



2024 FATALITY REVIEW REPORT

Tarrant County, TX

Every year, we release this fatality review report to remember the lives lost to intimate partner violence in our community and learn from those tragedies *in order to prevent future ones.*

The Tarrant County Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Adult Fatality Review Team, reaffirmed by the Commissioners Court in 2016, is led by the Office of Criminal District Attorney Phil Sorrells in partnership with The Archway – formerly SafeHaven of Tarrant County. Together with a group of dedicated professionals, we review each case closely to understand what happened and where intervention might have been possible.

This work is difficult. It's heavy. But it is also profoundly important. The findings of the team shape our county's Coordinated Community Response to IPV—bringing law enforcement,

attorneys, social scientists, medical professionals, and child welfare and domestic violence advocates together to keep survivors safe.

As you read this year's report, I hope you will see not only the data but also the deep commitment of so many in our community who refuse to accept intimate partner homicide as inevitable. Change is possible, and the lessons we learn here bring us one step closer to ensuring safety for every family who calls Tarrant County home.

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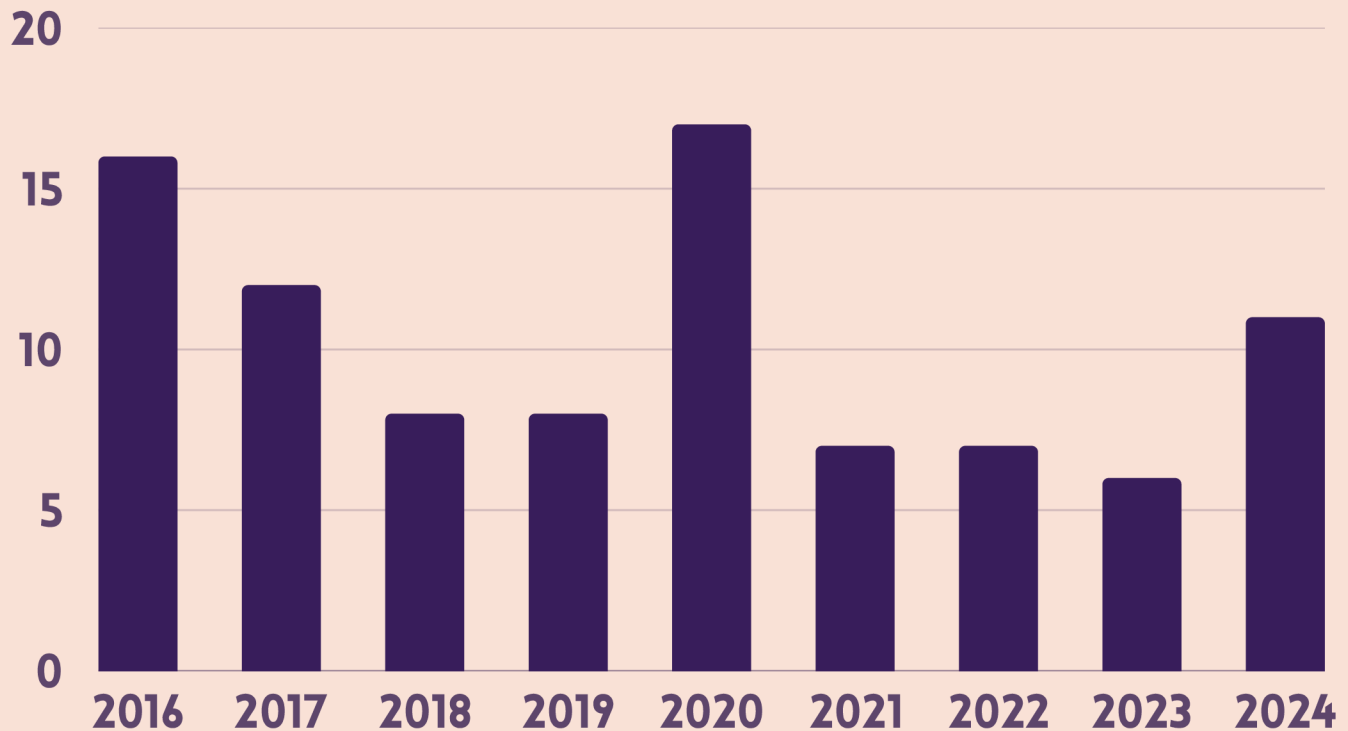


TEXAS
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HOMICIDES *BY YEAR*



DEFINING IPV HOMICIDE

For the purposes of the Fatality Review Team, an IPV homicide is defined as:

“An ongoing pattern of abusive behavior that can include physical violence, sexual violence, stalking, or psychological aggression (including coercive control) by a former or current intimate partner that is motivated by the offender’s desire for power and control over the victim, where the relationship ends in homicide.”

