

# Strengthening and Establishing Domestic Violence Fatality Review Teams (DVFRTs) in Rural Communities

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# Disclaimer

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## MISSION

Ujima's mission is to inspire and support the Black community in responding to and preventing domestic violence, sexual assault, and community violence. With a focus on collective responsibility and shared prosperity, we strive to cultivate a world where Black women and girls thrive. We pursue this mission by leveraging our resources, expertise, and networks to build a brighter future for generations to come.

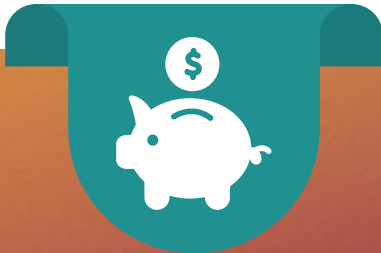


## VISION

The National Center on Violence Against Women in the Black Community aspires to create a future where Black Women and Girls are celebrated and live free from violence.



# PILLARS OF PROGRAMMING



Economic  
Justice



Legal  
Access



Health  
Equity



Housing



International Domestic,  
Sexual, and Community  
Violence

# Objectives

- Learn more about the Domestic Violence Fatality Review Teams: Ensuring Culturally Specific Responses Project.
- Understand how DVFRTs can prevent future domestic violence homicides.
- Understand the importance of developing culturally specific responses in DVFRTs.
- Recognize key challenges to developing and sustaining a DVFRT in rural communities.
- Develop strategies to enhance cultural responsiveness and sustain DVFRTs in rural communities.

# Domestic Violence Fatality Review Teams: Ensuring Culturally Specific Responses Project

The purpose of this project is to provide training and technical assistance to local, state, and tribal governments about implementing or improving domestic violence fatality review teams to ensure that such teams are informed by culturally specific responses.

## What do we provide?

- Monthly office hours every 3rd Thursday of the month.
- Listening sessions with DVFRTs and culturally specific organizations.
- Virtual meetings for DVFRTs to engage in peer-to-peer conversations on emerging issues.
- Webinars on topics relevant to DVFRTs.
- Training and technical assistance to local and state DVFRTs.
- Information and resources for DVFRTs on an interactive website.

# Domestic Violence Fatality Review

- Domestic violence fatality review refers to the process of identifying deaths related to domestic violence to examine systemic interventions that took place with both parties before the homicide and/or suicide.
- A fatality review team is a multidisciplinary group of professionals that meets to discuss the circumstances leading to and causing deaths to improve agency systems and take action to prevent other deaths.
- Teams can be a county or statewide level, Tribal or American Indian/Alaskan Native task force.
- Also known as **Domestic Abuse Homicide Review Panel, Domestic Abuse Fatality Review, Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board, Domestic Violence Fatality Review Task Force, Domestic Violence Fatal Incident Review Team**

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FATALITY REVIEW TEAMS IN THE UNITED STATES

## States with a Statewide Team

1. Alaska
2. Colorado
3. Connecticut
4. Delaware
5. District of Columbia \*
6. Florida
7. Georgia
8. Illinois
9. Indiana
10. Iowa
11. Louisiana
12. Maine
13. Massachusetts
14. Montana
15. Nebraska
16. Nevada
17. New Hampshire
18. New Jersey
19. New Mexico
20. New York
21. Oklahoma
22. Oregon
23. South Carolina
24. Tennessee
25. Utah
26. Vermont
27. Washington
28. West Virginia

## States with County Teams

1. Arizona
2. California
3. Colorado
4. Florida
5. Hawaii
6. Illinois
7. Indiana
8. Kentucky
9. Louisiana
10. Maryland
11. Michigan
12. Minnesota
13. Missouri
14. Nevada
15. New York
16. North Carolina
17. Oregon
18. Tennessee
19. Texas
20. Virginia
21. Wisconsin

## States with No Teams

1. Alabama
2. Arkansas
3. Idaho
4. Kansas
5. Mississippi
6. North Dakota
7. Ohio
8. Pennsylvania
9. Rhode Island
10. South Dakota
11. Wyoming

# Purpose of DVFRTS

- Identify the nature and frequency of fatalities in a community.
- Identify barriers to safety and justice for victims.
- Identify gaps in training, policies, practices, resources, communication, and collaboration.
- Understand and learn from the circumstances that led to the death.
- Offers recommendations for system improvements.
- Prevent future domestic violence fatalities.
- Develop recommendations for coordinated community intervention and prevention.
- Help raise awareness in the community on how to assist and support victims of domestic violence.

