

## **Can domestic violence harm children?**

Yes! Children who witness domestic violence may develop emotional, behavioral, and physical problems. Children do not have to be hit to feel the pain of violence.

## **How aware are children of domestic violence occurring in their homes?**

80 - 90% of children know about the violence occurring in their homes.

## **How many children witness domestic violence?**

About 10 million children witness their mothers being assaulted every year in the United States.

## **How do children feel when they witness domestic violence in their homes?**

Children who see or hear violence in their homes may feel guilty, helpless, angry, afraid, confused, and isolated.

## **How can a child's behavior be affected by witnessing domestic violence?**

Children exposed to domestic violence are more likely to bully and insult other children. They may spend less time with

friends and have lower quality friendships. Other behavioral problems may include hyperactivity, tantrums, stealing, excessive crying, and impulsiveness.

## **How does domestic violence affect a child's development?**

Children who witness domestic violence may come to believe that violence is an okay way to deal with conflicts and that violence is normal in relationships.

## **What kinds of physical problems may a child develop from witnessing domestic violence?**

Physical problems children may experience include bed-wetting, headaches, eating disorders, ulcers, self-mutilation, insomnia, vomiting, irregularity, asthma, sleepwalking, involuntary urination, and nightmares.

## **How does domestic violence affect a child's performance at school?**

Children who witness domestic violence may experience one or more of the following problems at school: erratic attendance, difficulty concentrating, learning disabilities, over-achieving, poor performance, school phobia, disobedience, and excessive fighting.

## **What long-term problems may a child develop as a result of domestic violence?**

Many children who witness domestic violence will have emotional, physical and behavioral problems in their adult lives. Witnessing violence as a child is associated with adult reports of depression, trauma-related symptoms, and low self-esteem. Also, the majority of abusive husbands have grown up in families where they witnessed their fathers abuse their mothers. Abused women are less likely to seek help if they witnessed domestic violence as a child.

## **How can I tell if a child may be living in a violent home?**

Look for the following warning signs:

- Unusual or unexplained injuries,
- Chronic illnesses, headaches, or stomachaches,
- Signs of neglect,
- Withdrawal,
- Depression or low self-esteem,
- Use of violence to solve conflict,
- Sleeping too little, too much, or during school,
- Flashbacks or nightmares,
- School problems, and
- Acting overly responsible.

## Is there hope for children growing up in violent homes?

Yes! Children who see violence in their homes are not doomed. Positive influences can help children overcome negative influences. Positive influences may include:

- Role models,
- Family support, and
- Community support.

## Where can I get more information and support?

To find a domestic violence program or shelter near you, contact the Montana Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence at (406) 443-7794 or 1-888-404-7794. For more information or resources, contact:

- Childhelp USA  
National Child Abuse Hotline at  
1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453)
- National Domestic Violence Hotline at  
1-800-799-SAFE (1-800-799-7233)

## How do I get more help?

Montana Legal Services Association (MLSA) provides free civil legal help to low-income people. Contact us to see if you qualify:

- Apply anytime online at [mtlsa.org](http://mtlsa.org);
- Call our Helpline at 1-800-666-6899 (Helpline hours are limited).

## What help can I find at MLSA?

- Legal advice and representation;
- Referrals to volunteer attorneys and other providers;
- Self-help clinics and materials.

## [www.MontanaLawHelp.org](http://www.MontanaLawHelp.org)

Need legal information or forms? Visit [www.MontanaLawHelp.org](http://www.MontanaLawHelp.org).

Can't find what you want? Use LiveHelp. Click on the LiveHelp picture and get help finding the information you need.

## [www.MTLSA.org](http://www.MTLSA.org)

Find copies of all our brochures online. They are all available for free download!

This pamphlet is meant to give basic legal information, not legal advice about your problem. The law changes often and each case is different. We recommend you talk to an attorney about your legal problem.

# Montana Legal Services Association

## Families and Kids:

## Children and Domestic Violence



Providing, protecting, and enhancing access to justice.

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