



## **Domestic Violence and Probation**

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## **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND PROBATION**

**by Fernando Mederos**

There is a broad social consensus that domestic violence is a deep-rooted problem that must be addressed through a coordinated effort by many social institutions. Without a systemic response it is impossible to provide safety for victims and hold batterers responsible for their conduct. Institutions such as the judicial system (including prosecutors, judges and probation), the police, mental health providers, the medical system, child protective agencies, treatment/intervention programs for men who batter and battered women's shelters have participated in the struggle against domestic violence. Among the many measures that have resulted from these efforts are restraining orders, pro-arrest or mandatory arrest policies for suspected offenders, mandatory batterer treatment for offenders on probation, specialized domestic violence units in district attorneys' offices and an array of protective and supportive services for victims of domestic violence in medical, mental health and child welfare settings.

Currently, the establishment of mandatory or pro-arrest policies for assailants means that many more offenders are being arrested and convicted of domestic assault. In most jurisdictions, convicted offenders are seldom given straight jail time; most are placed on probation. This sequence of events places probation departments in the forefront of the struggle against domestic violence.

This massive challenge arises at a time of reduced resources, with fewer probation officers available to cope with ever-expanding caseloads. As a result, the risk is that this growing category of offenders will be lost in the flood of probationers that are already overwhelming the system. There are two obvious drawbacks to this outcome. If batterers on probation are not given specialized attention, the rate of recidivism will be very high. Eventually more batterers will cycle repeatedly through the judicial system, thereby adding to the overwhelming caseloads that already burden probation officers. Another drawback is even more serious. If not given special attention, most batterers will continue terrorizing their families; in addition, some batterers on probation will seriously injure or kill their spouses or children. While there is no set of probationary measures that can prevent these outcomes with certainty, the absence of specialized management measures for domestic violence cases guarantees the continuation of domestic abuse for families, and the exposure of probation officers to public criticism or litigation. Fortunately, there are measures that can be used by probation officers to monitor batterers and intervene more effectively for the safety of battered women.

Typically, institutions that participate in a coordinated institutional effort against domestic violence discover that they must revise their procedures to maximize their effectiveness in this area. This involves developing a new vision of the dynamics of domestic abuse and, based on this new vision, implementing concrete changes in policies, procedures and deployment of resources. This is a two-way street. As probation departments change, they may require modified responses by police departments, batterer treatment programs and mental health agencies.

There are three core beliefs about domestic violence and batterers that must be examined and challenged in order to intervene more effectively in these cases.

1. **Battered women do not want their partners prosecuted and these cases waste the court's time to little purpose.** In most crimes between strangers (e.g., robberies, muggings, breaking and entering) the victim does not know the offender and has little problem cooperating with the prosecutor. Domestic violence is very different. Most offenders impose a system of coercive control where violence is but one of a range of behaviors used to control their partners. Other behaviors include: intimidation (yelling, use of threatening body posture and gestures), threats, psychological abuse, economic abuse, isolation, constant criticism, attacks against self-esteem, etc. Coercive control occurs within the context of an ongoing relationship where the offender may also be a good provider or father. **The victim is like a hostage who has been brutalized, and whose kidnapper has a close relationship with her.** It is natural for victims to feel ambivalent about prosecution of the offender. However, the usual expectation is that if a person is really victimized, s/he will have few qualms about prosecution and will provide information about the offender and cooperate with the prosecutor.

In reality, women's decisions in these cases are influenced by a range of interacting factors. The victim of domestic violence may endanger her life by talking to police or court officials and feel a pervasive sense of fear. Her religious or moral beliefs about relationships may inhibit her from taking actions which she views as breaking up her marriage. She may feel guilty about her role in conflicts in the relationship. She may be influenced by her economic dependence on her partner and worry about her ability to support her children should they separate. She may fear losing her children in a custody struggle or because the abuser has threatened to kidnap them if she leaves him. As a result, she may appear highly inhibited, act fearful without obvious provocation, feel paralyzed at times, distrustful at other times, etc. Her "lack of cooperation" should not be taken as an indicator that nothing really happened; instead there is a need for skillful intervention and support. When victims encounter supportive, understanding professionals who are willing to take the time to listen to painful stories, they are much more likely to use the resources of the judicial system.

2. **It takes two to tangle; wife beating happens because there are problems in the relationship.** If you believe that violence is an automatic response that occurs when anger builds up to a certain point, then you will find yourself accepting physical abuse as inevitable in some circumstances. This belief opens the door for offenders to manipulate the judicial system: they ask that their partners cease some behavior they dislike in order for them to give up assaulting her. In some way they advance the idea that if women were not provocative, men would not be physically abusive. This is the prevalent view of domestic violence in society; it appears to make common sense. If probation officers accept this rationale, then the focus shifts onto the spouse and she has to "earn" the right to be free from violence through good behavior. The offender is essentially off the hook.

Instead, it is important to convey the idea that violence is **never** justified; it is not uncommon to feel "provoked" in relationships-- to feel anger, hurt, frustration, disappointment, etc.-- yet none of these feelings are an acceptable excuse for assault. An offender who says he cannot control himself at home does not belong on the street.

3. **The typical batterer is a tough guy-- an obvious criminal, perhaps a big bruiser who has a history of drug use and generally violent behavior.** Batterers are assumed to be low-level criminals-- brutish guys with criminal records. People who have these expectations are likely to be very punitive with men who fit this stereotype and overly lenient with those who are well-spoken or make a good presentation. In reality men who batter are broadly representative of the general population of men; many are solid citizens with no criminal records, no substance abuse history, and long term employment. If the offender does not fit the stereotype, the system may not view him as a "real" batterer. Consequently, probation officers may not exercise appropriate control through enforcement of strict conditions of probation. Frequently, offenders who come across as calm, reasonable "solid" citizens are the most successful manipulators of the system. It is important to treat all batterers as potentially dangerous and to set and enforce strict conditions of probation.

It is critical to remember that battered women have difficulty with prosecution for many reasons. Experience has shown that battered women are much more likely to cooperate with courts when they encounter a supportive atmosphere which includes aggressive enforcement of restraining orders, prompt arrest of offenders who commit assaults or violate protective orders, prosecution strategies that don't depend solely on the victim's statements, and strict probation conditions for perpetrators.

