

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND CHILDREN NEWSLETTER

Children's Issues Committee  
Santa Clara County Domestic Violence Council

Vol. 12, #3  
Fall 2009

## Message From the Committee

The Children's Issues Committee is inviting the participation and contribution of people interested in domestic violence and its impact on education. The Committee is dedicating itself to the continued work of exploring how to best engage the education community as partners in responding to DV. We are in the process of developing a resource guide for educators and are seeking contributions from the community.

We have just finished the 2009 update of the Resource Guide for Children. The guide will be posted on the Domestic Violence Council website @ <http://dvc.sccgov.org> as well as attached to the email version of this newsletter. In an attempt to have the Resource Guide serve as many members of the community as possible, we are looking for children's books about domestic violence that are published in other languages besides English and Spanish. If you are aware of such resources, please contact Jonee Donnelly (See below).

The committee welcomes input and suggestions from the community. If you have an announcement or an interest in participating in our work, please contact Maureen Lowell, chairperson, @408-246-1300 or Jonee Donnelly, editor, @ [jdonlytx@pacbell.net](mailto:jdonlytx@pacbell.net).

\*\*\*\*\*

## In This Issue:

- Children's Exposure to Violence: A Comprehensive National Survey
- Silent Victims: Children Exposed to Family Violence {for school nurses}
- Education Next: Children Exposed to Domestic Violence Have a Negative Effect on the Behavior and Academic Achievement of Classroom Peers
- Book Review: Domestic Violence and Children: A Handbook for Schools and Early Years Settings
- Educator's Corner: "Ways to Support a Child Who Makes a Disclosure"
- Resource Guide for Children (in emailed newsletter)

+++++

## Events

*Domestic Violence, Addiction and Complex Trauma: Connecting the Dots*

Where: Marriott Santa Clara, Santa Clara, CA

Date: October 23, 2009

Sponsor: Santa Clara DVC 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference. With nationally known

keynote speakers John Briere and Vivian Brown, plus eight workshops. For more information and to register, go to <http://dvconference.sccgov>.

*“;We are Women! ;We are Life!”*: A Night of Theater and Dialogue.

Date: October 29, 2009, 6:00-8:00 p.m.  
Where: Mayfair Community Center, 2039 Kammerer Ave. San Jose CA 95116  
Sponsor: Somos Mayfair and Next Door Solutions to Domestic Violence  
Teatro Familias Unidas presents an original play based on their own lives and the lives of their ancestors. They are breaking silence, honoring the struggle and declaring the beauty, strength and dignity of being women, immigrants and mothers! There will be a dialogue after the performance and the play will be in Spanish with English translation available. There will be childcare and food. FREE. To register call: Lucero Arellano 408-501-7545 or Aryeh Shell 408-240-4999

+++++

Children’s Issues Committee, Santa Clara Domestic Violence Council; Monthly: 1st Tuesday, 8:00 am; First5 Santa Clara County, 4000 Moorpark Avenue, Suite 200, San Jose

Domestic Violence Council; Monthly: 1st Friday, 7:30 am; 70 West Hedding Street, San Jose

Child Abuse Council; Monthly: 2nd Friday, 7:30 am; 70 West Hedding Street, San Jose

+++++

### **.Children’s Exposure to Violence: A Comprehensive National Survey**

by

David Finkelhor, Heather Turner, Richard Ormrod, Sherry Hamby, and Kristen Kracke

This Bulletin discusses the National Survey of Children’s Exposure to Violence (NatSCEV), the most comprehensive nationwide survey of the incidence and prevalence of children’s exposure to violence to date, sponsored by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) and supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Conducted between January and May 2008, it measured the past-year and lifetime exposure to violence for children age 17 and younger across several major categories: conventional crime, child maltreatment, victimization by peers and siblings, sexual victimization, witnessing and indirect victimization (including exposure to community violence and family violence), school violence and threats, and Internet victimization. This survey is the first comprehensive attempt to measure children’s exposure to violence in the home, school, and community across all age groups from birth to age 17, and the first attempt to measure the cumulative exposure to violence over the child’s lifetime.

