

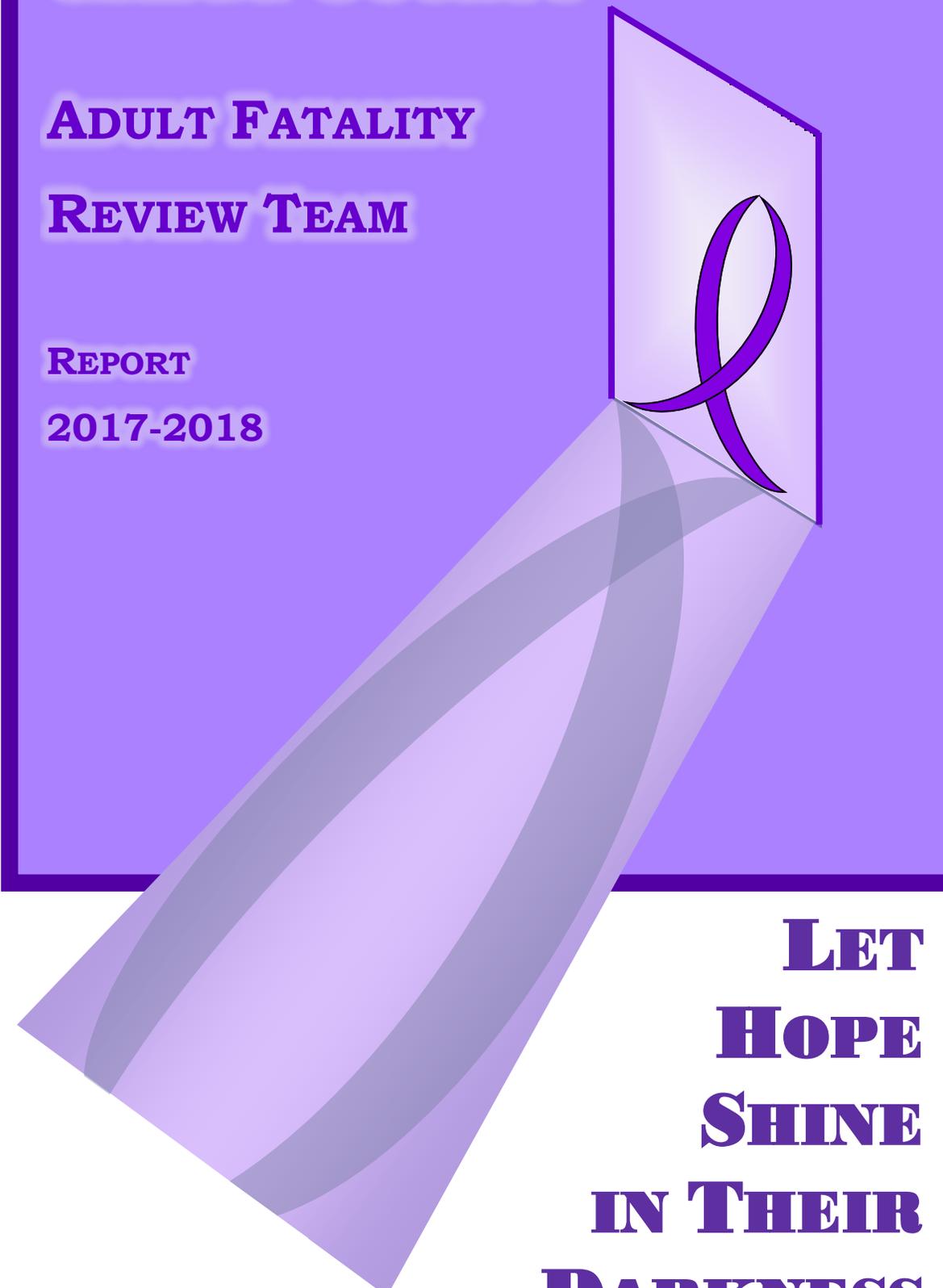
GREGG COUNTY

ADULT FATALITY

REVIEW TEAM

REPORT

2017-2018



**LET
HOPE
SHINE
IN THEIR
DARKNESS**

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We would also like to acknowledge former team members, Corey Hagler and Lynda Sorrell, and thank them for their participation.