At the same time, using the judicial system is dangerous in some cases, regardless of how expert the judicial response. Batterers have easy access to their victims and their families: they know where their children go to school, where her family lives, where she works or studies, who her friends are; so it is very difficult to cover all areas of exposure. Imagine the offender is obsessed with his victim, stalks her and has threatened her repeatedly-- that he is someone who will not stop unless he is behind bars. In such extremes the judicial system may not be very useful. Women who are in such lethal situations cannot risk even the brief delays that are built into the judicial response in most jurisdictions. For this reason, it is important to understand that the judicial system will not be everybody's route to safety. No matter how well the system works, it cannot guarantee a victim's safety. **This can be very difficult for court personnel to accept as the urge to solve the problem through court action may be quite strong. In response to the victim's situation, a probation officer may be overtaken by the urge to "rescue" the victim.** Yet people can have very good reasons for not using the judicial system, no matter how comprehensive and professional an officer's efforts. Battered women's shelters, which have been involved in this area for many years, are well acquainted with this type of case.

Probation officers need to hold batterers accountable regardless of their demeanor or lack of criminal history. To do otherwise is to leave openings for manipulation. Officers need to be very clear about the fact that there is no justification for the use of violence in relationships. It should not make a difference if the woman drinks, uses drugs, is a poor mother, etc.; no one should have to earn the right to be free from violence. One can respond to problems in different ways.

Finally, institutions such as probation departments and child protection agencies must consider that intervention in domestic violence cases will eventually call for some redeployment of resources. Typically, line workers in both types of agencies have large caseloads. Their work style tends to stress quick resolution of cases, with clients safely ensconced in treatment programs, training programs or jobs. The goal is to stabilize the situation rapidly in a way that calls for as little ongoing monitoring as possible. In the case of probation, decisions about intensity of monitoring are usually based on the offender's previous criminal record and on the nature of the offense for which the offender happens to be on probation. These operational guidelines are reasonable and efficient with typical offenders.

However, the situation is different with men who batter. Many of these men do not have criminal records. In fact, some may fit the profile of offenders who are good risks—no record, solid employment and well-respected in the community. The judicial system is not disposed to view these offenders as dangerous, and they may readily be placed in the pool of those who will receive low intensity monitoring. Experience has shown that this is a mistake. Batterers on probation require medium to high intensity monitoring and longer probationary periods. Longer probationary periods for batterers have been adopted because of the growing realization that many men who batter are highly chronic, long term offenders who feel entitled to behave as they do. They have continuing access to their victims and many ways to coerce them short of violent assaults. The longer the judicial system is involved with these offenders, the greater is the opportunity to consistently pressure this highly chronic group of offenders to change their behavior, thus providing increased safety for spouses and children.

In addition to extended probationary periods and high intensity monitoring, probation departments have responded to the special characteristics of batterers with a range of measures: specialized domestic violence units that track batterers closely and are expert in communicating with and supporting victims; extending probation and adding charges after violations of probation that endanger victims; short sentences for probation violators (e.g. an offender who violates probation serves one month of his 6 month sentence—when he comes out he still has 2 years of probation with mandatory treatment and a 4 month sentence to serve if he lapses again.) We are still in the process of developing more effective measures, and many of these improvements call for reallocation of resources and modifications of procedures. However, these strategies offer enhancements for victims' safety and lowered recidivism for offenders.

The following sections contain information sheets on several issues relating to men who batter, battered women, and assessment and intervention issues for probation. Wherever suggestions are provided for measures to take with offenders the intention is to give a menu of interventions that might be helpful. Different solutions will fit different jurisdictions.

## BASIC INTERVENTIONS IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES

- **Interview men and women separately.** Victims of domestic violence cannot talk freely when abusers are present. By talking to the women separately, you lessen the risk of retaliation and promote more disclosure.
- **Have clear rules about confidentiality and disclosure.** Fearing retaliation, many women protect themselves by not sharing information that they know will be disclosed in court or elsewhere. If your policy is that you will disclose certain types of information in court even if she wants this to be kept confidential (e.g. if she tells about a felonious assault, child abuse, etc.), make sure she knows this beforehand. This could be a lifesaving measure on your part. Also, being straight about this will help establish trust.
- **Do not tell the offender anything the victim has told you unless you're completely sure that it will not endanger her further.** Even if she gives you permission to share what she has told you, make your own assessment about safety and the risk of retaliation.
- **Assess the history of violence in the relationship.** Conduct a pre-trial or post-trial assessment according to the policies in your jurisdiction. How severe and persistent has the violence been? How has it affected the victim and the children? Is there a heightened danger of lethal assault? Is it important to warn the victim? See the section on Dangerousness-Lethality Checklist and the Questionnaire for Victims.
- **Assess the risk of retaliation and of continued harassment/abuse.** How safe will the victim and the children be? Is it reasonable to expect the offender to restrain himself? Has he respected previous restraining/protective orders? Has he made— and broken— many promises? If you think your best efforts, including highly restrictive monitoring of the offender, are not likely to turn out well because the offender is so dangerous and uncontrollable, share this information with the victim. Though this may make her anxious, it may influence her to activate all her self-protective resources.
- **Assess the impact of substance abuse.** Determine whether the offender is abusing drugs or alcohol. You may recommend an independent evaluation, drug/alcohol testing, question the spouse and consult the court and police arrest records on this matter.
- **Develop a probation plan for the offender.** What rules should be imposed on him by probation to keep him from further harming his spouse and/or children? Probation officers must make decisions about levels of control and the intrusiveness of the conditions of probation. See "Managing Offenders on Probation" for specific measures. The plan may also include drug/alcohol evaluations, testing and treatment; attending a batterer treatment program.
- **Become knowledgeable about resources for battered women.** Victims of domestic violence need specialized services which can address their need for support, understanding, safety planning (while they remain at risk), safety and refuge (even help in fleeing an offender), financial resources, housing, and help for their children. Battered women's shelters and programs usually have the required array of services and the specialized experience with safety issues.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF BATTERERS

These are some issues to keep in mind as you work with physically abusive men.

