

Source - Report:

**Confidentiality and community risk management:
Challenges and Opportunities for information sharing
Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children – Sept 2011**

It may be helpful to apply the approach proposed by Derek Truscott and Kenneth Crook (*Ethics for the Practice of Psychology in Canada*, University of Alberta Press, 2004) to determine whether an abuser poses a sufficient threat to his partner/former partner to justify sharing what would otherwise be confidential information. They suggest gathering information in five areas.

1. ***The person's history of violence, noting similarities with the current situation***: In domestic violence cases, there is often a strong similarity between the history of violence and the current situation. The abuser is likely to have a history of abuse with his present partner as well as with previous partners. Information about past abuse may be available through police records checks but also can be gathered by speaking with the victim/survivor to collect information about violence that has not been reported to the police.

2. ***The person's relationship to the threatened person***: The closer the relationship, the more seriously the threat needs to be taken. In domestic violence cases, the relationship is very close: the threatened person is almost always the partner of the abuser or, in a smaller number of cases, children of the relationship or children of the partner from a previous relationship.

3. ***The person's opportunity to act on the threat (availability of weapons, access to the victim)***: Because, in domestic violence cases, the abuser has ready access to the victim, the opportunity for him to act on the threat is significant. Even if a no-contact order (a family court restraining order, a peace bond, terms of release or probation relating to earlier charges, etc.) is in place, abusers often ignore these restrictions on their activities and continue to harass, intimidate and assault their partners.

4. ***Whether any factors provoked the threat and whether those factors are likely to continue***: Reports of the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee have identified a number of high-risk factors in cases of domestic homicide and have noted that many of those factors are present in the vast majority of domestic homicides.

Those factors include:

- A history of domestic violence
- A recent or impending separation
- Depression present in the perpetrator
- Increase in level or severity of violence
- Unemployment or drug/alcohol issues for perpetrator
- Access to or possession of firearms
- Prior threats to kill victim or commit suicide.

5. ***The person's response to any intervention already taken or attempted***: This information should be readily available in domestic violence cases through a review of any breaches of restraining orders or

bail conditions as well as of any criminal and family court interventions, including child protection interventions.

A thorough examination of these five areas should provide sufficient information to determine whether risk of ongoing harm is great enough to require a collaborative case management approach (ie; the use of a domestic violence high risk management team) and justifies the sharing of otherwise confidential information. It should also be part of any threat assessment that would be conducted in the process of determining whether or not a particular case meets the high risk mark for referral to a domestic violence high risk team.

The full report from the Centre is available on line and is worth reading – I thought this section provided a thorough approach that is helpful in our work. I have just lifted this page & referenced it, so it is out of context a bit.

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