
Domestic Violence Lethality Assessment Program (LAP)

321.1 POLICY STATEMENT

It is the policy of the Richmond Police Department to use the Lethality Screen at the scene of domestic violence incidents to identify victims of domestic violence in potentially lethal situations, and follow the established criteria to place those victims in immediate and direct contact with a domestic violence service program (STAND!) victim advocate. Officers administering the Lethality Screen to domestic violence victims should connect High-Danger victims to domestic violence victim advocates.

321.2 GENERAL

To establish a protocol and implement the use of the Lethality Assment Program (LAP) at domestic violence calls for service.

321.3 DEFINITIONS

- (a) **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE/ABUSE:** Domestic violence is a pattern of coercive behavior characterized by the domination and control of one person over another, usually an intimate partner, through physical, psychological, emotional, verbal, sexual, and/or economic abuse. Domestic violence is often called "domestic abuse" because it does not necessarily involve physical violence, and some of the tactics may not even be considered a crime.
- (b) **ABUSER:** A person who perpetrates a pattern of coerive tactics which can include physical, psychological, sexual, economic, and emotional abuse against an intimate partner, with the goal of establishing and maintaining power and control over the victim.
- (c) **VICTIM:** The person against whom an abuser directs coercive and/or violent acts.
- (d) **INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP:** An "intimate relationship" is one in which heterosexual or same-sex partners have, or have had, a sexual or emotionally intimate relationship.
- (e) **INTIMATE PARTNERS:** Intimate partners are persons who are, or have been involved, in an intimate relationship and who:
 - 1. Are married, separated, or divorced;
 - 2. Live or have lived together;
 - 3. Are current or former same-sex partners
 - 4. Have children in common; or
 - 5. Date, or have dated, but do not live, or have never live, together.
- (f) **INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE:** Domestic violence between intimate partners.
- (g) **LETHALITY SCREEN:** The evidence-based field instrument is used by trained personnel to assess a person who is a victim of intimate partner violence for her/his risk of being killed by an intimate partner.

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- (h) **HIGH-DANGER:** A term used for a victim who has been assessed through use of the LAP and the Lethality Screen as being at the greatest risk of being killed. The victim is said to be at "High-Danger."

321.4 INITIATING A LETHALITY ASSESSMENT

- (a) In addition to the procedures outlined in the general order, the responding officer should complete the Lethality Screen when he/she responds to a domestic violence complaint involving intimate partners and one or more of the following conditions exist:
 1. There is reason to believe an assault or an act that constitutes domestic violence has occurred, whether or not there is an arrest.
 2. There is a belief or sense on the part of the responding officer that once the victim is no longer in the care or presence of the responding officer the potential for assault or danger is high.
 3. Repeated calls for domestic violence complaints at the same location or involving the same parties.
 4. The responding officer believes one should be administered based on his/her experience, training, and instinct.
- (b) Responding officers should engage interpreter services in the manner described in Richmond Police Department Policy, entitled "Language Access services for Limited English Proficient (LEP) Persons."

321.5 LETHALITY SCREEN QUESTIONS

To initiate the Lethality Screen and corresponding LAP response protocol, the responding officer should:

- (a) Advise the victim in a positive, supportive manner that she/he will be asked a series of questions to help the officer determine the immediate potential for danger to the victim.
- (b) Administer the Lethality Screen outside the presence, hearing and awareness of the suspected abuser, family and/or other household members, particularly those who may be contributing to a dynamic of coercive control and abuse, or perpetuating some of the abuse directly; and any other parties who may also be in the residence.
- (c) Ask the questions in the order they are listed on the form and in the manner they are written.
- (d) Ask all the questions in assessing the victim. The more questions the victim responds to positively, the clearer and more immediate the potential for danger is to the victim.

321.6 ASSESSING THE RESPONSES TO THE LETHALITY QUESTIONS

- (a) After the responding officer asks the questions on the Lethality Screen, he/she should respond as follows:
 1. A single "Yes" response by the victim to questions 1, 2 or 3 reflects a High-Danger situation and automatically triggers the hotline call. Officers should still ask the remaining questions, as they will help the officer gather a more comprehensive

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understanding of the victim's situation before calling the hotline. Doing so will also allow the victim to assimilate lethality predictors that indicate that she/he is at risk of being killed by her/his intimate partner.

2. If the victim gives "No" responses to questions 1-3, but "Yes" responses to four or more of questions 4 thru 11, this reflects a High-Danger situation and triggers the hotline call.
 3. "No" responses to all of the assessment questions, or "Yes" responses to less than four of questions 4 thru 11, may still trigger the hotline call if the responding officer believes it is appropriate. The officer should ask the victim the following question: "Is there anything else that worries you about your safety? If yes, what worries you?" The response to the question may aid the officer in his/her assessment.
- (b) Similar to the subsection above, the officer may also assess a victim as High-Danger if the officer believes it is appropriate when:
1. The victim declines to answer all the questions on the Lethality Screen, or
 2. The victim does not answer one or several of the questions so that the victim does not respond "Yes" to enough questions to be assessed at High- Danger according to the protocol, or
 3. If the victim's responses do not reflect High-Danger, but the officer's "read" of the situation indicates High-Danger, the officer should make the hotline call.

