

Welfare and Domestic Violence Technical Assistance Initiative

Family Violence Protocol Development

The second in a series of Practice Papers
developed by the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence
for TANF and Child Support Enforcement agencies and
domestic violence advocates

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Welfare and Domestic Violence Technical Assistance National Workgroup¹

Family Violence Protocol Development

■ Introduction to the Practice Paper Series

This practice paper series, developed by the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence and funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is part of an initiative to provide technical assistance to state administrators and domestic violence advocates implementing the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) in TANF and child support enforcement (CSE) contexts. This initiative is a partnership between the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence (NRC) and the Administration for Children and Families, DHHS.

The purpose of this series is to provide practical information that will help states implement welfare and child support enforcement reforms that promote both the safety and self-sufficiency of domestic violence victims using these programs.

Welfare reform has raised new opportunities, challenges and uncertainties. The range and pace of the change makes it difficult to predict the effects on battered women and their families. As with many aspects of welfare reform, there are more questions about the intersection of domestic violence and welfare than there are answers. As state programs, pilot projects, and research proceed, the NRC will continue to update and incorporate new information and make it available to you. We welcome your feedback and suggestions.

■ Introduction to the Practice Paper # 2:

The first two papers in the series discuss interrelated issues and are designed to complement each other. Practice Paper # 2 provides detailed guidance on developing family violence protocols for: the disclosure of domestic violence information; TANF/CSE program response to such disclosures; and the safe enforcement of child support when family violence may be a risk. Future practice papers will address other family violence protocol areas, such as training, state implementation of Federal Parent Locator Service privacy protections, and welfare-to-work initiatives.

Practice Paper # 1 includes background information about domestic violence and the options battered women need to be safe and self-sufficient and concise discussions of key implementation issues.

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I. Approach to Protocol Development

New TANF/CSE initiatives call for enormous change in what programs do and how they do it. The issues, resources, and approaches may be different at the local, county, and state level. Incorporating a response to family violence into TANF and Child Support Enforcement programs will add an additional layer of complexity.

Given these realities, collaboration between TANF and CSE programs and between TANF/CSE programs and community domestic violence agencies will be necessary to build opportunities for battered women's safety and self-sufficiency. For example, CSE and TANF programs will need to coordinate child support enforcement information gathering, implementation of the cooperation requirement and good cause exceptions, and confidentiality protections. Community domestic violence programs can provide analysis of the safety implications of particular strategies, participate in training staff about domestic violence, and work with TANF/CSE to develop service and referral systems that will enhance safety and self-sufficiency.

II. Essential Elements of a Family Violence Protocol

A family violence protocol should be specific, easy to follow, and should enhance the safety and self-sufficiency of battered women using TANF/CSE programs. Safety means that the violence and other risks battered women face because of their abusive partners will be reduced. Self-sufficiency means battered women will have the opportunity to secure food, shelter, health care and other life necessities for themselves and their children. Currently, the principle strategy to enhance safety and self-sufficiency is to provide program benefits and services, referrals to community services, and temporary relief when program requirements hinder safety or self-sufficiency.

The primary goal of developing a protocol is to ensure that family violence victims needing services and/or temporary relief get access to them through a safe, effective administrative process. To meet this goal, the protocol should incorporate the following elements:

A. Informed and voluntary disclosures of domestic violence

To ensure client disclosures of domestic violence are informed and voluntary, it is recommended that states use one of the following approaches: universal notification, screening for voluntary disclosure of domestic violence, or a combination of the two. (See Practice Paper # 1, *Universal notification of options/program requirements and screening for voluntary disclosure of domestic violence* - p. 8)

■ Universal notification

A protocol using a *universal notification* strategy makes it likely that disclosure will be voluntary. However, there is a concern that some battered women may not get the notice, understand the notice and how it might apply to them, or know how to access services or apply for temporary relief.

