Biographical Information

David Mandel, MA

David Mandel has been working in the domestic field for over 19 years. David writes, trains and consults nationally on improving systems’ responses to domestic violence when children are involved and batterer accountability and change. In addition to national research on batterer's perceptions of their children's exposure to their violence, David has developed a series of public awareness and outreach posters designed to shift cultural attitudes about domestic violence. He has written a forty-hour curriculum, entitled *Dedication*, which is being used to train all new batterer intervention providers in Texas. He has also written a curriculum for working fathers entitled *Being Connected* and co-authored a batterer intervention program manual.

David has extensive experience improving the response of child protection agencies to domestic violence. He has worked with New York City's Administration for Children Services, various US Greenbook sites and other jurisdictions to improve outcomes for children in families where batterer's behavior is a concern. David has developed and piloted a 2 ½ day national workshop seminar, “Safe and Together: Concrete Strategies for Addressing Domestic Violence When Children Are the Focus.” He is currently overseeing the implementation of a statewide network of domestic violence consultants for the Connecticut Department of Children and Families.

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Web: www.endingviolence.com
One Family Worksheet

Instructions: Identify one family on your current caseload where domestic violence and the safety and well-being of children is an issue. Choose a family that you are very familiar with. Briefly describe the case and your challenges related to working with this family. At various intervals in the day, you will have a few minutes to review this worksheet in order to relate the material presented to the situation of this family.

(If you are an administrator/manager without direct service experience you can apply this exercise to a task/function/policy. This means that after each session you would consider how the information presented applies to that task. For example, if your staff interviews family members regarding domestic violence, would you change anything about this practice based on the information received?)

Brief overview of the family situation:

Challenges with this family/case:

1. Based on the material just presented, does your perception of your family’s case change? What, if anything, would you change about how you are handling the case?
2. Based on the material just presented, does your perception of your family's case change? What, if anything, would you change about how you are handling the case? What, if anything, would you change about how you are handling the case?

3. Based on the material just presented, does your perception of your family's case change? What, if anything, would you change about how you are handling the case?
Fill out the form below mail or fax it to the Non-Violence Alliance, 386 Main Street, Middletown, CT 06457 or fax: 860-346-4381. If you have questions, please call 860-490-8638 or email at davidmandel@endinglevience.com. When mailing your order please enclose your payment. For faxed orders, your order will not be processed until payment is received.

Name____________________________________ Organization_________________________________________
Address_______________________________________________________________________________________
Phone________________________________ Fax ____________________________
Email _______________________________________

Important: When adding customized contact information, a minimum order of 50 per customized poster is required.

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<td>For orders over 500, call 860-490-8638</td>
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Order Subtotal  
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Customized Message (please print):

Make Checks Payable To: The Non-Violence Alliance
I am David Mandel, MA, a family violence consultant to the Department of Children and Families in Connecticut. Being duly sworn, I do hereby depose and say that the following is the truth to the best of my knowledge and belief:

My qualifications for providing expert opinion in the matter of the Removal of Violet (1/15/90) and Paul Smith (12/19/92) from their father, Tim Smith (11/8/56) are the following: I am a co-founding partner in the Non-Violence Alliance, a private agency specializing in working with perpetrators of family violence. I have seventeen years of clinical experience with this population. For the past eight years I have been the Department of Children and Families’ primary consultant on matters pertaining to family violence perpetrators. In this role, I train all new social workers and investigators, provide regular case consultation and evaluations, and provide advice on matters related to policy and procedures. In addition to my clinical experience, I have authored numerous articles, training and program development materials regarding interventions with family violence perpetrators, including a training curriculum for all state approved batterer intervention facilitators in Texas. I am regularly invited to speak inside and outside of Connecticut on interventions with family violence perpetrators. I am currently conducting research into various aspects of interventions with family violence perpetrators including (a) a national study of batterer’s perceptions of their children’s exposure to their violence and abuse, (b) methods for improving child protection’s response to family violence perpetrator’s and (c) screening for family violence perpetrators in medical settings. Papers on these efforts have been accepted to national conferences in the field. In Connecticut, I have been repeatedly hired to provide professional training in this specialization for new Family Relations counselors for the Judicial Branch. I currently act as a consultant to the Connecticut Department of Corrections on research, training and program development issues related to family violence perpetrators. I hold a Master’s in Psychology and Counseling from Goddard College.

The following is my expert opinion based on my review of the documentation and information presented to me to by the Department of Children and Families:

I strongly support the decision made by the Department of Children and Families to remove the children from Mr. Smith’s custody due to (a) the imminent risk of physical harm and (b) the serious adverse emotional impact Mr. Smith’s behavior appears to have on his children. Mr. Smith’s history of violence, terrorist threats, emotional abuse and control combined with his escalating response to his children’s help seeking behavior raises valid concerns about the possibility of new and serious violence and emotional abuse if the children are returned to his custody at this time.

Mr. Smith’s behavior, as reported by the children and family members, and documented in court records, indicates a long-term, severe, persistent and escalating pattern of serious physical violence, and terrorist threats and actions. This pattern appears to date back to a period, at minimum, preceding the death of the children’s mother, Samantha Jones. At this time, Ms. Jones was granted a Relief from Abuse Order in Connecticut Superior Court, in which she swore “His is constantly
calling me a “fucking cunt” in front of the children…He has a gun and is threatening to blow my head off.”

In regards to Violet and Paul, Mr. Smith’s violence, terrorist threats and actions, control and cruelty appears to have created an atmosphere of fear, intimidation and unpredictability for Violet and Paul. The record documents multiple instances of Mr. Smith physically assaulting his children, including but not limited to:

- Hitting Violet with wooden stick
- Pushing and grabbing Violet by the throat
- Hitting Paul on the thigh with a piece of wood
- Kicking Violet in thigh
- Grabbing Paul by his shoulders

Mr. Smith’s willingness to act in a physically assaultive manner takes on an additional level of concern when coupled with Mr. Smith’s terrorizing and controlling behaviors. The children report that on a regular basis, Mr. Smith threatens to hit or “pound” them. Violet reports that Mr. Smith has threatened to “punch her face off” and “feed her to the wild dogs.” (During an interview with a social worker, Mr. Smith admitted to threatening the children, claiming that they should not take him seriously when he makes his threats.) Moreover, the children report that Mr. Smith takes them to remote locations to yell and discipline them. He has repeatedly interrupted Violet’s sleep by coming into her room to rip off covers, yell and shake her. Disregarding the normal developmental needs of his children, Mr. Smith has repeatedly exercised extreme and unhealthy levels of control over every aspect of the children’s daily routine. Using his power over their environment and physical well-being, Mr. Smith has controlled and destroyed Violet’s clothing, severely limited her room decorations, deprived her of contact with friends and family, and used deprivation of food as a form of punishment. Based on the reports from the children, it would be fair to compare Mr. Smith’s behavior as being more akin to an abusive prison guard than a caring parent.

Mr. Smith’s pattern of behavior is consistent with the profile of family violence perpetrators who engage in coercive control tactics, deny responsibility for this behavior and deny its negative impact on others. Additionally, Mr. Smith’s substance abuse appears to aggravate his violent and abuse towards their children.

Despite repeated attempts to address his behaviors by the Department (and others), Mr. Smith has persisted in these patterns of behavior and denied their impact on the children. Moreover, the children report that in response to their efforts to protect themselves and seek assistance for the family, Mr. Smith escalates his violence, intimidation, manipulation and control. Mr. Smith’s history of coercive control, violating boundaries, substance abuse, and willingness to use violence and the threats of violence to exercise power over his children makes it impossible to predict the extent to which Mr. Smith will go to maintain this control over his children.

Submitted by: _______________________________________________
           David Mandel, MA

Subscribed and sworn before me this _____ day of ________________, 2XXX.

Notary Public: __________________________ Expiration Date: ________________
Working With Batterers as Parents

What would a curriculum look like?
by David Mandel

In a recent Issues article entitled “Thinking about batterers as fathers: Reconceptualizing and rethinking policy and practice”, we raised the question “Are we (individuals, community agencies, policy makers, etc.) willing to work with batterers to help them become better fathers?” In this article we consider some of the programming and curriculum issues related to working with batterers as parents.

As various national efforts take a closer look at the direct and indirect risks batterers present to children, programming interventions with batterers will need to be modified and enhanced to address emerging concerns. These concerns are being identified through the literature, policy initiatives and community programming. Recent writings (Baker, Perilla, & Norris, 2001; Donovan & Patterson, 1999; Peled, 2000; Sliverman & Bancroft, 2002; Williams, Boggess, & Carter, 2001.) have highlighted issues of batterers in relationship to their children. Federally funded “Greenbook” demonstration sites and pending federal funding for supervised visitation through the Department of Justice’s Safe Havens grants both include strong batterer accountability components. Through our own research (see article this Issues) into how batterers think about their children’s exposure to violence we are collecting data that will help design more effective interventions. For instance, more than half the men identified that their physical violence (52%) and their verbal abuse (56%) made their children feel “scared.”

As a standard component of a coordinated community response to domestic violence, batterer intervention programs need to offer programming that mirrors the needs of the community. In the near future a growing need will clearly be addressing batterers in their parental role. Child protection agencies and juvenile court judges will want to know how batterer intervention programs are addressing batterers’ interactions with their children. Civil and family court judges will want to have targeted programs to which they can refer batterers as part of divorce, custody and visitation proceedings.

Furthermore, programming for batterers in relationship to their role as fathers dovetails with national initiatives on fatherhood. For instance, in one state, almost half the men involved with fatherhood programming self-reported behavior associated with domestic violence.

For poor men and men of color, there is a critical role for batterers’ programming that can be accessed on a voluntary basis outside the scope of the criminal justice and child protection systems. Batterer programming that centers on the well being of children may be the way to increase the voluntary involvement of batterers from all backgrounds. A social marketing campaign in Western Australia with the message “your violence towards your partner is harming your children” led to a significant number of abusers and males at risk to abuse being voluntarily referred for treatment (Donovan & Patterson, 1999).

Batterers as Parents Programming

What would a curriculum for batterers as parents look like? How would it be different from “standard” batterer intervention programs? What topics would it address and what role would it play in the coordinated community response?

Beginning with the last question, an intervention program for batterers as parents might be associated with an existing batterers intervention program or stand on its own. A batterers as parents program might be designed as a second stage program after an initial “standard” batterers intervention program was completed. Referrals would
most likely come from juvenile or civil court or directly from child protective services. Criminal courts could access these programs on an as needed basis. Successful completion of a batterers as parents program might be one of a range of preconditions a batterer would need to fulfill prior to (a) having increased contact with his child, (b) having increased contact with the mother of a child, (c) having any kind of visitation, supervised or unsupervised or (d) reunification with a child that has been removed.

For instance, a civil court judge presiding in a divorce proceeding where domestic violence was a factor could utilize a batterer’s participation in a batterers as parents program as a way to enhance the safety and well being of the adult and child victims. So instead of just ordering the batterer to have supervised visits, the judge could also include the completion of specialized treatment as a precondition of increased or unsupervised contact between the batterer and his children.

The batterers as parents program could take responsibility for making collateral contacts with the other parent, mental health professionals and any other professional who might have information relevant to the batterer’s dangerousness and his treatment of the children. As a condition of participation in the program, the batterer could be required to sign releases that give the program access to any custody studies or other evaluative information. Access to this information would increase batterer accountability and minimize his ability to manipulate the program.

Similar to partner/victim contact in “standard” batterer intervention programs, victims would be given information about the nature and content of the program so that they can utilize that information to help evaluate the behavior of the batterer and assess the safety of themselves and their children. Similar to criminal court the civil court judge or other interested parties might receive regular updates on the batterer’s progress in the program. Collateral contacts and progress reports might reduce the potential that the batterer could manipulate the program to his benefit. Information from the program might help the custody and visitation deliberations. Because of the varying level of risk to adult and child victims and the varying types of relationships victims have with batterers, programming for batterers as parents will need to be very responsive and sensitive to the needs and circumstances of individual victims. Like all batterers intervention programs, batterers as parents programming may increase risk by lulling the court, child protection or the victim into a false sense of security. In some cases, no level of programming or intervention will be adequate to allow some batterers to have any contact with their children.

A curriculum for batterers as fathers would need to have specific themes and educational objectives. Two basic themes could provide the framework for the curriculum. First, being exposed to violence and abuse in the home harms children. Violence in the home would be defined to include direct physical harm from child abuse, observed domestic violence and the ways abuse in the home undermines the parents’ capacity to parent. Second, if a batterer makes positive changes in his behavior towards the other parent his children can benefit. This message would emphasize how children can do well even if their parents are divorced or separated. It would also emphasize that children benefit from the positive emotional support of their fathers.

