

Welcome to the NNADV Advocate Certificate Course

Impact of Domestic Violence on Children



NNADV

Advocating change.
Educating our community.
Supporting services.

Acknowledgment

Portions of this course have been adapted from **The Impact of Domestic Violence on Children**, an online learning course developed by the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence.



Course Overview

Section 1: Introduction

Section 2: Children Living with Domestic Violence

Section 3: Risk and Protective Factors

Section 4: Common Advocacy Themes

Section 5: Tips for Working with Children

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Identify statistics related to children exposed to domestic violence within the home;
- Identify the range of experiences children are exposed to when domestic violence occurs in their homes;
- Distinguish between risk and protective factors of children exposed to domestic violence;
- Understand common themes related to children exposed to domestic violence; and
- List advocacy tips to assist children.

1. Introduction

Objective

After completing this section of the course, you will be able to:

- Identify statistics related to children exposed to domestic violence within the home.



1. Introduction

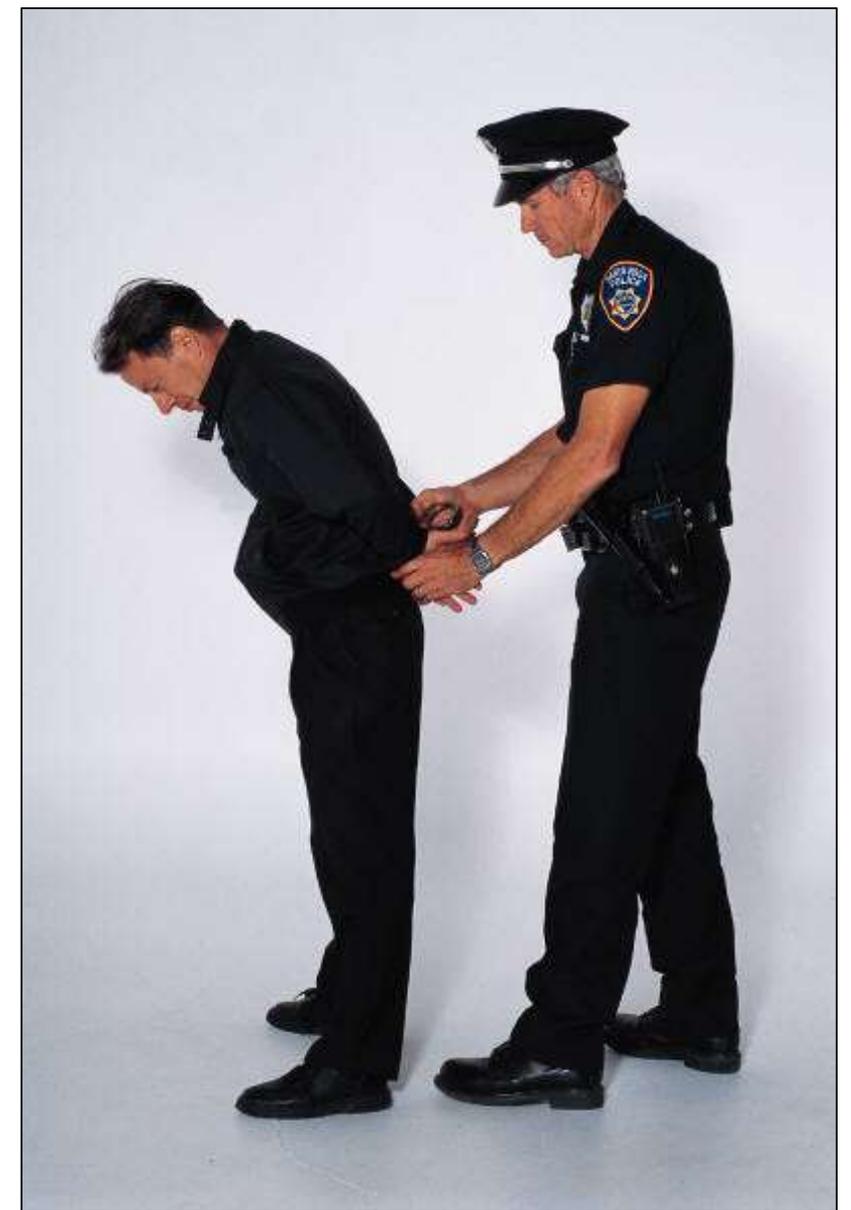
National Statistics

- In the United States, it is estimated that between 3.3 and 10 million children are exposed to intimate partner violence each year (Carlson, 1984; Straus and Gelles, 1990).

