




High-Danger Safety Planning Model Guidelines

FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ADVOCATES

2015 | MARYLAND NETWORK AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



This protocol seeks to develop a set of guidelines on how to safety plan with victims of domestic violence, including High-Danger victims.

This protocol was developed by MNADV in collaboration with domestic violence advocates from across Maryland.

How to use the High-Danger Safety Planning Model Guidelines

Designed for new advocates and experienced advocates who are working with identified High-Danger victims.

Materials Provided

- ▶ *The High-Danger Safety Planning Model Guidelines* outlines the steps an advocate should take when working with a victim.
- ▶ *The Safety Planning Considerations* provides tips and conversation topics for advocates to use when safety planning with a victim.
- ▶ *The Lethality Screen and Danger Assessment* are tools that can be used to help assess danger during the safety planning process.

Definitions

Safety Plan

- A safety plan is an individualized set of strategies that victims develop to reduce risks to themselves and their families.

High Danger Victim

- "High-Danger" is a term used to describe a victim who is at the greatest risk of being killed or seriously injured by an intimate partner. A victim is assessed as being at "High-Danger" either based on the victim's answers on the Lethality Screen, Danger Assessment or based on the belief of the practitioner.

Materials Provided

Lethality Screen

Danger Assessment

Safety Planning Definition

Adapted from Safety Planning with Battered Women: Complex Lives/Difficult Choices written by Jill Davies and colleagues.

High-Danger Definition

Created by the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence Lethality Assessment Program.

Safety planning is an ongoing process and includes...

- ▶ Understanding the risks to safety created by an abuser,
- ▶ Understanding how life-generated risks affect a victim's decision-making,
- ▶ Understanding the cultural norms and values of the victim,
- ▶ Understanding the variety of strategies used by a victim to reduce risks, and
- ▶ Understanding the role of advocates in responding to safety concerns and meeting basic human needs.

Materials Provided

High-Danger Safety Planning Model Guidelines

Notes

#1 – Victims are constantly safety planning without even realizing it.

#2 – Safety planning should include:

- * Immediate, short-term and long-term goals

#3 – When working with High-Danger victims,

- * You may only have time to focus on immediate and short-term safety goals which is fine. You can visit long-term safety goals after the volatility of the situation settles.
- * A short-cut to identifying immediate safety strategies is to use the techniques that have already kept the victim safe and build on those.

Advocate's Role

- ▶ Build Rapport
- ▶ Gather Information
- ▶ Reinforce Danger
- ▶ Educate and Safety Plan

Materials Provided

MNADV Domestic Violence Service Program Standards

Lethality Assessment Program Victim-Initiated Hotline Call Guidelines

Intro

An advocate can begin safety planning with a victim after a LAP Screen has been conducted and a first responder has contacted the DVSP hotline or if the victim calls the DVSP hotline herself. In both situations, the hotline call begins with building rapport with the victim.

Build Rapport

1. Use a soft, warm tone of voice.
2. Say things like, "It sounds like you are having a tough night," instead of generalizing the situation as a whole. Some victims can't think yet about the totality of their situation and doing so too early may be detrimental. Focus on what the victim is feeling in that

moment.

3. Acknowledge you understand how difficult it is for the victim to speak with you.

4. Empathize with victim.

5. Mirror the victim's language (unless the victim is minimizing / self-blaming). This means do not label the situation as domestic violence or the offender as an abuser if the victim isn't receptive to hearing that. Use the victim's language, which may be less strong than what an advocate would use "nervous" versus "scared," "tonight" versus generalizing the relationship as a whole, etc.

6. PRAISE, VALIDATE, and NORMALIZE the victim's trauma reactions and feelings.

7. Express admiration for the victim's courage and cooperation.

Gather Information

1. Ask about the incident that caused the victim to reach-out for services.
2. Ask, "What is your biggest concern RIGHT NOW?" and, "Do you have some place safe to stay tonight?"

Reinforce Danger

1. For high-danger victims, it is important to repeat that other's who have answered the LAP or DA questions as they did have been killed and that your are worried about her safety.

Educate and Safety Plan

1. Be solution-focused but concerned about what the victim feels they need to be safe.
2. Tailor your safety considerations and an explanation of your services to the victim's individual situation.



Safety Planning Considerations

Materials Provided

Safety Planning Considerations

Activity

Walk participants through the Safety Planning Considerations. Discuss each category and discuss the “tips” provided. Ask participants to name some “considerations” not listed. Make special mention of the “considerations” highlighted as they are ones to pay particular attention to if a victim is assessed to be in High-Danger.

Advocate's Role

- ▶ Build Rapport
- ▶ Gather Information
- ▶ Reinforce Danger
- ▶ Educate and Safety Plan
- ▶ **Encourage**

Materials Provided

MNADV Domestic Violence Service Program Standards

Encourage

1. PRAISE, VALIDATE, and NORMALIZE the victim's trauma reactions and feelings.
2. Express admiration for the victim's courage and cooperation.

