

Domestic violence: Police failed to ask 11 questions that might have saved Anako Lumumba

POLICE WHO RESPONDED TO ANAKO LUMUMBA'S FINAL CALLS FOR HELP FAILED TO ASK 11 QUESTIONS THAT COULD HAVE CONNECTED HER TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES.

[Jess Aloe and \(/staff/10046694/jess-aloe\)](#)

[Elizabeth Murray \(/staff/11981/elizabeth-murray\)](#), Burlington Free Press

Published 6:00 a.m. ET June 6, 2018 | Updated 1:40 p.m. ET June 8, 2018

SHARE THIS STORY

Pin

Share Share to ask

Share Share to ask

Share Share to ask

Share Share to ask

Just 48 hours before South Burlington police found her dead

(<https://www.burlingtonfreepress.com/story/news/local/2018/05/04/manhunt-causes-south-burlington-schools-keep-kids-indoors/58014002/>), lying on the floor with a bullet wound in her head, Anako Lumumba called police to ask for help.

Leroy Headley was parked outside her mother's apartment

(<https://www.burlingtonfreepress.com/story/news/2018/05/03/southview-drive-south-burlington-police/579551002/>), she told Essex dispatch, threatening to "shoot up the whole house."

That was the second time in a week that Lumumba called 911

(<https://www.burlingtonfreepress.com/story/news/crime/2018/05/05/south-burlington-homicide-headley-update/583520002/>) from her mother's Essex Junction home. She'd moved out of the South Burlington apartment she had shared with Headley, her partner for more than a dozen years, because she felt unsafe. Police who responded to that May 1 call again talked to Lumumba about Headley's behavior, his guns and getting an emergency restraining order.

What they failed to ask

During their two final conversations with Lumumba, the officers who responded thought she could be in danger, Essex Police Chief Rick Garey wrote in a May 18 email. That's why they suggested she seek a restraining order, he stated.

"We do try but we cannot make people take help," Garey wrote.

However, the officers who responded to those calls for help failed to conduct an 11-question screening (<http://preview.burlingtonfreepress.com/story/draft/660634002/>) that has proven successful at deterring domestic violence homicides. Garey, in an interview three weeks after Lumumba's death, was still unaware of the test, known as a lethality assessment, that Vermont's Center for Crime Victim Services has spent the past five years pushing departments to implement.

SHARE

More: Who was Anako 'Annette' Lumumba? SouthBurlington nurse remembered for caring for others

Police stand guard outside of 10/12 Southview Drive in South Burlington Thursday night, May 3, 2018, after a woman was found shot dead inside. Police are searching for Leroy A. Headley in connection with the woman's death.

(Photo: RYAN MERCER/FREE PRESS)

(<https://www.burlingtonfreepress.com/story/news/2018/05/04/who-south-burlington-woman-who-died-southview-drive/582022002/>)

Essex police are not alone in their failure to implement the lethality assessment. In 2017, Lumumba told South Burlington police that Headley was threatening her. Absent from the records describing those interactions are any mention of the test.

Had police done the screening, they would have asked Lumumba a series of questions. Do you think he might try to kill you? Does he have a gun

(<http://preview.burlingtonfreepress.com/story/draft/664059002>)? Have you left him after living together? Does he follow you or spy on you or leave threatening messages?

All of these were true of Lumumba's situation, according Essex and South Burlington police reports.

"This is the type of conduct we know increases the risk of a future homicide," said Cara Cookson, the policy director for the Center for Crime Services.

The questions are designed to help illuminate the danger for the victim (<http://preview.burlingtonfreepress.com/story/draft/664685002>), said Elyssa Boisselle, who coordinates the legal program at STEPS to End Domestic Violence.

"I think it's very common in some of these situations when someone's being abused to normalize that abuse," Boisselle said. "So they may not see how dangerous it is."

More: South Burlington homicide: New details include ATM surveillance photos, 911 call
(<https://www.burlingtonfreepress.com/story/news/crime/2018/05/05/south-burlington-homicide-headley-update/583520002/>)

If police had determined Lumumba to be at high-risk for being killed, the officers would have told her they needed to call a hotline, which is run by Boisselle's organization.

