

Engage to Protect: Foundations for Supervised Visitation and Exchange

Engaging with Men Who Batter in Supervised Visitation Centers

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Acknowledgments

This paper draws on eight years of wide-ranging discussions involving the Office on Violence Against Women, Praxis and other technical assistance providers, and visitation programs of all sizes and at all stages of development. We benefited from the contributions of many people who have a long history of working, researching, and training on issues related to domestic violence and to supervised visitation and the ways in which they intersect. In particular, the early work and experiences of the Safe Havens Demonstration Initiative sites—the South Bay Area, California; the City of Chicago, Illinois; the City of Kent, Washington; and the State of Michigan—helped focus our attention on the importance of engaging with men who batter in ways that foster safety and counteract the tactics of battering and the resulting harm.

We cannot begin to adequately thank the women who participated in focus group discussions and helped us explore the many facets and needs related to safety after leaving an abusive partner. We dedicate this work to them, and to the children, mothers, and fathers who everyday enter the doors of a visitation center. May our contribution help expand the possibilities of nonviolence and harmony for each family.

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NOTE: We recommend reading the following related papers in the *Engage to Protect* series: “Recognizing and Understanding Battering,” Ellen Pence and Jane Sadusky, 2009 ; and “Engaging with Battered Women,” Maren Hansen-Kramer, Julie Tilley, Beth McNamara, and Jane Sadusky, 2009.

The Evolution of an Engaged Practice

Engaging with men who batter... This discussion requires that we begin by defining “battering” and acknowledging that saying “men who batter” can be controversial. It is nevertheless a crucial distinction for visitation centers that follow the Guiding Principles of the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) Safe Havens: Supervised Visitation and Safe Exchange Grant Program (Supervised Visitation Program).¹ To “protect” and to have “equal regard for the safety of children and adult victims” require that a visitation center understand battering, which is distinctive from other forms of domestic violence for the variety of coercive tactics, the level of fear it produces for adult victims and their children, and its potential lethality. And while men and women both use violence in intimate relationships, *battering* has been and remains most characteristic of men’s use of violence in heterosexual relationships.² While there will be exceptions, in paying attention to battering a visitation center is primarily working with men who batter and women who are the targets of that battering.

Battering has been largely submerged under the broad category of domestic violence, a term which has come to include many kinds of violence and behaviors within relationships between intimate partners. While we do not present a full exploration of the distinction here, we provide a definition and a link to a more thorough discussion.

¹ The Guiding Principles were developed over a three-year period by a national steering committee, with coordination and guidance from the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. They include: (1) Equal Regard for the Safety of Child and Adult Victims; (2) Valuing Multiculturalism and Diversity; (3) Incorporating an Understanding of Domestic Violence into Center Services; (4) Respectful and Fair Interaction; (5) Community Collaboration; and, (6) Advocacy for Child and Adult Victims. See *Guiding Principles – Safe Havens: Supervised Visitation and Safe Exchange Grant Program* (December 2007), published by the U.S. Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women; available at www.praxisinternational.org.

² Few heterosexual women have the combination of physical strength, social support, and historical privilege to dominate a male partner with violence, coercion, and intimidation. Battering can occur in same-sex relationships, although there has been little specific research on intimate partner violence in lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender relationships (LGBT). See the work of the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs at www.ncavp.org.



Battering is an ongoing use of intimidation, coercion, violence, and other tactics **intended to control and dominate** an intimate partner. It involves patterns of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. In severity it ranges from intimidation by pushing, shoving, and restraining (e.g., a “bear hug”) to stalking over a period of many years; to making a victim live in constant fear of harm to herself, her children, or her family; to the extreme domination and physical violence of **“intimate terrorism”** (Johnson); and to killing her or her children or other family members or friends...It is not the same as hitting someone in a marriage.³

A shift in perspective and practice

Since 2002, the Supervised Visitation Program (SVP) has provided many communities with an opportunity to support supervised visitation and safe exchange that addresses battering and other forms of domestic violence. The SVP is grounded in the recognition that the process of separating from and leaving an abusive partner can increase rather than diminish danger for victims of battering and their children, and batterers often use visitation and exchange of children as an opportunity to inflict additional emotional, physical, and/or psychological abuse.

The SVP encourages an understanding of the ways in which coercion and control underpin domestic violence. It requires that the visitation and exchange services provided through its grants reflect an understanding of the dynamics of battering and other forms of domestic violence and the impact of domestic violence on children. It links supervised visitation and exchange with a wider community response by requiring grantees to include visitation programs, courts, and domestic violence advocacy agencies in their projects. Grantees have participated in wide-ranging discussions about how to build supervised visitation and exchange services that focus on the safety of adult and child victims of battering. This collective work has encouraged an understanding of supervised visitation and safe exchange as critical post-separation services for battered women and their children.⁴ It has also led to a shift in perspective and practice for SVP visitation centers in working with the adults and children who use their services, as supported by the following key components:

- The Guiding Principle of “equal regard for the safety of child(ren) and adult victims”

Under this principle, safety of children and adult victims is a center’s highest priority. Paying equal regard requires building a comprehensive understanding of the nature, dynamics, and impact of battering into all aspects of center services. The needs of adult victims are visible and

³ Definition from “Recognizing and Understanding Battering,” Ellen Pence and Jane Sadusky, 2009, in the *Engage to Protect* series papers. This discussion of battering draws on the following work: Ellen Pence and Shamita Das Dasgupta, “Re-examining ‘Battering’: Are All Acts of Violence Against Intimate Partners the Same?” 2006, Praxis International; Ellen Pence and Michael Paymar’s experience conducting education groups with men who batter (*Education Groups for Men Who Batter: The Duluth Model*, Springer, 1993); Evan Stark’s articulation of “coercive control” (*Coercive Control: How Men Entrap Women in Personal Life*, Oxford University Press, 2007); and Michael Johnson’s attention to the sharp and crucial distinction between what he terms “intimate terrorism” and “situational couple violence” (as set forth in the following and subsequent publications: “Patriarchal Terrorism and Common Couple Violence: Two Forms of Violence Against Women in U.S. Families,” *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 57 (May 1995): 283-294.

⁴ For papers and products from this national attention to supervised visitation and domestic violence, go to www.praxisinternational.org. This work included a multi-year Demonstration Initiative to examine promising practices and take a sustained look at supervised visitation and safe exchange in the context of battering and other forms of domestic violence. OVW selected four demonstration sites to carry out this work: Santa Clara County, California; the City of Chicago, Illinois; the City of Kent, Washington; and, the State of Michigan.

acknowledged in all center practices. A center that has equal regard for adult and child victims recognizes its unique position in protecting them from actual violence or from a batterer's attempts to use the center to continue the abuse. The principle of equal regard challenges the longstanding assumption of neutrality as the only standpoint for a visitation center. Neutrality in effect reinforces battering and abuse by not taking a clear stand against it.⁵

- The Guiding Principle of “respectful and fair interaction”

Treating all family members with respect and fairness does not mean that the center is neutral toward the violence perpetuated by a batterer or that the center will overlook controlling or threatening behavior. Because of the power imbalance inherent in a relationship where one partner has been violent and coercive to the other, fairness cannot be achieved through simplistic notions of sameness or impartiality. Centralizing fairness and respect requires that visitation centers not favor one side over the other, while permitting centers to protect one or more parties from another.

