



2024 ANNUAL REPORT

OKLAHOMA DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
FATALITY REVIEW BOARD





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2025

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The purpose of the Oklahoma Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board (DVFRB)¹ is to reduce the number of domestic violence-related deaths by identifying gaps in the domestic violence prevention and protection system. The Board proposes recommendations aimed at improving the coordinated response of the individuals, organizations, and agencies within the system.

This annual report is prepared in compliance with Oklahoma statute Title 22, Section 1601. The law mandates that the DVFRB submit an annual statistical report on the previous year's domestic violence fatality trends in Oklahoma, as well as a set of policy recommendations on how to improve the state's domestic violence protection and prevention system. The recommendations are drawn from the Board's discussions and reviews of Oklahoma domestic violence homicide cases.

Domestic Violence Statistical Findings for 2023

The DVFRB and Program Staff annually identify, review, and report on domestic violence-related fatalities that occurred in Oklahoma during the previous calendar year. A fatality is classified as domestic violence-related if it falls into one of the following broad categories: intimate partner homicide (IPH), family homicide, triangle homicide (also known as sexual-competitor homicide), bystander/good Samaritan homicide, and roommate homicide.² The table below outlines domestic violence-related fatality totals DVFRB staff compiled for the 2023 calendar year.

Variables	2023 Total
Homicide Cases	108
Domestic Violence Homicide Victims (All)	122
Intimate Partner Homicide Victims (Only)	50 (41.0%)
Murder-Suicide Victims (Only)	30 (24.6%)
Child Victims (< 18)	21 (17.2%)

The 122 domestic violence-related homicide victims identified in 2023 is the highest number since the DVFRB started collecting data in 2002. The total marks five consecutive years where the DVFRB has identified more than 100 victims who were killed due to domestic violence in Oklahoma.

DVFRB research shows Oklahoma averaged 115 domestic violence homicide victims between 2019-2023. In contrast, the average between 2014-2018 was 90. Notably, the total of IPH victims (50) is the highest ever recorded by the DVFRB. The average number of IPH victims during 2014-2023 was 40; the 2023 total is 25.0% higher than the average total recorded in the last decade.

Women made up the majority of IPH victims (292; 72.8%), while their killers were almost exclusively men. This aligns with national research placing Oklahoma as second in the nation for women being murdered by men in single victim/single offender incidents when analyzing 2020 homicide data.³ Further analysis of state rankings shows that, since 1996, Oklahoma consistently ranked in the top ten states for women murdered by men.⁴

¹ Referred to interchangeably as the DVFRB, the Review Board, or the Board.

² Categories are further defined on page 4.

³ Violence Policy Center. (2022, September). *When men murder women: An analysis of 2020 homicide data*. Retrieved from <https://www.vpc.org/studies/wmmw2022.pdf>

⁴ Violence Policy Center. (2023, October). *When men murder women: A review of 25 years of female homicide victimization in the United States*. Retrieved from <https://www.vpc.org/studies/wmmw2023.pdf>

The number of victims killed by family members increased from 45 in 2022 to 56 in 2023, continuing the increasing trend in family killings over the last five years. While the state averaged 39 victims killed by family members during 2014-2018, the average between 2019-2023 was 53. The average in the last five years is 36.0% higher than during 2014-2018.

The number of victims killed in domestic violence-related murder-suicides in 2023 (30) was also the highest ever recorded by the DVFRB. 2023 marks five consecutive years where more than 20 victims were killed in these types of murders. A majority of murder-suicides occurred in the context of IPH. Of the 30 murder-suicide victims, 16 (53.3%) were killed by their current or former intimate partner. An additional nine victims were killed after a perpetrator killed their current or former intimate partner. Additional victims included other family members, such as the couple's children, or innocent bystanders. Overall, intimate partner violence (IPV) was the driving force behind the death of 24 (80.0%) of all murder-suicide victims. All but one perpetrator of intimate partner murder-suicide was male (93.7%).

The total number of children (21) killed by family or household members increased by four in 2023. It is the highest total recorded since 2015, when 24 children were killed in domestic violence situations. Notably, 12 (57.1%) of the 21 child homicide victims were killed in the context of a murder-suicide. A total of nine (75.0%) of those 12 were killed in the context of IPH-related murder-suicides. In other words, these children were killed in the context of their father killing their mother or, in some instances, as young bystanders caught in the crossfire of an IPH.

In cases where it was possible to determine, DVFRB research found 73 (60.3%) out of 121 victims were killed in the context of IPV across all relationship categories. This includes 50 IPH victims, 12 family killings in the context of IPH or situations where an IPV altercation led household members to kill others (such as when a child or siblings kill their mother's/sister's abuser), eight triangle killings, and three bystander deaths. These homicides were all driven by IPV.

State Incident-Based Reporting System (SIBRS) crime data submitted to the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation (OSBI) by Oklahoma law enforcement agencies show an increasing number of reported unique incidents and victims.

As of November 2024, agencies reported 26,297 domestic violence incidents and 30,109 victims in 2023. It marks two consecutive years where OSBI's SIBRS totals increased across these two categories. From 2021-2023, Oklahoma averaged 25,543 reported domestic abuse incidents annually. Meanwhile, the average total of reported victims equaled 29,241 per year.

It must be noted that these statistics reflect only incidents where law enforcement determined a crime occurred. The numbers do not take into consideration tens of thousands of calls for service that law enforcement respond to that are categorized as domestics but are ultimately not counted towards official statistics. This may be due to law enforcement being unable to determine that a criminal offense occurred because of uncooperative parties or the pattern of abuse or coercive control goes beyond what can statutorily be considered a criminal offense.

Finally, DVFRB research found a total of 21,066 victim protective orders (VPOs) were filed in 2023. It is the highest number recorded between 2016-2023. It marks three consecutive years where the total increased after a significant decrease in 2020. The decrease in 2020 was likely influenced by the public health concerns brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Although it is difficult to pinpoint the precise causes of fluctuations in VPO filings, the statistics suggest filings have resumed the increasing trend that began in 2018.

2024 DVFRB Recommendations

In 2024, DVFRB case reviews and discussions predominantly revolved around the following:

1. Establishing a fund for a statewide program focused on providing direct trauma-informed services to children, adolescents, as well their caregivers, who have been impacted by fatal and non-fatal IPV;
2. Enacting a domestic violence-specific hearsay exception to bolster evidence-based prosecution in Oklahoma;
3. Strengthening areas of Oklahoma’s VPO laws, and;
4. Fulfilling the 2023 DVFRB recommendations that were not passed in the 2024 legislative session.

Recommendation One

In response to the increased number of children and caregivers impacted by family violence-related homicide, the Oklahoma Legislature should appropriate \$850,000 to fund a statewide program focused on providing direct trauma-informed services, such as specialized case management and therapy, to children, adolescents, and their caregivers, who have been impacted by the following types of IPV:

- **Intimate partner homicide (IPH) and/or murder-suicide:** murder of a child’s parent or caregiver by a current or former partner
- **Near IPH:** Attempted murder of a child’s parent/caregiver by a current or former intimate partner
- **Familial homicide:** Murder of a family member by another family member resulting from IPV
- **Sexual-competitor homicide:** A parent or caregiver’s former partner murders a new partner or vice-versa

Recommendation Two

The Oklahoma Legislature should take appropriate action to strengthen Oklahoma statutes so prosecutors across the state are better equipped to hold domestic abusers accountable through evidence-based prosecution. This will enhance the safety of victims, their families, and the community.

This recommendation calls for legislation on domestic violence-specific hearsay exceptions. The recommended statutory change is further explained in the Rationale section of this report and is briefly outlined below:

Create a domestic violence-specific hearsay exception provision under 12 O.S. § 2803.3 that aligns with recent Child Hearsay exceptions enacted through S.B. 619 and H.B. 3774.

Recommendation Three

The Oklahoma Legislature should take appropriate legislative action to strengthen the state’s victim protective order (VPO) system by amending 22 O.S. § 60.6(A)(2) & (B)(2), as well as §§ 40.3, 60.3, and 60.16. These changes will equip prosecutors with more tools to hold domestic abusers accountable in court for VPO violations, reduce burdens on victims, and increase system follow-through and consistency.

There are two subcategories in this recommendation regarding VPOs: (1) an amendment to include a “finding of guilt” in the definition of “conviction” for VPO violations, and (2) VPO service and filing updates.

The recommended statutory changes are briefly outlined below and further explained in the Rationale section:

1. **Redefining “Conviction” for VPO Violations**

- Amend 22 O.S. § 60.6(A)(2) and (B)(2) to broaden the definition of “conviction” to match other sections of law so that a “finding of guilt,” even if the sentence is deferred, is enough on a first-time VPO violation (misdemeanor) to allow the prosecution of a subsequent VPO violation as a felony.

2. Service & Filing: Amending VPO-Related Statutes for Increased Clarity & Uniform Application

- Amend 22 O.S. § 40.3 on Emergency Temporary Orders of Protection when courts are not open for business to include a subsection reducing filing and re-filing burdens on victims.
- Amend 22 O.S. § 60.3 on Emergency Ex Parte Orders to include a subsection reducing burdens on victims and increasing system follow-through and consistency.
- Amend 22 O.S. § 60.16(C)(3) on Emergency Temporary Orders of Protection to strike a clause that burdens victims with re-filing(s) and includes language that increases system follow-through and consistency regarding service and filing.
- Amend 22 O.S. § 60.16(C)(5) on Emergency Temporary Orders of Protection to reduce burdens on victims and include language that increases system follow-through and consistency regarding service and filing.

Recommendation Four

The DVFRB encourages the Oklahoma Legislature to enact the remaining statutory changes recommended in the Board’s 2023 Annual Report. This recommendation revisits the importance of the following:

1. Amend 21 O.S. § 644 so Oklahoma prosecutors are not limited to filing Domestic Assault & Battery (A&B) with a Deadly Weapon charge only if a shooting was involved. Eliminate the discrepancy between Domestic A&B with a Deadly Weapon and its non-DV counterpart, which can be filed if an offender commits A&B by means of any deadly weapon, such as a firearm or knife, or any other means likely to produce death.
2. Amend 21 O.S. § 13.1 to include domestic violence crimes outlined in 21 O.S. § 644 as 85% crimes.
3. Amend 57 O.S. § 571 so “Domestic Assault and Battery Subsequent Offense” and “Domestic Assault and Battery on a Pregnant Person” are statutorily considered violent crimes in the State of Oklahoma.

Conclusion

The DVFRB began collecting data in 2002 and tracked domestic violence homicides in Oklahoma dating back to 1998. This 23rd edition of the DVFRB report finds that 2023 was a record-breaking year in terms of domestic violence homicides in Oklahoma. The number of cases and victims are the most identified in DVFRB history.

Oklahoma faces a domestic violence epidemic. A significant amount of work is needed to ensure those who are currently being victimized have access to resources and that abusers are held accountable. Measures must be taken to interrupt and prevent the cycle of abuse.

The recommendations in this report provide an actionable roadmap for agency stakeholders and Oklahoma state lawmakers on how to address serious issues negatively affecting Oklahomans and our domestic violence protection and prevention system.

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

INTRODUCTION



From the Desk of the Attorney General

Thank you to the members of the Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board for your dedication to combating domestic violence in Oklahoma. Your expertise and recommendations have been instrumental in strengthening our state's response to this crisis. The sobering reality is that Oklahoma continues to rank among the highest in the nation for domestic violence incidents. The Board's work remains vital as we strive to end this cycle of violence and create lasting change in our communities.

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

Gentner Drummond
Oklahoma Attorney General
January 2025

Oklahoma Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board

This 23rd edition of the DVFRB Annual Report found that 2023 broke domestic violence homicide records in Oklahoma. The number of cases and victims are the most ever identified in DVFRB history and marks three consecutive years where domestic violence-related murder-suicides consistently made headlines across the state.

The brutality of these murders, which often involving the killing of children, highlight how pervasive the issue of domestic violence is in Oklahoma. We must continue empowering and protecting victims, ensuring abusers are held accountable for their actions, and enacting policies preventing abuse from occurring in the first place.

The Board is deeply grateful to the 2024 legislators who implemented several 2022 and 2023 DVFRB Annual Report recommendations. These changes included the enactment of a law adding the Department of Corrections to the DVFRB membership, amending the range of punishment in our strangulation laws, and appropriating a *historic* funding increase to Oklahoma Attorney General certified victim services agencies.

We commend the legislature for taking such actions. Our hope is this report will continue to encourage and guide Oklahoma's legislature, systems, agencies, organizations, communities, and individuals in the development and implementation of best practices and policies that strengthen our state's comprehensive and coordinated response to domestic violence.

Oklahoma Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board Members

Below are the members serving on the Review Board through June 2026. The selection process for and composition of the Review Board are established in [Title 22 O.S. § 1602](#).

Member	Agency
Eric Pfeifer, M.D. Celia Cobb, MD (Primary Designee) Jarred Michalski, MD (Alternate Designee)	Chief Medical Examiner
Gentner Drummond, J.D. Melissa Van Duyn (Alternate Designee) Susan Laib, Victim Advocacy & Services Unit Chief (Alternate Designee) Sara Wray (Alternate Designee)	Oklahoma Attorney General
Keith Reed, R.N., MPH, CPH Brandie Combs, MPH, Regional Director – District 5 (Primary Designee) Jill Nobles-Botkin (Alternate Designee)	State Commissioner of Health
Tracy Wendling, DrPH. Brandi Woods-Littlejohn, MCJ (Primary Designee) Emily Nicholls (Alternate Designee)	Chief of Injury Prevention Services Department of Health
Jeffrey Cartmell, J.D. Jennifer Postlewait, MSW (Designee) Marissa Belase, MSW (Alternate Designee) (Vice-Chair)	Director Department of Human Services
Aungela Spurlock Lt. Jenny Virden (Designee) (Primary Designee) Heather Cropper (Alt. Designee)	Director (former) State Bureau of Investigation
Victoria A. Friesen Melanie Ferguson, LCSW (Primary Designee)	Commissioner Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services
Timothy Tardibono, J.D. Constanzia Nizza, MPA (Designee) Natascha Ferguson, J.D. (Alternate)	Executive Director Office of Juvenile Affairs
Mike Booth, Sheriff, Pottawatomie County (Designee) Scott Hawkins, Lieutenant (Alternate Designee) Served most current term from July 30, 2024-January 6, 2025 Currently vacant due to Sheriff Booth's retirement	Oklahoma Sheriffs' Association
Chief Don Sweger, Guthrie Police Department	Oklahoma Association of Chiefs of Police
Vacant	Board of Governors Oklahoma Bar Association
Laura Thomas, J.D. DA, District 9 Sean Webb, J.D. ADA, District 9 (Alternate Designee)	District Attorneys Council
Sarah Coffey, D.O.	Oklahoma Osteopathic Association
Martina Jelley, M.D., M.S.P.H.	Oklahoma State Medical Association
Janice Carr, Ph.D., RN	Oklahoma Nurses Association
Hon. Sheila Stinson, J.D. District Court, Oklahoma County	Oklahoma Supreme Court
Laura Kuester, M.A., LPC Angela Beatty, CDSVRP (Alternate Designee)	Oklahoma Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (former)
Brandon Pasley, CDSVRP (Chair)	Oklahoma Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (Survivor)
Shelly Harrison, J.D.	Native Alliance Against Violence
Tania Bardin, B.A.	Native Alliance Against Violence (Survivor)

2024 RECOMMENDATIONS

Each recommendation is accompanied by suggested target systems and aligns with the Review Board's continuous goal of reducing domestic violence fatalities in Oklahoma. The three recommendations made below are the direct results of discussion and analysis from in-depth case reviews by the Review Board in 2024.

Recommendation One⁵

In response to the increased number of children and caregivers impacted by family violence-related homicide, the Oklahoma Legislature should appropriate \$850,000 to fund a statewide program focused on providing direct trauma-informed services, such as specialized case management and therapy, to children, adolescents, as well as their caregivers, who have been impacted by the following types of IPV:

- *Intimate partner homicide (IPH) and/or murder-suicide: Murder of a child's parent or caregiver by a current or former partner*
- *Near IPH: Attempted murder of a child's parent/caregiver by a current or former intimate partner*
- *Familial homicide: Murder of a family member by another family member resulting from IPV*
- *Sexual-competitor homicide: A parent or caregiver's former partner murders a new partner or vice-versa*

Target Systems

Oklahoma Legislature, Office of the Governor, Office of the Oklahoma Attorney General

Purpose

Develop a statewide program focused on providing specialized wrap-around services to children, as well as their caregivers, who have been impacted by IPV-related homicide.

Rationale

Introduction: Effects of Child-Exposure to Family Violence and Homicide

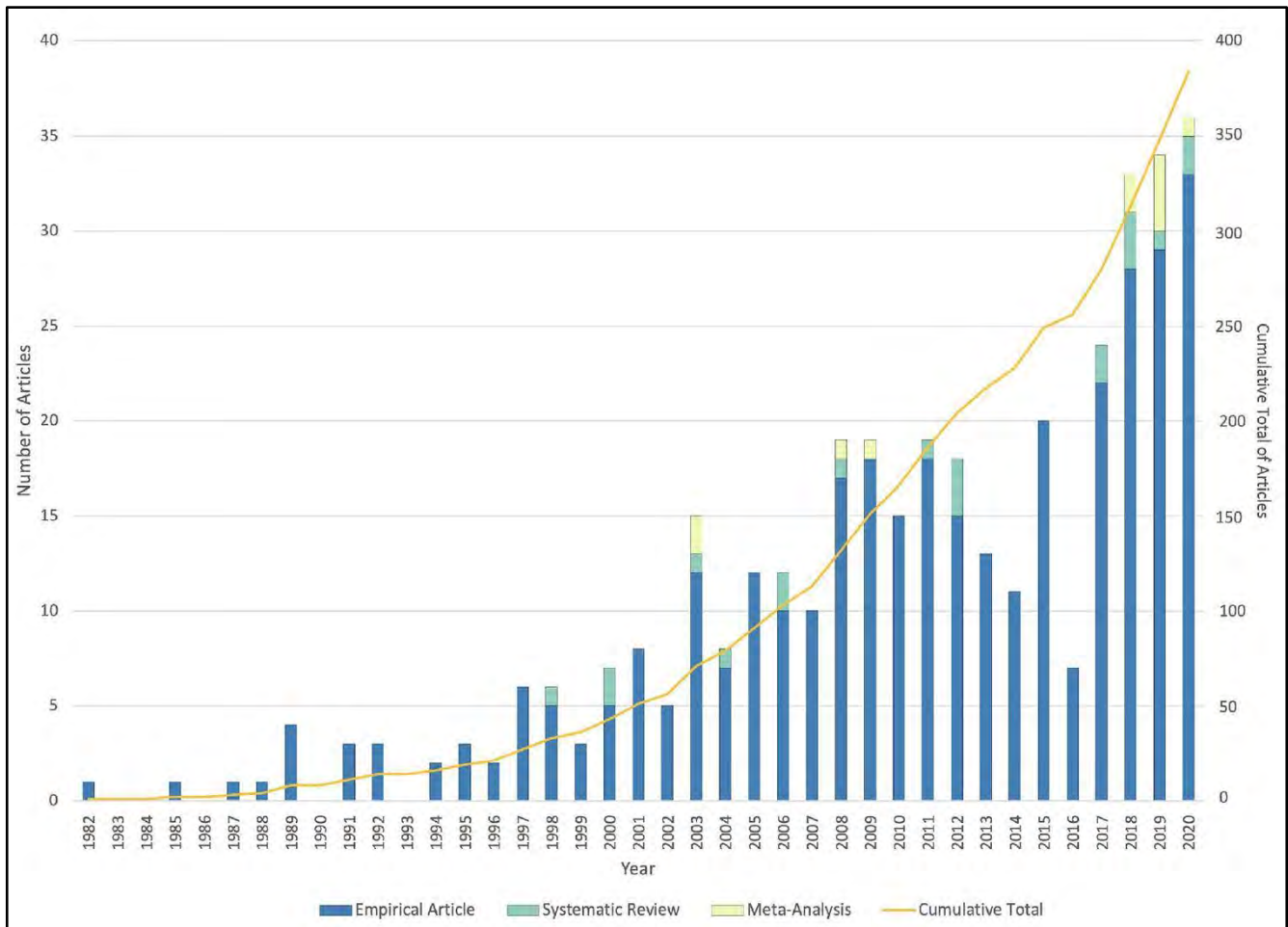
The DVFRB regularly reviews intimate partner homicides where children either witnessed or were exposed to the killing of a parent. In some cases, children were in the presence of what amounted to the torture of their mother at the hands of their father or intimate partner. Other situations resulted in perpetrators holding their children hostage or making them clean up the gruesome crime scene before leaving the children alone and fleeing from law enforcement.

Notably, case reviews reveal the killing is often the fatal outcome in a long history of both reported and unreported abuse in the home. In this tragic context, children lose one or both parents because of murder of one parent and, in some instances, the suicide or imprisonment of the other. Exposure to tremendous family violence and trauma ultimately reverberate throughout their lives. Without proper intervention and support, the impact may lay the groundwork for the unraveling of children's lives and a rippling effect on the community.

Childhood exposure to DV has been increasingly studied in recent years (*see Figure 1*).

⁵ Contributing Authors: OAG DVFRB Program Manager Anthony Hernández Rivera, MA; OAG Assistant Attorney General Sara Wray, JD; DVFRB Member Sara Coffey, DO.

Figure 1. Yearly and cumulative publication of the effects of IPV exposure on child outcomes



Source: Journal of Family Violence (2022): Nearly 50 Years of Child Exposure to Intimate Partner Violence Empirical Research: Evidence Mapping, Overarching Themes, and Future Directions.

Studies demonstrate the profound effects that exposure to intimate partner violence (IPV) has on children’s social and emotional development⁶ For example, it can impact not only their immediate experience of safety, but also

⁶ Wood, S. L., & Sommers, M. (2011). Consequences of intimate partner violence on child witnesses: A systematic review of the literature. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing*, 24(4), 223–236. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6171.2011.00302.x>; Stiller, A., et al. (2022). Witnessing intimate partner violence as a child and associated consequences. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 37(21-22). doi: 10.1177/08862605211055147; Holmes, M. R., et al. (2022). Nearly 50 years of child exposure to intimate partner violence empirical research: Evidence mapping, overarching themes, and future directions. *Journal of Family Violence*, 37(8), 1207–1219. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-021-00349-3>; Vu, N. L., et al. (2016). Children's exposure to intimate partner violence: A meta-analysis of longitudinal associations with child adjustment problems. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 46, 25–33. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2016.04.003>; Gartland, D., et al. (2021). Intimate partner violence and child outcomes at age 10: A pregnancy cohort. *Archives of Disease in Childhood*, 106(11), 1066–1074. <https://doi.org/10.1136/archdischild-2020-320321>; Gewirtz, A. H., & Edleson, J. L. (2007). Young children's exposure to intimate partner violence: Towards a developmental risk and resilience framework for research and intervention. *Journal of Family Violence*, 22(3), 151–163. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-007-9065-3>; Harding, H. G., et al. (2013). Exposure to maternal- and paternal-perpetrated intimate partner violence, emotion regulation, and child outcomes. *Journal of Family Violence*, 28(1), 63–72. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-012-9487-4>

children’s ability to learn and function in school.⁷ Youth exposed to IPV are also at an increased risk of developing poor coping habits, chronic medical conditions, including substance use disorder, mental health disorders, and chronic health conditions later in life.⁸ Studies show that merely being aware of violence, as opposed to witnessing it, can also lead to lasting negative effects on children and adolescents.⁹

A review of the literature over the last 50 years found indications of the following impact on IPV-exposed children when compared to non-IPV children:¹⁰

- **Health:** Higher rates of ER visits, poorer lung functioning, and greater reported health concerns.
- **Social-emotional Competence:** Lower levels of social-emotional competence and higher levels of emotional dysregulation.
- **Bullying:** Significant relationship between IPV exposure and both bullying perpetration and victimization.
- **IPV Acceptance:** “higher likelihood of accepting parental IPV as normative or justifiable, which in turn predicted youths’ Adult DV perpetration and victimization outcomes.”
- **Education:** Negative effect on academic functioning “as measured by grade retention, suspension and expulsion, truancy and absenteeism, disciplinary infractions, and failing grades.”

Losing one or both parents to IPH compounds trauma and can be completely destabilizing. Children exposed to IPH are a unique population of crime victims requiring a tailored community and system response. As discovered by the nation’s first statewide wraparound services program—Arizona Child and Adolescent Survivor Initiative (ACASI)—the response must be tailored to the unique and complex trauma caused by exposure to violence where children often have a relationship or know both perpetrator and victim.

ACASI is dedicated to serving children impacted by this specific violence and designed its response to address “the specific situations and needs of children who have lost a parent to intimate partner homicide or experienced intimate partner violence, and their adult caregivers, many of whom have also lost a loved one.”¹¹ ACASI emphasizes the importance of a unique response that is widely lacking otherwise: “We’ve listened to survivors who have explained the ways in which other grief groups haven’t felt relevant or helpful to them.”¹²

As we learn from our sister state, Arizona, the Child and Adolescent Survivor Initiative approach “increasingly recognizes the complexity and intensity of the trauma of both children and new caregivers in these IPH cases,

⁷ Bogat, G. A., et al. (2023). Developmental consequences of intimate partner violence on children. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, 19(1), 303–329. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-clinpsy-072720-013634>; A.E., et al. (2022). Childhood exposure to intimate partner violence and effects on social-emotional competence: A systematic review. *Journal of Family Violence*, 37, 1263–1281. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-021-00315-z>

⁸ Ravi, K. E., & Black, B. M. (2022). The relationship between children’s exposure to intimate partner violence and an emotional-behavioral disability: A scoping review. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 23(3), 868–876;

McTavish, J. R., et al. (2016). Children’s exposure to intimate partner violence: An overview. *International Review of Psychiatry*, 28(5), 504–518. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540261.2016.1205001>

⁹ McTavish, J. R., et al. (2016). Children’s exposure to intimate partner violence: An overview. *International Review of Psychiatry*, 28(5), 504–518. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540261.2016.1205001>

¹⁰ Holmes, M. R., et al. (2022). Nearly 50 years of child exposure to intimate partner violence empirical research: Evidence mapping, overarching themes, and future directions. *Journal of Family Violence*, 37(8), 1207–1219. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-021-00349-3>

¹¹ Arizona State University, Family Violence Center. (n.d.). FAQs: How are ACASI’s therapy and support groups different from the peer support groups already in my community? Retrieved December 26, 2024, from <https://socialwork.asu.edu/family-violence-center/faqs> (accessed Dec. 26, 2024)

¹² *Ibid.*

raising questions about the appropriateness of simply applying a generic notion of ‘trauma’ derived from the extant trauma literature.” In meeting the needs of children exposed to IPH, one size does not fit all.

Child-Exposure to Family Violence Homicide in Oklahoma: Previous Recommendations and Statistics

Since it began reviewing cases in 2001, the DVFRB consistently raised concerns about the significant number of children present at the scene of domestic violence-related homicides. Early editions of this report called on systems to ensure children on the scene of homicides are connected with the services and support needed to foster care and healing.

The DVFRB first called for the study of issues surrounding children on the scene of domestic violence fatalities in 2003.¹³ Other recommendations followed regarding the development of crisis response plans devoted to making sure children receive appropriate services in the aftermath of fatalities.¹⁴ In 2009, the DVFRB emphasized the importance of trauma-informed care for children and the importance of adhering to the joint response protocol between law enforcement and the Department of Human Services (DHS) when responding to homicide scenes that had children present.¹⁵ By 2015, the DVFRB, recognizing missed opportunities for early trauma-informed intervention, called for the joint response between law enforcement agencies and child welfare to address the immediate and long-term needs of children who witnessed the loss of one or both of their parents because of domestic violence homicide.¹⁶ The DVFRB most recently sought to bring attention to the issue of child witnesses at the scene of fatalities in 2022.¹⁷

The latest DVFRB statistics affirm the need for surviving children of IPV-related homicide cases to receive specialized, wrap-around, trauma-informed services. For the cases on which staff were able to collect data, statistics for the years 2019-2023 indicate that, on average, children are on the scene in 28.7% of all homicide cases each calendar year. A total of 297 children were identified as being present at the scene. This equals an average of 59 children witnessing the violent death of a family member every year in Oklahoma. Notably, DVFRB research found that, on average for the years 2021-2023, approximately 56.4% of the total number of children (174) witnessed homicide incidents that occurred in the context of IPV (*see Figure 2*).

¹³ Woods-Littlejohn, B. (prepared by K.C. Moon). (2004). *Annual report, domestic violence homicide: A multi-disciplinary analysis by the Oklahoma Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board, Annual Report Sept. 2003-Sept. 2004* (p. 9). Oklahoma Criminal Justice Resource Center. Retrieved from

https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/oag/documents/divisions/victim-advocacy-and-services-unit/domestic-violence-fatality-review-board-annual-report/dvfrb_2004_annual_report.pdf

¹⁴ Oklahoma Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board. (2005). *Annual report, domestic violence homicide in Oklahoma: A report of the Oklahoma Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board 2005* (p. 11). Retrieved from

https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/oag/documents/divisions/victim-advocacy-and-services-unit/domestic-violence-fatality-review-board-annual-report/dvfrb_2005_annual_report.pdf

¹⁵ Oklahoma Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board. (2009). *Annual report, domestic violence homicide in Oklahoma: Oklahoma Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board Annual Report 2009* (p. 2). Retrieved from

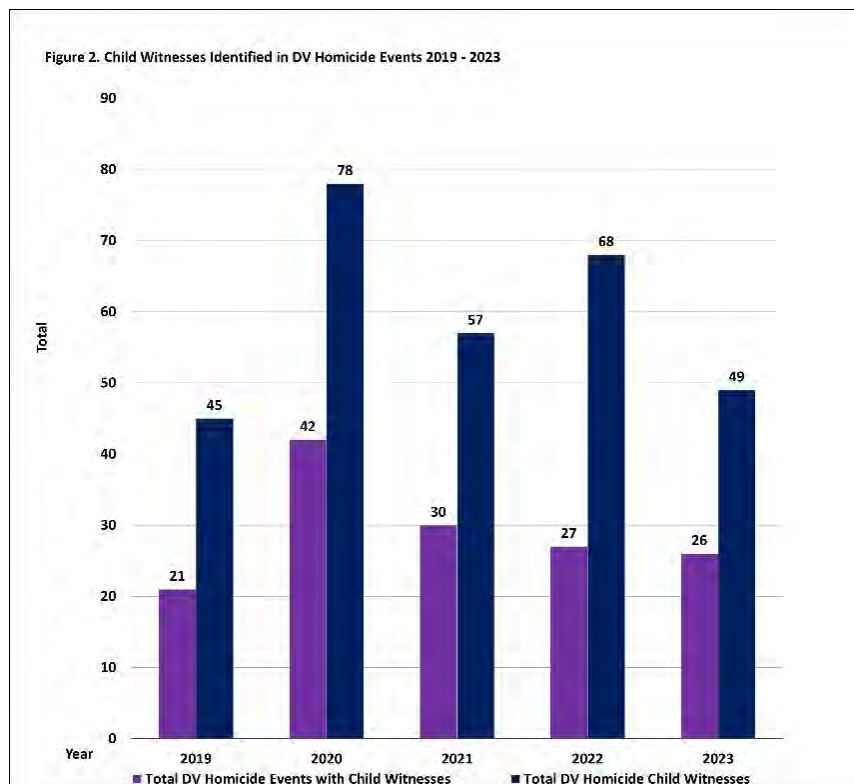
https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/oag/documents/divisions/victim-advocacy-and-services-unit/domestic-violence-fatality-review-board-annual-report/dvfrb_2009_annual_report_summary.pdf

¹⁶ Oklahoma Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board. (2015). *Annual report, domestic violence homicide in Oklahoma: A report of the Oklahoma Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board* (p. 26). Retrieved from

https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/oag/documents/divisions/victim-advocacy-and-services-unit/domestic-violence-fatality-review-board-annual-report/domestic_violence_fatalities_review_board_annual_report_2015.pdf

¹⁷ Oklahoma Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board. (2022). *Annual report, Oklahoma Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board: Annual report 2022* (pp. 34–35). Retrieved from

https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/oag/documents/divisions/victim-advocacy-and-services-unit/domestic-violence-fatality-review-board-annual-report/1.24.23_-_2022_dvfrb_annual_report.pdf



The DVFRB’s Position: Where Do We Go from Here? Serving Children Exposed to Violence and Homicide

The safety and wellbeing of Oklahoma’s families and children are vital to a strong, healthy state. In recent years, the highest level of our state government recognized this and proclaimed November “Oklahoma Family Month.”¹⁸ In part, the proclamation holds that family “is the cornerstone of a healthy and thriving society,” “families continue to be the most central social circle that a person can experience,” and “the health and strength of the average family determines the path of society[.]”

Governor Stitt’s proclamation recognizes the central role family life plays in the strength and future of our state and nation. The DVFRB agrees and holds that our statutory mission obligates us to remind our state of the gruesome impact family violence poses across countless households. Children who are exposed to rampant family violence and homicide are *not* afforded the strength, security, and benefits of a healthy home. On the contrary, these children comprise one of the most neglected and at-risk groups in our communities and are constantly in danger of falling through the cracks under the overwhelming weight of trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).

A safety net is vital for children who are not afforded the positive nurturance of a healthy family home due to family violence or homicide. Timely intervention in the form of specialized care is a critical step towards preventing today’s child witness from becoming tomorrow’s adult victim or batterer.

In recent years, some lawmakers inquired how to proactively intervene and address violence. In 2023, the House Judiciary – Criminal Committee at the Oklahoma House of Representatives held an interim study titled *Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Nurses*.¹⁹ In the study press release, State Representative Ross Ford expressed interest in “look[ing] at early intervention, programs that will empower victims to leave their attackers before it

¹⁸ Stitt, K. (2023, October 26). Governor’s proclamation: November as Family Month. *Executive Department, Oklahoma*. Retrieved from <https://www.sos.ok.gov/documents/proclamations/41779.pdf>

¹⁹ Oklahoma House of Representatives. (2023, October 4). *Oklahoma House Interim Study IS23-051, Judiciary – Criminal Committee*. Retrieved December 26, 2024, from <https://former.okhouse.gov/Committees/ShowInterimStudies.aspx> (accessed Dec. 26, 2024)

is too late, and that help show what healthy relationships look like.” We commend this line of thinking, which aligns with the DVFRB’s historical emphasis on early intervention and healthy relationship education to prevent violence.²⁰

Unfortunately, previous DVFRB recommendations calling for systemwide implementation of healthy relationship and dating violence prevention curriculum in Oklahoma’s education system never materialized. In the absence of systemwide early childhood education efforts, the DVFRB asks lawmakers to support an initiative that would provide vital services to an at-risk population of children whose lives are upended by family violence. The DVFRB recommends the Oklahoma legislature appropriate funds to the Office of the Attorney General to establish a statewide program providing specialized wrap-around services to children impacted by IPV-related homicide and non-fatal IPV.

Looking to Arizona, Oklahoma’s program should mirror ACASI. Oklahoma’s program, like ACASI, would foster surviving children and caregivers’ healing. The program should offer a variety of services aimed at breaking the cycle of trauma:

- **First**, a dedicated team of IPV experts should provide intensive case management and advocacy services tailored to the surviving children and caregivers’ needs.
- **Second**, the program should contract with mental health providers (MHPs) and qualified staff to provide specialized trauma therapy. The contracted MHPs should be trained in treating complex trauma and grief. Often, child survivors are not only experiencing traumatic loss of a parent, but many other losses simultaneously, such as potential school changes, relocation, loss of existing supports and friendships.

The combination of complex trauma exposure and traumatic grief highlight the need for specialized services by highly trained behavioral health professionals. Unlike single-incident trauma (“acute”), complex trauma results from chronic and prolonged traumatic events, such as domestic violence exposure, often experienced as harm perpetrated by a trusted person or caregiver.²¹ Complex trauma can change brain structure and function.²²

- **Third**, the program should facilitate other specialized services such as telehealth capabilities, a mentoring program, and organized peer support activities so children can connect and heal with others with similar experiences.

This program’s goal should be to address how children exposed to domestic violence homicide, as well as thousands of others exposed to sublethal family violence, contribute to Oklahoma’s high rates of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Oklahoma leads the nation in childhood adversity, with 28.5% of Oklahoma children experiencing two or more ACEs.²³

²⁰ See DVFRB Annual Reports from 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2012, 2015.

²¹ Ross, S. L., et al. (2021). Complex trauma and Trauma-Focused Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy: How do trauma chronicity and PTSD presentation affect treatment outcome? *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 111, 104734. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2020.104734>

²² Anda, R. F., et al. (2006). The enduring effects of abuse and related adverse experiences in childhood. *European Archives of Psychiatry and Clinical Neuroscience*, 256(3), 174–186. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00406-005-0624-4>; Teicher, M. H., & Samson, J. A. (2016). Annual Research Review: Enduring neurobiological effects of childhood abuse and neglect. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 57(3), 241–266.

²³ DeLongis, A., & Holtzman, S. (2021). *Social support and health: A review of the literature*. *PMC Journal of Medical Psychology*, 25(3), 134-147. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10481206/>

High ACE scores contribute to an array of bad outcomes later in life²⁴ and contribute to a significant array of negative consequences for children, families, and communities. In addition to increased morbidity, including increased substance use disorders and mental illness, we see a significant increase in obesity, cardiovascular disease and all-cause mortality. By instituting specialized clinical care for children exposed to violence and victims to IPV, Oklahoma could be a leader in the delivery of trauma-informed care. This would ultimately lead to a healthier Oklahoma for all.

Families set the direction and integrity of society. In recognizing family as the cornerstone of society, Oklahoma must prioritize intervention and support when that cornerstone is ravaged by family violence, with many consequences affecting our wider communities.

Facilitating healing from the impact of ACEs, such as IPV-exposure, can reduce detrimental consequences and create safer communities for all. After years of DVFRB recommendations regarding child witnesses to IPV and IPH, the Board recommends the fundamental step of providing tailored, wraparound services and intervention for children exposed to complex traumatic experiences inherent in domestic violence.

Implementation

This recommendation's implementation relies on the Oklahoma Legislature appropriating \$850,000 to the Victim Advocacy and Services Unit (VASU) at the Office of the Oklahoma Attorney General (OAG) to build a wraparound services program for child witnesses of intimate partner homicide and sublethal IPV.

The program can be either based out of VASU, or the funds can be sub-granted to a partner agency with expertise to do the work on behalf of the State of Oklahoma. A partner agency should have a proven track record of working with IPV victims and children using trauma-informed best-practices.

Program staff and contracted mental health providers should have experience in and expertise on IPV and its adverse impact on child development. Finally, the Oklahoma program should rely on input and technical assistance from experts at ACASI. This will enable the program to draw from tested policies, procedures, and best-practices while adapting to Oklahoma's needs and landscape.

²⁴ Bryant, D. J., et al. (2020). Association of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and substance use disorders (SUDs) in a multi-site safety net healthcare setting. *Addictive Behaviors Reports*, 12, 100293.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.abrep.2020.100293>; Dube, S. R., et al. (2003). Childhood abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction and the risk of illicit drug use: The adverse childhood experiences study. *Journal of Pediatrics*, 111(3), 564–572; Mersky, J. P., Topitzes, J., & Reynolds, A. J. (2013). Impacts of adverse childhood experiences on health, mental health, and substance use in early adulthood: A cohort study of an urban, minority sample in the U.S. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 37(11), 917–925.

2024 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation Two²⁵

The Oklahoma Legislature should take appropriate legislative action to strengthen areas in the Oklahoma statutes so prosecutors across the state are better equipped to hold domestic abusers accountable by authorizing evidence-based prosecution. This will enhance the safety of victims, their families, and the community.

This recommendation calls for legislation on domestic violence-specific hearsay exceptions as briefly outlined below:

Create a domestic violence-specific hearsay exception provision under 12 O.S. § 2803.3 that aligns with recent Child Hearsay exceptions enacted by the legislature under S.B. 619²⁶ and H.B. 3774.²⁷

Target Systems

Oklahoma House of Representatives; Oklahoma State Senate; Office of the Governor; District Attorney Offices, Oklahoma District Attorneys Council

Purpose

Increase the use of evidence-based prosecution so prosecutors are better equipped to hold abusers accountable in court.

Rationale

Challenges when Prosecuting DV Crimes

Domestic violence prosecution is murder prevention.²⁸ However, domestic violence crimes are among the most difficult to prosecute due to the complex dynamics characterizing DV situations. As a result, many DV victims are unwilling or unable to participate in prosecutions to testify against an abuser. The decision to not engage with the process may be traced to an array of factors, such as dissatisfaction with the criminal justice system, threats of retaliation, attempted reconciliation, and self-blame.²⁹

DV cases often present far more complex interpersonal and social dynamics than stranger-crime cases. For example, the victim and defendant are sometimes parents of the same child(ren), and DV victims may be accused

²⁵ Contributing Authors: OAG DVFRB Program Manager Anthony Hernández Rivera, MA; OAG Assistant Attorney General Sara Wray, JD; District Attorneys Council Assistant Executive Coordinator Ryan Stephenson, JD. A special thank you to Eric Epplin, 4th District First Assistant DA, for consulting on this recommendation.

²⁶ Oklahoma State Legislature, 59th Leg., Reg. Sess. (2023). *Senate Bill 619: Enrolled version*. Retrieved from http://webserver1.lsb.state.ok.us/cf_pdf/2023-24%20ENR/SB/SB619%20ENR.PDF; [12 O.S. § 2803.1](#)

²⁷ Oklahoma State Legislature. 59th Leg., 2nd Sess. (2024). *House Bill 3774: Enrolled version*. Retrieved from http://webserver1.lsb.state.ok.us/cf_pdf/2023-24%20ENR/hB/HB3774%20ENR.PDF; [12 O.S. § 2803.1](#)

²⁸ Walters, M.E. (2016, November 20). *Domestic violence prosecutor handbook* (p. 14). Retrieved from <https://www.ok.gov/dac/documents/Domestic%20Violence%20Prosecutor%20Handbook.pdf>

²⁹ Corsilles, A. (1994). No-drop policies in the prosecution of domestic violence cases: Guarantee to action or dangerous solution? *Fordham Law Review*, 63(5), 853-856. As referenced in Hudders, N. A. (2000). The problem of using hearsay in domestic violence cases: Is a new exception the answer? *Duke Law Journal*, 49, 1041-1047.

of breaking up their own family, taking a parent from a child through incarceration, or risking poverty and homelessness due to “putting away” the abuser.

Unlike other cases, many domestic violence victims and their families experience the impact of both the crime and the punishment. The added turmoil, risks, and losses victims face in testifying in domestic violence cases cannot be overstated.

In contrast to stranger-perpetrated crimes, domestic abusers often have intimate knowledge of and access to victims and victims’ loved ones, as well as an outsized impact on victims’ finances, housing, and economic stability. Domestic abusers undermine the justice system in powerful and unique ways through their ability to deter victims and witnesses from disclosing, reporting, or testifying to DV-related crimes.

Mark Wynn, former Nashville Metropolitan Police Department Domestic Violence Division Lieutenant and Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) Team member, works as a law enforcement trainer and consultant. “This crime is different than all other crimes,” he notes, adding that “[o]fficers need to understand that while bad things may happen to the offender when police intervene, worse things often will happen to the victim.”³⁰ Many victims experience increased harm and danger after seeking help. Abusers often leverage victims’ and abusers’ families and social circles to pressure, retaliate, intimidate, or guilt victims into not participating in the justice system.

The obstacles to domestic violence victims safely participating in cases is long-established. In 1995, the National Institute of Justice published *Victim and Witness Intimidation: New Developments and Emerging Responses*, finding that “Most interview respondents estimated that more victims were murdered and otherwise intimidated in domestic violence cases in their jurisdictions each year than in gang or drug crime-related intimidation attempts” and “intimidation in domestic violence cases is different in nature....because of the close relationship between domestic partners and the near universality of intimidation in domestic violence cases.”³¹ With increased witness risk and weak sentencing outcomes, many victims’ cost-benefit and safety analyses leads to electing nonparticipation.

Additionally, unique dynamics absent in other cases may include the witness’ love, loyalty, or emotional dependence on the defendant. A compounding factor to the steep challenges inherent in DV cases is the reinforcing cycle of intimidation, manipulation, and coercion in DV cases: perpetrators’ targeting of victims pays off. As reported by Oklahoma County, “over half of declined cases are due to victims being uncooperative. Nearly half of charged cases are dismissed because a victim will not testify.”³² Nonparticipating witnesses are often the abusers’ key to avoiding accountability and serve as a prime target to undermining the justice system.

Abusers frequently turn their energy and coercion towards the victim as the case lynchpin. Externally, the effects of this often present as victim statement recantations, bail payments, refusal to “cooperate” with prosecution, or testifying on a defendant’s behalf. In this way, DV defendants hijack the justice system, as well as ensure that

³⁰ Wynn, M. (2015). *Domestic violence: From an officer's perspective*. Retrieved from <https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.markwynn.com%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2FDomestic-Violence-From-an-Officer-2015.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK>

³¹ U.S. Department of Justice. (n.d.). *Intimate partner violence witness intimidation*. Retrieved from <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles/witintim.pdf>

³² Oklahoma County District Attorney’s Office, Domestic Violence Division. (2024, May). Presentation to DVFRB on May 29, 2024 Regular Meeting. PowerPoint presentation. *Proposed law changes*.

some key system partners walk away from a failed prosecution frustrated with and blaming the *victim*, further feeding into perpetrators' control and narrative.

