



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHIEFS OF POLICE

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE RESPONSE

POLICY AND TRAINING CONTENT GUIDELINES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The complexities of intimate partner violence warrant the full attention of law enforcement and the criminal justice system. Law enforcement professionals have the ability to support victims, hold offenders accountable, and prevent future acts of violence. In order to be successful, law enforcement agencies must articulate their priorities concerning intimate partner violence and ensure that this message, as well as officer expectations, is outlined for all members. Creating, implementing, and developing training on an intimate partner violence department policy ensures that an agency is prepared to effectively respond to and successfully prepare these complex cases and reinforces the safety of the community it serves.

A comprehensive intimate partner violence policy provides agency members with direction and support; helps ensure the safety of victims, agency members, and community members; and aims to hold perpetrators accountable. This resource provides law enforcement with issues, procedures, and recommendations to consider when developing an intimate partner violence policy as well as suggestions for developing training content. The IACP recommends departments take a preferred arrest response to intimate partner violence cases after effectively identifying the predominant aggressor. Therefore, any intimate partner violence policy should have a three-pronged focus—with victim safety and empowerment, officer safety, and perpetrator accountability being at the forefront. Departments should ensure that all other related policies are updated to be consistent with the provisions of this new or updated policy and that other forms of family violence, including elder and child abuse, are addressed in a parallel manner.

Knowledge and understanding about the crime of intimate partner violence, including promising practices for responding to and investigating the crimes of intimate partner violence, has expanded over the past decade, yet many misperceptions about intimate partner violence still exist. In small communities and rural areas, reporting may be even more difficult as victims in these communities often find themselves located at great distances from law enforcement agencies, social services, and medical care facilities.

The policy elements set forth in this document aim to strengthen the investigation and prosecution of intimate partner violence crimes. This document encourages thorough police investigations, comprehensive interview techniques, a focus on the offender's actions, and diligent work to establish rapport and trust with victims. Responding officers and investigators must take a professional, victim-centered approach to the crimes of intimate partner violence. This approach can restore the victim's dignity and sense of control, while decreasing the victim's anxiety and increasing their understanding of the criminal justice system and process. Through following a comprehensive policy and robust up-to-date training, responding officers and investigators have the power to help a person heal from intimate partner violence.

For the purposes of this document, the term “intimate partner violence” is defined as a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over or to harm another intimate partner. Intimate partner violence can include physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological actions or threats of actions that are intended to control and/or harm another person. This includes any behaviors that intimidate, manipulate, humiliate, isolate, frighten, terrorize, coerce, threaten, blame, hurt, injure, or wound someone.

DOCUMENT OVERVIEW

This policy and training document provides essential background material, supporting details, and suggested policy elements on intimate partner violence. It also addresses investigative procedures and promising practices for working with victims of this form of violence. A comprehensive intimate partner violence policy aims to enhance public confidence in the reporting and investigative processes, thereby encouraging all intimate partner violence victims to report the crime. The topics in this guide were designed to assist law enforcement leaders in tailoring a policy that meets the requirements and circumstances of their own communities and agencies.

The primary objectives of an intimate partner violence policy are to do the following:

- Identify **procedure and practice guidelines** for a victim-centered, multidisciplinary response to intimate partner violence cases and thorough investigation of this crime
- Articulate the **significant role and responsibilities** of all department members throughout the intimate partner violence response and investigation
- Present appropriate action for and response to any violation of permanent, temporary, or emergency **orders of protection**
- Highlight **methods to minimize further physical and psychological trauma** to victims of intimate partner violence by creating a respectful, objective response
- Foster the **safety of law enforcement** responding to calls for intimate partner violence
- Present details on **identifying and documenting stalking**, and other co-occurring crimes, where applicable
- Encourage a **coordinated community response** and ensure all victims are supported and offered free and confidential support, social service referrals, and information from a trained intimate partner violence victim advocate
- Identify strategies to **identify the predominant aggressor** and hold suspects accountable by keeping the investigation focused on their behavior and actions

When creating any policy and/or training curriculum on intimate partner violence, it is imperative that law enforcement understands this is a serious crime that hurts both individuals as well as the larger community. Agencies must respond appropriately and consider populations that have particular needs including children; older adults; male victims; individuals with disabilities (physical, developmental, intellectual, or communicative); individuals living in rural communities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender individuals; non-native English speakers; individuals affiliated with gangs; economically disadvantaged individuals; individuals with HIV/AIDS; trafficked individuals; and others. These community members and populations may need additional or special assistance that might not be outlined in this document. Departments are encouraged to collaborate with local community organizations to develop culturally competent protocols to effectively and thoroughly address the needs of their various community populations.

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FACTS ABOUT INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Experts estimate that a woman has between a one-in-three and a one-in-four chance of being physically assaulted by a partner or ex-partner during her lifetime.¹ On average, nearly 20 people per minute are physically abused by an intimate partner in the United States. During one year, this equates to more than 10 million women and men.² It is a problem of epidemic proportions. Crimes classified as intimate partner violence are unlike most crimes due to the intimate relationship between the victim and the accused. Traditionally, this distinction led authorities to treat these crimes as though they were not crimes but private family matters.

Through increased awareness and education, society, including law enforcement, has a greater understanding of the dynamics and issues involved in intimate partner violence, fully recognizing it as a crime. In the past, police culture and training discouraged arrests in intimate partner violence incidents, and officers were expected to mediate and defuse the situation, and at times, law enforcement were reluctant to intervene.

The response of law enforcement to the crime of intimate partner violence, however, varies widely from jurisdiction to jurisdiction and officer to officer. There are instances when intimate partner violence calls are assigned low priority, when officers fail to make arrests or make unwarranted dual arrests, and when assaults involving extensive physical injury and weapons are treated as misdemeanors. An effective law enforcement response to intimate partner violence must include the adoption of a comprehensive policy that (1) holds perpetrators accountable, (2) supports victims, and (3) is consistently applied. Any comprehensive policy must be part of a developed, coordinated community infrastructure that can provide support to maximize victim safety, implement sanctions against perpetrators, and offer rehabilitation opportunities for perpetrators.

To accomplish an effective law enforcement response, every agency member should understand the following:

- Intimate partner violence accounts for 15 percent of all violent crime.³
- The presence of a gun in an intimate partner violence situation increases the risk of homicide by 500 percent.⁴
- Nineteen percent of intimate partner violence involves a weapon.⁵
- Calls related to intimate partner violence represented the highest number of fatal calls for service for officers.⁶

¹ ABA, "Commission on Domestic & Sexual Violence," <http://www.abanet.org/domviol/cdv.html> (accessed November 9, 2016).

² Michele C. Black et al., *The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010 Summary Report* (Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011), http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs_report2010-a.pdf (accessed November 9, 2016).

