

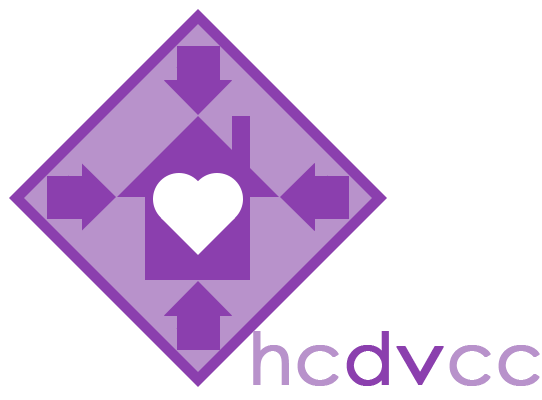
Harris County Domestic Violence

Coordinating Council

Adult Violent Death Review Team

2015

Annual Report



*“she*

*really thought he loved her . . . she really thought that he loved her”*

*–*

*Victim’s Mother*

*, Family Interviewing Project*

*We dedicate this report to all the people affected by*

*Intimate Partner Violence—survivors, family members, friends, co-workers, service providers, law enforcement and especially those who lost their lives as a result.*

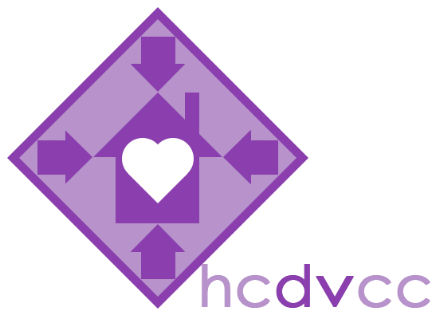
*May we all strive to end violence.*



This report would not be possible without the hard work and dedication of the Adult Violent

Death Review Team members (AVDRT). The AVDRT would like to thank Captain Dwayne Ready and the Houston Police Department’s Homicide Division. Without their support and

cooperation our reviews would be not be as comprehensive. The Team would also like to thank the families that shared the stories of their loved ones with us. Your kindness, strength and courage are unmatched.



January 2016

The year 2015 was an impactful year for the Adult Violent Death Review Team (AVDRT). Were convened after a two year break which included several community assessments, the beginning of family interviewing, and many new team members. If this is your first introduction to the AVDRT, let me provide a brief history. Each month a group of passionate advocates and investigators meet to review domestic violence homicides/suicides that have taken place in the Houston/Harris County community. The purpose of these meetings are to conduct a formal, confidential, and system-wide review; with the end-goal of creating and sustaining change in the “systems” within the Harris County community. Community collaborations of this degree are difficult to duplicate; this team has been meeting routinely since 1996 and its members are committed to seeing the end to domestic violence homicides and suicides.

Homicides and suicides are not easy to read about; this is an important report and I encourage you to review this with care knowing that we as a community still grapple with the loss of life, the impact of violence on children, and the impact on those advocates who assist surviving family members during the most difficult time of their lives.

This report marks the end of my tenure as the Chair of the AVDRT. My ten years of chairing this team has been an honor and an amazing learning experience. I have been surrounded by professionals from many different walks of life, each bringing their own passion and expertise to the table. I have been forever changed by this work and these people.

Donna Amtsberg, LCSW

AVDRT Chair

Clinical Assistant Professor

Director, Child Trauma Program

Graduate College of Social Work

University of Houston dkamtsberg@uh.edu 713-743-1491

# Adult Violent Death Review Team Agency Members

Aid to Victims of Domestic Abuse

The Bridge Over Troubled Waters, Inc.

Cenikor’s Odyssey House District Attorney’s Office, Victim Witness Division Domestic Violence Coordinating Council

Harris County Sheriff’s Department Homicide + Family Violence Unit

### Houston Area Women’s Center Houston Community College System Houston Police Department Homicide + Family Violence Unit Northwest Assistance Ministries, Family Violence Center Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (CPS & APS) Shalom Bayit University of Houston, Graduate College of Social Work



# Harris County Adult Violent Death Review Team Members

Donna Amtsberg, Chair

University of Houston Graduate School of Social Work

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Lori Albee  Adult Protective Services | Sherri Kendall  Aid to Victims of Domestic Abuse |
| Antrece Bagett  Houston Community College System | Lisa Levine  Houston Area Women’s Center |
| Sherryl Becker  Texas Department of Family and Protective Services | Barbara McInnis Houston Police Department |
| Barbie Brashear  Harris County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council | Deborah Moseley  The Bridge Over Troubled Waters |
| Rhonda Cartwright  Harris County Community Supervision and Corrections Department | Toby Myers  Shalom Bayit |
| Captain Sean Conrad  Harris County Sheriff’s Office | Michelle Permenter  Harris County District Attorney’s Office |
| Megan Hoag  Adult Violent Death Review Team Research Assistant | Rachel Portnoy  Adult Protective Services |
| Nicole Huff  Cenikor’s Odyssey House | Amy Smith  Harris County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council |
| Sgt. Greg Jackson Houston Police Department | Lt. Kira Webster Houston Police Department |

## Contents

[Adult Violent Death Review Team Agency Members vi](#_Toc24960)

[Harris County Adult Violent Death Review Team Members vii](#_Toc24961)

Contents ................................................................................................................. **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Introduction .......................................................................................................................................................... 1

Harris County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council Background .............................................................. 2

Intimate Partner Violence Fatality Review ....................................................................................................... 2

Cases of Intimate Partner Homicide in Harris County, TX .................................................................................... 4

Overview ........................................................................................................................................................... 4

Case Review Selection Process ......................................................................................................................... 5

Family Interviews .............................................................................................................................................. 5

Limitations ........................................................................................................................................................ 6

Summary Data of Cases Reviewed........................................................................................................................ 7

Fatality Details .................................................................................................................................................. 7

Victim & Perpetrator Demographics ................................................................................................................ 9

Victims ........................................................................................................................................................ 10

Relationship .................................................................................................................................................... 11

Living Arrangement ..................................................................................................................................... 11

Age Difference ............................................................................................................................................ 12

Children .......................................................................................................................................................... 13

Children Who Lost A Parent ........................................................................................................................ 14

Perpetrator History ......................................................................................................................................... 15

Criminal History .......................................................................................................................................... 15

Risk Factors ................................................................................................................................................. 16

Sentencing ...................................................................................................................................................... 17

Lessons Learned About the Review Process and Our Community ..................................................................... 18

Challenges ................................................................................................................................................... 20

Changes for Next Year ................................................................................................................................ 20

2016 AVDRT Recommendations ......................................................................................................................... 21



Harris

County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council

Harris County

Domestic

Violence

Coordinating

Council

Adult Violent Death Review

Team

Introduction

E

ach year in the St

ate of Texas, Harris County (

the State’s largest

county) has the highest number of women who are killed by their

intimate partners.

Harris County is the third largest county in the

United States with a population of more than 4.1 million people.

In

2014

, 132 women in Texas were killed by their intimate partners.

Twenty

-

eight of those deaths occurred in Harris County, (Texas

Council on

Family Violence, 2015).

Every year, the

Harris County

(

Council

Coordinating

Domestic

Violence

HCDVCC)

gathers

information related to service delivery from our local partners. We

know that there are over 35,000 calls to law enforcement on an

annual basis

in Harris County, and more than 82,000 calls to

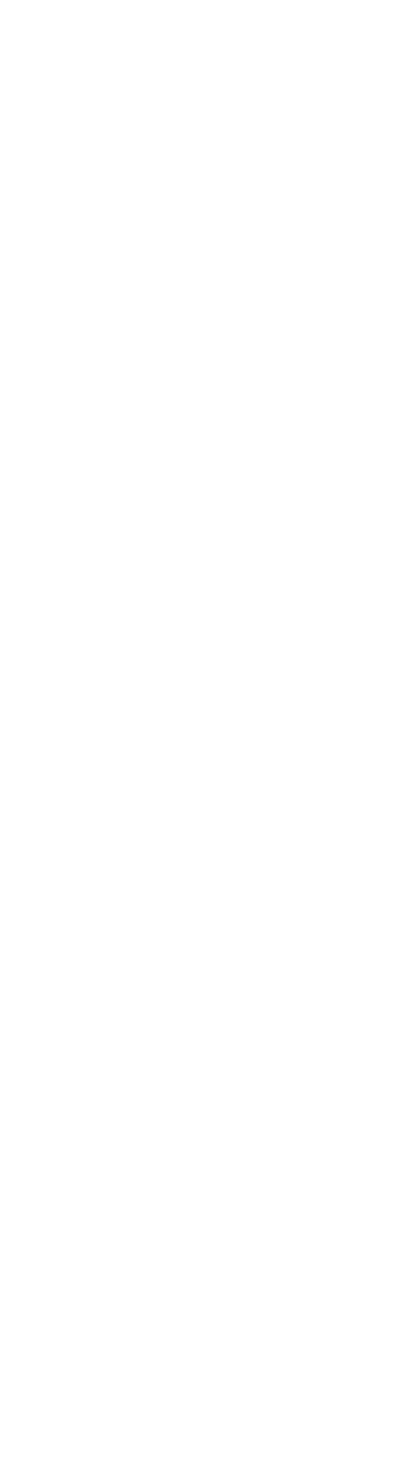
domestic violence hotlines within the county (HCDCVCC annual

collection of data from domestic violence systems, 2012). It is

estimated that 1 in 3 women are victims of domestic violence in their

lifetime (C

atalano, S, 2007).



“I never thought he

would hurt her, up

until the very end

when they separated

the last time. That’s

when I started

believing he would

actually hurt her,

because . . . he had

tried everything,

there was nothing left

for him to try.”

–

Victim’s Moth

er

,

Family Interviewing

Project



Harris County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council

According to Futures W

ithout Violence:



On average, more than three women are murdered by their husbands or boyfriends

in this country every day.



Of females killed with a firearm, almost two

-

thirds were killed by their intimate

partner.



Women are much more likely than men to be killed by an intimate partner. In 2005,

intimate partner homicides accounted for 33 percent of the murders of women but

less than four percent of the murders of men.

Harris County Domestic Violence Coord

inating Council Background

Harris County has a 20

-

year history of working toward creating community collaborations that

impact systemic change for survivors of domestic violence. The Harris County Domestic

Violence Coordinating Council (HCDVCC) was form

ed in 1996

in response to

identifying

collaboration as an essential building block to establish a coordinated

and systemic response. The

efforts to coordinate have evolved out of frustrations with the fragmentation of the policies and

activities of the

various agencies serving victims of domestic violence. These frustrations have

been expressed by victims, the community

,

and the service providers themselves.

HCDVCC serves as the coordinated community response for domestic violence and plays a

central

role in increasing collaborations among service providers. Because there are more

than 100 different organizations from various systems responding to victims of domestic

violence, collaboration building was identified as an essential building block to add

ressing the

barriers to increasing safety for victims, and decreasing violent deaths. HCDVCC is

distinguished by its strong, volunteer board of local leaders, which include representatives

from the Harris County District Attorney's Office, Houston Police D

epartment, Harris County

Sherriff’s Office, Pasadena Police Department, and Executive Directors of

various

victim

service agencies. HCDVCC is positioned to be an agency whose sole interest is working to

create strong collaborative partnerships in the commu

nity that increase communication

among services providers to effect positive change.

Intimate Partner Violence Fatality Review

As domestic violence work progressed across the United States, it became clear in many

communities that there was a need to for

m fatality review teams; the purpose of which is to



Harris

County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council

review domestic violence

-

related homicide cases and ident

ify needs within each community

with the ultimate goal of decreasing the incidence of preventable adult deaths.

In 2001 the Texas Legislature pass

ed Senate Bill 515 amending Chapter 672 of the Texas

Health and Safety Code to allow for the formation of adult fatality review teams in Texas

counties. In August of 2003 the AVDRT was designated as the official Harris County adult

fatality review team by

Harris County Commissioners Court.

Each month the AVDRT conducts system

-

wide reviews of selected cases of adult unexpected

deaths that have been caused by intimate partner violence occurring in Houston and Harris

County.



To conduct formal,

confidential and systematic evaluation and analyses of

adjudicated cases of family violence occurring in Houston and Harris County, focusing

on the flow of each case through the various agencies in the system to identify areas

for improvement or strengthen

ing of agency contacts and interagency response.



To evaluate policies, protocols, and practices to identify gaps in service within

agencies and the community.



To build a database for analysis of aggregate population of deceased persons and

perpetrators.



To disseminate information on prevention strategies through a bi

-

annual quantitative

and qualitative report to the AVDRT, HCDVCC, and as required to the Texas

Department of Protective and Regulatory Services and to the community at large.

“

***”s***

***he was high s***

***pirited, very high spirited, and very ambitious . . . and***

***she had a heart, a heart of gold . . . all of a sudden, that spirit . . .***

***came all the way down . . . if she walked out the door, she had to call***

***and let him know that she walked out the door and I***

***got to thinking,***

***there is something not right with this . . . that’s not a healthy***

***relationship if you have to call every time you make a move”***

***–***

***Victim’s Mother, Family Interviewing Project***



Harris County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council

Cases

of Intimate Partner Homicide in Harris County, TX

Overvi

ew

The case review data described in the 2015 report includes information from 17 cases of

intimate partner homicide in Harris County, TX from 2010

-

2012

. The data is based on the

number of cases reviewed by the team this year and does not reflect the tota

l number of

intimate partner homicides for the time period.



