

Safety Planning with Children and Youth

A Toolkit for Working with Children and
Youth Exposed to Domestic Violence



Safety Planning with Children and Youth:

**A Toolkit for Working with Children and Youth
Exposed to Domestic Violence**

Ministry of Justice

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SAFETY PLANNING FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH EXPOSED TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Shabna Ali, BC Society of Transition Houses
Denise Buote, Arbor Educational & Clinical Consulting Inc.
Sandra Bryce, Mary Manning Centre
Peggy Chan, Vancouver and Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services Society
Dave Cursons, Lower Similkameen Community Services Society
Moirra Dolen, Haven: A Society for Women and Children
Diana Ellis, Consultant
Shauna Filgate, Ministry of Children and Family Development
Kat Fong, Cameray Child and Family Services
Shelly Haynes - Marrelli, Ksan House Society
Juliette Kamper, Ministry of Justice
Shana Murray, Howe Sound Women's Centre Society
Tracy Myers, Haven: A Society for Women and Children
Melissa Peoples, Haven: A Society for Women and Children
Tracy Porteous, Ending Violence Association
Rhonda Sandoval, Social Health and Economic Development Society
Carolyn Sinclair, Police Victim Services of British Columbia
Monique Talarico, Elizabeth Fry Society Prince George
Cathy Welch, Ending Violence Association
Rhiannon Wong, BC Society of Transition Houses

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Cameray Child and Family Services
Cowichan Women Against Violence Society
Elizabeth Fry Society Prince George
Haven: A Society for Women and Children
Howe Sound Women's Centre Society
Ksan House Society
Lower Similkameen Community Services Society
Social Health and Economic Development Society
Sunshine Coast Community Services Society
Vancouver and Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services Society

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Purpose of the Safety Planning With Children and Youth Toolkit

In British Columbia, there are no standardized tools available to assist support workers to develop safety plans with children and youth who have been exposed to domestic violence. The purpose of the Safety Planning with Children and Youth: A Toolkit for Working with Children and Youth Exposed to Domestic Violence (the toolkit) is to address this gap by providing support workers with a resource to develop individualized safety plans for children and youth and provide support workers with information for mothers/caregivers and children/youth exposed to, experiencing and/or fleeing from domestic violence. According to the Violence Against Women in Relationships Policy (VAWIR), “safety planning is a key service for victims of domestic violence” (VAWIR, 2010).

“We hold parents and other adults in a child’s life to be responsible for his or her safety and well-being. However, under the circumstances of family violence and dangerous situations in which the child’s safety is at risk, we want the children to know that they also need to take care of themselves...the aim of personal protection planning is to equip children with some practical and realistic skills to be used [when exposed to domestic violence and] in cases of emergency.” (Peled, 1995, in Peled, 1995, p 86)

The development process of this toolkit included sector wide surveys, an international literature review, garnering advice from the project advisory committee, a BC based pilot of the toolkit, and an external evaluation.

The toolkit was prepared for the following programs across British Columbia: Children Who Witness Abuse; Stopping the Violence, Outreach and Multicultural Outreach, Community-based and Police-based Victim Services, Transition, Second and Third Stage Houses and Safe Home programs. As the field evolves, so do practices. It is helpful to occasionally review practices to ensure that they are

informed by current research. Therefore, this toolkit is intended to be useful for both new and highly experienced service providers. This guide can also be a helpful reference when specific questions arise when working with children and youth. The safety planning information provided in this toolkit is intended to be a set of guidelines and does not replace the procedures and protocols for working with children and youth that each agency has in place.

2. What is a Safety Plan?

Through a domestic violence lens, a safety plan is a strategy which involves identifying the steps one can take to increase safety. A safety plan helps to prepare for the possibility of further violence and provides guidelines to follow if one’s safety is at risk. A safety plan can be developed for a woman experiencing violence in relationships or children and youth exposed to domestic violence. A safety plan also helps to draw a woman’s or a child/youth’s attention to the need for safety and helps to focus where that attention needs to be placed.

3. Research that Informed the Development of the Safety Planning Toolkit for Children and Youth

An extensive literature review on children and youth’s safety planning tools, and processes, and an evaluation of safety planning tools was conducted. Seventy-two articles and/or books were reviewed which related to:

- Range and type of content of safety planning tools for children and youth
- Processes for the development of safety planning tools with children and youth
- Issues relevant to safety planning for children and youth

A 48 question on-line survey was distributed to workers in BC’s Children Who Witness Abuse Programs, Stopping the Violence Programs, Outreach and Multicultural Outreach programs, Police-based and Community-based Victim Service Programs, and Transition House, Safe Home, Second and Third

Stage House Child/Youth programs. Forty surveys were returned from a broad and diverse representation of staff.

a) Literature Review Research Findings – Safety Planning Tools for Children and Youth

The literature shows similar steps and core safety planning points, widely replicated in Canada, USA, Australia, New Zealand and Great Britain, in use with children/youth presently living in homes where domestic violence occurs. These safety plans often come in a range from simple lists to multiple page safety plans with language and illustrations tailored to the age of the particular child/youth. Consistent in the literature were the core safety planning points: (1) Go to a safe place; (2) Don't get in the middle; (3) Call for help; (4) You are not alone; (5) You are not to blame; and (6) Domestic violence is dangerous and against the law.

The research literature spanned a range of advice and analysis regarding different domestic violence situations of children, youth and their mothers. Written for various professionals working with children/youth, including counsellors, shelter workers, child-care workers, social workers, early childhood education staff, teachers and school administrators. The research reviewed various situations such as cultural/geographic diversity, same sex/gender relationships, sexual orientation and gender-identity, children/youth with disabilities, and Aboriginal families. Much of the research material focused on intervention methods with children/youth and domestic violence rather than specifically on safety planning by itself, but background material useful to safety planning was extrapolated for this project.

The literature review also covered the analyses of children/youth and domestic violence written from the perspective of children and youth themselves. This recent work, undertaken in the past decade, provides insights for those working with children/youth and domestic violence, and is taken into consideration in this toolkit.

b) Field Survey Research Findings

Fifty percent of survey respondents indicated that they did safety planning with children between the ages of 3-14 and sixty percent of respondents safety plan with youth age 15-18. In answering the query "What do you do first, second etc when safety planning with children/youth?" field survey respondents provided detailed sequencing of the steps they follow. They described using core safety planning points (for mothers and for children/youth) that matched the points found in the literature reviewed for this toolkit. Corresponding to the reviewed literature, BC support workers also described how they varied and individualized the core safety planning points according to the child/youth's particular circumstances.

c) Conclusions Based on Research Findings

The research findings lead to the conclusion that the core safety planning points, for all children/youth, are the same, with variations dependent on the developmental level and extenuating factors of each child/youth. The core safety planning points are: (1) Go to a safe place; (2) Don't get in the middle; (3) Call for help; (4) You are not alone; (5) You are not to blame; and (6) Domestic violence is dangerous and against the law. Based on this conclusion a "one stop learning" toolkit was developed.

4. Overview of Safety Planning With Children & Youth: A Toolkit for Working with Children and Youth Exposed to Domestic Violence

Section 1: Steps to Follow When Safety Planning with Children and Youth

This section consists of the safety planning steps to follow when safety planning with children and youth including the six core safety planning points found in a broad range of safety plans from the literature, with additions and refinements from support workers in the BC sector for addressing domestic violence and the project's Advisory Committee. Choice and depth of use of the core safety planning points by support workers will vary depending on the child youth's development level, their domestic violence

situation and the community they live in. This section contains steps under the following headings: (1) Open the safety planning discussion; (2) Introduce the concept of safety planning; (3) Listen to the child/youth, and determine their experience and knowledge; and (4) Work on the core safety planning points; and (5) Close the safety planning discussion.

Section 2: *Developmentally Appropriate Child and Youth Safety Planning*

Methods in this section provide support workers with easy to access guidelines for safety planning with children/youth of differing developmental levels/ages. When developing an age appropriate safety plan it is important to consider not only the age of the child/youth but also the developmental level of the child/youth. Support workers may have to adjust age appropriate safety plans for a child/youth to a younger or older age group depending on their developmental level. Content is presented for developmental levels approximating ages 3-5, 6-11, 12-14 and 15-18.

Section 3: *Practice Tips for Safety Planning with Children and Youth in Specific Situations*

There are certain situations where the child/youth may be particularly at risk. This section addresses some of these types of situations, including Safety Planning When Picking Up and Dropping-off the Child/Youth; Safety Planning when the Abusive Parent has Visits with the Child/Youth; Safety Planning with Youth who Experience Dating Violence; and Safety Planning Considerations for a Child/Youth Testifying in Court.

Section 4: *Taking Additional Factors into Account When Safety Planning with Children and Youth*

These considerations provide support workers with information pertinent to a range of additional factors affecting children and youth. These additional factors include: differing abilities (developmental, physical, mental); substance use; children/youth from ethno-cultural, immigrant and refugee communities; Aboriginal children/youth; geographic location/community size; sexual orientation and gender identity; relationship with offending parent/care-giver; when child/youth is in care; and when child/youth is involved in mandated services.



SECTION 1

Steps to Follow When Safety Planning with Children and Youth

SECTION 1: STEPS TO FOLLOW WHEN SAFETY PLANNING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Children and youth adopt various coping strategies when there is violence in the home. Some children and youth may enter the argument either directly or indirectly and therefore put themselves at risk. Younger children especially may feel responsible for the anger and violence and experience feelings of failure. Children and youth may benefit by having safety planning strategies to cope with their feelings of anger and helplessness.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR SAFETY PLANNING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

It's important to keep in mind the following guiding principles when safety planning with children and youth:

A1. Children/youth have a right to be safe. Reinforce with the child/youth that though it is okay to protect themselves if needed, that it is ultimately adults who are responsible for the safety of children and youth, especially in situations of domestic violence. The child/youth is not to blame for the fighting or for either parent/caregiver getting or not getting help.

A2. For safety planning to be effective, support workers must first listen to the child/youth's experience. What are their needs? How can you draw upon their strengths and help them to remain as safe as possible no matter what the situation, where they are, or who the abuser is.

When safety planning with a child/youth, keep in mind:

- Safety planning with children/youth takes more than one session or visit.
- All safety plans are individual and require regular revision.
- Safety plans will vary depending on the risk and safety factors present and the community resources available.
- Ensure the directions you give to children/youth about making emergency service calls reflect the reality of their community and region.
- Consider whether or not the child/youth are being used to keep the mother/caregiver in the violent relationship.
- Safety planning is complex and often challenging, consulting with a trusted peer or supervisor (as needed) can be valuable.
- The safety of children/youth exposed to domestic violence is always aligned with the safety of their mother/caregiver. Helping mothers/caregivers to enhance their safety enhances the safety of their children.
- Caregivers, such as foster parents or other guardians, may have unique responses and issues that need consideration when safety planning with children/youth. Ensure that caregivers understand court orders and guardianship and visitation issues and how these relate to the safety plan for themselves and for the children/youth they are caring for.

STEPS TO FOLLOW WHEN SAFETY PLANNING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

A3. Children and youth exposed to domestic violence will experience trauma to varying degrees. This needs to be taken into account when safety planning with them.

For further information about the effects of trauma on children/youth exposed to domestic violence by developmental stages, please refer to Appendix A: Impact of Witnessing Abuse, which is adapted from the Best Practices for the Children Who Witness Abuse Program (Barbeau, 2009).

A4. Be familiar with the mother/caregiver’s safety plan and how it relates to the child/youth. Be sure to discuss with the mother/caregiver what kind of safety planning steps are already in place. This could include protection orders, court orders that describe parenting arrangements, and who is authorized to pick up the child/youth from child care or any other activity.

A5. With consent from the mother/caregiver and child/youth, coordinate safety plans with other service providers working with the family. Collaborating with all service providers involved can enhance the child/youth’s safety by ensuring everyone is aware of the risk and safety factors and the safety plan in place. The consent to collaborate should be limited to the time you are working with the child/youth and mother/caregiver.

A6. When implementing this toolkit, the following standards will be followed:

- Participants are treated ethically and with respect for their rights;
- Physical environments, such as an agency’s playroom or offices are appropriately planned and maintained; and,
- Programs are governed and administered ethically and responsibly.

Safety planning will be most helpful to children if practitioners and mothers recognize the individual needs of children. Practitioners need to assess with the mother the

following characteristics of the children before tailoring with her an individualized safety plan: (1) age/developmental status; (2) mental status; (3) physical health status; (4) attachment to the father, i.e., degree of ambivalence or conflicted feelings towards the father. ALSO...age appropriateness, is the child capable/competent to carry them out.” (Hardesty, 2004, in Jaffe 2004, based on Hart, 2001)

This quote reminds support workers that mothers/caregivers are a good source of knowledge about their child’s attributes and provide important information when safety planning with children/youth.

STEPS TO FOLLOW WHEN SAFETY PLANNING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

1. Open the safety planning discussion
2. Introduce the concept of safety planning
3. Listen to the child/youth, and determine their experience and knowledge
4. Work on the core safety planning points
5. Close the safety planning discussion

Keep in mind your:

- tone of voice
- language
- body posture and positioning
- emotions
- gestures

1. Step One: Open the Safety Planning Discussion

Keep in mind the following points when safety planning with children/youth:

- √ Safety planning starts when the child/youth walks in the door of the building.

STEPS TO FOLLOW WHEN SAFETY PLANNING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

- √ When greeting them, point out the emergency meeting location and walk-through the building pointing out how to get out of the building safely.
- √ Welcome the child/youth into your office.
- √ Ask child/youth if they know why they are there.
- √ Provide information about your role.
- √ Remember to discuss confidentiality and its' limitations. For example, some information may need to be shared with someone else (explain circumstances).
- √ Confirm that the child/youth is comfortable talking about their situation.
- √ Children and youth will likely have been safety planning prior to meeting with you and may not realize that what they are doing is safety planning. Acknowledge that they might have their own techniques for keeping themselves safe.
- √ Pace the work. Try to assess by observation and checking in with the child/youth if trust exists to advance to the next step.
- √ Explain 'The Rights of the Child' developed at the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. For example, let the child/youth know they are entitled to healthy and safe living conditions. A child friendly version can be found at: <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncd-jne/pdf2010/bckUNCh-eng.pdf>

◆ **PRACTICE TIP:** *If a child is too young to explain Rights of a Child to, summarize it by letting them know that all children, no matter where they live, have a right to feel safe.*

“What is Building Rapport?”

What is rapport?

Rapport is based on mutual confidence, respect and acceptance.

Building rapport involves:

- Working with children/youth/mother/care-giver face-to-face;
- Not only asking questions but actively listening to hear what the child/youth/mother/care-giver is saying;
- Making empathetic statements to demonstrate an understanding of the child/youth's situation and needs.

According to Sally K Sheppard (2010), “Children are usually scared or confused about why you want to talk to them. Misconceptions need to be cleared before any trust can be built. It is good to ask children why they think you want to talk to them”.

Rapport building tips:

- First impressions are crucial.
- Present yourself as a neutral, non-intimidating, and supportive adult.
- Assess the child/youth's level of functioning.
- Give the child/youth time to become familiar with you and the environment.
- Allow the child to explore the room/area.
- Provide a space for youth that is not too child-like, treating them more like adult.
- Give the child simple choices.
- Give the child/youth an idea of why they are meeting with you.
- Begin with neutral non-threatening questions.

STEPS TO FOLLOW WHEN SAFETY PLANNING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

- Note any withdrawal or negative responses.
- Youth especially may try to 'test' you to challenge your commitment to them. This test is linked to building trust.

For more information about rapport building, refer to Sally K Sheppard's presentation in **Appendix B**.

