



MURIEL BOWSER
MAYOR

January 9, 2024

The Honorable Phil Mendelson
Chairman
Council of the District of Columbia
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 504
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Chairman Mendelson:

I am pleased to transmit to the Council of the District of Columbia the 2023 Annual Report of the Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board ("Board"), provided pursuant to D.C. Official Code § 16-1052(d).

The report summarizes the work undertaken by the Board from January 2022 through December 2022, describes a year in review and 2022 homicides that are domestic in nature, changes in legislation and updates to the protections for survivors of domestic violence in the District, and provides an update on District agency improvements undertaken in response to previous Board recommendations.

If you have any questions regarding the report, please contact Jennifer Porter, Director of the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants, at 202-724-7216, or by email at jennifer.porter@dc.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Muriel Bowser".

Muriel Bowser
Mayor

Enclosure



District of Columbia
Domestic Violence Fatality
Review Board

2023 Annual Report

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Introduction & Overview

The District of Columbia’s Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board (DVFRB) is honored to present its **2023 Annual Report** highlighting work undertaken from January through December 2022. The DVFRB represents one part of the District’s efforts to address domestic violence and improve the safety and lives of residents.

Domestic violence and related homicides are serious public health concerns. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, more than **10 million** women and men in the United States experienced physical violence by a current or former partner each year; approximately one in four women and nearly one in seven men experienced severe physical violence by a partner at some point in their lifetime.¹ Locally, an estimated **39 percent** of women in DC had been physically or sexually assaulted by an intimate partner in their lifetime.²

More recently, pandemic-related lockdowns and adjacent stressors caused those numbers to spike—particularly for victims and survivors of intimate partner violence. Criminal justice researchers estimate that rates of domestic violence in the U.S. rose by more than 8 percent during this time.³ Indeed, a combination of factors, including isolation from community, constant close quarters, economic instability, and medical anxiety, contributed to an alarming rise in domestic violence incidence around the world.⁴ As the World Health Organization declares the end of the global pandemic and data scientists grapple with tallying its effects, system response agencies and

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- 1 Truman, J.L., & Morgan, R.E. (2014). *Nonfatal Domestic Violence, 2003-2012 (Rep.)*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. doi:<https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/ndvO312.pdf>
 - 2 Smith, S.G., Chen, J., Basile, K.C., Gilbert, L.K., Merrick, M.T., Patel, N., Walling, M., & Jain, A. (2017). *The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010-2012 State Report*. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR34305.v1>
 - 3 Piquero, Alex R., Wesley G. Jennings, et al. (March 2021). *Domestic Violence During COVID-19: Evidence from a Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis*. Washington, D.C.: Council on Criminal Justice. <https://build.neoninspire.com/counciloncj/wp-content/uploads/sites/96/2021/07/Domestic-Violence-During-COVID-19-February-2021.pdf>
 - 4 UN Women, “Issue Brief: COVID-19 and Ending Violence Against Women and Girls,” *Gender-Based Violence* 1 (2020). <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/issue-brief-covid-19-and-ending-violence-against-women-and-girls>

networks have an opportunity to better assess needs in their communities as well as the gaps in or strengths of their responses. This work is especially important as domestic violence is often a precursor to homicide—another violent crime on the rise.

ABOUT THE DVFRB

The Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board works to prevent intimate partner and other domestic violence homicides in the District by improving the response of individuals, the community, and government agencies to domestic violence.⁵ The Board is the formally established entity for:

- tracking domestic violence-related deaths,
- assessing the circumstances surrounding those deaths and any associated risk indicators, and
- making recommendations to improve the systemic response to victims of domestic violence.

This city-wide, collaborative effort was originally established by the Uniform Interstate Enforcement of Domestic Violence Protection Orders Act of 2002 ([DC Code § 16-1051](#) *et seq.*, effective April 11, 2003). The Board comprises a cadre of experts from the areas of law enforcement, victim advocacy, social services, health care, child welfare, corrections, the judicial system, and invested community members with relevant subject matter expertise. A major strength of the DVFRB is the purposeful inclusion of a diverse set of system and agency representatives, as well as community stakeholders.

Annual DVFRB findings and recommendations are based on the Board's expert analysis of police, court, medical, and other public records.⁶

⁵ D.C. Code §16-1052

⁶ Media records include data from [DC Witness](#), which tracks all homicides in the District of Columbia. Only those homicides of victims 15 years and older that were attributed to domestic violence are included in this report.