A visitation center that has equal regard for a battered woman's safety will be fair and respectful to the father of her children. However, it will not act as though nothing has happened in his violence towards her. It will provide a valuable neutral *space* for visitation or exchange while taking a clear stand against violence and abuse. It will take care to submit factual reports that make visible any safety concerns, in clear terms related to the safety needs of each person. The visitation center will better fulfill its potential to use its relationships with court and community interveners, and its unique relationship with each family member, to help lessen the harm caused by the violence and maximize the possibility that each family member can live without ongoing fear, intimidation, or violence.

- A visitation center's role in contributing to safety for adult and child victims over time

Safety is the protection of children and adult victims of battering from continued physical, sexual, and emotional harm, coercion, and threats.⁶ A visitation center can have a distinctive place in promoting and influencing safety over three distinct time periods: the two hours a family is physically present in the facility, the two years over which separation unfolds, and the twenty-plus years of ongoing parenting until children reach adulthood. “2 hours – 2 years – 20 years” are not precise periods of time, but symbolic, and a useful cue to remembering that safety changes over time and circumstances.

A safe visit or exchange is undeniably critical and important to everyone involved and visitation centers have historically been organized to pay attention to safety exclusively in this context. Through the work of the Supervised Visitation Program, many centers have recognized that they can also have a unique connection with each family member over the period that separation, divorce, custody, and visitation issues are being resolved. A center can help a batterer get

⁵ The issue of neutrality in supervised visitation is far more complex than this brief statement. See “On Safety's Side – Protecting Those Vulnerable to Violence: Challenges to Notions of Neutrality in Supervised Visitation Centers,” Martha McMahon and Ellen Pence, Praxis International, 2008 available at www.praxisinternational.org.

⁶ The articulation of safety over time reflects the work of the Michigan and California sites of the OVW Safe Havens: Supervised Visitation and Exchange Grant Program Demonstration Initiative.



through the volatile period of separation and help weaken his opportunity and inclination to abuse. Whether by legal decree and/or the reality of having children in common, most battered women end up having to navigate parenting around their former partner until children reach adulthood, regardless of the severity of abuse they experienced. A visitation center can help support safety over this time period by the relationships it builds, regardless of whether it is part of a family's life for six months or several years. In addition, beyond its role with any one family, a visitation center contributes to ending battering and domestic violence by its ongoing participation in a wider community response and its links with domestic violence advocacy programs, the courts, and other collaborating partners.

Defining “engaged”

To be “engaged” means to be involved and connected in an intentional, thoughtful way.

We can all think of a time that we have used a service that had a big influence on our well-being. It could be access to health care or a certain kind of medical treatment. It could be making an insurance claim after a traffic accident or securing day care tuition assistance or unemployment compensation or financial aid. What did you have to do to receive that service? What was most important to that agency about your experience? How were you welcomed and introduced to that service and what was required of you? What was positive and helpful? What was negative and discouraging? Were you connected with someone who clearly explained the expectations and consequences of different actions and decisions? Were you treated ‘like a name’ or ‘like a number’? Was the agency engaged with you or were you processed in and out as though you were interchangeable with the next body in line?

A visitation center that encourages an engaged practice is one that is active in building meaningful relationships with people. **To engage with men who batter is a process that is different in approach and skills than that used to engage with women who have experienced battering, although both practices share a core definition.**

In the domestic violence field, it has long been recognized that protecting battered women and their children requires active engagement with women around their specific circumstances and needs. Visitation centers are in the unique position of working with the whole family, whereas most agencies and organizations responding to domestic violence intervene with one parent or the other. Centers have a valuable opportunity to go beyond the important mission of guarding women and children. They can engage with women around safety and they also have an opportunity to engage with men around safety and change.

Engaging with men who are using supervised visitation and exchange is both a means of fostering safety for women and children and counteracting his use of battering tactics. To be involved and connected in an intentional, thoughtful way with men who batter, however, poses a distinct set of challenges. The actions and beliefs that characterize battering mean that a batterer is often very good at using service agencies to reinforce his coercion and intimidation. It is easy to unintentionally collude – to discount, condone, or ignore the tactics of battering – particularly when visitation center workers are ill-prepared and have not developed skills to support engaged non-colluding relationships with men who batter.

There is a continuum of engagement with men who batter for visitation programs to consider.⁷ A visitation center must create an environment that is respectful and fair while not being naive about how it might collude with an abuser's ongoing control of a victim. Engagement requires a level of communication and dialogue with a man that goes beyond a simple enforcement of rules. As centers develop experience working with men who batter they will be able to expand how and when they talk with a man about the needs of his children and how he can solve problems related to visitation or exchange. Within months of first walking through the center's doors, most men will be making visitation arrangements directly with their children's mother and they will be discussing everything about their children with her, from school issues to health issues. Helping prepare him to do this in non-abusive ways is a level of engagement that can greatly benefit battered women and their children.

The Framework

This discussion presents a framework for safely and skillfully engaging with fathers who have been or are currently battering their children's mother. The framework is summarized in Appendix 1. Meeting the goals rests on the approach, as made possible by workers' knowledge and skills in key areas.

Goals

1. Foster safety for mothers and their children.

The primary goal is safety: her safety and her children's safety. A visitation center can create an environment that does not allow the battering to continue and that makes it possible to de-escalate or diffuse risk to her or the children. This attention to safety is both immediate, during the specific time period of a visit or exchange, and over the period of separation. It requires preparing staff to recognize and evaluate behavior in the context of battering. What does this father's action mean in the context of battering? How might this father's actions further his intent to erode her relationship with her children, harm her physically or emotionally, coerce her into returning to him, convince others that she is "crazy" or unstable, intimidate her, or gain custody of their children?

2. Counteract the tactics of battering.

To counteract the tactics of battering requires that a visitation center anchor its programs and services in recognition and understanding of those tactics. From this essential foundation it can develop the approaches and necessary skills in workers to safely respond. Supervised visitation is not a batterer intervention program, but it is intervening in the battering by providing a father with access to his children or, increasingly, by responding to battered women who have lost custody of their children.

⁷ FY2008 Solicitation: OVW Supervised Visitation Program funds cannot be used for therapeutic visitation; parent education or batterer intervention programs; or individual, group, or family counseling.

Battering is characterized by dominance and a sense of entitlement to a certain status as a husband and father. A battered woman's actions to separate and leave the relationship threaten that position of dominance and sense of entitlement. Because such actions mean that a batterer is losing much of his ability to control her, the post-separation period can be the most dangerous. It is often where efforts to harm a woman and/or her children increase substantially. It is often where attempts to control her increase substantially, through the children, the courts, and intervening services such as a visitation center.

To engage to protect means that a visitation center creates an environment that counters the tactics of battering. This is not to suggest that its role is to "hold him accountable" in the same way that criminal legal intervention holds batterers accountable. It means providing an environment that does not reinforce a batterer's expectation of dominance and entitlement. It means an environment that does not support his efforts to continue the control and abuse, deny the violence, or blame her.

