

## About WATCH's Strangulation Study


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### Report's authors

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### Thesis

 What impact did the felony strangulation legislation have on victim safety and offender accountability in Hennepin County and in Greater Minnesota?

### Methodology

-  Collected statewide charging statistics from the State Court Administrator's Office from August 2005 to August 31, 2006.
-  Reviewed 59 Hennepin County cases with felony domestic strangulation charges occurring during the first six months of the laws implementation (August 2005 to January 2006).
-  Reviewed 17 Hennepin County misdemeanor cases where defendants placed their hands around the victims' necks
-  Distributed a survey to the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women's member programs, eliciting responses from 16 domestic violence service providers serving primarily 15 counties and the Leech Lake Reservation
-  Interviewed 18 Hennepin County criminal justice system personnel familiar with the new statute, including victim advocates, law enforcement officers, judges, city attorneys, county attorneys, and probation officers.

### Notable features

-  Minnesota is only one of six states that have past felony domestic strangulation legislation.
-  To WATCH's knowledge only North Carolina has examined the implementation of their legislation, reviewing only charging and conviction rates.

## Conclusions and recommendations

### WATCH Recommendation #1

- **Increase probationary supervision of felony level offenders. This could be implemented through a specialized unit to supervise felony level domestic violence offenders or through increasing domestic violence training for probation officers that supervise felony level probationers.**

### Recommendation #2

- **Encourage judiciary to increase and standardize probation revocations when defendants violate their probation. Further, encourage the bench to verbalize the seriousness of violations of no-contact orders and orders for protection in domestic strangulation and to address them appropriately.**

### Recommendation #3

- **Discourage the judiciary from ordering stays of imposition of sentences for less than two years in domestic strangulation cases.**

### Recommendation #4

- **Provide written materials (with on-the-scene check list) for law enforcement officers called to domestic assault strangulation scenes to ensure that all necessary questions are asked of victims and witnesses, injuries are documented and photographed, and appropriate medical treatment is provided.**

### Recommendation #5

- **Encourage batterers intervention programs to develop specific types of intervention that target abusers who use strangulation.**

### Recommendation #6

- **Convene a domestic strangulation working group of the Hennepin County Family Violence Coordinating Council to look at the coordination and the implementation of the new law in Hennepin County. Use WATCH's report and its findings as a springboard for discussion and action.**

## Conclusions and recommendations

### Recommendation #7

- **Conduct yearly reviews of strangulation related misdemeanor cases to ensure that investigation, charging, and referral policies are followed.**

### Recommendation #8

- **Encourage service providers, law enforcement and court personnel to host domestic strangulation review teams or working groups in jurisdictions statewide to review the law, WATCH's report, and gaps in local implementation.**

### Recommendation #9

- **Provide training on strangulation for all domestic violence service providers, medical professionals and criminal justice system personnel, including specifics on statutory language and requirements.**

### Recommendation #10

- **Encourage community education about the high incidence of strangulation in domestic abuse cases; correct terminology when discussing strangulation; the impact of strangulation on victims and their children; the continuum of violence and the role strangulation plays as violence escalates; and the potential lethality of strangulation.**