



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES

November 2014

**Helping Survivors of Domestic Violence and Their Children:
New Guidance from the Administration for Children and Families**

Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased to share with you a set of Information Memoranda issued by the Administration for Children and Families across a broad range of ACF-supported programs in connection with Domestic Violence Awareness Month this year. The Information Memoranda highlight the extent and impacts of domestic violence, and encourage state and local human services programs to identify, prevent, and respond to domestic violence in the families and communities that they serve.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that on average, **24 people per minute** are victims of rape, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner in the United States. Over the course of a year, that equals more than **12 million** women and men.¹

While domestic violence affects every community, people living in poverty experience higher rates of abuse.²³ Women living in disadvantaged neighborhoods are more than twice as likely to be the victims of intimate partner violence as are women in more advantaged neighborhoods.⁴ Up to 74% of TANF recipients report recent domestic violence victimization.⁵ Four out of every ten American Indian or Alaska Native women have experienced rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime.⁶

Poverty can make it more difficult to escape domestic violence, and can result in additional hardships for those seeking to escape from it. Victims of domestic violence may feel trapped in an abusive relationship because they lack the economic stability to support themselves and

¹ Black, M.C., Basile, K.C., Breiding, M.J., Smith, S.G., Walters, M.L., Merrick, M.T., Chen, J., & Stevens, M.R. (2011). *The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010 Summary Report*. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

² Black, et.al

³ Cheng, T.C. (2013). Intimate partner violence and welfare participation: A longitudinal causal analysis. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 28(4) 808-830.

⁴ National Institute of Justice. (2004, September). When violence hits home: How economics and neighborhood play a role. Washington, DC.

⁵ Cheng, T. C. (2013). Intimate partner violence and welfare participation: A longitudinal causal analysis. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 28(4) 808-830.

⁶ Breiding, M. J., Chen, J., & Black, M. C. (2014). *Intimate Partner Violence in the United States – 2010*. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

their children alone.⁷ The National Network to End Domestic Violence estimates that between 22 and 57% of all homeless women report that domestic violence was the immediate cause of their homelessness.⁸ In the United States, the annual financial cost of intimate partner rape, physical assault, and stalking has been estimated at \$8.3 billion each year for direct medical and mental health care services and lost productivity from paid work and household chores.⁹

Furthermore, domestic violence disrupts the safety and development of children living in homes where they are exposed to violence. Witnessing family assault is among the most common victimization experienced by toddlers (ages 2 to 5).¹⁰ By the time they are 17 years old, more than 25% of children will have witnessed violence in their homes¹¹ and more than half of those youth will have experienced child maltreatment.¹² Children are resilient, but children exposed to domestic violence are more likely to develop interpersonal skill deficits, psychological and emotional problems such as depression and PTSD, and externalizing behavior problems such as school disruption and violent behavior.¹³ Domestic violence, poverty, and homelessness can disrupt a family's connections to community support, participation in early childhood programs, and access to child care, Head Start, and other early childhood service programs.

All of ACF's program offices have recently announced commitments to raise awareness of the impacts of domestic violence and the need for human services providers to:

- Recognize the impact of domestic violence;
- Respond effectively with trauma-informed strategies; and
- Safely link families to domestic violence services.

⁷ National Institute of Justice.

⁸ Wilder Research Center, *Homelessness in Minnesota 2003* 22 (2004); Center for Impact Research, *Pathways to and from Homelessness: Women and Children in Chicago Shelters* 3 (2004); Nat'l Center on Family Homelessness & Health Care for the Homeless Clinicians' Network, *Social Supports for Homeless Mothers*, 14 26 (2003); Inst. For Children & Poverty, *The Hidden Migration: Why New York City Shelters Are Overflowing with Families* (2004); Homes for the Homeless & Inst. For Children & Poverty, *Ten Cities 1997-1998: A Snapshot of Family Homelessness Across America* 3 (1998), cited in Nat'l Coalition for the Homeless, *Domestic Violence and Homelessness: NCH Fact Sheet #8* (1999).

⁹ Max, W, Rice, DP, Finkelstein, E, Bardwell, R, Leadbetter, S. 2004. *The Economic Toll of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in the United States*. Violence and Victims, 19(3) 259-272.

¹⁰ Finkelhor, D., Turner, H., Ormrod, R., Hamby, S., & Kracke, K. (October 2009). [Children's exposure to violence: A comprehensive national survey](#). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

¹¹ Finkelhor, D., Turner, H., Ormond, R. Hamby, S. & Kracke, K. (October 2009). [Children's Exposure to Violence: A comprehensive national survey](#). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the Centers for Disease Control and prevention.

¹² Hamby, S., Finkelhor, D., Turner, H., & Ormond, R. (2010). The overlap of witnessing partner violence with child maltreatment and other victimizations in a nationally representative survey of youth. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 34(10), 734-741.

¹³ Carlson, B. E. (2000). Children exposed to intimate partner violence: Research findings and implications for intervention. *Trauma, Violence and Abuse*, 1(4), 321-342.

These Information Memoranda (IMs) were prepared by ACF's offices in coordination with the Family Violence Prevention and Services Program (FVPSA) in ACF's Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB). Each IM incorporates agency-specific facts and resources to underscore the importance of addressing domestic violence across ACF-funded programs, and create linkages between ACF-funded programs and the network of domestic violence services in their respective states and communities. View the [IMs on the FYSB website](#).

Participating offices and agencies include:

- Administration for Native Americans (ANA),
- Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE),
- Office of Community Services (OCS),
- Children's Bureau (CB),
- Office of Family Assistance (OFA),
- Office of Head Start (OHS),
- Office of Child Care (OCC), and
- Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR).

We hope you find these to be helpful resources, and hope that they will assist you in efforts to strengthen attention to domestic violence in human services programs in your jurisdiction. Continued best wishes for your work.

Sincerely,

/s/

Mark Greenberg
Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and Families
Administration for Children and Families