BC SUMMARY OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RISK FACTORS

This is a summary of some of the risk factors that have been associated with an increased likelihood of future violence in relationships. This document is intended to assist police with assessing risk while conducting and documenting evidence-based, risk-focused domestic violence investigations.

Uses for the Summary of Domestic Violence* Risk Factors:

Focus an investigation on identifying the risk factors,

- Plan and guide interviews (during an interview you should examine the factors present under each of the four main headings),
- Assist police in justifying release or detention of the accused,
- Organize and complete mandatory risk assessment information for police reports, Bail Hearings and RCCs

Legend	
🧨	Indicates a risk factor associated with an increased likelihood of future violence **and also** an increased severity (escalation) of future violence.

1. Relationship History		
🧨	**1.1 Current Status of the Relationship**	• Is there past, recent or pending separation in the relationship? **Note:** Research indicates that an actual or pending separation in the current relationship is the most significant risk factors associated with an increased severity (escalation) of future violence.
🧨	**1.2 Escalation in Abuse**	• Is there escalation in the frequency/intensity of violence or abuse towards the complainant, family members, a pet or another person?
	1.3 Children Exposed	• Are there children, under 19 years of age, in the family who are living in the home? • Who are the parents and is there a child access or guardianship dispute? **Note**: Contact the Ministry of Children and Family Development.
	1.4 Threats	• Has the suspect ever threatened to kill or harm the complainant, a family member, another person, children or a pet?
	1.5 Forced Sex	• Has the suspect ever forced sex on the complainant?
🧨	**1.6 Strangling, Choking, Biting**	• Has the suspect ever strangled, choked or bitten the complainant?
🧨	**1.7 Stalking**	• Has the suspect displayed jealous, obsessive/controlling behaviours; stalked or harassed the complainant, or a previous intimate partner? • Is this behaviour persistent? Is it escalating? • Note: Social science experts say that where there are controlling coercive behaviours like stalking, the intensity and lethality of violence often escalates after the complainant leaves the relationship.
	1.8 Information on Relative Social Powerlessness	• Are isolation/marginalization factors present (i.e. social contact monitored or controlled, language barrier, disability, addiction, poverty, pregnancy, lack of transportation, financial dependency, literacy issues, mental illness, elderly, etc.)? • Is the woman Aboriginal, an immigrant or refugee? • Are social/cultural factors present (i.e. culture of male privilege or entitlement, unwilling to report or seek help, family pressures/shame, cultural beliefs, risks/ threats related to extended family or community, etc.)?

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2. Complainant's Perceptions of Risk

	2.1 Complainant's Perception of Personal Safety	• Does the complainant believe the suspect will disobey terms of release particularly a no contact order?
	2.2 Complainant's Perception of Future Violence	• Does the complainant fear further violence if the Suspect is released from custody? (What is the basis of the complainant's fear and what access does the suspect/offender have to the complainant?)
• **Suspect History**		
	3.1 Suspect's Criminal Violence History	• Does the suspect have a history of threats, violence, sex assaults, and /or criminal harassment? Are there gang affiliations?
	3.2 Previous Domestic Violence History	• Is there a history of stalking, violence or abusive behaviour in the current or a previous intimate partner relationship? • Is there any history of threats or actual violence or abusive behaviour against children, other family members, friends, co-workers or family pets?
	3.3 Court Orders	• Has the suspect ever violated a court order? • Is the suspect presently bound by any court orders including protection orders (e.g., FLA or CFCSA protection order)? • Is the suspect in a reverse onus situation for bail? **Note:** Obtain copies of orders wherever possible.
	3.4 Alcohol/Drugs	• Does the suspect have a history of drug or alcohol abuse?
	3.5 Employment Instability	• Is the suspect unemployed or experiencing financial problems? • Have there been recent changes in employment? • Note: Document information on past or current employer if applicable.
	3.6 Mental Illness	• Does the suspect have a history of mental illness (e.g. depression or paranoia, etc.)? • Is the suspect complying with mental health care (e.g. taking the medications prescribed)? • Note: Also document if there are any other serious medical issues involving any party.
	3.7 Suicidal Ideation	• Has the suspect discussed, threatened or attempted suicide? • If YES, when and how?
• **Access to Weapons/Firearms**		
	4.1 Weapons/Firearms (Used or Threatened)	• Has the suspect used or threatened to use a firearm or weapon against the complainant, family member, children or an animal?
	4.2 Access to Weapons/Firearms	• Does the suspect have access to weapons/firearms?

Domestic Violence is defined in the BC Violence Against Women in Relationships (VAWIR) Policy (Dec. 2010) as: Any physical or sexual assault, or the threat of physical or sexual assault against a current or former intimate partner whether or not they are legally married or living together at the time of the assault or threat. Domestic violence also includes offences other than physical or sexual assault, such as criminal harassment, threatening, or mischief, where there is a reasonable basis to conclude that the act was done to cause, or did in fact cause, fear, trauma, suffering or loss to the intimate partner. Intimate partner relationships include heterosexual and same-sex relationships.

Additional info related to this checklist is available at: http://www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/victimservices/shareddocs/victim-service-worker-vawir-protocol-high-risk.pdf