curb-violent-crime-in-oklahoma/>

<sup>42</sup> “Operation 922” – The Federal Domestic Violence Initiative for Western Oklahoma is Getting Results. Published October 22, 2021, by the United States Attorney’s Office for the Western District of Oklahoma. Source: <https://www.justice.gov/usao-wdok/pr/operation-922-federal-domestic-violence-initiative-western-oklahoma-getting-results>

<sup>43</sup> 2022 Oklahoma Project Safe Neighborhood – Western District. Published September 28, 2022, by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice. Source: <https://bja.ojp.gov/funding/awards/15pbja-22-gg-00819-gung>

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Federal prosecutors use initiatives to curb violent crime in Oklahoma. Published July 24, 2023, by Oklahoma’s News 4. Source: <https://kfor.com/news/local/federal-prosecutors-use-initiatives-to-curb-violent-crime-in-oklahoma/>

# "Operation 922" – The Federal Domestic Violence Initiative for Western Oklahoma is Getting Results

U.S. Attorney Bob Troester notes how domestic violence is at an epidemic level, and “can be urban communities and rural communities. It can be found in rich neighborhoods and found in poor neighborhoods. It’s found in educated individuals and uneducated. It’s found with the rich and the poor, and it’s found with all races.”<sup>46</sup> Many abusers are already federally prohibited from having a firearm and prosecuting them on firearm charges is an additional tool in breaking the cycle of abuse.

Case data shows that since March 2018 hundreds of individuals have been charged federally using the initiative’s framework. Adding federal charges to a case have led to an increase in jail time with an average sentence of 72 months. Additional time served is valuable to abuse victims looking to rebuild their lives outside of the cycle of abuse.

**Title 18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(8)&(9):**  
**(g) It shall be unlawful for any person—**  
**(8) Who is subject to a court order (VPO) that—**  
*(check www.oscn.net – look for ‘PO’ cases)*  
**(A) Was issued after a hearing of which such person received actual notice, and at which such person had an opportunity to participate;**  
**(B) Restrains such person from harassing, stalking, or threatening an intimate partner of such person or child of such intimate partner or person, or engaging in other conduct that would place an intimate partner in reasonable fear of bodily injury to the partner or child; and**  
**(C) (i) Includes a finding that such person represents a credible threat to the physical safety of such intimate partner or child; or**  
**(ii) By its terms explicitly prohibits the use, attempted use, or threatened use of physical force against such intimate partner or child that would reasonably be expected to cause bodily injury;**  
**OR**  
**(9) Who has been convicted in any court of a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence,**  
*(check www.oscn.net—look for ‘CM’ cases)*  
**to ship or transport . . . or possess . . . any firearm or ammunition. . . . (We need the gun!)**

<b>Domestic Violence-Derived Cases / Defendants Charged</b>	<b>296</b>
<b>Defendants Convicted/Guilty Pleas</b>	<b>278</b>
<b>Defendants Sentenced</b>	<b>212</b>
<b>Average Sentence</b>	<b>72 Months</b>

Source: U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Western District of Oklahoma

Federal prosecution has also resulted in numerous firearms and rounds of ammunition seized from domestic abusers. Many of these individuals already had victim protection orders against them, prohibiting them from owning a firearm. These removals are an impartial tool, given that firearms are used seven times more often than any other weapon in domestic homicides.<sup>47</sup>

<b>Number of firearms seized</b>	<b>423 (1.43 average guns per defendant)</b>
<b>Ammunition seized</b>	<b>8,654 rounds (29.37 average rounds per defendant)</b>

Source: U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Western District of Oklahoma

Results from the initiative have impressed local law enforcement leaders, with Canadian County Sheriff Chris West praising the benefits of the program, “It’s a good thing to have the availability and extra resources for filing,” West said. “The federal government has a longer statute of limitations. It’s a good thing for citizens and it’s another resource for protecting families and victims.”<sup>48</sup> Many of the defendants are related to gang activity, with 96 of the Operation 922 defendants (32.43%) having known gang affiliation to 38 separate gangs.<sup>49</sup> U.S.

<sup>46</sup> Oklahoma officials take action against domestic violence at federal level. Published August 18, 2023, by KOCO News 5 on ABC. Source: <https://www.koco.com/article/oklahoma-us-attorney-domestic-violence-federal-gun-laws/44845908>

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Operation 922 a proven tool to fight county domestic violence. Published October 28, 2021, by the Yukon Review. Source: <https://www.theyukonreview.com/yukon-review/news/operation-922-proven-tool-fight-county-domestic-violence>

<sup>49</sup> Federal prosecutors use initiatives to curb violent crime in Oklahoma. Published July 24, 2023, by Oklahoma’s News 4. Source: <https://kfor.com/news/local/federal-prosecutors-use-initiatives-to-curb-violent-crime-in-oklahoma/>

Attorney's Office for the Western District of Oklahoma Deputy Chief of Violent Crimes Jacquelyn Hutzell acknowledges the difficult job local and federal law enforcement officers have in enforcing Operation 922. "What I look for is cases that matter, that we're not just looking for the easy cases, but the ones that are actually worth pursuing," Hutzell said. "We want to make sure we're targeting the right people and making our community safer."<sup>50</sup> Operation 922 continues to prove its benefit to the residents of the Oklahoma City Metropolitan Area and law enforcement within the Western District of Oklahoma.

Operation 922 shows the benefit of state and federal law enforcement cooperation in combatting domestic violence in the Western District. Because of Operation 922 more domestic offenders are getting longer jail sentences away from their victims, allowing the most vulnerable people a chance to recover and rebuild their lives away from their abusers. The continued success of Operation 922 shows a path forward in continuing to combat and mitigate the scourge of domestic violence in Oklahoma.

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<sup>50</sup> Federal prosecutors use initiatives to curb violent crime in Oklahoma. Published July 24, 2023, by Oklahoma's News 4. Source: <https://kfor.com/news/local/federal-prosecutors-use-initiatives-to-curb-violent-crime-in-oklahoma/>

# Spotlight on Prevention Initiatives in Oklahoma

## Background by DVFRB Staff

On October 4, 2023, an interim study ([IS23-051](#)) titled *Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Nurses* was heard by the House Judiciary – Criminal Committee at the Oklahoma House of Representatives with the goal of examining the role of Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE) and how they benefit victims and the legal process. It also looked to explore and analyze ways to assist victims of domestic violence and address the generational impact of this abuse. In a [press release](#)<sup>51</sup> announcing a date had been set for IS23-051, State Representative Ross Ford expressed his interest in wanting to “look at early intervention, programs that will help empower victims to leave their attackers before it is too late, and that help show what healthy relationships look like.”

The interest by members of the committee to learn about early intervention and healthy relationships as a way to stop the abuse before it begins is timely and aligns with the historical position of the DVFRB about the importance of healthy relationships education as a way to prevent people from being victimized in the first place [[2005](#), [2006](#), [2007](#), [2008](#), [2009](#), [2010](#), [2012](#), [2015](#)]. At IS23-051, various speakers spoke about generational trauma and how the end to the cycle of violence often hinges on positive role models and healthy relationships. Brandi Wood-Littlejohn, Program Manager for Personal Health and Rape Prevention with the Oklahoma Department of Health (OSDH) Injury Prevention Service (IPS) did a presentation on healthy relationships and current initiatives by the OSDH IPS in this area.

This spotlight article aims to give readers an understanding of ongoing early intervention and prevention initiatives in Oklahoma. The goal is to provide decision-makers with a roadmap of several prevention efforts being undertaken by state agencies. DVFRB members representing the OSDH IPS, and the Office of Juvenile Affairs (OJA) contributed to the article below.

## Introduction

“*Was this death preventable?*” is a question that the Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board considers during every case. Each time the answer is yes, because violence is preventable. While the conversations often include that the death might have been prevented from additional connection to victim services to additional accountability for the perpetrator, if we truly want to end domestic violence, we must implement primary prevention efforts that address the root causes of this issue. Domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking are issues that are deeply intertwined and share many overlapping characteristics. As such, it is helpful to consider them as “gender-based violence” because they not only share a large evidence base, but also share the same root causes and many of the same potential solutions.

## What is Primary Prevention?

Primary prevention is stopping the problem before it can occur. Our goal with the primary prevention of gender-based violence is to stop it before it starts by addressing the conditions that allow violence to

## Preventionists’ River Story Analogy



Image: Public Health Sudbury & Districts

<sup>51</sup> Date Set for Ford Study on Domestic Violence Victims. Published September 25, 2023, by the Oklahoma House of Representatives. Source: [https://www.okhouse.gov/posts/news-20230925\\_1](https://www.okhouse.gov/posts/news-20230925_1)

happen in the first place. To better understand primary prevention, it can be helpful to clearly identify what it is not; preventionists often use the River Story<sup>52</sup> analogy to help situate primary prevention and differentiate it from other ways that violence can be addressed. This is differentiated from Intervention, which includes things like victim advocacy services and counseling, awareness raising, which includes activities like information tabling, and one-time presentations events. Primary prevention is also not risk reduction, which primarily focuses on self-defense techniques such as self-defense classes and encouraging the usage of the buddy system.

Historically, well-meaning efforts intended to prevent violence have mainly focused on awareness raising and risk reduction activities. While spreading awareness of the issue is important, especially when connecting affected people to support, it does not prevent harm from occurring in the first place. Similarly, efforts focusing on risk reduction also do not stop the harm from happening; they instead put the responsibility for avoiding or experiencing harm on the potential victim as opposed to the potential perpetrator, which is where the responsibility for harm rests. While self-defense classes can feel empowering for many who choose to take them, it is important to educate people that:



- 1) Gender-based violence is most often committed by someone that is trusted by the victimized person, so many people do not realize that they might confront a situation where they would have to use that skillset against someone that they care about.
- 2) When in danger, the midbrain takes over to ensure survival by triggering our automatic stress response (fight/flight/freeze/fawn), so not everyone will use self-defense skills if they do experience violence. Fawning is especially prevalent in domestic violence situations, where a victim will focus on making the offender happy or “overly agreeing” to try and mitigate the situation.

