



Strengthening
the Front Lines

- Collaborative Efforts Between Domestic Violence Centers, Courts & Law Enforcement to Safeguard Officers, Victims, and the Community
 - Presenters:
 - Tracy Veri, Ph.D.
 - Sheriff Michael Slupe
 - District Attorney Richard Goldinger
 - Attorney Kenneth Harris
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Learning Objectives

- Explain the link between domestic violence and officer safety.
- Identify key lethality indicators and evidence-based tools.
- Recognize the value of coordinated system response.
- Apply judicial and bond practices to reduce danger.
- Develop measurable outcomes for local initiatives.

DV Statistics

- Over 100 Pennsylvanians die yearly from DV; 66% by firearm (PCADV, 2023)
- DV calls are among the most dangerous for officers (FBI, 2024)
- 15–50% of police calls involve domestic disputes (NIJ, 2023)

Law Enforcement Officers Killed in Domestic Violence-Related Incidents in Pennsylvania (2015–2025)

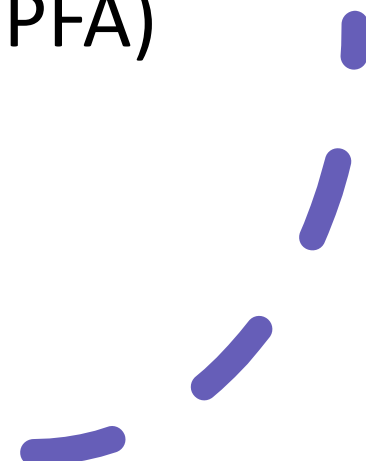
- **1. 2025 North Codorus Township Shooting (York County):**
 - **Date:** September 17, 2025
 - **Incident:** Three officers were killed, and two others were critically injured while responding to a domestic violence-related investigation. The suspect, Matthew James Ruth, ambushed the officers
- **2. 2025 Chambersburg Shooting (Franklin County):**
 - **Date:** October 8, 2025
 - **Incident:** Two Pennsylvania State Police officers were critically injured during a confrontation with a suspect following a vehicle pursuit related to a theft report. The suspect was fatally shot by the officers.
- **3. 2020 Walter Wallace Jr. Incident (Philadelphia):**
 - **Date:** October 26, 2020
 - **Incident:** Philadelphia police officers fatally shot Walter Wallace Jr., a Black man experiencing a mental health crisis, after he approached officers with a knife. The incident led to widespread protests and discussions on police response to mental health crises.
- **4. 2009 Pittsburgh Police Shooting:**
 - **Date:** April 4, 2009
 - **Incident:** A shootout occurred stemming from a domestic dispute, resulting in the deaths of three Pittsburgh police officers and injuries to three others. The shooter, Richard Poplawski, opened fire on officers responding to a 9-1-1 call from his mother

National Statistics on Officers Killed in Domestic Violence-Related Incidents (2015– 2025)

- **2015–2021:** Over this seven-year period, 19 officers were killed while responding to domestic violence calls, according to FBI data. [PolitiFact](#)
- **2017:** This year saw the highest number of officers fatally shot while responding to domestic violence calls, as reported by the Center for American Progress. [Center for American Progress](#)
- **2021:** Seven officers were fatally shot while responding to domestic violence calls, as reported by the Center for American Progress. [Center for American Progress](#)
- **2022:** In this year, 60 officers were killed feloniously, with 10% of these deaths occurring during responses to disorder or disturbance calls, including domestic violence incidents. [PolitiFact](#)
- **2025 (Mid-Year Report):** As of June 30, 2025, 42 officers had died in the line of duty, a 53% decrease from the same period in the previous year. Of these, 12 fatalities were related to domestic disturbances. [NLEOMF](#)



