



The Florida Senate

Interim Project Report 2001-008

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Committee on Children and Families

Senator Mario Diaz-Balart, Chairman

PROTECTING THE CHILD AND ADULT VICTIM WHERE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE EXISTS

SUMMARY

Existing research reveals that between 45 and 70 percent of children exposed to domestic violence are also victims of physical abuse and as many as 40 percent of child victims of physical abuse are also exposed to domestic violence. Research is also increasingly demonstrating that domestic violence can have adverse effects on children's physical, cognitive, emotional and social development. The outcome of this research has prompted states to give greater attention to the effect of domestic violence on children and to examine ways to best intervene and protect these children. Protecting the child must remain the priority. However, recognizing that family safety is essential to the child's safety and that the dynamics of domestic violence often influence the actions of the parents, the system and interventions can drive the way child protection and other systems intervene to protect the child.

In an effort to determine how Florida can further promote the safety and well-being of both the child and non-abusing battered parent as an option to protecting just the child, staff gathered information from a variety of sources including a survey and workshop of key stakeholders, literature review, site visits, review of child abuse cases, and examination of other state laws, policies, and practices.

Evident from this examination is the need for a comprehensive response to domestic violence and its impact on children as well as the emergence of common core components of an effective child protection response to domestic violence. Building such a system is a continuous effort, one that Florida has already begun to address. Recommendations for the next steps of this process focused on domestic violence training for child protection related staff and management, facilitating the application of the domestic violence training in daily practice, providing more formal direction to the protective investigation process relative to families where

domestic violence exists, examining policies relative to failure to protect, improving participation in and compliance with the batterer's intervention program, and creating community interventions for families at risk of child abuse where domestic violence exists.

BACKGROUND

State child protection systems, which are required by federal law to receive and respond to reports of child abuse, focus on the risk of harm to the child and the ability of the parent to protect the child in its determination of what, if any, child protection intervention is necessary to protect the child. For families reported for child abuse where there is domestic violence this perspective has not historically considered the risk of harm to the battered parent, how domestic violence may affect the parent's protection of the child, nor the potential for the battered parent to protect the child with assistance and support. Often the ramifications for families where there is domestic violence who are involved with the child protection system include blaming the battered parent for failing to protect the child when a lack of resources and concern for safety may have prevented actions normally expected and removal of the child from the home when services and supports may have enabled the battered parent to provide a safe home for the child.

Two recent developments have prompted an intensified desire and mandate to intervene with these families to protect the child from harm. First, the principles and requirements of the federal Adoptions and Safe Families Act of 1997, which have been incorporated into Florida law, strengthened the emphasis on the safety and best interest of the child. While still maintaining support for the family, this was a policy shift away from the primary goal of family preservation and will increase the likelihood of removing the child who is believed to be at risk of harm in the home.

Second, research that substantiates the risk posed to children as a result of domestic violence is growing. Children in homes where there is domestic violence have been found to be at increased risk of being physically abused. In a national survey of 6,000 American families, researchers found that 50 percent of the men who frequently assaulted their wives also frequently abused their children (Strass & Gelles, 1996). The rate of child abuse by mothers whose husbands had assaulted them was found by researchers to be at least double that of mothers who had not been assaulted (Ganley & Schechter, 1996). Domestic violence also can have an adverse effect on children's physical, cognitive, emotional and social development. Studies found that children exposed to domestic violence experience more problems with behaviors, such as aggression, conduct problems, depression, suicidal behaviors, anxiety, and low self-esteem; impaired ability to concentrate; difficulty in school work; and significantly lower scores on measures of verbal, motor, and cognitive skills (Fantazzo & Mohr, 1999).

The domestic violence system evolved simultaneously but separately from the child protection system to address the needs of battered women and historically had not dealt with the needs of the children. The different goals and priorities but often common families between these systems have focused attention on the effect of these differences in accomplishing the respective goals. This tension has created long-standing barriers to collaboration in assisting these families.

While there is support that the demonstrated risk of physical or psychological harm to children in families where there is domestic violence necessitates child protection intervention, there is also concern that the current direction of child protection intervention is dissuading battered women from seeking services for fear of losing their children. The problem is how to both protect the children and facilitate battered parents' ability to provide a safe home for themselves and their children. As a result, questions are being raised as to whether there is a more effective child protection approach for families where there is domestic violence.

