

**TEST REVIEW:**  
**The Ontario Domestic Assault  
Risk Assessment**  
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**I. General Information**

- A. Title: Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment (ODARA)
- B. Authors: N. Zoe Hilton, PhD; Grant T. Harris, PhD; and Marnie E. Rice, PhD.
- C. Publishers: American Psychological Association, APA Order Department, P.O. Box 92984, Washington, DC 20090-2984
- D. Forms; groups to which applicable: The ODARA is an actuarial risk assessment that was designed to be used by front line law enforcement officers to quickly predict the risk for domestic violence recidivism by male offenders. The system is used to inform decisions about whether to detain men accused of domestic violence as well as to inform courts about the applicability of bail, conditional release and sentencing. The thirteen items used in scoring the ODARA were selected from well-designed follow-up studies of domestic violence recidivism and which had the highest predictive validity for recidivism.
- E. General Type: The ODARA is intended for use in criminal justice settings, offender intervention and victim services settings to quickly and accurately evaluate the risk of domestic violence re-assault by a male offender against a female intimate partner. The thirteen predictor variables have been derived from actuarial sources (i.e., recorded in a police incident report or criminal record) and do not require clinical expertise or clinical judgment.
- F. Date of Publication: The ODARA was published in 2004 in *Psychological Assessment*, 16, 267-275. [Erratum 17, 131].
- G. Practical Features: The ODARA utilizes a single sheet scoring form with a list of the thirteen variables that have been documented in a police incident report, criminal history or victim interview. Variables have been selected for their predictive validity. The evaluator scores each variable dichotomously as either present (1) or absent (0) resulting in a total numerical score. The numerical score permits a rank ordering of an individual by numerical probability of risk for recidivism in the next five years. This probability score can be easily communicated to the criminal justice system, offender treatment personnel, victim services providers as well as victims.
- H. Cost: ODARA Scoring forms are available at no charge while completing *ODARA 101: The Electronic Training Program*. This is a free interactive e-learning program for assessors to learn to use the ODARA any day of the year and at any time that fits their schedule. The program consists of five chapters: Introduction, Learning Modules, Practice Cases, Certification, and Special Features. The program takes 4-6 hours to complete, depending on individual learning styles and preferences. A license request is required for certification in the ODARA and can be found online here: <http://odara.waypointcentre.ca/Account/Request>
- I. Time required to administer: It takes approximately ten to fifteen minutes to complete the ODARA if the required incident and criminal history records are available.

## II. Purpose and Nature of the Instrument

- A. Stated Purpose: The ODARA is an actuarial risk assessment that was designed to be used by front line law enforcement officers to quickly predict the risk for domestic violence recidivism by male offenders and to be able to communicate this risk in a common metric. The system is designed to inform decisions about whether to detain men accused of domestic violence and whether to offer the victim additional protection. It is also designed to inform courts about the applicability of bail, conditional release and sentencing using the common metric of a risk probability.
- B. Description of test, items, and scores: The ODARA consists of a checklist of thirteen variables that have been documented in a police incident report, criminal history or victim interview. Variables were selected for their predictive validity in follow up studies of domestic violence recidivism. The evaluator scores each variable dichotomously as either present (1) or absent (0) resulting in a total numerical score. The total numerical score permits a rank ordering of an individual by numerical probability of risk for recidivism within a certain future time frame. Some ODARA variables are scored with reference to the index (most recent) offense. Others are scored on the basis of events occurring before the index assault. The thirteen variables are (1) Prior Domestic Incident (2) Prior nondomestic Incident (3) Prior Custodial Sentence of 30 days or More (4) Failure on Prior Conditional Release (5) Threat to harm or Kill at the Index Assault (6) Confinement of Partner at the Index Offense (7) Victim Concern about Future Assault (8) More than One Child Combined (9) Victim's Biological Child from a Previous Partner (10) Violence Against Others (11) Substance Abuse (12) Assault on Victim When Pregnant (13) Barriers to Victim Support. Scores range from 0 to 13, and missing items are prorated on a scale. Each total raw score is converted into one of seven probability categories ranging from a 7 percent chance of re-assault to a 74 percent chance of re-assault within the following 5 years.
- C. Use in Counseling: The value of the ODARA is that it can identify the level of risk for re-assault of perpetrators of domestic violence so that additional resources can be provided to those victims at most risk and that the risk can be communicated to victims who are contemplating returning to the high risk situation. Additionally, the ODARA provides a valid and reliable tool for counselors who conduct forensic assessments to provide a fair and accurate evaluation to the courts of the intensity of intervention and level of supervision that will be required for those offenders who are at high risk for re-offending.

