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## I. POEMS

### *I am from!*

I am from Brazil  
I am from the very blue sea,  
Like the clouds in the sky.  
I am from a country where people join together  
Due to their own necessities,  
I am from America, where there are rules for  
everything.  
I am a mix of races,  
I am a daughter of a mother that God has given  
me,

I am from God, strong, steady, determined, and  
yet, simple.  
I am from Sacramento, daughter to M--- S----,  
They are never far from my thoughts,  
I walk back and forth and I count on them.

I am rice with beans,  
I am from the land where I can see everything  
green,  
Many flowers, vegetables and seafood.  
I am a lost and forgotten child,  
Maintained by bananas and *folha de picão* \*  
I am made of white chocolate, And I eat it as I  
please  
Even knowing that will make me put on extra  
pounds  
I am from chimarrão with fandango,

I am from the birth of the one, who wants  
everything and can do anything,  
I celebrate vigorously at each important meal in  
our calendar, cultural or religious.  
I am the union between friends and relatives.

I am the samba that is what I'll take to my grave.  
And through this dance, I get disconnected from  
this crazy world.

I am green belly with banana.  
I am from respect, from tenderness,  
I am from the family,  
I am from my kids.  
I am always a strong woman,  
Even though I don't look like one, I am the head  
of my family and  
I honored the name that was given to them.  
I am from love, even with so much pain in my  
life.

I am not from the Brazilian way,  
I am not unfaithful, even with people that  
despise me.  
I am not without a culture, only in search of  
money  
Because of a failed country.  
I am not emancipated, as I try to tell the whole  
world about my life,  
But I have obstacles with people around me.  
I am not tupiniquim.  
I am of much joy, much celebration.  
I am from a happy country, despite the  
difficulties.  
I am from joy, from happiness, from passion.  
I am in love with life, in love with the human  
being, in love with the Universe.  
I am only an immigrant woman.  
I am the strength and hope,  
I am the total happiness, I am the right to  
live and be respected  
I am the brightness of the future of my kids

---

Each of these poems was created as a group effort by  
women in focus groups described later in this report.

\*Translation of terms is provided in Appendix E.

*Eu sou do Brasil,  
Eu sou do mar bem azul,  
como as nuvens do céu.  
Eu sou de um país onde as pessoas se unem  
devido as próprias necessidades,  
Eu sou da América, que tudo tem regra.  
Eu sou uma mescla de raças,  
Eu sou filha de uma mãe que Deus me deu,  
Eu sou de Deus, forte, firme e com  
determinação,  
porém simples.*

*Eu sou de Sacramento, filha de Maria Campos,  
nunca elas saem dos meus pensamentos,  
ando pra lá pra cá e conto com elas.  
Eu sou arroz com feijão,  
Eu sou da terra onde posso ver tudo verde,  
muito florido, ortaliga e frutos do mar.  
Eu sou uma criança esquecida e crescida,  
sustentada com banana e folha de picão.  
Eu sou de chocolate branco  
que como a qualquer tanto  
mesmo sabendo que me engorda bastante.  
Eu sou do chimarão com fandango,  
Eu sou do nascimento daquele que tudo quer e  
tudo pode,  
Eu sou de celebrar com vigor a cada ceia  
importante  
em nosso calendário, cultural ou religioso.  
Eu sou a união entre amigos e parentes.  
Eu sou do samba, isto que levo até minha  
sepultura.*

## **Eu Sou!**

*E através desta dança que me desligo do mundo  
doido.  
Eu sou barriga verde com banana.  
Eu sou do respeito, do carinho,  
Eu sou da família,  
Eu sou meus filhos.  
Eu sou uma mulher sempre forte,  
mesmo não parecendo, sou a cabeça da minha  
família e  
honro o nome que lhe foi dado.  
Eu sou do amor, mesmo com tanta dores em  
minha vida.  
Eu não sou do jeitinho brasileiro,  
Eu não sou desleal, mesmo com as pessoas que  
me desprezam.  
Eu não sou sem cultura, apenas em busca de  
dinheiro  
por conta de um país falido.  
Eu não sou emancipada,  
pois tento falar ao mundo inteiro de minha vida,  
mas tenho barreiras com as pessoas que me  
cercam.  
Eu não sou tupiniquim.  
Eu sou de muita alegria, muita festa.  
Eu sou de um país feliz, apesar das dificuldades.  
Eu sou da alegria, da felicidade, da paixão.  
Apaixonada pela vida, pelo ser humano,  
apaixonada pelo universo.  
Eu sou apenas uma mulher imigrante.  
Eu sou a força e a esperança,  
Eu sou a felicidade total,  
Eu sou o direito de viver e ser respeitado,  
Eu sou o brilho do futuro dos meus filhos.*



## I am From

I am from the island of Moloka'i, 40 acres of farmland  
I am from an assortment of fruits and vegetables, live stock and pipi  
I am from God, from my mother's womb  
I am from the island of O'ahu  
I am from Kahalu, home of the crawfish  
I am from my grandson  
I am from the Big Island, King's Landing, home of King Kamehameha, home of plenty fun  
I am from the country and the ocean  
I am from New York

I am from a family of 24, all of whom are adopted, I am adopted  
I am from 2 brothers and sisters, have no mother, no father, no parents  
I am from many, many cousins, aunties and uncles  
I am from a family of 8 brothers and sisters  
I am from no kind of hero that affected my life  
I am from a family of 10, 5 brothers, 4 sisters and a great father  
I am from a mother that is not with us now and a great stepmother  
I am from a family of 5, where I am the oldest  
I am from no role models, the only role models living in my dreams  
I am from not knowing about my heritage

I am from land and sea, Waihole, home of the taro  
I am from fish, fried fish, fish  
I am from pineapple and papaya  
I am from seafood and pua'a  
I am from apples, oranges, watermelon, and corn

I am from Luau, Kalua pig, Lau Lau, Poi, and Lomi Salmon (mmmm . . .)  
What about the Haupia (laughter)  
I am from fishing for Papio  
I am from Luaus, most of the time in PaiPai Bay where people go for camping, fishing and all the fun stuff people do at the beach

I am from going fishing once with my dad  
I am from us all getting together on Christmas – that's all I've ever known about celebration and traditions

I am from lazy, not good enough, never amount to nothing  
I am from if you wasn't my daughter, I'd hate you  
I am from you're never going to accomplish anything  
I am from my father always saying you can do it but thinking to myself, I no can  
I am from my father encouraging me to do my best  
I am from you are so stupid, you can never do it right, you will have to do it all over again  
I am from everything you do will never be good enough for me

I am from cooperation  
I am from working as one  
I am from hula dancing  
I am from independence as a woman  
I am from parenting  
I am from respecting others, and others who respect you  
I am from mother earth and father sky  
I am from spirituality  
I am from ocean waves that bring me peace, I go there a lot

I am from stupid, lazy, brown  
I am from what I say is not important, what I feel is not important  
I am from Hawaiians are good for nothing, live in grass shacks, and I never liked it when I heard it  
I am from the Haole and every stereotype of that, of not being welcome in the Ohana, always being on the outside

### “I am from...” Poem

I am from...Nha Trang, Vietnam. I escaped from Vietnam and stayed in Hong Kong for 8 years. I arrived in the USA in 1984

I was born in Vietnam but I grew up in Cambodia. I escaped from Cambodia and entered in the USA 20 years ago.

I am from... my family with 4 children. I am the oldest one.

I am from... my family in which I am only daughter of 13 children.

I am from...only rice and fish in my family meals because my home was in a fishing village in Vietnam.

I am from... my traditional food with rice, soup, fish, and fish sauce. I do not like hamburger and cheese.

I am from... my family that members could see and talk to each other every day in Vietnam. We had a close, caring relationship but it doesn't happen here.

I am from... my family who just celebrates birthdays for children but not for adults. However, we remember anniversary of ancestor's death very well.

I am from...my parent who disciplined their children very well. They expected children to well-behave and be good kids. Children always listen to and respect parents and elders. They think of everything for the family first. In the USA, children have too much freedom and parents can't discipline them.

I am from . . . my family in which girls should know cooking, cleaning around in house, and helping mother to take care of younger siblings... and boys learn how to be a head of family, earn money for family living... children learn how to respect elders, neighbors and family's reputation.

I am from... a neighbor who misunderstood my traditional discipline to my children and gave me troubles. Coining children when they get sick is common in my country but it may get you in troubles here.

I am from...the school system that focuses on moral things in early education. In the USA, they teach kids about sex but this isn't supported in my country.

I am from...my American neighbors whom I couldn't trust. They say so sweet but they act so cruel. Their saying and acting are converse. I think I'll come back and stay in Vietnam when all my kids grow up and can take care of themselves.

I am from... my neighbors who seem jealous with success of new immigrants.

I am from an elementary school that discriminates against my son. My son was so upset that he chose no communication at all. He talks at home, outside but not at school.

I am from ...my dream for my children's good future. However, it seems my dream can't become true because of language and culture barriers. I don't know how to discipline my children in effective ways. I am so hopeless...and disappointed at my children.

I am from...my dream for all my children. They become to be good kids and citizens. They are successful and have better future. They care for family members always...

## “I am From”

I am from Khmer, America, Thailand and Cambodia.

I am from alone; mother and sister not with me, living in America alone.

I am from sour soup, rice, and Cambodian salad  
I am from curry and sweet soup that I dislike

I am from celebrations the death of the month of September, New Year in April, weddings, parties

I am from a songbird caught in the cage waiting to die because the male cheats on female  
I am from a betraying husband who is not true to me

I am from new culture, communities and CPS

I am from hope children finish school  
I am from a healthy and happy family

## I am From

I am from Puerto Rico  
I am from Puerto Rico also, even though I've never been there  
I am from being a Latina  
I am from being mixed up about my culture due to so many years in the United States  
I am from learning everything I know from my being raised in the United States since my birth

I am from my family  
I am from a sense of freedom, a freedom that my children also share  
I am from feeling safe in my community, free to come and go anytime  
I am from independence is possible for women

I am from a community that continues to gain more services  
I am from a community where many women don't use services because they are intimidated  
I am from a community where services are available but underutilized because people don't think they need the services  
I am from people who panic every year that the census comes out, even though the census is there to help us.  
I am from people who vote more and continue to be more involved in politics

**I am from.....**

I am from India, Gujarat, Medford, Surat, Bahrruch, Baroda, Kasmaba, where I grew up and spent my childhood

I am from India, a beautiful valley of Kashmir, a hill station, Dehra Dun and the capital of India, New Delhi, from US and a small town in central Massachusetts.

I am from Haiti and I have lived here for many years.

I am from the heat from the sun, from Ivory Coast West Africa , from France, Paris, and from Boston, Cambridge and now from a suburb west of Boston.

I am from Hindu community where people more believe in God and believe family orientation is more important than anything else. Brother, sisters and parents are the first.

I am from a family of one brother and three sisters and a mother and a father, a husband and his family and some friends.

I am from living with my daughter of 11 years in Massachusetts. I have only my mother, no sisters and brothers here but a sister who lives in the southern United States.

I do not have many friends, I am pretty independent.

I am from Boston from a church, from a sanctuary, from friends who are now my family. I consider the church as my family.

I am from the media.

I am from my neighborhood.

I am from a spicy country where you can find different spices with different taste. My grandmother used to tell me that spice makes your brain grow.

I am from people who love food, chicken being my favorite and greens too. Never liked lentils.

I make beans and rice and vegetables, I love Haitian cooking and Italian food too.

I am from banana plantain, rice, fish, and in one word tropical food, now Chinese

I am from a family who believes in Hinduism and culturally think that God is one but people see him from different eyes. What you see is what you believe, what treatment you get is what you give back to others.

In my family when we get married we don't marry twice, just once. In my family if you divorce someone you don't marry again.

I am from the S---\* and K---- family which is my mother, father the B--- family by marriage and now F--- A---- K----, K----- which is my father's name.

I am from Shivratri a religious affair, it is the celebration of the marriage of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati, Diwali is the celebration of lights and is celebrated with pomp and show. It is the coming home of Lord Rama after his exile of 17 years. Raksha Bandhan is another traditional celebration where a brother promises to protect his sister forever.

I am from celebrations from India culture, and have grown up with the Indian family in the United States. I like to spend time with other communities like Asian, Nigerian and Muslims.

I am from family values that consist mainly of respecting all elders and obeying them even if the age difference is not much. Think of others before yourself and sacrifice your happiness for the welfare of others. Do things that bring pride to the family and not shame.

---

\* Full names have been reduced to initials to preserve the anonymity of the participants.

**I am from ..... (continued from previous page)**

I am from a culture of people who practice a lot of voodoo, something I do not like it because they do a lot of bad things.

I am from Atsian in Akan culture from French Integrity, I am from faith, I am from the misconceptions of other cultures because this is a third culture for me.

I would like to make a name for my self and be independent, feel secure and find happiness.

I believe that you should never do bad things to people. I want to do many good things.

I am from a specific dream, which is total freedom and independence for my family in the States here and in the US.

**I Am From!**

I am from Molokai

I am from Kalamaula, a district of Molokai

I am from Grandma from Kalamaula

I am from CPS

I am from my Grandpa

I am from myself

I am from Fish and Poi

I am from Birthdays

I am from Luaus

I am from drinking

I am from “big baby”

I am from “you better not say anything”

You no bloody good

I am from Hawaiian language

I am from children are to be seen but not heard

I am from work

I am from Hawaiians are stingy

I am from Hawaiians are stupid (yeah, exactly)

I am from Hawaiians are poor and stupid

## I am from Poem

I am from the Big Island  
I am from Honolulu  
I am from Kauai  
I am from Ko'olau

I am from negative influences, my mom,  
uncles, and boyfriend  
I am from a big, close knit family, a family  
of alcoholics and addicts  
I am from positive influences, my dad and  
my children  
I am raised up in foster homes, don't really  
have a family

I am from Hawaiian foods  
My grandma who would always make fried  
aku bone and poi  
I am from rice  
I am from picking opihi  
I am from Beach Luau  
I am from Kanakapila  
I am from Pupui  
I am from Paniolos and the country lifestyle  
I am from holidays, every thing the same on  
holidays,  
I am from camping every summer  
I am from not having to do any chores on  
our birthdays

I am from an abusive mom telling me, "HIT  
ME!" and, "because of you, I am an  
alcoholic  
I am from my ex-partner who made me suck  
his thing or else he'd hit me  
I am from "stupid kid", I don't remember all  
of it but it was all bad things  
I am from mom getting drunk and blaming  
us for things: "its your fault your dad left,"  
"its your fault you're a girl", "its your fault  
your dad hits me"  
I am from my auntie guys saying, "stupid  
ass, you're so dumb, you'll never amount to  
anything."

I am from, "pack your stuff, you're going  
with uncle" (my mom was always  
threatening to send me away)  
I am from, "you are a troubled child, you are  
just like your father"  
I am from, "you are streetwise even though  
you aren't school and book smart."

I am from when you fight, better win  
otherwise your family will give you lickings  
I am from respecting other people's homes,  
take off slippers, help clean up after yourself  
I am from family comes first  
I am from being proud of being Hawaiian  
but I had a hard time because I'm the  
whitest one in the family because my dad is  
hapa haole  
But, I am also from a lot of comments like  
stupid Hawaiians and that hurt me inside  
I am from family comes first, obligation,  
take care of your family before anybody else  
I am from blood is thicker than water  
I am from surfing is the only way to take all  
your worries away

I am from Hawaiians, as a people are stupid  
I am from Hawaiians are nothing but  
druggies  
I am from "stupid Hawaiians, all they do is  
make kids, and drink"  
I am from Hawaiians are lazy  
In Hawaiian families, only the wife works  
I am from, "your family is a dysfunctional."  
I am from, "when your mother ever going to  
get off welfare?"  
I am from, "Hawaiians have no more jobs  
they are all on welfare."  
I am from, "You are going to be just like  
your parents."  
I am from what I think is a positive  
stereotype, that in living a hard life that we  
can take care of our responsibilities  
I am from all Hawaiian women are beautiful

## I am From Poem

I am from Big Island  
I am from the country

I am from Oahu, Kauai, Kona  
Mainland, Big Island and Hilo  
I am from Hawai'i Community College

I am from my parents  
I am from my ex-husband  
I am from smoking friends, real friends who I  
smoke with  
I am from my husband, my daughters  
I am from my grandfather  
I am from my close friends, which is very few

I am from grandparents  
I am from my mother  
I am from my in-laws, my husband who passed  
away  
I am from my supportive friends

I am from Lau Lau and Lomi Salmon  
I am from Poi  
I am from seafood  
I am from McDonald's  
And the food I don't like, mushrooms and peas  
I am from lobster, fish, lobster, and squid  
I am from Hawaiian foods  
I am from foods that I don't like, Filipino food

I am from no holidays  
I am from Jehovah's witness  
I am from preaching the bible  
I am from New Years Day, Fourth of July, and  
Christmas  
I am from picking coffee  
I am from kicking back at home

I am from perception  
I am from "no common sense"  
I am from "you're not supposed to feel like that"  
I am from everyone outside our religion or  
family is bad  
I am from you started it, just because I'm the  
oldest grandchild – I am the corruptor  
I am from, "you are a liar, you aren't capable of  
telling the truth"  
I am from, "you are stupid, you dummy, good  
for nothing, talking through your ass"  
I am from, "you are hopeless"

I am from how to work the lo'i  
I am from learning about na'au  
I am from learning to appreciate the land and all  
the things you can get from it  
I am from learning to recognize the signs or  
messages from things around us  
I am from learning I am from the people – like  
Auntie P--  
I am from chanting  
I am from plants  
I am from my past, my geneology, my ancestors  
and the land that I have

I am from Hawaiians are lazy  
I am from Hawaiians are not educated, are  
without morals and are abusive  
I am from all Hawaiians are alcoholic and drug  
users  
I am from "dumb Hawaiians"  
I am from all Hawaiians are alcoholic

## I AM POEM

I am from Maui  
I am from Oahu, Honolulu, Kalihi, Koiliouou, Makapu'u Beach  
I am from a functional family  
I am from a dysfunctional family

I am from a broken marriage  
I am from an abusive relationship  
I am from a mentally, sexually, physically and verbally abusive family  
I am from a racist, prejudice family  
I am from a functional family  
I am from a controlling family

I am from Hawaiian Food  
I am from Lomi Salmon and Poi  
I am from Korean Food  
I am from foods from the Pacific Rim  
I am from canned sardine, with onion and poi  
I am from canned corned beef and pork and beans and rice  
And, Spam of course  
I am from chopsticks and cheese  
I am from Chinese food, Filipino, Puerto Rican and Portuguese, too.

I am from picking limu, pahole fern, opihi, and fishing  
I am from first baby luau, first party  
I am from graduation  
I am from our funerals and weddings  
I am from Christmas and football games  
I am from family gatherings every Friday  
I am from New Year's Party  
I am from Birthday parties that last two weeks  
And from eating food the day after the party  
I am from hiking up in the mountains  
I am from sitting in the punawai  
Used to swim in the ditch, too.

I am from you come from a Haole  
I am from A---  
I am from A---  
I am from P--- K-----  
I am from lucky you have green eyes  
I am from do your chores, clean your room, do your homework and get off the phone!  
I am from did you cook the rice?

I am from you're all a bunch of monkeys  
I am from you made your bed, now lie in it  
And, if you had brains you'd be dangerous  
I am from nobody is going to like you after you're used



I am from why pay for the cow if you get the milk for free  
I am from when the broom is new, it sweeps good  
I am from your ass is grass, and you are fucked, screwed and tattooed  
I am from if only you'd listen

I am from a prayer warrior in the protestant church, Hawaiian healer and midwife  
I am from a Cantonese Chinese grandfather off the boat to work on irrigation who smoked Opium  
in Chinatown  
I am from parents who wished we would go to Kamehameha  
I am from respect your elders and to call them Uncle and Auntie  
I am from you need to be educated, and highly respected in the community  
I am from having a good name, everything was a name  
I am from be a law abiding citizen  
I am from better not make me shame  
I am from always kissing people, the Hawaiian way is Honihoni, how I hate that  
I am from come, come sit on uncle's lap even though you're only a little girl and he finger fucks  
you while you sit there  
I am from children are to be seen not heard  
I am from respect your Uncles and Aunties

I am from putting food on the altar to feed Aumakua  
I am from making the sign of the cross before going into the water or entering a church  
I am from Sunday school with VO5 head so tight I thought my head would bust, lace dress and  
shining black shoes

I am from all Filipinos have blades and eat dogs  
I am from Hawaiians always fighting with Hawaiians  
I am from others seeing me only an addict, not as the person I am  
I am from Hawaiians are uneducated – Kapulu  
I am from Hawaiians can make babies but can't take care of them  
I am from they are pregnant, barefoot, and cook rice

I am from Hawaiians got to get off welfare – all of 'em are on welfare  
That's what I heard Mariah Carey said when she came to visit our islands  
I am from the indigenous cannot handle their alcohol, sold all their land for alcohol, fire water  
I am from Hawaiians need to learn how to read and write they are not self-sufficient  
I am from stares at our big family, "poor thing you" because they knew my mom was being  
beaten  
But, never look at the Haole family next door the same way  
I am from all Hawaiians are abusive – husband and wife beaters, low class  
I am from Indigenous people who are homeless with no land

## II. INTRODUCTION

You have just been introduced to the women who generously shared their experiences, insights and opinions with us through their participation in an action research effort designed to learn more about how women from immigrant, refugee, and indigenous populations are involved with and treated by Child Protective Services (CPS). This effort has been a collaborative one since its inception, during its development and throughout its implementation. Collaborators are women of color and allies supporting the interests of women of color and include survivors, advocates, former CPS clients, child therapists, community organizers, cultural practitioners, feminist researchers, feminist scholars and batterer's treatment facilitators. While formal roles were assigned as indicated on the cover page, this work would not have been possible without the passionate dedication and cooperative spirit demonstrated by each contributor to do whatever needed to be done to accomplish the common goal.

The common goal is to share the voices of immigrant, refugee and indigenous women who are survivors of intimate partner abuse and who have been involved with child protective services, in order to inform and facilitate the development of policies, practices and interventions that will more effectively address the physical, emotional and spiritual health of individuals, families and communities. We hope that learning from and collaborating with women who have addressed these issues of partner abuse and child abuse and who have been changed by their interactions with systems relating to CPS will direct us toward new approaches in responding to the myriad problems produced by the ever-growing rate of family violence in this country. Thus, the primary goal of this pilot project is to complete the first step in the action research process: to define the problem through participation and input from key stakeholders and to identify strategies and mechanisms to begin addressing one or various aspects of the problem.

This report begins by defining the problem to be explored, identifying the purpose of the project and summarizing the research design. Next, data collected from three different data sources is described. In the subsequent section, feedback from participants and research team members is synthesized into lessons learned. The report concludes with ideas for how to use the data collected and recommendations for systems, individuals, and family and community members.

### Defining the Problem

The battered women's movement, which gained real momentum in the late 1970s, has been credited with raising public awareness, increasing public understanding of domestic violence, attracting public and private resources to the issue, and shaping interventions and services. At the same time, it has been criticized by feminist scholars and women activists of color for tailoring its policy proposals and social responses

primarily to the needs of white American-born women; failing to acknowledge, or address, the needs of other populations of women suffering abuse.

Research shows that women from Latin, African American, Asian, Pacific Islander and other non-Caucasian groups experience partner abuse at high rates, and are negatively impacted by their inability to escape abuse or seek appropriate rehabilitative and support services. Among the negative consequences are homelessness, joblessness, incarceration, drug and alcohol abuse, and physical and emotional injuries, including the range of symptoms grouped under the heading of post-traumatic stress disorder. The presence of these negative consequences frequently triggers investigations and interventions by Child Protective Services thus posing the ever-constant threat women will lose custody of their children, whether temporarily or permanently.