There is an analogy with the notion of "behind closed doors" which presumes that domestic violence is hidden from those outside the household when in fact others, especially neighbours, are often aware. In most cases, all parties choose to say nothing, preserving an illusion of lack of knowledge. A similar process comes into play with respect to children where, for example, if the violence had taken place when children were in their bedrooms, mothers had presumed they were asleep and the children had chosen not to shatter the illusion... we asked women if they had talked to their children while living with the abuse, only two said they talked a lot and tried to explain everything. Others said sometimes, either to reassure the children or to make excuses for the man... attempts to protect the children from finding out and not knowing what to say acted as further barriers to talking and explaining... this use of silence as a form of protection continued for some after separation... as a consequence some children were still unclear about all that had happened and why.

The linked process of self protection and protection of others combine for both children and women to create contexts in which silence appears to be the best or at least the safest, option. But silence, in turn, had meant that it was possible to misread and misunderstand each other's knowledge, needs and motivation. Women would stay because of the children, whilst the children had been desperately wishing they would separate. Children had suspected that their mothers were trying to look after their best interests and had seen how depressed and hurt they were, so had chosen not to say anything, whilst their mothers thought they were leaving the children in happy igno-

rance... early intervention strategies need to be sensitive to the complex dynamics between women and children and could usefully foster ways to enable them to talk to one another more openly." (Mullender, 2002, pp 165-167, 172)

This quote reminds all support workers that it is highly likely the children and youth they work with know that domestic violence happens in their family, even if no one in the family has spoken of it. It is important to learn more about what children/youth know, and what mothers think they know.

2. Step Two: Introduce the Concept of Safety Planning

a) Describe what a safety plan is. A safety plan is a strategy that involves identifying the steps the child/youth can take to increase safety. A safety plan helps to prepare for the possibility of further violence and provides guidelines to follow if their safety is at risk.

b) Find out what the child/youth knows about creating a safety plan. For example, most children/youth have participated in a fire drill at school, so for some ages it can be useful to start with that example and talk about the steps that are involved. Then you can move to applying the same steps to their own situation - home, community, and school.

◆ **PRACTICE TIP:** *Support workers may have to help a child /youth understand what safety is; not all children/youth who have been exposed to violence in the home know what safety is.*

- Explain issues of risk and safety in the context of domestic violence. To learn more about the different forms of domestic violence, please see Appendix D.
- Affirm with child/youth that the violence in their home is not their fault.
- Explain why you are going to work on a safety plan together and how this will assist them.
- Encourage the child/youth to pay attention to their feelings during an emergency situation.

STEPS TO FOLLOW WHEN SAFETY PLANNING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Where in their bodies do they feel the feelings? Encourage the child to listen to these feelings as they are signs it is not safe.

- Talk about strategies such as breathing techniques that can help relax their body and mind.

“It is... helpful if we contextualize the issues of risk and safety for the children within a conversational framework. This allows for the naming and exploration of the (child’s) care and connection with the father, as well as clarifying the mother’s ideas of how the child has been affected by the father’s violence. ..(When that has occurred) I move to the next step of making times to talk with her children (give children choice as to whether or not they want mother there)...my aim is to collaborate with children to access their imagination, knowledge and resources in order to create a safer family environment for the child, where the child is not a passive victim, but has agency within her/his situation. (Castelino, 2009)

In the study quoted here, support workers are reminded of the importance of using an open conversational tone when talking with the child/youth about risk and safety rather than checking off a list of safety and risk points.

3. Step Three: Listen to the Child/Youth and Determine Their Experience and Knowledge

“Discuss safety planning with the child by finding out how the child keeps him/herself safe. Talk with the child about not becoming involved when his/her parents are fighting and where he/she can go or what they can do when this occurs. Find out if the child knows how to call the police, what to say to the police—practice this if the child doesn’t know. Find out if the child has friends, if he or she is allowed to visit her/his friends or if the friends can come to the child’s home. Keeping family members isolated is a common dynamic in violence against women situations.” (MCFD, 2010).

- Ask the child/youth to describe what they

have already done to keep themselves safe. Affirm what they have done in the past and talk about how they can build on those actions.

- What does the child/youth know about the violence in their home? Gather information about the child/youth’s situation, i.e. their perspective of the domestic violence history - not just the mother/caregiver’s.
- Ask the child/youth to describe how they know violence is going to happen and to identify warning signs. Also, when there are warning signs, what do they do to keep themselves safe?
- Have they felt afraid?
- How does the child/youth feel about the abuser and their situation?
- Remind the child/youth that the behaviour of the abuser is not their fault.

“Much of the advice given to children and the development of safety planning advises children not to intervene since they run the risk of being hurt themselves. Though it is sensible to harness children’s concerns and energies in ways that place them in less danger, our research reveals that more is going on in children’s minds than adults may understand. Children do not just react unthinkingly. They make their own rapid and complex decisions as to what to do for the best, and these are deeply embedded in particular contexts – both what they think is going on, and their assessments of the extent to which they can influence swiftly evolving events.

Contrary to the impression that intervention primarily involves children trying physically to place themselves between the adult, or to seek help, the strategy used most commonly by the children in our sample had been to shout – to try to distract attention and thus interrupt a particular assault. ... Shouting and making clear their opposition to the abuse was a way

STEPS TO FOLLOW WHEN SAFETY PLANNING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

in which children had exercised agency and made their voices and opinions heard within the household. Whilst we are not suggesting that children be encouraged to act in dangerous ways, some thought is needed concerning the relationship between children's understandings of violence and their decision-making..." (Mullender, 2002 pp. 97-100)

In this quote, the researchers remind support workers of the importance of listening to children/youth and understanding how the child/youth may be feeling about intervening in the domestic violence.

4. Step Four: Work on the core safety planning points

The core safety planning points for children and youth are adapted from safety plans found in research literature and from field practice in British Columbia. Consider all the core safety planning points with children/youth as they will vary depending on the child/youth's developmental level, and their situation, and the community you work in. There is not a "one size fits all" safety plan. Each safety plan should be unique and specific to the child/youth you are working with.

When developing a safety plan with children/youth, incorporate the following points into their safety plan:

- A) Go to a safe place
- B) Don't get in the middle
- C) Call for help
- D) You are not alone
- E) You are not to blame
- F) Domestic violence is dangerous and against the law

In the following sections, sample scripts are provided as examples of wording that can be used when safety planning with children/youth. You will need to

adapt these scripts to be developmentally appropriate depending on the age and developmental level of the child and youth you are working with.

◆ **PRACTICE TIP:** *You can start the discussion of safety planning points wherever it seems most comfortable and useful for the child/youth. Some practitioners suggest that starting the discussion about a safe place/supports/who can help, can be a good way to initially address the topic. Use books, DVD's, photographs, and drawings, as appropriate.*

A) GO TO A SAFE PLACE

Talk to the child/youth about finding a safe place to go while the fighting is happening. For younger children this could be anywhere where the fighting is not going on. (As "Fighting" is how children/youth often describe domestic violence, this toolkit will also use this term.) Encourage them to do something that distracts or comforts them. Sometimes older children or youth may want to leave the home while the fighting is going on. Talk with them about safe places to go.

i. Who does the child/youth have in their support network and how do they access them? Depending on developmental level, have the child/youth:

- Identify people in their life they feel safe with.
- Draw a map or plan of their home.
- Brainstorm where they can go and what they can do if they don't feel safe when the fighting happens. For example, what about neighbours? Does the child/youth know them? Are they safe? Would they help?
- If the child/youth lives far from town or other people, how do they get to a safe place outside the house?
- Plan with them how to care for or hide special belongings (pet, sentimental things) if they have to leave home in a hurry.

ii. Help the child/youth identify what a safe place looks like both inside and outside the house. If it

STEPS TO FOLLOW WHEN SAFETY PLANNING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

is safe and appropriate, you could visit the child/youth's home and do a walk through. Alternatively, ask the mother/caregiver to walk through the house with the child/youth and point out the safe places.

◆ **PRACTICE TIP:** *Many children/youth have cell phones. If the child/youth has one, be sure to include using their cell phone in their safety plan, keeping it with them in and out of the house.*

Sample script to cover in your conversation with a child/youth about finding a safe place:

a) Figure out ahead of time a safe place you can go to inside your home when there is fighting, arguing, and/or loud voices that make you feel scared or worried.

- A safe place in your home is anywhere where the fighting, loud noises and arguing are not happening.
- Going to your safe place does not mean that you have to hide. It just means getting away from the fighting. Stay there until the fighting stops.
- If there is a lock on the door of a room, this might be good place to choose because you can lock the door.

b) While keeping yourself out of the way of the fighting, you might want to do something that makes you feel better, like:

- Listen to music.
- Watch television.
- Write, draw pictures, or play a video game.
- Be with any of your brothers/sisters and talk or play a game together.
- Remember to give yourself positive messages and use techniques you have learned to help keep yourself calm such as breathing techniques (take a deep breath and count to 10)

and going to a space/room that makes you feel calmer.

- Call the Kids Help Phone at 1-800-668-6868 and talk to someone if it is safe to do so.

c) If you think you might be safer outside of your home during the fighting, think ahead of time about some safe place(s) to go to. Talk with your mother/caregiver about where that safe place will be so you can meet up together after the fighting, when it is safer. Figure out how you will get there:

- Walk
- Ride your bike
- Take a bus
- Call someone for a ride
- Call a taxi

d) Try to keep some money in your pocket, purse, or room, for things like making a call from a public pay phone if there is one, or buying a bus ticket.

"Safety includes psychological safety and freedom from fear, creating peace at home. Safety can also be seen to include creating the space to recover from trauma and depression so that continuing confrontation with the triggers for traumatic re-living of the past does not undermine the recovery of both adult and child survivors of domestic violence." (Radford & Hester, 2006, page 127)

B) DON'T GET IN THE MIDDLE

Talk with the child/youth about how getting in the middle of the fighting could be dangerous for them. Affirm with the child/youth that they may feel conflicted about the fighting and may want to stop the fighting themselves. Tell the child/youth that it is safer for them, and their mother/caregiver, if they do not get involved. If they need or want to stay close by, advise the child/youth to stay out of sight, and if possible, to have a phone nearby.

Talk about what the child/youth needs to do before, during, and after the fighting so that they don't get in the middle. Remind the child/youth that the best way for them to help is to keep him or herself safe

STEPS TO FOLLOW WHEN SAFETY PLANNING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

and/or get another adult that can help.

◆ PRACTICE TIP: *In some cases it is important for the child/youth to trust their instincts. It may be that when they yell or cry that the fighting does stop.*

Sample script to cover in your conversation with a child/youth about not getting in the middle:

- Don't get in the middle (of the fighting, arguing, loud voices).
- Sometimes when adults are fighting, arguing, or using loud voices, some kids want to help, such as by staying in the room, or yelling to stop the fighting. But it is safer for you, and for your mother, if you do not get involved in trying to stop the fighting.
- If you feel like you need to stay close by, then stay out of sight and as far away as possible, and try to have a phone nearby.

C *Children's strategies for coping with inter-parental conflict may be sources of either risk or resilience...for example, problem-focused coping may lead children to attempt action by entering into the argument as a participant, either directly or indirectly...thus most at risk for becoming targets of their parents' anger. Younger children may be characterized by a combination of perceived responsibility for solving their parents' problems but an inability to do so, leading to forms of cognitive involvement such as 'worried avoidance,' with its concomitant feelings of helplessness and failure. With older children it is important to be sensitive to more subtle forms of emotional involvement, such as care giving and role-reversal, particularly for girls.*

There are potentially constructive active coping strategies children might use to respond to interparental violence, such as going to a safe place, calling 911, or turning to a third party for assistance. Coaching children in constructive active coping may increase not only their

ability to de-triangulate and their appraisals of self efficacy, but also their receptivity to the intervention. When children are distressed it is hard for them to feel comforted by the idea of 'just doing nothing,' and this is particularly true for older boys. Therefore, children benefit from having a repertoire of positive actions to perform, rather than a list of 'don'ts.' (Kerig, 2003, in Geffner, 2003, page 162-3)

This quote illustrates the importance of giving children/youth positive strategies to cope with exposure to domestic violence such as going to a safe place, calling 911 or turning to a third party for assistance.

C) CALL FOR HELP FROM EMERGENCY SERVICES

Discuss with the child/youth how to get help. Review the specific steps to follow when talking with emergency services, and discuss naming a code word for the mother/caregiver to use to indicate the child/youth needs to call 911. It is important to remember that not all communities use 911 for emergencies and rural areas often don't have street names and addresses. Therefore, the child/youth needs to know how to describe exactly where they are located. Talk to the mother/caregiver about writing down their address and/or specific landmarks and keeping this information where the child/youth always knows where it is in case of an emergency. A key point to stress is that the child/youth is not responsible for keeping their mother/caregiver safe, but they may be able to get help.

- For younger children, use a real (unconnected) phone so the child/youth can role-play phoning for help from emergency services and giving information.
- Sometimes, depending on the child/youth's previous experience, they are reluctant to call the police. For example, some children/youth see the police as the people who have broken up their family in the past and/or some children/youth find it difficult to call the police on their abusive parent. Discuss the police's role in protecting the public and encourage them to call the police for help.

STEPS TO FOLLOW WHEN SAFETY PLANNING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

◆ PRACTICE TIP: *The Kids Help Phone has the ability to do a “three way call” so that the child/youth does not have to be alone when calling the police.*

Sample script to cover in your conversation with a child/youth about calling for help:

a) You are not responsible for keeping your mother/caregiver safe, but you may be able to get help.

b) Talk with your mother about a code (special) word that only the two of you will know, that she can say out loud to let you know when you should call for help.

c) You could also talk with your mother about a signal only the two of you will know that she can use to let you know something is going on. For example, if you are not at home when the fighting is starting, your mother and you could agree that, if possible, she will turn on the porch light, or close certain window blinds to let you know to go somewhere safe.

d) Know how to phone to get help from emergency services if you think someone is getting hurt, you don't feel safe, or if you hear your mother say the code word.

e) Try to use a phone that is not in the room where the fighting is happening or use a cell phone. Even if your cell phone minutes are used up, you can still dial 911 and get through. If it is safe to do so, go to a neighbour's house and use the phone there, or to another safe place, such as a local store, to make a call.

f) This is how you make an emergency call: Push the buttons 9-1-1 on the phone for emergency services.

- The people who answer will say, “This is emergency services. Do you need police, fire, or ambulance?” You say: “Police”
You say: “My name is _____. I am ___ years old.”
- You tell the problem: “I need help. Send the Police. Someone is hurting my mother.”

Numbers children and youth can call for help:

You could give the child/youth the following numbers, and explain the difference between calling the Kids HELP Line and calling the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

Let the child/youth know that they can call the Kids HELP Line anytime if they need to talk to someone about what's going on at home and school and that they don't have to tell the counsellor on the phone who they are. The Kids HELP Line number is 1-800-668-6868 and their website is www.kidshelpphone.ca. Their website has a section for youth under the 'teen' option.

If they would like to report the abuse of themselves or their siblings, let them know that they can call the Ministry of Children and Family Development Helpline anytime. The number requires no area code and is 310-1234. A Ministry social worker is always on the line to listen and take action as needed. This help line is specifically designed to provide help in child abuse cases, and will likely involve the Ministry of Children and Family Development in the situation

- You say: “I am calling from (give complete address) _____”

◆ PRACTICE TIP: *Support workers in various regions of the province must know the correct emergency services number when 911 is NOT the number that is used in that region/community.*

g) After you have said these things, the best thing for you to do, if you can, is to stay on the phone. The person on the phone might need to ask you some more questions, or you might want to talk to them some more. If you do hang up the phone, the 911 operator may call back, which could make it dangerous for you and your mother/caregiver.

h) If you cannot stay on the phone because you do not feel safe, tell the person on the phone you are just putting the phone down without hanging it up.

STEPS TO FOLLOW WHEN SAFETY PLANNING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

i) Wait for the police or help to come.

D) YOU ARE NOT ALONE

Encourage the child/youth to identify who else they could talk with about the domestic violence in their family. Help the child/youth to understand they are not as alone as they may feel. The person(s) they choose to talk with could be someone who could help in an emergency and/or someone they could seek support from over time.

If it is appropriate, encourage the child/youth to talk to a safe person who will listen to them.