15

Cases Reviewed from

2012



1

Case Reviewed from 2011

*[*

*^*

*Evidence was presented to a Grand Jury who*

*determined that the person acted in self*

*-*

*defense so the case was no*

*-*

*billed.*

*Decedent*

*was the*

*main aggress*

*or with a long history of DV*

*.]*



1

Case Reviewed from 2010

*[*

*\*Charges were dismissed because the*

*body has never*

*been found*

*but the defendant was convicted on a Federal gun charge.*

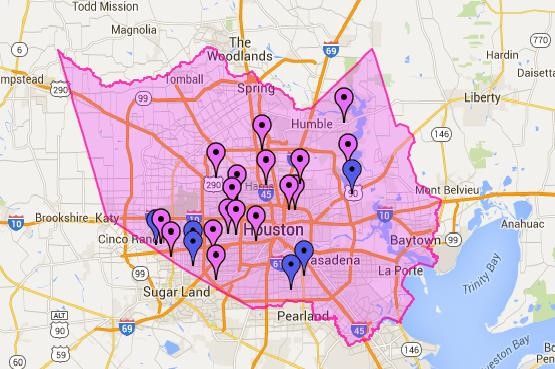
*]*

**Harris County, TX:**

The purple markers represent the zip codes of the 17 cases we

reviewed and the blue markers represent the 6 cases provide to us that we did not

have time to review.



Harris

County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council

Case Review Selection Process

Intimate partner homicides are identified by the relation

ship between the victim and the

perpetrator as being current or former spouses or current or

former

dating relationships. T

his

definition includes all intimate partner homicides regardless o

f the gender of the perpetrator,

including

same sex couples.

The

case list for the review process is generated by the Harris County District Attorney’s

Office. The list only includes cases where charges were filed

by the police agency and

accepted for prosecution by the Harris County District Attorney’s Office

. The l

ist may or may

not include murder/suicide cases. The total number of cases on the list to be reviewed by

the team during this time period was 23. Due to time constraints only 17 went th

rough the

entire review process.

Family Interviews

In hopes of

learning more about the lives of these victims and additional opportunities for

interventions and system changes, we spent the better part of the year developing the

process and policies for the inclusion of family interviews in our yearly review

.

Of the

17

cases reviewed we only had contact information on 9 of the families, with most

information being outdated and no longer available as mos

t of the cases were 3+ years old

.

Of the 3 families that were contacted

,

only 2 agreed to meet with select team mem

bers. The

third family did not believe their loved one’s case was an intimate partner homicide, although

case documents indicated that it was a same

-

sex relationship

.

The family interviews provided insightful information into the

challenges the victim

and the

family experienced leading up to the murder and the strength that has carried them forward

since then.

Not only did they provide

us helpful details about the

history of the violence in the

relationship

,

but of the relationship it

self,

the family’s

perception of what was happening to

their loved ones

, and their reflections on what needs to change in order to prevent this from

happening to others. We are humbled by the graciousness and openness of the families that

a

llowed us to interview them and m

ost of all we are

awed and

inspired by their strength and

resilience

.



Harris County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council

Limitations

Our findings align with the current nationwide data

available on intimate partner homicides, however,

we

recognize that the data

we

captured is only a snapshot

of

these

homicides.

O

ur review process does have several

limitations

,

including:

**Access to**

**Rel**

**evant Case**

**Information:**

Not everyone that

we would like to be at the table is currently

there. Our

access to a case is limited to the

information

current

team members

are able to gather and share

. While

everyone at the table is open and honest with their

information

,

many unanswered question

s remain.

**Accessing**

**Data**

:

The databases of team member agencies

were not designed to pull data for the purposes of the

review

.

Thus, data gathering is often

a cumbersome

process for already time

-

constrained agencies

and team

members

. There is additional data we would like to

access for the review, but we must be cognizant of the

time and effort each additional request places on team

members and their agencies. Additionally, the State of

Texas does not have a system in

place to collect

statewide and county level

data on

intimate partner

homicides.

A statewide tracking system would allow for

easier access to data and information.

**Access to**

**More**

**Current Cases:**

The majority of the 17

cases reviewed in 2015 were from 201

2

, with one being

from 2010 and one from 2011.

The District Attorney

provides us access to

cases that have gone through the

first stage of disposition, meaning the

defendants

have

pl

ed guilty or were found guilty. These reviews have

allowed us to identify

gaps within systems and identify

areas for improvement within our community. However,

because these cases happened 3+ years ago, it can limit

our ability to provide up to date recommendations as

some issues we identify in the review

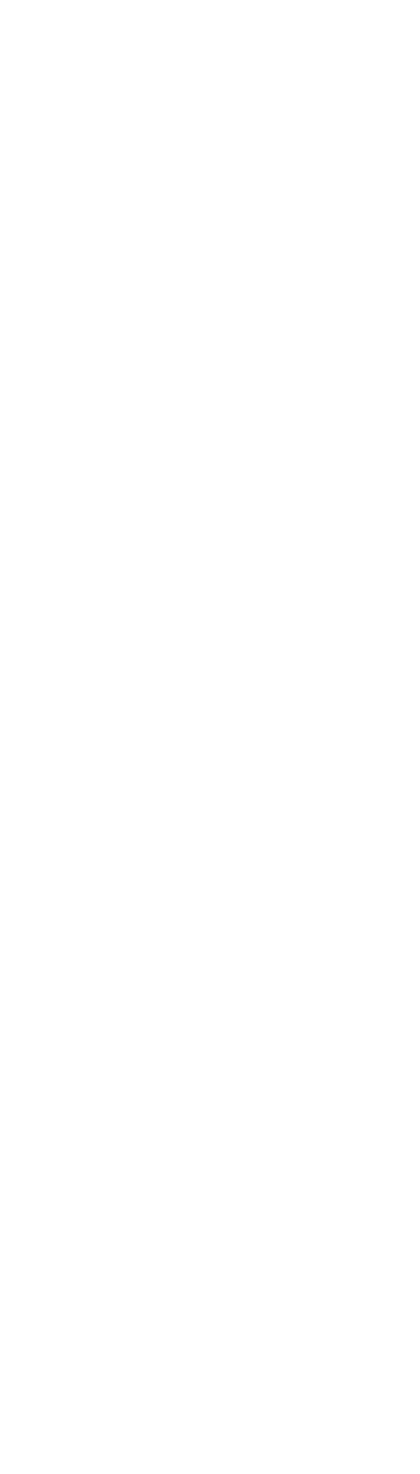
have already been

resol

ved by the time we review

ed

the case.



