





Photo courtesy of Lannis Waters/The Palm Beach Post

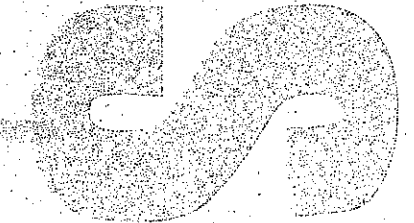
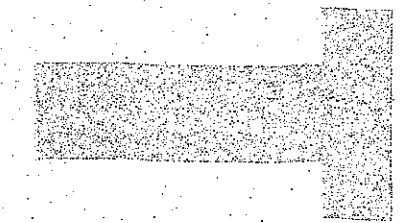
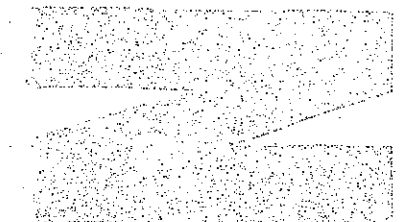
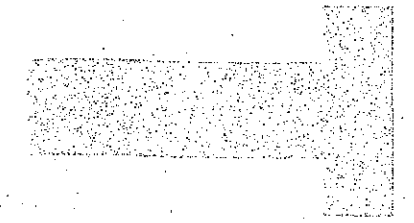
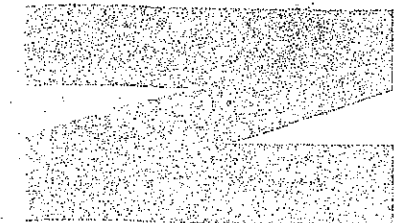
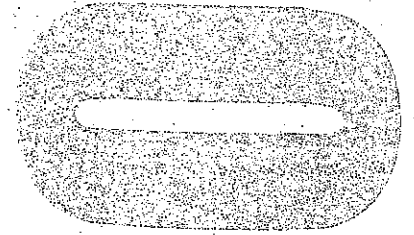
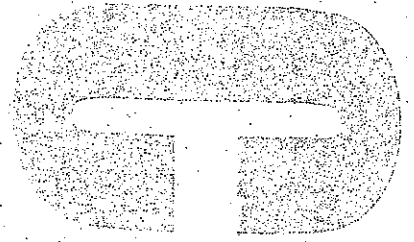
In 1993, the Office of the State Attorney created the DOVE (Domestic Violence Elimination) Unit to address a real need that existed in Palm Beach County: a need that still exists today. 1 in 3 women in the county has experienced sexual or physical violence, most often at the hands of an intimate partner. To combat this violence in our community, my office has a team of dedicated prosecutors and victim advocates who specialize in prosecuting domestic violence cases.

Whether we are assisting victims in court, helping a victim seek shelter or walking a victim through the process of obtaining an injunction, the DOVE Unit attorneys and staff stand firmly on the belief that the only way to break the cycle of abuse is to *interrupt* it. Our goal is to successfully prosecute domestic violence cases and help victims break the cycle of abuse by holding their abusers accountable. We recognize that it is only through the collaborative efforts of prosecutors, law enforcement agencies, DCF, service providers, shelters and Legal Aid attorneys that we are able to continue making a difference in the lives of families in Palm Beach County.

Silence is the enemy. Stop the silence so we can end domestic violence!

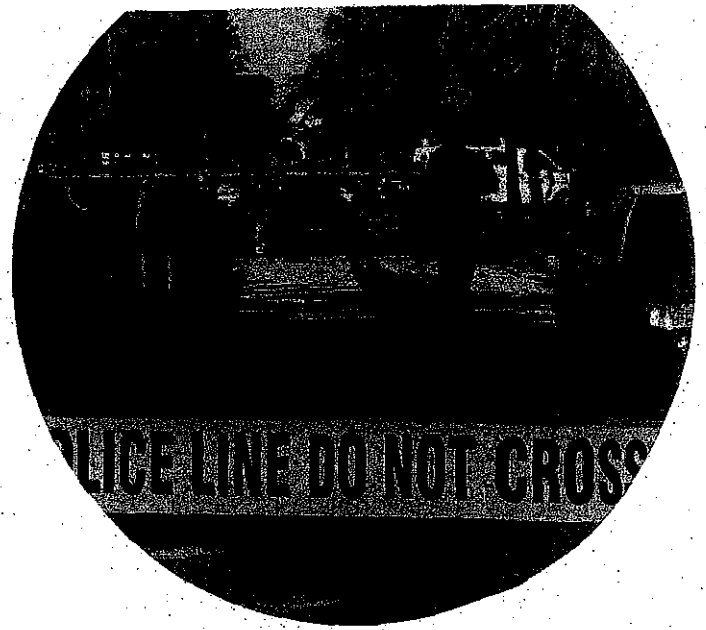
—Dave Aronberg, State Attorney, 15th Judicial Circuit, Palm Beach County

