

Children Exposed to Domestic Violence

A Teacher's Handbook to
Increase Understanding and
Improve Community Responses



NSW GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES



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The Importance of this Topic

Why you need to know

Each year in the U.S., millions of children and adolescents are exposed to violence in their homes, schools, neighborhoods, and through the media.^{1, 2, 3, 4} A significant proportion of these youths are exposed to domestic violence – abusive behavior used by one intimate partner to control and dominate the other. The young people touched by this form of violence often experience short and long term impacts that may affect their adjustment at school.

- Children and adolescents living with domestic violence are at risk for increased emotional and behavioral problems,^{4, 5} including increased violent behavior.^{6, 7, 8} They are also at increased risk of experiencing emotional or physical abuse.^{5, 6, 9} These difficulties may compromise their availability for learning and their capacity to get along with others at school.
- Early identification of difficulties can lead to earlier and more effective support and intervention for young people and their families. Teachers are in an ideal position to identify when a student is having difficulty.
- School-based interventions and prevention initiatives can reduce risk and increase protective factors for students. Teachers may be the caring adults who make a difference in the lives of students experiencing difficulties at home.

How this handbook can help

This handbook contains information that will help you:

- learn about domestic violence and its impact on children and adolescents;
- recognize the signs that students may display when they are having difficulties. These signs may occur for a variety of reasons, including domestic violence;
- learn ways to support students and deal with challenging behaviors in school;
- offer support and information about resources to parents who may be adult victims of domestic violence.

Definitions

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 ***inter-parental violence***. ***Battering*** is often used to refer to domestic violence or frequent and severe abuse.

Children exposed to domestic violence

- ⇒ refers to children and adolescents seeing, hearing or being aware of violence against one parent figure that is perpetrated by another parent figure. It is used interchangeably with ***children living with violence***.

Perpetrator

- ⇒ refers to individuals who are violent toward their intimate partners. It is used interchangeably with ***offenders, offending parents, batterers, abusive partners, and abusers***.

Victim

- ⇒ refers to individuals who are abused by their intimate partners. It is used interchangeably with ***survivor, victimized parent, abused partner, adult victim*** and ***battered partner***. Many domestic violence advocates prefer the term 'survivor,' as it reflects the reality that many abused individuals cope and move on with personal strength and resourcefulness.

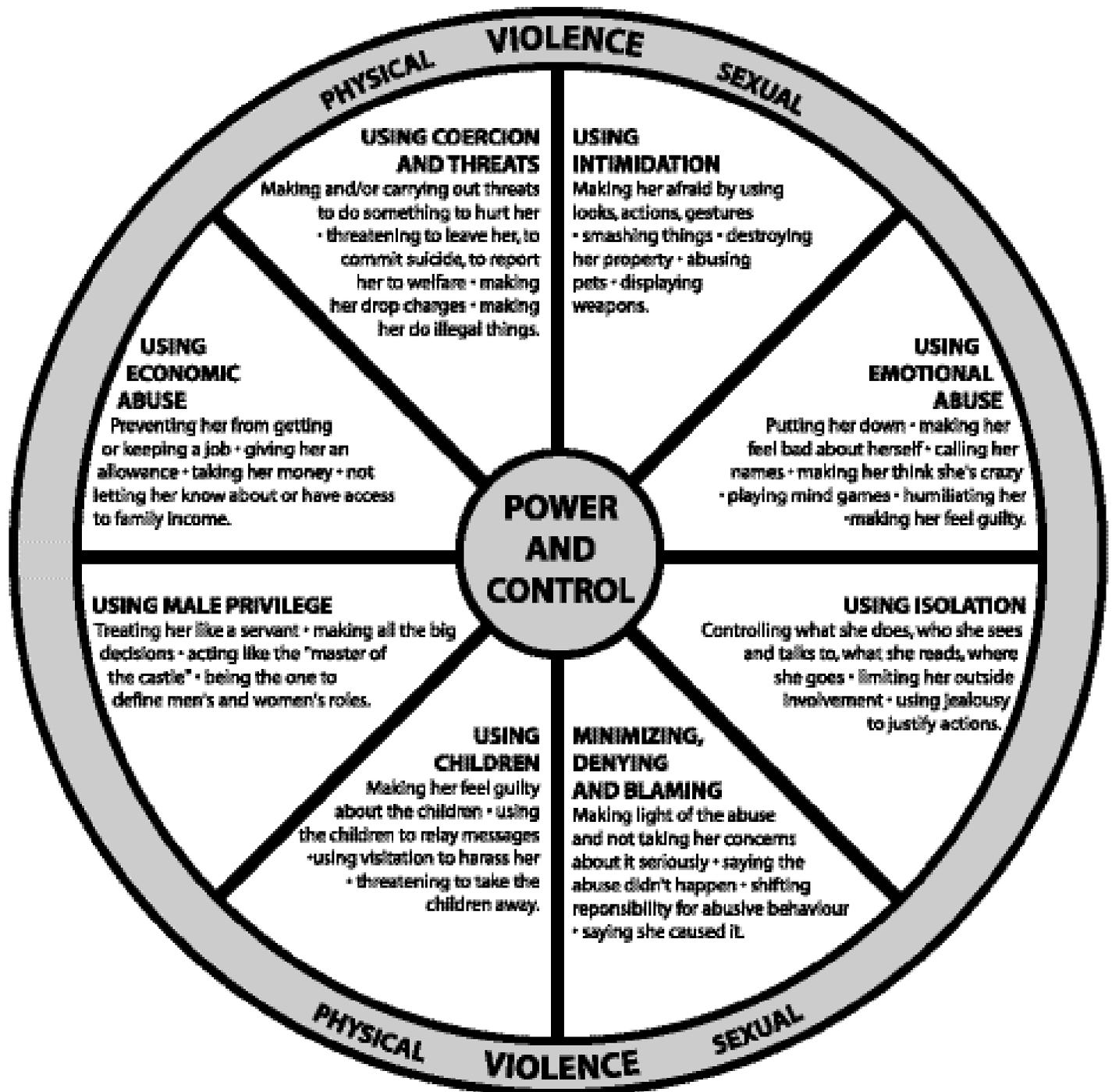
What is it?

