

Lethality & Risk Assessment

Risk assessment is defined as ...

"The formal application of instruments to assess the likelihood that intimate partner violence will be repeated and escalated. The term is synonymous with dangerousness assessment and encompasses lethality assessment, the use of instruments specifically developed to identify potentially lethal situations."

Roehl & Guertin, 2000, p.171

Risk Markers

Table 1: Characteristics that increase the likelihood of re-assault.

History of assault	Stability of relationships
Motivation for treatment	Childhood abuse
Stability of employment	Attitudes to women

Table 2: Indicative of life-threatening attack on a spouse include

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Homicide/suicide fantasies	
Displaying 'ownership'	
Being separated	
Being depressed	
Hostage taking	

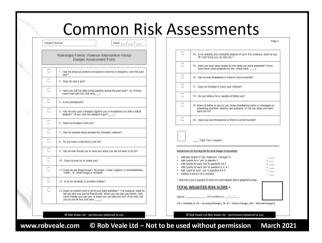
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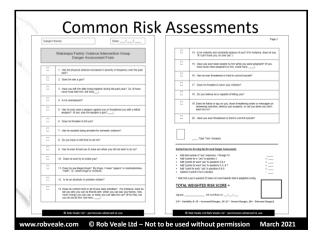
Challenges

Risk assessment presents challenges across four dimensions

- Victim comfort, safety, culture, experiences
- Staff training, sensitivity, manner, time
- Instrument validity and reliability
- · Organisational level how information is interpreted and influenced by processes, systems and policies at an agency or inter-agency level

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Health & Risk Assessment Questions

- Is your partner here now?

 Are you afraid to go/stay home?

 Has the physical violence increased in frequency or severity over the
- past year? Has your partner ever choked you (one or more times?)
- Have you ever been knocked out by your partner? (If applicable) Have you ever been beaten by your partner while
- Has your partner ever used a weapon against you, or threated you with
- Do you believe your partner is capable of killing you?
- Is your partner constantly jealous of you? If yes, has the jealousy resulted in violence?
- Have you recently left your partner, or are you considering leaving? Has your partner ever threatened to commit suicide?

- Have you ever considered hurting yourself/suicide?
 Is alcohol or substance misuse a problem for you or your partner?
- Have the children seen or heard the violence? Has anyone physically abused the children?

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What's about the form?

- For people who have forms.
 - Do questions on your forms facilitate conversations about 'safer'?
- For people who have conversations.
 - What do you make sure you discuss?

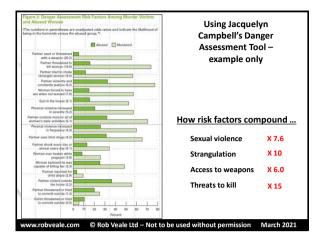


Caution

- Using cue cards
- · Using forms for documenting discussions
- Making it real when to complete the form



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Lethality& Dangerousness

The numbers in parenthesis indicate the factor by which a domestic violence victim's risk of homicide is increased relative to other domestic violence victims.

- 1. Has the victim ever used, or threatened to use a gun, knife or other weapon against the victim? (20.2x)
- 2. Ever threatened to kill or injure the victim? (14.9x)
- 3. Ever tried to strangle (choke) the victim? (9.9x)
- 4. Is the abuser violently or constantly jealous? (9.2x)
- 5. Has the abuser ever forced the victim to have sex? (7.6x)

Domestic Violence Homicide Risk Assessment data from USDOJ

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Summing Up

- Consider the specific purpose of your risk assessment.
- Risk assessment is not an end in itself, it should be completed for the purpose of safety planning.
- Risk is not static, so an assessment should be completed or reviewed at every opportunity.
- Ensure the 'voice' of the victim (their experiences) is included in your risk assessment and safety planning process.

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Discussion	
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