Supporting Children Exposed to Domestic Violence:
A Facilitator’s Guide to Creating a Coordinated Response in Elementary Schools
Acknowledgments

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Preface

The effects of domestic violence on elementary school children can be devastating. Children exposed to domestic violence can be impacted emotionally, physically, and psychologically. Domestic violence can negatively influence students’ ability to learn effectively and be positive participants in the classroom. Schools, however, can be a safer place for these children and can provide needed support.

A coordinated, well-planned approach to responding to students exposed to domestic violence—where everyone within the school and community is clear on roles and responsibilities—can help ensure that children and families get the help they need.

The goal of this guide, as part of the National Law Enforcement Museum’s Domestic Violence Awareness Program (DVAP), is to describe how a school-based facilitator can lead an elementary school community through a collaborative planning process to develop and implement a customized plan for identifying and supporting students exposed to domestic violence.

Most often a school administrator or mental health professional, the program facilitator can be any school staff member committed to this issue. Developing an effective, coordinated plan will require the participation, support, and active involvement of a range of school and community members.

This guide will help facilitators:

- Understand how domestic violence affects children and schools
- Understand the role schools can play in supporting children exposed to domestic violence as they work with law enforcement, domestic violence specialists, and other community partners
- Create a School-Community Leadership Team that will take the school through a planning process
- Develop partnerships with community agencies to work collaboratively
- Develop a customized, coordinated action plan (CAP), including a staff training plan, that outlines a school’s policies, protocols, and staff responsibilities for supporting its students exposed to domestic violence

To help facilitators, this guide also provides:

- Customizable forms and documents that can be used to develop a school’s CAP. These forms can be downloaded and customized at the DVAP Resource Website (www.LawEnforcementMuseum.org/DVAP).
- A resource section with an annotated list of resources on domestic violence prevention and the process of developing a CAP.
The companion DVAP Resource Website (www.LawEnforcementMuseum.org/DVAP) provides additional information, including:

- A list of local domestic violence resources for the metropolitan D.C. area
- A PowerPoint presentation template for training school staff

*Note:* This guide was written specifically for use by schools in the metropolitan D.C. area. However, the information provided can be applied to schools in other parts of the country as well.

*Note:* This guidebook is designed to help schools create a plan for supporting students exposed to domestic violence. Nothing in this guidebook should be considered legal advice. If you have questions about the law or need legal advice, please consult an attorney licensed to practice in your state.
Tragically, each year an estimated 1.3 million women in the United States are physically assaulted by an intimate partner (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 2007). This fact alone demonstrates the magnitude of the public safety problem that domestic violence presents for law enforcement. And every day, law enforcement officers play a pivotal role in trying to manage it. They are often the first contact for “violence-prone” families, provide a “free” service, are visible authority figures, and are often the only public agency able to provide assistance on a 24-hour basis. Although domestic violence is obviously a severe problem for those directly affected by it, many people do not realize that such calls take a heavy toll on responding law enforcement officers as well. The effects on officers are profound:

- Since 1855, almost 700 officers have lost their lives while responding to domestic disturbance calls in the United States.
- Among the number of officers feloniously killed between 2000 and 2009, 7 percent were killed during a domestic disturbance.
- Responding officers can take home stress, fear, and anxiety related to bearing witness to victims’ trauma.

—Federal Bureau of Investigation (2009)
—National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund (2011)

In this light, it is easy to see that domestic violence has been and will remain a critical issue for both law enforcement and for the public it serves. Part of the National Law Enforcement Museum’s mission is to tell the story of American law enforcement and contribute to a safer society, so there is a clear rationale for it to offer the DVAP. Ultimately, by empowering school professionals across the nation to support children who are exposed to domestic violence, the Museum hopes to help build communities that are free from domestic violence.

A major component of the DVAP, this guide can be downloaded online from the DVAP Resource Website (www.LawEnforcementMuseum.org/DVAP). This website includes additional related resources, downloadable forms, and Washington, D.C., area contacts.
I. Domestic Violence: Facts for Schools

Children’s Exposure to Domestic Violence

Each year approximately 7 to 14 million children witness assaults against a parent by an intimate partner (Edleson, Ellerton, Seagren, Schmidt, & Ambrose, 2007). Research has demonstrated that exposure to domestic violence, including hearing about the abuse after it has happened, may result in the same negative outcomes as experiencing violence directly.

Although the effects of exposure to domestic violence vary from child to child, children who grow up in homes where domestic violence occurs are more likely to:

- **Be violent themselves.** Research has shown links between exposure to domestic violence and increased bullying, increased emotional and behavioral problems, learning and imitating attitudes and actions of both parent figures, desensitization to violence, and cruelty to animals.
- **Become victims of abuse.** Children who live in households where abuse of their mother takes place are six times more likely to be abused themselves. In 2007 alone, an estimated 5.8 million children were involved in child abuse reports and allegations.
- **Have emotional and psychosomatic illness,** depression, and suicidal tendencies.
- **Experience traumatic stress reactions,** such as flashbacks, nightmares, bedwetting, intensified startle reactions, or constant worry about danger.
- **Have an ambivalent relationship with parents.** Affection for their parents may be mixed with resentment, disappointment, and fear.
- **Have a decreased sense of safety,** normalcy, and ability to cope with stress.
- **Have health problems in adolescence and adulthood,** including alcoholism, drug abuse, depression, obesity, and chronic adult diseases.

—Baker, Jaffe, & Ashbourne (2002)
—Illinois Family Violence Coordinating Councils (2009)
—U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (2009)
The Effects of Domestic Violence on Student Behavior in School

Children who are exposed to domestic violence may have serious difficulties at school. These difficulties may include behavioral problems, such as increased aggression and disciplinary problems, as well as emotional issues, such as decreased self-esteem and depression (Carter, Weithorn, & Behrman, 1999).

In addition, domestic violence may negatively impact a student’s ability to learn and contribute to a safe and positive classroom environment. These students may have a low capacity to get along with others, a limited ability to concentrate, and difficulty in connecting with others in the school, including other students and adults (Baker, Jaffe, & Ashbourne, 2002).

Importantly, students exposed to domestic violence may experience trouble with school work and may perform considerably worse in school than other students (UNICEF, 2006). They are also more likely to score significantly lower on tests of verbal, motor, and cognitive skills compared to the general student population (Fantuzzo & Mohr, 1999) and to be suspended and absent from school.

D.C. Metropolitan Area Statistics

- In 2009, 6,511 people were served at the two D.C. Domestic Violence Intake Centers (DVICs); 7 percent were pregnant.
- The number of children aged 12 and under who were served at D.C. DVICs tripled from 2008 to 2009.
- The number of teens aged 13 to 17 who were served at D.C. DVICs also tripled from 2008 to 2009.
- Between July 1, 2009, and June 20, 2010, 38 Maryland residents died as a result of domestic violence.
- The Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence received 1,468 helpline calls between July 2009 and June 2010, a 15 percent increase from the previous year.
- In 2009, more than 63,000 calls were made to domestic and sexual violence hotlines in Virginia, an 8 percent increase from the year before.
- A child was present during one in three domestic violence homicides in Virginia in 2008.
- Local domestic violence programs provided advocacy services to 4,178 children in 2009 in Virginia.

—DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence (2009)
—Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (2010)
(Kernic et al., 2002). Interestingly, some students may also respond by trying to be “perfect” students, attempting to please the adults in their life (Baker & Cunningham, 2005).

For more information about domestic violence, see Appendix A: Domestic Violence 101 and the Domestic Violence Resources section of Appendix B: Additional Resources.

“The most important protective resource to enable a child to cope with exposure to violence is a strong relationship with a competent, caring, positive adult.”

—Carter, Weithorn, & Behrman (1999)

What Schools Can Do

Schools can be a safe place for children exposed to domestic violence. Teachers and other school staff are often trusted, caring, positive adults in the lives of children, and are in the position to notice potential warning signs and take appropriate action to intervene. This guide describes the DVAP’s approach to addressing domestic violence in schools.

Schools have implemented a range of approaches to address domestic violence. Although prevention, education, and crisis response programs are not the focus of this guide, we encourage schools to consider how to incorporate prevention and crisis response approaches into their plans. Appendix C: School-Based Domestic Violence Prevention Approaches gives examples of some of the programs that have been implemented in schools to date, as well as ideas for how to create safe and supportive schools and classrooms.
II. Program Overview

This program focuses on intervention, whereby school staff are trained to recognize the signs that students may be exposed to domestic violence and to take appropriate steps to support them. The goal of this program is to identify students at risk and to connect them with appropriate supports and services to reduce or eliminate continued exposure to domestic violence situations.

This guide describes how a school-based facilitator can lead an elementary school community through a collaborative planning process to develop and implement a customized plan for identifying and supporting students exposed to domestic violence. This plan, a Coordinated Action Plan, or CAP, will outline staff roles and school policies and protocols for more effectively supporting students exposed to domestic violence.

The following describes key components of this approach.

Program Facilitator

Developing and implementing effective CAPs will require a strong facilitator who can lead a collaborative planning process within a school and with community partners. Most often, the facilitator will be a school administrator, school-based mental health professional, or other school staff member committed to this issue.

The facilitator must:

- Be able to act as a champion of this program
- Have the authority to enact change
- Have an understanding of the school culture and be able to work within it
- Have the skills necessary to motivate individuals and facilitate a collaborative planning process
- Have the ability to reach out to a range of school and community partners
- Have the time to follow through with the CAP development and implementation process

The program facilitator will have the important role of moving a group process forward to the goal of creating a CAP. Effectively facilitating this type of group process requires a someone who can build a team, create a sense of shared ownership, and work collaboratively with school personnel and community organizations.

Facilitation Skills: Developing Facilitative Leadership (http://www.ilj.org/publications/docs/Facilitation_Skills_Developing_Facilitative_Leadership.pdf) describes the role of a facilitator, tips for facilitators, effective communication skills, body language and facilitation, group process techniques, how to handle difficult team members, and personal attributes of the culturally competent facilitator. This document helps facilitators better understand the basics of group facilitation.

Appendix D: Program Facilitator Activity Checklist is a management tool that provides a framework for developing and implementing a CAP. This framework can be customized to meet a school’s individual...
planning needs and will guide the facilitator through the various tasks that must be accomplished to effectively complete the CAP. For more information on facilitation skills, please see Appendix B: Additional Resources.

