

## **GUIDE TO KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH ADVOCATES IN WISCONSIN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAMS**

This guide offers an introduction to the basic knowledge and skills, divided by topics, that are important for children and youth (CY) advocates in Wisconsin domestic violence programs. The guide is divided into two sections. The “Knowledge” section includes topics that children and youth advocates should be familiar with. These topics are arranged in approximate order of their importance to the job of CY advocate. The “Skills” section includes skills needed to do the job.

The “Knowledge” section (pages 3 - 11) covers the following topics:

1. Dynamics of Domestic Violence
2. Effects of DV Exposure on Children and Youth
3. Child and Adolescent Development
4. Child Abuse and Neglect, Including Child Sexual Abuse
5. Parenting by battered mothers and battering fathers
6. Childhood exposure to trauma and adverse childhood experiences
7. Resilience in Children and Youth Exposed to domestic violence
8. Parenting skills and child behavior management
9. Dynamics of teen dating violence
10. Prevention
11. Local Referral Resources for Children, Youth and Families

The “Skills” section (pages 12 - 28) covers the following topics:

1. Ability to Work Competently and Respectfully with Families from a Variety of Cultures and Backgrounds
2. Ability to Facilitate One-on-One Conversations with Children and Youth Exposed to DV and Dating Violence
3. Ability to Design and Facilitate Age-Appropriate Support Groups for Children and Youth Exposed to DV
4. Ability to Facilitate One-on-One Conversations with Mothers that Recognize and Support their Strengths as Parents and Enhance their Ability to Cope with Parenting Children Exposed to Domestic Violence
5. Ability to Facilitate Conversations with Mothers and Children Together that Support Respect for Mothers and Model Listening and Problem-Solving Skills.
6. Domestic Violence-Related Safety Planning
7. Ability to Plan and Deliver Age-Appropriate Prevention Education Presentations in Schools and the Community

### ***How to use this guide . . .***

- **Have continued discussions:** This guide is a tool for new CY advocates and their supervisors to discuss together and to revisit. This guide will compliment other orientation and training provide by the program such as working with victims and developing culturally relevant responses.
- **Assess and support knowledge and skill development:** Each topic includes a box with four categories: experienced, knowledgeable, developing and newcomer. The supervisor and new advocate can use these categories to assess the advocate’s level of familiarity with each topic. These categories are not a test, but a guide to help new advocates think about how much knowledge and skills they need to acquire in each area. They will also help acquaint the supervisor with the advocate’s range of skills and training needs.
- **Use the linked resources to learn more:** When an advocate needs more information on a given topic, he/she can use the **“Learn about . . .”** section. These sections contain information about resources advocates can use to become better informed about each topic. These resources have been chosen because they are a good introduction to the topic, easy to read and usually available free online. While most are only an overview, each is a good place to start.
- **Check-in:** Advocates can check back with supervisors regarding their progress in becoming familiar with each area and their need for more discussion, more resources, or more training and skill-building.
- **Connect with WCADV:** The Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WCADV) children and youth staff are always a place to turn. WCADV staff can:
  - Suggest additional resources.
  - Talk with supervisors about orienting new advocates.
  - Talk with new advocates about various aspects of their jobs.
  - Subscribe advocates to the children and youth advocate listserv. This listserv allows children and youth staff in Wisconsin domestic violence programs to communicate with each other, share ideas, resources and information.
  - Inform supervisors and advocates about upcoming children and youth advocate conference calls and networking meetings. These conference calls are a place to network with other CY advocates and typically occur monthly and are announced on both the director’s and CY advocate listservs.
  - Suggest ways new CY can connect with experienced advocates

## KNOWLEDGE

### 1. **Dynamics of Domestic Violence**

Start from the beginning . . .

In this area, I am:

1. Experienced – I am knowledgeable about this topic, and have put this knowledge to use in previous jobs, internships or volunteer work.
2. Knowledgeable – I am knowledgeable about this topic, but haven't put this knowledge to use in previous jobs, internships or volunteer work.
3. Developing – I know a little about this topic, but need to acquire more knowledge and learn how to put it to use.
4. Newcomer – This topic is brand new to me.

#### ***Learn about the Dynamics of Domestic Violence . . .***

Most DV programs have their own resources for training new advocates on the dynamics of domestic violence. Little Eyes, Little Ears: How Violence Against a Mother Shapes Children as They Grow (see below) includes information on dynamics of domestic violence.

### 2. **Effects of DV Exposure on Children and Youth**

Once a new advocate understands the dynamics of DV, the most important area of knowledge is how DV affects children and youth who are exposed at home. This knowledge should include:

- How children are exposed to DV
- Externalizing (behavioral) and internalizing (mental health) effects of DV exposure
- How DV exposure affects values, beliefs and critical thinking skills
- Developmental aspects of DV exposure

In this area, I am:

1. Experienced – I am knowledgeable about this topic, and have put this knowledge to use in previous jobs, internships or volunteer work.
2. Knowledgeable – I am knowledgeable about this topic, but haven't put this knowledge to use in previous jobs, internships or volunteer work.
3. Developing – I know a little about this topic, but need to acquire more knowledge and learn how to put it to use.
4. Newcomer – This topic is brand new to me.

