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The Danger Assessment for Law Enforcement

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What is the Danger Assessment for Law Enforcement?

The Danger Assessment for Law Enforcement (DA-LE) is an 11 question, evidence-based risk assessment instrument that identifies victims at the highest risk of intimate partner homicide (IPH) and near-lethal assault. The DA-LE was designed to be easily administered by responding law enforcement officers and to supplement the police report. High-risk victims are immediately connected to services and the DA-LE is provided to the court to inform criminal proceedings.



The DA-LE instrument was designed to be useful to the court and has a built-in cutoff score that screen in approximately 30% of cases into the high-risk category. This helps decision-makers focus on the most dangerous cases and helps to identify a manageable volume of cases for intensive risk management when used within the context of Domestic Violence High Risk Teams (DVHRT).

The survivor is the sole source of information used to complete the DA-LE. It does not rely on the defendant's criminal record to measure risk, reducing the likelihood that its results will reflect systemic bias in the justice system. The DA-LE is completed on-scene and is immediately available for use by the domestic violence response system.

The DA-LE was developed through a researcher and practitioner partnership between the Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center and two leading researchers in the field of IPH, Dr. Jacquelyn C. Campbell (PhD, RN, FAAN of Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing) and Dr. Jill Theresa Messing (MSW, PhD of Arizona State University School of Social Work). It is a shorter derivative of the [Danger Assessment](#) instrument, also created by Dr. Campbell.

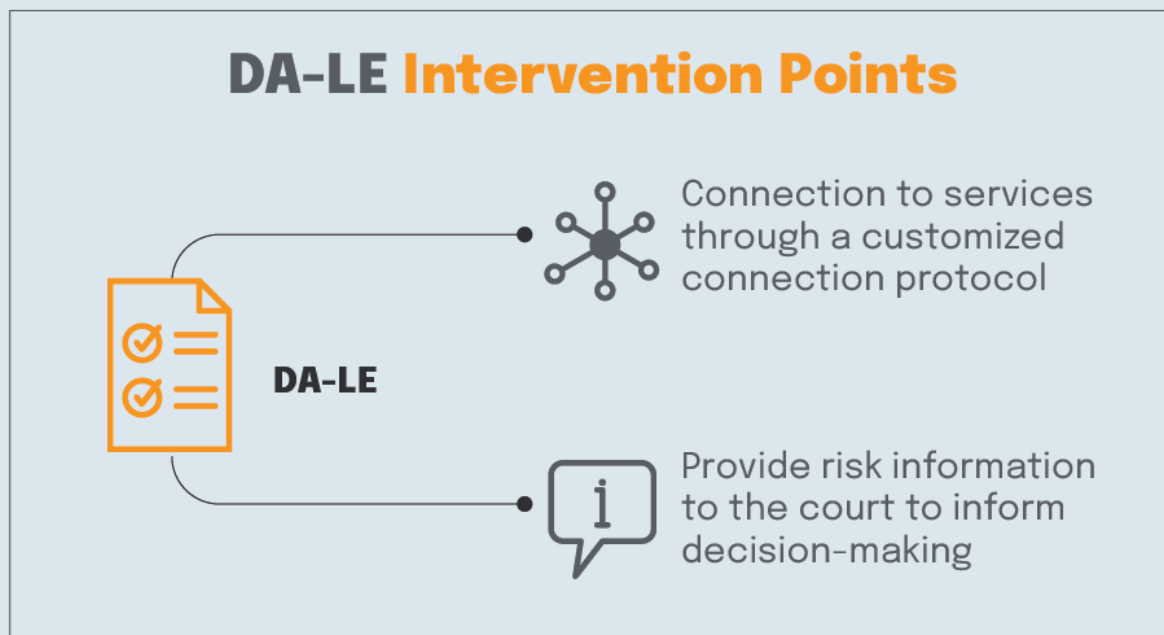
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Two separate data sources were used from previously conducted studies to both create and test the DA-LE. Risk assessment instruments are measured by their predictive validity, the accuracy with which they can predict future events. Testing revealed that the DA-LE has considerable predictive validity with no significant differences across race or ethnicity.



The DA-LE Approach to IPH Reduction

Identifying victims at risk of being killed is only the first step. The DA-LE approach to reducing IPH includes two key intervention points: 1) there is a coordinated response from law enforcement and domestic violence advocates to connect high-risk victims with supportive services and 2) the DA-LE is provided to the court to inform decisions. The DA-LE can also be used to identify high-risk cases for monitoring by a DVHRT or another multi-disciplinary team.



COORDINATED RESPONSE FROM LAW ENFORCEMENT AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ADVOCATES

Close partnership between law enforcement and domestic violence advocacy organizations is critical to the DA-LE approach. Due to the complex nature of domestic violence, a law enforcement response alone is often not enough. After identifying high-risk victims through use of the DA-LE, law enforcement officers immediately connect them to services through a customized connection protocol.

Research has found that many victims of IPH have contact with law enforcement prior to their murder. Anywhere between 39-91% of female victims of IPH were in contact with law enforcement prior to their homicide.^{i.ii.iii.iv} Victims are also more likely to underestimate than overestimate their risk of being killed by their partner.

