

# **Domestic Violence Risk and Needs Assessment (DVRNA)**

## **Scoring Manual**

**Third Edition  
2014**

**Domestic Violence Offender Management Board  
Division of Criminal Justice  
Colorado Department of Public Safety**

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### **Special Acknowledgements**

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## **Overview and Administration**

### **Introduction**

The Domestic Violence Risk and Needs Assessment (DVRNA) was developed by the Treatment Review Committee (Committee) of the Colorado Domestic Violence Offender Management Board (DVOMB). The Domestic Violence Risk and Needs Assessment (DVRNA) is a risk assessment for adult domestic violence offenders 18 years and older. It is intended to be completed once all the evaluation data has been gathered. It is empirically based and has content and face validity. The DVOMB has obtained funding for a validation study which will begin in October 2010.

This instrument was designed to identify risk factors that should be considered when working with domestic violence offenders in treatment. It is only intended to be used for offenders who have been arrested and are in the criminal justice system for a domestic violence offense. The risk factors that are empirically based on this instrument are predictive for offenders in the criminal justice system. It aids in determining appropriate level of treatment intensity. The DVRNA presents a framework within which to assess the risk of future intimate partner violence for domestic violence offenders in treatment. The DVRNA takes numerous risk factors that have been identified through empirical research as increasing the risk of violence or escalating its seriousness and consolidates these factors into a single measure, thus providing a method of determining the likelihood (probability) of ongoing or repeat violence.

### **Description**

The DVRNA is composed of 14 domains of risk most highly predictive of future violence, which were selected based on an extensive literature review, the clinical experience of the Committee, and the knowledge from the criminal justice system participants. Many items concern an offender's criminal history. A few domains are dynamic in nature, such as current lifestyle stability factors. Risk factors are used as one measure to assist with initial treatment planning including the design of offender competencies, and ongoing treatment plan reviews.

The DVRNA is a risk assessment tool that assigns offenders a total score based on risk for repeated domestic violence. Thus, an offender may be placed into one of three categories of intensity of treatment; low, moderate, or high. For example, any indication of a Significant Risk Factor would require initial treatment placement in the moderate level at a minimum, while an indication of a Critical Risk Factor would require initial treatment placement in the high intensity level.

## **User Qualifications and Training**

The DVRNA was designed to be scored easily by treatment providers in conjunction with the Multi-disciplinary Treatment Team, made up of an Approved Provider, responsible criminal justice agency, and a treatment victim advocate at a minimum. Other professionals relevant to a particular case may also be a part of the MTT such as human services, child welfare, and child protection services. Before using this assessment, it is important to read this manual and the Annotated DVRNA. In addition, users should complete DVOMB training because it is critical to insure rater accuracy and fidelity to the instrument. DVRNA users should have a basic understanding of risk factors related to domestic violence recidivism.

## **Documentation of Information Sources**

When completing the DVRNA for each domain, it is essential to identify the sources utilized to obtain the information. It is preferable to use official records (e.g., mental health, criminal justice reports), credible offender reports and written collateral reports for this documentation. The scoring of the instrument is intended to be transparent and sources of information must be available.

## Scoring Instructions Domain Risk Items

**A: Prior Domestic Violence Related Incidents** (Any of the following are Significant Risk Factors that indicate initial treatment in Level B **except number 1, which is a Critical Risk Factor and indicates treatment in Level C.**

This domain applies only to adult criminal history  
Do not include offenses committed as a juvenile

1. Prior domestic violence conviction

Critical Risk Factor that indicates initial treatment placement in Level C.

Include self reports of convictions

Includes deferred judgments, guilty pleas

Include convictions identified in criminal history as reported by probation or criminal justice report

2. **Violation** of an order of protection (documented)

Include civil or criminal protection orders

Include past or current orders

Include temporary protection orders

Include alcohol violations

3. Past or present civil domestic violence related protection orders against offender

Does not include criminal protection orders related to the arrest and conviction.

Do not include automatic orders related to marriage dissolution

Include temporary and permanent orders

4. Prior arrests for domestic violence

Include any arrest as an adult that was identified in the arrest as domestic violence

5. Prior domestic violence incidents not reported to criminal justice system

Include incidents reported by the victim **only** if the victim gives written permission to include this in the scoring of the DVRNA.