### ***Learn about the Effects of DV Exposure on Children and Youth . . .***

Advocates can begin to learn about childhood exposure to domestic violence by exploring these two resources:

- Little Eyes, Little Ears: How Violence Against a Mother Shapes Children as They Grow by Alison Cunningham & Linda Baker (2007)  
This comprehensive introduction to childhood exposure to domestic violence includes background material on the dynamics of woman abuse, how children are affected by violence, how children cope with violence at home, and how to respond to child disclosure of abuse and neglect.  
[http://www.lfcc.on.ca/little\\_eyes\\_little\\_ears.html](http://www.lfcc.on.ca/little_eyes_little_ears.html)
  
- Honor Our Voices is an online training program which presents children's personal experiences of living with violence in their homes while providing key issues and promising practices in working with children exposed to domestic violence. The training revolves around the diaries of three children, composites of real life stories and events of children exposed to domestic violence. Users can page through each of the three diaries at their own pace while exploring interactive audio and visual highlights and learning how to respond to children of different ages  
<http://www.honourourvoices.org/>

This is a useful, more scholarly article by the leading researcher on childhood DV exposure in collaboration with a DV advocate:

- "Emerging Responses to Children Exposed to Domestic Violence," Jeffrey Edleson in consultation with Barbara Nissley  
[http://www.vawnet.org/print-document.php?doc\\_id=585&find\\_type=web\\_sum\\_AR](http://www.vawnet.org/print-document.php?doc_id=585&find_type=web_sum_AR)

Lundy Bancroft has written two very good books on parenting by abusers and how domestic violence affects children and families. Both are well worth reading. Most Wisconsin DV programs own these books, or they can be borrowed from WCADV.

- The Batterer as Parent: Assessing the Impact of Domestic Violence on Family Dynamics, by Lundy Bancroft and Jay Silverman (Sage Publications)
- When Dad Hurts Mom by Lundy Bancroft (G.P. Putman's Sons)

This resource provides a detailed chart that illustrates the impact of exposure to domestic violence on five stages of child development. It describes the general impact of DV exposure, specific signs and symptoms, and children's perspectives from infancy through adolescence.

- The Impact of Exposure to Domestic Violence on Child Development by Casey Keene for the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
[http://www.vawnet.org/Assoc\\_Files\\_VAWnet/DevelopmentChildrenExposed.pdf](http://www.vawnet.org/Assoc_Files_VAWnet/DevelopmentChildrenExposed.pdf)

### **3. Child and Adolescent Development**

Knowledge of child development helps advocates better understand and help each child at his or her life stage and recognize developmental and educational delays. It also helps advocates talk to mothers about their children and plan activities that are age-appropriate.

In this area, I am:

1. Experienced – I am knowledgeable about this topic, and have put this knowledge to use in previous jobs, internships or volunteer work.
2. Knowledgeable – I am knowledgeable about this topic, but haven't put this knowledge to use in previous jobs, internships or volunteer work.
3. Developing – I know a little about this topic, but need to acquire more knowledge and learn how to put it to use.
4. Newcomer – This topic is brand new to me.

#### ***Learn More about Child Development . . .***

There is a great deal of information available on the internet and elsewhere on child development, especially for parents. Those new to the field of child development can to explore these resources:

- Center for Disease Control Child Development Web Site  
Several related pages of information on developmental stages, parenting tips, developmental screening and child safety.  
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/child/default.htm>
- Ages and Stages Fact Sheets  
Information on developmental stages and suggestions for enhancing child development for children birth to five years  
<http://ohioline.osu.edu/asc-fact/>
- Supporting Brain Development in Traumatized Children and Youth  
Easy to read information on normal child development, the developing brain, and causes for concern.  
<http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/braindevtrauma.pdf>

### **4. Child Abuse and Neglect, Including Child Sexual Abuse**

Forty to sixty percent of men who abuse women also abuse their children. Battered women are more likely to abuse their children than women who are not battered, although once they are out of the violent relationship, the odds of maltreating their children are reduced. Understanding the dynamics of child abuse and neglect is critical for advocates working with children from violent homes.

In this area, I am:

1. Experienced – I am knowledgeable about this topic, and have put this knowledge to use in previous jobs, internships or volunteer work.
2. Knowledgeable – I am knowledgeable about this topic, but haven't put this knowledge to use in previous jobs, internships or volunteer work.
3. Developing – I know a little about this topic, but need to acquire more knowledge and learn how to put it to use.
4. Newcomer – This topic is brand new to me.

### ***Learn More about Child Abuse and Neglect . . .***

Exploring these two sites will provide a useful overview to this large and important topic:

- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Child Welfare Information Gateway offers a series in linked web pages on many aspects of child abuse and neglect.  
<http://www.childwelfare.gov/>
- The web site of Prevent Child Abuse Wisconsin provides general information on child abuse and neglect along with information specific to Wisconsin.  
<http://www.preventchildabusewi.org/section.jsp?sectionid=2>

## **5. Parenting by Battered Mothers and Battering Fathers**

Abusers use children and harm mother-child relationships in order to control their partners and the entire household. The parenting of battered mothers is compromised as safety concerns force them to prioritize the demands of the abuser. Knowledge of these dynamics will help advocates better understand the dynamic of the families they serve.

In this area, I am:

1. Experienced – I am knowledgeable about this topic, and have put this knowledge to use in previous jobs, internships or volunteer work.
2. Knowledgeable – I am knowledgeable about this topic, but haven't put this knowledge to use in previous jobs, internships or volunteer work.
3. Developing – I know a little about this topic, but need to acquire more knowledge and learn how to put it to use.
4. Newcomer – This topic is brand new to me.

