



Domestic Violence Annual Report

January 2024

Executive Summary

The mission of the Department of Children and Families (Department) is to work in partnership with local communities to protect the vulnerable, promote strong and economically self-sufficient families, and advance personal and family recovery and resiliency. The Department's strong focus on creating a culture of intentional collaboration and integration has postured all programs to improve effectiveness that allows individuals and families to emerge stronger. This includes building a system of accountability, transparency, and alignment within the Department and among providers to maximize moments of impact with those served. Combined with the renewed focus on culture, program effectiveness, and accountability, the Department has significantly enhanced relationships with providers, and will continue to develop innovative initiatives to better support statewide domestic violence projects and drive positive outcomes for survivors.

The Office of Domestic Violence (ODV) operates as the central clearinghouse and administrator of state and federal funding initiatives for prevention and intervention of domestic violence. These duties include the monitoring and funding of Florida's certified domestic violence centers, as authorized in section 39.903, Florida Statute (F.S.). The operation of prevention and intervention services are achieved through multi-disciplinary coordination and focus on the improvement of the criminal justice system's response to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking crimes.

This year's annual legislative report provides an update of ODV's array of services, trends, and achievements for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2022-2023. As a part of the Office of Community Services (OCS), the ODV has been working diligently to enhance family safety by providing domestic violence-informed services and addressing intergenerational and systemic trauma.

What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence is a pattern of behaviors, violence, or threats of violence, that one person uses to establish power and control over a current or former intimate partner. It is not a disagreement, a marital spat, or an anger management problem. Domestic violence is abusive, disrespectful, and dangerous and may include abuse that is physical, sexual, emotional, spiritual, or economic. The use of threats, intimidation, isolation, pet abuse, and using children as pawns are also examples of domestic violence.

Domestic Violence Defined in Statute

Florida law defines domestic violence as any assault, aggravated assault, battery, aggravated battery, sexual assault, sexual battery, stalking, aggravated stalking, kidnapping, false imprisonment, or any criminal offense resulting in physical injury or death of one family or household member by another family or household member¹.

Identifying Incidences and Trends to Inform Domestic Violence Responses **Domestic Violence Crimes in Florida**

Domestic violence incidences in Florida are identified through several means. Often, victims of domestic violence, or friends and family on their behalf, seek support through community-based advocacy services such as certified domestic violence centers and other providers. Law enforcement are often the first responders to violence in the home, and in many cases are the first

¹ Section. 741.28, F.S.

to assist. Florida's child welfare services complete investigations into family violence when children are injured or have witnessed the violence. Despite the robust system Florida has in place, many cases of domestic violence go unreported. As a result, the true number of victims and domestic violence related crimes are difficult to determine.

The last Florida Department of Law Enforcement Uniform Crime Report was released for 2020. The 2020 crime statistics are as follows:

January – December 2020²

- Overall crime in Florida decreased by 14.1 percent, while reported domestic violence offenses increased by 1.16 percent.
- 106,515 domestic violence offenses were reported to law enforcement.
- 217 individuals died because of domestic violence homicide, representing approximately 20 percent of all homicides in Florida.
- Law enforcement made 63,217 arrests for domestic violence related crimes.
- The top ten counties with the most reported domestic violence offenses (by percentage of the population) were Levy, Dixie, Marion, Taylor, DeSoto, Hardee, Duval, Pasco, Leon, and Holmes Counties.

The Statewide Domestic Violence Hotline

Operated and managed by the Florida Domestic Violence Collaborative (FLDVC), Florida's Statewide Domestic Violence Hotline provides 24/7 multilingual supportive services, advocacy and information, and referral services for survivors of domestic violence, their children, families, and friends residing in Florida's 67 counties.

Florida Legal Services, Inc., administers the Statewide Domestic Violence Legal Hotline, which provides comprehensive legal advice, information, and referrals to survivors of domestic violence. During FY 2022-2023, the Florida Domestic Violence Hotline received 13,836 calls, 2,474 of which were answered by the legal hotline. In addition to incoming calls, the legal hotline made 3,636 outgoing calls, texts and emails to survivors seeking legal services. Callers to the Florida Domestic Violence Hotline primarily requested assistance related to receiving shelter, support services, information regarding the civil and criminal justice system, and economic empowerment services that help survivors gain financial independence. Survivors also requested legal information related to divorce and child custody issues, parenting rights, and interstate jurisdiction.

Florida's Certified Domestic Violence Centers

In FY 2022-2023, there were 41 certified domestic violence centers serving Florida's 67 counties and responsible for providing critical, life-saving emergency shelter, services, and programming to survivors and their children. In Florida, centers are on the front lines of responding to domestic violence by providing a place of safety, security, and empowerment to survivors of domestic violence and their children fleeing violent homes. Certified domestic violence centers are the only state-designated organizations responsible for the provision of a continuum of services to survivors, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, as they begin to achieve safety and self-efficacy. Certified domestic violence centers are statutorily required to provide specific services that include:

² Information from FDLE's 2020 Annual Uniform Crime Report: [DV Offenses by Type.aspx \(state.fl.us\)](https://www.floridalegal.org/dv-offenses-by-type.aspx?state.fl.us)

information and referrals; counseling and case management; temporary emergency shelter; a 24-hour crisis hotline; training for law enforcement personnel; assessment and appropriate referral of residential children; and community educational training related to the incidence of domestic violence, the prevention of such violence, and the services available for persons engaged in or subject to domestic violence³.