One element in counteracting the tactics of battering is to recognize and acknowledge the violence, which is frequently kept private or secret or dismissed as insignificant ("just an argument" or "I lost my temper"). A visitation center can relay consistent messages to a father who batters, regardless of whether he has admitted his use of violence toward his family members, by creating an environment that counteracts the tactics of battering. This environment can support a battering father to shift his focus to his own actions and their impact on his children and away from his obsession with their mother and her efforts to leave. It seeks to increase his awareness of his children's experience: e.g., "part of the children not wanting to see you is because you hurt their mother. You've scared them and they're afraid." An environment that counteracts the battering is one that lets him know about the center's collaboration with batterer intervention programs and other resources in the community that have helped men to change.

Approach

- **Continually gauge and account for the risk of harm to a mother and her children.**

Circumstances, risks, and safety needs change over time. A static plan based on information gathered at a family's first appointments will not support safety over the time. A safety "plan" cannot be words that get written down on a form and put in a file. It must be a living plan that shifts and changes over time as needs and risks change.

Continually gauging risk requires paying attention in an intentional, thoughtful way. It requires building a relationship with each father that maximizes communication. It requires frequent check-ins about how the visits or exchanges are going and about how things are going in general in his life. Has his wife filed for divorce after a period of separation? Is a final divorce action scheduled? Has he lost his job? Has he been arrested? Is he talking about moving away or leaving the country? Has he been trying to contact his children's mother in between scheduled visitations? Is he refusing to discuss adjusting the visitation or exchange schedule to a day or time that works better for his children and their mother? Is he saying things such as, "she'll never get the kids" or "she'll pay for this"?



Continually gauging risk also requires an understanding and awareness of the tactics of battering, along with factors that can signal increased danger for a battered woman and her children. Research into intimate partner homicides suggests several factors that should receive particularly close attention, both when a family first comes to the visitation center and throughout their relationship with the center: controlling behavior, extreme jealousy, severe attacks (particularly with a weapon or strangulation/choking), increasing frequency of violence, forced sex, and gun possession.⁸ Having knowledge of the frequency and severity of these and other coercive, intimidating behaviors speaks to the importance of a visitation center's relationships with its community partners and referral sources. Ideally, the referral source should be able to provide the visitation center with information about who is at risk and in what ways.

- **Develop a positive, problem-solving partnership with him.**

The notion of a partnership with a battering father carries a **caution**. The ability to manipulate is one of the key characteristics of battering and those attempting to or asked to intervene, such as a visitation center, are in no way immune. A problem-solving partnership in the setting of visitation services is one that is directed toward making visitation and exchange services work safely. The primary goal of fostering safety has to be kept clearly in view. It is problem-solving to help a batterer get through the volatile period of separation and help weaken his opportunity and inclination to abuse. It is a partnership around such problems as talking with his children about what has happened, learning to be with and care for his children in new ways, or connecting with batterer intervention and other community services that have helped men change.

- **Help him focus on his children's well-being and not on their mother.**

Battering causes harm to children, harm to a father's relationship with his children, and harm to a mother's relationship with her children. A visitation center can help a father repair the harm his actions have caused and contribute to a process of change if he is open to it. A visitation center can be one of the points of intervention that helps increase the possibility that he will be open to change. When a visitation center develops a respectful relationship with a father it sets the stage for conversations over time that can help him shift his attention to his children's well-being, instead of being preoccupied with their mother. From the beginning, center staff can encourage a father to build a different relationship with his children. They can encourage him to do what is good for his children, including reinforcing the importance of visitation and exchange that feels safe to his children, talking with him about letting go of their mother and letting her have a different life, and reinforcing the notion that the children need their mother in their life.

Batterers generally do not feel guilty or ashamed about how they have treated women. While they blame their partners and have little or no empathy for them, they often do feel guilty about what their children have experienced.⁹ A visitation center can keep bringing the conversation

⁸ For a summary of research into intimate partner homicide, see *NIJ Journal*, National Institute of Justice, Issue 250, November 2003, available at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij.

⁹ One of the most thorough examinations of battering tactics and parenting is *The Batterer as Parent: Addressing the Impact of Domestic Violence on Family Dynamics*, Lundy Bancroft and Jay G. Silverman, Sage Publications, 2002. Bancroft and Silverman describe the following attitudinal and behavioral qualities as characteristic of men who batter: control;



back to what his children need: to his children's need for visitation or exchange to go smoothly and to his children's need for a relationship with their mother. For example, when a father complains that his children will not talk to him during a visit, the center can reflect on how his actions against the children and their mother have harmed them and made them feel unsafe. This helps encourage his own efforts to examine his actions and recognize the harm that he has caused to his children by harming their mother.

Helping a father to shift his focus to his children's well-being and away from controlling and hanging onto their mother helps set a foundation for the possibility of safe, ongoing parenting without outside intervention over the long period of time until children reach adulthood.

- **Account for his social position and life experiences.**

Each father using a visitation center – and each worker in that center – comes from a neighborhood, a community within the larger community, a family, and, a set of values, customs, and beliefs about parenting, child rearing, marriage, and divorce. Melting everyone into one pot of universal experience or one universal person with a one-size-fits-all response serves no one well.

While everyone who comes through the doors of a visitation center – mothers, fathers, children, workers – lives in one world, they do not have the same experience of that world. In order to work with and help a father who has battered his children's mother, a center needs to understand what shapes his experience of the world. People's lives are complex and influenced by many facets of culture and identity.¹⁰ Flexibility is essential in accounting for an individual's social position and life experience.

When a father has seven children, how will a center adapt to make supervised visitation work? When he speaks a language other than English? When he is unemployed or a low-wage worker and cannot pay the center's fees? When he has never changed a diaper? When he has never spent time with his children on his own, apart from their mother or another person? When the visit coincides with a cultural holiday or celebration?

Accounting for a father's social position and life experiences does not mean that a visitation center accept his every concern without question. Because aspects of culture and identity can be used to reinforce battering, the primary goal of safety requires a thoughtful response. Is this a concern that impacts safety? A concern that reflects a cultural practice? A matter of parenting style? Or, is it 'all of the above'? In order to answer such questions, visitation center staff needs the knowledge and skills to engage with people who have cultural beliefs, values, customs, and practices that differ from their own.

entitlement; selfishness and self-centeredness; superiority; possessiveness; confusion of love and abuse; manipulateness; contradictory statements and behaviors; externalization of responsibility; denial, minimization, and victim-blaming; and, serial battering.

¹⁰ *Culture* is the complex, dynamic frame of reference shared by a group of people and reflected in customs, art, beliefs, spirituality, language and institutions. *Identity* includes aspects of how we see ourselves in the world (and how others may see us) that are intertwined with culture: i.e., as we define our identity by such characteristics as rural, urban, gay, straight, farmer, factory worker, teacher, believer, skeptic, working class, middle class, wealthy, poor, documented, undocumented.

Knowledge and Skills – Workers are prepared to...

