



# Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence

Fall 2016

## Featured in this issue: *High-Risk Model Programs*

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### From the Executive Director



I hope you all had a wonderful summer. As you know, October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month, a particularly significant time of year for all who advocate for domestic violence prevention and awareness. Once again, we encourage you to turn New York State purple by participating in our annual, statewide [Shine the Light campaign](#), now in its ninth year! Please see our updated [toolkit](#) for free, downloadable resources, and send photos of your efforts to: [opdpurple@opdv.ny.gov](mailto:opdpurple@opdv.ny.gov).

This issue highlights two highly regarded domestic violence prevention initiatives. In our feature article, "The Lethality Assessment Program: Homicide Prevention in Dutchess County," Leah Feldman and Whitney Bonura explain how Dutchess County has implemented the Lethality Assessment Program (LAP) as part of its homicide reduction strategy. Most notably, since 2014, 78 percent of victims in Dutchess County who were identified as being at high risk for homicide, and who were encouraged to speak with an advocate for safety planning and support, stayed connected with the Family Services Center for Victim Safety and Support for additional follow-up. Our Q&A with David M. Kennedy discusses Intimate Partner Violence Intervention, an evidence-based approach to reducing the most serious intimate partner violence through strategic law enforcement, community engagement, victim-centered advocacy and social service provision. Both programs provide information and insight about the value of a collaborative, clearly-defined prevention strategy as one component of the overall coordinated community response.

I wish you a wonderful fall and a happy holiday season.

*Gwen Wright*

### The 2015 New York State Domestic Violence Dashboard

The 2015 New York State Domestic Violence Dashboard will be available in mid-October. Since 2007, state agencies have compiled information from a range of systems to better understand the prevalence of domestic violence and the strength of the state's response. This year, the Dashboard is accompanied by the NYS Domestic Violence Dashboard Guide. The Guide explains the data included in the annual Dashboard and provides background information for additional context.

The [Domestic Violence Dashboard Project](#) uses these indicators in an effort to inform and impact services and resources statewide.

The 2015 Dashboard reveals several noteworthy trends and data points, including:

- In 2015, intimate partner homicides were at their lowest point since 2007
- Statewide calls to local domestic violence hotlines decreased by 10% from 2014
- NYS courts issued a total of 293,525 orders of protection in 2015, compared with 293,774 orders issued in 2014. Of the total 2015 orders issued, 205,364 or, 70%, were required to be recorded in the UCS' DV Registry.

**1-800-942-6906  
NYS Domestic & Sexual  
Violence Hotline**

Confidential • 24 HRS/7 DAYS  
English & español, multi-language accessibility  
711: Deaf or Hard of Hearing  
In NYC: 311 or 1-800-621-HOPE (4673)  
TDD: 1-800-810-7444



### Shine the Light on Domestic Violence!

Domestic Violence Awareness Month is here! How are you planning to turn the state purple? Check out our [Shine the Light Toolkit](#) for ideas. During October, post your updates and photos on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram with the hashtag #ShineTheLight.

### Did You Know?

According to the State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), there were a total of 612 homicide victims in 2015, with 114 (18.6%) of them having a domestic relationship with their offenders.

For more information, review the [Domestic Homicide in New York State 2015](#)

# The Lethality Assessment Program: Homicide Prevention in Dutchess County

Leah Feldman, Director of [Family Services Center for Victim Safety and Support](#) and Whitney Bonura, Project Coordinator of the [Universal Response to Domestic Violence](#)

An increase in domestic violence homicides and serious assaults over the past six years in Dutchess County has driven the implementation of a homicide prevention initiative called the [Lethality Assessment Program](#) (LAP), a nationally renowned program for first responders created by the [Maryland Network to End Domestic Violence](#). In 2012, Dutchess County implemented the High Risk Case Management Project, which included a High Risk Team, modeled from the [Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center](#). While this model continues to be effective, we quickly realized that if law enforcement were further engaged in this initiative, we would expand our reach and have a greater impact on the community. Dutchess County began with a pilot project that included implementing LAP in four jurisdictions: the [Dutchess County Sheriff's Office](#), the [New York State Police](#), the [Town of East Fishkill Police](#), and the [Town of Hyde Park Police](#). With the success in those jurisdictions, we expanded to three additional police departments, serving the [Town of Fishkill](#), the [Town of Poughkeepsie](#), and the [City of Poughkeepsie](#). There is currently expansion into four additional police departments with the goal of implementing LAP in all 15 police departments across the county.

LAP is an innovative prevention strategy to reduce domestic violence homicide. It provides an effective method for law enforcement to identify victims who are at the highest potential for being killed by their intimate partners, and immediately connect these individuals to the [Family Services Center for Victim Safety and Support](#) (CVSS) 24-hour Domestic Violence hotline. LAP begins when an officer arrives at the scene of a domestic call and assesses the victim's situation. If there is any doubt about the risk a victim may be facing, the officer will ask the victim to answer an evidence-based series of 11 questions known as the Lethality Screen for First Responders, which reliably predicts a victim's risk of death. The questions include: "Has he/she ever used a weapon against you or threatened you with a weapon?" and "Has he/she ever tried to choke you?"

