



Children Exposed to Domestic Violence

There are many ways children are exposed to domestic violence:

- seeing a mother assaulted or demeaned.
- hearing loud conflict and violence.
- seeing the aftermath (e.g., injuries).
- learning about what happened to a mother.
- being used by an abusive parent as part of the abuse.

In almost 40% of domestic violence situations, children see or hear the violence as it is happening. In many cases the violence is severe. Children who do not witness the violence are still a part of an unhealthy family and will be affected by the situation.

Children are more than 'witnesses' to domestic violence. Children living with conflict and abuse will "actively interpret, predict, assess their roles in causing a 'fight,' worry about the consequences, engage in problem solving, and/or take measures to protect themselves or siblings, both physically and emotionally".

What children learn from domestic violence:

- Violence and threats get you what you want.
- Victims are to blame for violence.
- Unhealthy, unequal relationships are normal or to be expected.
- Men are in charge and get to control women's lives and women don't have the right to be treated with respect.

Children exposed to domestic violence have increased risk of:

- emotional trauma (low self esteem, posttraumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression)
- health problems (failure to thrive eating/sleeping problems, developmental delays)
- difficulties learning
- becoming violent themselves or becoming a part of an abusive relationship as a teen or adult.

As a member of the public, if you believe a child is being abused, at risk of abuse, or not having basic needs met, you have a legal duty to report it to Child Protection in your area. In Saskatchewan, a child is considered to be in need of protection if she or he has been exposed to domestic violence or severe disharmony in the home. Failure to act may place the child at risk of further harm.



Sources

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