



**ANTI-VIOLENCE PARTNERSHIP  
of Philadelphia**  
*Together we can end the cycle of violence*

**Semi-Structured Interview Guide  
Survivors of Intra-Familial Homicide**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Time:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Setting:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Length:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Interviewer:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Interviewee:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Purpose:** To gather and elevate the perspectives of people with lived experience of intra-familial homicide (IFH) in order to improve systemic responses for families who experience IFH in Philadelphia and nationally. Topics will include IFH survivors' experiences with a variety of formal and informal agencies and systems that are commonly used after an IFH; areas of need and support that were and were not met; and components of assistance, support, and system navigation that made survivors' experiences positive or negative.

**IFH Research Questions:**

1. What is the current response to survivors of intra-familial homicides in Philadelphia?
2. What are the areas of need, experiences, and perspectives of survivors of IFH?
3. What are current best practices, areas of need, and opportunities to systematically support survivors of IFH?

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**BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION**

As the interviewer, you should:

1. Provide a brief introduction on who you are, a bit on your professional background, and your role in the IFH initiative.
2. Let survivors know why you are interviewing them and explain the purpose of the research.
3. Describe what interview participants can expect in terms of topics and time.
4. Remember that survivors' experiences are unique – do not generalize or make assumptions.
5. Maintain a stance of cultural humility and be mindful of differences in race, gender, sexual orientation, class, religion, and power between interviewer and interviewee.
6. Actively address power imbalance in roles of interviewer – interviewee relationship to empower participants with transparent information on the process, choice, and control over what and how survivors share their experiences and participate.
7. Remind participants that participation is voluntary and reference participants' rights (detailed on informed consent) to pause the interview or cease with research participation at any time. Also address privacy and confidentiality practices of data gathered and available connections with resources as desired.
8. Show appreciation to the survivor for sharing and taking the time to participate in this initiative to enhance support for families impacted by IFH.



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### BACKGROUND AND FAMILY INTRODUCTION

*(Complete face sheet to gather demographic information prior to start of interview)*

1. I'd love to start off by just getting to know you a little bit. Could you tell me about yourself?

**Follow-up:** This may also include any aspects of who you are: groups you identify with, things you enjoy doing, your job, your role in your family, something funny, something most people don't know about you, etc.

**Follow-up:** What are some things you like about yourself or that you consider a strength when you think about yourself?

2. How were you connected to the intra-familial homicide initiative?

**Follow-up:** What were some reasons that you decided to participate?

**Follow-up:** Please describe how you felt when someone from the IFH team reached out to you.

**Transition:** *To get us started, I have a few questions related to your family member who was murdered and your family. These questions will give us a picture regarding how you view your family.*

**Transition:** *Additionally, police, victim service providers, lawyers, and the media use many different words to speak about the people who are killed, their families, and the people who have done the killing. These questions will also let us know how you want us to refer to different people in your family throughout the interview.*

**Transition:** *As a reminder, if at any time throughout the interview you need a break or feel overwhelmed, please let us know so we can support you. Many of these questions are difficult, and it is okay to take the time you need to feel more comfortable answering them. If at any time you feel the need to stop the interview and not continue, let us know. We will support you in whatever way you need throughout this process.*

1. How would you like me to refer to your family member who was killed?

2. How would you like me to refer to the family member who killed [insert name/word identified above]?

3. What is your relationship to [insert name/word identified above] who was murdered?

4. What is your relationship to your [insert name/word identified above] who committed the murder?

5. How did you find out that your family member was murdered?

6. In your own words, how would you define your **immediate** family?

7. Please identify all of the people who you consider a part of your family.



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8. Tell me a little bit about the rest of your family.

**Follow-up:** This may include how you view the family relationships or whatever you feel is important to share.

9. How would you describe your family relationships before your family member was killed?

**Follow-up:** Talk through how people in your family interacted with one another before the murder.

10. Describe your relationship with [insert identified name of **decedent** above].

**Follow-up:** You can talk about anything that you would like to share or anything that stands out to you regarding your relationship with [name of decedent].

11. Describe your relationship with [insert identified name of person who **committed the murder**].

**Follow-up:** You can talk about anything that you would like to share or anything that stands out to you regarding your relationship with [name of person who committed the murder].

