



BCS Thinking and Learning Exercises

#2: Safety for Children in Contact Discussion

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Overview:

This exercise uses case scenarios to talk about how to explore whether children are OK and safety strategies for children and their mothers.

Time: 40 to 60 minutes for each scenario depending on group size

Leader preparation/instructions:

- Review BCS website section “How can I help my children?”
- Consider writing your own scenarios that raise the advocacy issues you’re currently seeing.
- The topic of children’s safety can bring up strongly held views and opinions. Be prepared to facilitate the discussion. Consider starting the discussion with a call for candor and open-mindedness, along with the acknowledgement that everyone participating is committed to the well-being of children and their victim-parents.
- For additional questions on supporting children’s safety and wellbeing by working with fathers who have been abusive, review BCS website section “How can my partner’s violence be reduced or stopped?”

Activity:

- Read a scenario out loud. Give staff a few minutes to process the information and write down their initial thoughts and questions.
- Use the discussion questions to explore how we know how the children in the scenarios are doing and to talk about ways to support safety for mothers and children in contact with their partners/fathers.

Victims in contact include:

- Person in a relationship with an abusive partner
- Person who interacts with an abusive former partner
- Child in the care of adult victims
- Child who interacts with an abusive parent (even if parents are not “together”)



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Scenarios

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Scenario #1:

Joe has been visiting his father Ron for a few weeks. Every time Joe comes back to shelter after having a visit he is very angry and lashes out at his mom Sheila and other residents. Joe is having a hard time connecting with the other kids in the shelter and hangs out alone in the living room. Joe's parents have a history of drug abuse. However, in the last year they both completed a treatment program and developed a strong network of support. When Joe's dad relapsed Sheila left him and came to shelter. She tells you that she and Ron will get back together after he completes this new program.

Scenario #2:

In your playgroup, Sandra talks about seeing her dad push her mom "BJ" around. She tells you that she loves her mom and her dad but wishes her dad would stop "being bad." Sandra talks about a recent school event that was a lot of fun until her mother yelled at her teacher and then her father got real mad at her mother and told Sandra she was going to grow up and be a loser just like her mother. You know Sandra's parents are still living together and that BJ has little social support. BJ confides in you that the fighting with Sandra's father is getting to her and that she drinks every night to calm her nerves so she can sleep.

Scenario #3:

You are meeting with Maria's mother Lucia and she tells you that Maria has been getting into a lot of trouble at school. She tells she has been asked to meet with her teacher three times this past month. Lucia mentions that she has been talking with Maria's father Raul and that they are getting back together. She tells you she could really use his help and that Maria really listens to her dad. You know that Raul has hit Lucia and that's why they broke up. Lucia tells you Raul has agreed to go to the local men's group.

Discussion questions:

- What are your concerns about the child? For the child's mother?
- What makes you think the child is okay? Not okay?
- What additional information do you want from the child's mother? From the child? Other supportive adults and/or agencies working with the family? From the child's father?
- What would make life better for the child? For the child's mother?
- What could you do to help the child's mother support the child's safety and well-being?
- What does the child's father need to do to support the child's safety and well-being?
- What supports or interventions might help him do this?