Understanding domestic violence helps us support affected students.

Domestic violence...

- ⇒ occurs in all age, racial, socioeconomic, educational, occupational and religious groups;
- ⇒ occurs within an intimate relationship;
- ⇒ typically involves repetitive behavior including different types of abuse – physical assault, psychological, emotional and economic abuse, and use of children (see Power and Control Wheel, page 5);
- ⇒ is used to intimidate, humiliate or frighten victims as a systematic way of maintaining power and control over them;
- ⇒ is abusive behavior that in most cases is learned (e.g., abusive behavior modeled in family of origin; abusive behavior rewarded – gets desired results for perpetrator);
- ⇒ ***is caused by the perpetrator*** and not by the victim or the relationship;
- ⇒ is a criminal offense where actual or threatened physical or sexual force is used;
- ⇒ differentially affects men and women: women experience more violence over a lifetime, more severe forms of violence and more serious injuries than do male victims;¹⁰
- ⇒ may present increased risk to the victim and children at the time of separation from the abuser;¹¹
- ⇒ results in victim behavior that is focused on 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).

Power and Control Wheel



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

Findings from the National Violence Against Women (NVAW) Survey¹⁰

- ⇒ In the United States, approximately 1.3 million women and 835,000 men annually experience violence by a current or former partner.
- ⇒ Over a lifetime, women experience more intimate partner violence than do men: 22.1% of surveyed women and 7.4% of surveyed men reported violence by a current or former partner.
- ⇒ Violence against women happens primarily in intimate relationships. When women and men who reported being assaulted, raped or stalked since age 18 were asked who the perpetrator was, 64% of the women and 16.2% of the men indicated that they were victimized by an intimate partner.
- ⇒ Women are significantly more likely than men to be injured during an assault. The risk of injury increases among female victims when the perpetrator is a current or former intimate partner.

(Note: The NVAW Survey was conducted from November 1995 to May 1996.)

Impacts on Children & Adolescents

Watching, hearing or later learning of a parent being harmed by a partner threatens young people's sense of stability and security typically provided by their family.

- Children and adolescents may experience increased emotional and behavioral difficulties.^{5, 12}
- Some young people who experience difficulties display traumatic stress reactions (e.g., flashbacks, nightmares, intensified startle reactions, constant worry about possible danger).¹³
- Children and adolescents living with domestic violence are at increased risk of experiencing physical injury or childhood abuse (e.g., physical, emotional).^{6, 9}
- The perpetrator may use children and adolescents as a control tactic against adult victims.¹⁴ Examples include:
 - claiming the children's bad behavior is the reason for the assaults on the non-offending parent;
 - threatening violence against children and their pets in front of the non-offending parent;
 - holding them hostage or abducting them in an effort to punish the adult victim or to gain compliance;
 - talking negatively to them about the abused parent's behavior.
- Children and adolescents may experience strong ambivalence toward their violent parent: affection coexists with feelings of resentment and disappointment.
- Young people may imitate and learn the attitudes and behaviors modeled when intimate partner abuse occurs.^{7, 8}
- 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 them.