- **This is highly chronic group of offenders.** Officers should expect high levels of recidivism in this group. We expect 75 percent of men who are on probation will assault their partners, violate restraining/protective orders or otherwise violate terms of probation. With such a chronic problem, officers should not anticipate quick cures; it takes years to change deeply-rooted behaviors. Although many men can stop being violent fairly quickly while they are in treatment, lasting change takes time.
- **Offenders are likely to have continuing access to victims.** Putting aside the victim's conflicted feelings, the offender knows where she works, where she and her parents live and he may have access to the victim through child visitation. There are multiple opportunities for intimidation, threats and psychological pressure. It is very important to monitor the offender very closely and limit access to the spouse or girlfriend.
- **A large number of offenders are alcohol and/or drug abusers.** Although intoxication due to alcohol or drug use does not cause violence, offenders are prone to become more severely violent and more frequently violent under the influence. It is important to establish sobriety immediately; alcohol or drug abuse treatment should be ordered prior to or concurrent with participation in a batterer treatment program. Otherwise, recidivism is inevitable.
- **Many domestic offenders have criminal records; many do not.** In customary criminal justice practice, perpetrators with more extensive criminal records receive more intensive and intrusive monitoring, yet many of the most harmful and lethal offenders have no criminal records. We advise officers to examine closely the history of violence in the relationship and to be sensitive to threats, and other behaviors that suggest heightened dangerousness (see the Dangerousness-Lethality Assessment).
- **Men who batter are convinced they are victims.** Although most convicted perpetrators of crime feel they are victims, batterers are particularly insistent about their victimization. Historically men who batter were protected by traditions of privacy and the sanctity of marriage and the family, to prosecute a wife beater constituted an invasion of privacy and an assault on the family. Social values have changed and we are now in the process of creating and enforcing a new taboo about behavior in marital relationships. Nevertheless, abusive men express a sense of intrusion and injustice, and feel that they have had something taken away or that their rights have been abridged.
- **Many men who batter are persuasive and logical.** People expect offenders to be inarticulate and conspicuously unreasonable. Instead, the abuser often is a very reasonable, persuasive character, who wants someone to understand him, to take him at face value. It is always important to go back to police reports, to read court documents such as medical reports and to talk to the victims separately.

## EXCUSES AND TACTICS OF MEN WHO BATTER

1. **Denial.** Refusing to admit violent behavior. "I didn't do anything." "She just bruises easy." "I had my fist out and she ran into it." **Minimization.** Admitting less than what actually happened; making the assault sound trivial. "I just gave her a little push." "It was only a love tap." "Her ribs are just a little bruised (not broken)."

2. **Focusing on intentions.** Defending one's behavior by pointing to good goals. "I was trying to keep her from hurting herself." "She was hysterical and yelling nonstop so I slapped her to calm her down."

3. **Victim-blaming.** Most popular excuse; he makes the case that she's such a bad person that she deserved whatever she got. The offender hopes you will focus on her behavior rather than his misconduct. If you begin to criticize her, you will become his ally. "I found her with another man." "She's a drunk (alcoholic, drug addict, bad mother, thief, etc.)." "She assaulted me."

4. **Loss of control.** I'm not really responsible for what happened; I exploded, but it wasn't really me. If you accept this idea, the man may not be held responsible for his behavior. "I lost it and the next thing I know she was down bleeding and screaming." "I saw a white (blue, red, yellow, etc.) light and I blacked out. When I came to she was lying on the ground."

5. **Provocation.** The offender claims the other person drove him over the edge. He's not responsible for what happened. "She made me do it." "She knew it was coming; she pushed me into it."

**Lack of money and time; distortion and miscommunication.** Offender cannot attend treatment because of work & cannot afford it. Also says that she thinks he's OK now or that the treatment program staff think he doesn't have a problem.

1. Tell the offender he has already been found guilty; invite him to request another hearing with the Judge. Get a detailed account of the scope of the violence by conducting partner contact interview (see copy in your packet) and by using police reports and hospital records.

2. Point out the effects of violence: terror, fear, distrust, pain, injury, destruction, etc. Even if his intentions are good violence is not justified and it is illegal. Good intentions do not justify violence.

3. A woman doesn't have to be Betty Crocker (a perfect mother or housewife) in order to deserve not to be beaten. People do not have to earn the right to be free from violence and fear: the act itself is illegal, just like bank robbery is illegal even if you're very poor or even if the bank cheated you on the mortgage.

4. If you're convinced you have no control, then we should surrender you now since treatment will be totally useless. Do you get violent the same way whenever someone gets you really upset? With your boss? Getting violent with someone is not an automatic thing once you get upset.

5. No one can make you violent; people can hurt you, frustrate you, anger you, etc., but there are many alternative ways of responding to things that don't involve violence.

6. Most batterers' programs have sliding scale fees; the man must make time for treatment. Finally, it is critical to communicate frequently with the batterer treatment program and the spouse to avoid enormous confusion and manipulation.



## TALKING TO OFFENDERS

- **Offenders will try to "divide and conquer"; they will run a disinformation campaign.** Men who batter are expert at finding divisions between people and exploiting them. They also tell different versions of the facts to different people. Make sure all staff are consistent about the rules. It is important to be in constant communication with the batterers' program, the man's partner and the women's advocate or victim witness representative.
- **Expect the offender to continue denying his behavior and blaming his spouse.** Most offenders take months or longer to admit responsibility for their behavior. Instead, they spend much energy trying to enlist a Probation Officer as an ally.
- **Many offenders attempt to get probation officers to back off by being constantly angry and challenging.** Many men come across as justifiably angry. They tell you their partners are crazy, they launch into long accusatory harangues about their spouses, citing example after example of the wrongs "she" has done. Faced with constant "righteous" anger, you may find yourself shifting the discussion toward less volatile ground and listening out of polite sympathy. We advise you to structure conversations carefully and to sharply limit complaints about victims. If he manages to shift the focus onto her behavior, he successfully manipulates your attention from him.
- **Other offenders attempt to get probation officers to back off by being super-placating.** This offender gives the impression of being in complete control. He wants to do everything possible to "clear up this misunderstanding"; he may even suggest he seek help with his wife. If you take calm denials at face value, then you assume the role of judge, requiring that the victim prove she has been abused-- a highly dangerous enterprise for a battered woman. Remember that many abusive men are reasonable and charming with everyone except their spouses. Being logical and calm in your office does not establish innocence.
- **Intimidating offenders will try to wear you down; super-placating offenders will try to enlist you as an ally: BOTH will try to get you to do as little monitoring as possible.** This will give the offender room to pressure his partner, ease his way back into the house, convince her that the court is not serious, etc. We advise you to make decisions about intrusiveness and frequency of monitoring based on your assessment of his dangerousness (derived from information from the spouse, police reports, the criminal record, etc.).
- **Offenders may try to draw you into arguments about their culpability.** We recommend that Officers not engage in such arguments; if there are legitimate questions about the offender's abusiveness, the batterer treatment program can help with an evaluation.
- **Do not tell the man anything the woman has told you unless you're completely sure that it will not endanger her further.** Question each person separately, do not divulge something that may endanger her. Even if she gives you permission to share what she has told you, make your own assessment about safety.
- **State rules in an impersonal fashion; focus on options and consequences.** Men who batter often love arguments and dominance struggles. You can say, "I can't argue with you about your probation or about being sent to a batterer treatment program. If you do not go, I will have to report it and schedule a surrender hearing. I can't change that."

