developed by

Ohio Domestic Violence Network

ODVN

in partnership with

Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services

The Law Enforcement Handbook for Working with Victims of Domestic Violence

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A Note on Terminology

This handbook is specifically intended for law enforcement officers responding to and/or investigating domestic violence between current and/or former spouses and/or dating partners.[1] To promote readability and conserve space, the following terms are used throughout the guide.

Table 1. General Terms

Term	Definition
Victim	The term "victim" is used throughout this document to refer to the person who allegedly experienced act(s) of domestic violence. Some people identify as victims, some identify as survivors, and some choose not to use a label.
Offender	The term "offender" is used throughout this document to refer to the person who allegedly perpetrated act(s) of domestic violence or the person who caused harm.
Domestic Violence **or** **Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)**	For simplicity, this document uses the terms domestic violence and intimate partner violence (IPV) interchangeably[2] to mean violence between current and/or former spouses and/or dating partners. However, the Ohio Revised Code's definition of domestic violence is much broader and includes additional relationships (e.g., parents, siblings, extended family). IPV is a complex type of violence perpetrated within an interpersonal relationship and most often an intimate relationship. IPV includes a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors by a current or former spouse or dating partner to gain or maintain power and control in a relationship. Behaviors can include physical violence, sexual violence, psychological abuse, emotional abuse, economic abuse, and/or stalking. The impact of this type of violence extends beyond the immediate impacts to victims and families; it has economic costs, long-term health impacts, and is also a factor in more than half of female homicides (Petrosky, et al., 2017).

[1] Additional guides on other forms of violence, such as family violence, are forthcoming from OCJS.
[2] Except when we speak about the legal definition of "domestic violence" in the Ohio Revised Code.

Quick Reference: Key Statutes[3]

Specific Statutes: Ohio Revised Code

O.R.C. § 2919.25 AND O.R.C. § 3113.31, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

"Domestic violence" occurs when an offender:[4] (1) Knowingly causes or attempts to cause physical harm to a family or household member; (2) Recklessly causes serious physical harm to a family or household member; or (3) By threat of force, knowingly causes a family or household member to believe that the offender will cause imminent physical harm to the family or household member.

"Domestic violence" means any of the following:

- The occurrence of one or more of the following acts against a family or household member, or against a person with whom the offender is or was in a dating relationship (current or within the past 12 months):
  - Attempting to cause or recklessly causing bodily injury.
  - Placing another person by the threat of force in fear of imminent serious physical harm or committing "menacing by stalking" (section 2903.211) or "aggravated trespass" (section 2911.211).
  - Committing any act with respect to a child that would result in the child being an "abused child."
  - Committing a sexually oriented offense.
- Violating a protection order.

The list below includes an overview of crimes that can also be tracked as domestic violence if the offender and victim are family or household members or in a dating relationship (current or within the past 12 months):

- 2903.11 Felonious Assault
- 2903.12 Aggravated Assault
- 2903.13 Assault
- 2903.14 Negligent Assault
- 2903.18 Strangulation
- 2903.21 Aggravated Menacing
- 2903.211 (2903.21.1) Menacing by Stalking
- 2903.216 Illegal Use of a Tracking Device or Application
- 2903.22 Menacing
- 2905.02 Abduction
- 2905.01 Kidnapping
- 2911.21 Criminal Trespass
- 2911.211 Aggravated Trespassing
- 2917.2 Telecommunications Harassment
- 2919.22 Endangering Children
- 2919.25 Domestic Violence
- 2919.27 Violation of a Protection Order
- 2921.04 Intimidation of Victim or Witness
- 2923.03/2919.27 Attempted Violation of a Protection Order
- 2923.02/2919.25 Attempted Domestic Violence
- 2903.01 Aggravated Murder, 2903.02 Murder
- 2903.03 Voluntary Manslaughter
- 2909.06 Criminal Damaging or Endangering
- 2907.02 Rape
- 2907.03 Sexual Battery
- 2907.05 Gross Sexual Imposition
- 2907.06 Sexual Imposition
- 2909.04 Disrupting Public Services
- 2905.05 Vandalism
- 2911.11 Aggravated Burglary
- 2911.12 Burglary
- 2903.04 Involuntary Manslaughter
- 2923.02/2903.01 Attempted Aggravated Murder
- 2923.02/2903.02 Attempted Murder
- 2923.02/2907.02 Attempted Rape
- 2909.02 Aggravated Arson
- 2909.03 Arson
- 2923.02/2909.02 Attempted Aggravated Arson
- 2923.02/2909.03 Attempted Arson
- 2903.06 Aggravated Vehicular Homicide; Vehicular Homicide; Vehicular Manslaughter
- 2903.08 Aggravated Vehicular Assault; Vehicular Assault

[3] Please see Appendix D. Terms and Statutes for a more extensive list of relevant terms and statutes.

[4] This handbook focuses on domestic violence between current and/or former spouses and/or dating partners, which is also referred to as IPV.

O.R.C. § 2903.18 STRANGULATION

"Strangulation or suffocation" is a specific felony offense that occurs when an offender impedes the normal breathing or circulation of the blood by applying pressure to the throat or neck, or by covering the nose and mouth.

Table 2. Signs of Strangulation or Suffocation

Physical Signs of Strangulation or Suffocation	
• Difficulty breathing or a raspy voice • Sore throat or difficulty swallowing • Speaking in short, choppy sentences • Redness, slight bruising, scratches, abrasions, scrapes, or ligature marks around the neck • Tiny red spots around the eyes, neck, or behind the ears	• Neck pain • Fainting or having "lost time," or time that the victim cannot recall • Feeling light-headed or experiencing a "head rush" • Nausea, vomiting, or coughing up blood • Involuntary urination or defecation

Please note: the above list is not exhaustive, and the presence or absence of any one sign does not necessarily prove or disprove the incidence of strangulation or suffocation.

Offenders are prohibited from (1) Causing serious physical harm, (2) Creating a substantial risk of serious physical harm, or (3) Causing or creating a substantial risk of physical harm by means of strangulation or suffocation.

Table 3. Document & Refer All Incidents of Suspected Strangulation or Suffocation

Do: Document and Refer	
✓	**Document Suspected Strangulation or Suffocation** • Any time strangulation or suffocation is suspected, with or without the presence of physical symptoms or injuries, officers should document the possibility. • Noting possible relevant signs of strangulation in a report may allow a prosecutor to charge accordingly. • Use the victim's language to describe the incident, such as "victim said suspect choked them," or "victim did not know what had happened but 'woke up' realizing that they had urinated on themselves.".
✓	**Refer Victim to Medical Care** • Whenever strangulation or suffocation may have occurred, call for EMT assessment or refer the victim to the emergency department for assessment even if no physical symptoms are immediately apparent. • Sometimes, physical symptoms may not be visible and a medical examination (e.g., the use of alternative light sources) can identify internal injuries, such as airway and throat injuries or traumatic brain injury (TBI). • A medical examination will also help document if any injuries exist.

OHIO VICTIM'S RIGHTS LAW "MARSY'S LAW" (OHIO CONSTITUTION ARTICLE I, SECTION 10A, HOUSE BILL 343, AND O.R.C. § 2930

"Marsy's Law" provides crime victims with meaningful and enforceable constitutional rights equal to the rights of the accused. The rights that crime victims are entitled to include:

- To be treated with dignity and respect throughout criminal justice proceedings.
- To be notified of his, her or their rights as a victim of crime.
- To be notified of specific public proceedings throughout the criminal justice process and to be present and heard during those proceedings.

A victim has the following rights:

- To be treated with fairness and respect for the victim's safety, dignity, and privacy.
- Upon request, to reasonable and timely notice of all public proceedings involving the criminal offense or delinquent act against the victim, and to be present at all such proceedings.
- To be heard in any public proceeding involving release, plea, sentencing, disposition, or parole, or in any public proceeding in which a right of the victim is implicated.
- To reasonable protection from the accused or any person acting on behalf of the accused.
- Upon request, to reasonable notice of any release or escape of the accused.
- Except as authorized by section 10 of Article I (Trial for Crimes), to refuse an interview, deposition, or other discovery request made by the accused or any person acting on behalf of the accused.
- To full and timely restitution from the person who committed the criminal offense or delinquent act against the victim.
- To proceedings free from unreasonable delay and a prompt conclusion of the case.
- Upon request, to confer with the attorney for the government.
  To be informed, in writing, of all rights enumerated in this section.

Table 4. Requirements for Law Enforcement Agencies

Do: Marsy's Law Requirements for Law Enforcement	
✓	Provide the victim with the victim's rights request form with the law enforcement information completed, victim's rights pamphlet, and information card upon initial contact.
✓	Document the victim's name and identifying information separately from other information on a page that is not a public record.
✓	Notify the victim and the victim's representative if an inactive case has been re-opened for a criminal offense or delinquent act with a statute of limitations longer than three years, unless this notification has been waived.
✓	Provide notice to the victim that they may request and receive information on the terms and conditions of bond; the time, place, and date of arraignment; and details of detainment in another jurisdiction for criminal offenses or delinquent acts.

See Appendix H. Additional Information and Resources for Victims for a copy of Ohio's Victim's Rights Request Form or visit the Ohio Crime Victim Justice Center at https://www.ocvjc.org/ to learn more.

Background

Introduction and Purpose

The Ohio Domestic Violence Network (ODVN) in collaboration with the Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services (OCJS) developed this handbook to provide promising strategies to help law enforcement officers respond to and/or investigate incidents of domestic violence.

This handbook is a field-ready resource that is intended to help law enforcement officers recognize the dynamics of domestic violence, identify high-risk factors, reduce harm, and increase victims' access to protection and support. The contents of this handbook prioritize overall safety (including victim, officer, and offender safety), offender accountability, and community trust.

Specifically, this handbook aims to:

→	Describe the dynamics of power and control in domestic violence and identify common barriers to safety.
→	Explain the "why" behind promising strategies for law enforcement officers working on domestic violence cases.
→	Advance key guidelines and share field-ready tools to improve practices related to screening for domestic violence.

All information included in this guide is available online at ODVN.org.

Scope of the Problem

Prevalence of Domestic Violence

Nearly 1 in 2 women and 2 in 5 men in the United States will experience rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by a current or former intimate partner (Leemis, et al., 2022). Of those, about 2 in 5 women and 1 in 4 men will report experiencing an IPV-related "impact," such as physical injuries, PTSD symptoms, medical care, and/or help from law enforcement (Leemis, et al., 2022).

Domestic violence costs more than $1.2 billion annually in Ohio alone (Von Nessen, 2024), including:

→	$264.8 million in physical health care costs
→	$239.9 million due to loss of life
→	$227.7 million due to loss of worker productivity
→	$122.4 million in mental health care costs

People of color, particularly Black women, are disproportionately victimized by domestic violence and IPV-related homicides. While Black women constitute 13.4 percent of the population, they account for nearly 30 percent of IPV-related homicides (Rowh & Jack, 2024), and more than 40 percent of Black women will experience IPV over the course of their lifetimes (DuMonthier, Childers, & Milli, 2017). Additionally, several factors may prevent women of color from seeking help, such as mistrust of the legal system or fear that they will not be believed or supported (Waller, Harris, & Quinn, 2022).

Detecting Patterns of Violence

Physical and sexual assaults, or threats to commit them, are the more obvious crimes that come to the attention of law enforcement. However, offenders' regular use of other abusive behaviors, reinforced by one or more acts of physical or sexual violence, make up a larger pattern of coercive control. Physical and sexual assaults that instill the threat of future violent attacks help the offender control the victim. Over time, these behaviors can have a significant impact on victims' behavior, credibility, and/or decision-making.

TACTICS OF IPV AND CORRESPONDING OFFENDER BEHAVIORS[5]

Isolation
Offenders may intentionally isolate victims from loved ones and community supports. Isolation is a process that can happen slowly and may not be immediately recognized by the victim. Over time, this may erode or eliminate a victim's support system so that they feel like the offender is the only person the victim can turn to. Examples can include:

- **Restricting or eliminating the victim's freedom of movement.** Preventing the victim from accessing or using a car, requiring the victim to ask for permission before they go anywhere or participate in any activities, preventing the victim from leaving the home, or refusing to give the victim a key to the house. Offenders also may not allow the victim to learn English to make it more difficult to access services.

[5] Additional behaviors and examples are included in Appendix E. Power and Control Wheel. The Power and Control Wheel is a diagram intended to help explain the various tactics offenders may use to gain or maintain power and control over victims.

- **Stopping the victim from seeing or talking to loved ones.** Acting extremely jealous or overprotective so that the victim will comply to prevent a fight or protect the offender's feelings.
- **Making the victim financially reliant on the offender.** Controlling access to money (including credit cards), not permitting the victim to work, or preventing the victim from accessing an education. This can also be called "economic abuse" or "financial abuse."

Coercion & Threats

Offenders' use of coercion and threats can create a pervasive sense of fear for victims. Examples can include:

- **Making or carrying out threats to do something harmful to the victim.** Threatening to leave the victim, seeking and/or obtaining sole custody of children in the home, withholding or interfering with the victim's welfare or benefits, or making false reports to damage the victim's reputation and credibility.
- **Threatening to kill themselves, the victim, children in the home, or other loved ones, pets, or animals the victim cares about.** Offenders may or may not act on these threats.
- **Making the victim do something illegal.** Making the victim commit fraud, lie to the authorities, or handle or use illicit substances.

Using Children & Pets

Offenders may choose to use children or pets in the home to gain or maintain control over the victim. Examples can include:

- **Threatening to take children, or pets, away.** Threatening to kidnap children or abduct pets if the victim attempts to leave.
- **Using children, or pets, to spy on the victim.** Pressuring the child to share personal information about the victim or hiding trackers or recording devices in the child's belongings to monitor the victim. For pets, this could include placing tracking devices on pets' collars or misusing other pet monitoring devices to monitor the victim.
- **Damaging the victim's relationship with children.** Telling the child not to listen to the victim, slandering the victim to the child, or otherwise trying to turn the child against the victim.
- **Using visitation to further harass the victim.** Using the exchange to provoke or follow the victim.

Minimizing, Denying, & Blaming

Offenders may deny or make light of the abuse they are inflicting on the victim or blame the victim entirely for the abuse instead of taking accountability for the behaviors they are choosing. Examples can include:

- **"Gaslighting" the victim.** The term "gaslighting" refers to the offender's psychological manipulation of the victim over time. Gaslighting frequently causes the victim to question the validity of their own thoughts and memories and can lead to confusion and uncertainty, lowered self-esteem, loss of confidence, and further dependency on the offender. Gaslighting can include repeated use of statements like "You're overreacting," "I never said that," "You're imagining things," "That was a joke, don't be so sensitive," "If you hadn't provoked me like that, I wouldn't have yelled at you/hit you/etc.," and/or "You're being paranoid."
- **Shifting blame on the victim.** Offenders may try to make the victim look like perpetrator by spreading lies about the victim to family and friends, saying that the victim is the offender, or making a false report against the victim. Patterns of behaviors like these are called "**DARVO**," which means "**D**eny, **A**ttack, **R**everse **V**ictim & **O**ffender" (Harsey, Zurbriggen, & Freyd, 2017).

Intimidation

Offenders may torment or attempt to gain or maintain control over the victim through intimidation. Examples can include:

- **Making the victim feel afraid.** Using gestures, looks, or actions to provoke fear, such as displaying or

cleaning weapons in a way that is intended to feel threatening to the victim.
- **Abusing or killing pets/animals the victim cares about.** This is often intended as a warning to the victim to "get in line" or face the same fate.
- **Destroying the victim's property.** Offenders may choose to smash or otherwise destroy property that the victim cares about. This behavior could constitute criminal mischief, arson, or criminal damaging or endangering, which are all against the Ohio Revised Code (detailed in Appendix D. Terms and Statutes, Crime Statutes).

