



Intersections of Domestic Violence and Child Maltreatment: An Introduction



Introduction

- Child maltreatment and domestic violence frequently co-occur. Both forms of abuse share common characteristics.
- If one form of abuse is suspected or known, the family should be assessed for the other.
- Please click on the link and listen to the powerful 911 call:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ryLBCu097ns>

Objectives



1. Realize the prevalence of co-occurrence of domestic violence and child maltreatment.
2. Know the shared characteristics of domestic violence and child maltreatment.
3. Learn how children experience domestic violence.
4. Understand how exposure to domestic violence can impact a child.
5. Discover strategies for assessing and preventing child maltreatment in an abusive relationship.

Prevalence

- Studies measuring co-occurrence of child maltreatment and domestic violence typically find that 30 to 60 percent of families experiencing one of the forms of abuse also experience the other.



Prevalence

- Co-occurrence findings vary due to:
 - Differences in populations sampled and study methods
 - Differences in the type of harm observed
 - Differences in definitions used



Prevalence



- One nationally representative study in 2006 estimated that 15.5 million American children live in families in which domestic violence had occurred at least once in the previous year.
- That same study estimated that 7 million children live in families in which severe partner violence had occurred.



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Shared Characteristics of Domestic Violence and Child Maltreatment

Shared Characteristics

Power and Control

- Perpetrators may:
 - threaten to report the victim to Child Protective Services for injuries the perpetrator actually inflicted
 - threaten to take custody of the children
 - threaten to harm themselves to control their victims
 - stalk their victims



Shared Characteristics

Power and Control

- Perpetrators may :
 - harm the child to hurt the other parent, particularly when separation has occurred or is imminent
 - use the child's behavior as an excuse to be abusive



Shared Characteristics

Power and Control

- Perpetrators may:
 - become angry and abuse the children when the perpetrator feels the victim is paying more attention to the children
 - require the kids to pay more attention to his/her needs than theirs for fear of the consequences



Shared Characteristics

Power and Control

- Perpetrators may restrict access to finances or transportation which can:
 - prevent the victim from getting medical attention for sick and/or injured children
 - prevent the victim from otherwise meeting the children's basic needs



Shared Characteristics

- Victims may be unlikely to disclose abuse for the following, overlapping reasons:
 - Victims may have had a previous negative experience with service providers after disclosing abuse
 - Victims may fear being blamed
 - Victims may be concerned about overreaction or minimization of the problem
 - Victims may feel responsible, guilty, or embarrassed for the abuse



Shared Characteristics

- With child maltreatment and domestic violence, it is difficult to prove that the perpetrator will not abuse again in the future.
- In both cases, harm can be either physical or emotional for victims.





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How Children Experience Domestic Violence

How Children Experience DV

- Children may:
 - be the direct targets of physical or verbal abuse
 - be subject to frequent moves if the adult victim tries to flee for safety
- Children may be forced into participating in the adult victim's abuse and degradation.
- Children may try to intervene and suffer injury, may blame themselves for the abuse, may join forces with the abuser or victim, and may become "parentified."



How Children Experience DV

- Children may overhear:
 - verbal abuse
 - screams and pleas for help.
- Children may witness:
 - the perpetrator being arrested
 - the victim's physical injuries, such as bruises
 - the victim taken to the hospital by ambulance



How Children Experience DV

- Children are more likely to be exposed to substance abuse.
 - Perpetrators who abuse alcohol are more likely to severely abuse their partners.
 - Victims may use substances to self-medicate due to physical or emotional pain.





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Impact of Domestic Violence on Children

Direct Impact

- Children may:
 - suffer physical injuries as the targets of violence
 - inadvertently be injured during an episode of violence
- Adult DV victims may over-discipline their children.
- Perpetrators may be severely controlling of the children and are likely to use harsh forms of discipline.



Impact on Parenting

- The adult victim's physical injuries can prevent the child from receiving adequate care.
- Adult victims may suffer from depression and anxiety which may hinder caring for the child.
- The adult victim may be prevented from getting medical attention for sick and/or injured children.



