

# Children Hurt Too:

## How You Can Help



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# Children Hurt Too:



## How You Can Help



Dear Parent:

This booklet was produced by a group of police officers in order to help you to help us stop the cycle of domestic violence. When responding to domestic violence calls, many of us have seen children who are frightened, hurt, and confused about what is going on in their homes. But we aren't able to talk to these children about the violence, and we know that many parents aren't able to talk to them either. Domestic violence is very hard to talk about with anyone!

When domestic violence occurs in a family, the children ARE affected. This booklet contains information that can help parents to talk to their children about the violence, and help children to recover from their experience so they don't become abusers or victims themselves.

We want to see the cycle of violence end, and with your help and the information included in this book, we can all work towards this goal. If you need more information or counseling for yourself or your children, please look in the resource guide at the back of this booklet.

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**Child Care Resources**

**Child Care Resources Referral Line:** (Assistance with child care referrals & resources) <http://www.childcare.org/> ..... **206-329-5544**  
or **1-800-446-1114**

**DSHS: Working Connections Child Care Assistance Program**  
(Child care assistance for working parents). ..... **206-341-7433**  
<https://www2.wa.gov/dshs/onlinecso/wccc.asp> ..... or **1-800-337-1835**

**Legal Information and Resources**

**Eastside Legal Assistance Program**  
(East & Northeast King County) ..... **425-747-7274**

**King County Neighborhood Legal Clinics** (Countywide) ..... **206-267-7070**

**King County Protection Order Advocacy Programs:**  
**Northeast District Court/Redmond Division:** ..... **206-205-7012**  
**Regional Justice Center Kent Division:** ..... **206-205-7406**  
**King County Courthouse Seattle:** ..... **206-296-9547**

**King County Bar Association Lawyer Referral:** (Ask for Domestic Violence assistance). <http://www.kcba.org/CLS/legalasst.html> .... **206-267-7010**

**King County Family Law Facilitators:** (Help with legal forms & information on legal procedures for parenting plans, .. **Seattle:** **206-296-9092**  
child support, & family law issues). ..... **Kent:** **206-205-2526**

**Northwest Immigrant Rights Project** (Help for refugees or immigrants with immigration issues) ..... **206-587-4009**

**Northwest Justice Project:** (Ask for Domestic Violence assistance)  
<http://www.nwjustice.org/> (Online legal resource directory) . **206-464-1519 x 295**

**Northwest Women's Law Center:**  
(Help with legal information & referral) ..... **206-621-7691**

**Office of Support Enforcement:**  
Child Support Resource Center ..... **206-341-7000**

## Domestic Violence Programs: (continued)

- Men Working Against Abuse** ..... 206-461-7824
- Northwest Family Life** (Faith Based Domestic Violence Support in North Seattle/Shoreline) ..... 206-363-9601
- NW Network** (Bisexual, Trans, Gay & Lesbian Survivors) ..... 206-568-7777
- Refugee Women’s Alliance**  
(Ask to speak with a Domestic Violence Advocate) ..... 206-721-0243
- Seattle Indian Health Board** ..... 206-324-9360 x 2601
- YWCA East Cherry** (Seattle):  
(Also provides African American Domestic Violence Support) .... 206-568-7845
- YWCA South King County Domestic Violence Services** ..... 425-226-1266  
(Also provides specialized children and Domestic Violence program)

## Supervised Visitation

- Safe Havens Visitation Program:** (Supervised visitation services for families with a history of Domestic Violence) ..... 253-856-5140

## Specialized Resources for Teens

- Step Up** (services for teens who have been violent with a parent) ..... 206-296-7841
- Teen Alcohol & Drug Helpline** ..... 24 Hrs: 206-722-4222
- Teen Health Clinics:** ..... 206-296-4600  
<http://www.metrokc.gov/health/locations/teens.htm>
- Teen Link** (24 hour, and staffed by teens 6-10 pm) ..... 206-461-4922



## Does Domestic Violence Impact Children?

If you are a parent who is a victim of domestic violence, it is important to know that the violence is not your fault. And the impact of the violence on your children is not your fault. But you can help your children by getting safe yourself, and by talking to them, listening to them and recognizing that the violence effects them too.

