The Interrelationship between Domestic Violence and Child Abuse

Mary Sawicki. J.D.
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NDAA/APRI

- Mary E. Sawicki, J.D.
- Senior Attorney
- National District Attorneys Association
- National Center for the Prosecution of Child Abuse
- 99 Canal Center Plaza, Suite 510
- Alexandria, Virginia 22202
- PH: 703-519-1653
Statistics

- Frequency of child abuse increases among families experiencing intimate partner violence

- Rate of child abuse escalates with severity and frequency of a child’s mother’s abuse

- (Straus, Gelles, Steinmetz, 1980)
Cross-Pollination

- Work in Multi-Disciplinary Teams
- DV and Child Abuse professionals in DV office cooperate
- Use resources: kids in court program
- Any and all hearsay laws
- Serve on each others coalitions and task forces
- Enlist the clergy and the community to engage in prevention, reporting and protection
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- The most common relationship factors that independently increased risk included a home with a stepchild of the abuser, an abuser's highly controlling behavior, and separation. The combination of controlling behavior and separation made femicide five times more likely.
HOW COMMON IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

1,247 women killed

• An estimated 2-4.5 million physical assaults are committed against U.S. women a year.

• Women in rural and suburban areas experience similar rates of DV

• DV transcends racial and social classes

• Each year about 324,000 pregnant women in the U.S. are battered by the men in their lives.

CDC
THE REALITY OF A DV ASSAULT

- 59% of female victims suffer an injury.
- 27% require medical attention.
- 18% are threatened by a weapon (knife is most common).

In 2000, in homicides where the weapon was known, 50 percent (1,342 of 2,701) of female homicide victims were killed with a firearm. Of those female firearm homicides, 1,009 women (75 percent) were killed with a handgun.)
WHY DOESN’T SHE JUST LEAVE

- May not be safer
- Fear
- Economic reasons
- Love
- Nowhere to go
- Children
  - Custody
  - Danger issues
- Believes batterer will change
- Family and community pressure
- Lack of confidence in the system
- Immigration issue
- Shelter issues
What about the kids?

• 87% of the children are aware of the DV.

• In 30-70% of the families with spouse abuse, there is child abuse.

• Severity of child abuse can parallel domestic violence.
CHILDREN WHO WITNESS DV

- Children who witness domestic violence often manifest behavioral and emotional problems, poor academic performance and delinquency

- (Edleson, 1999)
Homicides of Young Children

- 71% by family member
- 68% by "personal weapons"
- 58% perpetrators = male
- BUT---females are perpetrators in these homicides more often than any other age victim...
- OJJDP 2001
What about the kids?

- 3.3 million – 10 million kids at risk of witnessing DV per year.
- NO accurate measure of # of children who witness DV.
- Short and long term effects.
- Children do not sleep through their “parents” in combat.
How does DV impact kids?

- Truancy
- School drop-outs
- Health problems
- Suicide attempts
- Emotional Distress

- Criminal behavior
- Drug and alcohol problems
- Early adult unemployment
- Intergenerational violence
How does DV impact kids?

- Depression
- Sleep disorders
- Anxiety
- Low self-esteem
- Shame
- Helplessness

- Young infants-significant disruptions in sleep, feeding, emotional bonding with long-term developmental affects.
How does DV impact kids?

- Guilt - a feeling of complicity
- Confusion
- Antisocial behavior
- Rage and helplessness
- PTSD
- More prone to be victims and abusers
Who abuses the kids?

• 50% of men who abuse their spouse, abuse their children.

• 28% of battered women physically abuse their children.
BATTERER USES CHILDREN

• Hitting or threatening a child while in his/her mother’s arms,
• Taking the child hostage in order to force the mother’s return to the home,
• Using a child as a physical weapon against the victim,
• Forcing the child to watch assaults against the mother or to participate in the abuse, and
• Using the child as a spy or interrogating him or her about the mother’s activities.

• Ganley and Schechter (1996)
IS RESPONSE TO DV ADEQUATE?

1. Respond within 5 minutes:
   - 36% (stranger)  28% (intimate)

2. Police file a report:
   - 77% (stranger)  69% (intimate)

3. Police search for evidence:
   - 29% (stranger)  7% (intimate)

4. Police seize evidence:
   - 9% (stranger)  2% (intimate)

Although @ 75% of all family violence occurs in or near victims residence... BJS 2005