

Safety Planning Considerations

*This document provides ideas and suggestions for advocates to use while safety planning with victims of domestic violence. Each safety plan should be customized to meet the needs of individual victims and should include a conversation regarding successful and unsuccessful strategies used by the victim. Considerations highlighted in this document should be discussed with every victim but emphasized and prioritized in **High-Danger** cases. These considerations are highlighted due to their connection to questions on the Danger Assessment and MNADV Lethality Assessment Screen and had situational relevance in homicides cases historically.*

Safety Planning Strategy	Example Questions	Considerations
<p>Identify Warning Signs</p> <p>Help victims identify warning signs of future abuse. Help victims determine if there is a pattern to the abusive incidences.</p>	<p>Can the victim identify any warning signs or patterns that an abusive incident is imminent? If so, what actions can (s)he take to attempt to mitigate the abuse?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building tension, • Escalation of minor incidents, • Verbal threats increasing in frequency or severity, • Typical behaviors before abuse, • Review past instances of abuse, • Create a calendar of abusive incidents.
<p>Consider Location</p> <p>Encourage victims to move to safer locations before abusive incidences.</p>	<p>Is there a safer location that a victim can attempt to move to during an abusive incident?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beware of kitchens, garages and bathrooms (knives, dishes, hard surfaces, small appliances), • Avoid rooms where guns are stored, • Avoid rooms with limited or no exits and no phones.
<p>Access to Phone</p> <p>Assist victims to obtain quick and easy access to a phone.</p>	<p>Does the victim have access to a phone? If so, how can 911 or other emergency contacts be accessed safely? If not, is there a local program that can provide a phone?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-set emergency call functions into phones (911, police, family), • Obtain a "911" cell phone from domestic violence programs, • Add "911" to the contact list under a different name.
<p>Social Media/Technology</p> <p>Review any social media or technology that victims use for vulnerabilities.</p>	<p>Has the victim managed her/his privacy settings on social media?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disable "location services" on social media sites, • Avoid photos with location "stamps" or recognizable backgrounds, • Review privacy settings for social media sites, • Change passwords and security questions on any log-in sites.

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<p><i>Establish a Support System</i></p> <p>Encourage victims to create a support system and reduce their isolation.</p>	<p>What social spaces and community connections and resources can a victim utilize to build her/his support network?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain employment or new job skills, • Join a community association or club, • Explore or revisit spirituality or religion, • Call a domestic violence hotline periodically and develop a connection with staff and resources, • Reconnect with family or friends, • See a therapist or counselor.
<p><i>Establish Signals</i></p> <p>Explore options with victims for establishing alert signals.</p>	<p>Can the victim identify safe people in her/his life with whom they can establish a code or signal for help?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flashing porch lights, loud noises, and/or a certain code word or phrase, • Danger code phrases via text (e.g., "Can you get diapers for me?").
<p><i>Involving Children</i></p> <p>Engage children in the safety planning process but explore children's involvement with safety planning cautiously, taking into account the children's age and relationship with the abuser.</p>	<p>What skills and strategies can be developed to empower children to be engaged in safety planning?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call 911 or a trusted adult to alert them to the danger, • Teach children not to intervene in an altercation but to go for help, • Learn escape routes or places to hide, • Run to a neighbor's house for help, • Assist in gathering other children and pets, • Pull the fire alarm when escaping, • Safe Exchange/Supervised Visitation Centers, • Provide a copy of the protective order to school/daycare.
<p><i>Documenting Abuse</i></p> <p>Encourage the victim to document abuse.</p>	<p>Can the victim identify a safe way to begin documenting abuse in case (s)he decides to leave or take legal action?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep documents in a safe place and save emails, • Note any police activity including officers' names and badge numbers, • Log threats to self, children, and others using a journal or screen shots from a cell phone or computer, • Photograph injuries, • Document abuse in medical reports, • Consult an attorney.
<p><i>Important Documents</i></p> <p>Review what is considered an "important document" with victims.</p>	<p>What essential documents and accounts would a victim need in order to relocate, seek legal action, or to get access to financial, social, legal and medical services?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driver's License, • Passport, • Social Security Card, • Birth Certificates for the victim and her/his children, • Prescriptions, • Documentation of abuse, • Immigration papers/green card,

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<p>Storage Space</p> <p>Assist victims in coming up with creative solutions for safe storage.</p>	<p>Are there important and/or valuable items that a victim can safely remove and store in a safe place?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cash/credit cards/debit cards/bank account documents, • Health insurance card. • Rent a storage space, • At homes of trusted friends, family or neighbors, • At victim's place of employment, • In victim's car, • Rooms in the house the abuser does not frequent.
<p>Considering Safety while Leaving or after Leaving the Relationship</p> <p>Provide continued support to victims while leaving or after the relationship has ended.</p>	<p>When planning to leave, can the victim identify opportune times to take action?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave when the abuser is not at home or with a Law Enforcement escort, • Some days are more "high risk" (court dates, anniversaries, separation dates, and child visitation exchanges), • Involve only trusted individuals in the safety plan, • Change all passwords including non-financial accounts (Netflix, cell phone unlock), • Disable all GPS technology (EZ Pass accounts can be used as a GPS tracker), • Prepare children for changes in routine, • When a home is purchased, the address is a public record, • Address Confidentiality Program/changing of identity, • Witness Protection Program.
<p>Safety Considerations outside the Home</p> <p>Assist victims in maintaining their safety while out in public or other areas.</p>	<p>Can the victim identify other native places to frequent and do errands? If not, what strategies can (s)he use if the victim encounters the abuser?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public spaces may be safer than private, • Note exits and escape routes, • Let someone know when going out alone, • Check in and around car for the abuser, • Variations in routine can throw off the abuser, • Take a self-defense course, • Look out for GPS tracking and spoofing¹, • Back vehicles into parking spaces to make pulling out easier.

¹ Spoofing in the technology arena refers tricking or deceiving computer systems or other computer users. This is typically done by hiding one's identity or faking the identity of another user on the Internet or via Text.
<http://www.techterms.com/definition/spoofing>

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<p>Safety Considerations inside the Home</p> <p>Review possible in-home safety considerations with victims.</p>	<p>If the victim has left the relationship and is staying in her/his own home, what strategies and protections can be put in place to protect her/him against further physical and verbal abuse?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install dead bolts and window locks, • Change locks and do not keep a key outside, • Have key copier engrave "Do Not Duplicate" on keys, • Install a peep hole, • Look for signs of break-ins before entering, • Trace harassing phone calls (*57), • Block phone calls to others (*67 then dial number), • Obtain an unlisted number, • Leave old cell phone number connected to voicemail to record threats, • Have easy access to important numbers, • Keep copies of protective orders with friends or family, • Install a security alarm or loud window/door sensors, • Padlock outside circuit boxes, • Install motion detector lighting outside.
<p>Safety Considerations at Work</p> <p>Review safety considerations at work and how to engage the victim's employer in the safety plan.</p>	<p>What accommodations can be made at work, school or daycare to protect the victim?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notify trusted supervisors and coworkers, • Request that 911 be called anytime the abuser is seen on the premises, • Request that 911 be called anytime the victim is more than a set time period late for work, • Let employer know that if you call out for work using a set phrase, to call the police, • Adjust work hours to change the normal routine, • Check for the abuser's car in the parking lot and use a security service when available, • Request a parking spot closer to the entrance, • Keep office doors secured and locked, • Be aware of escape routes for emergencies, • Share copies of protection orders with employer, • Transfer to another position or location within your company/job, • Limit public profile on websites and company publications.



