

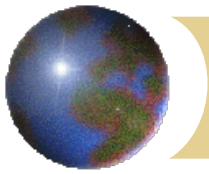
# **Children Exposed To Domestic Violence**

## **A Police Response**

S/Sgt. Debra Heaton

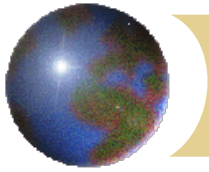
Criminal Behaviour Analysis Unit

Behavioural Sciences & Analysis Section



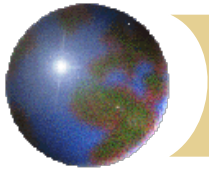
## *Threat Assessment Unit*

- ✦ Works closely with Criminal Profiling, Forensic Psychiatry and Research
- ✦ 6 members – 350-400 cases annually
- ✦ Domestic, Stalking, Sex Offenders, School, Workplace, Threatening Correspondence, Threats to Entertainment/Political/Judiciary, Forensic Stylistics
- ✦ Criminal Justice Agencies (Provincial, National International)



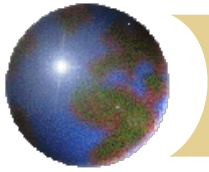
## *Threat Assessment Process*

- ✦ The process of threat assessment involves the evaluation of observable personal and situational indicators on either a risk enhancing or risk reducing basis to determine an individual's potential for violence.
- ✦ These indicators are based on scientific research conducted by a number of disciplines including the medical and mental health professions, law enforcement and specialists in the field of threat management.



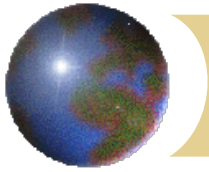
## *Threat Assessment*

- ✚ *Basically* - What risk does an individual pose to a target and how do we reduce or manage that risk.



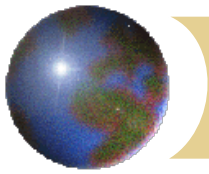
## *Training*

- ❖ Instruction by authors of risk assessment tools and theories and consultation with authors as necessary
- ❖ Mental Health training – DSM IV, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, Aspergers, Personality Disorders, Attention Deficit, Sexual Deviance etc.



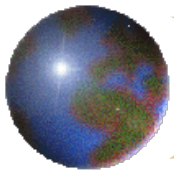
## *Services Provided by TAU*

- ⊕ Threat assessments
- ⊕ Case management  
suggestions/investigative strategies
- ⊕ Victim Safety plans
- ⊕ Court Testimony-Bail/Sentencing  
(Expert)
- ⊕ Threat Assessment Conference
- ⊕ Training



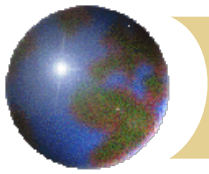
# *Assessments Used By*

- ⊕ Front line police officers
- ⊕ Criminal Investigation Section
- ⊕ Professional Standards
- ⊕ Crown Attorneys
- ⊕ Judiciary
- ⊕ Correctional Services ( Probation, Parole)
- ⊕ Policy Makers – school administrators
- ⊕ Coroners Inquest



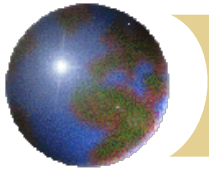
# *Unstructured Professional Judgment*

- ❖ Unstructured Professional Judgment
  - ❖ Lack of consistency or agreement
  - ❖ Informal, subjective and impressionistic
  - ❖ Little evidence it is accurate – not better than chance
  - ❖ Does not specify why or how decision reached



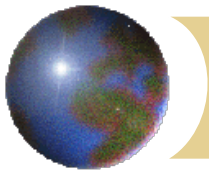
# *Structured Professional Judgment*

- ⊕ Risk assessments conducted according to explicit guidelines that are grounded in the scientific literature
- ⊕ More systematic
- ⊕ Increased agreement among assessors
- ⊕ Improved accuracy of violence predictions
- ⊕ Assists in planning and delivery of interventions (treatment and supervision)



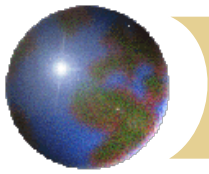
## *Qualifications to Use Tools*

- ✦ Expertise in conduct of individual assessments (training, experience)
- ✦ Expertise in the study and investigation of violence (experience, training)
- ✦ Trained by authors/developers of tools
- ✦ Diagnoses, treatment \*



# *Types of Assessments*

- ✦ ACTUARIAL Risk Assessment
- ✦ E.g. STATIC-99, PCL-R, VRAG, SORAG, ODARA
- ✦ long term risk
- ✦ weight to scores - percentile ranking
- ✦ Static factors – things that will not change
- ✦ Unable to case manage effectively to potentially reduce risk

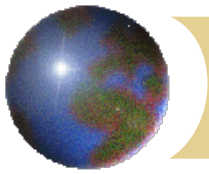


# ODARA

*Rice, M.E., Harris, G.T., & Hilton, N.Z.*

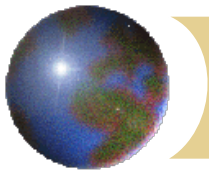
## The ODARA gives information about:

- The likelihood that the offender will commit an assault on his partner in the future
- The offender's rank order; that is, the proportion of domestically violent offenders who are at the same level of risk
- An indication of whether the offender will commit a relatively high number of new assaults in the future
- An indication of whether the offender will commit relatively severe new assaults
- Risk prediction across 5 yrs with an average recidivism rate of 15 months



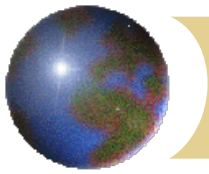
# *Types of Assessments*

- ✦ STRUCTURED PROFESSIONAL JUDGEMENT
- ✦ E.g. SARA, HCR-20, SAVRY, EARL-20B, EARL 21-G, SVR-20, RSVP
- ✦ Short term risk
- ✦ Combination of static and dynamic factors
- ✦ No scoring – presence/intensity/recency
- ✦ Only valid for the period that the dynamic factors are in play
- ✦ Allows for case management and the ability to reduce imminent risk



# *Violence*

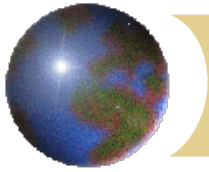
- ❖ Process as well as an act – culmination of long developing, identifiable traits, problems, conflicts, disputes and failures
- ❖ Factors assessed on presence, intensity, recency and frequency.
- ❖ May or may not change – Static/Dynamic
- ❖ Involves interaction of offender, victim and situational characteristics. (not just the number of factors but the combination)



# *Spousal Assault Risk Assessment*

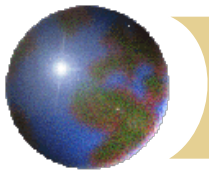
## *SARA*

- ✦ Past Assault Family
- ✦ Past Assault Acquaintance
- ✦ Past Violation Release Conditions
- ✦ Recent Relationship Problems
- ✦ Recent Employment Problems
- ✦ Recent Psychotic/Manic Symptoms
- ✦ Victim/Witness Abuse as Child
- ✦ Recent Substance Abuse
- ✦ Recent Suicidal/Homicidal Ideation
- ✦ Personality Disorder
- ✦ Past Physical Assault
- ✦ Past Sexual Assault/Sexual Jealousy
- ✦ Past Use Weapons/Credible Threat Death
- ✦ Recent Escalation Frequency/Severity
- ✦ Past Violation "No Contact"
- ✦ Minimization/Denial of Assaults
- ✦ Attitudes that Support Severe/Sexual Assault ((Index)
- ✦ Weapons/Threat of Death (Index)
- ✦ Violation "No Contact" (Index)



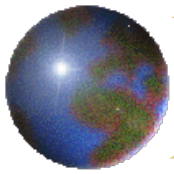
# *Categorization of Risk*

- ❖ Low—does not mean “no” risk
  - ❖ Management – do nothing, maintain those measures already implemented, or identify and put into place additional measures
- ❖ Moderate – somewhat elevated risk
  - ❖ Management –maintain, identify and put into place some assistance
- ❖ High – very elevated, imminent risk
  - ❖ Management – plan for both individual and target



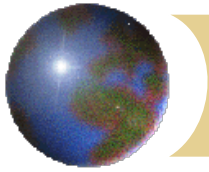
## *Determining Risk to Children*

- ❖ No risk assessment tool exists that is directly intended to assess the risk of violence to children in a domestic violence scenario.
- ❖ Existing tools are used and opinions are reached based on the risk factors present, and history in relation to the children.



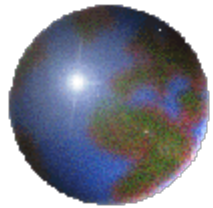
## *Determining Risk to Children*

- ❖ Some factors refer to children:
  - ❖ SARA – Witness to/Victim of abuse as a child
  - ❖ ODARA- Presence of Children, pregnancy
- ❖ Not for risk of child, but adult victim.
- ❖ May indicate inability to leave or protect self.
- ❖ Research is not clear.

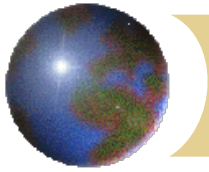


## *Reports to Children's Aid Society*

- ✦ Duty to report suspicion of child in need of protection.
- ✦ Domestic Violence Supplementary Report provided to CAS if child present.
- ✦ Case Management will suggest contact with CAS and other provisions.

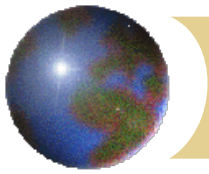


# Threat Assessment Example



## *Issues for Threat Assessment*

- ✚ Use of assessments inappropriately
  - ✚ Not for type of violence intended by tool.
  - ✚ Dated and invalid based on changed risk factors.
- ✚ Lack of appropriate risk assessment tools.
- ✚ Inability to share information.



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