

Colorado Domestic Violence  
Fatality Review Board

**Annual  
Report**

**2025**

Colorado Office of the Attorney General

Ralph L. Carr Judicial Center  
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Denver, CO 80203



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# In Memoriam

This report is dedicated to the 38 current or former intimate partners and eight collateral victims who died in the context of domestic violence in Colorado in 2024. Their stories serve as a sobering reminder of the urgent need to address and prevent domestic violence. Their memory fuels our determination to advocate for change and provide unwavering support to those who are at risk. Let us honor their lives by diligently working to create a safer and more compassionate society for all.

Dylan Adams

Angel Meyers

Alondra Reyes

Angel Beeker

Sierra Mininger

Barron Rhodes

Christine Barron-Olivas

Luis Gómez Reyes

Elise Sophia Ruybal

Shayla Bryan

Gaudy Garcia Pina

Jeffrey Segura

Danielle Byrd

Valarie Garcia

Chrystal Snow

Dakysten Cade

Desiree Fernandez

Michelle Keen

Breanna Canter

Jaya Flores

Seorin Kim

Jian Chang Chan

Gary Griffin

Cheri Kommer

Angela Cordova

Larry Lawton

Lori Mae Lupercio

Esmerelda  
Contreras-Mata

Luz Elena Lomeli-Lucio

Maria Pangelinan

Dustin Naulls

Lindsey Power

Vincenzo Decini

Sunemaura O'Brien

Aisha Quest

Desireé Terrazas

Rhyle King

Carol Williamson

## Collateral Victims of Domestic Violence<sup>1</sup>

Aaliyah Vargas-Reyes (1)

Lesley Kim (3 mo)

Xander Martinez-King (1)

Dane Timms (7)

Tristan Rael (7)

Xena Martinez-King (2)

Jessi Hill (7)

Summer Hill (3)

<sup>1</sup> We identified one case that originated outside of Colorado with a collateral fatality and ended with a perpetrator death in Colorado. Because the collateral fatality occurred outside of Colorado the victim is not included in the list here, but the case more broadly is included in the analysis in the Report.

# List of Acronyms

The following list includes acronyms used throughout this report:

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| <b>CDVFRB of Board</b> | Colorado Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board |
| <b>DOI</b>             | Date of Incident                                 |
| <b>DOL</b>             | Department of Law                                |
| <b>DV</b>              | Domestic Violence                                |
| <b>DVF</b>             | Domestic Violence Fatality                       |
| <b>DVFRT</b>           | Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team           |
| <b>ERPO</b>            | Extreme Risk Protection Order                    |
| <b>LAP</b>             | Lethality Assessment Program                     |

# Language Considerations

Several labels are used for abuse that occurs in the context of a current or former romantic/intimate relationship, including domestic violence, intimate partner violence, and intimate partner abuse. Given that most legal entities, such as the police and courts, use the term “domestic violence” and the legislature uses the term “Domestic Violence Fatality Review,” this report primarily uses the term domestic violence (DV) instead of “intimate partner violence” or “intimate partner abuse.”

Similarly, “intimate partner homicide” or “IPH” is a term often used in research on DV fatalities, but the term is used more commonly in research focused on homicides among current or former romantic/intimate couples and is less likely to address collateral fatalities and suicides. For this reason, this report primarily uses the term “Domestic Violence Fatalities” or “DVF.”

The term “victim” is used throughout this report to refer to a member of an intimate partner couple killed in the context of DV and to those who survived these situations. Because this report focuses on DVFs and the term “victim” is typically used in the criminal and legal context, it fits best within the mandate of the Colorado Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board (Board). However, the Board recognizes the term “survivor” speaks to the sense of empowerment with which many of those experiencing non-fatal DV identify, and we acknowledge the important journey towards the recovery of all impacted by DV.

## Message from Colorado Attorney General Phil Weiser

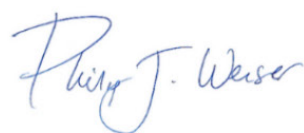
Each year, the Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board honors the lives lost to domestic violence and compiles critical data to guide our collective prevention efforts. This year's findings are sobering. While homicides in Colorado fell to their lowest level in five years, domestic violence fatalities rose by more than one-third. For the first time since the Board's creation, nearly one in five homicides in Colorado was connected to domestic violence.

These tragedies remind us that domestic violence is a distinct and persistent threat that requires equally distinct solutions. In 2024, every collateral victim was a child. This stark reality underscores the multigenerational impact of domestic violence and the urgent responsibility we share to act.

The Board has strengthened its ability to track trends by expanding partnerships with law enforcement, courts, and advocacy organizations. This year's report analyzes four years of comprehensive statewide data, providing a clearer picture of the patterns, risk factors, and missed opportunities for intervention. That information must guide our next steps.

As Attorney General, I remain committed to pursuing solutions grounded in prevention, accountability, and survivor safety. This includes improved firearm relinquishment processes, improving connections between survivors and resources, expanded use of risk assessment tools like the Lethality Assessment Program, and training for those working in family and juvenile courts, where risks to both survivors and children are often most visible.

The work of preventing domestic violence fatalities belongs to all of us — law enforcement, advocates, service providers, communities, and neighbors. By honoring the lives lost, we renew our shared responsibility to keep Colorado families safe.



Philip J. Weiser  
Attorney General, State of Colorado

# Executive Summary

This year's report includes both 2024 findings and, for the first time, a comprehensive analysis of four years of statewide DVF data (2021–2024). Through expanded partnerships and an improved data collection protocol developed since 2022, the Board now tracks a broader range of variables with greater consistency across cases. This larger, more robust dataset allows for stronger trend analysis and identification of some significant patterns in domestic violence fatalities (DVF).

In 2024, there were 54 DVF cases resulting in 72 deaths. These included 38 intimate partner victims, 26 perpetrators, and eight collateral victims. This represents a 24% increase in DVF victims and collateral fatalities from 2023 while overall homicides in Colorado declined by 16.7% over the same period, marking a stark divergence in trends. **Victim DVFs accounted for 18% of all homicides in Colorado**—the highest proportion in five years—despite a statewide drop in violent crime. This growing proportion of homicides highlights the persistent and escalating risk of DV and underscores the need for targeted, DV-specific prevention strategies.

The number of collateral fatalities continues to highlight the devastating ripple effects of domestic violence (DV). In 2024, **all eight collateral victims were children**, ranging in age from three months to seven years. **Over the four-year period, children accounted for more than half of all collateral fatalities.** Importantly, in analyzing the larger dataset for significance a clear trend emerged: **the risk to children has increased significantly over the years.** In particular, over the four years period, children were significantly more likely to be collateral victims across the four years. This finding emphasizes the growing need for safety planning and training that explicitly accounts for risks to children, especially in family court contexts.

In 2024, of the 72 fatalities, 52.8% were DVF victims, 36.1% were perpetrators, and 11.1% were collateral victims. Between 2021 and 2024, nearly one-third of DVF cases did not involve the death of a primary victim and rather solely involved the death of a collateral victim or of the perpetrator. Half of all DVF cases included perpetrator deaths, of which 72% died by suicide.

Firearms remained the leading cause of death. Of all 72 fatalities in 2024, 75% involved firearms. Firearms accounted for nearly two-thirds of DVF victim deaths, all eight collateral deaths, and the vast majority of perpetrator deaths, most of which were suicides. These numbers are consistent with the Board's four-year dataset, which shows that **four out of five domestic violence deaths in Colorado from 2021 to 2024 involved a firearm.** This persistent pattern reinforces the urgency of closing gaps in relinquishment procedures and is reflected in the Board's recommendation that firearms be removed immediately at the scene of domestic violence arrests.

The gendered nature of DVFs also remained strikingly consistent. Across the 2021–2024 dataset, nearly nine in ten victims were women and **nearly nine in ten perpetrators were men.** In 2024, 80% of victims were female, while 83% of perpetrators were male. Most cases across the years involved male perpetrators killing female partners, though a smaller proportion involved female perpetrators and male victims, or same-sex couples. Age patterns reveal that DVFs affect all stages of life: victims ranged from 17 to 85, and perpetrators from 17 to 79. Nearly a quarter of victims were under 26, and more than a quarter of perpetrators were between 26 and 35.

In 2024, the Board also conducted the most comprehensive review to date of DVF victim and perpetrators' prior criminal and civil system involvement. **At least half of the perpetrators had a documented DV-related arrest or warrant, one-in-five had a prior DV conviction, and nearly one-in-five had a felony conviction.** More than 30% had been on probation or pretrial supervision at some point, and 13% were under supervision when the fatality occurred. These findings underscore that many perpetrators were already known to the criminal and legal systems, highlighting missed opportunities for earlier intervention and prevention.

Domestic relations (DR) cases were a notable factor in several DVFs in 2024. In at least three DVF cases, one or more parties to the DVF were simultaneously litigating a DR case with someone other than the DVF victim or perpetrator. At least seven DVF incidents directly involved DR cases between the victim and perpetrator. Five were still open at the time of the DVF and all five involved custody litigation. These open custody disputes were particularly deadly: four of the five incidents included multiple victims, resulting in 10 total casualties (nine homicides and one attempted homicide). Of the eight child DVF victims in 2024, **five of the eight child DVF victims were involved in their parents' custody disputes.** These findings highlight custody litigation as a high-risk period for families experiencing domestic violence and point to the urgent need for stronger safeguards within family court proceedings.

There was either an active mandatory protection order or active civil protection order in at least 11 DVF cases. In four additional DVF cases there was a record of an expired mandatory protection order or civil protection order. The presence of both active and expired protection orders in these cases demonstrates the ongoing risk victims face even with legal safeguards in place and underscores the importance of consistent enforcement and monitoring.

Involvement with the civil court system (through a civil protection order or a DR case) was significantly and positively correlated with the number of fatalities, meaning the number of fatalities increased when the couple had a history of a civil court case prior to the DVF. These cases also were more likely to have a collateral fatality. These findings underscore that **civil court settings are critical points of intervention**—and that while protection orders and custody processes can serve as safeguards, they may also coincide with periods of heightened and sometimes, continued, risk, highlighting the need for stronger safety planning and systemic protections.

Finally, geographic disparities were evident. **Rural counties continued to have disproportionately high rates of DVFs per capita, and collateral fatalities were significantly more common in rural areas.** These differences emphasize the challenges of isolation, limited resources, and firearm prevalence in rural communities, underscoring the need for tailored prevention and response strategies.

# About the Colorado Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board

Per C.R.S. § 24-31-702, the Colorado Attorney General serves as the chair of the Colorado Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board (CDVFRB or Board), which is charged with:

- Examining domestic violence fatality data collected during the preceding year and identifying trends;
- Identifying measures to help prevent domestic violence fatalities and near-death incidents;
- Establishing uniform methods for collecting, analyzing, and storing data relating to domestic violence fatalities and near-death incidents;
- Supporting local fatality review teams by providing technical assistance, training, and necessary coordination; and
- Making annual policy recommendations concerning domestic violence to the Colorado General Assembly and pursuing implementation of any recommendations

C.R.S. §§ 24-31-702(1)(a), (8)-(10). The Board was established in 2016, and its mandate was renewed for another five years in 2022.

The Board comprises a multi-disciplinary set of leaders and subject matter experts from across Colorado committed to preventing domestic violence and domestic violence fatalities. The Board works with community stakeholders to publish an annual report detailing data and trends on domestic violence fatalities statewide and identifying policy recommendations to prevent these tragedies. The Board also works closely with the Colorado Attorney General's Office. A full list of Board members can be found at the end of this report.

# Defining a Domestic Violence Fatality

For this report, the Board defines a domestic violence fatality or DVF as the death of any person that results from an act of domestic violence or occurs in the context of an intimate partner relationship. Such deaths include:

- Homicides in which the victim was the perpetrator's current or former intimate partner.
- Homicides committed by an abusive partner in the context of intimate partner violence—for example, cases in which the homicide perpetrator kills a current or former partner's family member or new intimate partner, law enforcement officer, or bystander.
- Homicides that are an extension of, or in response to, ongoing intimate partner violence—for example, cases in which an abuser takes revenge on a victim by killing the victim's children.
- Homicides of abusers killed by intimate partner violence victims, often in self-defense.
- Death of abusers killed by friends, family, law enforcement, or bystanders intervening on behalf of an intimate partner violence victim.
- Suicide by the abuser committed in the context of an intimate partner violence incident.
- Suicides, other than the abusers, that may be a response to intimate partner violence.

In identifying DVFs, the Board is not making a determination of guilt or taking convictions into account but simply considering if there was a death that, based on the available information, arose in the context of domestic violence. Some cases never involve a prosecution, some have pending charges, and some involve fully resolved prosecutions. Whether, on these facts, the case would result in a conviction of any individual is not the determining factor in identifying whether a death was a DVF.

# Domestic Violence Fatality Data Collection Process

The findings presented in this report include a compilation of the 2024 DVF information collected by the Rose Aandom Center on behalf of the Board and the Colorado Department of Law. This year, for the first time in the Board's history, the report also includes a robust analysis of DVF data between 2021 and 2024. Starting in 2022, the Board, thanks to a collaborative partnership between researcher Joanne Belknap, Keisha Sarpong, the Fatality Review Program Manager at the Rose Aandom Center, and the Department of Law, significantly expanded the range of variables collected in each case and created an expanded and more robust protocol for data collection and management. This methodological improvement enhanced the representativeness of the data and ensured consistency across data sets.

The team also began to systematically backfill any missing data variables particularly as new case outcome information becomes available. The Board has also expanded partnerships to obtain more criminal legal system data and civil court data. Thanks to these changes, the Board now has a robust data set with consistent variables for multiple years. As such, this year's report not only analyzes data from 2024, but also combines four years of statewide data (2021–2024). This larger data set allows for stronger trend analysis and identification of significant relationships. As referred to in the report, significance refers to a statistical finding that is unlikely to have occurred by chance. When a result is described as significant, it means the observed relationship or difference has been tested and found to meet established thresholds for reliability (typically  $p < .05$ ). Statistical significance does not necessarily indicate that the effect is large or practically important, but rather that the pattern is consistent enough in the data to be considered meaningful for analysis.

To identify 2024 DVFs, the team conducted a diligent search of publicly available sources, including media reports and arrest affidavits, as well as non-public sources—primarily those provided by police, sheriffs, and district attorney's offices. The team also reviewed reports issued by the medical examiner's office, court data, and additional public source data such as Gun Violence Archive.

