

Domestic Violence Claimed 58 Lives in Wisconsin in 2015



Wisconsin Domestic Violence
Homicide Report
2015

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Foreword

This is the fourteenth edition of the *Wisconsin Domestic Violence Homicide Report*. End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin has been tracking and analyzing all incidents of domestic violence homicide that occurred in Wisconsin since 2000. This report documents fatalities from 2015.

Each year, we are confronted with the reality that no report can adequately measure and convey the deep loss that is represented in these pages. The individuals in Wisconsin who lost their lives to domestic violence in Wisconsin in 2015 were each unique human beings who loved and were loved, who were integral parts of families and communities and who will be profoundly missed. The narratives of how they lost their lives in no way represent all that is tragic about these tragedies.

We report on these deaths because, as advocates for victims of domestic abuse, we know that these all-too preventable deaths are often lost on the public consciousness. As the public gets more and more information from the news and now social media, it is often harder to see the broader context. Domestic violence homicides occur on average once per week in Wisconsin, but many times the reports of these deaths might only be described as the result of isolated, individual incidents, not part of a larger social phenomenon. One of our goals with the report is to draw together what may from one perspective appear like a scattered set of violent episodes to show a more complete picture of the ongoing toll domestic violence takes on the people our state.

As we continue with that goal, we have become more cognizant of how even this report does not capture some of the many ways in which domestic abuse takes lives. For example, Wisconsin and the rest of the country are in the midst of an opioid use crisis. The experience of trauma and feelings of hopelessness leave some domestic violence victims more susceptible to drug and alcohol abuse, including prescription drugs and heroin. We have no way discerning drug deaths that might be connected to domestic abuse victimization. We also know that experiencing ongoing domestic abuse leaves survivors at higher risk for a variety of serious medical conditions related to chronic stress, such as gastrointestinal conditions, hypertension, stroke, nervous system disorders and heart disease. The full measure of these and other potentially fatal impacts is certainly considerable but not fully known.

Indeed, the 41 narratives in this report, representing 58 deaths, barely scratch the surface. They do not convey the immeasurable loss of even one human life, and the incidents that are summarily noted here describe only a portion of the ways in which domestic abuse robs us of the vitality of our friends, family and fellow community members.

So we are left with a vast gap, between our ability to quantify domestic violence homicide and the reality of domestic abuse, which is so much bigger. With all that is unwritten and unknown, we ask that you stretch your minds and your hearts. Even if just for a moment, think and feel across the vastness of that gap. Attempt to span the innumerable ways in which our unhealthy and abusive modes of relating to one another in intimate relationships generate so much pain and loss. As human beings, our capacity to empathize and open our hearts, to care even for those we can never know, is what motivates us to make the world into a safer and more just place. In the face of the pain contained in this report, let us continue to imagine what we've lost — and what we stand to gain.

Executive Summary

Since 2000, End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin has chronicled deaths due to domestic violence that occur in our state. Over that 16-year period, individuals have died in Wisconsin because of domestic violence at a rate slightly higher than 1 death every 8 days. In 2015, there were 41 domestic violence homicide incidents, resulting in 58 deaths: 48 homicide victims, 9 perpetrator suicides following homicides, and 1 homicide by legal intervention. The basic findings of the report are outlined below.

| 2015 compared to 2014 | 2014 | 2015 |
|---|------|------|
| Incidents of domestic violence homicide | 35 | 41 |
| Victims of domestic violence homicide (excluding by legal intervention) | 36 | 48 |
| Homicides by legal intervention (responding law enforcement) | 1 | 1 |
| All domestic violence-related homicides | 37 | 49 |
| Perpetrator suicide (excluding by legal intervention) | 6 | 9 |
| Total deaths (victim and perpetrator) | 43 | 58 |

Other aspects of domestic violence-related homicides in 2015 include:

- Perpetrators of domestic violence homicide incidents were overwhelmingly male. In 2015, 29 of 40 (73%) of perpetrators were men. This figure excludes the one homicide that occurred during legal intervention. This incident has also been excluded from other perpetrator demographic statistics.
- In 2015, over one third of the victims of intimate partner-related homicide were killed after the relationship ended or when one person in the relationship was taking steps to leave the relationship. This figure demonstrates that leaving does not equal safety. It also supports the main message of this report: no victim in Wisconsin should have to take the courageous step of leaving an abusive relationship without the safety and support offered by domestic violence victim advocates and without the benefit of a coordinated community response that is designed to protect victims and hold perpetrators accountable.
- Victims reflected the span of life, from 2 months old to 92 years old. The average age of victims was 37 years old. Perpetrators ranged in age from 14 to 66. The average age for perpetrators was 41 years old.

- In 2015, homicides were committed in 21 separate counties in Wisconsin. About 57% of the homicide incidents occurred in urban areas, and roughly 43% happened in rural communities.
- Consistent with the findings throughout this report’s history, firearms remain the most common means of perpetrating domestic violence homicides. In 2015, firearms were the weapons used in half of the domestic violence homicide incidents, excluding the one homicide by legal intervention. In at least 4 of these domestic violence shooting deaths, the gunmen were legally prohibited from possessing firearms.
- Many of the 2015 homicide cases reflect the risk factors that research has found to be particularly associated with lethal violence. These include, among other factors: threats to use or actual use of a weapon, threats to kill, stalking, strangulation, obsessive jealousy, and sexual assault.

National and Historical Context

Domestic violence homicide rates overall have declined nationally for all race and gender groups in the past thirty years. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), from 1980 to 2005, intimate partner homicides declined by 44% and homicides among other family members decreased 26%. Similarly, nonfatal domestic violence has decreased by about 63% from 1994 to 2010. This downward trend has been attributed to increased awareness, services and intervention. However, the decline has varied significantly for different populations. The data from the Bureau of Justice Statistics indicate that between 1976 and 2005, “the number of black males killed by intimates dropped by 83%, white males by 61%, black females by 52%, and white females by 6%.” Unfortunately, more recently updated historical data from the BJS is not available.

Key Findings

Overview

| | 2015 |
|---|------|
| Domestic violence homicide incidents | 41 |
| Victims of domestic violence homicide (excluding by legal intervention) | 48 |
| Homicides by legal intervention (responding law enforcement) | 1 |
| All domestic violence-related homicides | 49 |
| Perpetrator suicides | 9 |
| Total deaths (victims and perpetrators) | 58 |
| Homicide incidents with two or more victims | 9 |
| Female victims | 21 |
| Male victims | 28 |
| Female perpetrators | 11 |
| Male perpetrators | 29 |

Relationship of victim to female perpetrator

| When perpetrator was female, victim was: | 2015 |
|---|------|
| Current male partner | 7 |
| Former or estranged male partner | 2 |
| Perpetrator's child (and child of current or former male partner) | 2 |
| Stepfather or step-grandfather | 1 |

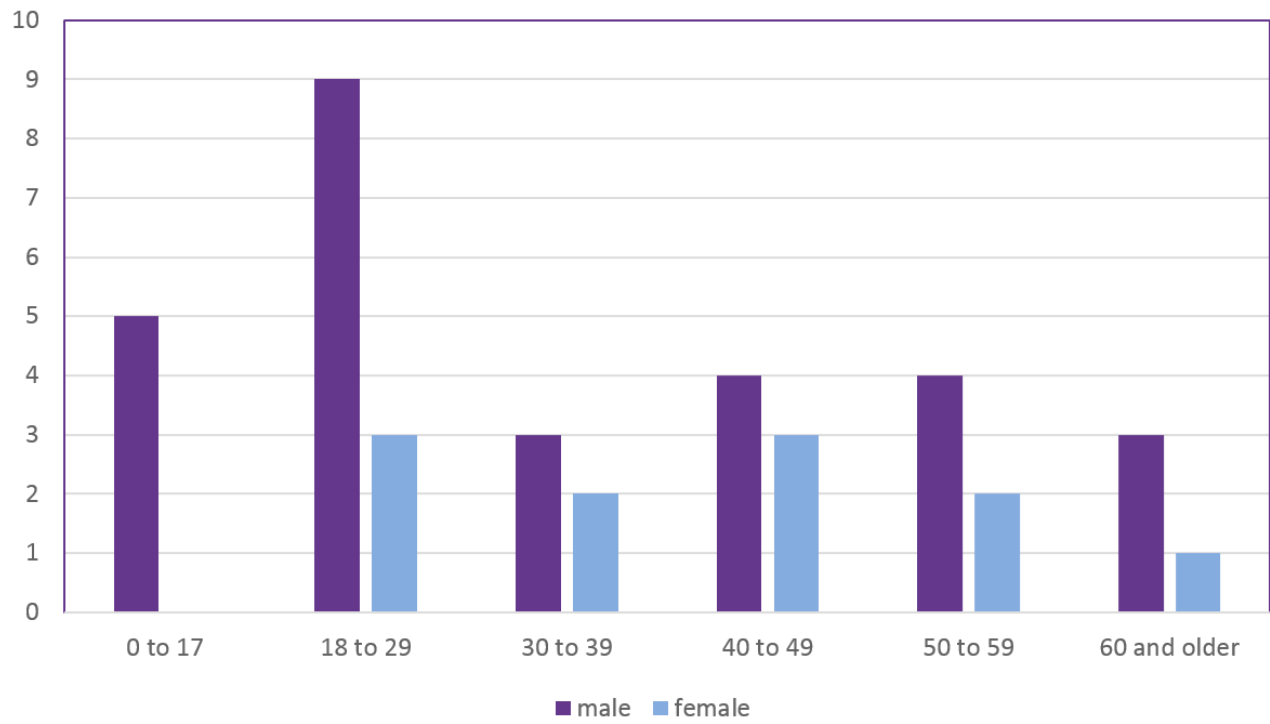
Relationship of victim to male perpetrator

| When perpetrator was male, victim was: | 2015 |
|---|------|
| Current female partner | 8 |
| Former or estranged female partner | 3 |
| Current male partner | 3 |
| Mother of the perpetrator | 3 |
| Father of the perpetrator | 3 |
| Stepfather | 1 |
| Perpetrator's child (and child of current or former female partner) | 1 |
| Child of perpetrator's current female partner | 3 |
| Other child family member related to former or estranged female partner | 2 |
| New male partner of perpetrator's former or estranged female partner | 3 |
| Sister | 1 |
| Bystander | 1 |
| Other adult family member related to former or estranged female partner | 3 |
| Unknown | 1 |

