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NRFC Technical Assistance Webinar



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“The Role of Fatherhood Programs in Addressing Domestic Violence”

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Presenters:

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Webinar Transcription (provided by Global Crossing)

Operator: Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for standing by. Welcome to the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse Technical Assistance Webinar conference call.

During the presentation, all participants will be in a listen-only mode. If at any time during the conference you need to reach an operator, please press star-0.

As a reminder, this conference is being recorded, Tuesday, October 21, 2008. I would now like to turn the conference over to Nigel Vann, Director of Training and Technical Assistance.

Please go ahead, sir.

Nigel Vann: Thank you very much and good morning everybody or good afternoon I should say. I'm calling in from California. It's morning here. I (unintelligible) be calling on my cell phone because the hotel phone here wasn't working right, so I trust everybody can hear me.

Take Time to Be a Dad Today

Anyway, we have an important topic today, the role of fatherhood program in addressing domestic violence and this is an issue that I think is really important for all of us. It's something that I've only really come to understand in the last four to five years, and I do think it takes a while for fatherhood programs and domestic violence advocates and (unintelligible) intervention programs to really sort of learn to speak the same language and understand where we're all coming from.

So I hope that's what we're going to be today, and I certainly think it is based on the presenters we have lined up for you, so we're going to really explore ways in which you can look out for issues of domestic violence that you need to be addressing and how to address that, but also I hope we can also talk about the role you can play as a primary prevention role to really challenge fathers and men to look at these issues differently and raise their kids differently so that we don't have to have these kinds of conversations.

Anyway, with that as a brief introduction, let me pass it over to Jen McHenry, who will cover the logistics for us and then I'll come back and introduce our first presenter.

Jen McHenry: Right. Thank you, Nigel.

I'm just going to go through a couple of things with you all. The first is how to ask a question. You can ask a question throughout the presentation today. You can't do it over your line so if you start to yell something out in the middle of the presentation and want to know why no one is responding is because we can't hear you, but we do want to hear from you.

So the way that you can do that is to use the Q&A button at the top of your screens. If you'll see that's there, you click on the word "Q&A," you type your question in the box and you hit "Ask," which will be at the right of your question.

We'll give you a standard response, something like "Thank you for your question. It's been submitted to the moderator." There are two things, the first is, let you know that we're sending your question over to Nigel so that we can collect them all and answer at the end, and also frees your mind up to ask a second question.

And so don't feel like you have to save all your questions until the end and please don't feel like you have to save only your best question. If you've got two questions, three questions, please send those along.

Also if we do not get to your question during the presentation today or if you think of one afterwards, you can email us at info@fatherhood.gov and we'll make sure that your question gets addressed.

Some other technical issues, the presentation screens may be a little bit small for you. The type is difficult to read or if maybe you're in your room with more than one person and it's hard to get everyone around the computer together, you can hit the F5 button and this will take the presentation slide in the center full screen.

If you'd like to ask the question, you do have to take the screen back so you hit F5 the second time or the Esc button and it will take you back to your original view.

If you have any trouble hearing, if someone starts to get too low or fade out, you can send us a message using that question and answer function, and the note that says, you know, I can't hear the presenter or could you speak up and we will send that to them so that gets addressed as well.

Also if you're interested in the slides, you can do that a couple of ways. If you do not get the email yesterday, you can email us at info@fatherhood.gov and we will send those out to you.

And also if you have a fast Internet connection, I don't recommend this if you do have a slower Internet connection, there is a screen of the - picture off at the top of your screen, so go back just a moment.

That looks like it's three pieces of paper and that's at the top right-hand toolbar. If you click on that, it will give you the option to download the handouts. I would recommend that again you only do this if you have a quick Internet connection; otherwise, it may delay the presentation. You can always email us, and we'll send those to you afterwards.

Again, please feel free to ask as many questions and as frequently as you'd like and we will make sure that they get sent to Nigel and the presenters.

Thanks. Nigel?

Nigel Vann: Okay. Thank you very much, Jen.

So let me introduce our first presenter to you. I haven't actually met Lisa Nitsch yet, but I've heard very good things about her and many of you may have met her at the recent OFA grantee conference because she did do a presentation there.

But as you'll see from her resume online, her bio that came with the announcement, she's done a lot of great work in this domestic violence field and her focus has been on evaluating success for abuser intervention programs, engaging men in work in violence against women, which I think it's just very important and coordinate public assistance to best ensure victim's safety.

She provides consultation in (TA) in this area for fatherhood programs and healthy marriage programs and those of you who have (TA) needs in this area, you know, she is part of our (TA) team, you may actually get to see her in your area one day.

One of the things I like about what Lisa has done is that in her work at the House of Ruth in Maryland for more than 10 years now she has adapted the program from the title of Batterers Program to the Gateway Project so the focus is now on supporting men in the change process by encouraging them to set their own personal goals without shame while still holding them accountable for their abusive behavior and I think that captures a lot of what we are trying to do in this combined work here.

So - and also as you see, she's involved in a lot of other things and in particular she is the Vice President of the women and fatherhood group that have been doing a lot of - aid the work we do for fathers.

So that's more than enough and let me pass it over to (Lisa).

Lisa Nitsch: Thank you, Nigel. Thank you very much.

So good morning to the West Coast and good afternoon to everybody else. And first, accept my apologies, while I've done many presentations, this is the first time I've ever presented to a phone. So I'm going to ask for your patience through this.

So as Nigel said, I have been at the House of Ruth for about 10 years and for almost that entire time we have had a partnership with our local fatherhood programs, what was then called the Center for Fathers, Families and Workforce Development, is now called the Center for Urban Families. Some of you may have heard of Joe Jones.

We've been working with them for - we just hit a 10-year anniversary as a matter of fact. But - and I could go into more of that but I'm going to leave some of that for Johnny Rice to talk about later, but that's where my perspective and my experience is coming from.

So to get us started for today, I have to figure out how to move my slides first. There we go.

We'll talk about the language for the 2006 fatherhood funding. So what the word say is, applications must include evidence of the commitment for consultation with one or more experts on domestic violence prevention or with domestic violence coalitions in developing activities or materials.

An applicant must describe how to propose programs or activities or address issues of domestic violence. This should be clear and reasonable.

There's lots of terms in there we could go - we could spend an hour and a half going over such as clear and reasonable or what a domestic violence expert is and how people define domestic violence much less address domestic violence.

So what we do know is not require the grantees, but it is good practice to develop a domestic violence protocol and this slide here actually somebody else throw it, I'll admit, says for identifying, referring victims of domestic violence for services and to provide staff training of domestic violence awareness, I think these fatherhood programs are in a more unique position, where you are going to be working with men



who are not only victims of domestic violence some - but also some are going to be identified abusers.

And so you are in a unique role to be identifying abusive behavior and to address it with men as men most of the fatherhood programs we work with, you know, are in groups of men.

So it really does put you in a primary role for prevention of domestic violence and intervention when necessary.

So what we're going to talk about today? We're going to talk about sort of break it down into three steps. One, engaging a domestic violence organization; two, finding appropriate ways to address issues of domestic violence in your program; and then three, how to go about establishing protocols for identifying and referring victims of domestic violence.

So we're going to talk about - let's get started about what stereotypes come to mind when you think about a domestic violence advocate. So we all know that there's all kinds of things and in the Halloween spirit, I decided to go with a witch today, but if we're going to be honest, some of the things I've heard across the country when I say, what comes to mind when you hear domestic violence advocate, I hear things like man-haters, they're all lesbians or if they're not lesbians, their partners are all wimp.

We see all men as abusers, we don't trust men, or we particularly don't trust men to work with us in the field of domestic violence and I have to admit even as they, what I consider, a father-friendly feminist, I struggled with the trust issue about I guess - and Johnny can talk about this more when the events we did with the speak out and standing back and letting men take the microphone and letting men take the lead in that project really was difficult for me.

