



## Chapter 2

# 911 Emergency Communications Center



## 911 EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS CENTER

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### **FRAMEWORK: BUILDING A SAFETY-ORIENTED RESPONSE**

When telecommunicators are organized, trained, and prepared to determine who is in danger and how, there are multiple opportunities to deliver a safety-oriented response to domestic abuse calls. Accurately recognizing and communicating the risk that one party poses to another can enhance the immediate safety of responding officers and everyone at the scene, as well as the extent to which subsequent interveners can address ongoing safety. An effective response requires solid coordination and communication between call takers, dispatchers, and patrol officers.

An effective response also requires that emergency responders have the ability to communicate effectively with callers. Beyond the inherent challenges of communicating with someone who is in the midst of an emergency, call-takers must be adequately prepared to respond to callers who are immigrants, who have Limited English Proficiency (LEP) or who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (Deaf/HOH). A robust language access plan that is widely distributed throughout the emergency communications center along with regular training and oversight is critical to an effective response.

Call-takers must be prepared to overcome fear and distrust that a caller might experience when calling 911. Those who are Deaf/HOH often mistrust hearing systems and institutions, particularly those connected with law enforcement. The caller, or someone known to the caller, may have had past experiences where call-takers were unprepared to respond using an accessible platform such as a relay service or text, which can in turn undermine the caller's confidence in accessing help. Callers who are immigrants, especially those who are undocumented, may fear deportation if they come into contact with police. They may be unwilling or unable to speak freely and may even decline an offer of an interpreter. Call-takers must exercise patience and respond in a calm and reassuring manner even if a caller appears to be resistant to speaking with them.

Domestic violence occurs along a continuum of severity and urgency.<sup>1</sup> A call may signal a high level of immediate danger to the victim, responding officers, and others at the scene. It may involve physical or sexual violence, as well as abduction of an adult or child. The offender may be violating a protection order, destroying property, or stalking, intimidating, threatening to kill, hitting, beating,

strangling, stabbing, or shooting a victim. The victim may be resisting or forestalling an assault. There may be quickly escalating physical violence or threats with a gun or other weapon. Or the caller may be reporting an event with little urgency, where no one has been hurt or is in immediate danger. When a suspect has left the scene (often referred to as “gone on arrival” or GOA) calls can shift quickly from a lower to a highly urgent priority if the suspect suddenly reappears. Based on national studies, between 42 and 66% of suspects are gone on arrival. These suspects are more likely to have criminal histories and twice as likely to re-abuse.<sup>2</sup>

Callers are often injured, frightened, or in danger of imminent attack.<sup>3</sup> They seek reassurance that a squad has been informed and need to know that help is on the way. They may not be free to speak openly about what is happening and who is involved. Difficulties in communication produced by fear, injury, strangulation, and stress may be further complicated by language differences, hearing or speaking disabilities, cognitive disabilities, or intoxication. Sometimes the caller offers a detailed description of the immediate threat which can be confirmed with a few clarifying questions. At other times the call-taker must determine the nature of the emergency within the constraints of the caller’s freedom to safely and openly relay information. The circumstances under which a victim of domestic violence calls 911 for help requires call-takers to communicate effectively and respectfully in the caller’s preferred language and preferred method of communication in order to obtain accurate and thorough information.

As call-takers obtain details about the nature of the emergency, they must stay alert to and ask whether it is safe for the caller to remain on the line and whether a caller can safely answer open-ended questions. If the caller does not want the suspect to know that 911 has been called, the call taker may have to ask brief yes-or-no questions. Hang-up calls and calls where no one appears to be on the line require that the call taker pay close attention to background sounds and conversations in order to inform dispatch about what is occurring and who is involved; for example, loud noises without intelligible speech may be an indication that the caller is Deaf/HOH. A caller speaking a language other than English requires that the call-taker be able to identify the correct language and access an interpreter quickly. It is not unusual in a domestic abuse call for the apparent suspect to get on the line—indeed, sometimes getting the suspect on the line can make a victim safer.<sup>4</sup> Call takers must be prepared to respond to such complex situations in ways that diminish danger and advance safety for all involved.

A 911 call-taker should be alert to behaviors that possibly indicate stalking and should respond in a manner that takes into account the potential risk and danger inherent in stalking cases. Violations of protective or harassment orders or other unwanted contact may be part of a pattern of behavior imposed on the victim and signal increased risk of harm. The call taker should take seriously reports of incidents that do not involve violence but can indicate stalking or harassment. Inquire about any past incidents that were similar or where the caller felt harassed or intimidated. Ask the caller if he or she is afraid of being harmed, or if he or she has been threatened with physical violence. Capture this information on the Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) report and dispatch with the appropriate priority. For further explanation of stalking, the challenges it presents to law enforcement and a list of behaviors that may signal stalking, see *Appendix 3G: Training Memo—Law Enforcement Response to Stalking*.

