



Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team (DVFRT) Recommendations

Presented by

Rebecca Smith, DVFRT Chair, BC Health & Human Services Director of Social Work

Maggie Slocomb, Helpmate

Whitley English, Survivor Voices Committee

Board of County Commissioners Regular Meeting

June 18, 2024



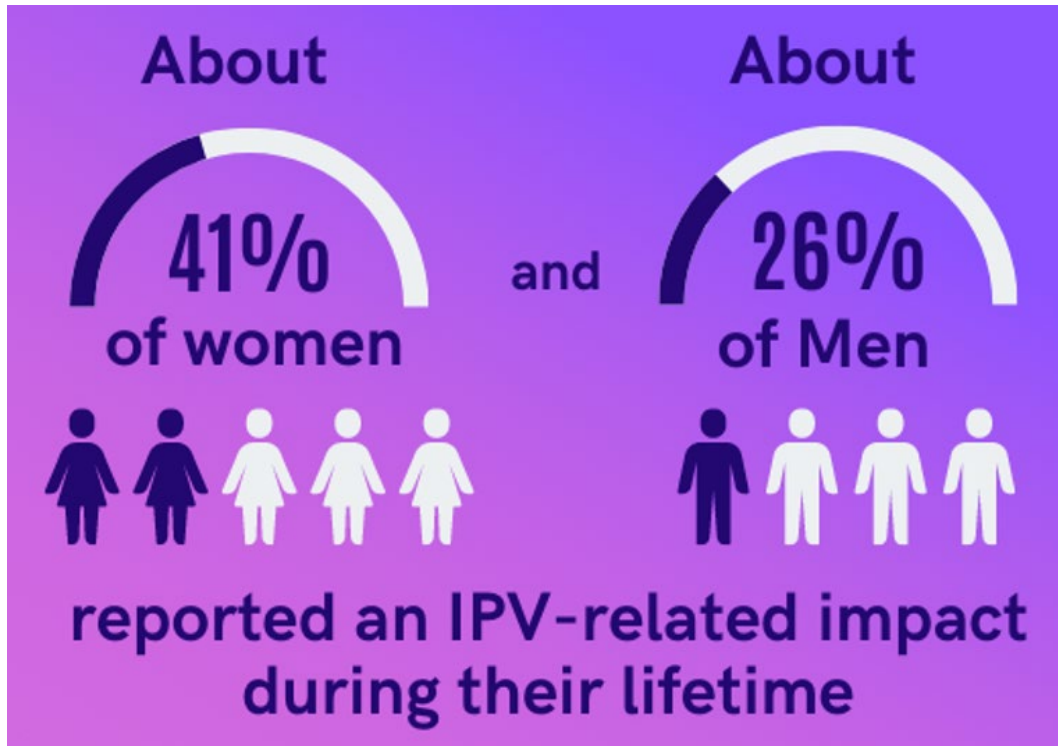
Objectives

- **Background**
- **2023 DVFRT Findings**
- **3-Year DVFRT Findings & Recommendations**
- **Coordinated Community Response for Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Accomplishments.**



