

Pima County Lethality Assessment Program

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*A Presentation for the
Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG)
Domestic Violence Protocol Evaluation Training*

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Lethality Assessment Overview

History of the Lethality Assessment Program

- Through research-based work of **Dr. Jacquelyn C. Campbell**, and
- Her validated assessment instrument: **Danger Assessment** (www.dangerassessment.org)
- Adapted into the Lethality Assessment in Maryland.



History of the Lethality Assessment Program

- Established Lethality Assessment Committee in 2003, including Dr. J. Campbell.
- Field tested in 2004 in 3 jurisdictions to determine if LAP was user-friendly.
- 84% of officers and 95% of advocates said LAP was “very easy” to “fairly easy” to do.
- Implemented LAP October 2005.

Key Components of the LAP

- The model is multi-agency, multi-disciplinary approach that benefits both
 - the law enforcement officer
 - the victim
- Law Enforcement is given a simple tool to quickly identify a victim's level of risk and lethality factors.
- Victims are immediately connected with services to meet their immediate and ongoing needs, including shelter and safety.

Lethality Assessment Program

Goals

1. To identify victims of domestic violence who are at the greatest risk of being killed.
2. To assist in identifying high lethality risk factors and raise awareness in the victims.
3. To encourage DV victims to go seek follow-up support services and utilize community resources.

Why a Lethality Assessment?

DV Statistics

- **1,500** DV fatalities a year in U.S.
- Police previously on scene in **50%** of DV homicides
- Only **4%** of DV homicide victims had ever availed themselves of DV services
- Re-assault dropped by **60%** when victims went into shelter

Benefits of the LAP

Prevention

- Offers real potential to prevent DV fatalities.
- Helps break the cycle of violence.
- Reduces repeat calls to the same household.

Education and Awareness

- Helps victims realize and face the danger they are in.
- Increases officer awareness of lethality risks.

Enhanced Services

- Increases agency cooperation and communication.
- Increases victim safety and access to shelter.

Law Enforcement use of the LAP

When to Initiate a Lethality Screen

Assaults, Repeat, Gut Feeling...

1. When you believe there's been an **assault** or other act of domestic violence,
2. When you believe the **victim faces danger once you leave,**
3. When the home or parties are **repeats,** or
4. When your **gut** tells you the situation is dangerous.



When to Initiate a Lethality Screen

Only in Cases of Intimate Relationships...

Any time officers are called to assist a victim involving an act of domestic violence between *intimate partners*.

Don't Screen if the DV is between:

- Siblings
- Parents and their children
- Disputing neighbors

Initiating the Lethality Screen

How do I begin...

- Approach the Lethality Screen simply, positively, and privately with the victim.
- Advise victim you would like to ask her some questions to get a better idea of her situation.
- Ask all the questions in order.

 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, did the victim speak with the hotline counselor? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		

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.

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Questions 1-3

- 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?

Questions 4-11

- 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 ever tried to kill himself/herself?
- 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?

High Lethality Screens

- If victim answers **“Yes” to questions 1, 2, or 3,** this will automatically indicate **a High Lethality Screen.**
- If the victim answers **“No”** to questions 1,2, or 3 but **“Yes” to any four questions number 4 through 11** will automatically indicate **a High Lethality Screen.**
- **In addition, an officer may trigger a protocol referral whenever they feel it is appropriate.**

How the LAP Works

High Danger Protocol Referral

- Advise victim she's in danger, that **people in her situation have been killed.**
- Tell victim you will call hotline to get information to help her and you would like for her to consider speaking to hotline.
- **Call hotline.**
- Provide basic information to hotline.
- Put victim on phone and stand-by.
- When victim finishes, conclude call by speaking with hotline.



Video

The Domestic Violence Hotline's Role in the LAP

The Phone Conversation

DV Service Provider



Once the hotline worker receives the call from the officer, she:

- Obtains information from officer
- Speaks with victim (if victim is willing)
- Safety plans **THROUGH** officer (if victim declines)

The Phone Conversation

Premise



The phone conversation between
hotline worker and victim is:

- Brief: Officer has to go back to service
- Focused: Brevity requires efficiency
- Different: For the Victim and Service Provider

The Phone Conversation

The Differences



For the Hotline Worker:

- Situation is volatile and dynamic, not static
- Offender is lurking or under arrest
- Victim may not be “ready” to talk, and thus may not listen
- Increased pressure to get victims into services quicker
- The conversation must be **BRIEF**

The Phone Conversation

The Differences



For the Victim:

- In a “crisis” state of mind
- Body and environment “out of control”
- Unaware of services available
- Shock of being told she’s in danger of being killed
- Not “ready” to make decisions regarding situation
- Interacting over the phone

The Phone Conversation

Goals for the DV Service Provider



1. Gather information.
2. Build rapport.
3. Reinforce victim's potential danger.
4. Educate and safety plan.
5. Encourage victim to go into services.
6. Conclude call with officer.



Implementation

Lethality Assessment Program *Implementation*

Training

1. When
2. How often
3. Who to include
4. Materials needed

Lethality Assessment Program *Implementation*

Logistics

1. Administrative Procedures/General Orders
2. Creation and Distribution of Materials
3. Collecting and Reporting Data
4. Resolution of Concerns
5. Quarterly Meetings

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