A curriculum based on these themes would educate batterers about the damaging effects of domestic violence on children and the adult victim’s parenting. The program would work with batterers to make changes in the following areas: (a) not engaging in abuse during and after a separation and divorce process, (b) healing the damage to children done by prior abuse and (c) positive co-parenting. The curriculum might also include other parenting topics that would be of special importance to batterers.

**Curriculum Design**
A curriculum for batterers as parents might follow the following design. To adequately cover a significant portion of the material below the program would need to run a minimum of sixteen sessions. Longer groups would have the advantage of allowing more time to cover the material and to support the group participants as they deal with various issues related to contact with their children. Intake and assessment sessions would precede entrance into the group. Group size should remain small (8-10 participants) to enhance participation and accountability.

A. Module One-Examining direct and indirect effects of violence in the home on children.

**Defining how children are exposed to domestic violence.** Batterers will probably come into a program with a very limited definition of children’s exposure to domestic violence. Batterers will need education on how children not only see and hear domestic violence but how they also experience it through the aftermath. Even if children are not home when the abuse occurs, they can see the bruises or a hole in the wall, may be separated from their father due to a restraining order or arrest, or feel the tension in the home before and after an incident of violence.

**Defining how children are used as weapons during domestic violence.** Batterers need to have certain behaviors involving the children clearly labeled as abusive and controlling. The ways batterers can use children as weapons may change as the children grow older and as relationship status changes. This segment of the curriculum would need to address physical and emotional threats, manipulation, and use of the legal system. In this section and throughout the entire curriculum, a strong emphasis would be placed on not using the children as weapons against their mother during a relationship or after a separation or a divorce.

**Understanding the impact domestic violence has on the parenting ability of the victim.** Battered women often do incredible jobs parenting their children in spite of the abuse that they face. The tactics of the batterer often directly or indirectly undermine the parenting of the victim. For instance, when a batterer controls a victim’s access to work and/or education, he may be depriving his and her children of the role model of an educated, self-sufficient woman. Other things he does may change her natural parenting style, undercut her authority with the children and increase tension between her and the children. A good curriculum for batterers would identify the damage their abuse does to the victim in her role as parent.

**Understanding the short and long-term impact of exposure to domestic violence has on children.** A central component of this module would help batterers identify the different ways children may be harmed by being exposed to their abuse. These effects may include interruption of routine, fear about physical harm to mother, father, self and siblings, developmental delays, school problems, aggression, withdrawal and depression, increased risk for suicidality, substance abuse, gang involvement, repetition of the cycle of family violence, and criminal behavior.

**Understanding effects of multiple exposures to violence: e.g. child abuse, community violence and domestic violence.** Many children are exposed to multiple forms of abuse. In this section batterers would be educated as to the cumulative impact of multiple forms of exposure to violence. This segment would create room for discussions of drug and gang related violence, racial and ethnic violence, bullying, socially sanctioned forms of violence, e.g. sports and television, war and violence in the home.

B. Module Two: No abuse after divorce/ separation

**Letting go of the relationship with the victim.** Many batterers need to let go of their previous relationship. Obsession with revenge or control can continue to threaten the physical and emotional well being of the entire
family. Children can be used as weapons or pawns. Challenging obsession and resentment should be a high priority for any program.

**Accepting another father figure in the child's life.** Afraid of being marginalized and believing themselves to be entitled, batterers will frequently directly and indirectly threaten, challenge, harass and even assault their ex-partner’s new boyfriend or husband. These abusive and controlling actions are frequently framed as concern for their children’s well-being. These justifications for continuing abuse need to be challenged. An ex-partner’s right to have another relationship should be stressed. Batterers need help in understanding how children feel about a new father figure, how to support children in making that transition and how to co-parent when their ex-partner has a new relationship.

**Not using legal and court processes to get revenge against victim.** During divorce and separation batterers may shift their tactics to the court. Withholding, or threatening to withhold child support, and greater financial resources often provides batterers with potent weapons. Batterers need to be confronted on these tactics as part of any program that addresses their role as parent.

**Dealing with child support and visitation.** Any program that works with batterers as fathers needs to stress the importance of following court ordered child support and not manipulating or violating visitation orders.

**Damage to children by talking negatively to family and friends of the victim.** During and after a relationship, a batterer often attempts to attack and malign his partner by talking negatively about her to friends, family and co-workers. This may be a key tactic for an abuser who continues to abuse after a divorce. The direct and indirect negative impact of this type of behavior on children needs to be identified. Batterers need to be challenged to stop all types of verbal slander of former partners.

**C. Module Three: Healing damage done by prior violence**

**Accepting the role the violence has played in separation from partner and children and in divorce.** Batterers frequently blame their partner for separation and divorce. This blame and denial of the impact violence has played in the family’s life often justifies continuing abuse of the estranged partner and the children. Discussion and activities should help batterers see the role their behavior played in their current family circumstances, whether it be an open child protection case, separation or divorce.

**How batterers can talk responsibly to children about their violence.** No matter the age of the child, a batterer can always let them know that they were wrong and solely responsible for their abuse. Batterers also need to be open to listening to what children say and do directly or indirectly to express their feelings about the abuse.

**Healing the damage done by prior violence and abuse.** No new abuse and accepting the needs of others are requirements if batterers are interested in supporting others heal from their prior violence. A curriculum for batterers as parents should encourage them to identify and support counseling or other healing activities for their children. This might include supporting counseling to repair a broken relationship between the victim and her children.

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**Taking responsibility for how prior abuse has affected the children's extended family members, friends**
and neighbors. Violence, abuse and control can damage or destroy extended family relationships. Children are impacted by these wounds. Any activities focused on healing the damage of abuse should include healing relationships outside the family.

Consistent emotionally involved parenting. If a batterer continues to be in a parenting role with children, the program should help identify what it means to be a consistently emotionally involved parent versus a parent who gets involved when it is convenient.

D. Module Four: Positive parenting/co-parenting

Child maltreatment laws and the definition of child abuse and neglect. Education in this area is an important part of the coordinated community response. Batterers involved in the child protection system will hopefully be hearing the same message in their group as they will from juvenile court and child protective services. Batterers who are referred to a batterers as parents group by a civil court judge will be exposed to information about what constitutes child abuse and neglect.

Positive discipline and the difference between discipline and guidance. Men attending the group will be educated to positive, non-violent, non-abusive parenting techniques. Special attention will be paid to making the distinction between punishment/discipline and guidance. A focus on how much parents teach their children through role modeling and guidance versus authoritarian discipline will be consistent with the program’s overall message about the batterers behavior and its impact on his children.

Importance of close emotional support to children. Research indicates that children benefit from an emotionally supportive relationship with their father. Program participants can be educated to skills related to being supportive of their male and female children.

Importance of positive relationship between parents no matter what the relationship status. This topic is crucial. Research into relationship status and children’s well being indicates that one of the most crucial variables for positive outcomes is the ability of the parents to work together for the child’s best interest. This seems to be beneficial regardless of the relationship status between the parents. Batterers need to know that even if a divorce has occurred, the quality of their relationship with their children’s mother may have a profound impact on their children’s short and long-term well-being.

Importance of father's to children. Discussing the importance of fathers with a group of batterers can be very tricky. Many, if not most batterers, have an over inflated, narcissistic sense of their importance to their partner and their children. When we speak of educating batterers about the importance of fathers to children we are talking about both how much damage fathers can do when they act destructively and the how much positive influence they can have when they act in a loving, supportive and responsible way.

Child developmental needs and how to support them. Batterers, frequently expect more of their children than is appropriate for their age. Batterers would benefit from information about the developmental stages and needs of children as they grow up.

Dealing with being afraid, feeling helpless as a parent. Raising children can confront parents with tremendous feelings of helplessness and fear. Batterers deal with these feelings through controlling and hurting others. Special attention needs to be directed towards helping abusers handle the natural fears and worries of being a parent without becoming controlling or abusive.

In addition to these four modules and their associated topics, any curriculum for batterers as parents might choose to also address other topics such as how to support and relate to female children, how to care for young children,
understanding the challenges children face at school, in the community and in our society, identifying and working with emotions, and dealing with step children.

**Conclusion**

There are multiple methodologies for turning this outline into an actual curriculum. Any individual, agency or community that attempts to tackle the task of safely helping batterers become better fathers needs to embrace the following concept: Powerful women and mothers are central to healthy children. This idea underlies the question we pose to men in our fatherhood curriculum. To get them to think about women and power we ask them: “How powerful do you want your partner to be?” We help them see the connection between their children’s mother doing well and their children’s well being. This is bedrock foundation for any programming that attempts to tackle this sensitive, important and emerging area of concern.

**References**


STRATEGIES AN ADULT SURVIVOR MIGHT USE TO PROMOTE THE SAFETY OF HIS OR HER CHILDREN
(*as determined by age and developmental stage of child)

- TRO or PO
- DV or homeless shelter
- Cell Phones
- Teach children code words
- Identify safe hiding places
- Call 911
- Remove child from abusive environment; Bring child to alternate, safe, location (ie: friend, relative, different room within home)
- Notify school officials, teachers, etc. of batterer’s potential violence; safety plan; emergency contact, TRO /PO; heighten awareness to and possible change in child's behavior
- Sleep in same room with children
- Get abuser drunk
- Identify emergency contact to if unsafe for child to return home
- Talk to children about how to respond to violence, ie: stay away from abusive/violent environment; respond to code word; go to identified neighbor’s house, hiding place etc.
- Move out of home with children
- Move out of home without children
- Post bail for offender
- Sleep in car/street (extreme example of children in “trunk” incident)
- Give children to abuser, don’t pursue custody
- Identify person to assist with visitation to reduce potential for violence during transfer of children
- Keep children out of school/change schools

1 Good practice with cases involving domestic violence and children requires identifying survivors' strategies for promoting the safety and well-being of their children that go beyond calling the police, getting a court order or leaving the batterer. It important to remember that when these strategies fail to protect the children that it is the batterer who is the source of the original risk. In many instances the batterer sabotages or undermines the survivor's efforts to promote the safety and well-being of the children. Social workers and others who wish to develop successful partnerships with survivors should approach them from the perspective that have been actively engaged in attempting to safeguard their children and promote their well-being, even if those attempts are not always obvious or completely successful. The acknowledgment of efforts similar to the ones listed above can be very validating for the survivor and offer a useful starting point for the development of case plan.

2006 created by Department of Children and Families' Domestic Violence Consultant Network
• Teach children to “lie” in order to placate batterer
• Do child’s homework, chores etc.
• Consult with child counselor/.bring child to counselor
• Pack emergency bag with child’s records, special toy, change of clothing etc.
• Gain custody/consult legal assistance
• Get false documentation
• Leave country
• Bring children to work
• Go back to abuser
• Invite abuser to home despite TRO/PO

STRATEGIES AN ADULT SURVIVOR MIGHT USE TO PROMOTE THE WELL BEING OF HIS OR HER CHILDREN
(*as determined by age and developmental stage of child)

• Make sure they attend school
• Normalize as much as possible by providing a safe structure
• Meeting basic needs (feeding, bathing, spending quality time)
• Keeping up to date medically
• Maintaining a routine to avoid exposure to possible violence
• Engaging children with outside activities and relationships (formal and informal)
• Helping children with their homework
• Attending school functions such as parent-teacher conferences, fairs, etc.
• Following family traditions (holidays, religious practices, and other)
• Providing children with age-appropriate tools to understand and cope with the violence
• Being able to “hide” it; in order to protect the children. (physically removing children from violence)
• Minimizing/ recanting to keep family structure for the children
• Adapting/ changing safety plan continuously when batterer changes tactics.
Domestic Violence Expert Consultation Initiative Overview

The Department of Children and Families is establishing a statewide, full time network of expert consultants to address the prevalence of domestic violence found in up to 60% of cases where child abuse is substantiated subsequent to a referral and DCF investigation. **Their primary mission will be to support the Area Office social work staff in more effectively addressing domestic violence as it relates to child abuse and/or neglect.** An independent contractor will act as the Statewide Service Administrator overseeing the development, implementation and supervision of the consultant network.

The consultants will help both DCF staff and other community providers improve their practice in the identification of and screening for domestic violence; effective interviewing; safety and risk assessment; the development and implementation of safety plans and effective service planning and the coordination of seamless service provision. Consultation and training will utilize a field-tested model that prioritizes five critical building blocks of a good child protection response to domestic violence. Consultants will assist social workers in developing case plans that build on the identification and description of:

- The batterer’s pattern of coercive control over the survivor and the family
- The range of actions the batterer has taken to harm the children
- The full spectrum of efforts made by the non-offending parent to provide for the safety and well-being of the children
- The adverse impact of the batterer’s behavior on the children
- The role of substance abuse, mental health, financial and socio-economic factors (e.g. discrimination, assimilation, culture) in the coercive control dynamics.