Under the Blueprint policies and protocols, responding officers need far more detail about the call than previously expected. As always, they need the correct location, how to safely enter the premises, and the presence and use of weapons. But now officers need specifics provided by the caller on the violence and threats being used; injuries; access to, type, description and location of firearms and/or other weapons; whether previous incidents involving the same parties have been reported, including the use of weapons or serious injury in previous cases; and the suspect's history of aggression toward law enforcement. They need up-to-date information about changing conditions at the scene. In GOA calls, details about the suspect's identity, physical description, and direction and mode of travel increase officers' ability to locate the suspect. Information about existing orders for protection, harassment orders, domestic abuse no-contact orders, warrants, criminal history, and prior calls to the address and parties involved can assist call takers, dispatchers, and officers to establish the nature of the emergency and the type and level of danger presented.

Domestic abuse calls often involve highly volatile situations. A caller who has been attacked or threatened may be frightened or injured and grow increasingly agitated as time passes. The five, ten, or fifteen minutes it takes for an officer to reach the scene can seem like ten times that long to someone who is urgently in need of help. The time required to access an interpreter can contribute to a delayed response and exacerbate the caller's anxiety. If the call-taker is able to communicate with the caller during the delay, they can offer reassuring messages and explain that help is coming as quickly as possible. In all cases, speaking in a

calm reassuring tone of voice can reduce the caller's distress, thereby increasing the clarity and accuracy of the information that she or he offers.

The Blueprint is designed to ensure that information related to the nature of emergency that call takers and dispatchers gather and document reaches subsequent interveners who are seeking to hold domestic violence offenders accountable. Prosecutors and those writing presentence investigation reports, for example, count on high quality, readily accessible recordings and computer assisted dispatch (CAD) transmissions that document specific details of the nature of the threats, harm, and violence involved in the call. Attempting to determine whether there is an actual domestic relationship involved helps to reduce the hundreds of cases officers respond to that are coded as a "domestic," but are not. Reducing over-coding helps focus officers' sense of urgency on domestic calls and provides a more accurate picture of the volume and scope of reported incidents.

Because domestic violence is a patterned crime, usually occurring over a long period of time, a single call is rarely the extent of the 911 center's involvement with a victim and offender. Many victims make repeated calls to 911 in the face of ongoing intimidation, threats, and violence. Neighbors or family members may call seeking help for a victim, although many victims may be wary of and even hostile to this kind of "third party" call.<sup>5</sup> Victims' attempts to leave the abusive relationship are often met with aggressive resistance and almost half (45%) of lethal domestic violence attacks are precipitated by the victim leaving.<sup>6</sup> Victims often cannot speak freely or openly about what is happening to them without facing retaliation and heightened abuse. It can take years to truly disrupt an offender's abusive behavior. The response to each call must therefore establish a foundation for continuing engagement if it is to reflect the ongoing nature of the crime and contribute to the long-term safety of victims, their children, and responding officers. Victims must know that they can use 911 to request help whenever they need it, whether it is the first or fifth or fifteenth call.

## **POLICY: RECEIVING 911 DOMESTIC ABUSE CALLS**

In addition to adhering to general agency policy, Emergency Communications Center (ECC) call takers will take the following actions in receiving and responding to domestic abuse–related calls, using the protocols and appendices referenced and included as part of this policy.

- 1. Implement the provisions of this policy in accordance with **Protocol 1: Receiving 911 Domestic Abuse Calls.****
- 2. Treat each domestic abuse call as Priority 2 if any of the following circumstances exist, including calls if the suspect has left the scene:**
  - a. A weapon is involved.
  - b. A physical assault is occurring or has just occurred.
  - c. It appears that violence is imminent; or the caller is afraid or the argument is escalating.
  - d. The suspect has made severe threats, such as threatened to kill the victim, take or harm children, harm or kill pets, burn down the house, or commit suicide.
  - e. The suspect has left the scene and the caller or victim fears his or her imminent return.
- 3. Code calls as Priority 3 if any of the following circumstances exist:**
  - a. The suspect is gone and unlikely to return soon and the caller or victim does not fear his or her return.
  - b. There is a reported violation of a no-contact order, order for protection, or harassment restraining order with no threat of harm and the suspect is not at the scene or likely to return soon.
  - c. There is an argument between parties with no known history of violence or threat of harm.
  - d. A third party reports shouting, a loud argument or other noises such as pounding or crashing with no further information. NOTE: Go to Priority 2 if it is determined that there is a history of violence at that address or between the parties.
  - e. When in doubt, code the call as Priority 2.
- 4. Communicate effectively, respectfully, and safely with callers.**

