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Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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Policy Issue Resources

Publication

Ending an intimate relationship, particularly when children are involved, is difficult. When the relationship has been affected by domestic violence, risks to the safety of the adult victim and the children compound the difficulties. Despite the risks involved in granting violent parents contact with their children, some courts and legislatures are reluctant to deny parents, even those with a history of violence, such access.

Supervised visitation and exchange centers can play a critical role in reducing the risk that many victims and their children face when leaving an abusive relationship and attempting to safely navigate custody. Creating services that truly mitigate those risks involves a great deal of planning. This guide, written by experts from Vera's Center on Victimization and Safety, outlines steps to help along this path.

The guide provides a step-by-step approach to developing visitation and exchange services that are responsive to the safety and other needs of adult and child victims of domestic violence.

Programs seeking to supervise visitation in domestic violence cases must address a broader range of potential dangers, including the possibility that the very services they provide could become vehicles through which battering parents can continue their abuse.

The authors of this guide draw on the experience of Vera's Center on Victimization and Safety, which has provided training and technical assistance to more than 70 communities to offer visitation and exchange services.

This guide uses gendered language when referring to victims and perpetrators of violence. This is intended to reflect research findings, which show that, in the vast majority of heterosexual relationships, it is men who engage in ongoing abusive control of their partners.

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