



Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence

# LETHALITY ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

## 2020 - 2021 Update

### Recognizing 10 Years of LAP

September 2022 marks Connecticut’s 10th anniversary of the introduction of the Lethality Assessment Program (LAP) to law enforcement’s response to intimate partner violence. Over these 10 years, (September 2012 – August 2022) over **75,000 SURVIVORS** have been screened by Connecticut’s dedicated law enforcement. It is through these efforts that Connecticut continues to lead the nation in helping survivors of intimate partner violence understand the potential danger facing them. This non-mandated initiative has assisted tens of thousands of survivors and their families learn about and connect to domestic violence services across the state. We are thankful for the tremendous leadership and daily efforts by police officers, state troopers, and domestic violence advocates who have contributed to this systemic transformation.

Prior to the introduction of LAP in Connecticut, survivors of intimate partner violence may not have been aware of the potential danger they were in or the resources available to them through Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence’s (CCADV) 18 member organizations. This left survivors and their families vulnerable to further violence and made it difficult to make informed decisions regarding their situation during the most critical times.

Since the introduction and expansion of LAP across Connecticut, survivors have had the opportunity to make informed decisions about their safety based on the results of this independent screen. The Lethality Assessment Program has further increased the collaborations between law enforcement, advocates, and other criminal justice and community-based stakeholders, which increases the safety of both survivors and law enforcement.

Between  
September 2012  
and  
December 2021...

**67,805**  
**SCREENS**  
conducted

**20,594**  
**SURVIVORS**  
connected to  
services

*LAP screens are a well-vetted, proven and very important tool that our officers possess in helping our community members who may be at risk for intimate partner violence. The program assists in quickly assessing imminent potential threats and then effectively connecting involved parties to support groups and agencies, often times during the person’s most difficult time in a relationship and exactly when it is needed most. The timely application of the LAP may well be the intervention needed for a person to receive a “roadmap” to leave a dangerous relationship and potentially save a life.*

- Chief Donald Anderson, Darien Police

## LAP - A Three-pronged Intervention Process

Connecticut's LAP is modeled after the original Maryland Lethality Assessment Program created by Dr. Jacquelyn Campbell. The evidence-based screening tool that emerged from Dr. Campbell's study of 2,500 intimate partner homicides has been the standard in identifying potential lethal behaviors in violent intimate partner relationships across the country.

The three-pronged intervention process includes law enforcement screening a survivor at the scene of an intimate partner violence incident, connecting those who score high danger directly to local domestic violence advocates, and discussing the possibility of pursuing additional charges based on criminal acts indicated on the LAP screen with the survivor.

## COVID-19 IMPACT

No one could have predicted the impact of COVID-19 on the country or here in Connecticut. However, the relationships, system collaborations, and communication processes that were developed through Connecticut's LAP prior to the COVID-19 pandemic laid the foundation for greater response and collaborations between systems.

The pandemic increased the complexity of survivor needs while simultaneously creating barriers to various resources. Connecticut's police departments and service providers modified access to lobbies and in-person counseling. Shelters that were already operating above capacity saw a significant increase in requests for shelter while also having to increase reliance on hoteling to meet public health distancing guidelines. Court locations were closed and consolidated to limit the exposure of the public and staff. Despite the many challenges, various systems worked together to address specific concerns and create new avenues to meet the needs of survivors of domestic violence.

The Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence advocated and partnered with the Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division to implement an online restraining order application process, which would allow survivors to apply online while court locations were closed. In addition to offering shelter and hoteling, CCADV felt strongly that they still needed to provide housing safety to those quarantined in place with abusers. Fifty-two percent (52%) of rapid rehousing referrals came from households still living in the community. Although law enforcement began taking complaints for specific crimes over the phone during this time, they ensured that domestic violence complaints were investigated in person and when intimate partner violence was present, the LAP protocol was followed.

Weekly Domestic Violence/LAP Coordinator Meetings moved to virtual platforms to ensure coordinators were able to shift focus to address emerging trends and complex investigations. Individual cases and system adjustments were influenced by the coordinated efforts of CCADV staff and our program membership. Addressing emerging negative trends during this period of great disruption was critical to meeting the needs of survivors and families.