“I was tempted to call

him over, hit her

myself and set him

up . . . to just end the

madness . . . for

somebody like me to

even start thinking

like that, it has got

ten

really bad and you

feel like there is no

other way out . . .

we’re just not like

that, but us not doing

something cost her

life.”

–

Victim’s Mother

,

Family Interviewing

Project



Harris

County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council

Summary Data of Cases Reviewed

Fatality Details

The majority of the homicides

from our case reviews

fall within three

categories, with gunshot

wounds resulting in two

-

fifths of the homicides

17)

of

(7

, followed

by more than one

-

fifth

from stab wounds

(4

of

17)

, and nearly one

-

fifth

from strangulation

17)

(3

of

.

In two of the seventeen cases reviewed, the perpetrator committed suicide after killing the

victim. In both cases the perpetrator was a male and the met

hod of suicide was a gunshot to

the head.

In nearly one

-

fifth

of cases reviewed

17)

(3

of

, there were c

ollateral victims resulting in two

deaths (victim’s c

ousin, victim’s boyfriend) and one

non

-

life threatening injury (victim’s

friend’s boyfriend). All w

ere the result of gunshot wounds.

In the cases reviewed, more than two

-

fifths of perpetrators

(7

of 16)

had

drugs and/or alcohol

in their system at the time of the homicide

(

*^2011 self*

*-*

*defense case not included*

).

*“*

*When she died, it was at that point when*

*the police asked*

*me was she abused. ‘What do you mean?’ She had marks*

*and things on her back . . . we never knew . . . the way that*

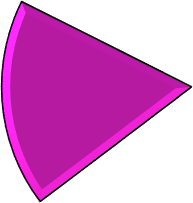
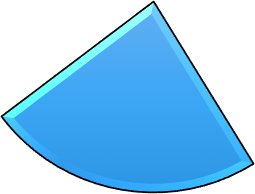
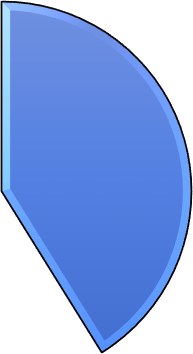
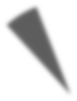
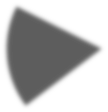
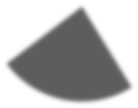
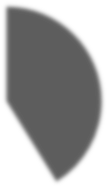
*he did her, it was violent, it was very, very violent”*

*–*

*Victim’s*

*Mother*

*, Family Interviewing Project*



41

%

%

23

18

%

%

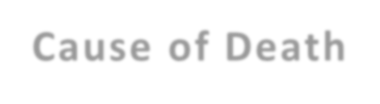
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6

