



**You and your
children have a
RIGHT to be safe
from **ABUSE****

**What You Need to Know
about Domestic Violence
and Child Welfare**



Pat Quinn
Governor



www.state.il.us/dcfs

What is domestic violence?

The Illinois Domestic Violence Act defines domestic violence as a crime in which physical abuse, harassment, intimidation of a dependent, interference with personal liberty by or willful deprivation is perpetrated by one family or household member against another. However, someone you have dated or are currently dating can perpetrate domestic violence.

Some people mistakenly believe domestic violence to be caused by mental illness, job stress or substance abuse. In fact, the basic goal of domestic violence is to establish or maintain power and control over the victim. The perpetrator wants to control what you do, when you do it, who you see, what you think, your access to money, medication, transportation, and more. The perpetrator's attempts to establish or maintain power and control come in many forms including, but not limited to, physical attacks and sexual abuse. The scars left by psychological attacks are just as harmful. Psychological abuse can come in the form of verbal insults, mind games, humiliation, excessive criticism and living with the constant fear of physical attacks. Unfortunately, to maintain control of the victim, the perpetrator often uses the victim's children.

Children as Primary and Secondary Victims of Domestic Violence

As **primary victims** research connecting domestic violence and child maltreatment is strong:



- Child Abuse is 15 times more likely to occur in families where domestic violence is present. (The Family Secret, Boston, 2000)
- Domestic Violence is often linked to severe and fatal cases of child abuse (Felix and McCarthy, 1994).
- By physically, emotionally or sexually attacking the children, perpetrators sometimes use children to establish or maintain power and control over the victim (Schechter and Carter, 1995).

As secondary victims research shows exposure to trauma increases the risk of such things as:

- Eating and sleeping disorders
- Verbally or physically aggressive behaviors
- Feelings of guilt believing themselves to be the cause of domestic violence
- Poor school performance
- Children under five may frighten easily or become anxious, clingy or cry a lot
- Alcohol and drug abuse in adolescents

If the African proverb “It takes a village to raise a child” has any meaning, then private and public agencies, hospitals, churches, synagogues, mosques, and we as individuals must work tirelessly to end domestic violence. Domestic Violence is reduced when abusers are held accountable through a coordinated community response. Our children are depending on us.

Is DCFS responding to the connection between domestic violence and child abuse?

The Department has developed a screening process to identify the presence of domestic violence and its affect on child safety and risk. Child protective service workers will assess families for domestic violence during the initial phase of child abuse or neglect investigations and permanency workers will utilize the same screening process at various points during the delivery of child welfare services.

Not all incidences of domestic violence will require intervention services from DCFS. When domestic violence threatens the safety of your family, the Department will provide you with the necessary services and service referrals to assist you in keeping yourself and your children safe.

In assessing the level of risk to the child, DCFS child protective service workers are trained to recognize these significant indicators of domestic violence:

- There is current domestic violence or the alleged batterer has a history of domestic violence
- The child is likely to be “harmed” during the violence (being held during the violence, physically restrained from leaving etc.)
- There is reason to believe the child will or is intervening in a violent situation, placing her/him at risk of “substantial harm”
- The alleged batterer is not allowing the adult caregiver and child access to basic needs, impacting their health or safety
- The alleged batterer has killed, committed “substantial harm” or is making a believable threat to do so to anyone in the family, including extended family members and pets
- The child’s ability to function on a daily basis is substantially impaired as a result of domestic violence
- The adult non-offending caregiver or alleged batterer blames the child for the domestic violence, describes or acts negatively toward the child
- The batterer has used or threatens the use of weapons



What types of questions will the DCFS worker ask me?

The DCFS worker will need to ask you many questions. Some of these questions are sensitive and may make you feel uncomfortable or embarrassed, but remember, your answers will help to determine the best course of intervention for you and your child.

Questions you may be asked are:

- Who is the batterer?
- Are you or your child in any immediate danger?
- What form of domestic violence does the batterer use: is it physical, sexual, threats, etc.?
- How often does this occur?

- In what way, if any, is your child directly involved?
- In what way is your child indirectly involved?
- Have you sought outside intervention in the past? If so, from what source and what happened?
- How has parenting changed for you as a result of domestic violence?