12.. How would you describe your family relationships after your family member was taken?

**Follow-up:** Can you talk about anything in particular that has changed or stayed the same?

**Follow-up:** How have day-to-day activities changed since the murder?

**Follow-up:** Describe any changes in roles within the family since the murder.

**Follow-up:** Tell me a little bit about how your family has adapted or changed since.

11. Whether healthy or unhealthy, can you talk about some things that you and your family members have done to cope with the absence of your family member(s)?

12. Have you or your family members started any traditions in memory of your family member? Describe.

13. Has any family member, friend, or community member stepped in to fill a more active role in your family?

**Follow-up:** This may mean someone helping you or your family more than before your family member was taken from you.

**Follow-up:** How are you connected to this person?

**Follow-up:** How did this person become more involved in your family system?

14. Is there anything else you would like to share with us about you, your family, or your family relationships?

**Transition:** *Now we are going to get into some questions around your experiences and areas of need at the time when your [relative] was killed. If you need to take a break from the interview at this time or any time going forward, please let us know.*

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### COMMON EXPERIENCES AND AREAS OF NEED

*We know from working with families that in the days, weeks, and months after a murder, family members are often doing everything they can to just keep going, take care of themselves, and access the services they need. At the same time, there are huge changes happening. All of this can be intensified when the homicide happens within the family. Below is a list of common areas where families have expressed needs and connections that may or may not apply to you. Please remember to answer these questions thinking back to immediately after the murder happened.*

1. After your family member was killed, please describe your **immediate** needs or things you needed help with right away. This can be anything you can think of that would have been helpful to you at the time of the murder.

2. Describe your needs in terms of **physical safety** after your family member was killed.

**Follow-up:** Who, if anyone, helped you meet your physical safety needs?

**Follow-up:** When did you need help with physical safety concerns the most?

**Follow-up:** Were there any physical safety concerns that were particularly challenging because the murder happened within your family?

3. Describe your experiences, whether positive or negative, of **household needs** after your family member was taken. This might include anything pertaining to your household such as childcare, food, utilities, rent, etc.

**Follow-up:** Who, if anyone, helped you with these household needs?

**Follow-up:** When did you need help with household needs the most?

**Follow-up:** Were there any household needs that were particularly challenging because the murder happened within your family?

4. Describe your experiences, whether positive or negative, with **crime scene cleanup** companies after your family member was taken.

**Follow-up:** Do you rent or own your home?

**Follow-up:** Who, if anyone, helped you with ensuring the crime scene was properly cleaned?

**Follow-up:** Who, if anyone, helped you cover the costs of crime scene cleanup?

**Follow-up:** Is there anything else you would like to share about crime scene cleanup?

5. Describe your experiences, whether positive or negative, with **funeral planning and burial assistance** after your family member was taken.

**Follow-up:** Who, if anyone, helped you with this?

**Follow-up:** When did you need help with funeral planning and burial assistance the most?

**Follow-up:** Were there any funeral planning and burial assistance needs that were particularly challenging because the murder happened within your family?



## **ANTI-VIOLENCE PARTNERSHIP of Philadelphia**

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6. Describe your experiences, whether positive or negative, with getting **emergency financial assistance** after your family member was taken. This can include crisis funds or informal support such as gofundme.org or neighbors, religious/spiritual community, etc.

**Follow-up:** Who, if anyone, helped you with this?

**Follow-up:** When did you need help accessing emergency financial assistance the most?

**Follow-up:** Were there any challenges accessing emergency financial assistance needs that were particularly difficult because the murder happened within your family?

7. Describe your experiences, whether positive or negative, with the **Victim Compensation Assistance Program (VCAP)** if one was completed. VCAP is a formal financial assistance application that reimburses family members for financial hardship and certain expenses after a murder or crime has taken place.

**Follow-up:** Who, if anyone, helped you with this?

**Follow-up:** When did you need help with VCAP the most?

**Follow-up:** Were there any VCAP needs that were particularly challenging because the murder happened within your family?

8. Describe your experiences, whether positive or negative, with accessing **therapy or grief counseling** after your family member was taken.

**Follow-up:** There is no set time frame on when it is best to begin receiving therapy or grief counseling. Do you have a sense of when the best time for you to start therapy was?

