



**Nevada Department of
Health and Human Services**
DIVISION OF CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

Initial Report of Workgroups Formed to Study the
Intersection of Domestic Violence and Child Welfare
in Nevada
2020

1. BACKGROUND

In 2019, the Nevada Division of Child and Family Services together with Domestic Violence Service Providers hosted a listening session to better understand the intersection of domestic violence and child welfare in Nevada. The listening session included feedback from child welfare staff, victim service providers, and others. As a result of the listening session, many needs were identified, and three workgroups were established to start the important work of improving system interactions. Those three workgroups were directed with the following missions.

Child Welfare Policies and Procedures Workgroup: This workgroup will take an inventory of current domestic violence policies within the three child welfare agencies, research best practices specifically for child welfare agencies and their staff, make recommendations on new policy or policy revisions.

Child Welfare / Human Service Agency Training Workgroup: This group will survey best practices and available training approaches for child welfare or other human service agency staff. The group will propose adjustments to current agency training to enhance workers' understanding of the dynamics of domestic violence situations and empower them to respond in the most appropriate way.

Victim Advocate Training & Support Workgroup: This group will survey best practices and available training for helping victim advocates understand the role of child welfare agencies, child welfare laws, and the dynamics of child welfare cases. The group will propose training resources and a coordinated education approach to assist victim advocates in their work with domestic violence victims that are involved with the Child Welfare System.

The workgroups hosted a series of meetings throughout the spring and summer of 2020 and submitted recommendations for immediate development and action. Guiding themes for each committee's work included the 5 themes found in the Quality Improvement Center on Domestic Violence in Child Welfare's *Learning from the Voices of Families and Professionals – Listening Sessions Report*:

- A. Improved system infrastructure
- B. Effective practices and programs
- C. Consistent and authentic collaborations
- D. Supportive policies
- E. Culturally responsive systems

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Each workgroup was asked to develop two to five recommendations that could be acted on swiftly and in a targeted approach. The workgroup recommendations are as follows:

Child Welfare Policies and Procedures: This committee recommends that child welfare agencies adopt the following policy changes directly related to child welfare and domestic violence:

- 1) Agency action and response upon learning about the presence of domestic violence in the home whether that be from an initial report or discovered during the course of serving the family
- 2) Child Welfare Safety Plan development in situations where there is domestic violence
- 3) Child Welfare Agency Domestic Violence Engagement and Response policy requiring each child welfare agency to develop a plan to strategically engage in continuous collaboration with Domestic Violence Service Providers and ensure staff have the proper training and resources to effectively serve families where domestic violence is present

Child Welfare / Human Services Agency Training: This committee recommends the following training topics for child welfare agency and human service agency staff to better understand domestic violence situations:

- 1) Trauma-Informed Domestic Violence training that includes an understanding of the neurological/physiological impact on children, the trauma impact on caregiver's responses, and compassion fatigue
- 2) How to properly complete or interpret intimate partner violence and domestic violence assessments
- 3) Understanding model protocols for identifying and responding to high lethality risk domestic violence situations

Domestic Violence Provider Training: This committee recommends the following training topics for domestic violence victim service providers for their staff to better understand the Child Welfare System:

- 1) Mandatory reporting laws and how the child welfare agency processes reports of child abuse and neglect
- 2) Life of a child welfare case from report to permanency including the child welfare model adopted in Nevada
- 3) Understanding child welfare safety plans

3. NEXT STEPS

The next steps for this collaborative effort will be to adopt the recommendations of the workgroups and establish action plans to deliver on the recommendations by early 2021. For the training recommendations, this will include:

- 1) Development or adoption of curriculum
- 2) Identification of delivery method or methods
- 3) Establishing processes for training feedback and improvement
- 4) Measurement of changed practice or competencies as a result of the training

For the policy recommendations, the action plan will include:

- 1) Research and drafting of statewide child welfare policies
- 2) Adoption of new child welfare policies
- 3) Technical assistance to child welfare agencies on implementation of local procedures
- 4) Plan for evaluation and feedback regarding policy implementation

Both systems, the Child Welfare System and the Domestic Violence Services Provider System, have incredibly dedicated teams. While these key action steps are important, exciting, and necessary, we must be committed to understanding these are just the initial steps in a much longer journey to develop true collaboration on behalf of the children and families that both systems serve.

Special Thanks To:

- Workgroup leads Rhonda Lawrence, Erika Pond, and Ross Armstrong
- Nevada Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence
- Clark County Department of Family Services, Washoe County Human Services Agency, and the Division of Child and Family Services Rural Region Child Welfare
- All workgroup participants