

Promoting Responsible Fatherhood Community Access Program

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROTOCOL GUIDE

**Example of a Domestic Violence Protocol
for Responsible Fatherhood Programs and Domestic Violence Partners**

This template was designed for use by grantees funded through the Colorado Department of Human Service's Promoting Responsible Fatherhood Community Access Grant, which was funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services/Administration for Children and Families/Office of Family Assistance from 2006-2011. It was created in partnership between the state's Responsible Fatherhood Program and the Domestic Violence Program. More information about each of the programs is available on the web at <http://www.coloradodads.com> and <http://www.colorado.gov/cdhs/dvp>. The template was developed as a tool to assist Colorado's Promoting Responsible Fatherhood grantees in developing a protocol describing how to respond to domestic violence.

In the context of Promoting Responsible Fatherhood, a well-structured domestic violence protocol ensures that domestic violence issues within families targeted by the program are safely, routinely, and consistently identified, appropriately addressed, and that adequate supports and safeguards are in place for families dealing with domestic violence. Each domestic violence protocol should serve as a resource for anyone involved in the implementation of a Promoting Responsible Fatherhood program. The protocols should provide concrete guidance and reflect day-to-day practice at the project level by reflecting the roles and responsibilities of different project partners.

This template identifies key components that programs might consider including in their domestic violence protocol, and provides commentary in the form of critical questions and analysis to facilitate program-level discussion and decision-making. To be most effective, the domestic violence protocol should be developed collaboratively with local and/or state domestic violence programs and experts. The local community domestic violence program is the organization responsible for providing a crisis response to victims of domestic violence and their children. While many programs in Colorado have emergency shelter available to victims, many do not; therefore the provision of emergency shelter services is not required for collaboration.

[We recommend that you] limit your protocol to **no more than 5** pages in length.

This protocol document template was adapted from the Domestic Violence Screening documents developed by the Adoptive Families Initiative Grant, the Community Healthy Marriage Project, the Regional Healthy Marriage Coalition, the Mountain Resource Center Partner Up Project, and blueprints developed by Anne Menard, National Resource Center on Domestic Violence. Updated 7/09.

Promoting Responsible Fatherhood Community Access Program

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROTOCOL TEMPLATE

Domestic Violence Protocol

Grantee:

<NAME OF FATHERHOOD PROGRAM>

List of Key Project Partners:

Discussion – This area of the domestic violence protocol should list key partners involved in the Promoting Responsible Fatherhood Project and a lead person for each partner, including contact information. Key partners include community organizations providing support to the program through referrals, resources, networking, training or other areas. Key partners may include organizations that wrote letters of support for the initial grant. Fatherhood programs are required to list at least one domestic violence organization in this area, and must attach a letter from the domestic violence organization documenting their involvement in the development of the domestic violence protocol. The domestic violence organization must be a community-based program (non-governmental) that provides services directly to victims of violence and their children. Fatherhood programs may also want to consider developing a relationship with a state-certified batterer treatment program in addition to the domestic violence program.

Description of Promoting Responsible Fatherhood Project:

Discussion – In this section of the domestic violence protocol, a concise description of the Promoting Responsible Fatherhood Program should be included to provide a context for the domestic violence response. What are the characteristics of the communities and families being targeted by the project? What types of services are offered to fathers (duration, frequency, curricula used, settings, etc...)?

Mission of Promoting Responsible Fatherhood Project:

Discussion – The mission of the fatherhood program may be the overall grantee’s mission or it may need to be tailored to the specific services funded through this grant. What is your fatherhood program ultimately hoping to accomplish?

Scope and Purpose of Protocol:

Discussion – The scope and purpose of the protocol should highlight the role of the protocol within the fatherhood program. An example is included below:

This protocol is designed to ensure that domestic violence issues for fathers who receive services from **<NAME OF FATHERHOOD PROGRAM>** are safely, routinely, and consistently identified. **<NAME OF FATHERHOOD PROGRAM>** staff will make every effort to ensure that domestic violence issues are appropriately addressed including, but not limited to, screening and referrals to other community resources. **<NAME OF FATHERHOOD PROGRAM>** will actively work with **<NAME OF LOCAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAM>** to learn about the scope of the problem of domestic violence in the community, dynamics of domestic violence offenders and victims, the services offered by the domestic violence program, and current efforts underway to respond to and prevent domestic violence.

