

Recommendations for Georgia Legislators

Legislators 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.

Under the Gold Dome

- + Ensure that staffers in contact with constituents are aware of victim services organizations in your area. Share the Georgia Domestic Violence Hotline number is 1-800-33-HAVEN with constituents who are at risk for abuse.
 - o Identify and provide information from your local domestic violence program.
 - o Posters and other awareness resources are also available for download at GeorgiaFatalityReview.com.
- + Enact proactive legislation to limit abuser access to firearms. Georgia has fallen behind our closest neighbors and many other states in efforts to address the public safety issues that abusers with firearms access pose.
 - o A concerted effort must be made to align state firearm forfeiture laws with federal law to clarify law enforcement's authority to remove weapons and establish penalties for the possession of firearms by Temporary Protective Order (TPO) respondents and those convicted of domestic violence misdemeanors.
- + Close the "boyfriend loophole" by introducing protections for victims who have been in a dating relationship with their abuser, but who have not been married to, lived with, or had a child with the abuser.
 - o Expand Georgia law to include civil protections for victims experiencing violence in their dating relationships. Georgia lawmakers must recognize the adverse impact the state's current law has on our youngest and most vulnerable victims of relationship violence. The requirement for teen dating violence victims to have an adult petition for TPO relief on their behalf often provides a barrier to safety and justice for victims as well as accountability for abusers. Dating relationships should also be among those qualified for TPOs.
- + Consider legislative change to more comprehensively address the problem of stalking.



FATALITY REVIEW PROJECT

- Remove the qualification in Georgia’s stalking statute which eliminates the offender’s residence as a location at which the crime of stalking can occur, so as to allow for increased accountability for intimate partner stalkers acting against someone who also resides or resided in the residence.
 - Allow warrants for stalking to be taken in either the jurisdiction where contact originated or where it was received.
 - + Introduce or support legislation designed to increase victim safety such as address confidentiality programs which allow victims to receive mail at a confidential address while their home location remains undisclosed.
 - + Ensure that programs and agencies charged with responding to domestic violence are adequately funded in the budget.
 - Ensure that law enforcement officers have the resources, training and information they need to respond to domestic violence calls. Because officers 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 officers 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.
 - + Bolster economic supports for domestic violence victims and the poor. Increased emphasis on services and strategies supporting long-term economic stability and well-being are imperative to victim safety.
 - This may include increasing wages, supporting the creation of new jobs for the unemployed and underemployed, and adequately funding programs supporting working parents, including subsidized childcare and transportation. Equally important is the development of policies to help employees who are domestic violence victims safely maintain their employment.
-

Use the Georgia Domestic Violence Fatality Review Project Annual Report

- + Read and Remember
 - Read the fatality review reports and remember the stories of those who have lost their lives to domestic violence.
 - Share victims’ names and stories at events that honor domestic violence victims and survivors.
- + Share with Others



FATALITY REVIEW PROJECT

- Copies of this report and prior reports are available at 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.

+ 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/.

