



**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 (Schechter 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.

### **Aledo**

Mercer County Family  
Crisis Center  
309/582-7233

### **Alton**

Oasis Women’s Center  
800/244-1978

### **Aurora**

Mutual Ground, Inc.  
630/897-0080

### **Belleville**

Violence Prevention Center  
of SW Illinois  
800/924-0069  
618/233-0741 TDD

### **Bloomington**

CA-CDV/Neville House  
309/827-7070

### **Cairo**

Cairo Women’s Shelter, Inc.  
618/734-4357

### **Canton**

Fulton/Mason Crisis Service  
309/647-8311

### **Carbondale**

The Women’s Center, Inc.  
800/344-2094

### **Centralia**

People Against Violent  
Environments  
800/924-8444

### **Charleston**

Hope of East Central Illinois  
888/345-3990

### **Chicago**

Apna Ghar  
800/717-0757

Connections for Abused Women  
and Children  
773/278-4566  
773/278-4114 TDD

### **Family Rescue**

773/375-8400 or 800/360-6619  
773/375-8774 TDD

### **Between Friends**

800/603-4357  
773/274-6508 TDD/TTY

### **Domestic Violence Court – Legal Advocates**

312/325-9300 and 312/325-9175

### **Metropolitan Family Service**

773/884-2210 (Not a Hotline)

### **Mujeres Latinas En Accion**

312/738-5358 or 312/226-3350 TDD

### **Neopolitan Lighthouse**

773/722-0005  
773/826-2883 TDD

### **Legal Assistance Foundation**

312/341-1070

### **Rainbow House**

773/521-1815

**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

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**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](http://www2.illinois.gov/DCFS)**

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