Systemic reliance on victim pre-trial and trial testimony enlarges the target on a victim's back. One way to decrease overreliance on victims' testimony under these circumstances is evidence-based prosecution—that is, providing prosecutors with additional options to collect and introduce evidence without victim participation.

One option would be for the legislature to amend 12 O.S. § 2803 to permit courts to admit, under certain circumstances, victims' hearsay statements in pre-trial and post-trial domestic violence case proceedings. A tailored DV hearsay exception is responsive to the unique challenges of DV cases and domestic abusers' frequent manipulation of witnesses and the justice system. Permitting the introduction of a limited type of statements at trial when the victim is present for cross-examination preserves a defendant's right to confrontation under the Sixth Amendment.

A DV hearsay exception may alleviate overreliance on victims' repeated testimony and minimize retaliation risks by reducing the number of times a victim must repeat details that incriminate the suspect or defendant. Not only does a DV hearsay exception enhance prosecution efforts, but it also counteracts the influence a domestic abuser can exert over the justice system through control or coercion of a victim, the state's witness. In these ways, a DV hearsay exception promotes justice.

A Potential Solution? Facilitating Evidence-Based Prosecutions with a New DV Hearsay Exception

There are many burdensome and intimidating settings for which a victim of domestic violence must be subpoenaed to court before ever reaching trial or the ultimate outcome of a case decided.

By the time of a preliminary hearing, a domestic violence victim has often repeated the narrative of events at least four times. They will first speak to the responding officer, who is trying to ascertain what has occurred at a given scene. They will next speak with the assigned detective who is trying to make sure all avenues are covered for a case that is being worked. If they take advantage of a protective order, they must once again tell their story in writing in the application process and orally at a hearing. And finally, prior to testifying at a preliminary hearing, a prosecutor will speak with the victim and ask questions regarding the event(s). It is only then, under subpoena, that a victim enters a strange courtroom with a judge, attorneys and their abuser, and is asked to testify.

Pursuant to 22 O.S. § 258(8), the statutory purpose of the preliminary hearing is for the State of Oklahoma to “establish probable cause that a crime was committed and probable cause that the defendant committed the crime.” Preliminary Hearings are often referred to as gate-keeping devices, a hearing to ensure that the State of Oklahoma does not proceed with charges that have no basis to be charged.

Establishing probable cause that a crime was committed and the defendant committed that crime should be what preliminary hearings revolve around. Evidence-based prosecutions provide a way in which the elements of a crime can be met by surrounding circumstances, such as law enforcement's testimony about their observations when responding to an incident or investigating a case. Broken doors, shattered cell phones, and visible injuries seen on victims are all ways in which officers can gather evidence that a crime was committed and by whom. Law enforcement can confirm information when speaking to victims and hearing an account of what led to the physical status of surroundings. However, currently, prosecutors indicated to the Board that this cannot be used in court if the victim is unable or unwilling to testify.

Permitting domestic violence hearsay at hearings would permit that corroboration of physical evidence with narratives that explain those surroundings. The judge could hear statements made to law enforcement and determine whether those statements explain the physical state of the scene, or the injuries observed on the victim. This would satisfy the stated purpose of determining whether a crime was committed and that the defendant was the one who committed it. Moreover, this corroboration would be permitted without forcing the victim to come to court and discuss again and again what is undoubtedly a traumatic incident.

Permitting admissibility in a pretrial setting of prior, official statements mentioned above would likely be helpful in assessing a more accurate, reliable understanding of the case and circumstances. Admitting such prior statements, while the victim is available for cross-examination, provides more information on which the court may make just decisions.

While testifying in court is generally considered an unpleasant, and perhaps scary experience, for anyone, in the case of DV victims, there are added, often invisible, coercive dynamics at work. To combat this dynamic, when prior statements that were made in a more neutral environment are shared in court, it may overcome some of the well-documented, coercive, intimidating impact DV abusers can have on testifying victims.

Permitting such time-bound, past disclosures, while making the victim available for cross-examination during trial serves the interest of justice by providing more information to help fact finders (judge or jury) understand the complete picture of what is often counter-intuitive and obscured by DV dynamics. Tailoring a hearsay exception to DV cases may help balance out the inherent issues that are unique to a defendant being intimately familiar with the victim while also preserving the defendant's Sixth Amendment right to confrontation.

The Sixth Amendment: Addressing Concerns about the Right to Confrontation

While seeking to reduce barriers for victims, a defendant's right to confrontation must be upheld. Hearsay that falls within an exception may still be inadmissible if violative of the Sixth Amendment. The Sixth Amendment to the United States Constitution reads, in part, "In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial...to be confronted with the witnesses against him..."

A domestic violence victim usually must take the stand, but the law should provide protection so that it need not happen more than once for a single incident. Higher courts have struck down rulings which did not provide the defendant with this basic right to confront an accuser at trial.³³ The current suggested legislation both acknowledges and embraces this protection bestowed upon the accused.

The Sixth Amendment is a bedrock principle of our justice system. The suggested legislation ensures that a defendant's trial right to confrontation is upheld. This right, however, is not absolute and should not extend to giving a defendant countless opportunities to harass victims and witnesses. The recommended amendment is similar to Oklahoma's Child Hearsay statute, which embraces the idea that a child ultimately will have to take the stand if a defendant proceeds to trial, but that there is legislative reasoning behind why they should only have to do so once. A DV hearsay exception strikes a balance between fairness for the defendant and the victim-witness, provides critical information to juries, and promotes truth and justice.

Facilitating Evidence-Based Prosecutions is Key for Offender Accountability

Evidence-based prosecution practices are an important tool used by prosecutors to minimize the extent to which abusers can use the criminal justice system to their advantage to avoid being held accountable. The review of hundreds of Oklahoma intimate partner homicides, members' countless years of experience in the field, as well

³³ See *Crawford v. Washington*, 541 U.S. 36 (2004); *Foote v. State*, 2023 OK CR 12, 533 P.3d 354.

as the extant academic literature on domestic violence dynamics, inform our decades-long position that perpetrator’s manipulation and the cycle of violence are often the real culprits for victims’ refusal to participate in our legal system.

To combat this, the DVFRB has historically advocated for the implementation of evidence-based prosecution practices in our state on several occasions [2006, 2007, 2008]. Recognizing these kinds of prosecutions are resource-heavy and technically demanding for even the most experienced prosecutor, the Board has also stressed the importance of making training available to prosecutors, so they are equipped with the know-how to move forward with cases with limited or no victim participation in the process [2002, 2003, 2007].

Similar calls were made in later years, highlighting training opportunities and resources offered by the Oklahoma District Attorneys Council (DAC), such as technical assistance offered by their Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Resource Prosecutor [2012, 2015, 2019]. These recommendations were made because we have long recognized that our justice system places an incredible burden on victims during what can be a yearslong journey towards justice. That burden can be alleviated with the use of evidence-based practices in the courtroom.

The effectiveness of prosecutors is oftentimes limited by the tools they have at their disposal in the courtroom. As a result, training and experience can only go so far if they cannot employ as many pieces of available evidence to make effective arguments to judge and jury. Notably, the current statutory landscape in our state excludes observations noted by law enforcement in their reports, if the victim is not present in every hearing held before the case finally goes to trial.

This essentially provides for a system that is stacked against victims obtaining justice on several fronts. First, the more times victims are required to show up to court, the more opportunities the abuser has to manipulate, intimidate, or outright obstruct the process by dragging it out until victims cannot keep up with the repeated court appearances. Second, to engage with the criminal justice process, victims often must overcome both systemic and economic barriers to be able to cooperate with authorities. Victims are likely to be unwilling or unable to engage in the criminal justice process when there is a failure to meet the barriers or needs they experience due to the crimes committed against them, which essentially place most, if not all, of the burden on the victims to obtain justice for themselves. (see Table 1).

Table 1. The Breadth of Need

Time & Financial Barriers	Remaining Needs	By not addressing needs caused by the crime...
<p>Victim’s Compensation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Denied • Upfront cost • Non-qualifiable <p>Restitution Failures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-probation sentence • Post-plea • Non-quantifiable <p>Other Providers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No one-stop shop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time-off • Breaking a lease • Moving expenses • Evictions and resulting loss • Glasses and contacts • Mobility assistance • Clothing • Transportation • Cosmetic procedures • Animal care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased difficulty gaining independence • Disincentivized from leaving the perpetrator • Less concerned with cooperating with law enforcement or the prosecution • Eroded faith in law enforcement, prosecution, services, and the community.

Source: Presentation by Tulsa County Assistant District Attorney Ashley Nix on October 4, 2023, at the Oklahoma House of Representatives interim study IS23-051. Title: Domestic Violence Sentencing and Survivor Services

Implementation

Implementing this recommendation would require the Oklahoma Legislature to add a provision to 12 O.S. § 2803 to permit admissibility of certain, prior, time-bound, official victim statements regarding domestic abuse incident(s) in criminal court proceedings. An idea is to make such statements admissible in the following circumstances: if the witness testifies at the trial; if the witness does not testify at the trial and is unavailable as defined by § 2804(A) and the requirements for admissibility pursuant to § 2804(B) are satisfied; or if the witness does not testify at the trial and the court determines that the statement is nontestimonial or if the court determines that defendant has forfeited his or her confrontation right by wrongdoing.

2024 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation Three³⁴

The Oklahoma Legislature should take appropriate legislative action to strengthen the state’s victim protective order (VPO) system by amending 22 O.S. § 60.6(A)(2) & (B)(2), as well as §§ 40.3, 60.3, and 60.16. These changes will equip prosecutors with more tools to hold domestic abusers accountable in court for VPO violations, reduce burdens on victims, and increase system follow-through and consistency.

There are two subcategories in this recommendation regarding VPOs: (1) an amendment to include a “finding of guilt” in the definition of “conviction” for VPO violations, and (2) VPO service and filing updates.

The recommended statutory changes are briefly outlined below:

1. Redefining “Conviction” for VPO Violations

- *Amend 22 O.S. § 60.6(A)(2) and (B)(2) to broaden the definition of “conviction” to match other sections of law so that a “finding of guilt,” even if the sentence is deferred, is enough on a first-time VPO violation (misdemeanor) to allow the prosecution of a subsequent VPO violation as a felony.*

2. Service & Filing: Amending VPO-Related Statutes for Increased Clarity & Uniform Application

- *Amend 22 O.S. § 40.3 on Emergency Temporary Orders of Protection when courts are not open for business to include a subsection reducing filing and re-filing burdens on victims.*
 - a. *Amend 22 O.S. § 60.3 on Emergency Ex Parte Orders to include a subsection reducing burdens on victims and increasing system follow-through and consistency.*
 - b. *Amend 22 O.S. § 60.16(C)(3) on Emergency Temporary Orders of Protection to strike clause that burdens victims with re-filing(s) and include language that increases system follow-through and consistency regarding service and filing.*
 - c. *Amend 22 O.S. § 60.16(C)(5) on Emergency Temporary Orders of Protection to reduce burdens on victims and include language that increases system follow-through and consistency regarding service and filing.*

Target Systems

Oklahoma House of Representatives; Oklahoma State Senate; Office of the Governor; District Attorney Offices; Judicial System

Purpose

Strengthening Oklahoma’s VPO system by expanding offender accountability, reducing burdens on victims, and increasing system follow-through and judicial consistency.

Rationale

Introduction

³⁴ Contributing Authors: OAG DVFRB Program Manager Anthony Hernández Rivera, MA; OAG Assistant Attorney General Sara Wray; DVFRB Member Assistant District Attorney Sean Webb (District 9); Former DVFRB Member Pottawatomie County Sheriff’s Deputy Lt. Scott Hawkins

Under 22 O.S. § 1603, when funds are available, the OAG is tasked with collecting the number of Victim Protective Orders (VPO) issued and violations committed in Oklahoma, calculated by district. The OAG is to provide this information to the DVFRB and Administrative Office of the Courts.

The OAG has been unable to provide this service in recent history; however, the DVFRB continues to follow the VPO process and impact on victims, including in IPH. In 2024, DVFRB research tracked how many VPOs were associated with all 50 IPH perpetrators. It found 32 protection orders were filed against 13 IPH perpetrators (26.0% of all IPH perpetrators documented) in Oklahoma district courts. The number of VPOs filed against each of the 13 perpetrators ranged from one to six VPOs. Seven perpetrators had at least one VPO filed against them at one point before the homicide. One perpetrator had two filings, another one had three, two had four each, and the final two IPH perpetrators had six VPOs filed against each. Notably, it was found that two IPH victims had active protective orders against their killer at the time of the homicide.

Overview

In Oklahoma, VPOs are often sought by victims of domestic violence, particularly intimate partner violence. Commonly, victims seek the justice system's help in ending psychological or physical abuse. There are other grounds and relationship requirements, and an example petition can be viewed here: <https://www.oklahomacounty.org/Portals/0/petition%20%281%29.pdf>.

IPV is perpetrated by a current or former partner and is generally divided into four categories: (1) physical violence, (2) sexual violence, (3) stalking, and (4) psychological aggression.³⁵ The CDC provides these definitions:

- **Physical violence** is when a person hurts or tries to hurt a partner by using physical force.
- **Sexual violence** is forcing or attempting to force a partner to take part in a sex act, sexual touching, or a non-physical sexual event (e.g., sexting) when the partner does not or cannot consent.
- **Stalking** is a pattern of repeated, unwanted attention and contact by a partner that causes fear or concern for one's own safety or the safety of someone close to the victim.
- **Psychological aggression** is the use of verbal and non-verbal communication with the intent to harm a partner mentally or emotionally or to exert control over a partner.

Victims often petition for VPOs to curb any single or combination of these harms.³⁶ VPOs are civil orders that carry potential criminal consequences for violations. They are an important resource for victims who are seeking help, regardless of whether they report abuse to law enforcement.

VPOs are effective when supported by adequate response mechanisms. They have the potential to be a powerful safety tool for victims and provide the criminal justice system with pre-homicide intervention points. With statutory amendments, Oklahoma can greatly increase VPO accessibility and enforcement.

There are many barriers in the VPO process—both in application and enforcement—that make this area of law ripe for statutory development. From service avoidance, continued hearings, reapplication, repeated days taken off work, transportation to and from court, and childcare burdens, the process is draining and demanding.

³⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2025, January 13). *About intimate partner violence*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/intimate-partner-violence/about/index.html> (last accessed Jan. 13, 2025)

³⁶ Redding, E. M., et al. (2023). "He will not leave us alone and I need the courts to help": Defendants' use of nonphysical violence in domestic violence protective order cases. *Violence Against Women*, 29(5). Retrieved from <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/he-will-not-leave-us-alone-and-i-need-courts-help-defendants-use>

Research indicates VPOs provide a protective effect for victims.³⁷ However, victims who apply for a VPO often do this at the risk of retaliation or an escalation of abusive behavior. The National Sheriffs' Association addressed VPO-related dangers, including to victims, law enforcement officers, and the community, in its publication, *Protection Order Service Checklist*.³⁸ Nevertheless, many victims bear these risks because they are told and trust that having a court-issued VPO will enhance their safety and that of their loved ones. It is therefore our obligation to ensure prosecutors are empowered to hold accountable those who violate VPOs to harm, threaten, manipulate, or coerce victims.

For those victims who make it through the process and are granted a permanent VPO, lack of enforcement becomes the next battleground. A common refrain regarding VPOs is, "A protective order is just a piece of paper; it won't stop a bullet." The power of this piece of paper is in the system response and enforcement, including every step from law enforcement taking a report to a judge sentencing for a VPO violation.

Abusers are known to test victims, the VPO, and the system. A common tactic is for abusers to commit seemingly minor, innocuous violations of a no-contact order. For example, an abuser might break the no-contact order by sending the victim a simple "happy birthday" text.

Imbedded in this violation is a series of tests. Will the victim report? Will law enforcement take a report? Will a detective investigate? Will an ADA press charges? The abuser is testing the victim and the system.

This creates a double-bind situation for victims. For example, if the victim does *not* report, or the ball is dropped in any stage along the way, the abuser will likely feel emboldened, and the victim will become unsure of the order's effectiveness. This unreported contact may also be used against the victim in the future, such as through an abuser's claims, "we've been in contact."

If the victim *does* report on a violation in the form of a "happy birthday" text, victims are often accused of being petty, over-reactionary, or vindictive. But if the victim waits to report until a major violation occurs, the VPO fails to serve its purpose, and the system misses the non-violent intervention points to demonstrate the seriousness of a VPO to an abuser.

When the system minimizes VPO violations based on the content of the violation, abusers are in control. This tactic erodes victims' trust in the system and VPO effectiveness while delivering abusers' message: I still have access to you, and no one can stop me.

While victims are warned against this, for a variety of reasons, sometimes victims are the ones who reach out to respondents. Even so, only the party against whom the judge ordered a VPO is responsible for abiding by it. It must be established that respondents cannot use this excuse for violating an order—the order is by a judge to the respondent. No one, including the victim, has the power to override an active order except the judge. This must be impressed upon respondents.

In contrast to waiting until violations are severe, every violation should be met with a clear response: this is a judge's order against the named respondent, the rules are clear, and there is no tolerance for order violations. Intervening early and often is more preventative and effective. Of the ways VPO statutes could be improved, the DVFRB identified those that revolve around enhancements for VPO violations and amend several areas in VPO-related statutes for increased clarity and uniform application.

The accessibility of VPOs, and the significant number of filings in Oklahoma, means it is a vital component of our state's domestic violence protective and prevention system. From 2016-2019, Oklahoma averaged 19,111 VPO

³⁷ Kothari, C. L., et al. (2012). Protection orders protect against assault and injury: A longitudinal study of police-involved women victims of intimate partner violence. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260512438284>

³⁸ National Sheriffs' Association. (n.d.). *Protection order service checklist*. Retrieved from <https://www.sheriffs.org/sites/default/files/ProtectionOrderServiceChecklistFormatted.pdf>

filings per year. During that time filings increased by on average by 1.4% annually. In 2020, filings decreased by 10.2% likely due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. Notably, the 2021 total increased to the levels seen before the start of the pandemic and since then continued to steadily increase. In 2023, a total of 21,066 VPOs were filed, representing a 9.8% increase when compared to the 2021 total. An average of 20,245 VPOs were filed annually between 2021-2023. As a result, the average seen between 2021-2023 is 6.0% higher than the one observed between 2016-2019 (*Figure 3*).



Recommendation Subcategory One Redefining “Conviction” for VPO Violations

The DVFRB’s Position on Enhancing Repeat VPO-Violation Charges

The DVFRB often hosts speakers during its regular meetings to learn about current issues or initiatives related to domestic violence prevention and intervention. In 2024, the Board hosted several prosecutors to learn about statutory proposals aimed at enhancing victim safety and offender accountability.³⁹

A recurring issue discussed during these presentations was the need to amend 22 O.S. § 60.6(A)(2) and (B)(2) so that it is stipulated that a prior “finding of guilt” is sufficient for prosecutors to file felony charges for a subsequent VPO violation. Currently, prosecutors can only do this if there has been a prior “conviction” for violating a VPO charge.

Legal Charge Enhancement(s)

The issue of repeat offenses is a factor that commonly increases penalty severity beyond standard punishments. Separate from the underlying charge, an increased penalty is often called a charge enhancement. So, while a simple first offense, without factors that speak to the increased risk an offender poses, will likely be met with less punitive measures, subsequent offenses are often more severely penalized.

“Previous Conviction”: The Repeat VPO-Violation Loophole

Barring factors such as physical violence, a first-time VPO violation is a misdemeanor. But courts are meant to hold accountable abusers who repeatedly violate POs by elevating the systemic response to a felony:

[Any person who,] [a]fter a previous conviction of a violation of a protective order, is convicted of a second or subsequent offense pursuant to the provisions of this section shall, upon

³⁹ Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board (DVFRB) Regular Meeting. (2024, August 28). Speakers: DAC Assistant Executive Coordinator Ryan Stephenson and First Assistant DA Jacobi Whatley (District 20). *DVFRB Regular Meeting*. (2024, September 25). Speaker: First Assistant DA Eric Epplin (District 4).

conviction, be guilty of a felony and shall be punished by a term of imprisonment in the custody of the Department of Corrections for not less than one (1) year nor more than three (3) years, or by a fine of not less than Two Thousand Dollars (\$2,000.00) nor more than Ten Thousand Dollars (\$10,000.00), or by both such fine and imprisonment.

22 O.S. § 60.6(A)(2) (emphasis added). Holding repeat VPO-violation offenders accountable hinges on the word “conviction.” Many first-time offenders receive deferred sentences. A deferred sentence is a legal judgment where a defendant pleads guilty or no contest, but the court does not enter a judgment of guilt. Therefore, such defendants are not “convicted” in the eyes of the law.

Deferred Sentences: A Deeper Dive

As noted above, under 22 O.S. § 60.6’s current statutory language, despite a guilty or no contest plea, many defendants are not deemed convicted; instead, defendants often receive a deferred sentence.

With deferred sentences, the court postpones sentencing and puts defendants on probation. If the defendant compliantly completes the probationary period, the court dismisses the charge. In this way, the defendant avoids a formal conviction on his or her record. A rationale for deferred sentences is to offer low-level or first-time offenders an opportunity to rehabilitate without the potentially life-altering consequences of a conviction.⁴⁰

Deferred sentences are outlined in 22 O.S. § 991c. In part:

- “Upon a verdict or plea of guilty or upon a plea of *nolo contendere*, but *before a judgment of guilt*, the court may, *without entering a judgment of guilt* and with the consent of the defendant, *defer further proceedings* upon the specific conditions prescribed by the court....” 22 O.S. § 991c(A) (emphasis added).
- “Upon completion of the conditions of the deferred judgment, and upon a finding by the court that the conditions have been met and all fines, fees, and monetary assessments have been paid as ordered, the *defendant shall be discharged without a court judgment of guilt*, and the *court shall order the verdict or plea of guilty or plea of nolo contendere to be expunged* from the record and the charge shall be dismissed with prejudice to any further action....” 22 O.S. § 991c(D) (emphasis added).
- “Upon *any violation of the deferred judgment*, other than a technical violation, the *court may enter a judgment of guilt* and proceed as provided in Section 991a of this *title or may modify any condition imposed*....” 22 O.S. § 991c(G) (emphasis added).

In these cases, deferred sentences do not fit the narrowed definition of “conviction” under 22 O.S. § 60.6; therefore, such sentences fail to establish the prerequisite “previous conviction” on which to build a future felony charge from repeat VPO violations.

Abusers who successfully complete deferred sentences for VPO violations often avoid felony charges for a subsequent VPO violation. On paper, they were never convicted in the first offense, so the second and subsequent offenses are often treated as a first offense (misdemeanor).

Despite victims experiencing repeat violations, they often see no increased protection or intervention from the justice system. This lack of responsiveness benefits abusers and diminishes victims’ trust in the system.

Solution: Consistency in “Conviction”

The DVFRB recommends that the legislature develop definitional consistency in the legal code and broaden the meaning of “conviction” in 22 O.S. § 60.6 to match that given in enhancement statutes related to DUIs and domestic assault and battery. These subsections are separate and distinct sections that define “conviction” for the purposes of that section.

⁴⁰ Love, M. C. (2009). Alternatives to conviction: Deferred adjudication as a way of avoiding collateral consequences. *Federal Sentencing Reporter*, 22(1), 6-16. <https://doi.org/10.1525/fsr.2009.22.1.6>

DUI Enhancement Language as a Guide

DUI statute 47 O.S. § 11-902(M), related to impaired driving, states, “Any plea of guilty, *nolo contendere* or finding of guilt for a violation of this section or a violation pursuant to the provisions of any law of this state or another state prohibiting the offenses provided for in this section, Section 11-904 of this title, or paragraph 4 of subsection A of Section 852.1 of Title 21 of the Oklahoma Statutes, shall constitute a conviction of the offense for the purpose of this section; provided, any deferred judgement shall only be considered to constitute a conviction for a period of ten (10) years following the completion of any court-imposed probationary term” (emphasis added).

With this statutory addition, DUI enhancement language is broad enough to include deferred sentences *and* pleas of *nolo contendere* (the Defendant acknowledges the State has the evidence to prove him guilty, but the Defendant does not actually acknowledge guilt). In the same way, the Board recommends that the legislature apply this broader definition of “conviction” to 22 O.S. § 60.6 to close the loophole of repeat VPO violations.

The Board supports amending 22 O.S. § 60.6 to include language such as the following:

Any plea of guilty, *nolo contendere*, or finding of guilt for a violation of this section or a violation pursuant to the provisions of any law of this state or another state prohibiting the offenses provided for in this section, Section 60.6 of this title, shall constitute a conviction of the offenses for the purpose of this section; provided, any deferred judgement shall only be considered to constitute a conviction for a period of ten (10) years following the completion of any court-imposed probationary term.

Defining “conviction” as a separate subsection provides clarity throughout § 60.6, as there are several mentions of the word “conviction” in § 60.6. Further, including a separate subsection defining “conviction” for the purposes of each section increases consistency with other sections of law which do the same.

Amending § 60.6 would close the conviction definition loophole. It would also give prosecutors discretion to file charges as a felony or a misdemeanor based on weighing several factors when making determinations, including case strength, victim input, suspect’s prior criminal record, and community safety.

Heightened intervention is required for subsequent and repeated VPO violations. Even when a defendant is granted a dismissal or record expungement from public view upon the successful completion of a deferred sentence, they should be given notice that subsequent VPO violations may result in felony charges. Repeated VPO violations is a pattern of behavior that the justice system should address for offender accountability, deterrence, victim safety, and increased institutional trust and consistency.

Recommendation Subcategory Two

Service & Filing: Amending VPO-Related Statutes for Increased Clarity & Uniform Application

Legislative Background

In 2019, the VPO legal scheme was overhauled when House Bill 2260 was enacted. It significantly reshaped the process for victims seeking protective orders after hours, improved victim services and promoted a trauma-informed approach. Notably, H.B. 2260 removed the requirement for victims to reapply for a more permanent order at the close of the next business day following the issuance of an emergency temporary protective order. These changes streamlined processes and alleviated unnecessary burdens on victims. However, there was missed language referencing pre-2019 procedures instead of post-2019 procedures.

In response, Representative Dell Kerbs and Senator Darrell Weaver filed H.B. 3601 in 2020. H.B. 3601 addressed essential clarifications and updates to the statutes governing VPO filing and service. The bill was specifically introduced to correct residual language in older statutes that contradict the 2019 reforms, leading to inconsistent application of the law.

While many jurisdictions recognize the intent and benefits of the 2019 law and implemented the updated procedures, others rely on conflicting statutory language, undermining the uniformity and effectiveness of

protective order processes. Some jurisdictions continue to follow outdated methods, creating a patchwork of practices across the state.

While H.B. 3601 successfully passed out of the House of Representatives 93-0, it failed to reach a vote in the Senate. However, adopting the amendments proposed in H.B. 3601 remains critical to ensuring consistency and efficiency in protective order procedures across Oklahoma.

The issues were again addressed in 2023 by Representative Ajay Pittman and Senator Bill Coleman in H.B. 1845.⁴¹ The bill was in response to issues related to VPO service, returns of service, filing, and hearings. However, while H.B. 1845 unanimously passed 89-0 out of the House, it stalled in the Senate. Thanks to the bills' advocates and legislators' hard work in 2023, the groundwork is prepared for amendments.

These statutory inconsistencies persist heading into 2025, creating confusion for victims, court clerks, and law enforcement. The process should be streamlined and victim-centered. Passing cohesive language is essential to prioritizing victim needs and reducing procedural confusion for legal and law enforcement personnel.

Emergency Orders of Protection: Improving Service and Filing Protocols

Pursuant to § 60.16(C), a victim may request a petition for an Emergency Temporary Order of Protection (ETOP) from the responding peace officer when the court is not open for business. The peace officer is to contact an on-call judge, inform the judge of the request, describe the circumstances, and receive approval or disapproval of the ETOP.

If granted, the peace officer provides a copy of the petition to the victim, along with the officer's signed statement that the judge approved the order. To be enforceable, the officer must notify the subject of the order of the issuance, order conditions, and make available the victim's petition and officer's attestation to the subject of the order. The officer is to notify the victim that the ETOP is only effective until the close of business on the next day the court is open.

The issue lies in the ETOP's short lifespan. Despite the degree of coordination, service, and disclosure required to acquire an enforceable ETOP, it may expire after less than 24 hours. This requires victims to go back through the entire process of seeking a protective order, including traveling, re-writing a petition, and filing. It also demands another round of resources from officers to attempt to locate and re-serve the respondent, thereby creating another flashpoint of danger for the victim.

For example, if a peace officer responds to the scene of a domestic violence crime at 11 p.m. on Sunday evening when the courthouse is closed, the officer may be able to go through the ETOP process, find and serve the order's subject, and provide an enforceable ETOP to the victim. However, when the court opens hours later that Monday, the ETOP will expire by 5 p.m.

Unless the victim can immediately arrange access to a VPO petition, requests an emergency ex parte order, re-writes the description of the incident(s), completes the seven-page petition, finds a way to file it, and officers can locate the respondent again for service, the victim loses the benefit of this added tool of protection precisely during the time an abuser likely poses a heightened risk to the victim. A victim would need to file to get a hearing date, which must be set within two weeks of filing.

Therefore, the Board recommends an amendment to § 60.16(C) to extend ETOP's lifespan during this critical period and reduce barriers and burdens of victims during times of crisis. The amendment would strike the language that the ETOP shall be effective "until the close of business on the next day that the court is open for business." Instead, it is recommended that the statute read that the ETOP shall be effective "until the date of the hearing set by the judge. The peace officer requesting the order shall be notified by the judge of the date, time,

⁴¹ Oklahoma State Legislature, Oklahoma House Bill 1845, 59th Leg., Reg. Sess. (2023). Retrieved from <http://www.oklegislature.gov/BillInfo.aspx?Bill=HB1845&Session=2300>; [22 O.S. § 40.3](#); [22 O.S. § 60.3](#); [2 O.S. § 60.16](#)

and courtroom location in which the hearing will be held. The peace officer shall provide the victim and subject of the order with a copy of the completed order and return the original order to the district court.”

Temporary emergency ex parte (temporarily granted without hearing the other party’s side) orders are statutorily required to be heard within fourteen days of issuance. 22 O.S. § 60.3(C). At that time, the responding party has the opportunity to present. With this amendment, a victim and respondent would receive a hearing date without the need to repeat the petition and service process back-to-back.

As outlined in the Implementation section, the recommended updates to §§ 40.3, 60.3, and 60.16 all revolve around bringing consistency to emergency order statutory language, reducing barriers to victim safety and justice system access, and stewarding peace officer resources by reducing duplicative processes such as re-serving respondents.

It is often said that, with 77 counties in Oklahoma, there are 77 ways of doing things. Clarifying statutory language and streamlining the process also increases legal and judicial consistency within and across districts. Amending the law to streamline the ETOP process is more trauma-informed by minimizing the number of times a victim must reiterate what the perpetrator did and reducing the burden of additional trips to the courthouse and additional paperwork during what is likely a chaotic, dangerous, and overwhelming period after being harmed or threatened.

A Note on VPO Service Challenges

In many circumstances, this recommendation would reduce the number of times officers must locate and serve respondents. Requiring a second round of service requirements on the same incident(s) decreases the likelihood of successful service, as respondents are tipped off and can avoid the paperwork.

Unless officers can show successful service informing respondents of the hearing date and time and allegations, victims cannot have a formal hearing. Without a formal hearing, victims cannot receive a final protective order. Many abusers have learned that, as long as they avoid service, victims will need to continually show up to court on the hearing date, only to need to go re-file for re-attempted service and receive a new hearing date.

This cycle can repeat indefinitely until either the defendant is served or the victim gives up on the process. Throughout the cycle’s duration, without successful service and notice to the respondent, the victim in this instance would not have an enforceable order, even if an emergency ex parte hearing had been held and order granted.

Abusers are known to exploit that fact that orders are not enforceable until they receive service, and final hearings cannot be held so victims can move on from the process until officers achieve successful service.

If the victim does not show up for a hearing, the case is typically dismissed on the spot. However, attending hearings may include many challenges, including arranging transportation, childcare, approval to take off of work, safety issues entering and leaving court, and navigating the court system (often pro se) while undergoing support system upheaval, trauma symptoms, injuries, or memory difficulties.

While abusers may not have been served, they often know about the hearing date and time (available on OSCN). This also puts victims in a dangerous situation, where an abuser will know when and where the victim will be on a given day. The court process opens the door wide for intimidation, harassment, stalking, threats, and violence.

The battle for efficient and successful service has many ramifications for victims. If officers are unsuccessful, victims have the option of paying out-of-pocket for private process servicers who may be able to dedicate more focused attention on service; however, many cannot afford to do so. Efforts to reduce the number of times officers must serve respondents increases efficiency and, likely, safety for victims, officers, and the community.

DVFRB Precedent: VPO-related Recommendations Over the Past Twenty Years

For those pursuing VPO statutory scheme updates and amendments, the Board encourages a review of the Board’s previous recommendations to inform changes:

- *Explore the role of district attorneys and law enforcement in the protective order process. [2012]*

- *Court Clerks and Deputy Court Clerks should be provided with basic professional development/training on Protective Orders (PO's), including information about Full Faith and Credit. [2014]*
- *Develop a guide for protective order application process. Include questions to assist victims who may be in crisis and may not understand the level of detail required of the petition. Be sure to encourage petitioners to include information about firearms possession and threats without weapons on the protective order petition [2012]*
- *Train judges on how to utilize bench cards on protective order cases to assist them in recognizing red flag indicators and potential danger. [2009, 2008]*
- *Courts should maintain accurate and detailed records regarding protective orders and make a good faith effort to be accessible to every victim of domestic violence. [2007, 2006]*
- *Utilize a bench card for judges handling protective orders to assist the court in recognizing red flags and danger potential in cases. [2007, 2005]*
- *Judges should work to ascertain why a plaintiff is requesting to drop a protection order to make sure that it is in their best interest and safety to do so. [2007, 2005]*
- *Before dismissing a protection order at plaintiff's request ask why it was granted in the first place and how circumstances have changed. Put in court record reason for judge dismissing the protective order. [2007, 2006]*
- *Domestic violence information should be available at the time of application for a protective order. Wherever protection order applications are filled out, at the minimum, SAFELINE cards should be available for applicants. [SAFELINE cards are small cards with the state domestic violence hotline number 1-800-522-SAFE (7233) made available to victims of domestic violence, usually by law enforcement and domestic violence advocates.] [2007, 2005]*
- *Modify Oklahoma statute to make second and subsequent violation of Protective Order a felony. [2010, 2003]*
- *Ensure victims have a safety plan for when batterers are served a protective order. [2008]*
- *Funding should be prioritized for Domestic Violence Services in all areas. Support for Domestic Violence Emergency Response Teams (DVERT), prosecution of domestic violence offenses including protective order violations. [2003]*

Implementation

Implementing this recommendation would require the Oklahoma Legislature to amend and create several statutory subsections. The outline below provides a roadmap:

Broaden VPO-Violation Enhancement Language

1. Amend 22 O.S. § 60.6 to include a subsection broadening the definition of "conviction" to include a "finding of guilt." The amendment would permit the prosecution of subsequent VPO violations as a felony, even if the offender received a deferred sentence for a previous VPO violation. The Board supports including the following language in § 60.6:

Any plea of guilty, nolo contendere, or finding of guilt for a violation of this section or a violation pursuant to the provisions of any law of this state or another state prohibiting the offenses provided for in this section, Section 60.6 of this title, shall constitute a conviction of the offenses for the purpose of this section; provided, any deferred judgement shall only be considered to constitute a conviction for a period of ten (10) years following the completion of any court imposed probationary term.

Alternatively, the legislature could consider amending 22 O.S. § 60.6(A)(2) and (B)(2) so, instead of only a “conviction,” a “finding of guilt” is enough to allow the prosecution of a subsequent VPO violation as a felony. This change would enable the filing of felony charges for subsequent violations, even if the offender received a deferred sentence for a previous VPO violation.

Reduce Victim Barriers and Burdens and Increasing System Follow-through

2. Amend 22 O.S. § 40.3 on Emergency Temporary Orders of Protection when courts are not open for business to include a subsection reducing filing and re-filing burdens on victims. Consider including language such as the following:

[The peace officer making the preliminary investigation shall:] Make every attempt to serve the subject of the order and complete a return of service when filing the petition with the district court. If the peace officer is unable to obtain service, the petition shall be filed by a peace officer with the district court the next business day. The court clerk shall receive the petition upon delivery by the peace officer and document the hearing date and time assigned to the case as documented by the peace officer. If the court clerk observes that service has not been obtained, the petition shall still be filed by the court clerk and issued to the appropriate office of the county sheriff to obtain service with priority.

3. Amend 22 O.S. § 60.3 on Emergency Ex Parte Orders to include a subsection reducing burdens on victims and increasing system follow-through and consistency. Consider including language such as the following:

The peace officer shall make every attempt to serve the subject of the order and complete a return of service when filing the petition with the district court. If the peace officer is unable to obtain service, the petition shall be filed by a peace officer with the district court the next business day. The court clerk shall receive the petition upon delivery by the peace officer and document the hearing date and time assigned to the case as documented by the peace officer. If the court clerk observes that service has not been obtained, the petition shall still be filed by the court clerk and issued to the appropriate office of the county sheriff to obtain service with priority.

4. Amend 22 O.S. § 60.16(C)(3) on Emergency Temporary Orders of Protection to strike a clause that burdens victims with re-filing(s) and include language that increases system follow-through and consistency:

[Inform the victim whether the judge has approved or disapproved the emergency temporary order. If an emergency temporary order has been approved, the peace officer shall provide the victim, or a responsible adult if the victim is a minor child or an incompetent person, with a copy of the petition and a written statement signed by the peace officer attesting that the judge has approved the emergency temporary order of protection and notify the victim that the emergency temporary order shall be effective] ~~only until the close of business on the next day that the court is open for business~~ the date of the hearing set by the judge. The peace officer requesting the order shall be notified by the judge of the date, time, and courtroom location in which the hearing will be held. The peace officer shall provide the victim and subject of the order with a copy of the completed order and return the original order to the district court;

5. Amend 22 O.S. § 60.16(C)(5) on Emergency Temporary Orders of Protection to reduce burdens on victims and include language that increases system follow-through and consistency:

[File a copy of the petition and the statement of the peace officer with the district court of the county immediately upon the opening of the court on the next day the court is open for business.] The peace officer shall make every attempt to serve the subject of the order and complete a return of service when filing the petition with the district court. If the peace officer is unable to obtain service, the petition shall be filed by a peace officer with the

district court on the next business day. The court clerk shall receive the petition upon delivery by the peace officer and document the hearing date and time assigned to the case as documented by the peace officer. If the court clerk observes that service has not been obtained, the petition shall still be filed by the court clerk and issued to the appropriate office of the county sheriff to obtain service with priority.

2024 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation Four⁴²

The DVFRB encourages the Oklahoma Legislature to enact the remaining statutory changes recommended in the Board's 2023 Annual Report. This recommendation revisits the importance of the following statutes:

- 1. Amend 21 O.S. § 644 so Oklahoma prosecutors are not limited to filing Domestic Assault & Battery (A&B) with a Deadly Weapon charge only if a shooting was involved. Eliminate the discrepancy between Domestic A&B with a Deadly Weapon and its non-DV counterpart, which can be filed if an offender commits A&B by means of any deadly weapon, such as a firearm or knife, or any other means likely to produce death.*
- 2. Amend 21 O.S. § 13.1 to include domestic violence crimes outlined in 21 O.S. § 644 as 85% crimes.*
- 3. Amend 57 O.S. § 571 so "Domestic Assault and Battery Subsequent Offense" and "Domestic Assault and Battery on a Pregnant Person" are statutorily considered violent crimes in the State of Oklahoma.*

Target Systems

Oklahoma House of Representatives; Oklahoma State Senate; Office of the Governor; District Attorney Offices; District Attorneys Council

Purpose

To eliminate discrepancies between domestic abuse and non-domestic crimes in Oklahoma statutes, better equipping prosecutors to hold domestic abusers accountable.

Rationale

Introduction – Revisiting 2023 DVFRB Annual Report Recommendation #2

In 2023, the Board's second recommendation contained four statutory recommendations aimed at increasing offender-accountability in Oklahoma. The Board identified changes that would equip Oklahoma District Attorneys and prosecutors with additional tools to enhance victim-safety and expand the option of removing high-risk domestic violence offenders from the community through jail or prison sentences.

These recommendations stemmed from DVFRB case reviews and discussions on how failure to hold abusers accountable emboldens them to continue abusive patterns of behavior from one relationship to another. Reviews indicated that lack of accountability increases the likelihood of violence escalating, possibly resulting in the killing or harm of intimate partners, children, family members, innocent bystanders, or public safety personnel.

In recent years, for example, the Board identified and reviewed cases where intimate partner homicide perpetrators engaged law enforcement officers with gunfire after killing the victim. The aftermath of IPV and IPH resulted in some of the most dangerous officer-involved shootings in our state. In other words, dangers associated with unaccountable IPV are not confined to the home; on the contrary, domestic abuse is predisposed to spillover, jeopardizing the safety of entire communities.

Reinforcement: Oklahoma House of Representatives Interim Study No. 23-015

⁴² Contributing Authors: OAG DVFRB Program Manager Anthony Hernández Rivera, MA; OAG Assistant Attorney General Sara Wray, JD; Tulsa County Assistant District Attorney Ashley Nix, JD.

The Board's concerns about offender accountability were echoed in an Oklahoma House of Representatives' 2023 interim study.⁴³ This study featured presentations about structural issues surrounding domestic violence sentencing that hinder abuser accountability.⁴⁴ The issues highlighted during the presentation mirrored the DVFRB's concerns about the current legal framework we rely on to prosecute domestic abusers.

A major interim study discussion was the range of punishment for first-time strangulation offenses. The study highlighted the necessity of broadening the punishment range from 1-3 years to 1-10 years. This change would give prosecutors more flexibility in seeking appropriate punishment based on severity and case facts.

The range of punishment for strangulation was covered at length in the Board's 2023 Annual Report. The focus on this policy issue led to the successful passage of Senate Bill 1211 in the 2024 legislative session, increasing punishment for strangulation to up to 10 years in prison.⁴⁵ The DVFRB commends the legislature for working diligently to pass this important piece of legislation.

It is vital to carry this momentum into subsequent legislative sessions. We encourage legislators to revisit the three other statutory suggestions included in the Board's 2023 Annual Report. The Board will continue outlining areas of Oklahoma law that can be improved to strengthen the state's response to domestic violence.

Disparate Responses to Domestic Violence (DV) and Non-DV Crimes

Oklahoma prosecutors face added challenges holding abusers accountable due to discrepancies between DV and non-DV crime statutes and punishments. There are three main discrepancies the 2023 Annual Report addressed: (1) the narrowed definition of "deadly weapon" for Domestic Assault and Battery (A&B) with a Deadly Weapon compared to simple A&B with a Deadly Weapon; (2) DV offenses considered non-violent; and (3) DV offenses as non-85% crimes.

Narrowed Definition of "Deadly Weapon"

Non-DV A&B with a Dangerous or Deadly Weapon is outlined in 21 O.S. § 652, and its domestic violence-related counterpart is outlined in 21 O.S. § 644.

Under 21 O.S. § 652(C), an offender can be charged with non-DV A&B with a Deadly Weapon if the crime is committed by means of *any* deadly weapon or "by such other means or force as is likely to produce death[.]" (Emphasis added).

In contrast, a DV-related A&B with a Deadly Weapon charge under 21 O.S. § 644(D)(2) can *only* be filed if a shooting was committed, in essence restricting the charge to one involving a firearm. The language reads, "Any person who....*shoots* an intimate partner or a family or a household member....by means of any deadly weapon that is likely to produce death shall, upon conviction, be guilty of domestic assault and battery with a deadly wapon[.]" (Emphasis added).

⁴³ Ford, R. (2023). *Domestic violence and sexual assault nurses*. Okla. H.R. Interim Study No. 23-051. Retrieved from <https://former.okhouse.gov/Committees/ShowInterimStudies.aspx> (last accessed Jan. 2, 2025)

⁴⁴ See Nix, A. (2023). *Domestic violence sentencing and survivor services*. In *Domestic violence and sexual assault nurses*, Okla. H.R. Interim Study No. 23-051 (pp. 23-051_Domestic Violence Sentencing and Survivor Services_Ashley Nix, Tulsa County DA's office_presentation.pdf). Retrieved from [23-051 Domestic Violence Sentencing and Survivor Services Ashley Nix, Tulsa County DAs office presentation.pdf](#) (last accessed Jan. 2, 2025).

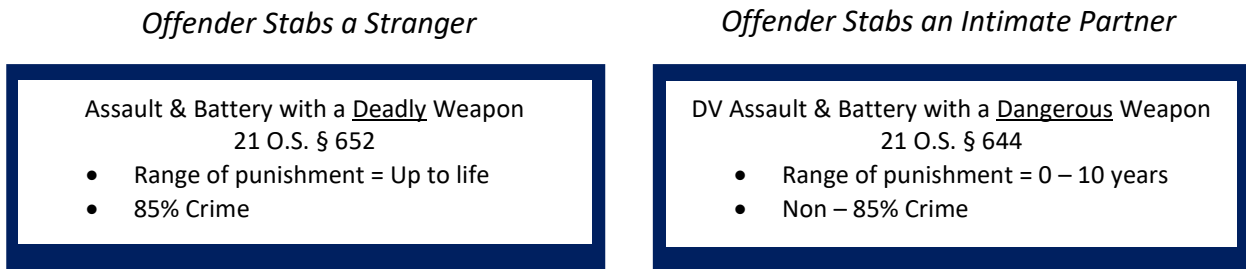
⁴⁵ Oklahoma State Legislature. 59th Leg., 2nd Sess. (2024). *Oklahoma Senate Bill 1211*. Retrieved from http://webserver1.lsb.state.ok.us/cf_pdf/2023-24%20ENR/SB/SB1211%20ENR.PDF (last accessed Jan. 3, 2025); 21 O.S. § 644

Creating a major discrepancy between the same criminal conduct, based solely on the perpetrator’s relationship with the victim, sends a message about Oklahoma’s higher tolerance for harm caused to those domestically connected to offenders. This discrepancy also presents a significant barrier to prosecutors.