To ensure that *universal notification* strategies meet the goals of informed and voluntary disclosure, protocols should provide for notice:

- ◆ to be given to all applicants and recipients in multiple formats, including: brochures in waiting rooms, posters in restrooms at the TANF office (where a battered woman can safely read and get phone numbers without an abusive partner's interference, and written notices mailed directly to applicants/recipients which include several topics of general concern (so an abusive partner will not see the notice and think the victim requested the information);
- ◆ to be communicated in ways most likely to be understood by applicants and recipients, including: information in writing, information provided verbally from staff or through audiotapes or videotapes, and information in multiple languages;
- ◆ to be given repeatedly and at each point where temporary relief might be needed (e.g., when child support cooperation is required, when work activities are required, when time limits will end assistance);
- ◆ that includes information about how domestic violence information will be used and what privacy/confidentiality protections are in place;
- ◆ that explains program requirements, program services and temporary relief available, the process to apply for services or relief, and any rights the applicant/recipient has to appeal adverse decisions; and
- ◆ that includes information about local domestic violence services, including emergency hotline numbers.

■ Screening for voluntary disclosure of domestic violence

A protocol using a *screening for voluntary disclosure of domestic violence* strategy must be designed carefully to ensure that disclosure is truly voluntary and informed. When program staff talk with applicants/recipients, they typically need to accomplish a number of tasks: give information about the program, work and other requirements; gather and record a variety of information; and make complex eligibility determinations, all in a limited amount of time. Other factors will also affect the nature of screening, such as how the questions are asked by the staff, the woman's perception of the potential benefits and dangers of disclosing and the amount of privacy the interview space provides.

- ❖ **To ensure that screening for voluntary disclosure of domestic violence strategies meet the goals of informed and voluntary disclosure, protocols should:**
 - ◆ require staff to explain to applicants/recipients that they are asking the screening questions to determine eligibility for special and/or temporary relief from specific program requirements;
 - ◆ require staff to tell applicants/recipients that they do not have to answer the questions they are about to be asked;
 - ◆ require staff to explain how domestic violence information will be used and what privacy/confidentiality protections are in place;
 - ◆ provide for screening in a language understood by each applicant/recipient, either directly by staff or through an interpreter; and
 - ◆ include screening questions that were developed in collaboration with advocates and others experienced in working with battered women.

- ❖ **Disclosure of domestic violence information to get temporary relief from program requirements and/or services should be allowed at any time. Battered women will face different dangers at different points in time.**
 - ◆ *A battered applicant may not disclose during the initial intake because she has no need for temporary relief, but might need it later after her partner begins to sabotage her employment.*
 - ◆ *A battered recipient may believe it is safe to pursue child support and then be the victim of retaliation by her child's father.*

- ❖ **Family violence protocols should establish procedures that allow applicants/recipients to apply for family violence services and/or temporary relief from program requirements at any time.**

Some battered women may not disclose at a particular time because it is unsafe or they think the program staff will be insensitive or not believe them. These are some of the reasons why a protocol should not require applicants/recipients to sign or make a statement under oath that they are **not** victims of domestic violence if they do not disclose this information when given the opportunity to do so.

- ❖ **Family violence information should be used solely for the purpose of determining eligibility for services or temporary relief and should otherwise be kept strictly confidential.**

Limiting the use of family violence information and keeping it confidential will encourage battered women who need help to ask for it. In addition, such measures can prevent unintended negative consequences (e.g., disclosure could lead to retaliation by an abusive partner).

Therefore, a family violence protocol should:

- ◆ list the particular purposes for which family violence information can be collected and used;
- ◆ collect only the information necessary to establish eligibility for program services or temporary relief;
- ◆ establish systems and procedures that prevent disclosure for other than the stated purposes;
- ◆ provide for access to interview space that does not allow others to hear the conversation between the applicant/recipient and the worker or advocate;
- ◆ limit access to computer databases or other records of such information; and
- ◆ inform staff of penalties or consequences they may face, if any, for unauthorized disclosure.

