



MILWAUKEE COUNTY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HIGH RISK TEAM

2021 Annual Report



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INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the work of the **Milwaukee County Domestic Violence High Risk Team (DVHRT)** that operates from Sojourner Family Peace Center in Milwaukee, WI. A DVHRT is a recognized best practice by the U.S. Department of Justice for communities to address domestic violence cases at highest risk for homicide. The goals of the DVHRT are to efficiently identify and staff domestic violence cases at the highest risk for lethality in order to determine individualized recommendations for each case that will ***maximize safety for survivors and accountability for offenders***. Additionally, Milwaukee's DVHRT creates an opportunity for survivors whose cases are being staffed to provide input to the team that can be used in determining appropriate recommendations for their case.

Milwaukee's DVHRT is a multidisciplinary team that includes individuals from Sojourner (a domestic violence service provider), the Milwaukee Police Department (MPD), the Milwaukee County District Attorney's (DA) Office, the Division of Community Corrections with the State of Wisconsin Department of Corrections Office (DOC), and representatives from suburban law enforcement agencies in Milwaukee County. These partners were selected to maximize efficiency and protect confidential information from being shared broadly.



THE GOALS OF THE DVHRT ARE TO EFFICIENTLY IDENTIFY AND STAFF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES AT THE HIGHEST RISK FOR LETHALITY IN ORDER TO DETERMINE INDIVIDUALIZED RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EACH CASE THAT WILL MAXIMIZE SAFETY FOR SURVIVORS AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR OFFENDERS.



The DVHRT meets twice weekly to discuss recommendations for that week's staffed cases. **Cases are selected for staffing based on criteria indicating exceptionally high risk for lethality.** Screening criteria include incidents that involve stabbing/use of a knife, shooting/use of a gun, sexual assault, strangulation, weighted lethality assessment screening tool scores of 25 or 26 points, kidnapping, arson or burning, particularly vulnerable victim due to age, pregnancy, or disability, or other egregious details.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2021 the team continued to meet virtually twice weekly to discuss cases. There were fewer total cases staffed in 2021 compared to previous years. The cases staffed, however, were more egregious and dangerous. For instance, there was a higher percentage of repeat DVHRT cases

staffed along with a higher percentage of cases involving shooting or use of a gun. To accommodate for the increasing number of egregious cases each week, the **DVHRT increased capacity starting late November of 2021 from 15 cases to 20 cases staffed weekly.**

We would like to thank our partners for continuing to serve the Milwaukee community throughout the pandemic and ensuring DVHRT interventions persist.

For questions, comments or concerns, please contact Michelle Coppens (DVHRT coordinator and high risk advocate) at:

