

**BELLINGHAM-WHATCOM COUNTY  
COMMISSION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

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**A REPORT FROM THE 2002  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SAFETY  
AND ACCOUNTABILITY AUDIT**

Response to Domestic Violence Cases  
Call for Service (911)  
Law Enforcement Response  
Jail Booking and Release

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# A Report from the 2002 Domestic Violence Safety and Accountability Audit

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **A Report from the 2002 Domestic Violence Safety and Accountability Audit**

#### **BACKGROUND**

The Bellingham-Whatcom County Commission Against Domestic Violence was created by City of Bellingham and Whatcom County ordinances in December 1998. The Commission, which is comprised of twenty-seven key community leaders, is charged with a mission to *provide leadership in the community's effort to reduce and prevent domestic violence*. The Commission conducted a Domestic Violence Safety and Accountability Audit in October 2002, believing that it was a critical step in identifying and implementing specific criminal justice system changes that would improve victim safety and offender accountability.

The Domestic Violence Safety and Accountability Audit (Safety Audit) refers to the process developed in Duluth, Minnesota, by Ellen Pence, Ph.D. The Safety Audit is a systematic observation and analysis of work routines and documents used and produced between and among institutions as they process “cases” of domestic abuse. The purpose of a Safety Audit is to see how, where, and if existing practices – those that are documented in forms or policies, or those that evolve within a work culture – ensure the safety of victims and the accountability of offenders.

The Domestic Violence Commission chose to focus Whatcom County's first Safety Audit on What-Comm, the county-wide telecommunications center, the Bellingham Police Department (BPD), the Whatcom County Sheriff's Office (WCSO) and the Whatcom County Jail. The Audit was supported and received full cooperation from the Bellingham Police Chief and Whatcom County Sheriff, who together oversee the four systems.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

The Safety Audit has six distinct steps: (1) forming and preparing an inter-agency Audit team; (2) determining which aspects of case processing the team will investigate; (3) determining the scope of the investigation; (4) collecting data from each point of institutional action on a case, including the relationship between the data produced at different points of intervention; (5) analyzing the data; and (6) preparing findings that lead to specific recommendations. The Audit team then looks at a sequence of actions and determines how or if that sequence is structured to centralize both victim safety and offender accountability. Safety Audits look at the context of agency intervention, such as information-sharing mechanisms between agencies, the education of and training available to agency staff, and the resources those staff have available. In so doing, the Audit reveals work processes underlying any problems or trends.

A trained sixteen-member Audit team (see Appendix A) conducted the Safety Audit during the week of October 21 – 25, 2002. During that week the Audit team held twelve interviews and participated in forty-three observations of practitioners in the four audited systems. In addition,

the Safety Audit consultant conducted text analysis of over 245 files, randomly selected from What-Comm, BPD, WCSO and the Whatcom County Jail. Two focus groups were held with domestic violence victims/survivors and service providers prior to the Audit week.

The Audit team met over the morning on the last day of the Safety Audit week to review its findings and develop preliminary recommendations. Each team prepared a set of recommendations that were then presented to their colleagues for review and comment. Appendix B contains the 42 preliminary recommendations made by the Audit team. The Audit team recommended several changes that involve systemic problems beyond the immediate response to domestic violence. They are included in the preliminary recommendations because they have an impact on the attention and resources available to victim safety.

## **FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Safety Audit produced a considerable amount of information specific to domestic violence case processing in Whatcom County. The final report supplements the Audit team findings with additional information from the text analysis. It highlights the thirty key findings and sixty-six recommendations, which are listed in summary form in Appendix F. The report focuses on gaps in victim safety and offender accountability because these are the areas where change should occur. It is important, however, to also acknowledge the qualities and features already in place. That practitioners and systems are willing to examine their own processes is evident in the composition and enthusiasm of the Audit team. They approached their work with energy and curiosity and found their colleagues eager to contribute to the process.

These are some key Safety Audit findings.

- **Inconsistent system responses.**  
Inconsistencies appear to be caused by a number of factors, such as absence of written policies and procedures, lack of training and lack of clarity between systems regarding who is responsible for communicating and requesting information.
- **Risk/danger evaluation is inconsistent and incomplete.**  
Although most law enforcement reports included general questions about abuse, many reports appeared to be missing deeper questions to better assess how dangerous the current situation is, how it compares to previous acts of violence, and what implications this has for victim safety and establishing probable cause.
- **Reports are frequently missing victim contact information, witness and suspect statements and information on the presence and welfare of children.**
- **Victim information and support is inconsistent and should be enhanced to provide links to more immediate crisis services.**
- **Deputies/Officers often respond to the scene with limited information on criminal histories and the existence of orders.**  
This is caused by lack of clarity on the role of dispatch in checking records, the lack of 24- hour record access within WCSO as well as lag time in entering records, and the lack of shared data systems between jurisdictions.
- **For incidents classified as “verbal domestic” (no arrest), the dispatch slip and/or report frequently suggest a level of violence or threatening conduct that may support a higher degree of intervention.**

- **System practitioners lack consistent access to technology/resources such as cell phones, lap top computers, 24-hour access to records, and cross-jurisdictional access to records. (These vary by agency.)**
- **Victim notification prior to offender release from jail occurs inconsistently, and in some cases, the jail does not receive adequate victim contact information.**

Civil and criminal justice systems have the potential to deter future violence, if the response is quick, clear, consistent, and linked to strong community-based services for victims and offenders. Victim safety can be compromised when information is lost, cues are missed, information is not documented and shared with appropriate practitioners, or when interventions do not account for the potential for retaliatory violence. The findings above demonstrate areas in which Whatcom County can improve its policies and practices in order to build an even stronger response to ensure victim safety and offender accountability.

Each Safety Audit finding in the report is followed by a series of recommendations. As documented in the Safety Audit Preliminary Recommendations (Appendix A), the recommendations fall into seven categories: technology, resources, rules and regulations, administrative forms and procedures, systems linkages, education and training, and social status assumptions. Here are examples from the Safety Audit recommendations:

#### **Technology:**

- Provide the means for WCSO Deputies to compose and record reports electronically.
- Provide Longarm and criminal history access via BPD patrol MDT and link Longarm (BPD report data base) with the AS400 (WCSO database).
- Require mandatory completion of domestic violence booking screen at the jail.

#### **Resources:**

- Develop pocket cards or similar cue cards to aid What-Comm staff in assessing safety and gathering information.
- Enter domestic violence reports into the AS400 (WCSO electronic database) by the next business day.
- Provide a cell phone or similar technology with Language Line access for every BPD patrol vehicle.

#### **Rules and Regulations:**

- Develop written What-Comm policies and procedures to guide staff and ensure consistency of response to domestic violence calls.
- Review the overall WCSO response to “verbal domestics” including review of required paperwork to identify areas for possible consolidation and streamlining.
- Design and implement a BPD departmental policy governing response to domestic abuse calls and train officers and supervisors department-wide.
- Provide training to jail staff about the significance of relaying threats and excited-utterance information to the prosecutor and other appropriate parties.

#### **Administrative Forms and Procedures:**

- Provide training and policy guidance to WCSO deputies about appropriate techniques for inquiring about children’s presence and welfare.
- Provide training and policy guidance to BPD officers about the significance of and techniques for obtaining witness and suspect statements in domestic violence cases.

- Incorporate risk questions into BPD and WCSO report writing requirements and forms and provide ongoing supervisory review and feedback to patrol/deputies.
- Require victim contact information from the arresting officers prior to booking in jail.
- Review all correspondence, telephone scripts, and other program materials to ensure that victims are fully informed of Community Volunteers Against Domestic Violence (CVADV) role and relationship to law enforcement agencies.

#### **System Linkages:**

- Clarify the role and relationship between law enforcement and What-Comm dispatch to articulate who initiates and communicates information such as weapons check, criminal history, and verification of orders.
- Provide WCSO deputies with reader privileges for Longarm (BPD report data base).
- Law enforcement to inform victims of available domestic violence crisis services and offer to make a connection for them while on-scene.
- Improve jail linkages to domestic violence services in order to strengthen connections between victims and sources of information, assistance and support.

#### **Education and Training:**

- Design and deliver agency-wide training to What-Comm staff.
- Provide guidelines and training to WCSO and BPD about investigating possible strangulation and offering medical attention.
- Provide training to jail corrections officers about the dynamics of domestic violence and batterer tactics of control.

#### **Social Status Assumptions:**

- Provide support for CVADV to serve non-English speaking victims, via recruitment of bilingual volunteers, access to phone-based or other translation services, and translation of victim notification materials into other languages.
- Working backward from jail booking records, use Safety Audit methodology to examine arrest of women on domestic abuse related charges in order to identify any problematic practices concerning victim safety.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Accountability means holding offenders responsible for their use of violence. It means creating and monitoring a coordinated community response that offers the promise of safety to victims of domestic violence. Accountability also means holding community systems accountable, which is what the participating agencies in Whatcom County have done with this Safety Audit. Four key criminal justice systems have been willing to take a look at themselves and determine, how, where, and if their current practices ensure victim safety and offender accountability.

This Safety Audit Report is a blueprint for change. Implementation of the recommendations will require commitment, prioritization and resources. The Commission is committed to supporting implementation of these recommendations and hopes to continue the audit process in future years by focusing on additional criminal justice systems as well as other agencies that form the community response to domestic violence.

## **A Report from the 2002 Domestic Violence Safety and Accountability Audit**

### **Response to Domestic Violence Cases: Call for Service (911) to Law Enforcement Response to Jail Booking and Release**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The Domestic Violence Safety and Accountability Audit (Safety Audit) refers to the process developed in Duluth, Minnesota, by Ellen Pence, Ph.D., and outlined in the Manual *“The Duluth Safety and Accountability Audit; A Guide to Assessing Institutional Responses to Domestic Violence”* by Ellen Pence and Kristine Lizdas. The Safety Audit is a systematic observation and analysis of work routines and documents used and produced between and among institutions as they process “cases” of domestic abuse.

The purpose of a Safety Audit is to see how, where, and if existing practices- those that are documented in forms or policies, or those that evolve within a work culture – ensure the safety of victims and the accountability of offenders. Where these practices fail to consider, or possibly exacerbate, these concerns, they can be redesigned. The Safety Audit is not an assessment of the work performance of individual staff members or administrators, but rather a holistic examination of the processes, practices, routines and functions that comprise the criminal justice response to domestic violence. What an audit examines is how the actions of offenders and the information gathered by staff are recorded, distributed, analyzed, and used by other people within the same or complementary systems. Individual staff members may be more or less effective in their own practices, but that is not the point of auditing their work: *it is to see how, where and if current practices – both those in job descriptions and those that evolve in the work culture – ensure the safety of victims and the accountability of offenders.*

The Safety Audit has six distinct steps: (1) forming and preparing an inter-agency Audit team; (2) determining which aspects of case processing the team will investigate; (3) determining the scope of the investigation; (4) collecting data from each point of institutional action on a case, including the relationship between the data produced at different points of intervention; (5) analyzing the data; and (6) preparing findings that lead to specific recommendations. The Audit team then looks at a sequence of actions and determines how or if that sequence is structured to centralize both victim safety and offender accountability. Safety Audits look at the context of agency intervention, such as information-sharing mechanisms between agencies, the education of and training available to agency staff, and the resources those staff have available. In so doing, the Audit reveals work processes underlying any problems or trends.

In October of 2002, the Bellingham-Whatcom County Commission Against Domestic Violence conducted a Domestic Violence Safety and Accountability Audit in order to examine the 911, law enforcement and jail response to domestic violence cases. The Commission chose to focus the Safety Audit on What-Comm, the county-wide telecommunications center, the Bellingham



Police Department (BPD), the Whatcom County Sheriff's Office (WCSO) and the Whatcom County Jail.

The Safety Audit was supported by the Bellingham Police Chief and the Whatcom County Sheriff, who together oversee the four systems. There was full support and cooperation from these systems throughout the entire audit process. Funding for the Safety Audit was provided by the Bellingham-Whatcom County Commission Against Domestic Violence (City of Bellingham and Whatcom County), ConocoPhillips and the Bellingham Sunrise Rotary.

The Bellingham-Whatcom County Safety Audit was designed to examine the initial criminal justice system response to domestic violence cases. Specifically, the Safety Audit examined the response of What-Comm call-takers and dispatch to domestic violence calls, the two law enforcement agency responses to domestics (arrest and non-arrest), and jail booking and release procedures for individuals arrested for domestic violence related offenses. The planning process involved six months of case file analysis, focus groups, discussions with practitioners, and scheduling of Audit week activities that culminated in an intense week of observations and interviews with practitioners from the four systems. The Audit week activities were conducted by a Safety Audit team.

Typically, a Safety Audit team is made up of members of each of the local systems being examined along with other key stakeholders. Sixteen Audit team members (Appendix A) participated in the Safety Audit, representing the following agencies: Bellingham Police Department, Whatcom County Jail, Whatcom County Sheriff's Office, What-Comm, Whatcom County Prosecutor's Office, City of Bellingham Attorney's Office, Whatcom County Probation, Whatcom County Health Department, Commission Against Domestic Violence, and four domestic violence service agencies, Womenscare Shelter and Domestic Violence Services, Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services, Lummi Victims of Crime and Opportunity Council. The Audit team members participated in a two-day training and committed a full week of their time and effort in order to conduct the Safety Audit. The Safety Audit served a twofold purpose. In addition to the Safety Audit itself, the process provided a training opportunity for Audit team members by applying the Safety Audit method of analysis.

The Commission Against Domestic Violence invited the community to attend a forum on the Domestic Violence Safety and Accountability Audit. This forum was held a few weeks prior to the Audit week and provided interested community members and professionals an opportunity to learn about the philosophy, purpose and practices of a Safety Audit.

The Bellingham-Whatcom County Commission Against Domestic Violence hopes that this process not only provided an enlightening, hands-on training opportunity for the Audit team members, but will also result in meaningful findings for system practitioners in What-Comm, the Bellingham Police Department, the Whatcom County Sheriff's Office and the Whatcom County Jail, all of whom were so generous with their time and expertise throughout the Safety Audit process.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Bellingham-Whatcom County Commission Against Domestic Violence was created by City of Bellingham and Whatcom County ordinances in December 1998. The Commission, which is comprised of twenty-seven key community leaders, is charged with a mission to *provide leadership in the community's effort to reduce and prevent domestic violence*. As one of its primary goals, the Commission focuses on projects that create overall systemic and policy change in the community response to domestic violence. The Commission selected the Domestic Violence Safety and Accountability Audit as one its 2002 projects, believing that it was a critical step in identifying and implementing specific criminal justice system changes that would improve victim safety and offender accountability.

The Whatcom County criminal justice system has a long history of understanding the serious nature of domestic violence along with an openness to examine and improve responses to domestic violence cases. In 1995, the Whatcom County Sheriff's Office developed an Operational Policy and Procedure Manual for domestic violence cases. At about the same time, the Bellingham Police Department created a Family Crimes Unit, recognizing the importance of consistency in reviewing and tracking domestic violence cases. Numerous collaborative efforts are in place or underway, involving multi-disciplinary system players. There is a high degree of professionalism and commitment to make continual improvements and strong relationships are in place between the multiple stakeholders.

In January 2002, the Commission Against Domestic Violence partnered with a number of organizations to co-sponsor the workshop "Awareness to Action". Trainers from Praxis International spoke about the value and qualities of a coordinated community response to domestic violence. Evaluations from the workshop indicated that participants were eager for Whatcom County to take the next step and implement the strategies outlined in the workshop. As a result of this feedback, the Commission determined the community was ready to conduct a Domestic Violence Safety and Accountability Audit. No other process had been available to systematically and objectively evaluate the criminal justice system response to domestic violence. The Safety Audit appeared to be an excellent tool to create effective systemic and policy changes.

The strong foundation and commitment to domestic violence issues in Whatcom County contributed to the success of the Safety Audit. The Safety Audit is a blueprint for change and implementation of recommendations will require commitment, prioritization and resources. The Commission hopes to continue the Safety Audit process in future years by focusing on additional criminal justice systems as well as other agencies that form the community response to domestic violence.

## **SAFETY AUDIT OVERVIEW**

### **Choice of Focus Area**

The call for service (911), law enforcement and jail response to domestic violence were selected for the focus of the Safety and Accountability Audit for several reasons. First, a 911 call prompts a law enforcement response that for many victims of domestic violence may be the first time they have encountered the criminal justice system. In 2001, Whatcom County law enforcement agencies reported 1,383 domestic violence related offenses. In addition, the Bellingham Police and Whatcom County Sheriff responded to 1,381 verbal (no arrest) domestics. These contacts are a critical time to make a difference, both in terms of victim safety and offender accountability. Even when there is no arrest, a 911 or law enforcement response communicates a message to potential victims and offenders. For those offenders who are arrested, jail procedures and practices are also significant in contributing to victim safety and offender accountability. If improvements are made at the entry point to the criminal justice system, it is more likely that community members will view and use the criminal justice system as one tool for victim safety and offender accountability.

Second, the Bellingham Police Department and Whatcom County Sheriff's Office have spent a significant amount of time developing, implementing and training personnel on domestic violence policies and procedures. These agencies felt confident about what was in place and were therefore open to the Safety Audit and the opportunity to make improvements.

Third, as stated earlier, the Commission hopes to follow the Safety Audit process through prosecution, probation and sentencing in the future. Therefore, it seemed appropriate to start the first Safety Audit with the initial criminal justice response and intervention.

### **Mapping**

Prior to the Safety Audit week of October 21 - 25, Sue Parrott, the local Safety Audit coordinator, worked with consultants from Praxis to map out all of the steps or "points of institutional action" involving the response and processing of a domestic violence case within each of the four systems. At What-Comm this included actions of call-takers to the closure of a case by dispatch. For law enforcement, this included procedures at a domestic violence call, paperwork, and the distribution of the case file information. With Whatcom County Jail it included the pre-booking and booking process as well as release procedures. (See Appendix C)

### **Focus Groups**

Focus groups provide a mechanism for identifying questions and themes to explore during the Safety Audit. It is a mechanism for bringing victims' voices into the audit process. In Whatcom County, two focus groups were conducted prior to the Safety Audit week, one with victims of domestic violence who had experience with 911 or law enforcement and another with domestic violence service providers. In addition, service providers received a template and instructions for gathering additional information from participants in support groups and other services.

### **Text Analysis**

The Safety Audit coordinator, with direction from the consultant, also collected relevant texts from each agency – forms, job descriptions, policies and procedures, statutes, and agency

descriptions – which were compiled into handbooks for points of reference for the Audit team during the Audit week. Agencies were asked to provide *complete case files*, which were defined as follows.

*Complete Case File includes, but is not limited to reports, statements, and forms. Examples from Bellingham and Whatcom County: Recordings or transcripts of 911 calls and dispatch communication, Victim's Rights Form, Domestic Violence Check List, Domestic Violence Complaint/Victim Statement, Domestic Violence Case Summary and Checklist, Incident Report Review/Routing Form, Complaint Report, Narrative Supplement, Primary Follow-Up Form, Case Summary/Probable Cause Form, Court Docket Form, Dispatch Slips, call logs and notes from CVADV Support Specialists, and Domestic Violence Supplemental. It does not include photographs or physical evidence.*

Case files from each system (911 calls, Bellingham Police Department domestic violence case reports, Whatcom County Sheriff's Office domestic violence case reports, jail booking and release screens), totaling over 245 files, were also collected and sent to Praxis for analysis. This material included: 26 AS400 Incident Details; 42 sets of jail booking and release screens; 61 WCSO case files; 55 BPD case files; and, 61 911-call recordings.

Case files from BPD and WCSO were selected by pulling every tenth file from all domestic-related cases, arrest and non-arrest, between January and August, 2002. Jail screen prints were compiled using every tenth domestic abuse-related booking during the same time period. 911 recordings cannot be retrieved by type of call and cannot be retrieved after 90 days. What-Comm was able to supply a CD-ROM, however, of 166 calls, most of which were domestic violence calls occurring within the past year.

For each system, a sample of text was analyzed in detail. Client and practitioner names, addresses and identifying features were removed; the text was coded and categorized to reveal patterns in risk level for clients in relation to system response; and overall themes or trends relating to victim safety and offender accountability were identified. During the Audit week, the Audit team also analyzed a sample of case documentation from each system, including: 911 transcripts, law enforcement reports for non-arrest incidents, and jail booking and release screen prints.

### **Interviews and Observations**

During the week on site in Bellingham, Praxis consultants and Audit team members interviewed 12 practitioners including: one Bellingham Police Department Officer; two Community Volunteers Against Domestic Violence working within law enforcement; two 911 call-takers/dispatchers; two detective sergeants; one Whatcom County Jail Lieutenant; one Whatcom County Jail Corrections Officer; the Bellingham City Attorney's Office Victim Advocate; one Whatcom County Sheriff's Deputy; and Lieutenant of Operations of What-Comm. The Audit team also participated in a total of forty-three observations. This included observations of 911 call-takers and dispatchers and observations of processes and procedures within the Whatcom County Jail. It also included ride-alongs with Whatcom County Sheriff Deputies and Bellingham Police Department Patrol. Finally, it included observations of Community

Volunteers Against Domestic Violence who work with the Whatcom County Sheriff's Office and Bellingham Police Department.

## **THE AUDIT TEAM'S PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Audit team met over the morning on the last day of the Safety Audit week to review its findings and develop preliminary recommendations. Each team prepared a set of recommendations that were then presented to their colleagues for review and comment. Appendix B contains the 42 preliminary recommendations made by the Audit team. This report supplements those findings with additional information from the text analysis. The team's recommendations are cross-referenced throughout the report (PR1 – PR 42).

## **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASE PROCESSING IN WHATCOM COUNTY: SAFETY & ACCOUNTABILITY AUDIT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS<sup>1</sup>**

The Safety Audit produced a considerable amount of information specific to domestic violence case processing in Whatcom County. This report highlights key findings and recommendations, which are listed in summary form in Appendix F. It should be read along with the Audit team's preliminary recommendations (Appendix B) for a complete picture of the Safety Audit findings and recommendations for change. The Audit team recommended several changes that involve systemic problems beyond the immediate response to domestic violence. They are included in the preliminary recommendations because they have an impact on the attention and resources available to victim safety. These include: the "time vampire" issues that impact 911 operator response, the need to upgrade overall 911 technology, deputy access to cell phones and laptops, and the bottleneck in the jail booking process.

This report focuses on gaps in victim safety and offender accountability because these are the areas where change should occur. It is important, however, to also acknowledge the qualities and features already in place. That practitioners and systems are willing to examine their own processes is evident in the composition and enthusiasm of the Audit team. They approached their work with energy and curiosity and found their colleagues eager to contribute to the process.

