

Lethality Assessment Workgroup Meeting

September 18th, 2024, 2:00pm (start time)
Meeting Location: TEAMS (Virtual)

Roll Call:

Zachary Durrett conducted roll call of Executive Members.

Name	Agency	9/18/2024
Amanda Price (Vice Chair)	Florida Partnership to End Domestic Violence	Present
Tanisha McDonald	Florida Partnership to End Domestic Violence	Present
Jenna White	Peaceful Paths Domestic Abuse Network	Present
Joe Petito (Chair)	Gabby Petito Foundation	Present
Tammy Taylor	Hubbard House	Present
Jennifer Rodriguez	Department of Children and Families	Present
Chief Todd Garrison	North Port PD	Present
Deputy Chief Ruth Cate	Tampa PD	Present
Chief Antoine Sheppard	High Springs PD	Present
Chief Robert Bage	Ft Walton PD	Present
Chief Richard Jones	Gulf Stream PD	Present
Sheriff Bob Gualtieri	Pinellas County Sheriff's Office	Present
Sheriff Vent Crawford	Hardee County Sheriff's Office	Present
Sheriff Bill Prummell	Charlotte County Sheriff's Office	Present
Sheriff Mike Adkinson	Walton County Sheriff's Office	Present

Roll Call Note: Chief Todd Garrison was not present at time of roll call but, joined the meeting at 2:29pm. Sheriff Vent Crawford was not present at time of roll call but, was present by 2:46pm (unknown time he joined the meeting).

FDLE Staff Present:

Director Chad Brown, Office of Criminal Justice Professionalism
Deputy Director Melissa Bujeda, Office of Criminal Justice Professionalism
Chief of Policy and Special Programs Brett Kirkland
Research and Statistics Consultant Zachary Durrett
Research and Statistics Consultant Matthew Sharp
Bureau Chief Ashley Pennington
Post Basic Curriculum Manager Rob Bates

Deputy Director Bujeda stated that members of the public invited to attend the Workgroup meeting and public members will be allowed to comment to the Workgroup with a three-minute time limit.

Old Business:

Motion present to approve the meeting minutes from the prior meeting were approved.

First motion: Jenna White; Second: Joe Petito.

New Business:

Joe Petito: Following up on why substance abuse is not a part of the assessment. The substance abuse question is asked in a follow up with help services after the lethality assessment. Are there any questions that need to be removed from the statute?

Sheriff Prummell: Suggested to have a subject matter expert review the lethality assessment to enhance the understanding of how the questions were developed so that the Workgroup can make an educated decision on which questions should be in the statute.

Joe Petito: Stated that the Lethality Assessment Program (LAP) is used in 37 States and was created by Dr. Messing and Dr. Campbell, and they believe it is the assessment that should be used by first responders.

Sheriff Prummell: Would like to hear from the expert how the assessment was developed.

Joe Petito: Offered attempt to have Dr. Messing, Dr. Campbell, or someone from their organization to attend the next meeting to address questions on the assessment and its development.

Amanda Price: Takeaway from the FDLE research document is that, in her own words, that there isn't a lot of research that exclusively supports one tool over another tool; one isn't necessarily more effective than the other. The Workgroup's obligation is to review the questions in the bill and make a recommendation as to whether all the questions currently listed in SB 1224 should be included in a state-wide lethality assessment instrument.

Amanda Price: Asked for the number of voting members on committee.

Deputy Director Bujeda: Confirmed 15 voting members.

Amanda Price:

Motioned for the questions written in SB 1224 remain the same as-is and be used in a lethality assessment and form. Joe Petito seconded that motion. The majority was not in favor; motion defeated.

Sheriff Gualtieri: Prior to voting on the motion, will the Workgroup be getting insight on the appropriate questions from a subject matter expert as Sheriff Prummell suggested before determining if the questions in SB 1224 are the best questions for the assessment?

Joe Petito: The LAP 2.0 is the most recent valid study. The LAP 2.0 addresses the strangulation question.

Amanda Price: In reviewing the legislative research and FDLE's research, there doesn't seem to be anything that does not support the use of the questions in SB 1224. The purpose of the motion is efficiency driven. FDLE can continue to monitor the use of the questions and make recommendations for any changes to the legislation annually.

Jennifer Rodriguez: Provided a general description of a risk/danger assessment and a lethality assessment. A lethality assessment looks to reduce homicide incidents. A risk/danger assessment is considering the likelihood that there will be future incidents of domestic violence through identified risk factors. Can FDLE verify the statute sent out was updated?

Deputy Director Bujeda: Replied that FDLE will confirm the fact sheet.