Introduction	4
Background	5
Team Review Process	6
Synopses	8
Recommendations	13
Team Members	14
Agency Resources	15



# INTRODUCTION

Domestic Violence is a nationwide problem. In the past the issue of Domestic Violence was not taken seriously by most communities and often not even discussed in others. Proudly, for almost 15 years Palm Beach County has had a team of professionals dedicated to exploring the causes, intervention and outcomes of Domestic Violence in our county.



The fight against Domestic Violence is ongoing and the Palm Beach County Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team will continue to join together to collectively address the many issues surrounding it. We have carefully compiled this report to illustrate the severity of the problem and how we work to affect education, understanding and hopefully, change.

Since 1997 the Palm Beach County Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team has dedicated their time to the domestic murder and attempted murder victims in our county. Palm Beach County is the second largest county in Florida and covers 38 municipalities from dense city populations to rural country areas. The challenge to give each case the individualized and thoughtful process it deserves is best served by maintaining a team of members from a wide variety of government and private agencies and non-profit organizations that offer social services.

Florida State Statute 741.316 supports our efforts by setting laws into place that allow the team to collect information from criminal, civil and social sources while protecting the confidentiality of the victims and their families. This process allows the team to look at systemic ways we might intervene in domestic violence cases more effectively thereby helping to facilitate better outcomes for our residents. The goal is multi-layered but surrounds the dignity, honor and remembrance of those who have lost their lives to family violence.

Fatality Review teams are becoming more widely used in Florida and nationwide. Communication with other teams is another critical part of our history and we remain open to learning more efficient or cohesive ways to make our goals more attainable. Conversely, other teams have sat in on our meetings to learn from our process as well. This communication allows us to look into trends that we may see occurring like murder-suicides.

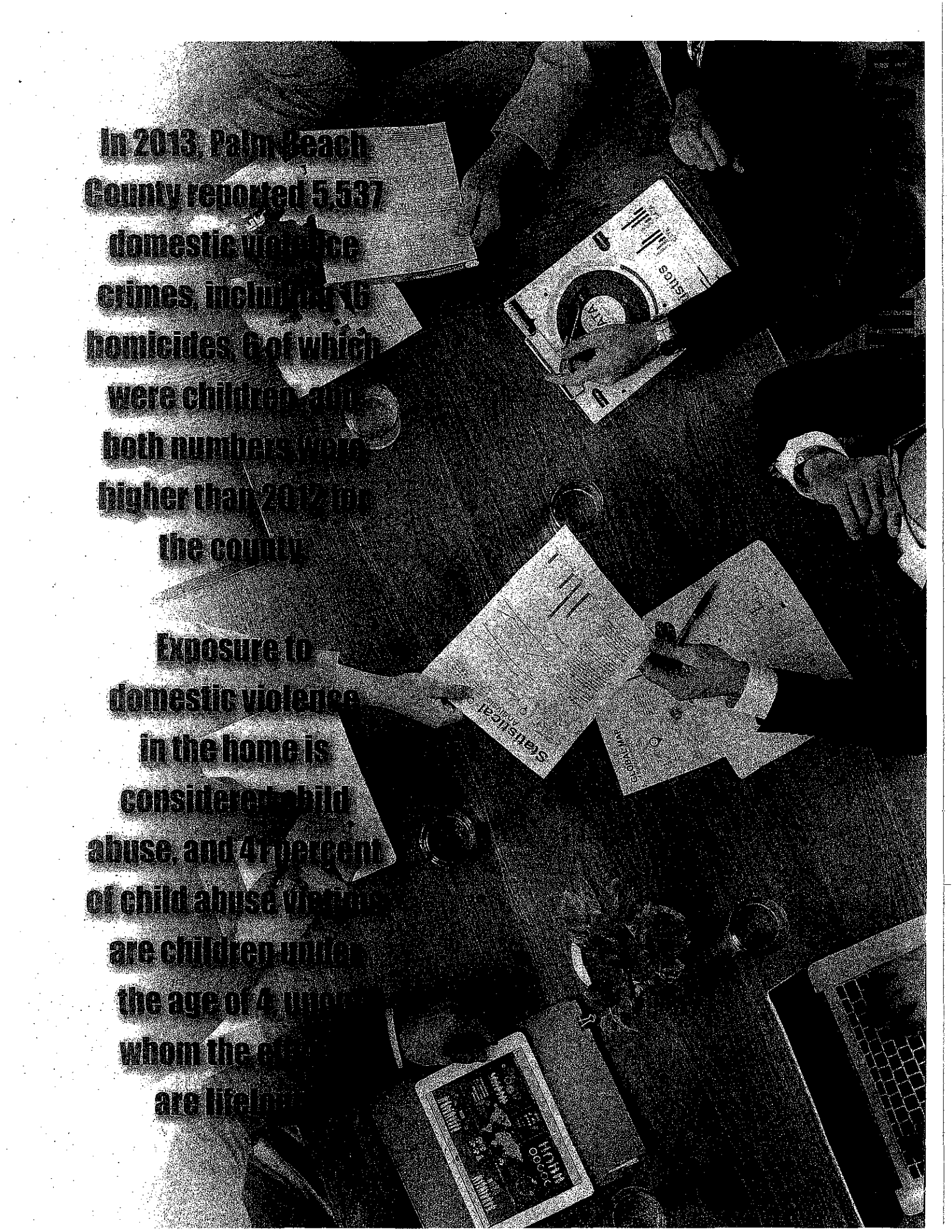
This report provides an overview of the domestic violence homicides that have occurred in Palm Beach County for 2013 as well as offers recommendations based on the review of specific cases. Each reviewed case has been adjudicated and closed or is not a part of any criminal, civil or other legal action as mandated by FS 741.316 (4). Each year the PBC team takes time to honor county residents who have died as a result of domestic violence by participating in Domestic Violence Awareness month activities and by remembering them with respect and tribute at our meetings.