- Provide the child/youth with community resources and refer appropriately.
- If necessary, you can help to program numbers of safe people and places into their cell phone if they have one.

“When asked what children living with domestic violence need, our sample of children were astonishingly clear and consistent. Most commonly cited was safety, closely followed by someone to talk to... children, like adults, need to find assurances that they can talk about issues outside their family and in confidence. The difference between children’s accounts where accessible forms of support had been present for them and those for whom this had been lacking was marked. Children who had not had an aware and helpful social network talked regretfully and in a resigned way about this having been unavailable to them, despite adult relatives and friends having known about the abuse. Those who had been able to access such support spoke animatedly about its significance.

Children learn to hide and disguise what is happening at home and as they get older this often involves lying to those they care about and then hating themselves for this betrayal of trust on their part. The fear of friends and others finding out, linked with a sense that they will then cease to be considered worthy of care and support, silences many children and

makes them discount the fact that others often know more than they admit. This conspiracy of silence traps children in a form of isolation which they make to the extreme by limiting social contact that could otherwise provide much needed escape from anxiety and even valuable understanding and help. Just as victims of domestic violence need others to name the abuse, so children need permission to talk and reassurance that this is neither to be disloyal to their family, nor a reflection on them or their worth. (Mullender, 2002, pp. 107, 114)

Sample script to cover in your conversation with a child/youth about finding others to talk with about their feelings:

Make a list of people you trust and can talk to about your feelings about the violence that is happening in your family. Here are some ideas:

- Another person in your family (elder, aunt, uncle, grandparents, cousin, foster parents, mother, caregiver)
- A friend
- A friend’s parent
- A neighbour
- A teacher, principal, counsellor or other support staff at your daycare/school.
- Your babysitter
- Your (girl guide/boy scout/group) leader, or a coach or mentor
- The imam, leader, minister, priest, or rabbi at your church/mosque/synagogue/temple
- A help line

E) YOU ARE NOT TO BLAME FOR THE FIGHTING. IT IS NOT YOUR FAULT

Reaffirm to the child/youth that they are not to blame for the fighting. Let the child/youth know

STEPS TO FOLLOW WHEN SAFETY PLANNING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

that even though they may hear their name in the fight, it is not their fault.

Sample script to cover in your conversation with a child/youth about how the fighting at home is not their fault:

a) No matter what, the fight is not your fault, even if you hear your name in the fight or if you are worried the fight is because of you, for example because you did not clean up your toys or get a good grade in school.

b) Adults have many ways to solve conflict/problems but violence should never be one of them.

c) You cannot make a person behave violently or be abusive; how a person behaves is their choice, and you are not to blame for their behaviour.

◆ **PRACTICE TIP:** *Children and youth often feel conflicted towards to the abusive parent. For example, they want to help their mother/caregiver so they call the police. They then have an overwhelming sense of guilt for getting their father in trouble. If the child/youth is feeling guilty for calling the police, or getting the abusive parent in trouble, reaffirm with the child/youth that they did the right thing.*

F) DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS DANGEROUS AND AGAINST THE LAW

Discuss with the child/youth that domestic violence is dangerous and against the law. Physical and sexual violence is against the law. However, domestic violence can take many forms, and not all are against the law. For example, verbal abuse is not against the law unless it includes verbal threats as “uttering threats” is against the law.

Sample script to cover in your conversation with a child/youth about the dangers of domestic violence:

a) Domestic violence is dangerous and people can get hurt.

b) It is against the law to hurt someone.

c) It is okay to love the abusive parent but not their behaviour.

5. Step Five: Closing the Safety Planning Discussion: Summarize the Safety Plan With the Child/Youth

Affirm with the child/youth that what they are experiencing is not their fault. They are not alone.

1) Discuss with the child/youth and their mother/caregiver if it is safe for the child/youth to have a copy of their safety plan with them, and if appropriate, give them a copy of their safety plan. Discuss with the child/youth and their mother/caregiver a safe place for the child/youth to keep their safety plan.

2) For young children and younger youth, it is likely their mother/caregiver was present during the safety planning. Make sure the mother/caregiver has reviewed the plan, is in agreement, and has a copy.

3) For older youth, it is likely their mother/caregiver was not present during safety planning. Encourage the older youth to share parts, if not all, of the safety plan with her.

4) End with an activity so that the child/youth leaves your office on a positive note. Some activities include:

- Have the child make a picture of their safe place and talk about why this place is safe.
- Have the child/youth share three wishes they have for their life.
- Have the child/youth think of one or two positive messages they can tell him or herself.
- Have the youth put contact numbers into their phone.
- With the child/youth, create a visual such as a picture to remind them of their safety plan, if it isn't with them.

STEPS TO FOLLOW WHEN SAFETY PLANNING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Safety Planning With More than One Child/ Youth

There may be times when you will safety plan with more than one child/youth at a time.

SAFETY PLANNING WITH SIBLINGS

When safety planning with siblings, it is important to remember that while siblings can be a valuable support for one another, their developmental age and varying proximity to the actual violent events over time means each will have a different experience of the violence. Support workers should consider the following when talking with siblings about safety planning.

a) Do not assume that siblings have the same experience of violent events in the home. Some hear and see more than others, some are told more than others. Their experience is also influenced by each child's role in the family. Research demonstrates that the roles children/youth may assume in the family impacts their understanding of the violence. Knowledge of the child/youth's role is critical to developing appropriate safety plans for each sibling. These roles include caretaker, mother's confidant, abuser's confidant, abuser's ally, perfect child, referee and scapegoat (Cunningham and Baker, 2004). According to one study, "A child's perceptions of attribution, blame, and consequences, while perhaps distorted and even erroneous, are powerful and even adaptive. First seek to understand" (Cunningham and Baker, 2004 p.35).

b) Studies also indicate that while siblings may support one another, not all siblings actually talk about the violence with one another. Denial, avoidance, fear, and worry are a few of the factors that can play a part in this silence, which can lead to a sense of isolation and lack of safety. Asking siblings about their experience and knowledge of the violence in front of each other can help them feel less alone, more connected with one another, and open to figuring out ways to help one another feel safe.

c) Ask siblings how they cope together, or apart, dur-

ing a violent event. Children have described feeling safer by "cuddling up" with their siblings, distracting each other with games or music, or getting away from the violence together. Younger children also describe the importance of having a favourite toy or "stuffie" to cuddle and keep with them to help them feel safe. Siblings can be present for one another when no other adult is around; so encouraging this support between them can provide a measure of psychological safety.

d) Ask younger and older siblings to talk together about what they would like from each other to feel "safer." Various studies report older siblings cope with the violence by looking after their siblings, or feeling responsible for keeping their younger siblings safe. Ask older siblings how they act and feel towards their younger siblings during violence in the home. Emphasize it is not their responsibility to keep their younger siblings safe. At the same time affirm with them the value of providing their younger siblings with basic support and comfort if they feel able to do so.

SAFETY PLANNING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN GROUP SETTINGS

Some support workers may facilitate safety planning sessions with groups of children/youth in the same age and/or developmental level. There are benefits to facilitating groups, including:

- "I'm not alone"- children and youth will see that they are not the only one who has been exposed to violence in the home.
- "It's not my fault"- children and youth will understand that the abuser is responsible for the abuse.
- "I have the right to be safe"- children and youth will learn that they have a right to feel safe and that there are other people in the community who can help them.

When safety planning with several children/youth in a group, it is important to remember that each will have a different experience of the violence.

STEPS TO FOLLOW WHEN SAFETY PLANNING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Support workers should consider the following when facilitating groups and talking about safety planning.

a) When facilitating a group with children or youth, create safety within the group first by having a “Check-In” before discussing some of the core safety planning points and principles. This can include group confidentiality agreements and consent forms depending on the age of group members.

b) Do not assume that children/youth have the same experience of violence in the home. Some hear and see more than others, some are told more than others.

c) Children/youth are able to draw from their experiences; each child/youth can discuss what they did to keep safe. This will also reinforce the notion that “you are not alone” and reduce the shame and isolation they may be feeling as experiences and ideas are shared by group members.

d) Ask group members how they cope when there is violence in the home and discuss the risks and benefits of these strategies with the group.

e) Ask group members who their safe person is or something or somewhere that makes them feel safe. Participants will draw on ideas from each other and can add to their own safety plan if appropriate.

For a sample lesson plan for facilitating a Group Session on Safety Planning please see *Appendix K: Safety Planning Group Session Example*.



SECTION 2

Developmentally Appropriate Child and Youth Safety Planning

SECTION 2: DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE CHILD AND YOUTH SAFETY PLANNING

You now know the steps to follow to develop a safety plan with children and youth. However, it is important to note that the safety plan will need to be adjusted according to the developmental level of the child or youth you are working with. In this section you will learn how to adapt safety plans for children/youth according to their developmental level, which is generally years:

- 3-5
- 6-11
- 12-14
- 15-18

A. SAFETY PLANING WITH CHILDREN DEVELOPMENTAL LEVEL YEARS 3 TO 5

When safety planning with young children it is advisable to have the mother/caregiver present. Affirming to the children that everyone wants them to be safe and they are not to blame are important messages for them to hear and for the mother/caregiver to deliver.

It is important to note that the option of leaving the home by themselves during the fighting is unsafe for children at this developmental age. Options for where the child could go will need to be included in the mother/caregiver's safety plan, for example, she may make arrangements for the child to stay with a family member or friend, or she may ask the child to stay in their room and watch a video.

◆ **PRACTICE TIP:** *There may be times when a safety plan for a child under the age of 3 is needed. Children at this developmental level should have their mother/caregiver with them for this discussion. Because the child at this developmental level is often too young to openly discuss the safety plan, incorporate the child's safety plan into that of their mother/caregiver.*

For an example of a pre-school age safety planning form please refer to **Appendix F**.

Factors to consider for children developmental level years 3 to 5:

- They are learning how to express feelings of anger and other emotions in appropriate ways.
- They are concrete thinkers, using experiences and observations to make sense of the world
- They tend to compartmentalize events.
- They focus on the outcome, rather than the process or rationale that leads to the outcome.
- They think in egocentric ways.
- They develop a sense of being a separate individual and display increased physical independence.

(Cunningham and Baker, 2004)

Suggested Method for Safety Planning with Children Developmental Level Years 3 to 5

Children at this developmental level should have their mother/caregiver with them during safety planning, or someone the mother/caregiver has designated.

- Review the core safety planning points with the child: Go to a safe place; Don't get in the middle; Call for help; You are not alone; You are not to blame; and Domestic violence is dangerous and it is against the law.
- At this developmental level, the safety planning is often more of an introduction to safety rather than a detailed plan.
- Discuss the importance of staying away from the violence inside the home. It is important to note that the option of leaving the home by themselves during the fighting is unsafe for this developmental level.

DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE CHILD AND YOUTH SAFETY PLANNING

- Use a picture drawn of a home, or a photograph to help locate a safe place to go to inside the home.
- Use a book, puppet, doll, or art and film resources as appropriate, for example the video “Tulip Doesn’t Feel Safe” (Hazeldon /Johnson Institute).
- Role-play using puppets or dolls teaching the child their name, age, contact numbers, address or identifying landmarks of where they live. Discuss with mother/caregiver and child where contact information can be located for easy access if the child cannot remember the details.
- Use words based on the child’s level of understanding, and contextualize this in an age-appropriate way, i.e. “when (x) happens, and you feel (x), what do you do, who do you tell?”
- Keep the discussion simple and use repetition.
- Do not label anyone as bad. Focus on the behaviour of the abuser as not being okay. Reaffirm with the child that it is okay to love the person but not their behaviour.
- Young children sometimes worry about others knowing/finding out and who will “get into trouble,” so talk about how making their own safety plan is a good way to keep them safe.
- Draw pictures or use actual photographs of trusted people the child knows and who they could talk to about their feelings and safety.
- Depending on the capacity of the child, information about and practice in using the telephone and calling 911 is important. Teach and ask the child to practice the 9-1-1 drill on the telephone for fire/police/ambulance.
- Confirm with the mother/caregiver and the child who is permitted to pick up the child from the babysitter or child care centre. Some child care centres request photographs of the

Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence provides an illustrated and interactive safety plan for preschool age children on their website. <http://www.ctcadv.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/preschoolsafetyplan.pdf>.

It outlines:

- How children can get help
- Who they can call
- Safe places they can go
- People they can talk to

persons who are allowed to pick up the child. Talk about what child care centre caregivers can do if someone comes to pick up the child who is not supposed to. (See Section 3 for more information on pick up and drop off of children and youth)

- Ask the mother/caregiver to give copies of court orders and protection orders to daycare providers and others who may require it, such as teachers and coaches.

B. SAFETY PLANNING WITH CHILDREN DEVELOPMENTAL LEVEL YEARS 6-11

Work together with the child to define and understand what domestic violence is. In some cases, safety planning with children at this developmental level can be more effectively done with the mother/caregiver present. Affirm that everyone wants the child to be safe. This is an important message for the child to hear and for the mother/caregiver to deliver. It can be helpful to encourage the mother/caregiver to have routine talks with her children about their safety – in case the situation changes and thus the safety plan has to change.

DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE CHILD AND YOUTH SAFETY PLANNING

Factors to consider for children developmental level years 6 to 11:

- They have an increased emotional awareness of themselves and others.
- They are able to think in more complex ways about right and wrong, cause and effect.
- Academic and social success at school has a primary impact on self-concept.
- Peers take on importance as children develop relationships with people outside their families.
- They form friendships and start to plan activities for themselves.
- They increasingly identify with the same-sex parent and become more aware of differences between males and females in our society.
- They are usually able to verbalize what their needs are to feel safe, can engage in more critical thinking and are often quite creative. (Cunningham and Baker, 2004)

resources as appropriate. For example, the Violence Is Preventable for Very Important People: Elementary Student's Responses to Children's Exposure to Domestic Violence (www.bcsth.ca) and Tulip Doesn't Feel Safe (www.hazelden.org)

- As there is a significant difference in the writing and reading abilities of children between the ages of 6 and 11, using visual techniques to work on a safety plan is also useful for this age group. For example, some support workers use a worksheet that asks the child to list one person they can go to at home, school, or in the community if they need help. On the back of the worksheet is a list of emergency numbers. Creating a support map is another way to do this visually.
- Drawing a plan of their house can be done to practice visual safety mapping of their house, and safe people and places.
- With this age group ask them to identify the safe adults in their life.
- Affirm with mother/caregiver and the child who can pick up the child from daycare and school. Talk about how people at the daycare/school will help if someone comes to pick them up who is not supposed to.

Suggested Methods for Safety Planning with Children Developmental Level Years 6 to 11

- Review the core safety planning points with the child: Go to a safe place; Don't get in the middle; Call for help; You are not alone; You are not to blame; and Domestic violence is dangerous and it is against the law.
- Talk together about safety planning with the participation of the mother/caregiver.
- Support workers can be specific and concrete with this developmental level.
- Ask what the child knows about domestic violence and safety from home, school, and the Internet, and make a note of this.
- Work together with the child to define/understand what domestic violence is.
- Use a book, puppet, doll, or art and film

For an example of a Safety Plan for elementary school age children, see the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence's "Older Kids Safety Plan" in *Appendix G*.

C. SAFETY PLANING WITH YOUTH DEVELOPMENTAL LEVEL YEARS 12 TO 14

The full participation of the mother/caregiver in developing the safety plan may not be needed or desired by the youth, suggest they present and share their safety plan with their mother/caregiver. An option for safety planning with youth at this developmental level is to develop an online safety plan. Another option is to create a written contract with

DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE CHILD AND YOUTH SAFETY PLANNING

the youth stating what they could do and where they could go if they feel unsafe.

Factors to consider for children developmental level years 12 to 14:

- They have an increased sense of self and autonomy from their family.
- They experience physical and emotional changes brought on by puberty.
- There is increased peer group influence and a desire for acceptance.
- For older youth, dating may raise issues of sexuality, intimacy, and relationship skills.
- They have an increased capacity for abstract reasoning and understand a broader world-view.
- The media has an increased influence on their lives.

