


A close-up photograph of a woman's face, focusing on her eyes and mouth. The image has a strong purple color cast. The woman's expression is neutral, and her lips are slightly parted.

2022 | 4TH PUBLISHED REPORT

TARRANT COUNTY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

FATALITY REVIEW REPORT



**WE DEDICATE THIS REPORT TO
VICTIMS AND THEIR CHILDREN,
FAMILY MEMBERS, AND FRIENDS.
MAY THE FINDINGS FROM THIS
REPORT CREATE CHANGE IN THE
SYSTEMS VICTIMS USE EVERY
DAY TO SURVIVE. WE SEE YOU.
WE HEAR YOUR STORY. WE WILL
CHANGE FOR THE BETTER.**

WHAT IS FATALITY REVIEW?

The Tarrant County Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Adult Fatality Review Team was reaffirmed by the Tarrant County Commissioners Court in 2016. The Fatality Review team is led by the Tarrant County Criminal District Attorney's Office in partnership with SafeHaven, Tarrant County's only state designated Family Violence Program.

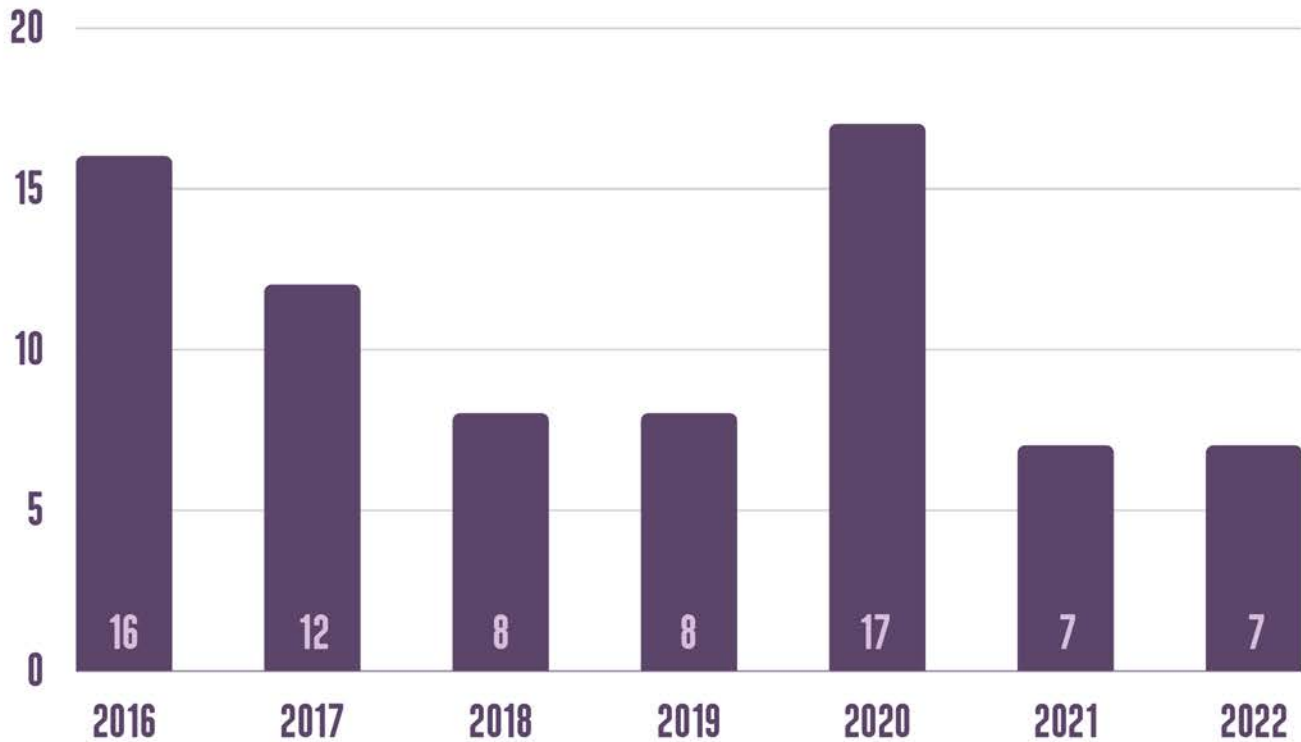
The team consists of appointed collaborators who conduct in-depth case analysis. Each collaborator provides relevant information to both gather data and paint a picture of the couple's relationship prior to the homicide. Each collaborator is also independently doing critical, life-saving work in the field of IPV.

