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INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

TO: Head Start and Early Head Start Grantees; Child Care and Development Fund Administrators

SUBJECT: Helping Victims of Domestic Violence and Their Children

INFORMATION:

The purpose of this Information Memorandum is to provide Head Start programs and Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) grantees with information about domestic violence. This information is provided by the Office of Head Start and the Office of Child Care in partnership with the Division of Family Violence Prevention in the Family and Youth Services Bureau of the Administration of Children, Youth and Families. Related resources and web links are provided throughout this Information Memorandum.

October is domestic violence awareness month, and it reminds us to ensure that young children and their families who are experiencing domestic violence receive the help they need. Relationships with caring and supportive adults provide a protective resource for parents and children who have experienced family violence, and Head Start and child care providers are well positioned to provide this kind of support.

In our Nation, far too many families experience domestic violence.

- One in every four women and one in every 13 men have experienced domestic violence during his or her lifetime.[1]
- Domestic violence is the second leading cause of death for pregnant women, and some 25 to 50 percent of adolescent mothers experience partner violence before, during, or just after their pregnancy.[2]
- By the age of 17, at least 27 percent of children nationwide have witnessed domestic violence in their own families,[3] and approximately 15.5 million children are exposed to domestic violence every year.[4]
- In 30 to 60 percent of families where either child abuse or domestic violence is present, child abuse and domestic violence co-occur.[5]

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[1]Tjaden, Patricia & Thoennes, Nancy. National Institute of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Extent, Nature and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey." July 2000.

[2]Leiderman, Sally and Cair Almo. 2001. *Interpersonal Violence and Adolescent Pregnancy: Prevalence and Implications for Practice and Policy*. Center for Assessment and Policy Development and the National Organization on Adolescent Pregnancy, Parenting, and Prevention.

[3] Finkelhor, David, Turner, Heather, Ormrod, Richard, and Hamby, Sherry L. Violence, Abuse, and Crime Exposure in a National Sample of Children and Youth. *Pediatrics* 2009 : peds.2009-0467v1-peds.2009-0467.

[4]McDonald, R., et al. (2006). "Estimating the Number of American Children Living in Partner-Violence Families." *Journal of Family Psychology, 30(1)*, 137-142.

Far too many families participating in early childhood programs are also affected by domestic violence. A 2002 study using a nationally representative sample of Head Start programs, for example, found that 17 percent of enrolled children were exposed to domestic violence.[6] Children may very well experience this violence themselves, but even when they are not directly injured, the exposure to these traumatic events can cause social, emotional and behavioral difficulties.[7] Child care providers may often see early indications of children's stress or trauma through the behavior of young children in their care. Child care providers can support the child during times of stress and can make hotline and other domestic violence information available to parents.

Early Head Start and Head Start and other early care and education programs should make every effort to assist families and children who are experiencing domestic violence. Help for victims of family violence is available 24 hours a day at:

National Domestic Violence Hotline (1–800–799–SAFE (7233) or TTY 1–800–787–3224)

Hotline advocates provide crisis intervention, safety planning, information and referrals. Head Start and Early Head Start programs should share State and local hotline information or numbers for local domestic violence intervention programs, either directly or in public spaces that are frequented by staff and families. CCDF State administrators are encouraged to share this information with child care providers and early childhood programs, for example, by distributing to child care resource and referral and agencies so they may share with their child care provider networks. CCDF administrators also could incorporate domestic violence awareness into technical assistance and training activities with child care providers. In addition, administrators could use early childhood State advisory councils to disseminate information.

For more information, including how to reach out to individuals who may be victims, visit:

HHS National Resource Center on Domestic Violence
http://www.nrcdv.org/dvam/about/aboutdv.php.

The coming months offer a good opportunity for early childhood programs to develop and reinvest in community partnerships with providers who have expertise in helping victims of domestic violence. (For Head Start programs, refer to Head Start Performance Standards-Family Partnerships 1304.40(b)(1)(i) and Community Partnerships 1304.41(a)(1)(ix)). To meet the needs of families affected by domestic violence, Head Start and child care programs can partner with organizations such as State domestic violence coalitions, local domestic violence and sexual assault service providers, legal advocates, health care providers, shelter programs, transitional and long-term housing assistance providers, and domestic violence intervention resources for children, mental health services, and/or batterers' intervention programs. These providers may offer direct services to families and children or important in-service trainings that could be tailored to the specific professional roles of Head Start and child care staff. (For Head Start programs, refer to Human Resources Management 1304.52(k)(3)).

Accompanying this Information Memorandum are three resources.

The first resource is a link to information about a domestic violence curriculum called "Safe Families, Safe Homes" that was developed for Head Start programs and that is being used in many States and

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[5]Edleson, J. L. (1999). The overlap between child maltreatment and woman battering. Violence Against Women, 5, 134-154.

[6]Cohen, E. and J. Knitzer. "Children Living with Domestic Violence: The Role of Early Childhood Programs." Prepared for the meeting, "Early Childhood, Domestic Violence, and Poverty: Taking the Next Steps to Help Young Children and Their Families." May 2002.

[7]Nelson HD, Nygren P, McInerney Y, Klein J. (2004). *Screening women and elderly adults for family and intimate partner violence: a review of the evidence for the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force. Annals of Internal Medicine* 140(5):387–96.

local communities for training and coordination amongst early childhood, domestic violence, child welfare and substance abuse treatment and prevention partners. This training is helpful to all Early Head Start and Head Start staff, but it is particularly helpful for family services staff and home visitors. It may also be a useful training tool for center and home-based child care providers. Many States, including Connecticut, New Hampshire, and West Virginia, are actively using this curriculum. It is currently being piloted with the Eight Northern Pueblos as well as in the State of New Mexico. For more information about "Safe Families, Safe Homes," please note the contact information in the attached fact sheet, "Safe Families, Safe Homes: A Domestic Violence Curriculum Developed for Head Start Programs, Fact Sheet and Contact Info."

The second resource is a list of State domestic violence coalitions, which can refer you to appropriate local services and inform you of different training options for staff.
State Domestic Violence Coalitions:
http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/content/familyviolence/coalitions.htm

The third resource is a guide entitled "Healing the Invisible Wounds," for helping children birth to 18 who have been exposed to violence. This guide is directed toward families but is also helpful for those who work directly with children.
Safe Start "Healing the Invisible Wounds"
http://www.safestartcenter.org/pdf/caregiver.pdf

Please direct any questions on this Information Memorandum to:

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Thank you for your work on behalf of children and families.

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