INTRODUCTION – WHAT YOU THINK YOU KNOW

While the problem of Family Violence¹ has received a great amount of national and media attention in recent years, there are still strides to be made in working to end this vast problem. One of the greatest hurdles to overcome is reaching an understanding of how invasive the Family Violence problem is. The consequences of Family Violence have reached Americans on an individual scale through its effects in the home, the workplace, the school and throughout the community. Family Violence has infiltrated politics, Hollywood, sports, schools, and houses of worship and business. It has no bias in relation to gender, race, nationality, religion, age or socioeconomic status.

The Center for Disease Control found that the lifetime economic cost of Intimate Partner Violence to the United States population is \$3.6 trillion.

This cost includes costs for medical expenses, lost productivity, criminal justice and other associated costs such as property loss or damage.

The World Health Organization found that intimate partner violence costs the United States economy billions of dollars each year. The Center for Disease Control found that victims of Domestic Violence lose eight (8) million days of work each year, resulting in a loss of productivity for businesses and an increased workload for the victim's and actor's coworkers. When an emergency relocation is necessary, victims may be forced to break a lease or quit a job with no advance notice. Healthcare costs throughout the country rise as treatment is needed not only for physical injuries sustained in a violent event, but also for physical and mental illnesses that arise later because of chronic abuse and/or stress. The criminal justice system employs law enforcement officers, jailers, prosecutors, judges, probation officers and accompanying staff to address the crimes of Family Violence. Because it is a nationwide problem, it has become a nationwide fight.

Family Violence is not just a family problem.
If you think you haven't been affected by Family Violence,
you have.

¹ Texas law uses the term "Family Violence" to encompass violence involving family, household and dating relationships. A similar type of violence is known in other states as "Domestic Violence." Statistics used in this report will also refer to "Intimate Partner Violence" which occurs between persons in a physically intimate relationship and is a more restrictive term than that used in Texas. Terminology in this report will reflect the term used to describe the group used to compile the statistic or the term used in identifying the group.

Even more important than the financial cost of Family Violence, is the cost of lives including those beyond the abused victim and the abuser. A recent study found that 20% of homicide victims were not an Intimate Partner victim, but were family members or friends of the abused partner, or were neighbors, persons who intervened, law enforcement responders or bystanders.²

To end the Family Violence problem that affects us all, we can work together. But, to fully equip our citizens to continue or prepare to fight this problem, we must educate ourselves in the realities of Family Violence and its effects. The previous information illuminates the far-reaching consequences that affect us. However, to compound the problem, many myths still exist in relation to Family Violence:

Myth #1: All victims report all incidents of abuse all the time.

TRUTH – From 2006-2015, only 56% of DV cases were reported to police. Of those incidents that were reported, 24% of those reports were made by a person other than the victim.³ Victims and offenders share a relationship that may be held together by love, fear, economic dependence or other reasons. So a victim may not choose to report an incident that could alter or destroy that relationship, despite the abuse.

Myth #2: When the abuse gets bad enough, or if the victim has children in the home, the victim will leave the relationship.

TRUTH – The most dangerous time for an abused victim is within the first three months of leaving the relationship. Leaving takes power away from the abuser and this loss of power can lead to an abuser's desire to reobtain power through escalated violence or homicide. Also, a victim may feel powerless to leave if they are unemployed – they feel that they must stay so that their children can survive.

Myth #3: Family Violence only involves physical abuse.

TRUTH – Abusers often employ verbal and psychological abuse as a form of power and control over their victim. This can include threats, humiliation, deception, isolation from friends and/or family, and economic control.

Myth #4: Victims are never killed by an abuser unless there has been a history of abuse

TRUTH - As shown above, Family Violence can include non-physical abuse as a form of control. The ultimate control that one person can have over another is control over whether that person lives or dies. Actors have killed loved ones when no previous history of abuse has been found.

² Smith, S., Fowler, K. & Niolon, P. (2014). Intimate partner homicide and corollary victims in 16 states: National Violent Death Reporting System, 2003-2009. American Journal of Public Health, 104(3):461-6. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2013.301582.