During FY 2022-2023, certified centers provided 613,583 nights of emergency shelter to 12,836 women, men, and children. Many survivors fled violent homes with their children, who represented 46 percent of those served in emergency shelter. In addition to the services required by Florida Statutes, many of our certified centers supplement their programs with important ancillary services such as transportation, rent and utility assistance, transitional housing, legal and court advocacy, work skills and job-readiness training and placement, financial literacy, and other training and education programs. Collectively, Florida certified domestic violence centers provided the following services:

- 12,836 individuals received emergency shelter at a certified domestic violence center.
- 6,620 requests for emergency shelter went unmet due to lack of capacity and resources (unmet requests for shelter are counted when program shelter, safe homes, or sponsored hotel rooms are at capacity or unavailable).
- 80,493 crisis hotline calls.
- 36,324 individuals received outreach services.
- 183,902 safety plans were completed with survivors.
- 26,237 service management goal plans were completed with survivors.
- 418,501 direct service information and referrals to survivors, family members, and individuals seeking services.
- 204,454 hours of supportive counseling and advocacy.
- 56,248 hours facilitating child and youth-specific activities.
- 33,953 adult individuals attended training and education events.
- 81,625 youth attended youth targeted community education.

Enhancing Services for Survivors and Promoting Family Safety

Domestic Violence Career Ladder Training

FY 2022-2023 was the first full year of the new domestic violence training series. The collaboration between the ODV and Workforce Learning and Development has resulted in an enhanced learning experience for child welfare professionals. The curriculum focuses on incorporating policy and procedures as well as supporting staff with Department data and opportunities to apply the subject material. This training series was optional the first year and now is a part of Career Ladder as one of the main tracks in which child welfare professionals can enroll. Training participants report a benefit of each of the trainings with many reporting benefits from the training series:

- 63 percent of respondents stated they are highly motivated to utilize these skills in their work.
- 56 percent of respondents said they are fully competent in using the concepts they have learned in practice.
- 64 percent of respondents stated this training will help them significantly in their work.

³ Pursuant to s. 39.905, F.S.

- 67 percent of respondents stated they have a solid understanding of the concepts taught.
- 73 percent of respondents stated the training enabled them to understand new concepts and prepared them to do their job better.

The development of this training program continues to grow with this fiscal year's development of a trainer guide to the domestic violence curriculum.

Statewide Training and Technical Assistance for Certified Domestic Violence Centers and Stakeholders

During FY 2022-2023, training, technical assistance, and education was provided to certified domestic violence centers, collaborative community partners, agencies, and service providers throughout the state. Training and technical assistance were provided to these entities to strengthen knowledge, enhance standards, and build capacity to provide quality services to domestic violence survivors and their children. Each training was created to address the specific needs identified by the center and/or local community organization. Training and technical assistance was provided by FLDVC in which 163 trainings and webinars, and 493 technical assistance visits and calls were provided to community partners, agencies, and service providers throughout the state.

Child Protection Investigation (CPI) Project

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Threatens Child and related IPV maltreatments continue to be among the most frequently reported maltreatments to the Statewide Florida Abuse Hotline. Thus, the Department and the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) worked together with domestic violence field experts from 2004 – 2008 to create a groundbreaking program focused on creating permanency for children by focusing on keeping the child safe in the home with the non-offending parent, forming the CPI Project.

The primary goal of the statewide CPI Project is to enhance family safety and create permanency for children by focusing on keeping the child safe in the home with the non-offending caregiver while increasing perpetrator accountability. The co-located advocates' domestic violence expertise serves to increase the capacity of child welfare professionals through survivor engagement, development of individualized safety plans, and survivor protective capacities. Advocates' expertise in this area assists child welfare professionals in partnering with survivors by building on the protective factors of the non-offending parent. The co-located advocates' domestic violence expertise also serves to assist child welfare professionals in identifying the perpetrators' pattern of coercive and controlling behaviors, gathering information to identify and address batterer-generated risks, and assessing the impact of the batterer's behavior on the children. The continued success of the collaboration created through the CPI Project has shown success in meeting the Department's goals to enhance family permanency, enhance the customer journey, and promote positive long-term outcomes. In FY 2022-2023, the CPI projects collectively utilized a seamless system of wraparound services, which allowed 11,613 children, whose families were involved in the child welfare system, to remain in the home with the non-offending parent. During this time, co-located advocates:

- Received and followed up on a total of 8,387 CPI Project referrals from child welfare professionals.
- Participated in 6,877 child welfare case staffings.
- Provided 13,490 case consultation services to child welfare professionals.

- Provided 42,789 services to child welfare involved survivors referred to local certified domestic violence centers. Services included shelter and housing, criminal and civil justice system assistance, personal advocacy and accompaniment, emotional support and safety services, as well as assistance with the state's Victim Compensation application and information and referrals.
- Provided 287 trainings to local child welfare partners and center advocates on topics including, but not limited to, the dynamics of domestic violence, the intersection of domestic violence and child abuse, batterer accountability, and safety planning.

The Department's Better Together: A Guided Discussion to Help Families Succeed

In partnership with the Office of Child and Family Well-Being (OCFW) and FLDVC, the ODV overhauled the previous year's *Better Together: A Guided Discussion to Help Families Succeed* workshops to provide more skills-based child welfare involved domestic violence training to address emerging programmatic trends. The curriculum was expanded to include a more multi-disciplinary approach resulting in the engagement of CPIs, CPI supervisors and trainers, Community-Based Care Lead Agency providers, Children's Legal Services, and co-located domestic violence advocates in collaborative discussion. Emphasizing the mutual goal of family safety, non-offending caregiver protective factors, and perpetrator accountability, the updated workshops focus on fostering productive working relationships, working through barriers in real time. ODV and OCFW have facilitated 25 Better Together Workshops to date, effectively increasing cross system collaboration, family permanency with the non-offending caregiver, and enhancing the safety of survivors and their children statewide.

