

SARA as a Risk Assessment for Intimate Partner Homicide

Limits

It is possible to assess risk for IPV with consistency and accuracy using simple tools



It is possible to manage risk for IPV with consistency and accuracy using simple tools



It is not possible to assess and manage risk for IPH with consistency and accuracy using simple tools

Explanations

Some simple tools are biased

- Assume risk factors are the same across cases

Some simple tools are additive

- Assume risk factors don't interact

Some simple tools are predictive

- Assume risk factors are stable over time

Some simple tools ignore dynamics

- Assume motivations, context are unimportant

The SARA-V3

Uses and Users

For use with (alleged) perpetrators

- Adults, male or female, ≥ 18 yrs

At any stage of legal proceedings

- Pre-arrest, -trial, -sentence; pre- and post-release

For use by criminal justice professionals

- With basic expertise in assessment and IPV

Development

Revision of earlier versions of SARA

- 1994, 1995, 1999
- Response to feedback

Influenced by advancements in SPJ

- Added relevance ratings, formulation, scenario planning, victim vulnerability factors, expanded management

Updated literature review

- Scientific and professional literatures

Administration

- 1 • Case information
- 2 • Presence of factors
- 3 • Relevance of factors
- 4 • Risk scenarios
- 5 • Management strategies
- 6 • Conclusory opinions

Nature of IPV

1. Intimidation
2. Threats
3. Physical Harm
4. Sexual Harm
5. Severe IPV
6. Chronic IPV
7. Escalating IPV
8. IPV-Related Supervision Violations

Perpetrator Risk Factors

1. Intimate Relationships
2. Non-Intimate Relationships
3. Employment Finances
4. Trauma/Victimization
5. General Antisocial Conduct
6. Major Mental Disorder
7. Personality Disorder
8. Substance Use
9. Violent/Suicidal Ideation
10. Distorted Thinking About IPV

Victim Vulnerability Factors

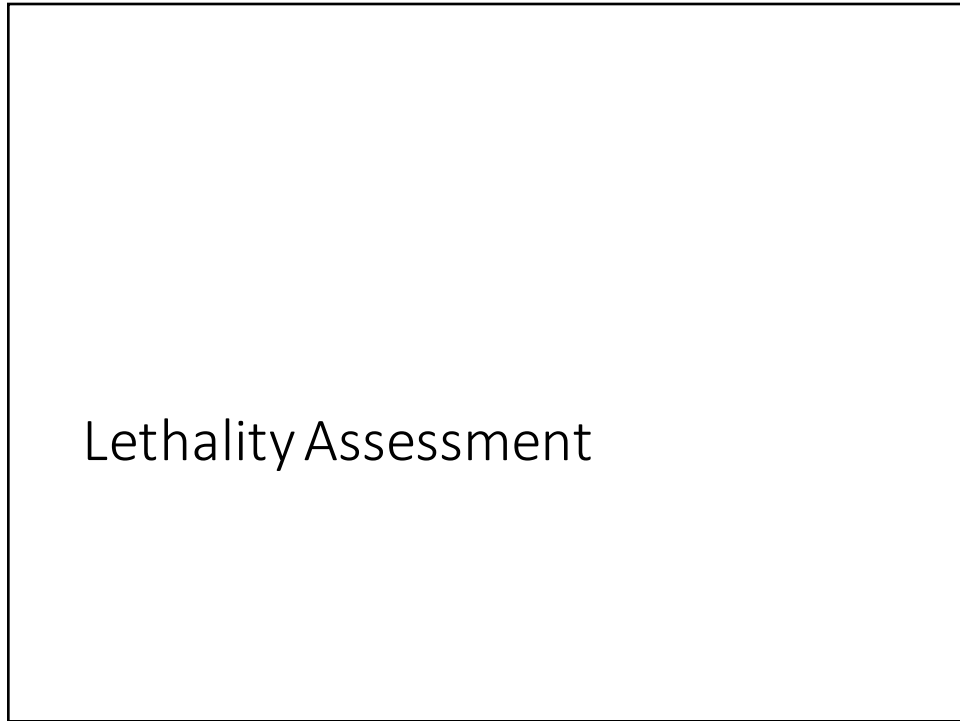
1. Barriers to Security
2. Barriers to Independence
3. Interpersonal Resources
4. Community Resources
5. Attitudes or Behavior
6. Mental Health

Basic Scenarios

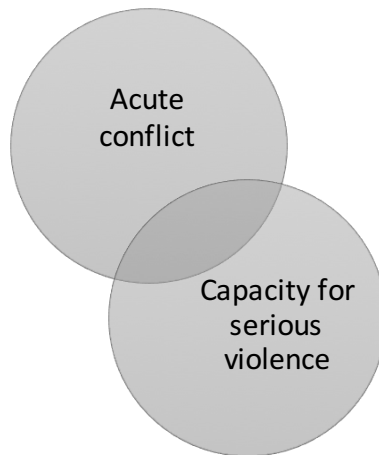
Repeat	Twist	Escalation	Improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider all past IPV, not just most recent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in motivation, victimology, modus operandi 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Including lethal or "worst case" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Including desistence or "best case"

Management Strategies

Monitoring	Supervision	Treatment	Victim Safety Planning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveillance or repeated assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imposition of controls or restriction of freedoms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rehabilitation, including further assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancement of security resources for identifiable targets



Lethality Factors



Acute Conflict

- Involved in serious dispute or very upset over outcome of dispute
 - Especially marital separation, child custody
- Important warning signs:
 - Stalking
 - Ultimatum or conditional threat
 - “If you don’t...”

Capacity for Serious Violence

- Demonstrated ability or willingness to engage in life-threatening violence
 - Especially current thoughts of violence, history of life-threatening violence
- Important warning signs:
 - Current thoughts of violence involve weapons or other high-lethality methods (e.g., strangulation)
 - Used weapons or high-lethality methods in past
 - Recent escalation of violence or violent thoughts of violence

Severe Disinhibition

- Mental state may overcome usual inhibitions against life-threatening violence
 - Especially mental or emotional problems
- Important warning signs:
 - Serious substance use
 - Serious mental illness (e.g., psychosis, depression)
 - Suicidal or nihilistic thoughts

Conclusions

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- IPH cannot be predicted, but it can be prevented
- The goal of IPV risk assessment should be prevention, not prediction
- Risk for IPH should be considered as part of every IPV risk assessment
- Effective IPV/IH risk assessment requires sophisticated tools used by expert evaluators based on comprehensive information

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