the Safe and Together™ model: Practice Tool: Mapping Survivors’ Protective Capacities

David Mandel and Associates LLC
www.endingviolence.com

Safe and Together™ Principles

1. Keeping child Safe and Together™ with non-offending parent
   Safety    Healing from trauma    Stability and nurturance

2. Partnering with non-offending parent as default position
   Efficient    Effective    Child-centered

3. Intervening with perpetrator to reduce risk and harm to child
   Engagement    Accountability    Courts

(c) 2014 David Mandel Associates LLC. Do not reproduce or distribute without permission
Safe and Together™ Critical Components

- Perpetrator’s pattern of coercive control
- Role of substance abuse, mental health, culture and other socio-economic factors
- Actions taken by the perpetrator to harm the child
- Full spectrum of the non-offending parent’s efforts to promote the safety and well-being of the child
- Adverse impact of the perpetrator’s behavior on the child

Interest of Child Welfare

The abuse to stop & the children to be okay

Interest of Adult Domestic Violence Survivor
Mapping Survivors’ Protective Capacities

What do we know about the survivors’ efforts to promote the safety and well-being of the children?

- Identify parenting efforts
- Identify protective efforts
- Validate strengths (documentation, engagement)
- Collaboratively safety plan

Implications

- Built on foundation of perpetrator pattern based assessment of domestic violence
- Fact based, strengths based v. “failure to protect” approach
- Gender Responsive
- Provides a foundation for establishing a partnership with the survivor
- Supports targeted, improved coordination and delivery of services
- Weaves together Safe and Together framework with other strengths based models
Accurate Assessment of Adult Survivor Protective Efforts

**Depends on Perpetrator Pattern Based Approach**

- You cannot fully understand or document the adult survivor's protective capacity without understanding perpetrator's pattern (Pivoting Practice Tool)
  - Additional emphasis can be placed on
- Identifying the specific behaviors the perpetrator has engaged in to disrupt or interfere with the primary caregiver’s protective capacity.
  - What behaviors has the perpetrator engaged in to disrupt or interfere with the attachment between the caregiver and his/her children?
  - What behaviors has the perpetrator engaged in to disrupt or interfere with social connections or concrete supports?

Accurate Assessment of Adult Survivor Protective Efforts

**Depends on Perpetrator Pattern Based Approach**

- Documentation should clearly identify the behaviors of the perpetrator and how it has disrupted or interfered with the other parent’s protective factors. It should also clearly identify the perpetrator as the source of the disruption of the protective factor.
Fact based, strengths based v. "failure to protect" approach

• Fact based assessment: Focuses on survivor's behaviors contextualized to the perpetrator's pattern
• Based on clear understanding that perpetrator is 100% responsible for their violence and abuse
• Strengths based
  • More comprehensive, accurate and useful than assessments based primarily on whether the adult survivor called law enforcement, sought a civil order of protection, separated or ended the relationship with perpetrator
  • Separates active protective efforts of the adult survivor from the perpetrator's behaviors
  • "Reasonable Person" standard may be useful

Gender Responsive

• Assumes both parents are equally responsible for safety and well being
• Accounts for gender based assessment biases
• Gives credit for "parenting in a foxhole" e.g. what did the survivor do to maintain routine in the face of perpetrator's abuse and control?
Step One: Identify Perpetrator's Pattern

Step Two: Identify Protective Efforts

- Based on a clear understanding of the perpetrator’s behavior pattern, next identify the protective factors of the domestic violence survivor.
- Sources of information include interview with the survivor, interview with children, collaterals, case record, and observation.
- Documentation should clearly identify the survivor’s protective factors when they are consistent with normal expectations. When the protective efforts have been adaptive, the context for that adaptation and the strengths of that adaptation should be clearly identified.
Step Two: Identify Protective Efforts

Questions
• What is the full spectrum of the domestic violence survivor’s efforts to support the safety and well being of her children despite the perpetrator’s behavior e.g. how has he/she continued to provide loving support, guidance?
• What has she been doing day to day to make things the best possible for herself and her children?
• Has the domestic violence survivor been able to build and maintain close bonds with his/her children despite the domestic violence perpetrator’s efforts to disrupt or interfere with those bonds?
• What are the specific strategies the domestic violence survivor has engaged in to comfort his/her children regarding the domestic violence and related stressors e.g. absence of perpetrator from home due to incarceration or living in new location in order to be safe?

Step 3:
Build partnership with adult survivor

• Worker validates the adult survivor’s strengths i.e. reflects back to her the protective efforts
• Ensures accurate, clear, contextualized documentation of these strengths
• “Despite the perpetrator’s behaviors.....
• “In active response to.....”
• Build on strengths to collaboratively develop any safety planning
• Strengths form foundation for difficult conversations, e.g. choices re: shelter
• “We know you’ve worked so hard and.....he’s still doing things that are dangerous for you and the children”
Collaboration/Coordination with domestic violence advocates/other providers

- Provides foundation for partnership with survivor's domestic violence advocates and other providers
- Sharing information about strengths between child welfare and adult survivors' providers as starting point for communication
- Discussion about non-offending parents' issues without blaming her for perpetrator's choices

Using the assessment of parental protective capacity as a tool to assess for coercive control/domestic violence

- Nurturing and Attachment: What does your partner do day to day to support you in having a strong bond with your child/children?
- Knowledge of Parenting: Child and Youth Development: Does your partner demonstrate through his/her behavior respect for your knowledge of child development/your child’s needs at their specific age?
- Parental Resilience: How does your partner act supportive to you when you feel stressed? How does he/she pitch in when other family members are facing stress?
- Social Connections: What does your partner do to support your relationships with community supports, friends and family members?
- Concrete Supports: How has your partner supported you accessing outside support/assistance including employment?
Safe & Together in Florida

3rd Annual Safe & Together Model Symposium
October 14-16, 2015 – Orlando, FL
Save the Date!

DMA has partnered with Florida DCF in developing a comprehensive approach to the Safety Methodology and the Safe & Together Model

David Mandel
ASSOCIATES, LLC

860-319-0966
www.endingviolence.com

http://www.facebook.com/DavidMandelAndAssociates
https://twitter.com/SafeandTogether

Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence