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## **Overview of Domestic Violence Cases Handled By the East Baton Rouge District Attorney's Office in 2016**

### **Introduction**

Domestic violence involves a pattern of behavior rather than a single isolated event. It is often a pattern of behaviors used in an intimate relationship to establish and maintain power and control over a partner or former partner. Domestic violence negatively influences our society by reducing our standard of living and our quality of life. Prosecutors have a responsibility to respond carefully and proactively to domestic violence crimes in order to ensure safety for victims and accountability for offenders.

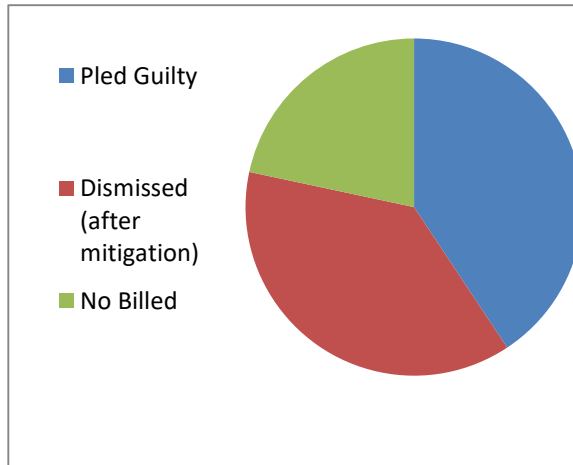
The District Attorney's office has a unique opportunity, through effective early intervention, to prevent future incidences of domestic violence, including homicides. Our prosecutors are mindful that a domestic violence offender seeks to control the victim without regard to the victim's well-being and often without regard as to whether children are present. This abusive condition necessitates that prosecutors carefully listen to the safety concerns of victims.

A pro-prosecution policy makes it clear to the offender that the prosecutor, and not the victim, is responsible for decisions regarding criminal prosecution. By relying primarily on the evidence collected by law enforcement rather than solely on the victim's testimony, the prosecutor may be able to reduce the risk of retaliation by the offender against the victim and increase the likelihood of a successful prosecution.

### **2016 Overview**

The District Attorney's overall caseload involving domestic violence has decreased this year from previous years. Possible explanations are the community efforts of BRAVE, FYSC, and the coordination between our office and Baton Rouge City Court.

We prosecuted approximately 1400 misdemeanor domestic abuse battery cases this year. Of those, 543 plead guilty, 503 were dismissed after mitigation such as the 26 week domestic abuse intervention counseling and/or mental health counseling, and 289 were no billed.



La. R.S. 14:35.3

Six (6) misdemeanor domestic abuse battery trials were held this year. Three (3) of those trials resulted in a verdict of Not Guilty, due to the victim recanting the account during direct testimony at trial. The defendants in these cases were Casandra Anthony, Mario Vasean Simmons, and George Woods.

The misdemeanor trial of George Parker resulted in a Guilty verdict to a responsive charge of simple battery.