This year, through partnerships with Board members representing Denver Pre-Trial Services, Denver's City Attorney's Office, and Probation, for the first time the Board was able obtain more robust criminal histories of all 2024 DVF perpetrators including the prevalence of prior domestic violence charges and convictions. Such information helped provide context on these risk factors for lethality. The Board's analysis of this critical data is available on page 15.

As with last year, in partnership with Bridge to Justice<sup>1</sup>, the Board also worked to review the extent to which the 2024 DVF victims and perpetrators were involved in domestic relations cases prior to and around the time of the DVF. These new data points are critical to understanding the extent to which custody disputes and interactions with domestic relations courts are risk factors and the Board's analyses are available on page 15.

The partnerships with Probation, Pre-trial Services, Denver's City Attorney's Office, and Bridge to Justice also helped the Board identify which DVF couples had active or past DV protection orders. The Board is aware that the relative protective value of protection orders is often misunderstood and is a subject of debate, and hopes the data found on page 15 and onward can provide helpful guidance.

As in past years, while the Board has made significant progress in expanding the means of accessing data and ensuring that detailed diligence was given to identify as many cases as possible, there are still challenges with obtaining Colorado DVF data. It is therefore likely that some DVFs occurring in 2024 were not identified. The reasons for this vary, but a connection between a fatality and DV is often unknown or unreported, and the method of reporting any evidence of DV within fatality data remains inconsistent. Moreover, additional important DVF data points are also challenging to obtain such as the connections between an identified DVF and missing and murdered Indigenous people, people of color, immigrants, people with disabilities, and the identification of LGBTQ+ victims.

There may be additional classifications of fatalities such as suicides or other fatalities categorized as "accidental" that occurred in the context of domestic violence but were not identified as such. For example, recently published research suggests there is a current gap in understanding the rates of DV preceding single incident suicides as opposed to DV murder suicides. An analysis of suicide events in North Carolina found that DV was a factor in 439 (4.53%) suicide cases (Kafka et al, 2022). While an emerging topic, recent national studies estimate that for 6% of youth and 7% of adult suicides, DV was a contributing factor, with the people who died by suicide being DV perpetrators, DV victims, or collateral victims (Kafka et al, 2023). Further, research also indicates that it is increasingly common for many perpetrators of DVFs to die of suicide (e.g. Zimmerman et. al, 2022).

Moreover, another recently growing body of research addresses "hidden" femicides, including staged homicides where perpetrators alter evidence to resemble suicide (Bitton & Dayan, 2019; Ferguson, 2021). Such tactics are disproportionately present in DVFs. (Bitton & Dayan, 2019; Ferguson, 2021; Ferguson & Petherick, 2016; Fitz-Gibbon et al., 2023).

Gathering comprehensive data is important to accurately represent the prevalence, dynamics, and risks related to DVFs. The Board, in partnership with the Rose Anderson Center, continuously seeks to evolve internal processes to identify as many cases as possible and to draw out the critical data points within these cases.

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<sup>2</sup> Bridge to Justice is a 501(c)(3) Colorado nonprofit organization that provides civil legal services to survivors of DV and sexual violence, as well as low- and moderate-income Coloradans who do not qualify for free legal aid.

# About Local Fatality Review Teams

C.R.S. § 24-31-703 enables communities across Colorado to form local Domestic Violence Fatality Review Teams (DVFRTs) to review fatal and near-fatal incidents of domestic violence. Teams are composed of a wide array of stakeholders —law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, advocates, and survivors.

## **Denver**

The Denver Metro Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team was formed in 1996 and was one of the first review teams in the country. The team is comprised of 25 professionals with multiple perspectives and includes community- and system-based advocates, child welfare advocates, medical providers, offender treatment providers, probation officers, law enforcement officials, prosecutors, and judges. The team meets monthly to review fatalities within the 1st, 2nd, 17th, 18th, and 23rd Judicial Districts. The team is managed by the Fatality Review Program Manager at the Rose Amond Center. The Fatality Review Program Manager identifies which DVFs to review monthly and prepares a thorough case review. The case reviews involve a presentation from the assigned detective and/or the district attorney who provides the context for the case, which may include information such as events leading up to the incident, relationship history, abuse history, and case disposition. Afterward, the entire team discusses the risk factors for lethality and what interventions were utilized or missed. Information from the reviews and additional case data are compiled and then analyzed at year's end. The findings are reported to the Board.

## **El Paso County**

After its founding last year, the El Paso County Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team is fully operational. TESSA manages the team under a Department of Law grant provided to support its work. The El Paso County team meets every other month to review cases within the county, has established a protocol manual, and currently conducts collateral victim interviews, as well as interviews where appropriate with the DVF suspect (when alive) and with loved ones of the deceased. The team is now also preparing to expand its scope to include reviews of domestic violence-related suicides. The El Paso County team collaborates with multiple agencies within the jurisdiction in close partnership and works actively to establish meaningful changes in the DV system of prevention.

## **Mesa County**

The Mesa County Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team has been active since 2015 and has grown significantly. The team's first review had approximately 17 people, but the most recent review included over 40 professional stakeholders. The Mesa County team attributes the growth to enhanced community trust in the team's mission and a commitment to fostering collaborations across the community. The team valued the relationship built with the Denver local fatality review team over the years. Good working relationships within the community, along with a strong team makeup, are equally vital to Mesa County's success.

The current chair of the Mesa County team is the Domestic Violence Response Team Coordinator from the District Attorney's Office. Prosecutors who worked the underlying DVFs help present overviews of the cases during the reviews. Mesa County conducts roughly two reviews per year.

## **Archuleta County**

Archuleta County operates a multidisciplinary team of nine professionals who work to improve responses to DV. The team was created in 2008 after an 18-month institutional analysis of the county's criminal justice response to DV. The team has since evolved into a Coordinated Community Response Team (CCRT), which acts as the local Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board and local Sexual Assault Review Team (SART). Reviews occur predominantly for near-lethal and fatal criminal cases, but also include misdemeanors and high-risk cases brought by an individual team member. The team meets monthly to identify concrete action steps to improve victim safety and offender accountability, including modification of processes, policies, and procedures within criminal justice, child welfare, victim advocacy, and medical systems. Most recently, in May, the team completed a DVF review.

# Colorado Programs and Legislation Mitigating Domestic Violence

Colorado has several protections that mitigate the risk of domestic violence and DVFs specifically. Highlighted below are two programs that are a focus area for the Board and the Department of Law. Details on additional long-standing protections are available in the 2022 report.

## Lethality Assessment Program

In the 2020 annual report, the Board recommended the implementation of the Lethality Assessment Program (LAP) across Colorado. The LAP is an evidence-based tool of 11 questions that a law enforcement officer may use to assess risk and connect a victim of DV with a confidential victim advocate. In 2021, the federal government awarded a Justice Administration Grant to the Attorney General's office to contract with a statewide coordinator tasked with implementing the LAP across Colorado. The statewide coordinator was hired in 2022 and spearheaded the creation of the Colorado Lethality Assessment Program or COLAP. COLAP established a clear process for communities wishing to receive free training on implementing LAP.

As of September 2025, there are approximately 44 agencies across 64 counties utilizing CO LAP. Eight agencies have been trained since last year's report was issued and the statewide coordinator has provided technical assistance to many agencies who are utilizing LAP. The statewide coordinator aims to conduct three train-the-trainer sessions in three different regions across the state.

Eight of the trained agencies share all their LAP screens with the statewide coordinator. These eight agencies conducted **654 LAP screens in 2024 which was a 9.3% increase from 2023**. Of these screens 52% screened in as high danger which means that they answered at least one of three questions in the affirmative or if they answered any six of the 11 questions in the affirmative. 6% were additionally identified as high danger based on the officer's experience and beliefs.

The most common risk factors amongst the submitted screens were jealous and controlling behavior (61%); previous separation (50%); the perpetrator following and spying on the victim (38%); and the perpetrator having previously strangled the victim (34%). A quarter (25%) of the victims reported the perpetrator had threatened to kill them. Of note, the responses demonstrating coercive controlling behavior (responses to LAP questions 6 and 11) were higher than the responses demonstrating assaultive behavior (responses to LAP questions 1 and 5).

Two-fifths (39.6%) of the screened-in victims (136 of the 343 screened in) choose to speak to an advocate on scene which was a significant increase from the year prior.

## **Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPOs)**

Laws authorizing extreme risk protection orders (ERPOs) temporarily prohibit individuals determined by a judge to be at high risk of firearm violence—including any combination of violence directed at others, themselves, or groups of people—from possessing or legally purchasing firearms.

A family member, household member, law enforcement officer or agency, mental health professional, or education professional may request a court to issue an ERPO. If granted, the individual determined to be at risk of harming others must relinquish their firearms and concealed-carry permit, if they have one, and may not purchase new or additional firearms for the duration of the order. While similar firearm restrictions are available through DV protection orders, DV survivors who might not otherwise be able to obtain a DV protection order can consider utilizing ERPOs to mitigate against the risk of firearms. The DOL received a federal grant to train law enforcement and education professionals about the use of ERPOs and announced the curriculum and training opportunities in September 2025. Curriculum for law enforcement has been piloted, and the finalized curriculum should be available in early 2026.

# 2024 Colorado DVF Findings and a 4-Year Analysis

As mentioned earlier, this year's report not only analyzes data from 2024, but also combines four years of statewide data (2021–2024). This larger dataset allows for stronger trend analysis and identification of significant relationships. As referred to previously in the report, a “significant” finding indicates confidence that a difference or relationship in the data is not due to chance.

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## The Number of Domestic Violence-Related Cases and Fatalities in Colorado

The findings distinguish between domestic violence fatality (DVF) cases and fatalities. A case is defined as an incident with at least one DVF. The number of fatalities is greater than the number of cases because multiple deaths can occur within a single incident.

**In 2024, there were 54 DVF cases resulting in 72 fatalities.** Of these, 38 were DVF victim deaths (70.4% of cases; 52.8% of fatalities), 26 were perpetrator deaths (51.2% of cases; 36.1% of fatalities), and eight were collateral deaths occurring across six cases (11.1%), representing 11.1% of all fatalities.

## DVFs versus Homicide Trends

This data underscores that Colorado experienced a significant divergence in homicide trends: while total 2024 homicides statewide dropped to a five-year low of 266—a 16.7% decrease from 2023—the number of victim DVFs<sup>1</sup> rose sharply to 46<sup>2</sup>—a 24% increase in victim DVFs compared to the prior year. As a result, victim DVFs constituted 17.2% of all homicides in Colorado in 2024, the highest proportion in the last five years. This sharp increase in victim DVFs, against the backdrop of an overall decline in homicide, underscores the unique and growing lethality of DV. It suggests that while broader public safety interventions may be reducing general violence, they are not having the same impact on DVFs.

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<sup>1</sup> To calculate this finding we considered the victim DVFs – which include the primary victim and collateral victims.

<sup>2</sup> To create equivalence with the statewide homicide data, this number combines the total number DVF primary victims and collateral victims. DVF perpetrator deaths are not included.

The disproportionate rise in victim DVFs signals a need for targeted prevention strategies that go beyond generalized crime reduction efforts. This includes better enforcement of protection orders, expanded use of risk assessment tools like the Lethality Assessment Program (LAP), and increased investment in DV-specific legal, advocacy, and mental health responses. Additionally, the data indicates that domestic violence continues to operate on a distinct trajectory—one that may be exacerbated by underreporting, lack of access to resources, or systemic gaps in identifying and interrupting high-risk cases. The growing share of homicides attributed to domestic violence in Colorado highlights an urgent policy imperative: addressing domestic violence requires dedicated, data-driven solutions that keep pace with its evolving patterns of risk and harm.

**Table: Victim DVF Trends Compared to Total Homicides in Colorado (2020–2024)**

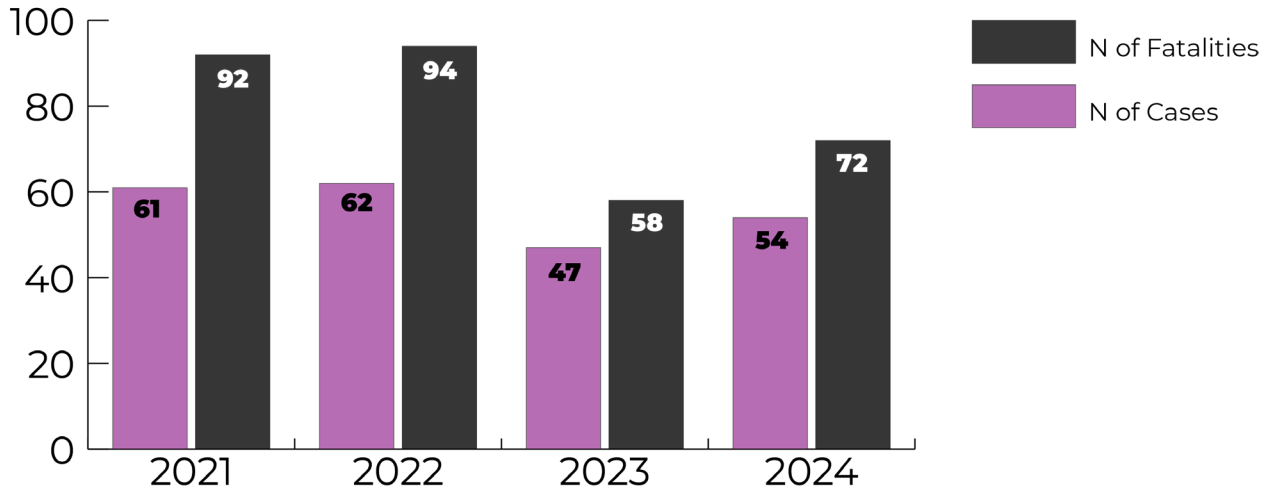
| <b>Year</b> | <b>Victim DVFs</b> | <b>Total Homicides</b> | <b>% of Total Homicides that are victim DVFs</b> |
|-------------|--------------------|------------------------|--|
| 2020        | 39                 | 307                    | 12.7 %   |
| 2021        | 59                 | 370                    | 16.0 %   |
| 2022        | 61                 | 392                    | 15.6 %   |
| 2023        | 37                 | 320                    | 11.6 %   |
| <b>2024</b> | <b>46</b>          | <b>266</b>             | <b>17.2 %</b>                                    |

### **Total Fatalities**

From 2021 through 2024, there were 224 DVF cases resulting in 316 fatalities (including victim, collateral victim, and perpetrator deaths) (Chart A). The number of cases per year ranged from 47 to 61, while the number of fatalities per year ranged from 58 to 94. On average, there were 56 cases and 79 fatalities per year. These variations across years were not statistically significant.