³ Jennifer L. Truman and Rachel E. Morgan, *Nonfatal Domestic Violence, 2003–2012* (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics), <http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/ndv0312.pdf> (accessed November 9, 2016).

⁴ Jacquelyn C. Campbell et al., "Risk Factors for Femicide in Abusive Relationships: Results from a Multisite Case Control Study," *American Journal of Public Health* 93, no. 7 (July 2003): 1089–1097, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1447915> (accessed on November 9, 2016).

⁵ Truman and Morgan, *Nonfatal Domestic Violence*.

⁶ Nick Breul and Mike Keith, *Deadly Calls and Fatal Encounters: Analysis of U. S. law enforcement line of duty deaths when officers responded to dispatched calls for service and conducted enforcement (2010-2014)*, <http://www.nleomf.org/programs/cops/cops-report.html> (accessed November 9, 2016).

DEFINITIONS

Abuse: The intended act of causing or attempting to cause harm to another that serves no legitimate or lawful purpose. Acts of intimate partner violence or abuse may include not only acts that inflict or threaten harm, but also acts such as verbal threats, acts of intimidation, sexual abuse, strangulation, property damage, animal cruelty, and stalking. Types of “**abuse**” are defined as

- **Economic Abuse** - Attempting to make an individual financially dependent by maintaining control of financial resources, withholding one’s money, or forbidding or obstructing employment.
- **Emotional Abuse** - A myriad of tactics used to undermine someone’s sense of self-worth including criticism, name-calling, and denigration
- **Physical Abuse** - Any intentional and unwanted physical act done toward a victim’s body. Physical abuse can include a wide range of behaviors, which include aggressive, offensive, and/or threatened actions.
- **Psychological Abuse** - The employment of verbal, emotional, and psychological acts or tactics rather than, or in concert with, physical attacks.
- **Sexual Abuse** - Unwanted sexual behavior done toward an individual, carried out with any body part or object. These are behaviors which the victim does not consent to engage in and that the offender commits without regard for the victim’s wants or rights. These behaviors could include forcing the victim into sexual acts, photographing or filming the victim in sexual acts without his or her consent, refusing to use prophylactic measures, and any other nonconsensual sexual behavior.

Community stakeholders: Organizations or individuals in the community who are responsible for joining together to foster effective prevention of and intervention in intimate partner violence. Community stakeholders include, but are not limited to, law enforcement, prosecutors, court administrators and staff, corrections, parole and probation, advocacy organizations, social service agencies, adult and child protective services, clergy, K-12 schools, colleges and universities, government, animal welfare organizations, businesses, and employers.

Full faith and credit: The federal Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) requires jurisdictions to honor the terms and conditions of a protection order issued by another jurisdiction, to include all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Indian tribes, and all U.S. territories, 18 U.S.C. 2265.

Intimate partner violence: A pattern of abusive behavior in any intimate relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over or to harm an intimate partner. Intimate partner violence can include physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological actions or threats of actions that are intended to control and/or harm another person. This includes any behaviors that intimidate, manipulate, humiliate, isolate, frighten, terrorize, coerce, threaten, blame, hurt, injure, or wound someone. Violence may include the following:

- Bodily injury or threat of bodily injury
- Sexual abuse or assault
- Physical restraint or unlawful imprisonment
- Property crime directed against the victim
- Stalking
- Strangulation
- Violation of a court order of protection or similar injunction
- Death threats (including third party)

- Threats of suicide

Intimate partner violence supplemental report: A law enforcement reporting form designed to thoroughly capture statements, acts, and evidence crucial to the successful prosecution of intimate partner violence cases.

Petitioner: The person alleging violence in a petition for an order of protection.

Predominant aggressor: The individual who poses the most serious, ongoing threat, which may 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 criminal act(s) of intimate partner violence—unless there is a clear and compelling reason not to arrest (self-defense determination, 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, 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.

Respondent: The person alleged in a petition for order of protection to have abused another.

Self-defense: As self-defense laws and definitions vary, every department should be aware of how self-defense is defined in their jurisdiction's penal code. In general, however, certain legal circumstances can exist under which persons may utilize a reasonable amount of force to protect themselves or another based on individuals' actual belief that they, or another, are in imminent danger coupled with reasonable grounds for such belief. If self-defense has been legally utilized under the law, there is an absolution of guilt or culpability. Agency members are encouraged to identify how self-defense is defined in their jurisdictions. This information should be clearly articulated in agency policy on intimate partner violence.

Stalking: A course of conduct or pattern of behavior directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to fear or suffer substantial emotional distress. All state stalking statutes require more than one incident to establish a course of conduct. Stalking often occurs in intimate partner violence relationships.

Victim: A person who has been harmed or threatened by acts of intimate partner violence and who a law enforcement officer has determined is not a predominant aggressor under the factors set out in the law.

TRAINING AND PERSONNEL SELECTION

Training is necessary for all personnel, sworn and non-sworn, who have contact with intimate partner violence victims, including dispatch and communications, initial responder, and supervisors as well as those who investigate these crimes. All officers should receive ongoing training that specifically addresses the realities, dynamics, and investigations of these crimes, resources available to victims, common suspect behavior, and legal developments pertaining to intimate partner violence. Responders at every level need to recognize that they are accountable to the victim.

The following is a list of recommended training elements.

Intimate partner violence crimes

- Dynamics of intimate partner violence, with an emphasis on common victim and perpetrator experiences and behaviors
- The use of power and control
- Additional crimes that occur in the context of intimate partner violence such as, but not limited to, sexual assault, strangulation, stalking, kidnapping, witness intimidation, animal abuse, and threats
- Protection order enforcement and violation protocols
- The role of drugs and alcohol
- Impact of intimate partner violence on children
- Firearms laws and enforcement
- State and federal laws pertaining to intimate partner violence
- Lethality and high risk indicators
- Officer safety issues
- Victim follow-up

Victims of intimate partner violence

- Victim empowerment and victim-centered response, including the importance of advocacy support
- Commonly exhibited victim behaviors, balanced with an understanding that everyone reacts differently
- Cultural competency and addressing special needs populations
- Effective interviewing and questioning
- Impact of traumatic events and complexities of the manifestation of trauma

Training for Communication and Dispatch

- Agency intimate partner violence investigations policy and procedures
- The dynamics and complexities of intimate partner violence
- Communicating with victims and language barriers
- Information to gather from victim or caller
- Critical information to relay to responding officers
- Steps to convey to victims regarding evidence preservation (if applicable)
- Liability issues for communications and call-takers

