

2022

Fatal Incident Review Team Report

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
COORDINATING COUNCIL

STATE OF DELAWARE

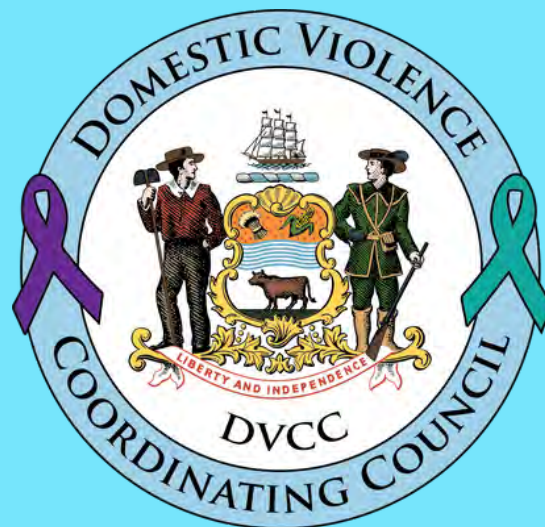
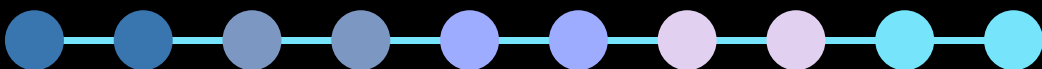


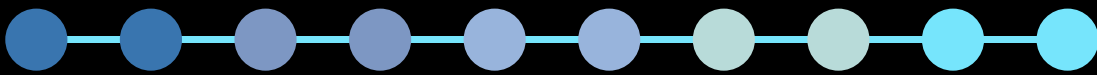
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The 2022 Fatal Incident Review Team (FIRT) Annual Report provides a summary of the Review Team's activities and accomplishments over the last year. This report contains statistical data for the domestic violence fatalities that occurred in calendar year 2021. This report is a supplement to the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council's Annual Report, which is published in the fall of each year. Building off the success of holding virtual reviews in the 2020 calendar year, the Review Team continued to hold all reviews from a virtual posture in 2021.

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Fatal Incident Review Team



The Domestic Violence Coordinating Council's Fatal Incident Review Team (FIRT) was established by statute in 1996 and became the first statewide team in the country. FIRT members are dedicated professionals who conduct examinations of State agencies and private organizations that had contact with the victim or the perpetrator to assess the system's response.

Although domestic violence fatality reviews are retrospective in nature, their purpose is prospective. Reviews focus on identifying trends, patterns and obstacles in services, assessing agency interventions, and, most importantly, developing practical recommendations aimed at improving the system and preventing future injury and death. In 2009, the General Assembly granted FIRT the authority to conduct near-death reviews. These reviews enhance the team's ability to improve Delaware's response to domestic violence with the wealth of knowledge that can be gained from speaking directly with the domestic violence survivor about the incident, the history of violence, system involvement, and awareness of resources.



Fatal Incident Review Team



FIRT CO-CHAIRS

The Honorable Vincent J. Poppiti*

The Honorable Jan R. Jurden

Professor Dana Harrington Conner

FIRT MEMBERS:

In accordance with 13 Del. C. §2105, in addition to the co-chairs, the Review Team shall consist of:

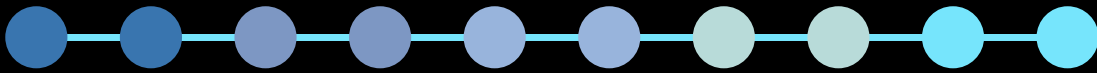
- The Attorney General or the Attorney General's designee;
- The Chief Defender or the Chief Defender's designee;
- The Director of the Division of Family Services or the Director's designee;
- The President Judge of the Superior Court, or the President Judge's designee;
- The Chief Judge of the Family Court or the Chief Judge's designee;
- The Chief Magistrate of the Justice of the Peace Courts or the Chief Magistrate's designee;
- The Director of the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health, or the Director's designee;
- The Commissioner of the Department of Correction or the Commissioner's designee;
- A law-enforcement officer to be appointed by the Delaware Police Chiefs' Council;
- A treatment provider from a certified batterers' intervention program appointed by the Council;
- Two victim advocates appointed by the Council;
- A victim of domestic violence appointed by the Council; and,
- A licensed health-care professional knowledgeable in the screening and identification of domestic violence cases appointed by the Council.

