



Intimate Partner Violence Reform Initiative — Year Two Report

November 2024

INTRODUCTION

The Intimate Partner Violence Reform Initiative was created in May 2022 by the Allegheny County Executive and City of Pittsburgh Mayor. Designed to coordinate policy and system-level work across agencies in Allegheny County, its purpose is to improve a complex and fragmented system for both survivors of intimate partner violence (IPV) and those who use violence in relationships.¹ In 2024, incoming County Executive Sara Innamorato reinforced the County's commitment to this initiative by including intimate partner reform as an element of her ["All in Allegheny Action Plan."](#)

During the past year, stakeholders from local and federal criminal justice systems, victim service organizations, community groups, and the healthcare and human services systems have worked to improve the ways in which people can access help, in how our systems work together and share information, and in how we can prevent the most serious harm. A report on the first year of this initiative is available [here](#). This report outlines the progress made during 2024, as well as plans and priorities for continued reform efforts.

LOCAL TRENDS

IPV often goes unreported and much of the information about victim-survivors is protected for safety purposes. However, over the past 18 months, the Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS) has been working to consolidate and better understand the various data sources available to us that can serve as indicators of IPV prevalence. Below are key takeaways and highlights from these metrics. More detail is available in **Appendix A**.

Prevalence numbers and rates

- In 2023, there were 33,728 domestic violence (DV) calls to 9-1-1, a 3% increase from 2022.² On average, there are 92 such calls each day. Year-over-year trends show that 9-1-1 calls for DV have been steady for the last seven years.
- Over the last 12 months, there were 2,473 new criminal filings for IPV-related charges. This accounts for 11% of all new criminal filings during this period.
- Child welfare caseworkers identified IPV as a safety and risk factor in 43% (830) of all new child welfare cases in 2023. This is up by 13 percentage points since 2019. As this is a newer source of information, it's difficult to say whether this increase is due to higher fidelity to the instrument or an actual increase in prevalence, but it does indicate opportunities for intervention in situations that may not come to the attention of the criminal legal system.

1 IPV is violence that occurs between current or former intimate partners. Though often used interchangeably with domestic violence (DV), DV may also include violence

between family members. In this report, we use IPV except when referring to the broader category of domestic violence.

2 This excludes the municipalities of Penn Hills and West Mifflin, as they have their own emergency management systems.

WHAT ARE THE KEY INITIATIVES IN 2024?

Table 1 lists the five priority areas as well as the 2024 initiatives within each.

TABLE 1: Priority Areas and 2024 Initiatives

PRIORITY AREA	2024 INITIATIVES
<p>I. Focus resources on those who are most likely to cause serious harm</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a high-risk team to identify cases of IPV and respond in real time with interventions meant to reduce the likelihood of future violence. • Create and deliver messaging about IPV for all high-risk individuals. • Implement IPV fatality and near-fatality reviews, with a focus on creating action plans for system improvement.
<p>II. Improve access and connection to protective and supportive systems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make the PFA process more accessible for survivors. • Expand the lethality assessment program (LAP) to all law enforcement departments in Allegheny County. • Create universal empowerment messaging about IPV to be displayed and/or distributed at key points (e.g., healthcare interactions, court proceedings, social service interactions). • Explore whether additional supports are needed for juveniles and young people exhibiting this type of violence. • Expand the use of restorative practices.
<p>III. Ensure information is available to decision-makers at the right time</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide child welfare caseworkers with easy-to-access information about IPV in their cases. • Create guidance for healthcare professionals about documenting IPV-related information.
<p>IV. Create common understanding of IPV and the systems that support survivors and people who use violence against domestic partners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and deliver training for personnel across all systems (judges, lawyers, frontline staff). • Create and deliver IPV training for local judges.
<p>V. Improve coordination and transparency</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue quarterly IPV Task Force meetings and regular working groups. • Publish an IPV homicide dashboard and annual reports on work and high-risk work. • Integrate information from temporary and final PFAs with other information (e.g., child welfare, criminal legal system) to improve practice. • Explore integrated DV/IPV court models (family/criminal) and assess implementation feasibility.

MAJOR GOALS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Priority I: Focus resources on those most likely to cause serious harm

Initiative: Create a high-risk team to identify cases of IPV and respond in real time with interventions meant to reduce the likelihood of future violence.

