



**OFFICE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**  
**2019/2020 -2020-2021**  
**ANNUAL REPORT**

Department of Children & Families  
Office of Domestic Violence

January 1, 2022

Shevaun L. Harris  
Secretary

Ron DeSantis  
Governor

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## Overview

The Department of Children and Families' (DCF) Office of Domestic Violence (ODV) operates as the central clearinghouse for state and federal funding initiatives for prevention and intervention of domestic violence. Primary responsibilities include the administration and oversight of federal and state funding designated to assist Florida's certified domestic violence centers, the leading providers of domestic violence services. The ODV monitors and funds the centers as authorized in Section 39.903, Florida Statute.

The Office of Domestic Violence promotes a coordinated, multidisciplinary approach to enhancing advocacy and improving the criminal justice system's response to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking crimes. Various partners in this effort include: Office of State Courts Administrator, Office of the Attorney General, Florida Prosecuting Attorneys Association and local State Attorney's offices, Florida Council Against Sexual Violence, local law enforcement agencies, and numerous community-based victim and legal service agencies. Additionally, the ODV provides technical support through the development of policy and practice to support victims.

During the 2020-2021 Legislative Session, DCF received 24 positions to permanently support the Office of Domestic Violence. In July 2021, the Department hired a Director of the Office of Domestic Violence and as of December 31, 2021, the office is fully staffed.

The ODV is actively working to align domestic violence programming with the goals and vision of the Department capitalizing on those key moments of impact with a victim and their dependents. Overall strategies include increasing engagement and collaboration with stakeholders, enhancing program effectiveness, and building a system of accountability and transparency with all service providers. Ensuring families emerge stronger remains at the core of the work currently in progress and will be accomplished by a trauma-responsive approach to decision-making to prevent revictimization of survivors and hold perpetrators accountable for their actions.

## Executive Summary

Fiscal Year 2019-2020 brought a significant transition to Florida's Domestic Violence Program. Following the passage of House Bill 1087, removing the requirement that the Department of Children and Families contract with the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence (FCADV) to deliver and manage of domestic violence services, DCF began the administrative process of terminating the contract with FCADV and re-establishing the Department's role in overseeing domestic violence programming in Florida.

In February 2020, Governor Ron DeSantis announced that the DCF and the Office of the Attorney General filed a lawsuit in the circuit court of the Second Judicial Circuit against the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence (FCADV), as well as the organization's executive leadership and board members following allegations of Breach of Contract, Breach of the Implied Duty of Good Faith and Fair Dealing, Breach of Fiduciary Duty, Fraudulent Concealment, Fraudulent Misrepresentation, Negligent Misrepresentation and Civil Conspiracy.

As a result of the allegations and subsequent investigations into members of the FCADV board's executive committee, one of two certified domestic violence centers in Miami-Dade County lost their shelter contract with the county and was unable to continue to provide the

required core services for certification. The Department completed a decertification with this provider, effective June 30, 2020, and the funding for services was moved to the other certified domestic violence center, Miami-Dade County Advocates for Victims. No services were lost in the transition of programs to the county.

In August 2021, Governor Ron DeSantis announced that the Department and the Office of Attorney General settled pending civil actions with the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence, its officers and directors, and the FCADV foundation for more than \$5 million. In connection with the settlement, the FCADV officers and directors will pay more than \$3.9 million to DCF and the Receiver, including a more than \$2 million payment by Tiffany Carr, former CEO. The FCADV foundation is required to liquidate all remaining assets and pay \$1.1 million to domestic violence centers around the state.

The Department was successful in its commitment that the termination of FCADV's contract would not result in any interruption of domestic violence services statewide. In February 2020, the Department appointed a Chief Executive for Domestic Violence Services to re-establish the Office of Domestic Violence (ODV), facilitate the transition of domestic violence services back to DCF, make recommendations about the future structure of the domestic violence program, and to manage the subsequent transition of hotline operations, legal services, and training and technical assistance to a new provider.

## **Service Provision**

In November 2021, the Department contracted with Women in Distress of Broward County, a certified domestic violence service provider, to deliver comprehensive management of services for the Department's domestic violence program including training and technical assistance to certified domestic violence centers and other stakeholders to improve intervention and prevention strategies in addressing domestic violence, legal services through designated projects, and implementation of 24-hour crisis hotline call center operations of the Florida Domestic Violence Hotline.

## **Federal and State Funding**

### **Domestic Violence Trust Fund (DVTF) and General Revenue**

The primary source of state funding for domestic violence emergency shelter, services, programs, and training is from state General Revenue. These funds are distributed to Florida's 41 certified domestic violence centers to provide critical, life-saving programs and services to domestic violence survivors and their children. The DVTF receives funds from a portion of fees for both marriage licenses and filing for dissolution of marriage, and fines for domestic violence crime convictions.

### **Domestic Violence Diversion Program**

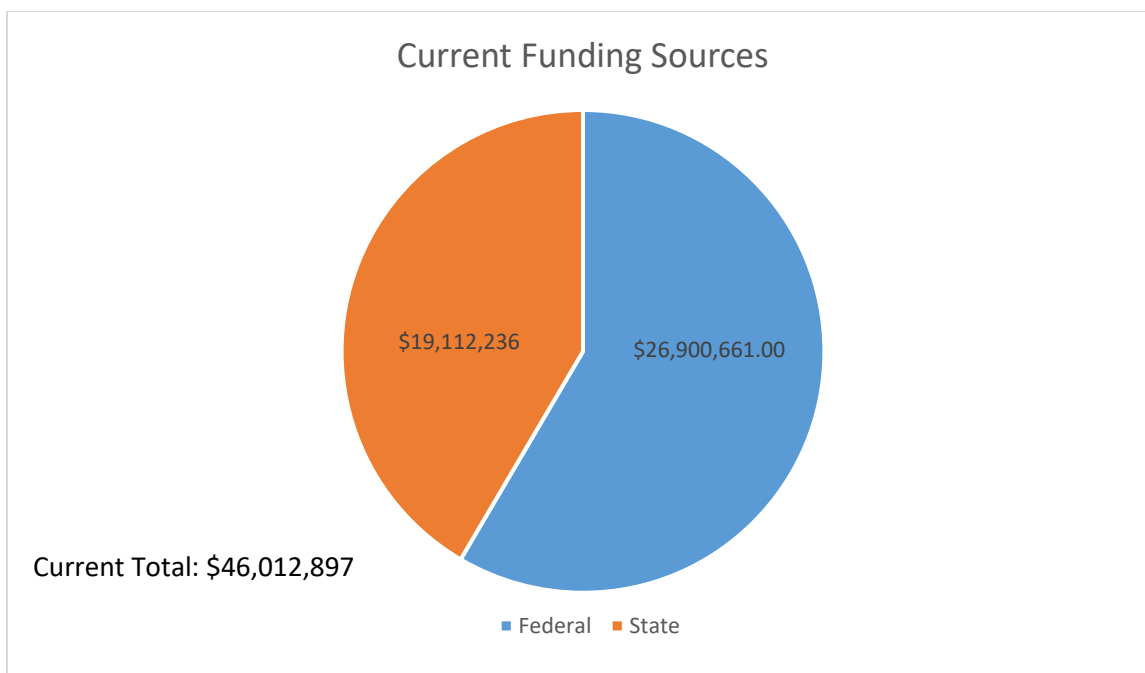
Recognizing that survivors of domestic violence may need temporary economic assistance to escape a violent partner, federal and state lawmakers created the Domestic Violence Diversion Program. Florida's program is modeled on federal law and provides support services to survivors unable to temporarily participate in training or work requirements due to safety considerations or the residual effects of domestic violence.

### **Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) Grant Program**

FVPSA is the only federal funding dedicated specifically for domestic violence centers for the operation of emergency shelter and other critical services. The grant program also provides funding to state coalitions for the provision of training and technical assistance to member programs to ensure quality of service provision to survivors and their children.

### **Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Grant Program\***

The Department administered two grants provided by the federal United States Department of Justice Violence Against Women Act: an annual formula grant, STOP, and the discretionary Grants to Encourage Arrest. The STOP grant promotes a coordinated, multidisciplinary approach to enhancing advocacy and improving the criminal justice system's response to violent crimes against women. Federal regulations require the funding to be allocated geographically based on identified needs and availability of resources.



### **Domestic Violence Defined in Statute**

Florida law defines domestic violence as any assault, aggravated assault, battery, aggravated battery, sexual assault, sexual battery, stalking, aggravated stalking, kidnapping, false imprisonment, or any criminal offense resulting in physical injury or death of one family or household member by another family or household member.<sup>1</sup>

### **A Broader Definition of Domestic Violence**

The legal definition of domestic violence focuses solely on the physical abuse perpetrators inflict on current and former intimate partners and other family or household members. Domestic violence also includes abuse that is emotional, psychological, spiritual, and economic, resulting in a pattern of behaviors that perpetrators use to establish power and control over their victims.

<sup>1</sup> Section 741.28, Florida Statutes

Abusers threaten, intimidate, and isolate victims, abuse pets, and use children as pawns against victim parents as tactics to perpetrate violence.

## **Incidences of Domestic Violence Throughout Florida**

Domestic violence incidences in Florida are identified through several means. Often victims of domestic violence, or friends and family on their behalf, seek support through community-based advocacy services such as certified domestic violence centers and other providers. Law enforcement are often the first responders to violence in the home, and in many cases are the first to offer assistance to a victim. Florida's child welfare services complete investigations into family violence when children are injured or have witnessed the violence. Despite the robust system Florida has in place, many cases of domestic violence go unreported. Domestic violence is a crime often kept within the home. Violence and serious injury may escalate over time, causing many victims to remain with an abusive partner or endure ongoing violence from a former partner before ever seeking help. Perpetrators of these crimes regularly threaten to escalate the violence, including threats of homicide, if the victim attempts to leave or seek help. Victims may also be afraid of the repercussions of seeking help from law enforcement and/or child welfare services. As a result, the true number of victims and domestic violence related crimes are difficult to determine.

## **Domestic Violence Crime in Florida <sup>2</sup>**

### **January – December 2019**

- Overall crime decreased by 4.6 percent, while reported domestic violence offenses increased by 0.4 percent
- 105,298 domestic violence offenses were reported to law enforcement
- 221 individuals died as a result of domestic violence homicide, representing approximately 20 percent of all homicides in Florida
- Law enforcement made 66,069 arrests for domestic violence related crimes

### **January – December 2020<sup>3</sup>**

- Overall crime decreased by 14.1 percent, while reported domestic violence offenses increased by 1.16 percent
- 106,515 domestic violence offenses were reported to law enforcement
- 217 individuals died as a result of domestic violence homicide, representing approximately 20 percent of all homicides in Florida
- Law enforcement made 63,217 arrests for domestic violence related crimes

\*Florida Department of Law Enforcement Uniform Crime Report provides crime statistics by calendar year.