Impact on Parenting

- The perpetrator's entitlement issues can lead to neglect of the child's needs.
- The perpetrator may focus on controlling the adult victim and neglect the child's needs.
- The child's needs may be neglected due to adult substance abuse.



Impact on Development

- Children may express fear, shame, or guilt after disclosing and are likely to feel isolated.
- Children may develop:
 - aggressive and antisocial behaviors
 - low self-esteem, depression, or anxiety
 - fewer social skills, such as relationship forming and coping skills



Impact on Development

- Children exposed to domestic violence are more likely to:
 - attempt suicide
 - drop out of school
 - become pregnant at a young age
 - abuse substances as an adult
 - have reduced attention spans or trouble concentrating
 - Join gangs
 - enter abusive relationships
 - abuse their own children



Impact on Development

- Children exposed to domestic violence are more likely to recreate the abusive relationships they have seen.
- One study found that child abuse or neglect increases the likelihood of arrest:
 - as a juvenile by 59%
 - as an adult by 28%
 - for a violent crime by 30%



Child Resilience

- Recent research has shown that individual child resilience moderates child development problems.
- Some children, even though exposed to domestic violence, develop coping skills in other ways and do not develop behavioral or emotional problems.





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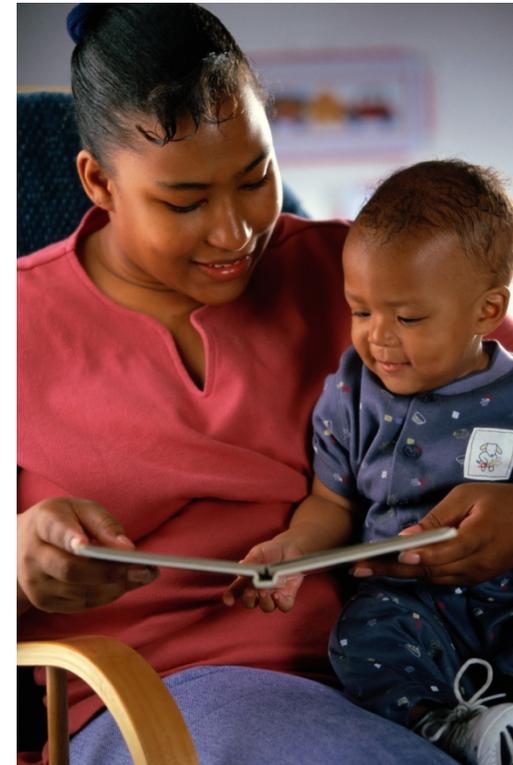
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Strategies for Prevention

Strategies for Prevention

- Removing the child from the home should be considered a last resort.
- Helping the abused parent receive appropriate services and protection is an effective way to secure the child's safety.
 - The perpetrator should be held accountable.
 - Researchers agree that when the perpetrator is not in the home, the child fairs a lot better.



Strategies for Prevention

Assess

- The first step for assisting families experiencing either form of abuse is recognizing the abuse.
- Assessment is critical and should be done often.
- Abuse may be physical or emotional; so, there may be more than physical signs that abuse is occurring.



Strategies for Prevention

Victims	Children	Perpetrators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Safety planning• Individual or group counseling• Specialized assessment services or crisis counseling• Legal advocacy, medical, economic, and daycare services• Shelter or transitional living services• Visitation or supervised exchange services• A review of domestic violence information• Mental health or substance abuse referrals, if applicable	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Safety planning• Safety skills development• Specialized individual or group counseling• After-school program referrals• Safe visitation and exchange services• Community-based enrichment programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Compliance with probation or parole, restraining orders, and custody orders• Parenting programs that include a focus on domestic violence issues• Abuser intervention program referrals• Safe visitation and supervised exchange services• Fatherhood programs when appropriate.• Substance abuse and mental health referrals, if applicable

Strategies for Prevention

Coordinated Community Response

- A Coordinated Community Response requires diverse agencies to work together to help families experiencing multiple forms of abuse by:
 - Assessing and providing for the needs of the entire family
 - Developing a system to protect the child and the abused parent
 - Making domestic abuse an issue of community responsibility
 - Empowering victims



Strategies for Prevention

Coordinated Community Response

- Know the agencies in your community.
- Have a list of agencies on hand that offer specific services such as:
 - Individual counseling
 - Substance abuse treatment
 - Family counseling
- Cross-training is essential for diverse agencies to be able work together effectively.