Background

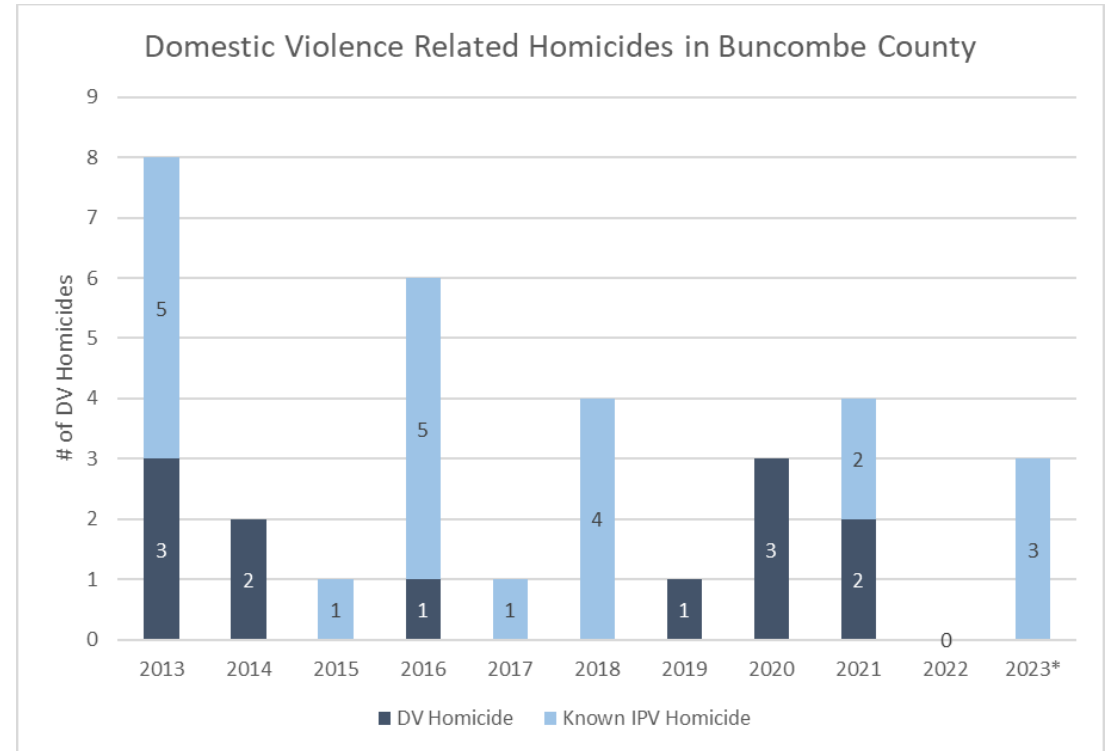
National Prevalence of IPV



IPV: Intimate Partner Violence

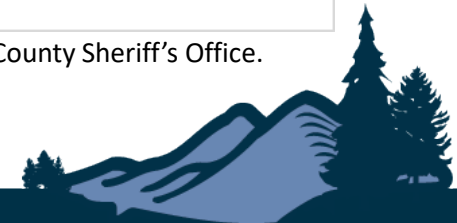
DV: Domestic Violence

Local DV Related Homicides in Buncombe



*2023 data per Asheville Police Department and Buncombe County Sheriff's Office.

Note: Some incidents involve one homicide while others involve multiple homicides



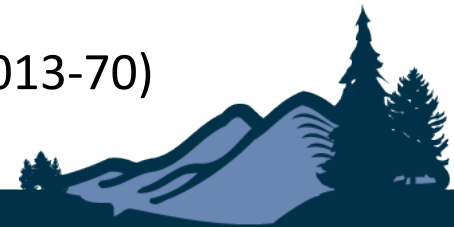
Buncombe County DVFRT

The mission of the Buncombe County Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team (DVFRT) is to prevent domestic violence (DV) deaths, increase safety for DV victims, and increase accountability for abusers through systems change.

Some DVFRT activities include:

- Studying incidents and causes of death due to DV through a multidisciplinary intensive 2-day review
- Presenting annually to the Coordinated Community Response to Domestic and Sexual Violence Leadership Team and Buncombe County Commissioners
- Identifying gaps and making system recommendations
- Issuing a report to the Buncombe County Commissioners, Governor's Crime Commission and NC Domestic Violence Commission every three years
- Abide by the laws, rules, and policies relating to confidentiality.

(DVFRTs are defined by the NC General Assembly in Session Laws 2009-52 and 2013-70)



2023 Review Findings

Extensive interactions with civil and criminal legal systems across multiple jurisdictions over eight years

Civil complaints, temporary ex parte orders, and criminal charges, but no permanent orders or convictions

Used workplace power, legal knowledge, financial power, and community status to intimidate partners

Colleagues observed increasing paranoia, depression, and homicidal thoughts before the murder-suicide



2023 Review Findings, Cont.

High lethality indicators: access to a gun, controlling behavior, violent jealousy, suicidality, spying, escalation to physical violence, and choking

No mental health services received despite court and Child Protective Services interactions; history of substance misuse, but only alcohol tested in autopsy

Nearly uninterrupted access to firearms despite multiple intimate partner complaints.

Source of the handgun used in the murder unknown; multiple bullet holes present in the home before the murder.