### ***Learn about Parenting by Battered Mothers and Battering Fathers . . .***

This book provides a good introduction to this topic:

- Helping Children Thrive: Supporting Woman Abuse Survivors as Mothers: A Resource to Support Parenting by Linda Baker & Alison Cunningham (2004).  
Information on the needs of abused women as mothers, how abusive men affect family dynamics, effects of power and control tactics on mothers, the potential impact of witnessing abuse on children of different ages, and strategies used by young people to cope with violence in their homes. Includes guidance on parenting children who have lived with violence.

<http://www.lfcc.on.ca/mothers.html>

- Lundy Bancroft's books, mentioned above, are both excellent resources on this topic.

## **6. Childhood Exposure to Trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences**

Trauma is an extreme stress, such as a threat to one's safety or emotional well-being, that overwhelms a person's ability to cope. Children and youth are particularly vulnerable to trauma exposure because their brains are still developing. Advocates can better understand youth in their programs by understanding how young brains grow and are affected by trauma.

In this area, I am:

1. Experienced – I am knowledgeable about this topic, and have put this knowledge to use in previous jobs, internships or volunteer work.
2. Knowledgeable – I am knowledgeable about this topic, but haven't put this knowledge to use in previous jobs, internships or volunteer work.
3. Developing – I know a little about this topic, but need to acquire more knowledge and learn how to put it to use.
4. Newcomer – This topic is brand new to me.

### ***Learn More about Childhood Exposure to Trauma . . .***

- The Needs of Children in Domestic Violence Shelters has some useful information on the impact of trauma on children and parents in chapters 1,3 and 4:  
[http://www.ccfhnc.org/images/ccfh10\\_5web.pdf](http://www.ccfhnc.org/images/ccfh10_5web.pdf) or  
[http://www.childandfamilypolicy.duke.edu/pdfs/projects/CCFH\\_Toolkit.pdf](http://www.childandfamilypolicy.duke.edu/pdfs/projects/CCFH_Toolkit.pdf)
- Maltreatment and the Developing Child: How Early Childhood Experience Shapes Child and Culture summarizes the impact of trauma on early brain development.  
<http://www.lfcc.on.ca/mccain/perry.pdf>

### ***Learn More about Adverse Childhood Experiences . . .***

The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study is one of the largest investigations ever conducted on associations between childhood trauma and later-life health and well-being.

ACEs are:

- Recurrent physical, emotional or sexual abuse
- Recurrent neglect
- An alcohol or other drug abuser in the household
- An incarcerated family member
- A household member who is chronically depressed, mentally ill, suicidal or institutionalized
- Domestic abuse in the household
- Parental separation or divorce

ACEs are major risk factors for poor physical and mental health, social problems and early death. ACEs seldom occur alone, and as the number of ACEs increases, the number of health risks increases.

- To learn more about ACEs, go to <http://www.cdc.gov/ace/index.htm>
- The web site of the Wisconsin Children’s Trust Fund has information about ACEs in Wisconsin: <http://wchildrenstrustfund.org/index.php?section=adverse-childhood>

## **7. Resilience in Children and Youth Exposed to Domestic Violence**

Resilience is the human capacity to face, overcome and be strengthened by adversity. Resilience is critical to healthy child development and overcoming trauma, including the trauma of exposure to domestic violence. Despite the risks of childhood exposure to DV, many children from violent homes grow up to be relatively problem-free in later life. Programming for children and youth is strengthened when it is based in knowledge of how to help children develop resilience.

In this area, I am:

1. Experienced – I am knowledgeable about this topic, and have put this knowledge to use in previous jobs, internships or volunteer work.
2. Knowledgeable – I am knowledgeable about this topic, but haven’t put this knowledge to use in previous jobs, internships or volunteer work.
3. Developing – I know a little about this topic, but need to acquire more knowledge and learn how to put it to use.
4. Newcomer – This topic is brand new to me.

### ***Learn More about Childhood Resilience . . .***

- The Youth Advocate Task Force of the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence created a newsletter on children and resilience: <http://www.vtnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/YouthAdvocateNewsletter2009.pdf>
- This volume of Synergy has a good article on resilience in children exposed to domestic violence on page 4: <http://www.ncjfcj.org/sites/default/files/synergy-7-2.pdf>

## **8. Parenting Skills and Child Behavior Management**

Mothers often request help in coping with challenging child behavior, so knowledge of good parenting skills and child behavior management is critical to preparing advocates to help mothers. There are many good sources of information, and most advocates are always developing their proficiency in this area.



In this area, I am:

1. Experienced – I am knowledgeable about this topic, and have put this knowledge to use in previous jobs, internships or volunteer work.
2. Knowledgeable – I am knowledgeable about this topic, but haven't put this knowledge to use in previous jobs, internships or volunteer work.
3. Developing – I know a little about this topic, but need to acquire more knowledge and learn how to put it to use.
4. Newcomer – This topic is brand new to me.

### ***Learn More about Parenting Skills and Child Behavior Management . . .***

Several resources already mentioned contain domestic violence-specific parenting information, notably Helping Children Thrive: Supporting Woman Abuse Survivors as Mothers: A Resource to Support Parenting and Lundy Bancroft's books. Two other useful resources are:

- Helping My Child: A Guide to Supporting Children Exposed to Domestic Violence by the British Columbia Children's Hospital, a guide to help battered mothers understand how domestic violence affects children and how they can support and protect their children. <http://www.bcsth.ca/sites/default/files/helping%20my%20child.pdf>
- Healing the Invisible Wounds: Children's Exposure to Violence: A Guide for Families is a brief, useful guide to violence exposure and child behavior, available in both English and Spanish. [http://www.safestartcenter.org/pdf/Healing%20Inv%20Wounds\\_English\\_aug09.pdf](http://www.safestartcenter.org/pdf/Healing%20Inv%20Wounds_English_aug09.pdf)  
<http://www.safestartcenter.org/pdf/caregiver-spanish.pdf>

## **9. Dynamics of Teen Dating Violence**

Children and youth advocates most often apply their knowledge of teen dating violence when doing prevention education presentations in schools and the community. Often, doing education on teen dating violence can lead to personal disclosure by teens and may require follow up referrals or services. Many CY advocates are also called upon to offer counseling and support to teens who are victims of abusive dating relationships or to facilitate support groups for teens.