I'm not sure that domestic violence advocates are always honest with themselves about how difficult they can be because some of us have worked really hard to get where we are and to get the message out there, and so we get nervous to hand it over. And just to be fair, I'll be nervous handing it over to anyone, not to the men.

But some of the other stereotypes using domestic violence to get custody of children and of course domestic violence advocates, my favorite stereotype is that we're only in the business of breaking up families.

So I give you that list just to show you that yes, we have been listening, we do hear what you think (some of these) fatherhood programs, so what I want to put down qualities to look for in a domestic violence partner. If you're considering a partnership, these are the things you should be looking for, basically, the opposite of your stereotype.

You're looking for an agency that doesn't approach all men as abusers, that finds creative ways of engaging men in the agency's work, recognizes that men can be victims of domestic violence and provide services for those male victims.

They can see the benefit -- and this is a big one -- they can see the benefit of your program and how batterers can benefit from this content and this is something I feel strongly about.

It is absolutely a victim service to help her abuser get a job because she is not going to complain that money is coming in the home for one; and two, she may need an eight-hour break from an abuser if she is choosing to stay in this relationship or to find a safe out. So this absolutely benefits a (unintelligible) between these programs, and I'll get into that a little bit more detailed later on.

Another thing that you're looking for in the domestic violence partner is somebody who understands the difference between a fatherhood program and healthy relationship in marriage program.

In all honesty, people - I work with all of these programs, these types of programs all across the country and I get really confused sometimes because these funding streams came out at the same time, they're big money, I know that some fatherhood programs are doing a couple of work and some of the couples programs or the healthy relationship in marriage program are doing father specific work. So really

defining for your partner, what is your role in working with families, help them understand that.

You know, also (one of the) domestic violence partner and this is also another big importance. When they acknowledges that many victims are in contact and in contact is a term that's kind of getting more popular on the national level these days and it's getting a lot of attention.

In contact whether that be voluntary or involuntary, so there are victims who are in contact with their abusers because of custody issue, because of mandated visitation, sometimes because of economic dependence or because they don't have somewhere else to go as far as live. There may not be a local shelter or the local shelter may not be adequate for their family.

And there's also, just to be fair, many victims who are in contact with their abusers voluntarily because they want their children to have the relationship with their father because domestic violence may not be the highest - sort of the highest - I don't know, the most difficult problem this family is facing right now.

Domestic violence may not be highest on their list of priorities even though as domestic violence advocate it's on ours.

So just to be fair, I think, we - if parents, just to be honest with you, (let you know) that we have our own grade, and so sometimes there are qualities that we are looking for in a good fatherhood partner.

We're looking for a fatherhood partner that acknowledge domestic violence exist. That's a great start for us. We're looking for a fatherhood program that recognizes the gender issues in domestic violence that we know that well, yes, men can be victims of domestic violence and women can be perpetrator, they are vastly the minority of cases.

We're looking for partners that acknowledge they are not trained to do intervention work with abusers and that's really important for us that a fatherhood program or is not a substitute for abuser intervention work.



We're looking for partners that agree that physical violence is never acceptable no matter what level, a partner that's willing to financially compensate us for our time and effort in this partnership, if you're receiving federal fund, a huge federal grant, but if we're a partner in that, we expect to have - to be financially compensated.

We're looking for partners that don't support father involvement in any cost and what I mean by that is putting the safety of the mother or children at risk in the name of father involvement.

We're also looking for partners that do not advocate in court on a batterer's behalf, and then somebody had sent in a question about that.

Fatherhood program - I know it was a discussion we had in the very beginning of our partnership with the Center for Urban Families that when there's a custody issue involved or there's a domestic violence case coming up, we had asked our fatherhood partners not to advocate on the batterer's behalf for visitation - in favor of visitation or in favor of something, some sort of standard around the contact or no contact with the victim.

If you want to talk about the job you got, fantastic, but as far as we were concerned, fatherhood programs aren't qualified to make a recommendation about the safety of contact with children or with the victims.

So moving on, what does an engagement - what does engaging of a partner look like? I think the first thing I want to say, somebody had said like this feels like you're starting a relationship and in all fairness, this is the beginning of a relationship. Hopefully, this is an ongoing relationship between agencies. So it needs to be nurtured.

So we're identifying what we're looking for in a partner and we're looking at basically what a healthy relationship looks like between fatherhood programs and domestic violence program.



So engagement looks like cross-presentation. What do each of the agencies (offer) in the community. This is key that we're not always familiar with the services that the other offers. We're also looking at cross-referrals. Again, I don't see any reason why a fatherhood program and a batterer's intervention program can't be making cross-referral. I don't see any reason for it.

Things like donation drive. You can do a donation drive for the local shelter, exchanging and consulting on curriculum is a big piece. I know we have started incorporating a lot of fatherhood information into our abuser intervention curriculum and our partnering fatherhood agencies incorporate domestic violence prevention work into their curriculums as well, and also supporting each other's community event. Johnny will actually go in probably more into our history in doing that as well.

So the second part of all of this is addressing domestic violence. So it gets all confusing at communication training, conflict resolution, anger management, abuser intervention, all that so what's the bottom line that's really important for you to know is that abusers know how to communicate.

Anger management in my opinion is a top psychology term just like everybody's bipolar these days and every child has ADHD. You know, we say people need anger management off the cuff without making any real assessment.

But the problem with that is abusers usually do find communicating with the judge, they communicate well with their probation agents, with their abuser intervention program, with their bosses, when they're out of the club. Consistently their victim is their intimate partner and sometimes their victim is just women in general. Sometimes it goes beyond generalized into all women.

So the problem with requiring things like mediation - talking about mediation or anger management particularly couples or family therapy when there's domestic violence involved is that we're making an assumption of respect and equality that is not there in violent relationships. They do not have that level of respect and that ideal of equality that some of - most of us have.



And to recognize an abuse is a skill set and it's a very effective one and it's very difficult to change. Some people feel abuse intervention programs are too long. We're talking about long-term behavior change that, you know, whether it goes from 20 weeks to 52 weeks some of the programs I know in the West Coast, we're talking about long-term behavior changes.

If you ever tried to quit smoking, if you've ever tried to lose weight, any kind of behavior that's reinforced is going to be difficult to change. Every time an abuser chooses to be abusive, their behavior is reinforced when they get what they want.

So in talking about mutual violence, situational violence, these are terms that are coming up a lot. There is no such thing as mutual abuse. There is - I agree there is violence for both partners - situation for both partners have been violent, but by definition, abuse is not mutual. Mutual violence sometimes and we have to be careful with that term, mutual violence sometimes takes away a person's right to be a victim.

And I'm saying this because I've worked for a long time, I've grown up in Baltimore City, and I've worked in - more of my professional careers have been in Baltimore City and I can tell you from my experience particularly in low income communities and communities of color, particularly if you're living in a community where people don't trust the police or are suspicious of the system that they're unlikely to call the police and they feel that their only choice is to fight back. We take away someone's right to be a victim.

We also sometimes in doing that, in creating and using terms like mutual violence, not to say it never applies but when we use it carelessly, we're taking away somebody's right to access victim services.

So - and bottom line just because both parties are hitting, doesn't mean no one is responsible for the behavior. It doesn't mean we should put it - be putting these couples together to be working together on the issue.

So why address it? We can go over all of these stats and I could read them off for you but most of you are going to have them on PowerPoint already.

So I think the key is to take from this is that domestic violence that we know is one of the single greatest - is the single greatest risk factor for child abuse. We know that that is the easiest identifier for child abuse.

And I want to draw your attention down to this last bullet. Research shows that 80% to 90% of children living at homes where domestic violence - where there is domestic violence are aware of that violence. I can't tell you how many children we've spoken to that this is true. And that doesn't mean necessarily that they solve the domestic violence where the parents had to be physically fighting in front of them.

