

# The Domestic Violence High-Risk Team

Brian Middleton  
Fort Bend County District Attorney



# What is the DVHRT?

- We are a multidisciplinary team created to implement the most practical interventions for high-risk intimate partner violence cases in Fort Bend County to reduce continuing harm to victims and raise offender accountability.
- We share information across systems, monitor high-risk cases closely, and make community-based referrals to close systemic gaps.

# Partner Agencies

- Fort Bend Women's Center
- Katy Christian Ministries
- Texas Forensic Nurse Examiners
- Attorney General Victim Services Division
- Texas Council on Family Violence

# Partner Law Enforcement Agencies

- Missouri City Police Department
- Fort Bend Sheriff's Office
- Stafford Police Department
- Katy Police Department
- Sugar Land Police Department
- Rosenberg Police Department
- Richmond Police Department
- Fulshear Police Department

# What is the Lethality Assessment?

- Allows for more strategic response to high-danger situations
- The lethality assessment is evidence-based.
  - Developed by the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence
- It is a way to assess the level of danger in an intimate partner relationship.
  - Partner LE agencies utilize the LAP during IPV
- Allows for identification of victims at greater risk of being killed.
  - Officers can determine risk based on score
  - Assessment does not determine risk factors for re-assault
- Connects victims with immediate services.
  - Officers contact hotline
  - Advocate safety plans with victim or through officer

# Why Prioritize the Assessment?

- 1 in 4 women and 1 in 10 men experience sexual/physical violence and stalking by an intimate partner during their lifetime.
- In 2019, 185 Texans killed by an intimate partner
- 2020, 228 Texans killed
  - 23% increase
- 2021, 204 Texans killed
- 2022, 216 Texans killed
- For every 1 homicide, there are 8-9 near homicides.
- LAP concept is that IPV is predictable and therefore homicide is preventable.

# After the Incident is Reported

- The victims have contact with the crime victim liaisons
- The high-risk cases are forwarded to Deputy Director of Victim Services
- Conduct follow-up calls to high-risk victims
- Cases closely monitored throughout the criminal process

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LETHALITY SCREEN FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT



Officer:	Date:	Case #:
Victim:	Offender:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Check here if victim declined to be screened <input type="checkbox"/> Check here if the officer could not administer the screen		
<b>A "Yes" response to any of Questions #1-3 is an automatic High-Danger assessment</b>		
1. Has he/she/they ever used a weapon against you or threatened you with a weapon?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Ans/Unk	
2. Has he/she/they threatened to kill you or your children?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Ans/Unk	
3. Do you think he/she/they might try to kill you?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Ans/Unk	
<b>"Yes" responses to at least four of Questions #4-11 is an automatic High-Danger Assessment</b>		
4. Does he/she/they have a gun or can they easily get one?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Ans/Unk	
5. Has he/she/they ever tried to choke you?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Ans/Unk	
6. Is he/she/they violently or constantly jealous or does he/she/they control most of your daily activities?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Ans/Unk	
7. Have you left him/her/they or separated after living together or being married?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Ans/Unk	
8. Is he/she/they unemployed?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Ans/Unk	
9. Has he/she/they ever tried to kill himself/herself/themselves?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Ans/Unk	
10. Do you have a child that he/she/they knows is not his/hers/theirs?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Ans/Unk	
11. Does he/she/they follow or spy on you or leave threatening messages?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Ans/Unk	
Is there anything else that worries you about your safety? (If "yes") What worries you?		
An officer may make a High-Danger Assessment if the officer believes the victim is in a potentially lethal situation.		
Check one:	<input type="checkbox"/> Victim is High-Danger based on score <input type="checkbox"/> Victim is High-Danger based on officer belief <input type="checkbox"/> Victim is not assessed as High-Danger	
If victim is High-Danger, did officer make a call to the hotline?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Did the victim speak with the hotline advocate?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	

**Note:** The questions above and the criteria for determining the level of risk a person faces is based on the best available research on factors associated with lethal violence by a current or former intimate partner. However, each situation may present unique factors that influence risk for lethal violence that are not captured by this screen. Although most victims who are assessed as "High-Danger" would not be expected to be killed, these victims face much higher risk than that of other victims of intimate partner violence. All domestic violence is serious. This Screen should not be used to determine whether someone is a victim or is at risk of re-assault.

This project was supported by Grant No. 2011-TA-AK-111 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.

© Lethality Assessment Program, a project of the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV). Use of the Lethality Screen without training approved by MNADV is prohibited.

August 2016



# DVHR Team, Programs, and TCFV

## Domestic Violence High Risk Team

- DVHRT Monthly meetings
- Work together to help those at high risk
- Victims have support across the state.

# High-Risk Cases Identified in Fort Bend

Year	Lethality Assessments	High Risk	Percentage High Risk	Went to Services	Sent to DA
2021	1117	508	43%	31%	54%
2022	1152	499	43%	34%	53%
2023	1336	507	38%	31%	37%
Average	1201	504	41%	32%	48%

# Questions ?



# References

Centers for Disease Control. (2015). *National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey*. Centers for Disease Control. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/2015data-brief508.pdf>

Fort Bend County. (2020-2021). Memorandum of Understanding for Fort Bend County Domestic Violence High Risk Team. Texas: Fort Bend County.

Texas Council on Family Violence. (2019). *Honoring Texas victims: Family violence fatalities in 2019*. Austin. Retrieved from [http://tcfv.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/2019HTV\\_FullReport\\_Web.pdf](http://tcfv.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/2019HTV_FullReport_Web.pdf)

Texas Council on Family Violence. (n.d.). LAP Train the Trainer PowerPoint. Austin, TX.