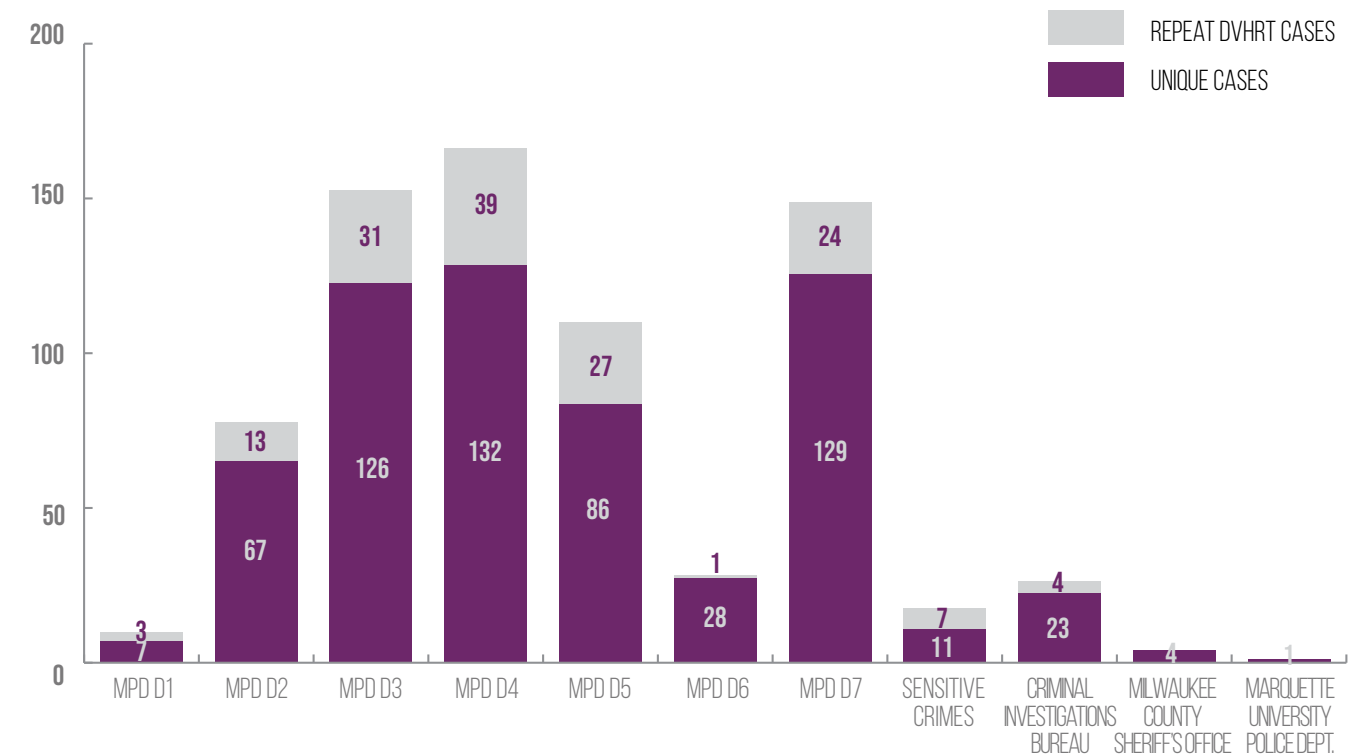
MichelleC@familypeacecenter.org

2021 MONTHLY CASE STAFFING & REFERRING DISTRICTS

2021 Monthly Case Staffing



2021 Referring Jurisdictions



831
CASES STAFFED
IN 2021

148
REPEAT CASES
STAFFED

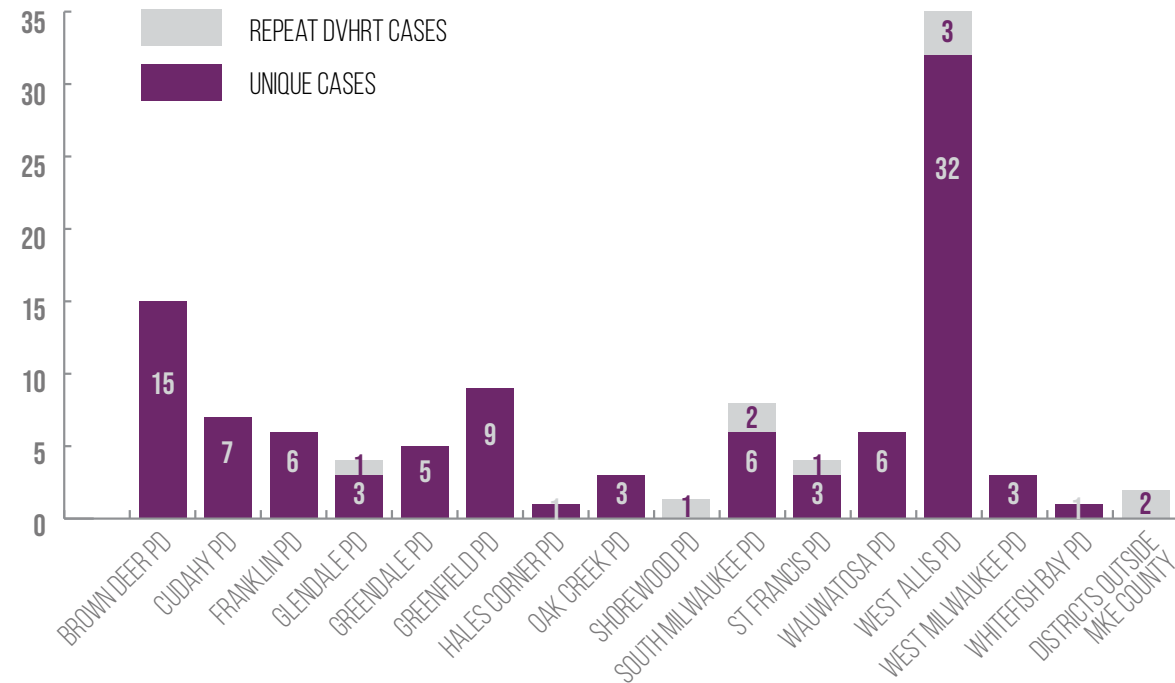
The DVHRT staffed a total of **831 cases in 2021, down from 874 cases in 2020**. Of those 831 cases staffed in 2021, **148 were repeat cases** that included the same victim (127 individuals) or the same offender (121 individuals) as a previous case. Unless otherwise specified, data in this report include both first time and repeat cases.

HIGHEST NUMBER OF
CASES FROM MPD
DISTRICTS

**3, 4
& 7**

The districts with the **highest number of DVHRT cases are MPD Districts 3, 4, and 7**. These three districts accounted for over half (55.1%) of the DVHRT cases in 2021. These districts also produced the highest number of cases in 2020 at 58.8% and in 2019 at 54.4%.

2021 Referring Jurisdiction: Milwaukee County Suburban Districts



(Milwaukee County Suburban Districts not listed here had 0 cases staffed by the DVHRT in 2021)