To the degree that a worker can describe the above five areas as completely as possible, it is likely that the case planning that occurs will be more effective in (1) addressing the safety, support and trauma needs of the adult survivor and the children, which would include keeping the children and the non-offending parent safe and together whenever possible, (2) reducing the batterer’s risk to the family and supporting their strengths as they relate to the family and (3) working in collaboration with community partners, including domestic violence advocates, batterer intervention programs, police, courts, and other community providers.

The initiative is designed to draw on existing community expertise in responding to domestic violence. To supplement their knowledge and skills, the Statewide Service Administrator will provide 10 days of initial training in the mission, role, and tasks of child protection workers, a uniform method of case consultation and other core knowledge areas. Consultants will then work with designated area offices and the Statewide Service Administrator to develop individualized work plans that will include:

- Becoming familiar with the office personnel and local community resources
- Integrating into the social work process including the participation home visits, intensive safety planning, family conferencing, and the development of treatment plans

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- Trainings to improve social worker, supervisor and manager knowledge and skills related to working with families experiencing domestic violence
- Trainings for community providers to facilitate a common framework for understanding and working with families experiencing domestic violence
- A method for providing area office managers with feedback on social work practice, critical issues and suggestions to improve coordination with local providers
- Professional development, including subspecialty areas of expertise

Each of the consultants will receive on-going training, support and mentoring from the Statewide Services Administrator, supplemented with trainings from DCF Training Academy staff, local and national experts in various topics, e.g. interviewing children witnesses of domestic violence, survivor trauma issues, and the role of family court in domestic violence cases. In addition to their basic consultation and training skills, each consultant will be expected to develop specific expertise in a topic area related to domestic violence and children, e.g. culturally competent responses to domestic violence, domestic violence and substance abuse, domestic violence and immigrant families, secondary trauma, battering in same sex relationships, motivational interviewing. Collaboration and communication between the domestic violence consultants across the state will be facilitated by the use of a collaborative secure web site, DialogueSpace, which will allow for sharing of resources, information, and collective problem-solving.
Violence, Abuse and Controlling Behaviors Checklist

Instructions: The following list contains some common forms of abusive behavior. Read each item and think about whether you have ever acted in this way towards an intimate partner. Circle or check each item you have done. Remember being thoughtful and honest about your past is essential to change.

**Emotional**

Yelling
Swearing
Put downs and name calling
Making fun of the other person
Insulting/mistreating her family or her children
Humiliating her in public or in front of friends/family
Criticizing or finding fault in her behavior, feelings or ideas
Blaming her for problems in your life
Failing to take her concerns, feelings or needs seriously
Isolating yourself from the family for long periods
Making jealous accusations
Making her account for where and how she spends her time
Verbally attacking her friends
Putting down her goals for her own education and/or work
Controlling conversations by changing topics, interrupting, not listening, not responding or twisting her words
Being manipulative
Lying
Withholding important information
Deciding what’s “logical” or important
Cheating on her
Repeatedly not following through on your promises

Being undependable
Blaming her for your violence
Pressuring her to forget or “get over” your abusiveness to her
Denying her feelings of anger, hurt or mistrust caused by your abuse

“Acting like her father” by:

Setting rules for her
Giving her an allowance
Telling her what she can and cannot do
Controlling the money in the house
Telling her what she can or cannot wear out of the house
Withholding money, car or other financial resources
Controlling the use of the TV and/or other appliances
Automatically assuming that childrearing/household chores are her responsibility

**Substance Abuse**

(Using drugs, including alcohol in ways destructive to yourself and your family)

Spending money needed for bills
Losing your job
Losing a home or car
Driving dangerously
Being physically or emotionally abusive while under the influence

Using abuse to obtain money for alcohol or drugs
Being abusive when confronted about your drinking or drugging

**Sabotaging Outside Relationships**

Checking up on her by calling or following her around
Pumping children for information about her behavior
Attacking the friends she spends time with
Accusing her of having affairs
Not allowing her to have male friends or work with male co-workers
Refusing to watch the children so she can go out
Grilling her when she comes home
Keeping her tied down with children
Using religious teachings to control her behavior
Showing up places unexpectedly
Checking mileage on car
Taping her phone calls
Using caller ID and call back features to check on her
Taking her keys
Tampering with her car
Physically or verbally harassing other men in her life

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**Threatening/Intimidation**

Punching walls  
Breaking or destroying furniture  
Throwing objects  
Overturning furniture  
Driving fast or dangerously with others in car  
Raising your fist  
Slamming things during an argument  
Cornering her  
Ripping up pictures, letters or other personal possessions  
Hurting or killing a pet  
Keeping a weapon around which frightens her  
Threatening with or pointing a weapon at her  
Boasting about your ability to hurt people  
Telling stories about your violent past  
Threatening her with martial arts or military experience  
Threatening to hit, slap, punch  
Threatening to hurt her children  
Threaten to hurt her family or friends  
Threats to hurt yourself if she doesn't do what you want  
Suicidal gestures  
Threaten to take legally or illegally take custody of children  
Threatening to report her to the authorities  
Threatening to financial abandonment of her or children  
Threatening divorce  
Threatening to betray her secrets  
Creating an atmosphere of fear in the household  

**Sexual Abuse:**

Refusing to use birth control  
Stopping her from using birth control  
Withholding information about your HIV or other STD status  
Pressuring her to have sex when she's ill or not feeling well  
Making a scene when she does not want to have sex  
Threatening to “get sex somewhere else”  
Pressuring her to have “make up” sex after your abuse  
Putting down her sexual performance  
Pressuring her to watch pornography  
Using sexually degrading language  
Pressuring her to have sex because of your financial support or religious beliefs  
Threatening physical harm to obtain sex  
Forcing her to do painful or humiliating things during sex  
Forcing her to prostitute herself  
Forcing her to watch you have sex with another person  
Having an affair  
Visiting prostitutes

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**Physical Violence**

Slap  
Punch  
Choke  
Push  
Restrain  
Thrown down  
Pull hair  
Pinch  
Bite  
Spit on her  
Strike with weapon, including knife, stick, etc.  
Use gun, rifle or bow to hurt her

---

**From the above list, write down the two most common behaviors that you have done.**

1. ________________________________________________________________________
2. ________________________________________________________________________

**From the above list, write down the two most destructive behaviors that you have done.**

1. ________________________________________________________________________
2. ________________________________________________________________________
Could your children say the following about you as their father, step-father or mother’s boyfriend?

My dad respects my mother.

My dad listens to my mom when she has something to say.

My dad is nice to my mom.

My dad likes it when my mom visits with her friends and family because mom comes home happier.

Sometimes my mom makes the big decisions and sometimes my dad makes the big decisions in the house and sometimes they make those decisions together.

My dad knows how to handle being angry without hurting other people.

My dad isn’t afraid of being gentle and kind to my mother, my brothers or sisters or me.

Even when my dad is stressed out from work or something else, he still treats us well.

I’m not afraid to ask my dad questions or tell him about things I’ve done wrong.

My dad gets mad at me sometimes but I’m never scared he’s going to hurt me.

My dad knows how to stand up for himself or speak his mind without getting violent physically or verbally.

My dad knows and cares when I’m feeling bad or upset.

My dad doesn’t criticize me when I make mistakes.

My dad knows a lot but isn’t afraid to say he doesn’t know and ask for help.

When I grow up I want to be treated the way my dad treats my mom. (Or I want to treat my partner the way my dad treats my mom.)

What else would you like your children to say about their dad…
The mounting social and professional awareness of the negative effects on children of exposure to the behavior of batterers has drawn attention to the need for effective tools for assessing risk to children from batterers as parents or guardians (e.g. Williams, Boggess, & Carter, 2001). Such tools are particularly needed by child protective personnel, custody evaluators, and courts with jurisdiction over child custody and child welfare cases, but are also important to the work of many therapists, battered women's service providers, batterer intervention programs, and programs for children exposed to batterers.

The model we are proposing here is particularly suited to assessment of post-separation risk to children from batterers. We commonly encounter the mistaken assumption among professionals, including judges and custody evaluators, that children are in less danger from a batterer once a couple is no longer living together, when the reality is often the opposite (Bancroft & Silverman, 2002; Langford, Isaac, & Kabat, 1999). Assessment of risk to children post-separation should be carried out with as much caution as would be called for in intervening with an intact family.

While couples are still living together, a batterer's danger to children can be mediated to some extent by their mother's ability to protect them. Assessment of her ability to protect requires the examination of such elements as the level of physical dangerousness of the batterer, the mother's strengths as a parent, the ability of her community to provide the necessary legal and supportive resources, and the mother's capacity to seek and use help for herself and her children (Whitney & Davis, 1999), while also avoiding the mistake of characterizing a battered woman as "failing to protect" her children (Magen, 1999). Therefore, the use of our model in assessing risk in intact families needs to be combined with careful and compassionate assessment of the mother's protective capabilities and her willingness to work collaboratively with child protective personnel.

Before describing the elements of a proper assessment, we will review the most serious physical, sexual, and psychological risks that batterers can pose to children, and describe the elements necessary for children's emotional recovery from exposure to battering behavior. Many of the errors currently made by professionals in assessing children's safety with a batterer are a product of the lack of clear delineation of what the central risks are, including the important possibility that a batterer's conduct with children may interfere with their emotional healing from traumatic experiences they have already undergone.
Following our section on the details of evaluating risk, we provide additional assessment guidelines that professionals can apply in cases where a batterer admits to a history of abusiveness but asserts that he has changed. We include this section because batterers sometimes succeed in using unfounded claims of change to circumvent proper evaluation of risk, an unfortunate outcome that we wish to caution against.

**RISKS POSED TO CHILDREN BY EXPOSURE TO BATTERERS**

Professional approaches to assessing risks to children from batterers often suffer from the absence of a clear definition of what those risks are. This gap can lead to lack of direction in an evaluation, vagueness in an evaluator's report, and recommendations that are based on scant evidence or on stereotypes regarding batterers and battered women. We therefore begin here by delineating the potential sources of physical and psychological injury to children from contact with batterers:

*Risk of exposure to threats or acts of violence towards their mother.* Children of battered women witness a large percentage of the batterer's physical assaults (Kolbo, Blakely, & Engleman, 1996) and sexual assaults (Wolak & Finkelhor, 1998), and the potential traumatic effects of these events are well-established (review in Cummings, 1998). Children also may be physically injured during such assaults, either by accident or because they attempt to intervene (Jaffe, Wolfe, & Wilson, 1990; Roy, 1988).

A high rate of serious assaults by batterers occur post-separation (Tjaden and Thoennes, 2000), and children are likely to witness these incidents (Peled, 2000). The risk that the batterer will assault the mother sexually also increases during and after separation (review in Mahoney & Williams, 1998). When a batterer kills his former partner, children commonly witness the homicide or its aftermath, or are murdered themselves (Langford, Isaac, & Kabat, 1999). Many perpetrators of domestic violence homicides have little or no criminal record involving violence (Langford et al.; Websdale, 1999), complicating the assessment process.

Exposure to post-separation threats or assaults on the mother can impede children's emotional healing. In a recent case of ours, for example, a child's violent nightmares began again, after ceasing for over a year, following his witnessing of frightening verbal aggression by his father during an exchange for visitation.

*Risk of undermining mother-child relationships.* Battering behavior can undermine mother-child relationships and maternal authority in a wide array of ways (Radford & Hester, 2001; McGee, 2000; Hughes & Marshall, 1995), interference which tends to continue or increase post-separation (Bancroft & Silverman, 2002). The emotional recovery of children who have been exposed to domestic violence appears to depend on the quality of their relationship with the non-battering parent more than on any other single factor (see below), and thus batterers who create tensions between mothers and children can sabotage the healing process.
**Risk of physical or sexual abuse of the child by the batterer.** Multiple studies have demonstrated the dramatically elevated rate of child physical abuse (review in McGee, 2000) and child sexual abuse (e.g. McCloskey, Figueredo, & Koss, 1995; Sirles & Franke, 1989; Paveza, 1988) by batterers. This risk may increase post-separation from the mother's inability to monitor the batterer's parenting and from the retaliatory tendencies of many batterers.

**Risk to children of the batterer as a role model.** Sons of batterers have dramatically elevated rates of domestic violence perpetration when they reach adulthood (Silverman & Williamson, 1997; Straus, 1990), and daughters of batterers find it more difficult than other women to seek assistance if they are abused (Doyne et al., 1999).

**Risk of rigid, authoritarian parenting.** Recovery in traumatized children is best facilitated by a nurturing, loving environment that also includes appropriate structure, limits, and predictability. A batterer may be severely controlling toward children (McGee, 2000) and is likely to use a harsh, rigid disciplinary style (Margolin, John, Ghosh, & Gordis, 1996; Holden & Ritchie, 1991), which can intimidate children who have been exposed to his violence and can cause the reawakening of traumatic memories, setting back post-separation healing.

