



# BROOME COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Sheriff Frederick J. Akshar II

Undersheriff Sammy L. Davis

155 Lt. Van Winkle Drive, Binghamton, NY 13905

**For Immediate Release:**

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## **BROOME COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE PRESS RELEASE**

### **Sheriff Announces New Partnership and Program to Protect Victims of Domestic Violence**

(TOWN OF DICKINSON) A new partnership between law enforcement and domestic violence assistance organizations aims to help better protect victims of domestic violence and save lives.

Joined by representatives from the Crime Victims Assistance Center and the Family Violence Prevention Council, Sheriff Fred Akshar announced the implementation of a new Lethality Assessment Program (LAP) to help identify victims who are at an increased risk of being killed by their intimate partner.

“Communities like ours have seen far too many victims of repeated domestic violence become victims of murder,” said Sheriff Fred Akshar. “Working with our community partners, we’re taking a proactive approach to prevent domestic tragedies before they can occur.”

The LAP program utilizes evidence-based screenings to help law enforcement better assess potential lethality by identifying common red flags, patterns and responses associated with domestic homicides.

#### **How it works:**

When a Broome County Sheriff's deputy responds to a domestic violence incident, the deputy completes a LAP screening with the victim. Based on their answers, the deputy can determine whether the victim is at high risk for domestic homicide and connect them with the appropriate support services. While all victims are connected to local resources like the Crime Victims Assistance Center, consenting victims identified as high-risk are immediately paired with a local Domestic Advocate to develop a safety plan and other prevention measures.

The Lethality Assessment Program has already been successfully utilized this year in two domestic violence cases where the offenders were arrested and charged for felonies and misdemeanors, while the victims were immediately connected with safety and support advocates to keep them safe before their offenders were apprehended.

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The LAP program was developed in partnership with Crime Victims Assistance Center and the Broome County Family Violence Prevention Council and is one of several domestic violence prevention and support initiatives the partnership plans to launch this year. Funding for the administration of the program came thanks to a grant through Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant through the U.S. Bureau of Justice Assistance.

“The Crime Victims Assistance Center is incredibly thankful to the Broome County Sheriff’s Office, the Family Violence Prevention Council and to the Westchester Domestic Violence High Risk Team, who provided training to both law enforcement and advocates over the course of this past year,” said CVAC Chief Executive Officer Christine Battisti. “Funding was a major roadblock to launch this program and we are grateful that the Sheriff’s Office was able to secure funds that allow our advocates to remain on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.”

“The Family Violence Prevention Council has a long standing history of developing innovative ways to support victims, professionals, and community members impacted by violence,” said Family Violence Prevention Council Coordinator Kristin Beylo. “The Lethality Assessment Program is an example of what hard work, trust, and partnership between dedicated agencies can accomplish. We thank Westchester County’s Office for Women and our Inter Agency Planning committee for helping this idea come to fruition. We look forward to a productive year of on going collaboration throughout Broome County.”

According to the [National Institute of Justice](#), 76% of female homicide victims had been stalked by the person who killed them. 54% of the victims reported stalking to the police before they were killed by their stalkers. 89% of the victims who had been physically abused had also been stalked in the 12 months before the murder. A [separate study published](#) in the American Journal of Public Health reported that the presence of a gun in a home where there is domestic violence increases the risk of homicide by 500%.

“At the end of the day, our community’s safety depends on cooperation and coordination between law enforcement and the residents we are sworn to protect,” said Sheriff Fred Akshar. “We stand ready to continue working together to find better ways to stop tragedy before it happens and keep our families safe.”

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