1. Introduction

National Statistics

- Police may encounter as many as half a million children during domestic violence arrests each year (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, November 2000).



1. Introduction

National Statistics

- A majority of studies indicate that between 30% and 60% of families in which domestic violence exists, child abuse also exists (Edleson, 1997).

1. Introduction

National Statistics

- Domestic violence has been shown to occur disproportionately in homes with children under the age of five (Taylor, Zuckerman, Harik, & Groves, 1994).



1. Introduction

National Statistics

- Although many adults believe they have protected their children from exposure to domestic violence, 80-90% of children in those homes can give detailed descriptions of the violence experienced in their families (Doyne et al., 1999).

1. Introduction

National Statistics

- Studies have shown that 25% of domestic homicides are witnessed by the children of the victim (Dooyne et al., 1999).



2. Children Living with Domestic Violence

Objectives

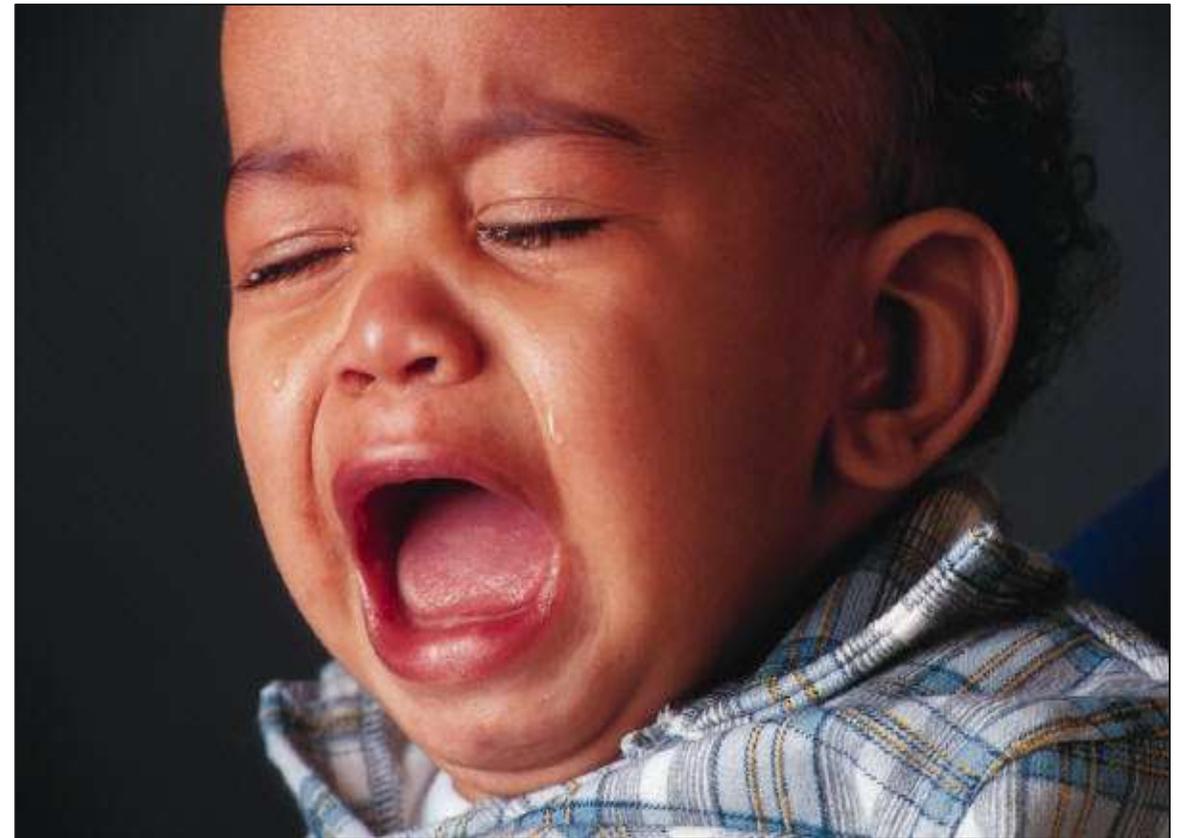
After completing this section of the course, you will be able to:

- Identify the range of experiences children are exposed to when domestic violence occurs in their home.



