



Law Enforcement's Role in the DVHRT

Law enforcement has a critical role in the DVHRT. In more than 80% of high-risk domestic violence cases, law enforcement will be the first point of contact with a victim. How a victim views their interaction with law enforcement significantly impacts their later willingness to engage with the DVHRT and participate in later legal proceedings. In TCFV's State Plan, we spoke to survivors about their experience with law enforcement.

One survivor explained a negative interaction with law enforcement: *"...the police officer was treating it like it was non-emergency. And I'm like, if you leave me out here with him, he's going to kill me."* Another survivor described a vastly different experience: *"The only person I had told was the officer who was called down, who referred me to the agency on that day that I had mentioned. And that was the first time I had spoken about any of it."*

Law enforcement must intervene and protect the victim and witnesses. **Each officer or deputy should receive training for and implement a risk assessment in the field when investigating a domestic violence incident.** Law enforcement's first involvement in a domestic violence situation should result in support and referrals to the victim. If a victim is determined to be high-risk through an evidence-informed risk assessment, all officers should be trained to refer a case to the DVHRT.

Law enforcement should also adopt the practice of assigning specific investigators to the DVHRT. These specific investigators should be informed when a victim is assessed as high-risk as soon as possible. This ensures that law enforcement partners on the DVHRT are aware of each high-risk case as it develops and maintains continuity throughout the investigation for the victim.

Law enforcement agencies agree to:

- » Participate or have a representative attend all scheduled DVHRT meetings.
- » Provide a Risk Assessment to all victims of domestic violence to identify high-risk cases.
- » Alert the DVHRT Coordinator of identified high-risk victims within 24 hours or as soon as practicable.
- » Connect the survivor with a family violence center for supportive services.
- » Assign domestic violence officers/detectives and a victim advocate as primary and alternate DVHRT liaisons, and ensure they are knowledgeable of DVHRT policies and procedures.
- » Alert the DVHRT on case updates and/or calls involving the parties of relevant cases whenever practical, unless doing so would interfere with an on-going criminal investigation.
- » Arrange annual (or biannual) training for all officers on family violence investigations and related offenses.
- » Provide the DVHRT with timely information on all relevant case updates as allowed by law, including risk assessments, criminal offender history, and police reports.
- » Understand and respect a survivor's need for privacy and confidentiality and their expertise on their safety.