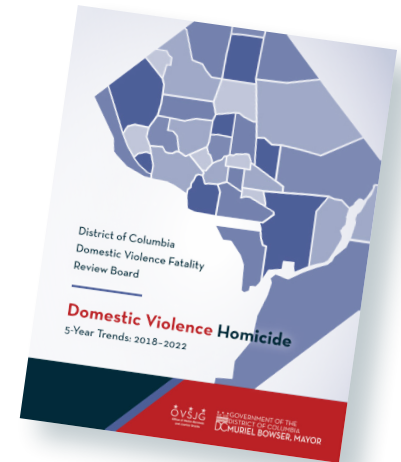
DVFRB Makeup	DVFRB 2022 Board Members ⁷	
<p>DVFRB legislation provides for 25 appointed members, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 governmental entities appointed by the Mayor; • 7 federal, judicial, and private agencies or entities with domestic violence expertise, either appointed by the Mayor or at the Mayor's request; • 8 community representatives (non-DC government employees) appointed by the Mayor, with the advice and consent of the Council, who serve up to a three-year term. 	GOVERNMENTAL ENTITIES	
	Shermain Bowden	Department of Behavioral Health
	Cheryl Bozarth	Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants
	Sasha Breland	Office of the Chief Medical Examiner
	Kafui Doe	Department of Health
	Susie Dunn	Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department
	Sarita Freeman	Child and Family Services Agency
	Keisha Keith	Department of Corrections
	Cindy Kim	Office of the Attorney General
	Jennifer Porter	Mayor's Office of Women's Policy Initiatives
	Subrena Rivers	Metropolitan Police Department
	ENTITIES WITH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE EXPERTISE	
	Rita Blandino	Superior Court of the District of Columbia
	Rachel Camp	University Legal Clinics
	Dawn Dalton	Coalition Against Domestic Violence
	Lenore Jarvis	District of Columbia Hospitals
	Toshira Monroe	Domestic Violence Housing Organizations
	Dana Joseph	Office of the U.S. Attorney—District of Columbia
	Jennifer Wesberry	Domestic Violence Advocacy Organizations
	COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES	
	Karen Barker Marcou	Ashley Joyner Chavous (Co-Chair)
	Amelia French	Laila Leigh (Co-Chair)
Lisa Geller	Varina Winder	
Beverly Jackson	Vacant	

⁷ Susie Dunn replaced Queen Anunay in April; Keisha Keith replaced Sarah Brooks in October; and Rita Blandino took over from Nelly Montenegro in May. Karen Barker Marcou and Amelia French departed in September.

ABOUT THE 2023 REPORT

The 2023 Annual Report encompasses: an outline of the DVFRB's work during the 2022 calendar year, updates regarding related District protections, and any recommendations made to District agencies based on the Board's review of recently closed domestic violence-related homicides. Relevant agency responses to the recommendations are also included.

Statistical trends and related findings are covered in our annual companion report, "[Domestic Violence Homicide: 5-Year Trends.](#)" These longer-term data sets provide necessary additional context for analyzing the scope of the problem and the impact of systems change. However, demographic information for the prior year's domestic violence-related homicides are featured here in "[2022 by the Numbers.](#)"



STANDARD CASE-SELECTION AND REVIEW PROCESS

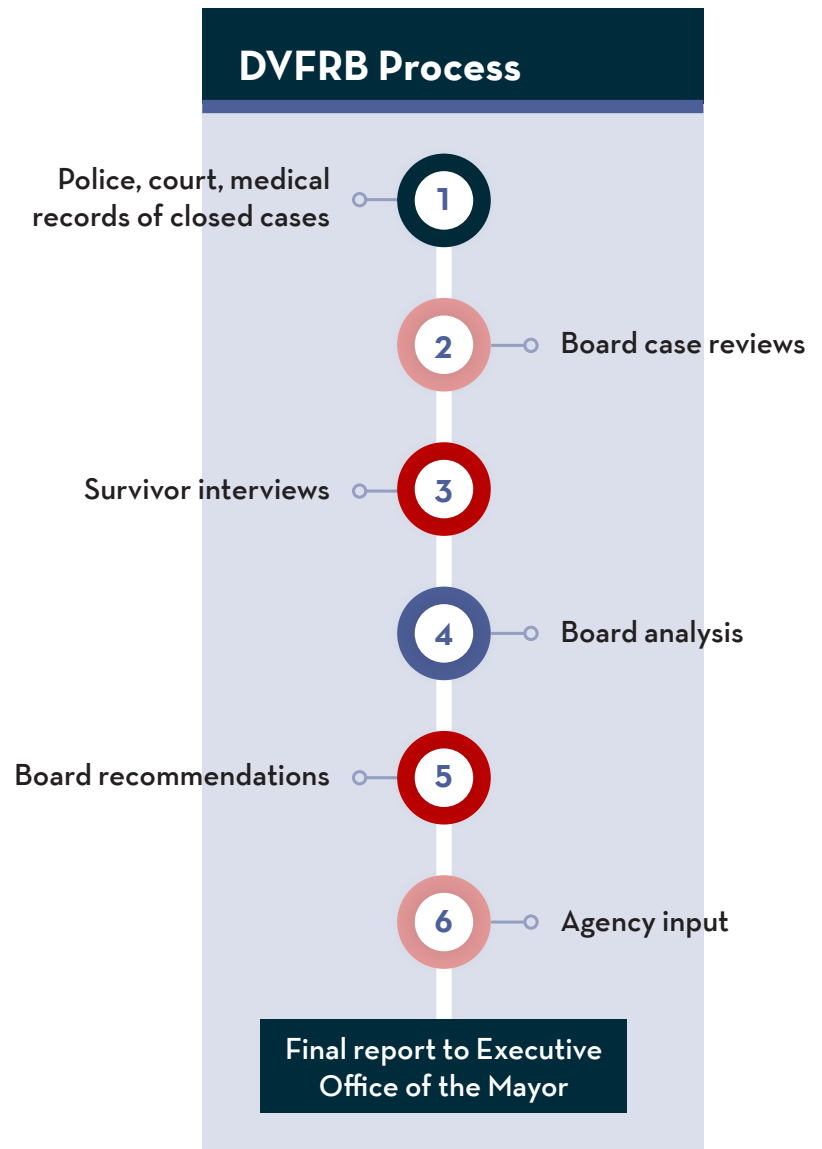
The DVFRB achieves its work through a multidisciplinary analysis of the victims' experiences, perpetrator behaviors, and the general circumstances surrounding the fatalities. Through the case-review process, the Board identifies lethality factors and trends related to the decedents, perpetrators, and systems responsible for supporting, assisting, and protecting victims from family or intimate partner violence. The cooperative efforts of the review process provide an opportunity to enhance and increase services and improve the District's response to address the needs of residents.

