

Children & Youth Exposed to Domestic Violence Domestic Violence Awareness Month Facts

For training and technical assistance call 1-800-52-PEACE

Resource Center on Domestic Violence: Child Protection and Custody

October 2014



Prevalence

1 Nearly one in four women in the U.S. reports experiencing violence by a current or former spouse or boyfriend at some point in her life.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2008). Adverse health conditions and health risk behaviors associated with intimate partner violence. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 57 (05), 113-117. Retrieved 9/4/14 from www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5705a1.htm

2 One in six (16.3%) children aged 0-17 years witnessed a parental assault over their lifetime. This figure rises to one third (34.6%) for 14-17 year olds.

Finkelhor, D., Turner, H., Ormrod, R., & Hamby, S.L. (2009). Violence, abuse, and crime exposure in a national sample of children and youth. *Pediatrics*, 124 (5), 1411-1423. Retrieved 9/4/14 from <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/124/5/1411>

3 15.5 million U.S. children live in families in which partner violence occurred at least once in the past year. For seven million children, the partner violence is severe.

Whitfield, C.L., Anda, R.F., Dube, S.R., & Felittle, V.J. (2003). Violent childhood experiences and the risk of intimate partner violence in adults: assessment in a large health maintenance organization. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 18(2), 166-185.

4 A representative sample of Head Start programs found that 17% of low-income children had been exposed to domestic violence.

Cohen, E., & Knitzer, J. (2002, May). Children living with domestic violence: the role of early childhood programs. Paper prepared for the Meeting: Early Childhood, Domestic Violence, and Poverty: Taking the Next Steps to Help Young Children and Their Families.

6 When violence exists in an intimate relationship, children may witness it more often after separation than before.

Hardesty, J. L., & Chung, G. H. (2006). Intimate partner violence, parental divorce, and child custody: Directions for intervention and future research. *Family Relations*, 55, 200-210.

5 Approximately one in three adolescent girls in the U.S. is a victim of physical, emotional, or verbal abuse from a dating partner, far exceeding victimization rates for other types of violence affecting youth.

Davis, A. (2008). Interpersonal and physical dating violence among teens. *The National Council on Crime and Delinquency Focus*. Retrieved 9/4/14 from http://www.nccdglobal.org/sites/default/files/publication_pdf/focus-dating-violence.pdf

Impact

7 Children exposed to domestic violence may develop a wide range of problems, including interpersonal skill deficits, psychological and emotional problems such as depression and PTSD, and externalizing behavior problems.

Carlson, B. E. (2000). Children exposed to intimate partner violence: Research findings and implications for intervention. *Trauma, Violence and Abuse*, 1(4), 321-342.

8 Children who observe parental conflict, hostility, and violent behavior are more likely to use abusive behaviors toward their significant others in both adolescence and adulthood.

Grych, J. H. (2005). Interparental conflict as a risk factor for child maladjustment: Implications for the development of prevention programs. *Family Court Review*, 43(1), 97-108.

9 Children react to exposure to violence in different ways, and many show remarkable resilience.¹ Studies suggest that as assets in a child's environment increase, including protective adults, the problems he or she experiences may actually decrease.²

(1) Finkelhor, D., Turner, H., Ormrod, R., Hamby, S., & Kracke, K. (2009). Children's exposure to violence: A comprehensive national survey. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Retrieved 9/4/14 from <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/227744.pdf> (2) Masten, A.S., & Reed, M. (2002). Resilience in development. In C.R. Snyder & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology*, 74-88. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.



Barriers to Leaving and Self-sufficiency

10 Battered women may not leave because of financial needs, family pressures, believing the children need a father, or the fear that he will follow through on threats to harm the children or gain custody.

See, e.g., Hardesty, J. L., & Chung, G. H. (2006). Intimate partner violence, parental divorce, and child custody: Directions for intervention and future research. *Family Relations*, 55, 200-210 and Hardesty, J. L., & Ganong, L. H. (2006). A grounded theory model of how women make custody decisions and manage co-parenting with abusive former husbands. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 23, 543-563.

12 Psychological tactics used by abusers include threats of violence, forced isolation, degradation, attempts to distort reality, and methods to increase psychological dependence.

Stark, E. (2007). *Coercive control: How men entrap women in personal life*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.



15 Significant numbers of women living in poverty are battered, and the violence they experience can make the climb out of poverty unattainable.

See, e.g., Lyon, E. (2000). Welfare, poverty and abused women: new research and its implications. Building Comprehensive Solutions to Domestic Violence, 10. Retrieved 9/4/14 from http://new.vawnet.org/Assoc_-Files_VAWnet/BCS10_POV.pdf

16 Evidence of abusive partner interference with women's efforts to obtain education, training, or employment and to sustain these efforts over time is high.

