

# Reading the Signs

For participants in the MNADV's Lethality Assessment Program for First Responders

### The LAP—Three Years Old

Three years of Lethality Assessment, 12,000 Lethality Screens, 3,700+ high danger victims speaking on the phone to the hotline, 1,000+ of those victims going in for domestic violence services. What momentous accomplishments from such a humble beginning when the Kent County Sheriff's Office and Mid Shore Council on Family Violence began as the lone participants. With the recent addition of three new agencies, we now have 92 law enforcement agencies and all the domestic violence service providers participating in all 24 jurisdictions, plus the LAP has begun to spread across the country and other disciplines.

### Out-of-State Expansion

With the help of a federal Byrne grant, in April we will be taking the LAP to:

- 3 counties in **Indiana**, including Indianapolis
- Jackson County, **Missouri**, including Kansas City
- Chatham County, **Georgia**, including Savannah
- Merrimack County, **New Hampshire**, including Concord
- Linn and Benton Counties, **Oregon**, including Corvallis

In May, we travel to **Mississippi** to train all 13 domestic violence service providers and a number of law enforcement agencies.

In June, off to **Oklahoma** to train nine law enforcement agencies and their partner programs (including Oklahoma City and Tulsa Police Departments) as part of a two-year NIJ research grant, under the guidance of The Johns Hopkins University and the assistance of the University of Oklahoma, to validate the Lethality Screen.

Currently in **Delaware**, the Delaware State Police and People's Place are working with us and piloting the LAP in Kent County.

### Expanding into More Disciplines

We have, additionally, begun fledgling expansion efforts into other disciplines:

- **Atlantic General Hospital** in Berlin
- **Frederick Memorial Hospital**
- **Montgomery County Interfaith Community Against Domestic Violence**
- various first responders in **Frederick County**

The next edition of *Reading the Signs* will be a "testimonial" issue. In 150 words or less, we would like our officers, our advocates, our LAP contacts, and perhaps even victims to tell us a story about how the LAP worked well for them. Even what you might consider a simple story. Please drop us a quick email at: [dmsargent47@msn.com](mailto:dmsargent47@msn.com).



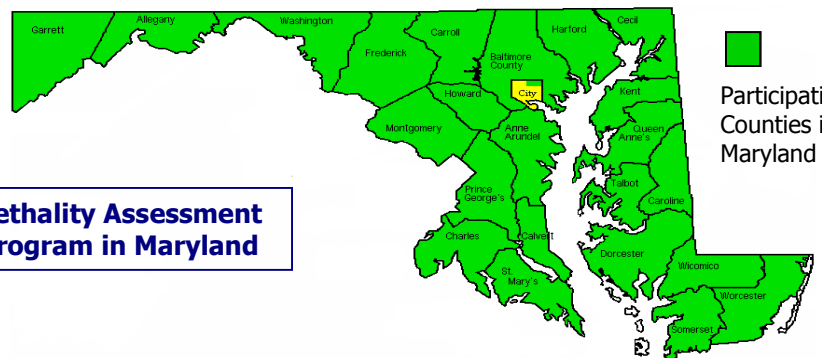
### Calendar Years 2006 through 2008 68 Agencies and 15 Programs Reporting 3,198,000—Population Being Served

Year (Participating Agencies)	Lethality Screens	High Danger (HD)	HDs Who Spoke on Phone	HDs Who Spoke on Phone & Went for Services
2008 (68)	6,788	3,713 (55%)	2,207 (59%)	621 (28%)
2007 (43)	3,304	1,923 (58%)	1,030 (54%)	263 (26%)
2006 (21)	1,839	990 (54%)	531 (54%)	158 (30%)
<b>3-Year Totals</b>	<b>11,931</b>	<b>6,626 (56%)</b>	<b>3,768 (57%)</b>	<b>1,042 (28%)</b>

### LAP Annual Award Winner

In October, the Anne Arundel County Police Department was given the LAP Award at the MNADV's 2008 Annual Awards Luncheon.

Since the AACPD implemented the LAP in July 2007 through December 2008, they have initiated 2,057 screens, 3.7 per day, and 31% of the entire number of screens administered in the state over the three-year period from 2006-2008. Moreover, AACPD has a 67% "spoke to" rate, an extremely impressive figure for such a large department. What has been noteworthy, however, is this fact: Between July 1999 through June 2007, Anne Arundel County averaged six domestic violence fatalities a year. Since implementing the LAP—now 21 months, the county has experienced two domestic violence fatalities (a homicide-suicide)! We consider this dramatically reduced fatality rate to be a hopeful sign. The AACPD is joined by the Annapolis and Crofton PDs and the Office of the State's Attorney.