Immigrant and refugee women are thought to be particularly vulnerable populations due to lack of access to services, poverty, and fears related to maintaining or attaining citizenship status. Indigenous women, while relieved of the burden of securing citizenship, otherwise face the same issues. Research indicates that family violence occurs across ethnic and class lines, yet women of color suffer the short- and long-term consequences of being battered in proportionally greater numbers, and to a greater extent, than their white counterparts. What remain unclear are the sources of increased vulnerability and causes for the disproportionate negative impacts experienced by families of color.

Some suggest that a major factor is institutionalized discrimination in the form of racism and classism compounded by gender bias throughout legal, social service and health care systems. Some hypothesize that women within communities of color lack information about what services exist and how to access them; or face barriers created by lack of transportation or translation/interpretation services. Others attribute high rates of abuse and failure to access services to cultural values more accepting of abuse of family members, or values that give higher priority to family or group loyalty, or to family honor or privacy. Some point to the low levels of participation of women from communities of color in the public and private agencies that provide services -- in law enforcement, criminal justice, health care and social service sectors. Others suggest that many services tend to overlook, intimidate and polarize many refugee and immigrant women. Finally, fear of disclosing or losing immigration status deters women from seeking help from public officials.

Increasingly, questions about the precise ways in which race and culture are relevant to patterns of abuse and service utilization are being raised, and organizations and individuals are attempting to develop culturally specific interventions. These projects may provide proof that innovative, community-based approaches can in fact surmount obstacles accepted by traditional service organizations as insurmountable. However, the community activists engaged in this work are hampered by a lack of reliable research both as to the nature of the obstacles, and as to the effectiveness of their efforts to overcome them.

## **Purpose of the Project**

There are four primary reasons for pursuing this project:

1. To learn how CPS can be more responsive to families experiencing domestic violence and child abuse and neglect;
2. To learn how domestic violence advocates can be more effective in helping clients to respond to allegations of or actual child abuse and neglect and CPS interventions;
3. To explore how community (family, friends, neighbors, church, civic organizations) can be more responsive to partner abuse and child abuse and neglect and provide support to families involved with CPS; and
4. To experiment with a research design that accomplishes the first step of participatory research and at the same time empowers advocates and survivors.

## **III. PROJECT DESIGN**

The project design included three methods of information gathering. The majority of effort and time was devoted to conducting focus groups in an urban setting, the Greater Boston area of Massachusetts and rural and small town settings on three Hawaiian Islands. A second data source was a short survey aimed at collecting the perspectives and opinions of advocates who work with battered women involved with CPS. We disseminated surveys to advocates and service providers who work within organizations serving battered women from immigrant, refugee and indigenous populations. A portion of project resources supported conducting interviews with individuals who were identified as “stake holders” or professionals with an interest in the overlap between domestic violence and child abuse and neglect.

### **A. FOCUS GROUP DESIGN**

#### **1. Developing the focus group methods and tools**

The foundational research team for the focus group component of the project included Quynh Dang, Aimee Thompson, Cathy Wong, and Pualani Enos. Quynh Dang is the Director of the Massachusetts Department of Health Refugee and Immigrant Safety and Empowerment Programs. She has several years of experience as a domestic violence advocate, trainer, community organizer and director of a domestic violence shelter and service center for Asian American women. Aimee Thompson is the Executive Director of the Close to Home Domestic Violence Prevention Initiative, a community-based organization in Dorchester, Massachusetts, which seeks to build the capacity of family, friends and neighbors to respond to domestic violence and hold institutions accountable for providing services that are responsive to community needs and interests. Aimee was a counselor and trainer in the Child Witness to Violence

Project at Boston Medical Center and director of a domestic violence program in the Ukraine and the Republic of Georgia for Project Harmony. Cathy Wong teaches at the University of Massachusetts in Boston in the Graduate College of Education. Cathy also teaches in the Institute for Asian American Studies and Boston University's Cross Cultural Counseling Program. Pualani Enos was a clinical law professor at Northeastern University School of Law for seven years before beginning this project. During this time she represented battered women and children in family law and restraining order proceedings, directed the Boston Medical Center Domestic Violence Advocacy, Education and Research Project, and conducted interdisciplinary research exploring ways to improve medical responses to domestic violence. Pualani Enos currently works for University of Hawai'i Manoa, School of Social Work, where she coordinates the evaluation of Ke Ala Lokahi, a culturally-based batterer's intervention and victim's support program located at Turning Point for Families in Hilo, Hawai'i. She continues to work as a part-time Senior Research Scientist at Northeastern University.

Team members shared similar interests including examining how culture impacts various service organizations and delivery of service, exploring the viability of participatory or action research methods to improve the status and quality of life for families, neighborhoods, and communities where intimate partner violence and child abuse occur, and identifying mechanisms for tapping into community and family member's strengths, needs and opinions with the hope of organizing and mobilizing community leaders. The collaborative relied on a melding of each team member's particular expertise and skills base.

The foundational research team finalized the research design and coordinated efforts to recruit and hire community researchers. Next, the team created focus group activities and a training curriculum for the community researchers and their research assistants. Finally, the team provided three training days for the community researchers to prepare them for their meetings with the participants. The first two days of training addressed recruiting participants, facilitating the focus groups, note taking during the group and transcription of focus group audio recordings. The third day focused on analyzing the data as a group, discussing what to do with the data, methods of dissemination to different audiences and facilitating a follow-up meeting with participants to do the same. The third day was perhaps the greatest challenge given the large amount of rich data, and language and cultural differences.

## **2. Training community researchers and finalizing focus group tools**

Community researchers were selected based on their experience working with victims of abuse, their familiarity with the issues relating to child abuse and neglect, their demonstrated commitment to working within communities of color and their willingness to assist other providers to increase their awareness of cross-cultural issues. All of the community researchers are either bi-lingual or multi-lingual and work as bi-cultural advocates in one or more settings. Most of them devoted themselves to learning about the workings of their clients' communities. Three of the community researchers

had some formal training or experience in qualitative data collection. Combined, they brought a variety of unique skills and experiences, positive relationships with key stakeholders in the community, and a good reputation with families from the community. Most importantly they each possessed high levels of integrity, humility, passion, and commitment. Their experience as advocates or active community members made them strong facilitators for women sharing traumatic and intense experiences.

Community researchers had several responsibilities. They were asked to recruit participants, schedule groups, facilitate groups, participate in data analysis, determine uses for the data and engage participants in data analysis. Additionally, they worked to ensure that focus group activities were appropriately tailored to the language, culture and communities of the various groups. They translated all the focus group materials, focus group data, data graphs and participant responses during the follow-up meetings.

Finally, community researchers participated in a one-hour focus group where they were asked to share their opinions about CPS' response to domestic violence and women of color, the benefits and challenges of working as a bicultural and bilingual advocate, and feedback about working as a community researcher. Information from this group will be described in various sections throughout this report.

### **3. Focus group activities**

The focus groups for participants consisted of six activities. The first three exercises centered on the participants' perceptions about themselves, how they define culture and what domestic violence and child abuse look like in the various communities. The first exercise, adapted by Cathy Wong<sup>\*</sup>, assisted the women in getting to know each other and elicited information about their cultural identity and perceptions about their own culture. The exercise produced the poems that begin this report. After completing the "I am from . . ." poem, facilitators for the Hawai'i groups asked participants to define culture and community. [Interestingly enough, although the definition of community and community affiliation are central to many of the questions contained in the focus group tool, this question was not included in the Massachusetts focus group tool. Fortunately, we identified this omission in time to incorporate it into the tool used for the Hawai'i groups.] After that, the participants were asked to analyze the overlap between intimate partner violence and child abuse and neglect in their community.

The rest of the exercises centered on participants' knowledge, perceptions and opinions about CPS. The fourth exercise consisted of a hypothetical that revealed participants' knowledge of CPS policies, procedures and how these coincided or conflicted with their own customs, practices and parenting. The exercise was crafted so that information could be shared in a general way, without ownership by any one participant. Specific strategies used to protect participant privacy were specifically

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<sup>\*</sup> Activity adapted from Linda Christensen in *Beyond Heroes and Holidays: A Practical Guide to K-12 Anti-Racist, Multicultural Education and Staff Development* (1998) Network of Educators on the Americas, Washington D.C. pp. 391-394.

described at the beginning of each group. The fifth exercise was a discussion format that afforded each participant ample opportunity to describe what they thought was helpful and harmful about CPS. Participants were also asked to share recommendations for CPS and any other related system.

At the end of the group, participants did two short closing activities. First, facilitators asked each participant to pretend she had been appointed to be “Queen” of her community for the day. Each participant was asked to place a toy tiara (adorned with small plastic jewels and feathers) on her head and describe in two minutes what she would do to address family violence and CPS interventions if she were, “Queen for the Day.” The intent of this exercise is to allow participants the freedom to think about what would be ideal without the limitations presented by current services, systems, resources, community attitudes and social norms. We also wanted to give the participants time to think independently of the group and end the group on a positive and hopeful note.

Lastly, participants were asked to share one word or phrase to describe the experience. This exercise was to serve as clinical check-in to gauge how participants were feeling and to see if anyone needed any kind of immediate support or referral to ongoing support. This exercise also provided participants with an opportunity to provide the facilitator with feedback about the focus group.

## **B. SURVEY DESIGN**

The Asian & Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence (“API Institute”) funded the development of a small survey project to collect quantitative data from advocates working with domestic violence survivors and their children. The survey was developed with advisory support of Mieko Yoshihama and Chic Dabby. The survey is comprised of 25 multiple choice and short answer questions.

The survey was disseminated at a National Summit sponsored by the Asian & Pacific Islander Institute in June 2002 and the Annual Meeting of the National Network to End Violence Against Immigrant Women (“The Network”) in August 2002. This method of data collection focused on two distinct populations of battered women advocates – those working with women from immigrant and refugee communities and those working with Asians and Pacific Islanders. Dissemination at these forums resulted in 74 completed surveys. Singh Sin Goh, MSW, University of Hawaii Manoa, performed the statistical analysis and created a data report that is on file with the author. Many thanks go to the 74 advocates who took the time and effort to complete the survey or bring it back to their organizations for completion.

## **C. INTERVIEWS**

Interviews were scheduled with stakeholders in Massachusetts and Hawai'i. Stakeholders were recruited based on their knowledge, interest and work experience in the area of domestic violence and child abuse. All stakeholders worked for systems related to child protection interventions including CPS staff and supervisors, domestic violence specialists working with CPS, shelter workers, attorneys, domestic violence advocates, guardians ad litem, child abuse evaluators, and family law attorneys.

The purpose of conducting the interviews with professionals who worked with battered mothers who were at risk of being, or who had been, involved with CPS was to compare and contrast issues and perspectives identified to the perspectives of participants in the focus groups. Moreover, these interviews would reveal how interested, invested and experienced professionals from these agencies are in addressing and working on the overlap of intimate partner violence and child abuse and neglect. The interview questions were intentionally general and tailored to the role of the professional in hopes of eliciting issues that were most pressing and interesting to each stakeholder.



## IV. PROJECT OUTCOMES

### A. FOCUS GROUP DATA

Overall, 30 women participated in focus groups. In Massachusetts, we conducted a Brazilian group, a Latin American group, a Vietnamese group, and a multi-cultural group. An individual interview was conducted with a Cambodian survivor in place of the focus group scheduled due to difficulty in recruiting people to participate in either a group or individual setting. While most women resided in the greater Boston area, there were some from central and southern Massachusetts. The groups were conducted in native languages except for a multi-cultural group which was conducted in English.

In Hawai'i, six groups were scheduled but only five were conducted due to illness and scheduling related problems with one group. The groups contained women who identified as part Hawaiian, except for one Native American woman who is the mother of a part-Hawaiian child. The project director, who is part-Hawaiian, acted as the research assistant for each group. Groups were conducted on three different islands with women representing five of the Hawaiian Islands.

#### 1. Participant Demographics

##### *Massachusetts' Participants*

Fifteen women participated in five groups conducted in the Greater Boston Area of Massachusetts. The age range of the women was 32-54. Women were born in Brazil, Guatemala, India, Haiti, the Ivory Coast, Puerto Rico, and the United States. One woman was born in the United States but had lived in Puerto Rico, the land of her ancestry, for some years.

Participants' relationships to their abusive partners varied. Some were married, others dating and others had children in common. Only one woman was currently in the midst of divorce proceedings. When asked about any current contact with their abusive partner, only seven out of the fifteen responded. One woman reported she was separated from her partner with voluntary contact, three reported being separated with involuntary contact and three reported no contact at all. Almost all of the participants were living with their children and apart from their children's father. The rest were living with their partner, and one of these women reported her sister also lived in their household. Two participants had only two children. The rest of the women had three to five children. The children's ages ranged from four to twenty-two, with equal representation between boys and girls. At least two boys were over the age of 12 amongst the groups interviewed. Only a few participants had family members living in the United States. However, almost all of them reported having at least 2 or 3 close friends in the United States. The most common support networks reported were friends and church. The next most frequent supports were family and counselors. Other support

networks identified were people at school, advocates, work colleagues, women's support group and legal assistance.

The range of time that participants were involved with CPS was 3 months to more than two years with most women reporting involvement for 1-2 years. Two of the participants reported that their case was still open meaning services were being delivered and investigation remained a threat. Five of the participants reported closed cases. One of the participants had experienced a reopening of her case after closure. Only two of the women experienced removal of their children into CPS custody. In both cases the children were placed with a family, but in one case the child was eventually moved to foster care. In this case, the children were split up.

Most of the participants are immigrants and one participant is a refugee. Six reported having been naturalized at the time that CPS became involved with their family. One person reported that her status was unsettled while the remaining participants did not respond to this question. Most of the women had been living in the U.S. for 7-17 years but one woman had only been in the country for only 2 months when CPS intervened.

Most of the women had completed high school or a GED program. Many had attended some college in their home country. Only a few of the women attended any kind of educational programs in the United States, these included ESL and a computer course. Almost all of the women were working either full-time or part-time.

### *Hawai'i Participants*

Thirteen women participated in five groups conducted on three of the seven islands that make up the State of Hawai'i. The age range of women who participated was 21-46. All of the participants were born in Hawai'i except one who was born in New York. Six of these women currently reside on the island where they were born and raised. While many of the women had visited Oahu at least once, they have never traveled to the mainland U.S. Some had never visited any of the other outer islands. Less than half of the women interviewed had visited or lived on any of the other outer islands. While two of the participants reported being pure Hawaiian, the rest of the women were of mixed ancestry. Women were Hawaiian-Chinese, Hawaiian-Portuguese, and various combinations of Hawaiian with other ethnicities that included Japanese, Filipino, Korean, Puerto Rican, German, Irish and other Caucasians. Two of the women did not describe their ethnicity specifically.

Participants were related to their abusive partners through marriage, living together and/or having a child in common. Almost all of the women had children with the abusive partner. When the women were asked about the current status of these relationships, three reported no contact, five reported living together and four reported being separated from that partner. Two out of the four separated reported that they continue to have involuntary contact with their abusive partner while the other two consider any contact with their abusive partner to be voluntary.

Many of the women did not respond to specific questions regarding type and length of involvement with CPS. Some of the women retained custody throughout CPS involvement and others lost custody of their children to family or foster care placements for a period of 6-18 months. Two of the women had their parental rights terminated for one or more children.

Many of the women had completed high school and a few were attending or had completed college. More than half of the women were receiving some kind of public assistance, either in housing or income supports, while the rest were working full or part-time.

## 2. Participants' Experiences of and Perceptions about Abuse

Participants from the groups in Massachusetts and Hawai'i reported emotional, economic, sexual and physical partner abuse during the groups. Participants emphasized the need for service providers to better understand the long lasting and sometimes debilitating impacts of living with such mistreatment. Women reported being forced to do whatever their partners dictated. When they chose to step outside the bounds set by their partner, they were cursed and criticized, ignored for days at a time or physically punished. Women described how such controlling behavior and resulting isolation disrupts relationships with others, reduces their ability to gain or maintain skills and competence in a variety of areas and prevents spiritual and emotional growth. Women also reported being forced to have sex. Sexual abuse results in feelings of subordination, shame and hopelessness. Participants raised serious concern that service providers continually minimize and overlook the impact of abuse that does not result in physical injury, given that such abuse causes internal scarring that impedes functioning well. One participant remarked, "Being treated like a slave day in and day out destroys your sense of self, identity and self-confidence."

All the women reported that physical, sexual, and mental abuse to children also exists in their communities. Most of the women reported raising their children based on their own experiences growing up. Some of the women believed that physical discipline in the form of slapping or spanking is required to teach a child the difference between right and wrong. A few reported that physical punishment or fear of being hit is key to ensuring that a child does not run wild but instead learns respect. However this type of physical discipline was explicitly distinguished from abuse defined as beatings with great force or weapons that resulted in injury to the child. Only two of the women felt that it was sometimes necessary to "beat the child" in order to correct them. At the other extreme, a number of women declared that any kind of physical punishment is unacceptable, qualifying their statements with the fact that this insight came only after being exposed to a different type of parenting.

Although the women acknowledged that severe physical discipline of children occurs in their communities, many felt it did not happen in all or even most families. Verbal abuse and neglect was considered to be far more common. Participants

displayed sadness when talking about how children are yelled at and criticized by parents, treated differently because of gender, and trapped in the middle of problems between parents. Neglect is even more prevalent than emotional or verbal abuse and considered by the women to be the most damaging. Participants define neglect as parents' failing to provide supervision, adequate attention, and physical protection. Several of the women sadly reported that many children go through entire days without a single positive interaction with an adult. Some also considered not participating in or passing on cultural traditions to be neglectful. Women described how many parents failed to provide their children with "the basics" which include food, clothing, health care and good hygiene habits on a consistent basis.

When discussing the relationship between domestic violence and child abuse, the participants expressed feeling responsible for any abuse or neglect their children experienced. Without specific questioning, the participants were unable to see any connection between the violence inflicted upon them by their partner and the abuse or neglect of their children. However, when asked about it directly, the women admitted that the physical, mental and emotional abuse they suffered did take a toll on their ability to parent. They acknowledged that they often felt powerless due to their partner's dominating behavior over the family, control over financial resources, and ability to manipulate people outside the family and systems in order to maintain control. Still most felt that any harm their children had suffered was ultimately their responsibility. None of the women lay sole blame for what happened to their children on their partner despite his being the primary source of abuse, threats and violence in the home. The participants' pain and remorse over what their children had endured was obvious by their tone, expressions, body language and demeanor.

Most women agreed that CPS did not address domestic violence in a direct or comprehensive way. None of the women in Hawai'i and few of the women in Massachusetts received any assistance from a domestic violence agency during the time they were dealing with CPS. CPS never offered such services but required women to obtain no-contact restraining orders against their partners in order to prevent removal of their children. Only a few mentioned being offered any abuse related services or resources that would be needed as a result of having no contact with the children's father. In Massachusetts, the women who did have access to an advocate during their proceedings reported being treated more fairly and felt much more positive about their involvement with CPS.

Participants reported that providers rarely seemed to incorporate their concerns about separating from their partners when providing advice and consultation. Women attributed this to CPS workers' failure to address domestic violence, examine the exact risks it posed to the children and recognize the strengths and benefits of the intact family. Participants wished that CPS workers recognized obstacles to leaving such as lack of self-confidence, feelings of self-blame and the economic and social disadvantages faced by children without a father. Many mothers felt that single parenting is often inadequate to provide the children with what they need and deserve. Additionally, leaving a partner may result in him retaliating by taking the children away

from her permanently. One participant represented the sentiment of all when she said, “I could live with the abuse if I had to, but if I ever lost my kids, my life would be over. I couldn’t risk him [my partner] taking them away from me.”

The concerns shared by participants in the groups demonstrate their keen understanding of how violence and abuse in the home hurts their children in a variety of ways and disrupts healthy development. The concerns they shared also showed that their experience is not unique, that other women and children in their communities also experience family violence and abuse. Women were amazed that time and time again, CPS workers and domestic violence advocates seem to perceive women as being unaware of their problems. Women remembered feeling that social workers misinterpreted their not knowing how to stop the risk to their children as a failure on their part to see that a problem existed. In fact, many women believed that if workers and advocates had as good an understanding of the risks posed to their children as they themselves did, CPS would have been in a more informed position to help them to help their children.

### 3. Cultural and Community Identity

The poems that begin this report were created during an “I am Poem” exercise. This activity provided women with some time to think and share about themselves and get to know each other. The exercise was far more emotionally intense and taxing than anticipated by the research team. Courageously, women shared painful and joyful experiences as well as their feelings and opinions about intimate, private topics. Openly sharing with each other served to create a bond and set a tone for the rest of the meeting.

While the poems that resulted are beautiful descriptions with a wealth of information, producing them was not easy for any of the groups. Community researchers reported that many of the participants seemed unclear about what was being asked of them. No one wanted to “go first” and people seem stymied and unsure for the first half of the exercise. Upon much reflection and discussion among the research team, the conclusion was that the exercise is challenging on many levels, especially given the subject matter. Writing the poems was truly emotional work.

Even with a thorough introduction, the product and purpose of this exercise is ambiguous. The idea of creating a poem may have been intimidating for many participants. Once the exercise got underway it was immediately apparent that participants had rarely been asked to speak about their needs, expectations, disappointments or opinions. The instructions focused solely on their views and insights, and their opinions of the outside world. Participants seemed to be taken by surprise by the request, perhaps somewhat in disbelief that we actually cared about their opinions. Moreover, it’s likely that participants were accustomed to their opinions being dismissed by previous listeners, as worthless, irrelevant, or a private matter that ought not to be shared. Next, the types of information discussed typically involved painful memories, many of which had never been resolved or even processed. Many of

the women had never spoken about their CPS experience with anyone before this meeting due to the shame, embarrassment and stigma associated with it. Also, this type of sharing requires that individuals make themselves vulnerable to others in the group, a task that is difficult for everyone, even those who have not been exposed to systems. Participants revealed their emotions through tears, raised voices, and defeated body language. Despite the difficulties presented by the exercise, participants appeared to have disposed of some of the pain associated with their CPS experience and seemed satisfied with their final product.

Immediately following the poem exercise, participants were asked to describe their cultural identity and community affiliations. Participants asked community researchers to repeat and explain the question in different ways and to provide several examples. We failed to anticipate that participants might not have a framework for analyzing identity and place within community unlike those of us who are accustomed to working cross-culturally and studying cultural competence. Many of the participants, despite living in richly diverse environments and surrounded by distinct cultural affiliations, did not immediately identify as part of a particular ethnic group. Few of the participants identified themselves in terms of individual accomplishments or interests. Most identified themselves with the systems or labels assigned to them due to the problems experienced. Another common theme was identifying themselves in terms of their relationships with their partners and children. More than a few of the women identified having no affiliation with any community presently or in the past, stating they felt completely isolated and alone. This they attributed to growing up in an abusive family of origin, to the isolation resulting from living with an abusive partner or the stigma associated with CPS interventions or public assistance programs.

#### **4. What Causes Family Violence in these Communities?**

##### **a. Causes of Family Violence**

Participants agreed that the primary cause of partner abuse and child abuse is poverty. Poverty may be due to unemployment, but may also exist where families are working multiple jobs that do not provide enough income to adequately support the family. Parents' inability to provide for their family is a significant and persistent cause for family problems and partner and child abuse.

Women also cited excessive alcohol use and drug addiction as a primary cause of severe violence, abuse and unpredictable behavior by their partners. Women recounted stories of doing whatever was necessary to get alcohol and drugs for their partners in order to protect themselves and their children from beatings. Some of the women acknowledged their own reliance on alcohol or drugs when the stress became too much.

Additionally, women attributed coercive, threatening and abusive behaviors to the way in which men are raised and from what they see growing up. Women agreed that their partners or their partners' families justified violent tactics and controlling behaviors through religious beliefs that the man is the head of the household and

women are there to serve their men. At the same time, women credited their own family beliefs, traditions and practices as contributing to their own response to such behavior. About half of the women had heard from older women in their family and communities that a man who loves a woman hits her. Many reported seeing women in their family accept abusive and violent behavior from their partners as an unavoidable part of life. For many women, older generations continued to send these messages to them as adults, encouraging men to beat their partners or excusing the behaviors when women go to them to ask for help and guidance. Older generations also encouraged them to use physical discipline with their children in order to “raise them right.”

