Common Risk Assessment questionnaire

VICTIM

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| **Risk factor** | **Explanation** |
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| **Victim** |  |
|  |  |
| Pregnancy/new birth | Family violence often commences or intensifies during pregnancy and is  |
|  | associated with increased rates of miscarriage, low birth weight, premature |
|  | birth, fetal injury and fetal death. Family violence during pregnancy is |
|  | regarded as a significant indicator of future harm to the woman and her child. |
|  |  |
| Depression/mental health | Victims with a mental illness may be more vulnerable to family violence |
| Issue | due to their inability to accurately assess their situation. |
|  |  |
| Drug and/or alcohol | Victims may use alcohol or other drugs to cope with the physical, emotional |
| misuse/abuse | or psychological effects of family violence, which can lead to increased |
|  | vulnerability. |
|  |  |
| Has ever verbalized or | Suicidal thoughts or attempts indicate that the victim is extremely vulnerable |
| had suicidal ideas or tried | and the situation has become critical. |
| to commit suicide |  |
|  |  |
| Isolation | A victim is more vulnerable if they are isolated from family, friends and other |
|  | social networks. Isolation also increases the likelihood of violence and is not |
|  | simply geographical. Other examples of isolation include cultural factors, |
|  | which may limit a new immigrant’s access to social supports; disabilities,  |
|  | which may limit social interaction or support; and/or the perpetrator not |
|  | allowing the victim to have social interaction. |
|  |  |

PERPETRATOR

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| **Risk factor** | **Explanation** |
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| **Perpetrator** |  |
|  |  |
| Use of weapon in most | Use of a weapon indicates a high level of risk because previous behavior |
| recent event | is a likely predictor of future behavior. A weapon is defined as any tool used |
|  | by the perpetrator which can injure, kill or destroy property, including guns. |
|  |  |
| Access to weapons | Perpetrators who have access to weapons, particularly guns, are much more |
|  | likely to seriously injure or kill a victim than others without access to weapons. |
|  |  |
| Has ever harmed or | Psychological and emotional abuse has been found to be a good predictor |
| threatened to harm victim | of continued abuse, including physical abuse. Previous physical assaults |
|  | also predict future assaults. |
|  |  |
| Has ever tried to choke | Strangulation or choking is a common method used by male perpetrators |
| the victim | to kill female victims. |
|  |  |
| Has ever threatened to | Evidence suggests that a perpetrator’s threat to kill a victim is often genuine. |
| kill victim | . |
|  |  |
| Has ever harmed or | Evidence suggests that child abuse and family violence are likely to occur in |
| threatened to harm or kill | the same family. Children witnessing, hearing or being subjected to |
| Children | violence will be adversely affected and may develop behavioral and  |
|  | emotional problems. |
|  |  |
| Has ever harmed or | Threats by the perpetrator to hurt or cause actual harm to family members |
| threatened to harm or kill | can be a way of controlling the victim through fear. |
| other family members |  |
|  |  |
| Has ever harmed or | A correlation between cruelty to animals and family violence is increasingly |
| threatened to harm or kill | being recognized. Because there is a direct link between family violence |
| pets or other animals | and pets being abused or killed, abuse or threats of abuse pets may be |
|  | used by perpetrators to control family members. |
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| **Risk factor** | **Explanation** |
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| **Perpetrator** cont’d |  |
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| Has ever threatened or | Threats or attempts to commit suicide have been found to be a risk factor |
| tried to commit suicide | for murder–suicide. |
|  |  |
| Stalking of victim | Stalkers are more likely to be violent if they have had an intimate relationship |
|  | with the victim. Stalking, when coupled with physical assault, is strongly |
|  | connected to murder or attempted murder. Stalking behavior and obsessive |
|  | thinking are highly related behaviors. |
|  |  |
| Sexual assault of victim | Sexual assault includes when the perpetrator has forced the victim to have |
|  | sex against their will, coerced sexual activity or carried out unwanted sexual |
|  | touching. Women who report sexual assault are more likely to have a history |
|  | of family violence. |
|  |  |
| Previous or current | Breaching Intervention Order conditions indicates the defendant is not willing to |
| breach of Intervention | abide by the orders of a court. Such behavior should be considered a  |
| Order | serious indicator of increased risk of future violence. |
|  |  |
| Drug and/or alcohol | Serious problems with illicit drug, alcohol or prescription drugs and inhalants |
| misuse/abuse | lead to impairment in social functioning and create a risk of family violence. |
|  | This includes temporary drug-induced psychosis. |
|  |  |
| Controlling behaviors | The perpetrator can exercise complete control over the victim’s activities by, |
|  | for example, telling the victim who they can be friends with, controlling how |
|  | much money the victim can access, and determining when the victim can see |
|  | friends and family and when the victim can use the car. Men who think they |
|  |  ‘should be in charge’ are more likely to use various forms of violence against |
|  | their partner. |
|  |  |
| Unemployed | Unemployment is associated with an increased risk of lethal assault, and a |
|  | sudden change in employment status – such as being terminated and/or |
|  | retrenched – may be associated with increased risk. |
|  |  |
| Depression/mental health | Murder–suicide outcomes in family violence have been associated with  |
| Issue | perpetrators who have mental health problems, particularly depression. |
|  |  |
| History of violent | Perpetrators with a history of violence are more likely to use violence against  |
| Behavior | family members. This can occur even if the violence has not previously |
|  | been directed toward family members. Other victims may have included |
|  | strangers, acquaintances and/or police officers. The nature of the violence |
|  | may include credible threats or use of weapons, and attempted or actual |
|  | assaults. Violent men generally engage in more frequent and more severe |
|  | family violence than perpetrators who do not have a violent past. |
|  |  |
|  |  |
| **Relationship** |  |
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| Separation | For women who are experiencing family violence, the high risk periods include |
|  | immediately prior to taking action, and during the initial stages of or  |
|  | immediately after separation. Victims who stay with the perpetrator because |
|  | they are afraid to leave often accurately anticipate that leaving would increase |
|  | the risk of lethal assault. The data on ‘time-since-separation’ suggests |
|  | that women are particularly at risk within the first two months. |
|  |  |
| Escalation – increase in | Violence occurring more often or becoming worse has been found to be |
| severity and/or frequency | associated with lethal outcomes for victims. |
| of violence |  |
|  |  |
| Financial difficulties | Low income (less than that required to provide for basic needs) and financial |
|  | stress including a gambling addiction are risk factors for family violence. |
|  |  |