Children at a very young age began picking up on nuances and tone. They can hear the violence even if they don't see it. Sometimes they see the injuries, if one of the parents is hurt and more importantly, some of you have seen what we called the cycle of violence that after there's a big large and what we call an explosion or incident of violence.

There's a honeymoon phase where everybody is being nice to each other and people bringing home flowers and they're apologizing and the house is cleaner or everything is just calmer. There's this calmer phase. We call that the honeymoon period.

Children recognize the honeymoon period. So even if they didn't see that explosion or that incident, when things are just too rosy, children get nervous. They know something just went down. So kids are aware of that cycle as well and then they develop an awareness in that at a much younger age than we think.

So continue more statistics for you. I know a lot of this fatherhood - a lot of the fatherhood initiatives, a lot of healthy relationship and marriage initiatives talk about (unintelligible) child well-being study.

So I think, you know, what's important here is child well-being study saying, you know, parent - children raised in two-parent households have better outcomes or what we also know is that it's not just about having two parents in the home. It's having two stage parents in the home and we have our own, you know, background.

Domestic violence field has its own sort of arsenal of research that say, it's not just fatherhood for the sake of fatherhood. It's not just two parents for the sake of having two parents in that home, it's not having two safe parents.

So if you think about what are the outcomes, what are your - what do you want to measure and what do you want your fatherhood program to be successful about, what are your goals for your client, what are your goals for your community that if there's domestic violence going on and you're not addressing it, if you're not addressing it with the fathers that you work with, if you're not addressing it with families that you come in contact with, you are not going to be meeting your goals.

In all likelihood, you're not going to be able to establish those outcomes positively. And to just steal a term from - Johnny Rice likes to use it, you know, you're not going to get the return on your investment the way you expect to. You're still not have - going to have healthy safe children.

So in establishing a protocol, I am not going to be nearly as helpful on this as I would like to be as some of you maybe hoping because you need to know your capacity and the capacity of your partner in domestic violence agency.

Our protocols are uniquely developed based on those two factors and so while we do have some templates that I'm happy to share with people and I'm happy to consult and have conversations with people about sort of where they see things happening and what have their response looks like.

The actual protocols are going to have to be based on one, your capacity, and two your procedures. Everybody has different intakes, sometimes they meet with the couples, sometimes they only meet with the father, so I'm getting a sign that I don't have much time left, but I'll have too many more slides to go.

So this is - this all has to be personalized to your agencies. So hopefully a good DV partner would help you walk you through that and if not there is technical assistance available.



But at a minimum standard, what I want you to get and when I say minimum standard, I mean just that. This is a minimum do no harm standard or two things. One, truth in advertising and that is, this is not a program. That it's equipped and appropriate for addressing domestic violence.

If - domestic violence is one of your issues, there's another program - hopefully, this good friend of mine in my community I'd like to refer you to.

And then the other thing that you - the other minimum standard you need to be making is quality service referrals and follow up. That doesn't mean - I think there's domestic violence, you have a problem, call the House of Ruth. That's not a quality service referral.

That means I want to help you make this connection. Here, can we call it together or calling your community partner over and see if they can come in that day to meet with your clients and following up with your clients.

I don't see any reason why if you identified somebody in your program that needs to be an abuser intervention program, but they can't - they have to stop coming to your program. I don't see why that would be necessary for fatherhood program.

I'm saying that for fatherhood programs that aren't working with couple, I don't see why that person would have to leave the program. I think that if anything you can be as long as you're communicating with each other, you can be supportive of each other's effort.

So ideal partnership. The ideal say all these wonderful things. If you want to create standard operating procedures for both agencies you have ongoing - this is what I can't emphasize enough. Ongoing case studies and review that even if you're not making at the point of making referrals yet, let's talk about some cases where there are any cases that you were nervous about the couple or any - that you're nervous about how he reacts in conversations on when they have disagreement.

So cross-referral, cross-training, again including content and curriculums, recognizing you can't fulfill the function of the other. My program is not a fatherhood program, the fatherhood program is not an abuser intervention program.

Keeping abusers engaged in programs while also receiving domestic violence services and education. We can't emphasize that one enough. It's been ideal for our program.

And then this last one, do not limit the partnerships to the parameters of one grant. So it's not really fair to be knocking on the door of your domestic violence - local domestic violence program and saying, "Hey, let's partner because the grant says I have to." You really do have to cultivate these relationships. You really do have to be - create a true partnership between the agencies.

So what we've learned. A pep talk doesn't impact the level of violence a family's experienced. Just calling somebody in your office to talk about it, talking about it in one session does not impact the level of violence.

While stressors like substance abuse and unemployment can compound domestic violence, they're not causal. Someone who abuses substances and his partner has two problems.

Unfortunately, we have to all understand that some abusers have no intention or desire to stop their abuse, period. No amount of intervention on any of our partners is going to make a change.

And this is big, on average, 10% of fathers who enroll in your program who have histories of domestic violence. So if nobody - and I'm not saying that you need to go identify one out of 10 guys. I'm saying if no one in your groups is talking about it, you're probably not addressing it. You know that you're not bringing it up enough. You're not talking about it at all.

So we've also learned basic screening tools will not identify most domestic violence. If you're using these grant tools, usually at (intake) and you say do you have history of domestic violence, have you ever hit your partner? Most people are smart enough

to say no, and are going to get past that particularly on first meeting. They might not trust you, much less a domestic violence program.

So we know that these screening tools while they're helpful and will capture some people for most cases, it's going to happen once they get into the program and start talking about what happens when you have a disagreement.

And the reason these screening tools don't work, it's because neither the abuser or the victims identify with terms like abuse or domestic violence.

If you ask the victim of domestic violence, you know, have you been abused, more than likely she or he is going to say, no, I haven't. Sometimes we normalized what's going on in the relationship and no one wants to think of as domestic violence. They're real heavy terms that nobody wants to identify with.

So instead talk - approach it like talk about the level of conflict in your relationship or every relationship has disagreement, let's talk about what your disagreements look like.

And then the last one is being too responsive or also (alarmist) can scare some people away from services. I had a great fatherhood partner that we were working with that when they found out somebody in their program was a victim of domestic violence, they said, we got to get you in the shelter tonight, let's do this, we're r- well that person never came back to the program because they got scared away.

So also being responsive even with good intention, you know, it takes skills. So if you have a case that you have questions about, I guess what's most important is call your local domestic violence, you know, consult with us, we want to be engaged in the conversation.

If when you're not calling us, we start to get suspicious about what's going on over there in that other program.

So I know I've been on lots of these presentations where I was left with more answers - I mean, more questions that I had answers and I saw that there were some

great questions that were already submitted that we could have really taken a full hour and a half to just address those questions.

So that's my info. Probably email is the best way to reach me if you have any questions, but I really am happy to answer them. So thanks.

Nigel Vann: (Unintelligible) I think that's, you know, a really great summary of what a lot of these issues are, you know, one of the real lessons to me in this work has been that really is the difference between a batterers intervention program and a fatherhood program as Lisa mentioned and, you know, I think we - in doing the work with fathers and we're trained to see the best in all men, so we can help them be the best they can be for their kids.

But if you are dealing with many who have abused, then you've got to challenge them on this stuff. Obviously, in terms of a fatherhood program, you're not working with batterers per se, but you are going to have guys in there who are being involved in some of this so that's why it's important to find ways to identify these things. So we will keep talking about that.

It's now my pleasure to introduce Kelli Bennett who I met in person just a couple of weeks ago up in Colorado. She is with the Colorado Department of Human Services. She is a fatherhood program specialist there. They have a community access grant from OFA and as part of that, they have made sub-grants to 30 organizations in Colorado for this fiscal year. And part of Kelli's role is to help those sub-grantees form domestic violence protocols and figure out ways to assess the likelihood of DV being present.

She is also working in whole range of other areas as you can see from her bio, and so she brings an awful lot to the table. And I'd like to introduce Kelli Bennett to share a little bit of what they've been doing in Colorado.

