

*Making prevention the priority-*

## New Initiatives to Protect Children from Domestic Violence

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### Today's Presentation- New Initiatives on Child Protection

1) Tertiary Prevention:

- ◆ Helping traumatized children
  - Restorative Parenting
  - Therapeutic Interventions

2) Secondary Prevention:

- ◆ Yale Domestic Violence-Home Visit Intervention Project

3) Primary Prevention:

- ◆ Adult responsibility in child sexual abuse prevention
- ◆ Mandated Reporting of child victims and witnesses
  - by the San Diego County Child Victim-Witness Protocol Committee
- 4) Implications to Hong Kong: What we can do further?

### What is trauma?

- When a child feels intensely threatened by an event he or she is involved in or witnesses, we call that event a trauma. Child traumatic stress (CTS) is a psychological reaction that some children have to a traumatic experience.

~The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)

### Trauma and Child Traumatic Stress

#### *acute traumatic events*

- School shootings
- Gang-related violence in the community
- Terrorist attacks
- Natural disasters (for example, earthquakes, floods, or hurricanes)
- Serious accidents
- Sudden or violent loss of a loved one
- Physical or sexual assault

#### *chronic traumatic situations*

- Some forms of physical abuse
- Long-standing sexual abuse
- Domestic violence
- Wars and other forms of political violence

## Child traumatic Stress

- occurs when children and adolescents are exposed to traumatic events or traumatic situations, and when this exposure overwhelms their ability to cope with what they have experienced.
  - disturbed sleep,
  - difficulty paying attention and concentrating, anger and irritability,
  - Withdrawal or Aggression
  - repeated and intrusive thoughts,
  - extreme distress—when confronted by anything that reminds them of their traumatic experiences.
  - posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, and a variety of behavioral disorders.



## What about Resilience?

- Not all children are negatively affected
- 63% of children exposed to DV show worse outcomes than children not exposed
- 37% do not differ from comparison group (Kitzman, 2003)



## Child Predictors of Resilience

- Good relationships with Consistent caregivers
  - High self esteem
  - Internal locus of control
  - External attribution of blame
  - Above average cognitive abilities
- (Heller, et al.,1999)



## Impact of Trauma on Caregiver-Child Relationship

- Loss of sense of caregiver as reliable protector
- Disturbed mental representations of who is safe and who is dangerous
- Loss of capacity to sustain representations of caregiver as secure base
- Often intense and contradictory emotions

(Lieberman & Van Horn, 1998)



## Impact of Trauma on the Caregiver

- When the caregiver has experienced interpersonal trauma:
  - The ability to establish and maintain an empathic relationship with the child may be impaired
  - The caregiver may have a decreased capacity to recognize danger or stress
  - The caregiver may need to protect him/herself from feelings of vulnerability & trauma
- The caregiver may have trouble tolerating the child's sadness, anxiety or aggression

## Helping traumatized children - Including parents is important

- Remember that the parent is the child's most important source of comfort and stability
- Work through the parent rather than directly with the child
- Attend to the parent's emotional state
- Don't take over the parent's function
- Focus on parent-child relationship

## Fostering Responsive Parenting

- Help parents understand symptoms and behaviors
- Provide specific strategies for behavioral intervention
- Help parents read and respond to cues, enhance parent/child interactions
- Help parent talk to child about traumatic experience

• Betsy McAlister Groves, LICSW,  
Director, Child Witness to Violence  
Project, Boston Medical Center

## Restorative Parenting- Domestic Violence Project (DVP)

- To establish a process for restoring the relationship between parent and child in the aftermath of violence toward a sense of wholeness for each person
  - 2 priorities:
    - Safety for all participants
    - Establishing or increasing accountability measures

David Mathews, Psy.D, LICSW, Domestic Abuse Project, 2006

## Restorative Parenting Assumptions

- Parents are able to change
- Parents desire the best for their children
- Children view their parents differently after violence
- “Normal” parenting programs needed to be modified



## Targets of RP

- Parents whose families and children have experienced a major life transition, trauma or loss
- Men who have been abusive to family members and are parents
- Women who are survivors of abuse and are parents



## Unique Themes for Intervention

- Understanding violence
- Accountability and responsibility
- Awareness of self and other parent
- Understanding of their children
- Restoration of relationship process
- Experience with and application of new behaviors



## Therapeutic Interventions for child victims or witnesses

1. Trauma Assessment
2. Evidenced-Based Therapy Services



### 1) Trauma Assessment for children:

- All children who have been abused should be assessed to determine if they are in need of trauma informed therapeutic services
  - ✓ Standardized assessments
  - ✓ A clinical interview of the child
  - ✓ Interview of parents and other caretakers



### 2) Evidenced-Based Therapy Services

- Promote healing and not be forensic
- Trauma-focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
- Parent-child Interaction Therapy
- Therapists should be trained in Evidence Based Treatment
- Support from Parents is essential



### Yale Domestic Violence –Home Visit Intervention Project

- The Child Development-Community Policing Program
- To increase officer awareness of the needs of children exposed to violence and trauma
- To link traumatized children to immediate developmentally appropriate services
- Increase coordination of services for families and eliminate duplication
- Decrease long-term effects of trauma by providing early intervention



### What they do?

- Home visit to the homes of families who have reported DV to the Police
- Visits are made within 1 week but typically within 72 hours
- Engage battered women through community- based outreach
- Concern for children



## Program Result (Sept,06)

- Program implementation areas: North Tryon (1998), Freedom and Steele Creek (2001), Westover (2004), Eastway(2006)
- Over 6730 cases referred, average 2 children per case
- Over half of the cases include at least one child 5 years old or younger
- 50% are DV victims
- ~ Evaluation results: children felt the police helped their families and felt safer after intervention  
(Charlotte-Mecklenburg, 2005)



## Adult's responsibility of protecting children

- "Schools have program to teach children about sexual abuse prevention-but what about adults? Shouldn't they be more responsible than a six-year-old?"
- More than 80% of sexual abuse cases happened in one-adult/one-child situations
- Only 29% of parents ever mentioned or discussed sexual abuse with their children
- A child's safety is an adult's job



## Mandated Reporting of child victims and witnesses

- Mandated Reporting and reporting procedures
  - Mandated reporters:
    - School personnel, health practitioners, employees of child protective agencies, commercial film or photographic print processors, child visitation monitors, etc
    - Physical Abuse, Neglect, Emotional Abuse, Sexual Abuse



## Reporting Procedures

- Steps to Take:
  - Listen Carefully
  - Questions & Tone
  - Verbal Support and Reassurance
  - Contact
  - Complete report
  - Notify
  - Send (within 36 hours)



### **From dialog to action: the implications to Hong Kong**

- What we can do further for parents with traumatized children?
- Mandated parenting groups for batterers?
- Enhance adult's responsibility on child abuse prevention ?
- Mandated reporting across child welfare service professionals?

**Let us all Join and Make the Prevention the priority for our children !**



#### Recommended Websites:

- <http://nctsn.org>
- <http://www.childwitnessstoviolence.org>
- <http://www.domesticabuseproject.org>
- <http://www.nccev.org/initiatives/cdcp/>
- <http://www.chadwickcenter.com>
- <http://ww.darkness2light.org>