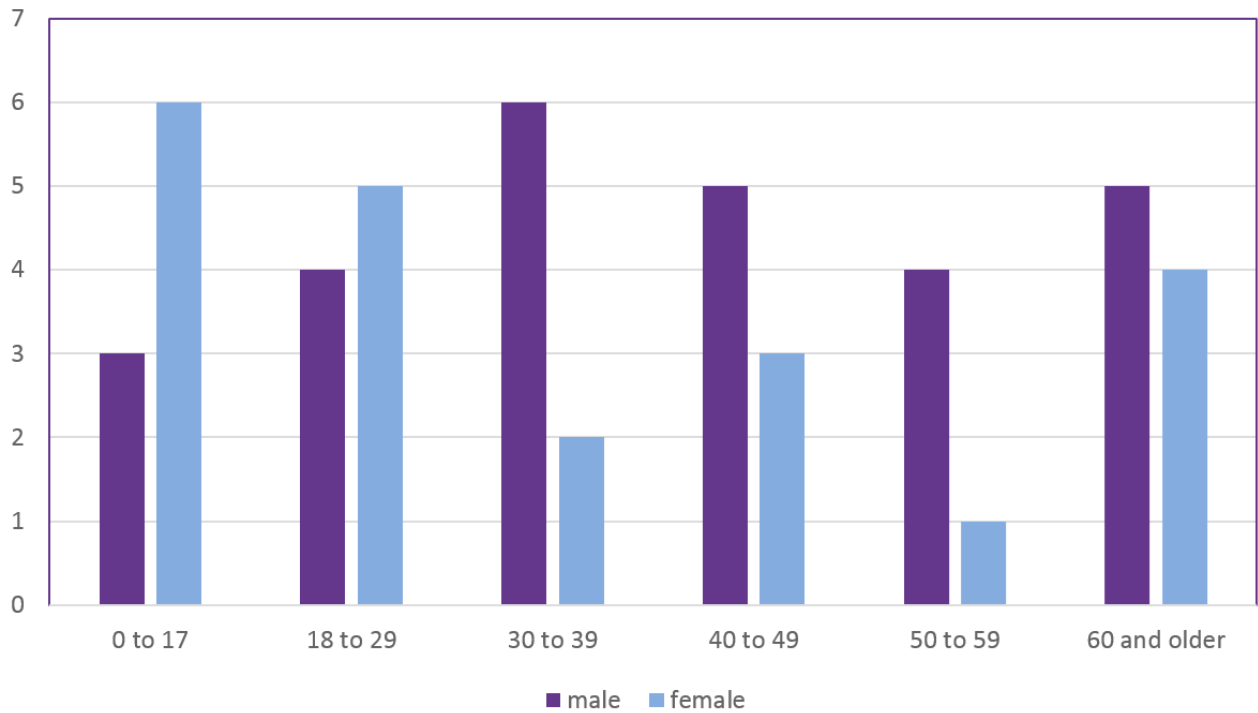
Suicide

| | 2015 |
|---|------|
| Suicide incidents | 9 |
| Suicide incidents involving firearms | 9 |
| Homicide incidents with perpetrator suicide | 8 |
| Male perpetrators of homicide-suicide | 8 |

Age and gender of perpetrators



Age and gender of victims



Method of homicide

| Method of homicide (by incident) | | | |
|----------------------------------|----|-----|--|
| Firearm | 20 | 50% | <p>Since 2005, firearms have accounted for more domestic violence homicides than all other methods of killing combined.</p> <p>Domestic violence assaults involving a gun are 12 times more likely to result in death than those involving other weapons or bodily force.</p> <p>The presence of a gun in domestic violence situations increases the risk of homicide for women by 500%.</p> <p>There are 46-percent fewer intimate partner gun homicides of women in states that require background checks for private handgun sales than in states like Wisconsin that do not.</p> |
| Stabbing or Cutting | 12 | 30% | |
| Blunt Force Trauma | 4 | 10% | |
| Strangulation or Suffocation | 2 | 5% | |
| Automobile crash | 1 | 3% | |
| Arson | 1 | 3% | |

Location of homicide incidents

| | 2015 |
|-----------------------------------|------|
| Home of victim and/or perpetrator | 32 |
| Public space | 3 |
| Vehicle | 1 |
| Home of a third party | 4 |
| Victim's workplace | 1 |

Race and gender of victims

| | Asian | Black | Latino | Native American | White |
|--------|-------|-------|--------|-----------------|-------|
| Male | 0 | 12 | 3 | 1 | 12 |
| Female | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 14 |

Race and gender of perpetrators

| | Black | Latino | Native American | White |
|--------|-------|--------|-----------------|-------|
| Male | 7 | 4 | 1 | 17 |
| Female | 4 | 1 | 0 | 6 |

2015 Domestic Violence Homicides

...she was a person, she wasn't just a victim of a crime. [Her daughter] wasn't just some little girl that was killed. They were people. They were so much to so many people. They were people who had lives and people who cared for them.

The accounts and discussions of the homicides included in this report should be read with these words from surviving family members in mind. It is far too easy to reduce people's lives to either a sensational story or a dry statistic.

The accounts of the domestic violence homicides included in this report, as in past reports, are compiled from information that is readily available via public sources and limited follow-up inquiries. The amount of attention such sources pay to one domestic violence-related homicide in comparison to another varies greatly. Hence, the detail available to address each homicide varies greatly. See *Methodology* for an extended discussion of this shortcoming.

Clearly, these brief descriptions in no way reflect the complexity and circumstances of each person's death. They certainly do not capture the complexities and fullness of their lives and the impact that each homicide or suicide has on surviving family members, friends, neighbors, coworkers, communities and those responding and attempting to help during the immediate event or in the time preceding it.

Individuals' ages are listed as of the date of the homicide.

ADAMS

Betty Jane Bennett, 92, Big Flats – July 31, 2015

In the town of Big Flats on July 31, Frank Krueger, 62, killed his mother, Betty Jane Bennett, before he killed himself. Emergency responders had been dispatched to the home Frank shared with his mother because he had set fire to the home and several out buildings. They found his body outside the home with a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head. They later found Betty's body in the home. An autopsy revealed she had been shot.

ASHLAND

Zhara Parent, 23, Ashland – December 23, 2015
Patricia Parent, 84

Daniel Parent, 54, killed his mother, Patricia, and wife, Zhara, before turning the gun on himself. Police records indicate that Zhara and Daniel lived with Daniel's mother in her Ashland home. A day before the murders, employees at the college campus where Zhara was taking nursing classes saw a male they later determined to be Daniel Parent walking the grounds of the campus looking for his wife. Police reports say the two had an argument outside and then left together.

Daniel Parent was a combat veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan. In a previous incident, Daniel knocked on his mother Patricia's door and said, "They are coming after me." Daniel's son told police that his father was drunk much of the time and had recently been laid off of work. Daniel and Zhara married in the Philippines, her native country, before Daniel's divorce to a previous spouse was finalized.

COLUMBIA

Rio – July 1, 2015

The sole fatality in this case is the domestic abuse perpetrator, Christopher Richardson, 42, who shot and killed himself after shooting at police during a high-speed chase. Two days prior, Richardson attempted to drown his girlfriend while they were camping on a sand bar along the Wisconsin River. For two days following the drowning attempt, Richardson held his girlfriend hostage using duct tape and zip ties. The high-speed chase ensued when the girlfriend escaped from Richardson's car and called 911 for help from a nearby church. Officers found the girlfriend had sustained physical injuries from the two days of abuse and captivity.

DANE

Chris Schwichtenberg, 39, Mazomanie – February 9, 2015
Ariyl Brady, 16

Dean Sutcliffe, 17, killed his ex-girlfriend's sister, Ariyl Brady, and Brady's mother's boyfriend, Chris Schwichtenberg, who answered the door when Sutcliffe showed up with a gun. According to the criminal complaint, Sutcliffe blamed Ariyl for his recent separation from her sister. Brady's mother also told authorities she received repeated threatening phone messages from Sutcliffe, blaming her and Schwichtenberg for the breakup with her daughter, prompting her to change her phone number. Sutcliffe pleaded guilty to two counts of first-degree intentional homicide and was sentenced to two life sentences that run concurrently. Sutcliffe will be eligible for parole in 2040.

DANE

Cory Pulliam, 2 months, Fitchburg – February 23, 2015

Corey L. Holly, 25, killed his girlfriend's two-month-old infant by inflicting blunt force trauma to the baby's torso. After claiming the baby slipped while being burped, Holly admitted that he "lost it" and squeezed the child to death. Holly has a past history of domestic abuse of other individuals. The aunt of Cory Pulliam's mother said that Holly had been physically and emotionally abusive toward the baby's mother and had been taking advantage of her financially. The mother reportedly has cognitive and emotional disabilities, which may have made her more vulnerable to Holly's abuse.