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<sup>2</sup> Information from FDLE's 2019 Annual Uniform Crime Report: <https://www.fdle.state.fl.us/FSAC/Data-Statistics/UCR-Domestic-Violence.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> Information from FDLE's 2020 Annual Uniform Crime Report: [https://www.fdle.state.fl.us/FSAC/Documents/Annual/Domestic-Violence/DV\\_Jurisdiction\\_Offenses\\_2020-\(3\).aspx](https://www.fdle.state.fl.us/FSAC/Documents/Annual/Domestic-Violence/DV_Jurisdiction_Offenses_2020-(3).aspx)

## Domestic Violence in Child Welfare Services

### Fiscal Year 2019-2020

- 88,818 alleged domestic violence maltreatments were reported to the Department's Abuse Hotline, totaling 24 percent of all maltreatments; of these cases, 14.5 percent were verified.
- 3,336 child removals involving domestic violence.

Of the child investigations closed in FY 2019-2020:

- 3,095 children had a verified maltreatment of either household violence threatened child, family violence threatened child, or intimate partner violence threatened child; and received either in home and/or family support services.
- 449 children were served through family support services, 2,649 were served in home, and three were served in both.

### Fiscal Year 2020-2021

- 80,982 alleged domestic violence maltreatments were reported to the Department's Abuse Hotline, totaling 23 percent of all maltreatments. Of these cases, 13.7 percent were verified.
- 3,139 child removals involving domestic violence.

Of the child investigations closed in FY 2019-2020:

- 1,283 children had a verified maltreatment of either household violence threatened child, family violence threatened child, or intimate partner violence threatened child and received either in home and/or Family Support Services.
- 161 children were served by Family Support Services, 1,096 were served in home, and 26 were served in both.

## Individuals Seeking Services

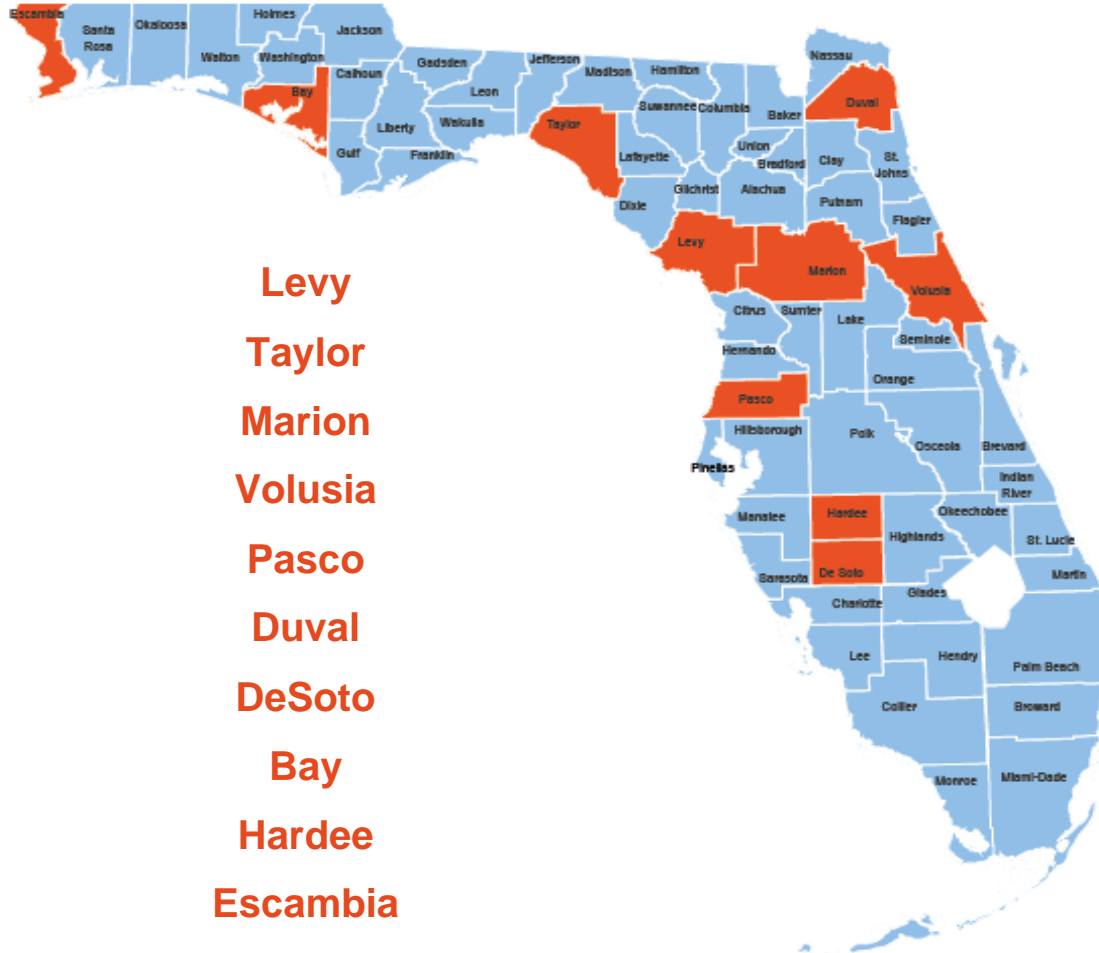
### Fiscal Year 2019-2020

- 12,492 individuals received emergency shelter at a certified domestic violence center
- Domestic violence survivors and their children spent 563,721 nights in emergency shelter
- Advocates received 73,817 hotline calls
- 153,757 safety plans were completed with survivors
- 34,046 women, children, and men received outreach services

### Fiscal Year 2020-2021

- 10,287 individuals received emergency shelter at a certified domestic violence center
- Domestic violence survivors and their children spent 412,360 nights in emergency shelter
- Advocates received 72,321 hotline calls
- 150,799 safety plans were completed with survivors
- 33,619 women, children, and men received outreach services

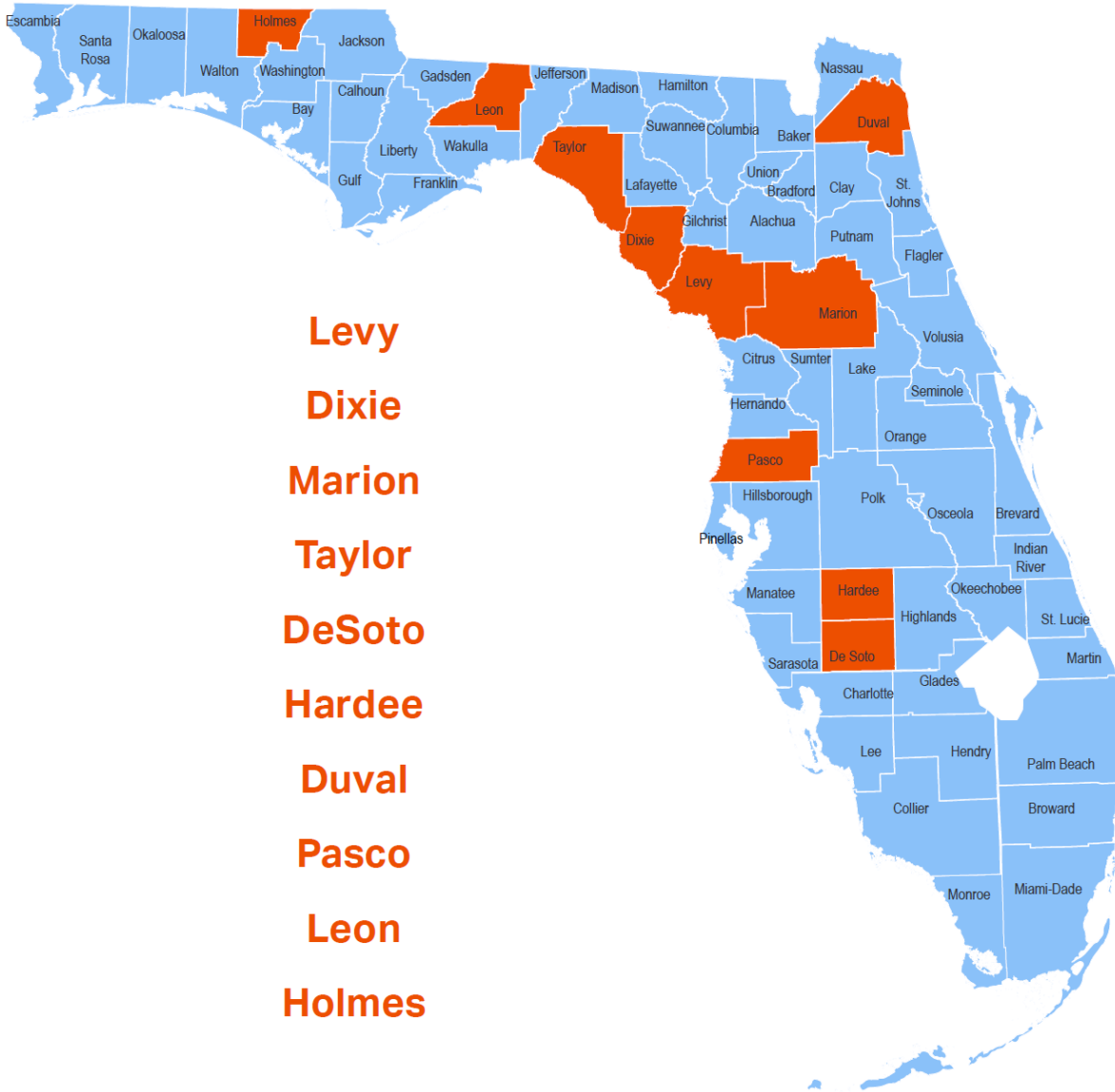
Domestic Violence Offenses, January-December 2019<sup>4</sup>  
*Top 10 Counties (by percentage of population)*



<sup>4</sup> Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Uniform Crime Report, Total Reported Domestic Violence Offenses by County 2019



Domestic Violence Offenses, January-December 2020<sup>5</sup>  
**Top 10 Counties (by percentage of population)**



<sup>5</sup> Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Uniform Crime Report, Total Reported Domestic Violence Offenses by County 2020

## Florida's Certified Domestic Violence Centers

Florida's network of 41 certified domestic violence centers are responsible for providing critical, life-saving emergency shelter, advocacy, and other services to survivors and their children in all 67 counties. Certified centers are on the front lines of responding to domestic violence by providing a place of safety, security, healing, and empowerment to survivors and their children whom are experiencing domestic violence. Domestic violence centers are the only state-designated organizations responsible for the provision of a continuum of core services to survivors, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, as they access safety and obtain independence from abusers.

Statutorily required core services include: information and referrals; counseling and case management; temporary emergency shelter; a 24-hour crisis hotline; training for law enforcement personnel; assessment and appropriate referral of residential children; and community educational training related to the incidence of domestic violence, the prevention of such violence, and the services available for persons engaged in or subject to domestic violence.<sup>6</sup> During FY 2019-2020, certified centers provided 563,721 nights of life-saving emergency shelter to 12,492 women, children, and men. Many survivors fled violent homes with their children, representing 45.6 percent of those served in emergency shelter.

