

# A Report from the State Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team



The State Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team  
and the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security

**Presented to:**

Governor Charlie Baker; Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito; the Clerks of the House and Senate; the House and Senate Committees on Ways and Means; the Joint Committee on Children, Families, and Persons with Disabilities; the Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security, and the Joint Committee on the Judiciary

**2021**

## **Table of Contents**

I.	<b>Dedication .....</b>	3
II.	<b>Acknowledgment.....</b>	4
III.	<b>Executive Summary.....</b>	4
IV.	<b>Membership.....</b>	6
V.	<b>Background.....</b>	7
VI.	<b>Philosophy and Process .....</b>	9
VII.	<b>Findings and Recommendations from the Fatality Review Sessions.....</b>	11
VIII.	<b>Data.....</b>	12
IX.	<b>Looking Ahead: 2022.....</b>	16

## **I. Dedication**

The Massachusetts Domestic Violence State Fatality Review Team dedicates the annual report to the fifteen victims killed in Massachusetts as of December 31, 2021 as a result of domestic violence, their surviving families and friends, and to victims and survivors of domestic violence everywhere.

*Kristen A. Carey, age 37*

*Michael Ricci, age 51*

*Danielle Taylor, age 30*

*Saharbanoo Rindani, age 76*

*Rhonda Pattelena, age 35*

*Celeste Marte-Lebron, age 49*

*Jahairi DeAlto, age 42*

*Fatima Yasin, age 27*

*Jamie A. Dickinson, age 34*

*Alicia N. Heywood, age 42*

*Dianne Silveira, age 71*

*Dejah Jenkins-Minus, 22*

*Paula Andrea Ortiz Ramirez, 48*

*Shirley Owen, 49*

*Sherell Pringle, 40*

## **II. Acknowledgment**

The Massachusetts State Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team Members would like to thank Governor Baker, Lt. Governor Polito, and the Governor's Council to Address Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence for their continued support throughout this process. We would also like to thank the Massachusetts District Attorney's Association, along with the Commonwealth's District Attorneys and staff who have continued to dedicate their time and efforts to facilitate review sessions. We look forward to our ongoing work with those offices, along with those that will host future review sessions. Last, but certainly not least, we would like to thank the local community partners who have participated in or will participate in local reviews. Without this support, these review sessions, and our work, would not be possible.

## **III. Executive Summary**

The Massachusetts State Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team (hereinafter the "State Team") presents its annual report for 2021. The State Team aims to address the problem of domestic violence and to seek solutions to reduce the number of domestic violence incidents in Massachusetts. We hope that each report published will lead to systems changes in Massachusetts that will strengthen the comprehensive and effective response to those continuing to suffer the effects of domestic violence and prevent fatalities in the future.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2020 the State Team transitioned to remote review sessions on secure platforms. The transition was seamless and did not impede the accomplishment of in-depth and robust review sessions.

Additionally, the State Team Chair Kelly Dwyer and Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS) Coordinator Lisbeth Pimentel participated in a newly established New England Regional Domestic Violence Fatality Review, with each New England state participating. The states' Chairs convened to share infrastructure, reporting requirements, processes, challenges, successes, and opportunities. The group plans to convene on either a bi-annual or quarterly basis. The goal in meeting is to be able to learn from each other, share ideas, and expand on strategies to enhance our own state's fatality review and identify opportunities for collaboration.

As of December 31, 2021, there were 14 domestic violence homicide incidents in Massachusetts, resulting in 15 domestic violence homicide victims and 2 perpetrator suicides or deaths. The need for our Team remains urgent; there is still much work to be done. We present our recommendations in Section VII of this report.

We also included Massachusetts data in Section VIII of this report, provided by Massachusetts Trial Courts and Jane Doe, Inc. – the Statewide Coalition on Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence. The inclusion of data from statewide organizations is intended to improve our understanding of the context of domestic violence here in Massachusetts.

Moving forward, the Team anticipates continuing our work in 2022 with the current process of comprehensive case review sessions across the Commonwealth and assisting District Attorneys' Offices in building local infrastructure and teams.