# Why Culturally Specific Responses Are Essential in DVFRT Work

- Culture shapes risk, help-seeking, and survival.
- One-size-fits-all reviews miss lethality indicators.
- System responses are not neutral.
- Rural victims and victims of color face compounded barriers.
- Survivor “choices” are often misunderstood.
- Better reviews lead to better prevention.
- Aligns with ethical, trauma-informed, and survivor-centered practice.



# Statistics

Black Women are almost **6x** as likely to be killed as a result of domestic violence than white women. (Daniels C. 2024)

For the **past 25 years**, Black females have consistently been murdered by males at higher rates compared to all other races. (VPC 2023)

American Indian / Alaska Native women are nearly **4x** as likely as white women to be fatally shot by an intimate partner. (Everytown for Gun Safety/ CDC 2023)

**60%** of Latina homicides in the U.S. are a result of intimate partner violence and IPH. (Sabina, C & Swatt, M. (2015)

While AAPI women die by intimate partner firearm homicide at a lower rate compared to other racial and ethnic groups, they experience the highest proportion of firearm homicides by intimate partners, with **58%** of gun homicides of AAPI women being committed by an intimate partner.( Everytown for Gun Safety 2023)

<b>STATES WITH THE HIGHEST HOMICIDE RATES FOR BLACK WOMEN AND GIRLS</b> <b>(GUARDIAN SOURCE: CDC)</b>	<b>STATES WITH THE HIGHEST DV HOMICIDE RATES FOR AANHPI WOMEN</b> <b>(2020 CDC'S WISQARS NVDRS)</b>	<b>STATES WITH THE HIGHEST RATES OF FEMALES MURDERED BY MALES</b> <b>(VPC 2022)</b>
1. <b>Wisconsin</b>	1. <b>Wyoming</b>	1. <b>Alaska</b>
2. <b>Missouri</b>	2. <b>Louisiana</b>	2. <b>Oklahoma</b>
3. <b>Kentucky</b>	3. <b>Arizona</b>	3. <b>Wyoming</b>
4. <b>Arkansas</b>	4. <b>Tennessee</b>	4. <b>Arkansas</b>
5. <b>Washington DC</b>	5. <b>Wisconsin</b>	5. <b>Louisiana</b>
6. <b>Indiana</b>	6. <b>Colorado</b>	6. <b>North Dakota</b>
7. <b>Ohio</b>	7. <b>Minnesota</b>	7. <b>Missouri</b>
8. <b>Louisiana</b>	8. <b>North Carolina</b>	8. <b>Wisconsin</b>
9. <b>Michigan</b>	9. <b>Pennsylvania</b>	9. <b>South Dakota</b>
10. <b>Illinois</b>	10. <b>California</b>	10. <b>Kentucky</b>

# Violence Policy Center Analyzing 25 Years of “When Men Murder Women” Report

Alaska was in the top 10 states for 18 out of the last 25 years and has consistently ranked number one or two among states with the highest rates in the last decade.

Arkansas was in the top 10 states for 14 out of the last 25 years.

Louisiana was in the top 10 states every year except 2008.

Nevada was in the top 10 states for 23 out of the past 25 years.

New Mexico was in the top 10 states for 13 out of the past 25 years.

Oklahoma was in the top 10 states for 15 out of the past 25 years.

South Carolina was in the top 10 states for 23 out of the past 25 years.

# Fatality Reviews Data Has Shown

- Disproportionate rates of victims losing their lives due to domestic violence.
- Victims of color usually do not seek services from systems.
- Lack of culturally specific services, such as language or other relevant services.
- Lack of coordination and collaboration between culturally specific organizations and mainstream providers.
- Disproportionate poverty limits victims' options for safety.