Currently there are two federal grant programs that specifically focus on the primary prevention of gender-based violence, both of which are administered by the CDC: the Domestic Violence Prevention Enhancements and Leadership Through Alliances (DELTA)<sup>53</sup> program, which is authorized by the Family Violence Prevention & Services Act (FVPSA), and the Rape Prevention and Education (RPE) program<sup>54</sup>, which is authorized by the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). The DELTA program currently provides competitive funding to 13 state domestic violence coalitions, and the RPE program provides formula funding to state and territorial health departments in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The RPE program has also recently expanded to provide competitive funding to state, territorial, and tribal sexual assault coalitions.

### **Prevention in Oklahoma**

The Oklahoma State Department of Health’s Injury Prevention Service (IPS) seeks to address the issue of sexual violence<sup>55</sup> through primary prevention efforts which work upstream to prevent sexual assault before it occurs.

<sup>52</sup> River Story. Published August 5, 2020, by the Pennsylvania Coalition to Advance Respect. Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vpJ4h8sxOJg>

<sup>53</sup> Domestic Violence Prevention Enhancement and Leadership Through Alliance (DELTA): Achieving Health Equity through Addressing Disparities (AHEAD). Published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Last Revised June 20, 2023. Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence/delta/ahead/index.html>

<sup>54</sup> Rape Prevention and Education Program. Published November 7, 2017 by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Last Revised March 2, 2023. Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/sexualviolence/rpe/index.html>

<sup>55</sup> Sexual Violence Prevention. Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) Injury Prevention Service (IPS) Webpage. Source: <https://oklahoma.gov/health/health-education/injury-prevention-service/sexual-violence-prevention.html>

This work is funded through the RPE program and the Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant. While the primary focus of RPE is the prevention of sexual violence, it is widely known that the issues of sexual and intimate partner violence are deeply intertwined. As such, there is a significant overlap in the risk and protective factors<sup>56</sup> that relate to both issues and many strategies that can help to prevent many forms of violence with shared risk and protective factors such as bullying, suicide, and youth violence.

The goals of the sexual violence prevention program are to:

- Prevent first-time perpetration of sexual violence.
- Reduce risk factors and enhance protective factors linked to sexual violence perpetration and victimization.
- Increase the number of non-violent interactions and healthy relationships.
- Reduce societal influences that support sexual violence.

Until the end of the previous five-year grant cycle (1/31/24), the Injury Prevention Service administered its sexual violence prevention program by:

- 1) Funding six DV/SA programs across the state to implement comprehensive prevention strategies tailored to the needs of their local communities:

- Domestic Violence Intervention Services – Tulsa
- Safenet Services – Claremore
- Wings of Hope – Stillwater
- Women's Resource Center – Norman
- YWCA of Oklahoma City - Oklahoma City
- LeFlore County Crisis Services - Poteau, and



- 2) Coordinating statewide prevention efforts through the Oklahoma Prevention Leadership Committee (OPLC)<sup>57</sup>, which brings together partners across various fields of prevention and response with community members and youth to align efforts in addressing gender-based violence. The OPLC believes that by connecting those in public health with those in the community, together we can provide resources, raise awareness of the issues in our state, and cultivate a space where people feel supported, believed, and valued. The OPLC envisions an Oklahoma Standard where safe and healthy environments are created in support of the social and emotional development of our state's young people and welcomes new members.

Over the past five-year grant cycle of RPE, the CDC’s guidance shifted from a primary focus of educating young people on safe and healthy behaviors through classroom curricula delivered in 7-10 sessions over the course of several months to instead focus on the conditions in our communities and society that allow violence and inequity to exist. This shift was accompanied by a change in strategy to include new approaches, such as

<sup>56</sup> Violence Prevention: Connecting the Dots. Published November 7, 2017, by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Source: <https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/connecting-the-dots/node/5>

<sup>57</sup> Oklahoma Prevention Leadership Committee. Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) Injury Prevention Service (IPS) Webpage. Source: <https://oklahoma.gov/health/health-education/injury-prevention-service/sexual-violence-prevention/oklahoma-prevention-leadership-committee.html>

cultivating healthy communities (schools, neighborhoods, towns, etc.) through the redesign of policies that are supportive of all members and campaigns around social norms that promote empathy and mutual respect.

In the 2024-2029 grant period, the CDC is shifting RPE activities further upstream to address economic empowerment and creating protective spaces. The IPS will be working with Oklahomans in the next year to determine our path forward with these funds, and while we will not be able to provide direct funding for healthy relationship education, we will still provide technical assistance and guidance to interested parties.

### ***The Oklahoma Office of Juvenile Affairs & Prevention***

In addition to prevention efforts being undertaken by the OSDH IPH, the Oklahoma Office of Juvenile Affairs (OJA) also has community-based prevention initiatives in place targeting the at-risk population they serve. OJA does this by working with 37 designated Youth Service Agencies (YSAs) that provide prevention and community-based services in partnership with their local juvenile service unit specialists (JSUs) and other partners in all 77 Oklahoma counties.

These YSAs provide services based on local needs identified in community needs assessment, which includes feedback from JSUs, the Department of Human Services, local school officials, parents, youth, community members, the Judiciary, District Attorneys, law enforcement, and other key professionals who assist youth in need of delinquency prevention services. These agencies offer many different services but specialize in offering the Botvin life skills curriculum. This curriculum has specific modules tailored to a variety of developmental levels and offers targeted content about healthy relationships and domestic violence/sexual abuse prevention.

There is not a definitive unique number of youths being serviced by the curriculum, but currently 21 out of 37 agencies are providing both targeted and universal Botvin services to parents and youth at all stages in elementary, middle, and high schools. Each of the 27 agencies specializes in a specific curriculum tailored for their unique area's needs. Schools also enter into agreements with the agencies to provide school-based services, with the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services supporting the purchase of curriculum and trainings statewide whenever needed or requested by the agencies. Each YSA has a sign-in sheet whenever the Botvin curriculum has been offered and based on these sign-in sheet numbers, the training has been viewed by 50,369 students in Fiscal Year 2023 and 54,826 students in Fiscal Year 2022. Because some classes have the same students for multiple modules, it is difficult to obtain the exact number of unique students, but the numbers are helpful to understand the scope of the curriculum's reach.

The work by YSAs showcases OJA's commitment to primary prevention among youth in Oklahoma. By partnering with advocates, community-based organizations, and fostering collaboration between systems, OJA consistently works towards achieving better outcomes with the at-risk population they serve.

### ***Closing***

Overall, prevention should go beyond curriculum and our current grant capacities. Prevention includes bullying prevention, the creation of protective environments where all young people feel safe and valued. It should be about engaging in a shift of mental models where we understand domestic and sexual violence as public problems, not private issues to be kept hidden. Everyone has a role to play in preventing gender-based violence. Some steps individuals should consider include:

- Communicate with the young people in your life. Exploring topics together like consent and healthy relationships can help youth recognize how to respect others and solve problems without violence. When young people feel comfortable talking to the adults in their lives about a wide variety of topics, it can help to keep the door open for important ongoing conversations about the things they're experiencing.

- Promote mutual respect. When communities address the root causes of violence by creating environments built on a culture of mutual respect, all of us can thrive.
- Connect your community. Community connectedness and youth feeling connected to their schools are two important protective factors against multiple forms of violence. To strengthen these protective factors, schools, organizations, and community members should work together with youth to create environments that are safe and supportive.
- Support and provide education. Inclusive, medically accurate education that promotes healthy development and decision-making for all ages is important so young people can learn about themselves and their relationships. Knowledge is a powerful tool to help keep young people safe.

We believe that all Oklahomans deserve to have respect, equality, safety, and trust in all the relationships they engage in throughout their lives. We also know that implementing and coordinating prevention efforts are key to ensuring that the goal of a healthier and safer Oklahoma becomes a reality.

***Additional information:***

Oklahoma State Department of Health – Injury Prevention Service<sup>58</sup>

- Intimate Partner Violence<sup>59</sup>
  - Teen Dating Violence Fact Sheet<sup>60</sup>
- Sexual Violence Prevention<sup>61</sup>
  - Teen Sexual Violence Fact Sheet<sup>62</sup>

Office of Juvenile Affairs<sup>63</sup>

- Youth Service Agencies (YSAs)<sup>64</sup>

For more information about prevention initiatives led by the Injury Prevention Service at the Oklahoma State Department of Health please contact Violence Prevention Administrative Program Manager Brandi Woods-Littlejohn ([Brandiw@health.ok.org](mailto:Brandiw@health.ok.org)) or Violence Prevention Coordinator Emily Nicholls ([Emily.Nicholls@health.ok.gov](mailto:Emily.Nicholls@health.ok.gov)). For more information about the Office of Juvenile Affairs (OJA) and Youth Service Agencies (YSAs) please contact Constanzia Nizza ([Constanzia.Nizza@oja.ok.gov](mailto:Constanzia.Nizza@oja.ok.gov)). All three of them are currently serving on the Domestic Violence Fatality Review (DVFRB) and contributed to this article.