RISK ASSESSMENT TICK SHEET FOR COMPLETION BY WORKERS OR PARTIES



|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Risk or vulnerability factor** | **Presence of factor** |
|  |  |  |
|  | Yes | No |
| **Victim** |  |  |

Pregnancy/new birth\*

Depression/ mental health issue

Drug and/or alcohol misuse/abuse

Has ever verbalized or had suicidal ideas or tried to commit suicide

Isolation

**Perpetrator**

Use of weapon in most recent event\*

Access to weapons\*

Has ever harmed or threatened to harm victim

Has ever tried to choke the victim\*

Has ever threatened to kill victim\*

Has ever harmed or threatened to harm or kill children\*

Has ever harmed or threatened to harm or kill other family members

Has ever harmed or threatened to harm or kill pets or other animals\*

Has ever threatened or tried to commit suicide\*

Stalking of victim\*

Sexual assault of victim\*

Previous or current breach of intervention order

Drug and/or alcohol misuse/abuse\*

Obsession/jealous behavior toward victim\*

Controlling behavior\*

Unemployed\*

Depression/mental health issue#

History of violent behavior (not family violence)

**Relationship**

Recent separation\*

Escalation – increase in severity and/or frequency of violence\*

Financial difficulties

\* May indicate an increased risk of the victim being killed or almost killed. # Mental health issues such as depression and paranoid psychosis, which focuses on the victim as hostile, are high risk when they are present in conjunction with other risk factors, particularly a previous history of violence. The presence of a mental health issue must be carefully considered in relation to the co-occurrence of other risk