Using Culture & Identity

Offenders can use the victim's culture and/or identity against them. Examples can include:

- **Making or carrying out threats to harm the victim based on their culture or identity.** Threatening deportation if the victim is an immigrant, regardless of their citizenship or immigration status.
- **Blocking access to community support and/or resources.** If the offender and victim belong to the same social group, the offender may use their connections to powerful people in the community that make it difficult for the victim to access or utilize traditional resources.
- **Sharing information about the victim could increase risks to their safety.** Offenders may threaten to "out" the victim by disclosing their sexual orientation or gender identity to friends, family, or community members, which could increase victims' physical safety risks, social risks, or cause economic or reputational harms (e.g., loss of employment, housing).

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF TRAUMA ON VICTIMS OF IPV

Violence and abuse include intentional acts or coercive tactics that cause trauma to another person. Trauma is characterized by feelings of intense fear, helplessness, loss of control, and/or threat of death.

Table 5. Trauma-informed Responses to IPV

Do: Use Trauma-Informed Responses to Domestic Violence	
✓	**Minimize the risk of re-victimization** Re-victimization can occur systemically when: (1) victims are not believed, (2) victims do not receive or cannot access the services or responses they need, or (3) victims are forced to repeatedly recount the abuse and violence they experienced.
✓	**Respect the victim's choices and control over their information, decisions, and their participation in the processes** For example, there are several factors that influence a victim's decision whether to participate in legal proceedings. Evidence-based investigative and prosecution practices ensure that offenders can be held accountable with or without the victim's participation in the process.
✓	**Focus on building trust and increase safety** Establishing initial safety and stabilization following a traumatic event, such as physical or sexual violence, is an important step toward healing and recovery for the victim. Law enforcement responding to domestic violence calls can help victims re-establish safety and stabilization.

Refresher: Responding to Domestic Violence[6]

IDENTIFYING LANGUAGE ACCESS NEEDS

After arriving on the scene, assess the language needs of the parties and determine whether an interpreter will be needed. According to the Ohio Revised Code (O.R.C. § 2930.041), victims who are Deaf, non-English speaking, or have limited English proficiency have the right to an interpreter during all investigative contacts with law enforcement (see Appendix D. Terms and Statutes, Language Access Requirements). Members of law enforcement in the field are permitted to use technology-assisted interpretation or translation services only when interpreters are not reasonably available. Refer to your agency's guidelines on the use of any technology-assisted tools – such as body worn cameras (BWCs), which can sometimes include translation technology – and ensure use is approved prior to utilization. You can also consider reaching out to the local prosecutor's office, courts, and/or local domestic violence programs to access their interpreters, though these costs would still need to be borne by the law enforcement agency.

Table 6. Do's and Don'ts for Working with Interpreters

Do:		Do Not:	
✓	Obtain an interpreter who is not known to the parties	×	Use a child, family member, friend, or community member.
✓	Speak directly to the victim using simple, clear language and short sentences.	×	Direct questions to the interpreter.
✓	Consider the use of technology solutions to provide translation when interpreters are not reasonably available. Obtain agency approval prior to implementation.	×	Use technology to provide translations without getting agency approval first.

SEPARATING THE PARTIES

It is imperative to separate all parties (e.g., victims, offenders, children in the home, witnesses) prior to conducting investigative interviews. This is particularly important for victims, offenders, and children in the home due to the unique dynamics of abuse. For example, when questioning the victim and offender at a residence, assess the available options to separate the parties, such as moving outside to question one party, utilizing a vehicle to serve as a secondary space, or using two separate rooms. At a station, use separate interview rooms, for example if available use a warm interview room or private waiting area with the victim and the cold interrogation with the offender. Key benefits of this practice are detailed below.

[6] Adapted from The Playbook (Lum & Koper, 2023), the Model Policy on Domestic Violence from the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), and FVPC's Tips for Law Enforcement (FVPC). If your agency does not have a Domestic Violence Policy, please consider using or adapting the model policy included in Appendix A. IACP Law Enforcement Policy Center, Model Policy on Domestic Violence.

Table 7. Benefits of Separating the Parties for Investigative Interviews

→	**Preventing Intimidation and/or Influence** Offenders' use of controlling and intimidating behaviors within the context of IPV can influence what a victim is willing to say in front of the offender. When interviewed together, or near the offender, the victim may downplay or deny the abuse to protect themselves and prevent abuse.
→	**Ensuring Victim Safety** IPV calls can be dangerous. Interviewing the offender and victim in the same room or space may cause escalations in tension, violence, or otherwise put the victim at risk. Separate interviews also allow officers to assess immediate safety needs and discreetly provide resources.
→	**Protecting Children** In cases where children (or other family members) are present, separate interviews protect them from further exposure to conflict and/or trauma. As with an adult victim, children may also feel pressured to downplay or deny the abuse if the offender is present. If children are present, follow your agency's guidelines and/or Child Protective Services (CPS) or Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) protocols. If you do not have a protocol, consider using the Handle with Care model for law enforcement and first responders (see Appendix D. Terms and Statutes, Protecting Children).
→	**Respecting Victim Autonomy & Privacy** Separate interviews offer a private, supportive environment for victims to disclose sensitive information. Where possible, consider holding victim interviews with the officer and investigator and/or facilitating warm hand-offs between departments, so that victims are not re-victimized or re-traumatized by having to repeatedly share the same information.
→	**Improving Accuracy & Fulfilling Prosecutorial Documentation Requirements** Separate interviews allow officers and investigators to compare accounts independently, identify inconsistencies, and ascertain where more evidence may be needed. Prosecutors and courts rely on statements given without coercion and separate interviews help fulfill this requirement.

Example Interviewing Model: FETI

Avoid conducting comprehensive interviews immediately following the initial report unless public safety concerns make it necessary. If a more comprehensive interview is needed, follow your agency's protocol regarding what type of interviewing model to use. One example is the Forensic Experiential Trauma Interview (FETI) interviewing model (Strand), which involves acknowledging the victim's trauma and clarifying specific details and information after facilitation and collection of the experiential evidence. Key questions to ask include:

- ***What they are able to remember about their experience.*** Using the phrase "able to remember" relieves some of the pressure on the victim, as not all victims can recall all significant details. Similarly, using the term "experience" encourages the victim to describe their actual experience as they lived it, relieving some of the pressure on the victim to determine what is important in the context of the criminal investigation.
- ***Their thought process at particular points during their experience.*** Asking what the victim was thinking about or how they were processing their experiences often reduces or even eliminates the need to ask potentially re-victimizing questions (e.g., why did/didn't you fight back?) and provides the interviewer with additional understanding related to the victim's thoughts and actions.
- ***Tactile memories (e.g., sounds, smells) before, during, and after the incident.*** Asking about sensory

information increases the victim's ability to recall additional information.

- ***How this experience affected them physically and emotionally.*** Understanding the effects of the experience on the victim increases the interviewer's ability to contextualize and understand it.
- ***What the most difficult part of the experience was for them.*** Victims may suppress painful details. Sensitively asking about the most difficult part of their experience can sometimes reveal important information and context to the interviewer.
- ***What they cannot forget about their experience.*** This kind of open-ended question can help the interviewer better understand both the victim's experience and their response to it.

Table 8. Dos and Don'ts: Trauma-Informed Interviewing

Do:		Do Not:	
✓	Ask the victim how they prefer to be addressed and whether anything would make them more comfortable (e.g., do they need to have an interpreter or someone else present).	×	Make assumptions based on the victim's or offender's identities, culture, living situation, or surroundings.
✓	Use the words and terms used by the victim and witnesses, integrating those into your questions and notes.	×	Use legal terms unless the victim or witness uses them. For example, in the report, say "victim reported being raped," instead of "victim was raped."
✓	Consider and document non-physical examples of abuse. For example, ask questions about monitoring or stalking, like "has your partner ever known things about you, like your location, when you haven't shared that with them directly?".	×	Ignore non-physical examples of abuse that point to a larger pattern. For example, while charges can only be filed for a physical assault, documenting the offender's prior monitoring of the victim's whereabouts establishes the larger pattern of abuse.
✓	Ask questions that get at the offender's behaviors over time (e.g., "has your partner ever hit, shoved, or threatened to kill you?").	×	Ignore the offender's history. Details could be provided by the victim or dispatch.
✓	Note when victims can/cannot recall what occurred. Gaps can point to possible strangulation, suffocation, or TBI.	×	Assume that gaps mean the victim is hiding something. Invisible injuries, like TBI, can negatively impact a victim's memory and recall.

EVIDENCE COLLECTION AND COMPLETION OF THE POLICE REPORT

Evidence-based investigation practices (EBIP) use current techniques that increase victim safety, offender accountability, and case outcomes, particularly when victims are reluctant or unable to testify due to manipulation or fear. Collecting and documenting corroborating evidence ensures that prosecution efforts can rely on more than just victim testimony. The following information could be documented and included in the responding officers' official report.

Table 9. Information that could be Included in the Police Report

Do:	
✓	**Lethality Assessment** If officers have completed training to implement lethality assessments and completed a case-specific lethality assessment, a copy can be attached to the police report. Lethality assessments can often be used by the court to inform decisions that are critical to victim safety (e.g., pretrial decisions). Learn more in Guidelines: Responding to Domestic Violence; examples included in Appendix B. Lethality Assessment Tools
✓	**Offender's Past Use of Violence or Abuse** Obtain the offender's background and history of abuse (e.g., from the victim, 911 dispatch) in addition to the specifics of the incident. Include relevant history.
✓	**Photos and/or Physical Evidence of the Incident** Take photos of the victim and their injuries, the offender, and the scene, if possible. Remember that injuries may be visible or invisible and can look different over time so photographing the area is recommended, regardless. Physical evidence could include torn clothing, damaged property, forensic evidence (e.g., blood, fingerprints), or any weapons brandished or used to carry out the alleged crime (see Weapons below and Appendix D. Terms and Statutes, Other Statutory Definitions for more information). Physical evidence may be anything that a victim, witness, or offender mentions in their statement(s). For example, if the offender threw a chair, law enforcement may want to photograph the placement and position of the chair or other property damage. Details like this can help with prosecutions and hold offenders accountable.
✓	**Signs of Strangulation** The following list is not exhaustive, and the presence or absence of any one sign does not necessarily prove or disprove the incidence of strangulation or suffocation: • Difficulty breathing or a raspy voice • Sore throat or difficulty swallowing • Speaking in short, choppy sentences • Redness, slight bruising, scratches, abrasions, scrapes, or ligature marks around the neck • Neck pain • Tiny red spots around the eyes, neck, or behind the ears • Feeling light-headed or experiencing a "head rush" • Fainting or having "lost time," or time that the victim cannot recall • Nausea, vomiting, or coughing up blood • Involuntary urination or defecation **DOCUMENT:** Look for and document any signs of strangulation or suspected strangulation. **REFER:** Ensure the victim receives immediate medical attention if any signs of strangulation are present or strangulation is suspected. It is important to note that injuries are not always immediately visible but may show up through a medical examination, such as throat injuries, injury to carotid arteries or TBI.

✓	**Contact Information** Obtain updated contact information, such as working phone numbers and emails, from the victim, offender, and/or witnesses so that relevant parties (e.g., victim advocate, detective) can conduct any needed follow up. **Please note:** the Ohio Victim's Rights Law requires that a victim's name and identifying information be documented on a separate page that is not a public record (see Appendix D. Terms and Statutes for more information).
✓	**911 Call Recording** Ask if any of the assaults took place during the 911 call and include that information on the report so that the call recording can be entered as evidence. Do not disclose the identity of the caller. This can increase the caller's risk for future violence.
✓	**BWC Footage** Officers should follow agency protocols regarding use of BWC. While there is some evidence that BWC footage can increase the number of domestic violence cases initiated by the prosecutor's office, the number to have charges filed, and the number to result in a guilty plea and/or a guilty verdict at trial (Katz, Choate, Ready, & Nuño, 2014), using BWC can also introduce challenges during a response. One of the major concerns for victims is privacy. A person who has just experienced a violent, traumatic assault may not want to be recorded (Safety Net Project, 2016).
✓	**Eyewitness Accounts** Include any eyewitness accounts from individuals who witnessed key events related to the alleged crime(s). Follow your agency's best practices for victim and witness interviews, which should be separate and distinct from your agency's offender interrogation techniques. For adult eyewitnesses, obtain written statements, when possible. You may need to conduct any child witness interviews in conjunction with CPS or coordinate with a local CAC or the Ohio Network of Child Advocacy Centers (ONCAC) to lead this process and ensure that interviews are forensically sound. Additionally, be aware of the potential impacts of trauma on a child who has experienced or witnessed violence and how that may show up in an interview setting (detailed in Appendix G. The Impact of IPV on Children). Review Ohio's Handle with Care map to determine if the child's school is a part of this program and can help provide resources.
✓	**Emergency Protective Order** If an emergency protective order has been issued, include a copy with the police report. If the report is not available to include, note the existence of the order, type of order, issuing court, date issued, and parties protected.

✓	**Officer Actions** When describing and documenting the legal basis for the arrest decision, provide an explanation both in the report and to the victim directly when an arrest cannot be made. In such cases, consider implementing proactive responses to prevent future violence, such as the Domestic-Related Repeat Incident (DRRI) Process (Santos & Santos, 2023): • Step 1: Identification and assignment • Step 2: Analysis • Step 3: Response • Step 4: Assessment • Step 5: Accountability Document any other officer actions taken; depending on the details of the incident, this may include the separation of parties for investigative interviews, removal of firearm(s), CPS notification, and the specific information and/or referrals provided to the victim.
✓	**Other Relevant Information** Per the responding officers' discretion, other relevant information that does not fit into any of the categories above can be documented and included in the report.

DETERMINING THE PRIMARY PHYSICAL AGGRESSOR

It is important that law enforcement officers responding to domestic violence calls gather information to help determine the primary physical aggressor. It can sometimes be challenging to make this determination as the primary aggressor may not be immediately self-evident due to a variety of factors. For example, when violence occurs between same-sex couples, police are substantially more likely to arrest both parties, even though police are equally likely to make arrests in same-sex as in heterosexual partner abuse cases (Pattavina, Hirschel, Buzawa, Faggiani, & Bentley, 2007).

When determining the primary aggressor, officers are required by law (see Appendix D. Terms and Statutes, Other Statutory Definitions) to consider the following, in addition to any other relevant information (e.g., offender's pattern of coercive control, trauma):

→	Any history of domestic violence or any other violent acts by either person involved in the alleged offense that the officer can reasonably ascertain.
→	If violence is alleged, whether it was caused by a person acting in self-defense.
→	Each person's fear of physical harm, if any, resulting from the other person's threatened use of force against any person or resulting from the other person's use or history of the use of force against any person, and the reasonableness of that fear.
→	The comparative severity of injuries suffered by persons involved in the alleged offense.

Table 10. Dos and Don'ts: Strategies to Improve Domestic Violence Case Response

Do:		Do Not:	
✓	Remain at the scene until the situation is under control and/or you have given the victim resources or made a referral to an agency that can assist them in creating a safety plan.	×	Make any statements that could discourage a victim from reporting domestic violence.
✓	As appropriate, conduct a lethality assessment to help determine ongoing danger and possible escalation.	×	Suggest, imply, or otherwise indicate the possible arrest of all parties to discourage future calls for law enforcement intervention.
✓	Document all injuries – including any signs of strangulation or suspected strangulation – and ensure the victim receives appropriate medical care.	×	Avoid taking action because the victim stated prosecution was not desired.
✓	Consider the impact of trauma and coercive control when determining which individual appears to be the primary aggressor.	×	Assume that the person with the most injuries is the victim (e.g., strangulation victims may fight back).
✓	Make a warrantless arrest in accordance with applicable laws if probable cause exists.	×	Make dual arrests without first contacting your supervisor.
✓	Conduct interviews in private and safe locations where you can minimize distractions.	×	Ask the victim if they want the offender to be arrested.
✓	Facilitate contact with a local victim advocate for additional services (e.g., obtaining order of protection) and leave behind a copy of Marsy's Law and a Victim Rights Request Form (see Appendix H. Additional Information and Resources for Victims).		
✓	Follow agency protocol to identify and respond effectively to a child whose parent is arrested.		

