

## **Enhanced Safety: Risk Assessment Tool in Family Courts**

### **Introduction**

The Clinic received funding from the Law Foundation of Ontario for a two-year project to create a risk assessment tool that will take into account the complex lived realities of survivors and current understandings of gender-based violence (GBV). The risk assessment tool will take into consideration physical, emotional, mental, social/cultural, financial, legal and spiritual abuse and will also take into account the multiple sources of oppression and systemic barriers that women experience.

### **The following are among the goals of our project:**

- Consult with stakeholders/family legal system actors including lawyers, judges, mediators, clerks, family court support workers and survivors.
- Observe court operations in Toronto, Peel Region, and Durham.
- Conduct a needs assessment for these courts, designed to identify knowledge gaps.
- Create a publicly accessible online risk assessment tool and user guide that addresses gaps identified in the needs assessment.
- Develop training for family legal system actors to be delivered in person.
- Create and make available a free online multimedia training module in both English and French.
- Establish internal and external evaluation procedures to ensure the tool continues to meet its goals.

### **The Schlifer Clinic is working with the following community partners:**

- Centre for Research & Education on Violence against Women and Children (CREVAWC) at the University of Western Ontario
- Luke's Place
- Indus Community Services

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**We have identified the following as critical activities:**

- ❖ Conduct a thorough literature review and create an annotated bibliography;
- ❖ Research risk assessment tools used in Canada and overseas to create a database of most commonly used tools and any potential GBV risk assessment tools;
- ❖ Meet and consult with community partners, court stakeholders, legal actors in family court, and high-risk clients;
- ❖ Analyze and compile data from the interviews and needs assessment;
- ❖ Develop a risk assessment tool and user guide tailored to family courts based on the needs assessments results and literature review;
- ❖ Pilot the risk assessment tool internally with Barbra Schlifer Clinic staff;
- ❖ Pilot the risk assessment tool externally at family courts, requesting input from court staff;
- ❖ Develop an in-person training to be delivered to court staff ;
- ❖ Create multimedia training to be permanently available on the Clinic's website in English and French.

To learn more about the Risk Assessment Project, please contact Patricia Coelho, Project Coordinator, at 416-323-9149 x 279 or by email at [p.coelho@schliferclinic.com](mailto:p.coelho@schliferclinic.com)

Be part of the conversation on Twitter: @schliferclinic #AndMeToo

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