Abuse and neglect may also result when one parent is required to take on the job of both mother and father. When a woman separates from an abusive partner, she is forced to work multiple jobs and maintain the household. Accordingly, she has less time to spend on and supervise her children. She is not around to enforce rules or provide consequences when rules are broken. So, she begins to rely on physical discipline that seems to achieve quicker results.

## **b. Cultural Supports and Disincentives**

### *Massachusetts’ Communities*

Participants in the groups from Massachusetts believed that there were no cultural safeguards or disincentives to partner abuse in the U.S. Some women believed that in their home country living in the same home or very close in the same community was sometimes a protection against abuse because, “if your husband abused you, the family would get involved and would not only stop the abuse but try to solve the problems that led to the abuse so that your marriage would be successful.” One woman also talked about how good male role models were a cultural safeguard against abuse. “Men in my family took care of the women and children in their family and protected them. That’s what I expected in my relationship. It happens in some relationships. The men feel a responsibility to care for and nurture their partner and kids, not tear them down.” Many felt that adaptation to U.S. culture also contributes to partner abuse. One participant explained, “being too far away from cultural ways and beliefs is what destroys our families.”

For many of the participants, religion is embedded in their culture. They described how the church and its teachings had significant influence upon people within their community. For many, the church had been a disappointment to them when dealing with abuse. Many believe that religious leaders play a strong role in maintaining the violence that happens in families. One participant stated, “Pastors and other religious people think they are helping you by trying to keep your family together but they have no idea what these men are like behind closed doors. They don’t know anything about domestic violence so they tend to give advice that makes everyone in the family unsafe and protects the abuser.” Another woman shared, “some religious men are bad role models because they preach one thing but act another.” Another

problem identified was pastors failing to recognize that not all marriages are the same. Treating everyone the same led to a lot of families not getting the support they need.

One participant described what many of the women discussed at length in one concise idea. She believes that there are two cultural beliefs that are engrained in men and women and that combined they result in men abusing women. “First, men think it’s OK for them to be the boss, they learn this from childhood, so when they grow up and get married, that’s what they have in their head, that they are the boss and should get everything their own way. At the same time, you learn that once you get married a man and woman stay married forever. Nothing can pull them apart. So men think they are entitled to get everything they want and then they think no matter what they do you have to stay. Women also believe they are trapped.”

Another participant thinks a contributing cause is the fact that family, friends, and society at large discriminate against single women. She lamented, “If you are a single man or even a single father you are congratulated – that’s fine. If you are a single woman you are a failure, a disappointment, desperate. People from my culture see women who have children from different partners as prostitutes. They don’t realize that you have different partners because the earlier ones were abusive. If you get a divorce you are a disgrace to your family and it’s really hard to find another husband.”

Women felt the primary reason that abuse was allowed to continue is because there are no consequences for violent, controlling, or abusive behavior. One participant exclaimed, “They aren’t getting enough or the right kind of punishment. There is nothing in our community that shames him or keeps him from this kind of behavior. It’s not only tolerated but accepted. I don’t think jail is the answer though because it just keeps him from earning money and puts him with other people who act like that.”

### *Hawaiian Communities*

Women who participated in the Hawai’i groups could not think of any cultural disincentives of abuse in families. In response to this question, one woman laughed at the idea. She stated, “it’s the culture that supports giving lickins’.” Another woman shared, “Most people in community know that it is going on but don’t do anything about it except for maybe gossip and look down on you about it.” Another woman experienced this many times. “The *braddahs* [men], they always stick together. If they see you are getting a licking they look the other way. Or, if you tell one of your friends the next day, and one of her boyfriend’s friends is there he’ll say, ‘I was there and that never happened.’ They always try to make you out to be the liar.”

Another way that culture supports men’s abuse against women is the way they are raised. One participant shared, “Men think they are able to do whatever they want because that’s what their mom put up with. They think they can come and go whenever they please. Men think they can treat you any which way and you’re going to have sex with them whenever they want.” Jealousy and possessiveness were also identified as leading contributors to abuse.



The participants also believe that violence creates violence. “Abuse has been happening since the beginning of time -- to our great-great grandmothers, all the way down the line to us.” Another participant shared, “Abuse in the family is the same since I was growing up but back then it was not considered abuse, it was discipline. I was told that being hit would keep me in line and teach me how to be good.”

Women believe that the man’s role as the financial provider entitles them to act anyway they please. “They think because they make the money that they are always right and you have to do whatever they say. They think they are one chief, but they sure don’t act like one, they don’t even have a pot to piss in.” Women believe that this belief comes from older generations. “When my mother-in-law and my own mother saw what he did to me they just told me, ‘He works hard for his money. Just do what he says and let him go out if he wants. Don’t make trouble.’”

Religion also played a strong role in some of the participant’s lives. One woman talked about how her religious values made it impossible for her to get a divorce. She described her situation this way, “Once you are married you have to just pray he’ll change. He is the man of the household and you’ll just have to sacrifice here so you’ll have a better place in heaven. You think maybe you are not praying hard enough, maybe you are paying for a past bad deed. This is very common among religious women. They go to their priest and that’s what they hear. You may be afraid of CPS and what they’ll do, but burning in hell for eternity is much more scary.”

## 5. Knowledge about CPS Procedures and Rules

Despite the fact that participants had been involved with CPS anywhere from 6 months to several years, they reported knowing little to nothing about the laws, rules, policies or procedures of the system with which they were dealing. Without exception, women complained of feeling confused about the roles of the different individuals working for CPS, the legal authority of CPS, what, if any, legal rights belonged to their family, as individuals or as a family unit. To participants it appeared that the power of CPS was limitless and monitored by no one. While some participants acknowledged that a judge in court had the power to review and reverse the actions of CPS, this gave them little consolation given that most of CPS’ actions take place for months before a case appears in court. Even when hearings occur at the scheduled time, they are often cut short or continued to another date to accommodate CPS workloads or court schedules. The majority of participants reported having a sense that they must be entitled to some legal protection as parents but did not know how to go about learning what their rights are or how to enforce them.

A serious concern shared by all participants was the power held by the individual caseworkers. It appeared to them that case workers could come into their home at any time of day without advance notice. A participant shared, “They can look anywhere in your home and ask you about whatever they please. They can check up on your personal and family history, interview and take your children out of school or daycare.

They have access to everyone’s medical records and check to see if you have any criminal record.” Another participant lamented, “Caseworkers have the power to tell you what to do, when to do it and where.” Reflecting on experiences with several different caseworkers, participants concluded, “Caseworkers do whatever they please, without answering to anyone.” No one was able to identify a consistent system of doing things or procedural deadlines that workers were required to observe when doing their work. They did not know of any standards that had to be met in order for CPS to become involved with a family or take custody of a child. Similarly, they had never heard of any time requirements governing CPS investigations, assessments or retaining custody of their children. Participants were uncertain as to how a service plan was determined and confused about how new items could be added to the list at any time. Participants had not been able to have any questions answered from anyone in CPS. While a few participants felt caseworkers to be responsive, most participants said it was close to impossible to reach the caseworker by phone and some did not even know how or where to reach the caseworker. Additionally, no one knew who to go to when they felt they experienced unfair, arbitrary or neglectful treatment by workers.

## **6. Insights, Opinions & Recommendations (See following graphs)**

## PARTICIPANTS' OPINIONS AND INSIGHTS RELATING TO CHILD PROTECTION INTERVENTIONS

### Positive/Helpful Aspects of Institutional Interventions

GENERAL POINTS	SPECIFIC EXAMPLES	QUOTES
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The potential and stated goal of CPS to protect, treat and assist children who have experienced abuse and neglect.</li> <li>2. CPS has access to services that could be helpful to families.</li> <li>3. The good and respectful workers can do a lot to help you.</li> <li>4. Nothing they do is helpful</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. CPS and authorities sometimes help protect women and children</li> <li>2. Services that could help include:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Access to long-term housing</li> <li>b. Extended day care</li> <li>c. Parenting classes</li> <li>d. Child treatment and counseling</li> <li>e. Treatment for abusive fathers</li> <li>f. Substance abuse treatment</li> <li>g. Support groups</li> <li>h. Work training</li> <li>i. Referral to family/immigration legal assistance</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. The good workers are the ones who:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Treat you like humans rather than animals</li> <li>b. Are honest with you and keep their word</li> <li>c. Offer you ways to help yourself and your family</li> <li>d. Accurately explain what is happening to you and how to keep your kids or get them back.</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. The system traumatizes all family members</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I’m glad they are recognizing abuse in families, in the past they weren’t doing anything about abuse against kids.”</li> <li>• “I heard that with one phone call, CPS can get you and your kids into real housing instead of emergency shelter that only lasts a short time.”</li> <li>• “If only I had known there were all these services for the abuse that was happening to me, I would have used it.”</li> <li>• “Parenting classes could be really helpful to help parents in our community find a different and better way to raise their kids.”</li> <li>• “CPS could help us to rebuild our lives by helping us with finding the things we need to live on our own, like used furniture and clothes for the kids.”</li> <li>• “CPS treated my case fine and followed up on my and my children’s safety very well. They explained things to me so I knew my rights and what was happening.”</li> <li>• “Instead of taking my kids away from me when I lost my housing, he found emergency housing for me and my kids.”</li> <li>• “The one good thing about CPS putting my kids in foster care is that it gave me a chance to go to class and treatment. It was a relief to be able to find out who I am and learn the things I never learned from my parents without having to drag my kids through it with me.”</li> <li>• “CPS is only trouble”, “CPS doesn’t help protect women and children at all, they only make things ten times worse,” “They take action and ask questions later; much later after the damage is done.”</li> </ul>

# PARTICIPANTS' OPINIONS AND INSIGHTS RELATING TO CHILD PROTECTION INTERVENTIONS

## Unhelpful/Harmful Aspects of Institutional Interventions

GENERAL POINTS	SPECIFIC EXAMPLES	QUOTES
<p>1. Children who are taken into CPS custody are placed in homes that are worse than those they were removed from.</p>	<p>1. Children are often:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. neglected</li> <li>b. physically, emotionally and psychologically abused</li> <li>c. deprived of basic needs such as adequate nutrition, clothes, proper sleeping accommodations</li> <li>d. not nurtured or treated with loving care</li> <li>e. harshly punished through verbal or physical methods</li> <li>f. required to work like hired help</li> <li>g. treated like second class to biological kids</li> <li>h. not supervised and/or directed appropriately by guardians</li> <li>i. exposed to children and adults from whom they learn destructive behaviors</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Once they put a kid in a foster care or group home, they never check up on them to see if how they are being cared for and if they have everything they need.”</li> <li>• “Many kids who are in foster care or residential homes skip school and walk the streets all day getting into trouble.”</li> <li>• “Guardians don’t create boundaries or make them live by rules that will help them be productive adults.”</li> <li>• “When children are put into foster care, CPS keeps changing family to family. It can break the child down because the child won’t be mentally stable.”</li> <li>• “I was placed in foster care from age 5-18. I went through 62 different placements and ended up in a hard core detention home. The State of Hawaii was my parent, every time a decision had to be made it went before the judge. My foster families never spend the money on me like they were supposed to. I got only the hand me downs while their real kids got new school clothes. I got teased a lot in elementary school because my foster parents refused to buy me panties. I had to go to school without panties under my dresses. I had to fight my way through school to get by all the teasing. Then, they labeled me a dysfunctional child. I was thought of as a troubled child that no one knew what to do with. All I wanted was to be loved.”</li> </ul>

## PARTICIPANTS' OPINIONS AND INSIGHTS RELATING TO CHILD PROTECTION INTERVENTIONS

### Unhelpful/Harmful Aspects of Institutional Interventions

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| <p>2. Children don't get the help and treatment they need from CPS</p> <p>3. Children are unnecessarily fearful, upset and confused by CPS failing to tell them about the reasons, extent of and conditions relating to separation from their parents.</p> <p>4. The way that children are taken from parents has devastating impacts on the children's well-being and mental health, negative impacts on mother's help-seeking and endangers the bond between mother and the child.</p> | <p>2. Despite the findings of abuse or neglect by a family member, CPS rarely ever ensures that children:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>receive trauma treatment or counseling</li><li>are placed in a setting that is least disruptive to their educational, religious, community and extracurricular activities.</li></ol> <p>3. CPS does not explain to the children</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>That removal was done against parent's wishes and reasons for removal</li><li>What parents are doing to get them back and the potential time frame</li><li>The CPS imposed restrictions on parents ability to contact the children, check on their whereabouts or ask about conditions at their current placement</li><li>That it is CPS that limits the length, frequency and type of visitation that parents have with children</li></ol> <p>4. Interventions took place in a variety of traumatizing methods:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>Children were interviewed at school without notifying or informing parents</li><li>Workers arrive at the house unannounced to interview parent and investigate living conditions</li></ol> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>“CPS never finds programs for the kids to participate in or treatment for the abuse/neglect they've suffered or witnessed.”</li><li>“I've heard of plenty of cases where children are molested by foster parents and no one even knew about it until the kids went back to their parents. By then it is too late to do anything.”</li><li>“Up until the time my kid came home they hated me because they thought I had given them up. By not visiting them or asking about where they stayed (CPS rules) they thought I no longer cared about them. To them it seemed like I didn't care about where they stayed, or who was taking care of them or if they were ok. It still makes me cry to think of it.”</li><li>“I'll never forget the day they took my kids away, it's like a life sentence, because by taking someone's kids you take away their life. They are taken away by strangers, away from the only parent they ever knew and who they have been with every day of their life.”</li><li>“These workers, who are strangers to your kids come with the police and physically take your kids. They don't give you a chance to explain what's happening, to say goodbye, or tell the kids you love them. It's the worst thing that could ever happen to a family.”</li></ul> |
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# PARTICIPANTS' OPINIONS AND INSIGHTS RELATING TO CHILD PROTECTION INTERVENTIONS

## Unhelpful/Harmful Aspects of Institutional Interventions

<p>5. Little effort is made to maintain, restore or build relationships between child and parents during the time period that the child is in CPS custody despite CPS' stated mission of looking out for the best interest of the child.</p> <p>6. Individual case workers are inadequately trained and supervised</p>	<p>c. Children are taken into custody at school without any notice to child or parent</p> <p>d. Police arrive at the house with a social worker and the children are removed immediately</p> <p>5. Mothers were never given any help to:</p> <p>a. Secure for their children adequate protection from abuse by their father</p> <p>b. Secure adequate protection from abuse by their partner</p> <p>c. Explain to children their father's abusive behavior and why mothers leave fathers to protect and do what was best for the kids.</p> <p>6. Lack of training and supervision are indicated by:</p> <p>a. The inconsistent quality of work from caseworker to caseworker.</p> <p>b. The inconsistency and lack of follow through by some workers.</p> <p>c. Caseworker's misrepresentations to the court regarding the amount, length and quality of home visits and investigative work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "I worked in the schools as a volunteer for years. They took my kids right out of school and into custody. The kids only had the clothes on their back and the belonging in their backpack. The least they could have done is talk to me first and give me a chance to tell them what was going on in the home."</li><li>• "Abuse shelters or other people that you go to for help sometimes work with CPS to take your kids away. They tell you they'll help you get help for your drug problem in order to get you to come to the place, but when you get there, the CPS and police are there and they take your kids. Then, they tell you they can't help you until you go get help for yourself to deal with the drugs."</li><li>• "Some workers do really good work, but the majority of them do mediocre or bad work."</li><li>• "Workers don't keep their promises. They say they are going to do what's best for your kids and tell you what to do to get them back but then they never deliver."</li><li>• "My worker talked about how I had to be accountable and responsible. But, repeatedly, she cancelled my visits with my kids or rescheduled home visits at the last minute because they were 'understaffed and overworked'."</li></ul>
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# PARTICIPANTS' OPINIONS AND INSIGHTS RELATING TO CHILD PROTECTION INTERVENTIONS

## Unhelpful/Harmful Aspects of Institutional Interventions

7. Service plans are often unreasonable and unmanageable for parents in crisis.

7. CPS' expectations of mothers are unfair in the following ways:
- a. There are too many simultaneous requirements
  - b. The services are in locations that are far from home or difficult to get to
  - c. The services are not coordinated by day and time
  - d. The services are not provided in different languages and no interpreters are provided.
  - e. Mothers are expected to control or influence their abusive partners and are held responsible for their behaviors or failure to follow service plans.
  - f. Requiring a woman to get a no contact restraining order does not always increase safety and may in fact endanger the safety and welfare of the family.

- d. Caseworkers intimidating, pressuring or persuading parents to sign papers that they don't fully understand.
- e. Caseworkers are not consistent and clear about their expectations of mothers

- “They don't explain what is happening or what rights parents have. They trick people into signing over custody of their kids voluntarily by saying, ‘this will allow us to do what is best for the kids.’ Of course the parents want what's best for the kids. But, then later, they hold it against you and use the paper to show you never wanted your kids anymore, that you gave them up ‘voluntarily’. They completely misrepresent the meaning and consequences of signing papers.”
- “Once you've lost your kids you feel like you have nothing to live for and you feel there is no hope. It's hard to do everything required when you feel that way.”
- “Obviously the people involved in CPS are having real troubles. Why don't CPS workers help people to address those troubles? Instead they just pile on all these new things the parents have to do, they don't help with money, day care or transportation. So now, you're without your kids or threatened with losing them, you have to deal with the abuse by your partner that's now out in the open AND you have to do all these new things on top of it.”
- “They ask you to do too much at the same time. Maybe if they had you do one thing, then the next, so things build on each other. When you go to eight things at the same time it's hard to take it all in. You'd learn a lot more if you could focus and not have to rush from one thing to the next.”
- “They found my husband had an alcohol problem. They ordered him and me to go to substance abuse treatment. I went even though I

## PARTICIPANTS' OPINIONS AND INSIGHTS RELATING TO CHILD PROTECTION INTERVENTIONS

### Unhelpful/Harmful Aspects of Institutional Interventions

8. CPS takes authority and respect away from parents. Treats the parents like they are the children and have less power than children.

8. CPS' treatment of parents makes them feel helpless and sometimes hopeless.

- Parents do not know what CPS is, the limits if any to its authority, who works there, or who makes decisions.
- Parents do not understand the procedures and policies of CPS, they do not know what to expect from the process.
- Authorities do not explain to parents what their rights are.

had no alcohol problem. He never even went once and they didn't make him go. What is it going to help if I go to class if I'm not the one with the drinking problem?"

- "The judge ordered us both to go to anger management to get our kids back. He went but it made him worse. He was mad at me, blaming me for having to go, and then got credit for completion even though his behavior didn't change one bit. I told him [CPS caseworker] that his behavior got worse but he told me that his finishing the class was all he was supposed to do."
- "CPS changes things all the time. They create this service plan and say you'll be done once you've completed all the things. Then, when you finish it, they tack more things on for you to do. Three months turns into 6 months, then a year and so on."
- "I felt as though I couldn't help my kids in anyway once they were in CPS custody. The things I always did for them, their whole lives, I couldn't do anymore."
- "There was no way for me to make sure they were exposed to our cultural values. Things that I learned growing up, I was not longer able to share with them."
- "No one ever told me what was really going on and what rights belong to parent during the whole process."
- "I guess my case worker made all the decisions because I never saw anyone but her."
- "I felt like they made up the rules as they went along. They say jump and you're supposed to jump. They don't care what you think about their orders. You just have to do 'em or suffer the consequences."



## PARTICIPANTS' OPINIONS AND INSIGHTS RELATING TO CHILD PROTECTION INTERVENTIONS

### Unhelpful/Harmful Aspects of Institutional Interventions

9. CPS does not provide services in different languages and does not provide interpreters.

10. CPS workers don't care about domestic violence and those who recognize it aren't trained about how to help someone in that situation.

9. CPS fails clients who do not speak English as a first language by:

- Assigning case workers who speak only English or a language other than the one the client speaks.
- Using children or abusive partners as interpreters
- Failing to hire enough interpreters
- Insisting that clients sign papers and read materials in English, even when they request materials in their native language.

10. CPS says they care about protecting the kids but they fail to see:

- How they can help the kids' mother to get protection for herself and the kids
- How crucial it is to hold the batterer accountable for his behavior and ensure he is punished and monitored.
- How destructive emotional and psychological abuse can be. They focus too much on what they can see like what kind of food is in the house, the appearance of their kids and their grades rather than looking at the damage that occurs from the unseen.

- “I couldn't understand what the worker was saying and she never brought an interpreter with her. I couldn't understand the paperwork I was signing because it was all in English.”
- “My case worker, this guy, was so mad because he spoke Spanish and he expected me to understand him even though I only speak Portuguese. He insisted that all Portuguese speakers understand Spanish and that I should be able to understand him. I told him I couldn't understand him, all I knew is that he was speaking Spanish.”
- “Several families I know have asked for interpreters during meetings or court proceedings but the workers say, ‘you understand me right? You don't need a interpreter.’”
- “There are a few really good ones, but they move on to go to school or get a better paying job, the ones who stay too long hate their job and take it out on you.”
- “One case worker acted like he did visits to my home and with other people to check on me but he never did. He was supposed to report how I was doing and said no changes yet and that another date should be set to decide about my getting my kids back. Every month there is a new reason for holding things up.”
- “Filing a restraining order is not worth anything, the paper will not help me at all.”
- “It's not fair that kids can threaten to call CPS if their parents hit them. A parent has the right to speak out loud to a kid.”
- “We are asked to do too many things at once, they make it so hard for you to get help because they throw too much at you at the same time.” CPS should take people's work into account, it's very difficult to meet service plan conditions when working.”

## PARTICIPANTS' OPINIONS AND INSIGHTS RELATING TO CHILD PROTECTION INTERVENTIONS

### Unhelpful/Harmful Aspects of Institutional Interventions

very difficult to meet service plan conditions when working.”

- “CPS is there to help you only if YOU are willing to get out of the situation.”
- “All the CPS workers care about is whether the house is clean.”
- “In all the years I was involved with CPS, they never once asked me about domestic violence.”
- “CPS did not help me when I was getting hurt and threatened by my partner/the kid’s dad.”
- “CPS causes trauma and pain on top of what you’ve already experienced without giving help that is needed, CPS makes you hysterical.”
- “CPS got involved with my family because the police reported to CPS that my husband was violent to me. The only person who knew about this violence was my caseworker. He wasn’t able to get permission from his supervisor to come to help me get a restraining order for no contact between my husband and my kids. The supervisor said it was only a civil case between me and my husband and so CPS couldn’t get involved. I asked her, wasn’t it her job to help in protecting the kids? She told me it was outside CPS jurisdiction.”
- “Men who are violent to their family are not getting enough punishment and that makes them able to do it again and again. There is nothing that really prohibits him from acting again. Even if you get away from him, he just finds another woman and does the same thing to her because he got away with it the first time.”