Because DV-A&B with a *Deadly* Weapon can only be filed if a perpetrator *shoots* the victim means prosecutors must often rely on the lesser DV-A&B with a *Dangerous* Weapon charge. Dangerous weapon is defined in this section as “any sharp or dangerous weapon” and carries a lesser maximum punishment.

This discrepancy is illustrated in Figure 4 by two hypothetical stabbing scenerios where the only difference is that, in one, the victim is a stranger and, in the other, the victim is an intimate partner:

Figure 4. Example - Hypothetical Scenario: Non-DV Related vs. DV-Related Crime Discrepancy



Thus, despite the high recidivism trend involved in domestic violence, those convicted of Domestic A&B with a Dangerous Weapon often serve significantly less of their sentence than those convicted of simple A&B with a Deadly Weapon—despite using the same type of weapon(s). In many cases, the discrepancy is solely based on the perpetrator’s relationship status with the victim.

For increased accountability and consistency, DV-A&B with a Deadly Weapon should not be restricted to shootings. If changed to comport with the language of simple A&B with a Deadly Weapon, for example, a domestic involving a knife or other sharp weapon could be charged as Domestic A&B with a Deadly Weapon, carrying up to life in prison. This change would place severe, weapon(s)-involved domestic incidents on the same footing as non-domestic.

Categorizing Domestic Violence Offenses as Violent Crimes

Pursuant to 57 O.S. § 571, Domestic Assault and Battery Subsequent Offense, as well as Domestic Assault and Battery on a Pregnant Person, are not statutorily considered violent crimes. Due to the recidivating nature and increased risks involved in each offense, respectively, the Board recommends codifying each as violent offenses.

DVFRB case reviews reveal there are instances of high recidivism and increased lethality in serial domestic violence offenders. Moreover, the message to survivors and perpetrators is that if the offender is already a convicted domestic abuser, or the survivor is pregnant, the perpetrator’s violence towards them—if it does not include strangulation, a firearm, a dangerous weapon, or great bodily injury—is not considered a crime of violence.

Additionally, by categorizing these forms of domestic violence as non-violent pursuant to 21 O.S. § 571, an offender’s charge and conviction could be expunged based on 22 O.S. § 18. By reclassifying as a violent crime, the charge could not be expunged and, instead, would allow the public and potential future partners to remain on notice of the person’s prior violent conduct.

Categorizing Domestic Violence Offenses as 85% Crimes

A final issue under this recommendation addresses 85% crimes. An 85% crime is when an offender is statutorily required to serve at least 85% of their sentence before being eligible for parole.

Currently, none of the domestic violence crimes in 21 O.S. § 644 are 85% crimes. Additionally, returning to the discrepancy between DV-A&B with a Deadly Weapon and its non-DV counterpart, only *non-DV* A&B with a Deadly Weapon is an 85% crime.

Thus, even if such an offender receives prison time, there is no statutorily prescribed minimum they are required to serve. This is a concern for prosecutors, who are left with little-to-no insight on when an offender will be released, making it difficult to gauge appropriate sentencing requests.

As a result of minimal time served, offenders are further emboldened by the lack of accountability. This can elicit significant fear and anxiety for survivors, who, despite an offender pleading to years in prison, have no idea when offenders will be released. This undermines the security of an in-custody sentence and increases safety concerns related to unpredictable release dates.

The approach erodes faith in the criminal justice system and undermines justice. *Overall, the goal should be a consistent statutory landscape with equivalent consequences for domestic abuse and crimes against strangers and non-DV victims.* Enacting these changes sends a message in Oklahoma that the consequences for domestic violence crimes are no longer less than non-domestic crimes. Ultimately, laws need to reflect to both offenders and survivors that the State of Oklahoma takes domestic violence seriously, with demonstrated follow-through.

Addressing the Unintended Consequence of the Wrongful Criminalization of DV Victims

When strengthening criminal laws, there is justifiable concern that unjust outcomes and sentences will result. Due to the nature of domestic violence and its cycle,⁴⁶ there are instances of criminalizing victims' use of force and self-defense.

With justice system involvement, IPV victims are particularly susceptible to being misidentified as offenders. The Women's Justice Commission, of which Oklahoma First Lady Sarah Stitt serves as Senior Adviser, noted in its 2024 report, "The transformation of 'victims' into 'offenders' can be attributed to several factors, including the coercive actions of abusers and a lack of understanding about the dynamics of interpersonal violence from system stakeholders."⁴⁷

The criminalization of victims and inadequate response to the harm suffered can begin at an early age. For example, in one survey of 163 girls institutionally housed for delinquency, the girls reported high rates of abuse, including 74.8% reporting physical abuse from family members.⁴⁸ Over 55% of the detained girls "viewed their experience of abuse as directly leading to their detention."⁴⁹

Research indicates that "[c]riminal justice system proceedings seldom address intimate partner violence as a pathway into the system or explore how these experiences contribute to women's use of violence in self-defense or to protect their children or other loved ones."⁵⁰ An impediment to justice and safety is the lack of specialized, updated, ongoing training on DV. "Research indicates that law enforcement officers,

⁴⁶ See DomesticShelters.org. (2022). *What is the cycle of violence?* Retrieved from <https://www.domesticshelters.org/articles/identifying-abuse/what-is-the-cycle-of-abuse> (last accessed Jan. 3, 2025) (highlighting the four common stages of 1. Tension Building, 2. Incident, 3. Reconciliation, 4. Calm, and back to 1. Tension Building, and so on, which can lead to chronic and escalating abuse over time).

⁴⁷ Council on Criminal Justice. (2024). *Women's justice: A preliminary assessment of women in the criminal justice system* (p. 9). Retrieved from <https://counciloncj.org/womens-justice-a-preliminary-assessment-of-women-in-the-criminal-justice-system/>

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

judges, and other stakeholders who interact with justice-involved women and have authority over the outcomes of their cases rarely understand the impact of violence and abuse on women’s criminal behavior.”⁵¹

For example, use-of-force in self-defense may look different in chronic abuse cases compared to non-relationship-based incidents. Victims, who often become experts on reading abusers’ behavior and signals as a survival mechanism, may react to signs of imminent harm—such as “the look”—that are imperceptible to others or on paper. IPV victims may react to threats and signs of threats that do not exist in stranger crimes. The dynamics of abuse and self-defense inherent in many IPV cases are often so different from other types of crimes that justice cannot be served without contextualizing them.

From 9-1-1 telecommunicators to law enforcement to attorneys to judges, every individual on the other end of victims’ and abusers’ interactions with the justice system must be trained on the complex, distinctive—and often counter-intuitive and coercive—dynamics of IPV. Otherwise, the system is ripe to be manipulated by abusers and weaponized against victims.

There seems a general respect for self-defense in U.S. jurisprudence; however, often IPV victims’ use of force does not fit neatly into traditional defenses. Additionally, the system often views IPV cases as far less coercive than they are and heavily weighs the belief that many victims have ample opportunity to flee the situation or relationship.

Part of the uniqueness of self-defense in IPV is that the risk of violence and homicide actually increases during break-up or post-separation periods. “Just leave” can be dangerous—if not deadly—advice. “Abusive relationships are extremely complex situations and it takes a lot of courage to leave. Abuse is about power and control. When a survivor leaves their abusive relationship, they threaten the power and control their partner has established over the survivor’s agency. This often causes the partner to retaliate in harmful ways. As a result, leaving is often the most dangerous period of time for survivors of abuse.”⁵²

During post-separation, abusers are known to stalk, threaten, and harm their victims. That is, they hunt their victims and sometimes victims’ loved ones. Many victims have learned that leaving does not make them safer, and they cannot rely on the system for protection once they do. The system response is largely reactive and not preventive.

The National Online Resource Center on Violence Against Women published *Women’s Experiences of Abuse as a Risk Factor for Incarceration: A Research Update* in 2015. This applied research paper highlights how victimization may lead women into the criminal justice system, where experiences of abuse are not always acknowledged or understood by the legal system. The paper highlights both direct and indirect routes in a potential victimization-to-incarceration pipeline, summarized below.⁵³

Direct Pathways

- **Victims’ Use-of-Force:** Victimized women may resort to violence as a form of self-defense or to protect others, which can lead to arrest and incarceration. However, the legal system often fails to recognize such

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁵² National Domestic Violence Hotline. (n.d.). *Why people stay in an abusive relationship*. Retrieved from <https://www.thehotline.org/support-others/why-people-stay-in-an-abusive-relationship/>. Statistics out of Canada, for example, hold that 77% of DV homicides occur upon separation, with the following two years often bringing increased violence, post-separation. Battered Women Support Services (2020, June 11). *Eighteen Months After Leaving Domestic Violence is Still the Most Dangerous Time*. <https://www.bwss.org/eighteen-months-after-leaving-domestic-violence-is-still-the-most-dangerous-time/>

⁵³ Council on Criminal Justice. (2024). *Women’s justice: A preliminary assessment of women in the criminal justice system*. Retrieved from <https://counciloncj.org/womens-justice-a-preliminary-assessment-of-women-in-the-criminal-justice-system/>

acts as self-defense, particularly in IPV cases of intimate where the threat is not easily identifiable to outsiders.

- **Misidentifying Predominant Aggressor:** “It may not be clear that the violence was used in response to violence or a threat of violence, particularly in cases of IPV when there may be a longstanding and ongoing threat that is reinforced symbolically and not necessarily easily identifiable to an outside party....Women who have experienced battering have spoken about a particular ‘look in his eyes,’ for example, that conveys an imminent threat based on past behavior.”⁵⁴ Victims may preemptively react to such a look, for example, knowing from experience the abuse that follows that look. On the surface, however, it may appear as though the victim is the “instigator.”
- **Perception:** There is a narrow view of victims that perceives personal agency and victimization as mutually exclusive. This results in the legal system’s perception of women as either helpless victims or perpetrators, which complicates recognition of self-defense in abuse cases.
- **Coercion:** Abusive partners may force victims to participate in crimes or take the blame for crimes they did not commit, sometimes under the threat of further violence.
- **Child-related Charges:** Women may face charges of failure to protect or child neglect or endangerment if they cannot protect their children from abusive partners. In these ways, sometimes abusers can “take their victims down” with them. In 2020, CBS requested data from Oklahoma DAs, finding that nearly 72% of those incarcerated for failure to protect are women (41 women to 16 men), sometimes with failure-to-protect defendants receiving harsher sentences than the direct abusers.⁵⁵ The paper highlighted that, “a majority of incarcerated women and girls report (sometimes extensive) histories of violence and abuse prior to their incarceration. Additionally, we see that violence in childhood or adulthood can erode protective factors, including health, family and social networks, community integration, education, employment, housing, sobriety, and self-esteem; this reduction in social, human, and economic capital increases girls’ and women’s vulnerability to incarceration.”⁵⁶
- **Manipulation:** Abusers may falsely accuse women of crimes or manipulate the legal system to have them arrested, a tactic known as “retaliatory arrest.” Research indicates that batterers may manipulate the criminal legal system, including using justice system knowledge to control their partners. The context of victimization should be considered when evaluating cases in the criminal legal system. This includes recognizing coerced or false accusations, recantations, and ensuring decisions take trauma and ongoing coercion into account.
- **Vulnerabilities of Immigrant Women:** Immigrant women often face heightened vulnerability due to immigration status, language barriers, or cultural differences. These may serve as barriers to victims seeking help through the justice system, such as calling the police, and abusers may exploit these factors to control victims.

Indirect Pathways:

- **Trauma Fall-Out:** Victimization, particularly from caregivers or intimate partners, causes psychological trauma, social isolation, and depletion of personal resources, which increases the risk of involvement in

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁵⁵ CBS News. (2020, June 7). *Failure to protect: Oklahoma child abuse law*. Retrieved from <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/failure-to-protect-oklahoma-child-abuse-law-60-minutes-2020-06-07/#:~:text=Any%20parent%20or%20guardian%20who%20knows%20a%20child,than%20men%20under%20the%20failure%20to%20protect%20law>

⁵⁶ Council on Criminal Justice. (2024). *Women’s justice: A preliminary assessment of women in the criminal justice system* (p. 6). Retrieved from <https://counciloncj.org/womens-justice-a-preliminary-assessment-of-women-in-the-criminal-justice-system/>

criminal activities and vulnerability to arrest and incarceration. A significant portion of incarcerated women and girls report histories of abuse, with violence eroding protective factors like health, family support, and employment, increasing vulnerability to incarceration.

- **Housing Instability:** Living in public spaces or on the streets exposes individuals to greater police visibility, raising the likelihood of arrest for delinquency.
- **Other Offenses:** IPV is linked to increased criminal engagement among women, such as drug offenses, property crimes, and commercial sex work. IPV often leads women to self-medicate with drugs, increasing their risk of arrest for drug-related offenses and other crimes. “Women and girls may use drugs as a mechanism of self-medicating to cope with psychological and physical pain caused by violence and then be arrested and incarcerated for drug-related offenses, including attempts to gain financial resources to support a violence-related drug addiction[.]”⁵⁷
- **Financial Instability:** IPV can hinder women's financial independence and employment opportunities, leading to economic desperation and criminal acts, like theft or prostitution, to survive or escape abuse. IPV can cause “poor mental health (post traumatic stress disorder, depression, drug/alcohol addiction), which negatively impacted women’s ability to maintain legal employment and imposed additional costs (e.g., for purchase of drugs), and, thus, led to criminalized attempts to secure economic resources. [Other research] also presented examples of women who had experienced abuse turning to fraud or theft, drug sales, and prostitution to gain financial resources to escape further violence and provide for their children.”⁵⁸

This survey of issues facing criminalized survivors is not to say that all those who are victimized are not responsible for harm caused to others. However, the Board would be remiss to ignore the ways in which it is possible for someone victimized by an abuser to be revictimized by the justice system in cases tied to the abuse.

It is the responsibility of those responding to the scene and those prosecuting on behalf of the State of Oklahoma to properly apply discretion in every type of case. With discretionary authority comes the critical responsibility of evaluating cases, particularly involving domestic violence, from all angles and staffing cases with fellow prosecutors to gain additional perspective. This also requires considering all surrounding circumstances, perpetration histories (both reported and non-reported through interviewing family members and previous partners), the documented history between the parties, as well as in what direction the evidence ultimately leads.

For example, if the historical perpetrator accuses the historical victim of domestic violence, which is a scenario that is sometimes seen when a perpetrator has pending charges for domestic violence, it is particularly important to look at every facet of the evidence, such as whether the reporting party’s injuries would be consistent with the accused historical victim using self-defense.

In considering the DVFRB’s recommendations to strengthen the statutory response to DV crimes, the Board recognizes the critical need for the system to be simultaneously committed to a well-informed response to such crimes. This includes considering previous Board recommendations, such as improved 9-1-1 telecommunicator training, lethality assessment protocol (LAP) training and implementation, and DV training for judges and law enforcement. Increased training, collaboration with DV expert witnesses and advocates, and active participation on Coordinated Community Response Teams are all recommended.

While there are many steps to prevent the wrongful prosecution of domestic violence victims, the responsibility largely falls on those who prosecute on behalf of the State to be trained on DV dynamics, properly screen and evaluate cases, review LAPs, dig deeply into DV histories, and apply discretion accordingly.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

While wrongful prosecution is a valid concern, it should be considered that the weaknesses in the current domestic violence laws potentially contribute to this precise issue. Survivors whose abusers face prosecution often grapple with the feeling that no one can adequately protect them, not even the criminal justice system. Thus, they revert to survival strategies, such as reuniting with the perpetrator.

When abusers face unjustly light sentences or lax oversight, it affirms victims' lack of faith in the criminal justice system. Survivors are disincentivized from reporting abuse or participating in cases and often become more reluctant to separate from the abuser. What often results is continued violence, if not an escalation, increasing the likelihood of homicide or a victim being wrongfully accused.

The concern of wrongful prosecutions also underscores how critical it is for Oklahoma to explore a variety of approaches in our domestic violence response toolbox, in addition to those already provided by our carceral and criminal legal systems. This might include exploring how to best strengthen our Batterer Intervention Program (BIP) system, Coordinated Community Response, early intervention education in schools, and areas that can address violence from its early onset before it escalates to the extreme abuse that often characterizes cases reviewed by the DVFRB.

Implementation

In addition to increasing safeguards against criminalizing survivors, implementing this recommendation would require the Oklahoma Legislature to amend several statutes. Below is an implementation roadmap:

1. Amend 21 O.S. § 644 so Oklahoma prosecutors are not limited to being able to file Domestic Assault & Battery with a Deadly Weapon charge only if a shooting was involved. Additionally, this charge should be an 85% crime. This would eliminate the discrepancy between Domestic A&B with a Deadly Weapon and its non-DV counterpart, which can be filed if an offender committed a crime by means of any deadly weapon, or any other means likely to produce death, and is an 85% crime.
2. Amend 21 O.S. § 13.1 to include domestic violence crimes outlined in 21 O.S. 644 as 85% crimes.
3. Amend 57 O.S. § 571 so Domestic Assault and Battery Subsequent Offense and Domestic Assault and Battery on a Pregnant Person are statutorily considered violent crimes in the State of Oklahoma.

ISSUE SPOTLIGHT – THE STALKING WARNING LETTER

Background⁵⁹

The Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board (DVFRB) meets regularly to review cases from which recommendations are drawn for the review board’s annual report publication. As part of these meetings, DVFRB staff often extend invitations to system professionals working in fields relevant to the Board’s mission to give presentations about their agency or projects. This engagement serves to further contextualize the broader domestic abuse landscape in our state and the reoccurring themes the membership sees in the fatality review work done in executive session.

In 2024, the DVFRB extended invitations to several current and former prosecutors to discuss areas in our statutes that could be improved to enhance the ability of prosecutors to hold abusers accountable. Prosecutors from District 4, 7, and 20, as well as executive staff from the Oklahoma District Attorneys Council (DAC), visited with the Board. Their presentations revealed several gaps in state statute aligning with issues the DVFRB identified in case reviews that hinder offender accountability. Many of these gaps were addressed in the policy recommendation section of this publication, because they pertain to specific and broader issues identified in fatality case reviews.

Notably, prosecutors consistently brought to the DVFRB’s attention practical issues surrounding the recently enacted statute 21 O.S. § 1173.1, otherwise known as the Stalking Warning Letter. This statute mandates that whenever a law enforcement agency receives a complaint of stalking and determines that such conduct has occurred, the law enforcement agency *shall* provide a copy of a Stalking Warning Letter to the accused *unless* the victim requests that such a letter not be served.

Prosecutors voiced concerns over how non-service of the letter is used as an argument against arresting or filing stalking charges against defendants pursuant to 21 O.S. § 1173. Although the DVFRB has yet to review cases where the letter played a role in a homicide, members found the issue so concerning it determined it warranted a section in this report highlighting how it can possibly endanger victim safety, embolden stalking behavior, and derail offender accountability.

The Board highlights this matter because stalking is a significant risk factor in domestic violence homicide. According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence:⁶⁰

- 76% of women murdered by an intimate partner were stalked first; 85% of women who survived murder attempts were stalked.
- 89% of femicide victims who had been physically assaulted before their murder were also stalked in the last year prior to their murder.
- 54% of femicide victims reported stalking to the police before they were killed by their stalkers.

⁵⁹ Contributing Authors: OAG DVFRB Program Manager Anthony Hernández Rivera, MA; OAG Assistant Attorney General Sara Wray, JD. A special thank you to those who consulted on this Spotlight: Jennifer Coulson, Lt. Scott Hawkins, and Tania Bardin.

⁶⁰ National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV). (2015). *Facts about domestic violence and stalking*. Retrieved from www.ncadv.org (accessed Dec. 30, 2024).

In highlighting the problematic Stalking Warning Letter statute, the Board seeks to address barriers to the justice system’s swift and consistent response to this criminal conduct.

In its statutorily mandated duty to “[i]mprove the ability to provide protective services to victims of domestic violence who may be living in a dangerous environment,” and “[i]mprove policies, procedures and practices within the agencies that serve victims of domestic violence,”⁶¹ the Board acknowledges the research that intimate partner stalking is often among the most overlooked intervention points pre-homicide.

Despite stalking increasing IPH risk three-fold,⁶² community and criminal justice system response to stalking consistently prove to be among the greatest failures in protecting victims and holding abusers accountable: “The most common use of the criminal justice system prior to attempted or completed intimate partner homicide was reporting intimate partner stalking.”⁶³ The Board encourages the Oklahoma Legislature to reject added barriers, such as the Stalking Warning Letter, in what often proves an already insufficient response to stalking crimes.

Recent Legislative Changes - Oklahoma Increases Penalties for Stalking and Creates Warning Letter

Until recently, a defendant convicted of stalking in our state was only guilty of a misdemeanor, punishable by no more than one year in jail, or by a fine of not more than \$1,000. This meant a stalking conviction likely led to offenders serving little to no time in custody, regardless of the degree of intimidation and fear to which stalkers subjected their victims.

In 2022, the Oklahoma State Legislature took noteworthy steps to ensure those who commit stalking are held accountable to a fuller extent under the law. Among other matters, House Bill (H.B.) 3286 increased penalties for stalking in our state, set forth by 21 O.S § 1173. H.B. 3286 made stalking a felony crime, punishable by fine or imprisonment or both. The Board is deeply grateful for the work of the legislative authors and supporters for addressing this issue head-on.

Imprisonment can now be up to three years in Department of Corrections (DOC) custody for a first-time offense; up six years in DOC custody for a second violation; and up to twelve years in DOC custody for a third violation. The legislation also levied steeper fines for each offense compared to the \$1,000 previously set forth by statute. Notably, H.B. 3286 reads, “This act shall be known and may be cited as the ‘Homicide Prevention Act[.]’”⁶⁴

Before	After
Stalking Conviction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One (1) Year DOC Custody, or • Fine ≤ \$1,000.00, or Both 	1 st Conviction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 – 3 years, or • Fine ≤ \$5,000.00, or Both
	2 nd Conviction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 – 6 years, or • Fine ≤ \$10,000.00, or Both

⁶¹ 22 O.S. § 1601(A)(4)-(5).

⁶² Stalking Prevention, Awareness, and Resource Center. (n.d.). *Stalking & intimate partner violence: Fact sheet*. Retrieved from <https://www.stalkingawareness.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Stalking-IPV-Fact-Sheet.pdf> (accessed Dec. 30, 2024).

⁶³ Stalking Prevention, Awareness, and Resource Center. (n.d.). *Stalking & intimate partner violence: Fact sheet*. Retrieved from <https://www.stalkingawareness.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Stalking-IPV-Fact-Sheet.pdf> (accessed Dec. 30, 2024).

⁶⁴ Oklahoma State Legislature. 59th Leg., 2nd Sess. (2024). *Oklahoma House Bill 3286*. Retrieved from http://webserver1.lsb.state.ok.us/cf_pdf/2021-22%20ENR/hB/HB3286%20ENR.PDF (accessed Dec. 30, 2024); [21 O.S. § 1173.1](#); [21 O.S. § 1176](#); [22 O.S. § 60.1](#); [22 O.S. § 60.2](#); [22 O.S. § 60.4](#); [22 O.S. § 60.11](#)

	3rd Conviction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 – 12 years, or • Fine ≤ \$15,000.00, or Both
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Table 2. Changes to Stalking Crime Range of Punishment

H.B. 3286 also required law enforcement to serve a Stalking Warning Letter (“Letter”) to individuals who have been accused of stalking, if law enforcement finds that such conduct has indeed occurred. The Letter is meant to notify the accused that their course of conduct “could be interpreted as stalking” as set forth in 21 O.S § 1173.

The Letter explicitly notifies the accused that their stalking behavior has induced fear or distress in their victim, who is listed on the letter as the person having notified law enforcement of the stalking. The statute contains a provision that the letter *shall* be required to serve the letter *unless* the victim requests otherwise. This law took effect on November 1, 2022.

The DVFRB’s Position: Major Concerns Surround the Stalking Warning Letter

Stalking weaponizes a perpetrator’s familiarity with the victim, especially when the parties are current or former intimate partners, and can pierce someone’s sense of security and agency in their daily lives. State-level estimates calculate that approximately 36.6% of women and 16.7% of men in Oklahoma will be stalked at some point in their lifetime.⁶⁵ This equals to approximately 542,000 and 248,00 Oklahoma men and women, respectively. Those same estimates calculate that 16.7% of Oklahoma women will be stalked by an intimate partner at some point in the lifetime, equaling about 248,000 individuals.

Considering this backdrop, the DVFRB commends the state legislature for taking a strong stance against stalking by increasing penalties. The DVFRB, however, determined it was necessary to encourage the legislature re-evaluate the rationale behind the Letter outlined in 21 O.S §1173.1 and consider repealing it.

This stance stems from concerns brought to the DVFRB’s attention by prosecutors who presented to the Board on current challenges to prosecuting domestic violence crimes in Oklahoma. Three separate presentations pointed out the Letter as an obstacle to prosecuting stalking because defense attorneys can argue that their client was never served the Letter, so cannot be charged with the crime. The fact the statute says law enforcement *shall* issue the Letter, unless otherwise requested by the victim, created a window to sow doubt on matters of due process. Another issue is that the Letter’s service mechanism and tracking remains unclear, as does the process for victims being notified and having the opportunity to opt out of the Letter.

21 O.S § 1173.1 requires that “[w]henever a law enforcement agency receives a complaint of stalking *and finds that such conduct has occurred,*” the agency is *required* to send a Letter, unless a victim opts out (emphasis added). As written, law enforcement must find that the crime occurred, presumably through some level of investigation or evidence review; however, instead of pursuing charges and a conviction after confirming the conduct under 21 O.S. § 1173, § 1173.1 instructs law enforcement to alert the stalker by issuing a written, formal warning. The Letter includes the statements that “Oklahoma law makes stalking a crime,” and the law enforcement agency “takes this law very seriously.”

However, if an agency is required by law to find that criminal conduct has occurred and respond with a letter of warning, how seriously does that state take the crime? Would the same be offered for other crimes, such as theft or robbery? The Board was left wondering about this preferential treatment of stalkers and at a loss for similar circumstances in which those found to have violated a criminal statute are (1) found to have done so, and (2) formally informed and warned.

⁶⁵ Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2023, December). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2016/2016 State Report. <https://www.cdc.gov/nisvs/documentation/NISVS-2016-2017-State-Report-508.pdf>.

The elements of stalking in Oklahoma are: (1) willfully; (2) maliciously; *and* (3) repeatedly (4) followed/harassed another person (5) in a manner that would cause a reasonable person [or member of that person's immediate family] (6) to feel frightened/intimidated/threatened/harassed/molested; and (7) actually caused the person being followed/harassed to feel terrorized/frightened/intimidated/threatened/ harassed/molested.

Considering the elements, this is not a crime that occurs accidentally; it often requires time, planning, and energy to perpetrate. Additionally, the impact of stalking is great. In one study, over 90% of stalking victims experienced significant psychological effects.⁶⁶ Effects can include PTSD symptoms, depression, anxiety, and feelings of helplessness. Stalking can also lead to other health issues, including chronic pain syndromes, gastrointestinal issues, or substance use.⁶⁷ 21 O.S. § 1173.1 minimizes both the act and impact of stalking.

Some victim advocates have also voiced concern over 21 O.S. § 1173.1, particularly regarding the lack of safety planning done with victims in weighing the option to opt out of the Letter requirement. Taking steps towards victim independence or abuser accountability can be very dangerous. As one resource notes, "When a survivor leaves their abusive relationship, they threaten the power and control their partner has established over the survivor's agency. This often causes the partner to retaliate in harmful ways. As a result, leaving is often the most dangerous period of time for survivors of abuse."⁶⁸

Tipping off a stalker through a Letter might serve only to encourage the stalker to change tactics, making future investigation and prosecution even more difficult. As one advocate noted, "victims of stalking are already burdened with the difficult task of collecting evidence, documenting their experiences, and reporting them to law enforcement." Navigating the added decision on whether to send a Letter and receiving adequate safety planning and support in the process are considerations that went unaddressed by the legislation.

Post-separation stalking and violence are serious considerations, as Board-reviewed cases demonstrate. Contacting law enforcement is a major step, and official intervention or information directly to a stalker regarding a victims' disclosure without effective safeguards in place can be highly dangerous. These circumstances may become flashpoints that require extensive safety planning.

As Oklahoma Human Services warns, "Flashpoints are things that may lead to increased violence and risk. Flashpoints are important to understand, and victims are encouraged to safety plan around times of flashpoints that they may experience."⁶⁹ There is no statutory process in place for law enforcement to discuss victims' risks and safety planning needs before delivering a Letter of accusation to a stalker.

Ultimately, while the rationale was likely well-intentioned, and a Letter to stalkers falling within a certain typology might be effective,⁷⁰ the lack of a tailored response and victim safety planning requirements in the process lead the Board to encourage repeal. The Board received input that the statute's effect is a barrier to a coordinated, effective response to stalkers and leaves victims exposed to increased dangers when they reach out for help.

⁶⁶ Storey, J. E., et al. (2023). The impact of stalking and its predictors: Characterizing the needs of stalking victims. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 38(21-22), 11569-11594.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/08862605231185303>

⁶⁷ Chang, J. C., et al. (2010). Understanding turning points in intimate partner violence: Factors and circumstances leading women victims toward change. *Journal of Women's Health*, 19(2), 251-259.

<https://doi.org/10.1089/jwh.2009.1568>

⁶⁸ National Domestic Violence Hotline. (n.d.). *Why people stay in an abusive relationship*. Retrieved from <https://www.thehotline.org/support-others/why-people-stay-in-an-abusive-relationship/>

⁶⁹ Oklahoma Department of Human Services. (n.d.). *Purple Ribbon program: Domestic violence programs and services*. Retrieved from <https://oklahoma.gov/okdhs/services/purpleribbon/vpo.htm> |

⁷⁰ Racine, C., & Billick, S. (2014). Classification systems for stalking behavior. *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, 59(1), 250-254. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23980606/>

As noted, before they are murdered, if domestic violence victims reach out to law enforcement, it will likely be regarding stalking. Before murdering, intimate partner abusers are very likely to stalk and terrorize, with little system pushback. For homicide prevention, the justice system must be responsive to these realities. However, research establishes the deeply harmful, negative impact stalking has on victims, regardless of whether it results in physical harm or death. Therefore, the Board encourages the repeal of 21 O.S. § 1173.1.

STATEWIDE OVERVIEW

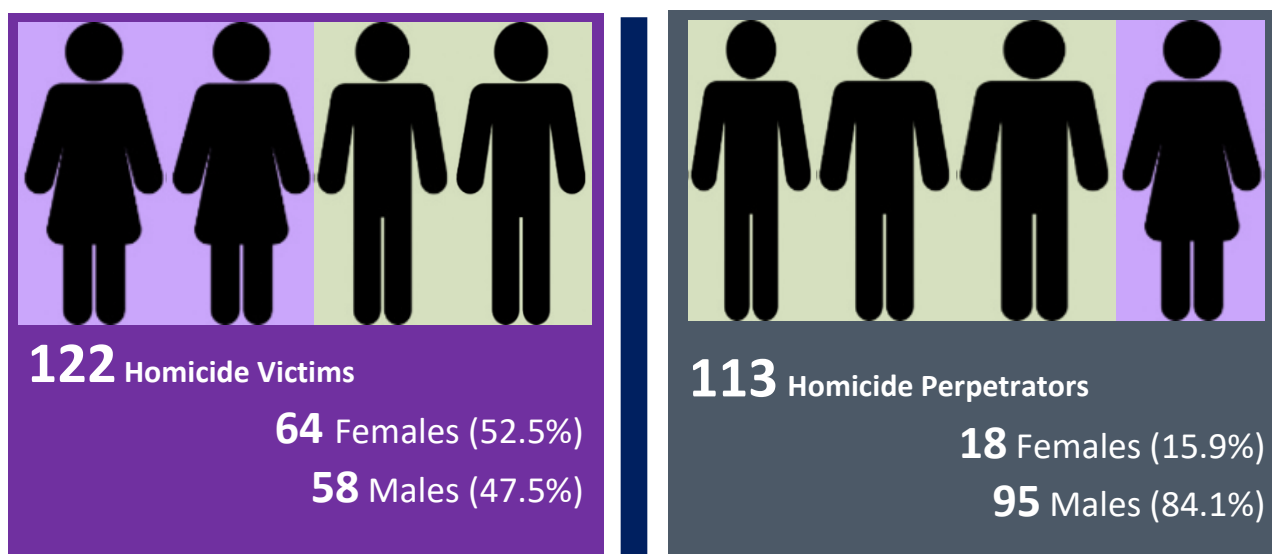
Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board Homicides

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

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

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

108 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOMICIDE CASES



In 2023 there were 92 incidents, also known as cases or events, identified by DVFRB Program Staff in which one or more persons were killed in a domestic violence-related homicide. There were 122 victims and 113 homicide perpetrators, 19 of whom died, for a total of 141 Oklahomans who died due to domestic violence. (Table 3)

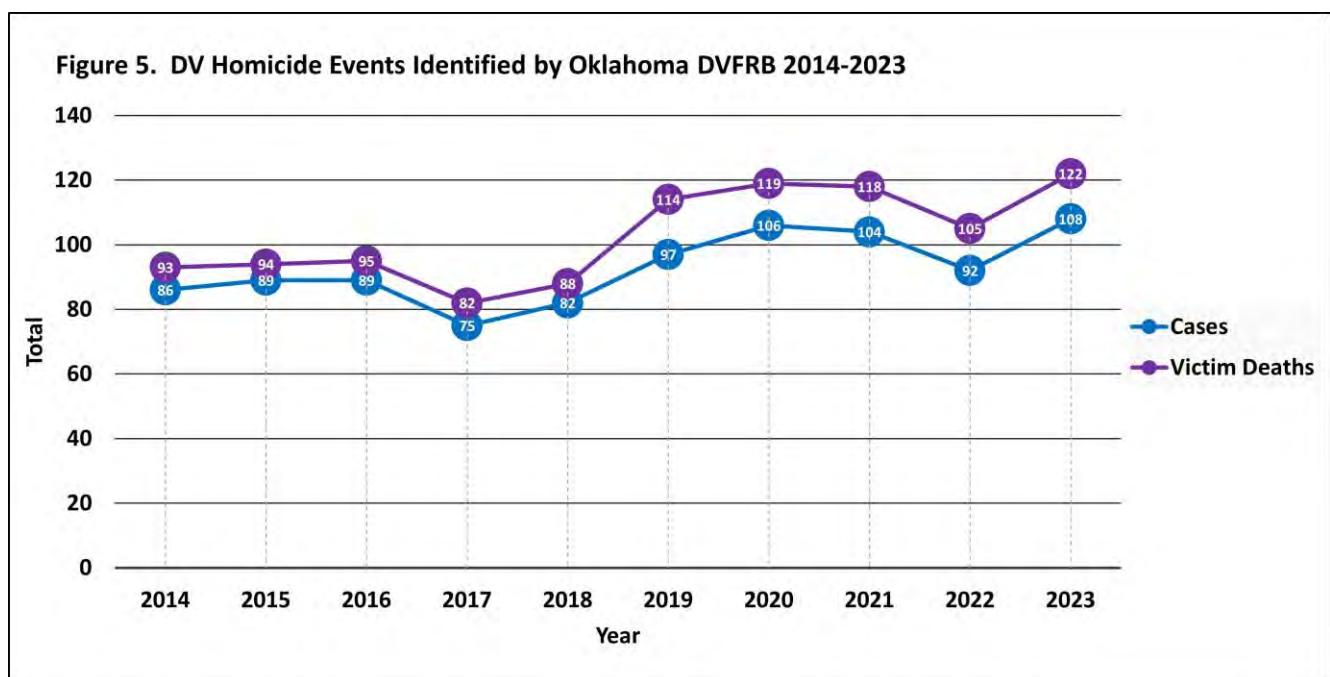
Table 3. DVFRB Domestic Violence Homicides in Oklahoma, 2014 to 2023

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Homicide Cases	86	89	89	75	82	97	106	104	92	108
Total homicide victims	93	94	95	82	88	114	119	118	105	122
IPH victims only	39	36	37	37	44	43	45	26	43	50
Child victims < 18	18	24	15	11	14	17	13	19	17	21
Homicide perpetrators	91	100	95	83	85	108	112	110	99	113
Homicide perpetrators who died / were killed	14	17	10	9	17	19	19	16	17	19

Statewide Observations

From 2014-2023, Oklahoma averaged about 93 domestic violence (DV)-related homicide cases per year. There was a significant increase in cases starting in 2019, raising the state average to about 101 DV homicide cases per year. The number of victims has also increased in recent years. The average between 2014 and 2018 was around 90 DV homicide victims per year. Since 2019 the state average increased to around 115 DV homicide victims per year. This trend continued with the increase in the total number of deaths, which is the sum of both victims and homicide perpetrators who died or were killed from domestic violence. On average about 104 individuals died in domestic violence related homicides from 2014 to 2018 but starting in 2019 it increased to approximately 133 deaths annually.

The number of perpetrator deaths has increased in recent years and remained consistently high. This is alarming because perpetrator deaths are largely associated with DV-related murder-suicides and are often some of the most violent homicide cases. Between 2017 and 2020 perpetrator deaths doubled in Oklahoma from a decade low of 9 in 2017 to 17 in 2018 and then 19 deaths in both 2019 and 2020. Perpetrator deaths decreased slightly in 2021 and 2022, but the 2023 total (19) matched the decade high seen in 2019 and 2020 (*Figure 5*).



By County

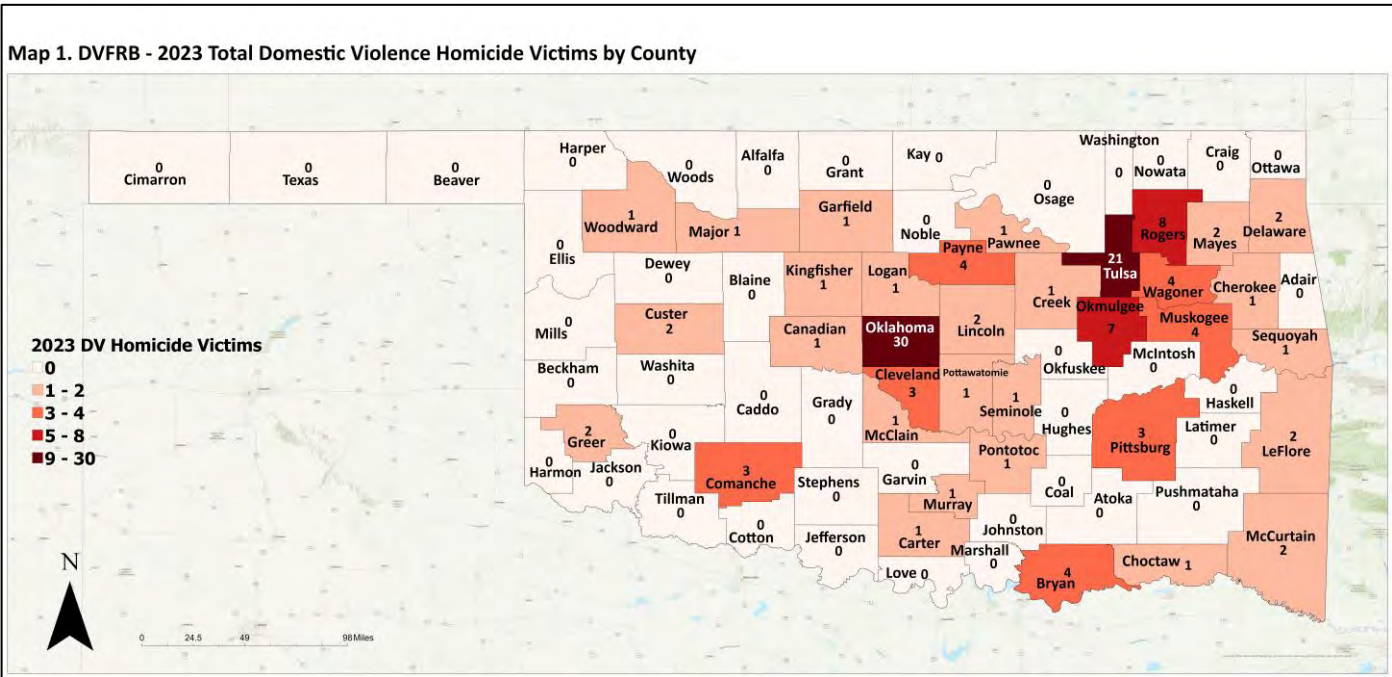
Staff identified a total of 141 individuals who died in domestic violence-related fatalities during 2023: 122 victims and 19. This resulted in a death rate of about 3.5 per 100,000 for the entire state. Consistent with prior years, the highest numbers of domestic violence-related deaths were concentrated in Oklahoma and Tulsa Counties (*Map 1 and 2*); a total of 57 people lost their lives to domestic violence in those two counties alone, comprising 40.4% of the total number of deaths. The higher share of deaths in Oklahoma and Tulsa Counties are most likely due to their high population, given that a combined 37.0% of Oklahoma's population resides in those two counties.⁷¹ The death rate in Oklahoma County increased from 3.0 in 2022 to 4.3 per 100,000 citizens in 2023. This rate is still slightly lower than the 4.6 deaths per 100,000 citizens in 2021. In contrast, the death rate in Tulsa County decreased from 5.2 per 100,000 people to 3.2, while the death rate in the remaining 75 other counties combined was about 3.3 per 100,000.

⁷¹ U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). *American Community Survey: Oklahoma demographics*. Retrieved from https://www.oklahoma-demographics.com/counties_by_population

At least one domestic violence-related homicide occurred in 35 out of Oklahoma’s 77 counties (45.5%) in 2023 (Map 2). The 2023 county total increased by five in comparison to 2022 and matches the totals seen in 2021 and 2020. An average of 32 counties had at least one domestic violence homicide during 2015-2023. The number of Oklahoma district attorney (DA) districts with at least one homicide remained unchanged from the previous year. These homicides occurred in 23 (85.2%) of the 27 Oklahoma DA Districts.

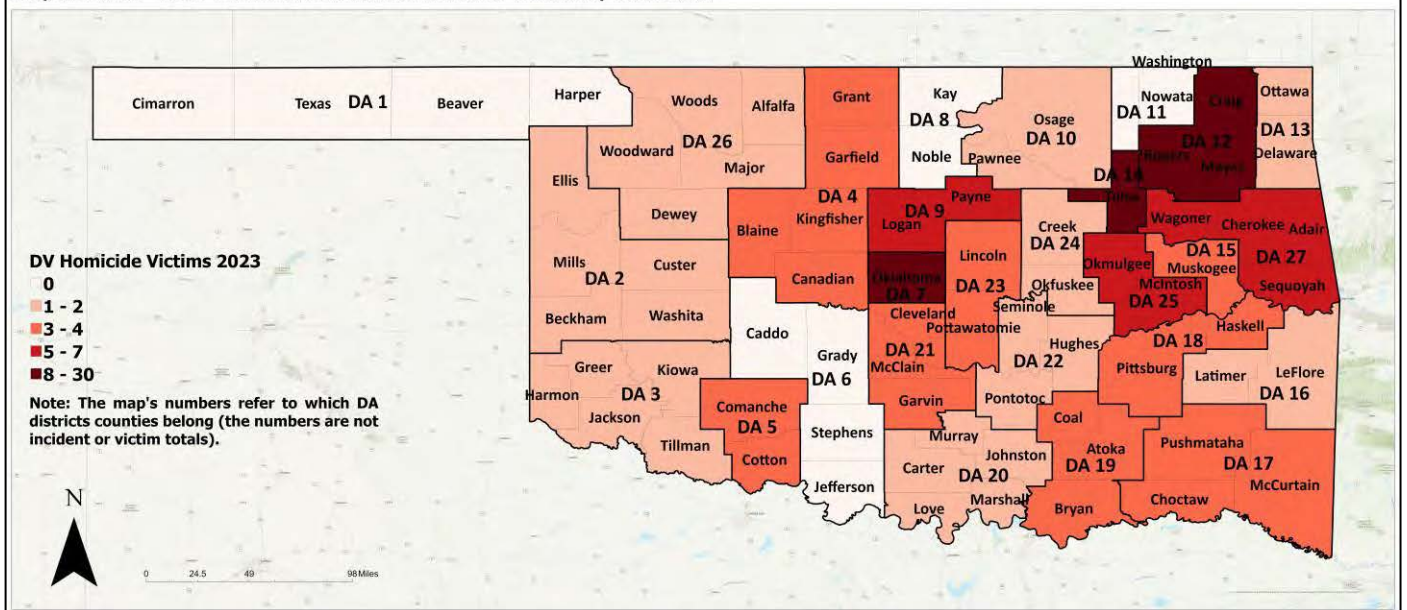
35
 Oklahoma Counties With At Least
 One Homicide

23
 Oklahoma DA Districts With At Least
 One Homicide



Note: Data for this map was collected by DVFRB staff and is current as of January 2025. The data may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that may not have been accounted for during the 2024 data collection process.

Map 2. DVFRB - 2023 Total Domestic Abuse Homicide Victims by DA District



Note: Data for this map was collected by DVFRB staff and is current as of January 2025. The data may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that may not have been accounted for during the 2024 data collection process. Map data table can be found in Appendix A – Table 22. DVFRB – 2023 Total Domestic Violence Homicide Victims by DA District.

Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation Domestic Abuse Data

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

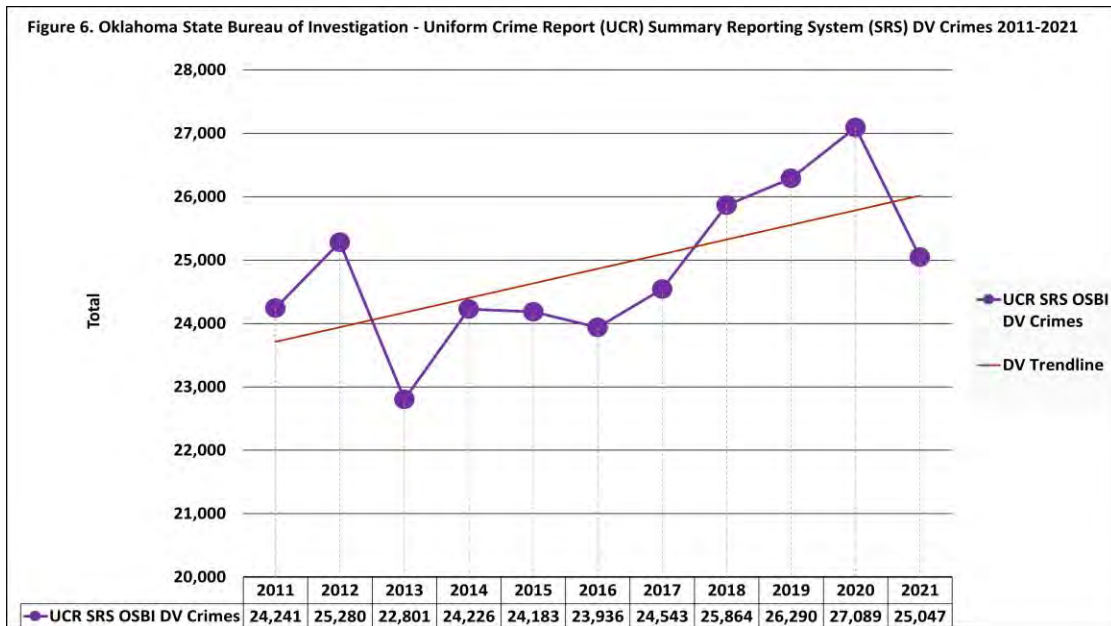
Since 1973, the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation (OSBI) has issued an annual *Crime in Oklahoma* report. This report publishes the most accurate and current crime information available for Oklahoma on a variety of reported crimes to law enforcement agencies. From 1973 to 2020, OSBI’s *Crime in Oklahoma* was a compilation of crime statistics drawn from Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) data received from local law enforcement agencies across the state via the Summary Reporting System (SRS).⁷² Reports include the most accurate and current crime information available for Oklahoma and includes offense, arrest, and clearance data. UCR offense data is reported by event and may include multiple offenses, more than one offender, and/or multiple victims.⁷³ The OSBI has included UCR Domestic Abuse data in their reports for years and between 2011-2020 included disaggregated data at the county level. This is again included in our annual report to provide a broader picture of domestic violence in Oklahoma in recent years (*Figure 6*).

From 2011-2020 the OSBI defined domestic abuse statutorily as *threatening, causing or attempting to cause serious physical harm between family or household members* to gather the data when it used the UCR system. It further divided domestic abuse crimes into four offense categories: murder, sex crimes, assault, and assault and battery. For purposes of reporting, the OSBI considered family or household members as current or former spouses, persons in dating relationships⁷⁴ or who have a child together, parents, foster parents, children, or persons otherwise related by blood or marriage, or people living in the same household or who formerly lived in the same household.

⁷² The statistics published in upcoming editions of *Crime in Oklahoma* will be drawn utilizing the Oklahoma State Based Incident Reporting System (SIBRS). This is due to state crime reporting transitioning from the UCR, Summary Reporting System (SRS), to SIBRS in compliance with new federal crime reporting standards.

⁷³ Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation. (2021). *Crime in Oklahoma: Transition from UCR to SIBRS*.

⁷⁴ Defined as courtships or engagements.



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

During 2011-2020, when OSBI used the UCR system, domestic abuse offenses generally increased. There were decreases in three of the years, including two consecutive years of decline from 2015-2016. Overall, from 2011-2020 domestic abuse crimes reported to law enforcement increased an average of 1.3% per year. From 2011-2020 an average of 24,845 domestic abuse crimes were reported per year. In 2020 the number of domestic abuse crimes reported to law enforcement peaked at 27,089. This record number of crimes reported to law enforcement in 2020 also coincided with a record number of domestic violence homicide victims identified by DVFRB staff. However, it is important to note that annual totals are likely lower than the actual number of domestic abuse incidents in Oklahoma because these totals are based on police reports and victims of domestic abuse may not contact law enforcement for a myriad of reasons.

The crime statistics published by OSBI in *Crime in Oklahoma 2021* in February 2023 were consolidated utilizing the new Oklahoma State Incident-Based Reporting System (SIBRS). Due to SIBRS and UCR SRS data having different reporting criteria it is difficult to directly compare totals obtained via one reporting system and the other. At the request of program staff, OSBI provided 2021 UCR domestic abuse data for Oklahoma counties.

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

Overall, these numbers suggest that although there may have been an overall decrease in crimes in 2021 after the 2020 peak, it may have been largely driven by the Tulsa County outlier.

Oklahoma State Incident-Based Reporting System (SIBRS) 2021-2023 Domestic Abuse Trends

Data Transition Statement

The 2021 Crime statistics published by the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation (OSBI) in its most recent edition of *Crime in Oklahoma* report were drawn utilizing the new Oklahoma State Incident-Based Reporting

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

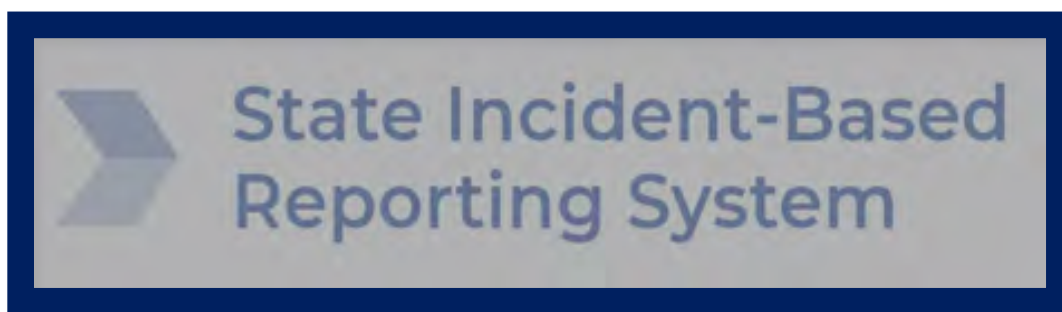
The new incident-based reporting system has several advantages compared to its UCR counterpart. The UCR data only collected data for eight crimes and included a Hierarchy Rule to determine which offense was reported when more than one crime was committed. For example, if a Robbery and Murder occurred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

The *Crime in Oklahoma 2021* report was the first OSBI crime statistics annual publication that used data entirely drawn from the new incident-based reporting system. It included domestic abuse data collected using SIBRS and, for the first time, statistics on the individuals involved that were not available in previous *Crime in Oklahoma* publications. SIBRS data for 2021-2023 will be presented in the next section to provide the most up to date snapshot of the domestic violence landscape in Oklahoma.

Disclaimer

The data presented in the next section was provided to DVFRB staff in advance by our partners at the OSBI Statistical Analysis Center (SAC). We must note that due to SIBRS being a live database, the tallies presented below might differ slightly from the ones that appear in previous or future editions of either this publication or *Crime in Oklahoma* reports. DVFRB staff have included notes in all relevant figures or tables depicting OSBI SIBRS domestic abuse data with the date it was queried by staff at the OSBI SAC. The 2021-2023 OSBI SIBRS totals in this publication are current as of November 26, 2024.

SIBRS Unique Domestic Abuse Incident, Victim, and Arrestee Trends 2021-2023



To be included as a Domestic Violence incident, an incident reported must have reported one of the following Offenses and report at least one of the following Victim-to-Offender relationship types:

- **Offenses:** Murder & Non-Negligent Manslaughter, Negligent Manslaughter, Justifiable Homicide, Kidnapping/Abduction, Forcible Rape, Forcible Sodomy, Sexual Assault with an Object, Forcible Fondling, Aggravated Assault, Simple Assault, Intimidation.
- **Victim-to-Offender Relationship Types:** Adoptive/Foster Child, Adoptive/Foster Parent, Biological Parents of Same Child, Boyfriend/Girlfriend, Child, Child of Boyfriend/Girlfriend, Common-Law Spouse, Ex-Spouse, Grandchild, Grandparent, Homosexual Relationship, In-Law, Other Family Member, Parent, Roommate, Sibling, Spouse, Spouse of Ex-Spouse, Stepchild, Stepparent, Stepsibling.

In 2023, a total of 451 Oklahoma law enforcement agencies contributed data to the SIBRS. These agencies reported 26,297 **unique incidents** having a domestic abuse offense and a domestic relationship. The 2023 total is 1,090 (+3.8%) more than the 2022 SIBRS total of 25,307 (*Figure 7*).

There were 31,317 unique victims (e.g. individuals, businesses, society, etc.) involved in these incidents in 2023, and of those victims, 30,109 were reported to be individual persons. The 2023 total of individual persons is 1,045 (+3.6%) more than the 2022 SIBRS total of 29,064. Law enforcement also reported 19,973 suspects, which is 449 (2.3%) more than the 19,524 identified in 2022. Finally, a total of 8,110 individuals were reported to have been arrested during incidents. This is a 554 (+7.3%) increase to the 7,556 reported in 2022.

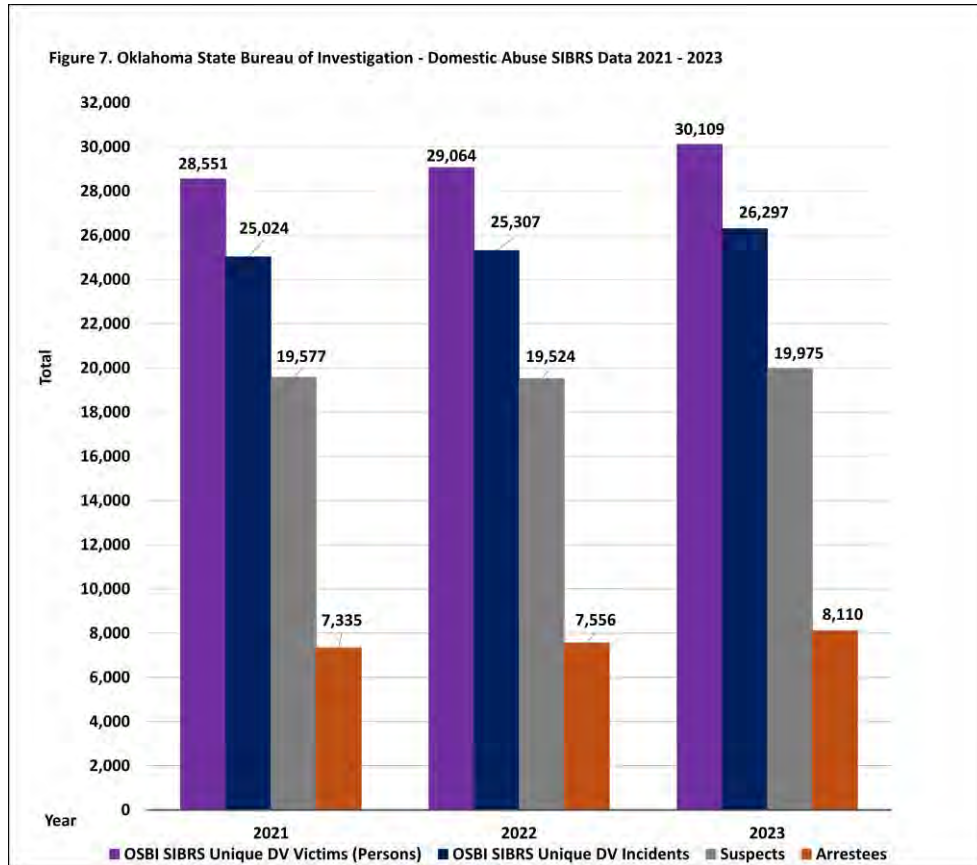


Table 4. Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation – Domestic Abuse SIBRS Data 2021 - 2023

	2021	2022	2023
SIBRS Unique Incidents	25,024	25,307	26,297
SIBRS Unique DV Victims (Persons)	28,551	29,064	30,109
SIBRS Unique DV Suspects	19,577	19,524	19,975
SIBRS Unique DV Arrestees	7,335	7,556	8,110

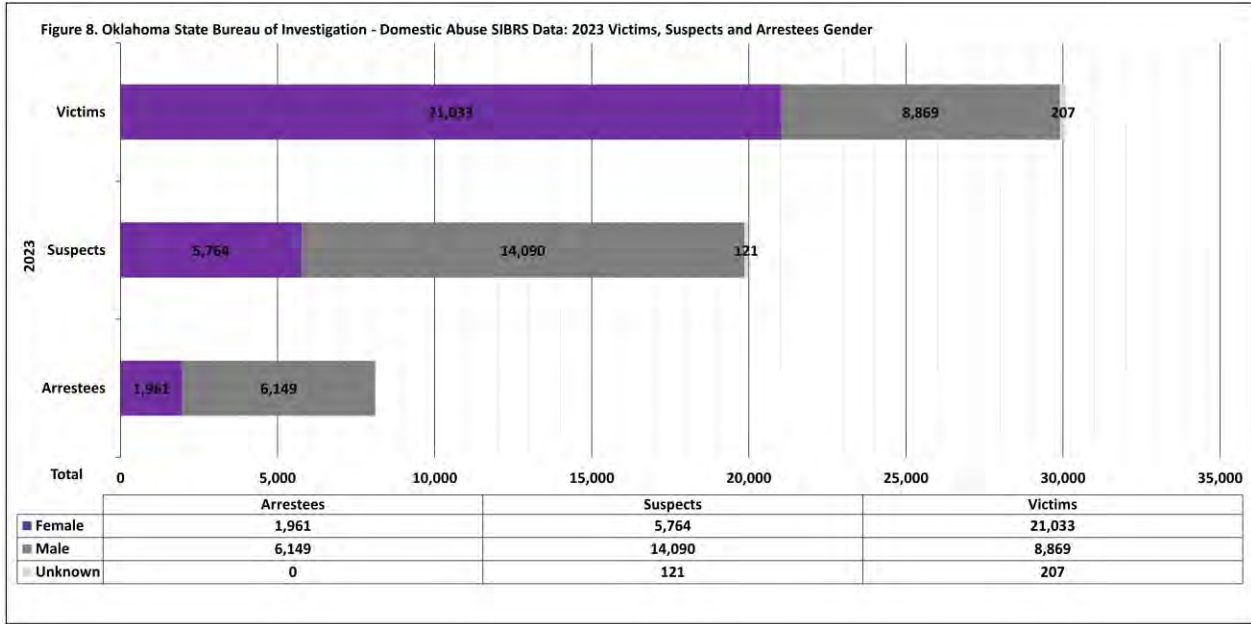
Note: Data provided by the OSBI Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) and current as of November 26, 2024. Totals may be subject to change due to SIBRS being a live database.

SIBRS Unique Domestic Abuse Victim and Arrestee Demographic Trends 2023

Gender

An advantage of SBRIS data is that it collects demographic information on the victims, suspects, and arrestees associated with domestic abuse incidents. Of the 30,109 unique victims in 2023 a total of 21,033 (69.9%) were female and 8,869 (29.5%) were male. Gender information was unknown for 207 (0.7%) victims. Of the 19,973

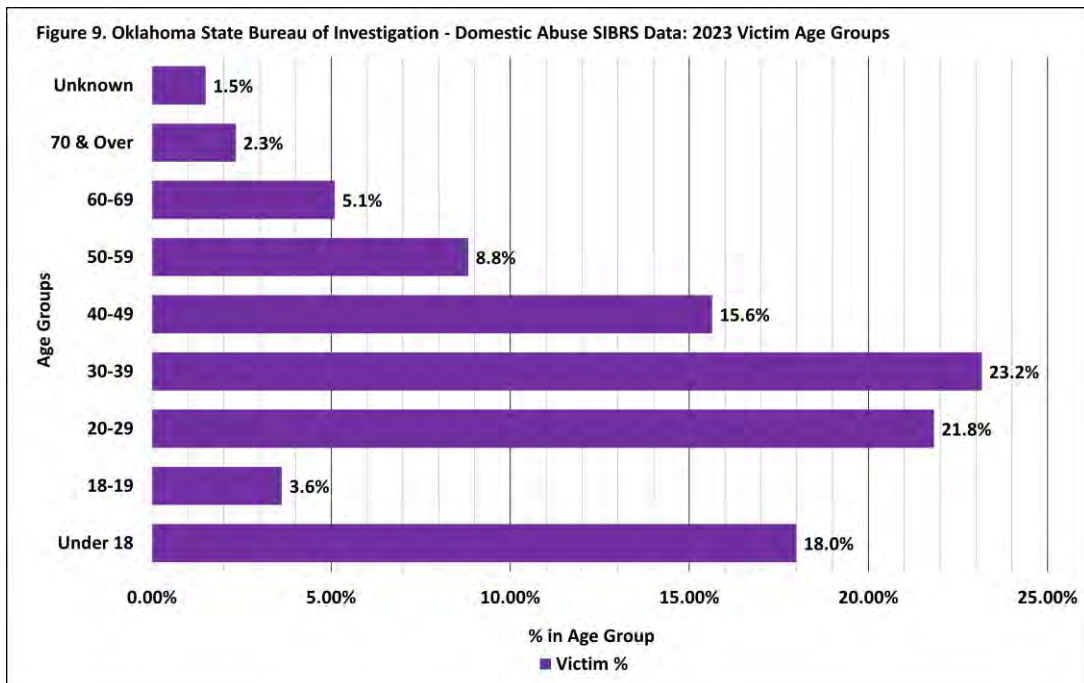
suspects, a total of 14,090 (70.5%) were male and 5,764 (28.9%) were female. Of the 8,110 arrestees, a total of 6,149 (75.8%) were male and 1,961 (24.2%) were female (*Figure 8*).



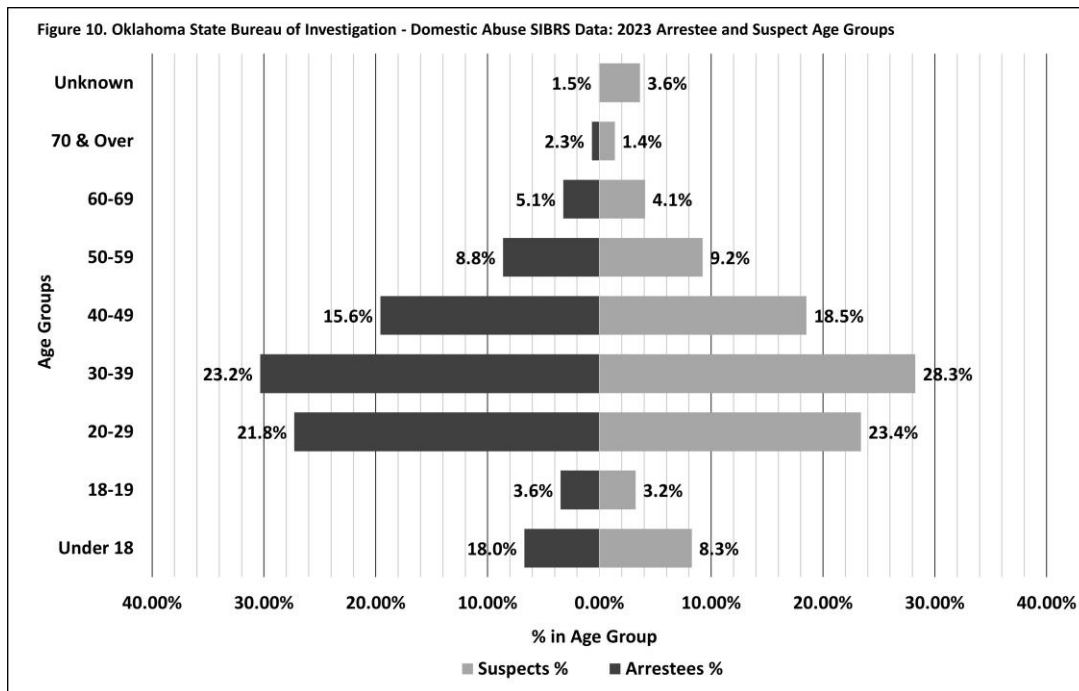
Note: Data provided by the OSBI Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) and current as of November 26, 2024. Totals may be subject to change due to SIBRS being a live database.

Age

SIBRS also compiles data on the age of unique victims, suspects, and arrestees involved in reported incidents. In 2023, the most common age ranges for victims were: Under 18 (18.0%), 20 – 29 (21.8%), and 30 – 39 (23.2%). A total of 63.0% of all victims fell within these age groups (*Figure 9*). The most common age groups for suspects were: 40 – 49 (18.5%), 20 – 29 (23.4%), and 30 – 39 (28.3%). A total of 70.2% of all suspects fell within these three age groups. The most common age groups for arrestees were: 40 – 49 (19.6%), 20 – 29 (27.3%), and 30 – 39 (30.3%) (*Figure 10*).



Note: Data provided by the OSBI Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) and current as of November 26, 2024. Totals may be subject to change due to SIBRS being a live database.



Note: Data provided by the OSBI Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) and current as of November 26, 2024. Totals may be subject to change due to SIBRS being a live database.

Table 5. Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation – 2023 Domestic Abuse SIBRS Data: Domestic Abuse Victim Suspect, and Arrestee Age Ranges

Age Range	DV Victims	%	DV Suspects	%	DV Arrestee	%
Under 18	5,415	18.0	1,650	8.3	545	6.7
18 – 19	1,091	3.6	648	3.2	282	3.5
20 - 29	6,574	21.8	4,671	23.4	2,213	27.3
30 – 39	6,974	23.2	5,644	28.3	2,461	30.3
40 – 49	4,709	15.6	3,699	18.5	1,589	19.6
50 – 59	2,658	8.8	1,846	9.2	699	8.6
60 – 69	1,535	5.1	818	4.1	263	3.2
70 & Over	703	2.3	275	1.4	55	0.7
Unknown	450	1.5	724	3.6	3	0.0
Total	30,109	100.0	19,975	100.0	8,110	100.0

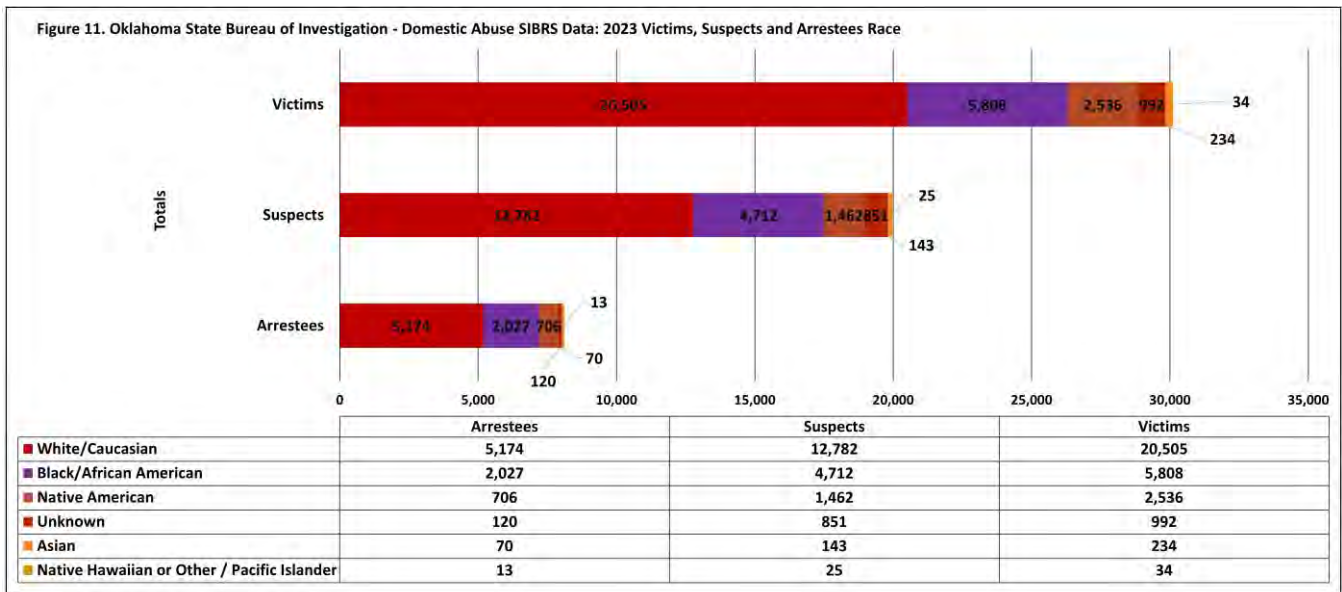
Note: Data provided by the OSBI Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) and current as of November 26, 2024. Totals may be subject to change due to SIBRS being a live database.

Race and Ethnicity

Notably, SIBRS compiles victim, suspect, and arrestee racial and ethnicity information. Of the 30,109 unique domestic abuse victims, 20,505 (68.1) were White, 5,808 (19.3%) were Black, 2,536 (8.4%) were American Indian/Alaska Native, 234 (0.8%) were Asian, and 34 (0.1%) were Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. Race information was unknown for 992 (3.3%) victims. In terms of ethnicity, 1,815 (6.0%) were Hispanic and 13,610 (45.2%) were non-Hispanic. Ethnicity information was unknown for 14,684 (48.8%) victims (*Figure 11*).

Of the 19,973 suspects, 12,782 (64.0%) were White, 4,712 (23.6%) were Black, 1,462 (7.3%) were American Indian/Alaska Native, 143 (0.7%) were Asian, and 25 (0.1%) were Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. Racial information was unknown for 851 (4.3%) suspects. A total of 1,041 (5.2%) of suspects were Hispanic and 8,453 (42.3%) were non-Hispanic. Ethnicity information was unknown for 10,481 (52.5%) suspects. Of the 8,110 arrestees, 5,174 (63.8%) were White, 2,027 (25.0%) were Black, 706 (8.7%) were American Indian/Alaska Native,

120 (1.5%) were Asian, and 13 (0.2%) were Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. Racial information was unknown for 120 (1.5%) of arrestees. 721 (8.9%) arrestees were Hispanic and 4,815 (59.4%) were non-Hispanic. Ethnicity information was unknown for 2,574 (31.7%) arrestees (Figure 11).

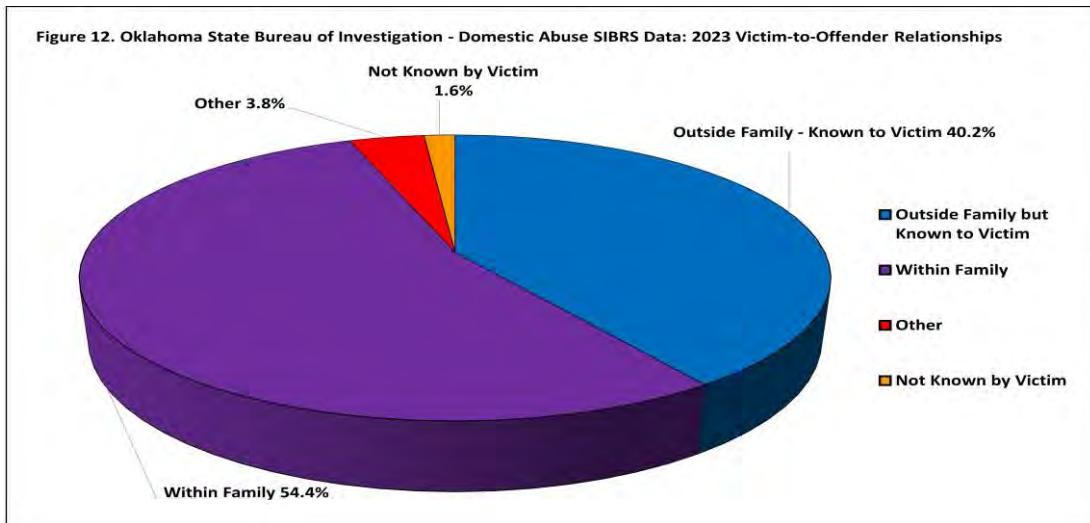


Note: Data provided by the OSBI Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) and current as of November 26, 2024. Totals may be subject to change due to SIBRS being a live database.

Relationship Types for Domestic Abuse Victims 2023

SIBRS also compiles information on the number of victim-to-offender relationships found in domestic abuse incidents. This provides a snapshot on who is perpetrating the violence and who is being victimized. Overall, there were 33,342 victim-to-offender relationships identified. In comparison to 2022, identified victim-to-offender relationships increased by +1,174 (+3.6%). Victims categorized as being Within Family (18,130) outnumber the Outside Family but Known to Victim (13,408) category (Appendix A – Table 21. OSBI SIBRS Victim-to-Offender Relationship Types in Domestic Abuse Incidents, 2022-2023). Notably, 14,816 (44.4%) relationships across the categories appear to have involved intimate partner violence (IPV)⁷⁵. The number of IPV relationships across the categories increased by +287 (+2.0%) (Figure 12).

⁷⁵ This number was obtained by adding the Spouse and Common-Law Spouse entries in the Within Family category and the Boyfriend/Girlfriend, Homosexual Partner, Ex-Spouse entries within the Outside Family but Known to Victim category.



Note: Data provided by the OSBI Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) and current as of November 26, 2024. Totals may be subject to change due to SIBRS being a live database.

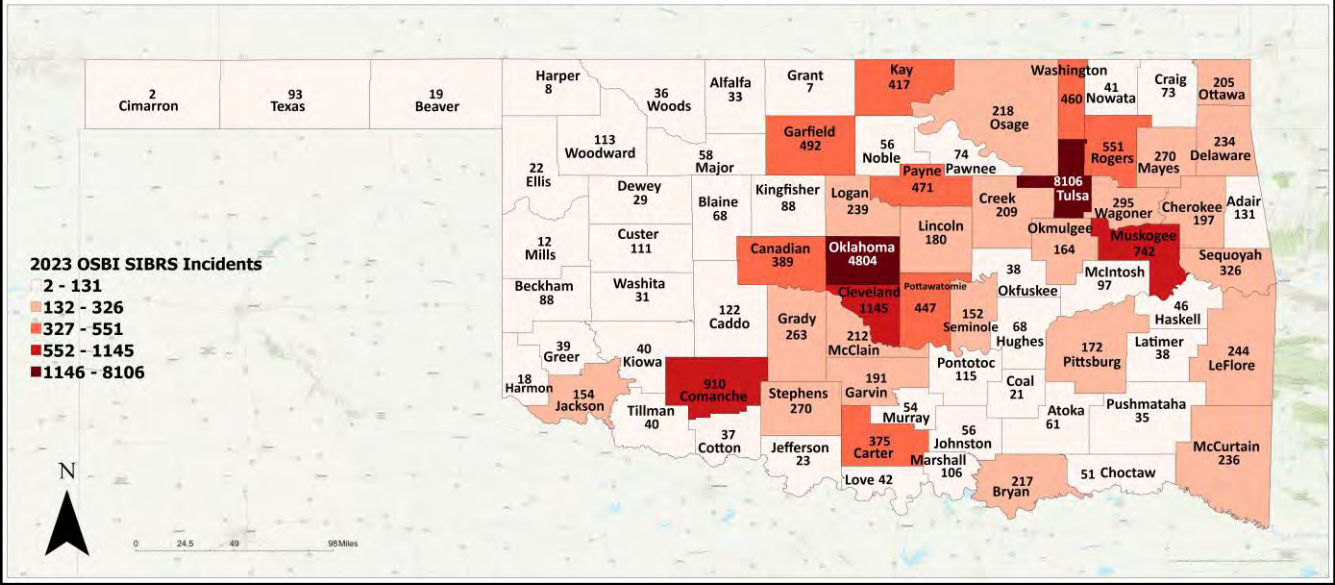
Domestic Abuse Incidents and Victims by County 2023

A total of 26,297 **unique domestic abuse incidents** were reported by law enforcement agencies in 2023. A total of 37 (48.1%) counties had more incidents than the previous year. Tulsa and Washington County saw the greatest increases with the former having reported a total of 8,106 (+918 = +12.8%) and the latter 460 (+94 = +25.7%) incidents in 2023. Overall, 22 of the 37 (59.5%) counties seeing increases in their totals had increments ranging from 1 – 15 more incidents. These 22 counties saw their totals increase by on average +6.7 incidents. The remaining 15 counties seeing increases had increments ranging from 21 – 918 (Tulsa). When excluding Tulsa County (outlier), the range increment is between 21 – 94. These 14 counties saw their totals increase by on average 43.9 incidents. (*Map 3 and 4*)

In contrast, 39 (50.6%) counties had decreases in the number of incidents reported. Cleveland and Creek County were tied with the biggest decreases with the first having reported a total of 1,145 (-49 = -4.1%) incidents and the second 209 (-49 = -19.0%) in 2023. Overall, 24 of the 39 (61.5%) counties seeing decreases in their totals saw their numbers decline by a range of 1 – 15 incidents. These 24 counties saw their totals decrease by on average -7.1 incidents. The remaining 15 counties saw decreases ranging from 16 – 49 incidents. These counties saw their totals decrease by on average -34.8 incidents.

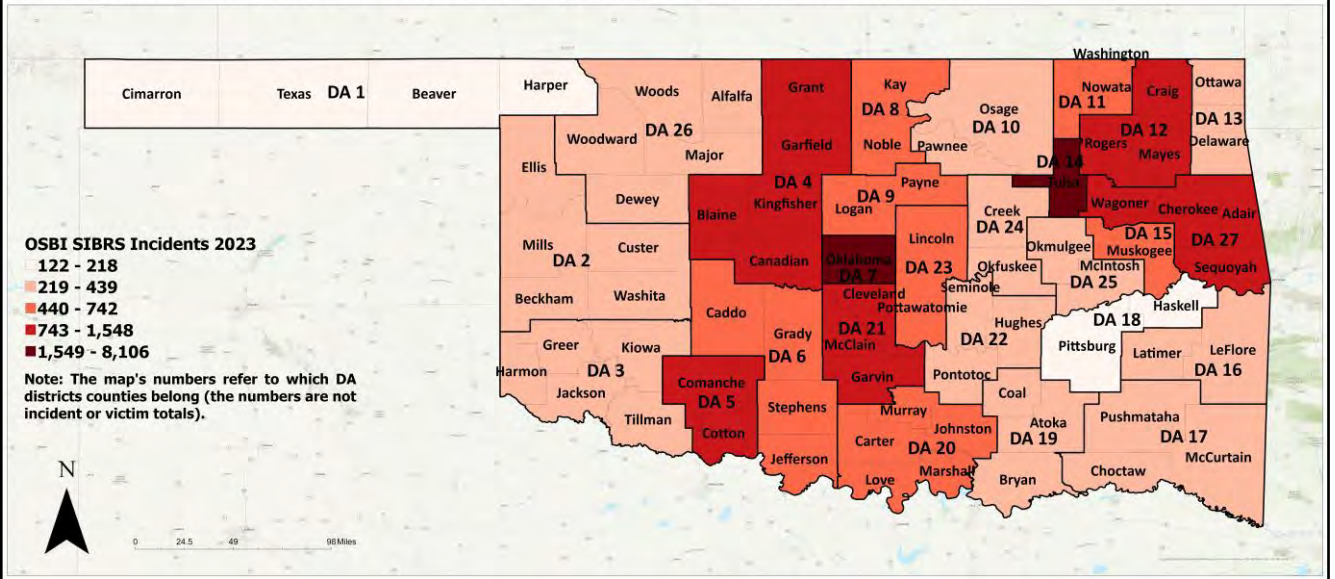
Only one (1) county (Ellis) saw no change in the number (22) of reported incidents from the previous calendar year. The 2023 statewide incident rate was 648.7 incidents per 100,000 people. In comparison, the 2022 statewide incident rate was 636.4 incidents per 100,000 people. As a result, the incident rate increased by +12.3 (+1.9%) incidents per 100,000 people.

Map 3. 2023 Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation SIBRS - Reported Domestic Abuse Incidents by County



Note: Data provided by the OSBI Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) and current as of November 26, 2024. Totals may be subject to change due to SIBRS being a live database.

Map 4. 2023 Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation SIBRS - Reported Domestic Abuse Incidents by DA District



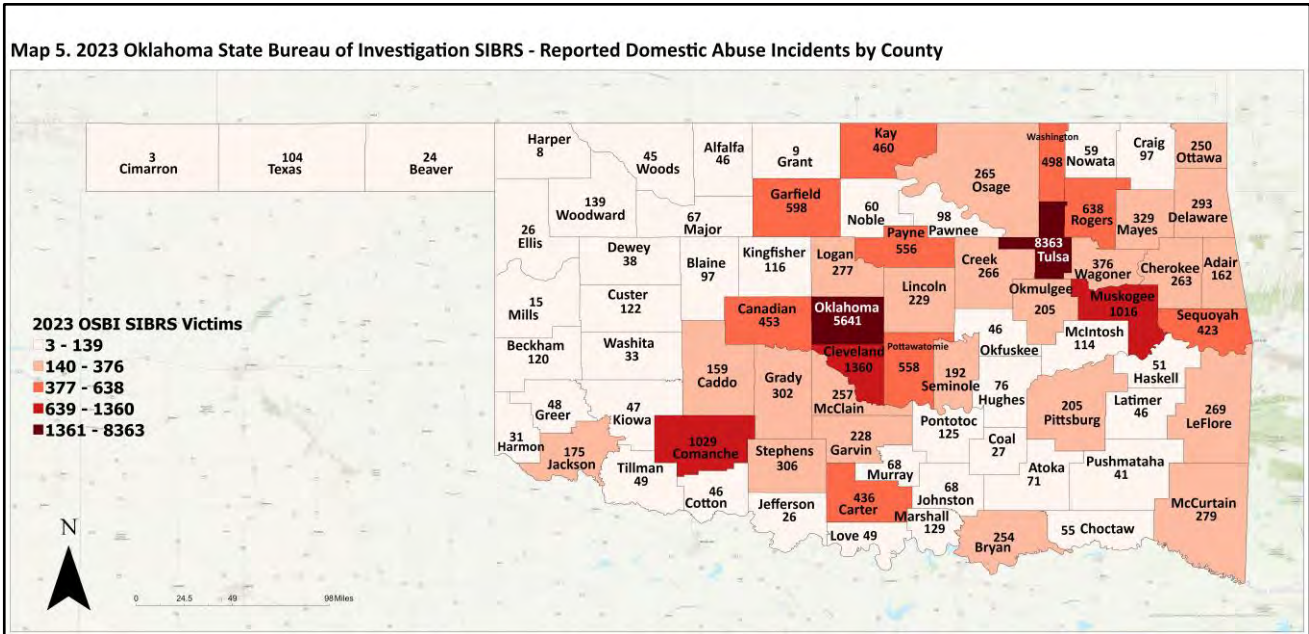
Note: Data provided by the OSBI Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) and current as of November 26, 2024. Totals may be subject to change due to SIBRS being a live database. Map data table can be found in Appendix A – Table 23. 2023 OSBI SIBRS – Reported Domestic Abuse Incidents by DA District.

A total of 30,109 unique domestic abuse victims (persons) were reported by law enforcement agencies in 2023. A total of 40 counties had more victims than the previous year. Tulsa and Oklahoma County saw the biggest increases with the former reporting 8,363 (+871 = +11.6%) total victims and the latter 5,641 (+98 = +1.8%) total victims. Overall, 22 of the 40 counties seeing increases in their totals had increments ranging from 1 – 15 more incidents. These 22 counties saw their totals increase by on average +7.2 victims. The remaining 18 counties seeing increases had increments ranging from 16 – 821 (Tulsa). When excluding Tulsa County (outlier), the range increment is between 16 – 98 victims. These counties saw their totals increase by +49.7 victims. (Map 4)

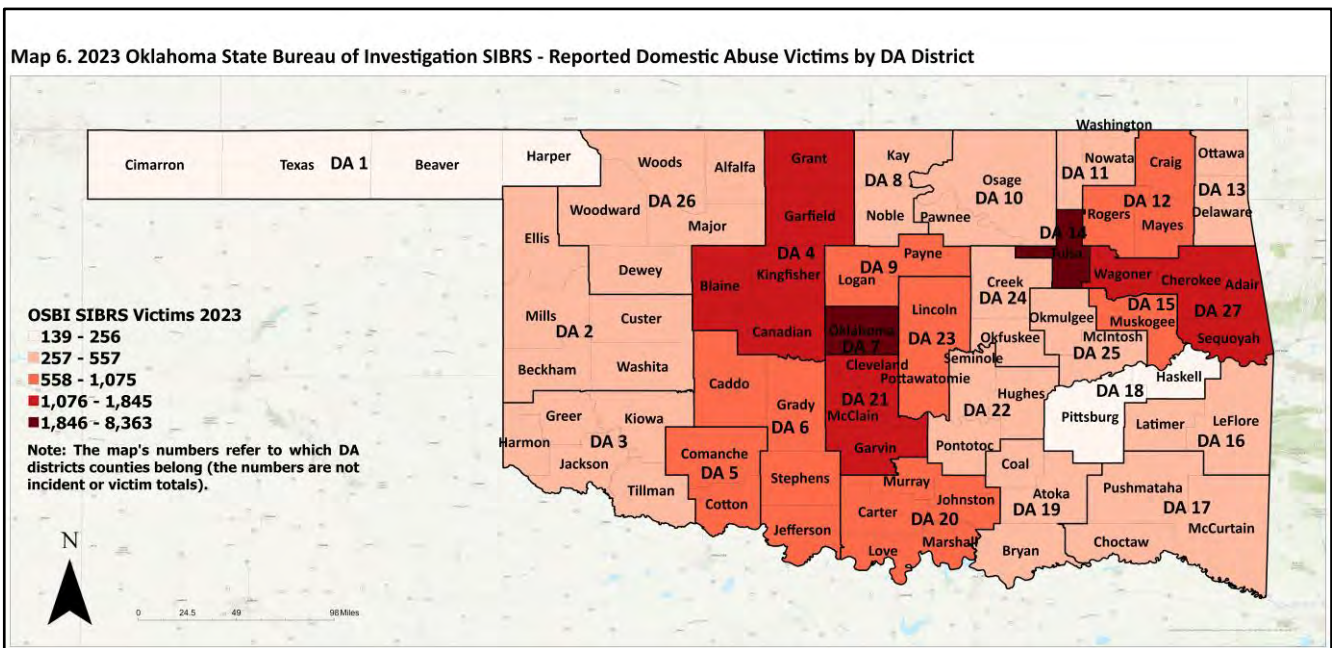
In contrast, 36 counties saw decreases in the number of reported victims. Rogers and Canadian County saw the biggest decreases in their victim totals with the first having reported a total of 638 (-69 = -9.8%) and the second 453 (-66 = 12.7%). Overall, 16 of the 36 counties seeing decreases saw the number of victims decline by

increments ranging from 1 – 15. These 16 counties saw their totals decrease by on average -7.5 incidents. The remaining 20 counties saw decreases ranging from 16 – 69 less victims. These counties saw their totals decrease by on average -35.4 victims.

Only one (1) county (Harper) saw no change in the number (8) of reported victims from the previous calendar year. The 2023 state domestic abuse rate for reported victims was 742.7 victims per 100,000 people. In comparison, the 2022 rate was 730.8 victims per 100,000 people. As a result, the victim rate increased by +11.9 (+1.6%) victims per 100,000 people.



Note: Data provided by the OSBI Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) and current as of November 26, 2024. Totals may be subject to change due to SIBRS being a live database.



Note: Data provided by the OSBI Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) and current as of November 26, 2024. Totals may be subject to change due to SIBRS being a live database. Map data table can be found in Appendix A – Table 24. 2023 OSBI SIBRS – Reported Domestic Abuse Victims by DA District.