- ✓ **Work with a person who is aggressive, intimidating, and manipulative in ways that lessen such behavior and encourage cooperation.**

A batterer might arrive at supervised visitation outwardly hostile or outwardly calm. He might be resentful and angry about having to spend time with his children under the confines of the center. He might be good-humored, friendly, and pleasant to talk with. He might have successfully shifted custody to himself and come through the door as a custodial parent. He might have begun to examine the harm he has caused or he might resist all opportunities for self-reflection and change. He may welcome the time he spends with his children, however short, and attempt to make their time together as meaningful as possible, or insistently complain that it is too short. He may have started to accept the separation and be less focused on his former partner; or, be even more obsessed and jealous than he has ever been.

Whether his demeanor is outwardly calm or hostile is a shaky basis from which to make conclusions about dangerousness. One man might be compliant and “schmoozing,” while the next man is overtly hostile and argumentative. Both might pose a similar risk to the women and children they have been battering. Some of the worst batterers – i.e., those using pervasive ongoing coercion and intimidation to dominate and control their partners – are the least physically violent. Their partners may use more violence trying to resist and establish some measure of control over their lives.¹¹

Regardless of whether a father first comes to the center outwardly calm or hostile, either demeanor can change from one encounter to the next and sometimes within the same visit or exchange. Workers must be prepared to respond to aggressive, intimidating, and manipulative behaviors. To add to the challenge, workers must also be prepared to gauge whether they are dealing with someone who is expressing emotions of anger and frustration or whether he is using that anger and emotion to reinforce aggression and intimidation and to manipulate the worker. The behaviors can seem very much the same, particularly without the baseline of a relationship built over time and solid information from referral sources that help the visitation center learn about his partner and children’s experiences and get to know his behavior in and around the center.

Strategies

- Be a proactive and well-prepared organization.

This includes solid knowledge about the dynamics of battering and other forms of domestic violence; an understanding of post-separation battering and how tactics can shift, particularly with respect to children; and specific skills for defusing and de-escalating aggressive, intimidating behavior. It includes clear communication between staff and supervisors. A proactive and well-prepared staff – even in the smallest center

¹¹ Batterers thrive on women’s use of violence. They are extremely adept at turning a woman’s efforts to resist the battering against her. They are often almost entirely able to deflect attention away from the battering and their own actions.

with two or three workers – knows that they can count on each other and do not have to ‘go it alone.’ They are free to ask for help in figuring out how to best respond to aggression, intimidation, and manipulation.

- Acknowledge and manage fear and the role that fear plays in shaping our response.

Anyone working in a visitation center is well-aware that the stakes are high. They are often working with families where a mother and children’s fear can almost be felt when they come through the door. Visitation centers and workers can be afraid of missing something and of intervening the wrong way or not intervening when they should. Everyone knows local or national visitation or exchange-related stories about children and mothers abducted and/or killed or severely injured by a battering father. They can be afraid of causing further harm to a mother and/or her child by inadvertently colluding with a batterer. They can be afraid of batterers, knowing what they have done to women and children and seeing and hearing their behavior in the center. It is difficult to not be afraid of a man who is shouting and swearing at you, and perhaps physically dominating you. It is difficult not to be afraid of a man who repeatedly ignores the center’s process and rules, requiring workers to intervene again and again.

A certain level of fear is part of the nature of the work of a visitation center and also helps keep the focus on fostering safety for mothers and children. It is problematic, however, when it becomes incapacitating, either because the center and its workers are too afraid to hold a battering father accountable for his actions or too ill-equipped to intervene early and effectively.

- Learn and practice specific techniques for defusing and de-escalating aggressive and intimidating behavior.

Practice is a key part of preparation for managing aggressive and intimidating behavior. That preparation, in turn, helps manage fears related to working with batterers. A visitation center can seek out specialized training from batterer intervention programs and other community agencies that have experience in preparing workers to respond to aggressive and intimidating behavior. A center can use role plays to practice responding to different scenarios in ways that redirect behavior and avoid power struggles.

Practice cannot stand alone, however. Visitation center workers need avenues to discuss and reflect on how different techniques worked in actual situations. What techniques have worked best? What has been difficult to do? How might the aggression and intimidation have been handled differently? This process of practice and reflection will prepare workers to learn and be comfortable using the following techniques:

- Remain calm; stop and back off if you get defensive.
- Know when to ask another staff member to become involved.
- Isolate the situation.
- Indicate that the two of you do not have to agree on all points.



- Be consistent and repeat yourself. When someone is in an aggravated state they may not listen closely or understand everything that is being said.
 - Use active listening skills and respond with respect.
 - Stay flexible; a rigid response can back you into a corner and escalate the situation.
 - Stay compassionate; avoid sarcasm and ridicule.
 - Be alert to nonverbal cues that indicate an increase or decrease in anger or anxiety (e.g., foot tapping that suddenly stops or increases in speed).
 - Set clear, easy to understand limits; do not overwhelm with information. Key aspects of setting limits include:
 - Be clear about expectations for behavior and consequences for ignoring those expectations, from a person’s first contact with the center onward.
 - Point out the behavior and its impact, ask for a change in behavior, and state the consequences. Sample statements:
 - “Do you realize you are [interrupting me, raising your voice, standing over me, leaning over me.....]? When you do this it makes it difficult to talk with you.”
 - “When you do that I can’t talk with you. I want to hear your side of things, but I need you to [describe what needs to change, e.g., please sit down...stop interrupting me...stop shouting]. I can’t help you or your children unless we talk.”
 - “I’d really like to hear your side of things, but my job is to make sure the kids are okay right now.”
 - “If you can’t stop I will have to stop this conversation and we can talk later.”
- Build respectful and fair relationships with men who batter.

With many battering fathers, a fair and respectful relationship with the visitation center can help diminish hostility and shift his attention to a process of repairing the harm to his children and rebuilding a sound relationship with his children. For some men, over time this shift in attention to their children’s needs can also open a path to begin repairing the harm to them and to their children’s mother. While one of our goals is to counteract the tactics of battering, that goal does not require that a father be stripped of his dignity. A visitation center can acknowledge his humanity and the difficulties of the situation without condoning the battering or ignoring its impact. Indeed, for a batterer to feel that he has lost his wife, his children, and his dignity can be a highly volatile and dangerous situation. It is likely to be a much safer situation if the visitation center can help him stay focused on his children in a way that he feels respected and with a sense of hope that his relationship with them will continue or be restored.

- Stay connected with and check-in with battered women.



Keep the goal of fostering safety uppermost. That requires keeping battered women informed of aggressive and intimidating behavior that requires staff intervention and continually checking in with her about changes in patterns. Has he left the center angry, embarrassed, or making threats of any kind? What is happening with her and the children? Has something changed in their circumstances or her plans related to the separation? What does his behavior mean to her? If his behavior has raised the possibility of the center terminating services, what would that mean for her and her children? Will that be the safest course of action?

✓ **Engage in positive, helpful ways without colluding in the battering.**

Colluding with a father who batters means that visitation center workers condone, discount, make light of, or ignore tactics that he uses to continue exerting power and control over his partner, to deny or minimize his own behavior, blame or demonize his partner, or portray himself as the victim.

