



Creating Opportunities for Safety and Change in Supervised Visitation Programs

**A policy framework for engaging men who use
violence**

Written by Jennifer Rose and Beth McNamara
Inspire Action for Social Change

In consultation with Lonna Davis & Leiana Kinnicutt
Futures Without Violence



Table of Contents

- I. Acknowledgements
- II. Introduction
- III. History
- IV. Voices of Women, Children and Men
- V. Understand your Community and Organizational Readiness
- VI. Creating Opportunities for Engagement and Change
- VII. The Roadmap for Developing Policies
- VIII. Conclusion
- IX. Appendices



This project is supported by grant #2011-TA-AX-K033 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

I. Acknowledgements

The inspiration, insight and collective thinking of the last decade made the writing of this publication possible. The extensive discussions and on-going exploration involving the Office on Violence Against Women, Futures Without Violence (FUTURES), Inspire Action for Social Change, Praxis and other technical assistance providers in partnership with communities seeking to improve the lives of those impacted by domestic violence have set the stage for expanding the field of supervised visitation.

The development of this publication could not have been possible without the three “Learning Community” sites from Bend, Oregon; Portland, Oregon; and the City of New Orleans. Each of these communities very graciously offered their time, allowed us to observe and conduct numerous interviews with many of their community partners. We extend our deepest gratitude to Gail Bartley, Amy Davidson, Kellie Prinz, Janice Garceau, Sarah Windsheimer, Guruseva Mason, and Kati Bambrick – their contributions, energy and passion for this work is so inspiring. The journey they allowed us to take with them spurred many great moments of learning and a few moments of sitting in the struggle of what should happen next.

We extend our deepest gratitude to the women and men using visitation centers in Portland and Bend Oregon who participated in listening sessions and community conversations with us. Their experiences helped us explore the many facets and needs related to safety and the use of a visitation center.

FUTURES would also like to express a huge thank you to Jennifer Rose and Beth McNamara for their leadership, vision and partnership in this effort. Their commitment to ending violence against women and children and to improving outcomes for all family members is unwavering.

Appreciation also goes to our partners at the Office on Violence Against Women for their generous support. Special thanks goes to Ginger Baran Lyons.

May our collective contribution help expand the possibilities for the field of supervised visitation and support families with new inspiration and commitment.

Sincerely,



Leiana Kinnicutt
Program Manager
FUTURES



Lonna Davis
Director of Children's Programs
FUTURES

II. Introduction

There are many hopes and fears around engaging with men who use violence. As advocates, we fear collusion, we fear we will miss important information that can cause harm, we fear being tricked, and we fear the worst. Despite these fears, there are also many hopes for engaging with men who use violence. We hope to have an impact, we hope to create change, we hope to break the cycle, we hope we can prevent ongoing risk and harm to women and children.

In order to be effective in our work with families we all need to hold onto both our hopes and fears as we move forward. We need to stay aware and vigilant about the gravity of domestic violence. At the same time, we need to stay hopeful so we can continue to be creative and open to the possibility of change and healing. The point of departure for this document is somewhere in the middle of these hopes and fears – that place of tension that keeps our feet on the ground and hearts and minds open.

Futures Without Violence, (FUTURES) partnered with Inspire Action for Social Change to develop this framework designed to help supervised visitation providers and their community partners create a more institutionalized and seamless approach to engaging with men who use violence. This project has been developed as part of a twelve-year commitment by FUTURES to work with visitation providers and their community partners to enhance their response and support to families experiencing domestic violence. While the focus of this document is on the work of supervised visitation providers, it is our hope that the ideas, concepts and thinking can contribute to shifting policy and practice across sectors working to end violence against women and children.

This document builds on the work of *Fathering After Violence*, a national initiative that aims to help end violence against women by motivating men to renounce their abuse and become better fathers (or father-figures).¹ It is meant to build on the initial findings from FUTURES' earlier work and aims to deepen our practice, intention and ability to hold men who use violence accountable while providing meaningful and thoughtful opportunities for change and healing. We recognize that our work with men who use violence must be connected and informed by our relationships with their partners and children and embedded in our larger communities' response to ending violence.

¹Arean, J., (2008) *Fathering After Violence: Working with Abusive Fathers in Supervised Visitation*. Family Violence Prevention Fund.

III. History

This document is the culmination of the work and thinking of many thoughtful, questioning and innovative leaders in our field. Many of us came together in 2002 with the launch of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women Supervised Visitation Grant Program, then known as the Safe Havens Grant Program. In July 2003, FUTURES received its first grant from the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) to provide technical assistance (TA) to four Safe Havens Supervised Visitation and Safe Exchange Program grantees across the United States.

The goal of the TA was to enhance safety for victims of domestic violence and their children by developing strategies for working with non-custodial fathers who use supervised visitation centers. The project was informed by the belief that supervised visitation programs should work to motivate men to renounce violence, become better fathers (or father figures) and be more supportive parenting partners.

In October 2004, FUTURES received a second OVW grant to implement and document the sum of these strategies. In collaboration with many partners, we designed, redesigned and tested innovative implementation plans for working with fathers, including the use of universal messaging, orientation sessions, non-violence groups and a multi-cultural mentoring project.

In the years that followed, FUTURES received funding to develop the National Institute on Fatherhood and Domestic Violence Supervised Visitation and Community Partners TA Series (NIFDV). The first Institute took place in March 2008 in San Francisco, California. Since that time, we have conducted seven additional Institutes with over eighty communities across the country. While the Institute was originally conceived as an advanced training, it quickly became evident that the Institute was beneficial to long-standing programs as well as programs in the developmental stage of their work.

In 2012, FUTURES received additional funding to explore the lessons learned from the almost ten years of TA and support on fatherhood and domestic violence that had been completed. During this time we surveyed communities who participated in the Institute and worked intensively with six communities who had attended the Institute. These communities and partners included: Bend, Oregon; Contra Costa County, California; The State of Michigan; Duluth, Minnesota; Grand Rapids, Minnesota; and Dekalb, Georgia. These communities generously donated their time and expertise to conduct listening

sessions and interviews with key stakeholders to help us learn about how NIFDV impacted their work.

In July 2013, FUTURES convened a meeting with the six communities and other experts to discuss the lessons learned and explore the ongoing TA needs of the field. From the lessons learned, FUTURES committed to revising the current NIFDV curriculum and create a learning community for the purpose of developing a framework for model policies and practices for engaging with men who use violence.²

In 2013, FUTURES received funding to support the enhancement of the NIFDV and partnered with Inspire Action for Social Change. The goal was to develop a model framework to enhance how supervised visitation centers engage with men who use violence. The project convened a small learning community to examine and develop policies and practices that support engaging men who use violence as a key strategy to enhance the safety of women and their children in supervised visitation and safe exchange centers.

The learning community comprised three communities: Bend, Oregon; Portland, Oregon; and the City of New Orleans. Site visits, service observation, policies and procedure review, documentation review, and the completion of listening sessions and interviews with parents, providers, courts and other key collaborative partners were completed as part of the learning community process. In partnership with the three communities we examined practices, challenging scenarios, ongoing issues, personal struggles with this work and innovative ideas for institutionalizing our work. While FUTURES and Inspire Action for Social Change had the privilege of authoring this document, it would not be possible without the support and partnership of the over eighty visitation programs across the country, hundreds of leaders and key stakeholders, as well as the many women, children and men who made time in their busy lives to share their stories and experiences with us. This document is the culmination of our collaboration with all those individuals and their collective thinking, struggle, innovation and hope.

Many lessons emerged from our work. Key lessons that are incorporated into the thinking and design of this framework include:

1. The importance of always keeping the safety of victims and accountability of men who use violence central to our work;

²Goodman, L., Bell, M., & Rose, J., (2013). "The Impact of the National Institute on Fatherhood, Domestic Violence, and Visitation on the capacity of supervised visitation centers to Engage Men and Enhance Family Safety." Available online here: http://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/userfiles/file/Children_and_Families/NIFDV%20Lessons%20Learned%20Report%202013.pdf.

2. The significance of building trust, and supporting relationships with mothers, children and fathers who use the centers;
3. The need to understand organizational stories and readiness to carry out this work;
4. The importance of a complex and nuanced understanding of domestic violence;
5. The importance of an analysis of culture and the role it plays in individuals' and families' lives;
6. Knowing that visitation work requires holding the needs of women, children and men simultaneously;
7. The essential need for meaningful community collaborations and partnerships that support safety, accountability and change.



IV. Voices of Women, Men and Children

“This program has changed my life and helped me find my passion to help other women who have been abused like me.”
- Mother using a visitation program

Our most profound lessons have come from listening to women, children and men who are using or have used supervised visitation programs. Their experiences and stories have helped shape our thinking and direction of our work. Early on in this process we conducted listening sessions with women and men who were using visitation centers in the Bay Area of California.

The most profound message we heard from parents was that neither believed the visitation center was organized or equipped to help them. Women believed visitation centers were set up to help their abusive partner get his children back, whereas men believed they were set up to keep their children from them. This reality was a catalyst for us to spend more time learning from the individuals using these programs, in order to better support the visitation centers’ goals of supporting safety and creating opportunities for change and healing.

Learning from women, children and youth, and men is key

It is important for programs and the larger community to intentionally carve out time and resources to learn from individuals and families using post separation services. Organizing listening sessions and/or individual interviews with women, men and children is an important way to keep the needs and experiences of people using these services at the center of the work.

For programs, recognizing the importance of learning from people using visitation services has to be an organizational value and an important aspect of the philosophical framework. Having a genuine desire and curiosity about what is working and not working for families is important. Creating a culture of reciprocity and shared learning is an important first step to building a strong partnership with individuals coming to these programs.