During FY 2020-2021, certified centers provided 412,360 nights of emergency shelter to 10,287 women, children, and men with children representing 44.7 percent of those served in emergency shelter. In addition to the services required by Florida law, certified centers supplement their programs with important ancillary services such as safety planning, outreach services, transportation, rent and utility assistance, transitional housing, legal and court advocacy, work skills and job-readiness training and placement, financial literacy, and other training and education programs.

During the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 fiscal years, certified domestic violence center advocates responded to domestic violence by:

- Completing 304,566 survivor-focused safety plans
- Providing 425,023 hours of counseling and advocacy
- Offering 672,578 direct service information and referrals to survivors, family members, and individuals seeking assistance
- Spending 90,938 hours facilitating child and youth-specific activities
- Providing youth-targeted community education to 139,072 participants
- Providing education and training programs to 65,097 adults

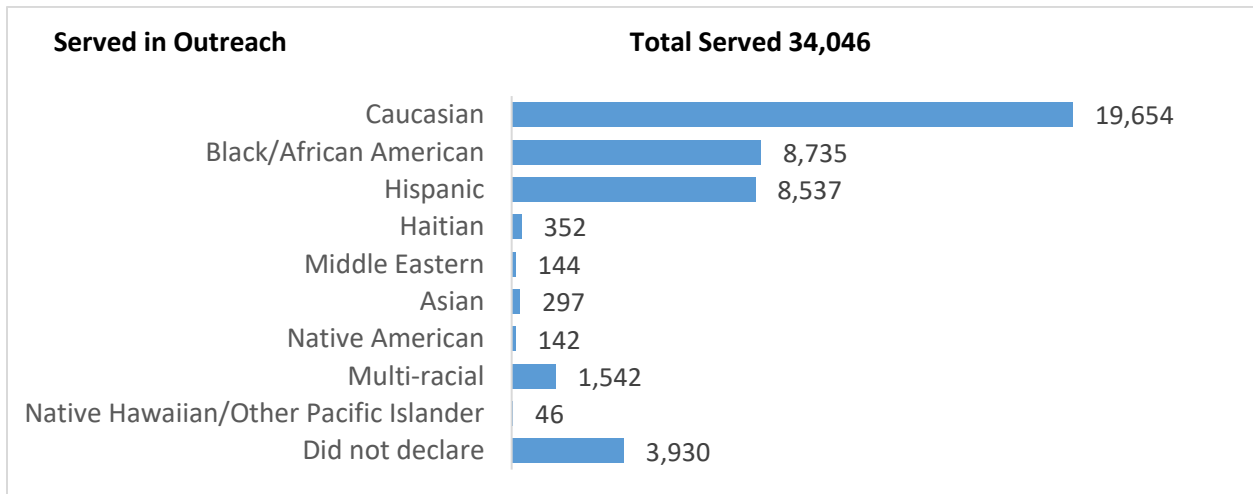
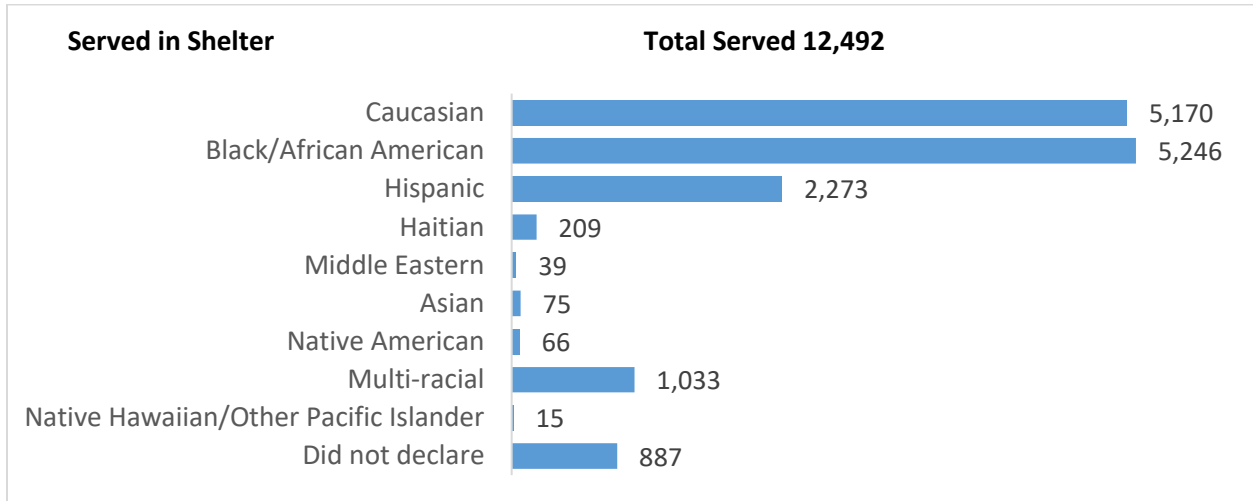
## Individuals Served

Domestic violence does not discriminate and occurs regardless of ethnicity, age, religion, culture, or socioeconomic status. To respond to Florida's unique and diverse population, Florida's certified domestic violence centers provide trauma-informed, culturally and linguistically appropriate services tailored to the specific needs of each individual and/or family seeking services

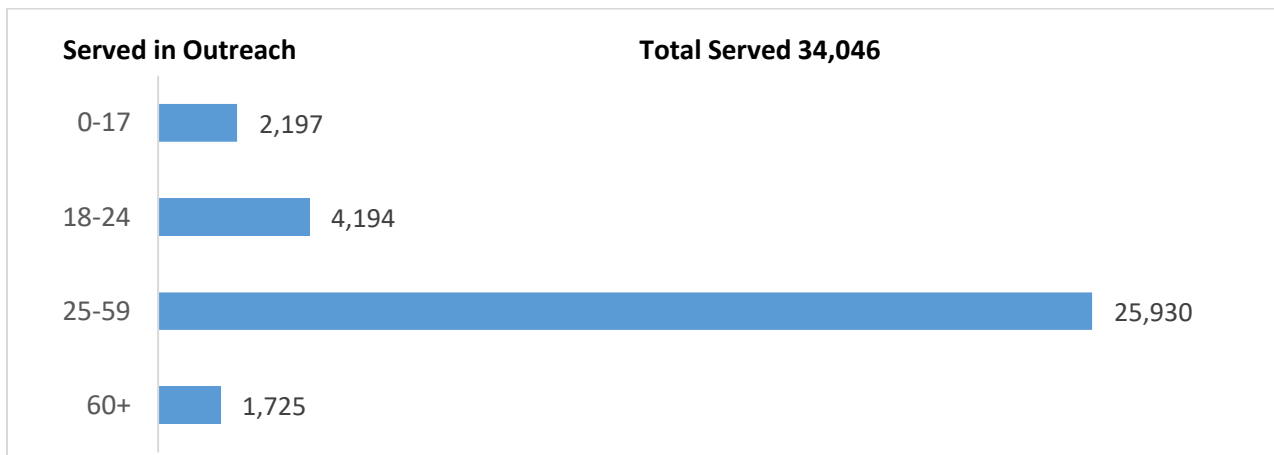
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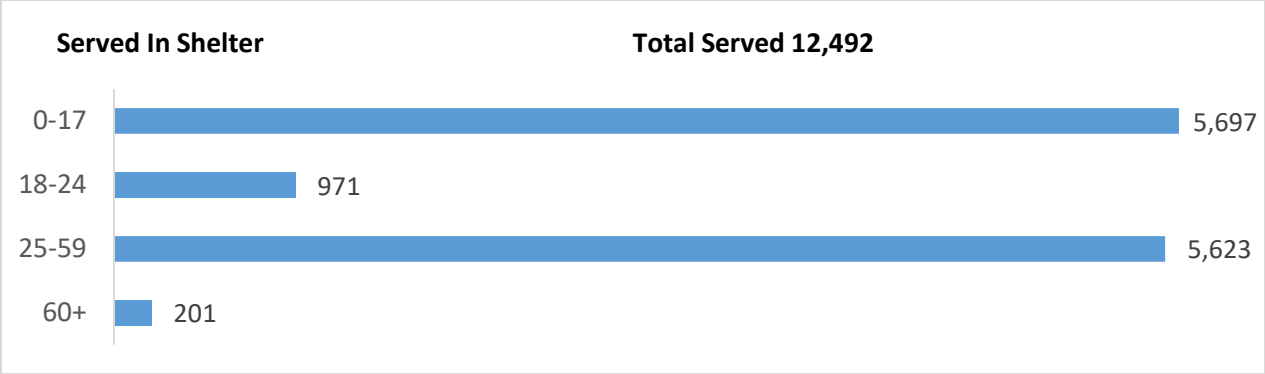
<sup>6</sup> Pursuant to s. 39.905, Florida Statutes

