

# CONNECT: Supporting Children Exposed to Domestic Violence

In-service Training for Resource Families

Trainer's Guide



Produced by the  
**Family Violence  
Prevention Fund**  
[www.endabuse.org](http://www.endabuse.org)

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## IN-SERVICE TRAINING FOR RESOURCE\* FAMILIES A Three Hour Session

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*\*By resource families, we mean foster families, kin caregiver families, and pre-adoptive and adoptive families.*

# Acknowledgments



The work of supporting children who have been exposed to violence is a community responsibility, and the child protection system is one partner in that critical effort. However, the presence of even one loving and supportive adult in the life of a child who has been exposed to domestic violence (DV) can make all the difference in the world. When a family's involvement in the child protection system leads to temporary out-of-home placement or adoption of a child, a skilled and compassionate foster, kin, or adoptive parent can be that lifeline for the child.

As the Family Violence Prevention Fund provided technical assistance to Family-to-Family sites in San Francisco, California and Macomb County, Michigan, we heard from foster parents and trainers of foster, kin, and adoptive parents that a need existed for a basic curriculum focused on concrete strategies for supporting children who had been exposed to domestic violence. The challenge to creating such a curriculum was that in order to know how to support children, one also needs to have at least a basic understanding of the dynamics within that child's family. We have attempted to accomplish both of these objectives in a 3-hour session, knowing that these are topics that can take years and many trainings to master. This training is but a starting point.

Many people offered their expertise and guidance as we developed this curriculum. We would like to thank Denise Goodman who offered her time and expertise to the writing of the document. Shellie Taggart made considerable revisions and re-writes as she tested the training with over 60 trainers in California. Our gratitude also extends to our reviewers, Miriam Berkman from the Yale University Child Study Center, Suzanne Cavanaugh from Macomb County, MI Department of Human Services, Stephanie Coram from San Francisco County, CA Human Services Agency and Ronald Dumont from the Massachusetts Dept of Children and Families.

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**Lonna Davis**  
**Project Director**  
**Family Violence Prevention Fund**

# How to Use this Curriculum



### **Description:**

- A basic training session on the dynamics of domestic violence, the impact of exposure to domestic violence (DV) on children, and strategies for supporting children who have been exposed to DV.

### **Intended audience:**

- Appropriate for foster parents, kin caregivers, and adoptive parents with all levels of experience in caring for children who have been exposed to domestic violence, or who may have cause to care for these children in the future. These families are referred to collectively as resource families.
- Ideally, this training should be conducted with groups of no more than 20-25 resource parents to allow adequate time for discussion. Trainers who have little domestic violence or training experience may want to offer it for the first time with a smaller group, or with a co-facilitator to help manage group dynamics.

### **Time needed to conduct training:**

- Three hours

### **Materials needed to conduct training:**

- Trainer's guide
- Copies of handouts
- 3 x 5" note cards with five icebreaker questions pre-printed on them
- Power Point set-up: laptop, LCD machine, power cords
  - (Optional) External speakers for videos
- Power Point slides (downloadable at [www.endabuse.org](http://www.endabuse.org) in the Children and Families Program)
  - (Optional) Training video vignettes (also downloadable)
- Newsprint/flipchart with stand
- Masking tape
- Pens
- Markers
- Name tags
- Refreshments

### **Important Notes for Trainers:**

- **If you plan to use the Power Point slides associated with this curriculum, preview the slides in advance of the training since some of them use animation in order to emphasize key points.**

- **Throughout the curriculum, you will see Trainer Options that are just that—optional training tools that you may or may not decide to use. Some of these Trainer Options are video vignettes relevant to the content. Practice using the technology in advance to avoid disruptions to the training.**

- Participants in the training may have had direct or indirect exposure to domestic violence. This is particularly likely to be true for kin caregivers, who may be caring for children specifically because a family member is either a perpetrator or a survivor of DV. Some individuals may have difficulties with the material being presented, either because it describes some of their (or their family member's) experiences or because it does not.

Sometimes formerly battered women can present with an attitude of "I got out of it, so why can't she just leave?" On the other hand, having survivors of DV in your training can lend a richness and reality to the dialogue that can make the training a powerful learning experience for everyone.

If you observe participants struggling emotionally during the training, you can ask a co-trainer or an experienced foster parent to check in with that individual at a break. Be prepared with the name and number of a local DV program or an advocate if necessary.

- Some trainers use the terms domestic violence, intimate partner violence, and battering interchangeably. Some feel comfortable talking about victims of domestic violence, while others prefer the term survivor. Similarly, when talking about the violent partner, some trainers will want to use the terms batterer or perpetrator, while others use language that describes the behavior rather than the person, such as "men who use violence." Trainers should spend a few minutes early in the training briefly clarifying which terms they will use and why. One possibility is to incorporate this discussion of terms into the section on the dynamics of domestic violence.
- Regarding the use of gendered pronouns during the training, it is important to state up-front that both women and men can be victims of domestic violence, AND to convey the reality that women are more often victims of domestic violence and suffer more serious injury and death than men. Both men and women can be battered in same-sex couples, and a man can be abused by a female partner. However, the majority of domestic violence situations involve a man being abusive with a female partner.

For this reason, some trainers tend to use the pronoun "she" when referring to the victim and "he" when referring to the violent partner. Others will want to occasionally remind the group that not all battering is male-to-female violence.

- The trainer should use the phrase "Resource Family" or "Resource Parents" to describe foster, adoptive and kinship families. This will help the presentation flow more smoothly. Trainers may want to post the definition of "resource family" on newsprint in the training room as a reminder and/or for anyone who arrives late to the training.

# Competencies and Learning Objectives



## **Competencies**

The resource parent will:

1. Be aware of the dynamics present in families experiencing domestic violence.
2. Know there is a correlation between domestic violence and child maltreatment.
3. Understand the extent and severity of the problems related to children's exposure to domestic violence.
4. Be aware that children are impacted by their exposure to domestic violence differently, depending on a variety of factors.
5. Be aware of the factors that influence children's resiliency in the face of domestic violence.
6. Recognize and begin to meet some of the special needs of children in care who come from domestic violence situations.
7. Understand the concept of resiliency as it applies to children who have been exposed to domestic violence.

## **Learning Objectives**

As a result of this training, participants will be better able to:

1. State the reasons why resource families need to understand the dynamics of domestic violence.
2. Describe some of the power and control tactics used by perpetrators of domestic violence.
3. Describe some of the reasons why adult victims stay in abusive relationships.
4. Describe the range of effects on children who have been exposed to domestic violence.
5. Describe some of the factors that influence how individual children are impacted by their exposure to domestic violence.
6. Describe some of the specific needs of children exposed to domestic violence and respond effectively to some of those needs.
7. Promote resiliency in children who have been exposed to domestic violence, and support the development of their positive coping strategies.

# Part 1

## Welcome and Introductions



Time: 15–20 minutes

Purpose: To provide an icebreaker and set the tone for the session

1.

**(Slide 1) Welcome participants to the training.**

Mention the Family Violence Prevention Fund as the developer of the curriculum.

**(Slide 2) State the main topics of the training.**

**(Slide 3) Ask participants to introduce themselves by name and make themselves a name tag.**

Ask them to also share a nickname—one that they had as a child, as an adult, or they can make up a nickname for themselves on the spot. This brief icebreaker can be humorous and help participants to feel more comfortable with each other.

2.

**Introduce the topic of domestic violence.**

Acknowledge that this topic is sensitive, difficult and emotional but a necessary part of their continued preparation as foster, adoptive or kinship parents as many children they will care for have lived with domestic violence. Tell the group that from this point on, you will collectively refer to foster, adoptive, and kin caregivers as “resource families”.

Acknowledge that some participants may have personal experience with domestic violence—themselves, within their families, or through a close friend—and that they might experience difficult emotions as a result of discussing this topic. Suggest that if this occurs, the participant may want to seek support for themselves through a local domestic violence program, a trusted friend, or someone else. Note that if participants have had personal experiences with DV, they may be able to use the experience to inform how they support children in their care. However, it will be important to keep in mind that every family’s and child’s experience is different, so as caregivers, participants will need to avoid making assumptions based on their own experience.

Inform participants that this short, 3 hour session should be the beginning of their education on the topic of domestic violence and that they should seek additional training to deepen their knowledge and develop their skills.

3.

# 4.

## **(Slide 4) Conduct the following icebreaker activity to provide a framework for the session's content and raise awareness of the impact of domestic violence on children and foster/adoptive/kinship parenting:**

For this activity, you will need five 3 x 5 inch note cards, each pre-printed with one question from the following list:

- ❖ Why is it important for resource families to know about domestic violence?
- ❖ How would you feel about a child if you learned that s/he lived in a home where domestic violence took place?
- ❖ How would you feel about a child's birth parents if you learned that the child came from a home where domestic violence took place? Would you feel differently about the victim parent versus the abusive parent?
- ❖ How might you support children who have experienced domestic violence differently than other children?
- ❖ In what ways are domestic violence and child maltreatment connected or correlated?

### **Activity Directions:**

- Divide the group into 5 roughly equal subgroups.
- Hand each subgroup one of the pre-prepared 3 x 5" question cards and ask them to pass it around to other subgroup members.
- Ask the group to discuss the question and prepare a brief answer of 2 sentences.
- Allow the small groups 5 minutes for discussion.

# 5.

## **Process the exercise by asking each group for their answer and provide the following information as each group responds:**

- **(Slide 5) Why is it important for resource families to know about domestic violence?**

Knowing how domestic violence impacts children, emotionally, socially, psychologically, and behaviorally helps caregivers understand and respond effectively to children in their care.

Learning about domestic violence can help resource parents to understand:

- The overt and subtle abuses children have lived with.
- How and why individual children may be affected differently by living with violence directed at one of their parents.
- Children's behaviors such as aggression, withdrawal, hyper-vigilance, regression, relationship issues, and so on.