# PARTICIPANTS' OPINIONS AND INSIGHTS RELATING TO CHILD PROTECTION INTERVENTIONS

## Recommendations for Change in Institutional Interventions

GENERAL POINTS	SPECIFIC EXAMPLES	QUOTES
<p>1. Workers need to be better trained and supervised more closely by people with more experience.</p>	<p>1. Workers need to learn:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. About the family, community, religious, cultural ways of the people they are serving</li> <li>b. How to access services that parents need to be able to complete their service plans more readily.</li> <li>c. How to identify needs and strengths of individual families rather than treating all families the same</li> <li>d. How to treat all their clients with respect in order to build better working relationships</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “They need to understand what it’s like in our communities, and know more about what it’s like to be in domestic violence, so that they know what to look for, how to investigate and how to understand what they see better.”</li> <li>• “I’ve heard that with one phone call CPS workers can get you housing – not shelter but real housing the public assistance kind. If they helped people to get the basics of housing, food and medical for the kids, they wouldn’t have to take kids from their parents.”</li> <li>• “CPS needs to make sure the service plan matches the family, not just give everyone the same list of things.”</li> <li>• “CPS should conduct more focus groups with women who have been in the system so they know what is needed by the families from the client’s point of view.”</li> <li>• “Workers need to take the time to learn about each parent instead of making quick assumptions about families in our communities.”</li> <li>• “How can CPS expect you to do what they say when workers treat us like we are stupid and no good. Most of them are on a power trip – the only way you get your kids back is if you do whatever they say, when they say it.”</li> <li>• “CPS needs to change the way it works with and treats parents, find ways to work more cooperatively.”</li> <li>• “CPS shouldn’t make parents less in the children’s eyes.”</li> <li>• “Someone needs to make sure workers are doing what they say they are doing.”</li> <li>• “CPS needs to recognize that they need to hire people to speak many different languages not just Spanish.”</li> </ul>

## PARTICIPANTS' OPINIONS AND INSIGHTS RELATING TO CHILD PROTECTION INTERVENTIONS

### Recommendations for Change in Institutional Interventions

2. Give workers the help and resources they need to do their job right.

2. CPS should:

- a. Hire domestic violence advocates to consult and provide support services to clients for all cases where one parent is abused.
- b. Hire more multilingual case workers
- c. Provide interpreters who are trained in issues of domestic violence and child abuse and neglect.
- d. Refer to or create services that are delivered in client's native language.
- e. Hire parents who have successfully completed their services plans to act as caseworkers.
- f. Provide day care vouchers to give parents who are single to help them gain independence.
- g. Provide moving expense funds
- h. Make summer camp and after-school programs available
- i. Provide children with health care
- j. Enable workers to be more accessible to clients.

- “The system needs to treat everyone the same. People shouldn't be treated better or let go just because of who they know or who their family is.”
- “CPS should hire us to work as case workers, [just like they hire battered women to work in shelter and former addicts to work in substance abuse programs] because we have been there, we know exactly what to look for and what services really help people and those that don't.”
- “I could have used someone to help me do all the things I needed to do and one person to talk to instead of having to tell all these different people the same things over and over. Knowing I had one person in my corner that I could trust would have made all the difference.”
- “Even if only for a limited time, a day care voucher would help me in that my son could interact with other kids and I could figure out what to do next, in my profession or career, and to meet new people.”
- “There were so many times that I needed to reach my worker but she never gave me her number. Whenever I tried to call CPS, she [my worker] was not there.”
- “They should recruit better foster families, really look to see who would take care of kids best. And, give those families resources to take care of the kids.”
- “There need to be procedures in place to screen out foster parents who beat and molest children. CPS needs to be better about facing up to their own mistakes and providing treatment and care to kids who are hurt in their custody rather than trying to hide it.”

# PARTICIPANTS' OPINIONS AND INSIGHTS RELATING TO CHILD PROTECTION INTERVENTIONS

## Recommendations for Change in Institutional Interventions

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| <p>3. CPS workers should replace their punitive approach to families with a more helpful/supportive one.</p>   | <p>3. CPS should provide:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>Preventive services before things reach a crisis or emergency situation.</li><li>More manageable and relevant service plans</li><li>Support resources for parents who are battered by their partner</li><li>Substance abuse treatment for the parents</li><li>Services and education that will empower parents so that children will respect parents.</li></ol> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>“CPS should try to help parents who are in trouble to see if they can do better with some help rather punish them as criminals right from the start.”</li><li>“CPS should provide education in the home to show parents a different way of parenting than they knew growing up (the role of parent has changed since they were kids)”</li><li>“Provide support services if moms need help with cooking, cleaning, shopping. Don’t take the kids away because mom needs help.”</li><li>“People need more education about what services are available and how to get the services”</li><li>“There should be groups available where moms who are abused by their partner can sit and talk and provide support to each other.”</li><li>“I think extreme physical punishment of a child is uncalled for and should not be accepted. Children have a right to be protected from that but parent’s rights and authority also needs to be preserved.”</li></ul> |
| <p>4. CPS should conduct thorough and unbiased investigations BEFORE taking action.</p>  | <p>4. CPS should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>Gather information from all relevant sources and take the time to study the situation before doing anything.</li><li>Examine <u>all</u> alternatives to assess the best possible course of action.</li></ol>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>“Workers need to really investigate so they don’t get fooled by the batterer. They need to figure out what’s going on behind closed doors. In a one-hour meeting, a batterer can make a worker believe anything he wants.”</li><li>“A thorough investigation would look to see if the kids are just doing or saying what the father says due to fear of him. Kids aren’t going to just come out and talk about the abuse the father is doing with a worker they have no reason to trust.”</li></ul>   |
| <p>5. All CPS workers should understand how domestic violence affects a parent’s ability to care for the kids and respond to CPS demands. CPS should treat domestic violence as part of the problem.</p> | <p>5. Workers should be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>Recognize abuser’s tactics instead of falling for their tricks.<br/>Hold abusive partners accountable for the risk they pose to all members of the family and monitor his compliance with the service plan.</li></ol>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>“CPS needs to see how the risk created by the husband is toward everyone in the family and they have to do more to protect the family from him once they get involved and put everything out in the open.”</li></ul>  |

# PARTICIPANTS' OPINIONS AND INSIGHTS RELATING TO CHILD PROTECTION INTERVENTIONS

## Recommendations for Change in Institutional Interventions

6. CPS needs to change the way they work with various ethnic, cultural, and racial groups

6. CPS should:

- b. Separate the abused parent's compliance from the abuser's.
  - c. Understand the impacts of abuse on the mother and the kids and incorporate this knowledge to finding appropriate resources.
  - d. Find resources to help battered mothers and kids increase safety.
  - e. Recognize that domestic violence happens in all cultures
  - f. Acknowledge that abusers know how to manipulate the system to abuse and punish their partners
- a. Increase the language capabilities of their workers so that clients who are not native English speakers understand what is happening to them and what they are agreeing to when they sign paperwork.
  - b. Identify and make accessible services that are delivered in client's native language
  - c. Seek out bi-cultural advocates who are well trained in domestic violence and child abuse and neglect.

- “Men should be punished by having to do community service or pay money, or something that they dread so much that they won't do it again. Jail doesn't really help because jail is full of these type of people.”
- “CPS needs to look hard for the truth because there isn't always proof. CPS needs to be careful not to be manipulated by the batterer because he can be so charming and good at lying. Sometimes the person telling the truth is weak from being overpowered.”
- “It's not so much about him hitting me, I am more concerned about my daughter opening her mouth than about him hitting me and then he's gonna hit her. How can she trust CPS to tell them what he is doing if they don't protect her from him after she tells.”
- CPS should monitor and expect as much out of the husband as the wife. They should take the time to watch how the husband interacts with the child and how he takes care of the child.”
- “CPS needs to change their image in our community so that people know that CPS won't take away your kids unless things are really bad in the home. That way people won't be afraid to ask for help earlier on.”
- “CPS needs to spend more time in the communities where the families they work with live. They need to learn about the community and the culture so they can help families better.”
- “The word is not getting out. CPS should run public announcements or infomercials on community radio stations so people hear about the information in their own language.”
- “Workers need to learn to respect all cultures not just their own. Our way may not be their way but that doesn't mean it's wrong.”

# PARTICIPANTS' OPINIONS AND INSIGHTS RELATING TO CHILD PROTECTION INTERVENTIONS

## Recommendations for Change in Institutional Interventions

<p>7. Need to provide better services to children</p>	<p>7. Better services would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Important to explain to kids what CPS does</li><li>b. When a mother has to separate from the father, CPS should help children see how what their mother is doing is to protect her and them.</li><li>c. Treatment for kids who have witnessed abuse</li><li>d. More emotional support for children</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “Better train social workers, especially those that are of the same culture as families involved to be more empathetic with women.”</li><li>• “CPS needs to understand children’s complaints in a cultural context through investigation and learning more about the home situation before making conclusions (a child may say there is no food in the house but what they mean is no American food).”</li><li>• “Many cultures have certain roles for men and women. If women are forced to leave their husbands they need help to learn to fulfill their responsibilities as the mother and take over the responsibilities of the father as head of household and provider.”</li><li>• “Children need to be punished if they do wrong so they know the difference between right and wrong. They have to learn to be accountable from the start.”</li><li>• “One of the best things CPS did for my child is to help her understand that what her dad did to hurt me was not her fault.”</li> <li>• “CPS needs to explain to the children what is happening to them and what their parents are doing to try to see them.”</li><li>• “CPS needs to give them counseling and support to help them understand and cope with what they have seen between their parents. If CPS makes a finding of abuse or neglect, they should give the child treatment and resources to deal with it.”</li><li>• “Children often blame the mother for leaving the father and keeping them from their father. CPS case workers should explain to the kids that their mother is trying to do what is best for them.”</li><li>• “If CPS is going to rip kids from everything they know, they have to make sure there is someone who can give them the love and support they need to feel safe while they are away from their family.”</li></ul>
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## PARTICIPANTS' OPINIONS AND INSIGHTS RELATING TO CHILD PROTECTION INTERVENTIONS

### Recommendations for Change in Institutional Interventions

8. Find news ways to deal with family abuse that involves parents and community

8. Ideas for new strategies include:

- a. Have workshops/seminars for the particular ethnic groups to educate them about domestic violence and child abuse and neglect in their community.
- b. CPS should provide paperwork (in appropriate language) that explains what is happening to the family and explain the procedures and requirements on the parents
- c. CPS should not pressure parents into voluntarily giving up their children without explaining all the potential interpretations of this act.
- d. Train community members to act as consultants to advise all parents of their rights under the law in the US
- e. Parenting tips for kids who are exhibiting behavioral problems due to witnessing or experiencing abuse.
- f. To allow parents and foster parents to communicate so they can arrange visitation and share information about the child directly.
- g. Focus more on fathers. Try to learn what kind of help works best for them and how to enforce men to get the help they need.

- “CPS should take more time to find out the source of why the parent hit the child. In many cultures, parents spank or hit the child because the child needs to be corrected. CPS needs to help the parent find ways to discipline the children so the children don’t think they can do whatever they want because the parents can’t do a thing.”
- “CPS should find different ways of questioning the family members about the situation. Asking different questions of different people from all different angles in order to collect evidence doesn’t get down to whether what is going on is right or wrong, it just confuses everyone.”
- “CPS should list services and resources to the family up front not wait until the family asks for them.”
- “CPS should not drop by without an appointment and then punish the parents because they were not at home.”
- “CPS workers who come to the house and spend time with the parent and kid can really see what’s going on. My worker came by twice a week every week and he could see how my son’s behavior was more violent and rude after each visit with the father. He could finally see the truth for himself.”
- “Parents should meet the foster parents to know what they are like and whether it’s possible for parents to play a more active role while the child is in foster care.”
- “CPS should work closely with the schools to help when children are behaving badly.”
- “When services are working to really help a family, CPS should find a way to provide ongoing services rather than close the case.”
- “Telling a man he is a bad husband and bad father is a big blow to his self-esteem too. It would be good for CPS to know how to get them to take help.”



# PARTICIPANTS' OPINIONS AND INSIGHTS RELATING TO CHILD PROTECTION INTERVENTIONS

## Recommendations for Change in Institutional Interventions

9. Ensure the welfare of children in CPS custody

9. Child's welfare includes ensuring:
- a. Children's physical safety
  - b. Children's basic needs are met
  - c. Children are not treated as hired help by the foster parents
  - d. Children are not treated differently from the foster parents' biological kids
  - e. Children are not verbally abused or emotionally neglected.
  - f. Children are placed in homes where they understand the language spoken
  - g. Children are placed in homes that are sensitive to cultural differences.
  - h. Children are given appropriate medical care and parents are notified of any medical conditions.

- "If CPS is going to take the kids away, they should sign a paper that guarantees the children's safety and good behavior while in DSS custody."
- "There should be a comparison of how children do in their homes vs. how they do with CPS. If CPS is more successful than parents then parents should give all kids to CPS."
- "CPS should regularly monitor foster parents by doing home visits and looking in the home to make sure the kids have clothes, food and beds to sleep in. One worker should create a trusting relationship with each child so the child has someone to talk to if things are unsafe in the home."
- "CPS should try to keep the children in one foster home and should try to keep the children in one family together."
- "CPS should try to shorten the time that kids are away from their family member. If there is a problem in the family, CPS should go to the source and solve those problems so the parents and kids can be together. Kids should be returned to the family when the parent is ready rather than have to wait until CPS or court has time to hear the case."

## 7. Special Issues Facing Immigrant Women

Participants represented immigrant and refugee populations from Brazil, Cambodia, Guatemala, Haiti, India, the Ivory Coast of Africa, and Vietnam. Two Puerto Rican women participated in the Latina group.

### a. Immigration and Naturalization in the United States

The United States is a country made up of and built by immigrants. Aside from three indigenous groups, Native American, Native Hawaiians and Alaskan Aleuts, all citizens come from immigrant ancestry. African Americans are the only people taken from their home country against their will and forcibly delivered to the United States.

Immigrants moved to this country in four waves<sup>\*</sup>: Eastern Europeans in the 1600's; Irish, Germans, and Chinese in the early 1800's; Southern and Eastern Europeans including Jews, Greek, Italians, Portuguese, Russians and Spanish in the late 1800's to early 1900's; and Asians including Cambodians, Indians, and Vietnamese in the mid- late 1900's. Africans, Brazilians and Haitians also immigrated throughout the 1900's. Today, most immigrants come from Mexico, the Philippines, Vietnam, the Dominican Republic, China, India, Cuba, Ukraine, Jamaica and South Korea.

The United States began to regulate immigration in 1882 and in 1917 created a law that required that all immigrants read and write. In 1921, Congress began creating laws that limited the number of immigrants entering the country. While there have been many different amendments regulating who may immigrate to the U.S., the most recent amendment passed in 1995 established a cap at 675,000 per year which does not include family members of U.S. citizens. Immigration laws favor relatives of U.S. citizens, refugees and people with skills needed in the U.S. In 1948, Congress began creating separate provisions for refugees under the Displaced Persons Act of 1948 and the Refugee Relief Act of 1953, to enable the United States to receive thousands of refugees from China, Cuba and Hungary.

Naturalization is the process by which a person becomes a citizen of an adopted country. Naturalized citizens have the same rights and responsibilities as people born in the United States except they cannot become president or vice president. In the United States, people may be naturalized by provisions within treaties, acts of Congress or by a process set out in the Naturalization and Immigration Act of 1952. This process

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\* A few basic facts about the participants' countries of origin are contained in this section. Increasing one's knowledge base of a client's home country will only improve one's ability to understand the client's perspectives. Information contained in this and the next section was excerpted from the website [www.worldbookonline.com](http://www.worldbookonline.com), which offers a free three-day trial subscription. This website is easy to use, provides vital information about the people, land, history, foreign relations and economics of different countries around the world. Information contained on this website provides only certain perspectives, so readers are encouraged to use it as a starting point for learning about the various populations with whom they work.

consists of three steps: an application, an examination and a final hearing. Applicants must prove themselves in three areas: age and residence; character; and loyalty and education. The Violence Against Women Act also contains provisions that enable women immigrants who are battered by their partners to pursue citizenship status and naturalization independent of their abusive partners.

Throughout history, immigration policy has shifted in response to relations between the United States and foreign governments and the numbers of people immigrating from a particular country or area of the world. Sometimes events, such as the New York City Trade Center bombings, will result in drastic changes in the way that immigrants who are not naturalized but who have been granted permission to live, work and go to school in the United States are treated. Significant government resources may be shifted to interrogate those with legal citizenships status and identifying those without it for the purpose of deportation. Immigrant groups are often subjected to mistreatment by individuals in dominant groups through disassociation, blatant discrimination and/or harassment.

According to the U.S. Census 2000, there are 11,898,828 Asians, or 4.2% of the U.S. population, including more than 1.6 million multiracial Asians. There are 874,414 Pacific Islanders or .3 % of the population, more than half of who identify as multiracial. A significant proportion of the Asian and Pacific Islander community was born outside the United States: 7.2 million were born in Asia, or 26% of the country's foreign born population. In 2000 there were 2.5 million Asian and Pacific Islander families in the United States.

- 1,678,765 single race and 1,899,599 multi-race **Asian Indians**
- 41,280 single race and 57,412 multi-race **Bangladeshis**
- 171,937 single race and 206,052 multi-race **Cambodians**
- 2,314,537 single race and 2,734,841 multi-race **Chinese**
- 9,796 single race and 13,581 multi-race **Fijians**
- 1,850,314 single race and 2,364,815 **Filipinos**
- 58,240 single race and 92,611 **Guamanians or Chamorros**
- 169,428 single race and 186,310 multi-race **Hmong**
- 796,700 single race and 1,148,932 multi-race **Japanese**
- 1,076,872 single race and 1,228,427 multi-race **Koreans**
- 168,707 single race and 198,203 multi-race **Laotians**
- 10,690 single race and 18,566 multi-race **Malaysians**
- 140,652 single race and 401,162 multi-race **Native Hawaiians**
- 153,533 single race and 204,309 multi-race **Pakistanis**
- 91,029 single race and 133,281 multi-race **Samoans**
- 20,145 single race and 24,587 multi-race **Sri Lankans**
- 118,048 single race and 144,795 multi-race **Taiwanese**
- 112,989 single race and 150,283 multi-race **Thai**
- 27,713 single race and 36,840 multi-race **Tongans**
- 1,122,528 single race and 1,223,736 multi-race **Vietnamese**

## b. Country Profiles

The country profiles provided below are included to give the reader some basic facts about the countries of the focus group participants including where the countries are located, the ethnic and religious make-up of each country's population, and sociopolitical and economic relations with the U.S. which account, in part, for immigration streams to this country. These profiles are intended to remind the reader that immigrants bring and invest in the U.S. the education, skills and other assets acquired in their country of origin. Knowledge of a person's home country's history reveals the strength, ingenuity and courage necessary to arrive in the U.S. at all. Additionally, these profiles reveal how United States is distinct in that so much of its population is monolingual, speaking only English.

*Brazil* occupies more than half of South America, bordering 10 other countries and the Atlantic Ocean. The population of Brazil is the fifth largest in the world. People from Brazil have a myriad of ethnic origins; the largest ethnic groups being Amazonian Indians, Africans, Italians, Portuguese, Spanish, Japanese, Poles, Germans and other groups from the former soviet republics and the middle east. The official language is Portuguese. Although the primary religion is Catholicism, some people practice Candomble.

*Cambodia* is a small Southeast Asian country on the gulf of Thailand and bordering Laos and Vietnam. Most of the people living in Cambodia are Khmer, and speak Khmer (also referred to as Cambodian), a language with its own alphabet. There are a few other languages. The second largest ethnic group is Vietnamese. Buddhism is the most widely practiced religion. Thousands of Cambodian refugees began fleeing Cambodia in the 1980s, moving to Thailand and then on to the United States due to the devastation caused by the Khmer Rouge's rule from 1975-1979, the U.S. military's secret bombing that began 1969, and the U.S. embargo imposed in the mid-1900s.

*Vietnam* is a country in Southeast Asia that borders China, Laos and Cambodia. Vietnam has 45 ethnic groups. The Kinh, ethnic Vietnamese make up over 80% of the population. The largest minority groups are the Hmong, Khmer, Muong and Nung. The primary language is Vietnamese, but many minority ethnic groups speak their own language. Throughout its history various factions within Vietnam as well as foreign powers have struggled to gain control of either or both North and South Vietnam. From 1957-1961, the United States supported the South Vietnam government by sending 500,000 members of the United States Armed Forces to South Vietnam. In 1973, the United States signed an agreement to withdraw its troops, but the fighting continued for two more years. In 1976, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam officially came into being. Many Vietnamese and ethnic Chinese fled the country for the United States, Canada, Australia, France and Belgium.

*Guatemala* is a small country in Central America that borders Mexico and El Salvador, the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean. People belong to two main groups, Mayan Indians and people of Indian and Spanish Ancestry. Most of the population

speaks Spanish. About 70% of Guatemalans are Roman Catholics and 30% Protestant. Most Mayan Indians speak one of the many Mayan Indian languages and live according to Mayan cultural and religious beliefs. Guatemala has strong economic and political ties – including military aid and training – with the United States.

*Republique de Haiti* is the official name of Haiti. Haiti occupies the western portion of the island of Hispanola bordering its neighbor, the Dominican Republic. It is the oldest black republic in the world and the second oldest independent nation. Haiti is one of the most densely populated countries and also one of the poorest in the western hemisphere. Most of the people in Haiti are African descendants, a smaller number of who also come from European ancestry. The official languages spoken are French and Creole. Most Haitians are Roman Catholic. However, many of their customs and practices are strongly influenced by African customs, and a religion known as Voodoo or Vodou is also practiced. First Spain, in the 1500s and 1600s, then France in the 1700s occupied Haiti. In 1804, slaves who had been forcibly transferred to Haiti by the French rebelled and gained independence. Throughout the 1900's successive struggles for power resulted in elected leaders being ousted by military dictators. In 1994, the United Nations Security Council, citing human rights abuses by successive self-appointed leaders and the mass exodus of Haitian refugees to the US, authorized a US led invasion into Haiti to reinstate Jean-Bertrand Aristide to his elected position of President.

*India* borders Pakistan, China, Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh. India is the second most populated country in the world. For centuries, many different groups of people migrated to India from other parts of Asia. Colonized by Britain in the late 1700's, India won its independence in 1947. During India's struggle for freedom, Hindus and Muslims each sought to gain political power. While Hindi is the official language, there are sixteen major languages and more than 1,000 minor languages.

*Cote d'Ivoire*, also known as the Ivory Coast, lies along the Gulf of Guinea on the west coast of Africa. The people of the Ivory Coast include the Akan, Kru, Voltaic and Mande. Within these groups there are 60 smaller groups. Prior to colonization by Europeans, Cote d'Ivoire was made up of Kingdoms including the Kong, Bouna, Kabadugu, and Sanwi. French is the official language but Jula is the commonly spoken language. Most people are Christians or Muslim, or practice traditional African religions.

*Puerto Rico* is about 1,000 miles Southeast off the coast of Florida with a population of almost four million people. Puerto Rico became a Commonwealth of the United States 1898 after Spain was defeated in the Spanish-American War. Puerto Ricans are citizens of the United States and can move throughout the U.S. without restrictions. However, residents of the island are not allowed to participate in presidential elections and are not required to pay federal income tax. Most Puerto Ricans are of Spanish descent. Smaller groups of Portuguese, Italian, and French also

live on the island. The primary language is Spanish, although many Puerto Ricans are also fluent in English.\*\*\*\*

### c. Distinctions Shared in the Focus Groups

Participants originated from very different parts of the world yet they share the common experience of starting a life in the United States far from their family, history and culture. All women identified strongly with their culture and home country, remained fluent in their native language and retained strong affiliations with their cultural and religious communities in their home country and in the United States.

Language barriers were described as the number one obstacle in obtaining effective services and receiving fair and equitable treatment from service providers. Participants described situation after situation in which they were expected to speak, read or understand English and were punished either explicitly or implicitly for not having a command of the language. CPS rarely provided interpreters for clients when meeting with them for the purpose of conducting an investigation or assessment and explaining directives and conditions. Participants had heard of several women married to English-speaking American born citizens who had experiences with CPS workers relying completely on their husband's representations of the circumstances. CPS rarely offered services that were delivered in the client's native language and expected clients to find their own interpreters or make do without one. CPS caseworkers or advocates who are bilingual are rare to find in any community.

Participants described stories illustrating how depending on their children to act as interpreters leads to inaccurate information transfer, and limits the communication to the age and skill level of the child. A child may appear to understand a concept due, say to their advanced vocabulary, but is unable to accurately describe this concept to a parent in a native language. Using a child as an interpreter also exposes her/him to information she/he would be sheltered from otherwise. This is too much to ask from a child that is already experiencing trauma. Additionally, a mother may be reluctant to admit confusion or despair if she must do so through her child who expects her protection. Finally, an older child may recognize this as an opportunity to gain new privileges in the family. One participant described how her adolescent son tried to exploit his role as interpreter. "He told me that the worker said in order for me to get out of trouble with CPS I had to buy him a pair of Nike shoes, feed him American food only and allow him to stay out after curfew since he had become the man of the family. I felt so turned around by everything going on, I believed him and did not feel like I could tell the worker what I thought of her demands." Combined, these factors can undermine a parent's authority by making her appear incompetent and inadequate in the eyes of the child.