Include offender self report of incidents

Include any incident commencing after age 18

Include incidents involving any intimate partner after age 18

Include incidents reported in writing by collateral contacts or documented interview(s).

**Domain B: Drug or Alcohol Abuse** (Any of the following are Significant Risk Factors that indicate initial treatment in Level B).

Requires use of a Division of Behavioral Health approved screening or assessment instrument and/or self-report or recent illegal activity involving substance abuse with emphasis on the most recent 12 months.

No problem indicates that there is no alcohol or drug abuse or that alcohol or drugs do not interfere with the offender's functioning.

1. Substance abuse/dependence within the previous 12 months

Refer to the DSM-IV-TR (or current version) for substance dependence or abuse criteria.

2. History of substance abuse treatment within the previous 12 months, or two or more prior drug or alcohol treatment episodes during adult lifetime.

Include any court-ordered or voluntary substance abuse treatment or counseling.

Include offender self-report

3. Offender uses illegal drugs or illegal use of drugs

Colorado Revised Statutes Section 18-18-404(1) refers to "unlawful use of a controlled substance – using any controlled substance, except when it is dispensed by or under the direction of a person licensed or authorized by law to prescribe, administer, or dispense such controlled substance for bona fide medical needs."

Illegal use of drugs includes the abuse of prescription medication; abuse of over-the-counter drugs; and or using illegal drugs such as cocaine, heroin, LSD, methamphetamine, etc.

Tobacco is not included

You may use offender self-report, police report, criminal justice record, and other witnesses.

*Discussion point:*

*For offenders that report the use of or have a positive UA for marijuana:*

*For the purposes of scoring this instrument:*

*Once the offender is on court supervision, probation supervision or parole supervision, marijuana use is not allowed, regardless of state laws. Therefore marijuana use is scored as illegal drug use.*

*If the offender used marijuana prior to criminal justice involvement, during a time when it was legal to use marijuana in Colorado, then it would not be scored as illegal drug use.*

*However, if at any time, the offender abused or is abusing marijuana this would be scored under B.1.*





**Domain C: Mental Health Issue** (Any of the following are Significant Risk Factors that indicate initial treatment placement in Level B at a minimum).

Mental health concerns may be documented from offender self-report, from the diagnosis by a qualified Approved Provider, from medical records, or from a practitioner qualified to identify a disorder. If an Approved Provider is not qualified to assess the mental health of an offender, the offender may need to be referred to a qualified clinician.

1. Existing Axis I or II diagnosis excluding V codes

The V code section of the DSM-IV-TR deals with other conditions that may be a focus of clinical attention. V codes are not a diagnosis and therefore not scored.

Do not score a substance abuse/dependence if this has already been scored on Domain B Drug or Alcohol Abuse.

2. Personality disorder with anger, impulsivity, or behavior instability (SARA, 2008)

This item should be ascertained based on past or current mental health evaluations. If an Approved Provider is not qualified to assess personality disorders, he/she needs to refer to an Approved Provider who is qualified or another qualified clinician.

Refer to the DSM-IV-TR (or current version)

3. Severe psychopathy

Psychopathy is a risk for violent behavior. It is a criminal justice construct. It is not defined in the DSM-IV-TR, subsequently you cannot diagnose someone as a psychopath. However, the degree of someone's psychopathy can be used as a risk factor (HARE Psychopathy Checklist Revised-providers must be trained in the use of this tool).

4. Recent psychotic and/or manic symptoms (SARA, 2008)

"Recent" is defined as the previous 12 months

Psychotic symptoms may include (a) grossly disorganized or illogical speech, (b) delusions, (c) hallucinations, and (d) grossly bizarre behavior. Manic symptoms include (a) extreme euphoria or irritability, (b) grandiosity, (c) racing thought and pressured speech, and (d) motoric hyperactivity

5. Psychological/psychiatric condition currently unmanaged

This condition needs to be diagnosed by a medical or health care clinician, by medical records, or by offender self-report.

6. Non-compliance with prescribed medications and mental health treatment

This information should be obtained from offender self-report or medical records.

7. An offender exhibits symptoms that indicate the need for a mental health evaluation

These symptoms may include such indicators as possible depression, psychosis, mania, and/or anxiety.