- How children may respond to normal conflict/anger.
- How children's responses to discipline may have been impacted by their exposure to domestic violence.
- How best to support children who have been exposed to domestic violence.

- **(Slide 5 second click) How would you feel about a child if you learned that s/he lived in a home where domestic violence took place?**

Resource parents are often upset, angry and confused when they learn that their foster/adoptive or relative child has lived in an environment where domestic violence has taken place. The resource parent may react by being overprotective, "cutting the child some slack" or being fearful of upsetting the child. It is important to recognize that domestic violence impacts children differently based on factors such as age, gender, severity and duration of the domestic violence. This session will provide valuable information that will help resource parents meet the needs of children in a way that is supportive and therapeutic.

- **(Slide 6) How would you feel about a child's birth parents if you learned that the child came from a home where domestic violence took place? Would you feel differently about the victim parent versus the abusive parent?**

Some resource parents may find themselves fearful for their own safety, the safety of the children, or the safety of the non-violent parent. Others may be angry at either the perpetrator of violence or at the adult survivor, and all will likely feel very protective of the children. Some resource parents may be very disturbed by this information. However, knowing that a child has experienced domestic violence may help you better understand the child's behavior and assist you in providing necessary care to help the child heal. In addition, foster or "kin" parents must be able to work towards reunification by caring for the child while at the same time supporting the birth parents in ways that promote the child's long-term safety. This session will assist resource parents in becoming aware of the power and control dynamics of domestic violence and its impact on adult and child survivors, and will provide strategies for supporting children who have been exposed to domestic violence.

- **(Slide 7) How might you support children who have experienced domestic violence differently than other children?**

Resource parents have learned in other trainings to utilize specific parenting strategies for children who have experienced sexual abuse or abandonment. Likewise, resource parents may need to alter how they interact with or respond to a child who has experienced domestic violence. For example, these children may not respond in the same ways as other foster/adoptive/kin children or even your birth children when you raise your voice or even when you try to comfort them with a hug.

***Resource parents will need to use non-violent, non-corporal discipline techniques in the home to help the child feel safe. In families where there are two parents, it is important to model healthy adult partnerships and treat each other with respect and non-violence.***

In addition, your role in visitation is critical. It is important to prepare and debrief children for visitation and assist children in expressing if they are feeling unsafe or at risk. We'll talk more about this later.

- **(Slide 7 second click) In what ways are domestic violence and child maltreatment connected or correlated?**

For years, we thought of domestic violence and child maltreatment as distinctly separate social problems. The more we learn, the more we come to see that these problems are intertwined. Millions of children are exposed to domestic violence each year in the United States, a situation that can be harmful to them even if they are never directly abused or neglected. Somewhere between 30 and 60% of child protection cases also involve domestic violence.<sup>1</sup>

Adult and child victims are likely to suffer at the hands of the same perpetrator. Children are sometimes at risk of maltreatment from the parent who is a perpetrator of violence, while others may be neglected by the parent who is battered, who may be overwhelmed by domestic violence or abusing drugs or alcohol to cope. It is important that we understand the dynamics of domestic violence, and the ways domestic violence impacts children who have experienced abusive and/or neglectful care.

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1. Jaffe, P. G., Wolfe, D. A., & Wilson, S. (1990). *Children of battered women*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage. See also Edleson, J.L. (2006, October). *Emerging Responses to Children Exposed to Domestic Violence*. Harrisburg, PA: VAWnet, a project of the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence/Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Available at: <http://www.vawnet.org>.

# Part 2

## Family Dynamics and Domestic Violence



Time: 55–60 minutes

Purpose: To provide participants an overview of the dynamics of domestic violence.

# A. Definition and Facts about Domestic Violence

1.

## **(Slide 8) Introduce the definition of domestic violence as a specific form of family violence using the content below.**

“Family violence” refers to many forms of violence between any family members including:

- intimate partner violence, also known as “domestic violence,”
- abuse of a parent by a child,
- elder abuse,
- sibling abuse, and
- child abuse and neglect.

**(Slide 9)** Domestic violence and dating violence refer to ***patterns of violence and coercive and controlling behaviors perpetrated by an adult or teen against an intimate partner***. The two individuals can be dating, married, cohabiting, or even separated or divorced. The intimate relationship can be between heterosexuals, gays or lesbians. Statistics indicate that the vast majority of victims of adult domestic violence are women, although a man can also be battered by a female partner. Dating violence refers to intimate partner violence between adolescents (heterosexual, gay or lesbian) in a dating relationship. In dating relationships, more and more adolescent girls are using violence as a way to fight back against abusive behavior or to send a message to their boyfriends (or girlfriends) not to mess with them.

**(Slide 9 second click)** It is important to note that when we talk about domestic violence, we are talking not only about physically assaultive behavior, but about a whole range of behaviors designed to establish control in an intimate relationship. These other abusive behaviors are sometimes reinforced by physical (including sexual) violence, but the results of extreme emotional abuse can be equally devastating as physical abuse to adult or child survivors.

2.

## **(Slide 10) Discuss some facts about Domestic and Dating Violence.**

Refer participants to  
*Handout a) Facts about Domestic and Dating Violence*

Domestic violence is pervasive and widespread – from a public health perspective, domestic violence is at epidemic proportions. In fact, domestic violence is so widespread that almost all of us have been touched in our professional or personal lives by domestic violence issues.

- Nearly one in four women reports experiencing violence by a current or former spouse or boyfriend at some point in her life.<sup>2</sup>
- A recent study suggests that approximately 15.5 million American children live in dual-parent households in which intimate partner violence has recently occurred. Nearly 30 percent of those children were exposed to domestic violence within the past year. Severe violence occurred in nearly half of these cases. Intimate partner violence is more prevalent among couples with children than those without children.<sup>3</sup>
- Among 11- to 14-year-olds who have been in a relationship, 62% say they know friends who have been verbally abused (called stupid, worthless, ugly, etc.) by a boyfriend/girlfriend.<sup>4</sup>
- One in five 13-14 year olds in relationships (20%) say they know friends and peers who have been struck in anger (kicked, hit, slapped, or punched) by a boyfriend or girlfriend.<sup>5</sup>

While there are many similarities in the experiences of families in which domestic violence occurs, there are also significant differences among individual families.

- Perpetrators of domestic violence are a diverse group. Men who use violence with their partners and or children are not all equally dangerous, have varying levels of love and connection with their children, and have different capacities regarding their ability to stop being violent.
- Women who are battered respond differently to abuse as a result of their access to resources, their cultural values around family and their role within the family, their immigration status, and other life contexts.
- Children are also impacted differently based on a variety of factors that we'll cover later in this session. It is important for all of us who support families in which violence occurs to acknowledge and respond to those differences, so that we don't miss opportunities for families to be reunited, and don't assume that all children are damaged forever.
- Like child abuse, domestic violence is not correlated with race. Contrary to some media portrayals, men of color are not more violent with their partners than white men. However, poverty does seem to be a significant factor in domestic violence.

2. Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2008, February 8). Adverse Health Conditions and Health Risk Behaviors Associated with Intimate Partner Violence. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5705a1.htm>.

3. McDonald, R., Jouriles, E.N., & Ramisetty-Mikler, S. et al. (2006). Estimating the Number of American Children Living in Partner-Violent Families. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 20(1): 137-142.

4. *Tween/Teen Dating Relationships Survey*. (2008). TRU, Liz Claiborne Inc. Available at: <http://www.loveisrespect.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/07/tru-tween-teen-study-feb-081.pdf>.

5. Idem.

# B. Why and how do men use violence and abuse with their partners?

## 1.

### **(Slide 11) Provide the following information:**

Too many men use violence and abuse to establish control over their partner. Some people believe that this occurs because as a society we have historically expected men to be the head of the household, the decision-maker in the family, and the disciplinarian. In some cultures, adherence to these “traditional” roles continues to hold tremendous weight with both men and women. Among newly arrived immigrants, for example, families sometimes adhere strongly to these roles as they struggle to maintain their cultural identity in a new environment.

Others think that men’s violence in personal relationships mirrors our violent society – that U.S. cultural values promote using violence to achieve power, and men act this out in their families. Some people say that men use violence because they can get away with it. Others believe that this is learned behavior in a man’s family or origin, or have other theories to explain this phenomenon. Whatever your personal belief about WHY so many men use violence and abusive tactics in their intimate relationships, what we know is that too many of them do.

**(Slide 11 second click)** It is important to understand that not every act of violence between intimate partners is domestic violence. Sometimes an incident of violence is isolated, and occurs because of temporary stress in the family. Remember that domestic violence is a pattern of coercive and controlling behavior, not an isolated incident.

It can also be confusing when two adults appear to be mutually combative with each other, which can lead to interpretations such as “They are battering each other”. Many victims of abuse fight back verbally or even physically. In order to understand these situations, it is necessary to explore the history and underlying dynamics of a relationship. Has one partner changed how they dress, who they talk to, what they do? Does one partner no longer have regular contact with friends or family? Has one partner been prevented from leaving? While sorting this out will not be your role as a resource parent, you should be aware that what looks like mutual violence is often a result of one partner’s attempt to control the other.

**TRAINER NOTE:** Be prepared to manage participant self-disclosure of domestic violence. Some suggestions for managing the situation:

- If the participant becomes emotional, another participant or a co-trainer could ask the person to step out of the room and provide them support and comfort.
- If the participant attempts to share a lengthy and graphic “testimonial”, choose a time to intervene (when the speaker takes a breath) and thank the participant for sharing. Validate their feelings, noting to the group that the experiences of domestic violence are powerful and emotional. Offer to talk more after the training if appropriate.