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\*\*\*\* Puerto Rican women were asked to join the Latino focus group because it is not uncommon for Americans to question their citizenship, and they share cultural and language barriers experienced by other Latina women.

Participants emphasized how important it is for CPS workers to explain the meaning and consequences of signing different types of paperwork. The best way to ensure clients' understanding is to provide a bi-cultural or bilingual advocate or interpreter. This is especially true when a client requests interpretive services. Many participants experienced English-speaking workers incorrectly assessing their English speaking capabilities. While women acknowledged that any traumatized person has great difficulty comprehending and processing information and expressing herself effectively, this is compounded when one is attempting to process comprehend and process information in a second language. Even someone who speaks a second language fluently will find her skills significantly reduced when she is upset, frightened or traumatized. Speaking in one's native language comes more naturally, and is much easier on the victim. Families in crisis should not be expected to be familiar with technical language of a child protection, social service or legal systems.

Services that are available to immigrants suffering from partner abuse were unknown to many of the participants at the time of CPS involvement. Those who had domestic violence advocates relied on them to learn about their right to restraining orders, the implications of criminal proceedings, family law relief and availability of income supports. None of the women received any assistance regarding their immigration status, but for many it was a primary concern. Participants pointed out that many immigrant women are fearful that accessing services or that being involved with CPS will jeopardize their citizenship status. For this reason, many battered immigrants do not seek help from services they know are available. None of the participants expected direct assistance in addressing citizenship status but wished that workers would be informed about the services available to immigrants and the implications of using these systems, on citizenship status for themselves and their families.

Participants described the benefits of working with bi-cultural advocates, those who spoke their language and were members of their culture group. Praising this resource, participants also noted that this is a very limited resource in that there may be only one or two bi-cultural advocates from a certain culture in an entire state. It also became clear from interviews that even when they do exist, bi-cultural advocates are responsible for too much. They typically have lots of clients and are asked to provide interpretive services for their clients in many different activities. Advocates are faced with the choice of representing very few clients or only supporting clients in some areas of their life. Additionally, advocates are often expected to represent the organization on issues of diversity, educate staff within their own organization about their cultural group and participate in community events that will attract members of the community to the service. Unfortunately, bi-cultural advocates have a much higher earning potential in the private sector doing less emotionally taxing work.

Other participants pointed out that one should not assume that one who speaks another language or belongs to a certain cultural group will treat people from their own culture well. One participant warned that sometimes someone from within your community is more punitive and judgmental because they feel you are shaming your people. Immigrants who have been in this country for a long time or who have

permanent status may look down on newer immigrants and treat them badly. To be an effective bi-cultural advocate, one needs to be aware of one's own cultural biases, identify the diversity that exists within the community, and understand that cross-cultural issues that are likely to arise. Systems hiring interpreters and bi-cultural advocates must be aware that there are distinctions between ethnic groups living on the same continent and that there may be cross-cultural tensions between those groups that will impact service delivery.

Several participants talked about having to manage family values in the United States and home country standards at the same time. One woman described the practice of arranged marriages in her home country and how separation and divorce in the U.S. had implications on family still living in her home country that an American caseworker is likely to overlook or discount. Divorce is unacceptable in many countries and there is no way to shield a family back home from the shame and stigma associated with it. Participants also described how it can be difficult to adjust to the cultural expectations between one's home country and life in the U.S. In their home country, men are responsible for supporting the family financially and women are expected to raise the children and maintain the household. They feared that separating from their partners would force them to work long hours outside the home and make it impossible for them to meet their responsibilities of maintaining a household and raising their children.

The issue of women's access to the work force surfaced another important point among participants. Several participants described how many men from their community are only half as powerful in the U.S. as they were in their home country. Men have trouble finding work that can support the family's needs, so women are forced to work to bring in a second income. Women may have access to education that they did not in their home country. There are more opportunities for women to work outside of the home, doing work that men cannot do. Unfortunately, women's success in the U.S. can cause men to feel powerless, ashamed, and worthless. When men are jealous of women, they beat them.

Respecting and honoring elders is a value that is a central part of the culture in one's home country but one that is hard to enforce in the U.S. The power structure and authority of the family is turned upside down, so that the children have most power, parents have some, and elders have the least. Children usually gain command of the language more quickly, learn about cultural practices and norms from school, friends, and jobs. Often children choose the American way of life over the family's traditional cultural practices or live bi-culturally by creating two separate and distinct identities – one for home and family life and another for their life outside the home.

Another significant difference between one's home country and the United States is the view of physical discipline. Participants believe that physical discipline exists in all cultural groups. Many showed confusion about why behavior allowed in their home country would be forbidden by U.S. Participants felt it would be helpful for immigrants to be given an opportunity to learn laws relating to disciplining children so that they do



not inadvertently break the law in their effort to raise obedient children. One parent talked repeatedly about how the intent behind physical discipline should be taken into consideration by CPS. “Parents use physical discipline to try to teach children between right and wrong, lessons they need to know to be productive and contributing members of society. U.S. parenting seems much too lenient, with not enough supervision and direction. Children stray and behave badly.”

## 8. Special Issues Facing Indigenous Women \*\*

Native Hawaiian or *Kanaka Maoli* (first peoples) women largely represented the indigenous group in this project. Women were chosen by their own self-identification as Hawaiian or part Hawaiian. One woman identified as Native American and the mother of a part Hawaiian, part Native American child.

### a. Hawai’i Profile

The state of Hawai’i is made up of a chain of islands that extends for 1,523 miles. eight islands from East to West are Hawai’i, Maui, Kaho’olawe, Moloka’i, Lana’i, Oahu, Kaua’i, and Ni’ihau, and all but Kaho’olawe are inhabited. These islands are located in the Pacific Ocean, midway between the United States and Japan. Over a million people reside in Hawai’i, and 72% of the population resides on Oahu. According to the 2000 U.S. Census 140,652 single race Native Hawaiians, 401,162 multi-raced native Hawaiians reside in Hawaii comprising about 13% of the total population. People living in Hawai’i are very diverse both in their nationality and ethnicity. The primary religions include Catholicism, the Mormon faith, Shintoism, and Buddhism. While many Hawaiians are Christian or Mormon, many have also maintained some aspects of Hawaiian religious beliefs and practice. The primary languages spoken by Hawaiians are English and pidgin English.

*“The Polynesians who settled in Hawai’i, perhaps as early as 300 A.D., brought with them a long Pacific Island history and distinctive island culture: their language, religion, their art, navigational knowledge, agricultural and fishing technologies, their legends and history and the plants and animals which they cultivated and domesticated.*

*It was their belief that their gods had created the land and the sea and everything on the land and in the sea. These resources were there for everyone’s use – land water and sea. Because these were created by the gods, they must be cared for. No one must take more than they need and everything must be shared.”*

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\*\* This section will contain more about the social, political and economic history of the Hawaiian people than was included in the section about Immigrant Women given that all women in these groups identified as belonging to the Hawaiian culture. Resource and time limitations made it impossible to do this type of research for the various groups represented in the Massachusetts. Additionally, the fact that there is relatively little research and publication relating to Hawaiians available or disseminated to the U.S. public, justifies additional time devoted to providing a context for understanding the information shared in the groups.

Statement by Marion Kelly, Hearings on the Report of the Native Hawaiian Study Commission Before the Senate Commission on Energy and Natural Resources, 98<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> Session 104 (1984).

### **b. Status of Hawaiians as Indigenous People**

Unlike some indigenous populations, Hawaiians are not recognized as a sovereign nation. While there are some entitlements to land and water rights provided by treaties dating back to 1820, most of these resources have not been distributed. Resources are controlled and managed by entities governed by the State of Hawai'i or the United States Federal Government. Most of the Hawaiian people who are entitled to these benefits have yet to receive them. Benefits are further threatened by a series of suits filed recently by non-Hawaiians born and raised on the mainland U.S. alleging these entitlements violate their right to equal protection. Success of these suits would result in the eradication of entitlements and a reversion of these resources to the state of Hawai'i.

While the experience of Hawaiians is certainly not unique among native peoples, one distinction is that Hawaiians are largely unknown to a great portion of United States citizens. While most Americans are familiar with the lush landscapes of Hawai'i from travel guides and advertisements, relatively few know about the Hawaiian people. The 2,400 miles of ocean that creates the physical separation between Hawai'i and the United States mainland and the additional 3,000 miles of land mass from the nation's capitol certainly adds to the isolation of Hawaiians. While the U.S. government has acknowledged wrongs committed against the Hawaiian people such as decades of weapons testing on Kaho'olawe, and the hostile overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawaii, these acknowledgements also remain unknown to most non-Hawaiians living in the continental U.S.

Western contact began in 1786 and marked the beginning of vast economic and social changes for Hawaiians. At this time, Hawai'i was ruled as an independent monarchy. Over a period of 70 years, thousands of Hawaiians died from contagious diseases brought by westerners and poor living conditions that resulted from U.S. land occupation. The population of Hawaiians declined from 300,000 to 73,000. In 1893, nine Americans, two Britons, and two Germans supported by the U.S. marines and navy removed Queen Liliuokalani by force. President Grover Cleveland refused the revolutionaries request that the United States annex Hawai'i when he learned that most Hawaiians were opposed to the overthrow. He urged that the Queen be restored to her throne but the revolutionaries refused. They and their followers formed the Republic of Hawai'i in 1894, and Sanford B. Dole, original owner of Dole Pineapple became the first and only President of the Republic. American businessmen controlled the government and were finally successful in annexing Hawai'i which enabled them to realize a special payment when shipping sugar cane to the U.S. Western interests in agricultural business in Hawai'i resulted in a drastic change in how land was possessed, managed and transferred. These changes resulted in Hawaiians being landless, poor and unable to support their families. At the same time, western religion, practices and

values were imposed on the Hawaiian people. Throughout the mid-1900s, speaking of the Hawaiian language, practicing traditional Hawaiian chants, dance, and prayer, and other cultural practices was forbidden. Such prohibitions disrupted the traditional passing of knowledge from generation to generation through oral history, observation, and experience. Hawai'i became a state in 1959.

The prohibition and disapproval of cultural practices disrupted the traditional passing of knowledge from generation to generation. Most of the Hawaiian people are unable to speak the language, so the only accessible source of information regarding their history comes from foreigners, many of who depict the history through their own cultural lens. Retention of Hawaiian language, and cultural values, beliefs and practices is due solely to the unfaltering resistance, courage, and wisdom of Hawaiians who recognized the importance of preserving the culture for generations to come. However, the painful history of being separated from land, water, and community that is central to Hawaiian culture has had lasting effects on the Hawaiians of today. It led to the erosion of social networks and local customs that strengthened and fortified Hawaiian families and communities. Similar to other native people on the mainland U.S., Hawaiians are over-represented in most negative social indices related to crime, unemployment, education, health and poverty.

Fortunately, the number of cultural practitioners and teachers has continued to grow since the 1970's when a resurgence of Hawaiian culture and practice was able to flourish. While there are a growing number of Hawaiians who do know the history and connect that history to the current problems facing the community, efforts to create change are fragmented. Collaboration is impeded by physical separation of people across the different islands. The means by which to improve the status and quality of life for Hawaiians remains a divisive issue among groups. There are benefits eligibility requirements and resource allocations strategies that fragment and alienate community members from one another. The influx of people from the Pacific Rim over the past century has led to intermarriage between Hawaiians and other cultural groups resulting in many Hawaiians identifying with anywhere from two to ten different cultures. Each town builds its own identity, customs and practices. The economy of each island is different from that of the others, and resources and available services are determined accordingly.

### **c. Distinctions Shared in the Focus Groups**

Unlike the immigrant groups in Massachusetts, most Hawaiian participants felt they knew little about their culture, were unable to speak any Hawaiian and did not attribute much of their current way of life to Hawaiian traditions. Additionally, many of the women said they did not have many life experiences where they felt pride in their culture or looked to their culture to find strength or support. Some participants shared that they may act in ways that are traditionally Hawaiian but that they were unaware of the purpose and function of the behaviors. A few of the participants remarked that they did not see the importance of being Hawaiian because in modern society there were no benefits to being Hawaiian. Some of the women believed that violence is a part of

Hawaiian culture given the prevalence of violence in Hawaiian families. Others pointed out that violence against women and children happens in all cultures and is not particular to Hawaiians. Participants were acutely aware of how people outside of their culture looked down upon them.

Participants asserted that Hawaiians are so busy trying to meet their basic needs they do not have time to pass on the meaning behind cultural ways of doing something and how those ways fit into larger cultural ideals. As one participant put it, “Hawaiians are use to getting the worst of the worst when it comes to land, housing, and water.” Another agreed, “Hawaiians are always struggling. They have to fight for everything they have and grow up learning to expect little from life.” Basic survival prevents many Hawaiians the luxury of studying, and analyzing the state of things in a political, social and economic context.

Hawaiian participants also talked about the difficulties of finding employment and obtaining an education. Women talked about being humiliated in school, some having been told by teachers that Hawaiians are not meant to be educated. One woman talked about a nun who told her that all Hawaiians are, “savages who can only hope to go so far in this world”. Women also recounted experiences with service providers that had a similar tone. One participant recounted about her initial contact with CPS, “I could tell with one look what that worker thought of me. She thought because I am Hawaiian, I am no good, dirty and hopeless.”

Participants attributed much of the violence that occurs in their communities to wide-spread crystal methamphetamine (known as “Ice”) addiction and alcoholism. Women reported that “Ice” is easy to get and very inexpensive. The high from this drug is short and results in sleeplessness, loss of appetite and high energy. Once the drug wears off, users become agitated, angry and violent, willing to do whatever it takes to get more drugs. Women reported that when men drink at social events or with friends, it usually leads to them “getting out of hand and craziness”.

Living on an island comprised of small towns and mostly rural settings creates particular issues for women experiencing intimate partner violence. First, there are fewer places to hide and travel is much more difficult. Traveling by ferry or by airplane is more expensive and requires more advanced planning than driving. While Oahu has a public bus system that allows people to travel to most parts of the island, the other islands have no bus system and limited taxi cab transportation. Also, there is little anonymity.

Participants discussed how the smaller towns and smaller islands suffer because most of the services are only available on the bigger islands and larger cities. People are often required to go to a different island to obtain medical and social services. A mother who needs substance abuse treatment may be forced to go to another island, making visitation and support from family much less likely. Similarly, foster placements may only be available on a neighboring island. This requires a child to adjust to the customs and practices of a different island and makes visitation with parents and siblings

impossible for families without the economic resources to travel inter-island. In addition to the trauma to the family, lack of visitation provides CPS with no opportunity to see interaction between the child and her family. The child's feelings of abandonment and isolation are exacerbated and the standards placed on the parents to get their children back are even higher.

Another distinction is that it is widely accepted practice amongst locals in Hawai'i for a man and a woman to raise children without being married and for couples to separate and find new partners who have children from other relationships. A problem identified in all the groups is how conflicts arise out of parents who are jealous of, or resentful about, children from other relationships and overly protective of their own biological children. Women reported feeling looked down upon by caseworkers raised on the mainland, for having children with someone who was not their husband and for having children from different fathers. They also got the sense that workers believed that poor people should not have children "that they couldn't afford" and felt they had been judged as irresponsible for having multiple children given their financial status.

## 9. Closing Sentiments

At the end of the group participants were asked to share what they would do to change family violence in their communities if they were made "Queen" for the day. While participants were somewhat shy about doing the exercise initially, most welcomed the opportunity to share their ideas of what could be different. Participants encouraged each other and supported the ideas and insights of the participant acting as "Queen." Everyone took the exercise quite seriously, and many of the participants expressed surprise at how many ideas came to mind and how strongly they felt about the need for drastic change. Some portions of their responses are summarized below.

### System changes to address poverty and family abuse

- "I would take the moms and kids, and maybe the dads and put them in a beautiful townhouse complex. Each townhouse would be nice and new and full of furniture and clothes. Each would have a garage with a car that runs good in it. Everyone could have pets. I would tell them that this is what they get if they do what they need to do to make changes. This new life would be their pay-off for changing. I would give them help they needed to find new opportunities."
- "I'd get all the *haoles* out of the directors' positions in programs and put in people who have been through the experience. I'd get them educated with a degree so they can help our people because they understand what we go through."
- "I'd make residential homes where families could go to get over drugs."
- "I would turn this world inside out. I would do outreach for the whole family, the grandma and granddad, the mom and the kids. I would create places where they can play and spend time together. I would create only positive things for the community. I would create an establishment for people when they hit hard

times so that it wouldn't be such a burden to get help. I'd give them help where and when they needed it."

- "I'd give them a place to voice their opinions and share. When the law is implemented I'd make sure people know the laws and rights. I watch to see how the laws work. I would learn from people how the people are doing. I would make the rules from my people's ideas. When the law is implemented, I would monitor how it works. I would make sure everybody understand and follow it very well. My people should know their rights well."
- "CPS must talk with the parents first and after talk to the kids; it's not because the kids are in the second level, but CPS would empower the parents. CPS would never use children to interpret. CPS would use agencies that are culturally and linguistically prepared to help immigrants. CPS would have a phone number accessible like 911."
- "Make sure that if women complete service plan, then CPS cannot add more stuff."
- "I'd help the kids to deal with the effects of taking them away."

#### Education for community members/Community driven solutions

- "I'd hold rallies and have women who've been through it share what they went through and how they got through it. I'd have more women who understand or know about family background, and how we were raised. That it was generational."
- "I'd create a community where kids have positive alternatives. Where there are role models of family involvement. That is my dream."
- If I had power, I would like to have a law that the kids should respect their parents and also that parents respect their kids.
- My community would be trained for the future so we understand what is respect in each other, if you give violence you're going to receive violence. My dream is to end domestic violence."
- "Let people be loving to each other. Let them know hitting does not equal love."
- "Let all families be drug free."

#### Alternatives to CPS

- "There would be no CPS on my island. I'd build one mansion and lock all the abusive people in there. Then, I'd take all the kids, show them some love. I'd separate men and women -ask if they know the meaning of love- I'd take them (kids) to my home for 24 hours- and let the parents think about it and then give them back."
- "I would keep a list of all people who got caught for abuse. I'd go down the list and separate the men and women. I would create some kind of evaluation showing trigger points on both sides. I'd open two training grounds outside the community. They'd be isolated with trained professional counselors that would get to know them and teach them. Training would also address child abuse. If men could understand the relationship with their mothers -they would learn how to treat women, how to be spiritual and humble. They would

be able to handle stress, anger, violence and temper. Before they could leave training camp- they would be put through a test.”

- “I would have more funds to work with families. I would fire off all social workers who treat people like animals.”

Assisting survivors of abuse to help themselves through accessing services

- “I’d tell all single moms about the kinds of services that can help them and tell them not to be too embarrassed to get help because they aren’t the only one”.
- “I would give women more courage to call hotline; file restraining orders; to relocate if necessary.”

## B. SURVEY DATA

### 1. Respondents

Surveys were disseminated at two conferences, one hosted by the Asian & Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence and the other hosted by the National Network to End Violence Against Immigrant Women. The survey was completed by almost 40% of the approximately 100 attendees at the first conference and about 15% of the attendees at the other. Respondents worked for domestic violence shelters, multi-service agencies, legal services, and health care based programs. Twenty-five respondents indicated they were working for culturally specific organizations and two worked for agencies addressing the needs of immigrants and refugees. Only a few respondents represented the police, religious, or civic organizations. Five respondents worked for policy or academic institutes. Five of the surveys were completed anonymously. Overall, twenty-two states and Guam were represented.

All respondents were women. The greatest number of respondents was made up of directors or managers. The next largest group included advocates, case managers and counselors for adult victims of abuse. Of the rest of respondents, eleven are attorneys, four work with batterers as case managers and group facilitators, four deliver educational or direct programming and participate in grassroots organizing and community outreach. Only three respondents work with youth and children.

### 2. Populations Represented

Respondents were asked to describe the population with whom they worked. Responses indicate how differently respondents working in the same field identify the cultural backgrounds of their clients. Most of the respondents used broad race categories such as Asians, Pacific Islanders, and Caucasian or slightly more defined categories such as South Asian or South East Asian. Several of these respondents then added more finite cultural groups by identifying some client’s country of origin. A few respondents left the question blank or wrote “all”, “diverse”, and “multiple”. One respondent used the terms “local” and “mixed”. This was the only reference to client’s

geographical affiliations and the only explicit acknowledgment that some clients were multicultural.

#### **a. Asians and Pacific Islanders**

65.7% (n=44) of those respondents who answered the item “populations served” reported that they served the Asian population. 25.4% (n=17) of the respondents reported that they served the Pacific Islander population. 3.0% (n=2) of respondents reported that they served the West Asian population. 40.3% (n=27) of respondents reported that they served the East Asian population. 38.8% (n=26) reported that they served the South Asian population. 47.8% (n=32) reported that they served the Southeast Asian population. 23.9% (n=16) reported that they served the Polynesian population. 16.4% (n=11) reported that they served the Micronesian population. Micronesians refers to Guamanians or Chamorro. 11.9% (n=8) reported that they served the Melanesian population. Melanesians include Fijians.

The Federal Government defines (a) “Asian American” to include persons having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent; and (b) “Pacific Islander” includes the aboriginal, indigenous, native peoples of Hawai’i and other Pacific Islands within the jurisdiction of the United States, and those having origins in the Melanesian, Micronesian and Polynesian regions of the Pacific Islands. In the 2000 Census, the Federal Government no longer groups Asians and Pacific Islanders together. The new groupings are Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders (NHOPI), American Indians and Alaska Natives (AIAN).

Historically, Asians and Pacific Islanders (APIs) in the United States have been grouped together under various names both by government classifications as well as by APIs, as part of an intentional community-based strategy to build coalitions with one another. There is tremendous diversity within this group of more than fifty distinct ethnic and national origin subgroups. There are conflicting views on the appropriateness of any aggregate classification or reference. For example, “Asian and Pacific Islander”, “Asian Pacific American”, “Asian American and Pacific Islander” have all been used in recent years to name our communities. Such groupings are ultimately political and part of a dynamic, continuing process of self-determination and self-identification.\*

Asians and Pacific Islanders are typically grouped by regions; some of these can be politically controversial. In addition, there are more ethnicities than there are countries (e.g., Hmong are an ethnic group from Laos). The list below attempts to be thorough, but notions of identity carry political, social and familial meanings too complex to analyze here.

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\* Asian & Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence, [www.apiahf.org/apidvinstitute](http://www.apiahf.org/apidvinstitute)



- *Central Asians:* Afghani, Azerbaijani, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tajik, Turkmen, Uzbek
- *East Asians:* Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Okinawan, Taiwanese, Tibetan
- *Hawaiians & Pacific Islanders:* (only those that are part of the US Jurisdictions). Carolinian, Chamorro, Chuukese, Fijian, Guamanian, Hawaiian, Kosraean, Marshallese, Native Hawaiian, Niuean, Palauan, Pohnpeian, Samoan, Tokelauan, Tongan, Yapese
- *Southeast Asians:* Burmese, Cambodian, Filipino, Hmong, Indonesian, Laotian, Malaysian, Mien, Papua New Guinean, Singaporean, Timorese, Thai, Vietnamese
- *South Asians:* Bangladeshi, Bhutanese, Indian, Maldivian, Nepali, Pakistani, Sri Lankan
- *West Asians:* West Asian is a contested term, most people from the region do not self-identify as such. It is typically referred to as the Middle East; and geographically includes the countries of Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey (straddles Europe and Asia) United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

#### **b. Other Ethnic Populations Served**

The other populations served included broad categories such as Native American, South American, Latin American, Indigenous and Black. More specific categories included Spanish, Guatemalan, Mayan, Mexican, Nigerian, Puerto Rican, and Russian.

#### **c. Other Affiliations**

Other group affiliations identified by respondents were refugee, immigrant, women and children, Muslim, Catholic, Pentecostal, Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, Haitian, Guatemalan, Native American, Russian, Okinawan, transgender and gay.

