



A FORUM FOR PRACTITIONERS IN THE FIELDS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, CHILD WELFARE AND FAMILY LAW

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FROM THE FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION FUND

Welcome to the first issue of *Policy Talks*! The Family Violence Prevention Fund developed this new publication, with generous support from the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, to amplify the voices of the many people who are working to stop family violence. In particular, we hope that *Policy Talks* will provide information and explore issues that help the child welfare, domestic violence and legal communities work in concert on behalf of battered mothers and their children.

We join the Family Violence Department of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, the National Greenbook Policy Advisory Committee, the National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators, the Child Welfare League of America, the Massachusetts Department of Social Services Domestic Violence Unit, the domestic violence resource centers, and many others in doing this difficult but important work. We hope this newsletter will spark ideas and promote solutions that bring our communities together and help us realize our shared goal to better serve families that are experiencing violence.

Policy Talks will be distributed six times per year. Each issue will contain news stories, information on new resources, and short versions of papers exploring relevant issues. The full text of all the papers published in *Policy Talks* will be available on the Family Violence Prevention Fund's web site, www.endabuse.org, on the Children's Program section.

We welcome your input, story ideas and papers to include in future issues. Please feel free to contact *Policy Talks* Editor Lisa Lederer at 202/371-1999 with ideas. If you know of others who should receive this newsletter, please let Lisa know that too.

Thank you!

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Managing Director, Family Violence Prevention Fund



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NEW YORK CITY LAWSUIT RESOLVED

Attorneys and advocates around the country are studying Federal Judge Jack B. Weinstein's recent ruling in *Nicholson v. Scoppetta*. Judge Weinstein ruled on December 21 that New York City's Administration for Children's Services (ACS) is violating the constitutional rights of mothers and their children by removing children from mothers simply because the mothers are victims of domestic violence. Already the case is leading to policy changes in New York City. It could have sweeping implications for battered women and their children across the country.

Judge Weinstein's injunction is similar to a draft he circulated for comment in November. It orders ACS to stop its policy of separating battered women from their children. Although it acknowledges improvements in ACS policies, it orders ACS to adopt new policies and practices to further improve its response to families experiencing domestic violence. The federal class action lawsuit was brought against ACS by a group of battered women who claimed that ACS took their children away simply because the women were victims of domestic violence.

Judge Weinstein is expected to issue an "extensive explanatory" memo sometime soon to further clarify his decision.

"The lawsuit was a success because of the level of attention it brought to domestic violence and child welfare issues. It promoted a more sophisticated understanding of how children are affected by domestic violence," said Jill Zuccardy of Sanctuary for Families, one of the attorneys who represented the class of battered women in the case. "During the trial, rather than just challenging existing practices, we promoted best practices. Expert witnesses on both sides shared the opinion that holding

a mother liable for exposing her child to violence is not an effective response. The focus needs to shift to the batterer and away from the victim."

"The women who brought this lawsuit had tremendous courage," said Pamela Whitney, Director of Domestic Violence and Family Support Services for the Massachusetts Department of Social Services. "The challenge is to do this work in a way that is thoughtful, not punishing to battered women, and that still protects children. I believe the injunction will have far-reaching implications. In Massachusetts, we have a ten-year history of doing this work. We know that it is possible for child protective services agencies to approach battered mothers in partnership with domestic violence agencies. But the kind of lasting change that is needed takes time."

Preliminary Injunction

The case addresses an issue that child welfare and domestic violence advocates across the country are facing – how to work together more effectively to help families experiencing violence. The New York City case is the first of its kind. But Zuccardy says that it has drawn a response from advocates around the country. Representatives from battered women's advocacy groups, child welfare agencies and other organizations have contacted Zuccardy for information about the case and for copies of Judge Weinstein's injunction.

Judge Weinstein issued the injunction to ensure that "battered mothers who are fit to retain custody of their children do not face prosecution or the removal of their children solely because the mothers are battered." The injunction focuses on the ACS practice of removing children from mothers who are victims of domestic violence for the reason that the mothers 'engaged in' domestic violence by being victims and allowing their children to witness the abuse. The

injunction finds the practice unconstitutional. “Practices and policies of ACS violate the constitutional rights of both mothers and children...parents and children have a constitutional right not to be separated by the government unless the parent is unfit to care for the child...the evidence to date overwhelmingly demonstrates that the defendants have violated these constitutional rights,” it states.

