

Advocate Initiated Response Program Annual Report

2024



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BACKGROUND

In May 2022, the New Orleans Health Department (NOHD), in partnership with the New Orleans Family Justice Center (NOFJC), New Orleans Police Department (NOPD), and Orleans Parish Communication District (OPCD) launched the Advocacy Initiated Response (AIR) Program. Initially piloted in the Third District, the AIR Program expanded to all eight NOPD Districts in January 2024.

The AIR Program is an intervention for domestic violence to increase victim safety, provide linkages to resources, and disrupt violence in the community. Community-based AIR Triage Advocates from the NOFJC contact victims directly after law enforcement responds to a domestic incident or disturbance with the goals of providing critical linkages to services and resources, enhancing safety, and preventing repeat incidents.

This report provides an overview of AIR operations, 2024 program data, and recommendations for future program improvements.

DEFINITIONS

Domestic Abuse is physical or sexual abuse and any offense against the person, physical or non-physical, as defined in the Louisiana Criminal Code, except negligent injury and defamation, committed by one family member, household member, or dating partner against another.¹

Domestic Disturbance is a call for service involving individuals with a domestic relationship that does not involve a crime.

Domestic Incident is a call for service involving individuals with a domestic relationship that does involve a crime.

Family Violence includes violence between family members who are parents/children, siblings, grandparent/grandchild, cousins, and in-laws

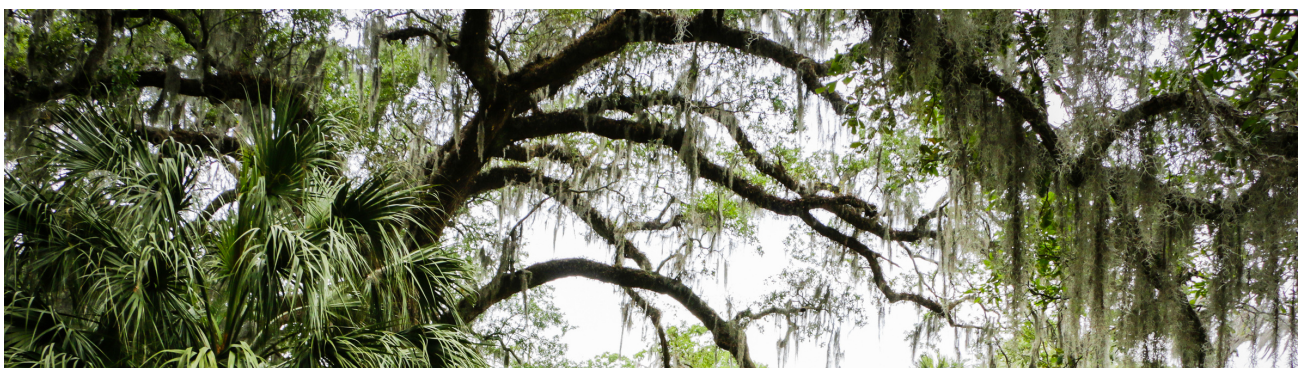
Intimate Partner Violence includes violence between individuals who are current or former dating partners, past or ongoing sexual partners, or current or former spouses.

Reporting Person, or complainant, is any person, including a community member, a nonresident, or a sworn or civilian member of NOPD, who calls the PSAP or “911” to request police assistance or services.

Safety Planning is a tool advocates use to help victims develop a personalized and realistic plan to protect themselves and reduce the risk of further harm.²

Suspect is a person who is believed to have perpetrator domestic violence.

Victim or survivor is defined as a person who has experienced domestic violence.



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Mission

The Advocate Initiated Response program seeks to intervene after domestic violence incidents to increase victim safety, provide linkages to resources, and disrupt violence in the community.

Program Goals

- Increase safety for victims
- Support families in addressing underlying causes of DV incidents
- Reduce rates of repeat calls to NOPD by providing alternative resources

Program Roles

New Orleans Health Department

NOHD's DV/SA Program oversees the AIR Program implementation by coordinating interagency and NOFJC program meetings and advisory groups, providing training and technical assistance, analyzing, and reporting on program outcomes, and evaluating metrics of program success.

New Orleans Family Justice Center

The NOFJC employs staff who implements the AIR Program, including AIR Triage Advocates.

New Orleans Police Department

NOPD provides domestic incident case information, including a victim/reporting person's name and contact information, suspect identifying information, narrative, and incident information, through NOPD Analytics Unit's PowerBI database system's AIR Dashboard.

Orleans Parish Communications District

OPCD manages the AIR Quickbase Database, and uploads CAD reports for eligible incidents.

