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
The Heart, Mind, and Soul of Greenbook

Teleconference Series: Part One

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NICHOLSON’S JOURNEY

THE OVERLAP OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND CHILD WELFARE
CHILDHOOD

- I grew up in Jamaica
- I was separated from my mom at the age of two
- My mom immigrated to the US for better opportunities
- My dad raised me
- I lived in an extended family
- I vowed to myself that when I had children of my own---that only death could separate us.
MY FAMILY

My Son Kendell
&
My daughter Destinee
TRAUMA

- In January, 1999 I was beaten severely by the man who is the father of my daughter.
- My daughter was nine months old and my son was five years old.
- I suffered a broken arm, fractured ribs, and a skull injury.
While I was in the hospital, CPS removed my children from my custody and my childhood vow was broken.
SHOULD ABUSED WOMEN LOSE THEIR KIDS?
BALANCING THE HARMS
REUNIFICATION

After a few weeks, my children were returned to my custody.
ADVOCACY MILESTONES BEGIN
NICHOLSON VS. WILLIAMS

- Lead Plaintiff in class action suit.

- A Federal judge decided that the practice of removing the children of battered women from their custody solely due to domestic violence was unconstitutional---further punishing mothers already victimized by domestic violence.

- The Judge in this case determined that because domestic violence is complex, good assessment is needed to understand the harm to children.

- As a result, CPS is now mandated to improve assessment and describe the impact of the violence on kids.
Edleson presentation overview

- Child exposure, maltreatment and adult domestic violence
- The need for collaboration
- What the national Greenbook evaluation tells us
Children’s exposure

- Visual - as “eyewitness”
- Audio - hearing the violence
- Tool of Perpetrator - used in event
- Aftermath - the impact of violence
Child exposure

- Range: 10% to 20% annually, resulting in 7 to 14 million children exposed each year (Carlson, 2000)

- National surveys:
  - NVAWS: 40.2% of battered women in US reported child exposed to violent incident
  - CVAWS: 33.2% in Canada
  - Singapore: 17% of random sample exposed as child
What children know

- **Studies indicate children are exposed:**
  - 100% in same or adjacent room (Hughes, 1988)
  - 81.3% of 1,799 incidents had children present (Leighton, 1989)
  - 21% of children reported witnessing despite contrary report by one or both parents (O’Brien et al., 1994)
Children are involved

- Nine times more likely to intervene (Adamson & Thompson, 1988).
- One to 2.5 year olds respond with negative emotions and intervention (Cummings et al. 1981, 1989).
- Children actively involve, distract parents or distance themselves (Garcia O’Hearn et al, 1997, Peled, 1998).
“Effects” of Exposure

- Over 100 studies available
- About 1/3 separated abused from witnesses
- Generally show:
  - Behavioral and emotional problems
  - Cognitive functioning problems
  - Longer-term problems

http://www.mincava.umn.edu
Overlap of CA & DV

- Most studies found 30% to 60% overlap, 41% was median
- High rates of overlap found in:
  - Child fatality reviews (41% - 43%)
  - Abused child studies
  - Battered mother studies

Need for collaboration

- Co-occurrence calls for better coordination between:
  - Child protection agencies (CPS)
  - Domestic violence organizations (DV)
  - Family & juvenile/dependency courts

- Greenbook was the result with:
  - Six federally funded demonstrations
  - National evaluation and technical assistance
Greenbook CPS results

- Worker reports of training on co-occurrence
  - 58% at start
  - 75% at end

- Worker reports of written protocols on reporting DV in homes
  - 54% at start
  - 85% to 100% at end

- Worker active screening for DV
  - 54% did so at start
  - 77% at midpoint
  - 62% at end

(Banks, Landsverk & Wang, in press)
Services for survivor/victims

- Worker documented referrals to DV programs
  - 52% of cases had DV referrals at start
  - 93% had DV referrals at end
- Most (80%) reported throughout that they treated mothers respectfully and did not unnecessarily label them as neglecting
- Voluntary referrals increased to DV services
  - 79% at start
  - 83% at end
- Voluntary referrals increased to legal services
  - 83% at start
  - 87% at end
Intervention for batterers

- Workers referred abusive men increasingly to batterer intervention
  - 29% at start
  - 45% at mid-point
  - 53% at end of study

- But no changes in holding batterers accountable or following up on referrals (e.g. attendance at program, compliance with service plans)

  *(Banks, Landsverk & Wang, in press)*
Overview of the Greenbook Initiative

Presented by Ruth Houtte
Effective Interventions in Domestic Violence and Child Maltreatment: Guidelines for Policy and Practice aka “Greenbook”

A construct for developing interventions based on a set of core values, framed by guiding principles, and offered in a series of system-specific recommendations.

Overarching goal is to improve outcomes for families:

- Enhance safety, stability and well being for all victims
- Keep mothers and their children together
- Accountability for the violence with the perpetrator
The Demonstration Sites
El Paso County, Colorado
St. Louis County, Missouri
Grafton County, New Hampshire
San Francisco County, California
San Jose County, California
Lane County, Oregon
Project Structure

Staffing
- Project Director/Coordinator
- Local Research Partner

Governance
- Executive/Steering Committee

Working Committees
- System Specific
- Multi-disciplinary

National
- Technical Assistance
- Evaluation
- Federal Partners
What are our successes?

• Protocols for cps, courts and dv programs
  • Multi-disciplinary dialogues
  • Employing advocates in cps and courts
  • Multi-system collaboration

• Training - cross system and system specific

• Changing hearts and minds/shifting focus
Protocol Development
Practice commitments
Training
Accountability

• There are tools and documents already out there - use them!

• Decide who will participate in the development through discussion, writing, research, review and feedback...not every system needs to be involved in every effort at the same level

• Decide who has ultimate authority regarding content

• Develop an implementation and training plan
Multi-disciplinary dialogues
Find common ground
Strategic planning

• Plan the meeting - who, what, where and when

• Educate participants in advance

• Good facilitation is critical

• Don’t start with a hot button issue - find a place from which you think participants can reach agreement
Specialized positions  
Bring new expertise into the system  
Builds capacity

• Job descriptions, policies, referral processes are out there - use them!

• Agreements on goals, conflict resolution processes, and expectations

• Support in the way of supervision and training is critical

• Expect bumps in the road - if it’s not working evaluate why - don’t give up on the idea
Training
Development of new skills
Institutional empathy
Sustainability

- Assess what exists currently for training in each and across systems
- Use experts to train local trainers, develop sustainable curricula, and help to develop creative interactive models for cross system training
- Job shadowing, mentoring
Lessons Learned

• Plan to change

• Recognize that change is hard

• Time is your friend

• Each system/partner starts with a different set of assumptions, beliefs, strategies, language and mandates

• It doesn’t always have to be a collaboration—sometimes it’s about cooperation
Lessons Learned Continued

- If it isn’t tense at times you aren’t getting at the heart of the issue
- Be realistic in your goals
- If it doesn’t work out, that’s not failure - evaluate why and make necessary changes
- Build on existing initiatives
Resources

Check out:
The Greenbook Initiative: www.thegreenbook.info
Family Violence Prevention Fund: www.endabuse.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

Or call:
The National Council of Juvenile & Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ)
Resource Center on Domestic Violence: Child Protection and Custody
1-800-527-3223