## III. Practical Evaluation

- A. Usefulness of manual: The directions for scoring and interpreting the ODARA criteria are published in *Risk Assessment for Domestically Violent Men- Tools for Criminal Justice, Offender intervention , and Victim Services* (N. Zoe Hilton, Grant T. Harris, and Marnia E. Rice, 2010, pages 151-168, American Psychological Association) in Appendix A: Scoring Criteria for the Ontario Domestic Assault

Risk Assessment (ODARA). Appendix A also includes information on adjusting the ODARA scores for missing information or missing variables. Appendix B provides Sample risk assessment report summaries and norms for the ODARA. Overall, the scoring instructions and appendices are clear, direct and concise. The manual for the ODARA is contained in the book: “Risk Assessment for Domestically Violent Men,” available from the publisher at <http://www.apa.org/pubs/books/4318055.aspx> or other booksellers.

- B. Adequacy of directions for administering the instrument: As noted in III.A, ODARA Scoring instructions are clear, direct and concise. However, it is recommended that the online training be completed to insure fidelity and gain experience in administration and scoring.
- C. Qualifications of examiners: The ODARA was designed to be used by front line law enforcement officers and has been expanded for use by criminal justice personnel, offender intervention providers and victim services organizations. Users are required to obtain a license for use and complete the online course or attend an in-person training on scoring and interpreting the ODARA. There are no professional credentials required for using the ODARA beyond certification.
- D. Scoring Provisions: The ODARA is hand scorable, which can be accomplished in 10-15 minutes if required records are available.

#### **IV. Technical Considerations**

- A. Normative sample: The normative group consists of 589 men in the province of Ontario, Canada known to have assaulted their female partner with an offense closest to but no later than late 1996 and who re-assaulted an intimate partner at least once after 1996 but no later than 2004, when the study was completed. After these men were identified about 30% re-appeared in police records as having re-assaulted an intimate partner at least once, which met the definition of “recidivism” for the study.
- B. Reliability: Inter-rater reliability among police officers for the thirteen ODARA predictor variables was .95 (Hilton et al, 2004) and far above the minimal level for a useful instrument.
- C. Validity: In data from construction and three cross-validation studies, the ODARA yielded a large effect size for predicting dichotomous outcome (ROC area of .71) and also predicted number of recidivism offenses, time until first recidivism, total amount of injury caused, and severity of new assaults.

#### **V. Evaluation**

- A. Comments of reviewers: There were no available reviews.
- B. General Evaluation: The ODARA is an actuarial risk assessment that ranks men with respect to their risk of domestic violence recidivism. The higher the ODARA score, the more likely the man is to assault a female cohabiting partner again, the more frequent and severe assaults will be, and the sooner he will assault again. The ODARA was developed in a study of 589 men known to police in the Province of Ontario, Canada, for physically assaulting their female partners, and it was validated in three further studies. In an average follow-up of approximately five years after an index offense, 30% of men recidivated. The ODARA consists of 13

unique predictors of domestic violence recidivism, including domestic and non-domestic criminal history, threat and confinement during the index incident, children in the relationship, substance abuse, and barriers to victim support. In the ODARA development research, only acts of physical violence met the definition of domestic violence recidivism. Of the men who recidivated, most assaulted the same partner as before.

- C. Development of an in-depth Risk Assessment for Forensic Purposes: The Domestic Violence Risk Appraisal Guide (DVRAG) was developed to increase the accuracy, replicability, and utility of the ODARA for use by forensic clinicians who have access to in –depth case information. The authors (Hilton, Harris, Rice, Houghton and Eke, 2008) added measures of habitual antisocial behavior to domestic violence assessment for use by forensic clinicians and criminal justice professionals who had more access to in –depth information than was available to front line law enforcement or victim support services. On average, an offender would have less than a 5% probability of misclassification by more than one VRAG category when scored by a trained rater. Information on the VRAG can be found in “Risk Assessment for Domestically Violent Men,” pages 67-88 and is available from the publisher at <http://www.apa.org/pubs/books/4318055.aspx> or other booksellers.

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