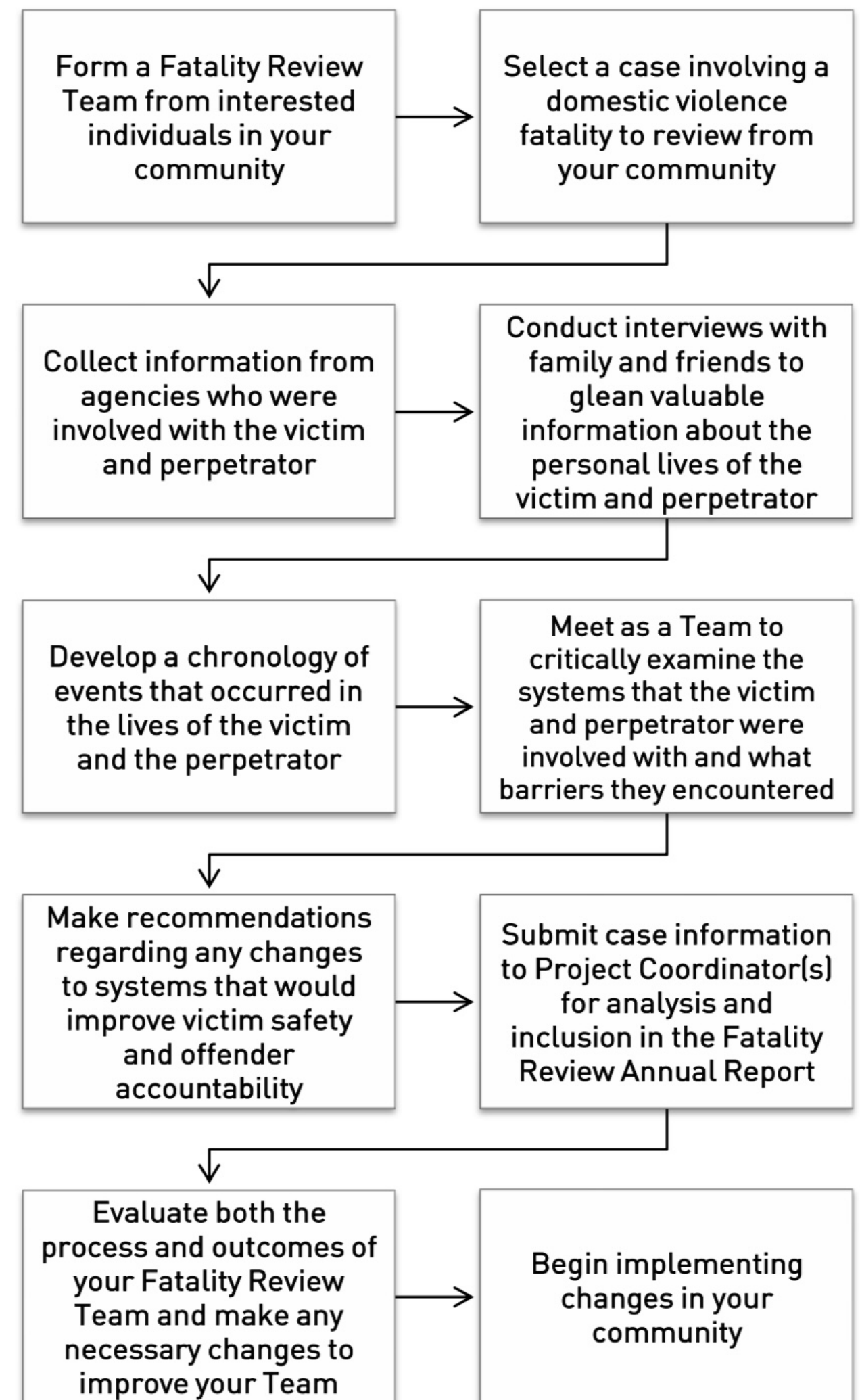


Share your thoughts with us?

