



1855 E. Dublin-Granville Road, Suite 301
Columbus, Ohio 43229
Phone: 614-781-9651
www.odvn.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Contact: Mary O’Doherty, maryo@odvn.org or 502-592-7856

109 people died from domestic violence in Ohio, a 35% spike over last year

Deaths in first 3 months of pandemic up by 14%, according to annual fatality count

COLUMBUS, Ohio (Oct. 6, 2020) – Ohio suffered 109 domestic violence fatalities in the year ending June 30, 2020 – a 35% increase in fatalities over the same time period last year, according to the Ohio Domestic Violence Network’s (ODVN’s) [fifth annual count of DV fatalities](#).

From April through June (the first full months of the pandemic during the reporting period), Ohio saw a 14% increase in the number of fatalities -- from 22 fatalities to 25 fatalities -- over the same three-month period in 2019.

ODVN released the fatality count at its annual Domestic Violence Awareness Month event. More than 200 people were registered to attend this year’s virtual event.

The fatalities, occurring between July 1, 2019 and June 30, 2020, were compiled from media reports and information provided by ODVN’s 75 member programs. More than 40% of the fatalities occurred as part of a homicide/suicide, and at least 70% of the fatalities were caused by guns. One law enforcement officer was killed in the line of duty by a batterer. Four children were killed.

The number of fatalities is the second highest since ODVN began doing the count in in 2015. A total of 116 DV fatalities occurred in 2016-17.

History has shown that domestic violence increases in the aftermath of disaster, and the economic downturn and Stay-at-Home Order caused by the pandemic are likely contributing to an increase in violence, said ODVN’s executive director Mary O’Doherty. Many ODVN programs are reporting an increase in the number of survivors seeking help, she said. Many more programs are reporting an increase in the severity of the abuse they’re hearing about from callers to their hotlines and from survivors seeking shelter.

“It makes sense that the need for physical distancing since March may have made victims – especially those with children – less likely to seek shelter,” O’Doherty said. “We know for certain that it was more difficult and confusing for some victims to go to court to ask for help during the first three months of the pandemic.”

Featured at the event were Representative Laura Lanese, who championed the DV line item in 2019, Senator Stephanie Kunze, Senator Nickie Antonio, Representative Janine Boyd and Representative Sara Carruthers. The elected officials urged ODVN’s member programs to make a case to their legislators for why Ohio’s domestic violence programs need more state support.

After the event, more than 50 participants met with legislators to advocate that Ohio’s \$1 million domestic violence line item be increased to \$5 million annually.

ODVN also presented the Croucher Family Award for Outstanding Leadership to Venica Miller, Crime Victim Services Deputy Director of Victim Service Initiatives at the Office of the Ohio Attorney General.

About the Ohio Domestic Violence Network (ODVN): ODVN provides a strong statewide voice for Ohio’s domestic violence programs that serve all 88 counties, and advocates on domestic violence-related issues at the state and federal level. ODVN runs a training institute for advocates and allies that trained 4,451 individuals last year, a legal assistance program that serves close to 700 survivors annually, a relocation program that served 529 survivors and 739 children last year, and a statewide prevention program.

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