

Honor Our Voices

ETHICS 1:

Assessment and Intervention with Children Who Have Experienced Domestic Violence



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Ethical Considerations for Therapists Working with Children and Caregivers who have Experienced Domestic Violence (Intimate Partner Violence)

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“Am I domestic violence-informed?”

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“Am I domestic violence-informed?”

Self-Assessment:

“Can I define (identify) *domestic violence* – types, dynamics, impact, risk?”

“Do I have knowledge related to common outcomes (impact) to children at this intersection?”

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“Am I aware of the multitude of ways in which the child’s victim parent can be impacted by her experiences with victimization, abuse, trauma?”

“Am I knowledgeable about the ways in which perpetrators of domestic violence use the children as pawns and very often continue their abuse and control even after separation of the parents?”

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“Am I able to identify elevated risk to the child and/or the child’s caregiver?”

“Am I assessing this risk – not only at the beginning – but throughout treatment?”

“Do I have a protocol for responding to risk and safety needs?”

“Am I routinely collaborating and consulting with a knowledgeable, experienced supervisor or domestic violence professional (within the limits of confidentiality and consent)?”

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Definition

Domestic violence is a **pattern of coercive control** that may also include physical violence, sexual abuse, psychological/emotional abuse, reproductive abuse and economic abuse perpetrated by one intimate partner or formerly intimate partner against another.

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Domestic Violence and Children

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Children are disproportionately present in households with domestic violence (Fantuzzo, Boruch, Beriama, Atkins & Marcus, 1997); and

Families with domestic violence have more children in the home (relative to the gen. pop.), especially children younger than age 5 (Fantuzzo et al, 1997).

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What Do Children Experience?

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- Approx. 30-60 percent overlap between child maltreatment and domestic violence (Edleson, 1999; Appel & Holden, 1998;. Stark & Filcraft, 1988); Hughes, Parkinson & Vargo, M., 1989).
- Children exposed to violence between a parent and his or her intimate partner are at a higher risk for sexual abuse than children from non-violent households (OJJDP, 2004; Fantuzzo & Mohr, 1999).

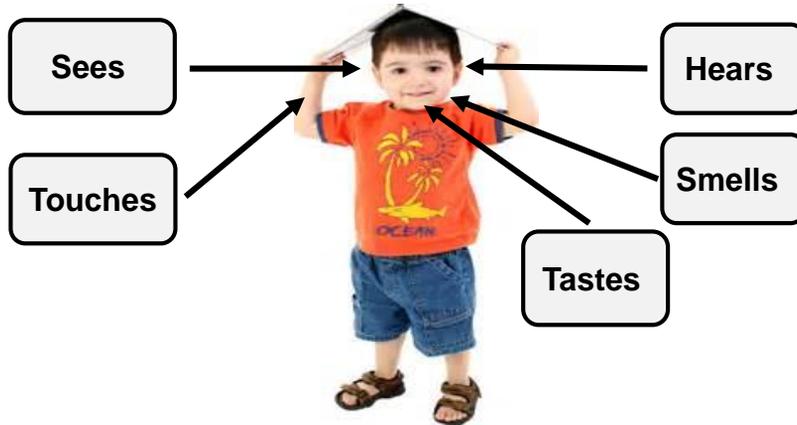
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“The perpetrator, through the use of intimate partner violence, creates an environment of fear and intimidation that can affect every member of a family, including children.”

YWCA (2007). *Through Their Eyes: Domestic Violence and Its Impact on Children*, YWCA Works, p. 6 (2007).

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Child Experiences Trauma (IPV) Through the Senses



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Home Environment

- Environment of fear and intimidation
- Desire to protect
- Responsibility/self-blame
- Divided loyalties
- Family secret
- Roles are determined by gender
- Unstable and unpredictable
- Favoritism
- Take on adult roles

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Lessons Learned

- Violence within the family is “normal” (*maladaptive cognition*)
- We hurt people we love
- Violence, threats, lies and manipulation solve problems
- Intimidation gets results
- The adult victim is at fault (or child blames self) (*maladaptive cognition*)
- “Anger” causes violence
- Drinking/drugs cause violence
- Nothing is safe (*maladaptive cognition*)

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During the Violent Incident

- Try to rescue/protect their mother/parent;
- Take physical action such get between the adults;
- Try to deflect abuser’s attention onto them;
- Try to distract the abuser;
- Try to take care of younger siblings;
- Seek outside help (call police, run to neighbors); and
- May not be allowed to check on their mother when they know something has happened.