**FY 2019-2020**

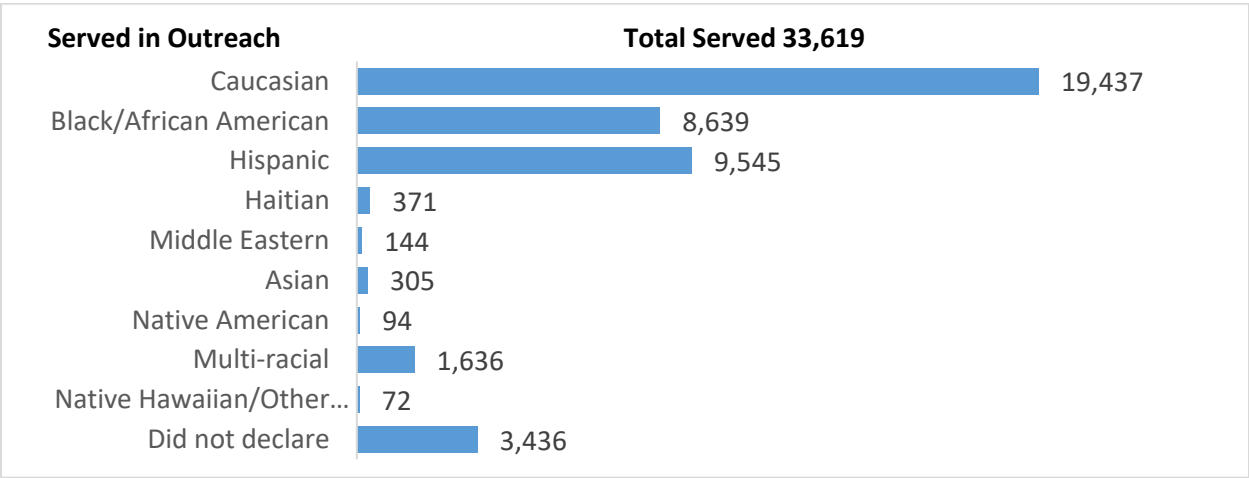
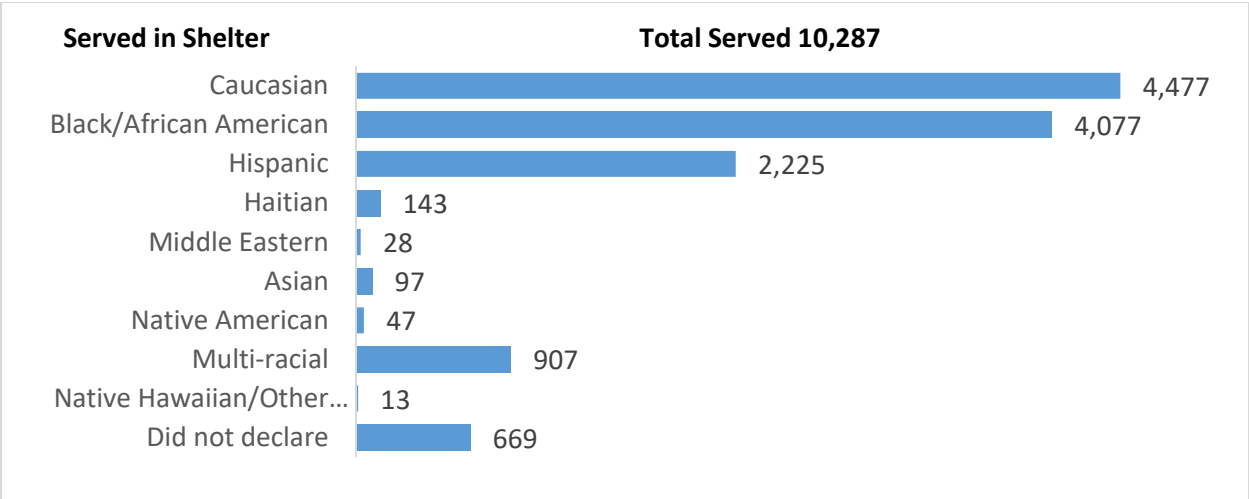


\*Race and ethnicity are separate categories for data collection purposes and thus the totals from the above lists are greater than the overall total of survivors served.

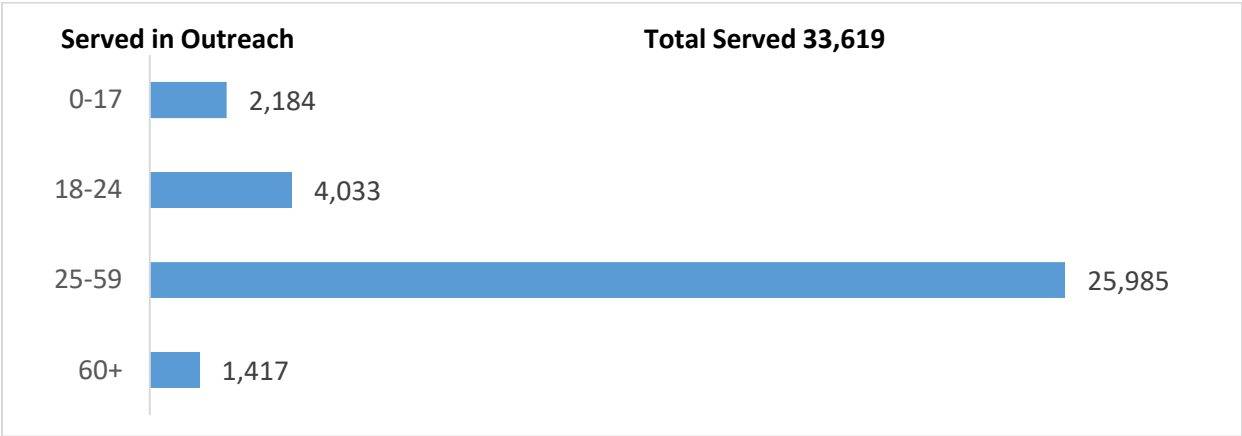
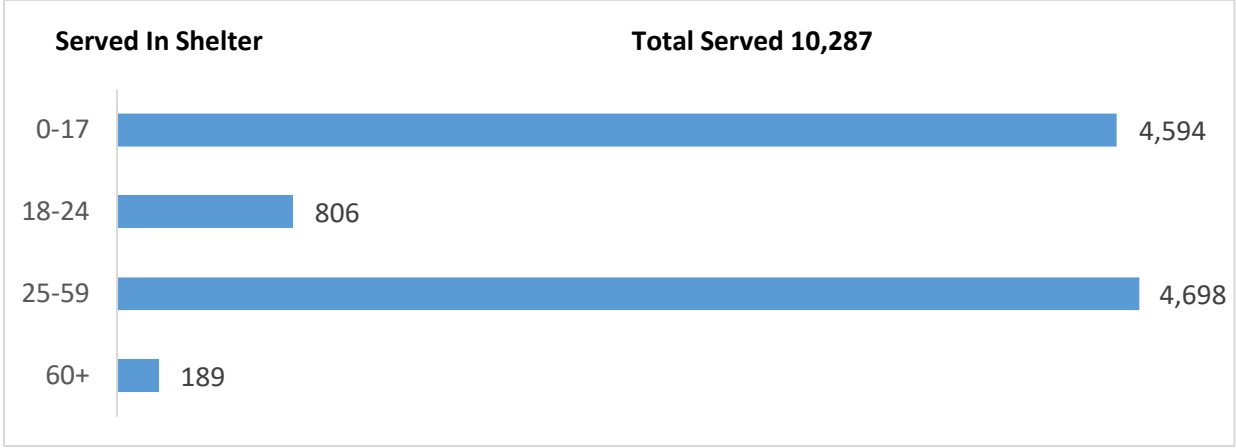




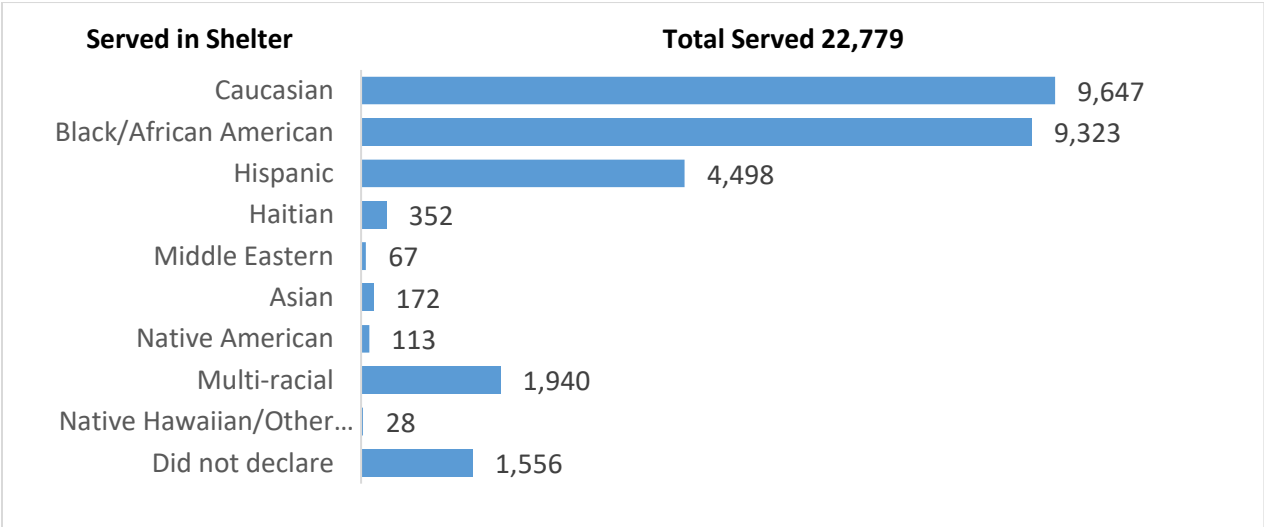
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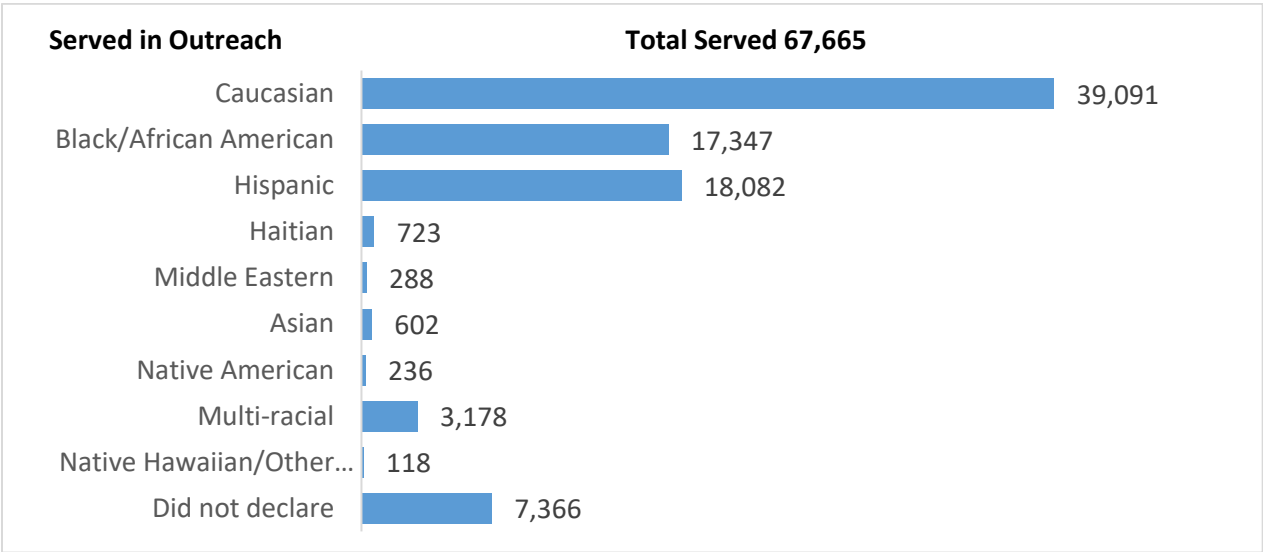