Through the review process, the team seeks to determine the details around each IPV homicide, and to explore possible systemic, policy, and practice improvements in our county and beyond. A combination of research and the passion of our community indicates a Coordinated Community Response (CCR) to IPV in Tarrant County is the most effective way to keep victims safe and hold offenders accountable. A reliable, trustworthy Adult Fatality Review Team is a critical component of an effective CCR. The team aims to initiate changes in our community's response based on our findings identified in this report.

FATALITY REVIEW CONTRIBUTORS



HOMICIDES BY YEAR



DEFINING IPV HOMICIDE

Solely for purposes of reviewing homicides in the Fatality Review Team, the agreed upon definition of an IPV homicide is: “An ongoing pattern of abusive behavior that can include physical violence, sexual violence, stalking, or psychological aggression (including coercive control) by a former or current intimate partner that is motivated by the offender’s desire for power and control over the victim, where the relationship ends in homicide.”

It is important to note that this is not the legal definition, nor does this serve as a standard definition in healthcare, education, social services, or other industries. This definition is solely for purposes of this specific review and was agreed upon when the team was formed in its current iteration in 2016. It stems from a combination of the definitions offered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Hofstra University’s Law School. This definition is intentionally more broad than the legal definition of Family or Dating Violence in the State of Texas.

2022 VICTIMS



FEMALE, 26 | FORT WORTH

"[She] had a generous, kind heart. She aspired to help people, even when she had no way to help them. She loved her parents and grandparents, visiting them often. She always made it a point to say, 'I love you.' Most of all, she loved and adored her children. They were her world, and she wanted nothing more for them than to have a wonderful life."



FEMALE, 66 | BLUE MOUND

"I've had my first Thanksgiving without you and just celebrated my 40th birthday, and you weren't here. I'm broken, I'm confused, I'm angry and I'm sad, but I know you're at peace. You're happy and with family, free of pain and misery, and I love knowing that."



MALE, 30 | FORT WORTH

"... a great father to the children you were raising. I am so proud of who you were and the person you turned out to be, but not hearing your voice saying, 'what's good popz,' and giving me the tight hugs are very much missed."



FEMALE, 51 | GRAND PRAIRIE

"She was a marvelous woman with the biggest heart. [She] gave freely and always helped those in need. She did this without question or judgment. She was the true definition of an Earth Angel."

2022 VICTIMS



FEMALE, 32 | HALTOM CITY

"I can't find the words you deserve. I can say I love you and how deeply I will miss you and your charisma, extroversion, spunk and eagerness to make everyone around you feel safe, welcomed and included. I love you, and this planet lost one of the best humans."



FEMALE, 31 | FORT WORTH

"[She] was a beautiful woman. Sweet, funny, and generous. Her smile would light up any room she was in. She loved her family fiercely and would protect any of us at all costs. She left this world too soon."



FEMALE, 44 | ARLINGTON

"She was a sweet, loving, caring, beautiful, single mother who left behind five kids along with two grandchildren. She always looked at the good side of everyone around her. She devoted her life to them; they were everything to her and now they will never see her again."



THREE SECONDARY VICTIMS

Three bystanders were killed in 2022. In two of the three incidents the intended victims lived, but the friend/family accompanying them died at the hands of the intended victim's abusive partner. Bystanders are not included in the overall IPV homicide number of 7.

2022 AT A GLANCE

2022 OVERVIEW



2022 saw six women and one man die at the hands of their intimate partner.

57%

of victims were separated from their partner at the time of the homicide. Leaving doesn't always mean safety.

HOMICIDES BY CITY

FORT WORTH



ARLINGTON



BLUE MOUND



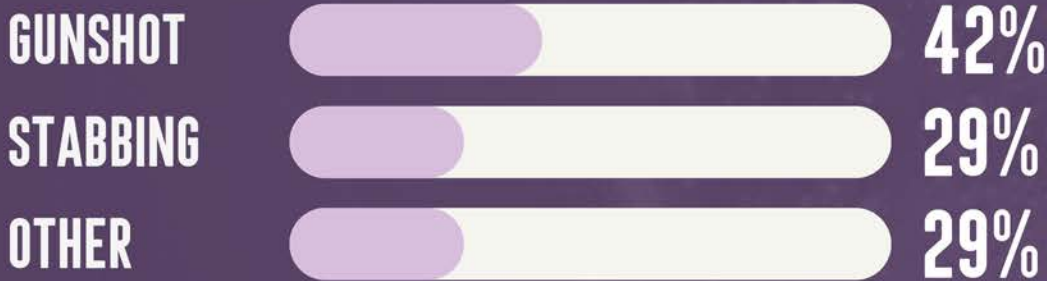
GRAND PRAIRIE



HALTOM CITY



METHOD OF HOMICIDE



DEPENDENT CHILDREN



11 dependent children lost one or both parents due to these homicides, and seven adult children lost their mothers. Three dependent children are known to be in foster care.

