

2019

# HOMICIDE REPORT

RELATIONSHIP ABUSE IN MINNESOTA



**VIOLENCE FREE**  
MINNESOTA

THE COALITION TO END RELATIONSHIP ABUSE



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# FOREWORD

Each year, as Violence Free Minnesota releases the *Homicide Report: Relationship Abuse in Minnesota* detailing another twelve months of grief and loved ones taken away too soon, the vision inscribed in our name can seem far away. A world free of violence requires imagination and hope while the reality of domestic violence on our communities feels overwhelming, enormous, and at times impossible to rise from. At least 21 people were killed due to intimate partner homicide in 2019 - children, friends, parents, neighbors, all of them deeply loved and deeply mourned. We know that these deaths are not solely the result of individual acts of violence, but a culmination of collective and widespread failures across multiple systems. And we know that all too often, anger gives way to despair and the present has a tendency to convince us that the future will yet again be like the past.

But we must keep imagining. There is another world beyond this one, in which we protect and nurture our communities and keep one another safe, where measures for justice and healing lie within us and neither one is reached at the expense of the other. Within our report, we examine the impacts of multiple facets of our lives - schools, the criminal-legal system, healthcare, and housing. Each and every person included in this report touched at least one of these facets and many others. First we must imagine a world in which these facets are not points of failure, but rather points of possibility. Who can we touch, what systems can we reach, how can we call one another in? And then, when we have imagined this world, we must act on it, through the ripples by which we are connected.

The people in this report - all of them with intricate and utterly unique potential - had reached some dreams and were unable to escalate others. On behalf of them, and all the other lives taken by interpersonal and systematic violence in Minnesota, we must escalate what we believe is possible. Mark Franklin Jr. was described as a peacemaker. A friend of Michelle "Shelly" Mae wrote in a letter that Michelle made an impact on her that she will carry with her for the rest of her life. A friend of Nicole "Nikki" Jazdzewski shared, "There is a huge hole in the living world where she used to be."

As we move forward and the present gives way to the past, we recognize we cannot fill the holes left behind by the individuals in this report. No one can. But we owe it to them, and to every person who loved them, to prevent one another from falling in. Intimate partner violence is consuming. It is all-encompassing. But as we honor and mourn the lives of those lost, we also honor the wisdom of advocates, peacemakers, and survivors and recognize that domestic violence, too, is preventable. So now we look to the years ahead of us, and we keep imagining and keep striving towards a violence free world.





# WE REMEMBER

## INTIMATE PARTNER HOMICIDES IN MINNESOTA: 1989-2019

### 1989

At least 17 women died from intimate partner violence\*  
At least 1 child died due to relationship abuse

### 1990

At least 15 women died from intimate partner violence  
At least 1 child died due to relationship abuse

### 1991

At least 9 women died from intimate partner violence  
At least 6 children died due to relationship abuse  
At least 2 bystanders/interveners died

### 1992

At least 20 women died from intimate partner violence  
At least 5 children died due to relationship abuse  
At least 3 bystanders/interveners died

### 1993

At least 24 women died from intimate partner violence  
At least 2 children died due to relationship abuse  
At least 5 bystanders/interveners died

### 1994

At least 14 women died from intimate partner violence  
At least 3 children died due to relationship abuse

### 1995

At least 23 women died from intimate partner violence  
At least 4 children died due to relationship abuse  
At least 2 bystanders/interveners died

### 1996

At least 17 women died from intimate partner violence  
At least 4 children died due to relationship abuse  
At least 3 bystanders/interveners died

### 1997

At least 13 women died from intimate partner violence  
At least 1 child died due to relationship abuse

### 1998

At least 18 women died from intimate partner violence  
At least 1 man died from intimate partner violence  
At least 2 children died due to relationship abuse  
At least 1 bystander/intervener died

### 1999

At least 19 women died from intimate partner violence  
At least 1 man died from intimate partner violence  
At least 11 bystanders/interveners died

### 2000

At least 29 women died from intimate partner violence  
At least 1 child died due to relationship abuse  
At least 3 bystanders/interveners died

### 2001

At least 22 women died from intimate partner violence  
At least 5 bystanders/interveners died

### 2002

At least 18 women died from intimate partner violence  
At least 1 child died due to relationship abuse



# WE REMEMBER

## Intimate Partner Homicides in Minnesota: 1989-2019

### 2003

At least 13 women died from intimate partner violence  
At least 2 bystanders/interveners died

### 2004

At least 12 women died from intimate partner violence  
At least 5 bystanders/interveners died

### 2005

At least 16 women died from intimate partner violence

### 2006

At least 17 women died from intimate partner violence  
At least 4 men died from intimate partner violence  
At least 1 bystander/intervener died

### 2007

At least 18 women died from intimate partner violence  
At least 2 bystanders/interveners died

### 2008

At least 20 women died from intimate partner violence  
At least 3 children died due to relationship abuse  
At least 4 bystanders/interveners died

### 2009

At least 12 women died from intimate partner violence  
At least 1 man died from intimate partner violence  
At least 3 bystanders/interveners died

### 2010

At least 14 women died from intimate partner violence  
At least 2 men died from intimate partner violence  
At least 4 children died due to relationship abuse  
At least 3 bystanders/interveners died

### 2011

At least 22 women died from intimate partner violence  
At least 1 man died from intimate partner violence  
At least 1 child died due to relationship abuse  
At least 6 bystanders/interveners died

### 2012

At least 15 women died from intimate partner violence  
At least 1 man died from intimate partner violence  
At least 3 bystanders/interveners died

### 2013

At least 22 women died from intimate partner violence  
At least 6 men died from intimate partner violence  
At least 2 children died due to relationship abuse  
At least 7 bystanders/interveners died

### 2014

At least 16 women died from intimate partner violence  
At least 1 man died from intimate partner violence  
At least 2 children died due to relationship abuse  
At least 3 bystanders/interveners died

### 2015

At least 22 women died from intimate partner violence  
At least 3 men died from intimate partner violence  
At least 4 children died due to relationship abuse  
At least 4 bystanders/interveners died

### 2016

At least 18 women died from intimate partner violence  
At least 2 children died due to relationship abuse  
At least 1 bystanders/interveners died

### 2017

At least 21 women died from intimate partner violence  
At least 1 child died due to relationship abuse  
At least 5 bystanders/interveners died

### 2018

At least 9 women died from intimate partner violence  
At least 1 man died from intimate partner violence  
At least 4 bystanders/interveners/bystanders die

### 2019

At least 16 women died from intimate partner violence  
At least 5 bystanders/interveners/bystanders die

A close-up, grayscale photograph of concentric ripples on a body of water, centered in the upper half of the page.

# POWER & CONTROL

At its core, domestic violence is rooted in power, control, and oppression. People who abuse often use multiple tactics to control their partners - economic abuse, isolation, gaslighting, and physical and sexual violence. Throughout 2019, we saw many examples of power, control, and oppression. Raven Bianca Gant's former partner took all of her and her daughter's clothing prior to her leaving and refused to return them. Bryce Bellomo, who killed his two sisters-in-law Candi Cheryl Goochey and Heidi Eve Pierce, previously prevented his wife Billie from calling 911 during an argument and then drove her out to a state forest against her will.

Abusive partners from dominant groups - such as white, cisgender, heterosexual men - benefit from privilege and systems of oppression while victims from marginalized groups - Black, Indigenous, and people of color, victims with disabilities, LGBTQ+ communities, immigrants, and women - may be punished and disempowered by the criminal-legal system, the child protective system, and educational institutions that funnel abused children into the juvenile justice system. These systems, just as abusive partners, wield control over victims. We cannot address nor prevent domestic violence without also addressing all forms of oppression and the ways in which they are leveraged to further trap, marginalize, and harm victims.

In 2019, multiple victims of color are included in our report, several of whom were previously criminalized, as many survivors of color disproportionately are. At least three victims in 2019 were Native women, one of whom, Gennie Marie Kingbird, was abandoned and left for dead by her husband. Native women go missing and are murdered at significant rates. In addition, in 2019 two Black women, Jessica Tashaonda Williams and Raven Bianca Gant, were killed with a firearm, the most common weapon used to commit homicide against Black women.



# OVERVIEW OF THE 2019 HOMICIDE REPORT

At least 16 Minnesotans were killed due to violence  
from a current or former intimate partner

The known number of Minnesotans killed due to domestic violence varies from year to year. We have seen numbers range from a yearly low of 12 deaths to as many as 37. In 2018, at least 14 Minnesotans were murdered due to domestic violence. This year, the number is higher. However, it is important to note that one year's data does not indicate a trend. In 2012, there were 19 known domestic violence homicides included in our report and in 2015, there were 33. The numbers of homicides in Minnesota fluctuate and can vary significantly from year to year.



**At least 16 women**

were murdered in cases where the suspected, alleged, or convicted perpetrator was a current or former intimate partner.



**At least 5 friends, family members, or bystanders**

were murdered in domestic violence related situations.



**At least 23 minor children**

were left without a parent due to intimate partner homicide.



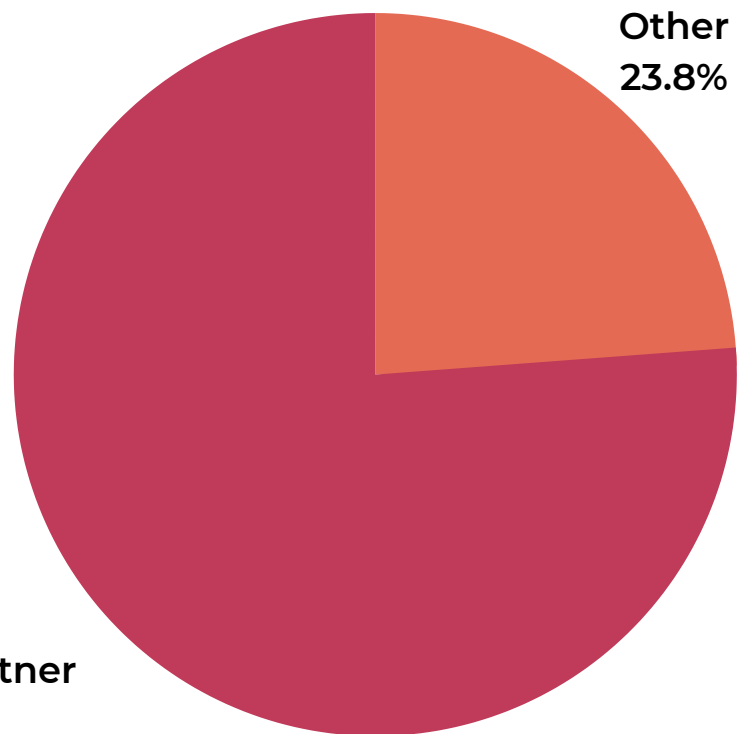
# VICTIMS AND RELATIONSHIP TO THE ALLEGED PERPETRATORS

Key Intimate Partner Homicide Statistics: 2019

## Current/former intimate partner 16 victims

Gennie Marie Kingbird  
Julie A. Kneifl  
Mary Jo Loons Jansen  
Alexandra Light Jacobs  
Nicole Ann Jazdzewski  
Jessica Tashaonda Williams  
Crystal Marie Bundy  
Darla Marie King  
Sauda Abubakar Maani  
Rebecca Lee Merringer  
Mainhia Yang  
Michelle Mary Mae  
Brittany Lynn Roy  
Raven Bianca Gant  
Kjersten Marie Ellingson  
Thea Renae Toles

**Intimate Partner  
76.2%**



## Other 5 victims

Candi Cheryl Goochey #  
Heidi Eve Pierce #  
Mark Franklin Jr. +  
William David \*  
Nelson Sidney \*

\* Family members killed alongside victim of intimate partner violence  
# Family member of intimate partner violence victim killed  
+ Family member of intimate partner violence victim killed after intervening to prevent intimate partner violence

# CAUSE OF DEATH

Key Homicide Statistics (2017-2019) for  
Adult Women Murdered by a Current or Former Intimate Partner

## 2019

### 2019 VICTIMS : 16

#### STRANGULATION: 3

Gennie Marie Kingbird  
Crystal Marie Bundy  
Michelle Mary Mae

#### GUNSHOT: 7

Mary Jo Loons Jansen  
Alexandra Light Jacobs  
Jessica Tashaonda Williams  
Rebecca Lee Merringer  
Mainhia Yang  
Raven Bianca Gant  
Kjersten Marie Ellingson

#### STABBING: 3

Julie A. Kneifl  
Nicole Ann Jazdzewski  
Darla Marie King

#### BEATING: 1

Brittany Lynn Roy

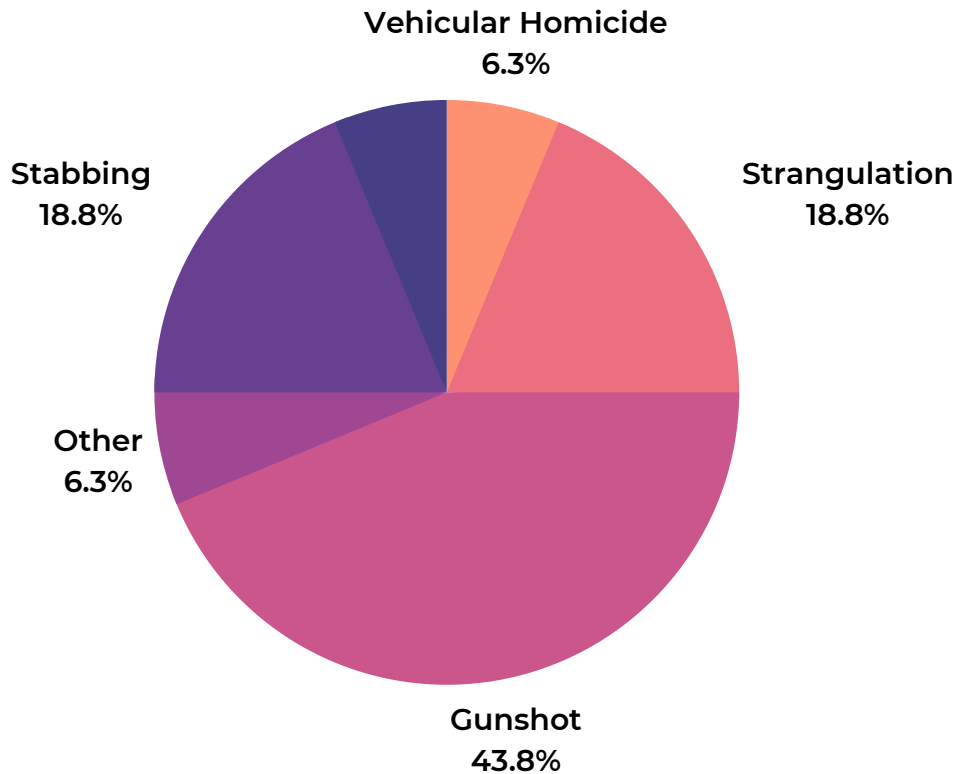
#### OTHER: 1

Thea Renae Toles \*

#### VEHICULAR HOMICIDE: 1

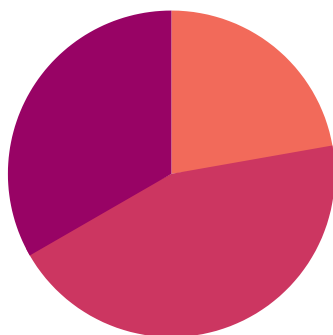
Sauda Abubakar Maani

\* Killed from toxicity poisoning/drugging



## 2018

Gunshot  
33.3%



Stabbing  
22.2%

Strangulation  
44.4%

Other/Unknown  
10.5%

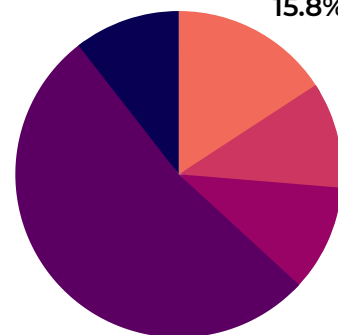
Beating  
15.8%

## 2017

Strangulation  
10.5%

Stabbing  
10.5%

Gunshot  
52.6%



# VICTIM WAS SEPARATED FROM ABUSER OR ATTEMPTING TO LEAVE

Key Homicide Statistics (2017-2019) for  
Adult Women Murdered by a Current or Former Intimate Partner

