

**“This is a very good tool
that will save lives.”**

**National LAP law
enforcement participant**

Role Play Activities #1 & 2

About the Scenario for Service

Use your own names and agency names, if you prefer.

Officer Hunt was dispatched to respond to the Gregory's residence after she called the police. As a result of his investigation, Officer Hunt determined that Mr. Gregory hit Mrs. Gregory (Elizabeth) in her face several times. Elizabeth sustained injuries to her left eye and has a bloody nose. Due to the fact that Mr. and Mrs. Gregory are intimate partners and that an assault had taken place, Officer Hunt initiated a lethality screen.

The script is only intended to convey **an example** of how to communicate the guideline “points of conversation.”

This specific script reflects a conversation constructed around a particular victim's circumstances and responses. The script is not intended to be the conversation. There will be many variations in conversations that cannot be addressed in a script. If role-played, the script will take about nine minutes. Not all conversations will take that long, and some conversations will be difficult in terms of the quality and quantity you can reasonably communicate.

Use the script primarily as a tool, or a study aid, to help you prepare for conversations that will be (1) in the moment of crisis, (2) with police at the scene, and (3) with a victim who may not be “ready” (from the standpoint of the process known as the “stages of change”) to speak with you.



**Maryland Network
Against Domestic Violence**

LETHALITY ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

Initiating the Lethality Screen and Activating the Protocol Referral: Officer and Victim Conversation

Officer Hunt: Ma'am, I'd like to ask you some questions that will help me understand your situation a little bit better.

Elizabeth Gregory: OK.

Has he ever used a weapon against you or threatened you with a weapon?

No.

Has he threatened to kill you or your children?

Not really. He'll say things sometimes, but never an outright threat.

Do you think he might try to kill you?

No, he wouldn't ever want to really hurt us. But sometimes I do think that he could, accidentally, when he gets in one of his rages I don't think he thinks about how violent it gets. He just isn't in control of himself.

Does he have a gun or can he get one easily?

No.

Has he ever tried to choke you?

Yeah, all the time. I don't pass out, but he'll choke me to get me to stop talking.

Is he violently or constantly jealous of you or does he control most of your daily activities?

Yeah, he is always thinking I am cheating on him. That's how it usually starts.

Have you left him or separated after living together or being married?

No, I have nowhere to go.

Is he unemployed?

No. He works at a different company, but in the same building as me.

Has he ever tried to kill himself?

I think so, before we got together. He took a bunch of pills.

Do you have a child that he knows is not his?

No.

Does he follow or spy on you or leave threatening messages?

All the time.

Elizabeth, your answers tell me you're in serious danger. People in your situation have been killed. I'd like to call the domestic violence hotline and tell the hotline worker what I found and see what they have to say. Then I'd like you to talk to the hotline worker. What do you think?

I don't want to talk to anyone else, I just want to finish this and try to sleep.

I understand. It's been a stressful night. Well, like I said, I'd like to tell the hotline worker what I found and see what they suggest so I'm in a better position to help you. You don't have to talk to them, but I'd like you to think about it while I'm on the phone.

Calling the Hotline: Conversations between the Officer and the Hotline Worker

Hotline Advocate: Thank you for calling Heartly House, this is Michelle, how may I help you?

Officer Hunt: Hi Michelle, this is Officer Hunt with the Police Department; I have a high danger victim.

Thanks for calling, Officer Hunt. Could I have the names of the victim and offender?

The victim is Elizabeth Gregory and the offender is Lee Gregory.

What is the case number?

2014-123.

Okay and what were Elizabeth's positive responses on the lethality screen?

She answered yes to numbers 5, 6, 9, and 10.

And were there any questions that were not answered?

Nope.

Okay, and do you mind telling me, briefly, what occurred and what your concerns are?

He accused her of cheating and then he got physical. I can see marks on her neck and face. She said she didn't think he'd kill her, but also that she didn't know if he'd be able to control himself. He wasn't on the scene when we arrived, but we will arrest him if he comes while we are still here. If we leave before he comes back, we'll apply for an arrest warrant.

Okay, and does Elizabeth feel comfortable talking to me?

No.

