

# Youth Exposed to Domestic Violence

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A handbook for the Juvenile Justice System to enhance assessment and intervention strategies for youth from violent homes



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Sponsored by  
**The David and Lucile Packard Foundation**

Linda L. Baker  
Peter G. Jaffe



Centre for Children & Families  
in the Justice System

Family Violence Department of  
the National Council of Juvenile  
and Family Court Judges



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**Authors:**

Linda L. Baker  
Peter G. Jaffe

**Graphic Design:**

Jeanie MacWilliam, R.G.D.

**How to Order:**

This handbook can be obtained from the Centre for Children & Families in the Justice System website: [www.lfcc.on.ca](http://www.lfcc.on.ca)

or write to:

Centre for Children & Families in the Justice System, 254 Pall Mall St., Suite 200, London, ON N6A 5P6

or call:

(519)679-7250 ext. 206  
or email: [pubs@lfcc.on.ca](mailto:pubs@lfcc.on.ca)

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# Youth Exposed to Domestic Violence

A handbook for the Juvenile Justice System to enhance assessment and intervention strategies for youth from violent homes

## Why you need to know

**Domestic violence is often a risk factor in the lives of youthful offenders regardless of whether it is the charge that brings them before the court. Professionals need to understand the overt and hidden ways domestic and other forms of violence affect juvenile offenders. For some, exposure to domestic violence, perpetration and victimization co-exist. Perpetration brings young people into the justice system, however, exposure and victimization also need to be identified and addressed to try and break the cycle of violence. While outcome research is lacking at this early stage of intervening in domestic violence with adolescents, lessons learned from intervention with adults suggest promising ways to begin. Namely, effective responses to domestic violence in the juvenile justice system likely will require well coordinated court and social services, informed by promising practices and over time, accumulated empirical evidence. The first step is awareness:**

- ⇒ Domestic violence is part of a constellation of risk factors linked to poor outcomes in youth, such as, later victimization<sup>1</sup>, violent behavior and other delinquent behaviors.<sup>2,3</sup>
- ⇒ A disproportionately high number of youth in the juvenile justice system have lived in homes characterized by adversity, neglect, physical abuse and domestic violence.<sup>4,5</sup>
- ⇒ A significant portion of juvenile offenders perpetrate violence against intimate partners and/or family members.<sup>7,8,9</sup>
- ⇒ Along with assessment for direct victimization (e.g., sexual abuse), evaluation for the presence, extent and impact of domestic violence assists in the identification of potential trauma and stressors contributing to a delinquent youth's life circumstances, as well as the type and amount of intervention.<sup>10</sup>

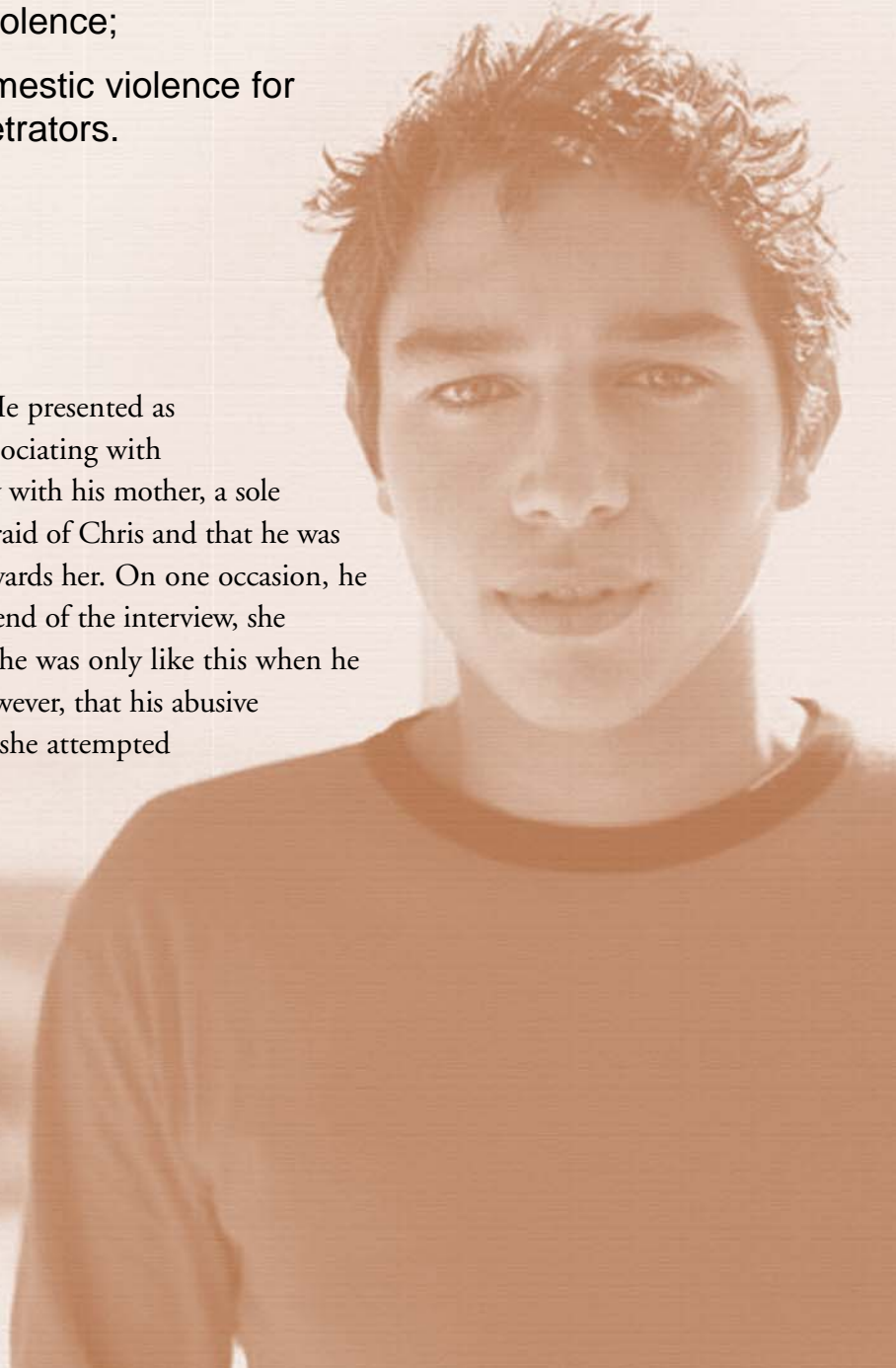
# How can this Handbook Help?