3 Year Themes: Findings

- **Systems issues**, such as:
 - Lack of information-sharing and permanent protective orders
 - Inadequate record sharing between jurisdictions
 - Child Protective Services focused on victims/survivors, with perpetrators not being held accountable for their behavior.
- Cases in which a **firearm** was used, the perpetrator had legal access



3 Year Themes: Findings, cont.

- Community members did not **report concerns** or support victim
- Perpetrators use **finance** to exercise power and control over victims
- **Inequities** around poverty, race, education, and socio-economic status have a significant impact on resources and opportunities



3 Year Themes: Recommendations

- Acknowledge the connection between firearms to DV homicides, child fatality, mass shootings and suicide and revisit the adoption of House Bill 525, as well as any other legislation that limits access to firearms of violent DV offenders.
- Create a DV Multidisciplinary Team (MDT)
- Build capacity and support for domestic violence service providers



3 Year Themes: Recommendations, cont.

- Continue full implementation of a perpetrator-pattern based behavior model for Child Protective Services, such as the Safe & Together Model.
- Support community education and prevention efforts, including:
 - trauma-informed, early childhood/school age programs,
 - increasing capacity and support for prevention programs, and
 - creating community campaigns to help people recognize danger signs of intimate partner violence.



Coordinated Community Response (CCR)



Community Engagement

- eNOugh
- Still Standing
- U&T Visas
- PorchLight Project
- Pathways to Prevention
- Community Health Workers Violence Prevention Professionals



No temas pedir ayuda...

Nuestros Oficiales pueden asistirte en el edificio del Centro de Justicia Familiar.

Aquí las víctimas de violencia domestica, agresión sexual y abuso pueden buscar ayuda.

Los sobrevivientes pueden obtener acceso a muchos servicios diferentes en un solo lugar y comenzar su viaje hacia la esperanza, la sanación y la seguridad.

El Centro de Justicia Familiar (FJC) está ubicado en 35 Woodfin St.

Llame al 828 250-6900 o al 828 250-6670 para hacer su denuncia.



If you or someone you know is a victim of domestic or sexual violence, please call the Family Justice Center at 828-250-6900 or visit the Family Justice Center at 35 Woodfin St. buncombecounty.org/enough

MANY PARTNERS, ONE LOCATION.....The Family Justice Center.



High Risk Interventions

- Lethality Assessment Protocol
 - **741** danger assessments made through LAP calls in FY23
- Danger Assessment
 - Helpmate administered **1,175** Danger Assessments, **683 (58%)** indicated the highest level of extreme danger for a survivor
- Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team



High Risk
Interventions
Identifying High Risk
DV Situations



Offender Accountability

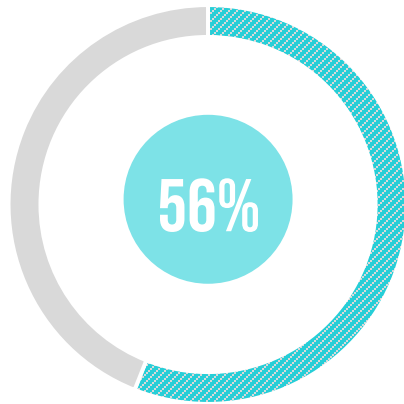
**Offender
Accountability**
Moving Toward
Behavior Change

- Domestic Violence Intervention Program
- Specialized Prosecution and Law Enforcement Units
 - Trauma-Informed Legal Assistant in DA's Office
- Perpetrator Pattern Based Behavior Framework for Child Protective Services Intervention
 - Safe & Together Model
 - Choose to Change Campaign



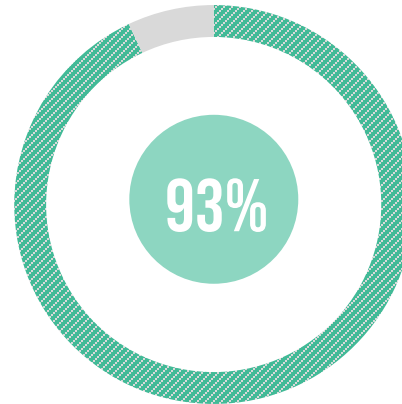
567 New Initial Intakes FY23

A Race/Ethnicity Category to Initial Intake Survey
Demographics to Ensure Equitable Access



