



# IN-SERVICE CURRICULUM FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICE PROVIDERS

## LETHALITY ASSESSMENT PROGRAM— MARYLAND MODEL (LAP)

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In partnership with  **Maryland Network**  
Against Domestic Violence

# Introductions

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# Objectives



To understand how the LAP works.



To understand why and how officer-initiated LAP hotline calls are different than typical hotline calls.



To feel ready to answer officer-initiated LAP hotline calls.



To know how to respond to high-danger victims.

## What is the Lethality Assessment Program – Maryland Model (LAP)?

Identifying victims at the  
greatest risk of being killed

**AND**

Encouraging them to go into  
domestic violence services

## The Evidence Tells Us

- For 28-33% of victims, the homicide or attempted homicide was the first act of violence.
- More than 44% of perpetrators were arrested in the year prior to the homicide, and almost one-third of victims contacted the police.
- Only 4% of abused victims had used a DV hotline or shelter within the year prior to being killed by an intimate partner.

# Counting the Differences

- The situation is volatile and dynamic, not static.
- The police are in the home.
- The offender is lurking or under arrest.
- The victim is not “ready” to talk, and thus may not listen.
- The victim may not be “able” to listen given the situation.
- Increased pressure to get victims into services quicker.
- The conversation must be BRIEF!



## Stages of Change

# When Law Enforcement Initiate the LAP Protocol

At the end of the call for service

Only in cases of intimate partner relationships  
where there is a manifestation of danger (one or  
more of the below):

There's been an  
assault or act of  
domestic  
violence,

Officer's belief  
that the victim  
faces danger  
when they leave,

When the home  
or parties are  
repeats, or

When the  
officer's gut tells  
them that the  
situation is  
dangerous.



## INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE LETHALITY SCREEN FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT



City/Town/Village:		
Officer:	Date:	Case #:
Victim:	Offender:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Check here if victim declined to be screened		
<input type="checkbox"/> Check here if the officer could not administer the screen		
<b>A "Yes" response to any of Questions #1-3 is an automatic High-Danger assessment</b>		
1. Has he/she/they 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/Unk
2. Has he/she/they threatened to kill you or your children?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Ans/Unk
3. Do you think he/she/they might try to kill you?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Ans/Unk
<b>"Yes" responses to at least four of Questions #4-11 is an automatic High-Danger Assessment</b>		
4. Does he/she/they have a gun or can they easily get one?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Ans/Unk
5. Has he/she/they ever tried to strangle or choke you?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Ans/Unk
6. Is he/she/they violently or constantly jealous or does he/she/they control most of your daily activities?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Ans/Unk
7. Have you left him/her/them or separated after living together or being married?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Ans/Unk
8. Is he/she/they unemployed?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Ans/Unk
9. Has he/she/they ever tried to kill himself/herself/themself?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Ans/Unk
10. Do you have a child that he/she/they knows is not his/hers/theirs?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Ans/Unk
11. Does he/she/they follow or spy on you or leave threatening messages?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Ans/Unk
Is there anything else that worries you about your safety? (If "yes") What worries you?		
An officer may make a High-Danger Assessment if the officer believes the victim is in a potentially lethal situation.		
Check one:	<input type="checkbox"/> Victim is High-Danger based on score <input type="checkbox"/> Victim is High-Danger based on officer belief <input type="checkbox"/> Victim is not assessed as High-Danger	
If victim is High-Danger, did officer make a call to the hotline?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Did the victim speak with the hotline advocate?	<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 are assessed as "High-Danger" would not be expected to be killed, these victims face much higher risk than that of other victims of intimate partner violence. All domestic violence is serious. This Screen should not be used to determine whether someone is a victim or is at risk of re-assault.

# Lethality Screen

# High Danger = Call the Hotline



“Yes” to at least one of questions #1, 2, or 3



“No” to questions #1-3 but “yes” to at least four of questions #4-11



No to all, or yes to no more than three of questions #4-11, **but officer believes it is appropriate**



Victim “does not answer” (DNA) the LAP screen questions because she/he needs immediate medical attention

# LAP Hotline Call Protocol

## 1. Gather Information from Officer

- Introduce yourself
- Find out which questions the victim answered “yes” to and which questions the victim declined to answer
- Ask the officer for a brief description of the incident that called them to the scene
- Ask the officer if the victim is willing to speak to you

# LAP Hotline Call Protocol

1. Gather Information from Officer
  2. **Build Rapport with Victim**
- Introduce yourself and thank the victim for speaking with you.
  - Briefly explain your program's confidentiality policy and services the victim may be interested in.
  - Empathize with the victim's situation
  - Express your admiration of the victim's courage
  - Emphasize that you support and believe the victim (and so does the law enforcement officer)



# LAP Hotline Call Protocol

1. Gather Information from Officer
  2. Build Rapport with Victim
  3. **Reiterate Danger of Victim's Situation**
- Express concern for the victim's safety and well-being.
  - Reinforce what the law enforcement officer has said: the victim is in danger and people in the victim's situation have been killed.

# LAP Hotline Call Protocol

1. Gather Information from Officer
  2. Build Rapport with Victim
  3. Reiterate Danger of Victim's Situation
  4. **Educate and Safety Plan**
- Explain that abuse is about control and it often escalates.
  - If the victim minimizes the abuser's actions, explain that abuse is never the victim's fault.
  - Safety plan for the next 24-48 hours.



# LAP Hotline Call Protocol

1. Gather Information from Officer
  2. Build Rapport with Victim
  3. Reiterate Danger of Victim's Situation
  4. Educate and Safety Plan
  5. **Encourage Victim to Seek Out Services**
- Suggest services that are specific to the victim's unique lethality predictors and safety concerns.
  - Encourage the victim to come in for services and try to set up an appointment time.
  - Ask the victim for a safe phone number



## Presenting Your Program's Services on a LAP Call

- Consider:
  - Which services are best for victims in each stage of change?
  - What might be especially enticing for someone who does not believe she/he is in an abusive relationship (or is generally not ready to end that relationship)?
  - What community resources does your program have connections to that might be valuable to mention?



## Concluding the Call

- Validate the victim's feelings, thank them for speaking with you, ask if your program can call and check in the following day, and summarize the plan you've discussed.
- Ask for permission to speak with the officer and to convey basic details about the safety plan you have developed.
- Convey the basic plan to the officer, ensure the victim has the hotline phone number, and thank the officer.

## When the Victim Declines to Speak With You

- First, request that the officer encourage the victim again to speak with you.
- Then, if the victim declines a second time, safety plan through the officer. Keep in mind the specific situation and Lethality Screen responses.
- Ask the officer to obtain a safe phone number to follow up with the victim.

## After This Session

Use the following questions to debrief with another advocate or supervisor at your DV Program:

- How are you feeling about taking LAP calls in general?
- What remains unclear to you? Where are you really confident?
- What seems similar to the “normal” hotline call that you’re used to? What seemed different?
- Which step of the LAP protocol was the most difficult for you?
- How will the LAP change the way you safety plan with and offer services to victims that are connected to you through officer-initiated LAP calls?

# Resources

Contact the designated LAP point person at your agency or someone from End Abuse to request any of the following:

- LAP Training Video
- LAP Pocket Protocol Cards
- LAP DV Program Communication Guidelines
- National LAP Conversation Guide for high-danger victims
- Safety Planning Considerations and Safety Planning Checklist

**“You took the time when no one else did.  
If you hadn’t I am sure me and my children  
would be dead.”**

# Questions?

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