For Whatcom County, implementing many of the recommendations contained in this report will mean refining policies and procedures already in place. In other instances, it will mean developing new policies and components in the coordinated community response. What is significant, however, is the willingness of practitioners and community systems to change, with the skills and contributions of the Audit team as a main component.

### **What-Comm – Emergency 911 and Dispatch**

911 and dispatch operators work under challenging circumstances: emergency calls requiring quick decisions; scared, injured, and distressed callers who have difficulty relaying information; and many non-emergency calls, from accidental cell phone calls to curious officers during a major event. Whatcom County is no exception, as the Audit team learned. Moreover, call-takers and dispatchers work under the additional challenge of lacking specific policy, training, and direction on responding to domestic violence calls. This has an impact on the consistency and thoroughness with which they are able to respond to domestic abuse calls. In addition to interviews and observations, these findings are based on an analysis of 61 recordings of 911 "domestics," including complete transcripts for 21 calls. Of the 61 recordings, 27 involved "third party" callers, with the incident reported by someone other than the victim or offender.

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<sup>1</sup> **NOTE: Throughout this report, the names of all individuals used in any case examples have been changed. Any similarity to Whatcom County residents is coincidental. Direct quotes from text appear in *italics*.**

**F1. Absence of written policies and procedures for domestic abuse 911 calls results in an inconsistent response and missing information relevant to victim and officer safety.**

**R1. Develop written policies and procedures to guide 911 staff and ensure consistency of response to domestic violence calls. [PR3, 4, 5]**

A written policy helps 911 operators assess victim safety, offender history, and the likelihood of danger. This includes procedures to guide them in obtaining the following kinds of information: immediate danger, whether it is safe for the victim to talk, presence of weapons, suspect location, nature of injuries and the need for emergency medical care, presence and welfare of children, existence of protection or no-contact orders, and the severity and frequency of prior violence.

Operators and dispatchers in Whatcom County work without a domestic violence call guide or policy manual. Each practitioner prepares his or her own “flip book” to guide his or her work. This introduces significant variation in the response of individual personnel. On-scene conditions are not always thoroughly assessed and relayed to responding officers. Information about prior domestic violence-related calls and related criminal history was not typically relayed to officers in the cases examined. The Audit team reported gaps in access to criminal history information and assumptions or misunderstanding about who was responsible for requesting and finding it. The 911 call transcripts show little inquiry into past history of violence or the existence of no-contact and protection orders. Of the 21 transcripts, in only four calls does the operator ask about past violence. In three of the transcripts, the caller tells the operator that there is a no-contact or protection order in effect. In none of the calls does the operator initiate a question about an existing no-contact or protection order.

Questions about the presence or involvement of weapons were often asked near the middle or end of a call, and without clarifying or confirming the answer. In Call #65-67, for example, the operator says *OK, and you said he has no weapons?* The caller replies, *No*, but the operator does not go back to confirm that *no* means the absence of weapons, or *no*, that’s not what she meant. Operators usually do not clarify what they mean by weapons, assuming that the caller will understand. They typically do not follow up by asking if there are guns or knives present or involved, or if there are dogs at the scene and whether that will be problematic for responding officers. Where the caller’s primary language is something other than English, the word *weapon* may not be understood, as this example from Call #34-41 (Case W19 in Table 1, Appendix E) illustrates.

C = Caller

911: *OK, we're going to get some help on the way, ma'am. Does he have any weapons?*

C: *inaudible*

911: *OK, does he have any weapons?*

C: *inaudible*

911: *He doesn't have any weapons?*

C: *What's a weapon?*

911: *Does he have a knife or a gun or anything like that?*

C: *No, I've never seen a gun.*

The lack of clear, uniform guidelines means that questions related to the caller's immediate safety often go unanswered. In 10 out of 14 calls where the caller was reporting threats or injuries, the 911 operator did not ask if she could speak freely or whether it was safe to stay on the phone.

The lack of clear, uniform guidelines also means that 911 operators are inconsistent in their questions related to the presence and safety of children. The caller will often note early in the call whether children are with her. An operator will typically ask *Is there anybody else in the house with you?* They rarely ask specifically about children, however, nor do they follow up with questions about children's well-being if it's clear that children are present. Of the 21 transcripts analyzed, in only 6 did the operator ask any questions that would elicit information about the presence of children. In only one, Call # 34-41 (Case W19), did the operator follow up with additional questions about their safety.

911: *Are you home alone right now?*  
C: *Huh?*  
911: *Are you home alone?*  
C: *No, I have a...three kids and one is four months and two... (inaudible)*  
911: *Your kids are with you?*  
C: *Yeah, my daughter saw him, he fight me, my daughter saw him.*  
911: *How old is your daughter?*  
C: *Seven years.*  
[later in the call]  
911: *OK. Are all the children with you?*  
C: *Yes.*  
911: *OK. Has he ever hit your kids before?*  
C: *No, my kids cry, my daughter says my husband you don't fight.*  
911: *(speaking to someone else - OK. That's good.) Are your kids OK?*  
C: *Yes.*  
911: *OK, you have three children?*  
C: *Yeah, three.*  
911: *A girl and two boys?*  
C: *Yeah.*  
911: *And is your girl the oldest?*  
C: *Yeah*  
911: *She's seven, you said?*  
C: *Yeah, (inaudible)*  
911: *And the brother is three?*  
C: *No, he's five.*  
911: *Five, and how old is your other son?*  
C: *Four months.*  
911: *Four months, oh, just a baby.*

When fearful or injured, a caller may be too focused on the actions of adults to provide information about children in response to a general question about whether anyone else is there. A specific question about children will provide responding officers with more complete information about the scene and potential witnesses.

Questions about injuries provide another example of inconsistent or incomplete response that can be addressed via policy and training (see F2). In 12 of the 21 transcripts, the operator did not inquire directly about injuries. Callers may say they are hurt, i.e., *my husband just raped me*



(Call #23) or *my husband has just head-butted me* (Call #25-27) or *he threw me on the floor and hurt my head* (Call #106). Operators sometimes, but not always, ask *do you need an ambulance?* A caller replying “no,” however, may not accurately reflect the seriousness of her injuries or the need for on-scene medical attention. Callers may refuse an ambulance because they cannot afford it. A refused ambulance does not necessarily indicate how much violence has occurred or at what level, or whether medical assistance is necessary. Callers may not be able to clearly judge their injuries, as this example from Call #42-43 illustrates.

C4: My whole face hurts (sobbing).  
911: OK, do you want an ambulance?  
C4: I don't know if I need an ambulance. He jumped on me with his knee on my face, with all his weight on me.  
911: OK, you need to tell the deputies that, OK? Right now you're going to need to calm down, maybe put some ice on it. If you think you need an ambulance, I can send you one.  
C4: I don't know, do you have to be dying to need an ambulance?  
911: No, no. They can come out and if you think it needs attention, they can come out and look at it. Do you want to try to deal with it there or did you want somebody to come out?  
C4: I don't know what to do, I don't know what it looks like or anything.

Establishing the level of injury and obtaining a more detailed description of the violence would help operators better assess the level of danger and provide responding officers with information about what kind of assault has occurred.

Developing a specific policy and agency-wide training on domestic violence will help address other areas of inconsistent response evident in the text analysis: response to third-party callers, response when the suspect gets on the line, and putting callers on hold.

Twenty-seven (27) of the 61 calls analyzed originated with someone other than the victim or suspect. The willingness of neighbors, relatives, friends, and passersby to report violence reflects a declining level of tolerance for domestic violence and recognition that someone is in potential danger. The involvement of a concerned friend, family member or neighbor can also be an important way of connecting victims with community services. In addition, with third-party callers, operators often have an opportunity to identify potential witnesses who are free from the intimidation of the abuser and who are not directly involved in the incident.

Determining whether it is safe for a victim to talk is one of a 911 operator's immediate, primary responsibilities. Because it is likely that the suspect is still present, operator's should assume that the caller cannot speak freely and advise her that she can answer “yes” or “no” if she feels it is not safe to talk. A common pattern in the 911 calls analyzed was to ask *what's going on* or *tell me what's happening* or *where is your husband now?* This approach may escalate the situation, however, and put the caller at further risk. Until an operator is certain the victim can speak freely, information should be obtained as much as possible via yes or no type questions. For example:

- Is it safe for you to talk?
- Is he standing next to you?
- Does he know you have called 911?
- Is he in the same room?

- Has he been violent toward you/your children/someone else?
- Is he threatening you?
- Are you frightened?
- Are you injured?
- Are the injuries serious? Are you bleeding? From your head? Does your head hurt? Are you having trouble breathing?
- Do you need an ambulance?

In only 4 of the 15 calls made by victims did the operator establish that it was safe for the caller to speak freely and to stay on the phone, and that was usually fairly late in the call. Too much emphasis was placed on obtaining the spelling of names and middle initials, before ascertaining the caller's safety. These types of procedures, and practice, should be addressed in agency-wide policy development and training.

Calls become even more challenging when the suspect also gets on the line. Operators must take care to speak calmly and respectfully, neither confirming or denying what he is saying or information that may have been relayed previously, while attempting to keep the suspect on the line until officers arrive. Operators should assume that the suspect may pick up the phone or an extension at any time, as happened with two of the calls analyzed. One (Call #20) provides an example of the suspect being aware of the call, getting on the line, and the operator attempting to keep the suspect on the line. Midway through the call the operator shifts to questions about whether the caller can speak freely. The call ends with the line going dead.

911: Do you know what his middle initial and birth date are?

C: Yeah.

911: OK, go ahead and tell me.

*She does not answer, you can hear her crying.*

911: Is that him I can hear in the background?

C: Yeah.

911: And are you able to speak freely with me?

C: No.

911: OK, because he is in the room?

C: Yeah.

911: And does he know that you are calling 911?

C: Yeah.

*Hear him in background - inaudible*

911: OK, is that him I can hear talking?

C: Yeah.

911: OK. Is there anybody else in the house with you guys?

C: My daughter.

911: How old is your daughter, is she a teenager or older?

C: fifteen.

911: Fifteen?

C: Yeah.

911: And what's your name?

C: Diane

911: Diane?

*(Hear him closer now.)*

911: You're doing great, OK. while I'm talking with you, we have a couple of officers who are headed over there.

C2: Hello, they'll be here shortly

911: OK, Who is this?  
C2: Ah, this is uh, Robert.  
911: OK, Robert. What's going on over there?  
C2: Uh, Diane and I aren't getting along and uh...  
911: OK, what happened?  
C2: There's just no waiting, getting her, it's just uh...hopefully  
911: OK, well we're just sending an officer, a couple officers over there to help you guys sort this matter out.  
C2: Thank you.  
911: That's OK. Can I just stay on the phone with you guys until they get there?  
C2: Thank you. I'm going to put the phone down. Thank you.  
911: OK. Diane are you still there?  
*No response - can hear him talking in the background. (inaudible)...you are the one that left all night long to go drinking with your buddies...oh. all night long, huh?*  
Phone dead.

The text analysis suggested another area for attention via policy development and training: putting callers on hold. While it is necessary for 911 operators to do so, either because other lines are busy or because of communication with a dispatcher or colleague, it is important that callers know what is happening, without suddenly experiencing silence on the 911 end of the call. Two of the calls analyzed (Call #34-41 and Call #4) had long stretches where the caller was put on hold, or there was no response from the 911 operator. Out of a 20-minute call in #34-41, almost 10 minutes consisted of pauses, with no talking and no explanation of why the operator was unavailable. These ranged in length from 16 seconds to almost two minutes. Call #4 included approximately four minutes of pauses in a 14-minute call. In this case, however, the operator either told the caller she would be on hold – *I'm going to put you on hold for just a second, OK?* – and apologized after putting the caller on hold again for over three minutes.

**F2. Absence of uniform training on response to domestic abuse 911 calls results in an inconsistent response and missing information relevant to victim and officer safety.**

**R2. Design and deliver agency-wide training to 911 and dispatch operators, in coordination with new policy. [PR1]**

**R3. Develop pocket cards or similar cue cards to aid 911 staff in assessing safety and gathering information.**

Inconsistent training makes it more likely that practitioners' responses will be inconsistent, as described in the discussion under F1. Policy and training in tandem will provide guidance for operators and dispatchers in establishing present danger, identifying potential witnesses, determining the presence and welfare of children, keeping parties on the line, establishing rapport with the caller, and addressing unique victim safety issues, such as strangulation, disabilities, language differences, and hang-up calls.

Several of the 911 operators have attended training on response to domestic violence calls delivered by the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission. It was evident in some of the calls because of the type of questions they asked and the manner in which they responded to the caller. However, training has not been uniform across the agency as became evident during the interviews and observations. Broad public safety requires that all practitioners receive a comparable and consistent level of professional training. What-Comm staff would

welcome more training specific to domestic violence response. It should include a role for domestic violence advocates and other community services. [PR2]

### **Patrol Response: Whatcom County Sheriff's Office**

WCSO deputies operate under a written policy specific to domestic violence that provides guidelines on state laws, departmental expectations, on-scene response and investigation, and report writing. This provides a certain consistency of response that is evident in the deputies' reports. In addition, a dedicated position reviews reports and may request additional information and documentation. In spite of being hampered by the lack of computer access and other report writing support, arrest reports are often lengthy and well-documented.

Whatcom County deputies cover a 2100 square mile jurisdiction that includes remote wooded and mountainous areas. Short staffing and multiple calls can delay response time and interfere with a complete investigation, in general and in domestic violence incidents. Based on a sample of 25 calls, in Whatcom County it typically takes twenty to thirty minutes to reach the scene, with response time ranging from nine minutes to 72 minutes. There is a clear priority on domestic assault calls when there appears to be injuries or an assault in progress and deputies attempt to reach the scene as soon as possible. As the Audit team observed, however, any cluster of calls can quickly leave only one deputy covering the entire county. Pressure to leave the scene quickly and get to the next call can result in gaps in risk assessment and the thoroughness of investigations and reports.

Recommendations for the WCSO Patrol focus on improving risk/dangerousness assessment, reviewing department-wide response to "verbal domestics," streamlining reporting requirements and forms, and strengthening investigative follow-through, particularly with respect to children and witness and suspect statements. Along with the Safety Audit week interviews and observations, the recommendations are based on a general review of 61 case reports and detailed analysis of ten files.

- F3. Risk/danger evaluation in domestic violence cases is inconsistent and often incomplete.**
- R4. Revise policy to provide more specific direction, building from the following questions.**
  - 1. Do you think that he or she will seriously injure or kill you or your children? What makes you think so? What makes you think not?
  - 2. How frequently and seriously does he or she intimidate, threaten, or assault you?
  - 3. Describe the most frightening event/worst incidence of violence involving him/her.
- R5. Provide training to deputies on revised policy.**
- R6. Incorporate risk questions into report writing requirements and provide ongoing feedback to deputies.**
- R7. Adapt the existing Domestic Violence Case Summary and Checklist to include this information. Consider utilizing it in pocket-card format. [PR20]**

The WCSO policy requires that deputies “ask about past abuse . . . The victim should be questioned about past abuse in every case.” The policy does not provide guidance about how to obtain information about past abuse, however, or the nature of current threats and fear. More specific direction, via policy revisions and training, would assist deputies in assessing risk and dangerousness. More detailed policy language should also be presented in a briefer pocket-card format similar to (Appendix D), to assist deputies with on-scene investigation, decision-making, and report writing.

Most reports include some general question about abuse. What is often missing, however, is the follow-up, the digging deeper to better assess how dangerous the current situation is, how it compares to previous acts, and what implications this has for victim safety and establishing probable cause.

Cases W17-W19 (Table 1, Appendix E) provide several examples of this general approach to risk/danger assessment. This was a series of calls involving the same individuals within a one-month period of time. Three different WCSO deputies prepared the three reports. Each report is an example of the lack of follow-up to information that suggests a significant level of past violence and current threat, leading up to the assault described in W19.

**F4. For incidents classified as “verbal domestic” (no arrest), the dispatch slip and/or the report frequently suggest a level of violence or threatening conduct that may support a higher degree of intervention.**

**R8. Use revised policy and training to strengthen deputies’ understanding of risk factors, investigative techniques, and available community referrals and resources for victims.**

**R9. Review the overall response to “verbal domestics,” including review of all required paperwork to identify areas for possible consolidation and streamlining. [PR21]**

The text analysis provided several examples of incidents classified as “verbal domestics,” which suggested a level of violence or threatening behavior that might support more vigorous intervention, including arrest. Table 2, Appendix E, provides several examples of these cases. It was common in reviewing the non-arrest files to see information from a reporting party that was either not addressed in the incident report or left questions about the level of threat and potential risk. The immediacy and urgency of calls to 911 may be the more accurate representation of what is occurring, and suggest risk factors that warrant further investigation: *hitting . . . stated he was going to kill himself . . . her wrist hurts . . . trashing the house. Just served papers . . . past suicidal threats . . . yelling and screaming . . . preventing her and the kids from leaving the house . . . threatened to strangle . . . hit her w/his hand . . . over break up . . . pistol under the bed unloaded . . . unsure if she was free to talk . . . pounding on [the door] and won’t go away . . . just took some belonging from her veh[icle] . . . ex-boyfriend . . . also pulled the wiring out of the car . . . making threats to come into the house and beat up . . . lots of yelling . . . he owns guns but does not know where they are at.*

There was some suggestion during the interviews and observations that incidents may sometimes be classified as “verbal domestics” because deputies are reluctant to complete the paperwork required when an arrest is made. This may be further exacerbated by the lack of computer-based report writing assistance. Therefore, recommendations include a review of **all** paperwork to determine where streamlining or consolidation might be appropriate, along with improved report writing tools [PR19].

- F5. In “verbal domestics,” the practice of having both parties sign the Domestic Violence Checklist and Victim’s Rights forms and complete the Domestic Violence Complaint/Victim Statement diminishes victim safety and offender accountability.**
- R10. Discontinue the practice of having both parties in non-arrest domestic incidents complete victim-specific forms. [PR21]**
- R11. Develop an alternative method for providing victims’ rights notification and information about the array of domestic violence related services available in Whatcom County, including programs for batterers. [PR18]**

One of the prevailing tactics of batterers is to present the target of their coercion and violence as the problem, and themselves as the victim. This practice reinforces that tactic and is an example of the unintentional consequences of institutional intervention. The current practice of distributing the forms to both parties, and obtaining both signatures on the same victim’s rights form, reinforces power and control dynamics: “she’s the crazy one, I’m the real victim.” Case W17, for example (Table 1, Appendix E), illustrates the inappropriateness of providing a victim’s rights form to both parties. In this case an offender with a substantial history of violence and previous arrests in another state, resulting in the victim’s hospitalization, is receiving victim’s rights notification.

- F6. Deputies often respond to calls with limited information about previous criminal history and the existence of protection orders or no-contact orders.**
- R12. Enter domestic violence reports into the AS400 (electronic database) by the next business day. [PR22]**
- R13. Clarify the role and relationship between patrol and dispatch to articulate who initiates and communicates information such as weapons check, criminal history, and verification of orders. [PR24]**
- R14. Provide deputies with reader privileges for Longarm (BPD report data base). [PR27]**
- R15. Provide deputies with 24-hour access to records. [PR28]**

During the observations and interviews, officers and dispatchers reported different understandings of who would initiate a search for information about an offender’s history of violence and current status regarding warrants and orders. Similarly, they gave examples of each assuming the other would ask or relay information about weapons.

The review of case reports revealed several examples of the gap in relaying information about past violence and arrests. Cases W17-W19 illustrate (Table 1, Appendix E) this, as do the cases

in Table 2. Cases W17-W19 involve an offender with a past history of violence and arrests in another state, as well as a history of incidents in Whatcom County. As the multiple cases build, there is still little information about this record. In W17-W18, deputies are dispatched without reference to previous history. In the case report for W17, the victim notes prior arrests and threats to kill. W18 contains none of the information about past violence and threats to kill that were included in the deputy's report for W17. The dispatcher in W19 notes that *M has been arrested twice previously in Reno, NV – for DV // F was hospitalized for head inj's there* (which the victim reports in the 911 call). Over the three calls, it does not appear that much further inquiry was conducted into the offender's past criminal history that would provide details about the nature of past violence and threats, and the implications for current risk.

Of the 19 cases in Tables 2 and 3, in three the dispatcher notifies the responding deputy that a no-contact order exists (W21, W22, W11). In the remaining cases, it is possible that the dispatcher has checked the status of no-contact orders, but that is an assumption that the deputy would have to make. There is little indication in the case files that someone has checked on the status of civil protection orders.

**F7. Information about the presence and well being of children is frequently missing or incomplete in incident reports.**

**R.16 Provide training and policy guidance to deputies about appropriate techniques for inquiring about children's presence and welfare.**

The case files reviewed show little specific attention to the presence and well-being of children. In Case W3, for example, the couple has two young children, but there is no reference to where they were during the incident, or whether deputies checked on their welfare. The report in Case W43 notes that there are three children in common, but no additional information.

Cases W17-W19 are representative of the response to and visibility of children in many reports. None of the three reports provide information about the children's ages, where they are, or whether they are safe. The W19 911 transcript (Call #34-41), however, reveals that there are three children, ages seven, two, and four months.

Cases W20-W22 (Table 3, Appendix E) provide a further example. In Case 20, there is no indication that the deputies interviewed any of the children (ages 17, 14, 11). In W22, no one speaks with the 15-year old, who was with the father at the time of the no-contact order violation. These cases illustrate several of the issues regarding children in domestic violence cases. In addition to the importance of establishing their safety and well-being, deputies' contact with children can provide valuable information about what has happened. While the report in Case W20 states that *they were in bed and did not witness the incident*, this was not accurate, as subsequent information revealed. The 11 year-old *observed her mom running out of the bedroom and her father chasing her mother, yelling and swearing*. This case also illustrates the ways in which batterers can attempt to manipulate and pressure children. The 11 year-old reports that *her father came to her School to take her out to lunch at Subway, which her father has never done in the past . . . telling her that he really did not beat her mother and "You know that's right."* [She]

*stated that she lied to her father saying yea because she knew that he would get mad if she told the truth.*

**F8. Reports are frequently missing victim contact information and witness and suspect statements.**

**R17. Provide training and policy guidance to deputies about the significance of and techniques for obtaining witness and suspect statements in domestic violence cases, including conditions for written statements.**

**R18. Apply Safety Audit methodology to further examine whether obtaining written statements from victims benefits victims and should be continued.**

**R19. Require the names and numbers of at least two people who can always reach the victim (separate from report). Confirm that this information is being collected per WCSO policy.**

WCSO policy currently requires that deputies interview witnesses, obtain phone numbers for victims/witnesses, and “always interview the suspect.” Deputies routinely interview suspects, but written statements appeared to be missing in most case files, though it appears that the Domestic Violence Complaint/Victim Statement is also viewed as a suspect statement in many instances.