This handbook contains information that will help you:

- ⇒ learn about domestic violence and its impact on adolescents;
- ⇒ learn about evaluating risk and safety planning for victims of domestic violence;
- ⇒ learn about coordinated justice responses to domestic violence and the role of juvenile custody programs and probation;
- ⇒ learn about risk assessment and reduction with adolescent perpetrators of intimate partner and family violence;
- ⇒ learn about promising practices for adolescent perpetrators of intimate partner and family violence;
- ⇒ learn about resources on domestic violence for adolescent victims and perpetrators.

## Case Example

Chris, age 14, incurred several theft charges. He presented as an affable and reasonable youth who began associating with antisocial peers during grade 9. In the interview with his mother, a sole parent, she reluctantly disclosed that she was afraid of Chris and that he was verbally abusive and physically intimidating towards her. On one occasion, he had locked her out of the house. Towards the end of the interview, she minimized his abusive manner, explaining that he was only like this when he did not get his way. She expressed concern, however, that his abusive behavior would escalate to physical violence if she attempted to set limits.



# Terms Used in this Handbook

## Domestic violence

- ⇒ refers to the abuse and/or assault of adolescents or adults by their intimate partners. It is used interchangeably with **intimate partner abuse** and **inter-parental violence**. **Battering** is often used to refer to domestic violence or frequent and severe abuse.

## Dating violence

- ⇒ is used to refer to adolescent relationship violence against intimate partners.

## Family violence

- ⇒ is an overarching term used to refer to all forms of violence that may occur in the family (e.g., domestic violence, child abuse, sibling violence, assaultive behavior towards parents, elder abuse). It is used interchangeably with **relationship violence**.

## Abusive adolescent

- ⇒ refers to adolescents who perpetrate abuse against family members and/or dating partners.

## Victim

- ⇒ refers to individuals who are abused by their intimate partners or other family members. It is used interchangeably with **survivor**, **victimized parent**, **abused family member** and **battered partner**. Many domestic violence advocates prefer the term 'survivor,' as it reflects the reality that many abused individuals cope and move on with personal strength and resourcefulness.

## Youth exposed to domestic violence

- ⇒ refers to children and adolescents seeing, hearing or being aware of violence against one parent figure that is perpetrated by another parent figure. It is used interchangeably with **children and adolescents living with violence**.



# Domestic Violence and the Juvenile Justice System

*Juvenile Justice must "identify and treat battered and battering teens to prevent the intergenerational cycle from repeating itself while making our homes, communities and schools safe." <sup>10</sup>*

*Sarah M. Buel, J.D.*

*(Juvenile and Family Court Journal, Spring 2002, page 1)*

There are four main ways domestic violence presents in the juvenile justice system:

1. **Exposure history** - Exposure to domestic violence and/or other forms of family violence may be a hidden factor when youth present with related (e.g., assault of a parent or an intimate partner) or seemingly unrelated charges (e.g., theft or drug possession).
2. **Presenting offense** - Offense constitutes a form of relationship violence perpetrated by an adolescent against a family member or dating partner.
3. **Hidden offending pattern** - Abusive behavior covertly co-exists with the presenting, non-domestic violence offense (e.g., property or drug offenses). Adolescent is abusing family member(s) or girl/boyfriend, but has not currently, or in some cases never, incurred charges for this type of assaultive behavior.
4. **Victimization** - Youthful offenders may be direct victims of domestic violence or other forms of family violence.

Recognition of the potential impact of exposure to violence or direct victimization does not excuse or diminish responsibility for criminal behavior by adolescents.

# Victimization, Violence and Youth

1. National estimates based on a 1995 survey indicate that of 22.3 million children between the ages of 12 and 17, approximately:<sup>11</sup>
  - ⇒ 1.8 million have been the victims of a serious sexual assault;
  - ⇒ 3.9 million have been victims of a serious physical assault; and
  - ⇒ 9 million have witnessed serious violence since birth.
2. Research links exposure to violence and self-reported violent behavior as an adolescent:<sup>12</sup>
  - ⇒ Children who have been victims of violence within their families were 24% more likely to report violent behavior as adolescents than those who had not been maltreated.
  - ⇒ Adolescents who were not themselves victimized but had grown up in families where partner violence occurred were 21% more likely to report violent delinquency than those not so exposed.
3. Survey information highlights the significant proportion of family violence perpetrated by adolescents against their parents and siblings.<sup>7</sup>
4. 16 to 39% of adolescent boys report having used violence against a dating partner.<sup>9</sup>
5. 20% of female high school students report being sexually or physically abused by dating partners.<sup>8</sup>
6. Victimization during adolescence increases the odds of being a perpetrator or victim of violence in adulthood. These risks persist even with controls for socio-demographic characteristics and prior problems in adolescence.<sup>13</sup>