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**Cause of Death**



Gunshot Wounds



Stab Wounds^



Strangulation



Blunt Force Injury

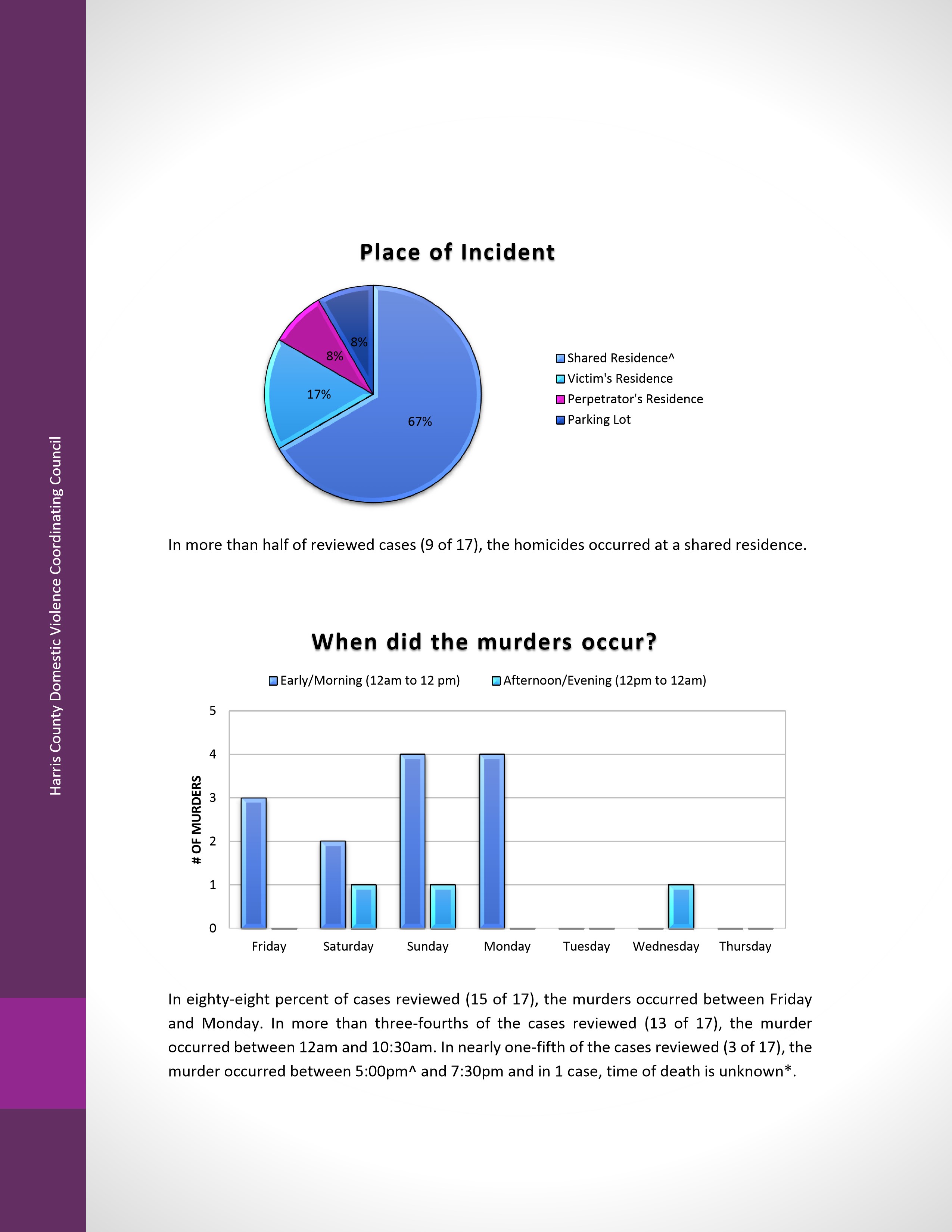


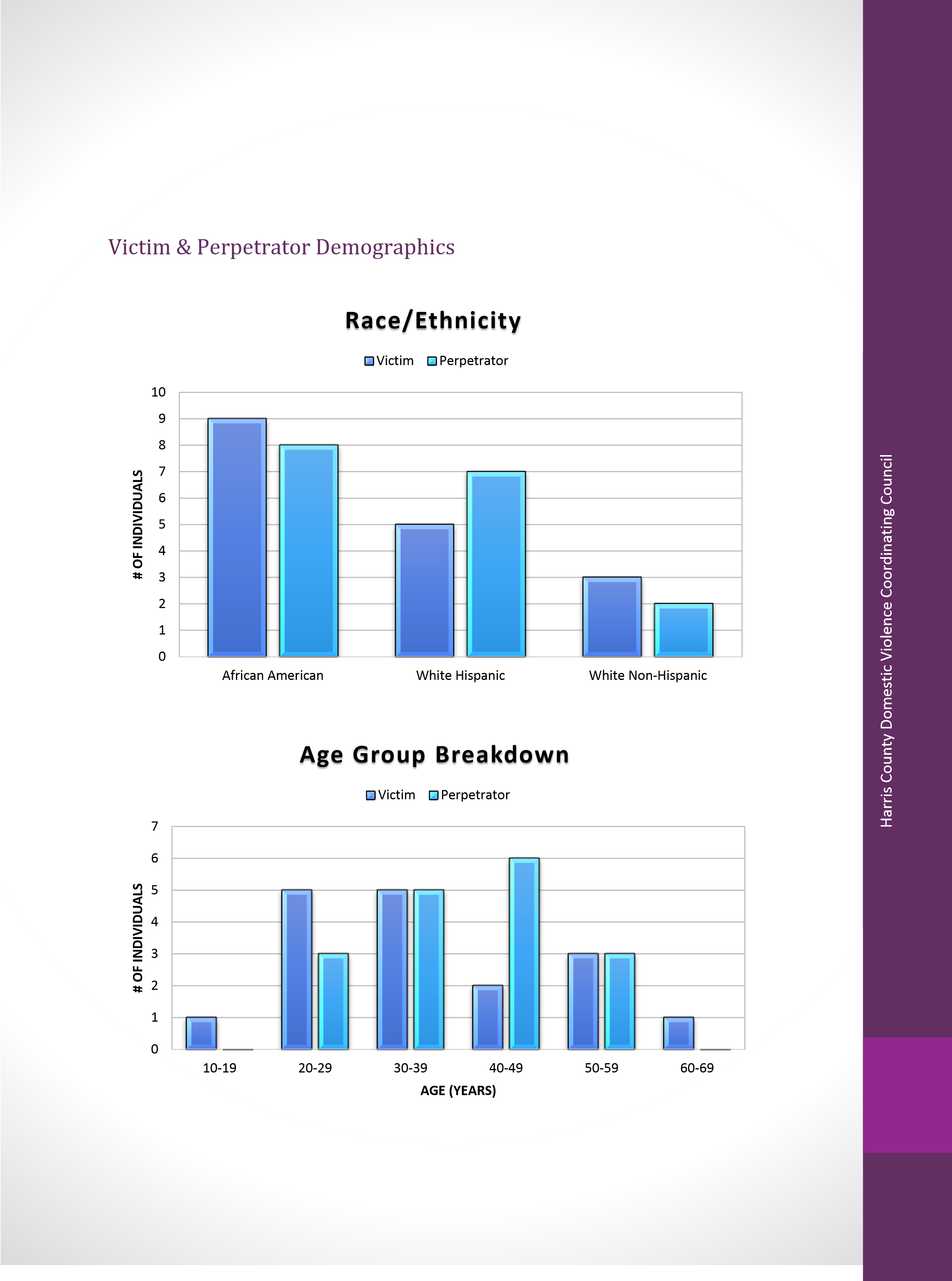
Strangulation, suffocation, &

blunt force injury



Unknown\*







Harris County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council

**Victims**

Of the cases reviewed, more tha

n three

-

fourths of the victims were female

(13

of

17)

. Of the male victims, one was the main aggressor in the self

-

defense case. About half of

the victims were African

-

American

(9

of

17)

, while twenty

-

nine percent were Hispanic

(5

of

17)

and eighteen percent were White, Non

-

Hispanic

(3

of

17)

. More than half of victims were

between the ages of 20 and 39 at the time of the incident

17)

of

(10

. The average age for a

female victim was 32 years and the average age for a male victim was 56 ye

ars.

**Perpetrators**

Of the cases reviewed, more than four

-

fifths of the perpetrators were male

(14

of 17)

. Of the female per

petrators, one was included from

the self

-

defense case. Nearly half

of the perpetrators were African

-

American

(8

or

17)

, while abou

t two

-

fifths were Hispanic

(7

of 17)

and about one

-

tenth were White, Non

-

Hispanic

17)

of

(2

. About two

-

thirds of

perpetrators were between the ages of 30 and 49 at the time of the incident

(

17)

11

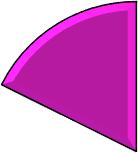
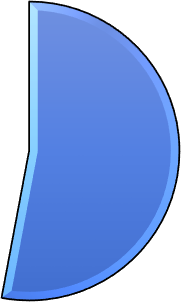
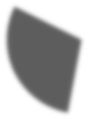
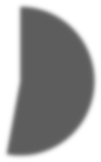
of

. The

average age for a male perpetrator is 39 years and

the average age for a female perpetrator

was 51 years.



%

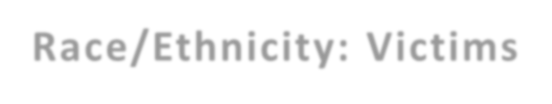
53

%

29

18

%



**Race/Ethnicity: Victims**



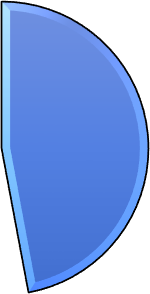
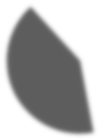
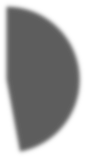
African American



White Hispanic



White Non-Hispanic



47

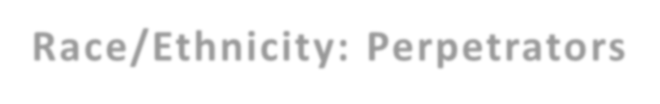
%

%

41

%

12



**Race/Ethnicity: Perpetrators**



African American



White Hispanic



White Non-Hispanic



Harris

County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council

Relationship

**Relationship Status**

Of the cases reviewed, about three

-

fifths of relationships were dating

(10

of

17)

, while about two

-

fifths were married

of

(7

17)

, including common law and those

who w

ere separated with no divorce pending. One of the 17 cases was a same sex

relationship.

