

Police Intervention
Domestic Violence Services of Benton & Franklin Counties

Responsibility:

It is the responsibility of advocates to know how to respond to Law Enforcement (LE) intervention in the shelter environment.

Procedure:

1. Any time Law Enforcement contacts the shelter, either via phone or in-person, the Shelter Manager should be notified immediately. If unable to reach the Shelter Manager, attempt to contact the Program Director or Executive Director.
2. The Shelter Manager is then responsible for informing the Program Director and Executive Director.
3. Complete and provide an Incident Report (found in file caddy on large file cabinet in office) to the Shelter Manager for review, by placing report in Shelter Manager's in-box (on top of large file cabinet in office.)

Police bring a client to the shelter:

- If LE is bringing a client into the shelter, they are to meet staff as we would any other client. Law Enforcement is not to bring a client directly to the shelter. If LE brings a client into the shelter, the client should sign the Law Enforcement Referred Release of Information to clearly define what information she does or does not want shared with Law Enforcement, Prosecution and any systems advocates.

Police trying to get information on a client / Police trying to contact client:

- If LE call or come by the shelter trying to find a client, staff shall maintain confidentiality by neither confirming nor denying that a client is in the shelter or has ever received services from the agency, unless the client has signed an Release of Information (ROI) allowing staff to do so. Even with an ROI staff will be very cautious to share only the information the client consented to share and nothing additional.
- If the client is in the shelter, staff will inform her that LE is trying to contact her or find out information about her and will encourage the client to contact LE directly if the client feels safe and comfortable enough to. Staff will work with the client to problem solve about the pros and risks of contacting LE directly. Staff will also inform client of the risk of files being subpoenaed and agency procedures for handling subpoenas.

Police serving a warrant on client / Police serving a search warrant on the shelter,

or a vehicle or area on shelter property:

- If LE attempts to serve a warrant at the shelter, DO NOT ACCEPT WARRANT. Do not allow Law Enforcement to enter the shelter. Anyone attempting to serve a warrant should be referred to the Shelter Manager or other supervisors. Provide the cell phone numbers for the immediate supervisor.
- Immediately notify Shelter Manager, Program Director or Executive Director via cell phone that service of warrant was attempted. The Executive Director or Program Director must be notified of all attempts to serve warrant. Shelter Manager, Program Director and/or Executive Director will work to ensure that Law Enforcement understands the laws protecting the confidentiality of victims of domestic violence.
- Complete an incident report regarding the attempted service. Document the time, date, location, any information about the person attempting to make service, and statement on how situation was handled.

Police dispatched for an emergency response:

- If there is not an emergent situation or the situation is under control and law enforcement assistance is not needed staff will inform LE as such and thank LE for their concern and timely response. If LE insists on having access to the shelter to assess the situation, staff will explain that because the shelter is confidential, we cannot allow access and let him/her know they can call the Shelter Manager or Program Director if further assistance or clarification is needed.
- If LE assistance is needed, access will be provided. Contact the Shelter Manager or a supervisor immediately.

If a client allows Police access to the shelter:

- Staff will inform LE that due to confidentiality the officer needs to step back outside. Address issue as you would in above scenarios.
- If the officer refuses, ask him/her to step into the staff office and contact the Shelter Manager or a supervisor immediately, and let the officer know he/she will need to wait to speak to a supervisor.

Request for police response:

- In an emergency, if staff needs to call the police - dial 911.
- Be prepared to provide the EXACT location, description, and address to the dispatcher - ask dispatch not to relay the address or location of the shelter over the radio! If safe to do so, stay on the phone with the 911 dispatcher until help arrives.

If another client contacts police:

- Staff has no control over whether another client breaks confidentiality. Even when it has been revealed to law enforcement that a client may be at the shelter, even if a crime was allegedly committed at the shelter, staff will follow policy regarding how to handle police trying to get information on a client or trying to contact a client at the shelter.