- a. Determine the need for language access services for those with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) or who request the assistance of an interpreter.
- b. Be prepared to respond to a call from an audio or video remote service, from a Text Telephone (TTY) or a Telecommunication Device for the Deaf (TDD). Recognize that those who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (HOH) may express themselves in ways that can be misconstrued as angry or hostile.
5. Determine the location and nature of the emergency and the response priority.
6. Direct responding officers to the location and parties at the scene.
  - a. Alert officers to any language access needs of those at the scene.
  - b. Provide information to assist in locating a suspect who has left the scene.
7. Establish the type and level of danger.
8. Advance safety for those at the scene while help is en route.
9. Communicate and document information related to the nature of the emergency; violence, threats, and injuries; and the safety of responding officers and those at the scene.
10. Establish a foundation for continuing engagement with members of the public seeking help in domestic abuse cases.

**The following appendices are included as part of the 911 policy and protocols on receiving domestic abuse calls.**

- *Appendix 1C: Training Memo—Interventions with Victims of Battering as Suspects or Defendants*
- *Appendix 1G: Training Memo: Enhancing a Coordinated Response to the Intersection of Domestic Violence Crimes and Access to Firearms*
- *Appendix 1H: Training Memo: Building Language Access for the Deaf Community into the Criminal Legal System Response to Domestic Violence*
- *Appendix 2A: Protocol 1—Card 1 CALLER SAFETY UNKNOWN*
- *Appendix 2B: Protocol 1—Card 2 UNSAFE FOR CALLER TO SPEAK FREELY OR STAY ON THE LINE*
- *Appendix 2C: Protocol 1—Card 3 CALLER SAFE TO SPEAK FREELY*



- *Appendix 2F: Training Memo—Accurate Coding of 911 Domestic Abuse Calls*
- *Appendix 2G: Training Memo—911 Attention to Violence*
- *Appendix 2H: Training Memo—Recognizing Signs of Strangulation*
- *Appendix 2I: Training Memo—Suspect on the Line*
- *Appendix 2J: Training Memo—Open-Line and Interrupted Calls*

See the Blueprint Supplement for appendices referenced in the policy and protocols. All training memos are based on Minnesota law. Other jurisdictions should make modifications as necessary.

### **Protocol 1: Receiving 911 Domestic Abuse Calls**

This protocol is not meant to instruct call takers in a set of strict sequential steps. It acknowledges that receiving 911 domestic abuse calls involves simultaneously obtaining and relaying information while maximizing safety for victims and responding officers. These functions often occur within a short period of intense activity. A safe response to domestic abuse calls requires considerable judgment on the part of call takers and an understanding of complex factors affecting communication and safety.

**Communicate effectively:** communicate in ways that (1) get help quickly and safely to the scene; (2) help the caller convey what is happening; and (3) establish an initial relationship with a member of the public who is turning to the law enforcement and other governmental agencies for help.

1. Use Protocol 1—Cards 1 through 3 (*Appendices 2A, 2B & 2C* and *Appendix 1H: Training Memo: Building Language Access for the Deaf Community into the Criminal Legal System Response to Domestic Violence* to guide the call.
  - a. When callers have Limited English Proficiency (LEP) or request an interpreter:
    - Try to determine the caller's preferred language. Call the telephonic interpreter service and request an interpreter. Ask for their assistance in identifying the correct language if necessary.
    - It is permissible to route the call to a bi-lingual call-taker on duty if that person is available and it does not delay the response.

- b. When responding to a call from someone who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing (HOH):
  - Be proficient in the use of the TTY or TTD to communicate with callers who use these devices.
  - Respond to calls that come through an audio or video message relay service, video remote interpretation, or text messaging in the same manner as other calls. (NOTE: Callers who are Deaf/HOH often prefer to communicate via text messaging.)
- c. When callers are unable to communicate clearly because of fear, injury, disability, intoxication, have LEP, are Deaf/HOH, or have other barriers to communication:
  - Slow down, use plain language and short sentences, avoid jargon and adjust the response.
  - Be alert to the impact of strangulation or other injuries on a caller's ability to communicate.
- d. Elicit information safely.
  - Verify that it is safe for the caller to speak freely.
  - Utilize strategies that promote safety when it has not been confirmed that the caller can speak freely.
- e. Inform caller when patrol has been notified and tell the caller that a squad has been dispatched. In emergency situations where the victim is afraid or anxious, check with the squad to see if the officer is en route and relay that information to the caller.
- f. Respond safely to calls that are disconnected or otherwise interrupted.
- g. Reflect awareness of cultural and social factors in communication, particularly when communicating with callers with LEP or who are Deaf/HOH.
- h. Establish rapport with and communicate core messages to callers.
  - Reinforce that 911 is available when a caller needs it, regardless of how many times they have called.
  - Avoid blaming or criticizing the caller.
  - Respond to callers with courtesy, respect, and reassurance, even when they are difficult to work with.

