Learner Objectives

• Understand the goals of violence exposure assessment

• Understand the importance of protecting sensitive information about domestic violence

• Be able to develop assessment questions for a child

• Understand the purpose and be able to develop a comprehensive assessment of child exposure to domestic violence
Goals of the Assessment

• Hear the child’s story

• Assess the safety of adults and children

• Understand the meaning the child attributes to the events

• Understand how the child is coping with or responding to the events and the aftermath

• Understand child and family strengths and protective factors

(McAlister Groves, Roberts, Winreb, 2000)
Cyclical Stages of Understanding Domestic Violence

Stage 1: **Recolletion** of events
Stage 2: Determining **causality**
Stage 3: Assigning meaning, i.e., **moralization**

Eisikovits and Winstok (2001)
INTRODUCTION TO JAMIE’S STORY

Jamie’s Story comes from a digital storytelling project organized by Zero Tolerance for Domestic Violence Initiative of Contra Costa County in California, http://www.contracostazt.org/

Click to play the movie
Reflecting on Jamie’s Story

• Think about how Jamie’s earliest recollection of domestic violence shaped her understanding of the events.

• How did Jamie assign meaning to the domestic violence?

• What causes do you think Jamie attributed to the violence?

• How did Jamie’s understanding of the domestic violence shape her view of family?
Assessment Techniques

• Structured interviews

• Assessment tools (CEDV)

• Drawing pictures and storytelling
  – Can help decrease anxiety
  – Useful for younger children
Setting up the Assessment

• Suggestions to keep in mind…
  – Conduct the interview in a space that is confidential and safe for the child
  – Child-friendly spaces that are designed with child sized furniture and toys
  – A place that is out of hearing range of parents
  – Removed from the context of the violence

(McAlister Groves, Roberts, Winreb, 2000; Peled & Davis, 1995)
Ask the Expert: Betsy McAlister Groves

“Why is this parent reluctant to leave the Area or to have me interview this child? It is important to assess the possible reasons which may include the following:

1. Age/developmental stage
2. The parent’s and the child’s understanding of the interview.
3. Direct interference by a parent who wants to hear what the child is saying, or does not want the child to talk about certain things.

• Do not compromise the child’s psychological and physical safety by putting pressure on the child to talk.

• If you are in doubt about the safety of the situation, do not interview the child.”

What if you cannot interview the child alone?

(For example, if you are doing in-home interviewing, the parent is hovering or not allowing the child to have his own space.)

Click here for a full outline of Betsy McAlister Groves response.
Basic Guidelines For Age Appropriate Language

• Short and simple sentences
  – 3 to 5 words
  – One concept or idea
• Remove unnecessary clauses:
  – “Can you tell me about”
  – “Do you remember”

(Bourg et al., 1999)
Basic Guidelines For Age Appropriate Language

- Test knowledge and understanding of certain words or phrases

- Avoid “Why” questions
  - 7-10 may be able to answer about themselves
  - 10-13 may be able to answer about others

(Bourg et al., 1999)
Establishing the Interview’s Focus

- Describe your role with the child

- Address confidentiality and it’s limits

- Communicate concern

- Provide a brief and general overview

Groves, Roberts & Weinreb, 2000)
Respecting the Child’s Boundaries

- Honor the child’s loyalty to the abusive parent
- Respect right not to talk or hesitance to share – forcing the issue will likely result in a complete shut down of communication
- Don’t force a child to leave their parents
- Don’t make promises you can’t keep

(Groves, Roberts & Weinreb, 2000; Peled & Davis, 1995)
Free Drawing and Story Telling

- “Can you draw a picture that you can tell me a story about?”
- Helps to break the ice and open a dialogue
- Use with younger children
- Transition into direct questions

(Groves, Roberts, Weinreb, 2000; Lieberman & Van Horn, 2004; Peled & Davis, 1995; Bourg et al, 1999)
A four year old boy who had witnessed chronic domestic violence initially denied any trouble at home to the interviewer. She asked if he would like to draw a picture of his family. He immediately agreed to do so and drew a picture of himself, his mother, father, and a younger brother.

He constructed the picture so that their home was drawn as a large square, covering most of the space on the paper. The family members were small figures, standing on either side of the large house: the boy and his mother on one side; the younger brother and the father on the other side.

The family alliances were clear, as was the separation between the parents. When asked what would happen if everyone went into the house, the little boy relied that they would start fighting. In this way, the interviewer was able to begin to talk with the boy about the fighting at home.
Types of Questions

• Open ended questions
  – Allow a free running narrative
  – Start with general and move to more specific

• Focused questions

• Multiple-Choice Questions

• Be conscious about leading

(Bourg, et al., 1999)
Resources

Handout:
• Sample Questions - for use as an example only, NOT an assessment tool
  – Click Here to download the handouts

Website:
Child Welfare Information Gateway
Power and Control Wheel

Abuse can be:
• Physical
• Sexual
• Emotional

Resource:
Power and Control Wheel at Domestic Abuse and Intervention Programs
Assessing the Abuse

- Type
- Severity
- Frequency
- Chronicity
Types of Exposure

Seeing & Hearing

• Hearing about the event afterwards

• Seeing the aftermath of the abuse

• Seeing or Hearing the event from nearby or far away
Child Involvement in Events

- Nine times more likely to intervene (Adamson & Thompson, 1988).

- Children actively involve, distract parents or distance themselves (Garcia O’Hearn et al., 1997; Peled, 1998).

- Children are more likely to intervene when the batterer is not a biological parent (Edleson, et al., 2003)

**Possible Intervention Examples:**
Calling police, alerting neighbors, intervening in the violence, yelling for the violence to stop
Coping Strategies

• Assessing the coping strategies informs the practitioner about how the child has organized their thoughts about the violence.

• Use of emotion-focused strategies vs. problem focused strategies

  **Examples:**
  Reckless behavior, defiance, new fears, etc.

(Garcia O’Hearn, Margolin & John, 1997; Lieberman & Van Horn, 2004; Peled, 1993)
Strengths Assessment

- Central to building effective intervention
- Part of every assessment category
- Helps to assess the general level of functioning of the child and family

(Groves, Roberts, Weinreb, 2000; Bourg, et al., 1999; MN DHS, 2001)

Resource:
Battered Women’s Protective Strategies by Sherry Hamby
Ending the Interview

• Positive Note

• Allow the child to ask questions

• Guide the child through what will happen next

(Bourg, 1999; Groves, Roberts, & Weinreb, 2000)