Larry Ewing, 76, Madison – April 18, 2015

A few months after he was released from prison, Dennis Hassel, 55, strangled Larry Ewing, a man with whom he had been involved in an intimate relationship. A person who knew Larry told authorities that Ewing had sent money to a man in prison and that Larry and this man had hooked up after the man had been released. After killing Larry, Dennis took Ewing's jewelry to a pawn shop and sold it. Dennis was charged with first-degree intentional homicide in the death of Larry and the case has not concluded.

Vladimir Schevchuk, 52, Town of Vienna – June 13, 2015

According to a criminal complaint, Irina Kolenkina, 54, fatally stabbed her husband Vladimir Schevchuk after arguing, drinking alcohol, and pushing each other while they prepared food in the kitchen and smoked cigarettes outside. She told authorities she was angry that he had asked her to impersonate his deceased first wife and had denied her the documentation she needed to get a passport so she could leave him. When authorities questioned Irina she said, "Yes, I killed him," and further stated that if she could have, she would have, "cut his head off." Initially Irina faced a first-degree intentional homicide charge, but the state amended its charges against Irina following a defense motion to admit evidence detailing a prior history of abuse carried out by Vladimir against Irina. Irina was convicted of second-degree reckless homicide and will spend ten years on probation.

Terrance Woods, 31, Madison – August 18, 2015

Terrance Woods was killed when he attempted to break into the home of his former girlfriend, Cierra Finkley, 25. Earlier that day, Terrance attempted to run Cierra and her small child over with his car. Cierra sought help from law enforcement. The police were reportedly looking for Terrance when he returned to Cierra's home later that day, kicking in her door. Terrance had previously been convicted of domestic abuse

battery against Cierra and was ordered to have no contact with her except with the permission of his probation agent.

Cierra was initially held on tentative charges of reckless homicide, despite the fact that Woods was breaking in to attack her and possibly her child. Local groups, including Freedom, Inc. and Young, Gifted and Black, rallied to Cierra's defense, drawing national attention to her plight. After several days in jail, Cierra was released on a signature bond pending a charging decision.

Following the lead of these local groups, End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin, along with other state coalitions and national domestic abuse advocacy organizations, urged the Dane County District Attorney to clear Cierra of any criminal liability. As of this writing – over one year later – no formal charging decision has been made.

JACKSON

Jacinda Muir, 30, Town of Brockway – May 17, 2015

John Cook, 23, stabbed his girlfriend 54 times after they used methamphetamine, drove to a park, and got into an argument. The criminal complaint states that John took Jacinda to the park with the intention of beating her up, but ended up prodding her into the woods with his knife as the argument escalated and then began stabbing her. When questioned about Jacinda's death initially, John denied being in a relationship with her, saying he was just using her for money. John was charged with first-degree intentional homicide and the case has not concluded.

Andrew Dammen, 24, Necedah – February 12, 2015

JUNEAU

Natalie Murphy, 21, shot and killed the father of her child, Andrew Dammen. When police arrived, Natalie confessed to the shooting but alleged that Andrew asked her to shoot him. Online court records indicate Natalie and Andrew were involved in a paternity case that concluded in July of 2014, however there is no clear indication that this case played any role in the homicide. Natalie was charged with first-degree intentional homicide and first-degree recklessly endangering safety. The case is set for jury trial in late September of 2016.

KENOSHA

Paula White, 64, Pleasant Prairie – March 19, 2015

David White, 61, fatally shot his wife, Paula, and their dog before starting their home on fire and fatally shooting himself. Earlier that day, the couple had been convicted of several felony animal mistreatment charges stemming from a 2013 incident where police discovered five dead horses on their farm. The couple did not appear for the final day of the trial, and a neighbor later called 911 to report hearing gunshots and noticing flames coming from the Whites' home.

**Alicia Arellano Hernandez, 3, Kenosha – September 11, 2015
Javier Arellano Hernandez, 1**

Lucia Hernandez Alvarez, 34, killed her two small children by drugging them with children's Tylenol and suffocating them as they fell asleep. She then tried to kill herself by cutting herself in multiple places. Javier Arellano Hernandez, Lucia's husband and the children's father, came home from work in the early morning hours of September 12 and called police upon discovering the children dead and Lucia bloodied. Lucia had written in blood on the walls of the bedroom, "Mi Amor Javier," which means, "My Love, Javier."

The day before the homicides, Lucia had crashed the family car and lied about it, claiming she lied because she thought Javier cared more about the car than about the family. Lucia also said she thought her husband was unfaithful and did not love her.

She is charged with two counts of first-degree intentional homicide, false imprisonment and administering stupefying drugs. A jury trial is scheduled for November 2016.

LA CROSSE

Kristen M. Johnson, 28, Holmen – March 1, 2015

Bryce Anderson, 30, struck his estranged girlfriend in the head with a hammer several times, cut her with a box cutter, and put a belt around her neck. When police arrived, they found Johnson's body in the garage with a letter signed by Bryce indicating what had happened. After killing Kristen, Bryce used her cell phone to send photos of her corpse to another man along with the message, "This is what happens when you are a liar." One witness stated that Johnson ended the couple's turbulent relationship the week before the killing and that Bryce planned to move out of the house. Bryce is charged with first-degree intentional homicide and the case is set for a jury trial in October 2016.

MARATHON

George Diver, 43, Wausau – June 27, 2015

George Diver was beaten to death by Jerry Schnabl, a man whom he accused of showing too much attention to his fiancée. George had recently been released from the Marathon County jail for time served on a domestic abuse conviction against his fiancée. While he was in jail, George's fiancée started a new job. The fiancée reported that, upon George's release from jail, George was suspicious that she was involved with someone else.

On the night of June 26, George, Jerry and the fiancée were together drinking at the residence George shared with his fiancée. At one point, George became upset that Jerry was affectionately touching his fiancée. According to Jerry, he told George to leave the home. George then punched Jerry. At that point, Jerry hit George multiple times and kicked him while he was on the floor. Jerry and the fiancée put George in his bed, and they remained at the home until the next morning. That morning, George was found deceased, having succumbed to his injuries. Jerry is charged with second-degree reckless homicide and is scheduled to be tried in late October 2016.

MILWAUKEE

Nevelo Cornelius Smith, 30, Milwaukee – January 4, 2015

Markell Greer, 18, fatally shot his ex-girlfriend's new boyfriend Nevelo Smith. Following the shooting of Smith, Markell held his ex-girlfriend, her sister and his ex-girlfriend's friend hostage at gunpoint. After a struggle for the gun, the three were able to escape. Markell's ex-girlfriend told law enforcement officers that he had been abusive during the course of their relationship and continued to harass and threaten her after they broke up, saying he would kill her if she would not get back together with him. According to the criminal complaint, Markell also repeatedly sexually assaulted his ex-girlfriend's teenage sister prior to the fatal shooting of Nevelo Smith. Markell faced ten felony charges as a result of this incident and received a 45-year prison sentence.

MILWAUKEE

Martha Garcia, 26, Milwaukee – January 12, 2015**Moses Garcia-Macias, 47, Milwaukee – January 15, 2015**

Efrain Garcia-Sotelo, 22, told officers that he stabbed his sister, Martha, because she was “sluttish” and, in his opinion, a bad mother. Martha’s two children were at school at the time. Efrain hid Martha’s body in her closet. Three days later Efrain’s father, Moses Garcia-Macias, found the body and began crying. Efrain told investigators that he came up behind his father and stabbed him in the back. Efrain’s mother and Martha’s two daughters tried to stop him from killing Moses and were injured as a result. Efrain was convicted of two counts of first-degree reckless homicide and was sentenced to 50 years in prison. He has since died while in prison.

Paul Kucharczyk, 39, Milwaukee – January 23, 2015**Kairii Garcia, 5 months**

Ruben Garcia, 20, fatally stabbed his 5-month old daughter after discovering a video posted online by Kairii’s mother, which showed the baby girl playing with her mother’s new boyfriend. Garcia asked to come over and see Kairii, and when he arrived began pleading with Kairii’s mother to get back together with him. When she refused, Garcia began stabbing her. Paul Kucharczyk, a family friend, tried to intervene but he too was fatally stabbed. Kairii’s mother’s new boyfriend was also stabbed multiple times during the incident but survived. Garcia pleaded guilty to two counts of first-degree intentional homicide and was sentenced to life in prison. He will not be eligible for release on extended supervision for 60 years.

MILWAUKEE

Tyrone Lawrence, 45, Milwaukee – March 5, 2015

Tyrone Lawrence was killed by a Milwaukee police officer who responded to a report of Tyrone threatening to kill his estranged wife with a knife. The wife had an active injunction in place that prohibited contact from Tyrone. The day before the shooting, Tyrone harassed his estranged wife while she was at the courthouse for their pending divorce. Tyrone's harassment continued via phone and text messages and was reported to law enforcement as a violation of the injunction. The morning of the shooting, the wife received another text message from Tyrone that said she had ruined his life, and that now he was going to ruin hers.

Around 11 o'clock in the evening, the wife heard a crash and saw that Tyrone had broken into her apartment through a second story entrance. She tried to call 911, but before she was able to do so, Tyrone knocked the phone out of her hand. Tyrone squeezed his hands around his wife's neck, then pulled out a knife and held it to her neck as she struggled. The couple's two children were present in the house, and at one point Tyrone told his son that he was going to kill his mom.

