

Promoting Responsible Fatherhood Community Access Program

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SCREENING TOOL GUIDE

**Example of a Domestic Violence Screening Tool Template
for Responsible Fatherhood Programs**

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.colorado.gov/cdhs/dvp> and <http://www.coloradodads.com>.

Directions for template use:

1. Grantees should carefully review the template and make changes relevant to their program. Any changes to the screening tool template should be programmatic in nature and enhance the effectiveness of the screening tool. Changes that undermine the intent and/or purpose of the screening tool are unacceptable.
2. The screening tool should be developed simultaneously with the domestic violence protocol in coordination with the local domestic violence program.
3. All drafts will be thoroughly reviewed and must be approved by CDHS prior to grantee's use.
4. It is recommended that grantees cut and paste the directions for the screener and the questions on the following page into a separate document before submitting to CDHS.
5. All contents denoted with **<ALL CAPITALS AND BOLD>** must be amended to the specific and relevant information for each grantee.
6. Grantees are encouraged to make additional changes that will give relevance to the screening document for their particular program.
7. Please include the title, "Domestic Violence Screening Form" and the name of the grantee on the form submitted to CDHS and **delete** the header (Colorado Department of Human Services, Promoting Responsible Fatherhood Community Access Program, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SCREENING TOOL TEMPLATE) from the top of the first page prior to submission.
8. All Fatherhood programs funded through the CDHS grant must have the screening tool in place **before** providing services. CDHS reserves the right to request copies of completed screening documents (with client identifying information removed) as a part of program monitoring and compliance efforts.
9. Grantees should not engage in screening for domestic violence until they have received training and technical assistance from CDHS. Please read and review the enclosed "Effective Screening Principles" prior to receiving training or technical assistance and prepare a list of additional questions for CDHS.

This screening document template was adapted from the Domestic Violence Screening documents developed by the Adoptive Families Initiative Grant, the Mountain Resource Center Partner Up Project, and Blueprints developed by Anne Menard, National Resource Center on Domestic Violence. Updated 08/2010.

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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SCREENING PRINCIPLES

Effective Screening Principles

1. Screen everyone.

It is vital that each potential program participant is screened for domestic violence. Screening will take time, patience, practice and a thorough understanding of how to respond effectively when violence is disclosed. Each potential participant needs to receive the same treatment and screening procedures. Ultimately, screening for domestic violence will improve the value of the types of services participants need. When participants disclose domestic violence programs can realistically evaluate the participants' needs and respond appropriately in a way that will help keep families safe. Fatherhood programs will only work with participants who are ready to begin parenting their children in a safe and healthy way. Participants who use co-parenting to intimate or maintain control over the biological parent of their children may not benefit from a fatherhood program.

2. Explain the purpose of screening.

Participants need to know that screening is not arbitrary and how the information collected about domestic violence will be used. Participants may need to be reassured that the purpose is not to report them to law enforcement, the courts or probation/parole. Explain to potential participants that fatherhood programs are obligated to screen for domestic violence as part of their federally funded grant. The ultimate purpose is to be sure that families are safe from harm and that participants are referred to appropriate resources. Tell participants that the goal is to be sure that the fatherhood program is an appropriate service to help their family and that other community resources may be better equipped to offer the type of help needed.

3. Create a comfortable atmosphere.

Participants may feel uncomfortable answering questions about their personal lives, especially those about domestic violence. Participants need to feel at ease while participating in screening. Be sure that the environment is friendly by screening in a quiet, confidential location. Encourage participants to take a break if needed and attend to their needs such as food, water and tools to ease communication. Participants may need translators, a written copy of the questions or other communication tools to fully understand the nature of the questions. Fatherhood program staff should ask the questions and take notes, allowing participants to speak their answers aloud. NOTE: Using phrases like "abuse" or "coercive control" sounds less incriminating or threatening than "domestic violence".