- Provide assurances that interpreter services are free of charge to the caller.
2. Determine the nature of the emergency and the response priority, per policy.
    - a. When in doubt, code the call Priority 2.
    - b. Establish the immediate threat of harm to persons at the scene, responding officers, and others.
      - Inquire about the suspect's access to firearms.
      - Obtain information on the type, location, description and use of firearms and/or other weapons.
    - c. Determine the nature of any injuries and the need for immediate medical attention.
    - d. Establish whether children are safe, harmed, abducted, or being drawn into the events in any way.
    - e. Assign an accurate type code.
      - Code any dispute between adult partners or former partners as a domestic when the relationship between the parties meets the statutory definition of a domestic relationship. Use this code whether or not there is an allegation of physical violence.
      - Code calls that involve allegations that a protection order has been violated accordingly.
      - An officer dispatched to a call coded domestic who finds that there is no domestic relationship between the parties should notify the dispatcher to recode the call.
      - Do not recode a call simply because it does not involve an allegation of physical assault. Re-code the call as non-domestic only if it has been established that there is no domestic relationship between the parties.
      - An officer dispatched to a call coded as non-domestic should notify the dispatcher to recode the call as a domestic when that relationship has been established and there is any allegation of abuse, whether or not an arrest is made.
    - f. When it is safe for the caller to stay on the line, keep the caller on the line until an officer is on the scene and has made contact with the caller, victim, or witness.

- Apply in calls reporting or suggesting high danger, volatility, or escalation, including but not limited to calls involving weapons, where the caller is afraid, where an assault or another crime is in progress, or where someone has been seriously injured.
  - Apply in calls where the suspect is at the scene and the threat is ongoing.
  - Apply in non-urgent calls reporting a low level of immediate threat and danger, as call volume permits.
  - Apply when the caller is a child and there is an ongoing situation.
- g. Do not force the caller to stay on the line if she or he says it is not safe. They may, however, be able to put the phone down and keep an open line.
- h. Use *Appendix 2B: Protocol 1—Card 2 UNSAFE FOR CALLER TO SPEAK FREELY OR STAY ON THE LINE* to guide the response to the following calls:
- Suspect on the line
  - Hang-up or other interrupted call
  - Open-line call
3. Direct responding officers to the correct address and location and to the appropriate people at the scene.
- a. Use Protocol 1—Cards 1 through 3 (*Appendices 2A, 2B & 2C*) to guide the call.
- b. Establish the correct address and physical location of the event.
- c. Utilize information available via the ANI/ALI screen and GPS sources as necessary and appropriate.
- d. Establish the means of entry to the premises.
- e. In third-party calls, determine whether the caller can let officers into the building.
- f. Establish the identities, descriptions, and locations of those involved at the scene.
- g. Alert the responding officer to the need for an interpreter or the use of an alternate method of communication, e.g. text messaging, at the scene if applicable.
- h. Establish and communicate the caller's location to dispatch.

4. Establish the type and level of danger to the caller, responding officers, and others at the scene.
  - a. Use Protocol 1—Cards 1 through 3 (*Appendices 2A, 2B & 2C and Appendix 1G: Training Memo: Enhancing a Coordinated Response to the Intersection of Domestic Violence Crimes and Access to Firearms*) to guide the call.
    - Establish as clear a picture as possible of the type of violence and actions of aggression or harm involved and the immediate danger.
    - Enter specific details in the CAD about the type of violence, actions of aggression, injuries, and harm being reported.
    - Include an exact report of what the caller saw or heard in order to assist officers in determining the means of entry, asking questions at the scene, and establishing probable cause. (See *Appendix 1C: Training Memo—Interventions with Victims of Battering as Suspects or Defendants.*)
    - Elicit pertinent information about the suspect's history of aggression.
    - Determine the risk to persons at the scene.
    - Determine the risk to responding officers, including dogs or other pets that may pose a problem for them.
    - Determine access to, type, location, description and use of firearms and/or other weapons, and whether previous incidents have involved the use of weapons.
    - Determine the suspect's history of aggression toward law enforcement.
    - Continue to stay alert to and confirm whether it is safe for the caller to stay on the line and respond to the call taker's questions.
5. Advance safety for those at the scene while help is en route.
  - a. Use Protocol 1—Cards 1 through 3 (*Appendices 2A, 2B & 2C*) to guide the call.
  - b. Communicate safely and effectively with the caller, including communicating in the caller's preferred language and method of communication.
  - c. Provide safety suggestions or instructions to the caller.
  - d. Provide medical instructions to the caller as necessary.