(Cunningham and Baker, 2004)

Suggested Methods for Safety Planning with Youth Developmental Years 12 to 14

- Review the core safety planning points with the youth: Go to a safe place; Don't get in the middle; Call for help; You are not alone; You are not to blame; and Domestic violence is dangerous and it is against the law.
- Use book, art, online and/or film resources as appropriate, for example the "Teen Relationship Workbook", by Kerry Moles (www.researchpress.com) and BC Society of Transition Houses' DVD and Study Guide "It IS a Big Deal: Youth responses to being exposed to domestic violence" (www.bcsth.ca).
- You can be more specific and individualized with youth at this developmental level. For example, you could have a focused discussion where many safety scenarios are given and the youth identifies which feels safe or unsafe for them.
- Youth tend to be more independent and are able to take an active role in their safety plan.

It is empowering for them to create a plan that fits for them personally.

- Let the youth know that it is easier for their mother/caregiver to take care of them and herself when she is not worried about them getting caught in the middle of the violence.
- Meet the youth 'where they are at', and work with them on areas they identify as important and relevant.
- At this developmental level, they are often able to go to a peer's home for safety.
- You may want to create a written contract with the youth stating what they would do and where they could go if unsafe – specific to their needs.
- Assist youth in identifying safe people they can talk with about their feelings. For some youth, writing in a journal or diary is also a way for them to express their feelings.
- This developmental level can be open to talking about all aspects of safety – sexual, emotional and physical, as well as thinking about their own emerging gender role. Discussing dating safety and healthy relationships can be part of this. Some youth seek emotional and physical support from others such as friends and partners, so talking about keeping safe around drugs, alcohol, sex, and bullying can be helpful. (See Section 3 on Dating Violence)
- Full participation of the mother/caregiver in developing the safety plan may not be needed or desired by the youth. Suggest they share their safety plan with their mother/caregiver.
- Safety plan around technologies the youth is using. For example, children and youth can be monitored and tracked by the abuser through social networks, spyware devices and cellular phones. For more information about spyware see: http://www.nnedv.org/docs/SafetyNet/NNEDV_SpyWareAndSafety_English.pdf

DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE CHILD AND YOUTH SAFETY PLANNING

Online Safety Planning Resources

Kids Help Phone: <http://www.kidshelpphone.ca/teens/yourspace/safety-planner.aspx>
 Bursting Bubble: <http://www.burstingthebubble.com/safe.htm>

- Youth can develop their own safety plan online, either alone or with a support worker and/or mother/caregiver.

D. SAFETY PLANNING WITH YOUTH DEVELOPMENTAL LEVEL YEARS 15 TO 18

Older youth often have a greater ability to keep themselves safe in comparison to younger children, but they may need help in identifying their own resources and developing a realistic safety plan for themselves. At this age, males especially may feel they can protect their mother/caregiver by intervening in the violence in some way. While respecting their feelings about this, encourage youth to first consider their own safety.

At this developmental level, full participation of mother/caregiver in safety planning may not be needed or desired by youth. Suggest they present and share their safety plan with their mother/caregiver.

Factors to consider for youth developmental level years 15 to 18:

- They are working towards adult independence.
- They are able to take an active role in their safety plan. It is empowering for them to create a plan that fits for them personally.
- It can be useful to talk about their history of risk taking, and how they tend to respond to unsafe situations.

(Cunningham and Baker, 2004)

Suggested Methods for Safety Planning With Youth Developmental Level Years 15 to 18

- Review the core safety planning points with the youth: Go to a safe place; Don't get in the middle; Call for help; You are not alone; You are not to blame; and Domestic violence is dangerous and it is against the law.
- Assist youth in identifying safe people they can talk to about their feelings. Safety plans for youth often include peers, community resources and specific agencies and help lines (MCFD, crisis lines, and child and youth mental health services).
- Use book, art, online and film resources as appropriate. The "Teen Relationship Workbook", by Kerry Moles (www.researchpress.com) and BC Society of Transition Houses' DVD and Study Guide "It IS a Big Deal: Youth responses to being exposed to domestic violence" (www.bcsth.ca) are recommended.
- Safety plan around technologies the youth is using. Keep in mind that they can be monitored and tracked by the abuser through social networks, spyware devices and cellular phones.
- This developmental level may be open to talking about all aspects of safety – sexual, emotional and physical, as well as thinking about their own emerging gender role. Discussing dating safety and healthy relationships can be part of this. Some youth seek emotional and physical support (from others such as friends and partners), so talking about keeping safe around drugs, alcohol, sex, and bullying can be helpful.
- Suggest creating a written contract with the youth stating what they would do and where they could go if they feel unsafe.
- Some older male youth may choose to or need to stay with a relative or friend if their mother/caregiver is in a transition house.

DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE CHILD AND YOUTH SAFETY PLANNING

- If youth can drive, suggest they keep a copy of the ignition key for the car with them.
- Be aware of safety and boundaries (for example, when connecting them with support services), and whether or not the youth feels comfortable/safe disclosing information to their mother/caregiver.
- Older youth may be able to assist in developing a safety plan for their younger siblings. This can include giving the support worker information on safe places that their siblings can go to and/or emergency contacts.



SECTION 3

Practice Tips for Safety Planning with Children and Youth in Specific Situations

SECTION 3: PRACTICE TIPS FOR SAFETY PLANNING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN SPECIFIC SITUATIONS

There are certain situations where the child/youth may be particularly at risk. In this section, safety planning in the following situations will be addressed:

- A. Safety Planning When Picking Up and Dropping-off the Child/Youth
- B. Safety Planning when the Abuser has Visits with the Child/Youth
- C. Safety Planning with Youth who Experience Dating Violence
- D. Safety Planning Considerations for a Child/Youth Testifying in Court

A. Safety Planning When Picking Up and Dropping-off Child/Youth

a) It is important to keep in mind that during the picking up and dropping off of the child/ youth the mother/caregiver may be at risk of experiencing violence from the abuser. Support workers need to safety plan with the mother/caregiver in advance of this situation. Safety planning tips to consider for the mother/caregiver include:

- i. Ensure the mother/caregiver has copies of court orders on her when children/youth are picked up or dropped off.
- ii. Suggest safe/neutral pick up and drop off places such as with safe family and friends and public places.
- iii. Work with the mother/caregiver on messaging when the abuser tries to engage in conversation, verbal abuse or an argument. An example of this is "This is not the appropriate time to talk about this."
- iv. Encourage the mother/caregiver to keep a journal

of incidents and dates in case it is needed in court or charges need to be laid.

v. Suggest the mother/caregiver call the police right away if any court order is breached.

vi. Talk with the mother/caregiver about requesting supervised visits.

b) It is important to safety plan around pick-up and drop-off of children and youth. Include the mother/caregiver in safety planning with the child/youth. Child/youth should be aware of who is safe to go to and what to say and do if they feel unsafe. With consent, work together with other service providers to ensure everyone knows about the safety plan.

i. When planning for the child/youth's safety, it is important that all support systems including school administration, coaches, after school care providers and others know exactly what court orders may be in place regarding parenting arrangements. The various types of orders that may be relevant to safety planning are: protection orders (including FLA and CFCSA orders), bail orders, probation orders, and peace bonds. There may be others, but these are most common.

Provide information to the mother/caregiver on how to obtain a summary of her court order which outlines access times for each parent. She can then give a copy of her order, including no contact orders, to her child's school, day care, child care services, and activity programs. Let her know that the abuser cannot be stopped from picking up the child/youth if there is no order on file at the school/daycare as copies of court orders need to be on file to stop a non-custodial parent from picking up the child.

Either the full order or a summary of the order, without reasons for judgment, can be provided (reasons for judgment are not always included in criminal

PRACTICE TIPS FOR SAFETY PLANNING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN SPECIFIC SITUATIONS

orders, so this only applies to civil orders). It is best to provide a summary of the order if one has been written by the judge. This provides 3rd party caregivers with relevant and pertinent information on the core issues.

If the order clearly provides days of the week that the abuser has access to the children, ensure that all school staff and relevant others are aware what days these are and that if he shows up on another day, they are to phone the police immediately.

If no order is in place, explain to the mother/caregiver that the abusive parent has the right to pick up the child/youth. Encourage her to seek legal counsel if there are no court documents (orders) identifying which parent is the legal guardian and/or who has what kind of parenting time and responsibilities.

◆ **PRACTICE TIP:** *It is important to note that support workers should not provide copies of the court order to third parties on behalf of the woman they are supporting. Doing so creates the possibility of a civil litigation process for the agency of employment, the support worker and the woman you are serving. As a support worker, ensure that the woman you are supporting understands the necessity of these documents and that third party groups understand their responsibility to phone police if there is a breach of the relevant order.*

For more information on peace bonds and family law protection orders, see *For Your Protection: Peace Bonds and Family Law Protection Orders, Information for women in relationship who need protection from violence or the threat of violence* (<http://www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/victimservices/publications/docs/peace-bonds-english.pdf>)

ii. Safety plan with the mother/caregiver and the child/youth in the event the abusive parent attempts to pick up a child when he is not supposed to or has been court ordered to have no access. The mother/caregiver should have already provided a copy of the summary of her court order to the school, extra-curricular activities staff, and child care services the child/youth attends and instructed these services to call the police if the abuser comes to pick up the child during a time outside their access time. Safety planning around this situation should include:

- Locating a safe place a child/youth can wait for their mother/caregiver to pick them up and identifying who will stay with the child/youth.
- Helping the child/youth to recognize who the safe adults are
- Working with the child/youth on messaging if the abuser shows up when he is not supposed to as many children/youth will feel uncomfortable telling the abuser “no.” An example of this is “I have to go tell my principal I’m leaving school.”
- Identifying who will call the police and explain to the mother/caregiver that the police have been contacted

For more information, refer to the “Children Exposed to Domestic Violence An Early Childhood Educator’s Handbook to Increase Understanding and Improve Community Responses” by Linda L. Baker, Peter G. Jaffe, and Lynda Ashbourne.

B. Safety Planning When the Abuser has Visits with the Child/Youth

Planning for visits with the abusive parent can help children manage fear or anxiety, and can help them develop safety skills and realistic safety plans to minimize the risk of violence during visitation (Hart, 1990). It is important to assess and reassess safety plans before and after visits. Factors that should be discussed with children/youth to help them plan for visits with the abuser include:

a) Ask the child/youth what they know of their father’s triggers for violence (explain what triggers are if you are working with a young child). Listen to how they have dealt with those before. If they are not aware of any triggers, discuss what some triggers could be during the visit. The mother/caregiver could also be involved in this discussion. Safety plan about how the child/youth will handle the situation if those triggers come up during the visit with their father. Consider engaging in a role-play to help the child/youth practice what they could say and do dur-

ing visits if they feel unsafe.

b) Discuss and safety plan around the impact of drugs/alcohol on their father's behaviour.

c) "Quizzing" children/youth for information about their mother/caregiver and ongoing family life is a common practice of abusers. Talk to the child/youth about how they can respond comfortably while not jeopardizing their own safety and sometimes inadvertently, the safety of their mother/caregiver. Provide information about how to respond if the abuser interrogates them about their activities or their mother/caregiver's activities.

d) Talk with the child/youth about matters such as torn loyalties they may feel between their mother and father, as well as conflicting feelings they may have about their father and his violent behaviour and their mother's decisions about the relationship. Listen to what they say about their loyalties and feelings. Affirm that feelings of anger, confusion, sadness, and fear are normal responses that they have a right to feel. The ability of each child/youth to deal with torn loyalties and conflicting feelings depends on their developmental level, their understanding of violence, and the level of violence that has occurred in the family over time.

e) Develop a system for calling their mother/caregiver or another family member who can help if needed. The child/youth should know how to use the phone and how to make a long distance call. The child/youth and mother/caregiver can choose a "code word", if the child/youth uses this word during their phone call, the mother/caregiver knows the child feels unsafe and to go and pick up the child/youth.

f) Be sure the child/youth knows how to call 911 and what to say.

g) If two or more children are on the visit, you can talk with them about ways they can help each other.

h) Explore with the mother/caregiver, the concerns she may have regarding child abduction and safety plan with her and the child (as appropriate). Discuss

who needs to be made aware of her concerns? Who they can talk to? What they can do? How to contact mother/caregiver, another safe person and/or 911. With consent and where appropriate, work with other service providers.

For an example of Safety Planning for Children's Unsupervised Visitation Arrangements please see Appendix J or MCFD's Best Practice Approaches for Child Protection and Violence Against Women (<http://www.gov.bc.ca/mcf/>).

C. Safety Planning with Youth who Experience Dating Violence

Support workers may find that they need to include specific safety planning strategies for youth who may be experiencing violence in their dating relationships.

Safety planning strategies for working with a youth experiencing dating violence include:

a) Talk to the youth about adults or friends they can tell or talk to about the violence.

b) Safety plan where they could go quickly to get away from a violent person if their safety is at risk

c) Plan around changing their route to/from school.

d) Ask if it's possible to use a buddy system for going to school, classes and after school activities.

e) Plan around transportation, for example, who could they call for a ride home?

f) Encourage youth to keep a journal describing the violence and documenting dates and times.

g) Suggest getting rid of or changing the number of any cell phones the abuser gave the youth.

h) Suggest keeping spare change, calling cards, number of someone who could help them and copies of no contact orders with them at all times.

i) Suggest changing all passwords on computers,

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emails, social networking sites and voice mailboxes.

j) Identify if it's safe for them to consider changing their school locker combination or lock.

k) Statistics Canada (2009) reported that young people between the ages of 15 and 24 had the highest rates of relationship violence and that the rates among LGBTQ2S youth were higher than those for non-LGBTQ2S youth. Research has shown that there is a higher incidence of violence in lesbian first relationships (Ristock, 2002), indicating a vulnerability for violence when first coming out. If we combine these findings with the high rates of violence against LGBTQ2S youth we begin to see a picture that indicates that LGBTQ2S youth are not only at risk from homophobic/transphobic violence but also at higher risk of being in an abusive relationship.

l) Don't assume a young person in an abusive relationship is heterosexual. If you are working with a LGBTQ2S youth, familiarize yourself or find someone who is knowledgeable about violence in same sex/gender relationships (see resources in Appendix I). When working with older youth who are experiencing violence in their intimate relationships refer to the Safe Choices Program at the Ending Violence Association of BC (www.endingviolence.org).

The above has been adapted from the Alabama Coalition Against Domestic Violence (<http://www.acadv.org>) and Holmes, 2006.

D. Safety planning with youth who are the abuser in their dating relationship

a) Encourage youth to take responsibility for their actions. Even if their girlfriend or boyfriend sometimes does things they don't like or makes them angry, no one deserves to be abused or controlled.

b) If they want to "change", remind them that they must "Change for themselves first." They may really want to stay in their current relationship, but even if they don't, stopping the violence will help them in their next relationship.

Young women are at the greatest risk of assault and sexual assault by intimate partners. Abusers may use a number of different tactics to try to exert power and control over their partners. Physical, sexual or psychological abuse may be perpetrated by an abuser acting alone or with a group of people against a young woman.

c) Suggest finding a friend they can be honest with about their concerns and their plans to change their behaviour who will hold them accountable if they see him/her being violent.

d) Suggest taking a break and spending some time away from their girlfriend or boyfriend.

e) Encourage them to commit to walking away from an argument before it escalates. Let their girlfriend/boyfriend know their plan.

f) Suggest they look at the people around them. If their family or friends are also violent in their relationships, they may want to find ways to spend less time with them. If that's not possible, at least pay attention to how they feel when they witness others being abused.

g) Reinforce they be patient with themselves. Let them know that admitting they want to change their behaviour is a significant step; but it takes a lot of work to change behaviour.

h) Suggest or refer them to a local program that can help.

The above has been adapted from Love is Respect. Org (<http://www.loveisrespect.org>).

