

## Children & Domestic Violence

When does the problem of domestic violence begin?

- Pregnant women are at an elevated risk for domestic violence assaults
- Domestic violence during a pregnancy correlates with a greater incidence of low-birth weight babies and pre-term complications
- The birth of the baby may actually trigger further violence due to the abuser's feelings of jealousy and being neglected...battering often increases in frequency and severity

Children and Domestic Violence:

- We CAN NOT protect children unless we protect their mother
- Domestic Violence is a generational cycle, i.e. behaviors are passed from one generation to the next through social learning
- 15 in every 1,000 children are victims of child abuse
- Domestic Violence and child abuse overlap
- If domestic violence is present in a home, the children are 15 times more likely to be abused
- In approximately 40% of fatal child abuse cases the mother was being abused by a partner
- Domestic violence is the number one factor for children to re-enter the DHS system after reunification with their families
- 50% - 75% of the time there is both child abuse and partner abuse in the same home
- Children who witness domestic violence are:
  - 6 times more likely to attempt suicide
  - 24 times more likely to be sexually abused
  - 60 times more likely to be involved in delinquent behavior
  - By age 4, children have begun to identify with the abuser in their home

Psychological Effects on Children

- Heightened anxiety and vigilance
- Demonstrate PTSD symptoms
- Demonstrate depressive symptoms
- Difficulty adjusting to new situations
- Children feel fear for themselves,
- Fear for their mother and self blame for the domestic violence
- Demonstrate developmental delays
- Children experience conflicting loyalties in domestic violence homes, i.e. loving Dad feels like betraying Mom
- Children are often cited as the source for the domestic violence

- At least 1 in 10 calls to police agencies for intervention in domestic disputes are made by minors
- Children often ask themselves:
  - Will he hurt me?
  - Is it my fault?
  - When will it happen again?
  - How can I stop this?

#### Physical Effects on Children

- Child is caught in the cross-fire of violent parents
- The likelihood of a child being injured as a result of an attempt to intervene in the domestic violence increased with age
- Demonstrate sleep disturbances
- Failure to Thrive

#### Behavioral Effects on Children

- Heightened school performance difficulties
- Demonstrate a preoccupation with physical aggression
- Truancy difficulties
- Bedwetting problems
- Classroom behavioral problems

#### Witnesses Become Perpetrators

- 63% of all boys age 11-20 who are arrested for murder have killed the man who was assaulting their mother
- 200-300 parents are murdered each year by their children
- Children who have witnessed abuse or who are abused are 1,000 times more likely to abuse a partner when they become adults.
- Children who witness domestic violence have a 74% greater chance of committing a crime against a person
- Children who witness domestic violence are 24 more times more likely to commit a rape