

Planning and Conducting Best-Practice Assessments of Community Response to Domestic Violence

Criminal Justice System Response: Police Patrol Response

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Domestic Violence Intervention Best Practice Checklists

Police Patrol Response

Best practices in the intervention response to domestic violence maximize safety for victims, hold offenders accountable while offering opportunities to change, and set an expectation of agency and practitioner accountability to one another and to victims and offenders. Characteristics of such best practices include:

1. Adherence to an interagency approach and collective intervention goals
2. Attention to the context and severity of abuse into each intervention
3. Recognition that most domestic violence is a patterned crime requiring continuing engagement with victims and offenders
4. Sure and swift consequences for continued abuse
5. Use of the power of the criminal justice system to send messages of help and accountability
6. Actions that reduce unintended consequences and the disparity of impact on victims and offenders

The attached best-practice assessment checklists have been designed to assist emergency communications (911), police patrol services, and CCRs in answering questions like *Are we centralizing and strengthening safety for victims of domestic violence in our community? How are we doing? Are we making things better or worse? Do our efforts enhance or diminish offender accountability?*

The checklists lend themselves to a relatively quick review of case files or reports by an interagency team to help your community's intervention agencies determine their adherence to best practices. We recommend that you follow these simple steps in conducting the case review.

1. Determine which intervention agency or agencies will be reviewed. Do so with their full knowledge and consent of the nature and scope of your review. Transparency is key.
2. Assemble a small group of practitioners who will review the files and report their collective findings and feedback to agency heads. This process benefits from the dialogue, reflection, and discussion that is possible with a small set of experienced practitioners, rather than relying on the limited perspective of a single person.
 - ✓ The work group consists ideally of three to eight members.
 - ✓ The team should have relevant interagency representation. For example, an assessment focused on police patrol would include representation from 911, patrol and prosecution.
 - ✓ The team should also contain at least one member who is a community-based advocate for victims of domestic violence.
 - ✓ Develop a confidentiality agreement governing how case file information will be treated and when and to whom it will be released. (It is equally important to protect the confidentiality of parties involved in a domestic violence incident as it is to protect the reputation of the officer who responded to the call and the respect of the agency head who generously offered reports for review.)
3. Identify and appoint a team leader who will:
 - ✓ Identify, gather and photocopy "case files" (e.g. investigation or patrol reports).
 - ✓ Schedule and facilitate work group meetings.
 - ✓ Keep a written record of the work group's discussions and findings.

4. Gather and photocopy case files and schedule all of the meetings.
 - ✓ We recommend meeting four to ten times total, completing all the work within a period of three months.
 - ✓ Use these guidelines for the numbers of files to sample, based on the scope of your review:
 - 911 call receiving and dispatching: 15 to 50 audio recordings of domestic violence–related calls (and, if possible, a printed transcript of the call) AND recordings and printouts of the corresponding contact between dispatchers and patrol officers for each call (typically referred to as “CAD” or computer-aided dispatch), if available
 - Police patrol response: 15 to 50 patrol incident or arrest reports for domestic violence–related cases, divided between arrest and non-arrest cases
 - Police follow-up investigations: 15 to 50 follow-up investigation reports for domestic violence–related cases
 - Prosecution charging: 15 to 50 sets of prosecution case files, divided equally between cases charged, declined, and any deferred prosecution or other diversion
5. Review the files:
 - ✓ Team members use the worksheet as a guide to identify practices that are included or missing in the response.
 - ✓ Work through each case file paying close attention to whether and how it reflects the practices listed on the worksheet (use one worksheet per case).
 - ✓ Check off all practices that are evident in the call, report, or file.
 - ✓ Note what is missing.
 - ✓ Use the notes column to record additional observations, questions, or examples related to the case and the practitioner’s response.
 - ✓ Complete the case review summary at the end of the worksheet.
6. Work as a team to articulate feedback and recommendations for agency heads:
 - ✓ **NOTE: Because a practice is not evident in the case record does not necessarily mean that it does not happen.** It may happen but not be documented.
 - ✓ Affirm that team members are in agreement on the conclusions.
 - ✓ Identify any areas of practice where the team is not in agreement or where additional investigation is necessary in order to reach any conclusions.
 - ✓ Provide specific feedback to the appropriate agency on its response to domestic violence cases, including examples of best practices that are in place, as well as recommended changes.

