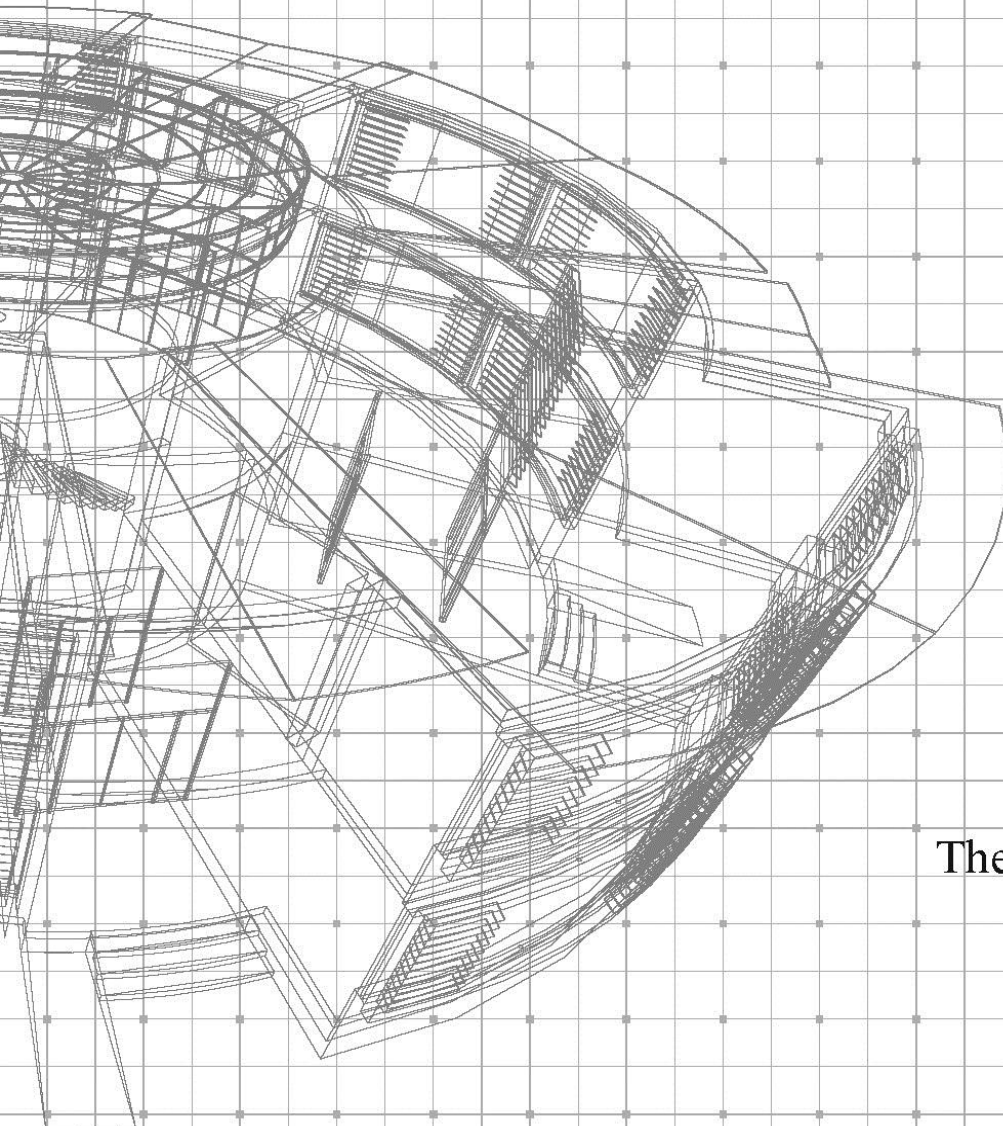


CHAPTER 2

911

St. Louis County Emergency Communications



The Duluth
blueprint
for **safety**

911

Policy: Receiving & Dispatching Domestic Abuse Calls

Scope

When emergency communication specialists 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.

A domestic abuse-related call for service is one involving parties in a current or former domestic relationship or others affected by such a relationship. In accordance with Minn. Stat. § 518B.01, Subd. 2 and for the purposes of this policy, a domestic relationship means spouses and former spouses; parents and children; persons related by blood; persons who are or have lived together; persons who have a child in common or share a pregnancy regardless of whether they have been married or have lived together at any time; and persons involved in a significant romantic or sexual relationship.

Domestic abuse includes a wide-range of actions that ultimately may or may not be determined to be criminal acts. These actions include but are not limited to physical assault, threats to harm or kill, attempts to kill, stalking, harassment, and violations of orders for protection.

Related Training Memos and Tools

In adhering to department policy governing the response to domestic abuse-related calls for service, emergency communications personnel shall utilize the following training memos and tools.