# Domestic Violence

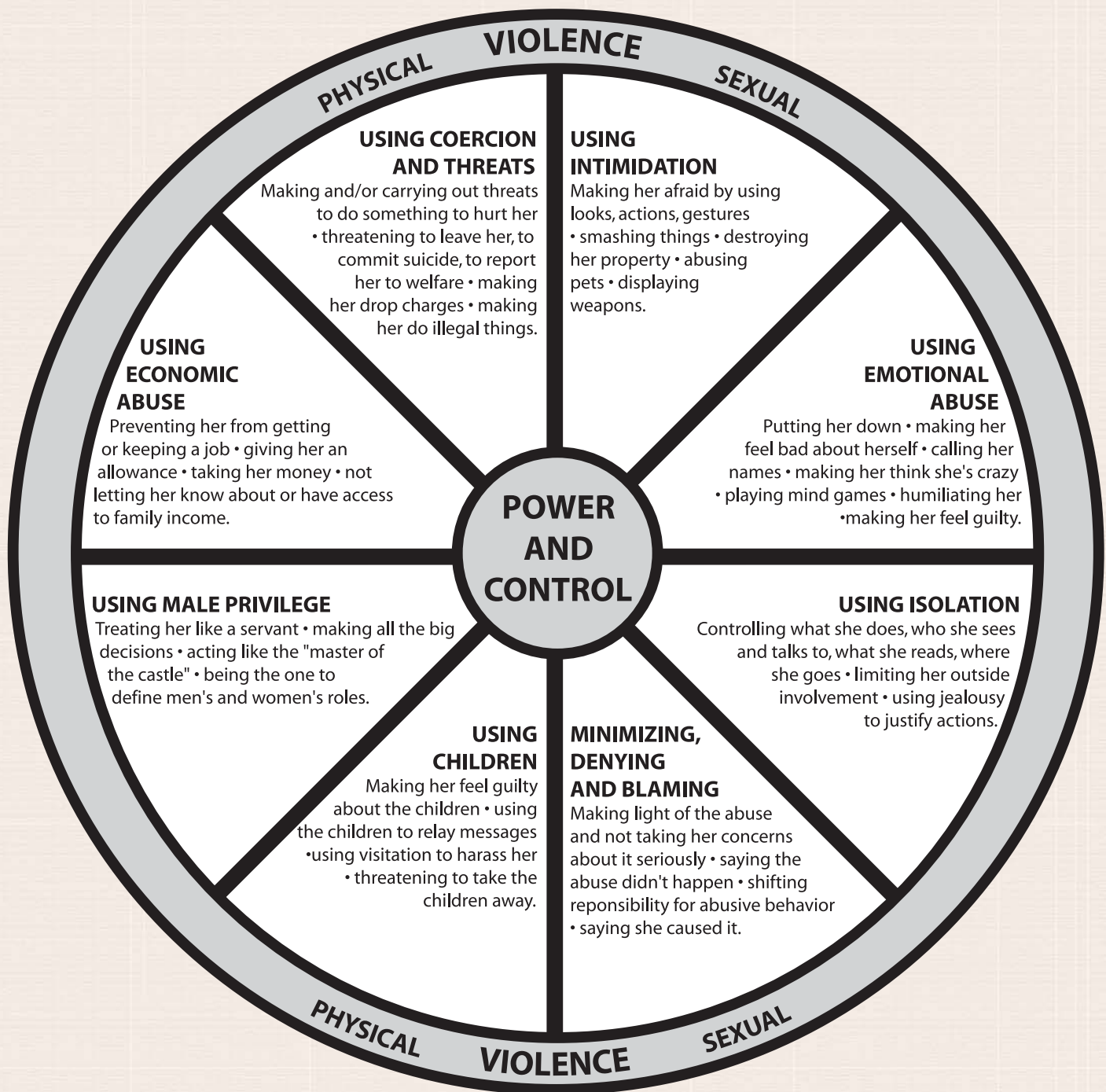
An understanding of domestic violence is necessary to support and intervene with exposed youth, as well as with those teens perpetrating intimate partner abuse and family violence.

## What you need to know about domestic violence...

- ⇒ occurs in all age, racial, socio-economic, educational, occupational and religious groups;
- ⇒ occurs within an intimate relationship;
- ⇒ typically involves repetitive behavior including different types of abuse – physical assault, psychological, emotional and economical abuse, and use of children (see Power and Control Wheel, page 8);
- ⇒ is used to intimidate, humiliate or frighten victims as a systematic way of maintaining power and control over them;
- ⇒ is abusive behavior that in most cases has been learned by the batterer (e.g., abusive behavior modeled in family of origin; abusive behavior rewarded – gets desired results for perpetrator);
- ⇒ **is caused by the perpetrator** and not by the victim or the relationship;
- ⇒ is a criminal offense where actual or threatened physical or sexual force is used;
- ⇒ differentially affects males and females: women experience more violence over a lifetime, more severe forms of violence and more serious injuries than do male victims;<sup>14</sup>
- ⇒ may present increased risk to the victim and children at the time of separation from the abuser;<sup>15</sup>
- ⇒ results in victim behavior that is focussed on ensuring survival (e.g., minimizing or denying the violence, taking responsibility for the violence, protecting the perpetrator, using alcohol or drugs, self-defense, seeking help, remaining in the abusive relationship).



# Power and Control Wheel



Developed by the *Domestic Abuse Intervention Project*, 202 E. Superior St., Duluth, MN 55802  
For more information contact: [info@praxisinternational.org](mailto:info@praxisinternational.org) or fax: (218)722-1053

# Impacts of Exposure to Domestic Violence

Watching, hearing or later learning of a parent being harmed by a partner threatens the sense of stability and security typically experienced by young people in their family. Negative impacts tend to be intensified when youth face additional adverse experiences (e.g., parent substance abuse).

- ⇒ Children and adolescents may experience increased emotional and behavioral difficulties.<sup>6</sup>
- ⇒ Some young people who experience difficulties display traumatic stress reactions (e.g., flashbacks, nightmares, intensified startle reactions, constant worry about possible danger).<sup>15</sup>
- ⇒ Children and adolescents living with domestic violence are at increased risk of being maltreated (e.g., physical or emotional abuse).<sup>16, 17</sup>
- ⇒ The adult perpetrator may use children and adolescents as a control tactic against adult victims.<sup>18</sup> Examples include:
  - claiming the children's bad behavior is the reason for the assaults on the non-offending parent;
  - threatening violence against children and adolescents and their pets in front of the non-offending parent;
  - holding them hostage or abducting them in an effort to punish the adult victim or to gain compliance;
  - talking negatively to them about the abused parent's behavior.
- ⇒ Children and adolescents may experience strong ambivalence toward their violent parent: affection coexists with feelings of resentment and disappointment.
- ⇒ Young people may imitate and learn the attitudes and behaviors modeled when intimate partner abuse occurs and behave in controlling and aggressive ways in relationships.<sup>2, 12</sup>
- ⇒ Exposure to violence may desensitize children and adolescents to aggressive behavior. When this occurs, aggression becomes part of the "norm" and is less likely to signal concern to them.

# Signs a Youth is Having Difficulties

Adolescents may display some of the following signs when they are living with domestic violence. The extent of difficulties tends to vary according to the severity of the violence, presence of risk and protective factors, gender, and cultural differences. They may also show these problems for other reasons (e.g., exposure to other types of violence, major family stressors). Accordingly, adolescents displaying these problems may not have been exposed to domestic violence.