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LETHALITY SCREEN FOR FIRST RESPONDERS



Officer:	Date:	Case #:
Victim:	Offender:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Check here if victim did not answer any of the questions.		
▶ A "Yes" response to any of Questions #1-3 automatically triggers the protocol referral.		
1. Has he/she ever used a weapon against you or threatened you with a weapon?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Ans.
2. Has he/she threatened to kill you or your children?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Ans.
3. Do you think he/she might try to kill you?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Ans.
▶ Negative responses to Questions #1-3, but positive responses to at least four of Questions #4-11, trigger the protocol referral.		
4. Does he/she have a gun or can he/she get one easily?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Ans.
5. Has he/she ever tried to choke you?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Ans.
6. Is he/she violently or constantly jealous or does he/she control most of your daily activities?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Ans.
7. Have you left him/her or separated after living together or being married?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Ans.
8. Is he/she unemployed?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Ans.
9. Has he/she ever tried to kill himself/herself?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Ans.
10. Do you have a child that he/she knows is not his/hers?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Ans.
11. Does he/she follow or spy on you or leave threatening messages?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Ans.
▶ An officer may trigger the protocol referral, if not already triggered above, as a result of the victim's response to the below question, or whenever the officer believes the victim is in a potentially lethal situation.		
Is there anything else that worries you about your safety? (If "yes") What worries you?		
Check one: <input type="checkbox"/> Victim screened in according to the protocol <input type="checkbox"/> Victim screened in based on the belief of officer <input type="checkbox"/> Victim did not screen in		
If victim screened in: After advising her/him of a high danger assessment, <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No did the victim speak with the hotline counselor?		

Note: The questions above and the criteria for determining the level of risk a person faces is based on the best available research on factors associated with lethal violence by a current or former intimate partner. However, each situation may present unique factors that influence risk for lethal violence that are not captured by this screen. Although most victims who screen "positive" or "high danger" would not be expected to be killed, these victims face much higher risk than that of other victims of intimate partner violence.



Lethality Assessment Program – Maryland Model (LAP)

Protocol for Law Enforcement and Domestic Violence Service Programs (DVSPs)

It is not uncommon to hear, after a domestic violence death, that it is difficult to stop someone who is bent on killing another person. The Lethality Screen and accompanying protocol were developed to help officers identify victims of domestic violence who are at risk of being killed and to take steps that might redirect their path toward safety. The LAP is an evidence-based homicide prevention tool. Because intimate partner homicides are predictable, they are preventable. The Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV) believes that the LAP can prevent domestic violence deaths, and we welcome your adoption of the Program.

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PURPOSE | Lethality Assessment Program Protocol

Identifying and Responding to High-Danger Situations

Domestic violence situations often escalate to further and more serious violence, and may result in the death of the victim, children or other family members, the abuser, bystanders and/or first responders. Recognizing and responding to this phenomenon is not easy for officers nor domestic violence advocates. **The LAP is designed to encourage and enable High-Danger victims to utilize the community's domestic violence resources, thereby reducing risk of re-assault and intimate partner homicide.** When High-Danger victims are identified in this way, the community is empowered to provide a differentiated response, thus improving the victim's safety.

Purpose of the Lethality Assessment Program

To improve response to victims.

The Lethality Screen and accompanying protocol improve the way law enforcement officers and the community deal with domestic violence across the nation. Officers often leave the scene of a domestic violence call for service and wish there were more they could do for the victim. The LAP allows officers to make a tangible difference in the lives of victims and their families, even when arrests are not made.

To educate and empower victims.

Simply by asking the Lethality Screen questions, the officer educates the victim about the predictors that indicate that she/he is at increased risk of homicide. The hotline advocate gives further education to the victim, as to how to remain safe, what options are available, and what resources are in the community. The victim is then empowered to make choices that increase her/his own safety and decrease the risk of homicide. Even victims who are not assessed as High-Danger at the time of the call for service and those who are not ready to seek help, receive valuable information from the Lethality Screen; it affords them insight into the warning signs that could indicate that their abusive relationship is escalating in severity, and could lead to death.

To respond more strategically to High-Danger situations.

The LAP provides officers an evidence-based tool for assessing the dangerousness of a victim's situation, and an accompanying procedure that immediately connects those victims who are at high risk of severe re-assault or death to a local domestic violence service program (DVSP). The LAP is founded on the belief that domestic violence is **variable**, and that domestic violence fatalities are **predictable and preventable**. Thus, the LAP is an innovation in **safety promotion** and **homicide prevention** that equips law enforcement agencies and DVSPs to respond more proactively to domestic violence in their communities through a **standardized lethality assessment instrument** and **differentiated response procedure** tailored to the victim's unique circumstances.

To enhance COOPERATION, COMMUNICATION, and COORDINATION between Law Enforcement Agencies and DVSPs.

A successful response to domestic violence depends on the willingness of law

enforcement agencies and DVSPs to work together in different ways. Without cooperation, communication, and coordination, law enforcement agencies and DVSPs cannot effectively identify victims who are in potentially lethal situations and properly connect them to safety and services, which are proven to save lives. Law enforcement and DVSPs need to understand that the safety of victims is best-achieved by their mutual willingness to work together. The LAP elevates the collective intelligence of the criminal justice and social services systems regarding best practices in intimate partner homicide reduction.

GOALS AND SUMMARY | **Lethality Assessment Program Protocol**

Goals

The goals of the Lethality Assessment Program are to:

- Reduce the danger level for victims;
- Reduce domestic violence-related fatalities;
- Educate victims to recognize lethality predictors;
- Educate and empower victims to make safe choices;
- Increase awareness of danger and lethality predictors among law enforcement agencies and DVSPs;
- Educate law enforcement agencies and DVSPs on how to provide differentiated responses to domestic violence situations;
- Inspire greater consideration of proactive interventions in law enforcement agencies and DVSPs;
- Provide victims an opportunity "to see themselves, their abusers, and their overall predicaments" through a "different lens"; and
- Enhance cooperation, communication, and coordination between law enforcement agencies and DVSPs.

Overview of the Lethality Assessment Program

The Lethality Assessment Program is comprised of:

1. Law enforcement conducting a lethality assessment through the use of an evidence-based instrument, the Lethality Screen.
2. Law enforcement contacting the DVSP hotline when a victim is assessed as being in High-Danger.
3. Law enforcement calling the DVSP hotline to seek guidance on how to provide a situation-appropriate, differentiated response.
4. Law enforcement encouraging the victim to speak with the DVSP hotline advocate.
5. DVSPs providing immediate safety planning and education to the victim.
6. DVSPs encouraging the victim to use the DVSP's services, as determined by the situation.
7. DVSPs following up with High-Danger victims and providing them with enhanced services, as appropriate.

INITIATING THE SCREEN | Lethality Assessment Program Protocol

When to Initiate the Lethality Screen

Criteria for initiating the Lethality Screen

The officer should initiate the Lethality Screen when he/she responds to a domestic situation between intimate partners, AND at least one of the following conditions exist:

- There is reason to believe that an assault or an act that constitutes domestic violence has occurred, whether or not there is an arrest;
- There is a belief or sense on the part of the officer that once the victim is no longer in the presence of the officer the potential for violence or danger is high;
- When the officer has responded to a domestic situation involving either partner before; and/or
- The officer believes one should be conducted, based on the officer's professional experience, training, and instincts.

The Lethality Screen should only be used in situations involving individuals¹ who have been in or are currently in an **intimate relationship** with each other. An intimate relationship is one in which heterosexual or homosexual partners have, or have had, a sexual or emotional relationship. Persons involved in an intimate relationship are or were romantic partners who:

- Are married, separated, or divorced;
- Live or have lived together;
- Have children in common; or
- Are dating, or have dated.

Situations in which the Lethality Screen cannot be administered

The officer must consider the immediate circumstances to determine whether to administer a Lethality Screen, and whether it will be feasible to employ all aspects of the lethality assessment and accompany response procedure (**explained on pgs. 8-13**). It might not be practical nor safe to initiate the screen if the abuser is present, the victim is incoherent or needs immediate medical attention, or when there is no telephone available.