ADVOCATE INITIATED RESPONSE

RESPONDING TO A NEED

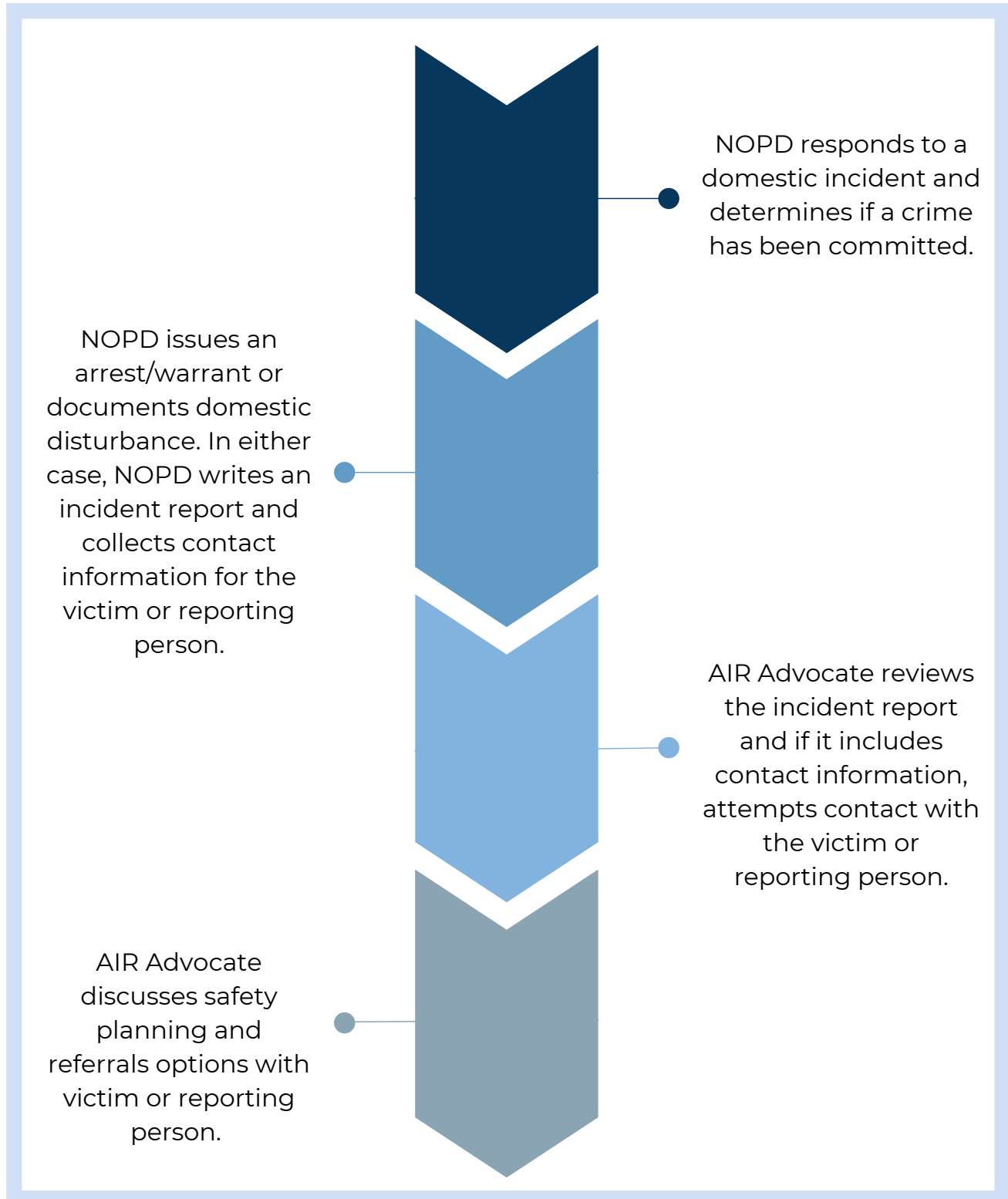
Domestic violence (DV) accounts for the highest volume of 911 calls received by NOPD annually and is the most commonly reported violent crime in Orleans Parish.³ Thousands of New Orleans residents are victims of domestic violence each year, and on average, fourteen New Orleanians lose their lives annually to domestic violence related fatalities.⁴ Responding to the overwhelming impact of domestic violence on the New Orleans community, the Advocate Initiated Response (AIR) program was created to provide survivors with vital support in the aftermath of a DV related incident, simultaneously gathering data that may be used to inform system-level responses to domestic violence.

The AIR Program connects skilled, trained community-based advocates directly to victims and reporting persons within one to three days of their 911 call with the mission of increasing victim safety, providing linkages to resources, and disrupting violence in the community. AIR is unique amongst advocate response programs in that AIR's activation does not rely on law enforcement or incidents reaching a specific level of acuity. Instead, AIR Advocates attempt to contact all victims and reporting persons who call 911 for a DV related incident, regardless of the incident's perceived acuity. This frees law enforcement from the responsibility of coordinating advocate responses while allowing advocates to intervene early in less acute incidents, potentially preventing escalation.