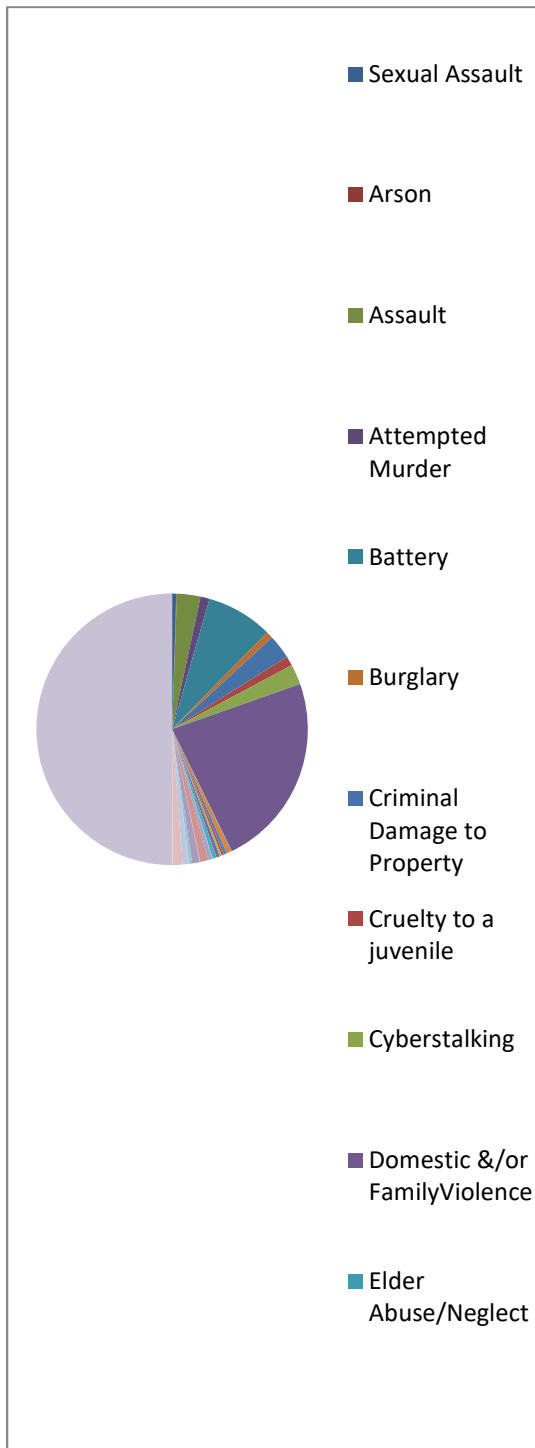
The misdemeanor trial of Tyler Roberts resulted in a Not Guilty verdict. The Court determined that insufficient evidence was presented to prove all elements beyond a reasonable doubt.

The District Attorney's office handles hundreds of domestic and dating violence felony offenses each year and 2016 was no exception. Domestic Abuse Battery may be a felony if involving strangulation, burning, or is enhanced due to the number of convictions. Domestic Abuse Aggravated Assault is also a felony by definition. However, our office prosecutes a number of other crimes that may be designated "domestic violence" felonies depending upon the relationship of the offender and the victim and the amount of exposure due to crime committed. Anything from murder/attempted murder to stalking/cyberstalking could be designated as a felony crime of domestic violence if the parties involved are household or family members.

In 2016 the District Attorney's office handled approximately 1800 cases of domestic violence involving the various crimes.



## 2016 Victim Contacts



Option	Number
Sexual Assault	12
Arson	2
Assault	67
Attempted Murder	26
Battery	189
Burglary	20
Criminal Damage to Property	69
Cruelty to a juvenile	27
Cyberstalking	58
Domestic &/or Family Violence	555
Elder Abuse/Neglect	2
Entry/Remaining after being forbidden	13
Home Invasion	9
Homicide	7
Identity Theft	6
Illegal Use of a Weapon	9
Improper Telephone Communications	12
Intentional Exposure to AIDS	2
Kidnapping	10
Stalking/Harassment	24
Terrorizing	1
Theft	22
Unauthorized Entry of an Inhabiting Dwelling	8
Unauthorized Use of an Access Card	1
Unauthorized Use of a Vehicle	18
Violation of Protective Order	28
Witness Intimidation	2
<b>Total Clients with Entries</b>	<b>1199</b>

\* Not every misdemeanor victim of domestic abuse battery is entered into our victim database.



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Significant felony trials from 2016 are:

Danny Weber was tried for the felony crime of Domestic Abuse Battery involving strangulation. He was found guilty of a responsive verdict of Misdemeanor Domestic Abuse Battery.

Louis Christal was tried for the crime of Attempted 2<sup>nd</sup> Degree Murder. He was found guilty of a responsive verdict of Aggravated Battery.