Potential Impacts at Different Ages

Key Aspects of Development

Potential Impact of Domestic Violence

Preschoolers

- Learn how to express aggression and anger, 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 vs. what I'm told).
- Think in egocentric ways. ⇒ May attribute violence to something they have done.
- Form ideas about gender roles based on social messages. ⇒ Learn gender roles associated with violence and victimization.
- Increased physical independence (dressing self, etc.). ⇒ Instability may inhibit independence; may see regressive behaviors.

School-aged Children (6 to 11 years)

- Increased emotional awareness of self and others. ⇒ More awareness of own reactions to violence at home and of impact on others (e.g., concerns about mother's safety, father being charged).
- Increased complexity in thinking about right and wrong; emphasis on fairness and intent. ⇒ Possibly more susceptible to adopting rationalizations heard to justify violence (e.g., alcohol causes violence; victim deserved abuse).
- Academic and social success at school has primary impact on self-concept. ⇒ Ability to learn may be decreased due to impact of violence (e.g., distracted); may miss positive statements or selectively attend to negatives or evoke negative feedback.
- Increased same sex identification. ⇒ May learn gender roles associated with intimate partner abuse (e.g., males as perpetrators – females as victims).

Adolescents

- Increased sense of self and autonomy from family. ⇒ Family skills for respectful communication and negotiation may be poorly developed due to violence; transition to 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 violence (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, gender role stereotypes).
- Increased influence by media. ⇒ Possibly more influenced by negative media messages about violent behavior, gender role stereotypes.

Signs a Student is Having Difficulties

Students may display some of the following signs when they are living with domestic violence. However, they may show these problems for many other reasons,¹⁵ and students displaying them may not have been exposed to domestic violence.

- **physical complaints** (headaches, stomachaches)
- **tiredness**
- **constant worry about possible danger and/or the safety of loved ones**
- **sadness and/or withdrawal from others and activities**
- **low self-esteem and lack of confidence, especially for trying new things (including academic tasks)**
- **difficulty paying attention in class, concentrating on work and learning new information**
- **outbursts of anger directed toward teachers, peers or self**
- **bullying and/or aggression directed toward peers in and/or out of the classroom**
- **stereotyped beliefs about males as aggressors and females as victims**

In addition to the behaviors listed above, older students may display:

- **suicidal thought and action**
- **high risk behavior including criminal activities, alcohol and substance abuse**
- **school truancy or leaving home**
- **dating violence**

What Teachers May See

The following are actual case examples and illustrate how living with violence can impact the lives of students:

Truancy:

- ⇒ Kevin, age 10, was referred because of truancy. The referral letter queried whether Kevin is developing a school phobia. The school is particularly puzzled by the episodic nature of his truancy and the fact that he comes to school in the morning but runs away during morning recess. During the second interview, Kevin discloses that his father is extremely violent and “beats Mom real bad.” Kevin explains that he has to be home some days to make sure his mother is okay. He describes staying outside his house and watching through the window, ready to intervene if his mother needs him.

Preoccupation and Secrecy:

- ⇒ Scott, age 8, is obviously distressed at supper. Eventually he discloses that his table partner Alex was really upset at school during math. Alex said that his mother left in the middle of the night after his parents had a big fight. Alex woke up in the night to arguing. He said that he saw his father pull his mother by the hair down the stairs. Scott tells his parents that Alex said that he would kill him if he told anyone else. Neither of the boys completed their math.

The next week, Scott tells his parents that Alex was really mad at his mother. Again, during a math assignment, Alex told Scott that his mother was with another guy and that she was going to try and take all of his Dad’s money. Alex also said that his father would never hurt his mother if she was not trying to hurt their family.

Dating Violence:

- ⇒ Jane, age 15, grew up witnessing repeated violence against her mother. She recalls many times when she and her mother fled to a shelter for safety. She reports that she hates her father and stepfather for how they treated her mother. She is determined not to find herself in a violent relationship. During a court-ordered assessment for truancy, Jane describes being slapped, kicked and knocked to the ground at school by her boyfriend. She explains that it was her fault because she had been speaking to another boy that her boyfriend does not like. Later, she discloses that she no longer sees her female friends because she has to be home in case her boyfriend wants to see her.

Anger and Aggression:

- ⇒ John, age 13, and his mother are talking with the social service worker from the school. His mother is very concerned about John’s verbal disrespect for his female teachers when they reprimand him. He is also physically aggressive toward her when she tells him that he cannot go out with his friends. His mother is surprised by John’s actions. She reports that John witnessed his father being violent toward her until he was eight. She describes being very close to her son and proudly tells of a time when he attacked his father with a wooden spoon in an effort to stop him from choking her. She knows John hated his father’s violent behavior and is hurt and puzzled by John’s aggression towards her and his teachers.