The DVFRB meets as a body periodically throughout the year and maintains other contact as needed. Domestic violence homicide cases are selected for review based on agreed-upon criteria established by the Board, and cases are only reviewed after closure of the criminal case.

The DVFRB currently focuses its in-depth reviews and recommendation process only on intimate partner homicides, which tend to follow similar patterns and could, therefore, benefit from systemic prevention efforts. A well-developed body of scientific research surrounding intimate partner fatality risk factors and prevention strategies guides the Board's review of these cases. While the

Board monitors and provides statistics of homicides committed by family members, relatives, roommates, and “common partners,”⁸ the Board’s annual recommendations stem from intimate partner homicide (IPH) cases. The Board seeks to honor these victims by attempting to understand their experience and using that knowledge to shape recommendations related to policy, practice, training, and public awareness.

DVFRB meetings are confidential and, thus, are not subject to open meeting rules; Board members must sign confidentiality statements. The Board obtains records from a variety of public and private agencies and programs that had contact with or provided services to the victim or the perpetrator. The Board coordinator prepares an initial summary of case material and provides the relevant records through a confidential file-sharing system. During review meetings, Board members discuss the facts and circumstances leading up to the homicide and identify potential gaps in service delivery and systemic breakdowns. The Board then proposes recommendations and suggests system improvements to prevent future homicides. The fatality review process is not investigative, and Board decisions are made collectively.



8 “Common partners” are defined by statute as people whose only connection to each other is a current or former intimate partner in common.

A retrospective analysis of fully adjudicated fatalities allows the Board to objectively observe gaps in the service system without assigning fault. With its “no blame” philosophy, the DVFRB hopes to inspire improved agency and system collaboration and a sense of urgency to work together to create a safer community for victims of domestic violence.

Domestic Violence Fatalities Defined

According to [DC Code § 16-1051](#), a “domestic violence fatality” is a homicide that occurs under any of the following circumstances:

- The alleged perpetrator and victim resided together at any time;
- The alleged perpetrator and victim have a child in common;
- The alleged perpetrator and victim were married, divorced, separated, or had a romantic relationship, not necessarily including a sexual relationship;
- The alleged perpetrator is or was married to, divorced, or separated from, or in a romantic relationship, not necessarily including a sexual relationship, with a person who is or was married to, divorced, or separated from, or in a romantic relationship, not necessarily including a sexual relationship, with the victim;
- The alleged perpetrator had been stalking the victim;
- The victim filed a petition for a protective order against the alleged perpetrator at any time;
- The victim resided in the same household, was present at the workplace of, was in proximity of, or was related by blood or affinity to a person who experienced or was threatened with domestic violence by the alleged perpetrator; or
- The victim or the perpetrator was or is a child, parent, sibling, grandparent, aunt, uncle, or cousin of a person in a relationship that is described within this subsection.

Types of Domestic Violence Homicide

Intimate Partner Homicide	Non-Intimate Partner Homicide
Current spouse	Parent, child, sibling, other family
Former spouse	3rd-party to current/former intimate partner
Current intimate partner (unmarried)	Roommate
Former intimate partner (unmarried)	Landlord/renter

Common Lethality Risk Factors

- Abuser has access to victim
- Abuser has a history of acute mental health problems (including depression)
- Abuser has a history of physical assault
- Police have received prior calls about abuser
- Abuser threatens homicide or suicide
- Abuser expresses extreme jealousy and possessiveness
- Abuser controls victim's daily activities/contact with others
- Abuser is unemployed
- Abuser consumes drugs/alcohol
- Abuser demonstrates lack of respect for the law
- Abuser destroys property
- Abuser obsesses over partner
- Abuser feels sense of ownership over victim
- Abuser threatens/intimidates victim's family
- Abuser has a history of sexual violence
- Abuser has strangled victim during previous assaults
- Abuser has access to firearms
- Abuser is publicly violent toward victim
- Abuser and victim are separated/estranged
- Abuser has a history of stalking
- Victim has children who are not the abuser's
- Abuser witnessed intimate partner violence as a child
- Abuser has abused pets
- Abuser and victim had a short courtship

2022 DVFRB Activities

The DVFRB is a volunteer body composed of public service professionals across a range of disciplines. From January through December 2022, the Board engaged in the following critical work:

- **Met via Webex:** The Board met 11 times during the calendar year, for a total of roughly 400 hours of discussion, training, and case review.
- **Appointed new Board members:** During 2022, new Board representatives were appointed for the Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department, the Department of Corrections, and the Superior Court of the District of Columbia. The Board also welcomed Community Member Lisa Geller.
- **Published an internal Board Directory:** The DVFRB coordinator compiled a directory of all current Board members to facilitate communication and provide background information on relevant areas of expertise.
- **Conducted in-depth case reviews:** The Board examined three complex intimate partner-related homicide cases.
- **Considered risk factors** and what data can and should be used for trends analysis. The DVFRB coordinator presented on available tools for risk assessment.
- **Explored joint case reviews**—and established procedures for multijurisdictional review—with surrounding areas, including counties in Maryland.

Operational Modifications

Originally imposed due to pandemic limitations, the following operational modifications have allowed the DVFRB greater flexibility, and thus frequency, in conducting its business. Therefore, they have been adopted for continued use as standard operating procedure:

- Use of a HIPAA-compliant, cloud-based file-share service that allows members to securely access, read, and upload records and files;
- Use of Webex to schedule and hold secure and confidential online meetings (with assistance from MOTA along with the Office of the Chief Technology Officer); and
- An agreement by members to uphold confidentiality policies while working remotely.

- **Facilitated related District systems briefings:** To foster a deeper understanding among the Board of District programs and agencies tasked with responding to domestic violence and homicide victims, the DVFRB coordinator facilitated a series of briefings conducted by partners across the city. To that end:
 - DC SAFE briefed the Board on their Supportive Advocacy Services, Crisis Response Program, Domestic Violence System Review, and Lethality Assessment Project—components of the High Risk Domestic Violence Initiative and the SAFE Space shelter. Information about the Domestic Violence Intervention Pilot Project was also shared.
 - An Attorney Advisor from the DC Sentencing Commission presented on the District’s sentencing guidelines, with a focus on DC sentencing of homicides.
 - The Project Coordinator for Project Change—DC’s Coordinated Hospital-Based Violence Intervention Program—spoke about the intervention program and who it serves.
- **Continually assessed status of the field:** The Board stayed abreast of ever-changing procedures, policies, and ways of providing services across the city during and post-COVID, and regularly incorporated those changes into a flexible workflow.
- **Responded to inquiries:** The Board responded to public and agency inquiries related to its work.
- **Published “Domestic Violence Homicide: 5-Year Trends, 2017-2021”:** This annual snapshot of domestic violence-related homicides in the District discusses key findings and trends over a five-year span. The DVFRB coordinator worked with system representatives across agencies to compile and reconcile domestic violence-related homicides in the District. The compiled data presented in these trends reports help shed light on who is most at risk of violence, from whom they are most at risk, and how best to intervene to prevent future domestic violence homicides.
- **Published “DVFRB 2022 Annual Report”:** This annual report included a recap of the DVFRB’s work over the 2021 calendar year, how the Board adapted to the COVID-19 public health crisis, and new recommendations based on a review of recently closed domestic violence-related homicides.

Protections in the District

The District has a robust set of protections and responses designed to reduce the harm of domestic violence. Highlighted below are those programs particularly tailored to decreasing fatalities.

Extreme Risk Protection Order

Relatively new to the District is the extreme risk protection order (ERPO), sometimes referred to as the “red flag law.” ERPOs are civil court orders designed to quickly remove a firearm from someone who poses a danger to themselves or others. Family members, partners, roommates, police officers, mental health professionals, and select others can petition DC Superior Court to issue an ERPO, allowing law enforcement officers to retrieve any firearms or ammunition from the subject of the order (the respondent). A temporary order can be granted in as little as one business day, while a final order can be granted within two weeks and lasts for up to one year at a time. Learn more from the [Office of the Attorney General](#). According to DC Superior Court, 17 ERPO cases (tracked as EPO) were disposed in 2022.

Lethality Assessment Program

Lethality assessments (also called danger assessments) are used to determine if a victim is at high risk for re-assault, major injury, or homicide. Lethality assessment programs (LAPs) are used in jurisdictions throughout the country, and—as in the District—are often a partnership among victim services, police departments, the courts, and other relevant agencies. The LAP is led by DC SAFE and operates under a protocol implemented by the City Administrator.

Since its inception in 2009 through December 2022, the LAP has screened 69,280 survivors and identified 33,587 as being at high risk for serious repeat assault or homicide. Those survivors can then receive expedited, coordinated, low-barrier access to services. In 2022, 3,468 screenings were conducted, with 829 identified as high lethality risk, and DC SAFE sent 356 LAP alerts. Over the life of the program, seven of those identified as at high risk have been killed.

LAP is part of a broader High Risk Domestic Violence Initiative (HRDVI), and is connected to the work of the Domestic Violence Systems Review (DVSR) team, a multi-agency accountability task force for complex, high-risk cases.