**Building a School-Community Leadership Team**

A team made up of dedicated school-based personnel and knowledgeable community members will work together to create a plan that responds to the needs of the school and the students. Led by the program facilitator, this School-Community Leadership Team will steer this effort and take ownership of it. Building on the complementary skills, interests, and expertise of each team member will enhance the effectiveness of the planning process and the resulting program.

Section VI describes how to develop a team, whom to involve, tips for building an effective team, and working collaboratively.

**Collaboration with Community Partners**

Schools cannot support students exposed to domestic violence without the help of existing community resources. Ideally, all parties—school staff, teachers, counselors, law enforcement working in schools, as well as community members—will be included in developing policies and procedures. Encouraging the participation of a range of school and community members in a thoughtful planning process from the beginning will help ensure that different viewpoints are considered, needs are addressed, and necessary resources are available. Identifying which community partners should be at the table and building strong partnerships with them are central features of this program.

Section V describes the importance of creating partnerships, tips for working with community agencies, memoranda of understanding, and working with key community partners, including domestic violence advocacy organizations, law enforcement, and community mental health agencies.

**The CAP**

The cornerstone of this program will be a CAP that outlines staff responsibilities and policies and protocols for effectively supporting students exposed to domestic violence. A school’s approach to intervening in cases where a child is suspected of being exposed to domestic violence is complex. The child’s physical and mental health; whether child abuse is suspected; cultural differences; and the availability of local resources all factor into decisions about the appropriate next steps. Developing an organized, well-thought out, coordinated plan for considering and addressing all of these related issues can help ensure that the best decisions are made to support students.

Sections III, VI, and VII describe the CAP:

- **Section III** describes the key components of the CAP and defines milestones for creating it.
- **Section VI** describes how to develop a process for identifying, supporting, and referring students, including the development of a staff roles flow chart, the roles of key school staff, and Individual Action Plans.
- **Section VII** describes key policy and protocol issues to consider when developing the plan, including mandated reporting, crisis response, making outside referrals, record-keeping, and safety planning.
Training School Staff

For the CAP to be effective, staff need to be trained to understand new policies and procedures for addressing domestic violence and their individual role in supporting students in need. A plan for training existing staff, as well as a plan for keeping them informed on updates and changes and for training new staff as they arrive, is necessary.

Section VIII describes a suggested training structure and how to plan for ongoing staff training needs.
III. Coordinated Action Plan (CAP) Overview

The program facilitator will lead a School-Community Leadership Team through the process of developing a Coordinated Action Plan (CAP). The CAP will involve the coordination of school and community staff, and will outline the responsibilities, policies, and protocols for more effectively supporting students exposed to domestic violence.

Once completed, the CAP will serve as a resource for all school staff who interact with students. Staff will understand what signs to look for in children and what to do if they suspect domestic violence or if a student makes a disclosure to them.

The goals of creating a CAP are to:

- Outline the specific roles of different categories of school staff in recognizing and supporting students who experience domestic violence.
- Establish and document how different categories of school staff will interact with one another and community members to best support students.
- Establish policies, protocols, and procedures for supporting students exposed to domestic violence.
- Create a training plan that can secure the sustainability of the CAP.

CAP Components

With the guidance of the program facilitator, each School-Community Team will create a CAP that best suits the needs and capabilities of its school and community. Although each school will customize its final plan to meet its needs, recommended documents include these, each described in detail in the following sections:

- **Individual Action Plans** *(Section VII)* that identify and describe roles for each professional within a school, warning signs to look for, action steps, key contacts, and relevant school policies and protocols
- **Staff Roles Flow Chart** *(Section VI)* that depicts how key roles within the school and the wider community interact to address domestic violence issues in a coordinated and comprehensive way
- **Protocol for Working with Mental Health Agencies** *(Section V)*
- **School Safety Plan** *(Section VII)*
- **Contacts List** *(Appendix E: Contacts List)* that can be used to keep contact information for important community partners in one place
- **Local and State Laws/Policies** *(www.LawEnforcementMuseum.org/DVAP)*
Other Identified Policies/Protocols (Section VII)

Training Plan that specifies details of training school to implement the CAP in your school (Section VIII)

Each of these components is designed to assist with particular aspects of your School-Community Team’s response to a student exposed to domestic violence and together will form your school’s CAP.

Using The CAP

The Team will determine the best place to store the CAP at the school. When it is completed, the CAP should be in a centrally accessible place, distributed to appropriate individuals, and also easily accessible to the range of school staff who may need it on short notice.

Individual aspects of the CAP may be used in a variety of ways. For example:

• Individual Action Plans can be posted in offices to remind staff about what to look for and the steps they can take.

• Lists of local resources and contacts can be printed and made available where staff in need may find them.

• Each staff member or community partner who undergoes training should complete an Individual Action Plan and receive a copy of local resources, contacts, relevant laws and policies, and a staff roles flow chart.

Milestones for Target Actions

Each school will develop its CAP at a different pace. The timeline for developing and implementing your plan will depend primarily on the extent to which your school has existing School-Community Teams/partnerships that can address this issue (e.g., a violence prevention team that can extend the scope of its work to include domestic violence might progress faster than a newly established team) and the amount of previous work done in this area.

Figure 1: Major Milestones (see page 16) illustrates major project milestones, with approximate time frames for completing each major task. Some activities will overlap, whereas some will need to be completed in sequence.

The Team will develop and refine a timeline based on the school’s capabilities and needs. The Team should schedule trainings strategically at the most effective times to encourage staff to adopt the CAP. For example, planning to train staff at less busy times or earlier in the school year when there is still time to implement the plan may be more effective.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Figure 1: Major Milestones</strong></th>
<th><strong>Suggested Time Frame</strong></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establish a School-Community Leadership Team</td>
<td>4–6 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create and implement an outreach plan for community organizations/collaborations, including establishing memoranda of understanding</td>
<td>6–8 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify staff roles and delineate interactions between staff in a customized staff roles flow chart</td>
<td>2–4 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct a thorough review of current policies and procedures</td>
<td>2–4 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop, review, and revise school policies and protocols</td>
<td>6–8 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete the CAP, including the training plan</td>
<td>6–8 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implement the CAP training plan</td>
<td>4–6 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review and update the CAP</td>
<td>Quarterly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IV. School-Community Leadership Team

No one person can or should attempt to develop a CAP on his or her own. Instead, a central role of the program facilitator will be to create and coordinate a School-Community Leadership Team that works together to develop and implement the CAP. This team approach will build on the complementary skills, interests, and knowledge of each team member to contribute to a plan that responds to the needs of the school and students.

Team Composition

The School-Community Leadership Team will consist of school personnel and representatives from the community. The program facilitator should consider people who are important players and who will be able to get the work done.

To be effective, Team membership should be limited to six to eight members. An Advisory Committee of additional interested, experienced school and community members can provide guidance and feedback to the Team as it creates the CAP.

School-Community Leadership Team members will typically include:

- School administrator (e.g., principal or assistant/vice principal)
- Grade-level teachers (preferably two from different grades)
- Mental health professional (e.g., school counselor, psychologist, social worker)
- Other school-related staff (e.g., school nurse, PE instructor, coach, afterschool staff)
- School resource officer and/or local law enforcement or school security officer
- Community stakeholders (e.g., community domestic violence coordinator, mental health agency staff, domestic violence advocates, crisis center workers, health care providers, social services staff, parents)

Identifying a staff person at a local community domestic violence program may be a first step, as that person may be able to help you connect with others in the community who are concerned about domestic violence. Later, this person may also be able to help with training school staff.

Although all school staff will be trained to recognize the signs of domestic violence exposure, only highly trained staff members (usually a counselor or social worker) should initiate conversations with students about domestic violence and manage a plan of action if a disclosure occurs (e.g., refer students to local services, develop a safety plan, report to local authorities).
Team Member Qualifications

Anyone can serve on the School-Community Team, but highly committed and interested team members will bolster the success of the CAP planning and implementation. The facilitator should look for members who:

• Have an interest in domestic violence prevention
• Are knowledgeable (or willing to learn) about domestic violence
• Are able to contribute to the planning process
• Are willing to commit to the Team for a designated period (e.g., one year; biweekly or monthly meetings)
• Demonstrate leadership abilities
• Are able to communicate well with school and community players

Keep in mind that some staff may themselves have experienced domestic violence. Personal histories, and the desires of staff not to reveal them, need to be respected. Consider how to support staff members who may reveal exposures to domestic violence, and consider the safety of anyone who is a survivor of domestic violence when publicizing a list of team members.

It is also important to engage team members who represent the range of ethnic and cultural groups represented in your school. These team members can be critical in ensuring that your efforts are culturally competent and effective in addressing the unique needs of all groups in your school.

Tips for Building an Effective Team

• **Build upon an existing group or committee that already addresses similar issues in your school.** Creating a new group from scratch can be a lot of work. Think about whether there is another group that already meets regularly and could either take on this work or form a subcommittee to address this issue. If no team is already in place, you will need to build a team. Think about the qualifications and commitment needed (see above), and ask people if they can participate.

• **Invite potential members to join.** People may be more interested in being part of a planning process if they are asked to volunteer. Engaged and willing team members will produce better results than a group of “assigned” staff members who may not be interested in helping.

• **Emphasize what each member has to gain from participation.** Focus on what members value. For example, staff might value professional development opportunities or contributing to a social responsibility project. Community partners, such as domestic violence advocacy agencies and/or law enforcement officers, will have the opportunity to become better connected with school staff and promote a positive presence among students exposed to domestic violence.
• **Involve people from different cultural backgrounds and include a mix of men and women.** People from diverse backgrounds can provide different perspectives as you move your planning process forward. Strive for balance in culture and gender to ensure that different perspectives are considered.

• **Be clear about expectations.** When you recruit team members, be very clear about the commitment required (e.g., committing for the school year, attending biweekly or monthly meetings, investing two to four hours a month). You will need team members who are willing to be active in moving this work forward.

• **Work with a manageable number.** Prioritize and choose a reasonable number of people to work with from among those who will have the greatest impact on the development and implementation of your CAP. Your team should have approximately six to eight members.

• **Keep people informed.** Giving team members ongoing information about the process and progress will help maintain their interest and support. Keep them in the loop via regular meetings, follow-up minutes and actions, e-mail, and individual meetings.

• **Have structured and purposeful regular meetings.** Make sure regular meeting times are established and have a structured agenda for each meeting. Solicit input from team members for agenda items. During the meeting, follow the agenda and identify specific action steps, who is responsible for each, and target deadlines. Build in accountability by making sure that actionable items are on the next meeting’s agenda and letting people know that they will be asked to report on their progress at the next meeting.

