

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIM ADVOCATE'S GUIDE







The DVVAG summarizes some of the risk factors that have been associated with an increased likelihood of future violence in intimate relationships. This document is intended to assist and guide Victim Advocates with the identification of high risk victims, safety planning and referrals.

Recommended Uses for the Domestic Violence Guide:





- Focusing an interview on identifying the risk factors present in a victim's life and on organizing and documenting information
- Identifying strategies and processes that could be utilized to increase the safety of the victim, and strengthen the ability to monitor and evaluate situations of risk.
- Ensure that the Victim Advocate understands the unique needs and circumstances of the victim so that appropriate referrals and resources can be put in place
- Assist in personalized safety planning and determining whether immediate action is required because the victim is in imminent danger.

Note: Partner = present or former intimate partner, gender is not relevant to the designation. Intimate does not mean sexual, a dating relationship qualifies

 Indicates a risk factor associated with increased severity (escalation) or likelihood of future violence.*

1. Relationship History		
	Current Status of the Relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the nature, length and history of the relationship between the victim and her partner? (i.e. dating, common-law, married, divorced) • Is there an actual or pending separation in the relationship? Note: This factor has been consistently identified as the most common risk factor present in a domestic homicide). • Does the victim have a new partner in her life?
	Children Exposed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the victim or her partner have children and are any of them under 19 years of age? (i.e. step, foster or biological) • Are there any arguments or threats over custody, contact, primary care or control of any of the children, including any formal legal proceedings
	Obsession, Jealousy, Control or Coercion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has her partner displayed jealous behaviours or actions that indicate an intense preoccupation with the victim such as following her, repeatedly phoning her, spying on her, controlling her daily activities/finances, isolating her from friends/family etc.? • Has the victim's partner limited her mobility such as locking her in a room, denying access to a telephone, refusing to allow her to leave the residence etc.? Note: Social science experts say that where there are controlling coercive behaviours, the intensity and lethality of violence often escalates after the victim leaves the relationship.
	Relative Social Powerlessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are marginalization factors present (i.e. disability, immigrant or Aboriginal background, addiction, poverty, pregnancy, lack of transportation, literacy issues, mental illness, elderly etc.)? • Are cultural factors present (i.e. family pressures/shame, religious beliefs, unwillingness to report, language barriers, isolation etc.)? • Has the victim's partner interfered with or made threats about her immigration status such as threats to revoke sponsorship, interfering with ability to work, or access English classes, or withholding passport or identity documents? Note: May indicate human trafficking. Contact the Office to Combat Trafficking in Persons
2. Victim's Perception of Risk		
	Perception of Personal Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the victim believe her partner will disobey terms of release particularly a no contact order?
	Perception of Future Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the victim fear further violence if her partner should be released from custody? (What access is there to the Victim and what is the basis of the Victim's fear?) Note: Although victims are unlikely to exaggerate their risk they often underestimate it.

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3. Partner History		
	Violence History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the victim's partner have a history of any actual or attempted violence on any person outside the family who has not been in an intimate relationship with the Partner? (e.g.. friends, acquaintances, co-workers or strangers) <p>Note: One of the most common research findings is that people with a history of violence are much more likely to engage in future violence.</p>
	Previous Domestic Violence History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the victim's Partner have a history of stalking, harassment, assaults, threats, sexual assaults, property damage or other abusive behaviours against her or a previous intimate partner? Is there escalation in the frequency/severity of violence or abuse towards the victim, family members, a pet or another person? (physical, psychological, emotional, sexual etc.) Is there any history of threats or actual violence or abusive behaviour against children, other family members, friends, co-workers, or other persons such as a new intimate partner of the victim? Has the victim ever been forcibly confined by her Partner Has the victim's Partner ever strangled, choked or bitten her? Has the victim's Partner ever coerced or forced sex on her?
	Court Orders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has the victim's Partner ever violated a Court Order? Is her Partner presently bound by any Court Orders?
	Alcohol/Drugs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does her Partner have a history of drug or alcohol abuse?
	Employment Instability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is her Partner unemployed or experiencing financial problems?
	Mental Illness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is her Partner depressed or have a history of depression in the opinion of professionals (physicians, counsellors etc.) or non-professionals (victim, friends, family, co-workers etc.) Does her Partner have a history of other mental illnesses (e.g. bipolar, paranoia, schizophrenia)? Has her Partner threatened or attempted suicide? (If YES, when and how?)
4. Access to Weapons/Firearms		
	Weapons/Firearms (Used or Threatened?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has her Partner used or threatened to use a firearm or weapon (e.g. gun, knife, crossbow) or other object intended to be used as a weapon (bat, vehicle, household object etc.) against the victim, family member, children or an animal?
	Access to Weapons/Firearms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does her Partner own or have access to weapons/firearms? (e.g. a friend, family member, through work, or recreational sports etc.)

* The Ontario Domestic Violence Death Review Committee has found that there are 7 or more risk factors present in all homicides they have reviewed. For the most recent ODVDRC Report and a complete and cumulative list of all risk factors and their descriptors go to:

<http://www.mcscs.jus.gov.on.ca/stellent/groups/public/@mcscs/@www/@com/documents/webasset/ec083081.pdf>