In desperation, the wife convinced Tyrone to call a mutual friend. The friend stayed on the phone with Tyrone and tried to convince him to leave the wife alone. Tyrone ended the call and told the friend to call the police. When police arrived, they found Tyrone and the wife on a chair in the living room. Tyrone had the knife to his wife's throat. According to the wife, officers commanded Tyrone to drop the knife several times, which he did not do. A police officer fired a single shot at Tyrone's head, killing him.

Tyrone had been arrested previously for violating the injunction and the wife reports that he had previously strangled her.

John B. Balistreri, 77, Milwaukee – April 10, 2015

John E. Balistreri, 40, beat his father, John B. Balistreri, to death with a two-by-four. The younger Balistreri claims that his father physically abused his mother. According to the son, when his mother died 25 years ago, she told him that she believed the father caused the blood clot that would eventually kill her. On April 10, after drinking, the son argued with his father about his mother's death. According to the younger Balistreri, the father then made a comment about his fiancée. According to authorities, the beating was incredibly severe, leaving the father unrecognizable. John E. Balistreri pled guilty to first-degree reckless homicide and was sentenced to 27 years imprisonment and 20 years of extended supervision.

MILWAUKEE

Pedrell Davis, 24, Milwaukee – April 14, 2015

Stephanie Harris, 31, fatally stabbed her boyfriend, Pedrell Davis, following an argument over use of the car. Pedrell's grandmother, who lived with Pedrell and Stephanie, overheard the couple arguing the morning of April 14th. At one point, she heard Stephanie yell, "Get off of me," and a few moments later Pedrell came out of the bedroom followed by Stephanie who was yelling and running at Pedrell with a butcher knife. She stabbed him once in the chest. When officers arrived Stephanie apparently told them, "Where is the ambulance? I don't want him to die. He spit on me, he beat me, I stabbed him, I don't want him to die." Online court records show that two felony abuse charges against Pedrell, in which Stephanie was named the victim, were dismissed in 2014. Stephanie initially faced a second-degree reckless homicide charge, but it was discharged after she was found incompetent to stand trial. Stephanie was placed in a supervised housing facility.

Tariq Akbar, 14, Milwaukee – July 3, 2015

During Milwaukee's Fourth of July lakefront fireworks celebration, Tariq Akbar, a 14-year-old boy, was shot and killed in a fight between two groups of boys. The fight was the result of a dispute about a girl that started on Facebook. Tariq was not a part of the dispute. Witnesses identified 15-year-old Matthew McMillan as the shooter. Matthew is charged with first-degree reckless homicide as a party to the crime. A jury trial is scheduled for October 2016. This is one of two fatalities included in this year's report that stem from group fights that occurred because of social media arguments.

Gerry Wilson, 54, Milwaukee – August 1, 2015

Diana Cunningham, 42, fatally stabbed her boyfriend once in the chest during an argument. Diana told officers that, after stabbing Wilson, she grabbed a towel and tried to apply pressure to his stab wound, and together they came up with the idea to say it was a robbery. However, by the time police arrived Gerry was deceased. Diana told authorities that she had been arrested for domestic violence battery in the past involving another victim, but those charges were dismissed when the victim failed to appear. For her role in Gerry's death, Diana pleaded guilty to second-degree reckless homicide and faces 20 years in prison and ten years extended supervision.

MILWAUKEE

Kiante Kelly, 33, Milwaukee – October 3, 2015

After fabricating several inconsistent stories about an intruder and self-defense, Dalvin Golden, 19, admitted to stabbing Kiante Kelly. Authorities were initially called when a woman heard a man screaming that his fiancé had been shot, although no gunshots were heard. When police arrived, they found Kiante with multiple stab wounds. Dalvin was on the floor pretending to be injured and unresponsive. He later told police that he and Kiante had been attacked by an unknown man. Later, he said Kiante attacked him with the knife in a domestic dispute and that he gained control of the knife and defended himself. He subsequently admitted Kiante never had possession of the knife. Dalvin was charged with second-degree reckless homicide and received a 10-year prison sentence and 10 years extended supervision.

**Tae'najah Morgan, 2, Milwaukee – October 20, 2015
Kevin Little, 10**

On October 20, 2015, Michael Morgan, 26, started a fire at the home of his estranged wife while six children and his wife's mother were inside the home. Tae'najah Morgan, Michael's niece, died in the fire and Kevin Little, Michael's stepson, died two weeks later as a result of injuries he sustained during the fire. Kevin's mother told authorities that she had been in the process of divorcing Michael, but they had recently decided to dismiss the proceedings and attempt to seek counseling. Court records show Michael has a violent past. He faced three misdemeanor charges in 2014 following an argument with his wife and was subject to a no-contact order. When he subsequently violated the order, he was charged with bail jumping. For his role in the deaths of Tae'najah Morgan and Kevin Little, Michael was charged with two counts of first-degree reckless homicide, arson, and two misdemeanor counts of bail jumping. The case has not concluded.

OCONTO

Paige Linsmeyer, 27, Gillet – August 1, 2015

Brian Cleary, 51, shot and killed his girlfriend, Paige Linsmeyer, at the couple's shared home. He then shot and killed himself. Brian died instantly. Paige was transported to the hospital but died from her injuries the next day.

PIERCE

Dean Kees, 60, Town of El Paso – July 10, 2015

Patricia Kees, 66, shot her husband 14 times, dragged his body outside into a ditch and proceeded to go to a bar and tell patrons her husband was dead. She initially denied having any role in Dean's death but eventually admitted it to authorities. Patricia suffers from dementia and was found incompetent to stand trial. She has been placed in a secure mental health facility.

Douglas Bailey, 51, Prescott – November 22, 2015

When Douglas Bailey did not show up at his family's house for Thanksgiving as planned, his sister reported him missing and told authorities that she was concerned that his girlfriend Rose Kuehni, 44, had harmed him. Rose eventually told investigators that she had asked a friend to dispose of Douglas's body after she killed him with a shotgun, alleging that she was afraid that he would rape her again and that he had made numerous threats to harm her. Rose is charged with first-degree intentional homicide and the case is set for jury trial in December of 2016.

PORTAGE

Nancy Pulchinski, 58, Town of Hull – March 5, 2015

Larry Pulchinski, 60, fatally shot his wife with a shotgun at their home before killing himself. A representative from the Portage County Sheriff's Department said Nancy may have had a medical condition and articles about the incident indicate that Larry was unemployed and may have been depressed.

Lisa Sanchez, 47, Bancroft – June 3, 2015

Larry Sanchez, 58, fatally shot his wife and then barricaded himself in their home for hours to avoid police. According to the criminal complaint, Lisa moved out of the home a few days earlier because of Larry's alcohol issues. On the day of the homicide, Lisa had planned to return to the couple's shared residence to pick up some of her belongings. Larry has pleaded guilty to a charge of first-degree reckless homicide and is awaiting sentencing.

RACINE

Vista Jackson, 14, Racine – September 14, 2015

Keller McQuay, 14, fatally shot his girlfriend Vista Jackson with a sawed-off rifle. A neighbor said she heard an argument before seeing Vista run from the house in tears and then return a short time later. A witness in the home where the shooting occurred told authorities that she heard the two say “I love you” to each other before hearing a pop. Friends of Vista told reporters that Keller was abusive towards her; however, Keller and some of his family members maintain that he was playing with the rifle when the weapon discharged, fatally striking Vista. At the time of the homicide, Keller was an adjudicated delinquent of a felony and as a result needed a court order to see Vista without adult supervision, according to Keller’s step-father. For his role in Vista’s death, Keller was charged with three felonies including first-degree reckless homicide. The case has not concluded.

ROCK

Terez Herd, 23, Beloit – January 19, 2015

Terez Herd was fatally shot by Samuel Brooks, 25, during an altercation which began with Samuel and another man fighting for over two weeks about a woman via Facebook. Samuel and the other man had agreed to meet and fight, and did so in front of a crowd that was estimated by a witness to be 20 or 25 people. Another person involved in the incident pointed a gun at Samuel and fired, prompting Samuel to return fire, fatally striking Terez. Samuel was initially charged with four felonies including second-degree reckless homicide, but that charge was dismissed as part of a plea deal. Samuel pleaded guilty to substantial battery and possession of a firearm by a felon. He was sentenced to four years in prison, with two years of supervision for the felony possession of the firearm and to one year and six months in prison with two years supervision for the substantial battery, to be served consecutively.

ROCK

Mark Marquez, 47, Milton – October 15, 2015

On October 15, Mario Lopez, 25, and his brother confronted Mark Marquez, a man they considered a father. During the confrontation, Mario stabbed Mark. Mark sustained serious injuries and died in the hospital several months later. The incident started when the Lopezes' mother told the brothers that Marquez had battered her. The brothers found Mark in a friend's garage. The other brother claims that as they confronted him, Mark tried to strike him with an alcohol bottle. According to other witnesses, there was a fight between one of the brothers and Mark. The other brother, presumably Mario, had a knife and entered the fight. After a short time, both Lopezes fled the scene. After Mark died from his wounds, the state brought a charge of first-degree intentional homicide against Mario as a party to the crime. A jury trial is scheduled for October 17, 2016. The other Lopez brother has pled guilty to harboring or aiding a felon.