Some strategies for sharing lessons learned with clients:

- Organize listening sessions with women, men and children;
- Utilize check-in time to talk with clients about what’s working or not working;
- Provide ongoing opportunities for participants to complete confidential satisfaction/feedback surveys;

- Create opportunities to share feedback with your community partners. This does not mean case specific information but overall experiences that people are having while using center services.

The following emerged from our conversations with women, children, and men who use supervised visitation centers, as well as the staff who work there. In the spirit of centering and honoring the voices of people whose lives are most effected by violence, we include them here as a small sample of what we learned from these conversations.

Of course, every person involved in supervised visitation has a unique and important story to tell. The quotes are not meant to be representative, but rather a reminder of the importance of learning from the experiences of supervised visitation staff and clients to improve our work together.

What we hear from women:

The experiences of women using visitation programs are as diverse as the women themselves. Some women expressed that the visitation programs saved their lives while others expressed deep resentment and concern. Although their experiences are different, what they described as lacking from programs was very much the same.

Every woman we listened to about her hopes and fears around using visitation programs described the importance of trust and their perception of how the center worked to earn and maintain her trust.

“I want my children to have a relationship with their father. I just want it be safe.” – Mother, listening session participant

“Quit treating the mothers like the father is the victim.” – Mother, listening session participant

“We want more information. We want staff skilled at seeing what’s really going on. We want them to see that the abusive one is charming and the victim looks crazy because she is shaken up. We need someone to say, ‘You’re being abused.’” – Mother, listening session participant

“And I don’t want to hear how great it went. The older kids hate him but the younger ones don’t. When the supervisors talk about how great it went – I don’t need to hear that.” – Mother, interview participant

“Having someone who listened and didn’t judge me was huge.”
– Mother using a visitation program

“I have been using the center for two years. Unfortunately, in the beginning I put them in the category of the system and put my walls up. I wasn’t going to let them in and know how I really felt. But it’s really nice to finally be able to vent and have a real listener.”
– Father, interview participant

What we hear from men:

The experiences of men who use violence vary greatly. Many of the men we interviewed described feeling like the visitation centers were against them, that staff were “man-haters,” and “out to get them.” They felt like victims of the system, they felt like they were treated like the enemy.

We also heard from some men that their experience changed over time. As they let down their guard and staff connected with them, they came to see the value of the program. Some men shared that they hadn't ever spent a solid hour with their children; they didn't know how to play with their kids. Others would come for their visits and set up the room and orchestrate their time with their children. Some fathers were appreciative of the parenting support and other resources offered by visitation centers. Others expressed that they just wanted staff to let leave them alone.

“I care about my children. I know they think I am bad person. I am a good father.” – Father, interview participant

“This isn’t easy, having someone who is half my age, who doesn’t have children telling me how to parent my children, it isn’t easy.”
– Father, interview participant

“I have been going to the visitation center for six months now. Because of the center I get to see my son and that’s a good thing but it seems they just want to judge and jump all over me when I don’t do or say something right...they should offer some help not just sit there in judgment – I really can’t wait to get out of there.”
– Father, listening session participant

“I felt very supported by the staff. This was an emotional time for me. I felt lost, I felt angry. I wanted to give up. My monitor encouraged me to keep coming and I am glad I did.” – Father, interview participant

“They sit there in the corner judging me, writing stuff down. That’s not helpful.” – Father, interview participant

What we hear from children and youth:

Creating opportunities for children and youth to share their stories and experiences is important. The focus on centralizing safety for adults and children, as well as engaging men use violence, can sometimes leave the needs, experiences and voices of children behind. Each child – even those coming from the same home – has a unique story to share. Creating regular and ongoing opportunities to listen to children and

youth is a key strategy in helping to keep their needs and experiences equally accounted for in this work.

“For my mom, being here is much less stress. For my dad, it’s benefiting him. He even had a hard time understanding that what he was doing was hurting us. When he gets mad, he gets REALLY mad and now he’s calmer.... I felt out of place before – when they’d yell – like I wasn’t supposed to be there – like I should not have gotten in the car, or should have gone in the house.” – Youth participant

What we hear from supervised visitation center staff members:

“The kids coming to our program want to be able to see their other parent and want to feel safe while doing so.” – Visitation center staff member

“Some kids have expressed being scared and want us to protect them. Especially older kids tell us this during the child orientation.” – Visitation center staff member

“Children and youth want us to protect them from bad feelings between their parents, especially any negative talking about the other parent.” – Visitation center staff member

“They don’t want to be utilized as messengers by a parent. They don’t want to be asked to take sides or to be neutral when they cannot.” – Visitation center staff member

“Sometimes they just don’t want a visit and they don’t want us to make them go.” – Visitation center staff member



“We look forward to seeing our dad. Some kids have not seen their dad in a long time, which makes them nervous.” – Youth participant

V. Understand your Community and Organizational Readiness

There is currently a universal mandate for all judges to act in the best interests of children in determining custody and visitation. The mandate is included in every state's statutory framework. However, in many states the mandate is loosely defined or completely undefined. Some states have implemented more nuanced consideration statutes to account for interventions for victims and perpetrators when there is domestic violence present in families. These statutes recognize that the presence of violence is given greater weight in making child custody and visitation arrangements. In some states a rebuttable presumption statute has been implemented not allowing a perpetrator of domestic violence to be awarded sole or joint custody of any child.

Despite these mandates and statutes, courts still struggle with the balance of safety of the parent who has been abused and access for the parent who has used violence. Currently seven states have a rebuttable presumption statute that the court shall order supervised visitation when violence is present in the home and several of these states have further conditions in place before a supervised visitation order can be lifted. Some of these conditions include completing a batterer's intervention treatment program, not abusing alcohol and other drugs, and determination that the perpetrator of violence no longer poses a danger to the child.³

There has recently been a tremendous effort to provide reform and guidance for the family court decision-making process in domestic violence related child custody disputes and enhance how best interest factors are weighted when domestic violence is determined. The Model State Code on Domestic and Family Violence is one such effort – the Model Code provides provisions to protect victims in a fair, prompt and thorough manner that states and communities can use to adapt and shape their statutory requirements.⁴ There are also further efforts to explore and enhance how to identify, understand and account for the nature, context and implications of abuse at every stage of the family court process.⁵

³Resource Center on Domestic Violence: Child Protection and Custody, a project of the Family Violence and Domestic Relations Program (FVDR) of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ). 2013

⁴Model Code on Domestic and Family Violence, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, 1994.

⁵Judicial Guide to Child Safety in Custody Cases, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, 2008.

Based on the trend of many states to mandate the court to make adequate provisions for the safety of the child and the other parent, interventions and an array of sanctions have been closely examined and enhanced in recent years. One such enhancement is ensuring the community is collectively engaged and involved in creating and providing supervised visitation services.

Early assessment and understanding of the readiness of organizations and the larger community to provide visitation services is imperative. While supervised visitation programs have tremendous potential to enhance the safety of victims and their children, support offender responsibility and create opportunities for change, they can also create unintended consequences and risk for families. We encourage communities and organizations to fully explore their readiness and take small intentional steps to increase their capacity to provide these services.

We also recognize that collective impact is the key to creating long-term results. The saying “the whole can be greater than the sum of our parts” carries a lot of meaning. Those who come to this work are typically passionate and committed. Collectively, that passion and commitment creates much more effective results for safer, healthier families. This work requires meaningful and effective relationships, shared leadership and investment, and shared beliefs and values about domestic violence and engaging men who use violence.

Assessing Community Readiness

One size can't and doesn't fit all – we aren't saying anything new when we state that every community is unique and what is possible and practical differs greatly. But there are some key considerations that should be determined prior to establishing supervised visitation services. It is important to establish the current climate and resources available for working with men in your community.

Determine if your community:

- Has the political will or belief systems that would support working with men who use violence as a leading strategy to enhance the safety of women who have been abused and their children in a supervised visitation program as well as other settings;
- Consistently upholds and accounts for the safety of women and children who are living with violence;

“We have a rural tradition here in Washington County – our silos have been taken down and we strive to work with each other – we know what others do will impact what we all do collectively to make a difference. We have also been intentional about ensuring that our political structure doesn't hinder our process and ability to be effective – we support each other and value the potential of change in all individuals.”
– Portland, OR Learning Community Site

“Vulnerability is the core of shame and fear and struggle for worthiness, but it is also the birthplace of joy, of creation, of creativity, of belonging, of love.”

– Brene Brown

- Has a strong and reputable batterer’s intervention program and/or a positive fatherhood program that understands violence against women;
- Shares the belief that people can change, that perpetrators of violence should be held accountable and responsible for the violence, and offers pathways to support change when possible;
- Holds a consistent and commonly stated community message about domestic violence;
- Has laws and statutes that guide decisions around child custody and visitation that accounts for domestic violence and works to determine the nature, context and implications of abuse at every stage of the family court process;
- Orders supervised visitation when it has been determined that ongoing supervised contact is not dangerous and the use of the center would not further compromise the safety of both the adult victim and their children, and;
- Has widespread commitment to engage in a collaborative process.
- Specifically looking at your supervised visitation program, its intersection with community partners and the availability of other intervening systems is a crucial evaluation step. Programs and community partners should consider the following:
 - How supervised visitation services are currently being used – who is being ordered/referred, what is the expectation of the services, how is information from the center used by other system interveners?;
 - Whether your court has an understanding that appropriate parenting and time spent with children that takes place without incident in a supervised setting does not remove the safety risks present at the time of referral;
 - Whether courts and other interveners will not be swayed in their decision to maintain safety for abused women and their children by enhanced engagement and positive supervised contact;
 - How a center’s decision to deny, suspend, or change services is supported or not supported by the court;
 - Who is being referred to your program? Are there racial and cultural disparities between your community and who is ordered to services?;
 - How is your supervised visitation program connected to the courts, referral sources and other post separation services in your community, and;
 - The importance of allowing for, and being open to, vulnerability for trust to develop among partners.