Limited English Proficiency. It is important to consider the victim's English language proficiency when considering whether to administer the Lethality Screen. Best practice is to have an officer who is fluent in the victim's primary language administer the Lethality Screen in the language the victim prefers. Officers may also use professional

¹As of 2014, the Lethality Screen is a valid instrument for individuals 16 years old or older. There may be situations where completing a Lethality Screen on a minor is appropriate, but first check your established policies. Mandatory reporting laws vary by state and the DVSP may not be permitted to provide services to minors without parental involvement. The local LAP Team Coordinator should be up-to-date as to the laws affecting mandatory reporting and the DVSP's policies concerning providing services to minors.

translators or telephone language lines to communicate with the victim. Make sure all officers are familiar with their agency's policies regarding Limited English Proficiency/Language Access. Officers should not have a family member or a neighbor of the victim interpret the Lethality Screen.

Hospitalization. If the officer was not able to administer the Lethality Screen because the victim was in need of immediate medical attention, the officer should automatically assess the victim as High-Danger (by checking the "Based on officer's belief" box on the Screen and noting that the victim was hospitalized), and call the hotline to advise the DVSP of the victim's condition. Officers should also immediately notify the emergency department of the victim's situation and the perpetrator's name, so that the hospital can take security precautions to protect the victim.

If the circumstances do not permit, or the officer believes that initiating the Lethality Screen may place the victim in immediate danger, the officer should not initiate the Lethality Screen at that time, but should still implement as many steps of the response procedure (**explained on pgs. 8-13**) as possible. The officer, or the agency's domestic violence unit, should consider trying to administer a Lethality Screen as soon as possible, at a safe time and location in order to determine the victim's level of danger.

Situations involving mutual battery

In cases involving allegations of mutual battery, usually one of the parties has acted in self-defense. Administering the Lethality Screen to an abuser would enable the abuser to manipulate the process and possibly have dangerous repercussions for the true victim. Many state laws expect officers to investigate mutual battery cases with a view toward identifying the predominant/primary aggressor. **Administering the Lethality Screen challenges officers to properly investigate cases of mutual battery.** It is highly unlikely that both parties would exhibit the dangerous and controlling predictors that comprise the Lethality Screen. Assess the situation very carefully. Do not administer Lethality Screens to both parties. Do not determine who is the primary aggressor by reviewing Screen answers—the Screen should be administered only after the primary aggressor is determined.

Best Practice: We strongly recommend determining which party is the abuser in the relationship (not necessarily the offender in the particular incident), and which party is generally the victim in the relationship, and then administering the screen to the "victim." Often victims in abusive relationships can provoke a violence incident — they feel it is coming anyway, and want to diffuse tension — but that does not mean they are not "true victims." Consider not only the most recent incident, but the history of violence in the relationship, whether one party seems controlling or has more power in the relationship, and your intuition.

How to Initiate the Lethality Screen

Asking the questions

The officer should advise the victim that he/she will ask the victim a short series of questions to help the officer determine how much immediate danger the victim is in. **The Lethality Screen questions should be asked in the order in which they are listed on the form, as their order is designed to help victims assimilate the lethality predictors in a logical fashion. The officer should ask the questions in a private setting, and use a positive and understanding tone of voice.** More information is available in the "Communication Guidelines."

The officer will use the form titled "Lethality Screen" to ask the victim the Lethality Screen questions.

Lethality Screen questions

1. Has he/she ever used a weapon against you or threatened you with a weapon?
2. Has he/she threatened to kill you or your children?
3. Do you think he/she might try to kill you?
4. Does he/she have a gun or can he/she get one easily?
5. Has he/she ever tried to choke you?
6. Is he/she violently or constantly jealous or does he/she control most of your daily activities?
7. Have you left him/her or separated after living together or being married?
8. Is he/she unemployed?
9. Has he/she tried to kill himself?
10. Do you have a child that he/she knows is not his/hers?
11. Does he/she follow or spy on you or leave threatening messages?

Note:

Question 7 refers to whether the victim has ever, in the history of the relationship with this abuser, separated or broken up with the abuser – NOT whether they are currently broken up.

How to Assess the Responses to the Screen

Yes to Questions #1, 2 or 3

A "yes" or positive response by the victim to any of Questions 1, 2, or 3 reflects a High-Danger situation and automatically warrants a call to the hotline.

Yes to any 4 of Questions #4-11 and No to Questions #1-3

If the victim gives negative responses to Questions 1–3, but positive responses to at least four of Questions 4–11, that reflects a High-Danger situation and warrants a call to the hotline.

No to Questions #1-3 and Yes to no more than 3 of Questions #4-11

The officer should ask the victim the following question: "Is there anything else that worries you about your safety?" If "yes," then: "What worries you?" The response to the question may help the officer better determine whether the hotline call should be made. **An officer may call the hotline and assess the victim as being in High-Danger (and call the hotline) whenever he/she believes the victim is in a potentially lethal situation.**

Unclear answers

Sometimes a victim might provide an unclear answer, or may share information in the context of answering the Lethality Screen questions that seems to contradict a previous "yes" or "no" answer. For example, a victim might answer "no" to, "Do you think he might try to kill you?" but then later say, "When he's choking me, I'm afraid he'll kill me." In situations like these, the officer should note his/her concern on the bottom of the Screen, and discuss it with the hotline advocate if a High-Danger assessment was made, so the hotline advocate can better assess the victim's danger, and coordinate a safety plan that is tailored to the victim's risk factors. **Even if a victim is not assessed as High-Danger on the Lethality Screen, an officer can still make a High-Danger assessment based on his/her professional experience, training, and instincts.**

HOTLINE CALL | Lethality Assessment Program Protocol

Response after the Lethality Screen

High-Danger cases

If a victim is assessed to be in High-Danger based on the Lethality Screen's results or the officer's belief, the officer will implement a hotline call as follows:

- **The officer explains the assessment to the victim.**
The officer advises the victim that his/her assessment of the victim's situation has shown that the victim is at an increased level of danger, and that people in the victim's situation have been killed.
- **The officer advises the victim that he/she will call the hotline.**
The officer then tells the victim that he/she would like to call the domestic violence hotline to get further guidance on how to proceed and to have the victim speak with an advocate.
- **The officer will call the hotline.**
Whether or not the victim initially wants to speak with the hotline advocate, the officer will call the hotline to inform them that there is a High-Danger victim, and to get advice on how to proceed.

Non-High Danger cases (including situations where none of the questions were answered)

- **Advise the victim that domestic violence is dangerous**, and sometimes fatal;
- Inform the victim to **watch for the lethality predictors** listed in the Lethality Screen because they may convey to the victim that she/he is at increased level of danger;
- **Refer the victim to the DVSP**; and
- Provide the victim with the officer's **contact information** or contact information of others who may be available during times when the officer is not available, in case the victim wants to talk further or needs help. Remind the victim to call 911 in situations where she/he might need immediate help.

Phone Protocol

Patrol phone.

If the officer has a work-issued cell phone, using that to call the hotline is the best option. The abuser will not be able to link the victim to the hotline, it does not involve a

In High- and Non-High Danger cases and "Did Not Answer" cases: Record-keeping

In all cases, including those when the victim was not High-Danger but a Lethality Screen was completed, the officer prepares a report.

- Record why a Lethality Screen was conducted;
- Record whether the hotline call was made;
- Specify which resources, (including the DVSP), were recommended to the victim; and
- Explain what, if any, follow-up actions were/will be taken. For victim safety, it is considered a best practice to arrange for both an officer and an advocate follow-up together, in-person, at the victim's residence or for the DVSP to conduct telephone follow-up.

third party, and it ensures the call will be brief. Consider using a supervisor's patrol phone, if officers do not carry patrol phones.

