

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		61
Chapter:	Child Safety Interventions	
Subject:	Responding to Domestic Violence in Child Safety Interventions	Page 1 of 3
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Purpose

To define the roles and responsibilities of Centralized Intake and Emergency Services (CIES), district social worker and supervisory staff, and domestic violence unit staff when responding to co-existing child abuse or neglect and domestic violence cases.

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Introduction

It is widely accepted that achieving safety and stability for children is closely linked to creating safety for the adult victim in co-occurring child abuse and domestic violence cases. Removing risks posed by the parent using battering behavior is critical to achieving child safety.

Interventions designed to address child abuse and neglect can potentially escalate violence to adult and child victims of domestic violence. The Domestic Violence Unit has the expertise to assist division staff with the coordination and development of appropriate and effective interventions in child abuse or neglect cases involving domestic violence.

For more information, see the Family Services [Domestic Violence Position Paper](#).

Definitions

Domestic Violence (also commonly referred to as **Intimate Partner Violence** or **IPV**): A pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors including physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, and economic coercion that an adult or adolescent uses to obtain and maintain control over their intimate partner. For the purposes of this

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definition, domestic violence does not typically include child abuse, child to parent violence or sibling violence, which are considered forms of family violence.

Policy

Case consultation by the Domestic Violence Unit is a necessary component to identify specific strategies to achieve child safety in cases where domestic violence is present. Social workers and supervisors are expected to utilize case consultation provided by the Domestic Violence Unit in conjunction with knowledge previously learned through training and case consultations. The goal of consultation is to maximize resources, improve consistency of response throughout the life of the case, and achieve outcomes of safety, permanency and well-being.

CIES staff shall inquire with all reporters about their knowledge of domestic violence in the family if it is not evident in the narrative of the report. When domestic violence is alleged, the CIES social worker will select the domestic violence checkbox on the intake screen, which will automatically send an email prompt to the domestic violence specialist assigned to the local district office. The domestic violence specialist will review the intake and outreach to the district office front end social worker or ongoing social worker when applicable.

Accepted Intakes

The Domestic Violence Unit will provide consultation to division staff on all intakes that are accepted for a child safety intervention with co-existing domestic violence concerns.

When domestic violence is a primary child safety concern with level 1 response time, the social worker or supervisor should contact the Domestic Violence Unit (if the Domestic Violence Unit has not yet contacted them) before contacting the family to commence the child safety intervention and interview the child at risk or any adult in the family.

In other cases where domestic violence is not the primary child safety concern and the report was accepted for other child maltreatment, the Domestic Violence Unit staff will contact the social worker or supervisor by phone or e-mail within 48 hours of intake acceptance. If a more immediate response is needed, the social workers or supervisor may contact the Domestic Violence Unit directly via cell phone or email.

For additional guidance, refer to the Family Services [Protocol for Conducting Child Abuse Investigations When Domestic Violence and Child Abuse/Neglect Co-occur](#).

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Unaccepted Intakes

The Domestic Violence Unit will review all intakes that are not accepted which have domestic violence listed as a primary child safety concern. The Domestic Violence Unit will assess reports made by community service providers or professionals to determine the need for consultation and training to the reporter or reporter’s agency to increase awareness and resources about children/youth and domestic violence. The domestic violence specialist will append the intake when an outreach to the reporter is made. If the reporter provides any new information, this will be included on the append and the domestic violence specialist will notify CIES supervisors by email of the new information.

The Domestic Violence Unit will not make contact regarding reports by family members, relatives, natural support systems, or friends unless outreach can be conducted safely.

Domestic Violence Identified Post-Intake

Domestic violence is not always identified by the reporter during the intake process. In situations where the front end or ongoing social worker has identified domestic violence as a safety concern or complicating factor in a family, consultation with the Domestic Violence Unit is strongly recommended as part of the risk and safety assessment or prior to family engagement meetings. Additionally, the Domestic Violence Unit should be consulted at significant decision-making points in a case including filing affidavits or changes to child custody status. These case changes often have implications to adult and child victim’s safety plans.

For specific guidance on documentation of domestic violence, see Family Services [Policy 41](#): Case Notes.