

Children Exposed to Violence

A Handbook for Police Trainers to
Increase Understanding and Improve
Community Responses



Sponsored by:
The David and Lucile Packard Foundation

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The support of The David and Lucile Packard Foundation is gratefully acknowledged.

The views expressed herein are those of the Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System of the London Family Court Clinic, Inc. and the National Center for Children Exposed to Violence and do not necessarily reflect those of The David and Lucile Packard Foundation.

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ISBN # 1-895953-14-6

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This handbook can be printed from the Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System website:
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INTRODUCTION

Violence in the US has been described as a public health epidemic.¹ Millions of children are affected each year. Children are exposed to violence in their families, schools, neighborhoods, and through the media.

- Estimates based on data from 44 states indicate that in 1997, approximately 984,000 children were victims of maltreatment nationwide and approximately 1,100 children die annually as a result of child abuse or neglect.²
- Households where domestic violence occurs are more than twice as likely to have children.³
- Before a child turns 18, she or he is estimated to have witnessed more than 200,000 acts of violence on television, including 16,000 murders.⁴

Young children are particularly vulnerable. They often have little or no contact with individuals or systems (e.g., education) outside of the family that can identify harmful situations.

- Children under age four accounted for 76% of child abuse and neglect fatalities in 1997.²
- Young children are disproportionately exposed to domestic violence relative to children in older age groups.³

While many children living with violence demonstrate remarkable resilience, the development and emotional well-being of a substantial number of children are significantly compromised.

- Long-term consequences of childhood victimization can include mental health problems, educational difficulties, alcohol and drug abuse, and employment problems.^{5, 6}

From the perspective of police officers, one of the most observable and distressing consequences of children's exposure to violence is the increased likelihood that young people will become involved in violence, either as a victim or as an aggressor. In cases of domestic violence, police are well acquainted with seeing a child first as a witness to his or her parents' fights and later arresting the same child for adolescent delinquency. Both arrestees and victims in domestic violence cases frequently report histories of repeatedly witnessing similar abuse between their own parents or caregivers. While the cause of delinquency is best described as a constellation of risk factors, research is consistent with police observation and experience.

- Being abused or neglected as a child increases the likelihood of arrest as a juvenile by 53% and of arrest for a violent crime as an adult by 38%.⁶
- Exposure to domestic violence in childhood is associated with a significant increase in self-reported violent behaviours during adolescence.^{7, 8}

The magnitude and potential consequences of this threat to children require that communities take action. Police officers

play an important role in increasing the safety and security of children through law enforcement, community service and crime prevention.

The capacity of police officers to carry out their role is enhanced when they understand the impact of violence on children, and the ways in which crimes associated with such violence may differ from other police matters.

This handbook

This handbook is for domestic violence specialists and trainers in police departments. It is designed to increase the understanding of children's exposure to **domestic violence** by officers responding to these situations.

While children are often exposed to multiple forms of violence and all exposure is of concern, this handbook focuses on **children's exposure to domestic violence** and **the related considerations for law enforcement professionals**. This focus is significant because children in these situations have been largely "invisible" to authorities and the public in the past. An understanding of the short and long term impacts that may be experienced by affected children has only developed in the past couple of decades. Accordingly, information on children living with violence and the implications for various professions and services have not been fully incorporated into relevant educational and training materials. The implications for law enforcement professionals related to children's exposure to domestic violence generally apply to children's exposure to other forms of violence.

The significance of domestic violence in the lives of children is highlighted by the following:

- Domestic violence is the most frequently occurring violence children experience. Police encounter as many as half a million children during domestic violence arrests in the US each year.⁵
- Exposure to domestic violence increases a child's risk of maltreatment (e.g., physical victimization).⁹
- Children exposed to domestic violence may experience many of the same symptoms and lasting effects as children who are direct victims of violence.¹⁰

Definitions of the terms used in this handbook

Domestic violence:

→ refers to the abuse and/or assault of adolescents or adults by their intimate partners. It is used interchangeably with *intimate partner abuse* and *interparental violence*. *Battering* is also used to refer to the typical pattern of domestic violence which occurs most frequently.

Perpetrator:

→ refers to individuals who are violent towards their intimate partners. It is used interchangeably with *offenders*, *offending parents*, *batterers*, *abusive partners*, and *abusive parent figures*.

Victim:

→ refers to individuals who are abused by their intimate partners. It is used interchangeably with *survivor*, *non-offending parent*, *abused partner*, and *battered partner*. Many domestic violence advocates prefer the term *survivors* as this reflects the reality that most abused individuals cope and move on with personal strength and resourcefulness.

Children exposed to domestic violence:

→ refers to children seeing, hearing or being aware of violence against one parent figure that is perpetrated by another parent figure. This term is often used interchangeably with *child witnesses to domestic violence* in other resources. The latter term is not used in this handbook to avoid suggesting that children are only impacted when they see the violence occurring, and to avoid confusing children's exposure to domestic violence with children appearing as court witnesses in legal matters. *Children exposed to domestic violence* is used interchangeably with *children living with violence* and *children affected by violence*.

MODULE

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:
WHAT IS IT?**

1

I) DESCRIPTION

Domestic violence is any use of physical or sexual force, actual or threatened, in an intimate relationship. Although both women and men can be victims of domestic violence, the overwhelming majority of this violence involves men abusing women.

These crimes are often committed in a context where there is a pattern of assaultive and controlling behavior. This violence may include physical assault, and emotional, psychological and sexual abuse. It can include threats to harm children, other family members, pets, and property. The violence is used to intimidate, humiliate or frighten victims, or to make them powerless. Domestic violence may include a single act of abuse. It may also include a number of acts which may appear minor or trivial when viewed in isolation, but collectively form a pattern that amounts to abuse.

Intimate relationships include those between opposite-sex and same-sex partners. These relationships vary in duration and legal formality, and include current and former dating, common-law and married couples. Criminal code offences resulting from intimate violence include, but are not limited to, homicide, assault, sexual assault, threatening death or bodily harm, forcible confinement, harassment/stalking, abduction, breaches of court orders and property-related offences.¹¹

A history of property-related offences may be associated with domestic violence (e.g., breaking into ex-partner's home, destroying partner's possessions).¹¹

1.3 million women and 835,000 men experience violence by a current or former partner annually.¹²

Over a lifetime, 22.1% of women and 7.4% of men experience violence by a current or former partner.¹²

64% of women and 16% of men report being raped, physically assaulted or stalked since age 18 by a current or former partner.¹²

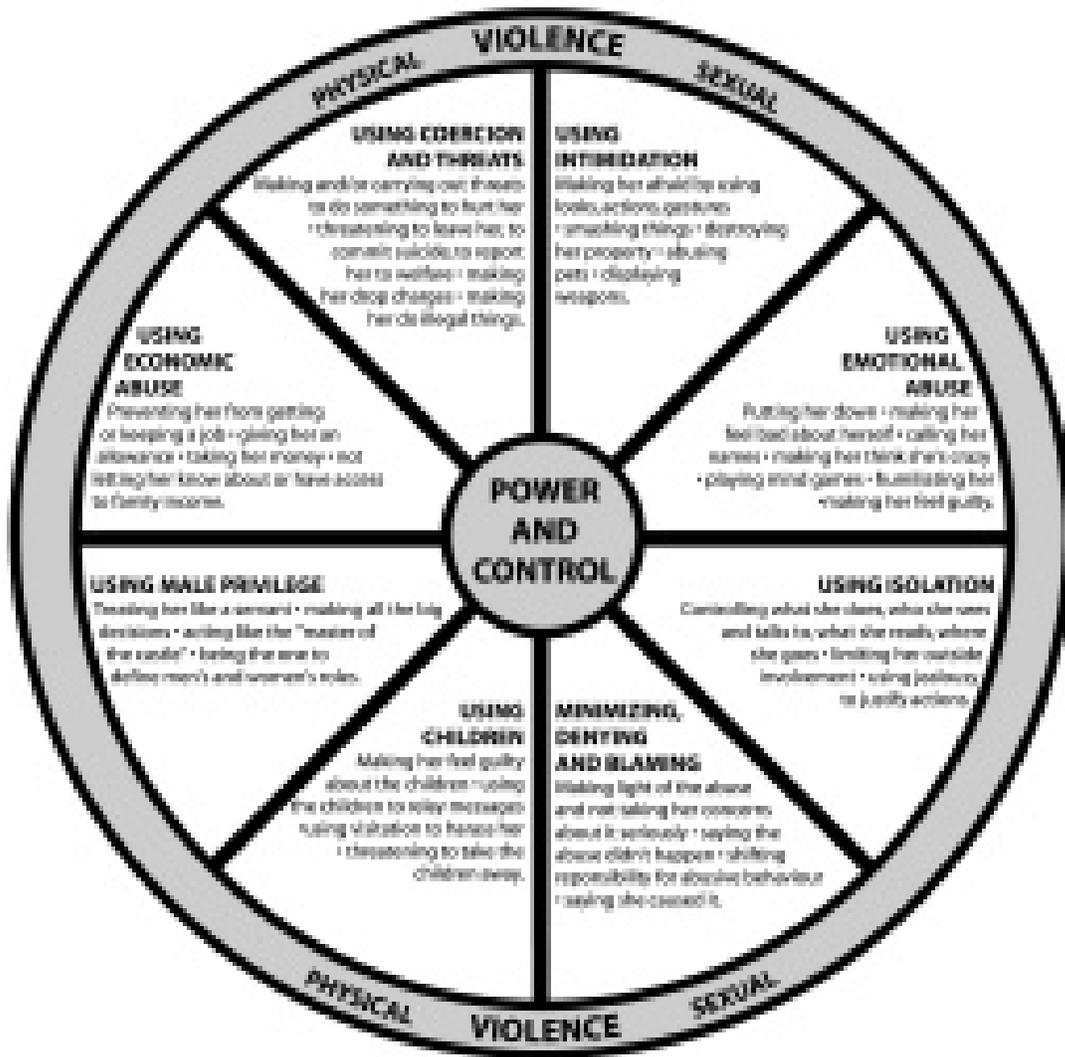
In 1999, 424 men and 1218 women were killed by intimate partners.¹²

II) CORE CHARACTERISTICS

Domestic violence . . .