The survey confirms that most of our society’s children are exposed to violence in their daily lives. More than 60 percent of the children surveyed were exposed to

violence within the past year, either directly or indirectly (i.e., as a witness to a violent act; by learning of a violent act against a family member, neighbor, or close friend; or from a threat against their home or school). Nearly one-half of the children and adolescents surveyed (46.3 percent) were assaulted at least once in the past year, and more than 1 in 10 (10.2 percent) were injured in an assault; 1 in 4 (24.6 percent) were victims of robbery, vandalism, or theft; 1 in 10 (10.2 percent) suffered from child maltreatment (including physical and emotional abuse, neglect, or a family abduction); and 1 in 16 (6.1 percent) were victimized sexually. More than 1 in 4 (25.3 percent) witnessed a violent act and nearly 1 in 10 (9.8 percent) saw one family member assault another. Multiple victimizations were common: more than one-third (38.7 percent) experienced 2 or more direct victimizations in the previous year, more than 1 in 10 (10.9 percent) experienced 5 or more direct victimizations in the previous year, and more than 1 in 75 (1.4 percent) experienced 10 or more direct victimizations in the previous year.

### Developmental Patterns in Exposure to Violence

#### **Victimization in Infancy**

*Most common victimizations during this period:*

- Assault by a sibling
- Assault with no weapon or injury
- Witnessing family assault

#### **Victimization in the Toddler Years (Ages 2 to 5)**

*Most common victimizations during this period:*

- Assault by a sibling
- Assault with no weapon or injury
- Bullying (physical)

#### Witnessing family assault **Victimization in Middle Childhood (Ages 6 to 9)**

*Peak risk period for:*

- Assault by a sibling
- Assault with no weapon or injury
- Bullying (physical)
- Emotional bullying/teasing

#### **Victimization in Preteens and Early Adolescence (Ages 10 to 13)**

*Peak risk period for:*

- Assault with weapon
- Sexual harassment (same rate ages 10 to 17)
- Kidnapping
- Witnessing family assault
- Witnessing intimate partner (interparental) violence

#### **Victimization in Later Adolescence (Ages 14 to 17)**

*Peak risk period for:*

- Assault with injury
- Assault by peer (nonsibling)
- Genital assault
- Dating violence
- Sexual victimizations of all types
- Sexual assault
- Sexual harassment (same rate ages 10 to 17)
- Flashing or sexual exposure
- Unwanted online sexual solicitation
- Any maltreatment
- Physical abuse
- Psychological or emotional abuse
- Witnessing community assault
- Exposure to shooting
- School threat of bomb or attack

The NatSCEV study represents the best attempt to date to quantify children's exposure to violence. Understanding categories and forms of violence is critical to creating appropriate interventions to prevent and suppress violence and to treat its

victims. This study's greatest contribution, however, is that it highlights the degree to which children in this country live with violence in their daily lives. Violence takes a toll on children whether as victims or witnesses. Seemingly minor incidents may have long-lasting and far-reaching consequences. If policymakers, practitioners, advocates, and the general public are to respond effectively to curb the negative effects of children's exposure to violence, everyone must look at the problem in its totality and make a coordinated effort to help the children and their families who suffer these effects.

(Office of Justice Programs, Juvenile Justice Bulletin, [www.ojp.usdoj.gov](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov) )

+++++

### **Silent Victims: Children Exposed to Family Violence**

by

Kathryn R. Kolar, RN, PhD, CPNP; and  
Debrynda Davey, RN, CDVD, Dip, EdD

Annually an estimated 3 million or more children are exposed to acts of domestic violence between adults in their homes. These children are at risk for abuse themselves as well as other immediate and long-term problems, especially if they have been exposed to repeated episodes of domestic violence. Multiple behavioral manifestations, including anxiety, depression, and posttraumatic stress disorder, may be associated with violence exposure, and it is imperative that school nurses recognize these. All children should be screened for domestic violence exposure at regular intervals, and those who are at risk should have a more thorough health

assessment. Planning for the safety of the child, nonoffending caregiver, and siblings and the school nurse involved in the situation is of utmost importance.

Students who are absent from school on a frequent basis without an adequate explanation, such as a diagnosed illness, may be victims of domestic violence exposure.

The child should understand that the discussion about domestic violence will be kept confidential unless the school nurse believes the health or safety of the child or another individual, such as the child's sibling, is in immediate danger.

The school nurse can assist the child in identifying a trusted adult to confide in if necessary when it appears the child is unsure about whom should be told.

The school nurse should provide reassurance that the violence is not the child's fault and there are people who can help the child and others involved in the situation to be safe.

Secrecy commonly surrounds the violence-affected home. Any child revealing the "secret" with which he or she has been living may experience an array of conflicting emotions.

Although some children exhibit resilience and are not affected by these experiences, others who are witnesses to domestic violence may suffer posttraumatic stress disorder, which could have an impact on both their school and social adjustment.

