J.B. Pritzker, Governor
State of Illinois

Delrice Adams, Executive Director
Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority

ILLINOIS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FATALITY REVIEW COMMITTEE: 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

ICJIA

Illinois Domestic Violence Fatality Review Committee: 2025 Annual Report

A report to the Governor and the Illinois General Assembly

Prepared by:

Vincent Sarna, Task Force Coordinator and Report Writer, Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority

Amanda L. Vasquez, Research Manager, Center for Victim Studies, Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority

Suggested citation: Sarna, V., & Vasquez, A. L. (2026). *Illinois Domestic Violence Fatality Review Committee: 2025 annual report.* Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority.

Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority

60 E. Van Buren St., Suite 650

Chicago, IL 60605

312-793-8550

www.icjia.illinois.gov

Acknowledgments

The Domestic Violence Fatality Review Ad Hoc Committee (DVFRC) would like to thank the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority staff for their support of this work. Specifically, the DVFRC would like to thank Scott Risolute and Brianna Martin for their legal guidance related to Open Meetings Act procedures, Jacob Derrick for his support in advancing legislation to improve access to domestic violence fatality and near-fatal records, Karen Galbraith and Vincent Sarna for administrative and technical assistance, and Executive Director Delrice Adams for her continued leadership and support of this initiative.

The DVFRC is also grateful for the continued support of Dr. Neil Websdale and his team for providing training to new DVFRC and regional review team members. Additionally, the DVFRC would like to thank its co-chairs, Sara Block and Megan Alderden, for all of their work on this important initiative.

Finally, the DVFRC thanks Kathleen R. Conlon Wasik for presenting domestic violence fatality data from Northwestern University's Illinois Violent Death Reporting System and Vincent Sarna for presenting on the work and recommendations of the State of Illinois' Colton's Domestic Violence Task Force.

Table of Contents

Introduction 1

Legislation 1

Domestic Violence Fatalities in the United States and Illinois 1

Organizational Structure 2

Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority 2

Illinois Statewide Domestic Violence Fatality Review Committee 2

DVFRC Funding and Staff 2

Officers 2

Members 3

Regional Review Teams 4

Partners 5

National Domestic Violence Fatality Review Initiative (NDVFRI) 5

Illinois Violent Death Reporting System 5

Operations and Activities 6

DVFRC 6

Regional Review Teams 7

3rd Judicial Circuit Regional Review Team 7

10th Judicial Circuit Regional Review Team 8

12th Judicial Circuit Regional Review Team 8

17th Judicial Circuit Regional Review Team 8

19th Judicial Circuit Regional Review Team 8

21st Judicial Circuit Regional Review Team 9

Conclusion and Future Plans 10

References 11

Introduction

This annual report documents the operations and activities of the Illinois Statewide Domestic Violence Fatality Review Committee (DVFRC) and its regional review teams during calendar year 2025.

Legislation

The DVFRC was established in 2021 as an ad hoc committee of the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (ICJIA) Board pursuant to the Illinois Domestic Violence Fatality Review Act (the Act; 750 ILCS 62).

The DVFRC was created in response to the significant impacts of domestic violence—particularly fatal and near-fatal incidents on individuals, families, and communities across Illinois. Under the Act, the DVFRC oversees the establishment of regional domestic violence fatality review teams, provides training and technical assistance related to team formation and case review processes, and compiles domestic violence fatality data, among other things (750 ILCS 62/20). The DVFRC first convened in January 2022 and continues to meet quarterly to carry out its statutory mandate.

Domestic Violence Fatalities in the United States and Illinois

Domestic violence-related fatality rates have increased both nationally and in Illinois. Nationally, domestic violence is associated with more than 1,500 deaths and approximately 2 million injuries each year (Huecker et al., 2023). The Illinois Violent Death Reporting System (IVDRS) indicated 358 intimate partner-related homicides[1] or suicides were reported in 2023. The IVDRS collects data from death certificates and coroner, medical examiner, and law enforcement reports. This marked an 84% increase from 2015, when reports totaled 193 intimate partner-related homicides or suicides (IDPH, n.d.). The Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence reported 137 domestic violence-related homicides in 2024 and 120 homicides in 2023 (Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 2024). In a recent victim service project conducted by ICJIA's Center for Victim Studies, 70.6% of domestic violence service providers reported serving individuals who had experienced a domestic violence fatality or near-fatal incident in the past year. Overall, these data highlight potential increases in domestic violence-related homicides, underscoring the importance of the DVFRC.