A worker may have been persuaded by a batterer's charm and manipulation that his ex-wife is "crazy" and unstable. Indeed, some of her behavior in trying to live with the battering may seem erratic and does not make sense outside of the context of battering. She may come across as demanding and unreasonable about scheduling. She may want to know everything that is said during a visit. A worker may not find her very likeable, particularly when her ex-husband appears cheerful or reasonable in comparison. Coupled with the center's approach to documentation and reporting, it can be easy under such circumstances for a worker to tell the court that "Dad was very loving, caring, and attentive to all his children during supervised visits. Also, Mr. Brown always displayed a positive attitude during his weekly visits with his children." The harm that he has done to his former wife and to his children disappears. The acts of stalking, intimidation, choking, and threats to take the children disappear.

Most visitation workers genuinely want to make a difference for the families they work with and do not want to endanger the safety of battered women and their children. Most collusion is perhaps more inadvertent than intentional, but there are many ways to ignore or make light of a battered woman's experience.

Building respectful, helpful, problem-solving relationships with battering fathers needs to proceed with a certain awareness and caution, grounded in a solid understanding of the tactics of battering. Bancroft and Silverman provide this description of a batterer's ability to manipulate others and set the stage for collusion.

[The great majority of batterers] may impress others as friendly, calm, and reasonable people, often with a capacity to be funny and entertaining. The public reputation that a batterer can build may cause people to be reluctant to believe allegations of his battering, thus making it more difficult for his partner and children to obtain emotional support or assistance. Our clients shape the public image of their partners as well, describing them to others as controlling, demanding, and verbally abusive at the same time as they paint themselves as caring and supportive partners who are earnestly trying to make things at home go



*well. The cumulative effect of these behaviors on those outside the family is to build sympathy and support for the batterer and to isolate the battered woman by damaging her credibility.*¹²

Visitation centers have to be watchful of how a batterer might manipulate his relationship with center staff. In making reports to the court, for example, staff can get so caught up in the wonderful relationship they have built that they lose the perspective and context of battering, safety, and the utterly artificial nature of the visitation setting as an indicator of ongoing safety.

Whether intentional or inadvertent, collusion reinforces a batterer's power and his claims that "no one will believe you." Collusion makes it possible for a batterer to enlist others in controlling his partner and to cut off her access to support. She can no longer trust that helping agencies will help. In addition to protecting herself from the batterer, she must now protect herself from those who collude with him.

Visitation centers and workers face the challenging of building a fair, respectful, positive, problem-solving partnership with a batterer while at the same time not colluding with him. It requires being attuned to the power imbalance inherent in battering, as well as the reality that a batterer may try to use the center to reinforce that imbalance and the underlying coercion and domination.

Strategies

- Learn what collusion looks like and clearly identify what it means to collude, however inadvertently.

A visitation center can enlist the help of its domestic violence advocacy partner in preparing staff to recognize and avoid colluding with batterers. The concept of collusion is familiar to battered women's advocates and they encounter many examples as they help women navigate the civil and criminal legal systems, health care and child welfare systems, and other institutions. The topic of collusion could be the focus of a series of informal discussions over a brown bag lunch or a formal training topic. Responding to scenarios and situations will help develop a sense for what it means to collude and what to watch out for. Visitation centers can also use case consultations at staff meetings to examine ways in which they may be colluding with batterers.

- Establish and maintain ongoing dialogue with battered women about the impact of the center's interactions.

Find out what is happening for women as a result of the visitation center's actions. Are her safety needs acknowledged and visible? Are she and her children getting the support they need to restore what was lost in their relationship because of the battering? To what extent does she feel that the visitation center is there to help? Have decisions affecting her safety been made that she was unaware of or never consulted about? Collusion flourishes when battered women are isolated and marginalized. It is less likely to take

¹² *The Batterer as Parent: Addressing the Impact of Domestic Violence on Family Dynamics*, Lundy Bancroft and Jay G. Silverman, Sage Publications, 2002, page 18.

hold under careful attention to a battered woman's safety concerns and the ways that human service agencies such as a visitation center strengthen or diminish her safety.

- Work within the community to promote a consistent message about battering.

A visitation center cannot act alone in working to end battering and other forms of domestic violence, as another of the Supervised Visitation Program Guiding Principles reinforces: community collaboration. The visitation center and its partners can relay a consistent message that challenges battering and weakens collusion. Namely, that domestic violence is not acceptable in our community, it will be identified when it takes place, and batterers will be held accountable.

✓ **Help him to stop harmful parenting and foster nurturing parenting.**

An ever-present theme in conversations with women about the experience of living with battering is fear that they will lose their children. "If you leave me I'll take the kids...you'll never see the kids again...no court's going to believe you." Women are acutely aware that if they act to protect themselves and their children, those threats may be made real.

Battering is harmful parenting. Apart from threats to take or harm children at the time of separation, the coercion, intimidation, and violence that defines battering is contrary to parenting that respects, protects, and nurtures children. While a battering father may express empathy and genuine concern for his children's feelings, he is unlikely to define his abuse of his children's mother as harmful parenting. That's something "between me and her." He will typically see himself as good father, even when belittling, ridiculing, dominating, and beating his children's mother.

There are six primary methods that batterers use to draw children into the abuse of their mothers.

- 1) Using excessive and coercive discipline and demanding that his partner discipline the children in the same way.
Example: Refusing to feed a child who has disobeyed an order or who forgot to do a chore.
- 2) Undermining the relationship between the children and their mother.
Example: Telling the children their mother is stupid and mocking her in front of them.
- 3) Isolating the children from their mother and the mother from her children.
Example: Playing favorites; physical isolating children from their mother by successfully obtaining joint or sole custody.
- 4) Using the children to control his partner.
Example: Telling her, "if you don't do what I say, this kid's going to get it."

- 5) Using the children to hurt his partner.
Example: Encouraging the children to disparage their mother or call her names; allowing or encouraging the children to physically attack their mother.
- 6) Hurting the children to hurt his partner.
Example: Beating or humiliating the children; or, in a final exercise of this tactic, killing the children, but not their mother.

Children who live with battering come through the doors of a visitation center with complex, intertwined feelings of fear, anger, disinterest, and love. They may not want to be anywhere near their father, or they may be eager to see him and blame their mother for their separation from him. If they are visiting a mother who has lost custody, they may be intensely angry at her or grieving and confused about why she has been taken from them, or they have been taken from her. They may be annoyed that their routines with friends, sports, and after-school activities are interrupted by visitation. They may be afraid for their mother or angry at her or both. They may be concerned about their father or angry at him or feel sorry for him or a mix of all three. They may have many conflicting feelings about what has happened in their lives and what this new routine known as visitation or exchange will demand of them. Their experience at the visitation center can be an opportunity for their father to begin to heal his relationship with them and repair the harm. Or, children's experience at the visitation center can be another avenue for their father to perpetuate the battering (see Appendix 2).

