



Checklist: What to learn about a woman's situation

Unless otherwise noted, links below lead to [AfterSheLeaves.ca](https://www.thersheleaves.ca). PDFs are also from this site.

Depending on whether your organization has already done an intake/needs assessment/risk assessment with your client, you may want to explore these questions with the woman in your first meeting(s) together. They provide a good framework to guide a conversation about intimate partner violence.

Before you begin, remind her of your duty to report where you suspect child abuse, so she can decide what information she wants and doesn't want to share with you.

Assess risk

- Level of risk, safety issues
 - What is the abuser's situation? [*see: [Red flags for risk \(PDF\)](#)*]
 - What are her fears?
- Status of the relationship
 - Are they living in the same location?
 - Does she want to leave? If yes, does the abuser know? [*see: [Red flags for risk \(PDF\)](#), [When a woman is preparing to leave](#)*]
- The abuse
 - What forms of abuse has she been subjected to? [*see: [Abusive behaviours checklist \(PDF\)](#)*]
 - What is the abuse pattern in the relationship? Where are they at now? Has it changed recently? Is it escalating? [*see: [The cycle of abuse](#), [Red flags for risk \(PDF\)](#)*]
- Challenges and barriers she has faced [*see: [Challenges for women who have been subjected to abuse](#)*]
 - In getting help, information?
 - In trying to leave the abuser?

Children and their safety

If she has children...

- How old are they?

- What are her safety concerns about them?
- Where are they? Who do they live with?
- Are there any family court orders about them? Is there another parent in their lives?
- If abduction is a safety issue, what's their status in Canada? Where are their passports?
[see: [Ways to prepare for, prevent and respond to an international abduction \(Luke's Place website with video\)](#)]

Her family law issues / what she wants to resolve

- Where will the [children live](#)?
- How will [decisions be made](#) about them?
- How can the children safely [see the other parent](#)?
- How can she and the children [keep safe](#) from her ex-partner?
- How can she get [financial support](#) from her ex-partner for the children and for herself?
- How will they divide up the [property](#)?
- What can she do if it's best for the children to stay in the [family home](#)?
- What will happen if one parent wants to move or travel with the children?
- How can she get a [divorce](#)?
- If her family law case has already begun, what stage is it at?
- Does she have a lawyer?
- Is she eligible for duty counsel or family advice lawyer services or a legal aid certificate, as may be available in your jurisdiction?

Other important things to learn

- Intersections with other areas of law
 - RCMP/police: Is her partner charged? Is she?
 - Is child protection involved?
 - Are there immigration related legal issues?
- Are she and her partner/ex married or in a common-law relationship?
- What supports does she have? (e.g., supportive family nearby, circle of friends, employment, housing)
- What supports does she need? (e.g., health/accessibility, language interpretation, culturally specific, housing, financial, counselling, childcare, legal advice)
 - What is she asking for?
 - What do you think might be helpful?