In this area, I am:

5. Experienced – I am knowledgeable about this topic, and have put this knowledge to use in previous jobs, internships or volunteer work.
6. Knowledgeable – I am knowledgeable about this topic, but haven't put this knowledge to use in previous jobs, internships or volunteer work.
7. Developing – I know a little about this topic, but need to acquire more knowledge and learn how to put it to use.
8. Newcomer – This topic is brand new to me.

### ***Learn More about Dynamics of Teen Dating Violence . . .***

Several resources already mentioned contain teens exposed to domestic violence information: [Helping Children Thrive: Supporting Woman Abuse Survivors as Mothers: A Resource to Support Parenting and Little Eyes, Little Ears.](#)

- The WCADV webpage on Teen Dating Violence includes an extensive resource guide and other materials related to working with teens.  
<http://www.wcadv.org/ourwork/teen-dating-violence>
- Love is Respect is a comprehensive website addressing teen dating violence and healthy relationships geared toward teens and helpful for adults.  
<http://www.loveisrespect.org/>

## **10. Prevention**

Prevention means taking action to end violence before it begins. When advocates understand prevention, they can begin to build prevention elements into their daily work. CY advocates working with children and youth exposed to violence or delivering prevention education presentations in schools can contribute to creating a future without violence and abuse. Often, classroom presentations on topics such as bullying, sexual harassment and teen dating violence lead to disclosure and connecting with children and youth in need of services. Exposing students to topics such as mutual respect, equality, assertive communication and setting boundaries helps them develop healthy friendships and equitable romantic relationships.

In this area, I am:

1. Experienced – I am knowledgeable about this topic, and have put this knowledge to use in previous jobs, internships or volunteer work.
2. Knowledgeable – I am knowledgeable about this topic, but haven't put this knowledge to use in previous jobs, internships or volunteer work.
3. Developing – I know a little about this topic, but need to acquire more knowledge and learn how to put it to use.
4. Newcomer – This topic is brand new to me.

### ***Learn More about Prevention . . .***

- In one page, "Primary Prevention Basics" describes the core elements of prevention of domestic violence.  
[http://www.wcadv.org/sites/default/files/resources/Primary\\_Prevention\\_Basics.pdf](http://www.wcadv.org/sites/default/files/resources/Primary_Prevention_Basics.pdf)

## **11. Local Referral Resources for Children, Youth and Families**

Children and youth advocates need to know where to direct families who need help that is beyond the scope of a DV program's services. Supervisors and co-workers can help new CY advocates learn about the services available in their community, county or tribe.

In this area, I am:

1. Experienced – I am knowledgeable about this topic, and have put this knowledge to use in previous jobs, internships or volunteer work.
2. Knowledgeable – I am knowledgeable about this topic, but haven't put this knowledge to use in previous jobs, internships or volunteer work.
3. Developing – I know a little about this topic, but need to acquire more knowledge and learn how to put it to use.
4. Newcomer – This topic is brand new to me.

***Learn More about Local Referral Resources . . .***

To learn more about local referral resources, advocates can:

- Talk to coworkers and colleagues at their organization about resources they utilize or recommend.
- Meet with collaborating partners to introduce themselves and build relationships.

## SKILLS

Skill development is largely a hands-on endeavor. The resources mentioned here offer a starting place for new children and youth advocates seeking to acquire these skills. New advocates can begin by reading Working with Survivors of Domestic Violence and Their Children by the Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence. It's a useful introduction to domestic violence advocacy programs that focuses on working with survivors and their children. It includes information on child development, welcome interviews, DV support groups for children and fostering resilience in children exposed to DV. Available by email from WCADV CY staff.

### **1. Ability to Work Competently and Respectfully with Families from a Variety of Cultures and Backgrounds**

Advocates should commit to:

- Acquiring the knowledge and skills needed to work respectfully and capably with families from a variety of cultures
- A lifelong practice of cultural self-reflection and learning

In this area, I am:

1. Experienced – I am knowledgeable about this topic, and have put this knowledge to use in previous jobs, internships or volunteer work.
2. Knowledgeable – I am knowledgeable about this topic, but haven't put this knowledge to use in previous jobs, internships or volunteer work.
3. Developing – I know a little about this topic, but need to acquire more knowledge and learn how to put it to use.
4. Newcomer – This topic is brand new to me.

### ***Learn about Cultural Competence and Self-Reflection . . .***

- In her short speech "The Danger of a Single Story," the Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Adichie explores the consequences of misunderstanding others by failing to appreciate each person's many overlapping stories.  
[http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_adichie\\_the\\_danger\\_of\\_a\\_single\\_story.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story.html)
- While written for parent educators, Culture and Parenting: A Guide for Delivering Parenting Curriculum to Diverse Families is a useful guide for advocates seeking to make their own work more culturally respectful and responsive.  
<http://ucce.ucdavis.edu/files/filelibrary/5264/20355.pdf>

## **2. Ability to Facilitate One-on-One Conversations with Children and Youth Exposed to DV and Dating Violence**

It's important the CY advocates be able to talk one-on-one with children and youth about a variety of topics, including difficult subject such as their exposure to domestic violence.