The injunction holds that the “government may not penalize a mother, not otherwise unfit, who is battered by her partner, by separating her from her children; nor may children be separated from the mother, in effect visiting upon them the sins of their mother’s batterer.”

It orders ACS to stop immediately the policy of removing children from their mothers without a court order “solely because the mother is the victim of domestic violence except in cases where the child is in such imminent danger.” The injunction also includes detailed and specific instructions for ACS to improve its response to families experiencing domestic violence. Among other things, the injunction calls on ACS to:

- Make “every reasonable effort” to separate a batterer from his victim and her children, and provide them with “reasonably adequate protection.” This includes helping the family find a shelter or other safe haven and obtain a protective order against the batterer.
- Inform mothers of their rights and those of their children before taking any action to separate children from mothers who are victims of abuse. This includes developing a pamphlet explaining these rights in English and Spanish.
- Implement a training and supervision program to inform ACS employees and contractors of the provisions in the

injunction and prepare them to implement the changes it outlines.

- Include a domestic violence specialist in each clinical consultant team it establishes.
- Establish a five person Review Committee to “assist in the enforcement of and compliance with” the terms of the injunction. The Committee will include representatives from New York City and state, and from plaintiff groups in the lawsuit.
- Report to the court once a month beginning next month. Copies of the reports will be distributed to parties in the lawsuit, and others.

Engaging in Domestic Violence

Before the trial, in some cases, ACS policy recommended removing children from homes where domestic violence was present and charging battered women with engaging in domestic violence if their children witnessed or experienced violence as well. The preliminary injunction specifically targets this policy, ordering the agency to “refrain from alleging against the mother as a grounds for finding of abuse or neglect” that a mother has been a victim of abuse or has “engaged” in domestic violence.

During the trial, through testimony and evidence, the plaintiffs presented the stories of 15 women who had their children removed by ACS because they had allegedly “engaged in domestic violence.”

One plaintiff, Sharwline Nicholson, had her two young daughters taken from her after the father of one of her daughters attacked her. Although this was reportedly the first violent incident, and neither of Nicholson’s children witnessed the attack, *Continued on page seven...*

POLICY PAPER

Every issue of Policy Talks features one to three short versions of policy papers exploring relevant issues. The papers are written by experts in the child welfare, domestic violence and legal communities. The full text of all the papers published in Policy Talks will be available on the Family Violence Prevention Fund's web site, www.endabuse.org, in the Children's Program section. If you would like to submit a policy paper for consideration of publication in Policy Talks, contact editor Lisa Lederer via email: policytalks@prsolutionsdc.com.

SHOULD CHILDHOOD EXPOSURE TO ADULT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE BE DEFINED AS CHILD MALTREATMENT UNDER THE LAW?

By Jeffrey L. Edleson, Ph.D.
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This article is based on a manuscript of the same title that has been accepted for publication. The complete draft is temporarily available online at <http://www.mincava.umn.edu/link>.

A growing body of research has revealed that many children are affected by exposure to adult domestic violence. A heated national debate is emerging around the question of whether children exposed to such violence should be defined as maltreated. At least one state changed its laws to this effect, only to repeal those changes nine months later. The fact is, however, that many child protection agencies already treat childhood exposure to domestic violence as a form of maltreatment that should be reported, investigated and result in state intervention.

Childhood exposure to adult domestic violence should not automatically be defined as maltreatment under the law. While we know that exposure to domestic violence is associated with behavioral, emotional and cognitive problems among children that sometimes lasts into early adulthood, we also know that children's experiences are diverse in the following ways.

- The level of domestic violence is known to vary greatly among families. The 1985 National Family Violence Survey (Straus & Gelles, 1990) revealed that an estimated 8.7 million American couples (16.1 percent) annually experienced at least one incident of domestic violence. It also found, however, that 3.4 million American couples (6.3 percent) annually experienced violence that was more severe and had a higher risk of causing injury.
- Children experience a wide range of exposures to violence at home and attach an equally wide range of meanings to those experiences (Peled, 1998). Edleson, Mbilinyi, Beeman and Hagemester (2000) found that 45 percent of the 114 mothers they anonymously interviewed reported that their children came into the room where abuse was occurring at least *occasionally*, while 18 percent reported that their children *frequently* came into the room and 23 percent reported their children *never* came into the room.

