

Central West Region VAW CAS working group

A review of some highlights of our training sessions - 2007-2012

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Compiled by Susan Jewett from powerpoint presentations provided by speakers

From Dr. Jeffrey Edleson's presentation 2010 - Parenting in the Context of Domestic Violence

Why A Child's Exposure to Violence is Important

- High co-occurrence of child abuse and adult domestic violence
- Children are frequently involved in violent events
- Exposure to violence affects child development
- Exposed children are more likely to be abusers and victims

Why is parenting an issue?

- Battered mothers need parenting services
 - Using power and control
 - Making up for absent father
 - Using children as allies or confidants
 - Children's similarity to father
 - Developing new rituals and support networks
 - Some are abusive
- Gender-bias about fathers and parenting
 - Men as irresponsible, disconnected
 - Mothers as primary caregivers
 - Few services for fathers/boyfriends
- Courts often mandate a relationship

Father are given access

- Father access restricted:
 - 71.2% in DV cases
 - 17.5% no DV
- Judges assigned supervised visitation in:
 - 25.6% of substantiated domestic violence
- 4.6% no evidence or allegation of domestic violence *(Kernic, et al; 2005)*

Evaluations of parenting

- Judges, custody evaluators and others:
 - underestimate the danger of men to their children
 - undervalue the safety strategies used by mothers

How do Men Who Batter Parent?

Research shows:

- Behavior negatively affects children
- Continue threats and violence after separation
- Limited evidence they are more controlling and abusive as parents
- Perpetrators often involve children in violent events *(see Bancroft & Silverman, 2002, for summary)*

Children and fathers

- Children are confused and ambivalent about their feelings toward their fathers
- Some children express relief that their father is out of the house
- Some children express sadness/longing that their father is gone

- Some children ally themselves with their father and see him as a victim, especially if they have seen him arrested.
- Children idealize their fathers, especially if they have little contact with them.

(Groves, et al,2007)

Questions on Father Intervention

- What is the most appropriate forum in which to encourage such contact?
- Will court officers substitute fathering programs for batterer intervention programs and, if so, what are the consequences in terms of safety?
- What are the goals of our work with these violent men who are fathers?

(Edleson & Williams, 2007)

Court Decision Options

- Contact choices
 - No contact
 - Supervised visitation (professional vs. kinship)
 - Supervised exchange (professional vs. kinship)
 - Exchanges in public places
 - Unsupervised visitation
 - Liberal and regular visitation
 - Shared custody/parenting
- Not automatic! Behavior based, not time based.
- Not rushed to least restrictive
- Regular judicial reviews in any option

(Jaffe & Crooks, 2007)

Visitation Access

- Some are too dangerous to receive visitation
- Use of professional supervised visitation centers
- Visitation centers require special precautions and training for domestic violence cases
- "Therapeutic visitation"

Service Decision Options

- Sometimes it is clinically useful to the child to involve fathers, must ask:
 - Is the father complying with court orders and mandated treatment?
 - What do family members want?
 - What is the level of violence and safety?
 - How involved are other systems?
 - What protections/risks in cultural environments?
 - What is the worker's assessment?

(Groves et al, 2007)

How do we engage Men Who Batter as Fathers?

Father Content in Men's Programs

- Mothers want more programming about fathering in programs
- Programs ought to pay more systematic attention to the issue of fatherhood
- More tools need to be developed
- Men need to understand the effects of violence on their children and how to reverse them
- Fathers need training to be nonviolent parents

(Davis & Arian, 2007; Peled, 2000)

Intervention: Father Program Content

- **Specialized content**
 - Direct and indirect impact on children
 - Enhance empathy with children and mother
 - Men's continued use of abuse
 - Parenting without violence
 - Co- or parallel parenting
 - Father's future role in child's life

Father's Programs

- After-care parenting groups
 - Caring Dad's Program (Scott, Crooks et al.; <http://www.caringdadsprogram.com>)
 - Addressing Fatherhood with MwB (Advocates for Family Peace, MN; stopdomesticabuse.org)
 - Wilder's 12-week skills group (Mathews, 1995)
 - Crager & Anderson 12-session (communication, online on MINCAVA)
 - Fantastic Fathers (Schwartz, online on MINCAVA)