## 2.

### **(Slide 12) Review the Power and Control Wheel**

Refer participants to  
*Handout b) Power and Control Wheel*

Review the handout with the following introduction:

This wheel was developed by the Duluth Domestic Abuse Intervention Project to help people understand the tactics that abusive men use. Abuses of power and control represent attempts by the perpetrator to intimidate, isolate, and diminish the autonomy of the domestic violence survivor. Some do not hesitate to use the children in that effort, by undermining the parenting relationship of the adult survivor with her children, encouraging children to be disrespectful or belittle their mother, or actually forcing the children to directly participate in the abuse of their mother.

Different versions of the Power and Control Wheel have been developed to expand on these basic concepts with different cultural groups (such as Latinos or Asian Pacific Islanders); various populations (such as teenagers, immigrants, and women with disabilities); and institutions (such as courts and medical facilities). If you are interested, you can search on-line or in your local library to see other versions of this wheel.

Men (and sometimes women) who are abusive use tactics to manipulate how other people and systems perceive the adult victim. This can occur within the child protection system, in visitation programs, in family court, or with resource parents and others who might otherwise provide support to the adult victim. When this happens, we can fall into the trap of seeing the survivor as choosing her partner over her children, as “failing to protect” her children, as a person with no ability to act on her own behalf, and as unworthy of our compassion or efforts to make her stronger, financially independent, and better able to parent her children.

## 3.

**Ask the group for additional specific examples of power and control tactics for each of the sections on the Power and Control Wheel.**

## 4.

### **Ask the group for their comments or thoughts about the Power and Control Wheel. The following questions may stimulate discussion:**

- How might a survivor feel when experiencing some of the tactics on the Power and Control Wheel? An immigrant survivor? A survivor who drinks or used illegal substances to cope with the violence?
- How can we, as individuals and systems who interact with the family, work to interrupt this dynamic?
- How might outsider observers (family, friends, co-workers) react/feel if they see behaviors described on the Power and Control Wheel? How would they interpret the behavior of the adult survivor and the children when they see the perpetrator using these strategies?

## 5.

### **Summarize the discussion.**

Perpetrators of domestic violence use intimidation; isolation; physical and sexual violence; verbal abuse; threats of deportation; threats to call child protection or get custody through the courts; threats to kill themselves, the children, or the survivor's family; and other strategies to establish control over their partner. Most are clever enough to use the specific tactics that they know will be most effective with an individual survivor. Their tactics can also "set up" the survivor to be perceived as an ineffective or uncaring parent. Social workers, resource parents and other professionals must be cognizant of this dynamic and not allow themselves to be swayed or influenced by the perpetrator in regards to how they view the survivor parent.

# C. Why do women stay?

1.

## **(Slide 13) Introduce a discussion about why women stay in domestic violence situations.**

Most of the domestic violence situations we encounter in the child welfare system involve women as the survivors of domestic violence. The fact that women remain with their children in domestic violence situations has been puzzling to people outside the field of domestic violence treatment. This has led to difficult working relationships between professionals in child welfare, whose primary concern is for child safety, and professionals in domestic violence, whose primary concern has been for the safety and empowerment of the survivor mother.

Some professionals and advocates who work in domestic violence feel it is unfair to ask “Why do women stay?” They believe a much better question is “Why do abusers abuse?” In many respects, they are correct. But for those of us, resource parents included, who may be confused about how victims can stay in situations where they and their children are being harmed, the question “Why do women stay?” is very important.

**TRAINER NOTE:** People often have very strong negative feelings about women who stay with abusers, and there will not be sufficient time during this training to address their beliefs. If people are judgmental, do not criticize them or attempt to persuade them with a different viewpoint. Instead, remind them that the purpose of this session is simply to identify reasons that a woman might not be able to leave or might find it difficult to do so.

2.

## **Lead a large group discussion about the reasons why women stay by asking the group, “If you were a survivor of domestic violence, why might you stay in the relationship?”**

For this activity you will need a flipchart and markers.

Record participants' responses on a flipchart. Add information to ensure all points below are covered.

## Why do Women Stay?

- **Love, and hope that change is possible.** In spite of the violence and abuse, many battered women truly love their partners, *but not the violent and abusive behavior*. The survivor may believe that leaving will hurt her partner. Love creates a powerful bond that is difficult to break and makes some women ever hopeful that the situation will change. Many survivors also have seemingly endless wells of optimism and take small signs as reinforcement of their belief that things will be different “this time” or in the future.
- **Extensive emotional abuse aimed at damaging self-esteem.** In many DV situations, ongoing emotional abuse has been aimed at diminishing the self-esteem of the survivor. This may lead to self-doubt, fear, and a sense of being overwhelmed. She may begin to doubt her own sense of what is happening or begin to believe that “it is my fault” or “I deserve this.” The violent partner often reinforces these beliefs, and/or convinces the survivor that she is incapable of making it on her own.
- **Inability to see the abuse clearly.** When we are in painful situations, we use our defense mechanisms to shield ourselves. Minimizing or even denying that abuse is happening can be very effective defense mechanisms. A survivor may explain what is happening by saying, “All couples fight”; she may convince herself that an injury was an accident or tell herself it isn’t that bad.
- **Financial dependence.** This is particularly applicable to women who do not have work skills or a history of gainful employment. An abusive man may utilize tactics such as controlling all the money, denying access to bank accounts, forcing the survivor to manage on an “allowance”, making his partner account for every penny spent, or forcing her to ask for permission to spend money. Leaving a partner is difficult in the best of circumstances. In some situations, leaving can result in a very different and impoverished lifestyle for the woman and her children. The wish to give one’s children the best possible life they can have, in economic terms, leads survivors to put aside their own wishes and remain in an abusive relationship.
- **Religious, cultural, and socially learned beliefs.** Culture is a set of socially defined attitudes, values, and beliefs that guide traditions, daily behavior, family roles, and so on. Virtually every culture embodies some values and attitudes that support the use of violence, and conflicting values and attitudes that condemn violence within a family. For women whose cultural or religious values promote loyalty to the family regardless of what is occurring, whose faith teaches them that suffering is to be endured, or who have seen no healthy relationships to compare to their own, leaving a violent or abusive relationship may not appear to be an option. Culture might be used to explain violence, as in “He can’t help it, it’s part of our culture.” or “That’s how men in our culture act.”
- **Emotional dependence.** An abusive man might work very hard to make his partner emotionally dependent upon him by convincing her that she cannot get along without him. When this is

accompanied by a strategy of separating the survivor from family and friends, she may become very isolated and dependent – psychologically and emotionally – on her partner. Loss of the partner threatens her sense of personal well-being.

- **For the “kids’ sake”.** A battered mother may not wish to see her children raised without a father or in a “broken home”, or she may believe that her partner is the better parent. This may be especially true for women who have had their parenting undermined, who use substances, or who are depressed.
- **For child safety.** Abusive men often threaten that they will get custody or unsupervised visits with the children if their partners leave them. They may also threaten to call child protection and report the mother as an abusive/neglectful parent. If she is abusing substances, this threat can carry more weight. Survivors have good reason to believe that this could happen and that the children would be at risk.
- **No place to go.** Many women are isolated, socially, emotionally, and geographically. Many live in areas where domestic violence services are not readily available. In addition, leaving and seeking shelter from friends and family, sharing complaints and stories with them, and then returning to the perpetrator can leave a survivor’s support network feeling fed up with her. It is not uncommon for a woman to leave and return several times to an abusive relationship before leaving permanently. Many friends and family close their doors – if not their hearts – to the survivor.
- **Reluctance to involve police/courts.** Depending on local law enforcement practices and the judicial system, a survivor may learn that involvement of authorities provides little protection, and can actually make things worse. Some women therefore think of involving the authorities as their last resort. This may be particularly true if the abuser has convinced her that law enforcement will not believe her story. Or, there may be other reasons a survivor may not contact law enforcement:
  - Her immigration status may be tenuous and she may fear deportation or imprisonment.
  - His immigration status and potential for deportation may place the economic well-being of her family in jeopardy.
  - The violent partner may have convinced the survivor that the family will experience more trouble, i.e. removal of the children or arrest of the breadwinner should police be contacted – and it will be her fault.
  - Decades of institutional racism have eroded the confidence of communities of color in their ability to get fair treatment or positive responses from law enforcement.
- **Heightened danger to self, children, friends, or family.** The survivor may recognize the potential for lethal violence in her abusive partner. In fact, separation from the violent parent often increases danger significantly, and many women are killed after they have left the relationship. Past threats or actual incidents of harm perpetrated toward the survivor’s loved ones can also lead her to stay in the relationship to protect others.

# 3.

**(Slide 14) Ask participants to briefly identify reasons that may make it difficult to work with parents who are victims or perpetrators of DV. Cover the following points as possible difficulties in working with these children and their families.**

- You may question the parenting ability, or the commitment to the children, of the survivor who remained with the abuser while the children went into care. You may question the parenting ability or commitment to the children of the perpetrator.
- You may feel conflicted about reunification plans when there has been a history of multiple separations and reunification of the parents.
- You may not feel confident that the parent has received treatment and education needed to understand domestic violence and keep herself and her children safe. You may not be sure that the perpetrator of violence has engaged in or is utilizing effective treatment.
- You may not believe that violent men can change their behavior, or you may believe that they pose a threat to you.
- You may not understand the family's cultural background, and may be fearful of appearing uninformed or making an offensive mistake when dealing with the parent.
- You may struggle with preparing the child for a visit with a parent who is violent when the child is fearful or hesitant to go, or with supporting the child when they return after the visit.
- You may have strong feelings about having to support a child emotionally that is afraid for his/her mother's safety.

# 4.

## **(Slide 15) Validate the participants' responses and summarize the discussion.**

Facilitate a brief large group discussion about support resources for domestic violence survivors and bring closure to Part II of the curriculum.

Domestic violence situations are difficult to manage, emotionally and practically, even for the most experienced resource parents. You may want to look for the support of the social worker, a therapist, or someone else to help you cope effectively with challenges regarding the children in your care. Where might you look for support in this community?

**TRAINER OPTION:** You may want to distribute a prepared list of local resources for caregivers. Sometimes a domestic violence hotline, a local university's women's center, or a local mental health clinic will take calls from family or community members seeking support.

