

# Unit 12: Homicide



**Time Required: 2.5 hours**

## Resources Needed

- OVC *Listen and Learn* DVD (clip: Arson-Related Homicide/Peggy; Homicide/Amy; Homicide/Myrtle)
- *Participant Workbook* (pages 81–90)
- TV and DVD player
- Chalkboard or tearsheets

## Prior to the Session

- Consider gathering local and state statistics and newspaper or article clippings for the discussion about homicide trends.
- Research your state's statutes related to homicide; be prepared to provide information to participants about these statutes.
- On individual sheets of paper, copy the victim statements from activity C at the end of this unit; use different color paper if available.

## Objectives

- Define **homicide**.
- Provide examples of homicide.
- Describe current trends for homicide crimes.
- Explain the impact of homicide on victims and survivors.
- Discuss thoughts and feelings about being held accountable for homicide crimes.



## Facilitator Tip

- Remind participants that although the victim is dead, survivors are left behind.
- Confront the attitude that the survivors will “get over it” or that “time heals all wounds.”

## What Is Homicide?

**Homicide** is defined as—

- **Murder:** Killing another person with prior intent to kill that particular victim or anyone who gets in the way and with no legal excuse or authority.
- **Manslaughter:** Killing another person without prior intent to kill.
  - Voluntary manslaughter involves killing another person in the heat of passion or while in the act of committing another felony crime.
  - Involuntary manslaughter involves killing another person while committing an illegal activity that is not a felony.



**Have participants read the “Words To Know” aloud.**

**Delivery options** include reading words aloud yourself, writing the words on a chalkboard or tearsheet, selecting participants to read words aloud, or dividing participants into small groups or pairs and having them discuss the terms among themselves. For all delivery options, survey participants to ensure that they understand the terms before moving on.



### Words To Know

**Covictim:** The loved ones or people associated with the event who are left behind after a homicide.

**Homicide:** The killing of a person.

**Homicide survivor:** See “covictim.”

**Murder:** The killing of another person with the prior intent to kill.

**Manslaughter:** Unlawfully killing a person without the prior intent to kill.

**Ripple effect:** The impact on others associated with the victim, such as coworkers, classmates, casual acquaintances, or neighbors.

**Survivor reactions:** Responses, such as thoughts or feelings about the murder of a loved one.



### Group Discussion

As a group, discuss some of the issues that homicide survivors must deal with:

- Death notification process.
- Identification of the body.
- Funeral arrangements.
- The media.
- An unsolved case.

Ask participants the following:

- What other issues can you think of?
- How would your family deal with these issues?



## In the News: Homicide Trends

This page offers recent statistics about homicide. If you have gathered local and state statistics, integrate them into your discussion. If you have found relevant newspaper or magazine articles, read them out loud or assign participants into groups of three to discuss and then present the information to the larger group.

### When discussing homicide trends—

- Select participants to read the trends aloud.
- Use local news articles, reviewing them carefully to avoid overly complex issues. Make sure that the articles do not identify offenders in your facility or victims in your community.
- Ask participants “Which trend is the most surprising to you?”



## Examples of Homicide

The *Participant Workbook*, pages 82–83, offers definitions and personal stories involving homicide; consider having participants substitute the names of their family members or friends in the scenarios. You also can share any state-specific statutes related to homicide with participants in this section.

**Delivery options** include taking turns with the participants in reading scenarios aloud; selecting participants to read scenarios (be mindful of reading abilities); and dividing participants into small groups or pairs to discuss scenarios. Refer back to “Words To Know” as they appear in the scenarios. Solicit feedback by asking the following questions: “Who was the primary victim?” “Who else may have been harmed by the offender?” “How was the victim harmed?” and “What do you think the victim is experiencing?” Add details to the scenarios. Encourage note taking.



## Triad Session

Have participants write their answers to the questions under each type of homicide example. Then, in groups of three, have participants share their responses with one another and offer feedback. Finally, bring the larger group back together to discuss participants’ responses.



## Group Discussion

Have volunteers read aloud the three quotes by homicide survivors on pages 82–83 in their workbooks. As a group, discuss the impact of victimization on these individuals. What if the crimes had been committed against participants’ family members?

## What Is the Impact of Homicide?

Homicide creates a ripple effect throughout several areas in victims’ lives: financial, physical, emotional, and religious/spiritual.