- occurs in all age, racial, socio-economic, educational occupational, and religious groups;
- occurs within an intimate relationship;
- is learned behavior;
- typically involves repetitive behavior encompassing different types of abuse (e.g., physical assault and sexual, psychological, emotional and economical abuse, use of children – see Table 1: Power and Control Wheel);
- is used to intimidate, humiliate or frighten victims as a systematic way of maintaining power and control over them;
- is caused by the perpetrator, not by the victim or the relationship;
- differentially affects men and women. Women experience more violence over a life time, more severe forms of violence, and more serious injuries than do male victims of domestic violence;^{12,13}
- is likely to present increased risk to the victim and children at the time of separation from the abuser;
- evokes victim behavior that is often about ensuring survival (e.g., minimizing or denying the violence, taking responsibility for the violence, protecting the perpetrator, using alcohol or drugs, self defense, seeking help, remaining in the abusive relationship).

Table 1: Power and Control Wheel



Developed by *Domestic Abuse Intervention Project*, 202 E. Superior St., Duluth MN 55802
For more information contact: info@praxisinternational.org or fax: (218)722-1053

Domestic violence calls: Police officers' experiences

It is often frustrating and confusing for police officers to deal with cases of domestic violence. For a variety of reasons, some of which are described in the next section, victims may resist the officer's efforts. Some victims may not provide the information required for making an arrest. Others may appear to minimize the extent of the violence perpetrated against them, limiting the officer's ability to substantiate serious charges. While wanting their aggressive partner to be held criminally responsible, victims may be overwhelmed by the impact of the current offense and/or accumulated abuse incidents. In these situations, victims may have difficulty providing the information needed for arresting the perpetrator on charges that reflect the seriousness of the incident. Officers may also encounter situations where victims actively co-operate with the criminal investigation, and then, at a later time, bail the defendant out of jail or appear in court requesting that charges be dropped.

Criminal justice remedies tend to be limited. Most calls for police service in domestic violence cases concern misdemeanor offenses, such as breach of peace, threatening and simple assault. These offenses do not carry significant penalties and usually do not justify lengthy pre-trial detention. It is not unusual for defendants to be released within days, if not hours, with court orders of protection that may be worth little more than the paper they are written on. In this context, officers frequently find themselves responding repeatedly to the same addresses, with little expectation that their attempts to intervene will result in any real change. Not surprisingly, many victims find their efforts to seek protection through criminal law disappointing and frustrating. Police, who are the most visible representatives of the criminal justice system, may then find themselves on the receiving end of the disappointed complainant's rage at her partner's violence and the inadequacy of the system to provide the protection she requires.

Domestic violence calls present police with highly charged emotional situations, which can be dangerous to everyone involved. Across the United States, a significant proportion of officers are injured while responding to domestic violence calls. The personal and emotional nature of the calls can also arouse strong feelings in the responding officers, particularly if they remind officers of similar circumstances in their own family or friendship network. It is not easy to remain neutral and professional in the face of such physical and emotional triggers, and officers may overreact to one party or the other, and/or quickly move on to the next call.

Many of the dangers and frustrations associated with police response to domestic violence are inherent in the law enforcement role. While it is not productive for officers to bemoan the thankless nature of their role, it is important to be aware of the many ways in which officers' frustration can get in the way of their effective exercise of authority. Greater knowledge about the dynamics of violence in intimate relationships may assist officers to respond in ways that feel most useful and supportive to the victim. It may also help officers to understand why their best attempts to intervene are so often met with resistance, and to tolerate the reality that repetitive police interventions may be necessary. The following information is provided with those goals in mind.

Factors influencing victims' decisions about their relationships with abusive partners

- **Victims make decisions about staying in or leaving their abusive relationship within the context of survival:**



Evidence suggests that for many women with children, the risks associated with leaving violent men include:

- surviving escalations in violence that often follow separation;
- raising children alone in poverty;
- facing the potential loss of their children to abusive partners in custody battles.

- **Leaving is often better understood as a process rather than an event:**



It is a process, and often a long one, because of factors such as:

- safety issues;
- the impact of the abuse on the victim (e.g., loss of self-confidence);
- the complexity of the relationship with the abuser;
- the challenge victims face when arranging to provide for themselves and their dependents.

The rate of homicide by husbands is 25 times higher when women are separated from their husbands than when they are married and cohabitating.¹⁴

- **Victims from diverse backgrounds may face additional pressures. Many women must access and navigate legal and support services in a language with which they have limited familiarity, comfort and skills:**



Indirect or direct experience may cause victims to fear they and their children will be discriminated against. In some cases, abuse by authorities in other countries may prevent victims from trusting or seeking assistance from police or others in their current communities. Also, experienced or perceived discrimination by authorities in their current communities will affect their willingness to request help.

The capacity of police officers to support victims in their efforts to protect themselves and their children increases with an awareness of the risks they face and the manner in which these risks necessarily influence their decision making. An understanding of the realities of domestic violence should also shift our focus from “why does the victim stay?” to “why is the abuser still being violent and what needs to happen to hold the perpetrator accountable for ending the violence?”.

MODULE

2

**UNDERSTANDING THE
NEEDS OF CHILDREN
& ADOLESCENTS
EXPOSED TO
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

I) HOW ARE CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS AFFECTED?

When children live with domestic violence, their experience is likely to be different from that of most children. Watching, hearing, or later learning of a parent being harmed threatens the sense of stability and security typically provided by family. Children often experience sadness, fear, guilt, anger, shame and confusion. The impact of directly or indirectly witnessing one's parent being emotionally and physically injured is intensified when another parent figure is responsible for the violence. Children may experience strong ambivalence toward their offending parent. Affection often coexists with feelings of resentment and disappointment over their parent's violent behavior.¹⁵

Between violent incidents, the emotional climate of the home may be very tense. Children may see their abused parent treated with ongoing disrespect. They may be concerned about when and how the violence will occur next. Some children describe trying hard to please or attempting to be invisible to keep the perpetrator calm. Others describe trying to influence the non-offending parent's behaviors in an effort to keep the abusive adult from becoming violent.

Increased risk for child maltreatment*

Children living with domestic violence face increased risks for direct victimization.¹⁶ First, they may be accidentally injured because of their close proximity to their non-offending parent during a violent incident. Young children who are physically near parents and older children who intervene to stop the violence may be particularly at risk.

Second, children living in a home where domestic violence is occurring are also at greater risk of experiencing neglect, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and physical abuse. In addition, children may experience victimization if the perpetrator uses them as part of the control tactics employed against the adult victim. While this can involve physical assaults, it is more likely to involve emotional abuse such as:¹⁷

- claiming the children's bad behavior is the reason for the assaults on the non-offending parent;
- engaging the children in the abuse of the other parent;
- threatening violence against the children and their pets in front of the non-offending parent;
- holding the children hostage or abducting them in an effort to punish the adult victim or to gain compliance;
- talking negatively to children about the abused parent's behavior.

The risk of being maltreated in childhood significantly increases if you live in a family where woman assault is occurring: approximately 30 to 60% of battered mothers' children also experience neglect, emotional abuse, or physical violence.¹⁶

*While exposure to domestic violence is considered to be maltreatment in some jurisdictions, here the term child maltreatment is being used to refer to neglect, emotional abuse (apart from exposure), sexual abuse, and physical abuse.

Increased risk for problems

Children exposed to domestic violence may experience increased psychological, behavioral and social problems (see *Table 2, page 20*).^{18,21} These difficulties include reduced social skills, as well as withdrawn, anxious and acting out behaviors. Some research has shown an association between children's exposure to domestic violence and subsequent aggressive behavior.¹⁹ However, not all children and adolescents who display such problems have been exposed to domestic violence. In fact, some children and adolescents exposed to intimate partner abuse do not appear to experience increased problems. Accordingly, while children are at increased risk for a variety of problems, their adjustment varies widely following exposure to violence.

While children are at increased risk for a variety of problems, their adjustment varies widely following exposure to violence.

Adjustment and resilience

Research has helped us begin to identify the factors that influence how children adjust following exposure to domestic violence. The factors are generally understood to be related to:

- the **nature of the violence** (e.g., intensity, proximity, duration);
- the **child** (e.g., age, gender, temperament, developmental stage);
- the **child's immediate and broader social context** (e.g., parent-child relationships, social connections, financial resources).

The way children make sense of their experience is strongly related to their thinking abilities, as well as their social and emotional maturity. Children's developmental stages help us understand how they might be affected by domestic violence. Factors shown to help children to cope with exposure to violence include:²⁰

- a strong **caring relationship with an adult** (e.g., parent, relative, teacher);
- **community safe havens** (e.g., community centers, churches, schools);
- a child's own **internal resources** (e.g., intelligence, interpersonal skills).

Children exposed to violence benefit from a caring relationship with an adult, community safe havens, and their own internal resources.

Table 2: Short term effects: Potential problems associated with exposure to domestic violence in childhood^{18, 21}

Types of Problems	Examples for Children & Adolescents
<p>Increased externalized behaviors</p>	<p>→ aggression toward others (e.g., bullying, fighting, dating violence); property destruction; antisocial behaviors (e.g., lying, stealing)</p>
<p>Increased internalized behaviors</p>	<p>→ withdrawn, fearful, reluctant to try new things, anxious</p>
<p>Increased physical complaints</p>	<p>→ increased stomachaches, headaches, tiredness; changes in appetite</p>
<p>Lower social capabilities</p>	<p>→ fewer age-appropriate social skills to initiate and sustain relationships, to seek assistance from others, and to satisfy personal needs</p>
<p>Learned attitudes supporting violence</p>	<p>→ violence is okay to teach others a lesson; 'might is right'; violence enhances one's image and peer status</p>
<p>Less developed thinking skills</p>	<p>→ less developed attention and concentration abilities; poorer understanding of social situations</p>

Traumatic stress reaction

Of the children who experience increased difficulties, some experience traumatic stress reactions following exposure to violence.²² This stress can be reflected in their emotions, thoughts and actions. Features of traumatic stress reactions include:

- re-experiencing aspects of the violence (e.g., flashbacks, nightmares);
- avoidance of reminders of the violence (e.g., may avoid males who raise their voices; shy away from conflict);
- numbing (e.g., may seem detached from others);
- increased arousal (e.g., may show strong startle-response to noise or startle easily in general).

Do children living with violence learn to be violent?

Children and adolescents learn from what they see modeled in their environment. When intimate partner abuse occurs, they may learn that hostile aggression can be used to control others. Some research suggests boys are more likely to learn to be aggressive, and girls may learn to accept violence from the males in their lives. This learning can take place even though children and adolescents want the violence in their homes to end. Also, exposure to violence may desensitize children and adolescents to aggressive behavior. When this occurs, aggression becomes part of the “norm” and is less likely to signal concern to the youth.

