

FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION FUND

The Facts on Preventing Violence Against Women and Children

The nation has made remarkable progress over the past 25 years in recognizing that domestic violence is a crime, providing legal remedies, social supports and coordinated community responses. Yet millions of families continue to be traumatized by abuse, leading to increased rates of crime, violence and suffering. Now it is time to *prevent* violence against women and children and its devastating costs and consequences by committing to a four- part strategy focused on children, youth and men.

Millions of Women and Children are Victims of Abuse; the Consequences Can be Serious, Long term, Intergenerational and Costly

Violence against women, including domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking is a persistent problem for women across income, race and locality. A significant number of the victims and perpetrators have children who often witness, hear or are exposed to the violence in other ways. In addition to the immediate trauma this causes, there may be long lasting emotional, behavioral, learning and financial injury, for the victim herself, for her children, and for society.

Violence Against Women and Children is Pervasive

- Nearly 25 percent of American women report being physically assaulted or raped by a current or former spouse, cohabitating partner, or date at some time in their lifetime.ⁱ
- Drawing on recent survey data, the National Research Council reports that one in every six U.S. women has at some time experienced an attempted or completed rape. Annually, more than 300,000 women are forcibly raped and more than 4 million are assaulted.ⁱⁱ
- 16-24 year old women are consistently reported as the group most at risk of abuseⁱⁱⁱ
- A study of 8th and 9th grade male and female students found that 25 percent had been victims of nonsexual dating violence and 8 percent had been victims of sexual dating violence^{iv}

Millions of Children and Youth are Abused or Exposed to Domestic Violence

- While estimates vary, between 3.3 million and 10 million children are exposed to family violence every year;
- In a nationally representative sample of Head Start programs serving low-income children ages 3-5, researchers found that 17 percent of the children studied had been exposed to domestic violence
- In 2002, an estimated 896,000 children were abused and neglected each year, a rate of more than 12 per 1000 children; 1400 children died as a consequence.^v A recent Department of Justice report suggests that the number of abused and neglected children is much higher: 2.7 million annually, with the death toll as high as 2000.^{vi}

Harms from Victimization or Exposure Can be Severe, Chronic and Costly

- Women victimized by abuse are more likely to be diagnosed with serious health problems including depression, panic attacks, high risk behaviors such as tobacco and substance abuse and sexual risk taking, as well as migraines, chronic pain, arthritis, high blood pressure, gastrointestinal problems, inconsistent use of birth control, and delayed entry into prenatal care^{vii}.
- Pregnant women are frequent targets of abuse and, as a result, are placed at risk for low birth weight babies, pre-term labor; pregnant and parenting teens are especially vulnerable^{viii}
- Abused children and those exposed to adult violence in their homes may have short and long term physical, emotional and learning problems, including: increased aggression, decreased responsiveness to adults, failure to thrive, posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, hyper vigilance and hyperactivity, eating and sleeping problems, and developmental delays.^{ix}

Crime and Incarceration of Youth are Often Associated with a History of Child Abuse and Exposure to Domestic Violence

- A study of young adolescents in the Cleveland area found that “recent exposure to violence at home...was one of the most significant predictors of a teen’s use of subsequent violence at school or in the community.”^x
- Approximately 457,000 14-24 year olds leave the juvenile justice system, federal and state prisons or local jails annually, and a high percentage of them have experienced or witnessed violence at home.^{xi}

FOUR MAJOR STRATEGIES TO PREVENT VIOLENCE IN FAMILIES

Drawing from research on the prevention of child abuse and domestic violence, three major strategies have emerged as keys to preventing violence against women and children.

1. Provide Services for Children Exposed to Violence at Home

One of the best ways to prevent adult partner violence is to treat children who witnessed violence between their parents or caretakers, or who were, themselves abused or neglected. Providing mental health support and advocacy for children exposed to violence, as well as building up protective factors in the children’s environment are key approaches to reducing subsequent problems and buffering further harm.