Tools: Assessing Domestic Violence Serious Injury or Lethality Risk

Identifying Higher-Risk Cases

LETHALITY ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

A lethality assessment is a brief checklist designed to help responding officers assess a victim's risk of serious injury or death by the offender. Lethality assessments are also called "risk assessments" or "danger assessments."

After receiving training to implement lethality assessments, members of law enforcement can use these tools to identify victims at the highest risk of intimate partner homicide and near-lethal assault. This helps focus resources on the most dangerous cases. After high-risk victims are identified, law enforcement officers help connect them to services and resources.

Lethality assessment programs have some evidence that they can prevent homicide and serious injury, especially among female dating partners (Koppa, 2024). There are also positive benefits for law enforcement; in addition to being easy to implement, officers using lethality assessments have reported feeling more confident handling high risk IPV scenarios (Lethality Assessment Program, 2022). Further, lethality assessments have been shown to improve public trust, with victims reporting being more satisfied with police response when lethality assessments are used (National Institute of Justice, 2018).

It should be noted that while lethality assessments can help identify higher-risk cases, they should not be used to determine whether someone is a victim of IPV or is at risk of re-assault. Each case is unique and all factors, including those not covered by an assessment tool, should be included in the responding officer's report (as detailed above).

If members of law enforcement have not been trained in the use of lethality assessments, funding may be available for training and implementation from OCJS. Training may also be available from ODVN.

To learn more, contact OCJS at OCJSInfo@dps.ohio.gov or ODVN at training@odvn.org.

Lethality Assessment Topics
More affirmative answers to the questions below indicate that a victim is more likely to experience escalating violence, serious injury, or death by the offender:

- **Violence:** Whether the offender shows a pattern of violence that persists and/or has recently increased in severity or frequency.
- **Strangulation:** Whether the offender uses or threatens use of strangulation.
- **Weapons:** Whether the offender uses or threatens use of a weapon or has access to firearm(s).
- **Threats:** Whether the offender threatens to kill the victim or the victim's children.
- **Fear:** Whether the victim believes that the offender is capable of killing the victim.
- **Self-Harm:** Whether the offender has attempted or threatened to attempt suicide.
- **Control:** Whether the offender has constant or violent jealousy, controls the victim's daily activities, or stalks or otherwise monitors (e.g., "spying on") the victim.

- **Relationship Status:** Whether the victim has recently ended the relationship or left the offender after dating, living together, or being married.
- **Employment Status:** Whether the offender is unemployed.

Table 11. Lethality Assessment Examples[7]

→	**Danger Assessment for Law Enforcement (DA-LE)** This is a validated risk assessment instrument that is commonly used across Ohio.
→	**Domestic Violence Lethality Screen for First Responders** This was developed by the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence and is used in several states and jurisdictions nationwide.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HIGH-RISK TEAM (DVHRT) APPROACH

Another promising model is the DVHRT, which leverages community partnerships to cooperatively elevate and address higher-risk victims of domestic violence (Maxwell, Sullivan, Backes, & Kaufman, 2020). Through this approach, law enforcement identifies higher-risk victims through a lethality assessment and, with permission from the victim, refers them to their community's DVHRT. The team works collaboratively to determine which cases require more intensive assistance and develop individualized protection plans. Team members typically include victim service providers, law enforcement agencies, batterers intervention programs, and others.

[7] Please see Appendix B. Lethality Assessment Tools for a copy of each checklist. *Please Note:* members of law enforcement should receive training on the use of these tools prior to use. Checklist questions should not be modified.

IPV Red Flags: Indicators of Increased Risk

Offender's Past History of Violence

An offender's criminal history, including repeated violent offenses, an escalation in severity, and the use of weapons, should be noted – particularly if the violent behavior is recent. A pattern of prior violent behavior can be an indicator of an increased risk of future violence:

→	Domestic violence offenders with a prior arrest are seven times more likely to be arrested again than those without a criminal record (Hirschel, Buzawa, Pattavina, Faggiani, & Reuland, April 2007).
→	Among individuals arrested in Ohio for domestic violence, 31% were arrested for domestic violence multiple times, and another 31% had an additional arrest for another violent crime (Ohio Attorney General, 2025).
→	Other research (ODVN, 2025) shows that for the one-year period from July 2024 to June 2025, of IPV-related homicide cases in Ohio: • 55% involved offenders with a criminal history, 37% included felonies. • 16% of offenders had a history of stalking. • 36% of offenders had a previous or current protection order in place.

While convictions are important to note, victim-reported history should also be considered to ensure that offenders who have avoided conviction in the past are held accountable.

OFFENDER RISK HIERARCHIES

Some jurisdictions create an offender risk hierarchy that suggest actions and interventions based on the perceived level of risk. For example, an offender with several IPV-related charges and convictions could be designated higher risk than an offender with no previous offenses, though it is important to note the severity of the incident itself, as well. Please see Appendix C. IPV Intervention Issue Brief for an example developed by the National Network for Safe Communities at John Jay College. The U.S. Department of Justice's Project Safe Neighborhoods Initiative also focuses crime prevention efforts on the offender (Maxwell, Sullivan, Backes, & Kaufman, 2020). Using criminal history, offenders are classified according to severity of risk, and a series of graduated tactics are deployed for each group.

Strangulation

→	Victims who survive strangulation are seven times more likely to become homicide victims and six times more likely to experience attempted homicide (Glass, et al., 2008).
→	For the one-year period from July 2024 to June 2025, 12% of perpetrators involved in IPV-related homicides in Ohio had a known history of strangulation (ODVN, 2025).

Table 12. Signs of Strangulation or Suffocation

Physical Signs of Strangulation or Suffocation	
• Difficulty breathing or a raspy voice • Sore throat or difficulty swallowing • Speaking in short, choppy sentences • Redness, slight bruising, scratches, abrasions, scrapes, or ligature marks around the neck • Tiny red spots around the eyes, neck, or behind the ears	• Neck pain • Fainting or having "lost time," or time that the victim cannot recall • Feeling light-headed or experiencing a "head rush" • Nausea, vomiting, or coughing up blood • Involuntary urination or defecation

Please note: the above list is not exhaustive, and the presence or absence of any one sign does not necessarily prove or disprove the incidence of strangulation or suffocation.

ENHANCING EFFORTS TO PREVENT IPV-RELATED HOMICIDE BY CRACKING DOWN ON STRANGULATION AND SUFFOCATION

In April 2023, Ohio enacted a standalone strangulation statute to make strangulation a felony offense and help improve responses to this dangerous crime (O.R.C. § 2903.18). Previously, strangulation was a misdemeanor offense that was prosecuted under general assault laws.

Table 13. Document & Refer All Incidents of Suspected Strangulation or Suffocation

Do: Document and Refer	
✓	**Document Suspected Strangulation or Suffocation** • Any time strangulation or suffocation is suspected, with or without the presence of physical symptoms or injuries, officers should document the possibility. • Noting possible relevant signs of strangulation in a report may allow a prosecutor to charge accordingly. • Use the victim's language to describe the incident, such as "victim said suspect choked them," or "victim did not know what had happened but 'woke up' realizing that they had urinated on themselves.".
✓	**Refer Victim to Medical Care** • Whenever strangulation or suffocation may have occurred, call for EMT assessment or refer the victim to the emergency department for assessment even if no physical symptoms are immediately apparent. • Sometimes, physical symptoms may not be visible and a medical examination (e.g., the use of alternative light sources) can identify internal injuries, such as airway and throat injuries or traumatic brain injury (TBI). • A medical examination will also help document if any injuries exist.

The Link Between Strangulation and TBI
Strangulation and suffocation can cause serious health problems for victims, both immediate and longer-term. Even if the victim has no visible injuries from suspected strangulation or the victim did not pass out, the victim could still have a TBI.

Brain injuries are highly prevalent among victims of domestic violence: 85% of victims of domestic violence report experiencing head trauma and, of those, half experienced this form of violence too many times to count; and 83% experienced strangulation and, of those, the majority (88%) experienced it multiple times (CARE, 2020).

Members of law enforcement should be aware that brain injuries are likely very prevalent among the victims of domestic violence with whom they come into contact. Victims with brain injuries may exhibit a range of "invisible" symptoms, detailed in the table below (see Appendix H. Additional Information and Resources for Victims for more on TBI).

Table 14. Signs of TBI

Type	Examples	
Physical Signs	• Headaches • Sleeping problems • Sensitivity to light or noise • Dizziness	• Balance problems • Fatigue • Seizures
Emotional Signs	• Worries or fears • Panic attacks • Flashbacks • Sadness	• Depression • Hopelessness • Anger or rage
Cognitive Signs	Difficulties with: • Remembering or understanding things • Paying attention or focusing • Following directions	• Getting things started or figuring out what to do next • Organizing things • Controlling emotions or reactions

Please note: the above list is not exhaustive, and the presence or absence of any one sign does not necessarily indicate or contraindicate brain injury.

Children in the Home

→	The risk that a child will be killed through an IPV-related homicide increases when the offender has a history of suicidal behavior, previously raped the victim, experiences external employment-related stressors, or when the child is not the biological child of the offender (Lyons, et al., 2021). Perpetrators of IPV-related homicide can frequently display violent and/or controlling behaviors when they feel a loss of control (e.g., job loss, job stress) or jealousy (e.g., living with a non-biological child).
→	In cases of IPV-related homicide, more than half of children are present for the homicide and experience varying levels of exposure to the crime (Alisic, Groot, Snetselaar, Stroeken, & van de Putte, 2017), such as witnessing the homicide, calling for help, or finding the body of their parent after the homicide has occurred.

→	For the one-year period from July 2024 to June 2025, IPV-related homicides had severe impacts on Ohio's children (ODVN, 2025): • More than 90 children lost a parent to IPV-related homicide. • More than 75 children lost a grandparent to IPV-related homicide. • More than 35 children witnessed a parent's murder. • 11 children/youth were killed, the youngest of whom was 4 months old. • 4 children/youth were murdered by a parent and 2 were killed by their mothers' new boyfriends. • Nearly 40% of IPV-related homicide cases with minor children were involved in custody disputes. • 2 cases involved family annihilation.

Weapons

Access to firearms increases the risk of IPV-related homicide:

→	A female victim is five times more likely to be killed when firearms are present (Campbell, et al., 2007).
→	Roughly once every ten hours, a woman is murdered by a current or former partner who is using a firearm (Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, 2026).
→	From 1974 to 2023, one in 10 individuals arrested for domestic violence in Ohio had been arrested for a separate incident involving a weapon offense (Ohio Attorney General, 2025).
→	Another data set (ODVN, 2025) showed that for the one-year period from July 2024 to June 2025, 84% of all IPV-related homicide deaths in Ohio were the result of gun violence: • 144 people were shot in 108 cases, and only 12 people survived the incident. • 1 police officer was shot and survived. • 1 law enforcement officer was shot and killed responding to an IPV call.

Training is available on safe strategies to secure firearms.
Contact OCJS to learn more.

REMOVAL OF FIREARMS

Ohio is one of twenty-one states that require law enforcement officers responding to a report of domestic violence to remove any weapons that were brandished, threatened, used, and/or otherwise present at the scene (ORC § 2935 (B)(3)(h)) (detailed in Appendix D. Terms and Statutes, Other Statutory Definitions below).

Pregnancy

→	Pregnancy can place victims at higher risk for IPV, including IPV-related homicides, as many women have reported that abuse started or intensified after becoming pregnant (Goodman, 2021). Physical violence during a pregnancy affects both the pregnant parent and the baby. This can include increased risk of depression and substance use for the pregnant person and increased risk of poor health outcomes for the baby.

→	Homicide is a leading cause of death for pregnant and postpartum women, as they are more likely to be murdered than to die from the three leading obstetric causes and most of these homicides are perpetrated by a current or former intimate partner with access to a firearm (Lawn & Koenen, 2022).
→	For the one-year period from July 2024 to June 2025, three pregnant women in Ohio were murdered by their babies' fathers (ODVN, 2025).

Animal Abuse

Animal abuse often co-occurs with domestic violence and is used by offenders to manipulate, threaten, control, and punish victims:

→	Animal abuse is a predictor of current and future domestic violence as well as rape, murder, arson, and the sexual abuse of children (Macias-Mayo, 2018).
→	Some studies indicate that up to 89% of victims say their pets were, threatened, harmed or killed by the offender (Cleary, Thapa, West, Westman, & Kornhaber, 2021).
→	Many shelters do not accept animals, so victims with a pet or other animals face additional barriers when finding someplace safe to go. Nearly half of victims will stay with an offender rather than leave their pet behind (Carlisle-Frank, Frank, & Nielsen, 2004).

Asking victims about pets they have or had and the offender's treatment of them can provide additional insight into behaviors, methods of control, and other crimes that may be co-occurring. Victims may not be comfortable talking about the abuse they have experienced but be open to sharing about the offender's mistreatment of a pet. Law enforcement officers are also mandated reporters for suspected animal abuse.

Ending the Relationship

Most IPV-related homicides occur during or after separation. Danger to the victim increases when they begin to think about or take steps to separate from the offender or otherwise end the relationship. Leaving an abusive relationship is not safe or easy (Buel, n.d.). As the offender realizes they are losing control over the victim, they often choose to increase violent and abusive tactics to try to regain control over the victim. For the one-year period from July 2024 to June 2025, in at least 35% of all IPV-related homicide cases in Ohio, the relationship had ended or was ending (ODVN, 2025).

While it can be frustrating for law enforcement to be repeatedly called back to the same residence, it is important to remember that a victim "just leaving" is rarely safe, realistic, or even possible. There are many complex factors that a victim will weigh when deciding to return to or stay in an abusive relationship. It is also important to remember that while the victim wants the violence to end, they may not want the relationship to end. People who choose to abuse are not violent all the time; they can often come across as charming and romantic in between episodes of violence.

Table 15. Barriers to Leaving an Abusive Relationship

Type	Examples
Fear	Victims often fear that the offender will become more violent if they decide to leave the relationship. Victims fear for their lives, as well as others' lives, and/or fear the violence will increase in severity or frequency. Victims may stay in the relationship to protect themselves, their children, and/or their pets.
Limited Financial Resources	Offenders often control all financial assets, leaving victims with limited or no access to the financial resources usually needed to help them leave the offender.
Internalized Blame and Shame	Victims may believe that the violence is their own fault. Tactics like gaslighting can make victims doubt their own experiences and feel like they deserve the violence or abuse.
Fear of Losing Their Children	Victims may fear losing their children in complex family court battles or fear that the offender will use the legal system to continue the abuse.
Isolation	Offenders often deliberately isolate victims from their family, friends, and support systems. This can make victims feel like they have nobody to turn to and nowhere to go.
Lack of Community Resources	Local community resources, such as domestic violence shelters, are chronically underfunded and are often at capacity. This can leave victims without a physical place to go. Further, if a victim is using other supports, like affordable childcare and housing, they may feel unable to leave.

Substance Use

Victim substance use and mental health concerns can precede or result from traumatic experiences. Victims may use substances as a coping mechanism for the physical and emotional pain they have experienced due to IPV. Victims can also experience substance use coercion, where offenders coerce victims into using or handling substances as part of the offender's broader pattern of controlling them. For example, an offender may force a victim to use substances or threaten withdrawal to exert control or further isolate them, or they may plant substances in the victim's home and then threaten to call CPS, creating risks to both the victim and any children in the home (National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma, and Mental Health, 2023).

It is important to note that while substance use and/or intoxication by an offender does not cause violence, it can increase the lethality and/or likelihood of violence (National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma, and Mental Health, 2024). Substance use intersects with domestic violence as a risk amplifier, not a root cause. Domestic violence should still be understood as a pattern of power and control, rather than a single violent incident caused by or related to the substance use.

Table 16. Dos and Don'ts: Documenting Substance Use

Do:		Do Not:	
✓	Use neutral language and descriptions about offender behavior, such as "suspect reported being intoxicated."	×	Shift responsibility away from the offender or minimize or excuse violent or abusive behavior, such as "suspect was drunk and did not remember any physical altercation."
✓	Use neutral language and descriptions about victim behavior, such as "victim reported that she and the other party had been drinking alcohol."	×	Blame the victim for the violence that has occurred, such as "suspect said the victim was drunk and out of control."