Recent exposure to domestic violence is a significant factor in predicting a child's violent behavior.¹⁹

Exposure to domestic violence in childhood is associated with increases in self-reported violent behaviors during adolescence.⁷

Young men who grow up in violent homes have a greater chance of becoming violent in their own dating relationships.²³

Long term effects: Potential adult problems associated with exposure to violence in childhood

- poor social adjustment (e.g., relationship difficulties)
- thinking distortions (e.g., underestimating self worth and capabilities)
- post-traumatic stress reactions (e.g., intrusive and upsetting images)
- emotional difficulties (e.g., depression, anxiety)
- substance abuse
- aggressive behavior/criminality

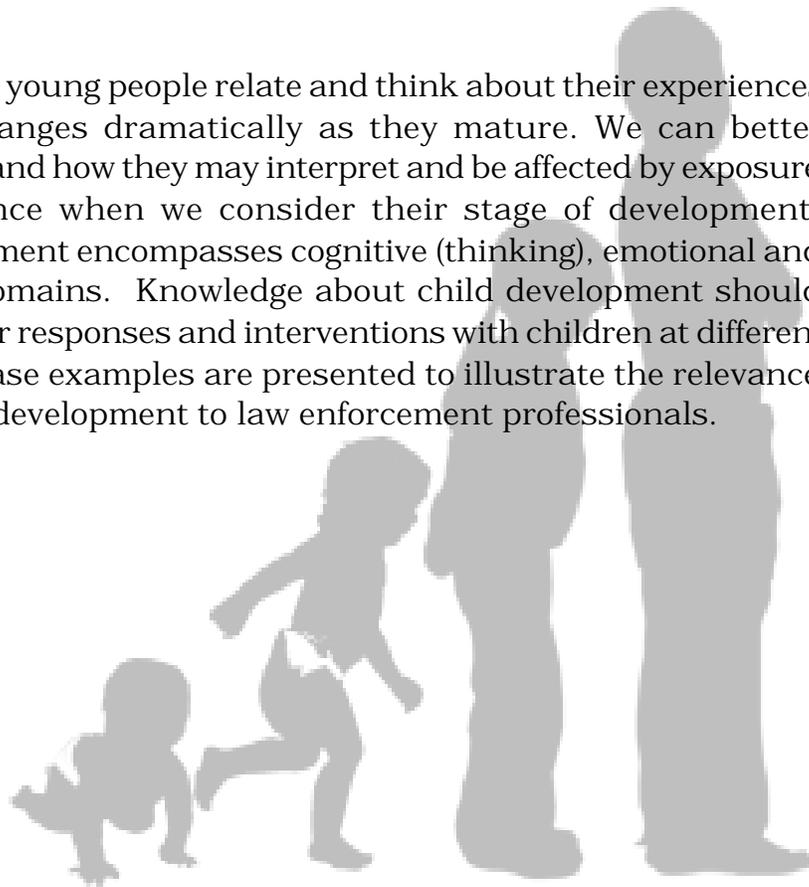
Module 2, Section I Summary

Impacts of exposure to domestic violence on children and adolescents

- **Psychological, behavioral and social problems may be experienced following exposure to domestic violence in childhood.**
- **Some children and adolescents who experience difficulties display traumatic stress reactions (e.g., nightmares, hypervigilance).**
- **Not all children and adolescents who display emotional and behavioral problems have been exposed to domestic violence.**
- **Some children and adolescents exposed to domestic violence do not appear to experience increased problems.**

II) POTENTIAL IMPACTS AT DIFFERENT DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES AND CASE ILLUSTRATIONS

How young people relate and think about their experiences changes dramatically as they mature. We can better understand how they may interpret and be affected by exposure to violence when we consider their stage of development. Development encompasses cognitive (thinking), emotional and social domains. Knowledge about child development should guide our responses and interventions with children at different ages. Case examples are presented to illustrate the relevance of child development to law enforcement professionals.



Infants and toddlers: Potential impact of exposure to domestic violence

Key Aspects of Development

Potential Impact

Take in information from the world around them through their senses



loud noises, vivid visual images associated with violence can be distressing

Form secure attachment



parents may not be able to consistently respond to children's needs

Become more active explorers of their world and learn through play



fear and instability may inhibit exploration and play; imitation in play may be related to witnessed aggression

Learn about social interaction and relationships from what they hear and observe in their families



learn about aggression in observed interactions

Case Examples - Infants & Toddlers

Case 1

Officers responded to a call regarding a domestic dispute. Two young parents who did not live together were arguing outside over who would take their 6 month old baby to their parents for Thanksgiving. Yelling and screaming escalated into pushing and shoving while the mother held the baby in her arms. A neighbor heard the commotion and called 911. When the officers arrived, the baby's father was punching the mother in the face as she struggled not to drop the baby. The baby was clearly upset and crying. Neither parent comforted the baby as they fought with each other.

Questions

1) What steps should the police take in assessing proper care of the infant?

The father will most likely be arrested for his assault on the mother in the officers' presence. It is important to find out who actually cares for the infant (i.e., one of the grandparents, one of the parents, or some combination), who will be available if both parents are arrested, history of violence between the parents, history of child abuse/neglect, and the capacity of the Child Protection Services (CPS) to care for the infant. Continuity and security of care for the infant should be a central factor in the officers' exercise of discretion.

2) Should the infant be seen in the emergency room?

One of the dilemmas is that parents may not accurately report whether the infant was hit or injured during the altercation. Accordingly, the safest course of action is to make sure the infant is evaluated immediately.

In collaboration with CPS, the infant was placed with the maternal grandmother, one of several primary caregivers for the baby.

Case 2

Police received a call regarding a domestic assault in progress. A woman had been sleeping in bed with her 4 month old baby. The baby's father returned home intoxicated late at night, and began to beat the mother. Neighbors heard screams for help and called 911. When officers arrived, they found a seriously bruised woman, the injured baby and the father attempting to flee the apartment. Officers interrupted and arrested the father. Emergency medical services treated the mother at the scene.

Questions

- 1) Can/should officers charge the father with risk of injury to the baby?**

What constitutes criminal risk of injury will depend on local statutes, however, an argument could be made that physical risk is only one factor among many to consider. Another risk is the potential effects of the violence on the infant's psychological and central nervous system development.

- 2) What additional assistance does the mother need to be able to keep herself and the infant safe?**

Issues to consider include shelter or alternate housing for the mother, high bond to keep the father temporarily incarcerated, other court orders likely to be issued, any information regarding the father's likelihood of complying with orders, existing resources for battered women, etc.

When the case was called for arraignment the next day, the mother refused to speak with prosecutors or victim advocates.

This is a common, frustrating experience for many officers. There are likely many complex reasons for this woman's

decision not to pursue prosecution of her partner (e.g., fear, financial dependence, love). This mother, like many people, may believe that these sorts of experiences have little or no effect on very young children. While the perpetrator is responsible for the violence, mothers who learn about the potential effects of domestic violence on their children's development may be more likely to take action to decrease the risk of their future exposure to violence. Police officers and others can be helpful in providing this information. Information about the effects of domestic violence on young children will be most useful when it is presented in a thoughtful and supportive way, in co-ordination with other social services that can assist the mother in developing a strategy for increasing her safety. Information is least likely to be useful to battered women when it is presented in a critical way and implies that she is an inadequate mother.

Case 3

Officers responded to the scene of a domestic dispute in which a woman was stabbed by her boyfriend with a meat cleaver and she retaliated by hitting him on the head with a metal bar that was part of a baby swing. The violence occurred in the presence of the couple's two children, aged two and eight. When officers arrived, they found the children curled up on the couch, splattered with blood. The mother was transported to the hospital by ambulance and her boyfriend was arrested. The distressed children were brought to the police station, where officers provided food and looked after them while they waited for CPS to respond. The two-year old, distraught and overwhelmed, complained to officers that she "had blood on her" that she feared would not come off.

Questions

1) What can officers say or do to assist the two-year old?

It is human nature to want to say something to make children feel better after these experiences. It is not unusual for adults to tell children that everything is going to be OK, or not to worry because the danger is over. But this is far from the truth. It can be more helpful to a young child for adults to acknowledge that something scary has happened, and that the adults are going to do the best they can to help them. One of the best things officers can do is to find out what other adults the children are close to, contact them, and bring them to the police station. It will be easiest to regain a sense of safety and security, especially for the two-year old, in the presence of a familiar, nurturing adult.

For this two-year old, the concerns about blood spots may reflect age-typical concerns about the body and cleanliness that may occur in response to any kind of mark on their clothing or body. The blood is also a powerful reminder of the scary incident the child experienced. The child's distress about the blood may communicate her fear of the memory of this event. A useful response is for the officer to help the child to wash the spots wherever possible and to find clean clothes if available. Although this will not necessarily stop the memory from returning, the child will not be visually confronted with the reminder.

While CPS workers and police worked closely together to investigate the safety and appropriateness of relatives who might care for the children, one of the officers held the two-year old on his lap. The child asked the officer to sing, and when he did, she fell asleep. The children were eventually placed with their maternal grandmother.

Preschoolers: Potential impact of exposure to domestic violence

Key Aspects of Development

Potential Impact

**Learn how to express
aggression and angry
feelings, as well as
other emotions, in
appropriate ways**



learn unhealthy ways of expressing anger and aggression; possibly confused by conflicting messages (e.g., what I see versus what I'm told)

**Think in
egocentric ways**



may attribute violence to something they've done

**Form ideas about
gender roles based on
social messages**



learn gender roles associated with violence & victimization

**Increased physical
independence
(dressing self, etc.)**



instability may inhibit independence; may see regressive behaviors

Case Examples - Preschoolers

Case 4

A woman walked into the central police station with a 6 year old boy and asked to report an assault. She was taken to the detective bureau, where she reported that her live-in boyfriend (the father of her 3 year old daughter) had kept her confined in their apartment for the past three days and had repeatedly assaulted her both physically and sexually. She had managed to leave the apartment by telling the man she was going to the corner for cigarettes. She took her 6 year old son with her, but left her 3 year old daughter behind with her boyfriend. She explained that she had left the girl behind because she did not think the girl's father would let her take their daughter. She made sure to take the boy because she worried that her boyfriend, who was not the child's father, would hurt her son if he was left. Police went immediately to the apartment to check on the safety of the girl and to arrest the boyfriend. The man heard officers approaching, grabbed the child and ran to hide in the basement. Officers followed and convinced him to come with them without a struggle. Officers transported the man to jail and the 3 year old to the police station, where she was reunited with her mother. The girl surprised officers when she ignored her mother and went to play with toys in the police station's family room. She also asked repeatedly where her father was and complained that officers had taken him.

Questions

- 1) Why did the girl behave this way? What should officers say or do?**

There are several reasons why the 3 year old may have ignored her mother and asked for her father. While the information available to officers indicates that the father is a dangerous figure, and his behavior during the previous days put the family at serious risk, this is not necessarily how the child sees her father.

