WHEN PERPETRATORS ARE PARENTS

How to Understand Child Safety and Well-Being in the Context of Domestic Violence
Mission
To create, nurture and sustain a global network of domestic violence-informed child welfare professionals, communities and systems.
Where is Safe & Together?

Recently Active

**UK**
- Barnardo’s Scotland
- Ministry of Defense
- Manchester
- Edinburgh

**Canada**
- Manitoba
- Ontario

**USA**
- Iowa
- District of Columbia
- Ohio
- Florida
- Michigan
- New York
- Texas
- New Mexico
- Virginia
- South Carolina
- Colorado
- Minnesota

**Australia**
- PATRICIA project
- Invisible Practices
- Queensland
- Western Australia
- Northern Territories
- Victoria
- South Australia
- New South Wales

**Asia**
- Hong Kong
Safe & Together™ Model

Better Outcomes for Families & Systems

Domestic Violence Informed Child Welfare System
- Improved Competencies
- Improved Cross System Collaboration

Practice Tools
- Mapping
- Pivoting
- Case Planning Guide
- Supervisor Matrix
- Pathways and Planning

Foundation
- Model Characteristics
- Principles
- Critical Components

Better Outcomes for Families: Safety, Well Being & Permanency
- Better Assessment
- Better Partnerships
- Better Case Plans

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DV and Children

48% of mothers in one home visitation program reported experiencing DV since the birth of their child.

Between 40-75% of children in the CPS caseload exposed to domestic violence are also victims of physical abuse.

DV has a measurable and substantial association with caregiver and family functioning, which in turn have a substantial association with child health and behavior.
DV and Child Welfare

In a 2002 comparison study, child abuse was more than 2.5 more likely to occur in families experiencing domestic violence or caretaker distress.

DV is usually (95% probability) associated with some form of child abuse or neglect or serious family dysfunction.

Multiple studies indicate that child fatalities or critical incidents may have domestic violence as a factor (as high as 2 out of 3).

The vast majority of children exposed to DV still have contact with their fathers. One study found that as many as 70% see their fathers frequently.

34% of all substantiated CPS investigations include exposure to DV as the primary category of maltreatment.
Safe & Together Principles

1. Keeping child Safe and Together™ with non-offending parent
   Safety  |  Healing from Trauma  |  Stability & Nurturance

2. Partnering with non-offending parent as default position
   Efficient  |  Effective  |  Child-centered

3. Intervening with perpetrator to reduce risk and harm to child
   Engagement  |  Accountability  |  Courts
What are the negative effects of domestic abuse perpetrator’s behaviour pattern* on child and family functioning?

*Coercive control and actions taken to harm the child

(1st, 2nd and 4th critical components)
Looks at the perpetrator’s behavior, not the relationship or the survivor’s behavior, as the source of the domestic abuse child risk and safety concerns

Beyond current relationship: 360 degrees assessment of perpetrator pattern

Strong nexus between domestic violence perpetrator’s behaviors and child safety and wellbeing

Highlights the choice(s) to be violent, abusive and controlling as parenting choices
Multiple Pathways to Harm

**Perpetrator’s Pattern**
- Coercive control toward adult survivor
- Actions taken to harm children

**Children’s Trauma & Safety**
- Victim of physical abuse
- Seeing, hearing or learning about the violence

**Effect on Partner’s Parenting**
- Depression, PTSD, anxiety, substance abuse
- Loss of authority
- Energy goes to addressing perpetrator instead of children
- Interference with day to day routine and basic care

**Effects on Family Ecology**
- Loss of income
- Housing instability
- Loss of contact with extended family
- Educational and social disruptions

**Harm to Child**
- Behavioral, Emotional, Social, Educational
- Developmental
- Physical Injury

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What is the domestic abuse survivor doing to promote child and family functioning in response to, or in the context of the domestic abuse perpetrator’s behavior pattern?
Moving to a more comprehensive strengths lens

- **Safety: Physical & Emotional Examples**
  - Managing household to reduce children’s exposure to violence
  - Sending children away (other room, other house, relatives, after school activities)
  - Verbally or physically intervening to protect children
  - Getting order of protection

- **Healing from Trauma Examples**
  - Talking to children
  - Bringing to counseling
  - Providing normalcy/routine/enjoyable activities
  - Engaging relatives in lives of children

- **Stability and Nurturance Examples**
  - Making sure household continues to function
  - Maintaining children’s basic needs
  - Informing children about any changes in household
  - Parenting in a “foxhole”
Holistic Assessment of Survivors’ Strengths

“What else do you know about what she did to promote….”

• **Her children’s physical and emotional safety?**

• **Her children’s healing from trauma?**

• **A nurturing and stable environment for the children?**
Tips

- Look for behavioral focused description of domestic violence perpetrator’s behavior and its impact on child and family functioning.
- Hold fathers/male caregivers to similar standards as the female caregivers.
- Expect behaviorally focused case plans for the domestic violence perpetrator.
- Look for documentation of specific behavioral formal and non-formal protective strengths by the non-offending parent.
- Consider the intersections of domestic violence perpetrator’s behavior and substance abuse, mental and behavioral health, housing and other issues.
- Consider what the agency did to partner with the adult survivor to avoid removal of child.
- Evaluations should consider questions related to the perpetrator’s pattern of behavior.
- Considering how criminal proceedings are holding him accountable as parent/supporting child and family functioning.

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Domestic Violence-Informed E-LEARNING COURSES
Meaningful tools for real change
SAFE & TOGETHER
6th Annual Conference
Domestic Violence and Children

October 3-5, 2018
Sheraton Gunter Hotel
San Antonio, Texas