This definition is not a legal standard, nor is it intended to replace definitions used in healthcare, education, social services, or other fields. It was established when the team was re-formed in its current structure in 2016 and reflects a combination of definitions from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Hofstra University’s Law School. The team intentionally adopted a broader framework than the State of Texas’ legal definition of Family or Dating Violence in order to capture the full scope of intimate partner violence homicides for review.

2024 VICTIMS



FEMALE, 38
Fort Worth

"We want her remembered as the wonderful mother and daughter she was, and an irreplaceable sister. She loved each one of us so much."



FEMALE, 24
Fort Worth

"I had so many plans for us, things we were going to do together... and now? I can't... I'll always feel empty without her."



FEMALE, 57
Colleyville

"One thing she enjoyed most was her frequent trips to Disney World. She will be remembered eternally for her unconditional kindness..."



FEMALE, 43
Azle

"Not a day goes by that my heart doesn't ache to hear your voice again and your laugh... It's your laugh. I miss the most... I love you!"



MALE, 63
Fort Worth

"My heart is hurting as I type this, uncle. I just asked about you because I wanted to see you and now you're gone! You will truly be missed."



MALE, 33
Crowley

"He was such a fun, loving, and gentle soul. He always wanted to make others laugh and brighten their day; he knew no stranger."

2024 VICTIMS



MALE, 38

Fort Worth

"He loved and cherished fatherhood by guiding his boys with all his love, affection, time and wisdom. He valued hard work and family."



MALE, 56

Fort Worth

"... A proud dad and grandpa who loved old country music and keeping up with old friends."



FEMALE, 61

Kennedale

"She was the embodiment of strength, compassion, & love. She worked tirelessly to build a better future for herself, her children, and her grandchildren."



FEMALE, 32

Tarrant County

"She was smart, loving, caring, and the life of any gathering. She would have given you the shirt off her back.. She is loved by so many."



FEMALE, 42

Fort Worth

"She was a shining star. She always wanted to help and was always smiling. She loved her children so much and will be missed."



**ASSOCIATED
DEATHS**

Three people died during an attempted homicide of an IPV victim where the intended target was not killed. These deaths are not included in the overall IPV homicide number in this report as they do not meet the definition. Deaths by suicide associated with an IPV homicide are also reported separate from the Associated Deaths number and the IPV homicide number.

2024: *BY THE NUMBERS*



2024: KEY POINTS



Danger in Leaving

Three of this year's 11 cases involved separation or intent to leave. National studies indicate that leaving and the three months that follow are often the most dangerous period for a victim in an abusive relationship – when abusers feel the greatest loss of control.



Concealing Homicide

At least three cases involved offenders going to extreme lengths to hide the homicide, including stashing, or dumping bodies to delay discovery. The attempts to hide victims' bodies underscore both the brutality of the crime and the isolation survivors often experience, even in death.



LGBTQ+ Homicide

2024 marked the first recorded case of an IPV homicide occurring between same-sex partners in our county's published reporting. In 2023, four LGBTQ homicides were recorded in the entire state of Texas. This case highlights that IPV occurs in every community, not just within heterosexual relationships.



History of Abuse

In at least six of the 11 cases, offenders had prior histories of IPV or violent criminal charges — including assault and stalking — prior to the homicide. This trend is consistent with national studies that show between 45–60% of men who commit intimate partner homicide have a prior IPV criminal record.



Method of Homicide

Firearms accounted for 36% (4 cases) of confirmed homicides in Tarrant County in 2024, *well below the national average*. A 2023 study co-authored by researchers from Johns Hopkins University found that firearms are used in more than 50% of IPV-related homicides nationwide.



IPV and Murder Suicide

In three cases, the offender died by murder-suicide, either immediately following the homicide or prior to trial. This continues a recent trend in Tarrant County, highlighting the lethal risk of IPV and the impact on families when abusers take their own lives after murdering their partner.



