



Intimate Partner Violence  
Risk Identification &  
Assessment Framework  
in Family Court



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 **The Law  
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 **United Way  
Greater Toronto**

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## **Project Enhanced Safety in Family Courts**

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## **IPV RIA Tool**

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# Intimate Partner Violence Risk Identification and Assessment

Intimate Partner Violence Risk Identification and Assessment (IPV RIA) must be used by Family Court stakeholders any time a client discloses past or current violence in their intimate relationship. RIA assists stakeholders with identifying high-risk situations by gathering information on current and historical factors related to the survivor's experience of IPV. RIA questions assist the assessor with exploring the nature, frequency, and escalation of abuse. RIA requires that the assessor seek detailed information on patterns of coercive and controlling behavior, which may indicate that abuse is likely to continue and escalate after separation. Further, several research studies suggest that, in cases where coercive control is present, the likelihood of severe harm or lethality is higher than when other types of abuse are present.

The following IPV RIA tool was created from extensive consultation with family court stakeholders, survivors of violence, and a review of literature on IPV risk screening and assessment tools. When creating RIA questions and categories, we considered the definition of family violence of the new Divorce Act<sup>1</sup> and factors that Courts must consider when assessing situations of family violence.

**The RIA framework is divided into three parts: RIA I, RIA II and RIA III, as detailed below.**

**RIA I - Risk Screening:** RIA I consists of 13 questions based on validated risk factors that assist court stakeholders to identify red flags for high-risk situations. The presence of such red flags indicates that the assessor must move on to RIA II.

**RIA II- Risk Identification:** RIA II consists of the seven categories noted in the below image: type of abuse; relationship history; survivor; perpetrator background; systemic factors; Indigeneity factors; and children. The assessor will explore a range of risk factors that would require appropriate interventions to protect survivors and their children from future harm.

**RIA III – Risk Mitigation:** RIA III requires a safety or action plan and/or a referral for each risk factor identified in the seven categories of RIA II. RIA III assists court stakeholders and survivors to reflect on court orders and strategies (i.e., safety plans) that may minimize the risk of future violence and harm.

<sup>1</sup> Department of Justice, "Divorce Act Changes Explained" (2020), online: Department of Justice <<https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/fl-df/cfl-mdf/dace-clde/div50.html>>.

# RIA I: Risk Screening

Name:	DOB
Assessor:	Date

RIA I consists of 13 yes-or-no questions based on risk factors validated by multiple research studies and Death Review Committees. A yes response to one or more questions should be considered as a red flag for potential future harm and/or lethality and requires the administration of RIA II and III for a more in-depth identification of other risks and a discussion of a safety /action plan.

Questions related to the history of abuse explore the timeline of the perpetrator's behaviour. Questions regarding the frequency of abusive behaviour, to be rated on a scale of 1-5, relate to the severity of abuse and the possibility of serious harm.

1 – never      2 – one time      3- once a month      4- every week      5- every day

Risk Factors	Yes	No	Recent	Past (more than 4 weeks)	Frequency of Behaviour (1-5)
1. 1. Has your partner followed/ controlled your whereabouts to know precisely where you are? (stalking) (e.g., often showing up at your workplace or school, contacting you through a third party, contacting you with harassing phone calls and/ or text messages, and using technological devices (GPS, phone apps, drones)					
2. 2. Has your (ex) partner expressed controlling and/or jealous behaviour towards you? (e.g. controlling your daily activities, finances/expenses, whereabouts, being jealous?					
3. Has your (ex) partner isolated you from your family/friends?					
4. Has your (ex) partner ever hurt you (physically)?					
5. Has your (ex) partner assaulted or you with a weapon? Do they have access to weapons?					
6. Has your (ex) partner tried to choke, suffocate or strangle you?					

# RIA I: Risk Screening

7. Has your (ex) partner ever threatened and/or tried to take the child/ren away from you and/or move with the child/ren out of the province without your knowledge and/or consent?					
8. Has your (ex) partner ever hurt or threatened to hurt your child/ren?					
9. Has your (ex) partner threatened to hurt him/her self? (commit suicide)					
10. Has your (ex) partner disobeyed/ violated any court orders in the past? (e.g., restraining order, bail conditions, peace bond, etc.)					
11. Is there a recent or pending separation? If yes, have you noticed an escalation of your (ex) partner's abusive behaviours since separation?					
12. Has your (ex) partner threatened to kill you?					
13. Do you think your partner is capable of killing you and/or your children?					

