**Prevalence**

1. Nearly one in four women in the U.S. reports experiencing violence by a current or former spouse or boyfriend at some point in her life.

2. One in six (16.3%) children aged 0-17 years witnessed a parental assault over their lifetime. This figure rises to one third (34.6%) for 14-17 year olds.

3. 15.5 million U.S. children live in families in which partner violence occurred at least once in the past year. For seven million children, the partner violence is severe.

4. A representative sample of Head Start programs found that 17% of low-income children had been exposed to domestic violence.

5. Approximately one in three adolescent girls in the U.S. is a victim of physical, emotional, or verbal abuse from a dating partner, far exceeding victimization rates for other types of violence affecting youth.

6. When violence exists in an intimate relationship, children may witness it more often after separation than before.

7. Children exposed to domestic violence may develop a wide range of problems, including interpersonal skill deficits, psychological and emotional problems such as depression and PTSD, and externalizing behavior problems.

8. Children who observe parental conflict, hostility, and violent behavior are more likely to use abusive behaviors toward their significant others in both adolescence and adulthood.

9. Children react to exposure to violence in different ways, and many show remarkable resilience. Studies suggest that as assets in a child’s environment increase, including protective adults, the problems he or she experiences may actually decrease.

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**Impact**


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Separation is a time of increased risk of homicide for battered women, sometimes occurring in relation to custody hearings and visitation exchanges.

Women with abusive partners attempt a variety of strategies to protect themselves and their children, but numerous barriers exist that impede their efforts.

Psychological tactics used by abusers include threats of violence, forced isolation, degradation, attempts to distort reality, and methods to increase psychological dependence.

Women with abusive partners attempt a variety of strategies to protect themselves and their children, but numerous barriers exist that impede their efforts.

Significant numbers of women living in poverty are battered, and the violence they experience can make the climb out of poverty unattainable.

Evidence of abusive partner interference with women's efforts to obtain education, training, or employment and to sustain these efforts over time is high.

Many victims remain in an abusive relationship because they believe that the violence is their fault. Family, friends, and society may deepen this belief by accusing the victim of provoking the violence and casting blame on the victim. Victims instead try to change their own behavior; however no one, except for the perpetrator is responsible for and can end the violence.


Exposure to family violence may exacerbate difficult mother-child situations by undermining the supportive, sensitive, and appropriately responsive nature of the mother-child relationship.

Battered women care deeply about their children’s safety and want to protect them from physical assaults but also want to protect them from the harms of poverty and isolation.

Abusive ex-partners are likely to undermine the victim’s parenting role.

If battered mothers cannot find safety, their fears and depression may reduce their ability to nurture and support their children as they normally would.

Children who have experienced profound emotional distress or trauma are largely dependent for their recovery on the quality of their relationship with their caretaking parent.

Psychotherapy designed for mothers and children together can increase the quality of parenting and increase positive outcomes for children.

Many abusive men are concerned about the effect of violence on their children and the children of their partners. Some may be motivated to stop using violence if they understand the devastating effects on their children.

Supporting children’s healthy attachment to a survivor-parent is crucial to their development and resiliency following exposure to domestic violence.

Domestic violence exposure should be followed by interventions that repair the harm on children and their mothers, with the primary goal of reinvigorating and balancing the child-mother relationship.

Parent-Child Relationships

Effective Interventions
Joint custody can be beneficial for children of non-violent, low-conflict couples but can increase the opportunities for abusers to maintain control and to continue or to escalate abuse toward both women and children in domestic violence cases.

Women who worked with advocates experienced less violence over time, reported higher quality of life and social support, and had less difficulty obtaining community resources over time.

Compared with the chronic problems of her partner, a battered woman’s psychological problems appear to be reactions to the violence and decrease as victims become safer.

While not all-inclusive of all domestic violence victims’ service providers, this graph reflects the average number of locations (sites) where victims can receive services that are funded by the Family Violence Prevention and Services Program of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The numbers listed reflect the average of local programs funded from 2011-2013, and the average number of tribal programs funded from 2010-2012. Each of the national, tribal, state, and local victim service providers work collaboratively to promote practices and strategies to improve our nation’s response to domestic and dating violence to make safety and justice not just a priority, but also a reality. (Updated April 2014)