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## Overview of the children and domestic violence services study

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### Abstract

The Children and Domestic Violence Services (CADVS) study is a project to collect detailed, contextual data at the state and local levels on the organization and relationship of child welfare services for children, and domestic violence services for women. Although previous research has found a high rate of domestic violence in families involved with child welfare services (CWS), little systematic research on a national scale is available about state and local policies and practices related to these families. The project reported in this article is a supplemental study of the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW), a national probability study of more than 5000 children and adolescents who become involved with CWS. Whereas, the NSCAW study contains detailed information on children and families, the CADVS study uses the same sample as NSCAW to gain information about the way that CWS and domestic violence service (DVS) agencies operate on behalf of victimized children and caregivers. The CADVS study design allows for linkage of this new contextual information to the individual level survey data collected in NSCAW. The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of the methodology used in CADVS, including sampling, data

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collection, and instrument development. Future plans for data analyses, including linkage between CADVS and NSCAW, are discussed.

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## 1. Introduction

Children exposed to domestic violence also are frequently the victims of co-occurring maltreatment. In particular, domestic violence is a significant risk factor for child verbal abuse, physical punishment, and physical abuse (Kerker, Horwitz, Leventhal, Plichta, & Leaf, 2000; Ross, 1996; Straus & Smith, 1995; Tajima, 2000). Although high rates of co-occurring domestic violence and child maltreatment have been noted in the general population (Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980; Straus & Smith, 1995), this co-occurrence has most commonly been investigated in single site, clinical samples of abused women and of physically abused children, with the majority of studies indicating rates of co-occurrence ranging from 30% to 60% (Appel & Holden, 1998; Edleson, 1999; Jones, Gross, & Becker, 2002). Many children exposed to domestic violence in the home come in contact with the child welfare services because of maltreatment, such as physical or sexual abuse, or when their exposure to domestic violence is defined as neglect. Although domestic violence and child maltreatment commonly occur together, policy makers and planners of services lack a nationally representative study that examines the prevalence of this co-occurrence, which demonstrates the importance of additional study in the area.

Equally important is the need for information on state and local policies and practices around services for families with co-occurring domestic violence and child maltreatment. The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) recognized the practical and inherent conflict likely to arise when two systems—one dedicated to the protection of women victimized by violence, and the other to the protection of children experiencing neglect or abuse—experience the extensive overlap in family caseloads likely to occur with issues so commonly present together. In a widely distributed document, the NCJFCJ (1999) called for extensive changes in research, practice and policy.

In 1996, Congress passed the *Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PL 104-193)* authorizing, among many other things, the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW). NSCAW is a longitudinal cohort study of more than 5000 U.S. children and adolescents ages 0–14 investigated as victims of child abuse or neglect and their families in 92 representative primary sampling units (mostly counties). The NSCAW study contains detailed information on child development, functioning and symptoms, services, environment and placement over a 36-month period along with information on domestic violence and maternal characteristics and services. By far the largest and most comprehensive study ever undertaken about children and families in child welfare, data from this research has provided important information, from a national perspective, on which researchers,

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