Professional Judgement plan of action:

# RIA II: Risk identification

Name:	DOB
Assessor:	Date

Questions in RIA II are based on the seven categories of factors identified above that relate to the survivor's experience of violence. These questions help identify potentially harmful situations that can impact a survivor's safety. Certain questions from RIA I are repeated in RIA II to allow for a more in-depth assessment of abuse and its escalation over time. RIA II helps identify broader systemic barriers that may contribute to the survivor's level of risk of future harm, and includes a comment session where the assessor can provide more details of the survivor's responses to each category.

Type of Abuse				
Risk Factors	Yes	No	Escalation (past 3 months)	Comments
1. Has your (ex) partner emotionally /psychologically abused you? (by making condescending comments to you, calling you names, insulting you, putting you down and/or making you uncomfortable in front of others, constant yelling or criticism)				
2. Has your partner damaged your belongings and/or property?				
3. Has your (ex) partner isolated you from your family/friends?				
4. Has your (ex) partner expressed controlling and/or jealous behaviour towards you? (eg. controlling your daily activities, your finances/expenses, your whereabouts, jealousy)				
5. Has your partner followed/ controlled your whereabouts to know precisely where you are? (stalking) (e.g., often showing up at your workplace or school, contacting you through a third party)?				
6. Has your (ex) partner ever cyber-stalked you (social media monitoring and tracking usage, sending excessive emails and/ or text messages)?				
7. Has your partner ever tried to monitor you using tracking devices such as GPS, cell phone, video monitoring, and others?				
8. Has your (ex) partner ever forcibly confined you or prevented you from leaving the house for work/school and/ or contacting family/friends?				

## RIA II: Risk identification

9. Has your (ex) partner tried to choke, suffocate or strangle you?				
10. Has your (ex) partner threatened any other family member or friends?				
11. Has your (ex) partner injured, threatened, or killed a family pet?				
12. Has your (ex) partner taken money away from you and/or controlled your finances?				
13. Has your (ex) partner tried to prevent you to work and/or look for a job?				
14. Has your (ex) partner ever hurt you? (physically)				
15. Have you sought medical attention/treatment as a result of an injury caused by your (ex) partner?				
16. Has your (ex) partner assaulted you with a weapon? (Any object that can hurt you such as a gun, knife, baseball bat, etc.) ? Do they have access to weapons?				
17. Has your (ex) partner threatened to kill you?				
18. Has your (ex) partner ever pressure or forced you to engage in sexual activities against your will?				

Relationship History			
Risk Factor	Yes	No	Comments
19. Has there been a recent separation or previous attempts to separate from your partner?			
20. Have you noticed an increase in frequency or severity of violence, threats and/or stalking behaviour since separation?			

## RIA II: Risk identification

Perpetrator Background			
Risk Factor	Yes	No	Comments
21. Is your (ex) partner taking any prescribed medication for depression and/or anxiety? If no skip question 24.			
22. Has your (ex) partner taken the prescribed medication regularly?			
23. Has your (ex) partner been hospitalized due to a mental health or addiction issue?			
24. Does your (ex) partner use alcohol or drugs?			
25. Has your (ex) partner attempted or threatened to hurt himself/herself? (commit suicide)			
26. Is your (ex) partner currently employed? If yes, for how long? If no, proceed to the next question.			
27. How long has your (ex) partner been unemployed?			
28. Has your (ex) partner been criminally charged or convicted? If yes, please describe the nature of the offence and/or conviction.			
29. Has your (ex) partner ever resisted being arrested by the police?			
30. Has your (ex) partner violated /breached any court orders in the past?			
31. Are there any recent life change circumstances in your (ex) partner's life (Loss of a family member, job loss, financial difficulties, immigration problems, disability, medical condition)?			



## RIA II: Risk identification

Survivor			
Risk Factors	Yes	No	Comment
32. Do you believe that your (ex) partner can cause you severe harm or kill you?			
33. Do you believe that your (ex) partner can cause severe harm or kill your child/ren?			
34. Have you ever requested a protection order (e.g. a restraining order or a peace bond) against your (ex) partner? If yes, specify.			
Risk Factors	Yes	No	Comment
35. Are you able to financially support you and your child/ren?			
36. Do you have family and/or friends who can provide support to you and your child/ren?			
37. Has your current geographical living situation (metropolitan or rural area) impacted your ability to access resources and/or seek safety measures for you and your child/ren? If yes, how?			
38. Do you have any physical and/or mental health condition that has impacted your ability to access resources and/or seek safety measures for you and your child/ren? If yes, how?			

