

2021

ADULT FATALITY

REVIEW REPORT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

TARRANT COUNTY,
TEXAS



ADULT FATALITY REVIEW TEAM

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE (IPV)

THE TARRANT COUNTY ADULT FATALITY REVIEW TEAM EXISTS TO PREVENT INTIMATE PARTNER (IP) HOMICIDES. THE TEAM'S PURPOSE, AS OUTLINED BY STATUTE FROM THE TARRANT COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT, WAS RE-AFFIRMED IN 2016 UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF COUNTY JUDGE GLEN WHITLEY. WITHOUT THAT AFFIRMATION, THIS INFORMATION WOULD NOT BE AVAILABLE TODAY.

IT IS VITAL TO RECOGNIZE THE DEGREE WITH WHICH THE TEAM HAS RELIED ON THE LEADERSHIP OF TARRANT COUNTY CRIMINAL DISTRICT ATTORNEY SHAREN WILSON. CDA WILSON IS AN UNYIELDING CHAMPION OF SURVIVORS AND THEIR ACCESS TO JUSTICE, AND SHE HAS PUT THAT PASSION INTO HER WORK TIME AND TIME AGAIN. IT IS NOT HYPERBOLE TO SAY THE ACTIONS OF CDA WILSON IN HER CURRENT ROLE HAVE DIRECTLY IMPACTED THE FUTURE OF SURVIVORS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY AND HELD OFFENDERS ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR CRIMES. CDA WILSON'S SUPPORT IN THE FATALITY REVIEW PROCESS IS UNMATCHED AND UNDOUBTEDLY HAS ADVANCED THE MISSION: TO END IP HOMICIDES.

WE WISH BOTH JUDGE WHITLEY AND CDA WILSON ALL THE BEST IN RETIREMENT.

The Adult Fatality Review Team is led by a partnership between the Criminal District Attorney's Office and SafeHaven of Tarrant County, the County's sole Family Violence Program as designated by the State of Texas. 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. These valuable collaborators are listed here:

- Alliance For Children
- Arlington Police Department
- Baylor Scott and White
- Department of Family and Protective Services
- Fort Worth Police Department
- JPS Health Network
- MedStar
- Office of the Tarrant County Criminal District Attorney
- Office of the Tarrant County Medical Examiner
- SafeHaven of Tarrant County
- Texas Health Resources

Through the review process, the Team seeks to determine the details around each IP homicide, and to explore possible systemic, policy, and practice improvements in our County and beyond. We are confident, through research and through our specific work, 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.

ADULT FATALITY REVIEW TEAM

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE (IPV)

Solely for purposes of reviewing homicides in the Fatality Review Team, the agreed-upon definition of an IP 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 USE OF CONTROL OVER THE VICTIM, WHERE THE RELATIONSHIP ENDS IN HOMICIDE OF A VICTIM BY AN OFFENDER.*

This report is Tarrant County's only analysis of local IP homicides and this team is the only one of its kind in the County. Its purpose is to better inform the work of the collaborators on the Team in an effort to end IP homicides locally. But, perhaps more important, each review of each relationship is an opportunity for a victim's story to be told, for dignity to be gained, and for some justice to be achieved.

**WE SEE YOU.
WE HEAR YOUR STORY.
WE WILL CHANGE FOR THE BETTER BECAUSE OF YOU.**

*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 Law School. This definition is intentionally more broad than the legal definition of Family or Dating Violence in the State of Texas.

THE ADULT FATALITY REVIEW TEAM REVIEWED A TOTAL OF 17 POSSIBLE CASES FOR THE 2021 CALENDAR YEAR. IT WAS DETERMINED:

FORT WORTH



ARLINGTON



MANSFIELD



HURST



GRAND PRAIRIE



5 VICTIMS DIED BY GUNSHOT
1 VICTIM DIED BY BLUNT FORCE TRAUMA
1 VICTIM DIED BY STABBING

SECONDARY DEATHS*



*A secondary death is where the offender killed a bystander. In two cases, the intimate partner survived when a bystander died. Please note those two are not included in the list of seven primary victims.