The current statutory framework for Florida's child protection system is set forth in ch. 39 F.S., with a series of administrative rules and operating procedures that drive the application of these laws in practice. Defining when a child has been abused or neglected due to domestic violence and when a parent has done everything possible to protect the child when domestic violence is involved determines how and when child protection intervenes with families where there is

domestic violence. Florida's definition of child abuse, neglect and harm, as it relates to these aspects, provides that harm to a child's health or welfare can occur when there is a failure to protect the child from inflicted physical, mental, or sexual injury caused by the acts of another (s. 39.01 (30)(j), F.S.), or there is violent behavior that demonstrates a wanton disregard for the presence of a child and could reasonably result in serious injury to the child (s. 39.01 (30)(i), F.S.). The operating procedures guide how the definitions of child abuse, neglect, and harm are applied through the establishment of a series of maltreatment allegations. Sections 39.01 (30)(i) and (j), F.S., are applied as "failure to protect the child" and "family violence threatens the child" maltreatment allegations.

Any person who knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been abused or neglected by a parent or other designated person is required to report the maltreatment (s. 39.201(1), F.S.). The designated person (or perpetrator) alleged to have caused or inflicted the abuse determines whether the abuse will fall within the jurisdiction of Florida's child protection laws. The definition of "caregiver" in s. 39.01 (10), F.S., and instructions relative to the "alleged perpetrator" in s. 10.002(9)(d) of Administrative Rule 65C-10 on Child Protection Investigations, provide a wide scope with which to capture the perpetrator within these laws and can include the domestic violence perpetrator who is often not living in the home.

An initial child safety assessment is completed in all investigations and used as a guide to determine the safety of the child. This assessment contains factors that are particularly relevant to examining the risk to the child in situations where there is domestic violence, including history of domestic violence as a victim or perpetrator and a pattern of continuing, escalating or increasing frequency of incidents.

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) has had a 2-day training on domestic violence in place for at least 3 years for its new protective investigators, protective service counselors, foster care counselors, adoption counselors, and protective investigative supervisors.

Section 39.301(8)(b), F.S., requires that a petition for dependency be filed in all cases classified by the DCF as high risk. Domestic violence is an identified factor that DCF may consider in determining whether a case is high risk.

When child abuse is alleged, services to stabilize the home environment, such as medical care, homemaker

service, day care, and protective supervision, can be offered for voluntary acceptance by the parents if the protective investigation determines that such services are needed for immediate or long-term protection (s. 39.301 (12), F.S.). These services can also be provided to parents through court ordered protective services to either stabilize the home or reunite the parent(s) with the child. When domestic violence exists, parents can be referred for domestic violence services or the batterer's intervention program.

There are a number of additional statutory provisions that impact child protection intervention with families where domestic violence exists. Children who have been abused, neglected, or exposed to domestic violence can be referred for children's mental health services for services and treatment. Section 394.493, F.S., specifies the children targeted for mental health services funded through the public mental health system as children and adolescents who are experiencing an acute mental or emotional crisis, who have a serious emotional disturbance or mental illness, who have an emotional disturbance, and who are at risk of emotional disturbance.

Certified Domestic Violence Centers offer a range of services to assist battered victims keep themselves and their children safe and are certified pursuant to s. 39.905, F.S. There are 38 certified Domestic Violence Centers in the state, each offering at a minimum the following services: emergency shelter, counseling, 24-hour hotline, information and referral, case management, assessment and referral of resident children (including screening for child abuse and an assessment of risk), and safety planning.

Injunctions for protection to remove an abuser from the home where domestic violence or child abuse exists can be obtained in two different ways. Section 741.30, F.S., provides for any persons who are victims of domestic violence or believe themselves to be in imminent danger of domestic violence to request an injunction for protection against domestic violence. Section 39.504, F.S., allows DCF, law enforcement, state attorney, or other responsible persons to request an injunction from the court to prevent any act of child abuse.

Domestic violence perpetrators can be required to participate in the batterer's intervention program under three conditions: the person is found guilty of, has had adjudication withheld on, or has pled nolo contendere to a crime of domestic violence (s. 741.281, F.S.); the respondent in an injunction for protection against domestic violence has violated the injunction (s. 741.31,

F.S.); or the respondent is ordered by the court to participate as part of the injunction for protection against domestic violence (s. 741.30, F.S.). The Department of Corrections is vested with the responsibility of certifying and monitoring the batterer's intervention programs, pursuant to ss. 741.32 and 741.325, F.S.

The Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence (FCADV)/DCF Task Force has been meeting to discuss emerging issues in the overlap between the child abuse and domestic violence systems since 1998. Their most recent success was the development of a model Interagency Working Agreement to be used in each of the districts between DCF or community based providers and the certified domestic violence centers to develop partnerships for serving these families. Implementation of this agreement in the districts will be initiated in the Fall 2000.

Florida has taken steps to begin recognizing how the dynamics of domestic violence often influence the actions of the parent. However, examination of this state's practices, other states' strategies, and innovative initiatives can identify how this state can further promote the safety of both the child and battered parent in its child protection investigations and interventions.

METHODOLOGY

In completing this project, staff obtained information from a number of sources, including the following: a survey of key stakeholders at the state level and in four geographic regions of the state on issues and potential solutions (with 39 percent or 42 of the 107 surveys completed and returned); examination of child abuse report data with the maltreatment allegation of "family violence threatens child"; review of 30 abuse report case files where family violence was alleged; examination of laws for Massachusetts, Michigan, California, South Dakota, Kentucky, and Alaska and interviews with staff regarding policies and practices; review of literature on the overlap between domestic violence and child abuse; a workshop with state level key stakeholders; and discussions and site visits regarding innovative initiatives in this area.

FINDINGS

The literature clearly demonstrates the strong overlap between child abuse and domestic violence, as well as the higher risk of abuse children exposed to domestic violence face. In recent studies, the estimated number of children who have witnessed domestic violence have

ranged from 3.3 million to 10 million per year in the United States (Davidson, 1994). Indications of the multiple issues facing many families involved in domestic violence, including the co-occurrence of child abuse, is reflected in Florida's child abuse reports and records. Data from child abuse reports in two DCF districts where some form of family violence was alleged revealed that 64 percent of the cases contained not only a family violence allegation, but also a physical or sexual type of child maltreatment allegation. In only 26 percent of the cases from these two districts being investigated for family violence was this the sole maltreatment allegation. Also, review of child abuse investigation records by staff revealed the complexity of the family circumstances with issues such as substance abuse, mental health, and parenting skills compounding the problem of domestic violence. For example, while not considered a cause of domestic violence, substance abuse can increase the lethality of the violence or can be a symptom of the battered parent's victimization.

However, there is growing attention to assisting the adult victims in providing a safe home for themselves and their children as a mechanism for protecting the child. This focus is based on the recognition that the safety of the non-abusing parent is linked with the safety of the child and, therefore, that the on-going problem of domestic violence in the home needs to be addressed in addition to the immediate risk posed by the domestic violence.

The survey of key stakeholders ascertained the perspectives of the various systems involved with the families in the child protection system where domestic violence exists. While these systems varied in their focus and philosophies, the responses reflected a somewhat surprising degree of consistency with respect to understanding the need for and value of services for children and adult victims and need for collaboration. The predominant role that respondents felt the child protection system should have in protecting the adult was offering more assistance to the adult victim and family.

The review of the literature and examination of several states' child protection laws, policies and practices consistently reflected the need for a comprehensive response to domestic violence and its impact on children and revealed common core components for an effective child protection intervention where domestic violence exists.

Understanding the Dynamics of Domestic Violence

Learning and understanding the dynamics of domestic violence, the impact of domestic violence on the children

and family, and implications of domestic violence in child protection intervention are intrinsic to effectively protecting the child and non-abusing parent and addressing the problem of domestic violence. Michigan, Massachusetts, California, and Kentucky all offer statewide training on domestic violence to at least their child protection staff and some to a much broader range of professionals. Massachusetts targeted its training to just the caseworkers and found that training of the supervisors and managers in the child protection system was also needed in order to create the system changes to more effectively address domestic violence.

In Florida, only new staff receive training on domestic violence as part of their certification process. While planned for full implementation in the fall, existing staff have not yet received the training and management level staff are not being trained. Conversely, domestic violence center staff currently receive only minimal training on child abuse and the child protection system.

Massachusetts has placed domestic violence specialists in their child protection units to provide case consultation and training to the social workers investigating child abuse reports and in many instances to work directly with the battered victims and their children along side the social workers. A similar initiative has been piloted in Florida where a designated protective investigator or supervisor in each protective investigative unit of DCF's District 4 has received more intensive domestic violence training and shadowed domestic violence center staff and is providing domestic violence consultation to the other protective investigators. This on-going technical assistance provided to staff investigating child abuse in Massachusetts and at Florida's DCF District 4 reinforces the domestic violence training and helps ensure its application in all components of the investigation process. Applying a solid understanding of domestic violence to the child protection system is the foundation for more accurately determining when the battered parent is part of the solution to protecting the child versus part of the child abuse problem and when removal of the child is and is not necessary.