- The presence or absence of risk and protective factors varies. Risk factors that co-occur with domestic violence might include parental substance abuse, presence of weapons in the home, both maternal and male caregiver mental health issues, and other forms of neglect. Protective factors include a protective mother, sibling or significant other in the child's life and the child's own ability to cope with stress.
- The risk of harm resulting from exposure may also vary from child to child. Both the degree to which a child is involved in violent events and the documented level of child maltreatment and emotional harm are important factors to consider.

This range of experience results in some children being severely affected by their experiences and others showing no greater problems than comparison children with no violence exposure. For example, a study of 58 children living in a shelter and recently exposed to domestic violence found great variability in problem symptoms (Hughes & Luke, 1998). More than half the children in the study were classified as either "doing well" (n=15) or "hanging in there" (n=21). Children "hanging in there" were found to exhibit average levels of problems and of self-esteem and some mild anxiety symptoms. The remaining children in the study did show problems: nine showed "high behavior problems," another nine "high general distress" and four were labeled "depressed kids." In a more recent study, Grych et al. (2000) found that of 228 shelter resident children in the study, 71 exhibited no problems, another 41 showed only mild distress symptoms, 47 exhibited externalized problems and 70 were classified as multi-problem.

One could argue that the impact of most forms of child maltreatment vary but that we still include them in mandatory reporting rules so that a full child protection screening and investigation might be conducted. I would argue, however, that we also exclude other forms of violence and exposure known to affect children from such screening and investigation. For instance, not all physical hitting of children is currently defined as child abuse. Straus (1994) has aptly described how spanking and other forms of corporal punishment of children are not, in most cases, defined as child maltreatment in our culture. It is also true that substance abuse by a caregiver will not be defined as maltreatment unless it is shown to present a significant risk to a child, for example, in the case of prenatal exposure (Chasnoff & Lowder, 1999).

Ideally, a child protection agency's interventions should lead to enhanced child safety and family strengths when there is a reported concern about a child. In reality, our child protection systems are given so few public resources that they will most often only respond to the cases of children at the greatest risk. This leaves most children – including those exposed to adult domestic violence – and their families the subject of screening and investigation by child protection systems but without the provision of many subsequent services. Nationally, estimates are that 40 to 60 percent of families in which maltreatment is substantiated receive no further services (English, 1998).

This is not an "either/or" debate with simple answers. There is a continuum of child and family experiences and we should meet these experiences with a continuum of responses. *Many* children and their families should not be referred for forensic child protection investigations and

interventions that carry the possibility of legal action against the parents. Rather, they should be offered voluntary, community-based assessments and services, for which some models already exist in domestic violence agencies and other settings. *Some* children exposed to adult domestic violence are at great risk for further harm and should be referred to the child protection system for assessment and intervention with their families. Figuring out how to sort out these differing experiences and offer the most appropriate responses is the challenge before us.

Full Document

Edleson, J.L. (2001). Should childhood exposure to adult domestic violence be defined as child maltreatment under the law? Manuscript accepted for publication. St. Paul, MN: University of Minnesota School of Social Work. Temporarily available on the World Wide Web at <http://www.mincava.umn.edu/link>.

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Continued from page three...

ACS placed the children in foster care.

Another plaintiff, Ekaete Udoh, was victimized by her abusive husband for years, although she sought help from city services. After her husband hit one of their children, Udoh's children were taken from her and placed in foster care. ACS charged Udoh with "engaging in domestic violence," although she was a victim herself.

There was a dispute during the trial over how many times ACS has removed a child because the mother was the victim of domestic violence, reports the *New York Law Journal*. Lawyers for the plaintiffs claim that removal of children in these cases occurs hundreds of times a year. But, former ACS Commissioner Nicholas Scoppetta testified that, in the vast majority of cases, other factors such as a mother's substance abuse or psychiatric problems led to removal of a child from the home. However, Judge Weinstein's injunction concludes, "ACS has engaged in a practice of removing children of battered mothers for the reason that mothers 'engaged in' domestic violence by being victims of such violence."

ACS Improves Its Policy

During the course of the trial, ACS continued to improve its response to domestic violence. In July, the agency developed drafts of a new Domestic Violence Protocol and Casework Practice Guide. In August, it officially changed its policy of charging battered women with "engaging in domestic violence." ACS issued an internal memo stating that the term would no longer be used. However, some battered women's advocates charge that ACS staff members have not adhered to the new policy.