In response to the 2017-2022 IPV homicide review, and with support from the National Network for Safe Communities, Allegheny County created an IPV high-risk team in late 2023, with the goals of 1) collectively identifying new incidents of IPV that meet the criteria for high risk of future violence and 2) responding in real-time with actions that aim to deter future violence. The team, which includes representatives from the Office of the District Attorney, the Court of Common Pleas (Pretrial Services, Probation, Criminal Court), DHS, Pittsburgh Bureau of Police, and Women's Center and Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh, created the criteria for a case to be reviewed and tested it in the fall of 2023.

Implementation began in January 2024 and includes everyone with a new IPV criminal filing within the City of Pittsburgh who meets the criteria. The team meets weekly and, since implementation, has reviewed 63 cases, deeming 48 (76%) high risk and creating joint action plans to support the individuals involved and prevent future violence. As part of this work, the team implemented consistent messaging in Pretrial Services that clearly outlines the rules a person must follow during the pretrial period.

Plan for 2025: The high-risk team is validating the high-risk criteria. The team plans to expand countywide in 2025 and will continue to use a data-driven approach to flagging cases and measuring the impact of the interventions that are being implemented. The team will also implement ongoing universal and tailored messaging to inform people arrested for IPV of the consequences and where to find help if they need it.

Initiative: Implement IPV fatality and near-fatality reviews, with a focus on creating action plans for system improvement.

In March 2024, the IPV Task Force conducted an IPV homicide review covering 2023 incidents. See **Appendix B** for more detail on the cases and findings. Information gathered from this review was used to develop immediate next steps, including training for people who engage with individuals during divorce or custody proceedings, revamping of victim compensation forms for police officers, and inviting crisis behavioral health providers to join the IPV Task Force.

Plan for 2025: In 2025, the team will document policies and protocols to govern ongoing annual IPV homicide reviews, to ensure they are sustained over time.

Priority II: Improve access and connection to protective and supportive systems

In 2024, initiative partners made strides by improving the PFA process, expanding the lethality assessment protocol program (LAP), and creating universal empowerment messaging and IPV training at key intervention points for judges, divorce and custody mediators, healthcare social workers and community violence interrupters.

Initiative: Make the Protection from Abuse (PFA) Process more Accessible for Survivors

The Family Law Center expanded the availability of kiosks to make filing PFA petitions easier and to allow for better tracking of information. The Fifth Judicial District continued to utilize technology to make the PFA process more accessible and to better connect and streamline the Emergency, Temporary and Final PFA processes.

In May, June and July 2024, Women's Center & Shelter trained frontline hospital social workers at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh, Magee-Womens Hospital and AHN's Center for Inclusion Health on the dynamics of IPV and, specifically, on the why, when and how to connect individuals to the Courts' PFA process. Training included a presentation, Q&A and basic resources.

Plan for 2025: Family Court will integrate the emergency, temporary and final PFA systems to streamline the application and filing process for victim/survivors. Data on temporary and final PFAs will be integrated and analyzed to improve processes and identify key gaps in information sharing to ensure that children and families are safe.

Initiative: Expand the Lethality Assessment Protocol Program to all Law Enforcement Departments in Allegheny County.

The Office of the District Attorney, Women's Center and Shelter, Center for Victims, Alle Kiski Hope Center and Crisis Center North continued operating the LAP program, helping to connect with and train police officers throughout the County. DHS is supporting this initiative by centralizing information about LAP to allow for better tracking and monitoring of police department use.

Plan for 2025: Partners will use newly created dashboards to better monitor the implementation of LAP and target new trainings and booster existing ones based on this data.

Initiative: Create universal empowerment messaging about IPV to be displayed or distributed at key points (e.g., healthcare interactions, court proceedings, social service interactions).

The ongoing emphasis on creating relationships among stakeholders has led to the beginning of conversations about standardized and universal empowerment messaging.

Plan for 2025: The team is also working to create universal messaging around IPV, its harms and where to get help at key touchpoints. The targeted touchpoints for 2025 include all calls of service related to IPV at family- and child-serving community-based organizations.

Initiative: Expand the use of restorative practices

In the summer of 2024, DHS, Women's Center and Shelter, and the University of Pittsburgh applied to become a pilot site for the use of restorative practices. Restorative justice works by emphasizing the needs of those who were hurt, encouraging accountability by those who caused the harm, and including the community to promote healing rather than punishment. Women's Center and Shelter already uses restorative justice practices to center the voice of the victim/survivor in their work, but members of the task force recognize the need to expand this practice as another way to help combat IPV countywide.