- ❖ ***Exceptions to confidentiality – note on mandated reporting of child abuse and neglect:***

There can be a great deal of confusion about child abuse and neglect in the context of domestic violence and, in particular, when it is appropriate to report child abuse/neglect to the state child protection agency. It is essential for the protection of both the victim parent and the child that clear standards and procedures for reporting are established and followed. Agencies should work with child protection services and domestic violence advocates to develop such standards and procedures and to train staff on them.

B. Effective responses to domestic violence disclosures

The response to disclosure should be helpful and designed to consistently enhance safety. Although some battered women will never disclose domestic violence information to TANF/CSE staff, some will. Some battered women will disclose because of *universal notification or screening for voluntary disclosure of domestic violence*, and some battered women, even without such strategies, will spontaneously disclose when informed about CSE cooperation, work requirements or time limits.

Battered women who do not need to disclose will still benefit from simply receiving the information provided as part of a notification strategy (e.g., information about local domestic violence services or other safety options). However, for women who need to disclose information to be eligible for temporary relief or services, the tone of the interaction with program staff and the ultimate response to the disclosure will affect the woman's safety.

Because each battered woman has unique safety issues, it can be difficult to develop a protocol that enhances battered women's safety and self-sufficiency once they have disclosed domestic violence information. There is no "one size fits all" approach that will ensure safety or self-sufficiency. Responding to battered women's safety needs requires a certain set of skills, and this too has implications for protocol development. (See Practice Paper #1, *Staffing Approaches* - p. 10.)

Family violence protocols are likely to increase referrals to community domestic violence services. Family Violence Option certification specifically includes language that the State has established and is enforcing standards and procedures to refer victims of domestic violence to counseling and supportive services.² Such referrals may provide essential services that will help a battered woman be safe and self-sufficient. However, local services may not have the resources available to meet the needs of battered applicants/recipients referred by the TANF/CSE program. It is important for TANF/CSE programs to contact local services before including them in their protocols.

■ Develop basic guidelines for responding to domestic violence disclosures

Basic guidelines will provide staff with a simple, clear direction for their response. These "ground rules" can also ensure that staff do not make things worse for battered applicants/recipients.

Example of basic guidelines

❖ Listen.

Staff should understand what the battered applicant/recipient sees as her risks and what options she needs to reduce them. It is important to avoid making assumptions about what she needs. For example, staff should **not** assume every woman who discloses domestic violence needs temporary relief from program requirements.

Other responses, such as job training, transportation, relocation costs, or child care may be what she needs. It may be necessary to ask questions to find out what the woman needs. Consider asking simple, non-directive questions, such as: “What do you think would help?” “What are you worried about right now?” “What’s your biggest concern?”

Emergency crisis situations: Although infrequent, there may be times when a battered applicant/recipient is in immediate danger while talking to a staff person. For example, an abusive partner has followed her to the agency office and threatens her. Staff should follow established safety procedures designed to protect both staff and applicants/recipients. Each office has a different layout, staffing, security/law enforcement access, etc. and therefore such procedures must be office-specific. Once immediate safety concerns are addressed, staff should ensure that the applicant/ recipient has ready access to advocacy or other opportunities to explore her options to stay safe – now that the immediate threat is over. It can be helpful to work with community domestic violence services and law enforcement to develop safety procedures when the risk is immediate.