(Cunningham & Baker, L ., 2007)

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Between Violent Incidents

- Stress (worry and anxiety) and fear may increase;
- Try to predict when the next incident will happen;
- Change their behavior in hopes that it will prevent violence from happening again (*maladaptive cognition*); and
- Some children “wish” for the violent episode – to have it over and release the overwhelming stress/tension of waiting.

(Cunningham & Baker, L ., 2007)

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Children As Pawns of the Perpetrator

- Using the children’s behavior (or misbehavior) as the excuse for the abuse;
- Encouraging/forcing the children to abuse their other parent;
- Threatening violence against the children and/or pets;
- Talking inappropriately to children about the other parent’s behavior; and
- Prolonging court proceedings regarding custody and access, especially when the abuser had previously shown little interest in the children.

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In What Ways Are Children Impacted?

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- Majority of children exposed to domestic violence “*appear to be functioning without clinically significant levels of an adjustment problem*” (Spilsbury, Kahana, Drotar, Creeden, Glannery & Friedman, 2008).
- However, clinically significant symptoms of psychological maladjustment appear to be linked to increased exposure to violence (proximity, frequency, severity, age) (Spilsbury et al, 2008).

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Patterns of Internalizing and Externalizing Behavior of Children in a Community Setting (n=175) (Spilsbury, et al, 2008).

Three (3) Clusters:

- **Under Clinical Cut Offs** (well below clinical thresholds for any internalizing or externalizing problem) **(69%)**
- **Externalizing problems** (with or without internalizing problems) (Conduct Disorder, Socialized aggression)**(18%)**
- **Internalizing problems only** (Depression, Anxiety, PTSD) **(13%)**

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Aggression

- Significant correlations between aggression in children and exposure to physical and psychological violence – as violence increases, so does aggression (Litrownik, Newton & Hunter, 2003)
- Exposure may heighten bullying behaviors in children (McGee, 2000);
- Recent exposure to domestic violence is a significant factor in predicting a child's violent behavior outside the home (Edleson, 2004).
- May learn how to use aggression to control others and to resolve interpersonal conflicts (Osofsky, 2003).

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Social Problems

Several studies have found that children score lower on measures of social competency.

Additionally:

- Social isolation (Hester, Pearson & Harwin, 2000);
- Difficulty trusting others (Hester et al, 2000);
- Poor social skills (Hester et al, 2000); and
- Deficits in relationships with others (Rhea, Chafey, Dohner & Terragno, 1996)

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Anxiety/Depression *Literature Review:*

- **16%** of children of battered women met clinical criteria for depression; **23%** were in clinical range for anxiety (Jouriles, Spiller, Stephens, McDonald & Swank, 2000).
- Violence in the home is a predictor of anxiety and depression in adolescents (Pelcovitz, Kaplan, DeRosa, Mandel & Salinger, 2000).
- Adolescent boys who witnessed domestic violence had higher levels of depression and suicidal thoughts than non-witnesses (Carlson, 1990)

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Experiencing domestic violence is an Interpersonal Trauma for Children



Greater likelihood of PTSD following Interpersonal Trauma



PTSD Prevalence Rates for Children Experiencing DV: 13%-50%
(Shelter Samples – closer to 50%)

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PTSD Cluster	Symptoms	Study
Re-Experiencing	52% intrusive thoughts or nightmares	Graham-Bermann & Levendosky, 1998
	98% nightmares, flashbacks	Lehmann and Ellison, 2001
	85-92% re-experiencing	Levendosky, Huth-Bocks, & Semel, 2002
Avoidance	19% traumatic avoidance	Graham-Bermann & Levendosky, 1998
	52% avoided talking or thinking about the trauma	Lehmann and Ellison, 2001
	3-47% experiencing avoidance symptoms	Levendosky, Huth-Bocks, & Semel, 2002
Hyper-Arousal	42% sleep problems, irritability or concentration	Graham-Bermann & Levendosky, 1998
	74% trouble sleeping, irritability, concentration	Lehmann and Ellison, 2001
	39-91% increased arousal	Levendosky, Huth-Bocks, & Semel, 2002

