

**Executive Summary**  
**GREENBOOK CPS TOOLBOX**  
**MEETING**  
**Washington, DC • July 19, 2002**

Background

The Greenbook CPS Toolbox Meeting was the first gathering of child welfare workers and administrators from five of the six Greenbook sites. The National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators (NAPCWA), an affiliate of the American Public Human Services Association and member of the Greenbook Initiative Technical Assistance Team, hosted the meeting. The goals of the meeting were:

- ◆ to allow the participants to meet one another and receive support from their peers;
- ◆ to develop a better understanding of the Greenbook Initiative as a whole; and
- ◆ to begin a dialogue on child welfare issues that have begun to emerge from the Greenbook sites.

The sites discussed their accomplishments thus far in the initiative and issues that are challenging in collaborative work. Participants also received materials, resources, and information on accessing technical assistance and had the opportunity to talk with federal partners, members of the technical assistance team, and a representative of the national evaluation team.

Participants

Susan Kelly, a nationally known expert on domestic violence in child protective cases, facilitated the toolbox meeting. Ms. Kelly currently serves as a consultant to the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Center for the Study of Social Policy. She was formerly with the Michigan Family Independence Agency where she was an architect of Michigan's model collaborative between domestic violence and CPS.

Prior to the toolbox meeting, Ms. Kelly contacted the participants and gleaned their thoughts and ideas on discussion topics for the meeting. Eleven participants from Grafton County, New Hampshire, St. Louis County, Missouri, El Paso County, Colorado, Santa Clara County, California and San Francisco County, California attended the meeting. Lane County, Oregon was unable to attend.

## The Meeting

Attendees spent the morning getting to know one another and discussing what their work means to them. Lauren Litton, Greenbook Program Manager from the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges gave an overview of the National Greenbook Initiative. Crystal Jackson, Training Coordinator from the Massachusetts Department of Social Services Domestic Violence Unit delivered a presentation entitled “Domestic Violence Interventions in Child Protection: One Approach.” Participants learned the mission and history of this pioneering collaboration in Massachusetts, discussed how the unit operates and were given the chance to ask questions.

Participants then broke into their respective sites and listed three accomplishments and one challenge arising from their Greenbook collaboration. Examples of site accomplishments include:

- ◆ Implementation of new policies and protocols, as well as the creation of new domestic violence specialist positions in child welfare agencies;
- ◆ Development of meaningful collaboration and partnerships across systems;
- ◆ Cross training opportunities;
- ◆ Increased recognition by CPS workers and administrators and the courts that domestic violence needs to be addressed in child welfare cases; and
- ◆ Systems evaluations (including child welfare agencies’ response to domestic violence cases) that will help inform best practices and policy changes.

Examples of challenges include:

- ◆ How to maintain programs and services in a time of fiscal crisis;
- ◆ How to collaborate when there is still fundamental disagreement and distrust among the systems;
- ◆ How to make sure policy changes and Greenbook ideas are filtered down and integrated into practice; and
- ◆ How to move from planning to implementation.

During the site presentation there was a lively exchange of information on how sites operate, how sites have faced different challenges, and how different protocols and policies have been or are in the process of being implemented.

Over lunch participants were given time to network and share information and insights with one another.

The afternoon was spent discussing issues that participants identified as challenges to their work at their sites. The goal of this exercise was to discuss the challenges, further identify them and begin to dialogue about potential solutions. Participants were also able to see that many of the challenges are occurring at all the Greenbook sites and that they are not alone in their struggles. Examples of the issues that were identified are:

- ◆ Staff turnover makes it difficult to keep staff well trained on this issue;
- ◆ It is a challenge to integrate domestic violence into everyday experience;
- ◆ The Greenbook recommendations are not yet a “way of doing business,” especially for front line workers;
- ◆ We still have a need for cross-system listening;
- ◆ Policy needs to be supported by good protocols;
- ◆ There is a lack of empathy for front line workers in terms of how difficult it is to do this work;
- ◆ Paperwork can get in the way - there is a documentation deluge;
- ◆ Co-existing issues (mental health, substance abuse) complicate the work;
- ◆ Communication is not always good among partners;
- ◆ Timeline requirements in ASFA make the work difficult;
- ◆ Good supervision is necessary;
- ◆ How to respectfully address the reality that some victims do neglect children;
- ◆ Balancing child safety and re-victimization;
- ◆ Confidentiality - feeling that CPS is more willing to share information than domestic violence service providers; and
- ◆ Overcoming the public’s mistrust and bad perception of the child welfare system.