***Special Acknowledgement**

At the close of 2021, FIRT experienced a transition in Co-Chairs when we said goodbye and thank you to the Honorable Vincent J. Poppiti, a founding member of the DVCC and FIRT. He has served in the capacity of Co-Chair of the Team since the Team's inception in 1996. He resigned from the Council in the fall of 2021 so he could enjoy his well-deserved retirement.

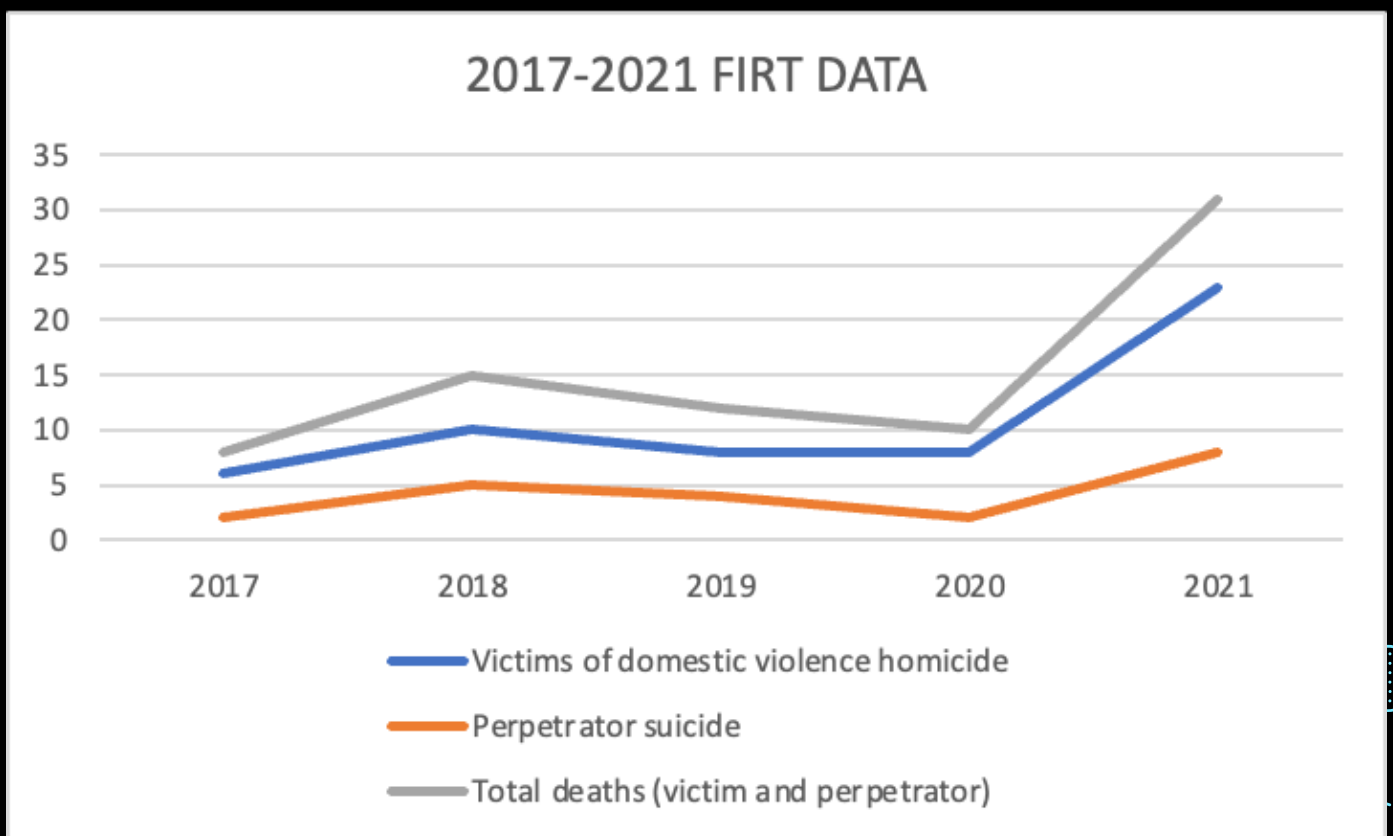
We welcome Debra Reed, as a co-chair for 2022.