Skills that can help with this include:

- Active listening skills
- Basic assessment skills for children and youth exposed to DV

In this area, I am:

1. Experienced – I am knowledgeable about this topic, and have put this knowledge to use in previous jobs, internships or volunteer work.
2. Knowledgeable – I am knowledgeable about this topic, but haven't put this knowledge to use in previous jobs, internships or volunteer work.
3. Developing – I know a little about this topic, but need to acquire more knowledge and learn how to put it to use.
4. Newcomer – This topic is brand new to me.

### ***Learn about One-on-One Conversations with Children and Youth . . .***

- Healing the Invisible Wounds: Children's Exposure to Violence: A Guide for Families, mentioned above, contains advice about starting a conversation with a child about abuse in the home.

### ***Learn about Active Listening Skills . . .***

- WCADV has created a handout on active listening skills. Scroll down to Appendix 1: Active Listening Skills.

### ***Learn about Assessment Skills for Children and Youth Exposed to DV***

- WCADV has created a guide for informally assessing the assets and needs of children and youth exposed to DV. Scroll down to the Appendix 2: Guide to Assessing Strengths and Challenges of Children and Youth in Wisconsin Domestic Violence Programs.

## **3. Ability to Design and Facilitate Age-Appropriate Support Groups for Children and Youth Exposed to DV and Dating Violence**

Informal support groups are a well established way to support build resilience in children exposed to domestic violence. Children and youth advocates should have good group facilitation skills and be able to:

- Choose support group topics that promote resiliency
- Choose activities that support planned outcomes for each session
- Help all group members feel comfortable, included and respected
- Manage behavior in group settings

In this area, I am:

1. Experienced – I am knowledgeable about this topic, and have put this knowledge to use in previous jobs, internships or volunteer work.
2. Knowledgeable – I am knowledgeable about this topic, but haven't put this knowledge to use in previous jobs, internships or volunteer work.
3. Developing – I know a little about this topic, but need to acquire more knowledge and learn how to put it to use.
4. Newcomer – This topic is brand new to me.

### ***Learn about Children and Youth Support Groups . . .***

In addition Working with Survivors of Domestic Violence and Their Children by the Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence mentioned above, advocates should read this manual.

- Groupwork with Children of Battered Women, A Practitioner's Manual, by Einat Peled and Diane Davis. A very comprehensive manual for a 10 week group for children ages 4-12. Contains background information on how domestic violence affects children and a chapter on parenting groups.

[http://www.nationaltraumaconsortium.org/documents/Adapted\\_Groupwork\\_Manual\\_041904\\_Update.pdf](http://www.nationaltraumaconsortium.org/documents/Adapted_Groupwork_Manual_041904_Update.pdf)

These resources may also be useful to CY support group facilitators:

- Youth/Child Advocate and Educator Manual of Activities & Exercises for Children & Youth by the Vermont Network Against domestic and Sexual Violence is a useful manual full of activities and exercises for support groups and prevention presentations.

<http://www.vtnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/Youth-Advocate-and-Educator-Activity-Manual.pdf>

- Teen Safe Facilitator's Guide and Teen Safe Curriculum by the Center for Young Women's Health at the Children's Hospital of Boston is a guide to facilitating a four-module curriculum on safety for teens in relationships, on the street and on the Internet. The Facilitator's Guide contains general information on facilitating groups for teens.

<http://www.youngwomenshealth.org/teensafe.html>

#### **4. Ability to Facilitate One-on-One Conversations with Mothers that Recognize and Support their Strengths as Parents and Enhance their Ability to Cope with Parenting Children Exposed to Domestic Violence**

An important part of an advocate's job is to support battered women as mothers, particularly when the family is in crisis and coping with the stress of shelter living.

In this area, I am:

1. Experienced – I am knowledgeable about this topic, and have put this knowledge to use in previous jobs, internships or volunteer work.
2. Knowledgeable – I am knowledgeable about this topic, but haven't put this knowledge to use in previous jobs, internships or volunteer work.
3. Developing – I know a little about this topic, but need to acquire more knowledge and learn how to put it to use.
4. Newcomer – This topic is brand new to me.

### ***Learn about Supporting Mothers . . .***

Listening skills are a simple but critical foundation for talking with and supporting mothers.

Advocates may also want refer to these resources:

- Helping Children Thrive: Supporting Woman Abuse Survivors as Mothers: A Resource to Support Parenting by Linda Baker & Alison Cunningham, mentioned above
- WCADV has created a simple guide to beginning to support battered mothers. Scroll down Appendix 3: Working with Battered Mothers in Crisis.

## **5. Ability to Facilitate Conversations with Mothers and Children Together that Support Respect for Mothers and Model Listening and Problem-Solving Skills.**

From time to time, advocates may be called upon to help families talk to together about problem they face.

In this area, I am:

1. Experienced – I am knowledgeable about this topic, and have put this knowledge to use in previous jobs, internships or volunteer work.
2. Knowledgeable – I am knowledgeable about this topic, but haven't put this knowledge to use in previous jobs, internships or volunteer work.
3. Developing – I know a little about this topic, but need to acquire more knowledge and learn how to put it to use.
4. Newcomer – This topic is brand new to me.

### ***Learn about Facilitating Family Conversations . . .***

- WCADV has created a simple guide to beginning to facilitate family conversations. Scroll down to Appendix 4: Suggestions for Advocates Facilitating Conversations with Families.

