

By [Karen A. Ferguson, PhD, CEO at CORA](#)

On Monday, February 13, a family of 4 was found dead in their residential home in San Mateo. Twin boys age 4 were discovered deceased in their beds, their mother shot multiple times and then a single gunshot wound to the father – confirmed as a murder-suicide. Names of the family have been released and there is an active investigation. This is what we know. It is not much yet, but it is tragic.

We are still unsure if this was a single incidence of violence including the presence of a firearm that went terribly awry or if this was part of a pattern of domestic violence. We may never fully know what was going on behind the doors of that home. But there is a truth that many crimes in homes are often about power, control and abuse.

Does it matter that we may not know the specifics of this tragedy? Anytime we hear of such a loss of life in the context of a family, a home, we can respond with even more vigilance. We can respond with a call for attention and awareness of the possibilities of what is happening behind the doors of many homes. We can consider whether we are reaching out enough and that shame and isolation keep victims from accessing the help they need. We can choose to do more.

CORA's SPEAK UP campaign, stretching across the county in 10 cities over the upcoming year, including in San Mateo, is designed to help address this. SPEAK UP's mission is clear: to educate our community members, reaching out to local businesses and community groups so that anyone experiencing intimate partner abuse has a safe path to seek help. Businesses play a unique and vital role in assisting survivors of abuse. In many cases, a victim may only have a chance to escape their abuser when running errands or visiting local establishments. And frequently it is our businesses that get to know and see the lives of community members, and of each other as co-workers. The statistics are stark, with an estimated 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men having experienced severe physical violence by an intimate partner. When there is a firearm in the home, it is 700% more likely there will be a fatality due to domestic violence.

As a community, our hearts ache for the loss of this family of four. As a community we can continue to be vigilant and to reach out. Perhaps in the future, we can be there before violence escalates in homes where intimate partner abuse is occurring. We don't know if that is what happened here, but we certainly can sound the alarm.

If you are a survivor of domestic violence or intimate partner abuse, remember that help is just a phone call away. You can reach CORA anytime through their 24/7 emergency hotline at 800-300-1080. Your safety and well-being are our top priority.

Join us in SPEAKING UP against domestic violence! Together, we can make a difference in the lives of those who need our support. #SpeakUpAgainstAbuse #SanMateoCountyUnites

Follow the SPEAK UP campaign on CORA's social media!

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