

European Manual on Risk Assessment

E-MARIA

EUROPEAN MANUAL FOR RISK ASSESSMENT



Foreword

Across Europe domestic violence/intimate partner violence affects between 1 and 2 in every 5 women. These women also live with children who are themselves exposed to this abuse. Across Europe, and indeed the globe, hundreds of women are also murdered by current or, more commonly, former partners each year. Understanding risk in domestic violence/intimate partner violence is this self-evidently important, but too few of us know how to do this in a systematic and systemic way. Understanding risk does not just mean which factors are likely to lead to homicide. It also means understanding risk in a broader sense to include the risk of poverty, the risk of homelessness, the risk of suicide, the risk of isolation. In other words, as survivors have been telling us for years, we need to be careful not to focus solely on physical abuse as the only source of harm. The impacts of domestic violence/intimate partner violence are far more than physical; this is a contributory factor to many of the social problems Europe faces, such as teenage pregnancy, poor educational attainment, substance use, mental health problems and is an enormous drain on criminal justice resources. In addition, domestic violence costs millions in public services, lost productivity, time off work and missed schooling. As such, domestic violence/intimate partner violence affects us all directly or indirectly.

Based on human rights principles, this manual provides in detail all the information and tools a professional needs to better understand, identify and manage the risks posed by domestic violence/intimate partner violence. Taking a holistic approach, it recognises that risks are not just generated by the abuser's fists but that domestic violence/intimate partner violence can also have a devastating impact on women's self-esteem and capacity to engage as a full citizen, affecting their lives long after they have reached a place of safety and bruises have healed.. Consequently guidance is also provided to promote the recovery of survivors; to restore their empowerment and autonomy.

The manual also promote a multi-agency response to domestic violence/intimate partner violence to meet the range of needs of survivors and their children. Partnership work between agencies is essential if we are to achieve effective interventions. This means addressing contested issues such as information sharing, data protection, and confidentiality. It means sharing power and responsibility across a system which stretches beyond your agency's boundaries. It means understanding each other's roles and it means working creatively together to make the system seamless so there are no gaps into which survivors can fall.

When the above is put into place, domestic violence/intimate partner violence can be reduced and prevented, as has been proven in many jurisdictions round the world. Reducing homicides and serious injuries are often the first achievements of implementing such an approach and this manual also contains the necessary tools to reduce the other risks that domestic violence/intimate partner violence creates.

Domestic violence/intimate partner violence is *not* inevitable; it can be challenged and prevented if everyone plays their part. It should be our hope that we can all live in homes which are safe sanctuaries, but for far too many women and children this remains a distant dream. My hope is that this manual will help professional across Europe to bring that dream a lot closer to reality.

Davina James-Hanman
Director of AVA – Against Violence and Abuse

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