Unfortunately, not all communities have ample services. The child's social worker or resource parent licensing worker can direct resource parents to services and support. Resources can be found via the internet, local crisis hotline and in materials at the library.

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**Break – fifteen minutes**

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# Part 3

## What Children Experience



Time: 30 minutes

Purpose: To provide participants a basic understanding of how children are impacted by exposure to domestic violence.

# A. How do we perceive a child who has been exposed to domestic violence?

For this activity, you will need a flipchart and markers. There is no slide for this activity.

1.

**Ask participants to consider the following question and record their responses on a flipchart.**

For a moment, imagine this scene:

*A child has just seen his/her mom verbally and physically assaulted by his/her dad. The police are called, and the child is taken from his/her home by a stranger and left at your home. How do you think this child would feel? What might s/he be thinking at this time?*

Common responses are scared, relieved, confused, overwhelmed, traumatized, worried about his/her mother or father, lonely, sad, distrustful, angry, helpless, loss of control, and guilty for leaving mom alone with dad.

**TRAINER OPTION:** Show the “Stairs” video vignette instead of asking participants to imagine the scene above. Ask participants to imagine that the child on the stairs has been brought to their home after police arrested his father. Ask the same questions: How do you think this child would feel? What might he be thinking? Process the responses with the group, and proceed to summarizing the discussion and segueing to next section.

## 2.

### **Summarize the discussion and segue to next section.**

Children being removed from a family in which they have been exposed to domestic violence are likely to be experiencing multiple, sometimes conflicting emotions. You may have just described children you already know, or what you think a child would be like in this situation. Some of these children will experience similarly difficult emotions around visits. It is important to understand that there will be times when the impact of domestic violence on a child is very evident, while in other children it may be much more subtle.

These same children may also be survivors of child abuse and/or neglect, and it can be virtually impossible to sort out the effects of exposure to domestic violence from the effects of child maltreatment. *It is therefore critical that you stay in communication with the social worker and the child's service providers to be sure the appropriate services are in place.*

It is important to remember that not all children who live in homes where domestic violence occurs are traumatized by the experience. Trauma refers to a high level of distress in children who have been exposed—the level of distress that overwhelms a child's ability to cope with the experience. Some children are traumatized by exposure to domestic violence, while others are not. Trauma can be short-lived (acute), or it can be chronic, depending on the situation. When children experience stressful events, hormones are released that activate brain circuitry that helps the child cope with the experience. When the stressful event ends, the physical response decreases and eventually disappears. In some children, however, the stress response doesn't end. Children who live in constant fear may experience traumatic, long-term stress.

# B. The Effects of Exposure to Domestic Violence on Children

Refer participants to  
*Handout c) The Effects of Exposure to Domestic Violence on Children*

1.

**(Slide 16) Introduce this section by stating that children are affected differently by exposure to domestic violence.**

While exposure to domestic violence is not healthy for any child, each child is affected differently depending on a variety of factors that will be covered in this section.

2.

**(Slide 17) Explain what is meant by “exposure to domestic violence”.**

“Exposure to domestic violence” refers to the various ways that children experience or are aware of violence between intimate partners in their home. This includes:

**(Slide 17—multiple clicks)**

- *(click)* Hearing threats of physical harm or death.
- *(click)* Feeling tension building in the home prior to an assault.
- *(click)* Being hit or threatened while in mother’s arms.
- *(click)* Hearing or seeing an assault on their mother.
- *(click)* Being denied care because their mother is injured or unavailable.
- *(click)* Being forced to watch or participate in violence against their mother.
- *(click)* Seeing or experiencing the aftermath of a violent incident (injured mother, broken furniture, police intervention, arrest of father, removal by child protection).
- *(click)* Having their relationships with their non-violent parent or other supportive adults undermined.
- *(click)* Being taken hostage in order to force their mother’s return to the home.
- *(click)* Being enlisted by the violent parent to align against the mother.
- *(click)* Experiencing the loss of a parent due to murder/suicide.

The non-violent parent may try various strategies to limit their child’s exposure, including sending the child to another room, into a closet, or to a neighbor’s house when a violent assault occurs; bearing the brunt of the violent parent’s anger to distract him from the child; attending to the needs of their partner to try to keep him calm; complying with his demands; going into shelter; calling the police; and so on. While none of these strategies may prevent a child from knowing what is happening, the child may be very aware that the mother is trying her best to protect him or her.

# 3.

## **Explain factors that affect the impact on children exposed to domestic violence.**

Children are differentially impacted by exposure to domestic violence based on a variety of factors<sup>1</sup>:

- The age of the child.
- The child's developmental stage.
- Severity, proximity, duration and frequency of the violence.
- The child's gender.
- The child's role in the family.
- Personal characteristics of the child (i.e. sense of self, mastery of tasks, security).
- Presence or absence of loving and supportive adults in their lives.
- Stability and responsiveness of staff and systems that interact with the child.

### **Briefly explain each factor:**

#### **(Slide 18) Child's age:**

The younger the child, the more harmful the impact may be. Young children are at high risk due to their immature ability to understand what is happening and why, or to regulate their own emotions.

They may:

- Believe that the violence is their fault.
- Feel they are responsible for stopping the violence.
- Experience the violence as happening to them personally. That is, they may experience it as if they are being personally assaulted – have increased heart rate and blood pressure, rapid/shallow breathing, alertness and rushes of adrenaline, and restricted emotional responses preventing them from yelling or screaming.

Older children may also take responsibility for violence in their families and believe they have to intervene to stop it or to protect their mother. They may be more cognitively able to appreciate cause and effect and to use rational skills to cope with their experience, but may also feel more physically capable of intervening and may in some cases be at very high physical risk as a result. For example, older boys sometimes feel they must protect their moms and consequently put themselves at risk of violence.

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1. Jaffe, P. G., Wolfe, D. A., & Wilson, S. (1990). *Children of battered women*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage. See also Edleson, J.L. (2006, October). *Emerging Responses to Children Exposed to Domestic Violence*. Harrisburg, PA: VAWnet, a project of the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence/Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Available at: <http://www.vawnet.org>.

### **(Slide 19) Child's developmental stage:**

Like a child's age, his/her developmental stage will also impact a child who is exposed to domestic violence, so different children within the same family will be affected differently. The exposure to domestic violence is likely to affect the tasks or milestones of the particular child's stage of development. Here are a few examples:

- Infants may develop mistrust of others.
- Toddlers may feel ashamed of themselves when adults are violent because they believe they were bad.
- Preschoolers may feel guilty because they believe that something they did (or didn't do) caused the violence.
- School aged children may feel inferior and restrict themselves from even trying what they know they can do.
- Adolescents may become confused about who they are and what they should expect from a relationship.

An important question to consider is, "At what age was the child first exposed to the domestic violence?" (It is not the age the child entered care that is critical in this analysis). Even very young children, who may not remember specific events or incidents, can be affected socially, emotionally, cognitively and even physically. If surrounded by domestic violence, an infant or toddler's worldview, sense of self, security, ability to relate and trust will be tremendously affected, creating a shaky developmental foundation and subsequent harm to the child.

### **(Slide 20) Severity, proximity, duration and frequency of violence:**

Not surprisingly, a child exposed to extreme, on-going, and/or frequent violence is more likely to be traumatized or seriously harmed than a child who is exposed to lesser levels of violence (pushing, shoving) or violence that occurs rarely. Furthermore, exposure to multiple forms of violence (domestic violence, child abuse, community violence, and so on) places children at higher risk.

### **(Slide 21) Child's gender:**

Boys and girls may be affected differently. Resource parents should note that these are trends rather than uniform reactions – some children display reactions more common to the opposite gender.

- Boys may identify with their violent or abusive father or father figure, tell themselves that their mother provoked or deserved the violence, and display aggression towards their mother or other females. They may become violent and aggressive in all relationships. However, most boys who are exposed to domestic violence as children will NOT grow up to be a perpetrator of violence.

- Girls may identify with their mother's attempts to control a partner's violent outbursts by pleasing the perpetrator. They may work to control situations by pleasing and taking care of others. Unfortunately, for some girls, they may go on to date or marry violent men as it is a pattern of interaction they know well. Most girls who are exposed to DV, however, will seek men who are not violent.
- If a man is the survivor, in our society that values the "tough guy" image, a child may be ashamed of his/her father, seeing him as ineffective and weak. The child may begin to identify with the aggressor. On the other hand, in a society that values women as nurturing, the child may feel tremendous anger toward the mother who is aggressive and bullying.

Each child in the family is likely to be affected emotionally in different ways by the domestic violence. Some children may become aggressive or abusive while others may become victims of violence themselves in their future intimate relationships. Within the resource family, children may express fear of the father or father figure, and require significant time to establish trust.

### **(Slide 22) Child's role in the family:**

In their book *Helping Children Thrive: Supporting Women Abuse Survivors As Mothers*, Linda Barker and Allison Cunningham (2004) explain the roles that children exposed to domestic violence take on or are forced into:

#### **(Slide 22 second click)**

- **Caretaker.** The child is responsible for child care, making dinner, and other household duties. Even in foster care, this child will often continue attempts to parent siblings.
- **Confidant to the victim and/or to the abuser.** A child may be privy to a parent's feelings, concerns, and plans. This child may serve as a "reality check" for the victim when she minimizes or denies that events have occurred. On the other hand, this child may receive special treatment from the abuser, be told justifications for the abuse, and be rewarded for reporting back on the adult victim's behavior.
- **Abuser's "assistant".** The child may be forced to participate in the emotional and/or physical abuse of the victim parent.
- **Perfect child.** The child tries to prevent the violence by excelling in household duties, school, and other activities, by never arguing, rebelling, misbehaving, or seeking help.
- **Referee.** This child may attempt to mediate tension in the home and keep the peace.
- **Scapegoat.** In some families, one child's behavior is used to justify the violence. This child may be special needs, be involved in the juvenile justice system, or a stepchild to the abuser.