Some students may cope by intently focusing on academics, sports or social activities. They describe blocking out the troubling events at home with life at school. These young people may appear as if they have not been affected by the domestic violence. It may be more accurate, however, to view them as children and adolescents whose coping strategies foster success at school.

Responding When Students Display Troubling Behaviors

These guidelines are helpful for teachers dealing with troubling behaviors regardless of whether domestic violence is a factor.

i) Remember there may be a variety of reasons for the student's behavior.

- ⇒ Problems may be explained by a number of factors in the student's life. Exposure to domestic violence is only one possibility.

ii) Reassure students and increase their sense of security in school by:

- ⇒ establishing simple rules and routines so they know what to expect;
- ⇒ giving straightforward explanations (where possible) for things that worry them (e.g., sirens, presence of police in school);
- ⇒ allowing students to naturally express themselves through talk, play and written assignments.

iii) Clarify your concern as it relates to the school and your responsibility to educate. Try not to interpret the behavior, but rather describe it. It may be helpful to consider the following questions:

- ⇒ What is the problem?
- ⇒ When did it start?
- ⇒ How often does it occur?
- ⇒ Who is affected and in what ways (e.g., failing grades, victimized peers)?
- ⇒ What has been tried and how did it work?

iv) Consult with the principal or the social service worker at your school.

- ⇒ Consultation provides opportunities to obtain support, information about resources and strategies for the classroom and school (e.g., hallways, yard).

v) Talk to the student's parent.

- ⇒ Express your concerns as they relate to the education of this student or others in a supportive and non-threatening manner.
- ⇒ Ask the parent what she/he is noticing at home and whether she/he has any ideas about what might be contributing to the student's difficulty in school.
- ⇒ Discuss possible ways to support the student (What can the parent do? What can you do?).

vi) Remember that it is often not easy to talk about family problems.

- ⇒ Domestic violence and other family problems are often treated with great secrecy. Sometimes the secrecy is a way of maintaining safety. By asking, you will have let the family know that you are concerned and willing to help. They may choose to talk to you in the future if they are experiencing violence or other problems that affect their child.

vii) Provide information on available resources.

- ⇒ Offer information about resources in the community that might assist the student and his/her family (e.g., women's shelter, domestic violence agency, child trauma/treatment program, cultural-linguistic interpretation services). (See pages 25 & 26.)

We suggest parents be encouraged to seek assistance for their child from a physician or family counseling agency when the child's behavior:

- is physically harmful to the student or others (e.g., physically fighting with others, laying down on the street);
- is intense enough to interfere with the student's day-to-day adjustment in school;
- does not respond to behavior management strategies;
- persists over time (3 to 6 weeks).

Students exposed to violence at home may benefit from specific teaching approaches and strategies. Fortunately, these approaches benefit most students and are likely already being used to some degree in your classroom.

i) Create a safe and low-stress environment that promotes respect toward others.

- ⇒ Establish an explicit norm against violence.
- ⇒ Consistently enforce non-acceptance of violence.
- ⇒ Teach and reward non-violent conflict-resolution and cooperation.
- ⇒ Model nurturing and respectful behavior.
- ⇒ Foster cooperation and reduce competition and situations where students may be humiliated (e.g., peers picking teams).

ii) Provide positive experiences and activities to promote security, self-esteem and learning.

- ⇒ Verbally praise students for their efforts.
- ⇒ Provide opportunities for fun.
- ⇒ Assist students to recognize their strengths and to experience success.

iii) Let students know what to expect.

- ⇒ Plan and prepare the students for visitors.
- ⇒ Minimize last minute scheduling changes.
- ⇒ Give advance notice of upcoming events.
- ⇒ Give advance notice of upcoming lessons or activities that may touch on difficult experiences.

iv) Increase positive connections to school.

- ⇒ Look for a match between the student's interests and/or strengths and the course (e.g., special project), school (e.g., assisting custodian), or extracurricular activity (e.g., club, sports).
- ⇒ Strongly encourage participation.
- ⇒ Enlist peer (e.g., cross-age mentor, tutor) and adult (e.g., staff, volunteers) support to provide encouragement and support to foster connection.

v) Use a variety of teaching strategies.