Online access to training videos and materials has been available through the [CT LAP website](#) to support law enforcement and advocates in their work. During 2020 and 2021, the training videos were viewed 3,212 times directly from the LAP website or from the private YouTube channel. The archived in-service training bulletins were accessed 1,994 times. These resources were valuable tools that ensured consistent communication of new legislation, best practices, and emerging trends.

## 2020 - 2021 DATA

During the 2020 and 2021 calendar years, there were 23,470 survivors of intimate partner violence screened by law enforcement. The data revealed that 12,872 (55%) of the survivors screened experienced circumstances in their relationship that indicated a high danger risk of being seriously injured or killed by their intimate partner. Of the survivors who were identified as high danger, 5,934 (46%) spoke to the LAP-line advocate at the time the officer called the local domestic program.

The data reveals that 127% of the high-danger survivors, who spoke to a LAP-line advocate engaged in services. The higher than 100% engagement can be attributed to three situations. First, some police departments have started the practice of calling the LAP-line for all screens whether the individual was determined to be high-danger or non-high danger. Second, with the added concerns of COVID-19 exposure, some survivors chose to not speak with the advocate with the officer

present but choose to call the domestic violence program after the officer had left the scene. Lastly, there are additional opportunities for survivors to engage in services through advocates embedded in the criminal and civil courts as proceedings are initiated. All three situations are the exception; however, they are significant enough to raise the percentage over the previously recorded 95% engagement.

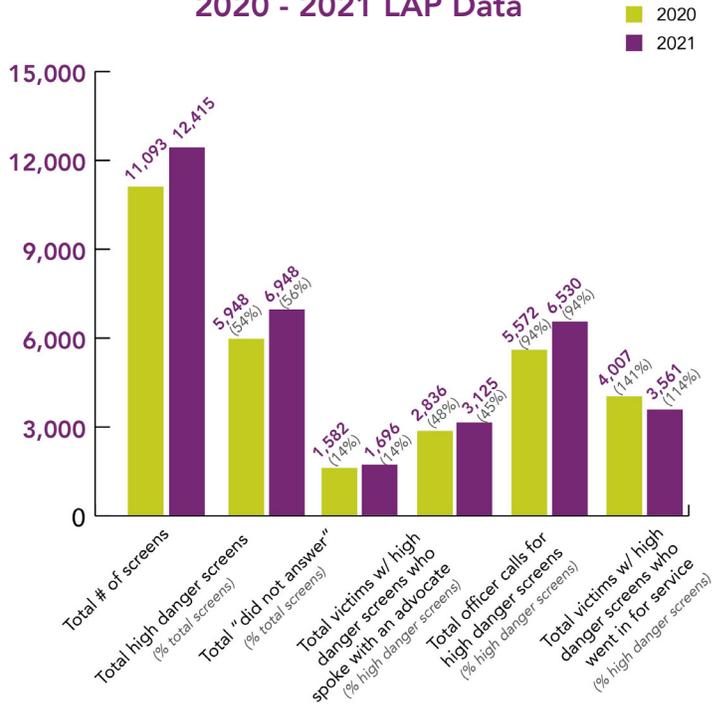
To better quantify these circumstances, in January 2023 we will expand the reporting fields to distinguish those survivors who chose to engage in services outside of the initial call made by law enforcement or who were not scored as "high danger".

### Most Frequently Reported Abusive Behaviors

An analysis of 21,484 conducted during the review period of 2020 - 2021 found that the following risk factors were reported the most frequently:

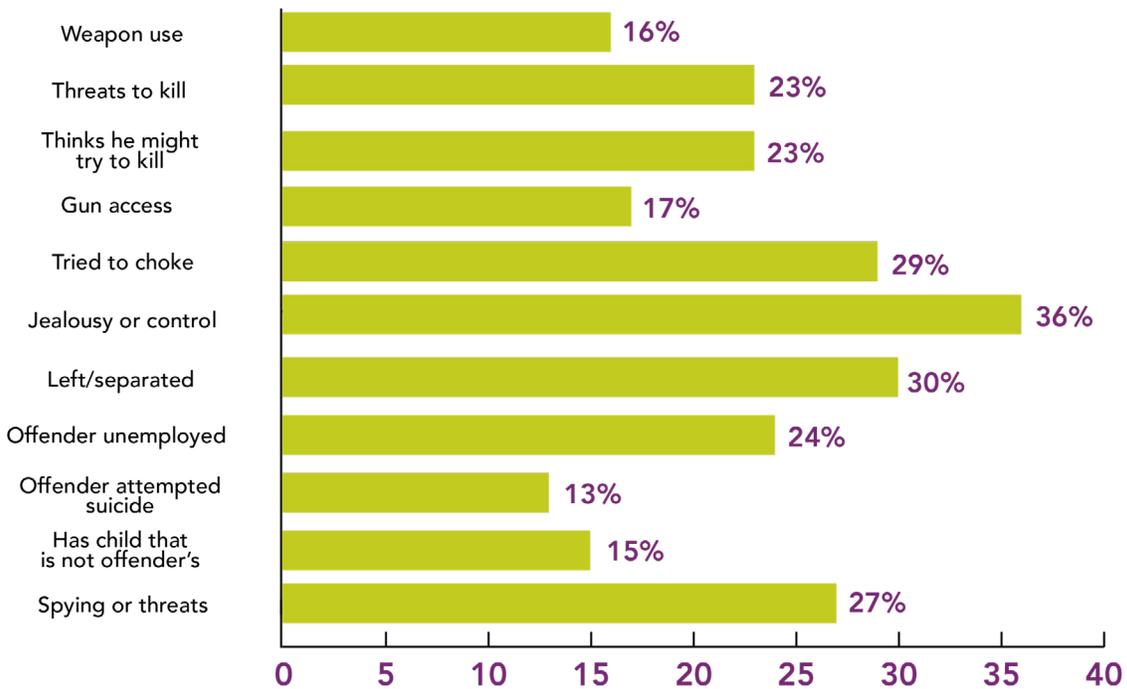
1. Violent jealousy or control
2. Prior or pending separation
3. Attempted strangulation
4. Stalking and/or threatening

2020 - 2021 LAP Data



### 11 LAP Risk Factors and Rate of Positive Responses (2020 - 2021)

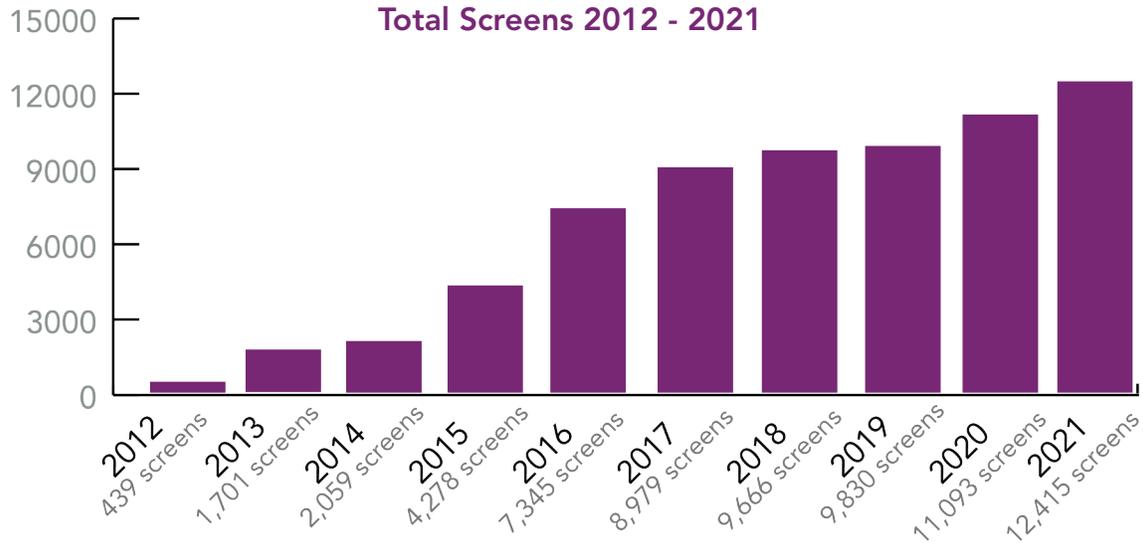
[ n = 21,484 screens ]



The 2020 and 2021 LAP data are available under the reports tab on the [CT LAP website](#). Any reporting agency that has fewer than ten screens per year is removed from the report to ensure survivor confidentiality. However, the totals and corresponding percentages are inclusive of all reported data.

