

**Women's  
Justice Center**



**Centro de Justicia  
Para Mujeres**

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## **Domestic Violence Homicide Risk Assessment (data from USDOJ Scale)**

**\*\* Weapons \*\* Threats \*\* Strangling \*\***  
**\*\* Constant Jealousy \*\* Forced Sex \*\***

*Note: The top five risk factors for domestic violence homicide usually don't bleed! In fact, these high risk factors often don't leave any visible marks at all.*

*The only sure way to determine the presence of these high risk factors is through careful, comprehensive victim interviews.*

### **Ask & Document**

#### **The Top Five Risk Factors**

The numbers in parenthesis indicate the factor by which a domestic violence victim's risk of homicide is increased relative to other domestic violence victims.

1. **Has the abuser ever used, or threatened to use, a gun, knife, or other weapon against victim? (20.2x )**
2. **Ever threatened to kill or injure victim? (14.9x) Document complete and accurate quotes of the threats**
3. **Ever tried to strangle (choke) the victim? (9.9x)**
4. **Is abuser violently or constantly jealous? (9.2x )**
5. **Has abuser ever forced victim to have sex? (7.6x )**

**More Notes:** *The US Dept. of Justice has now compiled a number of smaller studies into a lethality assessment list of 17 risk factors for domestic violence homicide. (The full lethality risk scale can be found at [www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/jr000250e.pdf](http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/jr000250e.pdf) Scroll to bottom of document. )*

*The numbers in parenthesis indicate the factor by which a domestic violence victim's risk of homicide is increased relative to other domestic violence victims. For example, if the abuser has used or threatened to use weapons, the victim's risk of domestic violence homicide is 20.2 times that of the average domestic violence victim.*

- **Always Keep in Mind: All Domestic Violence Victims Are at Heightened Risk of Homicide.**
- *Don't dismiss threats to kill and maim as "just words". All victims should be asked about threats, and all threats should be quoted accurately and in detail. Also, threats to kill or maim are a crime in California, PC 422.*
- *Even victim advocates often fail to ask about sexual violence in the relationship. **Sexual violence is serious trauma, and, is a high risk factor for domestic violence homicide. Don't be shy. Always ask!***
- *The USDOJ lethality scale deals only with factors inside the relationship. Other studies have found that factors outside the relationship - such as the quality of prior law enforcement or court response - correlate with future lethality. But again, the key to uncovering these risk factors is the same; a careful, comprehensive victim interview.*

## How You Can Help

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