Safety Plans

- ▶ Trauma-informed
- ▶ Victim-centered
- ▶ Individualized
- ▶ Focused on strengthening risk analysis
- ▶ Culturally sensitive
- ▶ **ONGOING**

Materials Provided

High-Danger Safety Planning Protocol

Trauma-Informed

1. Use active listening techniques
2. Move at the victim's pace – slow down

Victim-Centered

1. Make the physical space comfortable and private.
2. Again, ask what has worked for the victim in the past.
3. She knows her abuser better than anyone-listen to her concerns/strategies.
4. Ask open-ended questions and give the victim plenty of time to talk – don't rush her.
5. Identifying the partner-generated risks :

* Partner-generated risks may include, but are not limited to: Physical injury, psychological harm, such as threats to the victim's mental health, drug and

alcohol abuse, or suicidal ideation, child-related risks, financial risks, risks to family and friends, including the possible loss of relationship with abuser, arrest and legal status

6. Identifying the life-generated risks :

- * The advocate must assist the victim in identifying real or perceived life-generated risks, and discuss how the abuser may manipulate these risks to hurt the victim.

- * Life-generated risks may include but are not limited to: Finances, home location, physical and mental health, discrimination based on race, ethnicity, country of origin, limited English proficiency, gender, sexual orientation, age, ability or other form of bias, inadequate response from major social institutions including the legal system, health system, and workplace

Individualized

1. No two safety plans should look alike and using a “fill-in-the-blank” approach is strongly discouraged.

2. As any person making a significant life decision, victims must consider the consequences of pursuing certain options. Some examples may include:

- * “If I call the police they can stop him from hitting me, but my husband will lose his job (that supports our family).”

- * “If I get a protective order he’ll have to leave the house. I won’t be able to pay the rent without his help.”

- * “If I stop seeing him, he said he’d kill me.”

- * “If I report him, he can have me deported. Then I wouldn’t have anything, my family and my children are all here.”

3. Must be able to have “difficult” conversations about the victim’s behavior that is impacting their safety.

- * survival sex/prostitution

- * substance abuse

- * mental health treatment needs

- * withdrawing from the abusers family/friends

Focused on strengthening risk analysis

1. Administering the LAP, DA or other risk assessment tool can be valuable in identifying

victims at greater risk but it is also a valuable tool for educating victims of risk factors themselves.

Culturally sensitive

1. Make sure you are respectful of a victims culture and do not make assumptions. Engage a culturally specific community partner if you need assistance.

ONGOING

1. Always changing, always adapting – just like the victims themselves.

Safety Planning Technological Considerations

- ▶ Technological considerations should be a part of every safety plan. Technology can be used as a tool to help victims but it can also be used against the victim.
- ▶ Safety planning around technology including tracking applications and venues for communicating threats should be discussed.

For more information on technology safety planning, review the NNEDV Technology Safety Plan, A Guide for Survivors and Advocates

Materials Provided

NNEDV Technology Safety Plan, A Guide for Survivors and Advocates

Tool to Help

1. Document abuse
2. Call support systems
3. Call for emergency assistance

Safety Planning High-Danger Victims

- ▶ Include community partners
- ▶ Follow-up in-person
- ▶ Ensure services are available, including shelter
- ▶ Use the LAP or DA as a conversation guide and planning tool

Materials Provided

Lethality Assessment Program Protocol

MNADV Shelter to Shelter Referral Form and FAQ Sheet

Intro

Safety planning with High-Danger victims will incorporate many aspects of basic safety planning; however, with victims assessed as being in greater danger of being killed, more extensive, comprehensive approaches should also be address their specific risk factors. *Refer to the Lethality Assessment Program Protocol.*

Include community partners

1. With the victim's permission, advocates may partner with law enforcement, victim advocates, prosecutors, civil attorneys, culturally specific organizations, faith-based programs or other individuals who can assist in protecting the victim by limiting the abuser's access to her through arrest, bail/bond, criminal stay away orders, protective orders, filing for divorce or custody and/or enforcement of probation/parole violations.

2. Ask partners to “flag” high-danger victim’s address so when a call-for-service comes, they know more about the victims situation.
3. Coordinated Community Response – “Duluth Model”
 - * Team of professionals in the community working together (with the victim’s permission) to provide additional support and protection
4. Strangulation investigation teams
 - * Professional trained to recognize strangulation indicators and to promote medical identification, treatment, and documentation (Baltimore/Calvert).

Following up in-person

1. Following-up at their home with the assistance of law enforcement can be very helpful in supporting the victim through a very tumultuous time

Ensure services are available including shelter

1. May be more likely to need relocation services including safe accommodations in outside jurisdictions or transportation support to safe locations
2. *Refer to MNADV Shelter to Shelter Referral Form and FAQ Sheet*

Use the LAP or DA as a conversation guide and planning tool

1. Example: if the victim indicates the abuser threatened her with a gun, safety plan around avoiding the gun or the room in which the gun is located or having the gun removed through a Protective Order or bail/bond provision.

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