In fact, we know almost nothing about the nature of the child's relationship with her father or his behavior towards her, as distinguished from his treatment of her mother. For example, it may be that the child plays with her father and/or that the father has negatively influenced the child against the mother. The experience of running and hiding with her father may have been more playful than frightening to this young child. Along with her father, the little girl seems to have seen the police as intruders rather than as helpers. It is not uncommon for children to be angry at the police for arresting their parent and to worry that the arrested parent is hurt or in danger. In this situation, it is most helpful for the officer to respect the child's attachment to her father and to explain that officers acted because it was not safe for everyone at home. Officers can reassure the child that her father is not hurt, that both of her parents are in a safe place, and that her mother will take care of her.

When children are chronically exposed to domestic violence, they may feel that the world is an unsafe and unpredictable place where adults cannot assure their safety. Excessive clinginess or exaggerated independence may be indications of disruptions in the child's sense of security and attachment. Officers may be helpful to this child and her mother by offering a referral for clinical services, which can assist the mother in understanding and responding to the child in relation to her experience of this event.

2) Why would the 6 year old be especially at risk for being hurt?

This case provides an opportunity to review information about the co-occurrence of domestic violence and child maltreatment. This child may be at heightened risk because he is not the biological son of the aggressive man. Because of the possibility that the boy has been maltreated (recall the mother's concern for the boy's safety), it would be wise for investigators from police and Child

Protection Services to obtain the child's medical records and a complete skeletal x-ray series to check for previous injuries.

3) What else does the mother need to protect herself and her children?

Given that there has been a long and largely unreported history of violence in this family, this incident provides an opportunity for co-ordinated planning and support. The mother's decision to seek police intervention then results in a real increase in safety for her and the children. Considerations relating to physical safety include a high bond to assure the defendant is temporarily incarcerated, court orders of protection, and possible relocation of the family if he is to be released. This mother also needs substantial practical and emotional support to be able to maintain her focus on safety. Officers can provide referrals for advocacy and clinical services.

Detectives arranged for the highest possible bond by calling a prosecutor at home in the evening. They then assured the mother that she could safely return home with her children for the night. They also called for immediate assistance from an on-call mental health clinician familiar with available services for domestic violence victims. The clinician met with the mother at the police station, provided her with the name and telephone number of the court-based victim advocate, and explained the court procedure for the following day. The advocate reported that the mother was waiting for her at court when the doors opened, and that this was the first time she had been successful in connecting with this woman, though there had been previous cases prosecuted in court against the same boyfriend. The clinician also arranged for evaluations of both children and home-based psychological support and case management for the mother.

Children ages six to eleven: Potential impact of exposure to domestic violence

Key Aspects of Development	Potential Impact
Increased emotional awareness for self and others	→ more aware of own reactions to violence at home; more aware of impact on others (e.g., mother's safety, concerned about father being charged)
Increased complexity in thinking about right and wrong; emphasis on fairness and intent	→ possibly more susceptible to acquiring rationalizations heard to justify violence (i.e., myths of woman abuse)
Academic & social success at school has primary impact on self-concept	→ accessibility for learning may be decreased because of impact of violence (e.g., distracted); may miss positives, or selectively attend to negatives, or evoke more negative feedback
Competition assumes new importance within peer group	→ possibly more influenced by messages that confirm attitudes and behaviors associated with intimate partner abuse
Increased same sex identification	→ may learn gender roles associated with intimate partner abuse (e.g., males as perpetrators — females as victims)
Increased influence from school, peers, community and media	→ may use hostile aggression to compete; increased risk for bullying and/or being bullied

Case Examples - Children Aged Six to Eleven

Case 5

Police responded to a call about an ongoing fight between a man and a woman. When officers arrived, a 6 year old boy answered the door with a blank expression on his face. A 4 year old boy was huddled on the couch with a badly bruised woman. The 4 year old was crying. The woman had deep scratches on her neck. Officers also heard an infant crying in the next room. The female victim reported that her boyfriend (infant's father) returned home drunk and accused her of having another boyfriend. When she refused to talk about it, he began hitting her. She reported this was the first time that he had hit her, but stated that the father of the older children abused her regularly and has been in jail for some time.

Questions

1) Are there any specific concerns about the children?

This case provides an opportunity to review effects of exposure to domestic violence on children and the co-occurrence of domestic violence and child maltreatment.* In discussion, make the connection between exposure to violence and potential difficulties including the perpetration of violence in the future.

On follow-up by a domestic violence detective several days later, the mother asked if the detective would talk to the 6 year old, who has been hitting her and his younger brother since the events. She reported that the boy's teacher has been concerned about his aggressive behavior with other children, but she had not noticed anything of concern to her until the past few days.

**While exposure to domestic violence is considered to be maltreatment in some jurisdictions, here the term child maltreatment is being used to refer to neglect, emotional abuse (apart from exposure), sexual abuse, and physical abuse.*

2) How do you understand the 6 year old's behavior?

Relatively new to school, children of this age are experiencing separation and autonomy from their families. Often they are very invested in feeling in charge of their own experience and surroundings. Boys are likely to identify with men and are becoming more independent. The experience of being helpless at the time of the violent events can be overwhelming for the child, particularly a boy of this age who is concerned with issues of size and power and wishes to be strong and competent. Aggressive behavior after the event is one way for the child to turn around or undo the experience of extreme vulnerability. Aggressive acting out may also be a way for the child to identify himself with the more powerful, aggressive figure as opposed to the helpless victim. It is not unusual for any child who feels helpless and overwhelmed to later behave aggressively. The problem is when this response becomes a lasting coping strategy.

3) What can the detective do to be helpful?

The mother is asking for the detective's help because she sees him as endowed with authority. Typically, people think that officers authoritatively lecture a child into 'getting straight', but as we all know, this type of intervention rarely works. The officer may be more effective by discussing with the mother the relationship between the child's exposure, experience of confusing adult relationships and his aggressive behavior. An offer to the mother for on-going support and/or treatment from a social service agency or mental health program to help her and her children might be well received at this time.

Case 6

Refer back to case #3, in which the mother was stabbed and hospitalized and the two-year old was concerned about the blood on her. The 8 year old girl was distraught and crying in the police station. In an attempt to help the child feel better, officers brought her and her sister hamburgers, fries and drinks. Both girls greedily ate them. One officer sat next to the 8 year old as she was eating and she began to recount the details of the domestic incident. One striking feature of her story was her stating several times that she could have stopped them from fighting if only she had gotten the baseball bat from the closet and threatened to hit her stepfather. She also repeatedly asked to know what was going to happen to her mother and stepfather. She was very concerned that she would never see them again.

Questions

- 1) How can you understand what the girl tells the officer about her ability to stop the fight?**

It is not uncommon for individuals, and especially children, to feel helpless and without control in the face of these experiences. To feel more powerful and in greater control, they imagine that they could change the course of events, though it is far beyond their capabilities. Feeling powerful and psychologically in control feels better than being weak and helpless. There is a cost, however. Taking responsibility for changing the outcome almost invariably leads to guilt and self-blame when things do not change. The officer, by virtue of his/her authority and knowledge can simply say: "I know you wish that things were different, but you did the right thing by keeping yourself and your sister safe." Reminding the child that she was active in protecting her sister gives her some sense of accomplishment and efficacy.

2) What do you say to the girl about what is going to happen to her mother and stepfather?

Most of us want to spare children from any unpleasant information, but hiding the truth from them can be equally disturbing and may lead to another traumatic experience when the children discover that they are not returning home. In addition, when information is kept from children (and adults), they often imagine even more frightening and upsetting outcomes than the factual details the officer can provide. It is useful to tell the children that their parents are being treated at the hospital. It may be useful and important to get medical status reports from the hospital staff and inform the children of their parents' condition. If it has been determined that the mother will remain in the hospital, the children should be told of this decision and be asked with whom they might stay. Whenever possible, it is best to place children with people they know.

If a relative or family friend is going to care for the children, it will be important to provide her or him with some guidance about what reactions the children may have and how to support them.

Adolescents: Potential impact of exposure to domestic violence

Key Aspects of Development	Potential Impact
Increased sense of self and autonomy from family	→ family skills for respectful communication and negotiation may be poorly developed due to violence; transition of adolescence may be more difficult for youth and family
Physical changes brought on by puberty	→ may try to physically stop violence; may use increased size to impose will with physical intimidation or aggression
Increased peer group influence and desire for acceptance	→ possibly more embarrassed by violence at home; may try to escape violence by increasing time away from home; may use maladaptive coping to avoid (e.g., drugs)
Dating raises issues of sexuality, intimacy, relationship skills	→ may have difficulty establishing healthy relationships; possibly at greater risk to become involved in dating violence (e.g., boys as abusers & girls as victims)
Increased influence by media	→ possibly more influenced by negative media messages re: violent behavior, gender role stereotypes

Case Examples - Adolescents

Case 7

Late on a Saturday night, mother's boyfriend came home intoxicated and began arguing and then beating his girlfriend. The mother's 12 year old son, who was having a snack in the kitchen, picked up a steak knife and stabbed the boyfriend in the back. The mother called 911 and asked for an ambulance.

Officers arrived on the scene and both the mother and boy told the story. The man was brought to the emergency room by ambulance. The boy had no remorse, and stated that he just could not take it anymore and that this happens almost every weekend. Officers check police records and see there have been 15 calls to the address in the last 6 months.

Questions

1) What do you do and say to the boy and his mother?

The issue of arrest of the boy, of course, is of primary concern. Whether or not his arrest is mandatory will depend on the individual jurisdiction. However, this boy is at an age when he can perform in reality what younger children could only imagine. He protected his mother from a man that he views (perhaps rightly so) as cruel and dangerous. The repeat calls for service confirm that this boy has experienced innumerable episodes of domestic violence and it is possible that he too has been maltreated. He may have concluded, based on the repeated calls to the police, that the justice system was unable or unwilling to stop the violence against his mother. He likely felt justified in taking matters into his own hands.

Although arrest may be necessary, this boy needs a mental health evaluation and treatment. Punishment and treatment are not mutually exclusive. Inform the mother of the need for arrest and the recommendation that will be made to the court for the need for a comprehensive evaluation. In jurisdictions where the boy would be released to his mother's custody, the mother should be informed of the concerns about the boy's (and her) psychological well-being, the need for treatment, and that this recommendation will be made to the court. The officers can assist the court by providing the details about the domestic violence in their report.

