

## INVISIBLE PRACTICES:

# Working with fathers who use violence

Pre-reading material for the webinar hosted by [the CFCA information exchange in collaboration with ANROWS: Invisible practices: Working with fathers who use violence](#). The practitioner presenters (Jackie, Emma and Steve) will refer to this case in the webinar session.

This case study and example of documentation is drawn from the research reports: The PATRICIA Project: Pathways And Research In Collaborative Inter-Agency working and Invisible practices: Intervention with fathers who use violence led by Professor Cathy Humphreys and published by ANROWS. Further information about these reports can be found on the [ANROWS website](#).

Names have not been used and some details have also been changed to protect the identities of the research participants and family members.

The following are examples of documentation relating to the same situation with the same family. Read both and answer the reflective questions below.

### Version 1

Mother is Aboriginal and has a history of domestic violence relationships. She has a trauma history and substance abuse relapses. The most recent referral was because her current boyfriend (father of the youngest child) assaulted her in front of the children, giving her a black eye. After he was arrested, she went to the police, denied the violence, and tried to bail him out. She insists she wants to maintain the relationship even though interviews with the older children indicate they are scared of him and the youngest was in danger of being physically harmed during the last incident.

### Version 2

Father (white Australian) has a pattern of violent and coercive behaviours in this relationship and in a previous relationship. Over the last year his behaviour has damaged the functioning of this family through physical violence against the mother and as the children have reported that they are terrified for their safety and the safety of their mother. This violence (including the most recent arrest, when he punched her in the head three times, giving her headaches for three days and a black eye; threw her down on the ground; and kicked her in the stomach) has led to multiple moves of the children, disrupting their school attendance (the oldest child has missed 22 days of school

this year because of family disruptions related to his father's violence). Father is also regularly verbally abusive to the mother and the older two children. This includes the use of racist and offensive language to criticise her and her culture. The mother always tries to shield the children from this abuse by sending them to their rooms or to neighbours who she has set up to help.

The mother is proud of her culture and spends time every day reading to the children or telling them cultural stories. She also reassures and comforts them after their father becomes violent. The family is struggling on a low income because both parents have lost their jobs because of father's violence and arrests. The mother was working hard to deal with her substance issues but then got kicked out of her program 3 months ago when father threatened another client (male) in the parking lot. Since then she has relapsed. Now she is 3 weeks sober. In the past, he has taken their child to his parent's house and not returned for weeks at a time, saying "I'll never let you see your son ever again".

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## Reflective questions

1. What is difference between Version 1 and Version 2?
2. Would this difference influence your case plan? Would it influence your focus for intervention?
3. Consider how each version would set up your engagement and intervention approach with the father? Which version would give a clearer focus on what to talk to the father about?

For further discussion about this case study and documentation, please see the [related webinar](#).

## Further reading



Practice guide:  
Invisible Practices – Working with  
fathers who use violence



The PATRICIA Project:  
Pathways And Research In  
Collaborative Inter-Agency working



Safe and Together  
Addressing Complexity  
focussing on children

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