42.9%

**INCREASE IN CASES REFERRED
FROM SUBURBAN DISTRICTS**

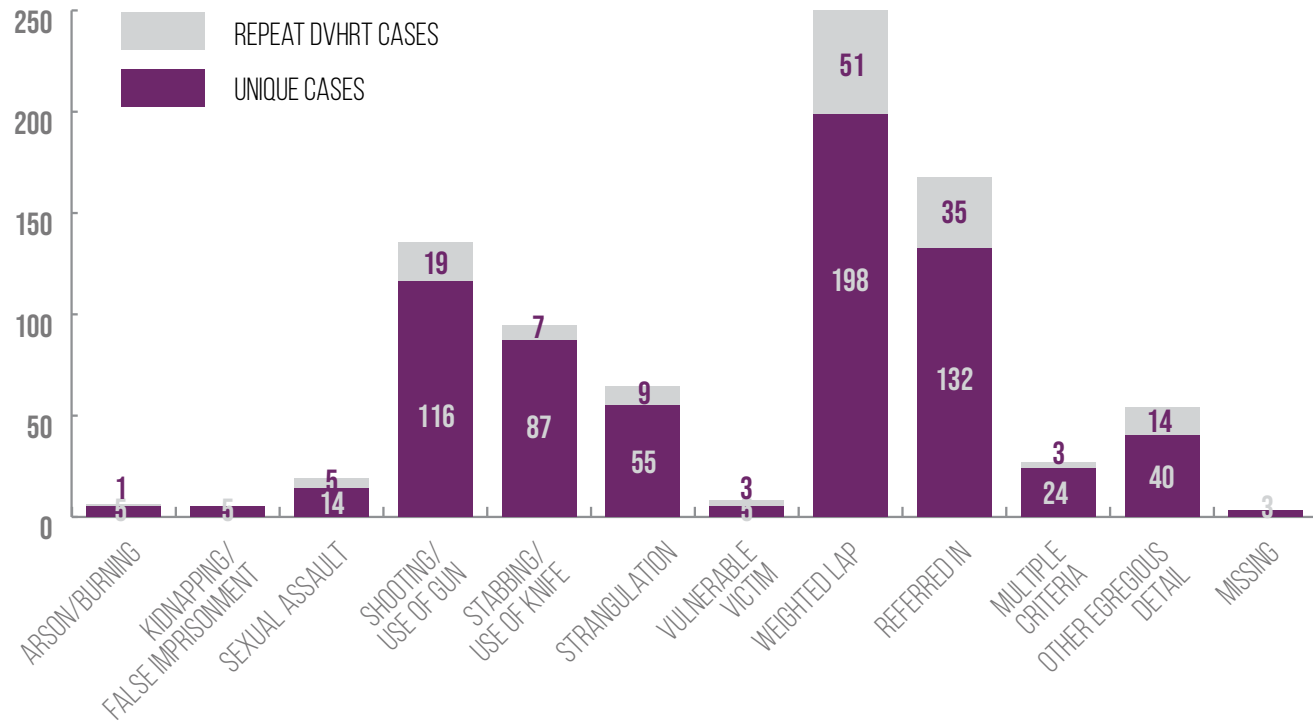
In 2021, suburban districts in Milwaukee (excluding West Allis, Brown Deer, and Greenfield) were involved in less than 1% of the total cases staffed by the DVHRT. West Allis accounted for roughly 4% of cases in 2021. Brown Deer accounted for roughly 1.7% of cases in 2021. Greenfield accounted for roughly 1% of cases in 2021. **The number of cases referred from suburban districts has increased 42.9% from 2020.** Milwaukee County suburban districts are not listed in this report if they had 0 cases staffed by the DVHRT in 2021. The two cases outside Milwaukee County that were staffed by the DVHRT came from incidents that occurred in Reedsville and Waukesha. These cases were referred into the DVHRT because they had a history in Milwaukee County and had been previously staffed by the DVHRT.



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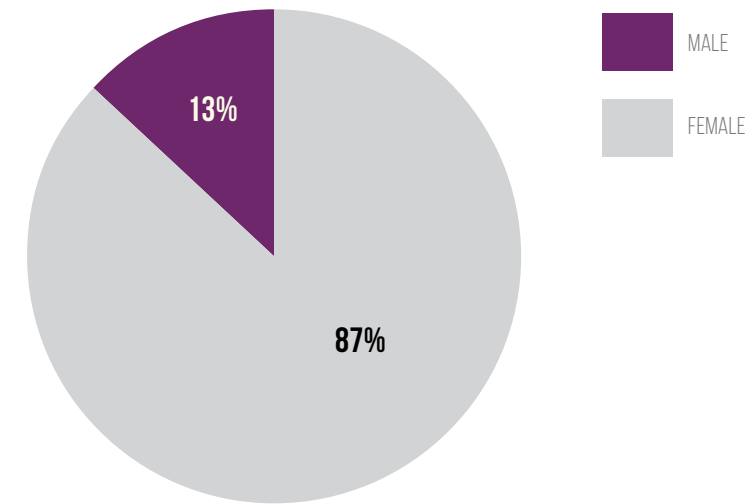
IN 2021, SUBURBAN DISTRICTS IN MILWAUKEE (EXCLUDING WEST ALLIS, BROWN DEER, AND GREENFIELD) WERE INVOLVED IN LESS THAN 1% OF THE TOTAL CASES STAFFED BY THE DVHRT.