NO

victims filed for a protective order or reached out for community resources prior to the homicide.

SECONDARY HOMICIDES

THREE BYSTANDERS WERE KILLED IN TARRANT COUNTY DURING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE INCIDENTS IN 2022.

Two of the secondary homicides were women killed in separate incidents while accompanying a custodial parent to a child custody exchange meetup.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE + CHILDREN

BY JULIE EVANS | ALLIANCE FOR CHILDREN

An all too common reality of many homes across our county is the occurrence of domestic violence. Did you know that 1 in 15 children will be exposed to intimate partner violence this year? Of those children who are exposed, one in three will be a direct victim in the act of violence itself.

Unfortunately, our teams experienced this tragedy first-hand. Tarrant County saw 11 dependent children lose one or both parents to a domestic violence homicide this year, and three of those children were present and witnessed the homicide.

Anxiety and post-traumatic stress are common in children who have witnessed a violent crime. When you add the death of a parent in this manner, not only is the likelihood increased, but these children are navigating high levels of traumatic grief and the uncertainties of their future. For example:

Where will I live?

Who will I live with?

Will I be with my brother or sister?

Many are also facing the addition of ambiguous grief, which is the grief associated with the loss of the other parent/caregiver that is out of their lives due to their involvement in the act of violence.

While our collective multi-disciplinary team rallies around our Tarrant County children, providing them access to an array of services, the impact of this unthinkable act will be felt for years to come. Through our mental health work with children, our goal is to give them tools to navigate this trauma while recognizing this was not their fault. We will continue to work with protective caregivers in supporting children today and planning for their future needs, both physically and emotionally.

2022 BY THE NUMBERS

11

dependent children lost
one or both parents

3

were present at the
time of the homicide

3

children are now in
foster care due to the
homicide

THE DANGER IN CUSTODY EXCHANGE

BY KATHRYN JACOB, LMSW | SAFEHAVEN PRESIDENT AND CEO

The fatality review team saw two cases in 2022 where violence erupted during a custody exchange. The intended victims in both cases lived, but the friend/family accompanying them died at the hands of an abusive father/ex-partner.

Custody exchange in relationships with a history of intimate partner violence (IPV) can be unsafe for several reasons. First, there is always a risk of physical violence. The abusive partner may use the exchange of children as an opportunity to confront or harm the other parent. This puts everyone in danger.

More common is emotional and psychological abuse. IPV often includes these forms of abuse and they can arise during a custody exchange. Abusive partners sometimes use this time to manipulate, threaten, or intimidate the victim parent. This can cause distress to the victim and the child(ren). Children witnessing abuse are victims in their own right, and those who are present during a custody exchange where abuse takes place between their parents can have long-lasting psychological and emotional effects on them. Witnessing abuse can lead to trauma and can negatively impact a child's well-being.

While in the presence of one another, an abusive parent can use custody exchange to coerce or manipulate a victim parent into signing an Affidavit of Non-Prosecution ("dropping charges"), or attempt to change the custody arrangements.

Abusers are unpredictable and custody exchange provides an opportunity for abusers to engage in erratic or dangerous behavior. This air of unpredictability can make custody exchanges particularly risky. These exchanges can escalate tensions that already exist between parents and can present triggers for further violence. Given these risks, it is essential for individuals in domestic violence situations to prioritize safety and explore all options for custody exchange. This can include:

- Supervised exchange locations – like Family Court Services (connect with them at (817) 884-1265). SafeHaven is also working on expanding the network of supervised exchange sites.
- Safe locations – like a police station
- Ensure Protective Orders are in place and enforced
- Seek legal advice
- Document everything

2022
BY THE
NUMBERS

2

bystanders were killed
during separate child
custody exchange
incidents

**bystanders are not included
in the overall IPV homicide
number of 7*

WHY GET A PROTECTIVE ORDER?

BY SAFEHAVEN OF TARRANT COUNTY LEGAL DEPARTMENT

We constantly hear, “Why should I get a Protective Order – it’s just a piece of paper!”