Robust Partnerships

Connecting with other organizations that can provide support to parents and children is a primary means of increasing safety for families. Supervised visitation programs must be a part of the larger community's response to enhance safety for women and their children and interrupt opportunities for ongoing abuse. Historically, visitation and exchange services have worked in isolation. In order to achieve better outcomes for women and children, we have learned that supervised visitation must be intentionally linked to other providers and agencies working with families who have experienced violence.

Creating and/or enhancing collaborative partnerships will take time and intention. Whether you are building a new collaboration or enhancing an existing one, it is important to be intentional about setting up systems for how you will work together.

Taking the time to identify a community's assets and explore the way groups, programs, agencies, individuals, and systems are working to end violence against women and children will enhance the community's ability to work collaboratively. Your exploration should focus on how collaboration with community partners can build upon the many talents, strengths and skills already existing in your community in new and creative ways. A worksheet to assist in identifying key community assets is provided in Appendix A – "Engaging with Men Who Use Violence in Supervised Visitation Programs – Community Asset Mapping Worksheet".

Supervised visitation programs should work to assess current partnerships by asking how your organization is connected to the larger community's response to domestic violence and how you define your current relationship with each partner (e.g., the courts, domestic violence organizations, organizations working with men who use violence, and culturally specific organizations working with families).

Once a supervised visitation program feels confident that strong partnerships are in place, the collective partnership will need to understand the program's intentional work with men who use violence. It's important that the court and other key partners (e.g., domestic violence advocates, family law attorneys, probation and parole, and batterer's intervention programs) understand the potential impact as well as the limitations of engaging with men at supervised visitation centers. Supervised visitation is not a service intended to create behavior change – engaging men, as a leading strategy to enhancing safety, should not be misconstrued as an intervention or change agent. At the same time,

"We communicate with each other regularly – we talk and strive to have a cooperative culture among all of our stakeholders."
–Bend, OR Learning Community Site

engaging with men can support safety at the center, and increase safety post-separation and in the long-term.

It is important for all partners to have clarity around engagement in centers and ensure it isn't misconstrued as parent education. Supervised visitation programs should educate their community partners against the misperception that if a father demonstrates good parenting skills he is no longer a safety risk. These two factors are not necessarily linked and should not dictate a determination of when a parent no longer poses a continued safety risk to his family.

Organizational Readiness

Assessing and building organizational infrastructure to support your work with men in supervised visitation programs can be broken down into five categories.

1. Creating an organizational story that supports the work.

Knowing and effectively communicating the mission, vision, and shared values is key to any successful organization – this comprises an organizational “story.” This story must be known, communicated and reflected upon effectively and frequently, both internally and externally. Once defined, this story impacts every aspect of an organization.

To ensure an organization is prepared to work with men who use violence in a meaningful way there must be a further examination of your “organizational story” and how engaging men is visible and supported.

A guide for examination is provided in Appendix B – “Engaging with Men in Supervised Visitation Center Services – Organizational and Community Readiness Chart.” The worksheet suggests a process that guides staff and board members through a series of questions about your organization’s readiness to engage men who use violence as well as how they perceive engaging men as a leading strategy for supporting safety and well-being for women and children.

The guide asks staff to list concrete ways their community is organized or prepared to accept your work with men and ways it is not organized or prepared to accept your work with men in your supervised visitation program.

2. *Building and maintaining a strong and cohesive leadership team.*

A strong organizational story will quickly become meaningless unless the organizational leaders set the stage for the shared beliefs to be set in motion and support and guide staff to translate those beliefs into concrete actions. Strong leaders must model and make visible the values an organization holds about its work with men. Organizations who work to end violence against women have typically focused all of their time and attention on working with women and children. Broadening your scope of work to include meaningful work with men might pose some organizational challenges.

Engaging in work with men who use violence is not for the timid – strong leaders will need to be able to communicate effectively what the organization does and why. They will need to bring the organizational vision to life, ask smart questions, and create a climate where it is okay to challenge and question the organization’s work but still not back down from the organization’s commitment to engaging men who use violence.

3. *Creating a strong organizational infrastructure.*

To effectively work with men in a supervised visitation center there are several things an organization must examine:

- How are you organized to support staff working with men who use violence?
- How are you organized to support staff working with women?
- How are you organized to support staff working with children who have been exposed to violence?
- How does your organization support and ensure that its staff represents the diversity within your community?
- How is supervision and support set up for staff?



Common fears related to engaging men:

- Working with men will water down our organization’s ability to work with victims.
- Fear that collusion might occur and we will compromise our ability to keep victims safe.
- Too many resources will go to working with men and negatively impact the organizations ability to concentrate on victim services.
- What if we miss something and someone gets hurt.

Whether you are a stand-alone organization or a program of a larger organization, there are additional considerations around infrastructure that will impact your work with men. If you are a stand-alone program you will need to explore how you are linked to other organizations working to end violence against women and other intervening systems. If you are a program within a larger multi-service organization, you will need to consider how the visitation program is linked to the larger organization. What firewalls do you have in place to protect family-specific information, and how does the rest of the organization understand and support your work with men?

It is sometimes easy to believe that the only opportunities for a supervised visitation center to impact a family's life is during the time they are in the center, but a center's work can have a long-lasting impact if intentional programming choices are made. First, it is important to remember that what happens inside the center has repercussions for clients' lives outside the center as well. We like to think of this as the 2-2-20 concept⁶. When thinking about safety, it is important to consider not just the "2 hours" during the visit, but also the "2 years" post-separation, as well as the "20 plus years" after the entire visitation experience is over for a family.

2-2-20 is a framework for making decisions about supervised visitation. For example, a particularly challenging visiting father wants to bring his mother to the center to see the children to share a meal. This involves more vigilance on the part of the monitor; more personalities to observe; more potential for the monitor to miss something. But it also involves a longer-term relationship between children and their grandmother, which could contribute to the children's resilience if the grandmother is a positive influence in their lives. Centers must continually assess and balance the short-term safety risks of what might occur during a visit with the potential for long-term benefit to the families.

Another important consideration for long-term safety is the "seeds" that are planted in the form of support for nonviolence and behavior changes by the abusive parent while families are using the center. Center policies and procedures – and transparency about why the policies exist – as well as taking intentional time to talk to each member of the family, are all opportunities to model behaviors and actions that support nonviolence that can be carried outside the center's walls.

It is important to be intentional and not create what may seem like "arbitrary rules" that must be followed because "the center said

⁶The 2-2-20 concept was developed as a result of the Demonstration Initiative of the Supervised Visitation Program and is discussed in "Building Safety, Repairing Harm: Lessons and Discoveries from the Supervised Visitation Program Demonstration Initiative", Praxis International, 2008.

so.”Center policies must make sense in the context of families’ lives; the violence that has been experienced and how further harm might come about. Policies cannot be a one-size-fits all approach. If something doesn’t create a safety risk for a family, a center should not need to restrict such actions or behaviors.

There are things your supervised visitation center and your community partners can do to set the stage for positive interactions with each family while at the center. First, determine what perceptions the community has about the center. For example, is there an assumption that the center will have bars on the windows, staff will wear white lab coats and observe fathers judgmentally, or the staff is all men-hating women? Determining the community perceptions, how those perceptions came about and what you and your partners can do to reduce or change the perceptions will help tremendously.

It is also important to think about what it feels like to come to your program – what does it feel like as a women who has been abused; what does it feel like as a child; what does it feel like for a man who has abused his intimate partner and children to come to your program? Making certain that you can meet each of their needs is vital in ensuring your program’s success.

4. Building and supporting organizational and individual talent and skill.

A successful program is built on a cornerstone of qualified, well-trained and committed staff. Programs need to have the best, most qualified staff that is provided with high quality training, support and supervision.

Providing supervised visitation services requires a high degree of knowledge and experience, a comfort level that supports working with trauma, crisis, conflict and confrontation, a level of self-confidence to make good decisions, an ability to manage and prioritize multiple tasks and needs at once, and hold a tremendous amount of compassion for women who have been abused, men who have used violence and children who have lived with and experienced violence in their family.

For many programs, staff turnover tends to be very high. This turnover has a tremendous negative impact on an organization and its ability to take on the added complexity of engaging men. What we have learned from organizations that strive to have longevity in their staff is that a work life/personal life balance is critical and must be nurtured. These organizations pay attention to the balance between staff autonomy and staff support when needed, staff feel trusted and respected and know they have the tools, support and respect they need to be successful.

“At Mary’s Place we have a strong cohesive staff - we don’t fear making mistakes or losing our job as a result of making a bad decision - our work doesn’t feel motionless, we are supported to think in new and different ways and when hiring new staff we have a commitment here to build a diverse team and a belief that our differences support new thinking - each person is valued for what they bring to the organization.”
– Mary’s Place, Bend, OR, Learning Community Site

These organizations are also intentional about hiring an eclectic staff, paying attention to hiring men and women, as well as multi-cultural and multi-generational individuals. The staff members of these organizations are provided with regular staff meetings as well as individual supervision and support. These organizations have also built in support and consultation with community partners working with women, men and children (e.g. batterer’s intervention programs, domestic violence advocates, children’s advocates, and family law attorneys) on a regular basis.

Program staff will need to be provided the best available training, information, support and resources to be successful in their positions. Both initial and ongoing training must include specific information to build staff knowledge and skills on working with men. Specifically, it is crucial for staff to understand the tactics used by men who use violence to control and intimidate their partners, post-separation abusive tactics, how men engage the system in their continued abuse of their partner, and how to effectively engage with men in a non-collusive, positive manner.