Chief Bage: Would like to have a discussion with a subject matter expert without using a third party via the Chair. That States that implement the assessment do so at a low rate. There is no State that uses this assessment at a 100% rate as this Workgroup is proposing for Florida. The questions do not have a lot of value unless there is an action step generated from the questions. Action steps may help in determining the appropriate questions. The animal abuse question appears to be valuable based on data.

Chief Jones: Right now, updating questions must go through the legislation. We could use a program, like the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence, to determine the best questions from a continuing research basis and go through the program for updates rather than need legislative updates year-to-year.

Joe Petito: It was sent through legislation, so we don't have to report to a different organization. The Maryland Network will tabulate the responses from the reports and use it to update future versions. This is why the questions are written in SB 1224 and not the actual program from the Maryland Network. Offered to connect with a subject matter expert from the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence to speak to the group and explain how the questions were derived in the LAP assessment.

Amanda Price: Reminded the Workgroup of a timeline and indicated that greater collective work cannot move forward if it is stuck on questions. There doesn't appear to be an adverse reason for using the questions as is.

Sheriff Gualtieri: The language used for the assessment questions in SB 1224 are too formal and rigid. There questions could be more concise for practical application.

Jenna White: Making the victim interview more of a conversation rather than a formal to make the experience more authentic.

Joe Petito: Sent the Teams meeting link to a member of the Maryland Network of Domestic Violence, Darrell Holly at approximately 2:42pm. He was introduced by Joe Petito at approximately 2:46pm.

Darrell Holly: The assessment in the bill is a validated tool. For the assessment to remain valid, it must remain in its current context. If questions are reordered or restructured, the tool becomes invalid. Darrell said that questions can be asked in a conversational manner, it does not have to be rigid. Other law enforcement agencies have not had an issue with the questions and neither have the victims. You must ask questions to find the facts.

Chief Jones: Indicated that the questions in SB 1224 are worded differently than the LAP 2.0 tool that Darrell Holly is discussing. Chief Jones asked Darrell Holly if he is aware if other State's legislation offer an exception for the questions to be asked in conversation or verbatim?

Darrell Holly: Oklahoma legislation requires the questions to be asked verbatim. Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence wants the tool to be use voluntarily. The tool is not the life saving measure, it's the entire process of helping the victim to safety. There is not researched to identify the tool is effective if it is legislatively required. LAP version 2.0 was officially released in 2024. A noteworthy change from version 1.0 was the addition of strangulation, which is a felony in all 50 States. Strangulation is a high danger question (above the line).

Chief Jones: Would adding a question on animal abuse be valuable for determining lethality?

Darrell Holly: Animal abuse has a direct correlation to domestic violence, but it does not offer more intel on whether homicide is a greater risk.

Chief Bage: Can we compare the statutorily required questions against the validated questions?

Joe Petito: Confirmed with Darrell Holly that the validated questionnaire is in the Oklahoma Study.

Sheriff Gualtieri: The questions in the Maryland instrument are not the same as the questions in the statute. Therefore, we should not use what's in the statute because it's invalid. The Maryland instrument's questions are shorter and more user-friendly.

Joe Petito: Requested Darrell Holly to read the validated questions off the LAP 2.0.

Darrell Holly: Read the questions from the LAP 2.0.

Joe Petito:

Motioned to accept the questions that are in LAP 2.0. Sheriff Gualtieri seconded the motion. Motion carries, unanimous for using questions on LAP 2.0.

Public Comment

Lauren Peace: Reporter with the Tampa Bay Times. Discussed a domestic violence homicide case in her area. In this case, there was access to a weapon and the partners had keys to one another's residence. Also, substance abuse was a risk factor in this case but that is not on the lethality assessment. Will the lethality assessment be used for every call of domestic violence, or will it be at the discretion of the officer responding to the call?

Darrell Holly: While substance abuse is a risk factor, we cannot screen for all risk factors, so we use the most prevalent questions for lethality, as indicated from the Oklahoma study, to determine the most prevalent questions that reduced lethality. Importantly, it is not the screen/assessment that saves lives. It is the services to the victim. There is a lot you can do as to why the outcome occurred in that case.

Lauren Peace: Just to clarify, a lethality assessment was not administered in this case and the victim was not connected to help services. Is the intent of the statute to connect the victim with help services if the lethality assessment is administered?

Sheriff Gualtieri: It is not proper protocol to engage in dialogue with a reporter at a public meeting.

Next meeting scheduled for Oct 11th, 2024, at 2pm.

Joe Petito: Motion to adjourn the meeting. Seconded: Chief Jones.