## OFFENDERS LEAST LIKELY TO BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE

Are there some men you might be unwilling to send to jail? Are there offenders you don't really consider dangerous? All of us have some blind spots. To act fairly and nondiscriminately we need to examine our biases.

- **Men who are good talkers.** You may be weary of hostile, angry types and find yourself being lenient with someone who is well-spoken, persuasive and logical. Make sure you consult court and police records and talk to the victim separately. Consistent monitoring/follow up procedures will ensure that no offender gets a free ride, even if he has a different approach.
- **Highly educated men who are rationalizers and endless arguers.** Educated rationalizers can wear you out. You may find yourself avoiding them, scheduling fewer visits, and questioning them less in meetings. Many probation officers simply refuse to argue or listen to arguments ("That's not what we're here for. If you insist on arguing, I consider this disruptive behavior and will bring it to the judge.")
- **Men who appear more helpless, vulnerable or physically fragile.** Because someone does not come across as physically imposing does not mean that they are not dangerous or unable to terrify their spouse. Offenders do not behave the same way with everybody; overly compliant behavior with an authority figure such as a Probation Officer can change drastically with someone whom the offender believes should listen to **him**. Consistent monitoring and follow up procedures are the best way to manage this type of offender.
- **Men who are highly religious.** Men who have undergone a religious conversion or who cite their religious beliefs as the source of their assaultive behavior should not be monitored less carefully or held to different standards of non-abusive behavior. The law should be applied equally to all offenders, regardless of religious affiliation. Sincere religious belief can be very impressive, but such convictions should never be used to justify abuse.
- **Men who are mentally ill.** Probation officers are sometimes reluctant to schedule a surrender and recommend time in jail for men who are mentally ill— it may be hard to imagine how some guys could survive 'inside.' Men who weep, who have had breakdowns, who take medication, etc., can be as dangerous and harmful as their "tougher" peers. They should be held to the same standards of non-abusive behavior toward victims while on probation.
- **Men who identify with a non-dominant culture.** Some men claim their culture delegates women to a subordinate role, and that the use of violence is permitted to keep women in line. They accuse the legal system of attempting to destroy their culture or of enforcing laws against domestic violence in a racist manner in their community. Under the law the same standards of behavior apply to everybody. When possible, such men should be referred to culturally appropriate programs which can challenge woman abuse from within the man's own cultural perspective. When not available, then refer to programs which have demonstrated cross-cultural effectiveness.
- **Men who are in recovery.** It may be tempting to be specially understanding with men who are making an apparently successful recovery from an addiction. However, many people go through recovery without becoming physically abusive. Again, behavioral standards about partners' safety and other conditions of probation should be applied consistently.
- **Men whose spouses are particularly difficult— loud, emotional, etc.** People often have a hard time believing and supporting someone who seems to get upset too easily or is too demanding. This may be very difficult, but (to state the obvious) all victims deserve protection.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF BATTERED WOMEN

1. **Many studies indicate that battered women are like women in general.** In terms of socioeconomic background, race, education, mental health, substance abuse, etc., battered women do not differ from women in general. They are also not any more co-dependent or enabling than anybody else in the population.
2. **Be careful of your biases about the perfect victim or "the Betty Crocker syndrome."** Even if she drinks, yells, is a poor mother or attempts to assault the man, a woman deserves protection. Women do not have to be ideal wives, mothers or housewives in order to be protected legally.
3. **Confidentiality is a critical safety issue.** Make sure she understands if there any limits to confidentiality-- if you have to report whatever she tells you. A disclosure of confidential information by you could make her subject to retaliation and could destroy trust. If she tells you about other acts of violence, about assaults on children, even about probation violations-- do you have to report these disclosures? Let her know about your constraints or responsibilities to report information ahead of time.
4. **Cases will reach you after many years of physical abuse and women will have worked out survival strategies.** Most battered women never seek help; they resolve the issue on their own by leaving or getting the guy to stop. Those who come to your attention usually have the most dangerous batterers. Their survival strategies, from hitting back to keeping quiet and going along, are not going to change immediately. Undoing what "we" may consider humiliating or risky survival strategies can only happen slowly.
5. **Unlike victims of random violence, many battered women have emotional and family bonds with their attackers.** It usually takes 5-7 years to resolve the situation by leaving or getting the man to stop. Most battered women do not want to be rescued; they want effective and quick intervention to stop the violence and keep him from doing it again. If you try to rescue her by telling her what to do, you're competing with the batterer, who is very expert at ordering her around.
6. **The long term effects of violence are complex.** Someone once said that violence causes terror, which turns to fear, which becomes caution, which turns into deference and attention, and then becomes tip-toeing and caretaking. Physical abuse is usually accompanied by tremendous psychological abuse, which destroys self-esteem and self-confidence, causing enormous confusion and even mental paralysis.
7. **Be aware that all the things we want the battered woman to do will increase her danger.** The most dangerous time for a battered woman is when she testifies against the man, when she is leaving him or after she has left him. He may have threatened her again and again about leaving him. Actions that you think are reasonable may be deadly for her, keeping quiet may make more sense to her.

## WORKING WITH BATTERED WOMEN

Critical points to convey to her: The perpetrator is responsible for his behavior. There is no acceptable justification for violence, no matter what he says or how much he blames her. Her safety, and that of her children, are your chief concern.

