



**What is  
your son  
reaching for ?**

Give him a **strong** foundation  
for his future by treating  
his **mother** with  
**respect.**



# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PERPETRATORS AS FATHERS: ACCOUNTABILITY AND CONNECTION

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# THEMES

- **The reality of abusive father's behavior towards their family and children**
- **The centrality of adult survivors to the safety, stability and well being of children**
- **Children's experience of their relationship with their abusive fathers**
- **Social/systems expectations of fathers as it relates to children**
- **Our attitudes and practices as practitioners towards these things as we work with them.**



# WHAT CHILDREN EXPOSED TO BATTERERS NEED



- ✘ What are the consequences for the children of the perpetrator's actions?
- ✘ How is each parent relating to the children around safety, stability, nurturance and healing from trauma?
- ✘ Do we distinguish between the different roles of perpetrator and non-offending parent in our work?



# SAFE & TOGETHER PRINCIPLES

1

It is in the best interest of children when they can remain Safe & Together with the non-offending parent.

2

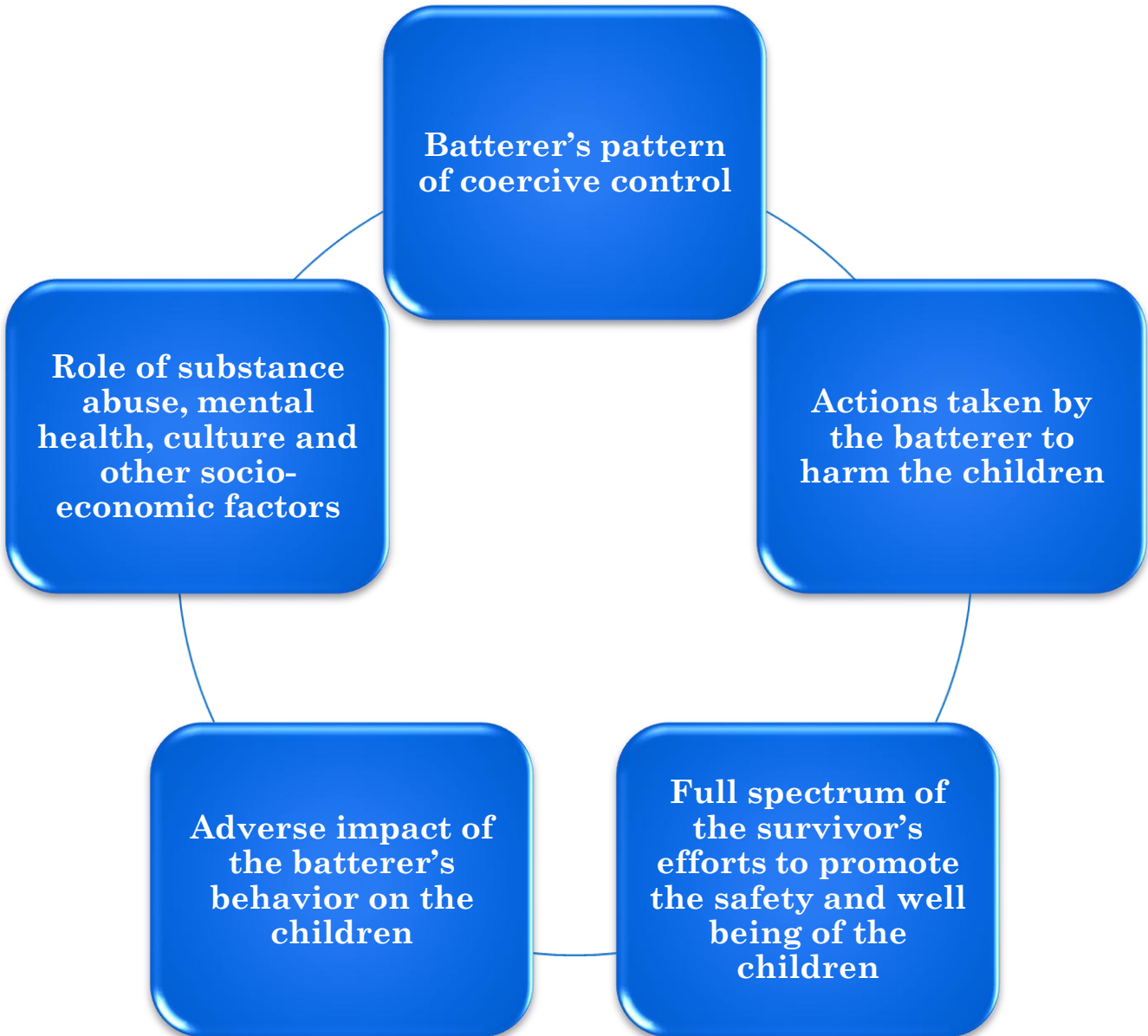
Partnering with domestic violence survivors is the most effective and efficient way to promote the safety and well being of children.

