*Welcome to LLA Reports, a podcast produced by the Louisiana Legislative Auditor’s office. This podcast is intended to be an oral representation of the written report it highlights and is primarily for the use of the Louisiana Legislature.*

This is Kristen Jacobs. I’m a senior auditor for LLA Performance Audit Services.

This episode of LLA Reports focuses on our new report titled “Challenges in Louisiana’s Efforts to Address Domestic Violence.”

This report provides the results of our performance audit examining how Louisiana is addressing the problem of domestic violence. The purpose of the audit was to identify challenges the state faces in its efforts.

Overall, we found Louisiana faces multiple challenges, including gaps in services for victims, insufficient and inflexible funding, inconsistent implementation of strategies to protect victims, lack of oversight for intervention programs for perpetrators, and lack of training for certain entities involved in addressing domestic violence.

We found Louisiana does not have enough domestic violence shelter beds and support services to meet the needs of all victims. For example, there is no domestic violence shelter in central Louisiana, and shelters across the state had an average of 2,659 unmet requests per year between 2015 and 2020.

In addition, only 10 percent of domestic violence funding comes from state sources in Louisiana. Other states often use a combination of state general funds and dedicated fees, which can be more flexible and predictable than the federal grants that provide the majority of Louisiana’s domestic violence funding.

We also found that laws intended to protect victims, such as those focused on the issuance of protective orders, are not consistently implemented across the state.

For example, abusers may not always be served with protective orders. The reasons for that include the individual fleeing or evading service, dismissal of charges, the expiration of temporary orders, and inefficient processes between agencies.

In addition, according to the State Supreme Court and sheriffs, not all sheriff’s offices are submitting proof to the Louisiana Protective Order Registry that protective orders are served, as required by state law.

The registry is a statewide database for temporary restraining orders, protective orders, preliminary injunctions, permanent injunctions, and court-approved consent agreements issued to prevent domestic abuse.

We found, too, that not all sheriff’s offices have developed policies and procedures for the firearms relinquishment process, also as required by state law.

In addition, while state law mandates domestic violence training for law enforcement, others – such as judges and district attorneys – are not required to have training.

However, the State Supreme Court provides the judiciary with a guide that outlines Louisiana’s civil domestic abuse, dating violence, stalking, and sexual assault laws, while the Louisiana District Attorney’s Association maintains a domestic violence prosecution manual that details best practices.

We found as well that the Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement has not completed a domestic violence awareness training program for law enforcement officers as required by state law.

We also found that intervention programs aimed at perpetrators have no oversight or consistency across the state because no entity is responsible for monitoring these programs. Nor does the state mandate that intervention programs follow standards that would help ensure consistency and accountability.

Additionally, although state law requires that public schools provide education on dating violence for students and employees, we found that not all public schools were providing such information.

As a result of our audit, we developed eight matters for legislative consideration and two recommendations.

Among the matters for legislative consideration, we suggested the Legislature consider more consistent and flexible funding for domestic violence programs. We also suggested the Legislature consider urging the Supreme Court to help identify best practices for serving protective orders and create in-depth domestic violence guidance for the judiciary.

In addition, we suggested the Legislature consider mechanisms to ensure sheriffs comply with state law related to submitting proof that protective orders have been served and to ensuring firearms are relinquished.

We also suggested the Legislature consider requiring that domestic abuse intervention programs follow statewide standards and designating an entity to oversee these programs.

We suggested, too, that the Legislature consider asking the Louisiana Department of Education or the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to provide information to schools regarding requirements about providing education on dating violence.

Finally, we recommended that the Peace Officer Standards and Training Council – or POST – complete the domestic violence awareness training program for law enforcement officers and develop a process for maintaining a list of all officers who complete the program.

As part of its response to our report, which is detailed in the report’s appendix, the Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement, which performs the staff functions for POST, disagreed with both of our recommendations.

*We hope you found this podcast informative, and that you’ll follow future episodes of LLA Reports.*

*This podcast was created as part of the audit report just discussed and is intended primarily for the use of the Louisiana Legislature. Both the full report and the podcast can be found on the LLA’s website at* [*www.lla.la.gov*](http://www.lla.la.gov)*.*

*Thank you for listening.*