

# **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

## **INTRODUCTION:**

This scenario is designed to provide the explorers with the basic principles concerning domestic violence investigative techniques. This scenario training manual is not all inclusive, but does suggest some specific techniques that should be used, although other methods can be just as equally effective. The focus of this training manual is to provide principles that are flexible and adaptable for the domestic crisis intervention scenarios. Following the basic principles in this manual should allow the law enforcement explorer to successfully handle these law enforcement competition scenarios safely and professionally.

## **TYPICAL SCENARIO:**

Team responds to a reported domestic violence call. Objectives may include: handing family violence scene, arrest procedures, and problem solving. This may require the team to investigate and determine if probable cause can be established for any crimes and providing any victim(s) with a Victim's Rights and Assistance paperwork/pamphlets.

## **EQUIPMENT OR ITEMS REQUIRED:**

Duty belts with training firearms

Handcuffs with handcuff key

Camera (optional)

Witness statement forms

Notice of Legal Rights and Remedies for Victims of Domestic Violence

## **DEFINITIONS:**

**“Domestic violence”** means any assault, aggravated assault, battery, aggravated battery, sexual assault, sexual battery, stalking, aggravated stalking, kidnapping, false imprisonment, or any criminal offense resulting in physical injury or death of one family or household member by another family or household member.

**“Family or household member”** means spouses, former spouses, persons related by blood or marriage, persons who are presently residing together as if a family or who have resided together in the past as if a family, and persons who are parents of a child in common regardless of whether they have been married. With the exception of persons who have a child in common, the family or household members must be currently residing or have in the past resided together in the same single dwelling unit.

- **Section 741.29, F.S. states that no law enforcement officer can be held liable in any civil action for an arrest based on probable cause, enforcement of a court order, or service of process in good faith arising from an alleged incident of domestic violence**

**“Notice of Legal Rights and Remedies for Victims of Domestic Violence as per F.S 960.001.**Law enforcement personnel shall ensure, through distribution of a victim’s rights information card or brochure at the crime scene, during the criminal investigation, and in any other appropriate manner, that victims are given, as a matter of course at the earliest possible time,

## **TIME:**

A typical domestic crisis intervention scenario is completed within an average of 10 to 20 minutes, depending on the scenario, number of rooms, room sizes, witnesses, complainants, victims and suspects. The maximum time limit is 30 minutes.

## **ORGANIZATION:**

An explorer team is usually comprised of four (4) explorers broken into two groups. The first group will be the primary, with one member being the team leader (P1). The other explorer will be designated as (P2). The other two explorers will be backup and designated as B3 and B4. This should be established prior to arriving at the scenario pre-briefing. The team leader will be one who will delegate responsibilities to the other members of the team and act as the “leader” throughout the scenario. The backup explorers will be out of the scenario until one of the primary explorers request them through the judge/dispatch.

## **TEAMWORK:**

The explorer team will need to show they are working together and that everyone is contributing to the team. Team members should show they are giving suggestions or their recommendations on how to accomplish tasks to their team leader to make the final decision.

## **WEAPON SAFETY SKILLS:**

When searching any room or layout, explorers should have their firearms pointed out toward the direction they are searching/looking called “high-ready” position. This is to ensure they can engage the suspect if they come out at them. Another safe direction is keeping the firearm in a “low ready” position, but not pointed at the ground. At all times, the explorer must keep their trigger finger off the trigger but indexed along the side of the firearm. Explorers should avoid all crossfire situations or “lasering” situations (the act of pointing your firearm muzzle at one of your teammates) as this can be points deducted especially if an explorer shoots one of their own teammates.

## **BRIEFING:**

The judge will act as dispatch and inform the team leader of the dispatch call. The team leader should always check with the judge/dispatch to ensure they have the correct information. The team leader should also confirm whether or not this location has any previous history of calls or protective orders for this address. The team leader should try to ascertain whether or not anyone in the residence may have any weapons as this is an officer safety issue. During the scenario the explorers may request information from the judge/dispatch using plain talk.

