

“The LAP program opens the door for more opportunities to assist and express more care toward the victim.”

*Waterford Police Department Officer,
Connecticut,
National LAP participant*

Domestic Violence Service Program (DVSP) Activity Packet

About the Activities

On the following pages, you'll find instruction sheets for a number of suggested training activities. Not all of the activities are required; you may pick and choose which activities would best serve your staff.

Please do not distribute copies of the packet to your staff (except as noted).

Activity #1: Barriers in Responding to Dangerous DV Situations.

Activity #2: Run the Screen: 11 Questions in 2 minutes

Activity #3: Role Play Activities 1 & 2 (with script)

Activity #4: Role Play Activities 3 & 4 (without script)

Activity #5: Case Study

Activity #6: Program Services: In Your Own Words



LETHALITY ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

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Activity #1: Barriers in Responding to DV Situations

Materials needed: Note-taking materials for each group.

Estimated time: 15 minutes.

Instructions:

- Divide your staff into small groups.
- Assign each group a role of “victim” or “law enforcement.”
- Have the groups discuss what obstacles and barriers make addressing a domestic violence situation difficult. What problems do police run into when hearing on the radio they need to respond to a domestic call? What are the difficulties victims face when the police respond to a domestic call? After the call has ended, what difficulties do both groups face?
- Ask one person in each group to take notes. Allow 5 minutes for discussion, then reconvene as a large group.
- Each small group will verbally report to the large group.

Potential responses from the victim groups: Trauma/PTSD (minimizing, avoidance, re-experiencing, etc.), mistrust of the police, lack of financial resources, lack of social network support, presence of children, not wanting to break up the family, language barriers, disability barriers. The victim may have substance abuse issues or other problems that they feel need to be hidden from the police. The neighbors may find out that something is happening in the home if the police come. The victim may currently be on probation or have a previous criminal history that makes interacting with law enforcement tense.

Potential responses from the law enforcement groups: a lack of information about the dynamics at the scene, may need to wait for back up, not knowing who called in the report, substance use/abuse by the people at the scene, working with people with language barriers, difficulties assessing primary aggressor, pressure to finish the call and get back in service, biases if law enforcement has already interacted with this couple.

Closing point: having the police at the scene of a domestic call can be difficult for both parties. It's important to understand the difficulties each side has already faced before calling the hotline. The LAP protocol and guidelines were developed to help overcome some of these barriers and to help all parties understand each other better.

Activity #2:

Administer the Screen—11 Questions in 2 minutes

Materials Needed: one Lethality Screen per person, pens

Estimated Time: 10 minutes.

Instructions:

- Divide your staff into small groups.
- Ask everyone to partner with someone next to them and distribute the Lethality Screens, one per participant. Have each person remember a victim he or she recently worked with, and answer the Lethality Screen questions as if they are that victim.
- Have Person A ask all the questions, in order, as written. Person A should fill out the Lethality Screen based on the answers Person B gives, and then score the result.
- Switch Person A and Person B, and repeat.

Closing point: allow the advocates to familiarize themselves further with the screen. Discuss how the scoring system works. Emphasize that officers can assess a victim as High-Danger based on the officer's belief, regardless of the victim's answers.

Activity #3: Role Play Activities 1 & 2 (with script)

Materials Needed: The script is a separate document, labeled “Role Play Script.” Please print at least 3 copies of the script (for each of the actors).

Estimated Time: 25 minutes (total for both role plays)

Instructions: Three participants should be chosen to read for the parts of the victim, advocate, and officer.

The script provides 2 scenario options of how the conversation could go with the same victim. We encourage you to demonstrate both possibilities to your staff.

Discussion questions:

- Does the script present a doable, re-creatable guideline for having a 10-minute conversation with the victim?
- Did it present any difficulties for your agency to recreate?
- How closely did the script follow the **Communication Guidelines**?
- Does your staff feel comfortable explaining your confidentiality policy in easy-to-understand terms?
- Can your staff assess which programs would be most useful to the victim, and can they explain the programs quickly and understandably?
- Can your staff safety-plan through the officer without feeling awkward or uncomfortable? What key safety plan ideas can be conveyed quickly through the officer?

Activity #4: Role Play Activities 3 & 4 (without script)

Materials Needed: A separate document labeled Role Play Activities 3 and 4 is provided. Please print at least 1 copy of the document and divide the pages appropriately for the victim(s) and advocate(s).

Estimated Time: 25 minutes.

Instructions: These scenarios begin once the officer hands the phone to the victim, so only a victim and advocate actor are necessary.

Provide each actor the document explaining his or her “character,” and allow a couple of minutes for them to read through the document. Then ask them to begin role-playing.