**Living Arrangement**

In more than three

-

fourths of the cases

17)

of

(14

, the victims and

perpetrators were living together at the time of the incident.

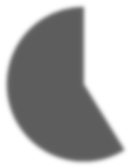
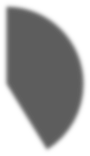
*“My daughter’s name wasn’t on the lease. People say they*

*didn’t even know she was there. That’s how isolated it*

*was.”*

*–*

*Victim’s Mother, Family Interviewing Project*



%

41

%

59



**Relationship at Time of Death**



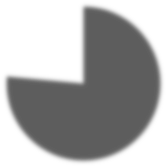
Married [Including, common law

marriage and separated with no

divorce pending]



Dating

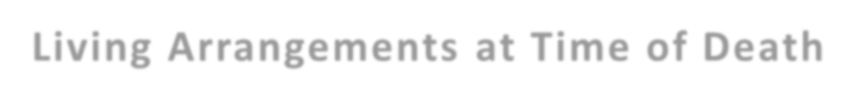


%

76

%

24



**Living Arrangements at Time of Death**



Living Together



Not Living Together



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**Age Difference**

Nearly half of all victims were younger than the perpetrator

17)

(8

of

.

Fe

males were on average 12 years younger than the perpetrator while there were no male

victims younger than the perpetrator.

More than one

-

third

(6

of 17)

of the victims were older

than the perpetrator (including all male victims) and on average female victi

ms were 4 years

older and male victims were 8 years older than the perpetrators. Additionally, eighteen

percent of victims were the same age as the perpetrator

17)

of

(3

.

*“he was such a normal good guy . . . you didn’t see this, at*

*family functions, birt*

*hday dinners, whatever it was, you*

*couldn’t have asked for a better guy . . . we didn’t*

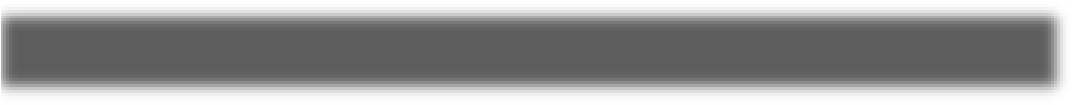
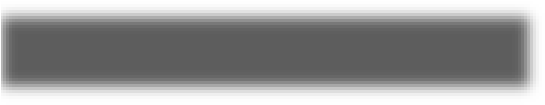
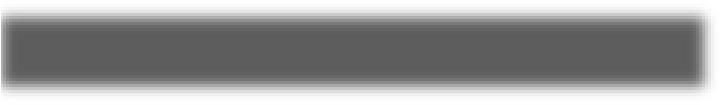
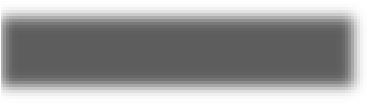
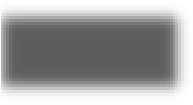
*know,*

*we didn’t*

*know”*

*–*

*Victim’s Aunt, Family Interviewing Project*



0

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

to 29 Years Younger

20

to 19 Years Younger

10

to 9 Years Younger

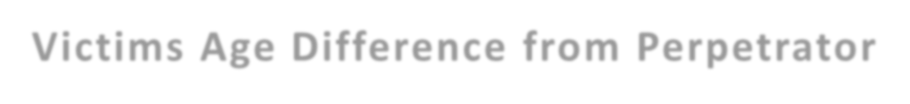
1

No Age Difference

Years Older

1-9

**# OF VICTIMS**



**Victims Age Difference from Perpetrator**



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*“She loved him, yes she did, but I really think [she]*

*probably would have ended that relationship*

*long*

*before she did if it had not been for her kids”*

*–*

*Victim’s Mother, Family Interviewing Project*

Children

Of the cases reviewe

d, 9 of them included children, equating to

more than half of the victims

having children. In five of the nine cases, all children were in common between the victim and

the perpetrator. In two of the nine cases, the victim had a child in common with the

perpetrator and a child that was not the perpe

trators biological child. In one of the nine cases,

there were no children in common, but the victim had an adult child/children that was not

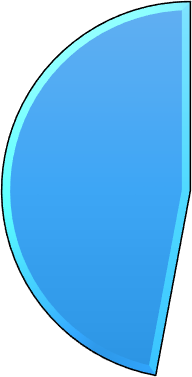
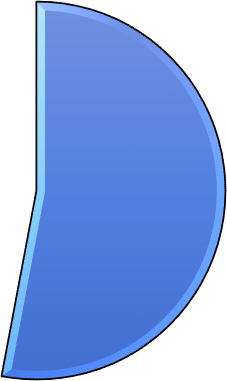
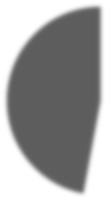
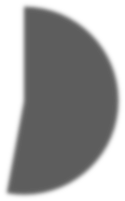
the perpetrators biological child. In one of the nine cases, the victim had step

-

children who

were the biological

children of the perpetrator.



Yes

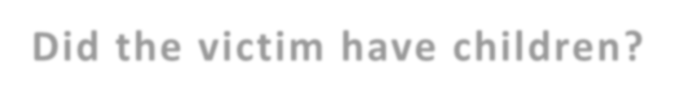
%

53

No

%

47



**Did the victim have children?**



Yes



No



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**Children Who Lost A Parent**

Of the nine cases, 23 children lost one or both parents [

*\*2010*

*case not included*

*—*

*number of adult children of victim is unknown*

. Nearly three

]

-

fourths of

the children were minors

of 23)

(17

when

they lost their parents and one

-

fourth were adults

23)

(6

of

. Additionally, thirteen percent of children lost both parents

(3

of

23)

, as the

perpetrator committed suicide after the murder.

**Children Present**

**During Incident**

In four of the nine cases

(44%)

, the murder occurred

while children were present in the home, with 8 children being present at the time of the

homicide

(35%)

. Of the children present, half of them witnessed the event or discovered the

body

8)

(4

of

.

