

## **DID YOU KNOW?**

- In 2010, 1 in 15 children in the United States were exposed to intimate partner violence for a total of more than 5 million children.<sup>i</sup>
- Witnessing intimate partner violence is associated with other forms of violence. 1 in 3 children who witnessed domestic violence were also child abuse victims.<sup>ii</sup>
- In 43% of domestic violence incidents with female victims, children are residents of the household where the incident occurred.<sup>iii</sup>
- In a single day in 2007, 13,485 children were living in a domestic violence shelter or transitional housing facility.<sup>iv</sup>
- Children's immediate reaction to experiencing domestic violence include generalized anxiety, sleeplessness, aggression, difficulty concentrating, nightmares, high levels of activity, and separation anxiety.<sup>v</sup>
- Abusive partners use children to control victims. Abusive partners often threaten to gain sole custody, kill, kidnap or otherwise harm children if victims leave.

## **WHY IT MATTERS**

Domestic violence creates a violent and hostile environment that can have devastating effects on children, both physical and emotional. Children who have been exposed to domestic violence can become fearful and anxious, concerned for themselves, siblings, and their parents. They may begin to feel worthless and powerless.<sup>vi</sup> Children exposed to violence may have difficulty paying attention and display depression and withdrawal. In the long run, children who witness or experience violence at home are much more likely to perpetuate the cycle of abuse in their own relationships as they grow into adulthood.<sup>vii</sup>

## **LONG-TERM IMPACT ON CHILDREN**

- Children who witness intimate partner growing up are three times as likely as their peers to engage in violent behavior.<sup>viii, ix</sup>
- Children raised in abusive homes learn that violence is an appropriate way to solve conflict. These children are more likely than their peers to be in abusive intimate partner relationships in the future, either as victims or perpetrators.<sup>x</sup>
- Children who witness incidents of domestic violence (a form of childhood trauma) are at greater risk of serious adult health problems including obesity, cancer, heart disease, depression, substance abuse, tobacco use and unintended pregnancies than peers who did not witness domestic violence.<sup>xi</sup>

## **CHILD CUSTODY**

- Fathers who batter the mothers of their children are twice as likely to seek sole custody of their children as non-abusive fathers.<sup>xii</sup>
- Courts award sole or joint custody to fathers in 70% of custody cases, despite the perception that mothers always win custody of children.<sup>xiii</sup>
- Abusive parents use child custody as a way to continue to threaten and harass the victim.<sup>xiv</sup>

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If you are in crisis, contact The National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or [www.TheHotline.org](http://www.TheHotline.org).

Please visit the **National Coalition Against Domestic Violence's** website at [www.ncadv.org](http://www.ncadv.org) for more fact sheets, membership information and valuable resources.

### **CHILD CUSTODY (continued)**

- In a Massachusetts study, 38% of abusive fathers seeking sole custody were awarded either sole or joint custody of their children, despite the fact that there was a documented pattern of abuse of both the mother and the children.<sup>xv</sup>
- Because an abuse victim is less likely to be able to afford legal representation, he or she is at an automatic disadvantage when involved in a child custody case.<sup>xvi</sup>

### **HOW TO HELP**

**One of the most effective ways to help protect children from the harmful effects of domestic violence is to ask your Members of Congress to:**

- Increase funding for the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) and funding for Supervised Custody Visitation Centers.
- Support legislation providing additional funding for local program initiatives that provide counseling and other services to children who witness domestic violence.
- Increase funding for Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) programs.
- Introduce, cosponsor, and vote in favor of legislation establishing and funding classroom-based programs to educate middle and high school students about healthy relationships, domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking.
- Encourage local schools and youth programs to train teachers, school counselors and athletic coaches on how to recognize children and teens who are victims of intimate partner violence. Provide educators with resources and prepare them to intervene in domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking situations.
- Support domestic and sexual violence education, prevention and intervention programs in your community.

<sup>i</sup> Hamby, S, Finkelhor, D., Turner, H., & Ormrod, R. (2011). *Children's Exposure to Intimate Partner Violence and Other Family Violence*. Retrieved from: <http://www.unh.edu/ccrc/pdf/fvq/NatSCEVChildrens%20Exposure-Family%20Violence%20final.pdf>.

<sup>ii</sup> Hamby, S, Finkelhor, D., Turner, H., & Ormrod, R. (2010). *The overlap of witnessing partner violence with child maltreatment and other victimizations in a nationally representative survey of youth*. *Child Abuse and Neglect* 34, 734-741.

<sup>iii</sup> U.S. Department of Justice (2006). *Intimate Partner Violence in the United States*.

<sup>iv</sup> National Network to End Domestic Violence (2008). *Domestic Violence Counts 07: A 24-hour census of domestic violence shelters and services across the United States*. Retrieved from: [http://nnev.org/docs/Census/DVCounts2007/DVCounts07\\_Report\\_Color.pdf](http://nnev.org/docs/Census/DVCounts2007/DVCounts07_Report_Color.pdf).

<sup>v</sup> The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (n.d.). *Children and domestic violence*. Retrieved from <http://www.nctsn.org/content/children-and-domestic-violence>.

<sup>vi</sup> Domestic Violence Round Table (2008). *The Effects of Domestic Violence on Children*.

<sup>vii</sup> Stith, S. M., Rosen, K. H., Middleton, K. A., Busch, A. L., Lundeberg, K., & Carlton, R. P. (2000). The intergenerational transmission of spouse abuse: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62(3), 640-654.

<sup>viii</sup> Baldry, A.C. (2003). Bullying in schools and exposure to DV. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 27(7), 713-732.

<sup>ix</sup> Fantuzzo, J. W. & Mohr, W. K. (1999). Prevalence and effects of child exposure to domestic violence. *The Future of Children – Domestic Violence and Children*, 9(3).

<sup>x</sup> Stith, S. M., Rosen, K. H., Middleton, K. A., Busch, A. L., Lundeberg, K., & Carlton, R. P. (2000). The intergenerational transmission of spouse abuse: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62(3), 640-654.

<sup>xi</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2014). *ACE study: Major findings*. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/findings.html>.

<sup>xii</sup> Przekop, M. (2011). *One More Battleground: Domestic Violence, Child Custody, and the Batterers' Relentless Pursuit of their Victims through the Courts*. Retrieved from <http://www.law.seattleu.edu/Documents/sjsj/2011spring/Przekop.pdf>.

<sup>xiii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xiv</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xv</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xvi</sup> Ibid.

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