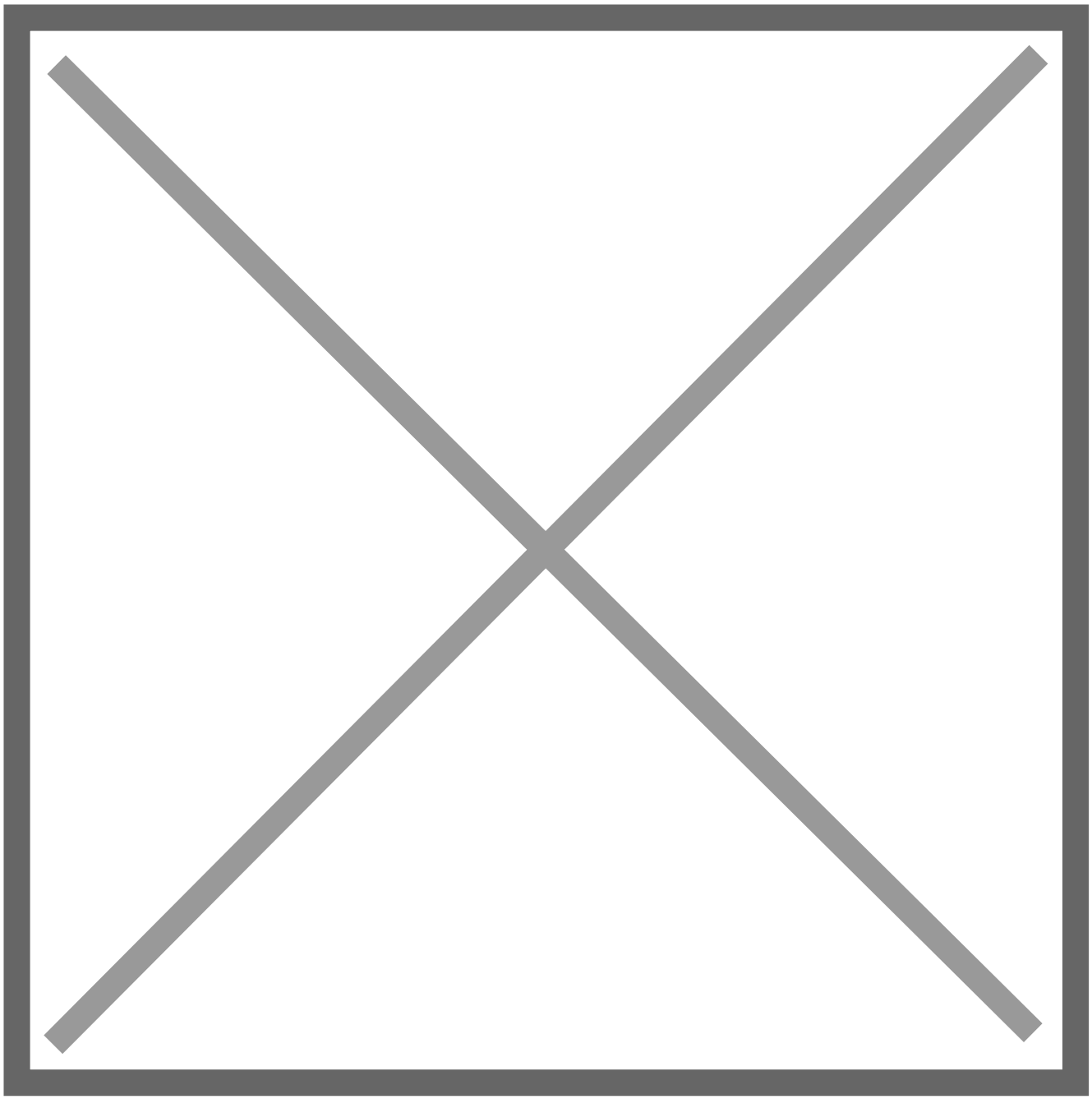
News



Youths and parents walk to an evacuation bus outside the Dennis M. Lynch Arena, an indoor ice skating rink, after a shooting in Pawtucket, R.I., Feb. 16, 2026. At least three people, including the suspect, were fatally shot during the Rhode Island youth hockey game, authorities said. (OSV News/Reuters/CJ Gunther)

Rick Snizek

View Author Profile



OSV News

View Author Profile

## Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

PAWTUCKET, R.I. — February 18, 2026
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

The St. Raphael Academy community in Pawtucket has joined other area high schools in mourning the deadly tragedy that rocked a series of hockey games underway Feb. 16 at a local arena, where a group of its players were gathered to play.