³ Bureau of Justice Statistics

Myth #5: If I know someone who is being abused, I will be able to see the warning signs.

TRUTH – According to the Texas Council on Family Violence, one (1) in three (3) Texans will experience Domestic Violence in their lifetime. Most of us do not feel that 30% of our social circle is being abused – why is that? Many victims of Family Violence become experts at hiding injuries and emotions, whether because of shame, fear or other reasons. And abusers are not often open about their behavior.

Myth #6: If your family is affected by Family Violence, there is nowhere to go for help.

TRUTH – If a victim is not comfortable going to family, friends or coworkers, there are confidential Family Violence centers and shelters throughout the United States and Texas that are ready and able to help abuse victims and their families. A list of resources is at the end of this report. And, to provide another avenue of help, the Gregg County Adult Fatality Review Team was formed.

Family Violence affects our entire society. The expanse of the problem requires a concerted effort by as many of us as possible to tackle the problem. Many agencies in Gregg County have stepped forward to provide the support and guidance that is needed to help end the problem of Family Violence. The Gregg County Adult Fatality Review Team (AFRT) is a multi-agency team working toward the goal to end the problem by reviewing fatality or near-fatality incidents involving or resulting from Family Violence. This report encompasses the work of the AFRT in 2017 and 2018 as we move toward the accomplishment of this goal, and it is presented to you as an invitation to join us in ending this problem.

**THE GOAL OF THE GREGG COUNTY ADULT FATALITY
REVIEW TEAM IS TO WORK TOGETHER TO IMPROVE THE
RESPONSE AND SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE COMMUNITY
AND AGENCIES OPERATING IN GREGG COUNTY AND
TO DECREASE THE INCIDENCE OF PREVENTABLE DEATHS.**

THE GREGG COUNTY ADULT FATALITY REVIEW TEAM

The Gregg County AFRT was created in accordance with the purpose outlined by Chapter 672 of the Texas Health and Safety Code “to decrease the incidence of preventable adult deaths by:

1. promoting cooperation, communication, and coordination among agencies involved in responding to unexpected deaths;
2. developing an understanding of the causes and incidence of unexpected deaths in the county or counties in which the review team is located; and
3. advising the legislature, appropriate state agencies, and local law enforcement agencies on changes to law, policy, or practice that will reduce the number of unexpected deaths.”

Deaths that are reviewable by the AFRT meet the following qualifications under Chapter 672:

1. the death was unexpected in that it occurred without anticipation or forewarning,
2. the deceased was an adult,
3. the injury that resulted in death occurred within the boundaries of Gregg County, and
4. the death was caused by interpersonal violence related to Family Violence (including Dating Violence), Suicide or Abuse

To provide a well-rounded review of each death case, the AFRT is a multidisciplinary and multiagency team of members with experiential knowledge in the areas of Abuse, Neglect, Suicide, Family Violence and Elder Abuse. AFRT Membership includes representatives of various agencies in Gregg County who are involved in the law enforcement, healthcare and victim services communities. During the reviews in 2017 and 2018, the Gregg County AFRT was comprised of members from the following agencies:

1. Department of Public Safety Victim Services;
2. Good Shepherd Medical Center;
3. Gregg County Community Supervision.
4. Gregg County District Attorney’s Office;
5. Justice of the Peace;
6. Longview Police Department;
7. Texas Department of Family and Protective Services;
8. Women’s Center of East Texas

FOR THOSE IN AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP AND FOR THOSE WHO
ARE LEFT BEHIND, LET HOPE SHINE IN THEIR DARKNESS.

WHAT IS FAMILY VIOLENCE

To understand the work of the AFRT, it is important to understand the types of cases that the AFRT reviews. The AFRT is guided by definitions provided by Chapter 71 of the Texas Family Code:

FAMILY VIOLENCE

an act that is against a victim who is the actor's family member, household member or dating partner that is intended to result in physical harm, bodily injury, assault, or sexual assault or that is a threat that reasonably places the victim in fear of imminent physical harm, bodily injury, assault, or sexual assault

FAMILY

individuals related by blood or marriage and also former spouses, co-parents and foster parents and foster children

HOUSEHOLD

persons residing together in the same dwelling or those who have previously lived in the same dwelling

DATING RELATIONSHIP

a victim with whom the actor has or has had a dating relationship and a victim can also include the new dating partner or spouse of a person who had a dating relationship with the actor; A dating relationship involves a continuing relationship of a romantic or intimate nature

As described above, the relationship between people involved in a Family Violence incident can result in difficulties in the identification and prosecution of relationships involving Family Violence. Because Texas includes not only the common definition of "family", but also definitions for household and dating relationships, this allows agencies in Texas to serve a large host of victims involved in interpersonal violence.