Each workshop included an evaluation, asking attendees for additional topics on which they would like future domestic violence training. Overarchingly, child welfare staff requested more information on perpetrator accountability and responsibility. In response, ODV's Child and Family Well-Being Initiative Coordinator, in collaboration with OCFW regional staff and the Office of Quality and Innovation, developed the training, *Improving Batterer Engagement*, and was facilitated at the 2023 Florida Children and Families Summit. The session included information on best practices, corresponding Child and Family Operating Procedure (CFOP), and state statutes.

Partners 4 Safe Families

In FY 2022-2023, the Department administered the legislatively awarded proviso contract for the Children's Home Society to deliver comprehensive domestic violence service enhancements through building collaborative community partnerships with behavioral health, child welfare, and domestic violence service providers within Polk, Hardee, and Highlands Counties. The Partners 4 Safe Families project was proposed to reduce the reoccurrence rate of domestic violence in families and communities, decrease incidents of domestic violence caused by batterers, increase the physical safety of domestic violence victims, improve mental health well-being scores of victims, and reduce the rate of re-entry into foster care as a result of abuse and neglect.

Economic Empowerment

The Statewide Economic Empowerment Program was created to address the impacts of financial abuse. It is a statewide effort, implemented in community-based domestic violence programs that assists survivors of domestic violence with overcoming immediate economic barriers and secure long-term financial independence and safety. Lack of financial knowledge and resources is the number one indicator of whether a domestic violence victim will stay, leave, or return to an abusive

relationship. Financial abuse occurs in 98 percent of all domestic violence cases. Survivors report that abusers utilize a multitude of economically related tactics to gain and maintain power and control over them, such as creating large amounts of debt in joint accounts, withholding funds from the survivor or children to obtain basic needs such as food and medicine, prohibiting the survivor from working, and not allowing the survivor to access bank accounts. The services provided to survivors that address financial abuse often include financial safety plans, housing advocacy, credit counseling, education on financial safety and literacy, employment assistance and training, general equivalency degree (GED) and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) services, access to micro-loans and micro-enterprise services, connections to survivor friendly financial institutions, matched savings programs, and access to free tax preparation services and education. During FY 2022-2023, certified domestic violence centers reported the following:

- 4,159 survivors of domestic violence participated in financial empowerment services using the Allstate Moving Ahead Curriculum.
- 8,600 survivors of domestic violence received financial empowerment services through the local domestic violence center Economic Empowerment Programs, a 39 percent increase from the previous year.
- 661 survivors participated in the certified domestic violence centers' Literacy Programs.
- 88 meetings were conducted with financial institutions or agencies that assist in developing programs related to micro-loans, micro-enterprises, matched savings accounts, and/or individual development accounts for survivors.
- 3,605 survivors of domestic violence were assisted with identifying and securing affordable housing, a 40 percent increase from the previous year and 2,513 survivors received assistance with identifying and securing employment goals, a 22 percent increase from the previous fiscal year.
- 152 survivors of domestic violence completed educational courses, job training programs, or certificate programs.
- 107 survivors of domestic violence participated in the micro-loan program, while 104 participated in the micro-enterprise program.
- Participating programs throughout the state provided 43,666 information and referral services, a 71 percent increase from the previous year; provided advocacy, and accompaniment in 54,349 instances, a 136 percent increase from the previous year; and provided 82,591 emotional support and safety services, an 88 percent increase from the previous year.
- While Economic Empowerment programs have assisted 2,987 survivors with filing Victim's Compensation applications, a 35 percent increase from the previous fiscal year, they have also provided shelter and housing services in 11,090 instances. Shelter and housing services include emergency shelter, safehouses, transitional housing, and relocation assistance.

Law Enforcement: Intimate Violence Enhanced Service Team (InVEST) and Enhanced Response

There are nine STOP (Services, Training, Officers, and Prosecutors) Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) grant-funded law enforcement projects that utilize a coordinated community response model to reduce the number of domestic violence homicides by increasing services for survivors identified in high-lethality domestic violence situations while increasing perpetrator accountability throughout the criminal justice process. Projects also provided domestic violence survivors and their children with protection and services while improving a community's capacity to hold batterers

accountable. STOP funding allowed for the expansion of the InVEST Project to fund at least one detective within law enforcement agencies to collaborate with certified domestic violence centers to reduce domestic violence homicides. STOP funded law enforcement agencies trained a total of 1,043 law enforcement officers and community partners on topics including dynamics of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, stalking, firearms and domestic violence, and identification and arrest of the predominant aggressor. Services Initiated by Law Enforcement Agencies participating in InVEST programs:

Fiscal Year	Domestic Violence Reports Initiated	Perpetrator Arrests	Prosecution Filings
2022-2023	4,557	2,234	2,228

Batterer Accountability Projects

The Department administered the Justice for Families Grant project, which was funded by the Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women for seven years. The project funds two Batterer Accountability Specialists (Specialist) at the Betty Griffin Center and the Lee Conlee House, certified domestic violence centers in St. Johns County and Putnam County, respectively. The role of the Specialist is to assist child welfare professionals with developing effective case plans to hold batterers accountable and to provide information to dependency court judges regarding a batterer's compliance with dependency case plans and court orders in other cases involving the batterer. The Center for Court Innovation has recognized Florida's Justice for Families project nationally as a best practice for batterer accountability. Florida enhanced the batterer accountability projects by funding a STOP project titled, *Dependency Court Batterer Accountability Project*, which supports a certified domestic violence center to employ a full-time Batterer Accountability Specialist to work in conjunction with the existing CPI Project co-located advocate to increase batterer accountability in dependency proceedings to help prevent a reoccurrence of violence that may result in the removal of children from the non-offending survivor. In FY 2022-2023 five additional certified domestic violence centers were awarded STOP funding to implement a batterer accountability specialist project due to the program's identified need. The centers receiving funding are Help Now of Osceola, Community Action Stops Abuse, Shelter for Abused Women and Children, Hubbard House, and Lee Conlee House.

