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

Presenters:
Liz Roberts, ACS NYC
Lonna Davis, FVPF
Juan Carlos Arean, FVPF

December 11th, 2007
Child Protective Practice in Cases Involving Domestic Violence:

New York City’s Reform Experience

Presented By:

Liz Roberts, MSW
Deputy Commissioner
NYC Administration for Children’s Services
### New York City’s History of Responding to Domestic Violence

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

Presented by:

Lonna Davis
Children’s Program Director
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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

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<th>Dangerousness</th>
<th>Impact on Children</th>
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<td>Mothers Help seeking and Barriers</td>
<td>Community and Family Support</td>
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**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

Presented by:

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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

(Barcroft & 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