3

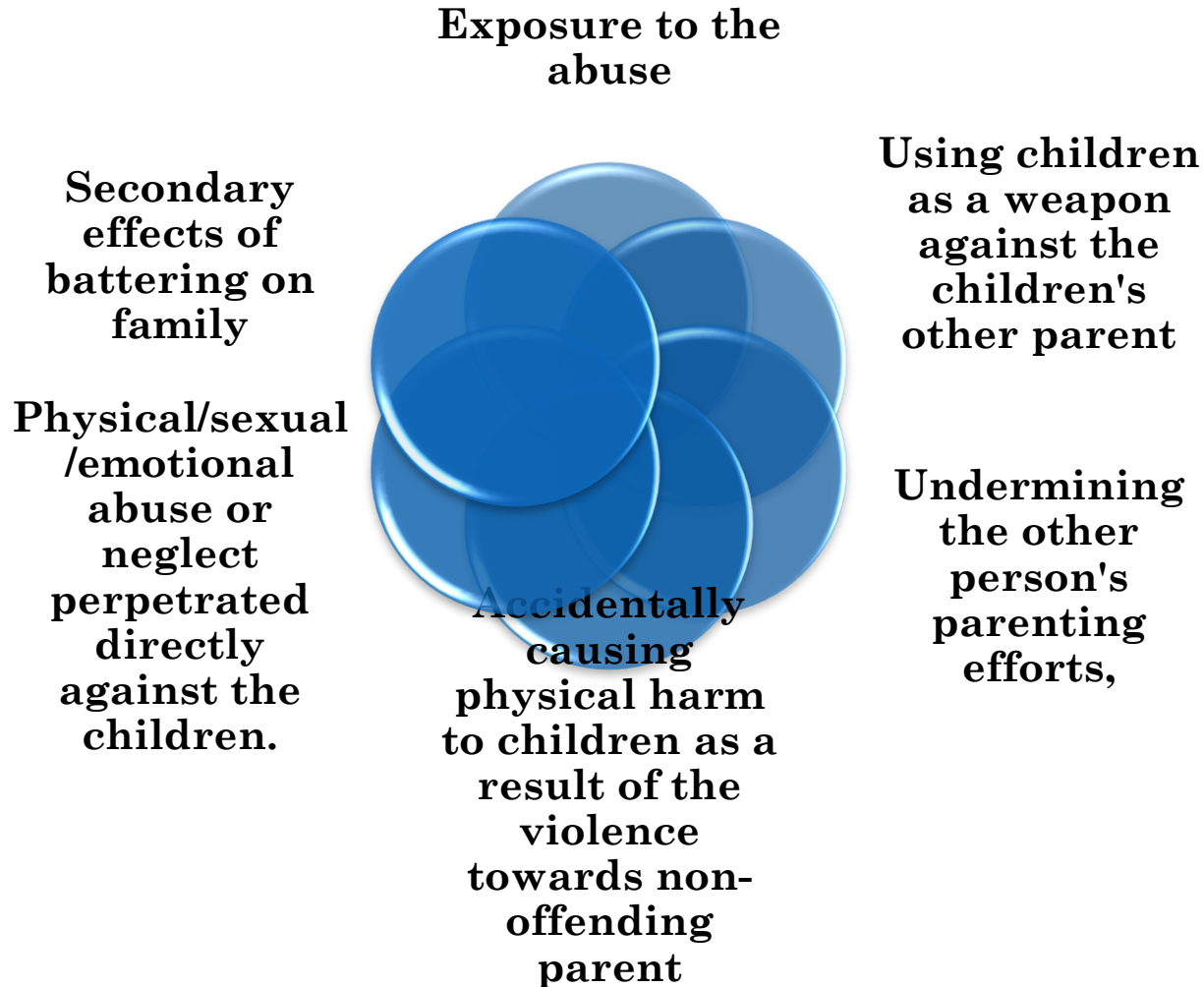
Efforts focused on child safety and well-being need to include interventions with domestic violence perpetrators.



# SAFE & TOGETHER CRITICAL COMPONENTS



# ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE BATTERER TO HARM THE CHILDREN



# US STUDY OF BATTERERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR CHILDREN'S EXPOSURE TO THEIR ABUSE

## ■ Target Population


- Identified by self or others as need batterer intervention
- Biological or social father\*

## ■ Total sample (N=1,182):

- 916 bio fathers
- 475 social fathers
- 365 were both bio and social fathers
- 137 were not any kind of father