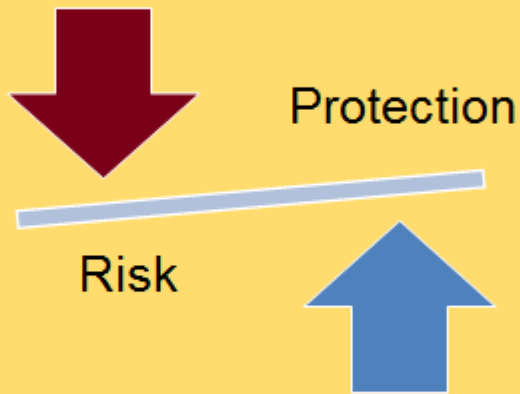
Caring Dads

- **Goals:**
 - Develop trust and motivation
 - Increase focus on child-centered fathering
 - Increase responsibility of abuse and neglect
 - Consolidate learning, trust, plan for future
- Small groups, 17 sessions
- Most often taken after batterer intervention Scott et al (2006)

In conclusion:

- Parenting by men who batter is important
- There are many opportunities
- But there are many concerns
 - Some fathers are too dangerous for contact
 - Do we encourage engagement? Where?
 - How do we ensure safety?
- In every area there is a dire need for research:
 - basic behavioral knowledge
 - assessment
 - decision making
 - intervention

Risk and protection



(Masten
& Sesma, 1999;
ACE studies)



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From presentation by Dr. Katreena Scott - Missed Opportunities

Three themes:

- Listening to victims
- Containing perpetrators - how do we respond to risk?
- Coordinating systems

Theme #1: Listening to the victims:

- No one took my fear or concerns seriously: Start listen to victim
- Stereotypes and attitudes about who and what a victim is and how they will respond
- Stereotypes and attitudes about who and what the abuser is and how they will respond
- Dismissive or condescending attitude and labelling victim as the problem
- Patronizing attitude and not acting on fears: (Remember Jackie Campbell's research that says the #1 predictive factor in femicide is a woman's own account of fearing she will be murdered)
- Dismissing my concern's as a mother for my child's safety by treating me as though I am full of jealousy and hatred and gold digger towards Andrew": " As long as we can continue to say in one sentence "he was an abusive spouse but a good father, we're not going to change anything" Dr. P. Jaffe.
- Systems working in silos, unwilling to coordinate interventions or even speak to each other

As long as we can continue to say in one sentence 'he was an abusive spouse but a good father,' we are not going to change anything.



Theme #2: Containing Perpetrators - How do we respond to risk?

- Ironically, as risk increases, both victims and perpetrators tend to become more isolated with fewer safeguards

- Considering Severity: Assaults vary in severity. From the work of the DVDRC and from longitudinal studies, we have a much better sense of level of risk.

Lethality and Risk Factors

- 84% of lethal cases have 7+ risk factors
 - Actual or pending separation, new partner in victim's life
 - History of domestic violence
 - Perpetrator depressed, Prior suicide attempts
 - Obsessive behaviour displayed by perpetrator, sexual jealousy
 - Escalation of violence
 - Prior threats to kill victim (also victim fear of being killed)
 - Prior attempts to isolate victim
 - Access to firearms
 - Excessive use of alcohol or drugs
 - Perpetrator unemployed
 - History of violence outside the family
 - Prior threats with a weapon
 - High control over victims' daily activities
 - Perpetrator failure to comply with authority
 - Extreme minimization and/or denial of past violence against victim

Risk is Dynamic and Perpetrator Response to Intervention is Very Important

1. In this case, Denial is a risk factor:

- Some level of minimization, blame and denial is very common, which is why offender accountability is one of the main aims of PAR programs
- But denial comes at different levels. Most often men admit to some wrongdoing, but minimize extent and degree of harm or blame partner for his behaviour
- A subset of men are "highly resistant". These men may completely deny their offense, may be openly hostile or dismissive towards program staff and program goals and are often disruptive to group
- In our sample of 488 men, collected at a similar agency in London Ontario, 144 deemed highly resistant; which is about 30%