Digging Deeper:

VICTIM RESISTANCE *BEYOND* TRADITIONAL SELF-DEFENSE

Dr. Kathryn Jacob, LMSW
The Archway President/CEO

This Fatality Review Team, coming from a wide variety of professional and academic backgrounds, often spends time discussing the role of a batterer, the role of a victim, and what it looks like when the victim behaves 'like a batterer' – meaning the victim uses physical violence to resist abuse. With four atypical homicides meeting inclusion criteria for the 2024 statistics, this conversation was ever-present during Team meetings.

The public often portrays victims as either passive recipients of abuse or as individuals involved in 'mutual combat'. However, substantial research, along with reporting from advocates nationwide, demonstrate that victims often engage in active forms of resistance, sometimes termed "resistive violence" or resistance to abuse (Hollander, 2018a). This resistance is not merely an isolated act as in traditional self-defense, but an ongoing survival mechanism that extends far beyond the narrow confines of what the public and the legal system typically understand. Sometimes this resistance is shown by a victim using physical violence outside of an IPV incident, and sometimes resistance shows up through

Digging Deeper:

VICTIM RESISTANCE CONT.

appeasement, a common survival mechanism in chronic IPV.

The legal system, and, similarly, differing views on the Tarrant County Fatality Review Team, struggle to accommodate more nuanced forms of resistance, causing a significant gap in what systemic justice is available for victims (ANROWS, 2019).

Resistance Beyond Self-Defense

Victims of IPV utilize a wide variety of strategies to resist abuse, ranging from overt actions (physical and sexual violence) to subtle, covert tactics (reclaiming power in smaller ways). Domestic violence advocates often remark that victims ‘do what they have to do to stay safe within an abusive relationship’. While physical self-defense in direct response to an immediate threat is the most recognized form of resistive violence (the ‘fight!’ in a ‘fight or flight’ trauma response), research indicates it is by no means the only one. Victims may use physical violence not only during an active assault but also in situations that fall outside the strict definition of imminent threat, because domestic violence does not happen at one point in time, it is chronic and persistent. Domestic violence is a pattern of power and control and once it is introduced

in a relationship, the metaphorical toothpaste cannot go back into the tube. Victims live in a constant state of vigilance. Abuse is prolonged and cumulative. It’s because of this, that resistive violence can include fighting out of desperation, using physicality to attempt to stop the abuse cycle (reclaim power), or using physical or sexual violence to react to pervasive coercive control rather than a single physical blow (Gondolf & Fisher, 1988, as cited in Hayes, n.d.). Such actions are a reaction to accumulated trauma, and result in an effort to regain control.

The goal for the victim is to end their constant state of fear in reaction to their partner’s domination. Many victims also engage in verbal resistance, such as arguing back, asserting boundaries, or refusing to comply with demands, even if it escalates the conflict in the short term (Ballan & Freyer, 2012; Hollander, 2018b). This form of resistance directly challenges the abuser's control and voice and can lead to triggering an offender into physical or sexual violence.

The Legal System’s Accommodation Challenges

Despite the myriad ways victims resist, the legal system predominantly recognizes only a very narrow definition of self-defense: that which involves an ‘imminent threat of bodily harm and the use of proportional force to

Digging Deeper: VICTIM RESISTANCE CONT.

repel that threat' (ANROWS, 2019). Arguably, in a pattern of power and control that defines domestic violence, violence is ever 'imminent'. The threat does not disappear – even when the relationship ends, the threat often still exists. The traditional legal framework is ill-equipped to address the diverse forms of resistance victims employ, particularly physical acts that occur outside the immediate moment of an assault. The legal system responds uniformly to intimate partner violence, and that uniformity does not easily accommodate for the extremely complex nature of victim behavior in response to chronic trauma of intimate partner violence.

For instance, if a victim's verbal resistance leads to an escalation and they are arrested for a domestic disturbance, their words are rarely seen as a legitimate form of self-preservation. The legal system often fails to understand the cumulative trauma and the concept of complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (C-PTSD) or social entrapment as an impact of a pattern of coercive control, which can explain why a victim might retaliate against an abuser not in response to an immediate threat, but due to years of escalating abuse and a pervasive sense of inescapable danger (Walker, 1979; ANROWS, 2019).

Victims do what they have to do to keep themselves safe in an abusive relationship.