# TEAM REVIEW PROCESS

The Palm Beach County Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team meets every third Tuesday of the month. At these meetings the team reviews individual domestic violence homicides, using in depth information on each case. Some of the evidence reviewed includes police reports and documents, news articles, criminal records, interviews of witnesses, maps of area where homicide took place, legal proceedings, crime scene videos and 911 recordings. The lead detective who worked the homicide case comes to a fatality review meeting and give a comprehensive presentation of the case.

The fatality review team examines the background of both the perpetrator and the victim looking at their history of work/school/family

and their interactions with different individuals in efforts to understand motives and behaviors. These different forms of information were used to determine a timeline of relevant events that led up to the fatality and examine areas where there was a breakdown in community support and responses. From these discussions recommendations were made to which areas need to be strengthened to prevent future homicides and improve community responses to this pressing issue.



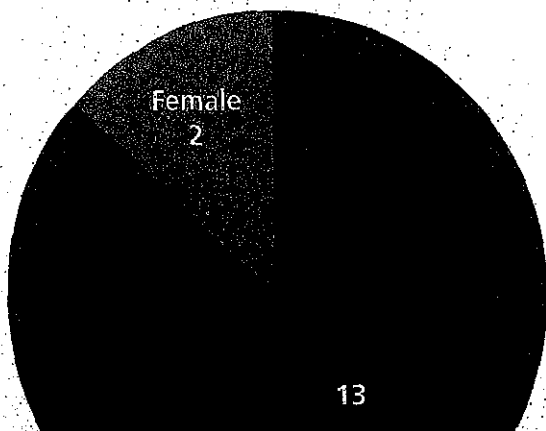
In 2013, Palm Beach County reported 5,537 domestic violence crimes, including 16 homicides, 6 of which were children, and both numbers were higher than 2012 for the county.

Exposure to domestic violence in the home is considered child abuse, and 41 percent of child abuse victims are children under the age of 4, upon whom the effects are lifelong.