Risk Factors Associated with High Levels of Denial

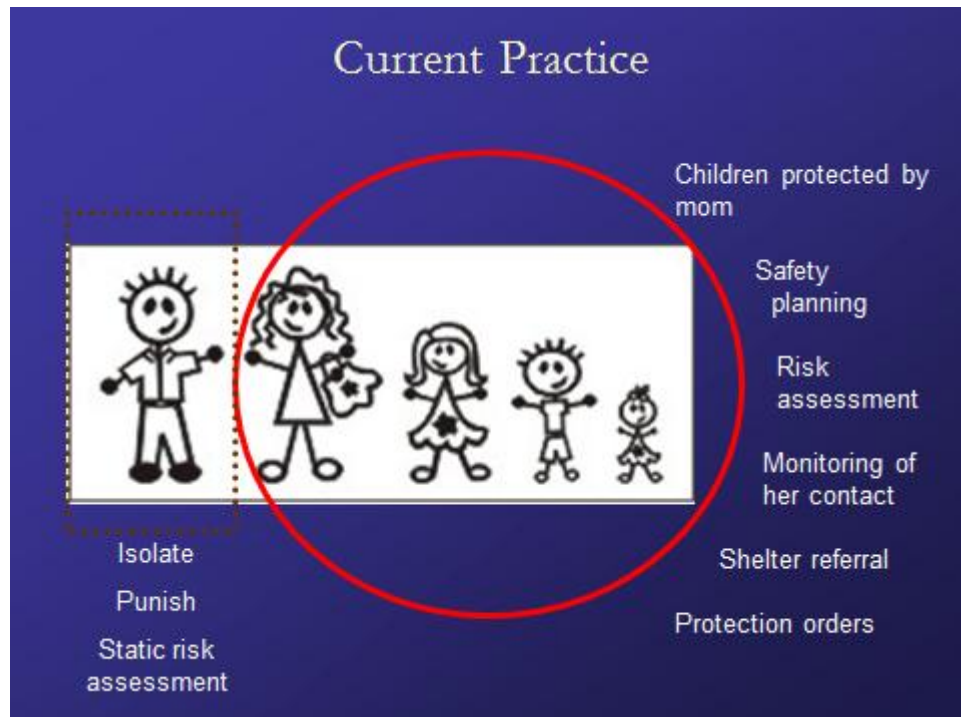
- As compared to non-resistant batterers, highly resistant batterers are more likely to:
 - Have a past criminal offence
 - Have a current restraining order in force
 - Have a current dispute with their partners over custody and access
 - Not be living with their partners and have no plans to reconcile
 - Self-report more difficulty managing anger
- The partners of highly resistant batterers report:
 - More physical abuse
 - More financial control
 - Greater concerns for personal safety
 - Greater fear of their partners

2. Second additional risk factor: Failure to complete PAR program

What do we know about failure to complete a PAR program?

- Estimates across studies suggest that there is about a 20% change in risk for re-assault associated with completion of batterer program. In other words, men who fail to complete are about 20% more likely to re-assault their partners
- Failure to complete intervention is one of the best predictors we currently have of future assault Citations: Bennett, Stoops, Call & Flett (2007); Gondolf (2001)

3. Third additional risk factor: Breach of no-contact order
What do we know about breaches of no-contact order?
- Rates of all forms of re-offence (i.e., additional assaults, breaches) greatest in the first 2 years
 - Any re-offence predicts subsequent assaults
 - Again, offending during the probation or intervention period is one of the best predictors of subsequent assault Citations: Klein & Tobin (2008); Gondolf (2001)
4. Fourth additional risk factors:
- Recent fear and recent obsession
 - involvement of his son



Towards Safer Practice

Father held accountable
for keeping family safe

Probation monitors
and assesses risk

Ongoing safety
planning for him

Collaboration and
information sharing
between systems



Court system
Probation Services
Child Protection
Women's Advocates
Addiction Services
Mental Health Services

Intervention for trauma and
violence

Support in keeping herself and
her children safe

Support for housing and other
practical needs

What's missing here? Towards a Safer Practice

For dad:

- Father held accountable for keeping family safe
- Probation monitors and assesses risk
- Ongoing safety planning for him
- Collaboration and information sharing between systems

Systems Involved:

- Court system
- Probation Services
- Child Protection
- Women's Advocates
- Addiction Services
- Mental Health Services

For Mom & Kids

- Intervention for trauma and violence
- Support in keeping herself and her children safe
- Support for housing and other practical needs

Risk and Potential Responses:

1. High Level of Denial at Program Intake

- *How successful is your community at engaging highly resistant clients? What happens when a man stubbornly refuses to admit to his assault?*
- *How do you communicate with partners of high risk clients? How do you help address her risk? How do you address his risk?*

2. Failure to Complete the PAR program

Protective Barrier around Dad

- Consequence for Dad of his continued denial (which resulted in him being asked to leave the Partner Abuse Response program) should have been a breach of probation - not being asked to repeat the program
 - Also, because Dad is no longer attending PAR program, he is monitored less often. Until the breach is prosecuted, he needs to be further monitored perhaps by his PO or perhaps in agreement with the intervention program.
 - Dad might also be referred to another intervention to address risk and to monitor him
- * How many men "fall through the cracks" in this manner? How do you follow-up when men fail to comply?*
- * How supportive would your community be of immediate breaches for failure to comply?*

Supports and Services to Moms/Partners

- Ironically, the obligation of PAR programs to contact men's partners ends when men are no longer in intervention (though many continue regardless). This means that as risk increases, support and services to victims often decrease.
 - Men's failure to complete intervention should prompt further outreach to victims.
- * Who communicates with women about increased risk associated with men's failure to complete intervention? What extra services or connections is a women provided with to support her in the context of increased risk?*

3. Breaching a of no contact Order

▪ Protective Barrier around Dad

Research is clear: Breaches of any probation condition should be prosecuted vigorously. 2006 Practice Memorandums for Crowns that is relevant. It instructs Crown counsel to "give careful consideration to the principal of general deterrence as well as the nature of the breach before agreeing to withdraw a charge of failing to comply with any court order as part of a plea negotiation. In the context of spousal abuse, disobeying non-association, non-communication or "stay away" conditions suggests a greater risk of potential violence by the partner. Accordingly, where there is a reasonable prospect of conviction, it will, generally speaking, be in the public interest to proceed with these charges. After a conviction for a serious breach of recognizance, Crown counsel should seek a consecutive sentence where possible."

- ** What court supports are available to women and children dealing with men who have breached probation orders? Would your community have made a referral for the children? Who communicates with Mom (and a new partner, if any) about her further increased risk?*

4. Risk and Potential Responses: CAS Assessment

Risk assessment in cases of DV should be re-examined by MCYS and OACAS. There should be a fundamental change in strategy for assessing risk in cases involving domestic violence so that the weight of decision-making rests on risk of harm posed by the perpetrator (rather than the capacity of the non-offending parent to take protective action or on evidence of psychological harm to child).

5. Risk and Potential Responses: Child's Exposure to Violence

Protective Barrier around Dad

- CAS would have opened a case on the basis of Dad's level of risk
- CAS would have consulted with probation officer to make a plan for risk management and reduction
- CAS might have required supervised access until Dad completes a domestic violence program and is accountable for past assaults
- CAS might have referred Dad to a program for fathers with a history of abuse, or exposing their child to abuse, (Caring Dads) for additional intervention and to reduce his use of his child in adult conflict

Support and Services to Mom and new partner

- Additional safety planning and support needed at this point for Mom and children
- CAS might have supported Mom and children in accessing ongoing monitoring of their safety and in accessing services that were relevant to their needs.

Third Theme: Coordination

a) High Risk Teams

If systems could coordinate high risk cases and develop a means of ensuring the victims safety and the child's safety is paramount to working with DV victims and offenders outcomes would be better

- It is imperative that these teams consist of: police, child welfare, mental health, correction Canada, probation and parole, shelters/community agencies (Sexual Assault Centres, Victim Services, Victim Witness, PAR, Bail pilot)
- The family court must be made aware of the importance and vital role High risk teams can play in making recommendations
- Should be lead by police and each team should have a trained threat assessor on team
- Develop a mechanism of assessing and managing risk

b) High Risk Case Counselling

- Bring together CAS, men's program, women's program and others involved professionals and make plans to:
 - Increase the protective barrier around perpetrator
 - Increase supports to victims
- Part of our work is to better coordinate systems

c) Other Recommendations

- Continue to educate professionals and non-professionals on risk factors for lethality so that there is shared understanding and shared information
- Develop policies to support and require collaborative case management with risk for lethality is high

Summary of this case (which Katreena was examining):

- Although Dad pled guilty, he continued to deny assaulting Mom
- He did not complete an intervention program capable of addressing his poor accountability
- He never examined his own pattern of control and abusive behaviour
- There were essentially no consequences for him for failing to complete the PAR program or for breaching no-contact order
- At no time did his increased risk result in any changes to his level of contact with his child

Dr. Peter Jaffe's presentation - May 2011 - Guelph

What Should We Have Learned about DV in the Past 30 Years?

