

Domestic Violence

6.09.01 PURPOSE

The purpose of this order is to establish general policies and procedures when responding to and investigating reports of domestic violence. Procedural details are in the Domestic Violence (DV) Manual.

6.09.02 DEFINITIONS

- A. Cohabitant** – Two unrelated adult persons living together for a substantial period of time, resulting in some permanency of relationship. Factors that may determine whether persons are cohabitating can be found in the DV Manual.
- B. Domestic Violence** – Abuse committed against an adult or a minor who is a current or former spouse or cohabitant, with whom a child is shared, or has or had a dating or engagement relationship ([PC §13700\(b\)](#)).
- C. Dominant Aggressor** – The person determined to be the most significant, rather than the first, aggressor, who poses the most serious, ongoing threat.
- D. Protective Order/Court Order of Protection** – A court-ordered injunction, regardless of form, content, length, layout, or type; issued for the purpose of preventing interaction between a subject and a specific (“protected”) person or persons.
- E. Stalking** – Any person who willfully, maliciously, and repeatedly follows or willfully and maliciously harasses another person and who makes a credible threat with the intent to place that person in reasonable fear for their safety, or the safety of their immediate family ([PC §646.9\(a\)](#)).
- F. Strangulation** – A form of asphyxia (lack of oxygen) characterized by closure of the vessels or air passages of the neck because of external pressure on the neck.

6.09.03 POLICY

The Department treats all acts of domestic violence as criminal conduct. When there is cause, members shall make an arrest instead of using dispute mediation or other intervention techniques.

6.09.04 PROCEDURES

A. Situational Awareness – Domestic dispute calls are considered the most dangerous types of calls for responding members and should be treated accordingly. Request as much information as possible from Dispatch prior to arrival.

1. En-route, officers should confirm the address and request any pertinent information Dispatch may have on the location or involved parties.
2. Request entry if at a private residence.
3. Warrantless entry is permissible if there is a reasonable basis to believe the safety of an occupant may be in jeopardy.

B. Secure the Scene – Members should, as quickly as possible, secure the scene as outlined in the DV Manual.

1. Separate involved parties and conduct a protective sweep if there is a threat to safety.
2. If needed, request language access assistance.
3. Secure any visible weapons.

C. Injuries – Provide aid and assess medical needs; call for an ambulance, if necessary, if it appears that strangulation has occurred, or at the request of any party.

D. Interview the Victim – Ensure as much detail is captured as possible.

1. Conduct an interview of the victim in a separate location from the dominant aggressor. Where possible, ensure there are sound barriers in place.
2. Inquire about strangulation and stalking. For strangulation, take photos of victim's face and neck regardless of visible injury. Advise victim that strangulation can cause internal damage.
3. Consider the following factors during the interview:
 - a. The nature and extent of DV.
 - b. The trauma, injuries, and signs of escalation toward lethal violence.
4. Obtain the suspect's ID (or photo) and show it to the victim to confirm identity.

E. Interview the Suspect

1. If SVU is notified, confer with responding investigator(s) prior to interviewing suspect.
2. Record (via Body Worn Camera) custodial interrogation, "Mirandize", and interview the suspect regardless of felony or misdemeanor charges.

F. Children

1. In an age-appropriate manner, ask children what they saw, what they heard, and what happened. Detail the tone, demeanor, location, name, and age of the child in the report.

2. Notify the Family and Children Services (FCS) Child Protective Services Hotline and refer to the DV manual for further procedures if:
 - a. The child was at the scene during the incident.
 - b. The investigation indicates any crime against the child.
 - c. An arrest is made and the child is present (DGO 7.04, Children of Arrested Parents).
 - d. The person taking care of the child after the incident is not a parent/legal guardian.
 - e. There is no identified designated caretaker.
3. The member does not need to wait for a release from FCS unless both parents/guardians are arrested or there is evidence of physical abuse against the child.

G. On-Scene Investigation

1. **Identify the Dominant Aggressor.** Consider the intent of the law to protect the victim from continuing abuse, parties' history of DV, whether either acted in self-defense, whether there are previous police reports or calls, which party will be in greater danger if nothing is done, are there defensive wounds, was strangulation involved, etc. ([PC §13701\(b\)](#)).
 - a. When possible, inform the victim of their legal right to self-defense ([PC §§ 692, 693](#)).
2. **Check for Active Court Orders.** Run the names of both the victim and suspect.
 - a. Follow the DV Manual if any of the following orders exist:
 - i. Restraining Order – 10-29 query Level II:MONSTER
 - ii. Stay Away Order – Level II: QCX and QCA
 - iii. Emergency Protective Order (EPO) – Level II:MONSTER
 - iv. Registered firearm
 - b. If members cannot verify an existing order (GVRO/DVRO), consider obtaining an EPO for protection until the order can be authenticated.
 - c. If an order exists but hasn't been served, attempt to serve the existing order.
3. Preserve the scene, collect evidence and photograph the incident per DGO 6.02, *Physical Evidence and Scene Preservation* and the DV manual.
4. **Weapons.** Take temporary custody of any firearm or inherently deadly weapon (e.g. something that the member reasonably feels could be weaponized based on the incident) in plain sight or discovered pursuant to a consensual or other lawful search ([PC §18250](#)) and book them (DGO 6.02, *Physical Evidence and Scene Preservation*, DGO 6.15, *Property Processing*).
 - a. If the weapon is not kept as evidence or contraband and can be lawfully possessed, officers will keep the weapon (DGO 6.15, *Property Processing*) for not less than 48 hours or more than five business days, unless a civil action is to be filed ([PC §18265](#)).