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

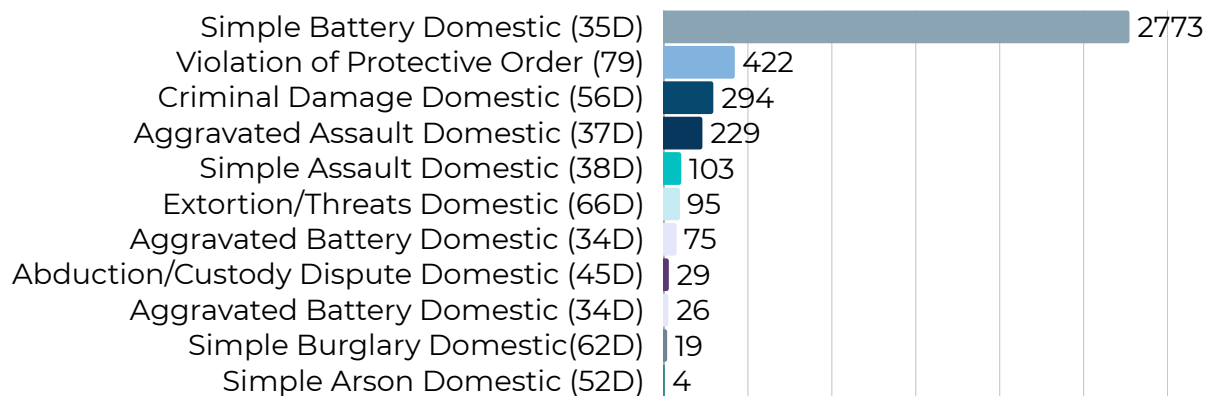
HOW ADVOCATE INITIATED RESPONSE WORKS



2024 INCIDENTS

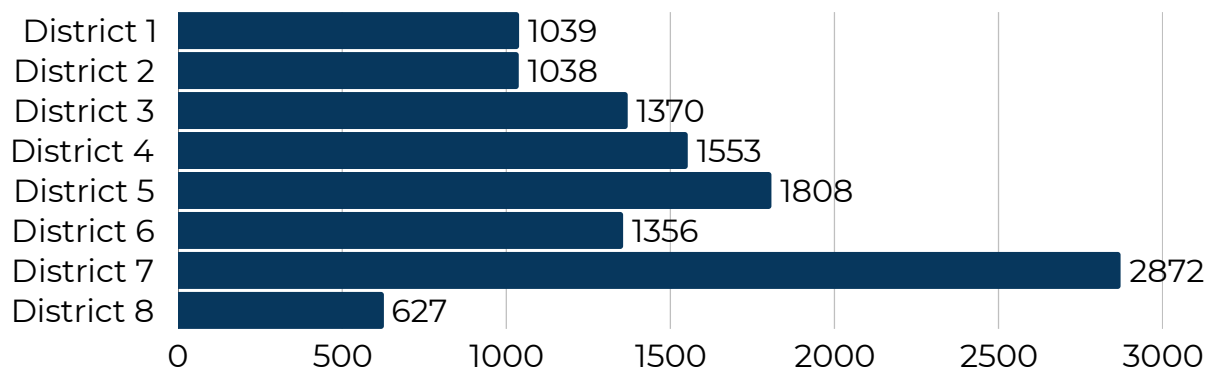
In 2024, AIR received 11,633 reports of domestic-related incidents from the New Orleans Police Department. 7,380 of these reports were domestic disturbances, incidents in which no crime occurred but residents felt unable or unsafe navigating the situation without a third party. The remaining 4,253 incidents were domestic violence related crimes. The most common crime reported was Simple Battery Domestic, which is “the intentional use of force or violence committed by one household member or family member upon the person of another household member or family member.” Violation of Protective Order was the second most common crime reported, demonstrating the likeness of offenders to re-abuse and the need for ongoing victim support and protections.

Domestic Violence Related Crimes (n=4,253)



*184 additional DV crimes occurred but were uncategorized.

Incidents* by NOPD District (n= 11,633)

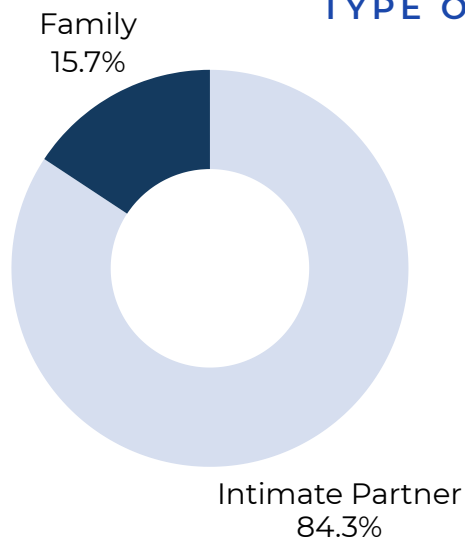


*All Incidents, including both domestic disturbances and crimes

INCIDENTS: CHARACTERISTICS

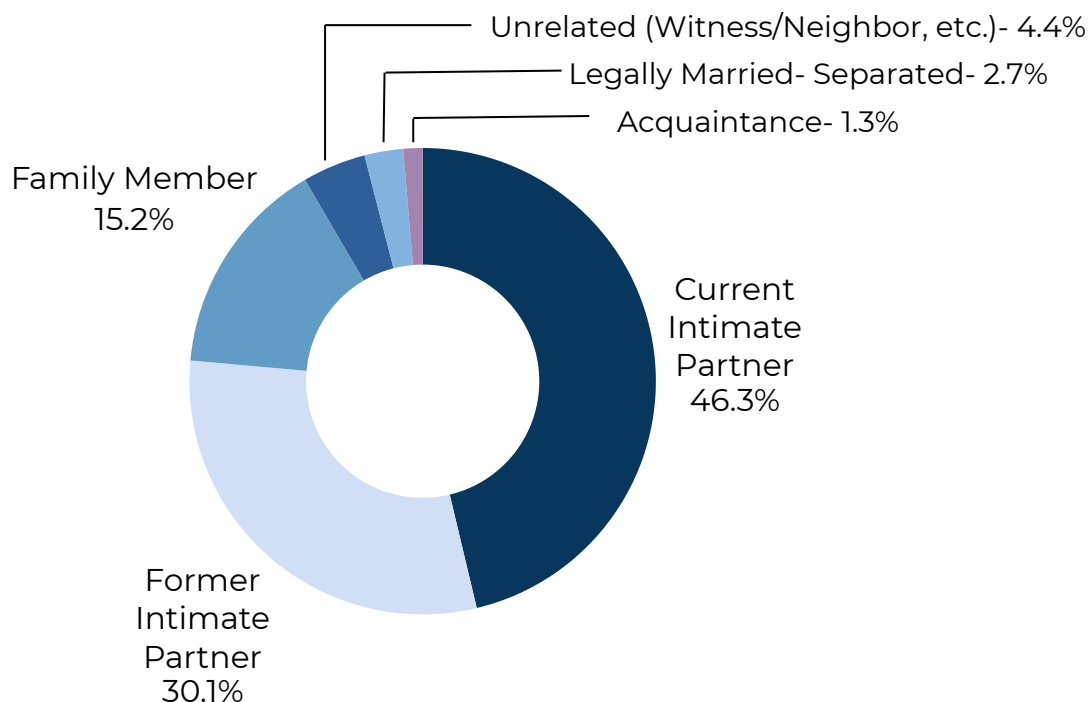
DOMESTIC DISTURBANCES AND CRIMES

TYPE OF VIOLENCE



Family violence is violence between people who are related through biology, adoption, or marriage whereas intimate partner violence occurs between current or former romantic or intimate partners.

