



Domestic Violence and Child Welfare Reform

A Three-Part Teleconference Series

Presented by:

Child Welfare League of America

Family Violence Prevention Fund

National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges

In partnership with:

The Office on Violence Against Women



Innovative Policy and Practice to Enhance Service Delivery

Teleconference Series: Part Three

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Child Protective Practice in Cases Involving Domestic Violence:

New York City's Reform Experience

Presented By:

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Deputy Commissioner
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New York City's History of Responding to Domestic Violence

- 1993-99** First efforts to establish routine screening for DV, and to build preventive capacity; initial partnership with domestic violence program
- 2000-01** Intensive period of policy and infrastructure development
Nicholson class action lawsuit filed; preliminary injunction trial
- 2002-04** Practice changes take hold, deepen
Lawsuit is concluded



Challenges for Child Welfare

- Dynamics of domestic violence:
 - Secrecy, isolation, control
 - Most victims make multiple attempts to leave relationship
 - Violence may escalate following separation
 - Abusive partners often reluctant to participate in services



Challenges for Child Welfare

- Confusion regarding “mutual abuse”, primary aggressor assessment
- Difficulty in predicting which cases are most dangerous
- Frequent overlap of domestic violence, substance abuse, and mental illness
- Insufficient resources for families



Child Protective Practice in Domestic Violence Cases

- Routine screening
- Case by case assessment of safety and risk
- Safety planning with victim as effective means to achieve child safety in majority of cases
- Emphasis on holding abusive partners accountable
- Safety interventions, including child removal, are made **when necessary** to ensure child safety



Strategies for Improving Practice

- Policy
- Training
- Expert consultation
- Managerial reviews
- Quality assurance/quality improvement



Critical Policy/Practice Changes

- Domestic violence consultants in each area office; integrated with substance abuse and mental health consultants
- Use of family conferences as a problem-solving tool
- Revised DV protocol to include tool for interviewing abusive partner
- Shifted family court practice to emphasize batterer accountability
- Instituted higher level review of case decisions



Staff Support

- Staff safety
- Secondary trauma, crisis response
- Policy response when staff are directly involved in domestic violence



Dilemmas

- Staff turnover
- Self-determination vs. agency authority
- Compliance vs. quality
- Risk avoidance
- Balancing multiple reform agendas



Lessons Learned

- Reform is possible, with multi-faceted approach (i.e. policy, training, consultation)
- Good domestic violence practice is linked to conditions for sound child welfare practice (caseloads, supervision, staff development, etc.)
- Meaningful investment of resources is essential
- Ongoing, intensive effort needed to sustain improvements
- No quick fixes



Assessing Risk and Safety

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Assessing Risk and Safety

- Approach
- Gathering and Understanding information
- Safety Planning



Approach

- Safe place to talk
- Conversation about what and why you need to talk to her abuser
- Convey concern about her and her children
- Ask her how you can help
- Be a partner in safety



Gathering Information

Dangerousness	Impact on Children
Mothers Help seeking and Barriers	Community and Family Support



Dangerousness

- Past history of violence and injury
- Bizarre acts of violence including sexual
- Threats to Kill
- Threats of Suicide
- Mental Illness
- Stalking
- Woman trying to leave or has left the relationship
- Use and access to weapons



Impact on Children/Teens

- Age of children
- Attachment to caregivers
- Level and frequency of exposure
- Direct physical or sexual abuse
- Behavioral problems
- Threats of abduction
- Cognitive issues
- Running away
- Sibling violence
- Psychological problems



Mothers Help seeking? Barriers to Help seeking

- How has she tried to stop violence?
- Who has she told?
- What has worked in the past?
- What hasn't worked in the past?
- Are there barriers to help seeking?
- How has she tried to help her children?
- What protective measures has she taken?
- What is in the way? Trauma, substance abuse, depression, poverty, other forms of oppression



Community and Family Support

- What has been her families response to her?
- Friends? Community agencies?
- Court? Police? CPS?
- Who is in her support system?
- What have been the consequences of her help seeking? Positive? Negative?



Understanding risk and safety

- Each time you try this, you should have a unique picture of the families situation
- It should tell you what you know and what you don't know about
- It should tell you where you need to put your energy for intervention, safety planning and service delivery



Safety Planning

- Fluid process done in full partnership with women
- Should not be documented like a service plan
- Think outside of the box and base rationale for ideas on what you learned from the assessment
- Should look different for every woman
- Contracted services may be needed and can go in service plan- this is different from safety planning
- Older children can benefit from safety planning as well (age appropriate)



Working With Men Who Use Violence

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Rationale

Effective intervention with men can have great impact on the safety of children and partners.