Chaddrick Piper was tried for the crimes of Domestic Abuse Battery involving strangulation and Home Invasion. He was found guilty of Domestic Abuse Battery involving strangulation and a responsive verdict of Unauthorized Entry of Inhabited Dwelling (felony). He was sentenced as a habitual offender.

Lenard Taylor was tried for Domestic Abuse Battery, multiple offender. He was found not guilty. The victim took the stand during the trial and identified someone else as the perpetrator of the underlying offense. She admitted that during the trial, it was the first time she named the new person; however, this "revelation" created reasonable doubt.

Aaron Williams was tried for the crimes of False Imprisonment with a Dangerous Weapon, Domestic Abuse Aggravated Assault in violation of the Child Endangerment Law, and Aggravated Assault with a Dangerous Weapon. He was found not guilty of False Imprisonment, but found guilty of the other two counts.

Domestic violence cases can be frustrating for prosecutors who do not understand the dynamics of domestic violence and the reasons for the victim's reluctance to participate in criminal prosecution. Specialization and training will enhance the ability of prosecutors to understand, and therefore, safely respond to victim behavior, thus our office hired a new misdemeanor prosecutor to the DV unit during the 2016 year and now has committed two assistant district attorneys to the exclusive prosecution of domestic violence cases.

Our office is proud to have a dedicated victim assistant assigned to each section of criminal court and to each special unit to try and meet the needs of all victims of violent crime. In 2016 we welcomed a licensed social worker to the domestic violence unit, allowing her to bring her unique skill set and professionalism to this vulnerable victim population.

### **Domestic Violence Involved Shootings**

2016 ended with disappointment for our office, as two domestic violence homicides occurred within a few short weeks of one another.



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On November 27, 2016 Terrell Walker shot and killed his girlfriend, April Peck. He attempted to kill the people who tried to render aid to her. Later that night Mr. Walker was shot and killed after he fired upon EBRSO deputies. This officer involved shooting was previously reported in the District Attorney's report of February 8, 2017.

On Sunday November 27, 2016, East Baton Rouge Sheriff (EBRSO) deputies responded to a shooting on Essen Lane. They located the victim of the shooting, April Peck, dying from multiple gunshots. Voluntary first responders had also been shot and run over by the shooter, Terrel Walker, Peck's boyfriend. When Walker opened fire on deputies nearby on Bluebonnet Boulevard, he was shot and killed.

Investigated by: LSP

Final report: Pending investigation with the Louisiana State Police.

Formal determination by District Attorney: Pending investigation with the Louisiana State Police.

Only weeks later, on December 17, 2016, Matthew Thornton shot and killed his girlfriend, Tangela Detiege. Later that same night he committed suicide.

It was not the only domestic violence attempted homicide/suicide of 2016. On February 12, 2016 Baton Rouge City Police were dispatched to the 1600 block of Wooddale Court where they confirmed that Reginald James shot and critically wounded his wife and then fatally shot himself.

The next day, February 13, 2016 was another officer involved shooting that was previously reported in the District Attorney's report of February 8, 2017.

On February 13, 2016, Baton Rouge City Police (BRCPD) received reports of property damage and shots fired in the area of Harry Drive and Monet Avenue in Baton Rouge. Officer Theodore Smith was dispatched, made contact with the complainant, and obtained descriptions of the suspect and of the suspect's vehicle. Officer Smith located the suspect driving his vehicle on Tom Drive at Airline Highway. The suspect fled at high speed with Officer Smith in pursuit. Officer Sean Garic joined the pursuit. Both officers attempted to stop the suspect on Fairfields Avenue, where the suspect immediately exited his vehicle firing a semi-automatic rifle at both officers. Both officers returned fire with their pistols killing the suspect, Calvin Smith.

Investigated by: BRCPD

Final report: issued May 9, 2016.

Formal determination by District Attorney: Justified officer shooting.

Only ten days later there was another officer involved shooting involving domestic violence. This case was also previously reported in the District Attorney's report of February 8, 2017.