2021 CASE SELECTION CRITERIA

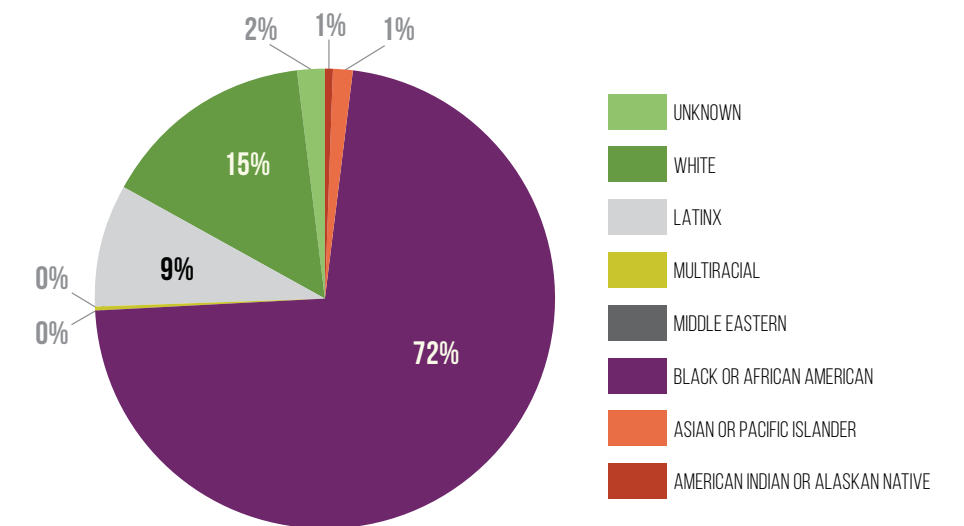


2021 VICTIM & OFFENDER CHARACTERISTICS

2021 Victim Gender



2021 Victim Race/Ethnicity



25
or
26
OUT OF A
POSSIBLE 26
POINTS

High LAP (lethality assessment protocol) screening tool scores (25 or 26 of a possible 26 points) accounted for the highest number of staffed cases in 2021. These scores come from victims' answers to screening questions conducted by law enforcement officers responding to a domestic violence call. When responding to a domestic violence call for service, law enforcement officers in Milwaukee County administer the LAP screening tool to victims. The victim answers 11 yes or no questions to determine the risk for lethality in each particular case. Officers use a script to inform victims if they are high risk and discuss immediate safety planning. Officers then offer to connect the victim to Sojourner for confidential domestic violence advocacy and support.

135
CASES INVOLVING
SHOOTING OR USE
OF A GUN

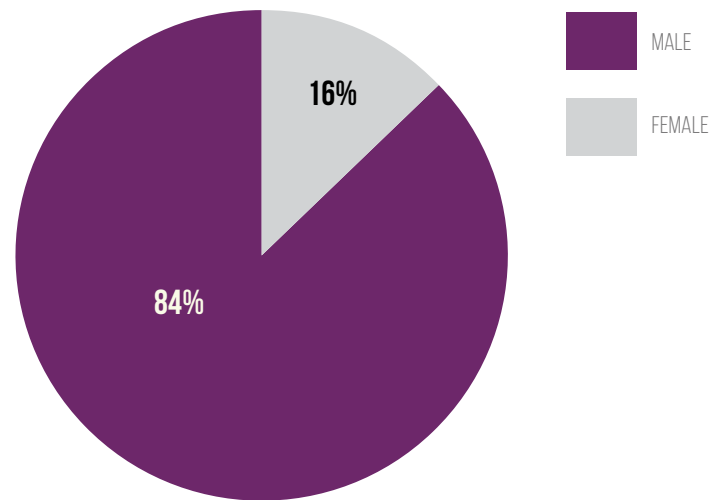
Cases that involved shooting or use of a gun were the second most common criteria of staffed cases in 2021 with 135 cases out of 831.

“Referred in” cases are those sent to the DVHRT from advocates, Milwaukee County law enforcement jurisdictions, the DA’s office, DOC or other partners of Sojourner Family Peace Center.

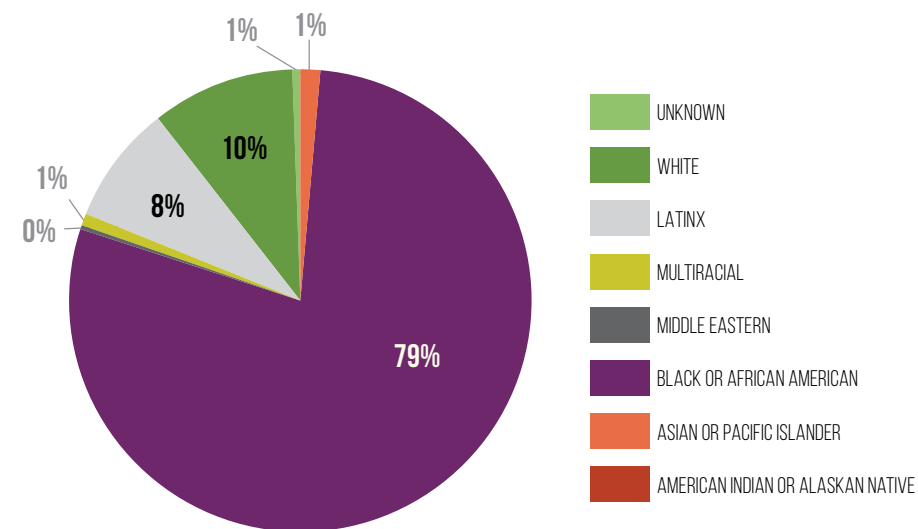
AVERAGE VICTIM AGE:

33.9 years
(RANGE: 17 - 93.9)

