



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHIEFS OF POLICE

RESOLUTION

Adopted at the 121st Annual Conference
Orlando, Florida
October 21, 2014

Increasing the Awareness of the Lethality of Intimate Partner Strangulation

Submitted by: Victim Services Committee
VIC.004.T14

WHEREAS, strangulation is an indicator of the escalation of violence and associated with increased risk of serious injury and/or death in cases of intimate partner violence;^{1,2,3} and

WHEREAS, strangulation has been identified as one of the most lethal forms of domestic violence and sexual assault;⁴ and is used to exert power over a victim by taking from them control of their own body;⁵ and

WHEREAS, when strangled, unconsciousness and anoxic brain injury may occur within seconds and death within minutes; and

WHEREAS, oftentimes, even in fatal cases, there is no external evidence of injury from strangulation, yet because of underlying brain damage due to the lack of oxygen during the strangulation assault, victims may have serious internal injuries or die days or even weeks, later; and

WHEREAS, many first responders lack specialized training to identify the signs and symptoms of strangulation and often focus on visible, obvious injuries like stab wounds or contusions. This lack of training has led to the minimization of this type of violence, exposing victims to potential serious short- and long-term health consequences, permanent brain damage, and increased likelihood of death; and

¹ Allison Turkel. "And Then He Choked Me: Understanding and Investigating Strangulation." National Center for Prosecution of Child Abuse. Update. Volume 20, Number 8, 2007.

² Gael B. Strack and Casey Gwinn. "On the Edge of Homicide: Strangulation as a Prelude." Criminal Justice. Volume 26, number 3, Fall 2011.

³ Training Institute on Strangulation Prevention and the California District Attorneys Association. The Investigation and Prosecution of Strangulation Cases. 2013.

⁴ Allison Turkel. "And Then He Choked Me: Understanding and Investigating Strangulation." National Center for Prosecution of Child Abuse. Update. Volume 20, Number 8, 2007.

⁵ Training Institute on Strangulation Prevention and the California District Attorneys Association. The Investigation and Prosecution of Strangulation Cases. 2013.

WHEREAS, there is a need to develop more experts in the field of strangulation and to use those experts in court proceedings to educate juries and judges so that they understand the signs and symptoms associated with this crime, and the severity of this crime;⁶ and

WHEREAS, some jurisdictions nationwide have taken legislative measures to address the brutality and lethality of strangulation assaults, many states, to date, still do not adequately address strangulation in their law enforcement training and/or criminal statutes, underestimating the significance of the act of strangulation and potential lethality;^{7,8} and

WHEREAS, lacking specific legislation and specialized training, many near-fatal strangulation cases are prosecuted as misdemeanors crimes. However, given the lethality of strangulation, offenders should be held accountable with a penalty that is commensurate with the nature of their crimes which is the equivalent of attempted homicide or serious felonious assault;^{9,10} now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the International Association of Chiefs of Police assembled at its 121st Annual Conference in Orlando, Florida, supports statutes and legislation that hold perpetrators accountable for the potentially lethal strangulation assaults, and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the International Association of Chiefs of Police supports training efforts, documentation forms and processes, and multidisciplinary partnerships for law enforcement that specifically address the occurrence, signs, symptoms, effective investigation, and the increased lethality of the power and control dynamics of strangulation assaults in cases of domestic and sexual violence.

⁶ Training Institute on Strangulation Prevention and the California District Attorneys Association. The Investigation and Prosecution of Strangulation Cases. 2013.

⁷ Training Institute on Strangulation Prevention and the California District Attorneys Association. The Investigation and Prosecution of Strangulation Cases. 2013.

⁸ Strangulation in Domestic Violence Cases: Overcoming Evidentiary Challenges to Reduce Lethality, Melissa Paluch, Development in New York State Family Law, Spring 2013

⁹ Training Institute on Strangulation Prevention and the California District Attorneys Association. The Investigation and Prosecution of Strangulation Cases. 2013.

¹⁰ Strangulation in Domestic Violence Cases: Overcoming Evidentiary Challenges to Reduce Lethality, Melissa Paluch, Development in New York State Family Law, Spring 2013.