- e. Stay alert to and respond safely to a suspect on the line. When helpful to reinforcing safety, engage with a suspect on the line to control escalation while officers are en route.
  - f. Notify the 911 supervisor when one of the parties involved is a law enforcement officer, public safety officer, 911 employee, public official, or a prominent member of the public.
6. Communicate and document information related to the nature of the emergency; violence, threats, and injuries; and the safety of responding officers and those at the scene.
- a. Use Protocol 1—Cards 1 through 3 (*Appendices 2A, 2B & 2C*) to guide the call.
  - b. Relay accurate information to dispatch and responding officers.
  - c. Enter specific details about the violence, threats, and injuries involved into the CAD report.
  - d. Access and relay records, including orders for protection, domestic abuse no-contact orders, and, upon the officer's request, suspect's probation or parole status, if available.
    - If records indicate firearms may be in the home, include type, description, location and information on past use of weapons.
  - e. Provide updated information about the call and conditions at the scene to dispatch.
  - f. Respond to requests for information from dispatch and officers en route or at the scene, including information about language accommodations and needs.
7. Establish a foundation for continuing engagement with members of the public seeking help in domestic abuse cases.
- a. Use Protocol 1—Cards 1 through 3 (*Appendices 2A, 2B & 2C*) to guide the call.
  - b. Be familiar with *Appendix 1C: Training Memo—Interventions with Victims of Battering as Suspects or Defendants* and *Appendix 1H: Training Memo: Building Language Access for the Deaf Community into the Criminal Legal System Response to Domestic Violence*.
  - c. Avoid placing the victim in a position of confrontation with the suspect.

- d. Protect the victim from retaliation when communicating with the suspect or the victim.
- e. Treat each interaction with the victim as an opportunity to build collaboration over multiple contacts.
- f. Know the signs that violence may be resuming or escalating.
- g. Respond to callers' requests for information about community resources related to domestic violence.
- h. Provide assurance to callers who are immigrants and callers with LEP that accessing law enforcement assistance will not trigger deportation proceedings.

## Victims made more 911 calls

if the perpetrator used a weapon, the victim experienced sexual abuse, or the physical violence was severe.

*- Bonomi et al. (2006)*





## **POLICY: DISPATCHING 911 DOMESTIC ABUSE CALLS**

In addition to adhering to general agency policy, ECC dispatchers will take the following actions in dispatching and responding to domestic abuse-related calls, using the protocols and appendices referenced and included as part of this policy.

- 1. Implement the provisions of this policy in accordance with **Protocol 2: Dispatching 911 Domestic Abuse Calls.****
- 2. Treat each domestic abuse call as Priority 2 if any of the following circumstances exist, including calls where the suspect has left the scene:**
  - a. A weapon is involved.
  - b. A physical assault is occurring or has just occurred.
  - c. It appears that violence is imminent; or the caller is afraid or the argument is escalating.
  - d. The suspect has made severe threats, such as threatened to kill the victim, take or harm children, harm or kill pets, burn down the house, or commit suicide.
  - e. The suspect has left the scene and is likely to return soon.
- 3. Code calls as Priority 3 if any of the following circumstances exist:**
  - a. The suspect is gone and unlikely to return soon.
  - b. There is a reported violation of a no-contact order, order for protection or harassment restraining order with no threat of harm where the suspect is not at the scene and unlikely to return soon.
  - c. There is a verbal argument between parties with no known history of violence and no threat of harm.
  - d. A third party reports shouting or a loud argument with no further information. NOTE: Go to Priority 2 if it is determined that there is a history of violence at that address or between the parties.
  - e. When in doubt, code the call as Priority 2.
- 4. Relay the nature of the emergency and the response priority to responding officers.**
- 5. Direct responding officers to the correct address; location; appropriate people at the scene; the need for an interpreter or alternate method of**

communication, if applicable; and detailed information that will assist officers in locating a suspect who has left the scene.

6. Relay to responding officers all available information about the type and level of danger involved, including description of violence; threats; injuries; and access to, use of, location and description of firearms and/or other weapons.
7. Communicate and document information related to the nature of the emergency and the safety of all involved to responding officers.

**The following appendices are included as part of the policy on dispatching 911 domestic abuse calls:**

- *Appendix 2D: Protocol 2—Card 1 Safety-Oriented Dispatching*
- *Appendix 1G: Training Memo: Enhancing a Coordinated Response to the Intersection of Domestic Violence Crimes and Access to Firearms*
- *Appendix 1H: Training Memo: Building Language Access for the Deaf Community into the Criminal Legal System Response to Domestic Violence*

See the Blueprint Supplement for appendices referenced in the policy and protocols. All training memos are based on Minnesota law. Other jurisdictions should make modifications as necessary.

