



State of Louisiana

Louisiana Department of Health Office of Public Health

LOUISIANA STATE DOMESTIC ABUSE FATALITY REVIEW

October 19, 2022

In-person Attendees: Dawn Joseph, Kristen Sanderson, Ramona Harris, Francis Robinson, Melanie Fields, Jemimah “Mimi” Mickel, Annette Arthur, Belinda Murphy, Doug Champlin, Ellen Conner, Jill Sessions, Joycelyn Johnson, Leslie Lyons, Mariah Wineski, Pam Guedry, Wanjennia Atkins, Renee Antoine

Zoom Attendees: Vandana Chaturvedi, Mark Bone, Hope Levins, Maeve Wallace, Cheryl (last name unknown), and another unknown guest signed in as Seagrovedreamer.

The meeting was called to order at 9:05 a.m.

Welcome & Introductions, Zoom Etiquette, and Guiding Principles by Kristen Sanderson

The remainder of the meeting was conducted by the Domestic Abuse Fatality Review (DAFR) Coordinator, Dawn Joseph.

Brief Overview of the Domestic Abuse Fatality Review (DAFR) Panel

- Established in 2021 by Louisiana Revised Statute 40:2024.1-2024.6.
- DAFR is housed within the Louisiana Department of Health, Office of Public Health, Bureau of Family Health.
- DAFR works to identify and characterize domestic abuse fatalities through a comprehensive and multidisciplinary review at the state and local levels to prevent future fatalities.
- Recommendations created at DAFR meetings are referred to stakeholder organizations to promote the health and safety of Louisiana families.
- The DAFR Panel is composed of 20 members or their designee:
 1. State Health Officer
 2. Secretary of the Louisiana Department of Health
 3. Secretary of the Department of Children and Family Services
 4. Asst. Secretary of the Office of Behavioral Health
 5. Director of the Bureau of Emergency Medical Services
 6. Director of the Governor’s Office on Women’s Policy
 7. Superintendent of State Police
 8. State Registrar of Vital Records
 9. Attorney General

10. District Attorney or Asst. District Attorney from the Louisiana District Attorney's Association
11. Sheriff from the Louisiana Sheriff's Office
12. Police Chief from the Louisiana Chief's Association
13. Coroner from the Louisiana Coroner's Association
14. Executive Director of the Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence
15. Executive Director of a Community-Based Domestic Violence Service Organization
16. President of the Louisiana Clerks of Court Association
17. Forensic Pathologist certified by the American Board of Pathology
18. Representative of the Legal Services Program providing civil representation to survivors of Domestic Violence
19. Representative of the Louisiana Protective Order Registry
20. Director of the Local Supervised Visitation or Safe Exchange Center

- Functions of the DAFR Panel

- Identify and characterize the scope and nature of domestic abuse fatalities in this state.
- Research and review trends, data, or patterns that are observed of domestic abuse fatalities.
- Review past events and circumstances of domestic abuse fatalities by reviewing records and other pertinent documents that are responsible for investigating deaths or serving victims.
- Research and revise operating rules and procedures for review of domestic abuse fatalities.
- Recommend systemic improvements to promote improved and integrated public and private systems serving victims of domestic abuse.
- Recommend components for prevention and education programs.
- Recommend training to improve the identification and investigation of domestic abuse fatalities that occur in Louisiana.
- Establish and/or authorize local and regional panels, and subject matter experts as agents of the state DAFR to which the review panel may delegate some or all of its responsibilities.
- Analyze data available through any state systems that may decrease the incidence of domestic abuse fatalities in this state.
- Create formal partnerships with existing local and regional fatality review panels to accomplish its responsibilities.

- The DAFR Process

- Once a domestic abuse fatality is identified through the Louisiana Violent Death Reporting System (LA-VDRS) and the Pregnancy Associated Mortality Review (PAMR), they will be matched with those recorded by the Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence (LCADV). Once a list is created, the DAFR Coordinator will work with abstraction staff to gather case records.
- Information may be requested from:
 - Advocacy Centers
 - Civil, Criminal, and Municipal Court Records
 - Coroners

- District Attorney
- Judicial Reports
- Law Enforcement (police departments and sheriff offices)
- Media Reports
- DCFS Records
- Reports of animal abuse
- The DAFR Abstractor prepares a case summary of the incident and it is reviewed by the DAFR Panel and authorized agents of the Panel.
- Panel case review meetings include the legislatively mandated members and authorized agents. Case review is closed to the public.
- The DAFR team uses case summaries to identify risk and protective factors and provide recommendations to help reduce the occurrence of domestic abuse fatalities in the future.
- Recommendations are referred to the stakeholder organizations promoting the health and safety of Louisiana’s families and invested in prevention of domestic abuse.

LDH Boards and Commissions In-person Meeting Requirement for DAFR Panel

- Meetings must be held in-person.
- Official members must meet in-person to satisfy open meeting requirements.
- A quorum must be present in-person for a making official decisions and voting.

Panel Members voted on the following:

- **Nominations and Vote for DAFR Panel Chair**
 - The Panel voted in favor of Wanjennia Atkins serving as DAFR Panel Chairperson. She was nominated by Kristen Sanderson, it was seconded by Melanie Fields.
- **DAFR Panel Procedures**
 - The Panel voted in favor of a quarterly meeting schedule, motion was made by Mariah Wineski and seconded by Ramona Harris. DAFR Panel 2023 meeting dates are:
 - January 18
 - April 19
 - July 19
 - October 18
 - The Panel voted to accept the Domestic Abuse Fatality Review Panel Policy and Procedures Handbook. The motion was made by Doug Champlin, seconded by Ellen Conner.
 - The Panel voted to accept the following as agents to the panel:
 - Hope Levins, Domestic Violence Special Projects Manager with the New Orleans Health Department
 - Dr. Maeve Wallace, Reproductive Epidemiologist and Assistant Professor at Tulane University
 - Sara Halphen, Chief Administrative Officer of the Bossier Parish Clerk’s Office

- Francis Robinson, Technical Program Assistant for the Louisiana Protective Order Registry

Members of the public exited the meeting and Panel members prepared for case review. The Panel reviewed three cases and determined:

- Contributing risk factors that were preventable
- Recommendations to prevent deaths from similar causes or circumstances in the future
- Additional information about the fatality that would have been helpful to know

Panel members began discussion on adding regional and local DAFR panels.

- Should begin setting up panels in areas of the state with the highest rates of domestic abuse fatalities
- Should mirror the state fatality review panel
- Other qualifications, processes, and resources needed to establish local and regional panels are tabled for discussion at the next Panel meeting

Self-care post case review

- Stay healthy
- Take breaks often
- Recite positive affirmations
- Have fun

Next Steps

- Suggested Meeting Locations
 - Capt. Belinda Murphy volunteered to reserve the La State Police Headquarters (Baton Rouge)
 - Chief Joycelyn Johnson volunteered the Southern University Campus (Baton Rouge)
- Assistance with case records
 - Panel members agreed to assist with gathering records to assist with case review.
 - The DAFR coordinator agreed to follow-up with information needed to secure records safely.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.