



Milwaukee County Domestic Violence High Risk Team

2022 Annual Report

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Special Acknowledgement

The work of the DVHRT would not be possible without the dedicated and passionate support of volunteer, Kaleen Morkin. Since the team's early days, Kaleen has contributed many hours weekly to screen cases for staffing. We are deeply grateful for her valuable contributions.



Graphic design by the generous in-kind support of Madison Huseboe of Maddesign Lab.

The report summarizes the work of **Milwaukee's Domestic Violence High Risk Team (DVHRT) in 2022.**

Milwaukee's DVHRT operates from Sojourner Family Peace Center in Milwaukee, WI. DVHRT is a recognized best practice by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) for communities to address domestic violence (DV) cases at high-risk for homicide. The DVHRT works to identify DV cases at the highest risk for lethality and craft individualized recommendations for each case that will maximize safety for victims and accountability for offenders. Additionally, Milwaukee's DVHRT creates an opportunity for victims whose cases are being staffed to provide input that can be used to determine appropriate recommendations for their case.

Milwaukee's DVHRT is a multidisciplinary team that includes individuals from Sojourner (a non-profit agency serving DV victims), Milwaukee Police Department (MPD), Milwaukee County District Attorney's (DA) Office, State of Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) Division of Community Corrections (DCC), and representatives from suburban law enforcement agencies in Milwaukee County. These partners were selected as they reflect the DOJ best practice model and allow us to maximize the efficiency of the work and protect confidential information from being shared broadly.

The DVHRT meets twice weekly to discuss intervention and recommendations for that week's cases. Cases are selected for staffing based on criteria indicating exceptionally high risk for lethality. Specific screening criteria used are discussed later in this report. Data presented in this report describes DVHRT cases staffed in 2022.

We would like to thank our partners for continuing to serve the Milwaukee community through their dedication to the DVHRT and ensuring that these life-saving interventions persist.

For questions, comments or concerns, please contact the DVHRT coordinator and high-risk advocate Michelle Coppens at MichelleC@familypeacecenter.org.

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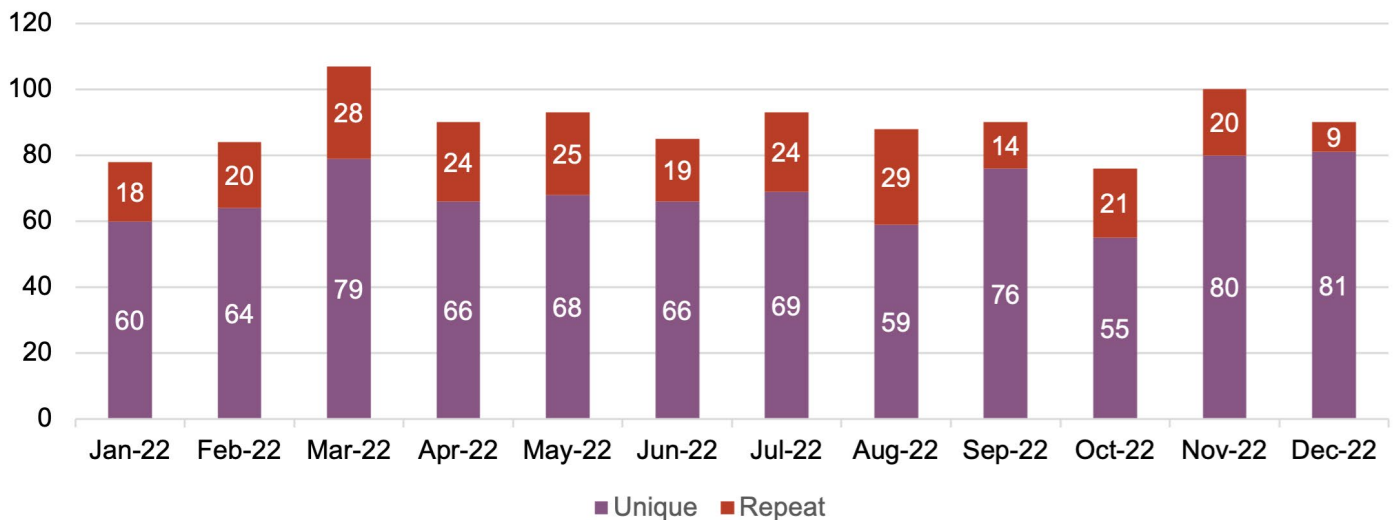
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2022 Monthly Case Staffing & Referring Districts