Plan for 2025: Workshops connecting frontline community violence interrupters with victim services personnel will be held.

Initiative: Explore whether additional supports are needed for juveniles and young people exhibiting this type of violence.

DHS hired a project manager to support IPV work within the department. This individual will be tasked with working with stakeholders to compile recommendations to better address the needs of children and youth witnessing and/or displaying this type of violence.

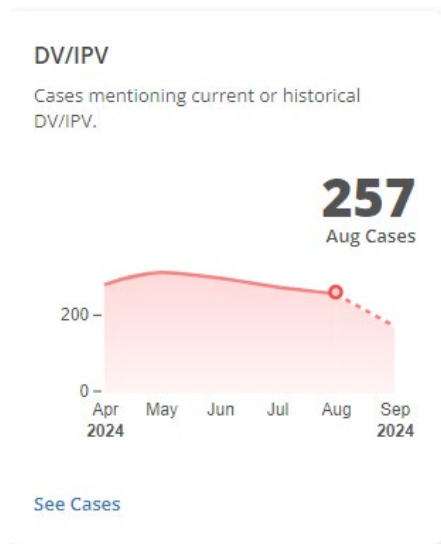
Plan for 2025: DHS will create a plan to provide additional supports for juveniles and young people exhibiting this type of violence. Juvenile Probation will also be invited to participate in the IPV Task Force to better connect the work they are doing with other stakeholders.

Priority III: Ensure information is available to decision-makers at the right time

Initiative: Provide child welfare caseworkers with easy-to-access information about IPV in their cases.

In child welfare, case notes often include important information about a family and their needs. However, it is tedious and time-consuming to dig through a case file to find this information or to put in the number of hours needed to conduct a case review. Over the last few years, DHS has implemented a natural language processing tool that presents child welfare case notes in a way that is more useful to caseworkers. Among other types of information, this tool flags mentions of IPV. In addition to helping caseworkers identify IPV within specific cases, the tool also has the ability to identify all current cases with current or historic mentions of DV/IPV and allows caseworkers to connect perpetrators across cases. Caseworkers are using this information to better identify and connect families to victim services agencies.

FIGURE 1: Child Welfare Case Tool



Plan for 2025: DHS plans to create real-time alerts of DV/IPV events for child welfare caseworkers, as well as protocols and training around appropriate response.

Initiative: Create guidance for healthcare professionals about documenting IPV-related information.

In June 2024, the IPV in Healthcare workgroup started planning to develop guidance related to documentation of IPV in medical records. This guidance for healthcare professionals must take into account a number of considerations, including the safety of the patient and their family, rapport between the doctor and patient, and the potential for medical information to be used in prosecution. The workgroup facilitated a discussion about considerations from a justice perspective with the broader task force and will use the information gathered to further refine the guidance protocols.

Priority IV: Create common understanding of IPV and the systems that support survivors and people who use violence against domestic partners**Initiative: Create and deliver training for personnel across all systems (judges, lawyers, frontline staff).**

In October 2024, cross-training of victim service providers and community violence interrupters was provided; it focused on the dynamics of community violence, of intimate partner violence, and the overlap between the two. This training also facilitated relationships among system partners, provided basic resources to support these connections, and started conversations about standardized messaging around violence.

In September 2024, Women's Center and Shelter, the Fifth Judicial District of PA - Family Division and DHS trained more than 25 custody mediators and guardians ad litem (GALs) on the dynamics of IPV, the prevalence and trends in the County, and techniques to use when engaging with people who have experienced IPV. The training included a tour of the shelter and facilities operated by Women's Center and Shelter.

A review of 2023 IPV homicides showed that divorce filings and proceedings can be a very risky time for people experiencing IPV (see **Appendix B**). In response, the Fifth Judicial District of PA also created and implemented training for judges hearing divorce petitions.

Plan for 2025: The team will create ongoing learning and cross-training opportunities between community violence frontline workers and victim services frontline workers, helping to create relationships and connections among the two areas.

Initiative: Create and deliver IPV training for local judges.