Police identified the shooting suspect as Robert Dorgan, 56, a biological male who appeared to identify as a woman and went by the name Roberta Esposito. They said that Dorgan shot and killed his own adult son, Aidan Dorgan, along with his ex-wife, Rhonda Dorgan, the son's mother, in the stands at the Dennis M. Lynch Arena, while the shooting suspect's other son, a senior at North Providence High School, was on the ice playing.

The suspect also shot and wounded his in-laws, Linda and Gerald Dorgan, and Thomas Geruso, a family friend, before fatally shooting himself in the stands, Pawtucket Police Chief Tina Goncalves said Feb. 16. Rhonda Dorgan died at the arena and Aiden Dorgan died at an area hospital. The three who were wounded remained in critical condition late Feb. 17.

Providence Bishop Bruce Lewandowski described the shooting as "senseless," and "deeply troubling."

"No one should have to experience this kind of violence, especially students," Lewandowski said in a statement Feb. 16.

"Please join me in praying for those who lost their lives in that hockey arena yesterday," he said. "Pray, too, for the healing and comfort of those who were injured and traumatized. May the God of all Mercies restore their hope for a more peaceful world."

The bishop said that the Catholic Schools Office, in partnership with the Providence Diocese's Office of Compliance and local law enforcement, will review safety practices across the diocese in the wake of this tragedy to do their part in keeping communities safe from violence.

Eight players from St. Ray's, along with their head coach, were part of a co-op team present in the arena just before 2:30 p.m., when a rapid series of gunshots broke the excitement of play in the air from high up in the stands, just out of range of a fixed camera livestreaming the hockey games for those unable to attend.

Players and spectators were seen scrambling for their lives, with players fleeing across the ice to the safety of the locker rooms — leaving gear piled up in their wake in exchange for greater speed — and spectators emptying the stands as they ran for the exits.

The St. Raphael Academy students are part of the Blackstone Valley Schools co-op hockey team, and the only students representing a Catholic school playing that day. St. Raphael is a diocesan coeducational Catholic high school operated in the Lasallian tradition.

Advertisement

"We are deeply sorrowed and troubled by the tragic events that occurred yesterday," Dan Richard, the school's principal, said in a statement, inviting all to join their community in prayer.

"We commend to God the souls of those whose lives were unjustly taken by these acts of violence," he said. "We pray also for healing for those who were injured, and for those who were traumatized. For their families and loved ones, may God give them the consolation and comfort that our words cannot."

He said that counseling services were being made available to those in the St. Ray's community who would like to talk with someone about the incident.

Richard also offered gratitude on behalf of St. Ray's to the state and local law enforcement and emergency medical personnel who rushed to protect the players and provided aid in the wake of the tragedy.

St. Ray's was slated to play in the quarter-final round the following week, but the Rhode Island Interscholastic League temporarily suspended all games out of respect for all players and families.

While some early news reports Feb. 15 pointed to the shooting being the result of a "family dispute," the Rhode Island Commission Against Domestic Violence insisted that the tragedy must be seen as a clear case of domestic violence.

"Domestic violence is not a private matter. It is a serious crime that impacts children, extended families, workplaces, schools, and entire communities," said Lucy Rios, the commission's executive director.

"What may be described as 'targeted' violence still placed countless others at risk in a crowded public space filled with young athletes and their families from multiple cities and towns," she said.

Rios said that domestic violence is about power and control, and it often escalates over time. Its impact ripples outward, affecting teammates, classmates, educators, neighbors and first responders. And with the Ocean State being small geographically, such crises can lead all Rhode Islanders to carry collective grief and shock.

Rios indicated that research continues to show a strong connection between domestic violence and mass shootings. She pointed to a study of U.S. gun violence crimes from 2009-2016 that found the majority of mass shootings (54%) were related to domestic or family violence, and that many of the victims in those incidents are children.

Principal Richard said that St. Raphael Academy is blessed to have received prayers and support from the larger Catholic community, the city of Pawtucket and the hockey community in Rhode Island and beyond.

"Our focus now, as always, is on our St. Raphael Academy students and community to provide the support they need so that they may heal," he said.