

Violence History Questionnaire

By Mark McGowan (2005)

1. Have you ever been in a physical fight (pushing, slapping, kicking, punching, or grabbing) with another person?
2. If yes, has it ever resulted in any injuries to yourself or the other person?
3. About how many fights have you been in, 30 – 50? How recently?
4. Can you remember how old you were when you first got into a physical fight?
5. Have you ever hit other people or damaged things when you were angry?
6. Have you ever used a weapon in a fight?
7. Do these violent incidents tend to occur in a particular setting, (i.e., home, school, community)?
8. Do you typically experience particular emotions/feelings during these types incidences?
9. Did someone do something or did something happen that made you act out violently?
10. Where you under the influence of any drugs or alcohol during these violent acts?
11. Going back to an incident in which you were violent, describe yourself before, during, and after?

Purpose and Interpretation

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information regarding an individual's violence history. Within the context of a violence risk assessment for youth, this structured interview was conceived of as a method for routinely screening for violence history in accordance with recommended practice using a guided professional judgment model (Borum, Bartel, & Forth, 2003; Borum, 2000). Further, a growing body of research and literature has suggested that prior violent behavior is a strong indicator for future violence within adult and adolescent populations (Borum, Bartel, & Forth, 2003; Borum, 2000; Farrington, 1991; Mossman, 1994; Parker & Asher, 1987; and Tolan, Guerra, & Kendall, 1995), if not "the best single predictor," (Borum, Bartel, & Forth, 2003).

When interpreting the information gathered through this interview process, it is important to take into consideration mitigating variables and their implication for guiding determinations for future violence risk. To that effect, available literature suggests that consideration should be given to age of onset, recency, frequency, and severity when determining if a potential pattern of violence exists and how these variables contribute to higher risk rating for this particular factor as well as for future violence.

Age of Onset

Research has suggested that early onset for reoccurring violent behavior increases the likelihood of future violent offending (Moffitt, 1993, 1997). It is also important to consider base rates and developmental norms for violence when considering this variable or determining if a pattern of behavior exists.

Recency

As noted within the Structured Assessment of Violence Risk in Youth (SAVRY) description for Historical Risk Factors, the relationship between past and future violent acts is amplified by the recency of prior incidents (Borum, Bartel, & Forth, 2003; White, Moffitt, Earls, Robins, & Silva, 1990). In other words, it has been suggested that a negative correlation exists between amount of time since the last incident and the risk for future violence.

Frequency

Frequency may be easiest way to determine whether a chronic behavioral pattern is present. However, careful consideration should also be given to fluctuations within an individual's behavioral pattern in terms of the number of incidents over time and situations.

Severity

The nature of violent acts can differ significantly and, therefore, careful consideration should be given to the severity of violent acts. Using the SAVRY, violence is defined as "*an act of battery or physical violence that is sufficiently severe to cause injury to another person or persons regardless of whether injury actually occurs; any act of sexual assault; or a threat made with a weapon in hand.*" With this in mind, additional weight must be given to acts of violence that have the potential to cause extreme injury or death by comparison to those incidents that have the potential to cause only minor injury to others (see the Structured Assessment of Violence Risk in Youth, Historical Factors for additional information).