

People-Centered Screening and Assessment

Module 2 Abuse Assessment Screen



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Learning Objectives- All

- At the end of this module home visiting professionals will be able to:
- Understand the context and purpose of conducting an Abuse Assessment Screen.
 - Identify the correct screening protocol and pitfalls for WI MIECHV grantees.
 - Articulate the value of the screening for families.
 - Effectively frame the Abuse Assessment Screen and process for families.
 - Use the screen with greater intention and effectiveness to strengthen home visiting services and individualize support for families.

Learning Objectives- Supervisors

- At the end of the supervisor section of this module, supervisors will be able to:
- Consider tools and strategies to support home visitors in conducting the Abuse Assessment Screen as an integrated and effective part of home visiting services.

Tip Sheet

Abuse Assessment Screen

Quick Facts about the Tool

Author(s): Wiist, William H., and Judith McFarlane. 1999. "The Effectiveness of an Abuse Assessment Protocol in Public Health Prenatal Clinics." *American Journal of Public Health* 89(8): 1217-21. <http://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/pdf/10.2105/AJPH.89.8.1217>

Author's Intent: Reduce violence against women by asking and responding with support to women experiencing violence.

About the Tool: There are 5 questions and a Plan of Action if someone screens positive. It is available in English and Spanish, and the initial research included use with Spanish-speaking and English-speaking women.

Purpose

The intent of this tool is to reduce violence against women by asking and responding with support to women experiencing violence. It is available in English and Spanish, and the initial research included use with Spanish-speaking and English-speaking women.

Protocol

- The companion video, *Ask and Respond*, addresses these steps:
- Make sure that screening proceeds in a confidential, safe, and supportive setting.
- If someone screens positive, ask about violence and safety. If the screen is positive, ask the person about violence and safety. If the screen is positive, ask the person about violence and safety.
- Record responses and determine if there is a positive or negative screen.

Value to Families

- Family members receiving information about the tool and about the tool's use.
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Framing it for Families

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Purpose of the Tool

- Pregnant mothers and mothers of young children are at significant risk of violence.
- The Wisconsin Department of Children and Families added this tool to the suite of screens and assessments as a response to the prevalence of violence against women and the opportunity to support women in establishing and maintaining safety through high quality evidence-based home visiting.

Quick Facts about Violence Against Women- Nationally

According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence:

- One in every four women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime.
- An estimated 1.3 million women are victims of physical assault by an intimate partner each year.
- The majority (73%) of family violence victims are female.
- Females were 84% of spousal abuse victims and 86% of abuse victims at the hands of a boyfriend.
- Boys who witness domestic violence are twice as likely to abuse their own partners and children when they become adults.
- 25% or more of same sex couples experience domestic violence as known as intimate partner violence (Stiles-Shields & Carroll 2015)

Quick Facts about Violence Against Women- Wisconsin

According to the Wisconsin 2014 2020 Long-Range Plan for a Safe WI

- 714,000 Wisconsin women have been physically abused, sexually assaulted, or stalked by an intimate partner.
- Domestic violence victimization leads to a significantly higher risk of depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, suicide attempts, and drug abuse.

Quick Facts about Violence Against Women- WI MIECHV

Value of the Tool to Families

- Reduce stigma for survivors
- Opportunity to give voice to their experience, if they so choose
- Trauma-informed services make a difference in family/child outcomes
- Connect people with additional supports and resources
- Individualized services

Screening Protocol- Getting Started

- Be compassionate, open, and respectful when introducing the screening tool.
- Make sure that the person completing the screen can speak freely/safely.
- Make sure the screening process is conversational, unhurried, and delivered calmly.
- If you are already aware of abuse history, acknowledge awareness and explain that the screen simply insures that you haven't overlooked something important that happened in their life.