• **Prepare for personnel turnover.** If a team member leaves the school or a community agency, plan to recruit and orient new team members. A support facilitator who is involved in all decisions and can assist when personnel changes occur will help ensure continuity through these turnovers.

• **Thank members regularly for their time and valuable contributions.** Celebrate progress and successes. Even small gestures, like having snacks at meetings, will help people feel appreciated. People will be more motivated to keep working hard if their work is recognized!
Identifying a CAP Coordinator

At least one person in the school, most likely a school counselor or social worker, should be able to serve as the “go to” person for school staff if he or she suspects a child has been exposed to domestic violence.

Early on in the planning process, the program facilitator, with input from the School-Community Leadership Team, will need to assess the qualifications of staff members. Someone in the school should have expertise and professional training in the following areas:

- Knowledge of domestic violence and its impact on children
- How to talk to children about possible domestic violence and child abuse
- Knowledge of state and local laws on domestic violence and child abuse, including mandated reporting requirements
- How to make referrals to local social service agencies
- How to create a safety plan with students
- How to manage the coordination of care for a child exposed to domestic violence

If no one has these qualifications, it will be necessary to identify a staff member who can be trained or to connect with someone in the larger school system or community who can serve in this function.

Working Collaboratively with Your Team

Developing a sense of shared ownership among team members is one of the most important jobs of the program facilitator. Team members come to the table with unique strengths, interests, and skills. Capitalizing on these strengths and sharing the work of moving the planning and implementation process forward will benefit the team and its results.

The facilitator’s job will be to help move the team toward completing the CAP collaboratively. In addition to decreasing the facilitator’s workload, shared ownership will increase the chances of implementing the plan.

To accomplish this goal, all team members must have a shared vision, the information they need, and the ability to participate in decision-making with the rest of the team. The facilitator can help promote this sense of collaboration by:

- Involving team members in the early planning stages
- Sharing information and resources
- Encouraging open communication and idea-sharing among team members
- Listening non-judgmentally and incorporating various perspectives and ideas
- Giving team members significant responsibility
- Dividing work into tasks and forming committees for these tasks, each with a leader from the group
- Allowing all team members to make decisions with team input
Administrator Support

Buy-in and support from high-level school administrators are essential for successful implementation of programs that address the social and emotional needs of students. School administrators (e.g., principal, superintendent) may automatically provide leadership for this issue, or the program facilitator may need to supply additional information and encouragement to increase awareness of the importance of addressing domestic violence within the school.

Getting buy-in can start with communicating with administrators about the goals of the program, and emphasizing the effects of exposure to domestic violence on academic performance and school attendance, as well as the increased risk of experiencing or perpetrating physical violence. In addition to general data about domestic violence, identifying local data relevant to the school and community (e.g., number of domestic violence calls and/or arrests in your community; number of women and children in local shelters) as well as data on the impact of domestic violence on student attendance and academic achievement can help demonstrate that domestic violence is a problem that must be addressed in the community. Local domestic violence agencies can help provide useful information for this task.

Ongoing communication with administrators about the program’s progress and impact may help generate additional resources and support. A facilitator should make sure to discuss the program with key administrators early and often so that they are well-informed.
V. Community Partnerships

Community partners have a unique role in addressing and preventing domestic violence within the community. They can provide valuable information and resources that can improve your school’s ability to address domestic violence. By tapping into these resources, the school will be able to provide more comprehensive and appropriate services to students, eliminate unnecessary duplication of effort, and build new skills among employees.

Essential community partners include:

• Domestic violence advocacy groups
• Social service agencies (e.g., mental health services, welfare agencies)
• Local law enforcement
• Other organizations that can help develop or implement your CAP, or have resources or information to help the Team understand and learn more about how to address domestic violence at school and in the community

Working with community partners will help ensure that students get access to services in a coordinated fashion and that services are responsive to their needs. Establishing these relationships now will mean easier access to services and information when staff need them.

Consider the following when approaching potential community partners:

• Think about how to incorporate representatives into the planning process. Who could be a good addition to the School-Community Leadership Team or Advisory Committee? What partnerships will be useful for information and resources?
• Create a timeline and assign appropriate team members to conduct outreach to each identified community partner. Think ahead about what kind of commitment is needed from each community partner (e.g., length of time, meeting attendance, help with facilitating staff trainings).
• Have information available to potential members (e.g., Appendix H: CAP Fact Sheet for External Distribution).
• Ask community members who else should be at the table.

Memoranda of Understanding

Developing memoranda of understanding (MOUs) or other agreements with community agencies to work with or to refer students to can help clarify expectations and responsibilities. These agreements can describe the type of agreed-upon partnership, the types of services and resources to be shared and provided, and the roles and responsibilities of each partner. For agencies where referrals might occur, these agreements can outline information-sharing between the school and the agency. Because the demand for children’s services may outpace the availability, the agreements may also specify a plan for referral if an agency does not have room to serve a child at the time of need. See Appendix B: Additional Resources for more information on MOUs.
Tips for Working with Community Agencies

- **Make community partners an integral part of your team.** When planning meetings and timelines, consider their availability and be accommodating.

- **Be open and honest in communication.** Remember that including community partners will build the strength of the services to students; different perspectives and approaches will enhance these services.

- **Spend time up front to understand one another’s systems and interests.** Be aware of potential turf issues between your school and the partners, and among the partners, and prepare to address them.

- **Be open to challenges to your own assumptions about what works best.**

- **Delineate clear roles and responsibilities.** Memoranda of understanding may help ensure that expectations are clear.

- **Work toward building consensus among partners.** The way decisions are made may change as you incorporate additional partners into your planning process.

Key Community Partners

The following section outlines how some key community partners might support the development and implementation of a CAP at your school.

**Domestic Violence Advocacy Organizations**

Domestic violence advocacy organizations provide support, services, and education for victims of and children exposed to domestic violence. They are often knowledgeable about local and state laws and policies related to domestic violence and can help make connections for additional, needed services.

Because they have a deep understanding of domestic violence and its complexity, domestic violence advocacy organizations may be able to help with staff training for these issues and can advise on the development of the CAP. Often, these organizations are the first point of contact for a family seeking help with domestic violence. As such, they can provide valuable, firsthand knowledge about any considerations that should be included in the school’s CAP (such as when a child is living at a shelter).

**Law Enforcement**

Law enforcement officers can help a school plan strategies for supporting students experiencing domestic violence, and involvement of law enforcement in planning can have several practical benefits. First, law enforcement officers are mandatory reporters of domestic violence and are required to document offenses and incidents. By working closely with law enforcement, schools can know that documentation will occur, reducing liability of school personnel. This official documentation, such as photographs of injuries, shows a history and can later be used if there is a legal case. Second, law enforcement officers and school resource officers (SROs) may know about domestic violence disputes or an arrest of an adult at a student’s home that can serve to verify concerns of school personnel.
Law enforcement agencies that take a community policing approach adopt a broader view of the role of law enforcement officers, seeing them not only as having a patrol role, but also as community problem-solvers with a role in crime prevention and the promotion of community safety (Battered Women’s Justice Project, August 2001). Those involved with community policing can participate in a school’s process of creating a CAP, bringing the complementary perspective of law enforcement to this work. For more information on community policing, please see Appendix B: Additional Resources.

### Cultural Considerations

Special cultural issues related to how domestic violence survivors interact with and perceive law enforcement are important to consider. When working with children exposed to domestic violence, remember that the attitudes of their parents and families toward law enforcement can shape their views and influence their reactions.

- Survivors might not feel comfortable involving the police or might be too embarrassed or fearful.
- When officers have shown sensitivity to survivors, women have reported viewing the experience as positive. However, when they felt the police did not treat them with sensitivity or respect, women reported the interaction as a negative experience.
- Survivors may not believe the police will take action, or they think the police will not take their report seriously.
- Individuals in same-sex relationships may not believe police involvement is sincere.
- Immigrant survivors may fear that reporting can lead to immigration problems for themselves as well as their extended family.
- Immigrant survivors may face additional language barriers to seeking support.

“Responding officers must consider the underlying social context of these women’s [or men’s] lives, including racism, homophobia, and low economic status. This social context not only shapes the experience of domestic violence, but also the survivors’ and justice system’s responses.”

—Senturia, Sullivan, Ciske, & Shiu-Thorton (November 2003, p. 35)

By working in partnership with community law enforcement agencies, schools can gain an additional resource not only for domestic violence prevention, but also for general school safety.
Community Mental Health Agencies

Local mental health agencies can provide additional support to children living with domestic violence. They can also connect children and their families to other community agencies offering resources unavailable at school or through a mental health provider (e.g., legal counsel, shelter, orders of protection). Consider the mental health agencies available in the community and whether the school already has established working relationships with them. It is important that part of the process for working with community mental health agencies includes determining the protocol for referrals. For more information on referrals, see Section VI.
VI. CAP Development Part 1: Staff Roles in Identifying Students Exposed to Domestic Violence

A key feature of the CAP will be the delineation of school staff roles in identifying, referring, and supporting students exposed to domestic violence. Though every school will have a slightly different set of staff positions that can respond to students exposed to domestic violence, this section offers a framework for thinking about the identification, referral, and support process.

**Key features of this approach:**

- **All school staff** can be trained to identify students exposed to domestic violence. Customizable Individual Action Plans (Appendix G: Individual Action Plan Templates) describe the roles that different staff can play as part of the CAP, outlining warning signs to look for, how to support students, relevant contact information, and school policies and protocols.

- **School social workers, nurses, and SROs** have specific roles in the referral and support of students. This section features information specific to those roles.

- **A CAP Coordinator** will serve as a point person for all school staff who may suspect that a child may be exposed to domestic violence.

- **A Staff Roles Flow Chart** (see page 31), illustrates the lines of communication and responsibilities between school staff, as well as with community partners.

- **Community partners**, including domestic violence organizations, local law enforcement, and mental health agencies, provide additional resources for supporting youth.

**Models for identification and referrals work with a multi-stage process, in which everyone in a school can look for warning signs and provide immediate responses to students, then refer students to a professional qualified to provide further assessment and support.**

**Process for Identifying and Referring Students**

This guide proposes an approach in which all school staff can identify the warning signs of a student who has been exposed to domestic violence; however, only qualified professionals in the school will assess students and provide additional support and services. Schools implementing a process for recognition and support of students exposed to domestic violence are at the cutting edge of developing programs in this area. Models for identification and referrals exist in other areas of child mental health promotion, such as suicide prevention. These models work with a multi-stage process, in which everyone in a school can look for warning signs and provide immediate responses to students, then refer students to a professional qualified to provide further assessment and support.