SAWYER

**Marilyn Werachowski, 60, Edgewater – May 30, 2015
Richard Werachowski, 62**

Marilyn Werachowski died in a fire set by her son Eric. She was last heard from while on the phone with 911 seeking help, after Eric shot and killed Richard Werachowski, his father, and set the house ablaze. When law enforcement officers arrived, they found the family home in flames. They also found Eric's body outside of the structure; he had killed himself with a gunshot to his head. Community members said that Eric lived with his parents and did not leave home very often.

SAINT CROIX

**Courtney Bradford, 30, New Richmond – September 2, 2015
Jasmine Bradford, 10**

Cristian Nunez, 37, stabbed his girlfriend Courtney Bradford at least a dozen times, killing her. Cristian also sexually assaulted and fatally stabbed Bradford's 10-year-old daughter Jasmine. According to the criminal complaint, after committing the homicides and starting a fire in Bradford's home, Cristian stole her vehicle and credit card and fled to El Paso, Texas, where he was arrested the following day. An ex-girlfriend of Cristian told police that she had a long conversation with Courtney a few days before the murders informing her of threats Cristian had made towards Courtney. Cristian was charged with five felonies, including two counts of first-degree intentional homicide. The case has not concluded.

WALWORTH

Joseph Hensel, 27, Elkhorn – October 10, 2015

Christopher Lemock, 32, shot and killed his domestic partner, Joseph Hensel. He then called 911 and handed the phone to the victim's young daughter. Christopher went into a bedroom and shot and killed himself. Police indicated that Christopher and Joseph lived together for about seven years.

WAUKESHA

Stanley Van Wagner, 50, Oconomowoc – May 15, 2015

On May 17, 2015, Amy Van Wagner, 51, went to a neighbor's house to report that she found her husband, Stanley, unresponsive in their basement. When authorities responded to the scene and began their investigation, they determined that Stanley had been shot four times upstairs, dragged to the basement, and covered with a tarp. Amy Van Wagner claims to have not seen Stanley in the two days prior to his death. When co-workers and friends became concerned and attempted to contact Stanley, Amy responded to them from his phone. In the days after his death, Amy repeatedly withdrew money from Stanley's bank account. The homicide investigation revealed that the family was having financial problems, and that Amy had recently borrowed money from a friend to hire a divorce attorney, which she wished to conceal from Stanley. Amy was not taken into custody until nine months after the homicide and faces charges of first-degree intentional homicide and hiding a corpse. The case has not concluded.

Crystal Matusek, 20, Summit – June 27, 2015

While driving on I-94 with his girlfriend, Crystal Matusek, Jared Weber, 22, intentionally crashed the vehicle, killing Crystal. Witnesses reported the driver appeared to lose control of the car, which then hit the center median and flipped over. Crystal was ejected and died on the scene. Jared was relatively unharmed and began saying, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry. We were arguing. Please don't let her be dead."

Two weeks later, police found a dash camera among Jared's possessions. Upon watching the video, detectives discovered the camera recorded the moments before the crash and showed Jared and Crystal Matusek arguing. Crystal said to Jared, "All you care about is this car." To which Jared responded, "I will crash this car," and immediately crashed the vehicle. Crystal can be heard screaming moments before the crash. Jared was silent. He is charged with first-degree reckless homicide. The case has not yet concluded.

WAUKESHA

Jeremy Trawitzki, 38, Muskego – October 30, 2015

Thomas Kruse, 41, shot and killed Jeremy Trawitzki outside of the restaurant where Jeremy worked. Jeremy sustained multiple gunshot wounds. Thomas was found nearby, dead from a single, evidently self-inflicted, shot to his head. According to reports, Thomas was estranged from his wife and believed Jeremy was involved with her.

WAUPACA

Craig Dake, 43, Fremont – March 6, 2015

During a verbal argument and physical fight, Alison Roe, 43, stabbed her boyfriend Craig Dake once, killing him. Alison told authorities that Craig was drunk and had punched her in the mouth and was choking her, prompting her to grab a knife and stab him once in the chest. Officers said Alison's lip was swollen and there appeared to be red marks on her neck. She is charged with first-degree intentional homicide and resisting or obstructing an officer. The case is set for jury trial in November 2016.

WINNEBAGO

Stacey Strange, 42, Oshkosh – September 20, 2015

After arguing over household responsibilities earlier in the day, Samson Gomoll, 30, fatally shot his girlfriend Stacey Strange when she returned home. The woman who gave Stacey a ride home said that Stacey asked her to come inside with her because she was afraid of how Samson would behave. When they entered the home, the couple began arguing and Samson accused Stacey of taking a magazine for his AK-47 assault rifle. Stacey showed Samson where the magazine was and then asked him to leave, threatening to call the police if he did not do so. The witness stated that Samson said he would kill Stacey if she called the police and then pulled a handgun from under a pillow on the couch and shot at Stacey four or five times, killing her. In April 2016, a jury convicted Samson of first-degree intentional homicide, and he was sentenced to life in prison with eligibility for parole after 32 years.

WOOD

Theresa Coates, 47, Saratoga – August 17, 2015

The same day that Theresa Coates' daughter broke things off with Miguel Oertel, 17, he threatened to kill himself and went to Theresa's home armed with a shotgun to see his ex-girlfriend one more time. Miguel said Theresa grabbed the barrel and the gun went off as they struggled, fatally striking Theresa in the abdomen. Miguel then shot himself in the face in an attempt to take his own life, but he survived. Miguel was found guilty of first-degree reckless homicide and was sentenced to 15 years in prison.

He called me & wanted me to come over & I told him NO. He said if I did not come over he would come to my house & wake everyone up. He told me I was the only one he could talk to. He acted like he was going to kill himself. So after an hour I finally went over & with him. He said he would kill me if I left him or ever contacted the police. He said he would kill me if I left him or ever contacted the police. He said he would kill me if I left him or ever contacted the police.

Two weeks ago went for a drive with him, twice stopped told me to get out NON STOP TEXT, PHONE CALLS COMING where I am, Threatening Friends, Threatening to get rid of my things

He called me & wanted me to come over & I told him NO. He said if I did not come over he would come to my house & wake everyone up. He told me I was the only one he could talk to. He acted like he was going to kill himself. So after an hour I finally went over & with him. He said he would kill me if I left him or ever contacted the police.

Struck me under my eye with a hand gun. THEN I had to go to the emergency room to get stitches. He went on a tirade including threatening to kill me, while kicking door violently.

Eight months ago I moved out because he threatened to shoot me and my family burn my house down. He said then there is no reason to live.

I want this injunction because he said then there is no reason to live. has also forced sex upon me within the last month.

With him he always left guns laying around with clips in them. he would always play with them like running the bullets through the chambers.

He said if I did not come over he would come to my house & wake everyone up. He told me I was the only one he could talk to. He acted like he was going to kill himself. So after an hour I finally went over & with him. He said he would kill me if I left him or ever contacted the police.

I was never able to get a license, phone or anything w/out his consent always told me I was "what's stopping" to get it. I made arrangements to get it.

Lethality Assessment Program Update

Over the last several years, advocates, law enforcement officials, health-care providers and others have paid increasing attention to the risk factors that are associated with lethal domestic violence

The 2014 Report contains an in-depth discussion of the screening questions from an assessment tool that is used in the Lethality Assessment Program (LAP) - Maryland Model. The screening questions have grown out of a body of research that has been primarily led by Jacquelyn Campbell at Johns Hopkins University. Under the protocol, when law enforcement responders or certain other community professionals come into contact with victims, they ask 11 yes-no questions. An affirmative response to any of the first three questions indicates the victim is at high risk to be killed. Answers of “yes” to three or more of the other questions also indicate elevated risk. When a high-risk case is identified, the officer or other professional places a phone call to the local 24-hour domestic violence hotline and encourages the victim to speak with the advocate on the phone. The victim is, of course, free to decide whether or not to speak with the advocate.

The LAP is based on research that found that only 4% of abused victims had used a domestic violence hotline or shelter within the year prior to being killed by an intimate partner. Importantly, another study found a 60% reduction in risk of severe assault when victims utilize the services of a domestic violence program. Therefore, while evidence shows domestic violence advocacy services are protective, research also suggests those who are perhaps at the greatest risk of death are not reaching out for help. These two findings present the opportunity both to predict who is at greatest risk and, simultaneously, to connect them with potentially life-saving services. The LAP is one of two best practices across the nation for addressing the risk of domestic violence homicide; the other is a Domestic Violence High Risk Team (DVHRT) Model, developed by the Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center.

In April of 2015, all law enforcement jurisdictions in Milwaukee County began administering the LAP screen when responding to intimate partner-related domestic calls for service, and Dunn County followed in April of 2016. This year, End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin has been working closely with the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV) to streamline their application and training process in an effort to simultaneously train more of Wisconsin’s interested jurisdictions. To that end, we will soon be adding nine more counties to the list of those who are implementing the LAP in Wisconsin. During the three days following the release of this report, 54 law enforcement jurisdictions, seven domestic violence advocacy centers, four district attorneys’ offices and three other community partner agencies will participate in the LAP train-the-trainer course. Once trained, those representatives will be charged with training their respective departments to use the tool within three months.

For the first six months of implementation, LAP teams are asked to collect and submit data to MNADV about the percentage of victims are found to be at high-risk when screened, and of those victims, the percentage that choose to engage with advocacy services. The percentages will then be compared to MNADV’s global performance data to determine how each newly implementing LAP community is performing compared to the average. Milwaukee County’s data revealed a service utilization rate of 61% among all law enforcement-identified high-danger victims, illustrating that

in Milwaukee County, the LAP is doing what it was designed to do: connect victims who are most at risk of homicide to services that could be protective. An advocate from Milwaukee has called the LAP a “game changer” because it has standardized the ways in which officers and advocates communicate with each other and with victims about lethality risk.