Address Confidentiality Program

The District’s Address Confidentiality Program (ACP), administered by the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants (OVSJG), provides a legal substitute address for eligible DC residents to maintain the confidentiality of their actual address. This program helps victims of domestic violence, sexual offenses, stalking, or human trafficking who fear for their safety by shielding their street address from public records, providing one tool in an individual’s broader safety plan. The Address Confidentiality Act was passed in 2018 ([DC Code § 4-555.01](#) et seq., effective July 3, 2018), and the program launched in 2020.

DVSR Partner Agencies

- DC SAFE (*program lead*)
- Child and Family Services Agency
- Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA)
- DC Forensic Nurse Examiners
- DC Public Schools
- Department of Behavioral Health
- Department of Human Services
- District of Columbia Housing Authority
- District of Columbia Superior Court
- Metropolitan Police Department
- Network for Victim Recovery of DC
- Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia
- Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants
- Pretrial Services
- Project CHANGE Hospital Violence Intervention Project (HVIP)
- U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Columbia

Civil Protective and Anti-Stalking Orders

On April 27, 2021, the Intrafamily Offenses and Anti-Stalking Orders Amendment Act of 2020 went into effect. This act in part amended previous civil protection order (CPO) provisions as well as created DC's first anti-stalking order (ASO). Notable changes include the following:

- CPOs are court orders that require the respondent to stay away from and have no contact with the petitioner. CPOs are available for sexual assault and sex or labor trafficking survivors, as well as intimate partners, family members, and household members. CPOs are now valid for up to 2 years, and a judge may extend the order for good cause. Additionally, minors ages 13-16 may file on their own behalf: against a respondent for an intrafamily offense; against a person who sexually assaults them; and under sex trafficking of children if they are the victim. Any minor can have a petition filed on their behalf by a parent, legal guardian, legal custodian, family member who is 18 years old or older, or sexual assault youth victim advocate. The court can also extend a temporary protection order (TPO) for up to 28 days at a time or for a longer time period with the consent of both parties ([DC Code § 16-1004](#)). In 2022, there were 4,900 new filings under intrafamily cases.
- ASOs are similar to CPOs but apply to petitioners who allege the respondent stalked them within the previous 90 days, regardless of their relationship to one another. Stalking behaviors are defined in [DC Code § 22-31A](#). These orders direct the respondent to have no contact with and stay away from both the petitioner and specified locations, among other requirements. Minors 16 and older may file on their own behalf; minors under 16 must have a parent or legal guardian/custodian file on their behalf (although adult family members can file for minors 13 years or older). ASOs can remain in effect for up to two years. The court can also grant a temporary order (TASO) without notice to the respondent—either in 14-day increments or up to 28 days with good cause ([DC Code § 16-10A](#)). According to the District of Columbia court's statistical summary, there were 1,124 new filings under the ASO in 2022.
- The Amendment also includes offenses against animals as intrafamily offenses, if the animal belongs to the petitioner, a family member, or household member.

After a CPO or ASO is put into effect, respondents are prohibited from purchasing firearms for the duration of the order and must relinquish possession of any existing firearms and ammunition. The bill also established a unit within the DC Metropolitan Police Department dedicated to serving CPOs and requires them to do so at the petitioner's request.

Employment Protections

Under the Employment Protections for Victims of Domestic Violence, Sexual Offenses, and Stalking Amendment Act of 2018 ([DC Code § 2-1401.01](#) et seq., effective April 11, 2019), employers, employment agencies, and labor organizations ("employers") in the District of Columbia may not discriminate against an employee or an applicant ("employee") based on their status as a victim or family member of a victim of domestic violence, a sexual offense, or stalking ("DVSOS"). The law amended the DC Human Rights Act of 1977.

Specifically, employers may not take an adverse employment action against an employee for the following actions if they pertain to DVSOS: participating in a legal proceeding, seeking physical or mental health care, or a third-party's disruption of the workplace or threat to their employment. The law also defines family members who are included, reasonable accommodations required of employers, and circumstances under which employers may or may not disclose the employee's status related to DVSOS.

2022 by the Numbers

According to available Metropolitan Police Department records, 14 people age 15 and older were killed in domestic violence fatalities in the District of Columbia in 2022.⁹ The breakdown between intimate partner homicide (IPH) and non-IPH is as follows:

IPH Victims

- **Gender:** 6 women.
- **Race:** All were Black.
- **Age range:** 27 to 52; average age was 39.
- **Wards:** 2 homicides each occurred in Wards 7 and 8; 1 homicide occurred in Wards 1 and 5.
- **Manner of homicide:** 5 victims were shot; 1 was stabbed.

IPH Perpetrators

- **Gender:** 6 men.
- **Race:** All were Black.
- **Age range:** 27 to 65; average age was 42.
- **Relationship to victim:** All 6 were current intimate partners.

Non-IPH Victims

- **Gender:** 1 woman and 7 men.
- **Race:** All were Black.
- **Age range:** 28 to 80; average age was 48.
- **Wards:** 3 homicides each occurred in Wards 5 and 8; 2 occurred in Ward 7.
- **Manner of homicide:** 6 victims were shot, 1 was stabbed, and 1 died of blunt force trauma.