A single child may play different roles over time, and have feelings of guilt or grief over the things they have done. As a resource parent, you can gently explore what roles a child has been forced to play, which can help you craft an appropriate response to their needs.

**(Slide 23) Personal characteristics of the child:**

Amazingly, there are children who seem to have a strong sense of self and are able to weather an enormous amount of violence in their lives by drawing on internal reserves and resources. These children seem to understand that the violence isn't their fault, feel successful in various areas of their life (school, sports, friendships), and may have strong sense of racial or ethnic pride.

**(Slide 24) Presence or absence of supportive adults**

***The single most critical factor in how children weather exposure to domestic violence is the presence of at least one loving and supportive adult in their life.***<sup>2</sup> Children without any support, who are isolated or lack nurturing adults in their lives, are more negatively affected by their exposure to DV.

For many children the single loving and supportive adult was most likely their mother, who did her best to provide her children a normal life even as she was being battered. Other adults can play this role as well, however – a grandmother, godparent, foster parent, coach, teacher, or neighbor can be the lifeline for a child coping with domestic violence.

**(Slide 24 second click)** It could be YOU!

**(Slide 25) Responsiveness of staff and systems that interact with the child:**

Knowledgeable and skilled child protection practitioners, teachers, coaches, mentors, police officers, judges, and others who understand and respond effectively to families in which domestic violence occurs can play a significant role in how children in those families are impacted. When we send a child appropriate and consistent messages in our actions and words that violence is a choice, that the violent adult is responsible for his own behavior, and that everyone in the family deserves to be safe, we are making a difference in how that child makes sense of the world and his or her family.

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2. Osofsky, J. D. (1999). The impact of violence on children. *The Future of Children: Domestic Violence and Children*, 9 (3), 38.

# 4.

For the next activity you will need a flipchart and markers.

**(Slide 26) Ask participants to share examples of the feelings and behaviors that children in their care who come from domestic violence situations have displayed.** Record responses on flipchart with “feelings” on one side and “behaviors” on the other side of the chart, making sure that the following points are covered:

FEELINGS	BEHAVIORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Shame</li><li>• Guilt</li><li>• Anxiety</li><li>• Fear</li><li>• Sadness</li><li>• Depression</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lying</li><li>• Fighting/aggression</li><li>• Talking back</li><li>• Poor school performance</li><li>• Clinginess</li><li>• Nightmares/sleep disturbances</li><li>• Preoccupation with parent’s safety</li></ul>

It is important for resource parents to recognize that children may not be able to tell us what the impact of domestic violence on their lives has been but they can show us. The behaviors and feelings you have just brainstormed show us the two primary ways that children from domestic violence situations are affected. Children may have a hard time regulating their emotions and behavior.

# 5.

**Explain the possible impact of exposure to domestic violence on children. Cover the following points:**

As already discussed, there is a strong correlation between domestic violence and child maltreatment. Some children who are exposed to domestic violence also suffer physical or emotional abuse themselves. It can be hard to distinguish the effects of exposure to domestic violence from the effects of being abused directly – some of the symptoms or signs may be indicative of either. Those effects also look different at different ages.

**(Slide 27)** In infants and young children, exposure may interfere with developmental tasks, alter brain chemistry, and weaken coping skills. The effects of exposure in infants, toddlers, and young children can show up as:

- Low birth weight
- Exaggerated startle response
- Somatic complaints (stomach aches, headaches)
- Regression in toileting or language

- Sleep disturbances (insomnia, nightmares)
- Difficulty attaching to caregiver
- Hyper-vigilance
- Separation anxiety
- Eating disorders

**(Slide 28)** (Refer to the lists of Feelings and Behaviors that participants developed.) By the time children reach school age, you begin to see two distinct kinds of responses.

- Children who “over-control” their emotions or behaviors – these are internalized effects of domestic violence. These children “hold things in.”
- **(Slide 28 second click)** Children who “under-control” their emotions or behaviors – these are externalized effects of domestic violence. These children are more likely to explode, act up or act out. They cannot manage their impulses.

**(Slide 29)** Sometimes a picture can be worth a thousand words. This is by an eight year old boy who was asked to draw a picture of his father. It says “This is how I see my father because he often gets angry and drunk and his eyes turn red.”

**(Slide 30)** Adolescents who have been exposed to domestic violence may use drugs or alcohol, use or be the victims of violence in their own relationship, be harmed when they attempt to intervene in an assault, or display attitudes supporting the use of violence.

**(Slide 31)** Here is another drawing of a young person exposed to his father’s violence. This artist was 13 at the time he drew this picture.

**TRAINER NOTE:** If participants are interested in more information about these drawings, you can direct them to the Family Violence Prevention Fund website at [www.endabuse.org/section/programs/children\\_families/\\_breaking\\_cycle](http://www.endabuse.org/section/programs/children_families/_breaking_cycle).

**(Slide 32)** At any age, children who are extremely affected by their exposure may demonstrate symptoms of trauma. These can include: not being able to stop thinking about the event or experience; appearing to be emotionless; crying easily or constantly; becoming extremely agitated for little or no apparent reason; have trouble sleeping and/or nightmares; have difficulty concentrating; worry excessively leading to physical complaints (i.e. stomachaches); or being “triggered” by a smell, loud arguing, or the sight of someone who looks like the perpetrator of violence. These children require the intervention of a skilled professional to process their responses and heal from their exposure.

## 6.

**(Slide 33) Ask participants to review the list and lead a brief discussion using the following questions:**

- Which of these effects in children are easier for you as a parent? Why?
- Which of these effects “drive you crazy”, or make it hard for you to parent? Why?

## 7.

**Summarize participants’ responses and segue to next section.**

Some resource parents find it easier to care for children who externalize their problems because the children are showing their issues and needs, giving the resource parent “something to work with.” This may work best for resource families that value open expressions of feelings, or who are accustomed to dealing with strong emotional release.

Other resource parents may find it more comfortable to parent children who internalize their problems, sparing them from dealing with overt behaviors; particularly if the family is one in which stoicism is expected and behavioral outbursts discouraged. However, we must realize that until these children feel safe enough to open up to us, we may not have many clues about what is really going on with the child.

For children who appear traumatized, we need to seek highly skilled, expert help from a therapist or mental health professional. Regardless, caring for children affected by domestic violence is no simple matter, and there are no simple solutions.

**(Slide 34) The next section will provide an overview of tips and suggestions to help you when parenting these children. This should not be your only class on this topic. Attending additional, more advanced training will provide you with a deeper knowledge and the critical skills needed to help the children heal from their exposure to domestic violence.**

# Part 4

## Supporting Children Affected by Domestic Violence



Time: 60 minutes

Purpose: To develop the skills of participants to support children exposed to domestic violence.

# A. What Resource Parents Need to Understand

## 1.

### **(Slide 35) Present each of the following concepts.**

The hopeful part of caring for children who have been impacted by domestic violence is that children can heal from their exposure to violence, and you can play a key role in that healing process. In this session, we're going to be discussing a variety of specific strategies that can help you provide the most appropriate care for these children. We'll start with some important things to keep in mind about children who have been exposed to domestic violence. Remember, many children will worry about their mother's safety and will miss their family.

- Tender loving care (TLC) may not be enough. The consistent presence of a loving and supportive adult is the single most important factor in promoting resiliency and healing in a child who has been exposed to domestic violence. For some children, however, it may not be enough. Each child's experience is unique, and resource parents will need to adapt their parenting style and their approach to the needs of the individual child. Resource parents may also need to seek professional help for the children in their care.
- Children who are exposed to domestic violence may worry about their mother's safety and feel extreme loss and anxiety. Most children in out of home care will miss their families. Children who have strong attachments to their mothers (and fathers) will feel the loss. Some of these children will need to be comforted and assured that their mother will be ok (without offering false hope). Predictable visits and additional phone calls may help. Resource parents should seek additional help for children who have excessive worry about their mother's safety and talk to the child's caseworker.
- There is no quick, easy fix. A child may not be able to respond quickly, even to very appropriate parenting and therapy. The important thing to keep in mind is that children who have been exposed to domestic violence do not heal in a steady way. Resource parents may see significant improvement at times and very little progress at others. That's because improvement in their behavior and relationships occurs after they build up a reservoir of emotional safety that helps children feel secure enough to risk new behaviors and ways of relating.
- Children need to move from unpredictable danger to reliable safety. We can help children realize that they are safe by using a nonviolent and nonaggressive approach to parenting. By not using corporal punishment and refraining from yelling, name-calling, making threats of physical violence, and other forms of verbal aggression, the child will be repeatedly reassured that your home is a safe place to be. We can let a child know that while all families have arguments, there is no danger of anyone being harmed. A good basic rule is "No one gets hurt, and nothing gets damaged."
- Relationships may be too close for comfort. Children who have been traumatized may have problems in relationships with peers and with adults. They may feel safer in a relationship that is not too close either physically, which they may associate with danger, or emotionally. They may fear that if they allow themselves to get close to a resource parent, they are being disloyal to or letting go of their biological parent.

# B. What Resource Parents can do to Support Children and Promote Healing

Refer participants to  
*Handout d) Strategies for Supporting Children Exposed to Domestic Violence*

## 1.

### (Slide 36) Present the following strategies for supporting children.

- **(Slide 36 second click) Create a predictable world.** Consistency makes the world feel predictable and safer to a child. Clearly stated, simple rules and expectations are important. Because this child comes from an environment in which one parent may have had absolute authority, it is important that resource parents not overuse their authority or use it in an arbitrary fashion.
- **(Slide 36 third click) Add structure and clear expectations.** Explaining and enforcing rules and expectations is important, and it is equally important to demonstrate structure in the child's environment. Routines for waking up, going to school, doing homework, eating meals, getting to bed and all the other regular daily or weekly activities provides a child with an environment they can count on.
- **(Slide 36 fourth click) Pay close attention to non-verbal cues.** If a child in your care is uncomfortable being approached too closely, ask him or her directly if s/he wants a hug or to talk through a situation. For children who shy away from physical affection or find it threatening, providing positive verbal reinforcement, slipping a note in their lunch bag, or casually sharing a special treat like ice cream can be more comfortable.
- **(Slide 36 fifth click) Avoid struggles for power and control.** These are children who have not experienced a sense of control in their lives and who may constantly struggle for control of their environment in all kinds of ways. Being oppositional, manipulative, or provocative are not attempts to "test us", but may be attempts by these children to control their world. Resource parents may struggle to respond well to these situations.