2. Children Living with Domestic Violence

- Children living in homes where there is or has been domestic violence are exposed to:
 - Physical abuse
 - Emotional abuse
 - Threatening behaviors
 - Coercion
 - Manipulative behaviors



2. Children Living with Domestic Violence

Physical abuse of adult victim

Abuse of children

Emotional abuse

Exposure

Observations

Aiding an injured adult victim or siblings

Physical abuse of adult victim

- Children may see punching, stabbing, slapping, or hitting. They may see the abuser threaten the adult victim with a gun or other type of weapon.
- They also may witness the murder of the adult victim or another family member or friend. Approximately 25% of all domestic homicides are witnessed by the children of the victim.

2. Children Living with Domestic Violence

Physical abuse of adult victim

Abuse of children

Emotional abuse

Exposure

Observations

Aiding an injured adult victim or siblings

Abuse of children

- Children may be intentionally or unintentionally hurt by the perpetrator of domestic violence.
- Some children are physically injured when they are being held by or standing next to the adult victim.
- There is a 30% to 60% co-occurrence of domestic violence and child abuse in the same families.

2. Children Living with Domestic Violence

Physical abuse of adult victim

Abuse of children

Emotional abuse

Exposure

Observations

Aiding an injured adult victim or siblings

Emotional abuse

- It is common for children to hear the violence that is occurring or hear the abuser's verbal abuse of the adult victim.
- They also hear the abuser make hurtful remarks about them or blame them for causing the violence.

2. Children Living with Domestic Violence

Physical abuse of adult victim

Abuse of children

Emotional abuse

Exposure

Observations

Aiding an injured adult victim or siblings

Exposure

- Even if children don't see the actual violence, they may see the aftermath:
 - broken furniture,
 - rooms in disarray, and
 - crying or injured adult victims or siblings.

2. Children Living with Domestic Violence

Physical abuse of adult victim

Abuse of children

Emotional abuse

Exposure

Observations

Aiding an injured adult victim or siblings

Observations

- They may see and hear interactions with the police. They may see the police arrest the perpetrator of violence. They may see the police arrest the adult victim if she tried to fight back or protect the children.
- As many as half a million children come into contact with law enforcement responding to domestic violence incidents each year.

2. Children Living with Domestic Violence

Physical abuse of adult victim

Abuse of children

Emotional abuse

Exposure

Observations

Aiding an injured adult victim or siblings

Aiding an injured adult victim or siblings

- Children may need to provide aid to injured adult victims or siblings.
- Some victims may find it difficult to adequately protect children due to injuries or sleep deprivation caused by the abuser.
- The abuser may manipulate the children or interfere with the adult victim's ability to be a good parent, requiring the older children to care for the younger children.

2. Children Living with Domestic Violence

Child Abuse

- Witnessing domestic violence does **NOT** necessarily constitute child abuse.
 - In Nevada, there must be an act or a failure to act that constitutes *child abuse or neglect* as defined in the Nevada Revised Statutes.

3. Risk and Protective Factors

Objective

After completing this section of the course, you will be able to:

- Distinguish between the risk and protective factors of children exposed to domestic violence.



3. Risk and Protective Factors

- This section of the course will focus on identifying risk factors and protective factors of children exposed to domestic violence in the home.



Risk Factors

Age
Severity
Frequency
Duration
Witness and Victim
Drug and Alcohol Abuse
Special Needs

Age

- There is no age at which children are immune to domestic violence.
- Young or pre-school aged children suffer the greatest impacts.
- Research shows that the younger children are when they are exposed to domestic violence, the more likely it is they will suffer adverse consequences.

Risk Factors

Age
Severity
Frequency
Duration
Witness and Victim
Drug and Alcohol Abuse
Special Needs

Severity

- Children who witness the most severe violence are more likely to suffer greater consequences.