There is a growing recognition that exposure of children to domestic violence

can have a negative influence on social, emotional, and cognitive development and may have long-term consequences that affect adult functioning and relationships. As a front-line health care provider, the school nurse is in an optimal position to identify children who live with violence in their homes and implement strategies to improve their circumstances.

(Published in The Journal of School Nursing. For the full article, go to <http://jsn.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/23/2/86> )

+++++

**Education Next: Children Exposed to Domestic Violence Have a Negative Effect on the Behavior and Academic Achievement of Classroom Peers**

(© Business Wire 2009, 2009-05-12 17:15:03 )

Children exposed to domestic violence not only have more disciplinary problems at school, they perform considerably worse in math and reading than other students. They also have a negative effect on their classroom peers, resulting in decreased test scores and increased disciplinary problems according to a new study by economists Scott Carrell of the University of California–Davis and Mark Hoekstra of the University of Pittsburgh, published in the summer issue of Education Next.

Carrell and Hoekstra find that adding one troubled student to a classroom of 20 students decreases student reading and math test scores by more than two-thirds of a percentile point and increases misbehavior among other students in the classroom by 16 percent.

The researchers found that troubled peers have a large and statistically significant negative effect on the math and reading achievement of higher income children, but only a small and statistically insignificant effect on the achievement of low-income children. The pattern is opposite for disciplinary outcomes. The presence of troubled peers increases problem behavior of low-income children, but does not significantly increase the disciplinary problems of higher income children.

Carrell and Hoekstra also found that the effect differed by race and gender. The negative test-score effect is large and statistically significant for white boys, but statistically insignificant for black boys. The test-score effects on girls are negligible regardless of race.

Disciplinary problems, however, increase for all subgroups except white girls. The effects are largest for black girls. One troubled peer added to a classroom of 20 students increases the probability that a black girl commits a disciplinary infraction by as much as 10 percent.

Carrell and Hoekstra also examined whether troubled boys affect their peers differently than do troubled girls. Across all outcome variables, both academic and behavioral, the negative peer effects appear to be driven primarily by the troubled boys, and these effects are largest on other boys in the classroom.

The results indicate that adding one troubled boy to a classroom of 20 students increases the probability that a boy will commit a disciplinary infraction by 17 percent and decreases boys' test scores by

nearly 2 percentile points -- or 7 percent of a standard deviation -- each year.

“These findings have important implications for both education and social policy,” Carrell and Hoekstra said. “Any policies or interventions that help improve the family environment of the most troubled students may have larger benefits than we have previously anticipated.”

<http://www.pr-inside.com/education-next-children-exposed-to-r1247748.htm>

+++++

### **Book Review**

**Domestic Violence and Children: A Handbook for Schools and Early Years Settings** by Abigail Sterne, and Liz Poole (2009)

What can schools and social care workers do to help children affected by domestic violence?

Large numbers of children are affected by domestic violence. The problem crosses every social class and culture. It causes distress and anxiety in children and adversely affects their learning and play, as well as their behaviour, wellbeing and attendance

Education staff may know of a child or family in crisis, want to help, yet feel outside their comfort zone, grappling with a complex issue not covered in their training. This book describes the impact of domestic violence on children and provides support for education and social care professionals. It takes heavy workloads

into account and suggests practical ways of meeting the needs of pupils who come from difficult home backgrounds.

The authors provide guidance and advice on:

- identifying and responding to signs of distress,
- helping pupils to talk about and make sense of their experiences,
- the impact on parenting and how parents can be supported,
- the needs of young people in refuges and temporary accommodation,
- pupil safety and government safeguarding guidelines,
- educating young people and the community about domestic violence,
- specialist domestic violence services and other agencies that support schools.

Domestic Violence and Children draws on the expertise of a wide range of professionals, including specialist domestic violence children’s workers and counsellors, psychologists, teachers, mentors and family support workers. It provides essential help and information to all children’s service directorates, as well as a range of professionals in education, social care, health and the voluntary sector.

+++++

### **Educator’s Corner**

*Ways to Support a Child Who Makes a Disclosure*

Childcare teachers may receive disclosures about violence in the home from young children, but may have limited information on how to support these children. The

following guidelines are offered to help you respond in ways that are helpful to children when disclosures do occur.

*i) Allow the child to tell his/her story.*

It usually helps children to talk about the violence or troubling events in their lives with a trusted adult.

*ii) Reassure the child.*

If children disclose a troubling incident at home directly to you, reassure them by validating their feelings (e.g., “Sounds like that was scary for you. Are you okay?”). Depending on the situation, it may also be helpful to let children know that you are glad they told you, that the violence is not their fault, and that no one should be hurt.