Assisting Families Where There is Domestic Violence to Make Their Children and Family Safe

There are common aspects identified in the literature and by other states in assisting families where there is domestic violence within the child protection system. These aspects include identifying whether domestic violence exists; understanding the forms of domestic violence that are occurring; ascertaining the risks posed to the child and adult victim; determining actions the adult victim has taken to seek help and protect the child;

and carefully assessing who is the primary aggressor, the parent's ability to protect the child and who is the perpetrator.

Massachusetts has established a comprehensive domestic violence protocol, which includes screening for domestic violence, assessing the level of risk to the children, determining the non-abusing parent's history of seeking help, assessing the dangerousness of the offender, and planning for interventions when domestic violence exists. Michigan has included questions to identify domestic violence in their risk and safety assessments. Kentucky reported that in its efforts to address both the risk and problem of domestic violence, the most important component was looking carefully at who is the perpetrator. They also noted that assessing carefully the non-abusing parent's willingness and ability to protect the child within the context of the domestic violence changes how the worker viewed the potential for the family and the interventions.

In the sample of Florida child abuse investigation records reviewed by staff, there was a consistent effort to thoroughly examine all individuals involved in the life of the children which better identifies domestic violence perpetrators not living in the home, to conduct criminal histories which identifies if there have been charges or injunctions relative to domestic violence, and to fully explore the family and community supports available. There were also, however, missed opportunities to address the actual problem of domestic violence as it relates to the child's on-going safety. There were a number of cases, primarily cases for which protective services were not court ordered, where domestic violence potentially existed but referrals for domestic violence services were not made. While not currently required of protective investigators, connecting families with domestic violence services, where there is any potential for domestic violence in the home, may assist the family to prevent the escalation of this violence.

In addition, minimal information regarding domestic violence in the household beyond the actual domestic violence event was contained in the records, indicating that more could have been learned about the circumstances and history of this domestic violence problem for these families, including the battered parents' help-seeking activities. The non-abusing parents ability or failure to protect their children appears to be considered in three aspects of Florida's abuse reporting and investigation process: whether there is maltreatment to the child as a result of a parent's failure to protect the child, whether a parent is a perpetrator based on the parent's failure to protect their child, and whether the

parent is able and willing to protect the child in determining the disposition of the case and how to keep the child safe. In the child abuse data reports reviewed for the two Florida DCF districts where there was an allegation of "family violence threatens the child," only 2.9 percent of these reports included the maltreatment allegation of "failure to protect." A careful examination of the circumstances of the case, including the parent's help-seeking activities, is an important component of determining a parent's ability or failure to protect the child. This process is already included in DCF's operating procedures in considering the maltreatment allegation of "failure to protect" and should be incorporated as a process in all other aspects of the investigator's consideration of a parent's ability or failure to protect the child, as it relates to domestic violence.

In addition, at the time the abuse report is made to the hotline, the alleged perpetrator is identified by the hotline counselor to determine whether the abuse falls within the jurisdiction of Florida's child protection laws and to direct the investigator's attention to key aspects of the report. Often at the time of the report, both the actual abuser (parent or non-parent) is identified as well as a parent for failure to protect the child. This identification of a parent as an alleged perpetrator due to failure to protect may be setting the tone and direction for the investigation toward the parent's failure or inability to protect the child. In an effort to minimize blaming the adult victim and to recognize the potential of the family to protect the child, the value of this identification should be examined by the department.

Florida's training on domestic violence includes the necessity for and how workers should perform these core aspects of the investigation, assessment, and service planning. The challenge is incorporating this understanding and practice into each of the cases encountered by the protective investigator. While Massachusetts had extensive protocols for their workers to follow, they felt policies were also necessary to provide more formal direction and create system change.

Strategies and Services for Assisting the Battered Parents to Provide a Safe Home for Their Children and Themselves

As the different states examined have made changes to their systems, laws, policies, or practices in response to dealing with the overlap between child abuse and domestic violence, the desire to identify and intervene with children who are in families where domestic violence exists is a common theme. Historically, child protective investigators have had few productive interventions available to them to assist families.

Massachusetts has been examining some of the issues surrounding when child protection should intervene and decided that many families where children are witnessing domestic violence should be served informally through community services and supports. A continuum of responses was considered needed from prevention of family violence to community services and supports to child protection intervention where there is higher risk of harm.