Strategies

- Be prepared to acknowledge the damage caused by battering.¹³

A battering father cannot change and move toward repairing the harm he has caused his children and their mother until he has acknowledged that harm. Children need to know that their fathers understand what they have done and the damage it has caused. A visitation center can support this process of recognition and change by acknowledging that harm when children raise questions about what has happened. A visitation center can help make the “elephant in the room” – namely, the reality of that harm – visible. When children question their father or are afraid of him or want him to explain himself a center should be prepared to support that discussion in a safe way. To only dismiss such questions as “adult talk,” and therefore out of bounds for any discussion between a father and his child, misses an opportunity to help a father move away from harmful parenting. In order to hold such discussions in ways that are safe and age-appropriate, prepare staff with guidelines, training, and practice in simulation kinds of exercises.

¹³ Several of the strategies outlined here also reflect aspects of the “Reparative Framework,” a conceptual model developed by the Fathering After Violence Initiative (FAV). FAV is “a conceptual framework to help end violence against women by using fatherhood as a leading approach.” Part of its work has included partnering with agencies providing services under the OVW Supervised Visitation Program, which led to development of a guide for working with fathers using supervised visitation centers and other related materials. Additional information and links to FAV products are available through the Family Violence Prevention Fund at www.endabuse.org.



- Reinforce opportunities to emphasize a father’s assertions of care and concern for his children.

Most fathers say they are at the visitation center to have a good relationship with their children, whether that is entirely the case or not. The center can provide the opportunity to revisit such assertions and tie his actions to his children’s well-being and safety. “Here’s what it looks like when you _____ and it’s not helping your children.” Or, “I know it’s been hard for you not to criticize the kids mother, but I can see that they’re more relaxed since you stopped trying to blame her for the divorce.”

- Model respectful communication and interaction.

A visitation center’s communication with fathers and children, particularly when they are together, is an opportunity to model respectful, non-coercive communication. Avoid ridicule and sarcasm. Decide with each father ahead of time on how a visit will be interrupted if that should be necessary. Agree on strategies that will accomplish the purpose of redirecting or stopping unsafe actions without putting a father down. Children need to know that they will be protected, but they do not need to see him humiliated or embarrassed.

- Prepare fathers for visitation and exchange services.

Imagine what it would be like to be dropped into a visitation center after you had not seen your children in three months and the last time you saw them you had been arrested after attacking and injuring your children’s mother. Or, you are a young father who will be visiting your toddler daughter and infant son, but have spent little time alone with them and have never changed a diaper. Prepare fathers for the experience of using the center and its services. Talk with them about how it might feel for them and for their children to come to the center, how their children might greet them, what will happen when they are at the center, activities to do with their children, questions their children might have, and how to answer those questions. It is not the center’s role to stand in or substitute for a child’s father, but it can reinforce aspects of supportive parenting at every opportunity.

- Stay grounded in mother’s and children’s experiences with battering.

Stay connected. Ensure that voices of adult victims and children inform the approach and decisions when working with every father coming to the visitation center. Learn from battered women and their children about their experiences in and outside of the visitation center. Check in and talk with them about what is happening in their lives. Focus group discussions with older children or young adults who grew up with a battering parent can be particularly insightful.¹⁴

¹⁴ For ideas and techniques for conducting focus groups, interviews, and other activities, see “Informing the Practice of Supervised Visitation,” Melanie Shepard, Jane Sadusky, and Beth McNamara, 2009, in the *Engage to Protect* papers.

- ✓ **Engage with people who have cultural beliefs, values, customs, and practices (including parenting) that differ from a worker’s own.**

There is no such thing as culturally neutral supervised visitation and exchange. Everything a visitation center does has cultural dimensions and impact, from the physical design and décor to communication styles to values and attitudes about women and men, parents and children, marriage and divorce. A center cannot say that this visit is influenced by culture, but that exchange is not; or, say that this family has a culture, while this family does not. Everyone who enters a visitation center, whether program participant or worker, is a cultural being, familiar with her/his own behavior, art, beliefs, language, institutions, age, class, music, race, religion, ethnicity, food, and other aspects of identity that have developed in relation to specific social and political contexts. A visitation center cannot truly engage with those using its services unless it steps out of that familiarity and recognizes its cultural assumptions, dimensions, and impact. Workers need to be aware of how their own experiences of the world shape how they interact with each father, mother, and child and not let their own beliefs, values, and customs get in the way of understanding each person’s situation and needs.

To illustrate this complexity, a worker at a roundtable discussion of visitation center practices described the following situation. A father who was originally from Persia was visiting his children at the center. He was biting into a sandwich and then placing pieces of the chewed food in his nine-month-old son’s mouth. “This is how we eat,” he told a visitation monitor when she asked what he was doing. “Mothers chew up the food and then feed it to the children. This is how our mother always fed us so that we could eat whatever the family was eating; we have no baby food.” The staff person reacted with disgust to what the father was doing and after the visit she asked the children’s mother about it. The mother was from Russia and was repulsed by the practice, which her husband had done at home with all of their children. She asked the center to not allow him to feed the baby in this way during the visits. Is this a safety or control issue that the center should address with the father? Or, is it a parenting style issue that needs to be handled some other way?

Strategies

- Be proactive and prepared: establish a practice of “cultural humility.”¹⁵

Establish a practice of self-assessment, study, reflection, and advocacy partnerships that prepares visitation center staff to engage with people with different cultural beliefs, values, customs, and practices. If left to good intentions, without specific attention to assumptions and practices, workers will be largely adrift. The Supervised Visitation Program has produced and published a number of documents to help visitation centers build a positive, respectful response to the background, circumstances, and cultures of

¹⁵ “Cultural humility” became the framework that the Chicago Demonstration Initiative used in exploring aspects of culture in visitation center practices. The strategies included here are drawn in large part from the experiences of the centers involved in that project (Apna Ghar, Branch Family Institute, and Mujeres Latinas en Acción), as described in “A Discussion of Accounting for Culture in Supervised Visitation Practices: The City of Chicago, Illinois Demonstration Site Experience,” December 2005 (available at www.praxisinternational.org).

their community and the families they serve (Guiding Principle 2).¹⁶

- Structure time and flexibility into all interactions.¹⁷

Time and flexibility are essential in order to build trust and relationships, understand what has happened in someone's life, and explain supervised visitation or exchange and the center's procedures in a way that makes sense to parents, particularly when the concept is entirely beyond their experience.

- Learn about the communities the center is located in and serves.

Do center workers know the basic demographic and census information for its service area? Does the visitation center know and have a relationship with human service agencies that work with various culturally distinct communities, particularly around domestic violence issues?

Invite diverse community organizations to walk through the center's space and procedures and provide a critique. Ask them to arrive at the center, complete an orientation, and walk through the space as if they were a parent who would be using the center. Welcome their insights and recommendations about how to make the center and visitation a more culturally respectful experience. Does the center feel welcoming, a place where they can interact with their children freely and safely?

Expand the visitation center's understanding of different communities' experiences with the courts, police, welfare, the medical field, and other intervening institutions, both currently and historically. Where centers do not have a shared cultural identity or social position with parents and children, they must take extra care to become aware of families' individual and community histories. For example, it is easy for someone to believe that institutional racism does not exist if they have not experienced it.

