

<b>Social Services Block Grant</b>  <b>Dear Colleague Letter</b>	<b>U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families Office of Community Services Division of State Assistance 330 C Street, SW, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor Mail Room 5425 Washington, DC 20201 <a href="http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ocs/programs/ssbg">http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ocs/programs/ssbg</a></b>
<b>Re: Domestic Violence Awareness Month</b>	<b>Date: October 31, 2016</b>

Dear Colleagues:

In recognition of October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month, the purpose of this Dear Colleague Letter is to provide the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) network with information about the resources to support victims of domestic violence and their families. The SSBG network has an important role in supporting vulnerable children, adults, and families through a wide variety of social service programming, offering them a safety net in their times of greatest need. This Dear Colleague Letter is released in partnership with the Family and Youth Services Bureau, Division of Family Violence Prevention and Services, ([www.acf.hhs.gov/fvpsa](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/fvpsa)) – the primary federal funding stream dedicated to the support of emergency shelter and related assistance for victims of domestic violence and their children.

In the United States, more than 10 million men and women experience abuse at the hands of an intimate partner each year.<sup>i</sup> Approximately 11 percent of children will be exposed to family violence in their lifetime, most of whom will witness it directly.<sup>ii</sup> Children who witness violence in the home may experience behavioral, social, emotional, and cognitive related challenges. Overall, intimate partner and domestic violence has profound impacts on the economic, physical, social, and emotional wellbeing of individuals and families.

Social services agencies serving children, adults, and families will serve clients who have or currently are experiencing the effects of domestic violence. The SSBG provides states the opportunity to serve those who have experienced domestic violence through a number of restorative and trauma-informed services. Consider that:

- Incidences of physical abuse against older adults are most likely to be committed by a family member.<sup>iii</sup> Furthermore, only approximately 4 percent of elder abuse cases are ever reported.<sup>iv</sup>
- Almost all domestic violence survivors report experiencing some form of economic abuse.<sup>v</sup>
- Evidence shows that victims of domestic violence may experience higher rates of depression and other mental health concerns.<sup>vi</sup>

The SSBG offers states the opportunity to provide direct and meaningful service to victims of domestic violence and their families through the 29 core service areas. Vital services to those experiencing violence in the home fall under social services provided by states through SSBG including, but not limited to: counseling, case management, housing and employment services, protective services, prevention and intervention, and information and referrals. Trauma-informed services create an essential resource for individuals and families who may be experiencing domestic or intimate partner violence, and represent a critical foundation for building resilience and opportunities for independence for victims and their children.

### **Opportunities for Prevention and Action**

The SSBG network and their local service providers can aid in the prevention and intervention of domestic violence by:

- Sharing national, state and local domestic violence hotline numbers;
- Posting hotline numbers in public spaces frequented by staff and families;
- Providing trauma-informed social services to victims and their families;

- Creating meaningful partnerships with agencies with expertise in serving those experiencing domestic violence; and
- Assisting individuals, children and families with accessing resources for necessary safety planning.

### **Domestic Violence Resources**

The following resources are offered to assist states and their awardees with connecting victims of domestic violence with free and confidential help available 24 hours a day.

- National Domestic Violence Hotline **1-800-799-7233**
- National Dating Abuse Helpline **1-866-331-9474**
- National Sexual Assault Hotline (RAINN) **1-800-656-4673**

### **Partnerships with Community Based Domestic Violence Programs**

Domestic Violence Awareness Month provides an opportunity for SSBG service providers to further enhance or reinvest in community partnerships with providers that have expertise in assisting victims of domestic violence. Staff training and technical assistance better prepare social service providers for addressing and responding to disclosures of domestic violence. Domestic violence coalitions, local domestic violence shelter programs, tribal domestic violence programs, and culturally specific community-based organizations are an integral part of any coordinated health and social service response to domestic violence.

Domestic violence coalitions are state and territory-wide leaders in the efforts to end domestic violence. More information about coalitions in your state or territory can be found at (<http://nnedv.org/resources/coalitions.html>). For additional information about family violence prevention and services through the Family Violence Prevention and Services Program, including programs and up to date news, please visit (<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/fysb/programs/family-violence-prevention-services>).

### **Immediate Resources**

We encourage all service providers working the children and families to incorporate training related to prevention and intervention of family violence. The following resources provide opportunities for training and learning on the topic of domestic violence.

**Domestic Violence: Understanding the Basics**, is an online learning tool developed by FVPSA grantee, the **National Resource Center on Domestic Violence** and **VAWnet**, the National Online Resource Center on Violence Against Women. This 1-hour interactive eLearning module describes the dynamics and common tactics that characterize domestic violence, provides an overview of the scope and impact on individuals and society, explores the underlying factors that allow domestic violence to exist, offers insight into the various risks and choices that survivors face, and shares how to be part of the solution. Divided into 10 sections that address common questions related to domestic violence, this self-guided online course will help new advocates, allied professionals, students, volunteers and the general public achieves a basic understanding of the complexities of this issue.

