

Memorandum

To South King County Community Network
From: Treatment Providers - South King County
Date: June 1, 2009

RE January 2009 "Making Children More Visible" report; also referred to as "The Audit".

When the South King County Community Network (SKCCN) proposed a concentrated effort by the domestic violence community to research the needs of the children, treatment providers¹ couldn't have been more supportive. We anticipated constructive and informative insights into ways we could do our part to ensure our programs better meet the needs of child witnesses and child victims of domestic violence.

The "Making Children More Visible" report, also known as "the Audit", presented some excellent suggestions which are included here, but were unfortunately out weighed by some serious concerns.

At the request of the South King County Community Network (SKCCN) an Audit Team was assembled to explore the *needs of children exposed to domestic violence*. An "Audit" was performed but was distributed without final review by the Network Leadership, as required by the contract. The contract also required "participating BIPs [Treatment Providers] to preview findings and recommendations before any release to the public." As of this date, the Audit Team has done neither. Sadly, violations of the contract are the least of the offenses. .

According to the Working Agreement (March 2008), the Audit Team was to "focus on two arenas: 1. *Intervention for children already exposed to DV and 2. efforts to build protective and resiliency factors within families in order to strengthen family and reduce the likelihood of family violence.*" The contract also stated the scope was to explore how treatment programs address "batterers' violence and its impact on their children." The Audit Team went far outside the scope of its responsibilities in its loss of focus and objectivity by lapsing into criticizing treatment programs on criteria that had little to do with child witness/victims of domestic violence.

1. This document did little to strengthen an alliance between Advocates and Treatment Providers but to suggest, as on page 16, "*with victim advocacy programs that may monitor the*" Treatment Providers.
2. Disparaging remarks within this report only widens the gap between Advocacy and Treatment Providers. Not only was it outside the scope of their responsibilities, but to infer Treatment Providers within South King County (or elsewhere) are "*not adequately connected to other agencies, their work is unaccountable and not trustworthy*" (page 5).
3. "The Audit" completely disregards female perpetrated and/or same sex domestic violence where children might be involved. Any lack of good parenting, regardless of gender, is detrimental to the welfare of the child(ren) and should be addressed.
4. In fostering such a gender-biased view of domestic violence, a serious gap of its own is formed. Children, whether by courts or visitation, must never be used by either parent against the other parent.

¹ Domestic Violence Treatment Providers or Domestic Violence Treatment Programs is more appropriate and respectful than the term "BIP" (WAC 388.60 Domestic Violence Treatment Programs).

5. The SKCCN Leadership recognized and apologized for the number of blatantly disrespectful remarks towards persons of other cultures, such as on page 29 and elsewhere, suggesting minorities "hide behind their culture or lack of English to avoid responsibility". It is our hope that all members of the domestic violence community treat all persons with the utmost respect and without prejudice to culture, gender, race, origin, religion, ability, or orientation.
6. It is clearly outside the scope of the contract and not the prerogative of the SKCCN to assess or advise Child Protective Services on how to do their jobs.

We do acknowledge the valuable information provided regarding: 1) elevating the awareness of the children of domestic violence who have gone unrecognized as victims, 2) bringing to light the gap in both assessment and curriculum needs regarding children exposed to domestic violence, and 3) movement towards a greater inclusion of the needs of the children in community response to domestic violence.

The following recommendations merit consideration:

1. First and foremost, to raise the awareness of all members of the community to the needs of the children of domestic violence and encourage each type of provider to elevate practices to meet those needs.
2. Elevate awareness regarding the differences between receiving parenting information from the domestic violence treatment programs, parenting classes, and "parenting after violence" type programs; and encouraging Treatment Programs to incorporate into or refer to the appropriate type of parenting training.
3. To collaborate with Treatment Providers to update forms and information regarding the children's experiences of parental violence and abuse. The report did include some excellent examples of questions that could/should be asked during a domestic violence treatment intake.
4. Convene meetings of parent educators, advocates, and treatment providers to cross train and share information (acknowledging there are excellent Children and Domestic Violence Conferences in the King County area which are an excellent forum for new information).

To accomplish these very substantial goals will take time, resources, collaboration on many fronts, and a very strict focus on the goal of "Making Children More Visible".

We are both appreciative and committed to the efforts of the SKCCN in their efforts to answer the original question: How do we answer the needs of the children? And as treatment providers: How can our programs better address domestic violence and its impact on the children?

We, the perpetrator treatment providers convened by SKCCN to consider the "audit" commissioned by SKCCN to address the needs of children exposed to domestic violence, request that SKCCN consider a new collaborative effort that re-addresses this important subject. If executed with carefully delineated parameters, a new study would provide invaluable guidelines and resources to treatment providers, as well as to all partners in the domestic violence community committed to the needs of the children.

Respectfully submitted,
the following treatment programs of South King County:

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