



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND CHILD WELFARE INVOLVEMENT



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WHY IT MATTERS

Domestic violence, also known as Intimate Partner Abuse (IPV), or Relationship Abuse among teens, is a pattern of behaviors used by one partner to maintain power and control over another partner in an intimate relationship. Domestic violence includes behaviors that physically harm, arouse fear, prevent a partner from doing what they wish, or force them to behave in ways they do not want. It includes the use of physical and sexual violence, threats and intimidation, emotional abuse and economic deprivation.¹ Many of these different forms of domestic violence/abuse can be occurring at any one time within the same intimate relationship. According to the *National Coalition Against Domestic Violence* (NCADV) organization, one fourth of all women and one out of ten men will experience IPV at some point in their life time. An average of 20 people are physically abused by intimate partners every minute – equating

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to more than 10 million victims of abuse annually.² Estimates of the number of children who have been exposed to domestic violence each year vary, with research suggesting that nearly 30 million children in the United States will be exposed to some type of family violence before the age of 17.³ Furthermore,

researchers estimate 30–60 percent of families with child welfare involvement also experience IPV.⁴

Exposure to both domestic violence and child maltreatment can have immediate and, often, long-term impacts on children and youth. Children who have been exposed to domestic violence are more likely than their peers to experience a wide range of difficulties, and the potential effects vary by age and developmental stage. They are more likely than other children to exhibit signs of depression and anxiety; higher levels of anger and/or

disobedience; fear and withdrawal; poor peer, sibling, and social relationships; and low self-esteem.⁵ They are also more likely than their peers to experience difficulties in school with concentration and task completion; score lower on assessments of verbal, motor, and cognitive skills; lack conflict resolution skills; and possess limited problems solving skills and exhibit pro-violence attitudes.⁶ Exposure to violence is an adverse childhood experience (ACE) that is associated

sole basis for removal. The Court also held that any decision to remove a child must be weighed against the psychological harm to the child that could be created by the removal itself, and that only in the rarest of instances should this decision be made without judicial approval. As we now recognize, removing children from their homes and placing them in out-of-home care often creates additional trauma. In recent years, enhanced collaboration among child and family-serving

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with long term, poor adult outcomes if left untreated. It's important for domestic violence, child welfare, and other child-serving professionals such as CASA volunteers and staff to understand the impact of trauma on child development and how to minimize its effects without causing additional trauma.⁷

Historically, even though adult and child victims were found in the same families, child welfare and domestic violence programs responded to victims separately. In the past, it wasn't unusual for children to be removed from their homes due to alleged safety concerns and the victim of domestic violence (often a parent and usually, but not always, the mother) charged with "failure to protect." In a ground-breaking case, *Nicholson vs. Williams*⁸, on Oct. 26, 2004, the New York Court of Appeals unanimously held that a mother's inability to protect a child from witnessing abuse does not constitute neglect, and therefore cannot be the

organizations and domestic violence programs has led to more comprehensive services to better meet the needs of both children and adults affected by domestic violence. Addressing these issues from a trauma informed perspective is critical.⁹

Unfortunately, children and teens who have been exposed to IPV may later repeat the abuse they see, thinking that it is a normal part of being in a relationship. This raises concerns for teens and young adults entering into their first romantic relationships. It's important for child welfare professionals and advocates to ensure that teens and young adults understand that healthy relationships are nonviolent relationships. By engaging youth in trauma informed practices and helping them develop resilience, they will be better positioned to understand the difference between healthy and unhealthy relationships.

ADVOCATES IN ACTION

Multiple forms of violence can take place under one roof, in the same community or neighborhood, at the same time, and at different stages of life. Understanding the overlapping causes of violence and the factors that can protect people and communities can help us better prevent violence in all its forms.

— Centers for Disease Control and Prevention¹⁰

ACTIONS

These recommendations were provided by Kerry Moles, Executive Director, Court Appointed Special Advocates of New York City (CASA-NYC). Ms. Moles has more than 25 years' experience working in the domestic violence and child welfare, including as the founding Director of the Family Wellness Program at the Children's Aid Society in New York. She is the author of *The Teen Relationship Workbook* (2001), *The Relationship Workbook* (2003) and *Strategies for Anger Management* (2003).

Learn the warning signs of domestic violence so you'll be more likely to identify it when it's an issue in a family you're working with. Common warning signs include extreme jealousy, one partner controlling what the other does or who they see, sabotaging relationships with friends or family, one partner who "speaks for" the other.

Learn about your state's mandated reporting requirements around domestic violence. Be aware

that when a child is in a home where there's domestic violence, it sometimes, but not always, constitutes child maltreatment. If you do report, be clear that the adult who is committing abusive behavior is the one harming the child – not the parent who is being abused. Also know that bringing domestic violence to the attention of child welfare officials or law enforcement can have unintended consequences of triggering increased danger for the survivor and children, so safety planning with the abused parent before making the report is critical.

Avoid victim-blaming statements like "why don't you just leave" or "did you do something to provoke this?" Remember that the person behaving abusively is always 100% responsible for their actions.

Be prepared to help the survivor and children safety plan. This might include helping them find a safe place to stay for the night, helping them figure out the best way to stay safe in case of abuse while remaining in the relationship, or making a long-term plan for safety. Do not assume leaving the relationship is the safest

strategy – leaving an abusive relationship often results in increased danger. For more information on safety planning, see: http://www.ncdsv.org/GHLA-NRCDV-FVW_Advocacy-Beyond-Leaving_2009.pdf¹¹

Know the important numbers and links. The number for the National DV Hotline is 1-800-799-7233, and you can find your state domestic violence coalition here: <https://ncadv.org/state-coalitions>.¹² Even better, know the number for your local DV organization. Offer the number to anyone who might be experiencing abuse, but also don't be afraid to call it yourself to get resources and expert advice on how to help a victim.