In light of the high number of third-party 911 calls (44% of the sample examined), case files would be expected to include witness statements in many incidents. Written witness statements are rare and witness interviews are often cursory.

The emphasis is on obtaining written victim statements, via the Domestic Violence Complaint/Victim Statement form. There is disagreement amongst prosecutors in the field, however, as to whether the emphasis should be on obtaining written victim statements, over those from witnesses and suspects, where possible. The question for Whatcom County to consider is whether written statements benefit the victim and enhance safety, or whether they are primarily for the benefit of institutional case processing and prosecution.

Victims are asked to complete the statement form at a time when they have been threatened, frightened, and possibly injured. In addition, individuals have a wide range of literacy, comprehension, writing abilities, and language differences. Reliance on a victim’s written statement can also lead some officers to limit more direct investigation and evidence collection. The offender may also still be at the scene. They may be reluctant to complete the form because of fears of retaliation.

Two of the case files illustrate some of the problems with an emphasis on written victim statements. In Case W5, the victim is reluctant to provide a written statement, and finally agrees to dictate one to a deputy. *Judith was experiencing wrist pain and she told me it would be too painful for her to fill out a domestic violence statement because she is right handed. Judith also expressed apprehension about filling out a statement because in her words, “I’m going to be beat to shit over this,” referring to her statement and the consequences she faces for Harold being arrested.* In Case W3, she responds *No* to question eight: “Has this person ever done this



type of thing to you before?” She appears to be reading the question literally: no, this type of violence (*had his hands on my neck, wouldn't get up*) hasn't happened before. Other information, however, indicates that there is a past history of domestic violence.

Information obtained during the review of jail booking and release procedures suggests that the absence of victim contact information has a significant impact on the inability of the jail to notify victims when inmates are released (see later discussion). Case files rarely included a work number for the victim and never included the number of someone who could always reach her. WCSO policy requires that deputies obtain a number if the victim has no phone or will be staying at a temporary address. In the latter case, the information should be *on a separate interoffice memorandum to the Prosecutor's Office. This information is to be treated as confidential, non-disclosable and non-discoverable information, and therefore must be submitted on a separate sheet.* This is an important safety consideration, and may explain the absence of victim contact information in the case files requested for the Safety Audit. Adherence to the policy should be confirmed, however.

**F9. Investigation of victim reports of “choking” or neck injury often does not include follow-up questions to clearly establish strangulation or attempted strangulation.**

**R20. Provide guidelines and training about investigating possible strangulation and offering medical attention.**

The text analysis provided several examples of victim reports of possible strangulation attempts, or conduct that should be questioned further to determine more precisely what had happened.

W19 *put his hands around her throat and started to strangle her*

W20 *hit her on the back of the head/neck . . . has threatened to kill her*

W43 *threatened to kill her . . . swinging her head back and forth . . . suffered a sore neck*

W3 *grabbed her by the throat . . . had his hands on my neck, wouldn't get up*

W10 *hit her several times in the upper back and neck area . . . had a sore neck and head*

W26 *held Alma down by the arm . . . would swear at her and grab her with both hands by the face*

The reports did not indicate that deputies always followed up with specific questions about what had occurred, to clearly establish whether or not this involved some attempt at strangulation. Victim statements about threats to kill were not followed up to determine what kind of threats, whether or not he had acted on those in the past, how this incident compared to others, or whether he had ever attempted to strangle her before.

**F10. Deputies lack access to computers as a means of preparing and managing reports.**

**R21. Provide the means for deputies to compose and record reports electronically.**

To their credit, WCSO deputies produce reports with a significant amount of information, given that most are handwritten. The time required to prepare handwritten reports, however, particularly in complex cases involving large volumes of information, can discourage thoroughness in documenting such things as risk assessment factors, the presence and well-being of children, witness statements, and past history of violence.

**F11. Domestic violence case review responsibilities are not included in the position description of the sergeant assigned to perform this function.**

**R22. Revise position description for the domestic violence detective sergeant and other dedicated positions to specifically include domestic violence case review and other responsibilities.**

Consistent review of deputies' reports and detective follow-up is important in building a consistent agency-wide response to domestic violence. It is the mechanism for correcting problematic applications of agency policy and state law, gauging officers' understanding of primary aggressor and self-defense considerations, and identifying training needs specific to domestic violence response. To institutionalize this response and to give it permanency independent of the individuals assigned to the position, the duties and responsibilities should be articulated in the written position description.

**Patrol Response: Bellingham Police Department**

Bellingham officers have access to a computer-based report writing system, Longarm, and 24-hour access to records and reports. Many of the reports reviewed reflect the additional level of detail that such resources support, including descriptions of injuries and property damage. Nevertheless, even in reports that include considerable information about the incident and the officers' observation, follow-up about risk level and children is often minimal. In addition, officers do not work under the guidance of a department-wide written policy (with the exception of officer-involved domestic violence).

**F12. Officers respond to domestic violence calls without the guidance of a written department-wide policy.**

**R23. Design and implement a departmental policy governing response to domestic abuse calls.**

**R24. Train officers and supervisors department-wide. [PR9]**

Domestic violence is a significant area of police work, with many demands on officers to understand the characteristics of the crime, the dynamics of domestic violence, and the impact on children, along with state laws and resources available to victims. Having a written policy and

related training in place provides officers with direction and a framework for consistent response. Without this foundation, the response risks becoming too individual, varying too widely among individual officers. In this Safety Audit, the text analysis of BPD domestic violence reports suggested inconsistencies in obtaining written statements, using the Domestic Violence Supplemental form, and investigating victim information about possible strangulation.

Wherever appropriate, more detailed policy language should also be presented in a briefer pocket-card format similar to Appendix D, to assist officers with on-scene investigation, decision-making, and report writing.

In its preliminary recommendations, the Audit team noted several areas of training that should be addressed via policy and training: the dynamics and causes of domestic violence, resources and links with community services and advocates, and civil protection orders [PR9].

**F13. Risk/danger evaluation in domestic violence cases is inconsistent and often incomplete.**

**R25. Include specific direction in the recommended domestic violence policy, building from the following questions.**

1. Do you think that he or she will seriously injure or kill you or your children? What makes you think so? What makes you think not?
2. How frequently and seriously does he or she intimidate, threaten, or assault you?
3. Describe the most frightening event/worst incidence of violence involving him/her.

**R26. Pending development of a domestic violence policy, publish a departmental training bulletin developed from the risk questions noted in R25.**

**R27. Incorporate risk questions into report writing requirements and forms and provide ongoing supervisory review and feedback to officers.**

**R28. Provide Longarm and criminal history access via patrol MDT and link Longarm with the AS400 (WCSO data base). [PR14]**

**R29. Provide two designated detective positions to conduct detailed case follow-up and risk assessment. [PR12]**

In a focus group session with battered women prior to the Safety Audit week, one participant offered this advice when asked for recommendations about changing police practice: “please hear what I’m not saying.” Determining risk is often just that: looking for and following up on something that may not be said directly, often out of fear of a batterer’s response or because of past experience with the police, but that may reflect a higher level of dangerousness than is apparent on the surface. Gathering as much of this information as possible at the time of the call is important not only for potential prosecution, but for influencing release and bail conditions and for connecting victims with support and safety planning.

In the review of case files, risk assessment tended to remain at a low level. Table 4 in Appendix E contains several examples of cases that have a substantial amount of detail about the incident leading to the call, but relatively little information about the context and history of violence and

the level of risk that the victim may be facing. B17 is an example of one of the more thorough reports reviewed, with the reporting officer taking time to investigate and document the incident, including follow-up with the reporting party. At the same time, asking the risk questions listed above would provide a far more complete picture of what has been happening and the offender's pattern of violence. Where a victim reports that there has been past violence, *but that she has never called before* (B4, B17), it is likely that she sees the violence escalating.

The cases in Table 4 also raise questions about whether a more serious level of violence is occurring than is reflected in the arrest charges. Findings F14 and F16 regarding non-arrest incidents and investigation of strangulation provide additional examples related to strengthening risk assessment.

The Audit team recommends more immediate access to criminal history information via the patrol vehicle's mobile display terminal (MDT) and linking the city's incident database with the WCSO system, AS400. This will improve the quality and thoroughness of information available to responding officers about past violence. This in turn provides cues for officers to look more thoroughly at risk and dangerousness.

In addition to improved on-scene risk assessment, the Audit team recommends additional follow-up and risk assessment via designated detective positions. The availability of such positions can have the unintended consequence, however, of diminishing the level and documentation of on-scene risk assessment and investigation if officers assume that a detective will cover that ground. BPD should be alert to this.

**F14. For incidents classified as “domestic dispute/DV (no assault)”, the dispatch slip and/or the report frequently suggest a level of violence or threatening conduct that may support a higher degree of intervention or more thorough risk assessment.**

**R30. Use the new policy, once drafted, and training to strengthen officers' understanding of risk factors, investigative techniques, and available community referrals and resources for victims.**

**R31. Clarify discrepancies between dispatch communication and on-scene information via further investigation with What-Comm staff, victims, suspects, and/or witnesses.**

Several of the cases in Appendix E, Table 4 illustrate this finding. In B24 there is no apparent follow-up to the “slapping” reported by the third-party 911 caller. It is not clear in the report whether the parties were separated or interviewed in proximity. A recent breakup adds another factor that suggests additional investigation. In B28 there is no information about the nature of the threats reported by the third-party 911 caller (or apparent effort to contact the reporting party).

B30 is an example where there may be a past history and additional risk assessment would be in order. When Corey says he *did not want the situation to get out of hand*, what does he mean? What happens when he gets out of hand? Has it happened before? When and where? Unlike B28, there is no indication here that the responding officer checked for warrants, orders, and prior

domestic violence assaults. There is no direct information from Jane, only the statement that apparently she offered the other officer *the same story*.

Finally, B16 is another third-party report. The dispatch slip notes lots of yelling and an *extensive* history of domestic violence. There is no information about what that history is.

**F15. Use of the Domestic Violence Supplemental form is inconsistent.**

**R32. Pending development of a department-wide domestic violence policy, provide guidelines and training about the use of the Domestic Violence Supplemental.**

**R33. Monitor use of the DV Supplemental to ensure its uniform use across the community.**

Of 40 reports analyzed, 21 did not include the DV Supplemental, including 14 where the incident resulted in an arrest. Of the 21 reports that did not include the supplemental form, 11 involved an offender who was identified as Black, Hispanic, or Indian. If the form is a primary means of linking victims with community services, it must be used consistently throughout the community.

**F16. Investigation of victim reports of “choking” often does not include follow-up questions to clearly establish strangulation or attempted strangulation.**

**R34. Pending development of a department-wide domestic violence policy, provide guidelines and training about investigating possible strangulation and offering medical attention.**

Of 19 case reports analyzed in detail, five included victim statements about experiencing strangulation-type conduct by the offender.

B1 *grabbed her around the throat . . . still holding her around the throat*

B3 *grabbed her by the neck and then put his arm across her neck and pulled her to the ground*

B5 *grabbed [her] by her throat and slammed her against the bedroom door*

B7 *had both hands around her neck pinning her down . . . had both hands wrapped around [her] neck and was not letting her get up*

B37 *grabbed her by the throat*

In two of the reports the officer makes a corroborating observation: *leaving a very noticeable reddened mark on the right side of her neck/throat (B37) and observed an area of slight redness on [her] neck (B7)*. It is not evident from any of the five reports, however, that the responding officers asked more detailed questions that would help determine the level of violence and degree of possible strangulation. For example: Did he “grab” you with one or two hands? Did he move or shake your head or neck? Is your throat sore? Did you become light-headed or faint?

While included as a separate finding, this is also an example of where the risk/danger assessment is incomplete.

**F17. Information about the presence and well being of children is frequently missing or incomplete in incident reports.**

**R35. Provide training and policy guidance to officers about appropriate techniques for inquiring about children’s presence and welfare.**

In 15 of 25 case files analyzed in detail, it is unknown or unclear if children were present during the incident. This was particularly so with the non-arrest incident reports (9 of 11). Where there is some reference to children in the dispatch slip or report, there is seldom any reference in the report as to whether the officer saw or spoke with the children and determined their involvement, general welfare, or whether the offender has been abusive towards them.

In cases B1, B2, B5, B7, B17, and B35-B37 (Table 5, Appendix E), for example, there is no indication in the report about whether the responding officers made specific inquiries into the children’s well-being, including cases where children were clearly present or in proximity: *pushed her into a wall in the children’s bedroom (B1); she yelled to her daughter . . . who came into the room, saw what was happening and then ran to phone police (B7); [Daughter] tried to stop him and he got in her face and yelled at her. He started to grab her (B36); and, [Daughter] rushed to assist, was trying to grab him from behind and keep him away from her mother (B37)*. With older children and teenagers who may be acting to defend their mothers, it is particularly important to determine what their experience has been.

Children may be a witness to what has occurred, via what they see and hear. Speaking with them can be particularly critical in determining primary physical aggressor, for example. Case B1 illustrates this: *Daddy has no right to push mommy (B1, three year old). I knew he would lie to the cops out there, so I unplugged the phone (B36, 13 year old)*.

**F18. Reports are frequently missing victim contact information and witness and suspect statements, while requiring written statements from victims.**

**R36. Provide training and policy guidance to officers about the significance of and techniques for obtaining witness and suspect statements in domestic violence cases.**

**R37. Apply Safety Audit methodology to further examine whether obtaining written statements from victims benefits victims.**

**R38. Require the names and numbers of at least two people who can always reach the victim (separate from report). [PR11]**

The text analysis indicated that when officers obtained written statements it was more likely to be from victims. Of the 14 arrest cases reviewed in detail, six included written victim statements (B1, B12, B17, and B35-B37). Only two had written statements from a witness (in both cases the teenage daughter of the victim, B35-36). None of the cases included a written statement from the suspect.

As indicated in the earlier discussion of WCSO practices, there is disagreement amongst prosecutors in the field as to whether the emphasis should be on obtaining written victim statements, over those from witnesses and suspects, where possible. The law enforcement agencies in Whatcom County, along with prosecutors, should consider whether written statements benefit the victim and enhance safety, or whether they are primarily for the benefit of institutional case processing and prosecution.

Victims are asked to complete the statement form at a time when they have been threatened, frightened, and possibly injured. In addition, individuals have a wide range of literacy, comprehension, writing abilities, and language differences. Reliance on a victim's written statement can also lead some officers to limit more direct investigation and evidence collection. The offender may also still be at the scene. They may be reluctant to complete the form because of fears of retaliation.

Information obtained during the review of jail booking and release procedures suggests that the absence of victim contact information has a significant impact on the inability of the jail to notify victims when inmates are released (see later discussion).

**F19. On-scene victim information and support is inconsistent and should be enhanced to provide links to more immediate crisis services.**

**R39. Distribute the domestic violence brochure and document in all reports that the victim has received it. [PR7]**

**R40. Inform victims of available domestic violence crisis services and offer to make a connection for them while on-scene. [PR8]**

**R41. Provide a cell phone or similar technology with Language Line access for every patrol vehicle. [PR13]**

**R42. Consider providing on-scene advocacy and support for victims via community domestic violence services.**

During the interviews and observations, Audit team members noted that distribution of the BPD domestic violence brochure was inconsistent. This was supported by the text analysis. In the 14 arrest cases reviewed in detail, in only 4 was it clear that victims received the brochure. There was no indication that the brochure was distributed in the 11 non-arrest cases. In addition to meeting notification requirements under state law, the brochure links victims with 24-hour crisis support and services.

The Audit team recommended a more pro-active role for responding officers to link victims with immediate crisis support. For example, they saw officers with cell phones (PR13) as able to inform victims of available services and make an immediate call: "Would you like to call right now?" They also saw cell phones as a way to immediately link officers and victims with translation services, not only for crisis services and support, but to assist in conducting a complete investigation.

**F20. Information in the BPD brochure, "Domestic Violence Hurts Everyone," could be enhanced to provide more specific information to victims about where to go with questions about the criminal justice process.**

**R43. Review the BPD brochure to update victim resource information and cross-reference sections. A broad-based advisory group of domestic violence victims should participate in this process. [PR15]**

The brochure already contains a significant amount of information in a reader-friendly format. Audit team members felt that this could be enhanced, perhaps with a question/answer series about where to go for information about the criminal justice process.

**F21. Community Volunteers Against Domestic Violence assigned to BPD lack training and/or access to key databases and word processing programs.**

**R44. Train volunteers to use Longarm and the BPD word processing program most efficiently. [PR16]**

**R45. Reinstall AS400 access so that BPD volunteers can identify domestic violence repeaters in city and county records. [PR17]**

The CVADV volunteers are in a distinctive position to observe patterns of domestic violence and link non-arrest calls that in context may suggest a pattern of more serious abuse. In order to do so, they need to have access to accurate criminal history information.

**F22. Domestic violence case review responsibilities are not included in the position description of the sergeant assigned to perform this function.**

**R46. Revise position description for the domestic violence detective sergeant and other dedicated positions to specifically include domestic violence case review and other responsibilities.**

Consistent review of officers' reports and detective follow-up is important in building a consistent agency-wide response to domestic violence. It is the mechanism for correcting problematic applications of agency policy and state law, gauging officers' understanding of primary aggressor and self-defense considerations, and identifying training needs specific to domestic violence response. To institutionalize this response and to give it permanency independent of the individuals assigned to the position, the duties and responsibilities should be articulated in the written position description.



## **Jail Booking and Release: Whatcom County Jail**

Work within the jail booking and release process is organized to collect a considerable amount of information related to victim safety. This includes information about whether the arrestee is “assaultive” or “suicidal.” Jail policy and procedure requires that victim contact information be obtained on domestic violence bookings. How that information is used and whether and to whom it is relayed, however, often makes it ineffective. The process of victim notification upon release, for example, is often contrary to the policy: “a corrections officer will make every reasonable effort to notify any victim of Domestic Violence prior to releasing the inmate.” Corrections officers are often hampered in their efforts to do so by the lack of victim contact information at the initial booking stage.

**F23. Victim notification prior to release occurs inconsistently, sometimes within minutes of release, sometimes after release, and sometimes not at all.**

**R47. Require victim contact information from the arresting officer prior to booking. [PR33]**

**R48. Require mandatory completion of the domestic violence booking screen. [PR33]**

**R49. Initiate notification attempts earlier in the release process. [PR33]**

During the Safety Audit week, the team’s interviews and observations pinpointed several problems related to victim notification. The process is hampered by the limited information that the jail has about the case. While they have access to Whatcom County information via the AS400, they do not have access to city information via Longarm. The victim notification attempt prior to an offender’s release usually depends on a single number, a single call.

The Safety Audit week findings are reinforced by the text analysis. A review of jail booking screen prints (pre-booking, domestic violence, and inmate release) for 40 cases showed that victims were notified prior to the offender’s release in 14 cases. In only five of the 14 was it clear when the notification occurred: between five minutes and 3.5 hours prior to release. In seven cases, notification happened anywhere from two minutes to over three hours after the offender was released. It may be that in some cases the notification occurred earlier, but was not recorded until later in the day.

Timely notification of an offender’s release can be critical to a victim’s safety. It provides an opportunity for her to move to a safe location, if necessary, or put a civil protection order in place.

Information obtained during the interviews and observations suggested that it was jail policy to notify the arresting agency when a victim could not be reached. A review of the policy, however, indicates that this is not a requirement. Corrections officers are only required to “make every reasonable effort to notify any victim.” The releasing officer is often hampered by a lack of victim contact information, either because it was not available from the arresting officer or was not entered into jail records. In four of the cases the Domestic Violence information screen was

blank and in another six there was no phone number listed where the victim could be reached or receive a message.

- F24. Domestic violence victims often call or appear at the jail and request to see the offender, sometimes in violation of no-contact orders. This places demands on jail staff, both for time and for non-jail information, such as income or housing assistance.**
- R50. Provide training to corrections officers about the dynamics of domestic violence and batterer tactics of control. [PR30]**
- R51. Improve linkages with domestic violence services in order to strengthen connections between victims and sources of information, assistance, and support. [PR34]**
- R52. Consider requiring an automatic phone block at the time of domestic violence arrest bookings on suspect to victim calls from jail (with victim option to remove it if a no-contact order does not exist). [PR32]**

Corrections officers reported frustration with victim attempts to contact batterers, either by telephone or by appearing at the jail receptionist's window or showing up in court. One staff member told the Audit team that up to 70% of victims call the jail to check on the defendant. Their questions usually concern the release time, but also such issues as where the victim could get income assistance while the offender is in jail. Finding alternative ways of providing this information via community advocacy organizations would ease the demands on the jail, and provide more accurate and more thorough support to victims.

The recommendation to consider an automatic phone block should be reviewed with a broad range of domestic violence victims to identify possible unintended negative consequences of such a blanket requirement. Another approach would be to consider a recommendation that emerged from the BPD work group: arresting officers should ask all victims if they want the jail to block outgoing calls from the suspect (PR10) and provide this information at the time of booking.

- F25. Corrections officers witness offender's threats and other actions relevant to victim safety and prosecution of the charge.**
- R53. Provide training to jail staff about the significance of relaying threats and excited-utterance information to the prosecutor and other appropriate parties, such as community domestic violence advocates.**
- R54. Develop mechanisms for relaying threats and excited utterance information that are quick, reliable, and place the least time demands on jail staff. [PR35]**
- R55. Flag domestic violence arrestees with a different colored wristband in order to support identification of no-contact order violations and attention to threats and excited-utterance statements. [PR31]**
- R56. Provide corrections officers with access to Longarm. [PR36]**

Corrections officers are in a position to witness an inmate's threats toward a victim and other actions that impact victim safety. This information – these “excited utterances” – can be useful to a prosecutor in presenting the court with certain bail and release conditions and in building evidence-based prosecution of a case. Following the Audit team training in early October, a new procedure was instituted that required corrections officers to notify the shift sergeant and the prosecutor if they heard threats and other statements that may be of interest to the prosecutor, and record it as an incident detail in AS400. The interviews and observations suggest that officers are unclear about the new procedure and that further work is needed to develop the process.

The Audit team also recommends considering ways of readily identifying domestic violence arrestees, such as a distinctive wristband, and providing a more complete record of previous arrests and complaints via access to Longarm.

