Lethality Assessment Program: The Maryland Model

TRAIN-THE-TRAINER CURRICULUM
FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAMS

2015 | MARYLAND NETWORK AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
Ice Breaker

EMBRACING CHANGE
Learning Objectives

- To understand that the LAP is an evidence-based approach to homicide prevention.
- To understand how to utilize the LAP protocol.
- To develop the skills necessary to effectively train law enforcement and domestic violence service program staff.
Next Steps

- LAP Coordinator will meet with representatives and LAP contacts from participating agencies.
- MNADV and jurisdiction will hold a teleconference to discuss implementation and address additional questions to prepare for training and implementation.
- Each agency will train their staff within four months.
- Each agency will implement the LAP within four months.
What is LAP: Maryland Model?

- Lethality Assessment Program: Maryland Model (LAP)
  - Identifying victims at the greatest risk of being killed, and
  - Encouraging them to go into domestic violence services
Predictable and Preventable

- Intimate partner homicide
  - Predictable and preventable

- LAP is an evidence-based response to intimate partner homicide
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.
- Only 4% of abused victims had used a DV hotline or shelter within the year prior to being killed by an intimate partner.

Predictable

Preventable
Stages of Change

Point of recognition:
"Something needs to change"

Pre-contemplation

Contemplation

Preparation

Action

Maintenance

Change is a nonlinear process that sometimes requires you to take a step back before you move forward.
How the LAP Works
How the LAP Works: Video

Lethality Assessment Program: ‘Something’s Going to Happen…’
When to Initiate the LAP

- Only in cases of intimate relationships and
- a manifestation of danger:
  - When you believe there’s been an assault or act of domestic violence,
  - When you believe the victim faces danger when you leave,
  - When the home or parties are repeats, or
  - When your gut tells you that the situation is dangerous.
Initiating the Lethality Screen

- Approach the Lethality Screen *simply, positively, and privately* with the victim.
- Advise the victim you would like to *ask her/him some questions to get a better idea of her/his situation.*
- Ask *all the questions in order and as written.*
Domestic Violence Lethality Screen for Field Practitioners

Field Practitioner: 
Date: 
Case #: 
Victim: 
Offender: 

(1) 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? 
   ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Ans.
2. Has he/she threatened to kill you or your children? 
   ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Ans.
3. Do you think he/she might try to kill you? 
   ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Ans.

☒ Negative response to Questions 1-3, but positive response 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? 
   ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Ans.
5. Has he/she ever tried to choke you? 
   ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Ans.
6. Is he/she violently or constantly jealous or does he/she control most of your daily activities? 
   ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Ans.
7. Have you left him/her or separated after living together or being married? 
   ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Ans.
8. Is he/she unemployed? 
   ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Ans.
9. Has he/she ever tried to kill himself/herself? 
   ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Ans.
10. Do you have a child that he/she knows is not his/her? 
    ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Ans.
11. Does he/she follow you or spy on you or leave threatening messages? 
    ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Ans.

☒ A field practitioner 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 field practitioner believes the victim is in a potentially lethal situation. 

Is there anything else that worries you about your safety? (If yes) What worries you?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Ans.

Check one: ☐ Victim screened in according to the protocol
☐ Victim screened in based on the belief of the field practitioner
☐ Victim did not screen in

If victim screened in: After advising him/her of a high danger assessment, ☐ Yes ☐ No did the victim speak with the hotline counselor?

Note: The questions above and the criteria for determining the level of risk is a parameters based on the best available research on factors associated with lethality to a current or former intimate partner. However, each situation may present unique factors that influence risk for actual violence that are not captured by this screen. Although most victims who screen “positive” or “high danger” would not be expected to be killed, many victims face much higher risk than other victims of intimate partner violence.

08/2010
Activity: 11 Questions in 2 Minutes

- Use your copy of the Lethality Screen.
- Partner with someone next to you.
- Introduce the Screen.
- Ask all the questions, in order, as written.
- Fill in the answer that the “victim” gives you.
- Now switch! Repeat!
Hotline calls and Cut-offs

Call the hotline
“Yes” to Q. #1, 2 or 3

Call the hotline
“No” to Q. #1, 2 or 3, but “Yes” to any four of Q. #4-11

Call the hotline
“No” to all, or
“Yes” to no more than 3 of Q. #4-11, but officer believes it is appropriate
Activity: “Scoring” the Screen

- “Yes” to Q. 1 and Q. 2, “No” to all remaining questions
  - High-Danger? Non-High Danger?
- “No” to Q. 1-3 (but was reluctant to answer Q. 3; answered “Yes” to 3 of Q. #4-11)
  - High-Danger? Non-High Danger?
- “No” to all questions (situation)
  - High-Danger? Non-High Danger?
- Does not answer (DNA) the Lethality Screen
  - High-Danger? Non-High Danger?
Advise victim she/he is in danger, that people in her/his situation have been killed.

