



DANGER ASSESSMENT IMPLEMENTATION PROTOCOL

SCOPE

This document applies to the implementation of the Danger Assessment within women's shelters. It provides the specific requirements for implementing the Danger Assessment tool. All individuals implementing the Danger Assessment should receive training in the use of the tool and be certified to use the DA.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this document is to provide a clear description of the requirements for implementing the Danger Assessment in a consistent manner, guided by research with a client-centered and trauma-informed approach.

PROCEDURE DESCRIPTION

Purpose of the Danger Assessment

The Danger Assessment is a tool for assessing the risk of a woman being killed by a current or former partner. The objective of the tool is to reduce the likelihood of further exposure to risk of femicide by empowering women with information that increases their understanding of risk factors and reduces minimization or denial of the severity and frequency of these risk factors. The Danger Assessment provides information that enables professionals to support women to develop safety plans for themselves and their children.

When the Danger Assessment is to be Administered:

1. Emergency Shelters:
 - Within 48 hours of a woman entering shelter.
 - When there is a significant change in the woman's life as defined by her and the case manager.
2. Second Stage shelters:
 - If a DA is sent to a second stage shelter by an emergency shelter it is recommended that the DA be reviewed within the first month of a woman's stay.

- If a DA has not been sent, it is recommended that the DA be completed within the first two weeks of a woman's stay.
 - The DA should be redone at 6 months and then reviewed again at time of discharge.
 - The DA should be redone if there is a significant change in the woman's life as defined by her and the case manager.
3. Outreach Programs:
- On a case-by-case basis according to your organizations policies and procedures.
 - When there is a significant change in the woman's life as defined by her and the case manager.

Preparing to Complete the Danger Assessment

1. The woman is given the following information:
 - a. The purpose, scope and limitations of the Danger Assessment;
 - b. The general nature of the information she will be asked to share;
 - c. The information that will be available to her as a result of completing the tool;
 - d. How and when the information will be shared with her;
 - e. How and where the information will be kept and who will have access to it;
 - f. Under what circumstances the organization would be required to share information with external authorities; and
 - g. Any other organizational policies or practices related to the tool.
2. The SUD scale is explained to the woman, including:
 - a. That the tool is used because recalling abusive events can be distressing and the SUD scale helps staff to understand the level of distress she is experiencing as she completes the tool;
 - b. How the SUD scale works:
 - A score of 0 represents being completely calm;
 - A score of 100 represents being completely anxious;
 - That staff will check with her periodically as she completes the tool and ask for a number from 0 - 100 that represents how she is feeling;
 - b. That she may stop the process at any time if she feels overwhelmed;
 - c. That staff will stop the process if she indicates a score of 50 or higher;
 - d. That if the process is stopped for this reason, she will be assisted to use techniques to help her return to a calm state; and
 - e. That staff will remain with her while she completes the tool.
3. Consent to complete the tool is confirmed or denied:
 - a. The woman is asked whether she has any questions about the tool or process, and these questions are answered.
 - b. The woman is asked whether she consents to the complete the tool.
 - c. If consent is denied, the woman is informed that she may complete the tool later if she chooses.

- d. Documenting in the woman's file when and how (written or verbally) she has consented to completion of the DA
- 4. The woman is provided with the handout *Types of Abuse* to assist her to understand the range of behaviors that are considered abusive and that may contribute to her level of risk.