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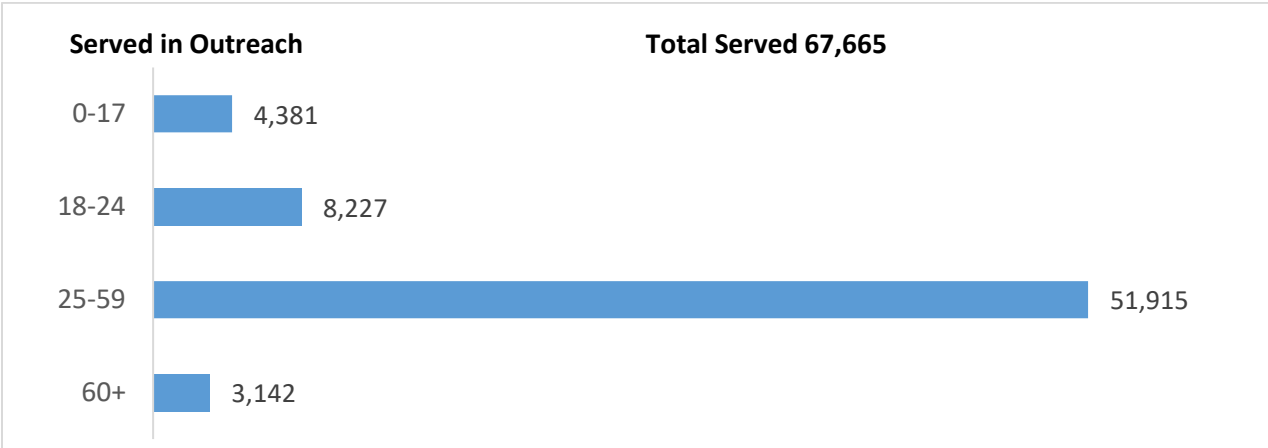
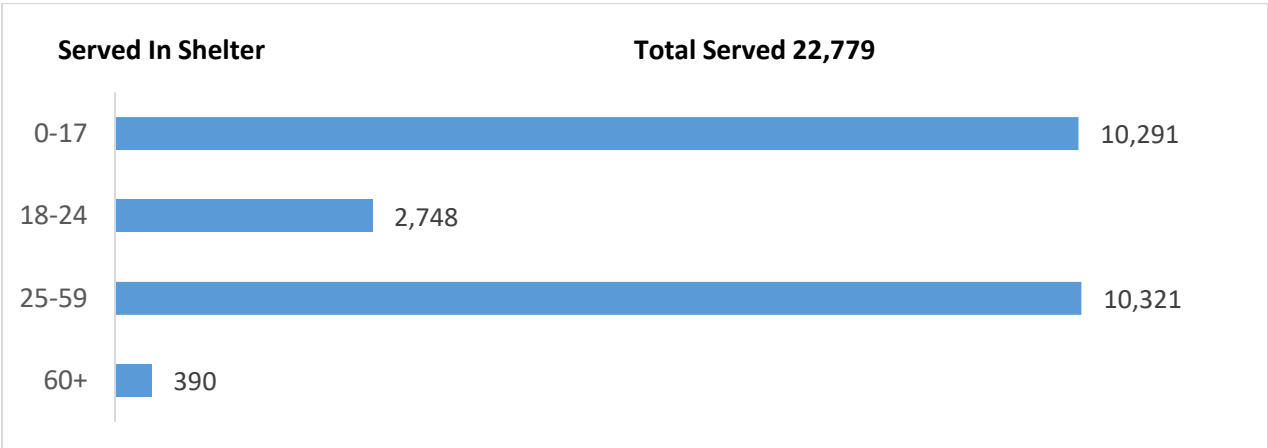


**FY 2019-2020 & FY 2020-2021**





\*Race and ethnicity are separate categories for data collection purposes and thus the totals from the above lists are greater than the overall total of survivors served.



## The Statewide Florida Domestic Violence Hotline

A domestic violence provider, Women in Distress of Broward County, was recently awarded a contract to operate the statewide Florida Domestic Violence Hotline, which provides trilingual services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Hotline advocates provide support, advocacy, information, and referral services for survivors of domestic violence, their children, families, and friends residing in Florida's 67 counties. The ODV, in partnership with Florida Legal Services, Inc., administers the Statewide Domestic Violence Legal Hotline, which provides comprehensive legal advice, information, and referrals to survivors of domestic violence. During FY 2019-2020, the Florida Domestic Violence Hotline received 25,115 calls, which included 4,600 calls answered by the legal hotline. During FY 2020-2021, the Florida Domestic Violence Hotline received 17,633 calls, which included 3,985 calls answered by the legal hotline.

## Domestic Violence Fatality Review Teams<sup>7</sup>

Florida's commitment to domestic violence prevention is evidenced by the existence of a Statewide Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team and 26 active local teams. Florida is one of only nine states with both statewide and local teams. Since 2009, the Attorney General's Statewide Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team has conducted comprehensive reviews of domestic violence fatalities with the goal of preventing domestic violence homicides. The team identifies gaps in the service delivery system and offers policy and practical recommendations to strengthen safety factors and reduce risk factors that contribute to these deaths. The statewide team is co-chaired by a designee of the Attorney General and the Department and is comprised of members from a variety of stakeholders who provide services to survivors, their children, and perpetrators of domestic violence. Members represent the court system, probation, parole, law enforcement, faith-based organizations, certified domestic violence centers, legal providers, health care providers, and the defense bar.

The statewide team convenes semi-annually and conducts in-depth reviews of Florida domestic violence fatalities. The reviews identify the events leading up to the fatality, the presence of high-risk indicators and the systemic gaps experienced by the victim and perpetrator. The statewide team also examines the data collected by the 26 local teams and creates recommendations to support education about the dynamics of domestic violence for community partners, service providers, system partners and the public. The recommendations identify systemic improvements that make it easier for survivors to access services and strengthen interventions for perpetrators.

The collaborative nature of fatality review supports an enhanced community coordinated response. The shared goals of prevention, accountability, mutual respect and collaboration create an atmosphere that supports diversity and promotes social change. All teams comply with Florida statutory mandates to maintain confidentiality and public records exemptions when reviewing fatality-related information<sup>8</sup>. The governing statutes require teams to exempt the identities of victims and their children from disclosure. All the information and records obtained by domestic violence fatality review teams are not subject to discovery or introduction into evidence in civil or criminal actions or administrative or disciplinary proceedings if the

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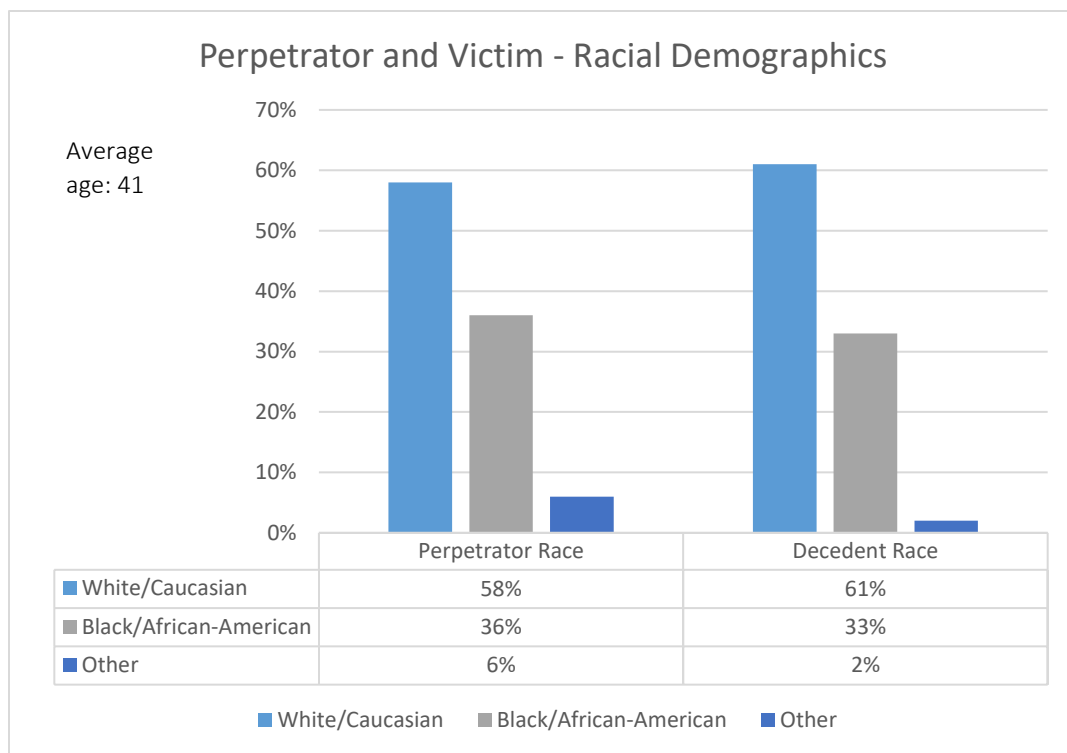
<sup>7</sup> For more information about the Statewide Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team: <https://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/domestic-violence/ag-statewide-domestic-violence-fatality-review-team.shtml>

<sup>8</sup> See s. 741.316 and s. 741.3165, F.S.