Investigations

- Department intimate partner violence investigations policy and procedures
- Objective investigation and interview strategies that focus on the perpetrator's actions, including a history of the relationship
- Preliminary investigations including guidelines for first responders
- Proper evidence collection and documentation, including non-visible injuries
- Understanding and identifying self-defense
- Predominant aggressor determination
- Department lethality and danger assessment tools (and procedures)
- Incidents of stalking and stalking behaviors
- Technology used pre-, during, and post-assault, including the use of social media
- Effective strategies for interviewing witnesses
- Thorough documentation and report writing and effective and accurate language
- Medical evidence and experts
- Additional requirements that may apply when the victim or suspect or both are members of a law enforcement agency

Suspects or perpetrators of intimate partner violence

- Realities of intimate partner violence perpetrators, including controlling behaviors
- Repeat offenders
- Interviewing and interrogation

Resources available

- Victim compensation programs
- Medical services
- Additional local community support and resources available

When an agency has a **dedicated intimate partner violence unit**, careful consideration should be taken when selecting personnel to staff it. Officers selected for this specialized detail should possess the following attributes and experience:

- Strong interpersonal communication skills
- Strong analytical and assessment abilities
- Strong written communication skills
- Knowledge of and comfort with speaking about intimate partner violence
- Experience interviewing victims of interpersonal violence
- Experience investigating crimes against persons
- Comprehensive understanding of evidence (physical and psychological) in intimate partner violence cases

TELECOMMUNICATOR RESPONSE

Telecommunicators (also known as dispatchers and/or call-takers) may be the first people with whom the victim will speak following violent event. As such, it is vitally important that dispatchers and call-takers are prepared to competently address evidentiary considerations while thoughtfully responding to a victim who may be in crisis. Call-takers must also understand that it may not be the victim of the violence calling to report a crime; oftentimes it is the perpetrator of the violence or a witness, including children. To ensure appropriate handling of these calls, as well as officer safety, dispatchers and call-takers should receive specialized training in the dynamics of intimate partner violence (see [Training and Personnel Selection](#) section for suggested topics).

Communications personnel should follow standard 9-1-1 protocol for emergency response. The immediate safety of the victim should always be the top priority for all dispatchers and call-takers. The following priorities should be added to your agency's policy:

1. Assign a priority response to all intimate partner violence calls, whether or not the assailant is known to be on the premises.
2. Dispatch a minimum of two officers to an intimate partner violence call, whenever possible.
3. Immediately notify and dispatch a supervisor to any intimate partner violence call received that involves or appears to involve law enforcement, as a perpetrator or victim, regardless of the involved officer's jurisdiction.
4. Communications personnel need to elicit the initial facts of the situation and determine whether the victim or others are in life-threatening danger or in need of emergency medical attention. The call-taker should dispatch emergency medical assistance as necessary.

During the initial call for assistance:

Attempt to elicit any and all information from the victim that may assist the responding and investigating officer(s) assess the situation:

- The immediate safety of the caller and individuals at the scene
- The nature of the incident (verbal or physical), injuries, whether violence is ongoing, and whether medical response is needed
- Suspect's relationship to the victim
- Whether weapons are involved, present, and/or threatened to be used, and the type of weapon(s)
- Any other apparent hazards to responders (including animals)
- Description of the location (house, apartment, vehicle, etc.) officers will respond to
- Information about the location (whether there is a back door, gates, shared locked entrance, apartment number, etc.)
- If there are language barriers or special needs such as an interpreter
- Whether any party is under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Whether the suspect is still on scene. If not, obtain the suspect's description and a description of clothing, time delay, direction of travel, and mode of travel
- Other persons involved or witnesses at the scene, including children
- Whether law enforcement has been called before because of this suspect and number of times, if known

There is not one, typical reaction demonstrated by victims of intimate partner violence; it is important to refrain from judging or discounting any victim, and all must be treated with respect and sensitivity.

- Whether there is currently a valid protection order against the suspect or whether there have been orders in the past
- Whether there are any outstanding warrants against the suspect or victim
- Whether the suspect or victim is on probation or parole
- Suspect's date of birth (if known)
- Previous history of intimate partner violence
- Past and current efforts to intimidate
- Previous history of any violence toward law enforcement

Speaking with victim callers of intimate partner violence:

- Make the safety of intimate partner violence victims a primary concern. Address threats of violence, whether immediate or remote, by working with the victim to focus on possible ways to enhance safety such as waiting for officers at another location or leaving the location if the suspect returns.
- The victim reaching out for assistance may be in crisis; behaviors can range from hysteria, crying, and rage to laughter, calmness, and unresponsiveness. There isn't one typical reaction; it is important to refrain from judging or discounting any victim. All victims must be treated with respect and sensitivity.
- In order to minimize victim frustration, it is important for the call-taker to explain that the questions being asked will not delay the dispatch of an officer to the caller's location.
- Remember that threats might not appear as such without considering the context. For example, a particular look, word, or gesture by the perpetrator may have significant meaning to the victim.
- Dispatchers **should not** ask the person calling if they desire prosecution.
- Remember all victims must be treated with respect and sensitivity.

After obtaining initial information:

- Relay all vital information to responding officers and supervisors, including possible language or communication barriers, weapons in possession of the suspect, past or current orders of protection, and any additional information that will enhance the safety of victim(s), witnesses, and officers as outlined in their 9-1-1 agency policy.
- Keep the original call for service active, even if a subsequent request to cancel the original call is received. Advise the responding officer(s) of the second call and instruct them to continue to respond, investigate, and assess the situation to ensure that all parties are safe.
- Keep the caller on the telephone if the caller is a victim or witness to an intimate partner violence incident in progress, after ascertaining that it is safe for the caller to do so, in order to relay ongoing information provided by the caller to the responding officer(s) and remain aware of victim's safety. Know that it might not be safe to keep the caller on the line. 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.
- Have ready access to police department records that indicate whether the parties involved in the incident have been involved previously in intimate partner violence incidents, whether previous incidents involved a weapon, or whether there is a protection order involving the parties in effect—and relay any relevant information to the responding officer(s).
- Preserve documentation of the facts and circumstances of each call, including 9-1-1 communications, for use in potential administrative and criminal investigations, according to jurisdictional protocols.

INITIAL OFFICER RESPONSE

When possible, at least two officers should respond to the scene of any intimate partner violence call that is in progress or has just occurred. However, since this is not always an option, it is encouraged that individual agencies establish their own policies and procedures for officer responses to intimate partner violence calls. Officers should employ standard precautionary measures in approaching the scene of a potentially high-risk incident, including parking away from the residence, waiting for backup, and checking the outside of the residence for assailants.

When dispatched to an intimate partner violence call, the responding officer(s) should do the following:

- Approach the scene with a high degree of caution.
- Obtain all available information from the dispatcher—and notify the dispatcher upon arrival.
- Avoid the use of emergency lights and sirens when not essential, so as not to alert the perpetrator to their approach.
- Be alert for persons leaving the scene and for the deployment of weapons from doors, windows, or nearby vehicles.
- When state law permits and as department policies direct, utilize recording devices to capture statements made by victims, perpetrators, and witnesses.