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<sup>58</sup> Injury Prevention Service. Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) Injury Prevention Service (IPS) Webpage. Source: <https://oklahoma.gov/health/health-education/injury-prevention-service.html>

<sup>59</sup> Intimate Partner Violence. Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) Injury Prevention Service (IPS) Webpage. Source: <https://oklahoma.gov/health/health-education/injury-prevention-service/intimate-partner-violence.html>

<sup>60</sup> Dating Violence Among Oklahoma Public High School Students Infographic. Oklahoma State Department of Health Publication. Source: <https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/health/health2/documents/teen%20dating%20violence%20infographic.pdf>

<sup>61</sup> Sexual Violence Prevention. Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) Injury Prevention Service (IPS) Webpage. Source: <https://oklahoma.gov/health/health-education/injury-prevention-service/sexual-violence-prevention.html>

<sup>62</sup> Sexual Violence Among Oklahoma Public High School Students Infographic. Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) Publication. Source: <https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/health/health2/aem-documents/prevention-and-preparedness/injury-prevention/handbooks/SAAM%20Infographic.pdf>

<sup>63</sup> Oklahoma Office of Juvenile Affairs Webpage. Source: <https://oklahoma.gov/oja.html>

<sup>64</sup> Youth Services Agency Information. Oklahoma Office of Juvenile Affairs Webpage. Source: <https://oklahoma.gov/oja/community-based-services/youth-services-agency-information.html>

# Spotlight on Oklahoma County VPO Data Project

Author: Larissa Bertapelle, Safety Project Manager at Palomar – Oklahoma City’s Family Justice Center

## ***Background – Palomar and the 1<sup>st</sup> Safety & Accountability Audit in Oklahoma County***

In July of 2023, Palomar initiated the first Safety & Accountability Audit in Oklahoma County, funded by the Improving Criminal Justice Responses (ICJR) Grant through the Office of



Violence Against Women (OVW). This audit is a 4-year project that examines specific processes related to domestic violence cases. It looks to ascertain system’s response to domestic abuse by looking at everything from the initial call to 911 placed by a victim to the course of the domestic violence case in court. The aim is to identify gaps and areas that can be improved that are specific to the community we serve. These audits allow us to better meet the needs of survivors, while increasing access to justice for them. A Safety and Accountability Audit is designed to identify practices that hinder victim safety and/or prevent batterers from being held accountable by looking to discover and articulate problems in domestic violence prevention and intervention processes.

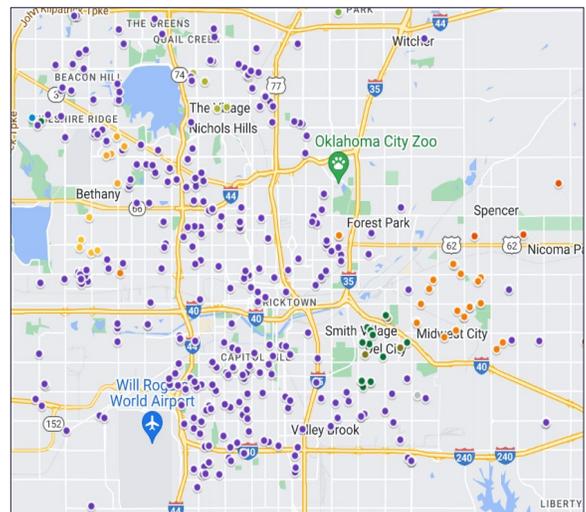


A successful Safety Audit hinges on building relationships and trusts with system stakeholders so that problematic practices can be addressed in an open and constructive manner. Doing this gets stakeholders to buy into the Safety Audit process and openly explore ways to improve current practices. This leads to strengthening systems already in place to protect victims and hold offenders accountable, which ultimate leads to a better coordinated community response to domestic violence.

## ***Tracking Victim Protective Order (VPO) Outcomes Using Data***

Palomar quickly identified a need to complete a comprehensive study, which remains ongoing, into the Victim Protective Order (VPO) process and outcomes in Oklahoma County. This groundbreaking initiative aims to evaluate demographic and geographical data of VPOs, the effectiveness of VPOs, and devising ways to strengthen the existing process into one that is more accessible for individuals from all backgrounds. This type of extensive analysis of filed VPOs is the first of its kind in Oklahoma County and will provide invaluable information to guide service delivery amongst an array of professionals into the future, including advocates, law enforcement, attorneys, and others working to improve domestic violence protection and prevention systems.

**VPO research map plotting petitioner addresses.**



The VPO Study examined a sample of 500 protective order petitions that had been filed through the Oklahoma County Court Clerk’s Office and presented to the district judge presiding over the VPO Docket, presently, the Honorable Judge Sara Murphy Bondurant. The data from these 500 petitions was initially extracted and recorded

into a spreadsheet and will be monitored throughout their respective lifespan until a disposition is entered for the last open case.

Some interesting highlights gathered from the initial data revealed that approximately 51% of petitions filed indicated the parties had been intimate partners (current or former spouses, dating relationship, cohabiting relationship, etc.), and that 52% of the initial petitions indicated that the protective order should be granted based on Domestic Abuse (this box was often checked with others, and was seldom checked independently). After initial hearings and associated dispositions were recorded, 54 final orders of protection were granted in court, half of which were based on a finding of domestic abuse.

### ***Changing the Narrative Around VPOs & Partnerships***

As the study has continued to progress, various conversations started taking place, coalescing into efforts to not only strengthen the already-available services for survivors of domestic violence and abuse, but to also extend offender accountability services into more shared spaces, creating a more effective wraparound effect that benefits survivors and the community. The work has also opened additional doors for more in-depth training for willing partners, in particular attracting various law enforcement agencies who have identified the need for better training pertaining to VPOs. These agencies were specifically looking for information regarding how to understand VPOs better, learning how to assist victims of domestic violence in completing an emergency petition outside of Palomar's hours, and best practices when responding to violation of protective order calls.

The positive response from law enforcement to this study underscores another main motivation for undertaking this study, which was to change the lens through which VPOs are viewed. Our goal has been to have stakeholders view them more as a tool and resource instead of just a simple piece of paper. By working to change how something is perceived and framing it in other terms we get an opportunity to change the culture around it. This in turn facilitates open conversations between stakeholders on how to best improve current processes. At the heart of this is the belief that our fight against domestic violence in Oklahoma can only be strengthened by fostering collaboration across systems, rather than working in silos.

### ***Contact Information:***

For more information about the VPO Study or the Safety & Accountability Audit, please contact Larissa Bertapelle, Safety Project Manager at Palomar via email at [Larissa.Bertapelle@palomarokc.org](mailto:Larissa.Bertapelle@palomarokc.org).

Data for this study continues to be gathered, updated, and evaluated on an ongoing basis. However, the author has consented for a sample of the data to be published in this report to give readers an idea of how to setup similar data-gathering efforts in other counties.

Initial Phase Data			
Metric, by category	Value	%	Notes associated with metric
<b>Party Demographics</b>			
Gender: M v F	71	14%	
Gender: M v M	40	8%	
Gender: F v M	288	58%	
Gender: F v F	101	20%	
Language: English	465	93%	
Language: Spanish	32*	6%	Based on what was able to be identified at filing (thru petition itself, notification from clerk's office...)
<small>Data was recorded solely from what was indicated by the petitioner. Many petitions were difficult to read and/or not filled out properly, making it difficult to properly record some data.</small>			
<b>Nature of Petitioner/Respondent Relationship</b>			
Strangers/No relation/Not indicated	13	3%	As indicated by writer of original petition
Legally married partners Formerly married (legally divorced)	72	14%	
Former intimate partners	19	4%	
	163	33%	
In-law relationship (current or former) Step relationship (current or former)	9	~2%	Inclusive of MIL, FIL, SIL, BIL, etc. Inclusive of step siblings, step parents, etc.
Filing on behalf of minors	13	~3%	
	2	<1%	
Employer-Employee, Co-workers	10	2%	
Landlord/Tenant	5	1%	
Neighbors*/Common or shared living situation	40	8%	Inclusive of roommates (former), housemates, co-residents, etc.
Familial: Parent-Child	43	9%	
Familial: Grandparent	2	<1%	
Familial: Siblings	6	1%	
Familial: Other	4	<1%	
Friends (current or former), Acquaintances Co-parenting situation	22	4%	Inclusive of classmates
	9	~2%	
Other	4	<1%	Inclusive of all indicated relationship types that do not fit into other previously listed categories
<small>Data was recorded solely from what was indicated by the petitioner. Many petitions were difficult to read and/or not filled out properly, making it difficult to properly record some data.</small>			
<b>Law Enforcement</b>			
Petition indicated law enforcement contact/involvement	230	46%	% of total petitions reviewed in Initial Phase (500)
Petition indicated that a police report was made	230	46%	% of total petitions reviewed in Initial Phase (500)
Police report # provided on petition	216	43%	*Many petitions indicated that LE was contacted and a report taken/made, but the case # was not presented in the petition itself.
LE Agency indicated on petition, if any:			*Many petitions indicated that LE was contacted/report taken/made, but LE agency was not specified.
OCPD	163	33%	% of total petitions reviewed in Initial Phase (500)
OCSO	23	5%	
Edmond PD	15	3%	
MWC PD	9	2%	
Del City PD Franklin Cty, Ohio	9	2%	
	1	<1%	
Logan Cty SO	1	<1%	
Bethany PD	5	1%	
UCO (Campus Police)	1	<1%	
Spencer PD	2	<1%	
Norman PD	2	<1%	
Warr Acres PD	2	<1%	
Choctaw PD	1	<1%	
The Village PD	1	<1%	
Cleveland Cty SO	1	<1%	
Langston University PD (Campus Police) Jones PD	6	1%	
Harrah PD	1	<1%	
	1	<1%	
Denton Cty	1	<1%	
OUPD	2	<1%	
SNU PD	1	<1%	
Tulsa PD	1	<1%	
Cases with related charges accepted by ADA	21	4%	This is NOT fully inclusive of all charges that may be pending/related to the sample of VPO cases. These are what was indicated on the petitions or easily found. Add'l research to be done to determine if more pending/resolved CM/CF cases are tied to VPOs within this study.
<small>Data was recorded solely from what was indicated by the petitioner. Many petitions were difficult to read and/or not filled out properly, making it difficult to properly record some data.</small>			
<b>Danger/Lethality Qualifiers</b>			
Weapons involvement	119	24%	% of total petitions reviewed in Initial Phase (500)
Strangulation indicated	56	11%	% of total petitions reviewed in Initial Phase (500)
Children included under EPO/VPO	204	41%	% of total petitions reviewed in Initial Phase (500)
Type of Matter:			
Domestic Abuse	258	52%	% of total petitions reviewed in Initial Phase (500)
Harassment	280	56%	% of total petitions reviewed in Initial Phase (500)
Stalking	194	39%	% of total petitions reviewed in Initial Phase (500)
Other crime against adult victim	123	25%	% of total petitions reviewed in Initial Phase (500)
Rape/Sexual Assault/Forcible Sodomy	28	6%	% of total petitions reviewed in Initial Phase (500)
Family/Household member of child victim	45	9%	% of total petitions reviewed in Initial Phase (500)
A&B w/ deadly weapon	23	5%	% of total petitions reviewed in Initial Phase (500)
Kidnapping	5	1%	% of total petitions reviewed in Initial Phase (500)
<small>Petitioners often selected more than one response in this category, and data was recorded as it was reported on each petition. Whether the petition was properly filled out or not was not a factor in recording the reported information.</small>			
<b>Disposition Data</b>			
Denied at first review	76	15%	
Emergency Protective Order (EPO) granted at filing	289	58%	
Hearing Only granted at filing	136	27%	
<b>SID Petition Data</b>			
# of petitions identifiable as requiring SID	32	6%	% of total petitions reviewed in Initial Phase (500)
# of Spanish-speaking petitions DENIED	1		
...EPO granted	22	69%	% of total SID-identifiable petitions from Initial Phase Data (32)
...HEARING ONLY granted	9	28%	% of total SID-identifiable petitions from Initial Phase Data (32)