Non-IPH Perpetrators

- **Gender:** 1 woman and 7 men.
- **Race:** All were Black.
- **Age range:** 22 to 62; average age was 35.
- **Relationship to victim:** 1 perpetrator was the child of the victim, 2 were other family members, 1 was a roommate, and 4 were related in another way.

Number of Domestic Violence Homicides by Year



⁹ Regarding domestic violence child fatalities, one infant was killed by the father, and a two-year-old was killed by the mother's current intimate partner.

2022 DVFRB Recommendations and Responses

The ultimate purpose for reviewing domestic violence fatalities is to reduce the incidence of such homicides. To that end, the Board uses its findings to craft recommendations for system improvements to strengthen the community response to domestic violence. In 2022, the DVFRB issued three recommendations to District agencies. The agencies involved have since reviewed the Board's recommendations, and available responses are included below.

Recommendation

Bolster Prevention and Response to Domestic Violence and Relationship Abuse Among OSSE Employees

Through a review of intimate partner homicide cases, the DVFRB determined that broader awareness about domestic violence and relationship abuse among District agency supervisors and employees could prove helpful in addressing such violence among city personnel prior to homicide. In particular, information regarding best practices on responding to incidents and disclosures of abuse in the workplace, as well as related District employment policies on emergency situations when there is a violent interaction at work, could be more broadly accessible. Employees may not be aware of available District supports, necessary or discretionary actions following a disclosure, possible protections, or other resources at their disposal.

Therefore, the DVFRB recommends that:

- A. The District's **Office of the State Superintendent of Education** (OSSE) provide guidance, support, and information to supervisors and employees about domestic violence/relationship abuse and stalking, including how best to respond should a coworker disclose abusive behavior occurring within or outside the workplace. Minimally, OSSE should:
 - Ensure all employees are aware of the Department of Human Resources's (DCHR) existing policy, *Supporting Victims and Survivors of Domestic Violence, Sexual Offenses, and Stalking and Their Family Members* (the "Policy"), and make both the Policy and any amendments easy for employees to access. Consider including information about the Policy (e.g., where and how to access it) in any new-hire on-boarding process as well as in the employee handbook.
 - Require all employees to review DCHR's Policy annually and track that requirement.

- B. OSSE develop an internal committee to study the agency’s domestic violence and relationship abuse guidelines to ensure those guidelines follow current best practices and provide appropriate support for staff experiencing relationship abuse. The committee should:
- Consult with relevant community-based organizations for best practices on agency response.
 - Work with OSSE’s internal human resources staff, DCHR, the Department of General Services (if appropriate and in response to evaluating safety protocols within OSSE’s physical offices and satellite locations), and relevant community-based organizations to determine gaps in addressing domestic violence/relationship abuse and stalking in the workplace. The committee should survey current practices across OSSE departments and, where appropriate, help formulate responses that better align with best practice—including what constitutes effective outreach.
 - Supervisors and coworkers may benefit from guidance on how to talk about abuse and best support their coworkers, as well as opportunities to practice such discussions. Consider including case scenarios in a medium such as a handbook.
- C. OSSE’s new internal committee work with relevant community-based organizations to create materials to help raise awareness about domestic violence/relationship abuse and stalking and distribute those materials to staff. Materials should include:
- A set of best practices for how OSSE supervisors should respond to disclosures of domestic violence/relationship abuse and stalking and what actions a supervisor or coworker must or may take if there is a domestic violence incident while at work. These departmental guidelines should supplement DCHR’s Policy and must maintain consistency with both DC-specific workplace laws and guidance by domestic violence subject matter experts.
 - Ongoing trainings focused on domestic violence/relationship abuse and stalking that might be experienced by staff inside or outside of the workplace. Training content should be developed in coordination with, and reviewed by, domestic violence subject matter experts.
 - An online module on domestic violence/relationship abuse and stalking added to any preexisting web-based compendium of mandatory staff trainings.

Agency Response

In FY23, OSSE can implement Proposal A described above. OSSE Human Resources division will be leading several initiatives under the Cultivate the Team strategic priority of OSSE's FY23-25 strategic plan. Projects are planned to review and revise OSSE's new employee orientation process and increase employee awareness of OSSE and Districtwide policies and protocols. OSSE HR can incorporate Proposal A into these planned projects.

In FY24, OSSE can work toward implementing Proposal B at the agency. OSSE will stand up an internal committee comprised of managers from our various divisions to review existing agency and Districtwide domestic abuse guidelines, in partnership with DCHR and other applicable entities, to provide recommendations to improve existing guidance, and recommend new guidelines, if applicable, and align practices across the Agency.

OSSE does not commit to implementing Proposal C in the way described. OSSE recommends that DCHR take the lead in developing and implementing Proposal C across the District government, including designing and curating training courses and materials, similar to the annual sexual harassment training mandate. OSSE will ensure that employees, at all levels of the organization, complete any training mandate instituted by DCHR.

Recommendation

Strengthen DCHR Guidance and Training on Domestic Violence Prevention and Response for DC Employees

District agencies need support, access to resources, and official guidance in their efforts to raise awareness about domestic violence and relationship abuse incidence, prevention, and response among staff. As the department charged with providing operational policy, instructions, and standards to city agencies and employees, DCHR is uniquely poised to develop, house, and distribute this guidance in a consistent, accessible, and clear way.