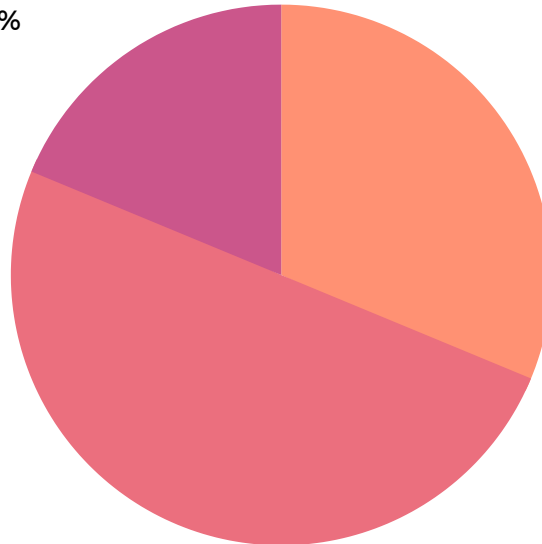
**2019**

**2019 VICTIMS : 16**

**TOGETHER: 8**

Gennie Marie Kingbird  
Julie A. Kneifl  
Alexandra Light Jacobs  
Crystal Marie Bundy  
Darla Marie King  
Rebecca Lee Merringer  
Mainhia Yang  
Brittany Lynn Roy

Other/Unknown  
18.8%



Separated/Attempting to  
Leave  
31.3%

Together  
50%

**SEPARATED OR  
ATTEMPTING TO LEAVE: 5**

Mary Jo Loons Jansen  
Nicole Ann Jazdzewski  
Jessica Tashaonda Williams  
Raven Bianca Gant  
Kjersten Marie Ellingson

**OTHER OR  
UNKNOWN: 3**

Sauda Abubakar Maani  
Michelle Mary Mae  
Thea Renae Toles

**2018**

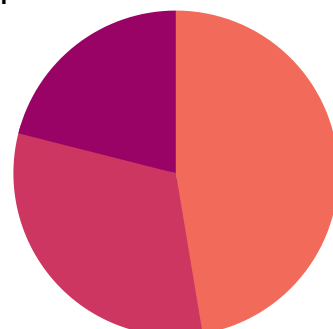
Other/Unknown  
10%



Together  
30%

Separated  
50%

Other/Unknown  
21.1%



Together  
47.4%

Separated  
31.6%

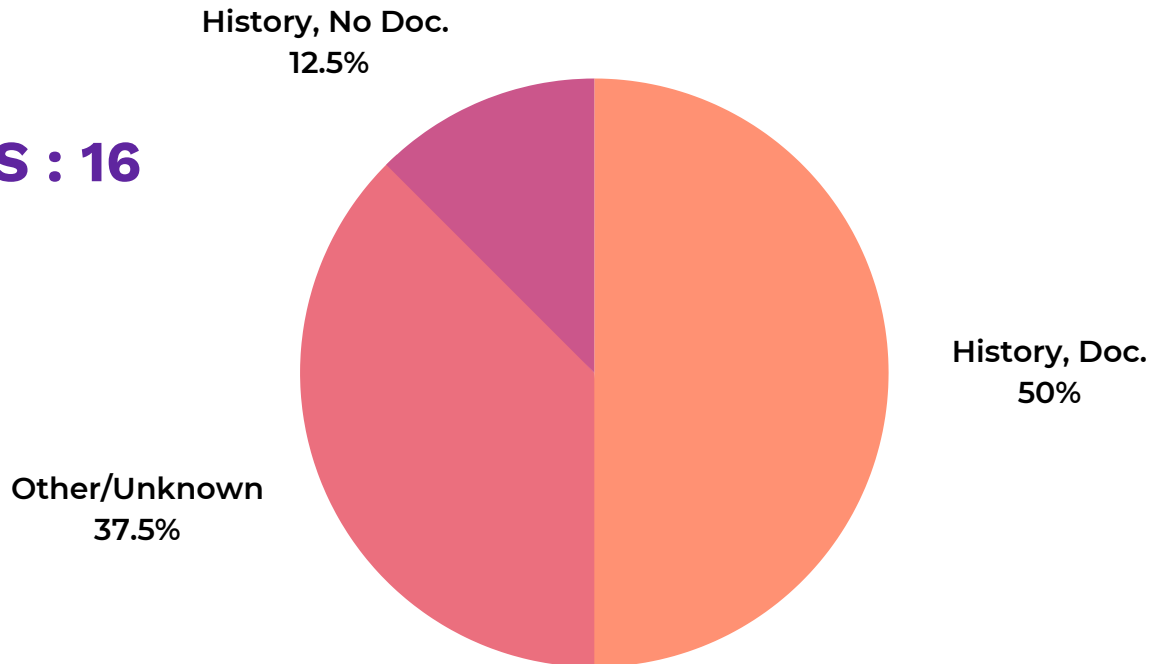
**2017**

# HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

Key Homicide Statistics (2017-2019) for  
Adult Women Murdered by a Current or Former Intimate Partner

**2019**

**2019 VICTIMS : 16**



## HISTORY WITH DOCUMENTATION: 8

Mary Jo Loons Jansen  
Jessica Tashaonda Williams  
Crystal Marie Bundy  
Darla Marie King  
Sauda Abubakar Maani  
Michelle Mary Mae  
Raven Bianca Gant  
Thea Renae Toles

## HISTORY, NO DOCUMENTATION: 2

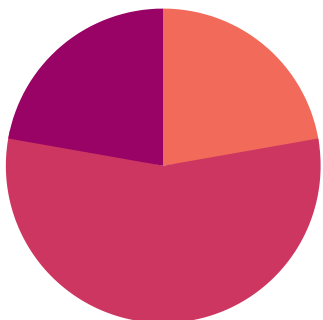
Rebecca Lee Merringer  
Nicole Ann Jazdzewski

## OTHER OR UNKNOWN: 6

Gennie Marie Kingbird  
Julie A. Kneifl  
Alexandra Light Jacobs  
Mainhia Yang  
Brittany Lynn Roy  
Kjersten Marie Ellingson

**2018**

Other/Unknown  
22.2%



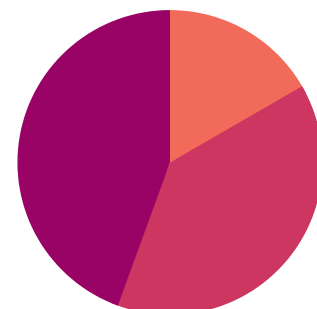
History, Doc.  
55.6%

History, No Doc.  
22.2%

Other/Unknown  
44.4%

**2017**

History, No Doc.  
16.7%



History, Doc.  
38.9%



# GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION OF VICTIM

Key Homicide Statistics (2017-2019) for  
Adult Women Murdered by a Current or Former Intimate Partner

## 2019

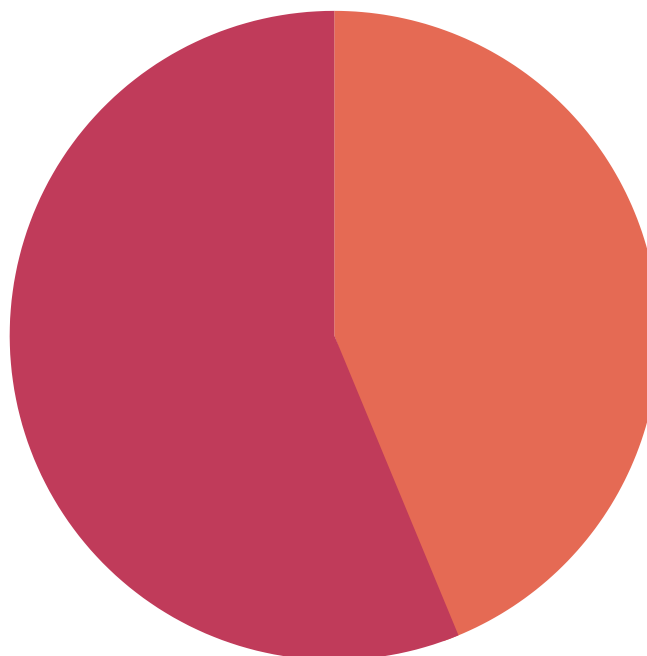
### 2019 VICTIMS : 16

#### TWIN CITIES

#### METRO AREA: 9

Julie A. Kneifl  
Mary Jo Loons Jansen  
Alexandra Light Jacobs  
Jessica Tashaonda Williams  
Darla Marie King  
Mainhia Yang  
Raven Bianca Gant  
Kjersten Marie Ellingson  
Thea Renae Toles

**Metro**  
**56.3%**



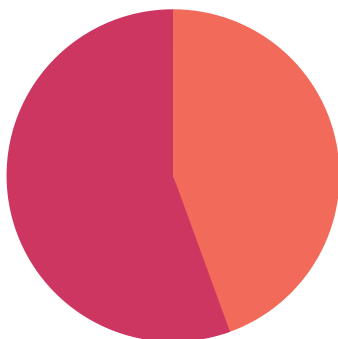
**Greater MN**  
**43.8%**

#### GREATER MINNESOTA: 7

Gennie Marie Kingbird  
Nicole Ann Jazdzewski  
Crystal Marie Bundy  
Sauda Abubakar Maani  
Rebecca Lee Merringer  
Michelle Mary Mae  
Brittany Lynn Roy

## 2018

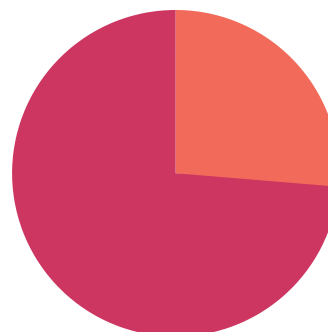
**Metro**  
**55.6%**



**Greater MN**  
**44.4%**

## 2017

**Greater MN**  
**26.3%**

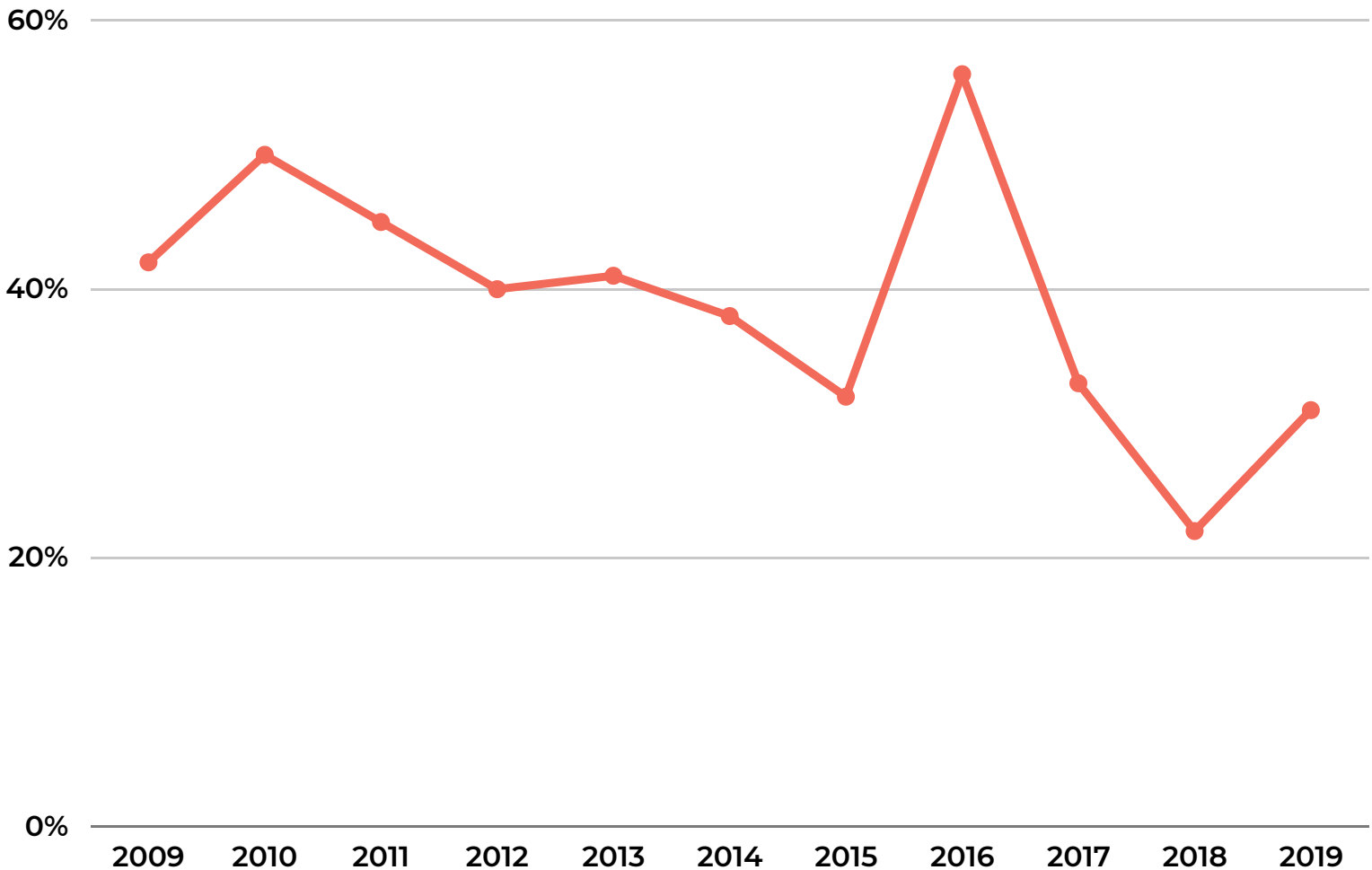


**Metro**  
**73.7%**

# HOMICIDE-SUICIDE

Key Homicide Statistics (2009-2019) for  
Adult Women Murdered by a Current or Former Intimate Partner

## Percentage of Adult Women Intimate Partner Homicide-Suicides Per Year



**2019  
HOMICIDES WHERE  
PERPETRATOR  
COMMITTED SUICIDE**

### **VICTIMS: 5**

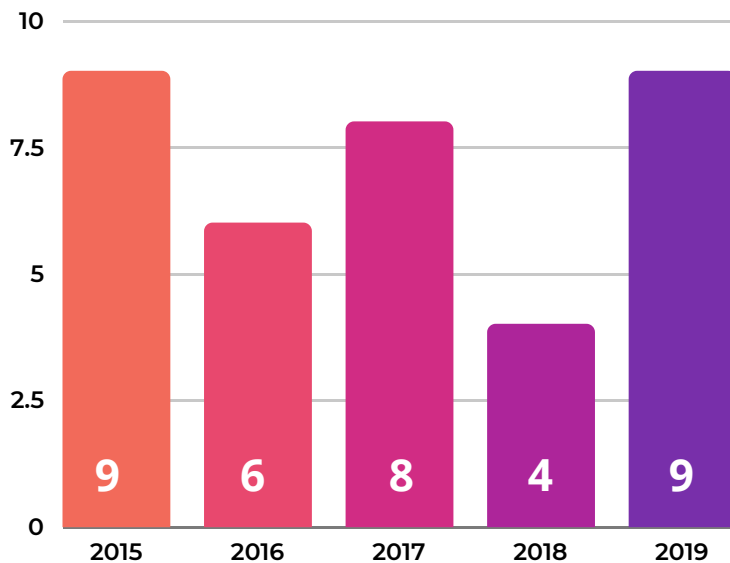
Julie A. Kneifl \*  
Alexandra Light Jacobs  
Rebecca Lee Merringer  
Mainhia Yang  
Kjersten Marie Ellingson

\*Perpetrator attempted suicide

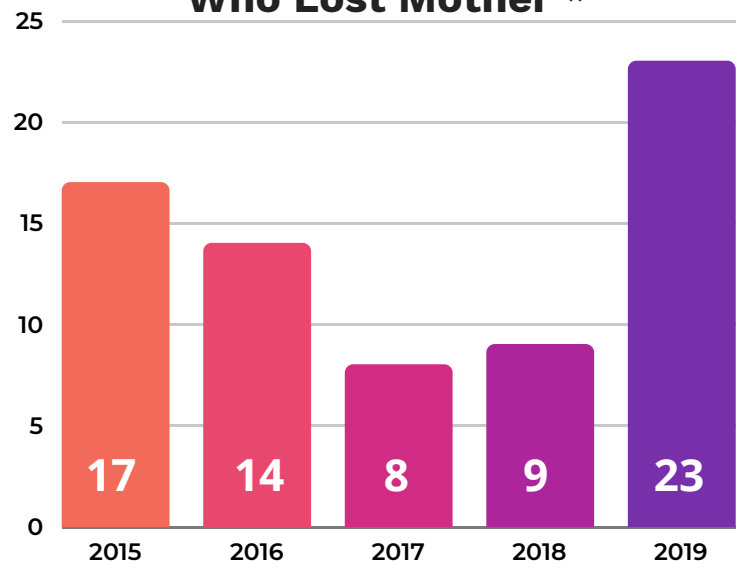
# MURDER OF MOTHERS AND EFFECT ON CHILDREN

Key Homicide Statistics (2015-2019) for  
Adult Women Murdered by a Current or Former Intimate Partner

