

Hidalgo County District Attorney Ricardo Rodriguez, a [DV survivor](#) himself: (956) 292-7600, [ricardo.rodriguez@da.co.hidalgo.tx.us](mailto:ricardo.rodriguez@da.co.hidalgo.tx.us) — interviewed 8/10: [https://otter.ai/u/djlcWk2NbggaTue\\_GOSDr9N25I](https://otter.ai/u/djlcWk2NbggaTue_GOSDr9N25I)

**We're doing a story about child domestic violence shootings. And I ran some numbers over five years and I found that child domestic violence shootings surged faster than overall child shootings during that first year of the pandemic. Parents are very scared to send their kids to school, especially after Uvalde, because of school shootings, but we're kind of seeing it as, home is just as dangerous. So, first of all, would that finding surprise you at all, given what you know about domestic violence through your work?**

I mean, it doesn't surprise me, obviously, that unfortunately there's been incidents where children are involved in these type of situations under domestic violence. There's many unfortunate stories out there that we haven't heard of, where it doesn't get to the point where gun violence takes their lives. But I'm sure there's children today, right now, living through domestic violence that somehow, some way, that kind of threat is there. Not something that's happened in that they've lost their life because of gun violence, but I don't see any difference than them witnessing themselves mom or dad killed because of gun violence. I think they're almost as equal victims as being the actual victim of dying from some kind of weapon. But, I mean, it's there. **Just like it's dangerous in the schools, it's just as dangerous in homes.**

**The state with the highest number of child DV shootings from my dataset was Texas, which is why I reached out to you, and I was wondering why you think Texas might be rising to the top of that list?**

I mean, what is it equal to Jennifer? Could we say, because more people have weapons in homes? **Weapons are more accessible to a whole lot of people.** I mean, that's the only thing that I can think of. Look, domestic violence has always been there. Domestic violence has been something that's been in homes, in the workplace, in schools. Somehow, some way, it's present. And it's never gone away, unfortunately. So that escalates a whole lot of other things. Just the domestic violence itself, if there's a weapon, and not necessarily a gun, but any kind of weapon that could seriously hurt someone, obviously it goes hand-in-hand with domestic violence at that point when something happens. So to answer your question, I guess **people have more weapons than ever.** Why? Well, everybody wants to say, "I have a Second Amendment right and I should have a weapon." And, and I'm not saying that you shouldn't. But how do we screen for it not to be in the wrong hands? How do we do that?

**In Texas, it's a little harder because now there's constitutional carry.**

Of course. I don't get it. I mean, it's the truth, I don't care who gets offended. **The truth is, you give more access to people that can carry a gun openly in public,** all kinds of weapons, I never wanted it to lead to this, but **obviously you're going to have more situations where guns are involved.** Whether it's domestic violence or whether it's somebody with mental illness, it's going to happen. And then look what happened in Uvalde.

**So if you have a child who's dealing with DV at home, then they have to go to school and have active shooter drills once a month, how might these drills affect child DV survivors?**

I think we have to be careful that we don't revictimize the victims. It's hard to do that when you're trying to do something good. You're trying to teach children how to react to a shooter in school, but you're gonna have those situations where you have kids that have already been victims. Teachers and counselors and people from the schools don't know what's going on with them at home. Besides worrying about what's going on in school and protecting them in school, another concern is, what's going on in their homes? The shooter from Uvalde, if we would have known what was going on with this guy in his home – what was happening with him and his mom and grandma, why was he kicked out – those are important things to know ahead of time. I'm not saying that you mark them as being a threat. So I could see where kids going to school and going through these drills could be revictimized because of what's going on in their homes.

**How does exposure to domestic violence affect a child's susceptibility to violence in later life?**

I really think that it just depends how much of it they see, how much they're involved, how bad it is at home. It just depends. You know, monkey see, monkey do. These kids are sponges, they absorb so many things. And not only are you hurting them and making them victims, but you could also be creating someone who, if we don't break that cycle, could have the same aggression and the same personality and characteristics of this person in their home who's causing so much harm. It's scary, because it could be passed on to your children. So it's also about breaking that cycle. At school, you can see those signs. You can see how kids from one day to the next change their character, their personality, and how they behave in school. Those are signs that something's going on in their homes.

**I saw some remarks you gave about being a domestic violence survivor and how perpetrators can actually heal and come out on the other side of being a perpetrator. How does that happen? Is healing possible for perpetrators?**

It is, I'm a true witness to that. As much as I love my father, and I hate to talk about him, because he is a 150% changed man. It's a private deal but I don't mind talking about it because people have to know that people can change. As much credit as I want to give my dad, the credit all goes to my mom. But **I live with the memories, I live with the scars. I was blessed that the cycle was broken.** I do tell the story once a while, about my dad. My dad just changed from one day to the next. He was given an ultimatum, but he took it and he never looked back. So myself and my siblings are blessed and fortunate that we were able to see that.

**What is your office doing now in terms of DV, I know you've been very proactive.**

We don't stop, we stay on top of everything. We provide the best service that we can and give people in the community the accessibility and the opportunity to contact us. And I see what

we've done, and it's not only been in our office. Every law enforcement agency here in Hidalgo County, all victim advocates, all social services, we have built this momentum, this team where everybody's engaged now, and making sure that that person who's out in the rural area has accessibility somehow some way for help, besides law enforcement. So we've just basically just continued to build that. We continue to build a lot of education about it, where people shouldn't be afraid if they need to come out and talk about it, if that's the only way we can help them. Prevention, creating awareness, we're huge on that, and we just keep pushing that as much as we can. I think the more people see that not only our office but municipalities, precincts are also involved somehow in educating the community, their courage just builds in coming out and saying "I need help. Someone help me." Unfortunately there's always a danger there because sometimes there's reactions of the aggressor who finds out and knows about this person getting help, and we try to avoid that. And honestly, we never want to lose someone to domestic violence. But yeah, we built his team, and we're just going to keep building on it.