Call domestic violence hotline.
Gather Information from Officer
High-Danger
Victim agrees to speak with the advocate

- Advise victim she/he is in danger, that people in her/his situation have been killed.
- Call domestic violence hotline.
- Provide basic information to hotline.
- **Victim speaks with hotline (officer stands-by).**
- Officer concludes call by speaking with hotline.
For the hotline advocate, the conversation is different because in this conversation, as opposed to most hotline conversations:

- 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.
- Increased pressure to get victims into services quicker.
- The victim may not be “able” to listen given the situation.
- The conversation must be BRIEF!
Gather Information from Officer

Build Rapport with Victim
Gather Information from Officer
Build Rapport with Victim
Reiterate Danger of Victim’s Situation
Gather Information from Officer
Build Rapport with Victim
Reiterate Danger of Victim’s Situation

Educate and Safety Plan
Katie, age 34, mother of 3 (2 by ex-husband, 1 by current abuser).

Lives with abuser, Adam, in public housing where she is the head of household.

He is being arrested for shoving her and smashing her cell phone when she called 911.
Gather Information from Officer
Build Rapport with Victim
Reiterate Danger of Victim’s Situation
Educate and Safety Plan
Encourage Victim to Go into Services
Activity: Program Services in Your Own Words

- Team of advocate(s) and law enforcement officer(s).

- Advocates:
  - Write down (in your own words) how you would briefly describe the services your program offers.
  - Verbally describe your program’s services to your law enforcement partner.

- Law enforcement officers:
  - Write down any questions you may have about the program's services.
  - After hearing the advocate describe the program’s services, describe the program's services (in your own words).
  - Seek clarification on unanswered questions.
High-Danger
Victim agrees to speak with the advocate

- Advise victim she/he is in danger, that people in her/his situation have been killed.
- Call domestic violence hotline.
- Provide basic information to hotline.
- Victim speaks with hotline (officer stands-by).
- **Officer concludes call by speaking with hotline.**
Activity: Role Play
High-Danger

Victim initially declines to speak with the advocate

- Tell the victim that you will still contact the domestic violence program
- Ask the victim to reconsider speaking with the hotline advocate
- Call the hotline
- While still on the phone with the hotline advocate, ask the victim if she/he has reconsidered and would now like to speak with the advocate
High-Danger
Victim continues to decline to speak with the advocate

- Reiterate that victim is in a dangerous situation
- Engage in basic safety planning with the victim through the advocate
- Inform the victim to watch for lethality predictors
- Ask for contact information for follow-up
- Encourage the victim to utilize the DVSP’s services
- Provide the victim with the officer’s contact info
Activity: Role Play
Non-High Danger

Non-High Danger victims are not at the same level of danger as High-Danger victims and therefore do not warrant the same urgent level of communication.

- Advise victim that domestic violence situations are dangerous.
- Advise victim to look for signs of danger.
- Vigorously refer victim to domestic violence service program.
- Give victim contact information.
“You took the time when no one else did. If you hadn’t I am sure me and my children would be dead.”
Best Practices

- Team Coordinator, agency representatives, and policy-makers will meet to discuss training plans and policies.

- Need to make policies surrounding whether to use the Lethality Screen with minors; how the Lethality Screens will be transmitted to the DVSP; what is each organization’s follow up/tracking protocol; what enhanced services the DVSP should be providing.

- We strongly recommend:
  - Using a patrol phone to call the hotline
  - Unannounced home visits with both law enforcement and a DVSP advocate.
  - DVSPs completing Danger Assessments for each victim.
  - DVSPs setting aside next-day appointments and guaranteeing shelter for High-Danger victims.
  - DVSPs following up with High Danger victims within 24 hours.
  - LAP quarterly meetings.
Contact Information

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