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On February 23, 2016 at approximately 8:30 p.m., East Baton Rouge Sheriff's Office (EBRSO) deputies responded to a 911 call in the Gardere area. Upon arrival, they spoke with the complainant who advised that her boyfriend, Travis Stevenson (DOB: 9/2/67), sprayed her and her daughter with pepper spray and then fled from the residence in his champagne/white Cadillac. While deputies were still at the scene, Stevenson called the complainant. When asked to surrender himself, Stevenson stated he was going to jump off the Mississippi River Bridge. Deputies immediately began searching for Stevenson. Shortly before 10:00 p.m., they located him in his vehicle parked next to an apartment building on Smith Street near Terrace Avenue. A deputy parked directly behind the Cadillac and approached on foot. Upon seeing Stevenson sitting in the driver's seat, the deputy gave loud verbal commands for Stevenson to exit the vehicle. Stevenson refused to comply and actively attempted to escape by ramming his vehicle backward into the deputy's vehicle and rapidly accelerating forward into a metal pole next to the building. During this process, a deputy broke the driver's side window in an effort to remove Stevenson from the vehicle. Stevenson continued to rapidly accelerate backward and forward endangering the deputies. Four of the responding deputies discharged their firearms. Stevenson was struck several times, resulting in his death. The incident was not recorded on any dash cameras or body cameras and there is no video of this incident known to law enforcement. Following EBRSO protocols, Sheriff Sid Gautreaux requested that Louisiana State Police (LSP) conduct the investigation of this deputy involved shooting.

Investigated by: LSP

Final report issued: September 22, 2016.

Formal determination by District Attorney: Justified officer shooting.

On May 14, 2016 Louis Williams began arguing with his live-in girlfriend. The argument escalated and Mr. Williams punched her in the face repeatedly, causing serious injuries. Later, Williams produced 9mm handgun and threatened to kill her. At some point during the argument, the victim was able to take possession of the gun, firing once at Williams as he was again coming toward her. This case was determined to be a justifiable homicide.

On May 15, 2016 Baton Rouge City Police responded to the 1800 block of N. Marque Ann Drive relative to a shooting. Detectives later arrested Kiera Turner for the murder of De'Shannon Browder. This case is pending prosecution.

Robert Marks, an assistant principal at Brookstown Middle Magnet School, was arrested in the kidnapping and desertion of Lyntell Washington's three year old daughter, who was found wandering alone in a parking lot on June 8, 2016. On October 5, 2016 Marks was indicted on murder and feticide charges. This case is pending prosecution.



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## Past and Future

Just as 2016 ended in the tragedy of domestic violence homicide, 2017 began with domestic violence homicides.

On January 1, 2017 Asha Davis was murdered in her apartment. Thailand Arcenia Brooks was arrested on February 21, 2017 for Second Degree Murder. Another child is left without a mother.

On January 10, 2017 Robyn Hale opened the door to be shot and killed. Her ex-boyfriend, Robert Williams, was arrested on 20 January 2017 for the offense of Principal to 2<sup>nd</sup> Degree Murder of Ms. Hale. Her three young children were in the home at the time of her murder.

There are proven links between exposure to violence and committing violence.

Matthew Thornton had a brother, Aaron Thornton. Aaron dated the sister of deceased Tangela, Ashley Detiege. Aaron and Ashley had two daughters. In September 2002, Ashley Detiege was murdered. No arrest was made, and to this day, Ashley's murder is unsolved. Aaron Thornton committed suicide in May 2010.

Ashley's sister, Tangela, and her boyfriend (Matthew) assumed responsibility for Ashley and Aaron's two daughters.