E. Safety Planning Considerations for a Child/Youth Testifying in Court

When working with children/youth, coordination and referral to other service providers is often necessary to meet the needs of the child/youth you are working with. Coordination and referral to other service providers is particularly important when the

child/youth will be testifying in court. Victim service programs are mandated to provide court support and can prepare the child/youth for testifying in court, which includes safety planning.

In Canada there are accommodations for child and youth witnesses in court. Section 486 of the Criminal Code (formerly referred to as Bill C-2) states that testimonial aids, including screens, closed-circuit television, support persons, as well as the use of video-recorded statements, will be available to facilitate the testimony by children other vulnerable victims and witnesses such as victims of spousal abuse and sexual assault. For these victims and witnesses, the aids will be available, on application, where it can be demonstrated that because of the surrounding circumstances (including the nature of the offence and any relationship between the victim/witness and the accused), they would be unable to provide a full and candid account without the testimonial aid.

Resources:

- Allison Cunningham and Pamela Hurley of the London Family Court Clinic prepared seven handbooks, entitled "A Full and Candid Account: Using Special Accommodations and Testimonial Aids to Facilitate the Testimony of Children." In facilitating testimony, many of the points discussed also provide for the child/youth's physical safety in court. See www.lfcc.on.ca for more information.
- The Ministry of Justice has a range of resources available, including: Let's Go to Court: A Guide to Court Orientation for Child & Youth Witnesses, A resource for Victim Service Workers and other professionals who are trained to help child witnesses ages 8-12 to get ready for court. (2006) <http://www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/victimservices/publications/docs/court-lets-go-child-youth-witness.pdf>
- Help Starts Here is a 14 part series of publications including these topics:
 - Domestic Violence
Information for victims of domestic violence. It provides an overview of domestic violence, definitions, effects, analysis, how to report to police, related laws, where to get help, steps to follow in getting help, and resources. (2007) <http://www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/victimservices/publications/docs/help-starts-here-domestic-violence.pdf>
 - Victim and Witnesses in Court
Information on improving the experience of victims and witnesses in court, especially vulnerable victims. (2006) <http://www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/victimservices/publications/docs/help-starts-here-victim-witness-court.pdf>
 - Victim and Witnesses Testify
Information on ways to make it easier for young victims and witnesses to testify. Methods include closed circuit TV, having a support person present, publication bans, and use of videos. (2006) <http://www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/victimservices/publications/docs/help-starts-here-young-victim-witness-testify.pdf>



SECTION 4

Additional Factors to Consider When Safety Planning with Children and Youth

SECTION 4: ADDITIONAL FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN SAFETY PLANNING WITH CHILDREN/YOUTH

Many children and youth that access your services may have other factors you will need to consider in addition to their exposure to domestic violence. It is important to acknowledge the limits of your ability to support a child/youth that may have additional factors to consider such as developmental delay, substance use or mental illness, and refer them to appropriate supports. You may consider working with the referral agency staff to ensure that safety plans are aligned and have similar messaging.

◆ **PRACTICE TIP:** *Remember to have release of information forms completed prior to working with other agencies.*

This section gives reviews some additional factors to consider when safety planning with children and youth, including:

- A. Differing Abilities
- B. Substance use
- C. Children/Youth from Ethno-cultural, Immigrant and Refugee communities
- D. Aboriginal Children/Youth
- E. Geographic Location, Community Size
- F. Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity
- G. Relationship with Offending Parent/Caregiver
- H. Child/youth is in care
- I. Child/youth is involved in mandated services

The information in this section is intended to provide some general information on these additional factors. Please consult the suggested resources for more information.

A. Differing Abilities

A.1 When child/youth has a disability

There are five types of disabilities: hearing, vision, chronic health conditions, developmental delay, and disability of an unknown nature (Statistics Canada, 2010). The child/youth may have a child care worker who may need to be involved in the safety planning as well.

- a) The safety plan (for mother/caregiver and child/youth) needs to ensure the following is easily accessible: medications, assistive devices and chargers, health care and insurance information, birth certificate, mother/caregiver's passport and driver's license, list of trusted attendant care/service providers, mother/caregiver money and/or credit cards, legal documents.
- b) If necessary, refer out, or get specific information/supports from agencies that have experience with and information regarding issues and challenges for children/youth with disabilities. For example, contact your local Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) office and talk to the person working in transcription/Braille services or contact your local chapter of Canadian Hearing Society or your local phone company to acquire TTY's and other assistive devices. If the referral agency does not have knowledge or expertise of the impact that domestic violence can have on a child/youth, it is beneficial to develop a safety plan with the child/youth and consult with the referral agency in helping you utilize the best strategies to help the child/youth understand and implement a safety plan. Certain challenges such as recall, generalization of information, experiencing stress etc. can impact a child/youth's ability to effectively use a safety plan.
- c) If your facilities are not currently accessible, develop a list of accessible locations where you can meet with the child/youth. If needed, negotiate with individual taxi companies using accessible cabs and

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parallel transit services for priority use for children and youth with disabilities.

For more information about children/youth with disabilities refer to the Statistics Canada website (www.statcan.gc.ca).

A.2 When Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is an issue for child/youth

According to Health Canada (2010), *“Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is an umbrella term used to describe the range of disabilities and diagnoses that result from drinking alcohol during pregnancy. The impact and effects of FASD vary. Specific birth defects and the degree of the disability can depend on how much alcohol was drunk, how often and when during the pregnancy; they can also depend on the state of health of the pregnant woman. No amount or type of alcohol during pregnancy is considered safe.”*

To learn more about FASD refer to the Health Canada website (www.hc-sc.gc.ca).

◆ **PRACTICE TIP:** *To learn more about practical strategies when working with children/youth with FASD and other helpful resources refer to the National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (www.nofas.org).*

Below are some key strategies that will be helpful when working with a child/youth with FASD. (National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, 2011).

- a) Ask the mother/caregiver to let you know where the child/youth is on the FASD spectrum as depending on where the child/youth is on this spectrum, they may be more inclined to intervene in domestic violence depending on level of impulse control.
- b) Repetition is key for comprehension.
- c) Work with the child/youth on impulse control.
- d) Make adaptations, for example, use a model or playhouse to simulate exits as a one-dimensional paper perspective is often misunderstood. Realistic photographs can also work well.

e) Safety planning may involve consultation with other professionals specific to learning or behavioural needs if the child/youth and mother/caregiver consents.

A.3 When child/youth has developmental delays

Developmental delay can include delay in intellectual development, physical development and/or another type of delay such as speech difficulties.

When working with children/youth with developmental delays keep in mind that cognition is not linked to a child/youth's ability to communicate. For example, they may understand but not be able to communicate this to you.

- a) Puppets can be a useful communication tool depending on the type of developmental delay.
- b) Art and play can be used in the discussion to help meet the child's developmental and cognitive abilities.
- c) If possible, it is best to include other service providers that the child/youth may be currently seeing for their developmental delay. This requires permission from the mother/caregiver.

For more information about developmental delay refer to the Statistics Canada website (www.statcan.gc.ca).

A.4 When child/youth has mental wellness issues

Researchers such as Peter Jaffe and John Briere and staff working in the violence against women, mental wellness and substance use fields have noted that mental wellness and substance use can fluctuate as women and children/youth cope with violence they experience or are exposed to. Often, though, the links between these issues are overlooked. For children and youth, the stress and fear stemming from being exposed to violence can lead to chronic health problems, including mental wellness and substance use (Haskell, 2010) (see Section B for more information on substance use).

ADDITIONAL FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN SAFETY PLANNING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Most mental illnesses begin during adolescence or young adulthood. According to Health Canada (2011):

“Mental illnesses take many forms, including:

- mood disorders, such as depression and bipolar disorder, which affect how one feels;
- schizophrenia, which affects how one perceives the world;
- anxiety disorders, which affect how fearful one perceives places, events or situations to be;
- personality disorders, which affect how one sees oneself in relation to others; and eating disorders, such as anorexia or bulimia, which influence how one feels about food and one’s body image”.

For more information about mental illness refer to the Health Canada website (www.hc-sc.gc.ca).

a) If necessary, refer out, or get information/supports from agencies with specific information regarding issues and challenges for children/youth with mental wellness issues.

b) Ask the child/youth how they feel about their level of mental wellness – what can be included in their safety plan to ensure their safety when domestic violence is happening in their home? What needs to be considered? This allows the child/youth to identify their own concerns and moves away from the assumption that mental wellness leads to a lack of safety. For more information on talking to children/youth about levels of mental wellness see the Canadian Mental Health Association’s Presentation at http://www.cmha.ca/data/1/rec_docs/2296_Talking%20to%20Children%20and%20Teens%20About%20Mental%20Illness.pdf

c) Ask the child/youth/mother/caregiver to recognize patterns of stress and identify warning signs of violence.

d) Ask the child/youth what they do to make them-

selves feel better or calm themselves down. Are they interested in learning other ways? What are things other people can do to help them calm down or feel better? Calming activities could include use of breathing techniques, colouring, drawing and/or journaling.

e) Continue using core safety planning points to develop the child/youth’s safety plan.

A.5 When mother/caregiver has mental wellness issues

The impact of mental wellness issues on care giving varies greatly for each individual. Possible effects of mental wellness issues can include financial, emotional, social and physical problems.

a) Ask how the mother/caregiver feels about her levels of mental wellness – what can be included in their safety plan and that of their child’s to ensure everyone’s safety when domestic violence is happening in their home? What needs to be considered? This allows her to identify her concerns and moves away from the assumption that mental wellness leads to a lack of safety.

b) Ask the mother/caregiver what she does to make herself feel better or calm herself down. Is the mother/caregiver interested in learning other ways? What are things other people can do to help her calm down or feel better?

c) Ask mother/caregiver to recognize patterns of stress and identify warning signs of violence.

d) Ask the mother/caregiver to make a list of safe places and people for children to access if he/she is going into mental wellness crisis.

e) Ask mother/caregiver to move medications and harmful things if she feels a mental wellness crisis coming on.

f) Ask what supports she has already accessed. With consent, work in collaboration with other service providers.

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A.6 Safety planning with a child/youth when their parent/caregiver has mental wellness issues

a) For older children/youth, (developmental level age 12 and up) it might be possible to involve the child/youth in the above discussion (5a-f) with their mother/caregiver, or, with the mother/caregiver's permission, you could review her responses with their youth as part of their safety planning discussion.

b) Continue using core safety planning points to develop youth's safety plan.

c) Any discussions about the mother/caregiver's mental wellness will need her permission. This could be a good opportunity to include a support worker for the mother/caregiver in the safety planning process.

d) Useful books for younger age children are *Someone in My Family has a Mental Illness* by Lynne Brindamour, and *Sometimes My Mommy Gets Angry* by Bebe Moore Campbell.

B. Substance Use

B.1 When child/youth is using substances

a) Experts in the substance use field advise not to do safety planning with children/youth when they are under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

b) When child/youth is sober, discuss the importance of keeping away from the violence, especially when they are using substances. .

c) If necessary, get information/supports from agencies with specific information regarding issues and challenges for children/youth who are using substances.

d) Ask the child/youth how they feel about their substance use and if/how s/he thinks it gets in the way of safety. This will allow the child/youth to identify safety concerns to include in the safety planning process.

e) Asking about how child/youth feels about their substance use may allow for consideration of whether there is anything they want to change in their life. If there is, help plan to make small steps towards those changes.

f) Ask if child/youth has accessed other supports and if they want any information about places/people they might talk to (i.e. a referral).

B.2 When mother/caregiver is using substances

a) Ask the mother/caregiver her feelings about her own substance use and if/how she thinks it gets in the way of safety for herself, and for her children.

b) For mothers/caregivers who cannot/do not want to stop using substances, it can be useful to safety plan around using substances more safely, and how she can make plans to ensure her children are safe if she is using substances.

c) Asking about how she feels about her substance use may allow for consideration of whether there is anything she wants to change in her life. If there is, help her plan to make small steps towards those changes.

d) Ask if she has accessed other supports and if she wants any information about places/people she might talk to (i.e. a referral).

e) Useful books for working with children include *When a Family is in Trouble* by Marge Heegaard, *My Dad Loves Me, My Dad Has a Disease*, by Claudia Black and *Substance Abuse Wishes and Worries: A Story to Help Children Understand a Parent who Drinks Too Much Alcohol* by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

C. Children/Youth from Ethno-cultural, Immigrant and Refugee communities

C.1 When child/youth is from an ethno-cultural community

a) Children from some ethno-cultural communities are not usually encouraged or allowed to be open

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to, or express their feelings to people outside of their families. This could be because of cultural norms or negative past experiences with authorities that have left the child/youth/family believing that people outside their families cannot be trusted.

b) Language is often a barrier in working with immigrant children. If you do not speak the child/youth's language, partnering with a support worker who does can help in building trust.

c) Art can also break the language barrier and can be used to help children express their feelings.

d) Ask the child/youth questions to assist with understanding their cultural standards for defining violent behaviour and compare it with Canadian laws. Support workers can find information about Canadian laws in the Criminal Code of Canada, British Columbia's Family Law Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

e) Children approach the task of coping with exposure to domestic violence through their own cultural lens and family experience, so it is important to recognize cultural variation within and between groups.

f) Be aware of racism and bullying that the child/youth may be experiencing and ensure their safety plan addresses these issues. Pay attention to both the way the child may be victimized by peers but also how they may be acting out their experience by bullying peers.

C.2 When child/youth is immigrant/refugee

It is important to recognize that an immigrant or refugee may have strong values within her culture or religion regarding the importance of the family unit. Family circumstances will play a role in the child/youth's experience of violence against women as well as the decision to leave the violent situation (Barbeau, 2010).

a) Experts in this field advise that it is preferable for safety planning with immigrant/refugee children/youth be done in conjunction with safety planning for their mothers/caregivers. This is especially the

case for refugee children/youth who may have experienced various levels of political and social trauma.

The Best Practice Manual for Children Who Witness Abuse Programs provides further suggestions for working with children from immigrant or refugee families:

- Discuss with the mother/caregiver (and the child who is old enough and youth) the particular needs (restrictions on meeting times? dietary needs?) and strengths related to their culture and how these strengths can be accessed to provide support and protection in culturally appropriate ways (McEvoy & Ziegler, 2006).
- If safety planning in a group, where possible, have at least two children from the same ethno-cultural background in each group (White & McConnell, 1995).
- Consider working with community leaders within immigrant or refugee groups to identify ways to design the service and especially the intake process. Work to balance the need for safety and health related information with the need to respect the dignity and privacy of the client (McEvoy & Ziegler, 2006).

For further reading refer to the Best Practice Manual for Children Who Witness Abuse Programs (www.bcsth.ca).

b) Be aware of racism and bullying that the child/youth may be experiencing and ensure their safety plan addresses these issues. Pay attention to both the way the child may be victimized by peers but also how they may be acting out their experience by bullying peers.

c) Consider using resources such as *Through the Eyes of a Child: An Introductory Manual on the Impact of Family Violence for Multicultural Home/School Workers* by the Vancouver Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services Society. (<http://www.vlmfss.ca>)

ADDITIONAL FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN SAFETY PLANNING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

D. Aboriginal Children/Youth

When working with children/youth from Aboriginal families, support workers must bear in mind the historical and social dynamics of colonialism and racism from which many Aboriginal communities are recovering, and the impact of this history on Aboriginal families. Working with Aboriginal families also needs to incorporate knowledge of Aboriginal conceptions of health and healing. For more information for working with Aboriginal children and youth refer to the Best Practices Manual for Children Who Witness Abuse Programs (www.bcsth.ca). For more information for working with Aboriginal women and families, refer to the Best Practices Manual for Stopping the Violence Programs in British Columbia (www.endingviolence.org).