As we look to the years ahead, we are encouraged by the continued commitment to combating domestic violence by the Baker-Polito Administration and the Legislature. As the state re-opened post-pandemic, local providers were seeing not only an increase in demand for their services but also an increase in the severity of violence experienced by victims. The Massachusetts FY22 General Appropriations Act (GAA) included a 25% increase (\$7.5M) in funding for local sexual assault and domestic violence programs, demonstrating the commitment to those who provide support to survivors. The FY22 GAA also continued level funding of the RESPECTfully statewide public awareness and prevention campaign initiated by Lt. Governor Polito, in coordination with the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) and the Legislature, and continued level funding for the Healthy Relationships Grant Program, which builds upon collaborative efforts between youth-serving organizations and sexual assault and domestic violence programs to teach youth about healthy relationships with the goal of prevention. Finally, the FY22 GAA included an additional \$5 million for the COVID-19 Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Survivor Safety Trust Fund, providing a substantial increase in funding to services under both EOPSS and EOHHS. These funding sources are excluded from the additional emergency funds allocated during the pandemic to support the enhancement of technology in services, maintain individuals and families in hoteling rather than community shelters, and other programmatic supports.

Additionally, the State Team appreciates the strong relationship between the Department of Public Health (DPH) and the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). This relationship is particularly important as long-term sustainable housing access for survivors and their families remains a top priority, requiring coordination for training and service provision. During the COVID-19 pandemic, DHCD provided 65 Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVPs) to 50 families and 14 individuals with the longest stays in domestic violence emergency shelters. Moreover, an additional \$3M in Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP2) Stabilization Fund funding was allocated to the existing DPH flex fund program for domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking survivors. This funding can be used for costs that are necessary to maintain or secure safe housing, costs

associated with keeping a vehicle operational, medical and dental bills, emergency childcare, education, and fees for obtaining copies of vital documents. Flexible funding from DPH's existing program provides survivors with a tool to relocate from a dangerous situation to safe housing—allowing survivors to more easily navigate existing housing programs. Since FY20, the DPH flex funding program has experienced a substantial increase in funding.

These efforts, along with the efforts of social workers, law enforcement, the courts, and others on the ground, move us closer to a future where the tragedy of domestic violence will be a thing of the past.

#### **IV. Membership**

##### MEMBERS

Chair Kelly Dwyer, *Executive Director, Governor's Council to Address Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence*

Shara Benedetti, *Acting General Counsel, Massachusetts Parole Board*

Jennifer Snook, *Assistant Attorney General, Office of the Attorney General*

Dr. Mindy Hull, *Chief Medical Examiner, Office of the Chief Medical Examiner*

Deborah Mendoza-Lochrie, *Chief Policy Officer, Office of the Chief Medical Examiner*

Middlesex District Attorney Marian Ryan, *Massachusetts District Attorneys Association*

MaryBeth Long, *General Counsel, Office of Middlesex District Attorney Marian Ryan*

Major John Mawn, *Division of Investigative Services, Massachusetts State Police*

Dianne Fasano, *Office of Probation*

Liam Lowney, *Executive Director, MA Office for Victim Assistance*

Diane Coffey, *Director of Victim Services, Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance*

Chief Justice of the Trial Court or a designee\*

Chief Justice of the Family and Probate Court or a designee\*

\*In accordance with the Committee on Judicial Ethics (CJE) Opinion No. 2014-4, "Serving on Statutory Commissions", dated December 10, 2014, Judges are not permitted to serve on the State Team despite being named in the statute:

*"The Code also does not permit you to serve on the domestic violence state review team, St. 2014, c. 260, § 4, because its clear focus and unbalanced make-up could convey the impression that domestic violence victims have a special position of influence with the judiciary and that the judiciary is aligned with the interests of law enforcement and the prosecution.*

*You may, however, consult with the Juvenile Life Sentence Commission and the domestic violence state review team pursuant to Section 4C(1) on discrete matters that concern the business of the courts as long as you make your limited participation clear in the reports and any records these commissions produce.*

*Additionally, the Code does not prohibit you from appointing non-judge employees of the judiciary to serve on any of these commissions as your designees. Those designees cannot have more powers than you. Although the Committee cannot render advice to non-judges, the Committee instructs you to inform your designees that the Code's limitations on your participation also apply to the designees and that these limitations should be clearly disclosed on all documents that list committee members and on all reports and recommendations the committee makes."<sup>1</sup>*

Per the CJE Opinion, the State Team is currently working with the Trial Court and the Family and Probate Court to name designees who can act in the limited consulting capacity outlined above.

## **V. Background**

The State Team was created by Chapter 260 of the Acts of 2014, *An Act Relative to Domestic Violence*. Chapter 260 was passed unanimously by the Legislature and signed into law on August 8, 2014.