Wave 1 Data			
Metric	Value	%	Notes associated with metric
Beginning sample carried over from prev wave	425	85%	% of original sample (500)
# Carrying on to next wave	255	51%	% of original sample (500)
<b>Continuances</b>			
TOTAL continuances	224	53%	% of wave 1 (425)
Continuances-Alias Auth'd.	71	17%	% of total wave 1 continuances (224)
Continued for INPD	23	5%	% of total wave 1 continuances (224)
Continued pending CPC/CM/CF	28	7%	% of total wave 1 continuances (224)
CPC	7	25%	% of total wave 1 continuances due to pending CPC/CM/CF (28)
CM	3	11%	% of total wave 1 continuances due to pending CPC/CM/CF (28)
CF	18	64%	% of total wave 1 continuances due to pending CPC/CM/CF (28)
<b>Dismissals/Denials/Transfers</b>			
TOTAL dismissals	90	21%	% of wave 1 (425)
Dismissed at petitioner's request	9	10%	% of total wave 1 dismissals (90)
Dismissed for FTP (including BPFTA)	80	89%	% of total wave 1 dismissals (90)
Denials	27	6%	% of wave 1 (425)
Transfers	29	7%	% of wave 1 (425)
<b>Final Orders</b>			
TOTAL final orders granted in Wave 1	54	13%	% of wave 1 (425)
...granted based on Stalking	4	7%	% of total wave 1 final orders granted (54)
...granted based on Harrassment	20	37%	% of total wave 1 final orders granted (54)
...granted based on Domestic Abuse	27	50%	% of total wave 1 final orders granted (54)
Respondent FTA, VPO granted.	27	50%	% of total wave 1 final orders granted (54)
2 year		11	
...based on domestic abuse	4	36%	% of total 2 year final orders granted (11)
...based on harassment	4	36%	% of total 2 year final orders granted (11)
...based on stalking	3	27%	% of total 2 year final orders granted (11)
5 year		28	
...based on domestic abuse	17	61%	% of total 5 year final orders granted (28)
...based on harassment	0		
...based on stalking	11	39%	% of total 5 year final orders granted (28)
Continuous/Lifetime		12	
...based on domestic abuse	8	67%	% of total continuous/lifetime final orders granted (12)
...based on harassment	0		
...based on stalking	4	33%	% of total continuous/lifetime final orders granted (12)
BIP ordered	15	28%	% of total wave 1 final orders granted (54)
MH Eval ordered	4	7%	
SA Eval ordered	2	4%	
Final Order granted by other than Bondurant	2	4%	1 Byers, 1 Hudson
TOTAL final orders granted based on domestic abuse with BIP also ordered	14	50%	% of total wave 1 final orders granted (54); % of total wave 1 final orders granted based on domestic abuse (27)
BIP ordered for Stalking	1	<1%	
<b>Miscellaneous Data</b>			
Petitioners appearing with/by counsel	38	9%	% of wave 1 (425)
Petitioners appearing pro se	387	91%	% of wave 1 (425)
Respondents appearing with/by counsel	65	15%	% of wave 1 (425)
Respondents appearing pro se	360	85%	% of wave 1 (425)
Total # of final orders granted with attorney present:			
Petitioner has counsel	3	6%	% of total wave 1 final orders granted (54)
Respondent has counsel	0		
Both parties have counsel	0		
# of cases denied/dismissed with counsel (1 or both parties present with/by counsel)	16	14%	% of all wave 1 dismissals + denials (117)
# of continuances granted with counsel (1 or both parties present with/by counsel)	38	25%	% of all wave 1 continuances granted (153) *This is excluding cases continued with alias authorized due to respondent not yet being served. (224-71=153)
# of transfers with counsel (1 or both parties present with/by counsel)	21	72%	% of all wave 1 transfers (29)
<b>SID Data</b>			
# of continuance due to being placed on incorrect docket	9	4%	% of total continuances in wave 1 (224)
# of cases heard/scheduled on SID	33	78%	% of total cases heard in wave 1 (425)
SID cases with FINAL ORDER granted	3	6%	% of total final orders granted in wave 1 (54)
SID Final Orders granted based on Domestic Abuse	0		
...harassment	0		
...stalking	3	6%, 75%,100%	% of all final orders (54), based on stalking (4), all SID final orders in wave 1 (3)
SID cases DENIED	3	9%	% of total Wave 1 SID cases (33)
SID cases CONTINUED	24	73%	% of total Wave 1 SID cases (33)
...continued in order to be heard on proper docket	9	38%	% of total Wave 1 SID continuances (24)
SID cases where 1 or both parties have counsel	9	27%	% of total Wave 1 SID cases (33)

Wave 2 Data			
Metric	Value	%	Notes associated with metric
Beginning sample carried over from prev wave	255	51%	% of original sample (500)
# Carrying on to next wave	202	40%	79% of sample wave 2 began with; 40% of original sample (500)
<b>Continuances</b>			
TOTAL continuances	176	69%	% of wave 2 (255)
Continuances-Alias Auth'd.	36	20%	% of total wave 2 continuances (176)
Continued for INPD	28	16%	% of total wave 2 continuances (176)
Continued pending CPC/CM/CF	29	16%	% of total wave 2 continuances (176)
CPC	8	28%	% of total wave 2 continuances due to pending CPC/CM/CF (29)
CM	3	10%	% of total wave 2 continuances due to pending CPC/CM/CF (29)
CF	18	64%	% of total wave 2 continuances due to pending CPC/CM/CF (29)
<b>Dismissals/Denials/Transfers</b>			
TOTAL dismissals	32	13%	% of wave 2 (255)
Dismissed at petitioner's request	4	13%	% of total wave 2 dismissals (32)
Dismissed for FTP (including BPFTA)	25	78%	% of total wave 2 dismissals (32)
Denials	5	2%	% of wave 2 (255)
Transfers	24	9%	% of wave 2 (255)
<b>Final Orders</b>			
TOTAL final orders granted in Wave 2	16	6%	% of wave 2 (255)
...granted based on Stalking	3	19	% of total wave 2 final orders granted (16)
...granted based on Harrassment	2	13%	% of total wave 2 final orders granted (16)
...granted based on Domestic Abuse	11	69%	% of total wave 2 final orders granted (16)
Respondent FTA, VPO granted.	13	81%	% of total wave 2 final orders granted (16)
<b>2 year</b>		<b>5</b>	
...based on domestic abuse	1	20%	% of total 2 year final orders granted (5)
...based on harassment	2	40%	% of total 2 year final orders granted (5)
...based on stalking	2	40%	% of total 2 year final orders granted (5)
<b>5 year</b>		<b>8</b>	
...based on domestic abuse	7	88%	% of total 5 year final orders granted (8)
...based on harassment	0		
...based on stalking	1	13%	% of total 5 year final orders granted (8)
<b>Continuous/Lifetime</b>		<b>2</b>	
...based on domestic abuse	2	100%	% of total continuous/lifetime final orders granted (2)
...based on harassment	0		
...based on stalking	0		
BIP ordered	6		% of total wave 2 final orders granted (16)
MH Eval ordered	0		
SA Eval ordered	0		
Final Order granted by other than Bondurant	2		1 Judge Byers, 1 Judge Hammond
TOTAL final orders granted based on domestic abuse with BIP also ordered	6	38%; 55%	% of total wave 2 final orders granted (16); % of total wave 2 final orders granted based on domestic abuse (11)
<b>Miscellaneous Data</b>			
Petitioners appearing with/by counsel	33	13%	% of wave 2 (255)
Petitioners appearing pro se	222	87%	% of wave 2 (255)
Respondents appearing with/by counsel	56	22%	% of wave 2 (255)
Respondents appearing pro se	199	78%	% of wave 2 (255)
Total # of final orders granted with attorney present:	1		
Petitioner has counsel	1		
Respondent has counsel	0		
Both parties have counsel	0		
# of cases denied/dismissed with counsel (1 or both parties present with/by counsel)	5	14%	% of all wave 2 dismissals + denials (37)
# of continuances granted with counsel (1 or both parties present with/by counsel)	36	26%	% of all wave 2 continuances granted (140) *This is excluding cases continued with alias authorized due to respondent not yet being served. (176-36=140)
# of transfers with counsel (1 or both parties present with/by counsel)	16	67%	% of all wave 2 transfers (24)
<b>SID Data</b>			
# of continuance due to being placed on incorrect docket	2	~1%	% of total continuances in wave 2 (176)
# of cases heard/scheduled on SID	16	6%	% of total cases heard in wave 2 (255)
SID cases with FINAL ORDER granted	2	13%	% of total final orders granted in wave 2 (16)
SID Final Orders based on Domestic Abuse	0		
...harassment	1	50%, 50%	% of all final orders (16), based on harassment (2), all SID final orders in wave 2 (2)
...stalking	1	33%, 50%	% of all final orders (16), based on stalking (3), all SID final orders in wave 2 (2)
SID cases DENIED	0		
SID cases CONTINUED	4	25%	% of total SID cases (16)
...continued in order to be heard on proper docket	2	50%	% of total continuances (4)
SID cases where 1 or both parties have counsel	6	38%	% of total SID cases (16)