*Note:* This guidebook is designed to help schools create a plan for supporting students exposed to domestic violence. Nothing in this guidebook should be considered legal advice. If you have questions about the law or need legal advice, please consult an attorney licensed to practice in your state.
Role of School Staff

All school staff play an important role in looking for and recognizing signs that a child may be exposed to domestic violence. The Individual Action Plans (Appendix G: Individual Action Plan Templates) clarify each school staff member’s roles and responsibilities when responding to children who may be exposed to domestic violence.

School may be the only safe place for some children, and may be the only place where they have significant interactions with adults outside the home. Although not all school staff should attempt to engage in conversations with students about domestic violence, they should be able to recognize the warning signs, document them, and know when to refer students to the CAP Coordinator/school counselor for further assessment and support.

These signs may be indicators of distress in general and are not always linked directly to domestic violence. However, here are some signs school staff can keep an eye out for among their students:

- Being more tired than usual during the school day.
- Having excessive absenteeism and/or tardiness.
- Expressing excessive worry about a parent not being safe without the child at home.
- Displaying new disciplinary or aggression problems, such as bullying or outbursts of anger.
- Being very parentified with siblings, classmates, or adults. A child’s role may be reversed at home if a parent is incapacitated by domestic violence.
- Seeming to dread going home.
- Holding stereotyped beliefs about gender (usually males as perpetrators and females as victims).
- Expressing physical complaints (constant stomachaches or headaches).
- Having unexplained changes in behavior, grades, demeanor, or physical appearance.
- Having unexplained bruises or injuries.
- Having a parent who defers all appointments, signing of documents, decisions, and discussions of the child to the other parent.
- Having a parent who waits for or looks to the other parent for permission to respond, even if communication is directed to him or her, or to the child.
- Having a parent who displays excessive deference to the other parent through body language.

—Baker & Cunningham (2005)
—Walker, P. (Personal communication, June 16, 2011)

In general, changes in a student are a sign to consider. For example, a student who is usually talkative in class who becomes quiet, or one who usually interacts well with other students but suddenly begins starting fights, may be struggling and in need of more support.

Individual Action Plans

This guide provides templates for Individual Action Plans (Appendix G: Individual Action Plan Templates) for school staff, including teachers, administrators, counselors/social workers, school
nurses, SROs, and other school staff. These Plans offer an accessible format for school staff to know their specific roles and responsibilities. The templates also list potential signs to look for and important contacts on a single sheet.

These templates can be a starting point for the Team to develop customized Individual Action Plans for their school. The Team can design Individual Action Plans using input from school staff about the resources they would like to see featured on this one-page document, incorporating the suggestions in this guide for the roles of each category of school staff, and including key information from policies and protocol developed specifically for the school. At the CAP Trainings, individual school staff can then further customize Individual Action Plans based on their own roles and needs.

Role of the School Nurse

The school nurse has a special role in working with students exposed to domestic violence, in addition to providing general medical support. Noting any injuries that may have occurred due to domestic violence or child abuse in the student’s file will help if legal action is taken against an abusive parent.

In addition, the school nurse may be involved in any schoolwide prevention activities if the school elects to take on these types of activities as part of approaching this issue.

Role of the SRO

The SRO also has a special role in working with students exposed to domestic violence. Like the school nurse, the SRO may be involved in developing school-based activities to educate students about safety, especially how to stay safe at home. The SRO may also work with school security personnel to file police reports if incidents involving students and/or parents occur at the school.

Note: Children living with domestic violence may seem especially nervous around an SRO and could display signs such as fear, being guarded or anxious with questions about their family or home, or refusing eye contact (Break the Cycle, 2009). Because SROs represent authority figures with the ability to “put people in jail,” children may fear getting into trouble, being removed from their home, or splitting up their family if they talk to a law enforcement officer. This may be especially true if children have heard negative stories or stereotypes about police officers. Consider ways to promote a positive presence of SROs and/or law enforcement officers in the school.

“Responding supportively to children making disclosures increases their sense of security and their willingness to share concerns in the future.”

—Baker, Jaffe, & Ashbourne (2002, p. 18)

Role of the CAP Coordinator

In most cases, the development of a CAP will identify a CAP Coordinator who can serve as a resource for school staff and for children. If a school does not already have a person with the necessary expertise (defined in Section III), a plan should be in place for identifying someone who can be trained to serve in this role.
A primary role of the CAP Coordinator is to assess and support children exposed to domestic violence. Assessment should include a conversation about the student’s home situation and the effects of that situation on the student’s life and experience at school. If the student discloses domestic violence, the CAP Coordinator can consider what outside referrals may be appropriate for ongoing support for the student and the abused parent. If the student discloses child abuse as part of this conversation, the CAP Coordinator will need to adhere to state and local laws for mandated reporting. Local community domestic violence advocates are a good resource for further understanding locally mandated reporting laws.

If a child reveals that he or she is exposed to domestic violence, the CAP Coordinator should also consider involving local law enforcement to help provide safety and protection to the child and other family members. Having a law enforcement representative on the School-Community Leadership Team can aid in this dialogue.

**Working with Parents**

If it is indicated that the student needs ongoing support from a community-based mental health provider, the CAP Coordinator should consider how to work with the parents to get the student this help while maintaining the highest level of safety for the family. It may be necessary to talk with the parents about the student’s needs without sharing that the student disclosed domestic violence or child abuse. If an abusive parent finds out that a child has disclosed abuse, the child’s and family’s safety may be threatened. Saying something general, such as “Your child’s teacher has expressed some concerns about your child’s behavior,” keeps the conversation open. The victimized parent also needs to be involved safely. The victimized parent is the expert on his or her home situation and will be helpful in determining what is safe and possible. For example, a school staff member may believe that it is best for a child and abused parent to seek safety at a shelter. But, leaving the home may not be safe, and may in fact worsen the abuse.

Depending on the protocol created for the CAP, the CAP Coordinator may do ongoing monitoring to check in on the student.

See the Talking to Students about Violence and Sensitive Issues section of Appendix B: Additional Resources for more information about talking with children about difficult subjects.
Cultural Considerations

Cultural factors can influence a student’s experiences related to domestic violence. Children come from varying family cultures and backgrounds and perceive their experiences, including those of family violence, through these lenses. Being aware of these differences can help when working both with a child suspected of living in a household where domestic violence takes place and with the child’s parent(s).

Cultural competence is the practice of treating people of all cultures with respect and dignity. The CAP should take cultural issues into consideration when developing a plan for identifying and supporting children exposed to domestic violence. More specifically, being culturally competent means:

• Learning to recognize and reject your pre-existing beliefs about that culture
• Resisting the temptation to stereotype or classify that person with cultural labels
• Allowing the child to tell you what is happening from his or her own point of view

—Break the Cycle (2009)

See Appendix B: Additional Resources for more information about cultural competence and how it relates to domestic violence.
Sample Staff Roles Flow Chart

This sample flow chart illustrates the connections among various school staff and community members. The School-Community Leadership Team will develop a customized flow chart as part of the CAP to show the lines of communication and responsibility between your school staff and community resources.

Some staff—such as a CAP Coordinator, school social worker, school nurse, or SRO—have specific roles, outlined below. Sometimes the first person to notice that a child may need help may be a bus driver, cafeteria worker, or other school staff person, whereas other times that person may be a teacher. For this example, the actions of non-teacher professionals in these roles have been combined under “school staff.”

**School staff/teacher** recognizes or is told that a child is experiencing domestic violence at home

**A child** discloses to a member of the school staff/teacher that he/she is experiencing domestic violence at home

**School staff/teacher** listens to the child’s story without judgment

**School staff/teacher** makes a referral to a school counselor or social worker (or designated CAP Coordinator)

**CAP Coordinator** interviews the child to determine whether a child abuse report must be made to child protective services

**CAP Coordinator:**
- assesses the need for referrals to community agencies
- makes referrals for child and/or parent to community agencies
- refers child to school nurse to document any related injuries
- refers child or parent to SRO or police officer to make any needed reports

**CAP Coordinator** makes report to child protective services

**CAP Coordinator** makes report to child protective services

**School nurse** notes any injuries stemming from domestic violence

**SRO** files a police report of relevant disclosures

**School staff/teacher** continues to monitor and provide support to the child

**CAP Coordinator:**
- assesses the need for referrals to community agencies
- makes referrals for child and/or parent to community agencies
- refers child to school nurse to document any related injuries
- refers child or parent to SRO or police officer to make any needed reports

**CAP Coordinator** makes report to child protective services

**School staff/teacher** continues to monitor and provide support to the child

**CAP Coordinator** makes report to child protective services

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**CAP Coordinator** makes report to child protective services

**School staff/teacher** continues to monitor and provide support to the child

**CAP Coordinator** makes report to child protective services

**School staff/teacher** continues to monitor and provide support to the child
Policies and protocols are part of a school’s supportive response to children exposed to domestic violence. The CAP will include policies and protocols designed specifically for the school, as well as references to state policies that affect the school’s actions.

**Existing Policies**

An understanding of policies already in place will help inform the development of the CAP. At a very basic level, being familiar with the state’s definition of domestic violence as well as the related areas of child abuse and neglect and child witnesses to violence will help in crafting new policies if needed.

Two areas for which the school may already have policies may need to be further developed for the CAP:

- Mandated reporting
- Crisis response

*It is critical to communicate that confidentiality is not possible if a child discloses abuse. Saying to a child, “If you’re being hurt, I can’t keep that a secret. I will have to tell someone so we can help you,” helps a child understand the limits of confidentiality.*

**Mandated Reporting**

Child abuse or neglect may be uncovered when domestic violence is disclosed. Mandated reporting refers to the state laws and policies that require certain people to make a report if they suspect or know about *child abuse and neglect*. In most states, all school staff are considered mandated reporters.

Reporting child abuse is a complex issue in cases of domestic violence. In some—but not all—states, witnessing domestic violence is considered child abuse and must be reported. Becoming familiar with state laws on child abuse and domestic violence (which may be found in the criminal code, the civil protection order statute, in custody law, and in other legal codes), either by looking directly at state laws or speaking with child abuse and domestic violence specialists, is a component of building a CAP. Consulting with local domestic violence programs and child advocacy programs may also help when thinking through the nuances of reporting child abuse or neglect, to clarify the school’s policy for mandated reporting. Some questions to ask include:

- What is the responsibility of each person in a school regarding mandated reporting?
- Is it possible to call and ask questions if a school staff member is unsure of what to do about a child?
- What will happen if someone in a school makes a report?
Please see the Mandated Reporting section of Appendix B: Additional Resources for additional training resources on mandated reporting.

