

# RADAR

FOR PEDIATRICS: A DOMESTIC VIOLENCE INTERVENTION

## **R = ROUTINELY SCREEN MOTHERS FOR ABUSE**

Intervening on behalf of battered women is an active form of preventing child abuse. Victims of violence are very likely to disclose abuse to a health care provider, but only if they are asked about it. **Always interview the parent alone if the child is over two years old.**

## **A = ARE YOU BEING HURT?**

Ask questions routinely in the course of taking a social history in the context of safety and discipline. "The safety of moms can affect the health and safety of children, so I want to ask you some personal questions." "Because violence is common in so many women's lives, I've begun to ask about it routinely:" "Is there anyone who has physically or sexually hurt you or frightened you?" "Have you ever been hit, kicked, or punched by your partner?" "I notice you have a number of bruises; did someone do this to you?"

**IF THE MOTHER ANSWERS "YES", SEE OTHER SIDE FOR RESPONSES AND CONTINUE WITH THE FOLLOWING STEPS:**

## **D = DOCUMENT YOUR FINDINGS**

Document in the pediatric chart that RADAR screening was done. Indicate response as "+", "-", or "suspected." Ask Mom if it is safe to document in chart. If yes, use statements such as "the child's mother states she was..." With her permission, include the name of the assailant in your record. "She says her boyfriend, John Smith, struck her..." Note any obvious injuries to the mother. Offer her help in arranging for appropriate medical services.

## **A = ASSESS SAFETY OF MOTHER AND CHILDREN**

Before she leaves the medical setting, find out if it is safe for her and her children to go home. Has there been an increase in frequency or severity of violence? Have there been threats of homicide or suicide? Is there a gun or other weapon present? Have there been threats to children or pets? Are the children currently being abused or in immediate danger?

## **R = RESPOND, REVIEW OPTIONS & REFER**

Know in-house and local resources for referral. **If the patient is in imminent danger**, find out if there is someone with whom she can stay. Does she need immediate access to a shelter? Offer her the opportunity to use a private phone. If she does not need immediate help, offer information about hotlines and resources in the community (see other side). Offer to write down phone numbers if it is unsafe to take information. Remember that it may be dangerous for her to have these in her possession. Discuss the effects of family violence on children. Do the children need a referral? **Make a follow-up appointment to see her and her children and document the options discussed.**

## IF THE MOTHER ANSWERS "YES":

### Encourage her to talk about it.

"Would you like to talk about what has happened?" or "What help do you need?" "What would you do if this happens again?" "How do you think this has affected your children?"

### Listen non-judgmentally.

This will begin the healing process for the woman and give you an idea about what kind of referrals she needs.

### Validate her experience.

"You are not alone." "You do not deserve to be treated this way."  
"You are not to blame." "What happened to you is a crime." "Help is available to you." "The violence is likely to get worse, and I am worried about you." "If you are not safe, your children are not safe."

## BE AWARE OF A CONNECTION BETWEEN CERTAIN CLINICAL SIGNS AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:

If **clinical signs** such as depression, suicidal ideation, anxiety, sleeping and/or eating disorders, or substance abuse are present, ask more specific questions. Make sure she is alone. "I am worried about you. It looks as though someone may have hurt you. Can you tell me how it happened?" "Sometimes when people feel the way you do, it's because they are being hurt at home. Is this happening to you?"

If the mother denies abuse, but you strongly suspect it, let her know there are resources available to her when she chooses to pursue such options in the future. Discuss the effects of family violence on children. Being exposed to violence in the home can be as traumatic for a child as being a direct victim of violence. Let her know that she can come to you in the future if she has questions or needs help. Make a follow-up appointment to see her and the children.

## RESOURCES

866 . SAFE . 014 (866 . 723 . 3014)	Philadelphia Domestic Violence Hotline
215 . 686 . 7082	Women Against Abuse Legal Center
215 . 985 . 3333	Women Organized Against Rape
215 . 242 . 2235	Menergy For men who are abusive
267 . 625 . 6135	Menergy en Español For men who are abusive
215 . 564 . 0488	Men's Resource Center For men who are abusive
215 . 496 . 0707	Children's Crisis Treatment Center Trauma focused therapy for children
215 . 438 . 9070	Anti-Violence Partnership Trauma focused therapy for children