Domestic Violence Related Deaths

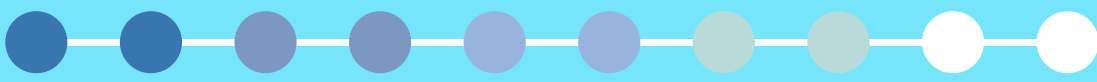


The DVCC tracks domestic violence-related deaths that occur throughout the State of Delaware. These domestic violence-related deaths include victims, perpetrators, or by-standers. These statistics include both intimate partner violence and family members.

This year Delaware saw an unprecedented number of deaths, which totaled 31 (including 23 victims and 8 perpetrator suicides).



Domestic Violence Related Deaths



These statistics only pertain to the 17 fatal incidents in 2021.

COUNTY:

NEW CASTLE: 9

KENT: 5

SUSSEX: 3

VICTIM CAUSE OF DEATH:

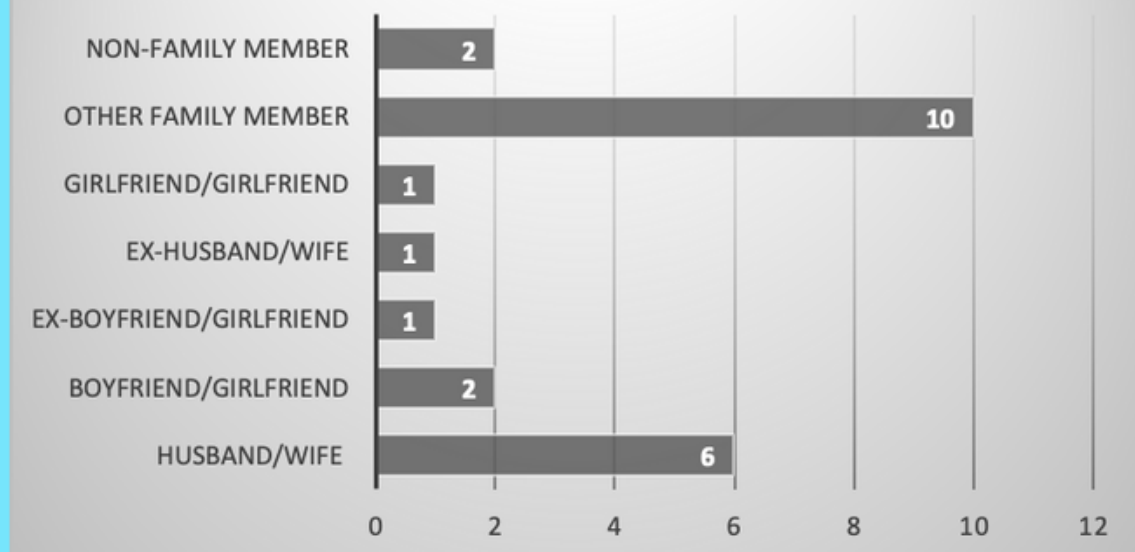
FIREARM: 10

**SHARP OBJECT
/ KNIFE: 6**

STRANGULATION: 1

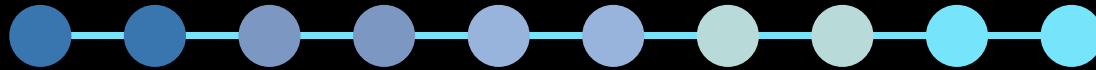
In total, 23 victims lost their lives during the aforementioned incidents.