Improving Outcomes

Members of law enforcement can optimize outcomes for both the victim and the investigation by implementing the following IACP-recommended practices (Feeney, et al., 2025).

Table 17. IACP-Recommended Strategies to Improve Outcomes

Do: Document and Refer	
✓	**Ensure the Victim's Immediate Health and Safety** Address any urgent medical needs, respect the victim's privacy, listen attentively and without interruption, and take any needed steps to ensure their safety. • As needed, take the victim to the hospital or coordinate emergency transportation. Forensic nurses (where available) or other trained medical professionals at the hospital can fully document the victim's injuries and account for what happened, including victims who have reported strangulation or showed signs of it, regardless of visible external injuries.
✓	**Offer Empathy and Support** Give the victim space to both process and express their emotions. Reassure them that their reactions are valid and that it is common to recall new or additional information later. Responses could include: • **Empathy:** "No one deserves to be treated like that, and it is not your fault." • **Generalizations:** "Domestic violence happens to many people and in all types of relationships." • **Empowerment:** "I believe you know what is best for you (and your children). I can help connect you with an advocate that is very knowledgeable about domestic violence and really knows how to help in situations like yours." • **Autonomy:** "What would be helpful to you right now?"
✓	**Provide Information and Guidance** Inform the victim about next steps and answer any questions they might have about the reporting and/or legal processes. Address any concerns with clarity and compassion. Let them know if and when they will be contacted by law enforcement, if known (e.g., "A detective will follow up with you in the next day or two"). • Victims living in rural areas may face additional challenges and barriers to accessing services. For example, smaller communities can mean more limited privacy and visiting a victim service provider may be easily noted by the offender, which could increase safety risks to the victim. • These risks can compound for victims from smaller social groups (e.g., LGBTQ+ victims, immigrant victims, Deaf or hard-of-hearing victims) living in rural areas. Let immigrant victims know that domestic violence, trafficking, and sexual violence is against the law in the United States and that they may have legal options, such as access to a special visa (e.g., U Visa, T Visa, VAWA "self-petition") because of their status as crime victims.

Sharing Strategic Expertise to Enhance Prevention Efforts

Law enforcement officers and professionals are frequently involved as expert partners in the Domestic Violence Fatality Review (DVFR) process.[8] Through the following roles, officers can help the review team better understand system responses and identify future prevention strategies:

- **Providing Strategic Case Information and Context:** Officers can contribute factual context to help understand patterns and gaps. This can include information related to prior calls for service and arrests, timelines of police contact with the victim and/or offender, and explanations of policing decisions made at the time, such as probable cause.
- **Sharing High-Level Systems Insights:** Officers can provide critical insights related to department policies and protocols, information siloes or bottlenecks, or barriers that officers face, such as staffing or training challenges.
- **Identifying Missed Intervention Opportunities:** Officers can help identify points where earlier intervention may have reduced future risks, areas where system contacts did not trigger the appropriate escalation or referral, or gaps in victim follow-up or offender accountability.
- **Collaborating on Recommendations and Championing Implementation:** Officers can provide strategic input and feedback on any actionable recommendations developed by the DVFR and help implement any approved recommendations within their departments.

[8] Please see Appendix J. Additional Resources for Law Enforcement for more information about the National Domestic Violence Fatality Review Initiative (NDVFRI).

About ODVN and OCJS

Contact Information

For additional information, contact:

Ohio Domestic Violence Network (ODVN)
174 E. Long Street, Suite 200
Columbus, Ohio 43215
www.odvn.org

Organizational Summaries

ABOUT ODVN

ODVN is a nonprofit membership organization based in Columbus, OH with a network of 76 local domestic violence programs that serve all 88 Ohio counties (detailed in Appendix K. Map of Ohio Local Domestic Violence Programs). ODVN's purpose is to support and strengthen Ohio's response to domestic violence through direct survivor support, training, public awareness, and technical assistance and to promote social change through the implementation of public policy.

Mission Statement	ODVN advances the principle that all people have the right to an oppression- and violence-free life; fosters changes in our economic, social, and political systems; and brings leadership, expertise, and best practices to community programs.

ABOUT OCJS

OCJS is Ohio's lead justice planning agency. OCJS administers grant funds to Ohio's criminal justice constituents and coordinates Ohio's comprehensive criminal justice plan. To safeguard federal and state criminal justice funds against waste, grants are monitored for compliance, audited for accuracy, and evaluated for effectiveness.

OCJS is also home to a team of researchers and policy specialists who provide practitioners and policymakers with valuable information on criminal justice issues. Additionally, OCJS facilitates initiatives such as the Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force, the Ohio Collaborative Community-Police Advisory Board, the Ohio Incident-Based Reporting System, the Statistical Analysis Center, and the Ohio Consortium of Crime Science.

Ohio FVPC
The Ohio Family Violence Prevention Center (FVPC) was established at OCJS in 1999. FVPC serves as an information clearinghouse for public and private organizations serving victims. It promotes awareness, intervention, and prevention of domestic violence and family violence-related issues in Ohio.

→	Information and resources for law enforcement, professionals, and individuals on family violence, related issues, and prevention efforts can be found on the FVPC website. Information on the Ohio Family Violence Prevention Advisory Council is also included here.

OCJS would like to thank the Ohio Crime Victim Justice Center (OCVJC) for providing information about Marsy's Law and crime victim rights.

OCVJC's mission is to ensure that Ohio state and federal crime victims are treated with fairness and respect for their safety, dignity, and privacy during the criminal justice process, they are informed of their rights, their voices heard, and the rights they choose to exercise are protected and enforced.

Authors and Key Contributors

The development of this handbook would not have been possible without the assistance of so many experienced, dedicated, and committed advocates and experts working within the movement to end domestic violence movement. It is with thanks and gratitude that ODVN and OCJS thank the following people for their contributions.

ODVN	Emily Dahl (author), Lisa DeGeeter (lead contributor), and Mary O'Doherty (project lead)
OCJS	Kaitlyn Bouchard (contributor), Nicole Dehner (contributor), Carol Ellensohn (contributor), Katherine Foulke (contributor), Mallory Minter-Mohr (contributor), Charles Partridge (contributor), Lisa Shoaf (contributor), and Nancy Radcliffe (contributor)

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IACP Law Enforcement Policy Center, Model Policy on Domestic Violence (April 2019)

IACP
Law Enforcement Policy Center

Model Policy

Updated: April 2019

Domestic Violence

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish agency priorities, guidelines, and procedures to be followed by law enforcement officers in response to domestic violence calls, to include when the subject is a law enforcement officer.[1]

II. POLICY

It is the policy of this law enforcement agency to provide a proactive, victim-centered approach when responding to domestic violence. Additionally, it is the policy of this law enforcement agency to take a position of zero tolerance on domestic violence. Any domestic violence incident will be thoroughly investigated, to include when law enforcement officers or individuals in positions of power or influence are involved.

III. DEFINITIONS

Domestic Violence: Abusive behavior in any relationship, as defined by law, that is used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner or family or household member.[2]

Intimate Partners or Family or Household Members: Persons who are married, in a domestic partnership, or in a romantic or dating relationship; have a child in common; have been intimately involved in some way; are related by blood, adoption, or legal custody; or reside in the same home.

Predominant Aggressor: The individual who poses the most serious, ongoing threat, who might not necessarily be the initial aggressor in a specific incident.

Preferred Arrest Response: Law enforcement officers are expected to arrest any person who commits a crime related to domestic violence as defined by law, unless there is a clear and compelling reason not to arrest, such as self-defense or lack of probable cause, after a comprehensive investigation to identify the predominant aggressor.

Protection Order: Any injunction or other court order issued for the purpose of preventing violent or threatening acts or harassment against, contact or communication with, or physical proximity to another person, including any permanent, temporary, or emergency order issued by a civil or criminal court (other than a support or child custody order issued pursuant to state divorce and child custody laws, except to the extent that such an order is entitled to full faith and credit under other federal law) whether obtained by filing an independent action or as a pendente lite order in another proceeding so long as a civil order was issued in response to a complaint, petition, or motion filed by or on behalf of a person seeking protection.

IV. PROCEDURES

A. Communications Personnel Response

When a caller reports a domestic violence incident, communications personnel should follow standard agency protocols. In addition, communications personnel shall do the following:

1. Dispatch a minimum of two officers whenever possible.
2. Assign a priority response whether or not the suspect is known to be on the premises.
3. Document the call and action taken for the call, including those that involve or appear to involve a law enforcement officer.
4. Attempt to elicit any and all information from the caller that may help the responding and investigating officer(s) assess the situation, including the following:
   a. The immediate safety of the caller and those at the scene

---

[1] For the purposes of this discussion, the term "officer" is used throughout. However, agencies should utilize the same procedures for any individual, whether civilian or sworn, employed by a law enforcement agency.

[2] Please refer to your state or provincial statute's definition of domestic violence. Domestic violence can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person. This includes any behaviors that intimidate, manipulate, humiliate, isolate, frighten, terrorize, coerce, threaten, blame, hurt, injure, or wound someone.

b. Other persons involved or witnesses at the scene, including children
c. The suspect's relationship to the victim
d. Whether law enforcement has been called before because of this suspect and the number of times
e. Previous history of domestic violence
f. Presence of firearms or other weapons

5. Ascertain if either the suspect or victim has any outstanding warrants or is on probation or parole.
6. Determine whether there is a valid protection order against the suspect or whether there have been orders in the past.
7. Whenever possible and when it will not jeopardize the individual's safety, keep the caller on the line in order to relay ongoing information to the responding officer(s). An alternative may be to ask the caller to place the phone down but leave the line open if possible and safe to do so.
8. If a caller requests that law enforcement response be cancelled, advise the responding officer(s) of the second call. Officers should continue to respond, investigate, and assess the situation to ensure that all parties are safe.

B. Initial Law Enforcement Officer Response—Special Considerations
When responding to a report of domestic violence, officers shall follow standard incident response procedures. In addition, officers shall do the following:

1. Avoid parking law enforcement vehicles in front of the residence or other site of the disturbance when possible.
2. When initially approaching the scene, indicate that they are responding to a call for service, without revealing the name of the caller or the caller's whereabouts.
3. Request entry in the event the incident is at a private residence. A warrantless entry is permissible if there is an objectively reasonable basis to believe that the safety of an occupant may be in jeopardy.
4. Make contact with all individuals present, including potential witnesses, victims, or perpetrator(s); separate all parties, keeping all individuals out of sight and hearing range of one another as safety permits.
5. Restrain and remove the suspect if necessary.
6. Assess for physical injuries, including inquiry about strangulation or possible internal, nonvisible injuries, and sexual violence; administer first aid; and request medical services as necessary.
7. Summon emergency medical services at the request of the victim or suspect, or if it appears that strangulation has occurred.
8. Inquire about weapons in the area or access to weapons; identify and take temporary custody of firearms or weapons in plain sight.
9. Determine whether there are any potential language barriers and request an interpreter where necessary.
10. Offer to contact a local advocate to provide support to the victim as available and provide a list of current contact information for local domestic violence victim advocacy organizations.

C. On-scene Investigation
The investigating officer(s) should do the following:

1. Inform the victim in advance of actions to be taken.
2. Conduct victim interviews in a location away from others at the scene. Interviews should include questions about
   a. acts of intimidation intended to prevent the victim from calling law enforcement or seeking other assistance;
   b. recent or previous stalking behaviors;
   c. objects or items that were given by the suspect; and
   d. unwanted contact by the suspect that made the victim feel frightened or threatened.
3. Take photographs of the victim and suspect whether or not there are any visible injuries.
4. Take photographs of injuries to all parties, including any healing or old injuries.
   a. Ideally photographs should also be taken 24, 48, and 72 hours later in the event the injuries become more visible and pronounced.
   b. Descriptive and specific documentation of the injuries should accompany the photos.
   c. Officers should be sensitive to the victim's need for privacy, which may include the use of an officer of the same sex as the victim to photograph injuries.
5. Collect evidence to establish the facts of the crime.
6. Check for the existence of a protection order or similar court orders through communications personnel or by whatever means available. If one is said to exist, ask the victim if they possess a copy. If not, verify the order through other means.
7. Obtain a comprehensive account of the events from all parties. Whenever reasonable and practical, interviews shall be recorded. However, if the victim or witness indicates

that they do not wish to be recorded, this should be documented in the officer's report and the recording should stop if permitted by policy and law.

8. Interview children at the scene in a manner appropriate to their age. Document any signs of trauma and any apparent wounds or healing of wounds on the children and take appropriate action, in accordance with law, to prevent imminent harm to the children, such as notifying the appropriate child protective agency.[3]
9. Assess for and document all actual and suspected incidents of violence, including physical and sexual abuse, elder or child abuse, property damage, and animal cruelty.

D. Officer(s) shall not do the following:
   1. Make any statement that would discourage a victim from reporting an act of domestic violence.
   2. Threaten, suggest, or otherwise indicate the possible arrest of all parties to discourage future requests for intervention by law enforcement personnel.
   3. Avoid taking action because the victim stated prosecution was not desired.

E. Role of the Supervisor
   Supervisors shall do the following:
   1. Respond to assist officers investigating incidents of domestic violence when requested by an officer or whenever the incident appears to involve a law enforcement officer, prominent community member, or public official.
   2. Supervise the on-scene investigation, if not already completed, to ensure that appropriate action is taken.
   3. Review all domestic violence reports for accuracy and consistency and conduct after-action reviews and domestic violence case audits to ensure officers and investigators are conducting comprehensive, victim-centered, perpetrator-focused investigations.
   4. Assess for co-occurring and interconnected crimes when responding to domestic violence, to include but not be limited to stalking, sexual violence, strangulation, firearms prohibitions, protection order violations, intimidation and threats, and abuse of children, elders, and animals.

F. Protection Order Enforcement
   1. If it has been determined that a protection order or any court mandated restraining order is known to exist, officers shall do the following:
      a. Obtain a copy of the order. If no copy is available, officers may use alternative means to verify and establish the terms and conditions as well as service of the order. A copy of the order is not required for enforcement. Officers should never avoid taking action simply because the victim does not have a copy of the order.
      b. Enforce the order even if it was issued by another jurisdiction.
      c. Determine if the order or applicable law prohibits firearm possession by the suspect. If so, officers shall
         (1) encourage the voluntary relinquishment of firearms and ammunition for safekeeping;
         (2) seize unlawfully possessed firearms and ammunition located in plain view or pursuant to a consensual or other lawful search; or
         (3) request a search warrant.
      d. Enforce custody provisions in accordance with jurisdictional law and language of the order.
      e. Document order information in the report including verification and terms of order.
      f. Document violation and prepare a report even if the suspect is not on scene. Attempts shall be made to locate and arrest the suspect.
      g. Never penalize or arrest the petitioner for violation of the restrictions detailed in the order.

G. The Arrest Decision
   1. Officers shall never ask the victim if they want the suspect to be arrested.
   2. Officers shall make a warrantless arrest in accordance with applicable law, as part of the preferred arrest response, if probable cause exists to believe that a person has committed a crime involving domestic violence as defined by law or has violated a protection order.
   3. Officers shall follow this agency's policy on identifying and responding effectively to a child, present or not present, whose parent is arrested.[4]

[3] For more information on interviewing children as witnesses, please refer to the resources available from the IACP's Enhancing Law Enforcement Response to Children Exposed to Violence and Childhood Trauma project at www.theiacp.org/children-exposed-to-violence.

[4] See the IACP Children of Arrested Parents Toolkit at https://www.theiacp.org/resources/safeguarding-children-of-arrested-parents-toolkit.

