

Domestic Violence

309.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to provide the guidelines necessary to deter, prevent and reduce domestic violence through vigorous enforcement and to address domestic violence as a serious crime against society. The policy specifically addresses the commitment of the Department of State Hospitals (DSH) to take enforcement action when appropriate, to provide assistance to victims and to guide officers in the investigation of domestic violence.

309.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

Court order - All forms of orders related to domestic violence that have been issued by a court of this state or another, whether civil or criminal, regardless of whether service has been made.

309.2 POLICY

A DSH response to incidents of domestic violence and violations of related court orders shall stress enforcement of the law to protect the victim and shall communicate the philosophy that domestic violence is criminal behavior. It is also the policy of DSH to facilitate victims' and offenders' access to appropriate civil remedies and community resources whenever feasible.

309.3 OFFICER SAFETY

The investigation of domestic violence cases often places officers in emotionally charged and sometimes highly dangerous environments. No provision of this policy is intended to supersede the responsibility of all officers to exercise due caution and reasonable care in providing for the safety of any officers and parties involved.

309.4 INVESTIGATIONS

The following guidelines should be followed by officers when investigating domestic violence cases:

- (a) Calls of reported, threatened, imminent or ongoing domestic violence and the violation of any court order are of extreme importance and should be considered among the highest response priorities. This includes incomplete emergency calls.
- (b) When practicable, officers should obtain and document statements from the victim, the suspect and any witnesses, including children, in or around the household or location of occurrence.
- (c) Officers should list the full name and date of birth (and school if available) of each child who was present in the residence at the time of the offense. The names of other children who may not have been in the residence at that particular time should also be obtained for follow-up.
- (d) When practicable and legally permitted, video or audio record all significant statements and observations.

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- (e) All injuries should be photographed, regardless of severity, taking care to preserve the victim's personal privacy. Where practicable, photographs should be taken by a person of the same sex. Victims whose injuries are not visible at the time of the incident should be asked to contact the Office of Special Investigations in the event that the injuries later become visible.
- (f) Officers should request that the victim complete and sign an authorization for release of medical records related to the incident when applicable.
- (g) If the suspect is no longer at the scene, officers should make reasonable efforts to locate the suspect to further the investigation, provide the suspect with an opportunity to make a statement and make an arrest or seek an arrest warrant if appropriate.
- (h) Seize any firearms or other dangerous weapons in the residence, if appropriate and legally permitted, for safekeeping or as evidence. If the domestic violence involved threats of bodily harm, any firearm discovered in plain view or pursuant to consent or other lawful search must be taken into temporary custody. (Pen. Code, § 18250.)
- (i) When completing an incident or arrest report for violation of a court order, officers should include specific information that establishes that the offender has been served, including the date the offender was served, the name of the agency that served the order and the provision of the order that the subject is alleged to have violated. When reasonably available, the arresting officer should attach a copy of the order to the incident or arrest report.
- (j) Officers should take appropriate enforcement action when there is probable cause to believe an offense has occurred. Factors that should not be used as sole justification for declining to take enforcement action include:
 - 1. Marital status of suspect and victim.
 - 2. Whether the suspect lives on the premises with the victim.
 - 3. Claims by the suspect that the victim provoked or perpetuated the violence.
 - 4. The potential financial or child custody consequences of arrest.
 - 5. The physical or emotional state of either party.
 - 6. Use of drugs or alcohol by either party.
 - 7. Denial that the abuse occurred where evidence indicates otherwise.
 - 8. A request by the victim not to arrest the suspect.
 - 9. Location of the incident (public/private).
 - 10. Speculation that the complainant may not follow through with the prosecution.
 - 11. Actual or perceived characteristics such as race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, economic status, age, cultural group, disability, or marital status of the victim or suspect.
 - 12. The social status, community status, or professional position of the victim or suspect.

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309.4.1 IF A SUSPECT IS ARRESTED

If a suspect is arrested, officers should:

- (a) Advise the victim that there is no guarantee the suspect will remain in custody.
- (b) Provide the victim's contact information to the jail staff to enable notification of the victim upon the suspect's release from jail.
- (c) Advise the victim whether any type of court order will be in effect when the suspect is released from jail.

309.4.2 IF NO ARREST IS MADE

If no arrest is made, the officer should:

- (a) Advise the parties of any options, including but not limited to:
 - 1. Voluntary separation of the parties.
 - 2. Appropriate resource referrals (e.g., counselors, friends, relatives, shelter homes, victim witness unit).
- (b) Document the resolution in a report.