D.1 When child/youth is Aboriginal

a) The extended family of the Aboriginal child/youth may be involved in the safety planning process. At the same time, the closeness of community and relatives can mean additional pressure for Aboriginal children/youth.

b) When and if appropriate find out who the family elder is so they can be brought into the plan – as long as they are a safe person for the child/youth.

c) Other issues to be aware of with Aboriginal children/youth: limited resources of mother/caregiver/community; abuser could be important community member; and fear/suspicion of justice and child protection systems. Also, distance of resources from home and complex relationships between victim, perpetrator, and their families/community. If they live on reserve, there could be a lack of privacy resulting in shame if their situation becomes known by others.

d) Be aware of racism and bullying that child/youth may be experiencing and ensure their safety plan addresses these issues. Pay attention to both the way the child may be victimized by peers but also how they may be acting out their experience by bullying peers.

e) When appropriate, support workers could use the Circle of Courage Medicine Wheel with the family. See Appendix H or refer to *Reclaiming Youth at Risk: Our Hope for the Future* by Larry Brendtro, Martin Brokenleg, & Steve Van Bockern (www.solution-tree.com).

f) An additional resource is the video *Little Voice in the Dark: A Support for Children Who Must Cope and Live with Family Violence*. To order this resource, contact the Tsawwassen First Nation at 604-943-2112.

E. Geographic Location, Community Size

E.1 When child/youth/mother/caregiver live in small communities or isolated/rural areas

a) In smaller communities, the lack of anonymity and privacy, the homogeneity of socio-cultural normative values and the population's demographic characteristics are issues when safety planning with children/youth and their mothers/caregivers. The fear of backlash from the community and the abuser "finding out" where a woman and her children have fled to are realistic concerns and need to be taken into account when safety planning.

b) Small rural communities can be a source of strength and inclusion. It is important to get a sense of where the child/youth is vulnerable and where they are connected within the broader community.

c) The distance from emergency services and other resources needs to be considered when safety planning with children/youth and their mothers/caregivers in isolated and rural areas.

d) When children/youth and their mothers/caregivers are familiar with service providers, as is often the case in small towns, efforts need to be taken to ensure confidentiality. Also, it is important to discuss whether the children/youth and mother/caregiver are comfortable receiving services from someone they know.

F. Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Issues of sexual orientation and gender identity can present some unique challenges and issues when safety planning with children/youth of same-sex/gender parents or living in same-sex/gender households and for children/youth who identify as LG-BTQ2S¹.

See Appendix I for a list of LGBTQ2S definitions and resources.

F.1 Factors to consider when children/youth identify as LGBTQ2S

a) Some children are aware that their gender identity is different than their assigned gender from a very early age. This awareness of being 'different' can be a source of added vulnerability if living in a home where they are exposed to violence. These children may internalize the violence as being a direct result of their 'difference'; because they do not conform to societal expectations around gender and gender expression. And indeed, it may be used as a 'weapon' by the abuser (i.e. blaming the mother for her son's desire to dress up and play with dolls and using that as an excuse to be violent). Be aware that helping a child/youth understand that the violence isn't their fault may require an additional discussion about difference, gender and discrimination.

b) Be sensitive to how a child/youth identifies themselves, what pronouns they use to describe themselves and their gender. Assess to determine the dynamics at play in the parent/caregiver's relationship. Dynamics in same gender relationships may be complex and do not necessarily follow a power and control dynamic where one person is the abuser and the other is the victim (see Ristock, 2002).

c) Safety planning with LGBTQ2S children/youth needs to include an assessment and questions about suicide and risk for harming oneself, in addition to safety planning around violence in the home. Homophobic and transphobic bullying and violence are some of the most common forms of bullying that

exist in schools (see Pride Education Network – www.pridenet.ca) and create an environment where many LBGQTQ2S students or students who are perceived to be LGBTQ2S are three times more likely to commit suicide than their non-LGBTQ2S counterparts (Gilbert, 2004).

F.2 Factors to consider when children/youth have LGBTQ2S parents/caregivers

a) If necessary, seek information/support from agencies with specific information regarding issues and challenges for children/youth with a same-sex or transgender caregiver.

b) Two different scenarios may be at play with children/youth who have caregivers who are LGBTQ2S: i) where caregivers are in an abusive same-sex/gender relationship and ii) where mother has left an abusive heterosexual relationship and is now in same-sex relationship and risk of violence is from the father.

c) Explore your own attitudes, assumptions, and understandings regarding gay, lesbian and transgender relationships. Assess to determine who the victim is and who the perpetrator is. Use neutral language when asking about sexual partners or perpetrators until the gender of the partner is disclosed. Fear of being "outed" may exacerbate issues for children of lesbians and transgendered people.

d) Relationship dynamics in same-sex/gender relationships are often complex and don't always follow the general power and control dynamic of heterosexual relationships.

e) Consider, with older children/youth, helping them to understand the violence dynamics that they are exposed to at home. Help them to understand about power and control, as well as dynamics of self-defence, retaliation and shifting power dynamics (see Ristock, 2002).

f) Allow the child to tell you who their family is: they may or may not be biologically related.

g) Consider whether or not the children/youth are being used to keep one of their parents/caregivers

¹ LGBTQ2S refers to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Two-spirited.

ADDITIONAL FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN SAFETY PLANNING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

in the abusive same-sex or transgender relationship by speaking publicly of the other parent/caregiver's sexual orientation against their wish. This can put additional pressure on the child/youth in their own search for safety from being exposed to domestic violence.

The above information is adapted from Holmes, 2006.

G. Relationship With Offending Parent/Caregiver

G.1 When child/youth's primary custodial caregiver is the abusive parent/caregiver

- a) Always put child/youth safety first.
- b) Have child/youth identify caregiver's triggers for violence.
- c) Work closely with MCFD child protection workers in these cases.
- d) MCFD child protection workers and the mother/caregiver must be involved in all cases where the abusive custodial parent is actively abusive towards the children/youth.

See Section 3 of toolkit for Safety Planning When Picking Up and Dropping-off the Child/You and Safety Planning when the Abusive Parent has Visits with the Child/Youth.

H. Child/Youth is in Care

Safety planning with children/youth recently placed in care needs to take into account the changed physical circumstances of the child/youth as well as feelings the child/youth may have because of being in care. For example, although a child/youth might be relieved to now be living somewhere away from the violence, they may also feel confused or angry at how their life has been so disrupted. Asking the child/youth in care how they are doing in their new living situation would be a good start to the safety planning discussion.

a) If there is an existing safety plan, all elements will need review because of new "in care" surroundings, perhaps a new school, new "safe" people to remember and new contact numbers. If there is not an existing safety plan, use the guidelines in this toolkit to build one.

b) Bear in mind that the foster parents will, at a minimum, need to be informed about the plan, and, given they are now providing shelter and care to the child/youth, may also be able to help with identifying some safety methods.

c) The safety plan of the child/youth in care will also need to consider the safety of the child/youth's foster home and its occupants. For example, care should be taken when making arrangements for the child/youth's pick-up and drop-off from visits with the abuser. (See Section 3 of toolkit for Safety Planning When Picking Up and Dropping-off the Child/You and Safety Planning when the Abusive Parent has Visits with the Child/Youth.)

d) The child's MCFD social worker may need to be involved in safety planning for a child in care and will certainly need to know what is in the child/youth's safety plan.

I. Child/Youth is Involved in Mandated Services

Safety planning with children/youth when your services have been mandated can be challenging. For example, a mother/caregiver may be mandated to take their child to Children Who Witness Abuse Counselling by a family court judge or the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) or she could risk losing custody of her children. Therefore it is possible that you may experience resistant children/youth and mothers/caregivers as well as those who may be unsure of why they must access your services.

a) It is important that the support worker clarify their role that they do not work for the Ministry of Children and Family Development. Clarifying this often helps towards building trust, especially when you explain that you need their verbal and written consent.

b) The support worker needs to discuss with the client what the mandated services/issues are to ensure she understands the mandate and possible consequences if she chooses not to attend your mandated program.

c) The social worker may request monthly reports regarding the child/youth's progress from you, with consent from parent. This is usually to receive updates if a mother/caregiver is bringing their child/youth to programs that have been mandated by the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD).

d) Collaborate with MCFD and develop a process on how to proceed when women and children/youth are mandated by the Ministry to attend your services.

e) MCFD may have parameters around parental involvement which must be incorporated into the safety plan.

f) Be familiar with MCFD's Best Practice Approaches for Child Protection and Violence Against Women. (www.gov.bc.ca/mcf/).

APPENDICES

Safety Planning with Children & Youth

APPENDIX A: IMPACT OF WITNESSING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

BC Society of Transition Houses, Best Practices for Children Who Witness Abuse Program (Barbeau, 2009).

Numerous sources list the lasting effects on children who have witnessed violence in their homes:

- Serious emotional and behavioural problems are seen at greatly elevated rates (between 10 and 17 times greater) in these children compared with children from non-violent homes (Jaffe, Wolfe, & Wilson, 1990).
- Many children experience symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), including fear, anxiety, irritability, difficulty concentrating, intrusive memories of the violence, anger outbursts, and hyper arousal (Lehman, 1997, cited in Agar, 2004; Graham-Berman & Leven-dosky, 1998).
- Aggression against peers, teachers, and mothers is increased in children who witness domestic violence, particularly among boys but also among girls (Jaffe, Wolfe, Wilson, & Sluszcza, 1986; Kerig, Fedorowicz, Brown, & Warren, 2000, both cited in Agar 2004).
- Emotional problems, such as depression, worry, school refusal, withdrawal from social interactions, and difficulty separating from the mother are frequently seen (Sternberg et al., 1993, cited in Agar 2004; Suderman & Jaffe, 1999).
- Many children suffer somatic complaints, such as body aches and pains, and illnesses with no known medical causes (Suderman & Jaffe, 1999).
- School achievement and social development are frequently compromised, as is the development of social competence (Moore & Pepler, 1989, cited in Agar 2004).

- Often there are more subtle symptoms, such as inappropriate attitudes about the use of violence in resolving conflicts, inappropriate attitudes about violence against women, and condoning violence in intimate and dating relationships; hypersensitivity about problems at home; and a sense that they are to blame for the violence (Suderman & Jaffe, 1999).

Symptoms are dependent on factors such as whether the domestic violence has stopped, feelings of safety on the part of the children and the mother, duration and intensity of domestic violence witnessed, and the child's coping style and other strengths or vulnerabilities. The ways that individual children remember and are affected by traumatic events depend largely on their age at the time, and coping styles vary with age (Cunningham & Baker, 2007). As well, children at various stages of development are differentially able to understand what is happening (Jaffe, Wolfe, & Wilson 1990). This section details the ways in which exposure to violence affects children at different developmental stages.

Prenatal

It is common for domestic violence to begin when a woman is pregnant. While consequences to the fetus require further study, there is certainly an elevated risk of physical injury to the fetus. What is less clear is the effect of elevated cortisol and other stress-related hormones on the developing fetus.

Infants and Toddlers

Even very young infants respond to witnessing parental conflict by stress that can be measured through changes in heart rate, crying, and other signs of distress (Suderman & Jaffe, 1999). The violence can directly interfere with the mother's ability to care for her infant, and it can also result in attachment problems (discussed above in Section B.1, "Attachment," beginning on page 27). Babies are also at risk of being physically harmed themselves, either intentionally by the abuser or unintentionally if they are in their mother's arms when she is being assaulted. Jaffe, Wolfe, and Wilson (1990) note

IMPACT OF WITNESSING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

that routines around sleeping and feeding are often upset, and a mother living in fear of her husband may be unable to handle the stressful demands of her infant. Infants who witness violence, they report, are often characterized by poor health, poor sleeping habits, and excessive screaming, all of which may contribute to further violence towards their mother. Arroyo and Eth (1995) remark that while children who are traumatized at this young age are unable to put their trauma into words, they may display symptoms that include hyper vigilance, exaggerated startle responses, developmental regressions, clinging behaviour, body dysregulation, and nightmares. Cunningham and Baker (2007) suggest that despite not understanding what is happening between adults, they nevertheless hear the noise and feel the tension, and may be distressed or scared, upset if not getting their needs met promptly, or too frightened to explore and play.

Features of domestic violence that might be most stressful for this age group include:

- Loud noise, such as banging and yelling;
- Sudden and unpredictable eruption of loud noise;
- A distracted, tense, unhappy, socially isolated mother;
- An angry, self-centred, inconsistent father or father figure;
- The chance of being injured physically by accident or physical maltreatment; and,
- Compromised nutrition and health if financial abuse restricts money to buy formula, vitamins, diapers, home safety devices, and so on. (Cunningham & Baker, 2007, p. 16)

Preschoolers

Preschoolers, from about age 3-6 years, are severely distressed by witnessing domestic violence. They may be very clingy or difficult to manage and negative in their mood (Suderman & Jaffe, 1999). Jaffe, Wolfe, and Wilson (1990) report that researchers

found signs of terror evidenced by the children's yelling, displaying irritability, hiding, shaking, and stuttering. They also note that children at this age appear more likely to experience physical complaints and to regress to earlier stages of functioning. Preschoolers are easily upset by changes to daily routines and are comforted by the re-establishment of routines such as those at mealtime and bedtime (Cunningham & Baker, 2007). Cunningham and Baker (2007) further note that for this age group, what they experience is more real than anything you tell them. The child may worry about being hurt and may have nightmares about being hurt. He may believe that the violence is his fault, and he may try to stop the violence, for example, by yelling. He may tune out the violence and focus instead on something like toys or television. He may hope that a television character or superhero will come and save him. He may be confused if Daddy is gone and worry that Mommy may leave too.

Features of domestic violence that might be most stressful for this age group include:

- Seeing Mommy upset, crying, and maybe bleeding or with a bruise;
- Seeing (and hearing) Daddy angry and yelling;
- Sounds and sights of first responders when they secure the scene and
- Assist on a call to the home;
- Chaotic change and unpredictability;
- Fear that they might be injured; and,
- Disruption in their routines if they leave a familiar home (e.g., to go into shelter) or if a father is no longer in the home. (Cunningham & Baker, 2007, p. 19)

School-Aged Children

School-agers, from 6 to 11 years, show their distress through aggressive and/or withdrawn behaviours at school and difficulty in concentrating (Suderman and Jaffe, 1999). These children are often labelled

IMPACT OF WITNESSING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

with attention deficit disorders (without having been asked about violence at home) and may have difficulties in peer relationships and low self esteem. Boys may begin to be particularly defiant with female teachers, mimicking the disrespect for women that they see at home (Suderman & Jaffe, 1999). At this stage, children look to their parents as significant role models. Boys and girls quickly learn that violence is an appropriate way of resolving conflict in human relationships (Jaffe, Wolfe, & Wilson, 1990). They may also suffer significant emotional consequences and experience embarrassment and shame related to the family secret. They may feel guilt at their own inability to prevent the violence and be confused by their divided sense of loyalty in wanting to protect their mother while also fearing their father's control over the family. Often these children will spend long hours at school, distracted and inattentive (Jaffe, Wolfe, & Wilson, 1990). Arroyo and Eth (1995) note that developmental regressions may lead to ostracism by classmates. Hyper vigilance combined with impaired concentration may make it very difficult for these children to learn well at school.

Cunningham and Baker remark that as children grow through the elementary school years, their understanding of domestic violence directed towards their mothers becomes more sophisticated. They see that actions have effects, and they may believe that the cause of the "fighting" is stress, family finances, alcohol, or whatever else their parents argue over. Believing this explanation is easier (emotionally) than seeing a beloved parent as someone who is mean on purpose (Cunningham & Baker, 2007, p. 20).

Features of domestic violence that might be most stressful for this age group include:

- A realization that their mother can't control her partner to protect herself (or perhaps even to keep the children safe);
- Understanding that their mother is sad and upset between incidents;
- Concern that their mother may be hurt;

- Scared that no one will take care of them if mother is seriously hurt or dies;
- If their father is loved, concern that he might experience negative consequences such as arrest, or that the parents will separate;
- Fear that they might be injured (now or in the next "fight");
- When noise keeps them awake at night, adverse effect on school performance;
- Anticipatory anxiety about the next incident; unpredictability of father's "moods";
- Worry that neighbours and friends will hear the noise or find out;
- Because of a need to preserve a sense of their father as a good person, being upset by negative comments that others make about him; and,
- Being upset at changing schools and losing touch with friends if the family has to move (e.g., to go into shelter). (Cunningham & Baker, 2007, p. 21)

Adolescents

Adolescents may demonstrate their distress at violence against their mother through school truancy, dropping out, and/or running away from home. It is common for adolescents to have trouble focusing on the future, and involvement in juvenile delinquency is more common among adolescents who have been exposed to domestic violence directed towards their mothers.