End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin will continue to partner with MNADV, the Wisconsin Department of Justice and local communities to advance the LAP in Wisconsin.

Gender Difference

Domestic violence, like many other forms of violence, presents a stark pattern of gender differences. As noted previously, the perpetrators of domestic violence homicide incidents were overwhelmingly male. In 2015, 73% of perpetrators were male.

The types of behaviors exhibited by homicide victims and perpetrators also typically vary according to gender. Female perpetrators have rarely engaged in the patterns of prior stalking, strangulation, increased and more severe violence, forced sex, threats to kill, and other coercive behavior that have characterized the homicides committed by men. However, in 2015 and over the years, there have been a limited number of exceptions in which women exhibit some of the battering tactics that typically characterize men’s violence against women. Many homicides committed by women were preceded by some kind of immediate or anticipated attack on the woman or a long history of abuse by the homicide victim.

Perhaps one of the starkest examples of the use of lethal force in self-defense documented in any edition of this report is Cierra Finkley’s defense of herself and her child. This case also exemplifies the double-standards that women, and women of color in particular, face when they use force to defend themselves. On the opposite page, an excerpted letter from End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin regarding possible criminal charges against Cierra is reproduced.

Self-defense does not appear to be a factor in any of the cases of a man killing a woman in this report. As in past years, the level of brutality and methods of homicide used by male and female perpetrators generally differs. Where the method of homicide was beating or strangulation, all of the perpetrators were men, except in the one case of a mother’s homicide of her son. The attacks often involved multiple injuries and severe trauma. In contrast, the domestic violence homicides committed by women have typically involved a single stab wound or gunshot, although sometimes these attacks involve multiple shots or stab wounds.

Related to gender differences, 2015 presented the unusual statistic that more men were victims of domestic violence homicides than women in that year. A look at this anomaly in context reveals that most of the male victims were killed by a man, usually the victim’s father, mother’s boyfriend, son or current female partner’s ex-boyfriend. These cases highlight domestic violence homicide’s wide reach. While abuse and battering are most often committed by a man against a woman, men and boys are also victims of domestic

October 14, 2015

Dear District Attorney Ozanne:



...

Cierra's situation exemplifies the double standards applied by the criminal justice system against domestic violence victims of color in our country. These double standards in part perpetuate the vast racial disparities that plague Wisconsin and Dane County.

Contrast Cierra's arrest and potential prosecution with the 2012 killing of Bo Morrison, a 20-year-old African American from Washington County. As you may recall, Bo was at a party in a friend's garage on the night he was killed. When police arrived in response to a noise complaint, the partygoers scattered, and Bo hid in the porch of the house next door. The white homeowner, Adam Kind, entered the porch with a handgun, shot and killed Bo as Bo was putting his hands up. Kind was never arrested and was cleared of any wrongdoing because the Washington County District Attorney concluded that Kind reasonably used deadly force when he killed a young man who was hiding in his porch. However, Cierra who defended herself against her abuser—after a long history of victimization, after an attempt on her and her child's lives earlier that day, and after the abuser broke down her door—was arrested, made to appear in court in a prisoner's jumpsuit and forced to respond to a \$100,000 bail request. This kind of starkly disparate treatment, in the year 2015, illustrates our state's shameful record on racial inequality.

Cierra's survival has a context. On an individual level, Cierra was deeply concerned for her safety and the safety of her 5-year-old daughter. Her intent that day was not to harm her abuser, but to protect herself. Someone with malicious intent does not call the police three times in the same day asking for help. Victims' acts of survival and desperation should not be crimes.

On a broader level, Cierra likely lived with the knowledge that, as an African-American domestic violence victim, her life and the life of her child were perilously close to the brink. Homicide is the second leading cause of death for Black females ages 15 to 24, and the most common type of homicide for these victims is intimate partner homicide. Black women are about three times more likely than the general population to be killed by a partner or former partner. In Wisconsin in recent years, Black victims account for 22 to 30 percent of all domestic violence homicide deaths, despite the fact they make up only 6% of the population.

Clearly, we have more work to do to protect the lives of Black women in our state ... African-American victims, in particular, face extraordinarily complicated choices when seeking help and safety. On one hand, they are acutely aware of the ways in which the criminal justice and law enforcement systems have contributed to what Michele Alexander describes as the "new Jim Crow," where often relatively minor offenses that occur with little notice on college campuses or in middle class suburban communities mean felony convictions for young African American men. In addition, African American victims know that calling the police could very well result in their arrests and criminal justice system involvement. And, victims are skeptical about calling the police for reasons that include fear of discrimination and that law enforcement involvement will not improve their situations. This skepticism is mirrored nationally in the findings from a recent study done by the National Domestic Violence Hotline. It found that the majority of victims feared calling law enforcement, citing issues of race and discrimination as main reason for their reluctance.

Despite all of this, Cierra did reach out for help—help the system did not provide. Prosecuting her under these circumstances would not only be unjust to her and her family, it would also further entrench the hopelessness in which many Black victims are trapped. Her prosecution would be a message to other victims: when you call the police, you will not be any better off; when you act to save your life, you will be made a criminal. We must eliminate the catch-22s and lose-lose choices that continue to oppress Black survivors. You can send a different message, one that allows for hope in a just future, by clearing the name of Cierra Finkley....

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Finkley'.

violence homicides. These homicides provide yet another reason why domestic violence cannot and should not be pigeonholed as a “women’s issue.” It is an issue which also adversely affects the health and safety of many men, and it is a social problem for which men bear significant responsibility.

On a deeper level, men’s use of violence both against women and against other men is a byproduct of broken, unhealthy notions of masculinity. Perhaps one of the most nuanced and cogent analyses of the relationship between faulty beliefs about masculinity and domestic violence homicides is contained in the book *Familicidal Hearts: The Emotional Styles of 211 Killers*, by Neil Websdale, a professor at Northern Arizona University and director of the National Domestic Violence Fatality Review Initiative. He paints a complex yet coherent and convincing picture of “family annihilators.” Websdale argues that perpetrators of familicide, who are overwhelmingly male, share one common trait: feelings of shame that they have fallen short of societal ideals of manhood.

Websdale’s account complicates but also builds off the traditional feminist understanding that domestic violence is an expression of male power and control to subordinate women in intimate partner relationships. He believes men who kill their families generally have a conscious or unconscious need to control their female partners. However, Websdale’s research shows these men feel a deep sense of powerlessness or lack of control in their own lives. Many of the men lack significant social attachments beyond their intimate relationships and have an inability to positively express themselves within these relationships. Their identity and sense of self-worth, therefore, tends to be bound up in relationships that are prone to instability and discontentment.

Based on these insights, Websdale calls us to go beyond the conception of intimate partner violence as an expression of power and control. Rather, when we take seriously the notion that family killers share a sense of extreme powerlessness, we can sharpen our focus on the warped belief systems, emotional deficiencies and pathological aspects of men’s socialization that drive both these feelings of powerlessness and the actions of some men who resort to otherwise unthinkable violence. Ultimately, Websdale’s writing suggests that men’s emotional development and ability to participate in egalitarian relationships is as essential to ending violence against women as any particular improvement to the social, political or economic status of women. This analysis dovetails with the movement to end violence against women’s growing emphasis on primary prevention and the promotion of more positive and rewarding models of masculinity.

Same-sex Intimate-partner Homicide

The 2015 report contains three cases involving same-sex relationships, which is equal to the entire number of domestic violence homicides in same-sex relationships identified by all of the reports from 2005 to 2014. The report has often noted that homicides in LGBTQ relationships have likely been under-counted because stigma and bias cloud the descriptions of these homicides in public sources. An LGBTQ relationship might be coded as “friend,” “roommate” or “other known to victim.” Where the victim was reported as single and there was no apparent forced entry to the home or scene, the homicide may go unrecognized as related to same-

sex intimate-partner violence. Indeed, the public accounts of the same-sex domestic violence homicides included in the 2015 report described the relationships in coded language and did not explicitly or clearly indicate that intimate partner violence was involved. The reticence of public sources to name same-sex intimate-partner violence is consistent with the oppression LGBTQ individuals face in achieving recognition of their relationships and especially when seeking help as survivors of domestic violence.

Below is an interview with Molly Hermann that discusses these issues. Molly Hermann is an LGBTQ intimate partner violence (IPV) consultant, with experience training providers, engaging LGBTQ communities, and conducting research to develop support systems. She is a long-term member of the statewide LGBTQ IPV Committee supported by End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault. The interview was previously published in the *2013 Wisconsin Domestic Violence Homicide Report*.

Q: Research shows that domestic violence occurs in LGBTQ relationships at roughly the same rates as heterosexual relationships. When we look at domestic violence homicides that have been identified and catalogued in the reports, there appear to be proportionally fewer domestic violence homicides in same-sex relationships. Between 2005 and 2013, we identified three LGBTQ domestic violence homicides in Wisconsin. In previous reports, we have acknowledged that we may undercount LGBTQ domestic violence homicides. Due to stigma, LGBTQ relationships can be hidden and inaccurately identified in the public record as “roommates” or “friends” or “acquaintances.” In light of your work advocating for LGBTQ victims of domestic violence, do you believe it is possible that some LGBTQ domestic violence homicides do not come to light as such?