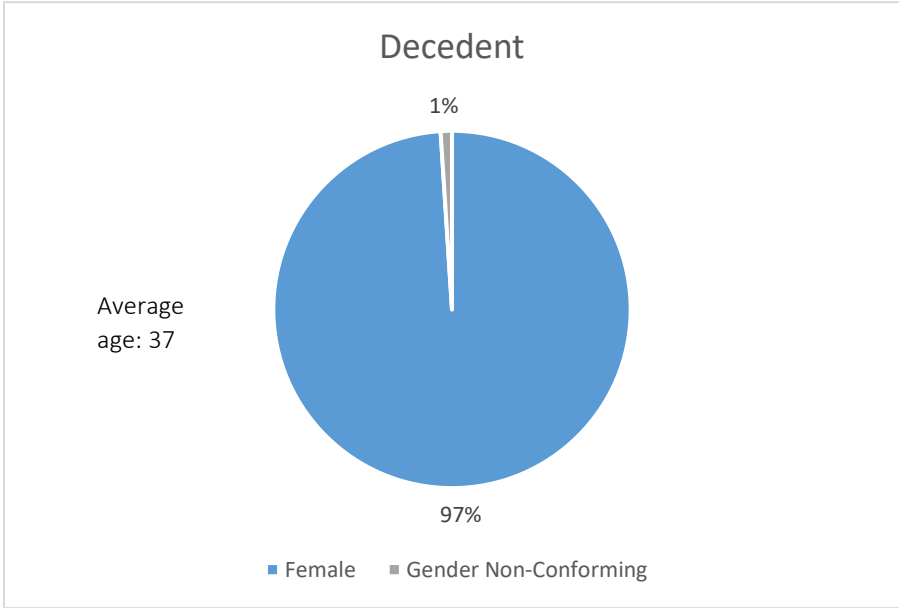
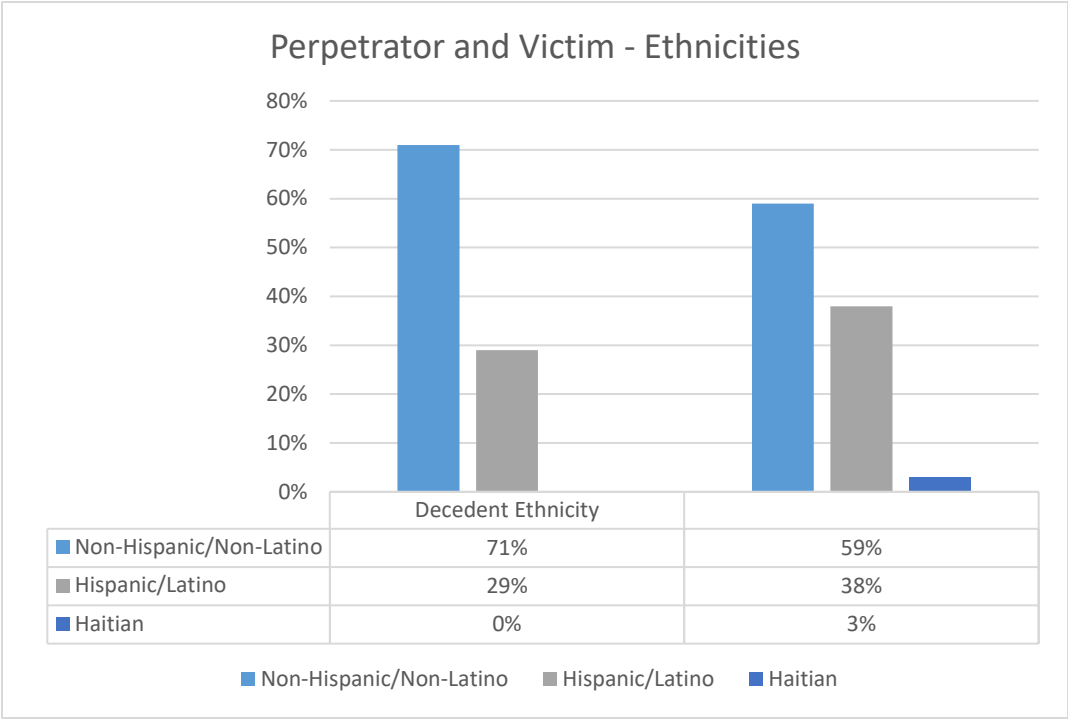
information and records relate to the team’s fatality review. Persons attending the meetings may not testify in any civil or criminal action or administrative or disciplinary proceeding if the information or records were produced or presented to the team during their meetings or other activities related to the team’s fatality review. These statutory mandates ensure that team members may freely discuss the circumstances and issues relating to the fatalities.

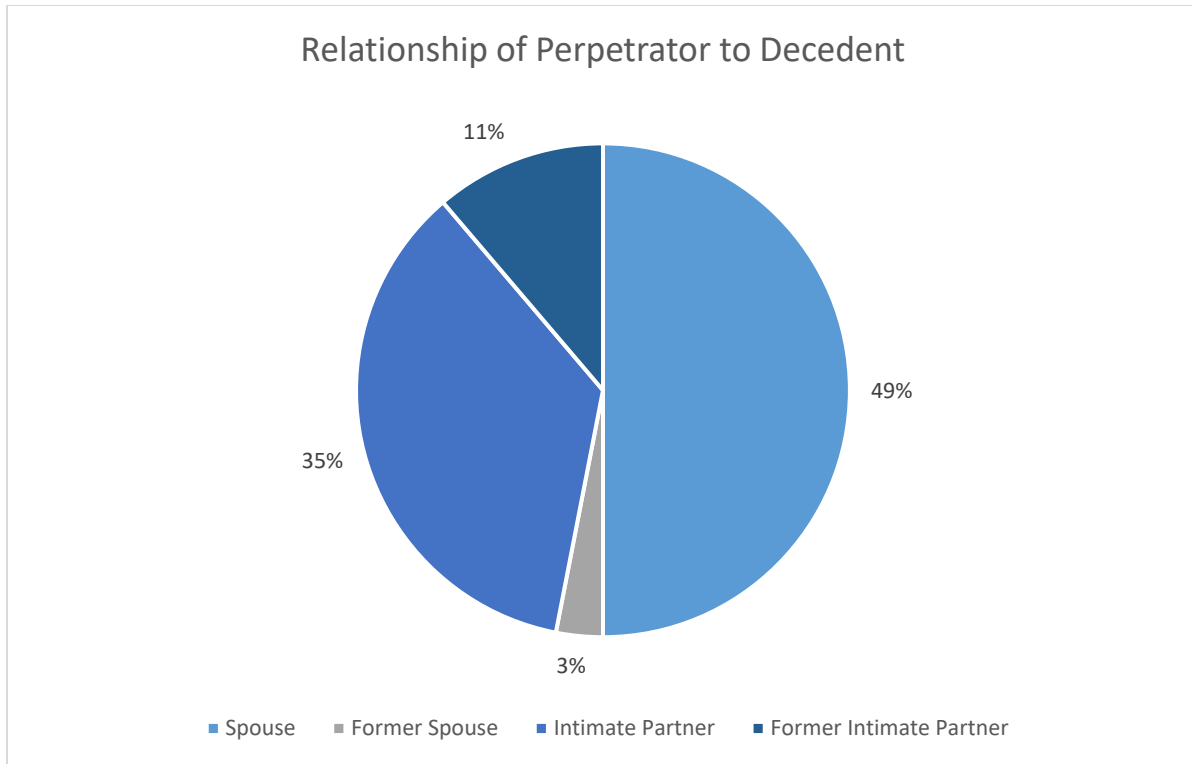
The statewide team also analyzes data submitted by local fatality review teams through a uniform data collection tool. The descriptive statistics on the following page reflect information contained in 37 fatality reviews conducted by local teams and submitted to the statewide team for Fiscal Year 2019-2020. The reviews may include both intimate partner homicides and other domestic violence-related deaths. When possible, the data points are based on information provided in all 37 reviews. In some instances, however, not all data points are reported in every review either due to non-applicability or to missing information; therefore, the totals may not always equal the total sum of 100.

### Domestic Violence Fatality Review Demographics









\*Not all data points are reported in every review either due to non-applicability or to missing information; therefore, the totals may not always equal the total sum of 100.

### Review Team Key Facts

62 percent of perpetrators were reported to have substance abuse histories.

52 percent of perpetrators had a known mental health condition and/or received mental health treatment.

In 35 percent of domestic violence fatalities, there was known prior alleged stalking behavior on the part of the perpetrator.

In 33 percent of the fatalities, there was a known criminal order of no contact issued against the perpetrator

58 percent of decedents and perpetrators were in the process of ending their relationship at the time of the fatality.

60 percent of decedents and perpetrators were separated at the time of the homicide.

61 percent of decedents were known to express an intention to leave the perpetrator.

63 percent of perpetrators had a known criminal history of domestic violence.

67 percent of fatalities had known prior death threats made by the perpetrator towards the decedent.

The Fatality Review Team key facts provide analytical insight on potential systemic vulnerabilities within Florida's approach and response to domestic violence. While the information and data derived from the fatality review teams are based on a sample of domestic violence homicides, this information is used to focus the state's efforts in stakeholder collaboration, effective operations, enhancing perpetrator accountability, and ensuring victims have access to life-saving resources and support.

### Statewide Trainings

The ODV provided ongoing training and technical assistance to domestic violence providers during the transition, with services to certified domestic violence centers increasing during the onset of the pandemic. Regular communication with domestic violence providers throughout Florida proved critical to addressing the changing landscape of service provision. Examples of training include:

- Advocacy Through Disasters: Pandemic, Hurricanes, and Domestic Violence
- Hotline and Screening for Services During a Pandemic
- Ensuring Culturally Responsive Advocacy, Engagement and Outreach During COVID-19
- Financial Exploitation of Later in Life Survivors
- Grounding Advocacy in Anti-Oppression Work
- Trauma, Resilience, and Ethical Communication
- Trauma-Informed Approaches to Conflict De-escalation
- Domestic Violence in Healthcare Settings
- Virtual Advocacy Skills
- Safety Planning for Community
- Advocacy with LGBTQ+ Survivors
- Outreach Strategies During the Pandemic
- Legal & Housing Barriers for Rural Survivors

## General Training and Technical Assistance

During FY 2019-2020, the ODV conducted 207 training sessions including statewide institutes, regional trainings, and onsite trainings for 5,303 participants from certified domestic violence centers, local community organizations working with survivors of domestic violence, and allied partners totaling over 310 hours of training. Of those trained, 97 percent of people evaluated reported that 1) the information presented in these workshops would be implemented into their work, and 2) participation resulted in an increase in their knowledge about the safety needs of survivors of domestic violence.

FY 2019-2020 training highlights:

- Conducted six Core Competency Training Institutes for 102 new certified domestic violence center staff and three Core Competency Train-the-Trainer Institutes for 36 certified domestic violence center staff
- Responded to 5,278 electronic technical assistance requests from domestic violence centers, collaborative partners, and other agencies
- Conducted 99 onsite technical assistance visits and meetings for certified domestic violence center staff and/or Board of Directors, collaborative partners, and other agencies
- Conducted 185 webinars/technical assistance conference calls

During FY 2020-2021, ODV conducted 253 training sessions including statewide institutes, regional trainings, and onsite trainings for 7,256 participants from certified domestic violence centers, local community organizations working with survivors of domestic violence, and allied partners. Training participation increased by nearly 37 percent in comparison to the previous fiscal year. Of those trained, 92 percent of people evaluated reported that 1) the information presented in these workshops would be implemented into their work, and 2) participation resulted in an increase in their knowledge about the safety needs of survivors of domestic violence.

FY 2020-2021 training highlights:

- Conducted six Core Competency Training Institutes and Core Competency Train-the-Trainer Institutes for 139 certified domestic violence center staff. In addition, The ODV conducted 10 Core Competency Learning Exchange webinars for 495 certified domestic violence center staff.
- Responded to 7,473 electronic technical assistance requests from domestic violence centers, collaborative partners, and other agencies
- Conducted 212 virtual technical assistance visits and meetings for certified domestic violence center staff and/or Board of Directors, collaborative partners, and other agencies
- Conducted 397 technical assistance calls and conference calls

## Child Protection Investigation (CPI) Project

Protecting children from the effects of domestic violence is a mutual priority of the Office of the Attorney General (OAG), certified domestic violence centers and the Department. “Intimate partner violence threatens child” is one of the most prevalent maltreatment offenses reported to the Statewide Florida Abuse Hotline. Recognizing the need to prevent children from entering Florida’s foster care system, the partners created this groundbreaking program designed to provide a coordinated community response for families experiencing the co-occurrence of domestic violence and child abuse by co-locating domestic violence advocates within regional

CPI units. Co-located advocates provide consultation to child welfare professionals, support and referral services to victims, and coordination with community partners to develop strategies to improve collaboration and resolve barriers for families. This immediate intervention, sometimes within hours of a child abuse report, helps to stabilize the crisis and increase safety in the home. The ultimate goal of the statewide project is to bridge the gap between child welfare and domestic violence service providers in order to enhance family safety and create permanency for children by focusing on keeping the child safe in the home with the non-offending parent, while increasing perpetrator accountability measures and strategies.