Training Memos and Guides

The following training memos and guides are available online from Praxis International's *Blueprint Materials* (http://www.praxisinternational.org/blueprint_materials.aspx):

- *1A Practitioner's Guide to Risk and Danger in Domestic Violence Cases*
- *1C Training Memo - Interventions with Victims of Battering as Suspects or Defendants*
- *2B Protocol 1 – Card 2 Unsafe for Caller to Speak Freely*

- *2D Protocol 2 – Card 1 Safety-Oriented Dispatching*
- *2E Protocol 4 – Card 1 Call Review Checklist*
- *2F Training Memo - Accurate Coding of 911 Domestic Abuse Calls*
- *2G Training Memo - 911 Attention to Violence*
- *2H Training Memo - Recognizing Signs of Strangulation*
- *2I Training Memo - Suspect on the Line*
- *2J Training Memo – Open-Line and Interrupted Calls*

Other Tools

The following guide is available in the Duluth *Blueprint for Safety* Chapter 8 (Resources):

- Dispatch Domestic Violence Call Guide

Policy 1: Receiving and Dispatching 911 Domestic Abuse Calls

In addition to adhering to general agency policy and procedure, emergency communications personnel receiving calls from the public shall take the following actions in domestic abuse–related calls, in accordance with this policy.

1. Communicate effectively, respectfully, and safely with callers

- Adjust response to caller by slowing down or simplifying language because of fear, injury, disability, intoxication or difficulty speaking due to strangulation.
- Provide language interpretation and TTY/TDD calls.

2. Elicit information safely

- Verify that it is safe for the caller to speak freely.
- When it is safe to do so and call demand allows, stay on the line with the caller in the following types of calls until an officer is on the scene and has made contact with the caller, victim or witness. However, do not keep the caller on the line if she or he says it is not safe. Instruct the caller to put the phone down and keep the line open.
 - Calls reporting or suggesting high danger, volatility, or escalation, including but not limited to calls involving weapons.
 - The caller is in fear.
 - An assault or another crime is in progress or someone has been seriously injured.
 - The suspect is at the scene and the threat is ongoing.
 - One or both parties are under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

- A possible suspect is on the line.
- The caller is a child and the situation being reported is ongoing.
- Inform caller when patrol has been notified and tell the caller that a squad has been dispatched.
- Utilize strategies that promote safety when a call has been disconnected or otherwise interrupted or a possible suspect is on the line.
- Respond to callers with courtesy, respect, and reassurance, even when they are difficult to work with.
- Reinforce that 911 is available when a caller needs it, regardless of how many times they have called.

3. Determine the nature of the emergency

- Establish the immediate threat of harm to persons at the scene, responding officers and others.
- Determine the nature of any injuries and the need for immediate medical care.
- Establish whether children are safe, harmed abducted or being drawn into the events in any way.

4. Assign an accurate type code

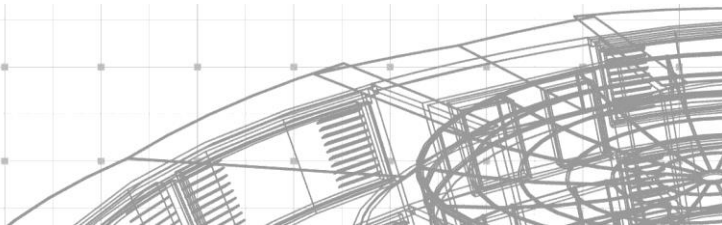
A domestic abuse-related call for service is one where the relationship between the parties meets the statutory definition of a domestic relationship or one that involves others affected by such a relationship.

- Use domestic abuse codes whether or not there is an allegation of physical violence and whether or not an arrest is made.
- Use domestic abuse code ORDERV for calls that involve allegations that a protection order/harassment order/DANCO violations.
- Recode calls as non-domestic only when the responding officer determines that there is no domestic relationship between the parties or otherwise related to the call.

Coding Calls

Treat each domestic abuse call as **Priority 1** if any of the following circumstances exist, including calls if the suspect has left the scene:

- A weapon is involved.
- A physical assault is occurring or has just occurred.



- It appears that violence is imminent; or the caller is afraid or the argument is escalating.
- 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.
- The suspect has left the scene and the caller or victim fears his or her imminent return.

Code as **Priority 2** if any of the following circumstances exist:

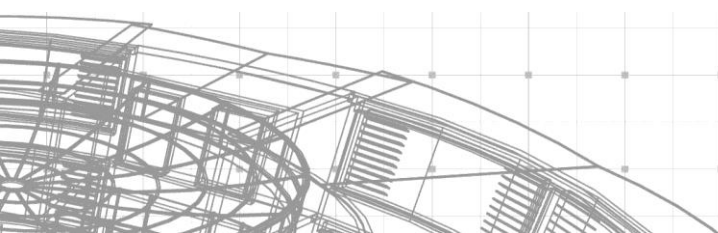
- The suspect is gone and unlikely to return soon and the caller or victim does not fear his or her return.
- There is a reported violation of a no-contact order, order for protection, or harassment restraining order with no threat of harm and the suspect is not at the scene or likely to return soon.
- There is a verbal argument between parties with no known history of violence or no threat of harm.
- A third party reports shouting or a loud argument with no further information. NOTE: Go to Priority 1 if it is determined that there is a history of violence at that address or between the parties or if information is received that a physical fight is occurring.
- When in doubt, code the call as Priority 1.