Note: This guidebook is designed to help schools create a plan for supporting students exposed to domestic violence. Nothing in this guidebook should be considered legal advice. If you have questions about the law or require legal advice, please consult an attorney licensed to practice in your state.

Crisis Response

Taking an existing school crisis response plan into consideration when creating the CAP helps to streamline a school’s actions when domestic violence-related crises occur. A crisis plan may indicate which school staff have leadership roles when crises occur, or what areas of the school are considered to be safe for students or staff involved in crisis situations. The crisis response plan may need to be amended to include domestic violence-specific actions, such as maintaining a restraining order or other court order on school property, responding to abuse that takes place on school grounds, or responding to a child who arrives at school from a protected shelter or leaves for one after school.

Please see the Crisis Response section of Appendix B: Additional Resources for additional training resources.

New Policies and Protocol

Some new policies specific to the CAP may need to be drafted as part of the planning process. Three types of policies or protocol are recommended below:

• Making outside referrals
• Record-keeping
• Safety planning

Making Outside Referrals

Given that each school has a different capacity for providing social and emotional support to students who depend on counseling resources and time, it is important for a school to determine the capacity of the school social worker, counselor, or psychologist’s role and decide when outside referrals to specialists are necessary. To appropriately support children exposed to domestic violence, it will be important to identify community agencies to which the school can make referrals.

The CAP Coordinator can help determine which agencies will accept referrals for individual, ongoing psychological counseling; which are appropriate to refer parents to for individual psychological counseling, domestic violence advocacy, crisis response, or support groups; and which agencies provide culturally specific services.

It may be helpful or necessary to develop agreements with local agencies for referrals, described as MOUs in Section V. The CAP Coordinator will want to keep track of these agreements so that new staff are aware of which agencies can provide which types of services. In addition, the CAP Coordinator will want to note which agencies might be interested in partnering with the school for ongoing work on this issue so that the School-Community Leadership Team can keep these agencies informed of progress and needs.
Record-Keeping

A record-keeping protocol will need to be created to track contact with students suspected of being exposed to domestic violence, as well as the referrals made to outside agencies. Working with a local domestic violence advocacy organization and a local law enforcement agency, determine what types of incidents school personnel should record. Consider local laws and procedures, as well as preferences of partnering organizations, when developing a record-keeping protocol. Points to consider:

- What types of information should or should not be recorded by school personnel?
- Who should keep track of records on students’ possible exposure to domestic violence?
- What laws and policies impact the confidentiality and legality of such record-keeping?

The School-Community Leadership Team should also determine what information needs to be documented about referrals. Consider the following questions, keeping in mind student privacy and safety will be top priorities:

- If more than one person is making referrals, how should those individuals keep records? Where are those records kept?
- Are the records open to others in the school?
- Are there different levels of access to the database?
- What kind of information can be released and to what individuals?
- What is the school’s policy about retention and destruction of records?

In addition, the CAP planning process should result in a protocol for how the school should update and store legal documents on custody, access, and guardianship. Some abusers will try to access student records in order to find addresses and other sensitive information, so it is important that schools have a policy for maintaining compliance with court orders and a clear policy for keeping records on court orders.

It is important to recognize that notes and records on students may be covered by various laws, including the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). FERPA governs under what circumstances access to a student’s school records may be granted. HIPAA governs under what circumstances access to a person’s health records may be granted. A school nurse and mental health professional working in a school may be governed by both laws depending on the type of record, and they must know what information can be shared, under what conditions, and with whom. For more information on both these laws, please see Appendix B: Additional Resources.

Safety Planning

The school can take precautions that help children exposed to domestic violence stay safe, and can also make an effort to do safety planning one-on-one with students.
A schoolwide safety plan should consider the following:

- Who is allowed to pick up each child from school
- A plan in case a parental figure who is not allowed tries to pick up a student
  - Who will stay with the student
  - Who will call the police
  - Who will talk to the parent and explain that the police have been called
- Schoolwide policies for parent-attended events, including when and how to limit access for a parent who risks the safety and well-being of other students, parents, and school staff
  - Confidentiality is a significant concern for people experiencing domestic violence. Take confidentiality into consideration when creating documents that will be distributed outside of the school, such as membership lists for PTO meetings or attendance lists from other school events, particularly if these lists are posted online and can be found through an Internet search.
- Flexibility about parent-attended events, such as holding separate parent-teacher conferences

—Break the Cycle (2009)
—Baker, Jaffe, & Ashbourne (2002)

**Safety Planning One-on-One with Students**

Creating a safety plan may help empower the child and help the child cope with scary or dangerous situations. An effective safety plan outlines specific steps for how children can stay safe in their home and neighborhood, provides information about available resources, and gives instructions on how to use 911 and other emergency numbers. See the Safety Planning section of Appendix B: Additional Resources for more information on safety planning with students.
To bring the CAP to life and implement it effectively, school staff will need to be trained to understand the CAP, why it is important, and how they fit in.

Appendix F: Training Checklist and Agenda includes information about planning a training, as well as a sample agenda. The DVAP Resource Website [www.LawEnforcementMuseum.org/DVAP] includes a PowerPoint presentation for the training that can be adapted for each school.

Training Structure

The entire school staff will need an initial training that offers an overview of the CAP, basic information about the impact of domestic violence on children, and how to identify and refer students who may be exposed to domestic violence. The training will also be an opportunity for staff to learn about the school’s established processes and protocols related to domestic violence and to complete and discuss their Individual Action Plans.

Given busy school schedules and time constraints, the school may need to be creative about setting aside time to conduct a training for school personnel. Here are some ideas to consider:

- Add the CAP overview to the agenda of already scheduled in-service times
- Bring on community experts to conduct the training collaboratively
- Build this training into existing training sessions that are related (e.g., mandatory reporting, bullying prevention, other violence prevention training)

In addition, the school will need to give careful consideration to training school staff who are not in the building during school hours and those who do not attend regular staff meetings (e.g., afterschool personnel, bus drivers, cafeteria workers). Consider what channels are currently in place for communicating with these various groups of staff. Some ideas for sharing information include working with unions to distribute information, direct mailings, and housing information on a website they can access. See Appendix I: Sample Introduction Letter to School Staff for a customizable letter that can be sent to school staff to inform them about the project.

Staff with specialized roles will need additional training. For example:

- School clinical staff (social worker, counselor, psychologist): assessment of children exposed to domestic violence; relevant community resources for getting help for a child, parent, or family (e.g., orders of protection or restraining orders; shelters; police report procedures)
- School nurse: noting injuries related to domestic violence

Consider whether the school or a community agency can provide professional development for these staff or if the school can allocate time for continuing education on these topics outside of school hours.
Planning for Ongoing Training Needs

Continued training is an important part of ensuring school staff are always prepared to help children exposed to domestic violence. Plan ahead for continued training:

• Work with the school administrator to set aside time in an annual in-service to provide additional information on domestic violence and to review changes to the CAP.

• Reach out to new teachers or school staff to make sure they have the information that others have received. Include the training as part of the new-teacher orientation.

• Prepare particular staff members to train others—thus developing the capacity to continually train new staff.
Closing Comments

Going through the steps outlined in this guide will result in the development of a collaborative, coordinated plan for identifying and supporting children exposed to domestic violence in your school and is the important first step toward making your school a safer learning environment for your students.

To ensure the effectiveness and ongoing use of the CAP you created:

• **Continue regular meetings of the School-Community Leadership Team.** These meetings can be less frequent than in the planning phases, but meeting regularly will help ensure that the CAP stays up-to-date, that training for new staff takes place, and that the Team can troubleshoot any problems or issues as they arise.

• **Maintain relationships with community partners.** Continue to keep your partners in the loop about your CAP, revisit and revise MOUs regularly, and update and involve your community partners as you move this work forward.

• **Review your CAP annually to ensure the information is current.** Consider how the CAP is working. What revisions could make it more effective? Are staff adequately trained? Are new staff trained regularly?

• **Assess the effectiveness of your CAP process.** Are staff following CAP procedures and protocols? Is the CAP Coordinator well-trained? What revisions could improve the process?

Congratulations on embarking on the process of developing a CAP in your school community. We hope this guide has provided you with the information and resources you need to be successful. Schools are breaking new ground in addressing the challenging, multi-faceted issue of domestic violence, and these efforts will no doubt make a difference in the lives of children.
Appendix A: Domestic Violence 101

What is domestic violence?

Domestic violence is not simply a single event that occurs in a single form. At its core, domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behavior used to control, humiliate, and maintain the power of one person over another person or several people in an intimate relationship.

**National Domestic Violence Hotline: (800) 799-SAFE**

The National Domestic Violence Hotline provides key information on crisis intervention and referral for victims of domestic violence, perpetrators, friends, and families.

*Domestic violence:*

- Can happen between spouses, dating couples, adults, elders, and teens. It can happen between straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning couples.
- Often involves children as “invisible victims” who are exposed to the abuse.
- Usually involves repeated behavior and can include physical, sexual, psychological, verbal, emotional, and economic abuse, as well as maltreatment of children.
- Affects people in all age, racial/ethnic, socioeconomic, occupational, and religious groups.
- Is more often perpetrated by men against women, but also may be perpetrated by women.

To help people experiencing domestic violence, it’s important to remember that domestic violence is a choice and is caused by the perpetrator and not by the victim. If the violence is physical or sexual, or if there are threats of physical or sexual violence, domestic violence is considered a criminal offense.

—Baker, Jaffe, & Ashbourne (2002)

—Illinois Family Violence Coordinating Councils (2009)

Although a black eye and bruises are thought of as signs of domestic violence, there are often other behaviors in addition to or instead of the most obvious physical violence. The following diagram, known as a Power and Control wheel, highlights different ways a perpetrator may try to gain and maintain power and control in a domestic violence relationship.
The Power and Control Wheel, developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project of the University of Minnesota, is based on the experiences of domestic violence survivors. It illustrates the most common abusive behaviors or tactics that survivors have identified. The wheel can be used to identify and define abuse. According to its creators, “the wheel makes the pattern, intent, and impact of abuse visible” (Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs, 2008).

The pattern of power and control involved in domestic violence can contribute to people who have experienced domestic violence developing survival coping skills, such as:

- Minimizing or denying the violence
- Taking responsibility for the violence
- Protecting the perpetrator
- Abusing alcohol or drugs
- Remaining in the abusive relationship
These coping mechanisms enable survivors to live with ongoing fear and anxiety. Because these skills often serve to protect the survivor from additional violence, there may not be an incentive to change or unlearn them.