309.5 VICTIM ASSISTANCE

Victims may be traumatized or confused. Officers should:

- (a) Recognize that a victim's behavior and actions may be affected.
- (b) Provide the victim with the DSH domestic violence information handout, even if the incident may not rise to the level of a crime.
- (c) Alert the victim to any available victim advocates, shelters and community resources.
- (d) Stand by for a reasonable amount of time when an involved person requests law enforcement assistance while removing essential items of personal property.
- (e) Seek medical assistance as soon as practicable for the victim if he/she has sustained injury or complains of pain.
- (f) Ask the victim whether he/she has a safe place to stay. Assist in arranging to transport the victim to an alternate shelter if the victim expresses a concern for his/her safety or if the officer determines that a need exists.
- (g) Make reasonable efforts to ensure that children or dependent adults who are under the supervision of the suspect or victim are being properly cared for.
- (h) Assist the victim in obtaining an emergency order if appropriate.

An officer shall advise an individual protected by a Canadian domestic violence protection order of available local victim services (Fam. §Code 6452).

309.6 DISPATCH ASSISTANCE

All calls of domestic violence, including incomplete emergency calls, should be dispatched as soon as practicable.

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Communication Operators are not required to verify the validity of a court order before responding to a request for assistance. Officers should request that Communication Operators check whether any of the involved persons are subject to the terms of a court order.

309.7 FOREIGN COURT ORDERS

Various types of orders may be issued in domestic violence cases. Any foreign court order properly issued by a court of another state, Indian tribe, or territory shall be enforced by officers as if it were the order of a court in this state. An order should be considered properly issued when it reasonably appears that the issuing court has jurisdiction over the parties and reasonable notice and opportunity to respond was given to the party against whom the order was issued (18 U.S.C § 2265). An otherwise valid out-of-state court or foreign order shall be enforced, regardless of whether the order has been properly registered with this state (Fam. Code § 6403).

Canadian domestic violence protection orders shall also be enforced in the same manner as if issued in this state (Fam. Code § 6452).

309.8 VERIFICATION OF COURT ORDERS

Determining the validity of a court order, particularly an order from another jurisdiction, can be challenging. Therefore, in determining whether there is probable cause to make an arrest for a violation of any court order, officers should carefully review the actual order when available, and where appropriate and practicable:

- (a) Ask the subject of the order about his/her notice or receipt of the order, his/her knowledge of its terms and efforts to respond to the order.
 1. If a determination is made that a valid foreign order cannot be enforced because the subject has not been notified or served the order, the officer shall inform the subject of the order, make a reasonable effort to serve the order upon the subject, and allow the subject a reasonable opportunity to comply with the order before enforcing the order. Verbal notice of the terms of the order is sufficient notice (Fam. Code § 6403).
- (b) Check available records or databases that may show the status or conditions of the order.
 1. Registration or filing of an order in California is not required for the enforcement of a valid foreign order (Fam. Code § 6403).
- (c) Contact the issuing court to verify the validity of the order.
- (d) Contact a law enforcement official from the jurisdiction where the order was issued to verify information.

Officers should document in an appropriate report their efforts to verify the validity of an order, regardless of whether an arrest is made. Officers should contact a supervisor for clarification when needed.

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309.9 LEGAL MANDATES AND RELEVANT LAWS

California law provides for the following:

309.9.1 STANDARDS FOR ARRESTS

Officers investigating a domestic violence report should consider the following:

- (a) An arrest should be made when there is probable cause to believe that a felony or misdemeanor domestic violence offense has been committed. (Pen. Code, § 13701.) Any decision to not arrest an adult when there is reasonable cause to do so requires supervisor approval.
 - 1. Officers are only authorized to make an arrest without a warrant for a misdemeanor domestic violence offense if the officer makes the arrest as soon as probable cause arises. (Pen. Code, § 836.)
- (b) An officer responding to a domestic violence call who cannot not make an arrest will advise the victim of his/her right to make a private person's arrest. The advisement should be made out of the presence of the suspect and shall include advising the victim how to safely execute the arrest. Officers shall not dissuade victims from making a lawful private person's arrest. Officers should refer to the provisions in the Private Persons Arrests Policy for options regarding the disposition of private person's arrests. (Pen. Code, § 836, subd. (b).)
- (c) Officers shall not cite and release a person for the following offenses:
 - (a) Penal Code section 243, subdivision (e)(1) (battery against spouse, cohabitant)
 - (b) Penal Code section 273.5 (corporal injury on spouse, cohabitant, fiancé/fiancée, person of a previous dating or engagement relationship, mother/father of the offender's child)
 - (c) Penal Code section 273.6 (violation of protective order) if violence or threats of violence have occurred or the suspect has gone to the workplace or residence of the protected party
 - (d) Penal Code section 646.9 (stalking)
 - (e) Other serious or violent felonies specified in Penal Code section 1270.1 (Pen. Code, § 853.6, subd. (a)(3).)
- (d) In responding to domestic violence incidents, including mutual protective order violations, officers should generally be reluctant to make dual arrests. Officers shall make reasonable efforts to identify the dominant aggressor in any incident. The dominant aggressor is the person who has been determined to be the most significant, rather than the first, aggressor. (Pen. Code § 13701.) In identifying the dominant aggressor, an officer shall consider:
 - 1. The intent of the law to protect victims of domestic violence from continuing abuse.
 - 2. The threats creating fear of physical injury.
 - 3. The history of domestic violence between the persons involved.
 - 4. Whether either person acted in self-defense.