- Keep in mind that a battered woman has usually been subjected to intense attacks on her self-esteem, including constant criticism, name-calling, ridicule, degradation of various sorts, threats, yelling, etc.
- Convey understanding, support and belief. Having someone take the time to listen is helpful and encouraging. It is important both to show empathy and to avoid overreacting by becoming too upset at her descriptions of violent assaults or getting very angry at the batterer--this might make her defensive.
- Obtain-- or make sure someone has obtained-- a history of violence in the relationship. Listening calmly to her account conveys understanding and support.
- Alert her to resources for abused women, including Victim Witness Advocates in your court and shelters or programs for battered women. These programs are an excellent resource for women who are at risk. They offer support groups, expert safety planning, emergency shelter, counseling and legal advocacy. They are usually very experienced in safety issues and in working with battered women in non-threatening ways.
- Avoid victim-blaming or rescuing. She is not responsible for his behavior, no one has to earn the right to be free from violence through good conduct. Instead of advising her to leave, consider reviewing her options for safety for herself and her children. If you get into the position of urging her to take any course of action too strongly, you risk competing with the batterer in attempting to control her.
- Maintain regular contact and make sure she knows she can call you when needed. With time, trust may build and monitoring may be accomplished more successfully.
- Maintain confidentiality; this is essential to build trust. Always check with her about what can and cannot be shared with her partner and the court. Make sure she knows that you are a mandated reporter of child abuse. If you must report violations of probation or further acts of abuse by the offender that she discloses to you, make sure she knows this beforehand.
- Follow through on your promises.
- Study ways your department might be more responsive to the needs of battered women and how it might work more effectively with other agencies. If you can help to lessen confusion and red tape, you will be improving the safety net for battered women and their children.

## MANAGING OFFENDERS ON PROBATION

- **Convey a message of disapproval about violent and abusive behavior.**  
Avoid pressure to ally with the violator. Consistently communicate that wife beating is abusive and criminal behavior.
- **Be intolerant about breaking the rules.**  
Surrender is always possible. Inform offenders of the possibility of revocation; probation is a privilege. Request surrender when violation of probation occurs.
- **Monitor closely and unpredictably.**  
Men who batter are constantly looking for loopholes— they consider themselves victims. Develop an intrusive and intense supervision plan. Make unannounced calls or visits.
- **Mandate the offender to specialized counseling.**  
Long term group counseling is recommended. Individual psychotherapy and family or couples' (marriage) counseling are not advised. If available, the offender is mandated to a batterer treatment program that holds abusive men responsible for changing violent behavior.
- **Demand consistent documentation from the batterer treatment program.**  
Efficient, frequent and *brief* communication should be provided, including an initial assessment report, monthly progress reports, incident reports, and a termination report.
- **Expect behavior change as a result of counseling.**  
The man should use treatment productively, the treatment program should not "babysit." The offender should remain non-violent with no threats or intimidation of the partner. The offender should not be disruptive and should comply with program requirements.
- **Develop rapport with the battered woman.**  
Conduct regular partner contacts to assess dangerousness, fear and risk of retaliation. Warn her about dangerousness if this is appropriate. Refer her to specialized resources (shelter, support groups for battered women)
- **Follow up on additional conditions of probation.**  
If you don't close loopholes, perpetrators *will* use them. If a restraining order is in effect, support the victim's efforts to have it enforced if the offender should violate conditions to stay away from her or her children, pay child support, follow supervised visitation rules, etc. Check that the offender has completed other conditions such as: surrendering firearms/weapons, attending batterer treatment program and participating constructively; attending alcohol and/or drug abuse program; staying clean and sober; attending AA or NA; or complying with drug/alcohol testing.
- **Probation revocation/surrender.**  
If the perpetrator violates probation, the system should attempt to hang on to him until he has 1 or 2 violence-free years. Option include: having the offender serve part of sentence, so he is released with time pending; repeating the batterer treatment program after his release; extending probation after release.

## ASSESSING FOR DANGEROUSNESS-LETHALITY AND ASSIGNMENT OF CASES TO APPROPRIATE LEVELS OF MONITORING

It is important to assess the dangerousness and lethality potential of men who batter their partners. This involves evaluating the potential for harm by considering both the capacity to inflict damaging or painful injuries (dangerousness) and the likelihood of inflicting deadly injury (lethality). Both of these elements are included because they are often hard to distinguish in practice and because dangerousness—the likelihood that a battered woman may be beaten again—should be sufficient reason for energetic and intense monitoring and careful safety planning.

Please note that a partner's (or spouse's) accounts of physical abuse are usually the most reliable and accurate source of information about the perpetrator's level of violence. It is important to have a careful procedure for obtaining this type of information: The partner may have to work through much coercion and fear in order to speak out. Keep in mind that by disclosing previously secret information, she is usually incurring a serious risk of retaliation (batterers often retaliate severely even for minor disclosures). For that reason it is essential to be a supportive interviewer and to avoid disclosing the data unless the risk of retaliation has been discussed and good safety planning has taken place. The police report and other court documents as well as medical reports are often useful sources of information. The perpetrator is the least reliable source of information. He has much to lose by disclosure.

Why is this type of assessment important?

- To warn the victim. If you believe there is imminent danger of harm, you must warn the police and the intended victim(s). The police really appreciate it if you can let them know that a man who is highly dangerous (e.g. has made a death threat) also has a weapon, knows martial arts and has a pit bull. If there is no imminent danger, but based on your findings, you determine that the offender can be quite dangerous, it is important to convey your sense of the level of risk to the victim and address safety planning. Even if she is quite aware of the risk, hearing it from a professional in the judicial system may influence her to institute self-protective measures.
- To provide the court with accurate and comprehensive information that results in appropriate conditions of sentencing that address the level of risk.
- To protect yourself. If the offender has a history of general assaultive behavior or assaultive behavior toward authority figures, you may want to take special precautions ranging from making sure other people are present during interviews to having a very specific contract about allowable behaviors and warning signals that will trigger a call for help on your part and penalties against the offender for inappropriate behavior.

Remember that men who batter are a diverse population; they resemble the general population of men very closely and are not an easily identifiable subgroup. Many of the offenders who first pass through the courts after the initiation of mandatory arrest policies for violations of restraining orders have criminal records and a history of substance abuse. These are people who are more

likely to disturb the peace in semi-public settings, but batterers in general are no more likely to have criminal records or problems with substances than the general population. The presently available research seems to indicate that half of these men do not have serious psychopathology. The other half have characteristics that suggest varying levels of severity of personality disorders. Lethality potential seems to be more typical of those who have the most severe psychopathology, but the research findings are not conclusive. Though relatively few offenders are potentially lethal or highly dangerous, it is important to take this possibility seriously.