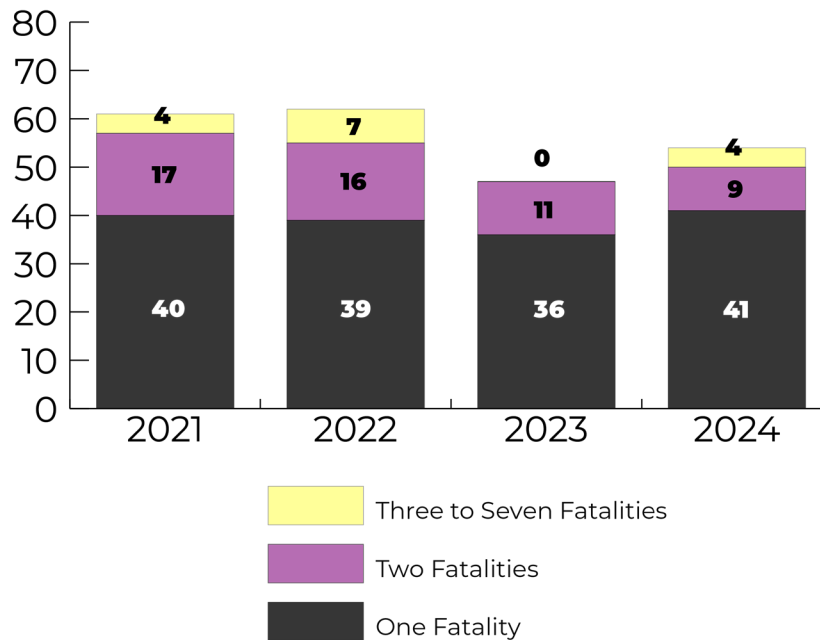
Two cases included fatalities outside of Colorado. While these cases are in the dataset, only fatalities that occurred within Colorado are counted in the fatality totals.

Chart A: Number of DVF Cases & Fatalities 2021 to 2024



Over the four years, 70% of DVF cases involved one fatality (Chart B), and 30% had more than one fatality. Almost a quarter (24%) involved two fatalities: 4% had three, 2% had four, and one case (0.4%) involved seven. The average number of fatalities per case across the four years was 1.4 (ranging from 1.2 to 1.5 annually). There were no significant year-to-year differences ( $F = 1.74, p = .16$ ).

Chart B: Number of Fatalities per Case / Incident



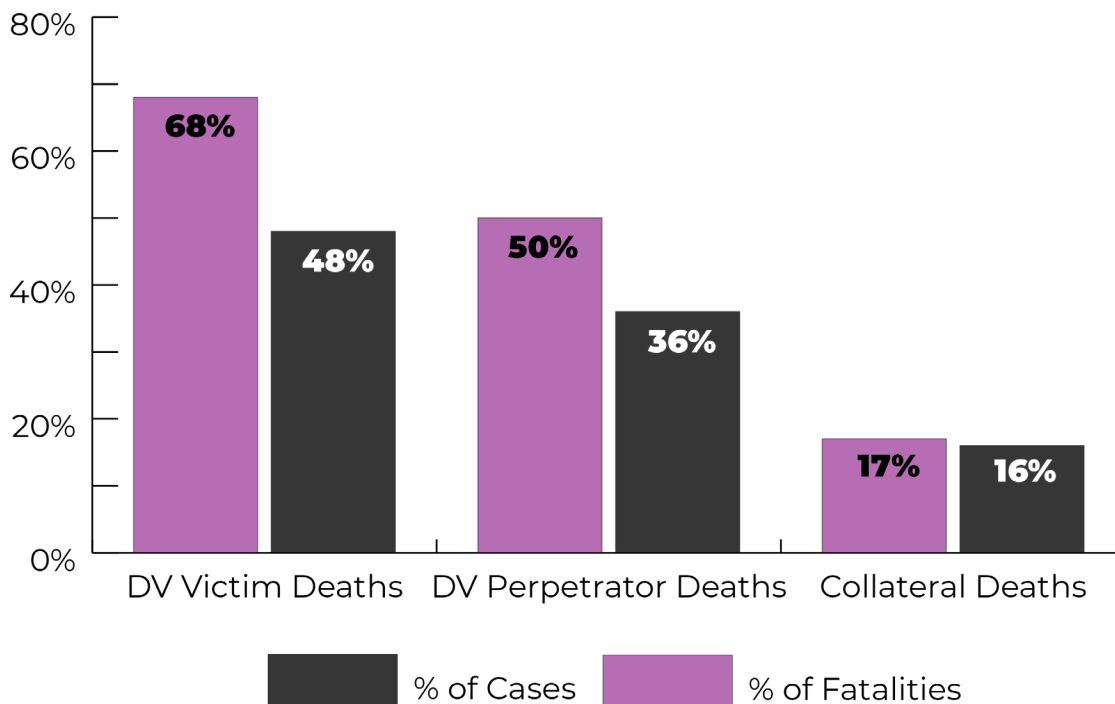
## The Distribution of Fatalities among DVF victims, Perpetrators, and Collateral Victims

In 2024 specifically, of the 72 fatalities, 52.8% were DVF victims (n = 38), 36.1% were perpetrators (n = 26), and 11.1% were collateral victims (n = 8). Collateral deaths occurred in six of 54 cases (11.1%), underscoring that while DVF victims remain the majority of deaths, perpetrators and collateral victims continue to represent a substantial portion of deaths.

This multi-year data demonstrates that DVFs often include fatalities beyond the DVF victim. This data has been relatively consistent over the years noted in Chart C below. While most cases (68%) included DVF victim deaths, **almost a third (32%) of DVF cases over the last four years did not result in the death of a primary DVF victim.** Half of all DVF cases (50%, n = 113) included perpetrator deaths—primarily suicides as addressed below.

Considering total fatalities (rather than total cases), about **half of all deaths (48%) were DVF victims and 36% were DV perpetrators.** Collateral victims (e.g., children, family members, bystanders, and law enforcement officers) constituted 17% of all deaths (n = 51).

Chart C: Type of Fatalities



Another way of comparing the distribution of DVF victim, perpetrator, and collateral fatalities is to examine the different combinations of deaths within each incident (e.g., deaths of only the DVF victim, only the DV perpetrator, both, etc.). There are seven possible combinations by year. The distribution is relatively stable over the four years, with no significant year-to-year differences. The three most common patterns are: the DVF victim as the sole fatality (42%), the DV perpetrator as the sole fatality (24%), and incidents where both the DVF victim and DV perpetrator died without any collateral deaths (18%). Less frequent were cases with only collateral fatalities or with all three categories of deaths (5% each). The rarest outcomes were incidents involving both the DVF victim and a collateral fatality (3%) or both the DV perpetrator and a collateral fatality (3%).

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## Demographic Characteristics of DVF victims and Perpetrators

As noted in Chart C, many cases included victims or perpetrators who did not die. This section describes the overall demographic characteristics of DVF victims, perpetrators, and couples, regardless of survival.

Gender<sup>1</sup>

**Domestic violence, and DVFs in particular, are highly gendered:** men are most often the perpetrators and women the victims. A national study found that 7.5% of male homicide victims and 51.0% of female homicide victims were killed by a current or former intimate partner (Nguyen et al., 2024, p. 16). Scholars describe the killing of women by male partners as a gendered phenomenon often referred to as “intimate femicide” (Walklate et al., 2020, p. 7).

Colorado DVF cases reflect this pattern. Across all couples (whether intact or separated, and whether the DV victim died, the DV perpetrator died, and/or there was a collateral death), over the past four years, **89% of DVF victims were women/girls and 90% of perpetrators were men/boys.** More specifically, 89% of DVF cases involved female victims with male perpetrators, 10% involved male victims with female perpetrators, and fewer than 2% were same-sex couples (two male-male and two female-female). This aligns with a national study finding that same-sex couples made up about 3% of DVFs (Velopulos et al., 2019). Among different-sex couples, women comprised 83% to 97% of victims annually, a fluctuation that approached statistical significance ( $X^2 = 6.71, p = .08$ ).<sup>2</sup>

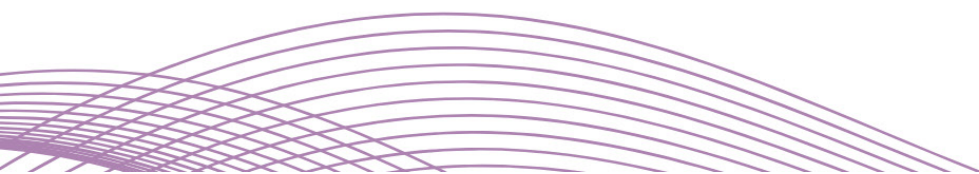
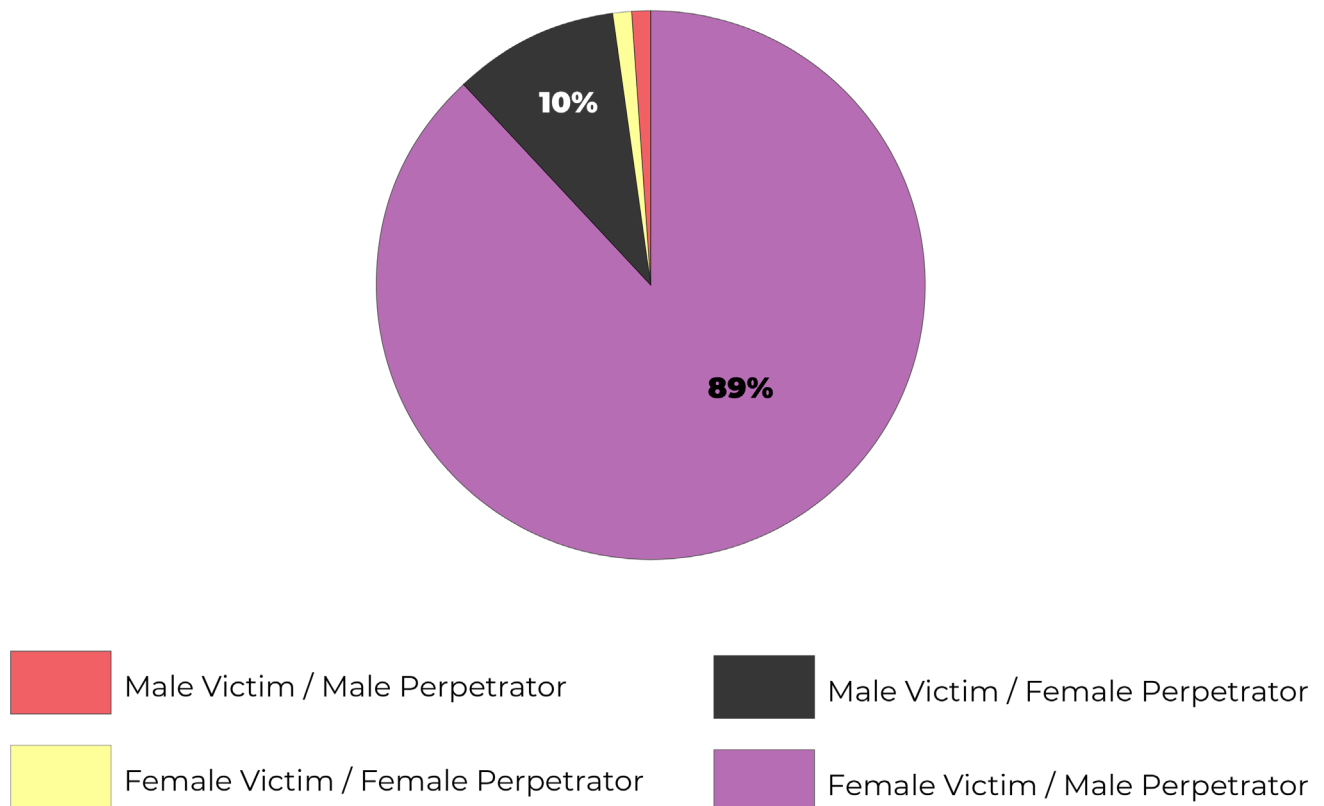
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<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that in the multiyear dataset, all DVF victims, perpetrators, and collateral victims were recorded as either female or male. No one was identified as transgender, nonbinary, or another gender identity. As such “male” and “female” are used throughout. This contrasts with research showing that IPV victimization is as high or higher among transgender and nonbinary people compared to cisgender individuals (Kelleher et al., 2025).

<sup>2</sup> The standard minimum probability used to establish significance is  $p < .05$ . A probability between .05 and 1.0 is typically designated as approaching significance.

In **2024**, of the 54 cases, **the highly gendered aspect of DVFs remained consistent with past years' trends.** Almost four-fifths (79.6%) of victims were female (n = 43) and 20.4% male (n = 11). Perpetrators were 83.3% male (n = 45) and 16.7% female (n = 9). Sex-dyad analysis of 2024 showed 79.6% male perpetrator/female victim (n = 43), 16.7% female perpetrator/male victim (n = 9), and 3.7% male-male (n = 2) dyads. There were no female-female couples.