[1] The term *intimate partner-related homicides* is utilized in this paragraph as it is the term used in the IVDRS.

Organizational Structure

ICJIA's Ad Hoc Domestic Violence Fatality Review Committee leads the fatality review initiative, providing oversight of regional review teams formed across Illinois.

Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority

ICJIA is a state agency dedicated to improving the administration of criminal justice by bringing together key leaders from the justice system and the public to identify critical issues facing the Illinois criminal justice system. The DVFRC is required to employ a full-time program manager to carry out its statutory duties (750 ILCS 62/40(a)(1)). ICJIA fulfills this requirement by staffing a DVFRC project director. The project director provides administrative support, facilitates the formation of regional review teams, and delivers training and technical assistance.

Illinois Statewide Domestic Violence Fatality Review Committee

The DVFRC is composed of subject matter experts representing the Illinois legislature, law enforcement, social and legal services agencies, and the criminal legal system. It also includes personnel from other agencies and systems that serve or interact with individuals who have experienced domestic violence.

Under the Act, the DVFRC is required to hold meetings at least quarterly and to establish and maintain a website (750 ILCS 62/40 (a)(1-5)). Members contribute their expertise by supporting the creation of regional review teams, providing training and technical assistance, and helping teams address barriers to accessing case records. The DVFRC is also responsible for developing guidelines and model policies for regional teams, and for submitting annual and biennial reports to the Governor and General Assembly. Biennial reports include policy and system recommendations aimed at reducing domestic violence-related fatalities in Illinois.

DVFRC Funding and Staff

In State Fiscal Year 2026, ICJIA received a $350,000 state appropriation to support the DVFRC. These funds support the salary of a full-time DVFRC project director and additional staff, subject to the approval of the DVFRC (750 ILCS 62/40(b)(8)).

Officers

Ms. Sara Block and Dr. Megan Alderden were elected as DVFRC co-chairs by the voting members in 2022 and were re-elected in February 2025. Jayden Anderson Baker was elected secretary of the DVFRC in February 2025.

Members

The Act requires DVFRC membership to be diverse in expertise, race, ethnicity, gender, and geography (750 ILCS 62/25– 30). In calendar year 2025, the DVFRC membership included the following individuals:

Dr. Megan Alderden, Co-Chair
Director and Associate Professor of Criminology
DePaul University

Sara Block, Co-Chair
Managing Director of Advocacy and Partnerships Ascend Justice

Dr. Anastasia Khoubeava
Emergency Medicine Physician
Endeavor Health

Hon. Robert J. Anderson
Judge (Retired)
18th Judicial Circuit

Carolyn Klarquist
Director, Pretrial Fairness
Office of the State Appellate Defender

Willette Benford
Survivor and Senior Advisor
Office of M.K. Pritzker

Andrew Hires
Sheriff
Richland County Sheriff's Office

Erica Koegler
Chief of Bureau of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, and Human Trafficking
Illinois Department of Human Services

Naomi Taylor
Director, Rape and Sexual Assault Prevention Program
Illinois Department of Public Health

Lieutenant Colonel Kevin Garcia
Assistant Deputy Director
Illinois State Police

Sally Turner
Caucus Whip
44th District
Illinois Senate

Jennifer Cacciapaglia
Executive Director
Mayor's Office of Domestic Violence Prevention, City of Rockford

Patrick Windhorst
Representative
117th District
Illinois House of Representatives

Jennifer Vancil
Chief Operating Officer of Domestic Violence Quincy Area Network Against Domestic Violence

Wendy Cohen
Senior Policy Advisor
Office of the Illinois Attorney General

Amanda L. Vasquez
Research Manager, Center for Victim Studies, Research and Analysis Unit
Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority

Ariana Correa
Policy Manager
Office of the Illinois Lieutenant Governor

Heather Blanke
Child Protection Supervisor
Illinois Department of Children and Family Services