On July 12, 2015, Makayla Jones was at her grandmother's apartment along with her boyfriend, Marquiles Whaley, her mother, Romander Jones and a friend of her mother, Shawyn Lollis, and some other (unidentified) people. At some point during the middle of the night, Marquiles Whaley became upset and shot Makayla, Shawyn, and Romander—multiple times each. Shawyn and Makayla died at the scene. Romander was taken to the hospital and survived. She was able to identify Marquiles Whaley as the person who shot her and murdered her daughter.

Makayla Jones was shot in the head in her bedroom as she lay in bed. Marquiles Whaley shot himself in the head at the foot of the Makayla's bed. He died at the scene.



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Makayla Jones was the 18 year old daughter of Romander Jones. Romander Jones had been dating and living with Jesse Turner for approximately 14 years. During those years, Romander experienced a great deal of domestic/dating violence—much of it went unreported.

### **Exposure to Domestic and Dating Violence**

Much research has examined the issue of children exposed to domestic and dating violence. “Exposure” may include hearing violence, seeing violence, intervening, and experiencing the aftermath. Research indicates that children exposed to domestic violence are more likely than other children to be aggressive and have behavioral problems, have different psychological issues, and exhibit higher rates of PTSD. (Kilpatrick, Litt, al., 2005) Children who try and intervene on behalf of a victimized parent are more likely to experience a “traumatic bond” with the abusive parent—confusing love and abuse. Growing up in a home with an abusive and controlling parent a victimized parent, children often become adult abusers or victims themselves. (Bancroft & Silverman, 2002)

There are many indicators of increasing “lethality” of abusive behavior that a victim of domestic violence may become aware of in order better assess her or his own safety.

- The abuser who states "Death before divorce!" or "You belong to me and will never belong to another!" or the old standby; "If I can't have you nobody will!" May be stating his fundamental belief that you have no right to life separate from him. An abuser who believes he is absolutely entitled to a woman's services, obedience and loyalty, no matter what, may be life-endangering.
- A man who idolizes his partner, or who depends heavily on her to organize and sustain his life, or who has isolated himself from all other community, may retaliate against a partner who decides to end the relationship. He rationalizes that her "betrayal" justifies his lethal "retaliation."
- Where an abuser has been acutely depressed and sees little hope for moving beyond depression, he may be a candidate for homicide and suicide. Research shows that many men who are hospitalized for depression have homicidal fantasies directed at family members.





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- Partner or spousal homicide almost always occurs in a context of historical violence. Prior intervention by the police may indicate elevated risk of life-threatening conduct.
  - Victims who have recently been attacked are more likely to be murdered. Thus, the frequency of violence and the recency of attack are indicators of possible lethality.
  
  - The type of past violence is important. Previous strangulation has proven to be a significant risk factor for possible future homicide.
  
  - A less obvious indicator of increasing danger may be the sharp escalation of personal risk undertaken by an abuser. When an abuser begins to act without regard to the legal or social consequences that previously constrained his violence, the chances of lethal assault increase significantly.
  
  - The abuser who has threatened to kill his (ex) partner, himself, the children or her relatives must be considered extremely dangerous.
  
  - The more the abuser has developed a about who, how, when and/or where to kill, the more dangerous he may be. The abuser who has previously acted out part of a homicide or suicide fantasy may be invested in killing as a "solution to his problems."
  
  - When an abuser possesses, collects, or is obsessed with weapons and/or has used them or has threatened to use them in the past in his assaults on women, the children or himself, increases his potential for lethal assault. If an abuser has a history of arson or the threat of arson, fire should be considered a weapon.
  