## High Performers for 2008

**"Spoke to" category:** above 56% (at least 20 High Danger victims who "spoke to" the hotline)

• Westminister PD	92%
• St. Mary's County SO	86%
• Montgomery County PD	70%
• Anne Arundel County PD	65%
• Howard County PD	61%
• Frederick County SO	60%
• Prince George's County SO	59%
• Calvert County SO	57%
• Cumberland PD	57%
• Queen Anne's County SO	57%
• Aberdeen, Havre de Grace, Rising Sun, and MSP–Westminster	100% (with 5 or more High Danger screens)

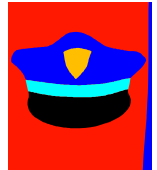
**"Services" category:** above the state average of 28% of High Danger victims who spoke on the phone and went into services

• CASA (Washington)	61%
• FCRC (Allegany)	56%
• Heartly House (Frederick)	51%
• Domestic Violence Center (Cecil)	51%
• CIC (Calvert)	49%
• Family & Children's Services of Central Md. (Carroll)	44%
• Abused Persons Program (Montgomery)	34%
• SARC (Harford)	30%



### "Based on the Belief of the Officer"

The LAP is weighted to a significant degree on the experience and instincts of the first responder—on what the officer's "gut" tells him/her. Previous surveys have indicated that 4-5% of high danger screens are "based on the belief of the officer." We've considered this a healthy figure, because we do not expect too many victims to be assessed at high danger in that manner. At the regular LAP quarterly meeting of the Montgomery County participants, including those in the state's attorney's office and the hotline, the Montgomery County PD reported that since they implemented the LAP on August 1, 2008, they have screened in 406 victims, 22 (5%) of those based on the belief of the officer. This likely demonstrates that our indications have been correct and that, as usually seems to be the case, our officers are doing a very good job of assessing victims, and then connecting them to services.



**Why is this recognition important?** Remember the 4% factor: Of victims who were murdered, only 4% had ever availed themselves of the services of a domestic violence provider. Look at the huge success of our top domestic violence programs in getting high danger victims into services, then consider how the victims got there—by the great work of our law enforcement agencies assessing and connecting them. Can there be any doubt our participating agencies—especially these recognized "High Performers"—have saved lives?

### Follow-ups

The seven domestic violence service providers listed as having the highest rates of return on High Danger victims going in for services are all programs which conduct follow-ups on High Danger victims. Their combined percentage of victims going into services for 2008 was 47%, as compared to the state average of 28%. SARC, also listed among those having the highest rates of return, will soon begin conducting follow-ups making it the 14th (of 20) program to do so.

### Screens Initiated Following TPO/IPO Hearings

The Harford and Montgomery Counties Sheriffs' Offices screen petitioners following TPO/IPO hearings. It's a practice we strongly advocate others to adopt. In 2008, the two sheriffs' offices administered **552** screens with a **78%** High Danger rate, a significantly higher percentage than for screens conducted in the field. Of the High Danger victims who spoke on the phone, **68 (32%)** went in for services.

### LAP—Trying to Save Lives

The point of the LAP's expansion and growth is to save more lives. The more jurisdictions that participate and the more first responders that become involved, the greater the total number of victims we will reach, and the greater number within each jurisdiction we will make aware. This is a critically important concept, because if just one element of our system is identifying high danger victims, that means we are only reaching that part of the population served by that lone part of the system. Last year Maryland suffered 75 domestic violence fatalities, 72 of which were intimate partner-related. Even with law enforcement agencies doing a superb job—and, we believe, saving lives—they can't do it alone. Ultimately, we want to be able to reach the entire population so we can put all victims of domestic violence in the position of making more informed decisions about their and their children's lives. **The question really does become: How do we help victims self-identify and encourage them to seek domestic violence services?**

### Great Read!

For advocates trying to understand the concept of safety planning a little better. A full, organized, and thought-provoking discussion using "women's centered advocacy." *Safety Planning with Battered Women: Complex Lives/Difficult Choices*, J. Davies, J.D. Lyons, and D. Monti Catania, Sage Publications, 2001.



Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence  
 Tel: (301)352-4574; Fax: (301)809-0422  
 Statewide Helpline: 1-800-MD-HELPS  
 Email: info@mnadv.org  
 Website: www.mnadv.org