

Champaign S.O.F.T.T. Domestic Violence Forum

9-11-08 Meeting Notes

Panel Moderators: **Darryn Holt** (LSSI)?

Cassandra Woolfolk (Catholic Charities)

Welcome: Oscar Gipson (African American Advisory Council)

Heidi Gulbrandson (DCFS- Urbana)

Panelists:

Tamela Atwood (DCFS- CPS)

Tara Gilman (DCFS- CPS)

John DeLamar- GAL (Retired judge)

Belinda Meyn (Cognition Works)

Mary Stauffer (A Woman's Place)

Pam Burnside ( Public Defender)

Julia Reitz ( Champaign States Attorney)

Lieutenant Anthony Cobb (Urbana Police Department)

Comments from the panelists:

◇ Meyn: Described the symptoms, signs and cycle of domestic violence

◇ Atwood: Described the protective custody process and connection to domestic violence and substance abuse.

◇ Reitz: Clarified the 3 different types of domestic violence-

1. Victim/perpetrator
2. Mutual perpetrators
3. Teens abusive to parents

◇ Burnside: Clarified that domestic battery “includes intimidating/provoking touch”.

◇ Lt. Cobb: Domestic violence in and of itself is not a crime. The crime is “battery”, destruction of property. Lt. Cobb states that from the police’s perspective, (UPD), “if there is risk to one child, there is risk to all children. Mr Cobb states that if they investigate a DV report and one child is exposed to parental violence, their policy is to remove all children “even if the other children are outside of the home when the dv incident occurs”.

◇ Reitz; We look at ongoing history of violence in the family. Even if there is not a risk of harm, the SA may file a petition based on repeated history of DV calls.

◇ Gilman: Other factors considered for PC include history, # of instances of DV, if there is a weapon involved, and did the parent take steps to protect the child.

◇ Atwood: There are complex issues involved in DV. Mom may not be at fault if it can be proven that she took steps to protect herself and the child.

◇ DeLamar: From the GAL’s perspective, there are physical and emotional changes in children exposed to DV even if they have not been abused. The state can find “imminent and urgent necessity” if there is a history of violence in the home. If all children are not removed from the home, what message does this send to the single child who is singled out for removal?

◇ Reitz: Every DV case does not result in ending a relationship. Victims and offenders must take steps to resolve the situation. “It doesn’t mean you have to file for divorce, but you have to do something [to rectify the situation]”.

◇ Stauffer: The shelter does not accommodate male victims of DV but they will put a male victim up in a hotel.

#### Corporal punishment-

◇ Atwood: Corporal punishment is not illegal. Safety issues include age of the child, existence of injuries. These factors must be assessed.

◇ Reitz: Aggravated battery to a child is a class X felony. Bruises are not enough, there must be severe injury. Domestic battery is considered a class A misdemeanor if there are bruises only. The state looks at the situation as a whole. “we will be as aggressive as possible to protect children.

◇ Burnside: What do we do with teens? This is a problem because this community has no support for parents who are having problems with teen violence in the home. Parents are charged with domestic battery for disciplining a teen.

◇ DeLamar: If parents choose corporal punishment, they need to take responsibility for keeping the child free from harm and injury.

◇ Cobb: Our role is to support parents and to allow them to parent their children and have authority in the home. We may let DCFS make the call. It is case by case but the law allows for a lot of latitude.

◇ Reitz: There is a new service that we hope to bring to C-U w/ Peter Tracy and Joe Gordon. Parenting with Love and Limits ([www.gopll.com](http://www.gopll.com)). This is an evidence-based parenting and counseling program for parents and youth. Additional services include operation snowball and Lifequest Center.

◇ De Lamar: Parents should call the police if a child uses violence in the home. The first time a child becomes violent, the parent should make the call to the authorities. There should be zero tolerance. There are alternatives to criminal prosecution, and diversion programs.

Question and answers:

*Q: Will you consider adding foster parents to the next panel?*

Yes

***Q: How can African American parents advocate for themselves when they cannot hire a private attorney?***

◇ Burnside: Schedule an appointment with their PD; document all conversations, document attendance to all counseling sessions and meetings with caseworkers.

***Q: How do you balance trauma from DV with trauma from separating a child from the family?***

◇ Atwood: No easy answers. Relative placements may reduce the trauma. We balance this all the time.

***Q: Why does domestic violence impact African American families in greater numbers than other groups?***

◇ Reitz: SES; single parenthood, teen pregnancy, pa ramours, if one grows up observing violence, a cycle of poverty and violence.

◇ Cobb: When people are more visible or live in close quarters (around extended families) they are under greater scrutiny and are more likely to have someone make a call if DV is observed. In higher income families, DV may occur behind closed doors with no one being aware.

***Q: Is there a rise in teen dating violence?***

◇ Reitz: Not in high numbers. It is more common to see girls fighting other girls over boyfriends.

Panel discussion ends. Surveys collected by SOFTT .