

## High-Risk Factors\*

### Relating to the AFM's Circumstances

Pregnancy or new birth	Family violence during pregnancy is regarded as a significant indicator of future harm to the woman and child victim. This factor is associated with control and escalation of violence already occurring.
Planning to leave or recent separation	For AFMs who are experiencing family violence, the high-risk periods include when an AFM starts planning to leave, immediately prior to taking action, and during the initial stages of or immediately after separation. AFMs (adult or child) are particularly at risk during the first two months.
Escalation	Violence occurring more often or becoming worse is associated with increased risk of lethal outcomes for AFMs.

### Relating to the Respondent's Actions

Controlling, jealous or obsessive behaviours	Use of controlling behaviours is strongly linked to homicide. Respondents who feel entitled to get their way, irrespective of the views and needs of, or impact on, others are more likely to use various forms of violence against AFMs, including sexual violence. Respondents may express ownership over family members.
Access to weapons	Respondents with access to weapons, particularly guns and knives, are much more likely to seriously injure or kill AFMs than perpetrators without access to weapons.
Use of weapons	Use of a weapon indicates a high level of risk because previous behaviour is a likely predictor of future behaviour.
Choking/Strangulation	Strangulation or choking is a common method used by Respondents to kill AFMs. It is also linked to a general increased lethality risk to a current or former partner.
Threats to kill Victim Survivor	Evidence shows that a perpetrator's threat to kill an AFM (adult or child) is often genuine and should be taken seriously, particularly where the Respondent has been specific or detailed, or used other forms of violence in conjunction to the threat.
Threats or actual harm to pets or other animals	There is a correlation between cruelty to animals and family violence, including a direct link between family violence and pets being abused or killed. Abuse or threats of abuse against pets may be used by Respondents to control family members.
Threats of self-harm or suicide	Threats or attempts to self-harm or commit suicide are a risk factor for murder-suicide. This factor is an extreme extension of controlling behaviours.
Stalking	Stalking, when coupled with physical assault, is strongly connected to murder or attempted murder. Technology-facilitated abuse, including on social media, surveillance technologies and apps is a type of stalking.
Sexual assault of Victim Survivor	Respondents who sexually assault the AFM (adult or child) are also more likely to use other forms of violence against them.
Unemployed or disengaged from education	Respondents who are not engaged in education or employment are likely to be with the AFM more often than those who have a schedule. This gives them more time to surveil, obsess over and control the AFM.
Drug or alcohol misuse	Drug or alcohol misuse can operate as a disinhibitor for Respondents who already hold abusive beliefs or use violence. They may also use more force than expected in an inebriated state.

## Risk Indicators

### Relating to the AFM's Circumstances

Self-assessed level of risk	AFMs are often good predictors of their own level of safety and risk, including as a predictor of re-assault. Professionals should be aware that some AFMs may communicate a feeling of safety, or minimise their level of risk, due to the perpetrator's emotional abuse tactics creating uncertainty, denial or fear, and may still be at risk.
Imminence	Certain situations can increase the risk of family violence escalating in a very short timeframe. The risk may relate to court matters, particularly family court proceedings, release from prison, relocation, or other matters outside the control of the AFM which may imminently impact their level of risk.
Financial abuse/difficulties	Financial abuse is a relevant determinant of AFMs staying or leaving a relationship.

### Relating to the Respondent's Actions

Threats to harm victim or family members	Psychological and emotional abuse are good predictors of continued abuse, including physical abuse. Previous physical assaults also predict future assaults. Threats by the Respondent to hurt or cause actual harm to family members, including extended family members, in Australia or overseas, can be a way of controlling the AFM through fear.
Previous or current breach of court orders/intervention orders	Breaching an intervention order, or any other order with family violence protection conditions, indicates the accused is not willing to abide by the orders of a court. It also indicates a disregard for the law and authority. Such behaviour is a serious indicator of increased risk of future violence.
History of family violence	Respondents with a history of family violence are more likely to continue to use violence against family members and in new relationships.
History of violent behaviour (not family violence)	Respondents with a history of violence are more likely to use violence against family members. This can occur even if the violence has not previously been directed towards family members.
Mental Illness/Depression	Murder-suicide outcomes in family violence have been associated with Respondents who have mental illness, particularly depression. Mental illness may be linked with escalation, frequency and severity of violence.
Isolation	An AFM is more vulnerable if isolated from family, friends, their community and other social networks. Isolation also increases the likelihood of violence and is not simply geographic.
Physical Harm	The severity and frequency of physical harm against the AFM, and the nature of the physical harm tactics, informs an understanding of the severity of risk the AFM may be facing. Physical harm resulting in head trauma is linked to increased risk of lethality, hospitalisation, and acquired brain injury.
Emotional abuse	Respondents' use of emotional abuse can have significant impacts on the AFM's physical and mental health. Emotional abuse is used as a method to control the AFM and keep them from seeking assistance.
Property damage	Property damage is a method of controlling the AFM, through fear and intimidation. It can also contribute to financial abuse, when property damage results in a need to finance repairs.

## Risk Indicators for Children

### Relating to the Child's Circumstances

History of professional involvement and/or statutory intervention	A history of involvement of Child Protection, youth justice, mental health professionals, or other relevant professionals may indicate the presence of family violence risk, including that family violence has escalated to the level where the child requires intervention or other service support.
Change in behaviour not explained by other causes	A change in the behaviour of a child that cannot be explained by other causes may indicate presence of family violence or an escalation of risk of harm from family violence for the child or other family members. Children may not always verbally communicate their concerns, but may change their behaviours to respond to and manage their own risk, which may include responses such as becoming hypervigilant, aggressive, withdrawn or overly compliant.
Child is a victim of other forms of harm	Children's exposure to family violence may occur within an environment of polyvictimisation. Child victims of family violence are also particularly vulnerable to further harm from opportunistic perpetrators outside the family, such as harassment, grooming and physical or sexual assault.

### Relating to the Respondent's Actions

Exposure to family violence	Children are impacted, both directly and indirectly, by family violence, including the effects of family violence on the physical environment or the control of other adult or child family members. Risk of harm may be higher if the Respondent targets certain children, particularly non-biological children. Children's exposure to violence may also be direct, include the Respondent's use of control, coercion or physical violence.
Sexualised behaviours towards a child by the perpetrator	There is a strong link between family violence and sexual abuse. Respondents who demonstrate sexualised behaviours towards a child are also more likely to use other forms of violence against them. Child sexual abuse also includes circumstances where a child may be manipulated into believing they have brought the abuse on themselves, or that the abuse is an expression of love, through a process of grooming.
Child intervention in violence	Children are more likely to be harmed by the Respondent if they engage in protective behaviours for other family members or become physically or verbally involved in the violence.
Behaviour indicating non return of child	Respondent behaviours including threatening or failing to return a child can be used to harm the child and the affected parent. This risk arises from or is linked to entitlement-based attitudes and a Respondent's sense of ownership over children. The behaviour is used as a way to control the adult AFM, but also poses a serious risk to the child's psychological, developmental and emotional wellbeing.
Undermining the child-parent relationship	Respondents often engage in behaviours that cause damage to the relationship between the adult AFM and their child/children. This can have long-term impacts on the psychological, developmental and emotional wellbeing of the children, and it indicates the Respondent's willingness to involve children in their abuse.
Professional and statutory intervention	Involvement of Child Protection, counsellors, or other professionals indicates that the violence has escalated to a level where intervention is required and indicates a serious risk to a child's psychological, developmental and emotional wellbeing.