

## Recommendations for Faith Leaders

Communities of faith 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.

### Incorporate Awareness of Domestic Violence

- + Let congregants know it is safe to discuss domestic violence-related issues by providing information through sermons, newsletter articles/ bulletins and in premarital counseling.
  - o Include messaging in public education and outreach efforts directed to family members and friends of those experiencing violence. Incorporate tips for how to support a victim, where to call for help, and recognizing signs of escalating danger. Provide supportive resources which assist bystanders in processing helpful ways to support someone close to them experiencing or perpetrating violence, such as a friends and family support group.
  - o Expand awareness that co-occurring issues increase risk of lethal incidents of domestic violence. Conduct an awareness campaign and continuing education for stakeholders which includes messaging that while other issues co-occur with intimate partner violence, they do not cause it.
- + Make brochures and materials on domestic violence program services available in public offices and restrooms.
  - o 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).
- + Get to know your community's domestic violence program and create a resource referral network. Provide warm referrals to domestic violence advocates for ongoing supportive services and safety planning.
  - o Welcome domestic violence responders to your place of worship and events and conduct an awareness event.



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- + Proactive responses to children exposed to domestic violence require significant commitment from the community and every system can play a role in assisting children exposed to domestic violence including: family connections, local school boards, teachers, faith-based youth groups, after-school programs, camp counselors and coaches. These service providers are positioned to develop resilience in children and to provide warm referrals to existing resources. Developing and promoting new resources and programs for children and teens which benefit child witnesses to domestic violence is also essential. Programming should also teach coping skills, information on positive and healthy relationships and how to identify and manage emotions.
  - + Work with domestic violence advocates to train staff and volunteers about domestic violence and stalking. With assistance from domestic violence advocates, make an organizational plan for responding to abuse within congregations, prioritizing victim safety and abuser accountability.
  - + To comprehensively address the problem, system 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.
  - + Participate in domestic violence training for faith leaders and engage in the work to end domestic violence. Work with your local domestic violence task force or domestic violence program to use the Safe Sacred Space: A Training Guide for Family Violence Task Forces, which is available for download at GeorgiaFatalityReview.com. Additional information can be obtained at FaithTrustInstitute.org.
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## Address Safety

- + Request extra patrol from law enforcement around your place of worship if there are concerns an abuser may try to establish contact with the victim there.
  - + Offer safe accompaniment to religious functions for victims who may be experiencing abuse.
  - + Avoid counseling couples together when allegations of domestic violence or stalking are present.
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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.



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- Share victims' names and stories at events that honor domestic violence victims and survivors.

## + Share with Others

- 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.
- Print the sections you think are relevant to others' work and share these sections with them.
- Print sections as handouts and use them in community presentations.

## + Discuss with Coworkers

- Discuss the report during a staff meeting at your workplace.
- Identify which recommendations are most relevant to your agency, and develop specific steps forward and work toward their implementation.

## + Incorporate into Strategic Planning

- Use the recommendations as a tool for strategic planning.
- If you work in a nonprofit agency, share the fatality review reports with your board of directors.
- Identify other agencies with which you want to collaborate, and discuss specific goals you can work toward together.
- Use fatality review statistics and recommendations in grant proposals.

## + Develop Task Force Initiatives

- 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.



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- 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/).



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