- ⇒ **physical complaints** (headaches, stomachaches)
- ⇒ **constant worry about possible danger and/or the safety of loved ones**
- ⇒ **depression and/or withdrawal from others and activities**
- ⇒ **low self-esteem and lack of confidence, especially for trying new things (including academic tasks)**
- ⇒ **suicidal thought and action**
- ⇒ **difficulty paying attention in class, concentrating on work and learning new information**
- ⇒ **outbursts of anger directed toward others, peers or self**
- ⇒ **bullying and/or aggression directed toward others**
- ⇒ **school truancy or leaving home**
- ⇒ **high risk behavior including criminal activities and substance abuse**
- ⇒ **stereotyped beliefs about males as aggressors and females as victims**
- ⇒ **dating violence**



# Screen for Exposure to Violence

Youth exposed to multiple forms of violence often suffer cumulative effects. Screening for domestic violence as well as other types of adverse conditions (e.g., community violence, direct victimization) should occur within the justice system. Consider the following:

## 1. Screen for exposure to violence and potential stressors, and determine frequency, duration, severity. Areas to include:

- ⇒ exposure to disasters or tragic events;
- ⇒ witnessing school or neighborhood violence;
- ⇒ victimization by peers (e.g., bullying, dating violence);
- ⇒ exposure to adult domestic violence or family violence;
- ⇒ childhood maltreatment (e.g., emotional, physical, sexual, neglect);
- ⇒ media violence (e.g., type of movies, TV shows, video games);

## 2. Explore whether the youth appears to be experiencing traumatic stress reactions.

For example:

nightmares; flashbacks; intrusive thoughts; sees perpetrator's face when she/he gets in a fight with someone else; and/or reports never sleeping deeply but rather hearing every noise

## 3. Provide a range of possible answers as part of your question.

- ⇒ Providing examples of mild, moderate and extreme behaviors (e.g., possible anger expressions) may give permission for the youth to share some of what “really” happens in their situation.

For example:

Some fathers give everyone the silent treatment when they're mad. Others take off. Some use a pet, something or someone as a punching bag. What kinds of things does your father do when he is angry at you? – at your mother?

## 4. Inquire how anger is expressed in the family and how minor and major disagreements are solved.

For example:

What kinds of things do you and your mother argue about? How do you argue/fight if it's little, everyday stuff? How about if it's a major disagreement? So, if you did \_\_\_\_\_, then what would your mother likely do? When you are living at home, how often do fights like that happen – daily, few times a week, few times a month? How do you know when the fight is over – what happens? Who usually wins? How come? Can you tell me about the biggest fight you ever had with your mother? Is it the same with you and your father?

# Screening *(cont d.)*

When using a questionnaire, consider the following:

- ⇒ **Ensure the youth has adequate reading and comprehension skills before administering a questionnaire.**
- ⇒ **Select from existing victimization questionnaires on exposure to domestic violence, community/school violence, family perpetrated abuse, peer victimization.**
- ⇒ **Conduct a follow-up interview.**
  - Provides an opportunity to seek clarification as needed and to determine if specific actions are needed (e.g., referral to Child Protection Services, referral to medical practitioner).

**(Note: See *Choosing and Using Child Victimization Questionnaires* for a description of existing tools and suggestions. This resource is available from the National Criminal Justice Service.<sup>19</sup>)**

## Case Example

Jane, age 15, was charged with 5 counts of assault against 4 female peers within a two week interval. Assessment for sentencing revealed she was not attending school and was experiencing sleep difficulties and nightmares. Questions about how anger was expressed in her family revealed that she had been exposed to horrific violence against her mother and harsh discipline practices. Her earliest memory was of hiding under the table and watching her father beat her mother. She indicated that she could not recall a celebration with extended family where there was not violence, and often the police were called. Jane indicated that she did not want to be violent towards others and that she had hated her father's abuse of her mother. She also stressed that she felt angry all the time and was not about to let peers abuse her. Questions about her boyfriend revealed that Jane was currently being victimized within their relationship. Her desensitization to violence and her desire to stay in the relationship, led her to conclude that her boyfriend's abusive behavior was not problematic even though she had received injuries such as a broken nose, broken ribs and substantial bruising. She agreed to participate in group intervention for adolescents with anger management difficulties but would not consider intervention to address the violence occurring in her relationship. She was placed on probation and did not receive additional charges. While her abusive relationship was no longer a secret and she allowed her probation officer to talk about her abuse and safety planning, her plans to marry her boyfriend had not changed at the time of last contact.



## Who is at Risk of Being Involved in an Abusive Dating Relationship?

While any young person can find him or herself in a violent relationship, there are some experiences that may increase that probability. For example, a history of maltreatment or witnessing abuse in the family while growing up increases the risk of involvement in an abusive dating relationship.<sup>21</sup>

### Implications for Youth in Custody or Conflict with the Law

The risk factors associated with dating violence are more common in young people in trouble with the law.<sup>22</sup>

- ⇒ 82% of youth in custody have been abused physically, sexually, or physically and sexually. Boys report physical abuse more frequently and girls report experiencing both physical and sexual abuse more frequently.
- ⇒ Males in custody most frequently report being physically abused by their fathers (56%), custody centre residents (38%), mothers (36%), strangers (34%) and custody care staff (33%).
- ⇒ Females in custody most often report being physically abused by boyfriends/girlfriends (64%), fathers (46%), mothers (43%), strangers (43%), and friends/acquaintances (38%). Females report being sexually abused by strangers (63%), a non-parental relative, and by their fathers (33%).
- ⇒ The majority of youth in custody begin to use alcohol, drugs or marijuana at a very early age.

Intervention and prevention of relationship violence needs to be a high priority in settings and programs for youthful offenders. Young people in conflict with the law frequently have had greater exposure to a variety of risks associated with adolescent relationship violence, and may be less likely to seek assistance.



# Responding to Disclosures

Youth justice workers often receive disclosures about abuse and adult or adolescent domestic violence from juveniles. The following guidelines are offered for responding to disclosures. (Guidelines to assist with later decision-making and formal responses are on page 15).