Although all offenders are potentially lethal, clinical experience leads us to believe that there are some who are more likely to be highly dangerous or lethal. The "typical" batterer blames his partner and attempts to excuse or deny his behavior, but he has some empathy for his spouse and can eventually admit some violent assaults. On the other hand, if the offender fits one of the three profiles below, there is more cause for concern. Key characteristics of each type of offender are highlighted to facilitate learning of each profile.

1. ***THE OBSESSED OFFENDER.*** This person cannot seem to tolerate separation from his spouse; he is very jealous, even to the extent of making irrational accusations, and he frequently monitors his spouse's whereabouts through calls, questioning the children and others, drive-by check-up visits, etc. He makes threats to kill or harm her if she leaves him, asks for a separation, divorce, etc. He often says, "If I can't have you, no one will." This type of offender is most likely to stalk, kill or injure his partner, even months or years after she has left him, obtained restraining orders, etc.
2. ***THE SADISTIC OFFENDER.*** This person's pattern of violence is vengeful and has a bizarre, depersonalized character. He treats her with a profound absence of consideration of her as a person. For instance, he forces her to have sex just after an operation or childbirth, or he chokes her by stuffing her head in a drawer and closing it. His violence usually involves inflicting severe pain or torture, such as burning her, starving her, beating her for hours, etc. These offenders often assault their spouses without any warning or apparent provocation. He may abuse his children sexually and this possibility should be investigated and ruled out. Usually, a sadistic offender terrifies his spouse profoundly through torture and continuous degradation and (understandably) she is not likely to attempt to flee. He is very likely to retaliate against her even when he appears to accept what you say. This type of offender frequently does not have a criminal record. He is usually employed and may even have a prestigious position in the community. He can injure his spouse severely.
3. ***THE HYPER-VIOLENT OFFENDER.*** This offender takes offense easily; a look, a question, even the most reasonable or mild attempts at limit-setting by others can trigger a violent response. He feels all "challenges" place his manhood and courage in question and that he must always prove himself. He often has a long criminal record resulting from bar fights, brawling, assault and battery charges, etc.; he is generally violent. This offender can be very dangerous to his partner, particularly if she fights back (not an unusual response for many victims). He usually has very conflicted and belligerent relationships with authority figures and he may assault you if he feels strongly or directly challenged. It is very important to set limits very clearly with this sort of offender and to penalize them if there are threats or attempts to intimidate you.

### Assessing Dangerousness and Lethality

Two tools are attached to assist a probation officer in making an assessment of the danger or lethality in a given situation and forming recommendations regarding the level of monitoring that would be appropriate.

1. The **QUESTIONNAIRE FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE** is an interview guide for questioning victims of domestic violence. As noted previously, it is impossible to obtain an accurate assessment of a case without information from the victim. In some jurisdictions, this information is gathered by advocates who meet with victims at the scene and relay it to the courts. If you need to make this contact yourself, this questionnaire can be adapted for your use. It should be used *after* you have established rapport with the victim and *after* you have gone over any limitations to confidentiality. If information she provides is going to be disclosed, she should know this beforehand and have the opportunity to decline disclosure.
2. Once you have compiled information from court records, the victim, and the offender, you can use the **DANGEROUSNESS-LETHALITY CHECKLIST** to help you organize the identified risks involved in the situation. The checklist helps you make a systematic review of the different forms of abuse and assess other behaviors such as threats and potential triggers. This checklist can help assess dangerousness and anticipate moments of increased risk in the future. For example, if an "obsessed" offender's spouse is about to file for divorce and he has made threats about this and you have flagged this as a triggering event, then this may be a time to increase monitoring of the offender and to remind the partner of heightened risk.

Both of these tools are organized around seven areas that you should consider when assessing potential lethality/dangerousness.

- **History of violence with spouse.** The preexisting pattern of physical abuse of the partner or children in the relationship is a reasonable indicator of future behavior. Assessors should keep in mind that violence can escalate suddenly in certain circumstances, such as when a man resumes alcohol or drug abuse, or when a sudden change in the relationship occurs (see Triggering events below). Sadistic offenders can be identified when obtaining a history of violence against spouses through their characteristic pattern of bizarre and painful assaults. Their physical violence include practices that resemble torture. The **DANGEROUSNESS-LETHALITY CHECKLIST** contains examples of bizarre forms of violence.
- **The use of weapons, including the use of martial arts and similar training.** Use of weapons or of martial arts in violent incidents usually indicates an increased risk of serious harm. Any prior history of the use of weapons or threats to use weapons should suggest seizure of weapons. In many jurisdictions, surrender of weapons and licenses to bear arms is required automatically.



- **Threats.** Threats should be understood as statements of future intentions. As indications of potential dangerousness or lethality, they are as important and significant as the pattern of previous physical abuse in the relationship; even in the absence of previous physical abuse, or when physical abuse has been minimal, threats are very accurate indicators of future behavior.
- **History of violent crimes and previous violations of restraining orders.** A history of convictions and/or accusations of assault may indicate a consistently violent disposition that may not be amenable to judicial management short of incarceration. Likewise, repeated violations of restraining orders usually indicate that the offender will not be effectively restrained by this measure. *On the other hand, lack of a prior criminal record or a lack of prior restraining orders violations do not necessarily indicate that the offender will respect such orders in the future.* Most batterers do not have a history of violent behavior outside of their families. Hyper-violent offenders will usually have extensive criminal records, with many assault and battery charges against varied parties.
- **Obsession with the partner.** Many men who kill or severely injure their partners are obsessed with them; they cannot accept the woman's wish to end the relationship. They resort to coercion and violence in an attempt to avoid a separation or breakup of the relationship. They also display much jealousy and often follow (stalk) their partners. Suicidality is also a concern with these offenders. Obsession is often observed in conjunction with a pattern of threats and the existence of potential triggers (see below).
- **Substance Abuse.** Alcohol and drugs do not cause abuse, but they accelerate and worsen the violence. Assaults can become more severe and more damaging with little or no warning. Offenders who are more violent are likely to become more dangerous when under the influence. For this reason establishing and monitoring sobriety is a critical measure with batterers and many safety plans which originate in probation often incorporate substance abuse treatment and random drug/alcohol testing. A relapse into drinking or drug use for an offender who had been violent under the influence may signal that he is about to become violent again.
- **Potential triggers.** Often there is a change in circumstances, such as the woman's starting separation or divorce proceedings, that precipitates an assault. This occurs when a man does not want to accept that she wants to end the relationship. Returning to alcohol or drug use can also be a trigger. A series of triggering events are listed in the DANGEROUSNESS-LETHALITY CHECKLIST.