321.7 ASSESSING THE RESPONSES TO THE LETHALITY QUESTIONS, NON-HIGH DANGER

If the victim is not assessed as High-Danger after the Lethality Screen is completed, the officer should:

- (a) Advise the victim that "domestic violence is dangerous and sometimes fatal."
- (b) Inform the victim to watch for the signs listed in the assessment because they may convey to the victim that she/he is at an increased level of danger.
- (c) Refer the victim to STAND!. If the victim would like to speak to the hotline, the officer should make the call for the victim. If the victim agrees, the officer does not need to remain on the scene during the victim-advocate conversation.
- (d) Provide the victim with the case number, the officer's contact information, or the number of another agency contact if the officer will not be available.

321.8 HIGH-DANGER VICTIMS AND THE HOTLINE CALL

- (a) If a High-Danger assessment is made, the hotline call shall be implemented as follows:
 1. Advise the victim that her/his answers have indicated to the officer that the victim is at an increased level of danger, and that people in the victim's situation have been killed or seriously injured. Convey this information in an understanding manner.
 2. Advise the victim that you would like to call STAND! and invite the victim to speak with a hotline advocate. In communicating with the victim, be encouraging and supportive.

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- Crisis Line for LAP: (888) 215-5555
3. If the victim initially agrees to speak with a hotline advocate, the officer should call the hotline number, introduce him/herself, and advise the hotline advocate that he/she has made a High Danger assessment. The officer should provide responses to a brief set of questions prompted by the hotline advocate. The officer should then continue the protocol as described in sections
 4. If the victim initially declines to speak with the hotline advocate, the officer should:
 - Tell the victim that the officer will still contact the domestic violence hotline to receive guidance on how to proceed with the situation;
 - Tell the victim that she/he may decline to speak with the hotline, but that the officer would like the victim to reconsider speaking with the hotline advocate; and
 - While the officer is still on the phone with the hotline advocate, the officer should ask the victim if she/he has reconsidered and would now like to speak with the hotline advocate.
 5. If the victim continues to decline to speak with the hotline advocate, the officer should convey information that the hotline advocate has suggested about safety planning and requesting a safe phone number for an advocate to follow up with the victim.
 6. If the victim agrees to speak with a hotline advocate after the officer has asked a second time, the officer should proceed with the protocol as described in previous sections.
 7. During the conversation between the hotline advocate and the victim, the officer should stay on the scene and allow the victim privacy while she/he speaks with the hotline.
 8. At the appropriate time during the conversation between the victim and the hotline advocate, the hotline advocate will ask to speak with the officer to conclude the call.
 9. The officer should be guided by the discussion with the hotline advocate for further assistance. Officers should provide reasonable assistance to the victim if help is requested, such as transporting the victim to a safe place.
- (b) If a High-Danger victim assessment is made, the officer should flag the victim's name and address of residence in the premise history with the following alert/notation:
1. "LAP DV Victim [Name] screened-in as High-Danger on [Date]"

321.9 WORKING WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT (LEP) PERSONS

General Principles:

- (a) Working with parties with Limited English Proficient (LEP) persons is not only about understanding the parties and being understood by them. The best practice is for the party with limited English proficiency to have as similar of an experience as an English speaking person.

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- (b) Officers and advocates should have employed the language access plan prior to administering the Lethality Screen or performing any part of the LAP protocol.
- (c) If available, an officer and an advocate who speak the victim's primary language should respond and perform the LAP.
- (d) The LAP should proceed according to protocol, and be revised only to take into account the requirements of language interpretation.

321.10 FILING OF THE LETHALITY SCREEN

- (a) Officers who have completed Lethality Screens shall transmit a copy to STAND! by the end of the officer's shift. Lethality screens can be scanned/emailed or faxed to the STAND! LAP Coordinator. If the Lethality Screen is scanned/emailed to STAND! the DSVU Supervisor should receive a copy of the document.
 - 1. The STAND! LAP fax number is: (925) 265-6066
 - 2. The STAND! LAP email address is: LAPCCC@standffov.org
- (b) The officer who completes the Lethality Screen shall file the original with the police report.
- (c) Records personnel shall route a copy of the Lethality Screen to the DSVU Supervisor within 24 hours.
- (d) The DSVU Supervisor will:
 - 1. Maintain a file of lethality screens,
 - 2. Prepare a report as provided in Section 321.13 (Records Reporting) below, and
 - 3. Submit the report to the LAP team coordinator at regular intervals.

321.11 DSVU SUPERVISOR

The DSVU Supervisor is tasked with:

- (a) Facilitating department training,
- (b) Maintaining and reporting LAP data;
- (c) Serving as a liason, communicating, and meeting with participating LAP agency representatives and agencies, and
- (d) Generally oversee and monitor the progress of the LAP.

321.12 TRAINING

LAP training shall be provided by LAP-trained staff to all officers before the conclusion of their field-training period.

321.13 RECORDS REPORTING

- (a) The DSVU Supervisor will prepare and forward annual reports to the LAP team coordinator at regular intervals.

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(b) The reports will contain the following information:

1. The number of Lethality Screens attempted;
2. The number of victims assessed as being in High-Danger;
3. The number of victims assessed, but determined not to be in High-Danger;
4. The number of victims that did not respond to all of the screening questions; and
5. The number of victims assessed as being in High-Danger who spoke to a hotline advocate.