*\*Based on 9 cases and a total of 23 c*

*hildren*

*.*

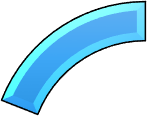
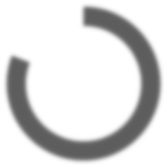
*“We [children] didn’t talk, we were scared . . . what he would do to*

*us . . . he would whoop us, but it wasn’t like the normal whopping, it*

*was like for real”*

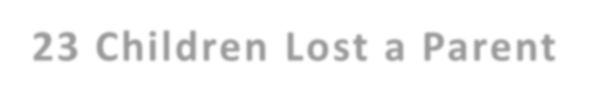
*–*

*Victim’s Daughter, Family Interviewing Project*



17

4



**Children Lost a Parent**

**23**



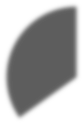
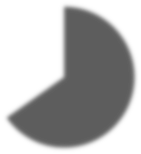
Number of minor children who lost

a parent



Number of adult children who lost a

parent



15

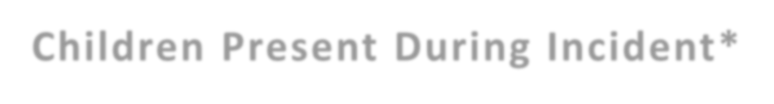
%

65

8

%

35



**Children Present During Incident\***



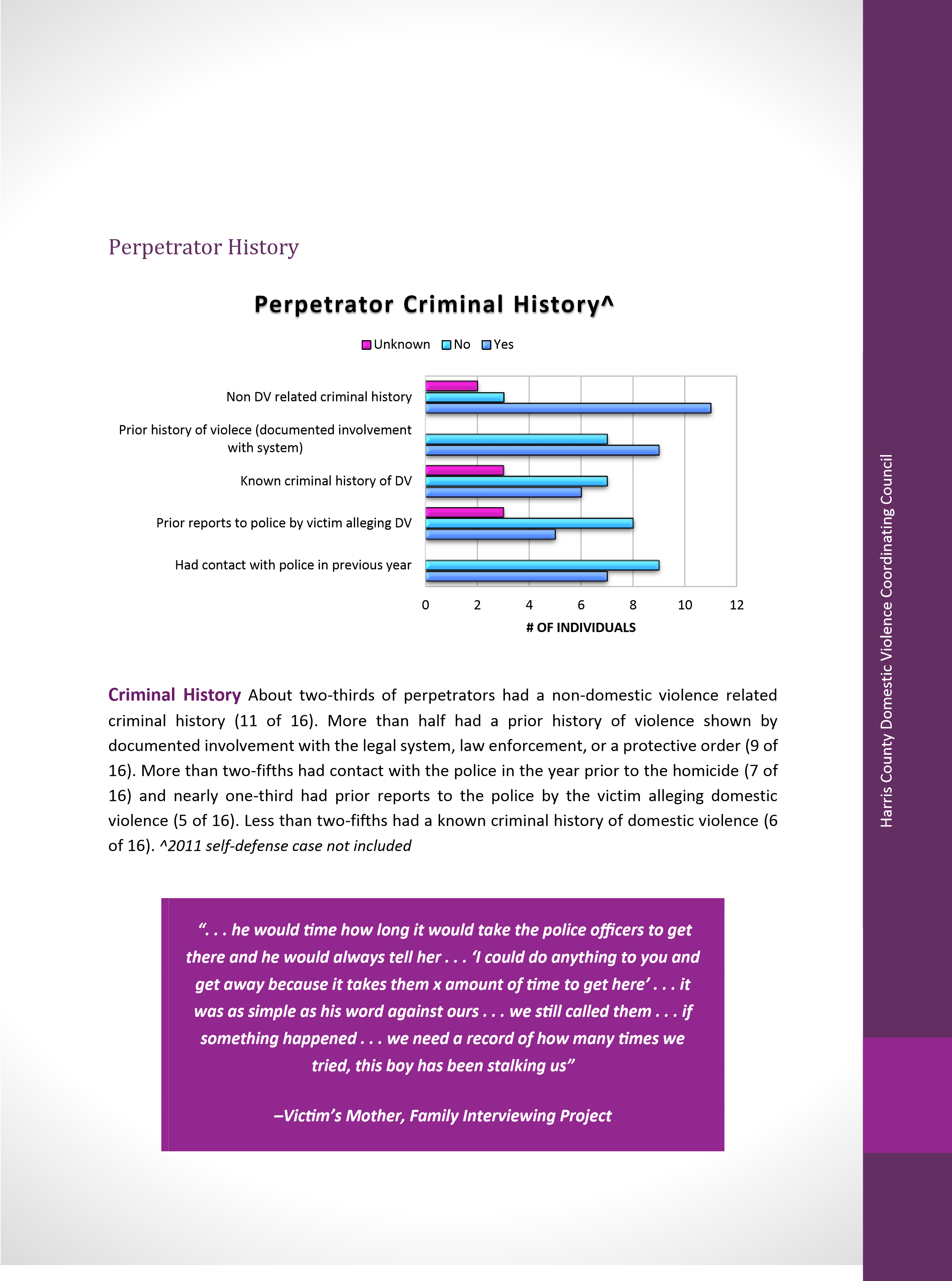
Children Not Present During

Incident



Children Present During the

Incident





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**Ri**

**sk Factors**

In eighty

-

eight percent of cases, the perpetrators had a history of violence

(14

of 16), while the other two are unknown

. In more than two

-

fifths of cases, the victim had

previously attempted to leave the abuser

(7

of 16), while the other nine a

re unknown

.

In one

-

fifth of the cases the perpetrator had pre

viously threatened to kill the victim

of 16)

(3

and in

one

-

fifth of cases, the perpetrator had access to firearms

of 16), while the remainder of

(3

cases are unknown

. In

all of the unknown

cases, we were unable to determine

if there was a

history of violence, attempts to leave, threats to kill, or access to firearms.

*^2011 self*

*-*

*defense*

*case not included.*

***“I knew he had access to some [guns] because some of***

***our family that we used to hang around and some of***

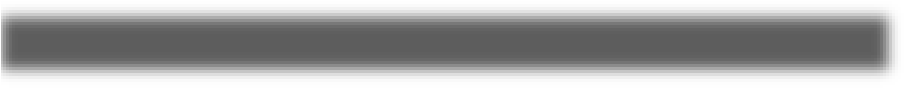
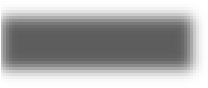
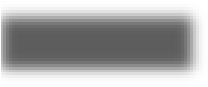
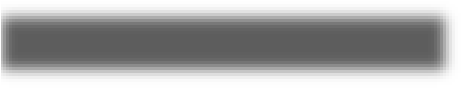
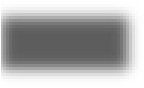
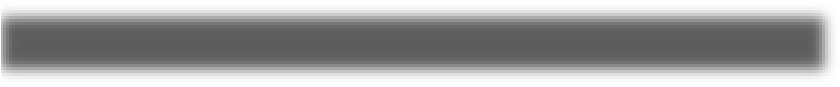
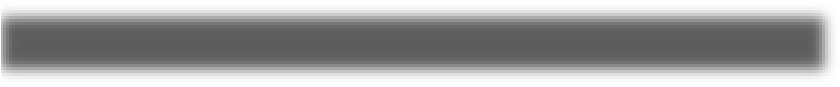
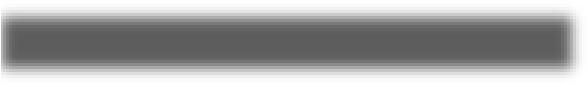
***his friends. We probably did have some in the house,***