## 6. **Domestic Violence-Related Safety Planning**

Safety planning is an important part of providing services for DV victims of all ages, and for CY advocates this can include:

- Safety planning for children and youth exposed to DV
- Safety planning for mothers regarding risks to their children
- Family safety planning, or other strategies to mitigate the unintended risks of separate safety planning for mothers and children
- Safety planning for teen victims of dating violence

In this area, I am:

1. Experienced – I am knowledgeable about this topic, and have put this knowledge to use in previous jobs, internships or volunteer work.
2. Knowledgeable – I am knowledgeable about this topic, but haven't put this knowledge to use in previous jobs, internships or volunteer work.
3. Developing – I know a little about this topic, but need to acquire more knowledge and learn how to put it to use.
4. Newcomer – This topic is brand new to me.

### ***Learn about Safety Planning . . .***

- Sessions Seven and Eight in Groupwork with Children of Battered Women, A Practitioner's Manual contain information on safety planning with children and youth.
- Sample safety plans for children and youth, mothers, families and teen victims of dating violence are available from the WCADV CY staff.

## 7. **Ability to Plan and Deliver Age-Appropriate Prevention Education Presentations in Schools and the Community**

Many CY advocates frequently do prevention education presentations in schools. These presentations can occur in classrooms from preschool to high school, and can cover a wide variety of subjects, such as bullying, healthy relationships and teen dating violence. CY advocates should possess interactive training skills and be comfortable:

- Speaking before a group and engaging an audience
- Creating presentations and interactive exercises on new topics
- Developing content that is age-appropriate

In this area, I am:

1. Experienced – I am knowledgeable about this topic, and have put this knowledge to use in previous jobs, internships or volunteer work.
2. Knowledgeable – I am knowledgeable about this topic, but haven't put this knowledge to use in previous jobs, internships or volunteer work.
3. Developing – I know a little about this topic, but need to acquire more knowledge and learn how to put it to use.
4. Newcomer – This topic is brand new to me.



### ***Learn about Prevention Education Presentations . . .***

- The Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault's (WCASA) Best Practices in Sexual Violence Prevention Education is a guide to doing prevention education in grades K-12. This guide is out of print and is being revised by WCADV and WCASA staff. An electronic copy of the original version may be requested for the WCADV CY staff.
- Youth/Child Advocate and Educator Manual of Activities & Exercises for Children & Youth by the Vermont Network Against domestic and Sexual Violence is a useful manual full of activities and exercises for support groups and prevention presentations.  
<http://www.vtnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/Youth-Advocate-and-Educator-Activity-Manual.pdf>

## APPENDIX

### **APPENDIX 1: ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS**

Active Listening Is:

- The foundation skill for all helping relationships.
- Your most powerful advocacy tool.
- Essential for establishing trust, understanding the help seeker's situation and starting the advocacy process.

#### **Being an Active Listener**

- Use open ended questions rather than those with yes/no answers.
- Encourage the help seeker to do most of the talking.
- Be accepting and nonjudgmental. See the situation from the help seeker's point of view.
- Explore the situation.  
"Has your dog run away before, or is this the first time?"  
"Tell me more about what you've done already to find your dog."  
"How are you feeling right now?"
- Identify the feelings and values that you hear.  
"Sounds like you're pretty worried about your dog."  
"So you think it's important for people to be good caretakers for their pets."
- Draw out any undercurrents that you notice.  
"I wonder if you're also feeling some guilt that you let your dog out of your sight?"
- Check back to see that you have understood her correctly.  
"So your dog might have run away last night, but you didn't notice that he was gone until this morning?"  
"You're also concerned that your dog isn't getting his medication?"  
"Sounds like this is pretty stressful for you?"
- Normalize and validate her feelings and experiences.  
"Of course you're worried."  
"It's natural to be upset when a pet is missing."

- Be aware of your own feelings and how the help seeker or her situation might be affecting you. Use your awareness of your feelings (such as confusion or mistrust) to help you understand the situation and ask questions, but keep the focus on the help seeker.

### **Specific Techniques**

- Replay the help seeker's statements using repetition or revision.
- Use minimal encouraging remarks to show that you are listening without breaking up the flow of her narrative: "Uh-huh." "Sure." "I understand." "Go on."
- Phrase some statements as questions.
- Don't be afraid of periods of silence.
- Accept the help seeker's reality. Always try to understand the situation from her point of view.

Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
[www.wcadv.org](http://www.wcadv.org)

**APPENDIX 2: GUIDE TO**  
**ASSESSING STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES**  
**OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN WISCONSIN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAMS**

Part of the job of a domestic violence children and youth advocate is to assess the strengths and difficulties of children and teens entering their programs. In some mental health or human service settings, assessment is a process that uses a standardized assessment tool or questionnaire to arrive at a specific score, diagnosis or case plan. In most Wisconsin domestic violence programs, assessment is a much more informal process. It is designed to get to know each child, teen and family and determine how the program might help. Consequently, these sample questions are intended to guide a conversation and be a starting point for establishing a supportive relationship with a child, teen or mother. They should not be used as a questionnaire, but as a guide to building rapport with mothers and youth and getting to know them better. The questions cover seven areas important to the well-being of children and youth:

- Physical health
- Developmental growth
- Behavior
- Emotional health
- Home life
- School
- Friendships and social relations

These questions do not specifically assess for the impact of domestic violence, although it will be important to talk about the youth's exposure to domestic abuse in order to understand him or her. They are also not intended to be developmentally appropriate, and should be modified or skipped as is fitting for each child or teen. The guide does not specifically assess for child abuse or include questions about risky behavior (such as substance use) that may be important to evaluating the well-being of older youth and teens. Assessment conversations are only a beginning, and should be supplemented by observation and relationship-building. There are no child development questions for children and youth, as it isn't reasonable to ask them to assess their own developmental progress.