4. Practice and role-play.

For programs that do not have experience in screening for domestic violence, practice and role-playing will be essential. Experience will help create a comfortable atmosphere for both the fatherhood program staff and potential participant. Seek the advice of a program with more experience or state staff for technical assistance in this area. Ask questions of the experts and be prepared for a wide range of answers from the participants to the domestic violence screening questions. Pair up with other program staff and take turns role-playing to gain experience. The state will be providing in-depth training on how to screen for domestic violence and it will be important for fatherhood programs to attend this training to learn how to ask and respond to each of the screening questions.

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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SCREENING PRINCIPLES

5. Be prepared for reluctance.

Participants may be hesitant to disclose domestic violence or to discuss their history with violence in their home. Some may have orders of protection, arrests or incarceration in their past and this can be difficult to discuss especially if the participant is now taking steps to overcome the domestic violence. If participants refuse to answer the questions about domestic violence, become angry or upset about the questions or question the validity of the questions, the fatherhood program may not be an appropriate resource for them. The refusal or anger could be a sign that they are not ready to face their abusive past and they want to keep the violence a family secret. Encouraging them to engage in co-parenting or a relationship with the biological parent of their children may in fact place the family at risk for violence and abuse. Be sure that fatherhood program staff is aware of policies to follow when someone refuses to be screened. A negative response to screening for abuse does not mean that abuse is NOT present. It may instead indicate that the person is not comfortable disclosing abuse at this time.

6. Frame questions to elicit helpful answers

It is acceptable to develop a personal style when asking questions about domestic violence. The way each question is framed can make a big difference. Although many of the questions require a yes or no answer, encourage potential participants to expand on their answers. Ask clarifying questions about their answers such as their familial history, background or situational information about the disclosures.

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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SCREENING TOOL TEMPLATE

Domestic Violence Screening Form

Domestic violence and abuse can happen to anyone, yet the problem is often overlooked, excused, or denied. This is especially true when the abuse is psychological, rather than physical. Emotional abuse is often minimized, yet it can leave deep and lasting scars. Noticing and acknowledging the warning signs and symptoms of domestic violence and abuse is the first step to ending it. No one should live in fear of the person they love. It takes courage to admit to, and then address this issue within your own relationships. It is a very rewarding accomplishment to overcome this common aspect of relationships. There is help available.

The screener explains the following to each program participant: "We need to take a few moments to ask you some questions about abuse and safety in your current and past relationships. We will ask some questions that will help us assess safety and how it impacts you and your child(ren). Safety is a top priority for **<NAME OF FATHERHOOD PROGRAM>** and we ask all program participants the same questions.

Prior to referral to any parenting/couples education services, all potential participants will be routinely screened for abuse whether or not signs, symptoms or behaviors suggesting abuse are present.

All information discussed and shared will remain private and confidential unless you reveal something that must be reported to the authorities. **<NAME OF FATHERHOOD PROGRAM>** is **<ETHICALLY and/or LEGALLY>** mandated to report child abuse to child protective services and abuse of elderly persons and/or adults with disabilities to adult protective services and will make a report of imminent physical harm to an adult or child directly to law enforcement. **<NAME OF FATHERHOOD PROGRAM>** will keep a copy of this screening form in your client record file. Do you feel comfortable answering these questions?"

Client Name or case identifying information: _____

Screening Questions

Screener: "We want to get a sense of your current relationship with the biological parent of your children. The status of this relationship will have an impact on your parenting and co-parenting and will help us determine how to best support your parenting in a safe and healthy way."

- Are you currently married to or in an intimate relationship with the biological parent of your children?
 YES NO

If not, do you have contact on a regular basis with the biological parent of your children (and how often)? YES NO How Often? _____

Comments: _____

Describe the context of the contact (shared custody, visitation, financial arrangements, etc...) ____

Screener: "Next, we need to ask you some questions about behaviors in your intimate relationships. It will be very helpful for you to be honest and open in all your answers to best assess how this fatherhood program can support you and your parenting."

