

STATE OF VERMONT  
AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES

**DCF**

**Department for Children and Families**



**FROM:** Sean Brown, Deputy Commissioner  
Economic Services Division

**BULLETIN NO.:** B16-12

**DATE:** March 1, 2016

**SUBJECT:** Reach Up Procedures – Addressing the Effects of Domestic Violence

**CHANGES ADOPTED EFFECTIVE** 3/1/2016

**INSTRUCTIONS**

- Maintain Manual - See instructions below.**
- Proposed Regulation - Retain bulletin and attachments until you receive Manual Maintenance Bulletin: \_\_\_\_\_**
- Information or Instructions - Retain until \_\_\_\_\_**

**MANUAL REFERENCE(S):**

P-2201 K

These procedures update the last child support procedures issued in 1999.

**Manual Maintenance**

**Reach Up Procedures**

**Remove**

P-2201 K (99-11)

**Insert**

P-2201 K (16-12)

3/1/16

Bulletin No.16-12

P-2201 K

P-2201 Application Procedures

K. Addressing the Effects of Domestic Violence (2207)

The department is committed to helping Reach Up families experiencing the effects of domestic violence to address those effects and begin to overcome economic barriers to independence. The following information and script are designed to help workers when interacting with potential victims of domestic violence.

Guidelines for Interacting with Victims of Domestic Violence

Most victims of domestic violence find it very difficult to talk about it. Many victims are not even aware that they are victims. For some victims, it is not safe to talk about domestic violence unless the discussion is very private. These are guidelines to follow whenever you talk about domestic violence with anyone who might have experienced it. For simplicity's sake, the guidelines use language appropriate for speaking to an adult female, but the department acknowledges that men and children may experience the effects of domestic violence, too.

**DON'T —**

- Don't ask her how she can put up with it, don't ask why she doesn't just leave, and don't imply that she has brought the abuse on herself or her family in any way.
- Don't press her to talk about domestic violence more than she is willing to, even if you are sure she has been abused.
- Don't pressure her to take steps that may lead to more violence. For example, don't pressure her to talk to a domestic violence program specialist, file a police report, or petition for a restraining order.
- Don't question her judgment or her value as a parent or blame her for the domestic violence.
- Don't slip a referral card or other information about domestic violence into her bag, or tell her to take the 201 DV (Domestic Violence – You Don't Have to Face It Alone) with her. If her abuser sees that she has information about abuse, it might trigger more violence.
- Don't send her mail or leave messages for her that relate to domestic violence.
- Don't try to talk to her abuser about domestic violence.

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P-2201 K2

P-2201 Application Procedures

K. Addressing the Effects of Domestic Violence (Continued)

**DO —**

- Do allow her to ask questions without assuming she is a victim.
- Do treat her with respect; allow them to maintain their dignity and be mindful of your words.
- Do make information available about services that may help her deal with domestic violence.
- Do take steps to protect her privacy and safety by offering to meet in a private office and keeping the information confidential.

**REMEMBER—**

- Her abuser may become more violent when she tries to improve her situation by going to work or training. He may make it difficult for her to work or attend training.
- For a variety of legitimate reasons, she may not know that she is a victim.
- Even if she is not experiencing domestic violence now, she may still be experiencing the effects of it. Children who have only witnessed domestic violence, for example, may have trouble learning or relating to other people.

Domestic Violence Script

Workers must inform each applicant and recipient of Reach Up of the right to request a child support waiver and work requirements deferment (see policy at 2207). To implement the policy, offer the parent the 201 DV and follow the script below. Please note that, for simplicity's sake, the directions in the script refer only to parents, not to caretakers other than parents. Please follow the script for all Reach Up applicants and recipients, whether they are parents or other caretakers.

1. The department recognizes that domestic violence occurs at all income levels, including in families receiving benefits from us. We're very concerned about this and want the families we serve to know that we're aware they may be affected by domestic violence and are here to listen to them. We understand that some people don't know what domestic violence is and don't realize that what is happening in their life is considered to be domestic violence. So we have prepared this brief information sheet for everyone to read.

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P-2201 K3

P-2201 Application Procedures

K. Addressing the Effects of Domestic Violence (Continued)

*[Hand the 201 DV to the parent (or other caretaker). If both parents are present give a copy to each of them. If anyone, including a child, accompanies the parent, continue to 2, which does not encourage discussion. If the parent is alone, skip to 3.]*

2. **I'll give you a few minutes to read it.** *[Pause while the parent reads]*

*[If the parent does not express a clear desire to discuss the notice or domestic violence, stop the discussion and continue with other interview topics unrelated to domestic violence.*

*[If the parent does express a clear desire to discuss domestic violence, skip to 4.]*

3. **I'll give you a few minutes to read it here. Then, if you have any questions, we can talk about them.** *[Pause while the parent reads it.]*

