

# Fact sheet 6: Structured professional judgement

This fact sheet is adapted from MARAM foundation knowledge guide pp. 35–37.

The practice model of structured professional judgement enables professionals to assess information to determine the level or seriousness of risk. Professionals are asked to bring their experience, skills and knowledge to the risk assessment process to make an assessment.

Risk assessment relies on you or another professional ascertaining:

- a victim-survivor's self-assessment of their level of risk, fear and safety
- identifying the evidence-based risk factors that are present.

You can gather information to inform this approach from a variety of sources, including:

- interviewing or 'assessing' the victim-survivor directly
- requesting or sharing, as authorised under applicable legislative information-sharing schemes, with other organisations about the risk factors present or other family violence risk-relevant information about a victim-survivor or perpetrator's circumstances.

You should consider this information and apply your professional judgement to each of the elements. This is the act of you analysing and interpreting information to determine the level of risk.

Risk assessment is a point-in-time assessment of the level of risk. Risk is dynamic and can change over time, which means that risk should be regularly reviewed, and any changes should inform future assessment.

## Model of structured professional judgement



Your assessment of the level or seriousness of risk, as well as appropriate risk management approaches must be informed by an intersectional analysis. You can also take into account relevant information about a victim-survivor or perpetrator's circumstances.

Best-practice approaches to risk assessment with victim-survivors enables them to share their stories with you by you believing them about:

- their experience of violence
- the relationship
- how this has impacted any children in the family (that is, understanding risk experienced by children as victim-survivors)
- how they are survivors in their own right, which may also be informed by direct assessment (of children)
- attitudes, beliefs and behaviours of the perpetrator.

Evidence shows that adult victim-survivors are often good predictors of their own level of safety and risk and that this is the most accurate assessment of their level of risk. By taking a person- or victim-centred approach to risk assessment and management and listening to and believing the victim-survivor you can recognise the victim-survivor as expert in their own safety, with intimate knowledge of their lived experience of violence.