- Significant problem that impacts the whole community
- Victims, perpetrators and children are a very heterogeneous group that defy stereotypes
- Key strategies have to include safety, accountability and healing
- Coordination/integration of courts & community services is essential

Domestic Homicides are Predictable and Preventable

- 85% of the cases had at least 7 risk markers
- Critical information held by family, work colleagues, front-line professionals
- Children are the victims in a number of ways
- Critical need to collaborate between child protection and VAW services as well as the justice system (criminal and family court)

Why Domestic Violence Is Relevant in Custody Disputes?

- Abuse Does Not End With Separation
- Overlap Between Child Abuse and Domestic Violence
- Children's Exposure to an Inappropriate Role Model
- Undermining of Non-Abusive Parent
- New Relationships Potentially Violent
- Perpetual Litigation as Form of On-Going Control
- Extreme Cases - Homicides and Abductions
Jaffe, P.G. Lemon, N. & Poisson, S.E. (2002) *Child Custody Disputes and Domestic Violence: Clinical and Legal Issues*. Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA

Custody Disputes Dilemmas

- Accurately assessing perpetrator, victim, & children
- Domestic violence but no visible/measurable impact on children
- Children aligned with victim/primary caretaker {alienation allegations?}
- Children aligned with batterer {wishes vs. best interests}
- Role of extended family {helpful or harmful?}

Guiding Principles For Resolving Conflicting Priorities in Custody Decisions

- **Priority 1** Protect children
- **Priority 2** Protect the safety & support the well-being of the victim parent
- **Priority 3** Respect the right of adult victims to direct their own lives
- **Priority 4** Hold perpetrators of domestic violence accountable for their abusive behavior
- **Priority 5** Allow child access to both parents

Strategy: Begin with the goal of achieving all five.
Resolve conflict by abandoning the lower priority.

Janet Johnston 2007

From Maureen Reid's presentation (presented with Dr. Jaffe):

Challenges for CAS staff with families who are post separation:

- ▶ Child protection must carefully consider the risks to children when there is a history of domestic violence and protracted family law proceedings
- ▶ Assessing for the ongoing dynamics of 'coercive control' is important

- ▶ Child protection involvement may provide a much needed conflict management role, or failing that may provide the corroborating evidence needed to support the victim parent

Promising Collaborations

- ▶ Presently seeing beginning improvements as a result of our Community Safety Planning Conferences
- ▶ Shared understanding of risk will help to enhance the safety planning and service coordination that are goal of conferences

Challenges for Service Providers

- ▶ Implementing common cross agency risk assessment processes
- ▶ Managing the volume of service demand and prioritizing services to most risky situations
- ▶ Developing a potpourri of services that align to the needs of each family- one size fits all just doesn't work

From Lundy Bancroft's presentation - in Guelph 2012

Profile of Men who use Abusive Behaviours - consistently true:

- Coercively controlling
- Entitled/ Self-centered
- Believes he is the victim
- Manipulative/ Good public image
- **Skillfully dishonest**
- **Disrespectful, Superior, Depersonalizing**
- **Good early in relationship**
- **Externalizes responsibility**
- **Social isolation of the victim, and sometimes of the children as well)**
- **Mentality of ownership, often including severe possessiveness**
- Denial
- **Minimization**
- **Lack of empathy for victim**
- **Punishes, retaliates**
- **Batters serially**
- **Danger increases post separation**

Tactics used by Men When Seeking Allies

- Seeking sympathy
- Minimizing seriousness of the offense
- Blaming alcohol
- Bonding with males against women
- Flattering/flirting with females
- **Shifting blame to victim**
- **Lying**
- **Promising change**
- **Getting people to pressure or criticize the victim**
- **Manipulating**

Working with Men who use Abusive Behaviours:

- Close monitoring and supervision
- Avoiding collusion
- Pressing him to deal with his abusiveness
- Don't take his word on his progress or behavior
- Maintain relationship with victim