Screening Protocol- During the Screen

- Record responses and determine if there is a positive or negative screen. (Do not leave a copy of the materials in the home as this can increase risk.)
- Build a safety plan if the threat is current.
- Carefully explore the danger that exists.
- Provide a warm hand-off to community resources, if needed.
- If the threat isn't immediate but the person needs additional mental health support, inquire with the person about need for ongoing support with a warm hand-off to a community referral.

Screening Protocol- After the Screen

- Complete the tool within 60 days of enrollment and complete the follow-up on Plan of Action within 60 days of completion of Abuse Assessment Screen.
- Enter data into SPHERE.

Potential Pitfalls

- Don't assume that you know how someone will react to the screen.
- People are not necessarily ready or resistant to talk about abuse, so provide an introduction to it before screening.
- Don't assume that because someone is in a same sex relationship that they don't need to complete the screen.
- Don't just hand the family the screen and say, "Please fill this out."
- Don't leave a copy of the screen or safety plan in an unsafe place.
- Don't wait until you're entering the data into SPHERE to determine if it is a positive or negative screen.

Completing the Abuse Assessment Screen Can Strengthen Progress with a Family

- Supports safety planning
- Reduces barriers
- Builds trust
- Helps to contextualize family goal setting
 - Understanding a family's trauma history provides insight into parenting goals.
 - Understanding lived experiences can explain barriers.
 - Understanding procedural memories allows home visitors to be more intentional about parent education strategies.

Framing the Abuse Assessment Scale for Families

- Screens can be a valuable strategy to supporting a family's motivation to make positive changes.
- Tending to a family's need for compassion, openness/transparency, and autonomy during screening can strengthen motivation to change.
- Scripts or recommended talking points are not meant to be memorized. Instead, they are a guide for how you develop effective communication with families.

Let them know that You're not Singling them out for this Screen

"Many families face challenges. So, we ask everyone about how they've been treated in relationships."

Convey Compassion

"I really want to understand you and your family's history and needs so that I am able to offer services to meet the needs of what is unique about your family."

Be Open and Clear

"We ask these questions to all families we work with because often what parents experience in their own childhood can influence what happens or how they feel when they raise children of their own. By better understanding what is going on or what happened in your life, we can better work together so you can meet your goals."

Keep Families in the Driver's Seat

"I am going to go through some questions with you about difficult experiences you may or may not have had. If you want to talk more about what a question means, let me know. We can do that. If there is a question you'd prefer not to answer, let me know and we can skip it."

Addressing Worries/Confusion about Reporting

"This screen, like everything you share with me is confidential. This means that what you share with me is not reportable to child welfare or law enforcement. There are just two things that I would have to report—if you are suicidal, or your children are being harmed. This allows me to support safety."

Video- Clip 1 Introducing the Screen

Video- Reflection

- What were some strengths of how the Abuse Assessment Screen was introduced?
- What else might you add to strengthen how the Abuse Assessment Screen is offered?

Video- Clip 2 Completing the Screen

Video- Reflection

- What skills or strategies were used to follow the protocol and keep the screening warm and supportive?
- What skills or strategies do you use to integrate screening as a natural part of a home visit?

Video- Clip 3 Reviewing and Responding to the Screen

Video- Reflection

- How did the home visitor send the message to the parent/guardian that the screening was more than a required exercise or paperwork?
- What kind of follow-up do the parent/guardian and home visitor each need to do, if any?
- How might the information learned in this screening influence how a home visitor works with this parent/guardian?

Safety Plan for the Family - If Someone is Still in the Relationship

Key Ingredients for a Safety Plan from the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence

- Think of a safe place to go if an argument occurs - avoid rooms with no exits (bathroom), or rooms with weapons (kitchen).
- Think about and make a list of safe people to contact.
- Keep change with you at all times.
- Memorize all important numbers.
- Establish a "code word" or "sign" so that family, friends, teachers or co-workers know when to call for help.
- Think about what you will say to your partner if he/she becomes violent.

