

How is our risk tool from other 'risk assessment' tools?

In recent years, the National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges (NCIWR) moved away from traditional or standard family violence risk assessment tools, because they focus narrowly on predicting physical injury or death, while research shows they fail to predict violence in up to 33% of cases.

More importantly, they miss the broader and often more persistent harms caused by family violence and amplified by unhelpful or harmful systems—like impacts on mental and physical health, economic wellbeing, social connections, and life prospects. These tools also tend to overlook what victims themselves identify as their most urgent risks and needs, and fail to support good advocacy, led by victims.

NCIWR developed a new approach called 'Nāhana Tūraru' (the risk belonging to her) that treats risk information as belonging to the victim rather than as a clinical assessment done to her. Instead of rating or scoring risk, it captures women's stories in their own words through natural conversation, records a wide spectrum of risks (not just physical harm), and focuses on what the victim identifies as most urgent. This information must be shared transparently with clients and shared with their consent with other agencies to improve their responses.

Our Challenge

We challenge other organisations to rethink how you gather and use risk information—to capture a broader range of harms/risks caused by family violence that can inform specific safety responses to address risks victims identify as most serious and most urgent. Risk information should be shared safely with the client's consent, with relevant professionals and organisations (like lawyers, police, housing providers, and courts) to coordinate effective responses and improve outcomes for adult victims and their children.

Risk Review Tool

Our Risk Review Tool on the last page of this document is the short version of Nahaana Turaaru, which can be used when a client changes services, something new happens in their lives, or to check-in about any changes to risk if they've been engaged for awhile. It is short, to the point, and focuses only on what has changed and what it could mean for her safety.

A note about victim suicide and harmful system responses

It is important to ask victims if they have had thoughts or plans to suicide, and whether and what harmful systems responses they have encountered, in order to understand and respond to the full picture of family violence risk. However, these are excluded from our risk tool to keep the focus on the perpetrator's pattern of harmful behaviour when sharing this risk information with others.

If you would like to use this tool

Please contact research@refuge.org.nz to explain how you plan to use it and whether/how you want to change it. We welcome others to use the tool if we believe it will support safety and wellbeing for victims and/or accountability for perpetrators.

Go to www.womensrefuge.org.nz/research-resources/ to read our resources on understanding, asking about and acting on risk, especially Risk & Safety Booklets 1-3.

Women's Refuge Risk Tool: Naahana Tuuraru (the risk to her)

Interview Details

Date of discussion with client: *



DD / MM / YYYY format

Date of next planned risk review: *



DD / MM / YYYY format

Tamaiti/tamariki name(s): *

Perpetrator name: *

Perpetrator relationship: *

These questions are about the ways the perpetrator (named above) has harmed the client, to get a picture of how and why the abuse puts her at risk.

Information about violence and risk may come up in any conversation with her, although she might use different ways of describing it. No matter what words she uses, tick all of the abuse tactics that she mentions in any conversation. For all multi-select tick boxes, a tick indicates "Yes" and leaving blank indicates "No." Tick 'Not Applicable' only if the question cannot apply to the client (for example, if it asks about pregnancy, and the client has never been pregnant).

Collecting this information in one place helps to show the risks of her being harmed by abuse in the future, as well as the risks she might be facing now because of the abuse that has happened already.

Physical Violence

Have they ever used any kind of physical violence against her? *

- If yes, please specify types of physical abuse experienced:
- ☐ Hit/punched her in the head
 - ☐ Pushed/shoved her
 - ☐ Other violence (please detail below)

Have they ever strangled, choked, or suffocated her? *

- If they have hurt her physically, did that ever lead to her:
- ☐ Passing out or losing consciousness
 - ☐ Experiencing new difficulties with concentration ('brain fog'), memory, or managing feelings in the days afterwards
 - ☐ Experiencing physical symptoms like head or neck pain, fatigue, unsteadiness, or problems seeing or hearing in the days afterwards
 - ☐ Having to see your GP about that injury
 - ☐ Needing to go to hospital
 - ☐ Not applicable because there was no physical violence
 - ☐ Not asked/answered
 - ☐ None of these

Details of health consequences:

Have they used violence against her that was life-threatening? *

Have they ever kept her somewhere against her will? *

Have they raped her (forced her to have sex when she didn't want to)? *

Have they forced you to participate in other sexual acts you didn't want? *

Threats and Intimidation

Does she believe they could kill her?*

At the moment, is she afraid that they might seriously hurt her?*

Have they threatened to kill her?*

Have they threatened to hurt or kill themselves to make her do what they want?*

Have they threatened to physically hurt her, or to get someone else to?*

Have they threatened to harm somebody else that she cares about?*

Have they harmed or threatened to harm animals?*

Have they used any of these types of intimidating behaviour?*

- ☐ Thrown or smashed her belongings
- ☐ Destroyed her phone
- ☐ Damaged the property [e.g. walls, windows]
- ☐ Drove dangerously with her in the car
- ☐ Not asked/answered
- ☐ None of these

Have they threatened to tell people about any of the following things, to make her do what they want?*

(This includes through rumours, as well as threats to share personal things about her that are real)

- ☐ Her mental health
- ☐ Her parenting
- ☐ Her income/benefits
- ☐ Her use of alcohol or drugs
- ☐ Her sexual experiences/sexual history [including posting intimate images online]
- ☐ Her involvement of illicit or illegal activity
- ☐ Not asked/answered
- ☐ None of these

Is anyone else making her feel unsafe or afraid?*

(e.g perpetrator's family)

Coercive Control

Have they controlled all or most of what she does each day?*

Have they often gotten jealous and accused her of doing something wrong?*

Have they tried to stop her spending time with whanau/family and friends, or made her relationships with them difficult?*

Have they often become angry or blamed her if she didn't follow rigid household routines that they set?*

Have they put her down, called her hurtful names, or tried to make her feel bad about herself?*
(This may be while alone or in front of others)

Have they stopped her from having her own money?*

Have they excluded her from decisions about shared or household money?*

Have they ever stopped her from accessing the following types of help, or made it harder for her to access these?

