

Domestic Violence and Youth: Implications for Professionals



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Youth and Domestic Violence

**Where one form of family violence exists,
there is a likelihood the other does as well.**

50% ...

A survey of more than 6,000 American families found that 50% of men who frequently assaulted their wives also frequently abused their children.

50% ...

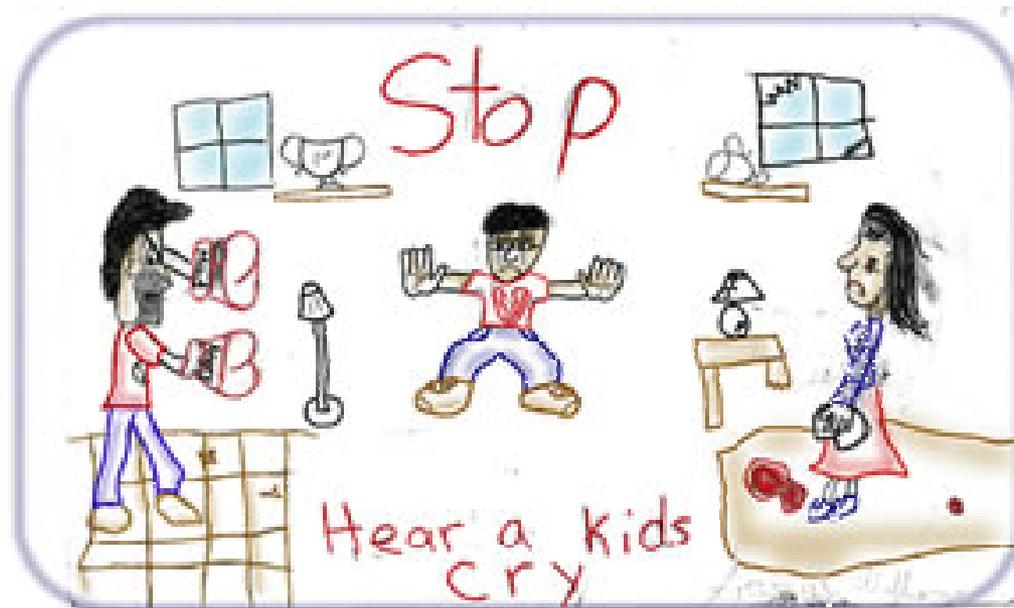
Slightly more than half of female victims of domestic violence live in households with children under age 12

10 million ...

Studies suggest that as many as 10 million children witness domestic violence each year.

Children and Domestic Violence

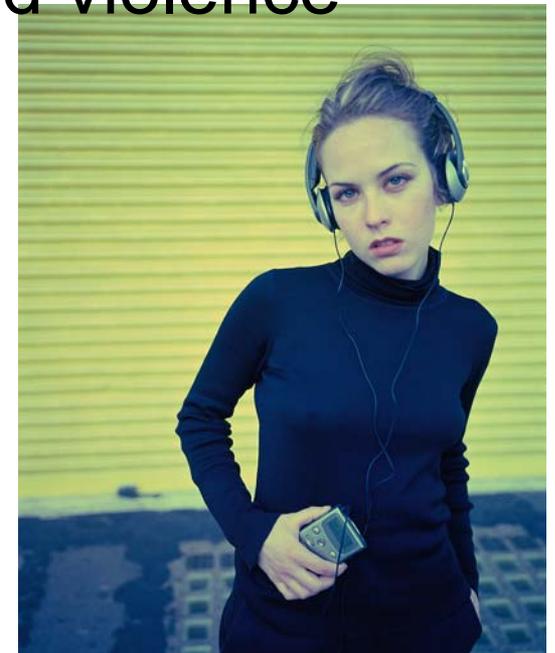
The U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect suggests that domestic violence may be the single major precursor to child abuse and neglect fatalities in this country



The Impact

Youth who witness domestic violence are more likely to:

- Exhibit behavioral and physical health problems including depression, anxiety, and violence towards peers
- Attempt suicide
- Abuse drugs and alcohol
- Run away from home
- Engage in teenage prostitution
- Commit sexual assault crimes





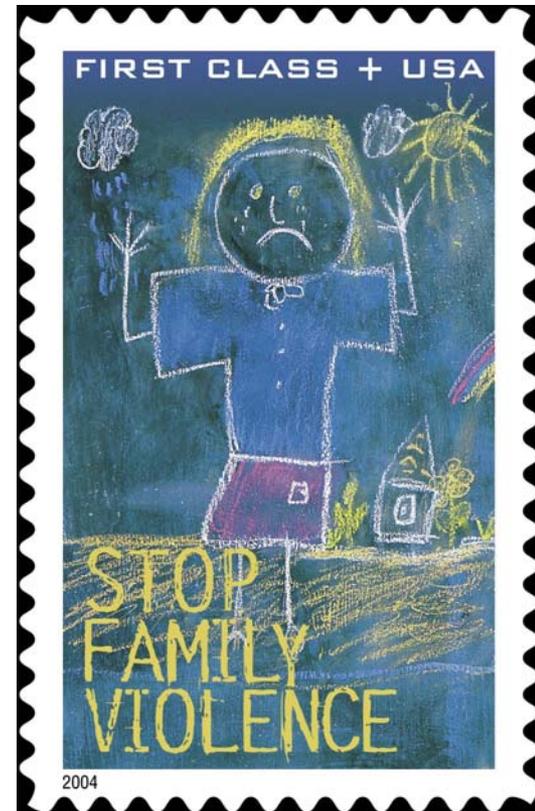
Dating Violence

Girls who reported that they had been abused by a dating partner were:

- More than twice as likely as non-abused girls to report smoking, drinking, and using illegal drugs
- Almost three times as likely to engage in bingeing and purging
- Six to nine times as likely to contemplate or attempt suicide

Batterers' Risk to Abuse Children

- **PHYSICAL ABUSE**
- **SEXUAL ABUSE**
- **PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE**
- **POST-SEPERATION RISKS**

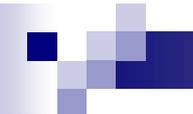


Risks Posed To Children By Exposure To Batterers



- *Risk of exposure to threats or acts of violence towards their mother.*
- *Risk of undermining mother-child relationships.*
- *Risk of physical abuse of the child by the batterer.*
- *Risk of sexual abuse of the child by the batterer.*

Risks Posed To Children By Exposure To Batterers



- *Risk to children of the batterer as a role model.*
- *Risk of rigid, authoritarian parenting.*
- *Risk of neglectful or irresponsible parenting.*
- *Risk of psychological abuse and manipulation.*
- *Risk of abduction.*
- *Risk of exposure to violence in the batterer's new intimate relationships.*

What Youth Learn

- The world is not safe
- Love = abuse
- Abuse works & is acceptable
- How to walk on eggshells
- How to take care of parents/siblings
- Family loyalty=keeping secrets

What Children Learn



- Inconsistency
- Power and Control
- FEAR
- You can't trust anyone
- Promises are meant to be broken
- TO BECOME ABUSERS AND VICTIMS



