

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOMICIDE IN OKLAHOMA

A REPORT OF THE OKLAHOMA DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FATALITY REVIEW BOARD 2007 FACT SHEET

January 2007–December 2007

A MULTI-DISCIPLINARY ANALYSIS

It is the intention of the Oklahoma Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board (Board) to increase professional and public awareness of the dangers and warning signs of volatile domestic violence situations so future deaths can be prevented. During 2007, the

Board completed in-depth reviews of intimate partner domestic violence homicides and continued to educate others about what the Board has learned as a result of case reviews. This report provides a summary of findings and presents Board recommendations for 2007.

Findings in Brief:

- 56% of victims in reviewed cases were killed by a current or former intimate partner.
- 47% of intimate partner perpetrators made death threats against the victim prior to the homicide.
- 41% of intimate partner victims were in the process of leaving the perpetrator.
- 33% of the homicides were witnessed by children.

HIGHLIGHTED FINDINGS FROM ALL IDENTIFIED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOMICIDES

Over the past ten years, the DVFRB has identified 776 homicides (average of 78 deaths per year) resulting from domestic violence that occurred in Oklahoma (cases tracked from 1998–2007). To date, case files have been compiled and partial data entry completed for all 776 victims. More extensive data elements were entered for the 216 cases that received full board review.

Type of DV homicide for the 776 victims:

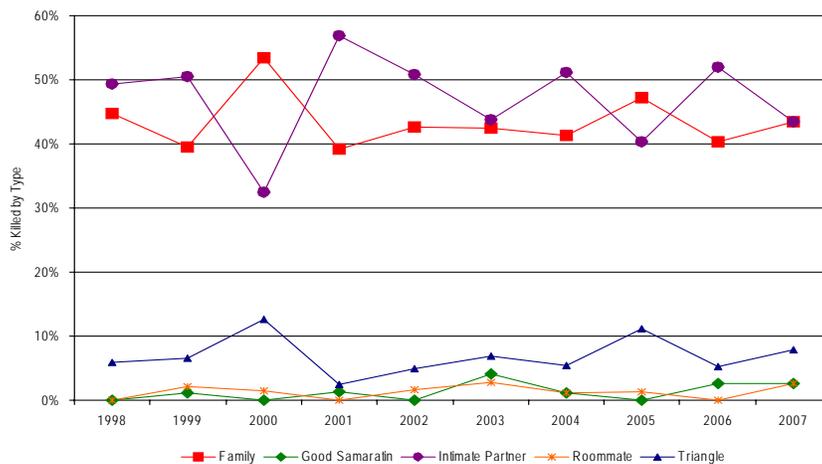
- 48% intimate partner homicides
- 43% family member homicides
- 7% triangular homicides (i.e. a woman's ex-boyfriend kills her new boyfriend or vice versa)
- 1% Roommates
- 1% Good Samaritans (non-involved people who intervene in a DV altercation on behalf of the victim)

The cause of death for the 776 victims:

- 53% firearms
- 19% Blunt force trauma
- 13% cutting/piercing
- 4% strangulation
- 2% asphyxiation
- 2% undetermined
- 6% all other causes of death.

16% (126) of all homicides resulted from homicide-suicides.

Type of DV Homicide Incident



HIGHLIGHTED FINDINGS FROM REVIEWED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOMICIDES

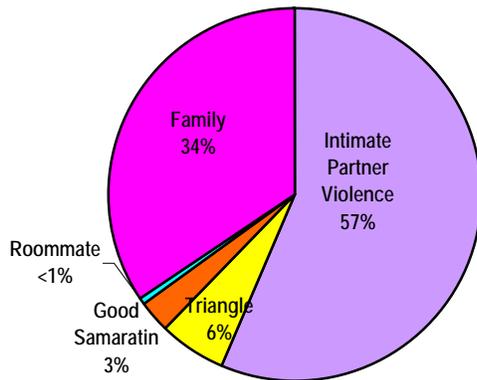
As of January 2008, the DVFRB had conducted reviews on 216 domestic violence homicide incidents that occurred from 1998 to 2006. The findings reported below provide the basis for the Board's annual recommendations.