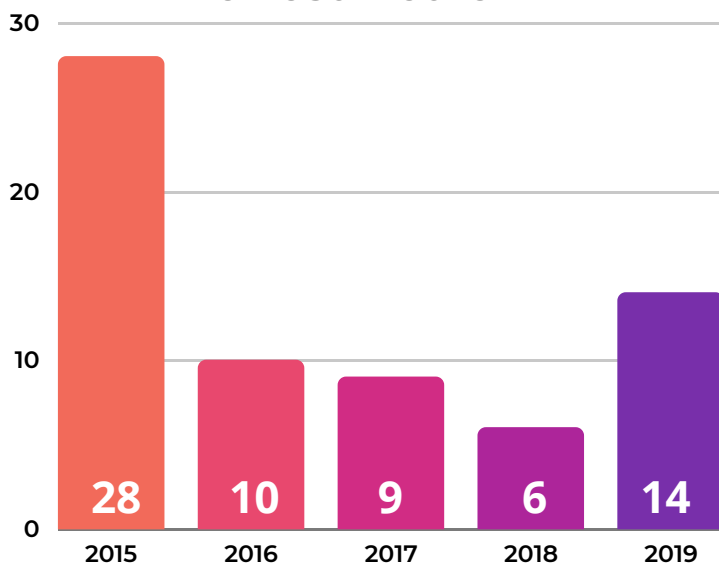
**Mothers with Minor Children**



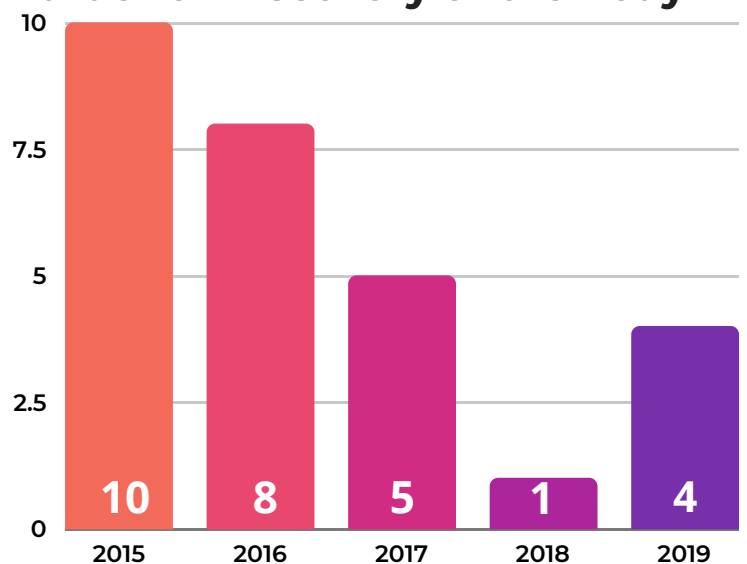
**Number of Minor Children  
Who Lost Mother \***



**Number of Adult Children  
Who Lost Mother \***



**Child(ren) Present at Time of  
Murder or Discovery of the Body \***



\*Numbers based on information available to us, and what we have confirmed. It is likely that some may actually be higher than indicated here.

**2019  
MOTHERS  
WITH MINOR  
CHILDREN**

## VICTIMS: 9

Candi Cheryl Goochey  
Nicole Ann Jazdzewski  
Jessica Tashaonda Williams  
Crystal Marie Bundy  
Mainhia Yang

Michelle Mary Mae  
Brittany Lynn Roy  
Raven Bianca Gant  
Kjersten Marie Ellingson

# RED FLAGS FOR LETHALITY

Each year, Violence Free Minnesota examines known intimate partner homicide cases in Minnesota and gathers information regarding four key lethality factors:

## LETHALITY FACTORS

- **the victim's attempts to leave the abuser;**
- **previous threats to kill the victim;**
- **abuser's access to firearms; and**
- **abuser's history of violence.**

Violence Free Minnesota has analyzed these four factors since 2006. For the past 13 years, these lethality factors have been present in a significant number of cases. If we had more access to records and conducted interviews with friends and family members of victims, we are confident that we would find additional information pertaining to lethality factors. We consider these four key lethality factors with the expectation that this information can be used to inform public policy and intervention strategies.

In 2019, 21 people were killed due to domestic violence in Minnesota. This included 16 women who were murdered by their current or former intimate partners.

## ATTEMPTS TO LEAVE

Mary Jo Loons Jansen, Nicole “Nikki” Jazdzewski, Jessica Tashaonda Williams, Raven Bianca Gant, and Kjersten Marie Ellingson were all either in the process of leaving their abusers, or had already separated from them. Raven and her daughter recently moved out of her abuser's home and had been staying with Raven's father. Prior to Raven leaving, her abuser had taken all of Raven and their daughter's clothing and refused to return them.

## PREVIOUS THREATS TO KILL

Rebecca Lee Merringer's husband had been committed to a hospital and spoke of harming her before his release. The men who killed Raven Bianca Gant, Michelle “Shelly” Mae, and Thea Renae Toles had all threatened to kill previous intimate partners.

## ACCESS TO FIREARMS

Matthew Jansen shot and killed his wife, Mary Jo Loons Jansen in February 2019. According to family members, an incident occurred in December 2018, causing them to remove all firearms from the home. Law enforcement found a receipt in his truck for a firearm purchased the next month.

## HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

Louis Bennett had a long history of abuse towards ex-intimate partners before he killed Sauda Abubakar Maani in a car accident.

**All of these cases illustrate the need for more effective intervention and the preventable nature of each homicide.**





# VICTIM'S ATTEMPTS TO LEAVE THE ABUSER

## LETHALITY FACTOR

National statistics, as well as information gathered from our history of reports, show attempts to separate from an abuser can increase the risk of lethality for victims. Abusive partners often view any attempts by the victim to leave the relationship as a loss of the abuser's power and control; therefore they may go to great lengths to prevent the victim from leaving. These lengths may include escalating or initiating violence as a means of regaining control.

If a perpetrator is involved with the criminal-legal system, victims may perceive greater safety; however, this may or may not be true depending on the level of monitoring and control from the criminal-legal system and the presence or lack of victim safety planning. Victims may also perceive greater safety in leaving the relationship when previous abuse in the relationship was solely non-physical; however, emotionally abusive relationships can and do sometimes escalate to physical abuse and homicide. Most individuals leaving abusive relationships are not killed, but a large number of those who are killed were attempting to separate from their abuser. Even when victims are able to leave an abusive relationship, there may be a period of increased risk in the months after leaving.

At least six victims (31% of adult women victims), had either attempted to leave or left the relationship in 2019. Many victims' attempts to leave were quite recent, including that of Nicole "Nikki" Jazdzewski, who was killed several hours after expressing that she wanted a divorce, and the majority of these cases involved documented or undocumented abuse histories, pointing to the importance of community-based interventions and safety planning.

## CASE HIGHLIGHT

### RAVEN

#### BIANCA GANT

On Thanksgiving night, Randall Watkins, 41, shot and killed his ex-girlfriend **Raven Bianca Gant**, 27, in front of their two-year-old daughter. **Raven and her daughter recently moved out of Watkins' home and had been staying with Raven's father. Prior to Raven leaving, Watkins had taken all of Raven and their daughter's clothing and refused to return them. Raven and her daughter arrived at Watkins' house Thanksgiving night to retrieve their belongings when Watkins prevented her from leaving the house...Raven's father stated she had been attempting to leave the relationship for a period of time and pointed to a history of abuse. Raven's father also said Watkins beat her and gave her two black eyes. When Raven's father previously tried to confront Watkins about his abusive behavior, Watkins shot him in the back.**



# ACCESS TO FIREARMS

## LETHALITY FACTOR

While the percentage of domestic violence homicides using firearms fluctuates from year to year, firearms are the most frequent weapon of choice and are used in almost half of the documented domestic violence homicides in our reports. The Violence Policy Center has found that female intimate partners are more likely to be killed with a firearm than all other means combined. These statistics emphasize access to firearms by an abuser as a significant risk factor for lethality. In 2019, twelve victims (57% of total victims; 7 or 44% of adult women victims) were killed by firearms.

National studies also show that firearms are the most commonly used weapon when there are multiple people killed by an intimate partner. A 2020 study using data from the FBI's Supplementary Homicide Reports found that among male perpetrators of domestic violence homicide, the use of a firearm was associated with a nearly two times higher likelihood of having at least one additional victim, compared to domestic violence homicides through other means. We routinely see this confirmed in our report. In 2019, David Schladetsky used a firearm to kill his ex-wife Kjersten Ellingson and their children William David and Nelson Sidney. Also in 2019, Bryce Bellomo used a firearm to kill his two sisters-in-law, Candi Cheryl Goochey and Heidi Eve Pierce.

Due to restrictions that prevent the Minnesota Department of Health from gathering and analyzing firearms data, we cannot know how perpetrators gained access to firearms - specifically perpetrators who used a firearm to commit homicide but did not qualify for a firearms license due to a history of domestic violence. In 2019, Theotis Thomas shot and killed Mark Franklin Jr., even though he was ineligible to possess a firearm..

## CASE HIGHLIGHT

### MARY JO

### LOONS JANSEN

**Mary Jo Loons Jansen, 46, was shot and killed by her husband, Matthew Jansen, 46, in their Blaine home on February 8. When questioned about what happened, Matthew stated he no longer had to "worry about a divorce now." According to family members, an incident occurred in December, causing them to remove all firearms from the home. However, law enforcement found a receipt in his truck for a firearm purchased the next month.**

Mary Jo Loons Jansen's family members removed firearms from their home for protection from her husband less than three months before she was killed, and Raven Bianca Gant's father was shot when he previously confronted her abusive boyfriend, Randall Watkins. These cases illustrate the need for adequate enforcement of firearm laws, the ability for the Minnesota Department of Health to collect firearms data as it relates to domestic violence, as well as the need for safety planning and risk assessments for victims whose abusive partners possess firearms.

# PERPETRATOR'S HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

## LETHALITY FACTOR

We strive to capture as much information as possible regarding a perpetrator's history of violence. Since our main source of information regarding a perpetrator's history of violence is through public court records, we are limited in our analysis. We consider a perpetrator to have a documented history of domestic violence if there are police or court records available to us or if a history of violence is referenced in the media.

Occasionally, media stories will quote a perpetrator's undocumented history of abuse in interviews with family members or loved ones of the victim or previous victims of the perpetrator. At times, we will be contacted by family members who share this information with us. We categorize this information as "undocumented but known" domestic violence history of the perpetrator.

At least eight perpetrators in 2019 had documented histories of violence against their current and/or former partners, children, or partners' family members, and at least two had known but undocumented histories. Perpetrators' histories of violence often do not begin or end with one victim; in some cases there may be a history of violence against previous or subsequent partners as well, up to and including homicide. While it is unclear how many victims in 2019 filed for or obtained orders for protection, at least two previous partners of perpetrators had obtained orders for protection against them.

## CASE HIGHLIGHT

### SAUDA ABUBAKAR

#### MAANI

Sauda Abubakar Maani, 24, died in a car accident in Owatonna on August 29. Louis Bennett, 42, was the driver of the vehicle and also died. **Bennet has a long history of domestic violence and assault. He had 17 assault charges in the past, two domestic violence charges that were dismissed, one misdemeanor domestic violence conviction, and three felony domestic violence convictions. Bennett was sent to prison for domestic violence against his previous girlfriend for an assault that required hospital care. She was granted an order for protection against him shortly before his release from prison in 2017.**

We note that in each of these cases criminal-legal system interventions did not prevent future violence or, ultimately, the homicides. These documented histories of violence by the criminal-legal system indicate the need for different interventions and represent missed opportunities, specifically for domestic abuse transformation programming for abusive partners, which addresses the root of power and control at the heart of domestic violence.



# THREATS TO KILL THE VICTIM

## LETHALITY FACTOR

Threats by the abuser to kill the victim, as well as the victim's belief that the abuser will kill them, are among the most reliable indicators of lethality. These indicators are often overlooked by the criminal and civil justice systems. A review of court documents and media reports of the 2019 murders does not reveal much information about threats to kill. We know that in at least three cases, the perpetrator did not make specific threats to kill but explicitly threatened to cause harm to the victim. For example, in the case of Michelle "Shelly" Mae the perpetrator's other partner stated he had made threats to kill her in the past, but it is unclear whether he made similar threats to Michelle.

Without access to and review of police case files and court records, it is difficult to determine whether threats to kill were made against the victim. While the absence of threats to kill does not tell us much, their presence can be a significant indicator of an abuser's risk of lethality.


## CASE HIGHLIGHT

### REBECCA LEE

### MERRINGER

Rebecca "Becky" Lee Merringer, 61, was shot and killed by her husband Duane Carlsrud, 62, in their Gary home on August 29. **Duane was previously hospitalized for mental illness and spoke about harming Rebecca before his release.**

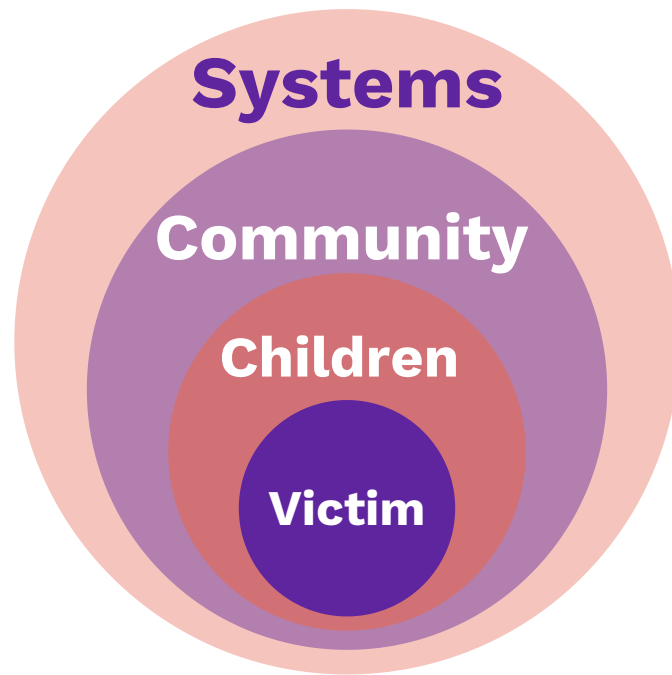


The background is a solid purple color with a subtle, textured pattern of concentric ripples, similar to water droplets. In the center, there is a faint, circular image of a tiger's face, looking slightly to the right. The text "CIRCLE OF IMPACT" is overlaid in a bold, white, sans-serif font, centered horizontally and vertically.

# **CIRCLE OF IMPACT**

# **CIRCLE OF IMPACT:**

## **VICTIM, CHILDREN, COMMUNITY, SYSTEMS**



Intimate partner violence - including homicide, its most extreme manifestation - has a ripple effect, or a “circle of impact.” At the center of the circle is the person most impacted by violence: the primary victim. Beyond the victim, the circle extends to the immediate family, specifically children whose primary caregiver is often the victim and/or perpetrator. For surviving children, trauma can last a lifetime. The circle widens further to the community. Friends, neighbors, and co-workers all mourn the tragic and preventable loss of someone they cared about. In some instances, these same people are witness to the preceding violence or the homicide itself; in other instances, they are killed as bystanders or in attempts to intervene in the violence. The community also experiences and attempts to grapple with trauma. Finally, the circle expands to encompass systems. While systems are made up of people, they are more than the individuals who work within them. Systems are large, powerful institutions with policies and practices that impact all of the other circles: community, children, and the victim.

Each ring in the circle of impact is connected to the victim and highlights the far-reaching effects of intimate partner violence. Within each ring, there are also opportunities or pathways to prevent violence. Communities of family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, faith congregations, and more can work together to dramatically increase safety in a victim’s life and their children’s lives. Yet, we also recognize domestic violence is systemic. If systems including healthcare; education; criminal-legal; child welfare; and housing were to incorporate the recommendations within this report, and implement survivor-centered policies, we know victims will be safer than they are without them.



# CIRCLE OF IMPACT: VICTIM

Victims do not just experience violence and power and control within their intimate relationships. They also navigate systemic barriers and violence beyond the abuse they face in their relationships. Victims facing racial disparities, economic instability, and criminalization experience compounding traumas that need to be addressed in order to craft effective interventions that work for individuals and make a safer Minnesota.

## Racial Disparities

Domestic violence occurs across all social boundaries and within all communities; however, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities are disproportionately represented among intimate partner homicide victims both in Minnesota and nationally. We found disproportionate numbers of Black and Native victims of domestic violence homicide compared to statewide demographics. Nineteen percent of domestic violence homicide victims in 2019 were Black, while comprising less than 7% of Minnesota's population. Native victims accounted for 14% of 2019 homicide victims, while the Native population makes up only 1% of the state. These violent disparities are attributed to histories of colonization, chattel slavery, genocide, generational trauma, and on-going systematic oppression.

Native women face higher rates of victimization due to legacies of colonialism and disconnect between local, state, and tribal laws. Jurisdiction issues between tribes and states create barriers and gaps in seeking due process. For example, tribes do not have the authority to prosecute non-Native perpetrators who commit assaults on tribal lands.

