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# Training Children's Services Workers in Domestic Violence Assessment and Intervention: Research Findings and Implications for Practice

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Training children's services workers (CSWs) to intervene in cases involving domestic violence has just begun, and three curricula, with different philosophical underpinnings and training foci, are currently available. This paper investigated the effectiveness of two training programs (One-Day and Fellows Programs) conducted in Los Angeles and Orange Counties, based on the Friend, Mills and colleagues' (1999) curriculum. After the training was provided, ethno-racially diverse participants were less likely to tolerate domestic violence, more likely to endorse a more expanded role for CSWs in domestic violence cases, and more confident in their ability to respond to such cases. Although both One-Day and Fellows Programs were generally effective in bringing about changes in attitudes and competency, the Fellows Program yielded a greater degree of improvement for participants with lower pre-test scores in some areas. Implications for the planning of training on domestic violence in the context of child protective services are discussed.

The link between child abuse and violence against women by intimate male partners can no longer be denied. Studies suggest that 45-70 % of batterers who have children present also abuse their children (American Humane Association, 1994). The National Family Violence Survey, a population-based study, found that 77% of children in families where domestic violence occurs had been abused by parents (Straus, Gelles, &

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Steinmetz, 1980). The increased attention to the connection between child abuse and domestic violence has prompted collaboration between advocates, administrators, policymakers, and researchers in the fields of child abuse and domestic violence and resulted in some innovative collaboration and training initiatives (Edleson, 1999; Ganley & Schechter, 1996; Mills, 1998; Mills, Friend, Conroy et al., 2000; Peled, Jaffe, & Edleson, 1994; Schechter & Edleson, 1994).

In recent years, three curricula designed to educate children's services workers (CSWs) on assessment and intervention practices in domestic violence cases have been published. Ganley and Schechter (1996) developed a national curriculum for training support by the Family Violence Prevention Fund titled, "Domestic Violence: A National Curriculum for Children's Protective Services." Conroy and Magen (1996) developed a training for New York City CSWs titled, "Training Materials on Domestic Violence for Child Protective Service Workers." Friend, Mills, and colleagues (1999) developed a model of assessment and intervention for Los Angeles and Orange Counties CSWs titled, "Intervention in Domestic Violence and Child Maltreatment: An Innovative Training Program for Child Welfare Workers." The latter two curricula were funded by a grant from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Administration of Children, Youth, and Families.

This paper first analyzes the three curricula, highlighting the similarities and differences between them, and reviews the results of previously published data on the Ganley and Schechter curriculum (Saunders & Anderson, 2000) and the Conroy and Magen curriculum (Magen & Conroy, 1998). Subsequently, the findings of an evaluation of a training program in California (Los Angeles and Orange Counties) that used the Friend, Mills, and colleagues' curriculum will be presented.

### *Domestic Violence Training Curricula for Children's Services Workers*

Each of the three curricula developed to train CSWs on methods of assessment and intervention in cases involving domestic violence addresses such issues as risk assessment, assessment of danger, safety planning, and intervention in ways that are consistent with emerging literatures in the field. For example, each of the curricula recognizes that when allegations of domestic abuse are made to the child protective services agency, CSWs should assess both the risk of future incidents of abuse, and the potential dangerousness of those incidents to mother and child. Similarly, each cur-

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