



NATIONAL CENTER TO ADVANCE PEACE for Children, Youth, and Families

Prevalence and Impact

1 15.5 million children live in families in which intimate partner violence (IPV) occurred in the past year. For seven million children, the partner violence is severe. ¹

2 Almost 1 in 2 women and more than 2 in 5 men report experiencing violence by a current or former intimate partner at some point in their life. Indigenous women experience the highest rates of IPV, which is disproportionately committed by White men. ²

3 Nearly 1 in 6 children (15.8%) reported witnessing an assault between parents during their lifetime. This figure rises to 1 in 4 (25%) among youth aged 14-17. ³



The National Center to Advance Peace for Children, Youth, and Families (NCAP), is a coalition led by Caminar Latino-Latinos United for Peace and Equity and includes Ujima: National Center on Violence Against Women in the Black Community, the Alaska Native Women’s Resource Center, the National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center, and Futures Without Violence.



Prevalence and Impact



4 Research indicates that 90% of IPV survivors report experiencing post-separation abuse, which is witnessed by children in at least 50% of cases.⁴

5 Child abuse and domestic violence often co-occur. Nearly 30% of children with verified CPS maltreatment reports were found to also have domestic violence in the home.⁵

6 Children exposed to domestic violence are at higher risk of experiencing developmental, cognitive, behavioral, psychological, and social problems; however, many show great resilience and develop creative coping strategies.⁶

7 Protective factors that foster resilience in children exposed to family violence include supportive relationships with parents, relatives, peers, teachers, mentors, and neighbors. Others include living in safe communities with strong connections, developing social and emotional competencies, and having a sense of belonging and positive engagement at school.⁷



8 CPS removal of children from a non-offending parent causes more trauma to both the survivor and child. In many cases, failure to protect laws are used to prosecute mothers who are survivors of domestic violence and through this process they often overlook the survivor's efforts to protect their children as well as the children's needs.⁸



Barriers to Leaving and Self-sufficiency

9 Women who have left abusive relationships are at significantly greater risk of being killed by an intimate partner within the first year than women who have not separated. Women facing abuse weigh this sobering reality when safety planning and deciding to leave relationships, especially in the context of determining best ways to protect their children.⁹



10 As many as 98% of women seeking domestic violence services experience economic abuse, such as interference in their efforts to work, stealing income, ruining credit, or controlling family finances. As a result, many victims lack the financial resources to leave and worry about providing for their children after leaving abusive relationships.¹⁰

11 Institutional racism and the lack of culturally-responsive services fuel distrust of law enforcement and mainstream organizations, which deters survivors from racial and ethnic minorities from seeking help. When they do seek help, they often receive punitive responses that take their children away rather than services that address their actual needs.¹¹



12 Stigmatization from mainstream institutions and law enforcement, as well as the fear of being outed, marginalize LGBTQ2S+ survivors and their children and preclude them from receiving the services they need.¹²



Barriers to Leaving and Self-sufficiency



15 People who use violence often degrade, manipulate, and gaslight survivors. These psychological tactics are also used to exploit legal systems, such as family courts, the child welfare system, and immigration laws. People who use violence may perform cooperation and good parenting to gain custody of children or make false child abuse accusations against the survivor, or threaten immigrant survivors with deportation.¹⁵

13 Survivors may stay in an abusive relationship to protect their children. Concerns about leaving include the fear that their children will not be raised in a two-parent household, that their partner will harm or gain custody of the children, that children may be taken away by CPS, or that they will not be able to support their children alone.¹³

14 Leaving is typically a process, not a singular event. Survivors often engage in a period of planning and strategizing for the safety of themselves and their children as they prepare to leave.¹⁴

16 Poverty may trap survivors in abusive relationships or contribute to ongoing financial and housing instability. Various studies have shown that anywhere from 50% to 80% of homeless women and children experienced prior domestic violence.¹⁶



Parent Child Relationships and Protective Factors

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17 Partners who use violence often undermine the survivor's parenting role by humiliating, criticizing, or undermining their authority in front of children. These tactics may disrupt the parent-child relationship by interfering with the survivor-parent's efforts to attend to their children's needs.¹⁷

18 Women's motherhood role and identity can be a source of strength for survivors. Striving to be a good mother despite the abuse may provide a sense of value and self-worth.¹⁸

19 Research indicates that for some people who use violence, their desire to be good parents motivates them to change their behavior.¹⁹

20 Many survivors make decisions based on what they believe is best for their children. A study of Latina survivors demonstrated that they prioritized their children over themselves, using adaptive strategies to protect their children or mitigate harm when there were no other alternatives.²⁰

21 Women with violent partners are equally nurturing towards their children and engage in similar parenting behaviors as women in non-violent relationships.²¹



22 Studies indicate that having nurturing and supportive relationships with parents and other caregiving adults is associated with increased resilience among children exposed to violence.²²



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Important Considerations for Systems

23 Many survivors experience victim-blaming when seeking help, especially if their children have been exposed to domestic violence. Survivors often feel they must prove their “worthiness” to access services and supports.²³



26 Transformative justice and community-based responses present promising alternatives to criminal justice system interventions. These approaches prioritize the needs of both survivors and those responsible for harm by emphasizing accountability and recognizing violence intervention as a shared community responsibility.²⁶



24 Research shows that survivor-parents and children support one another in their long-term recovery from domestic violence. Interventions that focus on nurturing the parent-child relationship can increase the quality of parenting and assist children in recovering from their trauma.²⁴

25 Collaborative interventions between domestic violence and child welfare agencies that hold people who use violence accountable, develop survivors’ strengths and protective factors, and promote child well-being can reduce domestic violence related child removals.²⁵



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Important Considerations for Systems

27 More than 90% of women who have experienced domestic violence would pursue child support if they could do so safely, but research shows that establishing, collecting, and enforcing child support orders can be triggers for increased domestic violence.²⁷

28 Intersectional and survivor-centered approaches that respond to the impact of systemic inequities and prioritize survivor agency and self-determination are better positioned to meet the needs and values of survivors and their children.²⁸



29 Research findings suggest that mandatory reporting laws hinder many survivors from seeking assistance and often exacerbate their situation. These laws frequently result in negative experiences with the legal and child welfare systems, which fail to recognize the survivor's domestic violence experiences. This issue is particularly prevalent among racial and gender minorities.²⁹



30 Joint custody can increase opportunities for people who use violence to maintain control and continue their abuse, yet research indicates that joint custody orders are the prevailing outcome in cases where domestic violence has been alleged. Significantly, a majority of cases lack specific provisions to ensure the safety of the survivor or children.³⁰



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