- Establish a process for ensuring language accessibility.

Language accessibility requires both an established process and flexibility. Hiring bicultural and bilingual staff from the communities represented in a visitation center's service area is an essential element. Recruiting and training a pool of interpreters in the most commonly spoken languages is another aspect, with particular attention to preparing interpreters to understand the issues and their role related to cases involving domestic violence. Interpreters working in legal, medical, and educational settings can be good candidates.

- Build worker's skills in listening, dialogue, and communication.

¹⁶ For example, the standards and practices section for Guiding Principle 2, Valuing Multiculturalism and Diversity (see reference at Note1); the work of the Chicago Demonstration Initiative; and, the work of the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community, including "Concepts in Creating Culturally Responsive Services for Supervised Visitation Centers" and "Ozha Wahbeganniss" (available at www.dvinstitute.org).

¹⁷ See Note 15



A basic ability to talk with and listen to people helps build an engaged practice in a very fundamental way. It is a foundation from which to connect with someone on a human level and learn about a person's history, culture, beliefs, values, and expectations. A visitation worker who is hesitant or uncomfortable communicating with people will find it difficult to build the kinds of relationships that support visitation services that are truly helpful to mothers, fathers, and children.

- Examine every aspect of a center's design and the implied and explicit messages about who is welcome and how they are valued.

For example, non-threatening locations (e.g., alongside health care offices, a shopping plaza, or community center) can be important in conveying respect, along with careful consideration of the placement and use of such security measures as uniformed guards and metal detectors. Formality in how people are addressed is also part of how a visitation center can welcome people and show respect, such as using Mr., Mrs., Miss, or Ms, or Usted, Señor or Señora.

When there is a gap between the center staff's background and that of the parents using the center, invite community members to help review the center's location, space, furnishings, magazines, art work, orientation appointments, and visitation and exchange procedures. Invite parents to help inform an understanding of the center's design and impact, via focus groups, questionnaires, or other avenues.

- Be alert to how aspects of culture and identity can be used to reinforce battering, as well as counter it.

In each culture, there are values, traditions, and practices that facilitate abusive and coercive relationships, and there are also values, traditions, and practices that support and promote functional and respectful relationships. It is important for SV [supervised visitation] staff to become knowledgeable about these aspects of different cultures and be able to use protective resources of diverse cultures in their interventions with men and with families in general.¹⁸

A visitation center can provide space for visiting parents and children to share meals and move about, including dancing and sports. It can work with fathers and mothers to accommodate families' faith observances, such as time for prayer, acceptable foods, holidays, and rituals. It can provide opportunities for extended family to be involved, as broadly defined by some parents and children to include a wide circle of relatives, close friends, and godparents. Any one of these actions can work to strengthen safety for a battered mother and her children. Any one of these actions can work to help a battering father become a nurturing parent and repair the harm to his children. Any one of these actions can also be used as a tactic of battering, to coerce or further isolate a mother. Visitation centers face the challenge and responsibility of figuring out what is safe for a battered mother and her children, apart from specific restrictions in court orders or

¹⁸ "Fathering After Violence: Working with Abusive Fathers in Supervised Visitation," Juan Carlos Areán, with contributions by Fernando Mederos, 2007, Family Violence Prevention Fund., See Note 13.



related to sexual abuse issues. The understandable temptation is to say no to any of the possibilities listed above, as many centers have done. Yet that blanket “no” ultimately serves no one well and constricts a visitation center’s unique position to help expand the possibilities of nonviolence and harmony for each family.

Returning to the earlier example, how *does* a visitation center determine whether the father’s way of feeding his baby is a parenting style reflecting his culture or another way in which he is attempting to exert control over his child’s mother? The answer is not to let the worker’s reaction dictate the response, although it is legitimate for her to raise the question: “Is this okay? How should our center respond?”

Begin by finding out what this action really means to the mother. Has food been used to control her or the children; has he ignored, degraded, or ridiculed her concerns in the past? Or, does her objection reflect a difference in tradition, without carrying the meaning of her children’s father trying to exercise power over her through the children. Is she frightened by the practice or annoyed by it? Talk with father. The worker can say that this way of feeding a child is something new and unfamiliar to her and she’s wondering about it. She can ask him to tell her more about the custom. Perhaps the father will say that it’s not very common any more, but he likes to do it to remember his childhood. Perhaps he will say that it only lasts a short time, between when a baby is weaned and can pick up bits of food on its own. The worker can examine her own biases and assumptions. Many parents of many cultures bite off bits of food and give them to their children. Perhaps it just seems “unsanitary” to her and something she would never do. The center can use connections it has developed in the Persian community. “We’re trying to figure something out at our center. Is this a common way of feeding very young children?” Make a decision out of all this information, with fostering safety for the mother and her children as the deciding factor.



Building and Sustaining a Framework of Engagement

Engagement starts at the front end of a center's relationship with each father who comes through the door. What kind of discussion, explanations, guidelines, atmosphere, and tone is being built from the first contact onward? What kind of relationship is being built? Do fathers know when and how you might have to intervene and have they been asked how the center might get their attention in the most respectful way?

