

Children First: Safe and Secure



Section IV—Issues Challenging Families

Family Violence: Its Impact on Children and Their Families

Children of all ages, including infants, are aware when domestic violence happens. Children exposed to domestic violence are in jeopardy whether they are directly involved in the violence or simply present in the home. They are at risk of physical, emotional, and psychological harm that can cause long-term damage. Some children are physically injured- either intentionally or by accident.

- ◆ The Texas Department of Public Safety reported 185,299 family violence incidents occurred in Texas in 2003.
- ◆ More than 3.3 million American children witness physical and verbal domestic abuse each year, and they are 15 times more likely to be maltreated than in homes without domestic violence.
- ◆ Of the children exposed to domestic violence, a disproportionate number are younger than age 5.
- ◆ At least 6 percent of all pregnant American women are battered.
- ◆ Infants and preschoolers exposed to domestic violence can develop eating and sleeping disorders, developmental delays, and symptoms of depression or anxiety.
- ◆ Children exposed to family violence are at increased risk for low self-esteem, depression, eating difficulties, sleep disturbances, poor concentration, substance abuse, violence, and poor coping skills.
- ◆ Teens witnessing domestic violence are more likely to engage in activities that include running away, abusing drugs and alcohol, prostitution, suicide, violence and sexual assaults.
- ◆ In 60 to 75 percent of the families in which a woman is battered, children are also battered.
- ◆ Children are twice as likely to be abused when their mothers are assault victims.



- ◆ Domestic violence is the major precursor to children dying from abuse and neglect.
- ◆ One or more children are killed in 10 to 15 percent of the nation's domestic violent homicides.
- ◆ A child's exposure to the father abusing the mother is the strongest risk factor for continuing the generational cycle of violence.
- ◆ Growing up in a violent home is the strongest predictor for a boy becoming a batterer as a teen and adult.
- ◆ Domestic violence is noted to be a major factor for homelessness and women seeking financial relief through Temporary Assistance to Needy Families funds.
- ◆ Batterers are twice as likely to seek sole physical custody of their children than are non-violent parents.
- ◆ Children with violent families may experience decreased parental availability due to the abused parent's injuries, depression and emotional exhaustion and the batterer's energies being directed towards maintaining control over the victimized partner.