### **3. Working with Clients involved with Child Protective Services**

All respondents had worked with clients who were involved with CPS at some time. 39.2% (n=29) of the respondents reported that “many” people with whom they worked are or have been involved with Child Protective Services (CPS), whereas 32.4% (n=24) of respondents reported “some,” 17.6% (n=13) reported “few,” and 9.5% (n=7) reported that “most” of their clients were involved with CPS either at or before the time service was delivered.

The most common reason for CPS involvement was physical abuse to the child (71.2%, n=52). Almost as common a reason for involvement reported was that “one parent abusing the other in the presence of the child,” (65.8%, n=48) and that, “one parent abusing the other parent” (56.2%, n=41). 58.9% (n=43) reported that neglect to

the child was the reason for CPS involvement. 38.4% (n=28) reported that the child being “inadvertently injured during an incident of domestic violence” was the reason. Other commonly reported reasons for CPS intervention were “sexual abuse,” “drug abuse,” and “the batterer made false allegations against the mother when in fact he was abusing her”.

A majority of the respondents (65.8%, n=48) stated that CPS action was initiated by a police report. 50.7% (n=37) of the respondents stated that CPS action was initiated by mandatory reporters. Mandatory reporters included advocates, agency staff including shelter workers, social workers, domestic violence intake units, welfare workers, as well as counselors, therapists, attorneys and courts. Less than half of the respondents (46.6%, n=34) reported that clients’ requests for services initiated CPS action, 45.2% (n=33) stated that teachers’ reports initiated CPS action, 31.5% (n=23) reported that health care reports initiated action, and 16.4% (n=12) stated that child’s requests for services initiated CPS action.

81.4% (n=57) of the respondents indicated that they are mandatory reporters, while the remaining 18.6% (n=13) were not. 92.8% (n=64) of the respondents indicated that they explain the limits of confidentiality to every client. 92.8% (n=64) of the respondents indicated that they assess the safety of the child in all their cases. The one respondent who does not, noted she was not trained to do this and for that reason felt this to be outside of her role. Only slightly more than half of the respondents (58.2%, n=39) agreed with the statement that “witnessing or living in a home where there is domestic violence is equal to abuse and neglect”.

When they feel that their client’s child is at significant risk of abuse, 86.8% (n=59) of the respondents stated that they worked with the client to identify ways that she can decrease the risk; 75.0% (n=51) indicated that they would try to find services outside their agency to decrease risk; 70.6% (n=48) reported that they would encourage and work with the client to make her own report to CPS; 60.3% (n=41) reported that they would try to find services within their agency to decrease risk; and 45.6% (n=31) stated that they would report the risk to CPS and tell the client of their doing so. Other responses included safety planning with the clients and problem solving with supervisors. 42.4% (n=28) of the respondents stated that their relationships with clients have been positively impacted by their reporting to CPS; 37.9% (n=25) stated that their relationships with clients have been negatively impacted; 25.8% (n=17) indicated that there was no effect and 34.8% (n=23) indicated that they had never reported to CPS.

A majority (58.9%, n=43) of the respondents stated that either themselves or others in their agencies work with someone in the local CPS office. These collaborators with CPS were “advocates,” “caseworkers,” “program staff,” “ children’s coordinator,” and “domestic violence project coordinator.”

When asked how CPS responded to the knowledge that a child is living in a home where one parent abuses the other but no abuse directed at the child has occurred, more than half of the respondents 56.5% (n=39) reported that CPS “threatens to remove the

children from the abused parent if she does not seek a protection order or leave the home.” 47.8% (n=33) reported that CPS does nothing; 46.4% (n=32) reported that “they conduct an investigation on both parents for abuse and neglect”; 39.1% (n=27) reported that CPS “conducts an investigation of the abusive parents for abuse and neglect”; 31.9% (n=22) reported that “they remove the children from the home” and 17.4% (n=12) indicated that “they attempt to terminate parental rights”. Other responses described included an attempt by CPS to refer the case to other agencies, requiring the abusive partner to leave the home, or ignoring the domestic violence all together. Some respondents indicated that there was no consistent response from CPS with regards to such cases.

Even when CPS workers acknowledged the problem of domestic violence, most workers responded ineffectively. Their lack of training around the issue often resulted in them missing or misinterpreting crucial information. Also, workers moved too slowly in cases that needed timely involvement and were unresponsive to calls and enquiries made by clients or other agency staff.

When children were removed from client’s care and custody, 82.9% (n=58) of the respondents indicated that these children were placed in foster homes. 67.1% (n=47) stated that the children were placed with the victim’s family members, slightly more than half 51.4% (n=36) reported that the children were placed with the perpetrator’s family members and 21.4% (n=15) reported that the children were placed in group homes. Other places that children have been reported to be placed were “emergency children’s shelter,” “juvenile shelter,” “with perpetrator”.

Less than half (46.0%, n=29) the respondents indicated that CPS considered keeping siblings together when placing a child in foster care. The same number of respondents stated that CPS considered finding a placement with someone close to the family. Only 15.9% (n=10) of respondents believe that CPS considers the child’s culture and religion when determining placement. Respondents also reported that CPS considers what placements are the most “expedient,” and for that reason will place the child “anywhere possible”.

Respondents identified several ways that the CPS has been helpful to people in the community. Slightly more than half (53.0%, n=35) of the respondents indicated that CPS assisted the abused parent in seeking support, resources and protective relief related to partner abuse; one in every three (33.3%, n=22) indicated that CPS carefully investigated the situation to determine whether a substantial risk of neglect or abuse to the child(ren) existed. 28.8% (n=19) of the respondents stated that CPS identified culturally relevant and appropriate services and supports for the abused parent. 24.2% (n=16) indicated that CPS provided trauma services/counseling; 19.7% (n=13) stated that CPS provided relevant services to the abusive parent; and lastly, 18.2% (n=12) of the respondents reported that CPS helped the parent find adequate housing, income supports, day care and employment.

51.6% (n=33) of the respondents indicated that CPS would try to help mothers address substance abuse issues while 45.3% (n=29) of the respondents indicated that

CPS would remove the child from the home and provide no services. 17.2% (n=11) of the respondents indicated that CPS did not respond to their substance-abusing clients at all.

CPS was also considered helpful when workers collaborated with domestic violence advocates. Respondents described these workers as sensitive to women's stories about domestic violence, knowledgeable and helpful to clients in accessing services and clear about their expectations of women. Other respondents felt that that CPS had not been helpful at all in their communities.

Respondents identified the following ways that CPS is harmful to their clients and their client's children. First, CPS workers are ignorant of the dynamics of domestic violence which leads to their blaming mothers who are in fact victims of abuse. CPS workers also minimize domestic violence situations, make judgments in favor of batterers and force women to choose between their marriage and keeping custody of their children. CPS workers are often disrespectful to clients who fear CPS. Respondents also perceived service plans for their clients to be unrealistic given the clients' circumstances and resources. Workers imposed rigid conditions on mothers but rarely followed through on their own promises.

Several respondents reported working on a number of cases where children had been placed in the custody of their father despite a documented history of abusive behaviors. They felt that the trauma inflicted upon the child by separating the child from his or her mother was unjustified and unduly destroyed the connection the child has with the non-abusive mother.

A majority (80.6%, n=54) of the respondents indicated that their clients had experienced language barriers in their interactions with CPS. Among those respondents, 79.2% (n=42) stated that interpreters were not accessible when needed; 66.0% (n=35) stated that interpreters were not trained in partner violence; 60.4% (n=32) stated that services required or offered were not delivered in the client's language; and 49.1% (n=26) reported that unavailability of interpreters contributed to the language barrier between their clients and CPS. Other problems related to language barriers stated by respondents included using batterers, children or other family members as interpreters; "racist" and "classist" interpreters, and bias against women with only basic English language skills. One respondent reported, "the assumption held by CPS workers that because a woman has a strong accent, she's ignorant, doesn't understand, and doesn't really know what's right for her."

More than half of the respondents (55.9%, n=33) indicated that CPS does not offer services that acknowledge a family's cultural or religious beliefs, while 37.3% (n=22) stated that CPS sometimes does. One person (1.7%) indicated that CPS does this "almost all the time." The remaining 5.1% (n=3) of the respondents indicated that they did not know.

For those who indicated that CPS “sometimes” offers services that incorporate their clients’ cultural or religious beliefs, the examples provided include CPS contacting other culturally specific service providers to attend to the client, CPS devoting specific units for various ethnic groups, CPS workers asking questions when they were in doubt of cultural issues, CPS workers learning more about the cultural values and practices, and CPS relying on cultural practices such as *Ho’oponopono* (a Native Hawaiian practice) to help clients resolve their problems.

A majority of the respondents (83.6%, n=51) stated that their clients had experienced cultural barriers with CPS workers or services, whereas 8.2% (n=5) of them reported that their clients did not experience such barriers. The remaining 8.2% (n=5) did not know if their clients experienced cultural barriers in their interaction with CPS. Examples of cultural barriers reported by respondents were the inability of CPS to understand the interplay of culture and religion as a factor impacting the parents’ decisions or the reading of a parent’s character and credibility without giving due regard to their cultural background. One mother lost her child to CPS because she did not leave her partner for fear of her family being harmed in Pakistan. Another respondent described how a client recounted a CPS worker telling her, “You will never be given custody of your children because you don’t speak English and this compromises your children’s ability to succeed in school”. CPS workers are also misinterpreting traditional healing practices such as “coining” to be abuse. Other respondents criticized the process of CPS intervention, by stating that CPS asked confusing questions to clients during interviews and made erroneous inferences from what the clients said.

37.7% (n=23) of the respondents indicated that they did not know the number of CPS workers that came from ethnic groups similar to those of the families involved with CPS; 13.1% (n=8) indicated that there were none and the rest thought there were anywhere between two and eight workers of the same ethnic group as the families involved.

Respondents suggested that CPS should be more sensitive to domestic violence issues and provide screening for domestic violence cases and case management to assist with access to needed support for victim and children. Another frequent suggestion was that CPS should provide trained interpreters for domestic violence victims and children. Some respondents suggested that CPS should collaborate with local domestic violence programs that have different ethnic group members and establish their presence in community roundtables by coordinating meetings with other providers. Other suggestions included the need for CPS to set up better visitation arrangements that include protection for victims of domestic violence.

## C. STAKE HOLDER INTERVIEWS

Twenty-eight interviews were conducted with individuals in the Massachusetts Greater Boston Area and four of the Hawaiian Islands, Hawai'i, Maui, Moloka'i, and Oahu. Interviewees were social workers, licensed social workers, attorneys, advocates, and therapists. Most of the interviewees were direct service providers but some were supervisors, managers or directors of their programs. The range of years of experience was 1-12 years, with the majority of people having 3-7 years in their current position. Together they represented child protective services, domestic violence shelter and advocacy services, legal services, immigration services, parenting evaluation and education agencies, and work training programs. The legal service providers assisted clients with restraining orders, family law proceedings, and/or immigration issues. A few also work as Guardians Ad Litem. A majority of the interviewees had previous experience working in a domestic violence agency, a child protection agency, mental health clinic or the criminal justice system. The range of years of previous experience in either domestic violence or child protection work ranged from 2-26 years, with most people ranging from 7-14 years. Six of the interviewees were bi-lingual and 11 were of the same ethnicity as one major ethnic group served by their agency. Only four of the interviewees were born and raised in the county where they provide services.

### 1. Demographics of Populations Served

Stakeholders described the people with whom they worked as primarily lower-income which they defined as people who are receiving public subsidies or the working poor. They stated that only a small portion of their clients who are currently receiving welfare had been raised on welfare. Clients are primarily people of color. In Boston, the majority of people involved in CPS are African American, Haitian, Latin, and Cape Verdean. A smaller portion of families are Asian, specifically Vietnamese, Cambodian, Japanese, and Chinese. Stakeholders estimated that 30% of clients involved with CPS are immigrants or refugees. Family size ranged from 2-4 children. In Hawaii, the majority of families involved in CPS are also people of color, including Hawaiians, Filipinos, Portuguese, and Puerto Ricans. Many of these families are multiethnic. A smaller portion of families are Asian or Pacific Islanders including families from Vietnam, Thailand, Korea, China, Guam, Samoa, and Tonga. Stakeholders from Massachusetts indicated that many of the CPS staff working in the Massachusetts CPS office were born and raised in the state or somewhere in the Northeast. The opposite was true in Hawai'i. A majority of the people working in Hawai'i were people born and raised in the mainland U.S., while most of the families served are "local," meaning they were born and raised in Hawai'i.

Stakeholders attributed most families' involvement with CPS to reports made by mandatory reporters including police, teachers, day care workers, court personnel, attorneys (in Hawai'i only), medical workers and social workers. A small portion of reports are made by family, friends, neighbors, parents and children on their own behalf. Stakeholders agreed that neglect was the most common reason for CPS intervention with families. Many providers believed there is a strong causal connection

between alcohol/drug addiction and physical abuse. Some providers believed that sexual abuse is more common in poor communities while a few think it is much more common among middle and upper class families.

Stakeholders working within CPS identified several factors that lead to neglect and abuse among poor families. Parents who are working two or more jobs to support their families without public assistance do not have adequate time to raise or supervise their children in the way they would like. Their children get into trouble at school or in the community and in response they use physical discipline. Additionally, poor parents are without the resources to pay for services that many middle- and upper-class people enjoy (e.g., nanny, housecleaning, accountant, etc.). When children are on vacation from school or home sick, working parents are unable to stay at home with them. Moreover, a lack of resources makes it impossible for parents to support children's participation in sports or other activities financially, or for parents to take children on outings or vacations. Some workers actually recommend that clients quit working and go on welfare in order to spend time with their children.

One provider described that many of the families involved with CPS are parents who had children too young. These young parents are overwhelmed by the responsibilities and find it difficult to financially support their families. Many never learned parenting skills other than physical discipline and punishment from their parents. Oftentimes, the father leaves the family and the mother must head the household alone. Mothers have no job, education, skills, transportation and their housing may be at risk. As the children get older, mothers have an increasingly more difficult time dealing with their children's behavior. Without adequate supervision and direction, the children's behavior continues to worsen so that being around the children becomes more and more challenging.

Often these parents were or should have been involved with CPS as children living in abusive or neglectful homes. It's common to see 30-year old grandmothers raising their daughters' children, and that does not always bring out the best in a mother who may have been hurt and abandoned by her mother.

Domestic violence is a common problem among families involved with CPS. Many children are experiencing neglect due to witnessing one parent hurt and terrorize the other parent. Additionally, mothers experiencing domestic violence may have difficulty parenting due to their own trauma and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder symptoms. Children may begin to act violently toward their siblings or the abused parent. Sometimes, a mother who is being beaten by her partner will display physical abuse against her children, which she would not do otherwise.

## 2. The Mission and Culture of Child Protection Services

Stakeholders reported that a majority of caseworkers are recent college graduates between the ages of 21-27, with little or no fieldwork experience of any kind. All stakeholders believed that people are drawn to work for CPS with the good intentions of wanting to help children. Some stay and make a career in CPS, while many stay only a few years because, “the job is not a good fit for them”. Some individuals interested in pursuing a career in the juvenile justice system use a job with CPS as a stepping-stone.

In both Massachusetts and Hawai’i, the ethnic diversity of workers had increased over the past few years, as more people of color and people with linguistic capabilities are hired. However, what is a significant increase in contrast to past practices, translates into only a fraction of people relative to the agency as a whole. What remains the same is that the majority of people who work for CPS come from very different backgrounds and look and sound quite different from the majority of the families who are involved with CPS. Stakeholders from Massachusetts stated that most of the Massachusetts’ CPS caseworkers are of European descent and relatively few, if any, are recent immigrants. None of the stakeholders knew the numbers of workers born to immigrant parents. Hawaiian stakeholders described CPS workers in Hawai’i as being more diverse, with representation from many of the ethnic groups that reside in the Islands, yet the majority of workers are Caucasian or Japanese. A number of the Hawai’i stakeholders believed that there must be some caseworkers of Hawaiian ancestry, but did not know anyone personally. Most people working for Massachusetts CPS were born in Massachusetts, or a neighboring New England state or New York, while a majority of Hawai’i stakeholders were born and raised on the mainland U.S. Stakeholders from both states estimated that a significant amount of caseworkers grew up in middle-class or upper-class environments.

When asked about the mission of child protective services, all agreed that protecting children from abuse and neglect is the central purpose of the agency. However, all agreed that there seems to be two prevailing approaches to achieving this mission. These were described as a social service approach versus a policing approach. Everyone interviewed used this terminology, and deemed that people working within the system typically adhered to one approach or the other.

The social service approach was described as helping children by employing social work strategies and supports to assist parents to help themselves in order to help their children. Investigation and assessment are used as vehicles to understand what problems exist, potential sources of problems, contributing factors, and potential solutions. Once these are ascertained, the caseworker works closely with the family to identify and direct clients to appropriate services.

The policing or criminal justice mentality was described as one where workers see CPS and its role as isolated from other types of social services. This approach involves not only identifying problems that families and individuals face but also to



assign blame and determine punishment. There is an emphasis on investigation and evidence collection with an eye toward proving and punishing past wrongdoing.

All providers interviewed agreed that the policing approach is the more common method used within CPS. However, almost all stakeholders interviewed believe that the social service approach is more in keeping with the mission of CPS and much more effective for all members of the family, especially the children. Not only is the policing model fraught with problems that impede workers ability to protect children but it also has the potential to cause more harm than good for all family members. Some noted that the policing approach might be used more often because many CPS managers, policy makers and administrators do not support the resources necessary to employ a social service approach.

Many providers described that the policing model necessarily requires a finding of wrongdoing so that punishment can ensue. Providers repeatedly described how this gets in the way of providing families with the assistance they need to make things better for their children. One stakeholder described, “. . . [W]orkers become too wrapped up in finding who to blame and they forget to look for how to help. Going into situations using an interrogation method often causes workers to narrow the purpose of their investigation to substantiating a report that justifies the intrusion into the family. This leaves them nowhere in thinking about how to help the family.”

A punishment model also tends to align workers with the children in opposition to the children’s parents, rather than treating the family unit as a whole, differentiating between the abusive and non-abusive parent, or addressing the individual needs of each parent. Assisting children as an entity independent from their families is often defended by a statement such as, “children are innocent victims with no one to take care of them when their parents fail in doing so”. This idea implies a misconception that a victimized parent is somehow responsible for her partner’s behavior and unlike the children, has a way to stop it. This victim-blaming attitude often results in the victimized parent not receiving services and resources that would ultimately help the children. The potential of a child being hurt physically is often used to justify extreme interventions without comprehensive investigation or analysis. Unfortunately, this type of thinking ignores the bond between child and parent and the potential of each parent to change in order to be a better parent. It also ignores the trauma that may be caused by unnecessary changes in the child’s everyday life and prolonged separation from their parents. This attitude is particularly dangerous in domestic violence cases. Rather than acknowledging the mother’s victimization, workers will blame a mother for her choice to be with an abusive partner and will punish her accordingly. Many spend all of their time monitoring a mother’s behavior so that they have little or no time left to assess or attend to the children’s needs.

Another deficit of the policing approach is that workers who use this model tend to think of themselves as the only ones who understand children’s problems and thus the only providers competent to provide services. Unfortunately, this attitude forecloses

opportunities to work cooperatively with other service providers and thus reduces the possibility of incorporating other perspectives and ideas into their work.

Providers identified several aspects about the “culture” of CPS that describes most CPS workers regardless of whether they adhere to a social service or policing approach.

One worker described how a majority of workers fail to recognize the importance of the context in which each family lives and tend to ignore patterns that exist among certain populations. Workers do their work with each family in a vacuum with little or no understanding of societal racism, classism, gender bias and how each of these may impact their work. “CPS workers, much like advocates and providers in other agencies, are unresponsive to the reality that racism and gender bias penalizes women, men and ultimately their children. These people have real struggles such as poverty and homelessness but these struggles are not incorporated into service plans. We hold them up to ridiculous standards, ignoring the multiple issues clients face and attempt to deal with.”

Another issue raised by many of the stakeholders is CPS workers’ tendency to use a deficit model of assessment and case management rather than a strengths-based model. A deficit-based model focuses on problems and determining strategies for removing deficits. This is typically done without a comprehensive assessment of the client’s strengths, resources and skills. In the domestic violence context the client is seen as the problem, abused because of what she does or does not do. Clients are deemed responsible for their problems and not being able to solve them. Workers unwilling to admit that CPS has insufficient or irrelevant services often resort to blaming families for not taking advantage of services that are offered. Rather than the system falling short, the family is deemed a failure.

Even acknowledging the many flaws of CPS, all stakeholders recognized that constant criticism of CPS by outsiders does nothing to better the system or the services provided to families. While the complaints may be valid, the process by which they are shared is often counterproductive. Workers become defensive and a protective culture develops which prevents workers from reflecting critically on their own work. To acknowledge shortcomings within CPS is interpreted as betrayal. Workers hold steadfast to rules and procedures without regard to an ever-changing climate and population. Naturally, this forecloses collaboration with other systems and services and thus deprives children of the benefits afforded by coordinated services.

### **3. The Overlap of Domestic Violence and Child Protective Services**

Providers estimated that one-third to three-fourths of the CPS cases included domestic violence issues. Thus, it would be impossible for any caseworker to avoid working with families experiencing domestic violence. Most of the informants interviewed identified an ever-growing tension between people identifying themselves as child protection workers and those identifying themselves as battered women

advocates. Put simply by one stakeholder, “child protection workers think battered women advocates don’t care about the safety and welfare of their clients’ children. Battered women advocates perceive child protection workers to be unaware of the risks for, and needs of, battered mothers.”

During the interviews all providers displayed frustration and disappointment about how they were perceived and understood by “the other side” and shared insights relating to existing tensions. During interviews, stakeholders revealed information that suggests that much of the tension that exists derives from differences in methods and emphasis rather than insurmountable philosophical disagreements. Both CPS workers and advocates recognize the negative impacts of children witnessing one parent abusing the other and experiencing abuse and neglect. Both recognize the need for reduction of such risks and treatment for children exposed to domestic violence. Advocates described how much of the work they did centered on their clients’ attempts to provide for their children. They also described their concerns for the past, present and future welfare of their client’s children because this is the primary concern for most of their clients. A steadily growing number of CPS workers are learning about domestic violence and as a result of comprehensive case management are identifying and addressing the needs of battered mothers and their children.

The tension between advocates and CPS workers seem to arise from disagreement about how mothers’ needs and children’s needs are prioritized, who is best situated to make decisions and implement solutions, and how much a mother should be expected to control and manage while she is still exposed to her partner’s abuse. For example, advocate stakeholders repeatedly articulated their belief that the best way to help children is to help their battered mothers and hold their abusive fathers accountable. While many of the child advocates interviewed agreed with this view, they also discussed a prevalent perception among CPS workers that mothers often fail to access help, and in fact put the needs of the abusive partner before their children’s needs. This view explains worker’s tendency to impose interventions rather than work cooperatively with mothers.

Another source of animosity between advocates and CPS workers from one CPS stakeholder’s perspective is the way that advocates condemn CPS in public forums when they do not really know the system, the workers or the circumstances relating to their clients’ family. A few stakeholders talked about how advocates seemed to further enrage or upset their clients rather than assisting them to work more effectively with CPS. Additionally, some battered women’s services refused services to women who needed them because they interpreted the services as being imposed by CPS rather than requested by the woman.

Giving the relevant stakeholders an opportunity to reflect and analyze the tensions that exist between them and other providers, revealed a much more complex set of issues than initially presented.

#### 4. CPS System Steps: Five Stages of Intervention

There are five stages of CPS interventions: intake, investigation and assessment, services and case management, foster care, and permanency proceedings. Each step will be briefly described in this section. Stakeholders raised issues relating to each of the five steps. For this reason, the information collected in the interviews are displayed in a graph relating to each step. Each graph summarizes ideal implementation in domestic violence cases, common problems related to implementation in domestic violence cases, and recommendations discussed by stakeholders.