# RESULTS FROM TOTAL SAMPLE OF FATHERS (N=1,045)

- Acknowledges that children have witnessed his verbal OR physical abuse: 76.5%
  - Believes that kids feel scared, sad or confused when they see or hear him acting physically violent: 69%
  - Believes various aspects of child's functioning and relationships are negatively affected a lot or somewhat by his abuse: 53%
  - Very worried or somewhat worried that son will grow up to be an abuser (40%) or that their daughter will grow up to be abused (44%)
  - Thinks violence and abuse negatively impacted his partner's ability to parent (a lot or somewhat): 20%
  - Made it harder to co-parent with his current partner (a lot or somewhat): 28%
  - Felt his violence negatively effected his feelings about himself as father (a lot or somewhat): 49%
- 

# SOME SHOW NO CONCERN (ALL FATHERS; N=1,045):

- 26% not at all worried about long term negative impact on children
- 17% not upset at all if child accidentally physically harmed
- 24% not upset at all if child was abusive to dating partner
- 25% not upset at all if child hated him because of abuse
- 12% would never stop violence if he believed it was harming children
- 22% would not at all upset if children thought violence was normal



# SELF ASSESSMENT

- What training and professional development experiences have you had working with men?
  - Education on male socialization/fatherhood
  - Internships/field placements
- Attitudes and beliefs about gender roles, parenting and the importance of fathers to children
- Willingness and ability to
  - Remain non-judgmental, engaged and non-colluding
  - Talk explicitly about the violence and abuse
  - Ask questions to identify potential for control
  - Set boundaries and be direct
  - Think about role of culture and gender
  - Put violence and abuse in context of relationship



	“Invisible”	“Good Guy”	“Bad Guy”
What we do	Ignore	Welcome/ Reward	Punish
Practice Implications	Do nothing with him	No assessment	Send him away
Implications for work with mothers and children	All the focus is on mom	Her efforts are valued less	All the focus is on mom



# HOW CAN WE CHANGE OUR PRACTICE AROUND FATHERS?

## ○ Short term:

- Ask about father's parenting and co-parenting role in every case.
- Consider father's influence in family even when he is not living in the home.
- Seek to understand the importance of the father to the child.
- Seek to understand the father's role in supporting or undermining the mother's parenting
  - Medical
  - Basic needs
  - Counseling
- Set high expectations for fathers (Little secret: Statute and policy makes no distinctions between mothers and fathers.)

## ○ Medium Term

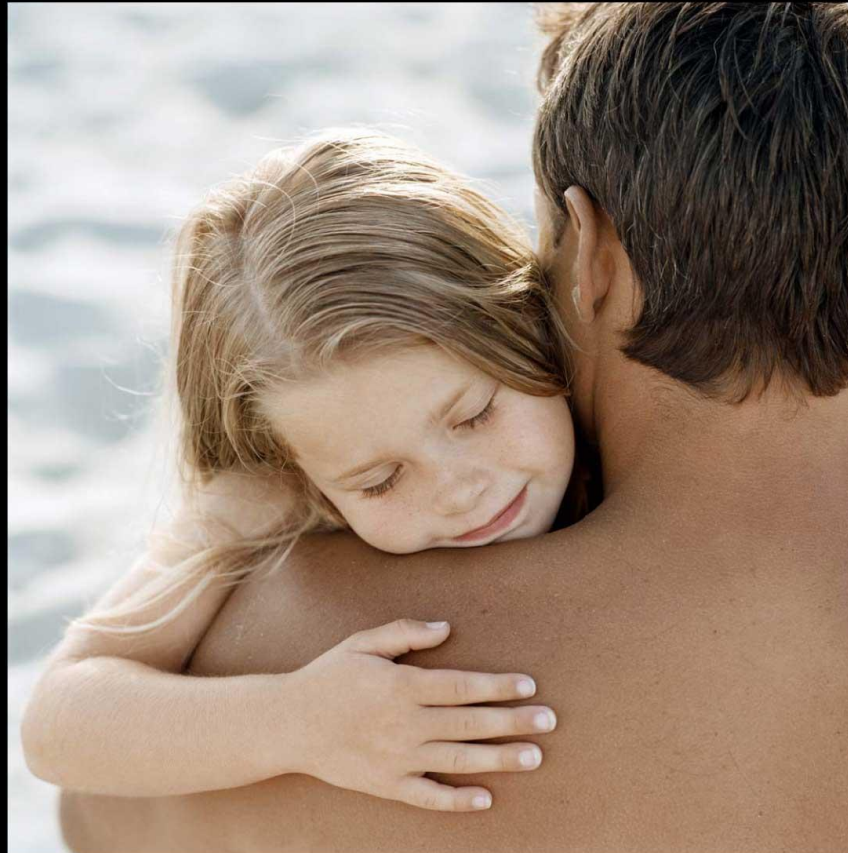
- Training for staff around working with fathers; Make sure that our processes and forms seek to integrate the role of fathers including non-custodial fathers into assessments and work

## ○ Long term:

- Services that address the role of father's in families; strengths and risks; outreach to young/first time fathers; changing cultural expectations of father's role in the family.



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You want to  
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**Start by being  
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