- Hospital based programs in San Francisco and Boston in which skilled practitioners provide intensive counseling with traumatized battered mothers and their children together are finding marked improvements in the mother’s parenting behaviors and the child’s cognitive capacities.^{xii}
- Providing supports to mother who have left or are in the process of leaving abusive partners have been demonstrated to reduce aggression and “conduct problems” in their children.^{xiii}

2. Provide Supports for Young and Vulnerable Parents

Pregnancy and childbirth are crucial times for strengthening understanding of the critical role of parenting, the essential opportunities for promoting healthy child development, and the consequences of trauma on a child's formative years. First-time parents, young people who become parents as teenagers, and parents who face other challenges - of low education, limited income, or a personal history of violence - can reap benefits for both themselves and their children from a range of in-home and center-based parenting support programs.

- The Nurse-Family Partnership, a widely known and scientifically evaluated home-visiting program for high-risk first-time single mothers, showed that children whose mothers were not in the program were nearly five times more likely to be abused in their first two years of life than those whose mothers were provided the coaching in parenting skills, counseling and other supports by the specially trained nurses. Fifteen years after the services ended, the mothers who were not in the program were five times more likely to have been arrested and their children were twice as likely to have been arrested.^{xiv} Strengthening supports specifically for mothers who have been battered by their husbands, ex-husbands or boyfriends is the next step in making this home visiting strategy even more successful in preventing future violence.^{xv}
- Chicago's publicly funded Child-Parent Centers have served almost 100,000 three and four year olds since 1967. Over a fourteen-year period, researchers followed 989 of those children and 550 similar children not in the program. The children who did not participate were 70 percent more likely to be arrested for a violent crime by age 18.^{xvi}

3. Strengthen Mentoring, Parenting Education and Other Violence Prevention Strategies in Programs for Vulnerable Youth and Prisoner Re-entry Programs

Young people, especially those who are struggling to overcome difficult circumstances or actions in their lives, need champions: someone to root for them, to stand by them, to serve as role models and to provide them with positive opportunities. Researchers increasingly recommend that efforts to develop gender identification and relationship patterns that are not linked to power and control begin as early as the middle and high school years.^{xvii}

Comprehensive school-connected programs designed to spur healthy relationships are showing increasing promise. Embedding mentoring, positive parenting and violence prevention strategies into programs designed to assist returning inmates also enable more families to be reunited, decrease the risk of harm, and reduce re-arrest.

- *Safe Dates*, a school and community-based program to prevent dating violence and abusive relationships, seeks to change rural seventh and eighth graders' norms about acceptable behaviors in romantic relationships, strengthen skills for resolving conflicts, encourage students to seek help from peers and adults, and improve community resources for victims and perpetrators of dating violence. The combined curricular and other activities, implemented and evaluated in North Carolina, have resulted in changes in dating violence norms, gender stereotyping, and awareness of community services.^{xviii}
- *Expect Respect: A School-Based Program Promoting Safe and Healthy Relationships*, developed by SafePlace in Austin, Texas reaches elementary and secondary school children and engages the entire school community through counseling and support groups, classroom presentations, summer teen leadership programs and training for

school personnel. The program aims to aid children and youth healing from past abuse, set high expectations for equality and respect in relationships, strengthen safety on school campuses and promote youth as leaders in preventing violence.

- Almost all existing federal and state prisoner re-entry programs do not address histories of domestic violence when planning for the release of prisoners, leading at time to devastating consequences including homicide of wives, girlfriends, and children.^{xix} New programs to address partner violence in the context of prisoner re-entry have shown promising results in reducing recidivism and violence.^{xx}

4. Develop Public Education Campaigns Targeting Men, Teens and Children

Using media to communicate important public health messages is an important strategy to address serious problems with widespread impact on large numbers of people. Public awareness and educational campaigns focused on increasing understanding of violence against women and seeking to make it an unacceptable behavior have helped stem violence against women over the past two decades.

- Polling to test the effects of social marketing campaigns designed to improve public knowledge of the nature and dangers of domestic violence have shown increasing awareness and understanding of it.^{xxi}
- In 2001 and 2002, using polling, focus groups and other tools to gather opinions from adult men, Peter D. Hart Research Associates found that men generally have a positive response to the idea that they can be role models and can steer boys away from abusive behavior.^{xxii}

ⁱ Tjaden, Patricia and Nancy Thoennes. 2000. *Extent, Nature and Consequences of Violence Against Women: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey*. The National Institute of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved January 9, 2004. <http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/183781.pdf>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.nap.edu/openbook/0309091098/html/7.html>, copyright 2004, 2001 The National Academy of Sciences, Advancing the Federal Research Agenda on Violence Against Women (2004)

ⁱⁱⁱ Tjaden, Patricia and Nancy Thoennes. 2000.