# APPENDIX A: DVFRB OVERVIEW

## Review Board Composition

The Oklahoma Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board (DVFRB or Review Board) is a statutory body enabled by the Oklahoma legislature under 22 O.S. § 1601-1603. Legislation creating the Review Board took effect in 2001. As of November 1, 2019, the Review Board is composed of twenty (20) members. The following eight (8) members are mandated by statute:

- Chief Medical Examiner
- Designee of the Office of Attorney General, Victim Services Unit
- State Commissioner of Health
- State Department of Health, Director, Injury Prevention Services
- Director, Department of Human Services
- Director, Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation
- Commissioner, Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services
- Executive Director, Office of Juvenile Affairs

The remaining 12 Review Board members are appointed by the Attorney General. Appointees serve terms of two years and are eligible for reappointment. The following agencies submit the names of three nominees for consideration of appointment by the Attorney General:

- A Sheriff, Oklahoma Sheriff's Association
- Chief of a municipal police department, Oklahoma Association of Chiefs of Police
- A private practice attorney licensed in Oklahoma, Oklahoma County Bar Association
- A District Attorney, District Attorneys Council
- A physician, Oklahoma State Medical Association
- A physician, Oklahoma Osteopathic Association
- A nurse, Oklahoma Nurses Association
- A domestic violence representative, Oklahoma Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
- A domestic violence survivor, Oklahoma Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
- A tribal domestic violence representative, Native Alliance Against Violence
- A tribal domestic violence survivor, Native Alliance Against Violence
- A judge, Oklahoma Supreme Court

## Review Board Mission Statement

The mission of the Review Board is to reduce the number of domestic violence-related deaths in Oklahoma. The Review Board will perform multi-disciplinary reviews of statistical data obtained from sources within the jurisdiction and/or having direct involvement with the homicides. Using the information derived, the Review Board will identify common characteristics and develop recommendations to improve the systems of agencies and organizations involved to better protect and serve victims of domestic abuse.

## Review Board Recommendations

The Review Board uses data and information from in-depth case reviews to develop annual recommendations. Recommendations are critical to improving our communities' ability to respond effectively to domestic violence and enhance safety and access to resources for survivors. Recommendations are developed and presented as broad, rather than case specific, suggestions for professionals and systems to address the pressing issue of domestic violence. Additionally, the Review Board monitors updates on recommendations made in previous years.

The Review Board makes recommendations based on cases reviewed during the calendar year. However, actual homicides reviewed in any given calendar year may not necessarily have occurred in the same year as the review. Since the case must first be closed in the criminal justice system, there is usually a delay between the time the actual homicide occurred and when the case is reviewed. A closed case is one in which the homicide perpetrator is deceased or has gone through initial court proceedings. The exception is in the case of murder-suicide or familicide. With no surviving perpetrators, there are no criminal legal proceedings. Therefore, the Review Board reviews these cases in closer proximity to the actual time the death event occurred.

The Review Board is optimistic that the systems, organizations, and agencies involved in the safety of victims and in holding perpetrators of domestic violence accountable for their violent and abusive behavior will review and implement the recommendations in a sustained community effort to prevent homicide and increase the quality of life for families in Oklahoma.

## **Dissemination of Review Board Findings and Recommendations**

Each year, the Review Board disseminates findings in the form of an annual statistical report to the legislature as well as numerous agencies, organizations, and other stakeholders in Oklahoma. Program Staff is also available to conduct presentations, training, workshops, and discussions regarding the annual report and DVFRB statistical data.

## **Confidentiality**

Effective case review requires access to records and reports pertaining to victims and perpetrators. The Review Board collects and maintains all information in a confidential manner in accordance with 22 O.S. §1601. Per statute, the Review Board does not report personally identifying information and instead reports *de-identified and aggregate data* to maintain the confidentiality and privacy of domestic violence-related fatality victims and their families. When appropriate, the Review Board invites victims' families to appear before the Review Board to tell their stories. Their names remain confidential.

# APPENDIX B: LETHALITY ASSESSMENT

Per 21 O.S. § 142A-3, effective November 1, 2021 law enforcement officers are required to administer the 11-question Lethality Assessment provided on the Office of the Attorney General's website when responding to incidents of intimate partner violence. Based upon the results, officers must either provide referral information for shelters, domestic violence programs, and other social services to the victim or, if the assessment indicates the victim is at high risk of homicide, officers must implement the full lethality assessment protocol.

The full lethality assessment protocol requires law enforcement to initiate a referral to a domestic violence advocate from an OAG-certified or Tribal domestic violence program. The officer does this by informing the victim of the results of the assessment, then advising the victim that they will call the domestic violence hotline to allow the victim to speak with an advocate. After telling the domestic violence advocate of the results of the assessment, the officer offers the victim the opportunity to speak with the advocate for safety planning, advocacy, and referrals for services. If the victim declines to speak with the domestic violence advocate, law enforcement **must** document the refusal on the lethality assessment form.

For ease of accessibility, the most recent version of the Lethality Assessment is provided in this report (see next page).



# APPENDIX C: RESOURCES FOR PROFESSIONALS

The Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board has compiled a list of local and national domestic violence resources professionals may find helpful in their work and can be used to inform and support domestic violence intervention and prevention efforts, promote best practices, and endorse strategies to improve Oklahoma's collective response to domestic abuse. The list is by no means exhaustive but serves as a starting point for professionals in the domestic violence prevention and protection network.

## Local Resources

### **OKLAHOMA ATTORNEY GENERAL VICTIM ADVOCACY AND SERVICES UNIT (VASU)**

**405.521.3921** | [www.oag.ok.gov/victim-services](http://www.oag.ok.gov/victim-services)

Oklahoma's Victim Advocacy and Services Unit (VASU) supports crime victims and their families by providing information, connection to local services, and direct assistance throughout the criminal process. Updated lists of OAG-certified domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking programs can be found on their website, as can past Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board Annual Reports. The unit also provides training for law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and victim advocates and collaborates with statewide partners to conduct the annual Oklahoma Partners for Change Conference on Domestic & Sexual Violence and Stalking.

### **NATIVE ALLIANCE AGAINST VIOLENCE**

**405.217.0212** | <https://oknaav.org/>

The Native Alliance Against Violence (NAAV), is a nonprofit organization operating as Oklahoma's only tribal domestic violence and sexual assault coalition. The NAAV serves Oklahoma's federally recognized tribes and their tribal programs that provide victims with the protection and services they need to pursue safe and healthy lives. The NAAV website contains a list of tribal domestic violence programs in Oklahoma and other informational resources.

### **24-HOUR OKLAHOMA SAFELINE**

**800.522.SAFE (7233)** | <https://www.oag.ok.gov/victim-services>

The Oklahoma SafeLine is a confidential, toll-free, 24-hour hotline for Oklahomans seeking help or information about domestic violence, stalking and sexual assault. Translation services are available in 150 languages.

## National Resources

### **NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

**800.537.2238** | [www.nrcdv.org](http://www.nrcdv.org) | [www.vawnet.org](http://www.vawnet.org)

The National Resource Center on Domestic Violence (NRCDV) is a comprehensive source of information for those wanting to educate themselves and help others on the many issues related to domestic violence. Key initiatives work to improve community response to domestic violence and ultimately prevent its occurrence. NRCDV has many resources available to assist in planning domestic violence intervention and prevention efforts and offers comprehensive technical assistance, training, and resource development.

### **NATIONAL NETWORK TO END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

**202.543.5566** | <https://nnedv.org/>

NNEDV addresses the complex causes and far-reaching consequences of domestic violence through cross-sector collaborations at the state, national and international level. They provide comprehensive, specialized technical assistance and training to the coalitions in order to best address the needs of victims and local domestic violence programs and grant them access to technical assistance regarding best practices at the national level.

