



Managing Interactions with Domestic Violence Abusers

WICSEC 2025

Introductions

Session Overview

Self-care

Warm-up



Session Learning Agreements

- ✓ Practice self-care.
- ✓ Maintain curiosity - there are many ways of knowing.
- ✓ Listen for understanding.
- ✓ Think creatively.
- ✓ Make room for others' experiences.
- ✓ Respect confidentiality.
- ✓ Be aware of potential bias.



Abusers are...



Guiding Principles

- Child support professionals need to give clear and unequivocal responses condemning the use of violence in relationships.
- Abusers are responsible for their actions, and stopping abuse requires intervention, accountability, and long-term effort to change their behavior.
- Survivor and child safety must always be paramount in child support professionals' responses to abusers.



Guiding Principles, cont.

- Survivors should never be blamed for the abuse they've experienced or for their children's exposure to domestic violence (DV).
- Child support professionals have a responsibility to mitigate the impact of DV on child support processes and outcomes.
- Child support professionals should not take on the role of counseling abusers or intervening to stop the abuse.



Working Definition of Domestic Violence

A pattern of assaultive or coercive behaviors that may include physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, verbal, and economic attacks that are used against an intimate partner to achieve compliance from or power and control over them.



Domestic Violence - Typology

- Coercive control and battering
- Resistive violence
- Non-battering violence



Why Focus on Coercive Control?

- List all the ways not providing protections for survivors in child support processes gives abusers “child support discounts.”
- List all the ways providing protections for survivors in child support processes imposes an “abuser penalty or surcharge.”



Quick Quiz

True or False: It is difficult to identify a person who causes harm.



Quick Quiz

True or False: Men are just as likely to be victims of domestic violence as women.



Quick Quiz

True/False – Most DV is caused by substance abuse, anger control, or mental health issues.



Quick Quiz

True or False: Most abusers cause harm because they experienced abuse as a child.



Quick Quiz

True or False: Domestic violence typically ends when a couple separates.



Why a training on effectively engaging perpetrators?

- In pairs or triads: How does having knowledge and skills in effectively managing interactions with domestic violence perpetrators improve child support outcomes?
- Report out to large group



Engaging with People who Cause Harm

Collusion	Balanced	Confrontational
Alliance forms - You take their side	Alliance with their positive traits and strengths	Oppositional – you’re adversaries
You join them in blaming others	Point out how their actions affect others	You openly judge and criticize their actions
No accountability or consequences for their actions/behaviors – you feel sorry for them	Respectfully and clearly convey consequences of their actions	You only focus on their harmful actions
You validate and affirm their side of the story	Allow them to express their perspective and share their side of the story	You cut them off and won’t listen to their side of the story
Conflict is reduced between you and the perpetrator of DV	Conversations stay focused but may feel strained	Conflict increases and they get angry and disengage



Case Scenario: The Helpful Ex-Partner

Background: Sarah and Mike divorced 18 months ago. They have two children (ages 7 and 10). Mike was ordered to pay \$800 a month in child support. Sarah works part-time in retail and receives child care benefits.

The situation: Sarah calls the child support office because Mike's payments have become increasingly irregular. Sarah sounds anxious and mentions:

- She never knows when money will come.
- Mike often brings children items they don't need instead of paying support.
- He tells the children he's “helping mommy because she can't handle things alone.”
- He frequently texts her about “better ways” to handle their arrangement.



Case Scenario: The Helpful Ex-Partner, cont.

When the caseworker contacts Mike, he presents himself as cooperative and concerned, saying:

- “I've been helping Sarah in other ways; I bought school clothes for the kids and paid her electric bill last month.”
- “She's not good with money management, so I thought it was better to help directly.”
- “I can show you receipts for everything I've spent on the kids.”
- “Sarah gets confused about finances; maybe you should mainly communicate through me.”



Case Scenario: The Helpful Ex-Partner, cont.

- How could a child support worker unintentionally collude in this situation?
- What is the potential cost to the CP if the child support worker colludes with the NCP?
- What could a child support worker do to increase safety in this situation?
 - Neutrality requires workers to address power imbalance.
 - Custodial parents pay the price when we fail to assess coercion.
 - Collusion can be passive.
 - Family safety and NCP accountability increases with protective case processing.



Tips for Managing Interactions with Perpetrators

- Have the safety and well-being of the victims/survivors as your priority at all step in the process.
- Respectfully make it clear that violence and abuse are unacceptable.
- Be aware of and convey to the person causing harm that domestic violence includes a range of different behaviors, not only physical violence.
- Be aware of the tactics of minimization, denial, and victim-blaming and don't give in to possible manipulations on the PCH's part.



Tips for Managing Interactions with Perpetrators, cont.

- Be aware of your personal feelings about the behavior of PCH, but don't let those feelings affect how you provide child support services. Focus on addressing behaviors and avoid being judgmental.
- Positively convey how the parent's payment of support can benefit their children.
- If a parent who has perpetrated domestic violence indicates some interest in changing, have referral information available – this should be a batterer's intervention program, not anger management.



For More Information or to Schedule OCSS DV Training

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