

Like murders, murder-suicides inflict excruciating pain on victims, survivors and society at large.

Unlike murders, however, police investigators in murder-suicide cases operate outside the structure that challenges them to understand a homicide well enough to support the public prosecution of the living perpetrator. Murder-suicides are not accompanied by public prosecutions.

How can society understand and properly respond to the violence of murder-suicides without an equivalent process for public understanding? And to that end, what's the proper balance between information that might even point to systemic solutions -- and certain vivid detail that can live online forever, hurting and re-hurting survivors, without adding much to the public's understanding?

These were the questions that came up during the course of our coverage of three murder-suicides in 2024 and 2025. Each of the cases exposed children to lethal explosions of domestic violence.

We were also aware of the primary concern that had led authorities to withhold details from certain previous murder-suicide investigations: A belief that the scope of the information and detail that often emerges in prosecutable homicide cases can hurt survivors of such violence, including children, and that such pain isn't necessary when no prosecution is needed.

Hopkinton police officers had gathered body-camera video from a scene of domestic violence that had taken place at the same house just weeks before. At that time, police cameras had recorded the future homicide victim as she fretted about her own future safety. This was the first video of its kind that we have acquired: police body-camera footage from one domestic violence scene foreshadowing a domestic violence murder in the future. Rhode Island has only recently adopted a statewide body camera policy.

The sensitivity of such new content was clear immediately: A frequent source for context in such scenarios in the past, the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence, declined to comment on the story, citing our anticipated use of video.

Our reporting leaned heavily on the extensive volumes of video as well as police reports and other records.

On social media, a non-profit praised us for "shedding light on recognizing red flags, addressing risk factors like firearms and past abuse, and emphasizing the need for stronger prevention to save lives." ~ Mark Reynolds, crime reporter, Providence Journal

<https://www.providencejournal.com/story/news/crime/2024/07/08/hopkinton-womans-domestic-abuse-ends-in-her-death-stephanie-francis/74330203007/>

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<https://www.providencejournal.com/story/news/crime/2025/01/10/memories-of-danielle-arruda-two-children-killed-in-ri-murder-suicide/77580935007/>

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