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The Batterer and Parenting

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The Batterer and Parenting (Bancroft and Silverman, 2002 & 2004)

Tends to be:

- Under-involved and neglectful
- When involved – rigid and authoritarian
- Tends to take an interest in his children when it is convenient for him or when an opportunity arises for him to obtain public recognition for his fathering.

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- Self Centered
- Manipulative
- Ability to perform well under observation
- Significant potential for punishment/retaliation
- Exposes children to abuse (*which is a parenting choice*)
- Damages his partner's relationship with her children
- Uses children to perpetuate abuse

(Bancroft and Silverman, 2002 & 2004)

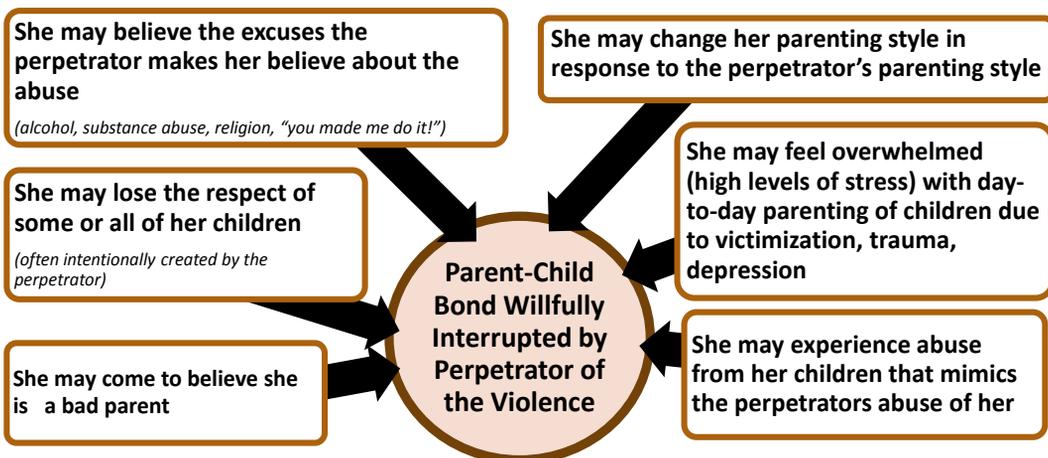
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Battered Mothers and Parenting?

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- Parents may be unaware that their children are watching, listening and learning from their father's violent episodes (Maze, 2004);
- They often they do not understand the impact to their child's present and long-term development (Maze, 2004).
- Being a victim of intimate partner violence can impact ability to parent

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- Juggling the needs of her children while at the same time trying to anticipate the perpetrator's behavior – not always able to prioritize the children's needs (Lapierre, 2007).
- She may suffer trauma-related mental illness, drug or alcohol abuse or poor physical health triggered by the abuse.
- Erosion of her authority with the children.
- Shame and guilt about the abuse may inhibit her communication with her children.

(Bancroft & Croft, 2005)

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- Domestic Violence induced stress may result in child neglect or maltreatment
- Research shows a majority of women's parenting improves once she and her children are safe.
- Support system (family, friends) may be diminished.
- Becoming increasingly impoverished emotionally and materially by seemingly endless and difficult litigation (*what might this mean for children and treatment?*)

(Bancroft & Croft, 2005)

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Efforts to Protect

- Many are working to create as “normal” a life for their children to protect them from the consequences of abuse.
- Fighting for their children’s well-being (although we cannot assume that they all will).
- Parenting their children differently behind the perpetrator’s back (Bancroft & Croft, 2005).

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The victim parent’s actions can be *counterintuitive*:

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Examples (Bancroft & Cross, 2005):

- Avoids angering the abuser by agreeing with him, pleasing and placating him, and complying with his demands. Urges the children to do the same;
- Keeps the abuse secret;
- In a chaotic and unsafe environment, she tries to distract and soothe the children and normalize the situation;
- Avoids or lies to friends, family and professionals;
- Assumes blame for family problems;
- Arranges for children to spend time away from home.