Lyon, E. (2002, August). Welfare and Domestic Violence: Lessons from Research. Harrisburg, PA: VAWnet, a project of the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence. Retrieved 9/4/2014, from: http://www.vawnet.org/Assoc_-Files_VAWnet/AR_Welfare2.pdf

11 Women with abusive partners attempt a variety of strategies to protect themselves and their children, but numerous barriers exist that impede their efforts.

Kennedy, A., Adams, A., Bybee, D., Campbell, R., Pimlott Kubiak, S., & Sullivan, C.M. (2012). A model of sexually and physically victimized women's process of obtaining effective formal help over time: The role of social location, context, and interventions. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 50 (1), 217-228.

13 Separation is a time of increased risk of homicide for battered women, sometimes occurring in relation to custody hearings and visitation exchanges.

Saunders, D. G., & Browne, A. (2000). Intimate partner homicide. In R.T. Ammerman & M. Hersen (Eds.), *Case studies in family violence* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Plenum.

14 Domestic violence is the third leading cause of homelessness among families in the U.S.

U.S. Conference of Mayors. (2009). Hunger and Homelessness Survey. Retrieved 9/10/14 from <http://usmayors.org/pressreleases/uploads/USCMHungercompleteWEB2009.pdf>; see also American Civil Liberties Union, Women's Rights Project. (2004). Domestic Violence and Homelessness. Retrieved 9/4/14 from <https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/dvhomelessness032106.pdf>

17 Domestic violence is often not detected or not documented in custody or visitation proceedings. When it is, if jurisdictions have a presumption that custody should be awarded to the non-abusive parent, a "friendly parent" provision tends to override the presumption.

Johnson, N. E., Saccuzzo, D. P., & Koen, W.J. (2005). Child custody mediation in cases of domestic violence: Empirical evidence of a failure to protect. *Violence Against Women*, 11, 1022-1053 and Kernic, M. A., Monary-Ernsdorff, D. J., Koepsell, J. K., & Holt, V. L. (2005). Children in the crossfire: Child custody determinations among couples with a history of intimate partner violence. *Violence against Women*, 11, 991-1021. Morrill, A. C., Dai, J., Dunn, S., Sung, I., & Smith, K. (2005). Child custody and visitation decisions when the father has perpetrated violence against the mother. *Violence Against Women*, 11(8), 1076-1107.

18 Many victims remain in an abusive relationship because they believe that the violence is their fault. Family, friends, and society may deepen this belief by accusing the victim of provoking the violence and casting blame on the victim. Victims instead try to change their own behavior; however no one, except for the perpetrator is responsible for and can end the violence.

Bragg, H.L. (2003). The basics of domestic violence. In *Child protection in families experiencing domestic violence* (pp.24-26). Washington DC: Office on Child Abuse and Neglect, Children's Bureau., Caliber Associates.



Parent-Child Relationships

19 Battered women care deeply about their children's safety and want to protect them from physical assaults but also want to protect them from the harms of poverty and isolation.

Hilton, N. Z. (1992). Battered women's concerns about their children witnessing wife assault. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 7*, 77-86; Humphries, J. (1995). The work of worrying: Battered women and their children. *Scholarly Inquiry for Nursing Practice, 9*(2), 127-145.

20 Abusive ex-partners are likely to undermine the victim's parenting role.

Jaffe, P.G., Johnston, J.R., Crooks, C.V., & Bala, N. (2008). Custody disputes involving allegations of domestic violence: Toward a differentiated approach to parenting plans. *Family Court Review, 46* (3), 500-522.

21 Exposure to family violence may exacerbate difficult mother-child situations by undermining the supportive, sensitive, and appropriately responsive nature of the mother-child relationship.

Ybarra, G., Wilkens, S., & Lieberman, A. (2007). The influence of domestic violence on preschooler behavior and functioning. *Journal of Family Violence, 2*, 33-42.

22 If battered mothers cannot find safety, their fears and depression may reduce their ability to nurture and support their children as they normally would.

Jaffe, P. G., & Crooks, C. V. (2005). Understanding women's experiences parenting in the context of domestic violence. Washington, DC: Violence Against Women Online Resources. Retrieved 9/4/14 from <http://www.mincava.umn.edu/documents/commissioned/parenting-indv/parentingindv.pdf>

23 Children who have experienced profound emotional distress or trauma are largely dependent for their recovery on the quality of their relationship with their caretaking parent.

See Erickson, J., & Henderson, A. (1998). Diverging realities: Abused women and their children. In J. Campbell (Ed.), *Empowering survivors of abuse: Health care for battered women and their children* (pp. 138-155). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage; Graham-Bermann, S. (1998). The impact of woman abuse on children's social development: Research and theoretical perspectives. In G. Holden, R. Geffner, & E. Jouriles (Eds.), *Children exposed to marital violence: Theory, research, and applied issues* (pp. 21-54). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Effective Interventions

24 Supporting children's healthy attachment to a survivor-parent is crucial to their development and resiliency following exposure to domestic violence.