Written plans can be found by an abuser and trigger violence. Discussion-based planning can help.

See www.nacdv.org for safety planning guidance.

Safety Plan for the Family- If Someone Has Ended the Relationship

Key Ingredients for a Safety Plan from the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence

- Change your phone number.
- Screen calls.
- Save and document all contacts, messages, injuries or other incidents involving the batterer.
- Change locks, if the batterer has a key.
- Avoid staying alone.
- Plan how to get away if confronted by an abusive partner.
- If you have to meet your partner, do it in a public place.
- Vary your routine.
- Notify school and work contacts.
- Call a shelter for battered women.

See www.nacdv.org for safety planning guidance.

Reflective Exercise Related to Safety Planning- Journal Prompt

- How do you talk with someone experiencing domestic or intimate partner violence about change without sounding judgmental?
- When someone is in survival mode or actively experiencing trauma, how do you support planning and problem solving?

Home Visitor Safety Plan- Creating Safety for Home Visitors

- Understand your agency's domestic violence home visiting protocol.
- If domestic violence is disclosed by a client, discuss with a supervisor whether or not it is safe to deliver home visiting services in the home.

Home Visitor Safety Plan- Your Safety Matters Too!

- Meet with the family/parent at the office if the situation is not safe
- Establish check in times with your office
- Park with front of vehicle pointed toward exit
- Observe and listen before entering a home
- Do not enter the home until you see the client at the door
- Position yourself near the door/exit in the household
- Have emergency numbers in your cell phone and set on auto-dial
- Always stay aware of your surroundings and look for behavioral clues
- Pay attention to warning signs of a dangerous situation (adapted from tcfv.org home visitor self-care)

Reflective Exercise 2- Debriefing with a Colleague or Supervisor

- What are your own beliefs and values about people experiencing domestic violence/intimate partner violence?
- What do you see/hear/feel/smell that might make you concerned about your safety during a home visit?
- If you measured your professional success based on reducing isolation and increasing options for someone who is a victim of domestic violence rather than whether or not they leave the abusive partner, how would that impact your job satisfaction?

Supervisor Resources

Support Home Visitor and Family Safety

- If you're going to screen for an issue like domestic/intimate partner violence, have a clear agency protocol and best practices in place as a foundation.
- If you don't have a protocol, check out this great free resource to support your program in developing one and reach out to local domestic violence experts for support in your protocol development-
http://www.tcfv.org/wpcontent/uploads/2012/09/Domestic_Violence_Protocol_for_Home_Visiting_Programs.pdf
- Ongoing training and support is important to reinforce the home visitors confidence and competence.

Preparing Staff to Screen for Abuse

- Know the signs of vicarious trauma, secondary trauma, and compassion fatigue and teach your team the signs.
- Intentionally recruit home visitors who have strong boundaries and who are comfortable bearing witness to and responding to disclosures of abuse/trauma.
- Teach and coach toward best practice standards for effectively screening for abuse and responding to abuse disclosures.

What is Vicarious Trauma?

- Negative impact on professionals who work with people who have experienced trauma (McCann and Pearlman 1990)
- Professional may experience trauma if the person they serve has experienced trauma in related ways to the professional's own lived experiences.
- Compassion Fatigue, which is also called "vicarious traumatization" or secondary traumatization (Figley, 1995), is defined as "the emotional residue or strain of exposure to working with those suffering from the consequences of traumatic events. It differs from burn-out, but can co-exist. Compassion Fatigue can occur due to exposure on one case or can be due to a "cumulative" level of trauma.