**Domain D: Suicidal/homicidal**

1. Serious homicidal or suicidal ideation/intent within the past year

“Serious” as defined in the SARA means that the ideation is experienced as persistent and intrusive or involves high lethality methods; or that the level of intent is moderate to high.

**This is a Critical Risk Factor that indicates initial treatment in Level C.**

2. Ideation within the past 12 months

The term suicidal/homicidal ideation generally refers to thoughts of committing homicide/suicide, including planning how it will be accomplished.

May be obtained from offender self-report or documented by other clinicians

3. Credible threats of death within the past 12 months

“Credible” means that the threats were perceived as credible by the victim (SARA, 2008)

4. Victim reports offender has made threats of harming/killing her

If the information is revealed by a discussion with the victim, protection of the victim is priority. It is imperative that if the victim signs a release that allows this information to be utilized for scoring the DVRNA, she/he understands the ramifications of signing such a form, possible retaliation from an offender and has received safety planning assistance from the treatment victim advocate.

When a victim states that his/her information cannot be revealed beyond the Approved Provider, the Approved Provider and the victim advocate, without compromising victim confidentiality, may consult with probation and shall ascertain other potential ways to document or address victim concerns. *For example:* If the victim reports substance abuse by the offender, the Approved Provider may require random urinalysis, thus obtaining information without revealing victim information.

**Domain E: Use and/or threatened use of weapons in current or past offense or access to firearms**

This information can be documented utilizing offender self-report, reports from probation, collateral reports, or police reports.

“The use of weapons and threats of death that cause fear in victims are associated with increase risk for future violence.” Manual for the Spousal Assault Risk Assessment Guide (SARA). Therefore the offender’s use of a weapon toward anyone in the offense is scored.

Use and/or threatened use of weapons include the threat or actual use of any weapon that poses potential realistic physical harm to the victim’s life. Potentially deadly weapons may include firearms, knives, and objects used as clubs; or such objects as tools, phones, etc. The object should not be a body part (e.g., hands, feet, mouth).

1. Gun in the home in violation of a civil or criminal court order

**This is a Critical Risk Factor that indicates initial treatment in Level C**

2. Use and/or threatened use of weapons in current or past offense

**This is a Critical Risk Factor that indicates initial treatment in Level C**

This information may be obtained from the police report and/or victim statements. If the information is revealed by a discussion with the victim, protection of the victim is priority. It is imperative that the if the victim signs a release that allows this information to be utilized for scoring the DVRNA, she/he understands the ramifications of signing such a form, possible retaliation from an offender, and has received safety planning assistance from the treatment victim advocate.

3. Access to firearms

Includes personal ownership of a firearm or living in a household with a firearm

Do not score if the offender does not have access to firearms – for example if they are stored

or locked elsewhere outside the home.

If a court order is allowing the offender to have a weapon, this is still scored because the offender has access to a weapon.

**Domain F: Criminal history – nondomestic violence (both reported and unreported to criminal justice system.**

This information may be documented from probation reports, arrest records, or offender self-report.

This domain applies only to adult criminal history

1. Offender was on community supervision at the time of the offense

**This is a Critical Risk Factor that indicates initial treatment in Level C**

Community supervision includes supervised probation, unsupervised (court monitored) probation, parole, private probation, community corrections, pre-trial release, bond, etc.

2. Offender has a prior arrest for assault, harassment, or menacing

**If there have been two or more arrests, this is a Significant Risk Factor that indicates initial treatment in Level B at a minimum.**

Do not include a domestic violence enhanced crime

3. Prior nondomestic violence convictions at any time during offender's adult life

Include any municipal, misdemeanor, and felony convictions.

Includes all convictions except traffic violations

NOTE: IF the offender was scored on Domain B 2 only for two or more prior drug or alcohol treatment episodes during his/her lifetime DO NOT also score any related previous DUIs here.

4. Past violation(s) of conditional release or community supervision

“Conditional release” includes probation, parole, bail, conditional discharge, suspended sentence, or any other occasion in which the offender is at liberty in the community under supervision or other requirements ordered by the court.

Violation of a no contact order counts as violation of conditional release

5. Past assault of strangers, or acquaintances

Assault includes physical assault, sexual assault and any use of a weapon.

There does not have to be an arrest to code this item.

Document how the information was obtained

6. Animal cruelty/abuse

Includes threatening, abusing, or killing a family pet.