Interventions to Avoid

- Conjoint counselling or mediation
- Anger management
- Substance abuse treatment *as a substitute for* legal consequences and batterer intervention services.
- Diversion

Working with Batterers on Parenting

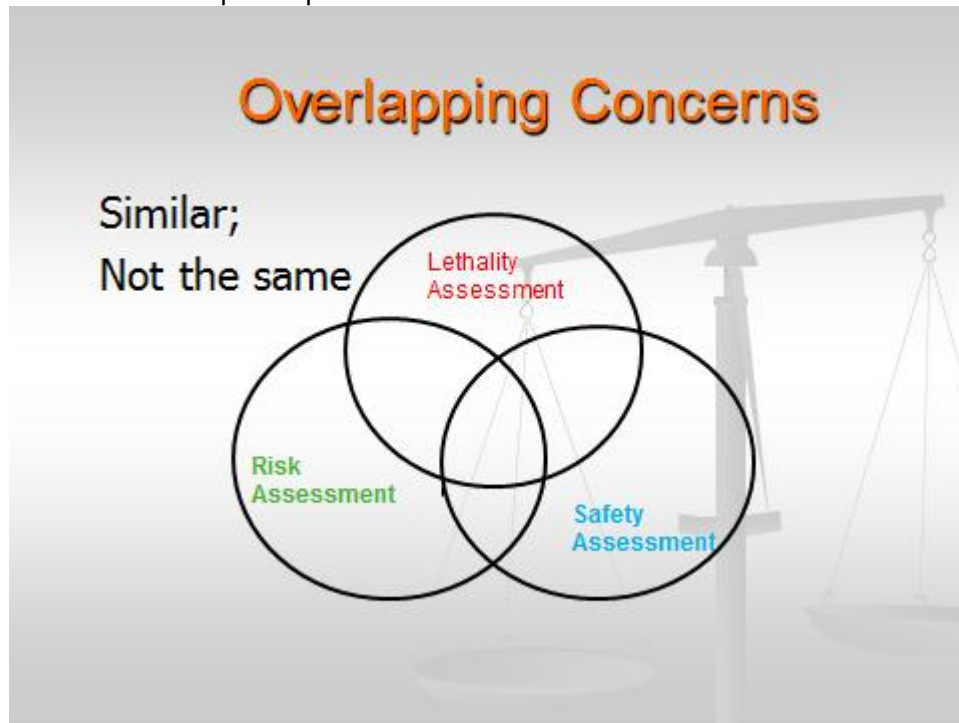
- Effects on children of exposure to battering
- Child abuse prevention
 - ✓ Effects of physical abuse/"physical discipline"
 - ✓ Alternate approaches to discipline
 - ✓ Effects of sexual abuse and boundary violations
 - ✓ Proper respect for children's boundaries
 - ✓ Effects of verbal abuse
 - ✓ Having age-appropriate expectations
- Proper co-parenting
 - Respecting the children's mother
 - Respecting her maternal authority
 - Sharing decision-making
 - Modeling respect for females
 - Modeling accepting responsibility for one's actions

Interventions to *avoid* with batterers

- ✓ Teaching skills for gaining children's trust
- ✓ Teaching skills to get children to open up emotionally
- ✓ Teaching insight into children's private thoughts and feelings
- ✓ Teaching the importance of fathers in children's lives

Contributing to Children's Recovery - Advocate for your clients' children

- Assist mothers with custody and visitation litigation
- Write effective reports for courts about the children
- Offer information to mothers (partners of clients) about children and how to assist them
- Don't help clients to seek custody or visitation or to find attorneys
- Advocate for your clients' children
- Work with CPS on holding the abuser accountable and offering appropriate supportive assistance to the mother
- Don't write reports for client's attorneys, or for the clients themselves - reports should always be addressed directly to the court



Community Challenges

- Concerns about costs
- Concerns about liability
- Concerns about being called into court as expert when don't fully understand research or evidence or lack thereof
- Safety concerns
- Systems/Agencies not talking to each other
 - Not planning together for system wide risk assessment
 - Adopting own strategies - not communicated with other parts of system as to why
 - Not understanding other agency models
 - Not communicating results or not giving credence to results from other systems
 - Not knowing how to reconcile discrepancies
 - DV Advocates afraid that Risk Assessment results will be used against victims
 - Concerned that unintended consequences not thoroughly considered

Protocol

As important as the instrument or system is the Protocol.