Officer's personal cell phone.

The officer is **under no obligation to use his/her personal cell phone**. However, because the victim is in danger, the officer should consider this as an option. Doing so will enable the victim to connect with services that may help her/him and will provide the officer with a practical way to handle the situation.

The victim's cell phone or landline.

This should be used only as a last resort. Modern technology gives even the least tech-savvy abuser the ability to trace or record calls. Be cognizant that the call history (even on a landline) can be tracked. Take all possible precautions. Officers should ask the victim if it is a possibility that the abuser could be recording the call, mention some warning signs (such as the abuser always knowing what the victim is doing, even without the victim telling him/her), and ask the victim if it is safe to use the victim's phone before making the call. Keep in mind that the abuser may be using other technology, including hacking into email, spyware, or video cameras, to monitor and control the victim.

The victim knows the abuser better than anyone; rely on her/his instincts to know whether using her/his personal cellphone or landline is a safe option.

Connecting the Victim to Services

If the victim initially declines to speak with the advocate

The officer will still call the hotline. Follow the "**Communication Guidelines**" for a guide to this conversation. The call should be brief, and should be focused on helping the officer safety plan with the victim.

The officer will:

- Tell the victim that the officer will contact the DVSP hotline to receive guidance on how to proceed with the situation;
- Tell the victim that the officer would like the victim to reconsider speaking with the hotline advocate; and
- While still on the phone with the hotline advocate, the officer will ask the victim if she/he has reconsidered and would now like to speak with the advocate.

If the victim continues to decline to speak with the advocate

The officer will:

- **Reiterate his/her assessment** that the **victim is in a dangerous situation**;
- Engage in **basic safety planning** with the victim through the advocate
- Inform the victim to **watch for the lethality predictors** listed on the Lethality Screen because they may convey that she/he is at an increased level of danger;
- **Ask if the victim's name and contact information can be given to the hotline**

- **advocate** for follow-up;
- **Strongly encourage the victim to call the DVSP and provide the referral information;**
- **Provide the victim with the officer's work phone number** or the phone number of others who may be available during times when the officer is not, in case the victim wants to talk further or needs help. Remind the victim to call 911 in situations where she/he needs immediate assistance.

The advocate will:

- **Engage in basic safety planning**, using the officer as a go-between.
- **Consider the victim's immediate circumstances:** her/his responses to the Lethality Screen, whether the abuser has been arrested, and whether the victim is planning to leave the abuser.
- Attempt to get permission for the DVSP to **safely follow up with the victim** in the next couple of days.

If the victim agrees to speak with the advocate

The officer will call the domestic violence hotline and advise the advocate that he/she has made a High-Danger assessment, and would like the advocate to speak with the victim. See "**Communication Guidelines**" for further instructions on the officer's interaction with the hotline advocate.

Upon being advised by an officer that a victim has been assessed as being in High-Danger,

- The advocate will have a brief conversation with the law enforcement officer about **which questions the victim responded "yes" to, which questions the victim declined to answer, and the context of the incident.**
- Then, the advocate will **speak with the victim, counsel the victim as appropriate, and determine immediate safety planning measures with the victim.** See the "**Communication Guidelines**" for specific steps to take, key points of the conversation, and a sample conversation.
- Before concluding the call, the advocate will ask the victim if she/he may **discuss the victim's situation with the officer in order to coordinate a safety plan.** If the victim declines to allow the advocate to share information with the law enforcement officer, the advocate should follow her/his agency's confidentiality policy. Nevertheless, the advocate should speak to the officer to let the officer know that the conversation has concluded and it is safe to end the service call.
- If the victim consents to a follow-up call by the DVSP, **solicit the victim's contact information and a suitable time and date to follow-up safely** (preferably within 24 hours of the initial hotline call), as well as how frequently the DVSP can follow up.

Hotline Conversation Points

1. Gather information from the officer.
2. Build rapport with the victim.
3. Reinforce that the victim is in danger.
4. Educate and safety plan.
5. Encourage the victim to use DVSP services.

The need for a longer call

If it appears to the advocate that the phone call will last more than 10 minutes and that the officer's presence does not seem to be required any longer, **the advocate will ask to speak with the officer.** The advocate will explain to the officer that his/her assistance or presence does not seem to be required any longer and that, if the victim agrees, the officer may consider leaving. **If the victim agrees, and the officer believes that the situation on the scene is stable and safe,** the officer should **provide the victim with his/her work phone number,** in case the victim wants to talk further or needs help; **and advise the victim to call 911** if the victim needs emergency assistance.

PROTOCOL CONCLUSION | Lethality Assessment Program Protocol

Concluding the Call for Service

Before leaving the scene

Before leaving the scene, the officer should:

- Inform the victim about possible follow-up by him/herself, or other law enforcement officials.
- Have a brief discussion about how to follow-up safely. Think about whether to block the officer's number from showing up on the victim's caller ID before calling, whether it is safe to leave a message, whether follow-up contact for any ongoing investigation should be done at the victim's workplace, etc.
- Make sure the victim knows what actions will be taken by the officer: will the abuser be arrested, will further investigation of the current incident occur or is the investigation closed, etc.
- Make sure the victim knows how quickly the abuser could be released from custody if the abuser was arrested.
- It is a best practice to provide the victim with a "victim's information card." This card should have emergency numbers listed, as well the contact information for the DVSP.

After leaving the scene

Inform domestic violence unit or supervisor. Notify the agency's domestic violence unit, if one exists, or a supervisor of the High-Danger assessment, and of the victim's wishes concerning follow-up, and offer a personal assessment of the victim's situation based on the information that the officer obtained from the encounter and/or from previous encounters.

- Based on the information provided by the officer and/or information known to the domestic violence unit, the unit or supervisor may decide that no follow-up should be made in this particular case, or that the victim and/or the abuser should be contacted.
- If a decision is made to contact the victim and/or abuser, the unit or a supervisor will devise a plan for contact to better determine the victim's situation, the need for further help and the danger posed by the abuser. The potential risks to the victim must be carefully weighed before activating such a plan.
- If law enforcement decides to do "welfare" follow ups (in contrast to criminal investigation follow ups), a plan should be made in conjunction with the DVSP.

Document. Prepare a report fully documenting the incident.

Share a copy of the Lethality Screen with the DVSP. This can be done at the end of the officer's shift, or one person can send all the LAP screens to the DVSP once per day. It is important to send the Lethality Screens to the DVSP in a timely fashion so that follow-up attempts by the DVSP will be prompt and informed. The Screens can be faxed or

scanned and e-mailed to the DVSP agency representative.

Providing Enhanced Services for High-Danger Victims

Services include nearly everything the DVSP does beyond the initial hotline call. The DVSP is encouraged to offer, and engage High-Danger victims in: safety planning, obtaining protection orders, referrals to legal services, shelter, free or reduced-cost counseling, survivors' support groups, legal advocacy, economic empowerment classes, food or clothing banks, 911 phones, and more. Please see "**Sample DVSP Policies**" for more information.

Follow up. The DVSP should create telephone or home visit follow-up procedures if procedures are not already in-place. Please see "**Sample DVSP Policies**" for more information. The best practice is for the hotline advocate to obtain permission from the victim to follow-up, and to learn the best way to follow-up during the initial hotline call. All attempts to follow-up should be tracked internally by the DVSP.

If a victim is particularly High-Danger, it is a best practice for an advocate and officer to make an unannounced home visit shortly after the initial Lethality Screen.

Intake. If a victim who has received a High-Danger assessment contacts the DVSP, the DVSP will:

- Process the victim according to its administrative intake procedures or a specialized, fast-track process.
- Commit itself to providing enhanced services to High-Danger victims and seek to develop and use best practices for helping such victims. Examples of best practices might include:
 - Guarantees of shelter if requested;
 - Providing more resources or a lower eligibility threshold;
 - Sharing resources and information across programs;
 - Set aside next-day appointments for counseling, legal services, or intake for High-Danger victims.