Given the dynamics of power and control, survivors often stay in violent relationships for complex reasons. Many survivors are socially isolated, financially dependent, and fear custodial or physical retribution by their intimate partner, making it that much more difficult to leave. The reasons for staying in an abusive relationship and leaving one are often the same, making the decision that much more difficult. In fact, the highest risk of injury to survivors or children typically occurs when a survivor leaves or attempts to leave a domestic violence relationship (National Network to End Domestic Violence, 2011). For more information on this challenging and often misunderstood issue, please refer to the Barriers to Safety and Escaping Abuse chart by the National Network to End Domestic Violence.

For more resources on domestic violence in general, see Appendix B: Additional Resources.
Appendix B: Additional Resources

1. Domestic Violence Resources
2. Facilitation Skills
3. Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs)
4. Community Policing
5. Cultural Competence
6. Talking to Students About Violence and Sensitive Issues
7. Mandated Reporting
8. Crisis Response
10. Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)
11. Safety Planning

1. Domestic Violence Resources

Battered Women’s Justice Project
http://www.bwjp.org/
The Battered Women’s Justice Project provides training, technical assistance, and other resources on domestic violence related to civil court access and representation, the criminal justice response, and battered women’s self-defense issues.

Behind Closed Doors: The Impact of Domestic Violence on Children
Created by the United Nations Children’s Fund, this paper lists worldwide statistics on children’s exposure to family violence as well as protective factors that can help support a child, and policy recommendations.

Children and Domestic Violence
http://www.lfcc.on.ca/children_exposed_to_domestic_violence.html
These resources from the Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System address various aspects of the effects of exposure to domestic violence on children, including guides and manuals geared specifically to schools and law enforcement.
Family Violence Prevention Fund
http://endabuse.org/
The Family Violence Prevention Fund partners with communities and organizations around the world to
find new ways to prevent violence in our homes and society and to help survivors of domestic violence. This
organization has created the Coaching Boys into Men campaign to teach boys that there is no place for
violence in a relationship: http://endabusesyntaxdev.forumone.com/content/action_center/detail/806

The National Domestic Violence Hotline (800) 799-SAFE (7233)
http://www.thehotline.org/
The Hotline website provides background information on domestic violence, resources on identifying
domestic violence, safety planning information, and local resources. The website also features a section on
issues and resources specific to deaf, deaf-blind, and hard-of-hearing outreach.

Police in the Lives of Young Children Exposed to Domestic Violence
This is the fourth chapter in a series, Early Childhood, Domestic Violence, and Poverty: Helping Young Chil-
dren and Their Families, and offers suggestions for a coordinated approach to helping children exposed to
domestic violence.

2. Facilitation Skills

The Community Toolbox
http://ctb.ku.edu/en/default.aspx
The Community Toolbox includes resources on building healthy communities. See Chapter 16 (under its
“Table of Contents” tab) on Group Facilitation and Problem-Solving. Other relevant sections from the tool-
box include Creating and Maintaining Coalitions and Partnerships, Building Leadership, Increasing Partici-
pation and Membership, and Enhancing Cultural Competence.

Facilitation Skills: Developing Facilitative Leadership
This resource from the Institute for Law and Justice describes key responsibilities of an effective group facili-
tator; the differences between facilitation, presenting, and training; tips for facilitators; effective decision-
making skills; and how to handle difficult team members.

Turning Points: Transforming Middle Schools; Guide to Collaborative Culture and Shared Leadership
This guidebook describes how to create a collaborative culture within middle schools through shared lead-
ership and decision-making and the creation of effective teacher teams.

3. Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs)

Developing an MOU
http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/usermanuals/domesticviolence/domesticviolenceo.cfm
The information provided by the Child Welfare Information Gateway discusses the importance of creating
an MOU for a collaborative that addresses child protection in families experiencing domestic violence.
U.S. Department of Justice, Sample MOU
http://www.oww.usdoj.gov/docs/sample-mou.pdf
This sample provides a relatively short and straightforward MOU for partners collaborating on work in domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and/or stalking.

Please also see the sample MOU template on the DVAP Resource Website: [www.LawEnforcementMuseum.org/DVAP].

4. Community Policing

Understanding Community Policing: A Framework for Action
This monograph produced by the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, Community Policing Consortium, provides a history of community policing in the United States, defines the core components of community policing, and offers practical recommendations for implementing community policing, including necessary organizational structural changes.

U.S. Department of Justice, Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS)
http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/default.asp?item=36
This website defines community policing and outlines the three major components: Community Partnerships, Organizational Transformation, and Problem Solving.

U.S. Department of Justice, COPS, Community Policing Defined
This document by the U.S. Department of Justice, COPS, further breaks down and defines the three components of community policing introduced on its website, above.

5. Cultural Competence

Cultural Competence in Domestic Violence Services
http://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/domviolence/casework_practice/cultural.cfm
Part of the Child Welfare Information Gateway, this website includes resources on providing culturally competent services to those who have been exposed to domestic violence.

Communicating Effectively with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Families
This resource, from the National Association of School Psychologists, features key messages on cultural responsiveness for school psychologists and others to consider.

National Association of Social Workers-Approved “Spouse/Partner Abuse” Course
https://www.speedyceus.com/ceus-courses/material_detail/38/
Chapter 3 of this course addresses cultural issues related to domestic violence and provides research results broken down by ethnic and racial groups.
6. Talking to Students About Violence and Sensitive Issues

Talking about Domestic Violence
http://www.practicenotes.org/vol8_no3/cromwell.htm
This resource was created for North Carolina’s Child Welfare Social Workers and outlines tips on how to speak with children, the survivor, and the batterer in the event of suspected domestic violence.

Talking to Children about Domestic Violence and Abuse: A Guide for Parents and Practitioners
This guide offers suggestions for talking to children about domestic violence and the feelings a child may have in this situation.

Talking to Children About Violence: Tips for Parents and Teachers
This resource, by the National Association of School Psychologists, provides tips to parents and school personnel on how they can talk to children and help them feel safe. It is available in English, Spanish, and Korean.

7. Mandated Reporting

Child Abuse and Neglect: Recognizing, Reporting, and Responding for Educators
http://www.vcu.edu/vissta/training/va_teachers/
This training was approved by both the Virginia Department of Education and the Virginia Department of Social Services as meeting the curriculum requirement guidelines outlined for teacher licensure certification. It includes videos, example scenarios, discussion questions, FAQs, and resources to help educators in Virginia prepare for their role as mandatory child abuse and neglect reporters. Topics include physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, emotional maltreatment, and children with disabilities.

Child Welfare Information Gateway
http://www.childwelfare.gov/can/
This website offers information on child abuse and neglect, including definitions, identification of signs and symptoms, statistics and data, risk and protective factors, common characteristics of perpetrators by type of abuse, the impact on individuals and society, and fatalities.

Children’s National Medical Center’s Policy for the Identification and Reporting of Suspected Child Victimization
http://dc.mandatedreporter.org/pages/docs/Model-Institution-Reporting-Policy.pdf
This report outlines the responsibilities of mandated reporters in the District of Columbia.

Keeping DC Children and Youth Safe: Mandated Reporter Training
http://dc.mandatedreporter.org/
This training was developed by a partnership between the District of Columbia Children and Family Services Agency and the Center for the Application of Information Technologies. The self-paced online training takes up to two hours to complete.
Poster for Virginia Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline and Training for School Employees
This poster includes the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline for Virginia and guidelines for how school employees can recognize and report incidents of suspected child abuse. Produced by the Virginia Department of Social Services.

8. Crisis Response

Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators
http://www.nctsnet.org/resources/audiences/school-personnel/trauma-toolkit
This toolkit was developed by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network to provide school administrators, teachers, staff, and concerned parents with basic information about working with traumatized children in the school system.

Identifying Seriously Traumatized Children: Tips for Parents and Educators
This resource from the National Association of School Psychologists outlines the factors associated with the severity of a traumatic event on a child, such as the exposure to the event and the perceived threat; individual protective factors that can help a child cope with trauma, such as his or her family and developmental level; and symptoms of severe stress disorders that a child who has experienced trauma may display.

Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities
This guide produced by the Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools of the U.S. Department of Education provides detailed information on school-community crisis planning based on the following elements: Mitigation/Prevention, Preparedness, Response, and Recovery.

PREPaRE: School Crisis Prevention and Intervention Training Curriculum
These National Association of School Psychologists-approved materials provide evidence-based resources for school crisis prevention and response.

What Police Officers Should Know
This resource from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network is from the related training “Cops, Kids, & Domestic Violence Law Enforcement Training.” It describes traumatic stress in children, how children respond, and the importance of intervening to help children in traumatic situations. It also includes tips for talking with children in these situations and available resources.


Family Policy Compliance Office
This website provides regulations, cases, and other resources from the office that implements FERPA.
10. **Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)**

*Dispelling the Myths about Information Sharing Between the Mental Health and Criminal Justice Systems*


This article provides background information on HIPAA and describes the ways in which HIPAA allows for complementary information sharing with criminal justice professionals.

Summary of the HIPAA Privacy Rule from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/understanding/summary/index.html

This website provides detailed explanations on all aspects of HIPAA.

11. **Safety Planning**

*Healing the Invisible Wounds: Children’s Exposure to Violence, A Guide for Families*


This resource includes suggestions for helping children feel safe in violent situations.
Appendix C: School-Based Domestic Violence Prevention Approaches

Schools around the country are already implementing different programs to educate for, intervene in, and advocate for domestic violence prevention. The following describes evidence-based crisis response programs, prevention programs, and schoolwide approaches to creating a safe school and classroom environment.

Evidence-Based Crisis Response Programs

Evidence-based programs included on the National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP) focus on cognitive-behavioral theories to help children deal with any trauma of being exposed to domestic violence.

Programs related to children exposed to domestic violence include:

**Children in the Middle**
This is a school-based program for children in divorcing families who experience significant stress due to parental conflict, loyalty pressures, and communication problems. It includes a video highlighting how children often feel caught in the middle of parent disputes.

**Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS)**
This program is both a school-based and individual intervention aimed at reducing symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, and behavior problems as well as improving peer and parent support and enhancing coping skills in children who have experienced trauma, including exposure to domestic violence.

**Curriculum-Based Support Group (CBSG) Program**
This is a support group intervention program designed to increase resiliency and reduce risk factors in children identified as at risk for future behavioral and substance abuse issues based on exposure to a variety of adverse situations, including exposure to domestic violence.

