Child Exposure to Domestic Violence & Pregnancy

Defining Child Exposure to Violence
Domestic violence exposure includes a variety of experiences of children in homes where one adult is using violent actions to control another adult (Edleson, 2006; Fantuzzo & Mohr, 1999):
- Seeing and hearing violent incidents; intervening to stop the violence; and experiencing the aftermath of the violence.

Incidence of Child Exposure to Domestic Violence
A recent national survey of youth found that 27% of American youth between 14 and 17 have been exposed to adult domestic violence during their lifetimes (Pinkelhor et al., 2009).

New Research on Partner Violence: Before, during and after pregnancy
A longitudinal study by Macy et al. (2007) found that:
- Physical and sexual abuse of pregnant mothers increased during pregnancy and postpartum periods to assist with the development of programs and services to help fill these gaps.

Method
- Modeled after Sadovsky’s (2010) Best Practice Assessment Guide to evaluate coordinated community responses to domestic violence. The purpose of conducting such an assessment is to gain information about how programs/policies/practices implement best practices in multiple domains and make recommendations according to the findings.
- Community consultations with practitioners.
- Focus groups with fathers and mothers.

Transition to Fatherhood

Becoming a Father has Benefits
- Fragile Families Study of 2,494 new fathers analyzed why and how the arrival of a new child may influence the fathers’ well-being and social participation.
- Changes in commitments to fathering were positively associated with changes in well-being, religious participation, and hours in paid labor.
- Greater commitments to fathering seemed likely to benefit mothers, children, and society at large (Knoester, Petts & Eggebeen, 2007).

Another contributing factor: Father’s relationship to mother of child
- Father’s Study of young new fathers (ages 15-24). The father–mother relationship was particularly important for men making the transition to fatherhood (Easterbrook et al., 2007).
- Fragile Families Urban Essex found the best predictor of a father’s involvement with his child was the quality of his relationship with the mother (Deklyen, 2007).

Engaging Men in the Context of Prenatal Care
- Interviews with young unmarried men suggested that female-centered care increased men’s perception of marginalization—especially when feeling s were reinforced by partners and extended families (Leite, 2007).

New fathers and early childhood periods
- The changing expectations of fathers necessitate the exploration of their needs, including increased social supports, engagement in the prenatal process, and more education on child development.
- Addressing the needs of new and expectant fathers may increase positive father involvement and decrease the risk for violence against women and children.
- The purpose of the First Time Fathers project is to identify the gaps in engaging new and expectant fathers during pregnancy and postpartum periods to assist with the development of programs and services to help fill these gaps.

Focus Groups with Fathers

Sample
Six Focus Groups
- IP:7
- Four Programs

Marital Status
- Married/Partnered – 79%
- Single – 21%

Race/Ethnicity
- European Amer. – (47%)
- African Amer. - (41%)
- American Indian – (6%)

Measuring Social Support
Identified Supports
- Fathers most frequently identified a parent or grandparent as the person they would go to for assistance of personal/private matters, material aid, advice, and physical assistance.
- Friends and informal mentors were most frequently identified as the people from whom fathers actually received support.
- A number of fathers also identified a formal service provider as someone they would go to for personal/private matters, material aid, advice, and physical assistance.

Length of Relationship
- Fathers typically went to people that they had a longer, more established relationship with when they needed material aid or physical assistance (i.e., family).
- When fathers needed to talk to someone about a personal or private matter they often went to people with whom they had a newer relationship (i.e., friends, mentors, formal service providers).
- Romantic partners or the mother of their child were rarely mentioned as sources of support for personal/private matters, material aid, advice, or physical assistance.

Preliminary Practice Implications
- Fathers are open to developing new supportive relationships for personal and emotional needs around parenting.
- Emphasizing existing family relationships as potential sources of emotional and personal support would provide fathers with stronger and more cohesive support networks.

First Time Fathers Study

Interviews with Practitioners
- 7 interviews from January through April 2011 with practitioners working in urban community medical clinic, home visiting program, and community education
- 2 open-ended questions about interactions and experiences with engaging with women and men during the prenatal and early childhood periods.

Findings

Material/Child Focus
- Limited father-specific information
- Programs & policies are centered on maternal health and well-being

Domestic Violence
- Limited screening for DV
- DV influences interpretation of father involvement
- Father specific programs cognizant of domestic violence issues

Male Involvement
- Court ordered
- Custody agreements
- Child Support
- Voluntarily involved tend to be older men

Recommendations
- Family centered policies and programs
- Continued assistance to practitioners
- Social media tools
- Develop father support
- Fatherhood Domestic violence Issues around class & race
- Fathers
- New fathers
- Practitioners
- Mentors
- Networks
- Programs

For more information, visit: www.minnesota.edu/mmvp/