



# Children Exposed to Domestic Violence

## There are many ways children are exposed to domestic violence:

- seeing a mother assaulted or demeaned.
- hearing loud conflict and violence.
- seeing the aftermath (e.g., injuries).
- learning about what happened to a mother.
- being used by an abusive parent as part of the abuse.

**In almost 40% of domestic violence situations, children see or hear the violence as it is happening. In many cases the violence was severe.** Children who do not witness the violence are still a part of an unhealthy family and will be affected by the situation.

Children are more than 'witnesses' to domestic violence. Children living with conflict and abuse will "actively interpret, predict, assess their roles in causing a "fight," worry about the consequences, engage in problem solving, and/or take measures to protect themselves or siblings, both physically and emotionally".

## What children learn from domestic violence:

- Violence and threats get you what you want.
- Victims are to blame for violence.
- Unhealthy, unequal relationships are normal or to be expected.
- Men are in charge and get to control women's lives and women don't have the right to be treated with respect.

## Children exposed to domestic violence have increased risk of:

- emotional trauma (low self esteem, posttraumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression)
- health problems (failure to thrive eating/sleeping problems, developmental delays)
- difficulties learning
- becoming violent themselves or becoming a part of an abusive relationship as a teen or adult.

**As a member of the public, if you believe a child is being abused, at risk of abuse, or not having basic needs met, it is your legal responsibility to call Child Protection in your area. Failure to act may discourage a child from telling anyone for a long time and place him or her at risk of further harm.**



## **Sources**

- Cunningham, Alice and Linda Baker. 2007.  
*Little Eyes, Little Ears – How Violence Against a Mother  
Shapes Children as they Grow.*  
The Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System.
- Edleson, J.L. 1999. "Children's Witnessing of Domestic Violence,"  
*Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 14:839-70.
- Statistics Canada.. 2006.  
*Measuring Violence Against Women: Statistical Trends 2006.*  
Ottawa: Minister of Industry.

*For more information, contact:*



T: 306.522.3515  
F: 306.522.0830  
E: [paths@sasktel.net](mailto:paths@sasktel.net)  
W: [www.abusehelplines.org](http://www.abusehelplines.org)



**Prairieaction**  
FOUNDATION  
Supporting Solutions  
To Violence and Abuse