❖ **Provide the help she needs whenever possible.**

After staff understand battered women’s concerns and needs, they are in a position to help the women access the resources that will reduce risks and enhance self-sufficiency. Some examples of such responses might be:

- ◆ help to relocate to affordable housing;
- ◆ relocation of job training or work activities to a site where her partner/ex-partner can’t hurt her;
- ◆ child care (that frees her from relying on her partner or his family to watch her child);
- ◆ financial assistance and health care;
- ◆ implementing procedures to prevent address disclosure to her partner/ex- partner;
- ◆ advocacy to help her explore her risks and options;
- ◆ substance abuse treatment that will not require her to give the children to her abusive partner;
- ◆ transportation to work, court, services, etc.;
- ◆ temporary relief from program requirements/time limits so she has time to identify and pursue safety options;
- ◆ temporary relief from program requirements/time limits because her partner/ex-partner sabotaged her safety plan and she needs time to develop and implement a new one;
- ◆ court ordered supervised visitation to protect her children.

❖ **Tell her what help you can provide and how to contact other sources of help.**

Staff should inform battered applicants/recipients about the help the TANF/CSE program can provide and the process for obtaining it. Also, staff should provide referral information regarding other services, such as domestic violence shelter programs, substance abuse treatment options and others.

Guidelines for referrals:

◆ **Match the referral to the need.**

Staff should understand what the resources have to offer and who they serve.

◆ **Provide the information necessary for an applicants/recipients to access the service.**

This includes: general information about eligibility requirements, phone numbers, location (NOTE: most domestic violence shelters have confidential locations to protect the residents), contact person, and intake procedures.

◆ **Explain what services the referral can provide and how it might help.**

Applicants/recipients are more likely to take advantage of services if they understand what they are and how they will affect them personally. For example, “You can call the domestic violence project – they can talk with you about some things that can help keep you and your child safe. You don’t have to give your name and you don’t need to stay in the shelter to get their help. They’re not lawyers, but if you need to go to court, they can go with you to support you. Everything you tell them is private, they won’t tell anyone else. Their services are free.”

Therefore, a family violence protocol should include basic guidelines for responding to disclosures that:

- ◆ allow for flexible, case by case response to the unique safety and self- sufficiency needs of each battered applicant/recipient;
- ◆ provide information about options and services and referrals that might enhance the safety and self-sufficiency of applicants/recipients who disclose that they are battered;
- ◆ provide battered applicants/recipients the opportunity to explore whether they need temporary relief from certain program requirements and then guidance through the process of qualifying for such waivers, exemptions, or extensions.

❖ **Develop an easy to use process for battered applicants/recipients to access program services and/or apply for temporary relief from program requirements.**

(See Practice Paper # 1, *Balancing access to help and fraud protection* - p. 17.)

Once battered applicants/recipients know about the services available, they will also need to be able to navigate the process for eligibility. To be accessible, the process must have reasonable eligibility standards and flexible documentation requirements. If proof beyond an applicant's/recipients' statement will be required, it is important to keep in mind that each battered woman will pursue different safety options. For example, one battered woman may call the police and another may not. Another battered woman might seek medical treatment and another may not.

There is no one piece of documentation (e.g., a police report) that all battered women will have. Therefore, programs should not require documentation from only one particular source. In addition, some documentation is not always available (e.g., under certain legal circumstances police reports may not be released to a victim). Gathering documentation takes time, transportation, and money. For poor battered women who are working or looking for work, compiling such information may be impossible.

It is also important to establish what will happen regarding the applicant's/recipients' case or status once she has begun the application process. For example, implementation of sanctions or ineligibility due to time limits should be suspended until the process is complete, including an appeal process. Given the amount and pace of change, the increase in worker discretion, and the serious consequences of application decisions, it is advisable to have an appeal process for adverse decisions to provide the opportunity to correct any mistakes in implementation.

Therefore, a family violence protocol should:

- ◆ address specifically when, and under what circumstances, a request by an applicant/recipients for temporary relief and/or services will be granted and what rights the applicant/recipients has to appeal adverse decisions;
- ◆ include any statutory or other presumptions regarding the credibility of battered applicant/recipients statements that allege domestic violence and under what circumstances "additional" evidence/documentation will be required;
- ◆ allow for flexibility in the types of acceptable documentation, if corroboration of an applicant's/recipients' statement will be required; and
- ◆ ensure that an application for temporary relief should immediately stop program actions until the application is granted or denied (e.g., child support enforcement activities should stop if a battered applicant files for temporary relief from cooperation requirements and safe enforcement options should be explored). Similarly penalties or time limits should be stopped until a determination is made on the application.