It is important to note that Family Violence can contribute to other crimes. Tensions in a relationship can lead to property crimes including Burglary, Criminal Trespass, Criminal Mischief (property damage) and Theft. The strain of a Family Violence relationship can often be triggered by or cause substance abuse which can lead to drug possession or intoxication crimes. And law enforcement and emergency medical providers can be put at great risk when responding to the highly emotional calls related to Family Violence incidents.

CRIME STATISTICS

In 2017, 17% of homicides in Texas involved a relationship that met the definition under Family Violence. In 2017 in Gregg County, three out of nine murders were related to Family Violence. Overall, Family Violence non-fatality incidents made up almost 20% of crimes listed below that occurred in Gregg County. And, as previously stated, some of the other crimes listed also occurred between those in a family, household or dating relationship.

CRIME STATISTIC TABLES 2014-2017 - TEXAS AND GREGG COUNTY									
Crime Stats 2017					Crime Stats 2016				
	Texas	Gregg	Gregg's % of state crime	% of listed crimes		Texas	Gregg	Gregg's % of state crime	% of listed crimes
Population	28,304,596	132,027	0.466%		Population	27,821,692	132,332	0.476%	
Theft	518,414	2693	0.519%	48.029%	Theft	548,941	3602	0.656%	51.731%
Family Violence	195,315	1085	0.556%	19.351%	Family Violence	196,564	1194	0.607%	17.148%
Burglary	133,145	892	0.670%	15.909%	Burglary	148,073	1140	0.770%	16.372%
Agg Assault	75,347	357	0.474%	6.367%	Agg Assault	72,609	424	0.584%	6.089%
Auto Theft	67,285	364	0.541%	6.492%	Auto Theft	68,523	358	0.522%	5.141%
Robbery	32,120	116	0.361%	2.069%	Robbery	33,250	146	0.439%	2.097%
Sexual Assault	14,332	91	0.635%	1.623%	Sexual Assault	13,320	82	0.616%	1.178%
Murder	1412	9	0.637%	0.161%	Murder	1473	17	1.154%	0.244%
Crimes in Gregg County		5607			Crimes in Gregg County		6963		
Crime Stats 2015					Crime Stats 2014				
	Texas	Gregg	Gregg's % of state crime	% of listed crimes		Texas	Gregg	Gregg's % of state crime	% of listed crimes
Population	27,469,114	132,004	0.481%		Population	26,926,906	132,208	0.491%	
Theft	555,867	3962	0.713%	52.630%	Theft	570,385	3729	0.654%	52.610%
Family Violence	194,872	1331	0.683%	17.681%	Family Violence	185,817	1237	0.666%	17.452%
Burglary	152,444	1126	0.739%	14.957%	Burglary	166,429	1084	0.651%	15.293%
Agg Assault	67,358	376	0.558%	4.995%	Agg Assault	65,338	437	0.669%	6.165%
Auto Theft	67,081	420	0.626%	5.579%	Auto Theft	67,741	365	0.539%	5.150%
Robbery	31,883	154	0.483%	2.046%	Robbery	30,857	103	0.334%	1.453%
Sexual Assault	18,636	140	0.751%	1.860%	Sexual Assault	18,756	122	0.650%	1.721%
Murder	1314	19	1.446%	0.252%	Murder	1187	11	0.927%	0.155%
Crimes in Gregg County		7528			Crimes in Gregg County		7088		
Note: Not all crimes that occurred in Texas and Gregg County are reported in this table.									
Source: Texas Department of Public Safety Crime in Texas Reports									

REVIEW OF CASES

The AFRT conducts confidential reviews of unexpected adult deaths that occur in Gregg County and involve Family Violence. An adult includes any person who is aged seventeen or older. These deaths are identified as reviewable cases by the members of the AFRT as they are made aware of an unexpected adult death. The information reviewed is provided by relevant agencies, professionals, health care providers and those who knew the involved parties.