Kelli Bennett: Great. Thank you, Nigel.

I'm pretty new at this Webinar thing too, so I share the request for you to be patient with me.

Like Nigel said, we have a community - a Federal community access grant in Colorado and our sub-grantees are the (Green Stars) and they just are pretty much throughout most of Colorado. The (Blue Stars) are programs that provide fatherhood services that are funded under different funding streams but do amazing work in Colorado as well.

One of the major components of our grants and our sub-grantees are required to develop a collaboration with an approved community based victim service provider.

We also request that they consider working with a batterer or an abuser intervention program. Some of our program function was in schools, so we ask them to collaborate with their local school districts, social workers or psychologists. And we really want to bring as many people to the table as we can to develop our protocols. And our protocol is required to be developed with the collaborator, with the local domestic violence agency to really try to get a protocol that's really rich and really broadly based.

Prior to really rolling out our grant, we did a couple of things on the state level. The first thing is we wanted to really get the state fatherhood staff and the state domestic violence staff to sit at the table and really start this process of kind of community building in a collaboration. So we really met together to discuss common ground, commonalities, make sure that we understood together what the same page was that we needed to be on.

We then went and did a one-day building bridges institute that we modeled after the 2006 conference in Wisconsin that brought together healthy marriage, responsible fatherhood and domestic violence.

We brought together our fatherhood providers and our local domestic violence agencies, and we really wanted them to start the ground work. We explored the common ground between the two groups, created open dialogue, tried to bring out to open and maybe get rid of some of these stereotypes and misunderstandings and really share with each other what the common missions were.

So our fatherhood programs that are domestic violence collaborators could kind of go into these projects and understand where each other was coming from and have some foundation to build on.

Out of these training, we developed some lessons that we learned and some kind of like ground work for where we needed to go and one of the things that we discovered with training was hugely important, both training to fatherhood providers on domestic violence issues and vice versa.

So I'll speak a little bit about the training that we do for fatherhood and then we also have some templates that we have for protocol and screening tools and I'll talk about that at length now.

The first thing we have is the Domestic Violence 101 training. It is done at the fatherhood academy we do every year at the very beginning of the grant cycle to all of our providers when they come in, get a Domestic Violence 101 training and this is just very basic, understanding domestic violence.

When you talk about economic, you know, course and what do you mean? When we talk about physical violence, what do you mean? We explain the impact of domestic violence on children, and we talk about power and control.

We also go into length about what domestic violence agencies do and the services they provide. The person who does our domestic violence training is with the Domestic Violence State Agency, so she is an expert in domestic violence in Colorado and she's able to talk to the fatherhood programs about domestic violence.

We also talk about the protocols and screening that will come on, and we also talk about the need to incorporate domestic violence and family violence and awareness of these issues within the continuum services of fatherhood program. It's real our goal that fatherhood programs understand why it's important to talk about family violence and why it's important to be safe and healthy when you're talking about fatherhood development.

This year we added Domestic Violence 201, which just follows up 101, and it really expands on some of the lessons that we've learned as we've been doing this work.

There are some guiding principles that, you know, we feel that it's important in the fatherhood programs and domestic violence collaborators are really working from and some of those include everything from, you know, domestic violence as a serious issue in our communities and that violence and intimate relationship undermines the development of responsible fatherhood and, you know, healthy relationships are safe relationships.

And so these are some of the things that we talked about. Now, fatherhood programs are able to talk to each other about what are some of the commonalities they found with their domestic violence collaborators.

Some successes and challenges, some of the things that our fatherhood programs have experienced throughout this service provision, you know, have they had any instances of an abuser coming into their group, how do they deal with that.

And most importantly, batter characteristics and tactics. This is something that has come out of our fatherhood programs is really wanting to understand what happens if somebody slips by the screening because as we've discussed already, it's going to happen, it may happen.

And so what are you going to be seeing in your fatherhood programs if you have an abuser, what are some of the tactics and characteristics, what can happen if you have somebody who is an active abuser in your group? And so we talk about some of those things and give our programs additional resources so they can kind of continue their knowledge (throughout the year).

Additionally, we have trainings that go on throughout the year. Our local fatherhood programs and our local domestic violence agencies do a lot of cross-trainings throughout the year and they can do it on broad domestic violence issues or they can do it on very community-specific issues and things that are coming up.



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So when they have a particular circumstance in their particular community, we can get a training put together for that community, for a region or we can roll it out to the state and really work through some of the difficulties or the successes of fatherhood and domestic violence (unintelligible).

One-on-one technical assistance is where I go out. And I will talk to programs or potentially even individual staff on how to ask the questions, how do I ask these screening questions to our dad without making them feel as if we're assuming that they're all abusers, how do I incorporate the domestic violence into my work to the fatherhood program, why do I even need to do that?

These are all some of the questions that we work with. I also work with programs on how to incorporate their domestic violence screening questions into their existing intake and assessments.

One of the things that we've found is that having 11 domestic violence questions that you ask in one (self group) is not necessarily always the most successful way of screening, and so really asking a lot of more open-ended questions, having this be more organic processing or screening is more successful, at least in our experience.

And then we also have community professionals that present on domestic violence issues throughout the year to our local communities and at the statewide level.

In our protocols and screening, we felt that it was really important to safely, routinely, and consistently identify domestic violence or family violence that's occurring.

And one of the things that we talk to our fatherhood programs about is that abusers are not necessarily going to walk in the door with a stamp on their forehead that says I hit my wife last night, so it's really important for us to screen consistently and routinely. And in Colorado, this means that all persons that are going to be served under at least this grant are screened for domestic violence.

We have a template, and I'll go through that in a little bit that we give the programs that they can take back to their communities and work with their providers on how to

ask questions and what does my agency do if domestic violence is an issue and we'll talk a little bit more about that.

And again, it's a collaborative process. We don't want fatherhood programs to get the trainings and then go back in their communities and develop in isolation. We really encourage them to work with their domestic violence partners on how to ask these questions and how are you going to continue the training and the relationship throughout the year.

So in regards to the protocol, it's pretty simple. The sections that we require, the first one is description of the partners, what we want the protocol to use for? One of the things is that we want staff to be able to have a game plan, so to speak, of what happens if domestic violence is an issue in this family or in our agencies.

And so we want them to know who their partners are. We want them to know who to go to for these questions or concerns or if there is something that they just want training on. The scope and purpose of the protocol, we very specifically and very clearly want to send the message that we are not the experts in domestic violence and we are not intending to be.

We're fatherhood programs, so what we want to do is to have a protocol that works with us on how to address domestic violence appropriately and safely, how to refer, how to get appropriate training, but we also want very clearly and we talk about this in the protocol and throughout is where to go, where to send people to if domestic violence is coming up.

We also in the protocol talk about underlying principles and shared values, and this is where our domestic violence collaborators and our fatherhood programs can sit together and realize that they're really are some shared values and principles among the two.

Some of our programs are coming up with as simple principle as, our programs will provide services to fathers in a manner that's consistent with promoting (unintelligible) safety and healthy well being that, you know, family violence is an

issue in our communities that our involvement needs to be safe and they then have this framework that they can go to and have consistency.

We also have a definition that we ask them to develop, so when our domestic violence partners are talking about domestic violence, they're meeting the same thing as our fatherhood programs that when they're using that term, when they're using the language that the language is consistent, that they were both meaning the same thing, that one program isn't meeting only physical violence while the other program is meeting physical, sexual, psychological abuse, those sorts of things.

So we really want our programs to get together and really be speaking the same language, understanding the same philosophies and values and kind of proceeding from there.

Again, we screen all persons for domestic violence. Some of our programs have taken a step farther, which is great and they screen both women and men and they screen not only for potential abuser characteristics, but they also screen for victimization, so they're really taking this and looking at victimization and domestic violence and family violence on the whole, which is great.