*Intake: Process by which cases are identified by CPS. Mandatory reporters or other concerned persons report risk of abuse or neglect to a child to a CPS hotline. Intake workers determine whether the report falls within the jurisdiction of CPS and refers all qualifying cases to the investigation department.*

IDEAL IMPLEMENTATION IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES	COMMON PROBLEMS OF IMPLEMENTATION IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES	RECOMMENDATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A caller (a concerned person, usually a mandatory reporter) reports on who poses a risk to the child and specifically describes the risk.</li> <li>▪ Caller reports whether a protective parent exists. If not, steps are taken to protect the child.</li> <li>▪ Caller describes abusive partner's tactics and access to family members, including safe means of contacting family and conducting investigation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Caller makes a report based solely on the presence of domestic violence or issuance of a restraining order.</li> <li>▪ Caller attributes risk to mother's failure to protect rather than father's abusive behavior.</li> <li>▪ Caller provides no information to increase safety for family during investigation.</li> <li>▪ Battered mothers who go to the courts, domestic violence service shelters or service centers are made vulnerable to CPS intervention by requesting services and assistance for abuse.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Intake workers should require callers to provide specific information relating to abuse to the mother as well as concerns of abuse and neglect to the children.</li> <li>▪ People who call CPS to make reports should spend time working with the battered mother to gain pertinent information and safety plan around CPS interventions.</li> <li>▪ CPS should educate mandatory reporters and community members about criteria for intervention and ways in which they can be helpful to families where children are at risk.</li> </ul>

*Investigation/Assessment: An investigator is assigned to investigate whether the abuse or neglect reported is true (substantiated) or false (unsubstantiated.) A determination must be made within 7-10 days, or 1-3 days in cases where children are removed from the home or a restraining order is issued. A report that is substantiated is further assessed to determine what, if any, services should be delivered to the family. A case may be opened and services may or may not be mandated for either or both parents. The family may also be referred to diversion programs where services are considered voluntary. However, failure to use such services and demonstrate improvement may result in a case being opened and having a mandated service plan.*

IDEAL IMPLEMENTATION IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES	COMMON PROBLEMS OF IMPLEMENTATION IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES	RECOMMENDATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Contact adult victim before talking to the children to determine how and where to contact the children and the offender.</li> <li>▪ Investigators should review abuser’s criminal records, police reports, any restraining order paperwork, and history of CPS involvement.</li> <li>▪ Investigators need to make an independent assessment based on a number of relevant informants and records. Investigation goes far beyond looking for facts to support the initial report.</li> <li>▪ Investigators and assessment workers understand there may be good reason for battered mothers or children witnessing abuse to deliberately withhold information they fear may lead to a more dangerous situation.</li> <li>▪ Parents should be assessed individually.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Battered mother is not contacted. She and children are put at increased risk by a visit from CPS that reveals she is accessing domestic violence services.</li> <li>▪ Investigators look for facts to support report of abuse only, fail to see and document vital information, and omit relevant facts when reporting to the court.</li> <li>▪ Investigators interview family members and reporter only. This addresses the concerns in the initial report but other problems that are potentially dangerous remain uncovered.</li> <li>▪ Workers have unrealistic expectations that women or children will disclose abuse at first meeting. Workers fail to describe the purpose and scope of work or to ask family members what they already know about CPS.</li> <li>▪ Workers with poor interviewing skills and little understanding of domestic violence misinterpret withheld information as a effort to hide abusive behavior or as a sign of denial.</li> <li>▪ Parents/couples are treated as a unit, and mothers are expected to influence or change the father.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Domestic violence cases should be flagged at intake and contact so that protocols to increase safety for family and workers should be implemented.</li> <li>▪ An objective review that incorporates a variety of perspectives is necessary. Relevant informants include school staff, day care, pediatrician, support systems to mother, support systems to father, and anyone who spends time with the child.</li> <li>▪ Interviewing professional providers for family members together is a good way to facilitate coordination of services and ensure the family is getting the same messages from each provider.</li> <li>▪ Workers need to continually work on interviewing skills, understanding domestic violence, establishing trust with family members, and adapting strategies to address trauma experience and age.</li> </ul>

*Services and Case Management: Once an assessment is complete, a service plan is created for the parents. In many cases, failure to comply with the entire service plan results in parents losing custody of their children temporarily until parents comply with service plan requirements.*

IDEAL IMPLEMENTATION IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES	COMMON PROBLEMS OF IMPLEMENTATION IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES	RECOMMENDATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Workers understand CPS intervention could create more harm than good.</li> <li>▪ Contact with family is conducted in ways that protect the safety of the mother and children.</li> <li>▪ Mother and children guide the practice.</li> <li>▪ Workers have a good knowledge of services and the ability to access services and resources for clients.</li> <li>▪ Service plans are created cooperatively with the parents and incorporate family and community support networks and resources.</li> <li>▪ Parent perpetrating domestic violence is held accountable for his behavior and is required to complete services.</li> <li>▪ The role of CPS is to be the least intrusive as possible while protecting the child; with the goal of reunification first and foremost, whenever possible.</li> <li>▪ Workers build a trusting working relationship with the family.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Workers believe any intervention is better than none, and do not recognize when harm is caused.</li> <li>▪ Workers fail to maintain safe contact protocols with the family which expose the family and workers to risk of harm.</li> <li>▪ Workers and service providers guide the practice. Practice is uninformed by the knowledge and experience of mothers and children. Service plans are based on services available rather than family's needs.</li> <li>▪ Workers create and deliver a service plan to clients. The directive model is not working. Telling people what to do seems a lot easier but in the long run it takes much more time and may not even work.</li> <li>▪ Workers either give up on the possibility of abusive partners changing to become non-abusive partners or fathers, or they like them so much they are unable to see their abusive and controlling tactics.</li> <li>▪ The threat to remove children is really the only threat workers have to ensure compliance. Unfortunately, this may result in an abusive father not complying so that the children are taken away in order to punish his partner for seeking help.</li> <li>▪ Workers do not spend time with the family. Because of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Workers should build trusting and mutually respectful working relationships with clients.</li> <li>▪ Workers should be supported to act with compassion and empathy.</li> <li>▪ Workers should get to know their clients and work with them to develop a service plan that will best work for them.</li> <li>▪ Workers need to better understand the implications of separation and how no-contact restraining orders can set off a course of events in other systems, like family court or BCIS (formerly INS).</li> <li>▪ Workers should not remove the children from battered mothers who are not abusive to their children. Instead, workers should help the mothers to obtain safety from her abusive partner.</li> <li>▪ Hold offender accountable while also maintaining his role in the family; support him to find employment and re-define relationships with family members.</li> <li>▪ More training, resources and support are required to support staff working with fearful and traumatized mothers and children.</li> <li>▪ Advocates/Parent's attorneys need to be better apprised of CPS reports, service plans and action in order to better represent their clients.</li> <li>▪ CPS needs to identify and contract more trauma services for adult and child survivors of</li> </ul>

high turnover among staff, each family may work with several different caseworkers.

- Workers display impatience and hostility towards parents and show a lack of sympathy and lack of empathy toward them.

abuse.

- Successful initiatives such as multidisciplinary teams, domestic violence consultants, diversion programs, drug court, family group or Ohana conferences, and substance abuse treatment programs for parents and children should be funded, expanded and replicated.
- Training in understanding what poor, single mothers who are abused face.

*Foster Care: When CPS determines that children are at risk in their home, children are placed in foster care or a group home. These placements are considered temporary for 15-months, during which time parents are required to complete services plans designed by CPS. Parents are assured some type of visitation with their children while they are in CPS custody.*

IDEAL IMPLEMENTATION IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES	COMMON PROBLEMS OF IMPLEMENTATION IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES	RECOMMENDATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Children and adolescents are placed in a home that is familiar to them. Siblings are placed together.</li> <li>▪ Children and adolescents are properly cared for and nurtured.</li> <li>▪ Foster care is limited to the time period parents need to improve conditions in the home.</li> <li>▪ Foster parents and placements are carefully monitored.</li> <li>▪ Children and adolescents have a trusting relationship and consistent contact with one CPS caseworker.</li> <li>▪ School age children and adolescents are able to remain in school and continue other activities while in CPS custody.</li> <li>▪ Removal is the last resort.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Many children are placed in foreign environments and are separated from their siblings.</li> <li>▪ While there are a few foster families where children thrive, most placements meet only minimal standards.</li> <li>▪ Some placements are abusive and neglectful.</li> <li>▪ Most placements are not culturally or linguistically appropriate. CPS does not appear to value linguistic or cultural relevance as highly as some of its other standards.</li> <li>▪ Children are not provided with support or counseling to help them deal with being apart from their families or the trauma experienced in the home.</li> <li>▪ Some family placements that would otherwise be approved are not because of an extended family member having a criminal history.</li> <li>▪ Unsupervised and supervised visitation requires extensive resources and raises a host of scheduling challenges.</li> <li>▪ Visitation is offered to both parents at the same time rather than offering separate visit times.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ More people from the communities where children live need to provide foster and respite care.</li> <li>▪ CPS should provide better support and resources to outstanding foster parents and hold them out as role models.</li> <li>▪ More services for adolescents need to be developed so CPS workers can make referrals.</li> <li>▪ New mechanisms need to be devised to reduce the amount of abuse and neglect that occurs in foster care.</li> <li>▪ Well-resourced visitation centers with travel accommodations should be created. Victims of domestic violence should be given safe opportunities to visit with their children.</li> <li>▪ An evaluation needs to be developed to determine whether a batterer's intervention program has effectively reduced the risk to mother and children before the father is given unsupervised visitation or custody.</li> </ul>



*Permanency Proceedings: the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 conditioned federal funding to state child protection service agencies on the implementation of a time-limited family reunification plan. This act requires that states permanently terminate parental rights of parent's whose children are in foster care for more than 15 months.*

IDEAL IMPLEMENTATION IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES	COMMON PROBLEMS IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES	RECOMMENDATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Parents who do not comply with requirements within 15 months are unlikely to do so. Children should be freed from their parents to enjoy permanent placement with an adoptive family.</li> <li>▪ Permanent placements exist for all children in foster care for more than 15 months.</li> <li>▪ Permanency is only sought when parents have not complied with service plans to remove the identified danger to the child</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 15 months is often an insufficient amount of time for battered women who have substance abuse issues to complete service plans.</li> <li>▪ Children of color and children over the age of 4 are extremely difficult to place. Adolescents are almost impossible to place. When parental rights are terminated, children become wards of the state.</li> <li>▪ Children may bond with their foster family and thrive. Workers review the improvement of the biological family in comparison to the foster care placement rather than according to requirements set forth in the service plan.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ CPS should clarify this 15-month time frame to all parents at the onset.</li> <li>▪ CPS should work more closely with parents and provide additional rehabilitative services before making children wards of the state.</li> <li>▪ Individually tailored, reasonable, service plans that include community and familial support are necessary to achieve positive results in the limited time provided by this law.</li> </ul>

## 5. Characteristics of an “Effective” CPS worker, Challenges Faced and Training and Support Needed.

All stakeholders were asked to describe what they considered to be the characteristics of an effective worker, what difficulties workers faced in doing the work and what training and support was needed. Much of what is described in this section was taken from interviews with stakeholders who have worked or currently work within CPS.

A good investigator interviews all relevant persons. He collects information from a variety of sources and reserves judgment until all information is collected. He approaches the family in a way that offers help and is honest about his role. He recognizes every situation is different so that he is open-minded with in each case and takes care not to use labels or pigeon-hole people. He is interested in people and comfortable in unfamiliar settings and situations. He is methodical, organized, innovative and self-motivated. He is empathetic, non-judgmental and a very good listener. He knows enough about child protection and domestic violence to know what questions to ask and what to listen for. He is clear about what information is gathered, where the information goes and what will happen to it.

An effective worker recognizes the power that she possesses and uses this power with humility, care and compassion. She interacts with all family members with respect while maintaining clear expectations and bounds. She treats everyone like human beings with the capacity and willingness to change. She has good interpersonal skills that allow her to connect and build a trusting relationship with families so they know her intentions go beyond catching them doing something wrong. One has to be likeable because the work is dependent on working with and among so many other people.

A successful worker recognizes she does not have all the answers and is willing to consider a variety of alternatives and new approaches. She realizes that the answers to problems lie within the family. She does not have to be right all the time or make other professionals feel less than or beholden to her. She recognizes that her learning potential is never ending and is comfortable asking for help and providing help to others. She recognizes that CPS services and battered women's services are limited and may not address every client's needs. She knows the community in which she works. She looks for strengths, skills and resources possessed by the family or the family's community and attempts to incorporate these into her work and her plan.

Characteristics that are particularly helpful when working on domestic violence cases include: ability to recognize abusive and controlling tactics and trauma symptoms; vigilantly attending to the safety of family members in the present and in the future, and extensive knowledge of local resources. The worker does not take what happens in his cases personally and can separate his own life from his clients' lives. At the same time, he is empathetic and hopeful. He has a positive worldview. A person with a negative worldview will see only problems. This worker employs a variety of social work techniques and sets appropriate emotional, mental and physical boundaries.

One CPS stakeholder explained, "The people who are abrasive, use a critical tone or present with a confrontational attitude do not last long. The people who are the best at what they do have an attitude of 'but for the grace of God go I'. They know that all parents make mistakes and some people go through tougher times than others."

No one comes into the job knowing how to do it. There is so much to it and the system is so complex that it can take years to learn everything about it. Everyone receives an initial training that includes a short component on domestic violence and shadows someone else in the same position before working independently. However, most of the learning comes from doing the work. The job offers a lot of independence and a somewhat flexible workday schedule.

Each worker has a direct supervisor and peers. Supervision varies greatly, some providing very close supervision and others monitoring from more of a distance. Structured supervision provides workers with the knowledge base they need to do the work. Ideally a supervisor models the creative thinking, preparedness and interpersonal skills that she hopes the worker displays with clients. Good supervisors care about their staff's struggles; helping them to manage work mandates and caseloads by

understanding what they have to do and assisting them to figure out how to do it with the resources available. This type of supervisor knows the worker's individual strengths and struggles, helps them to build skills to solve problem on their own and tries to avoid misuse or abuse of power differentials. While giving directives to workers appears to be easier than negotiating and partnering to find solutions, the appearance is deceptive. Workers who are supported in problem-solving and finding their own solutions are more likely to develop professionally and become more effective on their own. Those who rely on their supervisor's problem solving become reliant on their supervisors who are then required to spend additional time and resources with workers to address the same kinds of problems.

Caseworkers may have the most difficult job because unlike investigators and diversion workers, they work with dysfunctional families only. Investigators have the experience of meeting with families where abuse is unsubstantiated and diversion workers are likely to see clients improve their situations with little intrusion by CPS. While case managers do see progress, it is often preceded by several problems and disappointments of varying degrees. Additionally, they are responsible for removing children for noncompliance and terminating parental rights, two tasks considered by all providers to be stressful and upsetting. One provider shared, "it's a terrible job under any circumstances. It traumatizes everyone in the family and the worker." Even stakeholders most critical of CPS sympathized with the CPS workers, describing it as a, "difficult and thankless job within a hostile and oppressive system". Almost everyone outside of the system stated they would never want to work within it, which is an indication of how hard the work is.

Workers within CPS described the job as, "physically demanding, emotionally taxing and mentally draining". Many providers described workloads for most direct service workers to be unmanageable within a 40-hour work schedule. CPS workers are faced with hearing about multiple types of abuse, and must work with clients who have varying responses to trauma. They also work with clients living in desperation and hopelessness due to extreme poverty. Much of their work is conducted in the field, in homes and neighborhoods where they are without back up support. Workers regularly face harassment, verbal assaults, threats of physical assaults in the course of their work. by clients or clients' family members. Workers may also face clients who curse at and berate them. There are stories of caseworkers who have been pepper sprayed, spit on, and pushed. And though most will not experience actual physical assault, all workers have to cope with the stress that comes from knowing there is potential for personal injury.

One provider aptly termed CPS and domestic violence work in any context to be "emotional labor." Almost all stakeholders agreed that such work necessarily results in the building up of defense mechanisms that are often unhealthy or counterproductive. When people feel overwhelmed and do not know how to help families, they begin to doubt their own competence. To feel more competent, providers focus on tasks that can be more easily attained. As one provider noted, "its much easier to collect evidence than make a family safe. Most providers cannot live with the ambiguity of not knowing

what to do so they shape their work by what can be accomplished rather than what families actually need.” When complications and difficulties arise from this approach, providers can justify it by criticizing parent’s inability to make effective use of services offered.

Some stakeholders deemed the pay scale to be inadequate given the difficulty of the work. Some of the key informants outside of CPS questioned the legitimacy of the complaint they often hear from CPS workers that, “they are underpaid and overworked,” given that most domestic violence advocates are paid significantly less and seem to have a similar caseload. Other stakeholders believe that both caseworkers and domestic violence advocates, and any consultants working on these cases are significantly overworked and underpaid and that this not only impacts the way that they work with their clients but also the way that they work with each other. A few believed that the quality of their work with clients would be much higher and easier to do if they were treated better by their own organizations and had more positive relationships with other providers.

Given the way people described their jobs, it is not surprising that there is significant turnover by direct service providers in CPS. However, stakeholders also discussed a variety of survival strategies that help staff to cope with the many challenges presented by CPS work. First and foremost, providers described that as difficult as it is, the work is very rewarding. “Over time, you can see how you have really helped children and their families and that feels great. You also see some cases where children are placed in loving, caring families where they really thrive.” Next, stakeholders shared several things that individuals and systems can do to make the job easier to do over an extended period.

As individuals, providers need to know how to take care of themselves so they can, in turn, help others. “Providers need to have a life that they love outside of work.” Physical activity, such as group sports or individual exercise is a great stress reliever. Playing a musical instrument, writing or participating in some other creative activity is therapeutic. Providers mentioned gardening, playing a team sport, spending time with a pet, and religious group activities as good ways to cope with difficult, emotional work. Eating well, getting adequate sleep and socializing with others outside of work is another way to stay healthy.

Systems can also act in ways that support providers. Increased staffing is a sure way to reduce the workload for everyone and allow for increased supervision and training that will facilitate increased knowledge, skill development, and team building. Another way to support workers is to provide flex schedules, rotating work responsibilities, and allow for part-time positions. Systems can also foster a cooperative work environment where people are encouraged to work in teams and rely on each other for support on casework. Systems should not reinforce competitive attitudes and behaviors. Workers should also be encouraged to try new ideas and create new strategies. Systems should also support workers taking care of themselves by discouraging them instead of encouraging them to work overtime hours. The type of

support that stakeholders held out as most important is the opportunity to talk to others in small group settings about their work. They talked about how discussing the outcome of a case with a trusted colleague or participating in a group that is facilitated by someone who understands the impact of doing trauma work is much needed and rarely offered. One stakeholder regretted that she had heard manager after manager say they did not want to “open a can of worms,” despite the fact that providers’ behaviors demonstrated difficulty coping with a traumatic event that occurred within CPS. Some described how “venting” or “debriefing” helped them to process their disappointments and reflect on their performance with the support of another and that this, in turn, improved their performance. While many had a difficult time explaining why this type of activity brought them relief, they seemed unconcerned about why it worked. Rather, they were thankful that such an easy activity addressed needs that are difficult to address elsewhere. What was clear is that providers benefited greatly when given time to process how their work impacts each of them personally and the team as a whole, and their work with clients.

## 6. Other Relevant Service Providers

### a. Guardians Ad Litem

A Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) is assigned to a case to evaluate the best interest of the child, make determinations about the conditions in the home of the child and make recommendations to the court regarding service plans, custody and visitation. A family with resources may hire a GAL or the court may appoint a GAL to a case using state funds. When a GAL is appointed to a case the number of hours that may be billed to the state is usually limited to 10 hours. A GAL may request to work additional hours to accommodate the needs of a case, but must prove necessity of such work. The billing restrictions are the same regardless of the size of the family or the issues involved. In Massachusetts, GALs are usually social workers, psychologists but are sometimes attorneys. Before 2003, GALs were not required to attend any particular training or perform their work according to any particular protocol. Thus, the skills, experience, and work product of each GAL varies widely. In Hawai’i, all GALs are attorneys. While there are some professional meetings, there are no rules governing investigative procedures, documentation or reporting. There are a small number of volunteer GALs who are not attorneys who produce much of the work that is presented in courts by an Attorney GAL. Volunteer GALs not only work without compensation, but are asked to pay for all training related expenses including travel and accommodations for inter-island trainings.

Many of the stakeholders talked about negative experiences with GALs who did not do much work on the cases but made recommendations that had severe and lasting impacts on the families. Problems with GALs included:

- GALs did not recognize or address domestic violence or the connection between domestic violence and child abuse and neglect ;
- GALs treated parents as a unit or sided with the abusive husband who was able to present himself well in interviews;

- GALs failed to investigate cases thoroughly;
- GALs failed to learn about customs and norms of particular ethnic groups and imposed their own middle to upper-class values on the poor families with whom they worked; and
- GALs who are attorneys lack the child development and psychological evaluation skills of mental health providers, and psychologists, social worker and counselor GALs lack knowledge of how to navigate the legal system and CPS.

Stakeholders who are or have been a GAL acknowledged that these problems existed in some but not all GALs. They pointed out that the reason why work is often lacking comprehensiveness is because GALs are not compensated for any hours that exceed the hours allotted by the court; that most GALs know how to do a case properly but their work is often truncated due to lack of resources. None of the stakeholders knew a GAL that represented any of the ethnic groups studied in this project.

### **b. Family Law and Immigration Attorneys**

Family Law and Immigration Attorneys are often needed in cases where battered mothers are involved with CPS, but resources to pay these attorneys have become more and more scarce over the past several years. Free legal services are extremely limited in all areas and have become more so due to significant state budget cuts. Due to the time and expenses involved in these types of cases, it has become almost impossible to find a *pro bono* attorney willing to take work on this type of case without being compensated. Even if a battered mother involved in a CPS case can afford to pay attorney's fees, most private attorneys experienced in family law or immigration law are not trained in issues related to domestic violence and ignore the most important aspects of the case relating to the safety of the child. In the worst circumstances, an abusive father with resources hires an attorney of this kind while his partner goes without representation. Another significant problem is that most family law and immigration attorneys are not familiar with CPS and do not consider how CPS involvement and related proceedings affect the case or their client.

### **c. Attorneys Representing Children, Mothers and Fathers in Child Protection Proceedings**

There is consensus among stakeholders that attorneys appointed by the state to represent children, mothers, and fathers in proceedings related to removal and permanent termination of parental rights are for the most part inattentive, irresponsible and incompetent. Many talked about attorneys who did not return phone calls and had little contact with their clients throughout the entire period of CPS involvement. Stakeholders had no positive stories about attorneys acting in this role. One result is that other service providers such as family law attorneys, advocates, GALs, or CPS caseworkers are required to take on additional responsibilities and expend additional resources to compensate for the absent attorney. CPS lawyers are also put in the

position of having to do additional work or know that representations made to the court are one-sided.

#### **d. Police**

Only about half of the stakeholders mentioned the police in the interviews but those who did believe that 911 operators and police responding to calls at the home play a crucial role in whether or not mothers and children ask for help. All stakeholders who discussed this issue believed that the common reasons why police handled situations improperly included lack of training in domestic violence, poor interviewing skills, strongly held beliefs that family conflict is a private matter and therefore outside criminal justice domain, and impatience. Stakeholders also described a number of complicating factors that illustrate how the responsibility and tasks of police are often different from or in conflict with the interests of battered mothers and their children. A few examples are:

- Police may be called to the scene by a perpetrator if he knows that a possible result would be child removal from the mother and placement with the paternal extended family. One stakeholder described a client who had begged the 911 operator not to send the police to her house because she was sure this would result in her mother-in-law taking custody of all her children. Her mother-in-law had previously made a false report of abuse to CPS the last time the police responded to a call of her husband abusing her. CPS already warned her that another call to the police would result in her losing her children to her abusive partner's mother.
- Many women call CPS because they are afraid for their safety and want immediate assistance but do not necessarily want their partners to be prosecuted or sent to jail. Police fail to understand that many women are reluctant to participate in prosecutions that result in little or no jail time for fear that their partners will retaliate against them once the case is over. A lot of women feel that their partners going to jail will make them more abusive and violent. Others want their partners to stay employed in order to support the family. Additionally, women whose partners are immigrants have legitimate fears that their partners will be detained and deported.
- Police often find themselves addressing multiple crimes at once, and domestic violence may be perceived as less serious or more difficult to address than the other crimes involved.
- Police who work in communities in which they live may be seen as taking one partner's side over the other and this may result in conflict for or retaliation against them or their families.