One way to handle this is by saying, "I guess you must be feeling like you are stepping on dangerous ground now, but nobody wants to control you or be controlled by you." Then restate your rules and expectations. Having just a few rules and consistently enforcing them helps you to avoid control battles.

- **(Slide 36 sixth click) Model respectful and caring behavior.** When dealing with conflicting opinions or needs in the resource family, model respectful interactions and negotiations. If you and your partner disagree, you have an opportunity to show a child who has been exposed to domestic violence that there are other, healthier ways of resolving differences. Check in with the child after an argument to see how s/he experienced the interaction.
- **(Slide 37) Give children choices whenever possible.** Another strategy to deal with control issues is to allow children to make choices whenever possible and appropriate. This does not mean that the child makes decisions that resource parents should make. It is a strategy for helping a child feel that they have some control over their life and their environment.

Instead of saying, "It's time to take your bath," you might say, "Would you like to take your bath before or after your TV show?" The choice is not whether or not to take a bath, but when to take a bath.

Only offer choices if there really is a choice to be made. Narrow choices so that the child can pick from your list. "Do you want peanut butter and jelly or bologna?" instead of "What do you want for lunch?" Parents who use this approach find practically every aspect of family life lends itself to choices at some level.

- **(Slide 37 second click) Help children learn not only what not to do, but what to do instead.** When children fight, direct them to use non-violent means of resolving the conflict. You can say "You seem angry that your brother won't give you the toy you want. When you hit him, though, you are hurting him even though we know you love him. In this home, we do not use violence to get what we want. Why don't we sit down and come up with a plan for how you can share the toy? What do you think would be fair to both you and your brother?"
- **(Slide 37 third click) Teach children to put feelings into words.** A child exposed to family violence may have seen a lot of behaviors that express strong feelings, but may not have heard words to appropriately express those or other feelings. Help the child understand how effective it can be to use words to express themselves. Talk to them about feelings, help them to identify the (various) feelings they are having, and be a good role model by identifying your own feelings. Use "I" statements like, "I feel very frustrated when you don't do your homework." Acknowledge when the child follows your example with positive reinforcement.
- **(Slide 37 fourth click) Validate children's feelings about their parents.** A child may experience conflicting and confusing emotions when thinking or talking about her or his parents. You can help them understand that ALL feelings are okay and normal by saying in a non-judgmental tone things like "It sounds like you were really scared and sad when you saw your father being arrested." Or "It's okay to miss your mom, lots of kids in foster care do." OR "Some kids in similar situations feel confused, angry, scared, and sad all at the same time. There are no wrong feelings to have about what you experienced." If the children want to talk to you about the violence, let them do so but don't force the issue or dig for information. If you feel uncomfortable talking about the violence contact the child's social worker or therapist, who can continue the conversation.
- **(Slide 37 fifth click) Create opportunities for children to feel successful.** Talk with a child about their interests or hobbies, or ask if there is something they would like to try like dancing, art or sports. Children develop a stronger sense of self when they feel good about an accomplishment.

**TRAINER OPTION:** Show one of the video Public Service Announcements: *Father and Son* OR *The Wrong Way*. Explain that the PSAs were produced by the Family Violence Prevention Fund to raise awareness of how important it can be for men to take an active role in talking with boys. It can be especially powerful for resource fathers to send the right messages to all children. To download these PSAs, visit: [www.endabuse.org/section/programs/public\\_communications/\\_multimedia](http://www.endabuse.org/section/programs/public_communications/_multimedia).

- **(Slide 37 sixth click) Send the right messages.** When the opportunity arises for conversation about domestic violence, a child needs to hear specific messages about violence and their role in what happened.

**Say things like:**

- The violence in your home was not your fault, no matter what anyone said.
- It's not safe to try to stop the violence, even though you might really want to.
- It's not your fault that you aren't living with your mom and dad. You didn't do anything wrong.
- It isn't your job to protect your mom. Your job is to keep yourself safe, and to help keep your brothers/sisters safe.
- I don't think your father is a bad person, but his violence is not okay. However you feel about him is okay – it's normal.
- If you're angry at your mom, that's okay too.
- It's important to talk about how you're feeling. (Help them think of two or three people they could talk to).

**Additional things to say to adolescents are:**

- You have the right to feel like your boyfriend/girlfriend respects you for who you are.
  - He may love you, but when he hits you (calls you names, humiliates you, etc.) he isn't showing love—he's showing you who is in control.
  - I don't think your boyfriend/girlfriend is some kind of monster, but his/her behavior is not okay.
  - When you are in a relationship with someone, you should never have to feel afraid of that person. You may not always be happy, but you should never feel unsafe.
- **(Slide 38) Prepare children for visits.** Talk to the child about the visit in advance. Call the social worker to get the information that you need—where the visit will happen, who will be present, whether there are toys or art supplies in the room, what will occur, how long it will last, and so on. Give the child a chance to ask questions and to express their feelings about seeing their parent. In a domestic violence situation, separate visits with the parents should be the norm, although in many communities this is not the case.

**TRAINER NOTE:** Be prepared for resource parents to talk about challenges they have experienced as supervisors of visits in domestic violence situations. Sometimes resource parents end up in unsafe situations when they are asked to supervise visits between a child in their care and the child's abusive parent, or when both parents are visiting the child together. If this comes up, suggest that the resource parent have an immediate and specific conversation with the worker about making other, more appropriate, visitation arrangements.

Be prepared for the child's behavior and emotional state to be different immediately following a visit, and be sure to make time to check in soon after a visit occurs. If the level of visitation changes, prepare a child for what that means – more time with a parent, unsupervised contact with one or both parents, and so on.

- **(Slide 38 second click) Advocate for children when they need an advocate.** A child who has been exposed to domestic violence may be used to being isolated and blamed when they experience difficulty at school or in social situations. Another child may need to have regular contact – by phone or in a separate visit – with their survivor parent to be reassured that she is safe. Still another child may need professional help from a therapist or a skilled and knowledgeable mental health care provider. Resource parents play a key role in helping others understand the behaviors and needs of a child in their care, because they know more about those needs than a teacher who sees the child in group setting for a few hours a day, or a social worker who sees the child for an hour a month.
- **(Slide 38 third click) Be respectful of the child's parents.** No matter what your opinion of their behavior or choices, they are still the child's parents. Being negative or “bad-mouthing” the birth parents will force the child into a loyalty conflict and create unnecessary stress and anxiety for the child. Even your non-verbal expression such as body language and facial expressions can convey negative attitudes to the child about how you feel and what you think about their parents.

Say “I know you feel angry (sad, upset, etc), and that's okay. Your mom did the best she knew how to do in that situation, even though it didn't stop you from getting hurt.” OR “Your dad isn't a bad man, but his behavior toward you and you mom was not okay.” Do helpful things such as remembering a parent on their birthday, encouraging the child to make a card or draw a picture for a parent.

- **(Slide 38 fourth click) Have fun together!** You can also just find ways to play together and just have fun. Children need to play, be happy and feel like kids again!
- **(Slide 38 fifth click) Get support for yourself.** Resource parents should never feel as though they are alone in supporting children exposed to domestic violence. Seek advice or assistance from another resource parent, a social worker, the child's therapist, a local domestic violence program, the leader of your faith community, or a trusted friend. Create time for yourself to re-charge your batteries, ask for respite when you need it, and consult with other professionals when you need specific advice on dealing with a child's behaviors or responses.

**TRAINER OPTION:** Have copies of *CONNECT: Helping Caregivers Talk to Kids about Violence against Women* available to distribute. Explain that the brochures offer some concrete strategies and advice based on the experiences of other resource parents. Two different issues of the brochure are available in English and Spanish for free from the Family Violence Prevention Fund. To order copies, please visit: [www.fvpfstore.stores.yahoo.net/chpr.html](http://www.fvpfstore.stores.yahoo.net/chpr.html).

# C. Applying Parenting Strategies

For this activity, you will need copies of  
*Handout e) Applying Parenting Strategies for each participant.*

## 1.

### Conduct the following activity.

#### (Slide 39) Activity Directions:

- Divide the group into sub groups of 6-8 participants.
- Instruct them to use Handout c) *The Effects of Exposure to Domestic Violence on Children* and Handout d) *Strategies for Supporting Children Exposed to Domestic Violence* for this activity.
- Allow the groups 15-20 minutes of discussion.
- The groups should read the scenario in the handout e) and answer the following questions:
  - 1) How does each child appear to be emotionally impacted by what they have experienced?  
What is each child feeling at this time?
  - 2) What factors appear to be impacting how each child has been affected?
  - 3) Which child is experiencing “internalized” reactions? Which child is experiencing “externalized” reactions? Does either child appear traumatized?
  - 4) What parenting strategies would you use to promote healing within each child?
  - 5) What might you say to each child to help them understand and cope with their experience of exposure to domestic violence?

**TRAINER OPTION:** Divide the group into small groups of 6-8 participants as instructed above. Assign half of the groups to answer the questions only for James and the other half to answer the questions only for Jasmine. This option can be used when time is running short.

Reconvene the groups and ask them to share their responses. Provide encouragement and support to participants who express motivation to try new ideas.