### **NATIONAL CENTER ON DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE**

**512.407.9020 | [www.ncdsv.org/index.html](http://www.ncdsv.org/index.html)**

Founded in 1988 and renamed the National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence (NCDSV) in 2003, this organization provides training and consultation to a myriad of professionals who work with victims and perpetrators: law enforcement; criminal justice professionals such as prosecutors, judges and probation officers; health care professionals including emergency response teams, nurses and doctors; DV/SA advocates and service providers; and counselors and social workers. In addition to these professionals, NCDSV also works with local, state, and federal agencies; state and national organizations; educators, researchers, faith community leaders, media, community leaders, elected officials, policymakers, and all branches of the military on collaborative projects aimed at ending violence against women.

#### **NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE**

**800.799.7233 | 800.787.3224 (TTY) | [www.thehotline.org](http://www.thehotline.org)**

The National Domestic Violence Hotline has been a vital link to safety for women, men, children, and families affected by domestic violence since 1996. They respond to calls 24/7 and provide confidential, one-on-one support by phone or by chat available through the website, offering crisis intervention, options for next steps, and direct connection to sources for immediate safety. Their database holds over 5,000 agencies and resources from communities across the country. Bilingual advocates are on hand to speak with callers and their Language Line offers translations in 170+ different languages. The Hotline is an excellent source for concerned friends, family, co-workers, and others seeking information and guidance on how to help. The Hotline educates communities through events, campaigns, and dynamic partnerships.

#### **NATIONAL COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

**737.225.3150 | [www.ncadv.org](http://www.ncadv.org)**

The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV) seeks to lead, mobilize, and raise the voices of professionals and survivors to support efforts that demand a change of conditions that lead to domestic violence. NCADV is dedicated to supporting survivors, holding offenders accountable, and supporting advocates. They collaborate with other national organizations to promote legislation and policies that serve and protect victims and survivors of domestic violence and work to change the narrative surrounding domestic violence. Their website contains training opportunities and resources for domestic violence professionals, victims, and survivors.

#### **BATTERED WOMEN'S JUSTICE PROJECT**

**800.903.0111, ext. 1 | [www.bwjp.org](http://www.bwjp.org)**

The Battered Women's Justice Project is the national resource center on civil and criminal justice responses to intimate partner violence. They provide technical assistance and training to professionals engaged in these systems: advocates, civil attorneys, judges and related court personnel, law enforcement officers, prosecutors, probation officers, batterer intervention program staff, and defense attorneys; as well as to policymakers, the media, and victims, including incarcerated victims, their families, and friends. BWJP also assists tribal and military personnel who fulfill equivalent positions in their respective institutional responses to intimate partner violence.

#### **THE NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND FIREARMS**

**800.903.0111, ext. 1 | <https://www.preventdvgunviolence.org/>**

The National Resource Center on Domestic Violence and Firearms and the Safer Families, Safer Communities Project work to prevent domestic violence-related homicides involving firearms. The website provides resources pertaining to effective interventions in both criminal and civil domestic violence cases that can decrease the risk posed by dangerous domestic violence offenders with access to firearms.

#### **NATIONAL HEALTH RESOURCE CENTER ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

**415.678.5500 | [www.futureswithoutviolence.org/health](http://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/health)**

The National Health Resource Center on Domestic Violence (HRC) supports healthcare professionals, domestic violence experts, survivors, and policy makers at all levels to improve healthcare's response to domestic violence. The center offers personalized, expert technical assistance at professional conferences and provides an online toolkit for healthcare providers and domestic violence advocates to prepare a clinical practice to

address domestic and sexual violence, including screening instruments, sample scripts for providers, and patient and provider educational resources.

#### **NATIONAL CENTER ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, TRAUMA, & MENTAL HEALTH**

**312.726.7020** | <http://www.nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org/>

The National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma and Mental Health provides training, support, and consultation to advocates, mental health and substance abuse providers, legal professionals, and policymakers as they work to improve agency and systems-level responses to survivors and their children in a way that is survivor-defined and rooted in the principles of social justice. The website offers resources, educational materials and webinars related to domestic violence, trauma, and mental health directed toward various professional groups.

#### **NATIONAL CENTER FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME**

**202.467.8700** | [www.victimsofcrime.org](http://www.victimsofcrime.org)

The National Center for Victims of Crime (NCVC) is a nonprofit organization that advocates for victims' rights, trains professionals who work with victims, and serves as a trusted source of information on victims' issues. They are the most comprehensive national resource committed to advancing victims' rights and helping victims of crime rebuild their lives. The NCVC collaborates with local, state, and federal partners to provide direct victim services; secure rights, resources, and protections for victims of crime; and train and educate professionals and communities on understanding victims of crime and improving how they are treated.

#### **OFFICE ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

**202.307.6026** | [www.justice.gov/ovw](http://www.justice.gov/ovw)

The Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) provides federal leadership in developing national and states' capacities to reduce violence against women and administer justice for and strengthen services to victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. In addition to providing information and resources regarding domestic violence, OVW provides funding opportunities for agencies and organizations serving victims.

## **National Culturally Specific & Underserved Population Resources**

#### **NATIONAL INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTER**

**855.649.7299** | [www.niwrc.org](http://www.niwrc.org)

The National Indigenous Women's Resource Center, Inc. (NIWRC) is a Native nonprofit organization that was specifically created to serve as the National Indian Resource Center Addressing Domestic Violence and Safety for Indian Women. NIWRC seeks to enhance the capacity of American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes, Native Hawaiians, and Tribal and Native Hawaiian organizations to respond to domestic violence and provide public awareness, resource development, training and technical assistance, policy development, and research activities.

#### **STRONGHEARTS NATIVE HELPLINE**

**844.762.8483** | [www.strongheartshelpline.org](http://www.strongheartshelpline.org)

StrongHearts Native Helpline is a safe domestic, dating, and sexual violence helpline for American Indians and Alaska Natives offering culturally appropriate peer support, safety planning, crisis intervention, referrals, information, and advocacy 24/7. StrongHearts is anonymous and confidential and can be reached by phone or chat through their website.

#### **ASIAN PACIFIC INSTITUTE ON GENDER-BASED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

**415.568.3315** | [www.api-gbv.org](http://www.api-gbv.org)

The Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Domestic Violence is a national resource center on domestic violence, sexual violence, trafficking, and other forms of gender-based violence in Asian and

Pacific Islander communities. It analyzes critical issues affecting Asian and Pacific Islander survivors; provides training, technical assistance, and policy analysis; and maintains a clearinghouse of information on gender violence, current research, and culturally specific models of intervention and community engagement. The Institute serves a national network of advocates, community-based service programs, federal agencies, national and state organizations, legal, health, and mental health professionals, researchers, policy advocates, and activists from social justice organizations working to eliminate violence against women.

**ESPERANZA UNITED** (formerly Casa de Esperanza)

**651-646-5553** | <https://esperanzaunited.org/en/>

The Casa De Esperanza, Latin@ Network of Healthy Families and Communities is a leading, national Latin@ organization, founded in 1982, providing emergency shelter for Latinas and other women, family advocacy, and shelter services to leadership development and community engagement opportunities for Latin@ youth, women, and men. The Network provides training and consultations to practitioners and activists throughout the US, as well as in Latin America, and produces practical publications and tools for the field, disseminates relevant, up-to-date information and facilitates an online learning community that supports practitioners, policy makers, and researchers who are working to end domestic violence.

**UJIMA: THE NATIONAL CENTER ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY**

**844.778.5462** | <https://ujimacommunity.org/>

Launched in 2016, Ujima, also known as The National Center on Violence Against Women in the Black Community, serves as a national, culturally specific services resources center to provide support to and be a voice for the Black Community in response to domestic, sexual, and community violence. Ujima was founded in response to a need for an active approach to ending domestic, sexual, and community violence in the Black Community. They are on the forefront of new training and outreach tools to reduce violence against and homicides of Black women. Ujima is a clearinghouse for research literature, webinars, national issue forums, regional trainings, community-specific roundtables, blogs, articles, and on-site technical assistance. Ujima also works with organizations to develop public service announcements, issue briefs, videos, monographs, and fact sheets.

**THE NATIONAL CLEARINGHOUSE ON ABUSE IN LATER LIFE (NCALL)**

**608.255.0539** | <https://www.ncall.us/>

A national project of End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin: The Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence, NCALL is committed to creating a world that respects the dignity of older adults and enhances the safety and quality of life of older victims and survivors of abuse by engaging communities to foster a collaborative, inclusive, survivor-centered response to abuse in later life. They provide technical assistance and consultation, training, and resources related to abuse in later life and elder abuse. information sheets, curricula, toolkits, videos, webinars, web graphics, and posters on a variety of topics for various audiences related to abuse in later life and unique issues facing older adults and survivors of abuse.

**THE NORTHWEST NETWORK OF BI, TRANS, LESBIAN AND GAY SURVIVORS OF ABUSE**

**206.568.7777** | <https://www.nwnetwork.org/>

The Northwest Network of Bi, Trans, Lesbian and Gay Survivors of Abuse (NNW) supports queer and trans survivors in reconnecting to their self-determination through advocacy-based counseling and community education. They offer resources, training, and technical assistance specific to the queer community to organizations and providers working in the domestic and intimate partner violence field.

# APPENDIX D: VICTIM/SURVIVOR RESOURCES

The Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board has chosen to include a list of local and national domestic violence resources specifically for victims and survivors of domestic and intimate partner abuse. The list is by no means exhaustive but serves as a starting point for victims and survivors seeking safety and assistance.

## Local Resources

### 24-HOUR OKLAHOMA SAFELINE

800.522.SAFE (7233) | <https://www.oag.ok.gov/victim-services>

The Oklahoma SafeLine is a confidential, toll-free, 24-hour hotline for Oklahomans seeking help or information about domestic violence, stalking and sexual assault, including shelter services. Translation services are available in 150 languages.

