

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Contact: Andrea Valeska
Email: avaleska@violencefreeco.org
Organization: Violence Free Colorado

Violence Free Colorado Calls for Urgent Action to Address Domestic Violence Crisis in Colorado

DENVER, CO (October 26, 2023) – While Colorado has seen a welcome decrease in Domestic Violence Fatalities (DVF) for 2023, we must acknowledge that we still rank among the highest in the nation for DV fatalities, and there is much work ahead of us. According to the Colorado Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board's 2024 Annual Report, there were 47 DVF cases resulting in 58 fatalities this year—a significant reduction from the past two years. This decline reflects the dedication of communities, law enforcement, and advocacy organizations in addressing this critical issue. However, DVFs still account for 11% of all homicides in Colorado, underscoring that our work is far from over. While overall violent crime rates are decreasing, the number of domestic violence calls continues to rise, indicating an urgent need for ongoing awareness and proactive measures.

Ballots such as Prop KK are crucial in our initiative to address domestic violence in Colorado. These measures provide an opportunity for voters to directly influence funding and resources dedicated to this pressing issue. Prop KK specifically focuses on expanding support services for survivors, improving training for law enforcement and judicial personnel, and enhancing community awareness initiatives.

By voting for measures like Prop KK, Coloradans can ensure that vital programs receive the necessary funding to implement evidence-based practices, develop safety plans for victims, and provide comprehensive support services. Together, these efforts reflect a community commitment to creating a safer environment for all, particularly for those most vulnerable to domestic violence.

Alarming Statistics Reveal the Need for Immediate Action:

- The report reveals that **11% of all homicides in Colorado in 2023 were domestic violence fatalities**. This translates to 47 DVF cases, resulting in the tragic loss of 58 lives.
- **Firearms were the overwhelming cause of death in DVFs, accounting for 76% of all DVF-related deaths**. The report highlights the urgent need to restrict access to firearms for individuals who pose a danger to their intimate partners.
- **Disturbingly, children are not spared from the devastating impact of domestic violence**. In 2023, over half of the collateral victims—individuals killed in the context of DV who were not the primary victim or perpetrator—were children of the DVF couple.
- **The report also underscores the heightened risk faced by pregnant individuals, especially adolescent girls**. This finding emphasizes the critical need for targeted support and protection during this vulnerable time.

Violence Free Colorado urges policymakers, law enforcement, and community members to heed the report's recommendations and implement the following actions:

Strengthen and Expand Training for Family Court Professionals: The report identifies a strong correlation between DVFs and ongoing family court disputes. It is crucial that judges, parental responsibility evaluators, child and family investigators, and all other professionals involved in family court proceedings receive robust, ongoing training on domestic violence dynamics. This training should focus on:

- Recognizing and understanding the complex dynamics of domestic violence, including coercive control tactics commonly employed by abusers.
- Implementing evidence-based risk assessment tools to accurately assess the potential danger posed by abusers and develop safety plans for victims and their children.
- Prioritizing the safety and well-being of children exposed to domestic violence, recognizing that their safety is inextricably linked to the safety of the adult victim.

Enhance Protection Order Enforcement and Victim Notification: While protection orders are a crucial tool for protecting victims, the report highlights that their effectiveness is dependent upon robust enforcement and timely victim notification.

Violence Free Colorado urges lawmakers to:

- **Implement a system that notifies victims when protection orders are served, modified, and expire.**¹⁴ This would empower victims to take necessary precautions to enhance their safety, particularly during high-risk periods.
- **Develop legislation requiring that victims be informed if the person they sought protection against attempts to purchase a firearm.**¹⁴ This information is vital for victims to assess their level of risk and implement appropriate safety measures.

Address Coerced Debt as a Form of Economic Abuse: Coerced debt, a pervasive yet often overlooked form of economic abuse, traps victims in abusive relationships.

Violence Free Colorado calls upon the Colorado General Assembly to enact legislation that:

- **Recognizes coerced debt as a form of domestic violence and provides legal remedies for victims.**
- **Supports victims in regaining financial stability by facilitating pathways to debt relief and credit repair.**

Beyond Policy Changes, Community Action is Essential:

Violence Free Colorado emphasizes that ending domestic violence requires a comprehensive approach that goes beyond policy changes. The coalition calls on all Coloradans to:

- **Challenge societal norms that perpetuate gender inequality and contribute to the acceptance of violence against women.**
- **Support friends, family members, and colleagues who may be experiencing domestic violence.** Encourage them to seek help and provide a safe and non-judgmental space for them to share their experiences.
- **Volunteer or donate to local domestic violence agencies** to ensure they have the resources to provide essential services to survivors and their families.

Support for Survivors

If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic violence, support is available. Violence Free Colorado encourages survivors to reach out to local resources for assistance. You can visit Violence Free Colorado's website, www.violencefreecolorado.org for information and support services. Additionally, the **National Domestic Violence Hotline is available 24/7 at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)**, offering confidential support and guidance to those in need.