4 OFFENDERS HAD PRIOR ARRESTS
(AGGRAVATED ASSAULT & ROBBERY, THEFT, ASSAULT, & A WEAPONS CHARGE)

1 HAD A SUBSTANCE ABUSE HISTORY

0 HAD A KNOWN MENTAL HEALTH DIAGNOSIS

7 WOMEN DIED AT THE HANDS OF THEIR ABUSIVE INTIMATE PARTNERS.

5 OFFENDERS COMMITTED SUICIDE AFTER MURDERING THEIR VICTIMS.

4 VICTIMS HAD BEEN MARRIED TO THEIR ABUSERS.

3 VICTIMS WERE IN A DATING RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR ABUSERS.

2 VICTIMS HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN STRANGLER BY THEIR ABUSERS.

0 VICTIMS HAD A PROTECTIVE ORDER.

72% OF THE VICTIMS HAD ALREADY ENDED THEIR RELATIONSHIPS AT THE TIME OF THE HOMICIDE.

WORTH MENTIONING RESISTANCE TO VIOLENCE



A VICTIM OF ABUSE IS USUALLY NOT PASSIVE WHEN BEING PHYSICALLY, PSYCHOLOGICALLY, OR SEXUALLY ATTACKED. INSTEAD, SHE FIGHTS BACK, RESISTS HER ASSAILANT, ATTEMPTS TO COPE, AND TRIES TO SURVIVE.

- Turning Points, a Nonviolence Curriculum for Women

It is important to recognize that victims sometimes use physical retaliation toward their offenders.

This is called “resistance to abuse.” Resistance is sometimes used as traditional self-defense, fighting back during an attack by an offender, but can also include violence used against an offender at other times. Physical resistance used by a victim is sometimes an attempt to gain power in the relationship when it is clear a victim doesn’t have power and an offender does.

When an offender uses violence to gain power, it is typically a successful endeavor as it is motivated by the desire for coercive control over a victim. Intimate Partner Violence is a pattern of power and control. A victim’s use of physical violence describes a different narrative, with a different set of intentions. These narratives can include the desire for abuse to stop, the need to stand up for oneself, and/or an effort to gain control over a situation, but not the motivation to gain coercive control in the relationship.

IN 2021, TARRANT COUNTY HAD 2 CASES OF VICTIMS WHO KILLED THEIR OFFENDING PARTNER. VIOLENCE, & ESPECIALLY MURDER, IS NEVER THE ANSWER TO A DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SITUATION. THESE TWO HOMICIDES WERE NOT INCLUDED IN OUR PRIMARY VICTIM NUMBER DUE TO THE FACT THAT THESE SITUATIONS DID NOT MEET OUR DEFINITION OF AN IP HOMICIDE, WHICH SPECIFIES HOMICIDE AT THE HANDS OF THE OFFENDER.

WORTH MENTIONING SUICIDE & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

MAKING THREATS OR USING COERCION IS SAYING OR DOING SOMETHING TO MAKE YOUR PARTNER AFRAID... IT'S LIKE BLACKMAIL. [AN EXAMPLE OF COERCION OR THREATS IS] 'IF YOU LEAVE, I'LL KILL MYSELF.'

- Education Groups for Men Who Batter: The Duluth Model

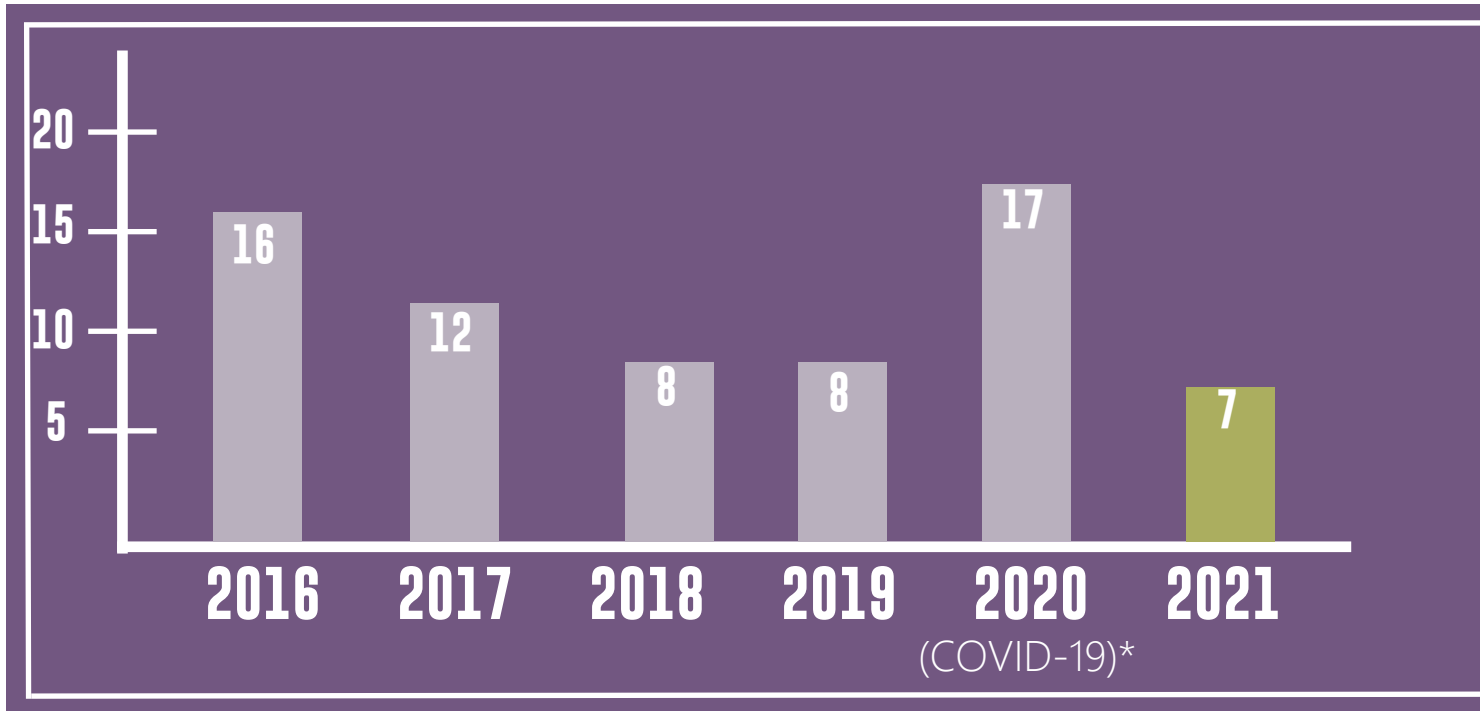
Threatening suicide is a control tactic for offenders. Making threats like the threat of suicide inspires fear in a victim that something bad will happen if the victim doesn't do what the offender demands. Offenders commonly view following through on threats as a method of punishing a victim.

OF TARRANT COUNTY'S SEVEN PRIMARY VICTIMS IN 2021, FIVE OF THE ABUSERS COMMITTED MURDER-SUICIDE. THE ABUSERS KILLED THEIR PARTNERS, AND THEN KILLED THEMSELVES. ALL OF THESE WERE BY GUNSHOT.

TWO OTHER CASES WERE REVIEWED BY THE TEAM WHERE THE VICTIM SURVIVED THE ATTACK AND THUS ARE NOT INCLUDED IN THE PRIMARY VICTIM NUMBER. IN ONE OF THOSE CASES, THE OFFENDER, AND LATER, THE VICTIM'S SON, DIED BY SUICIDE.

THE SAFEHAVEN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE IN TARRANT COUNTY IS AVAILABLE 24/7 AT 877.701.7233, AS IS THE NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION HOTLINE AT 988. THERE IS ALSO A CHAT FEATURE AVAILABLE ON THE WEBSITE: [SUICIDEPREVENTIONLIFELINE.ORG](https://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org).

IP HOMICIDES BY YEAR



Generally, the trend in IP homicides has shown an overall decrease since 2016, with the exception of 2020.

This is notable as the agencies involved in the Fatality Review Team have implemented specific interventions with the goal of decreasing IP homicides.

For a detailed list of these interventions, which agencies continue to implement presently, please refer to the Team's published report from 2020.

*Like all other aspects of life, domestic violence cases and services were impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic. It is important to note, however, that COVID-19 was not a 'cause' of domestic violence. Domestic violence can be aggravated by outside factors like substance abuse, unemployment, and a global pandemic. However, violence is a choice an abuser makes in an intimate relationship.



**TARRANT COUNTY
MEDICAL EXAMINER**