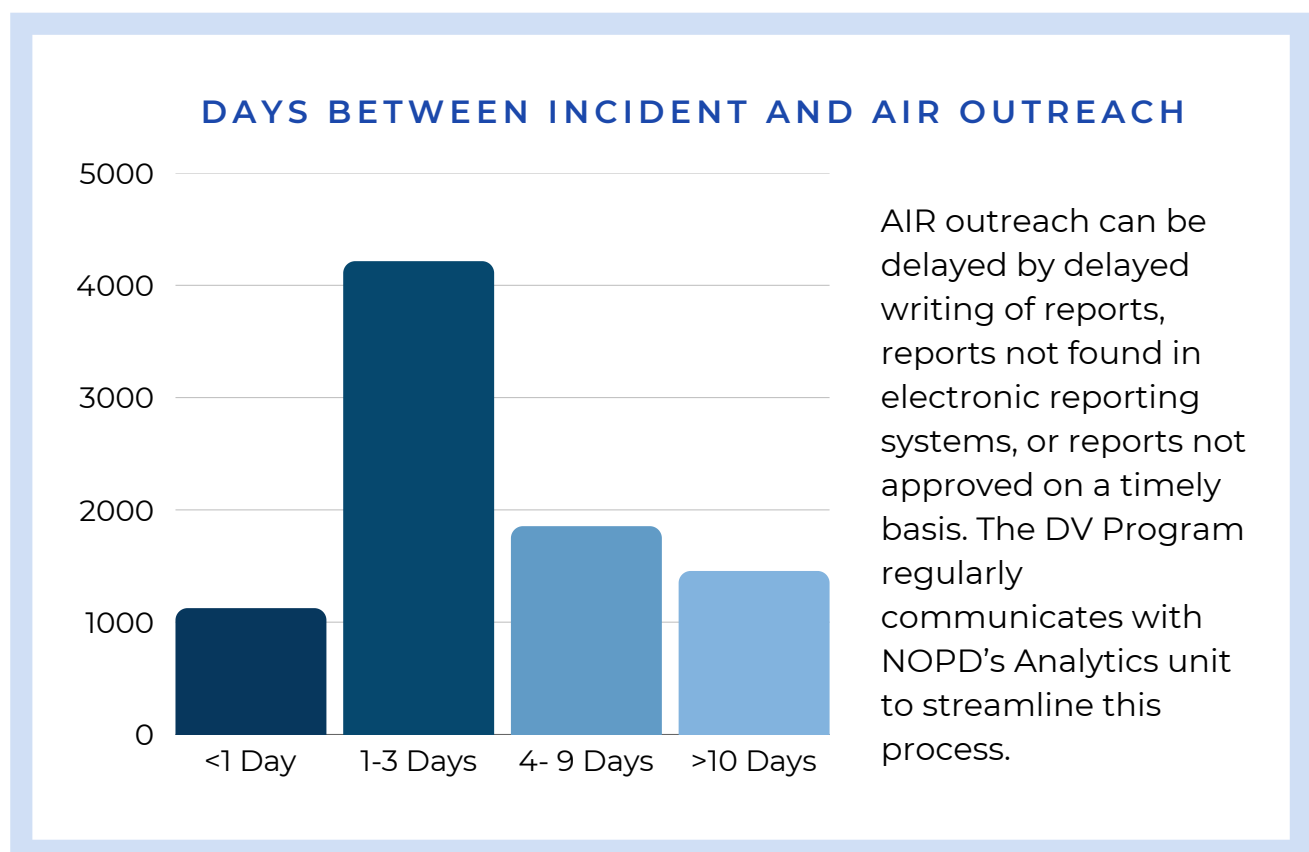
RELATIONSHIP TO VICTIM



AIR OUTREACH: CALL TIMES

INCIDENT RESPONSE

Because of the emergent nature of DV incidents, the AIR Program seeks to make contact with victims and reporting individuals as soon as possible after law enforcement responds to a domestic incident or disturbance. AIR's goal is to make an initial contact attempt within three days of the incident, and if a victim cannot be reached AIR advocates will continue to attempt contact a total of 3 times. If an AIR Advocate is successful making contact with a victim or reporting person, the advocate offers support, completes a safety plan with the victim, and identifies and offers appropriate referrals to supportive resources.