In May 2024, national experts from Futures Without Violence provided IPV training to 26 Allegheny County Common Pleas judges (from all four divisions of the Fifth Judicial District) as well as local magisterial and federal judges. The training, planned by the Task Force's executive committee, covered local trends and concrete resources, including considerations in cases involving IPV, helpful things to say from the bench when addressing both survivors and people using violence, and the impact and outcomes of using procedural justice in IPV cases.

Another training is scheduled for November 1, 2024, for Allegheny County's 46 magisterial district judges. These judges are crucial to how the Court handles cases involving IPV; they hear emergency PFA petitions, determine initial bail for all new criminal filings and ascertain whether there is sufficient evidence to proceed to trial.

Priority V: Improve coordination and transparency**Initiative: Continue quarterly IPV task force meetings and regular working groups.**

The IPV Task Force continued to meet and expand throughout the year, conducting work and accomplishing goals through coordinated cross-agency efforts. Member organizations are listed in **Appendix C**.

Initiative: Publish an IPV homicide dashboard and annual reports on work and high-risk work.

In addition to this annual progress report, DHS produced an IPV homicide dashboard that shows data over time and allows users to interact with the data. These data will be updated at least annually. A report on the IPV high-risk team, its structure and future plans was also published. DHS created and centralized internal dashboards that allow staff to monitor LAP implementation and target future trainings; there are plans to make this dashboard public in the future.

Plan for 2025: DHS will help to integrate information from temporary and final PFAs with other data (emergency PFAs, child welfare information, criminal filings) to monitor system improvements and to create real-time alerts for frontline workers. The Courts will explore integrated DV/IPV court models (family/criminal) and assess implementation feasibility.

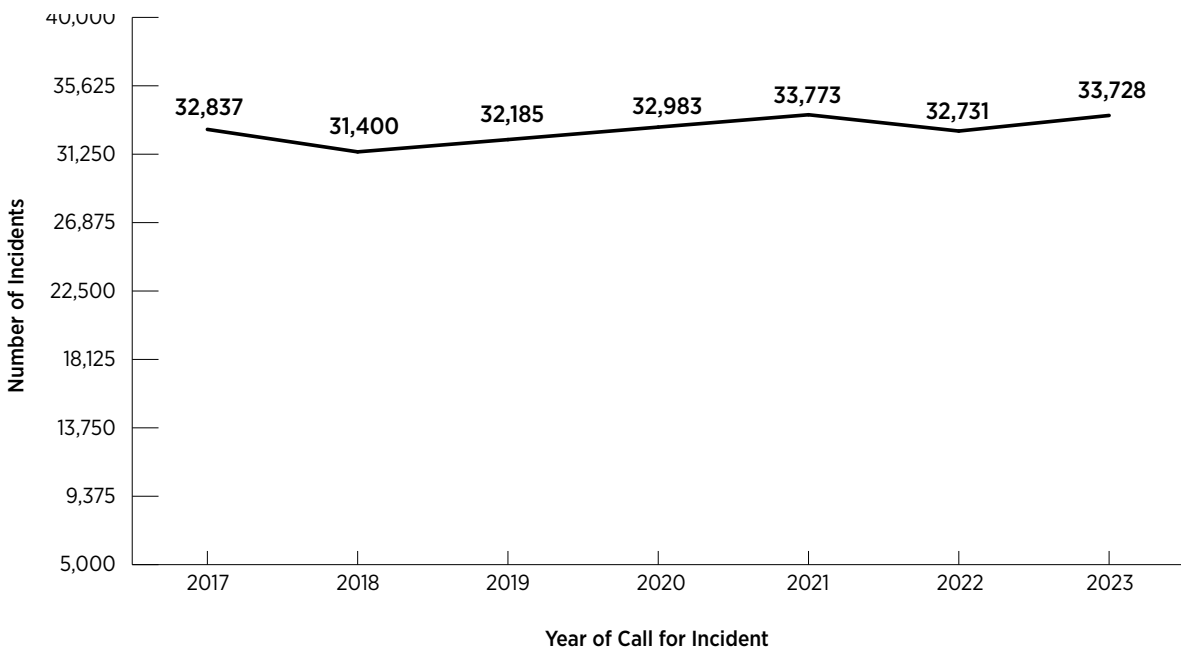
APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A: INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE STATISTICS

9-1-1 calls for domestic violence (DV)

When a call is made to Allegheny County Emergency Services (ACES), dispatchers identify the ‘call type.’ These call types are grouped into categories based on codes set forth by the National Academy of Emergency Dispatch. Although there may be multiple calls for the same incident, ACES identifies and counts unique incidents. **Figure 1** shows the unique number of incidents that were categorized as DV by ACES call staff at the time of the call. This includes calls for PFA service (requests for police to serve newly filed PFAs to the defendant) and does not differentiate between IPV and non-IPV domestic violence. Municipalities in Allegheny County with their own emergency management systems³ are not included.

