Concrete solutions. Meaningful tools. Real change.

SKILLS & STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING & INTERVIEWING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PERPETRATORS

Abuse is a Parenting/Caretaking Choice
Training

Objectives

✧ Explore and expand efforts to intervene with domestic violence perpetrators
✧ Learn to increase male caretaker engagement by understanding male parental development and high standard of parenting
✧ Practice interviewing DV perpetrators
✧ Discuss similarities and differences working with men from different backgrounds
Domestic violence perpetration is a parenting choice.
(regardless of geography or relationship status)
Where we’ve been

What we look at with mothers

- Parenting skills
- Substance Abuse
- Mental Health
- Relationship choices
- Meeting children’s basic needs
  - (food, medical, safe shelter, education)
- Kin network
- Employment choices
- Childcare choices
- Co-parenting relationship

What we look at with fathers

- **Employment**
  - Criminal history
  - Substance abuse
  - Mental health issues
## Where are going

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Engage and Intervention

Supporting Themes on Fatherhood

- Address low expectations for men as parents
- Understand male parental development
- Men from historically oppressed communities face additional challenges.
- Safety and well-being of children can be a powerful motivating force
- Good father = respectful and positive treatment of the child’s other parent
Male Parental Development

Milestones

What are boys / teens / men taught about…
- Becoming a father?
- Family planning and perinatal involvement?

What are the challenges / supports for men during…
- Their children’s development
- Major life transitions around fatherhood (e.g. parenting through divorce, becoming a grandparent)
Assessing Parenting Capacity

Learning about harm to child

- How has his behavior supported or undermined a safe, stable nurturing home environment?

- What is his behavior pattern as it relates to supporting or undermining his partner as a parent?

- What is his overall functioning and how does it effect the family?
  - This includes his/her work, substance abuse, choice of where to live, mental health, choice of relationships, criminal history, etc.

- What is his history of providing direct care, and emotional support for his children?
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
Safe & Together Critical Components

Perpetrator's pattern of coercive control

Role of substance abuse, mental health, culture & other socio-economic factors

Actions taken by perpetrator to harm child

Adverse impact of perpetrator's behavior on child

Full spectrum of non-offending parent's efforts to promote child safety & wellbeing
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
Interviewing Goals

Do’s and don’ts

NOT a Goal

- Getting a confession
- Explicit confirming of the survivors’ or children’s stories
- Teaching the perpetrator a lesson
- Learning about “triggers”
- Understanding the perpetrator’s “side” of the story

Useful Goals

- Connecting behaviors to the impact on child and family functioning
- Identifying if the perpetrator is willing to make changes/follow recommendations
- Explaining child protection role
- Demonstrate high parenting and behavioral expectations
- Being clear that abuse is not acceptable
Impact on Children

A potential motivating force

- Educate on how they can/have harmed children
- Educate on how damage to the relationship between child and other parent harms children
- Engaging client about their experiences and hopes in parenting
Prompting motivation

Sample questions

✧ What kind of father do you want to be?
✧ What kind of relationship do you want with your children?
✧ What do you hope your children think about you?
✧ What do you think your children will say about you in 5 years?
✧ When you act _____ way, how does that help you reach this goal?
Behavioral Expectations

Connecting change to the children

___________ = Child Safety?

___________ = Child Healing from Trauma?

___________ = Child Stability and Nurturance?

___________ = Improved Family Functioning?
Interventions

Focusing on the children

- Intervene directly with the perpetrator
  - Ask him to leave the home
  - Ask him to make decisions based on the children:
    - Keep electric/utilities on
    - Paying rent
    - Returning car
  - Ask him to stay in contact with children’s services
- Intervene using collaborative partners
  - Ask court to implement order of protection
  - Ask probation to do additional sanctions or monitoring
- Work with children’s providers
  - Inform providers of perpetrators’ patterns
  - Ensure providers are making child-focused assessments
Evaluating Change

Focus on behaviors, child and family functioning

- Is his behavior different?
  - Specifically related to his pattern of coercive control
- Is he able to focus on the needs of his children versus his own needs?
- Is able to support the children’s relationship with their mother?
- Does he identify his abusive behavior as being wrong?
- Can he describe the impact of his abusive behavior on his children?
Domestic Violence-Informed E-LEARNING COURSES
Meaningful tools for real change
SAFE & TOGETHER
6th ANNUAL CONFERENCE
Domestic Violence and Children

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San Antonio, Texas