## Chalkboard Exercise

Have participants take turns reading from the areas of impact lists. Solicit additional examples from the group, looking for the following:

<p><b>Financial</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Temporary or permanent job loss</li> <li>• Out-of-pocket costs</li> <li>• Travel expenses related to parole hearings</li> <li>• Loss of family home</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> </ul>	<p><b>Physical</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stomach pain</li> <li>• Headaches</li> <li>• Eating disorders</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> </ul>
<p><b>Emotional</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guilt/self-blame</li> <li>• Shame</li> <li>• Lack of trust</li> <li>• Depression</li> <li>• Changes in personal values</li> <li>• Hypervigilance</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> </ul>	<p><b>Religious/Spiritual</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questioning the goodness of others</li> <li>• Reevaluating basic values/beliefs</li> <li>• Issues about forgiveness</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> </ul>



**Facilitator Note**

If participants say they have never committed homicide, ask them whether someone they know was ever a victim or survivor of homicide and what the impact of that crime was.



**OVC Listen and Learn DVD**



**Facilitator Note**

There are three “homicide” video clips in this unit. Each is accompanied by its own set of questions. You may show them all in one class session or in multiple sessions.

**Peggy’s son Joey was killed in an arson crime.**

Consider stopping and starting the video to reinforce key points and then initiate discussion at the end. Possible discussion questions and answers follow:

- **What was the emotional impact of Joey’s murder on Peggy?**
  - It was extremely difficult for her to understand how the murderer’s intended victim survived while Joey was senselessly murdered.
  - She is very angry because she is a law-abiding citizen, and her son was an upstanding young man.
  - She feels as though “We’ve been punished for the rest of our lives because of someone we didn’t even know.”

- She is very sad because she knows the painful circumstance of Joey’s death from smoke inhalation, and the memory will stay with her for the rest of her life.
- **What was the “domino effect” of Joey’s murder on Peggy’s family?**
  - Her daughter has had to sleep with her since she saw her brother’s murderer at the trial.
  - Her daughter’s victim impact statement at sentencing was “heartbreaking.”
- **How can offenders demonstrate accountability and remorse for killing someone?**
  - They should not address their victim’s surviving members in court unless they are truly sorry. Saying “He would pray for us” was an insult to Peggy and her family.



**Myrtle’s daughter, Nanette, was murdered while attempting to stop an argument between two women.**

Consider stopping and starting the video to reinforce key points and then initiate discussion at the end. Possible discussion questions and answers follow:

- **When Nanette was murdered, what was the emotional impact of this crime on Myrtle?**
  - She was very angry because Nanette had multiple sclerosis and could not defend herself.
  - She was upset because the murderer showed no remorse.
- **When a victim/survivor is an elder, how might the impact of the crime be aggravated?**
  - Older people are not generally as strong as young people, so the emotional impact may cause additional physical aggravations or ailments.
  - Most older parents believe they will die before their children, so the loss of a child—particularly in a violent manner—is devastating.
- **What could Nanette’s murderer do to be accountable?**
  - Apologize to Myrtle and her family.
  - When she is released from prison, live a life free from crime, and be a good mother to her son.



**Amy’s sister Jill was raped, tortured, and murdered 8 years ago.**

Consider stopping and starting the video to reinforce key points and then initiate discussion at the end. Possible discussion questions and answers follow:

- **What was the emotional impact of her sister’s rape and murder on Amy?**
  - The crime has had a long-term impact on her. “Eight years ago . . . it seems like yesterday,” she said.
  - She became suicidal.
- **How did the emotional stress of the murder affect Amy physically?**
  - She developed dermatitis, a serious skin disease.
  - She grinds her jaw, which is a sign of stress.
- **What was the “domino effect” of Jill’s murder on Amy’s family?**
  - Her mother committed suicide.
  - Her older sister became “agoraphobic” (a person who is incapable of leaving the safety of home).
  - Her brother became an alcoholic.
  - Amy says, “There is not just one victim. You’re not just stopping at one person. . . . more than 200 people were affected by her (Jill’s) loss.”