Many parents think that their children don’t know when there is domestic violence in their home. Their children may be acting “normal,” doing well in school, and playing with their friends. Or if the child is acting aggressively, parents may think that their child just has a temper problem. Almost all children know that the violence is going on in their home and are affected by it in some way. Every child responds differently. Children often have difficult and painful feelings, learn negative lessons, and act out in destructive ways as a result of the violence.

Children may feel powerless, confused, angry, guilty, worried, and scared. They may be physically hurt themselves during a violent incident. They may learn that violence is an appropriate way to deal with problems, or that abuse is normal. In response to the violence, they might fight with other children, have sleep problems or physical illness, or act very withdrawn and shy.

Many children are physically and emotionally harmed when they experience domestic violence. But most children are very resilient, and they can recover with help from their parents, and from other supportive, non-violent people in their lives. In order for children to fully recover, the violence in their families has to stop.



## Safety Planning With Your Children

Unfortunately, children are often physically and emotionally endangered when domestic violence occurs. It is important to help them find ways to stay safe. Developing a safety plan with your kids can be complex. The goals for the safety plan are usually:

1. For children to be physically safe
2. For them to know where and how to get help.

When safety planning with kids, it is important to let them know that they are NOT responsible for the violence, and they can NOT stop it. The first step in safety planning is talking to your kids about the violence. This can be difficult but it is the first step in helping. Think of a situation where your child has been in danger from a violent incident. What would you have liked him or her to know and do? Some examples would be:

- Call my sister to get help
- Go to a safe place in the house
- Call 911

When you make a safety plan with your children, think about what your child is actually able to do. A three-year-old can't walk two blocks to a friend's house. A five-year-old might have trouble staying in his room for three hours. The plan should be age-appropriate.



## Domestic Violence Programs:

Services may include counseling, advocacy, legal advocacy, services for children and teens, shelters, and support groups.

### **24 Hour Domestic Violence Programs:**

#### **Abused Deaf Women's Advocacy Services (ADWAS)**

24 Hrs TTY: ..... 206-236-3134

#### **Broadview Emergency Shelter & Transitional Housing Program for Women with Children (Seattle) .. 24 Hrs: 206-299-2500 or 1-877-622-3122**

#### **Domestic Abuse Women's Network (DAWN)**

(South King County) ..... 24 Hrs: 425-656-7867

#### **Eastside Domestic Violence Program (EDVP) ..... 24 Hrs: 425-746-1940**

(North & East King County) ..... or 1-800-827-8840

#### **New Beginnings (Seattle & Shoreline): ..... 24 Hrs: 206-522-9472**

#### **Salvation Army Catherine Booth House (Seattle) ..... 24 Hrs: 206-324-4943**

#### **Washington State Domestic Violence Hotline**

(Domestic Violence Referrals Statewide) ..... 24 Hrs: 1-800-562-6025

### **Domestic Violence Programs:**

#### **Asian Counseling and Referral Service ..... 206-695-7600**

#### **Asian & Pacific Islander Women & Family Safety Center ..... 206-467-9976**

#### **Chaya (Serving women from South Asia) ..... 206-325-0325**

#### **Consejo Counseling and Referral Service, Domestic Violence**

Services (se habla Español) ..... 206-461-4880

#### **Jewish Family Service ..... 206-461-3240**

#### **Korean Community Counseling ..... 206-784-5691**

## Services for Parents & Children

### Community Information and Referral Telephone Lines

**Alcohol and Drug Help Line** ..... 24 Hrs: 206-722-3700

**Child Protective Services:** To report child abuse or neglect

24 Hrs: ..... 1-800-609-8764

**Childhaven’s Crisis Nursery: (24 Hrs)** ..... 206-328-KIDS

(Crisis Line & free voluntary emergency child care for Children age 0-6) ..... or 206-328-5437

**Children’s Hospital Medical Information Resource Line**

(Staffed by Nurses) ..... 24 Hrs: 206-987-2500

**Children’s Response Center:** Crisis support for Domestic

Violence Trauma and Sexual Assault (Eastside) ..... 425-688-5130

**Community Health Access Program:** Monday through Friday,

8:00 am – 5:30 pm (Interpreters & TTY available).