Therefore, the DVFRB recommends that:

- A. DCHR make the Electronic-District Personnel Manual policy *Supporting Victims and Survivors of Domestic Violence, Sexual Offenses, and Stalking and Their Family Members* (“the Policy”) available as a PDF for each DC government agency to post on its own intranet. Allowing agencies to post the Policy internally will encourage them to incorporate the information in their on-boarding process and routine training and will raise general awareness and access among personnel across the District government.
- B. DCHR provide mandatory trainings on domestic violence/relationship abuse and stalking to all District agencies. Topics for these trainings should be determined following consultation with domestic violence subject matter experts and relevant community partners but, at the least, should include information regarding warning signs of abuse and how employees should respond to disclosures of abuse in the workplace.
- C. DCHR develop, create, and publish trainings on domestic violence and relationship abuse, and post a training on DCHR’s domestic violence Policy on the Percipio (or any future) video training platform.
- D. DCHR display or otherwise post domestic violence resources in the offices and shared spaces of all DC agencies. Resources should be approved by or developed with guidance from domestic violence subject matter experts.

Agency Response

The DC Department of Human Resources (DCHR) will adopt the recommendations outlined in item A above. We will partner with the Human Resources Advisors within each agency and with the Office of the Chief Technology Officer to implement this recommendation.

DCHR will not implement recommendation B. We do not serve as subject matter experts in this field and defer to the DVFRB and other experts to identify and deliver such course(s). DCHR can partner with DVFRB to manage registration for such course(s) in PeopleSoft and share course content with the HR Community.

DCHR will not implement recommendation C as stated. DCHR can determine if courses on domestic violence and relationship abuse prevention already exist in Percipio. If a course already exists, DCHR can promote the training within the HR Community. DCHR does not serve as a subject matter expert in this field; therefore, we will not create this course content if the content is not readily available in Percipio.

DCHR will implement recommendation D with modifications. DCHR will share domestic violence resources with the HR Community and encourage them to post the information in their common areas. DCHR does not have oversight over offices and shared spaces in DC Government agencies; therefore, we recommend that DVFRB partner with the Department of General Services (DGS) to implement this recommendation.

Recommendation

Maintain CSOSA Modifications Post-Pandemic

Like many agencies that strove to reconfigure services in creative and thoughtful ways to best serve their community during the COVID-19 pandemic, the **Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency for the District of Columbia** (CSOSA) began offering online class options to offenders in its Domestic Violence Batterer Intervention programs. The DVFRB supports CSOSA in its efforts to reduce barriers to program attendance, while still adhering to the program's standards and goals.

Therefore, the DVFRB recommends that:

- CSOSA maintain online class options for offenders who may otherwise be unable or choose not to complete in-person classes, even as the pandemic abates.

Agency Response:

CSOSA currently offers online domestic violence classes and intends to continue to offer virtual and in-person classes. Participants will be permitted to attend virtually with CSO approval.

Conclusion

Domestic violence victims have often been isolated from their support system by their abuser, trapped in close confines, and controlled financially, emotionally, and physically—commonly with their children or other loved one under threat as well. Prevention and response efforts that provide resources and training wherever victims are, that coordinate across agency lines, and that offer resilient and robust interventions for survivors and offenders alike can quite literally help save lives.

The Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board is grateful to the agencies listed in this report, as well as to the Executive Office of the Mayor, for their commitment to improving the District of Columbia’s response to domestic violence. The work of the DVFRB to note, track, and analyze the related fatalities—and then to collaborate across the community on effective homicide prevention efforts—is more important than ever. The DVFRB is honored to serve the District and its residents in this capacity.

In reply to a recommendation originally drafted in 2021 and delivered to the Office of the Executive Mayor (EOM) in 2022, EOM submitted the following response.

DVFRB AGENCY RESPONSE FORM	
Responding Agency	Executive Office of the Mayor
Date	July 5, 2022
Statement of Need	The current COVID-19 public health crisis has illuminated widespread gaps in traditional city emergency planning. In hindsight, it is unsurprising that a public health crisis causing prolonged isolation, economic instability, medical uncertainty, and other hardships has resulted in elevated rates of domestic violence. Moving forward, the District needs a public safety crisis plan that accounts for these domestic violence factors and appropriate interventions.
Objective	<i>Evaluate the District's Response to Domestic Violence during the COVID-19 Public Health Crisis</i>
Recommendation	<p>The DVFRB recommends that:</p> <p>The Mayor's Office, with support from the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants and the DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency, convene a roundtable of local domestic violence prevention organizations and related District agencies. The roundtable would examine the city-wide response to the pandemic as it relates to domestic violence victims and would focus on lessons learned: what existing or emergency protocols worked well, where did efforts fall short, and how could the city better prepare for similar emergencies in the future. This network could then be activated to craft public messaging about resources and safety information during future events. Points of discussion for the roundtable should include:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The development of a comprehensive crisis protocol as part of the Domestic Violence System Review that includes all organizations and agencies that domestic violence survivors access as avenues to immediate safety (including DC SAFE, DC Superior Court, the Metropolitan Police Department, the Department of Human Services, and the Crime Victims Compensation Program) to allow those entities to coordinate any necessary changes in access to services, resources, or legal relief and to
	<p>communicate those changes effectively to the general public.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The creation of a specific, non-lapsing emergency fund to sustain community-based organizations that provide immediate crisis intervention services for survivors of domestic violence to ensure ongoing access for survivors to lifesaving resources and services during a city- or nation-wide emergency. ○ Whether or how previously created District emergency plans were triggered.
<p>Agency Response</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Accept in full. The agency agrees to implement the DVFRB’s recommendation in full. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accept with changes. The agency agrees to implement the DVFRB’s recommendation with changes. <input type="checkbox"/> Does not accept. The agency disagrees with the DVFRB’s recommendation for the following reasons and wishes to propose an alternate solution.