**What makes fatality review work harder and potentially more impactful in rural communities?**

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# Step-by-Step Guide to Fatality Review



# DVFRT Members

**DV Advocates**

**State Health Department**

**Court Personnel**

**Law  
Enforcement**

**Coroner/ Medical Examiner**

**Healthcare Professional**

**Prosecutors**

**Culturally Specific  
Community Based Org.**

**Community Corrections**

**Judges**

**Child Protective Services**

**DV Intervention Providers**

# Team Member Selection

<b>SELECTING THE RIGHT TEAM MEMBERS</b>	
<b>ABLE TO COMMIT TO MEETING TIMES</b>	Consistent member participation is a hallmark for building trust among team members. Meeting times should be consistent and agency representatives should commit to regular attendance, in writing, upon joining the team.
<b>NON-DEFENSIVE</b>	An open-minded, non-defensive approach to case review promotes the free flow of information and creates an atmosphere for team members to analyze and question agency responses.
<b>EXPERIENCE ON THE FRONT LINE</b>	First-hand experience will provide a needed critical eye toward the availability, consistency, and effectiveness of agency services. These team members will also have knowledge of how agency practice may diverge from agency policy.
<b>ABLE TO INFLUENCE AGENCY POLICY</b>	A team member's ability to implement agency changes based on recommendations from the case review (or to garner the attention of decision makers who can) is critical for success in local fatality review.

# Tips for Building & Sustaining a Rural DVFR Team

- Start with relationships, not structure.
- Invite trusted local champions.
- Develop confidentiality & MOU framework.
- Seek small funding for coordination if possible.
- Plan for logistics realistically based on your community.
- Turn findings into small, achievable changes.

# Case Selection and Information Gathering

- Address disparities in domestic violence fatalities.
- Avoid cherry-picking cases.
- Review all allowable cases in accordance with team policies and the legal framework.
- Collect information from agencies.

# Reviewing Cases

- Develop a chronology of events.
- Review of systems and barriers.
- Review case facts in the context of culture.
- Conduct interviews with family and friends.
- Discuss culturally specific findings and how the findings can be used to reduce future domestic violence fatalities.

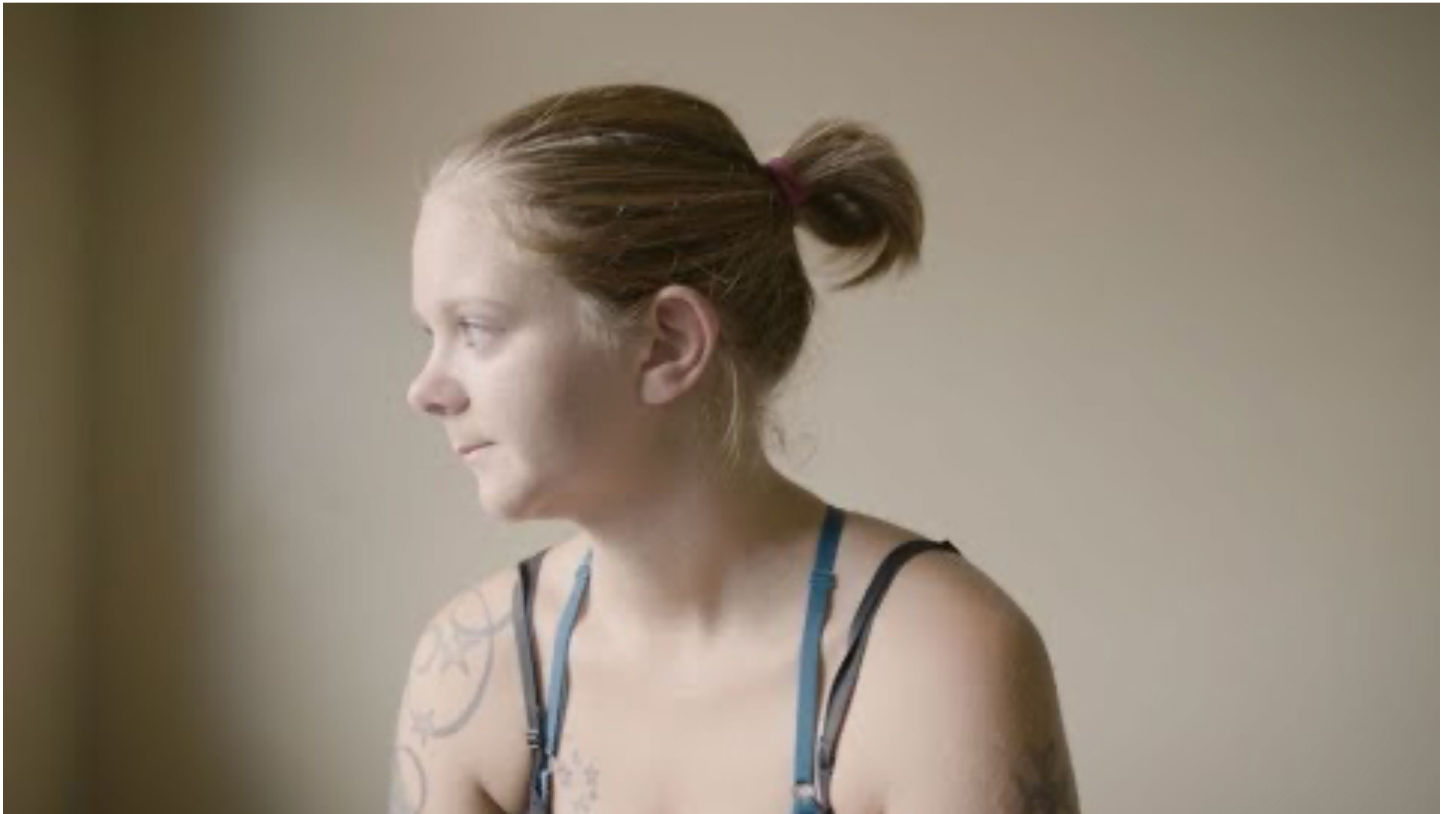
# Making Recommendations for System Improvements