5. *Having the capacity to change and adapt.*

What we have learned with certainty in the last decade of intensive exploration in this field is that ongoing evaluation and adaptation is key. It is crucial to support an environment of constant assessment and analysis and to foster ongoing conversations and feedback from program participants, staff and community partners. Each of these key informants hold valuable information about what is working and what needs attention and change.

It is important not to rely on a single method for evaluation. Centers should develop a plan to be informed in a variety of ways by diverse stakeholders. Examples of such methods are questionnaires, interviews, listening sessions, check-ins, case consultations, and case file reviews. Details on each of these methods and how to employ them can be found in the publication “Informing the Practice of Supervised Visitation” written by Melanie Sheppard, Jane Sandusky, and Beth McNamara.⁷



⁷Shepard, M., Sadusky, J., McNamara, B., “Engage to Protect: Foundations for Supervised Visitation and Exchange – Informing the Practice of Supervised Visitation.” Praxis International (2009).

VI. Creating Opportunities for Engagement and Change

The field of supervised visitation has changed tremendously over the past 12 years. The work of many wise and thoughtful advocates, visitation providers and community partners have worked tirelessly to move the needle in the overall thinking, engagement and support with families using supervised visitation programs. Programs are working hard to ground their work in the humanity, unique life circumstances and individual experiences of each woman, man and child coming into their visitation programs. Moving away from “cookie cutter” services and being willing to work at the intersection of the complexities of people’s lives is both transformative and difficult. We acknowledge that balancing the unique needs and safety of each member of the family requires significant skill, understanding and support.

Research tells us that men who use violence can be motivated to change their behaviors for the sake of their children. Early on in the Safe Havens Grant Program it became evident that working with fathers and children together represents a unique opportunity to engage with men who use violence. In fact, Principle IV of the Safe Havens Guiding Principles gives programs guidance that, “Visitation programs should treat every individual using services with respect and fairness, while taking into account the abuse that has occurred in the family.”⁸ Some programs started right away to engage with men who use violence while others were very hesitant and afraid of the risk and potential unintended consequences.

Some programs started with simple things like shaking his hand, bringing him a glass of water, being intentional about asking how he was doing. While engagement is far more complex than some of these simple gestures, these gestures did, at the very least, help programs to begin to see the humanity of the men and fathers coming to the center.

One program reported that their relationship with men seemed to be improving, however, their connection with the other parent was deteriorating. Many programs and TA providers were hearing from women that they felt like staff members were taking his side, asking why the staff was being so nice to him. They believed the staff had fallen for the manipulative behaviors of the abusive partner.

"Relationship building has become a key to our partnership with offenders. We came from a place of confrontation and shame - we quickly learned that this is an approach that does not have long-term benefits. We have a strong belief that people can change and this is how we approach our work with men."

– Washington County, OR Learning Community Site

⁸Office on Violence Against Women, US Department of Justice. (2007). Guiding Principles. Safe Havens: Supervised Visitation and Safe Exchange Grant Program. Washington, DC.

Upon reflection, these programs realized that they had not shared their approach and intention around engaging with men who use violence with their women clients. By not including women in the conversation about engaging with men, these programs missed opportunities to learn from women's experiences and determine if their engagement with men was supporting their safety or causing further harm.

Engaging with men for the purpose of enhancing safety must be done in partnership with women and children. This is a key lesson learned from the Safe Havens Grant Program. It is crucial for programs to incorporate strategies for ongoing communication and feedback from all clients. In each case, engagement must be defined by what is known about a woman's experience, her life circumstances, any ongoing risk and danger, her hopes and fears as well as her regular and ongoing feedback.

We define engagement as a genuine and authentic human connection, showing compassion and support for an individual. Holding men who use violence responsible for their actions, having hard conversations and setting limits is just as essential to engagement. Engagement is not an intervention per se; engagement is a strategy for building meaningful partnerships with individuals using our programs. Engagement with men who use violence offers opportunities for change. Engagement can offer hope for new possibilities, the ability to have children connected to their father in a way that may not have been possible, the ability for fathers to be connected to their children without violence and the ability for men to experience relationships without using violence.

When we adopt engagement as a strategy for safety and wellbeing, we need to gain clarity around the indicators for readiness. Women and children should be the primary guidepost for understanding men's readiness for engagement.

- *Key areas to explore with women, children and other staff:*
- Where is his focus? Has it shifted from the mother of his children to his children?
- Is he willing to take direction from staff or is everything a power struggle?
- Is he taking responsibility for any of his actions or does he continue to view himself as the victim?
- Has there been a shift in his flexibility? Does he continue to try and use the center to control her?
- Have you seen a change in his language or how he describes your center or the larger system?
- Does he continue to push all the limits and challenge all the guidelines?

As you explore areas of readiness for engagement, it is important to be aware of the reasons you may or may not engage. It's important to note that engagement strategies happen on a continuum and this work must be tailored to the unique needs and circumstances of each individual and family. Levels of engagement may shift and change on any given day or over time. Women and children should be involved in helping to understand the impact and benefits of engagement. Is it supporting safety and wellbeing or are there unintended consequences that need to be explored?

Additional areas for exploration include:

- Is she still frightened for her safety? How are the children - are they frightened?
- Is there ongoing stalking and/or abuse happening between visits?
- Does he continue to push the limits with center staff?
- Is he shut down and unwilling to work with center and staff?
- How is his body language? Is he open and communicative or are his arms crossed and non-responsive to engagement with center staff?

Recognizing the need to employ specific engagement strategies for women, men, and children, the following sections outline strategies that supervised visitation centers have found most effective for engaging their clients and including them in conversations about their services. A chart is provided in Appendix C –“Engaging With Men in Supervised Visitation Services – Indicators for Engagement” to help determine an individual’s readiness for engagement in a supervised visitation setting.

Engaging with women

1. Work to build trust.

Building trusting relationships with women is essential. It is important not to assume that she is going to trust you or the program. Visitation programs are typically not the first intervening system in a woman’s journey. Chances are there have been a number of other interveners. These experiences will shape how she feels about the center, especially if her experiences have been negative. Consider what you need to build trust with people or providers in your life. Women using the center need the same things. Ask her what would help her to trust you and the program.

2. Take her lead.

Take time to learn from her about the things she has done to keep her and her children safe and how the center can both support what is working and partner with her to continue to keep her and her children safe. Take time to hear and acknowledge how she has cared for her

“The staff worked very hard to build and maintain my trust. Even though they sometimes did things I did not agree with, I trusted them to keep me and my children safe.”
– Mother using a visitation center

children. Acknowledge that women are the experts in their lives and know their partners better than anyone else. Ask her to share with you what she thinks you need to know; what types of things you should be paying attention to, as well as any abusive tactics her partner might try. Building a partnership with her is key to building her trust and ensuring that your work is grounded in her unique risks and experiences. Remember, put her first and the needs of the center second.

3. Talk with women about your work with men.

Over the course of the Safe Havens Grant Program, visitation centers emerged and transformed all over the country. Many programs began to incorporate new and innovative safety and security measures. They built their programs with the goal of centralizing safety for adult victims and their children.

Unfortunately, many programs didn't include women in the conversation or explain the intentions behind their new safety measures. Talking with each woman about why you believe it is important to work with men who use violence is the first step. It is equally important to create opportunities for women to provide feedback on whether engaging with men is supporting their safety or not. Additionally, women are good barometers for whether or not their abusive partners are ready to be safely engaged.

Learn from her about what she thinks are potential opportunities for change. What does she want to change? What are her greatest hopes and fears? What might be some of the indicators of change? How will she and/or the program recognize those indicators?

4. Check in

Creating regular and ongoing opportunities to connect with women is another key strategy. Learning from women and building a trusting relationship needs to be an ongoing process. While orientations are our first opportunity to lay the groundwork for building trust, it is important to incorporate intentional and ongoing opportunities to stay connected. Check-ins allow you to establish and maintain ongoing dialogue with women, learn about changing conditions and circumstances, and address ongoing and often changing safety needs.

Engaging with men

1. Prepare men for visitation with their children.

Centers can be proactive around addressing potential issues by preparing all parents and children for visits, but especially fathers. The more prepared and aware men are about what may or may not happen when their children come to visit, the less fear and anxiety they may

experience. Talking to fathers about their hopes and expectations before visits can help center staff to address potential issues before they occur.

For example, if a father tells you he can't wait to hug his son and his son has told you he is nervous and not ready to hug his dad, center staff should try to address the potential conflict before it happens during supervised contact. Staff can prepare this father for the possibility that it might not go how he is expecting. Ask him to think about what it will mean and how it will feel if his child is not ready to hug him and ask what he could do instead of asking for a hug to support his child. Ask him for ways the center can be supportive during his visit with his child. You may also determine that you need to take more time with that child and the father before visits begin. Role-playing can be a useful tool to help everyone "practice" difficult scenarios and offer options for how to respond before they occur.

Additionally, centers can provide support and guidance for fathers when their children want to talk about their experience or ask tough questions. It can often prevent harm and actually support healing when fathers are prepared to respond to their children's tough questions.

3. Humanity as a leading approach.

While it is important to never lose site of the harm caused by men who use violence, seeing him as a whole person and leading with compassion can have a positive impact on center staff's ability to build respectful, non-colluding relationships. The language we use is important. Making the shift from labeling people by their behavior (abuser) or their custodial status (visiting parent) makes room for seeing and engaging the whole person. When staff genuinely cares about the men who are using their programs, they can feel the authenticity.

