

Transcript of the following video: <https://youtu.be/apvPrlq6eUw>

Benefits of the Lethality Assessment Program (LAP)

Chief Eric Atkinson from Menomonie Police Department shares his experience and perspective on how the LAP has had a positive impact in their community.

My name is Eric Atkinson, and I'm the chief of police for the city of Menomonie Police Department. I'm here to discuss today the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence Lethality Assessment Program or LAP for short. If you're watching this video it means you're considering utilizing the LAP within your community, and for that I'd like to congratulate you and try to address some of the concerns that you may have. First off I just want to say that the lethality assessment program is an exceptional evidence-based assessment tool, one which that is implemented too here in the city of Menomonie in partnership with our local domestic violence advocates along with our prosecutor's office at the Dunn County District Attorney's office. With that being said, some of the concerns may be: How does this program work? How can we implement it within our department? What are some of the issues that you may encounter? Well, first of all, it's an easy process to get set up and apply for and get the grant to bring the lethality assessment program by working through the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence. You work in collaboration with your domestic violence advocate partners and through that partnership you create a pathway of communication to assist the victims in getting out of these toxic relationships, that oftentimes prove quite harmful if not fatal. The lethality assessment program is a great risk assessment tool that highlights whether or not a person may be at risk for domestic violence homicide, and if this tool is implemented you will see that potential risks go down in your community.

Now in addressing some of the issues that do come up as to whether or not how much time this takes, can this be done, logistically how does this work? Well really folks, what we're looking at is an additional 10 to 15 minutes of officer time, of spending time on the scene building rapport with victims and helping them connect them with domestic violence advocates by connecting them with a phone call to your local domestic violence shelter and advocates so that way they can have a conversation about what resources are available to them. Some of the questions they may have will relate to where can they stay if they have pets, what are the options for them if they have children what's available, how do they get money, how do they survive, basically filling out or understanding what kind of needs are available in the community for them so they can get out of that relationship. It literally takes 10 to 15 minutes of your time and can make all the difference in the world in saving someone's life and connecting them with those folks.

Some of you may not also have the best relationship with your domestic violence advocates. This is a perfect way in order to build those partnerships and really understand each other's role, what each person does, what our expectations are, and work together to try to help save lives and improve lives in your community. It is truly a safe program. It also helps those people get out of that situation, and understand what resources are available. Let's remember, many of our victims have been traumatized many times for years, and through that trauma they feel like there is no hope, no one cares. Through this program you will find that people will learn that you do care that you are a champion of your community and you're a champion for victims' rights. And through those partnerships they will also find that there are other members in the community that will look out for them and try to help them.

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One of the other concerns that I've heard from Chiefs or comments that I've heard from members of communities is well, we have not had a homicide or domestic violence-related homicide in many years if not ever that they're aware of. And that may be true, and you may be asking, "why do we need to implement the lethality assessment program?" Well I have to ask you this – isn't protecting a person's life the greatest responsibility of a law enforcement officer when you took that oath, pinned that badge on your chest? Isn't it our responsibility to prevent crime when possible? Why should we wait as a community, and why should we wait as leaders and role models within our communities until tragedy strikes? The 10 to 15 minutes it takes on a particular call to service for domestic violence, that extra time it takes to talk with the victim to connect with that advocate – I believe that 10 to 15 minutes is worth a person's life, if not more time. But the reality is, 10 to 15 minutes is all you'll need to do.

One of the other concerns that gets brought up to me is, "Well chief, how do we make communication, how do we initiate communication with the advocacy center and the victim?" Many times the victims will have their own personal phones, but we have to be cognizant of potential stalking-type cases where the offender may be looking at their phone. My recommendation to you is this: either one, have your agency by burner phones that have temporary minutes that you can give to a victim so they can make that phone call, or if you have squad phones to be able to give them that squad phone to use for that 10 to 15 minutes where they have that conversation with that advocate. That is really the best way to go about this particular situation. Another option that may be available to you is there are a lot of programs that offer phones for people that do not have a lot of money, sometimes shelters are able to provide burner phones too as well, and maybe that is a partnership that you can work out with your local domestic violence partners. The important part is that that night that day that you have contact with that victim you're able to make immediate contact with that shelter with you being there helping to encourage them and provide that moral support.

I would strongly encourage any one of you, if you are interested in implementing the lethality assessment program to reach out to me at the Menomonie Police Department. My number is 715-232-2198. Again my name is Eric Atkinson, I'm the chief of police with Menomonie Police Department, and I want to thank you for your time.

Transcript of the following video: <https://youtu.be/xV6WXJSzi4>

Benefits of the LAP: Courtney Olson

Courtney Olson, Executive Director of Rainbow House in Marinette and Oconto Counties, describes why her community pursued the lethality assessment program (LAP) and the impact that it's had.

I'm Courtney Olson. I'm the executive director of Rainbow House Domestic Abuse Services, and the Hope Domestic Violence Homicide Response Project. In 2013 our agency had the distinction of having lost our interim executive director, Trish Waschbisch, to a domestic violence homicide. We understand firsthand what it's like to lose someone you love in that way. As a result of that our agency has become deeply vested in the work of homicide prevention. In the years from 2000 up to 2013 we were averaging more than one homicide in our three-county area each year. In the last five years since losing our friend and co-worker Trish, we haven't had a single homicide. I believe a large portion of that can be attributed to our agency having implemented the lethality assessment program. Our agency was one of the first in Wisconsin's wave of agencies to undertake this project. I believe that it's had a significant impact on our community in terms of connecting victims with law enforcement and our domestic violence program to ensure that they are aware of the resources that are available to them. I also believe that it's increased communication and cooperation between our local program and the agencies that serve us through law enforcement. As a result, we feel that our community is safer for victims of domestic violence, and I would encourage all programs to consider the possibility of implementing lethality assessment. Thank you.