

FAMILY VIOLENCE INTERVENTION PROGRAM



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OVERVIEW OF PROGRAM:

The Lucas County Juvenile Court Family Violence Intervention Program (**FVIP**) provides support, intervention and education to families, youth and the community aimed at reducing violence and aggression in the home.

Youth perpetrated Domestic Violence (DV) is among the top delinquency charges filed against youth in Lucas County. Unlike in adult court, where DV charges involve intimate partner violence, these cases usually involve a youth who is charged for violence or threats against a family member, usually a parent or guardian. These cases are unique from other delinquency matters which occur outside of the home because in these cases, the victim and perpetrator not only live together, but the victim (parent/guardian) is legally responsible to care for the perpetrator. As a result, it is important to provide interventions for the whole family, not just the youth.

FVIP provides support and interventions to every family after a youth has been charged with Domestic Violence (DV) or related offense such as, criminal damaging, menacing, disorderly conduct, etc. The FVIP team also receives referrals arising out of unruly charges from the Assessment Center, Misdemeanor Services and Probation. FVIP is committed to decreasing the incidence of family violence by developing family-specific interventions that promote community and family safety, victim restoration and creating healthy relationships through education, skill building, family support and conflict resolution.

The Court has been utilizing the Step-up Curriculum for the last fifteen years. It is a nationally recognized program designed specifically to address adolescent family violence. It is a strength-based educational program, used to create individualized safety plans and teach communication skills to build healthy and respectful family relationships. Family Violence Counselor, Hans Giller offers individual Step Up sessions to any interested families.

The Family Violence Intervention Team and Assessment Center staff provide the following crisis management, support and service referrals to the **youth, parents and family members**:

- ♦ Contacts the parent to obtain background information on all underlying issues which may have led to the youth's violent and/or aggressive behaviors.
- ♦ Meets with youth to establish trusting relationship and complete the following screening tools:
 - Global Appraisal of Individual Needs (GAIN): an evidenced-based screener to determine mental health and substance abuse needs of youth.
 - OYAS Diversion tool to determine the youth's risk to the community.
 - Public health screening instrument to determine if the family's basic needs are being met (ie. food, housing or medical).
- ♦ Shows Family Safety Video (a whiteboard animation video created by the FVIP team in collaboration with The Draw Store in 2016) which teaches families how to resolve conflicts peacefully.

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- ◆ Completes Individualized Safety Plan based on the information learned in the video.
- ◆ Screens the parent and youth for participation in a Family Conflict Mediation. This is an opportunity for the youth and parent to sit down together, with a neutral third party, and safely discuss the underlying issues which led to the youth's aggression, review the individualized safety plan and develop a plan of action to improve safety in the home.
- ◆ Accompanies families and youth to every court hearing and administers a safety screening tool at each hearing screening to assess safety concerns and monitor the youth's behaviors.
- ◆ Makes recommendations to the Magistrate or Judge regarding detention, compliance with the safety plan and services, as needed to address safety in the home.
- ◆ Offers families the opportunity to participate in Step up program individual sessions with family counselor, Hans Giller, or in group sessions with community partner, Sofia Center.
- ◆ Refers parents and youth to a wide variety of local community services, based on the needs and interests of the family.
- ◆ Partners with Zepf Center's Safety Net Shelter to offer parents a short-term (3-5 day) respite until safety is restored and services are in place. FVIP staff transports youth to and from Safety Net for court hearings and mediation.
- ◆ Collaborates with families and community service providers such as Ohio Rise, Family Council's Inter Resource Team, Lucas County Children Services, Department of Developmental Disabilities, Safety Net Shelter, local human trafficking services and other local mental health agencies, by setting up and attending team meetings.
- ◆ Promotes and refers youth to prosocial activities, such as classes at the Toledo Art Museum, sports activities, voice lessons, yoga, and music programs as well as court opportunities, such as the bike program at Toledo Bikes.
- ◆ Offers parents and youth the opportunity to participate in the free Crafting to Calm program. This innovative program offers individualized family centered wellness through the arts. Local textile artist and designer, Michelle Atkinson, teaches interested FVIP families a new skill, such as knitting, crocheting or painting which helps with self-calming and confidence building. Additionally, it is an opportunity for families in crisis to spend to spend conflict-free time together, building and restoring family relationships.

HIGHLIGHTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2023:

The Team worked with 249 new families with youth who were either charged with a family violence offense and/or exhibited abusive behaviors in the home.

- ◆ 225 (90% of the total DV charges filed in 2023) were handled **officially** and the youth appeared before a Magistrate or Judge. Many of these cases were dismissed at later court proceedings with court orders to follow through with the safety plan and community services.
- ◆ Of the 225 official cases only 3 youth (1.3%) were placed on further court supervision (Probation or Misdemeanor Services) as a result of the DV charge.

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- ♦ 23 (10% of **unofficial** DV complaints) in 2023 were diverted from the court system altogether and the FVIP team provided safety planning and follow up support.

The Team attended over 460 court hearings—to provide support to parents, continually evaluate safety, assess the youth’s progress and needs, request court orders and make referrals for the Step-Up Program, and other community services.

Family Violence counselor, Hans Giller, held 107 individual Step up sessions to teach and reinforce healthy communication skills within the family.

REFORM AND IMPROVEMENTS IMPLEMENTED IN 2023:

IDENTIFYING MORE FAMILY VIOLENCE CASES

In an effort to identify additional youth who may benefit from FVIP supportive services, Community Detention Manager, Mary Niederhauser, now reviews every complaint filed for youth prior to their detention hearing. If the complaint alleges any family violence issues, she notifies the FVIP team to attend the hearing and offer safety planning and services. As a result of this change, more family violence cases are now being identified and referred to FVIP.

TEEN DATING VIOLENCE

Through this process, there have also been more teen dating violence cases identified. These cases can come in under a variety of delinquency charges, such as telephone harassment, menacing, disorderly conduct, assault, trespass.

FVIP created a teen dating violence safety plan several years ago, but several additional procedures and programs have been implemented in 2023. Hans Giller is now providing a one-time healthy dating education class for every youth either adjudicated on a teen dating violence charge or referred to FVIP for this purpose. Probation officers have referred youth who are in unhealthy intimate relationships for this intervention, even if they haven’t been charged with teen dating violence.

FVIP has also created a new written protocol on how to address teen dating violence with input from the Juvenile Court’s Public Defenders and Prosecutors. Because intimate partner violence is so different that family violence and safety of the victim is paramount, it is not appropriate for victims and perpetrators to participate in services together. The prosecutor’s office (victim’s advocate) contacts and works directly with the victims of intimate partner violence in compliance with Marsy’s Law. FVIP then works with the teen perpetrator and parent to assist with safety planning, service referrals and education.

CRAFTING TO CALM FUNDING

Longer-term funding for Crafting to Calm has now been secured through the Department of Youth Services. This will ensure that more FVIP families can benefit from this program.■