

Family Violence Therapeutic Intervention Needs & Readiness Matrix

Introduction

The Family Violence Therapeutic Intervention Needs & Readiness Matrix is designed to assist clinicians and case managers to make informed decisions, ensuring safe and feasible therapeutic interventions for families experiencing family violence, including Adolescent Violence in the Home (AVITH).

The matrix provides a snapshot of the family's therapeutic needs and readiness. It also supports the development of tailored intervention plans. Regular reviews using the matrix will support ongoing monitoring of client progress and reassessment of their therapeutic needs and readiness.

This matrix also measures the impact of therapeutic treatment. It is utilised during assessment, reviews, and post-treatment to track progress, evaluate outcomes, and guide intervention decisions.

The matrix should be used in conjunction with existing risk assessment frameworks, other assessment measures, and clinical judgment to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the family's progress, outcomes, and safety.

Using a shared risk assessment framework is crucial for assessing and monitoring family violence risk in family violence therapeutic intervention programs. It provides a systematic approach to identify family violence risk factors and develop tailored interventions.

In Victoria, we use the Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM).

Regular reviews using the MARAM (or your state or territory's equivalent if there is one) ensures responsive and evidence-based support, emphasising safety and positive outcomes for the family's wellbeing and healing.

Interpreting the matrix scores

Intensive needs across multiple domains & low therapeutic readiness

When a family exhibits intensive needs across multiple domains with low therapeutic readiness: immediate and specialised interventions are necessary.

The family may be dealing with:

- severe trauma symptoms
- significant safety concerns
- high-risk factors related to family violence
- systemic or institutionalised abuse
- Discrimination and or cultural oppression
- disrupted relationships
- substantial developmental challenges, and/or
- a lack of support network and resources.



Addressing these complex needs necessitates creative, flexible, and coordinated approaches to overcome engagement barriers and foster therapeutic readiness.

Supervision plays an important role in effectively responding to this configuration. This involves regular discussions to formulate a comprehensive trauma informed plan for addressing support, safety, and wellbeing concerns.

Evaluating the effectiveness of existing services and identifying gaps in the service system is important. If necessary, timely referrals to other services should be made, and child protection should be notified if concerns arise.

If therapeutic readiness remains low despite interventions, a time-limited systemic response may be considered. The goal is to address the family's most immediate needs, enhance readiness, and increase the family's capacity to engage in therapy effectively. Temporary closure of the episode of support may be necessary if therapeutic readiness does not improve as expected. During this period, other services can work with the family to address primary concerns and establish safety.

Goal & Intervention Planning

Intensive needs across multiple domains & low therapeutic readiness

In these situations, goal and intervention planning primarily centres around establishing stability and safety within the family.

Examples of a caregiver's goals may include:	Examples of worker interventions may include:
<p>For myself and my children to know that we will be helped to be safe.</p> <p>For professionals to work together so I don't have to tell everyone the same things and they don't all give me different advice.</p>	<p>Schedule and facilitate care team meetings involving relevant professionals, with a focus on safety planning.</p>
<p>When things change in our family's circumstances, support services will help us in the ways we need at the time we need it.</p>	<p>To regularly review and update our safety plan in response to changing circumstances or threats.</p>
<p>To know who we can contact when we need help in a crisis, and that those services will help us.</p>	<p>To establish clear ways to communicate with support services, and emergency contacts for quick access to assistance in crisis situations.</p>
<p>To get help with the things in our family's life that make things really hard – housing, money, parenting etc.</p>	<p>Provide families with information and referral pathways to various support services, including housing, legal, mental health, family violence, family services, financial support, health services and so on.</p>
<p>To have a better relationship with my children where they feel like I can be there for them and that I want to be a good parent to them.</p>	<p>Create a safe and supportive environment where caregivers can collaborate with professionals in planning for their and their children's safety.</p> <p>Offer personalised information and resources to caregivers on trauma-informed parenting approaches and the effects of family violence on child development.</p> <p>Regularly meet with the caregiver, explore how family violence has affected their relationships, identify strengths and challenges, and address ongoing support needs as safety improves.</p>

This document provides examples of goals. In practice, specific interventions will be determined collaboratively taking into consideration the family's unique circumstances and needs. Goals will be assigned specific timeframes for implementation.

Interpreting the matrix scores

Moderate to high needs across multiple domains and variable therapeutic readiness

In situations where families have moderate to high needs across multiple domains and variable therapeutic readiness, targeted and tailored therapeutic interventions are indicated. This involves addressing trauma symptoms, safety concerns, risk factors related to family violence, developmental challenges, and the need for enhanced support networks and resources.

The primary goal is to strengthen resilience, address specific needs, promote therapeutic readiness, and facilitate healing. Regular check-ins with families are necessary to monitor and respond to changes in risk and ensure ongoing safety.

Supervision provides a valuable space to reflect on the family's needs, explore risk domains, and review protective factors. It is an opportunity to discuss and plan therapeutic responses based on the individual circumstances of the family.

