

The value of adopting a harm reduction approach when working with families affected by domestic violence to improve the safety and wellbeing of their children.

Cheryl Majka and Justine Harris, Save the Children

Aim of Presentation

In this presentation we will review the adoption of a harm reduction approach for supporting families experiencing domestic violence, based on the idea that there are a continuum of options and desired outcomes for dealing with a domestic violence.

Programs developed from this approach have three goals:

1. Prioritising the reduction of harmful consequences associated with domestic violence, especially any harm to children.
2. Providing alternatives to zero-tolerance approaches by incorporating goals that include remaining together if both parents so choose, and continuing to work with families if violence reoccurs.
3. Promoting access to services by offering low threshold alternatives to traditional treatment that may only be offered if parents separate.

We will present a case study of this approach in use in a community based family preservation service, that aims to strengthening parent and family functioning and improving child outcomes specifically in families where domestic violence has been identified as a current or recent concern.

The program has been designed to achieve the following outcomes:

- Improved parent and child safety
- Improved parental and family functioning
 - Promote a secure, predictable and dependable relationship between the parents and children
 - Increase child and parent self-efficacy
 - Promote responsive and warm parenting
- Improved parenting coping skills
 - Improve parent and child problem-solving skills
 - Increase positive communication
 - Improve coping skills of children and parents.
 - Improved child and adult social connections/resources

Currently there is no empirically validated program for this population, therefore this presentation will highlight an evidenced informed program design developed using a components approach. Research on this harm reduction approach has begun to test the impact of these practice elements including the coordination of these elements, tailoring treatment for specific families and the implementation of this approach.

Key words: Children, Research Informing Practice, Service Systems programs

Cheryl Majka and Justine Harris

Cheryl Majka

Senior Advisor, Implementation

Centre for Evidence and Implementation | Save the Children Australia

Suite 302, 418a Elizabeth St Surry Hills NSW 2010|02 8202 9100

Direct line: +61 4 8868 8292

Email: cheryl.majka@savethechildren.org.au

Cheryl Majka

PROFILE

Cheryl Majka is a Senior Advisor Implementation at the Centre for Evidence and Implementation, Save the Children Australia, based in Sydney. Cheryl has led implementation projects in the United States and in Australia with a focus of improving outcomes for children and families in the child welfare, child mental health, and juvenile justice sectors.