2021 Offender Gender



2021 Offender Race/Ethnicity

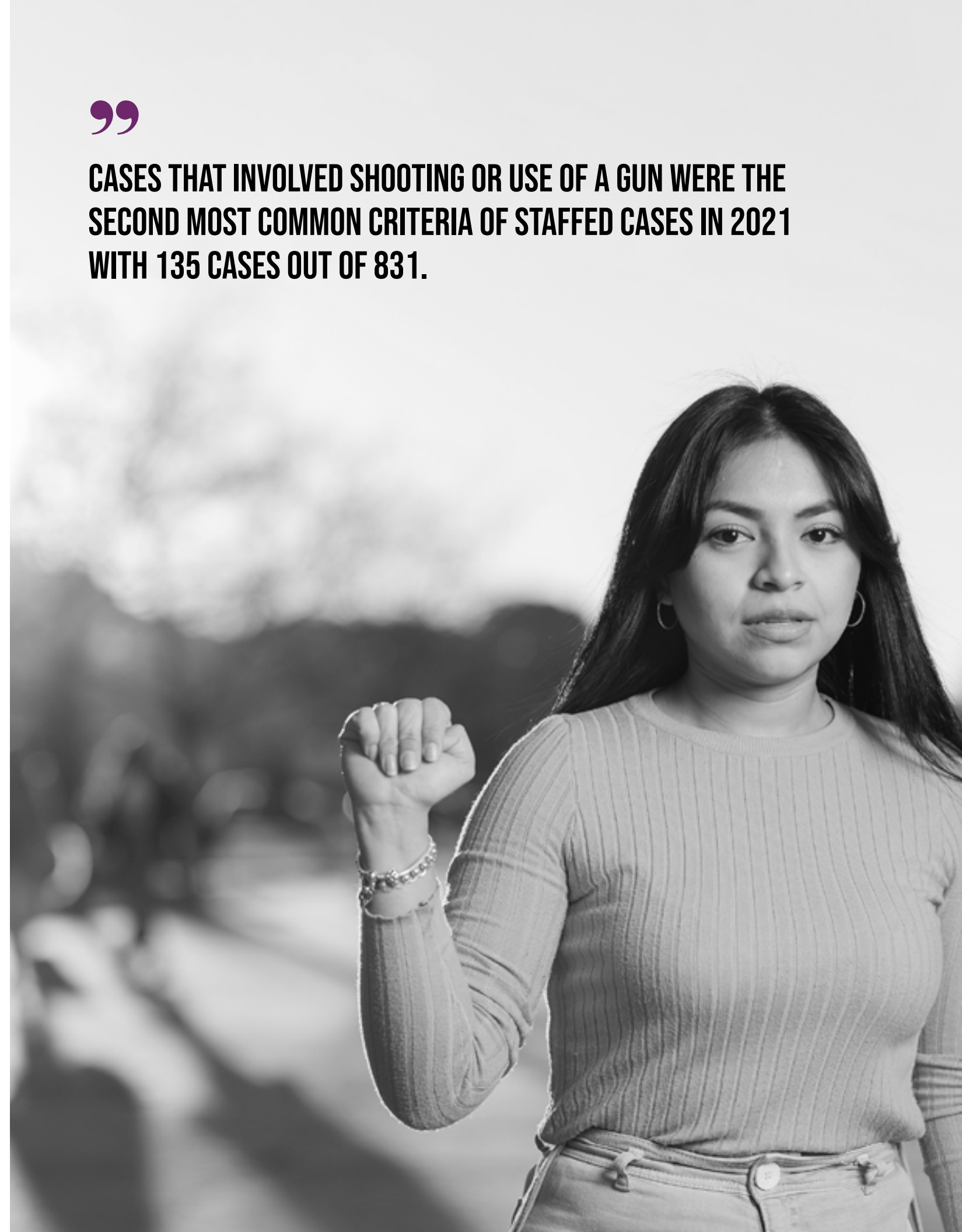


**AVERAGE
OFFENDER AGE:**

34.7 years
(RANGE: 17.8 - 77.3)

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CASES THAT INVOLVED SHOOTING OR USE OF A GUN WERE THE SECOND MOST COMMON CRITERIA OF STAFFED CASES IN 2021 WITH 135 CASES OUT OF 831.

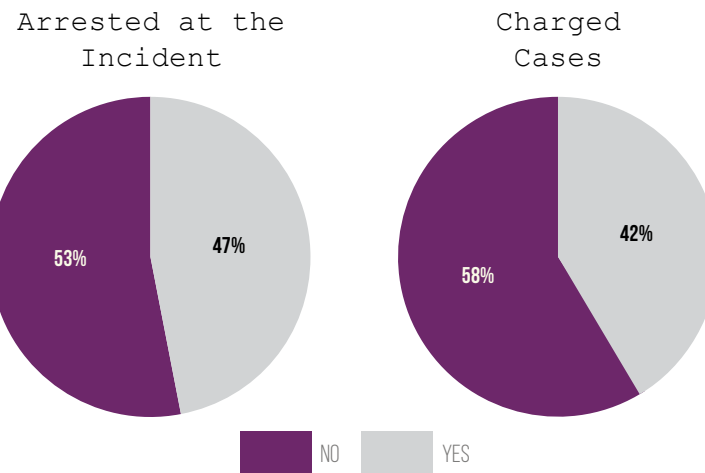


2021 DVHRT CASE OUTCOMES

The goals of the DVHRT are to maximize safety for survivors and accountability for offenders. We track a number of indicators related to these goals including whether there was an arrest of the offender, whether a case is criminally charged, the number of times domestic violence advocates made contact with the victim to safety plan and offer additional services and support, and whether a victim or offender was currently on supervision or had previously been on supervision with the Division of Community Correction including whether the supervision was domestic violence related. In late October 2021, we began tracking additional indicators of the recommendations the team made, including further law enforcement investigation, listening to jail calls, and the DA's office re-review a case. Since we began tracking these metrics late in 2021, they were only tracked for 174 cases that year.

ARRESTS: 47% OF CASES RESULT IN ARREST

- In 2021, 47% of cases (389 of 831 cases) resulted in the arrest of an offender at the time of the incident, up 2.6% points from 2020.
- Offenders were arrested in 39.9% of repeat DVHRT cases.
- One case was not applicable due to the abuser being deceased and two cases were missing data on offender arrest.
- Arrests were reported by the DA's office or relevant district officers.



