DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
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Dear Colleagues:

During Domestic Violence Awareness Month, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) is issuing a set of Information Memorandums (IMs) across a broad range of ACF-supported programs to highlight the extent and impacts of domestic violence, and to 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.[2,3] 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 percent 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 their children alone.[7] The National Network to End Domestic Violence estimates that between 22 and 57 percent 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

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[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.

[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).

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 percent of children will have witnessed violence in their homes[11] 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 Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (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.

This October, all ACF program offices are announcing commitments to raise awareness of the impacts of domestic violence and highlighting 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.

As Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and Families, I am pleased to share with you these IMs prepared by ACF's offices in coordination with the Family Violence Prevention and Services Program (FVPSA), an ACF division in the Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB). We will be releasing IMs from each ACF office throughout October. These IMs will be housed on the FYSB website (www.acf.hhs.gov/fvpsa). Each IM incorporates office-specific facts and resources to underscore the importance of addressing domestic violence across ACF-funded programs, and demonstrates linkages between ACF-funded programs and the networks of domestic violence services within states and communities. Using the FVPSA resources and information provided in the IMs, I encourage you to explore ways you can partner with domestic violence programs during this month and beyond.

Sincerely,

Mark H. Greenberg
Acting Assistant Secretary
for Children and Families

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[9] Max, W., Rice, D.P., 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.