

End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin: Annual Wisconsin Domestic Violence Homicide Report

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Madison – According to the newly released Wisconsin Domestic Violence Homicide Report, 72 people in Wisconsin lost their lives to domestic violence in 2019. Grisel Santiago-Rivera, Interim Director of End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin (End Abuse), announced the release of the report today alongside End Abuse Homicide Prevention Program Director Sara Krall.

Of the individuals who died because of domestic violence in 2019, 52 were victims of domestic violence homicides, 18 were perpetrators of homicides who then died by suicide, and two were perpetrators of domestic violence homicide who were killed by responding law enforcement. In 2019, domestic violence homicides took place in 23 Wisconsin counties.

End Abuse has produced the annual report since 2000, with the intention of honoring the lives of victims of domestic violence homicide and catalyzing improvements in systemic and community responses to violence. In addition to a summary report on 2019 domestic violence homicides, the latest edition of the report includes a review of 20 years of data collection on domestic violence homicide in Wisconsin.

The 20 year data review indicated that in at least 57% of the homicide incidents, prior domestic violence was a precipitating factor. Additionally, from 2000-2019, a victim leaving an intimate partner relationship preceded at least 42% of the cases we identified. Since 2005, firearms have killed more people in domestic violence homicides in WI than all other methods of killing combined.

“A perpetual barrier and challenge survivors face is the difficulty of achieving long-term economic stability, an aspect of which includes access to safe, affordable housing,” said Krall. “End Abuse is excited to announce we’ll be expanding homicide prevention work to include developing and enhancing relationships between

domestic violence programs and housing and homelessness service providers in partnership with the balance of state continuum of care.”

Recent high-profile killings of Black people at the hands of law enforcement across the nation have prompted End Abuse to consider whether their homicide prevention work, as it looks currently, aligns with the organization’s desire to dismantle systems of white supremacy. “All forms of violence and oppression are interconnected,” said Santiago-Rivera, “and at the intersection of domestic violence and racial inequities, the criminal justice system often fails victims and survivors of domestic violence. These tragic events have underscored how our homicide prevention efforts primarily focused on law enforcement response may further propagate the systemic violence we aim to end.

We continue coordination with local law enforcement in evidence-based models such as the Lethality Assessment Program – Maryland Model and high-risk teams, which decrease lethality for the many survivors in high danger who decide they must call law enforcement. Moving forward, we aim to broaden the list of community partners we equip to implement homicide prevention programming in conjunction with local community-based domestic violence programs. Widening the range of service providers who are knowledgeable about lethality risk factors and have established relationships with domestic violence advocates will improve survivor access to individualized crisis intervention and long-term support.”

The global pandemic has highlighted the challenges domestic abuse victims and survivors face each day. International reporting indicates an increase in domestic abuse incidents due to loss of income, isolation, and being in an enclosed space with an abusive partner. These stressors, exacerbated by the spread of COVID-19, puts victims and their children at a higher risk of being murdered by their abusers. “In these particularly challenging times,” said Santiago-Rivera, “domestic violence requires increased awareness and an urgent response.”

An opportunity to support the coalition’s work against domestic violence homicide in Wisconsin will take place on Tuesday, September 22, when End Abuse holds their first-ever non-event virtual fundraiser: Soar Above at Home. Additional information and registration is available at <https://bit.ly/SoarAbove2020>

To review the Annual Wisconsin Domestic Violence Homicide Report, visit: www.endabusewi.org/homicide-reports/