### OKLAHOMA ATTORNEY GENERAL VICTIM SERVICES

405.521.3921 | [www.oag.ok.gov/victim-services](http://www.oag.ok.gov/victim-services)

Oklahoma's Victim Services Unit supports crime victims and their families by providing information, connection to local services, and direct assistance throughout the criminal process. An updated [list](#) of OAG-certified DV/SA programs can be found on their website.

### ADDRESS CONFIDENTIALITY PROGRAM

866.227.7784 | <http://oag.omes.acsitefactory.com/address-confidentiality-program-acp>

The Address Confidentiality Program (ACP) provides victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking who apply a substitute address to use when interacting with state and local government agencies. The address serves as a victim's home, work, and school address and helps ensure a perpetrator does not use government records to locate them.

### ENHANCED OKLAHOMA VINE: CRIMINAL TRACKING & VICTIM NOTIFICATION SYSTEM / PROTECTIVE ORDER

877.654.8463 | <https://vinelink.vineapps.com/state/OK>

An automated notification system that allows victims and survivors to receive information on the location of a perpetrator following arrest, during prosecution, during a sentence to probation or confinement, and when there is any release or escape from confinement. Registering through the site allows victims and survivors to receive automated notifications by email, text, or phone and to check custody status online anytime. The site also includes a searchable database of service providers.

### OKLAHOMA CRIME VICTIMS' COMPENSATION

405.264.5006 | 800.745.6098 | <https://www.okvictimscomp.com/>

The purpose of the Crime Victims Compensation Fund is to provide a method to compensate for victims of violent crime for unreimbursed expenses related to the crime, including medical, dental and prescription costs, counseling and rehabilitation, loss of work income, replacement of services, and mileage reimbursement for medical, dental, and counseling appointments. An arrest of the offender does NOT have to take place to be eligible to file a claim; however, the victim and/or claimant is expected to fully cooperate in the apprehension, investigation, and prosecution of the perpetrator.

### OKLAHOMA STATE COURTS NETWORK UNIFORM PROTECTIVE ORDERS

[https://www.oscn.net/static/forms/aoc\\_forms/protectiveorders.asp](https://www.oscn.net/static/forms/aoc_forms/protectiveorders.asp)

Provides downloadable Word and PDF copies of the forms required to file a Petition for Protective Order. Also includes a link to a video made about the Protective Order Process made by the Bench & Bar Committee of the Oklahoma Bar Association.

### **OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS VICTIM SERVICES**

**405.425.2607** | <https://oklahoma.gov/doc/victim-services.html>

The Oklahoma Department of Corrections Victim Services provides information and resources to victims of crime while their perpetrator is in the DOC system. They can also help victims find assistance and support groups in their area.

### **OKLAHOMA STATE BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION VICTIM SERVICES**

**405.715.9505** | <https://osbi.ok.gov/services/victim-support/osbi-victim-services>

The OSBI Victims Support Program direct victims and families of victims in criminal cases handled by the OSBI to the resources available across the state of Oklahoma. The OSBI Victim Services Coordinators educate victims about the investigative & criminal justice processes and ensure victims are informed about their rights and the Crime Victim Compensation Program.

### **CARDINAL POINT: A DIRECTION FOR HOPE, CANADIAN COUNTY'S FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER**

**405.776.0990** | <https://cardinalpointok.org/>

Cardinal Point brings together needed services and resources for Canadian County victims of abuse in a centralized location. Victims and survivors receive individualized care, safety planning, service coordination, and support from the public and private providers on-site and in the community.

### **FAMILY SAFETY CENTER**

**918.742.7480** | 24-hour Number: **918.743.5763** | <https://fsctulsa.org/>

Tulsa's Family Safety Center strives to provide wrap-around services to domestic violence victims in a single location. On-site partners include Domestic Violence Intervention Services (DVIS) Advocacy, DVIS Legal Services, RSVP Safety Shepherd Volunteers, Tulsa County District Attorney's Office, Tulsa County Sheriff's Office, Tulsa Police Department - Family Violence Unit, Tulsa Metropolitan Ministries (TMM), YWCA of Tulsa Multicultural Service Center.

### **PALOMAR: OKLAHOMA CITY'S FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER**

**405.552.1010** | text **405.355.3556** | <https://palomarokc.org/>

Palomar provides free and confidential assistance to survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, trafficking and elder abuse and their children. Navigators assist victims and survivors with accessing available services from on-site providers that include victim advocates, law enforcement, legal assistance, mental health and substance abuse providers, and more. Palomar also has a network of resources for victims and survivors and their children residing in the Oklahoma City metro.

### **LEGAL AID SERVICES OF OKLAHOMA, INC.**

**888.534.5243** | **405.557.0020** | <https://www.legalaidok.org/>

Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma, Inc. (LASO) is a non-profit organization that assists low-income persons throughout Oklahoma with civil, non-criminal cases. They have 18 offices throughout the state and provide help with domestic violence issues. They can also assist domestic violence victims with immigration legal services. Victims can call or visit the website to apply for assistance.

## **Culturally Specific Local Resources**

### **NATIVE ALLIANCE AGAINST VIOLENCE**

**405.217.0212** | <https://oknaav.org/>

The Native Alliance Against Violence (NAAV), is a nonprofit organization operating as Oklahoma's only tribal domestic violence and sexual assault coalition. The NAAV is not a direct service provider; however, their website does have a [list](#) of Oklahoma's Tribal domestic violence and sexual assault programs.

### **LA LUZ ORG**

**405.724.8474 | 405.812.0762 (24/7 line) | <https://www.laluzokc.org/>**

La Luz provides services to Latinx victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Their services are confidential, free, and culturally and linguistically trauma-informed. Located in Oklahoma City, they serve the Oklahoma City metro area but can be contacted by anyone statewide.

### **LATINO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY**

**405.236.0701 | <https://lcdaok.com/>**

The Latino Community Development Agency (LCDA) is a non-profit organization that provides services for the Latinx community in Oklahoma, including domestic violence services. LCDA's mission is to enhance the quality of life of the Latino community through education, leadership services and advocacy.

### **DIVERSITY CENTER OF OKLAHOMA**

**405.604.5217 | <https://www.diversitycenterofoklahoma.org/>**

The Diversity Center of Oklahoma is a non-profit organization that provides quality services and community resources to the state's gender diverse and LGBTQ+ communities. Their mission is to reduce barriers for the Gender Diverse and LGBTQ+ communities and their families, including disenfranchised and marginalized people of color, by providing an OAG-certified DV/SA program, quality primary health care treatment, behavioral health treatment, and additional complimentary health care services.

## **National Resources**

### **NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE**

**800.799.7233 | 800.787.3224 (TTY) | [www.thehotline.org](http://www.thehotline.org)**

The National Domestic Violence Hotline responds to calls 24/7 and provides confidential, one-on-one support by phone or by chat available through the website, offering crisis intervention, options for next steps, and direct connection to sources for immediate safety. Their database holds over 5,000 agencies and resources from communities across the country. Bilingual advocates are on hand to speak with callers and their Language Line offers translations in 170+ languages.

### **VICTIMCONNECT RESOURCE CENTER**

**855.484.2846 | <https://victimconnect.org/>**

VictimConnect Resource Center (VCRC) is a weekday phone, chat, and text-based referral helpline operated by the National Center for Victims of Crime. Services are available for all victims of crime in the United States and its territories. Visitors to the hotline receive strength-based and trauma-informed services and referrals in over 200 languages.

### **LOVE IS RESPECT**

**866.331.9474 | Text LOVEIS to 22522 | <https://www.loveisrespect.org/>**

A project of the National Domestic Violence Hotline, Love is Respect offers inclusive, 24/7 information, support, and advocacy via phone, text, and live chat to young people between the ages of 13 and 26 who have questions or concerns about their romantic relationships. They also provide support to concerned friends and family members, teachers, counselors, and other service providers through the same free and confidential phone, text, and live chat services.

# APPENDIX E: DATA METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

## Types of Cases Reviewed

The Oklahoma statutory definition of domestic abuse found in 22 O.S. § 60.1. is “any act of physical harm, or the threat of imminent physical harm which is committed by an adult, emancipated minor, or minor child thirteen (13) years of age or older against another adult, emancipated minor or minor child who is currently or was previously an intimate partner or family or household member. The latter is further defined in statute as parents, including grandparents, stepparents, adoptive parents, and foster parents; children, including grandchildren, stepchildren, adopted children, and foster children; and persons otherwise related by blood or marriage living in the same household.

The Review Board and Program Staff identify and report domestic violence-related deaths using a broad interpretation of the statutory definition to capture as representative a picture as possible of domestic violence fatalities in Oklahoma. For purposes of this report, the Review Board and Program Staff identify incidents (also known as events or cases) in which one or more of the following conditions were present:

- The adult or teen homicide victim(s) and perpetrator(s) were current or former spouses or intimate partners, had a child in common, or were in a current or former dating relationship (intimate partner).
- The homicide victim(s) and perpetrator(s) were related by blood, marriage, adoption, or fostering, or one was in a current intimate or dating partner relationship with a co-habiting family member of the other, i.e., the child of a live-in partner, the live-in partner of a parent, etc. (family).
- The homicide victim was a bystander or Good Samaritan who intervened in or was nearby during an attempted or completed domestic violence homicide and was killed. This includes:
  - friends
  - family of current or former intimate or dating partners who are not co-habiting or do not have a child in common
  - law enforcement officers or other professionals attempting to assist the victim of domestic violence
  - co-workers
- The adult or teen homicide perpetrator(s) and adult or teen victim(s) were living together at the time of the homicide (roommates).
- The adult or teen homicide perpetrator(s) is the current or former spouse, intimate partner or dating partner of the adult or teen victim’s current or former spouse, intimate partner, or dating partner (triangle).
- The adult or teen homicide perpetrator(s) died by suicide within 72 hours of committing the homicide, including suicide by officer-involved shooting.

