

Interagency working between child protection and specialist domestic and family violence services and/or family law – the PATRICIA project scoping review

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2. Overview

A range of service systems may be involved with families experiencing domestic and family violence (DFV), with no single system having sole responsibility for interventions. The way services work together varies and little is known about these relationships. The Parenting Research Centre and University of Melbourne **PATHways** and **Research In Collaborative Inter-Agency** working, or the PATRICIA project, is exploring interagency working between child protection and domestic and family violence services and/or family law. A scoping review of interagency working was undertaken to inform an analysis of case site studies in the PATRICIA project.

3. Research question

What processes or practices do child protection services and specialist domestic violence services or family law engage in so that they can work better together to improve service responses for women and children living with and separating from family violence?

4. Methodology

A systematic search was conducted of nine academic databases and 10 organisation websites. Studies were included if they reported interagency working that involved child protection and that reported an evaluation with child, parent, family or service outcomes. The primary focus of this review was on male violence perpetrated against women.

5. Findings

Twenty-four models of interagency working were identified.

Models undertook various processes that may have aimed to facilitate working with child protection including:

- development of formal agreements for working together and sharing information;
- development of operations manuals of inter-agency working;
- development of shared theoretical frameworks, goals and vision;
- initiation of co-location of child protection with other agencies;
- formation of shared data management and security systems;
- formation of committees involving child protection;
- appointment of agency representatives and coordinators or liaisons;

- allocation of specific child protection funding;
- establishment role clarification of personnel from different agencies;
- development of shared intake and referral procedures;
- use of common risk assessments;
- development of agreements to include child protections in various aspects of services;
- provision of training on interagency working; and
- provision of cross-agency leadership.

6. Recommendations for policy and practice

- A stronger knowledge base is needed which reports on the impact of interagency models on outcomes.
- In order to continuously assess the quality and contribution of interagency collaboration, initiatives should be monitored for their implementation and outcomes.
- Determining the effectiveness of the *practices* used in the clinical work with children and families is equally important as determining the effectiveness of the way agencies work together.
- Further consideration should be given to formal agreements and ways in which they can support interagency joining up.
- The role of formal agreements in interagency working is of particular importance when engaging with the courts.
- Models of interagency working ought to involve more than just training as training is not sufficient to bring about change.
- Services should pay considerable attention to how the infrastructure surrounding the interagency collaboration may support this work.
- Particular attention should be paid to the involvement of child protection in DFV services.
- Evidence for interagency working in other sectors could be considered as a possible source of rigorous evaluations.

Key words – children, interagency collaboration, research informing practice