## 2.

### **Summarize the discussion.**

**(Slide 40)** We know that the special needs of children who have lived with violence require special care, and that good outcomes are never guaranteed. Many of the challenges to supporting these children result from their attempts to do the best they can to get by in families where violence, inconsistency, or poor care are daily occurrences. At the same time, we know that children need to have their connections and, often, their love for their parents validated and respected. We also know, from research and from children themselves, that your caring and compassionate parenting can have far-reaching effects. For some children, you will be that one person whose love and support will make the difference.

## 3.

### **Closing**

**(Slide 41—*click twice*)** Thank participants for coming and encourage them to attend additional trainings on this subject.

# Handouts



### Handout a)

## Facts about Domestic and Dating Violence

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### Domestic Violence

- ❖ Nearly one in four women reports experiencing violence by a current or former spouse or boyfriend at some point in her life.<sup>1</sup>
- ❖ Women are the victims of 1,200 deaths and two million injuries from intimate partner violence each year.<sup>2</sup>
- ❖ The majority (two-thirds) of United States nonfatal intimate partner victimizations of women occur at home. Children are residents of the households experiencing intimate partner violence in 43 percent of incidents involving female victims.<sup>3</sup>
- ❖ On average, more than three women a day are murdered by their husbands or boyfriends in the United States.<sup>4</sup>
- ❖ A 2006 study suggests that approximately 15.5 million American children are exposed to domestic violence. Nearly 30 percent of those children were exposed to domestic violence within the past year. Severe violence occurred in nearly half of these cases. Intimate partner violence is more prevalent among couples with children than those without children.<sup>5</sup>
- ❖ Children who experience childhood trauma, including witnessing incidents of domestic violence, are at a greater risk of having serious adult health problems including tobacco use, substance abuse, obesity, cancer, heart disease, depression and a higher risk for unintended pregnancy.<sup>6</sup>

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1. Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2008, February 8). Adverse Health Conditions and Health Risk Behaviors Associated with Intimate Partner Violence. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5705a1.htm>.

2. Idem..

3. U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2006). *Intimate Partner Violence in the United States*. Available at: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/intimate/ipv.htm>.

4. U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2007). *Intimate Partner Violence in the United States*. Available at: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/intimate/ipv.htm#contents>.

5. McDonald, R., Jouriles, E.N., & Ramisetty-Mikler, S. et al. (2006). Estimating the Number of American Children Living in Partner-Violent Families. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 20(1): 137-142.

6. Anda, R., Block, R., & Felitti, V. (2003). *Adverse Childhood Experiences Study*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Kaiser Permanente's Health Appraisal Clinic in San Diego. Available at <http://www.cdc.gov/NCCDPHP/ACE/index.htm>.

Handout a) – continued

## Facts about Domestic and Dating Violence

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### Dating Violence

Women age 16 to 24 experience the highest per capita rate of intimate partner violence.<sup>7</sup>

In a study of 724 adolescent mothers between the ages of 12–18, one of every eight pregnant adolescents reported having been physically assaulted by the father of her baby during the preceding 12 months. Of these, 40 percent also reported experiencing violence at the hands of a family member or relative.<sup>8</sup>

In a survey of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer identified youth, 49 percent of the respondents reported feeling abused by a partner in a past relationship.<sup>9</sup>

Among 11- to 14-year-olds who have been in a relationship:

- ❖ A strong majority (62%) say they know friends who have been verbally abused (called stupid, worthless, ugly, etc.) by a boyfriend/girlfriend.
- ❖ Two in five (41%) know friends who have been called names, put down, or insulted via cellphone, IM, social networking sites (like MySpace and Facebook).
- ❖ More than a third (36%) know friends and peers their age who have been pressured by a boyfriend/girlfriend to do things they didn't want to do.<sup>10</sup>

One in five 13–14-year-olds in relationships (20%) say they know friends and peers who have been struck in anger (kicked, hit, slapped, or punched) by a boyfriend or girlfriend.<sup>11</sup>

For many teens who have had boyfriends or girlfriends, dating pressures aren't simple adolescent angst; they're power and control issues that commonly underpin abusive relationships.

- ❖ Nearly two-thirds of these teens (64%) were with someone who “acted really jealous and asked where they were all the time.”
- ❖ Almost half of teens who have been in a relationship (47%) – and 55% of those who describe theirs as serious – have done something that compromised their own values in order to please their partner.
- ❖ One in five teens who have been in relationship (21%) have been with a partner who tried to prevent them from seeing family or friends.
- ❖ Three out of five (61%) said that they've had a boyfriend or girlfriend who made them feel bad or embarrassed about themselves.
- ❖ A startling 30% reported worrying about their personal physical safety in a relationship.<sup>12</sup>

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7. Rennison, C. M., & Welchans, S. (2003). *Intimate Partner Violence 1993-2001*. U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics: Washington, DC. Available at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/ipv01.htm>.

8. Wiemann, C., Aguarca, C., Berenson, A., Volk, R., & Rickert, V. (2000). Pregnant Adolescents: Experiences and Behaviors Associated with Physical Assault by an Intimate Partner. *Maternal and Child Health Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 93-101.

9. Tham, K., et al. (2000). *Queer Youth Relationship Violence*. Community United Against Violence and Lavender Youth Recreation & Information Center, California State Department of Health Services.

10. *Tween/Teen Dating Relationships Survey*. (2008). TRU, Liz Claiborne Inc. Available at: <http://www.loveisrespect.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/07/tru-tween-teen-study-feb-081.pdf>.

11. Idem.

12. *Teen Dating Abuse Survey 2006*. (2006). TRU, Liz Claiborne Inc. Available at: <http://www.loveisnotabuse.com/pdf/Liz%20Claiborne%20Mar%2006%20Relationship%20Abuse%20Hotsheet.pdf>.

# CONNECT: Supporting Children Exposed to Domestic Violence

In-service Training for Resource Families

Handout b)

## Power and Control Wheel



DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROJECT

202 East Superior Street  
Duluth, Minnesota 55802

### Handout c)

## The Effects of Exposure to Domestic Violence on Children

**“Exposure to domestic violence”** refers to the various ways that children are aware of violence between intimate partners in their home. This includes:

- ❖ Being denied care because their mother is injured or unavailable.
- ❖ Feeling tension building in the home prior to an assault.
- ❖ Hearing threats of physical harm or death.
- ❖ Hearing or seeing an assault on their mother.
- ❖ Being forced to watch or participate in violence against their mother.
- ❖ Seeing or experiencing the aftermath of a violent incident.
- ❖ Having their relationship with their non-violent parent or other supportive adults undermined.
- ❖ Being taken hostage in order to force their mother’s return to the home.
- ❖ Being enlisted by the violent parent to align against the mother.

**“Trauma”** refers to an extreme level of distress that overwhelms the child’s ability to cope with the event or experience.

### Potential effects of exposure to domestic violence on children.

- ❖ The effects of exposure in infants, toddlers, and young children can show up as low birth weight, exaggerated startle response, somatic complaints (stomach aches, headaches), regression in toileting or language, sleep disturbances (insomnia, nightmares), difficulty attaching to caregiver, hyper-vigilance, separation anxiety, or eating disorders.
- ❖ By the time children reach school age, they are often displaying either internalized (“holding things in”) or externalized (“acting out”) behaviors. Children who hold things in may appear depressed, sad, fearful, ashamed, and so on. Children who act out may lie, be aggressive or fight, talk back, perform poorly in school, be clingy, or have nightmares or insomnia.
- ❖ Adolescents who have been exposed to domestic violence may use drugs or alcohol, use or be the victims of violence in their own relationship, be harmed when they attempt to intervene in an assault, or display attitudes supporting the use of violence.

At any age level, children who are extremely affected by their exposure may demonstrate symptoms of trauma. These can include: not being able to stop thinking about the event or experience; appearing to be emotionless; cry easily or constantly; become extremely agitated for little or no apparent reason; or be “triggered” by a smell, the sight of someone who looks like the perpetrator of violence, loud arguing, or having some other sensory experience. Traumatized children should be referred for help by a trained mental health professional.

**Not all children who are exposed to domestic violence are traumatized or experience long-term affects of their exposure.<sup>1</sup> The presence of loving and supportive adults in their lives is the single greatest factor that helps children rebound from their exposure to violence.<sup>2</sup>**

1. Weinstein, J. (2002). *Summary of expert testimony on the impact on children of witnessing domestic violence*. From Nicholson v. Williams, Case #00-CV2229, E. D. NY. National Coalition of Child Protection Reform web site. [http://www.nccpr.org/index\\_files/page0007.html](http://www.nccpr.org/index_files/page0007.html)

2. Osofsky, J. D. (1999). The impact of violence on children. *The Future of Children: Domestic Violence and Children*, 9 (3), 38.