Both mothers and children may be uneasy when advocates meet with youth alone. Mothers may be concerned about what information their children will be asked to reveal, and children and teens may worry about their mother's reaction to what they share with an advocate. Advocates should make sure that youth know what information will be shared with their mothers, and explain the youth intake procedure to mothers in advance. Many programs collect information on youth by facilitating joint conversations with mothers and children. This encourages them to talk together about their experiences and reinforces the importance of the mother-child relationship. Programs that do joint intakes should talk with the mother in advance to learn if there are particular things that she does or does not want to talk about in the presence of her children.

Remember:

- Use great care when recording notes from conversations, as case files can be subpoenaed and used in court.
- Children and youth may disclose information that indicates that they are not safe or are in some kind of serious trouble. It is always important to begin by following your agency's guidelines for disclosing your obligation to report child abuse or contact primary caregivers regarding safety concerns.

### **Children and Youth Assessment Questions for Mothers**

Helping Children Thrive: Supporting Woman Abuse Survivors as Mothers, by Linda L. Baker and Alison J. Cunningham, is an excellent resource for supporting battered women as mothers. Pages 18-19 contain a guide to helping mothers identify their needs for their family, and can be used in combination with these questions. The entire document can be downloaded for free at <http://www.lfcc.on.ca/mothers.html>

#### General

- Describe your child.
- What are some of the things you like best about your child?
- What does your child do that makes you proud?
- How would you describe your relationship with your child?
- Does your child know why your family is staying here? (For shelter programs)
- Can you tell me anything about your family's culture or traditions that will help us understand you better?

#### Physical Health

- Is your child usually healthy?
- Does your child have a history of health problems?
- Does your child have any current health problems that concern you?
- Would you like to find medical help for your child?
- When was your child's last well child visit to a doctor or health clinic?

#### Child Development

- What does your child do well for someone his/her age?
- Are there ways that your child is behind other children his/her age?
- In general, do you think that your child's development is appropriate for his/her age?
- Do you have any concerns about how your child is growing and developing?
- Would you like more information about or help with your child's growth and development?

#### Behavior

- How is your child cooperative and well-behaved?
- Are there times when your child's behavior is a problem?
- How would you describe your child's overall behavior?

- What do you do that's effective in helping your child manage his/her behavior?
- Do you ever have difficulty coping with behavior problems in your child?
- Would you like help coping with your child's behavior?

### Emotional Health

- When does your child usually feel relaxed and happy?
- Are there times when your child is depressed, withdrawn, anxious or angry?
- In general, how would you describe your child's emotional health?
- Has trouble with your partner or abuse in your home caused problems for your child? If so, how?
- Do your child's moods or emotions ever cause you concern?
- Can you talk to your child about his/her feelings?
- Can you talk to your child about problems in your family?
- Would you like to find help to improve your child's emotional well-being?

### Home Life

- What do you enjoy about living with your child?
- Are there times when living with your child is a challenge?
- Who in your family does your child usually get along with? Who does he/she have usually conflicts with?
- Do your child's family conflicts ever become too difficult to handle?
- Would you like to find help to better handle your child's behavior at home?
- Is it important to you to give your child a sense of cultural pride or family tradition that makes him or her a stronger person?

### School

- What are your child's successes in school?
- Are there parts of school that are difficult for your child?
- Are you concerned about any part of your child's progress at school?
- Who are the teachers and other staff you feel comfortable talking to about your child's progress at school?
- Would you like help with any part of your child's progress at school?

### Friends and Social Relationships

- What makes your child good at being a friend?
- Does your child have any problems getting along with friends or other people?
- Is there anything that concerns you about your child's relationships with other people?
- Do you think your child could use help in improving his/her social or friendship skills?

## Assessment Questions for Children and Youth

Healing the Invisible Wounds: Children's Exposure to Violence, published by the Safe Start Center, is a good resource for beginning to work with children who have lived with domestic abuse. Pages 7-8 contain information about starting talk with children, followed by guides to age-appropriate conversations. The entire document can be downloaded for free at <http://www.safestartcenter.org/pdf/caregiver.pdf>

### General:

- What kind of things do you like to do?
- What are some things that you are good at?
- What do other people like about you?
- Do you know why your family is staying here? (For shelter programs)
- Can you tell me anything about your family's culture or traditions that will help us understand you better?

### Physical Health

- Are you usually pretty healthy?
- Do you have any problems with your health that worry you?
- Would you like to find help for any health problems?

### Emotional Well-Being

- When do you feel happy?
- Do you ever feel sad, worried or angry? What makes you feel sad, worried or angry?
- When you are feeling unhappy, is there anything or anyone who can help you feel better?
- Is there anyone you can talk to about your feelings?
- Are you ever concerned that you feel sad, worried or angry too much of the time?

### Home Life

- What do you like about being part of your family?
- Who do you get along with in your family? Is there anyone in your family who is hard to get along with?
- What's hard about living in your family?
- Do you ever feel sad or worried about trouble in your family?
- Is there anyone you can talk to about trouble in your family?
- When there are problems in your family, what helps with the problems or makes you feel better?

### School

- What do you like best about school?
- What school subjects are you good at?
- What school subjects are hardest for you?
- Are there parts of school you don't like?
- Are there adults at your school who you can talk to when you are having a problem?

