Appendix 2F

Training Memo—Accurate Coding of 911 Domestic Abuse Calls

Why is accurate coding important?

- Sets a foundation for interagency response and intervention.

- Helps reduce the many cases that officers respond to that are coded as "domestic."

- Supports the community response to domestic violence by developing the best possible information about the volume and scope of reported incidents.

- Contributes to a better understanding of whether and how diverse members of the community see 911 and the criminal legal system as a source of help.

Who has a role?

- Caller

- Call taker

- Dispatcher

- Responding officer

- Supervisor

All contribute to an **information loop** that establishes what has happened and who is involved and in what ways, and thereby helps to determine the nature of the emergency and the response priority.

What is involved?

- Accurate coding is influenced by:

  - The nature of the emergency and response priority

  - The opportunity to develop information about the call

  - Updates from officers on the scene

- Accurate recoding requires recognizing that domestic violence encompasses a wide range of ongoing actions of abuse, coercion,

harassment, stalking, and violence, and callers may be seeking help accordingly. For example:

- A physical attack is underway.
- Stalking behavior is frightening someone.
- Property is being destroyed or someone is being otherwise intimidated.
- A parent is fearful when a child has not been returned from visitation.
- An order for protection is violated.
- Neighbors, family members, and bystanders ("third party" callers) hear or see someone in distress or danger.

- Accurate coding rests on an information loop that begins with the caller and includes the call taker, dispatcher, and responding officers.

- Exercise caution when assigning the code:
  - Capture the many kinds of actions that constitute domestic violence.
  - Avoid using a domestic code as a general broad category for calls involving parties who are merely acquainted with one another.
  - **Do not recode a call as non-domestic because it does not involve an allegation of physical assault.**
  - Recode as non-domestic <u>only</u> after establishing that there is no domestic relationship between the parties.
  - On information from a responding officer, recode as domestic a call that was initially coded as non-domestic.

- Steps:
  1. Initial coding: Call taker makes initial determination of who is involved and how and whether the relationship and events warrant an initial domestic-related code (per list).
  2. Final coding: Dispatcher obtains update from officer on scene and adjusts coding <u>if warranted and supported by additional information</u>.

- Considerations:

- o Does <u>immediate</u> information provided by the caller identify the situation as a likely domestic abuse–related call?
  Example: "I/we need help because…My husband….My ex-wife…My former boyfriend…Our daughter's ex-husband…My mom and dad….is threatening …just tried to choke …is trying to break in…left 30 messages on the answering machine threatening to kill us…are fighting"

- o Can the caller describe the relationship between the parties who are the subject of the call?
  Example: "The couple next door is fighting…He's saying, 'you're my girlfriend'…I saw them in the bar and it looks like they're boyfriend and girlfriend…They live together…"

- o Has this address been the location of prior DOM or VOP calls?

Codes

It is expected that most domestic abuse–related calls will fit one of the specific codes listed, with exceptions in extraordinary situations such as an abduction and homicide that occurs in the context of domestic abuse.

Most domestic abuse–related calls will be assigned one of the following codes:

- DOM = Call is related to one or more of the following actions or events involving family or household members (see definitions):
  - o Harm, injury, or threats
  - o Stalking and harassment
  - o Destruction of property
  - o Threats to take children
  - o Attempts to break into the victim's residence
  - o Other disturbance involving family and household members

- VOP = Call is reporting violation of a current order for protection, harassment restraining order or violation of a no-contact order issued in a pending domestic violence criminal case.

  NOTE:

An officer dispatched to a call coded DOM who finds that there is no domestic relationship between the parties should notify the dispatcher to recode the call.

A call should not be recoded simply because it does not involve an allegation of physical assault.

Definitions

Domestic Abuse: physical harm; bodily injury; assault; the infliction of fear of imminent physical harm, bodily injury or assault; terroristic threats; criminal sexual conduct; or interference with an emergency call between family or household members. For purposes of the 911 response policy and accurate coding, domestic abuse also includes violations of orders for protection and harassment restraining orders obtained by one family or household member against another (Minn. Stat. §518B).

Domestic abuse also refers to crimes that are committed by one family or household member against another, such as damage to property; taking children or threatening to take children; harming or threatening to harm pets or other animals; damaging property; attempting to break in; stealing cars or other property, and other crimes.

Family and household members: spouses; former spouses; parents and children; persons related by blood; persons who are residing together or who have resided together in the past; persons who have a child or are currently expecting a child in common regardless of whether they have been married or have lived together at any time; a man and a women if the woman is pregnant and the man is alleged to be the father regardless of whether they have been married or have lived together at any time; and persons involved in a significant romantic or sexual relationship. Minn. Stat. §518B.