### Handout d)

## Strategies for Supporting Children Exposed to Domestic Violence

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- ❖ **Create a predictable world.** *Clearly stated, simple rules and expectations are important.*
- ❖ **Add structure and clear expectations.** *Routines provide a child an environment they can count on.*
- ❖ **Pay close attention to non-verbal cues.** *Providing positive verbal reinforcement if physical contact is uncomfortable to the child.*
- ❖ **Avoid struggles for power and control.** *Restate your rules and expectations calmly.*
- ❖ **Model respectful and caring behavior** *with your children and your partner.*
- ❖ **Give children choices whenever possible.** *Ask “Would you like to take your bath before or after your TV show?” or “Do you want peanut butter and jelly or bologna?”*
- ❖ **Help children learn not only what not to do, but what to do instead.** *Suggest negotiating a plan with a sibling or a friend, with each child having ten minutes with a toy.*
- ❖ **Teach children to put feelings into words.** *Help them to identify the feelings they are having, and be a good role model by identifying your own feelings. Use “I” statements like, “I feel very frustrated when you don’t do your homework.”*
- ❖ **Validate children’s feelings about their parents.** *In a non-judgmental tone, say things like “It sounds like you were really scared and sad when you saw your father being arrested” or “It’s okay to miss your mom, lots of kids in foster care do.”*
- ❖ **Create opportunities for children to feel successful and proud of themselves.** *Children develop a stronger sense of self when they feel good about an accomplishment.*
- ❖ **Send the right messages about violence being a choice, and that the violence is not the child’s fault.**

### **Say things like:**

- *The violence in your home was not your fault, no matter what anyone said.*
- *It’s not safe to try to stop the violence, even though you might really want to.*
- *It’s not your fault that you aren’t living with your mom and dad. You didn’t do anything wrong.*
- *It isn’t your job to protect your mom. Your job is to keep yourself safe, and to help keep your brothers/sisters safe.*
- *I don’t think your father is a bad person, but his violence is not okay. However you feel about him is okay – it’s normal.*
- *If you’re angry at your mom, that’s okay too.*
- *It’s important to talk about how you’re feeling. (Help them think of two or three people they could talk to).*

Handout d) – continued

### **Strategies for Supporting Children Exposed to Domestic Violence**

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#### ***Additional things to say to adolescents are:***

- *You have the right to feel like your boyfriend/girlfriend respects you for who you are.*
  - *He may love you, but when he hits you (calls you names, humiliates you, etc.) he isn't showing love—he's showing you who is in control.*
  - *I don't think your boyfriend/girlfriend is some kind of monster, but his/her behavior is not okay.*
  - *When you are in a relationship with someone, you should never have to feel afraid of that person. You may not always be happy, but you should never feel unsafe.*
- 
- ❖ **Prepare children for visits.** *Provide information, and give the child a chance to ask questions and to express their feelings about seeing their parent.*
  - ❖ **Advocate for children when they need an advocate.** *Helping others understand the behaviors and needs of the child in your care. Remember, you know a lot about those needs!*
  - ❖ **Be respectful of the child's parents.** *Say "I know you feel angry (sad, upset, etc), and that's okay. Your mom did the best she knew how to do in that situation, even though it didn't stop you from getting hurt." OR "Your dad isn't a bad man, but his behavior toward you and you mom was not okay." Be careful of your body language.*
  - ❖ **Have fun together!** *Kids need to feel like kids, and part of being a kid is having fun!*
  - ❖ **Get support for yourself!** *Seek advice or assistance from another resource parent, a social worker, the child's therapist, a local domestic violence program, the leader of your faith community, or a trusted friend. Make time to relax and rejuvenate!*

### Handout e)

## Applying Parenting Strategies

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James, age 12, and Jasmine, age 4, were placed in foster care two weeks ago after the police were called to their home. Their mother had been severely beaten by her husband, who is the adoptive father of her children. The children's mother, Joann, is currently in the hospital recovering from broken bones, cuts, bruises and surgery to repair a damaged spleen. Her husband is currently being held in jail.

School appears to be difficult for James, and he doesn't make much effort. He seems to get along with male teachers better than female teachers, who state that he is disrespectful towards them. He recently had a meltdown trying to do a report on what he wanted to be when he grew up and, in the end, refused to do it.

Jasmine misses her mother very much and says that she can't sleep at night because she is worried about her mother. She often wakes up in the middle of the night screaming or crying. A few days ago she just laid on her bed staring at the ceiling for almost three hours, despite your repeated attempts to get her interested in various activities. She said that she just wanted to see her mom.

These children need your help! Answer the following questions.....

- 1) How does each child appear to be emotionally impacted by what they have experienced? What is each child feeling at this time?
- 2) What factors appear to be impacting how each child has been affected?
- 3) Which child is experiencing "internalized" reactions? Which child is experiencing "externalized" reactions? Does either child appear traumatized?
- 4) What parenting strategies would you use to promote healing in each child?
- 5) What might you say to each child to help them understand and cope with their experience of exposure to domestic violence?

### Handout f)

## Domestic Violence and Dating Violence Resources

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### For resource parents:

- ❖ **National Domestic Violence Hotline:** 800-799-SAFE (7233) Provides 24/7, confidential crises counseling and local referrals.
- ❖ **National Foster Parents Association:** 253-853-4000 or 800-557-5238. Provides support to resource parents in achieving safety, permanence and well-being for the children and youth in their care. [www.nfpainc.com](http://www.nfpainc.com).
- ❖ **FosterParentNet:** A website devoted entirely to providing resource parents with referrals, education, training, support groups, and online discussion groups to help them in their role as resource parents. [www.fosterparentnet.org](http://www.fosterparentnet.org).
- ❖ **Family Violence Prevention Fund:** The Family Violence Prevention Fund (FVPF) works to prevent violence within the home, and in the community, to help those whose lives are devastated by violence because everyone has the right to live free of violence. For more than two decades, the FVPF has worked to end violence against women and children around the world. Instrumental in developing the landmark Violence Against Women Act passed by Congress in 1994, the FVPF has continued to break new ground by reaching new audiences including men and youth, promoting leadership within communities to ensure that violence prevention efforts become self-sustaining, and transforming the way health care providers, police, judges, employers and others address violence. [www.endabuse.org](http://www.endabuse.org).
- ❖ **Connect: Helping caregivers talk to kids about violence against women.** Connect is a mini-magazine for foster parents and kin that provides information on meeting the needs of children who have been exposed to domestic violence and who are in the child welfare system. Downloadable from: <http://fvpfstore.stores.yahoo.net/connect-minimagazine-for-caregivers-issue.html> [In Spanish: <http://fvpfstore.stores.yahoo.net/chpr.html>].
- ❖ **Building Healthy Teen Relationships.** Building Healthy Teen Relationships, is a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation administered by the Family Violence Prevention Fund to support the creation and evaluation of comprehensive community-based models of prevention that aim to decrease relationship violence and increase positive, protective relationship skills among 10 to 14-year-olds. [www.buildinghealthyteenrelationships.org/](http://www.buildinghealthyteenrelationships.org/).
- ❖ **A Parent's Guide to Teen Dating Violence: Questions to Start the Conversation.** This brochure provides helpful tips for any parents to talk to teens about dating violence. (Downloadable from: [www.loveisnotabuse.com/pdf/10questions\\_hand.pdf](http://www.loveisnotabuse.com/pdf/10questions_hand.pdf)).
- ❖ **What Parents Need to Know About Dating Violence: Advice and Support for Helping Your Teen.** Authors: Barrie Levy and Patricia Occhiuzzo Giggans. Publisher: Seal Press: Seattle, WA. This book is for parents who are concerned about teenagers in abusive dating relationships and provides straightforward advice to parents who are dealing with this issue.
- ❖ **Children Who See Too Much: Lessons from the Child Witness to Violence Project.** Author: Betsy McAllister Groves. Publisher: Beacon Press Books: Boston, MA. The author of this book draws upon her experience at the Child Witness to Violence Project at Boston City Hospital to help practitioners and others understand and support young children who are exposed to violence.

### Handout f) – continued

## Domestic Violence and Dating Violence Resources

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### For young children:

- ❖ ***Mommy & Daddy are Fighting*** . Authors: Susan Paris & Gail Labinski. Publisher: Seal Press: Seattle, WA. This story is about three young sisters who build a fort of blankets & huddle together to cope with their father's abuse against their mother. Picture book with washed illustrations, 4–8 years.
- ❖ ***Something Is Wrong At My House / Algo Anda Mal En Mi Casa***. Author: Diane Davis (English). Authors: Diane Davis, Cynthia Jones, and Marina Megale (Spanish). Publisher: Parenting Press: Seattle, WA. <http://www.parentingpress.com/> A boy tells about the violence in his home & how it affects him. For younger children, you can read just a text below the illustrations. Includes advice for children on coping. Small book with pencil sketch illustrations, 3–10 years.
- ❖ ***A Family That Fights***. Authors: Sharon Bernstein and Karen Ritz. Publisher: Albert Whitman & Co.: Morton Grove, IL. An 8 year old boy & his two younger siblings live in a home where the father abuses the mother. Picture book with illustrations in pencil, 4–12 years.
- ❖ ***The Kissing Hand***. Author: Audrey Penn. Publisher: Tanglewood Press: Terre Haute, IN. A story about a Raccoon who is fearful of starting school. Mrs. Raccoon shares a family secret called the “Kissing Hand” that can provide reassurance at any point when the world feels scary. This book is suitable for young children during times of separation as in foster care, or for children starting day care, or kindergarten. Illustrated picture book.

### For teenagers:

- ❖ ***Love Doesn't Have to Hurt***. Document on relationship violence written for teens by the American Psychological Association with support from the Partners in Program Planning in Adolescent Health. Downloadable from: [www.apa.org/pi/cyf/teen.pdf](http://www.apa.org/pi/cyf/teen.pdf).
- ❖ ***In Love and In Danger: A Teen's Guide to Breaking Free of Abusive Relationships***. Author: Barrie Levy. Publisher: Seal Press: New York, NY. This book provides information for teens who have questions on dating violence and how to access help from parents or other adults around them.

### Websites for teens on a variety of issues, including healthy relationships and dating violence:

- ❖ **National Teen Dating Abuse Hotline** 1-866-331-9474, 1-866-331-8453 (TTY). [www.loveisrespect.org](http://www.loveisrespect.org).
- ❖ **Teen Sexual Violence Prevention Campaign (Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence)**. [www.teenpcar.org](http://www.teenpcar.org).
- ❖ **Teens and Sexual Health**, in English and Spanish (Planned Parenthood). [www.teenwire.com](http://www.teenwire.com).
- ❖ **Safe Space for Youth** (Break the Cycle). [www.thesafespace.org](http://www.thesafespace.org).
- ❖ **Foster Club** (National network for youth in foster care). [www.fosterclub.com](http://www.fosterclub.com).

**Family Violence  
Prevention Fund**  
[www.endabuse.org](http://www.endabuse.org)

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The Family Violence Prevention Fund works to prevent violence within the home, and in the community, to help those whose lives are devastated by violence because everyone has the right to live free of violence.

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