Community services and supports can provide options to child protective investigators, both as alternatives to and components of court ordered protective services. Alaska has specifically identified “assistance with domestic violence” in its definition of family support services. Michigan’s Family First program, which offers families intensive, short-term crisis intervention and family education services in their homes, is provided not only in every county but also through 11 domestic violence shelters. These Families First programs targeting families where there is domestic violence have experienced an almost 96 percent success rate of the families remaining intact over a 3 to 12 month period after being served by the program.

In Florida, with funding from the U.S. Department of Justice, Violence Against Women Office, the Dependency Court Intervention Project for Family Violence in Miami provides domestic violence advocates to families where domestic violence is identified by the protective investigators. The families receiving this service had no additional child abuse hotline calls as of the May 1, 2000 report and the rate of removal of children was 2.5 percent compared with an agency countywide child removal rate of approximately 10 percent. Jacksonville’s Community Partnership for Protection of Children is piloting a comprehensive approach to preventing and responding to family violence and abuse as part of an Edna McConnell Clark Foundation initiative. A network of neighborhood and community supports was built and the *Individualized Course of Action* process was used for assessing the family’s situations and determining needed interventions. This process utilizes family team conferences and incorporates community support agreements to formalize the support to the family and report further danger of the child to the department. The use of the *Individualized Course of Action* will be expanded and DCF will be replicating this prevention effort in designated sites in four additional districts.

Sixty-seven percent of the respondents to the key stakeholders survey felt some change was needed to assist the non-abusive adult victim, with virtually all of

these responses identifying the need for more supports. The supports consistently identified included economic assistance, shelter, housing, counseling, information/education, and services for children. A study entitled *Florida’s Domestic Violence Needs Assessment for 2000*, conducted by the Institute for Family Violence Studies at Florida State University, found that permanent and transitional housing, along with mental health care and transportation, were the highest level and most important unmet needs of women experiencing domestic violence.

Holding the Batterer Accountable for Stopping the Violent Behavior

An important goal in intervening with families in the child protection system where domestic violence exists is holding the domestic violence perpetrator responsible for stopping the abusive behavior. Strategies states can use to hold the domestic violence perpetrator accountable include substantiating cases on the domestic violence perpetrator for the abuse, neglect, threatened harm and exposure of children to domestic violence; substantiating cases against the non-residing perpetrators; increasing the powers of the dependency courts to order a domestic violence perpetrator out of the home or to issue other appropriate orders; enabling criminal charges to be filed against the domestic violence perpetrator; and ordering domestic violence perpetrators to attend a batterer’s intervention program and monitoring their progress. (Carter & Schechter, 1997)

While a majority of the respondents to the key stakeholders survey indicated that adequate legal options exist for removing the abuser or requiring the abuser to take certain actions that would remove the risk of domestic violence in the home, the enforcement of current laws and injunctions for protection was consistently identified as a problem to accomplishing this goal. Also, virtually all of the responses from domestic violence and judicial professional groups reported that the s. 39.504, F.S., injunction was not an adequate tool to remove the abuser when domestic violence exists, with several respondents noting a lack of familiarity with this tool.

For individuals ordered to participate in the batterer’s intervention program as a result of a criminal offense, the probation officer provides a vehicle for ensuring attendance and participation. However, for those persons ordered to participate as a provision of the injunction for protection, there is not a mechanism that enables statewide follow-through and a consistent application of penalty for non-participation and violation of the injunction. Parents who are the domestic violence

perpetrators can be ordered to participate in the batterer's intervention program by the dependency court judge as part of the case plan requirements when a petition for dependency has been entered pursuant to ch. 39, F.S. Parents of children who are domestic violence perpetrators for whom a petition for dependency has been entered pursuant to ch. 39, F.S., can be ordered to participate in the batterer's intervention program by the dependency court judge as part of the case plan requirements. However, often the domestic violence perpetrator is not the parent or legal custodian, and with the exception of removing an abuser from the home to prevent an act of child abuse pursuant to s. 39.504, F.S., the dependency court has no authority to impose any required action upon the domestic violence perpetrator, including participating in the batterer's intervention program.

