

Domestic Violence

Law enforcement calls for service involving domestic violence require a comprehensive approach that factors in the unique dynamics between the victim and perpetrator in these situations, as well as the potential danger to responding officers.

- **Domestic violence** is defined as abusive behavior in any relationship, as outlined by law, that is used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner or family or household member. Domestic violence can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person.
- Law enforcement agencies should develop policies related to domestic violence that provide a **proactive, victim-centered approach**.
- In addition, agencies should take a position of **zero tolerance** on domestic violence, to include thoroughly investigating all domestic violence incidents, including those involving law enforcement officers or individuals in positions of power and influence.
- The **predominant aggressor** is the individual who poses the most serious, ongoing threat. This individual may or may not be the one who initiated the conflict. When making arrest decisions, officers should consider who appears to be the predominant aggressor. Dual arrests for domestic violence are strongly discouraged.
- Memorandums of understanding (MOUs) should be developed with victim service providers, child protection agencies, prosecutors, and other **community stakeholders** as part of a comprehensive response.
- Victims of domestic violence have many reasons why they are reluctant to leave or why they return to **abusive relationships**. These may include, but are not limited to, fear of retribution, financial dependence, and religious or cultural beliefs.
- Officers should **never** make any statement that would **discourage** a victim from reporting an act of domestic violence; **threaten** the arrest of all parties to discourage future calls for service; or **avoid** taking action because the victim does not wish to prosecute.
- Officers should look for signs and symptoms of **strangulation** when responding to domestic violence calls. Many strangulation victims show no visible injuries, so it is incumbent upon officers to include questions regarding strangulation when interviewing the victim.
- Officers should be aware of and fully investigate other crimes that often **co-occur** with domestic violence.
- Domestic violence victims should never be put in the position of stating whether or not they want the perpetrator to be arrested. Instead, as part of the **preferred arrest response**, officers are required to arrest persons committing a crime related to domestic violence whenever probable cause exists and there is no clear and compelling reason not to arrest, such as self-defense.
- **Risk assessments** should be conducted with domestic violence victims.