FIGURE 1: 9-1-1 Domestic Violence Incidents, 2017 through 2023



³ These include Bethel Park, Coraopolis, Findlay, Monroeville, Moon, North Fayette, North Versailles, Pitcairn, Upper St. Clair, West Mifflin and Whitehall.

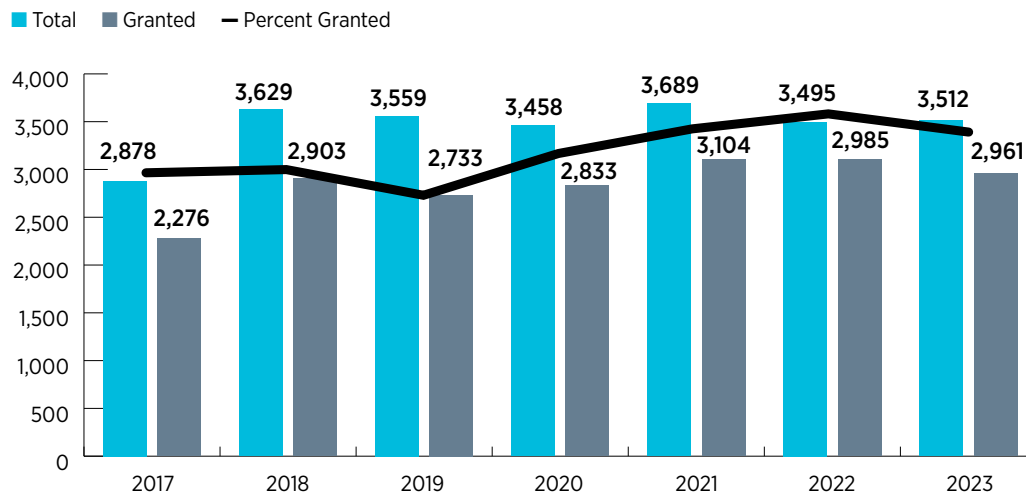
APPENDIX A

Emergency PFA Filings

If someone is in immediate danger and the Family Law Center’s PFA Department is closed, they may request an Emergency PFA Order at a Magisterial District Court or Pittsburgh Municipal Court. Emergency PFA orders are issued by magisterial district judges and provide protection until close of business on the next day the Family Law Center’s PFA Department is open (Monday through Friday, 8:00 AM to 11:00 AM). Click here for more information on PFAs.

In 2023, there were 3,512 emergency PFAs filed, of which 84% (2,961) were granted. Emergency PFA filings have been relatively stable over the past three years at roughly 3,500 per year and have been consistently granted at more than 80% in the past four years.