- i) Let the youth know the limits of confidentiality.**
  - ⇒ e.g., if someone is being abused; if someone plans to harm self or others.
- ii) Allow the youth to tell his/her story.**
- iii) Do not pressure the youth to talk.**
- iv) Reassure and validate feelings.**
  - ⇒ If youths disclose a troubling incident directly to you, reassure them by validating their feelings (e.g., “Sounds frightening. Are you okay?”).
- v) Inform the youth of what you are going to do.**
- vi) Support the youth in making choices whenever possible.**
- vii) Do not criticize or speak negatively about the abuser.**
  - ⇒ Adolescents can feel very angry at and loyal to a parent or partner at the same time. If you criticize the offending individual, feelings of loyalty and protectiveness toward that person may cause the youth to feel that he/she can not talk about the abuse.
- viii) Do not make commitments to the youth that you cannot honor.**

**Remember that victimization and exposure to domestic violence can be addressed without allowing offenders to rationalize or excuse their own criminal behavior.**

The youth may choose this time to disclose because they feel safer, or changes in circumstances (e.g., custody placement) have tipped the balance so that the youth’s typical coping strategies are strained. Responding supportively to adolescents making disclosures may increase their sense of security and their willingness to share concerns, or seek help in the future.

# Guidelines to Assist Decision-Making and Formal Responses to Disclosures

In the majority of states, legislation does not require that exposure to domestic violence be reported to Child Protection Services (CPS). The following guidelines are offered to help you decide how to respond when you learn that a youth is being exposed to domestic violence.

## **i) Determine if there is an issue to be reported to CPS:**

- ⇒ Is there an indication of statutory child maltreatment such as neglect, or physical or sexual abuse (e.g., based on information the youth or parent has already disclosed)?
- ⇒ Is there an indication of serious risk to the youth or another?  
For example:
  - imminent harm to someone (e.g., specific threat to kill and the recent purchase of a weapon);
  - escalating risk (e.g., existing problem where recent change may signal increased danger – the victim attempting to leave the partner who is now threatening to kill her with a recently purchased gun);
  - ongoing domestic violence situation, but with a change in the parent's capacity to protect his/herself and/or the youth (e.g., change in substance abuse pattern).
- ⇒ Consult with a supervisor.

## **ii) If there is statutory child maltreatment and/or serious risk:**

- ⇒ (These guidelines are also helpful for making reports to the police.)

## **iii) If there is no statutory child maltreatment and no serious risk:**

- ⇒ Arrange for support/intervention.
- ⇒ Determine whether and how the adult victim will be approached.  
Consider the following:
  - safety for youth, adult victim and other family members (siblings);
  - safety for you and others at the agency;
  - age of youth (e.g., 12 years vs. 16 years) and the youth's wishes.
- ⇒ Explore ways with the youth to support him/her.
- ⇒ Inform the youth about resources within the facility and the community.
- ⇒ Encourage the youth to approach you or someone of his/her choice if he/she wants to talk.
- ⇒ Document disclosure and your response according to agency policy.

(Note: These guidelines relate to youths that fall within the age range covered by the legislation relevant to child protection.)

# Reporting to Child Protection Services

In all states, statutory child maltreatment and/or serious risk to a youth must be reported to Child Protection Services (CPS). In a few states, legislation also requires that exposure to domestic violence be reported to CPS. When reporting to CPS, consider the following:

## i) Before making the report:

- ⇒ Let the youth/disclosing parent know of your reporting requirement, provide support and address any concerns – especially those related to safety.
- ⇒ Consult the designated agency authority.
- ⇒ Ensure you have up-to-date information about the youth that the protection worker will require (e.g., name, DOB, address, parents' names).

## ii) Making the report:

- ⇒ Determine who makes the report, according to legislation and/or agency policy (e.g., supervisor or individual who heard the disclosure).
- ⇒ Report disclosure information and any relevant background information (e.g., previous concerns).
- ⇒ Ask and record what CPS will do and when.
- ⇒ Record the date, time and name of the child protection worker who received the report.
- ⇒ Report the information in a way that encourages CPS to consider the safety of the adult victim in its investigation and report.

## iii) After making the report:

- ⇒ Reassure the youth and let him/her know what to expect.
- ⇒ Inform others according to legislative and agency policy requirements (e.g., other staff involved with the youth, the parent).
- ⇒ Document the disclosure and your response according to agency policy.
- ⇒ If appropriate, make referral for counseling.

**(Note: These guidelines relate to youths that fall within the age range covered by the legislation relevant to child protection.)**

No policy or guideline can anticipate every individual youth or family's unique circumstance. Therefore, safety and protection from any imminent harm must be the overriding concern.

There may be times when your agency policies and procedures seem to endanger the safety of the youth, the adult victim, you or others. If this occurs, advise your supervisor immediately and seek consultation and direction from domestic violence agencies and CPS in your area.



# Abuse Perpetrated by Adolescents

While many youth in the juvenile justice system have been affected by domestic violence, a significant number are also perpetrators of domestic violence.<sup>22</sup> Criminal justice responses are critical to deterring domestic violence.<sup>23</sup> These responses include:

- ⇒ **sending a strong message to perpetrators about the seriousness of intimate partner abuse;**
- ⇒ **supporting and adding force to community-based interventions with adolescents and adults;**
- ⇒ **providing integration and coordination that includes:**
  - ongoing communication among agencies/programs (e.g., integrating batterer intervention with court-ordered substance abuse treatment);
  - use of victim advocates (e.g., availability at all stages of criminal justice response);
  - designation of special units or individuals to this area;
  - provision of training;
- ⇒ **giving probation officers the pivotal role for coordination between the justice system and community-based programs:**
  - provision of accurate, complete information about the defendant (e.g., previous arrests, substance abuse history, involvement with child protection services; past participation in intervention programs);
  - effective supervision of perpetrators;
  - coordination among other criminal justice agencies, batterer interventions, substance abuse treatment programs, social services, victim advocates and the community;

Coordination within the justice system and with other agencies is vital because victims can be endangered by inadequate communication, insufficient knowledge and understanding of domestic violence, or lack of follow-through by agency representatives.<sup>22</sup>