Improving Criminal Justice Response Project

Victims of domestic violence, sexual violence, and stalking rely on Florida's 20 judicial circuits for protection and justice. The Office of the State's Court Administrator (OSCA) works to ensure that judges and court staff are well equipped to recognize and accommodate the individualized needs of victims in each unique case by continually offering training and technical assistance. As part of these efforts, OSCA has secured Office on Violence Against Women funds to contract with the Department, Florida State University's Institute for Family Violence Studies, and the Citrus County Abuse Shelter Association, Inc. (CASA) to develop trainings, maintaining a statewide protection order database, and to implement homicide reduction resource center to improve judicial response and court protocols for handling intimate partner violence cases. The project began during FY 2022-2023 and will continue through September 2024.

In collaboration with Citrus CASA, the Department presented the first of a six-part series offered to professionals within the criminal justice system focused on the relationship between high risk factors and intimate partner violence. In the interactive, introductory training, attendees received a

framework through which to effectively view risk factors within an intimate partner violence context, as well as an overview of common risk factors through which to assess risk. The goal of the training and subsequent trainings within this series is to ensure criminal justice professionals are well-equipped with the knowledge to effectively identify coercive control and assess risk factors within their various disciplines that perpetuate violence to ensure perpetrator accountability and survivor safety.

Domestic Violence Faith & Community Based Initiative

The ODV developed and launched SafeSpace⁴, a Domestic Violence Faith and Community Based Initiative. Faith-based communities are an integral part of a community's response and prevention of domestic violence. These partners not only provide support for their community; they also facilitate optimal opportunities for impact across the lifespan from youth and kids' programs, marital and partner groups, and groups for individuals to address a variety of life challenges. The Department is committed to connecting individuals in crisis with these pillars of resiliency to best support survivors, perpetrators, and their families, as they seek safety. The SafeSpace Initiative was developed with social ecological strategies in mind, from engagement with survivors or perpetrators individually or together, to building relationships within the community, as well as impact to societal structures, so that faith leaders have the opportunity to make significant change in the prevalence of violence.

The SafeSpace initiative was developed on a three-tiered approach to engagement including training and technical assistance, Domestic Violence Chaplain and Sanctuary Designations, and community connections. The initiative's soft launch event was held at the end of May 2023, which invited faith leaders to join the Department's Secretary Shevaun Harris in a panel discussion centered around the impact of domestic violence and the opportunity for faith leaders to engage and respond in a significant way. Following the introduction, the ODV began facilitating ongoing informational sessions, and began its monthly training offerings in June 2023. Its first quarterly "Community of Practice" workgroup was held on June 30, 2023, to bring together faith-based and community partners in the interest of sharing expertise and best practices to address domestic violence. The Department officially launched the Designation Curriculum in October of 2023.

Prevention Initiative

Aligned with the Department's priorities, the ODV seeks to reduce incidences of domestic violence by moving upstream to optimize early moments of impact. Primary prevention initiatives seek to obviate perpetration and victimization by addressing risk and protective factors across the socioecological model. By utilizing evidence-based strategies statewide and locally, conditions are being created to make violence less likely to occur.

During FY 2022-2023, ODV prevention initiatives focused on statewide capacity to enable successful strategies to flourish. Concentrating on supporting efforts made locally, the ODV developed and launched the Statewide Prevention Leadership Collaborative, where interdisciplinary practitioners of prevention from human trafficking, sexual, domestic, and family violence fields discuss current initiatives, strategies, research, and opportunities to collaborate on a quarterly basis. The Leadership Collaborative completed an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the prevention work achieved across the state to aid in future focus of operationalizing intersectional work within partner collaborations.

⁴ <https://www.myflfamilies.com/safespace>

At the local level, providers have prioritized youth leadership and community partnerships to community response to violence prevention and intervention and develop programming to support change. Centers are funded to develop, implement, and evaluate prevention strategies that incorporate planning with Community Action Teams, conducting local trainings, and meeting with key stakeholders. Each center develops its own unique strategic plan, based on the needs of the local community, centered on the elements of enhancing community partnerships and engaging with young people. FY 2022-2023 was the first year the ODV implemented a new reporting tool for providers to report on their prevention initiatives and activities, including youth engagement, community action, social change, and capacity building.

Community Engagement Activities Statewide

<i>Youth Engagement</i>	Number of Events	2,096
	Number of Attendees	77,283
<i>Community Action</i>	Number of Events	544
	Number of Attendees	27,109
<i>Violence Prevention and Intervention Response</i>	Number of Events	591
	Number of Attendees	28,843
<i>Capacity Building</i>	Number of Events	466
	Number of Attendees	17,838

Florida Partnership to End Domestic Violence

In 2020, the Florida Partnership to End Domestic Violence (FPEDV) formed to support domestic violence centers and in September 2022, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Administration for Children and Families, designated FPEDV as Florida's new state domestic violence coalition. In FY 2022-2023, the Department began administering FPEDV's proviso contract awarded by the legislature. The FPEDV receives state funding to leverage federal funds awarded to federally recognized state coalitions to enable FPEDV to coordinate statewide service improvements and provide essential technical assistance and training for Florida's 41 certified domestic violence centers and their staff.

