

### Effects of Intimate Partner Violence on Children

In Newfoundland and Labrador it is everyone's responsibility to report any information dealing with child abuse. If you suspect a child has been abused, or a child tells you they have been abused, it is the law to report it immediately.

See it. Report it. It's the law.

#### Violence during Pregnancy

- Pregnancy does not reduce the risk of experiencing any form of violence, including homicide<sup>1</sup>.
- Almost one quarter of women who experience intimate partner violence are assaulted during pregnancy<sup>2</sup>.
  - In 40 per cent of those incidents, it was the first episode of violence.
- Violence during pregnancy can result in low birth weight, preterm labour or miscarriage<sup>3</sup>.

#### Direct Harm

- Children can be harmed during an incident of intimate partner violence<sup>1</sup>.
- In 30-40 per cent of households where the partner is abused, the children are also abused<sup>4</sup>.
- Children who live in situations of intimate partner violence can experience short- and long-term emotional, behavioural, and developmental problems, including posttraumatic stress disorder, depression and poor concentration<sup>4</sup>.

#### Witnessing Violence

- Even when children are not direct targets of violence in the home, they can be harmed by witnessing it<sup>4</sup>.
- Most violent incidents are seen or heard by children in the home<sup>2</sup>.
- Witnessing family violence is as harmful as experiencing it directly<sup>4</sup>. Children from violent homes have some of the same behavioural and psychological problems as physically abused children<sup>5</sup>.

- Living in a situation where there is violence or living in a situation where there is a risk of violence, including witnessing violence against a parent, is considered a form of maltreatment by provincial child welfare legislation<sup>6</sup>.
  - Child protection systems work with families to mitigate risk by providing necessary services to ensure child safety.
- **Cognitive development effects<sup>1</sup>**
  - Cognitive/sensory growth in infants/small children can be impaired by harm to brain development from emotional stress.
    - Children may have problems with language development.
  - Difficulty learning:
    - Trouble with school work, poor concentration and focus, poorer performance in school (e.g., lower reading ability).
- **Emotional/psychological problems<sup>7</sup>**
  - Excessive irritability
  - Sleep problems
  - Emotional distress
  - Fear of being alone
  - Suffer from depression or severe anxiety
  - Suicidal tendencies
  - Low self-esteem<sup>8</sup>
  - Stress-induced illnesses
- **Personality/behavioural problems<sup>7</sup>**
  - Small children can demonstrate problems with toilet training, immature behaviour.
  - Primary age children can experience bedwetting.
  - Violent, risky, or delinquent behaviour:
    - Primary age children: defiant, destroy property<sup>8</sup>.
    - Teenagers: Substance abuse, pregnancy, criminal behaviour.
- **Social development problems<sup>7</sup>**
  - Children may develop limited social skills.
  - Children may lose the ability to feel empathy for others.
  - They may feel socially isolated because they are unable to make friends easily due to social discomfort or confusion about acceptable behaviour.
  - They exhibit aggressive behaviour toward their peers (e.g., verbal abuse, fighting).

*Children who witness intimate partner violence are more likely to be either perpetrators or victims of intimate partner violence later in life<sup>7</sup>.*

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<sup>1</sup> Sinha, M. (2012). *Family violence in Canada: A statistical profile, 2010. Section 2: Violence against intimate partners.* (Catalogue no. 85-002-X). Retrieved from Statistics Canada website: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2012001/article/11643-eng.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Johnson, H. (Ed.). (2006). *Measuring violence against women: Statistical trends 2006.* (Catalogue no. 85-570-XIE). Retrieved from Statistics Canada website: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-570-x/85-570-x2006001-eng.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> World Health Organization. (2011). *Intimate partner violence during pregnancy.* Retrieved from World Health Organization website: [http://whqlibdoc.who.int/hq/2011/WHO\\_RHR\\_11.35\\_eng.pdf?ua=1](http://whqlibdoc.who.int/hq/2011/WHO_RHR_11.35_eng.pdf?ua=1)

<sup>4</sup> Royal Canadian Mounted Police. (2012). *Intimate partner violence and abuse – It can be stopped.* Retrieved from Royal Canadian Mounted Police website: [http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/cp-pc/pdfs/int\\_par-rel\\_int-eng.pdf](http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/cp-pc/pdfs/int_par-rel_int-eng.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> UNICEF. (2006). *Behind closed doors. The impact of domestic violence on children.* Retrieved from UNICEF website: <http://www.unicef.org/protection/files/BehindClosedDoors.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Sinha, M. (Ed.). (2013). *Measuring violence against women: Statistical trends.* (Catalogue no. 85-002-X). Retrieved from Statistics Canada website: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2013001/article/11766-eng.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Federal-Provincial-Territorial (FPT) Ministers responsible for the Status of Women. (2013). *Measuring violence against women: Statistical trends – Key findings. Intimate Partner and Spousal Violence.* Retrieved from Status of Women Canada website: <http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/rc-cr/pub/violence-partner-partenaire-eng.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Sudermann, M. & Jaffe, P. (1999). *A handbook for health and social service providers and educators on children exposed to woman abuse/family violence.* Retrieved from Government of Canada website: <http://publications.gc.ca/collections/Collection/H72-21-163-1998E.pdf>