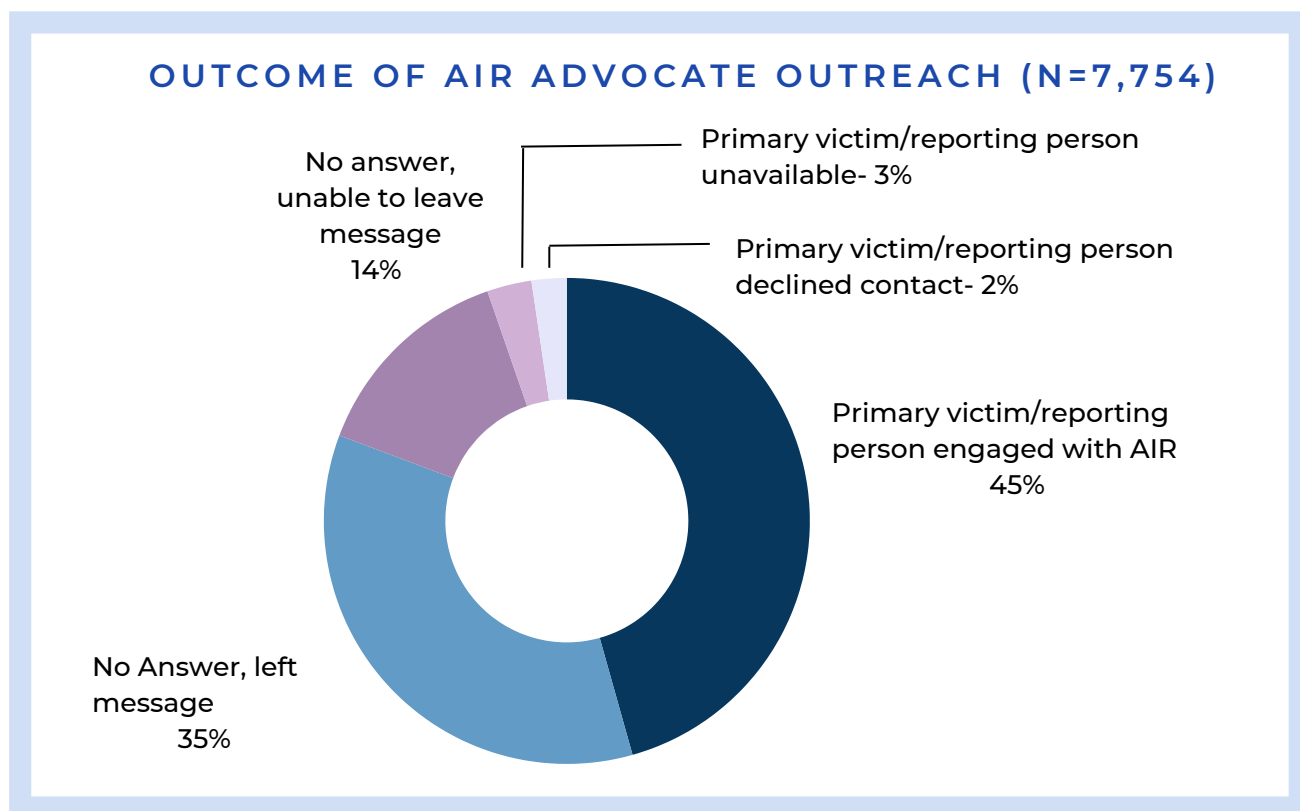


AIR OUTREACH: OUTCOMES

AIR ADVOCATE OUTREACH

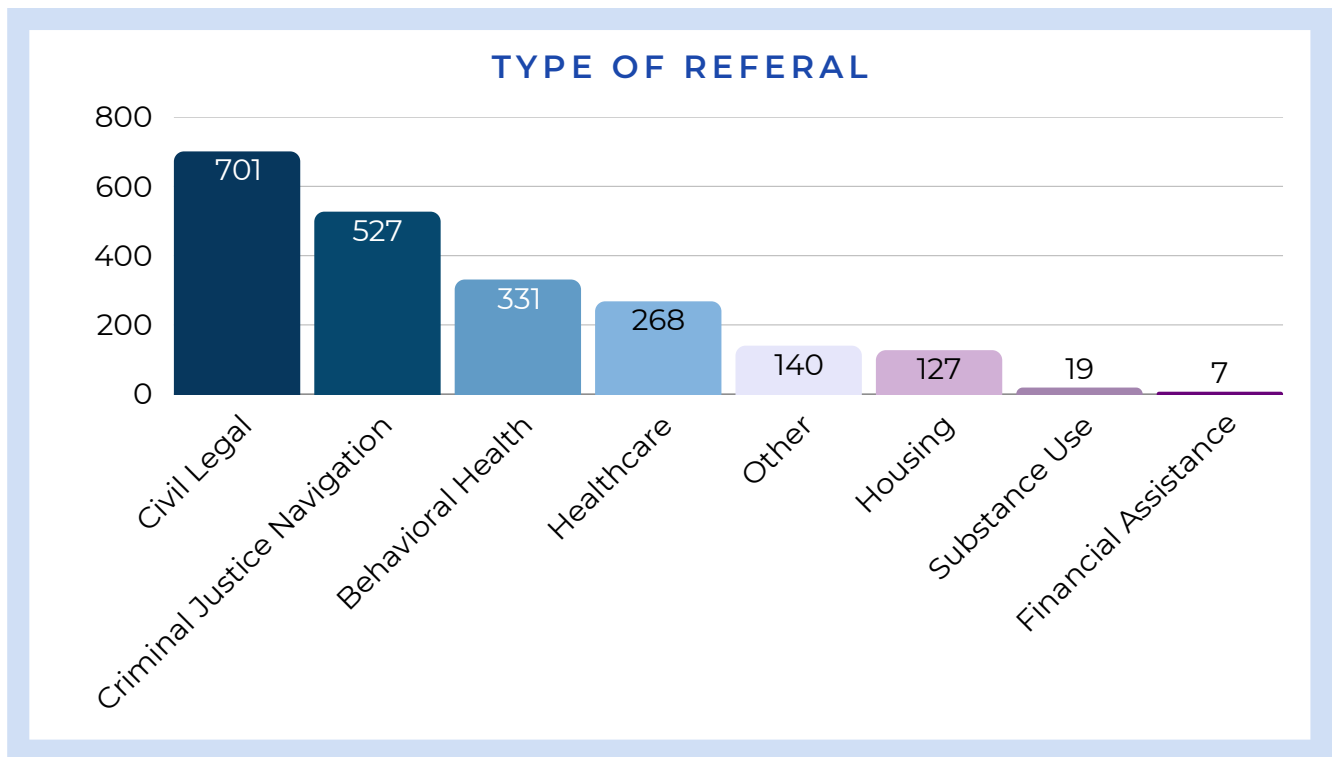
In 2024, AIR Advocates were able to review 11,020 of the 11,663 total incidents. 33% of incident reports reviewed did not include contact information or a working phone number for a victim or reporting person, making it impossible for AIR to attempt outreach. This can be due to a variety of reasons, including NOPD officers failing to obtain contact information, victims not disclosing contact information, victims not having safe contact information to give, or a non-working phone number.

67% or 7,754 of the reviewed incidents included contact information and a working phone number, allowing AIR advocates to attempt contact with the victim/reporting person. Of the victims attempted, 45% or 3,539 victims/reporting persons were successfully contacted, offered resources, and engaged in safety planning. Of important note, only 2% of victims or reporting persons successfully contact by AIR declined to receive their services. This low percentage demonstrates the demand for victim advocacy in the aftermath of a domestic violence incident.



AIR OUTREACH: REFERRALS

REFERRALS TO SUPPORTIVE SERVICES



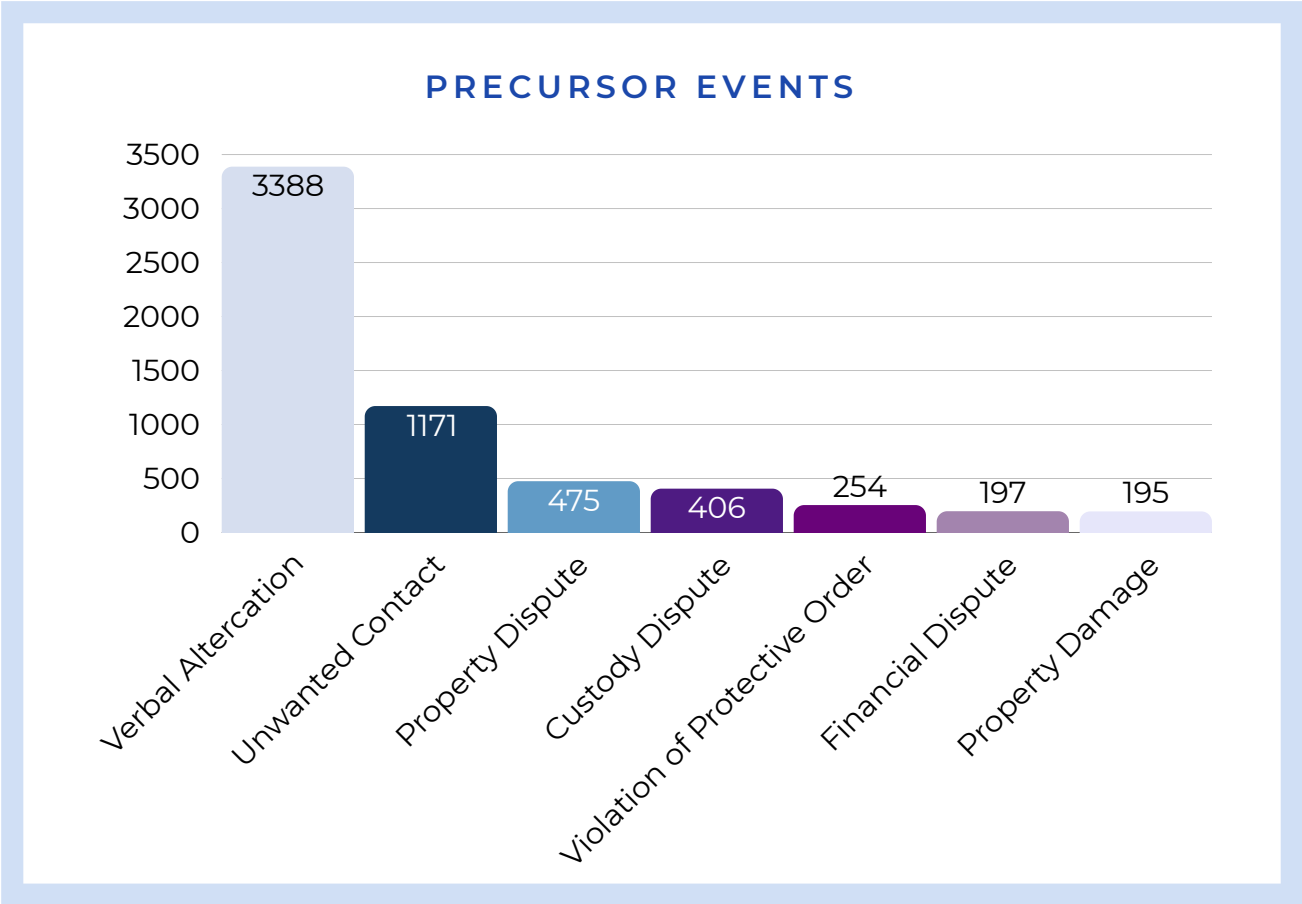
AIR referrals seek to assist victims with access to common areas of need for people who have experienced violence, including access to legal representation, medical treatment, victim advocacy, and trauma recovery services. 68% of victims or reporting persons who spoke with an AIR Advocate accepted one or more referral to support services or resources.

AIR Advocates made 4,570 referrals to the New Orleans Family Justice Center, which is designed to function as an umbrella referral providing many types of support through one access point. In 2024, 663 individuals referred accessed one or more service at NOFJC. Case management and trauma-informed counseling were the most frequently utilized services, while practical support, such as food and transportation assistance, was the most requested resource.

After victim advocacy, civil legal services was the most commonly requested referral, illustrating the impact of civil law processes like protective orders, custody agreements, and residency laws on victims' lives.

INCIDENTS: PRECURSORS

AIR Advocates seek to understand the events leading up to DV-related incidents in order to inform safety planning discussions with victims, as well as new prevention initiatives that seek to eliminate circumstances that lead to violence. To achieve this, AIR Advocates read NOPD incident reports and speak with victims to identify precursor events, which describe the circumstances that precede or indicate the incitement of abuse.



FINDING: CONFLICT RESOLUTION IS VIOLENCE PREVENTION

In 41% of incidents, an argument or verbal altercation was the event that prompted the victim’s call to NOPD. This was overwhelmingly the most common precursor identified in 2024 DV-related incidents. This finding highlights the importance of early intervention programs like AIR, which offer victims and reporting persons resources and support before conflict escalates to violence.