# When Youthful Offenders Perpetrate Relationship Violence

Young people in your setting or on your caseload may be perpetrating family violence (e.g., against a parent or sibling) or intimate partner abuse. This violent behavior may or may not be the criminal activity that has brought them into contact with the juvenile justice system at this time. The following information and guidelines are offered to assist your work with these youths:

- ⇒ Violent behavior against parents, siblings or intimate partners is typically learned behavior used to control and intimidate the victim.
- ⇒ The violence is likely to continue without intervention because of the power imbalance created by the abusive behavior and the reinforcement the youth experiences from being in control and obtaining what he/she wants (e.g., feeling powerful; control; instrumental gains such as money, freedom from rules, or tension relief).
- ⇒ Legal sanctions (e.g., charging, incarceration, supervision) are necessary to hold the offending youth accountable for stopping his/her violent behavior and for following through with treatment.<sup>22</sup>
- ⇒ Evaluation of risk should be ongoing and the safety needs of victims should be central to criminal justice responses and therapeutic interventions (see page 19).
- ⇒ Assessment is necessary to determine the type and focus of interventions (e.g., dynamics sustaining interpersonal violence, context of violence, substance abuse, mental illness).
- ⇒ Promising intervention with youths perpetrating relationship violence should include the following components:
  - personal accountability for violent behavior;
  - confrontation of denial and minimization of the use of violence in relationships;
  - victim awareness;
  - identification and change of attitudes and beliefs that support the use of interpersonal violence;
  - learning new interpersonal skills that promote respectful and caring relationships.
- ⇒ Regular input from victims is necessary to monitor the offending youth's behavior and progress. Safety issues must be adequately addressed in order to enable family members or intimate partners to provide information.

# Guidelines for Evaluating Risk & Safety Planning

Assessing risk and safety planning may be required because of adult or adolescent domestic violence, or another type of family violence (e.g., physical maltreatment of youth, assaultive behavior by youth towards parent). In these situations, the youthful offenders you are working with may be at risk of being harmed and/or at risk of harming their intimate partner or family members. In all of these cases youth justice workers have an important role to play. In some situations, you may have the lead while in others you may provide valuable information (e.g., to police, child protection services, the court, or other justice programs). The following guidelines are offered for individuals involved in evaluation of risk and safety planning:

- ⇒ **Conduct evaluations on an ongoing basis.**
  - Risk is dynamic and changes over time. Accordingly, an initial evaluation may not be accurate and relevant at various points throughout your contact with the youth.
- ⇒ **Include input from the victim in evaluation of risk and safety planning.**
- ⇒ **Communicate regularly with others to gather pertinent information that provides the most accurate and complete understanding of risk.**
  - Failure to communicate between key individuals (e.g., victim, family, school personnel, treatment program, probation officer) in the youth's life can result in missed warning signs and underestimation of risk.
- ⇒ **Determine risk factors and monitor for events that may act as triggers or elevate risk (see page 20 for Main Components Included in Domestic Violence Risk Assessments).**
- ⇒ **Document concerning events and risks in all settings/programs in order that obtaining information is not dependent on the quality of an individual's memory or the availability of that individual.**
- ⇒ **Develop safety plans in consultation with the victim and revise as necessary (see page 21 for Safety Plans).**



# Main Components Included in Domestic Violence Risk Assessments<sup>23, 25</sup>

## ⇒ **Assessing threats**

- threats to harm/kill the victim or others
- victim fears serious injury or death for self or children

## ⇒ **History of violence/use of force**

- victim's perceptions about risks to their safety including history of assaults/threats and recent escalation in violence
- prior injuries to the victim
- any breach of court order by abuser

## ⇒ **The role of weapons**

- access to firearms/weapons
- trained in use of weapons
- use of weapons in past violence

## ⇒ **Centrality**

- extent to which abuser's sense of self depends on the relationship
- possessiveness of the victim
- material and emotional "overlaps" between the abuser and the victim

## ⇒ **Stalking**

- extent of monitoring and checking up on the victim
- engagement in stalking behaviors
- persistent efforts to communicate with the victim when communication is unwanted

## ⇒ **Coercive control**

- degree and extent of control over the victim
- belief of entitlement to control by abuser
- level of verbal, psychological, financial control/abuse
- use of children to control the victim

## ⇒ **Significant events/changes**

- recent or anticipated separation
- recent changes in custody and access arrangements or abuser's time with children
- experiences of loss by abuser (e.g., loss of a job)
- flashpoints such as significant anniversaries, holidays

## ⇒ **Substance or alcohol abuse**

- extent and pattern of usage
- recent education

# Safety Plans and Risk Reduction

When youthful offenders are living with adult domestic violence or are victims of intimate partner abuse, safety plans include:

- ⇒ identification how to leave safely (e.g., safe exits from the home);
- ⇒ concrete information on where to go to be safe (e.g., shelters, alternative place);
  - helpful to have youth physically visit locations in a safe manner when there is not a crisis situation
- ⇒ provision of local telephone numbers for shelter, crisis center, police, and child protection agency to be kept in locations that make sense for the youth's individual circumstances (e.g., wallet, bedroom);
- ⇒ identification of who to tell about the violence so they can call police or assist if necessary;
- ⇒ identification of friends, family members, workers who youth can go to for support when stress/depression/upset levels are high;
- ⇒ opportunities to review safety plan.

When youthful offenders are perpetrating intimate partner or family violence, risk reduction strategies include:


- ⇒ enforcement of legal sanctions to hold perpetrator accountable for stopping violent behavior (e.g., incarceration, probation/supervision, attending batterers' program);
- ⇒ evaluation of risk that includes ongoing communication among justice programs, the victim, batterers' programs and individuals representing other agencies (e.g., school personnel, employer);
- ⇒ provision of relapse prevention planning;
- ⇒ identification of warning signs and strategies for youth to remove him or herself from a situation that is escalating;
- ⇒ provision of numbers for the juvenile perpetrator to call to obtain support (e.g., crisis line, Alcoholics or Narcotics Anonymous sponsor, batterers' program).

# Community Partnerships

## Community responses to domestic violence should:

- ⇒ provide safety;
- ⇒ foster the emotional well-being of all victims;
- ⇒ hold perpetrators accountable through legal sanctions and batterers' programs;
- ⇒ provide a continuum of coordinated services that are accessible regardless of a client's language and culture (e.g., cultural linguistic interpreters available);
- ⇒ promote prevention efforts (school programs, public awareness campaigns) as a long-term strategy for social change.

