

# Guideline for Domestic Violence Risk Assessment

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Domestic violence risk assessment is very complex. It must be noted that there is no perfect tool and that they are never fool-proof. No risk assessment instrument should be used as the only measure, but various assessments should be utilized, including extensive information from perpetrators, victims/survivors, advocates, and any record available. It is important to recognize that the repeat violence is very common in domestic violence and there is no such thing as “low risk.”

This Guideline is developed to introduce some risk assessment tools used around the country and should not be taken as an endorsement of any particular tools. Below, you will find: a) description of each tool, and b) source of the tool and contact information to order.

We ask that you use any of the tools with caution and safety of victims/survivors in mind. As research effort continues to test accuracy of risk assessment, we recommend that court personnel, batterers intervention programs, victim advocates and other service providers to seek the most updated tools and information.

1. **ASSESSING WHETHER BATTERERS WILL KILL**
  - a. This is an 11-item list of indicators in making an assessment of the batterer’s potential to inflict aggravated violence authored by Barbara Hart. Likelihood of a homicide is greater when these factors are present. The greater the number of indicators that the batterer demonstrates or the greater the intensity of indicators, the greater the likelihood of a life-threatening attack.
  - b. Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence (1992). *Accountability: Program Standards for Batterer Intervention Services*. Appendix A (A1-A3)  
[www.mincava.umn.edu/documents/hart/hart.html#id2295149](http://www.mincava.umn.edu/documents/hart/hart.html#id2295149) or National Resource Center on Domestic Violence 1-800-537-2238
2. **DANGER ASSESSMENT (DA)**
  - a. The DA was developed by Jacquelyn Campbell for nurses, advocates and counselors to use with survivors of domestic violence. The first part of the tool assesses severity and frequency of battering by presenting the woman with a calendar of the past year. The second part is 20 yes-no questions that weigh lethality factors.
  - b. [www.dangerassessment.com](http://www.dangerassessment.com)
3. **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE INVENTORY (DVI)**
  - a. The DVI is an automated DV offender assessment instrument that evaluates violence (lethality) potential, assesses control issues, quantifies substance abuse and measures stress coping abilities. This 155-item tool takes 30 minutes to complete.
  - b. [www.riskandneeds.com](http://www.riskandneeds.com) or 1-800-231-2401
4. **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE MOSAIC (DV MOSAIC)**
  - a. This is a domestic violence threat assessment system developed by Gavin de Becker and is selected by the National Victims Center (1998) as “one of the ten most promising new technologies for assisting victims.”

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For use by law enforcement agencies and service providers seeking to determine which spousal violence cases are most likely to escalate.

b. [www.mosaicsystem.com](http://www.mosaicsystem.com)

## 5. **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SCREENING INSTRUMENT (DVSI)**

a. The DVSI consists of twelve questions primarily related to criminal history of domestic violence and other violent offenses, including arrests, convictions and violation of restraining orders. Employment status, recent separation, and presence of children during the incident are the other risk factors probed. This instrument was designed as strictly statistical instrument which does not require inclusion of clinical judgement.

b. Williams, K. R. & Houghton, A. B. (2004). Assessing the risk of domestic violence reoffending: A validation study. *Law and Human Behavior*, 28, 437-455.

[www.springerlink.com/content/u507g1g4j1321870/fulltext.pdf](http://www.springerlink.com/content/u507g1g4j1321870/fulltext.pdf)

## 6. **HCR-20: Assessing Risk for Violence - Version 2**

a. The HCR-20 is a checklist to assess the risk for future violent behavior in criminal and psychiatric populations. The tool consists of 20 items including 10 historical variables, 5 clinical variables, and 5 risk management factors. It has a strict requirement on degree, training, and/or licensure for administrators.

b. [www.parinc.com](http://www.parinc.com) or 1-800-331-8378

## 7. **JUDICIAL CHECKLIST**

a. This four-page checklist, developed by the Judicial Subcommittee of the American Bar Association Commission on Domestic Violence, provides a good overview of domestic violence, legal and behavioral implications, lethality assessments, the impact of domestic violence on child custody cases and criminal cases, and effective domestic violence case management. The checklist, which is printed on glossy card-stock, is a good resource for judges and a handy training tool in the legal setting.

b. [www.abanet.org/domviol/pubs.html](http://www.abanet.org/domviol/pubs.html) or 1-800-285-2221

## 8. **RISK ASSESSMENT**

a. This assessment was developed for a training/reference manual for Ohio Adult Parole Authority. This is a checklist that utilizes four domains of risk (clinical, philosophical, historical, and contextual factors). This is not a scientific assessment and should be used as a guide.

b. Ohio Domestic Violence Network (2001). *Domestic Violence Reference Manual for Ohio Adult Parole Authority*. P.24-26  
[info@odvn.org](mailto:info@odvn.org) or 1-800-934-9840.

## 9. **SPOUSAL ASSAULT RISK ASSESSMENT GUIDE (SARA)**

a. The SARA is a 20-item, paper-and-pencil checklist designed to screen for risk factors of spousal or family-related assault. It is a quality-control checklist that is not only statistical but also includes clinical assessment by administrators.

b. [www.mhs.com](http://www.mhs.com) or 1-800-456-3003