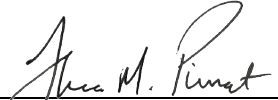


<b>LEESBURG POLICE DEPARTMENT REGULATIONS AND GENERAL ORDERS MANUAL</b>		
General Order Number: 133	Section: ADMINISTRATION	Effective Date: SEPTEMBER 2022
Title: <b>LETHALITY ASSESSMENT PROGRAM</b>		
Accreditation Standards: N/A		
Review Date:  JANUARY 2024	Total Pages:  3	Chief of Police:  

**I. POLICY**

- A. The Leesburg Police Department implemented the Lethality Assessment Program in January 2016. The program is an evidence based instrument for Law enforcement to:
  - 1. Identify victims of intimate partner violence who are at the greatest risk of being killed, and
  - 2. Encourage them to utilize the services of a domestic violence service program LAWS.
  
- B. It is the policy of the Leesburg Police Department to use the Lethality screen at the scene of a domestic violence incident to identify victims of domestic violence in potentially lethal situations, and follow the established criteria to place those victims in immediate and direct contact with a domestic violence LAWS hotline advocate. Officers administering the Lethality Screen shall ask the victim the Lethality Screen and when a victim is assessed as being in High Danger, call the LAWS hotline and ask the victim to speak with a hotline advocate.
  
- C. In addition to the procedures outlined the responding officer shall complete the Lethality Screen when he/she responds to a domestic violence complaint involving intimate partners (married, separated, divorced, live with or have lived together, have children in common, same sex partners, dating partners or ex-dating partners (NOT to include anyone 15 years old or younger), and if one or more of the following conditions exist:
  - 1. There is reason to believe an assault or act that constitutes domestic violence has occurred, whether or not there is an arrest.
  - 2. There is a belief or sense on the part of the responding officer that once the victim is no longer in the care or presence of the responding officer the potential for assault or danger is high.
  - 3. Repeated calls for domestic violence complaints at the same location involving the same parties.
  - 4. The responding officer believes one should be administered based on his/her experience, training and instinct.

**II. LETHALITY SCREEN QUESTIONS**

- A. To initiate the Lethality screen and corresponded LAP response protocol, the responding officer should:
  - 1. Advise the victim in a positive, supportive tone that she/he will be asked a series of questions to help the officer determine the immediate potential for danger to the victim. Example: I'd like to ask you a few questions that will help me understand your situation a little better.
  - 2. Officers shall turn off any body camera/recording devices.
  - 3. Administer the Lethality Screen outside the presence, hearing and awareness of the abusive partner.
  - 4. Ask the questions in the order they are listed on the form and in the manner they are written.
  - 5. Ask all the questions in assessing the victim. The more questions the victim responds to positively, the clearer and more immediate the potential for danger is to the victim.

**III. ASSESSING RESPONSES TO LETHALITY QUESTIONS**

- A. Once the responding officer asks the questions on the Lethality Screen, he/she shall handle the information as follows:

1. A single “yes” or positive response by the victim to questions #1, 2 or 3 reflects a High Danger situation and automatically triggers the hotline call. Officers shall still ask the remaining questions, as they will help the officer gather a more comprehensive understanding of the victim’s situation before calling the hotline. If the victim gives negative responses to questions #1-3, but positive responses to four or more of the questions #4 thru 11, this reflects a High danger situation and triggers the hotline call.
2. “No” or negative responses to all of the assessment questions, or positive responses to less than four of the questions # 4 thru 11, may still trigger the hotline call if the responding officer believes it is appropriate. The officer should ask the victim the final question regardless of the results in questions 1-11: Is there anything else that worries you about your safety? If the victim answered yes to the question what worries you, the response may aid the officer in his/her assessment.
3. Similar to the subsection above, the officer may also assess the victim as High Danger if the officer believes it is appropriate when:
  - a. The victim declines to answer all the questions on the Lethality Screen, or
  - b. The victim does not answer one or several of the questions so the victim does not respond to “yes” to enough questions to be assessed at the High Danger according to the protocol.
  - c. If the victim’s responses do not reflect High Danger, but the officer’s “read” of the situation indicates High Danger, the officer should make the hotline call.