**Risk of neglectful or irresponsible parenting.** Batterers often have difficulty focusing on their children's needs, due to their selfish and self-centered tendencies (Jacobson & Gottman, 1998). In post-separation visitation situations these parenting weaknesses can be accentuated, as batterers may be caring for children for much longer periods of time than they are accustomed to. Additionally, many of our battering clients have used intentionally neglectful parenting as a way to win their children's loyalty, for example by not imposing appropriate safety or eating guidelines, or by permitting the children to watch inappropriate violence or sexuality in media.

Neglectful parenting in our clients commonly takes the form of intermittently showing interest in their children and then ignoring them for extended periods. Post-separation, batterers of this parenting style tend to drop in and out of visitation, which can be emotionally injurious to their children and disruptive to life in the custodial home.

**Risk of psychological abuse and manipulation.** Batterers have been observed to tend towards verbally abusive parenting styles (McGee, 2000; Adams, 1991) and towards using the children as weapons against the mother (McGee; Erickson & Henderson, 1998; Peled, 1998). The latter risk appears to increase post-separation (McMahon & Pence, 1995), with visitation becoming an opportunity for a batterer to manipulate the children in his continuing efforts to control their mother (Erickson & Henderson).

**Risk of abduction.** A majority of parental abductions take place in the context of domestic violence, and are mostly carried out by batterers or their agents (Greif and Hegar, 1993). Post-separation parental abductions happen most commonly two or more years subsequent to the separation, and about half occur during an authorized visit (Finkelhor, Hotaling, & Sedlak, 1990).
Risk of exposure to violence in their father's new relationships. Post-separation, children run the risk that their father will abuse a new partner, as it is common for batterers to abuse women serially (Dutton, 1995; Woffordt, Mihalic, & Menard, 1994).

THE NECESSARY CONTEXT FOR CHILDREN'S RECOVERY FROM EXPOSURE TO BATTERING BEHAVIOR

When a batterer is no longer present in children's home, the possibility exists that healing and recovery will begin, as has been demonstrated by many studies on children's resilience (review in Wolak & Finkelhor, 1998). However, we find that children's continued contact with the batterer sometimes interferes with the creation of a healing context, the critical elements of which include:

A sense of physical and emotional safety in their current surroundings. The establishment of safety, and of the feeling of safety, is a first and indispensable step towards any process of emotional healing from trauma (van der Kolk & McFarlane, 1996), and in particular for children whose experience has included fear, danger, and insecurity at home as children of battered women experience (McGee, 2000). Where children are aware of the batterer's capacity for violence, unsupervised contact with him may cause them to feel insecure or anxious.

Structure, limits and predictability. Domestic violence can create a sense of chaos and lack of predictability in children's environment. The parenting patterns that accompany battering can aggravate this problem, as batterers tend to alternate between harshness and leniency with children (Holden & Ritchie, 1991) and battered mothers often experience erosion of their authority (Hughes & Marshall, 1995). Children's healing therefore depends on the development of structure, limits, and predictability in their home life to counteract the previous experiences of fear and turmoil.

A strong bond to the non-battering parent. Children who have experienced profound emotional distress or trauma are largely dependent for their recovery on the quality of their relationship with their caretaking parent (Jaffe & Geffner, 1998; reviews in Heller, Larrieu, D'Imperio, & Boris, 1999 and Graham-Bermann, 1998). Assisting battered mothers and their children to heal their relationships is one of the most important aspects of promoting recovery (Erickson & Henderson, 1998). Progress towards this goal may be eroded if the batterer uses visitation as a time to encourage the children to disrespect their mother, to feel ashamed of being close to her, or to defy her authority.

Not to feel responsible to take care of adults. Children who are exposed to battering behavior may believe that they must protect their mother, father, or siblings. To relieve this stress adults need to avoid burdening the children with adult concerns. The self-centeredness common in batterers leads to a substantial risk that the father may demand emotional caretaking from his children, particularly in the painful aftermath of parental separation.
A strong bond to their siblings. Overall level of family support is important in fostering resilience (Heller et al., 1999). Children exposed to batterers often have unusually high levels of tension in their sibling relationships (Hurley & Jaffe, 1990), and so may need assistance to address the divisions that have occurred. Batterers often foment tensions between siblings through favoritism and other tactics (Bancroft & Silverman, 2002), undercutting their recovery.

Contact with the battering parent with strong protection for children's physical and emotional safety. Except in those cases involving the most terrifying batterers or those who have abused the children physically or sexually, children's recovery may be furthered by having an ongoing opportunity to express their love for their father, to have a sense that he knows them, and to be able to tell him about key events in their lives. They may also crave reassurance that he is not in overwhelming distress. However, such contact is counterproductive when it interferes with the creation of a healing context.

It should be noted that a large proportion of batterers are unable to create or support most of the critical healing elements just listed, so that placing children in a batterer's custody or in unsupervised visitation with him will often impede their recovery.

ASSESSING RISK TO CHILDREN FROM CONTACT WITH BATTERERS

Given the range of sources of psychological and physical injury to children from batterers and the many elements necessary for children's recovery, assessing risk to children from batterers is a complex process. Information about a batterer's history of behavior and attitudes has to be gathered from multiple sources, as his own reporting is not likely to be reliable (Adams, 1991; Follingstad, Rutledge, Berg, Hause, & Polek, 1990). Sources should include the mother, the children, past partners of the batterer, court and police records, child protective records, medical records, school personnel, and anyone who has witnessed relevant events. (Custody evaluators have not typically considered this type of investigating and fact-gathering important to their assessments -- see Bow & Quinnell, 2001).

The facts gathered should then be applied to evaluate each of the following 13 points:

1) **Level of physical danger to the mother.**

The higher the severity or frequency of a batterer's level of violence, the greater the risk that he will physically abuse children (Straus, 1990). Level of violence is also an indicator of a batterer's likelihood to attempt to kill the mother (Websdale, 1999; Langford et al., 1999), or to carry out other continued assaults against her (Weisz, Tolman, & Saunders, 2000). His history of sexually assaulting the mother is correlated to overall level of physical danger (Campbell, Soeken, McFarlane, & Parker, 1998) and specifically to his likelihood of physically abusing children (Bowker, Arbitell, & McFerron, 1988). Threats of abuse are highly correlated with future physical violence (Follingstad et al., 1990) including post-separation violence (Fleury, Sullivan, & Bybee, 2000). Any history of violence to the mother during her pregnancies also indicates an
increased risk to commit frequent or severe violence (Campbell et al.). Evaluators should note that both threatened and actual homicide attempts may take place in cases where the batterer's previous history of violence had not been severe (McCloskey et al., 1995), and that the woman's own assessment of the likelihood of future violence by a batterer may be more accurate than any other predictor (Weisz et al.).

Additional relevant questions include: Has the batterer ever choked the mother? What types of injuries has he caused? Has he ever violated a restraining order? Has he made lethal threats against her or the children? Has he killed or attacked pets? Is he extremely jealous or possessive? Does he have access to weapons? Is he depressed, despondent, or paranoid? Does he stalk her? Is he escalating? What is his criminal record? Does he chronically abuse substances? Has he been violent towards the children, or towards non-family members? Does he use pornography? (These additional indicators of danger are based on Weisz et al, 2000; Campbell et al., 1998; Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart, 1994; Koss et al., 1994; Demare, Briere, & Lips, 1988.)

2) **History of physical abuse towards the children.**

As discussed above, batterers are more likely than non-battering men to physically abuse children and this risk may increase post-separation. It thus is important to evaluate a man's historical approach to discipline, including his reactions when angry at the children. Additional relevant questions include: Does he spank the children? Has he ever left marks? Does he ever grab the children roughly? Has he been involved in fights (including any that appeared mutual) with his older children? Does he minimize or justify physically abusive behaviors he has used in the past?

3) **History of sexual abuse or boundary violations towards the children.**

As discussed above, there is a substantial overlap between battering and incest perpetration. Evidence of sexual abuse should therefore should be treated with particular care in domestic violence cases. Subtler boundary violations can also be psychologically destructive, and can create a context for future sexual abuse or be signs of current undisclosed sexual abuse (Salter, 1995). Questions to explore include: Does the batterer respect his children's right to privacy, and maintain proper privacy himself? Does he expose the children to pornography? Does he pressure the children for unwanted physical affection or engage them in inappropriate sexual conversation? Does he make inappropriate comments about the children's bodies or physical development? Are there indications of secret-keeping?

4) **Level of psychological cruelty to the mother or the children.**

Our clinical experience indicates that a batterer's history of mental cruelty towards the mother or the children is an important indicator of how his conscience operates, and in turn of how safe children will be in his care. We also observe that the most psychologically abusive batterers sometimes can be especially determined to gain revenge against the mother, using the children as weapons if necessary. Research
indicates that the degree of emotional abuse in the home is an important determinant of the severity of difficulties developed by children exposed to domestic violence (Hughes, Graham-Bermann, & Gruger, 2001). A history of cruelty is overlooked in many evaluations, despite the fact that a majority of battered women report that the batterer's psychological abuse is even more destructive than his physical violence (Follingstad et al., 1990). Questions to explore include: What have been his most emotionally hurtful acts towards the mother? What behaviors of his have caused the greatest distress to the children? Has he ever deliberately harmed the children emotionally?

5) **Level of coercive or manipulative control exercised during the relationship.**

We find that the more severely controlling our clients are towards their partners the more likely they are to draw the children in as weapons of the abuse, and the more likely they are to be authoritarian fathers. Additionally, a dictatorial level of control over children has been associated with increased risk of both physical abuse (review in Milner & Chilamkurti, 1991) and sexual abuse (Leberg, 1997; Salter, 1995). Relevant questions include: Has he interfered with her social or professional contacts? Is he economically coercive? Does he dictate major decisions, showing contempt or disregard for her opinions? Does he monitor her movements? Is he dictatorial or minutely controlling towards the children?

Manipulation as a form of control can be examined through such questions as: Does he play the role of victim in the relationship? Does he abruptly switch to kind and loving behavior when he wishes to achieve certain goals? Has he sown divisions within the family? Is there evidence that he is frequently dishonest? Is he described by his partner, children, or other witnesses as "crazy-making"?

In cases where the batterer has a severe or chronic problem with lying, children's safety can be compromised by his ability to cover up the realities of his parenting behavior. Such a batterer may also lie directly to the children about their mothers, which can create confusion for them or foster tensions in their relationships with their mothers. Evaluators should thus always examine evidence of a batterer's credibility.

6) **Level of entitlement and self-centeredness.**

"Entitlement" refers to a batterer's perception of himself as deserving of special rights and privileges within the family (Silverman & Williamson, 1997; Pence & Paymar, 1993; Edleson & Tolman, 1992). It can be manifested through a selfish focus on his own needs, the enforcement of double standards, a view of family members as personal possessions, or self-centered grandiosity regarding his qualities as a partner or as a parent that contrasts with evidence of his abusiveness.

Self-centeredness has been shown to increase the chance of violent reoffending in batterers (Saunders, 1995; Tolman & Bennett, 1990). Furthermore, our clinical experience is that the batterer who is particularly high in entitlement tends to chronically exercise poor parenting judgement and to expect children to take care of his needs. These
observations are also consistent with indications that propensity to perpetrate incest is linked to self-centeredness (Leberg, 1997; Bresee, Stearns, Bess, & Packer, 1986), a view of the children as owned objects (Salter, 1995), and attitudes of paternal entitlement (Hanson, Gizzarelli, & Scott, 1994).

Relevant questions in this area include: Is the batterer frequently and unreasonably demanding, becoming enraged or retaliatory when he is not catered to? Does he define the victim's attempts to defend herself as abuse of him? Does he have double standards regarding his conduct and that of other family members? Does he appear to view the children as owned objects?

7) **History of using the children as weapons, and of undermining the mother's parenting.**

We have observed that batterers who have histories of chronically using children as weapons against their mother, or of deliberately undermining her parenting, usually continue or intensify those behaviors after the relationship breaks up; post-separation improvement in this regard is rare. Change is more common in the other direction, unfortunately, where some batterers who did not use the children as weapons while the couple was together may begin to do so post-separation in response to losing other avenues to control or harass the mother.

Questions to pursue include: Has the batterer mistreated the children out of anger at the mother? Has he taught them negative beliefs about her? Has he ever prevented her from caring for a child? Has he ever threatened to harm, kidnap, or take custody of the children? Has he used the children to frighten her, such as by driving recklessly with them in the car? Has he threatened to quit his job in order to avoid paying child support? Does he involve the children in activities that he knows the mother does not permit, or undermine her authority in other ways?