Section 4 of Chapter 260 outlines the Team's roles and responsibilities:

*"The purpose of the state team shall be to decrease the incidence of domestic violence fatalities by: (i) developing an understanding of the causes and incidence of domestic violence fatalities and domestic violence murder-suicides and the circumstances surrounding them; and (ii) advising the governor and the general court by recommending changes in law, policy and practice designed to prevent domestic violence fatalities. The state review team, in conjunction with any local review teams, shall develop a report to be sent to the clerks of the house and*

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.mass.gov/courts/case-legal-res/ethics-opinions/judicial-ethics-opinions/cje-2014-4.html>

*senate, the house and senate committees on ways and means, the joint committee on children, families and persons with disabilities, the joint committee on public safety and homeland security, and the joint committee on the judiciary. The report shall be issued not later than December 31 of each year.*

*To achieve its purpose, the state review team shall: (1) develop model investigative and data collection protocols for local review teams; (2) annually review incidents of fatalities within the commonwealth and assign at least 3 reviews, selected at random, to a local review team for investigation and report; provided, that no review shall be assigned unless it is approved by a majority vote of the state review team and all criminal proceedings, including appeals, related to the fatality are complete; (3) provide information to local review teams, law enforcement agencies and domestic violence service providers for the purpose of protecting victims of domestic violence; (4) provide training and written materials to local review teams to assist them in carrying out their duties; (5) review reports from local review teams; (6) analyze community, public and private agency involvement with victims and perpetrators of domestic violence and their families prior to and subsequent to fatalities; (7) develop a protocol for the collection of data regarding fatalities and provide training to local review teams on the protocol, which shall include protocol and training on the issues of confidentiality of records, victims' identities and any personally identifying data; (8) develop and implement rules and procedures necessary for its own operation and the operation of local review teams, which shall include the use of confidentiality agreements for both the state and local review teams; and (9) provide the governor and the general court with annual written reports, subject to any applicable confidentiality restrictions, which shall include, but not be limited to, the state team's findings and recommendations.”<sup>2</sup>*

In selecting cases for review, the State Team assigns cases to Local Teams. Per Section 4 of Chapter 260:

*“Each local review team shall be chaired by the local district attorney and shall be comprised of at least the following members, who shall be appointed by the district attorney and who shall reside or work within the district: a medical examiner or pathologist; a chief of police; a probation officer; a member with experience providing non-profit legal services to victims of domestic violence; a member with experience in the delivery of direct services to victims of domestic violence; and any other person with expertise or information relevant to an individual*

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<sup>2</sup> <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2014/Chapter260>

*case who may attend meetings on an ad hoc basis, including, but not limited to, local or state law enforcement officers, local providers of social services, providers of community based domestic violence, rape and sexual assault shelter and support services, hospital representatives, medical specialists or subspecialists, teachers, family or friends of a victim and persons recommended by the state review team.*

*The purpose of each local review team shall be to decrease the incidence of preventable domestic violence fatalities by: (i) coordinating the collection of information on fatalities assigned to it for review; (ii) promoting cooperation and coordination between agencies responding to fatalities and providing services to victims or victims' family members; (iii) developing an understanding of the causes and incidence of domestic violence fatalities within its area; and (iv) advising the state review team on changes in law, policy or practice which may affect domestic violence fatalities.*

*To achieve its purpose, each local review team shall, subject to assignment by the state review team: (1) review, establish and implement model protocols from the state review team; (2) execute a confidentiality agreement; (3) review individual fatalities using the established protocol; (4) recommend methods of improving coordination of services between agencies and service providers in its area; (5) collect, maintain and provide confidential data as required by the state review team; and (6) provide law enforcement or other agencies with information for the purposes of the protection of victims of domestic violence and for the accountability of perpetrators.”<sup>3</sup>*

The State Team convened in early 2021. Members held meetings and partnered with several District Attorneys' Offices, supporting the preparation, coordination, and execution of reviews to deliver the 2021 annual report.

## **VI. Philosophy and Process**

The Mission Statement, Values, and Process are reviewed and read aloud at the start of all fatality review sessions. They provide a template for decision-making throughout the review.

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

The Massachusetts State Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team provides strategic leadership for, and conducts collaborative, multi-disciplinary reviews of domestic violence-related fatalities with

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<sup>3</sup> <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2014/Chapter260>

local review teams in an effort to better understand the dynamics of such deaths and develop recommendations—without blame—for creative and effective strategies to reduce the number of domestic violence deaths in the Commonwealth.

