

WHAT IS NEW WITH ICAT?



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INCREASING SAFETY AND REDUCING HARM

An Interagency Case Assessment Team (ICAT) is a partnership of local agencies who review highest risk domestic violence cases with the goal of keeping domestic violence victims and their children safer.

They achieve this goal by legally and ethically sharing risk-related information and by building a safety net for victims, their children, and the community. ICATs provide specialized support and coordinated intervention, collaborating toward effective safety plans and proactive intervention with a focus on offender management.

The core membership of an ICAT includes representatives from law enforcement, child welfare, community corrections, and anti-violence. Others often include health, income assistance, immigration, and Indigenous representatives.

Domestic Violence Risk Identification (BC Ministry of Justice)

Coordination and cooperation across agencies and services are crucial to increasing safety and reducing harm for victims of domestic violence. Historically, response mechanisms in BC have been inadequately equipped to address high-risk domestic violence cases.

ICATs define and assess risk based on 19 risk factors under four categories:

Relationship History: Current status of relationship; escalation in abuse; children exposed; threats; forced sex; strangling, choking, or biting; stalking; and information on relative social powerlessness.

Complainant's Perceptions of Risk: Perception of personal safety; and perception of future violence.

Suspect History: Suspect's criminal violence history; suspect's previous domestic violence history; court orders; alcohol/drugs; employment instability; mental illness; and suicidal ideation.

Access to Weapons/Firearms: Weapons/firearms (used or threatened?); and access to weapons/firearms.

If the case is determined, through systematic assessment, to be of the highest risk, the ICAT will collaborate on a safety plan. Privacy laws limit situations in which someone's personal information can be shared, but they permit disclosure if it is necessary for the purpose of preventing more violence or saving a life.

There are 25 ICATs in the province of BC, 21 of which are active. A recent provincial file review of 639 high risk domestic violence cases involving 1701 people (victims, children, and offenders) identified 556 (87%) cases as 'highest risk' and 662 children (39%) as at high risk. Communities with ICATs reported 0 deaths.

The risk management strategy will include enhanced intervention, victim safety planning, and monitoring and support for the perpetrator. The victim may be prioritized for services and she may be given assistance with household and workplace security.

The benefits of ICATs include better identification of risk factors, proactive supports to victims and offenders, elimination of systemic barriers to safety, reduction in service duplication, fewer removals of children, and an overall reduction in domestic violence offences.

RESEARCH – CCWS is managing a new Research Project in partnership with the FREDIA Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children (Simon Fraser University). The team will gather ICAT data and conduct research and analysis to cement the incredible outcomes that are being reported. Dr. Chris Giles and Dr. Margaret Jackson, along with Stephanie Dawson, are conducting the research, guided by an Oversight Committee of stakeholders and partners.

ICAT Best Practices: Working Together To Reduce the Risk of Domestic Violence

ICAT Best Practices were developed collaboratively with criminal justice, child welfare, and community-based anti-violence programs. The document was created over a two-year period through consultation, research, and advisories. The resulting manual outlines emerging best practices, ICAT governance, privacy and information sharing, risk identification and risk management plans. Funding partners for the process and document are the Ministry of Justice, MCFD and the RCMP Family Violence Intervention Fund.

BRIEF HISTORY OF ICAT

ICATs were started by the Vernon and District Violence Against Women in Relationships Committee. CCWS and EVA BC have supported the development and maintenance of ICATs since 2001, with funding from the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Children and Family Development.

REFERRING TO AN ICAT

If your community has an ICAT and you suspect a domestic violence case you are working with has highest risk factors, contact your police detachment and ask to speak to the officer in charge of domestic violence, or call the Community Based Victim Assistance Program (CBVAP). If there is no CBVAP, call another anti-violence program in your community. If you think someone is immediately in danger, phone 911.

RESOURCES

ICATs and Information Sharing:
<http://endingviolence.org/prevention-programs/ccws-program/interagency-case-assessment-teams-icats/>

Information on privacy laws:
www.oipc.bc.ca and
www.priv.gc.ca/index_e.asp and
<http://endingviolence.org/publications/disclosing-information-in-woman-abuse-cases-guiding-principles/>

Risk factors to consider when domestic violence safety planning:
www.pssq.gov.bc.ca/victimservices/shareddocs/factors-to-consider.pdf