Risk Factors

Age
Severity
Frequency
Duration
Witness and Victim
Drug and Alcohol Abuse
Special Needs

Frequency

- The more frequent the violence is in the home, the more likely it is that the child will experience a negative impact.

Risk Factors

Age
Severity
Frequency
Duration
Witness and Victim
Drug and Alcohol Abuse
Special Needs

Duration

- The longer a child witnesses domestic violence, the more likely it is to have a negative impact.

Risk Factors

Age
Severity
Frequency
Duration
Witness and Victim
Drug and Alcohol Abuse
Special Needs

Witness and Victim

- Children who witness domestic violence and experience child abuse are more likely to have negative impacts.
- Researchers have called this combination of child abuse and witnessing a “double whammy.”

Risk Factors

Age
Severity
Frequency
Duration
Witness and Victim
Drug and Alcohol Abuse
Special Needs

Drug and Alcohol Abuse

- The impact of domestic violence is likely to be worse in a household in which there is also drug and alcohol abuse.

Risk Factors

Age
Severity
Frequency
Duration
Witness and Victim
Drug and Alcohol Abuse
Special Needs

Special Needs

- Children with special needs are more likely to be vulnerable to child abuse and neglect within a family.

Protective Factors

Gender
Length of Relationship
Psychological Hardiness
Support System
Personal Pursuits
Time since Events

Gender

- Gender is neither a risk factor nor a protective factor, but domestic violence is likely to have different impacts on children depending on their gender.
- Boys tend to exhibit externalizing behaviors (e.g., aggression or acting out) and girls tend to exhibit internalizing behaviors (e.g., depression or withdrawal).

Protective Factors

Gender

Length of Relationship

Psychological Hardiness

Support System

Personal Pursuits

Time since Events

Length of Relationship

- The length of the relationship between the abuser and the adult victim has an impact.
- The impact is likely to be greater if the adult victim has been in a long-term relationship with the abuser.

Protective Factors

Gender

Length of Relationship

Psychological Hardiness

Support System

Personal Pursuits

Time since Events

Psychological Hardiness

- Some children have better coping skills to deal with negative experiences than other children. They are able to remain resilient and optimistic about the world and their future.

Protective Factors

Gender
Length of Relationship
Psychological Hardiness
Support System
Personal Pursuits
Time since Events

Support System

- Having someone to turn to who is safe, supportive, and trustworthy can help children experience less trauma and increase their ability to heal from it.

Protective Factors

Gender
Length of Relationship
Psychological Hardiness
Support System
Personal Pursuits
Time since Events

Personal Pursuits

- Children with personal pursuits are often more resilient to the domestic violence they face at home.
- Personal pursuits (such as involvement in a sport, playing a musical instrument, or membership in an organization) can reduce a child's feelings of isolation and increase self-confidence.

Protective Factors

Gender
Length of Relationship
Psychological Hardiness
Support System
Personal Pursuits
Time since Events

Time since Events

- The impact is lessened the longer it has been since the last incident of domestic violence occurred in the home.

Activity

To learn more about the impact of domestic violence on children,
watch this [short video](#)



4. Common Advocacy Themes

Objective

After completing this section of the course, you will be able to:

- Identify common themes that advocates face when they work with children exposed to domestic violence.



4. Common Advocacy Themes

- This section of the course will present some common themes that many advocates encounter when they work with children exposed to domestic violence face.



4. Common Advocacy Themes

Children Believe There is No Safe Place

- When children live in a home with domestic violence, they transfer their fear to the world in general.



4. Common Advocacy Themes

Children Believe There is No Safe Place

- They may become hypervigilant, constantly scanning the environment, reluctant to try new things, or they may shut down.
 - Children who have witnessed domestic violence may be in a constant state of fight or flight.
- ✓ Note: For more information about trauma and its impact, please see Module 6: Survivor-Centered, Trauma-Informed Advocacy, Part 2.

4. Common Advocacy Themes

Children Believe the Adult Victim Cannot Protect Them

- Children have no reason to trust the adult who is perpetrating acts of violence or the adult victim who cannot stop the violence.
- They learn not to trust others.