- In 56% of the cases, the perpetrator and victim were cohabitating.
- There were witnesses in 56% of the cases reviewed.
 - Adults witnessed the homicide in 44% of the incidents.
 - Children witnessed one-third of the slayings.
- 82% of victims and 61% of perpetrators did not have a prior conviction record
- Orders of Protection (PO) had been utilized in 20% of the reviewed cases.
 - In 67% of the cases where a protective order was active at the time of the homicide, the defendant had violated the PO prior to the homicide.
- Law enforcement had responded to previous domestic disturbances in 28% of the cases
- In 59% of the reviewed cases, other people were aware that the violence was occurring.

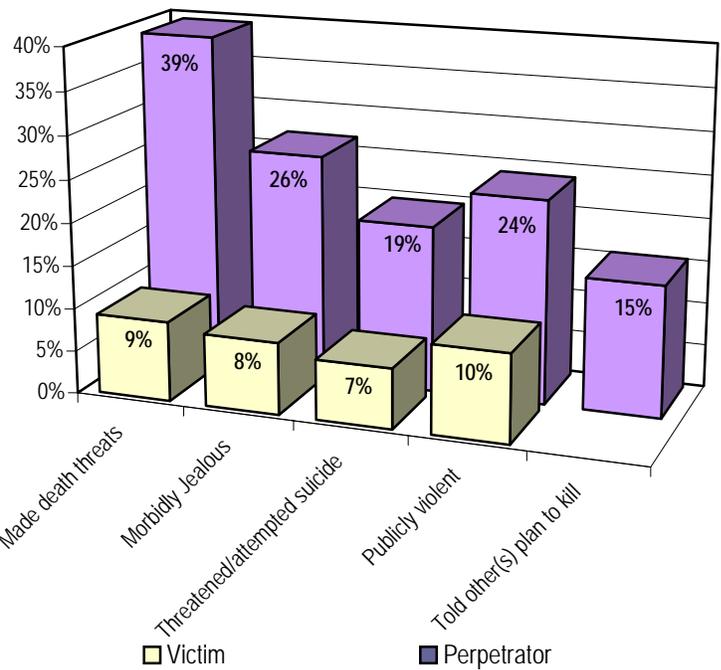
Characteristics

	Victims		Perpetrators	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Average Age	33.8	33.4	36.3	34.2
Median Age	33.2	33.7	38.2	33.5
Race				
White	96 72%	72 71%	39 76%	118 72%
Black	26 20%	19 19%	10 20%	31 19%
American Indian	10 8%	11 11%	2 4%	15 9%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1 1%			1
Of Hispanic or Latino Origin	5 4%	7 7%	1 2%	10 6%

Domestic Violence Homicide by Type



Lethality "Red Flags"



ACTIONS NEEDED TO IMPROVE SYSTEM RESPONSE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND PREVENT HOMICIDE

Oklahoma Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board

- Explore the use of lethality and danger assessments for system professionals.
- Create a Speakers Bureau from DVFRB members to educate system professionals and the public about issues concerning domestic violence fatalities.

Courts

- Utilize a bench card for judges handling protective orders to assist the court in recognizing red flags and potential danger. Danger assessments should be performed and reviewed by the judge before ordering the conditions of a protective order and/or bail. Before dismissing a protection order at plaintiff's request, judges should ascertain why a petitioner is dropping a protective order, ask why it was granted in the first place and how circumstances have

ACTIONS NEEDED TO IMPROVE SYSTEM RESPONSE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND PREVENT HOMICIDE

changed, and make sure that it is in the petitioner's best interest and safety to do so.

- Danger assessments should be performed and reviewed by the judge before ordering the conditions of bail and in situations where potential danger to the victim may be present, a no contact with the victim should be a condition of bond.
- 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.
- Safety planning information and referrals should be accessible to all victims applying for an order of protection.

Department of Corrections

- The DVFRB should engage the Department of Corrections in discussing domestic violence screening and intervention opportunities for inmates and probationers.

District Attorneys

- Implement evidence-based prosecution to overcome the situation when a victim is uncooperative or wants to drop charges. Seek law enforcement's cooperation in collecting, preserving and organizing evidence for use in domestic violence cases.
- Provide Evidence-Based Prosecution and Domestic Violence 101 Training to all District Attorneys and Assistant District Attorneys that prosecute domestic violence.

Domestic Violence Victim Advocates

- Bystander education - Work with family/friends – understanding what to do when confronted with violence; awareness of violent situations, responding to threats of violence or death threats.
- Always include children in safety planning and orders of protection.
- Seek to expand services – geographic and variety.