- Recommendations should be specific, actionable, and realistic.
- Makes recommendations that address the needs of at-risk community members.
- Partner with multidisciplinary community support/advocacy organizations to implement recommendations.
- Develop culturally specific action plans to accompany recommendations.

# Implementing Changes in Your Community

**“Fatality review without action does not prevent future deaths.”**

- Incorporate what is learned about the context of domestic violence fatalities through the DVFR process into other areas of the community’s prevention initiatives, interventions, and response services.
- Share annual summary themes. (no case details)



# Understanding Rural Context: Challenges

- Confidentiality concerns in “everyone knows everyone” communities
- Strong cultural norms emphasizing privacy
- Limited staff time & competing priorities
- Fear of blame or liability
- Records & data gaps
- Limited DV-specific expertise
- Geographic & transportation barriers
- Emotional impact in close-knit communities
- Increase risk of firearm prevalence
- Over-reliance on survivors to manage their own safety

# Understanding Rural Context: Action Steps

## **Confidentiality Concerns-**

- Establish strong confidentiality agreements.
- Review and explain state fatality review protections at every new member orientation.
- De-identify case materials whenever possible.

## **Limited Staff Time & Competing Priorities-**

- Meet quarterly instead of monthly.
- Keep meetings tightly structured (agenda + timekeeper).
- Rotate presentation responsibilities.
- Share pre-meeting summaries so that members come prepared.

# Understanding Rural Context: Action Steps

## **Fear of Blame or Liability-**

- Open every meeting with a purpose statement.
- Use neutral, systems-focused language.
- Avoid “Why didn’t they...” → use “What policies or conditions shaped this response?”

## **Records & Data Gaps-**

- Build relationships with clerks, records staff, and dispatch.
- Create a case timeline template to organize scattered information.

# Understanding Rural Context: Action Steps

## **Limited DV-Specific Expertise-**

- Build mini-learning moments into meetings.
- Invite regional experts virtually.
- Share simple tools: lethality indicators, an overview of coercive control, and firearm risk factors.

