

PREVENTING SPOUSAL HOMICIDE

PAMPHLET FOR WORKERS WHO WORK
WITH FIRST NATIONS AND INUIT



FIRST NATIONS OF QUEBEC
AND LABRADOR HEALTH
AND SOCIAL SERVICES
COMMISSION



à cœur d'homme
Réseau d'aide aux hommes pour une société sans violence

This pamphlet was produced by the association à cœur d'homme, in collaboration with the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission (FNQLHSSC).

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INTRODUCTION

This pamphlet was produced for workers who work with Aboriginal clientele. It is an intervention tool that has been adapted from the tools contained in the guide *Intervening with men to prevent spousal homicide* (Drouin et al., 2012), developed jointly by the association à cœur d'homme and the Interdisciplinary Research Center on Family Violence and Violence Against Women (CRI-VIFF), to the reality of First Nations. It comes in light of the fact that Aboriginal women in Canada are more than eight times more likely to be victims of spousal homicide than non-Aboriginal women (Status of Women Canada, 2009). It also comes in response to requests from workers who work in Aboriginal communities to have access to intervention tools to prevent spousal homicide.

This pamphlet is divided into two sections. The first section provides a framework through which to analyze the risk of spousal homicide. The second section includes strategies on how to intervene in situations where there is a risk of spousal homicide.

Before carrying out any intervention, be sure to find out about the resources available both within and outside the community that can support and assist you in managing the risk of homicide or suicide (first-line services, mental health organizations, sentinels, etc.).

ANALYZING THE RISK OF SPOUSAL HOMICIDE

In order to assess the risk of homicide in a given situation, you must collect sufficient targeted information to conduct your analysis.

CREATING A RELATIONSHIP OF TRUST

First, it is essential that you cultivate a relationship of trust with the person so he may feel comfortable confiding in you. At the beginning of the meeting, collect information by asking questions of a general nature about the person's current state of mind or affairs and his spousal/family relations. Don't shy away from asking questions. You need to have a good understanding of the situation in order to help the person.

Here are a few sample questions:

- **What brings you here today?**
- **What difficulties are you experiencing right now?**
- **How is everything at home?**
- **How is everything in your couple? Or with your ex?**
- **How is everything with your children?**
- **How are you dealing with these feelings of loss right now?**
- **What are you planning to do about that?**
- **How did you get out of that situation the last time?**
- **Are your loved ones worried about your situation?**

During this conversation, remain vigilant for the presence of risk factors of spousal homicide described below to determine whether to conduct a more comprehensive analysis of the situation. Pay special attention to any requests or behaviours that may seem unusual.

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EXPLORING THE RISK OF SPOUSAL HOMICIDE

When you detect risk factors during this initial conversation, ask more questions on these areas to further your analysis. Here are some sample questions to that end.

RISK FACTORS

SEPARATION

› How are you dealing with the separation?

› What role did your partner play in the separation?

› Is she with someone else now?

MONITOR

› Non-acceptance of the separation; feelings of abandonment, rejection; sense of loss, failure.

› Loss of hope for the relationship.

› Idea of vengeance.

› Notion that the partner broke up the family.

› Definite separation.

JEALOUSY/POSSESSIVENESS

› Are you jealous?

› How do you feel when other men talk to your partner?

› Do you think your partner is being unfaithful?

› Do you plan to confirm your suspicions?

› How?

MONITOR

› Obsessive jealousy.

CONTROL

› Do you monitor who your partner sees outside the house?

› Do you prevent her from seeing certain people?

MONITOR

› Control, sequestration, aggressive behaviours.

BEHAVIOURS OF DOMESTIC OR FAMILY VIOLENCE

› Tell me about some of the fights or conflicts you had with your partner in the last few months.

› Have you noticed a change in behaviour?

MONITOR

› Presence of violence in the relationship.

› Changes in the frequency and severity of violent behaviours.

BEHAVIOURS OF DOMESTIC OR FAMILY VIOLENCE	MONITOR
› Have you ever used physical violence? Have you ever used an object?	› Physical violence.
› Have you ever grabbed your partner by the throat?	
› Have you ever threatened your partner? Tell me about it.	› Death threats.
› Have you ever used a gun or other object to threaten your partner?	› Armed threats.
› Do you think you have the right to have sexual relations with your partner, even if she says no?	› Sexual violence.
HARASSMENT	MONITOR
› Do you make up reasons to contact your partner?	› Harassment; attempts to find the person.
› Do you watch or follow your partner?	
› Do you always insist on being near your partner?	› Entry without the partner’s consent.
RISK FACTORS FOR SUICIDE	MONITOR
› Are you depressed?	› Suicidal thoughts.
› Do you have suicidal thoughts?	
› Have you ever attempted suicide?	

ELEMENTS OF CONCERN

During the meeting, pay attention to the person’s non-verbal responses, attitudes and choice of words:

- › Does not think he is responsible for the situation and justifies his violent behaviours
- › Sense of being persecuted
- › Shows contempt, even rage, when talking about his partner
- › Wants vengeance
- › Impulsive reactions
- › Hatred, sense of being the victim (resentment)

- **Absence of sensibility to others or compassion**
- **Lack of collaboration during process (e.g. provides vague answers to interviewer's questions, says little about himself, appears to be hiding something, avoids questions, contradicts himself)**

In this case, it is important to ask additional questions to obtain a better understanding of the situation. For example: "I'm missing some parts of your story. Can you help me understand it better?" or even "I have a feeling that you left a few things out. Am I mistaken?"

HOMICIDE SCENARIO (PLAN)

- **Have you ever wished your partner was dead?**
- **Have you ever thought of killing your partner?**
- **How often has the thought of killing your partner crossed your mind?**
- **When do you think you will kill her?**
- **Where will you do it?**
- **How do you plan to do it?**
- **Do you have everything you need to carry out your plan? What is it that you need exactly?**
- **Have you thought about killing other people (children, new spouse, other family members or friends)?**
- **Do you have suicidal thoughts? If yes, have you considered taking someone with you?**

PRECIPITATING EVENTS

Factors or events that may trigger ideas of homicide or that could prompt the person to carry out his plan.

- **What's the worst thing that could happen?**
- **What would you do if that happened?**
- **Do you think that the worst is behind you or that it is yet to come? What makes you think that?**

- **What triggers homicidal thoughts for you?**
- **Exactly when, during the last few days, have most of these thoughts come to you?**

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EXPLORING PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Parallel to risk factors, it is important to consider protective factors when assessing the risk of spousal homicide. Protective factors are meaningful for the person and keep him from carrying out his homicide plan. Here are a few sample questions to help you explore the subject:

- **What made you decide to talk to me about this today?**
- **What has kept you from going through with your plan until now?**
- **What did you do to take your mind off of things?**
- **What could help you stop yourself from going through with your plan?**
- **Have you considered the consequences of those actions?**

Examples of protective factors:

- **Being able to consider grieving the breakup**
- **Feeling hopeful about the future**
- **Being able to imagine himself in someone else's shoes (empathy)**
- **Recognizing violent behaviours and their negative impacts**
- **Being able to ask for help**
- **Recognizing triggers and being able to take action to protect himself**
- **Demonstrating a willingness to change**
- **Investing himself in the process, trusting the worker**
- **Culture/spirituality**

INTERVENTION

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COMMUNITY LIFE IN ACTION

Before completing the homicide risk analysis and putting in place intervention and follow-up strategies to manage this risk, ask yourself the following questions:

- **Have members of the network or other people in his life witnessed his violent behaviours?**
- **Who?**
- **How did the community respond?**
- **What is the community's threshold for tolerating violence (pattern of silence, taboo, normalization)?**
- **How is the person integrated in the community?
What is his role in the community?**
- **Would some of the people in his life be able to play a support role in the intervention? Who, and in what capacity?**
- **Are weapons, alcohol or other drugs a factor?**

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INTERVENTION STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING THE RISK OF SPOUSAL HOMICIDE

The following intervention strategies can be used to help manage homicide risk. Evidently, your objective is to bring the person to renounce his homicide plan.

