1. Assessment, documentation, case planning and decision making about domestic violence as factor in child safety and well-being rests heavily on 1) an accurate description of the domestic violence perpetrator’s pattern of behavior and 2) a comprehensive assessment of the domestic violence survivor’s full spectrum of efforts to promote the safety and well-being of the child.
2. Since the impact of domestic violence on children varies based on a number of factors, it is critical for documents to describe the relationship between the domestic violence perpetrator’s behavior pattern and the child’s safety, basic needs and functioning.
3. An comprehensive assessment of a domestic violence perpetrator’s pattern of behavior needs to include (but is not limited) the history of using the child as weapon against the other parent; supporting the relationship between the domestic violence survivor and the child; supporting a partner’s parenting; disrupting normal household functioning; financial support of the child, and other factors that complete the picture of the impact of the domestic violence perpetrator on the overall safety and well being of the child.
4. Comprehensive assessments of survivor’s strengths as a parent need to include (but not be limited to) the history of reaching out for help and support including law enforcement, seeking civil protective orders, separating/divorcing/leaving the perpetrator, seeking counseling/advocacy services, reaching out to friends and friends **and**  the day to day behaviors associated with trying to reduce or prevent exposure of the child to the perpetrator’s violence and abuse **and**  the day to day behaviors associated with maintaining the child’s basic needs and well being.
5. From the perspective of the child’s healing from trauma, safety, stability and nurturance, it is ideal to maintain the child with the domestic violence survivor whenever possible.
6. Good documentation in domestic violence cases goes beyond language like the “family has a history of domestic violence” to describing the perpetrator’s specific behavior pattern. It does not lump together mother and father but describes each of their roles with the child based on their equal responsibility for the safety and well-being of the child. It avoids language like “mother allowed the father into the home” when it is more accurate to say that “father violated the protective order by returning to the home” or the perpetrator’s pattern of coercion is the more relevant factor in the father’s return to the home.
7. Given the high prevalence of domestic violence on the child protection caseload, universal screening for domestic violence in every case, regardless of the initial allegation, is highly recommended. Separate interviews of the parents and a standardized protocol are both essential elements in screening for domestic violence.
8. Protocols for considering the safety of the adult survivor and the child as a case moves through the child welfare system are highly recommended. These include discussions with the survivor about how the child welfare system’s involvement will impact safety; managing information that if shared with the domestic violence perpetrator may increase the danger of violence; and safety planning for court hearings including the consideration of separate hearings for the perpetrator and survivor.