There does not have to be an arrest to code this item.  
Document how the information was obtained

## **Domain G: Obsession with the victim (Current victim or current partner only)**

### 1. Stalking or monitoring

Stalking , as defined by the National Center for Victims of Crime, Stalking Resource Center, is a pattern of repeated, unwanted attention, harassment, and contact. It is a course of conduct that can include:

- Following or laying in wait for the victim
- Repeated unwanted, intrusive, and frightening communications from the perpetrator by phone, mail, and/or e-mail
- Damaging the victim's property
- Making direct or indirect threats to harm the victim, the victim's children, relatives, friends, or pets
- Repeatedly sending the victim unwanted gifts
- Harassment through the Internet, known as cyberstalking, online stalking, or Internet stalking
- Securing personal information about the victim by: accessing public records (land records, phone listings, driver or voter registration), using Internet search services, hiring private investigators, contacting friends, family, work, or neighbors, going through the victim's garbage, following the victim, etc.

### 2. Obsessive jealousy with the potential for violence, violently and constantly jealous, or morbid jealousy.

- Morbid jealousy describes a range of irrational thoughts and emotions, together with associated unacceptable or extreme behavior, in which the dominant theme is a preoccupation with a partner's sexual unfaithfulness based on unfounded evidence.
- Individuals may suffer from morbid jealousy even when their partner is being unfaithful, provided that the evidence that they cite for unfaithfulness is incorrect and the response to such evidence on the part of the accuser is excessive or irrational.
- Morbidly jealous individuals interpret conclusive evidence of infidelity from irrelevant occurrences, refuse to change their beliefs even in the face of conflicting information, and tend to accuse the partner of infidelity with many others.

This domain could be scored with evidence of a protection order that is based on stalking or a violation of that type of protection order. A charge for stalking with the current victim would also result in a score on this item.

**If the offender was scored for a civil protection order under Domain A.3 and the protection order is due to stalking, also score this Domain.**

## **Domain H: Safety concerns**

Information should not be used if it compromises victim safety and confidentiality and if the victim has not signed a written release of information specifically related to what information the victim is sharing. It is imperative that if the victim signs a release that allows this information to be utilized for scoring the DVRNA, she/he understands the ramifications of signing such a form, possible retaliation from an offender, and has received safety planning assistance from the treatment victim advocate. If the information is in the police report, the victim need not sign a release or give permission for this information to be used.

1. Victim perception of lack of safety/victim concerned for safety
2. Victim (female victim in heterosexual relationship) believes offender is capable of killing her

NOTE: Even though threats of death are only scored for male offender against female victim, the MTT shall consider threats of death by the offender toward the victim regardless of gender and over ride the findings of the DVRNA if necessary.

3. Offender controls most of victim's daily activities
4. Offender tried to "choke" victim

Although the medical terminology is "strangle", victims more readily identify with the word choke when reporting abuse.

5. Physical violence is increasing in severity
6. Victim forced to have sex when not wanted
7. Victim was pregnant at the time of the offense and offender knew this.
8. Victim is pregnant and offender has previously abused her during pregnancy.

**Domain I: Violence and/or threatened violence toward family members including child abuse**

This does not include criminal history. If there is criminal history related to this/these incident(s), score only on Domain F, number 3.

1. Current or past social services case as an adult where the offender was party to the action.

Voluntary social services involvement is not scored. This item is intended to be open or past cases in social services.

2. Past assault of family members

“Assault” includes physical assault, sexual assault, and any use of a weapon.

“Family members” include biological and legal relatives (parents, step-parents, siblings, etc.), as well as children by previous or present intimate partners.

Excludes previous or present intimate partners.

Score even if there was no arrest conviction.

May be obtained from credible offender self-report and written collateral reports.

3. Children were present during the offense (in the vicinity)

A yes response would include any children in the home or location of offense even if they were sleeping, or it was perceived that they could not hear or see the offense.

Include all children under of age of 18 regardless of their relationship to the victim and offender.



## **Domain J: Attitudes that support or condone spousal assault**

Support or condone either implicitly or explicitly, by encouraging (a) patriarchy (male prerogative), (b) misogyny, and/or (c) the use of violence to resolve conflicts.

Multiple arrests for domestic violence **do not** implicitly or explicitly imply attitudes that support or condone spousal assault.