**Black women are significantly more likely to be killed as a result of domestic violence during pregnancy or the year after childbirth than white women.**

In addition, many Native women, girls, transgender individuals, and Two-Spirit individuals go missing at staggering rates, but accurate and comprehensive data is difficult to track due to lack of national media attention and uniform reporting.

In 2018, the Violence Policy Center found that Black women were murdered by male intimate partners at rates nearly three times that of white women. Black women are also most frequently killed with firearms, and non-Hispanic Black women and Native women experience the highest rates of homicide, of which over half are committed by a current or former intimate partner. In addition, Black women are significantly more likely to be killed as a result of domestic violence during pregnancy or the year after childbirth than white women.

# CIRCLE OF IMPACT: VICTIM

## Economic Instability

Economic abuse is one of the most used tactics to maintain power and control over victims and occurs in 99% cases of relationship abuse. It destabilizes victims' access to basic human necessities like employment, housing, food, transportation, and child care. Economic abuse includes using tactics that cause a victim to lose their job or public benefits; ruining a victim's credit or preventing them from having a credit history; denying child support or making it too dangerous to pursue child support; and causing a victim to get evicted from, or denied access to, housing. Victims may also experience difficulties with work absenteeism and maintaining employment. Victims may sometimes become involved in systems of sexual exploitation due to financial need. Economic abuse is one of the most common reasons why victims are unable to leave abusive relationships.

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**Economic abuse is one of the most used tactics to maintain power and control over victims and occurs in 99% cases of relationship abuse.**

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While we have not had access to consistent data on the economic abuse experienced by the homicide victims in our reports, throughout our reports we have found victims who had faced economic instability in the past and/or suffered from a lack of economic resources in the five years preceding their murder.

- **Crystal Marie Bundy:** petitioned David Lee Williams for child support in 2017
- **Alexandra Light Jacobs:** family was \$110 million in debt
- **Gennie Marie Kingbird:** taken to court by Beltrami County for money owed in 2004 and 2010
- **Mainhia Yang:** taken to court by a bank in April 2019

# CIRCLE OF IMPACT: VICTIM

## Criminalization

Survivors are often labeled as both victims and offenders within the criminal-legal system. Victims are criminally charged for a variety of reasons, including using retaliatory violence, acting in self defense, or engaging in criminal behavior due to addiction - which may be a coping mechanism to survive the abuse they have experienced - as well as for criminal acts coerced by abusive partners. According to the ACLU, as many as 94% of women in some women's prison populations have experienced physical or sexual violence at some point prior to incarceration.

Criminalization disproportionately impacts BIPOC communities. Survived and Punished reports that about 67% of U.S. female prisoners are women of color. Nearly half of all Black transgender people have been incarcerated at some point, many of whom are then further victimized in prison by guards, other prison staff, and other prisoners. Native Americans make up 1.1% of Minnesota's population, but according to the Minnesota Department of Corrections, Native women make up 20% of the female prison population in the state. The Lakota People's Law Project found that Native women are admitted to prison at 6 times the rate of white women.

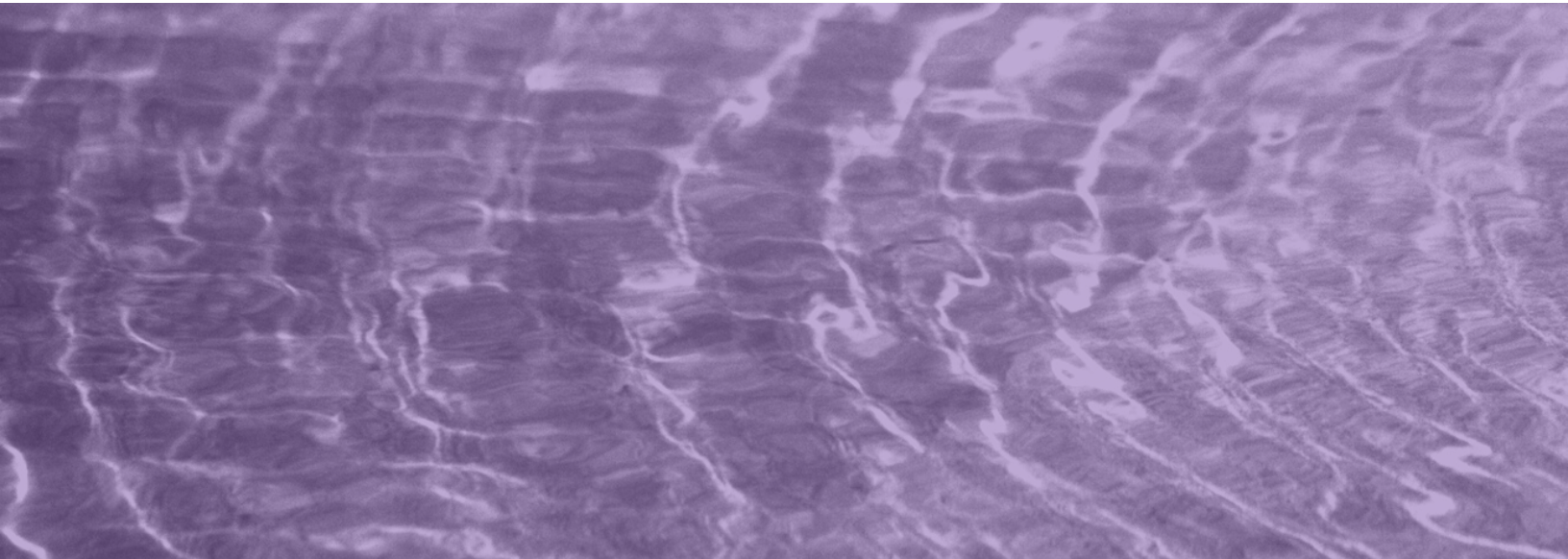
While gender-specific data on incarceration rates of Native communities is scarce, the Prison Policy Initiative reports that Native youth are three times more likely to be confined than white youth, and U.S. Census data indicates that Native communities are overrepresented in the criminal-legal system.

Race disparities play out throughout the criminal-legal system. Women of color are less likely to be able to afford cash bail as a condition of release thus remaining incarcerated pre-trial. Black women are also overrepresented in solitary confinement, on death row, and disproportionately serve sentences of life and life without parole.

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**Nearly half of all Black transgender people have been incarcerated at some point, many of whom are then further victimized in prison by guards, other prison staff, and other prisoners.**

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# CIRCLE OF IMPACT: VICTIM

## Criminalization

A 2019 report by Prison Policy Initiative found that nearly half of all incarcerated women in the US are held in jails and not prisons. This severely limits the programs and services available to incarcerated women. Prisons, due to the longer stay of those incarcerated, offer more services than jails.

Healthcare, especially mental health services, is scarce in jails. This is especially significant considering the high mental health needs for incarcerated women and the prevalence of trauma from violence in their lives. A study by the Vera Institute found that 77% of incarcerated women have a history of intimate partner violence. Histories of violence cause lasting effects from trauma and PTSD.

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**31% of adult women  
murdered by a current or  
former intimate partner in  
2019 had a criminal history.  
25% were charged with a  
QDVRO (qualifying domestic  
violence related offense).**

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Five of the 16 (31%) adult women murdered by a current/former intimate partner had a criminal history. Four of the 16 (25%) were charged with a QDVRO (qualifying domestic violence related offense).

- **Gennie Marie Kingbird:** convicted of a misdemeanor for disorderly conduct - fighting - in 2016
- **Darla Marie King:** Charged with domestic assault in 1994. Charge dismissed.
- **Sauda Abubakar Maani:** 10 charges for assault for brawling/fighting. Charged and dismissed for domestic assault in 2016. 2 theft convictions in 2015. Charged, but dismissed, for aiding/abetting and conspiracy to commit racketeering in 2017. Charge dismissed for emergency telephone interference in 2017. Convicted of 1st degree burglary in 2017. Multiple disorderly conduct convictions from 2014-2016
- **Michelle Mary Mae:** charged with domestic assault in 2014, later dismissed, and convicted of a misdemeanor for disorderly conduct - brawling/fighting
- **Raven Bianca Gant:** convicted of 2nd degree assault and terroristic threats in 2012. Perpetrator of her homicide, Randall Watkins, called police before he killed her claiming she assaulted him.

# CIRCLE OF IMPACT: CHILDREN

When the primary victim is a parent, children are immediately and significantly impacted. While some children are injured or killed as part of the relationship abuse against their parent, many more children are harmed by witnessing violence. In Violence Free Minnesota's 30 year retrospective report, we documented that over three decades, 151 cases of domestic violence homicide occurred with a child witnessing the murder. This data does not include the number of adult children who may have witnessed the homicide or were murdered alongside their parent. In many cases involving minor children, the need for protection was raised in a court proceeding or made known to another professional.

## Trauma

Exposure to household domestic violence, and/or witnessing the intimate partner homicide of a parent, can have devastating impacts on children throughout not only their formative years, but adolescence and adulthood as well. CDC-Kaiser Permanente's Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study is one of the largest investigations of the impact of childhood experiences on life-long health and well-being. The ACE research demonstrates that exposure to domestic violence can increase risk for physical, mental health, and substance abuse conditions.

Despite assumptions that children may be too young to understand domestic violence or may not notice, exposure to domestic violence can impair children's and infants' social, cognitive, and even neurological development. No child is too young to not be impacted. Exposure can result in greater likelihood of children experiencing or perpetrating dating or domestic violence themselves, trouble concentrating in school, lack of ability to empathize with others, maladaptive coping mechanisms, and the internalization that violence and control are normal and expected.

While many children are resilient and are able to cope positively and heal, this is not always the norm. One of the strongest protective factors for children exposed to domestic violence is their relationship with the non-abusive parent. When that parent is killed, this protective factor is eroded. While positive relationships with other caregivers can be beneficial in promoting post-traumatic growth, they cannot fully replicate the child's bond with the non-abusive parent.

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**One of the strongest protective factors for children exposed to domestic violence is their relationship with the non-abusive parent.**

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Multiple minor children witnessed intimate partner homicides and/or were left without a protective parent in 2019. In nine (43%) intimate partner homicides in 2019, minor children were present at the scene of the homicide or directly witnessed the homicide, and at least nine victims (43%) left behind minor children.



# CIRCLE OF IMPACT: CHILDREN

## Parenting Time Centers

Many cases in our 30 years of reports have involved ongoing abuse and control from an abusive parent even after victims filed for divorce, obtained orders for protection, and/or supervised or unsupervised visitation was set up. In some of these cases, children were murdered by the abusive parent during unsupervised parenting time. While it is unclear how many victims in 2019 were involved in family court, at least two cases involved homicides during the course of the abusive parent picking up, monitoring, or visiting their children. Candi Cheryl Goochey and Heidi Eve Pierce were killed by their brother-in-law after he arrived at his ex-wife's daycare where her sisters were about to pick up her and her children. Kjersten Ellingson, William David, and Nelson Sidney were killed by the children's father when he arrived to pick them up for his weekly parenting time.

**Parenting time centers provide a variety of services, including safe exchanges for families for holiday, weekend, and scheduled visits.**

The Center for Judicial Excellence has tracked the number of children murdered by a parent when divorce, custody, separation, visitation, or child support was mentioned in news coverage in the U.S. from 2008-2018. Several of these cases involve the murders of children by a parent during supervised visitation at a parenting time center, many of which also included a history of abuse against the child and/or other parent. A significant number of these cases involved concerns from the non-abusive parent about threats to themselves and their children's safety.

Parenting time centers provide a variety of services, including supervised visitation for families in which a participant(s) has been court-ordered to be supervised while interacting with their children, supervised phone calls, contact exchanges, and safe exchanges for families for holiday, weekend, and scheduled visits. Parenting time centers are not widely available in the Minnesota.



# CIRCLE OF IMPACT: COMMUNITY

The ripples of relationship abuse affect everyone, particularly those who love, care for, and work with victims and those who experience the trauma and devastation of witnessing or intervening in abuse. Long mischaracterized as a private issue between two individuals, relationship abuse often spills out of the home and into public life, with far-reaching impacts in schools, workplaces, community centers, churches, hospitals, and police departments.

## Interveners

Abusers who are confronted or witnessed while assaulting and threatening victims may also respond with violence against bystanders or interveners who may be friends, family members, neighbors, coworkers, or complete strangers. The end result is the loss of additional lives, creating a ripple effect beyond the initial target of abuse. Studies of intimate partner homicides have found that around 20% of victims are family, friends, law enforcement officers, neighbors, coworkers, and other interveners and bystanders.

A study of corollary victims using U.S. data from the National Violence Death Reporting System from 2003-2009 found that many bystanders or interveners killed were young and male, potentially due to male socialization and masculinity norms that encourage men to intervene in violence, as well as many bystanders or interveners being new male partners of victims.

Prior to an intimate partner homicide, there may be multiple community interventions or attempted interventions. Victims may reach out to family, coworkers, advocates, friends, and law enforcement for assistance.

While sometimes victims may hide the abuse, at other times loved ones are aware of the abuse and often attempt to help. Helping behaviors offered by community members may include providing alternative housing, assisting with court hearings, providing childcare, safety planning with the victim, helping the victim move, and offering emotional support. Sometimes, victims may decline help and loved ones may struggle with how to support them while taking care of themselves at the same time.

In one case in 2019, a victim - Mark Franklin, Jr. - died while intervening in a domestic assault, and in another case a victim's son was assaulted by the abusive parent several years prior. Raven Gant's father was shot when confronting his daughter's abusive partner prior to her homicide, and the family members of another victim removed the abuser's firearms from the home several months before her homicide.

Five of the twenty one (24%) intimate partner homicide victims were bystanders or interveners to domestic violence.

# CIRCLE OF IMPACT: COMMUNITY

## Public Violence & Trauma

It is not uncommon for abusers to publicly humiliate and criticize victims in front of other people as a tactic of power; public homicide signals the ultimate act of control and violence. An abuser who commits relationship homicide in public has not “snapped” or “lost control,” but in fact has already engaged in continuous violence and coercive control at home.

For those who witness a public intimate partner homicide, it is traumatizing, whether or not they knew the victim(s) personally. Witnesses may experience physical and emotional trauma responses, such as shock, disorientation, helplessness, numbness, anger and fear, and recurrent nightmares. They may also struggle with guilt about their responses at the time of the homicides.

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**An abuser who commits relationship homicide in public has not “snapped” or “lost control,” but in fact has already engaged in continuous violence and coercive control at home.**

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Loved ones and those close to homicide victims often suffer as a result, whether or not they witnessed the homicide. Several studies demonstrate that loved ones of homicide victims experience greater rates of PTSD than for other forms of violence, and may also experience physical health consequences, as well as economic consequences and loss of income. Some loved ones may experience secondary victimization through engagement with the criminal-legal system and other service providers.

Across several cases in 2019, victims were killed in public.

- **Kjersten Ellingson**, **William David**, and **Nelson Sidney** were killed outside their home
- **Candi Cheryl Goochey** and **Heidi Eve Pierce** were killed outside of a daycare
- **Gennie Marie Kingbird** was left to die on a back road
- **Sauda Abubakar Maani** was killed in an intentional car crash caused by her abuser after he publicly assaulted her on the street.







# CIRCLE OF IMPACT: SYSTEMS

Systems and institutions structure our society and lives. Victims often simultaneously navigate interpersonal violence and systematic violence at the same time, from the violence of criminalization to the violence of economic instability and homelessness. Challenging systems and promoting social change are core tenets of Violence Free Minnesota's mission. We understand that to center victim safety and end intimate partner violence, the largest ring in the circle of impact must fundamentally change to make an impact on the individual victim at the center.

## Criminal-Legal

While many victims do not turn to the criminal-legal system to address the abuse they are experiencing, others may have multiple points of contact with these systems. Some of the ways that victims may come into contact with these systems is through civil protective orders, Domestic Abuse No Contact Orders (DANCO), trials and testimony, and calls to 9-1-1 or law enforcement. Some victims have positive experiences with the criminal-legal system, while others experience retraumatization, harm, and a loss of control. Barriers such as language access, mistrust of legal systems, desire to remain in the relationship, and/or fear of the perpetrator, their community, and/or law enforcement may motivate victims' decisions as to criminal-legal system involvement. Some abusive partners also leverage criminal-legal systems such as law enforcement, civil protective orders, and family court proceedings as tools to continue to abuse and control, drawing victims into repeated proceedings.

In addition, studies show that approximately 80% of victims are afraid to call the police for assistance with the abuse they are experiencing. Many fear that they will not be believed by police, and studies show that 24% of victims who reach out for help are themselves arrested instead.

Prosecutors may threaten victims with jail time if they refuse to testify against their abusers. A study from the University of Cambridge found that Black victims whose partners were arrested on misdemeanor charges were 64% more likely to have died early, possibly due to causes consistent with chronic stress amplified by the arrests, compared to victims whose partners were warned but not removed by police. No such effect was found for white victims.

Further, a perpetrator's history of violence indicates varying points of contact with criminal-legal system actors and opportunities for intervention. These points of contact and intervention are an opportunity to transform abusive behavior through appropriate programming and potentially prevent future homicide. For each victim whose perpetrator had contact with the criminal-legal system, the system ultimately failed to create and maintain safety.