***we didn’t know.”***

***–***

***Victim’s Daughter, Family Interviewing Projec***

***t***



0

2

4

6

8

10

12

14

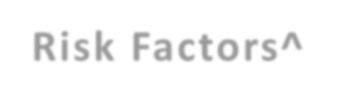
16

Victim: Previously attempted to leave

Perpetrator: Access to firearms

Perpetrator: Threatened to kill victim

Perpetrator: History of violence



**Risk Factors^**



Yes



Unknown





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Lessons Learned About the R

eview Process and Our

Community



Family interviewing is able to provide invaluable information for the team related to

the history and context of abuse experienced by the victims. Having the ability to

share the family story strengthens the team’s connect

ions with stakeholders and each

other, as well as leads to identification of systemic problems without judgement or

defensiveness. It allows us as a team to think beyond our own discipline.



Having a family interviewing protocol in place before conducting

the interview

provides structure and support for the process and keeps the interview on purpose.



Providing the team with team evaluations at the end of each meeting is helping to

keep the team focused on the process and purpose of the review, as well as al

lowing

the team to define what is working well:

o

Communication

o

Participation from law enforcement

o

Feedback from different systems

o

Opportunity to discuss case with law enforcement and DA’s Office

o

Having input from CPS about past of victims as well as offende

rs

o

Opportunity to explore context of the violence and other perspectives related

to the violence



Partnership with Law Enforcement and having investment from Houston Police

Department and the Harris County Sheriff’s Office is a true strength. Law

Enforcement leads the case review process by providing a

PowerPoint

presentation

that includes the 911 call, excerpts from the offender interview, a time line of the

incident, and any known history of the relationship.



Law Enforcement has shared that being able to “process” with the team allows them

as investigators to th

ink differently about the collection of information for future

cases. One investigator said during a review, “I wish I would have thought about

finding that out during the investigation.”



We are learning there is a need for follow

-

up, trauma informed se

rvices for families

who lose their loved ones due to domestic violence homicide. We are also

considering what

opportunities there may be

to provide connections among families

who have experience the loss of a loved one due to domestic violence homicide.



T

he presence of Adult and Child Protective Services offers insight from both a victim

and an offender perspective.



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

The diversity, experience, and wisdom of the individuals on the team bring collective

knowledge, wisdom, and insight to the case review.



It ha

s been enlightening to learn of the limitations due to protocols practiced by law

enforcement, and this also brings knowledge of how that system functions and the

role of law enforcement in homicide investigations that was not present to all

members and sy

stems represented on the team.



There is great value in having Battering Intervention and Prevention Programs

present as a team member.



HPD has already implemented a change to the letters sent to victims from the family

violence unit to include the Nation

al Domestic Violence Hotline as an additional

resource.



HPD changed their internal computer system for the ability to assign investigators to

assault cases in a more timely way.

***“. . . if you feel it . . . you know there’s things out of the***

***ordinary, I***

***would tell the parent or whoever, if there’s***

***something out of the ordinary, if they stop calling . . . find***

***out what’s going on . . . anybody, if you see something . . .***

***if it’s out of the ordinary, say something . . nobody knew***

***nothing, nobody called.”***

***–***

***Victim’s Mother, Family Interviewing Project***



Harris County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council

**Challenges**



The team is questioning the diversity of the team as members and as

systems. Who

are we missing?

Who is not represented?

As a team, we are not racially and ethnically

representative of the comm

unity we serve. There

is also a gap in representation from

the faith community.



There are continued limitations related to missing pieces from systems for the case

review.



The team still seems to work in isolation and seclusion and does not have a strong

sense of community recognition of the work that we are doing. There seems to be a

lack of visibility and awareness of the team and its role and function within a

coordinated community response to prevention of domestic violence.



There is a gap in state wi

de collection of data and there is no state wide sharing or

coordination of information.

**Changes for Next Year**



Work

to increase diversity within the team



Work to increase visibility and recognition of the work of the team



Solidify the family interviewing p

rocess and work to increase identification of families

for interviewing



Increase focus on the process and what we are looking for as a team



Create a process for retaining past protective order information (past the expiration

of the protective order) in th

e NCIC and TCIC systems for law enforcement access at

all times.

*“When the woman say ‘I fear for my life’, believe it. Stop*

*that ‘oh he just mad’ . . . if I’m calling you, if I’m taking the*

*time to dial 911, please take it seriously . . . listen to these*

*women, help these women . . . life matters”*

*–*

*Victim’s Aunt, Family Interviewing Project*



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County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council

2016

AVDRT Recommendations



Strengthen the lines of communication among agencies and organizations



Identify additional opportunities and continue current efforts to

increase

public

awareness of available resources for all survivors and perpetrators of domestic

violence.



Increase and strengthen our educational efforts to prevent deaths due to domestic

violence



I

ncrease awareness of the societal imperative to recogniz

e the magnitude of the

problem and the difficulties associated with identifying, investigating

and prosecuting

domestic violence deaths



Educate law makers, government and public officials and members of the criminal

justice system about the increasing magn

itude of mistreatment in our community,

and the need for more rigorous action and increased funding to combat the problem.



Develop

a process for retaining information on previous protective orders after their

expiration date in law enforcement databases

. T

he information found in previous

protective orders may provide helpful insight into the history of the relationship and

identification of potential risk factors, which may assist

law enforcement in their

investigations.



Advocate for the creation

of a stat

ewide repository for domestic violence fatality

review information

through state legislation.



Advocate for

a Statewide Conference for dissemination of information, sharing of

lessons

learned and increasing dialogue

among teams

across the state

.



Continue c

ollabora

tion

with the District Attorney’s Office to increase information

presented in the sentencing phase of a trial, including information about the risk and

lethality that was present in the relationship and the context around the history of

violence be

tween the victim and perpetrator.

1



Research and identify opportunities to engage individuals and families that have lost

loved ones due to domestic violence homicides, including ongoing support,

education, and advocacy.

1

Of the cases reviewed, when a plea was reached before trial, the sentences were longer

than those where the

cases went to trial.



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0069

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00009