Celina Villanueva
Senator
12th District
Illinois Senate

Patrick Delfino
Assistant Director
Illinois State's Attorney Appellate Prosecutor's Office

Jennifer Welch
Chief Policy Officer
Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Fatimeh Hussien
Criminal Court Advocate
Life Span Center for Legal Services and Advocacy

Emily Miller
Senior Advisor
Office of the Illinois Governor

Tom Weitzel
Chief of Police (Retired)
Riverside Police Department

Shelby Hoffman Binder
Policy, Advocacy, and Research Manager
The Network

Maurice A. West, II
Representative
67th District
Illinois House of Representatives

Meg Hefty
Associate Director
Sarah's Inn

Jayden Anderson Baker
Development Director
Harbor House, Kankakee County Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Fawn Pettet
Client Support Services Manager
Land of Lincoln Legal Aid

Amirrah Abou-Youssef
Coordinator
Family Violence Coordinating Council
12th Judicial District

Sheikera Balentine
Director of Legal Advocacy
Violence Prevention Center Southwestern Illinois

Dr. Tom Golebiewski
Adjunct Professor
Social Work
Loyola University Chicago

Alisa Velonis
Associate Professor
Community Health Services University of Illinois Chicago

All DVFRC members serve without compensation but may be reimbursed for expenses incurred, such as travel. No member requested reimbursement for 2025 expenses.

Regional Review Teams

Regional review teams are organized by circuit court boundaries. In 2025, the DVFRC established the 10th Judicial Circuit Regional Review Team. The other five regional review teams were part of the first cohort established in 2024.

The DVFRC's six regional teams included:

- 3rd Judicial Circuit Regional Review Team – Madison County and Bond County (formed in 2024)
- 10th Judicial Circuit Regional Review Team – Marshall County, Peoria County, Putnam County, Stark County, and Tazewell County (formed in 2025)
- 12th Judicial Circuit Regional Review Team – Will County (formed in 2024)

- 17th Judicial Circuit Regional Review Team – Winnebago County and Boone County (formed in 2024)
- 19th Judicial Circuit Regional Review Team – Lake County (formed in 2024)
- 21st Judicial Circuit Regional Review Team – Kankakee County and Iroquois County (formed in 2024)

Regional review teams maintain membership and meeting records, conduct reviews of domestic violence fatality or near-fatality cases, and prepare and submit annual and biennial reports to the DVFRC (750 ILCS 62/65 (a)). Regional teams are also responsible for creating a secure information system. ICJIA assumed responsibility for the privacy and security of sensitive and confidential records and maintains consistency across teams. Regional review team members have access to ICJIA's secure platform.

Partners

National Domestic Violence Fatality Review Initiative (NDVFRI)

NDVFRI representatives provide the DVFRC and regional review teams with technical assistance as they engage in domestic violence fatality reviews. In 2025, the NDVFRI provided the DVFRC's regional review teams and prospective members of the Cook County regional review team with training on domestic violence fatality and near-fatality review processes, including mock reviews.

Illinois Violent Death Reporting System (IVDRS)

The IVDRS is part of the National Violent Death Reporting System. Upon request, the IVDRS provides the DVFRC and regional review teams with data related to domestic violence homicides.

Operations and Activities

DVFRC

In calendar year 2025, the DVFRC met on the following dates:

- February 4
- May 6
- August 5
- November 4

All meetings included administrative updates and a brief mission moment. Mission moments highlighted current events related to domestic violence fatalities or near-fatal incidents to emphasize the importance of the committee's work. The DVFRC also invited guest speakers to present on domestic violence topics. The speakers presented State of Illinois Domestic Violence Task Force recommendations and Northwestern University's IVDRS domestic violence data.

Training and technical assistance meetings also were conducted regularly to support regional review teams. Co-chairs and ICJIA staff met monthly with each regional review team to provide guidance and technical assistance and to support their case reviews. ICJIA staff also developed training videos to accompany a guidebook, which regional review team members can access through Docebo, ICJIA's learning management system for staff, grantees, and the public.

By the end of 2025, the DVFRC expanded regional review teams by recruiting additional judicial circuits, increased public awareness of the initiative, and supported the formation of new teams.