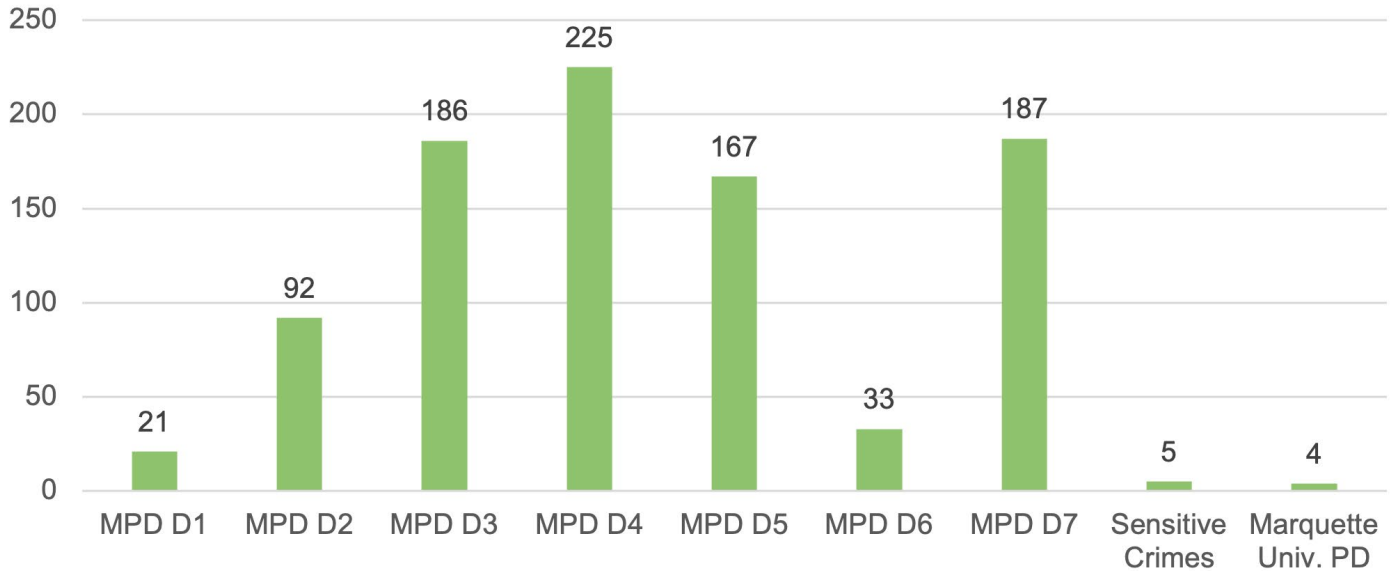
In 2022, the DVHRT met twice weekly to determine recommendations for that week’s staffed cases. **In 2022, the DVHRT staffed a total of 1,074 cases**, with an average of 20.7 cases per week. Notably, there was a **29.2% increase in the total number of cases** staffed from the 831 in 2021 to 1,074 in 2022. Of those 1,074 cases, 251 were repeat cases that included the same victim (208 individuals) or the same offender (214 individuals) as a previous case. **Repeat cases in which at least one of the parties was staffed before made up nearly a quarter, 23.4%, of cases in 2022.** Among those 15.9% were a repeat couple in which the same victim had been staffed with the same offender previously, while 3.4% were repeat victims with a new offender, and 4.0% were repeat offenders with a new victim.



2022 Monthly Case Staffing

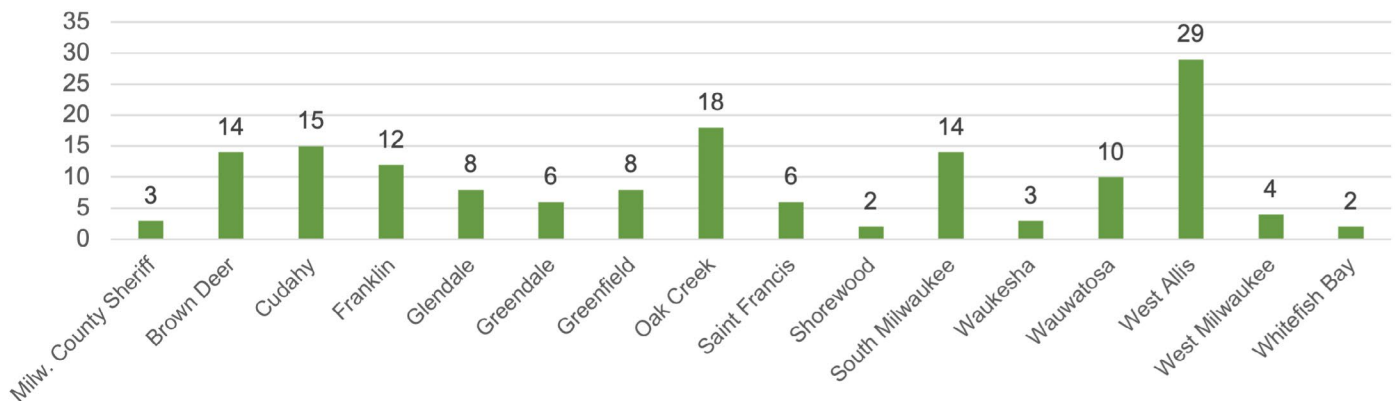


2022 Referring Jurisdiction: City of Milwaukee



The law enforcement jurisdictions with the highest number of DVHRT cases are MPD Districts 3, 4, & 7. These three districts accounted for over half (55.7%) of all the DVHRT cases in 2022. This is not unique to 2022. These three districts also produced the highest amount of cases in 2021 at 55.1% and 2020 at 58.8%.