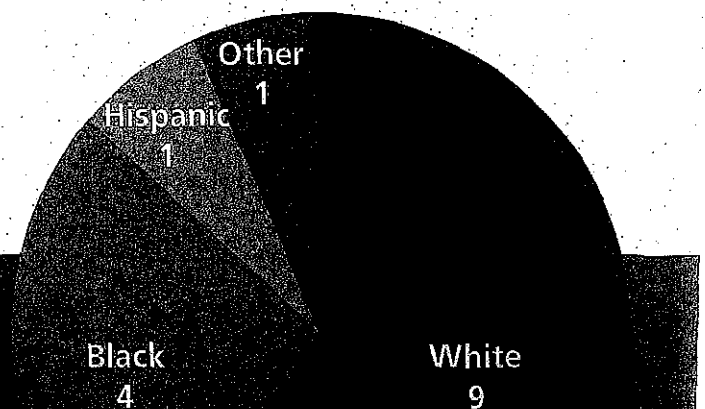
## 2013 PBC DV Homicides

- January 8, mother was stabbed to death by her adult son who had a long history of mental health issues to include bi-polar condition, paranoia and schizophrenia. Suspect arrested. *PBSO*
- January 18, while visiting his elderly wife in a nursing home that cared for dementia and Alzheimer's patients, husband shot and killed wife then committed suicide. *Tequesta PD*
- February 2, father entered into the home of his estranged wife and shot and killed his two minor children then committed suicide. *Boynton Beach PD*
- February 6, after not showing up for work, co-workers requested a welfare check on male victim. Victim was located inside residence deceased as a result of a gunshot wound and the suspect, male intimate partner, had committed suicide. *PBSO*
- April 3, husband entered into bank where his wife was employed. Husband shot and killed his wife then committed suicide. *Boca Raton PD*

### PERPETRATOR GENDER



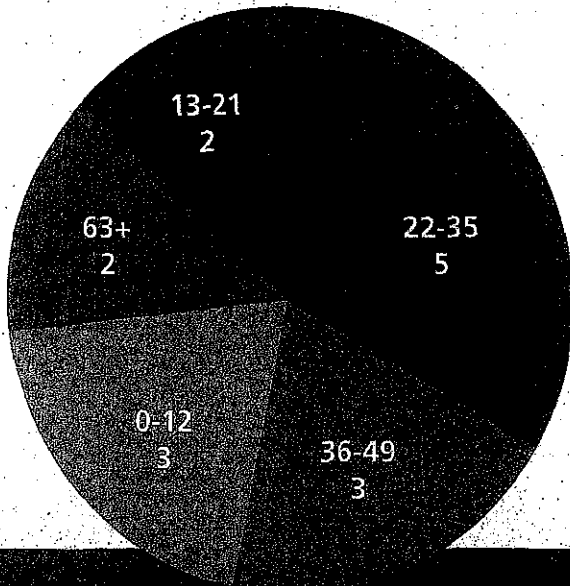
### PERPETRATOR RACE-ETHNICITY



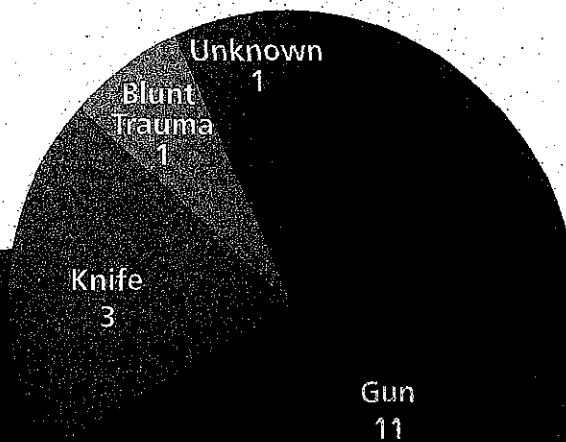


- June 5, victim was involved in a physical altercation with his minor son at which time his minor daughter kicked him in the back in an attempt to separate the parties. The victim later died from injuries stemming from the kick. The actions of the daughter were deemed reasonable and she was not charged. *PBSO*
- June 23, during the course of a missing person investigation, law enforcement located a victim of a homicide in a residence. The victim was identified as a friend of the missing woman. On December 19, 2013, the suspect was indicted by a grand jury on two counts of first degree murder. The missing victim has not been located as of the date of this report. *PBSO*
- July 16, Husband and wife were in the process of divorcing. husband shot and killed wife in their residence and then committed suicide. *Riviera Beach PD*
- July 31, victim was shot and killed by her on again, off again boyfriend. The suspect fled and was later apprehended. *Boynton Beach PD*