8) **History of placing children at physical or emotional risk while abusing their mother.**

We find that a batterer's behaviors that have the effect of harming or endangering children during partner abuse, even if the children were not intended targets, can demonstrate that his determination to abuse the mother sometimes overrides his use of safe parenting judgement. This type of reckless insistence on gaining retribution against the mother increases post-separation in some cases, with attendant augmented risk to children. Batterers who are violent in the presence of children have also been found to be more physically dangerous (Thompson, Saltzman, & Johnson, 2001).

Relevant questions include: Has the batterer been violent or mentally cruel during any of the mother's pregnancies? Has he been violent in the presence of the children, assaulted her while a child was in her arms, or pushed a child out of his way to get at her? Has he ever thrown objects in a way that has risked hitting the children? Has he verbally abused or humiliated the mother in the children's presence? Has he neglected the children when angry at her?
9) **History of neglectful or severely underinvolved parenting.**

A batterer's history of lack of proper attention to his children's needs is particularly relevant in the post-separation context. In our clinical experience and current research, we observe that a batterer who has shown little interest in his children may do poorly at protecting their health and safety during visitation, and may fail to meet even their basic emotional needs. In addition, studies indicate that a father's very low involvement in parenting during a child's early years increases his statistical risk of perpetrating incest (review in Milner, 1998).

Relevant questions include: Does the batterer have a history of disappearing for hours, days or weeks at a time? Has he ever refused to attend to children's medical needs? Has his lack of attentiveness ever put the children in danger? Has he shown an abrupt interest in the children, perhaps including seeking custody, in response to the dissolution of the parental relationship?

The batterer's own knowledge and compassion regarding children should be tested with such questions as: Can you tell me the names of your children's current and past teachers? Could you describe each child's infancy? What are each child's particular interests, likes, and dislikes? What struggles is each child currently encountering? What kind of involvement do you maintain with any children you have from past relationships?

10) **Refusal to accept the end of the relationship, or to accept the mother's decision to begin a new relationship.**

A batterer's refusal to accept his partner's decision to leave him, which often is accompanied by severe jealousy and possessiveness, has been linked to increased dangerousness in batterers (Weisz et al., 2000), including danger of homicide (Websdale, 1999), putting children at increased risk. We have observed clinically that those batterers who have high levels of these tendencies often also show increased use of children as tools of abuse or control post-separation. They may perceive the children as owned objects and therefore become intimidating if they learn that their is a new man in their children's lives. Finally, even those batterers who welcome the end of a relationship should be evaluated for their level of desire to punish the mother for perceived transgressions from the past, or to establish paternal dominion over the children.

Relevant questions include: Is the batterer depressed or panicked about the break-up, or insisting that the relationship is not over? Is he stalking her? Did he abruptly demand custody or expanded visitation upon learning that the mother had decided definitively not to go back to him, or when she began a new romantic involvement? Has he ever threatened or assaulted a new partner of hers, or warned her not to let any man other than him be around the children? Has he attempted to frighten the children about the mother's new partner, or to induce guilt in them for developing an attachment to him?

11) **Level of risk to abduct the children.**
The elevated risk of abduction by a batterer, particularly in cases where he has made related threats, is described earlier. Even in the absence of threats, evaluators should investigate indications such as abrupt passport renewals or efforts to get the children's passports away from the mother, surprise appearances at the children's schools, job-seeking in other states or countries, or unexplained travel plans.

12) **Substance abuse history.**

Batterers who abuse substances are an increased risk to physically abuse children (Suh & Abel, 1990), to reoffend violently against the mother (Gondolf, 1998; Woffordt et al., 1994), and to commit homicide (Websdale, 1999; Campbell, 1995). Substance abuse has also been linked to increased risk to perpetrate sexual abuse (Becker & Quinsey, 1993). Even in cases where the batterer states that he has overcome substance abuse, evaluators need to carefully examine the length and depth of the batterer's recovery, including his level of insight regarding the addiction, and should make sure that proper ongoing treatment and self-help are in place. Additionally, any tendency on the batterer's part to blame his violence on the addiction should be treated as a sign of risk for the future even if he is in recovery.

13) **Mental health history.**

Although mental illness is found in only a minority of batterers (Gondolf, 1999), even among those who kill (Websdale, 1999), such problems when present can increase a batterer's dangerousness (Websdale; Campbell et al., 1998) and resistance to change (Edleson & Tolman, 1992). Certain diagnoses, such as anti-social personality disorder, obsessive/compulsive disorder, major depression, and borderline personality disorder have been important contributors to danger in some of our cases. A mentally ill batterer needs proper separate interventions for his abusiveness and for his psychological difficulties.

The absence of mental illness or personality disorder, however, reveals little about a batterer's likelihood to be a safe or responsible parent. Psychological tests and evaluations do not predict parenting capacity well even in the absence of domestic violence (Brodzinsky, 1994). Furthermore, mental health testing cannot distinguish a batterer from a non-batterer (O'Leary, 1993), assess dangerousness in batterers (APA Presidential Task Force on Violence and the Family, 1996), or measure propensity to perpetrate incest, (Milner, 1998; Myers, 1997). Psychological evaluation with batterers is therefore useful only for ruling out psychiatric concerns.

(For case examples illustrating the above 13 areas to be explored, see Bancroft & Silverman, 2002.)

In collecting and evaluating evidence regarding these indicators of risk, evaluators should pay particularly close attention to the knowledge and perceptions of the battered mother; we find that failure to do so is one of the most common weaknesses in risk assessments in
domestic violence cases, particularly in custody and visitation evaluations. In cases where
the batterer is still living in the home, the evaluator needs to develop a cooperative
relationship with the battered mother to the greatest extent possible, understanding that
proper compassion, support, and services for her are in most cases the key to building
safety for her children (Magen, 1999; Whitney & Davis, 1999). Additionally, we wish to
calculators against making assumptions about level of risk to children based on
the economic class, race, or level of education of the batterer. We repeatedly encounter
cases where courts and child protective services have underestimated the physical,
sexual, or psychological danger to children from batterers who are well-educated and
professionally successful. We also observe cases where risk from minority batterers has
been exaggerated, particularly if they are also low-income.

The complexity involved in assessing the range of relevant issues does not lend itself to a
formulaic approach to categorizing level of risk to children from batterers. Evaluators
thus need to be prepared to conceptualize each batterer's parenting as falling on a
continuum, and to use multiple source of information to evaluate where on that
continuum he appears to fall. It can be helpful to think of three separate dimensions of
risk, as a batterer may be found to have one level of physical danger to his children,
another level of sexual danger, and yet another of psychological danger. We discourage
the use of models that attempt to assess risk to children by placing batterers in distinct
types, as such models lack both clinical and research bases at this time (see analysis of

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to offer detailed guidelines regarding custody and
visitation planning in domestic violence cases. (These are available in Bancroft &
Silverman, 2002.) The physical and emotional safety of both mothers and children needs
to be paramount in such plans, along with the need to create a healing context that can
support children's resilience (as discussed earlier). Where children's experiences during
visitation cause harm to the strength and security of their relationships with their mothers
or with each other, or cause setbacks to their emotional healing from the trauma of
exposure to domestic violence, the costs of supporting their relationships with their
battering father can outweigh the benefits.

ASSESSING CHANGE IN BATTERERS

Evaluators are sometimes in the position of needing to determine the validity of a
batterer's claim to have overcome his problem with abusiveness. Such a determination
cannot be made in the absence of a clear understanding of the nature of a battering
problem. Domestic violence perpetration has its roots in a definable set of attitudes,
beliefs, and behavioral patterns. These characteristics include among others the man's
belief in his right to use violence against a partner to impose his will (Silverman &
Williamson, 1997), his sense of entitlement within the family (Edleson & Tolman, 1992),
his patterns of controlling and manipulative behaviors (Lloyd & Emery, 2000), disrespect
for his partner and lack of empathy for her feelings (Russell & Frohberg, 1995; Pence &
Paymar, 1993), and his externalizing of responsibility for his actions (Dutton, 1995). We
have been involved in a number of cases where an evaluator has expressed his or her
believe that a batterer has changed despite multiple indications of lack of progress in overcoming any of the qualities that foster domestic violence.

Assessment of change in a batterer therefore should draw on multiple sources of information (not just the batterer's self-report), and include attention to the following issues at a minimum:

Has he made full disclosure of his history of physical and psychological abuse? A batterer must overcome denial and minimization in order to confront his abusive behavior meaningfully (Adams, Bancroft, German, & Sousa, 1992; see Leberg, 1997 on the similar dynamic in treating child sexual abusers). It is common for abusers to claim to have changed while simultaneously denying most of the history of violence, and a skeptical view should be taken of such assertions.

Has he recognized that abusive behavior is unacceptable? We find that some batterers who claim to have changed continue to justify their past violent or abusive behavior, usually through blaming the victim, thereby leaving an opening for using such justifications for future abuse. One indication of an abuser who may be making serious progress is his unqualified statements that his behavior was wrong.

Has he recognized that abusive behavior is a choice? Some batterers may acknowledge that abuse is wrong but make the excuse that they lost control, were intoxicated, or were in emotional distress. Acceptance of full responsibility is indispensable for change (Adams et al., 1992), and needs to include recognition that abuse is intentional and instrumental (Pence & Paymar, 1993).

Does he show empathy for the effects of his actions on his partner and children? As evidence of change, a batterer should be able to identify in detail the destructive impact his abuse has had (Pence & Paymar, 1993) and demonstrate that he feels empathy for his victims (Mathews, 1995; Edleson & Tolman, 1992), without shifting attention back to his own emotional injuries, grievances, or excuses.

Can he identify what his pattern of controlling behaviors and entitled attitudes has been? In order to change, a batterer has to see that his violence grows out of a surrounding context of abusive behaviors and attitudes (Pence & Paymar, 1993), and be able to name the specific forms of abuse he has relied on (Edleson & Tolman, 1992) and the entitled beliefs that have driven those behaviors.

Has he replaced abuse with respectful behaviors and attitudes? A changing batterer responds respectfully to his (ex-)partner's grievances, meets his responsibilities, and stops focusing exclusively on his own needs. He develops non-abusive attitudes, including accepting his (ex-)partner's right to be angry (Bancroft, 2002) and reevaluating his distortedly negative view of her as a person. Attitudinal changes are important predictors of behavioral improvement in batterers (Gondolf, 2000).
Is he willing to make amends in a meaningful way? We have observed that batterers who are making genuine change develop a sense of long-term indebtedness towards their victims. This sense includes feeling responsible to lay their own grievances aside because of the extent of injury that the abuse has caused.

Does he accept the consequences of his actions? Our clients who make substantial progress come to recognize that abusive behavior rightly carries consequences with it, which may include the woman's decision to end the relationship or the placement of restrictions on the abuser's access to his children. On the other hand, continued anger or externalizing of responsibility regarding such consequences tends to portend a return to abusive behavior.

(For a more detailed guide to assessing change in abusers, see Bancroft & Silverman, 2002).

SUMMARY

Children exposed to battering behavior can benefit tremendously when professionals have knowledge of the range of risks that batterers present to children, and when a systematic risk assessment tool is applied by child protective services and family courts. It is our hope that the model we are proposing here can serve as a launching point for the development of increasingly refined and sophisticated approaches to protecting children exposed to men who batter and to fostering their healing.

REFERENCES


Definition:

Domestic violence: a pattern of coercive control perpetrated by one person against another in an intimate relationship.

Understanding this definition of domestic violence and being able to describe a perpetrator’s pattern of coercive control is absolutely essential for assessing the on-going risk to the children, the safety of the survivor¹ and treatment planning.

While domestic violence usually comes to the attention of child protection through behavior that can get the perpetrator arrested like physical assault, threats of bodily harm, kidnapping, stalking, sexual assault, many behaviors in the pattern of control cannot be criminally prosecuted.

These include behaviors like name calling, threatening to use the courts to take away children, outing someone to their relatives, telling lies, throwing out birth control pills, controlling finances, cheating, keeping weapons in the home, hiding passports or other important documents and controlling access to phone and car.

Men and women in heterosexual and same sex relationships can be either perpetrators or survivors. Regardless of sex, assessing the pattern of coercive control remains the same: Who’s using physical violence, threats and intimidation to create fear in the other members of the family?² Who’s exerting coercive control through finances, manipulation, and sabotage of work or family relationships? Is one partner more vulnerable to coercive control due to his or her cultural status and institutional disadvantages?

¹ Using the term “survivor” instead of “victim” can help focus on the efforts of a parent to protect themselves and their children in the face of the threats and challenges of the batterer and life circumstances, e.g. housing issues, etc.

² For example, while men and women can both be perpetrators or survivors of domestic violence the level of coercive control experienced may vary. Women are 2 to 3 times more likely to report an intimate partner pushed grabbed or shoved them and 7 to 14 times more likely to report an intimate partner beat them up, choked them, or tied them down (Tjaden and Thoennes 2000a cited at http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/ipvfacts.htm).
Working with batterers: A basic documentation schema

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.
Documentation Schema
For a non-offending parent's full spectrum of supporting the safety and well-being of her children

Summary statement
Mother engaged in a pattern of supporting the safety and well-being of her son.