After 30 years of working with the criminal-legal system, it is time to re-evaluate whether criminal-legal responses are increasing safety, particularly for the most marginalized survivors, and creating the conditions for a future without violence.

# CIRCLE OF IMPACT: SYSTEMS

## Child Welfare

Children involved in the child welfare system as a result of domestic violence and intimate partner homicide may experience significant emotional and behavioral problems that may be misinterpreted by Child Protective Services (CPS), schools, and foster families as oppositional defiance, hostility, and aggression. Studies show that children with multiple foster care placements, children removed from their homes between the ages of 12 and 15, and children supervised by probation have a greater risk of incarceration. Placement disruptions and lack of coordinated care access may present barriers to children in need of mental health care for trauma. Due to systematic racism, Black children are also more likely to be diagnosed with disruptive behavioral disorders than white children and may be funneled into the juvenile justice system instead of receiving the mental health care they need to address trauma.

Additionally, Native children are disproportionately represented within the child welfare system, particularly in foster care. When abuse is reported, Native families and caregivers are more likely to be investigated, the allegations of abuse substantiated, and the children placed in foster care than white children.

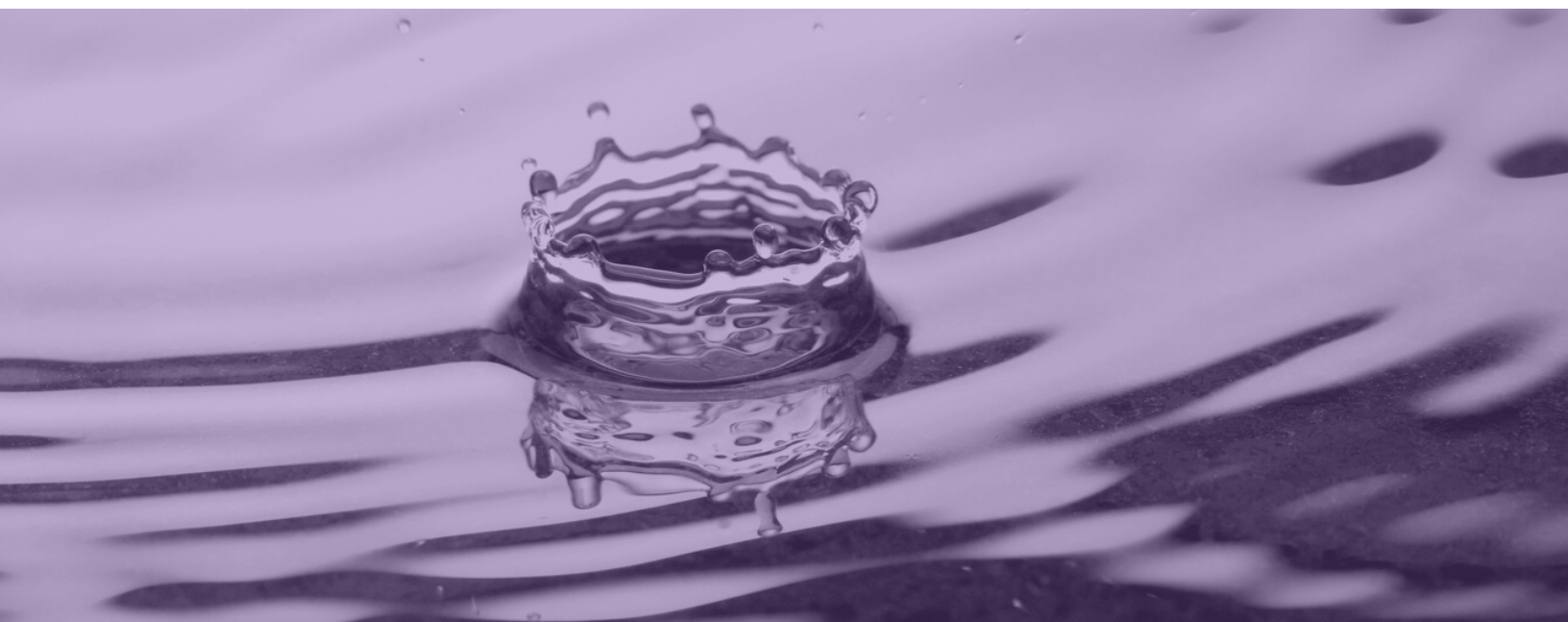
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**Native children are disproportionately represented within the child welfare system, particularly in foster care.**

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While some child welfare agencies may have co-located domestic violence advocates who provide training and case consultation, others may have few to no partnerships with agencies working to end domestic violence. In addition, “failure to protect” laws often further punish domestic violence victims and erode the protective, positive relationship with their children that is instrumental to child resilience. They also deter victims from seeking help for fear of retaliation from the abusive partner and criminal liability, and often disproportionately impact mothers of color.

Studies from the Children’s Bureau demonstrate that informal kinship care, or placing children with relatives without the involvement of the child welfare system, is a common practice among BIPOC communities and is used to preserve family and cultural connections. This practice can also help lessen the instability and disruption caused by multiple placements and lack of culturally-specific care.



# CIRCLE OF IMPACT: SYSTEMS

## Schools/Education

While schools may be a source of safety for some children and a place to escape an abusive home, they can also act as a pipeline to prison. Children who witness domestic violence, including intimate partner homicide, may experience incredible instability. They may have greater involvement and experience with domestic violence shelters and homeless shelters, homelessness, frequently moving between relatives, and the foster care system. These experiences and stressors may result in attending school while hungry, lack of sleep, reduced time to study and do homework, poor attendance, and increased anxiety and stress, all of which impact children's academic engagement and achievement. In addition, traumatized children may dissociate or cause disruptions during lessons, experience or perpetrate bullying against other students, or perform poorly in school.

**Zero-tolerance disciplinary policies in schools ignore the reason for traumatized children's classroom behaviors, and further punish and harm them.**

Children who exhibit trauma responses at school due to violence at home may be disciplined, suspended, expelled, and/or referred to law enforcement. These disciplinary methods disproportionately impact girls of color and push them out of school and into the juvenile justice system. Zero-tolerance disciplinary policies in schools ignore the reason for traumatized children's classroom behaviors, and further punish and harm them. Studies show that Black girls are six times more likely to be suspended from school than white girls.

In addition, the presence of School Resource Officers (SROs) in educational institutions frequently leads to surveillance and punishment of students of color, thereby retraumatizing youth for whom school should be a safe place. Not only does research show that the presence of SROs tends to generate an atmosphere of distrust, but SROs too often engage in violent and discriminatory practices to "de-escalate" situations (often involving students with disabilities and mental health conditions). These practices result in physical harm to students and replicate acts of police brutality used by outside law enforcement, such as body slamming, tasing, and placing students in chokeholds.

Because children who witness or experience abuse at home are more likely to fall behind academically, they may be diverted into remedial education programs at school, which disproportionately target youth of color and may lead to disability diagnoses instead of identifying trauma responses. Protective factors for youth experiencing abuse at home include a sense of belonging at school, which is eroded when teachers punish these students and separate them from their peers rather than providing trauma-informed services.

While it is not possible to know the extent of school engagement for the victims' children in this report, in four cases (19%) in 2019, minor children were present somewhere on the scene of the homicide or directly witnessed the homicide, and at least 23 minor children were left without a parent.

# CIRCLE OF IMPACT: SYSTEMS

## Healthcare

Many victims of intimate partner violence come into contact with healthcare systems at some point throughout the course of the abuse. The contact with healthcare may not be at the time of a physical assault. One survey of female domestic violence victims in Minnesota found that while the majority sustained injuries as a result, only 38% sought medical care. As a public health issue, the impacts of domestic violence appear in numerous areas of care: chronic disease management, depression and anxiety, PTSD, sexual and reproductive health, gastroenterology, and many others.

Some victims may not be comfortable accessing healthcare services for reasons including fears of mandated reporting and police or CPS involvement, and being prohibited from seeking care by an abusive partner.

Healthcare providers may lack adequate training in identifying and responding to domestic violence. In Minnesota, there is no specific statute addressing domestic violence screening or response protocols for healthcare providers, and while the Minnesota Center Against Violence and Abuse serves as an informational resource for healthcare systems, there is a lack of standardized, universal training.

While it is unclear exactly how many victims in our 2019 report had substantive points of contact with healthcare providers during the course of their abuse, at least two victims, Brittany Lynn Roy and Gennie Marie Kingbird, passed away in hospitals as a result of injuries sustained from the abuse, and the former girlfriend of Sauda Abubakar Maani's partner had previously been hospitalized after he assaulted her.

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**Domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness for women and their children.**

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## Housing

Domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness for women and their children. According to data collected by the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), between January 1, 2005 and September 4, 2019, 46,961 individuals who had experienced homelessness in Minnesota had also experienced domestic violence. The Wilder Research Center found in 2015 that domestic violence is one of the five leading causes of homelessness in the state. In addition, while the root of domestic violence is power and control, economic stress resulting from chronic unemployment and/or underemployment, foreclosures, evictions, and bankruptcy can exacerbate abuse. One of the top needs of survivors continues to be safe, affordable housing, along with the economic resources to maintain safety.

- **Mainhia Yang:** Evicted in 2018
- **Thea Renae Toles:** Evicted in September of 2019, months prior to being murdered







# RECOMMENDATIONS

Intimate partner violence is a public-health crisis and a systemic issue. As a public health crisis, it is predictable and preventable. Implementing policy changes to our systems and institutions can lead to positive outcomes including fewer instances of intimate partner violence and safer communities.






## T.I.E. MODEL: TRAINING, IMPLEMENTATION, EVALUATION

Violence Free Minnesota recommends a three-pronged approach for tangible change. Missing one element of the Training-Implementation-Evaluation model, or T.I.E., results in stagnation. Each element is imperative to success. Training develops understanding; implementing policies results in changes to practice; and ongoing evaluation of policies and practices measures change and intended impact. T.I.E. is an ongoing process; it must be routine and embedded in each organization, system, or institution.


# RECOMMENDATIONS



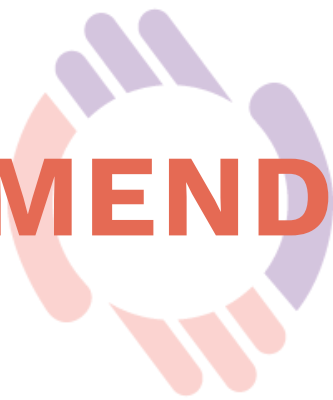
## Racial Disparities and Data Collection

-  Continue supporting the **Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women's (MMIW) Task Force** and similar projects focused on Native women and girls in efforts to analyze and expand data collection.
-  **Develop a task force focused on data collection** and research specific to victims of gender-based violence of **Black/African descent**, similar to the MMIW Task Force.
-  Specifically **collect and analyze data** at the intersection of race and gender-based violence in **currently existing data collection** (i.e. Minnesota Student Survey, Minnesota Point-In-Time Count)
-  **Policy changes and funding decisions based on data collection** at the intersections of race and gender based violence should be **centered on work by and for BIPOC communities, with BIPOC led agencies at the fore.**
-  Systems and institutions should work with trusted third party advocacy agencies to gather victimization histories - specifically histories of intimate partner violence - and base their policies, practices, and responses on that data collection to address histories of victimization.

## Children

-  Child witnesses to domestic violence and/or domestic violence homicide must have access to **robust, trauma-responsive and evidence-based therapeutic services**. Mental health professionals should collaborate with domestic violence advocates to generate partnerships that involve cross-training and consultation; domestic violence shelters and agencies may benefit from bringing mental health professionals on staff to provide services to the non-abusive parent and their children, ranging from individual therapy and family therapy to child support groups.

# RECOMMENDATIONS



## Children



**Children's mental health centers and domestic violence agencies must engage in cross-collaborational work and bi-directional referrals.** Children's mental health centers provide a variety of services, including assessments, behavioral therapy, case management, emergency services, and family and individual therapy. Mental health services for child witnesses must help children recognize how their behaviors have been shaped by trauma and develop positive coping mechanisms.



Systems in which children are found (such as CPS, criminal court, and family court) must implement training, policy, and evaluation procedures to recognize the importance of supports to protective parents and caregivers, including therapeutic services and assistance with basic needs such as healthcare, parenting programs, and financial assistance. For children placed with family members, guardian and family participation is vital to support children through the healing process and should be consistently encouraged. Children's relationships with non-abusive caregivers are also critical to healing from trauma.








**Continue to support and expand home visitation programs.** Home visitation programs provide comprehensive social and emotional information and parenting support to parents and caregivers during the early years of a child's life. Information about family home visiting programming should be provided to new parents and caregivers during prenatal visits and well-child checks for voluntary enrollment. Family home visitors should form partnerships with mental health consultants who can provide reflective and clinical support to family home visitors regarding children's mental health needs and trauma recovery. While the Minnesota Department of Health's family home visiting unit provides annual training to home visitors on intimate partner violence and Adverse Childhood Experiences, the unit must also incorporate children's mental health safety planning measures and child trauma best practices into home visiting sample protocols, technical assistance provision, and program consultations. **Funding and resources should be allocated for the development of culturally specific home visiting programs** such as the Family Spirit program designed to support young Native families, as well as for increasing diversity in staffing across home visiting units so that home visitors reflect the communities they serve. The recommendations generated by the Community Voices and Solutions (CVAS) advisory group to the Minnesota Department of Health in improving family home visiting programming for Black families in Minnesota must be sustained.

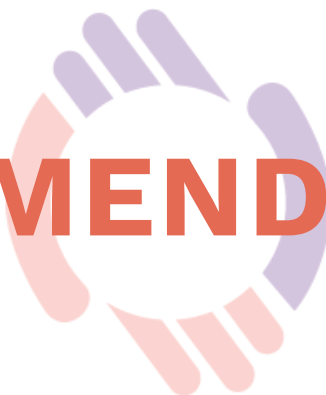
# RECOMMENDATIONS



## Children

-  All elementary, middle, and high school staff, regardless of role, should receive **robust, annual training on the impacts of domestic violence and child abuse** on children's social-emotional, physical, and academic development and performance through partnerships with organizations such as the Minnesota Children's Alliance. All school districts should identify trauma-responsive curricula, such as social-emotional development curricula and the evidence-based Helping Traumatized Children Learn curricula from the Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative.
-  All school districts should **consult with their local child mental health centers and domestic violence agencies** on the development of trauma-responsive school policies, and promote restorative rather than disciplinary approaches to disruptive behaviors in the classroom. Expulsion and suspension procedures should rarely occur and only for extreme safety concerns.
-  **Funding should be diverted from SROs to hiring trauma support counselors** that reflect the schools and communities they work in, implementing trauma-sensitive culturally specific supports in schools, such as traditional wellness practices, healing ceremonies, and art therapy, and the provision of alternative justice programming.
-  **Minnesota's school-based clinics should provide universal education on healthy relationships and dating violence to all students** with respect to gender identity or sexual orientation using the evidence-based Project Connect model from Futures Without Violence, particularly during reproductive and behavioral health visits. Students should be provided information about healthy relationships and services for youth experiencing or perpetrating abuse in relationships, as well as information about help for family and friends who may be in abusive relationships.
-  The Minnesota Department of Education's (MDE) **academic standards** must include input from community stakeholders such as child mental health centers and domestic violence agencies regarding the impacts of child exposure to violence on academic achievement; members from these agencies should be invited to serve on the standards committee and as expert reviewers.

# RECOMMENDATIONS



## Children



MDE's **School Safety Technical Assistance Center** should incorporate resources and technical assistance around student dating violence and child domestic violence witnesses alongside cyberbullying and bullying prevention initiatives. Domestic violence and child abuse advocates should be offered opportunities to participate in the School Safety Technical Assistance Council to provide leadership and guidance on the impacts of domestic violence and dating violence on children and adolescent students' academic and school engagement.



Prioritize the safety of non-abusive parent and children in family and juvenile court proceedings when domestic violence is identified.

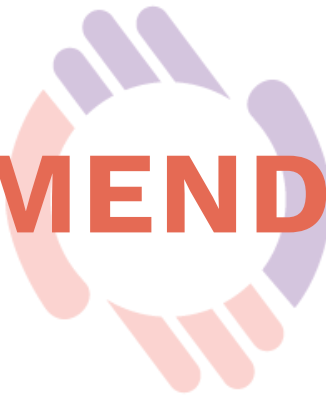


Instead of working in silos, **child welfare and domestic violence programs must establish cross-training, collaborative partnerships and develop trauma-responsive joint policies and protocols.** Through these partnerships, child welfare and domestic violence advocates must ensure children's safety while promoting parental strengths, and referring adult and child victim/survivors to domestic violence services where appropriate, deferring Child Protective Services intervention as much as possible so long as children's safety is protected. In some states, a child welfare practice called Differential Response, or DR, assesses families' cases to make a determination on whether children can be kept in the home while utilizing both child welfare and domestic violence services to enhance family and child safety. In Minnesota, the Family Assessment Response, or FAR, is often used similarly to ensure children's safety and respond to family needs while minimizing investigations and negative labeling. Child protection workers should collaborate with domestic violence advocates to consistently evaluate and revise FAR protocols for trauma sensitivity and cultural competence.