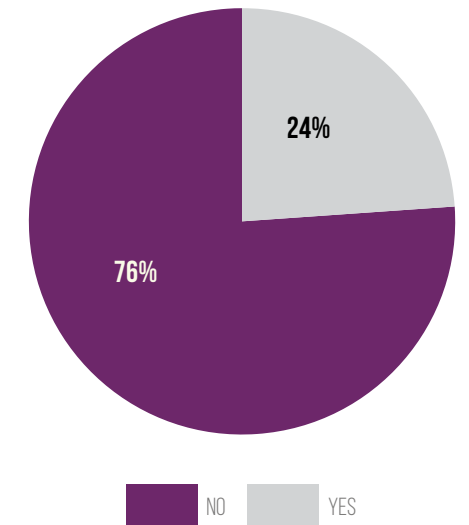
CRIMINAL CHARGING: 42% OF CASES CHARGED

- 42% of cases (345 of 831 cases) were criminally charged in 2021.
- 51.4% of repeat DVHRT cases were criminally charged.
- One case was not applicable due to the abuser being deceased.
- Criminal charges were reported by the DA's office.
- If charges were pending at the time of staffing, the result was followed up through CCAP searching to determine if the incident was charged. Charging decisions may have been changed after the meeting and after searching on CCAP.

ADVOCACY CONTACT: 77.5% OF DVHRT VICTIMS WERE CONTACTED BY A SOJOURNER ADVOCATE

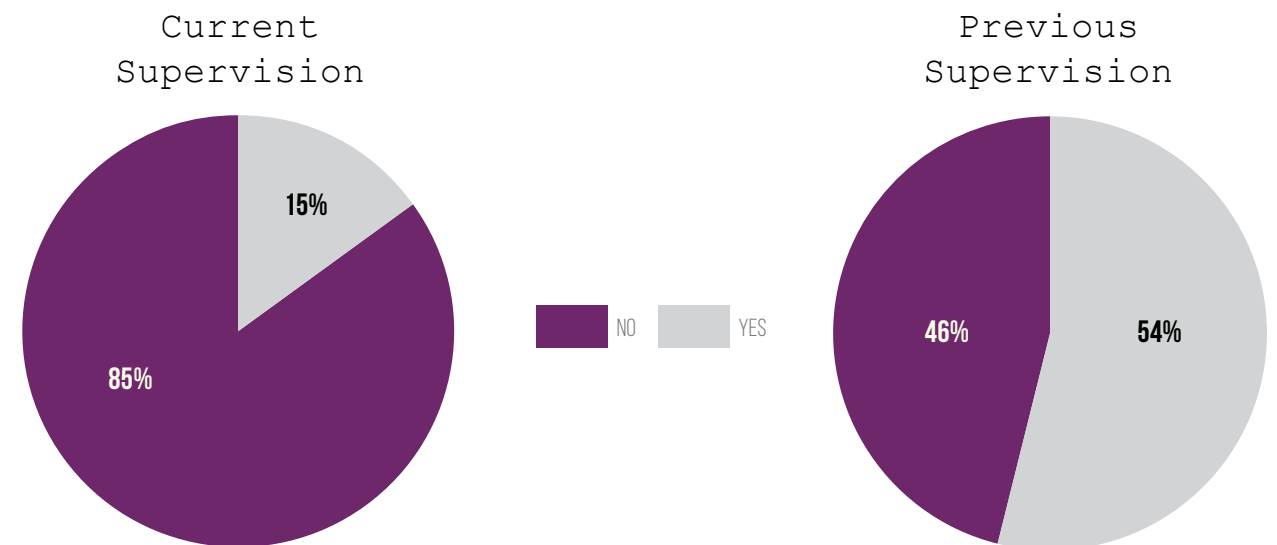
- Victims in 76% of cases had been successfully contacted before staffing. Victims in the remaining 24% of cases (196 total cases) were recommended to be contacted by the DVHRT after staffing.
- 79.7% of repeat DVHRT victims were successfully contacted before staffing.
- The DVHRT recommended advocacy contact with the victim in staffed cases for which Sojourner was unable to connect with the victim before the case staffing. A home visit is often recommended if contact through the phone is unsuccessful.
- Advocacy contact is not recommended when victims do not give consent to be contacted.

Advocacy Contact Needed



SUPERVISION: 15.3% OF OFFENDERS CURRENTLY ON SUPERVISION

- 15.3% of offenders were on supervision at the time of staffing and 15.9% of the offenders with previous supervision were repeat DVHRT offenders.
- 45.8% of offenders with current or previous supervision had domestic violence-related supervision.
 - 20.6% of these individuals were repeat DVHRT offenders.
- Supervision was reported by the Wisconsin DOC Division of Community Corrections.





**REVIEW OF
JAIL CALLS :** **16.3%**
ADDITIONAL
CASES

- *Because of DVHRT involvement, jail calls were recommended to be reviewed in an additional 16.3% of cases in which an offender was arrested.*
- A recommendation to review jail calls is made when there are concerns of intimidation or a violation of a no contact order.
- A DVHRT recommendation for jail call review was not made in cases that were in the process of having jail calls reviewed prior to case staffing.
- DVHRT recommendations for jail call review were recorded during case staffings.

LETHALITY: **0%**
NOT A SINGLE VICTIM
STAFFED IN 2021 WAS
KILLED BY THEIR ABUSER

- *None (0%)* of DVHRT victims staffed in 2021 were killed by their abuser or another DV abuser after staffing.
- **3 DV-related deaths** in 2021 in Milwaukee County involved a *previous* DVHRT victim or offender.
 - One individual died fleeing a domestic violence incident. They were staffed twice in 2021 as an offender.
 - One victim of a DV-related homicide was staffed as a victim in 2020.
 - One suspect of a DV-related homicide was staffed as a victim in 2021.

**FURTHER LAW
ENFORCEMENT
INVESTIGATION :** **6.1%**
ADDITIONAL
CASES

- *Because of DVHRT involvement, an additional 6.1% of cases received further law enforcement investigation to gather evidence to increase likelihood of criminal conviction and victim safety.*
- A DVHRT recommendation for further investigation was not made when law enforcement was already in the process of doing a follow up investigation or when it wasn't necessary for the DA's office to successfully prosecute the case.
- DVHRT recommendations for further law enforcement investigation were recorded during case staffings.