## PERPETRATOR AGE

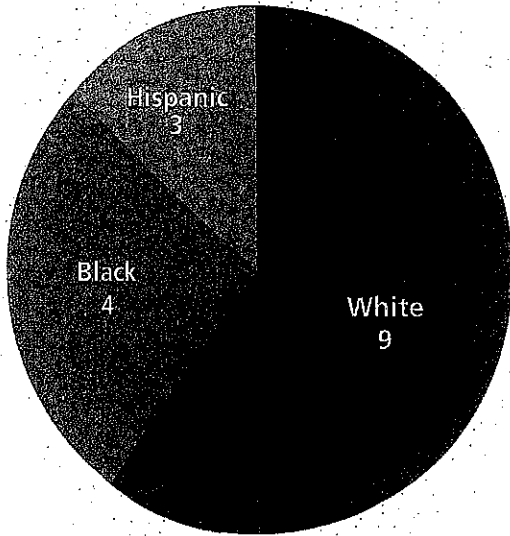


## METHOD OF HOMICIDE

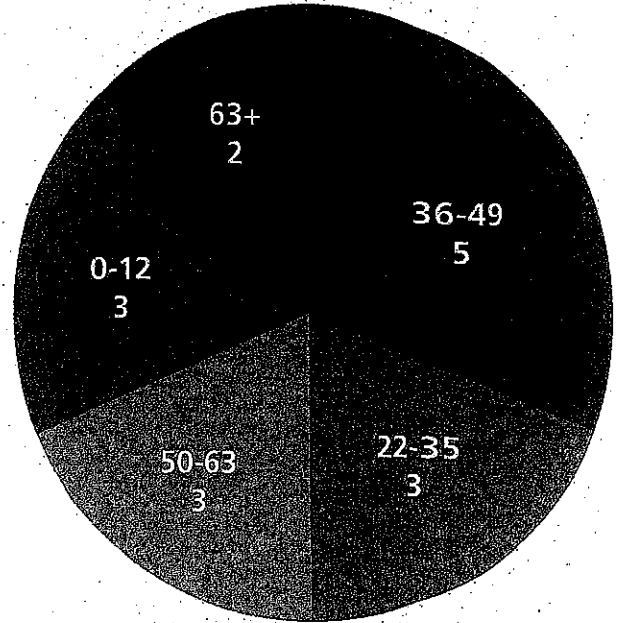


## 2013 PBC DV Homicides

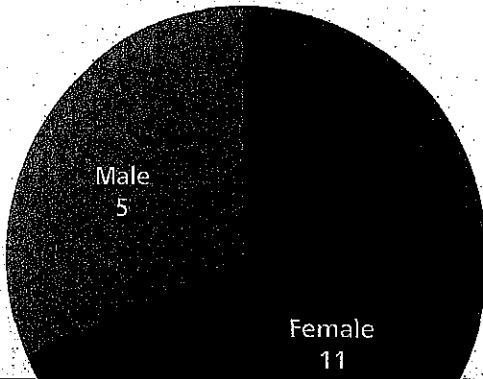
### DECEDENT RACE-ETHNICITY



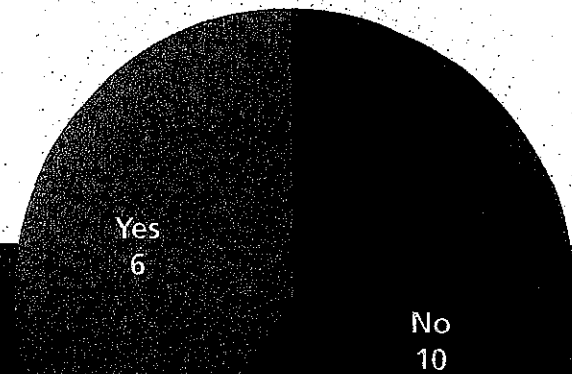
### DECEDENT AGE



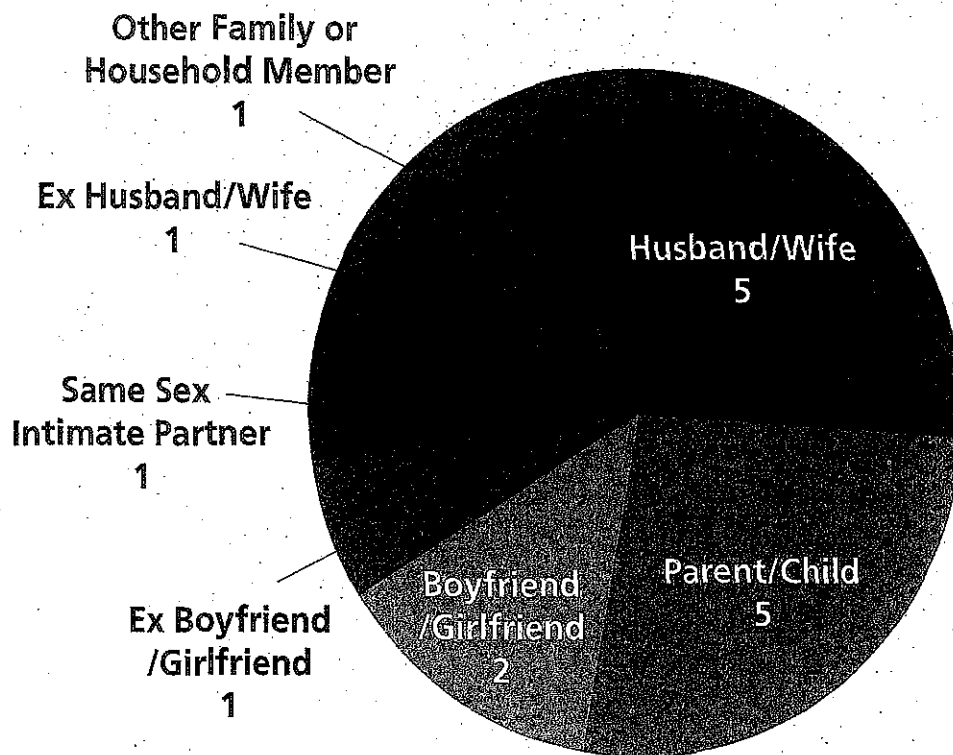
### DECEDENT GENDER



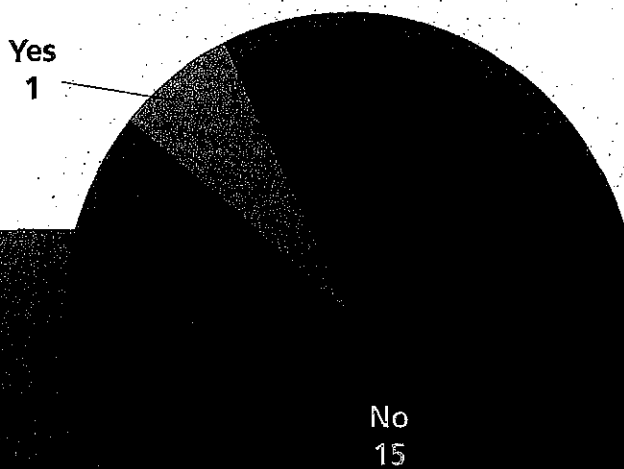