Cut off the role-play conversation after 10 minutes to begin discussion.

Discussion questions:

- Was the advocate able to move through the guidelines and complete the call in 10 minutes or less? Where could the advocate have trimmed the conversation down?
- Did the advocate solicit the information necessary to know which services were appropriate for the victim? What other services could have been offered to the victim?
- Does your agency know under what circumstances, and how, it will follow-up with High-Danger victims?
- Can your staff assess which services a victim is open to receiving quickly and accurately? How can they improve these skills?

Activity #5: Case Study

Materials Needed: Copies of a “case study.”

Estimated time: 25 minutes.

Instructions: Present a case study using the specific circumstances of a victim who has recently accessed your agency’s services.

Have an open discussion with the entire group about how to safety plan with that victim in a 10 minute call. Review the **Communication Guidelines** and brainstorm/discuss what could be said to that victim for each of the guidelines (and what her/his likely response would have been). Discuss how your staff could have safety planned for the victim through the officer, if the victim would have declined to get on the hotline. Discuss which services would be useful to the victim that your agency can provide, as well as which community resources might be appropriate for the victim.

Case Study Example: *If you do not want to use the circumstances of a recent victim, consider these circumstances.*

Veronica is 21-years-old and has a 3-year-old daughter. She lives in her parents' basement, and her abuser stays with her most of the time (but he often stays with his mother or his cousin when he and Veronica are fighting). Veronica is enrolled in community college. She hopes to become a nurse someday, but is currently focusing on improving her English-language skills. She speaks Spanish as a first language, and has limited English proficiency, but can make do in simple conversations. She is undocumented, but because she was brought over as a child, she hopes to gain papers soon.

Her abuser, Aaron, is not the father of her child. The father of her child lives in town and has an amicable relationship with Veronica, but is not very involved in their daughter's life. Aaron has two children with previous girlfriends. One of the ex-girlfriends has a protective order against Aaron and does not allow him to see their child. Aaron has currently enrolled in the same community college as Veronica. He works odd jobs for his uncle, but gets most of his income from selling marijuana. Both Veronica and Aaron use marijuana frequently.

Aaron pushes, hits, and chokes Veronica regularly. The violence has been escalating for the last six months. He is extremely jealous, especially of her daughter's father, and closely monitors their contact. He reads Veronica's text messages, emails, and social media accounts. He checks in on Veronica when she is working (at a restaurant in the mall) and in class. He does not want her to use birth control and is pressuring her to prove her love for him by becoming pregnant.

Veronica's next-door neighbor called the police tonight because of what she heard through the wall. Aaron was smashing dishes in the kitchen near Veronica. The glass broke and caused numerous cuts all over Veronica's legs and arms.

Veronica knows the relationship is not healthy, but does not feel safe breaking up with Aaron. He has threatened that if she breaks up with him, he will report her drug use to her employer, her school, and law enforcement, and she will be not be able to become a nurse or gain legal immigration status.

Activity #6: Program Services—In Your Own Words

Materials Needed: Note-taking materials.

Estimated Time: 20 minutes.

Instructions: Ask everyone to write down a brief explanation of your program's services.

Have each person read what they wrote to the person next to them.

Discuss how each service could be best explained (in a very brief amount of time) to a victim on the hotline; how to present services available without overwhelming the victim; how to explain services in a comprehensive but conversational way.

As you are doing this, identify which programs might be most useful to a victim in each of the stages of change.

For example, if you offer legal advocacy:

- A victim in the **pre-contemplation stage** may not be interested in assistance with a protective order or in filing family law cases. The victim may be interested in speaking with a legal advocate, however, to learn about her/his rights in the criminal case (if the abuser was arrested) or simply more about how the criminal process works.
- A victim in the **contemplation stage** may be interested in learning about legal rights as far as custody of shared children, child support, protective orders, and eviction, as well as information about criminal case proceedings.
- A victim in the **preparation stage** may be interested in all of the above, as well as actually taking steps (and getting a lawyer referral) to file cases against the perpetrator or more information on how to build a stronger case or defense.
- A victim in the **action stage** may be interested in all of the above, as well as assistance in filing the cases, and an advocate to attend court with her/him.
- Finally, a victim in the **maintenance stage** may need ongoing referrals as problems arise. Can she/he legally move with the children? Does the protective order cross state or county lines? Can an attorney or advocate assist in clearing up issues with credit caused by the abuser? Will the victim be notified if the abuser is released from jail?

Closing point: every agency offers more programs than any one victim needs or is eligible for. Make sure all staff understand how to explain each program, what the eligibility requirements are, and how that program may be useful to victims in a variety of circumstances.