#### **e. Substance Abuse Treatment Services**

Substance abuse treatment services that enable mothers to live with their children or maintain visits with them is a much needed service, but very difficult to find. Waiting lists to get into these programs are long and most programs require at minimum 6-months of treatment. Substance abuse is recognized as being a coping

mechanism to deal with the abuse and therefore a relevant service to be offered to battered mothers.

#### **f. Battered Women's Advocates**

Stakeholders from all systems expressed serious concern about the type of advocacy being delivered. Many believe that holistic, comprehensive and compassionate advocacy is being replaced with bureaucratic, directive and “efficient” service delivery. Advocates regularly decide who is acceptable for services and who deserves services when faced with resource limitations. Rather than being accountable for limitations of services, programs deem clients’ problems too complicated or outside their scope of services. CPS stakeholders talked about several cases where battered mothers were mistreated while in shelters and turned away from battered women’s service programs. Stakeholders believe that advocates still have a lot of work to do in making their programs more relevant and accessible to women of color.

Several stakeholders reported stories in which women were turned away from programs because their culture, language, presentation or communication styles were “different” from the women who normally used the services. In the shelter setting, women who cooked food with distinctive smells, spoke to their children in their native language rather than English, or practiced a religion that is not embraced in the U.S. may be convinced to leave the shelter because they aren’t a “good fit.” Women who speak abruptly, do not smile all the time, or keep to themselves are labeled as negative, angry or uncooperative and may be asked to transfer to a different setting because they make other women in the house uncomfortable. Women who identify as gay, bi-sexual or transgender are often also excluded without any pretense but simply rejected because the program does not “serve that population”. Women’s inability to access services significantly impacts their ability to address CPS concerns, comply with service plans, and transition out of CPS.

Often, women involved with CPS have many problems at the same time. These women are most often rejected from all types of domestic violence services including legal services, support groups, shelter and job training opportunities. Problems such as severe mental health diagnosis, alcohol and drug addition, children with behavioral problems or too many children are left without much needed assistance.

CPS stakeholders also expressed frustration with advocates who defined empowerment as telling clients what to do but not providing any support or assistance. They perceived many advocates to be just as guilty of not listening to or getting to know their clients. More and more systems are incorporating administrative procedures and resource allocation policies that limit advocates’ time with clients. Almost all talked about how some advocates can be just as punitive and blaming of mothers as the caseworkers they complained about. Women who do not jump on command are seen as difficult and unappreciative. This is especially true for mothers who do not resemble people commonly served by the program or who do not follow the advice of the advocates working in the program.



Many stakeholders questioned why so many advocates refuse to educate themselves about CPS or to make attempts to build relationships with CPS in order to better assist their clients. Advocates were described as being unrealistic and impatient in expecting to understand a complex system in the course of working with one client. All CPS stakeholders mentioned advocates' obvious confusion about how and when to report to CPS. Stakeholders felt it was unfair that advocates were resentful about mandatory reporting requirements and the impact on relationships with clients when advocates did not spend the time to more accurately understand requirements and were unwilling to support their clients through the process once a report was made.

Some CPS stakeholders also questioned what appeared to them as adversarial rather than collegial attitudes from advocates. One worker mentioned that advocates sometimes seem to fuel their client's frustration or hostility toward CPS rather than trying to approach the situation constructively.

## **7. Conclusions from Stake Holder Interviews**

Overall, the interviews demonstrate that there are some serious problems to overcome in the way all systems currently deal with the overlap of domestic violence and child abuse and neglect.

A provider summarized a sentiment shared by many of those interviewed, "We all talk about how much we love children and how our top priority is to protect children. However, if we were to judge by the state of things and the impacts of the policies and practices that we have created or allowed to endure, you would think that we hated children. All you have to do is look at the amount of children living in poverty, the number of children who do not receive the educational or health services they need, and systems such as child protective services and family court to see that our children are suffering and we, the adults in charge of raising them, accept these realities. We need to stop making excuses and start making change." Everyone interviewed agreed that in order for real change to occur, the issues described here not only need to be acknowledged but also prioritized. A commitment must be made to find new ways to deal with the age-old problems and there must be a shift away from applying simple, short-term solutions to complex situations.

## **D. SYNTHESIS OF FOCUS GROUP, SURVEY AND INTERVIEW DATA**

This section is an effort to synthesize the information collected in the focus groups, the surveys and individual interviews. The comparisons made here will be general in nature given the different methods by which information was gathered from survivors, bi-cultural battered women advocates and child protection and other service providers was collected. Despite its general nature, comparing the opinions and experiences of the three groups provides important information that may be helpful to systems, communities, individuals, and community activists.

The most surprising finding is that survivors, advocates and CPS and family law providers shared much in common. First, the issues identified, and the order in which they were prioritized was almost identical across groups. Next, women from the three components of the project shared similar concerns and perspectives about the prevalence of partner and child abuse. While some differences between the groups existed, they are few compared to the similarities. This demonstrates that there is significant common ground, and thus opportunity for resource sharing and collaboration among at least a subsection of survivors, advocates and CPS and family law providers.

## 1. Common Concerns and Perspectives

Survivors, advocates, child protective services and other types of service providers all agree that domestic violence and child abuse and neglect are significant problems in the communities studied. Additionally, all agreed that neglect is the most common reason that children are at risk. Physical abuse was most commonly attributed to inter-generational abuse, poverty, and drug and alcohol abuse.

Despite the co-occurrence of domestic violence and child abuse and neglect, survivors and various providers agreed that CPS is not adequately responding to domestic violence issues and as a result mothers, children and fathers continue to go without the attention, protection and services needed. Survivors and CPS providers emphasized that battered women's advocates and bi-cultural advocates could make a significant positive difference for women involved in CPS, whereas most advocates described their work as being detached and separate from that of CPS.

Foster care was a primary concern for all participants involved in this project. Unanimously, women agreed that few placements allow children to thrive, and that most satisfy only the basic needs of the children fostered. All agreed that siblings are likely to be separated during CPS custody, and that adolescents who are the most difficult to place often end up in group homes or correctional facilities. It is not uncommon for children to be placed with a number of different families during CPS custody, requiring traumatized children to repeatedly adjust to different rules, customs and ways of interacting. While culture and language is sometimes considered when placing children they are often not determinative factors due to the scarcity of families offering cultural and language diversity. CPS's inability to recruit and maintain foster parents and a lack of interest and participation by community members were the factors that contribute to this problem. Many women from the focus groups and several service providers from the interviews raised their concern that workers throughout the various systems rely on an unspoken assumption that children will benefit from being separated from cultural influences. As one respondent stated, "most workers assume that being with a white family and learning western ways will benefit a child. Many fail to see how connection to and reliance on cultural ways may help the child to be more resilient and productive."

All participants in the project identified that some children are physically abused and neglected in foster care. Failure to closely monitor foster families or maintain regular contact with foster children made children vulnerable to mistreatment and neglect. Even when abuse is identified, adequate treatment is not delivered and parents are usually not informed until the family has completed service plans. Survivors focused much of their time in the groups discussing how children were treated in placement, while providers spent more of their time talking about the decision leading up to removal and what parents needed to do to regain custody. Advocates focused most on the unfairness of a system that further punishes a mother who is also a victim and seeking services.

All participants recognized the need for children and adolescents involved in CPS to receive more services for the trauma or neglect they have experienced. Survivors spent much of their time identifying a number of opportunities for CPS to provide services to children where they currently do not. Providers recognized the need for more services to be delivered, especially immediately after children have been removed from their families. Everyone agreed that more time should be spent analyzing whether a particular foster placement would actually improve the circumstances for the child enough to justify separation from both parents.

All participants agree that a significant reason for many of the problems within CPS and other helping systems is that people working in systems do not understand the realities of the families with whom they work. While providers acknowledged poverty as a contributing factor to abuse and neglect, few of them talked about the importance of incorporating a family's economic realities into their work and reflecting this understanding in the development of service plans and expectations related to compliance. Survivors described in detail how differences in economic class between workers and families unfairly punishes parents. One worker described in an example the type of experiences that were raised again and again by the women in the focus groups. She shared:

*“I was working with an immigrant woman who had 7 children. Her caseworker repeatedly criticized her parenting because she did not ask them about their day while eating dinner or help them with their homework. She expected the older children to help with the younger children and perform many of the household chores. She was blamed for ‘enabling her husband to be unemployed’ by working two jobs to support the family and maintain the home mortgage. The caseworker criticized her for not going on welfare which would enable her to spend time at home with her children. He suggested that she change her serious tone and abrupt manner to a more soft and nurturing one. When she became visibly frustrated with the worker or tried to explain the importance of working to support her children and the time limits that came with that, she was labeled as ‘hostile, uncooperative and difficult.’ These characterizations were documented in case files and reports to the court. Rather than documenting her behaviors with the children or the fact that the children were doing well in the home, the worker documented her reactions to him. The*

*mother was working hard to figure out how to keep her family together while at the same time juggle the many concerns that come with living in a poor urban setting, but the caseworker could see only how her parenting fell short of the 'American Dream' family that he envisioned."*

The constant turnover in CPS was repeatedly mentioned as being highly problematic for parents, children and the system overall. Passing a family case from one worker to another allows those who are incompetent or lazy to avoid accountability and responsibility for their work or decisions, and allows people to act without regard for long-term consequences. Equally important, it minimizes the potential benefits made possible by effective workers. Participants, survey participants and stakeholders also shared concerns about the immense power held by individual workers and problems stemming from the inconsistency between workers and thus the unpredictability of systems. However, many of them also shared success stories resulting from survivors, advocates or providers implementing strategies that differed from traditional system procedures. The independence and wide-discretion that allows some workers to cause irreparable harm to families also allows well-trained and skilled workers to accomplish great things through case-by-case problem solving.

Everyone involved in the study repeatedly noted that an examination of CPS alone was too narrow a focus. Other systems and services as well as community networks were deemed just as instrumental in determining whether or not families received the necessary assistance. Everyone in the project identified that a criminal justice focus and policing approach that seems to be the focus of most systems is hurting rather than helping families. Providers confirmed survivors' impressions that CPS focused more on confirming reports of abuse through evidence collection than exploring a problem and addressing it with social services. With regret, everyone acknowledged that this policing philosophy has resulted in an increased vulnerability for parents attempting to access help for themselves or their children.

## 2. Areas of Difference

Survivors in the focus groups in Hawai'i talked about the frequency of sexual abuse in addition to neglect and physical abuse, whereas advocates and CPS providers discussed sexual abuse in the context of cases where it was the sole basis for intervention. Advocates recognized sexual abuse as a basis for CPS intervention and the difficulty mothers face in preventing contact between the children and an abusive father without adequate evidence of such abuse. More attention to identifying and responding to sexual abuse was a priority for survivors.

Survivors perceived child removal as CPS's first response, while CPS workers talked about it as a last resort when there were no other options. Advocates talked most about how CPS intervention often led to abusive fathers or paternal grandparents obtaining joint or sole custody of children in family law cases.

CPS stakeholders were the only participants in the project to reveal the difficulties they faced when implementing the time limitations imposed by federal law that required termination of parental rights once foster care placement had exceeded 15 months. One explanation is that mothers who had lost their children did not want to discuss losing their parental rights because it was too painful. Another explanation is that the only people who understand the federal requirements are those working within CPS. It may be that everyone outside the system attributes termination of parental rights to be determined by CPS' discretion rather than a condition imposed by federal regulations.

Survivors and two CPS workers voiced serious concern about the lack of attention to fathers, whereas most advocates and family law providers focused on accountability and punishment rather than rehabilitation. Advocates and a majority of the CPS and family law providers focused on ways to enforce separation from the father and limited contact between mother and father. Survivors and one CPS worker believe that a man who has a family, job and standing in the community has much more incentive to change his abusive behavior than a man who has lost everything. These participants agreed that the best way to reduce violence is to work with men to overcome the source of their abusive behavior and incorporate constructive and positive activities in their lives.

### **3. Consensus Recommendations for Change**

Perhaps the most encouraging aspects of combining information from each group is that while participants, survey respondents and stakeholders initially displayed frustration, disappointment and hopelessness about the prevalence of domestic violence and child abuse and the current response of systems, many also talked about people and strategies that do help families, and areas of change that would make significant improvements in the lives of families involved. Even though effective strategies may not be implemented system wide, they do exist and could be replicated on a wider scale. Of all the people involved in the study, the survivors had the greatest number of ideas of what things work and what changes could be made. They also seemed the most interested in actively pursuing activities to work toward change. Many providers identified areas of success and areas where change is necessary but appeared less hopeful about the system's readiness to change in any meaningful way.

Survivors, advocates and CPS and family law providers participating in the project shared the following recommendations:

- Treating people with respect is integral to the service
- More time needs to be spent connecting with and getting to know families
- Service should be more of a partnership
- Advocates and providers helping families need more support and resources
- CPS needs to shift from a policing approach to a social service approach
- Removal and foster care needs to be reviewed and revised

- All systems should use a strengths-based rather than needs-based model
- Innovative services that have been proven to work should be continued and expanded
- Poverty needs to be addressed more directly and incorporated into interventions
- Systems need to tap into community knowledge, resources and strengths



- Hospitals
- Military services/police judges
- Children’s therapists/evaluators
- Shelters and treatment facilities
- Churches
- Nonprofits
- Police
- Military Services
- Women from the same ethnic groups but who live in different areas

Recommendations are that everyone within these systems or organizations should be exposed to the information we have to share rather than relying on workers sharing information up or down through the chain of command. For example, if a presentation of the report were to be shared at a school, everyone from the principal to the janitor should be present. Parents should especially be offered an opportunity to see it.

The team also discussed what types of written products should come out of this project. The research team and the participants reviewed and provided feedback on the outline of this report, the data graphs included in the Insights, Opinions and Recommendations section, and the summary report (included in the appendix). Participants agreed that the summary report and data graphs should be translated into the native languages of the women who participated in the project. It would also be powerful to make presentations of the findings in different languages.

The team discussed a list of activities that some, many or all of us would be willing to participate in and work on. All of the participants who came to the follow up groups indicated that they would like to be involved in future efforts in some capacity. Many of the women would be willing to work 30 hours a week if they were paid a salary to do so. Many of the community researchers and research assistants also wanted to remain involved in some capacity, their time and resources being somewhat determined by what kind of funding was available. The project director and consultants on the team agreed to provide technical assistance to anyone who wanted to continue working in their communities and look for funding opportunities for the different activities listed below.

- Ongoing groups with participants
- Ongoing groups with community researchers
- Articles in English language and community media
- Articles in academic journals
- Community meeting to present findings/recommendations
- Present at conferences, local and national
- Agency/Provider meetings to present findings/recommendations
- Follow-up meetings with stakeholders
- Replicate study with larger groups and with other communities
- Publish and copyright training tool, ongoing training and/or training institute educating community about their rights
- Create “Know your rights” brochures in various languages
- Create National Center for Consultation on Domestic Violence and Children – in



- collaboration with CPS, school counselors, and community
- Hold a poetry reading in different communities, using all the poems.
  - Solicit an arts foundation to make a short video which includes photos or music representing each culture, women from each community reading the “I am Poems”, local resource information and ideas for creating change.
  - Peer led support group for mothers involved with CPS
  - Education and training of everyone on all the systems – ongoing; cross-trainings
  - Present the data at schools
  - Make systems more accountable to communities
  - Encourage more mentoring and less competition among women working in domestic violence and child abuse and neglect; develop more women leaders in the community
  - Create more jobs for people to work within their community
  - Work on initiatives that are developed, implemented and overseen by community members

## B. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FAMILIES

Participants identified several recommendations for mothers who are battered by their partners and family and community members who want to support families who are involved with CPS.

### Battered Mothers

- Do not hide from CPS if they are looking for you, it only makes things worse.
- Learn about your rights
- Find someone who understands domestic violence and your culture/language and ask her/him to advocate for you
- Be careful of how much you tell CPS, they sometimes use things against you later
- Be proactive with CPS, keep calling and asking for the services and help that you need. Call and ask to talk to a supervisor if necessary
- The easiest way to get out of the CPS system is to do everything they tell you

### Families

- Everyone in the community needs to play a more active role. People need to get involved and try to stop what is happening.
- Mutual trust and respect need to be a part of every relationship
- Knowing about your culture and feeling pride strengthens the family and all members in it. This requires a lot of time spent together and learning from elders in the family.
- Family, friends and community need to provide more support to families who are in trouble by helping them comply with service plans and making changes they need to make to be better parents
- More families need to be foster families. Community members who have the ability and resources to care for a child while their parents are getting help are more likely to understand the local customs and be interested in fostering the cultural identity of the child.
- Everyone needs to work together to reduce drug and alcohol use
- Each community would benefit from a peer-based parenting support group. Parenting programs should include awareness of the effects of emotional and physical abuse and alternative means of raising and disciplining children.
- Religious leaders need to learn more about abuse in families and improve the way they support victims of abuse.
- Women need to keep talking to each other about abuse they are experiencing.
- People need to learn how to communicate verbally, how to discuss problems by listening to each other rather than just fighting. The problem is that there is no discussion, just orders, grumbling or criticism. Silence, not talking things through, is what causes violence. People need to learn how to communicate with each other differently, less destructively and more caringly and lovingly.
- Parents need to learn more about their kids' needs. When a parent uses violence, the kids pick up violent and aggressive behavior. If parents took the time to learn better parenting, they would be closer to their kids and could help them when they were getting into trouble or having a hard time.



- Organize parenting cooperatives for parents who work to share childcare responsibilities when children are sick or on vacation.
- Organize parenting cooperatives for single mothers to share housekeeping/household maintenance responsibilities.
- Recruit community members to act as interpreters and bi-cultural case managers.
- Work more consistently with the family's entire support network.
- Fund and make referrals to substance abuse treatment programs that allow children
- Assist mothers to get support from domestic violence advocates

## **D. RECOMMENDATIONS TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ADVOCATES**

- Advocates need to find new strategies to accommodate reporting mandates. The survey results showed a significant amount of reporting is done by advocates working in shelters, service centers or health care settings – places where women who are abused by partners turn for help. Many women in the focus groups also talked about advocates blaming the reporting on the state requirements. Advocates should spend more time working with mothers to identifying acts that would remove the risk of abuse or neglect. If that is unsuccessful, they could work with the mother to make an accurate report, identify safe ways for CPS to make contact and then support the client as she goes through the process. Some advocates have devised ways to maintain client trust and salvage a relationship even after making a report. Advocates can be a significant help to clients by explaining reporting mandates ahead of time, informing clients what kind of report is being made before contacting CPS, explaining process and procedures, and potential time lines.
- Advocates can be helpful to a client already involved with CPS by helping her to establish productive ways of communicating and working with CPS, educating unresponsive or inexperienced case workers and advocating for more relevant or additional resources.
- Advocates need to be more responsive to clients who do not fit the common characteristics of the majority of their clients. Service providers from CPS, child protection and youth services voiced concern that shelters, support groups and other services often have rigid rules and will refuse services to women who “may make other women receiving services uncomfortable.” Service providers gave examples of domestic violence shelter workers encouraging women to move back to their home because they did not fit in, due to the smells of the foods they cooked, religious beliefs, or even speaking harshly and acting with abruptness and solemnity.
- Participants in the focus groups identified a number of parallels between the behaviors of CPS caseworkers and a growing number of domestic violence advocates. The similarities include:
  - Systematizing programs to such an extent that clients feel like most of their contact with the advocate is through paperwork and in court hearings. Improved organization and systematization increases efficiency but is not flexible enough to address the different needs of different people. What accommodates the system and works best from a services standpoint seems to trump what works for clients.

- Participants and advocates who were familiar with services delivered years ago remarked that there was a time when domestic violence advocates took the time to get to know their clients and offered them assistance far beyond helping with restraining order paperwork. Many observed that this change is due to the great administrative burden on advocates and pressure on them to increase the number of people served.
- Participants and stake holders also pointed to the “professionalization” of advocates as contributing factor to transition from empowering, client-centered advocacy to a directive, hierarchical and ‘efficient’ approach. People with college or graduate level degrees but no experience or training in domestic violence are hired to manage and direct people who have been doing direct services and attending trainings for years. There is a false assumption that people with higher education are somehow capable of catching up on the life and work experience of those without degrees. As a result, relational work with clients that is crucial to their getting what they need but is impossible to document is often secondary to work such as obtaining restraining orders, writing progress report or case notes, completing data reports for funding agencies and spending time improving relationships with other agencies.
- Lack of funding and reduced staff and resources is seen as another contributing factor. Reduced resources force managers to be stricter about the type of services delivered to clients. Several stories were shared about an advocate or CPS worker providing assistance to clients on their own time or without the knowledge of their supervisors because the client needed a service and considered outside the scope of the agency.
- The emotional labor of doing this type of work without adept support and supervision seems to be taking a toll. There seems to be a significant increase in turnover at domestic violence agencies and less and less support in the form of retreats, training and supervision. Many advocates, much like CPS workers, seem to be tired, frustrated and undervalued in their job.

## **E. RECOMMENDATIONS TO FUNDING AND MONITORING AGENCIES**

- Funding should be conditioned upon results that actually help the target community. Services addressing intimate partner abuse and child abuse and neglect, especially services directed at a particular ethnic or cultural group, need to more accountable to the families and communities affected by these services.
- Funding should be spent on interventions that address long-term solutions.
- Funding should include time to work with the community to be served to learn about what type and method of services would work best for that community. Funders should consider mandating that the funded programs hire a percentage of their staff from the community or ethnic group being served.
- Compensation and resource allocations (e.g., offices and equipment) should be allotted by quality and quantity of work. Programs should be encouraged to provide direct service providers with private offices to meet with clients, their own phone and internet access to communicate with other staff and agencies and support staff to help with administrative tasks. In many cases, only management and supervisors have access to these necessities.

- Upper- and middle-management should have direct service experience. Business, administrative or general social service experience is not enough to provide adequate supervision and support to direct service providers working in domestic violence and child abuse and neglect. Organizations providing services to and directly impacting low-income communities of color should prioritize hiring and retaining staff with multi-lingual speaking and writing skills, bi-cultural understanding, knowledge of and credibility within the community, and field experience with the same. These can be more crucial than having a bachelor's or graduate level degree.
- Preventative and restorative programs should be given equal priority to punitive and crisis intervention programs.
- While money should be given to new and innovative programs, money should also be given to innovative programs that are no longer new but have a proven track record. A common problem identified is that programs lose funding just about the time they have succeeded and the community has begun to rely on it. This forces agencies to unnecessarily invent different successful programs or increase their scope of service without additional staff. One way to do this is to provide programs with support in how to do fundraising or become profit generating.
- Funding should include money for training, supervision, resources, support/appreciation, reasonable work hours and manageable workloads. Funding should also be available to accommodate medical, family or maternity leave. Funding should also include time to attend meetings with other agencies for the purposes of cross-training and collaboration, and to attend community meetings.
- Funding agencies should not impose reporting requirements that take workers away from their work and should come up with measures that more accurately measure efficiency. Sometimes the most important work cannot be tallied, quantified or described in forms and numbers reporting. Perhaps feedback from clients would be a useful alternative.
- There should be more research done on the causes of violence to create more specific solutions to address these causes
- Programs that work to increase community awareness and investment in this issue should be funded despite their looking quite different from other funded programs. Community members, once organized and mobilized, are more likely to effect prevention and intervention through community support and changing social norms.

