

“I have no doubt that the LAP program has saved lives.”

*Plainville Police Department Sergeant,
Connecticut
National LAP participant*

LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES

Key Points of Conversation

Provide Basic Information to introduce the victim and the situation to the hotline advocate.

Make a Smooth Connection between the victim and advocate, when applicable.

Be Brief.

Be Encouraging and Helpful.

The phone call to a hotline advocate is not the norm for the officer nor for the hotline advocate. This is something new to you both. You will grow into it, but, in the meantime, there may be a little anxiety and uncertainty about dealing with one another and with this type of call. You both have a job to do on these calls and objectives you are trying to meet. **You are assessing the victim's lethality risk and encouraging her/him to speak on the phone to the hotline advocate; the hotline advocate is trying to account for the victim's safety and to get the victim into services.** You and the hotline advocate are a team in this effort. Respect each other's roles, and remember you are both serving a victim who is in danger of being killed.

Key Feature of Conversation | TEAMWORK

The conversation is very brief, mostly providing the hotline with basic information about the case so that the victim does not need to tell the hotline information you already know. This helps demonstrate that law enforcement and the domestic violence service program (DVSP) are a team, working together for victim safety.



**Maryland Network
Against Domestic Violence**

LETHALITY ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

Before the Victim Speaks with the Hotline Advocate

Introduce yourself, including your rank and agency, to the hotline advocate. Obtain the advocate's name, if she/he doesn't introduce her/himself.

→ *Hi Rebecca, this is Officer Smith from the City Police.*

Tell the advocate the purpose of the call.

→ *I have a High-Danger victim.*

The advocate will ask the victim's and offender's names and the report number.

→ *Her name is Virginia Jones. The offender's name is Adam Jones. The case number is 123-456.*

The advocate will ask the Screen questions to which the victim answered "yes" and any questions the victim declined to answer. Provide the hotline advocate the responses to the numbered questions.

→ *Mrs. Jones answered 'yes' to questions numbers 1, 4, 5, 6, 9 and 11 and declined to answer number 3.*

The advocate will ask you to report *briefly and basically* what occurred in the incident that caused the call for service.

→ *Mr. and Mrs. Jones got into an argument, and Mr. Jones struck Mrs. Jones several times in the face.*

Provide additional pertinent information, such as why you believe the victim may be in danger.:

→ *I've arrested Mr. Jones.*

→ *Mr. Jones was no longer at the scene when we arrived but a warrant will be issued for his arrest.*

→ *I was here last week and Mrs. Jones screened in after an altercation.*

→ *Ms. Thompson wasn't assessed as being High-Danger according to the Lethality Screen, but some of her responses made me uncomfortable, so I assessed her as High-Danger based on my belief.*



**Assess and
Connect**

Victim Agrees to Speak with the Hotline Advocate

Advise the advocate that you're putting the victim on the phone.

→ *Here's Mrs. Jones. She would like to speak with you.*

Note: After the hotline advocate and victim have finished the call, the hotline advocate should ask the victim to put you back on the phone, so the hotline advocate can brief you concerning the safety plan agreed to by the victim. For confidentiality reasons, the hotline advocate will ask the victim if she/he agrees to let the hotline advocate share what they discussed with you. If the victim declines, the hotline advocate will provide you with sufficient information to conclude the call.

Victim Declines to Speak with the Hotline Advocate

Advise the hotline advocate that the victim does not wish to speak with her/him.

→ *Mrs. Jones doesn't want to speak on the phone.*

Tell the advocate you will encourage the victim to speak one more time, interrupt the conversation with the hotline advocate, and ask the victim if she/he has reconsidered.

→ *I'll speak with Mrs. Jones once more and encourage her to get on the phone. Hold on please...*

Note: Be encouraging with words such as: "You're just talking"; "It's a private call"; "The hotline advocate can help you"; "The hotline advocate can give you information that can help"; "They understand what you're going through."

Focus on a particular situation the victim has expressed to you or that clearly exists and address that specific issue with a possible resolution: "You said you want to get away from him but that you don't know how to begin. The people I'm calling can help you. They can maybe even put you in a safe place."

If the victim agrees to speak, advise the hotline advocate and turn the phone over to the victim.

→ *Mrs. Jones has agreed to speak with you. Here she is.*

If the victim declines again, return to the hotline advocate, advise her of the victim's decision, and obtain safety planning information you can pass on to the victim, including the hotline number.

→ *Mrs. Jones still doesn't want to speak on the phone. What safety planning information can I give to her?*

Note: The hotline advocate will request that you ask the victim if she/he would like a follow-up call from an advocate, and to confirm whether the number is a safe number for a message to be left. The safety planning information and/or questions the hotline advocate will give you to pass on to the victim will be information that will serve the victim over the next 24-hour period.

CONCLUDING THE CALL FOR SERVICE

When you have completed your conversation with the hotline advocate, either after the victim has already spoken to the advocate or the victim has declined to speak with the advocate, then you should conclude the call for service.

For all victims:

- Give her/him **your work number** and another number for when you're not working (in addition to reminding the victim to call 911 if she/he is in trouble) that the victim can call in case she/he decides to take further action.
- Give her/him the **hotline number** and emphasize that the domestic violence service program can provide services, support, and education that can help her/him be safe.
- Emphasize that **the police and the program can help her/him**.
- Ensure you have **a safe follow-up procedure** with the victim. Whether you will be contacting the victim again or whether the hotline will, it is important to know how to follow up safely. Make sure the hotline knows this information as well.

Best Practices: Have a "victim services" card handy to give to all victims with law enforcement, prosecutor, and the domestic violence service program's contact information.

If the victim has declined to speak with the hotline advocate:

- Ask the victim if she/he would like **a follow-up call** from an advocate, and confirm whether the number is a safe number for a message to be left.
- Discuss the **safety points** made by the advocate with the victim.
- Remind the victim of the **dangerous and possibly fatal situation** she/he is in.
- Advise the victim that her/his **"yes" answers (review the questions with her/him) are signs of danger**.

If the victim has spoken with the hotline advocate:

- Reiterate that the **victim is in danger**.
- Encourage her/him to **go to the domestic violence program for services** or to keep her/his appointment, if one has been scheduled, because the program can help the victim.

Note: The officer stays with the victim during this call, to show the victim support and to demonstrate that law enforcement and the DVSP are working collaboratively to help the victim. It is important to show that you are all on the same team, working toward the same goal: the victim's safety.