Older children may ask you to not say anything to anyone about what they have told you. It will be important for you to let them know that you need to tell people who can help them be safe.

*iii) Do not pressure the child to talk.*

It is important to remember that your role is not to gather evidence or to investigate the situation. Your role is to listen and to acknowledge the feelings the child is sharing.

*iv) Do not criticize or speak negatively about the batterer.*

Children often have confused or mixed feelings about the batterer. They may hate the abuse but like the stories or games that the abusive parent sometimes reads or plays. Children can feel very angry at and loyal to a parent at the same time. If

you criticize the offending parent, feelings of loyalty and protectiveness toward the parent may cause the child to feel that he/she cannot talk about the abuse.

*v) Do not make commitments to the child that you cannot honor.*

Sometimes workers are so moved by a child’s situation and want so much to protect and reassure the child, they make statements that they cannot follow through on. Examples include comments such as: “I will keep you safe”; “I won’t let him hurt your mother anymore”; “I won’t tell anyone what you told me”. While clearly well intended, such commitments can diminish a child’s trust in others when he/she discovers the statements were untrue. This may cause a child to believe that no one can help and it is not worth telling anyone about the upsetting things happening at home.

*vi) Follow the child’s lead.*

Young children have short attention spans and typically do not spend much time on one topic, even when it is about a distressing event. They are more likely to talk a little bit, change the topic or move on to another activity, and then possibly revisit the troubling event again. It is important to follow the child’s lead and support him/her to carry on with activities when ready to do so. (This may be challenging in disclosure situations where you are not ready to carry on with activities.)

The child may choose this time to disclose because changes in circumstances have

tipped the balance so that the child's typical coping approaches are strained. Responding supportively to children making disclosures increases their sense of security and their willingness to share concerns in the future. (Excerpted from Children Exposed to Domestic Violence: An Early Childhood Educator's Handbook to Increase Understanding and Improve Community Responses by Linda L. Baker Peter G. Jaffe and Lynda Ashbourn, Centre for Children & Families in the Justice System).

+++++

### Web Sites of Interest

[www.endingviolence.com](http://www.endingviolence.com)  
[www.snbw.org](http://www.snbw.org),  
[www.cacscc.org](http://www.cacscc.org)  
<http://www.whiteribbon.ca/>  
[www.nextdoor.org](http://www.nextdoor.org)  
[www.safefromthestart.org](http://www.safefromthestart.org)  
[www.endabuse.org/programs/children](http://www.endabuse.org/programs/children)  
[www.mincava.umn.edu/link](http://www.mincava.umn.edu/link)  
[www.ncjfcj.org/dept/fvd/](http://www.ncjfcj.org/dept/fvd/)  
[www.childwitnessstoviolence.org](http://www.childwitnessstoviolence.org)  
[www.thegreenbook.info](http://www.thegreenbook.info)  
[www.cls4children.org](http://www.cls4children.org)  
[http://www.vawnet.org/DomesticViolence/  
PublicPolicy/Children/VTNetworkDV-  
CPS.php](http://www.vawnet.org/DomesticViolence/PublicPolicy/Children/VTNetworkDV-CPS.php)  
[www.breakthecycle.org](http://www.breakthecycle.org)  
<http://www.ncvc.org/tvp/main.aspx>  
[www.traumacenter.org](http://www.traumacenter.org)  
[www.civitas.org](http://www.civitas.org)  
[www.childtrauma.org](http://www.childtrauma.org)  
[www.istss.org](http://www.istss.org)  
[www.cfchildren.org](http://www.cfchildren.org)  
[www.ncptsd.org](http://www.ncptsd.org)  
[www.kovalik.com](http://www.kovalik.com)

The Domestic Violence and Children Newsletter is published four times yearly by the Children's Issues Committee, Santa Clara County Domestic Violence Council. Members of the Committee are:

Richard Garcia	408-246-1507
Maureen Lowell	408-246-1300 (chairperson)
Jonee Donnelly	408-247-3660 (editor)
Hatixhe Grbeshi	408-297-7348
Cynthia Spencer	408-522-3800
Marla Johannin	408-975-5631
Tricia Mlnarik	408-241-9990
C.J. Neustadter	408-534-5761 (secretary)
Jennifer Klassen	408-347-5234

For information or to submit articles, contact Jonee Donnelly, editor, at (408) 247-3660 or email to [jdonlytx@pacbell.net](mailto:jdonlytx@pacbell.net). Deadlines for submission are: April 15 for May issue; June 15 for July issue; September 15 for October issue; December 15 for January issue.