

## CHILD PROTECTION WORKERS' CONCEPTUALIZATION AND SELF-EFFICACY IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES



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### What was the Study?

An investigation into whether providing child protection teams with education sessions and access to online resources could improve worker confidence in responding to child exposure to domestic violence (DV) cases.

### Who Participated?

One hundred and forty-eight child protection workers, at the Children's Aid Society of Toronto, were assigned to one of four intervention conditions as part of a cluster randomized trial: **1) Mother-focused training, 2) Father-focused training, 3) Combined training** (Both mother- and father- focused), and **4) Service as usual (SAU)**.

Child protection workers who received mother training (i.e., mother- focused and combined conditions) were compared with those who had not (i.e., only received father-focused training and SAU) and vice versa.

### What did the Professional Development Training Look Like?

#### Session One

- Identifying key indicators and patterns of risks (in mothers and fathers) in cases of child exposure to DV
- How to successfully engage mothers/ fathers in parenting interventions to mitigate risks

#### Session Two

- Clear descriptions of the mother/father-focused interventions
- How the goals and outcomes of interventions aligned with the child protection Signs of Safety (SOS) model-informed goals

#### Session Three

- How to support/maintain change in clients that attended mother-/father-focused programs

### What did Participants Do?

Before receiving any professional development training, workers completed a background questionnaire, a hypothetical DV case vignette, and self-efficacy measure. Approximately 12 months later (after completion of the training sessions), workers completed the hypothetical DV case vignette and self-efficacy measure again. In total, 52 child protection workers participated fully.

### What Did We Find?

- Child protection workers were highly satisfied with the training sessions and resources provided in both the mother and father-focused conditions.
- Providing DV training and resources increased child protection workers' capacity to identify risks and needs of mothers experiencing DV and increased their self-efficacy for practice with mother survivors of DV.
- Training did not lead to any change in child protection worker confidence or capacity to work with fathers who had perpetrated DV.
- When given hypothetical cases, child protection workers identified few risk factors associated with domestic violence, seldom included change goals associated with fathers' perpetration of DV and very seldom included DV-related indicators of safety that would be important to closing the case.

## What's the Takeaway?

Providing access to a DV expert for brief professional training and resources on supporting mother survivors of DV can promote improved case conceptualization and increase worker self-efficacy when working with mothers.

Brief training and resources are insufficient to improve child protection worker understanding of risks, intervention needs, and indicators of change in fathers who have perpetrated DV.

More work needs to be done to ensure child protection workers have the knowledge and skill set to provide the best support in DV cases. Professional development training may need to be augmented with additional coaching and supervision to facilitate practice change.

### FIND IT ONLINE

<http://kh-cdc.com/en/project-profiles/safeunderstood.html>



## RELATED PUBLICATION

Colasanto, M. (2018). *Effect of Professional Training on Child Protection Workers' Conceptualization and Self-Efficacy in Domestic Violence Cases*. Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Full Text. [https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/91526/3/Colasanto\\_Marlena\\_201811\\_MA\\_thesis.pdf](https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/91526/3/Colasanto_Marlena_201811_MA_thesis.pdf)

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