

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOMICIDE IN NASHVILLE

DOMESTIC ABUSE DEATH REVIEW TEAM NASHVILLE-DAVIDSON COUNTY, TN

2016 ANNUAL REPORT

Cover Photo: photo used with permission from the Nashville Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV) Annual “Meet Us At The Bridge” event where a rose is thrown from the John Seigenthaler Pedestrian Bridge into the Cumberland River to honor each victim of domestic violence homicide.

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Metro Office of Family Safety

DOMESTIC ABUSE DEATH REVIEW TEAM NASHVILLE – DAVIDSON COUNTY, TN 2016 ANNUAL REPORT

PREPARED BY:

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Metropolitan Government of Nashville-Davidson County, Office of Family Safety

PREPARED FOR:

Metropolitan Government of Nashville-Davidson County, Mayor's Office
The Honorable Mayor Megan Barry
&
Metropolitan Government Office of Family Safety Advisory Committee

DEDICATED TO:

Victims and survivors of domestic violence in Nashville-Davidson County

Published November 2017

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Nashville Domestic Abuse Death Review Team (DADRT or Team) would like to thank Mayor Megan Barry for her support of the Team's activities to examine domestic violence fatalities. The Team would also like to express its gratitude to the Metro Government of Nashville-Davidson County Office of Family Safety (OFS) Advisory Committee for its guidance and support of the Office of Family Safety. Members of the OFS Advisory Committee include: the Nashville Chief of Police, the District Attorney General of Nashville-Davidson County, the Director of the Metropolitan Department of Law, the Davidson County Sheriff, a Domestic Violence specialized Circuit Court Judge or Special Master, a Domestic Violence specialized General Sessions Court Judge, a Domestic Violence specialized Juvenile Court Judge, a representative of the Mayor's Office, the Director of Criminal Justice Planning, the Director of Finance, the Department Head of the Office of Family Safety, and the Director of Metro's Jean Crowe Advocacy Center.

We are extremely grateful for our Team members who dedicated time out of their busy schedules to thoughtfully review the selected 2016 case and assist the Office of Family Safety in formalizing DADRT's policies and procedures. The dedication and expertise DADRT members bring to each meeting is invaluable to identifying the gaps in domestic violence homicide prevention and response in Nashville-Davidson County.

Lastly, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to all individuals that volunteered their time to provide insight as to why this homicide occurred. We are especially grateful to those family and friends who suffered a painful loss but were willing to share with us in order to lead our community to a better understanding of how to address domestic violence and how to attempt to prevent such terrible tragedies.

It is the hope of our Team that this report will lead to a better understanding of domestic violence in our community, the strengths and weaknesses in our response systems, and the steps that we must take to improve victim safety and offender accountability.

If you have any questions about the report, please contact Becky Bullard (615-862-5158 or beckybullard@jis.nashville.org), the High Risk Programs Manager at the Metropolitan Government of Nashville-Davidson County Office of Family Safety.

Sincerely,

Diane Lance

Diane Lance
Department Head
Office of Family Safety

Bonnie Beneke

Bonnie Beneke
DADRT Chair
Tennessee Department
of Children's Services

Michelle Richter

Captain Michelle Richter
DADRT Sub-Chair
Metro Nashville Police Dept.
Domestic Violence Division

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Domestic Abuse Death Review Team or DADRT is an interagency team that has met informally since 1995 and was officially created by Executive Order in 2002. The purpose of the Team is to review annually one to two domestic violence homicides that occurred in Nashville and develop recommendations to improve domestic violence prevention and response from the findings of that review.

In 2016, the case selected for review was a strangulation of a woman by her boyfriend. The Team compiled information about this case from criminal justice records, participating agencies, and an interview with a family member of the victim. From this information, the Team detailed several findings and recommendations on how to improve prevention and response to domestic violence in Nashville.

The interview with the victim's family member painted a family history of emotional and physical abuse as well as substance abuse. There were several instances where interventions at a young age could have assisted the victim, particularly after potentially witnessing her father's suicide. Therefore, many of the Team's recommendations center on early childhood prevention.




Additionally, the victim had multiple interactions with the criminal justice system and domestic violence non-profits in adulthood as a result of abuse from her estranged husband. However, the victim had minimal participation in criminal justice proceedings and did not follow through with services. High risk screening tools could have assisted police, prosecutors, and advocates to identify the victim as at risk for homicide.

The Team also found that the perpetrator was involved in the criminal justice system from a young age and abused several women with minimal consequences and escalating violence. Enhanced accountability for domestic violence crimes could have communicated the seriousness of prosecution to the perpetrator.




Finally, both the victim and the perpetrator had experienced or perpetrated significant violence with previous partners. Team members believe that the normalization of violence in these prior relationships contributed to the rapid escalation to deadly violence in this case. The Team will continue to explore this troubling dynamic we have designated a "relational risk transfer."

Additional lethality indicators found by the Team include:¹

For the Victim from Previous Intimate Partners:

-  Assaulted while Pregnant
-  Strangled
-  Escalating Victimization

For the Perpetrator from Previous Intimate Partners:

-  Multiple Strangulations
-  Use of and Access to a Firearm
-  Escalating use of Violence