**Protocol 2: Dispatching 911 Domestic Abuse Calls**

This protocol is not meant to instruct call takers in a set of strict sequential steps. It acknowledges that receiving 911 domestic abuse calls involves simultaneously obtaining and relaying information while maximizing safety for victims and responding officers. These functions often occur within a short period of intense activity. A safe response to domestic abuse calls requires considerable judgment on the part of call takers and an understanding of complex factors affecting communication and safety.

1. Relay the nature of the emergency and the response priority to responding officers per policy, using *Appendix 2D: Protocol 2—Card 1 Safety Oriented Dispatching* to guide the call.
  - a. When in doubt, code the call as Priority 2.

- b. Establish the immediate threat of harm to responding officers, the victim, and others.
  - c. Establish the nature of any injuries and the need for immediate medical attention.
  - d. Establish whether children are present, safe and unharmed.
  - e. Query call taker as needed to verify details related to responding officer and victim safety.
- 2. Direct responding officers to the correct address, location, appropriate people at the scene, the need for an interpreter or alternate method of communication, if applicable, and detailed information that will assist officers in locating a suspect who has left the scene.
  - a. Verify the correct address and physical location of the call while maximizing safety for the caller.
  - b. Verify the caller's location.
  - c. If someone at the scene has Limited English Proficiency (LEP), is Deaf/Hard of Hearing (HOH), or requests an interpreter and a bi-lingual officer who speaks the required language is available, dispatch that officer to the scene if it will not delay the response.
  - d. Relay to responding officers all available details about the identities and physical descriptions of those involved and at the scene, including whether anyone involved has LEP or is Deaf/HOH, and their preferred language and method of communication.
  - e. Relay to responding officers all available details about suspect when the suspect has left the scene or is reported as gone-on-arrival (GOA), including: identity, physical description, vehicle and whether the suspect has LEP or is Deaf/HOH and their preferred language and method of communication, if known.
- 3. Relay to responding officers all available information about the type and level of danger involved including violence, threats and injuries and actions of aggression or harm to persons at the scene.
  - a. Verify and relay the presence and use of any weapons.
  - b. Verify and relay information about the suspect's history of aggression toward those at the scene and toward law enforcement. In cases that

- seem volatile, notify the records section operator and request record checks.
- c. Promptly relay details about changing conditions at the scene to responding officers.
  - d. Promptly relay details about any change in suspect location and information that will aid officers in locating a suspect who has left the scene.
  - e. Determine and relay the status of any current warrants, court orders, and probation status (if probation information is available to dispatch).
  - f. Determine and relay the history of past calls to the location or those involved.
  - g. Check officer status and safety at the scene as warranted.
4. Communicate and document information related to the nature of the emergency and the safety of all involved to responding officers and subsequent interveners.
- a. Enter into the CAD report specific details about the violence, threats, and injuries involved. Include information about the suspect's access to, use of, location and description of any firearms and/or other weapons.
  - b. Provide updated information about the call and conditions at the scene to responding officers.
    - Inform the officer via radio of the general nature and severity of any threats.
    - Enter the more specific description of the call and quotes into the CAD and cue officer to check the CAD as soon as possible.
  - c. Respond to requests for information from officers en route or at the scene.
  - d. Ensure that officers have the following information available:
    - Warrants
    - Criminal history
    - Current order for protection, harassment order, domestic abuse no-contact order, and other court orders
    - Probation and parole status

- e. Do not recode a call as non-domestic simply because it does not involve an allegation of physical assault. Recode the call only if it has been established that there is no domestic relationship between the parties.
- f. On information from a responding officer, recode the call to a domestic type in cases where the initial coding was a non-domestic call type.
- g. Notify the designated 911 supervisor when one of the parties involved is a law enforcement officer or other public safety officer, 911 employee, public official, or prominent member of the public.
- h. Notify the records section when the officer indicates he or she is going to booking and request that a CAD report be e-mailed to the designated bail evaluator staff.

## When third parties

called the police, “the odds are 2-1/2 times higher that such cases will involve a major injury to the victim, compared to cases in which the victim calls [the] police herself.”

– *E. Buzawa et al. (2000)*

## **POLICY: RECORDS SECTION RESPONSE IN 911 DOMESTIC ABUSE CALLS**

In addition to adhering to general agency policy, ECC records section personnel will take the following actions in responding to domestic abuse–related calls, using the protocols and appendices referenced and included as part of this policy.

1. Respond promptly to requests for information related to 911 domestic abuse calls, according to **Protocol 3: Records Section Response**.
2. Utilize all available databases, documents, and other records to assist call takers, dispatchers, and patrol officers in establishing the nature of the emergency and the type and level of danger presented.
3. Following an arrest on a domestic call, e-mail the CAD report and the order for protection affidavit and petition, if any, to designated bail evaluator staff.

