

What your Program can do to Help Kids Heal

Supporting a Sense of Safety:

Shelter/ Direct Services:

- All children are welcome...older boys, teens, children
- Let kids see shelter security rules, procedures, locks, having rules that are clear
- Get children a stuffy to sleep with or whatever they identify as being helpful
- Have clear and supported positive non-violent discipline guidelines
- Strategize with teens and their moms about technology and cell phone use, supporting teens to navigate shelter guidelines, and design *survival plans* for teens staying in shelter
- Have clear confidentiality guidelines around youth and children's services
 - Maintaining confidentiality between advocates and kids unless concerns of safety about child or have child's permission to share with moms
 - Talk to moms in general terms when they ask what their kids are sharing
- Safety plan with youth/children and moms and consider youth/children's needs during this process
- Let children talk about their feelings around safety

Community:

- Work with local school, child care, other systems around safety, brainstorm ways for each child to feel safe accessing these services
- Know and Understand your McKinney-Vento (Homeless Student) state contacts to help arrange for educational needs

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Creating Structure/Predictability:

Shelter/Direct Services:

- Having clear kids guidelines that create reasonable structure for children and that also allow for empowerment of mother (quiet times, kitchen rules, where kids can be, etc.)
 - Be sure that kids are aware of guidelines when they come in - especially older children and teens
- Support moms on creating predictable schedules and routines
- Make engagements with children that are regular, predictable, and that you do not go back on
- Create support groups have structures that kids know and can count on
- Build in and encourage decision making for kids which is realistic for their age (choose between this and this; older kids and teens creating agendas for groups, etc.)
- Have clear and realistic time frames, activities, with less chaos in your programming

Community:

- Stress this issue when training schools, working with child's school, etc.

Facilitating Community/Familial Connection:

Shelter/Direct Services:

- Support whatever extended family and community structures are already in place for youth/child (safe and supporting my mother)
 - Baseball, visiting grandparents, school activities, staying in school of origin if reasonable, visiting overnight with friends, family, etc.
- Ask kids/moms what they want and need in terms of arranging the outside world

What your Program can do to Help Kids Heal

- Try to incorporate their ideas into the arrangements
- Consult with moms about the realities of these things remaining consistent while considering safety, transportation, logistics, etc.

Community:

- Train child related community organizations and systems about domestic violence, impact on children and mothers.
- Invite community organizations to donate gift cards, movie passes, festival and music tickets, etc.

Helping Children Not Feel Responsible to Care for Adults/be a kid or teen:

Shelter/Direct Services:

- Create spaces and guidelines that allow children a life separate from the responsibilities and burdens of adulthood
- Create spaces for children that are not within ear shot of adult conversations and are still supervised & safe
- **Caring for siblings:** Check with families about what their structures, needs and wishes are in terms of older siblings watching younger ones. Sometimes, watching out for younger siblings feels good to older children and creates a sense of normalcy for them.
- Think about creating spaces for teens away from both adults and little kids
- Support moms to give messages to their young children that they (moms) are ok and that they are being taken care of by friends, counselors, etc.
- Offer places for kids and teens to be together, play, talk, do fun stuff

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Providing Counseling/Support Groups

Shelter/Direct Services:

- Create opportunities for children and teens to have one-on-one time with advocates in quiet predictable spaces
- Create and implement age specific, intentional, curriculum based support groups for teens, children **and** non offending parents which create safe spaces to express feelings and strengthen bonds
- Have a list of community mental health resources for children, teens and non-offending parents

Community:

- Connect with local mental health resources, train them in domestic violence, ask for training from them on community resources and trauma, and maintain relationships and referral lists
- Collaborate with mental health providers to co-facilitate children, youth, parents support groups

Creating Access to Community Resources

- Keep connected to community resources for children, youth and parents surrounding your shelter
- Train child related community organizations and systems about domestic violence, impact on children and mothers.

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Considering Contact with Non-custodial Parent:

(Note: IF safe and doesn't interfere with healing)

- Support mothers who are interested in their children visiting non-custodial parents by providing information about the impacts of DV on children, legal and supervised visitation options, and strategizing and safety planning.
- Actively engage legal systems including courts, judges, attorneys, guardians ad litem
- Train them about domestic violence and impact on children and mothers
- Support and train *Supervised Visitation Programs* to understand the dynamics of domestic violence and impact on children
- Support families engaged in the legal system by creating legal focused support groups or advocacy assistance