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- Tries to reason with the abuser, challenge his behavior or improve the relationship.
- Prevents violence by encouraging the abuser to drink until he passes out.
- Endures physical assault, sexual assault and property damage by the abuser so he will not hurt the children.
- Uses alcohol and drugs to numb her own pain and continue to function.
- Uses denial to cope with the abuse.

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- Uses denial, escapism and disassociation to cope with the abuse.
- Severely disciplines the children herself to avoid worse punishment by the abuser.
- Participates in or lies about the abuser's criminal activity or abuse of the children.
- Uses force against the abuser to defend herself and her children.
- Stays with or returns to the abuser to avoid stalking and escalation of the violence if they are living apart.

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Suggestions for Enhancing Safety and Positive Treatment Outcomes

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Study: Community Treatment of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder for Children Exposed to Intimate Partner Violence: A Randomized Controlled Trial (Cohen, Mannarino & Iyengar, 2011).

Adapted TF-CBT Protocol:

1. 8 weeks
 2. **Safety component** – at the beginning of treatment
 3. **Trauma Narrative** – sharing child's IPV experiences and awareness with the mother (non-offending parent) and addressing maladaptive cognitions (instead of mastery of past trauma memories)
 4. Optimize child's ability to discriminate between real danger and generalized fears (instead of mastery of reminders of prior IPV experiences).
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Results:

- TF-CBT group significantly greater improvements in PTSD symptoms.
 - **In particular:**
 - ✓ Hyperarousal Symptoms
 - ✓ Avoidance Symptoms
 - No significant difference in re-experiencing symptoms
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Assessing Risk and Safety Planning

- Assess for **safety** at the beginning and continually reassess throughout treatment (adaptation from the TF-CBT protocol).
- Be familiar with the Jacquelyn Campbell, **Danger Assessment**. Evidence-Based tool used to assess for risk of intimate partner femicide. More information at <https://www.dangerassessment.org/>

Refer to Handout

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Lethality Risk Factors

Complex

(No one-size-fits-all approach – more than just a checklist)



Cannot Predict

(Cannot predict what is going to happen)



Learn Risk Factors

(Identify, Respond, Triage, Refer and help others be aware of the signs of danger and take precautions)

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- Use of or treat with a weapon **(20x)**
- Threats to kill **(15x)**
- Strangulation **(10x)**
- Violently and Constantly jealous (possessive) **(9x)**
- Forced to have unwanted sex **(8x)**
- A gun in the house **(6x)**
- Access to guns **(5x)**
- Increase in severity of physical violence **(5x)**
- Partner controls most or all of woman's daily activities **(5x)**
- Partner's use of illicit drugs **(4x)**
- Partner drunk every day or almost every day **(4x)**
- Woman ever beaten while pregnant **(4x)**
- Partner ever reported for child abuse **(3x)**
- Child in the home who is not perpetrator's biological child **(2x)**

Campbell et al. (2003). Risk Factors for femicide in abusive relationships: Results from a multisite case control study. *American Journal of Public Health*. 93(7): 1089-109

(interviewed the proxies of 220 femicide victims – compared to 343 abused control victims)

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“A child’s risk for lethality may be overlooked if there is no history of the perpetrator directly harming the child”

(Jaffe & Juodis, 2006).

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In What Circumstances are Children Killed in the Context of Intimate Partner Violence? (Hamilton, Jaffe, Campbell, 2012)

- Indirectly as a result of attempting to protect a parent during a violent episode;
- Directly as part of an overall murder-suicide plan by a parent who decides to kill the whole family; and/or
- Directly as revenge against the partner who decided to end the relationship or for some other perceived betrayal.

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LETHALITY ASSESSMENT

Children Killed In The Context Of Intimate Partner Violence.