If we don't intervene with men, we only focus on women, make them responsible for everything & increase their risk



Accountability measures with men who use violence

- Batterer intervention
- Direct, respectful conversation with MWB
- Enlisting others with whom he has a relationship
- Communicating with other service providers
- Police or court response (differential impact on men of color)



Men who Batter- Who are they?

- It's not a clinical diagnosis
- It's a behavioral profile, which includes:
 - Intimidation
 - Psychological and emotional abuse
 - Exaggerated, intrusive, disproportionate entitlement
 - Physical and sexual violence



Presentation

- Defensive-aggressive
- Challenging
- Charming-manipulative
- Superficially compliant
- Avoidant



Parenting by Men who Batter

- Continued threats and violence after separation
- Behavior negatively affects children
- More controlling and abusive parenting
- Perpetrators often involve children in violent events
- Good under observation

(Bancroft & Silverman, 2002)



Impact on Families

- Undermining of mother's authority
- Interference with mother's parenting
- Use of the children as weapons
- Sowing of divisions

(Bancroft & Silverman, 2002)



Why work with Men Who Batter?

- Fathers who use violence often have legal and illegal contact with their children
- Because most men want to be good fathers, in some cases this contact can be transformed into a positive and healing experience for the children.
- Some mothers who have suffered abuse want their children to have safer and healthier contact with their fathers.
- Some men are able to develop empathy towards their children, which may be a protective factor against further abuse.



Why work with Men Who Batter?

- Many men who have used violence grew up in abusive households and have lived through the intergenerational cycle of violence
- Abuse is a deliberate choice and a learned behavior and therefore can be unlearned
- Positive involvement by a father figure can be very beneficial to children's development
- Giving fathers more opportunities for change and healing is an essential component to end violence against women and children



Safety first!

- There are risks to engaging with MWB in the caseload. We need to plan carefully so as not to increase risk.
- There is a vast range in dangerousness and potential for change.
- If we assume that all MWB are lethal, we will miss many people.




Safety first!

- Always check with the victim about how to work with the perpetrator.
- Don't use information provided by the victim with the perpetrator, unless you have specific permission from her.
- If you must use information provided by the victim, safety plan with her ahead of time.



Do BIPs work?

- Research is mixed, but most researches agree that there are positive outcomes
- All researches agree that what really works is the **system of accountability**, not the programs in isolation
- BIPs must be transparent and cooperative; use certified programs, where available
- CPS is part of the **system of accountability**



**The following resources are available for FREE from
The Family Violence Prevention Fund
Website: <http://endabuse.org/programs/children>
(on Program page and under Children and DV Toolbox)**

- Steps Toward Safety: Improving Systems and Community Based Responses to Domestic Violence
- Breaking the Cycle: Fathering After Violence
- Advocacy Matters: Helping Mothers and Their Children Involved with the Child Protection System
- Confidentiality and Information Sharing Issues
- Family Team Conferences in Domestic Violence cases: Guidelines for Practice
- Connect: Helping Caregivers Talk to Kids About Violence Against Women
- Accountability and Connection with Abusive Men: A New Child Protection Response to Increasing Family Safety
- Supervised Visitation: Information for Mothers Who Have Been Abused
- Fathering After Violence: Working with Abusive Fathers in Supervised Visitation
- Beyond Observation: Considerations for Advancing Domestic Violence Practice In Supervised Visitation



Resources

Check out:

The Greenbook Initiative: www.thegreenbook.info

Family Violence Prevention Fund: www.endabuse.org

Child Welfare League of America: www.cwla.org

Praxis International: www.praxisinternational.org

MINCAVA Electronic Clearinghouse: www.mincava.umn.edu

Special site on Child Witnessing: www.mincava.umn.edu/link

USDOJ VAWO site: www.usdoj.gov/ovw

VAWnet Online Library: www.vawnet.org

Susan Schechter Fellowship: www.schechterfellowship.org

Sharwline Nicholson's website: www.balancingtheharms.com



Resources Continued

National Latino Alliance for the Elimination of Domestic Violence: www.dvalianza.org

Asian and Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence: www.apiahf.org

Institute on Domestic Violence in the African-American Community: www.dvinstitute.org

National Network to End Violence Against Immigrant Women: www.immigrantwomennetwork.org

Women of Color Network: www.womenofcolornetwork.org