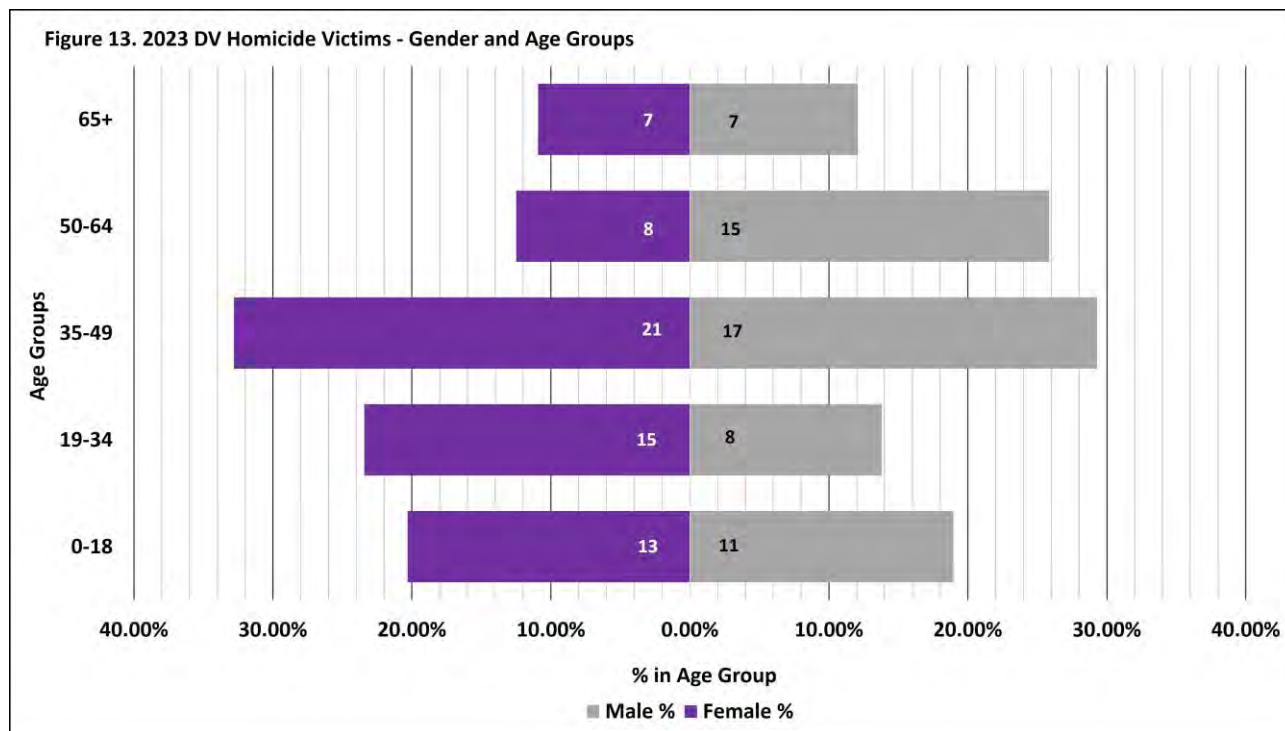
HOMICIDES - KEY FINDINGS FOR 2023

Victim and Perpetrator Demographics

The demographics presented in this section of the report include intimate partner homicide (IPH) and non-intimate partner homicides (non-IPH) identified by the Review Board occurring in calendar year 2023. Non-IPH cases include family members, triangle victims' bystanders, and Good Samaritans.⁷⁶

Gender

Program staff were able to determine the gender of all 122 (100.0%) domestic violence homicide victims. A total of 64 (52.5%) were female and 58 (47.5%) were male. A total of 64 female victims were identified, 58 (90.6%) of which were determined to have been killed by male perpetrators, four (6.3%) were killed by female perpetrators, and two (3.1%) were killed by two perpetrators, one which was male and the other was female. Fifty-eight (58) male victims were identified, 43 (78.2%) of which were killed by male perpetrators, 12 (21.8%) were killed by female perpetrator, and three (5.5%) were killed by two perpetrators, one of which was male and the other female. Staff were able to identify the gender of all 113 (100.0%) domestic violence homicide perpetrators. A total of 95 (84.1%) perpetrators were male and 18 (15.9%) were female. Ten (10) (55.5%) female perpetrators killed or were implicated in the killing of their current or former intimate partner (*Figures 13 and 14*).



Note: Data collected by DVFRB staff and current as of January 2025. Totals may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during 2024 data collection process.

Age

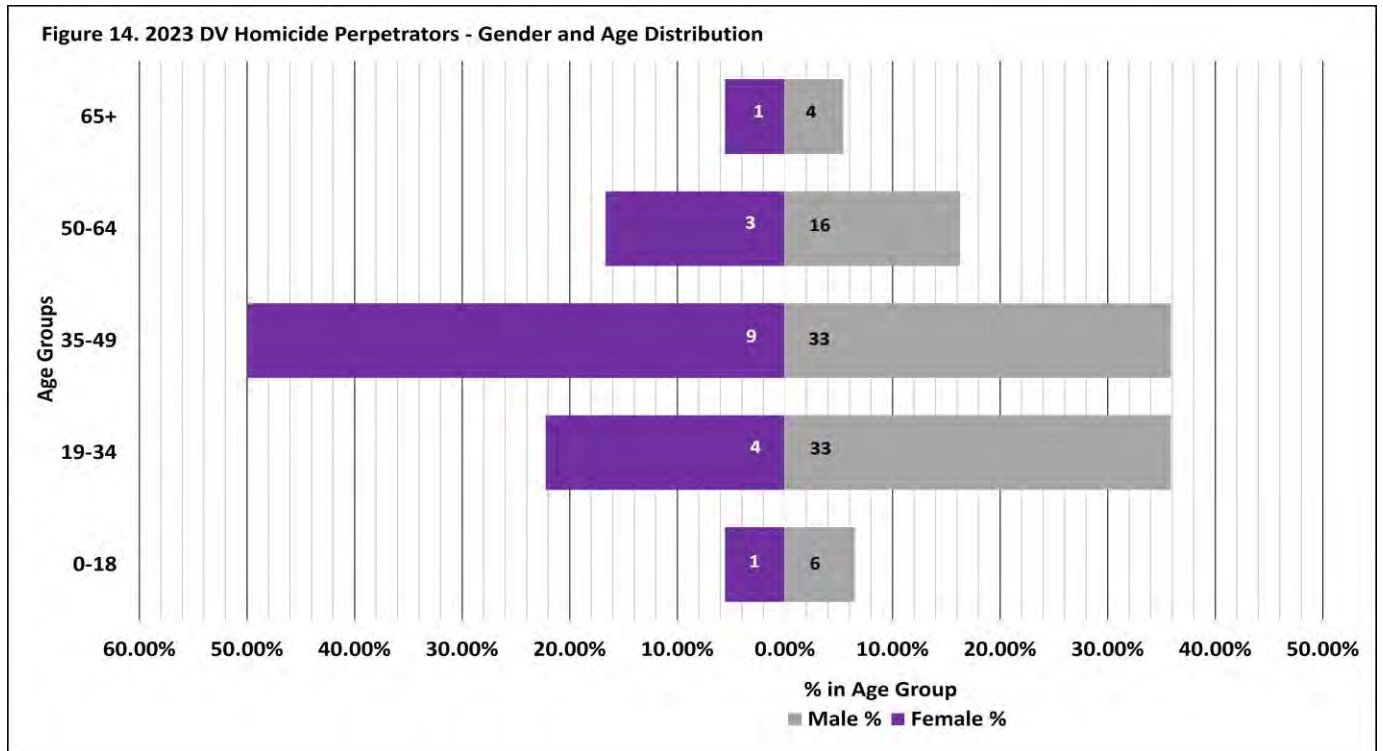
Program staff were able to determine the age of all 122 (100.0%) victims.⁷⁷ The 122 victim's ages ranged from three weeks old to 82 years old. The leading age group was 35 – 49 with a total of 38 (31.1%) victims belonging

⁷⁶ See *Appendix E: Data Methodology and Limitations* for a more detailed description about how the Review Board categorizes the different relationships between homicide perpetrators and victims.

⁷⁷ The age of the unborn victim was not calculated due to not having a date of birth to make the customary calculation.

to this age group. This was followed by the 24 (19.7%) victims 18 years old or younger. Age groups 19 – 34 and 50 – 64 were both tied at 23 (18.9%) victims falling within both age ranges. A total of 14 (11.5%) were 65 years or older. The average age of adult victims was 45.3 years old. Of the 21 juvenile victims,⁷⁸ six (28.6%) were under the age of five, three (14.3%) were less than a year old. The average age of all victims was 39.1 years old.

Staff was able to calculate the age for 110 (97.3%) out of 113 perpetrators. Those between the age of 35 and 49 years old (37.2%) represented the largest age group. This was followed by those between the age of 19 and 34 years old (32.7%). The youngest perpetrator was 12 years old, and the oldest was 73. The average age of all perpetrators was 39.0 years old, with the average age of adult perpetrators being 40.6 years. Seven (7) perpetrators (6.4%) were juveniles under 18 years old (*Figure 14*).



Note: Data collected by DVFRB staff and current as of January 2025. Totals may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during 2024 data collection process.

Race and Ethnicity

Program staff obtained racial and ethnicity information for 121 (99.2%) of 122 domestic violence homicide victims. Of the victims whose racial information was obtained, 81 (66.9%) were White/Caucasian, 20 (16.5%) were Black/African American, 18 (14.9%) were Native American, and two (1.7%) were identified as Multiracial (*Figure 15*). The two multiracial victims, however, were listed as solely White or both White and Native American in different source documentation. A total of 10 (8.3%) were identified as of Hispanic/Latino descent.

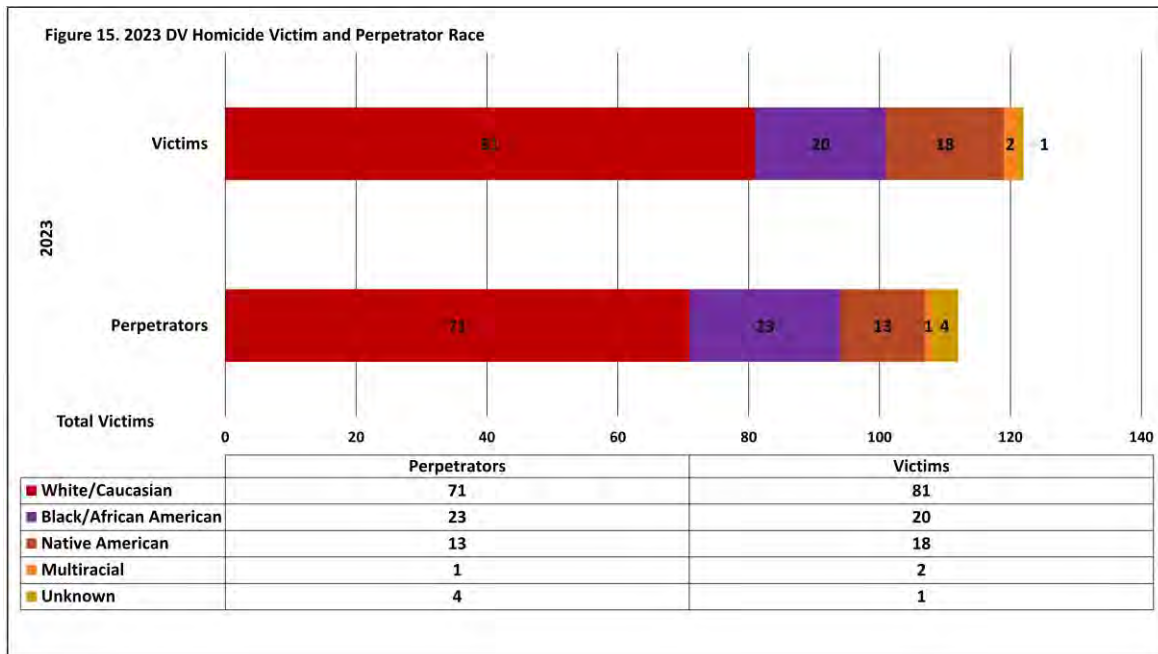
In 2023, the number of White/Caucasian and Native American victims increased by 25 and two, respectively, in comparison to 2022 figures (56 and 16). In contrast, the total of Multiracial victims decreased by three, but two of them were also identified as Native Americans. The number of Black/African American victims decreased by four when compared to the previous year (24). Meanwhile, the total number of Native American victims increased by four when counting Multiracial victims with Native American ancestry. No Asian victims were identified in 2023. The number of Hispanic/Latino descent increased by five.

It is important to note that the DVFRB has continued identifying higher number of Native American victims in recent years. The increase in the identification of Native American victims is likely due to two factors. First, the

⁷⁸ Juvenile is defined as an individual aged <18 years old at the time of the incident.

U.S. Supreme Court’s 2020 decision in *McGirt v. Oklahoma* required more thorough identification of Native American individuals involved in crimes. Second, Program Staff implemented a methodology whereby three sources are utilized to validate the race and ethnicity of victims and perpetrators.

Staff also obtained racial and ethnicity information for 109 (96.5%) of 113 domestic violence homicide perpetrators. Of the perpetrators whose racial information was obtained, 71 (65.1%) were White/Caucasian, 23 (21.1%) were Black/African American, and 15 (13.8%) were Native American (*Figure 15*). No Asian or Multiracial perpetrators were identified in 2023. A total of six (5.5%) were identified as of Hispanic/Latino descent. In 2023, the number of White/Caucasian and Native American perpetrators increased by 17 and 2 respectively. In contrast, the total of Black/African American perpetrators decreased by nine. The number of perpetrators identified as of Hispanic/Latino descent increased by two.



Note: Data collected by DVFRB staff and current as of January 2025. Totals may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during 2024 data collection process.

Relationship Types

The Review Board collects and compiles data according to the type of relationship that existed between the victim(s) and the perpetrator(s) (*Table 6* and *Figure 16*). Historically, Program Staff have compiled this statistic utilizing a one-to-one relationship between perpetrators and homicide victims so that the number of relationships matches the number of victims. In recent years, Program Staff have identified several cases where there are two perpetrators with different domestic relationships associated with one victim (two-to-one relationship). Naturally, this means that the number of relationships can outnumber the total number of victims. As a result, contrary to previous years, the totals below will outnumber the total of victims.

Table 6. Perpetrator Relationship to 2023 Homicide Victims

Relationship Type	2023	%
Intimate Partner	51	40.2
Family	57	44.9
Triangle	10	7.9
Roommate	6	4.7
Bystander/Good Samaritan	3	2.4
Total	127	100.0

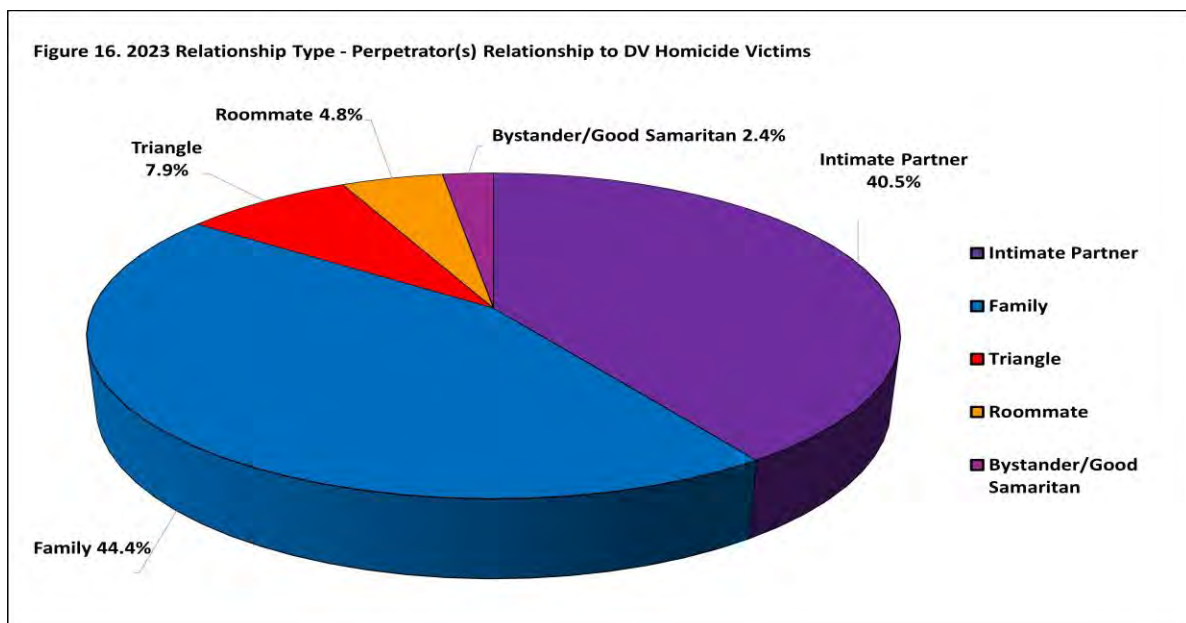
Note: Data collected by DVFRB staff and current as of January 2025. Totals may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during 2024 data collection process.

In 2023, 127 different relationship types were identified to exist between perpetrators and homicide victims. This includes fathers, stepfathers, mothers, mothers’ boyfriends, sons, stepsons, grandparents, grandsons, brothers, and other relatives. The leading perpetrator relationship was the Family category at 57 (44.9%). A total of 51 perpetrators were identified as current or former intimate partners of victims, including current or former spouses and current or former dating partners, which represents a 18.6% increase when compared to the 2022 total of 43. The number familial relationships between perpetrators and victims increased from 45 in 2022 to 57 in 2023, continuing the increasing trend in family killings over the last five years. While the state averaged 39 victims killed by family members during 2014-2018, the average between 2019-2023 was 53. The average in the last five years is 36.0% higher than during 2014-2018 (see Figure 16).

Triangle relationships, one in which the former spouse or intimate partner kills the current spouse or intimate partner of their former or current spouse or intimate partner (or vice versa), were identified 10 times. Six victims were killed by a roommate, two more than in 2022.

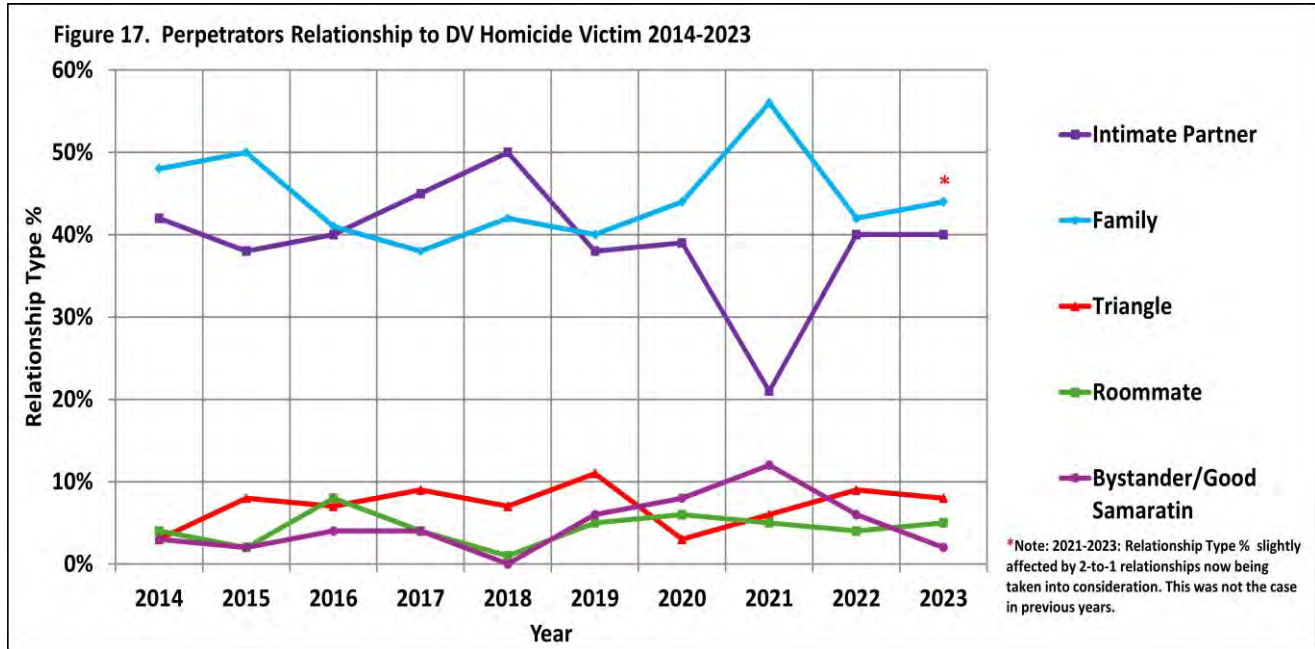
It must be noted there is often significant overlap between relationship categories in the sense that one type of killing can occur within the context of another. For example, there are situations where children are killed by their father just before or after he killed their mother. As a result, while the female’s murder would be considered an intimate partner homicide, the child killing(s) would be categorized as a family homicide. The same would happen if other individuals died in triangle situations or when bystanders are caught in the crossfire of these types of incidents. Notably, there are situations that would be categorized as family homicides even though one family member might have been defending another in an intimate partner violence situation (such as when a child kills their father or stepfather in defense of his/her mother). In others, a father might retaliate against a current or former intimate partner for separating by killing the children they share before committing suicide. This would be categorized solely as family homicides even though there is explicit evidence linking their motive to intimate partner violence.

As a result, to obtain a better picture of the overlap between categories, DVFRB staff researched whether intimate partner violence played a role in the immediate leadup to all homicides. In cases where this was possible to determine, DVFRB research found 73 (60.3%) out of 121 victims were killed in the context of intimate partner violence across all relationship categories. This includes 50 IPH victims, 12 family killings in the context of IPV or situations where an IPV altercation led household members to kill others (such as when a child or siblings kill their mother’s/sister’s abuser, eight triangle killings, and three bystander deaths. These victims died because of situations driven by intimate partner violence.



Note: Data collected by DVFRB staff and current as of January 2025. Totals may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during 2024 data collection process.

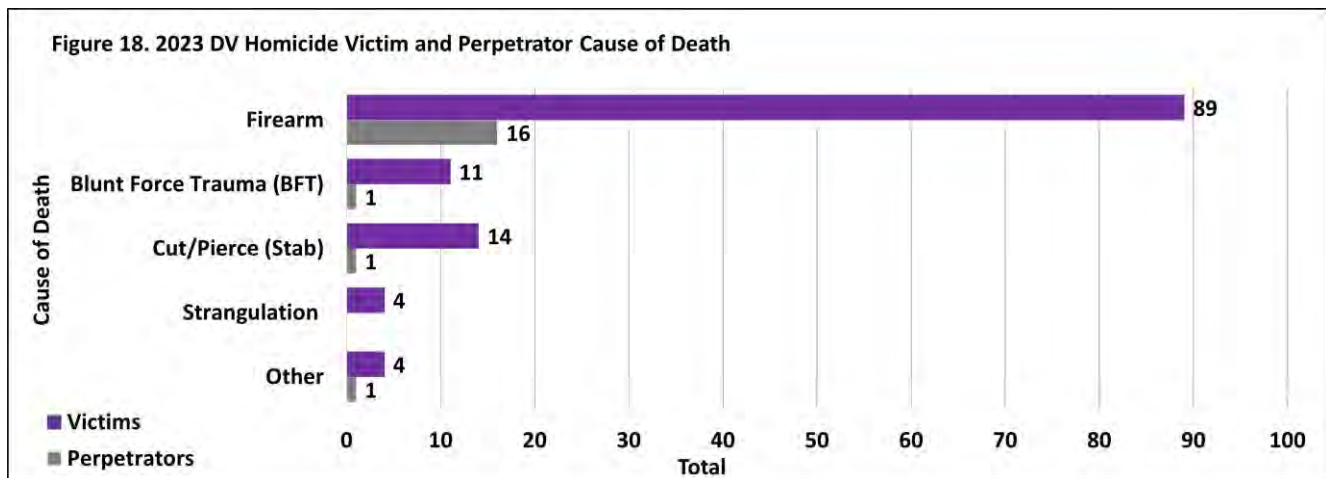
From 2014-2023, family and intimate partner homicides made up the largest categories of domestic violence-related homicides each year, though which one is the largest category varies from year to year (Figure 17).



Note: Data collected by DVFRB staff and current as of January 2025. Totals may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during 2024 data collection process.

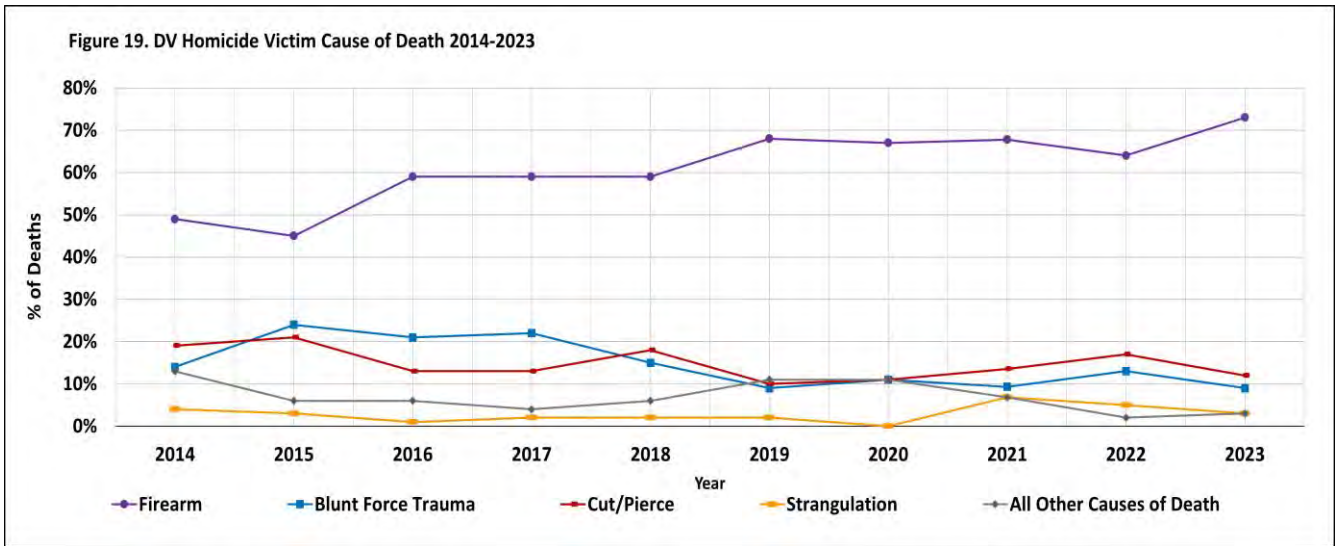
Cause of Death

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner of Oklahoma (OCME) investigates sudden, violent, unexpected, and suspicious deaths and conducts medico-legal investigations related to the death. The Review Board draws from data obtained from the OCME that includes a determination as to the cause and manner of death of individuals who die in domestic violence related incidents. Program staff were able to determine the cause of death for all 122 homicide victims and all 19 perpetrators who died in murder-suicides (see Figure 18).



Note: Data collected by DVFRB staff and current as of January 2025. Totals may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during 2024 data collection process.

Firearms have consistently remained the most prevalent cause of death in domestic violence homicide cases since the DVFRB began tracking cases in 1998. In 2023, firearms were the identified cause of death in 74.5% of all domestic violence-related fatalities for both victims and perpetrators who committed suicide. From 2014-2023, firearms were the cause of death in an average of 61.0% of domestic violence homicide victim deaths (Figure 19). About 68.0% of all victims have been killed with firearm in the last five years (2019-2023) alone.



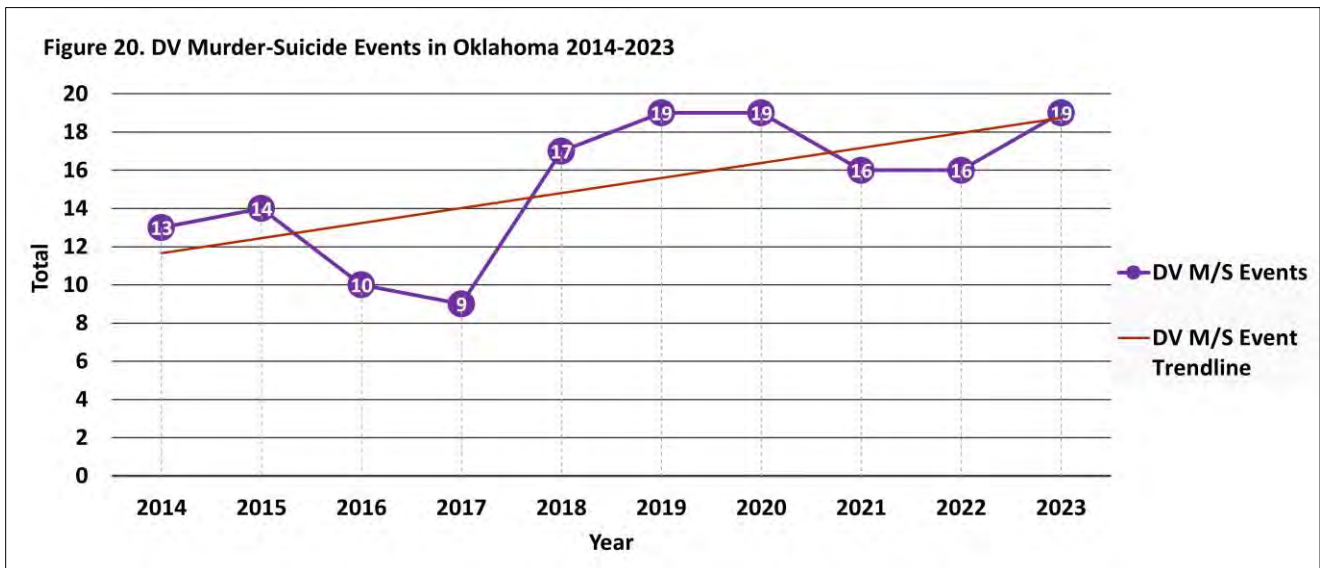
Note: Data collected by DVFRB staff and current as of January 2025. Totals may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during 2024 data collection process.

Murder-Suicide

An event is defined as a murder-suicide⁷⁹ (M/S) when someone murders an individual and then kills himself or herself, usually within 72 hours following the homicide, or is killed in a confrontation with law enforcement or by bystander/good Samaritan intervention in the aftermath of killing of victim.

In 2023, the Review Board identified 19 M/S cases resulting in the death of 30 victims. The total number of cases increased by three (+18.8%) when compared to the previous two years (16) and tied the decade peak of 19 seen consecutively in 2019-2020 (*see Figure 20*).

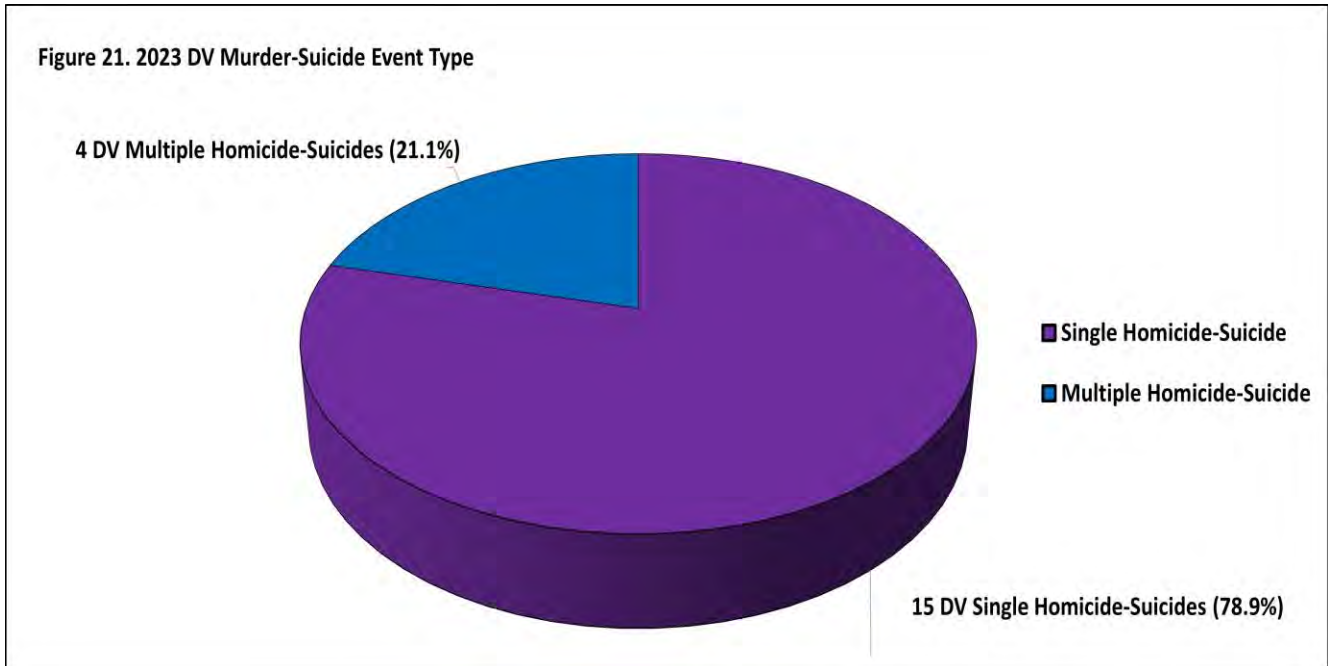
Notably, the total number of children killed in M/S events stayed at 12 for the second consecutive year. This is seven more than the 2021 total and continues to be the highest number since 2019 when there were eight child M/S victims. It continues to be the highest number recorded between 2014-2023.



Note: Data collected by DVFRB staff and current as of January 2025. Totals may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during 2024 data collection process.

⁷⁹ Murder-suicide and homicide-suicide are often used interchangeably in research literature.

Of the 19 M/S cases identified, 15 (78.9%) were classified as *single M/S* events, in which there was one homicide victim and one homicide perpetrator who completed suicide or was killed due to law enforcement or bystander intervention. This total increased by 3 in comparison to the previous year. In contrast, four of the 19 homicide-suicide cases (21.1%) were *multiple homicide-suicide* events, in which the perpetrator killed more than one victim before dying by suicide or by being killed by law enforcement or bystander intervention. Due to the nature of multiple homicide-suicide events, there are typically more homicide victims than there are events and/or perpetrators (Figure 21).

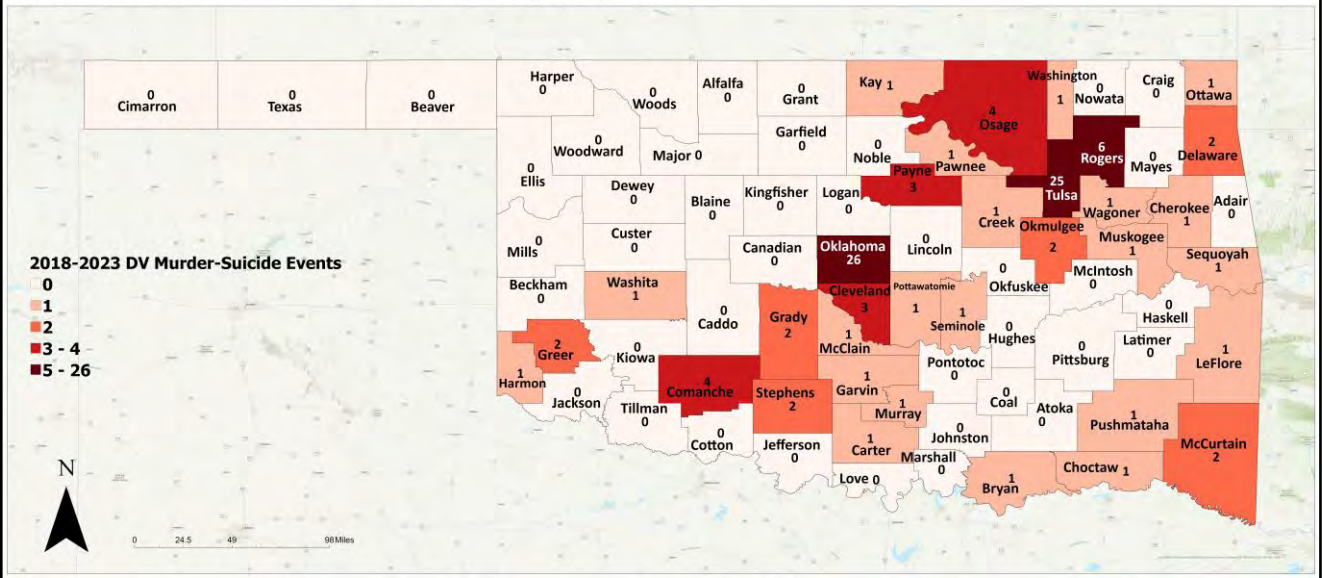


Note: Data collected by DVFRB staff and current as of January 2025. Totals may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during 2024 data collection process.

Overall, DVFRB research has found that the annual number of domestic violence related murder-suicides have increased in recent years. The data shows that after 18 M/S cases were identified in 2012 there was a decline and the state averaged about 11 every year from 2013 – 2017. Since then, Oklahoma has averaged about 17 murder-suicides annually during 2018 – 2023. A total of 104 M/S cases have been identified by the DVFRB during that period.

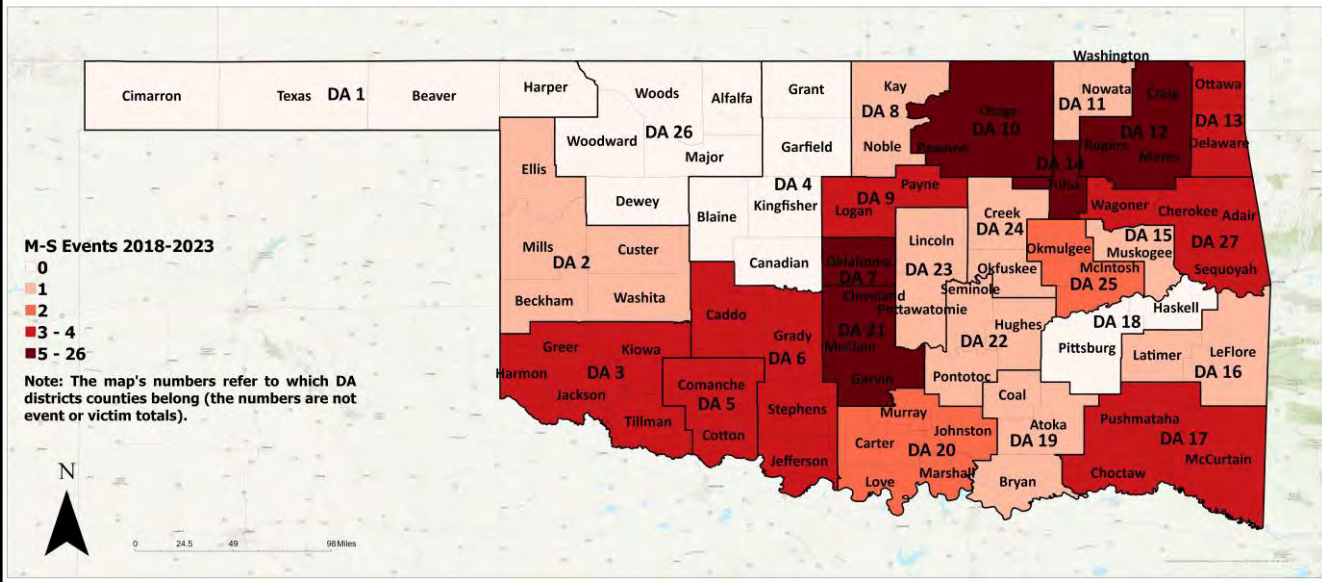
A geographical analysis reveals a total of 34 (44.2%) counties in Oklahoma have had at least one domestic violence-related murder-suicide between 2018-2023. Oklahoma County leads the state in the total number of events (26) identified during that period. Tulsa County is second with a total of 25 events identified during the same period. Both counties have averaged about 4 M/S events during that time. (Map 7 and 8).

Map 7. DVFRB - Domestic Violence Murder-Suicide Events by County 2018-2023



Note: Data collected by DVFRB staff and current as of January 2025. Totals may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during 2024 data collection process.

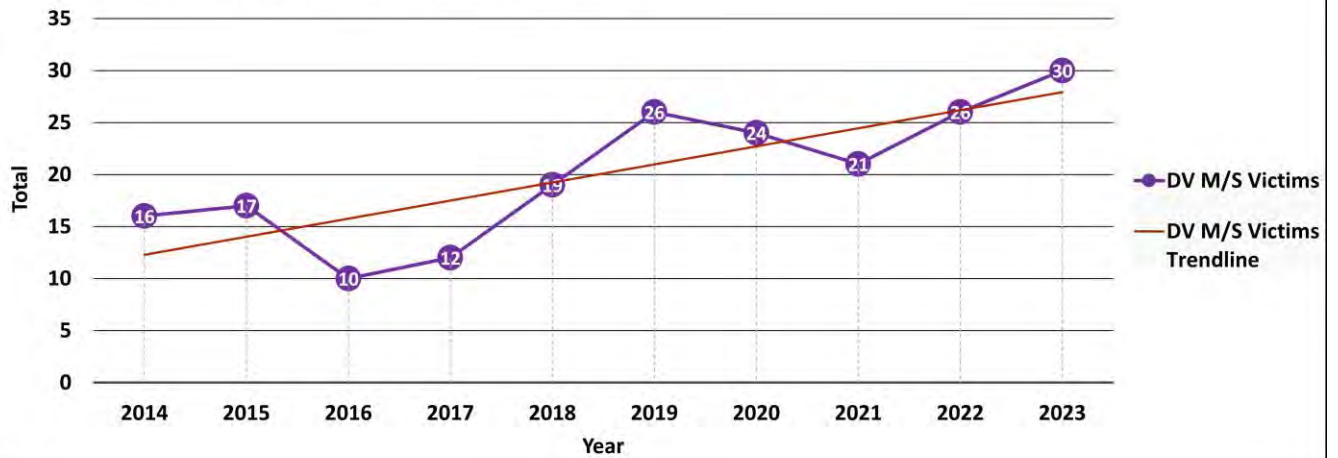
Map 8. DVFRB - Domestic Violence Murder-Suicide Events by DA District 2018-2023



Note: Data collected by DVFRB staff and current as of January 2025. Totals may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during 2024 data collection process. Map data table can be found in Appendix A – Table 25. DVFRB – Domestic Violence Murder-Suicide Events by DA District 2018-2023.

The total number of victims in 2023 (30) increased by four compared to 2022. This is the highest recorded number of M/S victims in DVFRB history and continues an alarming trending starting in 2018 when there was a steep increase in the number of M/S victims. The state average since then has been about 24 victims killed every year in M/S cases (2018-2023). This is concerning considering the annual average between 2012-2017 was 14. This means the number of annual M/S victims has increased by 71.4% when comparing the averages for the years 2012-2017 and 2018-2023. A total of 146 M/S victims have been identified from 2018-2023 (Figure 22).

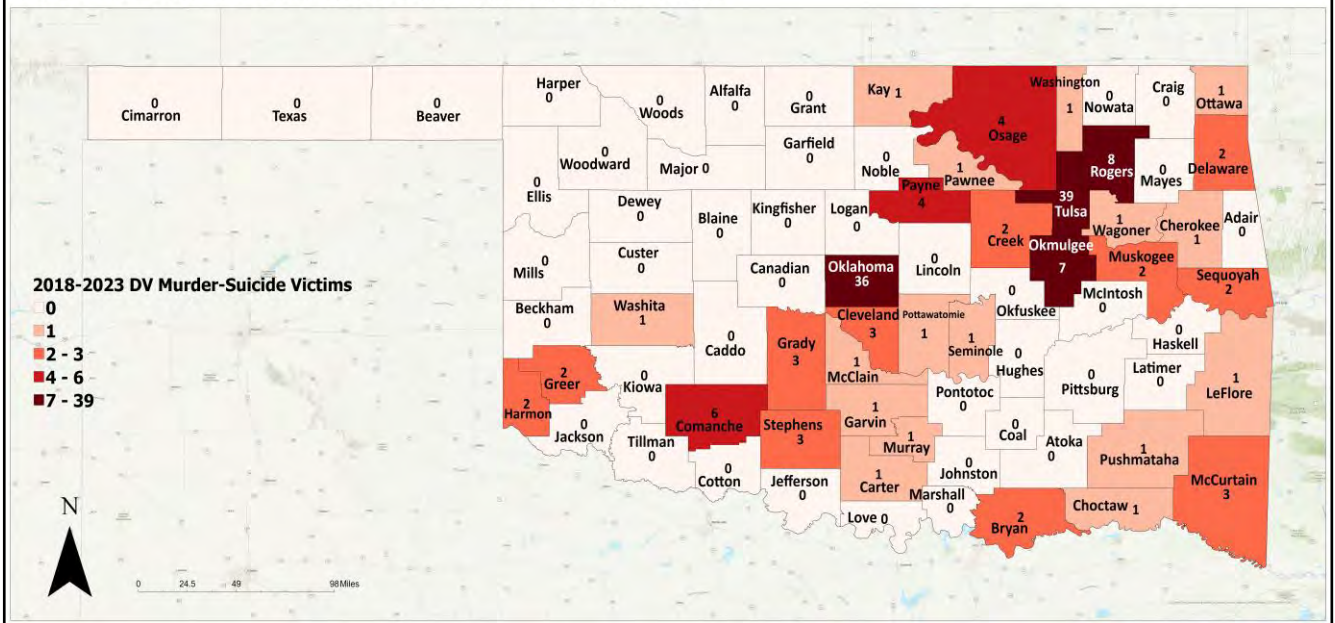
Figure 22. DV Murder-Suicide Victims in Oklahoma 2014-2023



Note: Data collected by DVFRB staff and current as of January 2025. Totals may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during 2024 data collection process.