- ☐ Medical services (e.g. hospital, GP, sexual health)
- ☐ Mental health services, counselling, or a support organisation
- ☐ Alcohol/drug/other addiction support
- ☐ Disability support
- ☐ Not asked/answered
- ☐ None of these

Have they forced her to drink alcohol or take drugs, or made her take more than you wanted to?*

Have they forced her to stop medication, share medication, or take more medication than what she is prescribed?*

Have they ever encouraged her to hurt herself or to end her life?*

Have they ever stopped her from practicing or made fun of her cultural, spiritual, or religious beliefs?*

Did she ever feel she had to say yes to sex out of fear?*

Have they forced her to:*

- ☐ Have sex with other people for money or for alcohol/drugs?
- ☐ Not use condoms or contraception when she wanted to?
- ☐ Become pregnant, continue a pregnancy, or end a pregnancy?
- ☐ Not asked/answered
- ☐ None of these

Stalking

During the relationship, did they follow her or repeatedly turn up when she didn't want them to?*

- Have they used technology such as phones, computers, or the internet to:*
- ☐ Track where she is or monitor what she's doing in ways she didn't want?
 - ☐ Look at private chats or messages to others when she didn't want them to?
 - ☒ 2 Contact her much more than what she would like? (e.g. calling, texting)
 - ☐ Pose as someone else to make contact?
 - ☐ Not asked/answered
 - ☐ None of these

If separated, did this stalking or checking up on what she's doing continue after separation?*

Have they asked someone else or paid someone else to follow her or track her whereabouts?*

Escalation of Abuse

Has this physical violence gotten worse or more frequent in the last month?*

Has this threatening behaviour gotten worse or more frequent in the last month?*

Has this stalking or checking up on what she's doing gotten worse or more frequent in the last month?*

Has the perpetrator's behaviour toward her gotten worse after she's taken steps to stop it/be safer from the abuse?*

(e.g. separation, court orders)

Sexual/gender Identity [If takatāpui/LGBTQIA+]

Have they put her down/belittled you because of her sexual/gender identity?*

Have they threatened to 'out' her to other people?*

Have they stopped you from expressing your sexual or gender identity in a way that is meaningful to you? *

Pregnancy/Children [if a parent/pregnant]

Have they physically harmed children?*

Have they harmed her while she was pregnant?*

Did their harmful behaviour toward her start/get worse while she was pregnant?*

Have they taken her children, or threatened to?*

Have they threatened to kill or hurt her children?*

Have they harmed her in front of children?*

Have they used her children to try see her or have contact with her?*

Have they put her down, belittled her, or verbally abused her in front of children?*

Have they used her children to find out details about her life?*

Have they ever made her child/children feel scared?*

Perpetrator Factors

Do they have access to firearms?*
(Give details on summary page)

Do they have access to other weapons?*

Do they have any history or issues with:*

- ☐ Mental health concerns?
- ☐ Suicide attempts?
- ☐ Traumatic brain injury?
- ☐ Harmful alcohol/drug use?
- ☐ Not asked/answered
- ☐ None of these
- ☐ Not applicable

Do they have any affiliations or membership to any gang?*

Have they ever breached protection order/police safety order/bail conditions?*
(Give details on summary page)

Were they prosecuted for these breaches?*

Do they have any criminal history, or a history of violence toward others?*

Summary

Summary of the perpetrator's violence against her and how it has changed in the last month*

(Include her stories or examples – physical, sexual, psychological, coercive control/stalking, using children, damaging access to support etc.)

What critical risk flags for severe violence or homicide were raised?*

(Examples of red flags: Attempts to kill her, Jealous and possessive behaviour, Stalking, Strangulation, Escalation (Abuse getting worse, happening more often, or involving more people, especially in response to her taking steps toward safety/separation), Coercive control, such as monitoring everything she does, Holding her hostage or breaking into her home, Threatening to kill her or her children, Any of the perpetrator factors listed, Her fear that the perpetrator may kill her)

Aside from the risks to her physical safety, what other risks can you see from what she has told you about the perpetrator's violence?*

(E.g to her housing or financial situation, her emotional capacity, her social support, her children, etc)

What questions haven't been discussed with her yet? When/how will those be discussed with her?*

Has a copy of this risk summary been given to the client, so she can share it with her lawyer or other agencies?*

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Perpetrator name: *

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Review Details

In the last month, has the perpetrator used physical violence against her? *

In the last month, has the perpetrator stalked her? *

In the last month, has the perpetrator intimidated or threatened her? *

In the last month, has the perpetrator used phones or other technology to stalk or monitor her? *

In the last month, has the perpetrator taken steps to limit her access to support? *

In the last month, has the perpetrator's violence escalated in response to her getting help/trying to be safer from abuse? *

Details of the perpetrator's recent violence, including how it has changed or escalated in the last month:

Details of any 'trigger events' or recent changes in the client's life (e.g. police or justice intervention) that may change the risks from the perpetrator:

Based on how the perpetrator has harmed her, what is your main concern for her safety right now?

Aside from the risks to her physical safety, what other risks can you see? (E.g to her housing or financial situation, her wellbeing, her social support, her children, etc)

Has a copy of this risk summary been given to the client, so she can share it with her lawyer or other agencies? *