The AFRT analyzes incidents of deaths that qualify as having been unexpected or preventable. For purposes of the AFRT, unexpected or preventable deaths do not include accidental deaths. A Family Violence incident is preventable because the actor chooses to engage in the action that causes injury to the victim. Therefore, even if the actor did not intend for the victim to die, this death is not considered an accident for purposes of our reviews because the act of violence was found to have a level of purpose to it. The AFRT can also examine collateral deaths that occur as a result of violence aimed toward a Family Violence victim. This can include the death of the children of a Family Violence victim or the death of bystanders. The AFRT analyzes the apparent reasons for the violence which resulted in death and tries to establish how the violence could have been prevented.

The AFRT analyzes death cases that are classified as homicide and/or suicide and can also analyze a near-fatality case in which the victim survives. The homicide cases involve the actor causing the death of a victim who falls within one of the Family Violence relationship categories. Suicide cases can be analyzed to see if a contributing cause was violence in a relationship and whether the deceased was a victim or offender of Family Violence. Murder-suicide incidents are also reviewed in which the actor killed the victim and then committed suicide.

The history of the relationship between the victim and actor is of special importance to the analysis by the AFRT. Understanding this relationship can aid in identifying triggers of violence or red flags that pointed toward impending violence. We try to determine if there was a history of violence in the relationship or if one trigger existed that led the actor toward fatal violence. We must also evaluate whether the victim was involved in any conduct that intentionally or unintentionally angered the actor. Because we seek a big-picture understanding of the incident, we must consider all circumstances and actions that led to and/or contributed to the violence.

During this review, we also examine the response of various agencies to the death and also any history of response to the needs of the people involved. Reviewing these events and their surrounding circumstances enables us to identify any gaps in service and assist agencies in strengthening their community response to Family Violence. It is our hope that a strong and well-rounded response to non-fatality events will lessen the number of fatality events resulting from Family Violence.

GREGG COUNTY CASE REVIEWS

CASE REVIEW DATA

In 2017 and 2018, the Gregg County Adult Fatality Review Team reviewed nine Family Violence fatality incidents occurring from 2008 to 2017. These reviews included nine deceased victims, two surviving victims, and three deceased actors.

INCIDENTS				
Homicide	Double Murder	Homicide & Near Fatality	Murder-Suicide	Suicide
4	1	2	1	1
CAUSES OF DEATH	Blunt Impact	Stabbing/Cutting	Shooting	Hanging
	1	3	4	1

JURISDICTION	
Longview Police Department	4
Kilgore Police Department	1
Gregg County Sheriff's Office	4

Note – Agencies not listed did not have a Family Violence fatality reviewed by the AFRT.

RELATIONSHIP (10 homicide or attempted homicide victims, 1 suicide actor)				
Spouse/Dating	Ex-spouse or Dating (Includes separation)	Other Family	Abused Victim's Child	Abused Victim's Brother
3	2	3	2	1
SOMEONE WAS AWARE OF THE ABUSE BEFORE THE INCIDENT				
Family	Friend/Coworker	Neighbor	Law Enforcement	Victim Service
3	1	2	4	2

CRIMINAL CASE OUTCOME				
Criminal Court Case Disposition	Guilty Plea	Not Guilty by Insanity	Jury Trial	No case – Self-Defense
	3	1	2	1
Punishment/Sentence	Penitentiary	Mental Commitment		
	6	1		

Note – One of the jury trials was cut short upon the guilty plea of the actor.