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- (e) An arrest shall be made when there is probable cause to believe that a violation of a domestic violence court order has been committed regardless of whether the offense was committed in the officer's presence. (Pen. Code, § 836; Pen. Code, § 13701.) After arrest, the officer shall confirm that a copy of the order has been registered, unless the victim provides a copy. (Pen. Code, § 836.)

309.9.2 COURT ORDERS

- (a) An officer who obtains an emergency protective order from the court shall serve it on the restrained person if the person can be reasonably located, and shall provide the person protected or the person's parent/guardian with a copy of the order. The officer shall file a copy with the court as soon as practicable and shall have the order entered into the computer database system for protective and restraining orders maintained by the Department of Justice (Fam. Code § 6271; Pen. Code § 646.91).
- (b) At the request of the petitioner, an officer at the scene of a reported domestic violence incident shall serve a court order on a restrained person (Fam. Code § 6383; Pen. Code § 13710).
- (c) Any officer serving a protective order that indicates that the respondent possesses weapons or ammunition shall request that the firearm/ammunition be immediately surrendered (Fam. Code § 6389(c)(2)).
- (d) During the service of a protective order any firearm discovered in plain view or pursuant to consent or other lawful search shall be taken into temporary custody (Pen. Code § 18250).
- (e) If a valid Canadian order cannot be enforced because the person subject to the order has not been notified or served with the order, the officer shall notify the protected individual that reasonable efforts shall be made to contact the person subject to the order. The officer shall make a reasonable effort to inform the person subject to the order of the existence and terms of the order and provide him/her with a record of the order, if available, and shall allow the person a reasonable opportunity to comply with the order before taking enforcement action (Fam. Code § 6452).

309.9.3 PUBLIC ACCESS TO POLICY

A copy of this domestic violence policy will be provided to members of the public upon request. (Pen. Code, § 13701.)

309.9.4 REPORTS AND RECORDS

- (a) A written report shall be completed on all incidents of domestic violence. All such reports should be documented on the appropriate form, which includes information and notations specific to domestic violence incidents as required by Penal Code section 13730.
- (b) Reporting officers should provide the victim with the case number of the report. The case number may be placed in the space provided on the domestic violence victim information handout provided to the victim. If the case number is not immediately available, an explanation should be given regarding how the victim can obtain the information at a later time.

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- (c) Officers who seize any firearm or other deadly weapon in a domestic violence incident shall issue the individual possessing such weapon a receipt and notice of where the weapon may be recovered, along with the applicable time limit for recovery. (Pen. Code, §§ 18250, 33800; Fam. Code, § 6389, subd. (c)(2).)

309.9.5 RECORD-KEEPING AND DATA COLLECTION

DSH shall maintain records of court orders related to domestic violence and the service status of each (Pen. Code, § 13710), as well as records on the number of domestic violence related calls reported to DSH, including whether weapons were used in the incident, or whether the incident involved strangulation or suffocation (Pen. Code, § 13730). This information is to be reported to the Attorney General monthly. It shall be the responsibility of the Records Manager to maintain and report this information as required.

309.9.6 DECLARATION IN SUPPORT OF BAIL INCREASE

Any officer who makes a warrantless arrest for a felony or misdemeanor violation of a domestic violence restraining order shall evaluate the totality of the circumstances to determine whether reasonable cause exists to seek an increased bail amount. If there is reasonable cause to believe that the scheduled bail amount is insufficient to assure the arrestee's appearance or to protect the victim or family member of a victim, the officer shall prepare a declaration in support of increased bail. (Pen. Code, § 1269c.)