**F26. While approximately 10% of the inmate population is female, women comprise nearly 20% of individuals booked under domestic abuse related charges.**

**R57. Working backward from jail booking records, use Safety Audit methodology to examine the arrests of women on domestic abuse related charges in order to identify any problematic practices concerning victim safety.**

This level of female arrests was not evident in the case files provided by the law enforcement agencies, although each agency was asked to provide examples of dual arrest cases. There were suggestions threaded throughout the report narratives, however, that women who had experienced an arrest after law enforcement intervention were more reluctant to contact law enforcement again or provide a statement. The focus group findings also raised concerns about arrests of domestic violence victims.

In order to avoid inappropriate arrests of domestic violence victims, however, additional information should be collected and analyzed to determine the context of the violence or other conduct that led to the arrest and whether primary physical aggressor and self-defense factors were adequately considered in the arrest decision.

During one of the last observations conducted during the Safety Audit week, a corrections officer raised these concerns with a member of the Audit team, in response to a particular series of booking photos: why do victims end up in jail while the person *who does this to them is still out on the street?* The photos suggested a woman who was perhaps being battered over a period of time or fighting back and should not have been arrested.

Conducting a “mini-Safety Audit” of female domestic violence arrests will provide a more complete understanding of what is occurring.

## **Community Volunteers Against Domestic Violence**

Because Community Volunteers Against Domestic Violence (CVADV) are assigned to the Whatcom County Sheriff's Office and the Bellingham Police Department they were included in the scope of the Safety Audit. The law enforcement volunteers' role is to contact victims in non-arrest incidents ("verbal domestics") and *provide them with information regarding community services, education around the issue of domestic violence and any support they may need . . . volunteers also support the work of law enforcement by assisting with background checks, information gathering, and interacting with prosecution.*

**F27. It is not clear that CVADV volunteers always inform victims that they are primarily an investigative arm of law enforcement and not a source of confidential victim support.**

**R58. Review all correspondence, telephone scripts, and other program materials to ensure that victims are fully informed of the CVADV role and relationship to law enforcement agencies.**

CVADV volunteers, in their telephone contacts and follow-up letters, offer "support and information" to victims of domestic violence. While they identify themselves as working on behalf of a law enforcement agency, it is important that victims clearly understand that the program is not providing advocacy services, but support within the context of law enforcement and the criminal justice system. Victims should also receive complete, accurate information about the range of community-based advocacy that is available, including 24-hour crisis services.

**F28. CVADV volunteers need additional support in understanding the dynamics and safety considerations specific to domestic violence, as well as current information about legal remedies available to victims.**

**R59. Conduct ongoing training for CVADV volunteers about the dynamics of domestic violence, legal issues, the distinctions between no-contact orders and protection orders, and making the appropriate referrals to local domestic violence resources. [PR42]**

Recruiting and maintaining a consistent volunteer pool of individuals who have a solid understanding of domestic violence is a challenge for every organization that relies on volunteers to provide support to victims. This is true for the CVADV program, as well, as the Safety Audit week interviews and observations established. Some volunteers have a tendency to see their role as a "tough love" approach, pushing victims to say they've "had enough." This approach, however, does not allow for the complexities of victims' lives and has the potential to compromise victim safety by encouraging her to take a course of action that may not have adequate safety supports behind it.

Volunteers need ongoing training on the dynamics of domestic violence and the multiple risks that victims face, order for protection procedures, updates on legal advocacy and other community services, and clarification of their role and distinctions between advocacy and victim

support. Volunteers also need an opportunity to discuss issues and frustrations on a regular basis, which can be difficult to establish, given the very nature of volunteers in an organization.

**F29. CVADV correspondence to victims does not include telephone numbers for community agencies and how to reach 24-hour support and crisis services.**

**R60. Revise all materials to provide a link to 24-hour services and clearly indicate the limited hours that CVADV volunteers can be reached. [PR38]**

CVADV volunteers are available only a limited number of days and hours a week. A victim who calls back in response to an earlier call or letter may have to wait two or more days to speak with a volunteer. Therefore, it's important that all correspondence, voice mail, and other communication provide victims with a link to 24-hour crisis support and services.

**F30. CVADV services are primarily English-only.**

**R61. Provide support for CVADV to serve non-English speaking victims, via recruitment of bilingual volunteers, access to phone-based or other translation services, and translation of victim notification materials into other languages spoken in Whatcom County. [PR40, PR 41]**

While Whatcom County is a predominantly English-speaking jurisdiction, there are a significant number of residents whose first language is Spanish, with a smaller community of Russian speaking residents. CVADV services and materials are primarily in English, though in this regard the program is no different than most public and non-profit agencies in the county. CVADV has translated its primary victim contact letter into Spanish and would like to recruit bilingual volunteers. The letter should take care to link victims with referral agencies that can provide someone who speaks that language.

The interest in recruiting bilingual volunteers raises the issue of whether volunteer recruitment criteria, and the polygraph in particular, may discourage a diverse pool of volunteers.

## CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Several themes emerged over the course of the Safety Audit that cut across agency lines and to a large degree sum up the key findings and suggest the direction of Whatcom County's next steps.

### **R62. Strengthen the overall criminal justice system and community understanding of and capacity for risk/dangerousness assessment.**

Battered women provide many cues about the risks they face. What often happens, however, as this Safety Audit discovered, is that practitioners miss the cues. The forms they use, the policies that exist or don't exist, the training they have received or not received – all can enhance or diminish the ability of 911 operators, law enforcement officers, and corrections officers to read the cues and to ask the next, deeper questions. Too often, as the Safety Audit discovered, critical information “drops off” and is unavailable to the next practitioner involved in the response. Or, practitioners may miss the significance of a batterer's behaviors or threats. Establishing the meaning and context of a particular act or incident is central to determining the danger that a victim faces: Who is doing what, to whom, with what impact, and to what degree?

The risk questions included in Recommendations R4 and R25 should be applied broadly and used by the range of practitioners who come into contact with battered women. Not only law enforcement officers, but advocates, victim/witness specialists, prosecutors, and probation officers, too.

1. Do you think he or she will seriously injure or kill you or your children? What makes you think so? What makes you think not?
2. How frequently and seriously does he or she intimidate, threaten, or assault you?
3. Describe the most frightening event/worst incidence of violence involving him/her.

The consequences of missing the cues are reinforced in the recently published WA State Domestic Violence Fatality Review.<sup>2</sup> Many of the examples and case reports cited in the review read as though they could have come from the text analyzed for the Whatcom County Safety Audit (Appendix E).

Domestic Violence Fatality Review panels repeatedly saw that law enforcement officers, prosecutors and judges did not seem to recognize the danger faced by the domestic violence victim. It seemed that this lack of recognition stemmed from an inability to place the most recent incident in the context of a larger pattern of abusive behavior.  
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The report acknowledges “the challenges to recognizing patterns of behavior within the criminal justice system.” The response in general is organized around individual incidents and characterized by poor communication across jurisdictions and agencies. This becomes even more

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<sup>2</sup> Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence, “*Tell the World What Happened to Me*”: Findings and Recommendations from the Washington State Domestic Violence Fatality Review, by Margaret Hobart, December 2002.

problematic in domestic violence cases because of the significance of patterns of violence, threats, and coercion over time. An isolated response, disconnected from the larger context of the violence, is always in a batterer's best interest, and dangerous to victim safety.

### **R63. Strengthen the coordinated community response (CCR).**

That the Safety Audit occurred, and with a broad-based Audit team, says much about Whatcom County's interest in crafting a community response to domestic violence. At the same time, as one team member noted, "perhaps we're not as coordinated as we think." Policies and information systems remain largely separate and distinct. As the Safety Audit was being planned, for example, there was no one place to find a copy of every agency's domestic violence policies and procedures, if they existed. Information about offenders is not integrated across jurisdictions. Training could be more cooperatively designed and delivered by teams of agency and community trainers.

Civil and criminal justice systems have the potential to deter future violence, if the response is quick, clear, consistent, and linked to strong community-based services for victims and offenders. The ongoing challenge for Whatcom County, and for any intervention, is to place controls on batterers without increasing their victims' vulnerability to retaliatory violence. Equally difficult is developing policies and protocols that account for the significant number of victims who are physically and emotionally controlled by their abusers, and may act in the abusers' interests. It is critical, therefore, to craft a coordinated community response among all participants that understands the pattern of violence being used and its impact on victim safety and autonomy.

### **R64. Explore ways to provide more immediate victim advocacy, support, and access to community services.**

In reading the case files, a reoccurring question was "what's next?" What happens when the officers leave the scene? What happens if they haven't made an arrest, but perhaps should have? What happens if they have made an arrest, but they leave behind a woman who is frightened, hurt, concerned about her children, and afraid about what will happen when he gets out of jail? Or, she doesn't speak English or has a mental health disability or is an alcoholic?

Part of this response comes via the printed information about services that law enforcement agencies are required by state law to distribute. As the Safety Audit discovered, some changes need to be made in the accuracy of this information and its accessibility for a broader range of the community. Another part of the response comes via the CVADV volunteers and follow-up provided by community-based domestic violence agencies. Again, the Safety Audit notes several ways in which information and linkages could be improved. Another part of the response will be for Whatcom County to consider ways of linking on-scene officers with crisis services, or providing on-scene advocacy and support to victims. This will in turn require discussion of the roles of and distinctions between independent advocacy and victim support services via the criminal justice system. This should also include exploration of the ways in which friends,

family, co-workers and neighbors might be included in providing support and building safety for battered women.

This discussion should also pay particular attention to the experiences of marginalized victims. Battered women who are homeless, chronically mentally ill, alcoholic, or drug-addicted, or prostitutes are particularly vulnerable to violence and typically receive less victim advocacy and support.

**R65. Use the Audit team to continue the examination of safety and accountability in Whatcom County, including the experiences of culturally and racially distinct communities.**

The Safety Audit is as much a way of thinking about violence and safety as it is a specific technique for examining institutional response. Via the Audit team, it also supports increased frontline practitioner involvement in policy development, training, and overall CCR direction. Practitioners use their own knowledge and experience in their organizations to help assess practice and recommend changes. The Audit team's expertise should be used, whether to conduct "mini-Safety Audits," such as suggested in this report, or more expansive Safety Audits of other components of the criminal and civil justice systems.

Safety Audit methodology should be used to further examine the experiences of culturally and racially distinct communities with the criminal justice system's response to domestic violence. Information gathered via interviews, observations, and text analysis suggest several lines of inquiry: domestic violence victims' fears that they will be arrested if they contact law enforcement; limited response to reports of assault or protection order violations; victims' fears that their partners will be killed or injured by law enforcement; concerns about jail conditions; and, availability and quality of language translation (including using children as interpreters).

**R66. Ground policy and practice in the expertise of domestic violence victims.**

One of the early steps in the Safety Audit was to conduct focus groups with battered women and community advocates. Participants were asked to share their experience with the agencies participating in the Safety Audit, or what they were hearing from women they worked with. They were also asked what the Safety Audit should look for. The community advocates were also encouraged to conduct similar discussions within their support groups and other interactions with domestic violence victims.

The information gathered at this point in large part predicted many of the Safety Audit findings: inconsistency in the systems' response, practices that compromise safety, inattention to children, and training issues related to understanding and documenting domestic violence. All of these areas are worthy of additional and ongoing study. As Whatcom County reviews the findings and considers implementation strategies, broad-based involvement by victims/survivors will be important to designing a community response that as much as possible addresses the diversity and complexity of victims' lives and avoids unintended negative consequences.



It is also in the text analysis that the voices of domestic violence victims can be heard. *My husband just raped me – He threw me to the floor and hit me – Can you send somebody quick? – I’m trembling . . . He kicked me. He shoved me to the floor and then he kicked – kicked me in my stomach and my head and everything and then he slapped me – my kids cry, my daughter says [to] my husband, you don’t fight – I don’t know if my nose was broken or not . . . my whole face hurts – I’m getting beat up . . . He punched me in the head . . . I can’t stand up – He gets in their face, he doesn’t hit him, but the finger in the face, and call them names . . . My husband has just head butted me and he’s coming towards me again.*

Text analysis can be used on an ongoing basis to periodically review 911 calls and law enforcement reports to better understand victims’ experiences with community systems and whether changes in policy, procedures, forms, technology, training, and system linkages are working as intended.

Many of the calls and reports reviewed for this Safety Audit stand out and would be worth transcribing in whole to illustrate both sound and problematic practices. The complexities of battered women’s lives, however, and the significance of building safety, accountability, and community support are illustrated in the words of this mother and her daughter.

*Mother: He owes me a lot of money . . . He just started calling me a “bitch” “cunt” “control freak” . . . screaming as loud as he could calling me “a fucking whore” . . . I told him to leave, get out, & keep on going down the road. (he has never really left & I have found him sleeping in my basement, club house & he has climbed through windows, stold keys, etc.) He then got in my face as close as he could and started screaming as loud as he could about how “fucked I was” . . . I see no end in sight. I am unable to help him and I feel his anger toward me is escalating & I do not know why . . . He in turn has lied, stold money and personal items, broken into my house, beaten me up & now he has threatened to kill me.*

*Daughter (age 13): He was screaming out of control. He had been asked to leave & that’s when he started to body slam my mom. That happened about four times . . . I knew he would lie to get the cops out here, so I unplugged the phone. I tried to stop him & he got up into my face which made me feel scared & I started to cry . . . This is wrong because we have been trying to get rid of him for so long & we have been having troubles do[ing] so because he keeps coming back.*

## **Safety and Accountability**

There is no one response that will support this mother and daughter. Rather, it is the act of weaving an understanding of safety within and through the community response that might make a difference. Safety is a state of being – of being free, from danger, risk, and injury. It is being free from your partner’s coercion, threats, and assault if you come home later than you said you would or didn’t have supper ready on time – or if you came home drunk or had an affair with the neighbor. Safety should not be dependent upon someone’s judgment of worthiness, or

deservingness. It means acknowledging the right to be free from danger, risk, and injury, regardless of character or compliance with expectations of how a “good victim” should act.

What intervention, what coordinated community response offers is the promise of safety, of action that will prevent someone from experiencing further harm at the hands of an intimate partner. It requires understanding the nature and context of violence, of repeatedly asking: Who is doing what, to whom, and with what impact and to what degree? What are the likely implications of our intervention actions? How does our intervention in individual cases affect the overall use of violence in our community?

Accountability means holding offenders responsible for their use of violence. It means refocusing the question from “why doesn’t she just leave” to “why does he beat, choke, kick, punch, cut, and rape.” Why does he leave her with “broken ribs, a punctured lung, a torn eardrum, and bruises to her face, neck, and upper arms”? Accountability doesn’t necessarily mean conviction or jail time, but it does require understanding the nature and context of violence, and asking these same questions: Who is doing what, to whom, and with what impact and to what degree? What are the likely implications of our intervention actions? How does our intervention in individual cases affect the overall use of violence in our community?

Accountability also means holding community systems accountable, which is what the participating agencies in Whatcom County have done with this Safety Audit. Four key criminal justice systems have been willing to take a look at themselves and determine how, where, and if their current practices ensure victim safety and offender accountability.

## **APPENDIX A: Safety Audit Team Members**

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### APPENDIX B: Safety Audit Team Preliminary Recommendations

Preliminary Recommendations October 25, 2002	Technology	Resources	Rules & Regulations	Administrative Forms & Procedures	System Linkages	Education & Training	Social Status Assumptions & Awareness
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>911 Center (What-Comm)</b>							
<b>PR1.</b> Provide specific training on domestic violence to 911 staff, especially basic understanding of power issues inherent in domestic violence.		√		√		√	√
<b>PR2.</b> Provide presentations from other agencies in the community about what they do and how it links with the 911 system.		√			√	√	
<b>PR3.</b> Standardize how operators receive and process information to assist in establishing risk and the imminence of danger.		√		√		√	
<b>PR4.</b> Develop written policies and procedures to guide 911 staff and ensure consistency of response to domestic violence calls and address issues such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ On-scene conditions and risk</li> <li>▪ Suspects who get on the line</li> <li>▪ 3<sup>rd</sup> party callers</li> <li>▪ “Drop-off” of safety-related information</li> </ul>			√	√		√	
<b>PR5.</b> Address “time vampire” issues that impact 911 operator response: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of 24-hour records look-up for county officers</li> <li>▪ Press calls coming to 911</li> <li>▪ Officers calling in out of curiosity about certain calls or offering to respond when they haven’t been dispatched</li> <li>▪ High volume of non-emergency public information calls</li> </ul>	√	√		√			
<b>PR6.</b> Upgrade 911 technologies to improve response to high volume, multiple calls and reduce the “drop-off” of safety-related information.	√	√					

<b>Preliminary Recommendations</b> <b>October 25, 2002</b>	Technology	Resources	Rules & Regulations	Administrative Forms & Procedures	System Linkages	Education & Training	Social Status Assumptions & Awareness
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Bellingham Police Department Patrol</b>							
<b>PR7.</b> Document in all reports that victim has received the DV brochure.				√			
<b>PR8.</b> Inform victims of the availability of DV crisis services and offer to call the number while on-scene: “Would you like to call right now?” <sup>3</sup>				√	√		
<b>PR9.</b> Conduct training on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Dynamics and causes of domestic violence and “chronic” patterns</li> <li>▪ Resources, referrals, and links with DV services and on-call advocates</li> <li>▪ Property rights; use of civil protection orders</li> </ul>					√	√	√
<b>PR10.</b> Ask all victims if they want the jail to block outgoing calls from the suspect.				√			
<b>PR11.</b> Obtain at least two phone numbers where victim can be contacted or someone can reach her.			√	√			
<b>PR12.</b> Provide two designated detective positions to conduct detailed case follow-up and risk assessment.		√					
<b>PR13.</b> Provide a cell phone (or similar technology) with Language Line access for every patrol vehicle to help officers handle calls by phone and stay in the area.	√	√					
<b>PR14.</b> Provide Longarm and criminal history access via patrol MDT; link Longarm with AS400.	√						
<b>PR15.</b> Revise BPD DV brochure to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Who/how to call</li> <li>▪ How to say what you need from the criminal justice process (i.e., who to call if you want someone released from jail)</li> <li>▪ Indicate that Womenscare has a “24-Hour Domestic Violence Helpline”</li> </ul>				√			
<b>PR16.</b> Train BPD CVADV program volunteers on using Longarm most efficiently and using agency’s word processing program.	√					√	
<b>PR17.</b> Reinstall AS400 on computers so that BPD CVADV volunteers can identify DV Repeaters in city and county records.	√				√		

<sup>3</sup> Praxis: Recommendations to link victims directly with crisis services, have advocates available on scene, and/or increase referrals require the involvement of and support for those services.

<b>Preliminary Recommendations                      October 25, 2002</b>	Technology	Resources	Rules & Regulations	Administrative Forms & Procedures	System Linkages	Education & Training	Social Status Assumptions & Awareness
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Whatcom County Sheriff's Office Patrol</b>							
<b>PR18.</b> Give likely victim a copy of the DV brochure when responding to verbal/non-arrest calls and document in report. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Or, develop alternative brochure for non-arrest domestic calls</li> </ul>				√			
<b>PR19.</b> Review all DV reporting requirements and forms to identify and eliminate duplication of information and update phone numbers and DV resources. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Need accurate, current information on victim's rights form</li> </ul>		√	√	√			
<b>PR20.</b> Consider providing pocket-card checklist in place of paper forms. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Include questions about children's presence and well-being</li> <li>▪ Risk assessment</li> </ul>			√	√			√
<b>PR21.</b> Review response to "verbal"(non-arrest) cases <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Discontinue distributing victim rights card to all parties</li> <li>▪ What level of risk assessment is taking place? Should take place?</li> <li>▪ Streamline paperwork</li> </ul>		√	√	√		√	√
<b>PR22.</b> Prioritize DV reports for immediate records processing to avoid backlog.			√	√			
<b>PR23.</b> Conduct on-going in-service training on domestic violence, particularly for officers who have been out of the academy 5+ years. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Dynamics of domestic violence</li> <li>▪ Victim safety</li> <li>▪ Children's presence and well-being</li> <li>▪ Victim resources and how to connect with them</li> </ul>						√	√
<b>PR24.</b> Clarify role and relationship between patrol and dispatch <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Who initiates and communicates information (i.e., weapons check, verification of orders)</li> </ul>				√	√	√	
<b>PR25.</b> Use e-mail system more effectively to distribute information between deputies and shifts.	√			√	√		

<b>Preliminary Recommendations October 25, 2002</b>	Technology	Resources	Rules & Regulations	Administrative Forms & Procedures	System Linkages	Education & Training	Social Status Assumptions & Awareness
<b>PR26.</b> Allow deputies to use tape recorders to take statements.	√	√		√			
<b>PR27.</b> Provide deputies with reader privilege for Longarm	√	√	√				
<b>PR28.</b> Provide deputies with 24-hour access to records.		√		√			
<b>PR29.</b> Provide deputies with access to cell phones (or comparable technology) and MDTs/laptops in vehicles.	√	√		√			
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Whatcom County Jail (Booking &amp; Release)</b>							
<b>PR30.</b> Conduct domestic violence training for corrections officers, particularly on dynamics and reasons why victims may be attempting to contact offenders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Include outside agencies and referral process</li> </ul>		√				√	√
<b>PR31.</b> Flag DV suspects/offenders with a different colored wristband (to support identification of NCOs and being alert to threats)			√	√			
<b>PR32.</b> Consider requiring an automatic phone block at the time of booking on suspect to victim calls from jail, on all DV arrests. (Victim can remove the block if a NCO does not exist). <sup>4</sup>			√	√	√		
<b>PR33.</b> Prioritize victim notification: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Require victim contact information from arresting officer before suspect can be booked</li> <li>▪ Update victim information on DV and booking and release screens</li> <li>▪ Require mandatory entry fields</li> <li>▪ Initiate notification attempts earlier in the release process</li> </ul>	√		√	√		√	
<b>PR34.</b> Improve linkages to DV services in order to transfer victim inquiries to jail receptionist about non-jail information, assistance, and support (i.e., getting orders for protection)					√		

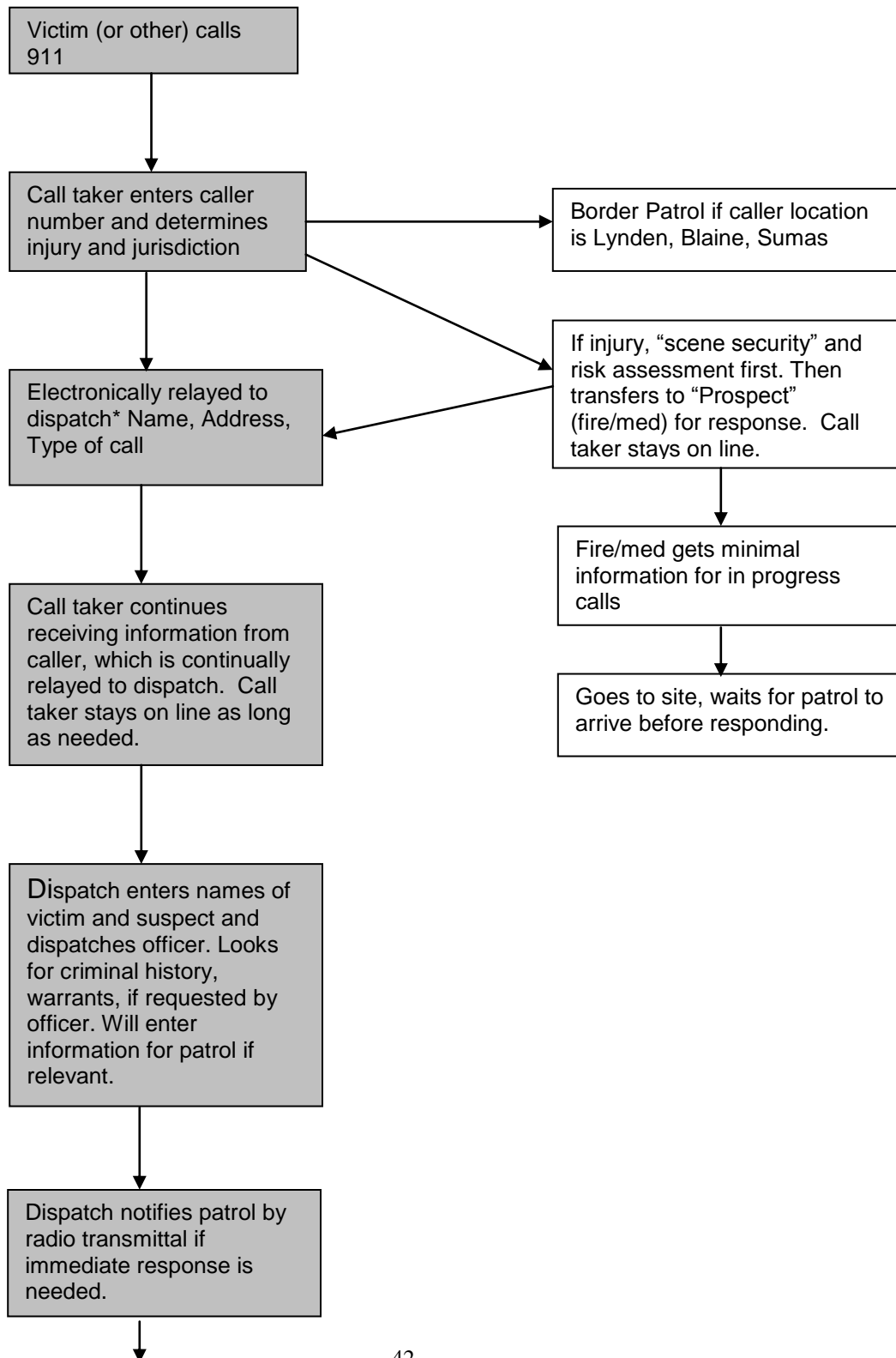
<sup>4</sup> Praxis: Recommendation should be reviewed with broad range of victims/survivors to identify possible unintended negative consequences.