VICTIMS (11)				
Gender	Male	Female		
	3	8		
Age	10-17	18-29	30-40	60+
	2	4	4	1
Race	White	Black	Hispanic	
	2	6	3	
Employment	Employed	Unemployed	Enrolled in School	
	3	2	1	
Children	With Offender	With Other Person	Present for Incident	
	1	6	3	
History of Violence with Offender	As victim		As Perpetrator	
	5		4	
History of Violence with Other Person	As victim		As Perpetrator	
	2		2	
Criminal History (not including Family Violence)		4		
Substance Abuse	Alcohol		Drugs	
	2		1	
Assistance Services	Social Services	Law Enforcement	Mental Services	
	2	3	0	

OFFENDERS (9)				
Gender	Male	Female		
	7	2		
Age	20-30	31-40	50+	
	3	4	2	
Race	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian
	2	4	2	1
Employment	Employed	Unemployed	Enrolled in School	
	4	2		
Children	With Victim	With Other Person	Present for Incident	
	1	5	0	
History of Violence with Victim	As victim		As Perpetrator	
	4		5	
History of Violence with Other Person	As victim		As Perpetrator	
	0		3	
Criminal History (not including Family Violence)		8		
Substance Abuse	Alcohol		Drugs	
	2		4	
Assistance Services	Social Services	Law Enforcement	Mental Services	
	1	6	3	

Of the cases reviewed in 2017 and 2018, the youngest fatality victim was 11 and the oldest victim was 61. All offenders were male except for the case in which the actor was found to have acted in self-defense and the case where a woman took her own life. We reviewed three cases in which the offender died. One case was a suicide by hanging. In another case, the offender cut the victim's throat and his own throat, and he died several days later. In the third case, after shooting his sister-in-law, the offender was killed by police during an armed stand-off.

Five of the victims were in a current or former romantic relationship with the offender. One case involved two brothers and another involved a son killing his mother. The suicide actor had lost her husband to a fatal illness a few months prior to the suicide. The incident that led to the police stand-off occurred against the actor's sister-in-law. The murder-suicide was the only case where the victim and offender had children together. Three victims under the age of 18 were injured or killed in the incidents reviewed by the AFRT. The two youngest fatalities were the daughters of mothers who were also victims in the fatality incident; the mother of the oldest child survived the incident. In the incident where the actor shot his sister-in-law, the victim's child was injured by glass that had been shot out in a vehicle.

Every fatality incident occurred at the home of the victim, as did the suicide case. In four of the cases, the victim and offender lived together. In four of the incidents, the victim and actor had recently ceased to live together. Six of the events were believed to happen between 1:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. Three other events were believed to happen between 7:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m.

Various weapons were used in the fatality incidents. In four of the homicide incidents, the actor used a gun. And, in three of the events, the actor used a knife. In the murder-suicide case, knives were found near both the victim and defendant. And, in the self-defense case, the actor stated that the victim had assaulted and threatened her with weapons. In the only incident involving a parent and child, the actor used a chair to bludgeon his mother to death. In eight out of the nine fatality review cases, a prior history of violence existed or the victim had made known to another person their fear of the actor. More than half of the reviews revealed a history of 911 calls for violence. In five of the relationships, a neighbor or family member of one or both of the parties was aware of the existence of abuse in the relationship.

Six of the incidents resulted in law enforcement investigation for the purposes of determining whether criminal prosecution was warranted. One case was found to be self-defense based upon the evidence found at the scene and a long history of violence between the victim and actor. Of the five cases that led to indictment, one case was resolved with a finding of Not Guilty by Reason of Insanity and the actor was committed for in-patient mental treatment. Two cases went to jury trial – both of the cases involved two victims. One of those cases resulted in a finding of Guilty with two 15-year prison sentences for the offenses of Murder and Aggravated Assault. In that case, the murder victim was the girlfriend of the actor and the Aggravated Assault victim

was her brother. The other case went to jury trial as a Capital Murder, but the actor chose to change his plea to Guilty during the trial and pled to two life sentences for Murder. In the case between brothers, the actor entered a guilty plea to Murder for 15 years in prison. In the remaining case prosecuted, the actor pled guilty to 50 years in prison for the murder of his girlfriend's daughter and 20 years in prison for Aggravated Assault for shooting his girlfriend.

SELECTED INCIDENTS

Case #1 – Self-Defense

The victim and actor had a twenty-five year history of assault against each other. The actor stated that she stabbed the victim when he tried to strike her with a rock or a brick. All of these weapons were found at the scene. She stated that the victim had recently become aggressive because he had been to prison and was using cocaine. A friend of the actor stated that she had been on the phone with the actor and had heard the victim threatening to kill the actor.