Specifics of the behaviors
She engaged in age appropriate play, attempted to defuse her partner's anger and abusive behavior through avoidance of his questions, placating him by providing him with a beer and engaging him in a conversation about chores, redirecting the conversation, reminding her partner about their son's needs, preparing dinner for the family, defending her parenting and her son's participation in age appropriate play. She also role modeled resistance to abuse by standing up to his verbal abuse and actively tried to remove herself and her son from her partner's abusive behaviors but was prevented from doing so by her partner's intimidating and threatening behavior.

How the behavior has helped child or ameliorated the impact of the batterers' behavior
While mother engaged in a series of efforts to shield her son from his fathers' verbal abuse, threats and intimidation, father continued to choose to expose his child to his verbal abuse, threats and intimidation of his mother. Mother's age appropriate play and her efforts to shield her son from his father's abuse should be seen as clear strengths as a parent. She appears to be actively engaged in supporting her child's safety and well-being.
Using Batterer Accountability Strategies to Increase Child Safety

by David Mandel

A couple of years ago, in a small Connecticut town, a young girl reported to a staff person at her school that she had been hit by an object thrown by her father. The incident was reported to the child abuse hotline and an investigator went out to speak to the family’s three elementary school age children. In separate interviews, the three children described Dad as “scary, violent and mean.” They all reported other incidents where they had been struck and also reported that Dad had struck their mother. Dad was reported to own firearms and have a military background. When Dad was interviewed by the investigator at the local police department, he acted belligerent and challenging. Concern for the safety of the children, the mother and the worker were high.

The Non-Violence Alliance was consulted about how best to handle to the father. The initial plan for the family had been to ask the mother to remove the children and seek some form of shelter or the Department of Children and Families would remove the children. After our consultation, the plan was reformulated to focus on the steps the father would need to take to address the danger he represented to his children. The father was told he needed to hand over his weapons to the local police department and move out of the house. He was also told he needed to get a domestic violence evaluation and abide by its recommendations. Reluctantly, he complied with all these conditions because the investigator made it clear that his choices would determine whether the children were removed or not. Any disruption to their life would be the result of his failure to comply with the stipulated conditions.

To confirm the father’s compliance, the investigator made unannounced visits to the home over the first weekend. The father was recommended to domestic violence treatment and complied with a condition of once a week counseling for over six months. At the end of that period, the children were reporting no new violence and a significant change in Dad’s demeanor. The case was eventually closed.

While the particulars of every domestic violence related case might not lend themselves to this type of approach, the case can help us focus on certain steps that would be important to explore in most cases where domestic violence is a factor. In this article we are going to focus on three important elements that supported the apparently successful outcome in this case:

1. Documentation of the behavior of the perpetrator and its impact on the children,
2. Development of perpetrator focused specific steps and
3. Use of appropriate treatment options.

These efforts can greatly increase the probability that children can be protected in their own home without the disruptions that accompany a removal from their home or from the non-offending parent.

Start with the Premise of Responsibility

In documenting the impact of a domestic violence perpetrator on the children in the household, it is essential to begin with the assumption that the male caretaker, whether father, stepfather or boyfriend, has a share of the responsibility for the emotional and physical well being of those children. Second, it is important to remember that violence, abuse and control are choices made by the domestic violence perpetrator, often without any regard for the impact these choices have on the children. By using these premises of responsibility it becomes easier to map out the damage to the children created by the perpetrator’s violence towards the mother. For instance, when a domestic violence perpetrator’s jealous accusations, stalking and harassment prevent the victim from taking a job, the worker can document the abuser’s failure to consider the financial and emotional needs of the children.

Documenting Perpetrator Behavior

Documentation should include a specific description of the perpetrator’s pattern of control, including past violent behavior, threats, intimidating actions and other forms of control. Particular attention should be paid to how the fear and uncertainty generated by prior behavior continues to impact current parenting, decision-making, risk analysis and safety planning of the adult victim. Details about the severity of violence, extent of injuries, duration of incidents, unpredictability of violent behavior, and the physical proximity to children are important to record. It is important to document if the children are being used as a weapon by the perpetrator or as way of gaining access to or control over a domestic violence victim. Therefore, it would be important to note if, when visitation with the children occurs, the domestic violence perpetrator spends all his time with the mother instead of the children, or pumps the children for information about the mother’s behavior. It would also be important to note the specific impact these actions appear to have on the child or children. Crying, protests, withdrawal into silence, or fearful behavior all would be some of the possible indications of negative impact.
The language used to describe the domestic violence in the household needs to be precise, affirming of the perpetrator’s role in harming the children and avoid blaming the victim for the behavior of the perpetrator. Imprecise phrases relegate the perpetrator and his responsibility to the background or make it disappear altogether. “Dysfunctional family,” “high conflict family,” “violent family” or other similar phrases, which blame the relationship, the family system or communication issues as the cause of the violence, should be avoided. Phrases like “the mother allows” the domestic violence perpetrator to be in the home, negate any impact violence, threats and manipulations by the abuser have in determining his presence in the home. When we transfer the language of codependency from the substance abuse field by using descriptions like “she enables his violence,” we shift responsibility for the perpetrator’s violence onto the victim. Therefore, if the domestic violence perpetrator, who has been ordered by a judge to stay away from the victim, makes illegal contact with victim, then the case notes should include a clear description of how he disregarded the court order.

In many cases, defining the battered woman who is a mother as having “failed to protect her children” solely based on her status as victim places the entire burden of responsibility for the damage done to the children by the domestic violence perpetrator on her shoulders. Instead we can increase batterer accountability by using language consistent with an understanding of the domestic violence perpetrator’s behavior as interfering with the parenting ability of the mother. As Randy Magen writes in his 1999 article in Child Maltreatment “In the Best Interests of Battered Women: Reconceptualizing Allegations of Failure to Protect,” “the concept of interference suggests that the obstacles created by the battering are not in the mother’s control to remove. This term also conveys the responsibility that both mothers and fathers have to be parents.” In actuality, the domestic violence perpetrator’s abuse interferes with the parenting of both adult caretakers. His abuse directly and indirectly undermines the ability of the adult victim to parent. Additionally, his preoccupation with controlling her draws his own attention from his obligation to meet the physical and emotional needs of the children.

Specific Steps
When the assessment has documented specific behaviors related to power and control, there are choices to be made about the treatment plan and/or specific steps in the perpetrator’s service agreement. In “Effective Intervention in Domestic Violence & Child Maltreatment Cases: Guidelines for Policy and Practice”, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges recommends that “child protection services should make every effort to develop separate services plans for adult victims and perpetrators—regardless of their legal status vis-à-vis the child.” Within these separate service agreements, some specific steps could be included. (See box)

When the criminal court is involved with a domestic violence perpetrator, coordinating with family court and probation can significantly enhance compliance. If court personnel are aware of a perpetrator’s involvement with child welfare, they can impose a mandate that he comply with all of the recommended specific steps. This is particularly useful in cases where the perpetrator is not a biological relation to the children.

Treatment Options
In the determination of specific steps, there is a choice to be made as to the most effective treatment option. Two of the most common choices, anger management and couples counseling, are almost always at the least ineffective and at the worst potentially damaging to the victims of domestic violence.

### Specific Steps for Child Protection Service Agreements with Batterers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The perpetrator will:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Commit no physically violent behavior towards any member of the household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Commit no intimidating behavior towards any member of the household. This includes defined and undefined verbal threats, destruction of property, throwing objects, punching walls, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Remove all weapons from the premises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Comply with all court orders, including protective and restraining orders, conditions of probation and parole, and visitation and custody orders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Seek out a domestic violence evaluation and comply with its recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Not use physical discipline with the children</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Acknowledge a majority of past abusive and violent behavior towards the adult and children victims</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Where appropriate, seek out and comply with recommendations of a substance abuse program</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. When necessary, continue involvement with mental health professionals</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Pay child support as scheduled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Support all reasonable efforts to provide the child or children with appropriate childcare, healthcare and other appropriate services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Not deny partner access to counseling, friends, family, phone or vehicle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Disclose to the adult victim information relevant to his prior history abuse, involvement with the court, and relevant information about income and family financial circumstances</td>
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Domestic violence is about control and the misuse of power to dominate another person, not about out-of-control anger. Anger management may help an abuser reduce the quantity of angry outbursts, but will not help him end other behavior such as manipulation, culturally sanctioned domination, or sexual abuse. The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges raises the concern that anger management is inappropriate when it does not address “underlying belief systems and attitudes that contribute to domestic violence.”

Couples or family counseling is useful for interactive issues that have a mutual, or systems, dysfunctional pattern. Issues such as communication, intimacy, or differing value systems may benefit from family therapy. However, abuse, and the fear it engenders in family members, first needs to be ended by the abuser so that there is enough trust available to work on the interactive issues. Victims of abuse may be further traumatized in an environment that sees behavior as mutually determined. She will be made to feel responsible for causing and changing the abuser's behavior, and be helpless to do so.

If the perpetrator who has been assessed is involved with the criminal justice system, it is possible to coordinate with court personnel who may have their own treatment options available. A coordinated response between the child welfare agencies and the court may have a stronger impact on the abuser's sense of external consequences, as well as his ability to deny his problem.

Within court systems, groups are available for abusers that range from short term, such as a ten-week class to long term psycho-educational groups lasting a year (or more if a condition of probation). Some treatment/intervention services, unfortunately, do not maintain contact with victims or present partners. These particular services are therefore missing a great deal of valuable information about the abusers. With the information a child protection worker has gathered in an assessment, a more complete picture of the specific abusive behaviors as well as their impact on the family may emerge. Abusers will most often choose not to share the whole story of their abuse while victims who feel safe enough can fill in the other 180 degrees of the situation.

The most effective treatment would include a multi-level group therapy program that focuses on control issues and includes a victim, or partner, contact component. Most therapists dealing with abusers appreciate a continued outside presence to hold the abuser externally accountable while they work on his internal accountability. There are, at this point, a number of such programs around the country.

The final treatment options to consider deal with substance abuse or mental health issues. Neither of these will cause abuse, but they may have a significant impact on the nature, predictability or quantity of the abuse. The abuser may need to be referred to substance abuse or psychiatric treatment to first make changes in these areas so they can be mentally and emotionally ready to work on issues of power and control. If it is unclear to you whether there is substance abuse or psychiatric issues enough to preclude domestic violence treatment, coordination with his treatment program may eventually sort this out.

It is the experience of the Non-Violence Alliance, and other programs throughout the country, that a minimal expectation for change to take place is about six months of weekly group treatment. The first month to three months deals with accepting responsibility for abusive behavior, while several more months are required to begin addressing the use of control in intimate relationships. An abuser can often stop physical abuse in a much shorter period of time. In some instances, it can end without treatment but through a simple external consequence such as arrest or the loss of his family to a shelter.

Conclusion
The use of batterer accountability strategies in child protection cases is in its infancy. There is peril and promise in exploring these approaches. The peril is clear. When intervening with the domestic violence perpetrator we must concern ourselves with minimizing the negative impact our choices will have on the safety of the adult victim and children. The promise is uncharted. Cutting edge strategies are still being developed locally and nationally. Some jurisdictions are naming non-related domestic violence perpetrators as respondents in petitions, and then using their subpoena and contempt powers to mandate compliance with the court conditions. In San Diego County, the child welfare and probation departments have developed a collaborative Family Violence Project that targets domestic violence perpetrators who appear on both caseloads. In other states, juvenile court judges are able and willing to issue restraining orders and handle related criminal matters in their courts making it easier to hold the perpetrator accountable for the safety of the children. The use of batterer accountability strategies can enhance the safety of children by addressing domestic violence at its source. Some domestic violence perpetrators can be made to change out of fear of the courts and external consequences. Others will change because they begin to realize the impact their behavior is having on others, particularly their children. Child protective service agencies, with their focus on caretaker responsibility, are uniquely positioned to develop and implement these innovative interventions.

*The following is actual court status update with the identifying information changed to protect confidentiality.

**In Re: Alejandro Cruz-Smith, DOB: 1/1/00**  
Angela Cruz-Smith, DOB: 1/5/03  
Marta Cruz-Smith, DOB: 7/11/04

**Superior Court for Juvenile Matters at:**  
1 Main Street  
Willis, Vermont 00000

**Court Update for Superior Court for Juvenile Matters**

Date: October 31, 2005

Mother and Father have a long history of domestic violence in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont. On 1/24/01, Maine Child Protective Services (CPS) responded to a referral of a domestic violence incident between Mother and Father. Maine Child Protective Services (CPS) records indicate that father assaulted mother while she was holding her son Alejandro. Mother sustained two black eyes. As a result, father was arrested. An Order of Protection was ordered by the court for a period of twelve months.

