TIPS FOR WORKERS WORKING WITH DADS:

ASSESSING LEVELS OF RISK--
MEN WHO HAVE BEEN VIOLENT WITH THEIR PARTNERS

- ✓ **Assessing risk should be continuous. Escalation of violence and/or control indicates increased risk. Partner's leaving may increase risk.**
- ✓ **Assessing risk should be based on consulting multiple sources of information: arrest reports, police information, criminal records, mothers and children.**
- ✓ **Men who batter vary in their risk levels and this has implications for how we approach them:**

MODERATELY VIOLENT men make up approximately half of all men who batter. These men have lower levels of violence and are more likely to change. Indicators of strength and lower risk should be considered. It is appropriate to consider services to help moderately violent men address domestic violence *and* to support their parenting. Visitation may be highly advisable.

CHARACTERISTICS OF MODERATELY VIOLENT ABUSERS: *Are any of these statements true?*

___ Violence may be frequent—more than once a month.
___ Usually does not cause injury, but may include slapping and pushing.
___ Coercive control (psychological abuse and controlling behaviors) is present but is not not severe or highly intrusive.
___ Usually lacks criminal record.
___ Violence usually remains within the family.
___ No indication of current substance abuse.
___ One (or two at most) Restraining or Protective Orders (R/Os) with same partner.

INDICATORS OF STRENGTH/LOWER RISK: *Are any of these statements true?*

___ Partner reports that she is not frightened; open to visitation.
___ Children report history of positive relationship and there are no indications of fear of father.
___ Children do not act out after visits.
___ Low level violence took place years ago; has been in other relationship(s) and current partner reports no physical abuse.
___ Violence only within the family; no indicators of violence toward others.
___ Has attended a batterer intervention program (BIP) and has remained nonviolent afterward.
___ Controlling and abusive behaviors have stopped or decreased significantly.

ONGOING REASSAULTERS are men whose violence is not severe, but who may continue assaulting (and thereby traumatizing) their partners and/or children. These men typically continue physical abuse despite treatment; episodic substance abuse is fairly common.

POTENTIALLY LETHAL OR HIGHLY DANGEROUS men are a

fraction of all men who batter. These men may end up making a lethal or near lethal assault. Some have a history of high levels of violence; others have no history of violence but have intense controlling behaviors manifested in jealousy, stalking and severe control of their partners. As you consider signs of higher risk, please note that highly intrusive control and/or extreme jealousy are indicators of serious risk *even in the absence of violent behavior*. Some of the most dangerous men have not been violent prior to a lethal or near lethal assault.

The checklist below lists indicator of ongoing reassaulters and for highly dangerous men. The most severe items are numbers 5→18. Make sure you make comprehensive inquiries. Ask about all items consistently.

INDICATORS OF HIGHER RISK OR INCREASING RISK (items 5-18 most acute).

1. ___ Abuse and/or violence accompanied by episodic or binge use of alcohol or drugs.
2. ___ More than one restraining order (R/O) in CORI; R/Os with different partners.
3. ___ Signs of increasing instability: recent unemployment, signs of depression or trauma.
4. ___ Violence is not of the most intense variety (no severe bruises, broken bones or serious injury) *but it does not stop.*
5. ___ Higher levels of violence: punching, kicking; bruises, cuts, and/or continuing pain; beatings w/severe bruises, burns, broken bones; head injury, internal injury, permanent injury; wounds from weapon.
6. ___ Has forced her to have sex when she did not want to do so.
7. ___ He owns a gun.
8. ___ She has left him. She is in a battered women's shelter or is looking for a shelter.
9. ___ He has used a weapon against her or has threatened to use a lethal weapon.
10. ___ He has avoided arrest for domestic violence.
11. ___ He is not the father of the children.
12. ___ Intrusive control: controls car, money, who she can see, when she can go out.
13. ___ Acute jealousy coupled with violence: irrational accusations of infidelity, spying; leaves notes, monitors her, and repeatedly destroys property. Says, "If I can't have you, no one will."
14. ___ Behaviors continue after separation or divorce.
15. ___ Violence is increasing in frequency or severity.
16. ___ Escalating response to trigger events: partner separating, leaving him, becoming more independent.
17. ___ Threats to kill or hurt children.
18. ___ Threats to kill or hurt partner.

Please consult **TIPS FOR WORKERS WORKING WITH DADS: *DIFFERENTIAL APPROACHES* FOR MEN WHO HAVE BEEN VIOLENT WITH THEIR PARTNERS** for suggestions for engaging men in different ways depending upon their level of violence.

The manual Accountability and Connection with Abusive Men. has more information. It is available at: http://www.thegreenbook.info/documents/Accountability.pdf

Developed by F. Mederos and the Massachusetts Fatherhood Education Leadership Teams for the Fatherhood Initiative at the Massachusetts Department for Children and Families, January, 2009. fernando.mederos@state.ma.us

TIPS FOR WORKERS WORKING WITH DADS:

DIFFERENTIAL APPROACHES
FOR MEN WHO HAVE BEEN VIOLENT WITH THEIR PARTNERS

Fatherhood engagement involves a **differential approach** where the engagement varies depending upon the father's risk levels and strengths:

- If the physically abusive man is moderately violent (see below) and has some strengths, we can consider services to help him address domestic violence *and* to support his parenting. Visitation may be highly advisable.
- If the physically abusive man is an ongoing reassaulter or is highly dangerous, access to children should be restricted and supervised, and our emphasis should be more narrowly focused on services to address domestic violence and/or substance abuse.

In other words, *fatherhood engagement may not involve access to children*. The checklist below will help you assess risk/dangerousness and make decisions about how to engage a man who has a history of domestic violence.

NATURE OF FATHERHOOD ENGAGEMENT & ACCESS TO CHILDREN	
MODERATELY VIOLENT PHYSICAL ABUSER: SOME STRENGTHS & INDICATORS OF LOWER RISK	**HIGH RISK TO PARTNER AND/OR CHILDREN: ONGOING REASSAULTER OR POTENTIALLY LETHAL ASSAULTER**
LESS RESTRICTED CONTACT W/CH. ⇨Assess children's level of trauma; assess aftermath of visits. ⇨Do not divulge information provided by mother unless she has been warned and safety planning has taken place. ⇨Unsupervised visitation with safety planning for partner. OR: ⇨Supervised visitation. ENGAGEMENT: ⇨Build on existing strengths; support good fathering practices; making amends (fathering after violence). Help father accept & undo traumatic impact of his past behavior. ⇨Use other Tip Sheets to promote his positive fathering involvement. SERVICES: ⇨Attend fatherhood program. ⇨Attend batterer intervention program. ⇨Substance abuse services.	MORE RESTRICTED OR NO CONTACT ⇨Same as left hand column. ⇨ Same as left hand column. Divulging information from mother increases risk. ⇨If mother & children are in shelter and he is a very high risk abuser, redact all information about her whereabouts; consider having another Area Office work with him, so he does not know what area she and children are in. ⇨Supervised visitation. In another community? ⇨W/acute risk, consider no family contact. ENGAGEMENT: ⇨Focus on programming that will help him address and lower his risk factors (see below). ⇨Assess capacity to take responsibility for past behavior. Assess behavior during visits. SERVICES: ⇨Attend batterer intervention program. ⇨Substance abuse services.

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