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New Tools Increase Safety For Families Facing Violence, Define Safe Roles For Abusive Fathers

One of the most difficult issues that child welfare workers face is how to help families experiencing both child maltreatment and domestic abuse. Few caseworkers are trained to understand domestic violence, and to know what interventions to use when child abuse and domestic violence are present in the same family. But two new resources from the Family Violence Prevention Fund (FVPF) can help.

Both *Family Team Conferences in Domestic Violence Cases: Guidelines for Practice and Accountability and Connection with Abusive Men: A New Child Protection Response to Increasing Family Safety* are designed to improve the child welfare system's response to domestic violence and child abuse.

Family Team Conferences describes the appropriate and safe use of this emerging tool with families experiencing domestic violence. It tells child welfare workers how to decide if families experiencing domestic violence are good candidates for Family Team Conferencing, which involves family and community members and other service providers – such as advocates for abused women – in deciding how to protect children facing maltreatment. It also educates domestic violence service providers and batterers' treatment professionals on the role they can play.

Accountability and Connection with Abusive Men helps caseworkers understand domestic violence and how to connect with abusers and hold them accountable. It seeks to remedy the child welfare system's excessive focus on mothers in cases where domestic violence is occurring, and to end the pervasive confusion and uncertainty about how to handle these cases. It offers: a behavioral definition of an abuser; characteristics of abusers; a look at domestic violence and race, class, culture and ethnicity using scenarios to illuminate sensitive issues; research findings about characteristics of abusers

accompanied by practice issues; tools for assessing the dangerousness of abusers; and more.

“Many families that experience child abuse also experience domestic violence,” said FVVPF President Esta Soler. “But we haven’t done enough to support families facing multiple forms of family violence. As a result, these families often have enormous difficulty getting the services they need. These tools can make a real difference in ensuring that Family Team Conferences are used appropriately, and in finding ways to provide both sanctions and support to abusive men.”

Family Team Conferences in Domestic Violence Cases: Guidelines for Practice was written by Lucy Salcido Carter, M.A., J.D. and edited by Kelly Mitchell-Clark. It was prepared by the FVVPF and the Child Welfare Policy and Practice Group with support from the Center for Partnerships in Child Welfare.

Accountability and Connection with Abusive Men: A New Child Protection Response to Increasing Family Safety was prepared by Fernando Mederos of the Massachusetts Department of Social Services Domestic Violence Unit. It was produced in conjunction with the American Public Human Services Association and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, Family Violence Department, “greenbook” project.

Both resources are available at
<http://endabuse.org/programs/display.php3?DocID=9929>