5. If an animal is injured or killed during the incident, photograph animal and contact Animal Care and Control (ACC).

H. Arrest

1. **Felony.** Considerations for a felony DV include:

- a. Corporal injury inflicted resulting in a traumatic condition ([PC § 273.5](#)), and/or
- b. Another felony crime that is determined to be DV-related.
- c. If the person violates a no-stalking temporary restraining order, injunction, or any other court order in effect prohibiting stalking ([per PC § 646.9\(b\)](#)).

2. **Misdemeanor.** Considerations for a misdemeanor DV include:

- a. A restraining order violation, if there is probable cause it had been served.
- b. A violation occurred in member's presence.
- c. A violation occurred outside the member's presence:
 - i. The victim may make a private person's arrest (DGO 5.04, *Arrest by Private Persons*), OR
 - ii. Member may make an arrest if there is probable cause to believe an assault or battery has occurred, the arrest is made as soon as probable cause arises, and the incident occurred between current or former cohabitants or spouses, fiancé; has or had an engagement or dating relationship; a child of the suspect; someone over the age of 65; and other relationships outlined in [PC § 836\(d\)](#).

3. **Citation and Release**

- a. Generally, do not cite and release in DV cases. Members considering the release of a suspect on a citation must evaluate the likelihood of a continuing offense, the suspect's history of violence, and statutory conditions under which a field release is not appropriate.
- b. Notify a supervisor if unsure about the ability to arrest. If no criminal conduct has occurred warranting an arrest, document the incident in CAD.

4. Refer the victim to SVU for follow-up investigation, regardless of whether an arrest has been made.

I. Notify DOC, SVU, and/or CSI if necessary.

J. EPO

1. Inform the victim that they may request the officer to request an EPO, and the member will do so if they believe there may be grounds for issuance ([Cal. Family Code §6275\(b\)](#)).

2. The member shall request an EPO, regardless of victim's request, if there are reasonable grounds to believe a person is in immediate and present danger of DV, based on the person's allegation of a recent incident of abuse or threat of abuse ([Cal. Family Code §6250](#)). If an EPO is not requested, member shall provide rationale in the incident report. Refer to DV Manual for procedure on requests.
 - a. EPO's do not need to be requested if victim has an active court order against the dominant aggressor, unless more restrictions or additional parties need to be added to protect the victim or others.
 - b. EPO's can also include children and pets.
 - c. Addresses are not legally required on an EPO. Check with the victim if they want their address on the EPO.

K. Victim Safety and Protection

1. Officer will remain on scene until the situation is under control.
2. Inform the victim about their rights to:
 - a. Obtain an order of protection.
 - b. Have a DV advocate or support person to be present at any interview ([PC §679.05](#)).
 - c. Have their name and any change in address kept confidential in incident reports released to the public ([Gov §6205](#); [§ 6254\(f\)\(2\)](#)).
 - d. Receive the report number and information for the proper investigation unit for follow-up ([PC §13701\(c\)\(8\)](#)), and note where this information is located on the handouts.
 - e. Request their incident report(s) and accompanying photographs in a timely manner ([Cal. Family Code §6228](#)).
3. **Documents.** In addition to documents provided to all victims of crime, provide the DV victim with:
 - a. SFPD Form 142 (Special Victims Unit (SVU) Resource Guide).
 - i. Member shall ask the victim the questions on the Lethality Assessment portion of the Resource Guide before providing it to the victim.
 - ii. If the victim responds 'yes' to any question, the member shall ask the victim if they would like the officer to contact an advocate for them while on the scene.
 - iii. Member may deactivate BWC in accordance with DGO 10.11, *Body Worn Cameras* if victim chooses to speak with an advocate at the scene.
 - b. Victim of Violent Crime Form and follow-up information.
4. **Shelter or Moving Locations**
 - a. If desired by the victim, members will assist in arranging shelter.

- b. If the victim leaves the premises, obtain a phone number and address where they may be contacted and provide the information to SVU prior to the end of watch. For the safety of the victim, do not include updated contact information in the incident report.
- c. Members will provide Civil Standby and may provide transportation to the victim (and children) to a safe location or medical facility if requested.

L. Incident Report – See DV Manual for reporting requirements.

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