The DVFRC engaged with seven circuits during the year with the goal of recruiting new teams, including Cook County, the 7th (Springfield), the 8th (Quincy), the 10th (Peoria), the 16th (Kane), the 18th (DuPage), and the 23rd (DeKalb) judicial circuits. The 10th Judicial Circuit team formed in September 2025, and the Cook County Judicial Circuit is planning to form a team in 2026. Team formation began by engaging a strategic partner within the circuit to introduce the DVFRC initiative and connect with prospective members. New members then received guidance on statutory requirements for team composition, including confidentiality agreements, and training on both the fatality review process and the DVFRC secure storage site. The DVFRC also supported each new team in selecting its first case.

The DVFRC's public awareness and education efforts included presentations by ICJIA staff and a DVFRC co-chair to both the Task Force on Missing and Murdered Chicago Women and the Illinois Family Violence Coordinating Council Statewide Committee

(IFVCC). The Task Force on Missing and Murdered Chicago Women was established to address the disproportionate rates of missing and murdered Black women and girls in Chicago. The Task Force invited the DVFRC to present on the overlap between domestic violence fatalities, near-fatal incidents, and the experiences of missing and murdered women and girls.

DVFRC members met with the IFVCC to encourage participation from judicial circuits not yet represented. The IFVCC is a multidisciplinary forum for collaboration among local victim service programs and criminal justice entities to strengthen community responses to family violence. In the meeting, the DVFRC presented an overview of the domestic violence fatality review process.

In addition, the project director co-presented on DVFRC work and trends in domestic violence fatalities and near-fatal incidents in Illinois to the Association of Police Social Services members.

Alongside county-level advocacy efforts, the DVFRC pursued and continues to pursue legislative changes intended to ease regional review team access to records for case reviews. One aim of the proposed legislative changes is to clarify provisions in Illinois' Substance Use Disorder Act and the Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Confidentiality Act, permitting records sharing and access for DVFRC case review purposes. The proposed changes also aim to extend DVFRC report timelines to allow for additional internal review and revise quorum requirements to require a simple majority.

Regional Review Teams

Regional review teams must complete at least two reviews per year. In calendar year 2025, the five established regional review teams completed 10 case reviews. The six regional review teams cover 12.7% of Illinois' counties, or 13 of 102 counties.

3rd Judicial Circuit Regional Review Team

The 3rd Judicial Circuit Regional Review Team included 11 members, held 13 meetings (virtually and in person), and conducted two case reviews.

In addition, the team participated in an annual domestic violence memorial event hosted by the Alton Memorial Hospital to commemorate community members who lost their lives to domestic violence. A team member spoke about the team's ongoing work. Finally, the team examined recent changes to the Illinois Domestic Violence Act to ensure stakeholders in their circuit were properly interpreting the updated legislation.

10th Judicial Circuit Regional Review Team

The 10th Judicial Circuit Regional Review Team formed in September and included 34 members. The team held four virtual meetings and prepared for its first in-person fatality review scheduled for April 2026.

To prepare for this review, the team attended DVFRC technical assistance meetings, formalized its review team membership, selected prospective cases, and elected co-chairs and a secretary. They also onboarded all team members to the Microsoft Teams secure storage site.

12th Judicial Circuit Regional Review Team

The 12th Judicial Circuit Regional Review Team included 20 members, held 19 meetings (virtually and in person), and conducted two case reviews.

The team attended a training on understanding the pathway to violence, which provided information on precipitating factors for mass shootings. This training helped inform the team's second domestic violence fatality review, which involved a premeditated murder and a death by suicide. Moreover, the 12th Judicial Circuit team used team-building exercises to foster cross-disciplinary connections within its review team. This allowed the team to examine its domestic violence fatality cases from a multidisciplinary lens and ensure that its county is addressing the unique needs of the community.

17th Judicial Circuit Regional Review Team

The 17th Judicial Circuit Regional Review Team included 17 members, held nine meetings (virtually and in person), and conducted two case reviews.

