

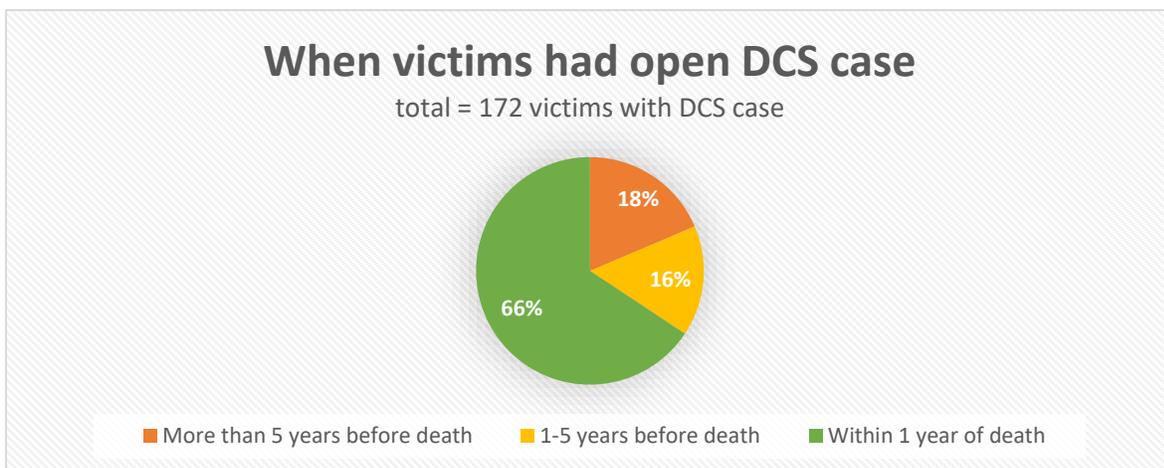
Get the Word Out

PROMOTING SAFETY AND STABILITY FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
SURVIVORS RECEIVING CHILD SUPPORT

Child Support is a critical resource for domestic violence survivors and their children

Financial stability is fundamental to safety and wellbeing. Washington State's Domestic Violence Fatality Review (DVFR) has identified public benefit programs as an important point of intervention for victims, offering access to critical resources as well as connection to victim advocacy.

Analysis of 421 intimate partner violence homicides in Washington State over 15 years showed that 41% of victims had been a participant in an open child support case at some point before their death. Of those cases, two-thirds were open within the year before the victim's death.



Most victims do not disclose domestic violence to case workers

Of 172 domestic violence homicide victims who were DCS clients, only 3% of cases had been flagged indicating that a case worker identified family violence as an issue.

Because efforts to collect child support from abusive fathers can trigger escalation of violence, survivors of domestic violence who receive Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) can request a good cause exemption to opt out of the requirement to pursue support enforcement. Only 3% of domestic violence homicide victims who received TANF ever requested this exemption. In one case, the exemption was granted. In the other two, a decision was pending at the time of the victim's death.

Requests for good cause exemption are not a reliable way to identify when domestic violence is an issue for survivors participating in WorkFirst. Screening for domestic violence by case workers revealed family violence in fewer than 10% cases in which domestic violence homicide victims were WorkFirst participants.

Practice Implications

Receiving child support services can be a critical point for survivors to access information and resources. Parents who have experienced domestic violence face potentially devastating economic impacts of abuse, which threaten stability and safety for themselves and their children. DCS workers cannot rely on disclosure of abuse to identify which parents may need domestic violence resources. Given the wide reach of DCS services, universal education strategies have tremendous potential to reach victims who need support, as well as their family and friends.

- Provide domestic violence information and referral to safety resources to everyone receiving DCS services. For example: include domestic violence resources and safety planning information in mailings and websites; share WSCADV's [Friends & Family Guide](#) on how to support someone in an abusive relationship; consider using evidence based tools such as [Futures without Violence safety cards](#).
- Continue to invest in internal and external expertise in order to promote practices that support survivors of family violence, such as the DCS Domestic Violence Liaison Group, and DCS partnership with WSCADV.