<b>Preliminary Recommendations                      October 25, 2002</b>	Technology	Resources	Rules & Regulations	Administrative Forms & Procedures	System Linkages	Education & Training	Social Status Assumptions & Awareness
<b>PR35.</b> Review the most effective way (quickest, most reliable, least work for staff) for jail staff to relay excited utterance-type statements to the prosecutors. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is new fax-based process the best?</li> <li>▪ Should jail get training in how these statements and declarations are useful to the prosecutor?</li> </ul>	√		√	√	√		
<b>PR36.</b> Provide corrections officers with access to Longarm	√				√		
<b>PR37.</b> Explore alternatives for reducing the bottleneck in the jail booking process (and freeing time for closer attention to DV). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Receive inmates into jail without prints during busy times</li> <li>▪ Have non-corrections personnel print inmates</li> </ul>	√	√		√			
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Community Volunteers Against Domestic Violence (BPD &amp; WCSO)</b>							
<b>PR38.</b> Revise victim letter to include phone numbers of community agencies and where/how to reach 24-hour support and crisis services.				√			
<b>PR39.</b> Contact victims by phone within a week of the incident		√		√			
<b>PR40.</b> Translate victim information letter into other languages <sup>5</sup>				√			√
<b>PR41.</b> Recruit bilingual volunteers to improve ability to contact non-English speaking victims.		√					√
<b>PR42.</b> Conduct on-going training for volunteers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Legal issues with DV</li> <li>▪ No-contact orders and protection orders</li> <li>▪ How to make the right referral to DV resources</li> </ul>						√	

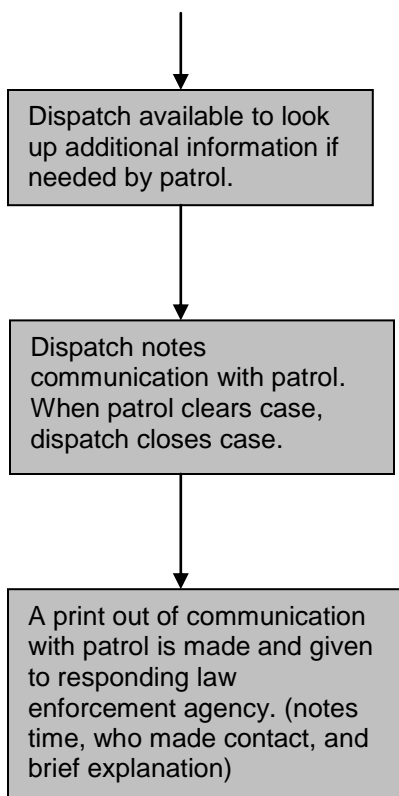
<sup>5</sup> Praxis: Do resources listed have bilingual staff? Will a caller easily reach someone who speaks her language?



### APPENDIX C: 911/Dispatch (What-Comm)

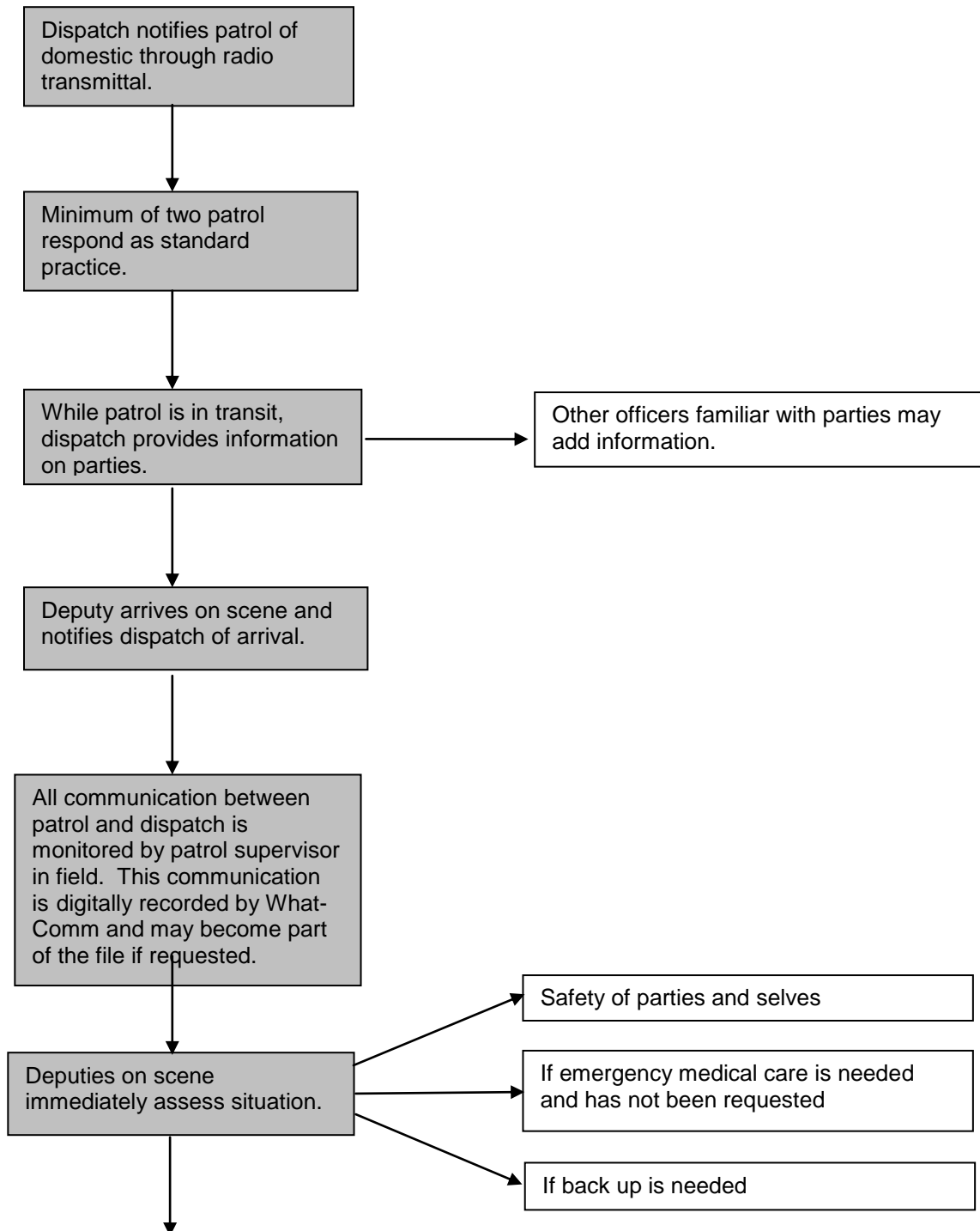


## 911/Dispatch (What-Comm) (continued)

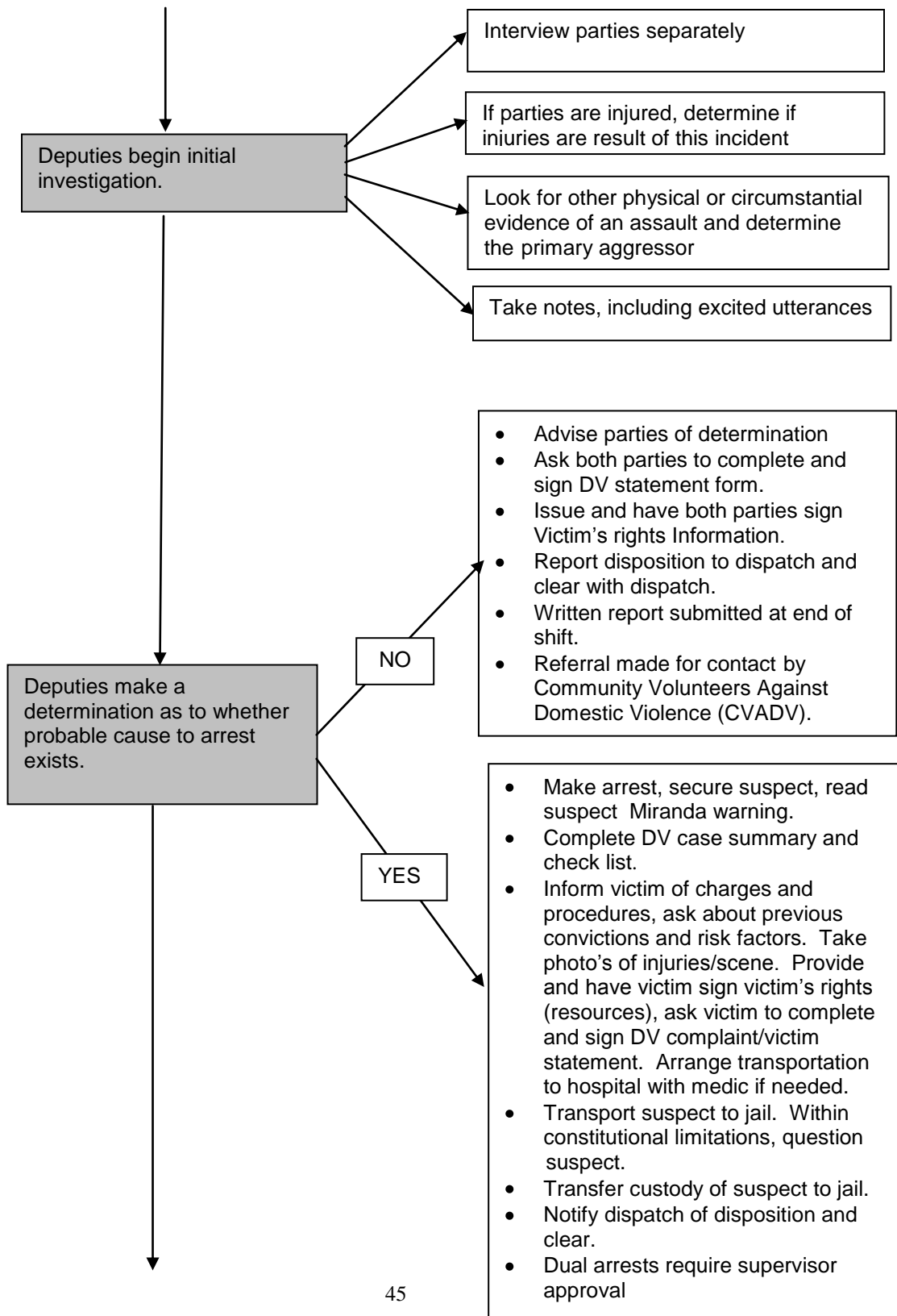


- Recordings are made of all calls to 911 and all patrol radio communications. Recordings are kept for 90 days.
- What-Comm will reproduce (MP3 format) 911 calls only for requesting agencies, such as prosecution.
- \* One dispatch for Bellingham Police Department
- \* One dispatch for Whatcom County Sheriff, Ferndale Police, Everson Police, Lummi Tribal Police, Nooksack Tribal Police.

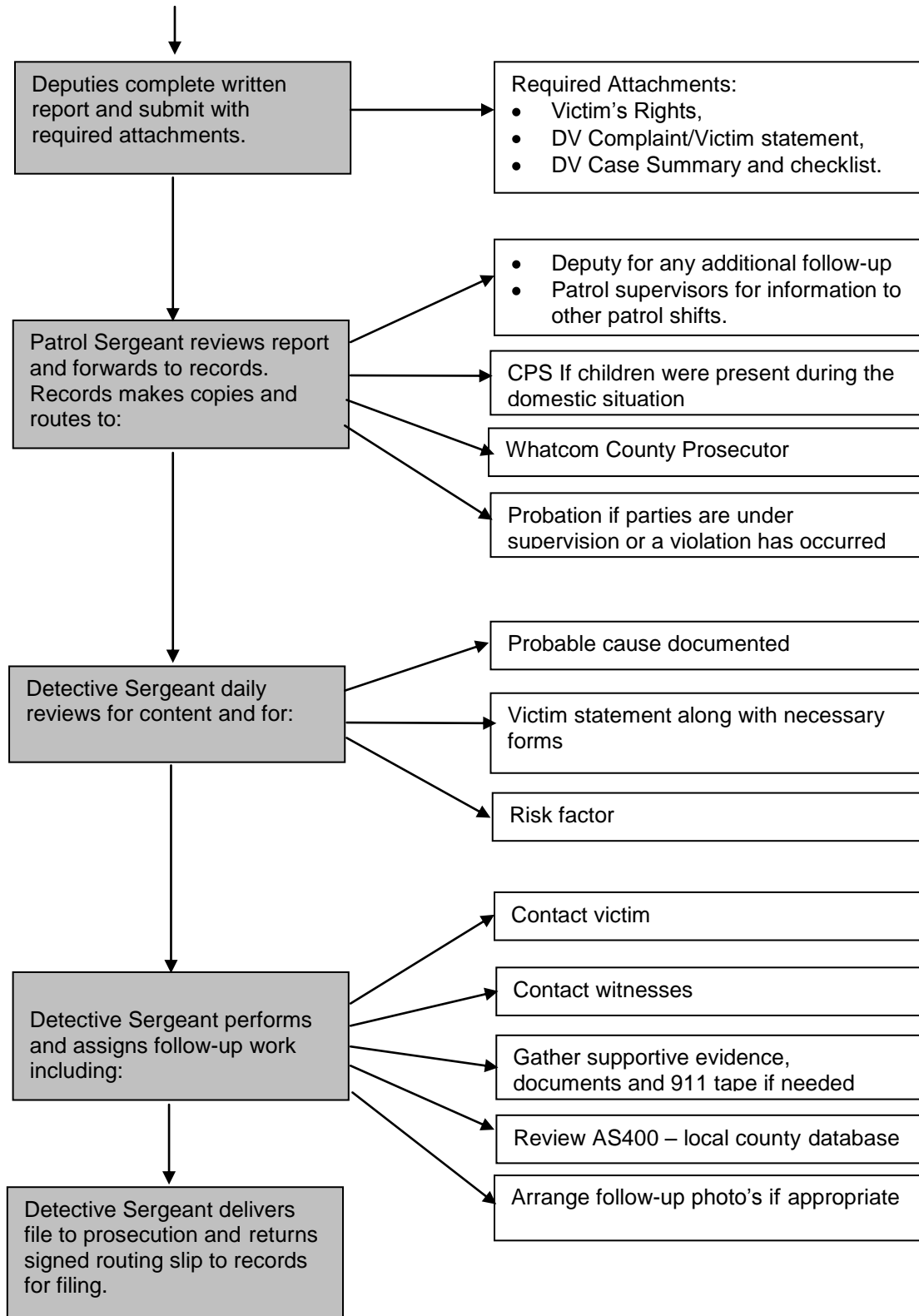
## APPENDIX C: Whatcom County Sheriff



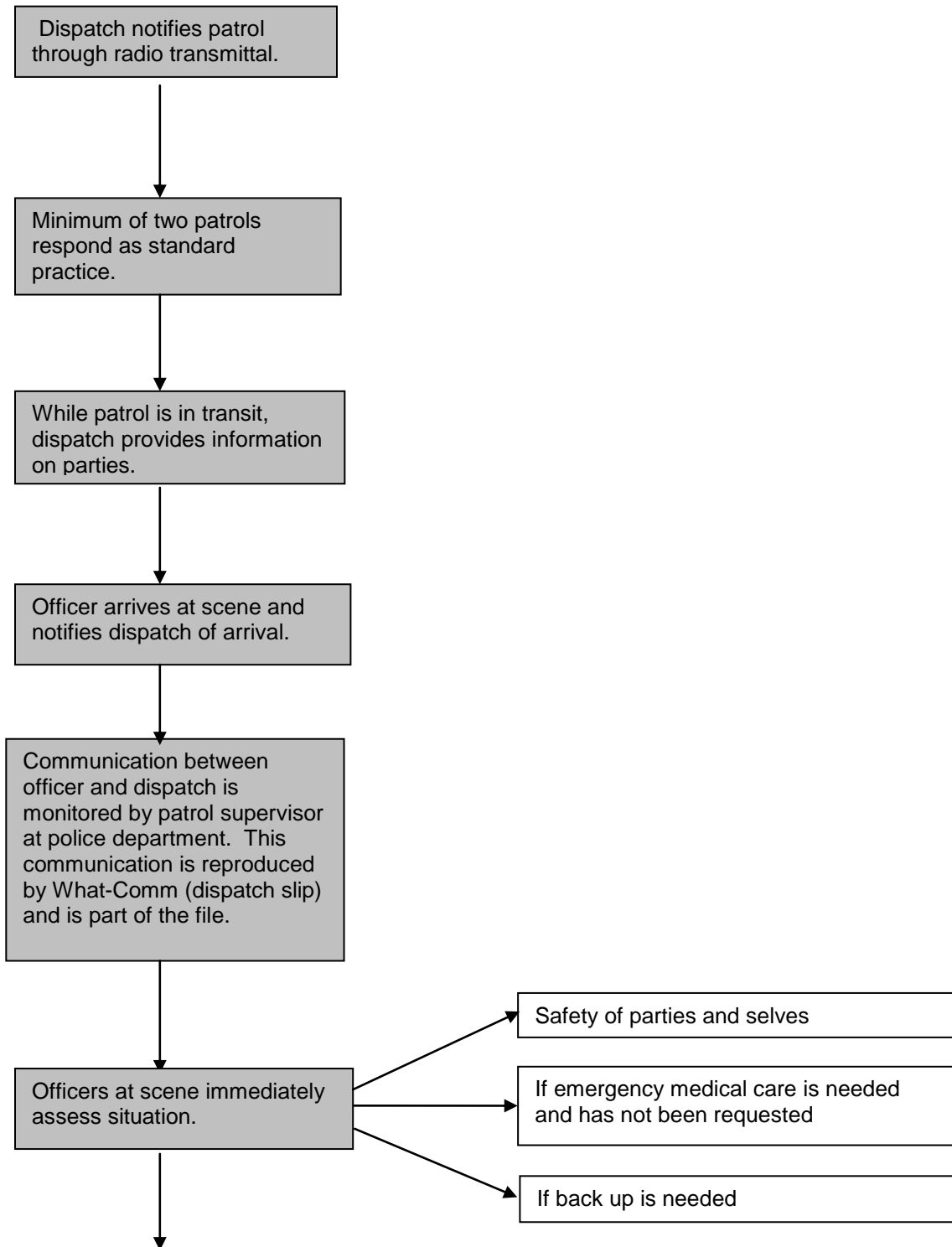
## Whatcom County Sheriff (continued)