4. **I can answer questions you have about the information you've just read or give you more information about the local domestic violence program and the services it offers to families affected by domestic violence. If you want to talk about your situation, everything you say will be kept strictly confidential unless it involves child abuse. I am required by law to report child abuse.**

*[If you are not in a private office, say the following.] **If you'd be more comfortable talking about this in a more private space, tell me, and I'll arrange for us to move to one.** [If the parent wants to talk in a private space, stop the discussion immediately and follow your district office's procedures to move the interview to a private space before going on with the discussion.]*

**Would you like to ask any questions or talk about this some more so that I can recommend some other agencies for your needs?**

*[If the parent indicates no, continue to 5. If the parent indicates yes, skip to 6.]*

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P-2201 K4

P-2201 Application Procedures

K. Addressing the Effects of Domestic Violence (Continued)

5. **All right, that's fine. I would like you to know that we do have information about domestic violence programs here. You can request a waiver of the requirement to pursue child support. You may also talk to your case manager about a deferment from the work requirements because of domestic violence.**

*[Then stop the discussion and continue with other interview topics unrelated to domestic violence, unless the parent, upon hearing about the child support waiver and work requirements deferment, has questions about either of them.]*

6. **If you are requesting or thinking about requesting a child support waiver, it would be beneficial for me to learn more about your situation. What would you like to talk about?**

*[Allow the parent to lead the discussion, following the guidelines in this section for interacting with people who may have experienced the effects of domestic violence. If, at any point, the parent indicates a desire to stop the discussion or appears uncomfortable with the subject, stop the discussion and continue with topics unrelated to domestic violence.]*

*Provide the parent with information about the domestic violence programs, the child support waiver and Reach Up. Advise the client that she may further discuss the work requirement deferment with her case manager. Talk about the child support waiver if it applies to the parent's situation, regardless of whether the parent asks about it. If, at any point in the discussion, the parent indicates that any member of his or her family may have experienced the effects of domestic violence, continue to 7 immediately.]*

7. **Are you safe now?**

*[If s/he is not safe, follow your district procedures for handling unsafe domestic violence situations. If you don't know what they are, ask your supervisor.]*

## Domestic Violence Script Flowchart

The department recognizes that domestic violence occurs at all income levels, including in families receiving benefits from us. We're very concerned about this and want the families we serve to know that we're aware they may be affected by domestic violence and are here to listen to them. We understand that some people don't know what domestic violence is and don't realize that what is happening in their life is considered to be domestic violence. So we have prepared this brief information sheet for everyone to read.

1. Hand the 201 DV to the parent (or other caretaker). If both parents are present give a copy to each of them.

*If the parent is alone, continue to 3*

2. I'll give you a few minutes to read it.  
[Pause while the parent reads it.]

3. I'll give you a few minutes to read it here. Then, if you have any questions, we can talk about them.

*If the parent does not express a clear desire to discuss the notice or domestic violence, stop the discussion and continue with other interview topics unrelated to domestic violence. If the parent does express a clear desire to discuss domestic violence, skip to 4.*

4. I can answer questions you have about the information you've just read or give you more information about the local domestic violence program and the services it offers to families affected by domestic violence. If you want to talk about your situation, everything you say will be kept strictly confidential unless it involves child abuse. I am required by law to report child abuse.

*If you are not in a private office, say the following:*

If you'd be more comfortable talking about this in a more private space, tell me, and I'll arrange for us to move to one.

*If the parent wants to talk in a private space, stop the discussion immediately and follow your district office's procedures to move the interview to a private space before going on with the discussion.*

Would you like to ask any questions or talk about this some more so that I can recommend some other agencies for your needs?

No

5. All right, that's fine. I would like you to know that we do have information about domestic violence programs here. You can request a waiver of the requirement to pursue child support. You may also talk to your case manager about the deferment from the work requirements because of domestic violence.

*Then stop the discussion and continue with other interview topics unrelated to domestic violence, unless the parent, upon hearing about the child support waiver and work requirements deferment, has questions about either of them.*

Yes

6. If you are requesting or thinking about requesting a child support waiver, it would be beneficial for me to learn more about your situation. What would you like to talk about?

*Allow the parent to lead the discussion, following the guidelines in this section for interacting with people who may have experienced the effects of domestic violence. If, at any point, the parent indicates a desire to stop the discussion or appears uncomfortable with the subject, stop the discussion and continue with topics unrelated to domestic violence.*

*Provide the parent with information about the domestic violence programs, the child support waiver, and Reach Up. Advise the client that she may further discuss the work requirement deferment with her case manager. Talk about the child support waiver if it applies to the parent's situation, regardless of whether the parent asks about it. If, at any point in the discussion, the parent indicates that any member of his or her family may have experienced the effects of domestic violence, continue to 7*

7. Are you safe now?

*If s/he is not safe, follow your district procedures for handling unsafe domestic violence situations. If you don't know what they are, ask your supervisor*