Conduct Danger Assessment. As part of the administrative intake procedures (primarily in cases where the victim has gone to the DVSP for assistance), an advocate should administer a Danger Assessment (if the advocate is certified to do so, from dangerassessment.com) to further understand the victim's situation, reiterate to the victim the danger she/he is in, and tailor a unique, longer-term safety plan. The LAP High Danger analysis is intended to cast a wide net – completing a Danger Assessment on all High Danger victims will allow DVSPs to target their resources more carefully to those most in danger. Further, research has shown that victims who complete a full Danger Assessment are more likely to engage in the criminal justice system for longer periods of time.

Team Approach. If the victim agrees and the advocate believes that it would be a constructive process, a coordinated team approach to securing the victim's safety would begin immediately, with other agencies/organizations being contacted as

necessary for further assistance. Other agencies could include law enforcement, the state's attorney's office, parole and probation, social services, adult and/or child protective services, and mental health services.



Lethality Assessment Program – Maryland Model

Implementation Checklist for Victim-Initiated LAP Screening Domestic Violence Service Providers

Foundational elements for LAP implementation:

- The Domestic Violence Service Provider (DVSP) approves the application of the Lethality Assessment Program (LAP) to be included as part of hotline operations.
- The DVSP has a domestic violence hotline operated by a trained staff person/s or volunteers, 24 hours per day, every day of the year.
- The DVSP uses the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV) Lethality Screen for First Responders.
- Trained DVSP's hotline and victim advocates serve as Lethality Screeners. Other Screeners may include additional staff or volunteers associated with the DVSP.
- The DVSP provides LAP training and education, as needed and which may be coordinated and/or provided by the MNADV.
- The DVSP captures data and report semi-annually to the MNADV.

Preparation for LAP implementation:

- The DVSP designates a LAP Coordinator.
- The DVSP works with the MNADV to establish LAP policy for hotline calls and to monitor progress on an on-going basis.
- The DVSP and MNADV meet to discuss the LAP policy, training plan and implementation logistics.

Technical assistance and training provided by MNADV:

- Sample LAP policy and assistance in drafting a policy for the DVSP.
- Coordination of meetings and trainings.
- In-service LAP training for staff.
- Informational, training and implementation materials.
- Ongoing technical assistance and communication.



High Risk Victim Follow-Up Model Guidelines

Purpose

When the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV) developed the Lethality Assessment Program, following up with victims assessed as being in High-Danger was a consideration that was not pursued because such an approach was not the norm among domestic violence service providers. Safety to victims was a concern in conducting follow-up, or outreach, along with a perception that such an approach would be disempowering. During the intervening years, domestic violence advocates in Maryland began the practice of following up because of a belief that high risk victims required immediate attention. The Maryland experience has demonstrated that the issue of victim safety is not the concern that advocates had perceived and, rather than being disempowering, follow-up best practices have enabled advocates to provide information, support and encouragement to greater numbers of victims.

This document seeks to establish a common set of guidelines on how to respond to the unique circumstances that high risk situations present. The MNADV developed these guidelines, in collaboration with domestic violence advocates and other stakeholders across the state. They represent the best practices of advocates in Maryland; they establish a unified best practice for use by advocates and law enforcement officers in conducting follow-up services with high risk domestic violence victims after an incident has occurred, and specifically after a Lethality Screen has been administered.

Method of Follow-up

The first step is to determine the method of follow-up. Follow-up would usually include phone calls to the victim by an advocate and/or scheduled or unscheduled home visits by a team of an advocate and an officer. The method of follow-up as a standard operating procedure should be determined by the capability of the domestic violence program as to which level of outreach it is capable of conducting and, in the case of the potential law enforcement partner, by its capability and willingness to participate as a team with the domestic violence program in conducting home visits. In individual cases the method of follow-up should best be determined by examining the circumstances of the situation, especially the level of danger the victim is in, with specific consideration given to empowering and informing the victim of the danger (s)he is in and connecting her/him with services.

The domestic violence program will decide on the method it will use to conduct follow-up services. Programs should not view these methods in absolute terms: they can adopt follow-up by using the telephone for some cases and reserve home visits for situations that might call for an enhanced level of contact with a victim. Programs should be open to follow-up methods and constantly reassess them. A decision to use home visits as a follow-up method can only be made in conjunction with a program's partner law enforcement agency.

Conducting Phone Call Follow-Up

Goals

Advocates should conduct phone calls as a method of follow-up with the victim in order to check on the victim's well-being, to educate the victim, to conduct immediate safety planning and to encourage the victim to utilize services.

Conversation with the Victim

Advocates should incorporate the points of conversation from the LAP Hotline Conversation Guidelines into their discussion with the victim. They should:

- Explain the limits of their confidentiality;
- Make an effort to gain the victim's trust. Engage in a discussion instead of talking "at" the individual;
- Use the discussion to find out more information about the history of abuse or the current incident. Discuss the lethality assessment and the victim's risk/children's risk of being seriously hurt or killed. They should familiarize themselves with other questions from the Danger Assessment, and other methods of abuse to move the discussion;
- Find out whether or not the individual has ever reached out for help in the past and the outcome. Also, find out if the victim has ever been in for services to a domestic violence agency, a hospital, the courts, etc., and the outcomes of each interaction;
- Explain the services that the domestic violence program provides and provide education, as needed, to ensure that the victim understands that the abuse is not her/his fault. Offer information about the full range of programs the domestic violence program offers because some clients may be hesitant to shelter or counseling but more open to legal help;
- Actively encourage the victim to come into the office or make an appointment for further services with the domestic violence program.

Timeline

The domestic violence program should conduct phone call follow-up within 24 hours of receipt of a High-Danger screen, or as required by the urgency of a particular victim's situation. The phone number used to contact the victim should be that which the victim provided to the officer or advocate during the course of the lethality call. Advocates should make three attempts to follow-up with the victim by phone. If an advocate is unable to reach the victim after three attempts, the advocate should consider making a request to law enforcement to conduct a well-being check on the victim. If no contact is made, a subsequent attempt should be made after thirty days.

If an appointment has been scheduled immediately following the lethality call, the victim should be contacted by phone on the morning of the appointment as a reminder and to check on her/his well-being. Victims may be reluctant to keep the appointment and advocates should strongly encourage the victim to keep the appointment. If a particular circumstance, such as child care or transportation, is a problem for the victim, the advocate should seek to problem-solve to provide an opportunity for the victim to seek services. Such problem-solving may include providing child care at the program or contacting the participating law enforcement agency to try to arrange for transportation.

Conducting a Home Visit

Partnership

Conducting home visits, generally to victims who have not yet engaged the domestic violence program, is a partnership between the advocate and the officer. This type of partnership, however, brings together two disciplines that typically work toward the same goal—victim safety—utilizing different methods.

Goal

The key to the partnership is to understand what home visits to high risk victims, and often to highly dangerous abusers, are seeking to accomplish, and the goals of the home visit are the same as those of phone call follow-ups: to check on the victim's well-being, to educate the victim, to conduct immediate safety planning and to get the victim into domestic violence services which is protective of victims and thus a crime prevention tool.

Respect for One Another's Work

Working together as part of a follow-up team, as with any partnership, will take time, patience and a willingness to educate one another about the other's work. As this learning process evolves, it is important to maintain a mutual respect of the work of one another's partner.

Advocate-Officer Team

Home visits of high risk victims are the domain of advocate-officer teams of the jurisdiction(s) involved. Home visits enable the advocate and officer team to observe the victim first hand, to be in a better position to assess the victim's level of danger, and perhaps to motivate the victim to take action.

