

SAMPLE Optional Memorandum of Understanding Strategies to Consider for
Successful Collaboration

The parties listed above and whose designated agents have signed this document agree that:

1. _____ County Department of Social Services and _____ (domestic violence program) will work collaboratively to participate in and/or develop coordinated community response teams/task forces to address domestic violence and child maltreatment. As a part of this process, both parties agree to develop meaningful relationships with diverse communities in order to design effective services.
2. _____ County Department of Social Services and _____ (domestic violence program) will offer services in culturally appropriate and effective ways and in settings comfortable to the family.
3. When domestic violence is identified, _____ County Department of Social Services will include _____ (domestic violence program) staff in child and family team meetings, unless requested not to do so by the adult victim/survivor. _____ County Department of Social Services will take all precautions to ensure victim/survivor safety during child and family team meetings. Both parties agree not to disclose the location of a victim/survivor to a domestic violence perpetrator, and to use care during team meetings to ensure that this information is not inadvertently disclosed.
4. _____ County Department of Social Services and _____ (domestic violence program) agree to work to the amount feasible to ensure that each family has a consistent staff member assigned to assist them and to minimize the transfer of cases involving domestic violence and child maltreatment.
5. _____ (domestic violence program) agrees to provide _____ Department of Social Services with basic information about domestic violence. In addition to complying with the DSS Intake Policy, _____ Department of Social Services agrees to provide all workers with basic information about domestic violence to aid in their screening process. Domestic violence information can be obtained from the [NC Coalition Against Domestic Violence](#).
6. _____ (domestic violence program) agrees to provide every victim/survivor seeking services with safety planning (including safety planning for children) and information on how to meet their basic human needs (such as food, housing and clothing), as mandated in the [NC Council for Women Guidelines](#).
7. _____ (domestic violence program) agrees to create supportive interventions for victims/survivors who maltreat their children at the same time that they ensure safety and protection for abused or neglected children.
8. _____ (domestic violence program) agrees to provide child-friendly environments in their service sites.

9. _____ (domestic violence program) agrees to have advocates or volunteers who are able to provide services or referrals for children who are affected by domestic violence.
10. _____ (domestic violence program) agrees to provide or coordinate services (including shelter) for all victims/survivors of domestic violence including those who: have teenage boys; are immigrants; are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender; or are stigmatized due to substance abuse, mental health needs or criminal records, in compliance with [NC Council for Women Guidelines](#).
11. _____ County Department of Social Services will consider alternative placement of a child **only** when the risk of harm from remaining in the home with the non-battering parent outweighs the risk of harm from being separated from the non-battering parent. The NC Division of Social Services [Domestic Violence Policy](#) provides guidance for making placement determinations. Additional information about assessing risk can be found in "Assessing Risk to Children from Batterers" ([Bancroft and Silverman](#), 2002).
12. _____ County Department of Social Services agrees to avoid placing a child in foster care with persons who have a documented history of perpetrating child maltreatment or domestic violence.
13. _____ County Department of Social Services is committed to thoroughly assessing the possible harm to a child resulting from maltreatment of the child or from the effects of adult domestic violence and to developing service agreements to address this harm. When possible _____ (domestic violence program) will support and/or participate in programs designed to address the harm to the child from adult domestic violence.
14. _____ County Department of Social Services and _____ (domestic violence program) agree that being a victim of domestic violence does not necessarily affect one's ability to effectively parent. Therefore, mandatory referrals to parenting classes for domestic violence victim/survivor should not be made by either party unless actual concerns about the victim/survivor's parenting abilities exist or the referral is requested by the victim/survivor. When referrals are made, they should be made to classes that address the specific needs of the person receiving the referral. (For instance, parents of teenagers should not be referred to infant care classes.) Unnecessary referrals to parenting classes may send the message to the victim/survivor that they are to blame for the domestic violence they have experienced.
15. If _____ Department of Social Services identifies that domestic violence is occurring within a family, the following assessments will be conducted and/or services will be provided (reference existing instruments) when feasible:
 - a. Assessments/Services for Children
Assessments of children will utilize existing screening instruments. In addition, DSS will:
 - Assess the nature and severity of past violence, the risk of violence in the future, the child's degree of exposure and resilience, the presence

of protective factors in the immediate and extended family, and available support from the community;

- Determine whether in-home services, such as intensive family preservation services, can provide meaningful support to adult and child victim/survivor, including help for the adult victim/survivor in assessing safety needs, making viable safety plans, and determining whether the safety strategies are working or need adjustment;
- Use visitation centers, when needed, for court-ordered visitation between a child and violent parent to protect the child from abuse and/or witnessing further assaults and threats against the victim/survivor;
- Referring children affected by domestic violence to skilled resources for counseling and treatment services in order to assess and address the consequences of the violence as appropriate;
- Provide transportation to safety resources, including shelters, domestic violence programs, childcare, court, educational institutions, counseling, and health care services.

b. Assessments/Services for Non-Offending Parent

Service agreements for the adult victim/non-offending parent shall not include accountability for coordination, payment or transportation for services required of the batterer/offending parent. In addition, DSS will:

- Assess the nature and severity of past violence, the risk of violence in the future, and available support from the community;
- Determine whether in-home services, such as intensive family preservation services, can provide meaningful support to adult and child victim/survivor, including help for the adult victim/survivor in assessing safety needs, making viable safety plans, and determining whether the safety strategies are working or need adjustment;
- Assist in securing safe housing-in the adult and child victim/survivor's own residence whenever possible or with her family or friends, in subsidized housing, in shelter, or in transitional or permanent housing;
- Offer support to adult victims/survivors in a respectful way that does not label them unnecessarily as neglectful and produce unintended, long-term, harmful consequences for them and their children;
- Refer adult victim/survivor to services that will aid in securing assistance (such as the TANF/DV program), child and employment support, and Work First;
- Refer adult victims/survivors to voluntary supportive counseling, groups or community-based advocacy services, and to job training, parenting, substance abuse treatment, and immigration specialists in programs trained to respond to domestic violence victim/survivor and their children referring survivors to legal advocacy, family law, or immigration law programs for assistance in obtaining protection orders, custody and safe visitation arrangements, child support, and/or divorce;

- Provide transportation to safety resources, including shelters, domestic violence programs, childcare, court, educational institutions, counseling, and health care services.
- c. Assessments/Services for Batterer/Offending Parent
 Services for the Batterer/Offending parent will be provided in a manner which does not hold the adult victim/non-offending parent responsible for the batterer's compliance or participation. In addition, DSS will:
- Assess of the nature and severity of past violence, the risk of violence in the future, and available support from the community;
 - Refer to batterer intervention programs approved by the NC Council for Women (anger management classes are not appropriate interventions for batterers) and other education programs and monitor attendance and compliance with court and program requirements;
 - Assess skills and provide referrals for parenting classes as needed or requested;
 - Create service agreements which are designed to promote accountability for the batterer/offending parent should not be reliant on the victim/survivor's cooperation in regards to treatment for the batterer/offending parent. Service agreements should include requirements to:
 - Cease verbal, emotional, physical, and sexual abuse of all family members;
 - Cease interference with their partners' efforts to parent children safely;
 - Comply with protection orders and other court-ordered mandates, including those imposed by probation, parole, and perpetrator intervention programs;
 - Attend, actively participate, and complete a Batterer's Intervention Program

We, the undersigned, approve and agree to the terms and conditions as outlined in this Memorandum of Understanding.

 Executive Director
 Domestic Violence Program

 County Director
 Department of Social Services

 Date

 Date