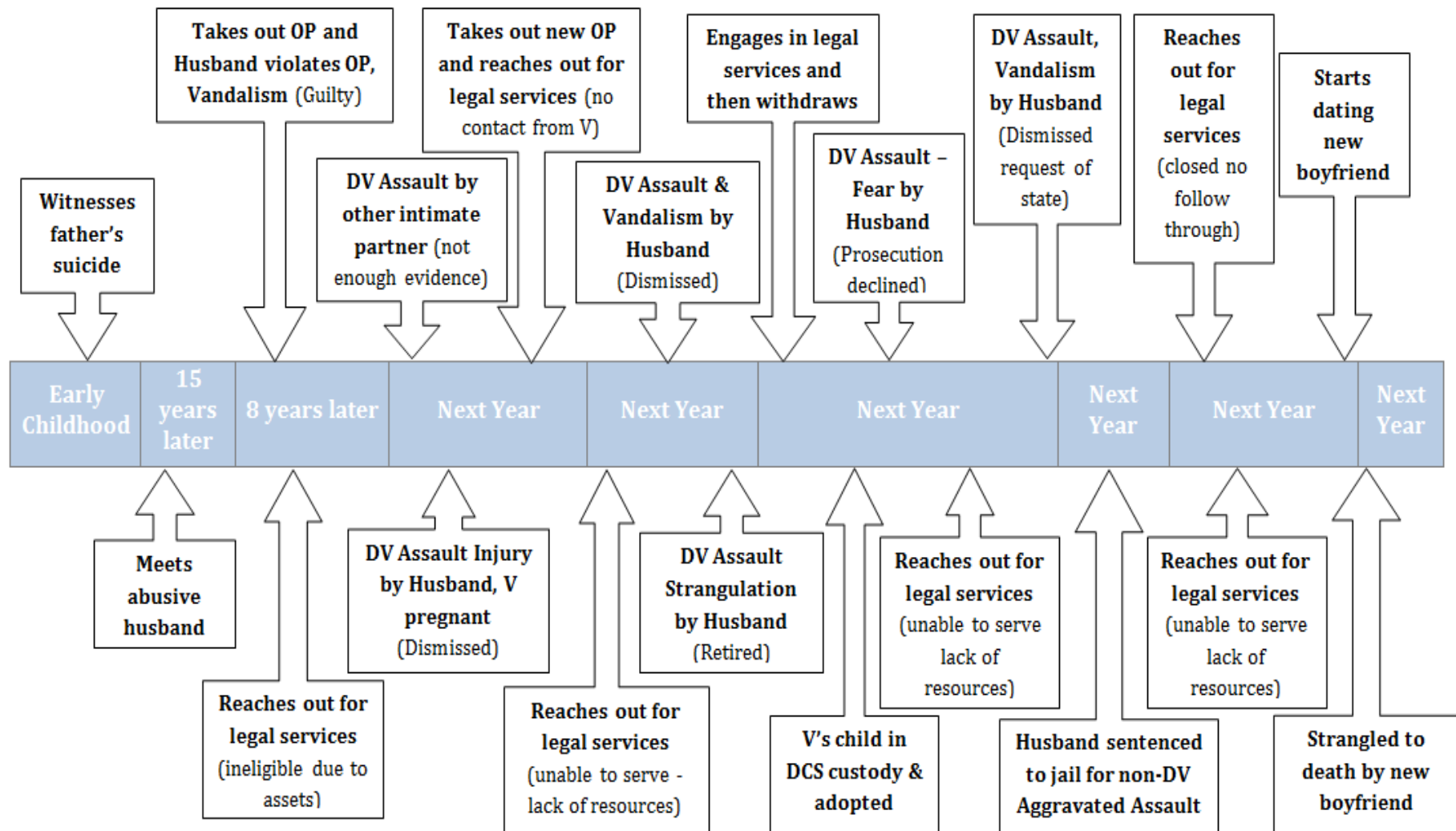
****The lethality indicators between the victim and the suspect are unknown due to the lack of information surrounding their brief relationship.**

¹ These indicators are taken from a research study by Jacquelyn Campbell in 2003 that identified several factors common in fatal and near fatal intimate partner violence. Campbell, Jacquelyn et al. "Risk Factors for Femicide in Abusive Relationships: Results From a Multisite Case Control Study." *American Journal of Public Health* 93.7 (2003). July 2003. Web. 16 Mar. 2017."

The key findings and subsequent recommendations from the review include:

- *The victim experienced traumatic events as a child.*
 - Recommendation: Identify children who have experienced trauma and address it through programs such as Handle With Care (HWC), increased school therapy access, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) identification, & increased community counseling resources.
 - Recommendation: Increase early positive role modeling and healthy relationships education through programs in elementary, middle, and high schools, such as YWCA Men Ending Violence Against Women (MEND) & Girls Inc.; You Have The Power (YHTP) Healthy Relationships & Bullying; Sexual Assault Center (SAC) Safe@Last & Be.; and Advocates for Women and Kids Equality (AWAKE) Healthy Relationships & Truancy Intervention.
- *Substances were abused by the victim's mother & by both the victim & perpetrator.*
 - Recommendation: Increase awareness of the impact of substance abuse on domestic violence cases through improved training, community awareness of drug endangered children, and increased availability of specialized treatment programs for victims.
- *The victim did not follow through with services and participated minimally in prosecution.*
 - Recommendations: Create additional avenues for outreach and support for victims that are reluctant to follow through with services and prosecution by increasing interagency coordination through programs established since the homicide, including: the Lethality Assessment Program (LAP), the High Risk Intervention Panel (HRIP), the District Attorney's Office Early Intervention Meetings (EIM), the Civil Legal Advocacy (CLA) Program, the Jean Crowe Advocacy Center (JCAC), and the forthcoming Family Justice Center.
- *The perpetrator was arrested multiple times for domestic violence crimes against multiple victims and served minimal time in jail.*
 - Recommendations: Enhance criminal justice system response to intimate partner violence cases through intimate partner violence-specific dockets, decreased turn-around time from incident to court resolution, enhanced sentencing for subsequent domestic violence convictions, a clearer and more effective firearms dispossession process for domestic violence offenders, and continued High Risk Intervention Panel (HRIP) case review to hold high risk offenders accountable.
- *The victim and perpetrator had multiple high risk indicators and their previous abusive relationships may have normalized high levels of violence and rapidly escalated the violence in their brief relationship.*
 - Recommendations: Continue to utilize and enhance Metro Nashville's Lethality Assessment Program (LAP) screen and High Risk Intervention Panel (HRIP), both established since the time of this homicide, to identify and respond to high risk cases; increase high risk offender identification through probation officer screening and high risk victim identification through victim service provider screening; and research "relational risk transfer" and its impact on lethality.

