

Domestic violence may be defined as the physical, sexual or emotional abuse of one household or family member by another.

## INDICATORS OF ABUSE

### Physical Abuse:

Pushing, shoving, punching and choking.

### Sexual Abuse:

Forced unwanted sexual acts, rape and incest.

### Emotional Abuse:

Threats, insults and forced humiliating acts.

### Isolation:

Preventing contact with family and friends and extreme jealousy.

### Intimidation:

Punching walls, destroying things and harming pets.

## IS IT A CRIME?

Yes, domestic violence is a **crime** when a person:

- Knowingly causes or attempts to cause physical harm to a family or household member;
- Recklessly causes serious physical harm to a family or household member;
- By threat of force, knowingly causes a family or household member to believe that the offender will cause imminent physical harm.

## CYCLE OF VIOLENCE

Many victims experience a cycle of abuse in three phrases.

- In phase one, tension increases in the relationship. There is a denial of impending violence.
- In phase two, violence occurs. The abuser denies responsibility.
- In phase three, often called "the honeymoon phase," the abuser denies the severity of the abuse and promises that it won't happen again.

The cycle is repeated, over and over. But for some victims, the violence doesn't follow this pattern.

## WHOSE FAULT IS IT?

Domestic violence is a pattern of behavior. Only the abuser can control that behavior. Violence is not the victim's fault.

## WHAT SHOULD VICTIMS DO IF THEY'RE IN DANGER?

If your life or the lives of your children are in immediate danger, call 911. If you're not in immediate danger, you may want to call your nearest domestic violence shelter. To connect with your nearest shelter, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline (800 799-7233). Weekdays during business hours call ACTION OHIO (888 622-9315) for referral.

This project was made possible with funding provided by the International Rescue Committee.



The additional funding for printing was provided by Ohio District of Kiwanis Foundation, Inc.



# Children Witnessing Domestic Violence



# ACTION OHIO

*Advocating for domestic violence victims, survivors and their families*

P.O. Box 15673  
Columbus, OH 43215  
Phone: 614-221-1255  
Toll-Free: 1-888-622-9315  
Fax: 614-221-6357  
Email: [actionoh@ee.net](mailto:actionoh@ee.net)  
[www.actionohio.org](http://www.actionohio.org)

## ACTION OHIO

Coalition For Battered Women  
P.O. Box 15673  
Columbus, OH 43215  
614.221.1255/1.888.622.9315  
[www.actionohio.org](http://www.actionohio.org)

## Effects of Children Witnessing Domestic Violence

Children who witness domestic violence are:

- more likely to exhibit aggressive and antisocial behaviors
- more likely to exhibit fearful and inhibited behaviors
- more likely to show less social competence
- more likely to have anxiety, self-esteem, depression, anger, and temperament problems.
- more likely to approve violence (boys)
- more likely to attempt suicide, abuse drugs and alcohol
- more likely to run away from home
- more likely to engage in teenage prostitution
- more likely to commit sexual assault crimes

**Source:**

Edleson, J.L., (1999), Problems associated with children's witnessing of domestic violence.  
Wolfe, D.A., et al. (1995), Strategies to address violence in the lives of high risk youth.

## Overcoming Trauma With Resilience

When domestic violence occurs, it impacts all members of the family, including the children. Even if the children didn't see or hear the battering, they will experience its aftermath—the victim's injuries, broken bones and bruises, or the broken furniture and damages to the home.

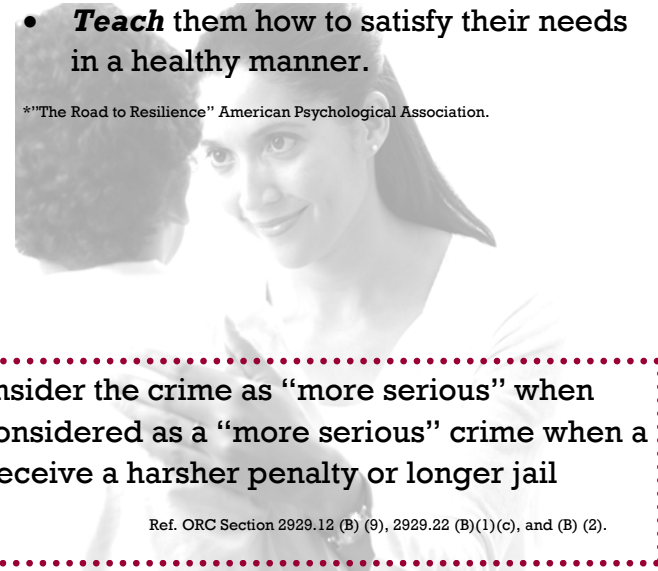
According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "Each year ... nearly 700,000 documented incidents of domestic violence... threaten the well-being of children and families across our nation."\* Those children feel the tension in the household, hear the rage in the batterer's voice and see the look of fear in the victim's eyes.

Although some children will find themselves as adults trapped within the cycle of abuse, many will go on to lead normal, healthy lives. The critical factor is resilience. Resilience is the ability to be confident and positive even after experiencing trauma and pain. It is the ability to get up after a fall and to go forward with hope and confidence. \*10/08/03 Press Release, <http://www.hhs.gov/news>

### *How to Help Build Resilience In Children\**

- **Encourage** them to make connections with family members and friends.
- **Help** them see problems as temporary setbacks.
- **Teach** them that change is a part of life.
- **Guide** them in setting and reaching goals.
- **Foster** their making decisions and moving ahead.
- **Help** them identify their strengths and areas for growth.
- **Nurture** their positive self-image.
- **Present** them with a hopeful view of the world and their future.
- **Teach** them how to satisfy their needs in a healthy manner.

\*"The Road to Resilience" American Psychological Association.



## What it means for DV offenders in Ohio

In Ohio, if domestic violence occurs in your home or within 30 feet of a child, a court will consider the crime as "more serious" when sentencing the person who is convicted of the crime. In other words, domestic violence is considered as a "more serious" crime when a child witnesses the violence. The person who commits domestic violence is more likely to receive a harsher penalty or longer jail sentence.

Ref. ORC Section 2929.12 (B) (9), 2929.22 (B)(1)(c), and (B) (2).