

**PROACTIVE** RESOLUTIONS  Kelly A. Watt, PhD  
Threat Assessment Specialist

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SAFETY  
ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING**

### DV Screening

- The process of determining whether a response is required and prioritizing actions related to follow up and documentation after warning signs have been exhibited
  - Are there reasonable grounds to believe there is a risk for violence?

### DV Screening Example

- Documented, reported, or suspected history of
  - Violent acts
  - Violent ideation
  - Violent intent
- Especially if
  - Recent
  - Serious
  - Escalating

### DV Screening Questions

- Violent Acts
  - Has your partner ever hurt/harmed you?
  - Has your partner ever threatened to hurt/harm you?
- Violent Ideation/Intent
  - Has your partner ever expressed thoughts or fantasies of hurting/harming you?
  - Has your partner ever made plans to hurt/harm you?
  - Do you think your partner will actually hurt/harm you?

### Safety Assessment

- Gathering information about potential risks to a woman's safety

Case-driven   Collaborative   Wide-ranging

### Safety Planning

- Taking action by developing a plan to increase a women's safety

Active   Strategic   Tactical

### Importance of Context

A woman must construct her own safety plan, tailored to her own circumstances, based on the resources she has access to, and each plan requires active, diligent work by her community. Anything that will help the woman trust her sense of risk and her sense of how to get safe will increase her safety.

Barbara Hart (1998)

### Important of Process

- Need to consider that intimate partner violence is a process and that different strategies will be appropriate at different points in time
  - Planning an escape route
  - Gathering key documents
  - Requesting a police escort
  - Applying for a court order

### Examples

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| Checklists   | • Provide list of strategies to consider                           |
| Unstructured | • Identify risk factors and recommend strategies with no structure |
| Structured   | • Identify risk factors and recommend strategies with structure    |

### ASAP

- Aid to Safety Assessment & Planning (2006)
  - Victim Services and Crime Prevention Division
  - Ministry of Public Safety
  - BC Institute Against Family Violence
- For use by victim service workers in collaboration with other service providers
- 22 risk factors
  - 10 Abuser Factors
  - 12 Safety Support Factors

### SPJ

- Relies on guidelines to structure the exercise of professional discretion

|                            |                      |                          |
|----------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Prevention via planning    | Collaborative Effort | Reflect best practice    |
| Specify basic risk factors | No scoring rules     | Encourages Collaboration |

### Administration

- 1 • Gather information
- 2 • Review risk factors
- 3 • Develop safety plan
- 4 • Note priority actions

### Step 1

- Identify information reviewed to form an opinion
- Identify any important limitations on an opinion

### Interviews

- Discuss purpose of assessment
  - Review limits to confidentiality, voluntary nature, options for documentation
- Employ a client-centered approach
  - Collaborative, supportive, and sensitive to issues of diversity
- Use probes to guide questioning
  - Gather information pertaining to each risk factor, including changes over time

### Violent Acts/Ideation

|       |                                    |
|-------|------------------------------------|
| When  | • Date, time                       |
| Where | • Location, context                |
| What  | • Acts, attempts, consequences     |
| Why   | • Motivations, precipitants, goals |

### Violent Acts/Ideation (cont.)

|            |                       |
|------------|-----------------------|
| Severity   | • Consequences        |
| Chronicity | • Duration, frequency |
| Diversity  | • Nature, types       |
| Escalation | • Trajectory          |

### Step 2

- Jointly consider standard and case specific risk factors
- Jointly consider functional relevance of risk factors

### Abuser Factors

- Identify risks to woman's safety
- 10 factors associated with an abuser's risk for intimate partner violence
- Relate to the abuser's history of spousal violence and criminality, psychosocial adjustment problems, and failure to abide by conditions

### Abuser Factors

1. Abuser's violence
  - Physical and sexual
2. Violent threats, ideation, intent
  - Intimidating behaviour
3. Escalation of violence or threats
  - Severity, frequency, diversity
4. Violation of civil/criminal court orders
  - Related to dv

### Abuser Factors (cont.)

5. Negative attitudes
  - Support, condone, minimize, deny
6. Other criminality
  - Unrelated to dv
7. Response to shifts in power and control
  - Real or perceived
8. Employment or financial problems
  - Absence and instability

### Abuser factors (cont.)

9. Substance use
  - Impairment of functioning
10. Mental health problems
  - Major mental illness
  - Personality disorder
  - Suicidal ideation/attempts