Create a consistent and reliable funding stream to **support parenting time centers (PTC)** throughout Minnesota.

# RECOMMENDATIONS



## Children



Kinship care, the practice of grandparents or other extended family members or tribe or clan members raising children when the parents or caregivers are unable to do so, can increase child stability while reducing the risk of child behavioral problems, in addition to decreasing the likelihood of additional placements. However, it is important that child welfare workers provide consistent and thorough follow-up visits with kin families and work collaboratively with them to develop prevention plans for children, as well as provide ongoing support and education on trauma-responsive care, increasing children's access to mental and behavioral health services. Children's extended family members should be engaged early and often in creating safety plans. Support should be given to kin families in the form of kin support groups, financial assistance through programs such as SNAP and Supplemental Security Income. Additionally, kinship support services should be evaluated regularly for effectiveness in providing emotional, social, and financial assistance to kin members.



Children of color are disproportionately represented in the child welfare system and in reports of suspected child maltreatment. **Child welfare programs should collaborate with culturally specific domestic violence agencies to receive training on cultural competence and cultural practices that may be misconstrued as forms of child maltreatment.** However, training is not enough and programs must routinely assess and measure racial equity goals, policies, and procedures as well as ensure that all risk assessment tools are routinely screened and tested for cultural and racial biases, such as misinterpreting symptoms of poverty as indications of child abuse and neglect, or cultural practices that involve children sharing beds with adults, as well as the incorporation of considerations regarding cultural discipline methods.



**Use the training, implementation, evaluation (T.I.E. model) for juvenile and family courts and professionals who work with families on the role of parenting time centers.** T.I.E. should focus on effective ways to use PTC for safe exchanges and parenting time, and how to assess transitioning to less restrictive parenting time.



**Juvenile and family courts should incorporate T.I.E. assessment models, like SAFer developed by the Battered Women's Justice Project,** that provide context for domestic violence, its impact on children, and develop interventions and responses that address safety concerns.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Community



Promote community intervention models that interrupt rather than confront those engaged in the use of violence and/or control tactics.



### COMMUNITY INTERVENTION \*

**DISTRACT:** Say or do something to interrupt the interaction.

**DELEGATE:** Ask for the help of someone else who may be better able to intervene (friends, neighbor, advocate).

**DELAY:** Check in with the victim or do something after the difficult moment or incident has passed.

**DIRECT:** Say or do something that directly engages one or more of the parties involved.

\* Credit: Khara Jabola-Carolus, Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women



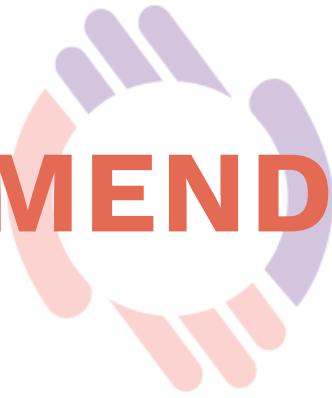
Enact **community engagement models** like those found within the *Creative Interventions Toolkit: A Practical Guide to Stop Interpersonal Violence* that provide avenues for calling those who use violence into community accountability processes and offer processes and support for behavior change.






Churches, synagogues, mosques, faith institutions, and **religious/spiritual leaders** should collaborate with domestic violence advocates and experts to provide education, resources, and appropriate support to victim/survivors in their religious/spiritual community. Faith communities can also play a vital role in holding people who commit harm and engage in intimate partner violence accountable, but should do so with the guidance of skilled restorative justice facilitators.






# RECOMMENDATIONS



## Community

-  Provide domestic violence **training** for all mental health professionals, including training specific to the trauma experienced by bystanders, intervenors, coworkers, and community members.
-  **Workplaces** should implement policies and practices that: appropriately respond to employees experiencing relationship abuse; encourage both perpetrators and victims to report and address abusive behaviors; and implement policies and practices that do not terminate or penalize parties for reporting violence happening within their relationships.
-  **Crime reparations and survivor resources** should be widely supported, culturally responsive, and provided to family and friends of homicide victims. Agencies working with families and friends should implement policies that provide the greatest level of transparency and most dignified treatment possible during a criminal homicide response.

## Criminal-Legal System, Criminalization of Survivors, and Community Accountability

-  **Invest in Domestic Abuse Transformation Programming (DATP).** While the state of Minnesota has made important investments in crisis and advocacy services after violence occurs, Minnesota has not made a statewide investment in programming directed at changing the behavior of those who use violence. To end abuse, Minnesota must promote culturally responsive programming that transforms behavior, prevents future violence, and increases safety. Only with sustained investment in changing perpetrator behavior will we end domestic violence.
-  Carceral facilities **must end policies and practices that retraumatize victims.** Such policies and practices include strip searches.
-  Carceral facilities **must increase access to mental health and supportive services** (including appointment frequency) within facilities. These services must be trauma-informed and culturally responsive.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Criminal-Legal System, Criminalization of Survivors, and Community Accountability



Establish a sustainably grant funded pilot program similar to California's proposed **Community Response Initiative to Strengthen Emergency Systems (CRISES) Act** [AB 2054], to scale up community-based responses to local emergency situations, including, but not limited to: intimate partner violence; community violence; public health crisis; people experiencing homelessness; mental health crisis; intimate partner violence; substance use; natural disasters. Such a program would create and strengthen alternatives to law enforcement in response to crisis situations not related to or that do not require a Fire Department or Emergency Medical Service (EMS) response in communities where there is a history and pattern of racial profiling, law enforcement violence, gaps in law enforcement service, or where vulnerable populations live.



**Reallocate resources from the criminal-legal system** - policing, prosecution, and punishment - **towards social and economic supports** individuals need to survive and thrive, including:



Organizations and systems that make appropriate mental healthcare widely available.



### WHAT IS CAHOOTS? \*

**31 years ago the City of Eugene, Oregon developed an innovative community-based public safety system to provide mental health first response for crises involving mental illness, homelessness, and addiction. White Bird Clinic launched CAHOOTS (Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets) as a community policing initiative in 1989.**

**The program mobilizes two-person teams consisting of a medic (a nurse, paramedic, or EMT) and a crisis worker who has substantial training and experience in the mental health field.**

\* Find out more about CAHOOTS here: <https://whitebirdclinic.org/what-is-cahoots/>

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Criminal-Legal System, Criminalization of Survivors, and Community Accountability



**Reallocate resources from the criminal-legal system** - policing, prosecution, and punishment - **towards social and economic supports** individuals need to survive and thrive, including:



Victim services and community programs that put resources directly in the hands of people who have experienced abuse;



Safe, affordable, long-term housing and programs that assist people in achieving housing stability;



Community-based violence prevention programming and Domestic Abuse Transformation Programming (DATP);



Restorative justice, transformative justice, and community accountability approaches to violence and abuse.



**Access to programming in carceral facilities** - such as, but not limited to, educational classes and workplace training - must be improved through policies that remove barriers to participation and increase the quality, quantity, and frequency of programs provided. The programming must provide opportunities that can lead to economic stability upon release, and gender disparities in programming within facilities must be eliminated.






## Healthcare



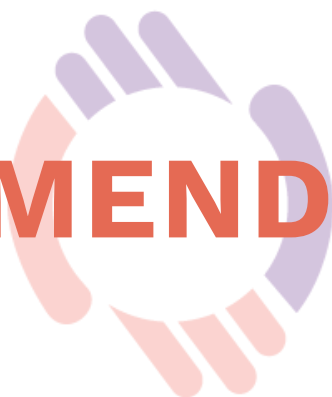
Healthcare providers must **institute universal education and assessment practices around healthy relationships** and domestic violence using the Futures Without Violence evidence-based health models to all adolescent and adult patients at every visit.

# RECOMMENDATIONS




## Healthcare

-  Require, either in statute or by administrative ask, training on identifying and screening for domestic and sexual violence and reproductive coercion for all healthcare providers who receive any funding from the Minnesota Department of Health. Healthcare providers should receive training on these topics using the evidence-based Futures Without Violence curriculum, and become trained on how to safely and effectively screen for violence through healthy relationship education to patients. This training requirement should include funding for provider time and for the advocates providing the training.
-  Clinics should partner with their local culturally specific domestic violence agencies to incorporate best practices recommendations into their assessment protocols; many cultures use different frameworks and terminologies for abuse. In addition, clinics and domestic violence agencies should collaborate on cross-training, case consultation, and the development of clinic and agency policies that support the health and safety needs of survivors, including policies that require patients to be seen alone.
-  Assessment for domestic violence should be incorporated into well-child checks, school readiness screening, and sports physicals. Providers must inform all parents and caregivers of the limits to their confidentiality prior to assessment and universal education initiation, and referrals to child crisis centers and domestic violence agencies made where appropriate.
-  As domestic violence may begin or escalate with pregnancy, all obstetrician-gynecologists must assess patients for domestic violence and reproductive coercion at initial prenatal visits, at least once per trimester, and at postpartum check-ups following the American College of Obstetrician and Gynecologists recommendations and make appropriate referrals.
-  Mental health and wellness services should be universally available and culturally responsive.

# RECOMMENDATIONS






## Housing and Economic Justice:

-  Support programs and approaches that offer **low-barrier, direct cash assistance to victim/survivors to make basic needs payments** like rent, utilities, or childcare can immediately increase safety AND future financial stability.
-  **Support economic empowerment programs that work to build financial capacity.** Violence Free Minnesota's Economic Empowerment program is one such approach. It provides training to direct service advocates who in turn provide financial coaching to victim-survivors. Survivors learn to manage debt, strengthen credit, build income, and increase their overall financial stability.
-  **Funding for housing assistance programs must be shaped by those with lived experience and programs led by BIPOC leadership who can create and lead survivor-centered and culturally-specific programming.**
-  Funding, including governmental grant programs, must **move toward expansive funding models with minimal administrative requirements.** Restrictive and cumbersome funding models create needless hurdles for survivor service providers, especially smaller programs and those serving traditionally marginalized communities, in their provision of services to survivors.
-  Local and state laws, resources, and **city planning efforts** must be focused to considerably expand the availability of affordable housing in order to address the critical housing shortage in our communities statewide.
-  The recent actions by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to rollback regulations that address fair housing protections for transgender individuals, women, individuals with disabilities, and BIPOC community members must be reversed, and **regulations that ensure equal access to housing must be issued.**
-  Laws and regulations that restrict access to public housing and housing benefits for **undocumented immigrants and those with and limited immigration status must be repealed.**



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Housing and Economic Justice:

-  Tenant protection laws must be implemented to ensure that survivors **can readily access and maintain affordable housing** regardless of past evictions, criminal history, poor credit, or other issues that so often are tied to past or current abuse.
-  Domestic violence agencies, and the voices of survivors with lived experience of housing instability, must be fully integrated into local homelessness and housing services networks to ensure that housing policies and practices are trauma-informed, and reflect the unique needs of survivors.
-  Passage of policies that **protect survivors from evictions** and the unfair negative impacts of having an eviction on their housing record, including but not limited to, increased notice requirements related to evictions, and eviction expungement reform.

# REPORT METHODS

Violence Free Minnesota tracks homicides in which the known or suspected perpetrator was a *current or former intimate partner* or the homicide is the result of domestic violence between current or former intimate partners. This includes family members, friends, and interveners who are killed as a result of the domestic violence being perpetrated by a current or former intimate partner.

## EXPLANATION OF DATA

For over 30 years, the statewide coalition to end relationship abuse has produced annual documentation on intimate partner homicides. The information contained within these 30 years of reports is overwhelming in terms of the numbers of individual deaths that are recorded. The reports list the number of people killed, however they do not reveal the enormous number of people impacted by those deaths, nor do the reports reflect the hundreds of thousands of individuals who, across these years, have experienced domestic violence and survived.

## REPORT MEASURES

In 1989, Violence Free Minnesota - then known as the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women - began collecting the names of women killed by domestic violence. The report has always recorded the deaths of women killed by current or former boyfriends and husbands. Over time, the report has expanded to include anyone killed due to domestic violence between current or former intimate partners. This includes the homicides between lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, and/or transgender current and former intimate partners, as well as cases of men killed by their current and former intimate partners. The report also documents the deaths of other family members, friends, neighbors, interveners, and bystanders who are killed due to domestic violence between current or former intimate partners.

Since 1993, the report has included those killed as a result of engaging in sex work and being used in prostitution or sex trafficking. These deaths are included because Violence Free Minnesota recognizes people engaging in sex work face violence due to stigma and that being used in prostitution and sex trafficking is a system of violence against women and children. These numbers were tracked separately for a number of years but are now included in the general count.

## CURRENT INCLUSION CRITERIA

- The homicide victim and perpetrator were current or former intimate partners, including dating partners; or
- The homicide victim was someone present during, or intervened in, an intimate partner violence incident, including friends, family members, new intimate partners, law enforcement officers or other professionals attempting to assist a victim of intimate partner violence; or
- Children who are killed by a parent's current or former intimate partner where there is sufficient public information that the perpetrator killed the child as an act of abuse against the parent; or
- The perpetrator killed the homicide victim due to perceived or actual rejection of romantic interest; or
- Homicides of sex workers, victims of sex trafficking, prostitution, and exploitation.

## AND

- If the homicide happened in Minnesota, if the body of the victim was found in Minnesota, or if the body was found in a nearby state but the circumstances surrounding the homicide began in Minnesota.



# METHODS

## REPORT MEASURES (CONTINUED)

We do not include cases where victims of domestic violence have killed an abusive partner in retaliation or self-defense. To make this determination, we examine each case individually, and consider the history of abuse, circumstances of the homicide, and information from family members and friends.

## WHAT THE REPORT DOES NOT MEASURE

The definition of domestic abuse in Minnesota law is broader than the definition that we use for this report. The legal definition of domestic abuse is physical violence or threats of physical violence between a family or household member. This includes violence between any family members or household members: adult child to parent, between cousins, roommates who have no intimate relationship, uncles who kill nieces, and parents who kill children. The *Homicide Report* focuses on one section of that broader definition of domestic abuse. Violence Free Minnesota specifically looks at those killed by current or former intimate partners or as a result of domestic violence between current or former intimate partners.

Why do we limit our definition? While all of these homicides are tragic and there are many similarities, Violence Free Minnesota has expertise in intimate partner abuse. We hope that by limiting this report to the intimate partner definition and looking at those deaths in light of the research that has been done about lethality and risk factors for that specific population, we may find information to help improve our work to end domestic violence.

Violence Free Minnesota also only measures those killed in Minnesota. Sometimes a person from Minnesota is temporarily residing in another state and is killed while living there. That person would not be included in our count. Conversely, someone from Illinois or Wisconsin or New Jersey may be visiting Minnesota and be killed by their intimate partner while in Minnesota. We do include that homicide in our count. The reason we make this distinction is twofold. First, we do not have the capacity to monitor the homicides that occur in other states. Second, we gather the *Intimate Partner Homicide Report* information in part to illuminate systemic gaps experienced by victims in Minnesota and create potential policy and/or service solutions. In recent years, we have also included cases where the victim's body is found in Minnesota or where we have reason to believe the homicide occurred in Minnesota, even if the body was found in a different state.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE REPORT

We rely on public information to create this report. In the early days of the report our sole source of information was media reporting. Currently, we identify most cases through media search results that are tracked daily, and then we follow up with local law enforcement agencies or county attorney's offices for more detail. We also look at other sources of information such as public court data, reports issued by medical examiners' offices, and social media. The way we gather information and the amount of data available to us has changed drastically over the years. However, we still struggle with inconsistent and incomplete information due to the discrepancies in the way information is collected and shared across the state.

# METHODS

## LIMITATIONS (CONTINUED)

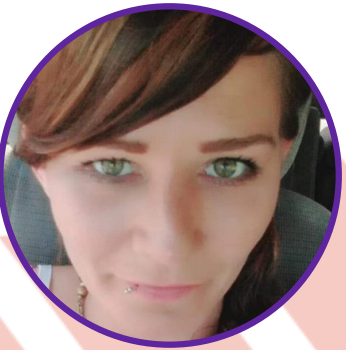
We use the phrase "at least" when describing the number of people killed each year because we cannot be certain we have recorded all domestic violence homicides since we rely on public records - primarily news accounts. In addition, almost every year there are deaths of women that are considered suspicious but the cases are not resolved. No state or federal agency collects comprehensive data on domestic violence homicides. In addition, the murders of women and children of color, Native American people, people who are immigrants and refugees, those living in poverty, people with disabilities, rural women, lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender people, and those who engage in sex work or are exploited in prostitution and sex trafficking may be under-reported in our listing as they frequently go unreported in mainstream media.

