

RESPONSIBILITY 3: INTERMEDIATE RISK ASSESSMENT

Risk Assessment With Person Using Family Violence

Risk assessments assist professionals in determining the level of risk presented by a person using family violence towards an adult or child victim survivor. Professionals can undertake an Intermediate Risk Assessment directly after a person using violence discloses using family violence, or when professionals become aware of information confirm that the service user is using family violence. Risk assessment is also a crucial tool to assess and monitor risk over time.

While there was a strong focus on observation in the Identification responsibility, the Intermediate responsibility has a larger opportunity for using prompting questions to inform risk-relevant conversations.

Practice Requirements

- **Understanding motivations** – People who use violence are likely to enter your service with a range of motivations, both conscious and unconscious, short and long-term. Some motivations are extremely influential on day-to-day behaviours and others are never acted upon. The strength of motivations can increase and decrease depending on internal and external interests and influences.
- **Using the Conversation Model** – The Conversation Model tool provides guidance on eliciting information in a safe, non-collusive manner that allows a professional to explore a person's presenting needs, relationships and circumstances while listening for violence-supporting narratives and behaviours.
- **Recognising invitations to collude** – Some people who use violence seek collusion through their narrative and description of their needs or circumstances. Professionals should be aware of invitations to collude which may be deliberate, considered and calculated in an attempt to manipulate professionals to get them on the person using violence's side or to instil doubt.
- **Opportunities to engage and monitor risk over time** – Professionals should maintain a proactive and active awareness of their family violence risk and behaviour. This includes any change or escalation of family violence risk, as well as the presence of or need to reinforce protective or stabilising factors related to their presenting needs and other circumstances.
- **Misidentification** – Family violence risk assessment and management practice includes identifying the person experiencing family violence (the victim survivor), the person using violence, and the ongoing risk of victimisation and perpetration of violence.
- **Identifying risk factors of suicide** – The practice guidance outlines 'shared' risk factors for suicide and family violence risk, you can access them [here](#). Professionals should keep the considerations linked above in mind to identify suicide risk when exploring family violence risk factors.

Using the Intermediate Assessment Tool

Who should use the tool?

Professionals who interact with service users to assess or manage a presenting need and/or engage with people in crisis situations or cohorts who are at risk of experiencing or using family violence.

When should the tool be used?

This tool should be used directly after a service user discloses using family violence or when the practitioner becomes aware of information identifying that the person is using family violence.

How should the tool be used?

In conjunction with the Intermediate Assessment Conversation Model which provides prompts to help the professional build rapport with and elicit responses from the adult using violence.

Please Note: Using this tool alongside a Conversation Model will support engagement and provide the opportunity to gain a person-in-their-context view.

Please see [here](#) for the full Practice Guides, including key examples. For more information on putting the Practice Guides into practice, please see the [PUV Training provided by No to Violence](#).

More information: <https://www.vic.gov.au/maram-practice-guides-and-resources>

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Practice Tip

- Professionals should reach out to other services through secondary consultation who may hold risk-relevant information so that they can respond to change or escalation of risk or to access specialist expertise to support understanding and management of risk and safety.

Risk Levels

At Risk

- High-risk factors are not present
- Some other recognised family violence factors are present, however, protective factors and risk management strategies are in place.
- Victim survivor's self-assessed level of fear is low, and safety is high.

Elevated Risk

- A number of risk factors are present, including some high-risk factors.
- The likelihood of a serious outcome is not high, however, the impact of risk is affecting the victim survivor's day-to-day functioning.
- Victim survivor's self-assessed level of fear and risk is elevated, and safety is medium.

Serious Risk

- A number of high-risk factors are present.
- Frequency or severity of risk factor may have changed/escalated.
- Serious outcomes may have occurred from current violence, and it is indicated serious outcome from the use of violence is likely and may be imminent.
- Immediate risk management is required to lessen the level of risk.
- Victim survivor's self-assessed level of fear and risk is high, and safety is low.

Responding When the Level or Seriousness of Risk is Determined

- Risk assessment levels include 'at risk', 'elevated risk', or 'serious risk'/'serious risk and requires immediate protection/intervention'.
- Once the level or 'seriousness' of risk is determined, refer to Responsibility 4 for guidance on developing a Risk Management Plan and Safety Plan, as required.
- If the assessed level of risk is 'serious risk' or 'serious risk and requires immediate intervention' (imminent risk), call police on Triple Zero (000).
- Professionals can seek advice and information from specialist family violence services and specialist perpetrator intervention services:
 - For support to determine level of risk, risk management and safety planning actions with the person using family violence
 - To develop or update risk assessments, risk management and safety plans with victim survivors.
- In some circumstances, it is appropriate to seek secondary consultation or referral to specialist perpetrator intervention services for comprehensive risk management. Secondary consultation or referral:
 - Must occur if the assessed level of risk is 'serious risk' or 'serious risk and requires immediate intervention'
 - May occur if the assessed level of risk is 'elevated risk'.
- These situations may also require police action. Consider referring the matter to Victoria Police for investigation, particularly where there is serious risk to the safety of any person.