Agency Implementation

Please describe any steps the agency plans to take in response to the recommendation:

The Executive appreciates the work of the Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board (DVFRB or Board) in assessing domestic violence (DV) homicide incidence and response always, and specifically during the pandemic. Many agencies are conducting debriefs of how we can “build back better” using lessons from the pandemic and I urge the DVFRB to make specific recommendations in this connection. Only with those recommendations can we consider whether it would be appropriate next year to create a non-lapsing fund for the non-profit grantees that serve victims/survivors of domestic violence as relates to pandemics.

Many nonprofit grantees throughout the government, even those that deliver essential services that were never by law interrupted, still were caught off-guard by the pandemic. All entities – governmental agencies, corporations, and nonprofits – should have continuity of operations plans (COOPs) and risk assessments. The threat recently was the pandemic, but the next one could be cyberterrorism, widespread flooding or other environmental crisis. COOP planning is required for government agencies, and I encourage NGOs and interagency organizations like the DV stakeholder community to engage in COOP planning for continuity of operations. The Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants (OVSJG) and the Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA) has been coordinating to host a training for community-based organization on COOP development and will be holding that training this fiscal year.

District grantees are always allowed to request changes in funding allocations as circumstances warrant. While much DV work is of necessity face-to-face, throughout the pandemic, more persons needed to have the appropriate technology to work as much as possible from home. I understand that OVSJG grantees were provided guidance that they were eligible to reprogram grant funds for costs associated with providing telephonic or video services, remote meeting services (e.g., Zoom), personal protective equipment (PPE), covering staff leave, or other clear pandemic related responses. Some grantees receive other District funds and

may have received such technology and PPE through other programs or grant reprogrammings. Should there be another pandemic, grantees will again be reminded of their ability to request necessary reprogramming of funds caused by changed circumstances. Nonprofits were offered emergency federal dollars through the paycheck protection program so that they could maintain staff even if other revenues declined.

Each year, the DVFRB writes a report with the recommendations generated by its analysis. The specific recommendations should be sent to the relevant agencies for their comments and response. While we have no ability to compel outside entities like the courts to respond or implement any crisis protocol, all stakeholders have an interest in being sure that there is a continuity of services provided to prevent and redress domestic violence generally and homicides in particular.

At a general level, the administration is taking numerous steps that may bear on domestic violence, such as hiring and deploying more persons in social work and medical professionals who are able to treat mental health crises and substance abuse. We offered numerous programs to ameliorate the financial effects of the pandemic and the unemployment it caused, which in turn may ameliorate some of the financial barriers to safety that domestic violence victims experience. Likewise, my administration has devoted record-setting dollars to the creation and preservation of affordable housing, and we made an American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) investment of \$17 million specifically for domestic violence housing.

As the DVFRB's reports have shown, an abuser's access to firearms is a lethality risk factor, and the District has taken numerous steps in an effort to reduce the presence of guns in the hands of persons with a propensity for violence, including and especially persons with a record of DV. For example, eligibility factors for registering a firearm in the District include not having been convicted of an intrafamily offense; not being the subject of civil protection order within the past five years; and not having a history of violent behavior within the past five years. Moreover, a person threatened with DV by gun (or anyone else) can call the Firearm

TIP Reward line to report an illegal gun, and they will be eligible for a reward of up to \$2,500 for a tip leading to an arrest and seizure of an illegal gun, with additional rewards for a ghost gun or handgun equipped with a conversion device, such as to turn a pistol into a long gun or to convert it to an automatic weapon. DC has a “red flag” law that allows the Superior Court to issue Extreme Risk Protection Orders which require temporary removal of firearms and ammunition from potentially dangerous persons, and persons can surrender a firearm at police stations or call for their removal by calling 911, and in such surrender situation, the person need not show any identification or be fingerprinted and is not subject to arrest for possession of an unregistered firearm. Programs like these are important whether we are in a pandemic, or not.

When the COOP planning meeting happens, I am sure that it will cover the maintenance of the range of programs that help prevent and redress domestic violence, and particularly DV that has the risk factors the DVFRB has identified as being closely associated with fatalities.

Most of the recommendations of the DVFRB in its 2021 report related to entities outside District agencies subordinate to the Mayor. I am hopeful that they are implementing many of the sensible recommendations the Board set forth.



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OV SJG
Office of Victim Services
and Justice Grants

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