Case #2 – Double Homicide

The actor and victim had separated and violence had increased during the summer months preceding the incident. The actor exhibited stalking behavior by repeatedly coming to the victim's home and frequently assaulting her. However, the victim, herself, had been charged with committing Aggravated Assault against the actor, and that charge was pending at the time of this incident. In the early morning, the actor told a friend that he believed his estranged wife was in bed with another man, and the actor obtained a gun from his friend. The actor went to the victim's home and shot the victim and her young daughter.

Case #3 - Suicide

The actor was widowed several months before her suicide, after her husband's severe illness. The actor had married her husband after he found her on a website which provided men with access to international women, mostly from the Philippines, the home of the actor. The actor had a history of mental hospitalization and had been charged with Aggravated Assault against her husband. The actor had received assistance as a victim from law enforcement and victim service providers, however, her acts of violence impeded her effective receipt of services. She was found deceased by police, and had a cord around her neck.

Case #4 - Matricide

The actor was a highly-educated immigrant from Nigeria who brought his mother to America. He had previously been abusive to an ex-wife and his behavior had escalated to include extreme paranoia. In the previous year, the actor received in-patient mental health services for both felony and misdemeanor criminal offenses. Others were aware of abuse to the victim by the actor in the form of verbal mistreatment and humiliation. The victim had sought help from her church in dealing with her son. The actor bludgeoned his mother to death with a chair and later called 911 to inform them of her body. The actor later stated that he believed that the victim was actually an impostor, pretending to be his mother. The actor was found Not Guilty by Reason of Insanity and committed for in-patient mental hospitalization.

RISK FACTORS

Several risk factors within relationships have been identified that place the parties at risk of a Family Violence fatality incident.

FATALITY RELATIONSHIP RISK FACTORS

Actor

Controlling victim's activities/associations, threatening victim, attempting or threatening suicide, escalating violence, following or spying on victim, jealousy, substance abuse, access to a gun, unemployment, damaging victim's property, history of choking victim

Victim

Recently trying to leave the relationship, believing the actor can kill him/her, having a child with a person besides the actor, attempting or threatening suicide

In our reviews, we found several instances of substance abuse, including during the fatality event. We also reviewed several cases that involved controlling and threatening behavior by the actor. Several cases involved actors with easy access to guns or knives. Many of the cases involved on-and-off again relationships where the victim had recently ceased to live with the actor. Along with these risk factors, we found that the actor in the case involving brothers had a history of violent behavior using a knife, the weapon that he used to kill his brother. In our 2016 report, we found that each offender had been suicidal or committed suicide at the time of the incident. In our 2017 and 2018 reviews, no single risk factor was found to be common in all of our cases.

BARRIERS TO SERVICE

In evaluating the services offered and/or provided to parties in the reviewed relationships, we identified barriers to service that existed. Barriers in our reviews included cultural and financial barriers, along with a lack of family or societal acceptance of seeking assistance. We also found barriers where a relationship consisted of a history of the actor and victim switching roles during Family Violence incidents. When a victim of one incident was the actor in another incident, then the availability of services may be narrowed. With victim services, a provider must ensure the safety of other victims, especially in a shelter situation. Therefore, a victim who exhibits violent behavior may have a barrier to shelter service. In a legal context, when a victim seeks a protective order, but has a pending case as an actor, then lawyers may be barred from assisting that person because of representational conflict rules.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE AFRT

During the reviews conducted by the AFRT, our team formulates recommendations to help us meet our goal. These recommendations are made for ourselves as a team, for the Coordinated Community Response that provides services to those involved and affected, and to our own Community of Gregg County.

THE GOAL OF THE GREGG COUNTY ADULT FATALITY REVIEW TEAM IS TO WORK TOGETHER TO IMPROVE THE RESPONSE AND SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE COMMUNITY AND AGENCIES OPERATING IN GREGG COUNTY AND TO DECREASE THE INCIDENCE OF PREVENTABLE DEATHS.