4. Allow for imperfection.

There are many unrealistic expectations for men in supervised visitation. If he has not completely changed, program staff often dismiss everything and anything he does that may be positive. There is great value in honoring when something good happens and acknowledging the strengths you observe. When you are able to support and encourage his strengths, you will be more effective in addressing issues or problems. Changing behaviors and belief systems can take time. Acknowledging even the slightest change can be a motivator for further and ongoing changes in men who use violence.

5. Build strong non-colluding relationships.

Building relationships with men who use violence is the foundation of this work. If supervised visitation centers do not build authentic relationships that are respectful and non-colluding, the rest of your efforts will fail. It is important to show up with a genuine curiosity

and allow men the space to share their story. Listening without judgment can be transformative for everyone. This does not mean being permissive or supportive of their abusive behavior or that you should ignore or minimize the gravity of his actions. We are suggesting that in order to create change and hold men responsible for their actions it is also important to build a connection with him that is caring and supportive.

When we asked visitation providers about their fears, collusion has been described as one of their biggest fears and one of the biggest barriers to building relationships. We will define collusion as intentionally or inadvertently condoning behavior or making light of and/or minimizing the impact of abusive behavior. Monitors fear he will “snow” them or they will be more apt to miss something if they build a relationship of care and understanding with him. This awareness is important and we need to be aware of collusion and what it looks like. Monitors need to have clarity about how they may collude. Collusion can come across in our body language, through our actions and sometimes our inaction.

6. Be transparent.

Transparency is important in this work with women, men and children. Letting people know why supervised visitation exists and what they can expect from it are good steps towards building an open and trusting relationship. Taking the mystery out of services while being clear, direct and open helps minimize some of the anxiety and frustration parents can feel when using center services. We are not suggesting that transparency will eliminate all the challenges you face as visitation providers. However, it will help reduce some of the issues that typically arise. Center staff can be good models for open, honest and direct communication.

7. Use fatherhood ideals and values.

Leading with positive and responsible fatherhood ideals is an important strategy for engaging with men. This gives the work an anchor and an opportunity to keep him focused on why he is coming to visitation - his children. Leading with positive fatherhood principles helps you to better understand how they see themselves as fathers – what value they place on their role as a father and what kind of relationship they want with their children. There are typically opportunities to highlight a strength that can open the door to deeper and more meaningful connections around their fathering, the impact their choices have on their children and exploring what they may want to start doing differently with their children.

Engaging Children and Youth

Supporting children and youth using your visitation programs is another important part of supporting the needs and safety of each member of the family. It can be easy for young people to get lost in the shuffle of their parents' needs, issues and concerns. It is important for visitation programs to dedicate time to getting to know the young people coming to their centers, to carve out time for regular and ongoing check-ins as well as incorporate their unique needs, experiences and wishes into your overall work with each family.

An important component of engaging with children and youth is working with both their mothers and fathers to determine how best to support their children. Helping mothers prepare their children for visits and support them after visits, and creating alternative opportunities for mothers to garner support and resources to take care of themselves, are all important components that visitation center staff can offer. Additionally, working with fathers around the needs of their children can help make visits that, at the very least, cause no further harm and in the best case scenario will promote healing and change. It is important for centers to remember that your role is not to make visits happen. Your role is to ensure that if visits happen, women, children and youth feel physically and emotionally safe. This allows you to slow down, listen to children and take their lead.

1. Let children and youth lead.

Centers should give children and youth some ability to guide their process. We often make assumptions about what children and youth need and want. We try to protect them from sensitive conversations; we try to ensure that, on our watch, nothing bad happens. Sometimes children want to ask their parent hard questions, tell them how they feel, express their emotions or confront them about the harm they have caused. Centers can support children and youth by fostering a space that allows those conversations to happen.

Understand that young people may test the waters at a visitation center to determine if the environment is truly safe and if they can trust staff and the abusive parent. Gaining their trust will take time. Following their lead, giving them tools to ask for what they need and then following through on what you've discussed, will have a positive impact on the children and youth coming to your programs.

2. Attention to transitions, routine and predictability.

Centers should be intentional about creating a safe space for children and youth to visit with their parent. Paying attention to transitions and maintaining a predictable routine is important. Staff can support children

and youth through the many transitions that occur at centers. This requires carving out intentional time before and after visits for children to check-in with center staff and move at their own pace. Often children are moved quickly from one parent to the next and sometimes they need time to transition. When you have multiple children from one family, recognize that each child may have different needs.

Predictability is important – if something is going to change, do your best to inform children before it happens. For example, center staff can tell children “Next week your monitor is going to be on vacation. Would you like to meet the person who will be with you and your dad next week?”.

3. Be a positive loving adult in a child’s life.

Never underestimate the power you have to support the children and youth coming to your program. We know that one of the key resiliency factors for young people is the presence of positive, loving relationships. Visitation center staff members have the ability to be one of those individuals in a young person’s life. Take time to get to know the children and youth coming to your program. Validate their experience, let them know it’s not their fault and they are not alone. Let them know you care about them and will be there to listen, provide support and keep them safe if that is what they need.

4. Prepare children and youth.

Much like your work with parents, creating opportunities to help bring children and youth into your programs is essential. Children and youth benefit from having orientations and regular check-ins with staff. Recognize that each child will have different needs based on age, development, comfort and level of trauma. It is important to ensure that the opportunity for children to talk with center staff exists. Helping children and youth know what to expect can help reduce a lot of the anxiety and stress they may be experiencing.



VII. The Roadmap for Developing Policies

As we previously mentioned, developing a supervised visitation and safe exchange program requires both leadership and community support. An important strategy for developing a successful program is to include community and key stakeholders in each step of the process. Engaging partners and stakeholders in the development of policies and procedures will help to incorporate the perspectives, experiences and needs of those you serve.

As a way to begin exploration to develop or re-examine policies on engaging men who use violence, it will be helpful to undergo a foundational exploration. The first step is to have the program staff and your collaborating partners explore each other's definitions and beliefs about domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse and stalking AND working with men. Whether you have been working collaboratively for years or are just building your partnership, it's important not to make assumptions that everyone holds the same definitions, beliefs and philosophies about this work.

These guiding questions can help assist you and your collaborative partners in exploring and developing shared understanding and definitions.

- How do you define domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, and stalking?
- What beliefs do you have about domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and child abuse that inform and guide your work?
- What are your beliefs about women who have experienced domestic violence?
- What are your beliefs about children who have been exposed to violence?
- What beliefs do you have about men who use violence?

These beliefs should then guide the development of a unifying vision, mission, and philosophy that will guide your work together. If you have already developed a vision, mission and philosophy you may need to check that the beliefs you articulated match your policies. Ask the following questions: What beliefs do our vision, mission, and philosophy reflect? How does the vision, mission, and philosophy account for our beliefs about women and children who have experienced domestic violence and men who use violence?

The final stage of your foundational exploration is designed to help define the role of supervised visitation and safe exchange programs in engaging men. Exploration of the following questions will assist your program in defining your role:

- What is the center's responsibility toward the mother who is being abused?
- Is it the center's responsibility to make the violence visible to other intervening systems?
- What is the center's role in creating long-term safety for families using center services?
- How will engaging with men who use services weaken his opportunity and inclination to further abuse the victim and/or children?
- How will the center create an experience that opposes the experience of being abused?

At the completion of your exploration you can begin the development or re-examination of your policies on working with men. Each policy that you create and/or evaluate should reflect your foundational work. If you find that a policy doesn't support or is in conflict with your vision, mission, and philosophy it is time to go back to the drawing board on that particular policy.

Policy Considerations

It is very easy to create a "laundry list" of policies dictating what parents can and cannot do at the center. However, when centers shift to an engagement model of services, this approach requires that centers be transparent about their policies and provide a clear explanation about how and why their policies have been created.

Policies that provide a clear explanation of their significance and address each family's needs will result in the following for your program:

1. It will be easier for staff to understand and explain to participants the reason for a particular policy;
2. Participants will have a deeper understanding of the policies;
3. Parents will better understand the purpose of each policy and the way in which policies are designed to support the safety and wellbeing of everyone in their family;
4. Improve the long-term safety and post-separation skills of every family using your services.

When centers move away from the "because I said so," approach to services, it is easier for a parent to understand each policy and hopefully recognize its importance and incorporate them in their life outside of the center.

It is also important to recognize that you can't begin to predict every possible incident or problem at the center. The inclination to create more policies (or "can't do" statements) each time something new comes up for a particular family will result in policies that may not be necessary or applicable for every person using your center.

Different and changing levels of risk will require different levels of response. You should consider how your policies can be responsive and account for the different levels of risk each family presents. Many family circumstances are unique and will change over time. Flexibility must be built into your policies.

Each family has a unique set of circumstances. You will be able to determine what your "core" set of policies should be for every family, and then you will have many more items that are only applicable for some families based on the level and type of risk. It can be helpful to include words such as "may" or "can" instead of "will" or "shall" when writing policies that may not need to be applied to everyone using your center.

Changing and modifying policies to adapt to the changes that arise within families can be tricky. Preparing for the potential of change upfront can help mediate the potential issues that may arise when you want to adapt and/or modify your original agreements with a family. Here is a sample statement to include in your initial agreements with families:

"Every family and situation has unique circumstances and therefore there may be circumstances that will require staff to make case-by-case determinations of additional policies/procedures that will need to be followed. Staff will evaluate each problem, concern, and family individually and will respond accordingly. In the event that additional policies/procedures are required, staff can then put these agreements in writing and review them with parents."

You will want to balance the need to want to standardize (create a system of "sameness" for every family that is similar) with being attentive to the particular circumstances of every family. It is not unusual to want to create a consistent system to follow; but it is important to be aware of the risks associated with this method of organizing your work and act to ensure that safety is not compromised by your policies/procedures.

External policies should be written in plain language so that people with low literacy and people who are under tremendous stress can easily

understand the policy. For instance, "Please leave the center promptly" is much more effective than "Please depart from the visitation center at your specified time and from your designated location at the facility."