Underlying Principles and Shared Values:

Discussion – This section of the protocol, and the discussion among partners that it prompts, can be very helpful in identifying shared principles and values and building trust between those working in the responsible fatherhood and domestic violence fields. It asks a simple but important question: What are the shared values that guide your work together? Fatherhood programs should work closely with the local domestic violence program in their community to develop these statements. Some examples of value statements are included below. Fatherhood and domestic violence programs should select those that are most relevant to them, their organizational mission, and/or develop other value statements pertinent to the community needs.

- **<NAME OF FATHERHOOD PROGRAM>** and **<NAME OF LOCAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAM>** recognize that domestic violence is a complex, serious and pervasive problem throughout our community. The use of physical, sexual, verbal, and emotional violence as well as the use of power and control in an intimate relationship undermines the development of responsible fatherhood and healthy relationships.
- **<NAME OF PROGRAM>** and **<NAME OF LOCAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAM>** will ensure that their staff and volunteers convey a strong message to the community and program participants that violence, abusive or coercive behavior is unacceptable in any situation including intimate relationships and that violence is never an appropriate response to conflict.
- **<NAME OF PROGRAM>** and **<NAME OF LOCAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAM>** will provide services to fathers in a manner that is consistent with promoting the safety and well being of fathers, mothers, and children.
- **<NAME OF PROGRAM>** and **<NAME OF LOCAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAM>** believe that all people are entitled to the right to live free from violence or threat of violence from current or former partners. To end the cycle of domestic violence, services must be provided to victims and perpetrators, with victim safety being a key priority.
- **<NAME OF PROGRAM>** and **<NAME OF LOCAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAM>** will take care not to disparage or compromise the efforts and successes of single parents.
- **<NAME OF PROGRAM>** and **<NAME OF LOCAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAM>** recognize the diversity of the community and the importance of providing culturally appropriate approaches to supporting the development of responsible fatherhood and healthy relationships in families. Cultural competency is critical to understanding families and their relationships, and to providing services and supports that are meaningful and relevant. We will respect the unique cultural identities, experiences, and circumstances of individuals, couples and families.
- **<NAME OF PROGRAM>** and **<NAME OF LOCAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAM>** recognize that promoting the development of healthy relationships with children and intimate partners includes the premise that “it’s only healthy if it’s safe.”
- **<NAME OF PROGRAM>** and **<NAME OF LOCAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAM>** believe that individuals in healthy relationships do not engage in violent, abusive, or coercive behavior.
- **<NAME OF PROGRAM>** and **<NAME OF LOCAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAM>** will make every effort to ensure that disclosures of abuse remain confidential, except in circumstances prescribed by law, professional standards or ethical protocol.
- **<NAME OF PROGRAM>** and **<NAME OF LOCAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAM>** will conduct effective screening and assessment for domestic violence in a consistent and diligent manner, assuring that both screening and assessment are implemented by staff who have been well trained.

- **<NAME OF PROGRAM>** and **<NAME OF LOCAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAM>** prescribe to current research and experiential evidence that domestic violence is most typically a problem involving a male abusing a female partner. All screening and assessment processes and procedures will reflect this evidence, but will be mindful of circumstances involving male victims and female perpetrators.

Definition of Domestic Violence:

Discussion – it is important for each responsible fatherhood program to define how domestic violence is defined for purposes of its domestic violence protocol. The term "domestic violence" and related terms such as "intimate partner violence," are often defined in different ways. To be clear, a common understanding of what constitutes domestic violence should be built among the project partners and reflected in the domestic violence protocol. Additionally, responsible fatherhood programs may also want to include some indicators of the prevalence of domestic violence in the community targeted by the fatherhood program and statements reflecting the community's commitment to address it.

Example:

For the purposes of this fatherhood program, the term "domestic violence" describes a pattern of abuse and coercive behaviors, including physical, sexual, and psychological abuse as well as economic coercion used against an intimate partner. Domestic violence often involves the use of a combination of tactics aimed at establishing and maintaining control of one partner over the other."

Screening for Domestic Violence:

Discussion – this section of the protocol should highlight how the fatherhood program and domestic violence program will review and evaluate the screening procedures and the document(s) used to screen potential participants.