## Being Accountable for Your Crimes

Homicide is a crime of choice. It is the direct or indirect decision and behavior to harm a person that results in death, the ultimate loss. The result of this choice has long-term and intense emotional impacts on covictims and survivors. **Remind participants that no one has the right to kill another person, regardless of the circumstances.**

### Group Discussion

Have participants read the accountability statements and share their thoughts with the group. Ask participants how they think the victims' families would feel hearing these statements.

## Additional Activities

If time permits after covering the material in this unit, you may conduct the additional activities listed on the next few pages before debriefing participants. You may also want to schedule a guest victim/survivor speaker.

Before conducting these activities, survey the group first for any cultural, religious, or personal opposition to participating in activities about death.

### Activity A

**Objective:** Participants focus on typical reactions of homicide survivors.

Ask participants to complete the “Reactions to My Murder” worksheet in their workbooks.

### Activity B

**Objective:** Participants experience what it is like to plan a cremation, burial service, ceremony, or memorial.

Ask participants to complete the “Plan a Funeral” worksheet in their workbooks.

### Activity C

**Objective:** Participants apply what they have learned about crime thus far by identifying types of crimes.

Choose three types of crime, such as burglary, sexual assault, and homicide, and write them down on individual tearsheets or on a chalkboard. Assign participants to small groups, give each group a batch of the victim statements you prepared before this unit began, and have each group place their statements under the “correct” crime.

When each group is finished, see if the other groups are in agreement. After some time, a few participants will catch on and say that any of the statements could fit under any of the crimes. If there is disagreement or a lack of understanding why, discuss with the class.

**Victim Statements:**

- This has been the worst thing that has ever happened in my life.
- I'm not getting much help with expenses.
- I have trouble concentrating at work.
- Maybe if I had been more careful, this wouldn't have happened.
- I've bought personal mace for protection.

- People treat me differently.
- The media was outside of my house after the trial.
- I think I will always be afraid.
- I don't want my name in the paper or on TV.
- This has taught me not to trust the way I used to.
- It's difficult to focus and spend time with my kids; I get distracted easily.
- I've bought a dog for protection.
- My friends say that I've changed.
- I was revictimized by the responding police officers.
- I don't know how to tell my family.
- I never thought I would be a victim.
- The material losses are the last thing on my mind.
- I don't look forward to the days ahead.
- I've bought a gun for protection.
- I found the criminal justice system confusing.

## Recommended Speaker

Have an appropriate speaker address the class on the topic of homicide.



## Discussion/Wrap-Up

Discuss what participants learned in the Homicide unit. Address any questions they may have.

# Unit 12 Participant Worksheets

## Activity A – Reactions to My Murder

Imagine that you have been murdered. Read the following reactions typically experienced by covictims during the first weeks or months after someone they know has been murdered. Choose the reactions that you believe specific family members or friends would have. Write their names under each reaction that applies.

Shock:

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Suicidal thoughts:

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Denial:

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Anger:

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Unable to make day-to-day decisions:

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Unable to sleep:

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Worrying whether you suffered:

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Able to make day-to-day decisions:

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Thoughts of revenge:

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Sadness, missing you:

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Having to take medication:

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Attending the offenders' hearings or execution:

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Constantly thinking about you:

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For most survivors, the trauma of your murder would be made worse by the need to make decisions and plans that are very stressful. Write the name of the person who would most likely deal with the following decisions or planning:

Notifying family and friends of your death: \_\_\_\_\_

Identifying your body: \_\_\_\_\_

Dealing with the religious or cultural issues your death raises with your family: \_\_\_\_\_

Informing law enforcement officials or victim services advocates of any religious or cultural taboos or requirements of your family: \_\_\_\_\_

Making the cremation/funeral/burial arrangements: \_\_\_\_\_

Reviewing and paying the medical bills: \_\_\_\_\_

Reviewing and paying the cremation/funeral/burial bills: \_\_\_\_\_

Dealing with the court process: \_\_\_\_\_

## Activity B - Plan a Funeral

Plan a cremation, burial, ceremony, or memorial by filling out the information below. Be as specific as you can.

**Services and burial costs:**

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**Burial options:**

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- Type of casket/urn/container:

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- Flowers/decorations:

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- Music:

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- Photographers/video:

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- Program (type of service):

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- Obituary:

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- Clothing:

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- Faith leader, speakers or attendants:

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- Reception/refreshments:

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