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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Final Georgia Fatality Review Report Released, Findings Highlight 10 Key Goals for Improving Domestic Violence Response in Georgia

ATLANTA, GA -- The Georgia Commission on Family Violence (GCFV) and the Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence (GCADV) released the 15th and final Annual Report of the Georgia Domestic Violence Fatality Review Project (the Project) on December 17, 2018. Since 2004, these agencies worked with communities across the state to conduct in-depth reviews of 116 domestic violence-related fatalities and near-fatalities. The Project's focus was to learn ways to more fully address the problem of domestic violence and to seek solutions to reduce the number of domestic violence-related deaths and injuries in Georgia.

The Project grew out of the need to evaluate factors which influenced the high rate of domestic violence-related homicide in Georgia. Each year, an average of 130 Georgia residents lose their lives to domestic violence. Most of these individuals are killed by a current or former intimate partner, but the number also includes children, family members and others killed during the course of domestic violence-related incidents. These statistics also include deaths of alleged perpetrators, most of whom died by suicide after killing or attempting to kill the victim(s). Georgia consistently ranks in the top 25 states for the rate at which men kill women — and in recent years, often ranked in the top 10.

Jennifer Thomas, Executive Director of GCFV, points out, "Over the past 15 years, nine survivors of near-fatal incidents along with friends and family members of 119 victims killed, have shared valuable insights about the lives of victims and perpetrators with review teams. Those insights, along with data collected by the Project, have become the driving force for facilitating systemic changes which improve safety for victims and accountability for perpetrators in Georgia." The Project's 14 previous Annual Reports, published 2004–2017, have detailed problems raised in case reviews, analyzed trends for stakeholders throughout Georgia, and given voice to victims who lost their lives in our state. With both partnering agencies shifting their focus towards Project-related implementation efforts in the new year, the Project will come to a close in its current incarnation on December 31, 2018.

The Project's Final Annual Report serves as a capstone for all previous reports and provides an overview of what we have learned, both in Georgia and nationally, about gaps in the systemic response to domestic violence and the circumstances which surround deaths which have occurred as a result of relationship violence. Thomas adds, "The Project's work has built a foundation for strengthening the

response to domestic violence in Georgia, and has shaped how we will continue to move this work forward to reduce the number of domestic violence incidents and related deaths in our state.”

The Annual Report offers “*10 Key Goals to Improve the Response to Domestic Violence in Georgia.*” The goals were selected based on either the frequency with which the issue was noted in case reviews, or as follow-up to repeated findings identified through the fatality review process or recommendations made by the Project. These goals focus on areas for which Georgia’s response needs improvement and represent opportunities to implement change that will ultimately create safer communities in Georgia:

- Goal 1: Increase opportunities for accountability for batterers
- Goal 2: Utilize all legal means to restrict abuser access to firearms
- Goal 3: Build the capacity of bystanders to support survivors and hold abusers accountable
- Goal 4: Develop state and local strategies to increase awareness of healthy relationships to prevent dating violence
- Goal 5: Ensure victims of domestic violence receive risk assessment and safety planning at all points of contact with helping professionals
- Goal 6: Increase efforts to incorporate awareness of co-occurring issues and participate in cross-training among allied professionals
- Goal 7: Incorporate assessments for stalking behaviors and ensure measures are taken to address the problem
- Goal 8: Provide supportive services to children exposed to domestic violence or who lost a parent to domestic violence homicide
- Goal 9: Improve access to culturally relevant services for victims from marginalized communities
- Goal 10: Address barriers that exist for victims to ensure ongoing safety and financial security

The 2018 Report draws on many valuable lessons learned from a decade-and-a-half of reviews and analysis and includes recommendations for how to meet the Project’s 10 key goals. Jan Christiansen, Executive Director of GCADV, emphasizes, “These goals are the roadmap for addressing complex issues which still exist. Each has great potential to increase safety for victims, strengthen accountability for abusers, and reduce the number of domestic violence-related fatalities in Georgia.” She goes on to say, “We are grateful for all of the hard work that went into this Project, the dedication of the Project staff and the more than 850 professionals who participated in case reviews. We look forward to continued efforts to move this work forward.”

The report will be accessible for free online at www.georgiafatalityreview.com.

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About the Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence: GCADV envisions a Georgia free of domestic violence. The mission of GCADV is to collaborate, advocate, educate, and empower. We empower survivors and the programs that serve them, we educate the public, and we advocate for responsive public policy. Our strength is in numbers, as we collaborate throughout Georgia to stop domestic violence. For more information, visit www.gcadv.org.

About the Georgia Commission on Family Violence: GCFV is a state agency created by the Georgia General Assembly in 1992 to develop a comprehensive state plan for ending family violence in Georgia. GCFV works throughout the state to help create and support task forces made up of citizen volunteers working to end domestic violence in their communities. GCFV conducts research and provides training, monitors legislation and policies affecting victims of domestic violence, and certifies Georgia’s Family Violence Intervention Programs. For more information, visit gcfv.georgia.gov.

To obtain resources and support: If you or someone you know is being abused, there are community and statewide resources available to you. Call 1-800-33-HAVEN (English/Spanish/TTY), the 24-hour statewide domestic violence hotline, for a confidential place to get help or find resources.