- ⇒ Provide time during the school day for homework completion when the student may be more able to attend and complete it.
- ⇒ Use co-operative learning strategies that allow for more immediate feedback, occasions to share and small group opportunities.
- ⇒ Consider ways of physically setting up your classroom to take a variety of learning styles into account.
- ⇒ Check often for understanding to see if what you are saying or modeling is being heard and understood.
- ⇒ Repeat information in a calm manner.
- ⇒ Allow students to use learning aids such as tape recorders, calculators, reference charts, and word processors – as necessary.

vi) Be aware that some activities or situations may remind students of troubling events associated with the violence in their homes.

- ⇒ Examples of events or themes that may be difficult for children living with violence include:
 - raised voices
 - alcohol/drug prevention
 - making something new to give to a parent
 - violence prevention education
 - peer fights

"School served as my shelter from many storms... Teachers opened doors to worlds for me that the rest of my life had slammed shut." ¹⁶

School and Community Partnerships

Links between schools and other community agencies helping families experiencing domestic violence.

- Building relationships with shelters, legal advocacy programs, counseling services, police services and violence against women prevention agencies will be beneficial.
- These links help address gaps that can exist in the broader system and enable school personnel to provide accurate referral information to mothers about resources.
- Working relationships and protocols between schools and shelters will make consultation regarding the needs of the students easier. Personnel working at shelters are an excellent source of support, information and advice.
- In many communities there are local coordinating committees or councils that focus on violence against women. These committees may offer opportunities for networking, and may have sub-committees focused on the needs of children and adolescents.

When students are living with their mother at a shelter:

Make necessary allowances around school assignments.

- ⇒ It may be difficult to complete assignments because of circumstances at the shelter (e.g., lack of quiet space) and the student's emotional state.

Cooperate with the safety plan that may have been developed in conjunction with the non-offending parent.

- ⇒ Children and adolescents may have helped develop a plan that may include where they must go when transported to school (e.g., office or yard) and what to do if the abusive parent comes to the school. It is important for every staff member at the school to be aware of this plan. This may involve protocols established with the shelter and police for crisis situations (e.g., hostile parent without visitation rights demands to see the student).

Be aware of any school policies and procedures in case a crisis situation occurs.

- ⇒ Policies that include procedures for dealing with these difficult and distressing situations are helpful (e.g., Who will call the police? Who will stay with the student? Where will the student be taken until the police arrive?). The goal is to maximize the safety and minimize the emotional distress of all students, parent(s), staff members and school visitors.

When a Parent is a Victim of Domestic Violence

When you are planning to talk to a parent who may be a victim of domestic violence:

i) Find a safe time and place to talk to the parent.

⇒ Try calling the parent. When she answers the phone, ask if this is a good time to talk about her son's/daughter's progress in school. Offer her the opportunity to come to the school to talk. If you leave a message, do not refer to problems at home as this could endanger the adult victim and/or the student.

ii) Share your concerns about the student.

⇒ Talk to her about your concerns from the view of her child's education and adjustment at school.

iii) Be supportive and provide information about community resources.

⇒ It may be very difficult for a parent to hear that her son or daughter has let someone outside of the family know about the abuse. The parent may be worried about difficult situations that may result from the disclosure, including increased safety concerns. She may respond to you with anger or denial. It is important to remain supportive and provide information (see pages 25 & 26). You may choose to highlight that her child was not trying to be disloyal or to create trouble. Most adult victims want to, and have tried to, protect their children.

iv) Encourage the victim to contact the local domestic violence program for support and help with planning for her safety.

⇒ Provide the parent with contact phone numbers or information on additional safety measures. Offer the parent the opportunity to call and provide a phone and privacy. If possible, follow up to see if she has made the connection.

v) Reassure the victim that you will not speak with the alleged abuser about your concerns.

⇒ Talking to the alleged abuser about your concerns may endanger the youth or the victimized parent. Your reassurance that you will not discuss issues related to violence with the abusive partner may relieve some of the concern the parent may be experiencing as a result of the disclosure.

vi) Determine whether you have an obligation to report to Child Protection Services (CPS). (See pages 19 & 20.)

⇒ If the adult victim is suspected of maltreating the child (e.g., physical abuse), contact CPS without discussing your concerns with the adult victim. Otherwise, share your concern, and when necessary, your obligation to report.

Ways to Support a Student Who Makes a Disclosure

Teachers may receive disclosures about violence in the home from students, but may have limited information on how to support these young people. The following guidelines are offered to enhance your ability and confidence to respond in ways that help students when disclosures occur. (Guidelines to assist with later decision making and formal responses are on pages 19 and 20.)

i) Let the student know the limits of confidentiality.

- ⇒ Inform students when you cannot keep information confidential (e.g., if someone is being abused; if someone plans to harm self or others). What you say will be influenced by the legislation in your jurisdiction and school policies.

ii) Allow the student to tell his/her story.

