

Understanding Domestic Violence

What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic Violence in General

Domestic violence (also called intimate partner violence (IPV), domestic abuse or relationship abuse) is a pattern of abusive behaviors that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another partner in an intimate relationship. Domestic violence can include physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, and/or economic actions or threats of action. The National Domestic Violence Hotline website has helpful information including warning signs, typical behaviors, and types of abuse. See <https://www.thehotline.org/is-this-abuse/abuse-defined/>

Power and Control Wheel

The Domestic Abuse Intervention Project developed [a diagram](#) that indicates the types of behaviors an abuser might use to establish and maintain control over his/her partner.

Spiral of Violence

In the past, domestic violence advocates and service providers used the “cycle of violence” to describe a common course or pattern of behaviors by the abuser in a relationship. It included four stages: tension building; acute violence; reconciliation or honeymoon; and calm. Today, domestic violence advocates and service providers reference the “spiral of violence.” This change in diagram was meant to reflect that the stages need not go in a particular order. See <https://www.safeplaceolympia.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/The-Spiral-of-Violence.png>

Facts and Figures

Statistics in General

To learn more about the rates of victimization, the demographics of those involved, the impact on children and youth as well as domestic violence in the work place, you can visit: <https://www.thehotline.org/resources/statistics/>

District of Columbia Specific

For DC specific information regarding domestic violence statistics, you can visit: <https://www.speakcdn.com/assets/2497/dc.pdf>

Domestic Violence: Children and Adolescents

Impact on Children

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) has provided information regarding the immediate reactions and long-term effects of domestic violence on children. It is important to note that a child's experience of violence depends on a number of factors including the age of the child, the temperament of the child, the frequency and intensity of domestic abuse, the response of adults as well as others in the social environment. For more information, see

- <https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/trauma-types/domestic-violence/effects>
- <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/domestic-violence-and-children-questions-and-answers-domestic-violence-project-advocates>

NCTSN has also developed a fact sheet series for parents whose children have been affected by domestic violence. The series includes information to help parents talk with the children about domestic violence as well as support in managing behaviors and relationships in a way that promotes resilience and recovery. See <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/children-and-domestic-violence-parents-fact-sheet-series>

Teen Dating Violence

The National Institute of Justice has funded research examining the nature, characteristics, and extent of dating violence; risk and protective factors; long-term and short-term outcomes; and systematic evaluations of teen dating violence prevention and intervention programs, policies and legislation. See

<https://www.nij.gov/topics/crime/intimate-partner-violence/teen-dating-violence/pages/welcome.aspx>

Child Abuse and Neglect

What is Child Abuse and Neglect?

It is frequently cited that 30 to 60% of children from homes where domestic abuse is present are also victims of abuse themselves.¹ As legal professionals, it is important to understand what child abuse and neglect is as well as the signs and symptoms, in order to respond appropriately. For more information about recognizing signs and symptoms, see <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/whatiscan/>.

NCTSN has information on the effects, interventions, and other resources for physical and sexual abuse:

- <https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/trauma-types/sexual-abuse>
- <https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/trauma-types/physical-abuse>

¹ Edleson, JL. "The Overlap Between Child Maltreatment and Women Battering." *Violence against Women* (February 1999) 5:134-54.

Sibling Violence

Research demonstrates that there is a strong correlation between sibling violence and other forms of family violence in the home environment. Western Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children put out an issue-based newsletter on the topic of sibling violence. Here you can learn more about factors that contribute to development of abuse between children at home, the incidence of violence, signs and symptoms, as well as how to respond to it:

<http://www.vawlearningnetwork.ca/issue-21-sibling-violence>

One specific type of sibling violence is sibling sexual abuse or incest. Research shows that sibling sexual abuse is more common when children live in homes with the presence of violence². Furthermore, since sexual assault is common in domestic violence, children may be exposed to sexual material and conduct before developmentally appropriate. As a result, children may exhibit inappropriate sexual behavior towards their siblings. This article gives background on sibling sexual abuse as well as best practice guidelines for professionals who receive initial disclosures:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1177083X.2012.729513>

The Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs published a "Research and Advocacy Digest" on Sibling Incest that provides an overview of what it is as well as what professionals should consider in working sibling sexual abuse survivors and their families. See

http://www.wcsap.org/sites/default/files/uploads/resources_publications/research_advocacy_digest/RAD_v10_i2.pdf

Parental Alienation/The Alienated Child

One of the ways that abusive partners can exert power and control over significant others is to use the children they have in common. When partners separate, the abuser may be more motivated to intimidate and control their victims through the children³. Many times, there are concerns that the abuser may alienate the child when there is domestic violence present in cases. There has been much dispute over the validity of the concept of "parental alienation" or "parental alienation syndrome." Richard A. Warshak is a psychologist and author who is considered one of the leading authorities on parental alienation. His website has an abundance of information that addresses this topic. See <https://www.warshak.com/index.html>

In response to the controversy, Joan B. Kelly and Janet R. Johnson wrote the following article that examines issues with parental alienation as a concept: The Alienated Child: A Reformulation of Parental Alienation Syndrome. See <http://jkseminars.com/pdf/AlienatedChildArt.pdf>

² Friedrich WN, Fisher JL, Dittner CA, et al. Child Sexual Behavior Inventory: normative, psychiatric and sexual abuse comparisons. *Child Maltreat.*2001;6 (1):37– 39

³ Bancroft, Lundy, "Court Review: Volume 39, Issue 2 - The Parenting of Men Who Batter" (2002). Court Review: The Journal of the American Judges Association. 144.