Victims who use non-traditional forms of resistance, especially those that might be perceived as aggressive or 'uncooperative' by law enforcement or the courts, often face criminalization. Most female clients enrolled in The Archway's battering intervention group have been deemed offenders by the court system but are truly victims who used resistive violence and were ultimately criminalized for doing so. They might be arrested for assault, property damage, or contempt, effectively punishing them for their attempts to survive and reclaim agency (BWJP, n.d.).

An Ongoing Conversation

IPV victim resistance is a complex, multi-faceted phenomenon that reflects the profound resilience of individuals facing sustained abuse. When victims use resistive violence, they are not acting 'just like the abuser'.

This is relevant when processing the details of intimate partner homicides in Tarrant County since an important aspect of the definition revolves around who in the relationship had power and privilege and who did not? Who was afraid? Who was in control for the duration of the relationship?

Not every person who kills their partner

Digging Deeper:

VICTIM RESISTANCE CONT.

meets the definition of 'battering' and determining such, for statistical purposes, falls at the feet of the local Fatality Review Team.

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Digging Deeper:

EMERGENCY PROTECTION ORDERS IN SAFEGUARDING ABUSE VICTIMS

Shelby Hopson
FWPD Victim Assistance Coordinator

Emergency Protection Orders (EPOs) serve as critical legal instruments designed to offer immediate, short-term protection for those at risk, particularly victims of domestic violence, child abuse, elder abuse, or stalking. These orders aim to restrict an alleged abuser's contact with the victim by prohibiting the offender from coming within so many feet of a protected address and prohibiting them from contacting the victim in a threatening or harassing manner, and in some cases, no contact of any kind. In Texas, EPOs are usually granted for 31-91 days and are mandatory in cases of serious bodily injury or use or exhibition of a deadly weapon, regardless of whether or not it is requested by the victim. (Tex. Code Crim. Proc. Art. 17.292).

While an EPO should not be relied upon as the only means of protection, it does allow law enforcement to make an arrest if conditions are violated. Although violations occur, they can carry legal penalties that act as future deterrents of family violence such as enhanced charges or increased bond amounts and/or conditions. Enforcement, especially when paired with criminal penalties, supports the orders' efficiency.

Digging Deeper:

EPO CONT.

As part of Senate Bill 48 passed during the 88th Regular Session of the Texas Legislature (2023), the Office of Court Administration (OCA) was charged with evaluating the efficacy of protective orders in Texas. Using a multi-disciplinary approach, the OCA reviewed relevant statutes related to the issuance and enforcement of protective orders, conducted a literature review of relevant academic and policy research, and examined the Protective Order Registry of Texas that was launched in 2020. Finally, the team surveyed key stakeholders across the Texas criminal justice system including judges, clerks, prosecutors, law enforcement agencies, legal aid providers, and family violence advocates. OCA found that Tarrant County made up 7% (11,375) of the total amount of EPOs issued in Texas from 2021-2023 and is 3rd only to Harris County (32%) and Dallas County (10%). In addition, they found that out of all the magistrates surveyed in Texas, 69% of them issue EPOs for all levels of crime, not just those mandated by the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure. Further, 96% of them prohibit the respondent from owning or possessing a firearm for the duration of the order. However, there are no set state-wide standards, protocols, or procedures to ensure that the person subjected to a

protective order actually surrenders their firearms. In a perfect world, all law enforcement agencies would be required to ensure that a respondent hand over their firearms as part of a protective order. However, many jurisdictions lack a process and resources, such as staffing and storage, to ensure that all respondents are complying with the conditions of the order (Office of Court Administration, 2024).

It should be noted that the majority of the violent offenses that qualify for most EPOs are also the ones that are the most underreported (Office of Court Administration, 2024). According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics reports from 2006-2015, 44% of nonfatal domestic violence victimizations went unreported due to privacy, protection of the abuser, and/or fear of retaliation (Reaves, 2017). The reality is that many survivors who have endured abuse will avoid seeking out protective orders on their own volition. This highlights the importance of EPO's during a criminal arrest. Even if a victim chooses not to cooperate with the investigation and declines an EPO, the law enforcement officer and/or magistrate can request one on their behalf and those involving a high-risk offense are mandated by law.

EPOs allow the victim a breathing period away from the offender, giving them time to seek more permanent solutions, such as long-term protective orders or relocation.