FIGURE 2: Emergency PFA Filings, 2017 through 2023

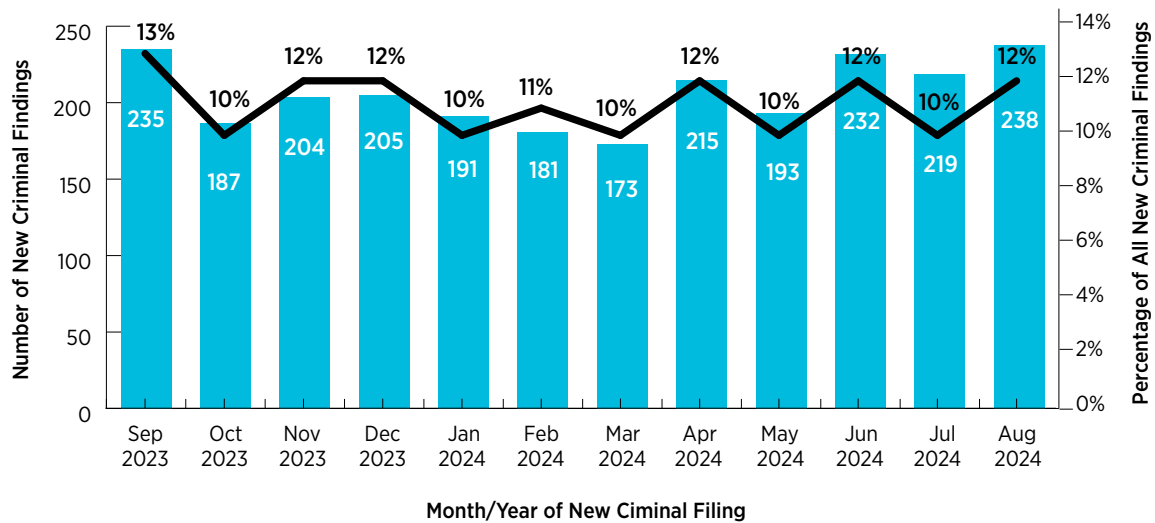


New criminal filings for IPV

In May 2022, Allegheny County Pretrial Services began identifying all new criminal filings related to DV. In August 2023, they separated out cases involving IPV from other domestic violence. From September 2023 through August 2024, the monthly average of 206 new criminal filings involving IPV accounted for 11% of all new criminal filings.

APPENDIX A

FIGURE 3: New Criminal Filings Identified as IPV, September 2023 through August 2024.

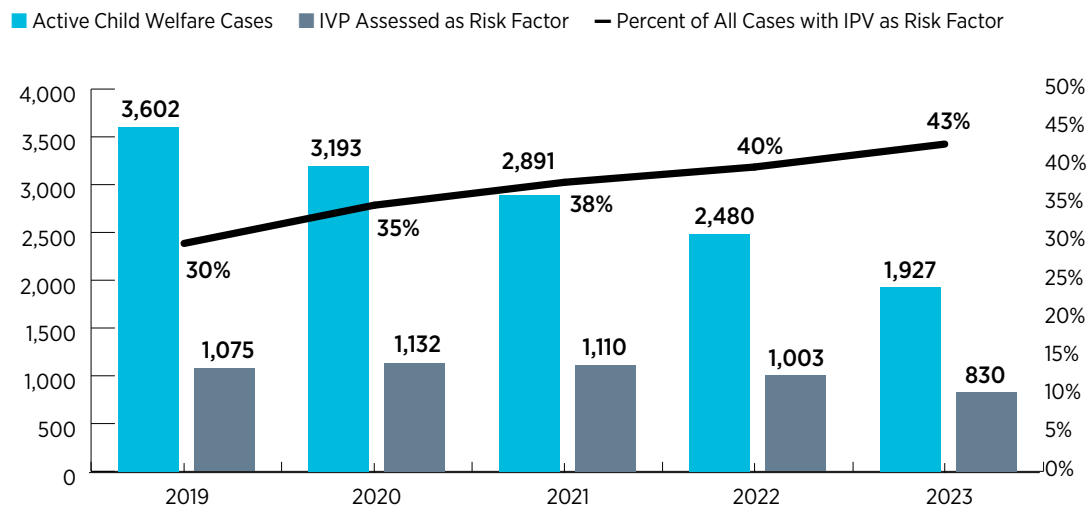


Child welfare

When a case is accepted for service in child welfare, a child welfare caseworker conducts an assessment using the Family Assessment and Screening Tool (FAST), a questionnaire instrument designed to help identify family risks and strengths. Widespread and consistent use of the instrument began in 2019.

Since widespread adoption of the FAST, child welfare caseworkers have increasingly identified IPV as a safety and risk factor. In 2023, it was flagged as a safety and risk factor on 43% (830) of all cases, which is up 13 percentage points from 2019. As this is a newer source of information, it's difficult to say whether this increase is due to higher fidelity to the instrument or an actual increase in prevalence.