Education

- Implement evidence-based prevention programs/curricula for children and adolescents (K-12 grade) that target dating violence and abuse, and promote healthy relationships.

Health Care

- Health care providers should assess patients for domestic violence and when abuse is discovered assess for danger and provide specific referrals and/or interventions to reduce risk and increase safety for women, children, persons with disabilities, and elders, and document findings in the medical record.
- Health care organizations should require that providers have training in screening and assessment, and recognition of abuse in all healthcare settings including hospitals, long-term care facilities, primary care physicians, obstetric and

gynecology, behavioral health units, health departments and Planned Parenthood.

- All health care professionals should become familiar with the current Oklahoma domestic violence reporting law [21 O.S. § 644].

Human & Social Service Providers

- Continue to identify and make referrals to services available for victims of domestic violence and their children.
- Continue to improve capacity of Oklahoma Department of Human Services workers to assess danger to children and other clients by including domestic violence screening and response in operating procedures. [Note: Screening and assessment of the risk factors for domestic violence requires specialized training. Further, an attempt to provide domestic violence services in the home not only holds potential danger for the home visitation staff, it particularly presents danger for victims and children, especially if conducted by staff who are not specifically trained. In addition to the training, home visitation staff should also complete an internship at a domestic violence shelter or crisis center. As an example, the Children First program operated by the Oklahoma State Department of Health requires at least 4 hours of training for their home visitation nurses that is provided twice a year by the Oklahoma Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault.]

Law Enforcement

- Cooperate with District Attorneys to implement evidence-based prosecution to overcome the situation when a victim is uncooperative or wants to drop charges. Effective scene investigation and documentation including a record of behavior, excited utterances, and a location description and completing a detailed report.
- Law enforcement should work with domestic violence advocates to make sure victims of domestic violence receive follow-up contact.
- Develop the capacity to perform Danger/Lethality Assessments on all domestic violence calls – with particular attention to weapon accessibility & presence.
- Always provide a Safeline card to the victim of domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking.
- Always notify OKDHS of children on the scene at domestic violence disturbance calls.

Legal

- Training/Education on representing adult and child victims of family violence:
 - ♦ Target all attorneys who work in divorce, family, and juvenile law through law school and offer continuing legal education credits.
- Establish/expand laws designed to protect children and victims of violence in family courts in matters of custody and visitation.

**OKLAHOMA DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FATALITY
REVIEW BOARD**

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**Full Report Available
on the Web!
www.ocjrc.net/dvfrb**

Please go to <http://www.ocjrc.net/> to review:

- This report
- Enabling Legislation
- The DVFRB Mission, Purpose and Definitions
- Methods and Limitations of data collection and data
- History of the Board

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ACTIONS NEEDED TO IMPROVE SYSTEM RESPONSE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND PREVENT HOMICIDE

Mental Health & Substance Abuse Providers

- Funding should be made available to make mental health care more accessible to more Oklahomans.
- Mandate training in domestic violence and danger assessment for all mental health and substance abuse workers/professionals. Implement standardized assessments for violence, including domestic violence (perpetration and victimization) and provide appropriate referral and care.
- Review emergency order of detention (EOD) assessment and release process. Incorporate lethality/danger risk assessments and rigid criteria for release when persons with a history of interpersonal violence who are held under an EOD.

All Systems

- Develop mechanisms for system accountability to ensure

victims are not “falling through the cracks.”

- Domestic violence awareness and assessment need to be included in the core education of counselors, attorneys, doctors, nurses, etc.
- Support inter-professional pilot studies of danger assessment tools in professional settings. Adopt appropriate, validated lethality assessments across disciplines.
- All systems need to be aware of lethality/danger indicators and how to appropriately respond to ensure victim safety.
- The Oklahoma Legislature should appropriate funding to agencies involved in direct services to victims of domestic violence and prevention/intervention services to batterers, at a level adequate to maintain at a minimum baseline services to all those seeking services.
- Communities across the state should collaborate to develop a coordinated community response to domestic violence.

If you or someone you know needs help in a Domestic Violence situation, please call:

Safeline – 1-800-522-SAFE (7233)

If you need general information about Domestic Violence, please call:
Oklahoma Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault – (405) 524-0700
The Office of the Attorney General, Victim Services Unit – (405) 521-3921

If you are in an emergency situation please dial 911 immediately.

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