Upon arrival at the scene, the responding officer(s) should do the following:

- Avoid parking the police vehicle in front of the residence or other site of the act that occurred, when possible.
- Identify themselves as law enforcement officers, explain their presence, and request entry in the event the incident is at a private residence. A forced entry is permissible if there is probable cause to believe that the safety of a potential victim may be in jeopardy, or if state law allows for forced entry.
- Ask to see the person who made the call or who is the subject of the call; do not reveal the name of the caller or their whereabouts. If access to the victim is refused, be persistent about speaking with the victim. If needed, ask the dispatcher to contact the caller by phone (if the caller is the victim).
- Make contact with all residents of the home, and all potential witnesses, victims, or perpetrator(s).
- Officers should take into account everything they personally observe, all physical evidence, and all things learned from dispatch or communications and witnesses or other person(s) supplying information.

Predictions based on tested and reliable danger assessment protocols can be critical for the first responder. What is known about intimate partner violence offenders is that they will actively pose a threat to responding officer and fight to defend what they often believe they are entitled to do and how they are entitled to behave. In many cases, perpetrators have been raised in a culture of male privilege that has shaped their values and beliefs, creating a mind-set of ownership of a loved one and a lack of personal accountability.

~ Mark Wynn, Officer Safety in Domestic Violence Responses, Police Chief Magazine, 2013

Upon contacting involved parties, officer(s) should do the following:

- Ensure all parties on-scene are separated.
- Inquire about weapons in the area or access to weapons.
- Identify and take temporary custody of firearms or weapons in plain sight.
- Restrain and/or remove the suspect if necessary.
- Identify all people or witnesses on the premises, including children.
- Assess persons at the scene for physical injuries (including inquiry about strangulation or possible internal injuries), administer first aid, and request medical services as necessary.
- Separate witnesses, the victim, and the suspect—keeping all individuals out of sight and hearing range of one another (as safety permits).
- Obtain a comprehensive account of the events from all parties.

Responding/investigating officer(s) **should never** do the following:

- Make any statement that would discourage a victim from reporting an act of intimate partner violence.
- Threaten, suggest, or otherwise indicate the possible arrest of all parties to discourage future requests for intervention by law enforcement personnel.
- Avoid taking action because the victim stated prosecution was not desired.

If officers do not have adequate training and tools for processing the crime scene, they should request the assistance of or direction from crime scene technicians and forensic scientists, when available.

ON-SCENE INVESTIGATION

Once control of a scene has been established, the officer's role is now to proceed with a thorough and complete investigation to determine if there is evidence of the crime of intimate partner violence.

When beginning questioning with victims, responding officer(s) **should** do the following:

- Express understanding, display patience, and provide respect for the victim, and attempt to establish trust and rapport.
- Display professional conduct at all times.
- Be an impartial fact finder.
- Remember that victims may struggle with gaps in memory.
- Ask open-ended questions that invite a narrative response.
- Inform the victim in advance of actions to be taken and either obtain consent to search the scene or obtain a search warrant as necessary.

When beginning questioning with victims, responding officers **should not** do the following:

- Ask leading questions.
- Push for a chronological account of what occurred.
- Ask victim blaming questions ("why did you...?" "why didn't you...?").
- Use jargon; acronyms; or police, medical, or legal terms.

Language considerations:

- Conduct interviews in the individual's primary language. The responding officer may need to call for another officer fluent in the language, or access support services or technology applications.
- Consider what the victim understands and how they express themselves. It is imperative to determine if any accommodations are needed including specific physical accommodations, language interpreters including an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter, communication book or pictures, individualized communication device, computer, or other available communication tools. Work closely and patiently with the victim to ensure that all details are captured correctly. In some situations, it may be necessary to ask the victim if there is someone who can help facilitate communication and dialogue; this should be a person trusted and selected by the victim (with the exclusion of children).

Body-Worn Cameras and Other Recording Devices

Policies and procedures for the use of body-worn cameras should clearly articulate how members should use cameras with victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking in order to maintain safety, privacy, and confidentiality.

A multidisciplinary team of community and criminal justice partners should be consulted in order to provide input regarding the complexities of responding to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking and the impact cameras and recording may have on these individuals.

The decision to audio and/or videotape responses should be done with knowledge and understanding of applicable federal and state laws, especially pertaining to retention, release, and viewing and in consultation with a prosecutor in order to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of the practice.

Department policy should also address how confidential conversations with advocates on scene will be handled, as well as discussions with victims regarding safety planning.

Inquiring about and documenting **injuries**:

- Ask anyone at the scene about signs and symptoms of injuries, including those that may be concealed by clothing or otherwise not readily apparent including internal and external injuries due to strangulation or attempted strangulation. Further visual investigation and color photographs of these areas may necessitate an officer of the same sex as the injured person.
- After making a proactive assessment of the physical condition of all parties and speaking with the victim, determine whether to summon emergency medical services (EMS) to the scene. In addition, summon EMS at the request of the victim or suspect (whether the officer believes EMS should be summoned or not).
- If there is indication that strangulation occurred, EMS should be summoned (see *Strangulation* details on page 17).

Suspect considerations:

- If the accused has been arrested or detained using handcuffs prior to the interview, the *Miranda* warning must be given prior to questioning.
- If the accused has fled the scene, obtain a description and solicit information as to the possible whereabouts of the accused.

Victim interviews:

- Address the victim's safety and privacy by conducting the victim interview in an area apart from the suspect and witnesses. Obtain information about previous incidents, including frequency and severity.
- Ask about any acts of intimidation that may have occurred, during this incident or any previous incidence, that were intended to prevent the victim from calling the police or seeking other assistance.
- Check for the existence of a protection order or similar court orders through dispatch or by whatever means available. If one is said to exist, ask the victim if they possess a copy. If not, other means to verify the order must be taken.
- Ask the victim about any stalking behaviors, concerning this incident or previous ones. Document objects or items given to the victim by the suspect, or any unwanted contact that made the victim feel frightened or threatened. Keep in mind the course of conduct and context of the crime. Remember that unwelcome gifts, contact, or attention from the suspect may be indications of serious danger.
- Ask the victim if they called, sent text messages to, used social media, or spoke to anyone prior to police arrival to identify potential evidence and possible additional witnesses.
- In accordance with agency evidence collection guidelines, collect, preserve, and document all physical evidence to support prosecution, including evidence substantiating the victim's injuries, evidentiary articles that substantiate the attack (weapons, torn clothing, pulled out hair, etc.), and evidence recording the crime scene (including any property damage, vandalism, etc.). Complaints of pain, whether or not injuries are visible, should also be documented.
- Document any healing or old injuries.
- Ensure that photographs are taken of the victim, as well as of the suspect, whether or not there are visible injuries. The investigating officer should make arrangements for follow-up photographs of the victim's injuries.
- Assess for and document all actual and suspected incidents of violence including physical and sexual abuse, elder or child abuse, and animal cruelty.