Policies can be created to solely address the "two hours" of a visit, but there can also be an opportunity to create policies that may impact post-separation safety for the longer term. It is important to recognize that center services are typically not intended to be long-term solutions for most families who will use your center. If you have determined that your center services have a role in engaging men, creating opportunities for change and supporting non-violence post-center services, there are several policies that may not support those efforts. It is important to recognize that some families will require more rigid and strict policies to be in place to support safety. However, not all families require that same level of scrutiny. In fact, for some families when policies are imposed that are not relevant or applicable to their life circumstances they can create unnecessary conflict and tensions between staff and parents. Some typical policy "red flags" include:

- Policies that require participants to stay in the "here and now."
- Policies that don't allow participants to talk about what brought them to the center.
- Policies that don't allow participants to talk about their family – including the child's mother.
- Policies that focus on redirecting poor parenting.
- Policies that assume the person who uses violence is the visiting parent and doesn't account for the safety needs of survivors of domestic violence who use centers services as the visiting parent.
- Policies that impose a particular cultural value that is not universal, for example, dress codes for visiting parents, or policies that do not allow visiting parents and their children to watch television or play video games at the center when the option is available.

When developing policies it is very easy to intertwine policies and procedures together. It is important to clearly distinguish policies from procedures. A policy is a statement that is determined by an organization that must be followed. Procedures are the instructions – the "how to" carry out a certain policy. Consider organizing your policy and procedure document with a statement of purpose. The statement of purpose should clearly outline the reason the policy or section of policies exist and should be linked to the mission and role of the organization. Your purpose statement should be followed by clearly articulated policy and then your procedure for carrying out the policy.

The following is a sample policy on staff qualifications:

Purpose: The purpose of this section is to establish minimal staff qualifications to ensure high quality, safe and respectful supervised visitation and safe exchange services.

Policy: We will hire diverse program staff that meet established qualifications.

Procedure: We will recruit staff for the visitation program through diverse strategies. Candidates who meet the following qualifications may be considered for interviews: 1) available to work during established program hours, 2) 21 years old or older, 3) ability to pass a criminal background check for violent crimes or crimes against children, 4) possesses a strong understanding of domestic violence, 5) willing to attend professional development, 6) possesses an ability to work calmly and rationally in challenging situations, 7) expresses an ability to work as a team member, 8) respectfully engages with women who are survivors of domestic violence, men who have perpetrated domestic violence and children who have experienced violence, 9) ability to manage multiple needs, expectations and safety issues, and come to this work with care and compassion for women, men and children.

Policy development or policy evaluation requires that you also anticipate and avoid unintended negative consequences that policies could create.

Explore the following questions for each of your policies:

1. Is this policy a reflection of our beliefs around engaging men who use violence as a leading strategy for enhancing the safety of women who have been abused and their children?
2. Does this policy support our vision/mission/philosophy around engaging men who use violence as a key strategy for enhancing the safety of adult victims and their children?
3. Does this policy align with the Office on Violence Against Women: Supervised Visitation Grant Program Guiding Principles?
4. Does this policy account for how culture and tradition will be supported?
5. Does this policy account for the equal regard to the safety of adult victims and their children?
6. Does the policy account for safety needs of adult victims who are the visiting parent?

“Some of us think holding on makes us strong, but sometimes it is letting go”
– Herman Hesse, Poet and novelist

7. Does the policy conform to any larger organizational rules, laws, or regulations?
8. Does this policy anticipate how a man using violence might circumvent the intent of this policy and/or find ways to use this policy to cause further harm?
9. Will you ever need to make exceptions to this policy?
10. Does this policy reflect an understanding that there will be varying degrees of danger and safety risks for each family, or does this policy assume the greatest potential of risk and impose that level on every family?
11. Is there clarity around why this policy has been established and who the policy benefits?
12. Is there clarity around how this policy will be implemented?

Appendix D – “Engaging with Men Who Use Violence in Supervised Visitation Programs – Policy Examination Chart” can be used to support your policy exploration.

Policy development is challenging because it requires programs to explore the efficacy of their programming and to reevaluate if necessary in order to move to a place of deeper engagement with men who use violence.

Policy Framework for Engaging Men Who Use Violence

1. Organizational Infrastructure

a. Staff Qualifications

Purpose: Centers that are actively working to engage and enhance their work with men who use violence should be intentional about the qualities and strengths of the staff they hire. It is important to sort out the difference between qualities a person naturally possesses and those skills that can be taught or learned through training. While centers can provide training to enhance staff skills and strengthen their approach to their work with men, there are certain qualities that can't be taught and must be taken into consideration when hiring and maintaining staff.

Having men on staff is an important consideration – it can be important for men and boys to have a male to relate and connect to and act as a healthy non-violent role model. It can also be reassuring to some women using center services to have a male on staff that will interact and intervene with their abusive partner.

How male and female staff members interact with one another can be a very powerful tool in working to engage with men in centers and create opportunities for change. A center should be intentional about having male staff that defer to female staff for final decision-making and jointly model positive, healthy communication and conflict resolution skills.

Staff qualification policy/procedure considerations:

The visitation center should be intentional about hiring and maintaining male and female multi-generational and multi-cultural staff that have the following qualities:

- A strong desire to work with men who use violence;
- Comfortable working with men who use violence;
- Clear philosophical understanding of domestic violence;
- An understanding of cultural humility and has the ability to be responsive to diverse and unique needs;
- Compassion and the ability to show respect to every person who uses center services;
- The ability to manage multiple needs, expectations and safety issues simultaneously;
- The ability to make clear decisions and remain calm in chaotic circumstances while being pressured or confronted by others;
- The ability to make decisions and defer decision-making to other staff when necessary;
- The ability to manage conflict effectively and model healthy communication styles; and
- Can continue to work effectively while strong emotions are being expressed.

b. Staff Development

Purpose: It is essential for centers to provide regular and ongoing training, supervision and support to enhance staff skills on engaging men who use violence. Meaningful staff training, meetings, supervision and support require dedicated and sufficient time for staff to receive training, share updates about families, debrief about difficult issues, and receive feedback from each other about how to work most effectively with families.

Staff time allows staff to critically examine feedback they're receiving from women, men and children; provide an avenue for staff to directly consider the implications of policies and

practices on center clients; determine where and how aspects of safety are getting lost in center practices; and consider where the needs of women, men, and children are not being met. For example, it is not uncommon for men who use violence to attempt to change the rules for their own personal advantage or manipulate staff to create conflict. Staff time can be used to develop a unified and consistent message that promotes the safety of survivors of domestic violence and their children. The number one goal of a supervised visitation center is to support safety for survivors of domestic violence and their children. Centers should be intentional about providing ongoing staff training on how they can create an environment that interrupts and intervenes when tactics of abuse are being used, minimizing risks, and working to reduce opportunities for ongoing abuse. Centers also have a unique opportunity to work with women, men and children. Staff should have an active role in training on de-escalating and decreasing risk and should know how not to escalate the risk posed to women and their children with their decisions and actions.

The work of a supervised visitation center can't be done in isolation. It is important that staff members are closely connected to one another and are provided support and supervision. It is also important that the work is seen as part of a larger community response to enhance safety for women and their children. The work of the center must be intentionally linked to other providers and agencies working with women, men and children who have experienced violence.

Staff training policy/procedure considerations:

The center should provide regular training for staff to be able to:

- Acknowledge the violence and abusive tactics when they occur at the center;
- Effectively engage with men in a non-collusive, positive manner;
- Intervene when men who use violence use the center or the larger system in their continued abusive tactics;
- Be a consistent messenger about the impact of violence on women and children;
- Hold knowledge and understanding of domestic violence and the difference between parenting choices and abusive behavior;
- Have an understanding of the tactics used by abusive men to control and intimidate their partners;
- Understand the impact of witnessing violence in their home on children and youth;
- Assure consistency, check bias, grow, learn, and support each other.

Supervision and support policy/procedure considerations:

The center should provide:

- Dedicated time for staff meetings on a regular basis;
- Facilitate regular individual supervision and support;
- Ongoing support and consultation with community partners working with women, men and children (e.g. batterers' intervention programs, advocates, children's advocates, legal services, etc.).

c. **Community partnerships**

Purpose: A primary means of increasing safety for families is to ensure the supervised visitation center is connected to other organizations and interveners that also provide support to families. The visitation center and its community partners should be intentional about how they will work together – with clearly articulated methods of communication, systems for referrals and ongoing connection. It is essential for visitation centers to strive to have a cooperative culture with all stakeholders who support the autonomy of the center and commitment to the mission.

Community partnership policy/procedure considerations

The center should develop strong collaborative partnerships by:

- Collaboratively developing meaningful systems for referrals;
- Dedicating time to build relationships and trust among partners and learn each partner's roles, responsibilities and limitations;
- Inviting judges, advocates and other partners to tour the center;
- Creating ongoing opportunities for cross-training;
- Inviting advocates to participate in staff meetings and other forums that inform center practice;
- Including partners in the development and review of policies and procedures;
- Working with the courts and domestic violence partners to establish a referral criterion that allows the center to retain the right to decline referrals and set conditions that could be put in order for services to be established or continued;
- Working collaboratively to support a community that is actively working to end violence against women;
- Collectively working with all partners to understand the center's intentional work with men who use violence, the impact of this work and the limitations of the center's work with men;
- Having shared clarity among partners that supervised visitation is not a service intended to be a catalyst of

change for men who use violence and cannot be used as an indicator for change.