Referrals to affordable medical/dental providers, counseling,

mental health care, medical insurance, child development, ..... 1-800-756-KIDS

prenatal care, WIC and other services ..... or 206-284-0331

**Community Information Line:**

Refers to variety of help resources and services ..... 206-461-3200

**Crisis Clinic:** Crisis support and referral ..... 24 Hrs: 206-461-3222

or 1-866-4-CRISIS

**Family Help Line / Parent Trust** (bi-lingual in Spanish)

Recorded parenting information, support groups & families ..... 1-800-932-HOPE

activities. <http://www.parenttrust.org/families/helpline.asp> ..... or 1-800-932-4673

**Harborview Center for Sexual Assault and Traumatic Stress:**

Crisis support for DV trauma and sex assault ..... 24 Hrs: 206-521-1800

**King County Sexual Assault Resource Center:** Crisis support

for DV trauma and sex assault (South County) ..... 24 Hrs: 1-888-998-6423

## Steps for Safety Planning With Children When Violence Takes Place at Home

- Think of a person or people who could help.
- Give your children time to come up with their own solutions.
- Focus on what your children think they could do to keep themselves safe.
- Ask them who they think could help them, and whether they would feel comfortable asking that person.

**Children should know that:**

- The safety plan may not always work.
- It’s not their fault if it fails.

## Help Your Child to Identify Warning Signs

First, think about what are the warning signs (if any) that you have when your partner is about to become abusive. Talk with your child about these warning signs. They might include times when you and your partner are arguing, raising your voices, name-calling or threatening. In talking to your child about his or her abusive parent, always stay focused on **behaviors**. You could say something like, “Sometimes your Dad acts in ways that are scary, and when he does, we need to do things to try to stay safe.”

## What Kids Can Do to Stay Safe

**They can:**

- Go to their room, or another room that is away from the abuse
- Leave the house and go somewhere safe: a neighbor’s house, a relative’s house, or outside
- Stay out of the way; get as far away from the violence as possible.
- Dial 911 if there is a phone that’s in a safe place
- Don’t ever try to physically stop the violence

**Tell your child that he or she *can’t* control the abusive person’s behavior.**

**SAFETY PLAN FOR \_\_\_\_\_**

This page is for Moms or Dads and kids to talk about together, and for kids to fill out with their parent's help if they need it.

**Who do I trust who can help me be safe when there is violence in our home?** *(Neighbor, relative)*

Name of person: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone numbers: \_\_\_\_\_

**What plan should I make with that person** *(Example: That person will call the police when I call to say there is a problem between my Mom and Dad, or they will let me come to their house)*

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Where is a safe place for me to go when someone is acting in scary ways?** *(Examples: our neighbor's house, a relative's house, etc.). (List names of people)*

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**If I can't leave, where is the safest place in the house for me to go?** *(Example, my bedroom, the basement, the bathroom)*

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

If I can call 911, what should I say?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**When to Get Counseling for Your Child**

If you notice any of the reactions listed below in your children over a period of time, or if they have extreme behaviors, it may be necessary to seek counseling for them:

*Some behaviors that indicate that your child may need professional counseling include:*

- Withdrawing
- Bullying, threatening or intimidating others
- Initiating physical fights
- Using a weapon
- Being physically or emotionally cruel to people
- Being cruel to animals
- Deliberately destroying others' property
- Running away from home
- Intentionally hurting her/himself
- Having frequent nightmares for prolonged period
- Showing a sudden change in behavior/personality
- Changes in eating/sleeping patterns
- Showing lack of interest in friends/school/etc.
- Grades change at school.

*A list of resources for children is provided in the back of this booklet.*



## Helping Children Develop in Healthy Ways

Even though your children have been affected by domestic violence, they can recover and be emotionally healthy, especially if they receive encouragement and support in the following ways:

1. **Encourage your children:** Notice your children's positive qualities and let them know that you appreciate these.
2. **Set clear limits:** Set limits that are reasonable and appropriate to your children's ages, to help them feel valued and secure.
3. **Listen carefully:** Pay attention to what your children say, **and** let them know you hear what they are saying.
4. **Be affectionate:** Hug, kiss, pat, and smile at your children. Tell them you care for them.
5. **Allow them to solve problems:** Encourage your children to solve problems and make some decisions for themselves.
6. **Communicate respectfully:** Share your feelings, expectations and needs with your children in a way that is respectful.
7. **Promote independence:** Allow your children to play independently in a safe environment.
8. **Spend time with your kids:** Reading together, talking and listening, or playing together helps children feel cared for.
9. **Arrange for new activities in which your child can succeed:** Set up new activities for your children that they enjoy, like playing sports on a team, or taking music lessons, so that your children learn new skills and gain self-confidence.
10. **Be a positive, non-violent role model for your children:** Maintaining safe, reliable interactions with your children and their other parent can help them develop self-esteem.
11. **Let your children know they are capable:** Allow your children to have responsibilities and let them know you have confidence in them.
12. **Let your children know they are worthy of love just for who they are, and not related to their behavior:** Tell them you like them, enjoy them, and appreciate them, without relating it to their behavior.