### Case Example



John, age 14, and his brother, age 16, were both charged with assault against their stepfather. Upon returning home late from an evening party, the boys were verbally chastised by their intoxicated stepfather. Recognizing that their stepfather's mobility was severely limited because of his drunkenness and emboldened by their own alcohol consumption, the brothers proceeded to beat their stepfather to the point that he required hospitalization. John disclosed that his stepfather had been abusive towards him, his brother, and their mother for as long as he could remember. While he had frequently attempted to defend his mother against his stepfather's violence, this was the first time he had attacked him. When confronted with John's disclosure, his mother confirmed the family violence. She denied being abused by John or his brother. John's brother said nothing. John denied remorse for the assault against his stepfather. In fact, he said he felt good and indicated that he was going to kill his stepfather and that no matter how long he and his brother were locked up, eventually they would get out and shoot his stepfather for all that he had done. When asked about guns, John replied that anyone could get a gun but refused to be more specific.

A subsequent interview with his mother revealed that John's maternal grandfather had two guns in his home which was within walking distance of her own home. The grandfather agreed to store the guns in a locked cabinet at a friend's home. John served time and was placed on probation, with a condition to attend intervention for abusive adolescent males. John's mother continued to live with John's stepfather. John refused to consider moving away from home as long as his stepfather continued to pose a risk to his mother.



# Promising Practices

- ⇒ **Hold the youth accountable for offending and other behaviors while understanding and validating the impact of past and present exposure to violence.**
- ⇒ **Recognize that early learning experiences influence how current experience is interpreted. For example, exposure to violence may cause a youth to view:**
  - violence as a means of establishing status/position;
  - violence as the means to most ends – frequent solution;
  - adults as untrustworthy and believe in youth vigilantism;
  - life as immediate and lack future orientation.
- ⇒ **Address both victim and perpetrator issues in interventions without allowing past victimization to excuse or justify offending behavior.**
- ⇒ **Develop and communicate explicit messages about individual accountability for behavior. For example:**
  - people are responsible for their behaviors;
  - provocation by another person does not justify violent responses;
  - the only person one can control is oneself;
  - individuals have the capacity to change their behaviors.
- ⇒ **Teach and reinforce individual accountability for behavior through cognitive and behavioral approaches at all levels of the program. For example:**
  - provide consistent and fair consequences that clearly demonstrate the link between the youth's actions and the responses she/he experiences;
  - implement positive (e.g., rewarding to the youth) and negative (e.g., unpleasant to the youth) consequences as soon as possible after the behavior;
  - link consequences logically to the nature and magnitude of the youth's behavior;
  - adjust program when necessary and build in supports to ensure youth can experience some success;
  - focus intervention on both cognitions (e.g., the youth's attitudes, beliefs, thinking patterns) and behaviors (e.g., increasing prosocial behaviors and decreasing maladaptive and antisocial behaviors).

# Promising Practices *(cont d.)*

## ⇒ **Provide culturally competent service that:**

- builds on the strength of the culture (e.g., spiritually, value placed on family);
- addresses issues related to relationship violence in ways that foster meaningful participation in program;
- promotes identification with the culture and mutual support.

## ⇒ **Recognize that hearing about experiences of victimization and perpetration can be distressing and provide:**

- opportunities for staff members to debrief in a professional and confidential manner;
- support for healthy practices for coping with stress (e.g., exercise, supportive work environment, balance between work and home life).

Intervention begins with awareness and commitment to bring about change. Lack of empirical evidence should not be used as an excuse for failing to acknowledge and attempting to intervene in this or other serious social issues. In time, rigorous evaluation of interventions will help us determine what practices are most likely to reduce recidivism and prevent victimization.

# An Innovative Approach:

## The Santa Clara Juvenile Delinquency Domestic and Family Violence Court<sup>24</sup>

On April 7, 1999, the Juvenile Delinquency Domestic and Family Violence Court was established in Santa Clara County, California, to address the serious social problem of domestic and family violence committed by juveniles.

Interagency collaboration and improved communication focusing on the issue of juvenile domestic and family violence are major features of Santa Clara County's specialized court program. This program must be court driven and led by a judge who is committed to the process. Representatives from the court and all the participating agencies and organizations continue to meet on a monthly basis to deal with problems as they present themselves and to develop interagency protocols and solutions. While this collaborative is now working smoothly, it has taken several years to develop it, and it continues to be a work-in-progress.

Initial results tend to support the thesis that minors who had successfully completed the program, by attending the interventions program and court reviews, along with other conditions of probation had lower recidivism rates. The intense scrutiny is intended to improve victim safety (by referrals to advocate agencies) and to set a higher level of accountability for the offenders. It is hoped that the Juvenile Delinquency Domestic and Family Violence Court will serve to end the cycle of violence, improve victim safety, and discourage the offender from committing new offenses.

### Program Philosophy

- ⇒ The safety and rights of domestic and family violence victims must be the highest priority in all aspects of service delivery by a juvenile domestic and family violence intervention program.
- ⇒ Intervention programs for juvenile domestic and family violence offenders should be part of a comprehensive community plan to stop domestic and family violence.
- ⇒ The philosophy of a juvenile domestic and family violence intervention program must advance the premise that domestic and family violence is criminal activity and is learned behavior, and is therefore changeable.
- ⇒ The goal of a juvenile domestic and family violence intervention program must be to end the offender's abusive, intimidating and violent behavior.
- ⇒ The content of a juvenile domestic and family violence intervention program must recognize and identify the effect and influence child abuse, witnessing domestic violence in the home, gang violence and socially accepted forms of abuse such as sexism, racism and heterosexism have on the development of offenders' interpersonal relationships.
- ⇒ A juvenile domestic and family violence intervention program must include a restorative justice approach that involves offenders making amends to the victim and/or community for the wrongfulness of their violence.