Announced and Unannounced Options for Home Visits

The team may consider scheduling home visits with victims beforehand. If it is not feasible to schedule visits, the team may conduct unannounced visits and may adopt this practice as a norm.

Visitation Policies

- Advocates should not conduct home visits by themselves. The team of the advocate and officer are better equipped and safer handling the variety of situations that can arise during a home visit.
- Law enforcement agencies should not have policies or procedures that require officers, without an accompanying advocate or coordinating with the partner domestic violence program, to make home visits for the purpose of safety planning or referral to a domestic violence program. In cases where the domestic violence program does not have the capability to participate in a home visit protocol, and the law enforcement agency wishes to conduct home visits for the purpose of providing safety information and referral, the agency and domestic violence program should coordinate such law enforcement home visits. The coordinating officer and advocate should consider sharing non-confidential information that might be conveyed to the victim in a manner that will insure that the victim understands that both are working together for the victim's benefit.

Timeline

The advocate-officer team should conduct home visits within 48 hours of receipt of a High Danger screen by the program, as required by the urgency of a particular victim's situation, or as agreed upon by the law enforcement agency and local program not to exceed the current work week. Home visits of screens received by the program on the weekend should be conducted within 48 hours of the first business day.

The team may discontinue the home visit efforts after three unsuccessful attempts to make contact with the victim, or fewer unsuccessful visits if the particular circumstance warrants discontinuation. By mutual agreement the team may decide whether to continue beyond three attempts if both the advocate and the officer consider contact with the victim acutely critical to the victim's and children's well-being. After thirty days, the domestic violence program will attempt to make telephone contact with the victim to renew efforts at follow-up by the team.

Resolving Team Concerns

Advocates and officers who have concerns about how the other carries out his/her role, or about the overall willingness to work as a team, should bring the matter to the attention of their own supervisor, if the matters are not able to be personally resolved, who in turn should discuss the matter with the other's supervisor to find resolution. Unresolved issues should move through each agency's/organization's hierarchy, as necessary, for decision-making.

Roles of Advocates and Officers during Home Visits

Advocates

The advocate's role is to provide the victim with safety planning, resources and encouragement to participate in domestic violence services. A victim's willingness or ability to participate in services may depend on the victim's circumstance and understanding of the dynamics that encompass the relationship. Services should be offered based on the victim's situation—depending on whether the victim has left the relationship, is planning to leave or remains in the relationship. The advocate's job is to honor the victim's choice and to work with the victim where(s)he is in terms of the victim's particular stage of change at the present moment.

Prior to conducting a home visit, the advocate will:

- Be at the designated meeting place to begin the home visits on time;
- Have adequate, pre-identified handout materials for victims concerning services;
- Review the hotline documentation of the lethality call and the Lethality Screen;
- Review police reports pertaining to the victim's situation;
- Share with her/his partner any background information on the victim and the abuser that the advocate is permitted to disclose. Of particular concern would be the potential danger the abuser might pose to law enforcement;
- Wear comfortable, professional attire.

Officers

The officer's role is to provide information that will enable the victim to understand that physical abuse is a crime and how the criminal justice system works; ensure the safety of all individuals on the scene; and enforce the law, as necessary.

Prior to conducting a home visit, the officer will:

- Be at the designated meeting place to begin the home visit on time;
- Review reports, including previous reports concerning the victim and abuser;
- Make records checks, including warrant, protective order, and firearms checks on the abuser;
- Have the police vehicle inspected and ready to go;
- Prepare law enforcement documents related to the parties involved in the visit;
- Ensure that the advocate understands the safety guidelines contained in these protocols for the home visit and knows how to carry them out.

During the visit, the officer will:

- If the abuser is not present, allow the advocate to guide the conversation and provide law enforcement related information as asked or needed;
- If the abuser is present, try to separate the parties in a comfortable, non-confrontational manner so that the officer remains with the abuser and the advocate with the victim;
- If the abuser is present but separating the parties does not appear to be feasible, share the conversation with the advocate so that both the officer and advocate are equally providing information pertinent to their functions.

Team

Both the advocate and officer as a team will:

- Review the information they have obtained with the other on each case and prepare a plan for each visit they are making.
- Discuss and agree upon the appropriate approach to the visit;
- Work out a route if there are multiple visits to be made;
- Discuss particular aspects of cases so both can contribute to the discussion of how certain matters should be approached, such as the potential presence of children and whether they were present during the incident which prompted the visit, and any dangers the abuser could pose.

Procedures for the Home Visit

Considerations when arriving at the home:

- Locate the address of the client.
- Park in a spot that is not in front of the address or in the driveway.
- Check for potential safety hazards before leaving the vehicle.
- Carry only those items necessary to conduct the home visit.
 - Secure personal belongings out-of-sight in the vehicle.
 - Keep keys accessible.
 - Keep doors locked until you are ready to exit the vehicle.

Considerations when approaching the home:

- Visually inspect the outside of the home and surrounding area.
- Do not stand directly in front of the door.
- Look and listen for noises from people inside and outside of the home (dogs, crying, fighting).

Considerations when entering the home:

- Visually inspect the inside of the home to note any hazards or identify the presence of children.

- Wait for the identified victim to come into view before entering the home (in case an unidentified person answers the door).
- Mentally note the victim's presentation.

Considerations while inside the home:

- Conduct the visit in rooms where you can easily leave quickly, if necessary.
- Never leave the visual presence of his/her partner.
- Stay aware of behaviors of the victim, of the abuser, and of the environment.
- If safety is at risk, the advocate should leave immediately, while the officer defuses or controls the situation.

Considerations while interviewing the victim:

- Present to the victim in a professional, but caring and respectful way (e.g., speak with the victim at eye level, open posture, etc).
- Be aware of the victim's demeanor and respond accordingly.
- Always refer to the abuser by name and be respectful when discussing the abuser.
- Assess for suicidal ideation and follow appropriate steps for getting the client help.

Considerations upon leaving the home:

- Be aware of people or activities taking place near the residence, the exit route and the vehicle. If there is danger, proceed with an alternate plan.
- Leave the scene right away. Do not make phone calls or write notes sitting in the car on the scene. This should be done in a safe place.

Conversation Points for Different Scenarios

Respect

When conducting a home visit, treat everyone present in the house with respect. Each victim may view their relationship differently; they may not call their partner an "abuser." Using such words may cause a victim to distance themselves from the home visit process. Follow the client's lead.

Scenarios

Every home visit will not be the same. Often the visit will be brief; however, there will be times when the needs of the situation demand that the team spend more time. Both team members should be of one accord at all times. The team should discuss how they will address the following scenarios:

- if the abuser is not home;
- if the abuser is home during the unannounced visit;
- if the abuser returns home while the team is still present.

If the abuser is not home at the time of the visit:

- Conduct the follow-up visit as originally outlined above;
- Ask the victim when (s)he expects the abuser to return (this can gauge the length of the home visit and may give light to any further information about how the abuser will react if (s)he returns and finds the team present).

If the abuser is home at the time of the visit:

- Interact with the victim (and possibly abuser) based upon the non-verbal or verbal cues given;

- Speak generally, if possible, about the nature of the visit and offer general resources to both parties;
- Maintain victim confidentiality;
- Separate the partners, if this can be done comfortably and without alarm to either party. Separating the victim from the abuser may enable the advocate to convey more information and enable the officer to communicate with the abuser about the criminal consequences of domestic violence.

If the abuser returns home during the home visit:

- Have the officer take the lead on how to handle the situation;
- As feasible, the team should engage in non-verbal cues;
- Use information regarding the abuser's previous interactions with police; also ask the client for input;
- Gauge verbal and non-verbal cues.