## 2012 - 2021 DATA

Since the introduction of LAP in Connecticut from September 2012 through December 2021, law enforcement conducted 67,805 screens and connected 20,594 survivors who scored high danger with advocates who provided immediate safety planning based on the survivors' circumstances and informed them of services available.



The total number of LAP screens increased annually as more departments were trained and commenced participation. There has been statewide participation of all state, municipal, and university / college law enforcement agencies since 2018 (first full year with statewide participation). In the years since all law enforcement agencies came on board, the total number of screens completed rose 28%.

**TOTAL LAP SCREENS  
COMPLETED INCREASED**

**28%**

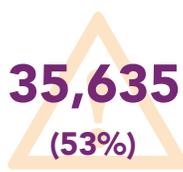
**BETWEEN 2018 - 2021**

LAP data from the commencement of the statewide rollout beginning in September 2012 through December 2021 demonstrates:

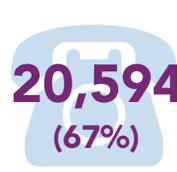
**LETHALITY SCREENS  
CONDUCTED**



**SCREENS CONSIDERED  
HIGH DANGER**



**HIGH DANGER VICTIMS  
SPOKE WITH A  
COUNSELOR**



**HIGH DANGER VICTIMS  
WHO SPOKE WITH A  
COUNSELOR FOLLOWED  
UP FOR SERVICES**



**Interested in bringing LAP to your state or county?**

CT remains the only state in the country to have full participation in LAP by its state police department and all municipal police departments. States or counties interested in learning more about incorporating LAP into their law enforcement response to intimate partner violence can contact Daniel Cargill, CCADV's Director of Law Enforcement Services, at [dcargill@ctcadv.org](mailto:dcargill@ctcadv.org).

## FOLLOW-UP ON CRIMINAL ACTS AS INDICATED ON THE LAP SCREEN

Law enforcement is encouraged to follow up on certain acts of violence as indicated by a “yes” answer on the screen. To accomplish this, at the conclusion of the screening process or the call to the advocate in high danger screens, officers advise the survivor that one or more of the questions they answered yes to is a crime in Connecticut. The officer advises the survivor that if they would like to give further details about the previous incident indicated on the screen, the officer will take a written statement if applicable and investigate the incident. If probable cause is able to be established, the officer will apply for a warrant for the arrest of their partner. If the survivor is not sure if they want to provide additional information about a previous incident, they can discuss the details with an advocate and determine if they want to move forward with a criminal complaint.

LAP Screen questions that are potential crimes in Connecticut:

- Has he/she ever used a weapon against you or threatened you with a weapon?
- Has he/she threatened to kill you or your children?
- Has he/she ever tried to choke you?
- Does he/she follow or spy on you or leave threatening messages?

Certain acts of violence such as strangulation and stalking significantly increase the potential danger present in an abusive intimate partner relationship. These acts coupled with attempted or recent separation are red flags for law enforcement and advocates. This additional information is critical for advocates to be aware of so they can tailor a safety plan based on the survivor’s specific circumstances.

**STRANGULATION & STALKING**  
coupled with  
**ATTEMPTED or RECENT SEPARATION**  
are **RED FLAGS**  
for escalating violence

## CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

The Lethality Assessment Program continues to serve as an effective tool for strengthening survivor safety through use of an evidence-based risk assessment screen and an important partnership between law enforcement and domestic violence advocates. Ensuring that survivors know that they may be facing a heightened risk of fatal violence and that free, voluntary services are available whenever they choose to engage is a critical first step in giving them the information they need to make informed decisions about their own safety.

CCADV and our 18 member organizations will continue working in partnership with law enforcement across the state, providing them with training and technical assistance they need to make LAP a success. We will also work to improve our data collection methods that in turn will strengthen our ability to analyze trends and gaps in survivor safety and the provision of domestic violence services.

*“Since the implementation of the Lethality Assessment Program in the Greater Bridgeport region, the collaborations and training opportunities with law enforcement have not only strengthened the partnership between The Center for Family Justice and local police but have provided additional safety measures for those impacted by intimate partner violence. The coordinated response provides greater opportunities to work together in the best interest of survivors and their children.”*

- Debra Greenwood, President & CEO  
The Center for Family Justice