Report ID# _____
Review written patrol report

Best Practices in Police Patrol Response to Domestic Violence	Notes NA = Not applicable
Instructions: Check all practices evident in the written report; give examples when possible.	
1. Document background of incident and the officer's actions, including:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Time of officers' arrival and time of the incident <input type="checkbox"/> Relevant 911 information, including details about any violence or threats communicated in the 911 call <input type="checkbox"/> Immediate statements of either party and witnesses <input type="checkbox"/> A complete description of the scene <input type="checkbox"/> Any existing orders for protection, harassment restraining orders, criminal case no-contact orders, probation holds, warrants, prior convictions <input type="checkbox"/> Threats suspect has made to victim if victim sought or cooperated with help from the courts or police <input type="checkbox"/> Indicators of stalking <input type="checkbox"/> Indicators of strangulation <input type="checkbox"/> Summary of actions taken by responding officers (e.g., arrest, non-arrest, attempts to locate, transport, referrals, victim notification, seizing firearms, rationale for self-defense or predominant aggressor determination) <input type="checkbox"/> Description of evidence collected (e.g. pictures, statements) <input type="checkbox"/> Documentation of predominant aggressor¹ determination when both parties have used or are alleged to have used violence against each other 	
2. Document information specific to each witness and party involved, including:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> His/her account of events and responses to interview <input type="checkbox"/> Observations corroborating (or not) accounts of events <input type="checkbox"/> Relationship to witnesses or other parties involved <input type="checkbox"/> Identification, addresses, workplace, phone numbers and other means of locating the person for follow-up <input type="checkbox"/> Injuries or mobility impairment <input type="checkbox"/> Emotional state/demeanor, including intoxication <input type="checkbox"/> Acts of intimidation or aggression, use of weapons 	
3. Interview the victim and document:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Responses to the risk questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you think he/she will seriously injure or kill you or your children? What makes you think so? What makes you think not? 2. How frequently and seriously does he/she intimidate, threaten, or assault you? Is it changing? Getting worse? Getting better? 	

¹ "Predominant aggressor" defined as the party who by his or her actions in the incident and through known history and actions has caused the most physical harm, fear, and intimidation against the other. "Predominant" does not mean the party who uses physical violence first or calls 911 first.

Best Practices in Police Patrol Response to Domestic Violence	Notes NA = Not applicable
Instructions: Check all practices evident in the written report; give examples when possible.	
<p>3. Describe the time you were the most frightened or injured by him/her.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Threats to the victim for seeking help, particularly regarding help sought from the police or courts <input type="checkbox"/> Name and phone numbers of someone who can always reach the victim, recorded in a confidential location 	
<i>4. Obtain additional information related to the suspect, including:</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Gone-on-Arrival: details about where the suspect might be and where he/she might stay when not with the victim <input type="checkbox"/> Suspect's county and state of residence for the past <u>10 years</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Whether Miranda is given and or a request for an attorney was made, and when this occurred <input type="checkbox"/> Whether a custodial interview of the suspect was conducted <input type="checkbox"/> Spontaneous statements given by the suspect after arrest 	
<i>5. Obtain additional information related to the case, including:</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Children at the scene: Details regarding their presence, involvement, and welfare <input type="checkbox"/> Existence of any party's language, communication or cognition barriers <input type="checkbox"/> Description of medical help offered or used, the medical facility that was used and a medical release obtained <input type="checkbox"/> Presence or involvement of elderly people <input type="checkbox"/> Presence or involvement of people with disabilities 	
<p>Patrol Response – List gaps in best practices</p>	