

## Resource: Severity of Abuse Grid<sup>1</sup>

This Severity of Abuse Grid (SOAG) has been developed to be used with the Risk Identification Checklist. It gives you a framework within which you can identify specific features of the abuse suffered by your person and help you to address their safety in an informed and coherent way. It will also typically provide information that will be relevant for those cases going to MARAC.

To complete the SOAG, take the answers from the relevant questions on the checklist and then explore in more detail the severity of each category of abuse **currently suffered** and the escalation if it exists. Whether you are using it at the initial assessment or when reviewing risk, we recommend that the timeframe that should be applied for 'current' abuse is an incident within the last three months. Please note that each case is unique and you will have to use your professional judgement in relation to the information that you are given by your person. **The context in which these and similar behaviours occur is all important in identifying a level of severity.**

**If you answer 'yes' to any of the questions 'is the abuse occurring?' you must circle one answer for each of the boxes in the other three columns to identify the level of severity, the escalation in severity and in frequency.**

Type of abuse	Is abuse occurring?	Severity of abuse	Escalation in severity (past 3 months)	Escalation in frequency (past 3 months)
Physical	Yes No Don't know Not answered	High Moderate Standard	Worse Unchanged Reduced	Worse Unchanged Reduced
Sexual	Yes No Don't know Not answered	High Moderate Standard	Worse Unchanged Reduced	Worse Unchanged Reduced
Stalking and harassment	Yes No Don't know Not answered	High Moderate Standard	Worse Unchanged Reduced	Worse Unchanged Reduced
Jealous and controlling behaviour / emotional abuse	Yes No Don't know Not answered	High Moderate Standard	Worse Unchanged Reduced	Worse Unchanged Reduced

<sup>1</sup> Grid and guidance reproduced with kind permission of the Hestia Fund.

## Guidance on completing the Severity of Abuse Grid

**Note:** This guidance is designed to help you complete the SOAG above. Please note that each case is unique and you will have to use your professional judgement in relation to the information that you are given by your person.

**The context in which these and similar behaviours occur is all important in identifying a level of severity.** For example, the misuse of substances including alcohol may increase the level of risk faced by an individual. Similarly, the cultural context in which abuse takes place should inform your judgement as to the level of risk posed.

Physical abuse			
No	Standard	Moderate	High
Never, or not currently	Slapping, pushing; no injuries.	Slapping, pushing; lasting pain or mild, light bruising or shallow cuts.	Noticeable bruising, lacerations, pain, severe contusions, burns, broken bones, threats and attempts to kill partner, children, relatives or pets. Strangulation, holding under water or threat to use or use of weapons, loss of consciousness, head injury, internal injury, permanent injury, miscarriage.
Sexual abuse			
No	Standard	Moderate	High
Never, or not currently	Use of sexual insults.	Uses pressure to obtain sex; unwanted touching, non-violent acts that make victim feel uncomfortable about sex, their gender identity or sexual orientation.	Uses threats or force to obtain sex, rape, serious sexual assaults. Deliberately inflicts pain during sex, combines sex and violence including weapons, sexually abuses children and forces partner to watch, enforced prostitution, intentional transmission of STIs/HIV/AIDS.
Harassment or stalking			
No	Standard	Moderate	High
Never or not currently	Occasional phone calls, texts and emails.	Frequent phone calls, texts, emails.	Constant/obsessive phone calls, texts or emails, uninvited visits to home, workplace etc or loitering. Destroys or vandalises property, pursues victim after separation, stalking, threats of suicide/homicide to victim and other family members, threats of sexual violence, involvement of others in the stalking behaviour.
Jealous or controlling behaviour/emotional abuse			
No	Standard	Moderate	High
Never or not currently	Made to account for victim's time,	Increased control over victim's time, significant isolation	Controls most or all of victim's daily activities, prevention from taking medication, accessing care needs

	<p>some isolation from family/friends or support network, put down in public.</p>	<p>from family and friends, intercepting mail or phone calls, controls access to money, irrational accusations of infidelity, constant criticism of role as partner/wife/mother.</p>	<p>(especially relevant for survivors with disabilities); extreme dominance, e.g. believes absolutely entitled to partner, partner's services, obedience, loyalty no matter what. Extreme jealousy, e.g. 'If I can't have you, no-one can', with belief that abuser will act on this. Locks person up or severely restricts their movements, threats to take the children. Suicide/homicide threats, involvement of wider family members, crimes in the name of 'honour'. Threats to expose sexual activity to family members, religious or local community via photos, online (e.g. Facebook) or in public places.</p>
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