While we record all homicides that are a result of domestic violence between current or former intimate partners, we provide yearly comparison information on a series of factors exclusively concerning murdered women. We limit this analysis to women killed by intimate partners because we are looking at the research that has been done on risk and lethality factors for women in abusive relationships. It may be that men face the same risk and lethality factors in abusive relationships, but to our knowledge, that research has not been done.

The information in Violence Free Minnesota's *Homicide Report* is a compilation of data gathered from public sources; it is not research. We gather this information to bear witness to those killed, to raise public awareness of domestic violence, and to help inform our policy and service work. One example of this limitation is in regard to tracking the rates of murder-suicides in domestic violence cases. For a number of years, approximately 50 percent of the domestic violence homicides of adult women also involved the perpetrator subsequently committing suicide. This percentage was significantly higher than the homicide-suicide rate reported nationally at 30 to 35 percent. In a three year period lasting through 2015, this percentage showed a significant decrease, dipping as low as 23 percent. The 2016 domestic violence homicides data showed an uptick in murder-suicides again, with 56 percent of the cases falling in that category; however, in 2017, that figure again goes down to 37 percent. What we don't know, and what this report does not address, is why there was such drastic fluctuation in these percentages and what that means. Violence Free Minnesota is not a research agency. We present this information in the hopes of raising questions, opening the door to deeper conversations, and encouraging research agencies to investigate further.







# VICTIM STORIES:

**MURDERED IN CASES WHERE THE SUSPECTED, ALLEGED, OR CONVICTED PERPETRATOR WAS A CURRENT OR FORMER INTIMATE PARTNER**



**GENNIE MARIE KINGBIRD**

**January 6, 2019**

**Age 41**

Gennie Marie Kingbird, 41, died in the hospital in Red Lake on January 6. Earlier that day, Gennie's husband, Jeremiah Kingbird, 39, contacted police and led them to an unconscious Gennie on a back road in Redby. Jeremiah stated he was intoxicated the night before and beat up Gennie and left her on the road. She died not long after this at the hospital. Jeremiah Kingbird pled guilty to second-degree murder and was sentenced to 16 years in prison. Gennie Marie Kingbird is survived by her five children.



**JULIE A. KNEIFL**

**January 30, 2019**

**Age 72**

Julie A. Kneifl, 72, was killed by her husband, Harvey Kneifl, 72, on or about January 30, in their Woodbury home. Law enforcement arrived to the house on the morning of January 31, after Harvey failed to appear at a scheduled court hearing. He was on trial for ten felony counts of second-degree criminal sexual conduct for groping multiple children while they rode the school bus he drove. On the night of January 30, Harvey stabbed Julie in the neck in their bathroom; after she died, he used the same knife to stab himself in the neck in an attempt to kill himself. When officers arrived the next morning they found Julie's body and Harvey unconscious. He later told officers that he killed his wife to help her "get to heaven." Julie suffered from Alzheimer's disease for the last four years. Harvey Kneifl was found guilty of second-degree murder and sentenced to over 30 years in prison. He was sentenced to an additional 20 years for felony sexual misconduct.





## **MARY JO LOONS JANSEN**

**February 8, 2019**

**Age 46**

Mary Jo Loons Jansen, 46, was shot and killed by her husband, Matthew Jansen, 46, in their Blaine home on February 8. Police received a call from Matthew stating he killed his wife on the evening of February 8, and upon arrival, discovered Mary's body. Mary had served Matthew with divorce papers around Thanksgiving last year, and intended to move out of their shared home on February 9, the day after she was killed. When questioned about what happened, Matthew stated he no longer had to "worry about a divorce now." According to family members, an incident occurred in December, causing them to remove all firearms from the home. However, law enforcement found a receipt in his truck for a firearm purchased this month. Police had also been called to the home in the past on two separate occasions for calls classified as domestic-verbal incidents. Mary Jo Loons Jansen leaves behind two children. Matthew Jansen has been charged with first-degree murder



## **CANDI CHERYL GOOCHEY**

**February 14, 2019**

**Age 37**

Candi Cheryl Goochey, 37, and her sister, Heidi Eve Pierce, 40, were shot and killed by their brother-in-law, Bryce Bellomo, 34, in Nevis on February 14. Candi and Heidi arrived to a home daycare, owned by Bellomo's mother, on February 14, to pick up their sister and Bellomo's children. Bellomo arrived at the daycare not long after Candi and Heidi and an argument ensued. Authorities believe the argument arose from the divorce between Bellomo and Candi and Heidi's sister. Bellomo fired shots outside the daycare, killing Heidi. Bellomo then fled in Heidi's vehicle, which Candi was still in, leading police on a twenty minute chase. Throughout the chase, Bellomo repeatedly fired at officers, and injured a Hubbard County Sheriff's Deputy. Bellomo later exited the vehicle and exchanged gunfire with another officer before killing himself in the driver's seat. Candi was found dead from a gunshot wound in the back seat of the vehicle. Candi is survived by her three children. Heidi is survived by her husband and seven children.



## **HEIDI EVE PIERCE**

**February 14, 2019**

**Age 40**

Heidi Eve Pierce, 40, and her sister, Candi Cheryl Goochey, 37, were shot and killed by their brother-in-law, Bryce Bellomo, 34, in Nevis on February 14. Candi and Heidi arrived to a home daycare, owned by Bellomo's mother, on February 14, to pick up their sister and Bellomo's children. Bellomo arrived at the daycare not long after Candi and Heidi and an argument ensued. Authorities believe the argument arose from the divorce between Bellomo and Candi and Heidi's sister. Bellomo fired shots outside the daycare, killing Heidi. Bellomo then fled in Heidi's vehicle, which Candi was still in, leading police on a twenty minute chase. Throughout the chase, Bellomo repeatedly fired at officers, and injured a Hubbard County Sheriff's Deputy. Bellomo later exited the vehicle and exchanged gunfire with another officer before killing himself in the driver's seat. Candi was found dead from a gunshot wound in the back seat of the vehicle. Candi is survived by her three children. Heidi is survived by her husband and seven children.



## **MARK FRANKLIN JR.**

**March 15, 2019**

**Age 21**

On March 15, Mark Franklin Jr., 21, was shot and killed by his cousin's boyfriend, Theotis Thomas, 19, in St. Paul. Prior to the shooting, Mark witnessed Thomas choke his girlfriend, and intervened to break up the assault. Thomas then threatened to return with a gun and shoot everyone before he left the home. A short time later, Thomas returned and fired two shots at Mark, one of which struck him in the face and killed him. Another minor cousin of Mark witnessed the shooting, and several small children were in the home at the time, including Thomas' infant child. Mark had recently moved back to Minnesota from Iowa, to be with his mother after she was shot by her husband. Theotis Thomas was ineligible to possess a firearm due to a second-degree assault conviction when he was a juvenile. He has sentenced to 30 years in prison for the murder of Mark Franklin Jr.



## **ALEXANDRA LIGHT JACOBS**

**February 14, 2019**

**Age 77**

Alexandra Light Jacobs, 77, was found dead in her Orono home on Wednesday, April 10. She was shot and killed by her husband, Irwin Jacobs, 77. Irwin was found in bed alongside Alexandra, dead by a self-inflicted gunshot wound. Alexandra enjoyed painting and was known for her volunteering. During her later years, Alexandra displayed signs of dementia and used a wheelchair for mobility. She leaves behind five adult children.



## **NICOLE ANN JAZDZEWSKI**

**June 2, 2019**

**Age 40**

Nicole “Nikki” Ann Jazdzewski, 41, was stabbed and killed by her husband, Ryan Jazdzewski, 40, in their Duluth home on June 2. Police arrived at the residence and found Ryan and Nicole’s seven-year old daughter outside covered in blood. Ryan then exited the house, also covered in blood, and admitted to stabbing Nicole a dozen times after an argument. Earlier in the day, Nicole told Ryan she wanted a divorce. When an argument occurred on the night of June 2, Nicole attempted to call 911, but Ryan prevented her from doing so, and told police he stabbed her to stop the call. He also told police he “lost it,” and only stopped stabbing Nicole after their oldest daughter asked him not to kill her mom. Ryan Jazdzewski has been charged with second-degree murder. Nicole leaves behind her three children.





## **JESSICA TASHAONDA WILLIAMS**

**July 19, 2019**

**Age 27**

On July 19, Jessica Tashaonda Williams, 27, was shot and killed by her ex-boyfriend, Shakee Shabazz Miller-Brantley, 28, in her St. Paul home. Jessica and Miller-Brantley had gotten into an argument earlier in the day, and she told him to return the gun she purchased for him. Miller-Brantley then shot Jessica five times with that gun, killing her. Jessica's body was found at the bottom of the stairs in her basement, where Miller-Brantley had carried her. A shirt was covering her face, which Miller-Brantley had placed so her children would not have to see her. Jessica had recently broken up with Miller-Brantley. He told police she had kicked him out of her house, where he had recently been living. Miller-Brantley has a criminal history that includes two previous charges for domestic violence, and one conviction. He also has a charge for assaulting a police officer. Shakee Shabazz Miller-Brantley was charged with second-degree murder of Jessica and shortly after was charged with an unconnected murder of a Minneapolis man in May 2019. He was eventually found incompetent to stand trial due to mental illness. According to the court, Miller-Brantley has "a lifelong history of severe mental illness," including schizoaffective disorder and antisocial personality disorder. Shakee Shabazz Miller-Brantley is currently civilly committed. Jessica Tashaonda Williams is survived by three children.



## **CRYSTAL MARIE BUNDY**

**July 27, 2019**

**Age 30**

Crystal Marie Bundy, 30, was killed by David Lee Williams, Jr., 37, in their home on July 27. According to the criminal complaint, officers arrived to the home early Saturday morning and found Crystal in bed not breathing. The complaint described red and purple bruises on her face, arms, hands and feet, two black eyes, and dried blood around her nose. A preliminary autopsy report listed cause of death from blunt force injuries and strangulation. The manner of death was listed a homicide. The couple's four minor children - aged 2 to 7 - were present in the home at the time of the homicide. David Lee Williams Jr. has been charged with two counts of second-degree murder.



### **DARLA MARIE KING**

**August 4, 2019**

**Age 47**

Darla Marie King, 47, was stabbed and killed by her husband, John Lawler, 56, in her Bloomington home on August 4. Law enforcement responded to a call at Darla's home and found her unresponsive and surrounded by a large pool of blood in her kitchen. Lawler, and Darla's adult son were also in the kitchen. Darla's son told officers he heard his mother and Lawler arguing and walked into the kitchen and found Darla covered in blood and Lawler on top of her. When her son asked Lawler what he had done he said nothing, but his face "drained of color." An autopsy found Lawler stabbed Darla four times. Lawler was arrested for domestic assault against Darla and her son in 2015, and again in 2018 for assaulting her son, but both charges were eventually dismissed. A Domestic Abuse No Contact Order (DANCO) was issued in both instances. John Lawler pled guilty to murdering Darla and was sentenced to over 30 years in prison.



### **SAUDA ABUBAKAR MAANI**

**August 29, 2019**

**Age 24**

Sauda Abubakar Maani, 24, died in a car accident in Owatonna on August 29. Louis Bennett, 42, was the driver of the vehicle and also died. Police responded to a call in the early morning of August 29, of Bennett hitting Sauda in his car. When law enforcement arrived, Bennett fled and led them on a chase that ended with the fatal car accident. Bennett has a long history of domestic violence and assault. He had 17 assault charges in the past, two domestic violence charges that were dismissed, one misdemeanor domestic violence conviction, and three felony domestic violence convictions. Bennett was sent to prison for domestic violence against his previous girlfriend for an assault that required her visit to the hospital. She was granted an order for protection against him shortly before his release from prison in 2017.



**REBECCA LEE MERRINGER**

**August 29, 2019**

**Age 61**

Rebecca "Becky" Lee Merringer, 61, was shot and killed by her husband Duane Carlsrud, 62, in their Gary home on August 29. Duane subsequently committed suicide after also killing the family pet. Duane was previously hospitalized for mental illness, and spoke about harming Rebecca before his release. Rebecca is survived by her six children.

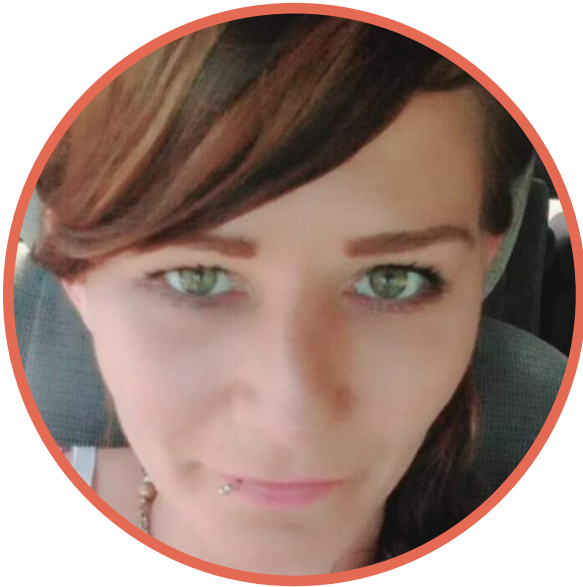


**MAINHIA YANG**

**September 7, 2019**

**Age 34**

Mainhia Yang, 34, was shot and killed by her husband Ge Yang, 51, in her New Brighton apartment on September 7. Ge Yang committed suicide after killing Mainhia. Police were called after a witness saw a man with a gun outside the apartment, before hearing a gunshot. Mainhia Yang leaves behind two minor children.



## **MICHELLE MARY MAE**

**October 3, 2019**

**Age 35**

Joshua Karjala, 34, strangled and killed Michelle “Shelly” Mary Mae, 35, on or about October 3, in his Swatara home. Michelle lived in Outing, and met Karjala through a dating app. On the night of October 2, the two went on a date. Karjala was arrested on October 5, on a probation violation for failing to disclose to his employer that he was a predatory offender, due to a fourth-degree felony criminal sexual conduct conviction in 2016. During the October 5 arrest, police found women’s clothing on his property that were later identified as Michelle’s by her family. On October 8, at the Aitkin County Jail, Karjala told a nurse he “may have killed a girl.” He said he could not remember much due to drug use, but he recalled Michelle allowing him to videotape them having sex, and upon viewing the tape he saw himself choke her to the point of unconsciousness. After a search warrant was issued for Karjala’s residence on October 15, Michelle’s body was found in a crawlspace of his home. At the time of Michelle’s murder, Joshua was also dating another woman. According to the criminal complaint, the girlfriend stated Joshua had choked and hit her and she was afraid to leave him because of what he would do someone else. She also stated he had threatened her life in the past. Joshua has a lengthy criminal history including: violation of harassment restraining order, numerous assault charges, a fourth-degree felony criminal sexual conduct conviction, a gross misdemeanor malicious punishment of a child conviction, and several domestic assault charges. Joshua Karjala has been charged with second-degree murder. Michelle “Shelly” Mae is survived by her three minor children.



## **BRITTANY LYNN ROY**

**November 22, 2019**

**Age 27**

Brittany “Goose” Lynn Roy, 27, was hospitalized due to injuries inflicted by her boyfriend, and later died on November 22, in Ponemah. The case is still ongoing. Brittany Lynn Roy leaves behind two minor children.





## **RAVEN BIANCA GANT**

**November 28, 2019**

**Age 27**

On Thanksgiving night, Randall Watkins, 41, shot and killed his ex-girlfriend Raven Bianca Gant, 27, in front of their two-year-old daughter. Raven and her daughter recently moved out of Watkins' home and had been staying with Raven's father. Prior to Raven leaving, Watkins taken all of Raven and their daughter's clothing and refused to return them. Raven and her daughter arrived at Watkins' house Thanksgiving night to retrieve their belongings when Watkins prevented her from leaving the house. After the shooting, police officers arrived at the Jordan neighborhood home in north Minneapolis and spoke with Raven's father. Raven's father stated she had been attempting to leave the relationship for a period of time and pointed to a history of abuse. Raven's father also said Watkins beat her and gave her two black eyes. When her father previously tried to confront Watkins about his abusive behavior, Watkins shot him in the back. Watkins was charged with gross misdemeanor domestic assault in July 2019 for hitting Raven but the charges were dismissed. Charges were also dismissed for misdemeanor domestic assault and interfering with a 911 call in 2010 after Watkins assaulted an ex-girlfriend, with whom he had a child. The same woman filed for an order for protection against Watkins in 2012. Randall Watkins has been charged with second-degree murder. Raven Bianca Gant is survived by her two-year-old daughter.