Case 8

While on routine patrol, officers saw a girl who looked to be about 14 years old sitting on her front steps. This was the third mid-morning in a row that beat officers noticed her there and the third school day she was truant. The patrol officer stopped and asked her why she was not going to school. She was reluctant to talk and what she said did not make much sense. So, the officer took the girl up to her apartment and knocked on the door. A woman (her mother) answered and was wearing large sunglasses even though the apartment was dark. She said that she thought her daughter was going to school. She left at the right time in the morning and returned at the normal afternoon time.

The officer asked the mother if it was alright to come in and talk with them. Obviously, he was suspicious about the mother's sunglasses and asked if there was somewhere that he and the girl might talk alone. The mother left the officer in the living room and went to her bedroom. The officer asked, "What's going on with your mom, why is she wearing sunglasses?" With that the girl began to cry and reported that her father (her parents are divorced) beat up her mother over the weekend and threatened to kill her.

Questions

1) How do you understand the girl's truancy?

This girl is not able to go to school because she is too worried about her mother to leave her alone. The girl does not stay inside for any number of reasons, including concern that if her mother knew she was home, her mother would insist she go to school. The girl may also feel that she does not want to discuss her worries with her mother because her mother is too vulnerable. Sitting on the steps outside allows the girl to keep tabs on her mother, while protecting her mother from knowing how worried she is or that she is truant.

2) What can the officer do to help the girl and her mother?

The officer can inform the mother about the reasons for the girl's truancy, and begin to investigate and document the assault on the mother. In addition to pursuing the criminal investigation, the officer can provide the mother with information and referrals to social service agencies to assist her with safety planning and emotional support.

The case also raises the question about whether to refer the girl to juvenile court or CPS for truancy. Although a punitive response is not warranted, she is at serious risk, and it is important to ensure she returns to school before her truancy becomes chronic. There is reason to think additional intervention will be required to return the girl to school, especially if the mother is resistant to pursuing a criminal complaint against her ex-husband. A referral to the appropriate authoritative agency can support the mother's resolve to make sure the girl does go to school, and can support the girl's need to know her mother is safe enough for her to leave home. CPS or juvenile court can also facilitate mental health evaluation and treatment for the girl.

III) INTERVENTIONS

Effective interventions for children and adolescents cannot be separated from responses to domestic violence itself. The welfare of children is strongly linked to their non-offending parent's safety and emotional well-being.

Responses to domestic violence should:

- provide safety;
- foster the emotional well-being of all victims;
- hold perpetrators accountable through legal sanctions and re-education programs.

Within this framework, assessment and interventions must be individualized to address the needs and strengths presented by each family member and family. Some responses will necessitate the involvement of Child Protection Services. Other times this involvement will not be necessary. The different combinations and range of resources that families require call for meaningful collaboration and coordination between community services. To be beneficial these services must be accessible, respectful, flexible, and culturally relevant.

Children and adolescents benefit from informal (e.g., peers, faith community) and formal supports (e.g., individual counseling, children exposed to violence groups, non-offending parent-and-child interventions). Age-appropriate interventions and those responsive to the youth's individual circumstances should be selected.

“Group was good. Before I went I thought this stuff (violence) only happened in our family, like we were weird or something. Lots of kids got stuff going on. We helped each other.” (twelve-year-old female)

Needs-based intervention goals for children and adolescents

- breaking the silence about the abuse
- learning that they were not at fault
- learning that violence is not okay
- learning respectful ways of relating to others
- establishing safety plans in case the violence recurs

Module 2, Section III Summary

Effective responses to domestic violence

- **Children and adolescents living with domestic violence require structure, reassurance and support to help re-establish stability and their sense of security.**
- **Adult victims, children and adolescents benefit from informal (e.g., relatives, church groups) and formal supports (e.g., individual, group and family interventions).**
- **Perpetrators benefit from being held accountable through legal sanctions and re-education programs.**

MODULE
SPECIAL
CONSIDERATIONS FOR
POLICE OFFICERS

3

I) DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS DISTINGUISHED BY THE INTIMATE CONTEXT IN WHICH CRIMES OCCUR

While the act may behaviorally appear like types of stranger-to-stranger violence (e.g., simple assault, sexual assault, stalking), domestic violence significantly differs because of the intimate relationship in which the crime occurs. The relationship between the perpetrator and the victim gives the perpetrator greater access to, and knowledge of, the victim. This privileged position provides increased opportunities for controlling and assaultive behaviors against the victim. There is also evidence that the severity of assaults is greater within intimate relationships¹². The context of intimacy may intensify the effects of the victim's trauma. The perpetrator's relationship to the victim may also afford cultural or social, if not legal, permission to abuse the victim.

Intimate relationships are complex. In addition to a sexual relationship, partners may share or have complementary roles and responsibilities related to finances, parenting, household chores and social activities. While clearly wanting the violence to stop, victims may not want their partners to be taken away for a variety of reasons (e.g., loss of necessary income, love for perpetrator, fear of reprisal violence in future). Thus, the complex relationship within which the violence occurs may create barriers to separation and lead victims to change their minds about charges being laid against their abusive partners.

Children’s relationship to the victim and perpetrator

Children exposed to domestic violence are also affected by its context of intimacy. They have emotional ties to and dependency on one or both of the adults involved. Because of their relationship to the non-offending parent, children are often used by the perpetrator to control the adult victim (e.g., engaging children in the abuse of the victim, holding children hostage). While children want the violence to stop, they often experience ambivalent and confusing feelings toward one or both parental figures. Children’s attitudes and feelings are influenced by a number of factors, including:

- their view of who is responsible for the violence (e.g., the child blames self);
- their sense of security in relation to a number of outcomes (e.g., How will we get money to eat if they take my Dad away? Who will play with me if they take me from my parents? Who will look after my pet if we go to the shelter?);
- the nature of their relationships with the offending and non-offending parental figures.

Children may also express ambivalence toward police authorities: immense relief that they stopped the violence, but anger that they took the offending parent away; or, anger that they were taken away from their home after the police came.

“Why can’t they (police) stop it (violence) without taking him (Father) away? He’s not a robber, like a bad guy or something— he’s a Dad.” (ten- year-old boy)

“I love my Mom more than anything, but I was really angry at her for not stopping him. I didn’t understand back then that she was as terrified of him as I was. She had no control over what happened. We were both frozen.” (adolescent female client)

Module 3, Section I Summary

Considerations when crime occurs in a context of intimacy

- **The effects of the victim's trauma may be increased.**
- **The perpetrator's access to and knowledge of the victim is increased and can be used to control and abuse the victim in an ongoing way.**
- **The crime often occurs within a context of ongoing psychological abuse that may not be evident to police authorities.**
- **Victims' multifaceted relationships with the perpetrators may create barriers to separation and lead victims to change their minds about charges being laid against their partners.**
- **Children exposed to domestic violence have significant relationships with and are dependent on the victim and/or the perpetrator.**
- **Children may have confused and ambivalent feelings toward the non-offending parent, the perpetrator, and police officers.**

II) THE PRESENCE OF CHILDREN IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SITUATIONS IS SIGNIFICANT

Police may encounter as many as half a million children during domestic violence arrests in the US each year.⁵ Households where domestic violence occurs are more than twice as likely to have children, as US census data predicts.³ These statistics highlight the presence of children in domestic violence situations, as well as the importance of understanding the implications of their presence for law enforcement professionals. For example, children may be physically harmed or emotionally distressed by the violence. Intervention by police authorities may create immense relief and/or additional worries or distress for the child (e.g., relief that the violence was stopped but concern about the non-offending parent's injuries and the offending parent's removal from the home). Either way, it is important that police officers acquire skills for and comfort in "talking" with children.

Considerations when children are present

i) Ask about children:



Ask the non-offending parent where the children are now, where they were when the violence occurred, and if they are okay.

ii) Reassure children:

→ Talking to them lets them know that someone outside of the family knows and cares (e.g., “That must have been scary for you. Are you okay?”).

iii) Determine if children are harmed or hurt:

→ Ask to see the children. It is important for police officers to find out if the children are physically hurt or in extreme distress. Often parents are unaware that children have heard or seen the violence. Children may be hiding in another part of the house. They may be sleeping or pretending to be asleep. Children have likely learned that what they are witnessing is a secret that should not be discussed with others. Threats may have been made to ensure their silence on this occasion and/or in the past. Many children learn that keeping quiet and out of the way are good survival strategies.

iv) Remember, children are affected by more than the criminal act:

→ The majority of domestic violence crimes occur within an ongoing pattern of psychological and physical abuse. The abuse often involves using children to control the adult victim. By the time police arrive, children have often been exposed to violence for a substantial length of time and may be experiencing the accumulated impacts of ongoing violence.

Tips for talking with children

- Address the child at eye level.
- Use simple, direct, age-appropriate language.
- If the child does not understand your role, explain it in terms that are easily understood.
- Discuss confidentiality and its limits.
- Honor a child's loyalty to an abusive parent. Do not criticize or demean the abusive parent.
- Acknowledge a child's right *not* to speak. Do not coerce a child to talk if he/she is not comfortable doing so.
- Don't make promises you can't keep.
- Communicate your concern about safety of the child.

Developed by the *Child Witness to Violence Project*, Boston Medical Center, One Boston Medical Center Place, Mat. 5, Boston, MA 02118-2393

MY SAFE PLACE



Interviewing children

Interviews can be stressful and intimidating situations for children. Children who witness a violent event or who are victims of abuse may be frightened, upset and anxious. When children feel reassured and comfortable, they are more likely to be more confident and competent in their ability to communicate. By developing your skills for interviewing children of different ages, you can increase their comfort and enhance the evidence gathered.

Ensure the child understands your question: Edith, age 5, showed the police officer her dress when asked for her address. The officer questioned her competency to communicate. However, Edith knew the answer to the question “where do you live?”.

Key factors in interviewing children

- When possible, obtain information about the child's family situation, abilities, activities, and special needs.
- Introduce yourself and describe your role in simple terms.
- Explain the purpose of the interview.
- Sit at the child's physical level.
- Use the child's name.
- Explain that you were not present and need help to understand what happened.
- Give the child permission to tell you when he/she does not know the answer or does not understand a word or question.
- Make no assumptions about a child's knowledge base or abilities.
- Use simple words and short sentences.
- Ask one question at a time.
- Avoid double negatives.
- Ensure the child understands your question (e.g., "I need to make sure you understand my question. What do I want you to tell me?").
- Continually clarify your understanding of the child's responses (e.g., "Do you mean ____?; Would you explain ____?; Tell me more.").
- Avoid rushing the child. Wait for him/her to listen to your question, to think about it, and to respond to it.
- Ask open-ended questions (e.g., "Tell me about ____; What happened when ____?; How did ____?")
- Avoid using "why" questions. "Why" questions may imply blame.
- Observe a child's non-verbal communication.
- Limit the use of questions that require a yes/no answer.