Be mindful of gender roles. Advocates understand that domestic violence is traditionally rooted in patriarchy and is most commonly perpetrated by males against female partners, abuse happens at similar rates in LGBTQ relationships, and men can be abused by

women. Relationships often initially appear to be “mutually abusive,” until a careful primary aggressor assessment can be completed by a person with expertise in domestic violence. **Remember that the parent who is abusive is still often an important part of a child's life.** Children should be given the message that it's OK to love your parent even if they hurt you or someone you love.

Get advice from your local DV provider. Abusive partner intervention is still in its infancy, so it may be hard to find an appropriate program for a parent who's abusive in your area. Know that anger management and mental health treatment in themselves are usually not sufficient treatment, and couples counseling and family counseling are not considered appropriate in cases of domestic violence – and can sometimes increase risk.

BRIGHT SPOT

FUTURES WITHOUT VIOLENCE

Futures without Violence has created several programs to involve men in preventing violence against women, including *Coaching Boys into Men* and the *Founding Fathers Campaign*. In 2010, they were chosen to be the lead technical assistance provider for the *Engaging Men Program*, a federal program. They partner with the *Office on Violence Against Women*, *Men Stopping Violence*, *A CALL TO MEN*, and the *Texas Association Against Sexual Assault* to support 23 projects across

the country that create public education campaigns and community organizing to encourage men and boys to work as allies with women and girls to prevent sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking.

To learn more:

<https://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/engaging-men-prevent-violence/>

SELECTED RESOURCES

Name	Description
<p><u>Center for Disease Control, <i>Training Professionals in the Primary Prevention of Sexual and Intimate Partner Violence: Planning Guide</i>¹³</u></p>	<p>This <i>Planning Guide</i> provides concepts and strategies for developing, implementing and evaluating IPV prevention training efforts. It allows the user to quickly assess what is needed to tailor individual trainings to different groups of professionals. It provides definitions of sexual violence and intimate partner violence and includes fictional case studies as well as real life examples to illustration theory into practice. The guide also includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Tip sheets</i>: Ideas and additional information to expand user knowledge. • <i>Worksheets</i>: Blank worksheets to help build the details of plans. Filled-in samples of some worksheets using the case studies to illustrate the work. • <i>Checklists</i>: A few simple checklists to help users stay on top of recommended tasks. • <i>Resources</i>: Where to find additional, useful resources to learn more about topic.
<p><u>Children’s Bureau National Resource Center for Child Protective Services, <i>Safety Organized, Trauma-Informed, Solution-Focused Approaches to Domestic Violence in Child Protection Slide Presentations</i>¹⁴</u></p>	<p>The Children’s Bureau National Resource Center for Child Protective Services sponsored a webinar series focused on domestic violence and child protection. Many of these resources are available on the linked site.</p>
<p><u>National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence, <i>Advocacy Beyond Leaving</i>, by Jill Davies¹⁵</u></p>	<p>In an easy to read question and answer format, this guide offers practical suggestions to assist advocates working day to day with victims. Using the familiar and concrete framework of woman-defined advocacy, the guide explains advocates’ important role in safety planning when victims are in contact with current or former partners.</p>

Name	Description
National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma and Mental Health ¹⁶	The National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma & Mental Health provides training, support, and consultation to advocates, mental health and substance abuse providers, legal professionals, and policymakers as they work to improve agency and systems-level responses to survivors and their children. Their work is survivor defined and rooted in principles of social justice.
Resource Center on Domestic Violence: Child Protection and Custody, Greenbook Initiative ¹⁷	The <i>Greenbook</i> helps child welfare workers, domestic violence advocates and family court judges in communities across the country change their approach to family violence to better help battered women and their children achieve safety. The <i>Greenbook</i> has spawned activities in states and localities across the country.

ENDNOTES

- 1 See <http://www.thehotline.org/is-this-abuse/abuse-defined/>
- 2 Black, M.C., Basile, K.C., Breiding, M.J., Smith, S.G., Walters, M.L., Merrick, M.T., Chen, J. & Stevens, M. (2011). *The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2010 Summary Report*. Retrieved from http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs_report2010-a.pdf
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 National Child Traumatic Stress Network, n.d.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 See Issue Briefs on “Trauma Informed Practice,” “Early Development and Trauma Impacts,” and “Promoting Youth Resiliency.”
- 8 For more information, see <https://www.nyclu.org/en/cases/nicholson-v-williams-defending-parental-rights-mothers-who-are-domestic-violence-victims>
- 9 See Issue Brief, “Trauma Informed Practice”
- 10 <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/fundedprograms/teendating.html>
- 11 http://www.ncdsv.org/GHLA-NRCDV-FVW_Advocacy-Beyond-Leaving_2009.pdf
- 12 <https://ncadv.org/state-coalitions>
- 13 <https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/5760>
- 14 <https://www.slideserve.com/search/presentations/domestic-violence-and-child-protection>
- 15 http://www.ncdsv.org/GHLA-NRCDV-FVW_Advocacy-Beyond-Leaving_2009.pdf
- 16 <http://www.nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org/>
- 17 <https://www.rcdvcpc.org/the-greenbook-initiative.html>