The CPI Project was conceived and implemented with the creation of seven pilot sites. Four additional sites were added in 2011, three of which focused on providing linguistically and culturally specific services. In 2014, the Governor and Legislature provided \$2 million to expand the highly successful CPI Project. This appropriation allowed for expansion to 45 counties where a high volume of domestic violence-related child maltreatment removals occur. In 2015, the Legislature again prioritized survivor and child safety by allocating an additional \$2 million to expand the CPI Project to all 67 counties in Florida.

### ***State***

During FY 2019-2020, the ODV completed 27 child welfare related trainings and onsite technical assistance visits for over 516 certified domestic violence center and child welfare agency staff members.

#### 2019-2020 Participant Feedback:

- 97 percent of people that participated in CPI Project training increased their knowledge about the overall safety and support needs of survivors as evidenced in post-tests administered at the end of the training.
- 97 percent of participants evaluated noted that the information in these trainings would assist in helping to increase a survivor's overall safety and support.

During FY 2020-2021, the ODV completed 73 child welfare related trainings and virtual technical assistance visits for over 1,053 certified domestic violence center and child welfare agency staff members.

#### 2020-2021 Participant Feedback:

- 100 percent of people that participated in CPI Project training increased their knowledge about the safety needs of survivors of domestic violence and agreed that the information presented in these workshops would be implemented into their work.

### ***Local***

During FY 2019-2020, co-located advocates responded to a total of 9,999 CPI Project referrals from child welfare professionals, participated in 2,753 child welfare case staffing meetings, and provided 14,184 case consultation services to child welfare professionals.

During this period, co-located advocates provided 21,674 services to 6,144 child welfare involved survivors, who referred to local certified domestic violence centers. Services included shelter and housing, criminal and civil justice system assistance, personal advocacy and accompaniment, emotional support and safety services, as well as assistance with the State of Florida's Victims' Compensation application and information and referrals.

CPI Projects were collectively able to create and utilize a holistic system of wrap around services which allowed 9,143 children, whose families were involved in the child welfare system as a result of domestic violence, to remain in the home with the non-offending parent. This effort significantly reduced the need for foster care services and produced an approximate cost savings of \$25,599,485.70 [9,143 x \$466.65 (lowest foster care board rate) x 6 months (low estimate for a child's time in foster care)].

Increased child welfare professionals' capacity in domestic violence cases:

- 65 percent of all surveyed CPI Project participants reported that the abuser was held accountable by the child welfare provider for the pain they caused.
- 62 percent reported that the abuser was held accountable by the child welfare provider for the pain they caused to their children.
- 96 percent of all children involved with a domestic violence maltreatment finding resulted in the child staying with the non-offending parent according to co-located advocate reports. This is consistent with previous year.

Increased safety for survivors and their children as a result of their participation in the CPI Project:

- 100 percent of all surveyed CPI Project participants reported that the DV advocate spent enough time talking about their safety.
- 100 percent of all surveyed CPI Project participants reported that the DV advocate spent enough time talking about their children's safety.
- 100 percent of CPI Project participants surveyed that received assistance from an advocate reported that the advocate was caring and supportive.
- Of the survivors referred to the CPI Project by child welfare partners, 49 percent not only accessed the services provided by the co-located advocate, but also accessed DV center core safety services. Access to core domestic violence services has been identified as a homicide reduction strategy by Florida's Statewide Fatality Review Team.

During FY 2020-2021, co-located advocates responded to a total of 8,180 CPI Project referrals from child welfare professionals, participated in 7,441 child welfare case staffing meetings, and provided 17,108 case consultation services to child welfare professionals.

During this period, co-located advocates provided 10,281 services to 6,715 child welfare involved survivors referred to local certified domestic violence centers.

CPI Projects were collectively able to create and utilize a holistic system of wrap around services which allowed 15,908 children, whose families were involved in the child welfare system as a result of domestic violence, to remain in the home with the non-offending parent. This effort significantly reduced the need for foster care services and produced an approximate cost savings of \$44,540,809.20 [15,908 x \$466.65 (lowest foster care board rate) x 6 months (low estimate for a child's time in foster care)].

## Intimate Violence Enhanced Service Teams (InVEST) and Law Enforcement Programs

### InVEST

InVEST utilizes a coordinated community response model designed to reduce the number of domestic violence homicides by increasing services for survivors identified in high-lethality domestic violence situations while increasing perpetrator accountability throughout the criminal justice process. Preventing domestic violence homicides requires a comprehensive, multifaceted, and community-based response in which law enforcement, other criminal justice partners, and domestic violence centers work together to hold perpetrators accountable and provide enhanced advocacy for survivors. The InVEST program includes members from law enforcement, domestic violence centers, child welfare agencies, courts, and other partners who utilize non-traditional approaches by identifying high risk cases and ensuring that all systems tailor their response to address the unique and diverse needs of each survivor. Currently, four law enforcement agencies in Florida are funded to complete this work.

#### Law Enforcement InVEST Statistics

	Initiated Domestic Violence Reports	Perpetrator Arrests	Prosecution Filings
FY 2019-2020	18,144	8,878	9,129
FY 2020-2021	18,561	9,009	9,552

### Law Enforcement Enhanced Response Program

Designed to provide domestic violence survivors and their children with protection and services while improving a community's capacity to hold batterers accountable, the Law Enforcement Enhanced Response program supports ten Florida communities in enhancing their response to survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. This program challenges the community to listen, communicate, identify problems, and share ideas that will result in responses that ensure survivor safety and offender accountability. The goals of the program include assisting survivors and their children with accessing the protection and providing services necessary to live violence free while improving the community's capacity to hold offenders accountable.

### Law Enforcement Training Initiative

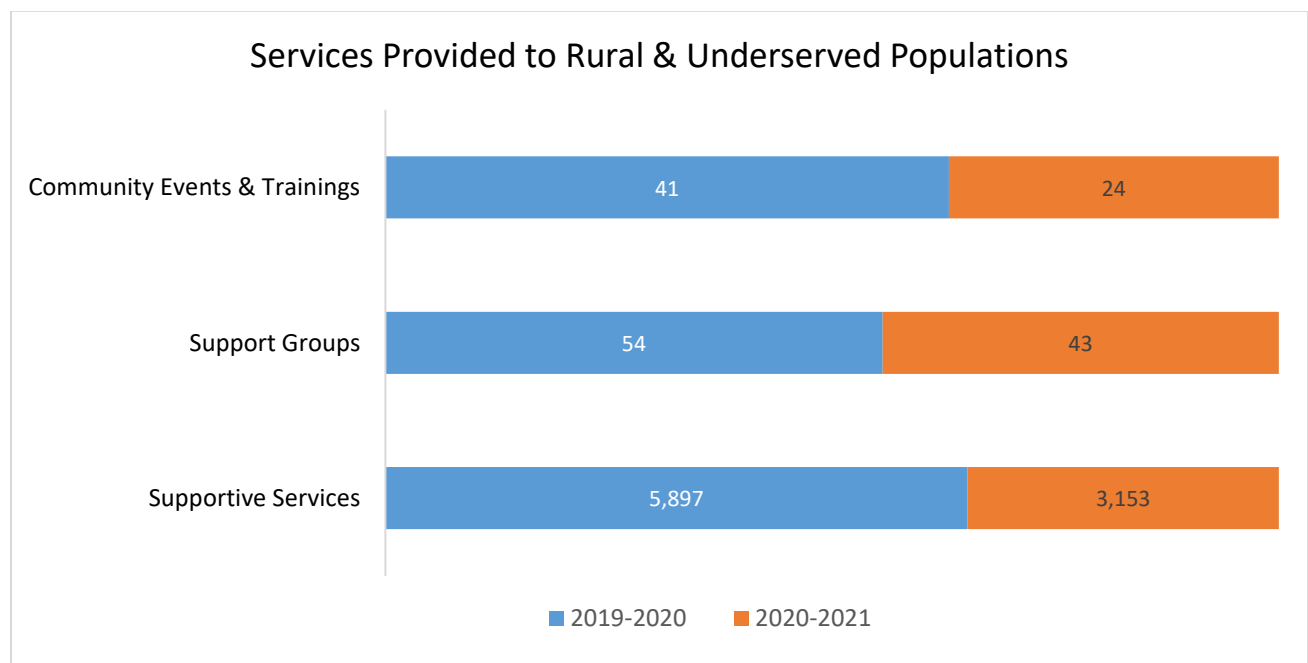
To increase perpetrator accountability in domestic violence cases, Florida provides training and technical assistance on best practices in evidence collection and prosecution of domestic violence perpetrators to law enforcement, advocates, and prosecutors. Trainings also include establishing appropriate protocols for responding to domestic violence calls, maintaining the confidentiality of survivor information, and effectively assessing the risk for potential domestic violence homicides.

During FY 2019-2020, Florida conducted 15 homicide reduction trainings for over 283 certified domestic violence center staff and allied partners. Eleven additional training sessions were completed for law enforcement on advanced topics related to law enforcement investigations, technology and stalking, and evidence collection in domestic violence cases for a total of 490 participants. Of those completing evaluations, 100 percent agreed that the information presented increased their knowledge.

During FY 2020-2021, 14 law enforcement trainings were completed on advanced topics related to law enforcement investigations, technology and stalking, and evidence collection in domestic violence cases for a total of 490 participants. Of those completing evaluations, 100 percent agreed that the information presented increased their knowledge and the information presented in these trainings would be implemented into their work.

### Rural Statewide Programs

The Rural Statewide Initiative and Rural Underserved Projects utilize a community organizing model designed to respond to the unique needs and challenges experienced by survivors residing in the most geographically isolated rural areas in Florida. In 1996, Florida established domestic violence and sexual assault outreach services in 19 rural counties where none previously existed. Since that time non-residential outreach programs have expanded to all certified domestic violence centers serving rural communities. Designated through Florida’s Services, Training, Officers, Prosecutors (STOP) Implementation Plan, funding opportunities are made available by grant solicitation for certified domestic violence centers to enhance programming for Florida’s most vulnerable populations. During Fiscal Years 2019-2020 and 2020-2021, the Department provided funding for seven rural projects serving some of Florida’s most isolated and rural communities within Manatee, Marion, Pasco, Putnam and Volusia Counties.



### Legal Services Projects

#### Injunction for Protection (IFP) Project

The Department partners with the Office of the Attorney General to administer the IFP Project. The IFP Project addresses the critical need for victims to have legal representation when filing *ex parte* petitions and at final injunction, ancillary, modification, and violation hearings. Legal representation ensures courts have all evidence necessary to determine whether to issue a



temporary and final injunction, provide ancillary relief such as financial support, modify an existing injunction, and hold perpetrators in contempt for injunction violations.