Child			
Risk Factors	Yes	No	Comment
39. Has your (ex) partner ever hurt or threatened to hurt your child/ren?			
40. Do you have any concerns about your (ex) partner's interactions with your child/ren?			
41. Is there any access schedule in place? If yes, specify.			
42. Has your (ex) partner ever threatened and/or tried to take the child/ren away from you and/or out of the jurisdiction?			
43. Has the child/ren expressed fear or concerns about seeing their father?			
44. Do you have any concerns related to your child/ren's development?			

## RIA II: Risk identification

Child			
45. Do you have any concerns related to your child/ren's mental health? If yes, is there a diagnosis or treatment in place?			
46. Does your child/ren have any health-related issue?			
47. Does your child/ren have any behaviour related issue?			
48. Who has been making the main decisions about the child/ren's life? E.g., Daycare/ school, health-related issues, recreational activities, etc. Please specify.			
49. Do you believe that you and your (ex) partner will be able to communicate and cooperate on issues regarding the upbringing of your child/ren? (co-parenting issues)			
50. Do you believe that your (ex) partner will encourage a close relationship between you and your child/ren?			
51. Do you have children from a previous relationship? If no, skip to question 54.			
52. Has your (ex) partner acted as a step-father? (assisting with the child(ren) 's upbringing?			
53. Do you have any concerns about your (ex) partner's interactions with your child/ren?			

Systemic/Institutional Factors			
Risk Factors	Yes	No	Comment
54. Has your immigration status impacted your ability to access resources and/or seek safety measures for you and your child/ren?			
55. Has your race impacted your ability to access resources and/or seek safety measures for you and your child/ren? If yes, how?			
56. Has your faith impacted your ability to access resources and/or seek safety measures for you and your child/ren?			

## RIA II: Risk identification

Systemic/Institutional Factors			
57. Has your gender identity and/or sexual orientation impacted your ability to access resources and/or seek safety measures for you and your child/ren?			
58. Is there a history of forced marriage within your and/or (ex) partner's families?			
59. Has your family forced you to get married? If yes, do you have any concerns about their reaction to your separation?			
60. Has your family or (ex) partner's family committed any violence against someone who did not follow their family norms?			
61. Have you suffered any type of abuse (emotional, verbal, physical, sexual) from any of your (ex) partner's extended family member (s)?			
62. Have you or your (ex) partner lived in a conflict zone/ war and/or refugee camp?			
63. Has a children's aid society been involved with your family? If yes, in what capacity? (e.g., support or child protection concerns/ investigation).			
64. Have you been involved with the criminal system? If yes, in what capacity?			
65. Have you been involved with the civil court? If yes, provide details.			

Indigeneity			
Risk Factors	Yes	No	Comments
66. Do you identify as an Indigenous person? If not, skip to question 70.			
67. Do you believe that your Indigenous status has impacted your ability to access resources and/or seek safety measures for you and your child/ren?			
68. Do you have any property on a reserve?			
69. Would you be interested in having support from an Indigenous agency/ support worker?			
70. Does your (ex) partner identify as an Indigenous person?			

# RIA Iii: Risk MITIGATION

RIA III assists with the development of strategies, actions, and court orders that can enhance the safety of survivors and their children. It helps facilitate an action plan based on the risk factors identified on RIA I and II.

It is essential that Family Court stakeholders discuss all risk factors identified with the survivor and create, with the survivor's input, risk mitigation and safety/action plan strategies that can mitigate the risk of future harm. In some cases, it might be necessary to involve other service providers, such as Victim/Witness Assistance Program (V/WAP) workers, child protection workers, shelter workers, criminal court high-risk committees, etc.

It is essential that stakeholders request the survivor's consent to share serious safety concerns and risk mitigation plans with any service providers involved with the family.

For each risk factor identified in the seven main categories of RIA II, a safety/action plan and/or referral should be discussed and listed in the boxes below.

Types of Abuse		
Risk Factors Identified	Referral	Safety/Action Plan
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		
11.		

Relationship History		
Risk Factors Identified	Referral	Safety/Action Plan
1.		
2.		

## RIA Ili: Risk MITIGATION

Survivor		
Risk Factors Identified	Referral	Safety/Action Plan
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		

Child		
Risk Factors Identified	Referral	Safety/Action Plan
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

Systemic/Institutional Factors		
Risk Factors Identified	Referral	Safety/Action Plan
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		

Idigeneity Factors		
Risk Factors Identified	Referral	Safety/Action Plan
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

# RIA Ili: Risk MITIGATION

## Other Considerations