Would you mind asking her again?

Sure. (to victim) Ma'am, have you thought it; would you like to speak with the hotline worker? It's a short conversation, it's private just between you and her, these folks can help you.

To Role-play when the victim does not come to the phone, go to page 9.

Conversations between the Hotline Worker and the Victim

Elizabeth Gregory: Okay. Hello?

Hotline Advocate: Hi Elizabeth, this is Michelle from Heartly House. Thank you for talking with me right now; I understand this is a difficult time. Before we get started, I want to tell you a little about Heartly House and the limits to our confidentiality policy. I want you know that everything you say to me is confidential, unless you disclose child abuse or that you're homicidal or suicidal. That means I can't tell anyone what we talk about, including the police, unless you give me permission. Does that make sense?

- *Introduce yourself,*
- *Thank the victim for speaking with you and acknowledge that you understand how difficult speaking with you is for her, and*
- *Briefly explain your program's confidentiality policy and services.*

Yes.

Great. Heartly House has a lot of free programs that you could use. We have a twenty-four hour hotline, counseling, and a shelter for individuals in immediate physical danger. If you decide that you are interested in filing for a restraining order, we can help you fill it out and connect you to a lawyer who can give you some advice.

Okay. I'm not really interested in any of that.

I understand. I am so sorry that you have had to go through this; you must have felt very scared tonight. I hope you realize how much strength and courage it took for you to talk to Officer Hunt and me. You should be very proud of yourself for doing that.

Thanks.

I'm really concerned about you after hearing what happened and what your responses were to the screen that you did with Officer Hunt. The officer may have already told you, but families in your situation have died as a result of the abuse and I really want to make sure that you and your daughter are going to be okay.

- *Empathize with the victim's situation; and express your admiration of the victim's courage and cooperation and your and the officer's support of her.*
- *Express your concern for the victim's (and her children's) well-being.*
- *Reinforce what the officer has already told the victim: that in situations such as this people have been killed.*

We're going to be fine. I overreacted and shouldn't have called the police. I don't want them to arrest him. I don't want our daughter to wake up and see the police here or to know that I put her dad in jail. I just want to put this behind us.

I know this is really hard for you, Elizabeth, but you definitely made the right decision. By calling for help, you not only showed your daughter that abuse is not okay but you protected you and your family. You didn't know what he would do next. You made the best decision that you could in that moment. It's important for you to know that this isn't, in any way, your fault. There isn't anything you could ever do that could justify him hurting you the way he did tonight.

No, it is partly my fault. I have been texting with my ex-boyfriend, and I shouldn't have been doing that. Or I should've erased the texts.

The reason people are abusive is because of a need to be in control. He is trying to control who you talk to, and that isn't okay. As I said before, there isn't anything you could do to justify his behavior. It's important for you to know that incidents will only get worse and happen more often. I'm not sure if you're familiar with it, but there tends to be a cycle to violence. After an incident occurs, you find yourself in a honeymoon phase, where things seem okay again. Maybe he's apologetic or he may start to feel bad about what happened. At some point later, things get tense again, little things start to happen and then, before you know it, another incident has occurred.

Yeah, that sounds pretty familiar.

I know you said you weren't interested in any of our services, so I was hoping we could talk right now for a few minutes about how to keep you safe tonight. Is that all right?

Okay.

Okay, Officer Hunt told me that Lee wasn't arrested and that he left your house before the police got there. Do you think he'll come back tonight?

I don't know. He may have gone to his brother's and started drinking, and so he may just pass out there.

Well, as I mentioned, we have a shelter here that I'd like you to think about coming to for the night. You'd have your own private room, it's sort of set up like an apartment.

I don't need shelter and I don't want to wake up my daughter and bring her to a strange place tonight.

I understand. It sounds like you're a good mom and that you care a lot about your daughter. Please keep in mind that the shelter is here and should you ever change your mind, do not hesitate to call us. I understand that you want to stay in your house. However, can we try to think of a place that, in case of an emergency, you and your daughter would be comfortable and safe if you had to leave right away?

I don't know. I don't want to tell anyone what happened.

That makes sense, but if people know that you are in danger, they would want to help.

