

# THE CRIME OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



## Training and Discussion Facilitation Guide

The purpose of *The Crime of Domestic Violence* training video is to present information regarding the complexities of domestic violence and how law enforcement and partners can effectively respond to victims and hold perpetrators accountable. This discussion guide is designed to reinforce key information highlighted in the video, encourage discussion on additional topics and promising practices, and assist law enforcement in applying this information to their local community.

### SEGMENT 1: CRITICAL CONTEXT

1. Define domestic violence/interpersonal violence. Review local/state/tribal/campus statute on domestic violence.
2. What tactics do perpetrators of domestic violence employ to gain and maintain power and control over victims?
3. There may be victim behaviors that seem counterintuitive or frustrate individuals responding to domestic violence cases.  
1) Discuss these behaviors; 2) identify reasons why they may occur; and 3) consider strategies to effectively support victims and proceed with the case when these behaviors are present.
4. Why may a victim of domestic violence hesitate to reach out for support or help?
5. How is domestic violence "a relationship that evolves over time?"
6. Why is it critical to capture the history of the relationship and abuse, physical and non-physical, that has occurred?
7. What additional barriers/challenges may individuals in the following communities have to leaving an abusive relationship or contacting law enforcement (be sure to discuss the

intersectionality of communities and experiences)? What specific needs during initial response and/or after contacting law enforcement may these individuals have?

- Individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing
- Individuals who are gay, lesbian, transgender, bisexual, or gender non-conforming
- Adolescents/teens
- Individuals with physical or cognitive disabilities
- Older adults
- Immigrants/non-English speakers

### SEGMENT 2: ON SCENE RESPONSE

1. How do incident based crimes differ from course of conduct crimes? Why is it critical to investigate domestic violence as a course of conduct crime?
2. While on scene of a call for domestic violence, what steps should law enforcement take to properly identify the predominant aggressor? What are the potential consequences of not identifying the correct person?
3. Discuss offensive and defensive injuries. How can responding officers distinguish between these injuries?
4. What questions may be helpful to ask victims in order to gather additional information, identify potential risks, and best support victims? What questions may be harmful or have a negative impact on victims?
5. Victims of domestic violence may be significantly impacted by the traumatic event that occurred. How might this affect the way they present to law enforcement? How may this impact their memory and recollection?
6. Discuss perpetrator behaviors that may not be criminal, but can be threatening to or cause fear in a victim of domestic violence.
7. How can a victim's decision not to participate in a case serve as evidence?
8. What ways can law enforcement show their support and understanding of victims of domestic violence when on scene?
9. What critical information should responding officers capture in

domestic violence reports? How may information from previous incidents involving the same individuals impact officers who respond at a later date?

10. Why is it critical that officers thoroughly and accurately document statements that occur before the start of an official interview? (Refer to *Crawford v. Washington* and *Davis v. Washington*.)
11. What crimes may co-occur in the context of domestic violence?
12. What are the signs and symptoms of strangulation? What questions can officers ask a victim to identify if strangulation occurred?
13. Discuss the statement: "Leaving a violent relationship is not an event, but a process."
14. If children are at the scene, what additional actions or protocols should officers consider?

### SEGMENT 3: OFFENDER REALITIES & THREATS TO OFFICERS

1. What tactics do perpetrators of domestic violence employ to gain and maintain power and control over victims? How may perpetrators use these tactics on responding officers?
2. How may law enforcement be seen as a "problem" to perpetrators of domestic violence?
3. Discuss what information law enforcement should have before arriving on the scene of a domestic violence call. Why is this information important? What details are pertinent to increasing officer safety?
4. What information can law enforcement elicit from a victim and witnesses that may increase officer safety?
5. What may an increase in calls to law enforcement or frequency in the incidents of abuse indicate?
6. Discuss various challenges that officers in rural and urban areas may face when responding to domestic violence calls.
7. How may information from previous incidents impact officers who respond at a later date?
8. Discuss strategies that may increase officer safety when responding to domestic violence calls.



## SEGMENT 4: WORKING TOGETHER

1. In the film, it was stated: "Everyone can play a role that is meaningful to the victim." When working with victims of domestic violence, how can forming community partnerships benefit victims? Law enforcement?
2. Discuss how victim advocates can support law enforcement investigations.
3. What needs may a victim of domestic violence have after leaving an abusive relationship?
4. How can community partnerships strengthen the response to:
  - Individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing
  - Individuals who are gay, lesbian, transgender, bisexual, or gender non-conforming
  - Adolescents/teens
  - Individuals with physical or cognitive disabilities
  - Older adults
  - Immigrants/non-English speakers
5. What resources or organizations are available in your community to support victims?
6. What community organizations has your department developed relationships with in order to support victims of domestic violence? What partnerships can be established to better support victims of domestic violence?
7. What effective practices or programs has your department implemented to better support victims?
8. What can law enforcement agencies and officers do to build rapport and trust with various communities within their jurisdiction?
9. How do you access your state victims' compensation programs?

### WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO

Flagstaff Police Department (AZ) • Prescott Police Department (AZ)  
Pitt County Sheriff's Department (NC) • Putnam County Sheriff's Department (WV)  
Cleveland Municipal Court (OH) • Glendale Advocacy Center (AZ) • Branches, Inc. (WV)  
Post Falls Police Department (ID) • Baltimore Police Department (MD)  
Nashville Public Television (TN)

**AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, THE SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS AND SURVIVORS  
WITHOUT WHOM THIS VIDEO WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE.**

For additional tools, visit [www.theIACP.org/Violence-Against-Women](http://www.theIACP.org/Violence-Against-Women)





## Protection Order Violations Report Review Checklist

### Does the report include all needed information?

- How was the case received?
- Is the time of the call recorded (including time of incident, time of dispatch, time of arrival)?
- Are the elements of the crime articulated?
- Is the scene concisely described/diagramed?
- Were photos taken and details recorded?
- Is the relationship of the parties identified?
- What is the history of the relationship? (include frequency of any violence, intimidation, and threats)
- Were all witnesses interviewed and documented?
- Were weapons/objects used?
- What was the emotional state of the victim (what did they report they were thinking and feeling)?
- What evidence was collected?
- Is evidence of fear articulated in the report?
- Have all threats been clearly documented?
- Are stalking behaviors identified? (e.g. following, repeated calling, sending unwanted gifts)
- Is the use of coercion and/or force articulated?
- Have all injuries (visible and non-visible) been documented? Were injuries existing or new?
- Was there any property damage? Theft? Burglary?
- Did the victim report being strangled ("choked")? If so, was it described in detail?
- Did the victim need medical attention?
- Were all spontaneous statements captured?

### Did your officers assist the victim with safety planning?

- Did the officer(s) provide the victim with information about local service providers?
- Did the officer(s) utilize a threat/risk assessment tool with the victim?

### Did your officer gather comprehensive information about the suspect?

- Was an arrest made?
- What was the emotional state of the suspect (what did they report they were thinking and feeling)?
- Did the officer(s) utilize a threat/risk assessment tool with the suspect?
- Was the proper protocol followed if the suspect was not on the scene?
- Are there any active warrants out for the suspect? Has the suspect been the respondent to a protection order in the past?
- Does the suspect have access to weapons?







Did your officers ask about and capture details regarding **non-visible injuries** that can occur from strangulation? Officers can use a scale of 1 – 10, 10 being the most extreme pain, with victims and include this information in the report.

- Difficulty breathing/unable to breathe, hyperventilation
- Raspy voice, hoarse voice, coughing, unable to speak
- Trouble swallowing, painful to swallow
- Neck pain
- Nausea, vomiting,
- Involuntary urination or defecation
- Dizziness, fainting/light-headed
- Headaches, head “rush”, ears ringing
- Loss of consciousness (how long?)
- Change in mental status (disoriented, combative, memory loss, “spaced out”)

Did your officer ask about and document **visible injuries** from the strangulation?

- Petechiae (pinpoint red spots above the area of constriction)
- Hemorrhaging, bruising
- Scratch marks, scrapes, abrasions
- Bloody nose, broken nose
- Finger nail impressions
- Swelling of the neck or face
- Pulled/missing hair, bumps on head
- Skull fracture, concussion
- Swollen tongue, swollen lips
- Is a diagram of injuries included with the report?
- Were there any existing (old) injuries?

Did your officer gather and document **comprehensive information about the suspect**?

- Was an arrest made?
- Did the suspect have any injuries? Were injuries identified on the suspect that may have been caused by the victim in self-defense?
- Could the suspect see the victim's face during the strangulation?
- What was the emotional state of the suspect (what did they report they were thinking and feeling)?
- Are there any active warrants out for the suspect?
- Have there been protection orders taken out on the suspect in the past?
- Was the proper protocol followed if the suspect was not on the scene?

Did your officer **discuss** the following with the victim?

- The need for follow-up photos.
- Receiving medical attention. Symptoms and injuries can occur days or weeks after the strangulation, including miscarriage if pregnant.
- Information about local service providers.

## Response to Non-Lethal Strangulation Report Review Checklist

Are your officers aware of the state's strangulation statute/law, if applicable?

- Does the report **thoroughly articulate the elements of the strangulation crime** that occurred?

Does the report include all needed information?

- How was the strangulation case received?
- Is the time of the call recorded (including time of incident, time of dispatch, time of arrival)?
- Is the relationship of the parties identified?
- Is there a valid protection order in place?
- Are the events that took place pre and post strangulation documented?
- Has strangulation occurred in the past?
- Was information about previous incidents (strangulation, domestic/sexual violence, threats, stalking), including frequency, documented?
- Were all witnesses interviewed and documented?
- What was used to strangle the victim (one hand, two hands, forearm, other body part, ligature, etc.)?
- Were other weapons involved?
- Did the strangulation take place from the front or from behind?
- Was the victim wearing jewelry?
- Was the suspect wearing jewelry? Gloves?
- Is the suspect right or left handed, if known?
- How long did the strangulation last? How many times was the victim strangled?
- Was the victim also smothered?
- Was the victim also shaken while being strangled?
- Was the victim's head pushed into a wall, floor, or other surface? Was there property damage?
- Did the victim attempt to protect themselves?
- What was the emotional state of the victim (what did they report they were thinking and feeling)?
- Did the suspect say anything to the victim before/while/after the strangulation occurred?
- Did the victim say anything to the suspect before/while/after the strangulation occurred?
- What was the suspect's demeanor before, during and after the incident?
- Did the victim describe what the suspect's face looked like during the incident?
- Why and how did the suspect stop strangling the victim?
- Was medical attention provided?
- Is the scene(s) concisely described/diagramed?
- Are all crimes that co-occurred with the strangulation thoroughly documented (sexual assault, kidnapping, property damage, etc.)?