FINDING: PROTECTIVE ORDERS PLAY A VITAL ROLE IN ELIMINATING UNWANTED CONTACT

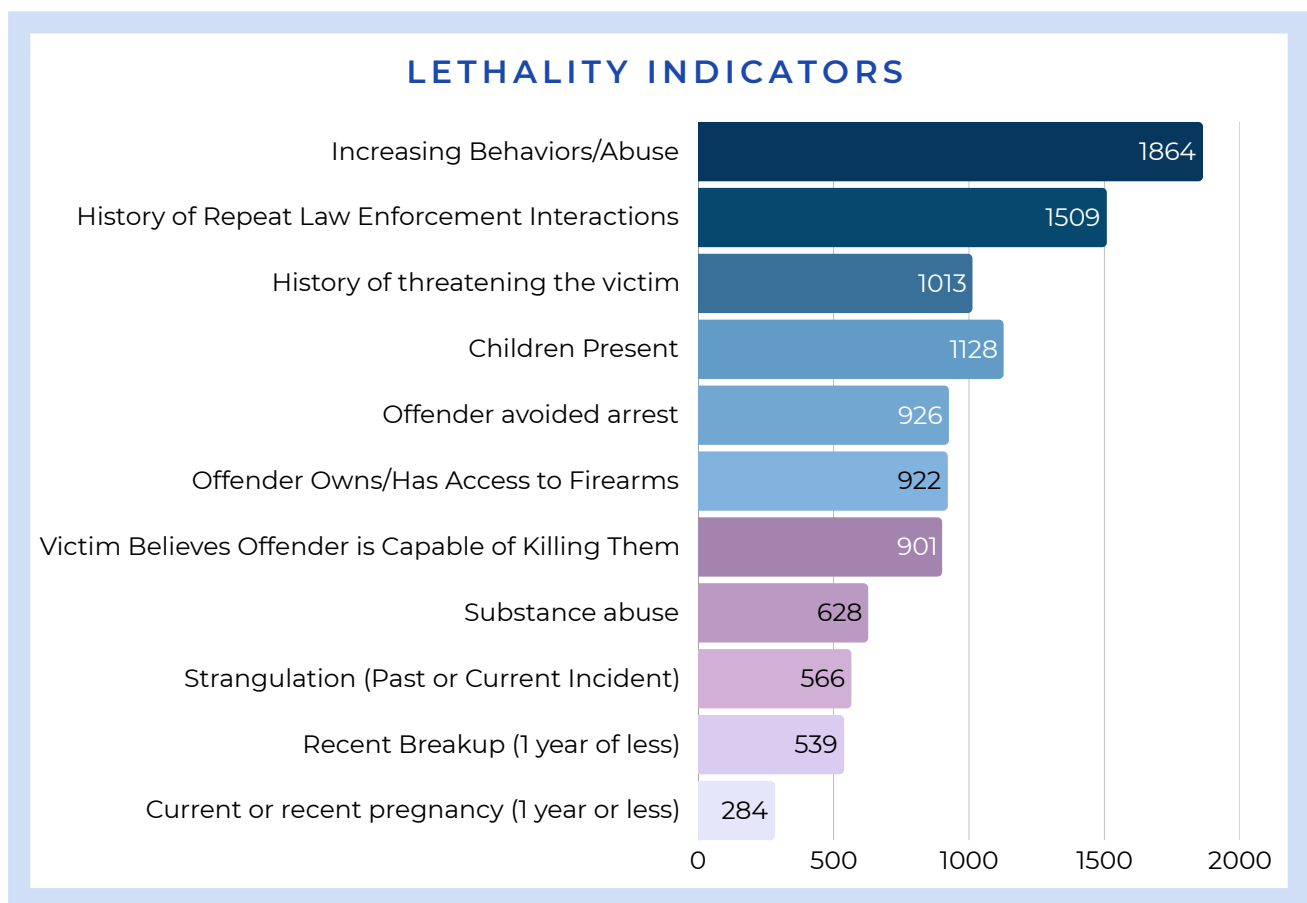
The next most common precursor documented by AIR Advocates is violation of a protective order or unwanted contact from the individual who caused them harm. Unwanted contact accounted for 17% of DV-related calls in 2024, highlighting the importance of systems that protect people from this form of abuse. Law enforcement is often unable to offer long-term solutions to unwanted contact when a civil or criminal protective order is not in place. AIR Advocates seek to prevent the cycle of abuse and repeat calls by referring victims of unwanted contact to services within Civil and Criminal District Court that help victims to petition for and maintain protective orders. Responding to this data, NOHD's DV/SA Program sought and received additional City funding to create a Criminal District Court Advocate position designed to help victims navigate first appearance hearings in which criminal protective orders are often issued.

FINDING: CIVIL LEGAL DISPUTES ARE AT THE HEART OF 10% OF ALL DV-RELATED 911 CALLS

In 2024, 10% of all domestic violence (DV) incidents stemmed from civil legal issues like custody and property disputes. While law enforcement are often called to intervene in these situations, they have limited authority to offer lasting solutions. Recognizing a critical need for civil legal assistance, the New Orleans Health Department's (NOHD) DV/SA Program successfully advocated for more resources. In 2023, City Council approved funding for additional civil legal services to address AIR referrals. This funding expanded services for DV victims through Southeast Louisiana Legal Services (SLLS), which provides free civil legal aid to low-income residents across southeast Louisiana. In 2024, SLLS served 250 AIR clients, helping them to secure protective orders, divorces, child custody, and safe housing.

INCIDENTS: RISK FACTORS

Risk assessments are used to determine the likelihood of future violence and the potential for harm, including serious injury or death, that may result from that violence. Risk assessments achieve this by determining the presence and impact of factors established by research to increase the likeliness and lethality of violence. Some of these factors include a history of violence, access to weapons, threats to hurt or kill the victim, and prior strangulation. While risk factors should not be considered causal, they can be used by domestic violence professionals to inform appropriate responses to disclosures.⁷



AIR Advocates speak with victims and reporting persons, read police incident reports, and review historical records to determine risk factors at play in each incident and develop a safety plan tailored to the specific needs of the victim. In 2024, advocates identified one or more factors associated with increased risk of lethality in 5,207 incidents (47% of the total incidents that AIR advocates reviewed), and in 72% of these incidents, advocates documented a previous history of domestic violence or histories of domestic disturbances. This underlines the need for an intervention like AIR, which seeks to interrupt cycles of violence.