IV. LETHALITY QUESTION RESPONSES – NON-HIGH DANGER

- A. If the victim is not assessed as Non High Danger after the Lethality screen is completed, the officer shall:
  1. Advise the victim that domestic violence is dangerous and sometimes fatal.
  2. Inform the victim to watch for the signs listed in the assessment because they may convey to the victim that she/he is at an increased level of danger.
  3. Refer the victim to LAWS. The officer should volunteer to call the hotline for the victim if the victim would like to speak with the hotline advocate. If the victim agrees, the officer does not need to remain on the scene during the victim-advocate conversation.
  4. Provide the victim with the case number, the officer’s contact information and Victim Witness /Laws brochures to ensure the victim is aware of resources available for further assistance.

V. LETHALITY QUESTION RESPONSES – HIGH DANGER VICTIMS AND THE HOTLINE CALL

- A. If a High Danger assessment is made the hotline call shall be implemented as follows:
  1. Advise the victim that her/his situation has indicated to the officer that the victim is at an increased level of danger, and that people in the victim’s situation have been killed or seriously injured. Convey this information in an understanding manner.
  2. Advise the victim that you would like to call the LAWS Hotline and invite the victim to speak with a hotline advocate. In communicating with the victim, be encouraging and supportive.
  3. If the victim requires the assistance of an interpreter, the officer shall inform the LAWS advocate of the language desired and give the LAWS advocate his/her cell phone #. The LAWS advocate will then initiate a three way call with the interpreter and victim.

VI. IF VICTIM DECLINES TO SPEAK WITH HOTLINE ADVOCATE – OFFICERS SHALL

- A. Tell the victim that the officer will still contact the domestic violence hotline to receive guidance on how to proceed with the situation. Do not use the victim’s phone to call the LAWS hotline.
- B. Tell the victim that she/he may decline to speak with the hotline, but that the officer would like the victim to reconsider speaking with the hotline advocate and
- C. While the officer is still on the phone with the hotline advocate, the officer asks the victim if she/he has reconsidered and would now like to speak with the hotline advocate.
- D. If the victim continues to decline to speak with the hotline advocate, the officer should do the same thing he/she would do for a victim who was not assessed as a High Danger, including conveying information that the hotline advocate has suggested about safety planning and requesting a safe phone number for an advocate to follow up with the victim.

- E. If the victim agrees to speak with a hotline advocate, the officer shall call the hotline number, introduce him/herself, and advise the hotline advocate that he/she has made a High Danger assessment. The officer shall provide responses to a brief set of questions prompted by the hotline advocate.
- F. During the conversation between the hotline advocate and the victim, the officer shall stay on the scene and allow the victim privacy while she/he speaks with the hotline advocate.
- G. At an appropriate time during the conversation between the victim and the hotline advocate, the hotline advocate will ask to speak with the officer to conclude the call.
- H. The officer shall be guided by the discussion with the hotline advocate for further assistance. Officers shall provide reasonable assistance to the victim if help is requested, such as making arrangements or assisting with transporting the victim to a safe place.

VII. FILING THE LETHALITY SCREEN

Officers who have completed the Lethality Screens shall place the original Lethality Screen form in the CIS mail box for the Family Crimes Detective/ LAP Representative prior to the end of their shift.

VIII. THE LPD LAP REPRESENTATIVE SHALL

- A. Facilitate LAP training.
- B. Maintain and report all LAP data.
- C. Serve as a liaison, communicate and meet with participating LAP agency representatives and agencies.
- D. Provide LAP training to all new entry-level officers prior to officers being advanced to solo patrol.