**DA'S OFFICE
RE-REVIEW:** **20.7%**
CASES

- *A recommendation for the DA's office to re-review a case was made in 20.7% of cases.*
- This recommendation was made for cases in which law enforcement was conducting a follow up investigation for evidence or when the DA's office was working to make contact with the victim.
- In some cases, the DA's office had not received reports or evidence from law enforcement. In these instances, a recommendation for the DA's office to re-review the case was made upon receiving the reports or evidence from law enforcement.
- DVHRT recommendations for DA's Office re-review of cases were recorded during case staffings.

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**NONE (0%) OF DVHRT
VICTIMS STAFFED IN
2021 WERE KILLED
BY THEIR ABUSER OR
ANOTHER DV ABUSER
AFTER STAFFING.**

**BECAUSE OF DVHRT
INVOLVEMENT,
JAIL CALLS WERE
RECOMMENDED TO
BE REVIEWED IN AN
ADDITIONAL 16.3%
OF CASES IN WHICH
AN OFFENDER WAS
ARRESTED.**

5 years of THE MILWAUKEE COUNTY DVHRT

2022 marks the 5-year anniversary of the formation of Milwaukee County's DVHRT. Since 2017, the team has expanded in capacity, allowing for a greater number of cases to be staffed each week, from 15 cases at its inception to the current 20 cases. The goals of the team have remained the same, to **maximize safety for survivors and accountability for offenders**. This is done through collaboration and information sharing among agencies to form appropriate recommendations for each case.

The majority of cases continue to occur in MPD Districts 3, 4, and 7; a trend consistent since the formation of the DVHRT. Demographic information such as age, gender, and race of the victim and offender remain consistent from 2017 to 2021 as well. This highlights the stark and unjust sociodemographic and racial inequities in the experience of violence in Milwaukee. Black and brown women continue to be the most frequent victims of lethal and near lethal domestic violence in our city. While these characteristics remain unchanged, the number of cases staffed from 2017 to 2021 has increased by 24% and the number of repeat cases staffed has decreased.

The DVHRT has been remarkably successful at preventing homicide in the cases they staff. In 2021, not a single victim staffed by DVHRT was killed. This success is even more remarkable considering the county-wide rise in domestic violence related-deaths since 2017. We hypothesize that the increase seen in 2020 is partially attributable to the COVID-19 pandemic, as this increase was seen nationwide. Although DV-related deaths have increased in the city, evidence supports the effectiveness of the DVHRT in maximizing safety for victims and accountability of offenders. ***Of the 3,131 cases staffed over DVHRT's 5 year history, only one case has resulted in the victim being killed by their abuser.*** One is too many, but this means the likelihood of a victim being killed after a DVHRT staffing is extremely low (0.03%).

In 2021, 47% of cases resulted in the offender being arrested, compared to 25.7% in 2019. This means ***law enforcement is almost twice as likely to make a timely arrest of a high-risk offender*** in just the past two years. Arrest of the offender can be critical in ensuring the physical safety of the victim, allowing them to put in



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THE GOALS OF THE DVHRT HAVE REMAINED THE SAME, TO MAXIMIZE SAFETY FOR SURVIVORS AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR OFFENDERS.

place safety measures such as applying for a restraining order, creating a safety plan, establishing code words with families and neighbors, changing locks at their current home, entering emergency shelter, or finding a new place to live.

While arrests have increased, the percentage of cases ultimately criminally charged has decreased from 2017 to 2021 by 5%. In 2021, the DVHRT recommended that the DA's office re-review 20.7% of cases, as well as law enforcement conduct follow up investigations for 6.1% of cases. ***The DA's office re-reviewed cases when law enforcement had obtained additional evidence as well as cases in which law enforcement was conducting additional investigation.*** This process can take time and a change in the charging decision may not be reflected in data presented in this report. Additionally, sometimes a decision to not charge a case or not re-review a case was made for

the safety of the victim. In some cases, criminally charging a case can increase the lethality. The DVHRT partners, including the DA's office, take this into account when making recommendations for cases.

Collaborative efforts from all agencies involved have benefited victims by crafting individualized recommendations that would not be possible without the information shared across agencies. This effort has not only benefitted victims, but each agency has been able to use the information shared in their work. DOC has been able to move forward with revocation when an offender is on supervision, the DA's office has gained information that may influence charging decisions, MPD and suburban districts have worked to locate and arrest offenders as well as conduct follow up investigations, and Sojourner has been able to offer security measures and other services to support victims.



FUTURE DIRECTIONS

FUTURE DIRECTION 1: EXPANDING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HIGH RISK TEAM (DVHRT) STAFFING CAPACITY

Throughout its 5 year history, more often than not, the Milwaukee County DVHRT has operated at full capacity staffing. That is, each week the team is staffing the maximum number of cases they are able despite the existence of other cases that meet screening criteria. To address the increasing number of high risk cases, the DVHRT expanded from 15 to 20 cases per week in November 2021. After the expansion, we began tracking a number of new indicators to better capture recommendations made and inform decision making for future cases. Despite the expansion, there are still more high risk cases DVHRT does not have the capacity to review. ***In the future, we need to expand DVHRT capacity to staff all high risk cases meeting screening criteria each week.***