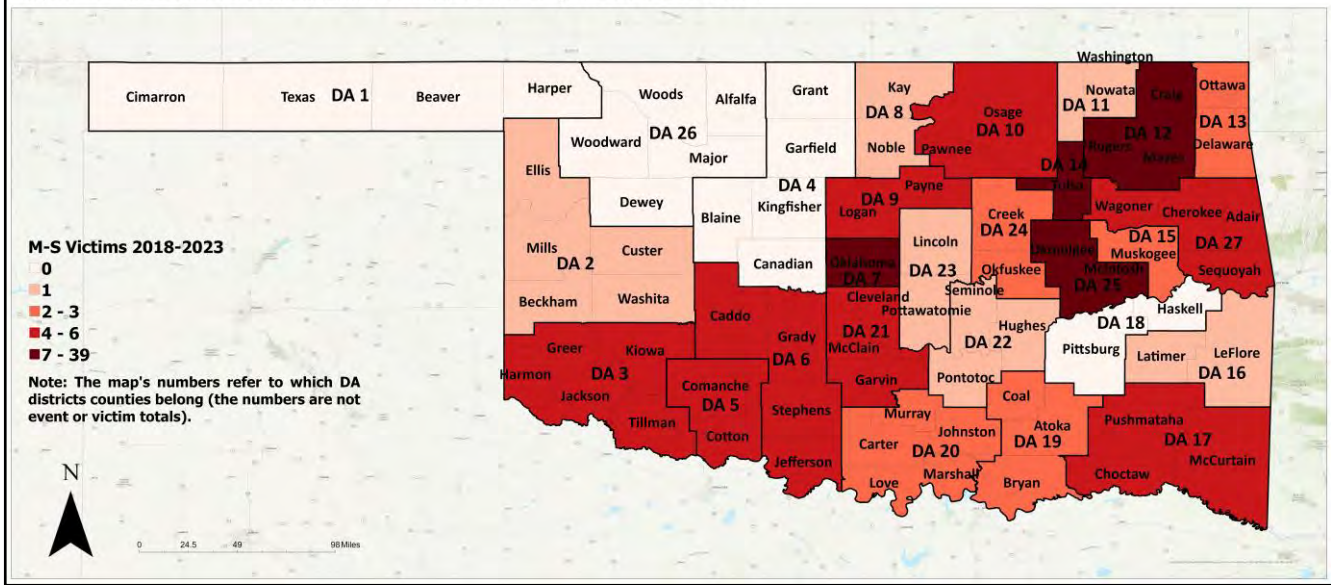
Tulsa County leads the state in the number of victims (39) killed in domestic violence related murder-suicide events during 2018 - 2023. Notably, only one M/S victim was identified in Tulsa County in 2023 compared to 12 the previous year. Oklahoma County is second with a total of 36 victims killed during the same period. A total of 8 victims were killed in M/S cases in the county in 2023, an increase of two from the previous year.

Map 9. DVFRB - Domestic Violence Murder-Suicide Victims by County 2018-2023



Note: Data collected by DVFRB staff and current as of January 2025. Totals may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during 2024 data collection process.

Map 10. DVFRB - Domestic Violence Murder-Suicide Victims by DA District 2018-2023



Note: Data collected by DVFRB staff and current as of January 2025. Totals may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during 2024 data collection process. Map data table can be found in Appendix A – Table 26. DVFRB – Domestic Violence Murder-Suicide Victims by DA District 2018-2023.

National research finds that M/S cases most often involve intimate partners; usually a man killing his current or former intimate partner and then himself.⁸⁰ In 2023, the Review Board found that 16 (84.3%) of the 30 M/S cases happened in the context of an intimate partner homicide. Thirteen (68.4%) were of them were single M/S events and three (15.8%) were multiple M/S events involving the killing of an intimate partner and several other family members or bystanders. Of the 30 victims who died in M/S events, 16 (53.3%) were killed by their current or former intimate partner. An additional nine victims were killed in the context of perpetrators killing their intimate partners. This includes other family members, such as the couple’s children, or innocent bystanders. This means intimate partner violence (IPV) was the driving force behind the death of 24 (80.0%) of all M/S victims. Only one (6.3%) female was identified as one of the 16 perpetrators of an intimate partner M/S. The remaining 15 (93.7%) were men. (Table 7 and Figure 23).

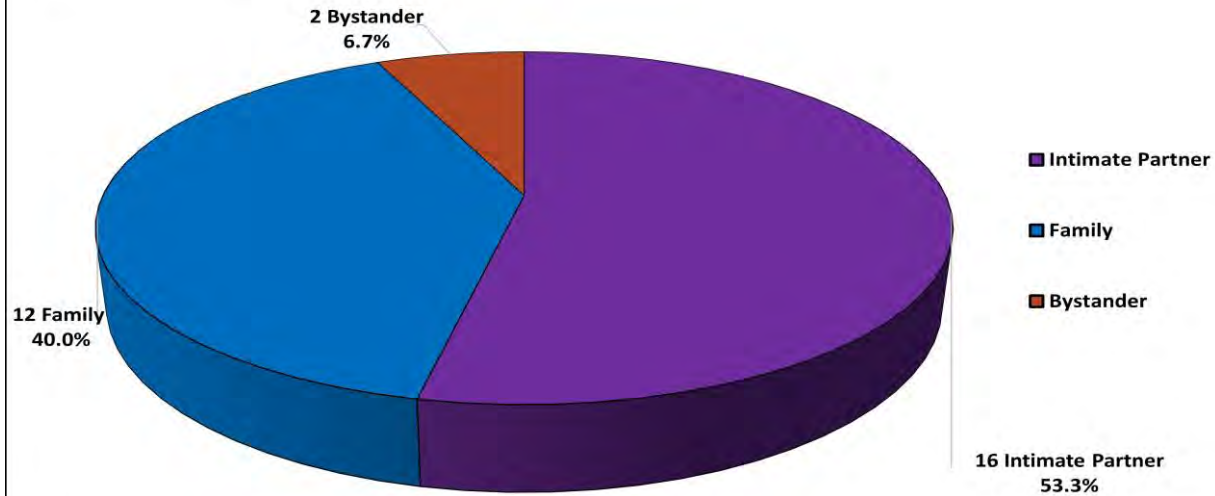
Table 7. Perpetrator Relationship to 2023 Homicide Victims

Relationship Type	2023	%
Intimate Partner	16	53.3
Family	12	40.0
Bystander/Good Samaritan	2	6.7
Triangle	0	0.0
Roommate	0	0.0
Total	30	100.0

Note: Data collected by DVFRB staff and current as of January 2025. Totals may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during 2024 data collection process.

⁸⁰ Marzuk, P. M., Tardiff, K., & Hirsch, C. S. (1992, June 17). The epidemiology of murder-suicide. *JAMA*, 267(23), 3179–83.

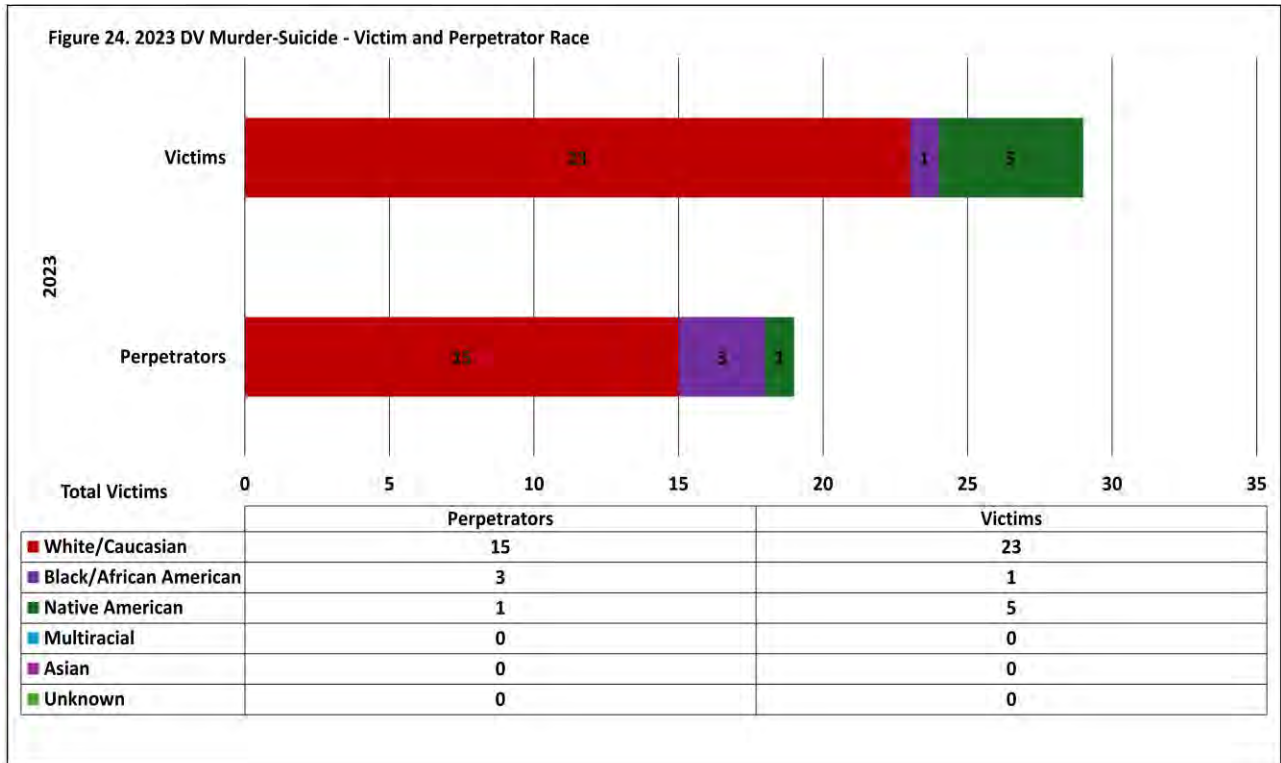
Figure 23. 2023 Perpetrator Relationship to Homicide-Suicide Victims



Note: Data collected by DVFRB staff and current as of January 2025. Totals may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during 2024 data collection process.

Most victims and perpetrators of domestic violence M/S were White/Caucasian; 23 (76.7%) victims and 15 (78.9%) perpetrators were White. Of the remaining victims, five (16.7%) were Native American and one (3.3%) was Black/African American. Staff were unable to identify the race of one (3.3%) victim. A total of 4 victims were identified as being of Latino/Hispanic ethnicity. Among the remaining perpetrators, three (15.8%) were Black/African American and one (5.3%) was Native American. Only one (7.1%) perpetrator was identified to be of Hispanic/Latino descent (*Figure 24*).

Figure 24. 2023 DV Murder-Suicide - Victim and Perpetrator Race

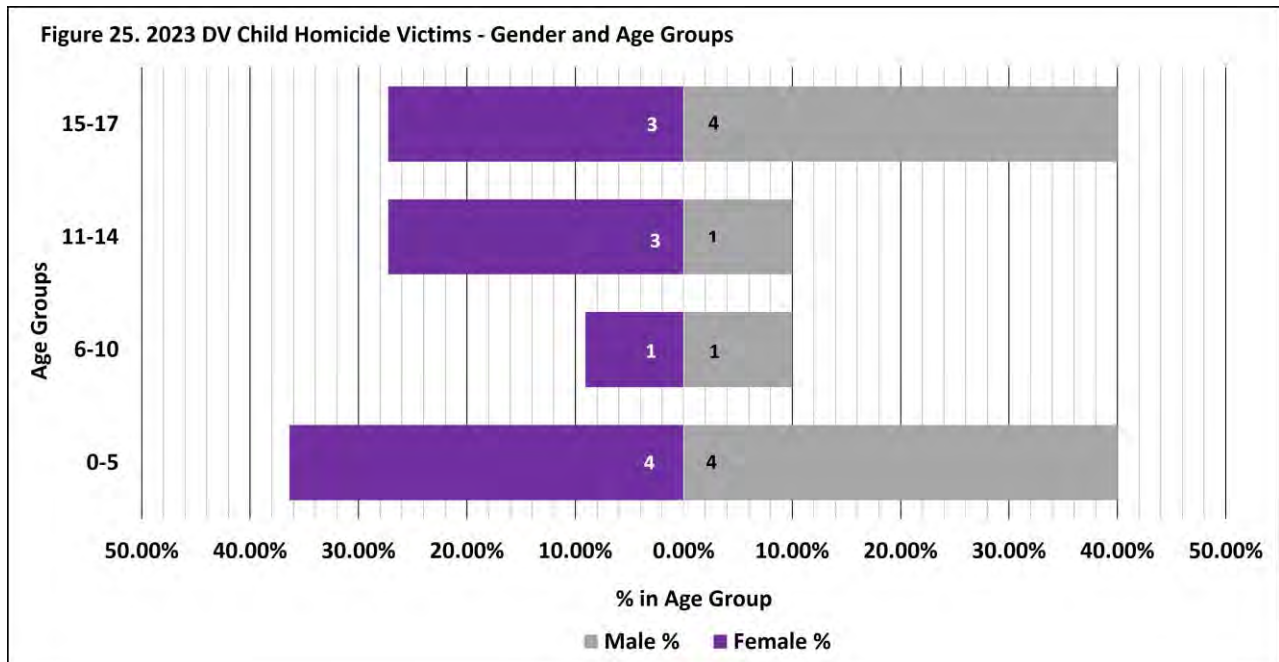


Note: Data collected by DVFRB staff and current as of January 2025. Totals may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during 2024 data collection process.

A total of 27 (90.0%) M/S victims in Oklahoma during 2023 were killed with a firearm. This finding aligns closely with previous national research, which posits that a majority of murder-suicides are committed with firearms.⁸¹ All murder-suicide perpetrators except one died as a result of a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

Domestic Violence Fatalities and Children

The Review Board focuses on child homicides and does not review cases of children who die due to negligence. The Oklahoma Child Death Review Board reviews child death cases resulting from neglect. Child homicides include, but are not limited to, deaths in which children are killed by parents, stepparents, foster parents, grandparents, siblings, uncles, aunts, or cousins. In 2023, the Review Board identified 13 domestic violence-related incidents in which 21 children were killed. Of the 21 children, ten were male (47.6%) and eleven were female (52.4%) (Figure 25 and Table 8).



Note: Data collected by DVFRB staff and current as of January 2025. Totals may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during 2024 data collection process.

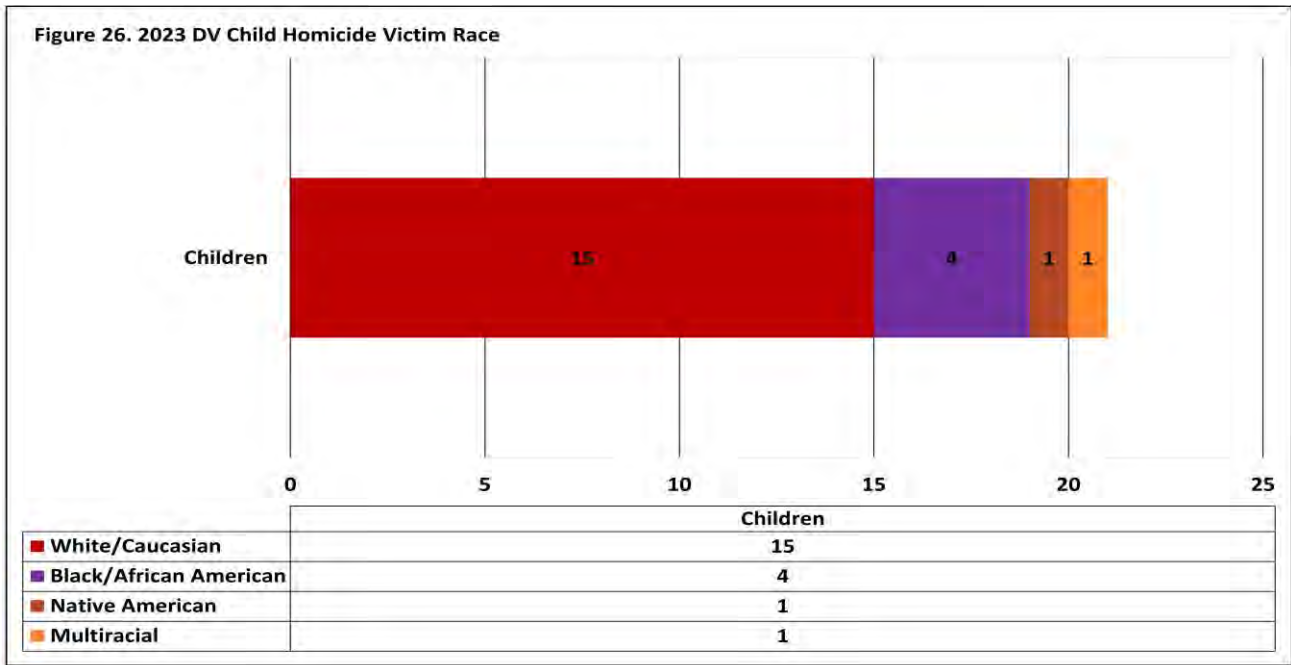
Table 8. 2023 Child DV Victims by Gender and Age

Gender	Count	%
Female	11	52.4
Male	10	47.6
Total	21	100.0
Age Group (in years)	Count	%
0-5	6	28.7
6-10	4	19.0
11-14	4	19.0
15-17	7	33.3
Total	21	100.00

Note: Data collected by DVFRB staff and current as of January 2025. Totals may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during 2024 data collection process.

⁸¹ Logan, J., et al. (2008). Characteristics of perpetrators in homicide-followed-by-suicide incidents: National Violent Death Reporting System—17 US States, 2003-2005. *American Journal of Epidemiology*, 168(9), 1056–64. <https://doi.org/10.1093/aje/kwn213>

Program staff were able to obtain racial and ethnicity information for all child victims. Of the children, 15 (71.4%) were White/Caucasian, four (19.0%) were Black/African American, one (4.8%) was Native American, and one (4.8%) was Multiracial (Figure 26).



Note: Data collected by DVFRB staff and current as of January 2025. Totals may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during 2024 data collection process.

In some cases, children were killed by perpetrators in the context of an adult intimate partner homicide (IPH) or an attempted IPH. There were four IPH events in 2023 where a child was also killed. In one of these cases, a minor in a relationship with another minor shot and killed the victim. The other three IPH events were all murder-suicides with multiple victims. Intimate partner violence was a driving force in the death of 11 children in 2023.

Notably, a total of 11 children were killed in murder-suicides. This ties the highest number of children killed in murder-suicide events for the years 2012-2023. This is the same number as in 2022 and is the highest number since 2019 when there were eight child murder-suicide victims.

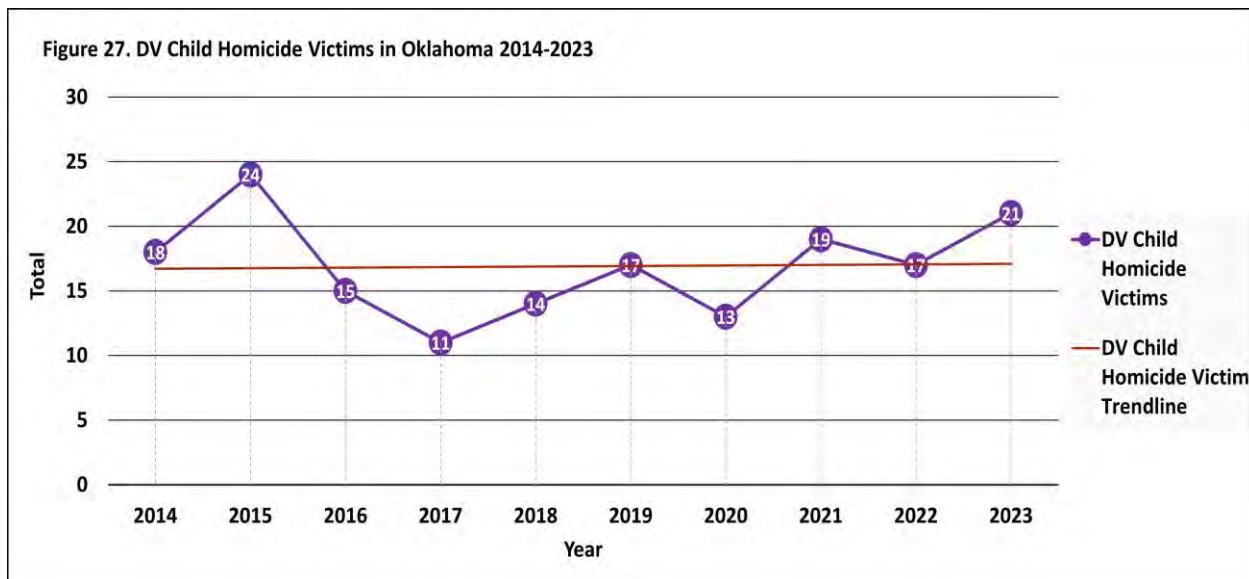


Table 9. Perpetrator Relationship to 2023 Homicide Victims

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
# Of Child Homicide Victims	18	24	15	11	14	17	13	19	17	21
# Of Victims ≤ 5 years old	14	16	12	10	9	10	9	14	11	8
Age of Youngest Child	< 1 day	2 months	< 1 month	< 1 month	3 months	2 months	2 months	2 months	2 months	1 month
Age of Oldest Child	17	15	17	6	17	17	17	17	13	17

Note: Data collected by DVFRB staff and current as of January 2025. Totals may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during 2024 data collection process.

Children aged five years and younger consistently represent the largest age group of children killed in domestic violence-related incidents in Oklahoma (Table 7). In 2023, 8 of the children killed were age five years or younger (64.7%), which was three less than in 2022. There was no incident of an unborn child dying in a domestic violence related incident, ending a trend of at least one pregnant woman killed because of domestic violence from 2020-2022.

In the period 2014-2023, there were 169 child victims and 66.9% of the children killed were age five years or younger. In 2023, the average age of children five years or younger (excluding unborn child) was 2.4 years old. The average age for children between the ages of six and ten was a little under 14.2 years old.

Table 10. 2023 Child DV Victims by Relationship to Perpetrator(s)

Relationship Type	Count	%
Father	5	22.7
Stepfather	3	13.6
Boyfriend of Mother	3	13.6
Mother	4	22.7
Other Relative	3	13.6
Other Non-Relative	3	13.6
Total	22	100.0

Note: Data collected by DVFRB staff and current as of January 2025. Totals may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during 2024 data collection process.

As with other domestic violence-related fatalities, there may be more than one perpetrator in a child's death, or more than one child may be killed by the same perpetrator. This can lead to the number of victims and perpetrators not being identical. In 2023, 13 perpetrators were identified in child deaths. Nine (69.2%) of perpetrators were men and four (30.8%) were women.

In addition to being killed in domestic violence-related incidents, children also bear witness to such events. Staff were able to identify whether children were present in 104 (96.3%) of the 108 domestic violence fatalities identified in 2023. A total of 49 children were identified as having witnessed or been in direct proximity to 26 separate domestic violence fatalities when they occurred. This means children were present in 25.0% of the domestic violence-related events in 2023 where staff were able to determine the presence of minors (Figure 28). Witnessing acts of domestic violence, particularly an act as severe as homicide, can result in short-term reactions such as generalized anxiety, sleeplessness, aggression, difficulty concentrating, nightmares, high levels

of activity, and separation anxiety in children⁸². The long-term impact of witnessing domestic violence as a child includes being three times more likely than peers to engage in violent behavior⁸³ and being more likely to become the victim or perpetrator in their own future intimate partner relationships.⁸⁴

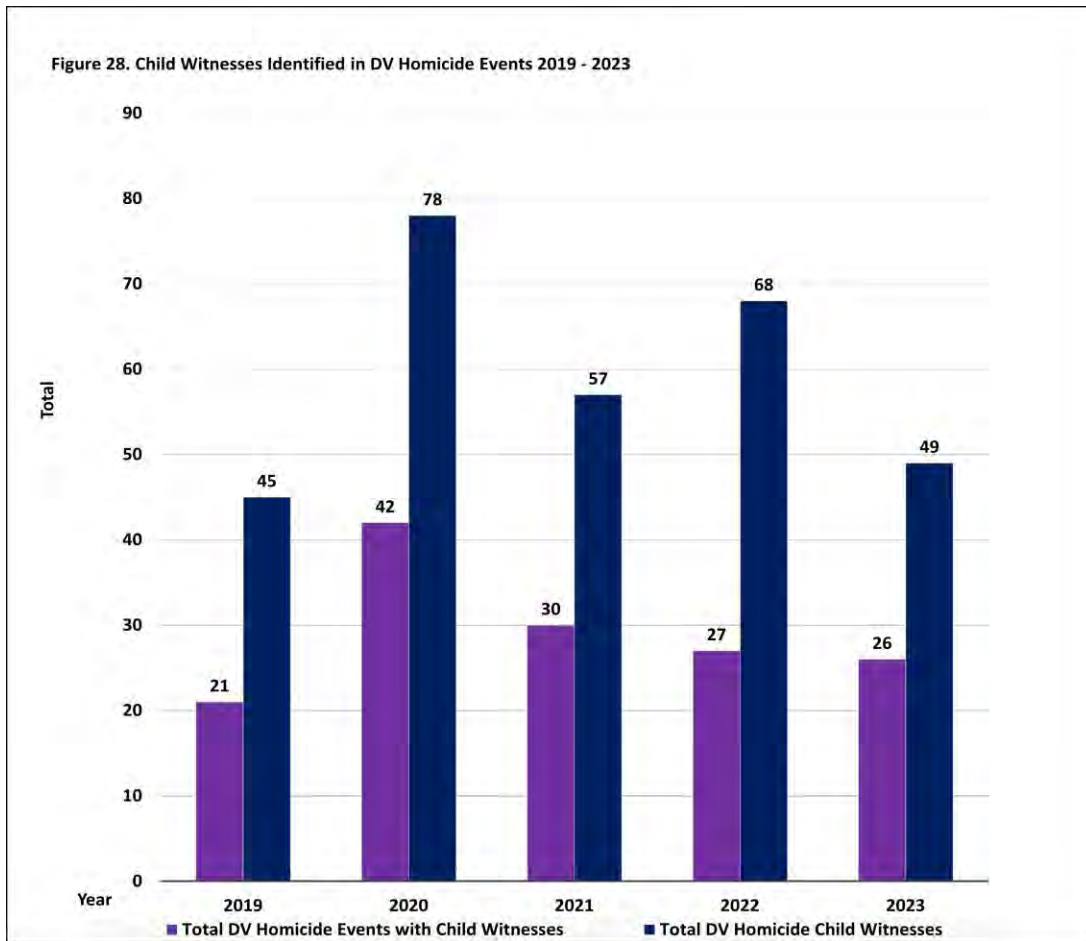


Table 9. Domestic Violence Homicide Child Witness Data 2019 - 2023

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total 2019 - 2023
DV Homicide Event with Child Witnesses	21	42	30	27	26	146
Child Witnesses	45	78	57	68	49	297

Note: Data collected by DVFRB staff and current as of January 2025. Totals may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during 2024 data collection process.

For the cases on which staff were able to collect data, statistics for the years 2019-2023 indicate that, on average children are on the scene in 28.7% of all homicide cases each calendar year. A total of 297 children were identified as being present at the scene. This equal an average of 59 children witnessing the violent death of a family member every year in Oklahoma. Notably, DVFRB research found that on average for the years 2021-2023, approximately 56.4% of the total number of children (174) witnessed homicide incidents that occurred in the context of intimate partner violence.

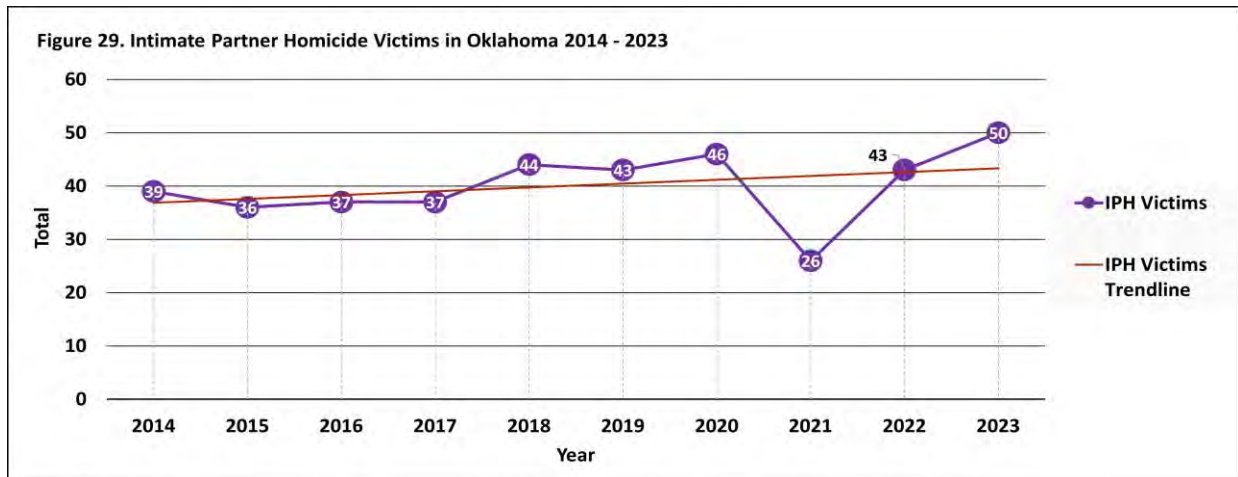
⁸² National Child Traumatic Stress Network. (n.d.). *Home*. National Child Traumatic Stress Network. Retrieved from <https://www.nctsn.org/>

⁸³ Fantuzzo, J. W., & Mohr, W. K. (1999). Prevalence and effects of child exposure to domestic violence. *The Future of Children*, 9(3), 21–32. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1602779>

⁸⁴ Stith, S. M., et al. (2000). The intergenerational transmission of spouse abuse: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62(3), 640–654. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2000.00640.x>

Intimate Partner Homicides

In the United States, women are more likely to be killed by an intimate partner than by any other group of people.⁸⁵ A study conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention analyzed data from 18 states (including Oklahoma) between 2003 and 2014 and found that domestic violence was involved in 55% of 10,018 female victim homicides. In the same study, adult female victims (≥ 18) were killed by current or former intimate partners in 93% of the cases.⁸⁶ The Review Board collects data related to intimate partner homicides (IPH) in Oklahoma. Intimate partners are current or former spouses and current or former dating partners, including same sex partners.



Note: Data collected by DVFRB staff and current as of January 2025. Totals may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during 2024 data collection process.

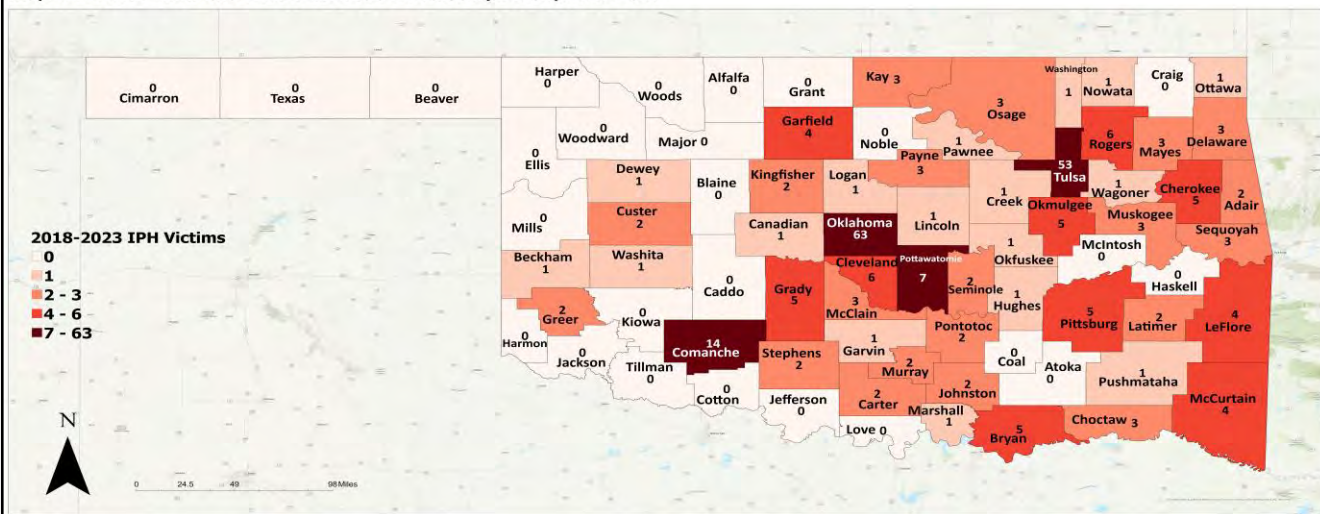
In Oklahoma, 50 (46.3%) of the 108 total domestic violence-related incidents in 2023 involved an IPH, with 50 victims, or 41.0% of the total number of victims, being killed by their current or former intimate partner (*Figure 29*). It must be noted that an additional victim was killed in a triangle homicide where a former intimate partner was charged as an accessory to the murder. As result, this victim was solely categorized as a triangle, but the perpetrator who was charged as an accessory was counted towards the IPH perpetrator demographics.

Notably, there were four IPH cases (8.0%) in which at least one victim was killed in addition to the intimate partner for an extra eleven deaths, resulting in a total of 61 victims (50.0%) killed in the context of an IPH. The 2023 IPH death total was the highest seen Oklahoma, with 50 direct deaths from IPH and 61 from intimate partner violence. From 2014 – 2023, Oklahoma consistently averaged about 40 IPH victims every year until a brief decline in 2021. The 2023 IPH total can be seen as the resumption of an otherwise consistent trend in the last 12 years, reaching an all-time high in 2023 (*Figure 29*).

⁸⁵ Petrosky, E., Blair, et al. (2017). Racial and ethnic differences in homicides of adult women and the role of intimate partner violence - United States, 2003-2014. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 66(28), 741–746. <https://doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6628a1>

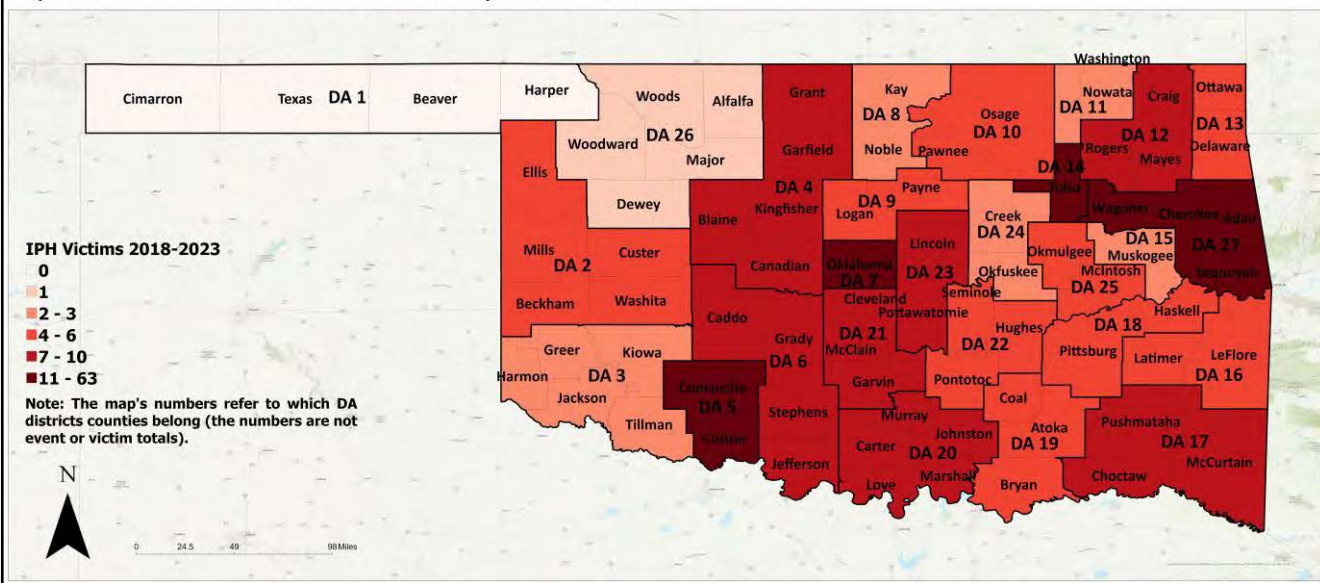
⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

Map 11. DVFRB - Intimate Partner Homicide Victims by County 2018-2023



Note: Data collected by DVFRB staff and current as of January 2025. Totals may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during 2024 data collection process.

Map 12. DVFRB - Intimate Partner Homicide Victims by DA District 2018-2023

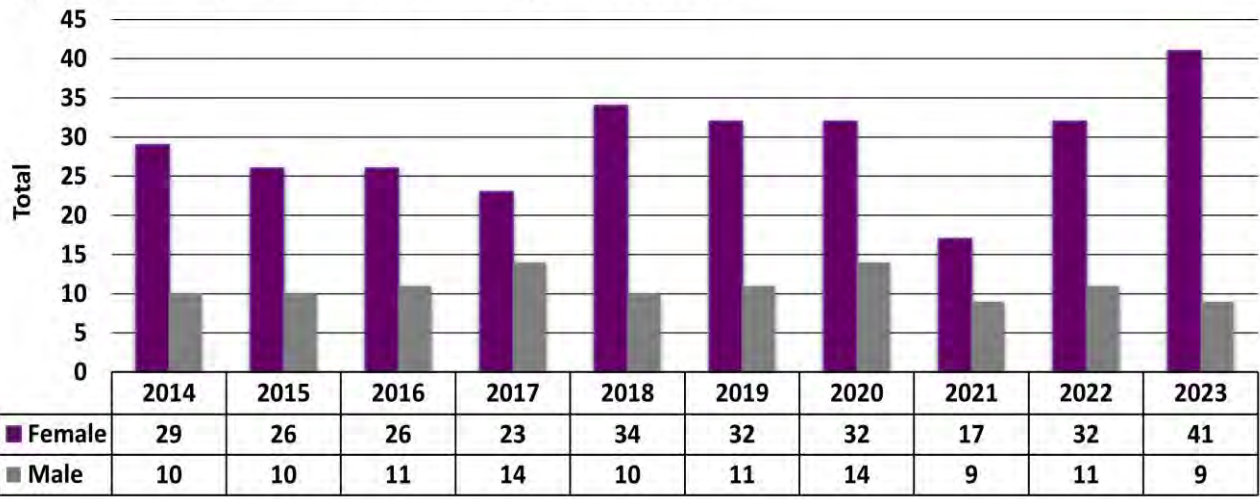


Note: Data collected by DVFRB staff and current as of January 2025. Totals may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during 2024 data collection process. Map data table can be found in Appendix A – Table 27. DVFRB – Intimate Partner Homicide Victims by DA District 2018-2023.

Gender

In 2023, consistent with previous years, women were more likely than men to be killed by an intimate partner. Of the 50 IPH victims, 41 were female (82.0%) and 9 were male (18.0%) (Figure 29). Of the 401 victims killed between 2014 and 2023 by a current or former intimate partner, 292 (72.8%) were female and 109 (27.2%) were male. On average, 29 women and 10 men were killed each year in Oklahoma by an intimate partner for the period from 2014-2023. Also consistent with previous years, more than two-thirds of IPH perpetrators in 2023 were male and men were three times more likely to be IPH perpetrators than women, with 72.8% of IPH committed by men (Figure 30).

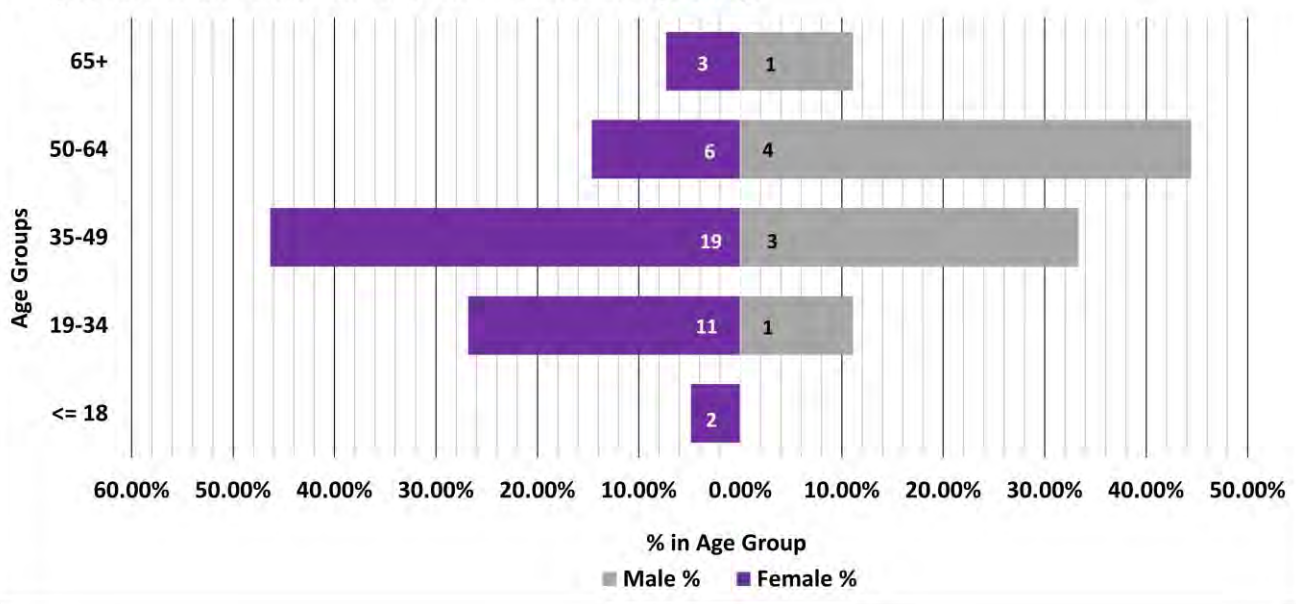
Figure 30. Intimate Partner Homicide Victims by Gender 2014-2023



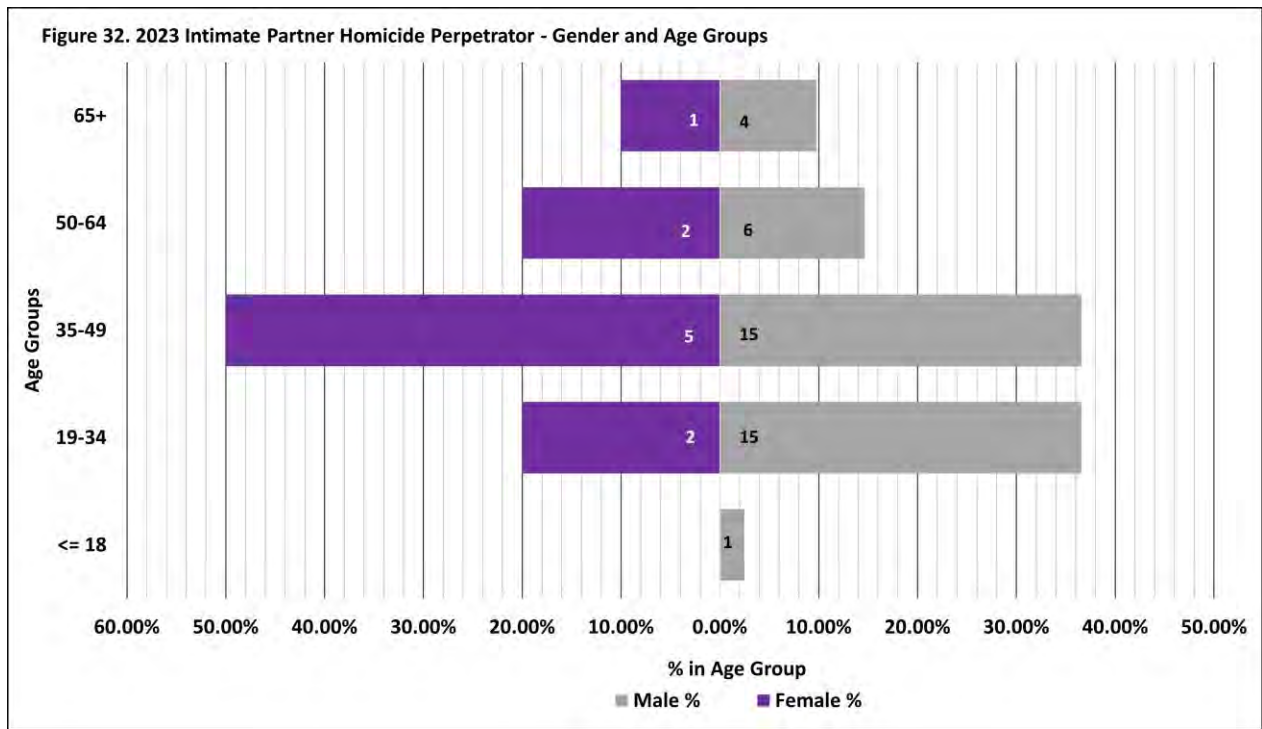
Age

The average age of the 50 intimate partner homicide (IPH) victims was 42 years old. The youngest IPH victim was 15 years old and the oldest was 70 years old. Most IPH victims were between the ages of 35-49 years (44.0%). 24% were between the ages of 19-34 and 20% between the ages of 50-64. Most female victims were between 35-49 years old (46.3%) and most male victims (44.4%) were between the ages of 50-64 years (Figure 31)

Figure 31. Intimate Partner Homicide Victim - Gender and Age Groups

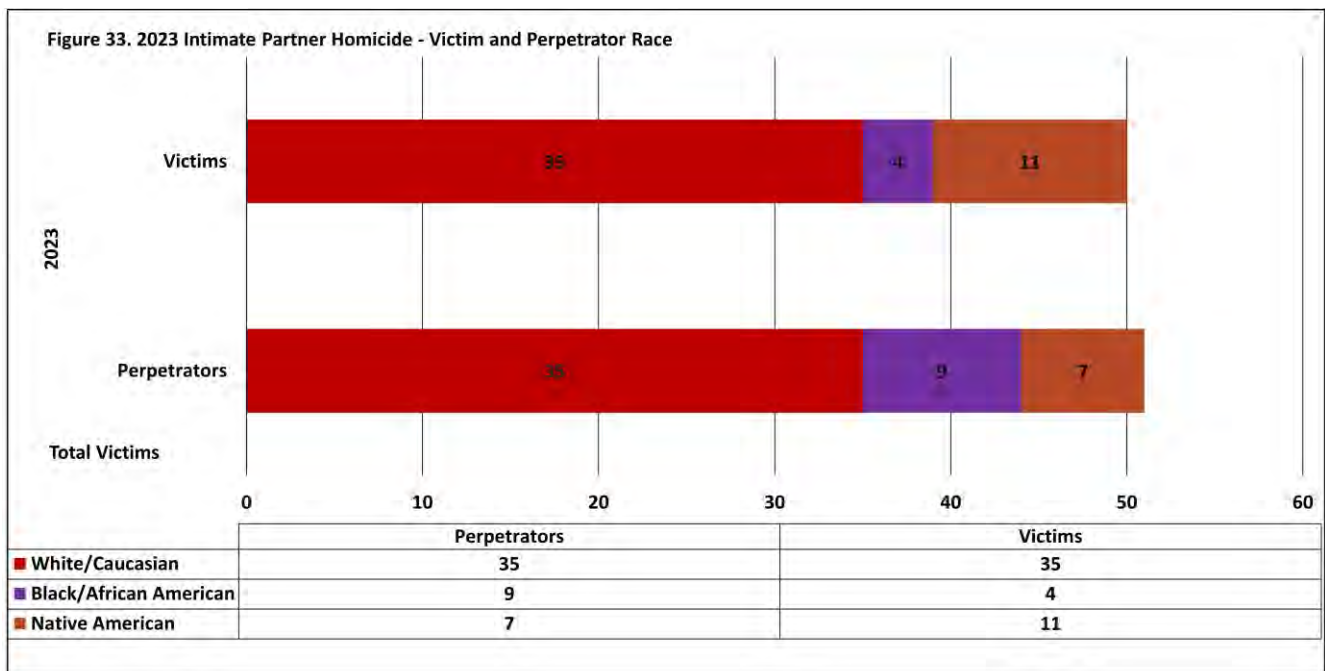


The average age of IPH perpetrators was 41 years old. The youngest IPH perpetrator was 15 years old, and the oldest was 73 years old. As with IPH victims, most IPH perpetrators (39.2%) were between 35-49 years old. Most female perpetrators (50.0%) were between the ages of 35-49 and most male perpetrators (36.6%) fell into the 19-34 age range and the 35-49 age range (Figure 32).