2022 Referring Jurisdiction: Milwaukee County Jurisdictions Outside the city of Milwaukee



The percentage of cases staffed originating from jurisdictions outside the City of Milwaukee increased from 13.0% of all cases in 2021 to 14.3% in 2022. **The suburban jurisdictions with the highest share of cases are West Allis (2.7% of all 2022 cases), Oak Creek (1.7%), and Cudahy (1.4%).** West Allis has historically had the largest share of cases outside the city, a trend that continues in 2022. **Oak Creek saw a notable increase in 2022** from just 3 cases in 2021 to 18 in 2022. Milwaukee County districts not seen on the graph had 0 cases staffed in 2022.

2022 Case Selection Criteria

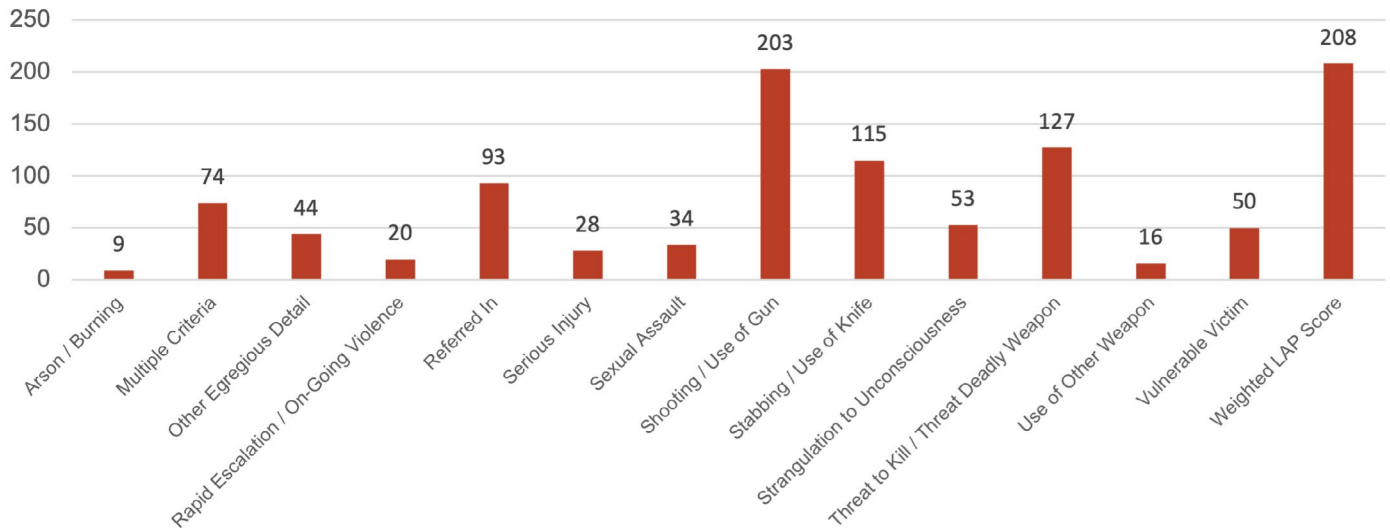
Cases are selected for staffing based on criteria indicating exceptionally high risk for lethality. **The most commonly used screening criteria in 2022 included a high weighted Lethality Assessment Protocol (LAP) screening score (19.4% of all cases), shooting/use of a gun (18.9%), threats to kill / threats with a deadly weapon (11.8%).** Cases that are notably egregious but do not fit other categories are included in the other egregious detail category (e.g., involving a child in the incident, stalking the victim, offender actively suicidal, etc.). The multiple criteria category consists of cases that were screened in as a combination of other categories. Referred in cases are those sent by DV advocates, law enforcement, the DA's Office, or other partners of the Sojourner Family Peace Center with concerns for lethality.

Data show that adult victims are not the only ones impacted.

Children were present at 32.0% of incidents that brought the case to the attention of the DVHRT in 2022.

Far more adult victims have children, approximately 80% of adult Sojourner clients. Thus, we know that even more children were impacted by violence in the relationship outside of the most recent incident. Interventions to promote adult victim safety also promote the safety of children.

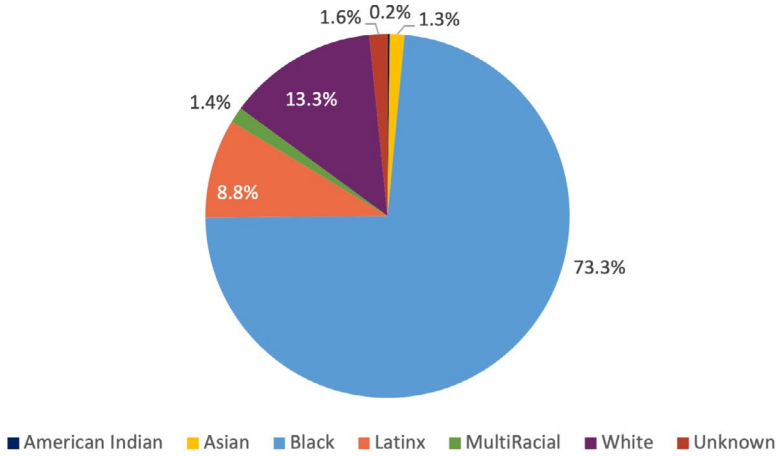
2022 Case Selection Criteria



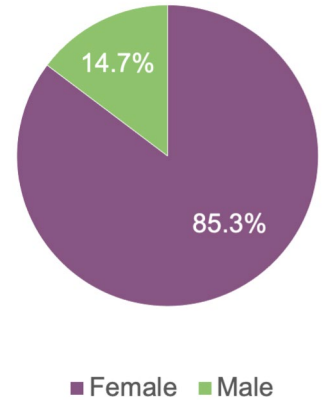
2022 Victim & Offender Characteristics

Victim Average Age: 34.5 years (Range: 17.4 – 87.2 years)

