

## PRESS RELEASE



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### **Study of Domestic Violence Homicides Finds Critical Gaps in Community Response**

***Victims not receiving needed services when filing Protection Orders***

***Higher rates of domestic violence homicide affect victims of color***

***Victims turn to neighbors more often than police, courts***

The Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence released new research today on domestic violence homicides in Washington. Sixty-eight women, men and children were murdered by an abuser in the last two years. The study found that many lethal abusers were never arrested or prosecuted for their violence. Services for victims could not meet the range of resources they needed to find safety.

“These homicides tell us where we are falling short,” said Nan Stoops, executive director of the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence. “They make it clear that we cannot rely on any one system or agency alone to end domestic violence. We all have a role to play.”

***Victims not receiving needed services when filing Protection Orders***

Police, medical providers, and other professionals often rely on Protection Orders as the first line of defense for victims. It tends to be the one piece of

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advice that victims receive. The study of homicides revealed that many victims filed for a Protection Order before their murder. But few received any critical and potentially life-saving advocacy services.

Advocates consider Protection Orders to be just one part of a victim's plan to stay safe. Advocates help victims determine whether a Protection Order is a good option for their unique situation. They help victims file for an order. And they address how the abuser might react to being served.

81% of courts in Washington that issue Protection Orders do not have these advocacy services available at the court. Victims, even those in life-threatening situations, have no one to talk to. Court clerks do not regularly tell victims about the local domestic violence program.

The result? Victims are often left without the information and support they need to plan for the abuser's reaction to the Protection Order. For too many, the consequences are lethal.

### ***Higher rates of domestic violence homicide affect victims of color***

The study found that Hispanic/Latina, African American, American Indian and Alaska Native, and Asian and Pacific Islander women were victims of intimate partner homicide at rates 2 to 3 times higher as compared to white, non-Hispanic women.

The same trend appeared to be true for male domestic violence victims. Comparison rates could not be determined for male victims due to the relatively small number of men killed by intimate partners (43 male victims since 1997 compared to 278 female victims).

The study did not look at the race of the perpetrator, but revealed increased vulnerability of domestic violence victims of color.

In-depth examination of these homicides shed light on why this might be occurring. "Our findings did not tell us that violence happens more often in communities of color, but rather that victims from these communities faced significant barriers to getting the help they needed," said Jake Fawcett, Fatality Review Coordinator with the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence. "It was not about race. It was about a lack of culturally

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appropriate services, interpreters, and economic resources.”

### ***Victims turn to neighbors more often than police, courts***

The study also found that victims turned to neighbors and others in their community more often than they called police or went to court. Neighbors tried to help, but often didn't know how. Few seemed to know they could call a local domestic violence program for assistance.

“We are committed to remembering those who were murdered and learning from their deaths,” said Stoops. “It is clear there is no simple solution to ending domestic violence. But every person can take the simple step of calling the domestic violence program in their area to learn how to help.”

To learn about the domestic violence program that serves your community, call the Washington State Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-562-6025.

The complete research report, *Now That We Know: Findings and Recommendations from the Washington State Domestic Violence Fatality Review*, is available at [www.wscadv.org](http://www.wscadv.org).

### **About the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

Founded in 1990 by survivors of domestic violence and their allies, the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence is a non-profit network of over 65 domestic violence advocacy programs across the state of Washington. Our work includes research, training, promoting domestic violence awareness, and public policy advocacy. To learn more, please visit our website at [www.wscadv.org](http://www.wscadv.org).

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