Florida Domestic Violence Collaborative (FLDVC)

The Florida Domestic Violence Collaborative (FLDVC), was awarded funding through a competitive Invitation to Negotiate to deliver comprehensive management of services for the Department's domestic violence program including training and technical assistance to certified domestic violence centers and community partners to improve intervention and prevention strategies in addressing domestic violence, legal services through designated projects, as well as implementing 24-hour crisis hotline call center operations of the Florida Domestic Violence Hotline.

Statewide Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team

The mission of the Statewide Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team⁵ is to identify statewide trends, systemic gaps, and potential solutions that increase safety and justice for survivors and their children, hold perpetrators accountable for their violence through coordinated community response efforts, and prevent the likelihood of domestic violence fatalities in the future. The statewide and local fatality review teams operate based on sections 741.316 and 741.3165, F.S.⁶, and create a timeline of events leading up to the fatal incident to examine agency/system involvement and degree of coordination to craft recommendations for improved future response. All teams comply with Florida statutory mandates to maintain confidentiality and public records exemptions when reviewing fatality-related information. These statutory mandates ensure that team members may freely discuss the circumstances and issues relating to the fatalities.

An innovative way to view the provision of services is through a lens that integrates awareness of high-risk indicators for lethality and primary and secondary prevention strategies. Utilizing knowledge about coercive control and recognizing the presence of high risk-indicators for lethality can shift how we respond to the needs of the people we serve by increasing perpetrator accountability and safety measures for survivors and their children. Every interaction or moment of impact with families presents an opportunity to provide trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and accessible services that ultimately could help prevent future homicides.

Fatality Review Action Teams

In FY 2022-2023, ODV convened action teams to support the implementation of statewide fatality review recommendations related to homicide reduction. The action teams developed implementation strategies to meet identified needs.

Action team implementation strategies:

- Develop a training curriculum for prosecutors, Children's Legal Services, and child welfare workers on Batterers' Intervention Programs (BIPs), including how they differ from anger management classes, and coordinate training efforts with the Office of the State Court Administrator's current training programs.
- OSCA is developing training for judges and prosecutors on the difference between BIP and anger management and why BIP should be ordered instead of anger management when appropriate. The team also identified the need for enhanced collaboration on batterer accountability with child welfare partners on batterer accountability.
- ODV and FLDVC are collaborating to develop multi-disciplinary training on the link between batterer suicidality and the high-risk indicators for lethality for multi-disciplinary partners.

The ODV plans to continue working with community partners to coordinate statewide implementation of these recommendations and identify funding opportunities throughout the state.

Key Findings and Moments of Impact

The programs administered by OCS, OCFW, Economic Self Sufficiency (ESS), and Substance Abuse and Mental Health (SAMH) offer critical opportunities to enhance safety measures for survivors and their children, hold perpetrators accountable for the violence, and support survivors

⁵ For more information about the Statewide Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team:

<https://www.myflfamilies.com/services/abuse/domestic-violence/programs/fatality-review-teams>

⁶ See ss. 741.316 and 741.3156, F.S.

and perpetrators in meeting basic needs for safety and stability through prevention and intervention strategies.

Connecting the findings to effective and appropriate services offers opportunities for homicide reduction activities. We do not have to wait for criminal justice system involvement to respond to domestic violence perpetrators and support survivors and their children. Intervention efforts can start as early as possible once intimate partner violence (IPV) and coercive control are identified.

Safety and stability provide support for survivors of intimate partner violence and their children. Safer conditions include societal and community supports that lower the propensity of long-term dependency on local assistance. Stable conditions that enhance safety “refer to predictable and positive experiences in one’s physical and social environments and relationships”⁷ including housing, employment, finances, transportation, childcare, and education. Community level protective factors such as access to safe stable housing, and access to high-quality, nurturing, and safe preschool and childcare can help prevent violence from occurring.⁸ ESS can support survivors and perpetrators in meeting basic needs for safety and stability and offer moments of impact to enhance protective factors for survivors and perpetrators.

While behavioral health problems do not cause individuals to harm their partners, research suggests a relationship between behavioral health concerns and IPV perpetration.⁹ Perpetrator suicidality as a risk factor for homicide needs more attention than previously considered.¹⁰ Many survivors demonstrate resilience and the skills to respond to adversity. Support from behavioral health professionals can strengthen coping skills and impact the negative effects of living with coercive control and intimate partner violence. SAMH services offer many opportunities for prevention and intervention strategies to enhance safety for survivors and their dependents and increase perpetrator accountability measures.

Statewide Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team Recommendations

Based on the current year reviews, the Fatality Review Teams statewide recommended:

- Enhanced collaboration between the Department of Defense (DoD), Department of Military Affairs (DMA) and civilian partners is recommended to ensure coordination of services in civilian domestic violence cases involving active military members.
- Enhanced collaboration between community partners including certified domestic violence centers, law enforcement, the civil and criminal court system, state attorneys, and other criminal justice professionals to enhance existing training related to the high-risk indicator of stalking for intimate partner homicide. Local fatality review teams also identified the need for training on the intersection of domestic violence, substance use, and mental health.
- Exploration of gaps in current training and develop content-specific guidelines for existing training on the intersection of domestic violence, substance use, and mental health for behavioral health providers, criminal justice system and community partners.