### **1. Explicitly endorses attitudes that support or condone intimate partner assault**

Explicit endorsed attitudes can be identified because they are precisely and clearly expressed or readily observable, leaving nothing to implication. It is expressed in a clear and obvious way, leaving no doubt as to the intended meaning.

Examples include: offender calling the victim by derogatory names, stating that the victim/partner should obey the offender, lack of obedience is justification for abuse, stating that the victim is too stupid to handle money.

### **2. Appears to implicitly endorse attitudes that support or condone intimate partner assault.**

Implicit endorsed attitudes are suggested or understood without being directly stated. To imply is to suggest rather than to state. An action or incident can imply an idea that would otherwise have to be stated.

Examples include: offender justifies behaviors that indicate the victim provoked him; such as she wouldn't stop talking or she was drunk. Offender provides covert messages around his/her true beliefs. Offender may verbally say he/she would not abuse his/her partner, but he/she is controlling and abusive by the actions of his/her behaviors.

**Domain K: Prior completed or non-completed domestic violence treatment**

Treatment occurred at any time in the past and was not completed, regardless of reason.

This information may be obtained from an Approved Provider or credible offender self-reports and written collateral reports from the criminal justice system.

Prior treatment that occurred at any time in the past regardless of the type of discharge received, whether successful, unsuccessful, or administrative.

Include any court-ordered or voluntary domestic violence treatment or counseling.

*IF the offender is in treatment again for the same offense, this is not considered a new treatment episode for the purposes of this instrument and therefore it would not be scored.*

**Domain L: Victim separated from offender within the previous six (6) months**

This refers to the risk of separation and is scored based on the *victim initiating the separation* from the offender within six months prior to the evaluation. Score this only when the victim has chosen to separate. This does not include the offender separating or a court order that requires they separate. Also score this item if the victim left and returned to the abuser.

It is a risk factor that can be reviewed at time of evaluation and calculated as the six (6) months previous to the evaluation.

Additionally, *any* time the victim initiates a separation from the offender this is a risk and needs to be scored and taken into consideration by the MTT. The MTT will determine on a case by case basis if the victim leaves during the offender's treatment whether this will impact level of treatment or treatment planning.

Separation refers to physical separation.

Separation may include entering a shelter, moving out of the residence, moving in with friends, or eviction of the offender.

**Domain M: Unemployed**

Do not count employment that is criminal in nature (e.g. drug dealing).

Unemployed is defined as not working at time of offense or at any time during intake or treatment and does not include offenders on public assistance, homemakers, students, or retirees.

An offender that is unemployed and collecting unemployment is scored as unemployed.

## **Domain N: Involvement with people who have pro-criminal influence**

**In order to score one point in this domain, *both* of the following factors shall be present.**

### **1. Some criminal acquaintances**

The presence of some criminal acquaintances is associated with an opportunity for pro-criminal modeling, a concept that is considered a major risk factor (Andrews & Bonta, 1994; Gendreau, 1995; Elliot et al., 1987; Hawkins & Lam, 1987).

Explore the scope of criminal involvement of the individual's network and to what degree it is an accepted norm.

- Score if the individual associates with (or did associate with prior to incarceration) some individuals who are not close friends, but are known to have criminal records or are known to be involved in criminal activity.
- Potential questions that can be asked: "Of the friends you just mentioned (reiterate by name if possible) which ones have been in trouble with the law, as far as you are aware?"

*For acquaintances or friends that have criminal records but are now clearly pro-social and stable, e.g., NA or AA sponsor with several years clean and sober, do not count these individuals as a pro-criminal influence*

## **AND**

### **2. Some criminal friends**

Attachments to pro-criminal others is a well documented predictor of criminal behavior, with roots in both of the major explanatory theories in criminology: social control (Hirschi, 1969) and social learning (Akers & Burgess, 1968).

Inquire whether the offender's friends are known to be involved in unlawful behavior. Potential questions that can be utilized are: "You've indicated \_\_\_ and \_\_\_ and \_\_\_ are friends of yours. What kind of experience have they had with criminal behavior?"

Explore the criminal orientation (to what degree they participate or support unlawful activities) of the individual's friends.

- Score if the individual has friends (or did prior to incarceration) who are known to have criminal records or are known to be involved in criminal activity.
- Friends are associates with whom one spends leisure time, whose opinions are valued, who provide help when in difficulty, etc.