



## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **For Immediate Release**

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## **PCADV, PSU-Harrisburg team to provide public With data on domestic violence screening tool**

*Lethality Assessment Program reports being funded by state crime commission*

**HARRISBURG, Pa.,** Jan. 6, 2016 – More than 1,400 Pennsylvanians sought assistance from local domestic violence service centers last year as a result of a new screening tool that helps identify victims who are at greatest danger of being killed or seriously injured by their abusive partner.

It's called the Lethality Assessment Program (LAP), and it's based on a protocol that was developed in Maryland. Beginning today, anyone can access data about Pennsylvania's Lethality Assessment with the click of a mouse or the touch of a finger. The Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence and the Pennsylvania State Data Center, Institute for State and Regional Affairs at the Pennsylvania State University-Harrisburg are making monthly LAP data available, free to the public. To access the information, visit the website <https://isra.hbg.psu.edu/pcadvdashboards/Home/tabid/2233/Default.aspx> .

The website provides such information as how many victims reported choking or strangulation by a partner (53 percent), and how many say their partner used or threatened to use a weapon against them (26 percent).

This information is being made available to the public through funding provided by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, said PCADV Executive Director Peg J. Dierkers. “It is our hope that sharing this valuable data will increase the public’s understanding of domestic violence and demonstrate that tools are available for reducing domestic violence and saving lives.”

Data show that LAP helped reduce Maryland’s domestic violence deaths by one-third during its first three years of implementation, Dierkers noted.

The data are displayed on a digital dashboard, which takes the information collected in the new screening tool and displays it in a way that the public can easily understand, said Sue Copella, director of the Pennsylvania State Data Center.

LAP partners law enforcement agencies with domestic violence programs. Police officers ask a series of screening questions to intimate partner domestic violence victims. If the victim responds affirmatively to questions, the police officer puts the victim in touch immediately with domestic violence counselors.

PCADV began offering LAP training to police departments in 2012; by April 1, 2016, 163 police departments in 38 counties will be using LAP to help save the lives of domestic violence victims.

Data showed that 2,722 victims identified by LAP in high danger of being killed have sought domestic violence services during the past three years, said PCADV Executive Director Peg J. Dierkers.

“PCADV is doing more than just counting domestic violence fatalities – we are trying to prevent them,” Dierkers said. “LAP connects victims of intimate partner violence with life-saving services, thereby reducing domestic violence fatalities.”

Dierkers also noted that PCADV is working with members of the General Assembly to pass House Bill 1581, which would increase the penalties for the crime of strangulation against an intimate partner.

Dierkers said that domestic violence remains at epidemic levels in the commonwealth. Each year, more than 85,000 Pennsylvanians seek assistance from PCADV and its 60 centers serving all 67 counties – that’s an average of 230 requests each day. One hundred forty-one Pennsylvanians died in domestic violence-related homicides in 2014, the most recent year for which statistics are available.

The website’s interactive digital dashboard visually summarizes the data PCADV receives from participating domestic violence programs and law enforcement agencies each month.

**About the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

*Founded in 1976, the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence is the oldest statewide domestic violence coalition in the nation. Each year its statewide network of 60 community based centers serving all 67 counties provides assistance to more than 85,000 victims of domestic violence. PCADV also promotes public awareness of domestic violence-related issues through its PA SAYS NO MORE campaign, which it operates in partnership with the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape. For more information, visit [www.pcadv.org](http://www.pcadv.org) or [www.pasaysnomore.com](http://www.pasaysnomore.com); or follow PCADV on Twitter @pcadvorg and on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Pennsylvania-Coalition-Against-Domestic-Violence/479697025386367>.*

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