2. Most couples argue from time to time. When you and your current or former partner(s) argue, does your partner ever show or express fear about your behavior?
YES NO

Comments: _____

3. Has your current or past partner(s) ever acted in any of the following ways? (Check those that apply)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Threatened to use physical abuse | <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted, controlled or monitored your access to the computer, telephone or transportation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Threatened to use a weapon against you | <input type="checkbox"/> Used insults on you |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Slapped, hit, pushed or punched | <input type="checkbox"/> Isolated you from family or friends |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Intimidated you with looks, gestures or movements | <input type="checkbox"/> Destroyed your personal belongings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Called you names, humiliated you or put you down | <input type="checkbox"/> Forced you to have sex |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Used jealousy to make you feel guilty | <input type="checkbox"/> Strangled or attempted to strangle |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Withheld shared financial resources | <input type="checkbox"/> Harmed or killed pets or animals |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prevented you from leaving or ending the relationship | <input type="checkbox"/> Threatened to kill you |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Monitored your behavior or movements | <input type="checkbox"/> Threatened to commit suicide |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Refused to allow you input in financial issues | |

If your current or past partner(s) have acted in any of the ways described above, do you want to talk to anyone about these behaviors?

YES NO

Comments: _____

If your current or past partner(s) have acted in any of the ways described above, when was the last time this type of interaction occurred? _____

If your current or past partner(s) have acted in any of the ways described above, what safeguards are in place to prevent these behaviors in the future? _____

4. Are you or have you ever been in a relationship where you acted in any of the following ways to your past or current partner(s), or has anyone accused you of acting in these ways? (Check those that apply)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Threatened to use physical abuse | <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted, controlled or monitored your partner's access to the computer, telephone or transportation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Threatened to use a weapon against your partner | <input type="checkbox"/> Used insults on your partner |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Slapped, hit, pushed or punched | <input type="checkbox"/> Isolated your partner from family or friends |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Intimidated your partner with looks, gestures or movements | <input type="checkbox"/> Destroyed your partner's personal belongings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Called your partner names, humiliated her or put her down | <input type="checkbox"/> Forced your partner to have sex |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Used jealousy to make your partner feel guilty | <input type="checkbox"/> Strangled or attempted to strangle |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Withheld shared financial resources | <input type="checkbox"/> Harmed or killed pets or animals |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prevented your partner from leaving or ending the relationship | <input type="checkbox"/> Threatened to kill your partner |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Monitored your partner's behavior or movements | <input type="checkbox"/> Threatened to commit suicide |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Refused to allow your partner input in financial issues | |

If you have acted in any of the ways described above, do you want to talk to anyone about these behaviors?

YES NO

Comments: _____

If you have acted in any of the ways described above, when was the last time this type of interaction occurred? _____

If you have acted in any of the ways described above, what safeguards are in place to prevent these behaviors in the future? _____

Screener: "Next, we need to ask you some questions about your children. The way you behave toward your children is important for our program to know so that we can best address safe and healthy parenting techniques in your life."

- 5. Have/Has your child(ren) ever witnessed arguing or fighting between you and your current or former partner?
YES NO
Comments: _____

- 6. Have you ever attempted to gain sole custody of the children or threatened to remove them from the custody of the biological parent?
YES NO
Comments: _____

- 7. Do you currently have court-ordered supervised visitation?
YES NO
Comments: _____

- 8. How do you raise a son/daughter to be nonviolent? _____

Screener: "Finally, we just need to ask some questions about how the courts or other agencies may be involved in your life."

- 9. Are you currently or have you in the past ever attended or been court-ordered to attend a batterer treatment program?
YES NO
Comments: _____

- 10. Have you ever had an order of protection (restraining order) issued against you by a former or current partner, either temporary or permanent?
YES NO
Comments: _____

11. Has your current or former partner ever called law enforcement because of your violence?
YES NO

Have you ever been convicted of a crime related to domestic violence?
YES NO

Comments: _____

12. Is there a current/pending court case involving a custody dispute between you and your partner's child(ren) where abuse has been alleged or disclosed? YES NO

Comments: _____