### **Additional Online Domestic Violence Resources**

- Promising Futures Without Violence developed by FVPSA grantee Futures Without Violence, is an online resource center for best practices for serving children, youth and parents experiencing domestic violence. This website houses evidence based interventions, program models, training curriculum and tools focused on safe services that build resilience and competence in children and parents impacted by domestic violence. <http://promising.futureswithoutviolence.org/>
- The **Domestic Violence Evidence Project** developed by FVPSA grantee the **National Resource Center on Domestic Violence** houses a comprehensive evidence review of domestic violence core services, programs, and innovative practices. <http://www.dvevidenceproject.org>

- [Trauma-Informed Domestic Violence Services](http://www.vawnet.org/special-collections/DVTraumaInformed-Overview) is a 3-part [VAWnet](http://www.vawnet.org) Special Collection Series reflecting an integrated perspective that incorporates an understanding of the pervasiveness and impact of trauma; supports healing and resiliency; and addresses the root causes of abuse and violence. This Special Collection was developed by FVPSA grantees the [National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma & Mental Health](http://www.nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org) in partnership with the [National Resource Center on Domestic Violence](http://www.nationalresourcecenterdv.org). <http://www.vawnet.org/special-collections/DVTraumaInformed-Overview>

### **Culturally Specific Resources**

There is a national network of organizations that address the impact of domestic violence and implement culturally relevant trauma-informed services for ethnic and racially specific communities. These organizations work to increase access to services through: training and technical assistance (such as statewide service implementation and language access planning), producing culturally relevant tools for advocates and practitioners, conducting culturally relevant research, and strengthening partnerships between culturally specific organizations and mainstream service providers.

- Asian and Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence, [www.apiidv.org](http://www.apiidv.org)
- Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community, <http://www.idvaac.org/>
- Mending the Sacred Hoop <http://mshoop.org/about-us/>
- National Latin@ Network – A Project of Casa de Esperanza <http://www.nationallatinonetwork.org>
- Women of Color Network, <http://womenofcolornetwork.org/>

### **National and Special Issue Domestic Violence Resources**

There is a national network of organizations that address the impact of domestic violence and dating violence within specific issue areas such as health, mental health, substance abuse, child protection, and legal services. These organizations work to increase access to services through: training and technical assistance, production of tools for advocates and practitioners, conducting research, and partnering with agencies to increase their overall capacity to support individuals and families impacted by domestic violence.

- National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, [www.nrcdv.org](http://www.nrcdv.org) and [www.vawnet.org](http://www.vawnet.org);
- National Indigenous Women's Resource Center, [www.niwrc.org](http://www.niwrc.org);
- National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma, and Mental Health, [www.nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org](http://www.nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org);
- National Health Resource Center on Domestic Violence, [www.futureswithoutviolence.org](http://www.futureswithoutviolence.org);
- Resource Center on Domestic Violence, Child Protection and Custody, [www.ncjfcj.org/dept/fvd](http://www.ncjfcj.org/dept/fvd); and
- Battered Women's Justice Project: Criminal and Civil Justice Center, [www.bwjp.org](http://www.bwjp.org).

Domestic Violence Awareness month brings new and expanding opportunities to forge strong partnerships that focus on building futures without violence for the thousands of families that we serve each day. Thank you for your continued dedication and commitment to support children and families.

Sincerely,

/s/

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Seth Hassett  
Acting Director, Division of Social Services  
Office of Community Services  
Administration for Children and Families  
Department of Health and Human Services

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<sup>i</sup> Black, M.C., Basile, K.C., Breiding, M.J., Smith, S.G., Walters, M.L., Merrick, M.T., Chen, J. & Stevens, M. (2011). *The national intimate partner and sexual violence survey: 2010 summary report*. Retrieved from [http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs\\_report2010-a.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs_report2010-a.pdf).

<sup>ii</sup> Hamby, S., Finkelhor, D., Turner, H. & Ormrod, R. (2011). *Children's Exposure to Intimate Partner Violence and Other Family Violence*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojdp/232272.pdf>.

<sup>iii</sup> Acierno, R., Resnick, H., Kilpatrick, D., Boyle, J., Steve, K. & Muzzy, W. (2008). *National Elder Mistreatment Study*. Retrieved from <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/NACJD/studies/28561/version/1#cite>.

<sup>iv</sup> (2012). *Elder Abuse and Neglect: In Search of Solutions*. American Psychological Association. Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/pi/aging/resources/guides/elder-abuse.pdf>

<sup>v</sup> Postmus, J. Plummer, S., McMahon, S., Murshid, N., & Kim, M. (2012). Understanding economic abuse in the lives of survivors. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 27(3), 411-430.

<sup>vi</sup> Truman, J.L. & Morgan, R.E. (2014). *Nonfatal Domestic Violence, 2003-2012*. U.S. Department of Justice Special Report. Retrieved at [www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/ndv0312.pdf](http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/ndv0312.pdf)