

**TIPS FOR WORKERS WORKING WITH DADS:  
ASSESSING LEVELS OF RISK--  
MEN WHO HAVE BEEN VIOLENT WITH THEIR PARTNERS**

- ✓ **Assessing risk and strengths should be continuous. Escalation of violence and/or control indicates increased risk. Partner's leaving may increase risk.**
- ✓ **Assessing risk should be based on consulting multiple sources of information: 51A reporters, collaterals, arrest reports, police information, criminal records, mothers, children and other family members.**
- ✓ **Men who batter vary in their risk levels and strengths, and this has implications for how we approach them.**

This tip sheet will help you assess levels of risk and strengths for men who batter. Please consult **TIPS FOR WORKERS WORKING WITH DADS: FLEXIBLE APPROACHES FOR MEN WHO HAVE BEEN VIOLENT WITH THEIR PARTNERS** for suggestions for engaging men in different ways depending upon their level of violence and strengths.

MODERATELY VIOLENT men have lower levels of violence and are more likely to change. It is appropriate to consider services to help moderately violent men address domestic violence *and* to support their parenting. Visitation may be highly advisable if the father is out of the home.

**CHARACTERISTICS OF MODERATELY VIOLENT ABUSERS:** *Which statements are true?*

- ◆ Violence may be frequent—more than once a month.
- ◆ Usually does not cause injury, but may include slapping and pushing.
- ◆ Coercive control (psychological abuse and controlling behaviors) is present but is not severe or highly intrusive.
- ◆ Usually lacks criminal record.
- ◆ Violence usually remains within the family.
- ◆ No indication of current substance abuse.
- ◆ One (or two at most) Restraining or Protective Orders (R/Os) with same partner.

**INDICATORS OF STRENGTH:** *Are any of these statements true?*

- ◆ Partner reports that she is not frightened; open to visitation.
- ◆ Children report positive relationship with the father and say they are not afraid of him.
- ◆ Father can play in appropriate ways with children.
- ◆ Children do not act out after visits.
- ◆ Low level violence took place years ago; has been in other relationship(s) and current partner reports no physical abuse.
- ◆ Violence only within the family; no indicators of violence toward others.
- ◆ Father is open to services, such as a fatherhood program, substance abuse treatment and counseling.
- ◆ Has attended a batterer intervention program (BIP) and has remained nonviolent afterward.
- ◆ Controlling and abusive behaviors have stopped or decreased significantly.

ONGOING REASSAULTERS are men whose violence is not severe, but who may continue assaulting (and thereby traumatizing) their partners and/or children. These men

typically continue physical abuse despite treatment; episodic substance abuse is fairly common.

**POTENTIALLY LETHAL OR HIGHLY DANGEROUS** men are a fraction of all men who batter. These men may end up making a lethal or near lethal assault. Some have a history of high levels of violence; others have no history of violence but have intense controlling behaviors manifested in jealousy, stalking and severe control of their partners. As you consider signs of higher risk, please note that highly intrusive control and/or extreme jealousy are indicators of serious risk *even in the absence of violent behavior*. Some of the most dangerous men have not been violent prior to a lethal or near lethal assault.

The list below lists indicators of ongoing reassaulters and of highly dangerous men. Ask about *all* items consistently.

INDICATORS OF HIGHER RISK OR INCREASING RISK (items 5-18 most acute).

1. Abuse and/or violence accompanied by episodic or binge use of alcohol or drugs.
2. More than one restraining order (R/O) in CORI; R/Os with different partners.
3. Signs of increasing instability: recent unemployment, signs of depression or trauma.
4. Violence is not of the most intense variety (no severe bruises, broken bones or serious injury) *but it does not stop*.

The most severe items are numbers 5→18. Make sure you make comprehensive inquiries.

5. Has forced her to have sex when she did not want to do so.
6. He owns a gun.
7. She has left him. She is in a battered women's shelter or is looking for a shelter.
8. He has used a weapon against her or has threatened to use a lethal weapon.
9. He has avoided arrest for domestic violence.
10. He is not the father of the children.
11. Intrusive control: controls car, money, who she can see, when she can go out.
12. Higher levels of violence: punching, kicking; bruises, cuts, and/or continuing pain; beatings w/severe bruises, burns, broken bones; head injury, internal injury, permanent injury; wounds from weapon.
13. Acute jealousy coupled with violence: irrational accusations of infidelity, spying; leaves notes, monitors her, and repeatedly destroys property. Says, "If I can't have you, no one will."
14. Behaviors continue after separation or divorce.
15. Violence is increasing in frequency or severity.
16. Escalating response to trigger events: partner separating, leaving him, becoming more independent.
17. Threats to kill or hurt children.
18. Threats to kill or hurt partner.

INDICATORS OF STRENGTH: (May indicate change over time)

*Are any of these statements true?*

- ◆ Has agreed to and is participating in services such as substance abuse treatment or a batterer intervention program.
- ◆ Respects visitation agreements; he is not using children to obtain information about the mother, and he is not making negative statements about the mother to the children.
- ◆ Has begun to refrain from threats, monitoring behavior, and from any acts of violence.

The manual [Accountability and Connection with Abusive Men](#), has more information. It is available at: <http://www.thegreenbook.info/documents/Accountability.pdf>

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