Conversation with the Victim

As with phone call follow-ups, advocates should incorporate the points of conversation from the LAP Hotline Conversation Guidelines into their discussion with the victim. They should:

- Explain the limits of their confidentiality;
- Make an effort to gain the victim's trust. Engage in a discussion instead of talking "at" the individual;
- Use the discussion to find out more information about the history of abuse or the current incident. Discuss the lethality assessment and the victim's risk/children's risk of being seriously hurt or killed. They should familiarize themselves with other questions from the Danger Assessment, and other methods of abuse to move the discussion;
- Find out whether or not the individual has ever reached out for help in the past and the outcome. Also, find out if the victim has ever been in for services to a domestic violence agency, a hospital, the courts, etc., and the outcomes of each interaction;
- Explain the services that the domestic violence program provides and provide education, as needed, to ensure that the victim understands that the abuse is not her/his fault. Offer information about the full range of programs the domestic violence program offers because some clients may be hesitant to shelter or counseling but more open to legal help;
- Actively encourage the victim to come into the office or make an appointment for further services with the domestic violence program.

If the client declines to speak with the advocate, the advocate should ask if (s)he can leave a business card or information in a safe place for the victim to review when (s)he is ready. If the victim is willing to offer a phone number, the advocate should take the number and follow up with the victim at a later time.

Working with Victims with Limited English Proficiency

When an advocate-officer team contacts a victim who does not speak English and the team is unable to communicate directly with the victim, the team should use the language line or should contact, if such contact will not cause an undue delay, an advocate or officer who speaks the language of the victim.

In preparing to go to a home where English is not spoken, the team should also try to be aware of certain cultural norms that may need to be observed and that may affect the visit, such as gender roles, who might answer the door, people coming to the house unannounced.

Debrief following the Home Visit

Once a home visit is completed, the team should discuss all aspects of the visit with a view toward improving the way that particular situations were handled. The team should review preparation, adequacy of materials that were provided, personal safety considerations, how they were able to manage the scene and various conversations that occurred, how they were each able to communicate with the various persons on the scene, how the victim responded to them, and how they interacted with one another.

Documentation following the Home Visit

Both the advocate and officer should each document the visitation in the manner their agency records contacts. However, the program should establish a general documentation sheet of high risk home visits as a basic record of the visit and to serve as the repository of the record.

DANGER ASSESSMENT

Jacquelyn C. Campbell, Ph.D., R.N.
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Several risk factors have been associated with increased risk of homicides (murders) of women and men in violent relationships. We cannot predict what will happen in your case, but we would like you to be aware of the danger of homicide in situations of abuse and for you to see how many of the risk factors apply to your situation.

Using the calendar, please mark the approximate dates during the past year when you were abused by your partner or ex partner. Write on that date how bad the incident was according to the following scale:

1. Slapping, pushing; no injuries and/or lasting pain
2. Punching, kicking; bruises, cuts, and/or continuing pain
3. "Beating up"; severe contusions, burns, broken bones
4. Threat to use weapon; head injury, internal injury, permanent injury
5. Use of weapon; wounds from weapon

(If any of the descriptions for the higher number apply, use the higher number.)

Mark **Yes** or **No** for each of the following. ("He" refers to your husband, partner, ex-husband, ex-partner, or whoever is currently physically hurting you.)

- ___ 1. Has the physical violence increased in severity or frequency over the past year?
- ___ 2. Does he own a gun?
- ___ 3. Have you left him after living together during the past year?
3a. (If have *never* lived with him, check here ___)
- ___ 4. Is he unemployed?
- ___ 5. Has he ever used a weapon against you or threatened you with a lethal weapon?
(If yes, was the weapon a gun? ___)
- ___ 6. Does he threaten to kill you?
- ___ 7. Has he avoided being arrested for domestic violence?
- ___ 8. Do you have a child that is not his?
- ___ 9. Has he ever forced you to have sex when you did not wish to do so?
- ___ 10. Does he ever try to choke you?
- ___ 11. Does he use illegal drugs? By drugs, I mean "uppers" or amphetamines, "meth", speed, angel dust, cocaine, "crack", street drugs or mixtures.
- ___ 12. Is he an alcoholic or problem drinker?
- ___ 13. Does he control most or all of your daily activities? For instance: does he tell you who you can be friends with, when you can see your family, how much money you can use, or when you can take the car? (If he tries, but you do not let him, check here: ___)
- ___ 14. Is he violently and constantly jealous of you? (For instance, does he say "If I can't have you, no one can.")
- ___ 15. Have you ever been beaten by him while you were pregnant? (If you have never been pregnant by him, check here: ___)
- ___ 16. Has he ever threatened or tried to commit suicide?
- ___ 17. Does he threaten to harm your children?
- ___ 18. Do you believe he is capable of killing you?
- ___ 19. Does he follow or spy on you, leave threatening notes or messages on answering machine, destroy your property, or call you when you don't want him to?
- ___ 20. Have you ever threatened or tried to commit suicide?
- ___ Total "Yes" Answers

Thank you. Please talk to your nurse, advocate or counselor about what the Danger Assessment means in terms of your situation.



Shelter-to-Shelter Domestic Violence Referral Form

This **voluntary** tool was created in conjunction with the statewide **Shelter Directors' Group**

Purposes of this form:

- To improve **coordination** and **collaboration** across shelter programs.
- To provide domestic violence shelters with a **consistent** way to **refer** victims to shelters in other counties when the victim is **at risk** by remaining at that shelter and/or in that community.
- To assist domestic violence victims with **safely relocating** from one domestic violence shelter (referred to as the shelter in their *home county*) to a domestic violence shelter in another county (referred to as *out-of-county shelter*).

Procedure:

1. Home shelter completes the referral form and faxes it to the out-of-county shelter.
2. Out of county shelter reviews the form and calls home shelter.
 - a. If victim cannot be accepted at this time, out-of-county shelter informs home shelter of this.
 - b. If the out-of-county shelter could possibly accept victim, the out-of-county shelter begins their normal screening protocol.

*This form is to be completed by the **staff person** who is primarily responsible for supervising/overseeing the domestic violence shelter in the home county.

1. Staff contact name(s) for shelter in home county: _____
2. Name of referring organization/shelter: _____ Shelter Phone#: _____
3. Victim's name: _____
5. Family size and demographics (genders and ages): _____

6. What is the victim's plan? _____

7. Does the family have any special needs? _____

Please confirm the following statements:

- The attached **information release** has been signed by the victim. Please fax with this referral form.
- The victim is fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence.

Please indicate the reason for relocation:

Please complete the following:

This relocation is to be **temporary** **permanent** Notes: _____

The shelter in the home county **will provide** **will arrange** transportation to the new location.

The program in the home county **will** **will not** continue to provide services (case management, legal, transportation, etc.) after the victim is relocated to the out-of-county shelter.

Notes: _____



FAQ:

Shelter-to-Shelter Domestic Violence Referral Form

ABOUT THIS FORM

1. Who created the Shelter-to-Shelter Domestic Violence Referral Form?

The Shelter Directors' Group, which is a longstanding networking group made up of Shelter Directors from comprehensive domestic violence programs throughout the state, initiated the development of the form in collaboration with the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV).

2. Why was the form developed and what is its purpose?

The Shelter Directors' Group recognized a need for greater transparency when one shelter refers residents to another shelter. This form was developed with the following purposes:

- 1) To promote victim safety by facilitating the safe relocation of victims to another shelter when they are in danger.
- 2) To foster improved coordination, collaboration, and trust across programs by providing a consistent way to refer victims to other shelters when it is necessary for their safety and well-being.

3. How can I obtain copies of the Shelter-to-Shelter Domestic Violence Referral Form?

You may request a hard copy of this form to be mailed to your program, or you can request to have this form emailed to you electronically by contacting Amber Guthrie at aguthrie@mnadv.org. In the top right hand corner of the form, there is a box where you can opt to add your organization's name or logo so the shelter to which you are referring can quickly determine the origin of the referral.