Digging Deeper: EPO CONT.

However, it is critical that the victim follow up with a law enforcement advocate or a domestic violence agency to discuss more comprehensive safety planning including emergency shelter if needed.

EPOs reflect a societal commitment to proactive protection and justice. Their issuance serves not only legal purposes, but also symbolic and psychological ones affirming victims' rights and validating their concerns for safety. However, systemic limitations still persist. Inconsistent enforcement, vulnerable survivor populations, and the possibility of inadequate protection in high-risk cases is seen all too often and advocates must educate victims to not solely rely on the EPO to keep them safe. To use EPOs to their full advantage, strong victim services, cross-agency coordination, and trauma-informed practices are essential. EPOs are vital tools in public safety and victim protection. Although not a substitute for more intense safety measures, EPOs can dramatically reduce threats and violence when supported by enforcement, education, and social services.

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Texas Code of Criminal Procedure. Art. 17.292



Digging Deeper:

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE IN LGBTQ+ RELATIONSHIPS

Mary Shamblin
The Archway PAIP Director

The 2024 Fatality Review Report reveals something that we have not yet seen in a published report: an intimate partner homicide between gay male partners.

While we know IPV occurs in all types of relationships, it is particularly notably in the 2024 report that one homicide occurred in a gay, male relationship. Clearly violence is not only a problem in heterosexual relationships. Over 40 percent of lesbian identifying women and 26 percent of gay identifying men have experienced rape, stalking, or physical violence by a same sex partner.

A commonly used tool in describing the pattern of power and control that exists in IPV relationships is the Power and Control Wheel, created in Duluth, Minnesota, in the 1980s by interviewing over 200 female IPV victims of male offenders. Years later, Duluth created a wheel specific to the LGBTQ community. In order to help LGBTQ survivors of domestic violence and hold offenders accountable, the LGBTQ power and control wheel, rather than the heterosexual power and control wheel, must be employed when working

Digging Deeper:

LGBTQ+ AND IPV

with both survivors and offenders to provide a succinct and relevant service that promotes understanding and healing.

The LGBTQ power and control wheel was created by Roe and Jagodinsky in partnership with the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (aka 'Duluth'). This wheel features the same eight features as the heterosexual power and control wheel: using intimidation, using emotional abuse, using isolation, denying, minimizing, and blaming, using children, using privilege, using economic abuse, and using coercion and threats. Like the heterosexual power and control wheel, the LGBTQ wheel is encompassed on the outer layer with physical and sexual violence, and includes the addition of heterosexism, homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia. The position of heterosexism, homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia on the power and control wheel is intentional: this is another control tactic that can be used by a batterer against their partner.

Specific to the LGBTQ community, batterers can use 'outing' as a way to keep their partners 'in the closet', or out them to family, friends, employers, or religious communities against their partner's wishes. Both tactics reinforce imbalanced power dynamics while

also isolating the victim from friends, family, or the LGBTQ community as a whole, making the victim more reliant on the batterer for companionship, resources, and support.

Additionally, batterers may use their own LGBTQ status to coerce their partners into staying in the relationship, provide them with emotional or monetary support, and prioritize their needs over their partner's needs and boundaries. These actions exploit their partner's resources and make the batterer their top priority, potentially resulting in joblessness, financial distress, and deteriorating friendships and familial relationships.

Many batterers, of any sexual orientation, may blame their violence on substance abuse and misuse or even blame their partner's perceived dependency for their own violent actions. LGBTQ identifying people do report higher levels of alcohol and drug use than their heterosexual peers. A batterer can excuse their violence by claiming not to remember the events due to intoxication, wait until their partner is intoxicated to abuse them, or even designate when and how their partner will use drugs or drink alcohol in the future.

These tactics, combined with other forms of abuse, can contribute to a pattern of power and control that ultimately ends in death. Those working with LGBTQ batterers must

Digging Deeper: *LGBTQ+ AND IPV*

be aware of the unique dynamics that can be utilized to gain and maintain power and control over their victims, who at the same time, are often disenfranchised and cut off from receiving help for the violence they are experiencing.