Developed by the *Child Witness Project*, Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System, 254 Pall Mall St., London, Ontario, CAN

Module 3, Section II Summary

Suggestions for dealing with the presence of children

- **Recognize the variety of ways children can be present – directly and indirectly.**
- **Ask where the children were, where they are now, and if they are hurt.**
- **Speak directly to the children to ensure they are okay and to reassure them.**
- **Speak to them in language they can understand.**
- **Sit or squat so you are physically at their level.**
- **Recognize there is often a history of violent incidents prior to your involvement. Children may be responding both to the immediate situation and from their own experience of past incidents.**

III) RISKS TO CHILDREN IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SITUATIONS NEED TO BE ASSESSED

Children living with domestic violence face increased risks. First, some violence directed at the adult victim poses threats to children's physical safety. In such situations, children may experience physical harm in a direct manner or by accident due to their presence in the violent event. For example, children's presence in the middle of a violent event where weapons are used creates a serious or compelling risk. Second, children living in families where domestic violence occurs are at increased risk of experiencing neglect, and emotional, sexual, or physical abuse. Evidence shows that these experiences may influence victims' lives well into their teen and adult years. Accordingly, officers should be aware that:

- a subset of domestic violence situations poses serious and imminent risk to children;
- when there is concern that children are being maltreated, the possibility of intimate partner abuse should also be investigated;
- when intimate partner abuse is occurring, the possibility that children are being maltreated should be assessed.

30 - 60% of battered mothers' children experience maltreatment (e.g., physical abuse).¹⁶

Children who are exposed to domestic violence are at increased risk of being murdered or physically injured.⁹

While exposure to domestic violence is considered to be maltreatment in some jurisdictions, here the term child maltreatment is being used to refer to neglect, emotional abuse (apart from exposure), sexual abuse, and physical abuse.

Legislation, policy and procedures

Police actions are governed by legislation and by the policies and procedures set down in respective police services. The legislation related to children exposed to domestic violence differs across jurisdictions in the US. Police have little discretion about possible actions in the few states where children's exposure to domestic violence is a crime, and/or where automatic reporting to Child Protection Services (CPS) is legally mandated or dictated by the policies and procedures within a given police service.

When reporting to Child Protective Services (CPS) is not legally mandated nor automatically required by policy and procedures

In many jurisdictions and situations, police have increased discretion over what action to take in regard to child protection. The following points are presented for consideration in these situations.

i) Assess for child maltreatment:



Many of the domestic violence calls you respond to will not involve child maltreatment. In these situations, children's ongoing safety depends primarily on the criminal justice system holding perpetrators accountable and supporting non-offending parents in looking after their children. Police play an important, front-end role in their decisions to remove the perpetrator, lay charges, and make referrals (e.g., victim services).

ii) Consider the safety of victims and their children:

➔ The welfare of children, on average, is strongly linked to their non-offending parent's safety and emotional well-being.

iii) Refer and provide information:

➔ Where available, the support of a police victim crisis service should be offered. Police officers should provide the non-offending parent with the names and telephone numbers of services that deal with violence against intimates and with children's mental health services within the community.

iv) Report to CPS when the situation poses a serious risk to children:

➔ There is agreement across jurisdictions that police officers have a duty to report to local child protection agencies when children are at serious risk due to domestic violence. These situations must be recognized and responses taken to ensure the safety of children and their non-offending parents. For example, significant substance abuse by adult victims and/or their abusive partners may create situations of extreme risk for children. In these situations, officers may feel that non-offending parents are unable to protect their children.

v) Do not blame the victim:

➔ It is important that non-offending parents are not blamed for their partners' abusive behavior, nor for situations that they do not have control over.

Module 3, Section III Summary

Approaching child protection issues

- **Know the state legislation and the policy in your department regarding reports to Child Protection Services.**
- **On average, the safety and well-being of children is dependent on supporting their non-offending parents in looking after them and in holding perpetrators accountable through legal sanctions and re-education programs.**
- **Police officers have a duty to report extreme risk due to domestic violence to Child Protection Services.**

IV) RISK ASSESSMENT, RISK REDUCTION AND SAFETY PLANNING FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DIFFER IN IMPORTANT WAYS FROM THOSE CARRIED OUT FOR OTHER VICTIMS

Evaluating risk is part of the ongoing work of police officers. In domestic violence situations, children’s safety is strongly linked to the safety and well being of the victimized parent. The safety of both children and adult victims is increased through effective risk assessment, risk reduction and safety planning. Accordingly, risk assessment, risk reduction and safety planning are of critical importance in domestic violence situations and should be modified from evaluations carried out in other areas of crime prevention. The following changes are necessary for evaluating risk in domestic violence situations to:

i) Broaden the concept of risk to include the complexity of risks within the intimate relationship:²⁴



The multifaceted and complex relationship between the victim and perpetrator in domestic violence is the host to a range of risks that do not typically characterize stranger violence. The perpetrator’s increased access to, knowledge of and relationship with the victim enables dimensions of their intimacy to be used to control and harm the victim (e.g., sexual relationship, children). As a result, assessment of risk must “go beyond assaultive behavior to include analysis of the complex package of physical, legal, economic, familial, social and emotional risks faced by the victim, and those the victim feels bound to protect.”²⁴

ii) Identify and use the context within which the violent incident occurred to facilitate decision-making:²⁵



The risk to adult victims and their children and the strategies needed to reduce risk are influenced by the general context in which the act of domestic violence occurred. Accordingly, the criminal justice system must go beyond the incident and understand the general context in which a given act occurs in the determination of risk and intervention strategies. The context for a given domestic violence act is determined by the intent of the offender, the meaning of the act to the victim, the effect of the violence on the victim, as well as other relevant factors (e.g., how much violence, coercion or intimidation enwrapped the criminal act).

Frederick and Tilley²⁵ of the *Battered Women's Justice Program* in Minnesota identified general contexts for domestic violence. **Battering** is the most frequently occurring context, and is described as a pattern of violence, intimidation and control. Others include an **isolated act**, **a history of general violence – a fighter**, and **mental impairment and incapacity**. There may be many complex, co-occurring problems that require assistance from multiple agencies (e.g., need for psychiatric intervention and batterers' program). Irrespective of the context in which domestic violence occurs, there is always a need to consider safety and accountability issues.

The context for a given domestic violence act is determined by the intent of the offender, the meaning of the act to the victim, the effect of the violence on the victim, as well as other relevant factors (e.g., how much violence, coercion or intimidation surrounded the criminal act).

iii) Carry out the assessment of risk, risk reduction and safety planning in collaboration with the victim:²⁶

→ However well intended and executed, criminal justice interventions are limited in their ability to keep victims and children safe. Victims “ultimately carry the ‘every-moment’ burden of attending to their safety and that of their children.”²⁴ Effective risk assessment, risk reduction and safety planning must therefore be a collaborative process to which the victim is central.

iv) Give priority to the victim’s understanding of past, present and future risks for self and children in the analysis of the totality of risk:²⁴

→ On average, victims engage in survival strategies for some time before law enforcement authorities are involved.²⁷ They have lived with the risk and are in a position to appreciate how the current situation compares to previous situations. They can also provide pertinent information on less evident risks related to their complex relationship with the perpetrator (e.g., economics, children). The trained, external view provided by police officers is very important. The safety of victims and children, however, requires that this view be considered within the context of the victim’s direct experience and understanding of all risks.

v) Consider the possible strategies for risk reduction in collaboration with the victim and evaluate for the potentially serious risks or costs that may occur in addition to expected benefits:²⁴

→ The complexity of the relationship factors, and the related dynamics of domestic violence, necessitate that each risk reduction strategy and safety plan be evaluated in a holistic manner and that the evaluation include the victim’s perception. Risk reduction that targets one factor in an isolated way may not be effective.

Components of risk assessment and safety plans

Police departments may have their own protocols for risk assessment that may or may not include the use of specific assessment tools. Assessment instruments assist officers to identify and focus on critical elements of a particular case and compare it to known cases that resulted in serious injury or death. While these tools do not enable the behavior of a given individual to be predicted, they are helpful in evaluating comparative risk and guiding plans to safeguard victims and children against identified dangers.

Victim advocates within the police service or community often play important roles in risk assessment and safety planning. The role of victim advocates is likely to depend on the characteristics of the specific situation, and/or the policies and procedures within a given police department. The areas covered in brief risk assessment and safety planning are outlined below. The elements contained in comprehensive domestic violence risk assessments and safety planning are presented in Table 3 and Table 4 respectively.

Brief risk assessment and safety planning

- Ask a woman if she feels safe right now, and if there is somewhere she can go or someone she can call in order to feel safer.
- Ask the victims of violence about risks to their safety, including history of assaults/threats, recent escalation in violence, and planned or recent separation.
- Ask if her children know how to call for help and go to a safe place in the house if they are afraid.
- Discuss signs of danger that you may have noticed (e.g., locks broken, weapons present and accessible, etc.).
- Provide contact information for the local shelter, counseling services, etc.

Table 3: Main components included in domestic violence risk assessments^{24, 28}

Assessing threats	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • threats to harm/kill the victim or children • victim fears serious injury or death for self or children
History of violence/ use of force	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • victims' perceptions about risks to their safety including history of assaults/threats and recent escalation in violence • prior injuries to the victim/children • any breach of court order by abuser
The role of weapons	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • access to firearms/weapons • trained in use of weapons • use of weapons in past violence
Centrality	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extent to which abuser's sense of self depends on the relationship • possessiveness of the victim • material and emotional "overlaps" between abuser and victim
Stalking	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extent of monitoring and checking up on the victim • engagement in stalking behaviors • persistent efforts to communicate with the victim when communication is unwanted
Coercive control	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • degree and extent of control over the victim • belief of entitlement to control by abuser • level of verbal, psychological, financial control/abuse • use of children to control the victim
Significant events/ changes	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recent or anticipated separation • recent changes in custody and access arrangements or abuser's time with children • experiences of loss by abuser (e.g., loss of a job) • flashpoints such as significant anniversaries, holidays
Substance or alcohol abuse	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extent and pattern of usage • recent escalation

Table 4: Main components in domestic violence safety plans

- How to leave safely (e.g., safe exits from the house for self and children).
- Where to go to be safe (e.g., shelter, alternative place).
- Where to keep important papers and documents.
- Which neighbors to tell about the violence so they can call police if necessary.
- Teach children how to call the police.
- How to protect self and children in dangerous situations.
- Local telephone numbers for shelter, crisis center, police, child protection agency.
- Importance of practicing and reviewing safety plan regularly with children.
- Possible safety measures at home (e.g., locks, lights, rope ladders, smoke detectors and fire extinguishers, code words for children to be picked up by another adult, to call police or to get out of the house quickly).
- Inform school of pick-up permission for children if necessary.
- Inform employer and co-workers of risk.
- Other friends, neighbors, family members who can look after children, support non-offending parent when stress/depression/anxiety levels are high.