Hamilton, Jaffe, & Campbell, 2013; Jaffe, Dawson & Campbell, 2012; Jaffe, Campbell, Hamilton & Juodis, 2012; Jaffe, Scott, Jenney, Dawson, Straatman & Campbell, 2014; Jaffe, 2015

CHILDREN KILLED IN THE CONTEXT OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Best predictor of homicide risk to the children is homicide risk to the adult victim. Children should be protected when community agencies believe mothers are at risk.

“Bottom Line”: When mothers are in danger, children are in danger.

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Implications for Professionals

- Children must be considered at risk for lethality if the female intimate partner is considered to be at high risk for lethality.
- The safety of children is inextricably linked to the safety of the adult victim (*safety planning with adults should always include risk to children*)
- A threat to harm the child(ren) can be seen as a warning sign of a perpetrator's potentially lethal violence and particularly important risk assessment question for child protection.

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- Special attention should be given to the perpetrator's prior threats to harm a child whenever children are involved in a case of domestic violence.
- Fathers are more likely than mothers to harm their children in retaliation for their partner leaving the relationship.
- Children should be protected when community agencies believe mothers are at risk.
- Pay close attention to risk to children in the backdrop of domestic violence and **custody disputes**.

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In Addition, We Need to Ask:

- Was the child directly threatened in any way?
- Were there threats to kill the child – or the family?
- Was there use of or threat with a weapon on the child?
- Was there direct child abuse? Physical? Sexual?
- Was the child ever strangled?
- Has the child tried to intervene in the past or is likely to do so in the future.
- Is there impending or actual separation of the adults?
- Are there child custody proceedings?

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Safety Planning with the Child

- Specific and developmentally appropriate
- Engage the non-offending caregiver safety planning with children and adolescents.
- Identify a safe alternative location should the environment become violent (Goodkind, Sullivan, & Bybee, 2004).
- Develop an escape plan so that the client can quietly move away from the violent environment without being noticed and/or escalating the violence.
- Include resources for the child, 911, hotlines, other telephone numbers.
- Safety planning for visitation with the offending parent
- Continually reassess the child's environment for safety and review the plan on a regular basis

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Safety Planning With the Child

- How do you know when violence might happen?
- Last time your mom got hurt, what did you do?
- Next time there is violence around, what can you do to keep safe?
- Who can you talk to when you feel worried or scared?
- In an emergency, who can you call for help?

Adapted from the YWCA OKC Children's Program

Child's Safety Plan (Example for a Younger Child)

When people are fighting remember to be **SAFE**:

1. Stay out of the fight
2. Ask for help
3. Find an adult who will help you
4. Everyone knows its not your fault

What can I do to be safe? _____

Where can I go to be safe? _____

These are the safe exits from my house: _____

Who are my safe people I can talk to about my problem? _____

Practice calling 911...

My name is _____

I am _____ years old

I need help. Someone is hurting my mom.

I live at _____

My phone number is _____

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Creating the Safety Plan

Resources:

A Toolkit for Working with Children and Youth Exposed to Domestic Violence (British Columbia Ministry of Justice) <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/law-crime-and-justice/criminal-justice/victims-of-crime/vs-info-for-professionals/training/child-youth-safety-toolkit.pdf>

The National Domestic Violence Hotline
<http://www.thehotline.org/2013/04/12/safety-planning-with-children/>

Child Welfare Information Gateway
<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/domviolence/casework-practice/safety-planning/>

Utah Domestic Violence Coalition <http://udvc.org/children-teens/children-domestic-violence>

Promising Futures <http://promising.futureswithoutviolence.org/files/2012/08/Family-Safety-Plan-Template2.pdf>

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Things to Consider

- The vast majority of children will have ongoing contact with the offending parent (DV perpetrator) – whether they want to or not – whether it is safe or not – whether the perpetrator has had intervention or not.
- Cannot underestimate the continuation (in some cases, escalation) of physically violent and/or coercive controlling tactics towards non-offending parent *post-separation*.
- Ongoing manipulation and use of the children as pawns post-separation.