Goal and intervention planning should occur collaboratively with the family and be informed by a relational-based therapeutic assessment. The assessment is regularly reviewed to assess its effectiveness and relevance in addressing the family's needs. This ongoing review process ensures that interventions remain aligned and relevant. Regular evaluation of intervention effectiveness is essential to ensure positive outcomes for the family.



Goal & Intervention Planning

Moderate to high needs across multiple domains and variable therapeutic readiness

Goals and interventions will often prioritise establishing stability and safety within the family system. The goals may also incorporate time-limited therapeutic interventions to address specific needs and promote positive outcomes. Please see examples of goals focusing on safety and stability in the previous section: 'Intensive Needs across Multiple Domains with Low Therapeutic Readiness.'

Examples of a caregiver's goals may include:	Examples of worker interventions may include:
<p>To be a calmer parent and not let everything from my past get in the way of having a better relationship with my kids – I want things to be different for them.</p> <p>To understand why my kids behave the way they do and have some strategies to help us all recover from what's happened to us.</p>	<p>Help the caregiver identify opportunities for meaningful shared activities or rituals that promote bonding, trust, and the development of a shared narrative.</p> <p>Support caregivers to implement positive strategies to promote positive parent-child relationships.</p>
<p>I want to know what to say and how to help my kids feel ok when we talk about the violence – I want them to know it's ok to talk to me about how they feel.</p>	<p>Help the caregiver to build trust and open communication with their child/ren.</p> <p>Developing a safe and supportive environment where children and young people are encouraged to openly express their thoughts, feelings, and experiences, recognising that their perspectives may differ from those of their caregiver, and may not be what the caregiver anticipated.</p> <p>Facilitate family therapy sessions that provide a safe space for open communication between caregivers and children, fostering mutual understanding and strengthening familial relationships.</p>
<p>To help my kids to feel strong enough to speak up when something's not right, without being scared they will be punished for it.</p> <p>For my teenage child to stop using violence when they are angry or upset with me and their siblings – I want them to recognise when they are feeling like that and to learn how to manage that better, so we all feel safe at home.</p>	<p>Support the caregiver to advocate for their own and their child/ren's needs within various systems, ensuring their voices are heard and rights upheld.</p> <p>Assist children and young people in understanding the impact of violence on their stress response system, supporting them to develop coping strategies and to identify and access supports.</p>

Interpreting the matrix scores

Variable needs and therapeutic readiness

Families with variable needs and readiness across domains present a mixed profile that requires careful assessment and individualised interventions. Their needs and readiness levels may vary across different domains, indicating the need for a flexible and tailored approach. This may involve addressing specific areas of concern, as well as building therapeutic readiness in domains requiring additional support, and capitalising on strengths in domains with lower needs. Regular monitoring, assessment, and adjustments are essential to ensure safety and promote positive outcomes. By closely tracking the family's changing circumstances, risk levels, and readiness, interventions can be adapted to meet the family's evolving needs and goals. This ongoing process supports a responsive and effective therapeutic journey.

Supervision provides a valuable space for the worker to reflect on the family's needs, explore risk domains, and review protective factors. It is an opportunity to discuss and plan therapeutic responses based on the individual circumstances of the family.

Goal and intervention planning should occur collaboratively with the family and be informed by a relational-based therapeutic assessment. The assessment should be regularly reviewed to assess its effectiveness and relevance in addressing the family's needs. This ongoing review process ensures that interventions remain aligned and relevant. Regular evaluation of intervention effectiveness is essential to ensure positive outcomes for the family.

Goal & Intervention Planning

Variable needs and therapeutic readiness

For families with variable needs and readiness across domains, goals and interventions should be developed collaboratively and be responsive to each family's unique circumstances. Please refer to the example goals in the previous sections for further guidance.

When creating goals with families in this context, it is important to collaboratively develop a comprehensive and flexible therapeutic plan that addresses specific challenges while using and building on the family's strengths in different aspects of their lives.

Targeted interventions should be provided to build therapeutic readiness in domains requiring additional support, with a focus on promoting positive change and progress. Regular review and adjustments are essential to ensure safety and positive outcomes as needs change.



Interpreting the matrix scores

Low need and high therapeutic readiness

Families with low needs across multiple domains and high therapeutic readiness are uncommon in referrals to intensive therapeutic family violence programs. However, sometimes a family like this may be referred. A screening or brief assessment is needed to understand the family's needs and the reason for their referral.

Based on the initial screening or subsequent brief assessment, the appropriate response may involve closure and referral to other services, or a brief intervention that focuses on skill-building, enhancing existing strengths, and providing targeted support to maintain positive outcomes.



Enhancing therapeutic outcomes with regular review and risk assessment

Regular review is essential in therapeutic work with families who have complex needs. As a family's circumstances and needs change, the effectiveness of interventions and goals must be regularly reassessed and adapted. This ongoing assessment ensures that interventions remain relevant, responsive, and aligned with the family's changing dynamics.

Integrating regular risk reviews in accordance with the MARAM framework is vital. These reviews enhance risk assessment and management for family violence situations, supporting the safety and wellbeing of all family members. By conducting regular risk reviews, clinicians can identify potential safety concerns, assess changes in risk levels, and adjust interventions accordingly. This proactive approach allows for early identification of risks and timely implementation of safety measures.



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