### CORE VALUES

It would be a daunting task to review all of the domestic and family violence deaths in Massachusetts each year. Accordingly, the State Team decided to take a similar approach to Montana and other states—focusing its time and resources on reviewing only “intimate partner” homicides and related fatalities. Even then, the Team can only meaningfully review three cases per year, as members have opted to take a deep dive into a smaller number of cases instead of a cursory review of all fatalities. The National Domestic Violence Fatality Review Initiative (NDVFI) demonstrates, however, that recommendations from a handful of meticulous case reviews can yield far-reaching implications for reducing Massachusetts’ domestic violence fatalities in the future.

During review sessions, members have embraced the “no blame and no shame” philosophy that guides many national fatality review teams. The State Team is not looking to single out individuals or agencies as bearing responsibility for these deaths. Rather, members will seek to identify systemic failures stemming from shortfalls and inefficiencies in local and state responses and then recommend appropriate solutions. This includes identifying when there are needs related to public awareness and education. Additionally, Team recommendations are issued in general terms so as not to infringe upon the confidentiality of those involved in each case.

### THE REVIEW PROCESS

Each review session took place in the county where the crime was committed and involved a Local Team chaired by the District Attorney with jurisdiction over the case. In conjunction with the State Team, the Local Team requested all available information and connected with relevant parties. This included consultation with law enforcement, as well as gathering criminal histories, medical records, autopsy reports, and other case history. The aim is to gather as much background information as possible to paint an accurate portrait of the victim, perpetrator, and those that knew them.

In the week prior to assembling, the host local review chair created a timeline of events from all gathered information and shared this with team members. This exercise was designed to expose strengths and weaknesses in the system, get a better understanding of relationship dynamics, understand who the formal and informal support networks were and what they knew, determine any history of help-seeking and offender accountability and the impacts of both, and help the team

understand the circumstances leading up to the fatality. Once assembled, the members continued to refine the timeline until they had exhausted all available information.

At the conclusion of each session, members identified practical recommendations and corresponding objectives that are measurable over time. These criteria enable the State Team to monitor the progress of its recommendations and ultimately measure success.

The State and Local Teams operate under strict confidentiality. All materials, reports, and timelines used and created during meetings are not part of the public record.

## **VII. Findings and Recommendations from the Fatality Review Sessions**

In 2021, the State Team continued to support local District Attorney's Offices for each review process. We continued to accomplish in-depth, robust reviews through virtual meetings. The recommendations below are from our 2021 domestic violence fatality review process.

1. *The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH), in partnership with the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS), and in consultation with faith leaders, should explore opportunities for domestic violence training and awareness for faith-based communities and ways to promote the information among these communities. The training and awareness should cover areas such as identification, bystander interventions, and opportunities to build partnerships with community domestic violence service supports.*

A continued theme presented during the review process was the need for training and awareness within faith-based communities, including building partnerships with local sexual assault and domestic violence providers (SDV). People in crisis often look towards their faith leaders for guidance and assistance, who may be someone's only support mechanism. There is a great need to strengthen the collaboration between faith-based communities and domestic violence organizations to improve community-wide approaches to ending violence. However, there is tremendous complexity in reaching all faiths, so it will be important to build into local efforts rather than state-specific directives. Providing resources, opportunities for connections, and examples of policies and procedures may be beneficial.

2. *The Office of Emergency Medical Services (OEMS), in partnership with the DPH Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Division and EOPSS, should explore best practices and training to equip EMS professionals with the tools necessary to better identify, treat, and refer survivors of domestic violence.*

EMS professionals are often the first or only medical contact that an injured victim of domestic violence may have. These providers have unique opportunities to intervene in cases of domestic violence, specifically by identifying the abuse and referring survivors to appropriate local services. Their identification of domestic violence can be the first step in interrupting the progression and escalation of violence. For instance, EMS personnel responding to an individual with a fractured wrist from an alleged accidental fall may notice the presence of multiple bruises of varying ages, which should raise concern for domestic violence. Training would enable EMS personnel to identify red flags while observing the interactions of the patient with their partner. Additionally, providing training, policies, and procedures on how and when to report and/or provide additional resources to the patient is crucial. Though EMS are mandated reporters of abuse towards children, people with disabilities, and the elderly, this does not include abuse between partners, and in many cases, a child witnessing domestic violence may not be easily identifiable to trigger a report. Additionally, suspected domestic violence scenes have the potential to escalate quickly and dangerously, so providing EMS personnel the understanding of how to handle notifying law enforcement discreetly can ensure safety for themselves and the survivor at the scene. Lastly, there is a need to strengthen collaboration between EMS and local service providers to assist in warm referrals of survivors and their families.