FINDINGS AND INTERVENTIONS: HIGHLIGHTED RISK FACTORS

While risk assessments are commonly used to inform safety planning sessions with victims, professionals also use them to predict the likelihood of abuse resulting in a fatality. Through the New Orleans Domestic Abuse Fatality Review, the NOHD DV/SA Program has identified several risk factors that are often associated with DV fatalities in Orleans Parish. While these factors do not necessarily cause the fatal outcome, they have been determined to be a factor among a number of factors that led to the fatality. Several of the risk factors identified by the NODAFR Initiative were commonly recorded by AIR Advocates as risk factors in 2024 incidents.⁸ Informed by AIR data, the following are risk factors that NOHD continues to highlight for targeted prevention and intervention strategies.

PRIOR HISTORY OF DV

DV is a patterned crime. Research tells us it almost always escalates over time and involves tactics of power and control, like use of threats, emotional manipulation, or acts of physical violence. Almost 30 years of research has also demonstrated that the most common risk factor for domestic violence homicide is prior domestic violence incident. 22-92% of those involved in a domestic abuse homicide are known in the criminal justice system prior to a homicide occurring.⁹

When AIR Advocates receive police incident reports, they take the time to not just review that incident but also determine if the people involved have had any prior incidents on record with NOPD or previous interaction with the NOFJC. This review allows AIR Advocates to treat DV as the patterned crime that it is and develop a more full picture of the DV incident, identify risk factors, track patterns that suggest intervention points, and provide individualized referrals for victims and their loved ones. This practice has also allowed AIR to identify repeat offenders, incidents with high potential for lethality, or particularly vulnerable victims and escalate these incidents for multidisciplinary agency response. This has empowered AIR to play the crucial role of functioning as an information hub, connecting discreet databases of information and as a result, identifying patterns and interventions points.

STRANGULATION

AIR identified strangulation as a risk factor in over 10% of 2024 DV-related incidents. Prior non-fatal strangulations are associated with higher rates of becoming a completed homicide in the future.¹⁰ Women who experience nonfatal strangulation by a partner are 750% more likely to experience homicide by that same partner.¹¹ Additionally, research has demonstrated that a majority of law enforcement officers killed in this country are killed by men with a history of strangulation assault against women.¹²

NOHD's DV/SA Program has continued to work with partners to address strangulation in our community, and AIR data highlights that the need persists for further prevention and intervention for strangulation. The NOHD DV/SA Program most recently conducted a review of 2023 data to determine arrest, prosecution, and sentencing outcomes for strangulation related crimes and develop recommendations for improving criminal system responses.

ACCESS TO FIREARMS

Decades of research has demonstrated living in a home with a firearm significantly increases the risk of dying from homicide, suicide, or accidental firearm related deaths,¹³ with one study finding that in domestic abuse situations, the risk of death is five times greater when a gun is present.¹⁴ AIR Advocates documented firearms present as a risk factors at over 20% of incidents.

NODAFR findings and AIR data has helped to inform NOHD's Office of Violence Prevention's firearm safe storage program designed to provide gun safes, cable locks, and educational materials to promote gun safety and secure gun storage to prevent injury and death. Since its inception in 2023, the program has distributed over 2000 biometric firearm safes to individuals along with brief firearm safety training. NOHD followed up after 6-12 weeks and 83% of safe recipients reported using the lockbox to store their firearms.¹⁵

CONCLUSION

The devastating impact of domestic violence on the citizens of New Orleans demands the innovative and integrated response provided by the AIR Program. By connecting skilled, trained community-based advocates directly to victims and reporting persons, AIR seeks to increase victim safety, facilitate crucial connections to resources, and disrupt cycles of violence in the community. The AIR Program's ability to review 11,020 reported incidents in 2024 and successfully engage with 45% of those with contact information demonstrates its significant reach and the clear need for this type of support. However, the limitation imposed by incomplete contact information in a third of reported cases underscores a critical challenge that must be addressed. The insights gathered through direct victim contact have yielded actionable recommendations, including the enhancement of contact data collection, the diversification of supportive referrals, and the expansion of accessible civil legal services. The AIR Program will continue to work to implement these recommendations and future ones identified through evaluation and assessment efforts, with the ultimate goal of preventing future violence and increasing victim safety.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the AIR findings from 2024, the NOHD DV/SA Program developed the following recommendations for program improvement to inform future operation and evaluation initiatives.

Recommendation	Strategies
Improve collection of accurate victim contact information at DV incident scenes	• Include in NOPD annual in-service training information and periodic roll call trainings information about the AIR program, AIR DV Dashboard, and the importance and utility of recording contact information, including options for safe secondary contacts.
Diversify resource referrals provided to victims by AIR Advocates	• Expand referral database used by AIR Advocates. • Increase advocate knowledge of resources through continuing education sessions with referral agencies.
Increase access to Civil Legal Services	• Convene a Civil Legal Taskforce to improve processes and programs impacting victims of DV including civil protective orders, firearm transfers, and court navigation. • Improve referral process between AIR and Civil Legal Services by establishing warm handoff protocols. • Expand City funding for agencies that provide free or low cost civil legal services for Orleans Parish residents.
Evaluate program to understand further impacts	• Contract with an external evaluator to explore AIR program's effectiveness in increasing victim safety, linking victims to resources, and disrupting the cycle of violence. • Use findings from evaluation to inform future AIR operations.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The New Orleans Health Department honors individuals whose lives have been impacted by domestic abuse and the experiences of survivors of domestic violence in New Orleans. It also thanks the AIR Advocates whose tireless work ensures every victim receives care and support. It is our hope that this initiative will help eradicate domestic abuse in our community and prevent violence from occurring in the future.



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www.nola.gov/health/domestic-violence-prevention