

Working with Families Experiencing Domestic Violence Overview

- Understanding the link between child welfare & domestic violence
- In Her Shoes – (possibility)
- Fact or Fiction?
- Assessing for domestic violence
- Best practices
- Collaborating with others

Objectives:

- To understand the nature of domestic violence including the tensions between the fields of domestic violence and child welfare.
- To be able to assess for domestic violence and offer appropriate & sensitive interventions to the entire family (children, victims, batterers).
- To be able to use family-centered tools, including safety plans, to help family members remain safe and free from abuse
- To develop strategies for collaborating with community agencies and the criminal justice system

What is domestic violence?

- A pattern of behavior
- Used by one person in a relationship
- To gain power & control over an intimate partner or family member
- Includes physical attacks, intimidation, threats, economic deprivation, psychological abuse, & sexual abuse

Link between child abuse & domestic violence

- In 30-60% of families who experience domestic violence, child abuse is also present
- And vice versa

Effects of domestic violence on children:

- Emotional
 - Feel guilty about not stopping abuse
 - Grieve for family & personal losses
 - Conflicting feelings
- Cognitive
 - Blame others
 - Okay to use violence
 - Rigid stereotypes about gender roles
- Behavioral
 - Act out or withdraw
 - Truancy
 - Excessive attention seeking
- Social

- Isolation
- Problems with relationships
- Physical
 - Somatic complaints
 - Regression in development tasks
 - Self abuse

Why be concerned about domestic violence? – (possible)

In Her Shoes

- Simulation exercise designed to understand what battered women experience
- Designed by the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Questions to Ponder

- What did you experience?
- What did you think about your experiences?
- What did you feel as you went through the stations?
- What, if anything, surprised you? What experiences were similar to what you've seen or heard before?
- What did you learn from this exercise?

Fact or Fiction?

- It's not just women who are abused; men are abused too.
- Women are just as violent as men.

Fact:

- In approximately 95% of domestic assaults, the man is the perpetrator.
- Women are 6 times more likely to be victimized by intimate partners than men.
- 25% of all women have experienced domestic violence during their lifetime
- 52% of all women have experienced some form of physical or sexual violence during their lifetime (from intimate partners as well as strangers).

Fact or Fiction?

- Children who were abused or witnessed abuse in their homes often become abusers or victims as adults.

Fact:

- Experiencing or witnessing violence does not automatically lead to being involved in intimate partner violence.
- HOWEVER, children who are exposed are more at risk for victimization in adulthood.

Fact or Fiction?

- Much domestic violence is caused by substance abuse.

Fact:

- Substance abuse does not CAUSE domestic violence.
- HOWEVER, involvement with substance abuse is a risk factor for domestic violence.

Fact or Fiction?

- Domestic violence occurs only in poor, undereducated, dysfunctional or minority families.
Fact:
- Domestic violence crosses all age, ethnic, socioeconomic, religious, and educational boundaries.
- HOWEVER, research identifies risk factors:
 - Younger age (18-30),
 - Lower socioeconomic status,
 - Lack of available services
 - Being separated, divorced or co-habiting,
- Research has mixed reviews on ethnicity as a risk factor.

Fact or Fiction?

- She could leave if she really wanted to.
Challenges Faced at Personal Level:
At the Family Level:
At the Community Level:
At the system level:
At the policy level:
Remaining Questions?
- Why does she stay? Why doesn't she just leave?
- How does she survive? How can I help?

Assessing for domestic violence: Look for indicators

Looking for Indicators: Child

- Overprotective, afraid to leave mother
- Abusive toward mother
- Other indicators based on consequences

Looking for Indicators: Mother

- Offers inconsistent explanations for injuries
- History of accidents
- Chronically depressed
- Secretive about home life
- Having trouble with decisions
- Evasive about questions on injuries
- Exhibits anxiety or fear in front of partner
- Offers apologies for partner's behaviors
- Feels isolated from family and friends

Looking for Indicators: Father

- Constantly speaks for mother
- Resists separate interviews

- Describes mother as clumsy, crazy, or incompetent
- Condescending to mother
- Admits to violence but minimizes its frequency
- Blames partner for provoking abuse
- Holds rigidly to traditional sex roles

How to ask about domestic violence:

- Interview separately
- Be non-judgmental
- Be genuine
- Discuss limits of confidentiality
- Gather behavioral descriptions
- Ask about animal abuse

Dilemmas:

- If she reports domestic violence:
 - She or her children may be at greater risk of violence
 - She may not be believed
 - She may be accused of ulterior motives
 - She may lose her children
 - To CPS
 - To the abuser (custody battles or kidnapping)
 - She may lose her status

- If she fails to report domestic violence:
 - She may be blamed for staying
 - She may lose her children
 - She may be at risk of continuing abuse.

More Dilemmas:

- If you remove child for his/her protection:
 - Child is temporarily safe
 - Mother is charged with “failure to protect” – victimized again
 - Ammunition for custody battle (mother unfit)
 - Face possible court action (Nicholson v. Williams)
 - Others?
- If you leave child in home with domestic violence:
 - Child at risk for further abuse – physical & emotional
 - Children affected – see list of consequences
 - May not help stop the violence

Best Practices - Victim

- Validation
- Build on victim’s strengths

- Help victim regain control over her own life
- Explore her options
 - Basic needs
 - Safety planning
 - Connections with family & friends – ecomap?
 - Offer referrals
- Safety Plan exercise
 - Break into groups of 2
 - Each take turn being the worker
- Join 3 groups together
 - What did you think about this exercise?
 - How could you use safety plans in your current work?
 - How could you adapt the plan for children?

Best Practices - Batterer

- Hold them accountable.
- Challenge their minimizations, denial, and blame.
- Know that it is NOT an anger management problem.
- Why do men batter?
 - Because they can
- Best practices?
 - Don't lose sight of their responsibility for the abuse.
 - Refer to batterers intervention program
 - Get the criminal justice system involved

Community Collaboration

- Community mapping
 - Similar to an eco-map
 - Evaluates current relationship
- Complete the Diagrammatic Assessment of Community Relationships form
 - Identify key agencies
 - Identify key contacts within those agencies
- Discuss your results with colleagues from your organization

Collaboration Strategies

- How can you improve or establish relationships with other organizations?
- How can you improve or establish relationships with key contacts within those organizations?
- Ideas:
 - Meetings & task forces
 - Training & presentations
 - Exchange of brochures & business cards
- Strengths?
- Limitations?
- Challenges?

Conclusion

- Review objectives
- Questions or comments?
- Evaluation