

## Appendix 1A

**Practitioners' Guide to Risk and Danger in Domestic Violence Cases**

This is an abbreviated list of factors related to risk and danger in domestic violence. Most of the research is based on violence toward women, which reflects the majority of cases coming into the criminal justice system. The presence of these indicators suggests that one of the following outcomes is likely without effective intervention: the violence will (1) continue, (2) escalate, and/or (3) become lethal.

**Using this risk guide**

- Each Blueprint protocol includes specific instructions for documenting and responding to risk. Practitioners should also read *Appendix 1B: Training Memo—Risk and Dangerousness*.
- Elicit and document the risk factors contained in this guide. Whenever possible, talk with the victim; engage in a discussion about danger rather than just asking if these things have happened. Victim perceptions and interpretations are important.
- Communicate risk factors to other intervening practitioners in a timely manner.
- Be attentive to the factors in a given case; use experience, common sense, and training to make judgments about the level of danger that both the offender and the set of circumstances pose.
- Adjust the response to each case based on the level of risk and dangerousness.
- Protect the victim from retaliation when soliciting or using safety and risk information.
- Link victims with risk factors to an advocate.
- Stay alert; the level and type of risk will likely change over time and as circumstances change. Determining and managing risk is an ongoing process.

**Acts or threats of violence associated with risk & lethality**

Factors listed in italics are particularly associated with lethal violence

- *Stalking*
- *Strangulation; attempts to “choke”*
- *Threats to kill the victim*
- *Threats to kill that the victim believes or fears*
- *Threats to kill that are conveyed to others*
- *Threats of suicide*
- *Forced sex or pressuring for sex even when separated*
- *Serious injury to the victim*
- *Carries, has access to, uses, or threatens with a weapon*
- *Violence outside of the home*
- Aggression toward interveners
- Threats to family, coworkers, victim’s new partner
- Animal abuse or killing pets
- Damages victim’s property
- Violent during pregnancy or shortly after birth
- Hostage-taking; restraint
- Acts exhibiting extreme hostility toward the victim

**Coercion**

**Violence with a pattern of coercion is a serious marker of high risk violence.** Coercion may be displayed as control of children, finances, or activities; sexual aggression; intimidation; hurting pets; or isolating the victim from support systems.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A victim’s attempt to terminate the relationship is a major change that poses increased risk.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Victims’ perceptions of high danger are typically accurate; their perceptions of low danger are often not.</li> </ul>	
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<p><b>Risk is higher when the violence is accompanied by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An increase in frequency, severity, or type of violence over recent months</li> <li>• Almost daily impairment by alcohol or drugs</li> <li>• The victim attempting a permanent break</li> <li>• Estrangements, separations, and reunions</li> <li>• Failure of prior interventions to affect the offender</li> <li>• A victim who expresses fear of threats to kill</li> <li>• A victim making no attempt to leave despite severe abuse</li> <li>• Prior arrests, law enforcement calls, and/or protection order(s)</li> <li>• Isolation of victim (physical or social)</li> <li>• A victim seeking outside help in the past year</li> <li>• A victim has a child who is not the offender’s</li> <li>• An abuser leaves before law enforcement arrive; eludes warrants</li> <li>• An abuser’s:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Lack of remorse</li> <li>○ Mental health issues</li> <li>○ Financial difficulty; unstable housing</li> <li>○ Generalized aggression or violent acts</li> <li>○ Ongoing efforts to take children from their mother</li> <li>○ History of violence in multiple relationships</li> <li>○ First act of violence is life-threatening or brutal</li> <li>○ Obsessive control of victim’s daily activities</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Homicide-Suicide (for male offenders) accounts for 27-32% of the lethal domestic violence incidents</b></p> <p><i>Predominant risk markers include: guns, patterns of estrangement and reunion and offender’s poor mental health. Additional risk markers may include:</i></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="1060 600 1890 771"> <tr> <td data-bbox="1060 600 1480 771"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obsession or jealousy</li> <li>• Alcohol impairment (23 to 38% of perpetrators)</li> <li>• History of domestic violence</li> </ul> </td> <td data-bbox="1480 600 1890 771"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suicide attempts or threats</li> <li>• Personality disorder</li> <li>• Depression of offender (46%)</li> </ul> </td> </tr> </table> <p><b>Women who kill male partners</b></p> <p><i>Predominant risk markers include: severe, increasingly frequent, and recent violence by male partner against the defendant; a defendant who is isolated and has few social resources.</i></p> <p>Additional risk markers may include:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="1060 998 1890 1356"> <tr> <td data-bbox="1060 998 1480 1356"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to or prior use of weapons</li> <li>• More than 10 violent incidents in the last year at the hands of the person killed</li> <li>• Prior law enforcement intervention in one or more domestic violence calls in past year</li> </ul> </td> <td data-bbox="1480 998 1890 1356"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prior strangulation by person killed</li> <li>• Traditional relationship (married, children, lengthy relationship)</li> <li>• Trapped and isolated in violent relationship</li> <li>• Defendant sought help</li> </ul> </td> </tr> </table>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obsession or jealousy</li> <li>• Alcohol impairment (23 to 38% of perpetrators)</li> <li>• History of domestic violence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suicide attempts or threats</li> <li>• Personality disorder</li> <li>• Depression of offender (46%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to or prior use of weapons</li> <li>• More than 10 violent incidents in the last year at the hands of the person killed</li> <li>• Prior law enforcement intervention in one or more domestic violence calls in past year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prior strangulation by person killed</li> <li>• Traditional relationship (married, children, lengthy relationship)</li> <li>• Trapped and isolated in violent relationship</li> <li>• Defendant sought help</li> </ul>
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- *Obsessive jealousy*
- Significant and harmful use of a child
- Drawing others into the abuse (e.g., children, family, friends)
- Non-compliance with probation or pre-trial release conditions

**(Note: The absence of any of these factors such as “defendant sought help” should not lead to a conclusion that there is no risk. These are not absolute correlations.)**