



Domestic Violence Expert-Informed Model Screening Questions and Practices

Background guidance on screening practices for caseworkers

- DV victims are frequently reluctant to share their history with strangers. It's critical to build trust through an interactive process that empowers a victim by respecting their self-knowledge and choices.
- DV victims, and their children, may have suffered trauma that can affect the victim's ability to process information and participate in the process.
- It's important to provide opportunities for the victim to share important information at all stages of the interview, and during subsequent contact points, to develop trust in the process and the case manager's supportive role.
- It's also essential to provide repeated opportunities to ask questions and receive information for a procedurally just and transparent process.
- Validate the importance of what is shared by the victim and support them as they disclose information.
- Respecting the victim's right to make choices for themselves and their children is a key strategy for engagement.
- Don't force disclosure – that should not be the goal. Instead, provide repeated opportunities for universal education on domestic violence and how the child support agency can enhance survivors' safety throughout the child support process.
- You will not be conducting a forensic type of interview. Our goal is to ask questions to get information on domestic violence or safety concerns to make this process safe for the victim and children, and to provide information, resources, and referrals, as appropriate to their situation.

Model Framing Language and Screening Questions

(Caseworkers: Below is a script of framing language and screening questions to use with both the applicant and the respondent.)

We take the safety of families receiving child support services seriously, and we can modify some of our processes to help with safety concerns. There are a few questions we ask everybody receiving our services to help us provide the right mix of services for your case. We don't share your answers to these questions with the other parent. We also know that things in relationships can change and so you can change your answers to these questions in the future.

- We usually have both parents come to our office for a conference to try and reach agreements on child support and parenting time. Do you have any safety concerns about meeting together with the other parent at our office?
- We don't routinely share address or contact information for either parent, but that information may appear on court documents or orders. Would you be concerned if the other parent knew your address or how to contact you?
- Do you have any reason not to feel safe giving information about the other parent or party in court?
- Do you have concerns about the other parent having parenting time with your children?
- Do you have concerns about contact with the other parent when exchanging the child(ren) for parenting time?
- Do you have or have you had any orders of protection that we should be aware of?
- We often work with parents who have experienced violence or are afraid of the other parent. I have information about resources that are available in our area. Would you like information about these resources?

(Caseworkers: If you are working with a specific advocate or staff person at a local domestic violence program, include the name and the role that person can play; for example, safety planning, counseling, connecting children to services, advocating for civil legal protections.)