Chart D: Sex Dyad of DV Victims & Perpetrators

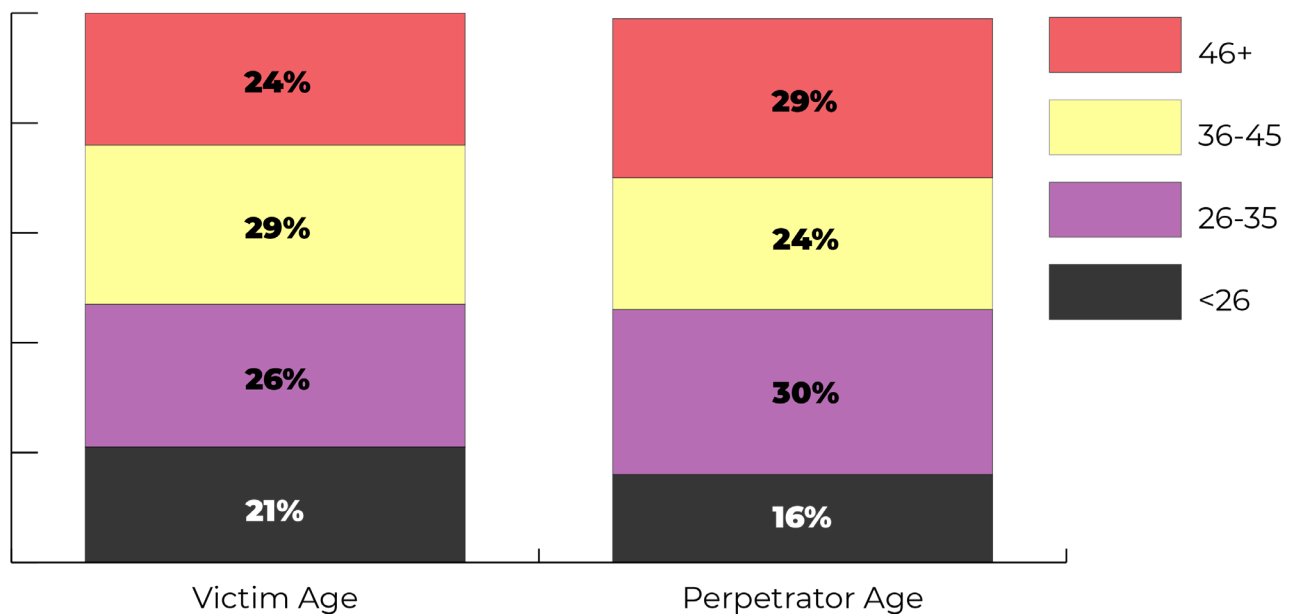


## Age

Chart E is consistent with other research that shows **DVFs impact every age range** (Chopin et al., 2023). DVF couples from 2021 to 2024 ranged in age from teenagers to elderly adults. Victims ranged from 14 to 91 years ( $\mu = 38.2$ ), perpetrators from 15 to 92 years ( $\mu = 39.3$ ). In four% of the couples, at least one member of the couple was under 18, and 14% had at least one couple member age 21 or younger. This finding underscores the importance of investing in teen dating violence prevention. Seven% of victims and 6% of perpetrators were 65+. No significant year-to-year differences were observed. The victim-perpetrator age gap ranged from 0 (they were the same age) to 31 years, with larger gaps significantly correlated with male perpetrators ( $r = 0.2, p < .01$ ). In other words, the larger the age gap between the DVF victim and DV perpetrator, the more likely the perpetrator was to be male.

In **2024**, victim ages ranged from **17 to 85 years (average = 39.8)**, while perpetrators ranged from **17 to 79 (average = 40.0)**. Nearly a quarter of victims (23.1%) were under 26, and 30.8% were 36–45. Perpetrators were most commonly 26–35 (27.8%) or 36–45 (24.1%).

Chart E: DV Victims' & DV Perpetrators' Ages



## Race

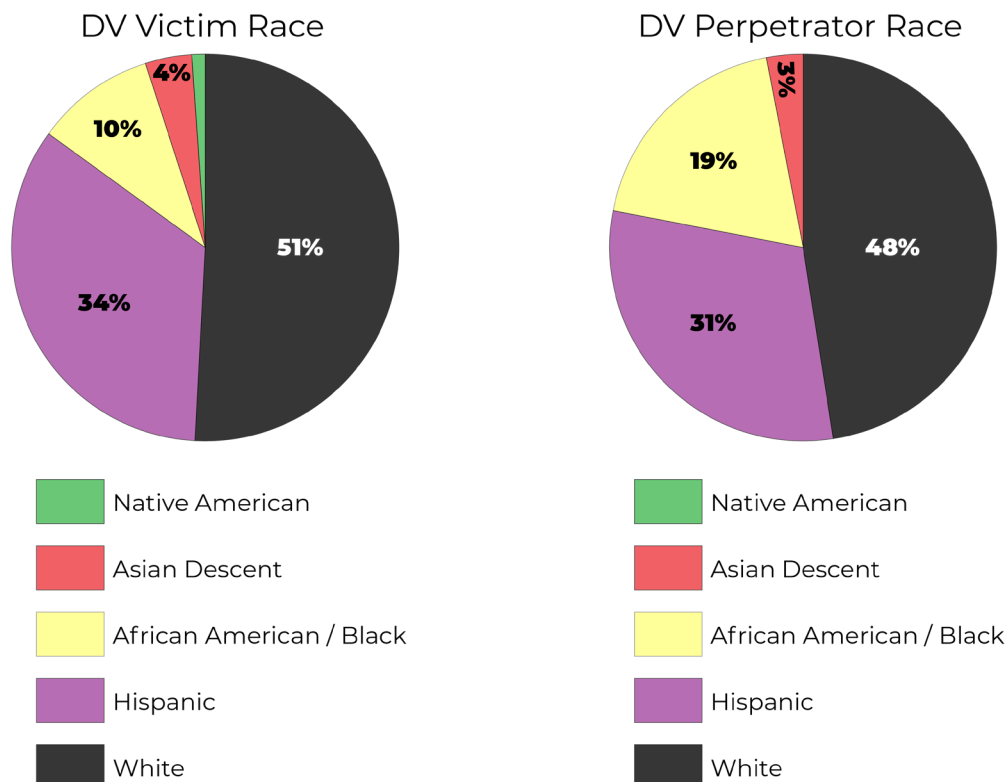
Chart F shows racial distribution of the DV couples (not all of whom died) in the DVF cases in Colorado from 2021 through 2024<sup>1</sup>. **Hispanic individuals were disproportionately represented:** they made up 23% of Colorado’s population in 2023 but 34% of DVF victims and 31% of perpetrators. The disproportionate representation of Hispanic individuals in Chart F is consistent with other DVF research (Garza et al., 2024; Macias et al., 2024; Petrosky, 2017). About three-quarters (76%) of couples were the same race. Victims were 50% white, 34% Hispanic, 10% Black, 4% Asian, and <1% Native American. Perpetrators were 48% white, 31% Hispanic, 19% Black, 3% Asian, and no Native Americans. There were no significant racial differences in DVF victims and perpetrators over the four years.<sup>2</sup>

In **2024**, racial distribution mirrored prior years: victims were 42.9% white, 35.7% Hispanic, 14.3% Black, and 7.1% Asian descent. Perpetrators were 40.8% white, 34.7% Hispanic, 20.4% Black, and 4.1% Asian descent. Among 40 known couples, 75% were same-race: 32.5% white-white, 27.5% Hispanic-Hispanic, 12.5% Black-Black. The remainder were interracial, most commonly white/Hispanic and white/Asian.

<sup>1</sup> Unless self-reported, racial data are often inaccurate in general, including research on DVFs (Belknap, 2021), which is particularly problematic with bi- and multi-racial individuals. Thus, Chart F should be interpreted with some caution.

<sup>2</sup> Crosstab analyses were conducted to test for significance in the grids shown in Chart F, which compared DVF victim race by year and DV perpetrator race by year. When the expected number of cases in a grid cell (for example, Native American perpetrators each year) is fewer than five, it becomes difficult to establish statistical significance. In these analyses, 11 cells for DV victim race by year and four cells for DV perpetrator race by year consistently had expected counts below five.

Chart F: DV Victim & DV Perpetrator Race

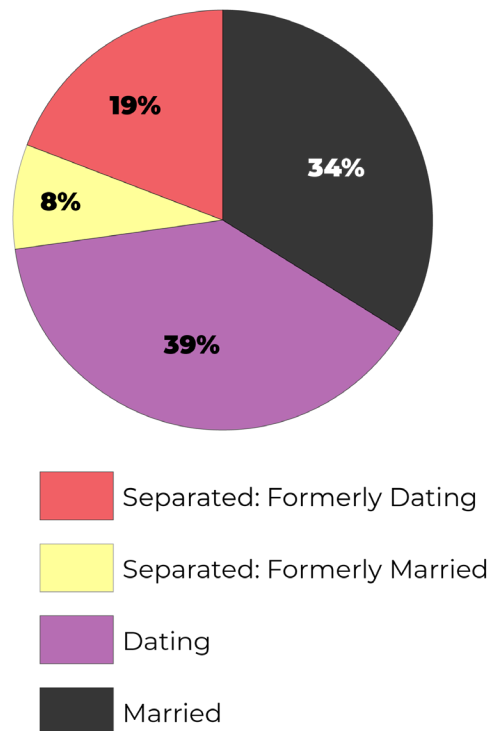


## Relationship Status

Among 206 cases over the last four years with known relationship status at the time of the incident, 39% were dating, 34% were currently married, 19% were ex-dating (ex-boy/girlfriends), and 8% were once married but currently divorced or separated (Chart G). Thus, **73% DVFs occurred within current relationships and 27% occurred after a relationship had ended.** No significant differences emerged across years.

In 2024, of 47 cases with relationship data, 31.9% were married, 8.5% divorced/separated, 42.6% dating, and 17.0% ex-dating. In 48 cases where togetherness was known, 75% of couples were still together at the date of the incident. Of these, 58.3% had never been married to each other, while 41.7% had been married at some point.

Chart G: Domestic Violence Couple Relationship at Date of Incident



## Pregnancy

Previous research identifies a **heightened risk of DV perpetrators killing their victims when the victims are pregnant** (Treves-Kagan, 2024; Wallace et al., 2021). Although acquiring accurate pregnancy data is difficult, pregnancy was a factor in at least seven of 224 cases (3.1%) between 2021 and 2024 (Chart H). Five of the 224 DVF victims were known to be pregnant, representing 4.1% of female victims under age 45. Notably, the two additional cases demonstrate the need to consider pregnancy beyond the DVF victim. In one, a 17-year-old girl killed her ex-boyfriend's new 21-year-old girlfriend who was pregnant with twins. In another, a 32-year-old pregnant woman killed (and sexually mutilated) her boyfriend after he questioned whether he was the "father."

In 2024, pregnancy appeared in only one case. No DVF victims were pregnant at the time of death. No collateral victims were pregnant. Thus, only 1 of 54 cases (1.9%) had any evidence that pregnancy was relevant to the DVF.

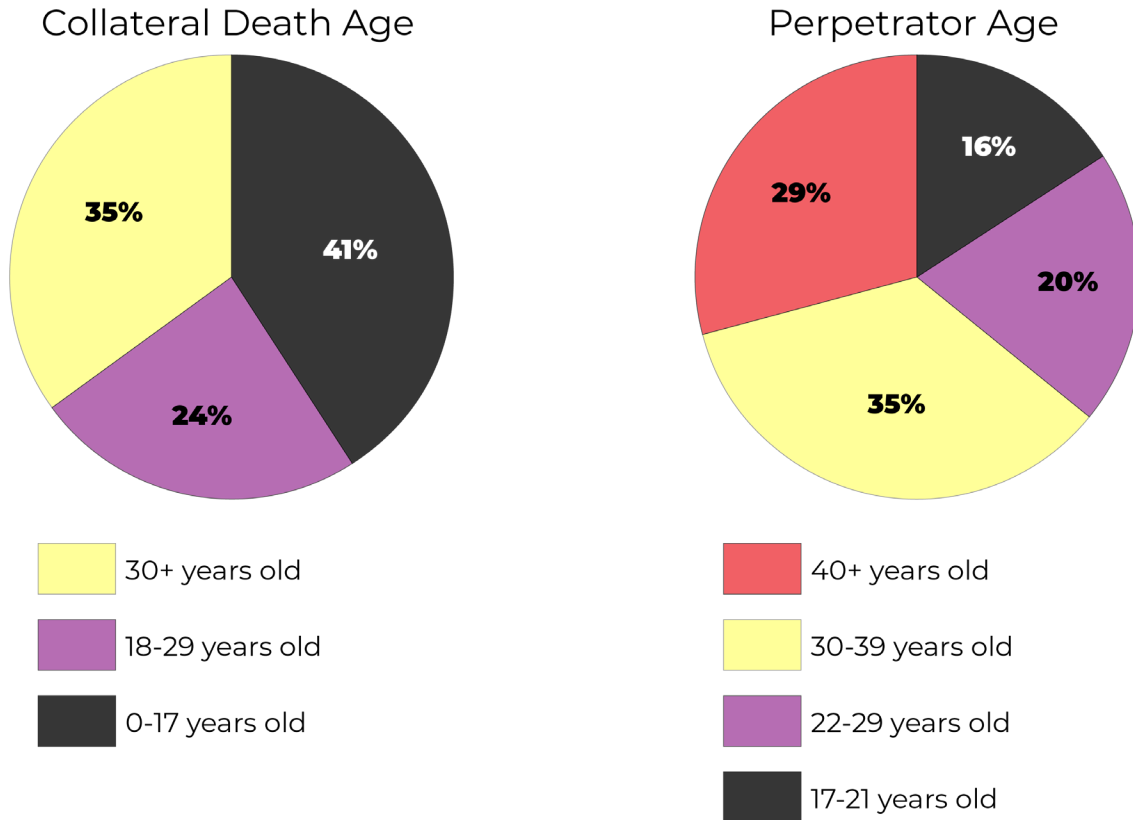
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## Demographic Characteristics of Collateral Victims and Perpetrators

In **2024**, collateral fatalities were especially notable: **all eight collateral victims were young children**, ages three months to seven years (average age = 3.5). All were **joint children of the DV couple**, not stepchildren. Collateral victims were 62.5% female (n = 5) and 37.5% male (n = 3), and **100% of collateral perpetrators were male**.