Domestic violence and risk

In 1999, 1218 women and 424 men were killed by intimate partners.²⁹

Physical abuse is the leading cause of injuries to American women between the ages of 15 to 44 years – more common than auto accidents, muggings, and cancer deaths combined.³⁰

Domestic violence may include a single act of abuse. Typically it includes a number of acts, some of which may appear minor or trivial when viewed in isolation, but collectively form a pattern that amounts to abuse.¹¹

A history of property-related offences may be associated with domestic violence (e.g., breaking into ex-partner's home, destroying partner's possessions).¹¹

Domestic violence perpetrators may have good qualities, in addition to their abusive and criminal behavior. For example, a perpetrator of domestic violence can be intelligent and socially skilled. Moreover, the toll and nature of victimization within an intimate relationship and the coping responses the victim may use to survive the abuse, are such that the perpetrator may be viewed as presenting in a more credible way than the victim.¹⁷

“Each intervener in the criminal justice system must ensure that the relevant information is obtained on each person who uses violence in his/her relationship, that the information is shared with other interveners who need the information, and that the information is incorporated into the decisions about how the case is handled.”²⁴

Module 3, Section IV Summary

Considerations for risk assessment and safety planning

- **Ensure that perpetrator is no longer a threat in the current situation.**
- **Carry out brief risk assessment with the victim to determine risk of the current situation.**
- **Listen to the victim's assessment of risk and offer feedback based on your observations.**
- **Discuss safety planning with non-offending parent and older children/adolescents, including what they can do to feel safe.**
- **Make referrals so that victim advocates within the police department or community can carry out a more comprehensive risk assessment and safety planning as follow-up to your intervention at the scene.**

V) ISSUES RELATED TO DUAL ARRESTS IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES

Over the past decade, police departments have begun to fine tune their arrest policies to account for the fact that a significant minority of the incidents to which they respond involve the use of violence by both parties. Examination of these cases shows that the use of violence by women can differ dramatically from that used by men. For example, many women use violence against their abusers in attempts to protect themselves from their attackers. Mutual arrests are common in many jurisdictions and the results are problematic for the following reasons:*

- Children of battered women are placed in foster care even though their mothers have histories of strong parenting and loving, supportive relationships with their children. In these cases, separation from the mother may heighten children's sense of insecurity and worry following the violent incident.
- Battered women refrain from seeking police protection because they fear that they, themselves, might end up being arrested and, where children are present, being separated from them.
- Charges against the most violent and dangerous abusers are routinely dropped because their victims are also defendants. This outcome poses risk to adult victims and may further expose children to domestic violence.

As a result of these unfortunate and dangerous developments, which many characterize as unintended consequences of the use of the criminal justice system to stop battering, police departments are increasingly training their officers to investigate such cases for self

* Personal communication (January 2002) to the authors from L. Frederick, *Battered Women's Justice Project*, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

defense and to refrain from arresting the party whose use of violence was legitimate in the eyes of the law. Furthermore, police are being asked to investigate which party, if either, is the **primary aggressor**, and to avoid arresting both parties where one is clearly more dangerous, more controlling in the incident, and more in need of government intervention. The goal is to reduce the risk of serious harm to others in the family.

Some states' statutes and many police departments' policies now require that police avoid arresting both parties where one acted in legitimate self-defense or was the secondary and less dangerous of the two parties.* There are other jurisdictions where policy continues to dictate that dual or mutual arrests be made when violence has been used by both parties in a domestic violence incident. In these situations, officers may issue citations (promise to appear in court) without custodial arrest to the less aggressive parent. This decision may be made in consideration of children viewed to benefit from remaining in the care of the parent receiving the citation. This evolution of the role of law enforcement serves to re-orient police to the primary purpose of police intervention in domestic violence cases. It also serves to place the focus of intervention efforts where they are most critically needed.

* Personal communication (January 2002) to the authors from L. Frederick, *Battered Women's Justice Project*, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Dual arrests in domestic violence cases: Problems and impacts on children

Problem

Potential Impact

Children of battered women with histories of adequate or strong parenting are placed “in care”



separation from their mother may heighten children’s sense of insecurity and worry following the violent incident

Battered women refrain from seeking police protection for fear they may be arrested themselves and separated from their children



children and adult victims less likely to access and benefit from intervention by the police and the justice system

Charges against the most violent and dangerous abusers are routinely dropped because victims are also defendants



increased probability that children will continue to be exposed to violence and the risks associated with such exposure (e.g., direct physical abuse, escalating violence)

Module 3, Section V Summary

Promising police practice where violence is used by both parties

State statutes and police department policies that direct police officers:

- **to determine whether there is a primary aggressor**
- **to avoid arresting both parties where**
 - ➔ **one acted in legitimate self-defense,**
 - or**
 - ➔ **one was the secondary and less dangerous of the two parties.**

VI) COLLABORATIONS AND COORDINATED COMMUNITY RESPONSES BENEFIT CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

Collaboration is essential when it comes to responding to domestic violence and the children living with it.³¹ Collaborative practice can be described as a range of joint endeavors between individuals, organizations and agencies. Examples include joint training, consultation, and various approaches to coordinating activities among disciplines, services and agencies.

Collaborative practice is promoted and reinforced by collaborative leadership at multiple levels and in multiple domains (e.g., intergovernmental bodies, interdisciplinary bodies). At a general level, meaningful collaboration creates a **network** of supports and protections for families in their communities. Such a network facilitates access to and navigation of services by a given individual, family or service provider (e.g., police officer). Lack of effective community collaboration places the burden of attempting to access and coordinate services on victims and their families. This challenge can be further complicated by the different philosophies and lack of understanding between different disciplines and services.

What are the benefits of collaboration and coordination?

Some of the benefits children and their families experience as a result of collaborations and better coordination among community partners include:¹⁰

i) Increasing early identification of, and intervention with, vulnerable children and their non-offending parents to reduce trauma and enhance healing:

→ For example, collaborations between police and mental health providers to obtain immediate assistance and intervention for children experiencing traumatic reactions from exposure to violence.

ii) Reducing risks of re-traumatization of children and families by systems:

→ For example, collaborations between criminal justice professionals, victim services and mental health professionals to reduce the number of interviews a child undergoes, to minimize the number of individuals involved in a case, and to provide court preparation for child witnesses.

iii) Enhancing the quality of discovered evidence:

→ For example, collaborations between law enforcement, prosecutors and child development specialists to aid with forensic interviewing of children.

iv) Supporting intervention and prevention by holding perpetrators accountable:

→ For example, collaborations between various partners within the criminal justice system to increase training in the area of domestic violence and to ensure monitoring of offenders and enforcement of protection orders.

v) Reducing the risk that victims and their children, or perpetrators, fall through the cracks within the community service network:

→ For example, community coordinating bodies made up of service partners working to end domestic violence.

Who should take part in community collaboration to intervene and prevent domestic violence?

Collaborations will differ according to the characteristics and make-up of a given community. Generally, community responses to domestic violence benefit from coordination between key stakeholders: survivors and their families, law enforcement authorities, child protection service professionals, domestic violence advocates and service providers, mental health and health care professionals.

There has been an increased awareness of the essential role of survivors of different ages in working with community partners to create services and support systems that meet the needs of domestic violence victims and their children. This vital dimension is relatively new. It is also important to expand the network through training initiatives, consultation and resource development, to include educators, early childhood care providers, clergy, employers and others who play significant roles in the lives of children and their families. These partners are in positions to assist in the early identification of children exposed to domestic violence and adult victims.

Continued efforts to develop a variety of approaches and means of collaborating with survivors are needed. These collaborations must be respectful and responsive to survivors' needs as well as helpful in shaping services.

Strategies to facilitate collaborations

i) **Make the benefits known:**



Law enforcement professionals and other community partners against domestic violence are more likely to invest in collaborations when they know the benefits experienced by affected children and their families. Collaboration becomes an easy sell if it makes some aspects of one's own job easier to carry out. In addition to discovery through direct experience, benefits can be identified from different perspectives through joint training, as well as interdisciplinary or inter-agency meetings.

ii) **Support community policing:**



Community policing provides a foundation for relationship building and problem-solving partnerships between communities and law enforcement. This strategy emphasizes crime prevention and community service along with law enforcement. For example, police officers are more visible and known in the communities they serve and play active roles in schools. This model is highly compatible with and complementary to collaborations and coordination to intervene in and prevent domestic violence.

iii) Develop inter-agency protocols:



To facilitate collaboration and a co-ordinated response at a community level, it is useful to have inter-agency protocols in place. These protocols can specify:

- when and how to make linkages and referrals;
- how to share information following referral when more than one agency is working with a child or family;
- who to include in ongoing consultation re: safety planning, discharge planning and follow-up support;
- how to handle potential sources of conflict or concern.

The following are examples of groups that might be included in inter-agency protocols with police departments: school boards, child protection agencies, children's and adults' mental health agencies, violence against women prevention services, women's shelters, violence against intimate partner services, crisis telephone and counseling services, health practitioners, family service agencies, probation and parole services.

iv) Provide opportunities for cross training:



Opportunities to participate in training with other disciplines and services promote mutual understanding, cross fertilization of ideas, and better ways of working together. Police officers are likely to benefit from domestic violence training initiatives with mental health professionals, domestic violence advocates, child protection workers, victim services professionals, and other groups within the criminal justice sector. Training on establishing and sustaining meaningful collaborations may be of particular benefit.

Examples of collaboration

The following examples describe exciting collaborations between law enforcement services and community partners such as mental health professionals and domestic violence advocates.

Safe Start Initiative:¹⁰



Funded to expand community partnerships to prevent and reduce the impact of violence by creating a comprehensive service delivery system that will meet the needs of children and their families at any point of entry into the system. Partnerships between service providers – including the fields of childhood education and development, health and mental health, family support and strengthening, domestic violence and child welfare, substance abuse prevention and treatment, crisis intervention, courts and legal services and law enforcement – should improve access to, and delivery and quality of, services for young children at high risk of exposure to violence, and for those who have been exposed to violence. Safe Start is a multi-million dollar/5-year initiative funded by the office of Juvenile Justice.