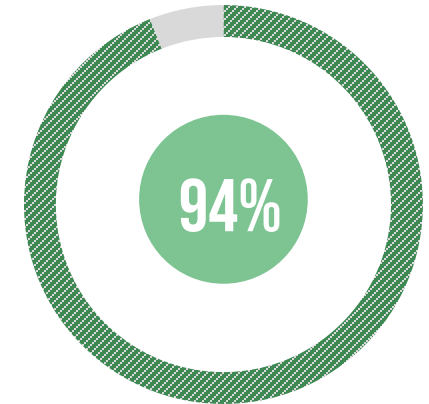
+2 Agencies

Clients that saw more than 2 or more agencies on their first visit



Created Safety Plan

93% of clients that participated in post-intake survey indicated that they created a plan to help keep them safe



Felt Safer

94% of clients that participated in post-intake survey experienced a reduction in fear & anxiety



FJC Partner Data FY23

Partner Staff & Buncombe County Contracted Services

- **Helpmate**
 - Total Individuals Served: 3,557
 - Polyvictimization: 1,016 (29%)
 - Members of Special Populations: 1,130 (32%)
- **Our VOICE**
 - Total Individuals Served: 591
 - Polyvictimization: 160 (27%)
 - Members of Special Populations: 273 (46%)

Buncombe County Contracted Services

- **Pisgah Legal Services**
 - Total Individuals Served: 117
 - Polyvictimization: 63 (54%)
 - Members of Special Populations: 73 (62%)
- **YWCA**
 - Total Individuals Served: 123
 - Polyvictimization: Not collected
 - Members of Special Populations: Not collected



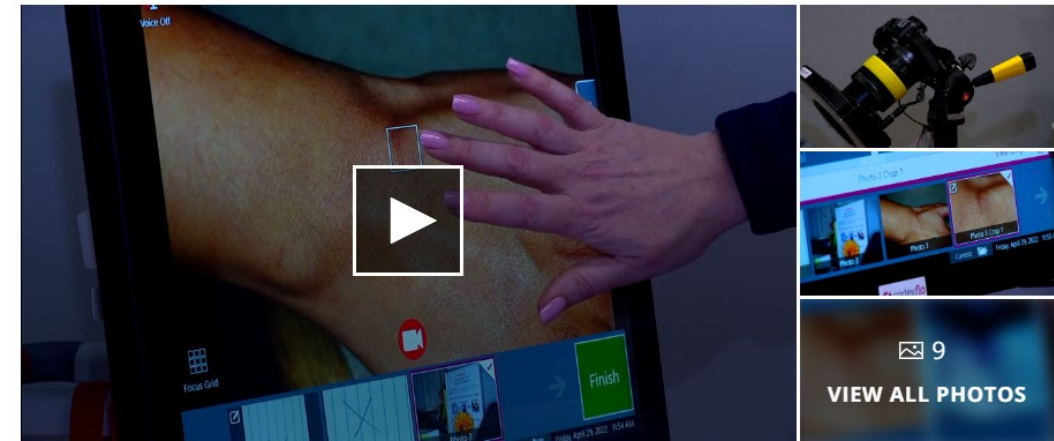
FJC Partner Data FY23 cont.

HCA/Mission Forensic Nurses FY23:

- Total Individuals Served in FJC: 128
(with the understanding that FJC is M-F 8-5 and subject to holiday closures)

New cameras enhance sexual assault victim exams at Mission Hospital, Family Justice Center

by Anjali Patel | Fri, April 29th 2022, 8:27 PM EDT



Across agencies, in FY23, **144,415*** services were provided to **12,429*** survivors for an average of **12** services per person. **cannot be unduplicated & indicates repeat clients*



Focus Areas for the Next 3 Years



Leverage increased staffing capacity (as recommended in FY25 budget) to implement DVFRT recommendations such as Multi Disciplinary Team (MDT), promotion of the Porchlight Project and other community campaigns to help people recognize danger signs of IPV

Continued implementation of Safe and Together Model in Child Protective Services to increase accountability for perpetrators of violence and their impact on child safety and well-being

Increased impact through work of Community Health Worker Violence Prevention Professionals and other individuals with lived experience



Sources

- Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), (2021, October 9). *Intimate partner violence*.
<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence/index.html>



Questions