Information provided. Again, this is where we say very clearly we are not domestic violence experts. We are not an abuser intervention program. We're not a domestic violence victim service agency and this is where we (unintelligible) very clearly indicate who does these services, and how to routinely and safely and consistently get help for people.

And then again, responding to disclosures of abuse, this is kind of referring back to our previous presentation in what are you going to do if domestic violence is occurring? What are you as an agency prepared and capable of doing?

So is this something where you're going to make sure if you provide couples work and healthy marriage work that you're doing that safely that you're being aware of, that it may not be an appropriate time, but you can do these other services.

And so it's really a good place for agencies to, in advance, very thoughtfully come up with what are the services that you're able to provide to somebody with active restraining orders or with active abuser issues and what are the things that you're needing to delay and how are you going to refer and how are you going to follow up on that and how are you going to walk through this process with this family safely.

I'm not going to go through this whole model. It's what we kind of preface our healthy father involvement on. Traditionally, you're going to hear a lot about healthy father involvement (involve) material and financial contribution or caring for children or enhancing children social confidence. There's a lot of research done on father (unintelligible) work, you know, helps enable children developing empathy.

One of the things that we integrate within our domestic violence component is healthy father involvement also involve modeling, safe and healthy relationships. It involves cooperative parenting. It involves all of these components, and so this is where we bring in elements of domestic violence training into our curriculum. This is where we have these conversations regularly and routinely.

And really working with our dads and our staff and our communities and understanding that you have to be aware of domestic violence issues, you have to be aware of that there is a, you know, disproportionate power ratio with men and women.

You have to be understanding of all these issues and you need to address them to have truly safe and healthy father involvement. And so this is where we, again, go back in tie in all of those elements.

When we speak about collaboration, one of the things that we have experienced that I certainly have is that the word "collaboration" can mean very different things to different people.

Some people have - you sign my paper, I'll sign yours philosophy of collaboration. Others - and where we kind of veer our programs toward is really doing a lot of the things that we spoke about in our previous presentation about really doing a lot of



cross-training and understanding going in what the word collaboration is going through.

At the beginning of our protocol, we require our agencies to get together and get common definitions and underlying principles. Well we do the same thing with the collaborations.

We ask them to get some underlying principles of the collaboration where they really work out that issue of shared, you know, resources potentially but certainly referral back and forth, cross-trainings, all of those different elements are hugely important and we want people to be on the same page with that at the beginning and throughout the training.

Funding our programs, our domestic violence program certainly don't have the mandate at least in the staff or in the state or the funding to do this work and so we tell our fatherhood programs that we encourage them and certainly allow them to give consultation fees to our domestic violence partners for this work.

Our programs are required under our plans to do this collaboration. Our fatherhood programs are required into this grant to have the protocols and screenings.

Our domestic violence partners have graciously and without any additional resources consented to do this and they spend a lot of time with us in terms of the protocols and training and consultation, and so we certainly want them to get compensation and additional resources for that work.

And then in regard to sustainability, it's difficult when you provide services to keep any issue necessary at the forefront. You're going to have very important issues that come up that you need to deal with this as an agency.

It's important for us though that domestic violence screening and domestic violence curriculums and understanding and training be kept at the forefront. And so we do that on the state level, we encourage that on our program levels, it's just really important, and I am wrapping up because I see my time is, I think, about done.

So what we will do in this state is we're going to continue our current process. We're going to get our existing fatherhood programs to add their voices and training new fatherhood programs to give them shared insight to teach them what they've learned, to work with them on how to do this work.

We provide additional insight on batterers so that way if somebody gets through the screening which we've already heard can happen, how to deal with it when it's in your program, how to recognize and then what do you do from there.

We also are piloting a Caring Dad's Program here in Colorado. It's just a curriculum that was developed and piloted for men who had abused their son, neglected their kids or exposed (unintelligible) others who abuse.

And so what we're really trying to do is bring as many different things to the table as we can to really make sure that our fatherhood programs are being aware of domestic violence and doing everything that we can to make our communities as safe and healthy as possible.

And I've forgotten to do the slides. I apologize. And I'm done, so my information is on here, Rich Batten is our Grant Administrator. He is also on here. If you guys have any questions, please feel free to contact me. My email too is the best way to get a hold of me by far, so that's it, thank you.

Nigel Vann: Thank you very much Kelli.

Yeah, I do encourage everybody to follow up with either Kelli or Lisa or Johnny and you can also send questions to me via the info@fatherhood.gov line and we can pass things on.

And so now let me move us on and introduce Johnny Rice to you, who's going to give us a bit of a fatherhood practitioner look here.

And Johnny is actually now the Director for the Office of Grants Management for the Maryland Department of Human Resources. And as part of his work there, he does oversee statewide domestic violence efforts. But Johnny has got a wide history here

in this field. He started as foster care worker for the Baltimore Department of Social Services and he's worked with low-income dads in correctional settings.

I first met Johnny sometime back in the '90s, when there were some common ground conversations going on at the Ford Foundation funded between domestic violence advocates and responsible fatherhood programs.

So Johnny was involved in one of the first efforts to have an actual fatherhood program work with a domestic violence program and that was when Johnny was working with Joe Jones at what is now the Center for (unintelligible) Families and worked with the House of Ruth and Lisa Nitsch. So Johnny brings some, you know, some real deep experience on how you do and what we've been talking about.

So that's it. Johnny?

Johnny Rice:

I'd like to say greetings to everyone and, Nigel. I'm appreciative of the opportunity to share some of my knowledge on this topic. I definitely also want to recognize OFA, who has been generous to fund Maryland's effort as it relates to responsible fatherhood as well as to the Center for Urban Families and Joe Jones, who kind of gave me the opportunity to get deeply immersed in this work.

I think first and foremost I want to say and we can move to the next slide, I want to say that responsible fatherhood programs are in a unique position to engage men, the Family Violence Prevention Fund and Peter D. Hart Research Associates did a survey and one of their findings was that men if asked would participate and arrange a violence prevention activities and it is fair to say I'm sure that that encompasses men that are fathers.

So we see that there is a group of men interested on a national level on this issue and it's important as practitioners not to ignore it, sometimes our mission can be viewed as our kind of contribution to abuse.

Next slide.



One of the things that is very clear is that responsible fatherhood programs can serve as a conduit to affect change and as Lisa, I believe, stated earlier, you know, you will get diminished returns on your investment.

We can pour in health services. We can pour in educational services, you know, the workforce development services, but if there is violence within a household, particularly with the low-income families that we're engaged in through our programs, we're not going to get the yield, the requisite fruits of the labor. So I think it's very important that as these men that we work with try to reach our for manhood that we assist them in removing those barriers.

Next slide.

As Lisa talked about and I think others, we know that children who has father involved in their life and particularly as it relates to father involvement, positive father involvement will have better child outcome, less likely to commit suicide, less likely to engage in sex at an early age, less likely to have contact with the juvenile justice system, so on and so forth.

And I think that also not denying often in a very timely research report to focuses on the impact of father absence kind of highlights the importance of this issue, but it also should be interrelated to domestic violence and the high cost the domestic violence has from a public health perspective and also on a workforce. So we can look at these areas as separate silos. They all interface in some form and some fashion.

Next slide.

So for the state not just Maryland but others who are representing their respective states are listening, it's important the we invest in these respective programs for the opportunity to improve the child outcome, but also one of the things that we recognize is that we have to deal intimately with the issue of domestic violence.

When I was at the Center for Urban Families, the profile of men that we engage in a responsible fatherhood program were between the age of the 16 to 35. That's critical



because as we think about that age range for high incidence and prevalence of domestic abuse and domestic violence, that is within that age range.

And so if we are working and engaged in men at low income community, their community that have a proper (unintelligible) of violence similar to those communities that we did our outreach in Baltimore City, we know even it was not self-reported, but just by crime statistics in those communities that violence was prevalent and that many of the families that we work with if they weren't directly engage in violence, they were exposed to it on some level.

Next slide, please.

