



Women's Health  
Council of RI

Children who witness domestic violence experience increased physical and psychological risk as compared to children who do not witness domestic violence?

TRUE

FALSE



Women's Health  
Council of RI

## *Impact of witnessing domestic violence on children*

After controlling for other stressors, children exposed to domestic violence fare generally worse than non-exposed children <sup>1-3</sup>

For young children, witnessing assaults against their mothers is associated with more symptoms than are other types of traumas, including assaults sustained by the child themselves <sup>4</sup>

- Neurobiology
- Psychological Outcomes- PTSD, depression, anxiety, NatSCEV
- Academic Achievement- performance, dropout rates
- Physical Health Outcomes- somatic complaints, ACE study
- Behavioral Outcomes- aggression, substance abuse

1 Kitzman KM, et al: Child witness to domestic violence: a metaanalytic review. J Consult Clin Psychol 2003;71:339-352

2 Wolfe DA, et al: The effects of children's exposure to domestic violence: a meta-analysis and critique. Clin Child and Fam Psych Rev 2003;6:171-187

3 Evans SE, et al: Exposure to domestic violence: a meta-analysis of child and adolescent outcomes. Aggress Viol Behav 2008;13:131-140

4 Scheeringa MS, et al: Symptom expression and trauma variables in children under 48 months of age. Infant Mental Health J 1995;16:259-270



Women's Health  
Council of RI

## *Mandated Reporting*

- Are providers mandated to call DCYF if a mother discloses victimization or violence in the home?
- **Yes**- When children are physically/sexually abused or neglected as a direct result of the IPV, mandatory reporting to DCYF is required
- **Yes**- When children directly witness the abuse, mandatory reporting to DCYF is required
- **No**- In cases like Maria's, reporting decisions require further questions
- Ask further questions: types of exposure, immediate risk to the child, inform the caregiver of the impact on children
- Assess the mother's/caregiver's protective capacity
  - Ability to protect herself
  - Ability to protect her children



Women's Health  
Council of RI

## *Further Assessment*

- Type of exposure - hearing but not seeing, intervening, seeing consequences etc...
- Known violence towards the children
- Safety planning to include the children
- Explain the impact on children of witnessing/exposure to DV
  
- Offer interventions that include the child:
  - Day One
  - Family Services of RI
  - Mental health referral for the child to provider specializing in child trauma



Women's Health  
Council of RI

## *What happens if you call DCYF*

- Discuss your concern with the DCYF hotline
- Safe Families Collaboration - Since 2004, Coalition for Domestic Violence co-locates at DCYF
- DV advocate/coalition representative responds with the investigator
- “... they assist us to make a safety plan to *not* require children to be removed from their home.”

### 2010

2,275 reports to CPS where DV alleged factor

1,200 substantiated investigations

61 cases where children removed

“...vast majority of families not open to FSU.”

Increased number of reports → increased number of referrals