In addition, please note the following:

- If an offender resembles any of the profiles listed above, and there is a **history of substance abuse** and you suspect **current alcohol or drug use**, the dangerousness potential increases drastically.
- If an offender has a history of attacking or threatening his partner using weapons or martial arts (karate, boxing, etc.), there is also an increased dangerousness potential.

## ASSIGNMENT OF APPROPRIATE LEVELS OF MONITORING

After you have completed the DANGEROUSNESS/LETHALITY CHECKLIST, you can use the attached SEVERITY OF VIOLENCE MATRIX to help you decide on the appropriate level of monitoring. The matrix places specific examples of violent behaviors in a continuum of increasing dangerousness and risk. It is intended to help you organize and think about this information in a meaningful way. Once the case information has been organized, the probation officer can place the offender's violence within this continuum.

This approach focuses the court's attention on the history and pattern of violence, rather than on other socioeconomic factors which may not relate to the level of dangerousness or lethality. Recommendations regarding the level of court-ordered supervision are increased accordingly. Offenders who have patterns of abusive acts that fall in the 'Severe Risk' and 'Acute and Severe Risk' levels for 2 or 3 of the categories should receive intensive monitoring/supervision. This is especially warranted if potential triggering events have been identified, such as an imminent separation or a wife's filing for divorce.

Methods for intensive monitoring and supervision vary by jurisdiction. Each probation office should develop guidelines for sentencing recommendations that increase the level of monitoring and impose other conditions consistent with the assessed level of dangerousness. Appendix A includes an example of a matrix in use by the probation office in Duluth, MN. It is used in making recommendations about conditions of release and the sentencing of misdemeanor domestic crimes. Currently, probation officers are using these risk levels to develop their recommendations to the court, within legislated limits, regarding jail time, length of probation, frequency of contact with probation officer, fines, and completion of batterers' rehabilitation programming. Probation officers are urged to include recommendations that address three factors: offender accountability, victim safety, and offender rehabilitation.

**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

(After an explanation of the relevant confidentiality guidelines and mandatory reporting laws has been provided, introduce the questionnaire: "The following questions are designed to help assess the dangerousness of the situation. Answering these questions can help both you and the court decide what safety measures should be put in place to help protect you and may be helpful in providing rehabilitation for the offender.")

**1. LEVEL OF INJURY**

What is the worst level of injury that you have experienced? Please describe what happened and when it happened? (Include approx. date, description and medical treatment)

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Given the incident you've described, on the following scale, the worst level of injury that you have experienced would be rated as: (Check only one)

Acute & Severe: life-threatening injury, losing consciousness, hitting abdomen during pregnancy, deep cuts; injury requiring hospitalization or extended medical care).

Severe (cuts, lacerations, severe bruises, pain in joints).

Serious (bruises, soreness, very shallow cuts, sprains).

What is the worst level of injury that **the children** have experienced? (Check only the worst level.)

Acute & Severe

Severe

Serious violence.

What happened? (Include approx. date, description and medical treatment)

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Has a child abuse report been filed with the Department of Social Services? Does it have to do with something he did?

Please explain.

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2. **USE OF WEAPONS**

Does he have any weapons? \_\_\_\_\_

Has he ever threatened you with them? \_\_\_\_\_

Has he ever used weapons on you or anybody else? \_\_\_\_\_

If he doesn't have one, is he likely to get a weapon easily or has he threatened to do so? \_\_\_\_\_

Does he have martial arts training (including boxing)? \_\_\_\_\_

Has he ever threatened you with it? Explain. \_\_\_\_\_

Has he ever used it on you or anybody else? \_\_\_\_\_

3. **FREQUENCY OF VIOLENCE** Has he done any of the following to you or the children?

	<u>TO YOU</u>			<u>TO THE CHILDREN</u>		
	Yes	No	How often	Yes	No	How often
Slapping	___	___	_____	___	___	_____
Punching	___	___	_____	___	___	_____
Choking	___	___	_____	___	___	_____
Pulling hair	___	___	_____	___	___	_____
Pushing	___	___	_____	___	___	_____
Restraining	___	___	_____	___	___	_____
Kicking	___	___	_____	___	___	_____
Burning	___	___	_____	___	___	_____
Using weapons	___	___	_____	___	___	_____
Throwing things	___	___	_____	___	___	_____
OTHER	___	___	_____	___	___	_____

4. **THREATS** Has he ever threatened:

To kill or hurt you? \_\_\_\_\_ How? \_\_\_\_\_

When did he threaten you last? \_\_\_\_\_

To kill or hurt others? \_\_\_\_\_ How? \_\_\_\_\_

When was the most recent threat? \_\_\_\_\_

To kill or hurt himself? \_\_\_\_\_ How? \_\_\_\_\_

When was the last time he said this? \_\_\_\_\_

Has he made vague threats such as "You'll never leave me" or "You'll never get away from me," etc.

Please list these threats and give an idea of their dates.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**5. CRIMINAL HISTORY**

Has he been violent toward other people? \_\_\_\_\_

Please describe incidents of violence toward others. (Include approx. date, number of victims, circumstances and detailed description of violence.) Please include **all** the incidents you know about.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**6. ISOLATION**

Does he check up on you often? \_\_\_\_\_

Does he call the house to speak to you very often? \_\_\_\_\_

Has he prevented or forbidden you from going out? \_\_\_\_\_

Does he lock you up or take away the car keys? \_\_\_\_\_

Has he isolated you in any other ways?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. MONITORING & STALKING**

Is your partner jealous? \_\_\_\_\_

Does he get very upset if you talk to other men? \_\_\_\_\_

Does he accuse you often of having affairs? \_\_\_\_\_

Does he check your clothes or your body to see if you had sex with someone else? \_\_\_\_\_

Examples of other jealous behaviors.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Does he follow you, go to your workplace or the children's school or daycare to check on you?  
Please describe in detail: \_\_\_\_\_

Has he ever followed you while on a restraining order? \_\_\_\_\_  
Has he ever found you after you moved away or went to a battered women's shelter? \_\_\_\_\_

Has he ever said things like: If I can't have you, no one will? It's no use living without you? If you leave me I'll kill myself? \_\_\_\_\_  
When/how often? \_\_\_\_\_

Has he ever heard voices telling him to hurt you or the children? Or said God or Satan told him to hurt you or the children? When? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you think he is obsessed about you? Please explain  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**SEXUAL ASSAULT**