In many of our programs, we share some of the same challenges and barriers and again, one of the things that we attempted to do with the deal was to trans-generational issue as related to violence and particularly many of the men that we engage reported as a child that they had witnessed violence and witnessed domestic violence within their household.

So of course there is the opportunity for them as they grow up to also engage in that violence and the value system with the absence of that value system and the value system of the subculture that has negative attitudes towards women, many instance we found that that was the case.

Next slide, please.

Unique access. When I talk about at the beginning, I just didn't mean unique access from a policy perspective, from a practice perspective. If we're thinking of 40% to 50% of domestic violence is unreported, I think earlier it was mentioned that it could be a myriad of reasons dealing with distrust of authority, cultural views that do not favor disclosing family information.

You know, 40% to 50% of those cases don't make it to the justice system, many times these families that also are part of violence to go into that radar need other services and many of them men to be outreach to that are part not just of the work I

did at Center for Urban Families, but also through our responsible (OSA) fatherhood initiative and grant.

They also fit the same paradigm in the sense they come from the similar communities.

Next slide, please.

In seeking about a paradigm shift, imagine two entities, one that's governmental, one that's community-based, that work with some of the same individuals from the same families that begin a thought process of how can we work together to better improve the general community and family outcome.

And initially, that was a challenging thing because as you see from the definitions and to just to give a summation, you know, when individuals are referred to the House of Ruth Maryland it's not because of a good thing. It's because they have done something that has been viewed in a negative manner in society, that it's against the law, that puts other people at risk, so victim safety and offender accountability are the focus.

With Center for Urban Families while as Nigel mentioned, we - even through our (OSA) strong father, strong family, (unintelligible) father's initiative, we also focus on holding men accountable so that they can be the best man that they can be.

I think one of the major things was, we are meeting men at the - usually their last stop, these are some men who may not have performed well in formal programs and these are men that society may view as not having any redeemable quality.

So we view these men as having inability to be successful and so that was the initial practice of thought process of both these organizations prior to partnership.

Next slide.

So what were some of the questions asked as we sat down with our staff to explore the possibilities of partnering with an abuse and intervention program. I'd never forget



one of our staff said out loud and (as we) began the initial conversation, you know, are we the police? What is this going to do to our community trust? You know, we are - we have a word of mouth reputation.

People come to us because they know they can trust us. How will our fathers respond to this new effort to bring the issue of domestic violence to the forefront and some of the men in our program, I mean, some of the staff in our program, the Center for Urban Families felt as though we're already dealing with this program effectively now.

If we hear it as a problem we go address the guy and say, "Look, if you don't stop this violence in your household, we're going to deal with you."

Now, of course, violence - to reduce violence, it wasn't productive. So the leadership had to come back to the table to say and be honest and say that this isn't the best way to deal with this issue.

So - and why should we do this? Two key things. One, we knew that we wanted children to have the best outcome possible in a safe house, in a house in which their family is strengthening and not negative behavior at least towards violence, particularly domestic violence, but I think also, you know, when you - not just child outcomes, but also we will look at victim safety and community safety and by investing in the male we felt that we could reach that.

Next slide.

I'm going to go through this one pretty quickly, but our concerns are the same concerns that many of you may have initially had or still have and that was that the domestic violence partner would be very stringent in their view of our men, particularly as it relates to African-American experience, which encompass the wide range of things such as structural issue or situational, social issue, racism.

These were issues while we didn't let them serve as a crutch, we felt they were real issues that men could explore and discuss within our program, and we could help them to navigate so they could move forward and be successful, but - next slide.

Also, what we realize was that some of the men that we were working with who communicated that they had issues around violence, talked about how their significant other would still call them even after they separated and one of the things that I found out in getting more learned in the field was that many women, particularly some women of color communicated that they didn't want the relationship to end, but they wanted the violence to stop.

Next slide.

So I think that what we found is that there are some starched realities, in the starched realities we had to look at was that we had a myth that we were not the experts on the issue of domestic violence and that kind of pushed us towards being open towards the partnership.

We were excited because even though we were a nationally recognized fatherhood program, we were still in a (fledging) field that was perceived as (fledging) at the time and the House of Ruth Maryland was a traditional strong nationally known abuse intervention - head of strong abuse intervention as well as shelter for women and their main focus was the support of those women.

So the Center for Impact Research and the (MPCL) through the four common ground dialogue as Nigel mentioned earlier afforded us the opportunity in a structured way to have two phases of collaboration.

The first phase is the partnership, identified areas with cross-(exchange) of information, the community-based domestic violence services.

The second phase focus on providing education and awareness to program participants.

Next slide.

This is probably one of the most important things that I think (unintelligible) probably centered upon -- next slide please - that will center on is our perspective as related to the collaboration.

First and foremost, before we, you know, really got into what a collaboration would look like, the leadership met to determine what will be the parameters, and we agreed that we were experts in responsible fatherhood. They agreed that they were experts in abuser intervention.

And in setting that we were clear, we developed the trust relationship that was forged by our leadership and (Lisa) and I are working together and they assisted us in adding to our fatherhood curriculum chapter on the domestic violence.

So we were starting to include that in our curriculum groups and working with men, which was very important to start to bring the issue on the table. Also, cross referrals, one of the great things that occurred was that the House of Ruth Maryland allowed us to come into their orientation session to talk about all the other services that we provide.

So when you think about the barriers that these men were dealing with within their group, be it employment, be it parenting skills, the House of Ruth was able to leverage our resources and to show that, well, we're going to hold you accountable but we also care about your welfare and we can show we can care by connecting you to these group of men who can assist you and navigate in some other issues that you may have.

The cross-presentations and services offered to staff and clients were important as well. We allowed and had the House of Ruth Maryland come to our facility to help conduct group focused on education and awareness.

And let me say these groups were not punitive groups, and these was important because as we went through our screening process and we could identify those men that had issues around domestic violence, we could refer them to the House of Ruth Maryland, but they were able to develop in-roads within our community on our site, which was site that was viewed as people friendly to the community.

And lastly, we also had a community event, which was a men's speak out and which over 100 men and one of the most challenged neighborhood in East Baltimore came together to actually sign a pledge to denounce violence.

That was critical because it was a blend of men from the fatherhood program, a blend of men from the abuse and intervention program, but it was successfully completed and had not re-offended over great length of time and these were men from the community speaking to other men within the community.

Next slide, please.

So what were the results? Twenty-five percent at that time of the men when I was at the Center for Urban Families were more likely to (complete) the abuse and intervention program, we believe that was because of the additional support services we provided.

Also when some men were noncompliance with the House of Ruth due to our data sharing ability, we were able to do go out in the community and do outreach. Some of those men just didn't go back because they had - they didn't want to go back, some of them had childcare issues or other issues in which they didn't know how to navigate.

We were able to assist them to navigate those problems and let the House of Ruth know what their status was. In many instances, this allowed us to assist men and not going back to jail, but to get back in compliance with the program.

Next slide.

Of course, as (Lisa) stated, we could talk about this for hours on end, but I think the partner or some of the main partnership strength was the ability to communicate in a shared information, particularly dealing with clients and families that we both had in our respective programs.

I think one of the other partnerships was that - one of the other benefits was it educated particularly our staff and I think also the abuse and intervention program about the nuances of each of the respective fields, it destroyed the myth, as (Lisa) said, all the women that weren't man-haters, all the men in the fatherhood programs were not coddlers of other men.

I think some of the weaknesses at the time and this - I believe this is definitely improved was trying to be able to track the data from a research perspective to drill down to look at what elements, particularly on the fatherhood side with a greatest contributor to keeping men in compliance.

And I think also one of the weaknesses is always, you know, trying to get continued funding. We're excited that we have the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence and the House of Ruth providing the technical assistance to our (OSA) programs here that are in Baltimore and Maryland. So that expertise is definitely necessary.

And next slide.