4. Common Advocacy Themes

Children Believe They Must Keep the Family Secret

- Children know they need to keep the family secret.
- The abuser or the adult victim may have told them directly or indirectly not to tell anyone about the abuse.
- One of the family rules is likely to be that others are not welcome in the house.



4. Common Advocacy Themes

Children Have Divided Loyalties

- Children struggle with ambivalence toward the abuser and the adult victim.
- Children may love the abuser, but hate the violence and abusive behavior.
- Children may find it safer to be angry with the adult victim, but also feel guilty and ashamed of these feelings.



4. Common Advocacy Themes

Children Often Become the Protector

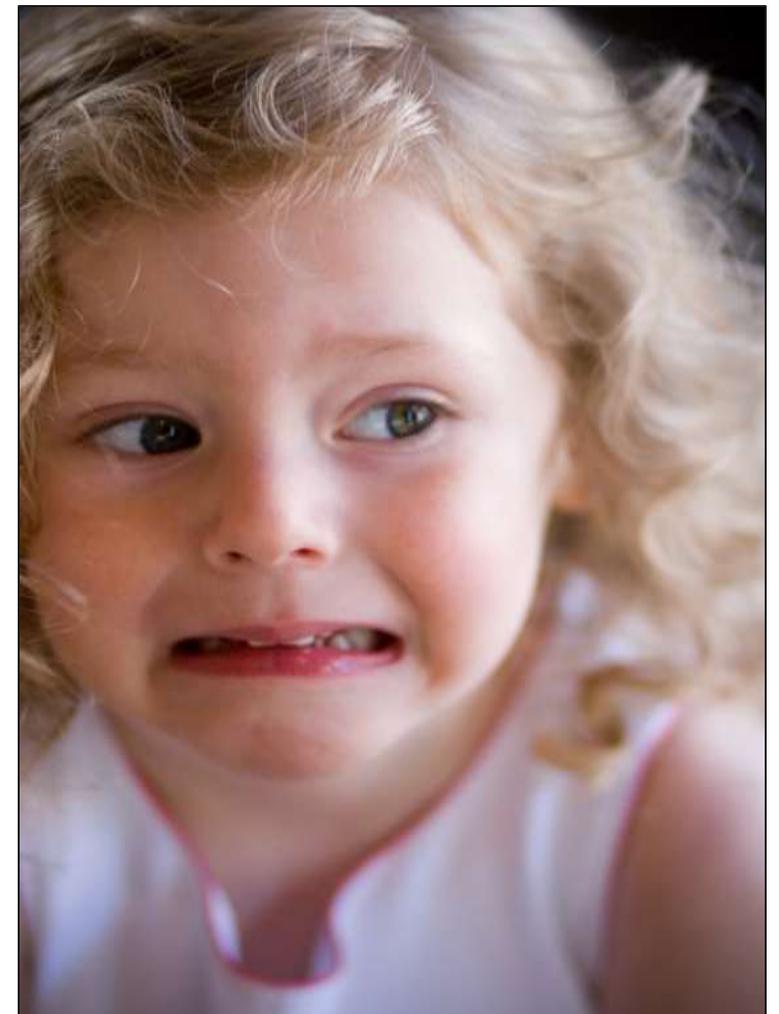
- Children may become the adult victim's protector and may not want to say anything that puts the victim in a bad light.



4. Common Advocacy Themes

Children Live with Chronic Fear

- Many children who experience domestic violence learn that aggression is an acceptable problem-solving strategy.
- For other children, living with domestic violence leaves them feeling anxious and scared.



4. Common Advocacy Themes

Children Live in a Chaotic Environment

- Children living in a chaotic environment often have trouble controlling their feelings and behaviors.



5. Tips for Working with Children

Objective

After completing this section of the course, you will be able to:

- Identify tips for working with children exposed to domestic violence.



Advocacy Tips

Engage their parent

Create a predictable world

Pay close attention to non-verbal cues

Give children choices

Help children learn what to do and not to do

Teach children to put feelings into words

Help children have fun

Engage Their Parent

- One of the best advocacy strategies is to find ways to strengthen the bond between the adult victim and the child.

