

Identifying Future RISK Indicators

The Identifying Risk Worksheet was created by Probation Officer James E. Henderson Jr. of the 15th District Court in Ann Arbor MI. It is a collection of risk factors from various authors and researchers such as Jacqueline Campbell. After the questionnaire was written, it was reviewed by a collaborative team including members of the domestic violence probation department, local batterer intervention agencies, and the local nongovernmental victim services agency SAFE House Center. The worksheet acts as an assessment tool for probation officers to identify future risk factors for those victimized by domestic violence. If used properly, it can educate the interviewees about risk factors even if they are unable to answer honestly. For more information Email: jhenderson@bwjp.org

Defendant Name: _____ **Date:** ____/____/____

Victim Name: _____ **Date:** ____/____/____

Arrest and Police Contact	Defendant	Victim
1. My arrest incident involved use of weapons		
2. My arrest incident involved alcohol		
3. My arrest incident involved amphetamines, speed, or crack.		
4. I have had police contacts/arrests for domestic violence.		
5. I have had police contacts/arrests for other crimes.		
Previous Uses of Violence		
6. I have made threats to kill my partner, family members or pets.		
7. I have killed or abused pets.		
8. I have committed previous assaults which caused physical bruising.		
9. I have assaulted my partner during or before sex.		
10. My assaults have involved biting, Choking, or strangling		
11. I have used or displayed weapons during assaults.		
12. I have a history of holding the victim against her will or following her.		
13. I have been unwilling to turn my victim(s) lose.		
Violence Prone Attitudes/Behaviors		
14. I have smashed, broken, or destroyed victim's things.		
15. I have objectified my partner by calling her names.		
16. I have blamed my victim(s) for injuries to herself.		

Arrest and Police Contact	Defendant	Victim
17. I have exhibited hostile/angry/furious reactions.		
18. I have blamed my victim(s) for all types of promiscuous behavior.		
19. I feel my victim(s) "belongs" to me for life.		
20. I have made jokes about gay or other races or have issues about them.		
21. I have threatened to or attempted suicide.		
22. I have fantasized about homicide or suicide		
23. I have had thoughts and desires of hurting my partner.		
24. I am obsessed with controlling my partner.		
25. I have exhibited paranoid thoughts or fantasies.		
26. I have/had mental health problems.		
27. I am currently depressed/history of depression		
28. I feel highly distraught, desperate, or hopeless.		
29. I notice that I am increasingly indifferent to legal consequences.		
Violence Prone Circumstances and Relationship Factors		
30. I have violated court/probation orders or failed to appear in court.		
31. I have no apparent desire to stop violence or controlling behaviors.		
32. I have access to guns		
33. I have access to victim(s) or her family.		
34. My threats of abuse or homicide are taken seriously by my partner.		
35. I have threatened or complained about my victim's children.		
36. I have a history of alcohol or drug abuse.		
37. I feel an excessive dependence or attachment to my partner.		
38. I feel socially isolated and I have minimal social skills or friends.		
39. My relationship with my victim is extremely tense or unstable.		
40. My victim has initiated separation or divorce.		
41. My victim has begun a new relationship.		

Please read the following information before utilizing the assessment tools:

“Identifying Future RISK Indicators” and “Identifying Power and Control Tactics”

⌚ In Washtenaw County, Michigan (where Probation Officer Jim Henderson developed these assessment tools) district court probation officers use these tools to collect information for presentence investigation reports and to gather insight into how to best work with a particular defendant and how to help enhance the safety of those victimized by violence.

⌚ These tools guide the initial conversation probation officers conduct with probationers convicted of crimes directed at an intimate partner. These tools are also used to guide separate interviews with the victims and/or current intimate partners of the probationer. In Michigan, information in presentence investigation reports is confidential to the public so there is a level of protection for the victim as well as the probationer. However the probationer can read the report and the victim is made aware of that fact.

⌚ During the interview, probationers are asked to approximate the number of times they have used the various types of abusive tactics listed in the assessment tools. In separate interviews similar information is gathered from the victim. The probation officer compares the victim and probationer reports to get a better picture of the nature of the abuse.

⌚ These tools are **NOT** a scientific measure of future risk of danger or lethality, but are a guide to help probation agents assess the level and nature of the violence used by the probationer. These tools are also helpful in assessing the level of accountability the probationer has for his or her violent behavior. This information is then used to tailor supervision strategies and oversight.

⌚ These are educational tools used to help contextualize and reframe certain behaviors as abusive. Reviewing each question can help give victims a new perspective and framework to understand the relationship and the violence. These tools can also help probationers begin to understand their behavior as a pattern of abusive use of power.

☐ Before interviewing victims, agents must work with victims to identify a safe time and place to conduct the interview. Interviews should not take place in front of the probationer, children, or the probationer’s friends or family members.

⌚ It should be made clear to victims that they are not required to answer questions, and that any information that they share with the probation officer is not fully confidential.

⌚ Probation officers should read each question to the victim, stating that research indicates that domestic violence is a pattern of behavior, whereby a variety of different tactics are used to maintain power and control. Thus, it is unlikely that the abuse that they experienced was related to a singular incident. It must also be made clear to victims that they have the option to pass or skip a particular question that they are uncomfortable answering and that those questions that are skipped will not be identified to the court.

⌚ Victims should be given information about community resources and domestic violence services as a matter of course. Whenever possible, the referrals should be made to a specific advocate instead of the general agency. For example, tell the victim that “Jenny is a very helpful person and she can be reached by calling...” In Washtenaw County, Probation Agent Jim Henderson has built relationships with non-profit victim service agencies so that he can arrange, with permission from victims, a safe time for a confidential advocate to call the victim at a later time.

⌚ Remember that mediation is not appropriate in domestic violence cases. These assessments should be conducted with the victim and defendant at separate times and locations. Information from these interviews should not be used to try to “prove truthfulness” of either party. Interviews are opportunities to educate each party as well as to gather information. Denial and minimization of the abuse are common coping strategies used by both parties, especially early in the intervention process.

⌚ Always remember that your actions with the probationer can potentially put the victim and/or current intimate partners of the probationer at risk for further violence or retaliation. Keeping a victim safe is surpasses or trumps our desire of holding the offender accountable. All actions should be measured with both goals in mind.

⌚ Agents are strongly encouraged to partner with both victim services agencies and agencies skilled at working with people who batter intimate partners. Many of these agencies can provide free training and resource materials for other professionals.

For more information on the use of these tools, please contact James Henderson at JHenderson@bwjp.org or (517) 522-8521 Cell (517) 414-7302