2. Service Delivery

a. Engagement

Purpose: From the very first interaction to providing ongoing services, it is essential to actively work to connect with every woman, man, and child/youth that comes through the doors of a center. Connecting with women, men and children must happen in a deliberate, intentional, and thoughtful way. This can be accomplished by getting to know people coming to the center, being authentically interested in their lives, and asking meaningful questions such as how they feel about coming to the center, what are their fears, or what they hope can happen from this experience.

Engaging with women also allows center staff to connect with her and build trust so she feels comfortable talking about what is happening in visits and share how her safety needs may have changed or might be compromised. Communicating with women helps center staff know when there are ongoing tactics of abuse being used and allows staff to understand the context of concerning behavior and how it impacts a woman's ability to stay safe from further harm.

Policy/procedure considerations for engagement with center participants:

The center should support staff to be able to:

- Engage in an active listening process with every woman, man and children that comes to the center – conveying a desire to be present both verbally and non-verbally in a non-judgmental fashion;
- Provide a welcoming environment for women, men and children;
- Check-in and connect with each member of the family on a regular basis to allow for continued and enhanced relationship and trust building;
- Treat all people coming to the center with a great deal of courtesy, respect and fairness;
- Have intentional time to connect to each member of the family to model behaviors and actions that support nonviolence;
- Ask questions about what is important. Ask how they feel about coming to the center, what are their fears, or what they hope can happen from this experience;
- Be flexible and open to safety strategies that will change over time;

- Have an active role in engaging men to help them become better fathers and non-violent partners;
- Have an active role in listening to women and work to understand the possible impact of actively engaging with their partners could have on their safety and their children's safety.

b. Orientation

Purpose: One of the primary purposes of orientation is to reduce the risk of further harm by building positive and respectful relationships with every woman, man and child/youth using center services. Orientation is not intended to be an administration process where the focus or sole intention is to meet the needs of the center by collecting data or completing center forms. During the course of the orientation process staff will engage in a conversation that allows participants the time and space to share their concerns, fears, strengths, hopes and experiences so that program staff can plan for and provide services that meet each family's unique needs, safety concerns, and cultural needs. Orientation appointments are designed to be the first of many intentional conversations with each parent and child/youth using center services. An orientation is a process, not necessarily a one-time appointment, and may take several visits to complete.

Orientation policy/procedure considerations

The center should support staff to be able to:

- Ensure that each parent and child/youth participate in an individual orientation appointment prior to services taking place;
- Provide a forum for participants to share their needs, express their concerns and ask any questions they might have;
- Prepare each parent and child/youth for services by talking about what they expect, how they think the first interaction will go (e.g. discuss possible activities, topics of conversation, what it will be like, what it will feel like), what hopes and desires they hold for using services;
- Be proactive in identifying possible impasses, disconnects, unrealistic expectations, or potential problems between each parent and child prior to services beginning;
- Determine the unique safety needs for each family and establish a visitation plan that accounts for those unique needs;

- Communicate the role/purpose of the program and how that impacts what can and cannot happen before and during visits;
- Describe how interventions could take place (verbally, nonverbally, during, after, etc.) and determine what feels most comfortable to the person using services.

c. Accountability

Purpose: Supporting safety and reducing harm and risk for adults and children is a key role of the visitation center. Programs have many different opportunities for interrupting ongoing abusive tactics before, during and after visits. Holding a balance between establishing connections with men who use violence and accountability requires skill, support and policies that operationalize this practice.

Mechanisms for holding men accountable need to be transparent and visible in the center’s philosophy, practice and policies. Centers have a number of strategies and mechanisms to hold men accountable. For men who are court ordered to programs, documentation can be used as a tool for accountability and information sharing. Providing community partners, judges in particular, information about ongoing harm and risk can support safety. It’s important to know that the same documentation can be used to harm women who are experiencing violence. The ability to suspend and/or terminate visits is another strategy centers have to interrupt ongoing abusive tactics.

Accountability policy and procedure considerations:

The center should support staff to be able to:

- Describe how, why, when and what to document. Both parents and your community partners should be clear about how your documentation practices are linked to safety and accountability as well as how it can be misused to facilitate ongoing abusive tactics;
- Understand the benefits and potential harm that can be caused by documentation practices and incorporate safety measures to prevent harm;
- Examine how you will address confidentiality between programs (within the organization and outside the organization);
- Create policies that allow you to adapt services based on unique needs as well as the increase and/or decrease of risk;
- Determine if you are able to safely provide services to each family you accept into the program;
- Determine how you will decide when it is safe to engage with men who use violence. How and who will determine the

indicators? What will be your systems for gathering feedback from those most impacted by his abusive tactics?

d. Interventions

Purpose: The only time supervised visitation center staff must intervene is when they are certain that a safety risk is involved in the specific interaction they are observing or taking part in. Center staff may also decide to intervene for the purpose of creating a learning opportunity. Often it is challenging to determine when an intervention is necessary, as well as when that intervention should occur. Intervention should be considered when safety is a primary concern. There are many different times when an intervention might be possible or appropriate. Monitors need to weigh the different options and remember that immediate intervention isn't always the right choice.

Intervention policy/procedure considerations:

- An intervention should not negatively impact the adult victim and the children.
- An intervention should not work to undermine a person/parent.
- An intervention should draw attention in a positive way that works to resolve or at least does not draw unnecessary attention to a behavior.
- Whether or not offering choices is an appropriate option to increase safety and allow for partnering, ongoing conversation, learning and possible growth.

“All of our growth shifted from panic to not feeling a need to rush into the next step. I am proud that my kids are establishing a relationship with their dad – without the visitation center it wouldn't have been possible. The visitation center sets him up for success, not failure.”
– Mother, interview participant



“Mistakes are really expensive. I had to go through all that but I'm grateful that the system has a tiny window I can see something bright – that was the visitation program.”
– Father, interview participant

VIII. Conclusion

While each community partner has an important role in engaging with men who use violence, supervised visitation programs are uniquely positioned to engage with men and fathers. Additionally, programs are working simultaneously with women, children and men that provide context and understanding of both risk and positive change.

By utilizing this framework supervised visitation programs and their community partners can engage in an on-going process of self reflection, assessment and institutionalized change around engaging with men who use violence as a leading strategy for safety and well being for women, men and children. In addition to the framework we have included some helpful worksheets to support the application of the framework in your centers and in the community.

We believe that leading with our hope for safety, peace and healing while being anchored by the realities of family's lives, we *can* be the catalyst for meaningful change in the lives of individuals and families experiencing domestic violence.



This project is supported by grant #2011-TA-AX-K033 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

IX. Appendices

Creating Opportunities for Safety and Change in Supervised Visitation Programs: A policy framework for engaging men who use violence

Appendix A: Engaging with Men Who Use Violence in Supervised Visitation Programs - Community Asset Mapping Worksheet⁹

Step 1: Identify *Key Contacts* in your community supporting adult victims of battering and their children

Step 2: Identify *Institutions* in your community supporting adult victims of battering and their children

Step 3: Identify *Organizations* in your community supporting adult victims of battering and their children

⁹Created by B. McNamara and J. Rose using resources from Berkowitz, B. and Wadud, E. (2003) University of Kansas, *Community Tool Box* and McKnight, J. and Kretzmann. (1993). *Building Communities from the Inside Out*, Chicago, IL: Northwestern University: Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research. © 2015. Futures Without Violence. All Rights Reserved.

--

Step 4: Identify *Associations* in your community supporting adult victims of battering and their children

--

Step 5: Identify *Cultural and Spiritual Resources* in your community supporting adult victims of battering and their children

--

Step 6: Putting it all together – This chart represents a map of the organizations, services, institutions, and individuals in your community that are working to end violence against women and children.

--

Appendix B: Engaging With Men in Supervised Visitation Center Services - Organizational & Community Readiness

Organizational Readiness	<i>List 3 concrete ways engaging with men as a leading strategy for supporting safety and wellbeing for women and children is visible in your:</i>		
1) Organization or program mission, vision, and values	Organization/Program Mission Statement	Organization/Program Vision Statement	Organization/Program Values
2) Programmatic practices	Describe specific activities and behaviors that demonstrate what this looks like in action (i.e., what programmatic practices/behaviors/actions do you have in place/do you see?)		
3) Public message about your work	How are these examples embedded in the public image/message about your work?		

Community Readiness	List concrete ways your community is organized or prepared to accept your work with men in supervised visitation?
Community Readiness	List concrete ways your community is NOT organized or prepared to accept your work with men in supervised visitation?

Appendix C: Engaging With Men in Supervised Visitation Center Services -Indicators for Engagement

This worksheet can be used during staff meetings and case consultations. When thinking about the indicators for engagement it is important to consider women, children and men. The purpose of this worksheet is to help facilitate critical thinking and understanding within your team about how parents are doing, opportunities for engagement and identification of potential safety risks.

Important note: This is not intended to be a form or record for an individual or family file. This worksheet is designed to support your thinking and decision making during staff meetings and case consultations.

Readiness for Engagement Indicator Questions:	Yes, No, Intermittently	How Do You Know This?
This father has his primary focus on his children - not on the mother of his children.		
This father is willing to take direction/re-direction from staff and does not engage in a power struggle with staff.		
This father takes responsibility for his actions and does not view himself as the victim.		
This father demonstrates his willingness to be flexible and does not attempt to use the center staff to control the mother of his children.		
This father follows the guidelines of the center and does not push the limits to meet his needs.		

	Identify the Father's behaviors, actions, beliefs	Identify the Mother's behaviors, actions, beliefs	Identify the Child/ren's behaviors, actions, beliefs
Describe what you saw that indicated that the father is open and/or willing to be engaged?			
Describe what you saw that indicated that the father is not or should not be engaged?			