- Discuss intimidation with the victim, including identifying and reporting it. Provide examples of subtle forms of intimidation, such as specific body language or gestures, contact through a third party or social media, or sending unwanted gifts, and a safe way for the victim to contact law enforcement. Ensure the victim is aware that intimidation can come from the suspect or others.

Children at the incident⁷:

- Document any signs of trauma and any apparent wounds or healing wounds on child(ren) and take appropriate action, in accordance with state law and relevant agency policy to prevent imminent harm to the child(ren).
- Determine if a child’s immediate safety and welfare requires involvement of Child Protective Services, in accordance with agency policy.
- Clearly and simply explain what has happened and what will happen next, including what is going to happen to the parents/adults and what is going to happen to the children. Ask children if they have any questions. Respond honestly, directly and simply.
- Review basic safety plans with the child on what they can do if another incident of violence occurs.

Witness interviews:

- Interview all witnesses fully as soon as circumstances allow. If witnesses provide information about prior incidents, the officer should document the information to establish a pattern.
- Document any statements the victim may have made to friends, family, neighbors, or others about this or any prior incidents in the report and those witnesses interviewed for statements.⁸

Danger and lethality assessments:

- Officers should follow any existing department danger or lethality assessment protocols and procedures.

Plan for **follow-up**:

- Available reports of previous incidents (if they exist), should also be referenced for corroboration and potential additional information.
- Offer to contact a local advocate to provide support to the victim as available and provide a list of current contact information for local intimate partner violence victim advocacy organizations. As part of a community-coordinated response, work with local support agencies to develop these resources. Because conversations with system or community advocates may be privileged, investigating officers must understand that unless there is a written waiver, a victim advocate cannot disclose information from the victim, even if it would significantly impact the investigation or prosecution of the case.
- Ask the victim where they will be staying and alternate points of contact. This information will be important to officers as well as prosecutors.

⁷ For more information regarding children exposed to violence, please refer to the International Association of Chiefs of Police and the Yale Child Study Center, [Enhancing Police Responses to Children Exposed to Violence: A Toolkit for Law Enforcement](#).

⁸ Officers should note that these statements of the victim to third parties may (depending on the circumstances) be admissible at trial as “non-testimonial” statements under *Crawford v. Washington*, 541 U.S. 36 (2004) (on the right of a defendant to confront witnesses by cross-examination at trial), even if the victim fails to testify. Preserving these statements now may increase the likelihood of a successful prosecution whether the victim testifies at trial or not.

IDENTIFYING EVIDENCE OF CO-OCCURRING AND INTERCONNECTED CRIMES

Responding officers must be aware that other crimes can occur in the context of intimate partner violence. Crimes commonly interconnected with intimate partner violence are sexual assault, stalking, false imprisonment, threats, fraud/extortion, property damage, human trafficking, kidnapping, witness intimidation, gang violence, criminal damage, and burglary. Responders and investigators should always look for and be open to evidence suggesting co-occurring, serial, and interconnected crimes. This will help investigators gain a complete understanding of what occurred and can ultimately be helpful in efforts to hold perpetrators accountable.

Strangulation

Strangulation, erroneously referred to as “choking,” is one of the most common, but overlooked injuries in intimate partner violence cases. Strangulation is the external compression (by body parts, ligatures, etc.) of the neck that impedes oxygen transport by preventing blood flow to or from the brain. Choking refers to an object in the upper airway that impedes oxygen intake.⁹ The lethality of this form of violence has only recently been brought into focus.¹⁰ In a San Diego, CA study of 300 strangulation cases during a 5-year period, 89 percent of the cases showed a history of intimate partner violence.¹¹ For a victim, the experience of being strangled often begins with severe pain, can lead to unconsciousness, and may result in brain death. The loss of consciousness is caused by blockage of either the jugular veins or the carotid arteries, thereby depriving the brain of oxygen. Only 4 pounds of pressure for 10 seconds is needed to close off the jugular veins and cause unconsciousness (by comparison, eight pounds of pressure is required to pull the trigger of a gun). As little as 11 pounds of pressure is necessary to close off the carotid arteries and cause unconsciousness. Strangulation can also result in a closing off of the trachea, causing the victim to be unable to breathe. If that cessation of breathing lasts 50 seconds, the human body reaches what is known as “the point of no return”; the body is unable to recover on its own and without some form of artificial assistance, the result is death.¹² Following even minimal pressure to the neck, resulting internal swelling over time can create a risky situation of impaired breathing for the victim and necessitates examination by medical personnel.

Strangulation

Non-visible injuries

- *Difficulty breathing/unable to breathe, hyperventilation*
- *Raspy voice, hoarse voice, coughing, unable to speak*
- *Trouble swallowing, painful swallowing*
- *Neck pain*
- *Nausea, vomiting*
- *Involuntary urination and/or defecation*
- *Fainting/light-headedness*
- *Headaches, head “rush”, ears ringing*
- *Disorientation, memory loss, “spaced out”*

Visible injuries

- *Petechiae (pinpoint red spots about the area of constriction)*
 - *Hemorrhaging, bruising*
 - *Scratch marks, scrapes, abrasions*
 - *Bloody nose, broken nose*
 - *Fingernail impressions*
 - *Swelling of neck or face*
 - *Pulled/missing hair, bumps on head*
 - *Skull fracture/head injuries*
 - *Swollen tongue, swollen lips*
-

⁹ Gael B. Strack and Casey Gwinn, “On the Edge of Homicide: Strangulation as a Prelude,” *Criminal Justice* 26, no. 3 (Fall 2011): 32–36.

¹⁰ The Continuing Legal Education and Mutual Assistance Division of the New York State District Attorneys Association, *Strangulation in Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Assault* (New York Prosecutors Training Institute, Inc.).

¹¹ Gael B. Strack and Dr. George McClane, “How to Improve Your Investigation and Prosecution of Strangulation Cases,” October 1998, updated January 2003, and September 2007.

¹² Penny Clute and Alexander Kuehl, “Know the Law: Resource Materials on Strangulation” (presentation, New York State Coalition Against Intimate Partner Violence conference, Albany, NY, July 23, 2000).

SUPERVISOR INVOLVEMENT

Effective supervision plays a key role in ensuring comprehensive responses to and investigation of intimate partner violence. Though this is important for victims, it is also important for ensuring compliance with department policy and accountability. First-line supervisors should demonstrate a thorough understanding of victim issues and proper response by subordinates.