2022 Victim Race / Ethnicity

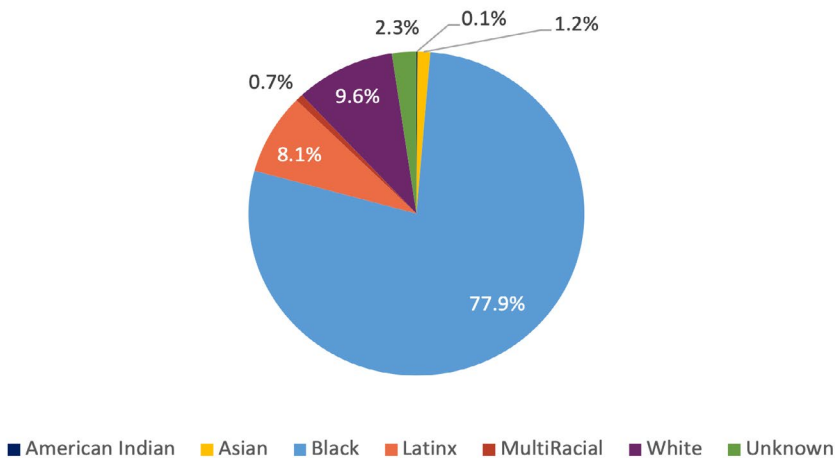


Victim Gender

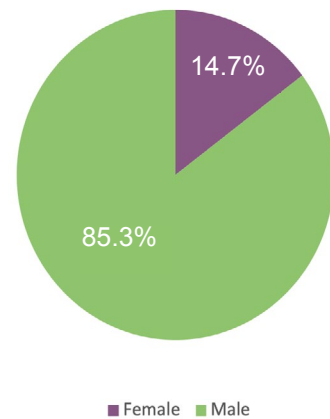


Offender Average Age: 33.9 years (Range: 17.4 – 78.1 years)

2022 Offender Race / Ethnicity



Offender Gender



The demographic characteristics of victims and offenders in 2022 are similar to previous years. **On average, victims and offenders are in their mid-30s** (34.5 and 33.9 years respectively), though the total age range of individuals served is large (17 years to 87 years). Victims are largely female (85.3%). Mirroring other disconcerting social inequities stemming from historical and structural racism, **the overwhelming majority of both victims (86.7%) and offenders (90.4%) were People of Color.** Black individuals in particular were over-represented (73.3% of victims, 77.9% of offenders).

More than any other group, **Black women continue to unjustly bear the heaviest burden of severe, lethal domestic violence.**

Nearly one fifth, **19.4% of offenders were on supervision at the time of the incident.** A much larger proportion, **48.4% of offenders had been on supervision at some point previously.** Not all supervision was related to a DV-specific crime, but **43.2% of offenders who were on supervision either currently or in the past were on supervision of a DV related crime.**



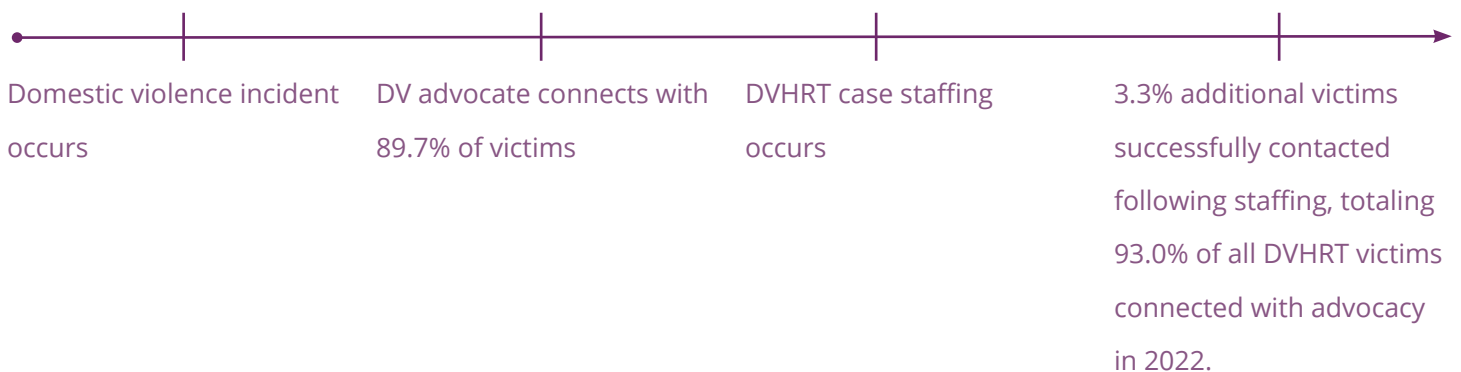
2022 DVHRT Case Recommendations & Outcomes