On 8/23/03, the State of New Hampshire, Town of Dover Police Department was dispatched to a domestic violence incident between mother and father. Father was arrested for physically assaulting mother. Two of the children witnessed this incident. Father was found guilty and incarcerated on 9/2/03. On 8/27/03, the State of New Hampshire CPS reported the above incident to the State of Vermont Department of Children and Families (DCF). DCF substantiated Physical Neglect against father and Emotional Neglect against mother.

On 2/19/04, neglect petitions were filed by the Department of Children and Families on behalf of Alejandro Smith-Cruz and Angela Cruz-Smith. The neglect petition for Angela was withdrawn and on 3/2/05, Alejandro Cruz-Smith was adjudicated as uncared for/specialized needs and protective supervision was ordered for nine months.

On 8/9/05, a petition of Neglect was filed by the Department of Children and Families (DCF), State of Vermont in Superior Court for Juvenile Matters on behalf of Angela Cruz-Smith, and Marta Cruz-Smith.

On 7/29/05, the court ordered mother and father to engage in Intensive Family Preservation (IFP) Services. However, father did not participate with the IFP worker to address his parenting nor did he attend all of the meetings.
Father has not kept appointments or made himself available to the Department.

On 10/7/05, Mrs. Cruz reported to this worker that she was three months pregnant.

The Department has received six other reports from the Willis Police Department of domestic violence at the home. On 6/3/03, the police reported to a call stating Mr. Cruz was involved in a verbal argument with his wife and threatening to leave and take his son with him. The report states that Mr. Cruz also was demanding to take all credit cards and bank cards. On 9/21/03, the police responded to a call stating a male was outside the home and may have a gun. The report also stated the man wants to shoot them and the dog. On 8/27/04, police responded to a call reporting Mr. Cruz was engaged in an argument with his wife. On 12/31/04, maternal grandmother called the police and stated her son-in-law was out of control and fighting with the family. On 3/1/05, a report stated a domestic dispute was in progress between Mr. and Mrs. Cruz and that the husband was violent. The police last responded to a domestic violence call on 7/15/05, stating that Mr. Cruz was being abusive towards his wife and children, and assaulting the children.

Mother has expressed to the Department and other service providers that she is fearful of her husband and is afraid for the safety of her children in Mr. Cruz’s care. Mother previously has stated that she has not left her husband because she feels she can better protect her children by remaining together.

Father maintains an environment in the home of fear and terror. Maternal grandmother has reported that Mr. Cruz can be violent and that the family is fearful of him.

Father is verbally aggressive and abusive towards his wife and children. Father often verbally threatens his wife and uses intimidation as a means of control.

Father is known to shift responsibility and blame his wife for DCF involvement and other family issues. Father has stated that he does not see a problem with his actions and blames his wife for their problems. Father has reported to the Department and other service providers that his “wife is the problem.”

Father becomes angry with his wife if he believes she has disclosed too much information to the Department or other service providers. Father has asked mother “not to open her mouth too much.”

Father has threatened that if his wife were to leave him that he would take his son.

Father maintains a chaotic and unpredictable environment. Father encourages aggression through play with his children. Father also has provided his son Alejandro with aggressive and violent video games not meant for his age group.

Father undermines his wife’s parenting and encourages his children to disobey house rules. Father uses slang and swear words with his child after his wife has worked to eliminate it from the home.
Mother has cooperated with DCF recommendations and Intensive Family Preservation (IFP) services. Mrs. Cruz has demonstrated progress in her ability to effectively parent the children and set rules. If father continues to undermine his wife in front of the children he will alter his wife’s progress and prevent her from gaining more control in the household.

Father has threatened to leave his wife or not support her with her current pregnancy. Mother is relying on her husband to bring her for prenatal care.

Mother is an illegal immigrant who does not have many resources of her own. She is financially dependant on her husband. Mr. Cruz controls how much money he gives his wife and the money she has for groceries or clothing for the children.

The Department strongly feels that Mr. Cruz continues to assault, threaten, and expose his children to his domestic abuse.

The Department has assessed that mother is fearful of her husband and as a result has been unable to protect herself and her children. Due to her fear, she has been unable to take the steps necessary to protect herself and her family.

The Department respectfully requests that the court intervene to protect this mother and her children from any further trauma from Mr. Cruz. The Department recommends protective supervision for Alejandro Cruz be extended for another six months and that the court also order protective supervision on behalf of Angela and Marta Cruz for a period of six months. The Department further requests that the father be ordered to complete the following specific steps under the order of protective supervision:

- Mr. Cruz must attend and engage in a domestic violence offender program, which includes group intervention.
- Father to attend and show progress in a parenting education program through Child Guidance or equivalent program.
- Father to actively engage in Children FIRST in-home services.
- Father to refrain from physically disciplining his children or using verbal threats.
- Father to not assault or threaten his wife in any way.
- The Department also requests that mother participate with the Women’s Center and continue domestic violence counseling and support services.

If father is unable to comply with these specific steps then the Department requests the court order father to be removed from the residence immediately. The Department further
advises that if the steps are not adhered to and the Department continues to observe violence in the home, the Department will seek commitment of the children.

Submitted by ___________________________  Date: ____________
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Batters as Fathers: Rethinking and Reconceptualizing Policy and Practice

by David Mandel

Exploring the role that batters play as fathers holds important significance for the members of the families who live with the abuse. Many battered women want their children to have a safe and positive relationship with their father even when he has been her abuser. Boyfriends and stepfathers who batter are often influential as a father figure in the lives of children. Driven by love and need, children may struggle to have a meaningful relationship with an abusive father well into adulthood. When a batterer does begin to address his abusive behavior, it is often because he is motivated to change for the sake of his children.

For governments, communities and agencies seeking the safest, most effective and comprehensive response to the impact domestic violence has in the lives of children, this key question remains to be solved: How best to address batterers who are both a caretaker of the children and the person exposing them to violence and abuse? To answer this question, we need to ask a series of other questions to reconsider and reconceptualize our current thinking and practices in social services, particularly child welfare. In our exploration of these questions we must consider both what we do “to” batterers and what we do “with” them.

Are we working towards making batterers more responsible and accountable for the well-being and safety of children in their family?

This is one of the most fundamental questions we can ask if we want improve the response of social services to the intersection of children’s well-being and domestic violence. In the last few years we have seen an exponential increase in the identification of domestic violence in child welfare cases. In general, this has been an important and long needed advancement. Unfortunately, this has also led to increased pressure on battered women. Many battered women are told they must protect their children or face the possibility of losing them. Frequently this occurs without any significant and sustained efforts to directly address the behavior of the batterer father, stepfather or boyfriend.

Historic practice of child welfare primarily has held mothers more responsible than fathers for the safety and well being of their children. The systemic aspects of holding mothers more responsible have only begun to change around the country in the last few years. These changes are slow in coming. Cases are still opened in the name of the mother. Social workers meet and work with the mother more frequently. When service agreements are written up, they often place a greater number of expectations and primary responsibility for the safety of the children on the mother. When domestic violence is involved mothers are expected to get orders of protection and enforce them more than perpetrators are expected to abide by them.

These expectations are supported by the wider culture’s standards for good parenting. For example, a man who works 60-80 hours a week to support his family has a reasonable chance of being considered a “good” father. Because we hold mothers to a higher expectation of day to day care and emotional involvement in their children’s lives, women who work outside the home are still scrutinized about the quality of their parenting. This double standard, and others like it, can have a profound impact on how a social worker approaches issues of responsibility for parenting, child safety and well being.

Without the presence of effective batterer accountability strategies, any effort to increase the ability of child welfare agencies to identify and intervene in domestic violence cases will inevitably increase the revictimization of battered women. Effective batterer accountability strategies should be built upon an accurate data collection system that allows decision makers to see and begin to understand the presence of batters in an agency’s caseload.

An accurate data profile helps begin to answer questions about how many batterers are involved in child welfare cases, what their relationship status with the mother of the children is, what their legal status with the children is, and what if any judicial involvement do they have. With accurate data, an agency could determine, for instance, if most batters on a child protection caseload are also involved in criminal court. If there was a heavy overlap then a strong collaboration with the criminal justice system might significantly enhance child safety. Better data on batterers could help determine how many batterers are boyfriends without any legal or biological ties to the children in the home and how many are biological fathers. Without an accurate data profile, policy and programmatic decisions are being based on anecdotal information. Collecting data on batterers will also lead social workers to become more attentive to the presence and characteristics of batters on their caseload.

Accurate data about batterers would also include research into the thinking and attitudes of batterers about their children. How do batterers think about their children in light of their violence? What do they notice about how their children are impacted by their behavior? What fears do they have about their children’s future? How do their children figure into their decision making? How are all these things different for fathers as opposed to boyfriends and step-fathers? Answers to these types of questions would give us information that would be extremely useful in development of policy and treatment interventions.

Are we utilizing existing legal and social work processes to hold batterers accountable for their behavior?

Batterer accountability is essential to the mission of any child protection and welfare agency. It is impossible to claim that you are addressing the safety of children and mothers suffering from domestic violence without developing strategies to deal with the batterer. Instituting these strategies do not necessarily involve major changes in the law or new resources. Old problems need to be approached with fresh eyes. For instance, in many jurisdictions, it is uncommon that one parent’s parental rights are terminated without terminating the rights of the other parent. Perhaps in domestic violence cases, where the batterer remains a serious threat to the children and the mother has demonstrated ample commitment to her children’s well being and safety, the batterer’s parental rights can be terminated without effecting the mother’s rights. This type of differential response could go a long way to removing a major injustice of the child protection system’s response to domestic violence.

A sample scenario might look something like this (based on a real case): The state’s child protective service agency becomes involved in a family because of domestic violence. The mother, who is also the victim, has no history of substance abuse and is acknowledged to be a good parent. The father has an extensive history of domestic violence, other criminal charges and substance abuse. The mother’s concern for herself and her children has been demonstrated on numerous occasions. After father enters an inpatient court-ordered alcohol rehab program, mother becomes more open about the abuse and joins a support group for battered women. If the father upon exiting rehab continues his alcohol abuse and violence, the mother should not be penalized. She has demonstrated a willingness and ability to address the issue of domestic violence, especially when the batterer has been removed from the situation. At this point it should be the role of child protection to do everything in its power to keep the children safely with their mother by taking action against the father. If no other approaches work with the father and he remains a serious risk, then the child protection agency could move to terminate his parental rights.

These next two questions:

**Are we teaching child protection and welfare workers how to talk to batterers who are fathers about the damage the violence does to their children?**

**Are we providing child protection personnel with the support, training and guidance they need to successfully and safely work with batterers?**

bring us to the doorstep of this third and crucial question:

**Do our policies and practices follow the most comfortable, familiar path to child safety: through the mother?**

Batterers are a very difficult and scary population to deal with. This is true for battered women, their children and the social workers that are sent out into the field to protect them. Having gone out on a child protection investigation, I have some sense of the challenges and risks that social workers in the field face on a daily basis. At the same time it appears hypocritical to tell a battered woman to keep a batterer away from their children when the social worker is not able or willing to confront and/or work with the batterer directly.

This is not about assigning blame. This is about acknowledging the truth that when child protection agencies do not develop sound batterer accountability strategies, good and well meaning social workers and supervisors focus their attention on the mother. Working with the mother is familiar and comfortable for most social workers. In domestic violence situations this translates into a greater emphasis on the service agreement the mother signs with the child protection agency. When she fails to follow through on her agreement, possibly in large part because of the batterer’s behavior, she is the one penalized. If the batterer shows up at the house, the mother is accused of failing to protect the children. This usually occurs even if the safest course of action for herself and the children was to let the batterer in when he showed up at the door.

Social workers should not be blamed for their apprehension about working directly with batterers. Without appropriate training, support and guidance from their agency, how can they be expected to effectively tackle such a difficult and challenging population? Often times they receive none of these things.

Preparing workers to address batterer accountability would include, but not be limited to (1) training workers to talk with batterers about their abusiveness and its impact on the children in the home, (2) instructing social work supervisors to support and guide their workers in addressing batterers and (3) providing social workers and their supervisors with guidance by giving high priority to batterer accountability in child protection protocols. The physical and emotional safety of the social workers in the field would also need to be given special consideration. For safety sake, supervisors need to support workers going out in pairs when necessary. Engaging domestic violence perpetrators may produce strong emotional reactions from workers because of experiences of domestic violence in their family of origin or current relationship. Supervisors need to be on the look out for extreme negativity or optimism, aggressiveness or passivity in social workers. Any of these reactions may be an indication that a worker may need to address their own personal issues in order to become more effective with this population. Social workers and staff who are victims of domestic violence need to know that they can come forward without adverse risk to their careers. Social workers who are perpetrators of domestic violence need to know that their behavior in the home will have impact on their employment and could lead to being disciplined and/or terminated.