- ⇒ It usually helps young people to talk with a trusted adult about the violence or troubling events in their lives.

iii) Do not pressure the student to talk.

- ⇒ It is important to remember that your role is not to gather evidence or to investigate the situation. Your role is to listen and to acknowledge the feelings the student is sharing.

iv) Reassure the student.

- ⇒ If students disclose a troubling incident at home directly to you, reassure them by validating their feelings (e.g., “Sounds like that was scary for you. Are you okay?”). Depending on the situation, it may also be helpful to let them know that you are glad they told you, that the violence is not their fault, and that no one should be hurt.
- ⇒ Older students may ask you to not say anything to anyone about what they have told you. It is important for you to let them know if you need to tell people who can help them and others to be safe.

v) Inform the student of what you are going to do.

- ⇒ Students are likely to feel relieved but vulnerable following a disclosure. The troubling situation they are dealing with may also have left them feeling powerless. Letting students know what steps you are taking and when you will talk to them can decrease their anxiety.

vi) Support the student in making choices whenever possible.

- ⇒ Students do not have control of the troubling situation. You can increase their sense of control by offering them choices. For example, some students will want time away from the class after making a disclosure and may prefer to sit in the library. Others may wish to re-join their class. Whenever possible, support students' sense of what they need at this time.

vii) Do not criticize or speak negatively about the batterer.

- ⇒ Young people often have confused or mixed feelings about the batterer. They may hate the abuse but like the “fun” times they also share with the abusive parent. Children and adolescents can feel very angry at and loyal to a parent at the same time. If you criticize the offending parent, feelings of loyalty and protectiveness toward the parent may cause the youth to feel that he/she cannot talk about the abuse.

viii) Do not make commitments to the student that you cannot honor.

- ⇒ Sometimes teachers are so moved by a student's situation and want so much to protect and reassure the youth, they make statements that they cannot follow through on. Examples include comments such as: “I will keep you safe”; “I won't let him hurt your mother anymore”; “I won't tell anyone what you told me.” While clearly well intended, such commitments can diminish a student's trust in others when he/she discovers the statements are untrue. This may cause a young person to believe that no one can help and it is not worth telling anyone about the upsetting things happening at home.

The student may choose this time to disclose because changes in circumstances have tipped the balance so that the youth's typical coping strategies are strained. Responding supportively to students making disclosures may increase their sense of security and their willingness to share concerns or seek help in the future.

Guidelines to Assist Teachers' Decision Making and Formal Responses to Disclosures

In the majority of states, legislation does not require that exposure to domestic violence be reported to Child Protection Services (CPS). The following guidelines are offered to help you decide how to respond when you learn that a child or adolescent is being exposed to domestic violence.

i) Determine if there is an issue to be reported to CPS:

- ⇒ Is there an indication of statutory child maltreatment such as neglect, or physical or sexual abuse (e.g., based on information the student or parent has already disclosed, or the student's response when asked if he/she is being hurt)?
- ⇒ Is there an indication of serious risk to the youth or another? For example:
 - imminent harm to someone (e.g., specific threat to kill and the recent purchase of a weapon);
 - escalating risk (e.g., existing problem where recent change may signal increased danger – the victim attempting to leave the partner who is now threatening to kill her with a recently purchased gun);
 - ongoing domestic violence situation, but with a change in the parent's capacity to protect herself and/or her child (e.g., change in substance abuse pattern).
- ⇒ Consult with a designated school authority (usually a principal).

ii) If there is statutory child maltreatment and/or serious risk:

- ⇒ Follow the guidelines on making a report to CPS on page 20. (These guidelines are also helpful for making reports to the police.)

iii) If there is no statutory child maltreatment and no serious risk:

- ⇒ Make a referral to the social service worker/counselor for the school.
- ⇒ Determine whether and how the adult victim will be approached. Consider the following:
 - safety for student, adult victim and other family members (siblings);
 - safety for you and others at school;
 - age of student (e.g., 8 years vs. 15 years) and the student's wishes.
- ⇒ Explore ways with the student to support him/her at school.
- ⇒ Inform older students (12-13 years or older) about resources within the school system and the community.
- ⇒ Encourage the student to approach you or another staff member at school if she/he wants to talk or if the situation escalates at home.
- ⇒ Document disclosure and your response according to school policy.

(Note: These guidelines relate to students that fall within the age range covered by the legislation relevant to child protection.)

No policy or guideline can anticipate every individual student or family's unique circumstance. Therefore, safety and protection from any imminent harm must be the overriding concern.