Advocacy Tips

Engage their parent

Create a predictable world

Pay close attention to non-verbal cues

Give children choices

Help children learn what to do and not to do

Teach children to put feelings into words

Help children have fun

Create a Predictable World

- Children who have been exposed to trauma need predictability:
 - Tell them what happens in the shelter and when.
 - Tell them where to find things.
 - Tell them what is expected of them.
 - Tell them who they can talk to if they have questions or need to talk to someone.

Advocacy Tips

Engage their parent
Create a predictable world
Pay close attention to non-verbal cues
Give children choices
Help children learn what to do and not to do
Teach children to put feelings into words
Help children have fun

Pay Close Attention to Non-verbal Cues

- Children may be afraid to share their feelings or ask for what they need. Pay attention to their non-verbal cues so you can respond to their needs.

Advocacy Tips

Engage their parent
Create a predictable world
Pay close attention to non-verbal cues
Give children choices
Help children learn what to do and not to do
Teach children to put feelings into words
Help children have fun

Give Children Choices

- Children who have witnessed domestic violence may feel powerless. Giving them choices whenever possible is empowering and makes them feel successful.

Advocacy Tips

Engage their parent
Create a predictable world
Pay close attention to non-verbal cues
Give children choices
Help children learn what to do and not to do
Teach children to put feelings into words
Help children have fun

Help Children Learn What to Do and Not to Do

- Children who have learned to use aggression to solve problems need help learning how to resolve issues. Teach them how to negotiate with siblings and others and discuss the consequences of their aggressive actions.

Advocacy Tips

Engage their parent
Create a predictable world
Pay close attention to non-verbal cues
Give children choices
Help children learn what to do and not to do
Teach children to put feelings into words
Help children have fun

Teach Children to Put Feelings into Words

- Children who have witnessed violence may have difficulty expressing feelings in words.
- You can help them by expressing your own feelings and encouraging them to do the same.
- Give them a list of feeling words or photos of expressive faces if this is difficult for them.

Advocacy Tips

Engage their parent
Create a predictable world
Pay close attention to non-verbal cues
Give children choices
Help children learn what to do and not to do
Teach children to put feelings into words
Help children have fun

Help Children Have Fun

- An important part of being a child is having fun, so find activities that they will enjoy.

More Advocacy Tips

Incorporate Culture

- Help children stay connected to their culture.
- You can do this by educating yourself about different cultures, celebrating important holidays or events with them, and displaying posters or banners that represent their culture throughout the building.

More Advocacy Tips

Validate Children's Feelings about Their Parents

- In a non-judgmental way you can say things like:
 - “It sounds like you were really scared when you saw the police arrest your father.”
 - “It’s ok to miss your father. Lots of kids feel that way.”

More Advocacy Tips

Create Opportunities for Children to Be Successful

- All children develop a stronger sense of themselves when they feel good about their accomplishments.
 - Every day you can find one thing about a child that is special and tell them.
 - You can post flipchart paper with each child's name and what is special about them so everyone else can see your positive statements about them.

More Advocacy Tips

Send the Right Messages About Violence

- Violence is always a choice and it is not their fault. You can say things like:
 - “What happened at your house is not your fault, no matter what anyone else said.”
 - “It’s not your fault that you and your mom are living here now. You didn’t do anything wrong.”

More Advocacy Tips

- ✓ No matter how you feel about a person who perpetrates domestic violence, do not say mean things about that person to the child.
 - ✓ Help a child identify three people they can talk to about their feelings whenever they are scared.
 - ✓ Check in with your supervisor to learn more ways to assist children who have been exposed to domestic violence.
 - ✓ Seek advice and support from your supervisor and co-workers.
- Working with children exposed to domestic violence can be emotionally draining.

Course Review

You are now able to:

- Identify statistics related to children exposed to domestic violence within the home;
- Identify the range of experiences children are exposed to when domestic violence occurs in their homes;
- Distinguish between risk and protective factors of children exposed to domestic violence;
- Understand common themes related to children exposed to domestic violence; and
- List advocacy tips to assist children.

Conclusion

This concludes the content of this course. After reviewing the accompanying resource materials, please proceed to the learning assessment.

You must receive a 90% or higher on this assessment to receive credit for the course.

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