- Do you feel like you need more help in order to do better in school?

#### Friends and Social Relationships

- What do you like to do with your friends?
- What makes you a good friend?
- What do you like best about your friends?
- What do your friends like about you?
- Is it ever hard to get along with other people?
- When you have trouble getting along with other people, what do you do?

Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
[www.wcadv.org](http://www.wcadv.org)



## **APPENDIX 3: WORKING WITH BATTERED MOTHERS IN CRISIS**

### **Battered Mothers Who Use Domestic Violence Crisis Services . . .**

- Are trauma survivors.
- Are in crisis.
- Love their children.
- Are stressed and overburdened by too many responsibilities and too few resources.
- Are behaving in ways that make sense to them under the circumstances.
- May be forced to defer their children's needs out of necessity.
- Have had their sense of competence and self worth eroded by their abusers.
- Have had their parenting and their relationship with their children damaged by their abusers.
- May be resistant or defensive because they are under stress, fearful or ashamed.
- May have coped with domestic violence by avoiding acknowledging its impact on their children.
- May be afraid to talk to their children about the abuse they've experienced.
- May feel guilty about exposing their children to domestic violence.
- May feel conflicted about the abuser's role in their children's lives.
- May have experienced poor parenting or abuse themselves as a child.
- Will not always parent the way they do when they are in crisis
- May make changes in how they live and parent, but will need time to do this.

### **Lessons for Advocates**

- There are lots of ways to be a good parent.
- Loving kids differently does not mean loving them less.
- All parents:
  - Have skewed vision regarding their own children
  - Are defensive about their parenting
  - Could be better parents
- We all:
  - Have been a difficult person (customer, parent, coworker) at some time.
  - Have difficulty admitting our shortcomings.
  - Have engaged in behavior we knew we should change, but weren't ready.
  - Know how it feels to be misunderstood.
- Battered women are a microcosm of the world at large, where there will always be a range of parenting, from very good to very poor. Domestic violence and shelter life may exaggerate this.
- Abused women come to domestic violence programs for safety and support regarding battering, not to get parenting advice.
- When a woman is in crisis, it's difficult to be the best parent she can be. It's also a poor time to get her to change the way she parents.

- Battered mothers may have good reasons for doing what they do, reasons that we may not be able to understand.
- We cannot expect more of battered women than they are capable of at the present time.
- Feeling unable to change is not the same as not caring.
- We cannot help a mother if we can't find a way to respect her.
- If you want a mother to nurture her children, look for ways to nurture the mother.
- For some women, we need to accept that our desire to see change for their children may be greater than theirs.
- Things change, especially for families in crisis. The change you want to see now may happen over time. Plant the seeds and be patient.
- Avoid creating toxic interactions with other staff. Vent and commiserate, but make a pact to help each other move on. You can't wring your hands and offer a helping hand at the same time.

### **What Battered Mothers Need**

(Based on the work of Lundy Bancroft)

1. Restoration of the respect for her parenting that the batterer has denied; recognition of her efforts to support and protect her children
2. Opportunities to heal from her own trauma
3. Opportunities to feel good about her relationship with her children
4. Support for challenging the values that her children have learned from the abuser

### **How Advocates Can Connect with and Support Battered Mothers**

- Ask the woman to help you understand her family & what support she needs to help her kids. Mothers are the best experts on their own families.
- Find out about her previous experiences with professionals (teachers, social workers, therapists) regarding her kids. Ask about what worked, what didn't, and what she'd like you to do differently.
- Parenting practices vary between cultures. Ask her to explain her cultural beliefs about raising children.
- Find something about each battered mother that you like and respect, and use that to build your relationship with her. Be on her side.
- Find out what's important to her as a parent. Connect with her around her own concerns about her children (vs. yours).
- Sharing information about the traumatic effects of domestic violence will help her feel less guilty and alone.
- Identify and reinforce her strengths and successes as a mother. Support her authority as a parent.
- Help mothers talk about their experiences and feelings with their children. Conversations should be age-appropriate. No negative talk about the other parent.

- Be a role model for positive interactions with children. Model listening well and practicing calm and compassionate problem solving.
- Talk with mothers and their children together from the start (intake). Don't wait until problems arise.
- Support mothers in demonstrating and teaching alternatives to the values of abusers.
- Build safety planning for the whole family into your first conversations with them.
- Give choices. Praise success. View failures as useful information.
- Approach each mother with an open mind and heart, and help her do the same with her kids.

Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
[www.wcadv.org](http://www.wcadv.org)

## **APPENDIX 4: SUGGESTIONS FOR ADVOCATES FACILITATING CONVERSATIONS WITH FAMILIES**

1. Begin by establishing rapport. Show respect and concern for every member of the family.
2. Maintain your role as facilitator of the discussion.
3. Support the adult's role as parent, and support everyone's right to be heard.
4. Respect the family's values. Ask about cultural or religious beliefs or practices that you may not understand.
5. Don't judge, blame or take sides.
6. Use active listening skills.
7. Identify strengths in individual family members and in the family as a whole.
8. Try to elicit feelings which are not being expressed directly and encourage alternative views of the family's circumstances.
9. Expect expressions of anger or other distress, but don't allow threats or abusive behavior.
10. If anger or silence create an impasse, try taking a break and having a separate conversation with one or more family members.
11. Regroup and try again. Eventually, the family members should talk to each other rather than to the advocate.
12. If appropriate, use a crisis counseling format:
  - a) Explore the problem.
  - b) Explore options for solving the problem.
  - c) Resolve the immediate situation.
  - d) End with hope.