The Child Development-Community Policing Program:³²



A collaboration between the Yale Child Study Center and the New Haven Department of Police Service designed to provide on the job training for police officers to recognize the needs of child witnesses at the scene of violence and to provide appropriate interventions. Police officers refer children for follow-up mental health services or immediate therapeutic attention. Clinicians are on call 24 hours a day. Police supervisors can obtain Child Development Fellowships, and clinicians can obtain Police Fellowships. A seminar program is offered that focuses on how to apply child development principles in the daily work of clinicians and police. Police officers make referrals and receive consultation immediately if necessary. Police officers and clinicians meet weekly for case consultation.

The Dade County Domestic Violence Division:³²



An interagency effort in Southern Florida between local shelters, the court system and police to identify victims of domestic violence, expedite the provision of service within the court system, and connect them and their children with needed services. This service includes a network of counseling agencies and treatment providers for abusers, victims and children. In addition, locations of all support services are provided to victims each time they access the court system. Court personnel educate the public about domestic violence in cooperation with schools, the legal and medical communities and private industry, as well as help victims of violence understand the nature of cyclical violence and the importance of safety planning. There is also a partnership between the Junior League and county government to provide long-term housing for victims and their children. The service provides training rotations for students in medicine, social work and postdoctoral psychologists and psychiatrists at the local university.

Module 3, Section VI Summary

Domestic violence interventions: Benefits of collaboration and community coordination

- **Increase early identification of, and intervention with, vulnerable children and their non-offending parents to reduce trauma and enhance healing.**
- **Reduce risks of re-traumatization of children and families by systems.**
- **Enhance the quality of evidence discovered.**
- **Support intervention and prevention by holding perpetrators accountable through the criminal justice system.**
- **Reduce the risk that victims and their children, or perpetrators, fall through the cracks within the community service network.**

VII) SPECIALIZED TRAINING AND CROSS TRAINING INITIATIVES IN THE AREA OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROMOTE EFFECTIVE LAW ENFORCEMENT INTERVENTIONS AND ENHANCE COLLABORATIONS WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Training is a means of imparting knowledge and skills to new recruits, as well as providing refreshers and updates for experienced staff. While recognizing the competing demands for limited training hours, we strongly advocate that training in the area of domestic violence and children's exposure to violence be included in professional development courses. Reasons for making this area a core component of law enforcement training programs are:

- the volume of police calls related to domestic disputes;
- the significant number of children encountered by police at domestic violence situations;
- the fact that these domestic violence crimes differ from stranger violence and that understanding the distinctions can assist officers to carry out their roles;
- the serious consequences of domestic violence on children and adult victims;
- the importance of participation by law enforcement officers in cross training initiatives to enhance coordinated community interventions.

Recommended topics for training

The following topics are offered for consideration in training on domestic violence and children's exposure to violence:

- Domestic violence – how these crimes differ from others
- Child development and impacts of exposure to violence at different stages
- Assessing risk; risk reduction and safety planning
- Forensic interviewing of children
- Identification of abuse-related injuries
- Legal issues related to child victims and witnesses
- Establishing and maintaining effective collaborations with community partners

Training considerations

Training is best situated within clear agency policy and practice. It should increase knowledge and understanding, as well as target particular needs. The following issues about training are important to consider:

i) **Provide ongoing training:**



Training that is provided on an ongoing basis (e.g., once a year) and over time helps to address potential gaps (in knowledge and practice) created by staff turnover.

ii) Integrate theory into practice:

→ It is important to link theory and practice by including practical implications and applications during training.

iii) Use peer models:

→ Peer training models encourage investment in the topic and the training.

iv) Integrate ethno-cultural issues:

→ Opportunities to promote awareness of and sensitivity to ethno-cultural communities should be integrated into all training courses.

v) Promote cross-training:

→ Cross-training – where members of different disciplines and services attend training initiatives – provides excellent opportunities for promoting mutual understanding between participating groups. Participants learn more about the issues, mandates, practices and strengths of each group. This inclusive approach also enhances collaborative practice.

Module 3, Section VII Summary

Recommended topics for training on domestic violence and children

- **Domestic violence - how these crimes differ from others**
- **Child development and the impact of exposure to violence at different stages**
- **Assessing risk; risk reduction and safety planning**
- **Forensic interviewing of children**
- **Identification of abuse-related injuries**
- **Legal issues related to child victims and witnesses**
- **Establishing and maintaining effective collaborations with community partners**

MODULE
FREQUENTLY ASKED
QUESTIONS

4

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. **What difference can I make?**

First – you can save a life. Effective, coordinated community interventions can reduce domestic homicides which have been described as “America’s most predictable murders.”³³

Second – your intervention in a domestic violence situation today is crime prevention for tomorrow. Law enforcement and criminal justice responses that keep children from being exposed to violence help prevent later juvenile delinquency and a future generation of perpetrators.

2. **Why do I need to know about the impact that exposure to violence at home can have on children?**

The magnitude and serious consequences of children’s exposure to domestic violence makes it a priority. Law enforcement practices can make a difference in the lives of children. The promotion of these practices starts with an understanding of the impacts of violence on children:

- Assessing for direct victimization
- Considering children in risk assessments, risk reduction and safety planning involving mental health or victim service professionals early to address children’s needs and reduce negative impacts

Understanding the vulnerability and the potential effects of exposure to violence on children and adult victims motivates all of us to invest in collaborative interventions that protect children and victims and prevent violence.

3. **Can a battering spouse be a good parent?**

The battering itself creates a climate of fear for children and offers inappropriate role modeling for caring relationships, conflict resolution and abusive power through threats and violence. A batterer may have positive qualities that are valuable as a parent. To maximize these qualities, batterers have to acknowledge responsibility for the violence against their partner and take part in an intervention program with an ongoing commitment to change.

4. **Can I force victims to get out of these unsafe situations?**

No! Leaving an abusive relationship is best understood as a difficult process that takes time and can be life threatening to victims and their children. The complexity of their relationship with the perpetrator extends victims' decision-making about leaving beyond the assaultive behavior. When deciding about staying or leaving, victims carefully weigh such things as:

- coping with escalations in violence that often occur in relation to separation;
- the possibility of losing children to abusive partners in custody battles;
- the numerous challenges faced when arranging to provide for themselves and their children.

Evidence shows many victims do leave abusive relationships and that the leaving process takes time.

Remember – victims want the violence to end, and ultimately, victims carry the moment-to-moment burden of attending to their safety and that of their children. Police officers who express compassion, hope, and the fact that the violence will not be condoned, may be planting seeds for future decisions.

5. What do I do when an adolescent who has grown up with domestic violence begins to be assaultive toward the adult victim or the perpetrator?

Some youth learn from the modeling in their family that violence is how you get what you want and how you relate to others. They can be assaultive toward a parent, siblings, girlfriend or others. Although less common, you may also encounter situations where the youth's assaultive behavior results from an attempt to stop the violence being perpetrated by the abuser.

Regardless of the context of the violence, the adolescent's assaultive behavior is not acceptable. In these situations, it is important to provide complete information about the circumstances in your report (e.g., long history of exposure to domestic violence, assault occurred while stopping a domestic violence incident). This information can provide a context for the prosecutor that may be a consideration in how the court deals with the matter (e.g., sentencing, conditions of probation).

Many youth who have grown up watching one parent victimize the other have difficulty dealing with the seeming double standard when they are charged for their violence in the family. The result is often intense anger that may be directed at the victim and/or at the police officer who intervenes.

APPENDIX A

Resources

Contact the following organizations for additional information on domestic violence, including impacts, getting assistance, resources, prevention and training. The websites for these organizations contain links to other valuable resources.

National Domestic Violence Hotline

Dial 1-800-799-SAFE or 1-800-799-3224 (TDD) Website: www.ndvh.org

- Trained counselors provide **crisis intervention, referrals to local service providers for victims of domestic violence and those calling on their behalf**, and **information or support in many languages**
- Counselors answer every call in both English and Spanish
- Translators are available for 139 languages
- Crisis intervention and referrals to the deaf are available through the TDD line

Local Service for Battered Women by Map of United States (Victim Services, New York)

Website: www.dvshelkertour.org/helpusa.html

Email: contact@safehorizon.org

- Click on the state for a list of resources in that area or email Safe Horizon requesting the resource(s) available in a specific community and a response will be returned within 24 hours (a little longer on the weekend)

Violence Against Women Office (VAWO)

810 7th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20531

Phone: (202)307-6026 Fax: (202)307-3911

Website: www.ojp.usdoj.gov/vawo

- One of the Office of Justice Programs, United States Department of Justice
- Works with victim advocates and law enforcement throughout the US to develop grant programs supporting a wide range of services for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking (e.g., emergency shelters, law enforcement and legal aid)
- Find a list of state hotlines, coalitions and advocacy groups by going to the VAWO website and clicking on *Help and Information Near You*

Family Violence Department of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ)

P.O. Box 8970, Reno, Nevada 89507

Phone: 1-800-52-PEACE or 1-800-527-3233

Website: www.dvlawsearch.com

- Improves the way courts, law enforcement, social service agencies and the community respond to victims of domestic violence and their families
- Provides information in a variety of areas, including new initiatives, domestic violence laws, publications, training and conferences

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV)

P.O. Box 18749, Denver, CO 80218-0749

Phone: (303)839-1852 Fax: (303)831-9251

Website: www.ncadv.org

- Grassroots, non-profit organization working to end violence in the lives of women and children
- Provides a national network for state coalitions and local programs serving battered women and their children
- Provides information and resources on domestic violence, including assistance for getting help
- Find a domestic violence organization in any area by going to *NCADV website* and clicking on *Getting Help*, and then clicking on *State Coalition List*

Family Violence Prevention Fund (FVPF)

383 Rhode Island Street, Suite 304, San Francisco, CA 94103-5133

Phone: (415)252-8900 Fax: (415)252-8991

Website: <http://endabuse.org> Email: fund@fvpf.org

- A national non-profit organization
- Mobilizes concerned individuals, allied professionals, women's rights, civil rights, and other social justice organizations, and children's groups to join the campaign to end abuse
- Provides public education/prevention campaigns, public policy reform, model training, advocacy programs and organizing

National Center for Children Exposed to Violence (NCCEV)

Child Study Center, Yale University School of Medicine,

230 South Frontage Road, P.O. Box 207900, New Haven, CT 06520-7900

Phone: 1-877-49-NCCEV or 1-877-496-2238

Website: www.nccev.org/us

- A national resource that increases awareness and provides information about the effects of violence on children and the initiatives developed to address this social problem
- Provides training, technical assistance and consultation to initiatives throughout the US that responds to children and families exposed to violence (e.g., Safe Start Initiative, Child Development-Community Policing (CD-CP) Program replication sites)

APPENDIX B

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