Victim/Perpetrator Relationship

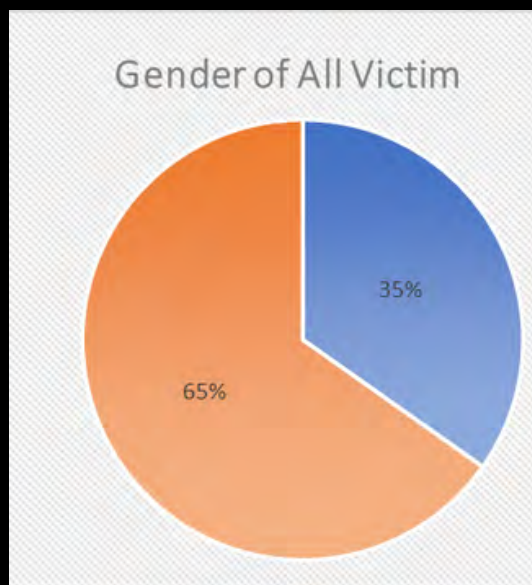
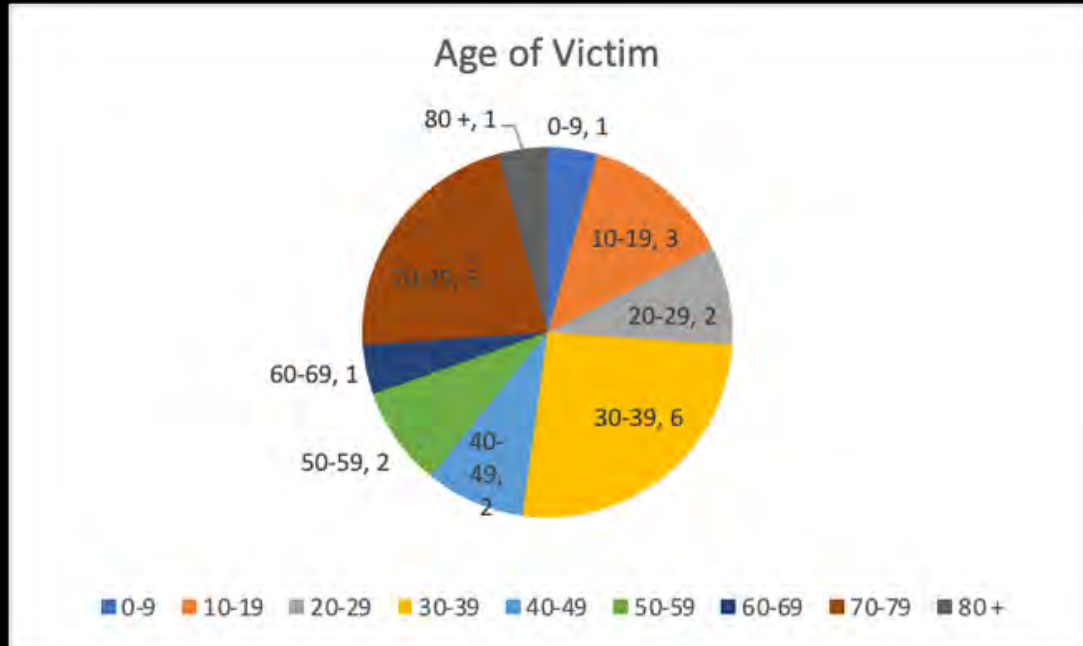


*Other Family Member includes: Uncle/Nephew, Brother-in-Laws, Son/Father, Son/Mother, Step-Siblings, Children, Siblings