Prevention Programs

The following examples highlight prevention-based programs that work to create a school culture based on non-violence.

**BullyProof**
http://www.utexas.edu/ssw/cswr/projects/r0012/
As part of the larger Expect Respect: A Domestic Violence Prevention Project for Elementary School Students, the Austin Center for Battered Women implemented the BullyProof curriculum for fifth graders. This curriculum is designed to teach children to value equality, respect, and safety and to reject violence and coercive behaviors in their current and future relationships. Evaluation results after the first year of implementation showed positive improvements in children’s ability to recognize and resist violent behavior as well as a difference in children’s attitudes to dating and sexual harassment.
Domestic Violence and School Safety Workgroup
Provided by Massachusetts legal services’ Domestic Violence and School Safety Workgroup, this site contains educational articles, FAQs, and checklists for parents, children, and various school officials on topics related to domestic violence, including restraining orders, school records, homeless students, and students with special needs.

Children as Witness Project
http://www.cabrini.edu/domesticviolence/
Produced by Cabrini College and Laurel House, the Children as Witness Project resource website provides interactive information. Areas of information include Domestic Violence From Different Perspectives, Myths & Realities, Ways Witnessing Domestic Violence Changes Children, Charts & Graphs, Domestic Violence Terms, Timeline of D.V. Laws in Pennsylvania, Books Can Open Dialogue, Do’s and Don’ts of Reporting Domestic Violence, School Safety Plan, Contacts For Help, and How Teachers Can Help.

Schoolwide and Classroom Environment Strategies for Prevention

Domestic violence is often learned behavior and attitudes are passed down through generations. School can be a place where positive communication, conflict resolution, and non-violence are learned and supported. By promoting healthy relationships and creating a positive learning environment, schools expose children to protective factors that in turn discourage the negative effects of living with domestic violence and help raise a nonviolent future generation.

—Slaby, Roedell, Arezzo, & Hendrix (1995)

Multiple strategies can be used both schoolwide and in the classroom to promote a positive, nonviolent learning environment.

Schoolwide Strategies

• Publicize local domestic violence advocacy agencies.
• Display posters that address healthy relationships. You may want to consider displaying posters with local domestic violence advocacy numbers in teacher bathrooms.
• Leave safety cards with hotlines or shelter numbers for employees/parents in restrooms or other places where they can be taken discreetly.
• Promote gender equality as well as non-violence among all members of the school community.
• Promote a culture of non-violence by working with the staff involved in the broader school safety effort.

In the Classroom

• Model respectful behavior, gender-neutral language, mutual respect, and personal responsibility.
• Quickly respond to violence of any type, including bullying.
• Address any derogatory language by suggesting other words to replace those words.
• Verbally praise and reward students for nonviolent conflict resolution and cooperation.
• Increase students’ sense of security by establishing and following simple routines and rules so they know what to expect.
• Plan and prepare students for visitors.
• Minimize last-minute schedule changes.
• Engage peer (older students) and adult mentors to provide support and build a positive relationship.
• Build violence prevention into the curriculum. Break the Cycle provides ideas that could be adapted for elementary school in various subject areas. As an example, see http://www.breakthecycle.org/system/files/pdf/ta-teacher-manual.pdf.
Appendix D: Program Facilitator Activity Checklist

The Program Facilitator Activity Checklist is a planning and management tool that provides a framework for developing and implementing your CAP. This plan can be customized to meet your school’s individual needs, and it will guide you through the various tasks that you will need to accomplish to effectively complete your CAP.

This tool is organized into four task categories: team-building, community partnerships, staff roles in identifying students exposed to domestic violence, policies and protocols, training, and implementation. It functions as a checklist and refers back to relevant sections of this guide for more information.

Review this management plan and the specific tasks listed under each major category. Think about how long it will take to accomplish each task and which people might be most effective at completing the task. Using this checklist as a management tool will help you develop your CAP; it includes tasks for working with community partners during development and for implementing training for school and community personnel after the CAP is developed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitator Activities</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Person Responsible</th>
<th>Critical Dates</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>If No or Not Sure</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Team-Building</strong></td>
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<td>We have established top-level administrator support for this program</td>
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<td>Review Section IV</td>
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<tr>
<td>We have selected our School-Community Leadership Team</td>
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<td>Review Section IV</td>
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<tr>
<td>We have assessed domestic violence expertise at our school</td>
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<td>Review Section IV</td>
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<td>We have identified a CAP Coordinator</td>
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<td>Review Section IV</td>
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<tr>
<td>We have established regular team meetings</td>
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<td>Review Section IV</td>
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<td><strong>Community Partnerships</strong></td>
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<td>We have identified community agencies to reach out to</td>
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<td>Review Section V</td>
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<tr>
<td>We have created a plan for outreach to and communication with community agencies</td>
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<td>Review Section V</td>
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<tr>
<td>We have established MOUs with community agencies</td>
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<td>Review Section V</td>
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</table>

Supporting Children Exposed to Domestic Violence
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<th>Facilitator Activities</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Person Responsible</th>
<th>Critical Dates</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Staff Roles in Identifying Students Exposed to Domestic Violence</strong></td>
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<td>We have customized Individual Action Plans for staff in our school</td>
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<td>Review Section VI</td>
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<tr>
<td>We have developed a staff flow chart</td>
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<td>Review Section VI</td>
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<td><strong>Policies and Protocols</strong></td>
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<td>We have reviewed existing school, local, and state policies and procedures</td>
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<td>Review Section VII</td>
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<tr>
<td>We have determined which community agencies can provide additional support or services</td>
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<td>Review Section V</td>
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<tr>
<td>We have created a documentation system for referrals</td>
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<td>Review Sections VII</td>
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<tr>
<td>We have coordinated with the crisis management team to add domestic violence situations to the school safety plan</td>
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<td>Review Section VII</td>
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<tr>
<td>We have developed new policies and protocol for the school if needed</td>
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<td>Review Section VII</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Training</strong></td>
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<td>We have developed a training plan for our school</td>
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<td>Review Section VIII</td>
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<tr>
<td>We have discussed with school leadership the support for additional training for specialty staff</td>
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<td>Review Section VIII</td>
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<td>We have planned for ongoing training needs</td>
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<td>Review Section VIII</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Implementation</strong></td>
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<td>We have determined where to keep the CAP</td>
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<td>Review Section III</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilitator Activities</td>
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<td>Person Responsible</td>
<td>Critical Dates</td>
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<td>Not Sure</td>
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<td>We have followed up with staff about Individual Action Plans</td>
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<td>We have disseminated printed copies of local resources and contacts</td>
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<td>Review Section III</td>
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<tr>
<td>We have a plan for continued monitoring and assessment of the CAP</td>
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<td>Review the Closing Comments in Section VIII</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E: Contacts List

School resource officer or school liaison police officer:

Name: ________________________________
Title: ________________________________
Organization: ________________________________
Address: ____________________________________________
_________________________________________________________
Phone Number: ________________________________
Fax Number: ________________________________
E-mail: ________________________________

Domestic violence advocate:

Name: ________________________________
Title: ________________________________
Organization: ________________________________
Address: ____________________________________________
_________________________________________________________
Phone Number: ________________________________
Fax Number: ________________________________
E-mail: ________________________________

Community health center domestic violence advocate:

Name: ________________________________
Title: ________________________________
Organization: ________________________________
Address: ____________________________________________
_________________________________________________________
Phone Number: ________________________________
Fax Number: ________________________________
E-mail: ________________________________
Hospital domestic violence advocate:

Name: ________________________________________________________________
Title: _________________________________________________________________
Organization: __________________________________________________________
Address: ______________________________________________________________________
Phone Number: ___________________________________________________________
Fax Number: _____________________________________________________________
E-mail: __________________________

Child therapist:

Name: ________________________________________________________________
Title: _________________________________________________________________
Organization: __________________________________________________________
Address: ______________________________________________________________________
Phone Number: ___________________________________________________________
Fax Number: _____________________________________________________________
E-mail: __________________________

Family law attorney:

Name: ________________________________________________________________
Title: _________________________________________________________________
Organization: __________________________________________________________
Address: ______________________________________________________________________
Phone Number: ___________________________________________________________
Fax Number: _____________________________________________________________
E-mail: __________________________
Immigrant and refugee assistance program contact:

Name: ____________________________________________________________
Title: ____________________________________________________________
Organization: _____________________________________________________
Address: __________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
Phone Number: _____________________________________________________
Fax Number: _______________________________________________________
E-mail: ____________________________________________________________

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender-based advocacy centers contact:

Name: ____________________________________________________________
Title: ____________________________________________________________
Organization: _____________________________________________________
Address: __________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
Phone Number: _____________________________________________________
Fax Number: _______________________________________________________
E-mail: ____________________________________________________________
Appendix F: Training Checklist and Agenda

Training Preparation
- Write the agenda for the training day (see below)
- Customize the PowerPoint presentation (see www.LawEnforcementMuseum.org/DVAP)
- Select dates, locations, and times of planned training events; make sure to choose a space that can accommodate everyone comfortably
- Identify an additional presenter for the training (if needed)
- Promote the training event through invitations, flyers, and e-mail reminders

Materials Needed for Training Day
- Copies of agenda
- Flip chart or white board
- Markers
- Promotional materials for each event
- Food and drink
- PowerPoint presentation
- Projector
- Projection screen
- Laptop or other device for projection
- Copies of CAP fact sheet (Appendix H: CAP Fact Sheet for External Distribution)

Recommended Training Agenda
- Introduction and Overview
- PowerPoint Presentation
  - How to access the Coordinated Action Plan
  - How domestic violence impacts children
  - Roles of staff in identifying and supporting students
  - How to identify students exposed to domestic violence
  - Creating your Individual Action Plan
- Q&A
Coordinated Action Plan
— My role as a school —
Administrator

Signs to look for

These signs may be signs of general distress or a variety of problems, and are not always linked directly to domestic violence. However, here are some signs you can keep an eye out for in students:

- Changes in attendance, especially new changes
- Unexplained change in behavior, grades, demeanor, or physical appearance
- Unexplained bruises or injuries
- New or excessive disciplinary problems
  - __________________________________________
  - __________________________________________

What I can do

One-on-one with students:
- Provide a safe space for a child to tell his or her story
- Be sure to explain the limits of confidentiality—if a student tells you that he or she is in danger, you have a responsibility to let someone know who can help
- Refer the student to the school counselor for further assessment

In the school at large:
- Promote gender equality among all members of the school community
- Make sure your school has all necessary and relevant policies and that they are up-to-date
- Act as a liaison with community partners and appropriate agencies
  - __________________________________________
  - __________________________________________

Contacts and policies

CAP Coordinator: (Name/#) ________________________________
Location of school policies: __________________________________
School counselor: (Name/#) ________________________________
SRO: (Name/#) ________________________________
Local domestic violence advocacy agency: (Name/#) ________________________________
Local police department: (Name/#) ________________________________
Child protective services: (Name/#) ________________________________

Other notes: __________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________
Signs to look for

These signs may be signs of general distress or a variety of problems, and are not always linked directly to domestic violence. However, here are some signs you can keep an eye out for in students:

- More fatigue than usual
- Excessive worrying about possible danger
- Aggressive behavior
- Changes in attendance, especially new changes
- Unexplained change in behavior, grades, demeanor, or physical appearance
- Unexplained bruises or injuries
- ____________________________________
- ____________________________________

In general, changes in a student are a sign to consider. Example: A student who is usually talkative in class suddenly, or over time, becomes quiet, or a student who usually interacts well with others suddenly starts fighting with peers.

