

EL PASO COUNTY AWARDED \$1.75 MILLION TO ADDRESS THE CO-OCCURRENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND CHILD MALTREATMENT: The Greenbook Grant

CONTEXT

Although two decades of research have confirmed that adults and children often are victimized in the same family, little was made of this finding until recently. For years, most communities have treated the abuse of a woman and the maltreatment of a child in the same family as separate phenomena having little to do with each other. Now, however, communities are asked to confront a new and compelling set of facts: (1) adult domestic violence (DV) and child maltreatment (CM) often occur together and (2) new responses are required of everyone, if violence within families is to stop. To date, community institutions and families have been offered few resources and tools to resolve the complex issues raised by overlapping domestic violence and child maltreatment in a family.

Communities and researchers have come to question the appropriateness of continually dealing with this dual and integrated problem in a disintegrated fashion. To this end, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges initiated a project to develop practice and policy guidelines related to the intersection of DV/CM. "*Effective Interventions in Domestic Violence and Child Maltreatment Cases: Guidelines for Policy and Practice*," known simply as the "**Greenbook**," was the product of this project and has become the foundation for the federally funded initiative. Its recommendations focus on three primary systems: the child protection system, the network of community-based domestic violence programs, and the juvenile or trial courts, which have jurisdiction over child maltreatment cases. Many other systems, including law enforcement and children's advocacy agencies, play an active role in designing innovative strategies that will offer a more comprehensive set of responses to eliminate or decrease the enormous risks that individual battered mothers, caseworkers, domestic violence advocates and judges must take on behalf of children.

The bedrock principle upon which all of the Greenbook recommendations are based is:

- Safety, well being, and stability for all victims of family violence
- Children should remain in the care of their non-offending parent(s)
- Create a community service system with many points of entry
- Hold DV offenders accountable for their violence against their partners and children

Sixteen organizations and Family Representatives (consumers who have experienced a component of the 'system') from El Paso County convened to become one of six demonstration sites to implement the Greenbook principles. The grant provides \$350,000 per year for five years starting in December 2000. Our award is linked to much of the great and nationally-recognized work done to date (e.g. DVERT), the strong foundation of collaboration in our community, and the creative use of TANF (public assistance) funds initiated by El Paso County Department of Human Services leadership.

DESCRIPTION OF OUR PROGRAM:

In writing our application, we tried to build on our past successes, existing relationships and structures while integrating as many of the Greenbook principles as possible. Our consortium aims to provide proactive services and supports to families dealing with the co-occurrence of DV/CM so as to minimize their system involvement. Five strategies that the consortium has identified to meet the goals are:

- Inclusion of Family Experts (consumers who identify as either formerly battered women or former offenders) in the decision-making process;
- Improve screening and assessment to include the co-occurrence of DV/CM in both child welfare and domestic violence agencies;

- Increase the number of safety and service plans developed for both adult and child victims; Incorporate DV/CM best practices into court's decision-making and coordinated court response; and
- Assess cultural competency within the Greenbook partner agencies and design strategies to enhance strengths, as well as close barriers to service.

The Consortium developed small work groups to design, test, implement and evaluate our locally developed strategies. No single approach stands alone; rather, each supports and reinforces the others. Each has a set of associated goals. We believe that the following concepts will help provide *proactive* services and supports to battered women and their children:

Service Access & Resource Development Committee

- Revise intake forms from primary systems (i.e. DHS, Law Enforcement and T·E·S·S·A) to better screen for the co-occurrence;
- Differential response for referrals and action, tailored to individual families needs:
 - Hire a DV Advocate/System's Analyst to be housed within Child Protection Services to coordinate the Institutional Safety and Accountability Audit and the development of written DV/CM guidelines for the Department of Human Services
 - Expand CASA's Supervised Exchange and Visitation Program
 - Create a Frontline Worker Committee to facilitate discussions between advocates, caseworkers and other direct service workers
- Create a DV/CM community resource manual for frontline workers
- Ongoing training on the myths/truths/best practices of DV/CM to the broader community
- Modify organizational policies and procedures to reflect the safety needs of battered women and their children
- **The Judicial System (Bench/Bar/Probation): Integration, Education & Capacity Building**
 - More integrated approach to DV/CM within the Courts – increased communication of the Judicial System, as well as with DHS caseworkers:
 - Hire a Legal Aid attorney to represent more women in the legal system
 - Hire a Court Case Coordinator to integrate information between the courts and act as a resource and referral person in the courthouse
 - Hire a Domestic Violence Case Monitor to ensure compliance with court orders
 - On-going training on the myths/truths/best practices of DV/CM for the Bench, District Attorney's Office, Office of the Guardian ad Litem, Probation, Office of the County Attorney, and Respondent Counsel
 - Assess and re-design the current mediation process by incorporating better screening instruments and ongoing training for all mediators.
- **Cultural Competency and Capacity Building**
 - Define Cultural Competency on a system/ individual - level
 - Conduct organizational self-assessment of current cultural competency practices in the Greenbook partner agencies to identify strengths and gaps
 - Design strategies to address present gaps and enhance system strengths
 - Contract with the Asian Pacific Development Center to reach out to Asian/Pacific Islander communities
 - Conduct cultural competency-related trainings to the Greenbook community

The El Paso County Greenbook initiative will be funded through November 2006.