

Risk assessment of domestic violence

in the Flemish Family Justice Centers



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AGENCY FOR
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risk assessment

≠

prediction

=

probability



RISK ASSESSMENT

Estimation based on the presence of risk (and protective) factors

Information based on the past and present

Risk factors linked to future risk of violence



RISK ASSESSMENT

Four generations of risk assessment tools

- Unstructured clinical assessment
- Actuarial assessment
- Structured professional assessment
- Assessment tool Veilig Huis

The importance of risk assessment for 'Veilig Huis'

Assessing risk in families, not for each situation separately

Assessing the severity of the situation and the risks of future violence

Identifying the most complex cases that are eligible for a multi agency approach

A risk driven approach with targeted interventions in order to prevent further violence and escalation



RISK ASSESSMENT
=
A PRIORITY

RISK ASSESSMENT: A MULTI AGENCY PERSPECTIVE

- Different actors (police, justice and healthcare workers) cooperate
- Using a shared case file system
- As a way of looking at the situation from different points of view that complement each other
- Taking into account practitioners' knowledge and experience
- As a basis for joint action plans
- Re-assessing risks, whenever necessary



DEVELOPING A TOOL FOR 'VEILIG HUIS'

- Based upon research and practice and policy (e.g. children)
- 'Good practices' in risk assessment in Family Justice Centers
- Example: Family Justice Center Antwerp
 - Multi-agency development
 - Phased implementation
 - Tests and evaluations



3 level approach

- Level 1: Police
- Level 2: Veilig Huis (case assessment)
- Level 3: Veilig Huis (specialised assessment by psychologist)



3 level approach

- Level 1: Police
 - Objective: assessing safety and defining further action
 - How? ISLP or Focus
 - Risk factors that can be assessed during intervention and taking into account the prosecution guidelines



3 level approach

- Level 2: Veilig Huis (case assesment)
 - Objective: identifying key risk factors with regard to future violence and/ or escalation
 - How? Digital file system
 - All partners involved have an overview of the risk factors that enable risk-based and tailor made decisions



3 level approach

- Level 3: Veilig Huis (specialised assessment by psychologist)
 - Objective: assessing attitudes and personality disorders, and orientation within mental health services
 - How? Risk assesment by psychologist
- Video



Opname

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RISK ASSESSMENT

Static risk factors

- Unchangeable

! Dynamic risk factors

- Spontaneously or as a result of interventions
- Stable dynamic risk factors
- Acute dynamic risk factors

Veilig Huis risk factors

RISK FACTORS	Evidence based research	Meta-analysis/review studies
Death threats/suicide thoughts or threats	***	Spencer et al., 2022; Matias et al., 2020; RTI (Groenen et al.), e.o.
Fear of the victim for his own safety or the safety of the children	**	Matias et al., 2020, RTI
Severe or extreme violence or injuries (e.g. physical violence leading to hospitalisation, rape,...)	**	Matias et al., 2020, Clare et al., 2021, RTI (Groenen et al.), e.o.
Non-fatal strangulation (e.g. choking smothering, drowning)	*	Matias et al., 2020 (Monckston-Smith)
Escalation patterns (e.g. frequency, nature, severity)	**	RTI (Groenen et al.), Matias et al., 2020
Children victim or witness to violence	*	Spencer et al., 2022, (Li et al., 2019)

Veilig Huis risk factors

RISK FACTORS	Evidence based research	Meta-analysis/review studies
Previous violence in current family context	***	Spencer et al., 2022; Matias et al., 2020; RTI (Groenen et al.), e.o.
Previous violence outside of the current family context	***	Spencer et al., 2022; Clare et al., 2021, RTI (Groenen et al.)
Control and isolation	***	Matias et al., 2020, Spencer et al., 2022, RTI (Groenen et al.)
Dependency	*	Spencer et al., 2022
Concerns about psychological functioning	*	Spencer et al., 2022
Substance abuse	***	Spencer et al., 2022, Clare et al., 2021, RTI (Groenen et al.)
Not looking for or accepting help	**	Spencer et al, 2011, RTI (Groenen et al.)

Thank you for your attention!

- Enjoy the rest of the conference
- Any further questions:
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