Boisselle, or one of her coworkers, would have discussed a safety plan with Lumumba — or guided the officer on what to say.

People in your situation have been killed, officers are trained to bluntly tell victims.

Boisselle or one of her colleagues would have followed up with Lumumba the next day.

A new chief, unclear policy

Essex police, as of May 18, had no formal policy covering the use of lethality assessments.

SHARE

Domestic violence: Police failed to ask Lumumba 11 life-saving questions

"Our officers have been trained in this screening tool, we have the forms available for the officer's use but it is the officer's discretion about when they will use the DV Lethality screening tool," Chief Garey wrote in a follow-up email after telling the Free Press in an interview that he was unfamiliar with the assessment.

Garey said in a May 17 interview with the Free Press that he attributed his lack of knowledge about the assessment and his department's policy to his newness to the chief's position.

A 2013 study showing the effectiveness of lethality assessments asserts that strong direction from police chiefs is necessary to smooth out any early missteps, like officers failing to use the assessment during domestic violence calls.

More: [Friend's plea to South Burlington homicide suspect: Do the right thing](#)

(<https://www.burlingtonfreepress.com/story/news/2018/05/04/leroy-headley-anette-lumumba-murder-domestic-violence-police-suicide-cop/582821002/>)

Garey, a 27 year veteran of the Essex Police Department, took over as the leader after Brad LaRose stepped down January, according to the Essex Reporter. Garey has held every position in the department from dispatcher to administrative chief.

In his follow-up email, Garey said that his department would be reviewing how other departments use the tool and reassessing their own use of the assessments.

The officer had no further contact with Lumumba after the May 1 call, although he gave her his business card, Garey said.



Police Chief Trevor Whipple briefs media outside of 10/12 Southview Drive on Thursday night, May 3, 2018, after a woman was found shot dead inside. Police are searching for Leroy A. Headley in connection with the woman's death.

(Photo: RYAN MERCER/FREE PRESS)

A gap between training and use of the tool

The Essex calls were not the first time Lumumba told police Headley made her feel unsafe.



Julie Coffey answers hotlines calls at Steps to End Domestic Violence in Burlington on Tuesday, November 21, 2017. They can be reached at their phone hotline 802-658-1996 or on the web: www.stepsvt.org

(Photo: RYAN MERCER/FREE PRESS)

(<http://preview.burlingtonfreepress.com/story/draft/665007002>)

No mentions of a lethality assessment appear in two police reports from April and December 2017 when Lumumba reported to South Burlington police that Headley was threatening and harassing her.

SHARE

Domestic violence: Police failed to ask Lumumba 11 life-saving questions

South Burlington police Chief Trevor Whipple declined to comment on why his officers decided against doing a lethality assessment during those calls — or answer if one had ever been one for Lumumba — citing the ongoing homicide investigation.

He confirmed that the records provided to the Burlington Free Press for each incident were complete, and that he believed the assessments would be mentioned had they been done.

Whipple said he has been a proponent of using lethality assessments, which he picked up on in 2015 from the Burlington Police Department.

Burlington received training in 2014 from the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence, the program that pioneered the test, to get the program off the ground. The network uses a “train-the-trainers” approach, which was designed to spread the lethality assessment from department to department.

The test has been linked to domestic violence homicides in Maryland dropping by a third between 2007 and 2012, according to a review done in 2013 by Virginia’s state government.

Once he saw it in action, Whipple said, he felt there was value in confronting a victim with the level of danger police believed they were experiencing.

“We simply stop and we look that individual in the eyes and say you have a very high potential of being killed,” he said. “It is that blunt.”

Few Vermont counties use the test

The lethality assessment’s proven success at curbing domestic violence homicides has failed to translate to its adoption its universal adoption.

The Center for Crime Services push to make the test an established practice among law enforcement departments across the state only taken root in Chittenden, Rutland and Washington counties.

Even in departments where chiefs have embraced the tool’s use, instructions for when an officer should use the screen vary.