- ❖ **If the program decides the pursuit of safety options may be required under certain circumstances, develop clear guidelines to implement such requirements.** (See Practice Paper #1, *Should the pursuit of safety options be a program requirement for battered women?* - p. 12.)

Therefore, a family violence protocol should include:

- ◆ under what circumstances the pursuit of safety options can be a requirement (e.g., only after the applicant/recipient has qualified for temporary relief, has talked with an advocate or other helping person, and agrees to pursue the option, and the option is available to her);
- ◆ what resources the agency will provide to help her pursue the option (e.g., transportation to court hearings, movers to help her relocate, etc.);
- ◆ details regarding how applicants/recipients will be informed of: the requirement process, what rights and responsibilities they have in the process, sanctions/consequences for failure to meet the requirements, and how to establish that she has met the requirements (e.g. is a letter from the program necessary?).

C. Safe child support enforcement when family violence may be a risk

(See Practice Paper # 1, Section, *Safety issues in the child support enforcement context* - p. 14.)

Safe child support enforcement means careful implementation of the cooperation/good cause or other exceptions provisions. It also means working with battered mothers to develop safer enforcement strategies when regular enforcement approaches may increase danger. Since enforcement activities, such as court hearings, may bring parents physically together, agencies should plan to provide physical protection to battered mothers as well (e.g., sheriffs, metal detectors at hearing locations, etc.).

Therefore, a family violence protocol should:

- ◆ address the need for TANF and CSE programs to coordinate efforts while maintaining confidential applicant/recipient information;
- ◆ provide an opportunity to explore options for safer enforcement (as an alternative to no enforcement) that allows for customized response to be developed with the battered parent;
- ◆ ensure that paternity/child support is not pursued if an applicant/recipient is found to have good cause not to cooperate until other safe strategies are developed;
- ◆ allow for enforcement to begin or renew if risk decreases or is eliminated;
- ◆ provide for physical protection of battered parents(e.g., sheriffs, metal detectors, etc.);
- ◆ protect all confidential information.

III. Approach to Protocol Implementation

■ Training

Training should focus on providing the information and skills necessary to implement the family violence protocol adopted by the TANF/CSE agency. Training should help staff successfully fulfill their role rather than just provide general information about domestic violence. TANF/CSE programs may find it helpful to collaborate with domestic violence advocates to provide training on certain aspects of a family violence protocol (e.g. making referrals to local program services, responding to safety needs when women are in immediate danger).

■ Implementation and Evaluation

To determine if TANF/CSE programs are working towards the goal of safety and self-sufficiency for battered women, it is important to both monitor the proper implementation of the protocol and evaluate the effects the protocol is having on the overall goals for the program, program staff, and battered women using these programs.

IV. Safety Considerations

As policy develops it is sometimes easier to identify what won't work or will cause problems than what is optimal. This is particularly true regarding safety concerns of battered women and their children. We know more about what may increase danger than how to prevent it. This is a summary of some practices or protocols that could increase danger and diminish opportunities for self-sufficiency.

■ Screening procedures that could lead to involuntary – and potentially dangerous – disclosures of domestic violence:

- ◆ requiring applicants/recipients to give “yes” or “no” answers to screening questions about domestic violence. Questions regarding domestic violence must be framed in such a way that applicants/recipients understand they can answer “Yes,” “No,” or “No comment”. Applicants/recipients must also know that a “no comment” answer will not affect their eligibility or benefits;
- ◆ requiring applicants/recipients to sign or make a statement under oath that they **are or are not** victims of domestic violence;
- ◆ punishing or sanctioning applicants/recipients who deny or fail to disclose domestic violence information at an earlier stage and then disclose such information later.