^{iv} Foshee, V.A., Lindner, G.F., Bauman, K.E., Langwick, S.A., Arriga, X. B., Health, J.L., McMahon, P.M., Bangdiwala, S. The Safe Dates Project: Theoretical Basis, Evaluation Design, and Selected Baseline Findings. Youth Violence Prevention: Description and baseline data from 13 evaluation projects (K. Powell, D. Hawkins, Eds.). American Journal of Preventive Medicine, Supplement, 1996, 12(5), 39-47. Retrieved from the CDC National Center for Injury Prevention and Control website: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/datviol.htm>

^v U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children and Families, Children's Bureau. Child Maltreatment 2002. Retrieved from the USDHHS website: <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb/publications/cm02/index.htm>

^{vi} Langstaff, J. and Sleeper, T. The National Center on Child Fatality review, Retrieved from the US Department of Justice website: <http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/ojdp/fs200112.pdf>

^{vii} Coker, A.; Smith P.; Bethea L; King M; McKeown, R. 2000. "Physical Health Consequences of Physical and Psychological Intimate Partner Violence." *Archives of Family Medicine*. 9.

^{viii} Parker, B., McFarlane, J., & Soeken, K. (1994). Abuse During Pregnancy: Effects on Maternal Complications and Infant Birthweight in Adult and Teen Women. *Obstetrics & Gynecology*, 84(1), 323-328.

^{ix} Harris, William; Frank Putnam, and John Fairbank. "Mobilizing Trauma Resources for Children." Presented as part of the meeting of the Johnson and Johnson Pediatric Institute: Shaping the Future of Children's Health, February 2004.

^x Edleson, J. as quoted in Rosewater, A. (2003)

^{xi} Rosewater, A. (2003), 11.

^{xii} Rosewater, A. (2003), 13; see also, Ehrenberg, Rachel, "Witnessing Abuse Can Hinder Mental Development But Studies Show Therapy With Families May Bring IQs Back Up," The Dallas *Morning News*, September 14, 2003. Retrieved from The Dallas Morning News website: <http://www.dallasnews.com>

- ^{xiii} Jouriles, Ernest; Renee McDonald; Laura Spiller; William Norwood. 2001. "Reducing Conduct Problems among Children of Battered Women." *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*. 69(5)774-785.
- ^{xiv} Olds, D.L. (1997). Long-term effects of nurse home visitation on maternal life course and child abuse and neglect. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 278(8), 637-643 and Olds, D.L. (1998). Long-term effects of nurse home visitation on children's criminal and anti-social behavior: 15-year follow-up of a randomized controlled trial. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 280(14), 1238-1244.
- ^{xv} Rosewater (2003),
- ^{xvi} Reynolds, A.J., Temple, J.A., Robertson, D.L., and Mann, E.A. (2001). Long-term effects of an early childhood intervention on educational achievement and juvenile arrest: A 15-year follow-up of low-income children in public schools. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 285 (18), 2339-2346. As quoted in *Fight Crime: Invest in Kids* (10/9/03)
- ^{xvii} Maxwell, C.D. and Post, L.A., "An Assessment of Efforts to Prevent Violence Against Women," prepared for the Workshop on Issues in Research on Violence Against Women, National Academy of Science, 2002.
- ^{xviii} Foshee, Vangie A; Karl E. Bauman, Susan T. Ennett; et al. 2004. "Assessing the Long-Term Effects to of the Safe Dates Program and a Booster in Preventing and Reducing Adolescent Dating Violence Victimization and Perpetration." *American Journal of Public Health*. 94(4): 619-624.
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- ^{xx} See Vera Institute, Safe Return Initiative. Retrieved from:
www.vera.org/project/project1_1.asp?section_id=8&project_id=27
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