So in closing, I think that we have the unique opportunity to harness the strength that our fathers bring and they can actually be proponent in talking about domestic violence and this is important because as we impact fathers, we impact their children.

Jackson Katz has and you can Google this online, they have Ten Things Men Can Do To Prevent Gender Violence. I'm not going to go through the list, but it even talks about items that men can do that don't cost much, so it's not all a funding issue, but it's an incorporation of a set of ideals that will help to shape men's attitudes towards women in a positive way and also deal with negative trajectories that are often stem from the media and popular culture regarding what fatherhood and manhood is.

I'm excited about this work and I definitely look forward to further discussing these items with you and my information is available, also (Lynwood McAlester), who is our project coordinator through our (OSA) grant, he can be reached via my information. I will forward your questions to him as well. He's also expert in this area.

Thank you.

Nigel Vann: Thank you very much, Johnny.

Yeah, I think it's really important, you know, that Johnny mentioned Jackson Katz there and ways that we can challenge other men.

We've got about ten minutes here where we can have a little bit of Q&A here.

((Crosstalk))

Nigel Vann: We've got a few questions that I'm going to raise. Firstly, about screening but also about just tell you how this conversation with your domestic violence partner, but also with the men you're working with.

But let's start with just taking a look at some of these screening issues. One question that came in was - Lisa, you mentioned, you know, the fact that if you mention abuse or domestic violence in talking to either partner, you know, if you've got contact with both partners, those are really not terms that anyone is going to respond to and say, oh, yeah, that's happening.

Lisa Nitsch: Sure.

Nigel Vann: So, you know - and this is a question for everybody, but let's start with Lisa.

So what terms - you know, how can you raise these issues, start these conversations without using words like abuse or domestic violence?

Lisa Nitsch: Well most couples - if - once it does get - domestic violence issue doesn't start as a punch in the face the first time. You know, it starts, you know, first calling your partner out of a name maybe and then pushing and grabbing and it escalates until, you know, you have both people both victim and abuser saying, you know, how did we get in this place?



So they don't necessarily identify it as domestic violence. It's so gradual. You know, like when you see changes in your partner at home just even in healthy directions that we're not always the first ones to notice because we see that person everyday, it's the same way with violence.

And so sometimes, when we're screening for domestic violence, we use terms like conflict or disagreement and arguments and just acknowledging that every couple has conflict.

And so, conflict doesn't define whether or not you're in a violent relationship. It's what does that conflict look like. And so that's what you want to talk to people about it. But, you know, when you do disagree, what does that look like, what do you usually disagree about, what usually happens when there's a disagreement, how do you handle it.

I think the thing to remember is that every case of domestic violence no matter how severe, and it comes down to one idea, and that is that one partner feels that they have the right to punish or get revenge on the other partner for not meeting their expectations. It doesn't matter how severe or how some people - how mild some people may consider it to be.

It's really just about I have the right to punish you because you didn't meet my expectation, if you have that going on, if that's the motivator, if one partner believe that they have the right to discipline the other. Those are those kinds - the nuances of things that you're listening for when you're screening and you're doing your group sessions.

So really, it's just - it's not do you have conflict, it's we know you have conflict, what does that look like?

Nigel Vann: Anybody else have a response to that, in terms, you know - I think, you know, part of the issue here as Lisa raised before is that there really is no such thing as mutual abuse because even if both people are hitting, one person is doing the (parent) control thing and that's really what we're worried about. So how do you keep out with what's happening?

Lisa Nitsch: Is that for me again, Nigel?

Nigel Vann: That's for anybody who wants to jump in on it, but, yeah.

Lisa Nitsch: You know...

Johnny Rice: I think - I mean, I think, you know, even just coming from the responsible fatherhood side as well, I think there are two things. I think at first is part of it is assessing, you know, the actual level of communication between couples.

I think part of the challenge in the field has been that, you know, what is perceived as normal and some environment is not normal even if it's verbal abuse, but I think also, you know, at least from a responsible fatherhood that we often come from a perspective of challenging men on their behavior on whether they're contributing regardless.

And, you know, you have to tease it out. Some may say that's fair, some may say it's not fair because, of course, we deal with men who come in wide range as well as he did this, he did that, we focused on him, what are you doing. And I think a part of it is being able to gauge what is the reality of that relationship.

We have had, you know, some incidents over the years where there are men who have come and self-reported that they've been abused and this is not mutual abuse. This is where it's the other way around. So I would have to, you know, kind of concur with Lisa's sentiment on this issue, but I think, at least from my end of responsible fatherhood program is to make sure that the men are being clear and being honest and forthright. And a part of that is utilizing the screening process as well.

Nigel Vann: Okay, right. Yes, let me just talk a bit about more about the screening and I do want to go back to this - to the idea of what we're having is the conversation with the men and with the DV providers.

But there was one question that came in and we can't answer that here. But somebody's asked the question: "We were told that if a client answers two of the

intake questions yet on our intake questionnaire, there are six questions on the intake questionnaire, if they answer two of them yes, which is the screening tool, we can't enroll them" and then apparently someone has told them (to) keep them engaged in the program.

So the question is asking for clarification on that. This is something that, you actually like to send this into the info@fatherhood.gov, we can seek some guidance from OFA on that and...

Lisa Nitsch: Can I - real quick touch on that, Nigel?

Nigel Vann: Yeah, that's what I was going to (ask you) to do.

((Crosstalk))

Nigel Vann: Yes, please, yeah...

Lisa Nitsch: You know, I was actually just in a meeting in Arlington and somebody - and I think the exact same question came out with the domestic violence meeting, a focus on domestic violence and somebody was showing me this (in-take) and I don't know that it's the same one, but it did have six questions and the questions were things like have the police ever been called to your home with the first question and I forgot what the second one, but I remember I would have been screened out for domestic violence.

Nigel Vann: Yeah...

Lisa Nitsch: I wouldn't have been able to participate in this fatherhood program. You know, I think some of the screening tools, when you've got six items and somebody screened down of the fatherhood program because of domestic violence, that really doesn't make sense to me.

As Johnny pointed out at his presentation that, you know, if you have a good relationship with your local domestic violence agency, the fatherhood program is an added support is the person who could go out on the street and look for that guy

when he doesn't show up for class and can help him with employment issues, they can help him with other parenting issues.

You know, I don't see a reason why anybody would be screening out abuser from a fatherhood program and I think it's a symptom of one of two things.

It's either not understanding what the fatherhood program is there to do, what are the services of fatherhood program offers or the second piece and this is bigger and more difficult is not trusting that fatherhood program to have a consistent message that when we start to confuse father's involvement and responsible fatherhood and father's rights, you know, sometimes in the domestic violence world, domestic violence advocates, their eyes glaze over when you start to bring up all those different terms...

((Crosstalk))

Nigel Vann: Yeah, yeah...

Lisa Nitsch: So...

Johnny Rice: And - yeah, and I want to jump in just to say two. One of the major tools that we utilize is the establishment of trust with the participant...

Lisa Nitsch: Right.

Johnny Rice: ...and through the establishment of their trust after getting him employment, after assisting him with crisis issues they may present, we get to know him, get to know his family and again, when you talk about the unique access and ability, that kind of opens a pathway to us to then challenge him on issues of violence to present themselves and whereas may - someone may - one of his friends or someone maybe external to his circle may communicate to him a formal system that they think he needs to receive these services.

We can provide it with maybe tough love in a brotherly fashion but at the same time say that, you know, we will hold him accountable because it's - you know, it is not our

wish to have a program in which we are working with families and strengthening father so he can be a strong abuser.

Lisa Nitsch: Right.

((Crosstalk))

Johnny Rice: We're strengthening father so he can be a better father and support the family and have better child outcome. So it is always even from a worker perspective or father and worker perspective that fear that, you know, we don't want to reunite a family, a work for reunification and then we see a story in the Baltimore Sun saying how our program actually put a victim in danger.

Lisa Nitsch: You see why I partner with this guy?