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- Studies have shown that the impact of domestic violence may be mitigated by the presence of at least ONE loving, supportive and supportive adult in their lives – and **when safe to do so, this should preferably be the victim parent** (Holt, Buckley, & Whelan, 2008)
- The child's healing and safety is inextricably linked to the healing and safety of the victim parent.
- Engage in *communication, collaboration and education* with the non-offending caregiver on risks and overlap between IPV and child abuse and neglect, impact to child (Kress, Adamson, Paylo, DeMarco, & Bradley, 2012)

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Challenges

- Complex safety needs of the family
- Possibility of concurrent child abuse
- Complex emotional needs of non-offending caretaker (usually the victim/survivor)
- High rate of aggressive and oppositional behavior
- Possibility of ongoing trauma (and triggering) due to ongoing or future exposure
- Transient nature of the population
- Requests to do couple and/or family therapy

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Special Considerations for Children Residing in Shelter

- Unrealistic expectations
 - Often not possible to follow a set protocol
 - Time may be very limited
 - Shelter population in constant state of flux
 - Demands high level of flexibility
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Re-Cap on Ethics

- Therapist level of competence “Am I Domestic Violence Informed” (how much training/experience do I need?)
 - Do I know how to identify and respond to IPV risk factors
 - Have I examined my attitudes and personal bias
 - Child abuse reporting related to children and intimate partner violence
 - Am I referring, collaborating and consulting with knowledgeable supervisors and domestic violence professionals (advocates)
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QUESTIONS



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RESOURCES

Statewide List of all Attorney General Certified Domestic Violence Victims Programs and Batterer Intervention Programs <http://www.oag.ok.gov/certification#list>

Statewide List of all Tribal Domestic Violence Programs <https://oknaav.org/>



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RESOURCES

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

Trauma Type: Domestic Violence

<https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/trauma-types/domestic-violence>

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RESOURCES

Safety Planning with Child Impacted by Domestic Violence

A Toolkit for Working with Children and Youth Exposed to Domestic Violence (British Columbia Ministry of Justice) <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/law-crime-and-justice/criminal-justice/victims-of-crime/vs-info-for-professionals/training/child-youth-safety-toolkit.pdf>

The National Domestic Violence Hotline

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Child Welfare Information Gateway

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Utah Domestic Violence Coalition <http://udvc.org/children-teens/children-domestic-violence>

Promising Futures <http://promising.futureswithoutviolence.org/files/2012/08/Family-Safety-Plan-Template2.pdf>

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RESOURCES

Warshaw Carole, MD, and Barnes, Holly, MA. Domestic Violence, Mental Health and Trauma: Research Highlights. April 2003. Available at http://new.vawnet.org/Assoc_Files_VAWnet/MentalHealthResearch.pdf

Responding to Domestic Violence: Tools and Forms for Mental Health Providers. Available at no cost through the National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma and Mental Health <http://www.nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org/publications-products/responding-to-domestic-violence-tools-and-forms-for-mental-health-providers/>

Domestic Violence Fact Sheet

www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/childrenanddv_factsheetseries_complete.pdf

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RESOURCES

Child Witness to Violence Project www.childwitnessstoviolence.org
Offers general information about the effects of domestic violence on children, statistics, and the *Report on Violence and Children*.

The "Greenbook" Federal Initiative www.thegreenbook.info
Provides resources and information regarding the six federally funded communities implementing the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges guidelines, *Effective Intervention in Domestic Violence & Child Maltreatment Cases: Guidelines for Policy and Practice*.

National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence The National Center has an award-winning website, initially funded by Altria that provides direct access to information for local, state and national professionals and volunteers.
<http://www.ncdsv.org/images/PowerControlwheelINOSHADING.pdf>

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The Link Research Project: Understanding the Link Between Child Maltreatment and Woman Battering

www.mincava.umn.edu/link

Provides up-to-date information on current research, practice, and promising intervention models with families experiencing domestic violence and child abuse and neglect.

Resource Center on Domestic Violence: Child Protection and Custody

www.ncjfcj.org/dept/fvd/

Comprehensive publications and technical assistance to the fields of domestic violence, child protection, and custody regarding policy and practice issues inherent in work with children exposed to domestic violence.



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RESOURCES

www.ocadvsa.org

www.familyviolence.org

www.uniteforkids.org

www.futureofchildren.org

www.uta.edu.ssw/lehmann

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