In 2021, DCF executed a contract with Florida's domestic violence service provider to oversee two Managing Attorneys to provide electronic and telephonic research and litigation support, on-site and virtual technical assistance, and coordinate webinars, learning exchanges, and other training opportunities. The Managing Attorneys review IFP Project monthly reports and track data to identify statewide trends, effective interventions, and barriers victims face when seeking injunctions for protection.

During FY 2019-2020, the Florida Office of State Court Administrator (OSCA) reported that victims filed 48,798 domestic violence, 3,670 dating violence, 1,451 sexual violence, and 21,511 stalking injunction petitions. During the 2020-2021 fiscal year, OSCA reported filings for 44,584 domestic violence, 3,432 dating violence, 1,053 sexual violence, and 20,159 stalking injunction petitions.

Seeking a civil injunction for protection is often the first step taken by victims to ask the court system to stop the violence. Civil injunctions for protection play a critical role in a coordinated community response to preventing domestic violence. Many victims complete the injunction petition without the assistance of a lawyer. As a result, temporary injunctions are often denied solely because the *pro se* petitioner did not include required information or documents; not because the petition is without merit. Victims in listening groups stated that when they obtained a temporary injunction, the batterer often threatened them if they moved forward with the process. Victims also stated that they feared facing the batterer at a final hearing without a lawyer present which often resulted in a voluntarily dismissal of the injunction.

This gap in legal services contributed to OAG's 2016 allocation of Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) federal funding to support the Injunction for Protection (IFP) Project. Currently, 33 certified domestic violence centers receive funding for 80 IFP Project attorneys and 15 IFP paralegals. In VOCA Federal FY 2019-2020, the IFP Project provided legal services to 14,702 victims, information/referrals to 8,430 victims, and victim compensation information to 4,830 victims. From October 2020 through June 2021, the IFP Project provided legal services to approximately 10,669 victims, information/referrals to 6,565 victims, and victim compensation information to 3,611 victims.

### **Legal Clearinghouse Project**

Established in 1997, the STOP-funded Legal Clearinghouse (LCH) Project partners certified domestic violence centers with their local legal aid/legal services providers who represent victims referred by the certified centers and other agencies at injunction for protection final hearings, and who provide legal advice in immigration matters. The LCH Project was expanded in 2017 to include providing legal representation in housing, public benefits, and credit repair matters. The STOP-funded Legal Clearinghouse (LCH) Project contracts with 10 legal services providers to provide legal representation to survivors at injunction for protection final hearings, and in housing, public benefits, and credit repair matters. The LCH Project contracts with one legal services provider to provide consultations to immigrant survivors of domestic violence seeking Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) visas.

VAWA allows an abused spouse or child of a U.S. Citizen or Lawful Permanent Resident or an abused parent of a U.S. Citizen to self-petition for lawful status in the United States, receive employment authorization, and access public benefits. Eligibility requirements include:

- You must be in a qualifying relationship with an abusive U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident
- You must reside in the U.S. at the time the VAWA petition is filed and you must have resided with the abusive U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident at some point.
- The abusive person must be either a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident
- You must have suffered abuse at the hands of the U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident
- You must be a person of good moral character

During the 2019- 2020 fiscal year, LCH attorneys:

- Represented clients in 307 injunction for protection final hearings, eviction defense, obtaining public housing and other housing matters, public benefits, and credit repair matters
- Provided 696 general consultation services to clients on a *pro bono* basis
- Provided 170 immigration consultations for survivors seeking Violence Against Women Act visas

In Fiscal Year 2020 – 2021, LCH attorneys:

- Provided 242 representations in injunction for protection final hearings, eviction defense, obtaining public housing and other housing matters, public benefits, and credit repair matters
- Provided 149 immigration consultations for survivors seeking Violence Against Women Act visas

### **Parent Attorney Project**

The Parent Attorney Project is a STOP-funded pilot project implemented in 2017 in Volusia County supports a full-time attorney to represent victims of domestic violence involved in the child welfare system. The goal of the project is to reduce the number of children removed from non-offending victims of domestic violence. The parent attorney provides representation as early as possible in the abuse investigation to advocate for services to permit the children to remain safely with victims, to advocate for interventions to hold batterers accountable, and to provide representation to victims in dependency related proceedings. Early appointment of attorneys for parents involved with the child welfare system has been identified as critical to children remaining safely at home with non-offending parents. See Edwards, Leonard (Judge ret), *Representation of Parents and Children in Abuse and Neglect Cases: The Importance of Early Appointment*, *Juvenile Family Court Journal*, (Spring 2012). In Fiscal Year 2019-2020, 63 survivors received legal assistance from the parent attorney, and 55 survivors received legal assistance from the parent attorney in Fiscal Year 2020-2021.

*The following statements were provided to the IFP attorneys from clients served during the 2020-2021 fiscal year:*

*“There are not enough words to thank you for your support and guidance. The time you spent explaining the system, what to expect, and why things happen the way they do was so incredibly valuable and appreciated. I called you when I felt very much in the dark. I can remember where I was standing and the relief of knowing someone would help me understand what was happening and be strong through the process. I owe so much of my strength through this process to you and your candid conversations and approach. I am so grateful to you and the shelter. I will certainly be giving back as so as I am able to and I will treasure the kindness and expertise you shared.” - IFP Client*

*“[The IFP Attorney] is an angel for helping me. I finally feel as if I’ve been heard. But for the IFP Project, I’d have no one. [The IFP Attorney] is my angel.” -IFP Client*

*“I don’t even know where to begin. I honestly just want you to know how much I appreciate you. You came into my life when I felt like I was fighting a losing battle. No one seemed to be taking my fear or concern seriously...until you called. You gave me back the motivation and faith I needed to fight for my boys and I. You went above and beyond during each conversation we had. You supported, listened, believed and fought for me. Thank you for fighting for my right to feel and be safe once again. I know I still have a long road ahead, but I will always remember you as the first pillar of light in the deep darkness. I will forever be grateful for your dedication and service to me and for my boys!” -IFP Client*

*“Thank you so much [The IFP Attorney] for helping me through this difficult time. I am so grateful to you for representing me in court for my injunction case. You are amazing and I’m forever thankful and truly appreciate [The IFP Attorney].” -IFP Client*

## **Justice for Families Grant Batterer Accountability Project**

The Department administers the Justice for Families Grant (JFF) project, funded by a Department of Justice Violence Against Women Act discretionary grant. Now in its sixth year, this project funds two Batterer Accountability Specialists (Specialists) at certified domestic violence centers Betty Griffin Center in St. Johns County and Lee Conlee House in Putnam County. The role of the Specialists is to assist child welfare professionals with developing effective case plans to hold batterers accountable, and to provide information to dependency court judges regarding a batterer’s compliance with dependency case plans and court orders in other cases involving the batterer. The Center for Court Innovation has recognized Florida’s JFF project nationally as a best practice for batterer accountability.

During Fiscal Year 2020-21, the Specialists participated in 84 staffings with DCF child welfare professionals in cases involving domestic violence to recommend effective interventions with batterers. The Specialists monitored batterer compliance with case plans in 84 dependency cases, and with court orders, including firearm surrender orders, in 93 civil injunction and criminal cases. Project partner St. Johns County Clerk of Court assisted the Specialists with providing batterer compliance information to dependency court and other judges to ensure batterers are held accountable for noncompliance. The Department provided 51 units of technical assistance to project partners.

Project partners convened four virtual meetings of the Batterer Accountability Advisory Board, which includes representatives from the Department’s Northeast regional office, the judiciary, community-based care agencies, the Sheriff’s Departments, probation, the state attorney’s office, batterer intervention programs and substance abuse and mental health providers. The

Board discusses successes and barriers and serves as a key component to cement long-term community investment in the project's goal of holding domestic violence batterers accountable.

## **Statewide Economic Justice Initiative**

The mission of the Economic Justice Initiative is to provide training, information, and resources to address the economic conditions that create barriers to the long-term independence and safety of victims and their children. Financial instability is one of the largest obstacles for victims seeking safety and one of the reasons that victims most often give for why they stay or have returned to their abuser. The ability to survive financially without the abuser presents challenges, whether it be due to loss of income, a place to live, childcare, healthcare, or other monetary issues including maintaining access to credit. Advocating for economic justice strategies can improve the many social conditions that prevent safety for victims.

### ***State***

As a part of the Economic Justice Initiative, the Department provides on-site, regional and statewide trainings as well as technical assistance to Florida's certified domestic violence centers. During FY 2019-2020, DCF completed 16 trainings and onsite technical assistance visits related to strategies for improving economic opportunities for survivors of domestic violence, economic empowerment, and addressing adult literacy needs. During the 2020-2021 fiscal year, DCF conducted 28 trainings and onsite technical assistance visits related to strategies for improving economic opportunities.

### ***Local***

Certified domestic violence centers, through OAG funding, employ advocates to focus on addressing financial abuse and implement economic empowerment programming for survivors. The local programs promote financial literacy and financial freedom from the abuser by working with victims to create financial plans, open bank accounts, implement matched savings programs, provide economic advocacy, and gain access to Earned Income Tax Credits. As a result, victims develop opportunities to effectively meet individual financial goals by taking advantage of micro-loans, micro-enterprises, or matched savings/Individual Developmental accounts provided by the participating domestic violence centers.

In FY 2019-2020:

- 11,653 survivors participated in financial empowerment services and literacy programs.
- 229 meetings were conducted with financial institutions or agencies that assist in developing programs related to micro-loans, micro-enterprises, matched savings accounts, and/or individual development accounts for survivors. This represents a 36 percent increase in meetings with financial institutions from the previous fiscal year.
- 3,524 survivors of domestic violence were assisted with identifying and securing affordable housing.
- 1,198 survivors received assistance with identifying and securing employment goals.
- 278 survivors of domestic violence completed educational courses, job training programs, or certificate programs.
- 144 survivors of domestic violence participated in the micro-loan program, while 262 participated in the micro-enterprise program.
- Participating programs throughout the state provided 28,341 information and referral services.
- Assisted 1,981 survivors with filing Victim's Compensation applications, they have also provided shelter and housing services in 12,583 instances.

In FY 2020-2021:

- 11,072 survivors participated in financial empowerment services and literacy programs.
- 106 meetings were conducted with financial institutions or agencies that assist in developing programs related to micro-loans, micro-enterprises, matched savings accounts, and/or individual development accounts for survivors.
- 2,257 survivors of domestic violence were assisted with identifying and securing affordable housing.
- 2,472 survivors received assistance with identifying and securing employment goals, completed educational courses, and job training programs.
- 89 survivors of domestic violence participated in the micro-loan program, while 91 participated in the micro-enterprise program.
- Participating programs throughout the state provided 22,522 information and referral services, advocacy.
- Assisted 1,582 survivors with filing Victim's Compensation applications, they have also provided shelter and housing services in 11,525 instances.

Florida Domestic Violence Hotline

Call or Chat: (800) 500-1119

<https://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/domestic-violence>