  - When an abuser believes that he is about to lose His (ex) partner or when he concludes that she is permanently leaving him; if he cannot envision life without her, this may be when he chooses to kill. That is not to say that all abusers kill when they conclude that the battered woman is separating from him. Some kill long before they have any idea that the battered woman may be thinking about leaving. So, it is not safe to assume that because she hasn't made plans to leave, that the abuser will not be dangerous. In one study of spousal homicide, over half the men were separated from their victims when they murdered them (Bernard et al, 1982). Women are most likely to be murdered



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when attempting to report abuse or to leave an abusive relationship (Sonkin et al, 1985; Brown, 1987)

- An abuser who has demonstrated aggressive behavior to the general public such as bar fights, gang related violence, job related violence, vandalism, repeated unlawful behavior, or illegal occupation is likely to be more dangerous.
- A hostage-taker is at high risk of inflicting homicide. Between 75% and 90% of all hostage takings in the United States are related to domestic violence situations.
- Men with a history of problems with drugs and/or alcohol show a higher risk. In addition, regardless of their drug and/or alcohol history, intoxication at the time of the assault shows significant risk to partners.
- The more severe the violence either experienced personally, or observed, in the family of origin, the more the risk.

### **Prosecution**

Our office policy emphasizes the State's authority in case decisions. A victim's ability to pursue prosecution may be compromised by fear of retaliation and threats made by the offender. Prosecution strategies must involve input from the victim. However, the ultimate decision regarding whether to prosecute the case remains with the prosecutor. One strategy for accomplishing this goal is our "pro-prosecution" policy which includes our "drop charge request" policy. This policy promotes prosecution of all appropriate cases without placing the burden of the decision for prosecuting upon the victim. These policies effectively state that domestic violence is a crime, not a private family matter. However, the concerns of the victims are considered, so that these policies do not create additional barriers to victim safety.

Domestic violence cases make up approximately 95 percent of all dropped case requests. There are a number of reasons why victims make these requests. Witness intimidation is often a factor in domestic violence cases. Some victims are coerced; some are threatened and make the request at the behest of the defendant or the defendant's family. Many victims are financially dependent upon the defendant or his family may have the defendant's family taking care of their children. In each and every case, the victim has a one on one interview to assess



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whether or not the victim is frightened or scared or threatened to make that request, and in every single case, the complete file is reviewed by District Attorney Hillar Moore.

Detailed professional evaluations may enhance prosecutorial decisions when balancing consideration of offender accountability and victim safety. Further, matching appropriate individual counseling services with offenders and families may prevent future family violence.

Collection of detailed evidence by our first responders and thorough follow-up investigation by law enforcement detectives ensures better prosecution when victims are reluctant to testify. Further, making the connection between our office Victim Assistance Coordinators and victims of serious violent crime or those who have immediate safety concerns, better ensures that our office will be able to find the victims when time comes for prosecution.

### **Community Engagement and Interventions**

The Office of the District Attorney remains committed to addressing generational violence. The goals for effectively responding to domestic violence victims, aside from offender accountability, are to increase victim safety, to support victims in protecting themselves and their children by validating their experiences, and to provide information about community resources and options. Victim assistants are careful to inform victims about any limits in confidentiality. Their goal is not to get them to leave their abusers, or to “fix” the problem, but to provide support through the criminal justice process, to offer information and to link to community resources

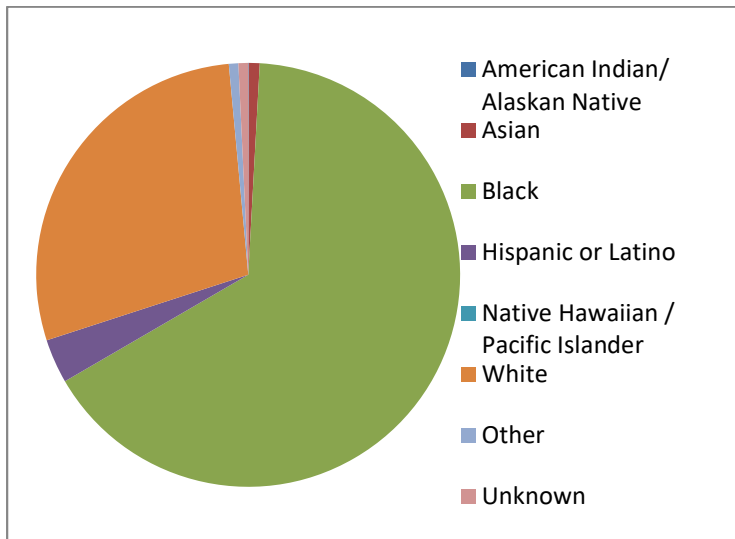
Last year, the office received grant money to launch a Hospital Violence Intervention Program. Recognizing that emergency rooms and trauma centers are often the first place victims seek help, could complement both our aggressive prosecution of domestic violence and our “front desk policy,” and could be a powerful way to stop the revolving door of violent injury in our hospitals. Engaging patients in the hospital, during their recovery, is an opportunity to change their lives, empower victims, and reduce recidivism. Our Victim Assistants offer violently injured patients of domestic violence links to alternative housing for safety measures, counseling, support groups, Crime Victim Compensation, employment, independent housing, education assistance, and case management services upon their release.

