Risk Assessment and Safety Planning Checklist for Clients

*Current Safety / Risk Assessment*

How comfortable are you interacting with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_now?

How often / when do you have to interact with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_?

How are you interacting with \_\_\_\_\_\_? (phone, texts, in person)

What worries you most about interacting with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_?

Are you worried that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ will physically abuse you?

Has \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ ever threatened or attempted to kill you? Are you worried \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ would do this now?

Does \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ sporadically show up at your work / home / kid’s school?

Would you feel comfortable if you have an unexpected or unplanned interaction with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?

Do you feel like you can leave / come home as you please?

Do you currently feel safe in your home? If it makes sense, is there somewhere else you can go stay for a few days while I connect you with more resources? What do you need to bring?

Would you feel comfortable having \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ around your kids / pets / family right now?

Have they ever hurt you in front of the kids? Been violent in front of the kids? Hurt the kids?

Look out for: access to firearms, threats to use weapon, attempted strangulation, threats to kills or use lethal violence, forced sex, threatened/attempted suicide, alcohol / drug use.

If you determine there is a high risk that a client or their children are at imminent risk of harm, focus on getting the client immediate help (if they want it). Make necessary connections with other attorneys/social workers in your office, or from an advocacy organization.

*Safety Planning Checklist*

*Communication:*

Discuss safest methods to communicate with the client.

Is there a safe phone number I can call you on? Can I leave a voicemail?

What is the safest day or time to call you?

Should I use a blocked or spoof number?

Is there a trusted third party that would be safe to call if I cannot reach you about your case?

Is it okay to text you?

Is it okay to email you?

Does \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ have access to your calls, texts, or emails? Do they know your passwords?

Is it safe to send all information to you through email or text, or just certain information?

Can I send you mail? Where is a safe address to send mail? Third party?

Is there a code word or phrase you can tell me on the phone if it is no longer safe to talk and you need to hang up? Example: I need to go to the bank.

*Meetings:*

Do they think their abuser may try to come with them to a meeting to discuss their case?

Is there a cover story or alternative location for a meeting where the abuser will not try to attend? Example: Child’s doctor appointment; taking the children to the library; Community Action Center that has other resources.

Tell your client if their abuser comes to the meeting, you will say that ethical and legal requirements of being a lawyer mean you need to meet with your client alone, and then you will bring them into the meeting.

*Miscellaneous*

Are there other parties (besides abuser) that you are concerned may try to intervene on behalf of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_? Is there anyone I should be particularly wary about contacting me/our office other than \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_? Examples: their parents, friends, family

Do you have access to safe, reliable transportation to get to our meetings or hearings?

*Case Related*

Do you have access to or can you make copies of important documents we need for this case and give them to me for safekeeping?

Advise client about public records, if applicable.

Do you think you will feel comfortable testifying about the abuse? Being cross-examined (explain what this entails)? Telling the judge or other side about the abuse? Even if \_\_\_\_\_\_ is present?

Are there any police reports or other records we could get to limit your needing to testify? Third parties willing to write statements?

Talk with client about significant events that will happen in the case. Let them know that you will give them plenty of warning before something happens so they can be prepared for potential retaliation by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

*Referrals*

Do you need shelter? If yes, refer to [Day One](https://dayoneservices.org/)

Do you want to speak with a DV advocate? They will help you make a comprehensive plan to stay safe. If yes, [refer to local agency](https://www.vfmn.org/find-a-program); culturally specific agency

Screen for other legal issues and refer to other attorneys in office as needed. Examples:

OFP/HRO, divorce, custody >> family law

Lease break, VAWA transfer >> housing

Good cause exemption, MFIP extension, income stability >> government benefits

U-Visa, VAWA self petition >> immigration

Is there anything else you are worried about right now?