Completing the Calendar

1. The purpose of the Calendar is explained to the woman including that it is a tool for raising her awareness of her experiences with abuse so that she is better prepared to answer the questions in the Questionnaire accurately.
2. The woman is given the choice to use the version of the Calendar she identifies with
 - a. Basic Calendar
 - b. Walking the Path Together Seasonal Calendar
 - c. Walking the Path Together Monthly Calendar
3. The process for completing the Calendar is explained to the woman.
 - a. The woman works through the months of the Calendar identifying and documenting incidents of abuse (Documentation of exact dates is preferred, but not necessary).
 - b. The woman is asked to recall important dates, special occasions, annual events and/or routine family gathering that the family attended to help recall incidents of abuse. The following examples are suggested:
 - Holidays or Vacations;
 - Birthdays and Anniversaries;
 - Her pregnancies/births;
 - Family events;
 - Seasons;
 - Weather events; and
 - Other routine activities potentially associated with abuse (e.g. payday).
 - c. The system for documenting incidents of abuse on the Calendar is explained to the woman.
 - i. Physical abuse is documented as follows:
 - P1 = Slapping, pushing; no injuries and/or lasting pain
 - P2 = Punching, kicking; bruises, cuts, continuing pain
 - P3 = "Beating up"; severe contusions, burns, broken bones,
 - P4 = Threat to use weapon; choking; head injury, internal injury, permanent injury, miscarriage
 - P5 = Use of weapon; wounds from weapon
 - If a woman feels that the severity of the physical abuse falls between two numbers, she is to mark the higher number on the Calendar.
 - ii. Other types of abuse are documented as follows.
 - E = Emotional, verbal or psychological abuse

F = Financial abuse
S = Sexual abuse
SP = Spiritual abuse
C = Choking

- If several types of abuse have occurred during one incident, all are documented.
 - If abuse has occurred for several days in a row, the appropriate letter may be written on the first day, and a line drawn through the other days that the abuse occurred.
- d. Where possible the Calendar is completed in the woman's handwriting in ink. If necessary, staff may write the events on the Calendar for the woman in ink, explaining on the cover page why it was necessary for staff to document, and then signing the explanation.
 - e. The process and finished document are reviewed with the woman, and she is encouraged to talk about the experience of completing the Calendar.

Completing the Questionnaire

1. The Questionnaire is described to the woman, including the following information:
 - a. The purpose of the Questionnaire, including that it is intended to raise her awareness of specific risks she is experiencing that will help her to make informed decisions about her safety;
 - b. The format of the Questionnaire, including that it has a number of questions depending on the version which require yes or no answers;
 - c. How the Questionnaire provides an assessment of risk, including that a scoring system is used to assess her level of risk of femicide (which means being killed by an intimate partner); and
 - d. That she can ask for clarification if there are questions that she does not understand.
2. The Questionnaire is implemented as follows:
 - a. The woman is given the choice of the version of Questionnaire that they identify with:
 - i. Original DA
 - ii. DA-I for Immigrant Women
 - iii. DA-R for Women in Same Sex Relationships
 - iv. Walking the Path Together DA
 - b. Staff asks the questions and documents the response;
 - c. Staff scores the Questionnaire;
 - d. Staff provides the assessment score to the woman; and
 - e. Staff discusses the meaning of the score with the woman.

Safety Planning

Staff take note of information shared during completion of the Calendar and the Questionnaire that indicate risk or opportunities for increased safety for the woman. This information is used to inform safety planning. (see *ACWS The Danger Assessment & Safety Planning* document).

MATERIALS

Materials needed to implement this procedure are:

- A copy of the blank Calendar of the woman's choice (Basic or WTPT)
- A copy of the Questionnaire or the woman's choice (DA, DA-I, DA-R, WTPT);
- The handout *Types of Abuse*;
- A consent form (if your organization requires written consent);
- Pens;
- Comfort items such as an afghan, shawl, blanket, water, stuffed animal, affirmation cards, etc; and
- *The Danger Assessment & Safety Planning* form.

DOCUMENTATION

Required documentation includes:

- That the Calendar and Questionnaire are kept on the woman's file
- A Consent Form is completed and kept on the woman's file (if your organization requires written consent to complete the Danger Assessment);
- Documentation of the woman's verbal consent to complete the DA is kept on file (if your organization does not require written consent); and
- Contact notes describing the details of staff interaction with the woman during completion of the tool (as required by your organization).
- Documentation in Outcome Tracker or other data base.