■ **Responses to domestic violence disclosures that could increase danger and diminish opportunities for self-sufficiency:**

- ◆ requiring all service or safety plans to have particular uniform provisions or the imposition of other universal “one size fits all” responses to domestic violence.

For example, programs cannot automatically assume:

- that leaving a relationship will always keep a battered woman safe and allow her to work;
- that police, courts, or other domestic violence responses will keep every woman safe and allow her to work;
- that services will lead to certain outcomes (e.g., If she goes to shelter her abusive partner will leave her alone);
- that the services have the capacity and resources to respond to every referral and all the needs of each battered woman;
- that every battered woman will take the same amount of time to achieve certain goals.

Programs must also be careful not to hold a battered woman responsible for a batterer’s violence or require her to make herself safe.

- ◆ limiting the time frame within which applicants/recipients may apply for family violence services and/or temporary relief.
- ◆ limiting battered applicant’s/recipients’ options for employment, training or other services available to all applicants/recipients.
- ◆ failing to maintain a battered applicant’s/recipients’ privacy and legal confidentiality protections.

■ **Child support enforcement practices or protocols that could increase danger and diminish opportunities for self-sufficiency:**

- ◆ disclosing confidential information;
- ◆ continuing to enforce child support even though custodial parent has applied/received good cause exception to cooperation [TANF cases];
- ◆ continuing to enforce child support when custodial parent has withdrawn petition or closed her child support case [non- TANF cases];
- ◆ enforcing child support when there is the risk of life-threatening violence, even with the battered parent’s permission, without developing and implementing a safety plan with her;
- ◆ ineffective collaboration/information sharing between TANF and CSE agencies (e.g. TANF sends CSE a case to enforce even though a good cause application not to pursue child support has been granted).

V. Family Violence Protocol Summary: Part 1

Practice Paper # 2 provides detailed guidance on developing family violence protocols for: the disclosure of domestic violence information; TANF/CSE program response to such disclosures; and the safe enforcement of child support when family violence may be a risk. Future practice papers will address other family violence protocol areas, such as training, state implementation of Federal Parent Locator Service privacy protections, and welfare-to-work initiatives.

Summary of Protocol Elements

- **Goal statement**
- **Legislative, administrative requirements**
- **Provisions to establish informed and voluntary disclosures of domestic violence.**

- ❖ **Universal notification provisions**

To ensure that universal notification strategies meet the goals of informed and voluntary disclosure, protocols should provide for notice:

- ◆ to be given to all applicants and recipients in multiple formats;
- ◆ to be communicated in ways most likely to be understood by applicants and recipients, including: information in writing, information provided verbally from staff or through audiotapes or videotapes, information in multiple languages;
- ◆ to be given repeatedly and at each point where temporary relief might be needed (e.g., when child support cooperation is required, when work activities are required, when time limits will end assistance);
- ◆ that includes information about how domestic violence information will be used and what privacy/confidentiality protections are in place;
- ◆ that explains program requirements, program services and temporary relief available, the process to apply for services or relief, and any rights the applicant/recipient has to appeal adverse decisions; and
- ◆ that includes information about local domestic violence services, including emergency hotline numbers.

❖ **Screening for voluntary disclosure of domestic violence provisions**

To ensure that screening for voluntary disclosure of domestic violence strategies meet the goals of informed and voluntary disclosure, protocols should:

- ◆ require staff to explain to applicants/recipients that they are asking the screening questions to determine eligibility for special services that need staff authorization to access and/or temporary relief from specific program requirements;
- ◆ require staff to tell applicants/recipients that they do not have to answer the questions they are about to ask;
- ◆ require staff to explain how domestic violence information will be used and what privacy/confidentiality protections are in place;
- ◆ provide for screening in a language understood by each applicant/recipient, either directly by staff or through an interpreter; and
- ◆ include screening questions that were developed in collaboration with advocates and others experienced in working with battered women.