Victim Timeline of Events (specific years not listed due to confidentiality)

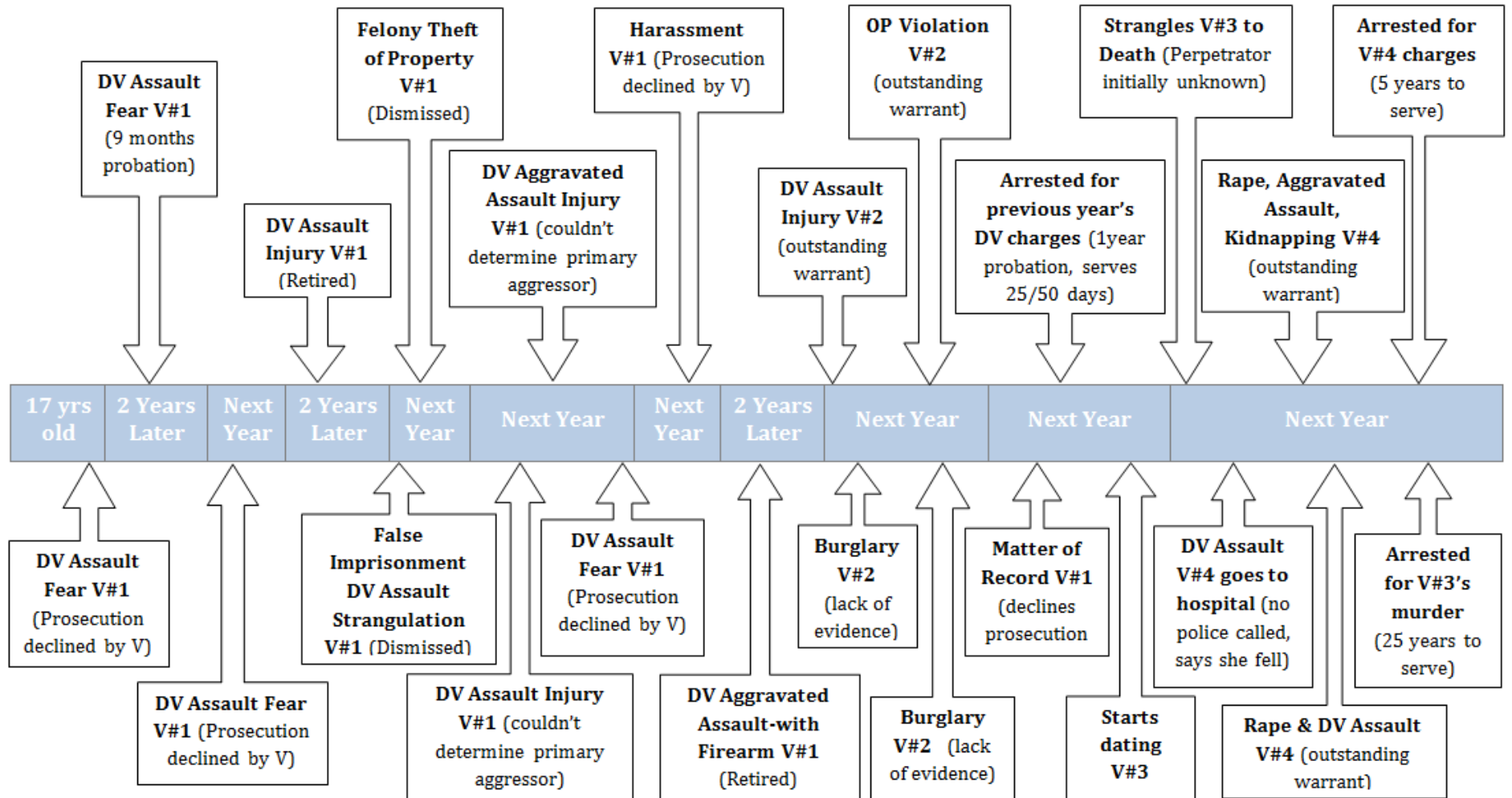


*OP = Order of Protection

*DV = Domestic Violence

*V = Victim

Perpetrator Timeline of Events (only including known intimate partner violence incidents, specific years not listed due to confidentiality)



*OP = Order of Protection

*DV = Domestic Violence

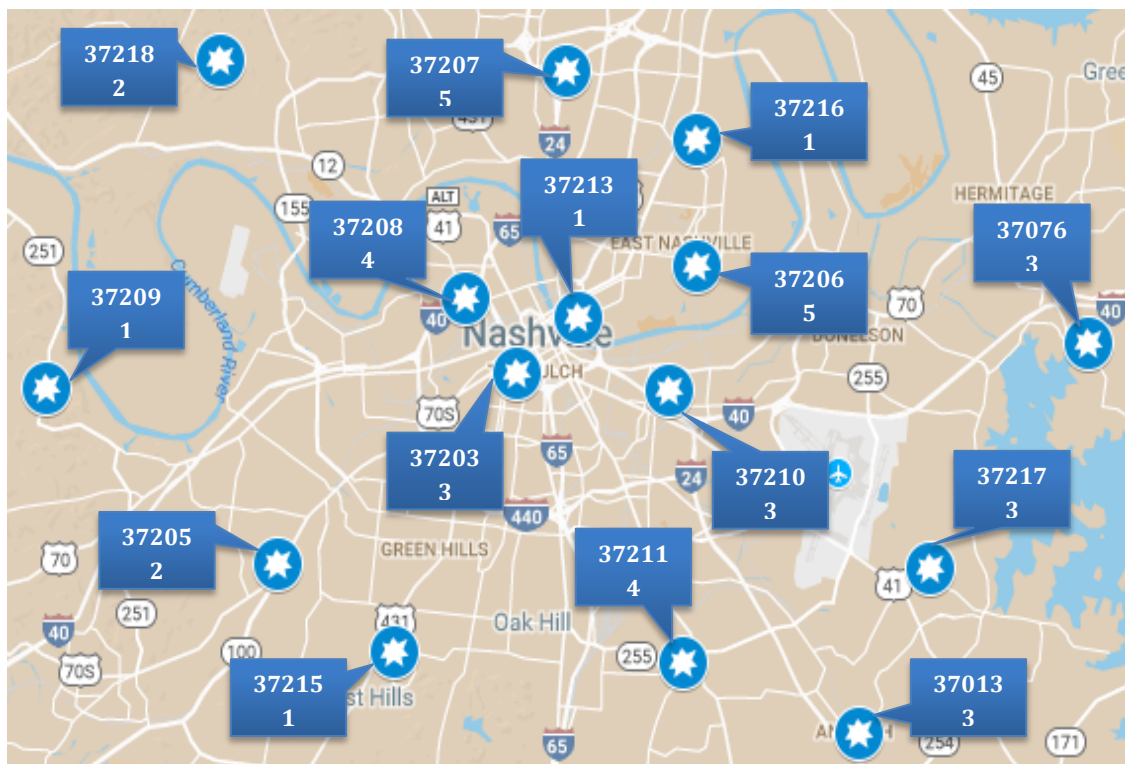
*V = Victim

2012-2016 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FATALITY STATISTICS FOR NASHVILLE-DAVIDSON COUNTY

Domestic violence homicides in Nashville, TN have varied in frequency over the past five years, between 2012 and 2016. According to Tennessee’s domestic violence statute, domestic violence homicide includes fatalities perpetrated by intimate partners as well as by non-intimate partners. An intimate partner includes current or former spouses, current or former dating partners, and individuals who have children in common. Non-intimate partner domestic violence perpetrators include family members as well as individuals that live together without intimate or familial relationships, such as roommates.

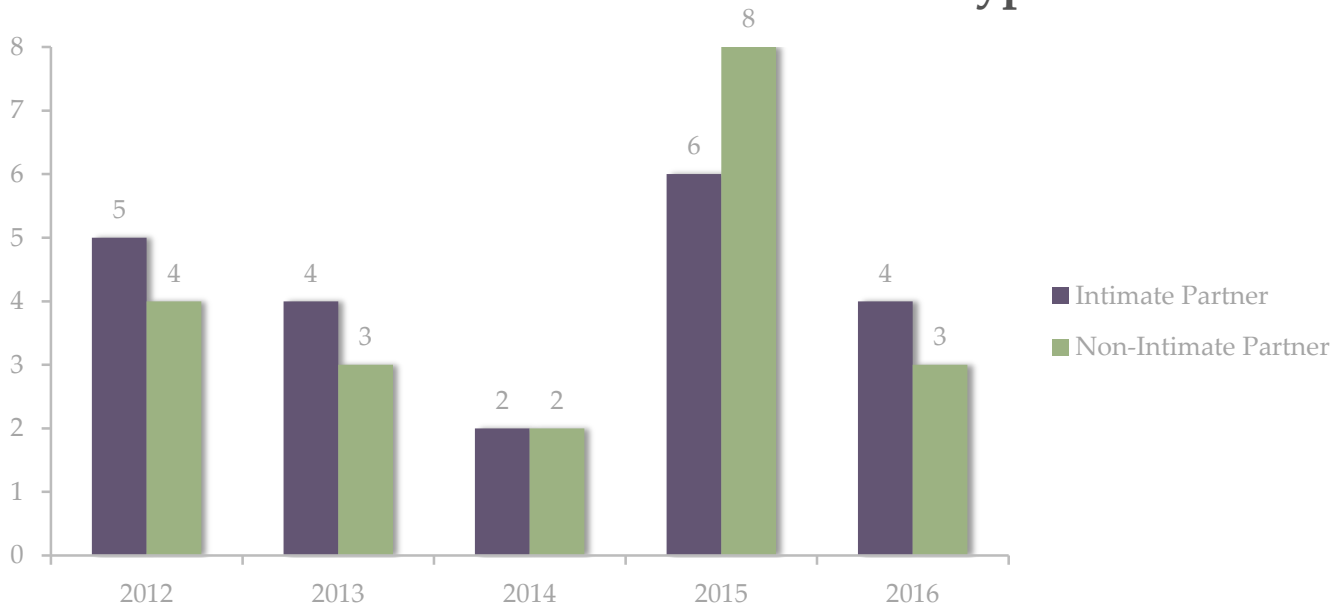
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Nashville Domestic Violence Homicides	9	7	4	14	7
Nashville DV Homicides as Percentage of Total Homicides	14.5%	18%	9.7%	19.4%	8.3%
Statewide DV Homicides as Percentage of Total Homicides	20.5%	25.8%	22.1%	23.3%	19.3%

Domestic Violence Homicides by Zip Code 2012-2016



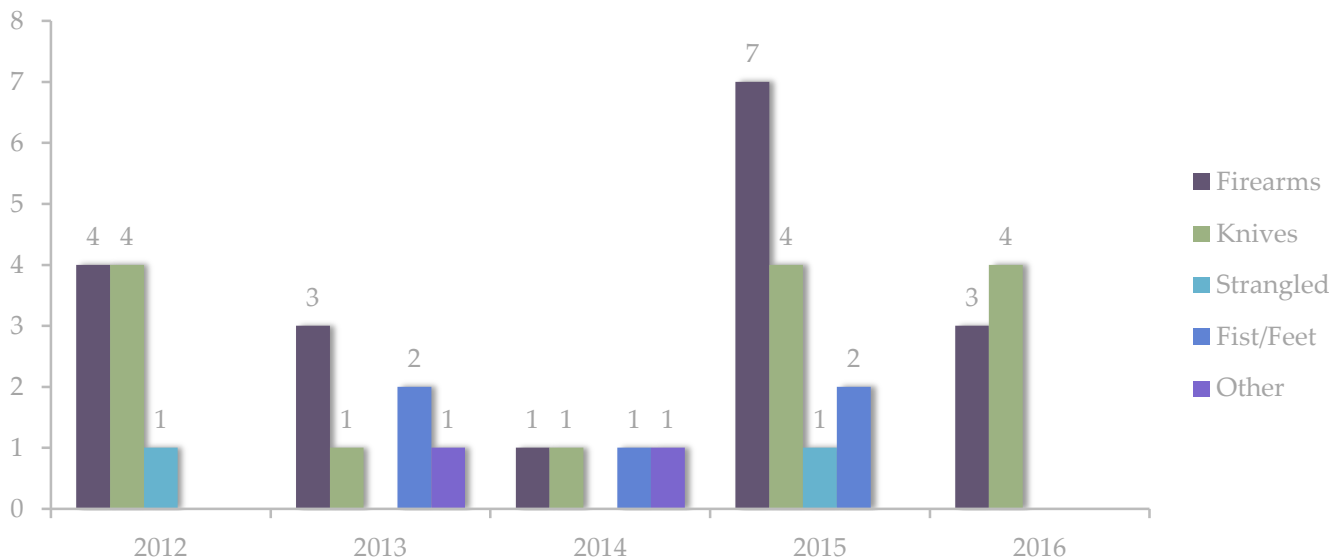
The map above shows the number of domestic violence homicides that took place within a given zip code in Nashville-Davidson County between 2012 and 2016.

Domestic Violence Homicide Type



There were a total of 41 domestic violence homicides between 2012 and 2016. The average domestic violence homicide rate per year over the past five years is 8 deaths per year with 4 being the lowest number of deaths in a year and 14 being the highest. Intimate partner homicides and non-intimate partner homicides were almost equal, with 51% of domestic violence deaths perpetrated by an intimate partner and 49% by a non-intimate partner.

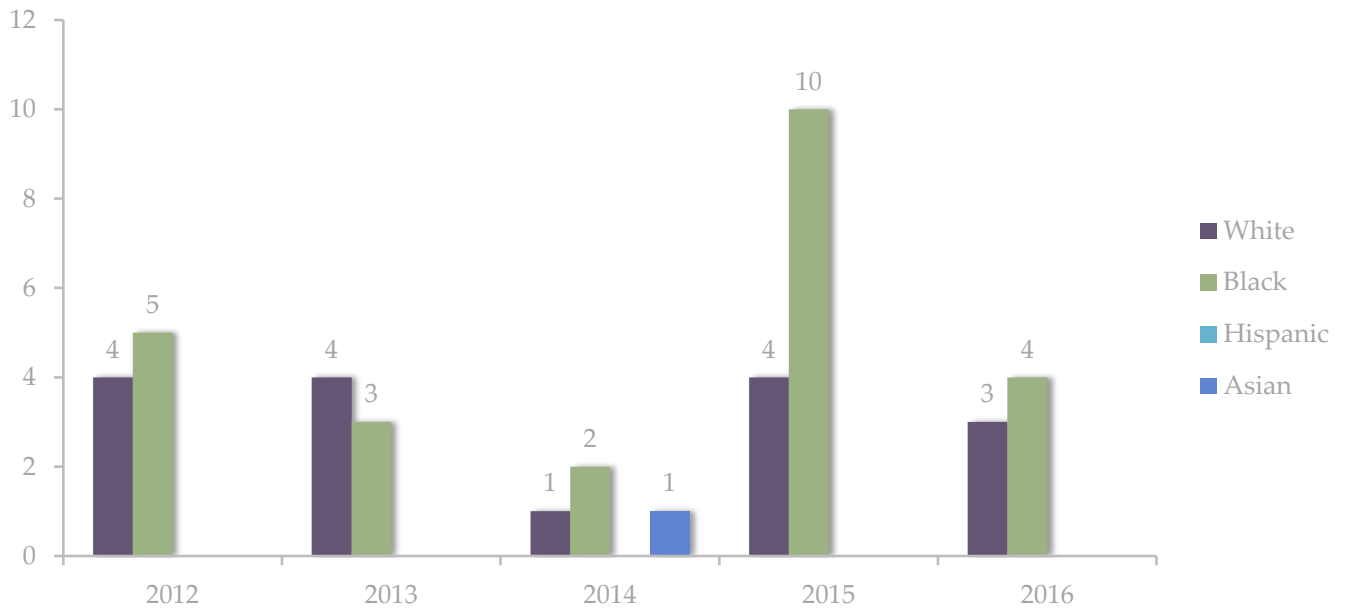
Weapons Used



Weapons used in the commission of the homicide vary from firearms to an individual's hands. From 2012 to 2016, the primary weapons used were firearms or knives, with 44% of homicides committed with a firearm and 34% with a knife. Additionally, 12% of deaths were perpetrated with hands/feet and 5% were strangulations.

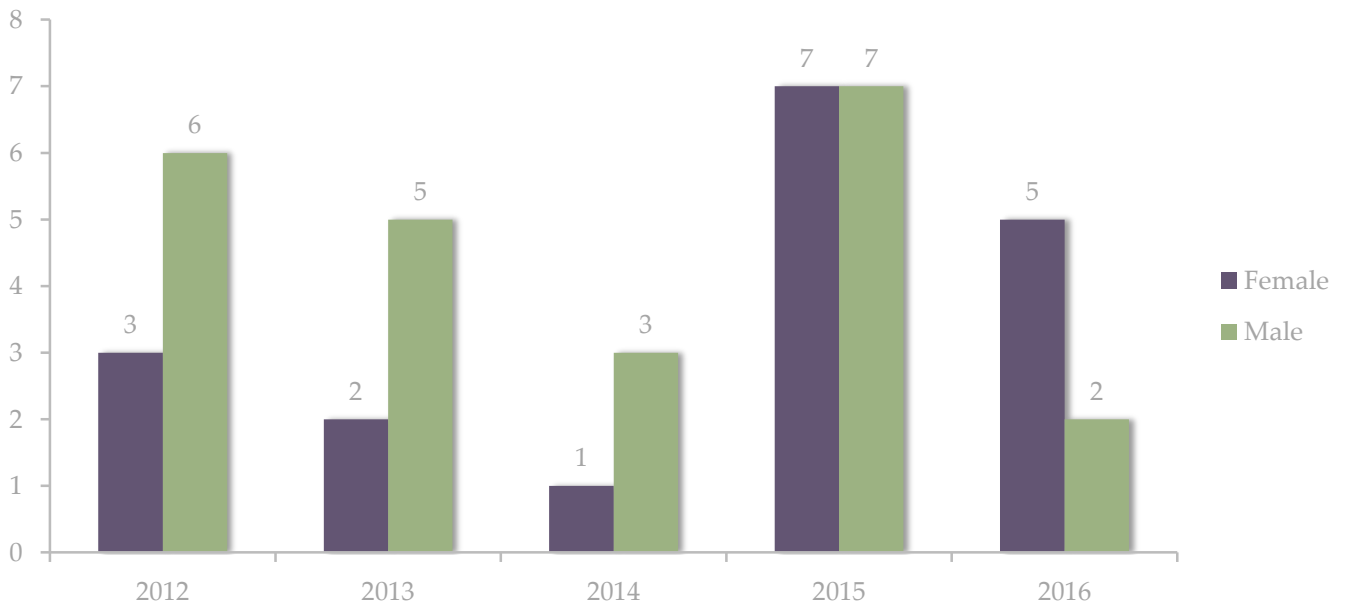


Victim Race



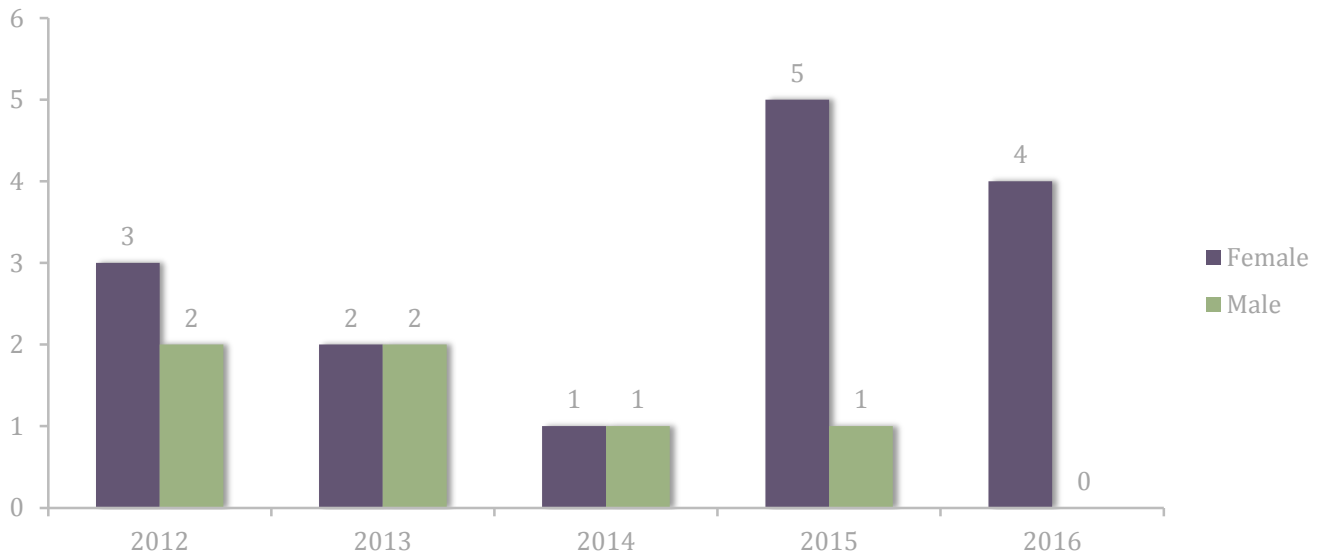
Over the 5-year period, African Americans made up 59 % of domestic violence homicide victims, Caucasians accounted for 39% of victims, Asians made up 2% of victims, and Hispanics accounted for less than 1%.

Sex of Victim



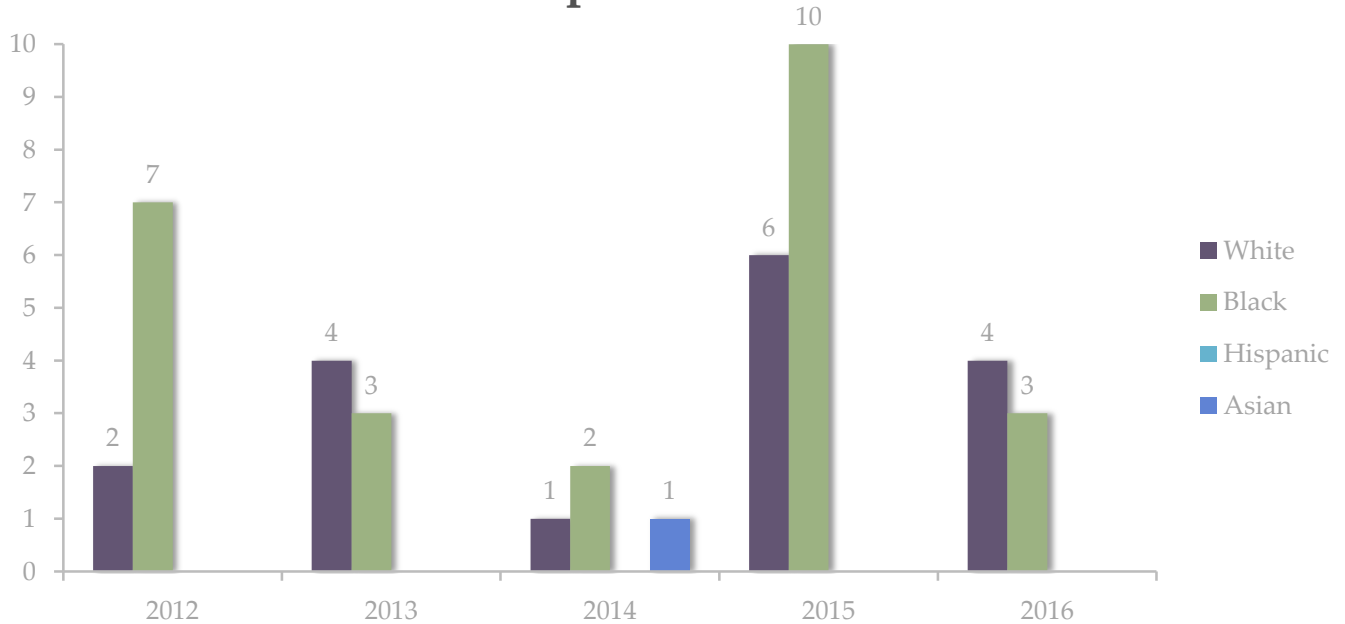
Men were slightly more commonly victims of all domestic violence homicides, during the 5-year period in Nashville. 56% of domestic violence homicide victims were male and 44% of domestic violence homicide victims were female. These figures include intimate partner and non-intimate partner homicides.

Sex of Intimate Partner Homicide Victim



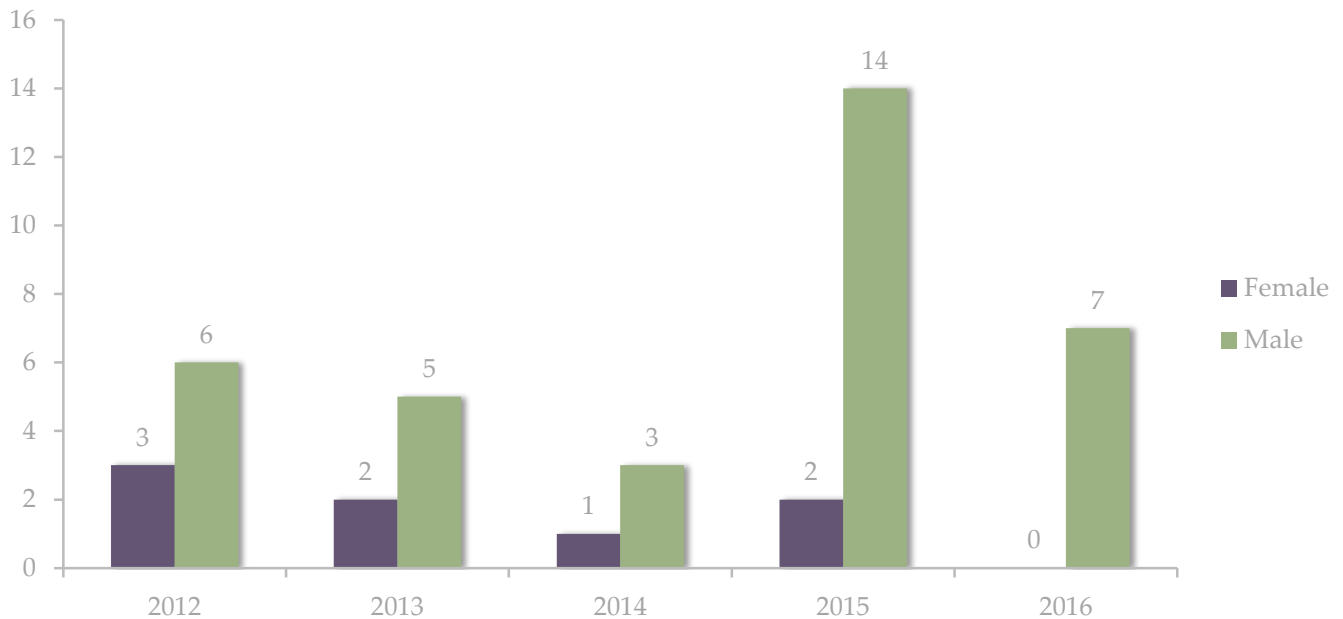
Conversely, women were more commonly victims of homicide when looking exclusively at intimate partner homicides and removing non-intimate partner cases (family, roommates). 71% of victims were female and 29% were male. Additionally, of the 6 male victims, 1 male victim was the victim of homicide by a male intimate partner and 2 male victims of homicide by female intimate partners were ruled justifiable.

Perpetrator Race



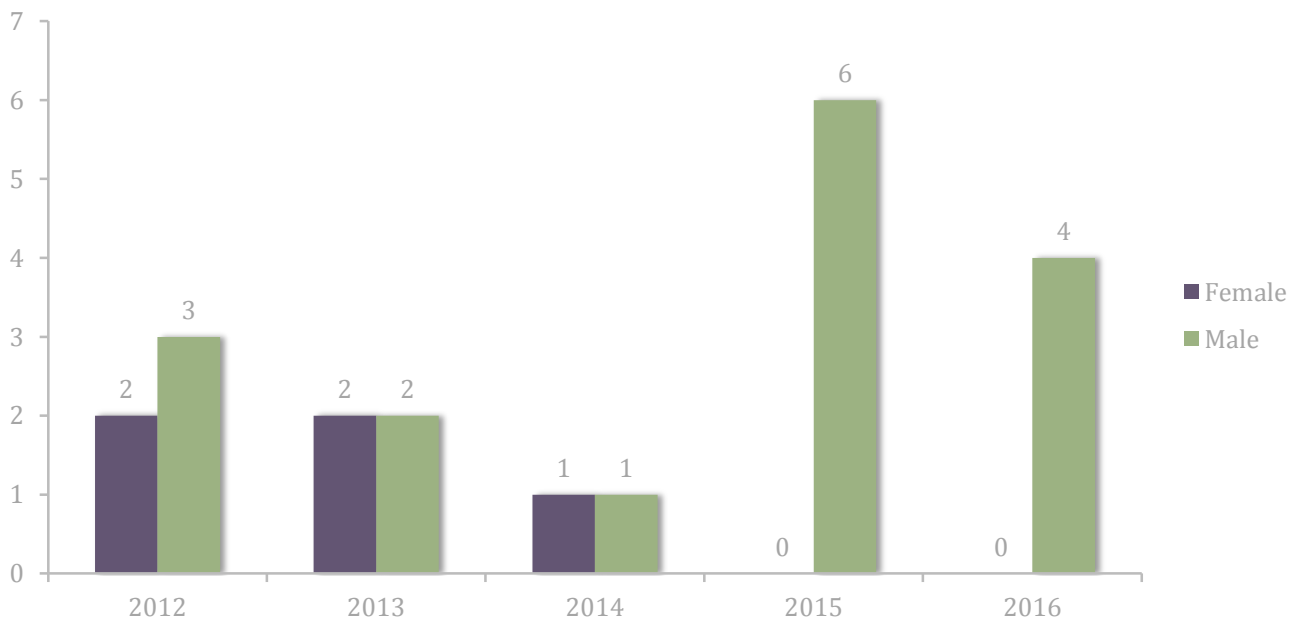
From 2012-2016, 58% of domestic violence homicide perpetrators were African American, 40% were Caucasian, 2% of perpetrators were Asian, and less than 1% were Hispanic.

Sex of Perpetrator



During the 5-year period analyzed, males accounted for 81% of DV homicide perpetrators, while females accounted for 19%.

Sex of Intimate Partner Homicide Perpetrator



Finally, when looking specifically at intimate partner homicides and removing non-intimate partner cases (family, roommates), perpetrators were also overwhelmingly male. During the 5-year period, 76% of perpetrators of intimate partner homicide were male and 24% were female. Of the 5 cases where the perpetrator was female, 2 of the cases were ruled justifiable.

CONCLUSION

The DADRT annual report serves as a continual safety assessment for Nashville-Davidson County. The recommendations the Team developed from the case review will guide the work of the Metro Office of Family Safety (OFS) and its partners in our prevention and response to domestic violence. The Team proposes that each of the report's recommendations be implemented with the support and guidance of the Office of Family Safety (OFS).

The Team is confident in Nashville-Davidson County's ability to successfully implement all recommendations contained in this report. The city is well-positioned to address these recommendations due to our exceptional partnerships and multi-disciplinary approach to domestic violence, including the following collaborative partnerships coordinated by Office of Family Safety (OFS): the Lethality Assessment Program (LAP), the High Risk Intervention Panel (HRIP), the Civil Legal Advocacy Program (CLA), the Jean Crowe Advocacy Center (JCAC), the new Family Justice Center (FJC) in development, and the Domestic Abuse Death Review Team (DADRT) itself. In particular, the Team's work is supported by the work of the Lethality Assessment Program (LAP) and the High Risk Intervention Panel (HRIP) as both programs essential in reducing the rate of domestic violence homicide in Nashville by their focus on the highest risk cases.

Each of these collaborative initiatives will be housed at the new Family Justice Center on Murfreesboro Road when construction is complete at the end of 2018. This will allow co-located partners to enhance our teamwork even further with daily meetings and immediate crisis response and coordination. This co-location will amplify Nashville's ability to address each of the recommendations included in this report.

Finally, the Office of Family Safety (OFS) is honored to have been selected by the Tennessee Office of Criminal Justice Programs (OCJP) to be designated the domestic violence fatality review technical assistance provider for the state of Tennessee. The Office of Family Safety (OFS) will hire a statewide fatality review coordinator to implement our DADRT model across the state that will report to a single statewide fatality review body. This statewide body will compile data from across the state and it is our expectation that this information will shine the light on necessary legislation to reduce the State's domestic violence homicide rate.

We are excited that our Team has been recognized as a leader in our domestic violence fatality review work in the state and we are committed to continuing to enhance our work around the highest risk cases in order to prevent domestic violence homicides. The Domestic Abuse Death Review Team (DADRT) is committed to honoring the lives of domestic violence homicide victims by working tirelessly to evaluate these cases and implement life-saving changes in Nashville's service to domestic violence victims.

PARTICIPATING DOMESTIC ABUSE DEATH REVIEW (DADRT) MEMBERS & ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY MEMBERS FOR THE 2016 CASE REVIEW

James (Jim) McDowell	Davidson County Sheriff's Office
Susan Tucker-Smith	District Attorney's Office Victim Witness
Ana Escobar	District Attorney's Office
Kimi DeMent	Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee and the Cumberland
Allison Cooley	Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee and the Cumberland
Nichelle Foster	Metro Public Health Department
Captain Michelle Richter	Metro Police Domestic Violence Division
Lieutenant Tommy Widener	Metro Police Domestic Violence Division
Sergeant Ralph Griggers	Metro Police Domestic Violence Division
Diane Lance	Office of Family Safety
Becky Bullard	Office of Family Safety
Whitney Blanton	Office of Family Safety – Jean Crowe Advocacy Center
Peter Macdonald	Private Citizen
Susan Kay	Private Citizen
Bonnie Beneke	Tennessee Department of Children Services
Dr. Melanie Lutenbacher	Vanderbilt School of Nursing
Cathy Gurley	You Have the Power
Tracy DeTomasi	YWCA Nashville & Middle Tennessee
Amy Dunning	YWCA Nashville & Middle Tennessee (currently with Office of Family Safety)
Allison Cantway	YWCA Nashville & Middle Tennessee



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