### Safety Support Factors

- Identify woman's needs
- 12 factors associated with the supports a woman needs to implement safety plan
- Relate to conditions in the woman's life that may increase the abuser's ability to be violent or decrease the woman's ability to protect herself

### Safety Support Factors

1. Level of personal support
  - Absence or negative
2. Living situation
  - Home, work, community
3. Level of fear
  - Self and others
4. Barriers created by attitudes and beliefs
  - Minimize injuries, blame self, lack faith

### Safety Support Factors (cont.)

5. Health impacts of abuse
  - Mental health problems
  - Physical health problems
6. Employment or financial problems
  - Absence and instability
7. Child-related concerns
  - Physical, emotional, financial
8. Substance use
  - Impairment of functioning

### Safety Support Factors (cont.)

- 9. Access to services
  - Cost, location, diversity
- 10. Responsivity of services
  - Willingness, knowledge, attitude
- 11. Provision of information
  - Dynamics, services, protections
- 12. Coordination of services
  - People and systems

### Step 3

Use past experience and risk factors to develop safety plan together

Specify safety plan strategies and tactics

### Strategies

| Supervision of Abuser   | Interventions for Abuser   | Woman's Physical Security  | Woman's Well Being  |
|---|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring abuser over time or restricting freedoms</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment, treatment and rehabilitation of abuser</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhancing static security of targets</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhancing dynamic security of targets</li> </ul> |

### Supervision of Abuser

- What strategies can justice agencies or services (e.g., police, corrections, courts, victim-witness) use to supervise or monitor abuser?
- Examples:
  - Restrictions on activity, movement, association, or communication
  - Personal contacts, field visits, communication inspections, electronic surveillance

### Interventions for Abuser

- What strategies can other agencies or services (e.g., advocacy, health care, education, social welfare, faith-based) use to treat or assist abuser?
- Examples:
  - Individual or group treatment
  - Medication or hospitalization
  - Interpersonal, anger, vocational skills programs
  - Legal, crisis, employment, or relationship counseling

### Woman's Physical Security

- What strategies can agencies or services use to enhance the woman's physical security (e.g. at home, at work, or in the community?)
- Examples:
  - Improve visibility by adding lights, altering landscapes, installing video cameras
  - Access can be restricted by improving locks, installing alarms and adding security checkpoints
  - More extreme measures may require relocation

### Woman's Well Being

- What strategies can agencies or services use to enhance the woman's or children's well-being (e.g. social and emotional)?
- Examples:
  - Provide information about support services and legal protections
  - Refer to support groups or recreational activities to decrease isolation
  - Treatment for mental or physical health problems

### Follow-Up

- Decide which agency or individual should be responsible for implementing each strategy
- Confirm with agency or individual whether they can implement the strategy
- Discuss potential barriers or repercussions to implementing the strategies

### Step 4

Communicate priority actions clearly and simply

Determine routine or emergency case review

### Priority Actions

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Case Prioritization   | • Level of effort or intervention required to protect the safety of the woman or others |
| Serious Physical Harm | • Risk the abuser will engage in serious physical harm against the woman or others      |
| Immediate Action      | • Risk the abuser will engage in imminent physical harm against the woman or others     |
| Case Review           | • Date for regular review and triggers for emergency review                             |

### ASAP Manual

- Justice Institute of British Columbia
- Website: [www.jibc.ca](http://www.jibc.ca)
- Price: \$55

### Local Resources

- Neighbours, Friends, & Families
  - Is a public education campaign that provides valuable information about strategies women could consider and important information about additional resources in the community
- Contact
  - 519-661-2111 ext. 87486
  - [www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.on.ca](http://www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.on.ca)

## Local Resources

- The Assaulted Women's Helpline
  - A 24 hour crisis line that can support women develop a safety plan, find space for them at a local shelter and refer them to other services
- Contact Information
  - 1-866-863-0511 (English)
  - 1-866-860-7082 (French)
  - 1-866-863-7868 (TTY)
  - [www.awhl.org](http://www.awhl.org)

## Contact Information

ProActive ReSolutions Inc.  
#142-1020 Mainland Street  
Vancouver, BC  
Canada V6B 2T4  
+1 (604) 482-1750  
[www.proactive-resolutions.com](http://www.proactive-resolutions.com)