When the Board looked at multiple years of data, **the risk to children has increased over the years**. Over 41% of collateral fatalities were children who ranged in age from one month to 17 years. About a quarter (24%) of collateral fatalities were 18–29, and about a third (35%) were 30–61. Reclassifying the age cohorts to consider those younger than shows that half (51%) of the collateral fatalities were in this youngest group. Over the four years (2021–2024), children were significantly more likely to be collateral victims across the four years ( $X^2 = 17.01$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

Chart J: Collateral Victims' and Perpetrators' Ages

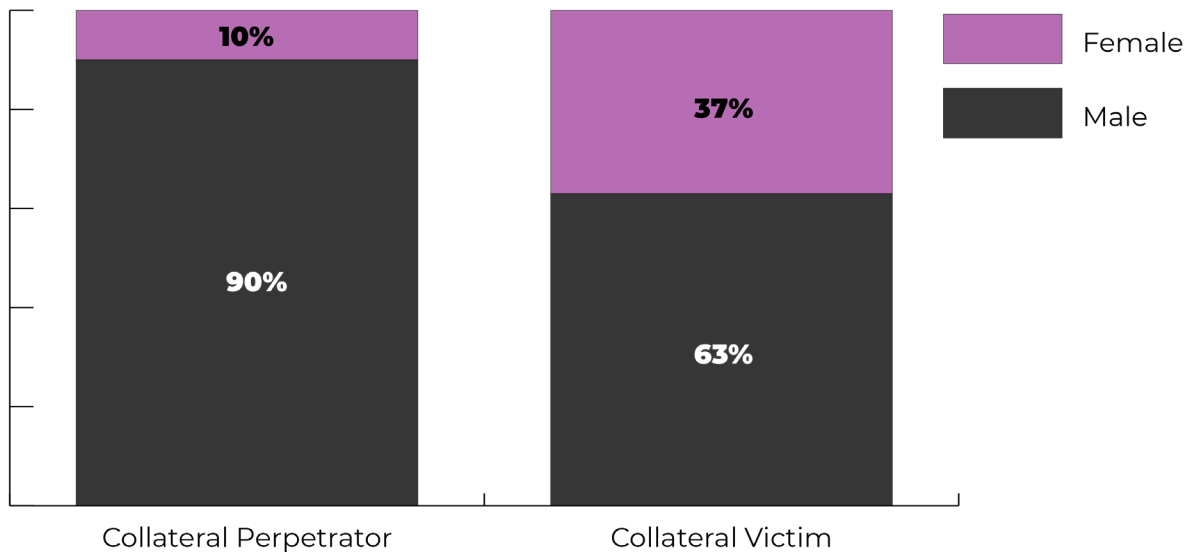


This tragic reality highlights why including risk to children is an essential element of safety planning. As outlined in the recommendations, ensuring that those in positions to identify risk to children in the family court system in particular are well trained remains more critical than ever.

The sex/gender of all 51 collateral victims was known and were solely identified as male or female. **90% of collateral perpetrators and 63% of collateral fatalities were male (Chart I)**. In 59% of collateral cases, males killed males; in 31%, males killed female collateral victims. In 6% females killed females and in 4% of cases females killed male collateral victims. Across the four years (2021–2024), there were no significant differences in the sex of collateral victims or in the sex dyads of DVF victim-perpetrator pairs (male-female, female-male, male-male, female-female). However, the sex of collateral perpetrators did vary significantly across years ( $X^2 = 9.75, p = .02$ ). In 2021 and 2024, all collateral perpetrators were men; in 2022, 91% were men; and in 2023, 57% were men.

Collateral perpetrators' gender distribution varied across years: 100% male in 2021 and 2024, 91% male in 2022, and 57% male in 2023 ( $X^2 = 9.75, p = .02$ ).

Chart I: Collateral Victims' & Perpetrators' Sex



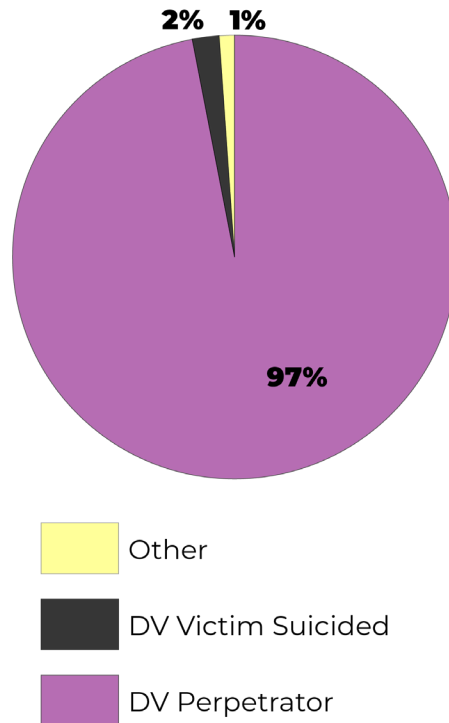
### A Comparison of DVF Victim, Perpetrator, and Collateral Fatalities

In **2024**, of the 38 DVF victim deaths, 97.4% (n = 37) were killed by perpetrators, and 2.6% (n = 1) died by suicide. **Among the 26 perpetrator deaths, 80.8% (n = 21) were suicides**, 7.7% (n = 2) were killed by law enforcement, 3.8% (n = 1) were killed by a DVF victim, 3.8% (n = 1) by a victim's new partner, and 3.8% (n = 1) died accidentally while fleeing police. All eight collateral victims were killed by DV perpetrators.

Over 2021–2024, 97% of DVF victims were killed by perpetrators. Two of the three remaining DVF victims died by suicide and one victim was killed by her father-in-law. These anomalies were too few for statistical comparison, but overall, no significant yearly differences emerged.

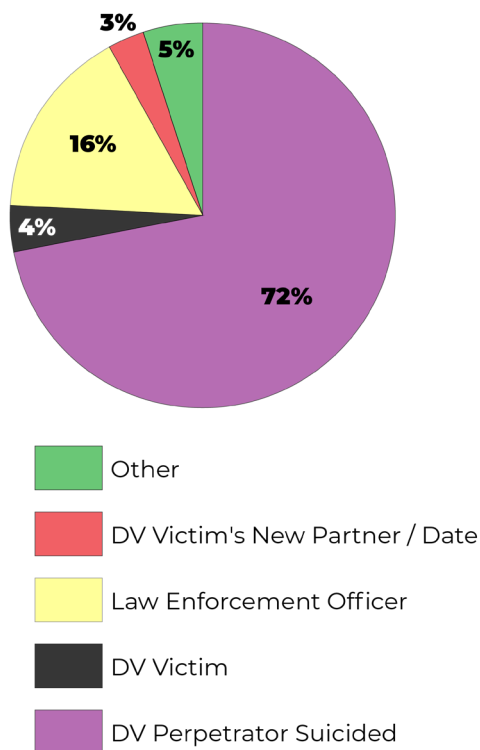
However, it is important to note that **there are likely additional DVF victim suicides that were not detected**. A recently growing body of research addresses “hidden” femicides, including staged homicides where perpetrators alter evidence to resemble suicide (Bitton & Dayan, 2019; Ferguson, 2021). Such tactics are disproportionately present in intimate partner homicides. (Bitton & Dayan, 2019; Ferguson, 2021; Ferguson & Petherick, 2016; Fitz-Gibbon et al., 2023). This unfortunate reality underscores that there are likely a number of unaccounted for DVFs that were otherwise classified as suicides. The Board has made a concerted effort to work with law enforcement and coroners over the past few years to better identify these cases. This effort has resulted in detecting two victim suicides that were classified as DVFs in the last two years. The Board anticipates a growing number of such cases being identified.

Chart K: Who Killed the DV Victims?



Of the 113 perpetrator deaths, 72% were suicides (Chart L). 16% were killed by law enforcement, 4% by DVF victims, 3% by victims' new partners, and 5% were classified as "other." In these cases, two were killed by the DVF victims' brothers, two by unrelated civilians at the scene, and two occurred during accidents while the DV perpetrator was fleeing the police responding to the DV calls.

Chart L: Who Killed the DV Perpetrators?



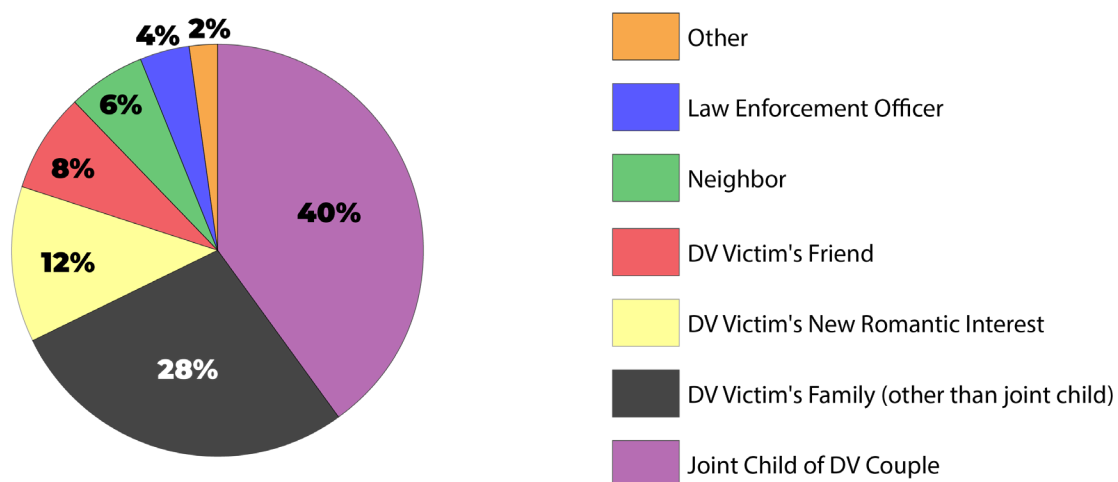
These findings highlight that preventing DVF requires attention to a wide spectrum of risk factors. For example, **perpetrator suicidality is itself a well-documented risk factor for DVFs** (Campbell et al., 2003; Ferguson, 2021) as seen in the data where 71% of cases involved a perpetrator suicide and must be addressed as part of victim safety planning.

All collateral victims were killed by DV perpetrators. This excludes two outlier cases: one in which the perpetrator's father killed his son's partner before dying by suicide, and another unresolved case in which a woman killed two of her children under circumstances that remain unclear.

Excluding these outliers, Chart N provides a more detailed view of the 50 collateral victims directly killed by DV perpetrators. The largest group were the **joint children of the DVF victim and perpetrator, who made up almost two-in-five (39%) of collateral deaths**. The next most common group were **family members of the victim (other than joint children with the perpetrator), who accounted for 27%**. Other collateral victims included new romantic partners of the victim (12%), friends (8%), neighbors (6%), and law enforcement officers responding to the DV incident (4%). Two additional cases were classified as "other"—one involved the DVF victim's brother, and the other the father-in-law described above, who killed himself after killing his son's partner.

Across 2021–2024, a clear trend emerged: **the percentage of collateral victims who were joint children increased significantly ( $p < .001$ ), while the percentage who were victim family members declined ( $p = .03$ )**. This pattern underscores the growing proportion of children among collateral fatalities, highlighting the devastating and multigenerational impact of DVFs.

Chart N: Collateral Victims Classifications



## Weapons and Causes of Death

Consistent with prior reports, firearms were the leading cause of death in the 314 deaths from 2021 through 2024 (Chart O). Of 314 deaths, **four in five (81%) of DVFs involved firearms**: 95% of perpetrator deaths (primarily suicides), 88% of collateral deaths, and 68% of victim deaths were caused by firearms.

Chart O: Causes of Death:

| <b>Weapon/Fatal Injury</b> | <b>Total</b> | <b>DV Victim</b> | <b>Collateral Victim</b> | <b>Perp. Fatality</b> |
|----------------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| Firearm/Gun Shot Wound     | 81%          | 68%              | 88%                      | 95%                   |
| Knife/Sharp Obj./Stabbing  | 6%           | 10%              | 10%                      | 0%                    |
| Ligature/Strangle/Asphyx.  | 5%           | 8%               | 0%                       | 3%                    |
| Blunt Object               | 2%           | 4%               | 0%                       | 0%                    |
| 2+ Non-Gun Weapons         | 3%           | 5%               | 0%                       | 0%                    |
| Other                      | 3%           | 5%               | 2%                       | 3%                    |

In 2024, firearms were again the most common weapon. Of 72 fatalities, 75% (n = 54) involved firearms. Firearms accounted for 63.2% of victim deaths (n = 24), 100% of collateral deaths (n = 8), and 84.6% of perpetrator deaths (n = 22). Knives were involved in 6.9% (n = 5), ligature/asphyxiation in 8.3% (n = 6), blunt objects in 1.4% (n = 1), and multiple non-gun weapons in 2.8% (n = 2). "Other" causes (5.6%, n = 4) included poison, overdose, or accidents.

### Rural vs. Urban Distribution

Some research shows that DVFs are more frequent in rural counties (e.g., Reckdenwald et al., 2019) which is consistent with Colorado data over the past four years. Using OEDIT's classification of rural, all of the counties with the highest DVF rate per 100,000 residents were rural; under DOLA's measure, nine of ten were rural. Per 100,000 residents, county rates ranged from 0.0 to 44.1.

While overall fatalities by county type did not reach statistical significance, they approached it (rural  $\mu = 1.64$ , urban  $\mu = 1.39$ ,  $t = -1.45$ ,  $p = .075$ ) and the Board anticipates that with more years of data a significance finding is likely. However, collateral deaths by county did reach significance and were more likely in rural counties (32%) than urban (15%) using both DOLA and OEDIT classification, and more numerous on average (0.45 vs. 0.20) ( $X^2 = 41.4$ ,  $p = .04$ ;  $F = 6.42$ ,  $p = .012$ ).

**In sum, collateral victims are more common and more numerous in rural counties, while overall fatality rates show a trend toward rural prevalence.**

In 2024, of Colorado’s 64 counties, 20 had at least one DVF in 2024. The rate of DVFs per 100,000 residents ranged from 0.0 to 27.5, with a statewide county average of 1.38. Costilla County had the highest rate at 27.5 per 100,000—representing a single fatality in its small population. There are two different classifications of rural – with Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT) and the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) having slight different classifications.

The seven counties with the highest DVF rates were rural under the OEDIT classification (Costilla, Lake, Conejos, Archuleta, Otero, Teller, and Routt, respectively), and the top six were also rural under the DOLA classification (with Teller categorized as urban by DOLA). The next two highest, Broomfield and Denver, were urban under both measures. Consistent with previous annual reports and the multi-year data shown in Chart P, rural counties continued to have the highest per capita rates of DVFs.