Has your partner ever coerced or forced you to have sex? \_\_\_\_\_

Has your partner forced you to have sex in ways you didn't want to or when you didn't want to? \_\_\_\_\_

Has you partner ever threatened to sexually abuse the children or actually abused them? \_\_\_\_\_

**9. SUBSTANCE ABUSE**

How much does he drink? \_\_\_\_\_

How often does he use drugs? \_\_\_\_\_

Does he change when he's drunk or high? How? \_\_\_\_\_

Has he ever been violent while drunk or high? \_\_\_\_\_

If previously sober, has he started to drink again? Or use drugs? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. **POTENTIAL TRIGGERS?**

Has he threatened you with violence related to the following issues: (Circle items)

- Leaving him    Seeing other men    Separation    Divorce    Child custody
- Hurting your children    Your family    Money    Wanting you back    Reporting you to DSS
- Reporting you to Welfare
- Your increasing independence:    Getting a job?    A better job?    Going to school?

Has something happened recently in relation to any of the circled items that make you think he might become violent?

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Is there other information you would like the court to know about the danger you may be in? (An event, a specific threat, a feeling you may have)

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## DANGEROUSNESS-LETHALITY CHECKLIST

Procedure: For each question, please check any items that match reported acts of abuse by the perpetrator.

**1. LEVEL OF INJURY** (Check only worst level of violence.)

Toward partner?

Acute & Severe: life-threatening injury, losing consciousness, hitting abdomen during pregnancy, deep cuts; injury requiring hospitalization or extended medical care).

Severe (cuts, lacerations, severe bruises, pain in joints).

Serious (bruises, soreness, very shallow cuts, sprains).

Give examples of incidents:

Toward children? (Check only worst level of violence.)

Acute & severe

Severe

Serious

Give examples of incidents:

**2. USE OF WEAPONS?** (May check multiple items.)

Has used a weapon or martial arts training on his partner or children.

Has used a weapon or martial arts training on another person.

Has a weapon or martial arts training and has threatened to use either.

Has threatened to get a weapon.

Does not have a weapon, but has threatened to use one.

Has weapons, but has not threatened to use them and has not used them except for hunting or work.

Has martial arts training, but has not threatened to use it and has not used it. History of violence?

**3. FREQUENCY OF VIOLENCE** (Check one:)

One or two incidents a year

Three to six incidents a year

Daily, weekly, or monthly incidents



4. **THREATS?** (May check multiple items.)**IN THE LAST SIX MONTHS:**

- Has threatened to kill his partner or children.
- Has threatened his partner or children with physical harm.
- Has threatened to kill others.
- Has threatened others with physical harm.

Recent vague threats such as "You'll never..."(leave me, divorce me, etc.) Please list:

**SIX MONTHS AGO OR EARLIER:**

- Threatened to kill his partner.
- Threatened his partner with physical harm.
- Threatened to kill others.
- Threatened others with physical harm.
- Vague threats. Please list:

5. **CRIMINAL HISTORY OF VIOLENT CRIMES?** (May check multiple items.)

- Has served time for crimes involving violence.
- Has served time for homicide or bodily injury.
- Has served time for crimes involving the use of weapons.
- Has been accused and arrested for crimes involving violence, but has not served time.
- Has violated a previous restraining or protective order.

Summarize criminal history, violations of restraining orders, etc.:

6. **ISOLATION** (Check one:)

- Extremely jealous; may make bizarre sexual accusations, e.g. smells sexual odors on her, claims she had sex with someone while he was out of the room for moments, claims she's having sexual dreams that involve other men, checks her underclothes for signs of sexual activity, etc.; victim's contacts with social/family are severely restricted
- Extremely jealous, accuses her constantly of being unfaithful and is convinced she's seeing other men. Isolates her due to jealousy. Prevents her from having contact with friends and family members
- Jealous; victim has less social/family contacts than before relationship

## 7. MONITORING & STALKING

- He has said he hears voices, from God or someone else, telling him to hurt her and/or the children.
- Says, "If I can't have you, no one will."
- Becomes acutely despondent at the thought of separating; e.g. withdraws, becomes uncommunicative, loses interest in daily life, panics, loses sleep, etc. Says life is worthless without her, he can't live without her and threatens or hints of suicide.
- Has tracked her down and found her after she has left him and gone to a battered woman's shelter.
- Has found her after she has left him and moved away.
- Monitors her or tries to find her by going to her workplace or the children's school or day care.
- Frequently calls to verify her whereabouts
- Other signs of obsession:

## 8. SEXUAL ASSAULT

Check one:

- Extreme sexual abuse such as inflicting severe pain during sex, having sex right after a beating or soon after surgery of childbirth, forcing her to have sex with other people or animals, beating her to force her to have sex).
- Uses force to have sex; threatens to sexually abuse children
- Uses coercion or threatens force in order to have sex

## 9. SUBSTANCE ABUSE?

Has been violent while under the influence.

(Check only one item below.)

Continuous alcohol or drug abuse. How long? \_\_\_\_\_

Episodic alcohol or drug abuse. How long? \_\_\_\_\_

NO: In remission. How long? \_\_\_\_\_ (Abstinence of less than one year cannot be considered remission; check one of the above).

10. **BIZARRE FORMS OF VIOLENCE?** (Check all that apply:)

- Torture (practices meant to inflict severe pain such as burning, cutting, inserting objects inside body)
- Depersonalized (violence in which the victim is treated as an object, such as choking a woman by putting her head in a drawer).
- Highly explosive (becomes acutely violent without warning; there may be no precipitating events such as an argument or a complaint).
- Other (starvation, withholding medications or medical treatment, etc.)
- Abrupt mood changes from "normal" and peaceful to a violent assault.
- Has injured or killed pets or animals
- Other bizarre forms of violence:

**POTENTIAL TRIGGERS?**

In addition to the above, is dangerousness/lethality increased due to the presence of threats which focus on current or upcoming issues, such as the following:

- Obtaining or renewing a restraining order?
- Initiating or continuing a separation or divorce?
- Initiating a move out of the area?
- Child custody or visitation orders?
- Child support or alimony orders or modifications?
- Division of property?
- Separated or divorced partner's dating? Or having a boyfriend?
- Her increasing independence: Getting a job? Getting a better job? Going to school?
- Starting to drink again?
- Starting to use drugs?
- Other(s) :