



## **Domestic Violence/Imminent Danger Policy**

### **City-Funded Family Shelters and Compass Connecting Point**

Domestic Violence is an incident and/or pattern of behavior used to establish power and control over another person through fear and intimidation, often including the threat or use of violence or coercion.

When domestic violence occurs in the family shelter system, the safety of the victim as well as the parents, children, residents, and staff remaining in the shelter must be protected. Every situation is unique and no one can predict what a perpetrator may be capable of. This policy is intended to provide guidelines for City-funded shelters to follow, but should not replace the shelter provider's ability to make any decisions necessary to ensure the safety of shelter residents and staff.

#### **A. DEFINITIONS**

##### **Domestic violence occurs:**

Between people in intimate relationships, including current or former husbands and wives, boyfriends and girlfriends, gay and lesbian partners, sex workers and their pimps/clients, and victims of stalking or trafficking.

##### **Domestic violence includes one or more of the following components:**

1. Attempting to cause or causing physical harm to another family or household member. This includes, but is not limited to: pushing, shoving, grabbing, punching, slapping, kicking, biting, pulling hair, threatening with a weapon, attacking with a weapon, leaving visible marks or causing bleeding.
2. Making explicit threats to physically harm a family or household member.
3. Forcing a family or household member to involuntarily engage in sexual activity through violence, threats of violence, or duress.

#### **B. PROTOCOLS**

##### **Self-Disclosure of Domestic Violence Cannot be Grounds for Denial of Service**

Self-disclosure by the victim of a recent domestic violence incident will not affect their ability to get on the wait list for shelter or to be placed in shelter by Compass Connecting Point.

However, it may still be the basis for a denial or service at a shelter based on the discretion of the shelter provider's evaluation of safety. For example, if a victim comes to his or her case manager with a black eye reporting that s/he was just struck by her partner, the shelter may decide to move forward with a denial of service for the alleged perpetrator. If a perpetrator of domestic violence admits to committing an act of domestic violence, s/he will be denied services.

## **When a Domestic Violence Incident Occurs**

If a domestic violence incident occurs in the shelter, the perpetrator will be denied services and must leave immediately. The victim will be given two options:

1. The victim may remain in the shelter if they immediately express willingness to request an Emergency Protective Order (EPO) or Civil Restraining Order as soon as possible, and follow through with taking steps to make the request for an EPO or a Civil Restraining Order.

If the family chooses not to avail themselves of this option, they must exit the shelter. If the domestic violence incident in question occurs after 7:00pm, the victim and other family members may stay until the following morning when they may be better able to access other resources. The family shelter staff will make every effort to secure a safe shelter situation for the exiting family, including providing assistance in accessing the following resources:

- Access a Domestic Violence Shelter (possibly the La Casa de las Madres Domestic Violence Response Team emergency beds)
  - CalWORKs emergency hotel vouchers
  - Other shelter beds outside San Francisco
  - Homeward Bound
  - The client's own support system
2. Where the family chooses to exit the family shelter, the provider will make available cab vouchers or other appropriate transportation resources to allow them to reach their destination.
  3. For families placed out of San Francisco County due to the availability of other resources, family shelters will provide transportation support for travel back to SF if needed (school, medical appointments, court, etc.) as needed for up to 15 days.

La Casa de las Madres Domestic Violence Program will work with a family shelter experiencing a domestic violence incident to make available their Domestic Violence Response Team (DVRT) emergency beds. Family shelter and La Casa staff will receive periodic training on how these beds will be accessed, how to proceed with placement of a family in these temporary beds, and continued communication after placement (see Appendix A).

4. Shelter providers shall consider extenuating circumstances that affect the victim's safety, including verification of a perpetrator's incarceration by law enforcement agencies and allowing the victim to return to shelter when there is no longer an imminent threat present.

## **Procedures to Contact Law Enforcement Agencies for the Provision of Emergency Protective Orders (EPOs) in Cases of Domestic Violence**

Compass Connecting Point and family shelters must report a domestic violence incident as a critical incident and contact law enforcement agencies in all cases of observed physical violence that take place at Compass Connecting Point or in shelter, and assist clients with getting an Emergency Protective Order whenever possible. While only law enforcement can request an EPO and only a judge can issue one, shelter staff should advocate on the client's behalf.

## **Shelter Grievance Policy**

Except in extenuating circumstances (see above), victims who refuse to seek an EPO or Civil Restraining Order will be denied services for imminent danger. They will be informed of their right to appeal the denial of service in accordance with the Shelter Grievance Policy.

## **Lethality Assessment Upon Intake to Evaluate All Families for Risk of Domestic Violence**

Compass Connecting Point and family shelter assessments must include questions regarding current and past domestic violence history in order to better assess the risk of danger or potential for reoccurring domestic violence, and provide those clients with necessary resources. Programs must use the *Domestic Violence Lethality Screen for Homeless Shelter Front Line Staff* (see Appendix B). The information in the screen must be kept confidential and cannot be used as part of a denial of service or presented at an internal hearing or arbitration.

