

RESEARCH BRIEFS



ODARA 101: Look What's New!

Elke Ham, P.G. Dip., N. Zoe Hilton, Ph.D., Crystal J. Giesbrecht, M.S.W., and
Sheila Macdonald, M.N.

ODARA 101 is the online training for the Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment (ODARA), recently re-launched in a new learning environment with automated features and controls divested to organization administrators. This article looks at why ODARA 101 is needed and its new, improved features.

Background

Nearly 200,000 Canadians are assaulted by their domestic partner every year, and four in ten assaulted women are physically injured (Statistics Canada, 2016). The ODARA is one of the few well-validated risk assessment tools for identifying cases at greatest risk of domestic violence recidivism (see review in Hilton & Eke, 2017). Since it was first constructed and tested (Hilton et al., 2004), the ODARA has been validated in a variety of populations and performed well in meta-analyses (e.g., Hanson, Helmus, & Bourgon, 2007; Messing & Thaller, 2013).

The ODARA is the most commonly used tool for assessing intimate partner violence (IPV) risk in the Canadian corrections system (Bourgon, Mugford, Hanson, & Coligado, 2018). Research using the ODARA victim interview format revealed that women who seek out victim services usually do so in preference to calling police (Hilton, Harris, & Holder, 2008). Shared use of the ODARA by the criminal justice system and community partners promotes effective communication and offender risk management, and empowers women's decision making and safety planning.

Training for accessible cross-sector risk assessment training is critical.

ODARA 101 is an online, restricted-access training program that assessors can use anytime, anywhere, and at no charge. It supplements the full ODARA scoring manual (currently under revision; Hilton, Harris, & Rice, 2010). Content is portrayed through learning modules using animated slides and videos with professional voice-over, quizzes, and scoring practice cases. Training takes about 4 to 6 hours and requires learners to score ten test cases to an acceptable level of reliability ($ICC \geq .75$). Our earlier evaluation showed that ODARA 101 is as successful as face-to-face training (Hilton & Ham, 2015).

Demand increased from 500 learners in 2012 to over 1,300 in 2017, requiring extensive staff time to manage numerous tasks, including handling email test submissions and creating and distributing certificates. Training videos dated from 2004 and did not reflect our users' current and diverse experiences. The outdated software platform was causing technical barriers.

Method and Results

The project was reviewed and approved by the research ethics board at Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care. We overhauled the program's outdated technology, revised content to enhance cultural and language accessibility, and evaluated training success and learner satisfaction in the new, improved program.



New Linguistic and Cultural Accessibility

We created new scenarios designed to respectfully reflect women's current experience of abuse in urban, rural, remote, and Indigenous communities. We gathered 20 true stories through collaborations with domestic violence shelter and counselling agency staff across the 21-member agencies of the Provincial Association of Transition Houses and Services of Saskatchewan (PATHS). We turned these into simulated victim interview transcripts, then edited them to ensure anonymity as well as a range of ODARA scores. We created versions set in hospital-based Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Treatment Centres (SADVTCs) in Ontario, shelters and victim crisis services, and police investigations. Thirteen scenarios were video-recorded. Training content was translated from English into French, including the professional voice-over.

In sum, ODARA 101's new features include:

- updated scenarios based on women's experiences of abuse
- choice of taking the test in three versions: interview, police records, or a mix
- video-based test on a limited, experimental basis
- choice of training, practice scoring, and testing in English or French

Improved Technical Accessibility

We converted the program from Flash to HTML and gave it a more intuitive web design. Learners are issued a license to access ODARA 101 and sent an automated password reset email. Learners complete the test entirely online with instant pass/fail results and downloadable certificates. Test cases are randomly assigned from a pool of 80 documents, creating a more secure and individualized test.

Agencies can now identify Organizational Administrators to oversee their staff's progress in the program. Org Admin privileges include:

- register their organization (using our 3-step guide to organization set-up)
- request licenses for all their staff
- assign licenses to individual learners
- see learner's training activity and test completion date
- transfer Org Admin privileges to another staff

Program Evaluation

Elke Ham and Zoe Hilton independently scored the ODARA for the 20 new case transcripts. The 2-way mixed, absolute agreement ICC on ODARA total scores was .82 single measures and .90 average measures. Final edits were made using consensus scoring.

We then evaluated ODARA 101 using a method similar to our previous evaluations of ODARA classroom and DVD training (Hilton & Ham, 2015; Hilton, Harris, Rice, Eke, & Lowe-Wetmore, 2007). Our sample comprised 223 self-selected participants attempting the test. They included Ontario's SADVTC clinic nurses, Saskatchewan's PATHS-member domestic violence shelter and counselling agency workers, and high-frequency ODARA 101 users from policing and probation services in Canada and the United States. We eliminated 13 previous participants due to an error in the program's calculation of test scores.

Most participants (78%) passed the test first time. The average ICC on first attempt was .82. This coefficient is not significantly lower than we found for the original ODARA 101 program, in which 45 assessors completed the training during a pilot phase with an average ICC of .88 (Hilton &

Table 1

Mean responses and percentage of positive responses to ODARA 101 evaluation survey.

Survey Item	Mean	(Standard Deviation)	Percent Positive
Ease of use	4.4	(.59)	85
User-friendliness	4.4	(.72)	86
Quality	4.4	(.69)	85
Utility	4.3	(.76)	83
Comparison to old program	4.7	(.52)	95
Org Admin controls	4.8	(.52)	95

Note: Response options range from 1 (very negative) to 5 (very positive). Percent positive includes responses of 4 or 5.



Ham, 2015), $Z = 1.30$, $p = .194$. However, all pilot phase participants passed on their first attempt, a significantly higher success rate, $Z = 3.48$, $p < .001$. The difference could be attributable to learners' adjustment to the online testing environment and inability to change scores after submitting each case score. Learners chose tests using: interview transcripts ($n = 55$, $ICC = .84$), police records ($n = 45$, $ICC = .83$), mixed documents ($n = 138$, $ICC = .82$), and video ($n = 24$, $ICC = .78$). No learners chose the French language test.

An evaluation survey was completed by 56 self-selected participants who made at least one attempt at the test and by 12 who only reviewed the program. Participants rated questions about ODARA 101's ease of use, user-friendliness, quality, utility ($n = 68$), comparison to old program ($n = 17$), and Org Admin controls ($n = 15$) on a scale from 1 (very false) to 5 (very true). Most responses were positive or very positive (Table 1) as illustrated in participant comments:

"The new version is much more accessible...Being able to pick up where you left off also makes it much easier for staff who are busy to complete the training easily."

"The new program is much more user friendly. It looks more professional, is easy to navigate, and seems easy to troubleshoot if needed."

Conclusion

ODARA 101 has been offered at no cost to Ontario's police services and Canada's shelters since its beginning, and to all approved organizations since 2014. Grants made it possible to keep the program running so far, and the new upgrades will see it through the next few years. We are currently reviewing avenues for long-term sustainability.

Author Note

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