After our 2017 and 2018 reviews, we have reiterated the same recommendations that we formulated from our 2016 report. Those recommendations are below:

Recommendations for the Gregg County Adult Fatality Review Team

- Create and further relationships with agencies who work with victims or offenders of Family Violence who can provide expert insight into the dynamics of these relationships and provide further understanding as to why Family Violence fatalities occur;
- Expand communication with agencies and individuals who can provide information on specific victims and/or offenders to conduct a more thorough review of fatality cases;
- Involve victim or offender families in the review preparation as they are willing;
- Identify an efficient way to identify all Gregg County fatalities caused by Family Violence or Abuse for future review

The Coordinated Community Response involves all of the agencies that respond to the Family Violence problem either before or after a fatality event. These agencies include those who make up the AFRT along with other agencies such as mental health professionals, Adult Protective Services and other violence prevention groups. The Coordinated Community Response can also

include family service providers and church and community programs which provide assistance to victims and/or offenders. For the Coordinated Community Response, we have included some previous recommendations (preceded by “***”) and added several recommendations:

Recommendations for the Coordinated Community Response

- ***Encourage agencies to notify an AFRT member or member agency if they become aware of a fatality that was or may have been caused by Family Violence or Abuse;
- *** Offer assistance to families where mental health issues within the family result in violence, including helping families understand how to respond to and cope with someone who is not taking medication as prescribed;
- Continue providing Mental Health services through the Court system for victims and actors;
- Provide counseling options for survivors and/or witnesses of fatality events along with counseling services for family and friends of the victim and/or actor;
- Formulate and implement service responses to relationships in which the parties alternate between being the victim and the offender;
- Consider the use of an on-scene Lethality Assessment at high-risk Family Violence scenes;
- Evaluate post-Court services to provide for safety to society and offender transition preparedness upon offender re-entry after imprisonment or mental commitment;
- Identify ways to cross cultural boundaries to publicize assistance options and provide quality assistance to all victims and actors;
- Safety plan with victims to identify risk factors and understand triggers that precede the actor’s violence; While the actor must not be excused for his or her violence, the victim can be empowered to understand what actions can help minimize or eliminate the violence to give them power over their own safety

We provide the following recommendations for the citizens of our community. As above, recommendations included in our 2016 report are preceded by “***”.

Recommendations for the Community of Gregg County

- ***Know how to assist a friend, coworker or family member who may be in a relationship involving Family Violence or Abuse;
- Eliminate the stigma of reporting Family Violence or asking for assistance;
- Minimize the availability of an actor’s “weapon of choice” where there is a history of violence;
- Dispel the myths of Family Violence and educate others as to the problem of Family Violence and potential solutions

WHAT NEXT?

Family Violence has had a far-reaching impact on our country. It has touched the lives of all of our citizens even when we have not noticed the effects. The problem of Family Violence has not ended. However, the Gregg County Adult Fatality Review Team is working to end the problem. But we cannot do it alone, and we look to our partner agencies and our community to provide the support and assistance needed to reach our goal.

In 2019, we will begin new reviews of cases that have occurred since 2014. As of the writing of this report, twelve fatality or near-fatality events have occurred in Gregg County, including multiple double homicides. Through the cooperation and hard work of the Coordinated Community Response agencies, many of the cases have resulted in convictions for the actors and the process of healing has begun for those affected by the loss. We want to provide hope to those living with and surviving Family Violence relationships.

It is the hope of the AFRT that no one else would have to live through the loss brought about by these incidents. We hope that our continued efforts will improve the provisions of services to help relationships at risk of fatality events. And we are thankful that the community of Gregg County will help us in this goal.

RESOURCES

WOMEN'S CENTER OF EAST TEXAS – WWW.WC-ET.ORG
903-295-7846 OR 800-441-5555

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GREGG COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE, VICTIMS COORDINATORS
903-236-8440

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COMMUNITY HEALTHCORE – MENTAL AND ADDICTION SERVICES
800-838-1009

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SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE – WWW.SUICIDEPREVENTIONLIFELINE.ORG
800-273-8255

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NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE – WWW.THEHOTLINE.ORG
800-799.SAFE (7233)

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NATIONAL DATING ABUSE HELPLINE - WWW.LOVEISRESPECT.ORG
1-866-331-9474