The Effects of Domestic Violence on Children
Implications of Children Raised in Violent Homes

- Often imitate behavior they witness
- 85% of batterers witnessed violence as children
- 50% of victims were raised in violent homes
- Many children feel they are responsible or partly to blame for the battering
Affects on Children

1/3 of children who witness their mothers being battered demonstrate significant behavioral and/or emotional problems including:

- Stuttering
- Anxiety and fears
- Psychosomatic disorders
- Loneliness
- Powerlessness
- Terror
- School problems
- Excessive crying
- Sleep disruption
- Shame
- Anger
- Humiliation
Affects on Children

- Children do not have to be physical harm to suffer the effects of violence
- Children who see or hear violence in the home live in fear
- Some symptoms displayed by children who witness violence are the same as seen in children diagnosed with ADHD and/or ADD
Other Effects on Children

- Death by homicide
- Death by suicide
- Emotional injuries (low self esteem)
- Depression
- Aggressive behavior toward others
- Delinquency
- Poor school adjustment
Other Effects on Children

- Modeling behavior - Learned victim/aggressor roles
- Runaway episodes
- Alcohol/drug experimentation
- Early marriage
- Continuation of violence in adult relationships
- Expansion of violence in the community
Red Flag Behaviors of Children

• Aggressive
  - attacking others,
  - destroying property,
  - cruelty to animals,
  - verbal attacks,

• Passive/withdrawn
  - avoids conflict,
  - becomes the perfect child,
Red Flag Behaviors of Children

• Manipulative
  – extreme jealousy,
  – sulking,

• Rebellious/acts out
  – challenges authority,
  – skips school, steals,
  – runs away,
  – smokes/drinks,
  – experiments with drugs,
Red Flag Behaviors of Children

• Suicidal ideations
  - self mutilation,
  - phobias,
  - eating disorders,
  - nightmares
Red Flag Behaviors of Children

• Health Problems
  – headaches,
  – stomach aches,
  – irritable bowels,
  – bedwetting,
  – backaches,
  – skin rashes,
  – mouth ulcers/cold sores,
  – earaches.
How to Help when a child tells you they are living in a violent home

- Let the child know you believe them
- Reassure the child it is not their fault
- Let the child talk about what is worrying them
- Help the child learn other ways of dealing with anger/frustration
How to Help
when a child tells you they are living in a violent home

• Help the child work out a safety plan for an emergency
• Help the child to feel good about him/herself
• Reassure the child that you will help as much as you can, or you will talk to someone who can
• Reassure the child that they are not alone
FACTSHEET

• Domestic violence may be the single major precursor to child abuse and neglect fatalities (U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect)

• Studies suggest that 3.3 - 10 million children witness domestic violence annually (Murray Straus, 1992)

• 50 percent of men who frequently assaulted their wives also frequently abuse their children (Murray Straus, Richard Gelles, & Christine Smith 1990)
FACTSHEET

• Slightly more than half of female victims of intimate violence live in households with children under age 12 (U.S. Department of Justice, 1998)

• Men who witness their parent’s domestic violence are twice as likely to abuse their own wives than sons of nonviolent parents (Murray Straus, Richard Gelles, & Christine Smith 1990)
Domestic Violence and Youth

• 8% of high school girls said “yes” when asked if “a boyfriend or date has ever forced sex against your will” (Commonwealth Fund Survey of the Health of Adolescent Girls, 1997)

• 40% of teenage girls age 14-17 report knowing someone their age who has been hit or beaten by a boyfriend (Children Now/Kaiser Permanente Poll, 1995)
Pregnancy and Domestic Violence

- Each year, at least 6% of all pregnant women, about 240,000, are battered by the men in their lives (CDC, 1994)

- Complications of pregnancy are significantly higher for abused women (Parker, B. McFarlane, J., & Soeken, K. 1994)