Appendix D: Engaging with Men Who Use Violence in Supervised Visitation Programs -Policy Examination Chart

Policy Being Examined: _____

	Yes, No, Maybe	Notes to Support Your Response:	Possible Modifications:
Is this policy a reflection of our beliefs around engaging men who use violence?			
Does this policy support our vision, mission and philosophy around engaging men who use violence?			
Does this policy account for how culture and tradition will be supported?			
Does this policy account for the equal regard to the safety of adult victims and their children?			
Does this policy account for safety needs of adult victims who are the visiting parent?			
Does this policy anticipate how a person who uses violence might circumvent the intent of this policy and/or find ways to use this policy to cause further harm?			

Will we ever need to make exceptions to this policy?			
Does this policy reflect an understanding that there will be varying degrees of danger and safety risks for each family or does this policy assume the greatest potential of risk and impose that level on every family?			

Appendix E: Engaging with Men Who Use Violence in Supervised Visitation Programs - Putting Policies to the Test -What happens at a visitation center?

This worksheet offers an example of the lived experience of women, men, children and the work of a visitation center. We don't propose that there is a "perfect" or "right" approach to engaging with men in a supervised visitation center – this example is meant to highlight some examples of the practical application of the framework we offer in this publication. It is our hope that programs use this scenario with staff and community partners as a tool to critically examine the current lived experiences of those who come through the doors of a visitation center and explore how this framework for engagement can be used to enhance the safety and well being of women, children and men in your own community.

James Jackson, Sandra Jackson and their six-year old daughter Alisha have been coming to the center for just over two months. There is a long history of abuse against Sandra perpetrated by James. Alisha was in their family home for most of the recent incidents of abuse and was in the same room the last time James was physically violent to Sandra. There have been a number of police reports verifying the violence James has perpetrated against Sandra – the court granted Sandra a three-year order of protection and the family was referred to the supervised visitation center by the family courts. The family used a different visitation center in the same town for a few months prior to their last court appearance.

During Mr. Jackson's supervised visitation orientation appointment he was open and willing to engage in conversation with the staff. He describes having a pleasant experience with his previous provider stating that the last provider, "let us be. She just let me be the parent. She knew her place."

James was asked to describe why he was referred to this center. He stated that Sandra is paranoid and has made up this whole story about him. He shared that he feels Sandra is a little mentally unstable and states she can create some pretty wild stories. James vehemently denies all the allegations of abuse and told staff that he is unclear about why he continues to be referred to programs like ours. He shared that he loves his daughter and he would do anything to see her, even come to the center. He describes a close relationship with his daughter and a deep commitment to being a "good" father.

James has described himself as a "disciplinarian" and shared during the orientation that he is concerned about his ability to parent while at the center. James shared that he and his daughter have a wonderful relationship and that he was certain his daughter misses him. When asked how he thought the first visit would go he described Alisha running into the room and jumping into his arms. He was certain that she would be excited and would probably want more time than was allowed for visits. James was asked how he thought Alisha would describe him. He took a long pause and said; "Alisha would describe me as one of her big teddy bears. She loves to cuddle in my lap."

During Sandra's orientation appointment she appeared very nervous and clearly flustered. She stated she was glad to be at a new center because she said she didn't trust the last person who

facilitated their visits. She told staff that the other provider always made her feel like she was blowing this all out of proportion. Stating that the previous monitor would tell her that everything was wonderful during their visits, that Alisha had a great time with her dad. Sandra stated that this provider would dismiss any of the concerns she raised. Sandra said this really bothered her, stating, “Of course they had a wonderful time. He only has to parent for an hour every week and Alisha does everything he says because she is afraid of what he will do if she doesn’t follow his rules.”

Sandra asked a lot of questions about the supervised visitation services during the initial orientation. She stated she didn’t trust that James would listen to a woman, especially a young pretty woman, and wanted to know if there was a male monitor on staff. Sandra was asked to share her fears about the visits, things she wanted the center staff to be paying particular attention to and what she needed from the center to keep her safe. At the conclusion of the initial orientation appointment Sandra was asked if she would like to make another appointment to come in and meet a few other staff members and have a chance to ask any additional questions that may come up for her. She agreed that this would make her feel much more comfortable – indicating that she was feeling so pressured to have to try and remember everything staff would need to know to keep Alisha safe. The second appointment took place and Sandra indicated she felt much more comfortable setting up a schedule for the first visit to take place.

Once both parents confirmed the visitation schedule, an orientation appointment was set up for Alisha. Child orientation appointments are held in lieu of the first visit to provide the child an opportunity to establish a routine, get familiar with the center and meet the staff that will be with them during their visit. Alisha appeared a little timid when she arrived. Alisha’s first question to staff was, “Is my dad here?” When she was told he wasn’t, that this was a special time just for her to visit the center, meet the people who worked at the center and for the staff to get to know her, she looked at her mom and then at the staff member and took a deep sigh. Under her breath she said, “Oh good.”

Alisha walked around the center with the staff person; she looked at the visitation room where she and her dad would visit, checked out the snack closet as well as the craft room. Staff asked her what her favorite things to do were and if she saw anything that she would like to do with her dad when she comes to see him at the center. She told staff she loved to do crafts but thought her dad would probably rather play UNO.

Staff asked Alisha how she was feeling about visiting her dad at the center – she replied that she didn’t know. She said it had been nice to have a little break. She then said, “I like my dad but he can be kind of scary.” She asked if she had to see her dad. She was told that center staff wouldn’t force her to do something she didn’t want to do but also asked her what staff could do to support and help her. After talking to Alisha a bit longer it was decided that a “break word” would be established. Alisha was told that the “break word” was a word she would use to let staff know if she needed or wanted a little break or wanted to talk with staff alone. She was told she could use her “break word” and staff would take her from the visitation room into the check-in room.

Prior to the first visit staff scheduled a call with James to check in about the upcoming visit. Staff talked to him again about his expectations for the first visit. He said he was anxious to get this

going and wanted to see his daughter. Staff talked to him about his expectation of how his daughter would greet him and how he felt the first visit would go. The conversation was strained but ultimately he indicated that he understood that his daughter may not run into his arms and may need or want to move a bit slower during the visit. He was willing to talk about some best and worst case scenarios for the first visit. Staff shared with James that a child's comfort and safety will be something that is important to staff and that center staff will allow his child to take the lead. James said he wasn't happy about this but understood and confirmed the first visit.

For the first two visits Alisha used her "break word" to end the visits early. The monitor took Alisha out of the visitation room to check-in. She refused to return to the visit despite being offered some alternatives such as returning to just say goodbye to her dad, playing by herself while her father stayed in the room with her, or to draw a picture in the staff room and if she decided she wanted to go back and see her dad she could. Alisha refused all of the suggestions staff made indicating that she just needed to see her mom.

During the check-in with James he seemed agitated and expressed that it seems like if he tries to discipline his daughter in a visit Alisha just ends the visit, which, according to him, completely undermines his authority as parent. He said he feels staff has taken away his parental rights and he is no more than an "entertainer" for his daughter so that she won't leave the visit. He stated that he is upset because now his daughter knows she can get away with this behavior and will do this every time they come to the center.

After Alisha ended each visit early center staff spent time talking with Sandra about what she feels is happening and what she needs from the center. Sandra shared that she felt Alisha was feeling a little anxious and just needed to take things slow. Sandra indicated she is thankful that the center was willing to attend to her daughter's needs and listen to her.

Internal concerns:

It is a concern of the visitation center that Mr. Jackson is asking the center to support his continued use of entitlement and his use of authoritarian behavior and appears to be using power and control to justify his behavior as his method of parenting.

Center Response:

Alisha has been impacted in some way by her father's abusive behaviors. It is important for the center to support Alisha and ensure her emotional and physical safety while at the center. The center is supporting Alisha to excuse herself when something doesn't feel good/right and is supporting her to take this process slowly and at her pace.

The center continues to provide an environment that does not reinforce Mr. Jackson's expectations of dominance and continued entitlement. The center is actively working not to allow James to create further harm or support his efforts to continue to control, use abusive tactics, or place blame.

Regardless of whether James has the ability to talk about his use of violence the center has been engaging with him in an effort to help him shift his focus and talk about the impact his behavior may have on his child. Center staff has worked to re-frame his behavior and identify why it could

be harmful or causing his daughter to be hesitant (e.g., “This is what I see you doing, this is what I see your daughter do in response....” “It can be common for children to need to take things slowly, support her to do this rather than force her to make a choice she isn't prepared for will have a much better long-term outcome...”)

Center staff has also approached James in a positive method of engagement, meaning staff has had conversations to offer help or suggestions around how he could connect with his daughter in a new way. Staff has also shared with James the positive things he has done during the visit that seem to engage his daughter and make her smile.

The center staff has shared with James that this is a period in his family where there are lots of changes happening. Supporting his daughter during this time in a way that doesn't force her to do something she isn't prepared for is important – letting him know that typically when children are forced into something they are not prepared for or ready for it can push them away even further. Center staff has asked James what kind of relationship he wants to have with his daughter in a few months from now, a few years from now and when she is in high school or an adult. Center staff has asked him to consider the following question: “If someone asked your daughter in ten years what kind of father was your dad, how would you want her to answer?” Center staff asked him in light of this question, how the center could help support him to get to this desired relationship with his daughter now. Center staff has also been intentional about not creating a space and a relationship that reinforces or allows James to enter into a power struggle with staff.

Futures Without Violence, formerly Family Violence Prevention Fund, works to prevent violence within the home, and in the community, to help those whose lives are devastated by violence because everyone has the right to live free of violence.



For more information on this project or Futures Without Violence, please contact: childrensteam@futureswithoutviolence.org

**100 Montgomery St, The Presidio
San Francisco, CA 94129
www.futureswithoutviolence.org
(415) 678-5500**

©2015. Futures Without Violence. All Rights Reserved.