((Crosstalk))

Nigel Vann: Excuse me.

Lisa Nitsch: I said you see why I partner with this guy?

Nigel Vann: Yeah...

((Crosstalk))

Nigel Vann: You know, I mean, I think, Johnny, you know, really hitting the button here because that's, you know, what we have to do in father's (build) really is to holding them accountable, you know, we've got to talk about what sexism is, we've got to talk about how social norms have made violence and abuse okay and we're going to challenge that, you know.

Kelli, let me just pull you in just for a minute because I know you've got a screening tool that you use in Colorado. How does that work for you?

Kelli Bennett: It's been well. We had some difficulty in the beginning in regards to exactly what we're talking about before and just perceptions of this very issue of if somebody answers the question wrong, do we have to stop serving them. And I think it really is - you know, I don't have a lot to add from what they previously said, but it's just a matter of not overreacting, understanding in the bigger context of how these questions are asked.

We do have some different organizations that are specific to the different cultures and our community that have some concerns about in our culture this one question is not an indicator of abuse.

So it's really working with each agency to understand the context of the question, to understand how answers fit in the context of domestic violence and really to be able to network and to tap into our partners that no more than we do quite frankly about domestic violence and understand for this one individual, how the answer is in context to work and how we can work with him on making him safe and his community safe.

Nigel Vann: Yeah, great. Thanks. Yeah.

You know, we've got about eight minutes left and we do have to make some time to do the survey.

I do just want to sort of underline the point that I think you've all been raising in one way or another is that part of what's required here is to develop the relationship with your domestic violence provider and, you know, that requires having ongoing conversations and it's understanding each other.

I know for myself when we started having these conversations, I didn't get it. I didn't get it in terms of where domestic violence advocates were coming from and, you know, really the horrors that they had lived through either themselves and/or with their clients they're working with and, you know, fatherhood programs have got to acknowledge and respect that going in. But they've got to find some common language, too.

One question I had before this Webinar from the grantee was a concern that have been raised by that DV partner that the fatherhood program might be used by batterers to gain access to their children. How - just real quickly, any ideas on how you would talk to your DV partner about something like that?

Johnny Rice: Lisa, do you want to start off and I'll...

Lisa Nitsch: And I just think - you know, we touched on it quickly about understanding from the very beginning in our program that it's not appropriate for a fatherhood program to make recommendations about supervision or custody or contact with their victim. It's really not appropriate if it's a domestic violence case where there's, you know, physical - if it's criminal then it's not even appropriate really for them to testify.

If they weren't at the incident, they weren't there to see if somebody was hurt, that so - and they shouldn't serve as a character witness on that kind of thing. So that was a tough conversation we had in the very beginning.

Johnny Rice: I think one of the ways that - and this is - it's my opinion - this - (Lisa) may jump on it, but I'm going to throw it out, I think it's the controversial part of the Webinar.

I think that it can - one of the things that we utilize and I think is important is prior to violence is the means to reduce violence, we have many men who had not engaged in violence, but we could tell were getting very stressed because they did not have relationship with their children and for whatever reason and I'm not talking about where there was incidence of violence.

And so, in some instances, you know, supervised visitation was viewed as a resource to ensure that violence did not occur and point in blank whatever they mean is if you're in a group and we're working with a man, he says, look, I care about my child, I'm working, I'm doing all these things, you guys say I should do, you can see that I'm doing it and, you know, I really want to see my child, you know, I'm just going to go over there, you know, tomorrow, I'm just going to go over.

And we would say, no, that's not the way to do it. And some of these - (see), some of these men were men that weren't engaged in any form of structure in a sense. So to

them to go over that in 1:00 am in the middle of the night would have been appropriate because they were frustrated.

So in some instances, you know, prior to abuse taking place, you know, that may be a resource of a tool that can help couples who may no longer be together intimately but to eliminate violence.

And also, I would say, Oliver Williams and Jeff Edleson have a text, I believe, called Parenting by Men Who Batter. And I think that has some resources in it that could be a help to educate the work that we do as well.

Nigel Vann: Great. Well thanks, Johnny, and I hate to cut this short because we - you know, this is a really important discussion and we do intend to continue to revisit this issue as part of our ongoing (TA) work and, you know, individual grantees if you do one specific assistance in this, please let us know.

Let me turn it to Jen for the survey and then I'll come back for a closing comment.

Jen: (Okay). Thanks, Nigel.

We're going to ask four quick questions, you'll see on your screen here. This is to give us some immediate feedback on what you thought and if we were doing what we thought we were doing. So if you'll (look at the) answer to the left.

This first question is, "I have a better understanding of how to address domestic violence within my program." Again, the answers are Strongly Agree, Agree, Unsure, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree. And as always you can no vote. That's a default at the bottom. Please put to the left.

And the question again one more time, "I have a better understanding of how to address domestic violence within my program." I'm going to give you just two more seconds.

Okay. We're going to go on to Question 2. Question 2 is, "I have a better understanding of the resources available to my program to address domestic



violence within our group.” Again, “I have a better understanding of the resources available to my program to address domestic violence within our group.” Strongly Agree, Agree, Unsure, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, or No Vote.

Okay, just a couple of seconds on this one as well. Again, answer to the left of the answer.

All right. Question Number 3, “I have a more complete understanding of how to approach and provide staff awareness training.” “I have a more complete understanding of how to approach and provide staff awareness training.” And the choices are Strongly Agree, Agree, Unsure, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, and No Vote.

A couple of more seconds on this one as well.

Okay thank you. We’ll move on to our last question.

“The advice and suggestions regarding how to work with domestic violence advocate partners were helpful to me.” Again, “The advice and suggestions regarding how to work with domestic violence advocate partners were helpful to me.” Choices are a little bit different: Very Helpful, Helpful, Unsure, Of Little Help, or No Help At All, again, No Vote at the bottom.

I’d like to thank you for participating in our poll, and we’ll turn it over to Nigel for some closing comments.

Nigel Vann: Okay. Thank you very much, Jen.

And I do just want to say that for those of you who are attending the grantee roundtable next week in Denver, that’s the single activity responsible parenting grants that didn’t come to Baltimore in July, and we will be talking more about some of this there.

And I would encourage you to go to the Clearinghouse Web site, fatherhood.gov, there are quite a range of materials addressing domestic violence issues there. And if

you're not familiar with the Family Violence Prevention Fund, we had Juan Carlos Arean from there present last year on these issues.

Their Web site is endabuse.org, endabuse.org. And I've actually used materials from there. I've done some work myself with batterers intervention groups and there are some great materials that just help you think about this and also recommend the Gender Violence Institute out of Minnesota, who are really helping victims but also challenging men to think differently about these issues.

So I encourage you all to send in any more comments, questions on this issue to us at info@fatherhood.gov. As it says on the screen, we're also always looking for issues you have that might be future Webinar topics.

We chose this one because we did get some questions from it, but also and I should done this at the beginning, what is domestic violence awareness month and that's the big reason why we have this Webinar this month.

And the Webinar next month, we'll be letting you know the topic for that very, very soon, and that will be on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving and I forget the exact date of that, but we will look forward to continue in the conversation with another topic then.

And as I said, I do encourage you to stay in touch with us on this issue because we do want to keep this at the forefront of everything that you're doing and just in closing I would say, you know, really continue these conversations. It takes a while - it takes a long while but, you know, continue these conversations with your domestic violence partners in the community.

But also continue these conversations with the fathers you're working with and just stress the impact on children of negative relations, but the positive outcomes for child well-being if we as fathers and men and mothers and partners treat each other respectfully that our kids see that and we raise our kids to treat each other respectfully.

So thank you very much for your attention and thank you very, very much to our three presenters and have a great day. And if the presenters want to stay on, we can talk a bit more.

Operator: Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, that does conclude...

Man: Thank you.

Operator: ...the conference call for today. We ask that you please disconnect your line.

END