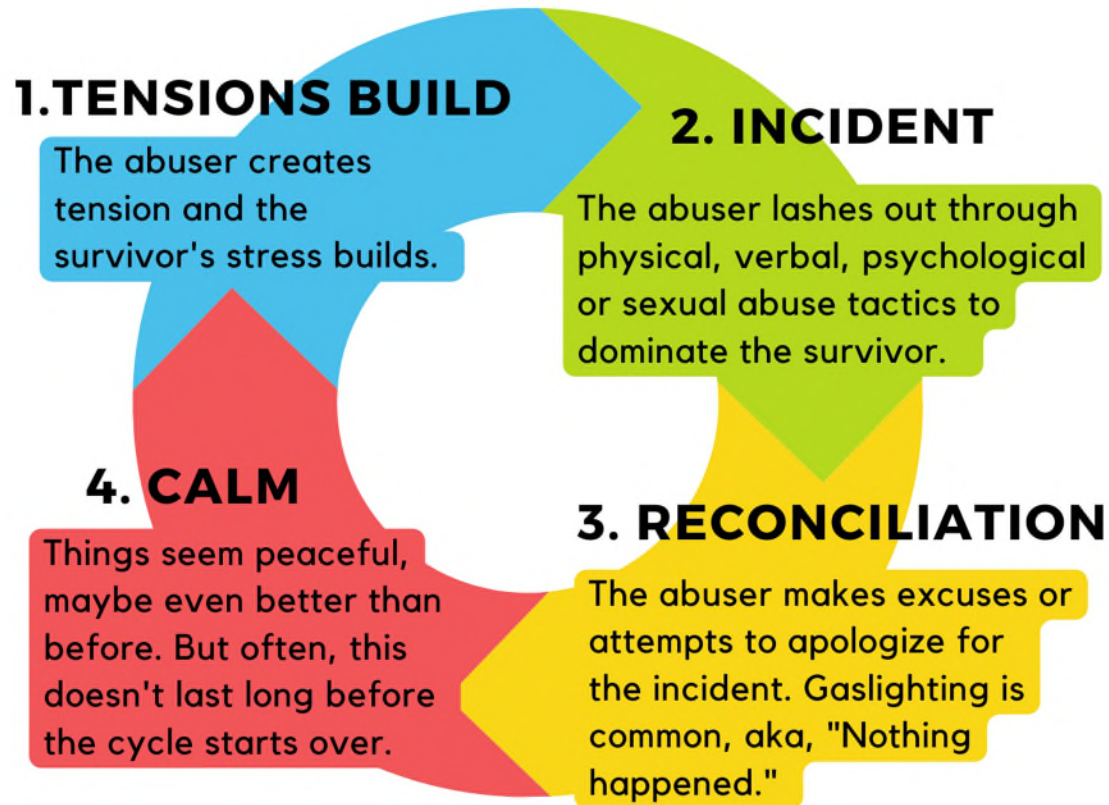
Understanding
Domestic
Violence

- “Why don’t they just leave?”
 - Pros and Cons of Protection from Abuse orders (PFA)
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Cycle of Domestic Violence

- Tension Building: escalating stress, verbal/emotional abuse, threats
- Acute Explosion: physical assault, strangulation, weapon use
- Honeymoon/Remorse: apologies, temporary calm
- Calm Phase: brief peace before tension rebuilds

CYCLE OF ABUSE



*Note: The Cycle of Abuse was originally created by psychologist Lenore Walker.
The Cycle does not represent all cases of domestic violence.*

DomesticShelters.org



Lethality Indicators

Strangulation or attempted strangulation

Threats to kill victim or children

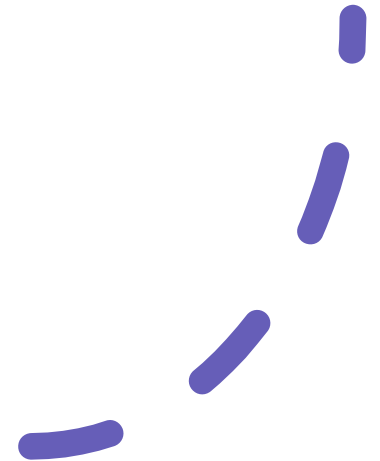
Access to firearms or weapons

Obsessive jealousy, stalking, harassment

Animal abuse as predictor of lethal violence

Animal Abuse and Legal Protections

- 70% of households with severe DV report animal abuse (Ascione, 2008)
- Act 146 extends protection to animals, limits firearm access to abusers



Evidence-Based Tools

Maryland Lethality Assessment Program (LAP): 11-question screening

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graph TD; A[Maryland Lethality Assessment Program (LAP): 11-question screening] --> B[Positive responses trigger advocate referral and safety planning]; B --> C[Enhances officer safety and informs judicial risk decisions];
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Positive responses trigger advocate referral and safety planning

Enhances officer safety and informs judicial risk decisions

Cross-System Collaboration

Joint training for law enforcement, DV advocates, and courts

High-Risk Case Review Teams (DVHRTs)

Information sharing for judicial decisions, bond, supervision

Tele-advocacy, virtual court briefings, mobile units for community access

Judicial & Bond Practices

- Risk-informed considerations for bond and release
- Stricter bond conditions for high-risk offenders
- Document prior threats and strangulation
- Multi-agency safety planning integration

Officer Safety Recommendations

1

Use lethality indicators during calls

2

Ask about pets and animal abuse

3


Collaborate with DV advocates for high-risk calls

4

Use screening tools (LAP, Danger Assessment)



Measuring Outcomes

- Track reduction in repeat offenses
 - Monitor DV-related incidents that involve weapons
 - Assess judicial compliance with risk-informed practices
 - Evaluate survivor safety outcomes
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