**The following appendices are attached to and included as part of the policy on the records section response:**

- *Appendix 1D: History of Domestic Violence Summary Instructions and Sample*
- *Appendix 1G: Training Memo: Enhancing a Coordinated Response to the Intersection of Domestic Violence Crimes and Access to Firearms*

See the Blueprint Supplement for appendices referenced in the policy and protocols. All training memos are based on Minnesota law. Other jurisdictions should make modifications as necessary.

### **Protocol 3: Records Section Response**

1. Utilize all available databases, documents, and other records to assist call takers, dispatchers, and patrol officers in establishing the nature of the emergency and the type and level of danger presented. Upon request, check the following:
  - a. Search civil court order registries statewide and nationally for orders for protection, harassment orders, and domestic abuse restraining orders.
  - b. Search for current domestic abuse no-contact orders (DANCO) issued as part of a pending criminal case.

- c. Search and verify status of any current warrants.
  - d. Search and verify vehicle registration and driver's license.
  - e. Search for data on previous calls involving the same parties or address, including whether previous calls involved the use of firearms or serious injury, or whether language services were previously utilized.
  - f. Search for criminal history, including arrest, charging, and conviction data. Use the History of Domestic Violence Summary (See *Appendix 1D: History of Domestic Violence Summary Instructions and Sample*) when available.
  - g. Search firearms and concealed carry registries to determine whether the suspect is known to possess firearms.
  - h. Search and verify probation and parole status, if possible.
2. Promptly relay the search results to personnel receiving, dispatching, and responding to the call.
  3. Following an arrest in a domestic abuse call, email the following documents to the designated bail evaluator staff, preferably immediately and no later than two hours after the arrest:
    - a. A copy of the CAD report
    - b. A copy of the affidavit for any order for protection or harassment order related to the call and the parties involved.
  4. Following any call involving a person on probation or parole, e-mail the CAD report to the probation or parole officer of record.

## **POLICY: SUPERVISING THE 911 RESPONSE TO DOMESTIC ABUSE CALLS**

In addition to adhering to general agency policy, ECC supervisors will provide the support and oversight - necessary to ensure a safety-oriented response to domestic abuse–related calls, using the protocols and training memos referenced and included as part of this policy.

- 1. Implement the provisions of this policy in accordance with **Protocol 4: Supervising 911 Domestic Abuse Calls.****
- 2. Conduct regular reviews of 911 recordings of domestic abuse calls and provide feedback and guidance to call takers.**
- 3. Conduct regular reviews of 911 CAD transcripts in relation to calls and provide feedback and guidance to dispatchers.**
- 4. Provide for access to interpreter services to aid in communication with those with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (HOH).**
  - a. Maintain a comprehensive and robust language access policy for the agency. Include periodic training for all staff.
  - b. Provide for access to telephonic interpreter services, TTY/TDD and if possible, access to text messaging and audio/video relay services to communicate with those who are Deaf/HOH.
  - c. Track use of spoken language interpretation by language requested to help determine the need for future language interpretation.
- 5. Maintain 911 recordings for at least ninety days (and longer if possible) and CAD transcripts indefinitely in a manner which allows later access by investigators, prosecutors, and defense attorneys.**
- 6. Relay recordings of 911 calls and related documents to investigators, prosecutors, and defense attorneys as requested.**
- 7. Notify the designated patrol supervisor when a domestic abuse call involves a law enforcement or other public safety officers, 911 personnel, public official, or other prominent member of the public.**
- 8. Conduct regular reviews of the response to inquiries and requests made to records section personnel.**



9. Conduct regular reviews of calls involving requests for language access in domestic abuse cases.
10. Periodically review contacts with telephonic interpretation companies and audio/video relay services, and review any incidents.
11. Meet quarterly with representatives from law enforcement, the Sheriff's Office, prosecution, and community-based advocates to discuss and review randomly selected cases to assess compliance with policy and protocol.

**The following appendices are attached to and included as part of the policy on supervising the 911 response to domestic abuse calls:**

- *Appendix 1A: Practitioners' Guide to Risk and Danger in Domestic Violence Cases*
- *Appendix 1B: Training Memo—Risk and Dangerousness*
- *Appendix 1C: Training Memo—Intervention with Victims of Battering as Suspects or Defendants*
- *Appendix 1H: Training Memo: Building Language Access for the Deaf Community into the Criminal Legal System Response to Domestic Violence*
- *Appendix 2E: Protocol 4—Card 1 Call Review Checklist*

See the Blueprint Supplement for appendices referenced in the policy and protocols. All training memos are based on Minnesota law. Other jurisdictions should make modifications as necessary.