The team identified interviews with community members as a method for better understanding lived experiences related to domestic violence. To support this work, the team created an interview subcommittee, which interviewed a local mother who lost her daughter to domestic violence. Insights from this interview helped inform interview processes for future domestic violence fatality review cases. The team also incorporated therapy dogs into fatality review meetings to support team members during the review process.

19th Judicial Circuit Regional Review Team

The 19th Judicial Circuit Regional Review Team included 28 members, held eight meetings (virtually and in person), and conducted two case reviews.

The team focused on implementing a clearer team structure, including identifying members responsible for case reviews and establishing defined appointment terms.

These changes were intended to support a more equitable and organized approach to the team's work.

21st Judicial Circuit Regional Review Team

The 21st Judicial Circuit Regional Review Team included 15 members, held 12 meetings (virtually and in person), and conducted two case reviews.

The team used its meetings to discuss opportunities for community engagement, including connecting with the local Department of Children and Family Services office and neighboring Iroquois County to better address domestic violence fatalities in that county. The team also discussed developing domestic violence awareness training for individuals working in hotels, motels, and laundromats to identify potential signs of domestic violence and appropriate responses. Implementation is planned for 2026.

Conclusion and Future Plans

In 2025, the DVFRC and its regional review teams conducted 10 domestic violence fatality case reviews. The 10th Judicial Circuit Regional Review Team is on track to review two cases. The Cook County Regional Review Team is also expected to be formed in 2026 and to complete two case reviews. Therefore, in 2026, the DVFRC and its review teams anticipate completing 14 case reviews.

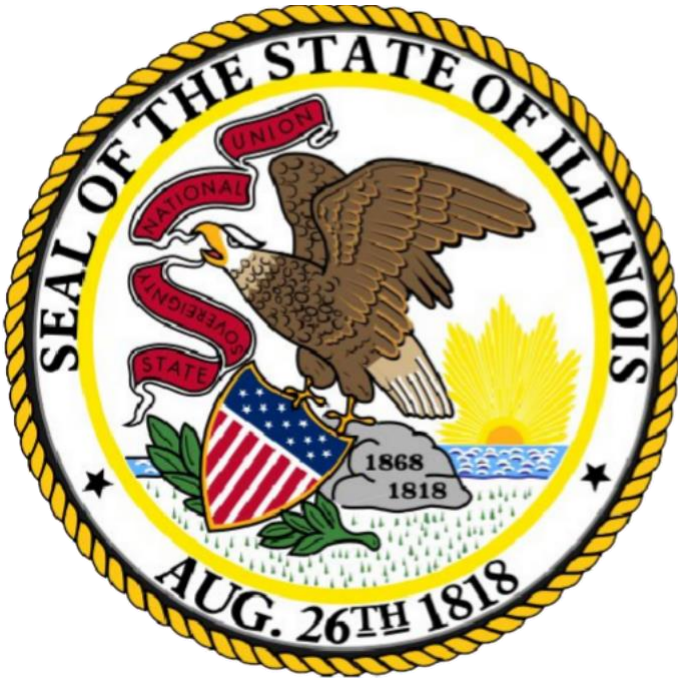
Looking ahead, the DVFRC plans to continue supporting the work of regional review teams through ongoing training and technical assistance, including providing monthly technical assistance calls; participating in initial case reviews for newly formed teams; and coordinating additional resources and training, as needed. The DVFRC will continue engaging judicial circuits across Illinois to support the expansion of domestic violence fatality review teams statewide. Regional review teams will also continue reviewing domestic violence fatalities and near-fatal incidents within their circuits to identify policy and system recommendations to strengthen prevention and responses across Illinois.

References

Huecker, M. R., King, K. C., Jordan, G. A., & Smock, W. (2023). *Domestic violence*. In *StatPearls*. StatPearls Publishing. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK499891/

Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence. (2024). *Annual homicide report 2024*. https://www.ilcadv.org/ilcadv-resources/?type=13

Illinois Department of Public Health. (n.d.). *Illinois violent deaths* [Dashboard]. https://dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/prevention-wellness/gun-safety/dashboards/il-violent-deaths.html



Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority
60 E. Van Buren Street, Suite 650
Chicago, Illinois 60605
Phone: 312.793.8550
Fax: 312.793.8422
TDD: 312.793.4170
icjia.illinois.gov