

# Locations

For more information about services offered at The Center, please call any of our locations or visit our website.

## KENTUCKY

**Kentucky Campus**

**Open 24 Hours**

*P.O. Box 2048*

*Louisville, KY*

**(502) 581-7222** Domestic Violence Crisis Line

**(502) 581-7242** TDD

**West Louisville Campus**

**(502) 775-6408**

**Mt. Washington Office**

**(502) 538-0212**

**Shelbyville Office**

**(502) 633-7800**

## INDIANA

**Southern Indiana Campus**

**Open 24 Hours**

*New Albany, IN*

**(812) 944-6743** Crisis Line

**Corydon Office**

**(812) 734-0280**

**Marengo Office**

**(812) 365-2338**

**Scottsburg Office**

**(812) 752-7996**

**(877) 803-7577**

Toll Free Crisis Line • 24 Hours

**[www.thecenteronline.org](http://www.thecenteronline.org)**

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# What about the Children?

THE EFFECTS OF  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE  
ON CHILDREN



*“I always thought that my kids didn’t know what was going on between me and their father. However, one day when I picked up my son at daycare, one of the workers commented that he had been hitting a little girl with a plastic shovel. I talked to my son about it and he said he was just doing what Daddy does.”*



*“He’s a good father and provider. He’s never hurt the kids so my situation isn’t that bad. It could be worse.”*



Information from



THE  
CENTER  
FOR  
WOMEN  
AND  
FAMILIES

# The Effects of Domestic Violence on...

## A Fetus or Infants

### MYTH:

*"No one would hit a pregnant woman."*

### FACT:

Studies have shown that 15-25% of pregnant women are battered and up to 30% of battered women are battered while they are pregnant.

### MYTH:

*"A fetus is safe in the mother's womb."*

### FACT:

Domestic violence causes more birth defects than accidents and illnesses combined. A mother's fear can send convulsion-like tremors through the fetus, "zapping" the baby's developing brain and nervous system. Just as a fetus can respond to familiar voices or music, sounds of rage can produce shockwaves which pass through the amniotic fluid, literally bombarding the baby's head and ears. Sleep dysfunctions can occur when a fetus/infant is awakened/kept awake by night-battering episodes.



### MYTH:

*"Infants are too young to know what's going on."*

### FACT:

Physicians report treating injuries to the hands of infants who dig their nails into their palms during domestic disputes. Because the mother is focused on her own survival, the baby may lay there all alone - teeth chattering, crying, and hyperventilating - for the duration of each battle. The infant's first and longest-lasting impression is that the world is a dangerous place and that they are helpless to leave violent situations.

## Young Children

### MYTH:

*"My partner only abuses me, he doesn't hurt the children."*

### FACT:

Studies have shown that 50% of men who frequently assault their wives also assault their children. Older children have been found to be the unintended victims of violence by accidentally being struck when they attempt to intervene in an attack on a parent. Simply being exposed to violence is its own form of abuse. Children who witness abuse often suffer the same symptoms as children who are directly abused.

### MYTH:

*"My children are asleep, or in the other room, when it happens...they don't see the abuse."*

### FACT:

Reality shows that 87% of children do see their mothers being abused. Through this boys learn that violence is a good way to settle problems, gain control of a situation, or get what you want. Girls learn how to expect and accept the abuse.

### MYTH:

*"I have left that relationship, so my children will be fine now."*

### FACT:

The feelings of fear, anxiety, powerlessness, low self-esteem, and the emotional and behavioral problems do not simply fade away when the child is taken out of that environment. These feelings have been learned and, without intervention, they will continue. It is estimated that in more than half of the kidnappings of children by their parents in this country, the abductions occur within the context of domestic violence.



## Teenagers

### MYTH:

*"My child is moody...it must be a phase."*

### FACT:

Depression, hopelessness and other forms of emotional disturbances and distress in teenagers are strongly linked to exposure to domestic violence in the home.

### MYTH:

*"I guess some children are just born with a wild side"*

### FACT:

Children of abuse are at an increased risk for one or more of the following: alcohol/drug abuse, gambling, compulsive spending, eating/sleeping disorders, sexual promiscuity, running away, and suicide.



### MYTH:

*"I thought my daughter would have learned not to let anyone treat her the way her father treated me."*

### FACT:

In violent homes, girls learn that it is okay to be abused. They do not learn any other way to have a relationship. Estimates show that 1 out of 3 high school students have experienced physical violence in their dating relationships.

### MYTH:

*"I don't like my son's friends, they are the ones teaching him to be violent. He is even violent towards me."*

### FACT:

Domestic violence has been found in 20-40% of the families of chronically violent adolescents. Teenage boys who had witnessed their father hit their mothers are three times more likely to hit their own female partners. Some teenagers from violent homes may become unhealthy, setting the stage for the next generation of abusers and victims.

## Second Hand Abuse:

### The Painful Legacy of Witnessing Domestic Violence

By Barbara Corry, M.A.

- Battering causes damage and distress to the fetus.
- Battering adversely affects infants and toddlers.
- Older children see and hear the violence.
- Battering means emotional abandonment.
- A battering home means living in constant fear.
- Violence creates constant anxiety.
- A violent home means feeling powerless.
- Battering creates low self-esteem.
- Family violence results in behavioral problems.
- Battered children take on adult roles prematurely.
- Children of abuse learn how to abuse others.
- Battered children learn to harm themselves.
- Abused children learn extreme behavior.
- Children of violence do not learn boundaries.

## Two Things to Keep in Mind

While this brochure does cover many specific effects of domestic violence on children, there is no way to cover all possible effects. However, two things that should always be kept in mind are these.

- 1) Children are **always** affected when they are exposed to violence in their homes, whether they are directly abused, witness the abuse, or cope with the aftermath of the violence.
- 2) Children must live within the confines of their family. If the family is not healthy, the child is not healthy, setting the stage for the next generation of abusers and victims.