4. When making arrest decisions, officers shall consider which individual appears to be the predominant aggressor.[5]
5. If an arrest is not made, the officer must provide an explanation in the report as to the reason why.
6. When an arrest cannot be made due to lack of probable cause, the officer should
   a. explain to the victim the reasons that an arrest is not being made, and
   b. facilitate contact with a local domestic violence service provider for information regarding counseling and other services.
7. Dual arrests are strongly discouraged. If an officer has probable cause to believe that two or more persons committed a crime and probable cause exists to arrest both parties, the arresting officer shall contact their supervisor before proceeding with the arrests. In the event of a dual arrest, a separate report for each arrest should be written and filed and should include a detailed explanation indicating the probable cause for each arrest.

H. Domestic Violence by Law Enforcement
In cases where one (or more) party of a reported domestic violence incident is a law enforcement officer, responding officers shall follow standard domestic violence procedures as outlined in this policy, regardless of jurisdiction. In addition, the following procedures shall be followed.
   1. Notifications
      a. When communications personnel receive a call that involves or appears to involve a law enforcement officer, they shall immediately
         (1) notify and dispatch a supervisor, regardless of the involved individual's jurisdiction, and
         (2) notify responding officers that the call involves a law enforcement officer.
      b. If previously unaware that the call for service involves a law enforcement officer, responding officer(s) shall immediately notify communications personnel and request that a supervisor of higher rank than the involved officer report to the scene, regardless of the involved officer's jurisdiction. If there is no one of higher rank on duty, the shift commander should be notified.
      c. The on-scene supervisor shall notify the chief executive or their designee and the accused individual's immediate supervisor as soon as possible.
      d. In the event that the officer is from another jurisdiction, the supervisor shall ensure that the chief executive or their designee in the accused officer's jurisdiction is notified.
      e. In the event that the reported incident involves the chief executive of a law enforcement agency, the appropriate prosecutors and the individual with direct oversight of the accused individual shall be notified.
      f. All notifications and attempts to notify shall be fully documented.
   2. Arrest warrants charging law enforcement officers with domestic violence and protective orders issued at a later time shall be served by no fewer than two officers with at least one being of senior rank to the officer being served.
   3. In cases where an accused officer is arrested and firearms have not previously been seized, firearms shall be seized if allowed by the agency or applicable law.[6]
      a. A supervisor shall relieve the accused officer of all service weapons regardless of whether the officer is a member of the responding agency.
      b. If the accused officer is a member of an agency in another jurisdiction, the service weapon shall be relinquished to officials at that agency.
   4. The agency policy regarding administrative investigations of alleged misconduct shall be followed. This may include taking administrative action if it has been determined that agency policy was violated.[7]

I. Victim Safety and Protection
Officers shall do the following:
   1. Remain at the scene of the incident until the situation is under control.
   2. Provide victims with information about
      a. obtaining an order of protection, if legally permissible;
      b. local domestic violence service providers;
      c. victim compensation;

[5] See Appendix A in the accompanying Concepts & Issues Paper for a list of items to consider when determining the predominant aggressor.

[6] 18 U.S.C. 922 (g)(9) - In the United States, federal law prohibits anyone convicted of a qualifying misdemeanor domestic violence crime (MCDV) from possessing firearms, which includes both service and personal firearms. The agency shall ensure compliance with federal law in cases where an accused officer has been convicted.

[7] See the IACP Policy Center documents on Investigation of Allegations of Employee Misconduct available at https://www.theiacp.org/resources/policy-center-resource/employee-misconduct.

d. parole or release dates and notification services that provide this information, such as Victim Information and Notification Everyday (VINE); and
e. crime report number and officer contact information.

3. Advise the victim what to do if the suspect or others harass or intimidate the victim, witnesses, or others.
4. Assist the victim in establishing a safety plan, whether or not they plan to remain with the suspect.

J. Incident Documentation

1. Officers shall complete a thorough, detailed report following response to or investigation of a report of domestic violence, whether or not an arrest is made. If available, a domestic violence supplement report form should be used.[8]
2. In addition to routine documentation regarding the incident, the officer should ensure that elements as they relate to the domestic violence relationship are captured, including, but not limited to the following:
   a. Observations upon approach, including the demeanor of the victim, suspect, and witnesses
   b. Relationship of parties involved
   c. History of relationship
   d. Current or past protection orders
   e. Prior calls to the location involving the suspect
   f. Probation or parole status of the suspect
   g. Information on co-occurring crimes to include, but not be limited to, stalking; sexual violence; strangulation; firearms prohibitions; protection order violations; intimidation and threats; and abuse of children, elders, and animals
   h. Details of any children present
   i. All threats and intimidation tactics used by the suspect
   j. Presence or use of firearms or weapons

K. Post-Incident Follow-Up

1. An agency representative shall be designated to make follow-up contact with victims of domestic violence and inquire whether additional violence or intimidation has occurred. Subsequent incident(s) shall be treated as separate events, assigned a new case number, and investigated in accordance with this policy.
2. Following an arrest, the agency designee shall notify victims of any conditions of bail and advise the victim of their right to request revocation of bail from the state, county, or city attorney's office if the conditions are violated.
3. A trained member of the agency should be assigned to assess the level of danger posed to the victim in order to inform perpetrator release decisions.[9]

L. Collaboration and Training

1. This agency will establish or maintain ongoing partnerships with local community stakeholders and victim advocacy organizations to develop a holistic approach to responding to victims of domestic violence and ensure they are notified of all available resources.
2. All agency personnel shall receive comprehensive mandatory instruction on this policy on an annual basis.

[8] For a list of what should be included in a domestic violence supplemental report form, please see Appendix B of the accompanying Concepts & Issues Paper.

[9] For a list of questions to ask in a domestic violence risk assessment, please see Appendix C of the accompanying Concepts & Issues Paper.

Every effort has been made to ensure that this document incorporates the most current information and contemporary professional judgment on this issue. Readers outside of the United States should note that, while this document promotes procedures reflective of a democratic society, its legal basis follows United States Supreme Court rulings and other federal laws and statutes.

Law enforcement administrators should be cautioned that each law enforcement agency operates in a unique environment of court rulings, state laws, local ordinances, regulations, judicial and administrative decisions and collective bargaining agreements that must be considered, and should therefore consult its legal advisor before implementing any policy.

This document is not intended to be a national standard.

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Appendix
B

Lethality Assessment Tools

DANGER ASSESSMENT - LAW ENFORCEMENT (DA-LE)

SUBMIT THIS WITH YOUR REPORT

☐ **DISTRICT 1** ☐ **DISTRICT 2** ☐ **DISTRICT 3** ☐ **DISTRICT 4** ☐ **DISTRICT 5**

Officer:	Date:	Incident #:
Victim:	Suspect:	

For each question, provide as much information as space allows. Include additional information in your report.

☐ **CHECK HERE IF VICTIM DECLINED RISK SCREEN**

RISK FACTORS

1. Has the physical violence increased in severity or frequency over the past year?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Answered
2. Have you left him/her after living together in the past year?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Answered
3. Does he/she control most or all of your daily activities?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Answered
4. Has he/she tried to kill you?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Answered
5. Has he/she ever threatened to kill you?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Answered
6. Has he/she used a weapon against you or threatened you with a lethal weapon?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Answered
7. Has he/she ever tried to choke (strangle) you?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Answered
8. Has he/she choked (strangled) you multiple times?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Answered
9. Do you believe he/she is capable of killing you?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Answered
10. Does he/she own a gun?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Answered
11. Has he/she ever threatened or tried to commit suicide?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Answered

Total "Yes" Answers _____ ☐ **Further Review**

Justification for Further Review:

The DA-LE is based on the Danger Assessment and research of Dr. Jacquelyn C. Campbell, PhD, RN, FAAN of Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing and Dr. Jill Theresa Messing, MSW, PhD, Arizona State University School of Social Work and developed with the Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center. The contents of this DA-LE may not be reproduced, changed, or duplicated in any manner without express written permission of Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center, Inc.
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PIO	SIO	Unit	Supervisor Name/Badge

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LETHALITY SCREEN FOR FIRST RESPONDERS

Officer:	Date:	Case #:
Victim:	Offender:	

☐ ***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 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?	☐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/hers?	☐Yes	☐No	☐Not Ans.
11.	Does he/she follow or spy on you or leave threatening messages?	☐Yes	☐No	☐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: ☐ **Victim screened in according to the protocol**
☐ **Victim screened in based on the belief of officer**
☐ **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? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **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.*

MNADV 08/2005

Appendix
C

Intimate Partner Violence Intervention Issue Brief

National Network
For Safe Communities
at JOHN JAY COLLEGE

524 W. 59th St., #1140B
New York, NY 10019
(646) 557-4760
nnscommunities.org

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE INTERVENTION

ISSUE BRIEF

OVERVIEW

Between 40 and 50 percent of female homicide victims are killed by intimate partners,[1] and intimate partner violence comprises 15 percent of all violent crime.[2] Traditional approaches to intimate partner violence have been ineffective at controlling the most dangerous abusers, and have burdened victims by asking that they leave the relationship and their support networks, relocate themselves and their children, and take criminal justice steps that could put them and their families at further risk. Developed by the National Network for Safe Communities (NNSC), the Intimate Partner Violence Intervention (IPVI) is an offender-focused, victim-centered approach that addresses the most serious intimate partner violence. The strategy aims to reduce harm to victims; intervene early in cycles of victimization; and shift the burden of preventing intimate partner violence from victims to a partnership of criminal justice actors, advocates, service providers, and community figures.

STRATEGY

Intimate partner violence is often thought of as fundamentally different from other types of violence, but a considerable body of evidence shows that, as with other serious violence, the gravest intimate partner violence with respect to the most vulnerable victims tends to be driven by "chronic" offenders who commit a wide variety of crimes at relatively high rates.[3] Research also demonstrates that intimate partner violence offenders who do not fit this profile can be deterred by relatively low-level sanctions; IPVI aims to create meaningful deterrence for the most chronic and dangerous offenders as well.

The goals of the strategy are to identify and intervene in patterns of abuse as early as possible; counter the "experiential effect" by which ineffective criminal justice responses teach abusers that

they will not be held accountable; communicate strong community norms against intimate partner violence; and to deter and if necessary incapacitate the most dangerous abusers by any legal means available, including through "pulling levers" on other actionable offenses such as a probation or parole violation or a weapons charge. Throughout this process, advocates and providers reach out to victims to assess safety and offer appropriate services.

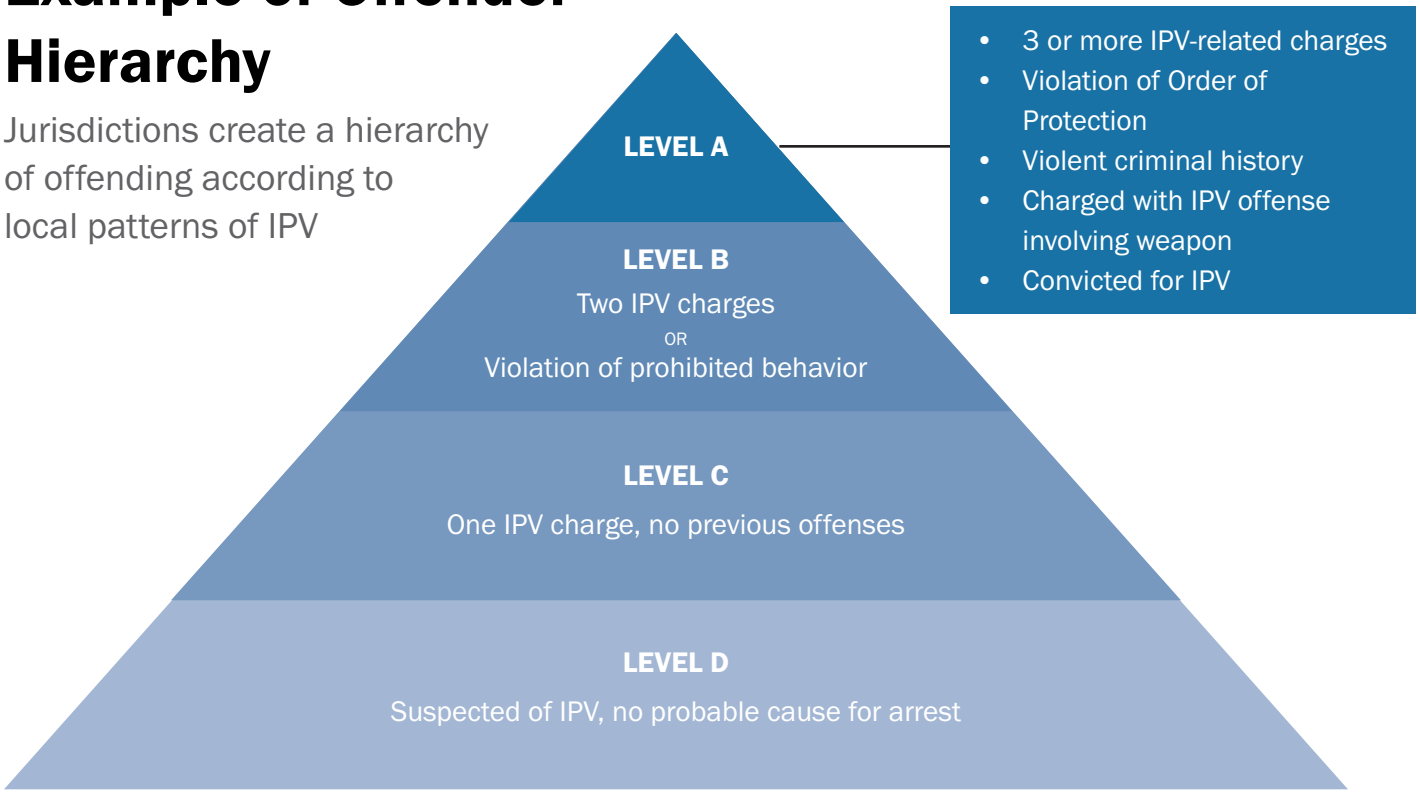
IMPLEMENTATION

The IPVI strategy addresses all intimate partner violence offenders known to the criminal justice system. First, law enforcement analyzes crime data and arranges offenders into a hierarchy based on their histories of intimate partner violence. At each level of offending, a partnership of law enforcement, community representatives, and service providers clearly communicates to offenders that intimate partner violence will not be tolerated, and gives explicit notice of the criminal justice action that will be taken both at that and the next level. The partnership also emphasizes to offenders that victims are not directly involved in any action that law enforcement takes.

To ensure victim safety, IPVI utilizes a parallel affirmative outreach structure, corresponding to each level of offending, that matches support services to victims and addresses issues of safety. Led by local victim advocates, this includes an enhanced protocol of written and in-person outreach informing victims of available services, as well as safety planning.