Information Provided to All Referring Partners:

Discussion – many fatherhood programs are relying on referrals from other community or faith-based organizations or institutions, including religious leaders, county departments of human/social services and others. The Domestic Violence Protocol should describe the steps that will be taken to inform referring partners about the fatherhood programs, including clear statements in all materials describing the fatherhood program and in any presentations about the program, clarifying the following:

- 1) *The fatherhood program is not a domestic violence intervention program;*
- 2) *Alternative community services exist for families with current domestic violence issues; and*
- 3) *The fatherhood program can assist community partners in determining what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate referrals.*

Depending on the depth of involvement in the referring partners, the protocol may need to include information on how each referring partner assesses clients for domestic violence. Additionally, it may be helpful to document in this section how or if referring partners will receive domestic violence training. Be sure to carefully spell out the role of each referring partner.

Responding to Disclosures of Abuse:

Discussion – when disclosures of domestic violence occur as a result of screening or at any point during participation in a responsible fatherhood program, an appropriate response must follow. This section of the domestic violence protocol should describe both how decisions related to participation in responsible fatherhood activities will be made when domestic violence has been disclosed or detected, and how referrals to domestic violence services will be made. Some responsible fatherhood programs may elect to specifically identify in their protocol when they will elect not to provide parenting/couples education to a particular client. Some fatherhood programs may be dealing with the issue of domestic violence effectively, while others will feel more comfortable referring to an outside agency.

Example:

Client may not participate in the parenting/couples education program due to one of the following circumstances:

- A current order of protection against one of the parties exists;
- A pending criminal court case related to domestic violence exists;
- There is a pending court case related to child custody where domestic violence is alleged;
- Fear is an element of the participant's current/former relationship; and/or
- Indicators of abuse or controlling behavior are present.

In circumstances where abuse is disclosed and the fatherhood program participant is co-parenting a child with the former and/or current victim, a more in-depth assessment should occur. In these circumstances, it is vital to include the local domestic violence program in assisting with the assessment. Responsible fatherhood programs have an ethical and moral responsibility to ensure that the safety of the victim is fully assessed and accounted for when abuse is known and/or disclosed, even if the victim does not directly receive fatherhood services. Assessments should include consideration of the recentness of the abuse, whether it occurred in a present or past relationship, the types of intervention services provided to both the victim and the perpetrator, the perpetrator's compliance with and successful completion of a batterer's intervention program, protection orders, supervised visitation, or other appropriate response, and other intervening variables. The goal of this assessment will be to ensure informed decision-making and safe participation.

Maintaining Confidentiality:

Discussion – this section of the protocol should clearly describe the confidentiality standards (some of which are defined by law or professional standards) that bind information sharing by those who will be involved in domestic violence screening, including governmental agencies, domestic violence programs, health agencies, clergy, and other community-based organizations. To clarify roles and avoid misunderstandings, expectations related to what information will and will not be shared related to domestic violence disclosures should be described.

Domestic Violence Curriculum

Discussion – this section should reflect how the fatherhood program plans to incorporate the issue of domestic violence into the parenting or couples counseling curriculum used. Examples include text from program materials, how staff will address domestic violence when it is raised among participants, or how often/how much time the program will spend in addressing domestic violence with participants.

Cross-Training on Responsible Fatherhood and Domestic Violence Issues:

Discussion – in order to effectively implement this protocol, it will be necessary to ensure that those involved in identifying and responding to domestic violence issues, and those providing support to domestic violence victims within the context of the promoting responsible fatherhood project, receive necessary training to be defined by state parameters. This section of the protocol should identify the key partner groups (state/county agencies, domestic violence organizations, health care providers, clergy, and parenting, relationship, marriage education program providers) and describe the training they will receive to fulfill their roles and assist others to fulfill their roles under this protocol. The protocol should also clarify how the trainings will be coordinated, the timetable for the training and how often it is scheduled.

Review of Protocol:

Discussion – given the new nature of many of the promoting responsible fatherhood programs, it is recommended that a 6-month protocol review be built in to allow the project partners to assess implementation strengths and weaknesses and make modifications as necessary. Any changes or modifications are subject to modification by CDHS.