

UTAH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COUNCIL – PRESS RELEASE

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Domestic Violence Continues to Take a Tragic Toll in Utah

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(Salt Lake City, Utah) – Domestic violence takes a tragic toll in Utah every year, and 2009 was no exception. The first domestic violence related death occurred on January 4, 2009, when Brittany Nichols' boyfriend, angered at her attempts to end their relationship, fatally stabbed Brittany multiple times, possibly in the presence of her three-year old daughter. By mid-year there were ten such deaths, and by year's end there are twenty-seven. December was the deadliest month, when six deaths occurred, all the result of two murder-suicides.

The loss of loved ones from domestic violence affects not only the victim and perpetrator but also children, extended families, neighborhoods, and communities. The age range for this year's fatalities was four years to seventy. There are eleven female and sixteen male domestic violence related deaths, including two male children, ages four and six. Twelve of the deaths resulted from murder-suicides, and five occurred in dating violence relationships, indicating that violence between dating and intimate partners can escalate to fatality.

Compiled categories are in the list below:

- Cohabitant Homicides: 2 (2 female)
- Perpetrator Suicides: 5 (4 male, 1 female)
- Dating Relationship Homicides: 3 (2 female, 1 male)
- Dating Relationship Suicides: 3 (3 male)
- Domestic Violence Related Homicides: 13 (6 female, 7 male (2 children))
- Domestic Violence Related Suicide: 0
- Domestic Violence Related Death: 1 (1 male)

Total Domestic Violence Related Deaths in Utah 2009: 27

Number of domestic violence related deaths caused by the use of a firearm: 21

It is crucial to recognize that domestic violence occurs in all communities, and across all lines of income, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation, age and disability. Risk factors should be recognized: physical violence increases in frequency and severity; threats with weapons or threats against life; attempted strangulation, controlling behaviors, forced sex, threats of suicide, violence against children or animals, and violence outside the home, among others. All are acts of domestic violence or related to it. They are real threats and should be reported.

According to Moises Prospero, Chair of the Utah Domestic Violence Council, “We need to address domestic violence at the individual, familial and community level through effective programming and public awareness.” In an additional effort to raise awareness, the full 2009 Domestic Violence Related Death list and other domestic violence-related information is available on the Utah Domestic Violence Council website located at www.udvc.org.

Judy Kasten Bell, UDVC Executive Director, states, “If you or someone you know is experiencing abuse, tell a friend, a neighbor, a family member or co-worker. **For immediate help call 9-1-1.** If you decide to leave a violent relationship, do not threaten to leave, and do not act alone. Call a local victim advocate or the Utah Domestic Violence Link-Line at 1-800-897-LINK (5465) for help. Your call is confidential and could save lives. You can be referred to an advocate who will help you create a safety plan and help find shelter for you and your children. If you are a person who has been violent, there is also help available for you through the Link-Line. Remember, there’s no excuse for abuse. End domestic violence by breaking the silence.”