Example of Offender Hierarchy

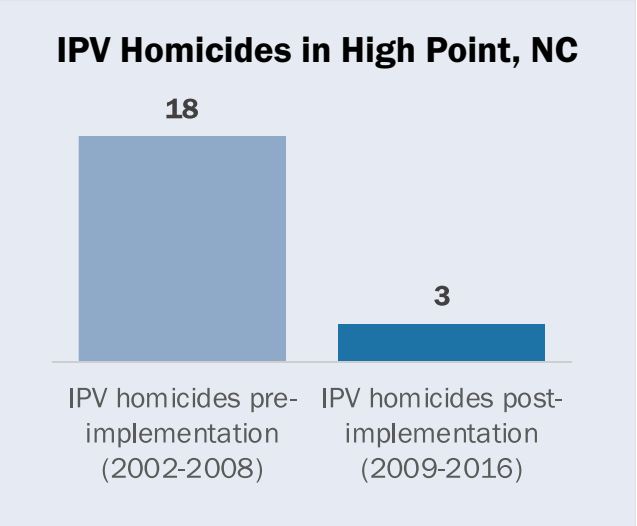
Jurisdictions create a hierarchy of offending according to local patterns of IPV



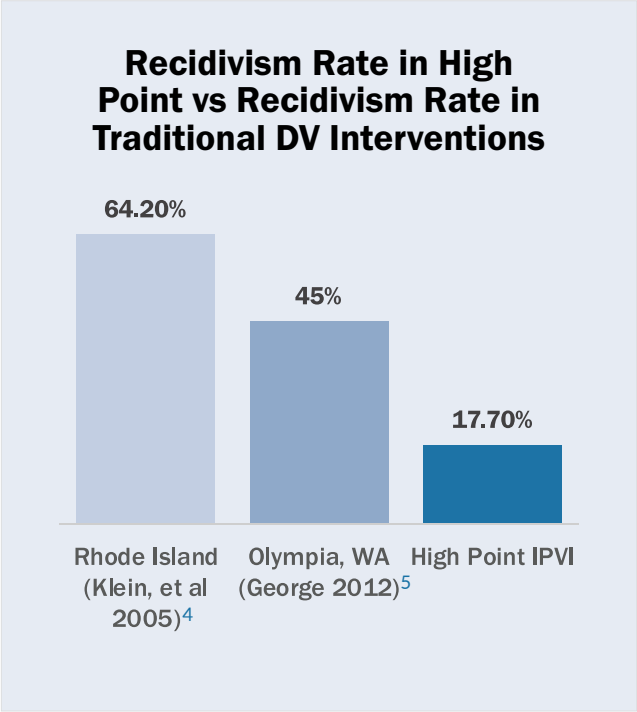
Law Enforcement Actions and Parallel Victim Outreach Protocol		
Level of Offending	**Law Enforcement Action**	**Victim Outreach Protocol**
A	Legal action by any means available. Law enforcement may employ "pulling lever" non-IPV actions that do not require victim cooperation or produce more effective sanctions than IPV options.	Victims assessed on-scene for emergency needs and offered all available support and services.
B	Offender must attend "call-in" meeting where they receive moral and legal message against IPV as well as offer of help. Law enforcement message includes an explicit warning about enhanced agency attention offenders are now exposed to, including "pulling lever" actions mentioned above.	Victim receives notice before offender is called in. Victim advocates conduct risk assessment and safety planning.
C	Detective gives offender face-to-face deterrent message explaining IPVI and legal consequences for further offending such as increased bail, enhanced prosecution, and tightened probation conditions.	Victim notified of available services. Victim advocates make in-person visits to offer services.
D	Offender receives letter detailing close police monitoring; community moral message against IPV; and personal legal consequences for further offending.	Victim receives letter explaining IPVI and available services. Victim advocates conduct outreach.

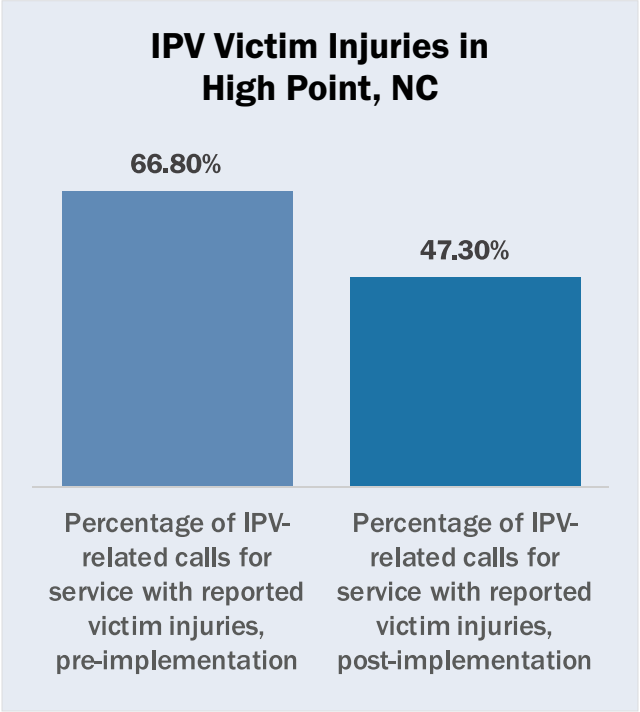
RESULTS

An evaluation of the pilot IPVI implementation in High Point, North Carolina found dramatic reductions in intimate partner homicides, reoffending among notified intimate partner violence offenders, and victim injuries.



The results in High Point suggest an approach that holds great potential for other American cities seeking a new way to address serious intimate partner violence. As a result of the successful pilot implementation, NNSC and the Department of Justice are supporting expanded implementation in three cities nationally and making the underlying logic of the intervention available to both law enforcement and victim advocate communities.





ENDNOTES

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The **National Network for Safe Communities at John Jay College** supports cities to implement and advance proven strategies to reduce violence and improve public safety, minimize arrest and incarceration, strengthen communities, and improve relationships between law enforcement and communities.

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Appendix
D

Terms and Statutes

General Terms

This handbook is specifically intended for law enforcement officers responding to and/or investigating domestic violence between current and/or former spouses and/or dating partners. To promote readability and conserve space, the following terms are used throughout the guide.

Table 18. General Terms

Term	Definition
Victim	The term "victim" is used throughout this document to refer to the person who allegedly experienced act(s) of domestic violence. Some people identify as victims, some identify as survivors, and some choose not to use a label.
Offender	The term "offender" is used throughout this document to refer to the person who allegedly perpetrated act(s) of domestic violence or the person who caused harm.
Domestic Violence **or** **Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)**	For simplicity, this document uses the terms domestic violence and intimate partner violence (IPV) interchangeably[9] to mean violence between current and/or former spouses and/or dating partners. However, the Ohio Revised Code's definition of domestic violence is much broader and includes additional relationships (e.g., parents, siblings, extended family). IPV is a complex type of violence perpetrated within an interpersonal relationship and most often an intimate relationship. IPV includes a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors by a current or former spouse or dating partner to gain or maintain power and control in a relationship. Behaviors can include physical violence, sexual violence, psychological abuse, emotional abuse, economic abuse, and/or stalking. The impact of this type of violence extends beyond the immediate impacts to victims and families; it has economic costs, long-term health impacts, and is also a factor in more than half of female homicides (Petrosky, et al., 2017).

Ohio Crime Statutes

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (O.R.C. § 2919.25, O.R.C. § 3113.31)

"Domestic violence" occurs when an offender:[10] (1) Knowingly causes or attempts to cause physical harm to a family or household member; (2) Recklessly causes serious physical harm to a family or household member; or (3) By threat of force, knowingly causes a family or household member to believe that the offender will cause imminent physical harm to the family or household member.

"Domestic violence" means any of the following:

- The occurrence of one or more of the following acts against a family or household member, or against a person with whom the offender is or was in a dating relationship (current or within the past 12 months):
  - Attempting to cause or recklessly causing bodily injury.
  - Placing another person by the threat of force in fear of imminent serious physical harm or

[9] Except when we speak about the legal definition of "domestic violence" in the Ohio Revised Code.
[10] This handbook focuses on domestic violence between current and/or former spouses and/or dating partners, which is also referred to as intimate partner violence (IPV).

committing "menacing by stalking" (section 2903.211) or "aggravated trespass" (section 2911.211).
  - Committing any act with respect to a child that would result in the child being an "abused child."
  - Committing a sexually oriented offense.
- "Violating a protection order"

The list below includes an overview of crimes that can also be tracked as domestic violence if the offender and victim are family or household members or in a dating relationship (current or within the past 12 months):

- 2903.11 Felonious Assault
- 2903.12 Aggravated Assault
- 2903.13 Assault
- 2903.14 Negligent Assault
- 2903.18 Strangulation
- 2903.21 Aggravated Menacing
- 2903.211 (2903.21.1) Menacing by Stalking
- 2903.216 Illegal Use of a Tracking Device or Application
- 2903.22 Menacing
- 2905.02 Abduction
- 2905.01 Kidnapping
- 2911.21 Criminal Trespass
- 2911.211 Aggravated Trespassing
- 2917.2 Telecommunications Harassment
- 2919.22 Endangering Children
- 2919.25 Domestic Violence
- 2919.27 Violation of a Protection Order
- 2921.04 Intimidation of Victim or Witness
- 2923.03/2919.27 Attempted Violation of a Protection Order
- 2923.02/2919.25 Attempted Domestic Violence
- 2903.01 Aggravated Murder, 2903.02 Murder
- 2903.03 Voluntary Manslaughter
- 2909.06 Criminal Damaging or Endangering
- 2907.02 Rape
- 2907.03 Sexual Battery
- 2907.05 Gross Sexual Imposition
- 2907.06 Sexual Imposition
- 2909.04 Disrupting Public Services
- 2905.05 Vandalism
- 2911.11 Aggravated Burglary
- 2911.12 Burglary
- 2903.04 Involuntary Manslaughter
- 2923.02/2903.01 Attempted Aggravated Murder
- 2923.02/2903.02 Attempted Murder
- 2923.02/2907.02 Attempted Rape
- 2909.02 Aggravated Arson
- 2909.03 Arson
- 2923.02/2909.02 Attempted Aggravated Arson
- 2923.02/2909.03 Attempted Arson
- 2903.06 Aggravated Vehicular Homicide; Vehicular Homicide; Vehicular Manslaughter
- 2903.08 Aggravated Vehicular Assault; Vehicular Assault

STRANGULATION (O.R.C. § 2903.18)

"Strangulation or suffocation" is a specific felony offense that occurs when an offender impedes the normal breathing or circulation of the blood by applying pressure to the throat or neck, or by covering the nose and mouth.

Table 19. Signs of Strangulation or Suffocation

Physical Signs of Strangulation or Suffocation	
• Difficulty breathing or a raspy voice • Sore throat or difficulty swallowing • Speaking in short, choppy sentences • Redness, slight bruising, scratches, abrasions, scrapes, or ligature marks around the neck • Tiny red spots around the eyes, neck, or behind the ears	• Neck pain • Fainting or having "lost time," or time that the victim cannot recall • Feeling light-headed or experiencing a "head rush" • Nausea, vomiting, or coughing up blood • Involuntary urination or defecation

Please note: the above list is not exhaustive, and the presence or absence of any one sign does not necessarily prove or disprove the incidence of strangulation or suffocation.

Offenders are prohibited from (1) Causing serious physical harm, (2) Creating a substantial risk of serious physical harm, or (3) Causing or creating a substantial risk of physical harm by means of strangulation or suffocation.

Table 20. Document & Refer All Incidents of Suspected Strangulation or Suffocation

Do: Document and Refer	
✓	**Document Suspected Strangulation or Suffocation** • Any time strangulation or suffocation is suspected, with or without the presence of physical symptoms or injuries, officers should document the possibility. • Noting possible relevant signs of strangulation in a report may allow a prosecutor to charge accordingly. • Use the victim's language to describe the incident, such as "victim said suspect choked them," or "victim did not know what had happened but 'woke up' realizing that they had urinated on themselves.".
✓	**Refer Victim to Medical Care** • Whenever strangulation or suffocation may have occurred, call for EMT assessment or refer the victim to the emergency department for assessment even if no physical symptoms are immediately apparent. • Sometimes, physical symptoms may not be visible and a medical examination (e.g., the use of alternative light sources) can identify internal injuries, such as traumatic brain injury (TBI). • A medical examination will also help document if any injuries exist.

Other Ohio Statutory Definitions

ABUSED CHILD (O.R.C. § 2151.031)

An "abused child" includes any child who:

- Is the victim of "sexual activity" (defined in Chapter 2907).
- Is the victim of disseminating, obtaining, or displaying materials or performances that are harmful to juveniles (as defined in Chapter 2907).
- Is endangered (defined in section 2919.22).
- Exhibits evidence of any physical or mental injury or death, inflicted other than by accidental means, or an injury or death which is at variance with the history given of it.
- Because of the acts of the child's parents, guardian, custodian, or caretaker, suffers physical or mental injury that harms or threatens to harm the child's health or welfare.
- Is subjected to out-of-home care child abuse.

AGGRAVATED TRESPASS (O.R.C. § 2911.211)

"Aggravated trespass" occurs when a person: (1) Enters or remains on the land or premises of another with the purpose to commit a misdemeanor, the elements of which involve causing physical harm to another person or causing another person to believe that the offender will cause physical harm to that person; or (2) Enters or remains on a critical infrastructure facility with purpose to destroy or tamper with it.

AUTHORITY TO ARREST WITHOUT WARRANT – PURSUIT OUTSIDE JURISDICTION (O.R.C. § 2935.03(B)(3)(H))

When a law enforcement officer responds to a report of an alleged incident of domestic violence or an alleged incident of the offense of violating a protection order and if the circumstances of the incident involved the use or threatened use of a deadly weapon or any person involved in the incident brandished a deadly weapon during or in relation to the incident, the deadly weapon that was used, threatened to be used, or brandished constitutes contraband, and, to the extent possible, the officer shall seize the deadly weapon as contraband pursuant to Chapter 2981 of the Ohio Revised Code.
Upon the seizure of a deadly weapon pursuant to division (B)(3)(h) of this section, section 2981.12 of the Revised Code shall apply regarding the treatment and disposition of the deadly weapon.

For purposes of that section, the "underlying criminal offense" that was the basis of the seizure of a deadly weapon under division (B)(3)(h) of this section and to which the deadly weapon had a relationship is any of the following that is applicable:

- The alleged incident of the offense of domestic violence or the alleged incident of the offense of violating a protection order to which the officer who seized the deadly weapon responded.
- Any offense that arose out of the same facts and circumstances as the report of the alleged incident of the offense of domestic violence or the alleged incident of the offense of violating a protection order to which the officer who seized the deadly weapon responded.

FAMILY OR HOUSEHOLD MEMBER (O.R.C. § 2919.25)

"Family or household member" means any of the following:

- Any of the following who is residing or has resided with the offender:
  - A spouse, a person living as a spouse, or a former spouse of the offender.
  - A parent, a foster parent, or child of the offender, or another person related by consanguinity (blood) or affinity (marriage) to the offender.
  - A parent or a child of a spouse, person living as a spouse, or former spouse of the offender, or another person related by consanguinity or affinity to a spouse, person living as a spouse, or former spouse of the offender.
- The natural parent of any child of whom the offender is the other natural parent or is the putative other natural parent.

MENACING BY STALKING (O.R.C. § 2903.211(A)(1))

"Menacing by stalking" occurs when a person:

- Engages in a "pattern of conduct" that knowingly causes another person to believe that the offender will cause physical harm to the other person or a family or household member of the other person or causes "mental distress" to the other person or a family or household member of the other person
  - This may be based on words or conduct of the offender that are directed at or identify a corporation, association, or other organization that employs the other person or to which the other person belongs
- Using any form of written communication or any electronic method of remotely transferring information (including any computer, computer network, computer system, or telecommunication device), posts a message or uses any intentionally written or verbal graphic gesture with the purpose to:
  - Engage in a pattern of conduct knowingly to cause harm to another person
  - Urge or incite another to engage in such a pattern

MENTAL DISTRESS (O.R.C. § 2903.211 (D)(2))

"Mental distress" means any of the following: (1) Any mental illness or condition that involves some temporary substantial incapacity; or (2) Any mental illness or condition that would normally require psychiatric treatment, psychological treatment, or other mental health services, whether any person requested or received psychiatric treatment, psychological treatment, or other mental health services.

PATTERN OF CONDUCT (O.R.C. § 2903.211 (D)(1))

A "pattern of conduct" requires:

- Two or more actions or incidents closely related in time, whether or not there has been a prior conviction based on any of those actions or incidents; or two or more actions or incidents closely related in time, whether or not there has been a prior conviction based on any of those actions or incidents, directed at one or more persons employed by or belonging to the same corporation, association, or other organization.
- Actions or incidents that prevent, obstruct, or delay the performance by a public official, firefighter, rescuer, emergency medical services person, or emergency facility person of any authorized act within the public official's, firefighter's, rescuer's, emergency medical services person's, or emergency facility person's official capacity, or the posting of messages, use of intentionally written or verbal graphic gestures, or receipt of information or data through the use of any form of written communication or an electronic method of remotely transferring information, including, but not limited to, a computer, computer network, computer program, computer system, or telecommunications device, may constitute a "pattern of conduct."

PERSON LIVING AS A SPOUSE (O.R.C. § 2919.25 AND O.R.C. § 3113.31)

"Person living as a spouse" means a person: (1) who is living or has lived with the offender in a common law marital relationship; (2) who otherwise is cohabiting with the offender; or (3) who otherwise has cohabited with the offender within five years prior to the date of the alleged commission of the act in question.