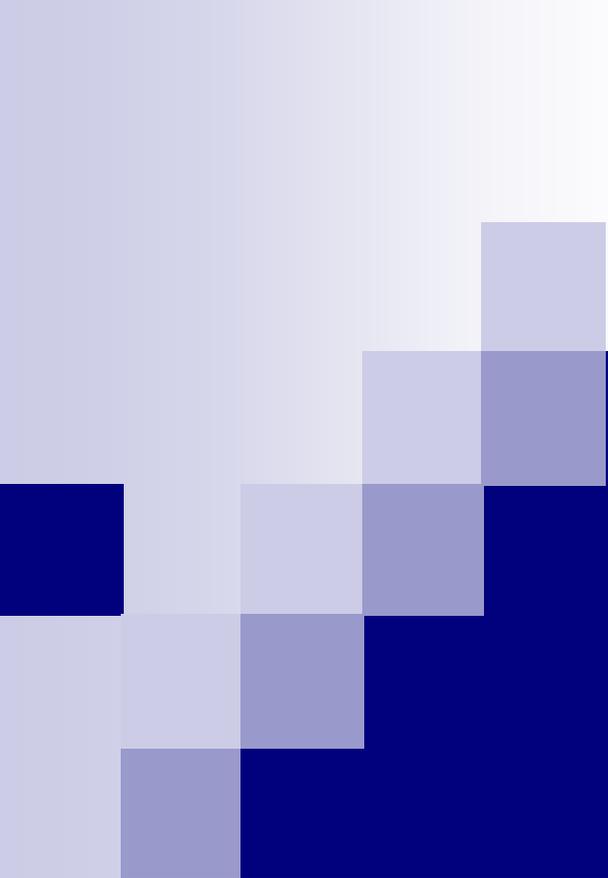
How Dangerous is the Abuser?

Danger Assessment

- Abuser's physical violence increasing in frequency
- Abuser's physical violence increasing in severity
- Abuser has attempted to choke
- Abuser has access to/owns guns
- Abuser has threatened to kill victim
- Abuser has threatened to or has used weapons in prior incident
- Abuser has forced sex

Danger Assessment

- Victim believes partner is capable of killing her
- Abuser is extremely jealous of victim
- Abuser controls all of victim's activities
- Abuser beat victim during pregnancy
- Abuser has serious alcohol abuse
- Abuser uses drugs
- Recent separation/Significant change in relationship
- Abuser is unemployed
- Abuser has "avoided" arrest
- Victim has a child that is not from the abuser
- Abuser stalks victim



Recommendations for Professionals

Recommendations



“A community’s response to domestic violence is only as strong as it’s weakest link.”

- From *Child Custody & Domestic Violence*, by Peter G. Jaffe, Ph.D.

Recommendations

- Conduct a thorough investigation
- Examine credibility of the parties through a wide range of sources of evidence
- Understand that the absence of police or medical records does not in itself indicate that domestic violence isn't a factor
- Do not use psychological testing or evaluation to attempt to establish domestic violence perpetration or victimization, or to predict dangerousness or parenting ability in batterers

Adapted from The Batterer as Parent, Bancroft & Silverman, 2002

Recommendations

- Interpret children's statements and observations cautiously with a full understanding of family dynamics in domestic violence cases
- Risk should be assessed on all risks posed to a child by a batterer, not solely on level of physical dangerousness
- If DV is present, do not proceed on the assumption that ongoing tensions between parents are mutually caused.

Adapted from The Batterer as Parent, Bancroft & Silverman, 2002

Recommendations

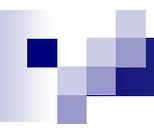
- Carefully assess the alleged batterer's ability to focus on his children's needs
- Observations of the batterer's presentation of himself to a professional should not be weighed heavily in assessing the presence or severity of DV perpetration.
- The paramount goal in DV cases is to promote the strongest relationship possible between children & the non-battering parent.

Adapted from The Batterer as Parent, Bancroft & Silverman, 2002

Recommendations

- Professionals evaluating custody who do not have a background working in DV programs should seek consultation from a DV professional on all custody cases w/DV
- Assessment of parenting capacity should include evaluation of the parents' values with respect to parenting
- Recommendations made regarding custody or visitation should be weighed carefully and should fully consider dynamics of domestic violence/exposure to battering

