



# Addressing Fatherhood with Men Who Batter

Melissa Scaia

Advocates for Family Peace

Scott Miller

Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs

# Introduction of the topic

- Most men who batter are fathers
- Most of the men have developed belief systems similar to their own fathers
- Last 30 years, BIPs have developed around the country to address men's violence against women
- Very little time has been spent on men as fathers and as co-parents/parallel-parents
- Greater empathy by men toward their children's experiences of the violence than toward their partners' experiences

# **Why Should We Focus on Fathers?**

Most men who batter have some level of contact with their children.

Many battered mothers report that their abusers purposefully involve children in violent events (Edelson, 2006).



Men who batter systematically undermine and interfere with battered mothers' parenting in multiple ways (Bancroft, 2002).

The violence perpetrated in the home is used to control the behavior of the other members in the family.



On average, children exposed to adult domestic violence exhibit more difficulties than those not exposed. The difficulties can vary in range and extremity in behavioral and emotional functioning and cognitive functioning and attitudes (Edleson, 2006).

# History of the Fathering After Violence (FAV) Project

- AFFP was chosen as a pilot site by the Family Violence Prevention Fund as part of the Safe Havens: Supervised Visitation and Safe Exchange grant program of OVW
- Facilitators' experiences in groups with men who have been abusive
- Blandin Foundation, Northland Foundation, Minneapolis Foundation and Bush Foundation Funding
- Research, Focus Groups, and Interviews

**Goal:** Add curricula and sessions to BIP programming that focuses on men as fathers and parenting partners

**Community / Systemic Goal:** Every man who uses supervised visitation and exchange for battering will also participate in the IPMF

**Goal for the development of this curriculum:**

To help end violence against women and children by motivating men to become better fathers (or father figures) and more supportive parenting partners.

## **Core principles of the curriculum:**

- The safety of women and children takes priority over all other intervention goals. Sometimes this may mean that some men should not have contact with their children regardless of their completion of a group for men who batter. Fathers who are actively violent should not be encouraged to do this work. At a minimum, the woman should be provided with information about the program and referrals to appropriate services if requested.
- The behaviors of men who batter are rooted in beliefs that justify their use of violence to control women and children.

- This group process as an intervention is based on engaging in dialogue with men who batter to critically examine their beliefs and to encourage change.
- Men's use of violence towards their current/ex-partner should be considered when determining access to their children.
- All intervention practices must reflect an understanding of the interdependence of mother's and children's safety.
- Intervention practices for men who batter in their role as fathers should be accessible to men of diverse cultures and individual circumstances. There should be open, respectful, and honest communication between men and group facilitators.

# Theoretical Framework for understanding fathering by men who batter

- Men who batter parent differently than other fathers and systematically undermine and interfere with battered mothers' parenting in multiple ways (Bancroft, 2002).
- Most battered women want the children to have contact with the father – as long as it is safe for the children.
- Our culture closely ties fatherhood to dominance and strength
- Men who batter often believe that the children's mother and children should provide unquestioning compliance.
- Most men who batter do not believe that if they have harmed the mother that they have harmed the children



# **Coordinating a Response to Fathers Who Batter**

When are parenting skills classes appropriate?

What are the risks?

What beliefs does a father need to implement skills?

Who should skills programs be connected to?

# Not a parenting curriculum

- Traditional parenting curriculum seeks to provide parents with skills to parent children as circumstances arise (child management techniques) and to increase men's knowledge of stages of "normal" child development
- Knowing child development stages + entitlement **WILL STILL EQUAL = battering**
- This curriculum focuses on the entitlement that men have in relationships to their children and the children's mother as a parenting partner
- Intended to be incorporated into and/or with a BIP

# The Four Themes

**Theme One:** Examining Men's Own Childhood Experiences with their Father

**Theme Two:** The Impact and Effects of Men's Abusive Behaviors on their Children

**Theme Three:** Becoming a Child-Centered Father

**Theme Four:** Examining How Men Can Be Respectful and Non-abusive of Their Children's Mother and of the Mother-Child Relationship



**Exploring the content**

**Videos**

**FATHERHOOD LOG**

# Written Curriculum, DVD, and future Trainings

- **Written curriculum, “Addressing Fatherhood with Men Who Batter” = \$100**
  - Written by Melissa Scaia, MPA, Laura Connelly, and John Downing
  - Forward by: Ellen Pence, PhD
  - Edited by: John Connelly, Scott Miller, and Jane Sadusky
- **DVD = \$125**
  - Four vignettes
  - 911 call
- **Purchase Curriculum and DVD at:**  
[www.stopdomesticabuse.org](http://www.stopdomesticabuse.org)
- **Training on the curriculum scheduled for:**
- September 14 – 16, 2011 at DAIP;  
register at: [www.theduluthmodel.org](http://www.theduluthmodel.org)

# Contact information

Advocates for Family Peace  
1611 NW 4<sup>th</sup> Street  
Grand Rapids, MN 55744  
218-326-0388

[mscaia@stopdomesticabuse.org](mailto:mscaia@stopdomesticabuse.org)

[www.stopdomesticabuse.org](http://www.stopdomesticabuse.org)

Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs  
202 East Superior Street  
Duluth, MN 55802

[smiller@theduluthmodel.org](mailto:smiller@theduluthmodel.org)

[www.theduluthmodel.org](http://www.theduluthmodel.org)