You and your children have a RIGHT to be safe from ABUSE

What You Need to Know about Domestic Violence and Child Welfare

Illinois Department of DCFS Children & Family Services
**What is domestic violence?**

The Illinois Domestic Violence Act defines domestic violence as a crime in which physical abuse, harassment, intimidation of a dependent, interference with personal liberty by or willful deprivation is perpetrated by one family or household member against another. However, someone you have dated or are currently dating can perpetrate domestic violence.

Some people mistakenly believe domestic violence to be caused by mental illness, job stress or substance abuse. In fact, the basic goal of domestic violence is to establish or maintain power and control over the victim. The perpetrator wants to control what you do, when you do it, who you see, what you think, your access to money, medication, transportation, and more. The perpetrator’s attempts to establish or maintain power and control come in many forms including, but not limited to, physical attacks and sexual abuse. The scars left by psychological attacks are just as harmful. Psychological abuse can come in the form of verbal insults, mind games, humiliation, excessive criticism and living with the constant fear of physical attacks. Unfortunately, to maintain control of the victim, the perpetrator often uses the victim’s children.

**Children as Primary and Secondary Victims of Domestic Violence**

As *primary victims* research connecting domestic violence and child maltreatment is strong:

- Child Abuse is 15 times more likely to occur in families where domestic violence is present. (The Family Secret, Boston, 2000)
- Domestic Violence is often linked to severe and fatal cases of child abuse (Felix and McCarthy, 1994).
- Perpetrators sometimes use children to establish or maintain power and control over the victim by physically, emotionally, or sexually attacking the children (Schecter and Carter, 1995).

As *secondary victims* research shows exposure to trauma increases the risk of such things as:

- Eating and sleeping disorders
- Verbally or physically aggressive behaviors
- Feelings of guilt believing themselves to be the cause of domestic violence
• Poor school performance
• Children under five may frighten easily or become anxious, clingy or cry a lot
• Alcohol and drug abuse in adolescents

If the African proverb “It takes a village to raise a child” has any meaning, then private and public agencies, hospitals, churches, synagogues, mosques, and we as individuals must work tirelessly to end domestic violence. Domestic Violence is reduced when abusers are held accountable through a coordinated community response, and when victims are provided services appropriate to their experience with abuse. Our children are depending on us.

Is DCFS responding to the connection between domestic violence and child abuse?

The Department has developed a screening process to identify the presence of domestic violence and its affect on child safety and risk. Child protective service workers will assess families for domestic violence during the initial phase of child abuse or neglect investigations. If your case is opened, your worker will continue to screen for domestic violence dynamics during your family’s involvement with DCFS. Your worker will work with you to develop a safety and service plan for domestic violence.

Not all incidences of domestic violence will require intervention services from DCFS. When domestic violence threatens the safety of your family, your worker will work together with the DCFS Domestic Violence Intervention Program to help identify the appropriate services and referrals for you and your family. The Department will provide you with the necessary services and referrals to assist you in keeping yourself and your children safe.

In assessing the level of risk to the child, DCFS child protective service workers are trained to recognize these significant indicators of domestic violence:

• There is current domestic violence or the alleged batterer has a history of domestic violence
• The child is likely to be “harmed” during the violence (being held during the violence, physically restrained from leaving etc.)
• There is reason to believe the child will or is intervening in a violent situation, placing her/him at risk of “substantial harm”
• The alleged batterer is not allowing the adult caregiver and child access to basic needs, impacting their health or safety

• The alleged batterer has killed, committed “substantial harm” or is making a believable threat to do so to anyone in the family, including extended family members and pets

• The child’s ability to function on a daily basis is substantially impaired as a result of domestic violence

• The adult non-offending caregiver or alleged batterer blames the child for the domestic violence, describes or acts negatively toward the child

• The batterer has used or threatens the use of weapons

What types of questions will the DCFS worker ask me?

The DCFS worker will need to ask you many questions. Some of these questions are sensitive and may make you feel uncomfortable or embarrassed, but remember, your answers will help to determine the best course of intervention for you and your child.

Questions you may be asked are:

• Who is the batterer?

• Are you or your child in any immediate danger?

• What form of domestic violence does the batterer use: is it physical, sexual, verbal, threats, etc.?

• How often does this occur?

• In what way, if any, is your child directly involved?

• In what way is your child indirectly involved?

• Have you sought outside intervention or help in the past? If so, from what source and what happened?

• How has parenting changed for you as a result of domestic violence?