Depression and suicide are also more common (Suderman & Jaffe, 1999). Jaffe, Wolfe, and Wilson (1990) note that adolescents normally develop closer relationships outside the family. These may include intimate relationships in which they practise the sex roles and communication styles learned from their parents.

This may also be a time when teens begin to experience violence within their own relationships.

IMPACT OF WITNESSING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

For girls, this may be a turning point in which they make decisions about how to respond to threats or violence from boys. Some boys handle their frustration with the violent behaviour they see at home by assaulting their mother or siblings.

Cunningham and Baker (2007) note that as they grow physically larger and stronger, teens may choose to intervene in incidents and even risk injury. Adolescents may feel embarrassment and a strong desire to hide the violence from those outside the family. They may feel concern for the well-being of their mother and responsibility for taking care of younger siblings and perhaps their mother as well. They may feel vengeful towards the abuser and may have anger aimed at either or both parents. Teens have access to a wider range of coping strategies than do younger children. Some of these techniques are effective at solving the immediate problem, such as running away or using drugs to numb the emotional pain, but this relief comes at a cost if it leads to problems at school or in other contexts.

Impact on Children's Roles in the Family

Cunningham and Baker (2007) write at length about the roles all children play within their families. Some are conscious and others unconscious; some are willingly assumed while others are imposed on a child. For example, in many families one person is the mediator of disputes, another is the "baby" of the family, one might be the prized child who can do no wrong, another might be the "black sheep" who does not fit in and is expected to disappoint the others.

In a family that lives with domestic violence, the roles reflect the unique ways by which each child copes with the situation in which they live.

The authors note the following key points about family roles:

- Children may play roles before, during, or in the aftermath of violence.
- During abusive incidents, a child might play the referee, rescuer, deflector/distracter, or caretaker of younger siblings.

- A child may use the role as a strategy to cope, so it might not be turned off overnight once the abuser is gone.
- Roles assigned by the abuser can lead to guilt, grief, and other hurtful emotions, especially after he leaves.

For further reading: For further reading refer to the Best Practice Manual for Children Who Witness Abuse Programs at www.bcsth.ca and go to "Resources and Publications" and select "BCSTH Publications- Children Services."

APPENDIX B: BUILDING RAPPORT WITH CHILDREN

Sally K Sheppard, LCSW of the Sexual Assault Center of Northeast Georgia <http://www.gacasa.org>

What is rapport?

The dictionary definition of rapport is “connection, especially harmonious or sympathetic.”

Rapport is based on mutual confidence, respect and acceptance.

What is rapport building?

It is your responsibility to engage the child and bring him or her to see you as a trusting and helping person. In addition, being interested in the information provided, conveying the sense that you want to understand the world of the child.

Why is rapport important?

- Your job is important!
- Children have a lot to say.
- We are the ones to listen.
- Establishing a relationship in a small amount of time is crucial and sometimes very difficult.

Children and Rapport Building

Children are usually scared or confused about why you want talk to them. Misconceptions need to be cleared before any trust can be built. It is good to ask children why they think you want to talk to them.

What is Important to Gain Rapport?

- Setting
- Issues
- Facilitation of Communication
- Non-threatening, empathic style

Setting

- Quiet and private
- Non-demanding atmosphere
- Minimal distractions

Issues

- Play
- Control
- Entering and leaving the room
- Limit setting
- Presence
- Physical contact
- Food and gifts

Facilitation of Communication

- Silence
- Body language
- Eye contact
- Encouragers/ Door openers
- Reflection/ Active listening

Non- Threatening, Empathic Style

- I wonder if it is hard to talk to someone you just met?”
- Decrease the power differential
 - Body position
 - Verbal tone
 - Don't Touch
 - Easy words

Children and Rapport

- Communication
- Language (verbal and non-verbal)
- Trust

Language

- Sensitivity to the developmental level is necessary to interview a child and interpret their statements accurately.
- Choose language that is appropriate to the developmental level of the child.
- Misunderstandings and avoidable errors can occur when children are questioned as if they are adults.

BUILDING RAPPORT WITH CHILDREN

- Broad, general questions can be asked at the beginning and the responses used to determine a child's language level.
- Analyze a child speech to determine level of intelligibility, the average sentence length, average number of syllables in words, complexity of grammar, tense and pronoun usage, and sophistication of vocabulary.

Non-Verbal Language

- A child who slouches in his chair or refuses to make eye contact may be indicating resistance.
- Adjust your body language and approach in such a way so that the child will become engaged in the process.
- In addition, observation of the nonverbal behaviours of a child may also give insight difficulty.

Adult vs. Child Language

- Adult/Child language is a part of socialization that teaches children what to do, what to think, and how to feel. It is characterized by:
 - Domination
 - Expanding their comments
 - Correcting them
 - Asking many specific questions
- Children expect adults to have direct communication.
- Children assume adults know the answers due to socialization.
- Children learn that the goal of conversation is to figure out what adults want to hear.
- That's why it is crucial that you adopt a different linguistic style to elicit information.

Building Trust

- Trust builds through small specific acts carried through consistently over time.
- Trust isn't an emotion. It's a learned behaviour that we gain from past experiences. It is hope and dependability, and putting confidence in someone.
- Building a trusting relationship with a child doesn't happen overnight. It takes time.
- It must be earned and maintained with consistent actions.

Rapport Building Tips

- First impressions are a crucial stage.
- Present yourself as a neutral, non intimidating, supportive adult.
- Assess the child's level of functioning.
- Give the child a little time to become familiar with you and the environment.
- Allow child to explore the room/area
- Give the child simple choices
- Give the child a small idea of why you are there
- Begin with neutral non threatening questions
- Pay Attention
- Language pattern and Body language
- Confidence/ Ability to answer questions
- Note any withdrawal or negative responses

Reflection

- You must listen to be able to do this

BUILDING RAPPORT WITH CHILDREN

- Re-state what the child has said
- Acceptance
- Clarification
- Content/Emotion
- Allows the child to structure the conversation

- This age wants to please you.
- Build rapport by asking about colors and animals.
- Let them show off with ABC's and 123's.

Rapport Building Tips

- Avoid body positioning of power, place yourself at or below the child.
- Do not touch the child.
- Verbal tones should be matter of fact.

Best Question Ever

So ...What happened next?

Rapport with Different Ages of Children

Each stage in a child's development has its own challenges.

- The infant and toddler learn how to control their behaviour and evolve a sense of self through exploring their relationship to the worlds of family and play.
- School age children have the tasks of adjusting to the new environment of school, learning academics and socializing with peers.
- Adolescents are coming to grips with the self in terms of social development and choosing a path for work and career goals.

Understanding developmental considerations can help the clinician to better understand the world of the client and to gain better rapport.

Preschool

- Ages 2 to 5
- They should be able to tell you a who, what and where about a situation.

Elementary

- Ages 5 to 10
- They should be able to tell you who, what, where and 1 or more than one time.
- They still want to please you, but have learned how to manipulate the situation.
- Build rapport by talking about holidays, pets, school, and friends.

Pre-Teen

- Ages 10 to 13
- This age should know the who, what, where, and how many.
- This age is learning to test the system.
- They still want to impress, but will hold back information.
- Build rapport by letting them lead the conversation. Try noticing things that they look interested in and build from there.
- These children begin to develop meta-cognitive skills.
- Children of these ages often have with jokes, secret codes, and secretive languages, such as Pig Latin.
- This development can open the door to building techniques
- Different rapport techniques might be used with this age group.

BUILDING RAPPORT WITH CHILDREN

Teen

- Ages 13 to 17
- This age should know the who, what, where, how many and specific details of events.
- This age is attempting to be independent.
- They want to be treated as adults and will be more open if treated as adults.
- Again, look for things that interest them.
- Be aware that they will lie to you and are looking to startle you.

Cultural Considerations**What is Culture?**

Culture in general is beliefs and values on the basis of which people interpret experiences and behave, individually and in groups. Broadly and simply put, “culture” refers to a group or community with which you share common experiences that shape the way you understand the world.

There are many cultural considerations in the process of rapport building. Such as age and sex roles have special and unique meanings in different cultures. A task to build rapport is to create an environment and to ask questions that are sensitive to the culture of a child and his/her family.

The same person can belong to several different cultures depending on his or her birthplace; nationality; ethnicity; family status; gender; age; language; education; physical condition; sexual orientation; religion; profession; place of work and its corporate culture.

Culture is the “lens” through which you view the world.

Rapport between people of different cultures can be hindered by reluctance on the part of the interviewer to share stories, thinking that their client may not understand the connection.

During the rapport building process in a relationship, most people seek out similarities. Becoming acquainted and building trust in this manner is an important and natural process. Often times, these similarities help to pull relationships through challenging times.

Culture is often at the root of communication challenges. Exploring historical experiences and the ways in which various cultural groups have related to each other is key to opening channels for cross cultural communication.

Becoming more aware of cultural differences, as well as exploring cultural similarities, can help you communicate with others more effectively. Next time you find yourself in a confusing situation, ask yourself how culture may be shaping your own reactions, and try to see the world from the other’s point of view.

Things to Avoid

- Do not over talk.
- Do not explain.
- Limit evaluation statements.
- Do not fill the pauses.
- Do not comment of the child’s behaviours.
- Whatever you do, DO NOT jump into the topic of concern without rapport. Then you might as well leave and let someone else approach the child.

IF the child brings up the topic of concern then go for it and see where they will take you.

To build a rapport with children, young people and those caring for them, it is important to demonstrate understanding, respect and honesty. Continuity in relationships promotes engagement

REVIEW

- Show an empathetic exterior to the child.
- Be child friendly.
- Eye contact and sincerity of the voice.
- Never show negative emotions.

APPENDIX C: THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Public Health Agency of Canada (2010). Go to www.phac-aspc.gc.ca and type in The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child - National Child Day - Public Health Agency of Canada into the Search Box.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child - A child and youth-friendly version
What is the Convention?

- It is a treaty that is important for children all over the world. It was approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1989.
- The Convention has been agreed to by almost every country in the world. Canada agreed to the Convention in 1991. Canada has been working ever since to make sure children know about and live their rights.
- In the Convention, there is a full list of rights for all children under the age of 18. Those rights are to be protected and promoted.
- The Convention says that governments are in charge of making sure that children have rights and that those rights are respected.

What are its basic principles?

1. Non-discrimination

The rights of each child are to be respected without discrimination of any kind. It does not matter if children are boys or girls, if they are rich or poor, what their religion, ethnicity, or language is, or whether they have special needs. All children have rights.

2. The best interests of the child

When decisions are made that affect the lives of children, the Convention says that it is very important to think about what is best for the child.

3. The right to survival, life, and development

The Convention says that governments should do

their best to protect children from harm, and to help children live and grow to be the best they can be.

4. Participation

Children have the right to give their opinions in all matters that affect them and to have their voices heard. Children's views should always be taken seriously.

Why is it important for children to learn about their rights?

- You will understand what rights are, that rights come with responsibilities, and how you can help others practice their rights.
- You will know if others have gone against your rights and know how to react.
- You will respect the rights of other children because you know all children share the same rights.
- You will feel good about yourself knowing that you have rights!

For more information see: www.childday.gc.ca, www.unicef.ca, www.rightsofchildren.ca

APPENDIX D: NATURE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

BC Society of Transition Houses (Salerno, 2010)

Any woman may be subject to violence regardless of her ability to access systems, and/or her social or economic status, abilities, being an Aboriginal woman, citizenship/nationalities, class, education, ethnicity, experience of colonization, gender, geographic location, health, occupation, refugee/immigrant status, religion, and sexuality. We acknowledge that this list is not exhaustive.

Physical Violence

Hitting; pinching; pushing; punching; shooting; stabbing; cutting; choking; slapping; burning; shoving; using a weapon; physically restraining; intentional interference with basic needs (e.g. food, medicine, sleep). May escalate to serious assaults and/or death.

Isolation, Restricting Freedom

Controlling contacts with friends and family, access to information and participation in groups or organizations, restricting mobility or movement; monitoring telephone calls, emails, text messages.

Psychological and Emotional Abuse

Frequently ignoring her feelings; ridiculing or insulting her most valued beliefs, gender, sexuality, ability, age or sexual orientation; religion, race, heritage, class or first language; withholding approval, appreciation, and affection; continual criticism, name-calling, shouting; humiliating in private or in public; refusing to socialize; preventing her from working; controlling the money; refusing to let her participate in decisions; isolates her from seeing her friends and family; regularly threatens to leave or tells her to leave; manipulates her with lies and contradictions; uses intimidating facial expressions and/or body posture; accuses her of being unfaithful; uses sexualized language; verbally abuses the children and/or pets in household.

Stalking and/or Harassing Behaviour

Following her; turning up at her workplace or house; parking outside her location; repeated phone calls or mail to victim and/or family, friends, colleagues; sending unwanted gifts; stealing mail; hacking into

emails; harming or threatening to harm to her family, friends, or pets; harassing her employer, colleagues or family; vandalizing her car or home; assault (physical, sexual, emotional); kidnapping or holding her hostage; use of technology to track her movements, eavesdrop or view her without her knowledge.

Threats and Intimidation

Threatening to harm partner, self or others (children, family, friends, and pets); threatening to make reports to authorities that jeopardize child custody, immigration or legal status; threatening to disclose HIV status; threatening to reveal sexual orientation to family, friends, neighbours and/or employers.

Economic Abuse

Controlling or stealing money; taking her pay cheque; restricting money for food or; necessary medical treatment; and fostering dependency.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual touching or sexual activity without consent to it.

Rape/Sexual Abuse Harassment

Forcing sex or specific acts; pressuring into unwanted sexual behaviour; criticizing sexual performance.

Property Destruction

Destroying mementos; breaking furniture or windows; throwing or smashing objects; trashing clothes or other possessions.

APPENDIX E: AN EXAMPLE OF A CHILDREN'S SAFETY PLANNING FORM

Nipissing Transition House (2011) www.nipissingtransitionhouse.com

Talk to your children about safety. Just like you need to become aware of safe places in your home and safe places to go, so do your children. It is important that your children know the choices available to them and what they can do to be as safe as possible and what they shouldn't do as well. The following is a form to complete with your children so they know what they can do if someone is getting hurt at home.

IF THERE IS A FIGHT, DO NOT TRY TO STOP THE FIGHTING! THE BEST WAY YOU CAN HELP ME IS BY GETTING HELP!

RUN TO YOUR SAFE PLACE. YOUR SAFE PLACE IS _____.

CALL 911 - an operator will answer "POLICE, FIRE, AMBULANCE".

Then you say "POLICE!"

My name is _____.

I am _____ years old.

I need help.

Send the police. Someone is hurting my mom.

The address here is _____.

The phone number here is _____.

REMEMBER DON'T HANG UP!

Nipissing Transition House 547 John Street, North Bay Ontario P1B 2M9

APPENDIX F: AN EXAMPLE OF A PRE-SCHOOL AGE SAFETY PLAN

Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence (2011) or <http://www.ctcadv.org/> and go to the "Get Help Tab" followed by "Safety Planning" then "Safety Planning for Children the Safety Planning for Pre School Children".

Preschool Safety Plan



If someone is hurt or in danger,



I will  911



If there is fighting in my house, I will go to a safe place. Some safe places for me to go are:



In the closet.



Under the bed.



In the backyard.



In the bathroom.



To the neighbor's.