These findings indicate that law enforcement has a unique opportunity to identify cases that are escalating towards homicide and help survivors understand their risk. Once a victim understands their risk, they are more likely to take self-protective actions including engaging with domestic violence services and reaching out to friends and family.▼

RISK INFORMATION PROVIDED TO THE COURT

The DA-LE is a supplement to the police report that contains information about risk and the history of violence in the relationship beyond the current incident. It is immediately available to the court and is intended to inform decisions that are critical to victim safety.

The pretrial period can be a dangerous time for victims, particularly if they have recently left the relationship or have become estranged from their abusive partner. The DA-LE provides critical information to prosecutors, judges and others making pretrial decisions.

Pretrial release decisions must balance the constitutional rights of the defendant with victim safety concerns. Detention and monetary bond should be reserved for defendants who pose a greater risk to a specific victim or to the public. The DA-LE provides critical information about risk to the court and helps the court distinguish between defendants who pose a greater risk to their victims from those who pose a lower risk.



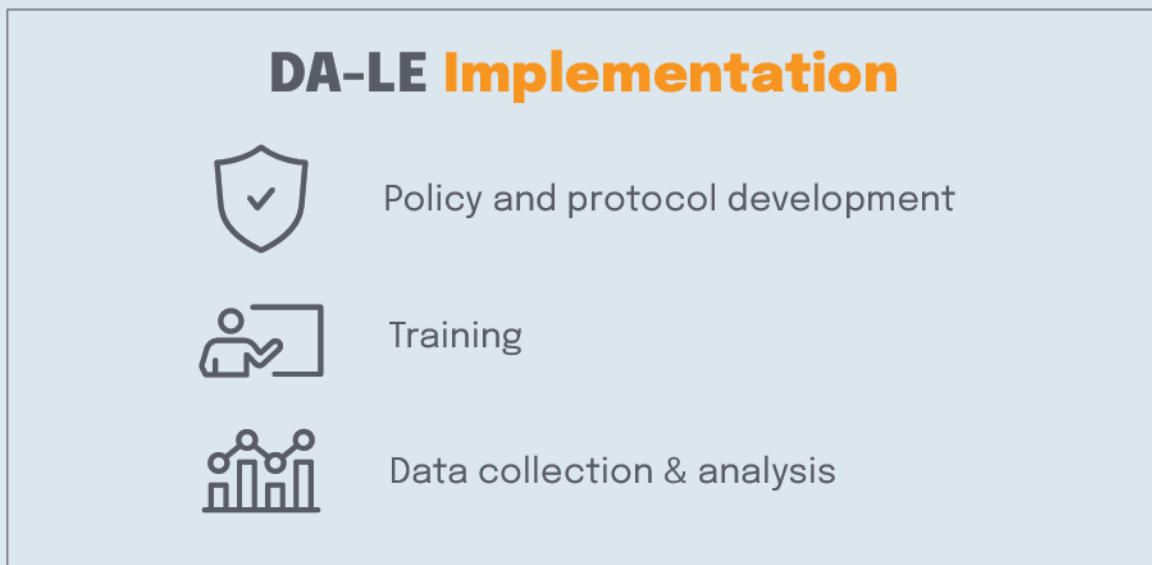
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DA-LE Implementation

In order for communities to use the DA-LE, they must complete an implementation process with technical assistance from Geiger Institute.



There are three steps to DA-LE implementation: 1) Policy and protocol development; 2) Training; and 3) Data collection and analysis.



STEP 1: POLICY AND PROTOCOL DEVELOPMENT

Law enforcement agencies implementing the DA-LE develop policy on DA-LE administration and collaborate with DV agency partner(s) to develop a protocol for connection of high-risk victims to DV services.

STEP 2: TRAINING

Discipline specific trainings are provided to develop understanding of the DA-LE and how risk information will be used across the DV response system.

Law Enforcement Training:

Law enforcement officers receive training on DA-LE administration, its accompanying policy, and the protocol for connection to services. Training is provided through a Train-the-Trainer format or as direct training to officers.

Advocate Training:

Advocates receive training on the protocol for connection to services.

Prosecutor Training:

Prosecutors receive training on the research supporting the DA-LE, its predictive validity, and how it may be used to inform decisions in court. Geiger Institute provides a co-training with a lead prosecutor.

Judicial Training:

Judges receive training on the research supporting the DA-LE, its predictive validity, and how it may be used to inform decisions in court.

STEP 3: DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Data collection is used to measure the impact of the DA-LE and promote program sustainability. The data helps communities to evaluate the effectiveness of their protocol in connecting high-risk victims to services and helps to inform any adjustments to the program. Data is also used to track intimate partner homicide events and encourages analysis of the domestic violence system response.

The Geiger Institute offers a broad range of training and technical assistance opportunities to support your community's domestic violence homicide prevention efforts. **To request more information on the DA-LE or to obtain training and technical assistance to implement the DA-LE please contact info@geigerinstitute.org**

ⁱ Georgia Commission on Family Violence & Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Georgia Domestic Violence Fatality Review Project, 2015.

ⁱⁱ Koppa and Messing, Can Justice System Interventions Prevent Intimate Partner Homicide? An Analysis of Rates of Help Seeking Prior to Fatality. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. June 2019.

ⁱⁱⁱ Messing et al. Police Departments' Use of the Lethality Assessment Program: A Quasi-Experimental Evaluation. US Department of Justice, 2014.

^{iv} New York City Domestic Violence Fatality Review Committee, 2021 Annual Report.

^v Messing et al. Police Departments' Use of the Lethality Assessment Program: A Quasi-Experimental Evaluation. US Department of Justice, 2014.