



Firearm-Related Domestic Violence Starter Information

Focus 1. Define & Monitor the Problem

"In 2021, Colorado had 61 incidents in which domestic violence resulted in a fatality, and 91 people died in these incidents. This was the highest number of domestic violence fatalities since the Board was created in 2017." – **Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board, 2022 Report**

Much domestic violence goes unreported by all-gendered people, including by women. For instance, most men do not report domestic violence and so fatalities are typically the only statistic available, and even that may be underreported.ⁱ That said, below is a summary of the data provided in the Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board 2022 Report (DVFRB 2022).

- **88%** of domestic violence victims were identified as female.
- **90%** of perpetrators were identified as male.
- **81%** of the deaths resulted from gunshot wounds (see **Figure 1**).
- Just more than half of the fatalities involved couples who were currently or formerly dating, while 48 percent were among married couples. A little more than one-quarter of those couples were broken up or estranged at the time of the homicide.
- Similar to the 2020 findings, in 2021, DVFs occurred disproportionately (measured as the number of DVFs out of 100,000 in the population) in rural, as compared to urban, counties.
- The data did not sufficiently account for race and ethnicity.

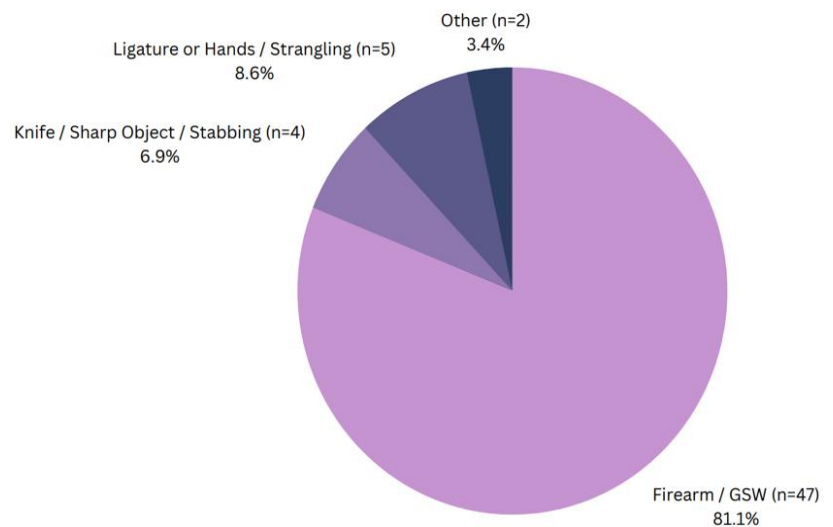


Figure 1. Weapons / Cause of Death (N=58). Source: Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board.

Focus 2: Develop Understanding of Risk & Protective Factors

Risk Factors (per the DVFRB 2022 Report)

A central focus of local Domestic Violence Fatality Review Teams (DVFRT) involves a review of all DVF cases with the purpose of identifying what red flags or lethality indicators were present at the time of the fatality. In case reviews, some DVFRTs use a Red Flags checklist. This checklist includes factors that research suggests are indicators of future lethality. The Denver DVFRT, for example, has identified a robust set of lethality factors in their red flag checklist. This checklist has evolved, and the



current list reflects more than 25 years of experience reviewing DVFs. Its lethality factors include, but are not limited to considering:

1. The abuser's access to firearms.
2. The abuser's prior threats with a firearm.
3. The abuser's possessiveness of victim.
4. The abuser's prior strangulation attempts of the victim.
5. The abuser's prior threats to kill the victim.
6. The abuser's history of drug/alcohol use or abuse.
7. The abuser's belief victim is in a new relationship.
8. The abuser's perceived loss of control.
9. The victim and perpetrator have one last meeting that precedes fatality.
10. The abuser's escalated threats of suicide Imminent separation of the couple.
11. Imminent separation of the couple.
12. Pending legal action related to incidents of abuse.

Focus 3: Engage the Community to Promote Multi-Sector Prevention Strategies

Upstream (e.g., root cause & social determinants)

- Social-emotional skill development for at risk populations.ⁱⁱ
- Shift gender narratives and gendered social expectations.ⁱ

Direct Prevention

- Improve background checks.ⁱⁱ

Intervention

- Family mental health supports.ⁱⁱ
- Red flag laws or buddy programs (as law and enforced).ⁱⁱ
- School identification of family violence.ⁱⁱ
- Invest in strategies that ensure firearm relinquishment.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Expand domestic violence training opportunities for judicial officers.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Invest in diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts that improve the response to domestic violence statewide.ⁱⁱⁱ

Preparedness & Response

- Police training.ⁱⁱ

Recovery

- Create a mechanism for law enforcement agencies to report Domestic Violence Fatalities (DVF's) directly to the Attorney General's Office.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Develop a local domestic violence fatality review team best practices and protocol manual.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Coordinated wraparound support for the victim (if survived) and any children.ⁱⁱ

ⁱ McCoy, Derek. (2023) Personal Communication

ⁱⁱ Bornstein, Jacob. (2023) *Youth Protection in Every Neighborhood Project*. Wellstone Collaborative Strategies.

ⁱⁱⁱ Colorado Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board, [2022 Annual Report](#).