### CHILDREN PRESENT



## RELATIONSHIP TYPE



## PROTECTIVE ORDERS IN EFFECT



- September 12, minor victim was stabbed to death by her mother who then committed suicide. Suspect was divorced from the child's father who shared custody. *West Palm Beach PD*
- October 2, victim was shot and killed by her boyfriend who was arrested and charged. *Riviera Beach PD*

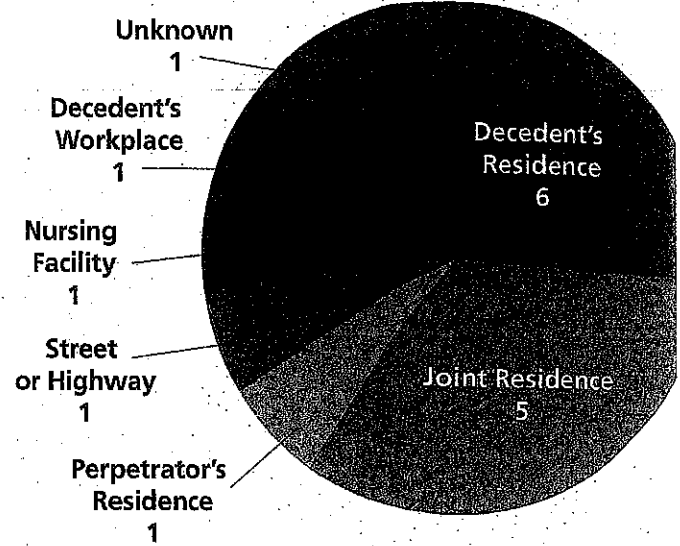
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# SYNOPSIS