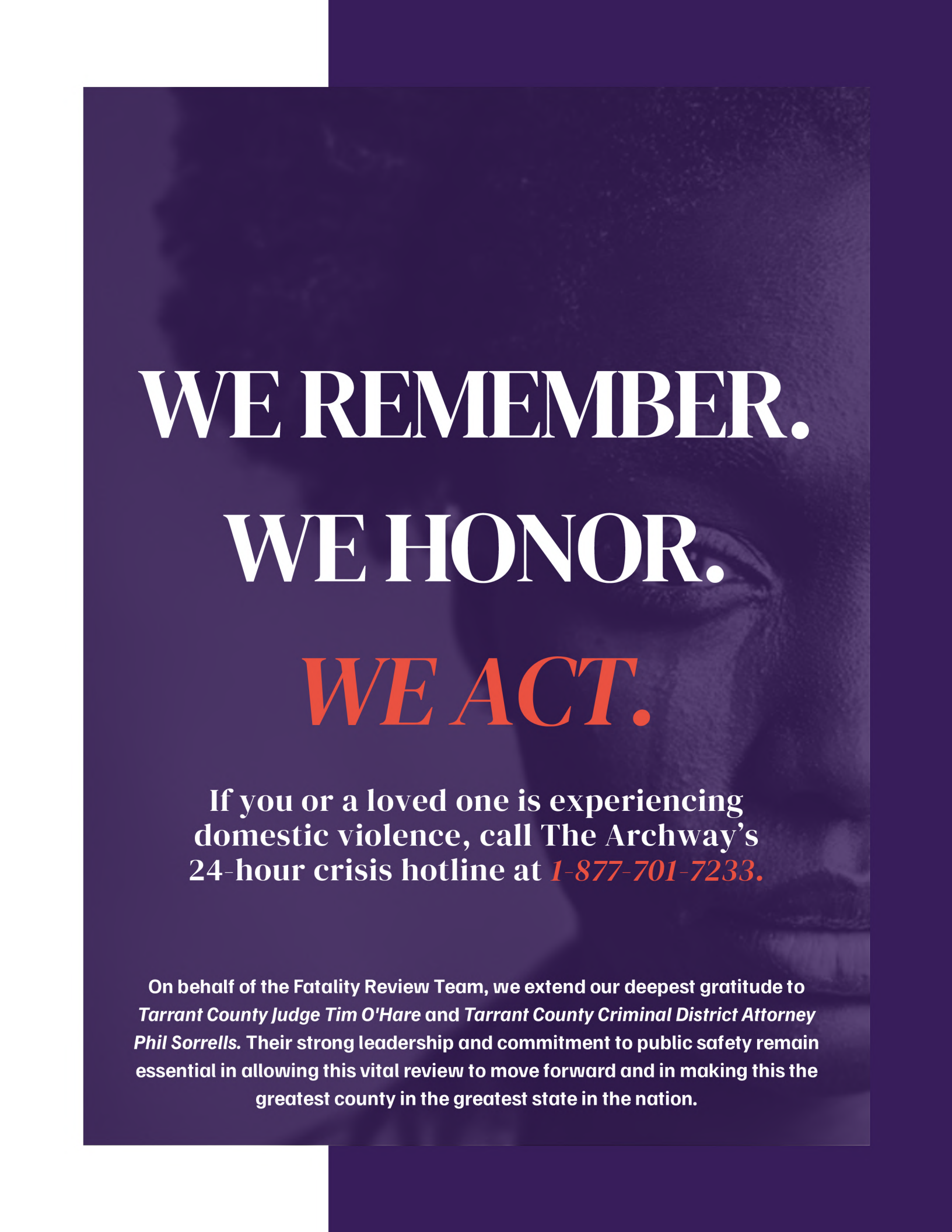
Per The Archway's state accreditation to provide programming to batterers in Tarrant County, the agency facilitates one LGBTQ offender group, primarily populated by referrals from the criminal courts via the probation system.

For more information on this program, go to:
www.thearchwaytx.org.

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WE HONOR.

WE ACT.

If you or a loved one is experiencing domestic violence, call The Archway's 24-hour crisis hotline at *1-877-701-7233*.

On behalf of the Fatality Review Team, we extend our deepest gratitude to Tarrant County Judge Tim O'Hare and Tarrant County Criminal District Attorney Phil Sorrells. Their strong leadership and commitment to public safety remain essential in allowing this vital review to move forward and in making this the greatest county in the greatest state in the nation.



www.thearchwaytx.org