Participants then broke into several groups and engaged in more detailed discussions of the following issues:

#### When victims abuse/neglect children

- ◆ It is difficult to determine why abuse is happening - Is a mother disciplining to keep the children from acting out in front of batterer because she fears he will hurt the children?
- ◆ Are we going too far in trying to avoid re-victimizing the mother? There may be times when it is necessary to remove children from the mother.

#### Confidentiality

- ◆ We need to involve legal system stakeholders.
- ◆ There are issues surrounding asking family to waive confidentiality.
- ◆ It is helpful and necessary to get women involved in creating protocols.
- ◆ Advocates and community members may feel confidentiality is important and that it exists because the “system” has not worked for those it was supposed to serve.
- ◆ Sometimes we have to accept that information cannot be shared. Courts sometimes do not want to accept this limitation. We need to trust each other. Front line workers can ask advocates to ask family to disclose or give release of information - this maybe the missing piece.
- ◆ The issues get more complicated once a case enters the court system.
- ◆ This is a training issue.

### How can we hold batterers accountable/responsible?

- ◆ Expand batterer accountability beyond a batterer's intervention program or the court system (e.g. family intervention, community intervention).
- ◆ Create separate service plans for perpetrators and victims. Do not hold her responsible for his actions.
- ◆ Change the language in petitions (i.e. - do not say that parents fight in front of children or parents engage in domestic violence - instead use language that accurately reflects the perpetrator's actions).
- ◆ Hold the perpetrator accountable for safety, not the victim.
- ◆ This is a training issue for staff - many front line workers are not aware of how to hold batterers accountable. Staff maybe fearful of working with batterers - training may help them feel more comfortable.
- ◆ Help the batterer understand the impact his behavior has on his children (this works for some).
- ◆ Need to work with child support - this is another way to hold perpetrators accountable (this may not be safe or even possible in some domestic violence cases).
- ◆ Accountability vs. timelines - batterer's required to attend 52-week treatment program. This may affect his rights to his children.

### ASFA timelines

- ◆ Push to locate absent parents - this may bring a former partner and batterer back into a woman's life.
- ◆ In order for the mother to get services we may need to make a finding against her in court.

### Relationships with our partners

- ◆ Not all partners are at the table that need to be.
- ◆ We still have some major communication issues - some partners are bringing agendas to the table. This makes it hard to trust each other and be straight and open. This definitely impedes the process.
- ◆ We need to encourage everyone that we have to really talk to each other in order to collaborate.

### Frontline issues-specialization

- ◆ Creation of issue-specialization positions can create problems (e.g. the domestic violence specialist holds all the knowledge and no one else knows how to handle domestic violence cases or it makes it seem like a marginal issue, not a way of doing business).

Participants were then given an overview of the technical assistance available to Greenbook sites. Finally, the participants were asked to develop an action plan regarding what they want to carry home to their sites from this meeting. Many sites' plans included a meeting with the Site Project Director to summarize this meeting.

Many sites also included actions to begin to address some of the aforementioned challenges.

Participants were asked to complete evaluations of the toolbox meeting. Reactions were overwhelmingly positive, stressing that they appreciated the chance to get to know folks who are struggling with similar issues. Participants felt supported in their work and were glad to learn of resources that are available to them. When asked how the meeting could be improved, participants asked that meetings in the future be longer, occur more frequently and cover the issues in a more in-depth fashion. Many participants also felt it would be helpful to have the technical assistance team come on site.

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