
A MODEL PROTOCOL FOR CROSS-AGENCY RESPONSE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

This Domestic Violence Protocol provides a framework for an active relationship between community advocates and the local law enforcement agency. This document is intended to assist advocates and law enforcement with defining their cross-agency working relationship in order to implement best practices in domestic violence response. The protocols referenced in this document should serve as a basis for agencies to tailor to the needs of their individual jurisdictions and available community resources.



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OFFICE OF THE NEVADA ATTORNEY GENERAL



Community-Based Organizations

Organizations not affiliated with the criminal justice system can often assist in meeting the needs of a victim that the criminal justice system cannot. Some of the assistance offered by the community-based organizations includes 24-hour crisis hotlines, emergency shelters, transitional housing, individual and group support, counseling, advocacy, and other supportive services. Community education and professional training are often available as well.

Many of the community victim services agencies have advocates who can offer assistance when a victim applies for an Order of Protection. This affords an opportunity to intervene to disseminate information to the victim, thereby potentially interrupting the cycle of violence. Most agencies have advocates available to accompany a victim to various hearings to offer support and information about the process. Some agencies have advocates available to accompany a victim to various hearings to offer support and a measure of reassurance.

VICTIM ISSUES

Victims of domestic violence often have had negative experiences with the criminal justice system. Law Enforcement officers must be cognizant of this and devote the time necessary to attempt to establish rapport and open dialogue with a victim. A victim advocate can be instrumental in developing a positive relationship between the victim and the criminal justice system resulting in greater safety for victims, their family/pets and successful investigations.

Law Enforcement Protocol

Dispatcher

A dispatcher who receives a domestic violence incident will:

1. Assign priority based on the following factors:
 - a) Whether the parties are separated;
 - b) Whereabouts of the suspect;
 - c) Use of weapons;
 - d) Nature of any injuries;
 - e) Threats of future harm;
 - f) Whether the incident was physical, verbal or involved other types of abuse
 - g) Is there a history of domestic violence; and
 - h) Presence and/or involvement of children or other surrogate victims (elderly, pets, etc.).
2. Reassure the Victim that help is on the way.
3. Once all necessary information is obtained and law enforcement has confirmed the scene is secure, the dispatcher will contact the local domestic violence service provider so an advocate can be provided immediately or as soon as available.

Contact Victim Services Advocate

Contact the local domestic violence service provider as early in the process as possible. The victim advocate may be called to the scene of any domestic violence incident whether or not an arrest is made. The victim advocate shall assist the victim which may include, but is not limited to:

1. Assisting with the development of a safety plan for the victim(s);
2. Providing referrals to community resources and relevant phone numbers;
3. Providing transportation to a medical facility, shelter, etc.;
4. Advising the victim on Emergency Orders of Protection;
5. Informing victims on the functions of VINE (the nation's leading victim notification network), assisting victims with downloading the VINELink app on their smart phone, helping them create an account on VINE to track their offender if an arrest has been made or showing them how to use the service provider feature so they can access services as needs arise; and
6. Contacting the animal shelter or Humane Society to arrange emergency shelter for household pets when necessary.

Victim Services On-Scene Responders

The purpose of victim services providers is to keep victims informed, connected to resources and prepared for a variety of situations dependent upon the nature of their case. The victim advocate in a domestic violence case can assist the victim in understanding the criminal justice process, in assessing their needs and in determining how to best meet those needs.

After assessing a domestic violence scene for the level of danger, the patrol officer should consider whether or not to call out an on-scene victim services advocate. Officers should consider calling an advocate when any of the following situations arise:

1. There is serious physical injury to the victim;
2. There are children at the scene that have witnessed the events and may be traumatized;
3. Shelter is needed for the victim and/or the children and/or pets;
4. The suspect has made threats or used weapons;
5. The suspect has not been taken into custody;
6. There are basic unmet needs;
7. The victim is emotionally distraught and/or needs a support person; and
8. When it is in accordance with departmental policy.

The on-scene victim services advocate will assess the needs of the victim and may:

1. Calm the victim and de-escalate the situation as much as possible;
2. Assess immediate needs of both the victim and family members;
3. Locate any on-scene children and assess immediate needs including additional personnel to assist with childcare;
4. Provide an emotional support person for the victim;
5. Facilitate transportation to a shelter or other destination;
6. Obtain minimal emergency supplies;
7. Coordinate, with the officer, a brief history of the occurrence and the background of the couple;
8. Develop a plan of action with the victim, including immediate and short-term goals entailing safety planning, emergency orders of protection, shelter information and other referrals as necessary;
9. Explain victims' rights;
10. Provide information, when applicable, on the Victims of Crime Program and how to apply for the funds; and
11. Provide referrals to agencies that can provide long-term assistance.

If the scene is not safe or if the suspect is not arrested, the victim services advocate should meet the victim at a neutral location.