## Case Identification

The Review Board and Program Staff search multiple Oklahoma newspapers and their social media sites for homicide incidents which have occurred in the state and which appear or are known to have been related to domestic violence. A major source of cases that falls into this category is the *Tulsa World’s* Tulsa homicide case [database](https://tulsaworld.com/news/specialreports-databases/tulsa-homicide-case-database-1989-to-present/html_cd9f9c2e-2c52-11e3-aa7e-001a4bcf6878.html#tncms-source=login)<sup>65</sup>, which tracks all homicides in the Tulsa metropolitan area from 1989 to present.

Program Staff also utilize multiple local television news and their social media accounts of homicides as another source of domestic violence-related murders and suicides that have occurred in the state. They also regularly

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<sup>65</sup> [https://tulsaworld.com/news/specialreports-databases/tulsa-homicide-case-database-1989-to-present/html\\_cd9f9c2e-2c52-11e3-aa7e-001a4bcf6878.html#tncms-source=login](https://tulsaworld.com/news/specialreports-databases/tulsa-homicide-case-database-1989-to-present/html_cd9f9c2e-2c52-11e3-aa7e-001a4bcf6878.html#tncms-source=login)

search websites such as the [Gun Violence Archive](#)<sup>66</sup> and the [Gun Violence Memorial](#)<sup>67</sup> for Oklahoma gun deaths and use multiple sources, including some of those already listed, to evaluate if any of them are domestic violence-related.

In addition, Program Staff receives emails from police departments, particularly the Oklahoma City Police Department, regarding homicides and collect additional information to determine which are related to domestic violence. The Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation (OSBI) also provides Program Staff with an annual list of domestic violence homicides reported by law enforcement agencies across the state through the State Incident-Based Reporting System (SIBRS). Historically the list has only included homicides which met the statutory definition of domestic abuse, but in 2021 the OSBI and Program Staff met, and the list was expanded to include more categories incorporated in the DVFRB's broad definition of domestic violence-related homicides. Finally, OAG-certified, and Tribal DV/SA and batterer intervention programs are encouraged to contact Program Staff and inform them about any homicides in their area which are or appear to be related to domestic violence.

## Case Review Process

The fatality review process is like a public health model that promotes and protects the health of people and the communities where they live, learn, work, and play. Program Staff collects information related to cases from various sources, including:

- the medical examiner (autopsies)
- criminal, civil, and juvenile court documents
- law enforcement agencies
- District Attorneys
- Department of Human Services
- Department of Corrections
- Department of Health
- mental health, substance abuse, and co-occurring treatment providers and agencies
- hospitals
- batterer intervention programs
- media reports
- obituaries
- social media accounts

In some cases, when appropriate, Program Staff or the Review Board will obtain background information from surviving family members, friends, and others.

Because the Review Board conducts in-depth reviews, they are only able to review a portion of the overall number of qualifying domestic violence homicides in any given year. A case is considered qualified for review when all criminal cases related to the homicide have been disposed or when the perpetrator also dies during the incident, as in cases of homicide/suicide. Program Staff monitor the remainder of the cases. The Review Board discusses selected cases during monthly closed, confidential meetings. The Review Board strives to find ways in which the system could have better served the deceased victims prior to their deaths and surviving family members.

## The Review Process

When a case undergoes in-depth review, the Review Board and Program Staff:

- examine the circumstances and context of the death
- establish a timeline and summary of events leading up to the death incident going back as far as possible
- identify potential lethality risk factors (also known as *red flags*)
- determine which agencies were involved with the homicide perpetrator(s), victim(s), and child(ren) prior to the death event
- identify agency and system responses

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<sup>66</sup> <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/>

<sup>67</sup> <https://gunmemorial.org/>

- ascertain any collaboration, communication, and coordination between the agencies and organizations involved
- identify agencies' use of evidence-based best practices
- pinpoint victim challenges and barriers to obtaining help (such as language, income, transportation, cultural beliefs, and values)
- identify possible gaps in the prevention and protection system's response to domestic violence (such as criminal justice, protective order, juvenile/family court, law enforcement, judiciary, and child welfare)
- asks, "Is there anything that could have been done differently to improve the systemic and/or community response to the victim(s) and/or perpetrator(s)?"

## Data Collection, Validation, and Limitations

### Variables and Collection

Program Staff gather two sets of variables on cases confirmed as being related to domestic violence. Cases are confirmed as domestic violence-related by requesting and reviewing information from at least three (3) sources, including the law enforcement report(s) pertaining to the homicide, death certificate(s), and news media stories, to determine the relationships of those involved and the circumstances of the fatality event. The first set of variables is collected for *all cases* in a calendar year verified as being domestic violence related. These are the variables needed to complete the statistical analyses contained within the annual report, including but not limited to demographic information (i.e., age, sex, race, ethnicity, etc.), relationship types, locations of incidents and deaths, causes and manners of deaths, and criminal justice information. These are referred to as the *master case list variables*.

The second set of variables is much more comprehensive than the first set and is currently primarily collected for cases that undergo in-depth review by the Review Board. This set contains the approximately 248 variables outlined in the *DVFRB Codebook Protocol v4.2* and are entered in the DVFRB Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) database after coding. These are known as the *Codebook variables* and were developed by previous program staff based on public health and domestic violence statistical research and guidance. Due to the number of domestic violence-related fatalities which occur each year and the limited number of staff, collecting and entering the Codebook variables for every confirmed case has not been possible for several years. However, program staff work diligently each year to collect and enter the variables for the backlog of cases.

The information needed to complete the master case list and Codebook variables is gleaned from the documents (listed above) collected by Program Staff. The former's variables are entered onto the master case list, an Excel book in which every confirmed domestic violence-related fatality is recorded by calendar year. The latter's variables are coded following the guidelines outlined in the *Codebook Protocol* and entered into the SPSS database.

### Validation

Variables are validated using three sources whenever possible. This is due in large part to differing information on the numerous sources used by Program Staff to collect data. For example, when collecting variables related to race and ethnicity, the law enforcement report may indicate a victim is white and their death certificate and Child Welfare records show they are Native American. Program staff would code the victim as Native American in this case. In cases where there is no agreement among the sources on a specific variable and/or the information cannot be found at least two sources, Program Staff will prioritize information reported to sources by the victim (i.e., victim reported in a mental health assessment they are Native American) and/or an immediate family member (i.e., the informant for the victim's death certificate is the victim's mother, who reported they were a Tribal member). Many master case list variables collected are cross validated by the Program Manager and the Research Analyst to ensure accuracy.

## **Limitations**

Since Program Staff relies primarily on media reports and online databases to identify potential domestic violence-related fatalities, there is no certainty that all deaths are captured. Additional domestic violence fatalities could be found among deaths ruled to be due to unintentional injuries, to injuries of undetermined intent, and suicide. In particular, deaths due to strangulation, suffocation, drug overdoses, and poisonings may not be ruled a homicide or reported as such by the media.<sup>68</sup>

As indicated, Program Staff encounter numerous barriers when collecting information to complete the master case list and Codebook variables. In addition to conflicting information across sources, Program Staff may be unable to find the pertinent information in the sources they gather or are not granted access to documents that may contain the information, despite the wide purview granted to the DVFRB in 22 O.S. § 1601. In addition, some documents may be destroyed by agencies or organizations after a certain timeframe, making it difficult to collect certain information; for example, behavioral health records may be destroyed seven years after a victim discharges from services (with a few exceptions). This is particularly applicable to Codebook variables due to the sheer number of variables coded.

Because the information needed for certain variables may be conflicting or inaccessible, representative longitudinal and/or multivariate analyses of variables can be challenging. In addition, several changes in the Program Staff since the DVFRB's inception have resulted in documented and undocumented changes in data collection and validation methods. Both factors combined result in caveats for all data analyses conducted by Program Staff to date. To address this issue, current Program Staff are working on a Program Manual that outlines, among other things, procedures for data collection and validation, particularly for the master case list variables. In addition, the National Domestic Violence Fatality Review Initiative is working on a National Clearinghouse for Uniform Reporting System, a five-year initiative sponsored by the Office of Violence against Women and US Department of Justice, in which Oklahoma is a potential contributor.

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<sup>68</sup> For example, in Utah 33.1% of the IPV-related fatality victims from 2009-2016 were suicides. (Violence Injury & Prevention Program, 2005).

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# 2023 DVFRB ANNUAL REPORT

## Oklahoma Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board

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If you or someone you know needs help in a domestic violence situation, please call:

**SafeLine**

**1-800-522-SAFE (7233)**

If you need general information about domestic violence, please call:

The Office of the Attorney General  
Victim Advocacy & Services Unit  
(405) 521-3921

If you need more information about the Oklahoma Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board, please call:

The Office of the Attorney General  
(405) 521-3921

**If you are in an emergency situation please dial 9-1-1.**

## Please go to [www.oag.ok.gov](http://www.oag.ok.gov)

- Copies of reports from previous years;
- Oklahoma Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board mission, purpose, definitions, methods and limitations of data collection, and data; and
- History of the Oklahoma Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board.

**Please widely disseminate this  
annual report.**

*Publication prepared by the Oklahoma Office of the Attorney General, Gentner Drummond, on behalf of the Oklahoma Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board (DVFRB).*

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