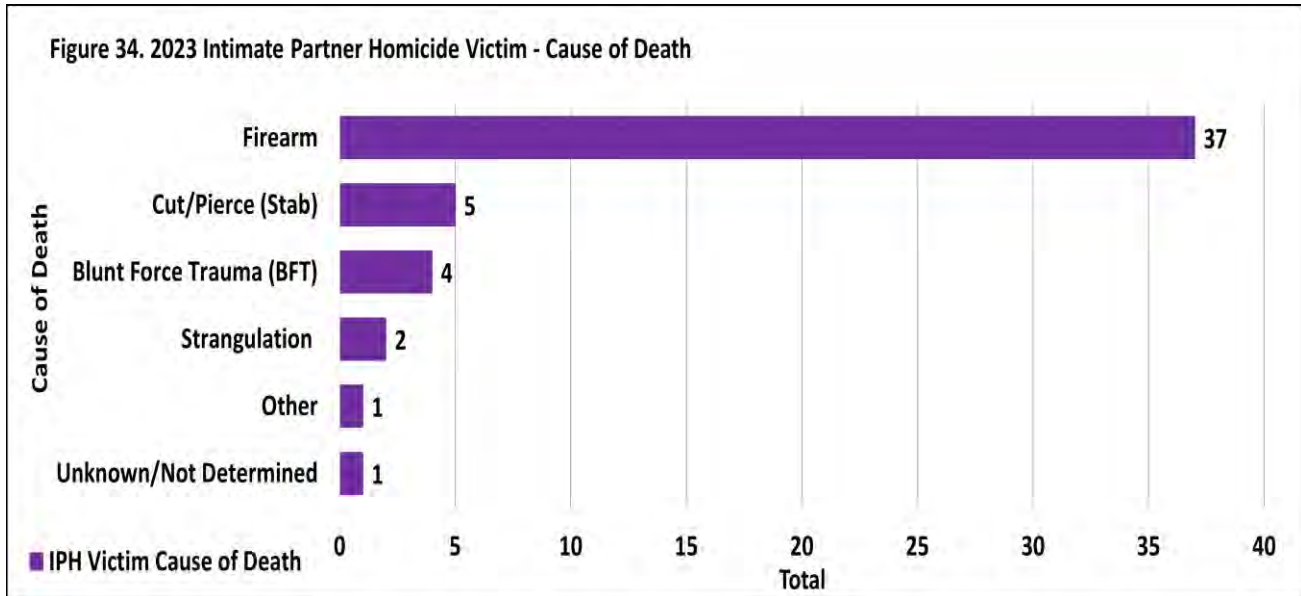
Race and Ethnicity

Of the 50 IPH victims, 35 (70.0%) were White/Caucasian, four (8.0%) were Black/African American, and 11 (22.0%) were Native American. Four victims (8.0%) were identified as having a Hispanic/Latino origin. White/Caucasian perpetrators represented the majority with 68.6%, followed by Black/African Americans with 17.6%, and Native Americans with 13.7%. Finally, three perpetrators (5.9%) were of Latino/Hispanic ethnicity (Figure 33).



Cause of Death

Aligned with national research,⁸⁷ Oklahoma’s data shows firearms to be the most used weapons in intimate partner homicides (IPH), typically surpassing the total of all other causes combined. In 2023, 24 IPH victims in Oklahoma (55.8%) were killed by firearms (*Figure 34*). This is an increase in total fatalities from 2022, when 24 of the 43 total IPH victims were killed by firearms (55.8%), and an increase in the proportion of homicides committed with firearms (an increase from 55.8% to 74.0%).



Of U.S. firearms, handguns are the most used weapon by males to murder females in single victim/offender murders.⁸⁸ In one study, females were more likely to be murdered by their intimate partners with firearms than by all other causes combined.⁸⁹ Other research analyzing risk factors for femicide in abusive relationships found that an abused woman is five times more likely to be killed by her abusive partner when her partner owns a firearm.⁹⁰ In addition, there appears to be a link between *non-fatal* intimate partner violence, firearm ownership, and a perpetrator’s likelihood of using the gun to threaten the partner.⁹¹ Perpetrators of intimate partner violence use guns as tools of intimidation and psychological control of the intimate partner, most often as means to threaten and instill fear.⁹²

Relationship Status

All statistics reported on behavior and activities present in the intimate partner relationship prior to death are underreported from actual occurrence, as the Review Board relies on police reports, various agency reports, case notes, documentation, and witness statements/interviews for this information. Therefore, capturing all the

⁸⁷ Zeoli, A. M., et al. (2018). Analysis of the strength of legal firearms restrictions for perpetrators of domestic violence and their associations with intimate partner homicide. *American Journal of Epidemiology*, 188(7), 1290–1297. <https://doi.org/10.1093/aje/kwy174>

⁸⁸ Violence Policy Center. (2019, September). *When men murder women: An analysis of 2017 homicide data*. Violence Policy Center. <https://vpc.org/studies/wmmw2019.pdf>

⁸⁹ Campbell, J. C., et al. (2003). Risk factors for femicide in abusive relationships: Results from a multisite case-control study. *American Journal of Public Health*, 93(7), 1089–1097. <https://doi.org/10.2105/ajph.93.7.1089>

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Rothman, E. F., et al. (2005). Batterers' use of guns to threaten intimate partners. *Journal of the American Medical Women's Association* (1972), 60(1), 62–68. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/16845765/>

⁹² Sorenson, S.B. (2017 March). Guns in intimate partner violence: Comparing incidents by type of weapon. *Journal of Women's Health*, 26(3), 249-258. doi: 0.1089/jwh.2016.5832

prior behavior is impossible because the victims and perpetrators are not in a position to reveal all past behaviors.

Table 12 outlines the types of relationship IPH victims had with their homicide perpetrator. Overall, most victims were either the perpetrator’s current intimate partner (44.2%) or spouse (42.0%). Male perpetrators were almost equally likely to kill their current spouse or intimate partner. Female perpetrators meanwhile killed their spouse or current intimate partner evenly.

Table 12. Relationship of IPH Victim to Perpetrator, 2023

When perpetrator was male, victim was:	Total	%
Spouse	14	35.0
Ex-Spouse	1	2.5
Current Intimate Partner	16	40.0
Former Intimate Partner	9	22.5
Total	40	100.0
When perpetrator was female, victim was:	Total	%
Spouse	5	50.0
Ex-Spouse	0	0.0
Current Intimate Partner	4	40.0
Former Intimate Partner	1	10.0
Total	10	100.0

Living Arrangements

The Review Board tracks information related to the living arrangements between the IPH perpetrator and victim at the time of the homicide. In 2023, known data indicated 31 IPH victims (62.0%) were living with their partner full-time or intermittently when the homicide occurred. Reports suggest that 19 IPH victims (38.0%) were not cohabiting at the time of their murders in 2023, compared to the 22.7% who were not in 2022.

For the 50 victims in 2023 for which the data could be found, a cohabiting spouse or intimate were more likely to be killed than any other group, comprising 58.0% of victims collectively. Victims who were cohabiting with their current intimate partner perpetrators represented the largest plurality at 30.0%

Men were more likely to kill an unmarried partner with whom they lived, with 31.7% of victims killed by men were cohabiting (unmarried) with the perpetrator at the time of the incident. A lower percentage of victims (24.4%) were killed by their cohabiting male spouses. Overall, 56.1% of IPH victims killed by men were cohabiting with the perpetrator at the time of the incident. Of the 41 IPH committed by men, 40 victims were female, and one was male. Women killed a cohabiting spouse in 44.4% of incidents and killed an intimate partners (unmarried) in 44.4% of incidents. In one case a wife was separated from her husband when the homicide occurred. Overall, almost 88.9% of IPH victims killed by women were cohabiting with the perpetrator at the time of their deaths. Out of the overall 50 IPH victims there were 19 (38.0%) that were not cohabiting with the perpetrators at the time of their deaths.

Separation

Of the 50 IPH victims identified in 2023, program staff ascertained that 35 victims (70.0%) were not separated from the perpetrator at the time of the homicide. Spouses make up 14 of these 35 cases (40.0%), with 21 of the 35 coming from non-married intimate partners (60.0%). In homicides with a female victim, 27 (65.9%) victims were not separated from their partner, compared to 14 victims who were separated from their partner before the homicide (34.1%). In cases with a male victim, eight of the victims were not separated from their partner (88.9%), while one victim had separated (11.1%). Staff were unable to determine facts regarding whether victims and defendants were actively breaking up when the homicide was perpetrated.

Prior Physical Violence

A history of prior physical violence in the relationship is difficult to ascertain. The Review Board relies on sources of information such as law enforcement reports, protective order petitions, prosecutorial records, hospital records, and information from family and friends. However, since many of the IPH cases from 2023 are not yet closed in the criminal justice system, complete prosecutorial records are not available for most cases at the time of this report. In addition, abuse in most intimate partner relationships is not reported to authorities, and victims may not disclose abuse to anyone prior to their deaths.

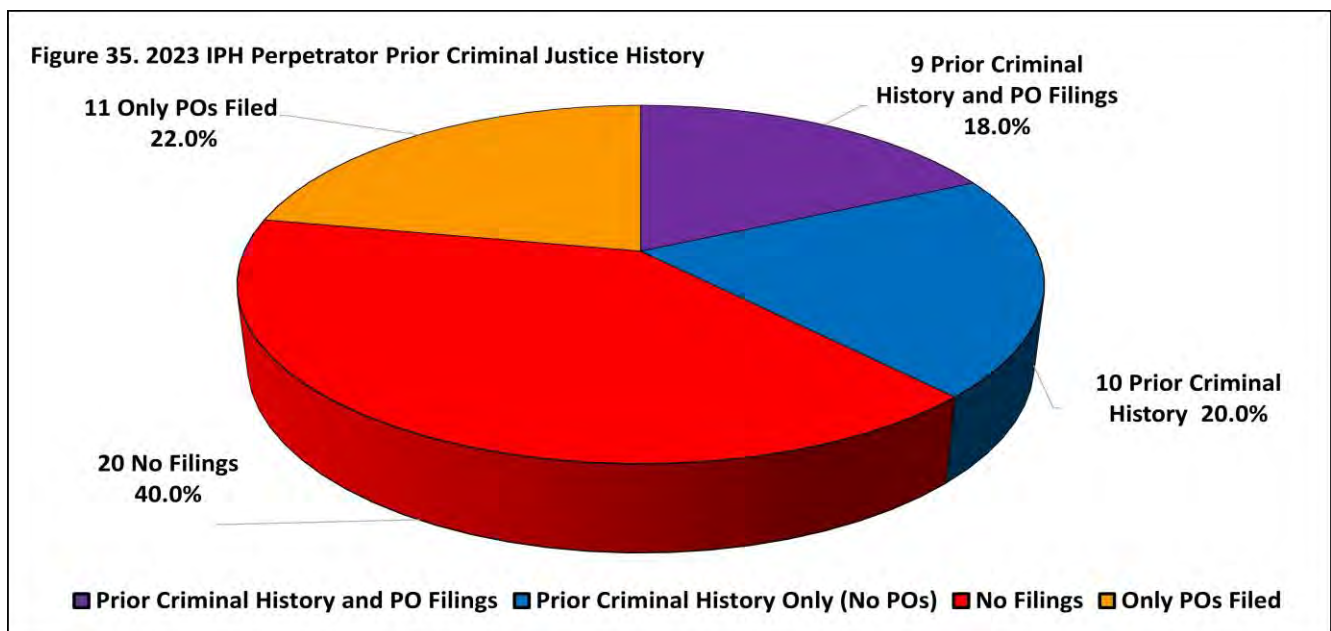
Despite these limitations, in 2023 program staff were able to uncover enough information in the records for 31 of the 50 IPH victims to determine if the victim experienced physical violence by the IPH perpetrators at some point prior to the homicide. Of the 31 victims, 28 (90.3%) were subjected to physical violence by the perpetrator prior to their death. Among the 28 IPH victims in 2023 who suffered physical violence by their perpetrator, current spouses (39.3%) were the largest group experiencing pre-homicide physical violence, followed by current intimate partners (35.7%).

Intimate Partner Homicide Perpetrator Court Records Check

Homicide case reviews often reveal that some intimate partner homicide perpetrators had a long history of criminal misdemeanor or felony charges filed against them prior to killing their intimate partner. In other cases, perpetrators may not have had a history of criminal charges but had prior protective orders (PO) filed against them by family members or an intimate partner. On some occasions, extensive criminal histories suggest there were ample opportunities for intervention and keep the offender away from the community.

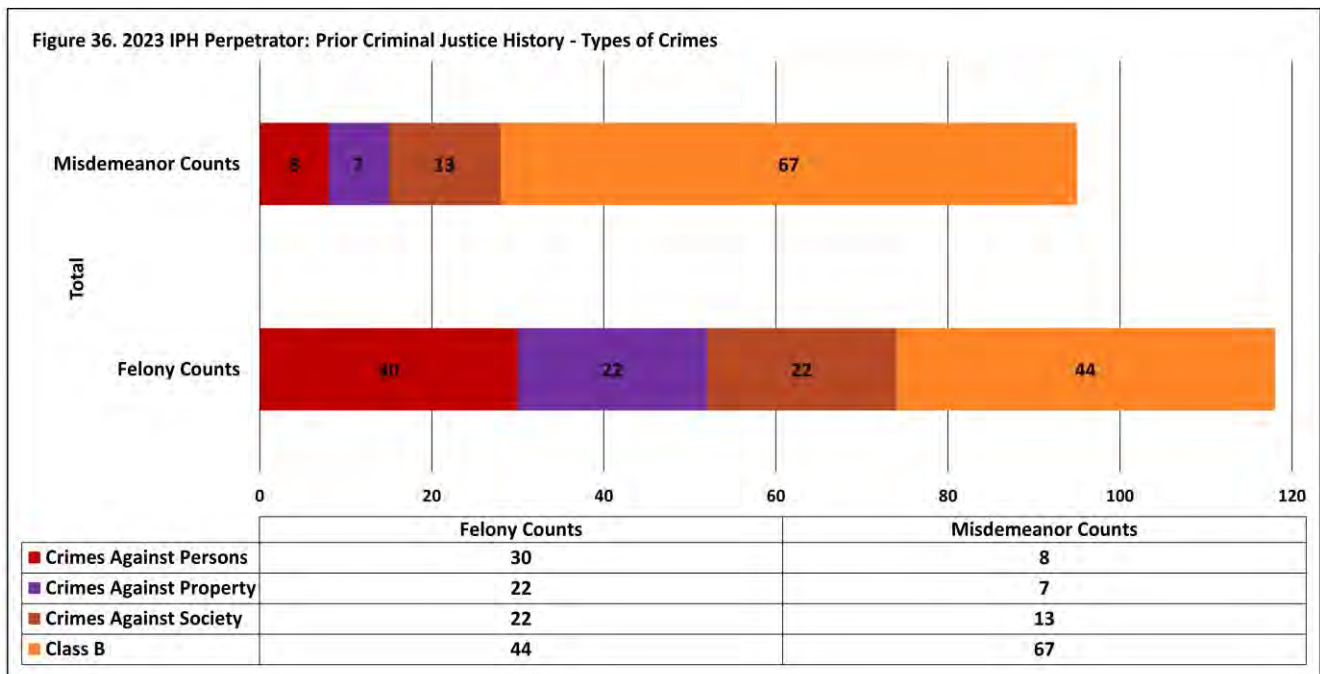
To obtain a broader picture of intimate partner homicide perpetrator criminal history, staff conducted criminal background checks for all 50 IPH perpetrators to ascertain whether they had ever been charged with criminal misdemeanors, felonies, or whether they had PO history prior at any point prior to the homicide. Staff relied on OSBI Criminal History Information Request Portal (CHIRP) requests and searches through both the Oklahoma State Courts Network (OSCN) and On Demand Court Records websites' search engines. It is important to note that while this research was extensive, out of state filings were not searched, and it is possible some perpetrators may have had additional criminal history or protective order filings out of state.

Utilizing this methodology, it was determined that 10 (20.0%) IPH perpetrators had prior criminal history before committing the homicide. Eleven (22.0%) did not have criminal history but had a protective order filed by or against them. Nine (18.0%) had prior criminal history and were mentioned in a protective order filing. Twenty (40.0%) did not have a criminal history, or a protective order filing (*Figure 35*).

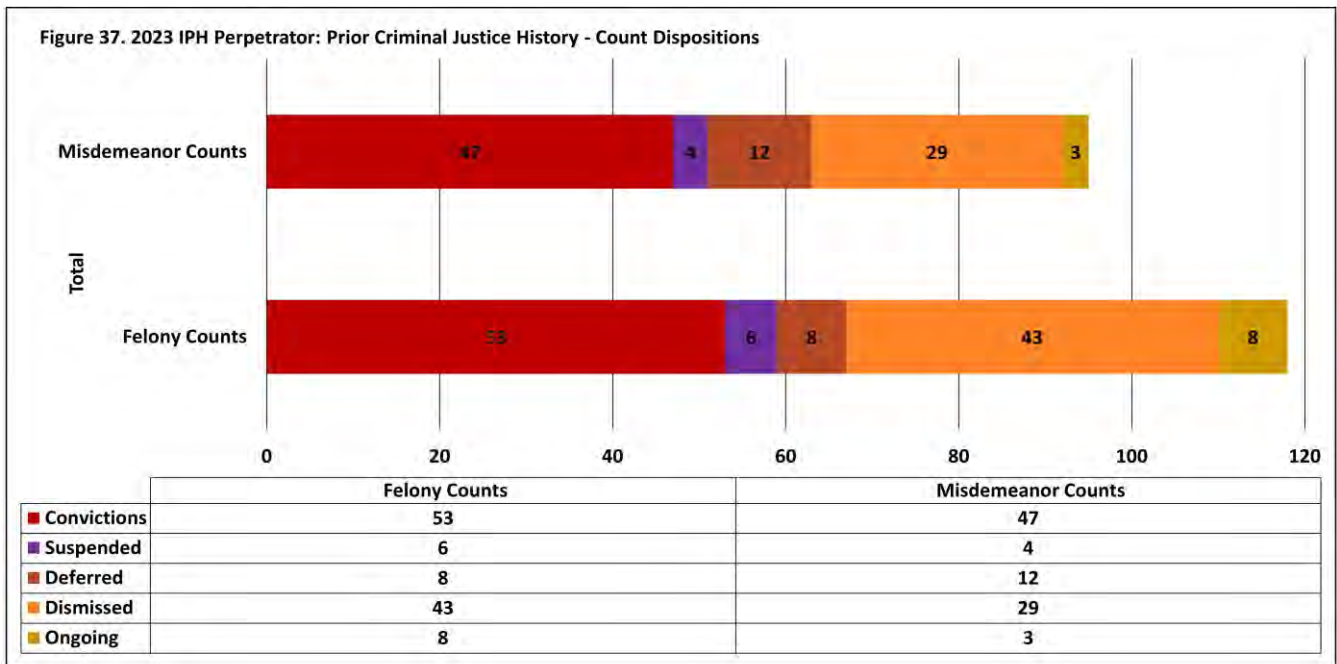


Staff also worked to find and categorize any charges found using the FBI’s National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) criteria. Under the NIBRS system, each reported crime is classified as either a Group A or Group B offense, and these offenses are then separated into one of three categories: Crimes Against Persons, Against Property, or Against Society. Crimes Against Persons are crimes where the victims are always individuals; these include murder, rape, assault, etc. Crimes Against Property are crimes where the object is to obtain some of kind of property or monetary benefit; examples are robbery, bribery, and burglary. Crimes Against Society are crimes that are prohibited by society in engaging in certain types of activity and tend to be victimless crimes like drug crimes and prostitution. Group B offenses tend to be more minor in nature in comparison to other crimes, usually consisting of liquor law violations, DUIs, and other offenses of that nature.

This methodology was used to classify both misdemeanor and felony criminal counts into one of four categories: crimes against a person/property/society or a Group B offense. In terms of misdemeanors, it was determined 8 were crimes against persons, 7 against property, 13 against society, and 67 were Group B offenses. Looking at felony counts, it was determined 30 were crimes against persons, 22 against property, 22 against society, and 44 were Group B offenses (*Figure 36*).



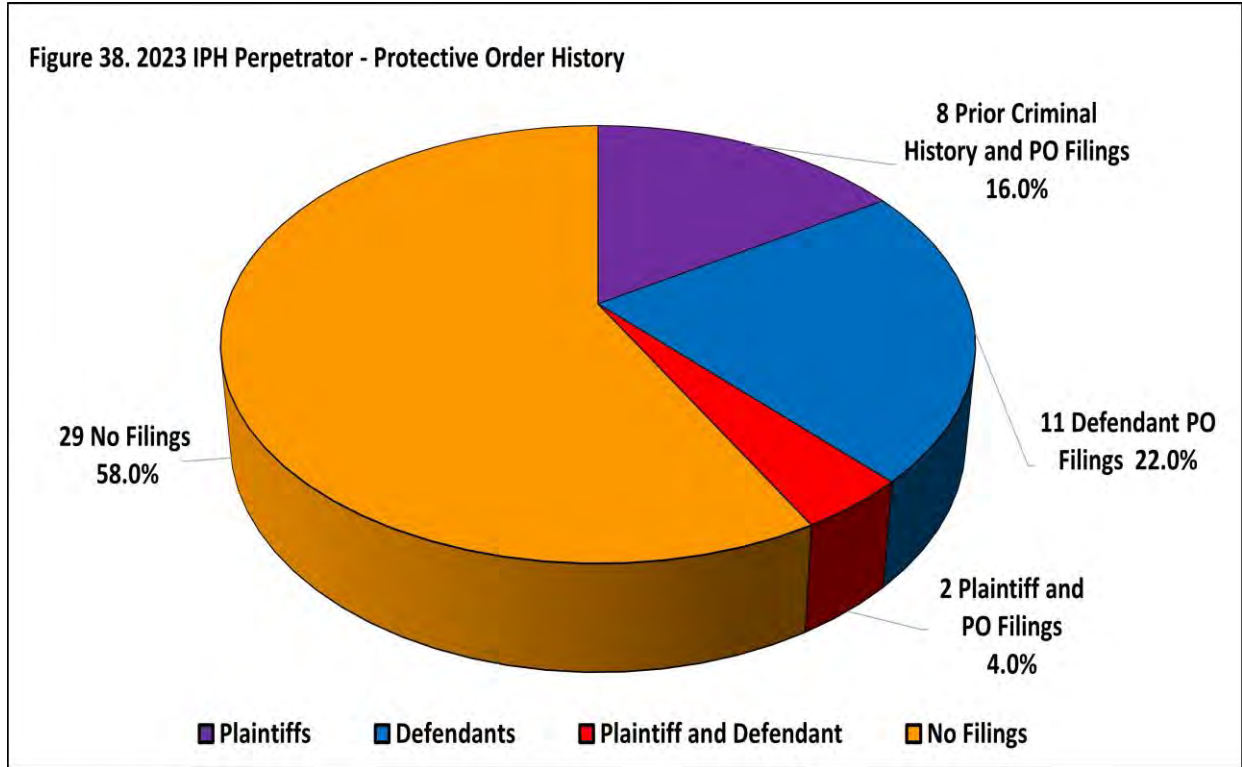
A total of 56 criminal misdemeanor cases were filed against IPH perpetrators, with a total of 95 individual criminal counts were associated with these misdemeanor cases. Of that total, 47 (49.5%) resulted in convictions, 29 (30.5%) were dismissed, 12 (12.6%) resulted in deferred sentences, four (4.2%) were suspended, and three (3.2%) are ongoing. In contrast, a total of 62 criminal felony cases were identified as being filed against IPH perpetrators. A total of 118 felony counts were associated with these cases. Of that total, 53 (44.9%) resulted in convictions, 43 (36.4%) were dismissed, 8 (6.8%) resulted in deferred sentences, 8 (6.8%) are still ongoing, and six (5.1%) resulted in suspended sentences (*Figure 37*).



Both the prior misdemeanors and prior felonies suggest a history of criminality could be linked to IPH incidents, given that 38% of all IPH perpetrators had criminal history prior to the IPH incident. While most of these offenses were Class B, Crimes Against Persons had a significant share (25%) of prior felonious offenses, suggesting a causal link to IPH offender with offenses against individuals. Dispositional history suggests minimal consequences for IPH offenders with a criminal history, with a conviction rate below 50% for both misdemeanors (49%) and felonies (45%). Outright dismissal of charges was the 2nd most likely outcome for the disposition of misdemeanors (31%) and felonies (36%).

Program staff analyzed how many protective orders were filed mentioning the 50 IPH perpetrators. Collectively, IPH perpetrators had 32 individual protective orders filed against them and filed 19 individual protective orders against others. Two IPH perpetrators had active protective orders against them by their victims when the homicide occurred; one of these homicides was a murder-suicide (*Figure 38*).

Twenty-one IPH perpetrators were mentioned in a protective order filing, with 11 being defendants in a protective order filing, and 8 being plaintiffs. Two IPH perpetrators were both plaintiff and defendant in various protective order filings. 29 IPH perpetrators were not mentioned in any protective order filings.



Criminal Justice

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

Throughout 2023 and 2024, charges were filed in District, Tribal or Federal Court against 77 (69.0%) domestic violence homicide perpetrators or accomplices. As of December 2024, 65 domestic violence homicide perpetrators have been charged in Oklahoma District Courts. Of those 65 cases brought against perpetrators, 34 (52.3%) were still ongoing, 27 (41.5%) have resulted in a conviction, two (3.1%) have been dismissed, and two (3.1%) resulted in acquittals. (Table 13)

Table 13. Status of District Court Cases Against 2023 Homicide Perpetrators

Status	Total	%
Ongoing	34	52.3
Conviction	27	41.5
Dismissed	2	3.1
Acquitted	2	3.1
Total	65	100.0

Five (6.5%) perpetrators were charged in various Tribal Court. Of those cases, two (40.0%) have resulted in convictions and three (60.0%) are still ongoing. (Table 14)

Table 14. Status of Tribal Court Cases Against 2023 Homicide Perpetrators

Status	Total	%
Ongoing	3	60.0
Conviction	2	40.0
Total	5	100.0

Finally, charges were filed against seven (9.1%) perpetrators in Federal Courts. A total of three (42.9%) resulted in convictions and four (57.1%) are still ongoing. (Table 15)

Table 15. Status of Federal Court Cases Against 2023 Homicide Perpetrators

Status	Total	%
Ongoing	4	57.1
Conviction	3	42.9
Total	7	100.0

Out of the remaining 35 (31.0%) perpetrators, 19 were not charged because the perpetrator died at the time of the incident, and 16 were not charged by prosecutors because they deemed it self-defense or because the cases are still under investigation. (Table 16)

Table 16. Charges not Filed

Status	Total	%
No Charges – Death of Perpetrators	19	54.3%
No Charges – Self Defense or Other	16	45.7%
Total	35	100.0

Intimate Partner Homicide Cases

Charges were filed in District, Tribal, or Federal Court against 30 (60.0%) out of the 50 intimate partner homicide perpetrators. Staff was unable to determine whether charges were filed against one (2.0%) perpetrator. A total 27 (90.0%) of those perpetrators were charged in Oklahoma District Courts. Of those cases, 14 (51.9%) are still ongoing and 13 (48.1%) have resulted in convictions. (Table 17)

Table 17. Status of District Court Cases Against 2023 IPH Perpetrators

Status	Total	%
Ongoing	14	51.9
Conviction	13	48.1
Total	27	100.0

One (3.3%) perpetrator was charged in Tribal Court and the case is still ongoing. (Table 18)

Table 18. Status of Tribal Court Cases Against 2023 IPH Perpetrators

Status	Total	%
Ongoing	1	100.0
Total	1	100.0

Two (6.7%) perpetrators were charged in Federal Court, and both cases are still ongoing. (Table 19)

Table 19. Status of Federal Court Cases Against 2023 IPH Perpetrators

Status	Total	%
Ongoing	2	100.0
Total	2	100.0

Charges were not filed against the remaining 19 (38.0%) perpetrators. A total of 16 (84.2%) died at the time of the incident and three (15.8%) were not charged by prosecutors because they deemed it self-defense or the cases are still under investigation. (Table 20)

Table 20. Charges not Filed

Status	Total	%
No Charges – Death of Perpetrators	16	84.2
No Charges – Self Defense or Other	3	15.8
Total	19	100.0

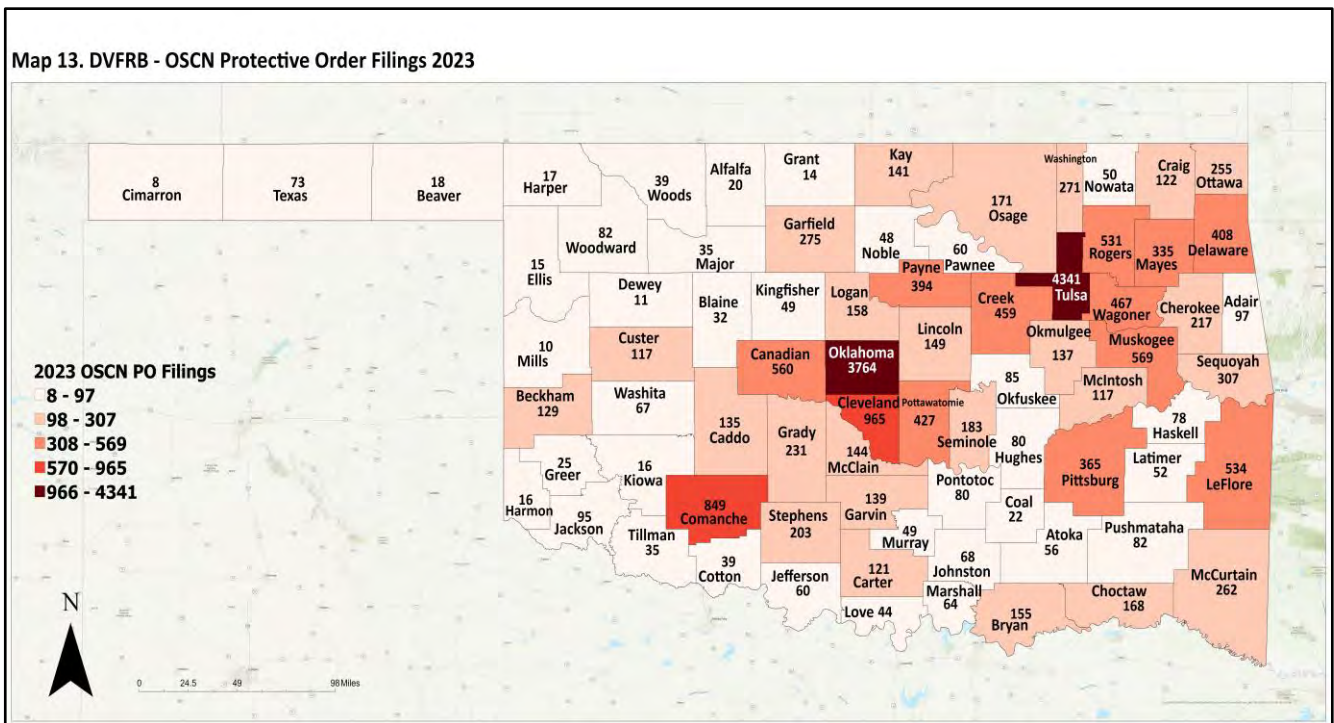
VICTIM PROTECTIVE ORDERS

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

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

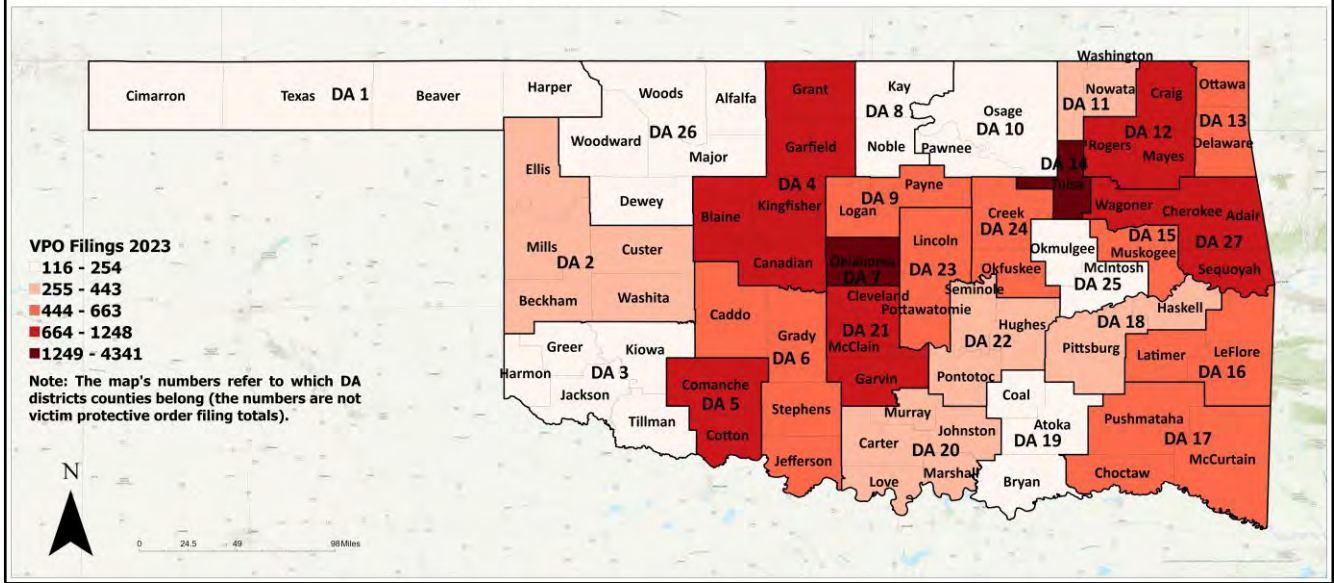
Despite these challenges, program staff have been able to closely monitor the number of VPOs being filed in Oklahoma utilizing the OSCN Case Search webpage. Staff obtain a total count of VPO filings by determining the last VPO filed on a given calendar year per county. This is done because each new VPO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

Utilizing the method described earlier, staff found that a total of 21,066 VPOs were filed in Oklahoma in 2023. The 2023 total is 2.9% higher than the one found in 2022. (Map 13 and 14)



Note: Data collected by DVFRB staff and current as of January 2025. Totals may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during 2024 data collection process.

Map 14. DVFRB - OSCN Victim Protective Order Filings by DA District



Note: Data collected by DVFRB staff and current as of January 2025. Totals may be subject to change if staff are alerted to other incidents that might not have been accounted for during 2024 data collection process. Map data table can be found in Appendix A – Table 28. DVFRB – OSCN Protective Order Filings by DA District 2023.

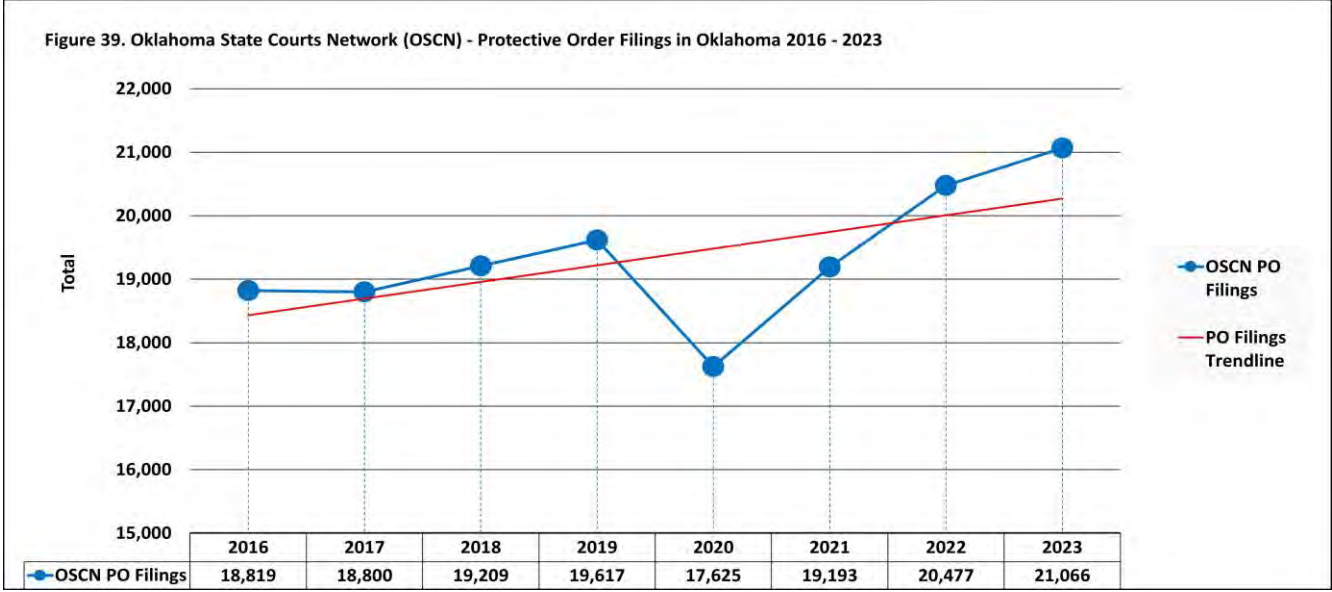
County totals were obtained for all 77 (100.0%) Oklahoma counties. The number of VPO filings increased in 47 (61.0%) counties while the number decreased in 29 (37.7%). One (1.3%) county had the same number of filings as the previous year.

Oklahoma and LeFlore counties saw the biggest increases compared to the previous year. Each of them had 113 more filings in 2023. This represented a 3.1% increase for Oklahoma County and a 26.8% increase for LeFlore County. A total of 25 of the 47 counties seeing increases in their totals had increments ranging from 1-15 more VPO filings. These 25 counties saw their totals increase by on average +7.7 filings. The remaining 22 counties seeing increases had increments ranging from 19-113. When excluding the two counties with 113 more filings each, the range increment for the 20 other counties was between 19-81. These counties saw their totals increase by on average 38.4 filings.

In contrast, the number of VPO filings decreased in 29 (37.7%) counties. Tulsa and Rogers Counties saw the biggest decreases in the total number of filings when compared to 2022. Tulsa County’s total of 4,341 was -112 less than the previous year. It must be noted, however, that this only represents a decrease of -2.5%. Rogers County’s total of 531 was -77 less than the previous year. This represented a decrease of -12.7% when compared to 2022. A total of 15 of the 29 counties had their totals decrease by a range of 1-15. These counties saw their total number of filings decrease by on average -6.2 filings. The remaining 14 counties saw their totals decline by numbers ranging from 16-112. When excluding the two biggest total decreases (112 and 77), the numbers range from 16-38. These counties saw their totals decrease by on average -26.2 filings.

The 2023 total continues the increasing trend in VPO filings after the 10.2% decrease in 2020. The 2023 total is 16.3% more than the one recorded in 2020. Although it is difficult to pinpoint the exact cause of fluctuations in VPO filings the statistics suggest that filings have resumed the increasing trend that started in 2018. The decrease in 2020 may have likely been influenced by the public health concerns and unique challenges brought about by

the COVID-19 pandemic. The numbers suggest the increasing trend has resumed as the state has continued to move on from the COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 39).



Spotlight Article – Legislative Action

Contributing Author: Kelsey Samuels, Executive Director, Community Crisis Center of Northeast Oklahoma

Oklahoma Approves Historic Increase in Funding for Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Victim Services

In a monumental response aimed at expanding support for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault (DV/SA), Oklahoma lawmakers passed the largest funding increase for victim services in state history during the 2024 legislative session.

Through a unified effort, the House and Senate leaders secured an additional \$10 million in state appropriations to victim services programs. This landmark effort marked a 325% increase over the previously allocated \$4 million allocated to programs for decades. The 31 Oklahoma Attorney General-certified DV/SA service providers led the advocacy work for this increase.

This legislative advocacy effort was spearheaded following the publication of the 2023 Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board Annual Report, where its top policy recommendation called for the state to play a more prominent role in the funding of services to support DV/SA victims. The recommendation specifically called for an additional \$10 million for victim service providers.

The funding victory was the culmination of over a year of diligent work by former Senate President Pro Tempore Greg Treat, Speaker of the House Charles McCall, and Chair of the House Appropriations and Budget Committee Kevin Wallace, who made increasing victim services funding a 2024 legislative session priority. Their efforts not only secured a historic increase in appropriations but also resulted in the unanimous passage of Senate Bill 2039, which established the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services Revolving Fund.

Senate Bill 2039 was forward-thinking legislation with three primary objectives:

1. **Expanding Access to Services by:** Ensuring a stable, institutionalized, statewide system exists to channel adequate funding, maintaining access to a baseline-level of services for DV/SA victims.
2. **Fostering Coordinated Community Response:** Encourage partnerships among law enforcement, courts, hospitals, local social services, and other critical agencies to ensure a holistic approach to victim support.
3. **Supporting Underserved Populations by:** Ensuring that all victims have access to needed care and resources.

This funding increase arrived at a critical time. State victim service agencies had not received an increase in state allocations in more than 20 years. In the face of a 42% reduction in federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding, the additional state support was vital to maintaining critical services.

The new funding formula, now codified, guarantees future appropriations for victim services, ensuring programs remain a priority for the state. By securing a permanent funding mechanism, Oklahoma made an important commitment to the safety and well-being of its citizens. This historic legislative achievement marks a significant step forward in Oklahoma's response to domestic violence and sexual assault, and it promises to have a lasting impact on victims, families, and communities across the state.

Spotlight Article – Federal Grant Awards for Oklahoma LAP Projects

Contributing Author: Anthony Hernández Rivera, DVFRB Program Manager, Office of the Oklahoma Attorney General

Background – Lethality Assessment Protocol in Oklahoma

Since November 1, 2014, Oklahoma peace officers have been required by 21 O.S. § 142A-3 to use a risk assessment tool to assess homicide or re-assault risk to victims when responding to intimate partner violence (IPV) scenes. The tool, known as the Lethality Assessment Protocol (LAP), includes a law enforcement-social services collaboration approach that entails peace officers asking a series of questions and connecting victims via telephone to either Oklahoma’s 24/7 DV/SA hotline or local DV/SA service provider.

The goal is to assess and communicate risk factors to victims, identify IPV victims at high risk of homicide, and connect them at the scene with a service provider to ensure an opportunity to speak with a trained advocate. In addition to real-time support, advocates can safety plan with victims, coordinate shelter, provide community resources, and discuss information on victim services and rights, all in a trauma-informed way.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LETHALITY-SCREEN FOR FIRST RESPONDERS		
Officer:	Date:	Case#:
Victim:	Offender:	Relationship:
Address of Incident:		Date and Time of Incident:
___ Check here if the victim did not answer any of these questions.		
A "Yes" response to any of Questions 1-5 automatically triggers the protocol referral.		
1. Has the person ever threatened to use or used a weapon against the victim?	___ Yes ___ No ___ Refused	
2. Has the person ever threatened to kill the victim or the children of the victim?	___ Yes ___ No ___ Refused	
3. Has the person ever tried to choke the victim?	___ Yes ___ No ___ Refused	
4. Has the person ever tried or threatened to kill him/herself?	___ Yes ___ No ___ Refused	
5. Does the victim think the person will try to kill the victim?	___ Yes ___ No ___ Refused	
Negative responses to Question 1-5 but positive responses to at least three of Questions #6-11 trigger the protocol referral.		
6. Does the person have a gun or can he/she get one easily?	___ Yes ___ No ___ Refused	
7. Is the person violently or constantly jealous or does the person attempt to control most of the daily activities of the victim?	___ Yes ___ No ___ Refused	
8. Does the person follow or spy on the victim or leave the victim threatening or unwanted messages, phone calls or text messages?	___ Yes ___ No ___ Refused	
9. Does the victim have any children the person knows is not his/her own child?	___ Yes ___ No ___ Refused	
10. Has the victim left or separated from the person after living together or being married?	___ Yes ___ No ___ Refused	
11. Is the person unemployed?	___ Yes ___ No ___ Refused	
An officer may trigger the protocol referral, if not already triggered above, as a result of the victim's response to the below question, or whenever the officer believes the victim is in a potentially lethal situation.		
Is there anything else that worries the victim about his or her safety? If so, what worries the victim?		
Check one: ___ Victim screened in according to the protocol ___ Victim screened in based on the belief of the officer ___ Victim did not screen in		
If victim screened in : Did the officer contact the local OAG Certified DV/SA Program or Tribal DV/SA Program? ___ Yes ___ No If "no" state why: _____		
If the officer is unable to make contact with a hotline advocate at the local program after at least two attempts within a 10 minute period, contact the State SAFELINE at 1-800-522-SAFE (7233). After advising the victim of high risk for danger/lethality, did the victim speak with the hotline advocate?		
<small>Note: The questions above and the criteria for determining the level of risk a person faces is based on the best available research on factors associated with lethal violence by a current or former intimate partner. However, each situation may present unique factors that influence risk for lethal violence that are not captured by this screen. Although most victims who screen "positive" or "high danger" would not be expected to be killed, these victims face much higher risk than of other victims of intimate partner violence.</small>		

Figure 40. LAP risk assessment form available on the OAG website.

