



Domestic Violence & Welfare Benefits

FAMILY VIOLENCE OPTION ADVOCACY MANUAL

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ABOUT THIS MANUAL

This manual is designed to inform advocates about how they can assist victims of domestic violence who are receiving or applying for welfare in Pennsylvania. The 1996 federal law that created the new welfare program – Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) – included a provision called the Family Violence Option, which is designed to address the needs of domestic victims receiving TANF. Pennsylvania adopted the Family Violence Option in 1996. Former Governor Ridge convened a Domestic Violence Task Force made up of representatives from the Department of Public Welfare, Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence and other advocates to design and implement strategies to respond to domestic violence within the welfare setting.

Under the guidance of the Task Force: DPW implemented new policies and procedures that affect victims; DPW caseworkers, clerical support, CCIS staff and OIG staff received training so that they appropriately and sensitively respond to individuals who are being battered or have a history of domestic violence; and domestic violence advocates were cross-trained on DPW policy so they are able to support victims applying/receiving public benefits.

Because the overwhelming majority of TANF recipients and domestic violence victims are female, this manual uses the female pronoun “she” and the noun “women” to refer to them. Masculine terminology is used to refer to batterers and to non-custodial parents.

This manual is designed to be used with the Department of Public Welfare's regulations, *Cash Assistance Handbook (CAH)*, *Food Stamp Handbook (FSH)*, *Medicaid Eligibility Handbook (MAEH)*, and *Operations Memoranda* which provide the rules governing DPW's operation of Cash Assistance, Food Stamp and Medicaid programs. Some portions of the relevant rules are attached in appendices to this manual. DPW's handbooks are publicly available in their entirety on DPW's website at the following link: <http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/oimpolicy/manuals/manuals/oimpolman.asp>. Chapter 108 of the *Cash Assistance Handbook* contains all of DPW's policies and procedures relating to family violence. The *DPW Operations Memoranda and Policy Clarifications*, which are issued by DPW to supplement and update the policies in the Handbooks, are publicly available on DPW's website: They can be accessed at the top of the table of contents of each of the handbooks.

This manual is available at www.pcadv.org/Publications.asp#Manuals.