Field supervisors should be responsible for monitoring any intimate partner violence calls dispatched to the officers under their direct supervision or within their area of responsibility. Whenever possible, the supervisor will respond to the scene for the purpose of providing additional safety, monitoring the situation, assisting with determination of predominant aggressor, and being available for mentoring and advice. In situations where the supervisor is not able to respond, follow-up will routinely be conducted to ensure policy is followed.

Supervisors should do the following:

- Respond to assist officers investigating incidents of intimate partner violence, if requested by an officer, or when deemed necessary.
- Ensure line officers respond in an objective, professional, nonjudgmental manner.
- Help locate both agency and community resources to effectively investigate the assault that occurred.
- Encourage problem-solving partnerships between the department and community organizations, such as intimate partner violence advocacy centers, to foster cooperation and better support victims.
- Review all intimate partner violence police reports for accuracy, consistency, and victim-centered response.
- Encourage officers to look for co-occurring and interconnected crimes when responding to intimate partner violence including, but not limited to sexual assault, stalking, treats, trafficking, strangulation, kidnapping, and witness intimidation.
- Conduct after action reviews and intimate partner violence case audits to ensure officers and investigators are conducting comprehensive, victim-centered, perpetrator-focused investigations.
- Create ongoing training opportunities for department members to improve the skills needed to properly investigate intimate partner violence.
- Work to increase communication between law enforcement and prosecutors to ease the transition for victims moving from the investigation phase to prosecution.
- Incorporate victim service issues and response to victims of intimate partner violence into performance evaluations, and award and promotion recommendations of department members.

Incidents involving law enforcement

Upon arrival on the scene of an intimate partner violence call or incident involving a law enforcement officer, as victim or suspect, the primary patrol unit should immediately notify dispatch and request a supervisor of higher rank than the involved officer report to the scene, regardless of the involved officer's jurisdiction.

Responding officers should be aware of the possible increase in danger due to the fact that a police officer will possess firearms or other weapons and be skilled in combat training.

Responding officers must also be aware that an officer suspect may attempt to make emotional appeals to fellow officers.

Law enforcement engaged in intimate partner violence, specifically stalking behaviors, will have more sophisticated surveillance tools and methods available.

- Hold members accountable when they behave in a way that is not in line with the values and the mission of the department regarding intimate partner violence investigations.
- Regularly share victim services information at roll call and staff briefings. This education and training should be ongoing and can also be done in the field with officers when not answering calls for service.
- Recognize and reward officers for providing effective victim services.

INCIDENT DOCUMENTATION

Officers should complete a thorough and detailed report following a response to or investigation of an allegation of intimate partner violence, regardless if an arrest is made. If available, an intimate partner violence supplement report form should be used. The reporting officer must maintain objectivity in reporting and avoid inserting into the report the officer's own opinions, bias, or judgments regarding the incident and parties involved.

Ensure the following elements of any intimate partner violence incident are objectively documented in a report:

1. How the case was received
2. Time of call (including time of incident, dispatch, and arrival)
3. Observations upon approach including demeanor of victim(s), suspect, and witnesses
4. Relationship of the parties involved
5. History of the relationship
6. Visible injuries to parties on scene, new and existing
7. Complaints of pain and non-visible injuries
8. Signs and symptoms of strangulation
9. Whether or not medical attention was requested
10. Current or past protection orders
11. Previous incidents
12. Prior calls to the location involving the suspect
13. Description and diagram of the scene
14. Property damage
15. Statements by the victim, the suspect, and all witnesses including children
16. Firearms or weapons on the scene
17. Firearms or weapons to which the suspect has access
18. Details on all collected evidence
19. Probation or parole status of and active warrants for victim or suspect
20. Information on co-occurring crimes such as stalking, sexual abuse, strangulation, property damage, and others
21. Details of any children present, including names, sex, date of birth, and address where they usually reside, as well as the name of any other parent or relative with whom they usually reside
22. All threats and intimidation tactics by suspect
23. Threats or harm to pets or evidence of animal abuse
24. Arrest decisions including detailed reasoning if an arrest was not made
25. Details if the suspect was not on the scene

PROTECTION ORDER ENFORCEMENT

A protective order is a legal injunction that requires a party to do, or to refrain from doing, certain acts with the purpose of empowering victims of interpersonal violence and giving a means of safety. Each state in the United States has some form of intimate partner violence restraining order law and many states also have specific restraining order laws for stalking, harassment, and sexual assault. Protective orders can help victims regain control by establishing boundaries, restrictions, and sanctions with the support and enforcement of the criminal justice system. In some jurisdictions, protection orders may be one of the few safety options for a victim; they may be the tool that a victim needs in order to begin separation from an abusive party.

If it has been determined that a protection order (or any court-mandated restraining order) is known to exist, officers should:

- Obtain a copy of the order. If no copy is available, the officer should use alternative means, such as the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) or local databases, 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.
- Enforce the terms and conditions of the order even if it was issued by another jurisdiction.
- Comply with all laws, policies, and procedures of their own jurisdiction concerning violation of orders, such as mandatory arrest, if applicable.
- Enforce custody provisions in accordance with jurisdictional law and language of the order.
- Document the order information in the report including verification and terms of order.
- Document the order violation and prepare a report even if suspect is not on scene. Attempts must be made to locate and arrest suspect.
- Be aware that older protection orders might not explicitly prohibit possession of firearms, but federal, state, or tribal law might prohibit their possession where the order meets the requirements of 18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(8) or state or tribal law.
- Verify that an order has been issued and make reasonable efforts to (1) inquire if the respondent on the order, if present or contacted during the investigation, possesses firearms; (2) inquire through local and federal databases to determine if any firearms are registered to the respondent; (3) inquire of the petitioner whether the respondent possesses any firearms; (4) seize prohibited firearms located in plain view or pursuant to a consensual or other lawful search; (5) request the respondent surrender firearms and ammunition; or (6) request a search warrant.

Be mindful

Perpetrators of intimate partner violence are coercive and skilled at manipulating victims in order to gain power and control; they may use the possibility of arrest against victims and/or as leverage and as another means of power and control.

A victim may feel pressured, or be manipulated by the perpetrator into letting him/her into the house, workplace, or meeting with him/her with the sole purpose of setting a victim up for arrest.

Oftentimes it is safer for a victim to comply with the demands of a perpetrator rather than suffer the consequences of not complying.

Arrest of a victim for violations of their own protection order may embolden the perpetrator and give him/her more power.

Arrest of victims for violations of their own protection order takes a procedure that is meant to protect victims and uses it to punish them. The result is damage to victim trust in the criminal justice system and the creations of hesitation on the part of the victim to seek law enforcement protection because of the possibility of being arrested.