I guess. I know we'd always be able to stay with my brother or my best friend for a night or two, if I had to.

That's great. Do they live near you?

Yes, my best friend lives just down the street and my brother lives downtown.

Okay, that's a start. Do you think you could talk to them and let them know, in case of an emergency, you're considering that?

I don't think so.

It sounds like it is important to you to keep things private. I understand and want to emphasize that anything you say to me is confidential, and I won't tell anyone unless you tell me about child abuse. I also want to thank you again for talking to me — I know it can't be easy to be talking to me right now. One other thing you can do is to have a bag packed and kept in a safe, accessible place, with anything that you and your daughter might need, should you have to leave in a hurry. Things like extra clothes, some cash, medicine, keys and any important documents. Do you think you could put something like that together after we're done talking?

Yeah, I think I could. I could probably keep it in my desk drawer at work.

Safety plan with the victim for her immediate needs, e.g., her safety and specific living necessities over the next 24 hours.

That sounds like a great plan! Do you think that, if you felt in danger again, you would call the police?

I don't know. I guess.

That's good Elizabeth. I know this is hard, but please know that the police are there to protect you and your family. It would also be a good idea to teach your daughter how to call the police. Do you think that you could do that?

She knows how. She's 11.

I'm glad to hear that. Another step you can take to stay safe is to identify the safest route outside of your house. That way, if something happened and you needed to get out right away, you would have already thought through the safest way. You could just keep in mind where you are in the house, and which doors are unlocked or that you could unlock quickly.

Okay.

You can also consider picking up a 911 cell phone from us. That's something you could always have with you, or put in your packed bag, just to feel a little safer.

That might not be a bad idea; he's smashed my phone before.

Okay, that sounds good to me. I want you to know that you haven't only taken such huge steps tonight, but you've demonstrated a lot of strength and courage while doing so. You should be very proud of yourself.

Thanks. I still don't know if I made the right decision.

I know it's hard to recognize that in yourself, but from talking to you and Officer Hunt tonight, it's been very obvious to me. It also really sounds like you could benefit from our services. I know it's been hard talking to me tonight, especially with everything that's going on around you at home. But I want you to know that it can be really helpful to have the opportunity to come in and talk to someone when you can feel safe and comfortable. We have an appointment available with Shannon at 10:00 a.m. Would that work with your schedule?

I don't think that is necessary.

I understand. Please also think about coming by to pick up a 911 cell phone. You don't need an appointment to do that; all you would need to do is call to make sure someone is here, and then stop by.

Okay.

Why don't I call you tomorrow and we can talk a little bit more. That will give you some time to process everything you've been through tonight and we can wait to talk about scheduling an appointment then. I'm just really concerned about you and I want to make sure that you're safe and getting the support you deserve. Can you give me a phone number that would be safe for me to reach you on tomorrow?

I don't think so. He checks my phone and I don't want him to see messages from you.

I understand. Thank you for thinking of that, and for letting me know. You mentioned earlier that you were thinking of leaving a packed bag at work — is there a safe number I could call there? Or could we email with you?

Yes, you can call me work number. 301-555-3412.

If you don't answer, is it safe for me to leave a message for you there? And if so, should I say "Heartly House" or just "Michelle"?

You can leave a message and say "Heartly House." I'm the only one who knows the password.

That is perfect. I'll call you tomorrow, but if you need anything before then, please don't hesitate to call us back anytime, twenty-four hours a day.

Okay, thanks. I'll talk to you tomorrow then.

Thanks again for talking to me tonight, Elizabeth. I hope you realize how strong and courageous you have been through this difficult process. The officer will make sure that you have our hotline number before he leaves.

Okay.

Can I tell Officer Hunt that we made a plan?

That's fine. Here he is.

Conversations between the Hotline Worker and the Officer

Officer Hunt: Hello

Hotline Advocate: Hi, I just want to let you know what Elizabeth and I came up with. She has a place to stay if she feels unsafe and is going to pack an emergency bag. I'm going to call her tomorrow at her work to check in. Were you able to give her our brochure?

That sounds good. Yes, she has the brochure.