A: First, yes, I believe some homicides that were truly intimate partner homicides in LGBTQ relationships were not recognized as such in previous years’ reports. If you look at homicides that take place generally in Wisconsin, and if the Domestic Violence Homicide Report is subset of those homicides, I think it is likely that some cases were misclassified as “roommate dispute” or “dispute between friends” so that they never made it into the set of cases that were examined for classification as domestic violence homicides. It is critical that we strive to name LGBTQ domestic violence homicides correctly. I think of the victims of LGBTQ domestic violence. If we are not naming the issue from the outside, how are they going to name what is going on in their homes and seek help? Second, it is interesting because when you mention there have been three domestic violence homicides in LGBTQ relationships since 2005 in Wisconsin, I think I know which three homicides you are talking about. I do not work in the domestic violence field on a daily basis, but I still know about those incidents and remember them. One effective way to build awareness within communities is to talk about local events that happened there. In those two particular communities, folks knew about the incidents. Often they knew someone who was involved, and those connections are a powerful way for individuals to recognize a community-level issue that should be addressed.

Q: So, even though the LGBTQ domestic violence homicides we know about are few in number, they are very impactful?

A: Yes, I think so. A lot of us have various connections to the people involved. If you are working with a LGBTQ organization in Milwaukee, for example, five people there might have known the person involved. It really hits close to home. People who were connected often ask themselves, "Were there warning signs?" The point is not to feel bad about what we might have done differently, but to watch moving forward and to be better prepared to respond when we see signs of domestic abuse in same-sex or transgender relationships.

Q: How, if at all, has the public perception of LGBTQ relationships changed since 2000 and has any such change impacted the degree of acknowledgment and awareness of domestic violence in LGBTQ relationships?

A: The recognition of LGBTQ relationships is coming along, but obviously it is a complicated process, especially in Wisconsin, or we would have been getting married a long time ago. If it is hard to recognize a relationship, it is even harder to recognize domestic violence in that relationship. It is like walking through quick sand. It's a slow moving process. And yet, there are people who are in violent relationships right now. We can't wait for people to call our relationships legitimate and then start addressing domestic violence. When a same-sex relationship ends, there is no system for dissolving all of the legal aspects of that relationship, like ownership of property or custody of children. In a non-abusive situation, it is incredibly difficult and time-consuming. I can't imagine how difficult it would be if a victim were trying to secure these types of rights while leaving a violent relationship and dealing with an abusive ex-partner. Opposite-sex couples have divorce. Same-sex couples are not afforded that process. Clearly, LGBTQ relationships are becoming more visible. More people in Wisconsin would vote, "Yes - let LGBTQ couples get married." Parenting in LGBTQ couples is becoming more respected than it has been in the past. Yet, I don't think that acceptance of LGBTQ people is a quick translation to recognition that domestic violence happens in LGBTQ relationships, especially because those of us who are trying to prove that our relationships should be valued don't necessarily want to reveal that there are sometimes problems, that abuse happens in our relationships too. We are struggling just for recognition and acceptance, and, of course, there is a reticence to cloud the image we are trying to project by acknowledging that, just like in heterosexual relationships, domestic violence occurs in same-sex relationships, too. We also have to remember that there are still many LGBTQ youth who are not accepted by their families, who are out on their own and who are just trying to survive. For these youth, because of stigma and homophobia, the priority is simply survival, not trying to gain acceptance of their relationships from mainstream society

Looking Ahead to 2016

In July of 2016, End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin released preliminary domestic violence homicide statistics for the first half of that year. Typically, we only present annual statistics through the release of this report in the fall of the following year. This has been our practice for a number of reasons. In particular, often the passage of some time is necessary to gather all of the relevant facts. Homicides that may have first appeared to be related to domestic abuse turn out to be unrelated once the investigation is complete. Similarly, incidents that may not have initially been linked to intimate partner violence are later revealed to be domestic violence homicides.

However, we took the unusual step of releasing preliminary data for 2016 because local advocates alerted us to what they perceived as an alarming increase in domestic violence homicides. After review, 39 cases from January to June of 2016 that meet the report's definition of domestic violence homicides were identified. A comparison to previous years' data revealed that in no other January-to-June period was the total that high over the history of this report. In fact, the number of homicides from the first half of 2016 were 70-percent higher than average and represents a one-third increase over the previous high, which occurred from January to June of 2009. Indeed, this was a startling and alarming discovery.

Looking at the preliminary 2016 data in light of the 2015 statistics contained in this report, the overall picture may reveal a longer-term elevated level of domestic violence homicides. The total number of deaths and victims in 2015 is the second highest year previously recorded. (2009, with 67 deaths, was the highest.)

However, there are some important caveats.

First, prior to 2010, this report did not consistently track and record the killing of parents by their adult children as domestic violence homicides. The report shifted to categorically include these cases at the urging of advocates for older adult victims who convincingly argued that the dynamics of power and control that are present in intimate partner abuse also underlie abuse to elders by their children or grandchildren.

Second, our ability to more accurately identify domestic violence homicides has improved over the last several years, particularly when compared to the first decade of the report. In terms of this report, characterizing a homicide as a domestic violence homicide requires establishing the nature of the relationship between the victim and perpetrator and, in some cases, understanding the motive. The amount of accessible and relevant information has grown exponentially over the years. With virtually all news content published and archived online, in addition to being broadcast or physically printed, and with the advent of social media's capacity to reveal networks of relationships between individuals and other relevant details, there is now simply much more information available to understand the context of and motive behind homicide incidents. Therefore, the increase in domestic violence homicides identified in 2015 and in the first half of 2016 may be attributable, at least in part, to a greater amount of available information, rather than solely an actual increase in violence.

Regardless of the precise nature of the trend, advocates continue to search for both an understanding of what makes victims vulnerable and possible sources of safety.

Economic stability has a profound effect on victims' options for safety. An inability to survive financially apart from abusers is a main reason victims stay in abusive homes or are often forced to return to abusers. The last several years have seen a very disparate economic outlook for Wisconsinites. While the economy in Wisconsin has slowly grown since the end of the Great Recession, recovery has been weaker in Wisconsin than in other comparable states and the benefits of economic recovery have not been shared equally. About one quarter of Wisconsin workers earn wages that are too low to keep a family of four above the poverty level. Wisconsin is the third worst state for racial disparities in the employment rate between white and Black workers. These economic inequalities are set against government policies that cut or restrict access to social safety net programs. These cuts force children and families into desperate situations. Thus, many victims of domestic abuse in Wisconsin and their children victims are vulnerable because they cannot afford stable housing and struggle to have basic necessities.

In addition, research shows that the one of the single biggest risk factors of death in domestic violence cases is the presence of firearms in the home of the victim. By all accounts, gun sales nationally in 2015 were significantly higher than in any previous year. Gun dealers in Wisconsin confirmed that 2015 sales were frenetic. The rise in the presence of guns comes in tandem with changes in state laws that make it easier for individuals to buy and carry firearms. Additionally, gun safety legislation that would lower the domestic violence homicide rate in Wisconsin was blocked. For instance, states with background checks on all gun sales have a 46% lower gun-related domestic violence rate than states like Wisconsin that allow loopholes in the background check system. A bill to provide background checks was introduced in Wisconsin in 2015, but did not advance because of opposition from the NRA and other gun-lobby groups. Throughout this report's history, the number of domestic violence homicides from gun violence represent more deaths than all other methods of homicide combined.

Progress on gun safety and economic equality is necessary, but beneficial shifts in these areas may take years. More immediately, we hope that the increased number of domestic violence homicides reported in 2015 and 2016 will prompt more communities in Wisconsin to proactively adopt best practices and evidence-informed strategies to save lives. (See for example page 29.) These strategies are most effective when implemented in collaboration on a community-wide basis.

"We urge Coordinated Community Response Teams to examine their community's response to domestic abuse and to consider how they can adopt best practices and enhance collaboration. According to national data, over 40 percent of domestic violence homicide perpetrators were arrested within a year prior to the killing. Once the warning signs of lethal violence are recognized, communities can focus resources and attention on these families."

- End Domestic Abuse Executive Director, Patti Seger

Government funding for services for domestic abuse victims increased significantly during the period of 2015 and first half of 2016. This is a positive development and all available research

indicates that better access to and availability of services for victims of domestic violence will save lives. It is important to note that, while this increased funding was committed to the cause of domestic violence victim services during the 2015 calendar year, the actual funding was generally not available to be utilized by service providers until well into 2016. The positive impact of this increased investment in victim safety could not register in this year's report and will likely be only minimally felt in the 2016 report.

Therefore, holding the individual tragedies and pain that occurred in 2015 and into 2016 in our hearts, we look to the future. We remember all of the important work done each day in Wisconsin by victim advocates, social service providers, community members, law enforcement and, of course, survivors themselves to save lives — with thanks this work will continue and grow. We recommit ourselves to promoting the steps we know would reduce domestic violence homicides: attention to the known risk factors, economic stability for survivors, commonsense gun safety laws, changing a culture that supports power and control in intimate relationships and connecting survivors and their families to advocacy services.

Methodology

Our definition of homicide is the killing of one human being by another. This encompasses criminal, justifiable, self-defense and reckless homicides. Homicides are considered domestic violence-related if:

- The victims and perpetrators were spouses or partners, former spouses or former partners, adults with children in common, and adults or teens that had been in a dating relationship.
- Beginning with the report for 2010, we also include cases that involve a parent or grandparent killed by an adult child or grandchild. We do not include these cases, however, if the defendant was found not guilty by reason of mental illness or lacked the capacity to stand trial.
- It was a homicide of a person other than the intimate partner and it occurred within the context of domestic violence. This encompasses cases where the circumstances of the murder included obsessive control of the perpetrator's current or former partner that extended to her or his new partner. We also include the homicide of a bystander or someone who attempted to protect a domestic violence victim from future harm.
- The homicide was a child death that occurred as an extension of or in response to ongoing abuse between adult intimate partners. For example, when a partner or estranged partner killed his or her children in order to exact revenge on his or her partner, it is considered domestic violence-related.

