

Example One

- Common Statement: Father was arrested for domestic violence.
- Why this is problematic: The term "domestic violence" is too vague and requires the listener to interpret what that means based on their own knowledge or bias. This statement does not acknowledge systemic problems in law enforcement and assumes that arrest equals fault or guilt. If we rely on arrest records only, we lose important information, and risk misidentifying who the person using violence is.

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- **Better:** Father was arrested on May 10th after strangling mother in front of the children. During the incident mother was called derogatory names such as "bitch" and "slut", and father threw family photos and broke the television. Children reported feeling scared of their father. Mother was also shared that she felt afraid for her life, as father has threatened to kill her before. Father has a pattern of calling mother names in front of the children, and......

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• Why this works: Does not leave room for ambiguity. Draws a nexus between the perpetrator's pattern and impact on child(ren) and family functioning. Clearly shows risk and harm to survivor and children.

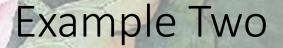




- Common Statement: Both parents use violence. They're both abusive.
- Why this is problematic: Mutual combat is a myth. One primary aggressor can be identified with thorough assessment. Survivors often use violence as a survival strategy or as a response to trauma, and are often punished for this, either by experiencing arrest, or not being believed by professionals.

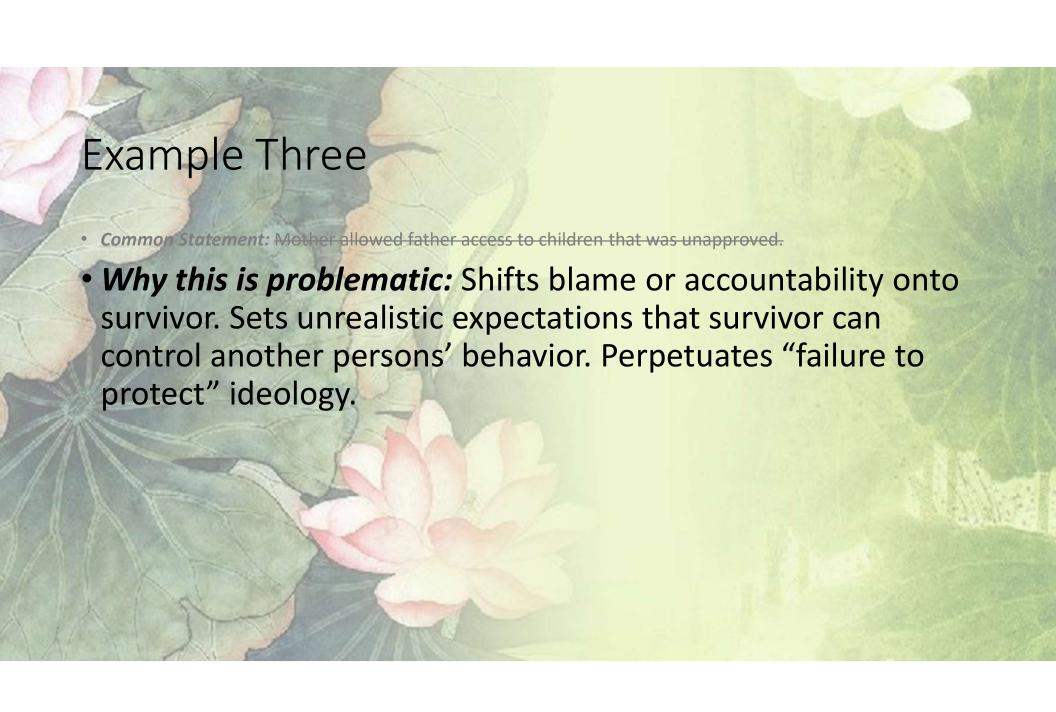


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- Better: While we are concerned that mother scratched/punched/bit father, it is clear that father has a pattern of severe coercive control over the family. Father has a history of utilizing systems, such as CPS and law enforcement, to harass mother by threatening to call police or make reports. He frequently threatens to take the children out of state, kill himself if she were to leave the relationship, or threatens to make the family homeless.



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- Why this works: Shows partnership with survivor, but still addresses concerning behaviors and impact on child safety while holding person using violence responsible for behavior.







- Common Statement: Mother allowed father access to children that was unapproved.
 - Why this is problematic: Shifts blame or accountability onto survivor. Sets unrealistic expectations that survivor can control another persons' behavior. Perpetuates "failure to protect" ideology.
- Better: During a recent unannounced home visit, worker found father in the home with the children. Father has a pattern of harassing and stalking mother, and threatened to kick in the door until mother let him in. Mother made the choice to allow him access to the children to prevent damage to the home and minimize emotional impact on children.



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- Why this works: Continues to show partnership with survivor and shift accountability onto partner using violence. Calls out protective factors of survivor.