**Follow-up:** If you did receive therapy, what were the things that made you aware that you wanted or needed therapy, or helped you feel ready to start therapy?

**Follow-up:** Were there any things that got in the way of connecting with therapy or grief counseling?

**Follow-up:** Were there any needs related to therapy or grief counseling that were particularly challenging because the murder happened within your family?

9. Describe your experiences, whether positive or negative, with **support groups** focusing on survivors of homicide that you attended or became a part of--even if you no longer attend.

**Follow-up:** How did you find out about the support group?

**Follow-up:** When did you start/stop attending?

**Follow-up:** Were there any particularly challenging parts of connecting with support groups because the murder happened within your family?

10. Describe your experiences, whether positive or negative, connecting with a **religious/spiritual community** after your family member was taken.

**Follow-up:** Were there any particular challenges connecting with a religious or spiritual community because the murder happened within your family?

**Follow-up:** When was, or might have been, the best time to connect with religious/spiritual support?

**Follow-up:** Who, if anyone, helped you connect you to this community?



## ANTI-VIOLENCE PARTNERSHIP of Philadelphia

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**Follow-up:** If you were already connected to a religious or spiritual community, did your connection change at all after the murder?

11. Are you aware of whether any of your **family members** were offered any of the services we just discussed after your family member was taken?

**Follow-up:** What were they offered?

**Follow-up:** Did they participate in any services?

12. Please talk a little bit about the needs or experiences of any **children** in your family who were impacted by the murder of your family member.

**Follow-up:** How were the children related to both [insert name identified earlier re: decedent] and [insert name identified earlier re: person who committed the murder]?

**Follow-up:** How old were these children at the time of the murder?

**Follow-up:** Could you describe in what ways, if at all, the murder was talked about with these children?

**Follow-up:** Could you describe how the homicide impacted school, or if there were any specific challenges with school?

**Follow-up:** Do you recall any specific services or needs for the children at the time of the murder?

**Follow-up:** Were any services offered to the children at the time of the murder?

**Follow-up:** Were the needs of the children addressed?

**Follow-up:** Are there any children right now who may need services? Describe.

13. Is there anything else you would like to share with us regarding your experiences with services or areas of common need before we go on to the next group of questions?

**Transition:** *Now we are going to get into some questions regarding your experiences with agencies and systems within Philadelphia that you may have dealt with after your family member was killed. Again, if you need a break or do not wish to continue the interview, please let us know.*

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### INTERACTIONS WITH INSTITUTIONS AND SYSTEMS

*Family members of murder victims are suddenly asked to interact with many large and complicated agencies and systems. Some of these agencies and systems you may have interacted with in the past for other reasons, and some you may have never had contact with before. Interacting with these agencies is often even more complicated when family members of the victim are also related to the person who committed the murder. Part of this research is designed to ask people who have this unique experience about what these interactions were like in order to change policies of those systems and better meet the needs of families of murder victims in the future. If you've had experiences with these agencies in the past, please answer specifically considering your experiences with them after the murder of your family member.*





## **ANTI-VIOLENCE PARTNERSHIP of Philadelphia**

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1. Describe your experiences, whether positive or negative, with the **medical examiner's office, specific to identifying the body of your family member and bereavement services.**

**Follow-up:** Are there any specific examples of something the medical examiner's office (MEO) did that was helpful to you? Any examples of something that was unhelpful?

**Follow-up:** Were there any particular challenges with the MEO because the murder happened within your family?

**Follow-up:** What would have made interacting with the MEO better for you?

2. Describe your experiences, whether positive or negative, with **homicide detectives** after your family member was taken.

**Follow-up:** Are there any specific examples of something detectives did that was helpful? Any examples of something that was unhelpful?

**Follow-up:** What would have made interacting with homicide detectives better for you?

**Follow-up:** Were there any particular challenges with the homicide detectives because the murder happened within your family?

3. Describe your experiences, whether positive or negative, with the **legal/court process.** This may include experiences during the preliminary hearing, trial, sentencing, or any other aspects that were particularly impactful for you if there was an arrest in the case.

**Follow-up:** Describe your experience (if any) with a court advocate or anyone who provided you support during the legal/court process.