PROBABLE CAUSE (O.R.C. § 2935.03(B)(3)(A))

A police officer has reasonable grounds to believe that the offense of domestic violence or violating a protection order has been committed and reasonable cause to believe that a particular person is guilty of committing the offense if any of the following occurs:

- A person executes a written statement alleging that the person in question has committed the offense of domestic violence or the offense of violating a protection order against the person who executes the statement or against a child of the person who executes the statement.
- The police officer, based upon the officer's knowledge and observation of the facts and circumstances of the alleged incident of the offense of domestic violence or the offense of violating a protection order or based upon any other information, including, but not limited to, any reasonably trustworthy information given to the police officer by the alleged victim of the alleged incident of the offense or any witness of the alleged incident of the offense, concludes that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the offense of domestic violence or the offense of violating a protection order has been committed and reasonable cause to believe the person in question is guilty of committing the offense.
- The police officer witnessed the person in question commit the offense of domestic violence or the offense of violating a protection order.

PRIMARY PHYSICAL AGGRESSOR (O.R.C. § 2935.03(B)(3)(D))

In a situation in which family or household members have committed the offense of domestic violence against each other, an officer is required by law to consider, in addition to any other relevant information,[11] the following:

- Any history of domestic violence or any other violent acts by either person involved in the alleged offense that the officer reasonably can ascertain.
- If violence is alleged, whether the alleged violence was caused by a person acting in self-defense.
- Each person's fear of physical harm, if any, resulting from the other person's threatened use of force against any person or resulting from the other person's use or history of the use of force against any person, and the reasonableness of that fear.
- The comparative severity of any injuries suffered by the persons involved in the alleged offense.

VICTIM ADVOCATE (O.R.C. § 2305.236)

A "victim advocate" is a professional from a crime victim service organization who provides support and assistance to a victim of a crime during court proceeding and recovery efforts related to the crime.
A person who provides support and assistance for a person who files a petition under O.R.C. § 3113.31.

VIOLATING A PROTECTION ORDER (O.R.C. § 2919.27)

"Violating a Protection Order" occurs when an offender recklessly violates the terms of any of the following: (1) A "protection order" issued or "consent agreement" approved pursuant to O.R.C. § 2916.26 (Temporary Protection Order) or O.R.C. § 3113.31 (Civil Protection Order); (2) A protection order issued pursuant to O.R.C. § 2151.34, O.R.C. § 2903.213, or O.R.C. § 2903.214; (3) A protection order issued by a court of another state; or (4) A protection order issued by a court of another state.

Ohio Constitution

OHIO VICTIM'S RIGHTS LAW "MARSY'S LAW" (OHIO CONSTITUTION ARTICLE I, SECTION 10A, HOUSE BILL 343, AND O.R.C. § 2930

"Marsy's Law" provides crime victims with meaningful and enforceable constitutional rights equal to the rights of the accused. The rights that crime victims are entitled to include:

- To be treated with dignity and respect throughout criminal justice proceedings.
- To be notified of his, her or their rights as a victim of crime.
- To be notified of specific public proceedings throughout the criminal justice process and to be present and heard during those proceedings.

A victim has the following rights:

- To be treated with fairness and respect for the victim's safety, dignity, and privacy.
- Upon request, to reasonable and timely notice of all public proceedings involving the criminal offense or delinquent act against the victim, and to be present at all such proceedings.
- To be heard in any public proceeding involving release, plea, sentencing, disposition, or parole, or in any public proceeding in which a right of the victim is implicated.
- To reasonable protection from the accused or any person acting on behalf of the accused.

[11] Other factors could include the impact of trauma on the victim and the offender's pattern of coercive control. Please see Background for more information on these topics.

- Upon request, to reasonable notice of any release or escape of the accused.
- Except as authorized by section 10 of Article I (Trial for Crimes), to refuse an interview, deposition, or other discovery request made by the accused or any person acting on behalf of the accused.
- To full and timely restitution from the person who committed the criminal offense or delinquent act against the victim.
- To proceedings free from unreasonable delay and a prompt conclusion of the case.
- Upon request, to confer with the attorney for the government.
  To be informed, in writing, of all rights enumerated in this section.

Table 21. Requirements for Law Enforcement Agencies

Do: Marsy's Law Requirements for Law Enforcement	
✓	Provide the victim with the victim's rights request form, victim's rights pamphlet, and information card upon initial contact.
✓	Document the victim's name and identifying information separately from other information on a page that is not a public record.
✓	Notify the victim and the victim's representative if an inactive case has been re-opened for a criminal offense or delinquent act with a statute of limitations longer than three years, unless this notification has been waived.
✓	Provide notice to the victim may request and receive information on the terms and conditions of bond; the time, place, and date of arraignment; and details of detainment in another jurisdiction for criminal offenses or delinquent acts.

See Appendix H. Additional Information and Resources for Victims for a copy of Ohio's Victim's Rights Request Form or visit the Ohio Crime Victim Justice Center at https://www.ocvjc.org/ to learn more.

Federal Protections

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT (VAWA)

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA, 18 U.S.C., Section 2265) mandates that all states, territories and tribal courts provide full faith and credit to orders of protection issued by courts of other states, territories, and tribes. VAWA entitles victims of domestic violence certain protections under federal law. Any protection order issued by the court of one state or Indian tribe shall be given full faith and credit by the court of another State or Indian tribe and enforced as if it were the order of the enforcing State or tribe as long as it meets the following conditions of the act: (1) The court that issued the order has jurisdiction over the parties and the matter; (2) Reasonable notice and the opportunity to be heard was given to the offender (to protect that person's due process rights); and (3) In the case of ex parte orders, the offender must be provided the opportunity to be heard in a reasonable amount of time after the issuance of the emergency order to protect due process rights.

The full faith and credit provision applies to both civil and criminal protection orders, whether issued ex parte, after a hearing, or by consent agreement. However, special safeguards are in place for mutual orders of protection. As provided for by Ohio law, there must be separate filings by the parties and a specific finding of fact by the court that each party has abused the other for mutual orders to be enforceable under full faith and credit.

Language Access Requirements

VICTIM RIGHT TO INTERPRETER (O.R.C. § 2930.041[12])

Victims who are Deaf have the right to a registered or certified American sign language interpreter on the registry for interpreters for the Deaf at all court proceedings, all meetings with the prosecutor, and all investigative contacts with law enforcement, the probation department, the department of rehabilitation and correction, and the department of youth services, at no cost to the victim. Costs of the interpreter shall be paid by the court, prosecutor, law enforcement agency, or custodial agency.

Non-English speaking victims and victims with limited English proficiency have the right to a certified, provisional, registered, or language-skilled foreign language interpreter at all of the following at no cost to the victim: court proceedings, meetings with the prosecutor, investigative contacts with law enforcement, contacts with the probation department, and contacts with the department of rehabilitation and correction and the department of youth services. Law enforcement officers in the field may utilize technology assisted interpretation if interpreters are not reasonably available.

The victim's right to a certified, provisional, registered, or language-skilled foreign language interpreter is subject to availability but is not subject to the cost of retaining an interpreter. Any agency that is unable to provide a victim with an interpreter as required shall maintain records of the agency's attempt to comply with this requirement.

Protecting Children

OHIO HEALS: LINKING SYSTEMS OF CARE FOR OHIO'S YOUTH (LSCOY)

LSCOY aligns the systems of care that meet the needs of Ohio's children, youth, families, and caregivers who have been victims of crime or have been exposed to violence. LSCOY provides resources to victims, their families, and the professionals who work with them. Learn more at: https://www.ohioheals.org/.

HANDLE WITH CARE (HWC) PROGRAM

The Handle with Care (HWC) program uses a trauma-informed, cross-systems, and standardized approach to ensure that children who witness or experience violence receive supportive interventions and age-appropriate care. Check the Ohio HWC progress map[13] to find a program in your area.

[12] A victim's right to an interpreter is also included in the Ohio Victim's Rights Law or "Marsy's Law."
[13] Learn more about Handle with Care: Ohio at https://handlewithcareoh.org/.

Table 22. HWC for Law Enforcement and First Responders

Do: HWC Practices for Law Enforcement	
✓	**Determine Whether Children are Present** • Document the Child's Name, Age, School/Child Care Agency
✓	**Health & Safety Checks on Children** • Visual Observation & Questions, Relationship to Parties, Demeanor, Witness to incident, Injuries/ Treatments, CPS Reporting
✓	**Provide Parent/Guardian Information and Resources** • CACs, Victim Resources, DCI Coordinator

Promising Practices: Specialized Docket

CUYAHOGA COUNTY HIGH-RISK DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COURT

In Cuyahoga County, the High-Risk Domestic Violence Court launched in 2020 to reduce the risk of violence and homicide in high risk cases of IPV. A specially trained, multi-disciplinary team of justice system professionals works collaboratively to improve victim safety by providing resources for victims and intense monitoring and behavioral interventions for offenders.

The court is actively handling cases and uses tools (e.g., GPS monitoring, batterer intervention programs, strict bond conditions) to hold offenders accountable and increase victims' safety. In a preliminary evaluation of the program in 2023, most victims (70%) reported feeling safer because of their experience with the program and 86% said they would recommend this system to others (Thames, 2025).

Appendix
E

Power and Control Wheel

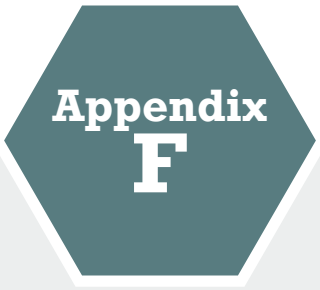
Power and Control Wheel

The Power and Control Wheel is a helpful tool in understanding the overall pattern of abusive and violent behaviors that can be used by an offender to establish and maintain control over a victim. The inner wheel details the sometimes subtle and ongoing behaviors displayed over time, while the outer wheel represents physical and sexual violence. One or more violent incidents are typically accompanied by an array of the inner wheel behaviors. While they are less easily identified, they firmly establish a pattern of power and control.

This tool does not attempt to give a broad understanding of all types of violence that can occur in the home or community. The Power and Control Wheel was created to represent the lived experience of women who live with a male abuser, which is why it uses a female pronoun.



The Power and Control Wheel was created by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project in Duluth, MN.



The Role of Victim Advocates

Victim Advocate Roles and Functions

A domestic violence victim advocate provides individualized information and support to victims of IPV. Victim advocates prioritize victim safety, autonomy, and access to resources, while protecting victim privacy, upholding confidentiality, and following applicable mandatory reporting laws, in accordance with the NOVA Code of Ethics. This code of ethics is also used by the Ohio advocate credentialing body, the Ohio Advocate Network (OAN). Victim advocates may hold degrees or certifications in social work, counseling, criminal justice, or related fields and must complete specialized training in trauma-informed, victim-centered advocacy.

Table 23. Key Functions of an Advocate

Type	Examples
Victim Support and Safety Planning	• Provide emotional support, crisis intervention, and validation. • Work closely with victims to develop an individualized safety plan, which typically cover a range of topics, including physical safety (e.g., firearms risk, strangulation risk), technology safety (e.g., technology-facilitated monitoring), and financial safety (e.g., access to resources).
Information & Options Counseling	• Explain victim rights and help victims understand the available remedies (e.g., civil, criminal). • Center the victim's autonomy and decision-making; victim advocates should not direct but help inform victims' choices.
Systems Navigation & Accompaniment	• As needed and permitted, accompany victims to relevant meetings, such as court proceedings, hospital visits, police interviews, or child-welfare meetings. • Help victims complete needed forms and documentation (e.g., protection orders, housing). • Manage community relationships and coordinate referrals to needed resources, such as housing providers, counseling, legal aid, healthcare, or financial assistance. • Advocate for the victim's needs with other service providers.
Prevention & Outreach	• Provide training to community members and service providers. • Participate in prevention education and awareness community events and campaigns, in addition to community response teams and fatality review efforts.

Find a local domestic violence program in Ohio: https://www.odvn.org/find-help/

Appendix
G

The Impact of IPV on Children

Children and IPV

Children in the home are likely to witness and/or experience domestic violence themselves. This can create chronic stress, trauma, and/or traumatic responses that can show up in the child's behavior. However, these responses may not be noticed or addressed because their trauma reactions can often look disruptive or disrespectful, or the child may be notably quiet or clingy. Living with or visiting an offender who abuses the child's parent puts the child on high alert throughout the day and night for what could happen to them next. Offenders can also undermine the victim's parenting and the relationship between the victim and the children.

BEST PRACTICES FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN EXPOSED TO IPV

It is important to understand how the trauma of experiencing domestic violence can impact children and teens. They can exhibit trauma responses during the investigative process that could impact the following:

- **Thoughts:** Children and teens may blame themselves and think the abuse is their fault, or they may blame the parent who is being abused rather than the offender. They may think every family has this kind of hurt happening and they want the abuse to stop.
- **Feelings:** Children and teens may feel: (1) sad and mad that the abuse is happening; (2) guilt that they cannot stop it; (3) worried about when something scary will happen next; (4) afraid of being hurt; (5) overprotective of their siblings, pets, and parent; and (6) confused by the offender's twisting of love and fear.
- **Physical Sensations:** Children and teens may cry more often than their peers; have frequent headaches or stomach aches; throw-up; feel shaky, fidgety, dizzy, or jumpy; have nightmares; or cover their ears from sounds. Many will experience racing thoughts, making it hard to stay focused.
- **Behaviors:** Children and teens may be jumpy, startle easily, have difficult behaviors, cry a lot, be grumpy and irritable, have difficulty sitting still, and have difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep. Some may be quiet, shy, or clingy and experience behavioral regressions, such as sucking thumbs or wetting their beds or clothes.
- **Coping:** All children and teens will find ways to cope with their stress and worry. Their actions and choices must be understood as survival skills developed while living with an abusive parent. Their behaviors may show up as disruptive, disrespectful, or overprotective, which is frequently linked to the abuse they have witnessed or experienced.

Children and teens will also show resiliency – especially when a caring adult provides comfort, care, lets them know they matter, and that the abuse is not their fault.

Appendix
H

Additional Information and Resources for Victims

OHIO VICTIMS' RIGHTS REQUEST FORM

As a victim of crime, you have constitutionally protected rights. **Some rights are automatic. Some rights require your request.**

This form provides important information about your rights. This form is NOT a public record. If you are a victim of a sexually oriented offense, protection order violation, or other offense of violence, law enforcement will review this form with you and ask you to complete this form so that criminal justice officials know which rights you wish to exercise. Law enforcement will provide you a copy of the form. These rights also apply to victims of all other criminal offenses. Law enforcement will provide victims of all other offenses information on how to access the form on-line or provide a printed form, upon request. **Complete the form and provide to the law enforcement agency who is investigating. Keep a copy.**

Requesting and Enforcing Your Rights

- Page two of this form provides a list of rights that must be requested if you wish to exercise them. It is your choice. You can choose to exercise all, some, or none of your rights.
    - PLEASE NOTE: If you are a victim of an offense of violence or a sexually oriented offense and you do not complete the form or request your rights at first contact with law enforcement, you will be automatically opted in to all "upon request" rights until you opt out of your rights or are contacted by the prosecutor. Once contacted by a prosecutor, you will no longer be opted in and you must request your rights in order to exercise them.
- You can change your mind at any time about which rights you choose to exercise. However, if you choose not to exercise some rights and then request them later, you may give up some rights that only apply during certain stages of the case. If you change your mind, you must call, email, or complete a new form and return it to the investigating officer, prosecutor, court, prison, jail, or community based correctional facility to ensure officials have updated information on the rights you wish to exercise and updated contact information. You can obtain another Victims' Rights Request Form at ocvjc.org or by calling 614-848-8500.
- **If any of your rights are denied, you may ask the advocate or prosecutor to help, seek enforcement on your own, hire an attorney, or request free legal assistance from Ohio Crime Victim Justice Center at https://www.ocvjc.org/request-for-assistance or call 614-848-8500.**
- An online resource to help you understand and exercise all of your rights is the Victims Rights Toolkit, https://www.ocvjc.org/victims-rights-toolkit

Appointing a Victim Representative

- You may choose to exercise your rights and/or choose a representative to exercise your rights. A representative can be anyone other than the defendant. You can choose, change, or remove a representative at any time.