The DVHRT crafts individualized recommendations for each case to maximize safety for victims and accountability for offenders. Commonly made recommendations include connecting victims with DV advocacy services, information sharing amongst partner agencies, arrest of an offender among those not already arrested and in cases in which this would increase victim safety, law enforcement follow up investigation, district attorney's office re-review the case, and review of jail calls amongst offenders who were arrested. Further, we track outcomes of the team's work including whether a DV advocate was successful in connecting with the victim, whether there was a new call from the victim to Sojourner's DV hotline or the police in the 6 months following staffing, whether there was an arrest of the offender, whether a case is criminally charged, the result of criminal prosecution amongst prosecuted cases, and homicide or DV-related death of victims or offenders.



Connection to DV Advocacy Services¹

- Recognizing the importance of DV advocacy especially in the immediate aftermath of an incident, increased efforts were made in 2022 to connect with victims quickly. For instance, in cases in which responders at the initial incident had not obtained victim consent for contact from Sojourner, law enforcement officers made follow up efforts with victims to explain the potential benefits in connecting with a confidential DV advocate.
- These enhanced efforts to connect victims quickly were successful. In 2022, **advocates had already successfully connected with 89.7% of victims after the incident but before the case staffing**, up from 76.0% in 2021.
- **In an additional 3.3% of cases, advocates successfully connected with victims only after the DVHRT staffing.**
- **Altogether, 93.0% of DVHRT victims were connected to a DV advocate in 2022**, up significantly from 77.5% in 2021. Sojourner advocacy contact is not recommended or attempted when victims do not give consent to be contacted. In these cases, other DVHRT partner agencies (e.g., victim witness advocates at the DA's Office) still make every effort to reach victims. Recognizing the importance of connection, DVHRT partners aim to have victims connected to at least one partner agency on the team.
- Sojourner is not the only DV service provider in the Milwaukee area. Some victims are connected to DV advocacy services at sister organizations throughout the city. All DVHRT partners encourage victims to connect to other providers, especially if the victim is hesitant to connect with Sojourner. Victims' connections to those other organizations are not captured in the data presented in this report.



¹ Advocacy contact data are kept and provided for this report by Sojourner.

Information Sharing²

- Another common recommendation made by the DVHRT is for information sharing amongst partner agencies. **Information sharing only occurs where confidentiality mandates and victim consent allows.** Information sharing can include sharing parties' contact information, details found in criminal complaints, offender location information, restraining order petitions, information from victim impact statements, details of past relevant incidents, and any other information that would help the team understand the case circumstances and implement recommendations.
- In 2022, **information sharing between DVHRT partner agencies was recommended in 23.6% of cases.**



²Data on information sharing as a recommendation was kept and provided for this report by Sojourner.

Victim Safety³

- To measure victim safety, we examine calls to Sojourner’s domestic violence hotline as well as subsequent law enforcement reports for a DV-related matter involving these victims.
- In 2022, Sojourner’s hotline received a new crisis or law-enforcement call involving 21.8% of victims in the 6 months after their case was staffed.
- In 2022 in the 6 months following case staffing, 22.0% of victims had a new law enforcement report for DV (e.g., battery, strangulation, violation of restraining order, false imprisonment, stalking, etc.). Importantly, this only includes reports generated by MPD. ⁴ Data on reports from other districts in Milwaukee County was not available for this report. There may have been more than 22.0% of victims with new law enforcement reports as a DV victim considering those other Milwaukee County jurisdictions.
- Using hotline calls and law enforcement reports inherently underestimates of the actual reoccurrence of DV for victims. Not every time someone experiences coercive control, fear, or violence do they call a hotline or call the police, meaning these estimates under-count on-going violence and threats. Alternatively, calls to a DV hotline and/or law enforcement may represent not that the victim is experiencing more violence, but rather that the victim is more aware or more trusting of those resources and more likely to call now when they do experience a threat or violence. This possibility is particularly salient considering Milwaukee’s DVHRT as many team members intentionally work to build rapport and trust with the victims served. In these cases increased calls to a DV hotline or to law enforcement would represent not decreased victim safety but increased victim trust in helping professionals. Further, we only had data from law enforcement reports issued by MPD, which does not include reports issued by any other law enforcement districts in the county. Lastly, using new law enforcement reports does not necessarily capture every victim who calls the police for DV as not every call for service results in a law enforcement response or a written report. Further, in Wisconsin, DV is statutorily defined as occurring between adults who are married, were previously married, share a child in common, or cohabitate. This excludes couples who are dating but are not married, do not share a child in common, and do not live together. This is sometimes known as the “boyfriend loophole.” These loophole cases sometimes do not get classified as DV when the call for service comes in or when officers respond to the scene.

³ Hotline call data were provided by Sojourner and new law enforcement report data were provided by MPD.

