

The High-Risk Project Overview



The Issue

The pandemic increased the levels of risk for women in abusive relationships. This risk was exacerbated by confusion and disruption in the criminal court system due to public health restrictions of the pandemic. Counterpoint saw a need to more effectively identify high-risk situations and create collaborative and innovative ways to enhance safety of survivors and increase risk management of high-risk abusers.

The Response

Counterpoint developed a strategy to:



Screen ALL partners

of the Partner Abuse Response (PAR) program participants using an evidence-based screening tool



Carry out inter-sectoral High-Risk consults

(primarily within the criminal justice system) to implement coordinated actions that would protect survivor safety

Timeframe

STARTED:
October 2020

COMPLETED:
June 2021

Definition

High-risk situations were defined as those where the survivor was at risk for serious or lethal violence by the abuser.

The Project

178 referrals received



16 cases identified as High-Risk



Funding

Canada's Emergency Community Support Program through the United Way of Greater Toronto

Concerns

Of the high-risk cases:

- > More than 50% the offenders were screened into the Early Intervention (E.I.) Court – a process designed for low risk/ first time offenders. This process provides NO criminal justice oversight when offender is in PAR.
- > In almost 50%, including 4 E.I. cases, the offender strangled his partner; the serious risk of strangulation was not considered in any of these cases.
- > In almost every case the offender had Failed to Comply with court orders however, prior to the consults none had been followed up with charges and convictions.
- > A quarter of the offenders had been referred to PAR numerous times, because they had not successfully completed the program: 1 was attending PAR for the 4th time, 1 for the 3rd time and 2 for the 2nd time.

Calls for Action



1

Screening for E.I. court must be restored based on the criteria identified by the provincial Ministry of the Attorney General.

2

Reinstate the collection of critical evidence, specifically video statements by victims.

3

Strangulation has deadly consequences and should be prosecuted as attempted homicide.

4

Charges related to Fail to Comply with court orders must be considered as serious charges where Police, crowns and probation work together to ensure vigorous and successful prosecution.

5

Differential programming is needed for offenders, particularly for offenders who have been repeatedly mandated into PAR programs and show little or no change in the behavior or understanding of the impact of their behavior.

6

Risk changes over time and to successfully manage and mitigate risk, the criminal justice system all and community agencies must work together to share information and to develop strategies to effectively manage offender risks and enhance survivor safety.