

Working with batterers: A basic documentation schema¹

Part I: The pattern of coercive control and how the batterer is harming the children

“A” has engaged in a pattern of coercive control that has included physical violence, threats, destruction of property, sabotaging “B’s” outside relationships, using children as weapon against “B”, and undermining his partner’s efforts to parent their children.

Part II: Specifics of behavior

“A” on three separate occasions physically assaulted “B.” In each of these incidents, he pushed her to the ground, kicking her in the face, chest and stomach. “B” was pregnant during one of these incidents. She has received numerous bruises as a result of these assaults. On other occasions he has ripped phones out of the wall and punched a hole in the wall. He has threatened to deny support for his children if “A” left and has, as reported by the children, to take them “someplace where they can be away from their mother forever.” “A” told the children that “B” is stupid, doesn’t know anything and they will “only learn how to be dumb fools if they pay attention to her.” Family members report that “A” has harassed them, yelling and screaming at them when they try to call or visit. The maternal grandparents have stopped coming to the home to watch the children as a result.

Part III: Adverse impact on the children

As a result of “A’s” behavior, the children are afraid to leave mother alone at home during the day. The oldest child (12 years old) has missed twenty days of school this year due to her desire to protect her mother. The youngest boy (6 years old) doesn’t listen to his mother, acts out and repeats words and phrases taught to him by the father (calling mother “stupid,” “an ass”, and “a dumb whore.”) The children have had to change schools twice in the past year because “A’s” violence has led them to be evicted from different apartments. These school changes have led to the oldest child falling behind in her studies and a loss of supportive teachers and specialized programming for the youngest child. “A’s” behavior has isolated the children from extended family and disrupted family functioning. The youngest child is have trouble in school with aggressive behavior and will only listen to his father in the home. When “B” brings him to counseling, the boy yells “that his father says he doesn’t need to go to counseling, and that he’s not crazy.” The child has resisted his appointments and no longer wishes to attend his counseling sessions as a result of father’s influence over him.” The family has gone weeks at a time without a working phone after “A” has ripped the phone out of the wall. He only returns the phone once “B” and the children apologize to him for all the things they have done wrong in his eyes. The lack of phone creates a concern for the ability of the family to call emergency services or medical providers if there are problems.

¹ Full documentation of domestic violence dynamics would include additional elements such as more information about the batterer’s parenting, the full spectrum of the non-offending parents efforts to provide for the safety and well-being of the children and relevant other information about finances, culture, substance abuse and mental health issues.