Okay, is there anything else that I can do for you tonight?

No. Thanks for helping.

Thank you, bye.

Conversations between the Officer, the Victim, and the Hotline Worker

Continued from page 4

Elizabeth Gregory: *No, I'd really rather not speak to anyone else tonight.*

Officer Hunt: I understand. Michelle, are you there? Elizabeth does not want to speak with you tonight. Do you have any advice for us?

Hotline Advocate: OK. Could you explain that we have a 24 hour hotline, so she can always call back tonight if she changes her mind, and could you explain that our shelter is set up sort of like a dorm-style — each family has their own private room, with locking doors, and it may not be like what she imagines shelters to be like. It's a lot more private.

Sure thing, Michelle. Elizabeth, the hotline worker, Michelle, wants you to know that the hotline is open 24 hours a day, in case you change your mind and would like to talk to someone after I leave. She also wants to make sure you know that you can stay in the shelter, and you'd have your own private room.

I understand. I just don't think it's necessary.

Okay. Let me see if there is anything else we should go over. Michelle?

Yes, could you start safety planning with Elizabeth? You mentioned that Lee was not on-sight and couldn't be arrested. Will you make sure to explain that process, and see if Elizabeth is willing to pack a bag to be ready to leave in a hurry if he comes back tonight?

Sure. Elizabeth, I know we talked about arresting Lee. We are looking for him, and can arrest him immediately if we see him in the next 48 hours. If you think you know where he is, you can call me — here is my card — and I'll take care of it.

Okay.

I also want you to think about packing a bag with supplies for a couple of days, like clothes, money, your important documents, medications, so that if Lee comes back and you sense danger, you can leave immediately for a friend or family's house or to go to the shelter. Do you think you can do that?

Yes.

Okay, Michelle, it sounds like Elizabeth is going to take some of those steps.

That is good to hear. Is there anything about her situation specifically that we should safety plan around? Any specific concerns either of you have?

Elizabeth, Michelle wants to know if there is anything specific we should figure out a safety plan for. Can you think of anything?

No.

Okay. Michelle, Elizabeth can't think of anything specific. One of my concerns is that Elizabeth mentioned she and Lee work in the same building. Are there any special precautions Elizabeth can take?

Yes, I am glad you mentioned that. Often companies will tighten security if they know someone is having a personal issue. It may be worth mentioning to her HR department or her manager, and see if they can make restrictions on who can enter her floor or her work area.

Elizabeth, Michelle said you could mention what's happened to your HR department or manager and they may be able to restrict access to your floor or work area.

I don't know that I want to do that.

She could also talk to her manager about getting a second voicemail box or email account — one Lee doesn't know about — so that she can receive messages safely and be in touch with us in the future.

Okay, Elizabeth, Michelle suggested that you get an extra email account or voicemail box at work, one that Lee doesn't know about, and then you can communicate with us safely in the future.

I could probably get another email account really easily. He cant access my work voicemail right now anyway, so I don't think I need another one.

That's great! Can you think of anything else you want to ask Michelle about?

Not right now.

Okay, you can always call her back or call me back if you think of something. I think we are all set here, Michelle.

That is good to hear. Please tell Elizabeth that I am concerned for her safety, and ask if I can follow up with her tomorrow. Please also mention the 911 cell phones we have at our office.

Okay. Elizabeth, Michelle is concerned for your safety. It would make her feel more comfortable if she can check in with you tomorrow and if you would think about going to her office to pick up a free cell phone that can call 911 at any time. Can she call you tomorrow to talk more about that?

Yes, she can call my work. It's 301-555-1234.

Thank you. Can she leave a message saying who she is?

Yes.

Okay, Michelle — Elizabeth says you can call her at work tomorrow. Her number is 301-555-1234 and you have her permission to leave a message if she doesn't pick up.

Thank you. It sounds like we are finishing up here.

Yes, I think we are. Elizabeth, is there anything else you want me to ask Michelle about or should we hang up?

You can hang up.

We're all set here, Michelle. Thank you for your help.

Thank you for calling. Goodnight.



LETHALITY ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

This project was supported by Grant No. 2011-TA-AX-K111 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.

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