Warshaw, C. (2014). Thinking about trauma in the context of domestic violence: An integrated framework. *Synergy, 17* (FVPSA/OVW Anniversary Special Issue 1 of 2), 2-7.

25 Domestic violence exposure should be followed by interventions that repair the harm on children and their mothers, with the primary goal of reinvigorating and balancing the child-mother relationship.

Ybarra, G.J., Wilkens, S.W., & Lieberman, A.F. (2007). The influence of domestic violence on preschooler behavior and functioning. *Journal of Family Violence, 22*, 33-42. Retrieved 9/4/14 from http://www.semsafeforcehouse.org/pdfs/Domestic_Violence_and_Preschool_Behavior_and_Functioning.pdf



26 Psychotherapy designed for mothers and children together can increase the quality of parenting and increase positive outcomes for children.

Lieberman, A.F., Van Horn, P., & Ippen, C.I. (2005). Toward evidence-based treatment: Child-parent psychotherapy with preschoolers exposed to marital violence. *Journal of the American Academy of Child Adolescent Psychiatry, 14*(12), 1241-1248.

27 Many abusive men are concerned about the effect of violence on their children and the children of their partners. Some may be motivated to stop using violence if they understand the devastating effects on their children.

Rothman, E.F., Mandel, D., & Silverman, J. (2007). Abusers' perceptions of the effect of their intimate partner violence on children: A research note. *Violence Against Women, 13*(11), 1179-1191.



Effective Interventions

28 Ninety percent of women with current or former abusive partners want to pursue child support if they can do so safely.

Pearson, J. & Thoennes, N. (2000). New directions for child support agencies when domestic violence is an issue. *Policy and Practice*, (58) 29-36.

29 Compared with the chronic problems of her partner, a battered woman's psychological problems appear to be reactions to the violence and decrease as victims become safer.

Erickson, N. S. (2006). Use of the MMPI-2 in child custody evaluations involving battered women: What does psychological research tell us? *Family Law Quarterly*, 39(1), 87-108.

30 Joint custody can be beneficial for children of non-violent, low-conflict couples but can increase the opportunities for abusers to maintain control and to continue or to escalate abuse toward both women and children in domestic violence cases.

Saunders, D.G. (2007). Child custody and visitation decisions in domestic violence cases: Legal trends, risk factors, and safety concerns. Harrisburg, PA: VAWnet, a project of the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence/Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Retrieved 9/4/14 from <http://www.ssw.umich.edu/about/profiles/saunddan/CustodySaundersVAW-net.pdf>

31 Women who worked with advocates experienced less violence over time, reported higher quality of life and social support, and had less difficulty obtaining community resources over time.

Sullivan, C.M. (2012). Advocacy services for women with abusive partners: A review of the empirical evidence. Harrisburg, PA: National Resource Center on Domestic Violence. Retrieved 9/4/14, from <http://vaw.msu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/DVAAdvocacyResearchSummary10-2102.pdf>



Family Violence Prevention & Services Act Celebrating 30 Years

While not all-inclusive of all domestic violence victims' service providers, this graph reflects the average number of locations (sites) where victims can receive services that are funded by the Family Violence Prevention and Services Program of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The numbers listed reflect the average of local programs funded from 2011-2013, and the average number of tribal programs funded from 2010-2012. Each of the national, tribal, state, and local victim service providers work collaboratively to promote practices and strategies to improve our nation's response to domestic and dating violence to make safety and justice not just a priority, but also a reality. (Updated April 2014)



Local

1,505 Domestic violence shelter sites

1,129 Non-shelter service sites



**State/
Territory**

56 State/Territory domestic violence coalitions, many of these are dual domestic and sexual violence programs



Tribal

83 Tribal domestic violence shelter sites

179 Tribal non-shelter sites

Compiled by Z. Ruby White Starr.

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National

2 Domestic and dating violence hotlines (available 24/7)

2 Resource centers focused on broad-based technical assistance, resource development, public policy, training, and on expanding the work of Tribal Nations

5 Special issue resource centers focused on public health, civil and criminal legal response, child protection and custody, mental health, trauma, and working with incarcerated victims

3 Culturally specific resource centers and organizations focused on communities of color and immigrant populations including African Americans, Asian Pacific Islanders, and Hispanic/Latinas

1 Technical assistance project focused on enhancing services to children and youth

1 Learning center focused on services and supports to LGBTQ victims

Visit www.acf.hhs.gov/fvpsa to learn more.