

## **Principles Of ASAP Guidelines For Safety Assessment And Safety Planning**

Important features make violence against women in relationships different from many other crimes:

- the likelihood of repeat violence is common;
- the abuser is known ahead of time – the woman usually has had, or is in, an intimate relationship with him; and
- the woman's ties with the abuser are complex; typically they do not end with intervention.

1. The use of violence is the abuser's choice. The abuser's decision to use violence is influenced by numerous physiological, psychological, and social factors.
2. Abusers must be held accountable for their violence by the criminal justice system and the community. The woman must never be held responsible for the abuser's violent behaviour.
3. The goal is to prevent, not predict the violence.
4. Safety plans can assist to reduce danger. They cannot provide absolute safety.
5. A goal of ASAP is to work in partnership with the woman to identify risks and build strategies to reduce the risks and increase her safety.
6. Women who live with abuse evaluate their risk on a continual basis. A goal of ASAP is to turn this assessment into a conscious, pro-active process. While women may minimize or deny risk factors, they are also in the best position to assess the danger posed by their abuser.
7. If the woman has children, their safety and well-being is integrally linked to the safety of the mother. Each step in the ASAP process includes a consideration of the mother's assessment of and plans for the safety and well-being of her children.
8. The woman is the expert on her life; she owns her safety plan. While she will often have help from service providers, the safety plan belongs to the woman.
9. The role of service providers is to work with the woman to help her manage the risk, instead of imposing a plan.
10. Safety assessment and safety planning must accommodate the diverse reality of women who experience abuse.

### **Aid to Safety Assessment & Planning**

**BC Institute Against Family Violence and Victim Services and Community Programs  
Division, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General**

11. Safety assessment and safety planning take place in a dynamic and complex context of the abuser's risk factors and the woman's safety support factors. All of these factors can fluctuate, and safety assessment as well as safety planning will need to be revisited and adjusted as the woman's life changes.
12. No one individual or agency will have all the relevant information. Sharing of information increases the effectiveness of safety assessment and safety planning. Conflicting protocols and practices, including confidentiality restrictions, may impede safety assessment.
13. Ideally, safety assessment is a collaborative process. All of the agencies that are responsible for responding to a woman's safety needs should work together. (In practice, this is not a reality in many communities.)
14. Safety assessment and safety planning should include a realistic assessment of the availability and effectiveness of local justice, health and social service system resources.
15. Keeping women safe requires commitment of resources to safety assessment and safety planning. Safety assessment requires skilled staff as well as adequate funding, services, and infrastructure.