While Protective Orders do not serve as a forcefield of safety for a victim of intimate partner violence (IPV), let’s be clear: Protective Orders serve as a vital tool in a survivor’s tool box and will continue to provide valuable legal benefits.

In 2022, none of Tarrant County’s seven IPV homicide victims filed for a Protective Order, and since our first Fatality Review Report in 2019, only 4 of the 39 cases our team reviewed received a Protective Order.

Protective Orders are legally binding documents issued by a court, and they establish very clear boundaries for how an abuser can or cannot interact with a victim. One of the most important purposes a Protective Order serves is as an instrument utilized by law enforcement to stop violence before it occurs.

Child custody exchanges can be incredibly dangerous times for IPV victims. In fact, in 2022 two bystanders who were accompanying a victim to separate custody exchanges were killed when violence erupted. Protective Orders can address child custody and visitation and may include provisions that limit an abuser’s access to children or mandate supervised visitation to prevent further abuse and ensure the child’s safety.

No - Protective Orders cannot guarantee physical safety, but they remain a life-saving legal tool for victims, and they work to hold offenders accountable in the likely chance that further violence occurs.

Filing for Protective Orders can seem daunting, but representatives from SafeHaven’s legal department and the Tarrant Country Criminal District Attorney’s Office are always available to walk survivors through this process.

2022 BY THE NUMBERS

0

victims filed for a
protective order

0

sought community
safety resources

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE + BOND

BY ALLENA BANGS | TARRANT COUNTY CRIMINAL DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

This year's report reflects that two of the offenders were actively being supervised on bond conditions by the pre-trial division of the Community Supervision Department in Tarrant County. In the State of Texas, every individual arrested and charged with a crime is entitled to a pre-trial bond with very limited exceptions. In recent years, due to criminal justice reforms and jail over-crowding, bonds have been significantly lower than in years past.

After an arrest, a suspect is brought before a magistrate or a judge within 48 hours to hear the charges before them, designate whether they need an appointed attorney, and have a reasonable bond set. A magistrate may consider several factors in setting a bond, including the facts of the crime and the safety of the community. Besides the actual monetary amount, the magistrate may also set forth conditions of bond. Conditions can include home confinement, GPS monitoring, remote cell phone monitoring, urinalysis, surrender of firearms or weapons, and prohibitions on contact with victims or witnesses, and certain locations. It is at the magistration of an offender when he or she is often served with an Emergency Protective Order (EPO).

If an EPO is not issued, the bond conditions operate in the same manner. Meaning, the State of Texas allows an individual charged with a Family Violence case to be charged for violation of a protective order OR violation of a bond condition. The importance of that provision is that if an offender does violate the conditions with a new crime, that constitutes one of the limited scenarios where an offender can be held with no bond until the resolution of their case.

In Tarrant County, an offender who is brought in with a Family Violence charge receives an extra risk assessment that evaluates prior criminal history and a determination based upon the Danger Assessment, if it is available in the

Cont.

2022 BY THE NUMBERS

2

offenders were out on
bond at the time of the
homicide

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE + BOND CONT.

police report. The Danger Assessment is a validated tool used to measure a victim's level of danger within a relationship. They may also be evaluated using the ODARA tool by trained pre-trial officers. The ODARA is a validated tool that measures an offender's risk of recidivism, or re-offending.

The unfortunate reality, however, is that if an offender can financially make their bond, there is only so much the pre-trial division can legally do to actively supervise a person free in the community. In 2019, Tarrant County initiated the High Risk IPV bond caseload, which is designed for released offenders who are at the highest risk of re-offending. There are hundreds of individuals currently being supervised in that caseload.

Unfortunately, in the two cases reflected in our report, the new offenses were homicides. In one instance, it was the homicide of the victim being protected by the bond conditions, and in the other instance, it was the victim's new partner (a secondary victim not included in the overall IPV homicide number of 7). This is the ultimate risk when an offender is released back into the community. Generally, there are many crimes with a low risk of recidivism, and there are even fewer categories of crime where the same victim would be victimized. Offenses that occur within the family or against an intimate partner are the obvious exception. We know that from statistics and our Fatality Review report each year, this is reflected anecdotally.





SAFEHAVEN

WE WISH TO EXPRESS OUR SINCERE GRATITUDE FOR OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS ON THE FATALITY REVIEW TEAM. MAY THE COUNTLESS HOURS SPENT ON THIS REPORT CREATE POSITIVE CHANGE FOR SURVIVORS IN TARRANT COUNTY.