The report also accounts for overall deaths related to domestic violence homicide, including perpetrator deaths. Most perpetrator deaths are suicides. The count of domestic violence homicide victims occasionally includes perpetrators killed by responding law enforcement

officers (homicide by legal intervention) or killed by someone in defense of another person who was under attack. The victim count also includes law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty when responding to domestic violence. There were no homicides in 2015 that fell into the latter category.

In each case of homicide-suicide, we listed the murdered person in our heading as the homicide victim. We seek to be as consistent and as accurate as possible year to year in determining which homicides to include in the report.

In compiling our summary data, we seek to include the total number of homicides committed in Wisconsin in a given year. As previously noted, we use UCR data submitted to DOJ and, if available for the year in question, information from Bureau of Health Information (BHI) from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services. Each agency compiles its data from various reporting methods including death certificates, police reports, coroner, medical examiner and hospital records. For example, BHI counts homicides of Wisconsin residents that occur in other states, as well as traffic fatalities from intoxicated driving; DOJ counts homicides in the Wisconsin county in which they occur and conforms to UCR standards that omit intoxicated driving deaths. DOJ does not include homicides by legal intervention. The BHI figure is therefore usually higher than the UCR-based count.

A Note about Child Homicides

As noted above, we include as domestic violence homicides, child killings that occurred as an extension of or in response to ongoing abuse between adult intimate partners. For example, when a partner or estranged partner killed his or her children in order to exact revenge on his or her partner, it is considered domestic violence-related.

We believe our limited ability to recognize these cases likely results in an under-count of these types of homicides. Homicide of a child is often viewed as an isolated incident of child abuse. An investigation of a child homicide can often overlook past domestic violence or the domestic violence might not be included in the public record. While we believe that a larger number of child deaths are directly related to an ongoing pattern of domestic abuse, our current methods of tracking homicides do not allow us to consistently identify children killed by perpetrators of domestic violence.

Each year there are a number of homicides of children we do not include but in which domestic abuse appears to be a salient characteristic or risk factor. These cases are not included because we lack the necessary information to link the killings to intimate partner violence (and thus to the report's definition of domestic violence homicide). Below is an example of this type of incident from 2015.

Waupaca County

On June 14, John Brush's girlfriend left her three-year-old son in his care. About an hour later, he called her to say the boy was not breathing. Brush told the mother that he called 911, but when she arrived back at the house she found Brush and his parents standing around the severely injured child. Brush said he did not want to call 911 because he had

warrants out for his arrest. The mother rushed the boy to the hospital. The child was in critical condition for about two weeks before he died.

Brush claimed the child fell down the stairs, but medical investigators determined the injuries were not consistent with that story. Prosecutors initially charged Brush with reckless homicide and six other charges. He pled no contest to first-degree recklessly endangering safety. He has not yet been sentenced for that crime.

As documented by court records, Brush had a long history of violent behavior, including a substantial history of domestic abuse. He was charged with domestic abuse in separate cases in 1999, 2000, 2003, 2007 and 2010. Some of the charges were for felony-level offenses. He also was a respondent in two separate restraining order cases brought by different women.

However, the case is not classified as a domestic violence homicide because we did not find documented evidence that Brush was violent to his current girlfriend, the child's mother.

While the Brush case does not meet our definition of domestic violence homicide, the death of this child is connected to, or likely connected to, domestic abuse in a number of ways. First, domestic abuse perpetration is often a repeat behavior, particularly by a individual with Brush's long, documented history. Thus the lack of documentation of Brush having engaged in abuse in relationship with the child's mother may simply be because most incidents of domestic abuse do not come to light in public sources, not because the abuse was not occurring. Second, at the time of the homicide, Brush was wanted on a warrant. He had violated a condition of probation that was imposed for a conviction related to a restraining order violation. Therefore, taking a broad view, the child's death may not have occurred had Brush faced greater accountability for past domestic abuse behavior.

The Brush case is just one example of how the fatal consequences of domestic abuse extend beyond the particular cases that meet our definition of a domestic violence homicide. Domestic abuse is a pervasive epidemic that has directly victimized well over one million Wisconsinites. Therefore, it is not surprising the cases included in any year's report only show a portion of the various ways domestic abuse has life and death implications in our state.

2000 to 2015 Totals

| Year | Homicide Deaths | Suicides | Total |
|---------------|-----------------|------------|------------|
| 2015 | 49 | 9 | 58 |
| 2014 | 37 | 6 | 43 |
| 2013 | 43 | 12 | 55 |
| 2012 | 48 | 4 | 52 |
| 2011 | 34 | 3 | 37 |
| 2010 | 45 | 7 | 52 |
| 2009 | 52 | 15 | 67 |
| 2008 | 37 | 10 | 47 |
| 2007 | 41 | 10 | 51 |
| 2006 | 28 | 8 | 36 |
| 2005 | 40 | 6 | 46 |
| 2004 | 28 | 5 | 33 |
| 2003 | 45 | 16 | 61 |
| 2002 | 38 | 11 | 49 |
| 2001 | 33 | 9 | 42 |
| 2000 | 33 | 8 | 41 |
| Totals | 631 | 139 | 770 |

Topic Index to Previous Homicide Reports

Each year, the homicide report includes a discussion of a variety of topics. Below is an index of the topics that have been addressed. Each year's report is available at: <http://endabusewi.org/ourwork/homicide-reports>.

African-American communities, Impact on, 2005 (16), 2008 (23), 2009 (34), 2010 (37), 2011/12 (42), 2013 (46)

Bystander risk, 2002 (8), 2003 (10), 2004 (6), 2005 (11)

Child custody, connection to, 2001 (7), 2006/7 (23), 2009 (25)

Children, Impact on, 2003 (10), 2005 (10), 2006/7 (22), 2008 (18), 2009 (22), 2010 (27), 2011/12 (39), 2014 (28)

Coordinated community response, 2010 (7), 2013 (30)

Dane County, a closer look, 2009 (21)

Domestic abuse programs, impact on, 2009 (39), 2010 (30), 2013 (48)

Family members, surviving, 2013 (32, 34)

Gender differences, 2008 (21), 2006/7 (28), 2009 (30), 2011/12 (45)

Gun violence, 2000 (2), 2001 (5), 2002 (6), 2003 (7), 2004 (5), 2005 (8), 2006/7 (32), 2008 (25), 2009 (37), 2010 (33), 2010 (34), 2011/12 (34), 2014 (30)

Health-care response, 2013 (45)

Help-seeking, 2005 (17), 2006/7 (33), 2009 (38), 2010 (37)

Hmong and Lao communities, impact on, 2006/7 (30), 2009 (33), 2011/12 (43), 2013 (39)

Interventions, missed opportunities, 2004 (9), 2011/12 (46)

Later life homicides, 2005 (15), 2008 (23), 2009 (35), 2010 (27), 2011/12 (38), 2013 (44)

Latin@ communities, impact on, 2009 (34), 2011/12 (42), 2013 (29)

Lethality Assessment Program, 2014 (37)

Lethality risk factors, 2014 (27)

LGBTQ communities, impact on, 2010 (30), 2011/12 (44), 2013 (43)

Law enforcement, homicides by, 2010 (35)

Media coverage, 2001 (8), 2002 (9), 2003 (10), 2004 (10)

Multiple homicides, 2006/7 (20), 2008 (16), 2009 (29), 2010 (32), 2011/12 (45)

Near homicides, 2006/7 (21), 2008 (16), 2009 (37), 2010 (36)

Northcentral Wisconsin, a closer look, 2006/7 (17)

Pregnancy, elevated risk, 2005(14), 2011/12 (35)

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Location of homicide, 2006/7 (21), 2011/12 (37)

Rural communities, impact on, 2009 (32)

Self-defense, 2001 (5), 2000 (2), 2003(8), 2005 (15), 2008 (22)

Separation, increased risk, 2001 (7), 2002 (7), 2003 (8), 2004 (7), 2006/7 (26), 2008 (20), 2009 (26), 2010 (32), 2014 (34)

Sexual assault, 2004 (8), 2005 (13)

Suicide, 2003 (9), 2005 (9), 2014 (35)

Stalking, 2001 (6), 2002 (8), 2003 (8), 2005 (13), 2006/7 (27), 2008 (21), 2009 (27), 2010 (33), 2011/12 (34), 2014 (36)

Strangulation, 2005 (13), 2006/7 (29), 2008 (22), 2009 (29), 2010 (34), 2014 (32)

Teen dating violence, 2013 (40)

Ten-year retrospective, 2009 (41)

Tribes, impact on, 2009 (32), 2011/12 (43), 2013 (41)

Veterans, 2010 (35), 2011/12 (36)

Welfare reform, 2000 (3)

Workplace violence, 2011/12 (37), 2013 (42)

About End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin

At End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin, we strive to be the statewide voice for survivors of domestic violence.

- We educate shelter and program volunteers and advocates, law enforcement, legislators and community members to provide safety and support to victims.
- We strive to shift Wisconsin from the attitudes and beliefs that cause domestic violence to values of mutual respect and equality.
- We partner with communities in the effort to prevent and end domestic abuse.

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www.endabusewi.org

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