The purpose of these questions is so the officer can assess the current incident in the context of behavior that often indicates escalating violence in a domestic violence situation. If the victim's response to the questions indicates an increased risk for homicide, the officer calls the Family Services CVSS hotline to seek advice, and encourages the victim to speak with the hotline worker.

LAP is based on 25 years of research by [Dr. Jacqueline Campbell](#) of Johns Hopkins University. It is a proactive approach to encouraging victims in high danger to seek services. The protocol recognizes the research: every year, between 1,500 and 1,600 women in the U.S. are killed by an abuser. In the year prior to the homicide, more than 44 percent of abusers were arrested, and almost one-third of victims contacted the police, but only 4 percent of abused victims had used a DV hotline or shelter within the year prior to being killed by an intimate partner. The LAP procedure aims to close this gap by empowering victims to seek services that increase their safety. Participation in services is considered a protective factor, interrupting the escalation of violence to prevent homicide.

Dutchess County's experience with LAP since May of 2014 has been very positive. In two years, officers screened 2,074 victims in seven jurisdictions, with 49 percent of them identified as being in high danger. Those identified were encouraged to speak with an advocate, and 65 percent did connect for safety planning and crisis intervention services. Most notably, 78 percent of those victims who connected with the hotline immediately following a domestic incident stayed connected with Family Services for additional follow-up. (The national average is 29 percent).

These numbers are significant. They are also a credit to advocates and officers have demonstrated a strong willingness to work together in new and innovative ways to help victims feel supported so that they can make decisions to increase safety for themselves and their children.

Homicide prevention is a community initiative driven by strong collaboration. The High Risk Case Management Project is centered around collaboration and the exchange of information across systems, which makes victims and their children safer. The Project is highly innovative in that it is a collaborative effort among many community groups. It is the support of these groups that makes the process effective, efficient, and strong. The goal of homicide prevention is widely shared across systems and agencies, and this project is giving those systems and agencies a practical way of implementing these initiatives to align with public safety needs.

It is not uncommon after a domestic violence death to hear, "How could this have been prevented?" It is also not uncommon to hear that we cannot prevent homicide or stop someone who is intent on killing another person. LAP was developed with the goal of interrupting escalating violence and preventing death. Through LAP, Dutchess County is taking a stand that domestic violence homicide is preventable in our community.

# Q&A: The Intimate Partner Violence Intervention

This Q&A was conducted with David M. Kennedy, Director of the National Network for Safe Communities at John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

## Q What is the Intimate Partner Violence Intervention?

**A** The Intimate Partner Violence Intervention (IPVI) is an evidence-based approach to reducing the most serious intimate partner violence (IPV) through strategic law enforcement, community-based informal social control, victim-centered advocacy and social service provision.

Developed by the National Network for Safe Communities (NNSC) at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, IPVI is based on a proven framework that has informed interventions against group violence, overt drug markets, and other critical public safety problems. The strategy is motivated by a desire to alleviate the most serious harm to victims and their families; intervene early in cycles of victimization; teach men they won't get away with IPV; and remove the burden of offender accountability from victims. Under IPVI, police and community partners make clear that IPV won't be tolerated, and they take special action to deter and, if necessary, incapacitate the most dangerous offenders. A pilot implementation in High Point, North Carolina, known locally as the Offender Focused Domestic Violence Initiative, has shown consistently positive results for seven years.

## Q How is this different from traditional responses to IPV?

**A** The strategy represents a shift from traditional approaches by deterring offender violence rather than relying on changes in victim behavior. While it gives special law enforcement attention to the most severe offenders, it also takes steps for early intervention and deterrence. An essential element is its focus on offenders at early stages of offending, and its creation of community norms against IPV, with clearly defined consequences.

## Q Who implements the strategy?

**A** IPVI relies on a partnership among law enforcement; community-based victim advocates; social service providers; community members; local government; and local, state, and federal prosecutors. Each partner contributes to IPVI's goal of reducing the most serious IPV. Law enforcement works strategically to hold offenders accountable, and victim advocates and service providers offer affirmative victim outreach and holistic support.

## Q How does the strategy work?

**A** IPVI addresses all IPV offenders known to the criminal justice system. The IPVI strategy recognizes that offending occurs at different levels of severity, conducts analysis to understand the local dynamics of offending, and engages each level of offender with a specific approach. Ongoing offenders are "promoted" to the appropriate higher level.

Pilot implementation identified four levels:

- Low-level suspects with IPV call for service but no arrest were assigned to the "D-list" and hand-delivered a letter by an officer to notify them of community intolerance of IPV and notice of the legal consequences for further offending.
- Offenders with a first IPV arrest since the strategy began were assigned to the "C-list" and visited in jail by a detective, who explained the new approach and gave notification and warnings about heightened consequences.
- "B-listers," those with an IPV history who committed another offense, were mandated to attend a "call-in" meeting, where community members and law enforcement communicate to offenders: (1) a credible moral message against IPV; (2) a credible law enforcement message about the

consequences of further IPV; and (3) an offer of help for those who want to change. Law enforcement warned explicitly about the enhanced attention the offenders were now exposed to and that the IPVI would seek other legal avenues for future IPV offenses.

