

Erie County Sheriffs
Domestic Violence
Unit



Effects of Domestic Violence
on Children

Seneca Nation Early Childhood Center
August 13, 2008

Presented by Brian Mohr



Child abuse is often linked to domestic violence


Children living in violent homes may have witnessed verbal threats, objects thrown, floggings, threats with weapons, sexual torture, suicide attempts and murder. In most cases, these children are not only witnesses to the violence, but are also assaulted during violent incidents.

In a national survey of over 6,000 families, researchers found that 50% of men who frequently assaulted their wives also frequently assaulted their children.¹

The Massachusetts Dept. of Social Services reviewed 200 substantiated child abuse reports and among these cases, 48% of the of the case records mentioned adult domestic violence.²

Among hospitalized child abuse cases, 59% of mothers of abused children have been found to be beaten by their male partners.³

Children from violent homes learn:

- It's acceptable for men to hit women
 - Violence is the way to get what you want
 - Big people have power they misuse
 - Men are bullies who push women and children around
 - Expression of feelings signifies weakness
 - Don't talk about violence!
 - Don't trust and
 - Don't feel!
- 

Effects on Children

0-5 years

- ◆ Physical Complaints
- ◆ Sleep disturbances
- ◆ Bed wetting
- ◆ Excessive separation anxiety
- ◆ Clingy and anxious

6-12 years

- ◆ Behave in ways to reduce tension
- ◆ Attempt to control parental violence
- ◆ Fear of being abandoned
- ◆ Fear of being killed or fear themselves killing
- ◆ Fear of their own anger and other's anger
- ◆ Eating disturbances
- ◆ Insecure and distrustful of their environment

13-18 years

- ◆ Alcohol and drug abuse
- ◆ Running away
- ◆ Early pregnancy and marriage
- ◆ Suicidal thoughts and actions
- ◆ Homicidal thoughts and actions
- ◆ Criminal activities

Effects on Adult Survivors

- ◆ Higher stress levels
- ◆ Higher levels of anxiety, depression and psychiatric illness
- ◆ 5 times more likely to commit suicide
- ◆ Experience twice as many miscarriages
- ◆ Reduced coping and problem-solving skills
- ◆ More somatic complaints such as headaches and muscle and joint fatigue

FDV SURVIVORS ARE MORE LIKELY TO:

Be Socially isolated

Use Alcohol and drugs

Abuse dependent children

GIRLS

- * Somatic complaints
- * Withdrawn and passive
- * Approval seeking
- * "Mother's little helper"
- * Low frustration or infinite patience

BOYS

- * Acting out
- * Tantrums
- * Fights
- * Low frustration
- * Bullying



Web Resources

endabuse.org Domestic Violence prevention
actagainstviolence.apa.org Violence prevention
safeyouth.org National Youth Violence Prevention
childabuse.com Prevention through education and awareness
aed.org Educational Development
ncpc.org National Crime Prevention Council
nysed.gov New York State Dept. of Education
fnys.org Families Together in New York State
ed.gov US Dept. of Education

parentingwithdignity.com Affirmative parenting
rosemond.com Affirmative parenting

theantidrug.org Drug prevention
mediacampaign.org Drug prevention
freevibe.com Drug prevention

¹Straus, M. A., Gelles, R. J., & Smith, C. (1990). *Physical violence in American families: Risk factors and adaptations to violence in 8,145 families*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.

²Hangen, E. (1994). Department of Social Services Interagency Domestic Violence Team Pilot Project: Program data evaluation. Boston, MA: Massachusetts Department of Social Services.

³Schechter, S., & Edleson, J. (1994). In the best interests of women and children: A call for collaboration between child welfare and domestic violence constituencies. Unpublished Manuscript.

