Throwing Victims a Lifeline

What We’ve Learned Through Implementing Lethality Assessment in Utah

- 3 people died in the Boston Marathon bombing on April 15, 2013
- An average of 3.4 women die EVERY DAY in America from domestic violence
8th Annual DV Symposium - 9/8-9/2016

5C1 - Throwing Victims a Lifeline - Lethality Assessment - Boardman & Kelley

- 2,753 died on September 11, 2001
- 18,615 women have died from Domestic Violence crimes since that date in America
  (As of September 1, 2016)

Collateral Consequences of DV

- Multiple collateral homicides
- Sexual competitor homicides
- Homelessness, drug abuse and overdoses
- Indirect deaths and near deaths
- Suicides
- Mass shooting perpetrators often have DV backgrounds
- Police officer deaths
Victim Participation

85 per cent of DV victims do not participate in prosecution

Why???

It Doesn’t Matter!!!

We need to do our jobs!
"As a child, I heard in my home doctors and ambulance men say, 'Mrs. Stewart, you must've done something to provoke him.' 'Mrs. Stewart, it takes two to make an argument.' Wrong. Wrong! My mother did nothing to provoke that -- and even if she had, violence is NEVER EVER a choice that a man should make. Ever."

-- Patrick Stewart
Why Lethality Assessment?

- Only 4% of DV homicide victims nationwide had ever received DV services.
- Research consistently shows future assaults are reduced significantly if victim receives DV services (one study says 60 per cent reduction in serious assaults).
- 50% of homicide victims had some previous involvement with law enforcement.
- GOAL: Connect the highest risk victims with services.

Why Lethality Assessment?

- Victims often significantly underestimate the danger they are in.
- GOAL: Assist victims in making informed decisions. “The primary purpose of the LAP is to educate women regarding their own danger.” - Jacquelyn Campbell, Ph D
“Where something is predictable, it is preventable.”

-- Jacquelyn Campbell, PhD

Prediction is very hard to do, especially if it is about the future.

-- Yogi Berra
Jacquelyn Campbell Research

- Johns Hopkins School of Nursing professor
- Research since 1980 on common risk factors for future lethal intimate partner violence
- Risk Assessment instrument in medical setting beginning in 1985
- 20 questions and protocol – for use in a medical setting

Lethality Assessment Protocol (LAP) in Maryland

- Designed for LEA first responders
- Since 2005, 100 per cent of Maryland LEA use LAP
- Maryland has had a 34 per cent reduction in DV Homicides and serious DV assaults
Lethality Assessment

LAP is done by law enforcement and first responders if:

1) Intimate partner relationship AND:
2) Probable cause assault has occurred, OR
2) Repeat LEA calls to parties or to location, OR
2) ‘Gut Feeling’ of officer indicates

Domestic Violence Lethality Screen for First Responders
**“Screened IN” Result**

- Show victim the assessment and explain results to her
- Make call to DV hotline – NOT on victim’s phone
- Ask victim to speak with crisis worker
- If victim declines, emphasize importance and then ask victim to reconsider
- If victim still declines, follow next steps

**“Screened OUT” Result**

- Advise victims that DV is dangerous, violence is likely to continue and may increase
- Ask victims to look for signs of danger in her life
- Refer victim to services
- Give victim contact info
- Proceed with criminal case, if any
Maryland Results (So Far)

- When LAP used, 54 per cent screened in
- 59 per cent of victims screened in spoke with hotline resource worker
- 33 per cent of victims screened in sought services
- Average length of time for officers was 12 minutes at scene

- Between 2006 and 2008, number of victims who participated in services after LAP who died:
  - ZERO.