## **Staff Training on Domestic Violence and Other Crisis Situations**

All family shelter provider staff will continue to receive training in crisis intervention, de-escalation, and the dynamics of domestic violence relationships and how to support families experiencing domestic violence. Family shelters are required to submit a list of relevant trainings completed by shelter staff to HSH and the Shelter Monitoring Committee on an annual basis.

In addition, all shelter employees will be required to attend the "Safe Housing Training" by La Casa de Las Madres. This training is customized to address the needs of each program, including shelter design (e.g. size and layout of shelter, congregate or private rooms, staffing levels) with the goal of increasing staff ability to recognize domestic violence risk factors, respond to domestic violence incidents, help clients create safety plans and obtain EPO's, and keep other shelter residents and staff as safe as possible.

**Appendix A**  
**HSH Domestic Violence Policy**  
**HSH Family Homeless Shelters and La Casa de las Madres**  
**Domestic Violence Response Team (DVRT) Bed Access Protocol**

When a domestic violence incident occurs in a family homeless shelter in which the victim's safety requires that they leave the shelter immediately, family shelter staff must follow this protocol unless the victim refuses assistance.

1. Family shelter staff will call La Casa's hotline number at 1-877-503-1850. Staff will identify themselves as calling from an HSH family homeless shelter and request access to the DVRT beds.
2. La Casa staff will conduct a short phone intake with the victim. If the victim has stayed at La Casa before and compromised the shelter's confidential location or was asked to leave due to violence, it will preclude them from using the DVRT beds. If this occurs, or if the DVRT beds are not available, the family shelter staff will need to access other resources (such as other domestic violence programs, out-of-county shelters, or the victim's support system).
3. If the intake concludes they are eligible, and there is DVRT space available, La Casa staff will arrange to send a cab to the family shelter in order to transport the victim to La Casa.
4. Family shelter and La Casa staff will inform all supervisory staff as required.
5. Once the victim has entered, appropriate family shelter and La Casa staff will continue to communicate and work together to assist the victim with determining next steps. These may include:
  - Remain at La Casa if beds are available and La Casa accepts the family
  - Utilize La Casa's Drop-In Center to identify other DV resources
  - Access a 14-day hotel voucher through the CalWORKs program (if the victim is a CalWORKs recipient or is CalWORKs eligible)
  - Return to the family homeless shelter if the perpetrator is verified by law enforcement to be incarcerated
  - Access other resources with the family's support system
6. Family shelter staff will inform the HSH Family Emergency Services Manager of the incident and outcome.

Family shelters and La Casa agree to train their staff in these protocols on a regular and as-needed basis.

## Appendix B: Domestic Violence Lethality Screen for Homeless Shelter Front Line Staff

**To be used with individuals ONLY (not to be used with couples)**

**Clients may opt out of answering any or all questions**

<b>Staff:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
<b>Client:</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Check here if victim did not answer any of the questions or had a barrier to communication</b>	
<b>A “yes” response to any of the questions #1-3 is at higher risk.</b>	
1. Has your (former) partner ever threatened to kill you or a loved one (children, family member, pets)?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> not answered
2. Has your (former) partner ever used or threatened to use a weapon against you?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> not answered
3. Do you think your (former) partner might try to kill you?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> not answered
<b>“No” responses to #1-3 but “yes” to at least 4 of #4-15 is at higher risk.</b>	
4. Does your (former) partner have a gun or can they get one easily?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> not answered
5. Has your (former) partner ever tried to choke you?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> not answered
6. Is your (former) partner violently or constantly jealous, or do they control most of your daily activities?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> not answered
7. Have you left or ever tried to leave the relationship?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> not answered
8. Is your (former) partner unemployed?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> not answered
9. Has your (former) partner ever threatened to kill themselves?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> not answered
10. Do you have a child that your (former) partner knows is not theirs?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> not answered

11. Does your (former) partner follow or spy on you or leave threatening messages?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> not answered
12. Has your (former) partner violated any restraining orders?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> not answered
13. Have there been prior incidents of domestic violence?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> not answered
14. Does your (former) partner abuse alcohol or drugs?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> not answered
15. Do you have a chronic health condition or physical/mental limitation that affects your daily life?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> not answered
16. Is there anything else that worries you about your safety? If yes, what worries you?	
16. Is there anything else that worries you about your safety? If yes, what worries you?	
If victim screens for higher risk, after advising of a high danger assessment, did the victim speak with a hotline counselor?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no

**Keep this form confidential.** The questions above aim to determine the level of risk an individual faces based on the best available research of which factors correlate with lethal violence from a current or former intimate partner. However, each situation may present unique factors that influence risk for lethal violence that may not be captured by the questions above. Cases that screen positive face a higher risk of serious violence than other victims of intimate partner violence, but **no screen can predict with absolute certainty the level or risk.**

**This screen does not take the place of an in-depth danger assessment, which should be conducted by a trained domestic violence advocate.**