⁷ Protective factors for Survivors of Domestic Violence: Issue Brief, QIC-DVCW February 2019. P.4.

⁸ <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/violence-prevention/risk-and-protective-factors>

⁹ Sesar, Kristina & Dodaj, Arta & Šimić, Nataša. (2018). Mental health of perpetrators of intimate partner violence. *Mental Health Review Journal*. 23. [10.1108/MHRJ-08-2017-0028](https://doi.org/10.1108/MHRJ-08-2017-0028).

¹⁰ Bridger, Eamonn & Strang, Heather & Parkinson, John & Sherman, Lawrence. (2017). Intimate Partner Homicide in England and Wales 2011–2013: Pathways to Prediction from Multi-agency Domestic Homicide Reviews. *Cambridge Journal of Evidence-Based Policing*. 1. [10.1007/s41887-017-0013-z](https://doi.org/10.1007/s41887-017-0013-z).

- Enhanced collaboration with law enforcement agencies and community partners including, but not limited to, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) and the Florida Sheriff's Association (FSA), to explore promising practices for law enforcement related to criminal investigations of domestic violence. Promising practices include enhanced investigations of domestic violence-related homicide/suicides to gain a better understanding of how to prevent the likelihood of future fatalities.

Federal and State Funding

Domestic Violence Trust Fund (DVTF) and General Revenue

The primary source of state funding for domestic violence emergency shelters, services, programs, and training is from state general revenue. The amount allocated to local centers was \$12,100,114. These funds are distributed to Florida's 41 certified domestic violence centers to provide critical, life-saving programs and services to domestic violence survivors and their children. The DVTF receives funds from a portion of fees for both marriage licenses and filing for dissolution of marriage, and fines for domestic violence crime convictions. As a separate project, the Department administered funds for the Child Protection Investigation Project to create programming to address the complexities associated with the needs of families in the child welfare system experiencing domestic violence. The amount allocated to local centers was \$3,909,235.

Domestic Violence Diversion Program

Recognizing that survivors of domestic violence may need temporary economic assistance to escape a violent partner, federal and state lawmakers created the Domestic Violence Diversion Program. Florida's program is modeled on federal law and provides support services to survivors unable to temporarily participate in training or work requirements due to safety considerations or the residual effects of domestic violence. The amount allocated to local centers was \$7,750,000.

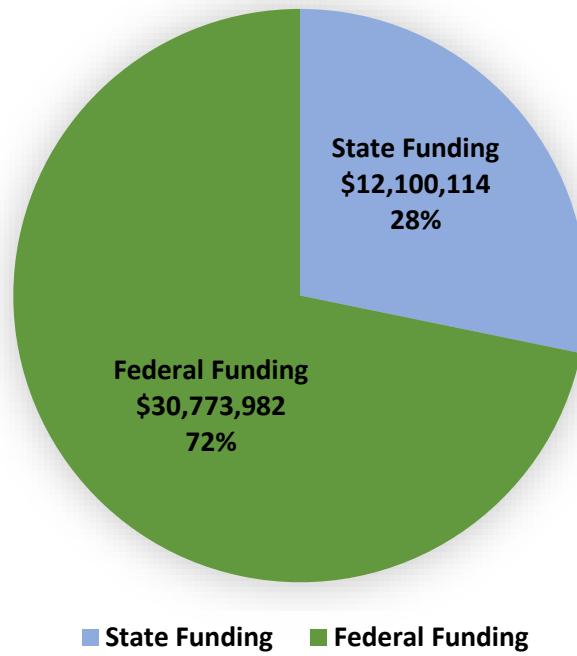
Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) Grant Program

FVPSA is the only federal funding dedicated specifically for domestic violence centers for the operation of emergency shelter and other critical services. The amount allocated to local centers was \$13,527,997 (\$6,759,134 from FVPSA and \$6,768,863 from FVPSA American Rescue Plan). The grant program also provides funding to state coalitions for the provision of training and technical assistance to member programs to ensure quality of service provision to survivors and their children. The FVPSA American Rescue Plan (ARP) is a supplemental grant award that provides states, tribes, and local domestic violence and sexual assault programs with flexible funding for shelter, temporary housing, and supportive services.

Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Grant Program

The Department administered an annual formula grant, VAWA Services for Training, Officers, and Prosecution (STOP), provided by the United States Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women. The amount allocated to local providers was \$9,495,985. The STOP grant promotes a coordinated, multidisciplinary approach to enhancing advocacy and improving the criminal justice system's response to violent crimes against women. Federal regulations require the funding to be allocated geographically based on identified needs and availability of resources.