Defining Secondary Trauma and Compassion Fatigue

- The effect of traumatic contagion (Rosenheck and Nahan 1985)
- Cost of caring which is natural, predictable, treatable, and preventable (Figley 1995)
- Compassion Fatigue/Secondary Traumatic Stress- nearly identical symptoms to PTSD
- Silencing response may ensue which interferes with the professional's ability to attend to the needs of the person they are serving

Secondary Trauma & Compassion Fatigue

Know the Signs

- Emotional exhaustion
 - Reduced sense of personal accomplishment or meaning in work
 - Mental exhaustion
 - Decreased interactions with others (isolation)
 - Depersonalization (symptoms disconnected from real causes)
 - Physical exhaustion
- (American Institute of Stress 2015)

Tools for Helping Professionals Cope

- Professional Quality of Life Scale (Hudnall Stamm, 2009-2012)
http://proqol.org/ProQoL_Test.html
- Promote Resiliency and Prevent Compassion Fatigue (Hudnall Stamm, 2009-2012)
http://proqol.org/Helper_Pocket_Card.html
- Self-Care Assessment Worksheet (Saakvitne, Pearlman, 1996)
www.ecu.edu/cs-dhs/rehb/upload/Wellness_Assessment.pdf
- Your Employee Assistance Plan

Recruiting Home Visitors

During the interview process, tell candidates that part of this job involves asking questions about parents'/guardians experiences with abuse.

Let potential home visitors know that disclosures of abuse among participating families are NOT uncommon.

Give candidates a few minutes to review the screen, ask them to role play administering the screen during the interview.

Sample interview questions might include:

- Using a screening tool, how would you approach asking questions about a parent's history of abuse?
- If someone discloses significant abuse how will you show compassion and keep the focus on the parents needs and interests?
- How might knowing about a parents' abuse history help you work with them more effectively as a home visitor?
- If you heard something during screening that was disturbing to you, how would you address your own feelings and needs about what you'd heard?

Orienting New Staff

- Discuss the amount of domestic violence and other forms of abuse in Wisconsin families and families in your caseload.
- Describe the impacts of domestic violence on child development.
- Schedule attendance at the next Abuse Assessment Screen training offered by the UW Milwaukee Child Welfare Training Partnership.
- Introduce new staff to people in the community who work on DV issues.
- Share and review the Abuse Assessment Screen tip sheet with new home visitors or home visitors expressing discomfort with administering the screen.
- The first time administering the screen should not be with a home visiting family; it should be in a role play with a supervisor or colleagues.
- Provide multiple role play opportunities to conduct the screen within the first 90 days of employment.
- Support safety planning with clear expectations and agency policies and protocols about what to do if a home feels unsafe.

Support a Reflective Approach

- Discuss feelings and reactions to administering the Abuse Assessment Screen with home visitors during staff meetings and/or during one-on-one supervision.
- Listen without judgment.
- Explore if any of the reflective exercises or other reflective activities might help process delivery of the screen.
- The supervisor and home visitor can consider together the implications of screening results on service delivery and add ideas to case notes.
- Identify staff who are comfortable and effective in delivering the screen and pair them with colleagues to practice skills.

Administration and Quality

- Monitor completion of the Abuse Assessment Screen using the Home Visiting Data Collection Table.
- Monitor documentation of screening results in SPHERE at least quarterly for newly enrolled families.
- Analyze data to see if there are any trends in completion rate, documentation of follow-up, and family outcomes.
- The supervisor and home visitor can consider together the implications of screening results on service delivery and add ideas to case notes.

Resources

- Domestic Violence Protocol Template
http://www.tcfv.org/wpcontent/uploads/2012/09/Domestic_Violence_Protocol_for_Home_Visiting_Programs.pdf
- The Abuse Assessment Screen-
Read a summary of the research about the screen.
<https://www.crimesolutions.gov/ProgramDetails.aspx?ID=165>
- Find domestic violence resources in Wisconsin.
<http://www.wcadv.org/gethelp/search>
- Find Sexual Assault Survivor Services in Wisconsin.
<http://www.wcasa.org/pages/SASPs.php>
- Same-Sex Domestic Violence: Prevalence, Unique Aspects, and Clinical Implications
<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0092623X.2014.958792?journalCode=usmt20>

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