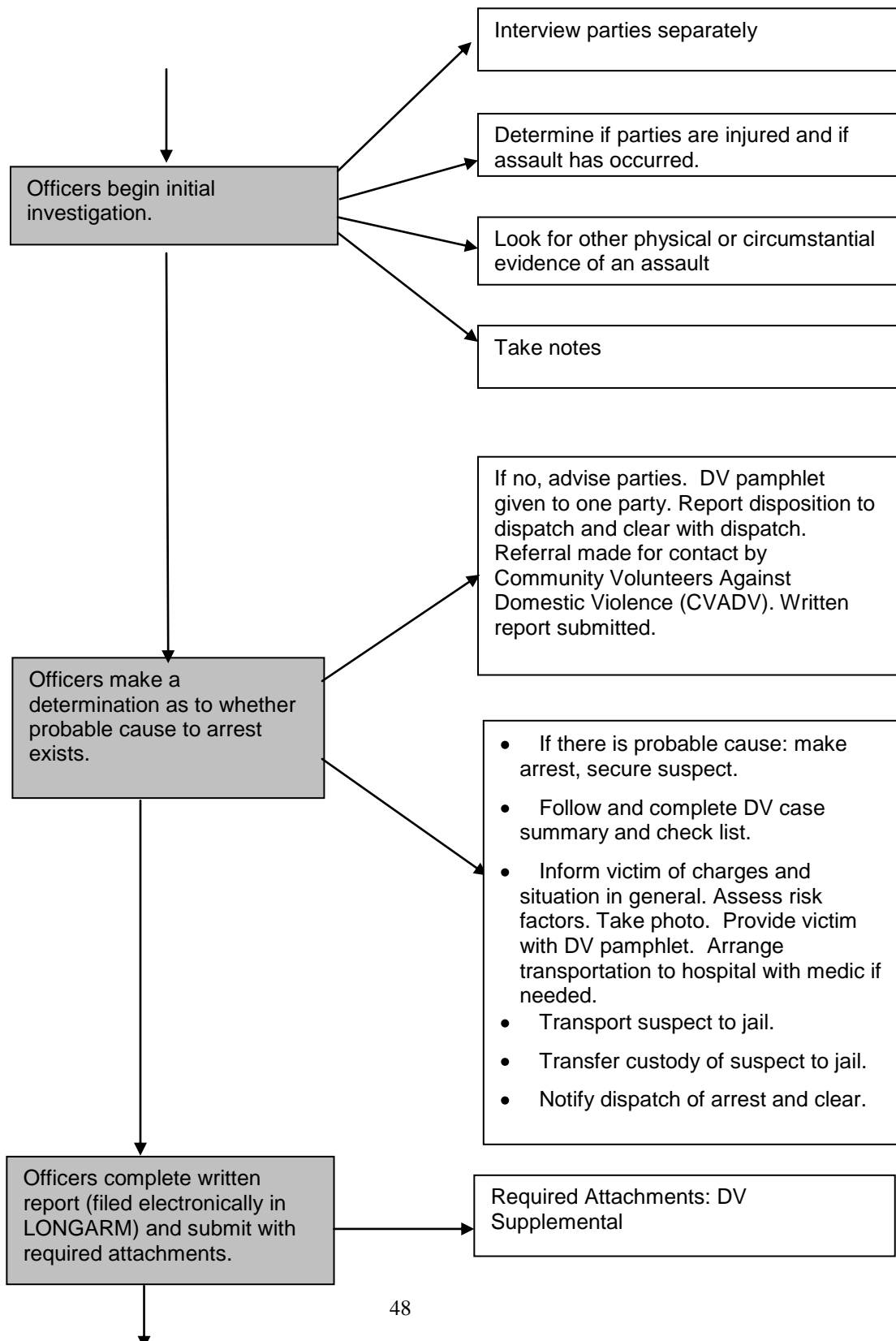
## Whatcom County Sheriff (continued)



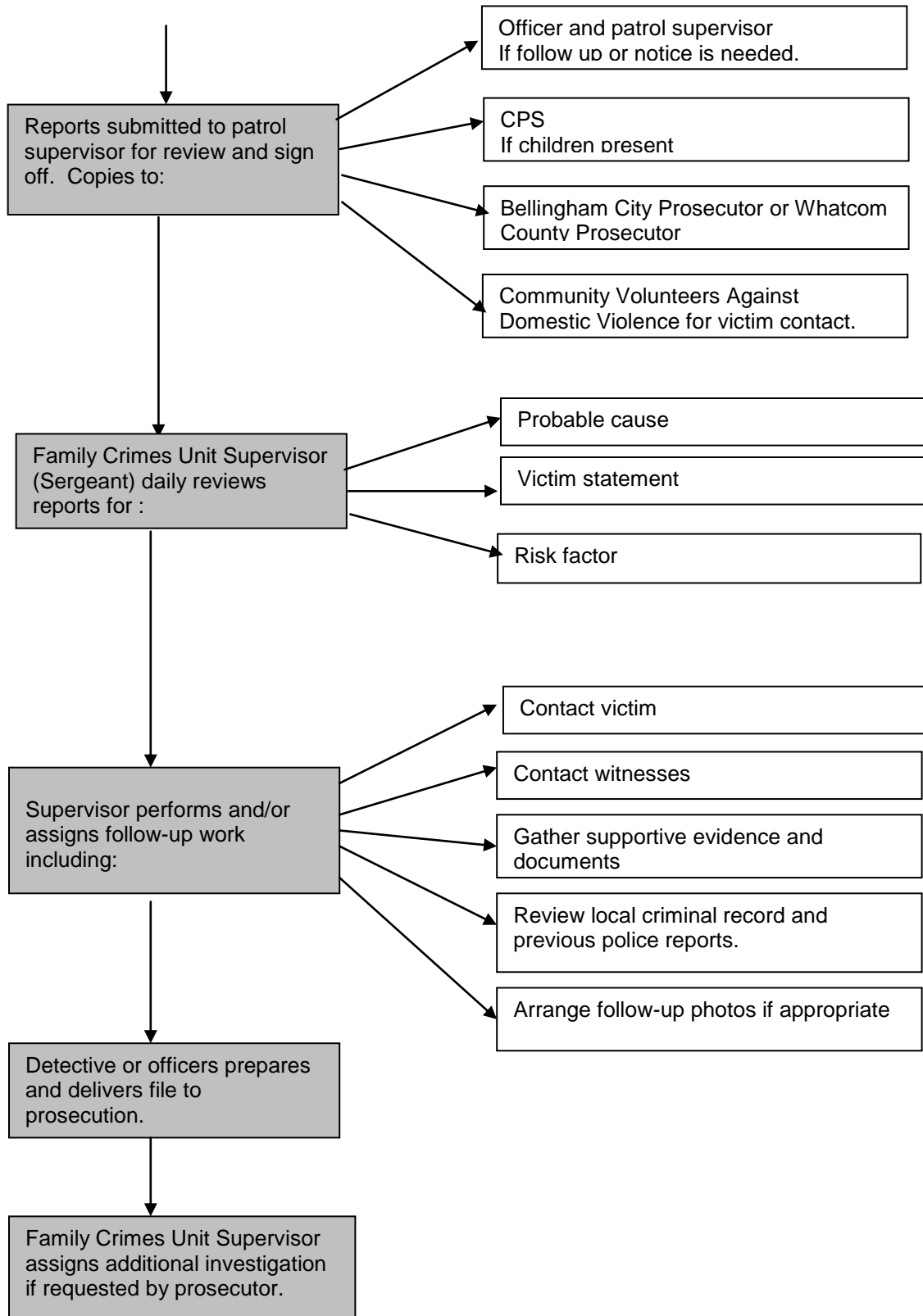
## APPENDIX C: Bellingham Police Department



## Bellingham Police Department (continued)

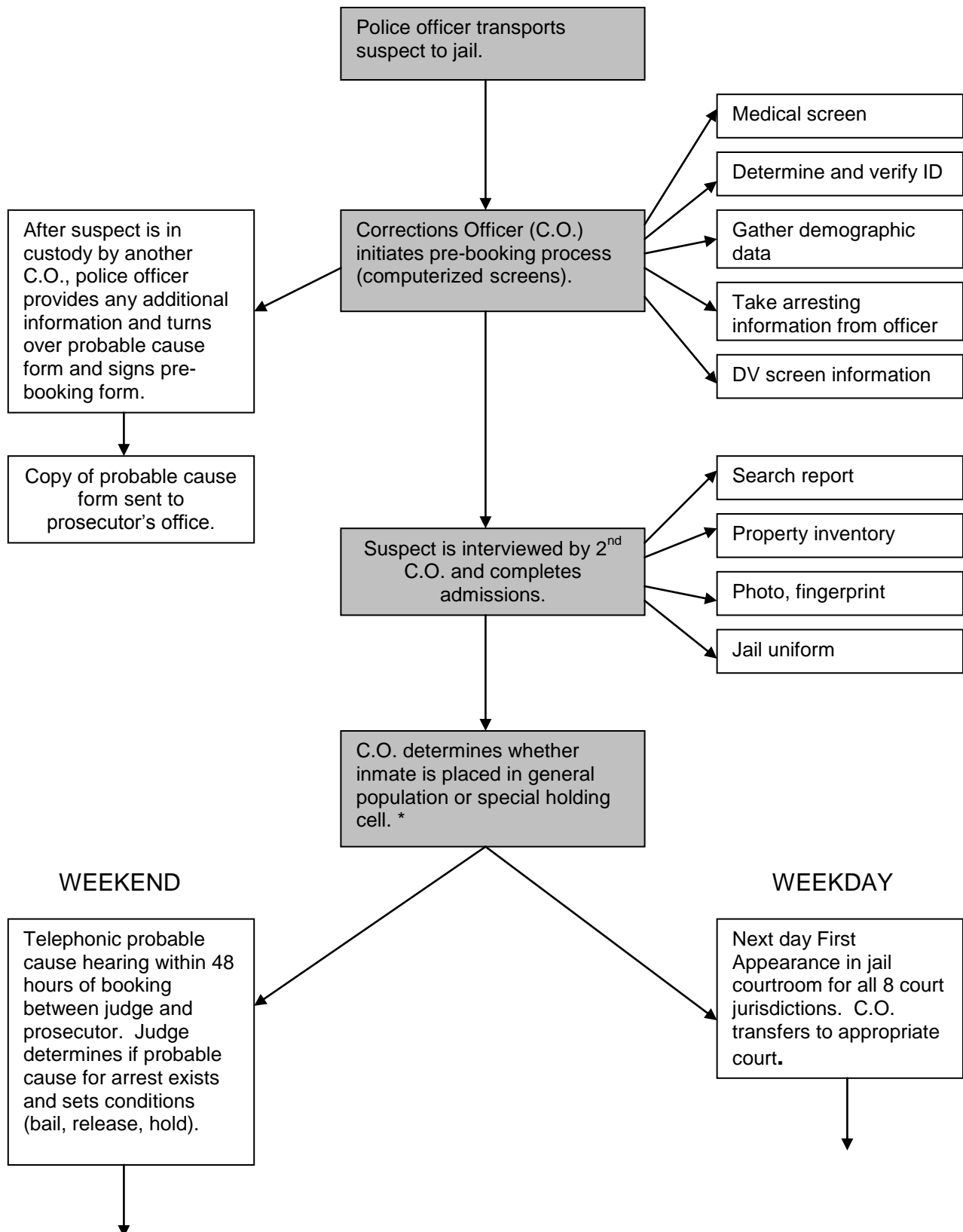


## Bellingham Police Department (continued)

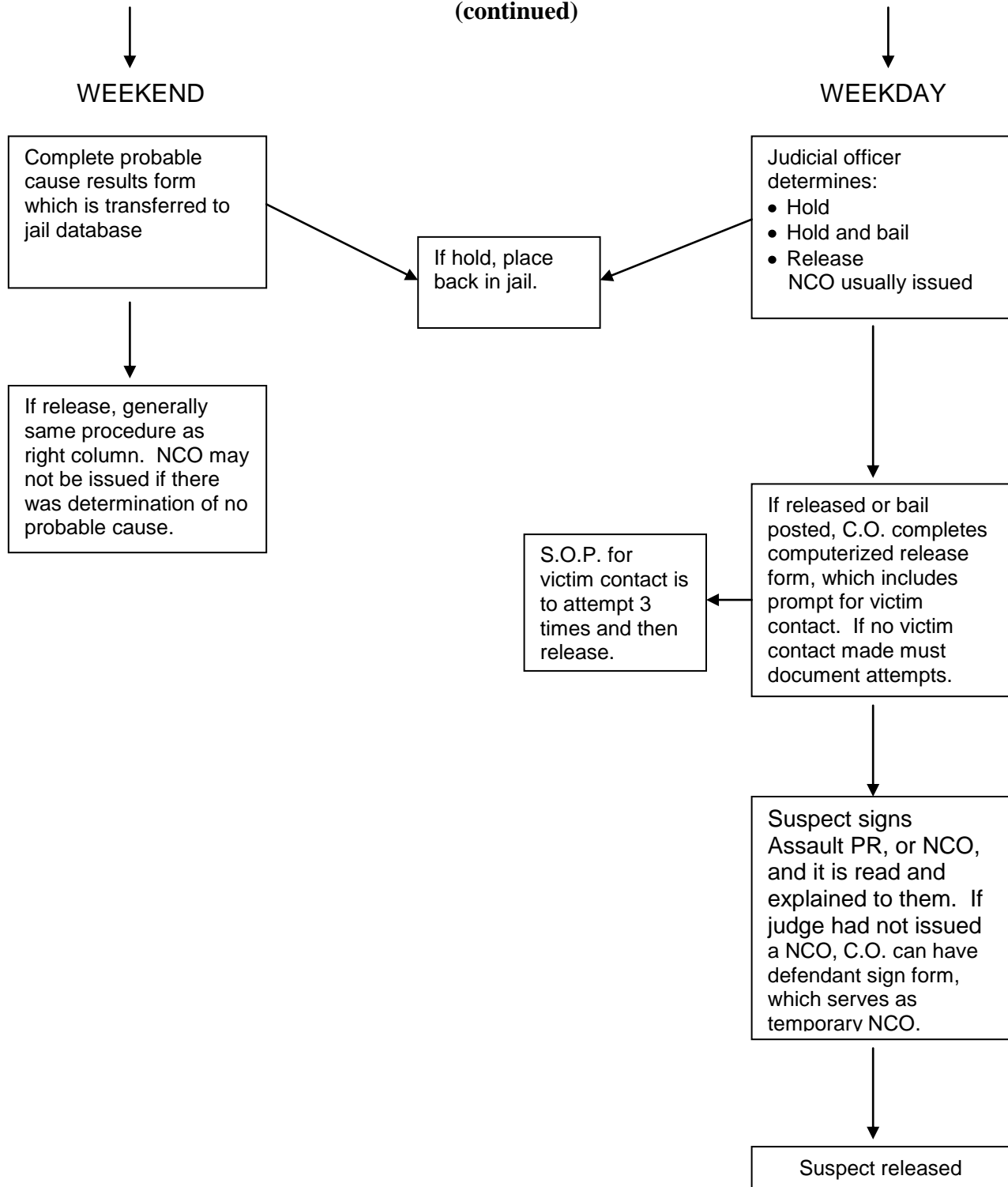




## APPENDIX C: Whatcom County Jail



### Whatcom County Jail (continued)



\*Jail can block phone so inmates cannot call certain numbers, if victims or prosecutor request in person.

**APPENDIX D: Domestic Abuse Arrest/Incident Pocket Card**  
**St. Louis County (MN) Sheriff's Office**

**Report Writing Checklist**

Document the following:

1. Time of arrival and incident
2. Relevant 911 information
3. Immediate statements of either party
4. For each party interviewed document:
  - (a) relationship of parties involved/ witnesses
  - (b) name, DOB, address, phone - work/home
  - (c) his/her account of events
  - (d) responses to deputies' follow-up questions
  - (e) past history with same/other victims
  - (f) deputy observation related to account of events
  - (g) injuries, including those not visible (e.g. sexual assault, strangulation)
  - (h) emotional state, demeanor
  - (i) alcohol or drug impairment
5. Names and phone numbers of two people who can always reach victim (#s not to be included in report)
6. Where suspect has lived during past seven years
7. Children present, involvement in incident, general welfare. Children living at residence, not present
8. Evidence collected (e.g., pictures statements, weapons, other)
9. Medical help offered or used, facility, medical release obtained
10. Rationale for self-defense or predominate aggressor (see reverse)
11. Summarize actions (e.g., arrest, non-arrest, attempts to locate, transport, referrals, victim notification, seizing firearms)
12. Existence of OFP, probation, warrants, and prior convictions
13. Responses to risk questions (see reverse)

**RISK QUESTIONS:**

1. Do you think he or she will seriously injure or kill you or your children? What makes you think so? What makes you think not?
2. How frequently and seriously does he or she intimidate, threaten, or assault you?
3. Describe most frightening event/worst incidence of violence involving him/her.

**SELF-DEFENSE DEFINITION:**

Reasonable force may be used to resist, or aid another to resist, an offensive action. A person may use all force and means that she or he reasonably believes necessary to prevent bodily injury that appears imminent. The use of force must be reasonable given the strength differential and the nature of the threat, i.e., deadly force is justified when it is necessary to prevent death or great and imminent bodily harm.

**PREDOMINANT AGGRESSOR CONSIDERATIONS:**

Intent of policy - to protect victims from ongoing abuse

Compare the following:

- severity of their injuries and their fear (incident)
- use of force and intimidation (incident)
- prior domestic abuse by each party
- likelihood of each suspect to cause future injury
- fear of each person of being injured by the other

**DETERMINING THE VALIDITY OF ORDERS FOR PROTECTION:**

Any protection order should be presumed valid (even an out-of-state order) if all of the following are identified:

- names of the parties
- the date the order was issued, that date being prior to the date of enforcement
- the expiration date of the order
- specified terms and conditions against the abuser
- the name of the issuing court
- the signature of a judicial deputy or of someone on behalf of a judicial deputy

## **APPENDIX E: Case File Excerpts**

**Table 1: Cases W17 – W19**

**Table 2: Whatcom County Sheriff’s Office Non-Arrest Incidents (“Verbal Domestic”)**

**Table 3: Whatcom County Sheriff’s Office Arrest Incidents**

**Table 4: Bellingham Police Department’s Non-Arrest Incidents (“Domestic Dispute/DV No Assault”)**

**Table 5: Bellingham Police Department’s Arrest Incidents**

**Table 1:**

**Note: Individual names have been changed. Any resemblance to a resident of Whatcom County is coincidental.**

<p><b>W17</b></p>	<p>W17 was classified as a “verbal domestic” and no arrest was made. It begins with a 911 call at 22:38. Amit apparently made the call, although that is not clear from the dispatch slip. At some point the 911 operator spoke with Sasha. Dispatch relayed that <i>she says he owns guns but does not know where they are at</i>. At the scene, Amit told the responding deputy that <i>he got into another verbal argument with Sasha</i> (there had been another call the previous day). Amit <i>admitted he had a bad temper</i> and told the deputy that <i>he had been arrested before in Nevada, on two occasions for D/V assault</i>.</p> <p>A second deputy interviewed Sasha. <i>Sasha indicated to Deputy X that she was not assaulted or threatened by Amit. However she did state Amit did threaten to kill her, but she indicated she didn't take Amit seriously and he says that all the time</i>. On the Domestic Violence Complaint/Victim Statement she dictated to the deputy she added: <i>He got arrested in Reno, NV twice for domestic violence. Once w/ a knife</i>. There is some follow-up to these statements by the interviewing deputy: <i>Amit did not make any aggressive or furtive movements towards her</i>. What else might the deputy have learned had she or he asked the questions recommended in R4?</p>
<p><b>W18</b></p>	<p>W18 was also classified as a “verbal domestic.” It occurs four days later and begins with a 911 call, apparently from Sasha, at 18:15. The dispatch slip shows little information: <i>language barrier . . . verbal only</i>. At the scene, the responding officer speaks first with Amit, who reports that he was moving out and <i>Sasha demanded he give her money for their three kids</i>. When he refused she called WCSO. Sasha told the deputy that <i>she called 911 to prevent Amit from leaving without giving her money</i>. Deputy completed the DV Complaint/Victim Statement for Sasha. This form contains none of the information about past violence and threats to kill that were included on W17. Did this deputy inquire about past violence? What information might have surfaced with different questions?</p>
<p><b>W19</b></p>	<p>W19 results in Amit’s arrest for Fourth Degree Domestic Assault. It occurs about three weeks after W18 and one month after W17. It begins with a 911 call from Sasha at 14:58. (What-Comm records provided to the Safety Audit included a recording of this call.) It is a long call, over twenty minutes before deputies arrive. Sasha is extremely upset and distressed. She reports to 911 that Amit <i>kicked my head . . . kicked me and slapped me . . . kicked me in my stomach and my head</i>. Amit told the responding deputies that Sasha <i>threw a pan of water at him and kicked him several times in the chest and on his right forearm</i>. Sasha said that she had asked for more child support and alimony and Amit <i>became enraged an attacked her by kicking her in the abdomen . . . put his hands around her through and started to strangle her while threatening to kill her . . . had made many threats to kill her in the past, but this time she thought him very serious about carrying through with the threat and became very frightened</i>. There are no follow-up questions to this information. Why did she think him very serious this time? The DV Complaint/Victim Statement (completed by the officer) refers to the Nevada arrests, but nothing about the prior incidents in Whatcom County (at least three within the past month).</p>

**Table 2: WCSO Non-Arrest Incidents (“Verbal Domestic”)**

**NOTE: Individual names have been changed. Any resemblance to a resident of Whatcom County is coincidental.**

Case #	Dispatch Slip Account	Report Account
W12	<i>Eric Small is hitting Jennifer Small with his hand . . . [Jennifer on phone] her husband is on methadone and stated he was going to kill himself . . . F stated her wrist hurts, refusing first aid</i>	<i>[What-Comm advised] no orders between the parties and no wants. Jennifer appeared calm and she was holding an icepack on her right wrist . . . She tried to take his pills away from him because she thought he was going to try to kill himself . . . Took his bottle of methadone and started dumping the pills in the toilet . . . struggled briefly over the pills . . . Eric had some minor scratches on his wrist and his right cheek . . . he didn't think Jennifer was trying to scratch him . . . he didn't feel assaulted . . . Her wrist was sore after the struggle for the pills . . . she thought he was going to try to kill himself . . . Bridget said she saw and heard [them] struggling in the bathroom . . . unable to develop probable cause to arrest either party . . . both said there was no history of assault . . . no previous domestic reports.</i>
W13	<i>Small, Eric trashing the house. Just served papers . . . Just verbal this AM [now 8:24] Male ripping the computer up . . . Past suicidal threats by male [OD], has taken some meds this am but RP doesn't think he has OD'D</i>	<i>Jennifer appeared calm . . . Arguing with her husband about getting divorced . . . Served with divorce papers at about 0800 . . . She called 911 because her divorce papers state he could not take any property from the residence . . . Observed no signs of struggle . . . Eric appeared angry and was yelling</i>
W33	<i>Glover is yelling and screaming . . . F half is going to leave and will call us when she gets to a safe destination . . . RP's ex-wife is involved in domestic at the above with her boyfriend, Jason Glover. RP spoke w/ exwife by phone, she says Justin is preventing her and the kids from leaving the house . . . Now have Justin on the line, he says Dianna is refusing to leave the room. Says it's verbal only. Says she has been physical in the past . . . Female and son have left the house</i>	<i>Had a verbal argument . . . And as it escalated he decided to phone the police . . . Diana decided to leave with the three children and go to a friends house . . . He stated all three of the children had left with Diana because they wanted to and he had to reason to fear for their safety . . . [He] advised that there had been one previous domestic, verbal report filed by him on [Diana] approx 1 year ago and no physical domestics in the past.</i>
W34	<i>Ex-girlfriend threatened to strangle RP . . . Speaking to Kim Meyers; saying Josh hit her w/ his hand Mother in law / Lori Grant also hit her. Kim is calling from the AMPM standing by the payphone.</i>	<i>Josh Grant called 911 and reported that he had a verbal argument with his girlfriend. Kimberly Meyers left the residence and called 911 from a payphone to report the argument. . . Provided a statement indicating that Josh hit her on the wrist with an open hand, and left a red mark. I didn't see any marks on Kim's wrist [Josh said] he didn't hit Kim . . . Kim said Josh has never hit her before . . . didn't think he was intentionally trying to hit her.</i>
W35	<i>This is over break up - RP says male 1/2 is packing all of her stuff . . . Pistol under bed unloaded (but non involved) Male 1/2 aware LE has been called.</i>	<i>Rachel reported not physical violence on today's date. She appeared to be in good conditions and was not upset.</i>
W39	<i>Mark was right next to RP / Unsure if she was free to talk</i>	<i>Aaron said he and Katie have reported a verbal domestic in the past, but they have never assaulted each other. Katie said she was not threatened or assaulted.</i>