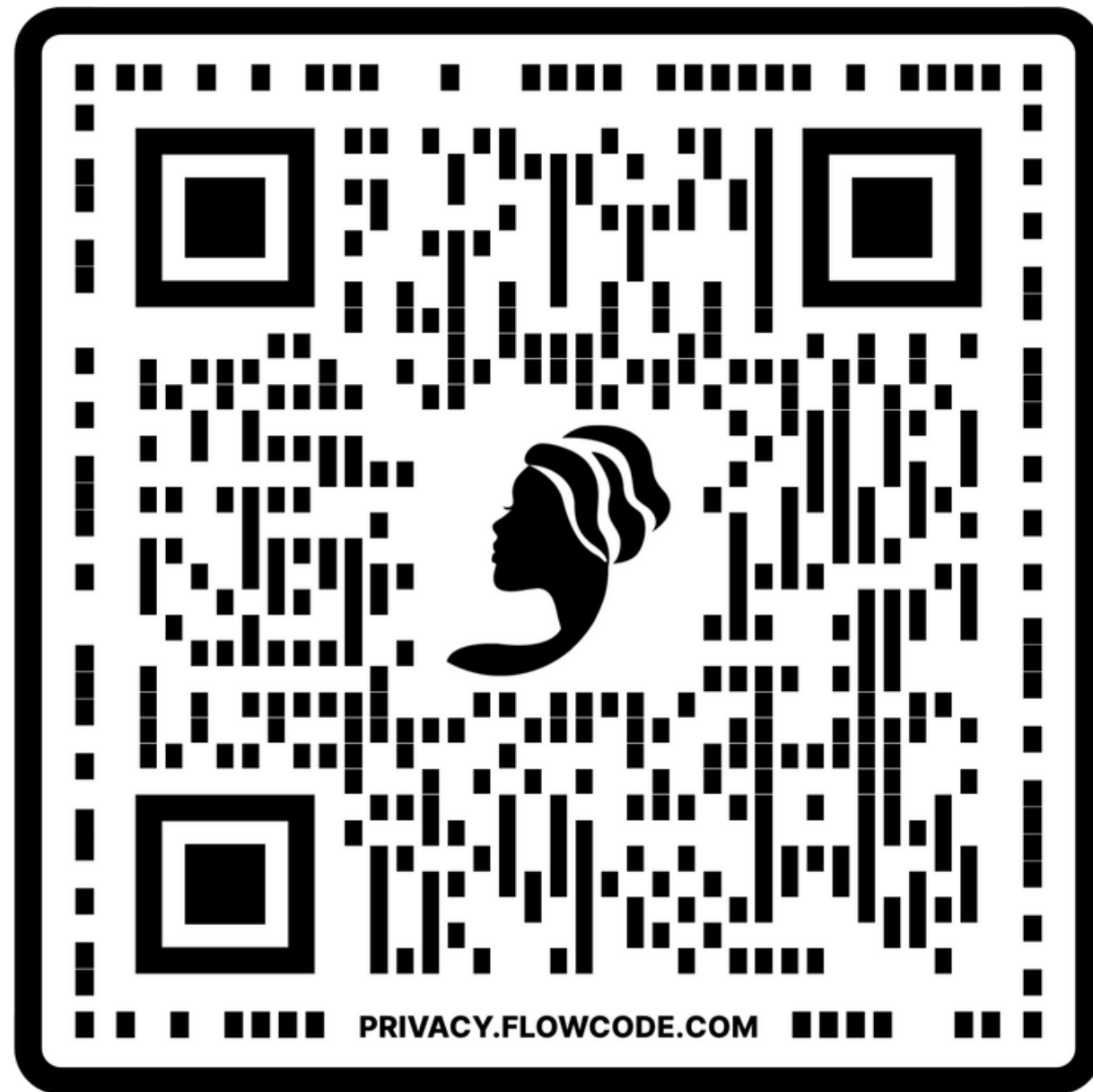
## **Geographic & Transportation Barriers-**

- Offer hybrid/virtual attendance.
- Rotate meeting locations.
- Schedule during times that avoid court or shift changes.

# Benefits of Culturally Specific DVFR Work

- Addresses the needs of all members of the community.
- Culture provides context.
- Enhances the quality of case reviews and action plans.
- Analyses and findings could reduce future deaths.
- Improves victims' access to and utilization of services and enables support.

# Ujima's DVFRT-ECSR Project Office Hours



**SCAN ME**

*Together  
We Can!*

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