Essential elements:

- Agreement on purpose of risk assessment in system/agency
- Approach to victims if involved
 - What is said to encourage participation
 - What is said regarding use of results - confidentiality
 - If perpetrator - what are legalities of use of results
- Who conducts the risk assessment - first responders? In depth assessors?
 - Credentials - training necessary

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5 Item version of Danger Assessment Tool - predictive validity for any and severe re-assault

- Has the physical violence increased in frequency or severity over the past 6 months? 3.7 (1.9-7.1) <0.001
- Has he ever used a weapon or threatened you with a weapon? 2.1 (1.1-3.9) 0.025
- Do you believe he is capable of killing you? 2.6 (1.1-6.1) 0.027
- Have you ever been beaten by him while you were pregnant? 2.2 (1.2-4.1) 0.010
- Is he violently and constantly jealous of you? 3.0 (1.1-8.1) 0.028
 - *Cross-validated Hosmer-Lemeshow goodness of fit = 0.12; Area under the curve = 0.79
 - If three of 5 - 83% sensitivity but 56% specificity
 - If four yeses of 5 - 66% sensitivity & 82% specificity
 - Either way - outperforms women's perception of risk by itself

Policy Possibilities

- Use 5 item version in Emergency Department, protective order hearings, child custody etc.
- If 3 of 5, do full Danger Assessment and proceed based on results
- If 4 of 5, policy is to report to police &/or to Domestic Violence advocacy program - her choice - do with her
- If 2 of 5, tell her has two of 5 highly predictive risk factors for serious assault/homicide - highly recommend further immediate advocacy - call with her
- If 0-1 of 5, proceed with normal referral/procedural processes for DV

In Maryland, they use these 3 questions from the Danger Assessment (if any answer is "yes", then they proceed to a full danger assessment (or refer for one to be completed asap)

- Has he/she threatened to kill you or your children?
- Has he/she used a weapon against you or threatened you with a weapon?
- Do you think he/she might try to kill you?

If full Danger Assessment results shows 3 more "yeses" on these questions, then the protocol is followed:

- Does he/she have a gun or can get one easily?
- Has he/she ever tried to choke you
- Is he/she violently jealous or control most or all of your daily activities?
- Have you left him or separated after living together or being married in the past year?
- Is he/she unemployed?
- Has he/she threatened or tried to kill self?
- Do you have a child that he/she knows is not his/hers?
- Does he/she follow or spy on you or leave threatening messages?

And always, the assessor needs to trust their judgement/gut:

Is there anything else that worries you about your safety? – assessor judgment about response

Policy, Practice and Research Implications

- Need for substance abuse treatment for abusive men - concurrent with batterer intervention? Combination programs? New models needed with rigorous evaluations
- Coordinated community response with probation, courts, batterer intervention, DV victim services, children's services, fatality reviews closely working together to plan a community risk assessment strategy
- Need for collaborations between researchers & clinicians in substance abuse, health, criminal justice and advocacy - for advances in risk assessment - research and policy
- Deadly mix of guns, substances & interpersonal violence

Future Directions:

- "Danger Assessment is a Process not a Product" (B. Hart)
- Field developing rapidly - watch literature
- Differentiating lethality & reoffending risk - different batterer typologies may explain differences (Holtzworth-Munroe)
- Strategies for working with victims important - to increase their realistic appraisal and to determine risk factors not available from criminal record checks or from perpetrators never previously arrested - e.g. as part of batterer intervention programs
 - They need to know as much as we need to know
- Assessing safety - protective strategies as well as danger - implications for interventions
- Continuing to collect data - so practice is evidence based
- Important to develop/test risk assessment accurate for
 - children being killed/harmed
 - Immigrant & aboriginal communities
 - same sex couples
 - female perpetrators - both of homicide/attempted - may or may not be primary aggressor in prior DV

Immigration and First Nation Issues

- May pretend that understands English better than she/he does
 - Language as a means of control
 - Telephone interpreter better than nothing but best to have a member of team - imperative that some bilingual services providers
- Making risk assessment culturally appropriate - Cree/Lakota project "Walking the Path" with DA in Alberta
- Afraid of deportation
 - Assure will not call Immigration Services
 - May have been threatened with own deportation OR a family member's deportation - is this a risk factor for re-assault &/or homicide?