⁴ Among cases staffed January through September 2022. 6 month data for cases staffed October through Dec 2022 not available for this report.

Arrest of Offenders⁵

- **Offenders were arrested at the scene of the incident in 33.7% of all staffed cases** in 2022.
- Not all arrests occur at the initial scene. If an offender is not in custody at the time of case staffing and arresting the offender will enhance victim's safety, DVHRT recommends law enforcement locate and arrest the offender. This **recommendation to arrest the offender after the initial incident was**

made in 23.4% of all cases in 2022. Among cases with a recommendation to arrest, **20.7% of those offenders were eventually arrested.**

Ultimately, the offender was arrested for the incident that brought the case to the attention of the DVHRT in 44.0% of cases in 2022.⁶

Criminal Prosecution of Offenders⁷

- In cases in which the offender is not criminally charged at the time of staffing and doing so would promote victim safety, the team may make a recommendation for either law enforcement follow up investigation or DA's office re-review of the case. In 2022, **recommendations that law enforcement conduct follow up investigation were made in 9.2% of cases**, allowing for the collection of additional evidence that may support criminal prosecution. **Recommendations that the DA's office re-review occurred in 6.4%** of all cases in 2022.
- Ultimately, **the DA criminally charged offenders in 32.5%** of all DVHRT cases in 2022.
- Among charged cases, **29.8% of offenders were successfully convicted, 21.2% of offenders were not convicted** (e.g., charges dismissed, found not guilty), and **49.0% of charged cases were still pending a resolution.**
- Considering all cases staffed in 2022, **ultimately only 9.6% of all offenders in 2022 DVHRT cases were charged and eventually convicted of a domestic violence related offense** at the time of writing this report (summer 2023).
- The resolution of criminal charging takes considerable time. Additionally, the time it takes for a case to reach conclusion has been extended further due to the challenges and resulting backlog in cases due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We see this in the 49.0% of criminally charges cases still pending resolution at the time of this report.
- Criminal prosecution is not in and of itself a measure of success on DV cases, including high risk cases. Criminal prosecution can be a successful intervention strategy in some cases, but pursuing criminal prosecution is not suitable or safe in all cases.

⁵ Arrests were reported by the district police officers or DA's office at meetings. Subsequent arrest data after the initial incident was provided by MPD.

⁶ Arrest statistics include the 916 cases for which we had arrest data.

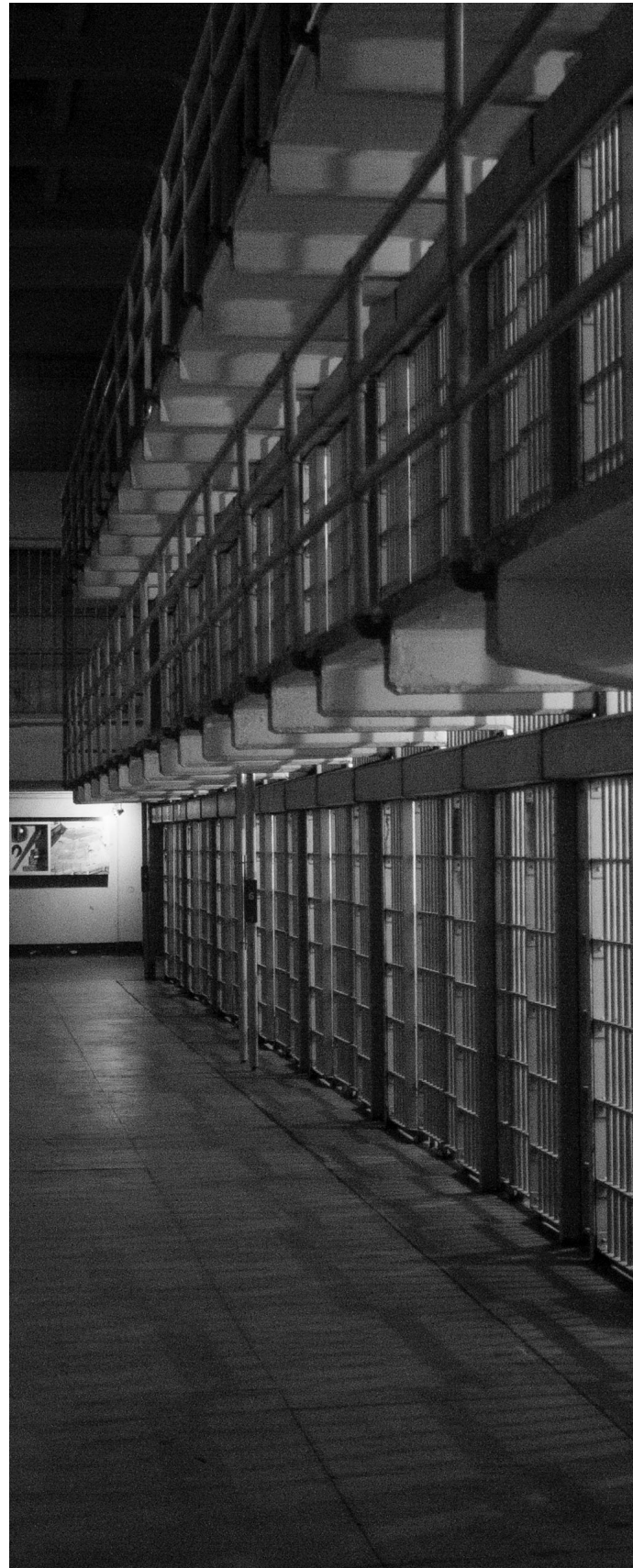
⁷ Data on criminal charges were reported in staffing meetings by DA's office representatives. If charges were pending at the time of staffing, the result was followed up through WI Circuit Court Access (CCAP) searching to determine if the incident was charged. Data on resolution of the criminal case was also gathered via CCAP.