## **THEA RENAE TOLES**

**November 28, 2019**

**Age 43**

Thea Renae Toles, 43, was killed by Edward Zappa, 38, on or about November 28, in Mounds View. Thea met Zappa on the dating app Tinder, and arrived at his home on the night of November 28. Zappa was not home at the time, but told her to enter and wait for him after he finished Thanksgiving dinner with his family. He also texted her, "DO NOT" throw away a bottle of GHB he had, so they could take it when he arrived. Zappa was known to take and provide others with GHB, referred to as a "date rape" drug. When he arrived home, he gave Thea the drug and they both eventually fell asleep. The next morning, Zappa could not wake Thea and he called the police. He told officers Thea had not ingested any drugs, and an initial toxicology report by the medical examiner showed nothing in her system, due to the fact that GHB requires expanded testing. After the text exchange between Zappa and Thea was discovered by police, an expanded toxicology report was made and found a lethal dose of GHB in Thea's system. Due to the length of time it took to discover the use of GHB, Edward Zappa was not charged until July 2020, with third-degree murder and first-degree manslaughter of Thea Renae Toles. Zappa has a long criminal history which includes: charges of domestic assault by strangulation in 2015, terroristic threats during a domestic assault in 2014, and a felony domestic assault conviction in 2015. A woman also took out an order for protection against him in 2006. He was also on probation at the time he killed Thea Renae Toles.



**KJERSTEN  
MARIE  
ELLINGSON**



**WILLIAM  
DAVID**



**NELSON  
SIDNEY**

**December 1, 2019  
Ages 39, 11, 8**

On the morning of December 1, David Schladetzky, 53, shot and killed his two sons, William David, 11, and Nelson Sidney, 8, outside of their Minneapolis home. He then entered the house shot, stabbed, and killed his ex-wife, Kjersten Marie Ellingson, 39, before killing himself. Police officers responded to calls of gunshots and found the two boys in the front yard. As officers arrived, they heard shots coming from inside the house. Kjersten and David's bodies were later found inside the home. A divorce was finalized between the two in June 2019.





# **WE REMEMBER:** **MEMORY KEEPING**

Memory keeping is an essential practice to address and respond to intimate partner homicide and domestic violence. We grieve the devastating losses, while also uplifting that victims are not defined by their deaths, but rather by their lives and stories. Through memorializing the mothers, sons, children, friends, coworkers, and neighbors named in this report, we strive to keep their memories alive. They were nurses, caregivers, grandparents, students, teachers, and cousins, who brought joy, wisdom, and laughter to their loved ones. Their lives were cut far too short, but they touched so many other lives, and in some cases, saved them.

As we share these victims' stories and the statements and memory keeping rituals of their loved ones, we must not forget our communities' capacities for post-traumatic growth and resilience. Healing is a process rather than an event, and it is not always linear. But it is possible, and we bear witness to the public awareness and peacekeeping efforts made by the families, friends, neighbors, and coworkers of those who have confronted grief and loss, as we look forward to a violence-free Minnesota.

# WE REMEMBER: MEMORY KEEPING

## Statements from Friends & Family



**Mary Jo Loons Jansen:**

"This will definitely be a process. Something good is going to come of it. I just don't know what," said Liz McFarland, a friend. "Fantabulous mother," said McFarland. "She put her kids first. It was always about the kids." She described her friend as the loving mom, the diligent dental assistant and the joyful companion who knew the lyrics to just about every '80s song. "Those are the things that make me cry," said McFarland. "I won't get to have that with her. Her kids won't. Her sisters and brother won't. No one will be able to share in that laughter. I hope people understand and can learn from this and help somebody," said McFarland. "That abuse is not always physical. It's verbal, it's emotional, it's mental and it wears people out."



**Michelle "Shelly" Mae:**

DeAnn Evanson, Shelly's mom, said a letter read at Shelly's memorial service, written by a friend named Jamie whom Shelly met in the aftermath of Tobbie's death, poignantly described her daughter's personality. "Before you came into my life I was selfish, bitter, hateful, thought I was better than others. I was quick to judge without even giving anyone a chance," the letter stated. "Then I sat down and listened to you talk, listened to your story. That instant my heart changed. You taught me that no one should ever be judged. You taught me how to be more empathetic, and that everyone has their own story to tell. "You taught me all of these things just by being you. I've never met anyone like you, Michelle. I can honestly say that you changed my life, you made an impact on me that I will carry with me for the rest of my life." "She was full of life. She was a great listener, a great friend, a great mom. Full of life," said DeAnn Evanson, Shelly's mother. "She wanted to see her kids go off to school or get married and have babies. It was something that she was looking forward to because she knew how much I loved being a grandma."



**Mark Franklin Jr.:**

"He didn't deserve this," Mark's aunt, Danielle Moore said. "Everyone knows you're not going to hear a bad story about him because he's a peacemaker. He's been that way since he was a kid." Franklin had moved back to MN to be with his mother as she recovered from a domestic violence shooting herself.

# WE REMEMBER: MEMORY KEEPING

## Statements from Friends & Family



### Nicole "Nikki" Ann Jazdzewski:

"We hope Nikki's death will bring awareness for others living and coping with domestic abuse in their lives," Kenneth and Deborah Hovland said in a statement after the hearing. "How it can be hidden from sight, due to the manipulative nature of the people who are abusers, and how deadly it can turn when the abuser thinks they have lost control of the victim." Family members described Nicole as brave and strong, with an infectious smile and an unwavering love for her children. They said she dedicated her career to saving lives, most recently as an intensive care nurse at St. Luke's. "There is a huge hole in the living world where she used to be," friend Margo Kelsey said. "There can be no justice for Nikki."



### Raven Bianca Gant:

Jiccarra Hollman was Raven's close friend. She says Raven had a knack for style, and she earned it. "I would describe Raven as fun, loving, the life of the room, probably the most fashionable in the room," Jiccarra said. Raven's mother, Lakecia Gant, described her daughter as "super hard worker." She was an accounts manager at the Union Depot Hotel. "I want [J.J.] to know that she had an awesome mom who loved her very much, who loved her very, very much," Lakecia said. "That's not OK for any women, for any young adult, for no female to experience," Lakecia said. "It's just not right."



### Kjersten Marie Ellingson, Nelson Sidney, and William David:

Joyce and Bruce Ellingson, in a paid obituary published Sunday, said of their slain daughter and grandchildren, 'It is so very, very hard to move from the present tense to the past tense when talking of Kjersten, William, and Nelson. We are heartbroken'. The Ellingsons went on to describe daughter Kjersten Schladetzky as 'a fiercely loyal friend, a wonderful listener, a brilliant leader, thoughtful, insightful and a rare breed of person.'"

## Memorials



### Kjersten Marie Ellingson, Nelson Sidney, and William David:

An Honor & Memorial Gift was submitted to Guthrie Theater in Fall 2019/Spring 2020

# WE REMEMBER

January 6, 2019: Gennie Marie Kingbird, 41, died as a result of strangulation in Redby

January 30, 2019: Julie A. Kneifl, 72, died as a result of stabbing in Woodbury

February 8, 2019: Mary Jo Loons Jansen, 46, died as a result of gunshot in Blaine

February 14, 2019: Candi Cheryl Goochey, 37, died as a result of gunshot in Nevis

February 14, 2019: Heidi Eve Pierce, 40, died as a result of gunshot in Nevis

March 15, 2019: Mark Franklin Jr., 21, died as a result of gunshot in St. Paul

April 10, 2019: Alexandra Light Jacobs, 77, died as a result of gunshot in Orono

June 2, 2019: Nicole Ann Jazdzewski, 41, died as a result of stabbing in Duluth

July 19, 2019: Jessica Tashaonda Williams, 27, died as a result of gunshot in St. Paul

July 27, 2019: Crystal Marie Bundy, 30, died as a result of strangulation in Sauk Rapids

August 4, 2019: Darla Marie King, 47, died as a result of strangulation in Sauk Rapids

August 29, 2019: Sauda Abubakar Maani, 24, died as a result of strangulation in Owatonna

August 29, 2019: Rebecca Lee Merringer, 62, died as a result of gunshot in Gary

September 7, 2019: Mainhia Yang, 34, died as a result of gunshot in New Brighton

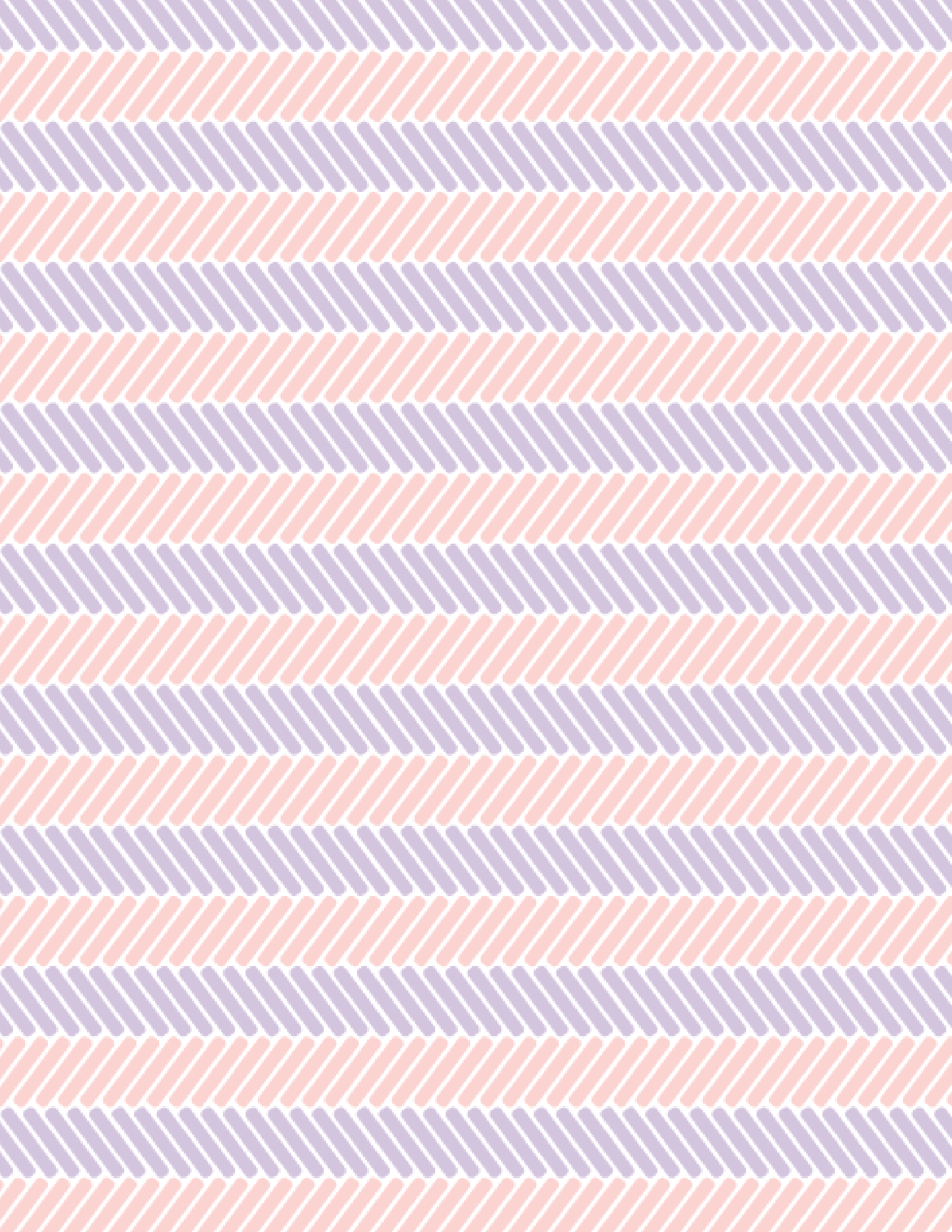
October 3, 2019: Michelle Mary Mae, 35, died as a result of strangulation in Swatara

November 22, 2019: Brittany Lynn Roy, 27, died as a result of beating in Ponemah

November 28, 2019: Raven Bianca Gant, 27, died as a result of gunshot in Minneapolis

November 28, 2019: Thea Renae Toles, 43, died as a result of toxicity poisoning/drugging in Mounds View

December 1, 2019: Kjersten Marie Ellingson, 39, William David, 11, and Nelson Sidney, 8, died as a result of gunshot in Minneapolis







## **VIOLENCE FREE** **MINNESOTA**

THE COALITION TO END RELATIONSHIP ABUSE

### **ABOUT**

Founded in 1978, Violence Free Minnesota is a statewide coalition of over 90 member programs working to end relationship abuse. Violence Free Minnesota strives to end relationship abuse by taking strategic action in partnership with the power of survivors and member programs across the state. As Minnesota's state domestic violence coalition, we shape public policy, raise public awareness, and build the capacity of community-based programs to address the needs of survivors of relationship violence and advocate on their behalf.

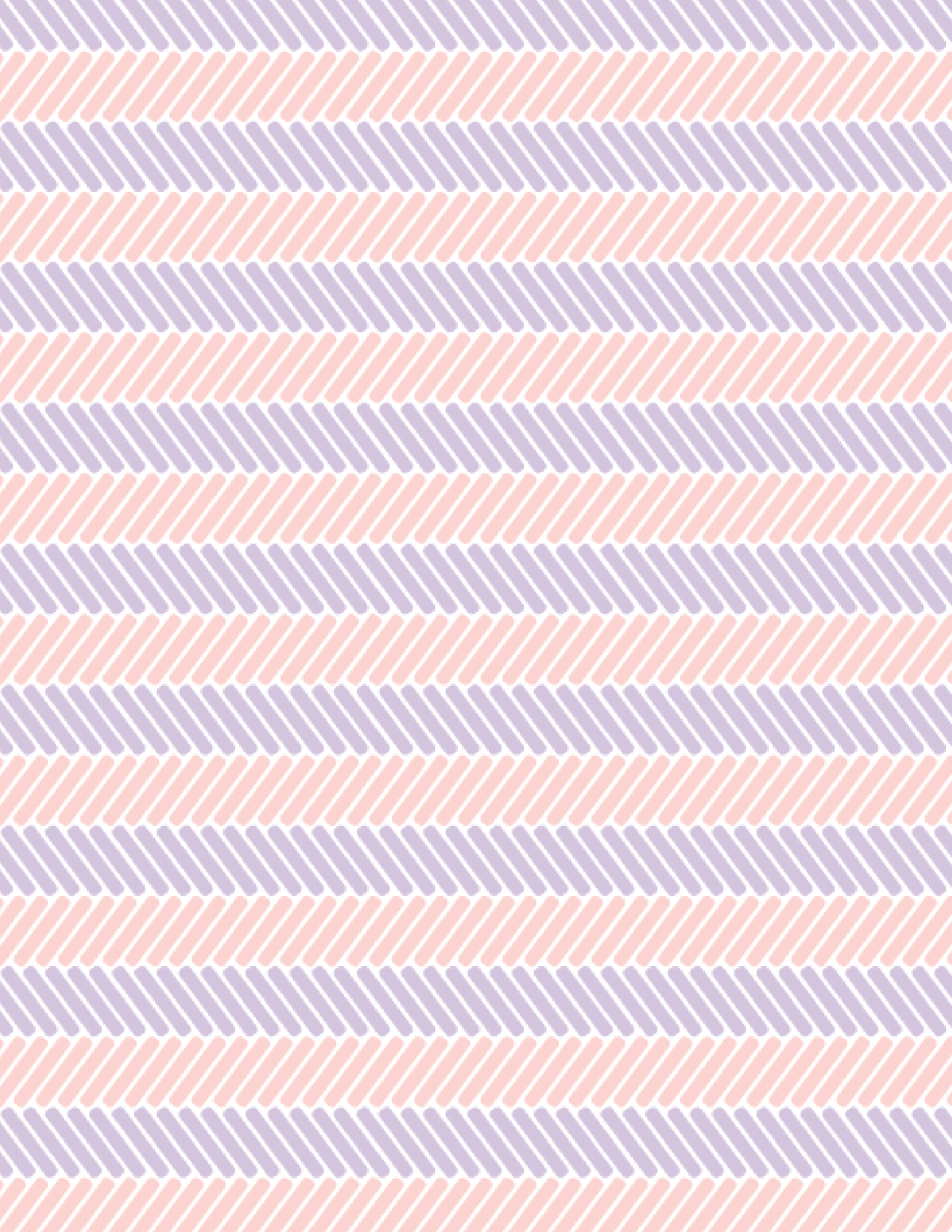
We ask Violence Free Minnesota be credited when information from this report is used.

### **OUR MISSION**

- Represent relationship abuse victim/survivors and member programs;
- Challenge systems and institutions;
- Promote social change;
- And support, educate, and connect member programs.

### **OUR VISION**

To end relationship abuse, create safety, and achieve social justice for all.





# **VIOLENCE FREE** MINNESOTA

THE COALITION TO END RELATIONSHIP ABUSE

**If you are a victim experiencing abuse,  
contact Day One at **866.223.1111** to connect with services.**

Violence Free Minnesota  
60 East Plato Boulevard, Suite 230  
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55107  
Ph. 651.646.6177  
[www.violencefreeminnesota.org](http://www.violencefreeminnesota.org)

A MEMBER OF



MINNESOTA