For more information, please contact:

**Eugene M. Hyman, Judge**  
Superior Court of California  
County of Santa Clara  
191 North First St., San Jose, CA 95113  
Tel: 408-808-6220 Email: ehyman@sct.co.scl.ca.us



# A Model for Group Intervention<sup>27</sup>

A 14-week group intervention with abusive male adolescents developed at the Domestic Abuse Project in Minneapolis, MN, includes:<sup>26</sup>

- 1. Introduction and Definitions of Abuse** - establish a place where members feel physically and emotionally safe; brainstorm definitions of abuse; challenge each participant to think critically about the different types of abuse.
- 2. How I Learned to be Abusive** - increase understanding of domestic violence as learned and socially sanctioned; learn alternatives to being abusive.
- 3. Payoffs and Consequences – A Look at Power and Control** - learn payoffs and consequences for abusive behavior and the potential effects of witnessing domestic abuse; learn appropriate and inappropriate expressions of anger.
- 4. The STOP Plan** - increase understanding of the escalation process; increase awareness of motivations underlying abusive behaviors and the cues that precede abuse.
- 5. The Time-Out Plan** - develop a personalized Time-Out Plan while learning about the varying levels of cues and how to rate them according to the progression of abuse.
- 6. Family Session** - establish boundaries and communication; review educational material covered in group, the adolescent's personal STOP and Time-Out Plan; assess how the intervention is working; provide support and feedback to participants, parent(s)/caregiver(s).
- 7. Emotions** - increase ability to experience, label and appropriately express emotions; discuss the impact of gender socialization.
- 8. Styles of Communication** - discuss styles of communication (assertive, passive, aggressive, and passive-aggressive); identify personal styles of communication and how they vary by situation.
- 9. Conflict Resolution** - learn and practice conflict resolution skills and assertive communication.
- 10. Gender Role Socialization** - understand how stereotypical gender role socialization permits gender-based violence and consequences of maintaining it.
- 11. Dating Violence** - challenge cultural myths related to dating relationships; learn early warning signs of abusive relationships and characteristics of healthy relationships.
- 12. Taking Responsibility for My Abusive Behavior** - take ownership of abuse by identifying victims of abusive behavior; identify cues that precede abuse and the consequences; apply individual STOP and Time-Out Plans to these situations.
- 13. Family Session** - assess intervention; provide continued support, feedback and future recommendations.
- 14. Closure/Celebration** - review educational content; share perceptions about group; provide written feedback to group leaders.

For more information, please contact:

Diane Davis  
Domestic Abuse Project  
Minneapolis, MN 55404  
Tel: 612-874-7063

# Where to Go for Help

Important numbers for you to know and share with youth and their parents as needed

## Fill in the Contact Numbers for your Community:

Women's Shelter	
Domestic Violence Agency	
Family Counseling Agency	
Child Protection Services	
Victim/Witness Program	
Hospital	
Police	
Cultural/Linguistic Interpretation Services	
Legal Aid	
Batterer's Program	
Child/Adolescent Trauma/Treatment Program	

## Teaching Survival Information to Adolescents:

### For immediate assistance in an emergency, dial 911.

- Dialing 911 can reach police, the fire department and ambulance
- Tell operator the problem and give your full name and address where the emergency is taking place
- Do not hang up the phone until the operator tells you to

### **NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE - dial 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or 1-800-787-3224 (TDD)**

- Trained counselors provide crisis intervention, referrals to local service providers for victims of domestic violence and those calling on their behalf, and information or support in many languages
- Counselors answer every call in both English and Spanish
- Translators are available for 139 languages
- Crisis intervention and referrals to the Deaf through the TDD line

For additional information about the services provided by this HOTLINE visit the following website: [www.ndvh.org](http://www.ndvh.org)

# Resources

Contact the following organizations for additional information on domestic violence, including impacts, getting assistance, resources, prevention and training. The websites for these organizations contain links to other valuable resources.

## **NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

6400 Flank Drive, Suite 1300, Harrisburg PA 17112-2778-17

phone: 800-537-2238 fax: 717-545-9456 TTY: 800-553-2508

## **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN OFFICE (VAWO)**

810 7th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20531

phone: (202)307-6026 fax: (202)307-3911 website: [www.ojp.usdoj.gov/vawo](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/vawo)

- One of the Office of Justice Programs, United States Department of Justice
- Works with victim advocates and law enforcement throughout the US to develop grant programs supporting a wide range of services for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking (e.g., emergency shelters, law enforcement and legal aid)
- Find a list of state hotlines, coalitions and advocacy groups by going to the VAWO website and clicking on Help and Information Near You

## **FAMILY VIOLENCE DEPARTMENT OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF JUVENILE AND FAMILY COURT JUDGES (NCJFCJ)**

P.O. Box 8970, Reno, Nevada 89507

phone: 1-800-527-3223 website: [www.dvlawsearch.com](http://www.dvlawsearch.com)

- This department of the NCJFCJ is dedicated to improving the way courts, law enforcement agencies and others respond to family violence.
- This resource provides information on publications, training and conferences, resources and laws.

## **NATIONAL CENTER for CHILDREN EXPOSED TO VIOLENCE (NCCEV)**

Child Study Center, Yale University School of Medicine, 230 South Frontage Road, P.O. Box 207900, New Haven, CT 06520-7900

phone: 1-877-49-NCCEV (62238) website: [www.nccev.org/us](http://www.nccev.org/us)

- A national resource that increases awareness and provides information about the effects of violence on children and the initiatives developed to address this social problem
- A provider of training, technical assistance and consultation to initiatives throughout the US that respond to children and families exposed to violence (e.g., Safe Start Initiative, Child Development-Community Policing (CD-CP) Program replication sites)

## **NATIONAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFERENCE SERVICE (NCJRS)**

website: <http://virlib.ncjrs.org/juvenilejustice.asp>

- NCJRS is a federally sponsored information clearinghouse for people involved with research, policy, and practice related to criminal and juvenile justice and drug control.

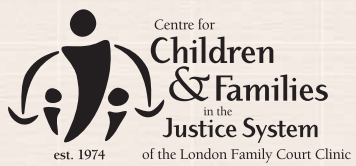


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254 Pall Mall St., Suite 200, London, Ontario, Canada N6A 5P6  
Tel: (519)679-7250 Fax: (519)675-7772 email: [info@lfcc.on.ca](mailto:info@lfcc.on.ca) website: [www.lfcc.on.ca](http://www.lfcc.on.ca)