

## **Can domestic violence harm children?**

Yes! Children who witness domestic violence may develop emotional, behavioral, and physical problems. Children do not have to be hit to feel the pain of violence.

## **How aware are children of domestic violence occurring in their homes?**

Eighty to ninety percent of children know about the violence occurring in their homes.

## **How many children witness domestic violence?**

Approximately 10 million children witness their mothers being assaulted every year in the United States.

## **How do children feel when they witness domestic violence in their homes?**

Children who see or hear violence in their homes may feel many overwhelming emotions, including guilt, helplessness, anger, fear, confusion, and isolation. How can a child's behavior be affected by witnessing domestic violence?

Children exposed to domestic violence are more likely to bully and insult other children. They may spend less time with

friends and have lower quality friendships. Other behavioral problems may include hyperactivity, tantrums, stealing, excessive crying, and impulsiveness.

## **How may domestic violence affect a child's development?**

Children who witness domestic violence may come to believe that violence is an okay way to deal with conflicts and that violence is normal in relationships.

## **What kinds of physical problems may a child develop from witnessing domestic violence?**

Physical problems children may experience include bed-wetting, headaches, eating disorders, ulcers, self-mutilation, insomnia, vomiting, irregularity, asthma, sleepwalking, involuntary urination, and nightmares.

## **How may a child's school performance be affected by domestic violence?**

Children who witness domestic violence may experience one or more of the following problems at school: erratic attendance, difficulty concentrating, learning disabilities, over-achieving, poor performance, school phobia, disobedience, and excessive fighting.

## **What long-term problems may a child develop as a result of domestic violence?**

Many children who witness domestic violence will have emotional, physical and behavioral problems in their adult lives. Witnessing violence as a child is associated with adult reports of depression, trauma-related symptoms, and low self-esteem. Also, the majority of abusive husbands have grown up in families where they witnessed their fathers abuse their mothers. Abused women are less likely to seek help if they witnessed domestic violence as a child.

## **How can I tell if a child may be living in a violent home?**

Look for the following warning signs:

- Unusual or unexplained injuries,
- Chronic illnesses, headaches, or stomachaches,
- Signs of neglect,
- Withdrawal,
- Depression or low self-esteem,
- Use of violence to solve conflict,
- Sleeping too little, too much, or during school,
- Flashbacks or nightmares,
- School problems, and
- Acting overly responsible.

## Is there hope for children growing up in violent homes?

Yes! Children who witness domestic violence in their homes are not doomed. Positive influences can help children overcome negative influences. Positive influences may include:

- Role models,
- Family support, and
- Community support.

## Where can I get more information and support?

To find a domestic violence program or shelter near you, contact the Montana Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence at (406) 443-7794 or 1-888-404-7794.

For more information or resources, contact:

- Childhelp USA  
National Child Abuse Hotline at  
1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453)
- National Domestic Violence Hotline at  
1-800-799-SAFE (1-800-799-7233)

## MLSA HelpLine: (800) 666-6899

Need legal help? Call the HelpLine.  
Open Monday-Friday from 9 am to 4 pm.

MLSA staff will help you apply over the telephone. If you qualify, you could:

- get an appointment with an MLSA advocate, or
- be referred to a free attorney, or
- get signed up for a self-help class, or
- get self-help materials.

## [www.MontanaLawHelp.org](http://www.MontanaLawHelp.org)

Need legal information? Go online.  
Visit [www.MontanaLawHelp.org](http://www.MontanaLawHelp.org).

You can find information about legal problems such as divorce, parenting plans, landlord and tenant issues, and public benefits. You can also find information about getting legal help, community resources, and courts.

Can't find what you want? Use LiveHelp. Click on the LiveHelp picture and get help finding the information you need.

This pamphlet is meant to give basic legal information, not legal advice about your problem. The law changes often and each case is different. This pamphlet may not apply to your problem. You should not rely on it only. Please talk to an attorney about your problem.

## Montana Legal Services Association

### Children and Domestic Violence



*Providing, protecting, and enhancing access to justice.*

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