

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND FIREARMS

Statistics

- On average, between 2001 and 2005, weapons were used in 15.6% of female victimization and 28.1% of male victimization. The weapons include firearms, sharp weapons and blunt objects. *DOJ, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Intimate Partner Violence in the U.S., 12/2007.*
- Pre-incident risk factors for intimate partner femicide include perpetrator's access to firearms and previous threats with weapons. Abusers who possess guns tend to inflict the most severe abuse on their partners. *Campbell, J. "Risk Factors for Femicide in Abusive Relationships: Results from a Multisite Case Control Study," American Journal of Public Health 93(7), 2003.*
- A study of women physically abused by current or former intimate partners found a five-fold increased risk of the partner murdering the woman when the partner owned a gun. *Firearms and Intimate Partner Violence, Johns Hopkins University Center for Gun Policy and Research, 2003.* http://www.jhsph.edu/gunpolicy/IPV_firearms.pdf

Local Stats

- During 2006 in Texas, 63% of women murdered by intimate partners were killed with firearms. *Texas Council on Family Violence.*
- During 2006 in Harris County, 59% of the women murdered were killed with firearm by their intimate male partners. *Texas Council on Family Violence.*

Overview Of The Issue

- More men in the US die from homicide yet more women die from being shot, and more women die from intimate partner homicide specifically. A gun is frequently, and too often, the weapon of choice for killing women.
- Domestic violence is perpetrated by abusers seeking to control their families through manipulation, exploitation and violence. Domestic abusers with access to firearms form a particular threat to their victims, giving them an easy and effective tool with which to carry out their agenda. The risks of highly violent victimization and homicide are increased for victims and their children.
- The patterns of behavior of domestic violence offenders show that they will escalate in violence. Spousal and family violence can end in murder-suicide when the abuser realizes he is losing or lost his power to control. Murder-suicide often occurs when the abused victim seeks to leave the abuser, files for divorce and/or moves out of the residence.

What You Can Do

- If you or a loved one experience domestic violence, speak with someone about creating a safety plan for the victim and children when preparing to leave the abuser.
- Debates over how or whether concealed gun laws work, whether certain bills are unfair to hunters and legal gun owners is ineffectual to the degree that access to firearms for abusers remains. The questions should be what can be done to control and regulate domestic violence offenders who have access to guns from escalating their violence and what steps need to be taken to make protective orders more effective.

Impact On Victims

- In addition to state law, federal law says it is illegal for most abusers to have a gun or ammo if a final Protective Order is in place or the abuser has been convicted of certain domestic violence misdemeanors or any felony in the past. An exception is that law enforcement and military personnel may be allowed to possess their service weapon while on duty. *Keilitz, S., "Civil Protection Orders," Violence and Victims 9(1), 1994.*
- To ensure that the court understands victims' concerns and that information about the abuser's guns is included in court documents, the victim should write down information about the number of guns the abuser has and whether abuser has threatened victim with gun in the application for a PO instead of waiting until the hearing. *Brochure on Firearms and Domestic Violence: A Guide to the Laws that can Remove Guns from a Domestic Abuser – Texas. Americans for Gun Safety Foundation, 2003.*