Adapted from The Batterer as Parent, Bancroft & Silverman, 2002



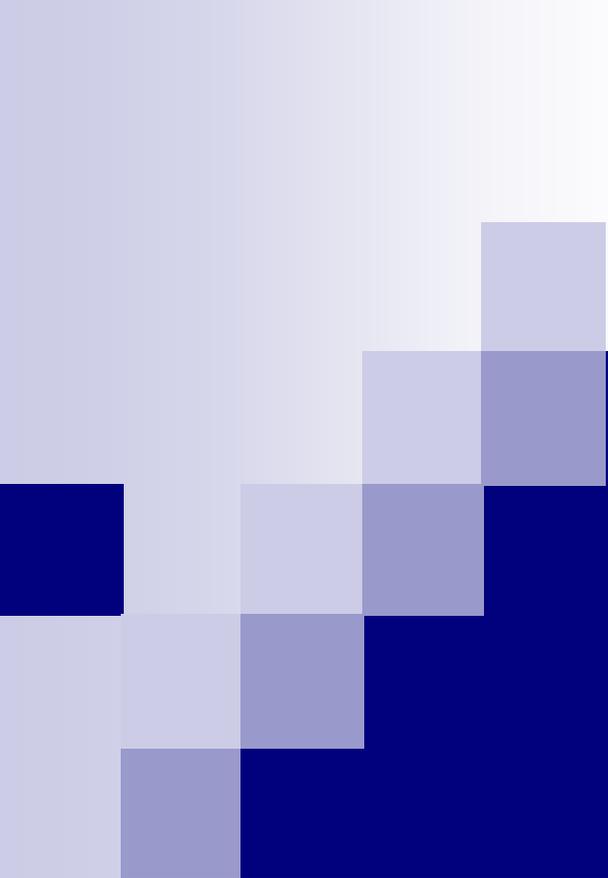
Potential Recommendations for Case Reports

For Batterers:

- Attend Certified Domestic Violence Intervention Programs
- Be held accountable to the full extent of the law for all abusive behavior

For Victims (Non-Battering Parent & Children):

- Specialized domestic violence services, including therapy, group counseling, advocacy, legal services
- Mentoring programs for children, especially boys
- Wide range of appropriate services that will help support the victim in achieving safety and overcoming trauma



Resources

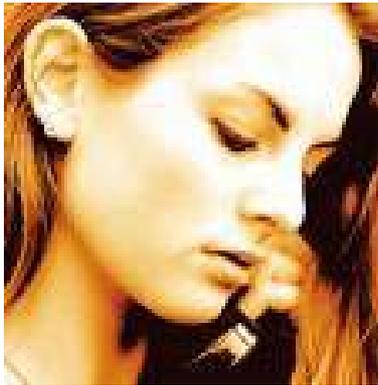
Delaware Resources for Children



- New Castle County: 762-8989
Child, Inc.- Helping Children Heal Program,
Project P.R.I.D.E. dating violence program
- Kent/Sussex County: 424-2420
Turning Point at People's Place II, Inc.-
Child Counseling Program

National Resources

National Domestic Violence Hotline



1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

1-800-787-3224 (TDY)

National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline

1-866-331-9474

1-866-331-8453 TTY

www.loveisrespect.org

Legal Remedies

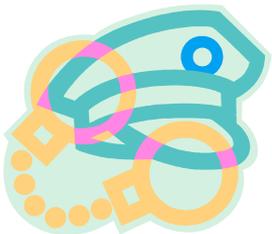
Civil: Protection from Abuse Order

- available in Family Court
- ”substantive relationships”
- wide range of remedies



Criminal: Misdemeanor/Felony Charges

- must call police or obtain a warrant
- Prosecution has a no-drop policy



Delaware Resources

24 Hour Hotlines



New Castle County	302-762-6110
Kent/Sussex Counties	302-422-8058
Sussex- Latina	302-745-9874