#### **Protocol 4: Supervising the 911 Response to Domestic Abuse Calls**

1. Prepare for implementing this protocol by taking the following actions:
  - a. Read all ECC policies and accompanying appendices and training memos related to the 911 response to domestic abuse calls.
    - Protocol 1: Receiving 911 Domestic Abuse Calls
    - Protocol 2: Dispatching 911 Domestic Abuse Calls
    - Protocol 3: Records section Response in 911 Domestic Abuse Calls
  - b. Be familiar with *Appendix 2E: Protocol 4—Card 1 Call Review Checklist*.
  - c. Review and integrate the materials in *Appendix 1A: Practitioners' Guide to Risk and Danger in Domestic Violence Cases*, *Appendix 1B: Training Memo—*

*Risk and Dangerousness Appendix, and 1C: Training Memo—Intervention with Victims of Battering as Suspects or Defendants* and into the call taking and dispatching work routines.

- d. Develop and implement a language access policy to enhance a safety-oriented response to those with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and those who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing (HOH). Review the plan annually.
2. Conduct regular reviews of 911 recordings and CAD transcripts (as assigned to the designated supervisor).
  - b. Use *Appendix 2E: Protocol 4—Card 1 Call Review Checklist* to guide the reviews.
  - c. Listen to three 911 domestic abuse calls from each call taker on a quarterly basis.
  - d. If problems are identified, meet with the call taker to listen to the calls, review the checklist results, and provide feedback and guidance as needed.
  - e. Provide a written annual report based on reviewing a sample of ten or more of each of the following types of domestic abuse calls:
    - Caller is a “third party,” someone other than the victim or suspect, e.g., neighbor, bystander, family member (NOTE: A telephonic interpreter calling on behalf of someone who is Deaf/HOH is not a third party)
    - Caller is a child
    - Hang-up calls coded as domestic abuse calls
    - Disconnected or otherwise interrupted calls
    - Calls involving the use of interpreters, TTY/TDD, message relay, remote audio and video interpretation, and text messaging
  - f. On a quarterly basis, listen to the radio transmissions from each dispatcher of three 911 domestic abuse calls and read the related CAD transcripts and call taker generated information.
  - g. If problems are identified, meet with the dispatcher to listen to the calls and read the accompanying CAD transcript, review the checklist results, and provide feedback and guidance.

- h. Include attention to information requested and supplied by records section personnel as part of the regular quarterly reviews conducted with call takers and dispatchers.
  - i. Prepare a quarterly report for the Operations Manager regarding compliance with these policies and protocols.
- 3. Maintain 911 recordings and CAD transcripts in a manner that allows later access by investigators, prosecutors, and defense attorneys; relay recordings and documents as requested.**
  - a. Ensure that recording equipment and systems are properly maintained, including any necessary software upgrade and instructions to 911 personnel.
  - b. Ensure that the 911 recording will be preserved as potential evidence for at least 90 days, and longer if possible. Ensure that CAD screens will be preserved on the secure server for at least 90 days and indefinitely, if possible.
  - c. Provide clear instructions to investigators, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and probation officers on the process for obtaining recordings and/or CAD transcripts and respond to those requests in a timely manner. Upon receipt of a request for 911 data, the supervisor will take the following action: (fill in specific protocol here)
  - e. Designate a 911 supervisor who is authorized to answer questions related to the release of recordings and other documents related to domestic abuse calls.
- 4. Inform call takers of the importance of and process for notifying 911 supervisors when a domestic abuse call involves a law enforcement officer or other public safety officer, 911 employee, public official, or prominent member of the public.**

## CHAPTER 2 ENDNOTES

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1. Campbell, et al., (2003 pp. 15-19).
2. An estimated 42-66% of suspects are 'gone on arrival' (Klein, 2008, Part 1, p. 17).  
  
In the Quincy study of a proactive court model, "those offenders who left the scene had twice the number of past criminal charges and twice the recidivism rate of those present when police arrive." (Buzawa, et al., 2000, p.22)
3. Bonomi, et al. (2006, p. 1360) studied how often domestic violence victims called police. They found victims made more 911 calls if the perpetrator used a weapon (96% more), the victim experienced sexual abuse (58% more), or the physical violence was severe (40% more).
4. New laws criminalizing interference with 911 calls have been enacted in Alaska, Washington, Connecticut, Indiana, Maine, Minnesota, North Carolina, Texas, and Wyoming.
5. In the Quincy, MA study, 68% of 911 calls to the police were made by the victim. Buzawa et al. (2003, p. 21) found that when third parties called, "the odds are 2-1/2 higher that such cases will involve a major injury to the victim compared to cases in which the victim calls [the] police herself."  
  
Hutchison (2003; cited in Smith, p. 45) found that almost two-thirds of calls to police were made by victims. In this study, 14% of third party calls were made by a neighbor/friend, 9% by a child, 4% by a family member, and 4% by a stranger.
6. Block (2003, p. 6).