5. Direct responding officers to the correct address, location, and parties at the scene

- Establish the correct address and physical location of the event.
- Utilize information available via the ANI/ALI screen and GPS sources as necessary and appropriate.
- Establish the means of entry to the premises.
- In third-party calls, determine whether the caller can let officers into the building.
- Establish the identities, descriptions, and locations of those involved at the scene.
- Establish and communicate the caller's location.
- Relay to responding officers all available details about suspect identity, physical description and vehicle when the suspect has left the scene or is reported as gone-on-arrival (GOA).

6. Establish the type and level of danger to the caller, responding officers, and others at the scene

- Establish as clear a picture as possible of the type of violence and actions of aggression or harm involved, whether drugs or alcohol are involved and what is the immediate danger.
- Enter specific details in the CAD about the type of violence, actions of aggression, injuries, harm being reported and if it can be determined, what the suspect is upset about.



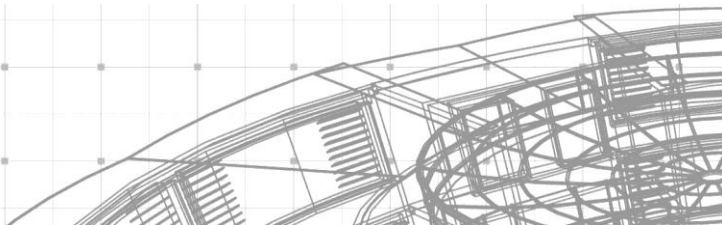
- Include an exact report of what the caller saw or heard in order to assist officers in determining the means of entry, asking questions at the scene, and establishing probable cause.
- Determine the presence and use of weapons.
- Elicit pertinent information about the suspect's history of aggression, including aggression toward law enforcement.
- Stay alert to changing conditions at the scene.

7. Advance safety for those at the scene while help is en route

- Communicate safely and effectively with the caller.
- Continue to stay alert to and confirm whether it is safe for the caller to stay on the line and respond to questions.
- Provide safety suggestions or instructions to the caller.
- Provide medical instructions to the caller as necessary.
- Notify the designated emergency communications supervisor when one of the parties is known to be a law enforcement officer, public safety officer, emergency communications employee, public official, or a prominent member of the public.
- Stay alert to and respond safely to a suspect on the line. When helpful to reinforcing safety, engage and keep the suspect on the line.

8. Document and communicate information related to the nature of the emergency

- Enter specific details about the violence, threats, and injuries involved into the CAD report.
- Utilize all available databases, documents, and other records to assist emergency communications personnel and responding officers in establishing the nature of the emergency and the type and level of danger. These include:
 - Civil court order registries statewide and nationally for orders of protection, harassment orders, and domestic abuse restraining orders
 - Domestic abuse no-contact orders issued as part of a pending criminal case
 - Warrants
 - Vehicle registration and driver's license
 - Data on previous calls involving the same parties or address including history of domestic violence summary when available.
- Relay updated information about the call and conditions at the scene to emergency communications personnel and responding officers both in CAD and on air.
- Inform responding officers via radio of the general nature and severity of any threats.



- Respond to requests for information from emergency communications personnel and officers en route or at the scene.
- 9. Establish a foundation for continuing engagement with members of the public seeking help in domestic abuse cases**
- Convey explicit, detailed information about what the caller has heard or seen to assist officers in making accurate determinations about self-defense and predominant aggressor.
 - Avoid placing the victim in a position of confrontation with the suspect.
 - Protect the victim from retaliation when communicating with the suspect or the victim.
 - Treat each interaction with the victim as an opportunity to build collaboration over multiple contacts.
 - Know the signs that violence may be resuming or escalating.
 - Respond to callers' requests for information about community resources related to domestic violence.

Policy 2: Supervising the 911 Response to Domestic Abuse Calls

Prepare to implement this protocol by taking the following actions:

1. Read all agency policies, protocols and training memos pertaining to the emergency communications' response to domestic abuse calls.
2. Be familiar with all protocol cards related to the response to domestic abuse calls.

Conduct regular reviews of 911 recordings and CAD transcripts (as assigned to the designated supervisor), using the 911 Domestic Abuse Call Review Checklist.

1. Listen to three 911 domestic abuse calls from each call taker on a quarterly basis.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. Prepare a quarterly report for the Operations Manager regarding compliance with these policies and protocols.
6. Put the call reviewed and any documentation in the employee file to be used in employees' annual review.

Maintain 911-call recordings and CAD transcripts in a manner that allows later access by investigators, prosecutors, and defense attorneys; relay recordings and documents as requested.

1. Ensure that recording equipment and systems are properly maintained, including any necessary software upgrade and instructions to 911 personnel.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. Upon receipt of a request for 911 data, take the following action: Fill out an investigation form and give to a lead dispatcher or center supervisor to follow up on requested information. Attach cad printout to the investigation form.
5. Designate a 911 supervisor or lead who is authorized to answer questions related to the release of recordings and other documents related to domestic abuse calls.

Inform emergency communications personnel of the importance of and process for notifying 911 supervisors when a domestic abuse call is known to involve a law enforcement officer or other public safety officer, 911 employee, public official, or prominent member of the public.