## **VIII. Data**

Domestic violence does not discriminate – it affects every demographic and every community throughout Massachusetts. Furthermore, it is difficult to measure the true impact of domestic violence due to vast underreporting, which is important to remember when reviewing data. Some survivors report to law enforcement, while others rely on the support of friends and family or of local program services.

In the 2019 report, we began sharing information from the Trial Courts demonstrating the number of Protective and Harassment Prevention Orders, along with the number of charges (violation of a restraining order, assault or battery on a household member, and violation of a harassment order) since 2016.

In 2021, Massachusetts has seen an increase in the number of restraining orders filed and also similar numbers of domestic violence related charges across the state. As always, these numbers do not accurately reflect the reality of domestic violence here in the Commonwealth. According to the Massachusetts Trial Courts, there has been a 3.8% increase in the number of Protective Orders (209A) and Harassment Prevention Orders (258E) filed in 2021, resulting in over 41,000 orders filed. At the same time, the Massachusetts Trial Courts' data show relatively similar numbers in

comparison to 2020 for domestic violence related charges filed across Massachusetts (violation of a restraining order, assault and battery on a household member, and violation of a harassment order) resulting in approximately 21,000 total charges. More specifically, looking at the number of strangulation cases showed a 9.9% increase from 2020 to 2021. This includes incidents such as strangulation in violation of a court order, pregnant victims, and causing serious bodily harm; highlighting a similar trend viewed by service providers discussed earlier in this report specific to the increase in the severity of violence seen in domestic violence related incidences this past year.

As with previous years, we continue to maintain updated information within this report from Jane Doe, Inc., the Massachusetts statewide coalition against domestic violence and sexual assault that publishes an annual overview of domestic violence homicides in Massachusetts (see Figures 1 and 2).



Jane Doe Inc.  
The Massachusetts Coalition  
Against Sexual Assault and  
Domestic Violence

JDI's definition of domestic  
violence homicide provides  
context for these different  
categories and information  
provided here.

Overview of Domestic Violence Homicides in Massachusetts Year to Date 2021			
		WHO ARE THESE DV HOMICIDE VICTIMS?	
# of DV Homicide Incidents	14	Female DV Victims	13
		Male DV Victims	1
		DV Perpetrators (except when killed by police)	0
# of DV Homicide Victims	15		
# of DV Perpetrator Suicides or Deaths <sup>A</sup>	2	Female Associated with DV Victim	1
Total DV Deaths	17	Male Associated with DV Victim	0
Male DV Homicide Perpetrators	13	Children Associated with DV Victim	0
Female DV Homicide Perpetrators	1	Family (non-IPV)	0
		Bystanders (includes police)	0

Figure 1. [Jane Doe, Inc. Overview Domestic Violence Homicides in Massachusetts Year to Date \(obtained 12/31/2021\)](#)

Domestic Violence Homicides in Massachusetts January 1, 2021 through December 31, 2021						
DATE	HOMICIDE VICTIM	AGE	ALLEGED HOMICIDE PERPETRATOR (relationship)	AGE	CITY/ COUNTY	LOCATION/ METHOD
1/2/2021	Kristen A. Carey	37	Keith M. Cuthbertson (S) <i>Current male spouse</i>	49	Charlton, Worcester	Home/Shooting
1/28/2021	Michael Ricci	51	Christine Ricci <i>Current female spouse</i>	46	Marshfield, Plymouth	Home/Stabbing
2/8/2021	Danielle Taylor	30	Cleber Mariano <i>Current male partner</i>	33	Falmouth (Teaticker), Cape & Islands	Hotel/Strangulation
3/6/2021	Saharbanoo Rindani	76	Abdal Rindani <i>Current male partner</i>	83	Westborough, Worcester	Home/ Strangulation
3/26/2021	Rhonda Pattelena	35	Jeffrey Buchannan <i>Current male partner</i>	33	York, Maine (from Bedford, MA)	Public Location/ Blunt force injury to head
3/31/2021 (injured) 4/20/2021 (died)	Celeste Marte-Lebron	49	Santos Lebron De Los Santo <i>Current male spouse</i>	42	Lowell, Middlesex	Home/Burning (pending)
5/2/2021	Jahaira DeAlto and Fatima Yasin	42, 27	Marcus Chavis <i>Current male spouse of Fatima</i>	34	Boston, Suffolk	Home/Stabbing
6/22/2021	Jamie A. Dickinson	34	Jesse A. Brooks (S) <i>Current male partner</i>	38	Oxford, Worcester	Home/Shooting
7/29/2021	Alicia N. Heywood	42	Akil S. Jackson <i>Current male partner</i>	41	Roslindale, Suffolk	Workplace/ Shooting
8/29/2021	Dianne Silveira	71	Edmund Silveira <i>Current male spouse</i>	86	Taunton, Bristol	Home/Shooting
11/25/2021	Dejah Jenkins-Minus	22	Leonard Robinson <i>Current male partner</i>	22	Lowell, Middlesex	Home/ Stabbing (sharp force injuries)
12/11/2021	Paula Andrea Ortiz Ramirez	48	Mario Alberto Mira Lopera <i>Former male partner</i>	48	Chelsea, Suffolk	Home/Stabbing
12/17/2021	Shirley Owen	49	Brendon Owen <i>Former male partner</i>	47	Franklin, Norfolk	Home/TBD
12/21/2021	Sherell Pringle	40	Bruce Maiben <i>Current male partner</i>	44	Saugus, Essex	Public Space/TBD

