

## Recommendations for DFCS and Child Support Services

Employees of the Department of Family and Children Services and Child Support Services are uniquely positioned to impact safety for victims and accountability for perpetrators of domestic violence.

The Georgia Domestic Violence Fatality Review Project has developed recommendations geared to reduce incidents of domestic violence and domestic violence-related homicide. To affect change, local communities must work diligently to implement these recommendations, which were developed by fatality review teams across the state. Acting on established best practices and calls to action from the Project's 15-year history is how Georgia will see real change in the future.

### On the Job

- + Ensure staff have the resources, training and information they need to respond to domestic violence cases. Because social services staff, particularly those responding to referrals in the field, are often the first point of contact victims will have with “the system,” how their case is handled often sets the tone for future requests for assistance or intervention by victims. Ensuring staff members have a dynamic understanding of the problem of domestic violence and how to intervene is vital. Providing any additional resources and support they need to do their job effectively is imperative.
- + Make contact information for domestic violence programs available on a widespread basis in all of Georgia's communities. Both traditional and non-traditional systems will benefit from referral information for supportive services such as the statewide domestic violence hotline 1 (800) 33-HAVEN [1 (800) 334-2836] and local domestic violence programs. Posters and other awareness resources are also available for download at [GeorgiaFatalityReview.com](http://GeorgiaFatalityReview.com).
  - o Increase awareness of resources available to teens, such as textlines. Georgia teens can contact the Breaking Silence Teen Textline any time at (706) 765-8019 for confidential support. Love Is Respect also offers teens a safe place to connect with an advocate via text. Users can text “loveis” to 22522 to receive assistance from a peer advocate.
- + Secure basic safety planning training for all responders and service providers. Training on safety planning provides an excellent opportunity to bridge the gap between domestic violence programs and other agencies in contact with victims, and enhances the coordinated community response to intimate partner violence.
  - o Ensure responders from across the spectrum receive training on the issue of intimate partner stalking. The training should incorporate both the identification of stalking behaviors and how to respond to



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- intimate partner stalking in accordance with best practices within their field.
- Ensure all responders receive ongoing culturally specific training and information addressing the intersection of domestic violence and marginalized and underserved communities.
- + Encourage voluntary surrender and safekeeping of firearms in domestic violence-related safety plans.
  - Work with your local task force or coordinated community response group to develop countywide protocols to establish how each agency will cooperate to restrict access to firearms by domestic violence offenders and protective order respondents. Georgia's communities must carry the torch for this important issue until legislative and legal system actions catch up with the risk firearms pose to citizens of our state.
- + Regularly update your local Child Abuse Protocol in collaboration with domestic violence advocates.
- + Develop new resources and services which benefit child witnesses to abuse in the home. Proactive responses to children exposed to domestic violence require significant commitment from their community and local service providers. Every system can play a role in assisting children exposed to domestic violence. Family connections, local school boards, teachers, faith-based youth groups, after-school programs, camp counselors and coaches are each positioned to develop resilience in children and to provide warm referrals to existing resources. Every system should promote programs for children and teens which teach coping skills, positive and healthy relationships and how to identify and manage emotions.
- + In the event of a serious injury incident or domestic violence-related homicide:
  - Support parents, caregivers, and children to mitigate the impact of trauma.
  - Prioritize the emotional and mental health of surviving children following the homicide. All surviving children should receive professional counseling with therapists who specialize in grief and trauma.
  - Ensure surviving family members who are raising children are aware of kinship care resources.
- + Inform victims about the increased risk correlated with filing for child support and provide a referral to a domestic violence program or hotline for assistance with safety planning. The Georgia Domestic Violence Hotline number is 1-800-33-HAVEN.
- + Provide advance notice of hearings to victims and encourage victims of abuse to receive safety planning around increased risk associated with the looming accountability of court.
- + Develop integrated intervention responses which address both domestic violence and substance abuse issues simultaneously. Promising results have been reported for integrated interventions which address domestic violence and substance use simultaneously.



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- + Expand awareness that co-occurring issues such as mental health and substance abuse increase risk of lethal incidents of domestic violence. Share with clients and other stakeholders that while other issues co-occur with intimate partner violence, they do not cause it.
  - + To comprehensively address the problem, systems responders must assess their unique position to determine how they can impact change. All stakeholders must take immediate steps to address abusers' issues of non-compliance with court orders or new incidents of abuse.
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## Use the Georgia Domestic Violence Fatality Review Project Annual Report

- + Read and Remember
  - o Read the fatality review reports and remember the stories of those who have lost their lives to domestic violence.
  - o Share victims' names and stories at events that honor domestic violence victims and survivors.
- + Share with Others
  - o Copies of this report and prior reports are available at [GeorgiaFatalityReview.com](https://GeorgiaFatalityReview.com). Email the link to coworkers, advocates, judges, police officers, mental health professionals, substance abuse counselors, attorneys, health care workers, religious leaders, teachers, family, and friends.
  - o Print the sections you think are relevant to others' work and share these sections with them.
  - o Print sections as handouts and use them in community presentations.
- + Discuss with Coworkers
  - o Discuss the report during a staff meeting at your workplace.
  - o Identify which recommendations are most relevant to your agency, and develop specific steps forward and work toward their implementation.
  - o Incorporate into Strategic Planning
- + Use the recommendations as a tool for strategic planning.
  - o Identify other agencies with which you want to collaborate, and discuss specific goals you can work toward together.
  - o Use fatality review statistics and recommendations in grant proposals.
- + Develop Task Force Initiatives



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- As a group, identify areas in which the community is doing well and areas in which improvement is needed.
- Identify two to four recommendations that are priorities for your community and implement them.
- Create a subcommittee for your priority areas and report your progress to the Georgia Commission on Family Violence.

## + Increase Community Awareness

- Create discussion groups in your community to talk about the fatality review reports and recommendations for change. These groups can be interdisciplinary groups of professionals or groups of community members interested in making their communities safer and healthier.
- As a group, identify action steps toward implementing the recommendations in this report.
- Contact the Georgia Commission on Family Violence or the Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence for further conversations and presentations.

## + Alert the Media

- Alert the local media about fatality review findings, recommendations, and local work being done to help victims of domestic violence.
- For additional suggestions about working with the media download our Domestic Violence and The Media tip sheet here [GeorgiaFatalityReview.com/resources/](https://GeorgiaFatalityReview.com/resources/).