Oklahoma lawmakers, advocacy groups, and the DVFRB backed this legislation a decade ago, hoping it would increase the number of IPV victims accessing potentially lifesaving advocacy and shelter services. At the time, the Oklahoma Attorney General (OAG) Victim Advocacy and Services Unit (VASU) organized three LAP regional trainings that utilized a “train the trainer” model to assist law enforcement agencies to prepare for the implementation of the new legislation.

Unfortunately, by 2016, DVFRB intimate partner homicide (IPH) case reviews found that law enforcement agencies consistently neglected to conduct the LAP at the scene of IPV calls. Subsequent IPH case reviews over the years demonstrate that the failure to conduct the protocol remains a serious, ongoing issue in Oklahoma. In 2022, the DVFRB made a policy recommendation calling for LAP training at major law enforcement conferences in the state. The Board also recommended that at least an hour of Oklahoma’s peace officers’ annual continuing education requirements be devoted to DV and LAP training.

Since the recommendation, OAG staff assigned to the DVFRB created a new LAP class to actively train peace officers and cadets at events and academies throughout the state. Starting in 2023, staff partnered with law

enforcement organizations such as the Oklahoma Association of Chiefs of Police (OACP), Sheriffs' Association (OSA), State Bureau of Investigation (OSBI) Agents Association, and the Council on Law Enforcement Education and Training (CLEET) to offer the LAP training at their events.

In 2024 alone, DVFRB staff led 23 LAP training sessions at conferences, local police academies, and cadets enrolled in peace officer certification programs at Career Techs. Last year, this training impacted 548 peace officers.

Federal Grant Applications and Awards

It was quickly determined that more personnel were required to support the DVFRB-led LAP implementation initiative. Additional personnel dedicated solely to working on this project would broaden the initiative's reach and scope.

In response, VASU staff applied to two competitive federal grant programs to fund LAP-focused positions. Both federal grants were awarded to fund the proposal, totaling \$1,264,466. The OAG DVFRB will spearhead the statewide LAP implementation project.



The first grant was a U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), Office on Violence Against Women (OVW), Improving the Criminal Justice Response (ICJR) Program Grant. This OVW ICJR award totaled \$994,032 for project implementation over a three-year period. The second grant was a DOJ Bureau of Justice Assistance grant totaling \$270,434.00 over a two-year period.

These funds enable the state to have personnel dedicated to LAP implementation work.

Project Details

The grant funds will be used to hire three LAP Training Coordinators. Coordinators will spearhead a coordinated LAP training and awareness campaign to bolster implementation across Oklahoma. Coordinators will also develop LAP education materials, such as flyers and videos, that will be available on-demand on the OAG and partner agency websites.

Since DVFRB staff began LAP training, they have collected hundreds of peace officers' email addresses. Coordinators will have access to the email list to disseminate training materials and reminders directly to individual peace officers. The LAP Coordinators will build relationships with law enforcement organizations such as the OACP, OSA, and CLEET to attend meetings, conduct presentations, and advocate for LAP implementation by engaging directly with Chiefs of Police, Sheriffs, and other agency leadership.

LAP Coordinators will engage in targeted outreach and lead training sessions anywhere in the state, at no cost to agencies. They will also develop protocols and data-collection methods to measure LAP-related call volume to the state's SAFELINE DV/SA hotline and calls to local OAG-certified DV/SA programs. Data collection will help determine whether training efforts are effective and whether victims are being connected to resources.

LAP 2.0 in Oklahoma

ICJR funds will also be used to onboard 50 law enforcement agencies, as well as several OAG-certified and tribal victim service providers, to a new digital LAP platform that streamlines the protocol process, so referrals are

immediately forwarded to partner community-based DV/SA agencies. This platform, known as LAP 2.0, is a data application utilized by several states and organizations, including the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV). The platform enables first responders and advocates to work as equal partners in a more coordinated, communicative, and collaborative approach to engaging victims who may not otherwise access potentially life-saving services.

Upon the completion of a LAP response and submitting risk assessment answers on the platform, LAP 2.0's functionality allows participating law enforcement agencies to automatically forward the referral to a partner DV/SA service provider who is participating in the LAP 2.0 program. LAP 2.0 allows officers to note whether the victim is open to being contacted by a service provider in the future if the victim did not wish to speak to an advocate on the phone at the IPV incident scene.

The project will benefit existing LAP application and DV/SA services in three ways: First, it will incentivize implementation by letting officers see assessment-use benefits beyond initial on scene contact. Second, it will enable service providers to do secondary follow-ups if victims consent. Third, gathering detailed data on LAP implementation will enable project staff to conduct targeted training outreach to jurisdictions which most need implementation support.

LAP Coordinators will recruit, onboard, and train law enforcement and victim services personnel to utilize the LAP 2.0 platform at no cost. LAP project personnel hiring is ongoing, and the first stage of the project will begin in early 2025.

Contact Information:

If your agency is interested in LAP training or being a LAP 2.0 partner, please direct inquiries to DVFRB Program Manager, Anthony Hernández Rivera, via email: Anthony.Hernandez-Rivera@oag.ok.gov.

REVIEW BOARD ACTIVITIES

Review Board members and DVFRB Program Staff broaden the reach of the DVFRB by engaging in activities aimed at improving the domestic violence prevention and protection system. Some members participated in the following activities in 2024:

- **Brandon Pasley, CSDVRP**, designee for OCADVSA, DVFRB Chair, and **Angela Beatty, CDSVRP, MSW candidate**, alternate designee for OCADVSA, served as two of the primary faculty members for CW 1024. CW 1024 is an intensive-day experiential training meant to give new child welfare specialists information, skills, and knowledge they can use to serve families where coercion and control are present. In March 2024, they both presented to students at OU's School of Law around criminalized survivors. In May, Mr. Pasley presented In Her Shoes for the Canadian Co. Family Justice Center, Cardinal Point. Ms. Beatty provided In Her Shoes' training for Oklahoma County Bar Association's Lawyers Against Domestic Violence group. Both presented at a panel for domestic violence awareness month to members of the Junior League in Oklahoma City as well as local community members. Mr. Pasley provided a full day of training to the Cheyenne and Arapaho Victim Services Program in November. Throughout the year Mr. Pasley and Ms. Beatty participated in multiple media stories outlets and sources surrounding domestic violence.
- **Laura Kuester, M.S., LPC**, designee for the Oklahoma Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (OCADVSA), developed and presented trainings on domestic violence, sexual assault, and the lethality assessment protocol to law enforcement agencies across the state. She also presented mental health trainings for law enforcement on vicarious trauma and burnout and mental health issues survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault face. Throughout 2024 she regularly conducted television/newspaper interviews and made presentations to various community organizations and system partners to raise awareness of findings from the Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board.
- **Melanie Ferguson, MSW**, designee for the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (ODMHSAS), provided trainings related to domestic violence to a wide array of behavior health providers across the state. Approximately 129 providers attended DV 101 trainings on Coercive Control, and 79 providers attended DV 201 trainings on Risk Assessment and Safety Planning. 206 participants attended various DV 301 trainings on specialty topics throughout the year (e.g. Nonfatal Use of Firearms and Working with Children Exposed to DV). Ms. Ferguson hosted the first ever Domestic Violence Liaison summit with a guest speaker from the National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma, and Mental Health (NCDVTMH). She attended the Fatality Review Conference in Prescott, Arizona, and continued to oversee the DV Liaison Program and strengthening efforts to bridge behavioral health and victim service agencies.
- **Brandi Woods Littlejohn, MCJ, and Emily Nicholls**, primary and alternate designees for the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH), Injury Prevention Service (IPS). The IPS worked with OSDH Communications to create and distribute materials to promote equitable access to victim-centered services by creating awareness of the Oklahoma Safeline. Posters were designed in two sizes and then translated into nine additional languages: Burmese, Chinese, Farsi, Hmong, Marshallese, Spanish, Tagalog, Tigrinya, and Vietnamese. All ten languages were made available on the IPV webpage and full-sized posters were printed in English, Spanish, Marshallese, and Vietnamese. The IPS also designed advocacy window clings and magnets that were distributed in English and Spanish. For the first time, the IPS ran a two-week Meta ad campaign, in which five unique graphics created by OSDH Communication were seen 1,009,164 times by 294,844 unique individuals.

The IPS presented two sessions at the 2024 Partners for Change Conference; one in conjunction with other OSDH staff called "Leveraging Local Health Department Resources to Support Survivors" to

encourage cooperation between county health departments and local domestic and sexual violence victim service programs, and the other on partner-inflicted brain injuries. The IPS secured a third session at PFC for attendees to learn more about the Family Support and Prevention Service and the services available to victims at Family Resource Centers. At the conference the IPS provided training to over 126 advocacy professionals on recognizing signs of potential brain injury and learning how to accommodate survivors to over 126 professionals who serve domestic violence survivors. Additionally, the IPS collaborated with the OSDH Nursing Service, Oklahoma Family Support Network Program, and Community Health Worker Program to train 146 OSDH staff and grantees on building confidence and skills to serve patients experiencing gender-based violence.

- **Brandie Combs**, designee for the Oklahoma State Department of Health, currently serves on the newly formed Oklahoma Sexual Assault Advisory Board (OKSAAB) with an overall goal to develop and approve statewide protocols for Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE). Part of the duties of the OKSAAB includes annually reviewing changes to SANE protocols, recommending policy changes to member agencies, identifying protocol action items, identifying/proposing resolutions for protocol complaints, and evaluating the effectiveness of the protocols. Ms. Combs also serves as the Regional Director of county health departments in Southwest Oklahoma. As Regional Director, Ms. Combs works with key stakeholders to create systems that ensure victims of sexual assault have access to SANE and advocate services.
- **Martina Jelley, MD, MPSH**, designee for the Oklahoma State Medical Association, works with a team at the University of Oklahoma College of Medicine has been working with a national team of medical educators to integrate trauma informed care education into medical school and residency curriculum. She presented nationally on this topic at the Association of American Medical Colleges Learn Serve Lead conference, Society of General Internal Medicine annual meeting, and Academy on Violence and Abuse Global Health Summit.
- **Sara Coffey, D.O.**, designee for the Oklahoma Osteopathic Association to the Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board, is the Anne and Henry Zarrow Endowed Leadership chair of Psychiatry and Oklahoma State University Center for Health Sciences. In her work in training medical students and residents, she incorporates training on trauma informed care and education around domestic violence in the clinical setting. She is the principal investigator for the SAMHSA grant that provides CLEET training for law enforcement officers in the state of Oklahoma. This training focusing on mental health needs in the community, including but not limited to elements of Mental Health First Aid, vicarious traumatization, post-traumatic stress disorder, adolescent development, and other topics to educated law enforcement on the mental health impacts of trauma and violence in communities, including those that serve communities.
- **Janice Carr**, designee for the Oklahoma Nurses Association (ONA), serves as an Associate Professor of the Kramer School of Nursing at the Oklahoma City University. Ms. Carr has presented several times on domestic violence, including *Impact of IPV Practice Intervention on Student's Communication and Interpersonal Interventions with IPV Clients* on September 26, 2024, at the Oklahoma Nurses Association Convention. She also presented *Domestic Violence Landscape and Trauma Informed Care for Domestic Violence Victims* on October 25, 2024, at the international conference Nursing Leaders 2024. Ms. Carr also uses domestic violence simulations and video/lecture methods to teach nursing students how to assess and respond to suspected and actual domestic violence situations in a healthcare environment. Ms. Carr has written the article "Responding to Domestic Violence" and been published in the Fall 2024 edition of Arizona Nursing News, the Fall 2024 edition of South Carolina Palmetto Nurse, and the January 2025 edition of Oklahoma Nurse. Ms. Carr has collaborated with the Oklahoma Attorney General's Office and senior nursing students at OCU to create six infographic documents that can be used to inform the public and health care professionals about domestic

violence. These infographics are titled: *Trauma Informed Care, Risk Factors for Intimate Partner Homicide, Domestic Violence Resources, Power and Control Behaviors: Intimate Partner Violence, Familicide, and Child Abuse Risk Factors and Screening.*

- **Melissa Van Duyne**, alternate designee for the Office of the Attorney General, serves as the VSU-Training Program Manager for the Office of the Attorney General. Ms. Van Duyne has managed the Partners for Change (PFC) conference for two years in a row, with the most recent being held September 18-19, 2024. In her managerial role, Ms. Van Duyne holds monthly PFC meetings to strategize and organize the next year's PFC conference. She also annually plans and hosts the Oklahoma Victim Assistance Academy (OVAA), most recently held June 23-24th, 2024.

In addition to her DVFRB duties Ms. Van Duyne assists with the Address Confidentially Mail program (ACP), onsite certification reviews, and works with DVFRB staff in presenting LAP trainings across the state. Ms. Van Duyne serves on the Post Adjudication Review Board and the Oklahoma Child Abuse and Neglect Conference Planning committee, both of which meet monthly. Ms. Van Duyne has attended several conferences in the last year, including the Oklahoma Child Abuse and Neglect Conference on 15th-17th 2024, the End Violence Against Women Conference held in San Diego on April 1st-3rd 2024, and the Oklahoma Department of Human Services Domestic Violence Symposium on October 29th-30th, 2024.

- **Chief W. Don Sweger**, designee for the Oklahoma Association of Chiefs of Police, acts as a liaison between the DVFRB and members of Oklahoma's law enforcement community. As part of his duties on the Board, Chief Sweger shared and expounded upon training suggestions and standards offered by the DVFRB, provided training and guidance on the Lethality Assessment Protocol, and facilitated meetings and dialog between the DVFRB and law enforcement.

DVFRB Program Staff Activities

Anthony Hernández Rivera, MA, DVFRB Program Manager, **Nicholas Massey**, MA, Research Analyst, and **Sara Wray**, JD, Assistant Attorney General, constitute the DVFRB Program Staff. In addition to maintaining an annual list of people who die due to domestic violence and collecting information related to those deaths, Anthony and Nicholas are responsible for the administrative aspects of the DVFRB. This includes preparing case-related information for the DVFRB's monthly review meetings, collecting and analyzing data relevant to domestic violence, domestic violence-related deaths, and protective orders, and authoring the DVFRB annual report. Sara provides technical and writing assistance for the Board's policy and legislative recommendations.

In 2024, Anthony and Nicholas worked towards increasing the number of trainings they led on behalf of the DVFRB. They led training on 29 different occasions throughout the year. Altogether they presented 31 sessions to audiences, including 23 lethality assessment protocol (LAP) sessions, 5 mock domestic violence fatality review sessions, and 3 sessions on 9-1-1 call-taking best practices in the context of domestic violence calls. Trainings were offered in 12 different counties throughout the year. Staff trained audiences in the following counties: Oklahoma (7 times), Cleveland (6), Tulsa (4), Pontotoc (3), Kay (2), Pottawatomie (1), Ottawa (1), McClain (1), Haskell (1), Creek (1), and Comanche (1). A total of 719 individuals benefitted from this training.

Notably, DVFRB staff partnered with the Oklahoma 9-1-1 Management Authority and the Oklahoma Chapter of the Association Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO) to offer a new training on 9-1-1 call-taking best practices when answering domestic violence calls. This training was designed by DVFRB staff and offered to new and veteran 9-1-1 professionals at regional APCO trainings in Lawton, Edmond, and Miami, OK. Staff also led two workshops at the 2024 Oklahoma Partner for Change Conference on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (PFC) in September 18-19.

In addition to training efforts, staff played an important role in developing and submitting proposals to several competitive federal grants, including a U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), Office on Violence Against Women (OVW), Improving the Criminal Justice Response (ICJR) Program Grant, and a DOJ Bureau of Justice Assistance grant. These efforts resulted in two grants being awarded to the Oklahoma Office of the Attorney General, totaling a combined \$1,264,466.00. These funds will be used to hire additional staff to support ongoing DVFRB-led LAP projects aimed at bolstering statewide implementation.

Finally, DVFRB staff attended two conferences as part of their commitment to continuing education on domestic violence matters. Staff attended the 2024 Crimes Against Women Conference on May 20-23 in Dallas, TX and the Fatality Review Conference 2024: The State of the Art on October 14-15 in Prescott, AZ. This last conference was organized by the National Domestic Violence Fatality Review Initiative (NDVFRI), which is housed at the Family Violence Center at Arizona State University. DVFRB Program Manager Anthony Hernández Rivera was invited by NDFVRI partners to sit on a plenary panel titled New and Re-Emerging Fatality Review Teams. Mr. Hernández sat alongside counterparts from Illinois, Nebraska, California, and Scotland, UK to speak to audiences about fatality review work. Staff also presented and attended the Oklahoma Partners for Change Conference on September 18-19, in Norman, Oklahoma. The Staff was given the opportunity to present an LAP session and a mock domestic violence fatality review session while at the Partners for Change Conference.

APPENDIX A: DATA TABLES

Table 21. OSBI SIBRS Victim-to-Offender Relationship Types in Domestic Abuse Incidents, 2022-2023

Relationship Type	2022		2023	
	Count	% of Total	Count	% of Total
Within Family	17,388	54.1	18,130	54.4
Adoptive/Foster Parents	80	0.2	85	0.3
Adoptive/Foster Child	95	0.3	109	0.3
Biological Parents of Same Child	1,020	3.2	1,096	3.3
Spouse	3,955	12.3	4,014	12.0
Common-Law Spouse	243	0.8	225	0.7
Parent	2,347	7.3	2,610	7.8
Sibling	1,887	5.9	2,056	6.2
Child	3,425	10.6	3,458	10.4
Grandparent	312	1.0	318	1.0
Grandchild	322	1.0	387	1.2
In-Law	533	1.7	540	1.6
Stepparent	322	1.0	349	1.0
Stepchild	563	1.8	599	1.8
Stepsibling	128	0.4	129	0.4
Other Family Member	2,156	6.7	2,155	6.5
Outside Family but Known to Victim	12,981	40.4	13,408	40.2
Acquaintance	369	1.1	467	1.4
Friend	58	0.2	60	0.2
Neighbor	56	0.2	62	0.2
Babysitter	6	0.02	7	0.0
Boyfriend/Girlfriend	8,804	27.4	8,756	26.3
Child of Boyfriend/Girlfriend	533	1.7	497	1.5
Homosexual Partner	367	1.1	390	1.2
Ex-Spouse	1,160	3.6	1,431	4.3
Spouse of Ex-Spouse	86	0.3	91	0.3
Roommate	807	2.5	927	2.8
Ex-Roommate	30	0.1	45	0.1
Employee	2	0.01	0	0.0
Employer	3	0.01	3	0.0
Otherwise Known	700	2.2	672	2.0
Not Known by Victim	448	1.4	526	1.6
Relationship Unknown	271	0.8	277	0.8
Stranger	177	0.6	249	0.7
Other	1,351	4.2	1,278	3.8
Victim was Offender	1,108	3.4	1,049	3.1
Unfilled.	243	0.8	229	0.7
Total	32,168	100.0	33,342	100.0

Table 22. DVFRB – 2023 Total Domestic Violence Homicide Victims by DA District

DA District	Counties Served	Total
1	Beaver, Cimarron, Harper, Texas	0
2	Beckham, Custer, Ellis, Roger Mills, Washita	2
3	Greer, Harmon, Jackson, Kiowa, Tillman	2
4	Blaine, Canadian, Garfield, Grant, Kingfisher	3
5	Comanche, Cotton	3
6	Caddo, Grady, Jefferson, Stephens	0
7	Oklahoma	30
8	Kay, Noble	0
9	Logan, Payne	5
10	Osage, Pawnee	1
11	Nowata, Washington	0
12	Craig, Mayes, Rogers	10
13	Delaware, Ottawa	2
14	Tulsa	21
15	Muskogee	4
16	Latimer, LeFlore	2
17	Choctaw, McCurtain, Pushmataha	3
18	Haskell, Pittsburg	3
19	Atoka, Bryan, Coal	4
20	Carter, Johnson, Love, Marshall, Murray	2
21	Cleveland, Garvin, McClain	4
22	Hughes, Pontotoc, Seminole	2
23	Lincoln, Pottawatomie	3
24	Creek, Okfuskee	1
25	Okmulgee, McIntosh	7
26	Alfalfa, Dewey, Major, Woods, Woodward	2
27	Adair, Cherokee, Sequoyah, Wagoner	6
Total	77 Counties	122

Table 23. 2023 OSBI SIBRS – Reported Domestic Abuse Incidents by DA District

DA District	Counties Served	Total
1	Beaver, Cimarron, Harper, Texas	122
2	Beckham, Custer, Ellis, Roger Mills, Washita	264
3	Greer, Harmon, Jackson, Kiowa, Tillman	291
4	Blaine, Canadian, Garfield, Grant, Kingfisher	1,044
5	Comanche, Cotton	947
6	Caddo, Grady, Jefferson, Stephens	678
7	Oklahoma	4,804
8	Kay, Noble	473
9	Logan, Payne	710
10	Osage, Pawnee	292
11	Nowata, Washington	501
12	Craig, Mayes, Rogers	894
13	Delaware, Ottawa	439
14	Tulsa	8,106
15	Muskogee	742
16	Latimer, LeFlore	282
17	Choctaw, McCurtain, Pushmataha	322
18	Haskell, Pittsburg	218
19	Atoka, Bryan, Coal	299
20	Carter, Johnson, Love, Marshall, Murray	633
21	Cleveland, Garvin, McClain	1,548
22	Hughes, Pontotoc, Seminole	335
23	Lincoln, Pottawatomie	627
24	Creek, Okfuskee	247
25	Okmulgee, McIntosh	261
26	Alfalfa, Dewey, Major, Woods, Woodward	269
27	Adair, Cherokee, Sequoyah, Wagoner	949
Total	77 Counties	26,297

Table 24. 2023 OSBI SIBRS – Reported Domestic Abuse Victims by DA District

DA District	Counties Served	Total
1	Beaver, Cimarron, Harper, Texas	139
2	Beckham, Custer, Ellis, Roger Mills, Washita	316
3	Greer, Harmon, Jackson, Kiowa, Tillman	350
4	Blaine, Canadian, Garfield, Grant, Kingfisher	1,273
5	Comanche, Cotton	1,075
6	Caddo, Grady, Jefferson, Stephens	793
7	Oklahoma	5,641
8	Kay, Noble	520
9	Logan, Payne	833
10	Osage, Pawnee	363
11	Nowata, Washington	557
12	Craig, Mayes, Rogers	1,064
13	Delaware, Ottawa	543
14	Tulsa	8,363
15	Muskogee	1,016
16	Latimer, LeFlore	315
17	Choctaw, McCurtain, Pushmataha	375
18	Haskell, Pittsburg	256
19	Atoka, Bryan, Coal	352
20	Carter, Johnson, Love, Marshall, Murray	750
21	Cleveland, Garvin, McClain	1,845
22	Hughes, Pontotoc, Seminole	393
23	Lincoln, Pottawatomie	787
24	Creek, Okfuskee	312
25	Okmulgee, McIntosh	319
26	Alfalfa, Dewey, Major, Woods, Woodward	335
27	Adair, Cherokee, Sequoyah, Wagoner	1,224
Total	77 Counties	30,109

Table 25. DVFRB – Domestic Violence Murder-Suicide Events by DA District 2018-2023

DA District	Counties Served	Total
1	Beaver, Cimarron, Harper, Texas	0
2	Beckham, Custer, Ellis, Roger Mills, Washita	1
3	Greer, Harmon, Jackson, Kiowa, Tillman	3
4	Blaine, Canadian, Garfield, Grant, Kingfisher	0
5	Comanche, Cotton	4
6	Caddo, Grady, Jefferson, Stephens	4
7	Oklahoma	26
8	Kay, Noble	1
9	Logan, Payne	3
10	Osage, Pawnee	5
11	Nowata, Washington	1
12	Craig, Mayes, Rogers	6
13	Delaware, Ottawa	3
14	Tulsa	25
15	Muskogee	1
16	Latimer, LeFlore	1
17	Choctaw, McCurtain, Pushmataha	4
18	Haskell, Pittsburg	0
19	Atoka, Bryan, Coal	1
20	Carter, Johnson, Love, Marshall, Murray	2
21	Cleveland, Garvin, McClain	5
22	Hughes, Pontotoc, Seminole	1
23	Lincoln, Pottawatomie	1
24	Creek, Okfuskee	1
25	Okmulgee, McIntosh	2
26	Alfalfa, Dewey, Major, Woods, Woodward	0
27	Adair, Cherokee, Sequoyah, Wagoner	3
Total	77 Counties	104

Table 26. DVFRB – Domestic Violence Murder-Suicide Victims by DA District 2018-2023

DA District	Counties Served	Total
1	Beaver, Cimarron, Harper, Texas	0
2	Beckham, Custer, Ellis, Roger Mills, Washita	1
3	Greer, Harmon, Jackson, Kiowa, Tillman	4
4	Blaine, Canadian, Garfield, Grant, Kingfisher	0
5	Comanche, Cotton	6
6	Caddo, Grady, Jefferson, Stephens	6
7	Oklahoma	36
8	Kay, Noble	1
9	Logan, Payne	4
10	Osage, Pawnee	5
11	Nowata, Washington	1
12	Craig, Mayes, Rogers	8
13	Delaware, Ottawa	3
14	Tulsa	39
15	Muskogee	2
16	Latimer, LeFlore	1
17	Choctaw, McCurtain, Pushmataha	5
18	Haskell, Pittsburg	0
19	Atoka, Bryan, Coal	2
20	Carter, Johnson, Love, Marshall, Murray	2
21	Cleveland, Garvin, McClain	5
22	Hughes, Pontotoc, Seminole	1
23	Lincoln, Pottawatomie	1
24	Creek, Okfuskee	2
25	Okmulgee, McIntosh	7
26	Alfalfa, Dewey, Major, Woods, Woodward	0
27	Adair, Cherokee, Sequoyah, Wagoner	4
Total	77 Counties	146

Table 27. DVFRB – Intimate Partner Homicide Victims by DA District 2018-2023

DA District	Counties Served	Total
1	Beaver, Cimarron, Harper, Texas	0
2	Beckham, Custer, Ellis, Roger Mills, Washita	4
3	Greer, Harmon, Jackson, Kiowa, Tillman	2
4	Blaine, Canadian, Garfield, Grant, Kingfisher	7
5	Comanche, Cotton	14
6	Caddo, Grady, Jefferson, Stephens	7
7	Oklahoma	63
8	Kay, Noble	3
9	Logan, Payne	4
10	Osage, Pawnee	4
11	Nowata, Washington	2
12	Craig, Mayes, Rogers	9
13	Delaware, Ottawa	4
14	Tulsa	53
15	Muskogee	3
16	Latimer, LeFlore	6
17	Choctaw, McCurtain, Pushmataha	8
18	Haskell, Pittsburg	5
19	Atoka, Bryan, Coal	5
20	Carter, Johnson, Love, Marshall, Murray	7
21	Cleveland, Garvin, McClain	10
22	Hughes, Pontotoc, Seminole	5
23	Lincoln, Pottawatomie	8
24	Creek, Okfuskee	2
25	Okmulgee, McIntosh	5
26	Alfalfa, Dewey, Major, Woods, Woodward	1
27	Adair, Cherokee, Sequoyah, Wagoner	11
Total	77 Counties	252

Table 28. DVFRB – OSCN Protective Order Filings by DA District 2023

DA District	Counties Served	Total
1	Beaver, Cimarron, Harper, Texas	116
2	Beckham, Custer, Ellis, Roger Mills, Washita	338
3	Greer, Harmon, Jackson, Kiowa, Tillman	187
4	Blaine, Canadian, Garfield, Grant, Kingfisher	930
5	Comanche, Cotton	888
6	Caddo, Grady, Jefferson, Stephens	629
7	Oklahoma	3,764
8	Kay, Noble	189
9	Logan, Payne	552
10	Osage, Pawnee	231
11	Nowata, Washington	321
12	Craig, Mayes, Rogers	988
13	Delaware, Ottawa	663
14	Tulsa	4,341
15	Muskogee	569
16	Latimer, LeFlore	586
17	Choctaw, McCurtain, Pushmataha	512
18	Haskell, Pittsburg	443
19	Atoka, Bryan, Coal	233
20	Carter, Johnson, Love, Marshall, Murray	346
21	Cleveland, Garvin, McClain	1,248
22	Hughes, Pontotoc, Seminole	343
23	Lincoln, Pottawatomie	576
24	Creek, Okfuskee	544
25	Okmulgee, McIntosh	254
26	Alfalfa, Dewey, Major, Woods, Woodward	187
27	Adair, Cherokee, Sequoyah, Wagoner	1,088
Total	77 Counties	21,066

APPENDIX B: DVFRB OVERVIEW

Review Board Composition

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

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

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

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

Review Board Mission Statement

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

Review Board Recommendations

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

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

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

Dissemination of Review Board Findings and Recommendations

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

Confidentiality

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

APPENDIX C: LETHALITY ASSESSMENT

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

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

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

APPENDIX D: RESOURCES FOR PROFESSIONALS

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

Local Resources

OKLAHOMA ATTORNEY GENERAL VICTIM ADVOCACY AND SERVICES UNIT (VASU)

405.521.3921 | <https://oklahoma.gov/oag/about/divisions/victim-advocacy-and-services-unit.html>

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

NATIVE ALLIANCE AGAINST VIOLENCE

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

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

24-HOUR OKLAHOMA SAFELINE

800.522.SAFE (7233) | <https://oklahoma.gov/oag/about/divisions/victim-advocacy-and-services-unit.html>

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

National Resources

NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

800.537.2238 | www.nrcdv.org | www.vawnet.org

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

NATIONAL NETWORK TO END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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

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

NATIONAL CENTER ON DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

512.407.9020 | www.ncdsv.org/index.html

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

NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE

800.799.7233 | 800.787.3224 (TTY) | www.thehotline.org

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

NATIONAL COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

737.225.3150 | www.ncadv.org

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

BATTERED WOMEN'S JUSTICE PROJECT

800.903.0111, ext. 1 | www.bwjp.org

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

THE NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND FIREARMS

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

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

NATIONAL HEALTH RESOURCE CENTER ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

415.678.5500 | www.futureswithoutviolence.org/health

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

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

NATIONAL CENTER ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, TRAUMA, & MENTAL HEALTH

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

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

NATIONAL CENTER FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME

202.467.8700 | www.victimsofcrime.org

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

OFFICE ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

202.307.6026 | www.justice.gov/ovw

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

National Culturally Specific & Underserved Population Resources

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTER

855.649.7299 | www.niwrc.org

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

STRONGHEARTS NATIVE HELPLINE

844.762.8483 | www.strongheartshelpline.org

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

ASIAN PACIFIC INSTITUTE ON GENDER-BASED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

415.568.3315 | www.api-gbv.org

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

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

ESPERANZA UNITED (formerly Casa de Esperanza)

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

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

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

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

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

THE NATIONAL CLEARINGHOUSE ON ABUSE IN LATER LIFE (NCALL)

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

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

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

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

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

APPENDIX E: VICTIM/SURVIVOR RESOURCES

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

Local Resources

24-HOUR OKLAHOMA SAFELINE

800.522.SAFE (7233) | <https://oklahoma.gov/oag/about/divisions/victim-advocacy-and-services-unit.html>

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

OKLAHOMA ATTORNEY GENERAL VICTIM SERVICES

405.521.3921 | <https://oklahoma.gov/oag/about/divisions/victim-advocacy-and-services-unit.html>

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

ADDRESS CONFIDENTIALITY PROGRAM

866.227.7784 (For Oklahoma Area Codes Only) | <https://oklahoma.gov/oag/about/divisions/victim-advocacy-and-services-unit/acp.html>

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

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

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

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

OKLAHOMA CRIME VICTIMS' COMPENSATION

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

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

OKLAHOMA STATE COURTS NETWORK UNIFORM PROTECTIVE ORDERS

https://www.oscn.net/static/forms/aoc_forms/protectiveorders.asp

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

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS VICTIM SERVICES**405.425.2607** | <https://oklahoma.gov/doc/victim-services.html>

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

CARDINAL POINT: A DIRECTION FOR HOPE, CANADIAN COUNTY'S FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER**405.776.0990** | <https://cardinalpointok.org/>

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

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

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

PALOMAR: OKLAHOMA CITY'S FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER**405.552.1010** | text **405.355.3556** (during business hours) | <https://palomarokc.org/>

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

LEGAL AID SERVICES OF OKLAHOMA, INC.**888.534.5243** | **405.557.0020** (OKC Office) | <https://www.legalaidok.org/>

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

Culturally Specific Local Resources

NATIVE ALLIANCE AGAINST VIOLENCE**405.217.0212** | <https://oknaav.org/>

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

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

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

LATINO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY**405.236.0701** | <https://lcdaok.com/>

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

DIVERSITY CENTER OF OKLAHOMA

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

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

National Resources

NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE

800.799.7233 | **800.787.3224 (TTY)** | www.thehotline.org

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

VICTIMCONNECT RESOURCE CENTER

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

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

LOVE IS RESPECT

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

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

APPENDIX F: DATA METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

Types of Cases Reviewed

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

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

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

Case Identification

The Review Board and Program Staff search multiple Oklahoma newspapers and their social media sites for homicide incidents which have occurred in the state and which appear or are known to have been related to domestic violence. A major source of cases that falls into this category is the *Tulsa World’s* Tulsa homicide case [database](https://tulsaworld.com/news/specialreports-databases/tulsa-homicide-case-database-1989-to-present/html_cd9f9c2e-2c52-11e3-aa7e-001a4bcf6878.html#tncms-source=login)⁹³, which tracks all homicides in the Tulsa metropolitan area from 1989 to present.

⁹³ Tulsa World. (2025, January 20). *Tulsa homicide case database 1989 to present*. Retrieved from https://tulsaworld.com/news/specialreports-databases/tulsa-homicide-case-database-1989-to-present/html_cd9f9c2e-2c52-11e3-aa7e-001a4bcf6878.html#tncms-source=login

Program Staff also utilize multiple local television news and their social media accounts of homicides as another source of domestic violence-related murders and suicides that have occurred in the state. They also regularly search websites such as the [Gun Violence Archive](#)⁹⁴ and the [Gun Violence Memorial](#)⁹⁵ for Oklahoma gun deaths and use multiple sources, including some of those already listed, to evaluate if any of them are domestic violence-related.

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

Case Review Process

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

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

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

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

The Review Process

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

- examine the circumstances and context of the death
- establish a timeline and summary of events leading up to the death incident going back as far as possible
- identify potential lethality risk factors (also known as *red flags*)

⁹⁴ Gun Violence Archive. (2025, January 8). *Gun violence archive*. Retrieved from <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/>

⁹⁵ Gun Memorial. (n.d.). *Gun memorial*. Retrieved from <https://gunmemorial.org/>

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

Data Collection, Validation, and Limitations

Variables and Collection

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

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

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

Validation

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

were a Tribal member). Many master case list variables collected are cross validated by the Program Manager and the Research Analyst to ensure accuracy.

Limitations

Since Program Staff relies primarily on media reports and online databases to identify potential domestic violence-related fatalities, there is no certainty that all deaths are captured. Additional domestic violence fatalities could be found among deaths ruled to be due to unintentional injuries, to injuries of undetermined intent, and suicide.⁹⁶ In particular, deaths due to strangulation, suffocation, drug overdoses, and poisonings may not be ruled a homicide or reported as such by the media.

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

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

⁹⁶ For example, in Utah 33.1% of the IPV-related fatality victims from 2009-2016 were suicides. Utah Domestic Violence Prevention Fund. (2020). *Intimate partner and domestic violence fatalities in Utah: 2020 report*. Utah Department of Health. <https://vipp.utah.gov/wp-content/uploads/IP-DV-Fatalities-2020-1.pdf>

APPENDIX G: TERMINOLOGY

ACRONYM/TERM	DEFINITION
85% Crime	Refers to a sentencing law that requires certain convicted offenders to serve at least 85% of their sentence before becoming eligible for parole.
A&B	Assault and Battery. A criminal charge involving physical harm or the threat of harm, often part of domestic violence.
ACASI	Arizona Child and Adolescent Survivor Initiative. A program in Arizona designed to provide specialized services to children and caregivers impacted by intimate partner homicide or violence, serving as a model for similar programs.
ACE	Adverse Childhood Experiences. Certain negative events occurring before age 18.
ACP	Address Confidentiality Program
ADA	Assistant District Attorney
Advocacy	Support and assistance provided to victims, often including safety planning, resources, and emotional & practical help from individuals or organizations.
Battering	Ongoing physical, emotional, or psychological abuse with the intent to control or intimidate.
BIP	Batterers Intervention Program
Bystander/Good Samaritan Homicide	A killing of an innocent bystander or a person who intervenes in a domestic violence situation, typically not directly involved in the conflict.
CCRT	Coordinated Community Response Team. A collaborative group of professionals and organizations addressing DV within their community and creating a more responsive, efficient system. The team typically includes representatives from law enforcement, victim advocates, legal professionals, social services, and other agencies and community organizations.
Charge Enhancement	Steps increasing the severity of a criminal charge, typically in cases of repeat offenses or aggravating circumstances, resulting in increased penalties.
Child Exposure to Domestic Violence	Refers to children witnessing or being affected by domestic violence, often leading to long-term harm.
CHIRP	Criminal History Information Request Portal
CLEET	Council on Law Enforcement Education and Training
Coercion	The use of force, threats, or manipulation to make someone act against their will, often seen in abusive relationships.
CPS	Child Protective Services
CWS	Child Welfare Services
Cycle of Abuse	A repetitive pattern of abusive behavior, including tension building, violence, and reconciliation, followed by calm periods.
DA	District Attorney
DAC	District Attorneys Council
Deferred Sentence	A legal judgment in which a defendant pleads guilty but the court delays sentencing, offering the defendant a chance to avoid a formal conviction if he or she meets certain conditions.
DHS	Department of Human Services. The Oklahoma state agency responsible for services related to children and families, including welfare, child protective services, and response to domestic violence cases.
DOC	Department of Correction
DOJ	Department of Justice
Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Resource Prosecutor	A specialized role within the Oklahoma District Attorneys Council focused on providing assistance and expertise in domestic violence and sexual assault cases.

DVFRB	Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board. A team that reviews domestic violence-related death cases to identify patterns and make recommendations to prevent future fatalities. Statutorily authorized under 22 O.S. § 1601 <i>et seq.</i>
DV	Domestic Violence. A pattern of abusive behavior used by one partner to gain or maintain control over another.
DV/SA	Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
Emergency Ex Parte Order	A judge-signed order designed to provide immediate protection on an emergency basis for a person who is a victim of domestic violence, stalking, harassment, etc. <i>Ex parte</i> means without the abuser present in court, allowing for a swift response to protect the victim.
ETO	Emergency Temporary Order (of Protection). A legal order issued to provide immediate protection when the court is not open for business, usually in cases of domestic violence, when a victim's safety is at risk.
Evidence-Based Prosecution	A legal approach that emphasizes the use of physical evidence and law enforcement testimony in domestic violence cases, especially when victims are unable or unwilling to testify
Hearsay	Refers to a statement made outside of the current court proceeding that is offered in court as evidence to prove the truth of the matter asserted in the statement. Such statements are generally inadmissible due to unreliability.
Hearsay Exception	A rule allowing certain out-of-court statements to be admissible in court, even though they are typically not allowed under hearsay rules.
I.S.	Interim Study. A brief study or review by the Oklahoma Legislature to examine a specific issue or policy.
IPH	Intimate Partner Homicide. The killing of one intimate partner by another in a domestic violence context.
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence. Abuse of another with whom the perpetrator is in a close relationship (physical, emotional, or sexual).
LAP	Lethality Assessment Protocol. A process and tool used by law enforcement to assess the potential risk of intimate partner homicide in domestic violence situations and connect with victim services.
LE	Law Enforcement
Lethality Risk	The likelihood that domestic violence may escalate to homicide. Tools like LAP are used to assess this risk.
M/S	Murder/Suicide. A homicide in which the perpetrator kills one or more victims before killing themselves.
MHP	Mental Health Provider. Professionals trained to offer mental health services, such as therapists, psychologists, or counselors, who provide treatment for trauma, grief, and other psychological needs.
NIBRS	National Incident-Based Reporting System
Nolo Contendere	A legal plea in which a defendant does not admit guilt but agrees to accept punishment as if guilty. Often referred to as a "no contest" plea.
Nontestimonial	A legal term describing statements or evidence that do not fall under the rules of testimony, often relevant in determining admissibility in court.
O.S.	Oklahoma Statutes. The codified body of laws governing Oklahoma.
OAG	Office of the Oklahoma Attorney General. The office responsible for overseeing law enforcement.
OCDR	On Demand Court Records
OSBI	Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation. The primary state agency that collects and manages criminal data in Oklahoma, including domestic violence reports.
OSCN	Oklahoma State Court Network
PACER	Public Access to Court Electronic Records

SA	Sexual assault.
SAC	Statistical Analysis Center
Safety Plan	A temporary, short-term, tailored plan to safeguard victim safety while more permanent safety provisions (including offender accountability) can be put in place.
SAMHSA	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
SIBRS	State Incident-Based Reporting System. A system used by law enforcement agencies to report domestic violence incidents and victims to the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation (OSBI).
SRS	Summary Reporting System
Stalking	Repeated, unwanted behavior that causes annoyance, fear, or distress, often present in domestic violence cases and often precedes intimate partner homicides.
Sublethal IPV	Intimate partner violence that does not result in death but may still result in significant harm, such as physical injury or psychological trauma.
SWAT	Special Weapons and Tactics. A police unit specializing in high-risk operations.
Target Systems	Stakeholder organizations and entities that impact or will be impacted by or are involved in implementing a recommendation, such as the Oklahoma Legislature, Governor's Office, and District Attorney Offices.
Trauma-Informed Care	Services that recognize and address the impact of trauma, particularly in cases of abuse. This approach is grounded in the understanding that survivors of DV may experience physical, emotional, psychological, and/or sexual trauma, which can affect behavior, decision-making, and well-being.
Triangle Homicide	Also known as sexual-competitor homicide. A killing that often revolves around three parties where competition or control is exerted by the perpetrator against another individual over a romantic or sexual partner.
VASU	Victim Advocacy and Services Unit. A unit within the Office of the Oklahoma Attorney General that provides advocacy and services to victims of crime, including domestic violence.
Victim-Blaming	Focusing on a victim's conduct more than the abuser's or holding the victim responsible for the violence he or she experiences, which can justify the abuser's actions. It often includes placing responsibility on the individual for the abuse, violence, or trauma experienced, and shifting the focus away from the perpetrator's conduct.
Victim's Compensation	Financial assistance provided to victims of crime to help cover expenses incurred as a result of certain crimes, such as medical bills, funeral costs, or lost wages.
VPO	Victim Protection Order. A legal order issued by a court to protect a victim from harm, often used in cases of DV. A VPO shall not exceed five years, unless a specific finding under 22 O.S. § 60.4 (G)(1)(b) qualifies it to be a continuous order.
Witness Intimidation	The act of threatening, coercing, or otherwise discouraging a witness from testifying in a criminal case, particularly common in domestic violence cases. Intimidation may occur directly from defendant to witness or by a defendant's proxy (friend, family member, etc.).

APPENDIX H: REFERENCES

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2024 DVFRB ANNUAL REPORT

OKLAHOMA DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FATALITY REVIEW BOARD OKLAHOMA OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL



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oklahoma.gov/oag/vasu

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

SafeLine
1-800-522-SAFE (7233)

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

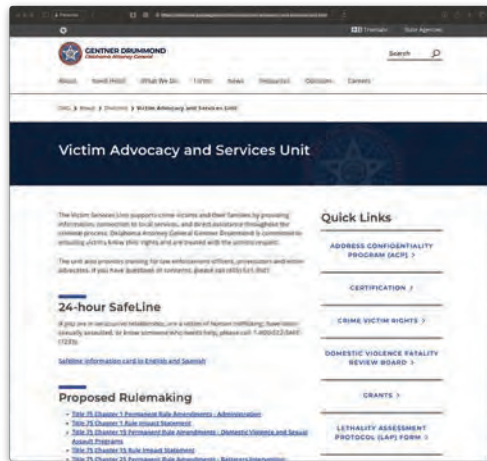
Victim Advocacy & Services Unit
405-521-3921

If you need more info about the Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board, call:

Office of the Attorney General
405-521-3921

If you are in an emergency situation please dial

9-1-1
for Emergency Assistance



VICTIM ADVOCACY AND SERVICES UNIT WEBPAGE

<https://oklahoma.gov/oag/vasu>

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

PLEASE WIDELY DISSEMINATE THIS ANNUAL REPORT.

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

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