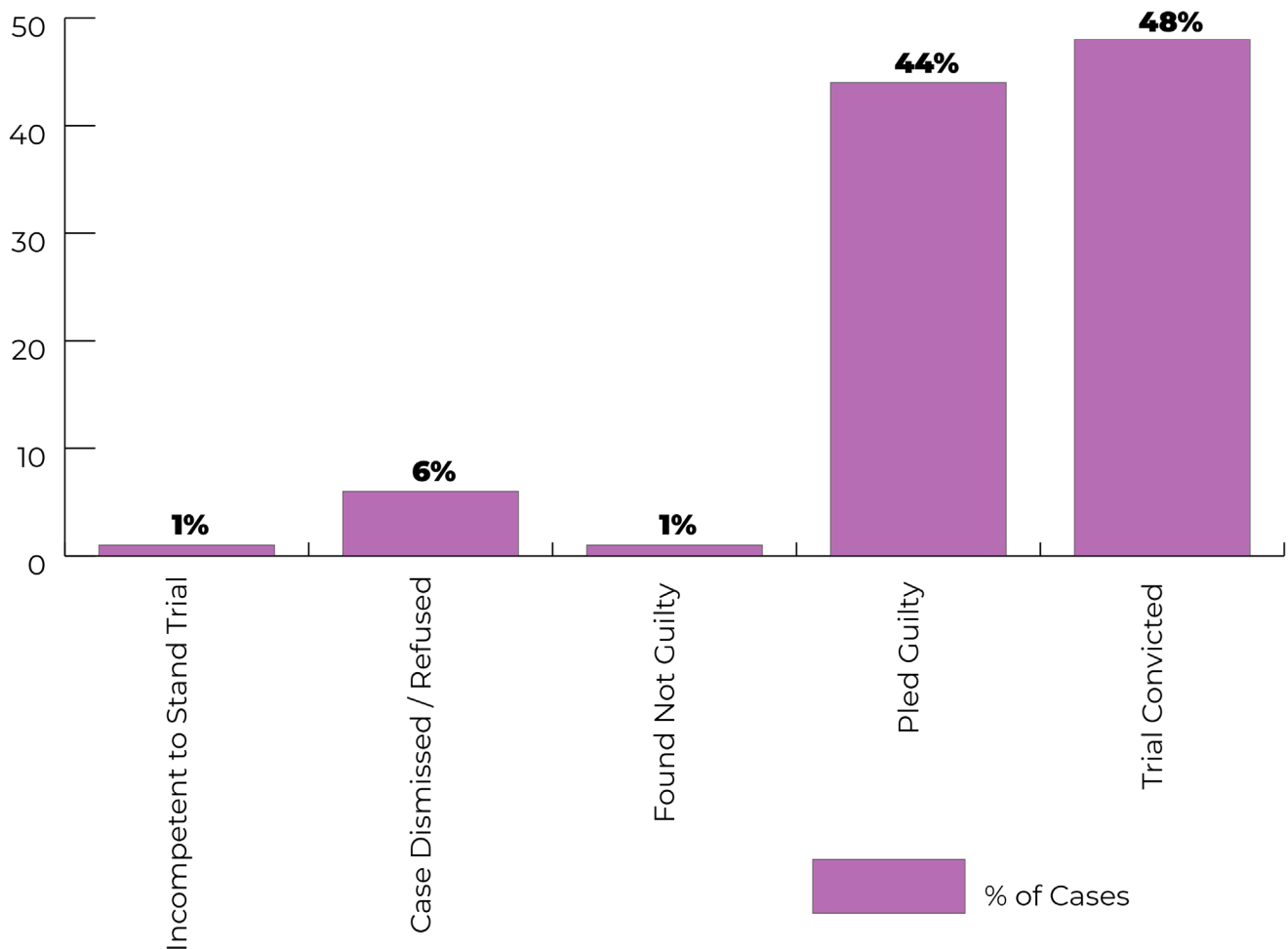
**DVF's per 100,000 by County**

| <b>Classification</b> | <b>County</b>      | <b>DVF's / 100k</b> |
|-----------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Rural (Both)          | Costilla           | 27.50               |
|                       | Lake               | 13.56               |
|                       | Conejos            | 13.34               |
|                       | Archuleta          | 7.05                |
|                       | Otero              | 5.52                |
|                       | Routt              | 3.99                |
|                       | Rural (OEDIT only) | Teller              |
| Mesa                  |                    | 0.63                |
| Urban (Both)          | Broomfield         | 2.60                |
|                       | Denver             | 1.96                |
|                       | Garfield           | 1.59                |
|                       | Douglas            | 1.30                |
|                       | Weld               | 1.11                |
|                       | Arapahoe           | 0.76                |
|                       | Adams              | 0.75                |
|                       | Boulder            | 0.61                |
|                       | Pueblo             | 0.59                |
|                       | Larimer            | 0.54                |
|                       | Jefferson          | 0.52                |
|                       | El Paso            | 0.40                |

## Criminal Legal System Outcomes

Chart Q shows that 91% of DVF cases result in a criminal conviction (N = 69). Nearly half (48%) involved a guilty verdict in court, 44% were resolved through a guilty plea, and 6% of the charged cases were dismissed or refused. Only one case resulted in a not guilty verdict at trial and in another the perpetrator was found incompetent to stand trial.

Chart Q: Outcome of Charged Cases



The table below indicates that 85% of the charges are for first degree murder, 12% for second degree murder, 1% for manslaughter, and 2% for vehicular homicide. The convictions are evenly divided between the original charge (51%) and a charge for a lesser offense (49%).

## Offense Charges & Convictions

| Offense         | Charges (whole sample) | Convictions (whole sample) | Charges (No Collateral Deaths) | Convictions (No Collateral Deaths) |
|-----------------|------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1st Deg. Murder | 85%                    | 44%                        | 82%                            | 43%                                |
| 2nd Deg. Murder | 12%                    | 48%                        | 14%                            | 47%                                |
| Manslaughter    | 1%                     | 6%                         | 1%                             | 8%                                 |
| Vehic. Homicide | 2%                     | 2%                         | 3%                             | 2%                                 |

Four variables were significantly related to charges, convictions, and less commonly, changes from charges to convictions. (These significant relationships are not reported in charts).

First, in terms of gender, male perpetrators (90%) were significantly more likely than female perpetrators (60%) to be charged with first degree murder ( $X^2 = 7.13$ ,  $p = .008$ ).

Second, **urban counties (91.4%) were far more likely to charge perpetrators with first degree murder than rural counties** (50.0%) ( $X^2 = 12.38$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

Likewise, first degree convictions were more likely in urban (50.0%) than rural counties ( $X^2 = 8.92$ ,  $p = .003$ ).<sup>1</sup>

Third, first degree murder charges were more likely in cases with one or more collateral deaths than cases without any collateral deaths. ( $X^2 = 5.63$ ,  $p = .018$ ). In every case where there was at least one collateral death (someone other than the main DVF victim also killed), prosecutors filed first-degree murder charges (100%). In contrast, when the sole person killed was the DVF victim, prosecutors filed first-degree murder charges 82.3% of the time. However, when collateral deaths were present, half (50%) of perpetrators were ultimately convicted of first-degree murder. When the DVF victim was the sole fatality, they did not lead to significantly higher rates of first-degree murder convictions (43%). This suggests that while collateral deaths influenced the charges, they did not lead to higher rates of first-degree convictions in the end. There was no observable impact on charge reductions when collateral victims were involved—charges were reduced at conviction about half the time in both groups (50% vs. 51%).

<sup>1</sup> The rural/urban relationships were significant using the OEDIT and DOLA measures regarding first degree convictions, but only the OEDIT measure was significant when testing rural/urban by first degree charges. The chi-square and p values reported in parentheses are from the OEDIT measure.

## Prior Official Criminal and Legal System Involvement

### Data Collection

Collecting data on prior criminal and legal system involvement is difficult, largely because many of the criminal and civil records are siloed across jurisdictions and agencies. This year thanks to a collaborative partnership with members of the Board and their respective agencies and with Bridge2Justice, the Board was able to collect more data points on Colorado criminal and civil court involvement of the 2024 DVF victims and perpetrators.

As to the criminal data, the Board was able to review Colorado state-level criminal histories and Denver Municipal Court data of the 2024 DVF perpetrators.<sup>1</sup> However, matching individuals across systems is often constrained by incomplete identifiers (e.g., limited birth date information, common names, incomplete searches, etc.). To avoid over-counting or misattribution, the Board only included cases where a record could be confirmed with reasonable certainty. As a result, the findings are underinclusive—absence of a record does not mean that no record exists, but rather that the record could not be verified. In other words, “no” entries in the dataset should be read as “no or unknown,” reflecting these limitations in data collection.

Thanks to partnerships with agencies represented on the Board, the Board was also able to collect comprehensive Colorado statewide data as to whether 204 DVF perpetrators had ever been on probation or pre-trial supervision at any point and at the time of the DVF.

As to civil court data including all protection order data, the Board was able to review whether the DVF couple had ever been involved in a domestic relations case and whether a civil protection order or a mandatory protection order had been recorded against the DVF victim or perpetrator.

### 2024 Criminal and Civil System Involvement

As noted above, in 2024 there were 54 DVF cases. When considering available information, **at least half (50%, n = 27) of the DVF perpetrators had a DV-related arrest or warrant issued for an arrest on their record.** Of these, the Board was able to confirm that at least 12 of the DVF perpetrators had a prior DV conviction (22%). A separate search was run of DVF perpetrators felony conviction backgrounds, regardless of the connection to DV. At least 18.5% (n =10) had at least one prior felony conviction.

At least 31.5% (n=17) of DVF perpetrators were previously on probation or pretrial supervision at some point. Of these, **seven of the DVF perpetrators (13%) were on probation or pretrial supervision when the DVF occurred.**

<sup>1</sup> In addition to drawing from criminal justice records, the Board incorporated information from publicly available sources such as news articles. The Board was generally unable to obtain municipal level criminal history data from jurisdictions beyond Denver. Some DV charges are recorded at the municipal level and therefore the findings here likely undercount the extent of the DVF perpetrators criminal history. The Board also was unable to collect any data on out-of-state criminal histories.

Domestic relations (DR) cases were a notable factor in several DVFs in 2024. In at least three DVF cases, one or more parties to the DVF were simultaneously litigating a DR case with someone other than the DVF victim or perpetrator. These cases illustrate the way custody or divorce disputes with third parties may add to already volatile dynamics. For example, one DVF victim was engaged in divorce litigation with a former partner when her current partner murdered her. The former partner and DVF perpetrator were also simultaneously litigating a divorce against his former spouse. Although it is unclear whether the DR litigation directly precipitated these DVFs, their recurrence underscores the need to understand how family court processes intersect with risk of lethal violence.

In addition to third-party disputes, at least **seven DVF incidents directly involved DR cases** between the victim and perpetrator. Two had closed prior to the fatality, and five were still open—all five involved custody litigation. These open custody disputes were particularly deadly: four of the five incidents included multiple victims, resulting in 10 total casualties (nine homicides and one attempted homicide). Of the eight child DVF victims in 2024, **five of the eight child DVF victims were involved in their parents' custody disputes**. These findings highlight custody litigation as a high-risk period for families experiencing domestic violence and point to the urgent need for stronger safeguards within family court proceedings.

There was either **an active mandatory protection order or active civil protection order in at least 11 DVF cases**. In four additional DVF cases there was a record of an expired mandatory protection order or civil protection order. Taken together, these cases show both the prevalence and limitations of protection orders as a safety tool. The presence of active mandatory protection orders or active civil protection orders in DVF incidents underscores that while protection orders can serve as important safeguards, they are not sufficient on their own to prevent lethal outcomes. This reinforces the need for courts, advocates, and law enforcement to view protection orders as one component of a broader safety strategy, rather than a guarantee of protection.

Considering only civil court involvement, 10 of the DVF cases either had an open DR case or an active civil protection order at the time of the fatality.

# Victim Stories

When these stories make the news, the stories of these victims have been told for them, often stripped of those attributes and characteristics of who they were. We choose now to share their highlights and accolades that many knew, didn't get the chance to know. Our best effort was made to locate photos, and quotes from family and loved ones. Their words, memories, and stories offer a fuller picture of the lives lived and the lasting impact of those we have lost.



## **Dylan Adams**

Age: 23  
Denver, Colorado  
April 2nd, 2024

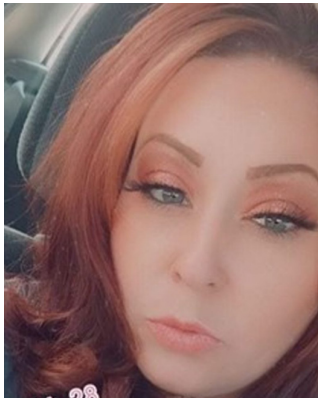
"Dylan loved and cared for his brothers and sister, was a great student and an amazing friend. He was the kind of person people could tell stories to, and he'd listen with quiet strength."



## **Angel Beeker**

Parker, Colorado  
April 4th, 2024

The CDVFRB remembers Angel Beeker.



## **Shayla Bryan**

Age: 35  
Aurora, Colorado  
January 18th, 2024

"[She] is the loving mother of three beautiful children. She was known as Aunt Shay to her nieces and nephews, She is a dedicated momma, daughter, sister, aunt, and friend."



## **Danielle Byrd**

Age: 45  
Parker, Colorado  
November 28th, 2024

"Danielle was always a sweet and loving child. She grew up to be an amazing person whose thirst for life could not be quenched. She was small in structure but mighty in courage."



**Breanna Canter**

Age: 30  
Denver, Colorado  
September 24th, 2024

“Beloved daughter and mother. She leaves behind a 10 year old son and her parents. She was loved by so many that will miss her deeply.”



**Dakylen Cade**

Age: 21  
Denver, Colorado  
March 11th, 2024  
The CDVFRB remembers Dakylen Cade.



**Jiang Chang Chan**

Age: 54  
Colorado Springs, Colorado  
September 1st, 2024

“Jian Chang was incredibly outgoing, and she cherished spending time with her children and friends. No matter the distance, she always made sure her friendships remained strong. She will be deeply missed by her family and her many friends around the world.”



**Angela Cordova**

Age: 52  
Sheridan, Colorado  
May 30th, 2024

“Loved and adored by both family and friends, she will always be remembered for her kind and huge heart and her infectious laugh. Her life will be honored by the life she lived and through the love and friendship she gave us all.”



**Vincenzo Decini**

Age: 25  
Denver, Colorado  
The CDVFRB remembers Vincenzo Decini.



**Desiree Padilla Fernandez**

Age: 33

Leadville, Colorado

August 30th, 2024

“Desiree was a beautiful, loving daughter, sister and mother to her son. Desiree worked hard and always cared for others.”



**Jaya Capri Flores**

Age: 21

Unincorporated Arapahoe County

August 1st, 2024

A colleague of Jaya: “Her smiling, positive attitude will be missed severely.”



**Valarie Ann Garcia**

Age: 36

Thornton, Colorado

June 8th, 2024

“Valarie attended school in Brighton and pursued a career in massage therapy at Denver Career College. She was a devoted single mother to five beautiful children and shared a lifetime of memories and love with the father of her two oldest children.”