The Judge told former Commissioner Scoppetta that he recognized the improvements in agency policy with regard

to domestic violence, but still found that ACS had acted improperly in removing some children from their homes. "The federal court intercedes with regret," the injunction states. "It recognizes the enormous strides the State and City of New York have made in ameliorating and addressing problems of domestic violence...After this suit was commenced...ACS began to attempt remediation of the grave deprivations and threats of deprivations of plaintiffs' constitutional violations. These initial moves by ACS, while praiseworthy, have not yet cured the constitutional violations."

The injunction grants ACS a six-month stay to give the agency sufficient time to adjust its practices to comply with the Judge's decision, as well as "the opportunity to implement further changes that secure and protect plaintiffs' constitutional rights without unnecessary interference by the court." ACS has appealed the Judge's decision.

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NEW GUIDELINES ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND CHILD MALTREATMENT AVAILABLE

The National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators (NAPCWA), an affiliate of the American Public Human Services Association, has developed an important new tool to help child welfare agencies meet the needs of families and children affected by domestic violence and child maltreatment. *Guidelines for Public Child Welfare Agencies Serving Children and Families Experiencing Domestic Violence* addresses the nexus between domestic violence and child abuse. It provides a series of recommendations and best practices that child welfare agencies across the country can adapt and utilize.

Guidelines provides a conceptual framework for developing model policies, protocols, practices and programs to increase collaboration among child protective services agencies, domestic violence advocates, juvenile and family courts, and communities to help families experiencing abuse. Each section of the publication includes information and tips about how to respond to domestic violence and child maltreatment; child welfare agencies can integrate the material into existing policies.

NAPCWA is distributing *Guidelines* nationwide to help improve child welfare agencies' response to domestic violence and child abuse. The first sections address the importance of collaborative efforts between child welfare agencies and domestic violence service providers. Although child abuse and domestic violence often co-exist within the same families, the systems traditionally have not worked together. *Guidelines* includes tips on how public child welfare agencies can better meet the needs of both children and women who face abuse at home. This includes forming partnerships with domestic violence advocates and other community service providers, training child protective service workers on the dynamics of domestic violence and the needs of battered women, and developing effective identification and intervention strategies for adult and child victims of violence.

To improve child protection agencies' response to domestic violence, *Guidelines* includes 18 policy and practice recommendations. These include:

- **Batterer Accountability** – Holding batterers accountable for their abusive behavior by monitoring court rulings and documenting abusive or threatening behavior towards their children, wives or child protective

service workers.

- **Cross-System Collaboration** – Developing multidisciplinary teams to assist families experiencing multiple issues such as domestic violence, substance abuse, poverty and child maltreatment.
- **Cultural Diversity** – Developing and promoting policies, programs, practices and training that meet the needs of culturally diverse populations and communities.
- **Domestic Violence Representation** – Incorporating domestic violence advocates and specialists in decision-making groups that affect outcomes for children and families.
- **Intake/Screening** – Screening for domestic violence during child protection intake and assessment, and tracking the cases where domestic violence is present.
- **Out-of-Home Placement** – Screening guardians, kin, and foster and adoptive parents for domestic violence to ensure that children are not placed into abusive situations.
- **Policy Review** – Examining current policies to identify, engage and hold batterers accountable and increase safety for adult victims and children.
- **Specialized Programs for Child Witnesses** – Assessing the impact of witnessing domestic violence on children and developing programs and services to meet the needs of child witnesses.

- **Supports for Workers –**
Implementing support systems for child welfare workers to allow them to safely intervene in domestic violence cases, and adopting human resource policies to help workers who may be victims of domestic violence.

The recommendations and other information in *Guidelines* are not mandatory for child welfare agencies, but NAPCWA hopes agencies will integrate them into existing mandates. With the policies in place, “the outcomes for children exposed to domestic violence can improve,” states *Guidelines*. Adult and child victims will have access to culturally competent services, batterers will be held accountable for their behavior, and victims of domestic violence can “experience child protective services intervention in a manner that is non-blaming and supportive.”

Guidelines were developed by NAPCWA’s Domestic Violence Workgroup in collaboration with the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) and the Family Violence Prevention Fund. The publication is based on recommendations contained in NCJFCJ’s publication, *Effective Intervention in Domestic Violence and Child Maltreatment Cases: Guidelines for Policy and Practice*, as well as information provided by public child welfare agency directors, domestic violence advocates, child advocates, legal representatives and others. Financial support for *Guidelines* was provided by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and the Center for the Study of Social Policy.

Guidelines for Public Child Welfare Agencies Serving Children and Families Experiencing Domestic Violence is available on the American Public Human Services Association’s web site, www.aphsa.org.