Victim Statements

- “It helped me see that I have spent a lot of time minimizing my experiences so I could be normal.”
- “It helped me to know how much danger I was in and it scared me.”
- “This makes me more resolved not to go back.”
- “It made me strong in supporting my decision to be free of stress and harm.”
Ripple Effects of LAP on the system:

- New medical protocols
- New dispatch protocols
- Increased inter department collaborations
- Increased bail and release conditions
- More protective orders
- Serial batterers identified between agencies

Minnesota Bench Guide (2009)

- How To Use The Domestic Violence Risk Assessment
  - Obtain information regarding these factors through all appropriate and available sources
    - Potential sources include police, victim witness staff, prosecutors, defense attorneys, court administrators, bail evaluators, pre-sentence investigators, probation, custody evaluators, parties and attorneys
  - Communicate to practitioners that you expect that complete and timely information on these factors will be provided to the court
    - This ensures that risk information is both sought for and provided to the court at each stage of the process and that risk assessment processes are institutionalized
    - Review report forms and practices of others in the legal system to ensure that the risk assessment is as comprehensive as possible
  - Expect consistent and coordinated responses to domestic violence
    - Communities whose practitioners enforce court orders, work in concert to hold alleged perpetrators accountable and provide support to victims are the most successful in preventing serious injuries and domestic homicides
Do not elicit safety or risk information from victims in open court
- Safety concerns can affect the victim’s ability to provide accurate information in open court
- Soliciting information from victims in a private setting (by someone other than the judge) improves the accuracy of information and also serves as an opportunity to provide information and resources to the victim

Provide victims information on risk assessment factors and the option of consulting with confidential advocates
- Information and access to advocates improves victim safety and the quality of victims’ risk assessments and, as a result, the court’s own risk assessments

Note that this list of risk factors is not exclusive
- The listed factors are the ones most commonly present when the risk of serious harm or death exists
- Additional factors exist which assist in prediction of re-assault
- Victims may face and fear other risks such as homelessness, poverty, criminal charges, loss of children or family supports

Remember that the level and type of risk can change over time
- The most dangerous time period is the days to months after the alleged perpetrator discovers that the victim
  - might attempt to separate from the alleged perpetrator or to terminate the relationship
  - has disclosed or is attempting to disclose the abuse to others, especially in the legal system

Utah Pilot Areas – Beginning September 1, 2015
How is the LAP being piloted in Utah?

Train law enforcement and victim service providers to partner and use the standardized, evidence-based lethality screener

Reduce duplication of effort--victims get screened once in a way that makes sense to first responders and victim advocates/emergency shelters

Evaluate and create a blueprint for expanded implementation in SFY17

The Lethality Assessment Program – Maryland Model

Respond and Assess  Connect with Advocate  Shelter and Services
Utah’s Lethality Assessment Protocol

- **Law Enforcement**
  - Screens victims to identify those in “High Danger”

- **Lead Victim Service Provider**
  - Provides services (shelter, legal advocacy, etc) to victim if he/she desires

- **Support Victim Service Provider**
  - Supports Lead provider with backup services

Officer-Initiated Screens

1,150 LAP Screens Completed
- **High Danger**: 692 (61%)
- Only 40 were done because of officer’s “gut feeling”
692 High Danger Victims
- 543 Spoke with Hotline Advocate: 224 (77%)
- 11% were Previous Clients

Accessed Services: 187 (27% of high danger victims)
- 68%: Crisis/Ongoing Counseling
- 65%: Case Management
- 44%: Legal Advocacy
- 32%: Shelter
Advocate-initiated Screens

991 LAP screens completed
- High Danger: 886 (89%)
- All spoke with an advocate
- 24% were previous clients

Advocate-initiated Screens

641 accessed services (65%)
- 68%: Crisis/Ongoing Counseling
- 88%: Case Management
- 13%: Legal Advocacy
- 62%: Shelter
**Additional Benefits**

**Victims/Survivors**
- Increased awareness of danger
- Greater access to services
- Access to immediate safety planning
- Empowerment

**Law Enforcement & Victim Service Providers**
- Improved relationships
- Decline in repeat calls
- Better understanding of a survivor’s situation
- Encourages creativity

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**Future Plans**

- Identifying and training new partners
  - Bringing on new victim service providers and their law enforcement partners
- Identifying challenges and problem-solving to make the LAP a success
- Most importantly, reducing the domestic violence related homicide in Utah
I freed a thousand slaves. I could have freed a thousand more if only they knew they were slaves.

-- Harriet Tubman