FUTURE DIRECTION 2: OUTREACH TO MORE HIGH-RISK VICTIMS

Not a single victim or offender involved in DVHRT staffed cases was killed in 2021. This remarkable success of the team stands in stark contrast to the rising number of DV-related deaths across the county in recent years. Further, only one victim staffed by DVHRT in the team's 5 year history has been killed. The DVHRT has successfully prevented homicide in cases they staff. Our challenge remains in connecting with victims in cases that do end in homicide. In the majority of DV-related deaths in the past 5 years, the victims and offenders have not been involved with any DVHRT partner agency prior to the death. Therefore, ***we must increase outreach to victims and their family members who are in dangerous and potentially lethal situations but who have not connected to any formal networks for support.***



FUTURE DIRECTION 3: INCREASE ADVOCACY CONTACT WITH HIGH-RISK VICTIMS

In 2021, Sojourner's advocates made contact with victims in 76% of cases before they were staffed by DVHRT. This is an improvement from 2020 where only 66.1% of cases had pre-staffing contact, but a decrease from 2017 where 88.3% of DVHRT victims were connected with Sojourner before staffing. In 2017, 635 cases were staffed compared to 831 in 2021. Due to the increase in victims staffed, it may be difficult for Sojourner to make contact with every victim before staffing. If advocates are unable to make phone contact, a home visit is attempted. If a victim isn't home when the home visit is attempted, Sojourner may not be able to make contact with a victim unless they reach out for support. ***We need to build advocacy capacity to quickly contact high-risk victims who are most difficult to reach.***

FUTURE DIRECTION 4: PROVIDE EXTRA SUPPORT TO VICTIMS IN AREAS OF HIGH NEED

Milwaukee Police Department districts 3, 4, & 7 were the largest sources of DVHRT cases in 2021, a trend persisting since 2017. This indicates a need for specific strategies in these districts. These strategies could include *on-scene response in which a DV advocate accompanies an officer to the scene, increasing the number of police officers specialized in DV, having more advocates in these districts, and increasing professional training and public awareness of DV.*

We are working in collaboration across partners to advance each of these Future Directions and ultimately more effectively intervene and wrap support around high risk domestic violence survivors.



APPENDIX A 2021 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HIGH RISK TEAM MEMBERS

Team Member	Agency	Team Member	Agency
Alvarado, Jaclyn	Department of Corrections	PO Miller, Keith	Milwaukee Police Department
Artega, Michaela	Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office	Munoz, Jessica	Sojourner
Attewell, Kathy	Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office	PO Nouri, Mohammad	Milwaukee Police Department
Bakunowicz, Katie	Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office	Ortiz, Kathryn	Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office
Barnes, Constance	Sojourner	Ortiz, Rosendo	Sojourner
Bausch, Carly	Sojourner	Othmer, Melissa	Department of Corrections
Belmontes, Marisa	Sojourner	Parry, Amy	Medical College of Wisconsin
Capt. Birch, Carolyn	Milwaukee Police Department	Peters-Garay, Meghan	Department of Corrections
PO Bongle, Matt	Milwaukee Police Department	Prosser, Emily	Sojourner
PO Bray, Louise	Milwaukee Police Department	Raymond, Taylor	Sojourner
Butters, Samantha	Sojourner	Rivas Plata, Maria	Sojourner
PO Carlson, Cindy	Milwaukee Police Department	Robinson, Sheila	Sojourner
Chartrand, Zach	Sojourner	Sadowski, Sara	Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office
Ciardo, Mackenzie	Sojourner	PO Sanders, Ordlyn	Milwaukee Police Department
Coppens, Michelle	Sojourner	Santiago, Minerva	Department of Corrections
Cooper, Sue	Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office	Schepp, Chad	Department of Corrections
Cox, Justina	Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office	PO Stacey, Deborah	Milwaukee Police Department
De Toro, Andria	Sojourner	PO Stachowiak, Jason	Milwaukee Police Department
Figuroa Vasquez, Guadalupe	Sojourner	Stengel-Flemmer, Amanda	Sojourner
Flagg, Bryandhi	Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office	Swenson, Cherie	Sojourner
Gass, Katherine	Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office	Tapia, Jessi	Sojourner
Gould, Naomi	Sojourner	Taylor, Deja	Sojourner
Hau, Kelsey	Sojourner	Region 3 Chief Niel Thorson	Department of Corrections
Heitman, Nick	Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office	Torbenson, Matthew	Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office
Horsfall, Kelly	Department of Corrections	Captain Turner, Lucretia	Milwaukee Police Department
Lt. Janick, Theresa	Milwaukee Police Department	Vang, Kao	Sojourner
Johnson, Meghan	Sojourner	Walsh, Kayleigh	Sojourner
PO Jones Jr., Michael	Milwaukee Police Department	Warichak, Laura	Sojourner
Lt. Klein, Roberta	Milwaukee Police Department	Washington, Carla	Sojourner
PO Kopesky, Louis	Milwaukee Police Department	Watson, Anna-Alicia	Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office
Kostalec, Connie	Medical College of Wisconsin	Watson, Twanna	Sojourner
Krenz, Dakota	Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office	PO Watts, Shemia	Milwaukee Police Department
Lawrence, Shawanna	Sojourner	Werner, Tracy	Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office
Legler, Kelli	Sojourner	Williams, Rahquiyah	Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office
Marchan, Breanne	Sojourner	Witty, Brittany	Sojourner
Marquardt, Liz	Sojourner	Wolter, Liz	Sojourner
PO Marshall, Christina	Milwaukee Police Department	Woods, Sarah	Sojourner
McGowan, Kristin	Department of Corrections	Yang, Ger	Sojourner
Merlo, Evelyn	Sojourner	Yeado, Julie	Sojourner
Mineo, Francesco	Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office		





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