FIGURE 4: Percentage of Active Child Welfare Cases with IPV as an Assessed Risk Factor, 2019 through 2023

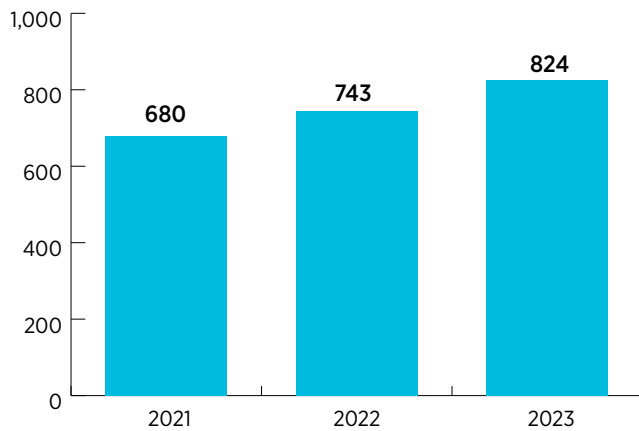


APPENDIX A

Emergency shelters/DV shelters

DV shelters are prohibited by regulation from sharing individual level data, but they are required to report aggregate information on the people served to HUD. Figure 4 displays aggregated information submitted by the three DV shelters to DHS and HUD. It includes the distinct count of individuals (including adults and children) who accessed shelter services through one of the three DV shelters. In 2023, there were 824 people who were served in any of the DV shelters; 24% were single adults and 76% were adults with children.

FIGURE 4: Number of Unique People Served in a DV Shelter, 2021 through 2023



APPENDIX B**APPENDIX B: IPV HOMICIDE REVIEWS 2023**

In May 2023, participants from law enforcement, social services, the court system (probation/pretrial) and the healthcare system met to review the nine IPV/homicide incidents that occurred in 2023. Due to issues of confidentiality and ongoing court processing, the group conducted in-depth case reviews on the four incidents categorized as murder-suicide.

Summary of IPV homicide incidents in 2023

- There were nine IPV homicide incidents in 2023, affecting 10 victims. This accounted for 9% of all homicides in 2023; 4% (3) of male homicides and 44% of female homicides (7).
 - **4 of the 9 incidents were murder-suicides.**
- For perpetrators of the homicide: 100% (9) were Black, 67% (6) were Male
- For victims: 80% (8) were Black, 70% (7) Female (1 child)
- 2 incidents occurred in the City and 7 outside of the City (McKeesport (2), Pitcairn, Penn Hills, Wilkins, Monroeville and Swissvale)

Summary of in-depth case review findings

- Individuals
 - Were disconnected from all formal services.
 - There was a noted lack of connection to services during times of crisis (especially MH crisis).
 - There were indications of intergenerational trauma and exposure to violence as children.
- Relationships
 - Incidents occurred during breakups, including during divorce proceedings.
 - There was evidence that the couples were experiencing financial struggles.
- System
 - Information collected during a call for services isn't always documented when no alleged crime occurred.
 - Information about violence is not always put into divorce complaints.
 - The potential exists to improve messaging and resource connection at time of divorce for people who may be experiencing/have experienced violence.
 - There are racial disparities in both perpetration and victimization.

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX C: ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERS OF THE IPV TASK FORCE

- Allegheny County Adult Probation
- Allegheny County Department of Human Services
- Allegheny County Health Department
- Allegheny County Police
- Allegheny County Pretrial Services
- Allegheny County Sheriff
- Allegheny Health Network: Center for Inclusion Health
- Alle-Kiski Area HOPE Center
- Center for Victims
- Crisis Center North
- Fifth Judicial District of PA (Criminal Division, Family Division, Court Administration)
- FISA Foundation
- Neighborhood Legal Services Association
- Office of the District Attorney
- Office of the Mayor of the City of Pittsburgh
- Pittsburgh Police Department
- U.S. Attorney’s office, Western District
- U.S. Federal Probation
- University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC), Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh
- University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC), Magee Women’s Hospital
- Women’s Center & Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh
- YWCA

APPENDIX D**APPENDIX D: MEMBERS OF THE IPV REFORM INITIATIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM**

The leadership team was convened by the Mayor of the City of Pittsburgh and the County Executive of Allegheny County. It includes leadership from:

- Alle-Kiski Hope Center
- Allegheny County Department of Human Services
- Allegheny County Health Department
- Allegheny County Office of the District Attorney
- Allegheny County Public Defender's Office
- Fifth Judicial District of Pennsylvania
- FISA Foundation
- Gwen's Girls
- Nina Baldwin Fisher Foundation
- Office of the United States Attorney, Western Division
- Pittsburgh Bureau of Police
- Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh
- Women's Center & Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh (WC&S)
- YWCA of Greater Pittsburgh