If the situation you are experiencing does not rise to the level of DCFS involvement, the DCFS worker may still use the opportunity to encourage you
to seek intervention. **Remember, domestic violence is a crime and silence protects the batterer.**

### Deciding to end a violent relationship

While all victims of domestic violence want the abuse to end, not all victims of domestic violence will decide to end the relationship. Whether this is the best decision for you and your child should be carefully discussed and analyzed with someone you can trust. However, you should know that the most unsafe time for many victims is when the victim is trying or considering ending the relationship. If you are considering leaving or ending the relationship, you should prepare a safety plan for domestic violence with your worker. Here are some things to bear in mind:

- Decide on an escape route and practice it with your child. Be careful that your destination is not one well known and expected by your batterer.
- Pack and hide a bag in case you need to leave quickly. Survivors of domestic violence have identified birth certificates, medication, money, car keys, social security cards and your address book as important items to include in your bag.
- Whether you leave your home or not, legal intervention can be beneficial. A court order, known as an order of protection, can help you in demanding your abuser stay away from your place of employment, your child’s school and, of course, your home. Orders of Protection also serve as documentation in case of future court involvement such as custody, visitation or divorce.
- If there is DCFS involvement, let your assigned worker know what is happening. Your worker is there to help you and your children stay safe.
### Domestic Violence Victim Services

The following are 24-hour crisis lines unless otherwise indicated. There may be other domestic violence services in your area. Check the telephone yellow pages under “Social Services” or call your local police department and medical/hospital social workers for assistance. The 24-hour, toll-free, Illinois Domestic Violence Helpline is: 877/863-6338.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Phone Numbers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aledo</td>
<td>Mercer County Family Crisis Center</td>
<td>309/582-7233</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alton</td>
<td>Oasis Women’s Center</td>
<td>800/244-1978</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aurora</td>
<td>Mutual Ground, Inc.</td>
<td>630/897-0080</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belleville</td>
<td>Violence Prevention Center of SW Illinois</td>
<td>800/924-0069 or 618/233-0741 TDD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bloomington</td>
<td>CA-CDV/Neville House</td>
<td>309/827-7070</td>
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<td>Cairo</td>
<td>Cairo Women’s Shelter, Inc.</td>
<td>618/734-4357</td>
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<td>Canton</td>
<td>Fulton/Mason Crisis Service</td>
<td>309/647-8311</td>
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<td>Carbondale</td>
<td>The Women’s Center, Inc.</td>
<td>800/344-2094</td>
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<td>Centralia</td>
<td>People Against Violent Environments</td>
<td>800/924-8444</td>
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<td>Charleston</td>
<td>Hope of East Central Illinois</td>
<td>888/345-3990</td>
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<td>Chicago</td>
<td>Apna Ghar</td>
<td>800/717-0757</td>
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<td>Connections for Abused Women and Children</td>
<td>773/278-4566 or 773/278-4114 TDD</td>
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<td>Family Rescue</td>
<td>773/375-8400 or 800/360-6619</td>
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<td>Between Friends</td>
<td>773/375-8774 TDD</td>
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<td>Metropolitan Family Service</td>
<td>773/884-2210 (Not a Hotline)</td>
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<td>Mujeres Latinas En Accion</td>
<td>312/325-9300 and 312/325-9175</td>
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<td>Neopolitan Lighthouse</td>
<td>773/722-0005 or 773/826-2883 TDD</td>
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<td>Legal Assistance Foundation</td>
<td>312/341-1070</td>
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<td>Rainbow House</td>
<td>773/521-1815</td>
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Danville
YWCA Your Resource
Connection Shelter
888/548-1800

Decatur
Dove, Inc.
217/423-2238

DeKalb
Safe Passage, Inc.
815/756-5228

Des Plaines
Life Span
847/824-4454
849/824-0189 TDD

Effingham
Stopping Women Abuse Now
800/715-6260

Elgin
Community Crisis Center, Inc.
847/742-4182
847/742-4057 TDD

Freeport
VOICES DV Agency
877/994-7233

Galesburg
Safe Harbor Family Crisis Center, LTD.
309/343-7233

Harrisburg
Anna Bixby’s Women’s Center
800/421-8456
618/252-8389 TDD

Homewood
South Suburban Family Shelter
708/335-3028
708/481-6808 TDD

Jacksonville
Crisis Center Foundation
877/243-5357
217/245-6816 TTY

Joliet
Guardian Angel Community Services
815/729-1228
815/741-4643 TTY

Kankakee
Kankakee County CADV
815/932-5800

Macomb
Quad City CADV
309/837-5555

Oak Park
Sarah’s Inn
708/386-4225
708/386-3687 VTDD

Olney
Stopping Women Abuse Now
888/715-6260

Peoria
Women Strength
309/691-4111 or 800/559-7233

Princeton
Freedom House
800/474-6031

Rockford
PHASE/WAVE
815/962-6102

Springfield
Sojourn Shelter and Service
866/435-7438

Waukegan
A Safe Place
847/249-4450

Wheaton
Family Shelter Service
630/469-5650
630/790-6344 TTY
You and your children have a **RIGHT** to be safe from **ABUSE**.

Illinois Department of Children and Family Services  
Domestic Violence Intervention Program  
A Project of the Division of Clinical Services  
100 W. Randolph, 6-100  
Chicago, Illinois  60601  
Phone: 312/814-4153  
Fax: 312/814-5689

To report suspected child abuse or neglect, call  
1-800-25-ABUSE (1-800-252-2873)  
(TTY: 1-800-358-5117)

www2.illinois.gov/DCFS

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