



ACTION TIPS

For Health Care Providers >>

By addressing childhood exposure to domestic violence, health care professionals can accurately diagnose underlying causes of illness, minimize emergency room visits, and prevent long term health consequences for youth.

The Impact of Childhood Exposure to Domestic Violence (CEDV) on Health Care ...

- Children who have been exposed to domestic violence are more likely to present with allergies, asthma, gastrointestinal problems, headaches and flu than their peers.¹
- These children may seek medical care more frequently², increasing the demand on doctors' offices, clinics and emergency rooms that are already stretched thin.

The ripple effects of childhood exposure to domestic violence are especially prevalent in the doctor's office and health clinics.

But what if we could make it easier for health care providers to diagnosis and treat patients more effectively? And what if we could, at the same time, improve the health, well-being, safety and success of the children and youth in our community?

5 Things Health Care Providers Can Do

1. Learn about the impact of domestic violence on children, common symptoms patients may display, and how to respond supportively and share this information with colleagues. Families Thrive's offers an online learning center (www.familiesthrive.org) and training workshops.
2. Work with colleagues and administrators to develop referral protocols to other health care, mental health, and community resources.
3. Make information about domestic violence and the impact on children easily accessible to patients, including placing brochures and posters in waiting areas.
4. Routinely screen all families for domestic violence. Many women will disclose domestic violence when asked in a pediatric setting.
5. When domestic violence is identified, communicate support for the patient, document findings, provide resource information and refer the patient to services based on established protocols.

Clinicians may be seeing the effects of domestic violence more than they realize.

Patients may come in with the following:

- Suspicious injuries
- Chronic pain
- Headaches
- Chronic abdominal/pelvis pain
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Trouble sleeping
- Substance abuse
- Developmental delays
- Emotional disorders
- Behavioral problems

What Is Childhood Exposure to Domestic Violence (CDEV)?

Domestic violence is a pattern of harmful coercive and controlling behaviors used within an intimate relationship. It is about power and control, and can manifest itself as physical, emotional, verbal, financial or sexual abuse.

One in four children in Contra Costa County has seen one adult in their family abuse another adult at least once during their childhood.³

Exposure to domestic violence is a primary cause of trauma in children's lives. It can affect a child's ability to learn and function in school, and is associated with greater rates of antisocial behavior, substance abuse, mental illness and adverse health outcomes in adulthood. Protective adults, oftentimes a teacher, can play a crucial role in the lives of children exposed to domestic violence.

How Families Thrive Helps Our Community

Families Thrive, a unique Contra Costa County partnership, works with dozens of diverse organizations to address the specific needs of children and families impacted by domestic violence and the needs of professionals who work with these children on a daily basis.

Families Thrive is committed to linking key entities (courts, counselors, mental and health care providers, schools, social services, and youth organizations) and championing cutting-edge strategies to raise awareness, share insights, and build community-wide support for families impacted by domestic violence.

Join the learning community at www.familiesthrive.org.

Tips developed in partnership with the Kaiser Permanente Northern California, Family Violence Prevention.

Sources:

1. Graham-Bermann, Sandra A and Julie Seng. 2005. "Violence Exposure and Traumatic Stress Symptoms as Additional Predictors of Health Problems in High-Risk Children." *Journal of Pediatrics*. 146(3):309-10.

2. Stop Violence Against Women. "Health Care Providers and Forensic Medical Institutes." *Domestic Violence – Explore the Issue*. Accessed 23 July 2012. Available <http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/svaw/domestic/link/health.htm>.

» www.familiesthrive.org »

» A project of the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors' Zero Tolerance for Domestic Violence Initiative »

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