Responding and investigating officers **should not** do the following:

- Penalize or arrest the petitioner for violation of the restrictions detailed in the order.
- Refuse to document a report because the respondent is no longer on the scene.
- Take no action because the violation did not occur in the presence of the officer(s).

PREDOMINANT AGGRESSOR DETERMINATION

The officer should utilize the totality of information gained from a thorough and comprehensive investigation to make a determination of predominant aggressor. When trying to determine which person poses the most serious ongoing threat to whom, officers should consider the following:

1. Who uses threats and intimidation in the relationship?
2. Does either individual in the relationship isolate their partner?
3. Who is emotionally abusive (uses degrading names, humiliating comments, etc.)?
4. How are minimization, blame, and denial being used by the victim and/or the suspect?
5. Who utilizes the children to get their way in the relationship?
6. Who has forced sexual contact or used sexual acts as a way to control the other?
7. Who has control of money and finances or uses them as a way to control the other?
8. Who utilizes coercion and threats?
9. Have any threats been carried out or steps taken to carry them out?
10. Does either party have a history of committing violent crimes?
11. What does the premise history tell you about calls for service to the residence?
12. Is there a history of intimate partner violence between the parties?
13. Is there a physical size difference between the parties?
14. Does either party have a protection order against them or a history of protection orders against them?
15. Who appears to be more capable of assaulting the other?
16. What is the severity of the injuries to the parties?
17. Did either party utilize self-defense?
18. Is there potential for violence in the future? If so, by whom?
19. Which party has access to firearms or other weapons?
20. What types of injuries do the parties have? Are they offensive or defensive in nature?
21. Does either party express fear of the other?
22. Is there evidence from witnesses?

Following a thorough investigation that factors in the context within which the incident occurred, if the officer determines that in fact both parties have utilized equal violence, that there was no self-defense involved, and that there was no predominant aggressor, the officer should notify a supervisor.

If the officer determines probable cause exists to arrest both parties, the arresting officer should write and file a separate report for each arrest and include a detailed explanation as to the probable cause for each arrest.

ARREST DECISION AND PROCEDURES

Arrest Decision

- Officers should make a warrantless arrest (as permitted by law or department policy), as part of the preferred arrest response, if an officer has probable cause to believe that a person has committed a crime involving domestic abuse.
- When applicable, officers should arrest for violation of protection orders.
- If an arrest is **not** made, the officer must provide a detailed explanation in the report as to the reasons why an arrest was not made.
- When an arrest cannot be made due to lack of probable cause that a crime has been committed, or, if the arrest is authorized but not made (reasons to be detailed in the incident report), the officer should do the following:
 - Explain to the victim the reasons that an arrest is not being made
 - Advise the victim of her or his rights
 - Explain the process and procedures for filing and submitting a criminal complaint or other options, such as requesting a warrant or summons, including any action the victim needs to complete
 - Encourage the victim to contact the local intimate partner violence service provider for information regarding counseling and other services
- If an officer has probable cause to believe that two or more persons committed a misdemeanor or felony, or if two or more persons make complaints to the officer, the officer should attempt to determine whether one party acted in self-defense or whether one party was the predominant aggressor.
- **Arrest is the preferred response with the predominant aggressor only.**
- **Dual arrests are strongly discouraged.** Officers should not use dual arrests as a substitute for a thorough investigation. Supervisors should be involved in decisions of dual arrest.
- If the officer determines probable cause exists to arrest both parties, the arresting officer should write and file a separate report for each arrest and include a detailed explanation as to the probable cause for each arrest.
- If the suspect is not on the scene, officers must follow proper protocol to locate suspect.

Arrest Procedures

- The arresting officer(s) should take the accused into custody as soon as it is determined that a warrantless arrest is appropriate.
- If the suspect has fled the scene, the officer(s) should attempt to locate and apprehend the suspect. (The officer(s) should advise dispatch of the suspect's description along with other pertinent facts in order that a lookout can be placed for the suspect.) Should the suspect not be located, the officer(s) should initiate procedures to obtain a warrant for the suspect as soon as practical.
- Calls for interpersonal violence that involve prominent citizens, public officials, or police officers may present particular difficulties for the responding officer. In such circumstances, the responding officer(s) should request that a supervisor respond to the scene and should ensure that this incident be handled in the same manner as any other intimate partner violence incident.
- The officer should never put a victim in the position of stating whether or not they want the suspect to be arrested. It should be expected that a victim will be reluctant to see the abuser arrested for many reasons.

The investigating officer(s) ***should not*** consider the following factors in making arrest decisions in interpersonal violence cases:

- Marital status of the parties
- The ownership or tenancy rights of either party or living arrangements
- Verbal assurances that the violence will stop
- The victim's emotional status
- The victim's initial reluctance regarding an officer-initiated arrest
- Whether or not physical injuries suffered by the victim can be personally observed at the time of the law enforcement response
- A claim by the suspect that the victim provoked or perpetuated the violence.
- Denial by either party that the violence or crime occurred when there is evidence of intimate partner violence
- Whether or not there have been arrests on previous calls
- Whether or not the victim has a criminal background
- Belief that the arrest might not lead to a conviction
- Whether or not a current protection order exists
- Adverse financial consequences that might result from the arrest
- That the incident occurred in a private place
- The racial, cultural, social, political, or professional position, age, gender, or the sexual orientation of either the victim or the suspect
- Immigration status of the victim or the suspect
- The use of alcohol and/or drugs by either or both parties
- Whether or not there were witnesses
- Whether or not the police witnessed the incident
- Whether the suspect is a law enforcement officer
- The investigating officer's perception of the willingness of the victim or of a witness to the domestic abuse to testify or participate in a judicial proceeding

While the above facts may be used as background information to complete a thorough intimate partner violence investigation for prosecution, **they should not be part of an officer's determination to arrest.**

VICTIM SAFETY AND PROTECTION

Law enforcement must make victim safety and protection a priority, recognizing the important role they play in supporting the safety of victims and enabling informed decisions. Officers should ensure that victims have information regarding their right to apply for a protective order and information regarding shelter and advocacy services. If possible, victims should receive assistance in obtaining an order or necessary services.

Responding officers should do the following:

- Provide victims with information about obtaining an order of protection, if law permits.
- Provide victims with information about local service providers.
- Utilize a threat and risk or danger assessment tool with the victim and/or perpetrator, if implemented by the agency.
- Discuss the use of a “stalking log” with the victim, if applicable.
- Inquire about the suspect’s access to weapons.
- Discuss what to do in the event that the victim, witnesses, or third parties are harassed or intimidated by the perpetrator or others. Remain open to the possibility that the suspect may monitor or stalk the victim. The victim should be advised to call 9-1-1 in case of an emergency.
- Provide the victim the crime report number as well as contact information for the reporting officer (including badge number or other identification) and person handling the follow-up, if known.
- Discuss arrest decisions, victim compensation, court dates, and parole or release dates, if applicable.