Reporting to Child Protection Services

In all states, statutory child maltreatment and/or serious risk to a child must be reported to Child Protection Services (CPS). In a few states, legislation also requires that exposure to domestic violence be reported to CPS. When reporting to CPS, consider the following:

i) Before making the report:

- ⇒ Let the youth/disclosing parent know of your reporting requirement, provide support and address any concerns – especially those related to safety (e.g., “I know someone who can help you and your Mom. I’ll tell her.”).
- ⇒ Consult the designated agency authority (usually a principal).
- ⇒ Ensure you have up-to-date information about the student that the protection worker will require (e.g., name, DOB, address, parents’ names).

ii) Making the report:

- ⇒ Determine who makes the report, according to legislation and/or agency policy (e.g., principal or teacher who heard the disclosure).
- ⇒ Report disclosure information and any relevant background information (e.g., previous concerns by the school).
- ⇒ Ask and record what CPS will do and when.
- ⇒ Record the date, time and name of the child protection worker who received the report.
- ⇒ Report the information in a way that encourages CPS to consider the safety of the mother in its investigation and report.

iii) After making the report:

- ⇒ Reassure the student and let him/her know what to expect (e.g., “Mary Green is going to come to visit you after lunch. She helps kids and their parents stay safe.”).
- ⇒ Inform others according to legislative and school policy requirements (e.g., school staff involved with the child, the parent).
- ⇒ Document the disclosure and your response according to school policy.
- ⇒ If appropriate and in collaboration with CPS, make a referral to the social service worker/counselor associated with your school for ongoing support/follow-up (may not be an available resource for many schools).

(Note: These guidelines relate to students that fall within the age range covered by the legislation relevant to child protection.)

There may be times when your school policies and procedures seem to endanger the safety of the child, the adult victim, you or others. If this occurs, advise your principal immediately and seek consultation and direction from domestic violence agencies and CPS in your area.

Safety Planning

Transportation Arrangements

- ⇒ It is essential that you know **who can** pick up the student and **who can not**.
- ⇒ Have a plan in the event a parent who is not allowed attempts to pick up a student (e.g., who will stay with the student, who will call the police, who will explain to the parent that the police have been contacted).
- ⇒ Copies of court papers need to be on file to stop a non-custodial parent from picking up the student. You may need to explain this to the mother and encourage her to seek legal counsel in cases where there are no court documents identifying which parent is the legal guardian and/or issues of access.
- ⇒ Depending on the risk, some children being transported from shelters may need to go into the school building until class begins.

Handling parent-attended events where domestic violence is an issue:

- Focus on the student and the student's participation in the event.
- Obtain copies of legal documents that state changes in guardianship, custody and access arrangements (e.g., custody and visitation agreement, restraining order).
- Do not inadvertently blame either parent for whatever situation unfolds when talking with the student.
- Be aware of your attitudes and feelings toward each parent and the current situation. This will help to safeguard against your attitudes and feelings leading to unhelpful or nonprofessional practice.
- Be prepared to be flexible to support solutions that maximize comfort and safety for students, their families, and staff (e.g., separate parent conferences with the father and the mother).
- You (or your principal) need to be prepared to make decisions about limiting access to school functions by a parent whose behavior jeopardizes the safety and well-being of students and their teachers.

Community Responses

Community responses to domestic violence should:

- provide safety;
- foster the emotional well-being of all victims;
- hold perpetrators accountable through legal sanctions and batterer's programs;
- provide a continuum of coordinated services that are accessible regardless of a client's language and culture (e.g., cultural linguistic interpreters);
- promote prevention efforts (school programs, public awareness campaigns) as a long-term strategy for social change.

School-Based Violence Prevention

While violence prevention benefits all students, it may be especially important for those exposed to violence. For example, a safe school environment may be a haven away from stressors at home.¹⁷ Anti-bullying or healthy dating relationship programs may teach conflict resolution skills that provide alternatives to what is modeled at home.¹⁸ Teachers play an important role in advocating for, implementing and sustaining school-based violence prevention.¹⁹

What can teachers do?

- **Learn about violence in relationships, how it impacts students, and school-based prevention. For example:**
 - ⇒ Seek out professional development on topics such as children exposed to domestic violence, bullying, dating violence and school-based prevention.
- **Continually work to develop school practices that are inclusive and promote students' sense of belonging and availability for learning. For example:**
 - ⇒ Model inclusiveness.
 - ⇒ Provide sports activities for all students, not only for the few who make the school teams.
 - ⇒ Address “cool-kid cliques” or “gangs” that abuse and silence others (e.g., separate classes or lunch hours, cross peer mentors/tutors).
 - ⇒ Develop strategies to engage and foster connections (e.g., academic, social, athletic) for all students to the school.
- **Make helping create a safe school in and out of your classroom a priority. For example:**
 - ⇒ Consistently enforce and “bring to life” a school code of conduct that defines and promotes respectful behavior and provides an explicit norm against violence.
 - ⇒ Establish peer mediation programs in which students learn to use conflict resolution skills in the halls and in the school yard.
 - ⇒ Model respectful strategies for classroom management.
- **Help plan and/or support special violence awareness events for students. These events name and define violence, as well as increase awareness about different types of violence and its impact on victims. For example:**
 - ⇒ Plan assemblies featuring guest speakers whose lives have been touched by violence.
 - ⇒ Organize a violence prevention fair.
 - ⇒ Schedule theatre productions focused on violence prevention and debriefing sessions with older student facilitators.