Strategies for Prevention

Coordinated Community Response

- Benefits of a Coordinated Community Response include:
 - Increased likelihood of early detection.
 - Reduced risk of re-victimization.
 - Reduced chance that families will fall through the cracks.





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Case Scenarios

Scenario 1

At intake, Mrs. Smith tells the visitation staff that she is relieved that the judge ordered supervised visitation between her ex-husband, Brad, and son Phillip in the Injunction for Protection Against Domestic Violence. She notes, however, that she is worried about Mr. Smith's other son, Darius, who he had with a former girlfriend. She says she saw six year old Darius in the grocery store and he had a black eye "again." She says Mr. Smith "uses Darius as a punching bag."

Scenario 1

- What statements has Mrs. Smith made to the staff that are alarming?
- How could the alleged abuse against Darius affect Phillip's visitation?
- What should the staff member do?



Scenario 2

Mr. Jeff Jones is visiting with his daughter Julie in a dependency case. He was accused of hitting her so hard that she had welts on her legs and buttocks. Mrs. Jones left Mr. Jones after the incident, and lives with Julie in an apartment a few blocks from the marital home. One day, when dropping Julie off at the supervised visitation program, Mrs. Jones says to staff, "I think Jeff is still following me. I thought he would stop harassing me after a few weeks, but he still shows up at work, and texts me that it's all my fault. He says he's sure I will suffer for this. I'm so afraid of him."

Scenario 2

- What statements has Mrs. Jones made to the staff that are alarming?
- How could the stalking situation affect visitation?
- What should the staff member do?





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Protective Factors

Protective Factors

1. Nurturing attachments facilitate:
 - Child resilience
 - Child coping skills
 - Child interpersonal skills
2. Knowing about normal developmental stages:
 - Helps prevent over-disciplining
 - Helps control parental frustration



Protective Factors

3. Having and using resilient coping skills:
 - Helps prevent projecting stress onto the child
 - Helps prevent parents from taking anger out on the child
4. Having supportive social connections:
 - Gives the child a more secure environment
 - Models good social relationships for the child



Protective Factors

5. Access to external support:
 - Enables the parent to access resources that can help the child
6. Social and emotional competence of children helps children:
 - Learn how to create healthy relationships
 - Do better in school





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Important Phone Numbers



Hotlines

**If you suspect domestic violence or child abuse...
DON'T WAIT! CALL:**

- **National Domestic Violence Hotline**
1-800-799-SAFE(7233) or
TTY 1-800-787-3224
- **Florida Domestic Violence Hotline**
1-800-500-1119 or
TDD 1-800-621-4202
- **Child Abuse Hotline**
1-800-96-ABUSE (22873) or
TTY 1-800-453-5145



SUPERVISED VISITATION PERSONNEL:

**Child safety is
everyone's job!**

DO

- Assess the child's safety.
- Tell the child you are glad he/she told you.
- Get down to the child's level to listen.
- Consult with a supervisor.

If You Suspect Child Abuse or Neglect,

DON'T WAIT!

CALL

1-800-96-ABUSE (22873)

1-800-453-5145 for TDD

**Call if you have reason to suspect,
even if you are unsure...
the Hotline Counselor will determine
if there should be a report.**

DON'T

- Tell anyone (other than the Hotline Counselor and your supervisor) what the child told you.
- React with shock or fear.
- Push for details that the child may not feel ready to share.
- Doubt your instincts or the child's word.

**What
Information
is Helpful When
Making a Call?**

1. Child's name
2. Addresses and phone numbers for the family
3. Your name and contact information

**For More
Information:**

**Contact
DCF Website
or
childwelfare.gov**



Florida's Supervised Visitation Programs: Protecting Children, Connecting Families
The Clearinghouse on Supervised Visitation, Institute for Family Violence Studies,
College of Social Work, Florida State University

<http://familyvio.csw.fsu.edu>





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Definitions



Florida Statutes



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References