Domestic Violence Related Deaths: Victim Demographics



*Average age =
45 years old*

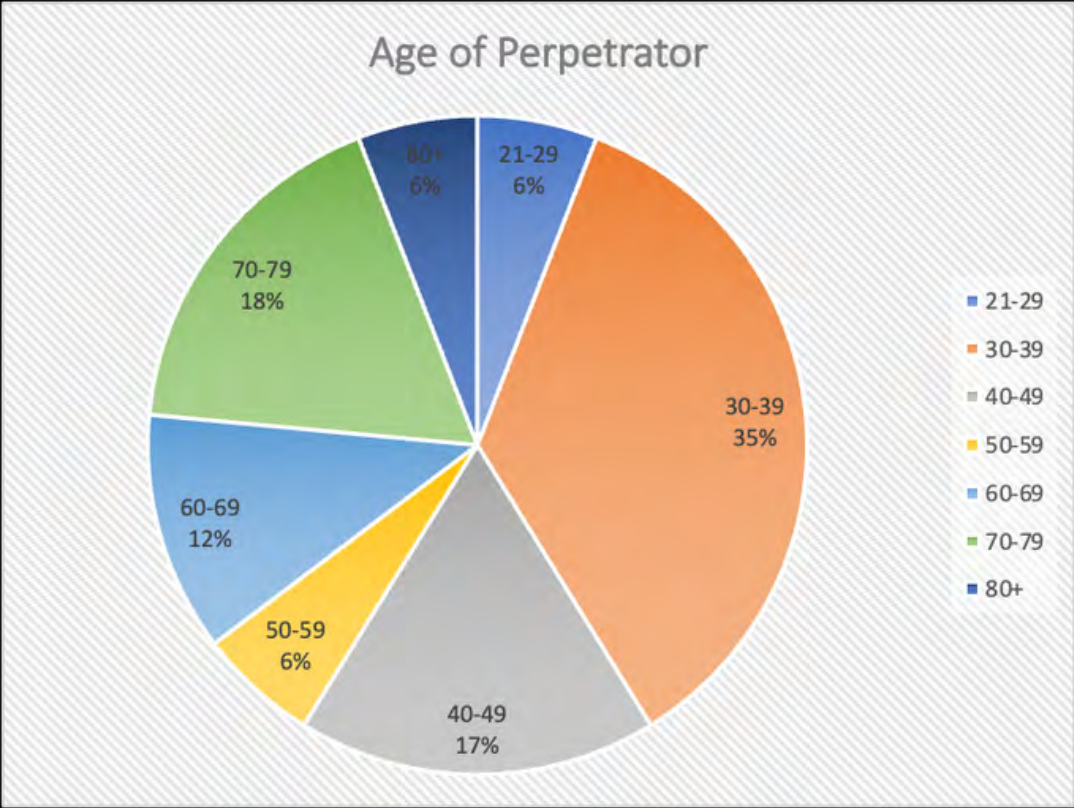
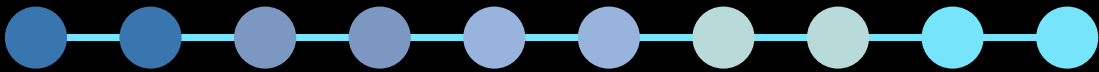


Of the 12 Cases of IPV

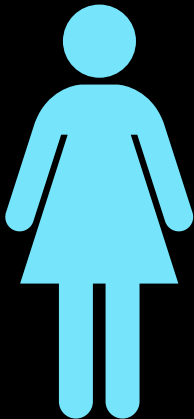
2 Male-Identified Victims

10 Female-Identified Victims

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RELATED DEATHS: PERPETRATOR DEMOGRAPHICS



Murder/Suicide Perpetrators



29% Female



71% Male

In 2021 alone:

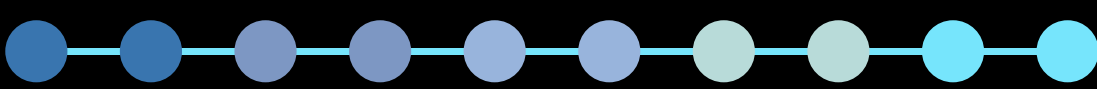
18 children and teens are survivors of having one or more parent killed in a domestic violence related homicide.



The collage is a 2018 Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month "Chalk About Love" activity with local high schools in which students were asked to provide their definition of love.

There are many definitions of love, but abuse is not one of them.

Recommendations & Responses



The ultimate purpose for reviewing domestic violence fatalities is to reduce the incidence of such deaths. At the end of each case review and following the presentation of information, Review Team members produce recommendations for improving the system response to domestic violence.

The Domestic Violence Coordinating Council is extremely grateful to the participating agencies and their commitment towards improving the system's response to domestic violence. We are fortunate to have the high level of cooperation demonstrated by the agencies' responses to the Fatal Incident Review Team's recommendations.



2021 Recommendations



2021 Recommendation

Domestic Violence Coordinating Council

1. The DVCC should partner with law enforcement agencies to explore annual/ongoing training on the Lethality Assessment Protocol to ensure victims are connected to victim services.

Response:

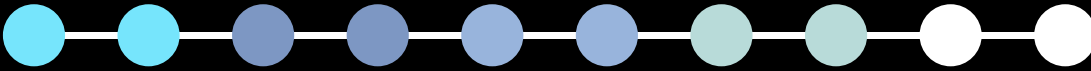
The DVCC's Training Committee and Law Enforcement Training (LET) Workgroup will explore methods and opportunities to provide and sustain annual LAP training.

2. DVCC should increase efforts to enhance the awareness of the interventions for children who experience intimate partner violence and trauma between service providers, child welfare professionals, law enforcement, and other key stakeholders.

