



## FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI

Issue 23-07

Date: 04/18/23

### **STRENGTHENING ASSESSMENTS AND INTERVENTIONS FOR INFANTS/TODDLERS EXPOSED TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE/INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE**

Investigating Domestic Violence/Intimate Partner Violence (DV/IPV) is a complex matter. Factors such as family dynamics, severity of abuse, and frequency of abuse increase the level of difficulty when staff conduct assessments and work to formulate safety interventions. Assessing instances of DV/IPV and connecting the clues revealed during an investigation and throughout the life of a case, can be challenging and are further complicated when infants and toddlers (ages 0-5) are involved.

It is important to remember the “cycle of violence” has three distinct phases:

1. Tension-Building Phase
2. Acute or Crisis Phase
3. Calm or Honeymoon Phases

It is also important to note that, while these are very distinct phases of DV/IPV, the pattern of DV/IPV is not linear. Staff are encouraged to review the [Power and Control Wheel](#) as a resource to help deepen their understanding of DV/IPV.

Without intervention, the frequency and severity of the abuse tends to increase over time. Understanding and identifying which phase of the cycle applies to each individual, and may help staff formulate needed safeguards. When interventions, such as [Community-based resources](#) (e.g., Prevention and Aftercare, Family Preservation, Foster Family Agencies, Alternative Response Services, and Partnerships For Families), have been identified and agreed to by a family, a referral to the appropriate service is to be made as soon as possible as early linkage to these interventions will assist in assessing a family’s readiness for change and/or needed support.

When integrating and analyzing the factors impacting a family affected by past or current DV/IPV, staff may want to consider further consultation with an SCSW, ARA, Coach Developer, and/or the Department of Mental Health, particularly when the following conditions exist:

- The household includes vulnerable children (aged 0-5-years-old).
- A historical pattern of DV/IPV is disclosed or is revealed during an investigation or at any time during the life of a case. This may include, but is not limited to:
  - Prior instances of DV/IPV, including those that occurred during prior relationships as well as any arrests for violent crimes.
- A parent/caregiver has/had mental health struggles (A diagnosis not required.)
  - Pay close attention to prior/current threats to harm self or others as well as reports of post-partum depression.

If you have any questions regarding this release, please e-mail your question to:

[Policy@dcsf.lacounty.gov](mailto:Policy@dcsf.lacounty.gov)

*(right click to open footer section and access link)*



## FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI

Issue 23-07

Date: 04/18/23

If there are delays in linkage to a [Family Preservation Assessment and/or prevention services](#), or if DCFS learns a family declined prevention services, consider further consultation with an SCSW, ARA, Coach Developer to determine next steps/other possible interventions to ensure child safety. Interventions to consider may include:

- Bringing social connections together to discuss what actions family and/or friends will take to keep the children safe. Remember social connections (e.g., family, friends, etc.) can also be utilized as [protective actions to address identified worries](#), even when those worries do not rise to the level of further DCFS involvement. Social Connections can also assist families in taking steps to access services that would help them safely care for their children and reduce the likelihood of future maltreatment.
  - Staff are reminded to [document](#) how families will utilize their supports to address the worries.
- Assesses whether the parent(s) are utilizing the social connections to demonstrate behavior changes that mitigate safety worries, such as telling a support about the violence, moving into a relative's home who is aware of the violence or [obtaining a restraining order](#) with an understanding of the impact of violence on their child's well-being.
  - Staff are reminded that a restraining order can assist in keeping the family safe, but does not replace a safety plan.
  - DCFS should never require a parent/caregiver to obtain a restraining order.
  - A parent/caregiver's choice or inability to [obtain a restraining order](#) should not be considered as a factor in determining whether a parent acted appropriately to protect a child from DV/IPV
- If worries are not mitigated, consider voluntary services or court intervention ([which may or may not include removal](#)) to reduce the likelihood the children will be exposed to future violence (abuse or neglect).
  - Consider consultation with an SCSW, ARA, RA and/or County Counsel.

If you have any questions regarding this release, please e-mail your question to:

[Policy@dcsf.lacounty.gov](mailto:Policy@dcsf.lacounty.gov)

*(right click to open footer section and access link)*