Domestic violence is a public health concern with serious and far-reaching consequences for patients, families, and communities. Most experts and clinicians agree that domestic violence emerges from learned behaviors and attitudes. This social learning suggests that children and adults constantly receive implicit and explicit messages about relationships, normative or acceptable behaviors with intimate partners and family members, and violence. Such



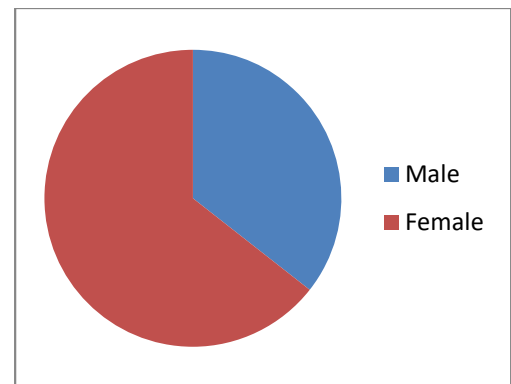
socialization occurs within families, communities, culturally and religiously defined groups, and cross-culturally.

\*2016 Demographics of EBR DV Victims:



American Indian/Alaskan Native	0%
Asian	1%
Black	66%
Hispanic or Latino	3%
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	0%
White	28%
Other	1%
Unknown	1%

Male	36%
Female	64%



Victims of domestic and dating violence and their children are referred to community support services including legal options, advocacy services, and health care settings. Most importantly for stopping the cycle of violence, referrals are made for counseling. Domestic violence is an extremely traumatizing experience, and the emotional scars associated with abuse often outlast the physical impact. Counseling provides a secure process for coping with the residual trauma and is essential to healing. Domestic violence counseling is designed to increase self-esteem and confidence, improve victims' coping skills, reduce self-blame, and develop self-



healing techniques. These referrals are often reflective of victims' cultural background, special needs, and disabilities.

**Community Resources**

Emergency Shelter

- Iris Domestic Violence Center
  - Local (225) 389-3001
  - State Hotline 1-888-411-1333
  - National Hotline 1-800-799-7233

Individual Counseling Services

- Family Service of Greater Baton Rouge (225) 924-0123
- Crisis Intervention Center (Traumatic Loss Counseling) (225) 924-1431
- Children's Advocacy Center (225) 343-1984

Support Groups

- Domestic Violence Community Group Counseling (225) 389-4736
- Hope & Healing Homicide Survivors Support Group (225) 389-4736

Food

- Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank (225) 359-9940
- Southeast Ministries Association Inc. (225) 924-5122

Clothing

- St. Vincent de Paul (any location)
- Salvation Army of Greater Baton Rouge (225) 355-4483

Financial Services

- Crime Victims Reparations (225) 239-7850
- Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge (225) 336-8700
- Salvation Army of Greater Baton Rouge (225) 355-4483

Legal Aid

- Southeast Louisiana Legal Services (225) 448-0080

Employment Services

- Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge (225) 336-8700

Childcare Assistance

- Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) (877) 453-2721