- **Learn to effectively teach anti-violence curriculum, and/or effectively integrate anti-violence lessons into existing subject matter, without taking away from core academic learning. For example:**
 - ⇒ Plan a math lesson on gathering, graphing and interpreting data that uses results of student surveys on bullying.
 - ⇒ Use the topic of dating violence for an English writing assignment to practice the five paragraph essay.
- **Develop strategies for coping with the stress associated with learning about students' exposure to violence and with being exposed to incidents of student violence. For example:**
 - ⇒ Find opportunities to professionally and confidentially debrief.
 - ⇒ Develop supportive work environments that promote a balance between work and home.
 - ⇒ Identify and celebrate successes.

Examples of Resources

A School-Based Anti-Violence Program (ASAP)²⁰:

- ⇒ Available through the Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System in London, Ontario, Canada, this violence prevention program encourages teachers, parents, students and community agencies to work together to create safe schools with zero tolerance for violence. There are program offerings for both elementary and secondary school children with appropriate curriculum and activities, as well as suggested resources. The program stresses the importance of educating teachers prior to embarking on prevention within the schools.

The Second Step²¹:

- ⇒ Developed in Seattle, Washington, this program teaches children problem-solving and coping skills. The goal of the program is to increase empathy, self-control, anger awareness and management, and non-violent conflict resolution and problem-solving.

My Family and Me: Violence Free²²:

- ⇒ This elementary school curriculum, developed by the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women, labels different kinds of family violence and its effects, teaches children how to develop safety plans, increases awareness of the benefits of respect, equality and sharing power, encourages assertiveness and problem-solving skills, and helps children learn how to affirm their own self-worth.

The Youth Relationships Program (YRP)²³:

- ⇒ Aimed at helping adolescents understand the abuse of power and control that leads to violence in relationships and how to enhance healthy relationship skills for themselves, the YRP is designed as an 18 week program for small groups (8 - 15 participants) of male and female youth aged 14 to 16 years. Sessions are two hours in length. Along with gaining an understanding of how the abuse of power and control form the basis of violence, there is an ongoing focus on healthy relationship styles including assertive communication, empathy, active listening, etc. Later in the program, participants have an opportunity to connect with community service providers, and undertake some form of social action aimed at violence prevention to build on a sense of accomplishment and success.

Where to Go for Help

Important numbers and information to share with older students or parents as needed

Fill in the Contact Numbers for your Community:

Women's Shelter	
Domestic Violence Agency	
Family Counseling Agency	
Child Protection Services	
Victim/Witness Program	
Hospital	
Police	
Cultural-Linguistic Interpretation Services	
Legal Aid	
Batterer's Program	
Child/Adolescent Trauma/Treatment Program	

For immediate assistance in an emergency, dial 911.

- For immediate assistance in an emergency or crisis situation
- Dialing 911 can reach police, the fire department and ambulance
- Tell operator the problem and give your full name and address where the emergency is taking place
- Do not hang up the phone until the operator tells you to

NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE

dial 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or 1-800-787-3224 (TDD)

- 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 through the TDD line

For additional information about the services provided by this HOTLINE visit the following website: www.ndvh.org

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 RESOURCE CENTER ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

6400 Flank Drive, Suite 1300, Harrisburg PA 17112-2778-17

phone: 800-537-2238 fax: 717-545-9456 TTY: 800-553-2508

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

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 how to get help
- Find a domestic violence organization in any area by going to the NCADV website, then clicking on Getting Help, and then clicking on State Coalition List

FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION FUND (FVPF)

383 Rhode Island St. Suite #304, San Francisco, CA 94103-5133

phone: (415) 252-8900 fax: (415) 252-8991

e-mail: fund@fvpf.org web site: <http://endabuse.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 (62238) 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
- A provider of training, technical assistance and consultation to initiatives throughout the US that respond to children and families exposed to violence (e.g., Safe Start Initiative, Child Development-Community Policing (CD-CP) Program replication sites)

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