

Resources and Helpful Links

For help and information in B.C. contact the free and confidential domestic violence hotline: VictimLink B.C. at **1-800-563-0808**, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in multiple languages.

Also see: www.domesticviolencebc.ca and www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.ca

For free downloadable brochures on safety planning, how to talk to abused women, or how to talk to an abuser, go to: www.spotthesigns.ca

Safety planning if your client is preparing to leave the relationship:

Prepare a safety bag and keep it hidden in a secure place, e.g. with a friend. This bag should include items such as clothing for you and the children; cash for a taxi and essentials; a list of important telephone numbers (including transition houses); medication; and a spare set of keys. Include important valuables and saleable items, photocopies of important documents: passports, visas, immigration papers, birth certificates, marriage license, bank books, insurance papers, and tax returns.

Save money for an emergency in a safe place or ask friends or family members to hold money for you. Have a savings account opened in your own name.

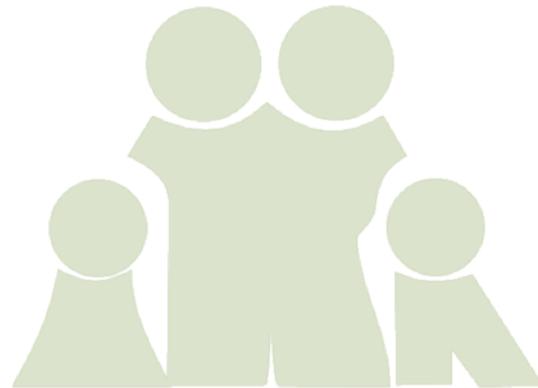
Keep a diary. Keep any evidence: pictures, threatening letters, records of medical visits, or apology notes.

Contact a lawyer to know your rights.

Before another incident occurs, leave if possible, and go to a safe place.

In an emergency, call 911

Domestic Violence Interview Guide For Lawyers



Domestic homicides are the most predictable and preventable of all homicides. They share a pattern of risk factors that can be detected if we know what to look for and if the right questions are asked.

Spot the signs — before someone dies

What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic Violence is a pattern of coercive behaviour that is used by one person in an intimate relationship to gain power and control over another. Domestic Violence includes physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and financial abuse. It occurs between people of all socio-economic, cultural, racial, educational and religious backgrounds, regardless of sexual orientation, or whether the couple is in a long-term marriage or a short-term dating relationship.

What should you do if your client tells you she is a victim of Domestic Violence?

Let her know that your conversation with her is confidential. Provide her with information about resources available to her in the community including shelters, counseling, safety planning, referrals and advocacy.

Ensure that you and your office staff have developed a safety plan for your own workplace and have protocols in place to ensure safe and confidential communication with your client.



Remember that abused women and their children who receive help from the larger community (professionals, friends, neighbours, family members, co-workers) are more likely to safely leave an abusive relationship.

Why you need this Guide:

- To identify whether your client is in or has been in an abusive relationship
- To focus your interview on identifying the presence of risk factors in your client's life
- To organize and document information for your brief
- To ensure that your representation of and advice to your client is fully informed by her unique needs and circumstances
- To make appropriate referrals and provide information to your client about resources in the community and safety planning
- To determine whether immediate action is required because your client is in imminent danger



We are all touched by the impact of domestic violence and have a personal responsibility to help end it. Recognizing it is the first step. Take the warning signs seriously. If your client asks you to or if you believe it might be a life and death situation, call 911 and involve the police.

Spot the signs — before someone dies



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The Domestic Violence Interview Guide

Current Status of the Relationship

- What is the nature, length and history of the relationship between your client and her partner?
- Are they dating, living common-law, formally married, or divorced?
- Is there an actual or pending separation? 🔥
- Does your client have a new partner in her life?

 Separation from an abusive, controlling partner is the most common risk factor present in domestic homicides. While leaving may be the best response to a violent relationship, the majority of women who are killed have left without adequate safety planning.

Relative Social Powerlessness

- Are marginalization factors present, such as a disability, immigrant or Aboriginal background, addiction, poverty, pregnancy, lack of transportation, literacy issues, mental illness, or is your client elderly?
- Are cultural factors present such as family pressures/shame, religious beliefs, unwillingness to report, language barriers, or isolation?
- Has the partner interfered with or made threats about your client's immigration status, such as threats to revoke sponsorship, interfering with ability to work or access English classes, or withholding her passport or identity documents?
- Is your client and/or her partner between the ages of 15 and 24 or is there a significant age difference between them?

Perception of Personal Safety or Fear of Future Violence

- Has her partner ever been bound by or is he presently bound by a court order? Has he violated court orders or flouted authority in the past (driving prohibitions, bail, probation, or family court orders)?
- Does your client believe her partner will disobey the terms of any court orders?
- Does your client fear further violence if her partner is arrested or served with a court order? 🔥

Alcohol, Drugs, Mental Health and Unemployment 🔥

- Does your client's partner have a history of severe drug or alcohol addiction?
- Is her partner unemployed or experiencing financial problems?
- Is her partner depressed or does he have a history of depression in the opinion of professionals, such as physicians, or non-professionals, such as friends, family, or co-workers? 🔥
- Does her partner have a history of other mental illnesses (e.g. bipolar, paranoia, schizophrenia)?
- Has her partner threatened or attempted suicide? If yes, when and how? 🔥
- Was your client's partner abused and/or witness to domestic violence or suicidal behaviour as a child?

Obsession, Jealousy, Control 🔥

- Has the partner displayed jealous behaviours or actions that indicate an intense preoccupation with your client such as following her, repeatedly phoning her, showing up at her workplace, controlling her daily activities/finances, or isolating her from friends, co-workers, or family?
- Does her partner accuse her of infidelity?
- Has your client's partner limited her mobility by locking her in a room, not allowing her to use the telephone, or refusing to allow her to leave the residence?

 Social science experts say that where there are controlling coercive behaviours, the intensity and lethality of violence often escalates after the victim leaves the relationship.

Children Exposed 🔥

- Does your client have children and are any of them under 19 years of age (including step, foster or biological, his, hers or theirs)?
- Are there any arguments or threats over custody, contact, primary care or control of any of the children, including any formal legal proceedings?

 Children who have been exposed to domestic violence are more likely to exhibit behavioural, social and emotional problems and cognitive and attitudinal problems. Males exposed to domestic violence as children are more likely to engage in domestic violence as adults; females are more likely to be victims.

Partner Violence History 🔥

- Does her partner have a history of any actual or attempted violence on any person outside the family such as friends, acquaintances, co-workers or strangers?
- Does your client's partner have a history of stalking, harassment, assaults, threats, sexual assaults, property damage or deprivation or other abusive behaviours against her, a previous intimate partner, children or other family members, or other persons such as a new intimate partner of your client?
- Is there escalation in the frequency/severity of violence or abuse towards your client, family members, a pet, or another person, whether physical, psychological, emotional, financial, or sexual?
- Has her partner ever forcibly confined, strangled, choked, or bitten your client?
- Has her partner ever assaulted her while she was pregnant?

 A history of Domestic Violence is the second most common risk factor in domestic homicides. Research studies indicate that men who are severely verbally abusive are very likely to become physically violent against their partners.

Access to Weapons 🔥

- Has her partner used or threatened to use a firearm or weapon, such as a gun, knife, crossbow, or other object intended for use as a weapon, such as a baseball bat, vehicle, household object etc., against your client, a family member, children or an animal?
- Does her partner own or have access to weapons through a friend or family member, or through work or recreational sports etc.?