Review of Jail Calls⁸

- In cases in which the offender is arrested and incarcerated, the DVHRT sometimes recommends a review of the calls that offender has made from jail to investigate possible on-going contact the offender has with the victim, intimidation, and coercion and control.
- In 2022, **the DVHRT recommended jail call reviews in 12.2% of cases in which the offender was arrested.**

Homicide & Death⁹

- Perhaps the most important outcome we track is whether victims are killed by their offender. **In 2022 0%, not a single DVHRT victim, was killed by their offender.** Given that the cases staffed by this team are selected because of their high statistical risk for lethality, this result is particularly impressive.
- Beyond the primary DV victim being killed by their offender, other types of DV-related death can occur. Examples include the killing of a bystander who was attempting to protect a victim or simply in the wrong place at the wrong time, the killing of a child, the suicide of an offender, or the killing of the offender by a victim or a victim's family member or new partner in self-defense or retribution. **In 2022, there were 2 such DV-related deaths involving DVHRT offenders.** One offender in a DVHRT case later died by suicide. Another offender in a DVHRT case was killed by his victim's father in an attempt to protect that DV victim from ongoing abuse.



⁸Data indicating whether jail call reviews were recommended was kept and provided for this report by Sojourner.

⁹Homicide & DV-related death data were kept and provided for this report by Sojourner.

Conclusions & Future Directions

FUTURE DIRECTION 1: Improve outreach to isolated victims

Data in this report demonstrate the positive impact of Milwaukee County's DVHRT on victim safety and offender accountability.

Particularly noteworthy is the fact that not a single DVHRT victim was killed by their offender in 2022.

As this team intentionally staffs cases at the highest risk for lethality, this is an impressive and noteworthy outcome. Further, this stands in stark contrast to the high number of DV homicides and related deaths in Milwaukee County at large, 49 total DV-related deaths in 2022. Victims in situations that turned lethal in 2022 were largely isolated and unconnected. In fact, the majority (66.7%) of DV-related deaths in Milwaukee County in 2022 involved DV victims that were not connected to

professional help at any of the DVHRT partner agencies. In contrast, those connected and staffed by the DVHRT did not ultimately end in homicide. **Our challenge remains in outreach to unconnected victims so that they might benefit from interventions like DVHRT that we know can work to save lives.** This involves not only outreach and awareness building of services, but vital trust building within communities so victims feel safe and able to utilize the help that is available. Ideally, all victims would be aware of and able to connect with robust support through the full array of DV services available at Sojourner as well as our many dedicated sister DV agencies throughout the city. Review these resources here: <https://city.milwaukee.gov/Health/Services-and-Programs/staysafe/directory>



FUTURE DIRECTION 2: Reduce reoccurring abuse through innovative responses to promote victims' connection to advocacy services

While no DVHRT victims lost their lives to their offender, **nearly a quarter of victims experienced ongoing DV after their case was staffed**, indicated by 22.0% of victims with new law enforcement reports of DV and 21.8% of victims with calls to the DV hotline in the 6 months following case staffing. These data likely reflect challenges DV victims face leaving an abusive relationship and ongoing threats, stalking, and violence after leaving. While the DVHRT can provide lock changes and security cameras on a victim's home, these interventions are not available if victims are unable to find safe, affordable housing to begin with. The DVHRT can encourage offender arrest and prosecution, but most are not charged and those that are do not result in significant time incarcerated for offenders. The DVHRT can make referrals to youth-serving organizations in consideration of child safety, but if a victim shares children with their offender, the offender is likely to be an on-going part of the victim's life and the lives of the children by family court mandate or victims' efforts to provide children with a relationship with both parents. In the future, the DVHRT may consider adopting daily multi-agencies briefings on cases particularly on days of

the week when the larger case staffing meetings do not occur. These daily briefings would allow team members dedicated collaboration time on cases between lengthier staffing meetings. Similarly, other innovative practices that decrease the time between an incident and connection with advocacy services will ensure the best chance at sustained support to the victim. To this end, several partner agencies that participate in DVHRT are piloting on-scene response, in which other professionals (e.g., DV advocates, nurses) accompany law enforcement to the scene of a DV incident for more in-person, immediate connection with the victim. Finally, to understand how this violence re-occurrence rate compares to other victims, future research should include comparison groups of victims at similarly high risk but who are not staffed by a DVHRT. While intentionally denying a high-risk victim DVHRT staffing for the sake of evaluation is unethical and not possible in a single location, researchers may be able to take advantage of naturally occurring comparisons. For instance, using similarly high risk cases in a comparable urban area that does not currently operate a DVHRT.