Response:

The DVCC's Children & DV Committee will work with the Department of Services for Children Youth and Families, and partner agencies to identify service gaps for children impacted by IPV.

2021 Recommendations (cont)



3. The Department of Justice should establish an internal policy stating that cases involving IPV Domestic Violence be assigned to specialized and trained DV Prosecutors, regardless of the court jurisdiction.

Response:

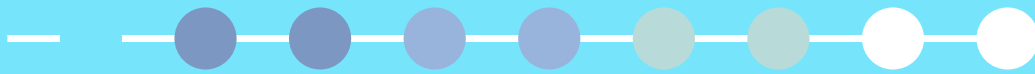
The Department of Justice is taking steps to expand the Domestic Violence Unit statewide.

4. The Court of Common Pleas should explore the establishment of a domestic violence calendar to improve the responses to domestic violence cases, which would allow for an improved coordinated court response with judges, court personnel, and prosecutors.

Response:

The Court of Common Pleas previously had a dedicated domestic violence calendar in New Castle County, but the number of domestic violence cases decreased when the statute changed to have additional domestic violence relationships heard in Family Court, and the dedicated calendar was no longer appropriate. However, CCP will continue to monitor the data and will consider reestablishing a standalone domestic violence calendar if it is merited.

2021 Recommendations (cont.)



5. Request the Court of Common Pleas explore establishing a Domestic Violence Coordinator who would have the ability to identify, screen and expedite domestic violence matters; and strengthen communication between the courts and key stakeholders.

Response:

There is currently a grant-funded Domestic Violence Coordinator contracted through Family Court that is tasked with coordinating domestic violence cases between all the courts. The Court of Common Pleas will invite the DV Coordinator to a statewide Judges' meeting to explore expanding the use of the DV Coordinator in CCP.

Past Recommendations

FIRT recommendations from each year are provided in the annual reports. See:

<http://dvcc.delaware.gov/firt-reports/>

IF YOU ARE IN DANGER, PLEASE CALL 911

Domestic Violence/Rape Crisis

New Castle County:

Domestic Violence	302 762 6110
Bi lingual	302 762 6110
Rape Crisis	1 800 773 8570
TTY	1 800 232 5460

Northern Kent County:

Domestic Violence	302 678 3886
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Kent & Sussex Counties:

Domestic Violence	302 422 8058
Rape Crisis	1 800 773 8570
Bilingual	302 745 9874

DVCC Main Office

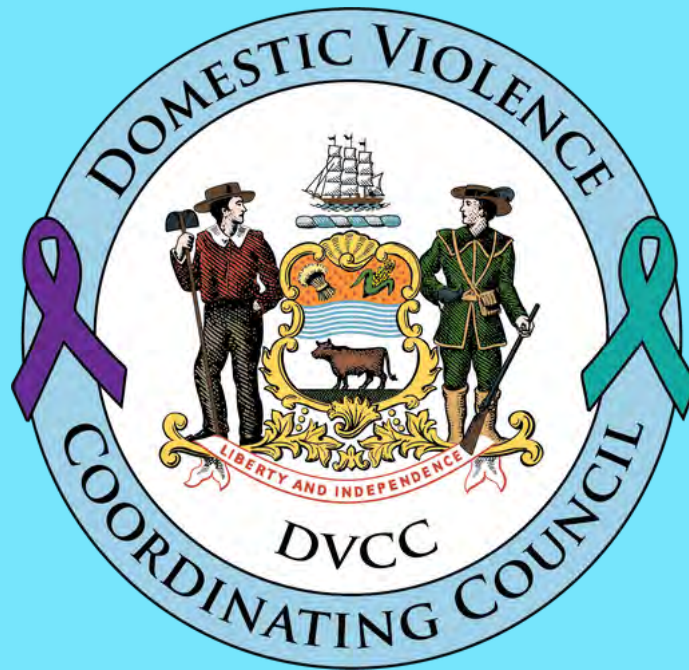
900 North King Street, Suite 300
Wilmington, DE 19801
Phone: 302 255-1700

DVCC Kent and Sussex County Office

Milford State Service Center
13 S.W. Front Street, Suite 105
Milford, DE 19963
Phone: 302 424-7238

<http://dvcc.delaware.gov>

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