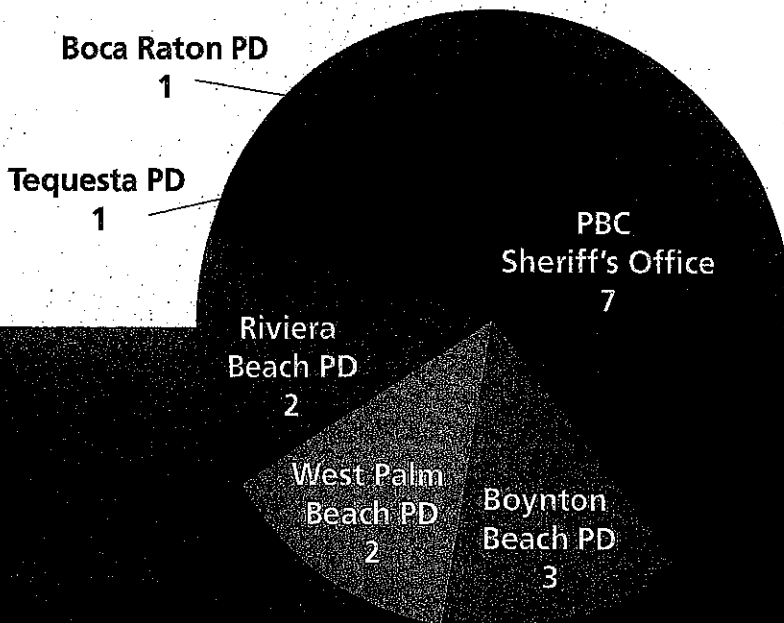
## 2013 PBC DV Homicides

- October 20, victim was shot and killed along the roadway during an argument with her estranged husband. The suspect was subsequently shot and killed by responding law enforcement when he threatened them with a gun. *PBSO*
- October 20, the suspect forcibly entered the residence in which his wife was staying, violating a restraining order that she had been granted. The suspect dragged the victim outside where he shot and killed her. The suspect attempted suicide but was unsuccessful. *West Palm Beach PD*

### PLACE OF INCIDENT



### LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY



- October 28, missing person report was initiated when victim failed to show up for work. Victim was later located in Hendry County deceased. Probable cause developed for ex-husband who subsequently committed suicide prior to his arrest. *PBSO*
- December 9, victim was stabbed to death by his mother's long time live in boyfriend who then committed suicide. *PBSO*

## Conditions of Pre-Trial Release

Conditions of Pre-Trial Release are outlined in Florida State Statute 741.29 (6) and are commonly referred to as "Orders of No Contact". Currently these orders vary by county throughout the state. The Order of No Contact being utilized in Palm Beach County defines "Contact" as follows:

- NO direct or indirect messages or communications by the Defendant
- NO direct or indirect contact by a third person on behalf of the Defendant.
- NO communication of any kind including telephone calls, messages on answering machines and voice or electronic mail; all written forms of communication, including letters of apology; or any other means of communication, including the delivery of gifts at any time, either at a residence, school, or workplace.

Under this current definition, a defendant can return to their residence as long as the victim is not present without violating the order. The current exception that is often noted on the Order reads:

*"The Defendant may return to the residence where the above-listed person(s) resides for the purpose of removing the Defendant's PERSONAL EFFECTS ONLY and then only in the presence of a uniformed law enforcement officer and on ONE occasion only."*

It is important to note that this "exception" is an exception to **contact**. If the victim is not present, the defendant is not violating the order.

It is recommended that the current Order of No Contact be updated to include verbiage similar to an Injunction for Protection which prohibits the defendant from:

*"Staying at least 500 feet away from the victim, the victim's residence, victim's place of employment, and/or school."*

This language is taken from the current Order of No Contact being utilized in Broward County. It is understood that a defendant intent on harming a victim may not be deterred by a Judge's order however more restrictive language may prevent a situation in which the victim and defendant inadvertently end up at the residence or other location allowing a potential lethal incident to occur.

(Continued on page 14)

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Public Awareness

Palm Beach County should have a comprehensive awareness campaign to increase awareness about the adverse effects of domestic violence on families and on the community as a whole. The campaign should consider the linguistic and cultural diversity of the citizens of Palm Beach County and employ a variety of media including billboards, training materials and public service announcements to communicate that domestic violence is a crime and comprehensive services are available to assist families experiencing violence, including that domestic violence centers offer a wide-range of free outreach services to victims and their children in addition to shelter.

## Stalking

Aid to Victims of Domestic Abuse and The Legal Aid Society of Palm Beach County were collaboratively awarded a grant to increase services and collaborations to serve victims of stalking and hold perpetrators accountable. Over the past two years, AVDA and Legal Aid hired additional service providers and coordinated a community collaborative group of service providers. The Anti-Stalking Collaborative team members developed an Anti-Stalking Toolkit, Law Enforcement Model Policy and Investigative Tip Card, Stalking Victim's Rights Brochures in three languages, and hosted two Annual Training Institutes on issues related to stalking. It is recommended that the county continue to work on a coordinated response to serve victims of stalking and utilize the Toolkit and additional resources to provide quality, supportive services to victims of domestic violence who are stalked.

