

SUPPORTING PEOPLE LIVING WITH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

A GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING
RISK FACTORS FOR DOMESTIC &
INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AS
WELL AS THE DOS AND DON'TS
OF HANDLING DISCLOSURE OF
VIOLENCE.

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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence describes a pattern of abusive behaviour that is used to maintain a power imbalance in a relationship. Domestic violence and abuse can include physical, emotional, sexual, financial, and spiritual violence.

GENERAL RISK FACTORS

Risk is the potential for danger. It is dynamic and contextual. With an issue as complex as violence, risk can never be completely understood and it is with uncertainty that we make educated best guesses as to the extent of risk someone is facing with regards to domestic or intimate partner violence.

General risk factors for domestic and intimate partner violence can be broken up into two main categories: primary risk factors, and secondary risk factors.

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PRIMARY RISK FACTORS

Risk Factors	Action Needed
<p>Indicators that abuse is imminent or already occurring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • abuser having violent thoughts or acting violently • fear inducing behaviour (threats, intimidation, stalking, etc.) 	<p>Immediate action is needed. Consult, collaborate, and refer as needed.</p>

SECONDARY RISK FACTORS

Risk Factors	Action Needed
<p>Relating to abuser:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • having mental health issues, facing unemployment, recent or pending separation, and other significant life changes <p>Relating to victim (increased vulnerability):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • language barriers, unemployment, lack of education, health issues, precarious housing, disability, immigration status, history of childhood abuse or trauma 	<p>Immediate action is not necessary. Continue to regularly ask further questions, and monitor the situation.</p>

If there are no primary or secondary risk factors present, immediate action is not necessary. Keep the door open for future conversation.

04**QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK TO OPEN THE DOOR**

- How have you been lately?
- How are things going?
- This pandemic has caused a huge upheaval for lots of people. How are you and/or your partner managing the stress of it?
- So much advice is coming out from government and health professionals. How are you and/or your partner making decisions about health and safety?
- Are you and/or your partner still working?
- How are you and/or your partner handling that change?

FURTHER QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK:

- You mentioned/I noticed [risk factor]. Can you tell me more about that?
- When did [name the abuser's behaviour] start? Has it gotten worse lately? Is it happening more often? Are you worried about your children's well-being or safety? Are you worried about your own?
- Can I share what you've told me with other professionals in order to problem solve this?
- I am afraid for your safety/I am afraid for the safety of your children. Would you be willing to speak to a specialist about a comprehensive risk assessment?

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The Domestic Violence Death Review Committee compiled a list of 39 risk factors for domestic homicides. In over 75% of cases the committee has reviewed, at least 7 risk factors were present prior to the homicide.

MOST COMMONLY IDENTIFIED RISK FACTORS FOR DOMESTIC HOMICIDE INCLUDE:

- a history of domestic violence
- recent or pending separation
- obsessive behaviour
- abuser is depressed
- abuser is unemployed
- victim is isolated
- there is escalation of violence
- threats to kill victim and/or kill themselves (abuser)
- victim had intuitive sense of fear*

*intuitive sense of fear may seem obvious, but most victims of abuse are able to rationalize their abuser's behaviour and may even feel that they can control the "outbursts" as long as they do everything "properly". If you're talking to someone who seems to be afraid of their abuser, that is an indication that the situation has escalated beyond their capacity to rationalize. This is a risk factor that should not be minimized or ignored.

DOS:

- 1 **DO REACH OUT AND REACH OUT OFTEN**
- 2 **DO ASK HOW THEIR PARTNER IS HANDLING THE HEALTH RECOMENDATIONS**
- 3 **DO NAME WHAT YOU ARE SEEING**
- 4 **DO USE ANOVA'S CRISIS SUPPORT LINE:
(519)-642-3000**

DON'TS:

- 1 **DON'T DEMONIZE, BUT DON'T EXCUSE THE ABUSIVE BEHAVIOUR**
- 2 **DON'T ENCOURAGE THEM TO CONFRONT THE ABUSER**
- 3 **DON'T ENCOURAGE THEM TO LEAVE WITHOUT A CLEAR SAFETY PLAN**
- 4 **DON'T PUSH THEM TOWARDS ACTIONS WHEN THEY ARE NOT READY**

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Services Currently Available Through Anova

24/7 Crisis & Support Line – call (519) 642-3000

Support available for folks experiencing any form of violence or abuse.

Sexual Assault Intake and Counselling – call (519) 642- 3000

Done via phone and/or secure online video apts.

Family Court Support – contact Rita at courtsupport@anovafuture.org or (519) 642- 3003 ext. 3225

For folks leaving abusive relationships and involved in or looking for info on the Family Court System.

Community Outreach – call (519) 642-3000

Help navigating legal, housing and healthcare systems, creating safety plans, and accessing supports.

Shelter – call (519) 642- 3000

Options available for women and children.