If the situation you are experiencing does not rise to the level of DCFS involvement, the DCFS worker may still use the opportunity to encourage you to seek intervention. **Remember, domestic violence is a crime and silence protects the batterer.**

Deciding to end a violent relationship

While all victims of domestic violence want the abuse to end, not all victims of domestic violence will decide to end the relationship. Whether this is the best decision for you and your child should be carefully discussed and analyzed with someone you can trust. However, you should know that the most unsafe time for many victims is when the victim is trying or considering ending the relationship. If you are considering leaving or ending the relationship, you should prepare with a safety plan. Here are some things to bear in mind:

- Decide on an escape route and practice it with your child. Be careful that your destination is not one well known and expected by your batterer.
- Pack and hide a bag in case you need to leave quickly. Survivors of domestic violence have identified birth certificates, medication, money, car keys, social security cards and your address book as important items to include in your bag.
- Whether you leave your home or not, legal intervention can be beneficial. A court order, known as an order of protection, can help you in demanding your abuser stay away from your place of employment, your child's school and, of course, your home. Orders of Protection also serve as documentation in case of future court involvement such as custody, visitation or divorce.
- If there is DCFS involvement, let your assigned worker know what is happening.

Domestic Violence Victim Services

The following are 24-hour crisis lines unless otherwise indicated. There may be other domestic violence services in your area. Check the telephone yellow pages under “Social Services” or call your local police department and medical/hospital social workers for assistance. For Chicago Metropolitan area, there is a 24-hour toll free hotline with staff ready to assist you in locating available services. The number is 877-863-6338.

Aledo

Mercer County Family
Crisis Center
309/582-7233

Alton

Oasis Women’s Center
618/465-1978 or 800/244-1978

Aurora

Mutual Ground, Inc.
630/897-0080

Belleville

Women’s Crisis Center of
Metro East
618/235-0892
618/233-0741 TDD

Bloomington

CACDV/Neville House
309/827-7070

Cairo

Cairo Women’s Shelter, Inc.
618/734-4357

Canton

Fulton/Mason Crisis Service
309/647-8311

Carbondale

The Women’s Center, Inc.
800/344-2094

Centralia

People Against Violent
Environments
800/924-8444

Charleston

Coalition Against Domestic Violence
888/345-3990

Chicago

Apna Ghar
773/334-4663

Connections for Abused Women
and Children

773/278-4566
773/278-4114 TDD

Family Rescue

773/375-8400 or 800/360-6619
773/375-8774 TDD

Between Friends

800/603-4357
773/274-6508 TDD/TTY

Domestic Violence Court –
Legal Advocates

312/325-9300 and 312/325-9175

Metropolitan Family Service

773 884-2200 (Not a Hotline)

Mujeres Latinas En Accion

312/738-5358 or 312/226-3350 TDD

Neopolitan Lighthouse

773/722-0005
773/826-2883 TDD

Rainbow House

773/762-6611

Danville

YWCA Your Resource
Connection Shelter
217/443-5566

Decatur

Dove, Inc.
217/423-2238

DeKalb

Safe Passage, Inc.
815/756-5228

Des Plaines

Life Span
847/824-4454
849/824-0189 TDD

Effingham

Stopping Women Abuse Now
800/715-6260

Elgin

Community Crisis Center, Inc.
847/742-4182
847/742-4057 TDD

Freeport

YWC/VOICES Program
877/994-7233

Galesburg

Safe Harbor Family Crisis
Center, LTD.
309/343-7233

Harrisburg

Anna Bixby's Women's Center
800/421-8456
618/252-8389 TDD

Homewood

South Suburban Family Shelter
708-335-3028
708/481-6808 TDD

Jacksonville

Crisis Center Foundation
217/243-4357
217/245-6816 TTY

Joliet

Guardian Angel Community Services
815/729-1228
815/741-4643 TTY

Kankakee

Kankakee County CADV
815/932-5800

Macomb

Quad City CADV
309/837-5555

Oak Park

Sarah's Inn
708/386-4225
708/386-3687 VTDD

Olney

Stopping Women Abuse Now
888/715-6260

Peoria

Women Strength
309/691-4111 or 800/559-7233

Princeton

Freedom House
800/474-6031

Rockford

PHASE/WAVE
815/962-6102

Springfield

Sojourn Shelter and Service
217/726-5200

Waukegan

A Safe Place
847/249-4450

Wheaton

Family Shelter Service
630/469-5650
630/790-6344 TTY

**You and your children have a RIGHT
to be safe from ABUSE.**

**Illinois Department of Children and Family Services
Domestic Violence Intervention Program**

A Project of the Division of Clinical Services

100 W. Randolph, 6-100

Chicago, Illinois 60601

Phone: 312/814-4153

Fax: 312/814-5689

**To report suspected child abuse or neglect, call
1-800-25-ABUSE (TTY: 1-800-358-5117)**

Printed by Authority of the State of Illinois
DCFS #530 – 5,000 Copies – February 2009
CFS 1050-85 – Rev. 2/2009