

# The Family-Centered Toolkit for Domestic Violence Programs and Resources for Mental Health Providers

## *An Integrated Approach*

Integrating a family-centered, trauma-informed, and culturally responsive approach encourages us to view domestic violence survivors and their children holistically. This approach recognizes the innate resources for healing and resilience that we all have and that survivors and their children draw upon to survive and thrive. (Blumenfeld, S. and Baca, J., 2021)

## *The Family-Centered Toolkit for Domestic Violence Programs: Understanding Our “Why?”*

- Awareness of the effects of intimate partner violence on children’s development and well-being.
- Recognition of how the relationships between protective caregivers and their children are the greatest resource for fostering resilience and healing.
- Knowledge of how the bonds between survivors and their children can be negatively affected by domestic violence which includes tactics that undermine caregiving by protective parents.
- Historically, domestic violence services have been separated into services for adult survivors and services for children, rather than taking an approach that centers the relationships between adult survivors and their children.

The intention with this toolkit is to help programs envision and implement an integrated approach that supports parent-child relationships and families with a range of culturally responsive, trauma-informed, and developmentally sensitive practices for adult survivors of domestic violence and their children.

It offers guidance that includes knowledge, best practices, resources, scenarios and prompts to spark critical conversation, actions for staff and supervisors, and strategies for building organizational capacity. While this resource was designed for domestic violence programs, the information is also useful for practitioners working within other systems that also touch survivor’s lives, such as mental health and substance use services. The hope is for these systems to effectively partner with domestic violence advocacy organizations to increase community support networks for survivors and their families.

Changing the ways organizations support families experiencing domestic violence takes a willingness to undergo self-assessment, constructive critique, and leadership. The shifts may challenge some core beliefs, modify existing services, and add new approaches that center relationship and actions that consistently follow survivors’ lead.

## *Continuing The Conversation: Topics for Discussion and Reflection*

According to the [National Center for Domestic Violence, Trauma, and Mental Health \(NCDVTMH\)](#), the following content includes information and opportunities upon which to explore and reflect:

- Readiness and Getting Started
- Organizational Commitment to Family-Centered Work
- Creating Welcoming, Family-Friendly Environments
- Inclusive Child, Teen, and Family-Centered Practices
- Attachment, Child Development, and Trauma
- Supporting Caregivers Affected by Domestic Violence
- Supporting Caregivers with Mental Health Needs and their Children
- Supporting Caregivers who Use Substances and their Children
- Activities for Families
- Evaluating Program Services and Outcomes
- References, Handouts, and Resources

### **Critical Conversations for Family-Centered Work:**

- How does the organization currently provide services to survivors and their children?
- Does the organization have a willingness to work with survivors and children as a family unit?
- Does the organization have job descriptions that describe family-centered work expectations?
- Does the organization have policies that articulate the importance of family-centered practices?
- Does the organization have the physical environment (inside and outside) to accommodate the needs of families?
- Are staff discussions (informal or formal meetings) generally focused on deficits in families, programming, and funding, or is there an attempt to focus on what is going well?

## *NCDVTMH Resources to Support Family-Centered Services*

NCDVTMH promotes survivor-defined healing, liberation, and equity by transforming the systems that impact survivors of domestic and sexual violence and their families. The following resources from our center, as well as many more, can be found on the [NCDVTMH website](#):

- [Becoming Accessible, Culturally Responsive, and Trauma-Informed Organizations-An Organizational Reflection Toolkit](#)
- [Recorded Webinar Series: Building Trauma-Informed Services for Children, Youth, and Parents Impacted by Domestic Violence](#)
- [Recorded Webinar: Two-Spirited Healing and Wellbeing Frameworks: Discussing Two-Spirit, GNC, and LGB Resilience](#)
- [A Guide for Engaging and Supporting Parents Affected by Domestic Violence](#)
- [Information Memorandum](#) from the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#) and the [Administration for Children & Families \(ACF\)](#) calls for collaboration on domestic violence, substance use, and mental health.

## Additional Resources

- [Zero To Three](#). Zero To Three offers a comprehensive interactive resource for parents, caregivers, and professionals on the healthy development of children from birth to age 3.
- [Video: Introduction to the Circle of Security Parenting Approach](#)

## Engaging Children and Youth

- Short videos, mindfulness exercises, and other games, such as [“Guessing the Feelings”](#) (from the movie *Inside Out*, 2015)
- [Web Series: “The Halls.”](#) An eight-episode web series from the Boston Public Health Commission’s [Start Strong](#) initiative addressing gender-based violence in teen dating relationships. The series also includes a [discussion guides](#) for high school youth.
- [love is respect.org](#), a project of the [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#), offers 24/7 information, support, and advocacy to young people between the ages of 13 and 26 who have questions or concerns about their romantic relationships. It also provides support to concerned friends and family members, teachers, counselors, and other service providers through the same free and confidential services.

**Phone:** 1-866-331-9474

**Text:** LOVEIS to 22522

**Live Chat:** [Healthy relationships for young adults | love is respect](#)

## Domestic Violence Resources

- [Resources from the National Network to End Domestic Violence \(NNEDV\) for working with survivors of violence using online platforms, telehealth services, and other technologies.](#)
- [“Empowering Children in Shelter”](#): This culturally specific resource for American Indian and Native Alaskan children, teens, and their caregivers is a compendium of activities that can be shared and adapted. It’s designed to honor Indigenous cultural traditions and to teach activities and crafts to the next generation.

## References

Blumenfeld, S., & Baca, J. (2021). *Family-Centered Toolkit for Domestic Violence Programs*. Chicago, IL: National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma, and Mental Health.

National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma, and Mental Health, [Core Curriculum on Creating Accessible, Culturally Responsive, and Trauma-Informed Services](#), 2021.

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**Cathy Cave**, Senior Training Consultant  
National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma, and Mental Health