Sometimes I need to talk to someone. I know I can talk to







APPENDIX G: AN EXAMPLE OF AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AGE SAFETY PLAN

older kids Safety Plan

I will learn
to 
911




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To make sure I stay
safe I will keep a
quarter with me so I
can make an
emergency phone call
to:

If there is 

in my  and

I have to 

without my mom, I will go



?

If I can't go there, I will go

?



Safe places where I can go
at home are:

911 _____ ?
 _____ ?
 _____ ?

AN EXAMPLE OF A PRE-SCHOOL AGE SAFETY PLAN



I will have a special code word with my family to keep us safe. My family's special code word will be:

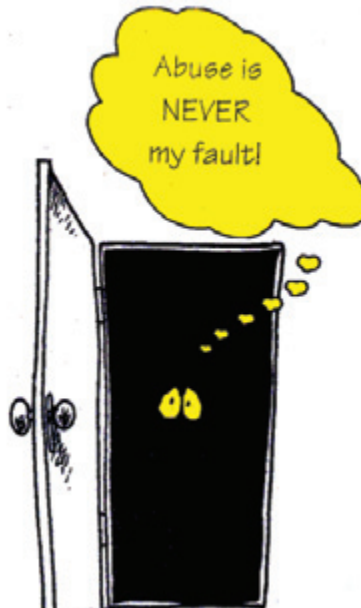


My family should have an escape route in case of an emergency. An emergency or dangerous situation when we would use our escape route would be _____?

I will practice our escape route with _____? and we will practice and review it regularly.



I know I can talk to _____?
and _____?



Sometimes people touch our bodies in a confusing way that makes us feel uncomfortable.

If someone touches my body in a way that hurts me or makes me uncomfortable, I will tell _____?
and/or _____?



If I had to leave my house in a hurry, I would bring _____?
_____?



_____?
_____?
_____?
_____?
_____?
_____?
if I could.

APPENDIX H: CIRCLE OF COURAGE

Larry Brendtro, Martin Brokenleg, & Steve Van Bockern. *Reclaiming Youth at Risk: Our Hope for the Future*. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service. This book can be ordered from www.solution-tree.com

Four Directions of the Circle

The Circle of Courage was painted by Lakota artist George Blue Bird. The four directions portray universal human needs for belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity. These are the foundations for resilience and positive youth development.

1. Belonging

In Native American and First Nations cultures, significance was nurtured in communities of belonging. Lakota anthropologist Ella Deloria described the core value of belonging in these simple words: "Be related, somehow, to everyone you know." Treating others as kin forges powerful social bonds that draw all into relationships of respect. Theologian Marty observed that throughout history the tribe, not the nuclear family, always ensured the survival of the culture. Even if parents died or were not responsible, the tribe was always there to nourish the next generation.

2. Mastery

Competence in traditional cultures is ensured by guaranteed opportunity for mastery. Children were taught to carefully observe and listen to those with more experience. A person with greater ability was seen as a model for learning, not as a rival. Each person strives for mastery for personal growth, but not to be superior to someone else. Humans have an innate drive to become competent and solve problems. With success in surmounting challenges, the desire to achieve is strengthened.

3. Independence

Power in Western culture was based on dominance, but in tribal traditions it meant respecting the right for independence. In contrast to obedience models of discipline, Native teaching was designed to build respect and teach inner discipline. From earliest childhood, children were encouraged to make decisions, solve problems, and show personal responsi-

bility. Adults modeled, nurtured, taught values, and gave feedback, but children were given abundant opportunities to make choices without coercion.

4. Generosity

Finally, virtue was reflected in the preeminent value of generosity. The central goal in Native American child-rearing is to teach the importance of being generous and unselfish. In the words of a Lakota Elder, "You should be able to give away your most cherished possession without your heart beating faster." In helping others, youth create their own proof of worthiness: they make a positive contribution to another human life.

APPENDIX I: SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY DEFINITIONS AND RESOURCES

Lesbian – a woman who forms sexual and affectionate relationships with other women; the term originates from the Greek island of Lesbos which was home to Sappho, a poet, a teacher and a woman who loved other women.

Gay – a person who forms sexual and affectionate relationships with those of the same gender. Often used to refer to men only.

Two-Spirited – people of aboriginal or First Nations heritage who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or transsexual; were accorded special and positive status, in many parts of North America, before colonization.

Queer – Originally a derogatory label used to refer to lesbian and gay people or to intimidate or offend heterosexuals. Recently, this term has been reclaimed by some lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgendered people as an inclusive and positive way to identify all people targeted by heterosexism and homophobia. Some lesbians and gays have similarly reclaimed dyke and faggot for positive self-reference.

Sexual Orientation – refers to our romantic and erotic attractions to other people. Defining oneself as gay, lesbian, bisexual, gay or heterosexual describes whether you are attracted to people of a sex/gender that is the same or different than yours.

Gender – the collection of roles, characteristics and behaviours imposed on women and men by society. 'Sex' is used to define the biological and physical characteristics of the body.

Gender Identity – one's sense of place in the socially constructed role of male or female; one's internal and psychological sense of oneself as male or female, or both or neither (regardless of sexual orientation). People who question their gender identity may feel unsure of their gender or believe they are not of the same gender as their physical body.

Questioning - can refer to a person who is exploring their identity, gender, sexual orientation, or all three. People who are questioning may be unsure, still exploring, and concerned about applying a social label to themselves for various reasons.

Transgender (TG) – a transgender person is someone whose gender identity or expression differs from conventional expectations of masculinity or femininity; transgender is also a broad term used to describe the continuum of individuals whose gender identity and expression, to varying degrees, does not correspond with their genetic or physical gender, or does not conform to society's assigned gender roles and expectations. Many medical researchers now believe that transgenderism is rooted in complex biological factors that are fixed at birth. Transgendered people may be heterosexual, bisexual, or homosexual.

There are a number of useful resources and places to seek out information about same-sex/gender relationships, relationship violence and issues of gender identity in adults and children/youth. Some examples include:

Programs:

- Safe Choices Support and Education Program, provides education, consultation and resources for service providers and workshops to the LGBTQ2S community on healthy relationships. Go to www.endingviolence.org and follow the links to the Safe Choices Program.

Books/Reports:

- Ristock, Janice (2002) *No More Secrets: Violence in Lesbian Relationships*. Routledge Press.
- Ristock, J. L. (2002a). *Responding to Lesbian Relationship Violence: An Ethical Challenge*.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY DEFINITIONS AND RESOURCES

In *Reclaiming Self: Issues and Resources for Women by Intimate Partners*, ed. L. Tutty and C. Goard. Fernwood and RESOLVE

- Ristock, J.L. (2011) ed. *Intimate Partner Violence in LGBTQ Lives*. Routledge Press. New York.
- Toppings, Peter (2004) *Removing Barriers and Building Access*. The Centre, Vancouver, BC.

Online Resources:

- Ristock, J. and .N. Timbang. (2005). *Relationship Violence in Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender/Queer Communities: Moving Beyond a Gender Based Framework*. MINCAVA electronic clearinghouse available online at: www.mincava.umn.edu and search "Relationship Violence in Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender/Queer Communities: Moving Beyond a Gender Based Framework."
- Pride Education Network – they have a number of manuals and discussion papers on the issues and concerns of LGBTQ2S. A handbook on Gender for use with elementary and secondary school students will be available in the spring of 2011 – www.pridenet.ca.
- Northwest Network of Bisexual, Trans and Lesbian Survivors of Abuse, Seattle, WA – www.nwnetwork.org.
- Qmunity: BC's Queer Resource Centre, Vancouver BC – www.qmunity.ca

Assessment Tools:

- Holmes, Cindy. (2006) Appendix A: Safety Assessment and Planning for Women in Abusive Same-Gender Relationships. ASAP Manual. BC Institute of Family Violence.
- White, C and J. Goldberg. (2006) Appendix B: Safety Assessment and Planning in Abusive Trans Relationships. ASAP Manual. BC Institute of Family Violence.

APPENDIX J: SAFETY PLANNING FOR CHILDREN'S UNSUPERVISED VISITATION ARRANGEMENTS

Ministry of Children and Family Development (2010)
"Best Practice Approaches for Child Protection and
Violence Against Women Safety"

Barbara Hart recommends that in cases where there has been spousal or child abuse, there should be safety planning for unsupervised visits to help children manage their fear and anxiety, and to minimize the risk of violence during visitation. Professionals should help children identify safety issues and build problem-solving skills. Safety plans for children should be realistic, simple, and age-appropriate.

Possible safety strategies to empower children include:

1. To provide information beforehand on how to handle queries about their mother's activities
2. How to avoid situations (place, time, circumstance) of prior violence
3. How to phone home, including making long distance calls or using operator assistance
4. How to obtain emergency assistance, e.g., 911
5. Escape logistics
6. How to manage an intoxicated parent
7. What to do if they are kidnapped.

Safety plans for children should be developed with the non-abusing parent and the child, and should be rehearsed. ("Spousal Violence In Custody And Access Disputes: Recommendation for Reform"; p. 60; Nicholas Bala et al; March 1998)

APPENDIX K: SAFETY PLANNING GROUP SESSION EXAMPLE

BC Society of Transition Houses, (2007). "Violence IS Preventable: Enhancing Partnerships Between Children Who Witness Abuse Programs and BC Schools". Vancouver, BC: BC Society of Transition Houses. Chapter 7 page 16 (7-16).

Session 6: I HAVE A RIGHT TO BE SAFE

Messages to Children

- Children have a right to feel safe.
- There are people in the community who can help you.

Desired Outcomes for Group Members

- Ability to identify safe people and places in their lives
- Awareness of community support resources
- Development of personal safety plans

GROUP ACTIVITIES

1. Check-in. Ask children how they are feeling and follow up from the last session.
2. Discuss safety as a feeling. Ask children what it means to be safe.
3. Encourage children to discuss the people and things that make them feel safe, as well as situations that make them feel unsafe (at school, in the neighbourhood, at home). This may also include feeling safe from bullies.
4. Ask children to draw their safe person or something that makes them feel safe, such as a stuffed animal, a pet, a neighbour, a relative, etc.
5. Repeat this activity with ideas of safe places

for each child. Some examples could be a tree house, the group, an aunt or uncle's house, etc.

6. Brainstorm people in the community who can help when children face a crisis and feel scared. You could introduce the panel of supportive people in the community and ask them to explain what they do and how they help families. Encourage children to ask questions.

BREAK! Snacks!

7. Introduce the game Play It Safe (refer to Section 12 of "Violence IS Preventable: Enhancing Partnerships Between Children Who Witness Abuse Programs and BC Schools" for information on this game). This game is useful for familiarizing children with unsafe situations and is a tool for developing safety strategies.
8. Personal safety plan. Let the children know that they all have the right to feel safe. Enable children to create their own personal safety cards with phone numbers of people who can help. Encourage children to role-play calling 9-1-1.
9. Closure. Invite children to come and sit in the circle and talk about one safe thing that they can plan to do when they are feeling unsafe.

APPENDIX L: SAMPLE SCRIPTS FOR SAFETY PLANNING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

1. Sample script to cover in your conversation with a child/youth about finding a safe place:

a) Figure out ahead of time a safe place you can go to inside your home when there is fighting, arguing, and/or loud voices that make you feel scared or worried.

- A safe place in your home is anywhere where the fighting, loud noises and arguing are not happening.
- Going to your safe place does not mean that you have to hide. It just means getting away from the fighting. Stay there until the fighting stops.
- If there is a lock on the door of a room, this might be good place to choose because you can lock the door.

b) While keeping yourself out of the way of the fighting, you might want to do something that makes you feel better, like:

- Listen to music.
- Watch television.
- Write, draw pictures, or play a video game.
- Be with any of your brothers/sisters and talk or play a game together.
- Remember to give yourself positive messages and use techniques you have learned to help keep yourself calm such as breathing techniques (take a deep breath and count to 10) and going to a space/room that makes you feel calmer.
- Call the Kids Help Phone at 1-800-668-6868 and talk to someone if it is safe to do so.

c) If you think you might be safer outside of your home during the fighting, think ahead of time about some safe place(s) to go to. Talk with your mother/caregiver about where that safe place will be so you can meet up together after the fighting, when it is safer. Figure out how you will get there:

- Walk
- Ride your bike
- Take a bus
- Call someone for a ride
- Call a taxi

d) Try to keep some money in your pocket, purse, or room, for things like making a call from a public pay phone if there is one, or buying a bus ticket.

2. Sample script to cover in your conversation with a child/youth about not getting in the middle:

a) Don't get in the middle (of the fighting, arguing, loud voices).

- Sometimes when adults are fighting, arguing, or using loud voices, some kids want to help, such as by staying in the room, or yelling to stop the fighting. But it is safer for you, and for your mother, if you do not get involved in trying to stop the fighting.
- If you feel like you need to stay close by, then stay out of sight and as far away as possible, and try to have a phone nearby.

SAMPLE SCRIPTS FOR SAFETY PLANNING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

3. Sample script to cover in your conversation with a child/youth about calling for help:

- a) You are not responsible for keeping your mother safe, but you may be able to get help.
- b) Talk with your mother about a code (special) word that only the two of you will know, that she can say out loud to let you know when you should call for help.
- c) You could also talk with your mother about a signal only the two of you will know that she can use to let you know something is going on. For example, if you are not at home when the fighting is starting, your mother and you could agree that, if possible, she will turn on the porch light, or close certain window blinds to let you know to go somewhere safe.
- d) Know how to phone to get help from emergency services if you think someone is getting hurt, or if you don't feel safe, or if you hear your mother say the code word.
- e) Try to use a phone that is not in the room where the fighting is happening or use a cell phone. Even if your cell phone minutes are used up, you can still dial 911 and get through. Perhaps go to a neighbour's house and use the phone there, or to another safe place, such as a local store, to make a call.
- f) This is how you make an emergency call:
- Push the buttons 9-1-1 on the phone for emergency services."
 - The people who answer will say, "This is emergency services. Do you need police, fire, or ambulance?"
 - You say: "Police"
 - You say: "My name is _____. I am ___ years old."
 - You tell the problem: "I need help. Send the Police. Someone is hurting my mother."
 - You say: "I am calling from (give complete address) _____"

◆ PRACTICE TIP: *Support workers in various regions of the province must know the correct emergency services number when 911 is NOT the number that is used in that region/community.*

g) After you have said these things, the best thing for you to do, if you can, is to stay on the phone. The person on the phone might need to ask you some more questions, or you might want to talk to them some more. If you do hang up the phone, the 911 operator may call back, which could make it dangerous for you and your mother/caregiver.

h) If you cannot stay on the phone because you do not feel safe, tell the person on the phone you are just putting the phone down without hanging it up.

i) Wait for the police or help to come.

4. Sample script to cover in your conversation with a child/youth about finding others to talk with about their feelings:

a) Make a list of people you trust and can talk to about your feelings about the violence that is happening in your family. Here are some ideas:

- Another person in your family (elder, aunt, uncle, grandparents, cousin, foster parents, mother, caregiver)
- A friend
- A friend's parent
- A neighbor
- A teacher, principal, counsellor or other support staff at your daycare/school.
- Your babysitter
- Your (girl guide/boy scout/group) leader, or a coach or mentor
- The imam, leader, minister, priest, or rabbi at your church/mosque/synagogue/temple
- A help line

SAMPLE SCRIPTS FOR SAFETY PLANNING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH**5. Sample script to cover in your conversation with a child/youth about how the fighting at home is not their fault:**

a) No matter what, the fight is not your fault, even if you hear your name in the fight or if you are worried the fight is because of you, for example because you did not clean up your toys or get a good grade in school.

b) Adults have many ways to solve conflict/problems but violence should never be one of them.

c) You cannot make a person behave violently or be abusive; how a person behaves is their choice, and you are not to blame for their behaviour.

6. Sample script to cover in your conversation with a child/youth about the dangers of domestic violence:

a) Domestic violence is dangerous and people can get hurt.

b) It is against the law to hurt someone.

c) It is okay to love the abusive parent but not their behavior.

RESOURCES & REFERENCES

Safety Planning with Children & Youth

RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

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