HOW TO USE THE FORM

4. How should I use this Form?

This form can be used by your program's shelter staff to refer a shelter resident to a domestic violence shelter in another county. By using this form, it communicates to the shelter on the receiving end that the request for transfer is for a valid and serious reason. It should only be used if the resident is in imminent danger in your shelter, or if there are extenuating and specific circumstances why relocating to the other county would be beneficial. Specific examples include:

Examples of appropriate referral:

- Their abuser has shown up at your program's shelter to threaten or attack the victim.
- The victim is being stalked, the abuser knows where the shelter is, and the victim has reason to believe s/he is in danger.
- The victim's immediate family, employer, school, or children's daycare or school are located in the other county and the victim has concrete, specific plans to permanently relocate to this other county.

Examples of inappropriate referral:

- The resident has no history of domestic violence.

- The resident is being exited from your program's shelter for being violent and would pose a threat in another domestic violence shelter environment.
- The shelter staff no longer wants to work with this person.
- The resident is almost ready to leave shelter, but their length of stay has been maximized.
- There is no room at your program's shelter

Shelter staff should complete the form with the victim, obtain a release of information from the victim, and send the form and signed release to the other shelter.

5. Do I have to use the Shelter-to-Shelter Domestic Violence Referral Form?

No, the Shelter-to-Shelter Domestic Violence Referral Form is voluntary and meant to be an additional tool for shelter staff. Programs are encouraged to utilize the form and incorporate it into their existing referral and request for transfer procedures.

6. Does a release of information need to be filled out by the victim?

Yes. To maintain confidentiality while coordinating service provision and to protect victim safety, a release of information must accompany the form. A sample information release form from the National Network to End Domestic Violence is included for your convenience. However, you may substitute this form with your own agency's release form. In keeping with the best practice of time-limited, specific, and survivor-informed releases, we recommend keeping the form effective for no more than 48 hours.

HOW TO RESPOND TO THIS FORM

7. What should I do if a shelter sends me this form?

If another shelter sends this completed form to your program, please review the form and communicate with the referring shelter promptly. We recognize that every shelter's policies vary on when and how to accept someone into shelter. If it is possible that the person being referred may be eligible for your shelter services, then follow-up with the program to initiate your normal screening and intake process and to discuss logistics, transportation, coordination of services, etc. To prevent re-traumatization, you may wish to obtain an additional information release so the referring program can share additional details about the situation without having the victim recount all of the details again. If the victim is ineligible for your shelter program, please promptly let the referring shelter know so they can inform their resident and move on to alternative options.

8. Does receiving the form mean that we are expected to accept the person being referred?

No, the form is intended to be a starting point for communication and collaboration with the other shelter, eliminating the need for multiple phone calls. Accepting the referral is done at the discretion of each program, following normal protocol and procedures for each program.

9. Does using the Shelter-to-Shelter Domestic Violence Referral Form mean we must accept out-of-county residents?

No. The form does not require that an out-of-county resident be accepted into your program. We recognize that each shelter's policies and philosophies vary with regard to county residency. We also recognize that most shelters will accept out-of-county residents at least occasionally due to extenuating circumstances such as those listed in Question 4 above. Even if your shelter is unable to accept the referral (based on residency, the circumstances, capacity, etc.), please communicate this to the referring shelter promptly.

THANKS FOR ALL YOU DO!



Technology Safety Plan

A Guide for Survivors and Advocates

This document contains general information about safety planning with victims of domestic and sexual violence, stalking and trafficking in situations of technology abuse. As an overview, this document provides general tips and suggestions. For more specific safety planning strategies, please consult one of our safety planning guides to a particular technology or situation and please contact a local victim advocate who can help you with a more thorough safety plan.

Trust your instincts. If you suspect that the abusive person is harassing, stalking, or monitoring you using technology, it is possible and likely. Abusers, stalkers and perpetrators can be incredibly persistent and creative in maintaining control and technology is another tool for them to misuse.

Get more information. Navigating violence, abuse, and stalking is very difficult and dangerous. Work with a victim advocate to discuss your options and to help you plan for your safety. You can call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233, the National Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-656-4673, or the National Human Trafficking hotline at 1-888-373-7888.

Look for patterns to identify misused technology. Carefully try to figure out how or which technology is being used to harass, stalk, or monitor you. For example, if you suspect you're being watched, is it in a particular room in your house? If you suspect you're being followed, is it just when you're in your car or wherever you go? Narrowing down the potential source of technology will help you create a more precise safety plan.

General safety tips. If it seems like the person knows too much about your activity, it could be from a variety of sources. The abuser could be monitoring your computer or cell phone. The perpetrator could be accessing your online accounts or gathering information about you online. Or the stalker could be monitoring your location.

Use a safer computer/device. If you suspect that the abusive person is monitoring your computer activities try using a safer computer, tablet, or device to prevent the abusive person from seeing what you're doing.

Change passwords and usernames. Change the usernames and passwords of your online accounts on the safe computer. Don't use the new username and password on the computer that is being likely monitored. Consider creating brand new accounts, such as a new email address. Also consider using a non-identifying username instead of your actual name and don't use the same password for your accounts.

Check your cell phone settings. Go through your phone's settings to ensure that other devices aren't connected to the phone and that Bluetooth and location access is limited or turned off. If your phone allows apps to be downloaded, make sure you know what each of the apps do; if you don't use it or don't know what it is, delete the app. Pay attention to excessive battery or data usage as that may indicate that a program may be in use on your phone constantly. Call your phone carrier to ask about location settings or third-part applications.



Technology Safety Plan

A Guide for Survivors and Advocates

Get a new cell phone. If you suspect that your cell phone is being monitored, the safest thing is to get a new phone with an account that the abusive person doesn't have access to. A pay-as-you-go phone is an inexpensive alternative. Put a passcode on your phone and ensure that location settings and Bluetooth settings are turned off.

Have your car checked. If the abusive person knows where you are whenever you are in your car, you may consider having your car checked for hidden location devices. Ask a trusted mechanic or law enforcement to check the car thoroughly.

Limit the information you give out about yourself. Most things we do these days asks for personally identifying information—whether it is to make a purchase, open a discount card or create an account. Limit the information that you provide since you don't know who else they will share your information.

Get a P.O. Box or inquire about Address Confidentiality Programs. If you're concerned about someone knowing your actual address, you can open a private mail box or if your state has an address confidentiality program, check to see if you can be a part of that program. (Note that this is most helpful if you have recently moved or the abusive person doesn't already know your address.)

Hidden cameras. If you suspect cameras in your home, figure out where the camera is hidden based on the information shared by the abusive person (for example, the abusive person seems to know details of what you're doing when you're in the living room) or gifts to you or members of your household from the abusive person. Some camera detectors may be helpful in locating the cameras, but remember that some detectors will only locate wireless cameras or wired cameras. Either remove the camera or, if that may be dangerous, limit what you do in the room that is being monitored. If your computer/tablet has a built-in web camera, consider disabling the camera when you aren't using it. Or you can cover the camera with a piece of removable tape.

Document the incidences. If possible, document the stalking or harassing behavior. Check out NNEDV's stalking log for an example. Sometimes, a harassing or stalking incident by itself may seem minor. But a series of incidences will show a pattern of behavior that can be proved as criminal stalking or harassment.

Report the incidences. If you feel safe in doing so, report the incidences to law enforcement and ask for a police report. If the harassing behavior is online, report it to the website. Many sites have links where you can report abusive content.

Think about your safety. Oftentimes, many victims want to stop the abusive behavior by getting rid of the technology. However, for some abusive individuals, this may escalate their controlling and dangerous behavior if they feel their control is threatened and you are removing all access. Think about what may happen if you remove the camera or the GPS. Incorporate that into your safety planning. For example, some survivors choose to use a safer computer, device or phone, but not disabling to the monitored device to continue collecting evidence.