

I n t e r p a r e n t a l V i o l e n c e

Description of Intimate Partner Violence

Definition

- Intimate partner violence (IPV) is an umbrella term that describes “any form of physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, and/or verbal abuse between partners in an intimate relationship” (Murray & Graves, 2012, p. 14).
- IPV is often referred to as other terms, including “domestic violence, dating violence, battering, spouse abuse, wife abuse, and intimate partner abuse” (Murray & Graves, p. 13).
- Children who witness parental IPV are often considered the “invisible victims” of IPV (Osofsky, 2003). Exposing a child to IPV can be considered a form of child maltreatment.
- What it means for a child to witness IPV is difficult to define. Some forms of witnessing are very obvious, such as a child actually watching interparental violence. However, even if children do not see the violence with their own eyes, they may be witness to it through hearing it, or dealing with the aftereffects of it (e.g., coming home following a violent incident and seeing the parent victim in an injured state).

Prevalence

According to the National Center for Children exposed to domestic violence, (<http://www.ncccev.org/violence/domestic.html>), each year, an estimated 3 to 10 million children witness assaults against a parent by an intimate partner.

- There are high rates of overlap, as much as 30% to 60%, between parental IPV and child maltreatment (Kaufman, Kantor, & Little, 2003).

Identification / Assessment Strategies

Within many Child Protective Service (CPS) guidelines, exposing a child to IPV is considered a form of neglect for failing to protect the child (Kaufman et al., 2003). Therefore, counselors must be aware of mandatory reporting requirements in their jurisdiction to determine whether and how suspected child witnessing of parental IPV should be reported to the appropriate authorities.

Because of the high rates of IPV in clinical populations, combined with the significant consequences that can result from it, all clients should be screened for IPV experiences. Based on a comprehensive review of the research literature, Mt9(hha(r)-7.8()167.8y and G)72.9(r)-7.8()16798(v)1589(es(2012)l p3(r)12(ese)2.

- Both formal instruments and more unstructured, open-ended interview questions should be used.
- Areas of clinical assessment may include the following: the child's basic and developmental needs, the co-occurrence of child maltreatment, trauma and mental health symptoms, the level of social support available to the child, and the child's functioning in different areas of life, such as academic, social, and behavioral.
- The assessment process can be linked to safety planning with the child or with a parental figure for the child. Safety plans with children may address how to report future abuse, how to recognize safety risks, and role playing safety behaviors (for more information on developing a child safety plan see Kress, Adamson, Paylo, DeMarco, & Bradley, 2012).
- An instrument that may be useful when working this population is the Trauma Symptom Checklist for Children (Briere, 1996), which assesses how youth between the ages of 8 and 15 responded to traumatic events, and has six clinical subscales: Anger, Sexual Concerns, Anxiety, Posttraumatic Stress, Dissociation, Depression, and Anger.

I T E R V E W S T R A T E G I E S

General strategies and considerations that should be used when working with child witnesses

INTERNET RESOURCES

Internet-based resources that specifically address children witnessing domestic violence include the following:

- The Child Welfare Information Gateway: <http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/domesticviolence.cfm>
- The American Academy of Family Physicians: <http://www.aafp.org/afp/2002/1201/p2052.html>
- Futures without Violence: http://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/userfiles/file/Children_and_Families/Children.pdf
- UNICEF: <http://www.unicef.org/protection/files/BehindClosedDoors.pdf>

REFERENCES

- Briere, J. (1996). *Psychological Assessment Resources*. Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources.
- Kaufman Kantor, G., & Little, L. (2003). Defining the boundaries of child neglect: When does domestic violence equate with parental failure to protect. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 18, 338-355.
- Kress, V., Adamson, N., Paylo, M., DeMarco, C., & Bradley, N. (2012). The use of safety plans with children and adolescents living in violent families. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 20, 249-255.
- Murray, C. E., & Graves, K. N. (2012). *Child Abuse and Neglect: A Practical Guide*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Osofsky, J. D. (2003). Prevalence of children's exposure to domestic violence and child maltreatment: Implications for prevention and intervention. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 6, 161-170.