**Table 2: WCSO Non-Arrest Incidents (“Verbal Domestic”)**

**NOTE: Individual names have been changed. Any resemblance to a resident of Whatcom County is coincidental.**

Case #	Dispatch Slip Account	Report Account
W40	<p>Joe Biggs is AOB and at her door and is pounding on it and won't go away . . . He just took some belonging from her veh. This is her ex boyfriend . . . Also pulled the wiring out of the car so RP couldn't use it . . . Can hear Terri arguing with Joe through the door . . . Joe was making threats to come into the house and beat up Terri and Matt</p>	<p>Terri was calm, unhurt, and in good condition . . . Has yelled at her in the past but has never assaulted her . . . No court orders exist . . . She was not in fear of Joe returning</p>
W17	<p>Language barrier . . . RP has been drinking Wife is not AOB/ Can hear lots of yelling . . . Now talking F half . . . She says he owns guns but does not know where they are at.</p>	<p>Verbal argument . . . Admitted he had a bad temper . . . Arrested before in Nevada on two occasions for D/V assault . . . Sasha indicated that she was not assaulted or threatened by Amit. However she did state Amid did threaten to kill her, but she indicated she didn't take Amit seriously and he says that all the time . . . Showed me a 2 inch scar on her left shin . . . [today] threatened to kill her and mentioned that he had a gun . . . had never seen him with one and would not know where he kept it if he did have one . . . Cindy Thomas indicated all she observed was a verbal argument.</p>
W18	<p>[Same parties as W17] Poss AOB at residence . . . Language barrier, M is ex-hubby who lives w/RP . . . Verbal only</p>	<p>She and her ex-husband had a verbal dispute over money . . . Amit stated that there was no physical contact . . . She did indicate that WCSO had responded to a verbal domestic between the two several days earlier . . . Cindy Thomas confirmed that the dispute was verbal only.</p>



**Table 3: WCSO Arrest Incidents**  
**NOTE: Individual names have been changed. Any resemblance to a resident of Whatcom County is coincidental.**

Case #	Dispatch Slip Account	Report Account	Charge
W19	<p>M vs F . . . M kicked F in stomach/ and slapped her . . . No weapons/ Poss AOB/M is now in the back part of the store and she is in the house . . . 3 sm children are there as well . . . M threatened to kill her/she is in the living room of house . . . RP states that he batters her often . . . M has been arrested twice previously in Reno, NV -- for DV // F was hospitalized for head inj's there . . . employee at the store Cindy said female broke the door down and threw water at him 15 ago . . . she didn't see anything physical . . . male says female kicked him in the chest when he fell on the floor then ran, saying he didn't hit or kick her . . . other [unit] will follow F to ER (sbe's driving w/ her kids)</p>	<p>[Amit] . . . Seemed very calm. [Sasha] . . . was very visibly emotionally distraught. She was crying hysterically and kept repeating that she was afraid Amit was going to kill her . . . Amit explained to me that Sasha came through the back door of the store office and threw a pan of water on him causing him to slip on the floor . . . [then she] kicked him several times in the chest an on his right forearm. There were unidentifiable visible marks on Amit consistent with his account . . . Sasha does not speak very good English and I resorted to calling the language line for an interpreter . . . Sasha said that Amit became enraged and attached her by kicking her in the abdomen. She said that he then put his hands around her throat and started to strangle her while threatening to kill her. Sasha told me that her airflow was never cut off. Sasha told me that Amit had made many threats to kill her in the past, but this time she thought him very serious about carrying through with he threat and became very frightened. She said that she began fighting him and grabbed him by the chest area of his shirt and struggled free . . . I observed what appeared to be a large scrape type mark on the lower right side of Sasha's abdomen and several smaller marks on the left side of her throat area . . . there is a past history of domestic violence . . . told me she would not seek medical attention . . . later learned through the interpreter that Sasha was experiencing a greater degree of pain and would to the hospital if she had someone who could watch her children, but she had no one to watch her children. [Discover that hospital provides childcare and officer escorts her there] She also had some marks approximately 1/2 to 3/4 inch wide roughly in the shape of fingers around the left side of her throat.</p>	Assault 4th
W20	<p>RP vs Husb . . . Beth Olson vs Ryan Olson . . . Husb kicked and pushed her to the floor - no aid needed -- husb unaware RP calling</p>	<p>She appeared upset, but she had no visible injuries. She told me that her husband was intoxicated and he had assaulted her. She said that he hit her on the back of the head/neck and knocked her to the floor. He kicked her in the back, and he hit her with a cloth bathrobe . . . [Ryan] appeared very intoxicated and he seemed to expect me to arrest him . . . [Beth] said that her back was hurting, and she though she would have visible bruises on her neck and back. She agreed to come into the Sheriffs Office [in 3 days] for photographs. Beth said that Ryan has assaulted her in the past, and he has threatened to kill her. These</p>	Assault 4th

**Table 3: WCSO Arrest Incidents**

**NOTE: Individual names have been changed. Any resemblance to a resident of Whatcom County is coincidental.**

Case #	Dispatch Slip Account	Report Account	Charge
		<i>incidents were several years ago . . . She has been concerned for her safety and she has decided to divorce him. She has been in contact with the Women's Care shelter, and she plans to contact them again. I issued Beth a DV Rights form.</i>	
W21	<i>Father just drove up RP's driveway . . . Poss NC order on file . . . RP not sure if mother would approve of her calling in // says father has hurt mother in past . . . Beth called back to advise M 1/2 has left approx 5 ago//unk DOT //f sounded somenhat evasive// advised dep would still make cont ref viol.</i>	<i>[Beth] said her husband was there earlier but had left . . . She is getting a divorce from Ryan and they both had court today . . . Ryan was at her house to talk about [the children]. I asked Beth if Ryan had threatened or assaulted her. Beth said "no." She said Ryan parked his truck at the bottom of the driveway and walked about half way up the driveway. Beth said she stayed at the top of the driveway, about 74 feet away . . . I asked Beth if Ryan was trying to start an argument or intentionally harass her. Beth said "no" . . . Beth also said Ryan was trying to be very civil about the divorce and did not want him arrested for violating the domestic order . . . [Spoke with Emily, 11] Emily said she heard a truck at the bottom of the driveway and then heard a door shut. Emily said she went to the top of the driveway with her mom. Emily said she saw her dad coming up the driveway. She said she knew her dad was not allowed to be at the house so she called 911 . . . [Ryan met deputy at Sheriff's Office] Ryan was advised of his constitutional rights and said he would provide a voluntary statement . . . said he wanted to clarify what the judge had said about the custody of the kids so he went to the house.</i>	Violation of no contact order
W22	<i>Occ'd this morning . . .RP's ex husband came to her house this morning in violations of no cont order</i>	<i>Saw Ryan pull off of the [street] and into the entrance to her driveway . . . She said she saw him get out of his truck and stand just outside the gate. She said she also saw her son, Benjamin [14] get out of Ryan's truck and come through the gate and walk up the driveway . . . to ask for some of Ryan's ties and his fishing pole . . . she heard Ryan yelling at her from the gate. She said she did not know what he was saying and she did not respond to him . . . She told me that her trial is set for Monday, on the prior assault charge and she feels strongly about following through with pursuing this complaint . . . [deputy contacts Ryan] he admitted to going to his old house . . . bus said he stayed on the roadway and denied pulling into the driveway. He admitted to getting out of his truck but denied yelling anything at Beth.</i>	Violation of no contact order

**Table 3: WCSO Arrest Incidents**

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Case #	Dispatch Slip Account	Report Account	Charge
W43	<p>The F is a victim of DV from earlier this afternoon &amp; had been picked up by RP . . . F called M &amp; asked him to come pick her up // RP thinks they are headed home . . . Judith Parker just called back - M just hit her in the head w/ his hand &amp; ripped her hair out, she is hiding in the bedroom . . . M is in the living room, RP doesn't want him to know that she called.</p>	<p>Reporting party Sonja Shibilski, a friend of the family, was requesting that the [WCSO] check the welfare of Judith parker because of comments she overheard Harold Schultz say and because of the earlier domestic violence . . . Details of that incident are not clear, or immediately available, but Judith apparently suffered damage to her right wrist and fingers . . . was admitted to St. Joseph's emergency room because of the incident, but left the hospital prematurely because of fears that Harold would punish her physically . . . dispatch advised that Judith was calling secretly from her residence . . . Judith came running out onto the porch in tears and fearful of Harold . . . I noted that as Deputy X escorted Harold out of the residence door, Judith immediately ducked behind me and covered in total fear as she broke down in tears. Judith remained very fearful of Harold and was making statements to me about how Harold had threatened to kill her and that she was very afraid he was going to beat her again . . . Judith continued to cry uncontrollably and repeat how afraid she was of Harold and that she didn't want to say anything because she did not want to be "killed" by Harold . . . [he] was saying "you fucking bitch, why did you call the cops on me?" as he was grabbing her by the hair and rapidly swinging her head back and for the in the car . . . it was very painful and that she now suffered a sore neck, and bumps and bruises . . . Harold was saying "Stupid bitch . . . I'm done dealing with you!" and "I'm tired of your mouth, you ugly fucking bitch." . . . she was trying to be "nice" to Harold because she did not want to be beaten any further . . . Harold also said to her, "You fucking bitch, you're not leaving" and "It'll take the sheriffs 4 hours to get here. I can kill you in that time you fucking bitch."</p>	<p>Felony harassment                      DV; Assault 4th</p>
W3	<p>M V F . . . F says he grabbed her &amp; refusing to leave . . . No mpns - has drug HX - suj did take crack last night . . . RP thinks the male has left but not sure . . . Unkn where he would go to.</p>	<p>Antonia was sitting in a chair and looked like she had been crying . . . I contacted James who stated he and Antonia have been together as boyfriend/girlfriend for 6 years and have 2 children in common (# yoa and 6 months) . . . He and Antonia had gotten into an argument. James stated Antonia became very upset and he grabbed onto her in an attempt to calm her down. James claimed he had held onto Antonia in a "hug" like position . . . Antonia said she turned around to face James and he grabbed her by the throat. Judith said she was very frightened</p>	<p>Assault 4th</p>

**Table 3: WCSO Arrest Incidents**

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Case #	Dispatch Slip Account	Report Account	Charge
		<i>and though James was going to start to hit her. Antonia then stated James grappled her to the floor and sat on her chest. Judith said she could not breathe because of his weight and again stated she was afraid James was going to hit her . . . I did not see any marks or bruises on Antonia, but I was clear Antonia was very intimidated and fearful.</i>	
<b>W43</b>	<i>James Charles just left on foot . . . RP says he grabbed the phn out of her hand</i>	<i>Dispatched to a report of a possible physical domestic . . . Antonia appeared calm and did not have any sign of obvious injury . . . James came over unannounced to visit a child they have in common . . . She asked James to leave . . . [he] would not leave, so she called 911 . . . I asked Antonia if she would complete the domestic violence complaint statement. Antonia refused and signed the statement . . . I asked James if he would provide a voluntary written statement about their argument. James refused and state he did not want to talk about the incident any further.</i>	<i>Violation of no contact order</i>
<b>W10</b>	<i>RP's daughter . . . Was assaulted by the father of their child . . . He threw her against a wall and hit her . . . He is not there now</i>	<i>Ann did not initially want to talk to me . . . She was very upset and shaking . . . They also have a 4 month old child in common. Kevin [returned from work] asked where the child was. She replied that he was at her mother's house and she was moving out. At that point Ann was sitting on their bed. he then flipped the mattress over and pushed her and the mattress into the wall. The front of her body was pushed into the wall leaving her back exposed. According to Ann, Kevin at that that point hit her several times in the upper back and neck area . . . There was no redness or bruises on her neck and back . . . She said he assaulted her for 1 to 2 minutes then departed back fro work. Throughout our contact Ann was shaking and crying. She did not want Kevin to go to jail and was very concerned about what was going to happen to him She was persuaded by friends and family to file this report . . . Ann was advised of Kevin's arrest and she was concerned about retaliation. She was very nervous about his response to the arrest and how it would affect her . . . No visible injuries, but the victim did state that she had a sore neck and head.</i>	<i>Assault 4th</i>
<b>W11</b>	<i>Dist. Ct Probation . . . No cont with subject since 0404 was victim of domestic</i>	<i>What-Comm advised that district court probation though Kevin Jon was living with his girlfriend Ann Summer . . . Kevin told Deputy X that he knew he wasn't supposed to be here because of a no contact order that was in effect. I talked with Ann and she told me that Kevin was here because he was "taking</i>	<i>Violation of no contact order</i>

**Table 3: WCSO Arrest Incidents**

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Case #	Dispatch Slip Account	Report Account	Charge
		<i>care o this kids." She said Kevin was living with her because his family "needed" him. Ann was upset that we were arresting him an did not want him to go to jail. Ann said she tried to get the order dropped but said she can't for financial reasons. I issued Ann a D.V. Rights form, which she refused to sign. She also refused to give a D.V. statement.</i>	
<b>W26</b>	<i>Heard a woman screaming for help . . . 2nd call from same addr a hangup . . . Phn hung up on callback. Third call back, heard a F yell help me, then the phn went dead . . . F calling back crying, saying to a M to get off of her, get away from me . . . can bear her crying in the background and yelling, can also hear a M voice . . . line is still open and I can hear a F and M talking in the background, unable to hear what is being said/ will continue to keep line opne in case she comes back to the phn</i>	<i>What-Comm advised me via radio that they could hear a woman screaming for help, sounds of a struggle, and a man yelling. Upon my arrival, I could hear a woman inside the residence sobbing and repeatedly saying "stop it, stop it" . . . Alma was crying and obviously very upset . . . have recently taken up separate residences . . . Alma said Jose has assaulted her numerous times in the past . . . Jose called her a "bitch". Alma told Jose to get out but Jose refused to leave. Jose climbed on top of Alma who was still laying on the bed. Jose held Alma down by the arms and started yelling at her. Alma could only recall that Jose would swear at her then grab her with both hands by the face and say that he loved her . . . Alma said she is afraid of Jose and believes Jose will hurt her.</i>	Assault 4th

**Table 4: BPD Non-Arrest Incidents (“Domestic Dispute/DV No Assault”)**  
**NOTE: Individual names have been changed. Any resemblance to a resident of Whatcom County is coincidental.**

Case #	Dispatch Slip Account	Report Account
B24	M VS F - slapping . . . Been going on for 30 min	They recently broke up but are now back together . . . Arguing this morning about [Roger] not helping out around the house. The argument got very heated and loud but did not turn physical/ . . . The situation was settled for the moment after [Roger] decide to go to a friends and cool down.
B25	RP's girlfriend AOB and hitting him [she gets on phone, too] she's hysterical and keeps hanging up the payphone. . . F is very AOB. M half hung up on me before I could get any more info from him.	(Both appeared to be intoxicated . . . Said Georgia was too drunk to be out on the street by herself and that he was trying to get her to go with him . . . Apparently refused and therefore began arguing with him . . . Separated and each went their own ways.
B28	male inside threatening fem Male is chasing fem and swearing at her . . .also child and another employee in store . . . Was trying to get fem in the back room - RP heard screaming when she left and socking his hand in his fist - RP witnessed male pushing the female	Employee (not the reporting party) told me there was a verbal dispute only . . . Contacted them in the managers apartment . . . [both] told me no physical contact nor would there be . . . he was leaving for work . . . No evidence of a assault . . . No want, order or prior DV assaults involving [parties]
B30	Were arguing, F pushed table at RP's legs, he pushed her back & out the door . . . F is back knocking on the back door . . .RP has locked the door & won't let her in . . . F doesn't live there	Upon arrival [both] conversing in a normal, calm manner . . . Indicated that he and his girlfriend were engaged in a heated argument . . . She acted on her frustration and pushed the coffee table against his leg . . . Said he was not hurt . . . [she refused to leave] He simply grabbed her and lifted her and placed her outside the rear sliding glass door . . . Indicated he called the police because he didn't want the situation to get out of hand. Apparently, Jane Reilly offered Officer X the same story.
B32	Says there's lots of shouting going on and sounds like stuff being tossed enough such that one of the RP's lights have been knocked off the wall . . . RP doesn't not know the name of residents / says it's a family w/ a small child	Report that yelling and banging could be heard within the residence . . . James was obviously upset, stating that he and his girlfriend [Anna] had been arguing, but everything was now alright . . . Didn't want to let us into the residence to speak with [Anna], who we could see down the hall . . . explained we had to speak to both parties independently . . . spoke with Anna inside . . . arguing because James had been out with friends all night. Neither party could explain the apparent "banging," but guessed that it may have been a result of them packing to move . . . apartment cluttered with packed and partially packed boxes.

**Table 5: BPD Arrest Incidents**

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Case #	Dispatch Slip Account	Report Account	Arrest Charge
B1	<p><i>Husband hit her . . . M knew she was calling . . . Phone got disconnected . . . See Male &amp; Fem inside w/ small child - nothing going on right now</i></p>	<p><i>Frank White appeared visibly angry. Cindy White was crying and looked as if she had been crying for awhile. She was holding her daughter, Casey White. Their son, Hunter White, was also there. When I walked in, Hunter White said: "DADDY HAS NO RIGHT TO PUSH MOMMY." [Interviewed separately] They are going through a separation . . . Frank White started to call her names in front of the children, and told her he would put her in her grave. Cindy White slapped Frank White and [he] grabbed her around the throat, and pushed her into a wall in the children's bedroom. Cindy White hit the back of her head on the wall. [He] was still holding her around the throat, so she kicked at him to get away. Cindy White said she got on the phone to call 9-1-1. Frank White unplugged the phone . . . [He told me] they got into a pushing match and he said he put his hand on her chest below her throat and pushed her into the wall. [2nd officer's report]: said that he and Cindy White pushed each other a few times each, but no punches were thrown.</i></p>	Assault 4 <sup>th</sup>
B2	<p><i>Occ'd last night w/ bfriend . . . Male body slammed RP and pushed her around, RP is extremely bruised . . . Unk loc for the male, took RP's veh and poss left town . . . Charges as HX of this that she has not reported in the past.</i></p>	<p><i>They broke up . . . she took the initiative . . . She changed the locks on her door, in an effort to keep him out of the apartment . . . Left the apartment unlocked last night, and went to bed. She heard someone come inside the apartment, and found [him] inside, with his cousin. [He] started cooking food in the kitchen . . . [She] told him that they needed to leave after they ate. This started an argument between the two, and she ran upstairs away from him. He chased after her . . . forced his way into her bedroom, and "chest thumped" her hard enough to almost make her lose her breath. He then grabbed her by her wrists and started yelling "You don't disrespect me in front of my family . . . you're the one who makes me do these things to you." [He stayed in the house. In the morning, he left with her car, though she said he shouldn't] She has no idea where he is now, or when is going to return . . . She said she wants to obtain a no contact order or perhaps a protection order as soon as possible. I advised her to call us as soon as he returns so that law enforcement could speak with him . . . [could see] bruising on both forearms, just above her wrists. It appeared that the bruises are about the size a finger would leave due to a tight grip . . . She is not totally sure this [brain aneurysm] is why he has started becoming physical with her, but said that they used to not have the problem in the past.</i></p>	Assault 4 <sup>th</sup>

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Case #	Dispatch Slip Account	Report Account	Arrest Charge
B3	<p>RP says [Gregory Peace] jumped RP on the trail and tore her shirt, she is bleeding from her hand and RP grabbed bunch of his hair - RP declining air [aid] . . . RP says [he] said "bitch you are going to die. No weapons seen . . . RP now saying [Gregory] asked her for beer and when she didn't have it he attacked her . . . says [he] is her ex-boyfriend . . . says subj charged w/rape in past.</p>	<p>Living together in a camp in the wooded area . . . Star Johnson, who appeared to be slightly intoxicated, said that she had been walking on the trail just inside the woods . . . When Gregory Peace approached her and grabbed her by the neck and then put his arm across her neck and pulled her to the ground. She tried to get away and reached back at him. he bit her in the hand. When she was on the ground he ripped the front of her shirt open . . . [she] grabbed his hair and pulled some out trying to get away from him. Gregory Peace let her up and told her that if she ever told his wife he would kill her. He then ran from the area . . . [she] said that she thought Gregory Peace was trying to rape her . . . because of the way he grabbed her and the fact that he had grabbed her shirt and ripped it. when he threatened to kill her, she did not think he would do it, but was afraid that his wife would find out about the assault and his advances . . . Star Johnson was bleeding from a bite mark to the hand. She had some black hairs in her hand and some stuck in t e blood on her hand. her blouse was torn open on the front. She had a scrape to the elbow and said that her arms hurt from biting the ground [Locate Gregory Peace about 1 hour later] He said that she attacked him and "choked him out." He said that he had to grab her by the arms to get away. He said that he had not bitten her, but added that he does not really know what happened because he was "really drunk."</p>	Assault 4th
B4	<p>M VS F M was yelling, pushing over furniture, hit her w/ his face - but his forehead on her face and pushed her w/ it . . . Also burned her w/ a cigarette by accident . . . This was over a dispute on how to discipline . . . M is right next to her . . . He took the other phn away when she tried to phn earlier and smashed it . . . denies aid, this has happened in the past . . . HX of physical, this is the first time she's phn'd for help</p>	<p>Before arriving . . . Bonnie Ventnor reported that there has been a history of domestic violence, but that she never has called before . . . Observably shaken, upset, and crying . . . Recliner was overturned in the middle of the living room and the foot rest appeared to be broken . . . Peter Ventnor [said they] don't see eye to eye about disciplining their 3yo daughter . . . [He] put his forehead against Bonnie Ventnor's forehead and pushed her head backwards, thus causing her body to move backwards . . . in order for him to get his point across to [her] he feels like he has to be physical with objects and his voice . . . admitted that he was angry, wanted to make a point, and shoved it over . . . tossed the chair over before he hit[her] in the forehead . . . [She] attempted to call the police with the phone in the kitchen . . . he grabbed the phone from her and threw it against the wall, leaving a mark on the wall and the phone inoperable . . . During my entire contact with Peter Ventnor his 3yo daughter was sitting on his lap . . . No injuries observed on [her]. [Second officer reports that] Bonnie Ventnor said that Peter Ventnor had gotten upset with her for slapping the hand of their daughter . . . started yelling and swearing at her . . . kicked the coffee table and kicked over the lazyboy chair . . . got up in her face and hit her in the forehead with his forehead . . .</p>	Assault 4th Interfering w/ reporting DV