## Helping Our Kids When They Have Witnessed DV

There are lots of things we can do to help children when they have witnessed domestic violence. It is normal for people who have been in a violent relationship to NOT want to talk to their kids about it. It is difficult to realize that your children are aware of the violence and are impacted by it. It may seem like not talking about it will help them forget it happened. But not talking about the violence often causes kids to be more confused and scared.

Below are some simple ways to help kids when they have been in a home with domestic violence:

- Acknowledge that the violence happened and that you know it was hard for them.
- Listen to them
- Talk about their feelings, if they want to
- Show understanding
- Let them know it's not their fault
- Let them know you love them
- Let them know the violence is not okay
- Acknowledge it's hard/scary for them
- Accept that they may not be willing or able to talk about it right away
- Always act in a way that is non-threatening and non-violent with your kids
- Take them to counseling if they need it
- Set limits respectfully when your child is acting violent

## Why We Should Talk to Kids

When we don't talk to our kids about it, they make their own assumptions, and learn some negative lessons of what is supposed to happen in a relationship.

## What Happens When No One Talks to Children about the Domestic Violence

- Child learns that the violence is normal
- Child is afraid to talk about the violence
- Child is confused, doesn't understand
- Blames her/himself
- Learns to deny and not to talk about their own feelings
- Learns that it's not OK to ask about the violence or discuss it
- Child may think the violence is his/her fault, or the victims fault

*It's a lot scarier for kids when no one ever talks to them about the violence.*

## What Makes it Hard to Talk to your Kids About Domestic Violence?

*It is not easy to talk to your children about the violence. Some parents say:*

- I feel uncomfortable.
- I'm scared to bring it up.
- I don't know what to say.
- I'm afraid I'll make things worse.
- It's over now, why talk about it.
- I don't want them to hate their Dad/Mom.
- They won't understand.
- They didn't know it happened.
- They are too young to hear about it.
- They'll just be more scared.
- They'll tell other people.
- Their Dad/Mom will be mad.

*It helps if you can:*

- Be patient. Don't push it. Try another time if they don't want to talk/listen.
- Remember that you are helping them by talking about it; you are not making it worse.
- Talk about it at a time when you are both relaxed and won't be interrupted.
- Practice ways to talk about it with a friend you trust or a counselor.
- **Know that when you talk to your children about the violence you are helping them:**

- ✓ feel safer
- ✓ learn that violence isn't their fault
- ✓ learn that violence is not the way to solve problems
- ✓ feel cared for and understood
- ✓ learn that it is OK to talk about their feelings

When you talk to your kids about the violence you might find out they have been more affected than you were aware of. It is not easy to hear about your children's bad feelings and fears. Most parents feel responsible and that they have not been a good parent. Remember that you are doing the best thing you can do right now to help them recover.

## Children Learn from Their Parents Behavior

As most parents notice, children imitate the behaviors of their parents, and of other people who are important to them. Children are more likely to imitate the behaviors of people they view as like them. For example, boys are more likely to imitate their fathers, and girls are more likely to imitate their mothers.

Children learn the behaviors they see, and are more likely to imitate these behaviors when they are rewarded for it. Imitation starts at an early age. Researchers (and parents) found that children can imitate behaviors beginning at age 12 to 21 days (for example, sticking out their tongues). Infants can imitate adult's sounds by 12 weeks old.

Parents have a strong influence on how their children behave. You can affect how your children behave by paying attention to your own behavior, and using behaviors you want your children to learn.

Parents can teach children positive behaviors by:

- Being non-violent
- Expressing positive feelings with family members
- Talking out problems in a respectful way
- Respecting the needs and feelings of family members
- Telling others what you need in a respectful way
- Letting them know that abusive/violent behavior is not OK if they are exposed to it.

**Children can also learn these behaviors by spending time with other adults who behave in these ways.**

