A Fact Sheet About Children and Domestic Violence

The experience of living in a home with a batterer is different for each child. Some children primarily hear or sense the violence while others witness physical, emotional, and/or sexual abuse perpetrated against their mothers or fathers. Many children experience emotional, behavioral, physical, social and cognitive impacts from exposure to abusers. How children are impacted by domestic violence depends on mediating factors such as their age and developmental level, the severity of the violence they experience, and the strength of family and community support.

How to Support Children’s Healing

Research shows that the most important protective resource to enable a child to heal from violence is a strong relationship with a caring, positive adult – most often a non-offending parent.

A strong bond with significant adult.
Support the building and strengthening of relationships between children and their non-offending parents; be a supportive and significant adult in children’s lives.

A sense of safety.
Support the creation of physically and emotionally safe home, school, agency and community environments for children.

Structure, limits, predictability.
Support home, agency, school and community environments where children have structure and limits and can predict their interactions.

Strong community and family relationships.
Support the building and strengthening of family and community relationships including with siblings.

Support for feelings/ kids being kids.
Create safe places for children to express their feelings about the domestic violence, are encouraged to be children and not given adult responsibilities.

Counseling/Support Groups/Community Resources.
Reach out to your local domestic violence program to find out what supportive resources are available for children who experience domestic violence.

Contact with battering parent only if it is safe and doesn’t interfere with healing.
Advocate for safe contact with battering parents which does not interfere with children’s healing. Support the use of supervised visitation programs and services.
Some Statistics

Vermont

- In 2012, there were 1,370 children served by the 14 member programs of the VT Network. (2012 VNADSV Annual Report)

National

- Approximately 15.5 million children are exposed to domestic violence every year. (McDonold, R. et al. 2006. “Estimating the Number of American Children Living in Partner Violent Families.” Journal of Family Psychology, 30(1), 137-142.)

- Men exposed to physical abuse, sexual abuse and adult domestic violence as children were almost 4 times more likely than other men to have perpetrated domestic violence as adults. (Whitfield, C.L., Anda, R.F., Dube, S.R., Felitti, V.J. 2003. “Violent childhood experiences and the risk of intimate partner violence in adults.” Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 18, 166-185.)


- Girls and young women between the ages of 16 and 24 experience the highest rate of intimate partner violence. (Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, “Intimate Partner Violence in the United States, 1993-2004.” December 2006.)

- 30% to 60% of perpetrators of intimate partner violence also abuse children in the household. (Edelson, J.L. 1999. “The Overlap Between Child Maltreatment and Woman Battering.” Violence Against Women. 5:134-154.)

- In a single day in 2012, 18,968 children in the U.S. were living in a domestic violence shelter or transitional housing facility. Another 5,815 sought services at a nonresidential program. (Domestic Violence Counts 2012: A 24-hour census of domestic violence shelters and services across the U.S. National Network to End Domestic Violence. 2013. http://nnedv.org/resource/census/3418-2012-report.html)