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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

GEORGIA FATALITY REVIEW REPORT RELEASED

Findings Highlight Connections between Domestic Violence-Related Homicide and Suicide

ATLANTA, GA (March 8, 2017) - Today, the Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence (GCADV) and the Georgia Commission on Family Violence (GCFV) released the 13th Annual Report of the Georgia Domestic Violence Fatality Review Project (the Project). Together, these statewide agencies coordinate the Project and work with local communities to conduct in-depth reviews of domestic violence-related fatalities and near-fatalities. Fatality Review Teams in 23 judicial circuits have reviewed more than 100 fatal domestic violence incidents since the Project began in 2004. With the objective of lowering the homicide rate, the Report analyzes data compiled during fatality reviews and provides recommendations for systemic change.

The Report takes a closer look at a key finding included in previous Project reports, the suicide-homicide connection: perpetrators attempted or completed suicide in 38% of cases reviewed by the Project and 37% of perpetrators had threatened or attempted suicide in incidents that occurred prior to the homicide. The high number of reviewed cases involving suicide mirrors statewide data, as murder-suicides account for approximately 30% of domestic violence-related incidents tracked annually by the Project.

Jennifer Thomas, the Executive Director of GCFV points out, "In 2016 alone, we are aware of 121 Georgians who lost their lives during domestic violence incidents. Completed and attempted murder-suicide incidents accounted for 52 of those deaths." Thomas continues, "Knowing these incidents account for nearly half of all domestic violence-related deaths in our state, it is clear that our focus on this topic is necessary."

The Report highlights trends identified in reviewed cases that ended in murder-suicide versus cases ending in homicide, and focuses on criminal and civil interventions as well as interventions by advocates, family members, friends, and the faith community. Relationship dynamics and tactics of abuse which are unique to murder-suicide cases are explored throughout the Report.

Key findings included in the Report include:

- **Firearms are used to commit almost all murder-suicides in Georgia.** Firearms were used in 85% of murder-suicide cases reviewed by the Project, nearly twice the rate of

reviewed homicide cases (43%) and between 2012 and 2016, 98% of known murder-suicide incidents statewide were committed using a firearm. In 2016, 95% of murder-suicides involved use of a firearm.

- **Many perpetrators were known to be depressed or suicidal prior to the murder-suicide.** 48% of perpetrators in reviewed cases showed signs of depression prior to committing murder-suicide, as compared to 28% who showed signs of depression in homicide cases. Additionally, 55% of perpetrators threatened or attempted suicide prior to the murder-suicide incident as compared to 26% of perpetrators in reviewed homicide cases.
- **Many victims were no longer in a relationship with the perpetrator of the murder-suicide.** Sixty-two percent of victims killed in reviewed murder-suicide cases were no longer involved in a relationship with their abusers, nearly twice the 34% in homicide cases.
- **Fewer perpetrators of murder-suicide were involved in the criminal justice system.** Only 33% of abusers in reviewed murder-suicide cases had a violent criminal history prior to the lethal incident, a significant decrease from 58% in homicide cases.

The Report asserts that suicide intervention for perpetrators could also be considered domestic violence homicide prevention. Among the recommendations of the Report is the implementation of suicide prevention strategies including the QPR Gatekeeper Training. QPR, which stands for “Question, Persuade and Refer,” is an educational program designed to teach the warning signs of a suicide crisis and how to respond. The Project has partnered with the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities to receive training in the QPR model and will be conducting trainings for key stakeholders around the state.

Jan Christiansen, the Executive Director of GCADV, believes the Report serves as a guide for our state to increase victim safety and perpetrator accountability. She says, “It is great tool for change in communities around the state. The Project takes a hard look at the trends that emerge in these cases and provides recommendations about how we can improve our response to intimate partner violence. The Report includes ways that everyone can get involved in their communities to address gaps in safety and accountability.”

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.