**Luis Gómez Reyes**

Age: 35

Denver, Colorado

March 29th, 2024

The CDVFRB remembers Luis Gómez Reyes.



**Gary Griffin**

Age: 59

Denver, Colorado

May 1st, 2024

“Gary was a charismatic individual who touched the lives of many through his infectious smile and compassionate nature. He was a man of considerable achievements, a loving husband, father, son, brother, uncle and friend, whose life was beautifully adorned with courage, love and a unique sense of humor.”



**Jessi Hill**

Age: 7  
Phippsburg, Colorado  
January 13th, 2024  
The CDVFRB remembers Jessi Hill.



**Summer Hill**

Age: 3  
Phippsburg, Colorado  
January 13th, 2024  
The CDVFRB remembers Summer Hill.



**Mary (Michelle) Keen**

Age: 67  
Conifer, Colorado  
November 10th, 2024  
“Michelle was enjoying retired life in the mountains. She poured herself into her family and six grandchildren, texting often and sending packages and letters to those who lived far away. Fall was her favorite season.”



**Seorin & Lesley Kim**

Age: 44 & 3 mos  
Denver, Colorado  
July 29th, 2024  
“Seorin was a dreamer, she loved Disney musicals and would, every time laugh and cry with their triumphs and setbacks as we ate red apple jelly bellies for dinner. Music was her escape, but there was structure and discipline to her artistic expression.”

In Korean culture, a baby’s 100th day marks a joyous occasion to mark the baby’s health and future. While Lesley only spent Eighty-Three days on Earth, they were spent being happy and healthy.



**Rhyle King**

Age: 24  
La Junta, Colorado  
June 11th, 2024  
The CDVFRB remembers Rhyle King.



**Xander Roy & Xena Gabrielle Martinez-King**

Age: 1 & 2

La Junta, Colorado

June 11th, 2024

The CDVFRB remembers Xander Roy and Xena Gabrielle Martinez King



**Cheri Kommer**

Age: 55

Denver, Colorado

August 19th, 2024

The CDVFRB remembers Cheri Kommer.



**Larry Lawton**

Age: 85

Pueblo, Colorado

November 23rd, 2024

The CDVFRB remembers Larry Lawton



**Luz Elena Lomeli Lucio**

Age: 44

Aurora, Colorado

May 5th, 2024

“She was a mother, daughter, sister, grandmother and an aunt who was passionate about her family and independence. Always building for her family. She was the anchor, and pillar who always had a solution.”



**Lori Mae Lupercio**

Age: 51

Denver, Colorado

August 1st, 2024

The CDVFRB remembers Lori Lupercio



**Esmerelda Contreras-Mata**

Age: 25  
Colorado Springs, Colorado  
May 16th, 2024  
Her sister said of Esmerelda : “[She] was a bright light in the lives of those around her.”



**Angel Meyers**

Age: 43  
Parker, Colorado  
January 11th, 2024  
“Angel was owner and operator of her crafting business “Get Over It Sunshine” in Colorado. She was taking classes towards her nursing certificate. She loved her children and was a devoted advocate for Autism.”



**Dane Timms**

Age: 7  
Parker, Colorado  
January 11th, 2024  
The CDVFRB remembers Dane Timms



**Sierra Mininger**

Age: 24  
Greeley, Colorado  
December 9th, 2024  
“Sierra was a graduate of Northridge High School and a 4-year member of the U.S. Marine Corps JROTC (Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps), one of the most significant character development and citizenship programs for youth in the country. She excelled in this program! She was a top rifle marksman and spoke at the annual JROTC Marine Birthday Ball.”



**Sunemaura O'Brien**

Age: 65  
Capulin, Colorado  
October 4th, 2024  
“[She] was an incredible person in all aspects of life! She was a healer, grounded in Mother Earth. She taught us how to be and how to live with an attitude of gratitude.”



**Christine Barron-Olivas**

Age: 71  
Boulder, Colorado  
September 8th, 2024  
The CDVFRB remembers Christine Barron-Olivas.



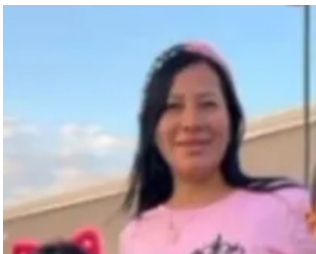
**Dustin Nauls**

Age: 38  
Grand Junction, Colorado  
May 14th, 2024  
The CDVFRB remembers Dustin Nauls.



**Maria Pangelinan**

Age: 29  
Denver, Colorado  
February 2nd, 2024  
The CDVFRB remembers Maria Pangelinan



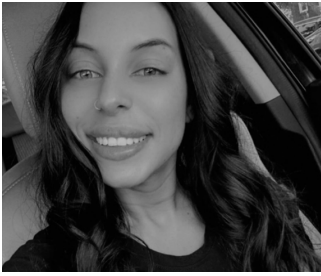
**Gaudy Garcia Pina**

Age: 37  
Boulder, Colorado  
September 24th, 2024  
“A Venezuelan mother of three who came to this county in hopes for a better future for her children. She was tragically un-a-lived by her ex just one month after arriving to Colorado.”



**Lindsey Power**

Age: 39  
Fort Collins, Colorado  
January 29th, 2024  
“Though the dark themes of domestic abuse and gun violence surround her untimely and tragic death, the true light that Lindsey brought to this world will never be extinguished. It is a reoccurring declaration by those who knew her well, as well as acquaintances; every person who met Lindsey is better for having known her.”



**Aisha Quest**

Age: 32  
Broomfield, Colorado  
September 12th, 2024  
The CDVFRB remembers Aisha Quest.



**Tristan Rael**

Age: 7  
Colorado Springs, Colorado  
April 12th, 2024  
The CDVFRB remembers Tristan Rael.



**Alondra Reyes & Aaliyah Vargas-Reyes**

Age: 20 & 1  
Aurora, Colorado  
December 14th, 2024  
“Our dear Alondra was such a caring, patient & kind soul. She loved painting and doing all sorts of arts and crafts. She’d be adventurous and liked to explore fun things to do around nature. As for our beloved Aaliyah, she was always such a smart and happy baby. She loved learning through watching Mrs Rachel. We loved feeding her from our own plates, also she would go crazy for apples. She loved dancing, loved her teta.”



**Barron Rhodes**

Age: 42  
Lakewood, Colorado  
May 12th, 2024  
The CDVFRB remembers Barron Rhodes.



**Elise Sophia Ruybal**

Age: 36  
Milliken, Colorado  
May 7th, 2024  
“Elise was loved by so many. She was a friend to anyone she met. She would always be up to try any new adventure, and she did everything with a smile. Her biggest pride and joy was her beloved son. She loved him more than anything. She would always tell him “It’s me and you against the world “Pop”.”



**Jeffrey Juan Segura**

Age: 52  
Fort Garland, Colorado  
June 16th, 2024

“He loved meeting new people and making friends anywhere he could. He was very outgoing and will forever be remembered for his kind, caring nature. In his free time, Jeff loved to go fishing and ride his Harley Davidson”.



**Chrystal Snow**

Age: 38  
Pagosa Springs, Colorado  
July 2nd, 2024

“She was loved and raised by many people throughout her childhood. The beauty of family is that you have a village of people who will step in and step up — and Chrystal had a very big family that loved her very much.”



**Desireé Terrazas**

Age: 39  
Denver, Colorado  
March 2nd, 2024  
The CDVFRB remembers Desireé Terrazas.



**Carol Williamson**

Age: 60  
Unincorporated Weld County  
October 23rd, 2024  
The CDVFRB remembers Carol Williamson.

# Updates on 2024 Recommendations

## **Develop a training for Child and Family Investigators (CFIs) and Parental Responsibilities Evaluators (PREs) focused on domestic violence.**

Since last year's report was issued, the Judicial Department has entered into an Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) with the DOL to work cooperatively on developing training for PREs and CFIs. Through that IGA, in June 2025, the Judicial Department issued a Request for Proposals to identify a vendor that would work with both agencies to develop and deliver modern and robust training for PREs and CFIs on the topics addressed in last year's recommendation. They anticipate that this training will also be valuable for judges and court staff. The RFP closed in DATE and the agencies are currently working together to select a vendor.

This work will continue into 2026.

## **Increase the use of risk assessment tools in organizations and systems that work directly with domestic violence survivors**

The Board continued to invest in the increased utilization of LAP throughout the state and details that work above. The Board also continues to work closely with Denver pre-trial services and probation to find opportunities to utilize fatality data to inform how these systems utilize risk assessment process and protocols. The Board also will continue to seek opportunities for cross-agency collaboration to increase the utilization of risk assessments through the state.

## **Require that victims be given the choice to be notified if the subject of a restraining order they sought protection against attempts to purchase a firearm**

Currently those who seek civil or criminal protection orders (PO) – including domestic violence POs and Extreme Risk Protection Orders – are not consistently notified when the POs are served or when they expire nor are they notified when the restrained party seeks to purchase a firearm. However, pursuant to the recommendation of the Colorado Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board, HB 25-1098 was introduced to require an expansion of the state's existing victim notification system to provide registered victims, victim's family members, and other interested persons with this information. The bi-partisan bill passed both the House and the Senate with significant margins and was signed into law on June 2, 2025.

However, due to fiscal constraints no funding was provided by the legislature. The Colorado Attorney General's Office sought grant funding, but again, due to limited funding opportunities did not receive the funding necessary to implement HB 25-1098. The DOL is currently seeking alternative funding mechanisms.

## **Provide more protections to DVF victims who are coerced or forced into creating debt**

The Board was pleased that the legislature recognized the economic impact of abuse on victims and survivors and introduced HB 25-1194. While the bill received bi-partisan support, the bill did not advance and was not enacted by the General Assembly.

# 2025 Recommendations

## **Local domestic violence fatality review boards should, when feasible, interview the perpetrator and victim's family and friends as well as the perpetrator.**

The goal of local domestic violence fatality review teams is to carefully consider closed DVF cases in an effort to promote improved understanding of and responses to DV at the individual, community, and institutional levels. These teams are critical catalysts for change—from implementing robust training for stakeholders, to helping develop early intervention strategies, to establishing clearer lines of communication and cooperation.

Historically, case reviews involve compiling available documentary records (such as criminal history, medical history, social service records, and court records) and interviewing the institutional actors involved in the case (law enforcement, district attorneys, and if available, advocates). The case is then meticulously presented to the full team to facilitate conversation about potential missed intervention points and opportunities for expanded and improved preventive methodologies. While these official records such as police reports and court files provide critical information, they often present only a partial view of the circumstances surrounding the homicide.

The information typically reviewed by Review Teams relies on information from institutional sources, yet many DVF cases involve both victims and perpetrators have little formal system involvements – they may have no criminal records, law enforcement may never have responded to instances of domestic violence, it is often difficult if not impossible to know if they sought support services, and so forth. Cases with a limited documentary record are therefore often not selected by review teams and a critical portion of DVFs and the respective insights a case review may offer are limited. And even in cases with a more robust documentary record, reviews can lack important contextual information about the history of the relationship and informal support systems utilized.

There is an emerging best practice in the fatality review space to bring more contextual information into the review by conducting structured and semi-structured interviews with the victim and perpetrator's friends and families and the perpetrator where possible. This year the Colorado Springs DVF Review team was able to incorporate this practice and interviewed the DVF perpetrator and her family and the family of the victim. They reported that the information gained from these interviews was instrumental to their review and deepened the impact of the process.

In consultation with the Colorado Springs DVF Review team the Board has updated its Review Protocol document to create a structure for incorporating these “collateral interviews” into the review process. These updates include details about how to identify whom to interview, who is appropriate to conduct the interview, and model questions for each potential interviewee.

The Board recommends that, where feasible and appropriate, local Domestic Violence Fatality Review Teams (DVFRTs) utilize this updated protocol to incorporate collateral interviews into their review process. These interviews will allow local teams to gather first-hand accounts about the history of the relationship, prior help-seeking efforts, and the broader social, psychological, and economic factors at play. The Board remains committed to supporting local teams as they incorporate these practices.

## Require Removal of Firearms at Domestic Violence Arrests

As detailed in numerous past reports, firearms and domestic violence are a deadly combination, and the Board's data bears this out. Over the last four years, four in five DVFs involved firearms. Research consistently shows that the presence of a firearm in a domestic violence situation drastically increases the risk of homicide – one study found abusers with access to guns are five to eight times more likely to kill their partners than those without firearm access.<sup>1</sup> Over the years the Board has carefully reviewed current efforts to address firearm relinquishment in the context of domestic violence. Specifically, the Board considered the firearms investigator model the Denver District Attorney's Office has used in partnership with the Public Defender's Office. The Board recognized that other jurisdictions may not have the funds to replicate the Denver District Attorney's model and in 2023 recommended that CBI be provided with the legislative authority to provide firearms relinquishment investigation support for a limited pilot program in Colorado. Last year, in recognition of the General Assembly's decision to increase CBI authority and funding to investigate firearms crimes, the Board redirected its focus towards victim notification of attempted firearm purchases by those subject to a domestic violence protection order(s). The Board applauds the General Assembly for passing HB 25-1098 in response to this recommendation and this year the Board will continue to work to secure funding.

However, despite these efforts, the reality remains that firearms overwhelmingly drive DV lethality in Colorado and the current relinquishment framework in domestic violence cases does not functionally result in the removal of firearms. Specifically, Colorado's framework law relies heavily on an offender's honesty and compliance. For instance, someone charged with domestic violence or is subject to a domestic violence protection order must self-report the number and location of firearms they possess in an affidavit to the court. However, many offenders simply claim they have no guns, and it is difficult to obtain evidence to disprove this claim.

The Board therefore recommends Colorado should enact legislation mandating that when law enforcement responds to a domestic violence call and finds probable cause that domestic abuse has occurred, the responding officers must temporarily seize any firearms in the respondent's possession or control at the scene. This would include guns in plain view or discovered pursuant to a lawful search or consent.<sup>2</sup> The firearms should then be held temporarily by law enforcement for safekeeping for 48 hours or until the first advisement, whichever is earlier.<sup>3</sup> Then if the firearm is not needed as evidence in a criminal case and the owner is legally permitted to possess it (i.e. the gun is not contraband and the owner is not prohibited), the law enforcement agency should make the firearm available for return.