Mitigating the Impact of Family Violence on the Children

Historically, there has been a widely held assumption that very young children are not affected by family violence because they are too young to know or remember what has happened, a notion which studies on the exposure to violence are beginning to dispute. For example, infants exposed to violence may not develop the necessary attachments to their parents or caretakers. Preschool children may regress developmentally and suffer sleep disturbances. (Jaffe & Sudermann, 1995)

The PREVENT initiative of Miami's Dependency Court Intervention Program for Family Violence provides comprehensive assessments for young children adjudicated dependent between the ages of 12 and 60 months, to both help these children recover from the family violence and to assist the court in permanency and treatment planning for the children. The initial findings from this program have indicated that more than 70 percent of the children evaluated show signs of serious developmental delay, such as inability to solve problems, speak, or understand spoken language, and/or emotional difficulty. These findings are evidence that children who have been maltreated, including both children who have been abused or exposed to domestic violence, are in need of early intervention services but are going undetected. It also suggests that children in families reported for child abuse or neglect form a pool of children who are potentially at higher risk for problems and delays in a number of child functioning and development areas that increase the likelihood of future school failure, need for special education, violent criminal behavior, and abusive parenting.

In addition, a majority of the respondents to the key stakeholders survey indicated that interventions targeting the children's abuse or exposure to domestic violence were either inadequate or not available. This is consistent with the respondents in *Florida's Domestic Violence Needs Assessment for 2000* who identified mental health care for children as the highest unmet need for children.

During the 2000 legislative session, SB 1264 was adopted which created a commission to study how Florida can better identify and effectively serve young children with or at high risk of mental disorders or developmental delays with the goal of minimizing the adverse effects of those delays in these children. This study offers an opportunity to begin exploring how to intervene with these children earlier and more effectively.

Building Collaboration Between Child Protection and Domestic Violence Systems

Central to creating effective child protection intervention where domestic violence exists is building a partnership between the child protection and domestic violence systems. This collaboration building has been a high priority for Florida. The establishment of the FCADV/DCF Task Force and development of the model Interagency Working Agreement offer both state level and community based mechanisms to focus on the common ground between the systems.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Building an effective child protection system for families where domestic violence exists is a continuous effort. Below are recommendations for the next steps in this process:

- Direct DCF to fully implement the training on domestic violence for all existing protective investigators, protective investigative supervisors, foster care counselors, adoption counselors, and protective service counselors, and provide the training to all Operations Program Administrators by December 31, 2001. Require training on child abuse of all domestic violence center staff. Implement the initial training of existing child protection and domestic violence staff as a joint training.
- Direct DCF, in conjunction with other entities, to identify other professions and staff involved with families where there is domestic violence in the child protection system who should receive training on domestic violence and develop recommendations for implementing training for each profession. At a

minimum, the Child Protection Teams, Child Welfare Legal Services, DCF's district attorneys, and hotline staff are to be considered.

- Pilot the use of domestic violence consultants, who would receive a higher level of compensation, in designated DCF protective investigative units to reinforce and assist with the application of the domestic violence training.
- Direct DCF to amend administrative rules to provide formal direction to the protective investigation process relative to families where domestic violence exists to address the following: consideration of the adult victim's attempts at help-seeking and other actions to protect the child in determination of the parent's ability or failure to protect the child; assessment of the current danger of domestic violence to the adult victim and provisions or referrals for the adult victim for the development of a safety plan for themselves; and referrals for adult victims to domestic violence assessment and services when any domestic violence potentially exists.
- Direct DCF, in collaboration with other entities, to examine the process of identifying non-abusing parents as alleged perpetrators due to failure to protect at the time the child abuse report is received, its impact on the investigations, and the value of such identification to the abuse reporting and investigative process.
- Direct DCF to incorporate into its training on the child safety assessment, instructions on utilizing s. 39.504, F.S., injunction to remove the domestic

violence perpetrator when determined, in collaboration with the non-abusing parent, to be a mechanism to protect the child.

- Strengthen statutory provisions to require the batterer's intervention program to report to the court for the court record the batterer's enrollment and completion of the program. Condition a respondent's request for dissolution of an injunction upon his or her completion of the batterer's intervention program.
- Require that an examination be conducted to identify individuals who should be required to participate in the batterer's intervention program and the current mechanisms for monitoring completion of the program, and develop recommendations for requiring participation of the identified individuals and for ensuring compliance.
- Pilot the development of innovative community interventions to assist families where domestic violence is in the home but for whom child protection intervention is determined not the most appropriate intervention, in providing themselves and their children with safe homes without domestic violence. Domestic violence centers and DCF districts entering into the Interagency Working Agreements would collaboratively identify effective interventions, with an emphasis on maximizing the utilization of existing services.

COMMITTEE(S) INVOLVED IN REPORT (*Contact first committee for more information.*)

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Committee on Judiciary and Committee on Fiscal Policy

MEMBER OVERSIGHT

Senator Mandy Dawson