

Primary, Secondary and Victim-Focussed Domestic Violence Risk Factors

Primary risk factors refer to violence or intimidation that is recent or escalating. They indicate that the perpetrator is already engaged in violence or is thinking about it. Primary risk factors encompass the following:

- Violent thoughts (images, fantasies, urges)
- Violent threats (may be vague such as If I can't have her nobody can; or explicit such as I'm going to kill her)
- Violent acts (actual or attempted physical or sexual harm)
- A pattern of fear inducing behaviour such as stalking or ongoing intimidation

Secondary risk factors are circumstances or conditions related to the individual or the relationship that may contribute to increased risk and violent or abusive behaviour.

Victim-focused risk factors are related to the victim/survivor's vulnerability and include her innate sense of danger and the complex network of needs, problems and social circumstances she faces. These factors can contribute to elevated risk for victims who already experience vulnerabilities. Although the factor "extreme fear of perpetrator," does not meet the criteria of a primary risk factor, is particularly important to pay attention to and should carry the same weight as a primary risk factor.

Primary Risk Factors (escalating or recent)	Secondary Risk Factors	Victim Focused Risk Factors
-History of domestic violence -Physical violence including hitting, punching, slapping, choking -Sexual violence including forced sexual acts and/or assaults during sex -Threats to kill victim -Threats or assault with a weapon -Threats or attempts to commit suicide by perpetrator -Threats to harm children -Hostage-taking and/or forcible confinement -Destruction or deprivation of victim's property -Violence against family pets -Assault on victim while pregnant -Violence outside of the family by perpetrator -Stalking	- Actual or pending separation - Perpetrator was abused and/or witnessed domestic violence as a child - Perpetrator fails to comply with authority - Child custody or access disputes - Perpetrator unemployed or underemployed - Excessive alcohol and/or drug use by perpetrator - Perpetrator depressed in the opinion of family/friend or professionally diagnosed -Perpetrator experiences other mental health or psychiatric problems - New partner in victim's life - Access to or possession of any firearms - Sexual jealousy (perpetrator) - Sexist attitudes (perpetrator) - Significant perpetrator life changes -Suicidal behaviour in family of origin - Controls most or all of victim's daily activities - Attempts to isolate victim	-Extreme fear of perpetrator -Inconsistent attitude or behaviour (i.e. ambivalence) -Inadequate support or resources -Unsafe living situation -Health problems -Mental health issues -Addictions (alcohol/drug abuse) -Disability -Language and/or cultural barriers (e.g., new immigrant or isolated cultural community) -Economic dependence -Living in rural or remote locations -Fear or distrust of legal authorities -Lack of awareness or distrust of mainstream services -Pregnancy

Some risk factors may be dynamic in nature meaning that they can change over time (eg., perpetrator's mental health, substance abuse, employment). Changes in dynamic risk factors can elevate or decrease the level of risk.