

**Advocacy Beyond Leaving:  
Keeping Women & Children  
In Contact Safe**

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Building Comprehensive Solutions to Domestic Violence:  
*A project of NRCDV in collaboration with Greater Hartford Legal Aid*

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**Who is “in contact”?**

- Woman in a relationship with an abusive partner
- Woman who interacts with an abusive former partner
- Children in the care of these women
- Children whose father abuses his partner

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**Understanding Why Some Battered  
Women Remain in the Relationship**

**Decision-making about a relationship  
includes her analysis of:**

- **Partner who batters-generated risks**
- **Life-generated risks**

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## Battered Women's Risk Analysis Regarding Relationship

### Stay

- Physical violence
- Risks to children
- Financial losses
- Risks to family/friends
- Legal risks
- Life-generated risks

### Leave

- Physical violence
- Risks to children
- Financial losses
- Risks to family/friends
- Legal risks
- Life-generated risks

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## Woman-Defined Advocacy- Components

1. **Understand the woman's perspective, including her risk analysis and current safety plan.**
  - Consider partner who batters-generated risks; life-generated risks; risks to and safety plans for children; culture; resources; her strengths, what she's tried/is trying
2. **Build a working relationship with the woman to respectfully review her analysis and strengthen her plan.**
  - Review risks to woman and children
  - Work together to identify and implement safety strategies
  - Plan is modified as woman's life and circumstances change

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## Advocacy with Victims in Contact

- Does NOT say that victims should stay
- Does NOT abandon the important option of leaving
- Does NOT mean it is always good or safe for children to have contact with a father who is abusive

It is advocating for the safety of all victims.

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## Safety and Safety Plans Broadly Defined

- **Basic human needs**
  - Examples: housing, food, clothes, health care, employment/income, quality education for children
- **Eliminate/reduce the violent and controlling behavior by partner/ex-partner**
- **Improve the parenting of children's father**
  - interactions with the children and with their mother

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## Risk Review

1. **Understand victim's perspective**
  - What risks
  - Why/why not seen as risk
2. **Identify and check your (advocate's) perspective**
  - Explore possibility of life threatening violence
  - Explore possibility of serious risks to children
3. **Try to form a shared perspective**

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## Advocacy with victims in contact is same/different from leaving focused advocacy

<b>Same</b>	<b>Different</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Matches safety strategies to risks</li> <li>■ Determines what she can do safely</li> <li>■ Builds from strengths, resilience, and positive cultural models</li> <li>■ Advocates for her access to services, resources</li> <li>■ Includes strategies to support children's well-being and safety</li> <li>■ May include batterer intervention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Victim in contact may be able to do fewer things safely than a victim who leaves</li> <li>■ Options that rely on no contact/leaving may have limited or no use -- or be used differently</li> <li>■ May need to explain to systems why victim is in contact</li> <li>■ May include range of victim-defined options and interventions for partner/father, e.g. reduction of violent and controlling behavior, financial, health, parenting</li> </ul>

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## Advocacy for Children in Contact

- Help mother know how her children are doing
- Support the mother's parenting
- Identify and build from strengths, resilience, and positive cultural models
- Offer strategies to improve children's well-being and safety
- Take steps necessary to protect them from serious harm

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## When Engaging Men/Fathers Who Batter around Services, Interventions

- Offer victims accurate information about:
  - Changing **her partner's** violent and controlling behavior
  - Improving the parenting of **her children's** father
  - Services, intervention, strategies aimed at partner/father that will make things better for victim and/or her children
- Plan with victim how to make those services, interventions available to her partner
  - Identify partner's strengths and build from positive cultural models
- Explore safety strategies for adult and child victims about partner's/father's participation in services or interventions

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## Talking to Adult Victim about Partner's Parenting

- Ask about his relationship/contact with children
- Explore the difficult parts – risks
- Explore what good parts might exist – his strengths
- Ask what she thinks would make him a better parent
- Ask if she thinks it is possible for him to make that change and what would help him do it
- Explore how fatherhood resources, interventions might decrease/increase risk or danger to her or the children

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