Safety planning

- Law enforcement can assist victims of intimate partner violence plan for safety.
- Safety plans often involve victim families, friends, and co-workers.
- No two victims face identical risks; therefore, it is important that safety plans are individualized for each person.
- Safety plans can be created when a victim chooses to leave a perpetrator and when a victim chooses to stay with a perpetrator.
- Safety planning is an ongoing process and the plan should be continually assessed.
- Safety planning may include a lethality assessment to determine level of risk.
- An advocate can assist with developing a safety plan with a victim.

Danger Assessment

- Danger assessments are helpful tools to assist victims in assessing the lethality of their current situation.
- An advocate can assist with administering a danger assessment.

POST-INCIDENT INVESTIGATION AND FOLLOW-UP

The agency should make it standard procedures that the following occur:

- A department representative is designated to make follow-up contact with victims of intimate partner violence and inquire whether subsequent violence or intimidation has occurred.
- Subsequent incident(s) should be treated in accordance with established policy and assigned a new case number.
- Following an arrest, the department designee should 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.
- A trained member is assigned to assess the level of danger posed to the victim in order to inform perpetrator release decisions as well as inform ongoing safety planning efforts with the victim.

Victim Non-Participation in the Criminal Justice Process

It is not uncommon for a victim of intimate partner violence to reconsider their report to law enforcement, to question their participation in the criminal justice system and/or to stay with their abusive partner. Victims may feel they have no other option but to recant in order to disengage from the system. A victim-centered approach recognizes the tremendous courage of victims who come forward and the personal cost to those who participate in the criminal justice system. It is critical for investigators to understand that reluctance to participate in the criminal justice process is not necessarily indicative of a victim not caring of being in danger. Various influences affect a victim's willingness and/or ability to participate, including the follow:

- Fear of retribution (by offender, offender's family, friends, or others)
- Financial dependence on the abuser and/or lack of financial resources to leave
- Immigration status and concerns
- Ongoing intimidation (including witness intimidation) by the abuser if the victim participates in the process
- Feelings of embarrassment, fear, and/or shame
- The desire to put the incident behind them
- Frustration in repeating the details
- Fear of facing the suspect in court
- Lack of support from family, friends, the suspect, peers, or others
- Pressure from cultural and/or religious upbringing or beliefs
- Child custody and child support concerns
- Fear of not being believed
- Fear the criminal justice system will not be effective

Victims who decline participation in the investigation should not be asked to sign a non-prosecution statement. Asking a victim to do so may deter him or her from returning at a later date. If the evidence clearly indicates a crime has occurred, the investigators should work with their agency and any intimate partner response team to decide next steps with the case.

Consider going to where the victim is staying to get photos as it is common for victims to feel uncomfortable going to a police station for follow-up. Ideally photos should be taken 24, 48, and 72 hours later in the event the injuries become more visible and pronounced. Descriptive and specific documentation of the injuries should accompany the photos.

COORDINATED COMMUNITY RESPONSES TO INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

The process of reporting an act of intimate partner violence can be difficult for victims. Law enforcement should consider partnering with community organizations and advocates to create a more supportive atmosphere for victims throughout the reporting and investigation process. When victims believe they are supported, they are more likely to report. This practice results in better trust in the criminal justice process.

- **Domestic Violence/Abuse Response Team (DVRT or DART):** The domestic violence/abuse response team is a model of intervention that identifies and provides a coordinated, multidisciplinary response to victim needs and aims to more effectively hold offenders accountable. Often, the team is highly trained and provides support, resources, and safety planning to the victim.
- **Victim Advocates:** Victim advocates provide counseling, advocacy, referrals, resources and information, and support. They may also act as liaisons with SANEs (sexual assault nurse examiners), law enforcement, and other criminal justice members throughout the investigation and adjudication process.
- **Campus Public Safety and Law Enforcement Agencies:** Local law enforcement agencies are encouraged to partner with colleges and universities in their jurisdictions to create memoranda of understanding or letters of agreement to establish communication and implement effective plans to address dating and intimate partner violence crimes.¹³
- **Military:** Developing a memorandum of understanding between local nonmilitary law enforcement agencies and the military law enforcement office on military installations can ensure effective response to victims of intimate partner violence and better offender accountability.¹⁴

Departments should work with multidisciplinary partners to collect, manage, and analyze data regarding intimate partner violence reporting, medical care, response, investigations, prosecutorial charging decisions, trials, pleas, convictions, and sentencing to stay current and measure effectiveness.

Departments should work with community partners and advocates to develop victim surveys or other opportunities to provide feedback.

Departments should analyze and use data to assist in updating policy, identifying training needs, and counseling and commending employees.

Departments should consider including victim support information, including agency policies and contact, community referrals, and resources on the agency website in an easily accessible location.

¹³ Please see “Building Partnerships among Law Enforcement Agencies, Colleges and Universities: Developing a Memorandum of Understanding to Prevent and Respond Effectively to Sexual Assaults at Colleges and Universities,” https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/white_house_task_force_law_enforcement_mou.pdf

¹⁴ Please see “Developing a Memorandum of Understanding Between the Installation Law Enforcement Office and Local Civilian Law Enforcement Agencies,” <http://www.ncdsv.org/images/DevelopinganMOUbetweenInstallationLECivilianLE.pdf> and “Adapting the Department of Defense MOU Templates to Local Needs,” [http://www.ncjfcj.org/sites/default/files/MOU%20-%20Appendix%2010%20Adapting%20the%20Department%20of%20Defense%20MOU%20Templates%20to%20Local%20Needs%20\(Detailed%20Descriptions\).pdf](http://www.ncjfcj.org/sites/default/files/MOU%20-%20Appendix%2010%20Adapting%20the%20Department%20of%20Defense%20MOU%20Templates%20to%20Local%20Needs%20(Detailed%20Descriptions).pdf).

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Content recommendations were submitted by a multidisciplinary group of subject matter experts including prosecutors, law enforcement, advocates, and national training and technical assistance providers. Departments are encouraged to use this document to establish department policy and training content customized to their agency and jurisdiction. Every effort has been made by the IACP staff and partner subject matter experts to ensure that this document incorporates the most current information and contemporary professional judgment on this issue. However, each law enforcement agency operates in a unique environment of federal court rulings, state laws, local ordinances, regulations, judicial and administrative decisions, and collective bargaining agreements that must be considered when developing policy and protocols. In addition, the formulation of specific agency policies and training content must take into account local political and community perspectives and customs, prerogatives, and demands; often divergent law enforcement strategies and philosophies; and the impact of varied agency resource capabilities, among other factors.