

*Reducing risk where feasible*

Just as with self-harm, there is no definitive way to know who will harm others or when they will do so. The goal is to manage risk with an understanding of the limitations.

It is helpful to understand what the Safety Assessor-1 is not intended to do. This instrument is not intended to predict harm to others where there is a higher degree of pre-meditation and/or what we call sociopathy. Parties with these mind-states are not likely to honestly report violent intentions or propensities on a self-report form such as the Safety Assessor-1. Nor is it intended to screen those who would commit violence pursuant to their religious or political ideological beliefs.

The Safety Assessor-1 is more likely to help predict violence or parties with violent propensities when impulsive or anger driven violence is at risk. It may also help with those who have ambivalent or mixed feelings about possible violence. In addition, it may also help with less cunning respondents or respondents who are progressing up the violence predisposition curve but are still willing to honestly report their propensities.

The Safety Assessor-1 can also be used in conjunction with the *Dashometrics Anger Spectrum-1* (the Anger Spectrum-1 does not ask for self-reported information about violent intentions and may be better able to identify defensive or non-disclosing parties)

With these considerations in mind, the following are guidelines for interpreting this instrument:

- ▶ Items 1 through 6 should be thought of as a “ladder of risk”; the higher up the ladder the higher the risk. Thus, parties who respond with “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” on item 6 would be at highest risk. An affirmative response to item 6 especially suggests that risk is imminent and action should be taken to protect those who are at risk if at all possible – to the extent that parties at risk can actually be identified through different forms of information or evidence.

Where there is an affirmative response to item 6 those who administer this assessment should consider whether on an overall basis (considering this assessment and other relevant information)... 1) they have a duty *to warn* law enforcement and/or intended victims of potential violence (this is usually determined by state law)... 2) by law or ethics they are *restricted from warning*...or, 3) if there is neither a duty to warn or not to warn whether they should involve law enforcement and also warn potential victims. Furthermore, in some states certain parties have not only a duty to warn but also what is referred to as a duty to predict harm to others.

Any party who administers the Safety Assessor-1 who has a governmentally issued professional license should consult with their licensing regulations or licensing board if they are unclear about what their rights and obligation in this situation are. We encourage our users to understand these legal duties before a crisis is reached.

- ▶ Item 7 seeks to identify those who have a history of harm to others. Affirmative responses to this item obviously indicate a higher level of risk.
- ▶ Items 8 and 9 together are meant to 1) determine the degree to which respondents have generalized their anger; thus an affirmative response on item 9 may indicate higher risk based on the concept of “generalization” of grievance or anger and 2) possibly identify intended targets. Affirmative responses on item 8 should invite the follow up question of exactly who the violence would be directed against. Once again, those who give this assessment should clearly understand when they have a “duty to warn” or perhaps even a “duty to predict” under the law of their state.
- ▶ Item 10 is intended to act as a screen for those who are willing to make what is essentially a “cry for help”
- ▶ Item 11 is intended to identify respondents where extra effort should be made to cultivate a trusting relationship or respondents whose answers might be interpreted more skeptically in view of their lower trust level.

*Dashometrics* is especially interested in working with research partners in the area of assessing risk of harm to self or others. Our hope is that over time, with proper research, this instrument can become increasingly more predictive based on different response profiles or constellations.