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		<i>threw the phone against the wall . . . [He] has assaulted her on previous occasions, but she has never called law enforcement . . . said she has been too scared in the past to call.</i>	
<b>B5</b>	<i>F VS M. . . F is RP says the male left after hitting her . . . She is crying but refusing aid . . . Hit her in the arm . . . UNK where he went . . . RP is home with her 2 kids . . . Having a hard time getting anymore info from RP . . . Sisterinlaw just walked in and is yelling at RP in background</i>	<i>While enroute to the scene, Dispatch advised the dispute had turned physical . . . [he] had just returned home today after a thirty-day drug/alcohol treatment . . . Once she disagreed with, he became enraged . . . Began throwing things around the house . . . threw [her] stereo on the ground and broke it. The broken stereo was still on the bedroom floor . . . she attempted to call the police, at which point Jaime Lorca grabbed Alma Perez by her throat and slammed her against the bedroom door, and then pull the phone and its cord off the wall . . . then took [her] cell phone and disassembled the battery and threw it into the dense brush outside of the residence . . . [He] left the residence . . . have two common children together . . . she is fearful of [him] and a no-contact order would provide her some sense of protection against his violent behavior . . . suffered several scratches and redness to her right forearm as a result of being thrown against the door.</i>	Assault 4 <sup>th</sup> Interfering w/ reporting DV Malicious Mischief 3 <sup>rd</sup>
<b>B6</b>	<i>Boyfriend is slapping her . . . He is in the house, and she is outside . . . They have been having problems for 8 yrs.</i>	<i>Gone from the area . . . Grabbed her by the arms and shook her during the argument . . . Pushed her in the chest . . . Grabbed her, but she did not feel like it was an assault. Minnie Casper said that she called 911 early before Frank Kelso could assault her. I need to contact Frank Kelso to get his side of the story.</i>	Unknown, if any; suspect gone
<b>B7</b>	<i>Sounded like a child saying someone trying to hurt my mom and then the phone was hung up / could hear some loud voices in the background . . . Calling back inside now . . . Called back inside and got no answer . . . RP says mom and her boyfriend are fighting -- male is the aggressor -- he is aob, no weap's -- RP will wait at the nabors for OFC - should also be another male in the house names XX - he is not involved in the fighting.</i>	<i>Ken Stevenson came into the bedroom where she was sleeping and pinned her down on the bed. Stephanie White stated that Ken Stevenson had both hands around her neck pinning her down on the bed and preventing her from getting up . . . She yelled to her daughter, Carol White, who came into the room, saw what was happening and then ran to phone police . . . denied that [he] had punched her . . . but stated that another houseguest had pulled [him] off her before he had a chance . . . [She] seemed hesitant to report the above information and kept stating there has been quite a few fights which has resulted with both of them getting arrested on separate occasions . . . refused to provide a written statement . . . she didn't want to participate in any charges against Ken Stevenson. Officers observed an area of slight redness on [her] neck, but she was not complaining of any lingering pain. [Officer then spoke with 14 year old</i>	Assault 4 <sup>th</sup>

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		daughter] <i>she had witnessed [him] holding her mother down on the bed . . . Ken Stevenson had both hands wrapped around [her] neck and was not letting her get up . . . saw [him] punching her mother in the left side (torso_ with a closed fist - - after watching Ken Stevenson punching her mother was when she ran and phoned 911 . . . Stephanie White said "he held me down, but he didn't bit me."</i>	
<b>B12</b>	***Not over radio, male has scanner. Dodge, Richard threatened vic and slashed tires on her car, prevented her from leaving residence earlier, vic waiting at RP's house, occurred an hour ago . . . Felony warrant on Dodge . . . Flagged officer safety in AS400	<p><b>[Report 1: 2/2/02]</b> <i>her boyfriend, Richard Dodge, had threatened to kill her . . . Can be a very violent person and had assaulted her in the past [She confronted him about missing cash] he became very upset and began yelling and screaming at her . . . She has witnessed [him] get into his uncontrollable "psychotic rage" in the past. [She] indicated that she had been assaulted by [him] several times in the past when he became violent, but never found the courage to report the incidents to the police . . . [After he went upstairs] she quickly left the residence and got into her car . . . suddenly heard [him] yelling while he was standing in the parking lot next to her vehicle on the driver side . . . demanded that [she] get out of the car, but when she refused to do so, he struck the car several times . . . "if you don't get out of the car right now, I'LL KILL YOU" . . . [she] told me she was very scared, and that due to [his] violent tendencies she did not want to be around him any more [Officers enter her apartment and arrest Dodge; about 4 hours later, another officers contacts her to collect written statement] Alyssa Pike showed me several bruises and cuts on her left leg where she said [he] hurt her several days ago, cutting her leg with a knife . . . handed me a Polaroid photo, taken tonight by her friend . . . of her leg bruises and cuts . . . did not report the leg injury incident to the police when it happened . . . is afraid that [he] will harm her again, based on the threats he made tonight to kill her.</i></p> <p><b>[Report 2: 2-6-02]</b> <i>Follow-up to ask about medical treatment] She told me no and she was going to "quash" the whole thing because she was "drunk"</i></p> <p><b>[Report 3: 4-2-02]</b> <i>Came into the Department and advised that she had lied about the death threats . . . she also said the marks were caused by blackberry bushes and she wanted to drop all charges.</i></p> <p><b>[Report 4: 5-9-02]</b> <i>came in with victim advocate from courts] wanted to provide a written statement based on her recent incident. [Report 5: 5-23-02] charged Alyssa Pike with making a false or misleading statement to a public servant.</i></p>	Felony Harassment Threat to Kill (both dropped)

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Case #	Dispatch Slip Account	Report Account	Arrest Charge
B17	<p>RP just got off the PHN w/ him and heard lots of yelling, male likes to throw things . . . Male made threats to come over and is also upset w/ RP over a friend being in the house w/ her . . . RP called back . . . She would like call from LE . . . Is concerned fro her safety when husband gets out of jail.</p>	<p>Reporting party was Patti Drake, the estranged wife of Derrick Drake [wbo] reported that while she was on the phone with Derrick Drake she could hear Amber Kennedy yelling in the background and then the phone went dead . . . The male was sitting with the female on his lap and he had his hands strapped around her arms as if he was holding her in place. The male looked in our direction and immediately let go of the female once he recognized Officer X . . . [She] appeared disheveled and nervous as she walked over to speak with me . . . said that she has been trying to leave the residence but that Derrick will not let her . . . [officer asks about history of domestic violence] Derrick has hit her before . . . two weeks ago, as she was trying to leave the residence like tonight [he] closed the front door on her head causing a lot of pain and bruising behind her ear [officer notes bruising behind ear] . . . I observed a broken telephone next to the back fence entryway. . . I had Amber Kennedy show me the inside of the residence to check for any other damage [she stated that he] has previously broken doors in her house that she has had to replace, along with several broken phones . . . she has never called the police . . . she said that she had made three attempts to leave tonight, but that each time Derrick Drake had grabbed her with both arms and carried her back where he could have control over her . . . I contacted [the reporting party] by telephone. Patti Drake stated that Derrick Drake can be a very violent person and that she is scared of him and for Amber Kennedy, and that is why she called 911.</p>	Assault 4th
B19	<p>Occ'g by PHN from Storm, Nelson . . . W/whom there is a NCO with . . . RP has pass susp loc infor, on going for several days</p>	<p>Report that her ex-boyfriend, and father of her newborn child, was calling her on the phone in violation of a court order prohibiting him from contacting her . . . Calls have been occurring for the last few days. . . caller ID showed a call . . . ended in him calling her several names including "whore" and "fuckin bitch"</p>	Violation of Protection Order
B35	<p>RP's Mom says her husband hit her in the car somewhere . . . [her mom] is bleeding from the face and refusing aid.</p>	<p>Observed that she had blood on her face and on her lips. I noticed that her left cheek was swollen. I observed a half inch laceration above the left side of her upper lip ad thinner upper and lower lips appeared to have been cut from the impact. [She] stated that her mouth felt numb and she was starting to get a headaches.</p>	Assault 4th
B36	<p>Pulled a knife on RP and left on foot . . . Supposed to still have knife on him</p>	<p>Allegedly pulled a knife on [her] . . . I am familiar with these parties, due to prior domestics (physical and verbal) which have resulted in both parties being arrested previously. . . [he] was sleeping in [daughter's] bedroom. She states that she tried to wake him, but he wouldn't get up . . . He was apparently getting up in her face, and screaming as loud as he could . . . used his upper body to bump [her] backwards about 4 or 5 times . . . when [daughter] tried to calm him down, [he]</p>	Assault 4 <sup>th</sup>

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Case #	Dispatch Slip Account	Report Account	Arrest Charge
		<i>apparently got in her face and started to scream at her as well . . . pulled a small red swiss army knife from his pocket and said "I'm going to gut you."</i>	
<b>B37</b>	F is on the phone screaming she has broken glass all over her house and her leg is cut up . . . Male in house refusing to leave . . . David has a permanent no trespass here . . . RP however let him in . . . She is advising she thru a glass of wine at him. Male threw crystal candle holders off table and busted them . . . that is where the glass came from . . . both have been drinking wine . . . there is long HX of this between these 2 . . . RP declined aid 2X	<i>Report of a domestic between she and her longtime, off and on, boyfriend . . . Could see blood on the right leg of Sophia Lukaski, and there was portions of glass scattered about the living room floor . . . Invited him in . . . Proceeded to have a pleasant evening together . . . [David Jenkins] started hinting that he wanted [her] to go upstairs with him to "have sex" . . . started to insult [her] and call her names (she refused to state exactly what in the presence of her daughter) . . . [She] reacted to these insults by throwing the contents of her wine glass on [him. His] response to being doused with wine was to sweep his arm through the items that she had on a small, knee high table in front of the couch . . . [He] rushed at [her] and grabbed her by the throat, leaving a very noticeable reddened mark on the right side of her neck/throat . . . [Daughter] rushed out to assist, was trying to grab him from behind and keep him away from her mother.</i>	Assault 4 <sup>th</sup> Malicious Mischief

## **APPENDIX F: Summary of Safety Audit Findings and Recommendations**

### **What-Comm – Emergency 911 and Dispatch**

- F1. Absence of written policies and procedures for domestic abuse 911 calls results in an inconsistent response and missing information relevant to victim and officer safety.
- R1. Develop written policies and procedures to guide 911 staff and ensure consistency of response to domestic violence calls. [PR3, 4, 5]
- F2. Absence of uniform training on response to domestic abuse 911 calls results in an inconsistent response and missing information relevant to victim and officer safety.
- R2. Design and deliver agency-wide training to 911 and dispatch operators, in coordination with new policy. [PR1]
- R3. Develop pocket cards or similar cue cards to aid 911 staff in assessing safety and gathering information.

### **Patrol Response: Whatcom County Sheriff's Office**

- F3. Risk/danger evaluation in domestic violence cases is inconsistent and often incomplete.
- R4. Revise policy to provide more specific direction, building from the following questions.
1. Do you think that he or she will seriously injure or kill you or your children? What makes you think so? What makes you think not?
  2. How frequently and seriously does he or she intimidate, threaten, or assault you?
  3. Describe the most frightening event/worst incidence of violence involving him/her.
- R5. Provide training to deputies on revised policy.
- R6. Incorporate risk questions into report writing requirements and provide ongoing feedback to deputies.
- R7. Adapt the existing Domestic Violence Case Summary and Checklist to include this information. Consider utilizing it in pocket-card format. [PR20]

F: Finding

R: Recommendation

[PR] cross reference to the corresponding recommendation listed in Audit Team Preliminary Recommendations – Appendix B

- F4. For incidents classified as “verbal domestic” (no arrest), the dispatch slip and/or the report frequently suggest a level of violence or threatening conduct that may support a higher degree of intervention.
- R8. Use revised policy and training to strengthen deputies’ understanding of risk factors, investigative techniques, and available community referrals and resources for victims.
- R9. Review the overall response to “verbal domestics,” including review of required paperwork to identify areas for possible consolidation and streamlining. [PR21]
- F5. In “verbal domestics,” the practice of having both parties sign the Domestic Violence Checklist and Victim’s Rights forms and complete the Domestic Violence Complaint/Victim Statement diminishes victim safety and offender accountability.
- R10. Discontinue the practice of having both parties in non-arrest domestic incidents complete victim-specific forms. [PR21]
- R11. Develop an alternative method for providing victims’ rights notification and information about the array of domestic violence related services available in Whatcom County, including programs for batterers. [PR18]
- F6. Deputies often respond to calls with limited information about previous criminal history and the existence of protection orders or no-contact orders.
- R12. Enter domestic violence reports into the AS400 (electronic database) by the next business day. [PR22]
- R13. Clarify the role and relationship between patrol and dispatch to articulate who initiates and communicates information such as weapons check, criminal history, and verification of orders. [PR24]
- R14. Provide deputies with reader privileges for Longarm (BPD report data base). [PR27]
- R15. Provide deputies with 24-hour access to records. [PR28]
- F7. Information about the presence and well being of children is frequently missing or incomplete in incident reports.
- R.16 Provide training and policy guidance to deputies about appropriate techniques for inquiring about children’s presence and welfare.

- F8. Reports are frequently missing victim contact information and witness and suspect statements.
  - R17. Provide training and policy guidance to deputies about the significance of and techniques for obtaining witness and suspect statements in domestic violence cases, including conditions for written statements.
  - R18. Apply Safety Audit methodology to further examine whether obtaining written statements from victims benefits victims and should be continued.
  - R19. Require the names and numbers of at least two people who can always reach the victim (separate from report). Confirm that this information is being collected per WCSO policy.
- F9. Investigation of victim reports of “choking” or neck injury often does not include follow-up questions to clearly establish strangulation or attempted strangulation.
  - R20. Provide guidelines and training about investigating possible strangulation and offering medical attention.
- F10. Deputies lack access to computers as a means of preparing and managing reports.
  - R21. Provide the means for deputies to compose and record reports electronically.
- F11. Domestic violence case review responsibilities are not included in the position description of the sergeant assigned to perform this function.
  - R22. Revise position description for the domestic violence detective sergeant and other dedicated positions to specifically include domestic violence case review and other responsibilities.

**Patrol Response: Bellingham Police Department**

- F12. Officers respond to domestic violence calls without the guidance of a written department-wide policy.
  - R23. Design and implement a departmental policy governing response to domestic abuse calls.
  - R24. Train officers and supervisors department-wide. [PR9]

- F13. Risk/danger evaluation in domestic violence cases is inconsistent and often incomplete.
- R25. Include specific direction in the recommended domestic violence policy, building from the following questions.
    1. Do you think that he or she will seriously injure or kill you or your children? What makes you think so? What makes you think not?
    2. How frequently and seriously does he or she intimidate, threaten, or assault you?
    3. Describe the most frightening event/worst incidence of violence involving him/her.
  - R26. Pending development of a domestic violence policy, publish a departmental training bulletin developed from the risk questions noted in R25.
  - R27. Incorporate risk questions into report writing requirements and forms and provide ongoing supervisory review and feedback to officers.
  - R28. Provide Longarm and criminal history access via patrol MDT and link Longarm with the AS400 (WCSO data base). [PR14]
  - R29. Provide two designated detective positions to conduct detailed case follow-up and risk assessment. [PR12]
- F14. For incidents classified as “domestic dispute/DV (no assault), the dispatch slip and/or the report frequently suggest a level of violence or threatening conduct that may support a higher degree of intervention or more thorough risk assessment.
- R30. Use the new policy, once drafted, and training to strengthen officers’ understanding of risk factors, investigative techniques, and available community referrals and resources for victims.
  - R31. Clarify discrepancies between dispatch communication and on-scene information via further investigation with What Comm staff, victims, suspects, and/or witnesses.
- F15. Use of the Domestic Violence Supplemental form is inconsistent.
- R32. Pending development of a department-wide domestic violence policy, provide guidelines and training about the use of the Domestic Violence Supplemental.
  - R33. Monitor use of the DV Supplemental to ensure its uniform use across the community.



- F16. Investigation of victim reports of “choking” often does not include follow-up questions to clearly establish strangulation or attempted strangulation.
- R34. Pending development of a department-wide domestic violence policy, provide guidelines and training about investigating possible strangulation and offering medical attention.
- F17. Information about the presence and well being of children is frequently missing or incomplete in incident reports.
- R35. Provide training and policy guidance to officers about appropriate techniques for inquiring about children’s presence and welfare.
- F18. Reports are frequently missing victim contact information and witness and suspect statements, while requiring written statements from victims.
- R36. Provide training and policy guidance to officers about the significance of and techniques for obtaining witness and suspect statements in domestic violence cases.
- R37. Apply Safety Audit methodology to further examine whether obtaining written statements from victims benefits victims.
- R38. Require the names and numbers of at least two people who can always reach the victim (separate from report).[PR 11]
- F19. On-scene victim information and support is inconsistent and should be enhanced to provide links to more immediate crisis services.
- R39. Distribute the domestic violence brochure and document in all reports that the victim has received it. [PR7]
- R40. Inform victims of available domestic violence crisis services and offer to make a connection for them while on-scene. [PR8]
- R41. Provide a cell phone or similar technology with Language Line access for every patrol vehicle. [PR13]
- R42. Consider providing on-scene advocacy and support for victims via community domestic violence services.

- F20. Information in the BPD brochure, “Domestic Violence Hurts Everyone,” could be enhanced to provide more specific information to victims about where to go with questions about the criminal justice process.
- R43. Review the BPD brochure to update victim resource information and cross-reference sections. A broad-based advisory group of domestic violence victims should participate in this process. [PR15]
- F21. Community Volunteers Against Domestic Violence assigned to BPD lack training and/or access to key databases and word processing programs.
- R44. Train volunteers to use Longarm and the BPD word processing program most efficiently. [PR16]
- R45. Reinstall AS400 access so that BPD volunteers can identify domestic violence repeaters in city and county records. [PR17]
- F22. Domestic violence case review responsibilities are not included in the position description of the sergeant assigned to perform this function.
- R46. Revise position description for the domestic violence detective sergeant and other dedicated positions to specifically include domestic violence case review and other responsibilities.

### **Jail Booking and Release: Whatcom County Jail**

- F23. Victim notification prior to release occurs inconsistently, sometimes within minutes of release, sometimes after release, and sometimes not at all.
- R47. Require victim contact information from the arresting officer prior to booking. [PR33]
- R48. Require mandatory completion of the domestic violence booking screen. [PR33]
- R49. Initiate notification attempts earlier in the release process. [PR33]
- F24. Domestic violence victims often call or appear at the jail and request to see the offender, sometimes in violation of no-contact orders. This places demands on jail staff, both for time and for non-jail information, such as income or housing assistance.
- R50. Provide training to corrections officers about the dynamics of domestic violence and batterer tactics of control. [PR30]

- R51. Improve linkages with domestic violence services in order to strengthen connections between victims and sources of information, assistance, and support. [PR34]
- R52. Consider requiring an automatic phone block at the time of domestic violence arrest bookings on suspect to victim calls from jail (with victim option to remove it if a no-contact order does not exist). [PR32]
- F25. Corrections officers witness offender's threats and other actions relevant to victim safety and prosecution of the charge.
  - R53. Provide training to jail staff about the significance of relaying threats and excited-utterance information to the prosecutor and other appropriate parties, such as community domestic violence advocates.
  - R54. Develop mechanisms for relaying threats and excited utterance information that are quick, reliable, and place the least time demands on jail staff. [PR35]
  - R55. Flag domestic violence arrestees with a different colored wristband in order to support identification of no-contact order violations and attention to threats and excited-utterance statements. [PR31]
  - R56. Provide corrections officers with access to Longarm. [PR36]
- F26. While approximately 10% of the inmate population is female, women comprise nearly 20% of individuals booked under domestic abuse related charges.
  - R57. Working backward from jail booking records, use Safety Audit methodology to examine the arrests of women on domestic abuse related charges in order to identify any problematic practices concerning victim safety.

### **Community Volunteers Against Domestic Violence**

- F27. It is not clear that CVADV volunteers always inform victims that they are primarily an investigative arm of law enforcement and not a source of confidential victim support.
  - R58. Review all correspondence, telephone scripts, and other program materials to ensure that victims are fully informed of the CVADV role and relationship to law enforcement agencies.

- F28. CVADV volunteers need additional support in understanding the dynamics and safety considerations specific to domestic violence, as well as current information about legal remedies available to victims.
- R59. Conduct ongoing training for CVADV volunteers about the dynamics of domestic violence, legal issues, the distinctions between no-contact orders and protection orders, and making the appropriate referrals to local domestic violence resources. [PR42]
- F29. CVADV correspondence to victims does not include telephone numbers for community agencies and how to reach 24-hour support and crisis services.
- R60. Revise all materials to provide a link to 24-hour services and clearly indicate the limited hours that CVADV volunteers can be reached. [PR38]
- F30. CVADV services are primarily English-only.
- R61. Provide support for CVADV to serve non-English speaking victims, via recruitment of bilingual volunteers, access to phone-based or other translation services, and translation of victim notification materials into other languages spoken in Whatcom County. [PR40, PR 41]

## **Conclusions**

- R62. Strengthen the overall criminal justice system and community understanding of and capacity for risk/dangerousness assessment.
- R63. Strengthen the coordinated community response (CCR).
- R64. Explore ways to provide more immediate victim advocacy, support, and access to community services.
- R65. Use the Audit Team to continue the examination of safety and accountability in Whatcom County, including the experiences of culturally and racially distinct communities.
- R66. Ground policy and practice in the expertise of domestic violence victims.