**Follow-up:** Were there any particular challenges with the court process because the murder happened within your family?

4. Describe your experiences (if any), whether positive or negative, with the **district attorney's office, specific to prosecutors.**

**Follow-up:** Were you kept up-to-date and prepared appropriately on your family member's case?

**Follow-up:** Can you think of an example of something that the DAO did that was helpful? How about

an example of something that was unhelpful?

**Follow-up:** Were there any particular challenges with the DAO because the murder happened within your family?

**Follow-up:** What would have made this experience better for you?

**Follow-up:** Has there been an arrest, conviction, or sentencing in the murder of your family member?

5. Describe your experiences, whether positive or negative, with the **district attorney's office, specific to the Crisis and Response to Engage Survivors (CARES) peer crisis responders.**

**Follow-up:** Did CARES provide an immediate response to the scene or to you and your family in the first 48 hours?

**Follow-up:** Did you receive home visits from CARES crisis responders?

**Follow-up:** Did you receive emergency assistance or connection to services from CARES crisis responders?



## ANTI-VIOLENCE PARTNERSHIP of Philadelphia

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**Follow-up:** What would have made this experience better for you?

**Follow-up:** Were there any particular challenges with the CARES staff because the murder happened within your family?

6. Describe your experiences, whether positive or negative, with **victim service agencies** after your family member was taken.

**Follow-up:** When was, or might have been, the best time to connect with a victim service agency?

**Follow-up:** What exactly did victim service providers assist you with? What did you wish they were able to assist you with?

**Follow-up:** Were there any particular challenges with accessing services from victim service agencies because the murder happened within your family?

7. Describe your experiences, whether positive or negative, with the **media** after your family member was taken.

**Follow-up:** Did the media ever contact you (or vice versa) after your family member was taken?

**Follow-up:** Describe your experiences with **social media** after your family member was taken.

**Follow-up:** Were there any ways that you may have benefited from information or support on how to interact with the mainstream media or social media?

**Follow-up:** Were there any particular challenges with the media because the murder happened within your family?

**Follow-up:** What would have made this experience better for you?

**Transition:** *Now we are going to get into some questions regarding how your experiences can help improve services for the future. If you need to take a break at this time, let us know.*

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### BEST PRACTICES AND CHANGES FOR THE FUTURE

1. In general, what would you have changed to feel more supported after your family member was taken?

2. Describe some things that were **not offered** to you that would have been helpful after your family member was taken.

3. Describe your experiences with agencies reaching out to you by phone or with letters after your family member was taken.

**Follow-up:** Did any agencies reach out to you after the murder of your family member at six months, 12 months, etc.?

**Follow-up:** When did outreach from agencies stop (if the outreach has stopped)?

**Follow-up:** When would outreach from agencies have been most helpful to you after your family member was taken?





## ANTI-VIOLENCE PARTNERSHIP of Philadelphia

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4. Overall, did you feel supported by agencies after your family member was taken?

**Follow-up:** How can we improve this?

5. Describe the most positive aspects of support services after your family member was taken.

**Follow-up:** What are some examples of what you found helpful?

6. Describe the most negative aspect of support services after your family member was taken.

7. Describe any feelings associated with how other people or agencies looked at you or treated you after your family member was murdered.

**Follow-up:** This can include neighbors, police, agencies, etc.

**Follow-up:** How would you like to have been treated?

8. If you had to give any advice to a family who will go through a similar situation as you, what might you tell them?

9. What do you wish professionals who will work with future survivors of intra-familial homicide knew to best support survivors and their families?

10. In regards to your family member being murdered, is justice possible in your opinion?

**Follow-up:** If yes, what does **justice** look like or mean to you?

11. Moving forward, do you have any needs that you would like addressed at this time?

12. Are there any children under 18 years old who may need services or support at this time?

13. Would you be interested in reviewing the materials the IFH team will develop based on these interviews before they are published (i.e., brochures)?

14. Is there anything else you would like to share before we end the interview?

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**END INTERVIEW:** *Thank you so much for completing the interview and taking the time to share some of your most difficult experiences with us to help improve services for families in the aftermath of homicide. I'm now going to turn off the audio recording device and we can take a few minutes to check in, discuss services you may be interested in, and go over what the research process looks like from here.*

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