

Risk Assessment in the MARAM Framework (Victoria)

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Core Risk Assessment Principles

1. Victim Survivor Self-Assessment

- The client's own sense of fear or safety is a strong predictor of actual risk.
- Trust what they tell you, even if they minimise or downplay their experience.
- Ask directly: "Do you feel safe?" "Do you think things are getting worse?"

2. Evidence-Based Risk Factors

- MARAM outlines specific behaviours linked with serious harm or death (e.g., strangulation, threats, stalking, pregnancy violence).
- These factors are assessed using structured tools appropriate to your level of engagement (e.g., Intermediate Risk Assessment).

3. Professional Judgement

- Your clinical insight and intuition matter.
- Use what you know from your work with the client, including presentation, emotional cues, inconsistencies, or signs of fear and confusion.

4. Information Sharing

- Under Victorian law, services can share risk-relevant information using the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS) and the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS).
- This helps create a clearer and more coordinated response across services.

5. Intersectional Analysis

- Risk is shaped not just by the perpetrator's behaviour, but also by the client's access to support and safety.
- Consider how culture, disability, visa status, language, gender identity, or trauma history impact their risk, visibility, and ability to seek help.

MARAM Risk Factors Checklist

This table summarises the key evidence-based risk factors from the MARAM Framework, useful for therapists assessing family violence. Serious risk factors - those that may indicate an increased risk of the victim being killed or almost killed - are highlighted.

Risk Factor	Description
Physical assault while pregnant/new birth	Violence may start or escalate during pregnancy, increasing risk to mother and child. Strong indicator of future harm.
Self-assessed level of risk	Victim's own assessment of safety is a strong predictor of risk. May be minimised due to fear, confusion, or emotional abuse.
Planning to leave or recent separation	Period around separation is extremely high risk — particularly within the first 2 months post-separation.
Escalation of violence	Any increase in severity or frequency of abuse is linked to higher risk of serious harm or lethality.
Imminence	Court proceedings, prison release, or relocation may trigger rapid escalation.
Financial abuse / stress	Includes control of finances, forced poverty, or perpetrator gambling — linked to higher risk and entrapment.
Controlling behaviours	Strongly correlated with homicide. Includes isolation, micromanagement, financial, cultural, or tech control.
Access to weapons	Access to guns, knives, or any threatening object increases risk of serious harm or death.
Use of weapon in most recent event	Past weapon use indicates high likelihood of future violence.
Harmed or threatened victim/family	Physical/emotional abuse or threats to family signal high ongoing risk.
Strangulation/choking	High lethality risk; linked to traumatic brain injury and death. Always requires serious intervention.
Threats to kill	Specific or repeated threats to kill should always be treated as genuine and highly dangerous.

Risk Factor	Description
Threats or harm to pets	Used to control or terrorise victim. Strong link to broader patterns of abuse.
Threats or attempts of self-harm/suicide	Can be used as control; high risk for murder–suicide scenarios.
Stalking	Intimate partner stalking, tech abuse, obsessive monitoring—especially dangerous after separation.
Sexual assault	Strongly linked to other forms of violence and control. Indicator of severe coercion.
Breaches of court orders	Ignoring legal protections indicates disregard for authority and heightened risk.
History of family violence	Predictive of ongoing or escalated abuse. Past behaviour is a strong indicator.
History of other violence	History of violence outside family shows pattern of risk, particularly if weapons used.
Obsessive/jealous behaviour	Includes entitlement, possessiveness, and rigid gender beliefs — major warning signs.
Unemployment/disengagement	Linked to financial stress, resentment, and increased likelihood of violence.
Drug/alcohol misuse	Substance abuse contributes to volatility and diminished impulse control.
Mental illness (esp. depression)	Especially relevant in murder–suicide risk; may exacerbate other risk factors.
Isolation	Reduces victim’s ability to seek help; increases perpetrator control and undetected harm.
Physical harm	Repeated physical abuse, especially to head or involving weapons, is a lethality indicator.
Emotional abuse	Used to destabilise, control, and isolate victim. Impacts mental and physical wellbeing.
Property damage	Used to intimidate, threaten, or punish. Also contributes to financial abuse.

Note: Use this checklist to guide risk conversations, safety planning, and decisions about referral or escalation. Refer to full MARAM practice guides for structured assessments and legal obligations.