

Features of an Evidence-Based Intimate Partner Abuse (IPA) Assessment

1. Takes the form of a structured interview, sometimes known as *Structured Professional Judgement*, established as the soundest general approach to assessing cases involving allegations of intimate partner abuse. It combines clinical judgement, based on the expert's knowledge and experience, with actuarial instruments that have been validated and found reliable.
2. Takes into account the existence of cognitive errors and heuristics that can lead to bias with even the most experienced evaluators.
3. Draws from evidence-based forensic and clinical interviewing methods such as *Motivational Interviewing*, *Criteria-Based Content Analysis*, the *Cognitive Interview*, and, *Strategic Use of Evidence*, as well as validated instruments, that maximize the interviewer's ability to detect deception and determine what is credible.
4. Renders judgement based on a consideration of all the available evidence, including: the consistency of the client's statements with other available evidence, including statements from witnesses, and objective data such as audio or video recordings, etc.; the credibility of individual witnesses, and the compatibility of their statements with those of other witnesses or objective data.
5. When there are contradictions among these sources of data, it is important to consider the established risk factors for IPA, primarily previous history of IPA and previous criminal history involving physical violence, as well as trauma history and the mental health and personality profiles of the parties.
6. Recognizes that IPA is a complex phenomenon that usually occurring behind closed doors, with interacting dynamics, contradictory behaviors and motives, and emotion-tainted perceptions, and does not usually involve clear-cut victims and perpetrators, rendering assignment of blame challenging.
7. Takes into account research evidence that many mental health professionals, attorneys, family court evaluators, and others involved in the assessment, adjudication, and treatment of IPA are gravely misinformed about this topic, and prone to such errors as the availability and representativeness heuristics, and confirmatory bias. Such bias tends to skew in the direction of assuming that men are victims and women are perpetrators, and that all or most forms of IPA are chronic and severe.
8. Is informed by the most up-to-date empirical research data, as published in peer-reviewed journals. Too often, court-appointed experts, whose professional background involves legal or clinical expertise, or victim advocacy, lack significant research experience.