Figure 2. [Jane Doe, Inc.](#) Details Domestic Violence Homicides in Massachusetts Year to Date (obtained 12/31/2021)

KEY:

^ This list includes all cases of domestic violence related deaths including DV perpetrator suicide or death with or without either murder or attempted murder of DV victim as long as suicide occurred in the context of a relationship with domestic violence. In these cases, there will be no name listed under "homicide victim" and explains why the total number of incidents does not always equal the

total number of perpetrators. (S) – indicates suicide (D) – indicates other cause of domestic violence homicide perpetrator death, including being killed by DV victim in self-defense and suicide by police (A) – attempted suicide by domestic violence homicide perpetrator (DVV) – indicates that domestic violence victim committed the murder

### **JDI Definition of Domestic Violence Homicide**

JDI's definition of domestic violence homicide aims to capture the full picture and context of domestic violence homicides. Homicides are considered domestic violence related if:

- the homicide victim and perpetrator were current or former spouses or intimate partners, adults or teens with a child in common, or adults or teens in a current or former dating relationship
- the homicide victim was a bystander or intervened in an attempted domestic violence homicide and was killed (including friends, family members, new intimate partners, law enforcement officers, or other professionals attempting to assist the victim of domestic violence, roommates, and co-workers)
- the motive for the murder was reported to have included jealousy, in the context of an intimate partner or dating relationship, or
- a relationship existed between the homicide perpetrator and adult or teen victim that could be defined as exhibiting a pattern of power and control (including family or household members and caregivers). We also include the deaths of perpetrators, whether by suicide, police, or self-defense by the victim to demonstrate the broad impact of domestic violence. This list may be edited over time to reflect any new information that comes to light about these domestic violence homicide incidents.”

According to Jane Doe, Inc., as of December 31, 2021, there were 14 domestic violence homicide incidents, resulting in 15 domestic violence victims and 2 perpetrator suicides or deaths. From 2017 to 2018, there was a decrease in domestic violence homicide victims. However, from 2018 to 2019 there was a slight increase. Although we saw a substantial decrease from 28 domestic violence homicide victims in 2019 to 10 victims in 2020, we have unfortunately seen an increase in 2021. Even one homicide is one too many.

The success of the State Team will ultimately be measured by our ability to identify opportunities to improve systems and community response to domestic violence, identify opportunities for prevention and education, and identify replicable best practices that increase safety for victims and hold offenders accountable.

## **IX. Looking Ahead: 2022**

As we continue to review cases for 2022, members will select cases at random under the following topics: one case that did not have prior contact with the criminal justice system, one case with prior contact, and one case that involves an underserved population of victims, such as immigrants, elders, teens, members of the LGBTQ community, or persons with disabilities.

The Team will continue to look for particular identifiers to ensure that chosen cases do not all look the same. For example, identifiers could include: children in the home, use of a firearm, high profile perpetrators and/or victims, open probate and criminal issues, and murder/suicide.

Additionally, the State Team will continue to utilize the information provided by Dr. Neil Websdale from the National Fatality Review Initiative in building out the Massachusetts infrastructure for inclusion of family, friends, and colleagues by way of interviews. This will enable the State Team and Local Teams to gather more information for an in-depth understanding of the lives of all involved in each case reviewed. The State Team will strive to develop the training and policies for the Local Teams, working towards the goal of implementing this infrastructure in the coming years.