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NEW DIALOGUES AMONG BATTERED WOMEN’S ADVOCATES

Experts are learning more and more about the ways that the child protection and domestic violence systems interface, and how women are affected by conflicting policies and practices. The Family Violence Prevention Fund (FVPPF) has launched a new project to build leadership in the domestic violence community on behalf of battered women who are involved in the child welfare system or are at risk for becoming involved. The project will address three challenges:

- 1) How can domestic violence activists become involved with the child welfare system? Without that involvement, many battered women and children (who are increasingly visible in the system) have few options for enhanced advocacy.
- 2) How can we increase community involvement to prevent families facing violence from becoming unnecessarily involved with the child welfare system? Some states and communities are designing measures to address family violence that may, in the end, unnecessarily separate children from their families and communities.
- 3) How can we better understand and address the overrepresentation of children of color in the child protection system? Children of color are disproportionately represented in the system, and this is consistent across rates of reporting and substantiations; length of time protective cases stay open; rates of removal; and length of time spent in the foster care system.

With support from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the FVFPF is initiating several projects to create new dialogues in the domestic violence community. The goals are deeper understanding of women's diverse experiences, enhanced advocacy, and better policies for battered women and children who are or may be involved with the child welfare system.

One project, led by INCITE!, will increase dialogue among women of color activists and organizers to create strategies that prevent more battered women and their children from becoming involved with the child welfare system. INCITE! convened an Activist Institute on Child Welfare and Violence Against Women in San Francisco last month. A follow-up dialogue will take place at the Color of Violence II Conference in Chicago in March.

A second project will seek to increase dialogue among state coalitions against domestic violence and the Women of Color Leadership Network to help battered women and their children who are currently involved in the child welfare system.

A third project will increase dialogue among the Asian & Pacific Islander Institute, the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community and the National Latino Alliance for the Elimination of Domestic Violence (Alianza) to explore and document practice and policy issues that will help battered women who are involved in the child welfare system.

Another project, under the leadership of the National Network on Behalf of Battered Immigrant Women, will convene focus groups of women to explore their experiences and document what advocates could do to improve services and advocacy.

For information on these projects, contact Lonna Davis at the Family Violence Prevention Fund Boston Office, 617/522-2770.

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IN THE NEWS...

AR – A ten-year-old boy who stabbed a man abusing his mother will not be charged in the incident, reports the *Associated Press*. The Crawford County Sheriff's Office announced in November that it is not filing charges against the boy who stabbed his mother's boyfriend, Russell Weaver, in the back with a five-inch steak knife. The incident took place when Weaver was attacking the boy's mother, who is not named in the *AP* report. The boy's eleven-year-old sister ran to a nearby house and asked neighbors to call the police, and the boy threatened to stab Weaver if he did not stop assaulting the boy's mother. Weaver kicked the boy twice before being stabbed. Deputy Prosecuting Attorney Marc McCune says he will file felony charges of second-degree domestic battery and first-degree "terroristic threatening" against Weaver, reports the *AP*.

AZ – Elvira Charley, a member of the Navajo Nation, will face trial in Phoenix for the murders of three of her six children. At a pre-trial hearing, Charley's attorney, John Trebon, claimed that his client has no recollection of shooting her children, according to the *Navajo-Hopi Observer-News*. During the trial, Trebon outlined the ten years of domestic abuse Charley faced at the hands of her now estranged husband, Tommy Charley. At one point, Charley spent more than a month in a domestic violence shelter, according to Trebon.

DC – The District's Domestic Violence Intake Center is the subject of controversy. Battered women's advocates claim that victims of domestic violence who turn to the Center for support risk having their children taken away from them, according to the *Washington Post*. The Center provides battered women with free legal, medical and

other emergency services, including counseling. But city policy requires city-employed counselors at the Center to report allegations of child abuse to the city's child welfare agency. The reports lead to investigations by child protection authorities. The city does not track what happens to the cases after they are reported to child welfare, but Deputy Mayor for Children, Youth and Families Carolyn Graham tells the *Post* that the city only removes children from women who have "drug or other problems" that prevent them from taking steps to keep their children safe. Battered women's advocates claim that the reporting policy places battered women in danger of losing their children and will deter them from seeking the help they need.

FL – The grant for a project of the Miami-Dade Dependency Court that examines the impact of domestic violence on the child maltreatment cases that come to court is running out, reports the *Miami Herald*. The program, started in 1997 and funded by a U.S. Department of Justice Violence Against Women grant, was designed by Miami-Dade Juvenile Court Administrative Judge Cindy Lederman. It screens women involved in the juvenile court system for domestic violence and provides victims with counseling and other services and support.