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<sup>1</sup> Campbell, et. al. Assessing risk factors for intimate partner homicide, NIJ Journal No. 250. U.S. Dept. of Justice (2000).

<sup>2</sup> Some jurisdictions as a standard procedure require officers on scenes of a DV call to ask questions about firearm possession and location. Such procedures should be utilized to ensure effective implementation of this recommendation.

<sup>3</sup> Consider that at the first advisement, which typically occurs within 24 hours, a criminal protection order is often ordered which restricts access and purchase to firearm.

Such a law would fill a critical gap in Colorado’s current framework – currently, law enforcement cannot seize firearms at the scene of a domestic violence arrest unless the firearm was used in the crime. And ultimately, even after a firearm prohibitor is ordered, as noted above, firearms are rarely relinquished. By empowering officers to disarm abusers immediately at the scene, the proposed law would provide urgent protection for victims and responding officers, create a period to reduce the chance of lethal escalation, and provide a tool for law enforcement to fill the relinquishment gap.

About one-third of U.S. states already require or explicitly authorize law enforcement to remove firearms at the scene of domestic violence incidents. In fact, at least 20 states from across the political spectrum have enacted such laws.<sup>1</sup> For example, New Hampshire law mandates that officers remove all firearms and ammunition in an abuser’s possession whenever there is probable cause to believe domestic abuse has occurred. California requires officers at a domestic violence scene involving a threat to life or an assault to take temporary custody of any firearms in plain sight or discovered during a lawful search. New Jersey, likewise, directs that law enforcement must seize any firearms at the scene if they have probable cause to believe a domestic violence offense occurred and reasonably believe the firearms pose a danger to the victim. States as diverse as Hawaii, Illinois, Montana, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and West Virginia have implemented similar on-scene firearm removal provisions in their domestic violence response laws.

Requiring immediate, on-scene removal reduces the chance of retaliatory violence or escalation in the hours and days following an incident—often the most dangerous period for victims. The approach is temporary and subject to court oversight but is well aligned with the importance of proactive gun removal to protect victims, officers, and the public.

### **Update Colorado statutes to clarify that a third-degree assault DV conviction is a firearm prohibitor**

Currently, federal law prohibits individuals convicted of a misdemeanor crime with a factual basis of domestic violence (MCDV) from purchasing or possessing firearms.<sup>2</sup> In Colorado, many such convictions are under Colorado’s current third-degree assault statute. This statute prohibits knowingly or recklessly causing bodily injury to another or with criminal negligence causing bodily injury with a deadly weapon. C.R.S. § 18-3-204(1)(a).

When determining whether an offense is an MCDV, courts consider if the offense matches an MCDV definition. In Colorado, it is an MCDV offense to knowingly or recklessly cause bodily injury, but not to do so negligently. Under current caselaw, if the statute is “divisible” into separate crimes—one a knowing and reckless crime that matches a MCDV definition and one a negligence crime which does not match—then those convicted of the former are prohibited from purchasing or possessing firearms. But if the statute is “indivisible” then no one convicted under the statute is prohibited from purchasing firearms. There is currently a dispute as to whether the statute is divisible.

<sup>1</sup> The following laws requires some sort of removal of firearms on scenes of DV calls for service. Cal. Penal Code § 18250; Haw. Rev. Stat. § 709-906(4); 725 Ill Comp Stat 5/112A-30(a)(2); Mont. Code § 46-6-603(1); Neb. Rev. Stat. § 29-440(1)(a); N.J. Stat. § 2C:25-21(d)(1)(b); Ohio Rev. Code § 2935.03(B)(3)(h); Okla. Stat. tit. 22, § 60.8(A); 18 Pa. Cons. Stat. § 2711(b); Tenn. Code § 36-3-620; Utah Code § 77-36-2.1(1)(b); Utah Code § 78B-7-408(1)(b); Utah Code § 76-5-106.5(17)(a)(ii); ARCW 10.99.030(3)(a); W. Va. Code § 48-27-1002(e)(1). The follows laws allows for some sort of removal of firearms on scenes of DV calls for service: Alaska Stat. § 18.65.515(b); Ariz. Rev. Stat. § 13-3601(C); Conn. Gen. Stat. § 46b-38b(a); Ind. Code § 35-33-1-1.5(b); La. C.Cr.P. Art. § 891; Md. Family Law Code § 4-511(a); N.H. Rev. Stat. § 173-B:10(l)(a); 13 V.S.A. § 1048.

<sup>2</sup> 18 U.S.C. 922(g)(9).

If it is not considered divisible, then all third-degree assault convictions, including those that involved knowingly or recklessly causing bodily injury against an intimate partner, would no longer be considered an MCDV and those convicted individuals could purchase firearms legally in Colorado. This outcome could materially increase danger to survivors given the risks of gun access poses as discussed above.

Historically, Colorado and the federal government have agreed that the third-degree assault statute is divisible and individuals convicted under the third-degree assault (knowing/recklessness) have been prohibited from purchasing or possessing firearms. However, there is emerging disagreement about this interpretation and there is material risk that the statute will be considered indivisible meaning that many domestic violence offenders will not be prohibited from purchasing or possessing firearms in Colorado. Other recent federal action may compound this risk. For example, the U.S. Department of Justice has proposed a new rule under 18 U.S.C. § 925(c) to allow individuals to seek restoration of federal firearms rights and the new rule expressly contemplates relief even for people with MCDVs.

To address these risks, the Board recommends two legislative changes:

- 1. Amend C.R.S. § 18-3-204 to place the two forms of third-degree assault (knowing/reckless as one and negligence as another) into separately numbered subsections.** This would be a non-substantive change because it would not alter the elements or penalties of the offense, but would eliminate any dispute about the divisibility of the statute and provide for clearer court records. However, this change will only prohibit firearm possession and purchase as to offenses committed after the recommended legislative change. If someone was convicted under the pre-amended statute and attempts to purchase a firearm, they will not be prohibited from doing so. In order to address this, the Board therefore also recommends the second legislative change discussed below.
- 2. Add third-degree assault (knowing/reckless) against an intimate partner as a state firearm prohibitor under Colorado's Possession of a Weapon by a Previous Offender (POWPO) statute, C.R.S. § 18-12-108.** This change would give Colorado independent authority to prohibit and prosecute firearm possession by domestic violence offenders with knowing/reckless third-degree assault convictions—whether under the potentially amended or current version of the statute—regardless of future changes in federal law or enforcement priorities. This would simply restore Colorado's firearm prohibitions to their long-standing scope.

These reforms, taken together, would ensure that individuals convicted of domestic violence in Colorado remain prohibited from possessing firearms, regardless of shifting federal interpretations. By reinforcing both the clarity of our assault statute and the strength of our state-level prohibitions, Colorado can preserve a vital protection for survivors and maintain a critical tool in preventing domestic violence fatalities.

## **Law enforcement should consider providing resources to both parties at all domestic violence related calls where there is no probable cause to make an arrest.**

Law enforcement agencies across Colorado should consider implementing protocols to provide resource materials at all domestic violence (DV) calls when there is no probable cause to make an arrest. These materials might include information and referrals for both the victim and the alleged perpetrator.

Under Colorado law, officers are required to make an arrest when there is probable cause that domestic violence, which includes acts of intimidation, coercion, control, or physical violence, occurred. C.R.S. §§ 18-6-803.6(1); 18-6-800.3(1). However, many calls for service relating to a domestic violence concern do not result in an arrest due to insufficient evidence and lack of probable cause. However, this does not mean domestic violence did not occur and frequently both parties would benefit from further support and services. Survivors often minimize or deny abuse during law enforcement interactions due to fear, shame, or coercive control by their partner. Additionally, cultural, religious, or economic barriers may prevent individuals from disclosing violence or seeking legal intervention.

In fact, research suggests that only about half domestic violence victims will seek help from law enforcement at all.<sup>1</sup> And when they do, only a small percentage of calls result in an arrest and even less in a conviction.<sup>2</sup> These statistics are reflected in this year's data – only 20% of the DVF perpetrators even had a DV conviction in their record. However, survivors are often more likely to seek support from community-based resources when such services are made accessible. Studies indicate that effective responses to DV include timely intervention and services for both victims and offenders, including access to behavioral health care, trauma support, and accountability programs.<sup>3</sup>

To help increase utilization of support services, some Colorado law enforcement agencies have developed protocols for providing leave-behind resources at DV calls that do not result in an arrest. The Board recommends that law enforcement should consider developing such protocols and training on the proper use of the protocols. The protocols should include determination by an officer on a case-by-case basis if it is appropriate to distribute the materials. And in particular, the protocols should address when the materials should be left with only whom appears to be the primary victim, with both parties, or neither party given the nature of the situation. It has been made clear to the Board that some survivors and victim advocates strongly believe leaving materials at any DV call not resulting in arrest is a critical step towards safety planning while others, including a survivor on the Board, have raised concerns that in some cases, leaving such materials behind for both parties could place victims at future risk. These perspectives underscore why a case-by-case assessment by law enforcement is critical for victim safety. Such assessments require officers to be well-trained on DV dynamics and protocols should address risk factors an officer should consider.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on ten years of NCVS data (2006–2015), police were notified in more than half (56%) of nonfatal domestic violence victimizations. Serious violence, however, accounted for over one-third of unreported victimizations. Primary reasons cited by victims for nonreporting serious violence included feeling the situation was a personal matter (32%) or fear of reprisal (31%). Other reasons included protecting the offender, feeling the crime was unimportant, and inefficient or biased police. (Reaves, 2017)

<sup>2</sup> In the NCVS data for 2006–2015, only 23% of victimizations reported to police resulted in an arrest at the time of initial police response. Follow-up action by the police occurred in about one-third of reported victimizations, with arrest in 10% of those cases. Overall, including situations where the victim signed a criminal complaint, the alleged offender was arrested or charged in 39% of victimizations reported to police (Reaves, 2017).

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., Jacquelyn C. Campbell et al., *The Danger Assessment: Validation of a Lethality Risk Assessment Instrument for Intimate Partner Femicide*, 24 *J. Interpersonal Violence* 653 (2009) (demonstrating that early identification of high-risk domestic violence situations through structured tools can inform timely interventions that save lives).

To support this recommendation, the Board has developed an example of potential leave-behind materials that includes information on signs of healthy and unhealthy relationships, DV support services, and domestic violence offender treatment approved through the Domestic Violence Offender Management Board. Agencies may choose to customize the template to include local resources and incorporate other changes to suit their needs and protocols.

Proactively offering information at these high-risk moments provides survivors with safer pathways to support and offers potential early intervention for individuals at risk of causing harm.

# Acknowledgements

This report was authored by Keisha Sarpong, Fatality Review Program Manager at the Rose Aandom Center, Dr. Joanne Belknap, Professor Emeritus in the Department of Ethnic Studies at the University of Colorado Boulder, Margaret Abrams, the co-founder of the Denver DVFRT, and Shalyn Kettering of the Department of Law. Keisha has been working with the Board and DMDVFRT since 2022. She provides leadership to the Denver Metro Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team and has supported the work of developing other teams across the state. Joanne has served as the DMDVFRT's researcher since 1998. Her guidance as a researcher has helped Colorado receive national recognition for its DVF Review work. Margaret Abrams is the former Executive Director of the Rose Aandom Center and has been a leader in the DVF Review space for her whole career. Shalyn Kettering manages the Board in her role as Legal Counsel to the Attorney General.

Many thanks for the contributions of members of the Department of Law including Janet Drake, Catie Fowler, Maxwell Mead, and Elliot Goldbaum. We are also very grateful for our partners at Bridge to Justice, including Rachel Dane. Lastly, thanks to all the agencies and individuals across the state who provided us with data for this report.

# Board Members

- City attorney's office in Colorado who has experience working with victims of domestic violence or prosecuting domestic violence offenders: **Linda Loflin-Pettit**, Manager of Government and Community Relations, Denver City Attorney's Office
- Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment: **Christal Garcia**, Infant and Child Wellbeing Coordinator, Family Adversity and Mortality Section, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
- Colorado District Attorneys' Council Designee: **Rachael Powell**, Chief Deputy District Attorney, 4th Judicial District
- Criminal Defense Attorney: **Tally Zuckerman**, Partner, Zuckerman Law, LLC
- Denver Metro Domestic Violence Fatality Review Committee: **Linda Johnston**, EAW Project Director, Colorado District Attorney's Council
- Department of Human Services' Adult Protection Services: **Nicole Fisher**, Adult Protective Services Policy Specialist, Department of Human Services
- Department of Human Services' Child Protection Services: **James Connell**, Intake and Assessment Administrator, Division of Child Welfare, Office of Children, Youth and Families
- Domestic Violence Survivor: **Bridget Dyson**, Survivor and Victim Advocate, **Erica Bethel**, Survivor and Victim Advocate
- Domestic violence advocate representing a shelter or other domestic violence service organizations: **Carmen Lewis**, Executive Director, Rise Above Violence, Pagosa Springs
- Domestic violence offender management board: **Jesse Hansen**, Domestic Violence Offender Management Board Program Coordinator, Colorado Department of Public Safety
- Domestic violence treatment provider specializing in offender treatment: **Lindsey Spraker**, Executive Director, Lifelong, Inc.
- Judge or magistrate: **Judge Keri Yoder**, 7th Judicial District
- Law enforcement agency: **Sandra Campanella**, Retired Domestic Violence Detective
- Medical professional with forensic experience: **Megan L. Lechner**, Forensic Nurse Examiner, UCHealth Memorial Hospital (El Paso County)
- Probation, parole, or community corrections program: **Lindsey Dixon**, Pretrial Services Supervisor, Department of Public Safety, City and County of Denver

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## Resources

The Colorado Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board has compiled a list of local domestic violence resources professionals, survivors and champions of survivors may find helpful and can be utilized to strengthen Colorado's response to domestic abuse.

The Department of Law's Consumer Engagement and Data Services and Constituent Services teams field phone calls and written inquiries from the public. This team conducted statewide outreach to identify DV resources in all 64 counties in Colorado to ensure that when constituents call, they can be connected to reliable domestic violence resources.

**If you or anyone you know is a victim of domestic violence or is in need of support services, there are organizations that can help. If you are in a crisis or need immediate support, dial 911 or call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at (800) 799- SAFE (7233), and for a comprehensive list of resources available throughout Colorado please visit Violence Free Colorado at [www.violencefreecolorado.org](http://www.violencefreecolorado.org).**