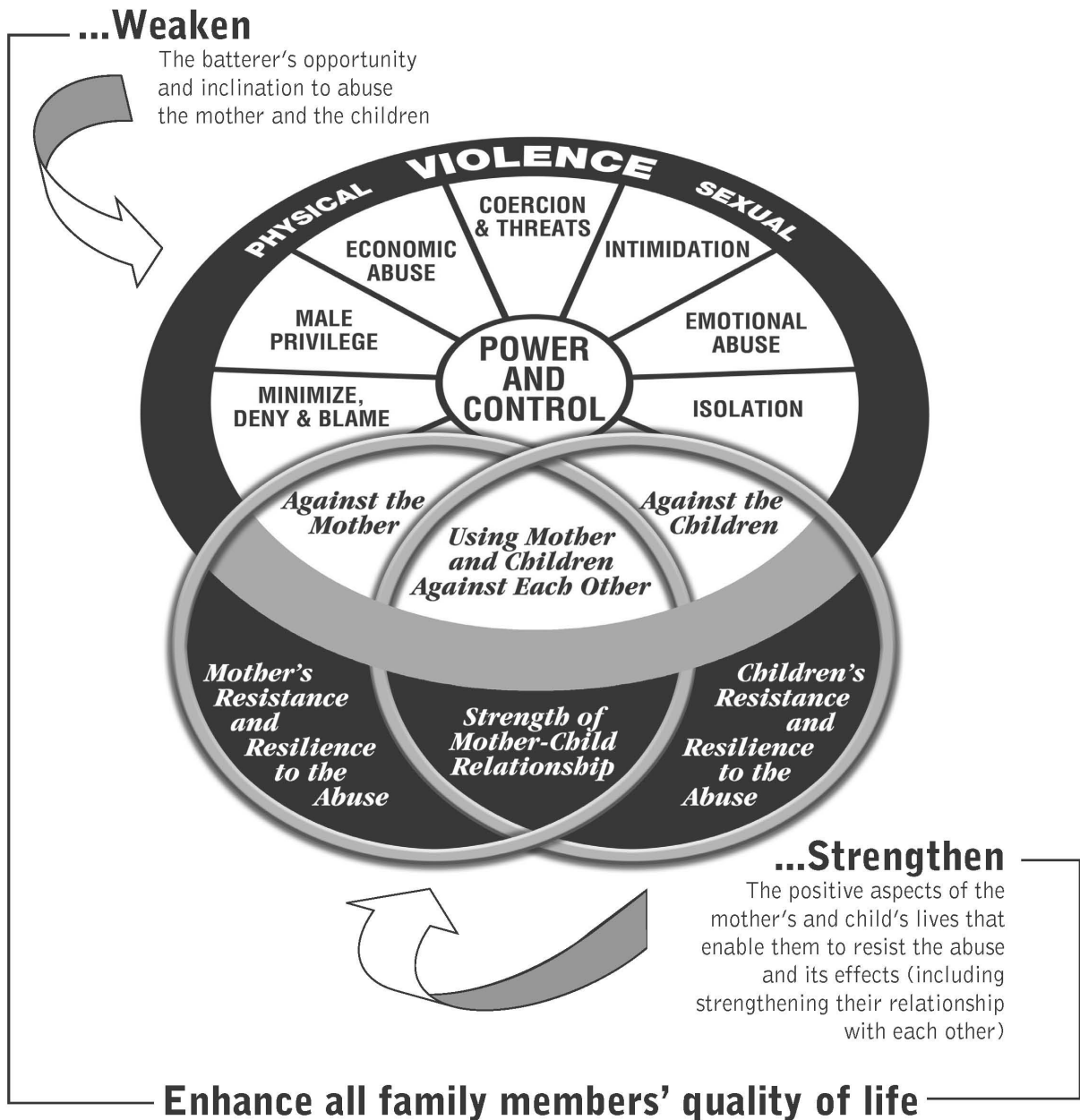
Engagement is sustained to the degree that it is built into the center's infrastructure. Sustaining a framework of engagement requires building it into the key methods by which human service agencies such as visitation centers organize and coordinate their work. Is the framework of engagement stated in the visitation center's **mission** statement? Is it reflected in the **philosophy** and **language** used to describe the center's role and relationships? Is the framework visible in the visitation center's **policy**? Do the center's **administrative practices** – its forms, documentation, reports, case management – reflect the framework's goals and approaches? What kinds of **resources** support the framework? What kinds of **training** do workers receive to help them develop the necessary knowledge and skills? Is the framework reflected in the **linkages** or connections between and across workers and between the center and its community partners? Is the framework of engagement included in a stated expectation of the visitation center's **accountability**, both to its workers and to those using its services?

Appendices:

1. Engage to Protect: A Framework for Working with Women and Men in Supervised Visitation Centers
2. Power and Control Wheel Adaptation: Domestic Violence Cases Involving Children

Engage to Protect: A Framework for Working with Women and Men in Supervised Visitation Centers	
<i>To be “engaged” means to be involved and connected in an intentional, thoughtful way</i>	
Engaging with mothers who are being battered	Engaging with fathers who batter
<p>Goals:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Foster safety for mothers and their children. 2. Counteract the experience of battering. <p>Approach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continually gauge and account for the risk of harm to a mother and her children.* • Develop a positive, problem-solving, safety-oriented partnership with her. • Connect mothers and their children with advocacy. • Account for her social position and life experiences. <p>Knowledge and Skills: Workers are prepared to...</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Problem solve <u>with</u> her and not <i>for</i> her.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Help her to talk with and restore her relationship with her children. ✓ Stay connected with and helpful to her when she is emotionally upset in response to the battering. ✓ Engage with people who have cultural beliefs, values, customs, and practices (including parenting) that differ from a worker’s own. 	<p>Goals:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Foster safety for mothers and their children. 2. Counteract the tactics of battering. <p>Approach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continually gauge and account for the risk of harm to a mother and her children.* • Develop a positive, problem-solving partnership with him. • Help him focus on his children’s well-being and not on their mother. • Account for his social position and life experiences. <p>Knowledge and skills: Workers are prepared to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Work with a person who is aggressive, intimidating, and manipulative in ways that lessen such behavior and encourage cooperation. ✓ Engage in positive, helpful ways without colluding in the battering. ✓ Help him to stop harmful parenting and foster nurturing parenting.** ✓ Engage with people who have cultural beliefs, values, customs, and practices (including parenting) that differ from a worker’s own.
<p>*Gauging risk of harm means to develop and adjust the center’s plan for the safety of each mother and her children.</p> <p>**The operating assumption here is that battering a child’s mother is harmful parenting.</p>	

SUCCESSFUL INTERVENTIONS IN CASES OF BATTERING THAT INVOLVE CHILDREN...



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Between 2002 and 2010, Praxis International worked in partnership with the Office on Violence Against Women to provide technical assistance and training to grantees in the Supervised Visitation Program. The following resources were developed during that partnership and are available at www.praxisinternational.org.

Safe Passage: Supervised Safe Exchange for Battered Women and Their Children, Jane Sadusky, March 2010

Engage to Protect: Foundations for Supervised Visitation and Exchange, 2009

“Recognizing and Understanding Battering,” Ellen Pence and Jane Sadusky

“Engaging with Battered Women,” Maren Hansen-Kramer, Julie Tilley, Beth McNamara, and Jane Sadusky

“Engaging with Men Who Batter,” Maren Hansen-Kramer, Julie Tilley, Beth McNamara, and Jane Sadusky

“Informing the Practice of Supervised Visitation.” Melanie Shepard, Jane Sadusky, and Beth McNamara

“Crafting Policies that Account for Battering – Beyond Cut-and-Paste: 9 Tips to Successful Program and Service Policies,” Ellen Pence and Jane Sadusky

On Safety’s Side: Protecting Those Vulnerable to Violence – Challenges to Notions of Neutrality in Supervised Visitation Centers, Martha McMahon and Ellen Pence, 2008

New Perspectives on Supervised Visitation and Safe Exchange: Orientation, Jane Sadusky, 2008

Building Safety, Repairing Harm: Lessons and Discoveries from the Safe Havens Demonstration Initiative, Jane Sadusky, 2008

Building the Practice of Orientation in Supervised Visitation and Safe Exchange: A Trainer’s Guide, Ellen Pence, Val Kalei Kanuha, Maren Hansen-Kramer, Jennifer Rose, Beth McNamara, Julie Tilley, and Jane Sadusky, 2008

The reports of the Safety and Accountability Audits conducted by the Safe Havens Demonstration Initiative sites, which addressed the following questions:

City of Kent, WA: How does a victim of battering who might benefit from supervised visitation services identify and access them? January 2007

South Bay Area, CA: How does the work of a visitation center produce or not produce safety for everyone involved? July 2004; Rev. February 2006

City of Chicago, IL: How does a visitation center account for peoples’ unique cultures and identities? December 2005

State of Michigan: What is the role of a supervised visitation center? July 2004