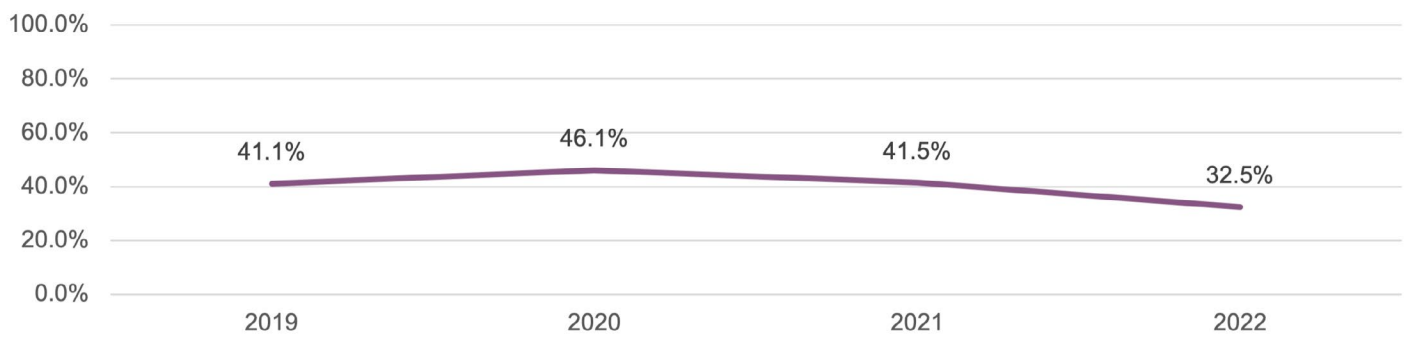


FUTURE DIRECTION 3: Keep victims safe by pursuing offender accountability

The percentage of DVHRT cases that are criminally charged has decreased from a high of 46.1% in 2020 to 32.5% in 2022. This decrease may be due partially to the snowballing impact of COVID related delays in the criminal justice system. As the court system continues to address the COVID related backlog, particular attention should be placed on prosecution and speedy resolution of these DVHRT cases at particularly high

risk of lethality. DVHRT partners should work together to identify cases and in criminal charging will promote victim safety and public safety. The DA's office should then pursue criminal charging in those cases. Not every case is appropriate for criminal prosecution. For instance, prosecution can aggravate offender behavior and put victims at risk in some cases.

Criminal Charges among DVHRT cases



FUTURE DIRECTION 4: Prevent intergenerational transmission of abuse by keeping parents and children safe

Children were present at nearly a third (32%) of incidents in 2022 DVHRT cases. Even more children were impacted by abuse and violence in their homes as the vast majority (over 80%) of adult victims we serve are parents. In order to prevent the cycle of violence and abuse continuing in these children's lives, we must provide parents the safety and resources that allow them to adequately protect their children. Further, we can connect children and their families to supportive youth services that can help them heal from the trauma they have experienced. Sojourner is expanding our offering of group services for children and teens focused on healing from exposure to DV, building relationship with other youth and families who have been through similar

circumstances, and learning healthy relationship skills. See more information about available services here: <https://www.familypeacecenter.org/help-for-children-teens>. Beyond the youth services offered by Sojourner, building awareness and connection to the many other youth serving organizations in our city will ensure children and youth have safe and healthy places to develop, grow, and become the best versions of themselves. Going forward, we must cultivate partnerships with youth serving organizations across Milwaukee to build capacity to recognize DV in the families they serve and respond effectively.



FUTURE DIRECTION 5: Grow and sustain capacity to staff all high risk cases

Case selection among the large number of high risk cases in Milwaukee County has historically been the biggest challenge for Milwaukee's DVHRT and remained so in 2022. Operating in a large urban area, there are almost always more potential cases than the team has capacity to staff. Thanks in part to the proven impact of the DVHRT in previous years, the team was awarded a large expansion grant by the Wisconsin Governor's Office. With those funds in 2023, **the team will expand the number of cases staffed weekly by 50% from 20 to 30 staffed cases per week.** This expansion is a critical step forward in staffing every high risk case that meets criteria each week. Sustaining this capacity increase will be vital to keeping high risk victims safe.

In addition to expanding the number of cases staffed, the DVHRT will also welcome new partner agencies expanding the potential interventions and

recommendations the team is able to implement. The Alma Center is one such partner being added to the team. The Alma Center's services include active outreach, one-on-one services, group services for offenders with the goal of healing and rehabilitation so these individuals do not use violence and abuse again. Further CRC (Community Reintegration Center) will join the team as a partner agency who is able to ensure that offenders incarcerated at CRC can access the critical services Alma Center provides. MPD Sensitive Crimes is not a new partner, but will be able to increase staff dedicated to DVHRT with the expansion funding. Further, with the expansion funds, the team expects quicker turnaround and review as information on cases will be provided daily to team. Finally, the expansion funding will allow Sojourner to accomplish home visits to high risk victims more quickly.