- Offenders with a history of severe IPV, "A-listers," were arrested immediately and used as deterrent examples to other offenders. They were also occasionally charged with non-IPV charges.

## Q How does IPVI ensure victim safety?

**A** Victim safety is the goal of IPVI. A parallel structure provides affirmative outreach to victims, corresponding with each level of offending, to address safety and ensure access to holistic, trauma-informed services, including a protocol of written and in-person offers of services and safety planning. A strong relationship with the IPVI advocacy community, independent from its law enforcement partners, gives IPVI a unique perspective on the risks and challenges of their work and better equips them to protect victims.

## Q Is the strategy effective?

**A** Initial evaluations of the pilot implementation in High Point have been promising, and included a dramatic reduction in IPV homicides—there were 17 in the five years prior to implementation and three in the seven years since. Results have also included reduced victim injuries, fewer repeat calls for service, and overall positive responses from the victims involved. We believe this approach also holds great promise to reduce recidivism rates for IPV offenders, IPV arrests, victim harm in IPV assaults, and repeat calls for service.

The NNSC announced a partnership with the DOJ's Office on Violence Against Women to replicate the strategy in three cities.

# Risk Reduction Enhanced Response Pilot Program

[Unity House of Troy](#) and [Safe homes of Orange County](#) have each been awarded \$200,000 from OPDV for the [Risk Reduction Enhanced Response \(RRER\) Pilot Program](#), which seeks to prevent intimate partner related homicides in New York State.

The programs will use a team approach, in conjunction with the [Lethality Assessment Program](#) (LAP), Jacqueline Campbell's [Danger Assessment](#), to identify and respond to those domestic violence cases that

are at the highest risk of serious injury or death. The RRER Program brings together local multi-disciplinary program partners (including the lead domestic violence service provider, law enforcement, a probation department, and a district attorney's office), that share case information and implement case-specific intervention plans to mitigate danger.

Additionally, each program is utilizing a strategy that builds on local strengths and resources. For example,

Unity House plans to include the [Unity House Law Project](#) in the RRER Program, and to increase surveillance of offenders monitored by GPS. Safe Homes has drawn on their local relationships, and plans to collaborate with additional local organizations, including [Catholic Charities](#) and [Legal Services of the Hudson Valley](#).

OPDV is proud to partner with these two organizations.

## Meet Erin Trowbridge: OPDV's Excelsior Fellow



Hello! I'm Erin Trowbridge, OPDV's Excelsior Fellow. I received my MPA from Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy at University of Albany, and have been working at OPDV since September 2015.

The Excelsior Fellowship Program was started by Governor Andrew M. Cuomo in 2013 "to bring highly talented graduates into government service." Excelsior Fellows work on policy, full-time, alongside senior members of the administration, having the opportunity to

work on pressing issues facing the state. Our wonderful Executive Director, Gwen Wright, has entrusted me with the important and exciting work of managing OPDV's new [Risk Reduction Enhanced Response Pilot Program](#). I am extremely passionate about using policy to protect victims of domestic violence by creating a lasting shift in culture and practices. I am so grateful to be working toward ending domestic violence with such a fierce and accomplished team at OPDV.

## The State Office of Victim Services Marks 50 Years

This year, New York State recognized the 50th anniversary of the founding of the agency that is now the [NYS Office of Victim Services](#) (OVS). As the second oldest state victim compensation program in the country, and the first permanent agency of its kind, OVS provides financial relief to men, women and children who are innocent victims of crime. The agency also funds 223 programs across the state that provide direct services to victims.

To commemorate this year's landmark anniversary, OVS developed a [new campaign](#) to educate New Yorkers about the services and compensation available from the state to assist crime victims and their families. The campaign,

which involved collaboration with crime victims, service providers and OVS staff, includes a video, testimonials, and five 30-second public service announcements currently airing on broadcast television markets upstate. Visit [www.ny.gov/OVS50th](http://www.ny.gov/OVS50th) to learn more.

OVS continues to maintain its three-tiered mission to:

- provide compensation to innocent victims of crime in a timely, efficient and compassionate manner;
- fund direct services to crime victims via a network of community-based programs; and
- advocate for the rights and benefits of all innocent victims of crime.

For more information or to file a compensation claim, please visit the [OVS website](#), and/or call OPDV's Victim Resources Coordinator at 518-457-4100.



Theresa Sareo, left, is joined by Lisa Gilbert and her two children, Zachary and Riley. Ms. Sareo and Mrs. Gilbert described how OVS has made a difference in their lives at an event to mark the agency's 50th anniversary.

**NYS Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence** [www.opdv.ny.gov](http://www.opdv.ny.gov)

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