What I can do

Students look to you, the teacher, to set the tone in the classroom. A teacher can also be a first line of support for students and can connect them with resources that provide support beyond what you might be able to do in the classroom or after school.

One-on-one with students:
- Provide a safe space for a child to tell his or her story
- Be sure to explain the limits of confidentiality—if a student tells you that he or she is in danger, you have a responsibility to let someone know who can help
- Report to a school counselor/administrator, as needed

In the classroom with all students:
- Model respectful behavior, gender-neutral language, mutual respect, and personal responsibility
- Quickly respond to violence of any type, including bullying
- Address any derogatory language by suggesting other words to replace those words

In the school at large:
- Promote gender equality among all members of the school community

Contacts and policies

CAP Coordinator: (Name/#) ____________________________________________
Location of school policies: ____________________________________________
School counselor: (Name/#) ____________________________________________
SRO: (Name/#) ______________________________________________________
Child protective services: (Name/#) ______________________________________

Other notes: ___________________________________________________________________
Coordinated Action Plan
— My role as a school —
SRO/Community Police Officer/School Security Officer

Signs to look for
These signs may be signs of general distress or a variety of problems, and are not always linked directly to domestic violence. However, here are some signs you can keep an eye out for in students:

• Excessive worrying about possible danger
• Aggressive behavior
• Changes in attendance, especially new changes
• Unexplained change in behavior, demeanor, or physical appearance
• Unexplained bruises or injuries
• New or excessive disciplinary problems
• Fear, guardedness, or anxiety about questions about their family or home, or refusing eye contact
• ___________________________________
• ___________________________________

What I can do
One-on-one with students:
• Provide a safe space for a child to tell his or her story
• Be sure to explain the limits of confidentiality—if a student tells you that he or she is in danger, you have a responsibility to let someone know who can help
• Refer to the school counselor, as needed

In the school at large:
• Promote gender equality among all members of the school community
• Develop school-based activities to educate students about safety, especially how to stay safe at home
• File police reports if there are incidents involving students and/or parents that occur at the school
• Help the school develop and implement policies to ensure all students are safe while at school
• ___________________________________
• ___________________________________

Contacts and policies
CAP Coordinator: (Name/#) ____________________________________________
Location of school policies: ____________________________________________
School counselor: (Name/#) ____________________________________________
Student’s teacher: (Name/#) ____________________________________________
Local domestic violence advocacy agency: (Name/#) __________________________
Local police department: (Name/#) _______________________________________
Child protective services: (Name/#) _______________________________________

Other notes: ___________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________

Supporting Children Exposed to Domestic Violence

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Coordinated Action Plan
— My role as a school —
Counselor/Social Worker

Signs to look for
These signs may be signs of general distress or a variety of problems, and are not always linked directly to domestic violence. However, here are some signs you can keep an eye out for in students:

• More fatigue than usual
• Excessive worrying about possible danger
• Aggressive behavior
• Changes in attendance, especially new changes
• Unexplained change in behavior, grades, demeanor, or physical appearance
• Unexplained bruises or injuries
• New or excessive disciplinary problems
• ______________________________
• ______________________________

What I can do
One-on-one with students:
• Provide a safe space for a child to tell his or her story
• Be sure to explain the limits of confidentiality—if a student tells you that he or she is in danger, you have a responsibility to let someone know who can help
• Develop an individual safety plan with the student
• Report to outside agencies, as needed
In the school at large:
• Promote gender equality among all members of the school community
• Act as a liaison with community partners and appropriate agencies
• Keep records of referrals, according to school policies
• ______________________________
• ______________________________

Contacts and policies
CAP Coordinator: (Name/#) ______________________________
Location of school policies: ______________________________
School counselor: (Name/#) ______________________________
SRO: (Name/#) ______________________________
Local domestic violence advocacy agency: (Name/#) ______________________________
Local police department: (Name/#) ______________________________
Child protective services: (Name/#) ______________________________

Other notes: __________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

Supporting Children Exposed to Domestic Violence
Coordinated Action Plan
— My role as a school —

**Nurse**

**Signs to look for**

These signs may be signs of general distress or a variety of problems, and are not always linked directly to domestic violence. However, here are some signs you can keep an eye out for in students:

- Frequent physical, emotional complaints (headaches, stomachaches, sadness)
- Preferring to stay in your office rather than in class or at home
- More fatigue than usual
- Excessive worrying about possible danger
- Aggressive behavior
- Unexplained change in behavior, demeanor, or physical appearance
- Unexplained bruises or injuries
- _______________________________________________________________________
- _______________________________________________________________________

**What I can do**

**One-on-one with students:**

- Provide a safe space for a child to tell his or her story
- Be sure to explain the limits of confidentiality—if a student tells you that he or she is in danger, you have a responsibility to let someone know who can help
- Document any signs of abuse
- Report to outside agencies, as needed

**In the school at large:**

- Promote gender equality among all members of the school community
- Act as liaison with community partners and appropriate agencies
- _______________________________________________________________________
- _______________________________________________________________________

**Contacts and policies**

CAP Coordinator: (Name/#) _______________________________________________________________________
Location of school policies: _______________________________________________________________________
School counselor: (Name/#) _______________________________________________________________________
SRO: (Name/#) _______________________________________________________________________
Local domestic violence advocacy agency: (Name/#) _______________________________________________________________________
Local police department: (Name/#) _______________________________________________________________________
Child protective services: (Name/#) _______________________________________________________________________

**Other notes:**

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
Supporting Children Exposed to Domestic Violence

Coordinated Action Plan
— My role as school —

Staff

Signs to look for

These signs may be signs of general distress or a variety of problems, and are not always linked directly to domestic violence. However, here are some signs you can keep an eye out for in students:

• More fatigue than usual
• Excessive worrying about possible danger
• Aggressive behavior
• Changes in attendance, especially new changes
• Unexplained change in behavior, grades, demeanor, or physical appearance
• Unexplained bruises or injuries

In general, changes in a student are a sign to consider. Example: A student who is usually talkative in class suddenly, or over time, becomes quiet, or a student who usually interacts well with others suddenly starts fighting with peers.

What I can do

One-on-one with students:

• Provide a safe space for a child to tell his or her story
• Be sure to explain the limits of confidentiality—if a student tells you that he or she is in danger, you have a responsibility to let someone know who can help

With all students:

• Report to a school counselor/administrator/student’s teacher, as needed
• Model respectful behavior, gender-neutral language, mutual respect, and personal responsibility
• Quickly respond to violence of any type, including bullying
• Address any derogatory language by suggesting other words to replace those words

In the school at large:

• Promote gender equality among all members of the school community

Contacts and policies

CAP Coordinator: (Name/#) _____________________________________________
Location of school policies: ____________________________________________
School counselor: (Name/#) ___________________________________________
SRO: (Name/#) _____________________________________________________
Student’s Teacher: (Name/#) ___________________________________________
Child protective services: (Name/#) ________________________________

Other notes: _______________________________________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________

Supporting Children Exposed to Domestic Violence
Coordinated Action Plan Fact Sheet

Why is it important to address domestic violence in elementary school?

- Children who are exposed to domestic violence may have serious difficulties at school:
  - Behavioral problems, like increased aggression and disciplinary problems, as well as emotional issues such as depression and decreased self-esteem
  - More school suspensions and absences, and more nurse visits for social and emotional complaints compared to their peers
  - Trouble contributing to a safe and positive classroom environment
- School can be a safe place for children exposed to domestic violence and can provide needed support.

What is our school doing?

- Working with community partners, we are creating a Coordinated Action Plan—where everyone within the school and community is clear on roles and responsibilities—to help identify and support students exposed to domestic violence.
- We are training school personnel to recognize the warning signs of domestic violence, and to learn about the mandated reporting requirements and the school’s policies and protocols for supporting our students.

How can community organizations be involved?

Schools cannot support students exposed to domestic violence without the help of existing community resources. Community partners can:

- Participate in the School-Community Leadership Team, representing their perspective as a mental health agency, domestic violence program, or law enforcement officer
- Consult to the School-Community Leadership Team on the development of components of the Coordinated Action Plan (such as how to work with parents who have been abused, or how to train staff as mandated reporters)
- Provide needed resources to our school, including expertise on domestic violence, referrals, and services
- Make their organizations aware of the work that the school is doing, so that the whole community can work better together

For more information, please contact: PROGRAM FACILITATOR NAME, PHONE NUMBER, E-MAIL.
Dear [SCHOOL NAME] school staff:

This letter is to inform you of a new safety and wellness program we will be implementing with your assistance and support. This program will develop a coordinated school-community action plan on how to identify and support students exposed to domestic violence.

The effects of domestic violence on elementary school children can be devastating physically and emotionally. Exposure to domestic violence among family members, including hearing about the abuse after it has happened, can lead to the same negative outcomes as experiencing violence directly. Students exposed to domestic violence can have trouble learning and being positive participants in the classroom.

Schools, however, can make a difference. This program adopts a collaborative and coordinated approach between school staff and community agencies—such as law enforcement, domestic violence advocacy agencies, and mental health agencies—and parents. Our Coordinated Action Plan will outline what signs to look for in children and what you can do if you suspect or hear about domestic violence.

Further information on how you can help and what training opportunities will be available to you to assist in implementing this program will follow shortly.

Thank you for your cooperation and support.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

[Your name]
Appendix J: References


Supporting Children Exposed to Domestic Violence