## **ARRIVAL:**

Team leader should advise Judge/dispatch they are on scene or in the area.

## **APPROACH:**

The explorer team should utilize some type of fast but safe “tactical” style approach to the location door. The explorer team should be ready to make their entry into the location, without compromising their team, such as standing in front of glass windows/doors, where they can be readily seen by the occupants inside. The team should try to actively listen to any verbal yelling or screaming coming from within the location.

## **ENTRY:**

Remember an officer can only enter a premise without a warrant to protect individuals in distress, to assist victims of crimes that have just occurred or to investigate suspicious signs of impending danger. If the team leader feels justified in entering the location without a warrant due to the reasonable belief that a person is in need of immediate physical help, then entry can be made, but please note you may have to justify your entry to the judge at the end of the scenario. *Please note: at no time will explorers kick open doors at competition scenarios.*

A more typical response will require the team members to knock on the premise door and announce your agency (POLICE/SHERIFF) and then wait for an occupant to answer. Once contact is made with the occupant, the team may have to “talk” or explain their way into the residence. This requires the understanding, that by law, officers are required to investigate all family violence calls to determine if there is any offense(s) that have occurred. A safety protective sweep of the premise should be performed by the team members to ensure no one is hiding or elsewhere in the location. If any persons are injured, medical responders should be requested from dispatch.

## **FRISK/SEARCH:**

If a suspect is located on scene or in the area, a terry frisk of the suspect for weapons is encouraged, only if the explorers have a reasonable belief that the suspect may have weapon(s) concealed on their body.

## **IDENTIFYING VICTIMS, WITNESSES AND SUSPECTS**

The team will start the process of trying to establish the identity of any potential suspects, victims and witnesses. All persons being interviewed should be separated to ensure the quality and consistency of their account of the incident. Too many times a suspect overhearing the victim’s story can then adapt a story to match the victims, making them less likely to have committed a crime. If there are any witnesses they will each need to be interviewed in detail to gain as much information possible about the incident or suspect(s). Always be sure to obtain their identification/personal information. This should include their full name, date of birth, sex, race, and driver license number.

If at any time, the suspects wish to sit on a couch, bed, or other bulky furniture, and the explorer finds no reason for them not to, explorers should always double check the furniture to make sure there are not any hidden weapons stuffed into the seat cushions, or where they would have access to grabbing any concealed firearm or handcuff key.

Remember that if suspect(s) are being questioned in relation to the offense of crime they will need to have their Miranda Warning (rights) read to them. Explorers should always confirm that the suspect understood their rights by having them sign the Miranda Warning card. The explorer should then ask if they want to answer any of their questions. It is strongly recommended for Explorers to write the suspects statements down on their field notepad

### **WITNESSES/ PHOTOGRAPHS**

If any victim(s) are visibly injured, cut/bloody, bruised, strangled or any form of serious bodily injury, a team member should photograph to document all the injuries to the victim(s). The photographs may be simulated but will still need to be taken starting from distance working into a very close picture with a ruler or other scale object along with several photos taken from different angles.

If there is evidence on scene that either confirms or disregards a statement that evidence should be photographed.

### **IDENTITY & ARREST OF SUSPECT(S):**

If the lead explorer feels they have established probable cause for an arrest using Florida Statutes the team should affect the arrest and place the suspect(s) in double locked handcuffs. The suspect(s) should be searched and placed in a patrol vehicle or designated area.

### **ENDING SCENARIO:**

The Explorers shall provide the victim with the Victim Rights Information. The explorers will return the staging area of the scenario and notify dispatch/judge the disposition of the case.

### **DEDUCTIONS:**

Loss of points can be obtained by unjustified discharge of weapons, unnecessary roughness of the suspect(s), or explorer killed by suspect(s), victims, witnesses or other explorers. Not locating weapons on suspects or inside the scene. Improper placement of handcuffs/not double locking.