# TEAM MEMBERS

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Boynton Branch of the Department

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Social Science Division  
Office of the Public Defender

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Boca Raton Police Department

**Alexcia Cox**  
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Office of the State Attorney

**Holly DiBenedetto**  
Supervisor  
PBC Victim Services  
& Certified Rape Crisis Center

**Grace Diaz-Arguelles**  
Victim Advocate  
Office of the State Attorney

**Adrienne Ellis**  
Chief Assistant State Attorney  
Office of the State Attorney

**Dale Fox**  
Detective  
PBC Sheriff's Office,  
Domestic Violence Unit

**Maureen Francois**  
Victim Advocate

**211 Palm Beach/Treasure Coast  
Rape Crisis Violent  
Crime Hotline**  
(561) 547-8637  
(866) 891-7273  
www.211palmbeach.org

**Aid to Victims of Domestic  
Abuse, Inc.**

**Certified Domestic Violence  
Center**  
(561) 265-3797  
(800) 355-8547 - 24hr Hotline  
www.avdaonline.org

**Alpert Jewish Family  
& Children's Services**

**Rosenberg Jewish Domestic  
Abuse Outreach and Support  
Program**  
(561) 684-1991  
www.jfconline.com

**Alzheimer's Community Care  
Specialized Alzheimer's Day  
Center & Family Nurse  
Consultant Program**  
Hotline (800) 394-1771  
(561) 683-2700  
www.alzcare.org

**Area Agency on Aging of Palm  
Beach/Treasure Coast, Inc.**  
Senior Advocacy  
(561) 684-5885  
www.youragingresourcecenter.org

**Boca Raton Police Department**  
Amber Busa  
Victim Advocate  
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**Muriel S. Waldmann MS  
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Fatality Review Team**  
Victim Advocate Coordinator  
(561) 742-6108  
waldmannm@bbfl.us

**Department of Children  
and Families  
Florida Abuse Hotline**  
(850) 487-6100  
(800) 962-2873  
www.myflfamilies.com

**Florida Atlantic University  
Florida Atlantic University  
Victim Services**  
(561) 297-0500  
www.fau.edu

**Florida Department  
of Corrections  
Victim Services**  
(850) 488-9166  
1-877-884-2846 / 1-877-8-VICTIM  
www.dc.state.fl.us

**Guardian Ad Litem,  
15th Judicial Circuit**  
(561) 355-2773  
(561) 330-1752  
www.galpbc.org

**Home Safe-Safety Net**  
(561) 383-9800  
www.helphomesafe.org

**Legal Aid Society of Palm  
Beach County, Inc.**  
(561) 655-8944  
(561) 644-8944, ext: 238  
(800) 403-9353  
www.legalaidpbc.org

**National Alliance  
for Grieving Children**  
www.nationalallianceforgrieving-  
children.org

**National Crime Victim  
Bar Association**  
(202) 467-8716  
www.ncvc.org

**Office of the Attorney General  
Division of Victim Services and  
Criminal Justice Programs**  
(561) 837-5000  
www.myfloridalegal.com

**Office of the State Attorney  
Fifteenth Judicial Circuit**  
(561) 355-7100  
(800) 353-3589  
www.sa15.state.fl.us

**Palm Beach County  
Victim Services and Rape Crisis  
Center**  
(561) 355-2418  
http://www.pbcgov.com/public-  
safety/victimservices

**YWCA - Harmony House  
Certified Domestic Violence  
Center**  
(561) 640-0050  
1 (800) 973-9922  
24 hour hotline (561) 640-9844  
www.ywcapbc.org

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**Ana Jimenez**  
Victim Advocate  
Aid to Victims of Domestic Abuse

**Joe LaBianco**  
Family Safety Specialist  
Department of Children and Families

**Debra L. Storm**  
Victim Advocate  
Florida Atlantic University  
Police Department

**Terri Zaccardo**  
Supervisor, Unified Family Court  
PBC Clerk and Comptroller's Office

**“This report is dedicated to the 16 women, children and men who were killed by an act of domestic violence in Palm Beach County in 2013, to their loved ones, and to those who work every day to prevent these deaths.”**

**Palm Beach County Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team**

*The team would like to acknowledge and thank the PBC Criminal Justice Commission for their support and assistance with this project.*