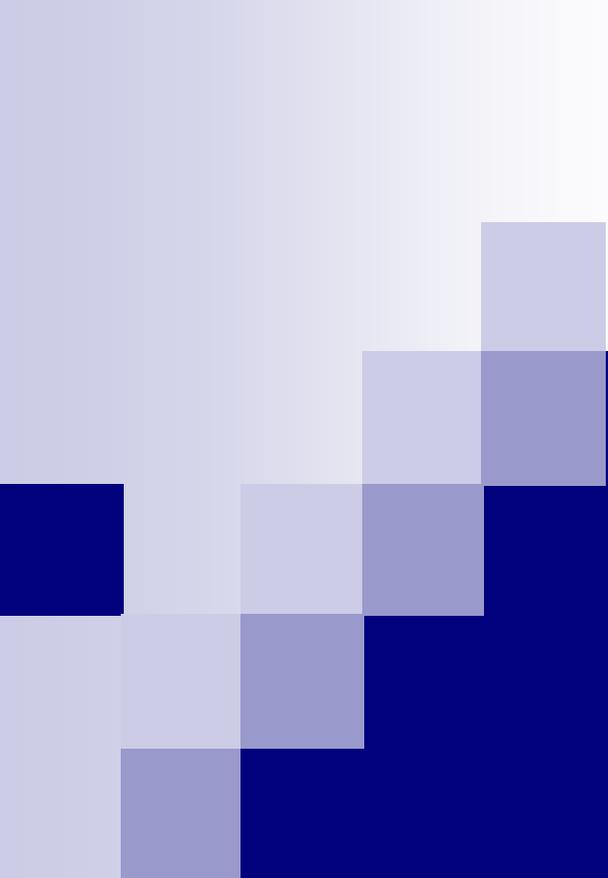
Emergency Shelters



Available Referrals:

- **Court Advocacy/Legal Services**
- **Victim and Child Counseling Services**
- **Offender Treatment Services**
- **Police Victim Services**
- **Family Court**

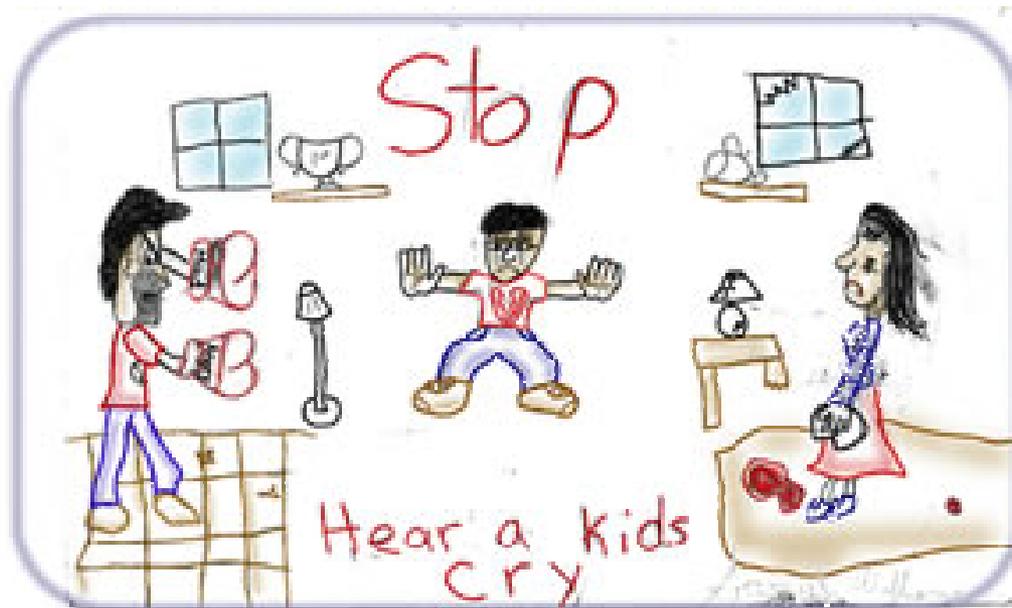




Helping Children Heal

Key Elements of Children's Healing

- A close relationship w/their non-abusive parent
- Safety
- Good relationships w/siblings
- Connection to other loved ones, peers, self



Key Elements of Children's Healing



- Opportunities to talk about events and express feelings
- Opportunities to release distressing feelings
- Good information about abuse

Empowering Children

- Teach critical thinking skills
- Understand and support children's emotional and physical survival strategies
- Talk to children about safety planning



Community Responses

- Coordinated community response (cooperation, information-sharing)
- Reach out to the child's non-abusive parent
- Help address barriers to accessing services
- Help create an Abuse-free world