❖ **Disclosure of domestic violence information to get temporary relief from program requirements and/or services should be allowed at any time.**

A family violence protocol should:

- ◆ establish procedures that allow applicants/recipients to apply for family violence services and/or temporary relief from program requirements at any time.

❖ **Family violence information should be used solely for the purpose of determining eligibility for services or temporary relief and should otherwise be kept strictly confidential.**

A family violence protocol should:

- ◆ list the particular purposes for which family violence information can be collected and used;
- ◆ collect only the information necessary to establish eligibility for program services or temporary relief;
- ◆ establish systems and procedures that prevent disclosure of information provided by an applicant/recipient for other than the stated purposes;
- ◆ provide for access to interview space that does not allow others to hear the conversation between the applicant/recipient and TANF/CSE worker;
- ◆ limit access to computer databases or other records of such information;

- ◆ inform staff of penalties or consequences they may face, if any, for unauthorized disclosure; and
- ◆ include clear standards and procedures for reporting child abuse or neglect.

■ **Provisions to establish effective responses to domestic violence disclosures and battered women who ask for help**

❖ **Develop basic guidelines for responding to domestic violence disclosures.**

A family violence protocol should:

- ◆ allow for flexible, case by case response to the unique safety and self-sufficiency needs of each battered applicant/recipient;
- ◆ provide information about options and services and referrals that might enhance the safety and self-sufficiency of applicants/recipients who disclose that they are battered; and
- ◆ provide battered applicants/recipients the opportunity to explore whether they need temporary relief from certain program requirements and then guidance through the process of qualifying for such waivers, exemptions, extensions.

❖ **Develop an easy to use process for battered applicants/recipients to access program services and/or apply for temporary relief from program requirements.**

A family violence protocol should:

- ◆ address specifically when, and under what circumstances, the request of an applicant/recipient request for temporary relief and/or services will be granted and what rights the applicant/recipient has to appeal adverse decisions;
- ◆ include any statutory or other presumptions regarding the credibility of battered applicant/recipient statements that allege domestic violence and under what circumstances “additional” evidence/documentation will be required;
- ◆ allow for flexibility in the types of acceptable documentation, if corroboration of an applicant’s/recipient’s statement will be required; and
- ◆ ensure that an application for temporary relief should immediately stop program actions until the application is granted or denied.

- ❖ **If the program decides the pursuit of safety options may be required under certain circumstances, develop clear guidelines to implement such requirements.**

A family violence protocol should include:

- ◆ under what circumstances the pursuit of safety options can be a requirement (e.g. only after the applicant/recipient has qualified for temporary relief, has talked with an advocate or other helping person and agrees to pursue the option, and the option is available to her);
- ◆ what resources the agency will provide to help her pursue the option (e.g. transportation to court hearings, movers to help her relocate, etc.);
- ◆ details regarding how applicants/recipients will be informed of: the requirement process, what rights and responsibilities they have in the process, sanctions/consequences for failure to meet the requirements, and how to establish that she has met the requirements (e.g., is a letter from the program necessary?).

- **Provisions for safe child support enforcement when family violence may be a risk.**

A family violence protocol should:

- ◆ address the need for TANF and CSE programs to coordinate efforts while maintaining confidential applicant/recipient information;
- ◆ provide an opportunity to explore options for safer enforcement as an alternative to no enforcement that allows for customized response to be developed with the battered parent;
- ◆ ensure that paternity/child support is not pursued if an applicant/recipient is found to have good cause not to cooperate until other safe strategies are developed with the woman;
- ◆ allow for enforcement to begin or renew if risk decreases or is eliminated;
- ◆ provide for physical protection of battered parents (e.g., sheriffs, metal detectors, etc.); and
- ◆ protect all confidential information.

Endnotes

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² 42 U.S.C. 602(a)(7)