Current Funding Sources

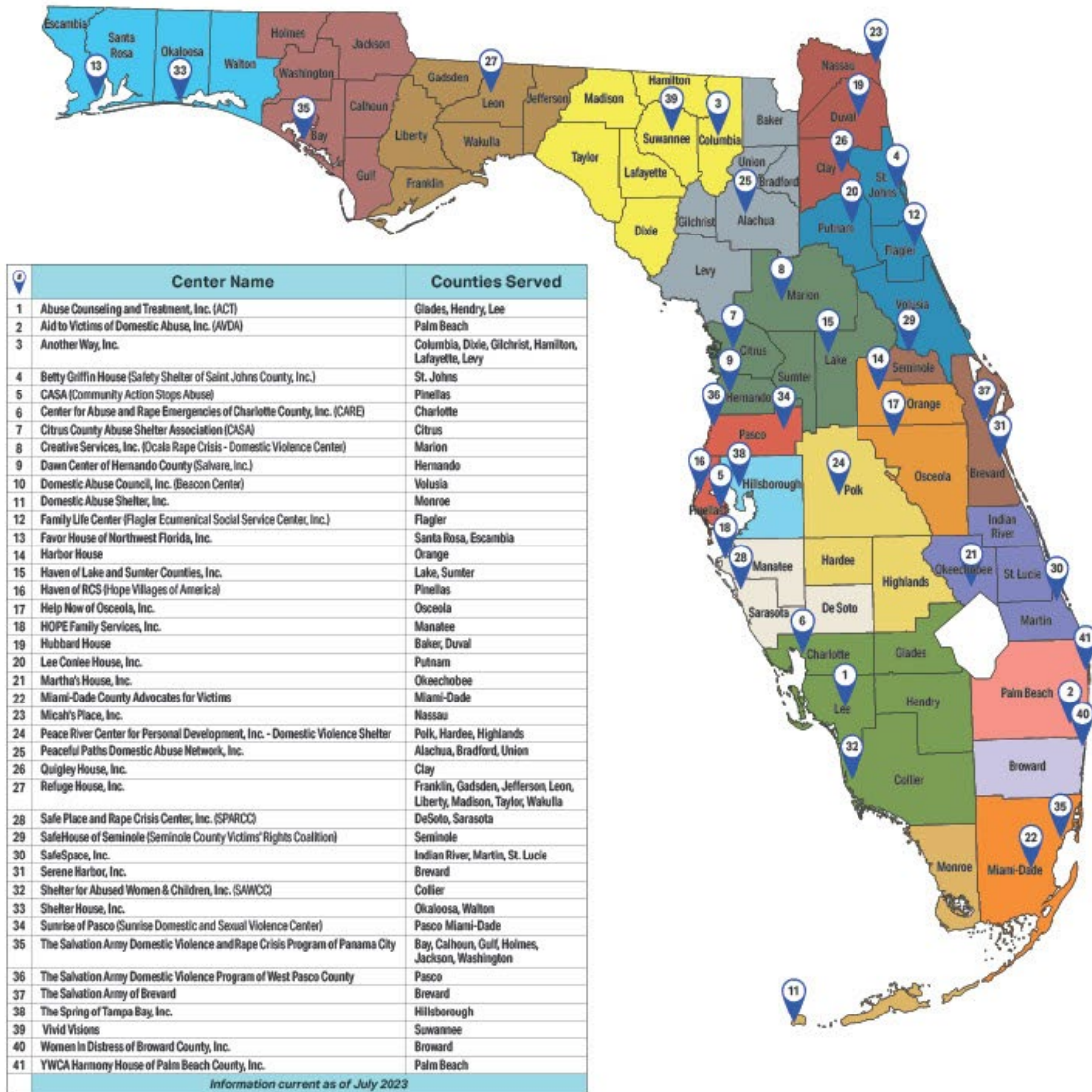


Appendix A

Florida Certified Domestic Violence Centers



Domestic Violence Centers



Appendix B

Florida Fatality Review Team Data

The figures in this report present an overview of cases selected by the fatality review teams of fatal or near-fatal domestic violence incidents across the State of Florida. The teams reviewed the deaths in 2022.

It is important to note that the existing research related to known risk factors is based on cases of intimate partner femicide, which are male perpetrated homicides of their female partners. Therefore, information on the breakdown of known risk factors contains data related to 27 deaths that teams identified as resulting from intimate partner homicide.

Description of Findings

The descriptive statistics in this report are based on information that local teams obtained from reviewing domestic violence homicides in their communities. The reviews may include both intimate partner homicides and other domestic violence-related deaths. When possible, the data points are based on information collected from 27 reviews submitted by local teams. In some instances, however, statistics are based on different totals. This is either due to non-applicability or to missing information for any given review. Therefore, the totals may not always equal the total sum of 100. Additionally, one review that is included in the basic demographics is left out of the fatality analysis due to the fatality being determined to have been in self-defense. The total number of cases used to calculate each statistic is provided in parentheses.

Decedent Demographics

- Gender: Female 100% (N = 27)
- Average age: 47 (min: 17, max: 86)
 - On average, perpetrators were three years older than decedents.

Decedent Race	Number	Percent
White/Caucasian	20	74.1%
Black/African American	6	22.2%
Other	1	3.7%
Total	27	100%

Decedent Ethnicity	Number	Percent
Hispanic/Latino	13	48.1%
Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino	9	33.4%
Not provided/unknown	5	18.5%
Total	27	100%

Perpetrator Demographics

- Gender: 100% male (27 of 27)
- Average age: 45 (median: 47, min: 18, max: 81)

Perpetrator Gender	Number	Percent
Male perpetrator / female decedent	27	100%
Total	27	100%

Perpetrator Race	Number	Percent
White/Caucasian	20	74.1%
Black African American	6	22.2%
Unknown	1	3.7%
Total	27	100%

Perpetrator Ethnicity	Number	Percent
Hispanic/Latino	11	40.8%
Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino	10	37.0%
Not provided/unknown	6	22.2%
Total	27	100%

Perpetrator Characteristics

Mental Health

- 15 percent (4 of 27) of perpetrators were thought to have a mental health condition and/or received mental health treatment (based on various sources, e.g., police records, court documents and personal narratives from self, family members or friends).