Privacy and Safety

- You may be eligible for a protection order. The investigating officer will provide available resources to assist with obtaining a protection order.
- You may use the form on Page 2 to request redaction (removal) of your name, address, and identifying information from public records related to this case. This request does not apply to crash reports submitted to the Ohio Department of Public Safety. You must send a separate request with the pertinent information on your crash (name, date, location) to the Department of Public Safety to request redaction of crash reports found athttps://publicsafety.ohio.gov/what-we-do/crash-reports/crash_report_search by emailing traffstats@dps.ohio.gov or calling (614) 466-3536.
- You may be able to keep your address private by obtaining a Safe at Home address. Learn more at: https://www.ohiosos.gov/secretary-office/office-initiatives/safe-at-home/survivors/ or call 614-995-2255.
- If the defendant, defendant's attorney, or anyone else acting on behalf of the defendant contacts you to talk with you, request an interview, or attempt to obtain any information or materials from you, you have the right to refuse. Immediately contact the prosecutor to let them know you have been contacted. You may also contact **https://www.ocvjc.org/request-for-assistance or call 614-848-8500.**
- You can receive texts, calls, or emails to receive notice of a defendant or offender's release or escape from jail or prison. Register at: https://www.vinelink.com/#state-selection

Arraignment

- **Arraignment is a hearing that can happen within a couple days after the defendant is charged with a crime.**
- If you request notification, law enforcement will notify you of the arrest of the defendant and can provide you a phone number for the clerk of the court to get information on the date, time, and location of the arraignment proceeding.
- During arraignment the judge decides whether or not to release the defendant on bond, determines bond conditions, and whether or not to issue a protection order.
- You have the right to attend the arraignment and tell the judge about any safety concerns and your opinion regarding release, bond conditions, and whether or not you would like a protection order.

Compensation and Restitution

- Crime Victim Compensation Fund: You may be eligible to apply for reimbursement for certain financial losses relating to your victimization, even if the suspect has not been arrested or convicted. You may apply at: https://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/individuals-and-families/victims/apply-for-victims-compensation or call 800-582-2877.
- Restitution: Upon conviction, the court must order the offender to pay you for certain financial losses relating to your victimization. It is important to keep a record of all expenses incurred as a result of the crime so that the court can use this information to determine what costs are properly included in an order of restitution. https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/courtSvcs/MarsysLaw/SCO-CSD-0002.pdf

OHIO VICTIMS' RIGHTS REQUEST FORM

FORM COMPLETED BY:
☐ Law enforcement ☐ Victim
☐ Prosecutor

Report No.: _____

Case No.: _____

Reporting Agency: _____ County: _____

Reporting Officer: _____. Badge No.: _____

Reporting Agency Phone: _____ Defendant/Suspect's Name_____

Charges: _____ Arraignment: _____
Date, Time, and Location, if known

AUTOMATIC RIGHTS—YOU DO NOT NEED TO REQUEST THESE RIGHTS

The right to be informed of your rights.

The right to be treated with fairness and respect for your safety, dignity and privacy.

The right to reasonable protection from the accused or any person acting on behalf of the accused.

The right to information about the status of the case.

The right to refuse a defense interview, deposition, or other discovery request.

The right to object to defense requests for access to your confidential information, including medical, counseling, school or employment records, access to your personal devices or on-line accounts, or other personal information.

The right to be present at all public proceedings.

The right to have a support person with you during proceedings.

The right to tell the court your opinion in public proceedings involving release, plea, sentencing, disposition, parole, and any other hearing that involves victims' rights.

The right to object to unreasonable delays.

The right to full and timely restitution from the offender.

RIGHTS THAT MUST BE REQUESTED

YES **NO**

☐ ☐ I WANT my name, address, and identifying information to be redacted (removed) from:
☐ Law enforcement records ☐ Prosecutor records ☐ Court records

☐ ☐ I WANT notice of the arrest, escape, or release of the offender.

☐ ☐ I WANT reasonable and timely notice of all public proceedings.

☐ ☐ I WANT to confer with the prosecutor in the case in addition to the times listed above.

☐ ☐ I WANT to be notified of subpoenas, motions, or other requests to access any of my personal information.

☐ ☐ I WANT to appoint a Victim's Representative.

☐ ☐ I WANT to confer with the prosecutor at certain points in the case, including before pretrial diversion is granted, before the prosecutor amends or dismisses an indictment, information, or complaint, before the prosecutor agrees to a negotiated plea, and before a trial or adjudicatory hearing.

☐ ☐ I WANT interpretation services during contacts with criminal justice system officials.
☐ Foreign language interpreter in _____ language
☐ American Sign Language interpreter

OHIO VICTIMS' RIGHTS FORM

As a victim, you must keep law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, courts, and custodial agencies up to date with your current contact information.

LAW ENFORCEMENT/PROSECUTOR USE ONLY

☐ Victim of violation of protection order, offense of violence, or sexually oriented offense was presented the form, but the victim was unable to complete the form. Victim is opted in to all rights until the victim completes the form or is contacted by the prosecutor and provided the opportunity to complete the form. The public records division and custodial agency was provided the victim's and/or victim representative's information for redaction and notification.

Victim Name: _____

Ohio Victims' Rights Request form provided to me by ☐ law enforcement officer OR ☐ prosecutor's office on

_____(date).

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Address:_____

Preferred method of contact (check all that apply): ☐ mail ☐ phone call ☐ email

I can be reached between _____ and _____ at _____ (best method of contact)

Date: _____

☐ Please provide my name and contact information, and that of my representative, if applicable, to the custodial agency, if any.

If requested by victim:

Victim Representative Name: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Address:_____

Date: _____

☐ As the victim, I do not wish to receive notices about this case. Please provide notices to my representati

FOR BUSINESS VICTIM USE ONLY

☐ As the representative of _____(insert business name), by checking this box, I hereby OPT OUT of the business's victims' rights in this case and future cases unless I notify law enforcement, the prosecutor, or the court otherwise.

Get Help: Resources for Victims

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINES AND HELPLINES

Domestic violence hotlines and helplines provide access to free, nonjudgmental support and referrals for services for adult and youth victims of domestic violence and their loved ones. Many are available 24/7.

📞	**National Domestic Violence Hotline** 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) | https://www.thehotline.org/
📞	**Child Abuse Hotline** 1-855-642-4453
📞	**Teen Dating Abuse Helpline** 1-866-331-9474 | https://www.loveisrespect.org/get-relationship-help-24-7-365/
📞	**StrongHearts Native Helpline** 1-844-7NATIVE (62-8483) | https://strongheartshelpline.org/
📞	**Victim Hotline and VictimConnect Resource Center** 1-855-4VICTIM (84-2846) | https://victimconnect.org/
💻	**WomensLaw Email Hotline** https://hotline.womenslaw.org/public

Every victim should have access to a personalized safety plan developed in partnership with a victim advocate.

To find a local domestic violence program in Ohio, visit https://www.odvn.org/find-help/

OTHER RESOURCES FOR VICTIMS

→	**Ohio Crime Victim's Rights Toolkit (Ohio Crime Victim Justice Center):** This toolkit is designed to help crime victims learn about and exercise their rights. | https://www.victimsrightstoolkit.org/
→	**Invisible Injuries: When Your Head is Hurt While Experiencing Domestic Violence (ODVN):** This handout addresses the range of impacts that head injuries resulting from domestic violence can have on victims. | https://www.odvn.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Invisible-Injuries-Overview.pdf
→	**Resource Directory (Linking Systems of Care for Ohio's Youth):** This resource directory was created as a connecting link for victims, caregivers, and service providers working with victimized children, youth, and young people across Ohio. | https://www.ohioheals.org/for-victims
→	**National Link Coalition:** This coalition maintains a resource center addressing the link between animal cruelty and human violence. | https://nationallinkcoalition.org/resources

Appendix
I

Additional Resources for Law Enforcement

Additional Resources for Law Enforcement

HANDS, ONE-PAGERS, AND FACT SHEETS

→	**Enhancing Law Enforcement Response to Domestic and Sexual Violence (IACP):** This fact sheet includes ten things to know on enhancing law enforcement response to domestic and sexual violence. | https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/images/10%20Things%20to%20Know.pdf This one-pager details the six-step process to enhance law enforcement response to domestic and sexual violence. | https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/images/Six-Step%20Process.pdf
→	**2025 Ohio Domestic Violence Fatalities (ODVN):** This 10th annual report details IPV-related fatalities in Ohio, including targeted victims, perpetrators, and others who were present when the fatalities occurred. | https://www.odvn.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/FatalityInfographic2025_web.pdf
→	**IPV Fact Sheet (ODVN):** This fact sheet includes key statistics, disparities, and remedies. | https://www.odvn.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Intimate-Partner-Violence.pdf

TOOLKITS AND RESOURCE LIBRARIES

→	**Police Response to Violence Against Women – VAW (IACP):** This resource library includes tools, resources, and policies to assist law enforcement in responding to VAW. | https://www.theiacp.org/projects/police-response-to-violence-against-women-vaw
→	**Criminal Justice Toolkit (Start By Believing):** This toolkit is designed for criminal justice professionals and includes fact sheets, defending against bias, and other resources. | https://startbybelieving.org/start-by-believing-criminal-justice-toolkit/
→	**NDVFRI Resource Library (National Domestic Violence Fatality Review Initiative):** This resource library includes reports, recorded webinars and videos, and other documents. | https://ndvfri.org/resources/

ASSESSMENTS AND TRAININGS

→	**Ohio-specific Trainings (ODVN):** Upon request, in-person, skills-based training is available on a range of topics. Reach out to ODVN for more information. | training@odvn.org
→	**Conference on Crimes Against Women:** This annual, in-person event in Dallas, TX is dedicated to addressing and combating all forms of crimes against women. It serves as a platform for first responders, law enforcement, advocates, and others to gather, share knowledge, and collaborate on strategies to prevent and respond to these crimes. | https://conferencecaw.org/
→	**Agency Self-Assessment and Community Assessment: Approaches to Domestic & Sexual Violence (IACP):** This self-assessment tool is intended to help agencies think critically about current practices and identify areas of strength and opportunities to update and enhance services. | https://www.theiacp.org/GBVAssessments

→	**Training Program on Enhancing Rural Law Enforcement Response to Violence Against Women (IACP):** This training program provides rural law enforcement training and technical assistance to enhance their response to VAW. | https://www.theiacp.org/projects/training-program-on-enhancing-rural-law-enforcement-response-to-violence-against-women
→	**AEquitas Trainings:** A victim-centered, offender-focused, and collaborative organization, AEquitas offers a range of in-person and/or web-based trainings, including those related to the investigation and prosecution of sexual violence, intimate partner violence, stalking, and human trafficking. | https://aequitasresource.org/trainings
→	**Introduction to Understanding Domestic Violence Victimization (National Center for Victims of Crime):** This interactive, web-based training from the National Center for Victims of Crime (NCVC) provides practical steps for a response and advances an understanding of how a coordinated community response can improve outcomes. | https://education.victimsofcrime.org/courses/introduction-to-understanding-domestic-violence-victimization/

OTHER RESOURCES

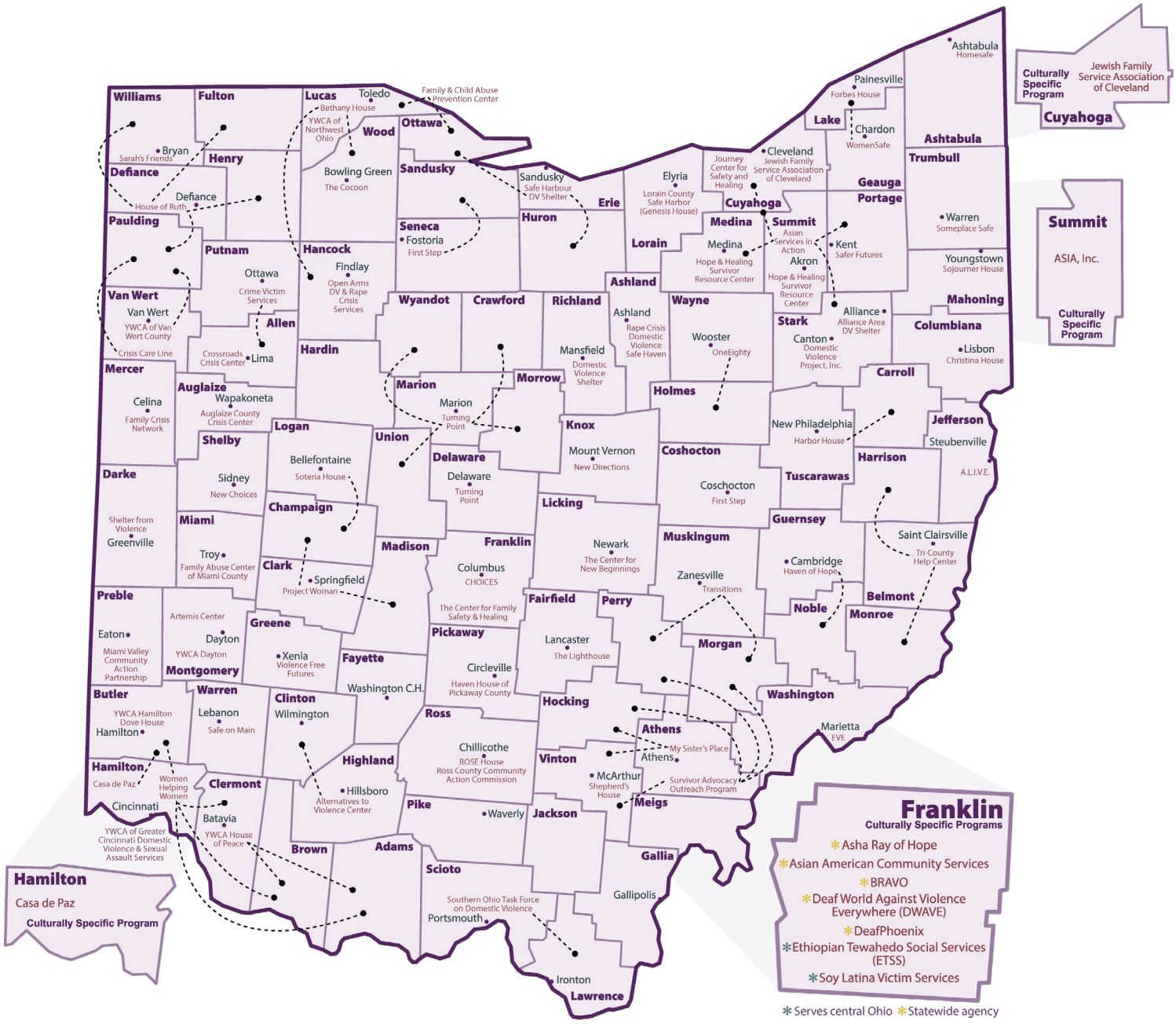
→	**Assessing Risk On-Scene: Law Enforcement (DV RISC)**: This podcast focuses on assessing risk and lethality and using IPV risk assessments on-scene in law enforcement settings. Featured speakers include representatives from IACP, The Geiger Institute, the Law Enforcement Training and Technical Assistance Consortium, and others. | https://dvrisc.org/resource/assessing-risk-on-scene-law-enforcement/

Appendix
J

Map of Ohio Local Domestic Violence Programs

Ohio Domestic Violence Network

Domestic Violence Programs



Ohio Domestic Violence Network
ODVN

174 E. Long Street, Suite 200
Columbus, OH 43215
www.odvn.org • info@odvn.org
Information and Referral Line: 614-781-9651
Toll Free: 800-934-9840

Appendix
K

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Works Cited

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