FL – Child abuse investigations in the state increased by 140 cases last September because prosecutors are now required to refer all domestic violence cases where children are involved to the state, reports the *Palm Beach Post*. Under the new system, the state's Department of Children and Families (DCF) must investigate whether children from families involved in domestic violence cases witnessed the violence or were abused themselves. In total, 800 cases of child abuse were reported in September, and officials report the DCF now has "too

many cases to handle," according to the *Post*.

MA – This fall, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts hosted screenings of *Small Justice: Little Justice in America's Family Courts*. The documentary by Garland Waller explores the family court system and the trouble many battered women and their children face when they are involved in the system. The documentary follows the life of child advocate Diane Hofheimer and three of her clients – battered women who lost custody of their children to their husbands who also abused the children. More information on the documentary is available online at www.smalljustice.com.

OR – Safe Spaces, a free program run by the Volunteers of America (VAO) Family Center, provides counseling and other services to children who witness domestic violence. The program, started two-and-a-half years ago, has groups for children aged four to nine and will develop groups for pre-teens and teens, reports the *Oregonian*. In the groups, children express their feelings and interact with other children who have witnessed domestic violence. Male and female facilitators work with the groups to provide the children with a good example of how the sexes can relate to one another. Safe Spaces has been successful helping children deal with the trauma of witnessing domestic violence, but the program is having trouble identifying enough children to participate in the groups, according to the *Oregonian*.

WA – District Court Judge Edward Shea ruled that Kristi Tsarbopoulos will retain legal custody of her three children and that the children will not be returned to Greece to live with their father, Anthony Tsarbopoulos. The Judge's decision overturns a lesser court's ruling that ordered

the children to return to Greece. The Tsarbopouloses moved to Greece in 1997, and Kristi Tsarbopoulos returned to America with her children and filed for divorce from her husband last year. Anthony Tsarbopoulos then sought legal action under the Hague Convention to keep his children with him in Greece. During the ensuing trial, Kristi Tsarbopoulos accused her husband of committing domestic violence and child abuse. Anthony Tsarbopoulos denied the allegations, but Judge Shea ruled that the children would be “subjected to intolerable conditions or grave danger of physical and psychological harm” if they returned to Greece, reports the *Spokesman-Review*. Anthony Tsarbopoulos is expected to appeal the ruling.

NATIONAL -- The National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators (NAPCWA) has received funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ (HHS) Administration for Children and Families to host a fifth Regional Leadership Forum on Improving Outcomes for Children and Families Affected by Domestic Violence and Child Maltreatment. The HHS funding will supplement funding NAPCWA received from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation to host four Regional Leadership Forums. The Forums bring together state-level leaders from the juvenile court system and the fields of domestic violence and child maltreatment to discuss developing collaborative efforts to respond more effectively to families experiencing violence. Forum participants are invited to attend, and include representatives from state courts and directors of domestic violence coalitions and state child welfare programs. The first Forum was held in Atlanta in August; the second Forum was held in Albuquerque in January; and the

subsequent three Forums will be held in Seattle, Philadelphia and Chicago. For more information about the Forums, contact NAPCWA Domestic Violence Project Coordinator Dena Huff via phone: 202/682-0100 ext. 293, or via email: dhuff@aphsa.org.

NATIONAL – The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) awarded a total of \$1.3 million in funding for the surveillance of child maltreatment to the health departments in five states: California, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri and Rhode Island. The funding is for studies of mortality and morbidity rates during 2000 and/or 2001 for children up to the age of nine-years-old. The studies will compare and test approaches for monitoring abuse, with the goal of developing a practical and effective surveillance system for child maltreatment that can be implemented on the state level. The awards were made at the end of September, 2001, and include funding for a 12-month budget period within a three year project period.

NATIONAL – The U.S. Department of Justice’s Violence Against Women Office (VAWO) has allocated \$15 million dollars to the new Safe Havens for Children Pilot Program. The program helps to create safe places for visitation and custody exchange in cases of domestic violence, child abuse, sexual assault or stalking. VAWO is expected to release a solicitation shortly. Eligible applicants include states, units of local governments and Indian tribal governments that plan to contract with nonprofit organizations to provide the “safe havens.” More information about the program and VAWO’s application process is available online at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/vawo.