

## Recommendations for Mental Health, Medical, and Substance Abuse Providers

Mental health, medical, and substance abuse providers 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

- + 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.
  - Make brochures and materials on domestic violence program services available in your offices.
  - Posters and other awareness resources are also available for download at [GeorgiaFatalityReview.com](http://GeorgiaFatalityReview.com)
  - Increase awareness of resources available to teens experiencing abuse. 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.
  - Evaluate current policies and protocols to identify where domestic violence information can be incorporated.
- + Provide referral information for abusers to Family Violence Intervention Programs (FVIP). A list of local programs can be accessed at [www.gcfv.georgia.gov](http://www.gcfv.georgia.gov).
- + Arrange to receive ongoing training on domestic violence, including signs of increased risk, through your local domestic violence program.
  - 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



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agencies in contact with victims, and enhances the coordinated community response to intimate partner violence.

- Cross-train with professionals responding to domestic violence, substance abuse or mental health incidents. Because of the high likelihood that their respective populations of clients will experience multiple co-occurring issues, Georgia's professionals should be equipped not only to provide triage to a co-occurring issue outside of their expertise, but also be knowledgeable on the local, state and national resources appropriate to provide additional support alongside their targeted interventions.
- + Incorporate screenings for both domestic violence and suicide indicators into patient assessments and patient education materials.
  - Help victims identify options for safety and refer them to domestic violence advocacy programs. Refer abusers to certified Family Violence Intervention Programs.
  - Receive training on how to help clients at risk of suicide and their families reduce access to lethal means, particularly firearms. Consider the free, two-hour course through the Suicide Prevention Resource Center on Counseling on Access to Lethal Means (CALM) by registering at [www.training.sprc.org](http://www.training.sprc.org).
  - 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 intimate partner stalking in accordance with best practices within their field.
- + 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.
- + 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.
- + Obtain copies of any Temporary Protective Orders (TPOs) or other relevant court orders that address the abuser's conduct for the abuser's counselors and the discharge planner if the abuser is receiving in-patient treatment.
- + Develop local protocols for release from mental health treatment and establish contacts with your local domestic violence program who can act as your liaison should safety measures need to be addressed with the victim prior to an abusive patient's discharge from treatment.
- + Sponsor workplace trainings. With help from domestic violence experts and their local Chamber of Commerce, employers can develop a plan for addressing domestic violence which makes sense for their company. This plan may include the development of a model domestic violence in the workplace policy such as those found at



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WorkplacesRespond.org. Request the Domestic Violence in the Workplace Train the Trainer Toolkit at GeorgiaFatalityReview.com.

- + Evaluate community resources available to families who have lost a loved one to homicide, and the process for making families aware of them. Connecting children who have been exposed to domestic violence and/or survived domestic violence homicide to services is imperative to break the cycle of domestic violence and prepare children to have healthy relationships. Communities should develop protocols for outreach and response to child witnesses of domestic violence and for child survivors of domestic violence homicide. Protocols should make certain children are referred to counseling with therapists who specialize in grief and trauma, and ensure surviving family members who are raising children are aware of kinship care resources and the Crime Victims Compensation Program. Protocols should also include strategies for conducting follow-up with families at six months, one year, 18 months and two years after the homicide. Consider reviewing the model protocol “When Children Witness Domestic Violence Parental Homicide,” developed by the House of Ruth (Maryland) and the Baltimore City Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team to assist with this process.
- + 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, 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.
- + Examine agency policies and practices which may prevent members of underserved populations from accessing your services. Examine your program’s intake forms, questionnaires and outreach materials for accessibility and visibility for different languages, abilities and cultural representations. Ensure Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act is being followed. Develop a language access plan to ensure language services are provided for all Limited English Proficient (LEP) people and develop a plan to better serve victims with disabilities during contacts and in written materials.

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## 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.



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## + Share with Others

- Copies of this report and prior reports are available at [GeorgiaFatalityReview.com](http://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.
- Contact the Georgia Commission on Family Violence or the Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence





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[GeorgiaFatalityReview.com](http://GeorgiaFatalityReview.com)

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/](http://GeorgiaFatalityReview.com/resources/).



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