	POSSIBLE INTERVENTIONS
➤ Openly listen to the person talk of homicide and identify emotions	➤ Listen to the person, encourage him to share his feelings. ➤ Ask direct questions. ➤ Tell him that he’s not the only person to have had these thoughts.
➤ Explore the needs the person is trying to meet through homicide	➤ Explore and identify the needs that underlie the homicide intent. ➤ Validate your perception of the situation with the person. ➤ Explore other means of meeting these needs.
➤ Help the person cope with grief (loss)	➤ Inform the person about the stages of grief and encourage him to fully experience each stage (stages of loss and grief: shock and denial; pain and guilt; anger; bargaining; depression and pain; rebuilding; acceptance [Kubler-Ross, 1969]). ➤ Explore with the person the meaning of these losses and the impact on his life.
➤ Explore the consequences of homicide	➤ Explore the consequences this action would have on him and the people in his life (assess gains and losses). ➤ Avoid moralizing or trying to make the person feel guilty.
➤ Come up with safety strategies	➤ With the person, identify the moments when the homicidal thoughts are most likely to occur and steer the intervention towards realistic protective strategies that can be put in place. ➤ Empower him to take small steps. ➤ Make sure his partner and children are safe.

Table continued on next page. ➤

	POSSIBLE INTERVENTIONS
➤ Reinforce protective factors	➤ Help the person identify his sources of motivation to keep him from going through with it. ➤ Talk with the person to see if he has already spoken about his situation with someone and if this person can help him. ➤ Clearly and unequivocally denounce violence in the community. ➤ Use an object of symbolic value that he can keep with him at all times. ➤ Spirituality.
➤ Make a formal commitment to non-aggression	➤ Before ending the intervention, make sure that the person will not carry out his plan. A verbal agreement can be made between the person and the worker to reaffirm that the prevention strategies will be implemented until the next meeting. ➤ The person will be informed that if he is suspected of not complying with the agreement and thereby compromising the safety of the people identified in the agreement, the confidentiality clause will be lifted and the police will be called in to intervene. ➤ The person is accountable for fulfilling the commitment. This is a commitment he makes to himself, not to the worker.
➤ Determine the relevance of consulting another resource (first-line services, crisis centre, youth protection services, psychologist, informal caregiver, spiritual guide)	

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FOLLOW-UP

When intervening in a situation that presents with a risk of homicide, there must be follow-up with the person following the risk management process. Follow-ups will vary according to the severity of risk. In other words, the greater the risk, the shorter the interval between meetings.

Follow-up strategies in the context of homicide risk management:

- **Schedule another meeting (shorter time intervals between meeting, according to level of risk).**
- **Informal follow-up: Arrange to meet in the community (find pretexts to meet him, go visit him to see how he's doing).**

- **Draw on the person's network (friends, family, spiritual guide, community) when possible.**
- **Work closely with other professionals to carry out the intervention (i.e. don't do it alone).**
- **Regularly re-evaluate the strategies in place and review the level of risk of homicide.**
- **Promote sharing circles.**

In addition to providing follow-up for homicide risk management, it is also critical that the person receive support as part of a healing process to end violence.

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RESOURCES

- Suicide prevention hotline or suicide prevention centre (CPS)
- Emergency hotline
- Crisis centre
- The community's first-line services
- The community's youth protection services (if applicable)
- Help resources for perpetrators of domestic violence
- The CIUSSS or CIUSSS in your region
- Police services
- Quebec Native Women's Shelters Network