- **South Burlington:** Officers are directed to use the assessment in four situations: if there’s been an assault; if the officer senses potential danger; if police have been called repeatedly to the location or to deal with the people involved; or if the officer has a gut instinct, Whipple said.
- **Winooski:** No written policy exists, Chief Rick Hebert said, but he directs his officers to use the screen on every call that involves intimate partner violence.
- **Colchester:** The department has used the lethality assessment since 2015. The written policy, updated in February 2018, directs officers to use the tool at their discretion.
- **Burlington:** Burlington’s domestic violence response policy directs officers to use a risk assessment during each domestic violence investigation, confer with their supervisors to establish a safety plan for the victim, and document the outcome of the assessment in the report.
- **Shelburne:** The lethality assessment is written into the domestic violence policy, said Chief Aaron Noble, and directs officers to follow similar guidelines as South



The apartment development on Franklin Street in Essex Junction where Anako "Annette" Lumumba was staying with her mother after leaving Leroy Headley in May. Lumumba called 911 to complain to police that Headley was stalking her, waiting in the parking lot, calling her cell phone repeatedly all day and ringing her mother's apartment in the middle of the night.

(Photo: RYAN MERCER/FREE PRESS)

- **Milton:** Officers must complete the screening "during a domestic violence situation where an assault has occurred."
- Williston did not respond to a request for their policy.

In Chittenden County, the network needed to staff the domestic violence hotline already exists. Police just have to use it.

Shelburne lethality screen
[\(https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/4495948-Shelburne lethality screen.html\)](https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/4495948-Shelburne lethality screen.html)

The Free Press found:

- Police failed to ask 11 questions that might have saved Lumumba's life.
[\(https://www.burlingtonfreepress.com/story/news/local/2018/06/06/domestic-violence-police-failed-ask-lumumba-11-life-saving-questions/663063002/\)](https://www.burlingtonfreepress.com/story/news/local/2018/06/06/domestic-violence-police-failed-ask-lumumba-11-life-saving-questions/663063002/)
- Vermont's new gun law may not be the answer to protecting victims of domestic abuse.
[\(https://www.burlingtonfreepress.com/story/news/local/vermont/2018/06/06/domestic-violence-anako-lumumba-could-new-vermont-gun-law-have-saved-life/664059002/\)](https://www.burlingtonfreepress.com/story/news/local/vermont/2018/06/06/domestic-violence-anako-lumumba-could-new-vermont-gun-law-have-saved-life/664059002/)
- Headley racked up 160 police interactions and at least five restraining order requests but was never convicted of any crime.
[\(https://www.burlingtonfreepress.com/story/news/local/2018/06/06/domestic-violence-leroy-headley-anako-mumumba-15-years-abuse-accusations-no-convictions/664685002/\)](https://www.burlingtonfreepress.com/story/news/local/2018/06/06/domestic-violence-leroy-headley-anako-mumumba-15-years-abuse-accusations-no-convictions/664685002/)
- The legal system in place to protect victims is porous and lets many people fall through the cracks.
[\(https://www.burlingtonfreepress.com/story/news/local/2018/06/06/domestic-violence-convictions-hard-restraining-orders-relief-abuse-safety-net-has-many-holes/665007002/\)](https://www.burlingtonfreepress.com/story/news/local/2018/06/06/domestic-violence-convictions-hard-restraining-orders-relief-abuse-safety-net-has-many-holes/665007002/)

Why is the Free Press committed to investigating domestic violence? Executive Editor Michael Kilian explains.
[\(https://www.burlingtonfreepress.com/story/news/2018/06/06/domestic-violence-anako-lumumba-why-free-press-shining-spotlight-abuse-women/662103002/\)](https://www.burlingtonfreepress.com/story/news/2018/06/06/domestic-violence-anako-lumumba-why-free-press-shining-spotlight-abuse-women/662103002/)

Contact Elizabeth Murray at 802-651-4835 or emurray@freepressmedia.com. Follow her on Twitter at @LizMurrayBFP. Contact Jess Aloe at 802-660-1874 or jaloe@freepressmedia.com. Follow her on Twitter at @jess_aloe.



Mourners gather at the LaVigne Funeral Home in Winooski before funeral services for Anako "Annette" Lumumba on Thursday, May 17, 2018.

(Photo: GLENN RUSSELL/FREE PRESS)

SHARE

Burlington Free Press
PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

.(1).

© 2019 Burlington Free Press, a division of Gannett Company, Inc.