Workers need to be given the appropriate training to be able to talk to batterers about their violence. Over the past twenty years batterer intervention professionals have gained substantial knowledge about working to help batterers see and take responsibility for the consequences of their behaviors. These skills need to be made available to the child protection field. Workers need to learn how to deal with batterer denial and resistance in a direct and straightforward manner.

For instance, consider a circumstance where an abuser acknowledges that he acted abusively towards his girlfriend but claims that the children were not effected because they were not home. A social worker needs to know that they can still pursue a conversation with the batterer about the impact of his behavior on the children by exploring other circumstances related to the incident. For example, if the girlfriend was bruised during the incident, how does he think the children reacted when they saw the bruise? If he was arrested and removed from the house, what did he tell the children about why he was gone? Child welfare workers need to be trained in these types of interviewing strategies so they feel more comfortable and effective working with batterers.
Are we creating community-based options for primary, secondary and tertiary prevention directed at the perpetration of battering?

Child protection agencies are not alone in their responsibility to display leadership and innovation in addressing the role batterers have in the lives of children. Other agencies and institutions can join in identifying and engaging men whose violence in the home is harming children. Developing successful and comprehensive prevention methodologies holds special importance for people of color and poor people who are inappropriately over-represented in the criminal justice and child protection systems. Creating resources, like batterer intervention programs, that can be accessed without an arrest or substantiation of child abuse or neglect might help with this imbalance and should be a strong priority.

The following is an example of what is possible in this area of prevention. For the last few years, the government in Western Australia has run a social marketing campaign targeted towards current and at-risk male perpetrators of domestic violence. Within two years they had received approximately 7000 calls to a special hot line. Out of these calls, 2800 were from men seeking help for their violence. Approximately 1600 referrals for treatment were made. The message that reached all these men: Your violence to your partner is harming your children.

Other steps can be taken to identify batterers who come into contact with mental health and medical professionals. Mental health workers should be doing universal screening for the perpetration of violence for clients who present with issues like depression, relationship difficulties, and divorce. Medical staff in emergency rooms should develop protocols for interviewing patients who show up with self-inflicted injuries such as ones that might result from punching a wall. General practitioners could become more comfortable with exploring the issue of violence and abuse with their patients. Obstetricians could attempt to meet and screen the father of the child for issues of violence as a regular part of pre-natal care. Substance abuse counselors and programs could make education about and assessment of domestic violence perpetration a regular part of their interventions.

Are we willing to work with batterers to help them become better fathers?

When we talk about responsibility and accountability for batterers who are fathers and male caretakers our primary focus is usually on preventing further violence. This is appropriate and it is not necessarily good enough. The more challenging question from an emotional and policy point of view is what kind of resources are we willing to devote to helping batterers who are fathers become better dads.

If we want to be responsive to the needs of battered women, at least some of them, want their children to have a safe and positive relationship with the man who was abusive to them. Most of the time, children want to have a relationship with their father. Batterers can be encouraged to send their children to groups for children who have been exposed to domestic violence. Some children gain more from these programs when they have the support of their fathers. By supporting his child or children in this way, a batterer would be taking concrete steps to acknowledge and take responsibility for the harm his behavior has done to his child or children. Data from a pilot survey of batterers involved our treatment program indicate some men would be interested in referring their child to a children group if it was made available to them.

What kinds of programs and resources do we need to set up to help batterers be better fathers? Options in this area might include supervised visitation programming that focuses on improving the parenting ability of the father, mentoring programs for young fathers and intensive parenting skill development that emphasizes the needs of the children. Father involvement programs need to accept that domestic violence is one of the issues that some of their clients ought to address in order to be more responsible fathers. As the corrections field explores the reentry of domestic violence offenders into the community, it needs to examine his relationship to his children.

At each step in the process of helping batterers become better fathers, we will need to listen intently to the voices of battered women, their children and their advocates. We need to concern ourselves for their safety and make room for their genuinely conflicted feelings. As we explore this area of policy and practice, we need to recognize that we are working outside the realm of black and white solutions. As policy makers and practitioners we can no longer allow ourselves the luxury of imagining that arresting a batterer or physically separating him from the victim will automatically resolve the question of his relationship with his children. For the sake of the children, we need to take on this issue of batterers as fathers in a sophisticated and thoughtful way. (Thanks to Leigh Goodmark and Gretchen Test for their feedback on this article.)
9 Ways to Collude with Abusive Men

by John Went

The following list reflects some of the most common mistaken beliefs about abusers and their violence:

1. "I actually like him."
Abusive men are likeable. In many ways they are the same as all of us. But it is important to remember that this likeable man exerts his power and control in ways that physically and/or emotionally destroy his family. Liking him can be the first step toward minimizing his abuse.

2. "He’s a victim."
Many, if not all, of abusive men have been victimized in their lives. He needs to take responsibility for what he is doing now in order to stop the cycle. By itself, dealing with his own victimization will not stop his abusiveness. Understanding his victim/s will help him stop his abuse and better understand himself.

3. "She’s the perpetrator."
His partner may not be a very nice person (or he may paint her that way). Men almost unanimously use this as an excuse for their behavior. No matter what she does, he has no right to abuse her.

4. "He’s stressed out."
Stress does not cause abuse. In fact, men who stop trying to control members of their families often report a reduction in stress.

5. "His life stinks. He’s being oppressed by (his boss, mother, victim, etc.)"
Oppression is bad. Abuse is bad. We can end oppression by dealing with oppressors, not by abusing those lower in the cultural hierarchy.

6. "If he stops his substance abuse, he will stop his violence."
Substance abuse can dramatically increase the forms abuse takes. However, unless the man is willing to confront his attitudes about power, control, and his family and take concrete steps to redistribute the power in the relationship, he will continue to try to dominate others, even when he is sober.

7. "Anger is an addiction."
Many men report feeling "high" and find a release of tension when they lose their temper. Although there are physiological components to anger, abusive behavior is a political (power and control) issue. There are many non-abusive ways to deal with tension.

8. "It’s a problem in the family system."
Abusive men generally have family issues that need to be dealt with at some point. Abuse maintains an inequity in power in the relationship that cannot be dealt with by seeing the partners as equals. This view can lead to serious safety issues for family members.

9. "He’s sorry and he’s trying really hard."
The only way to say you’re sorry is to end the abuse.
Menu of Expectations for Batterers in Child Protection Cases Where Domestic Violence is Present

1. No further physical violence towards any member of the household (includes pets).

Purposes: To set clear boundaries around future violence. To end physical harm and fear of further violence for all members of the household.

Success: No reported violence by any member of household, extended family members or other witnesses, and no observed indication of violence, i.e. bruises. No new arrests.

2. No further intimidating behavior towards any member of household. This includes verbal threats, defined or undefined, destruction of property, throwing objects, punching walls, etc.

Purpose: To end climate of fear in the household.

Success: No reported intimidating or threatening behavior. No reported or observed damage to household, especially holes in wall, etc. Worker will look for missing or broken objects in household. Household members will be interviewed for presence of threats or intimidating behavior.

3. All weapons will be removed from the premises including guns, bows and arrows, shotguns, hunting rifles. The weapons will need to be sold or given to law enforcement for safekeeping.

Purpose: To reduce likelihood that identified weapons will be used to assault or intimidate members of the household.

Success: Batterer will produce bill of sale or receipt from police.

4. Seek out an evaluation and comply with recommendations of domestic violence counseling to address issues of control and abuse. Anger management or couples’ counseling will not be accepted as treatment in domestic violence cases. The treatment will have as its goals:

a. The cessation of violent, abusive and controlling behaviors towards the adult partner/mother.
b. The cessation of violent and abusive behaviors toward any children in the home.
c. Education about the effects of violence, abuse and controlling behaviors on family members.
d. Collateral contact with the adult victim and the referring agencies for exchange of information about the purpose and limitations of the counseling; the batterer’s pattern of abuse and violence and other
relevant information about the batterer.

Purpose: To engage batterer in appropriate counseling with the goal of ending coercive control and physical violence over family. To obtain a professional evaluation of a client’s motivation to change abusive behavior, and his understanding of the impact of his abusive behaviors.

Success: Completion of required evaluation and (when recommended) counseling sessions. Reports from victim and children that abusive behavior has ended. Victim reports greatly safety and freedom. Commonly recommended lengths of counseling range from six months to one year. Actual length of counseling determined on an individual basis.

5. Will not use physical discipline with children.

Purpose: To create clear boundaries around discipline in order to prevent child abuse.

Success: No bruises or other indications of physical discipline. No reports from anyone in the family of further physical discipline.

6. Will be able to acknowledge a majority of past abusive and violent behavior towards partner and children, which will include:

   a. Detailing the abusive nature of specific actions, physical and non-physical
   b. Display an understanding of the impact of these behaviors on his partner, children and himself
   c. Display an ability to discuss his own abusive actions without blaming others or outside circumstances for his behavior
   d. Be able to demonstrate non-abusive, non-violent behavior when in prior similar circumstances he would have become violent or abusive.

Purpose: The batterer will be able to demonstrate to others, including DCF workers and family members, non-abusive behavior and a sense of responsibility for his own abusive behavior.

Success: Can do the above things.

7. When necessary, the batterer will seek and follow recommendations of substance abuse evaluation.

Purpose: While substance abuse does not cause domestic violence, it co-occurs with domestic violence in many batterers. Substance abuse, when suspected, must be addressed through a separate evaluation and counseling process from the domestic violence. Active substance abuse may increase the batterer’s dangerousness and/or inhibit his ability to benefit from domestic violence counseling.
Success: When there is an identified substance abuse problem, the batterer remains clean and sober. The substance abuse evaluator indicates no need for substance abuse treatment.

8. The batterer will stay involved with any mental health counseling, and follow doctor's recommendations, including taking prescribed medications.

Purpose: While mental health issues (e.g. depression) do not cause domestic violence, they can co-occur with domestic violence in batterers. Untreated mental issues may increase the dangerousness of the batterer and/or hinder his ability to engage in domestic violence counseling.

Success: The batterer maintains his recommended mental health treatment regimen, e.g. counseling sessions, medications.

9. The batterer will not deny partner access to phone, vehicle or other forms of communication and transportation.

Purpose: The batterer cannot isolate the adult victim/children from access to friends, family, and employment by controlling communication and transportation.

Success: The victim/children report access to existing communication and transportation resources. Social worker observes access to existing communication and transportation resources.

10. The batterer will share with partner all relevant information to income and family financial circumstances.

Purpose: This expectation is intended to reduce the batterer’s financial control over his partner and the family.

Success: The batterer provides the victim with pay stubs and information on bank accounts and other assets.

11. The client will disclose to partner all information relevant to child abuse and domestic violence, including prior arrests, open cases with other children with DCF, probation.

Purpose: In order to maintain control or avoid negative consequences, batterers will often lie or withhold information from his partner. By requiring him to share information about his prior criminal history, current criminal justice involvement, domestic violence and/or child abuse history will provide the partner with information relevant for her risk analysis and safety planning.

Success: The partner reports that the batterer has shared with her all known information about his prior criminal history, current criminal justice involvement, domestic violence and/or child abuse history.
12. If separated, no unwanted or unexpected visits to partner’s home or office (can include her family or other identified relatives).

Purpose: Batterers regularly attempt to pressure or coerce a partner who has left to return to him. This behavior can be very threatening and lead to physical violence.

Success: No reports of threatening or harassing behaviors.

13. Respect all existing court orders, including protective, restraining, custody and visitation and child support orders.

Purpose: Batterers often defy court orders. Including “respect all existing court orders” in child protection expectations underscores the importance of those orders to the safety and well-being of the children and emphasizes the need for the client to comply with other court orders as a condition of complying with DCF and/or juvenile court.

Success: All reports (partner, other courts) indicate that the batterer is complying with all existing court orders.

14. In lieu of formal child support order, the batterer will maintain financial support for his children regardless of whether he resides with them or not.

Purpose: To reduce the batterer’s ability to control or coerce his partner through financial pressure. To articulate the expectation that the batterer will provide for the basic needs of his children regardless of the status of his relationship with their mother.

Success: The social worker verifies that the batterer is maintaining his financial support of his children.

15. The batterer will support all reasonable efforts to provide his child(ren) with appropriate services including childcare, healthcare (e.g. well-baby visits). The batterer will not interfere with the other parent’s efforts to seek out services for themselves and the children.

Purpose: To articulate the expectation that the batterer will provide support for the physical and emotional needs of his children regardless of the status of his relationship with their mother. To prevent isolation of mother and children from necessary services.

Success: The partner/children report access to services.