Suicidality

- 30 percent (8 of 27) of perpetrators died by suicide and an additional 4 percent (1 of 27) previously attempted but did not die by suicide.
- 11 percent (3 of 27) of perpetrators were known to have made threats of suicide prior to the fatality.

Substance Abuse

- 60 percent (16 of 27) of perpetrators had a history of substance abuse (based on various sources, e.g., police records, court documents, and personal narratives from family members, or friends).

Possession of Weapons

- 15 percent (4 of 27) of perpetrators were known to carry or possess a weapon in such a way that it was used as a means of power and control.

Criminal and Domestic Violence History

Criminal History

- 48 percent (13 of 27) of perpetrators had a known history of domestic violence against the decedent based on criminal records and narrative reports.
- 33 percent (9 of 27) of perpetrators had a known history of domestic violence toward other survivors/victims.
- 67 percent (18 of 27) of perpetrators had a known non-domestic violence related criminal history.

Criminal Charges

- 4 percent (1 of 27) of perpetrators had a known criminal order of no contact issued against them.
- 52 percent (14 of 27) of family members reported knowing about prior incidents or prior threats of domestic violence by the perpetrator toward the decedent.
- 67 percent (18 of 27) of perpetrators were arrested for the homicide/attempted homicide of the decedent/survivor*
 - *The total number does not include homicides in which the perpetrator died by suicide.

Stalking and Orders of Protection

- 33 percent (9 of 27) of perpetrators exhibited alleged stalking behavior as defined by section 784.08, F.S.
- 15 percent (4 of 27) of perpetrators exhibited alleged stalking behavior that did not meet the statutory requirements of 748.08.
- 19 percent (5 of 27) of perpetrators had harassed, threatened, or battered the decedent at or on the way to their workplace.
- 15 percent (4 of 27) of perpetrators had a known criminal order of no-contact for any domestic violence cases issued against them.
- 4 percent (1 of 27) of perpetrators had a known civil order of protection filed against them by the decedent.
 - When an injunction was filed, 100 percent (1 of 1) of perpetrators had a permanent injunction issued against them by the court.
- 4 percent (1 of 27) of perpetrators had a known petition for a civil order of protection filed against them by an individual other than the decedent.
- No perpetrators (0 of 27) had evidence of an arrest connected to a violation of an injunction for protection by the decedent.

Threats

- 15 percent (4 of 27) of perpetrators made death threats to the decedent prior to the fatality.
- 4 percent (1 of 27) of perpetrators were known to have previously attempted to kill the decedent prior to the fatality.

Characteristics of the Fatality

- 41 percent (11 of 27) of decedents expressed an intention to leave the perpetrator.
- 41 percent (11 of 27) of decedents and perpetrators were in the process of ending their relationship at the time of the fatality.
- 22 percent (6 of 27) of decedent and perpetrators were known to have ended (i.e., they were separated or divorced). Out of the six decedents and perpetrators that ended the relationship, five ended in less than three months and one ended between six months to a year.
- At the time of the fatality, 19 percent (5 of 27) of decedents were known to be in a new relationship.
- At the time of the fatality, 15 percent (4 of 27) of perpetrators were known to be in a new relationship.

Manner of Death (or attempt)	Number	Percent
Homicide—gunshot	17	63.0%
Homicide—stabbing	3	11.1%

Other (not specified in data)	3	11.1%
Homicide—strangulation	2	7.4%
Homicide—suffocation	1	3.7%
Attempted homicide—gunshot	1	3.7%
Total	27	100%

Relationship Type	Number	Percent
Intimate partner (unmarried)	12	44.5%
Spouse	10	37.0%
Former intimate partner (unmarried)	4	14.8%
Other (bystander)	1	3.7%
Total	27	100%

Relationship Length	Number	Percent
20 years or more	5	18.5%
10 years to less than 20 years	5	18.5%
5 years to less than 10 years	2	7.4%
1 year to less than 5 years	7	26.0%
6 months to less than 1 year	2	7.4%
less than 6 months	4	14.8%
Unknown	2	7.4%
Total	27	100%

Impact on Children

Children in the Home

- 30 percent (8 of 27) of decedents had children living in the home.
- When children were living in the decedent's home, the breakdown is as follows:
 - 50 percent of households with children had one child (4 of 8).
 - 50 percent of households with children had two children (4 of 8.)

Relationship to Children

- 75 percent (6 of 8) of decedents were known to be the parent to at least one of these children.
- 63 percent (5 of 8) of perpetrators were known to be the parent to at least one of these children.

Children as Witnesses

- There were known surviving minor children who witnessed or were present in 15 percent (4 of 8) of the fatalities where there were known children reported.
- 4.5 percent (1 of 27) of decedents were known to be pregnant at the time of the fatality. The length of the pregnancy was four months, and the perpetrator was the father.

Impact on Children

- 50 percent of reviews including placements involved children placed in the home of relatives of the decedent or perpetrator (based on various sources, e.g., police records, court documents, personal narratives from family members or friends). 100 percent (3 of 3) of those placed with relatives were placed with a relative of the decedent.
- Out of six reviews reporting child placement, 33 percent were placed with the Department (3 of 6).

- Out of the eight reviews involving children:
 - 63 percent (5 of 8) involved allegations of child abuse filed against the perpetrator.
 - Of the five reviews involving child abuse allegations filed against the decedent, 80 percent (2 of 2) of the allegations were unfounded.
 - 25 percent (2 of 8) involved allegations of child abuse filed against the decedent.
 - Of the two reviews involving child abuse allegations filed against the decedent, 100 percent (2 of 2) of the allegations were unfounded.