

Conifer Counseling Informational Page



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Signs and Symptoms of Children Exposed to Domestic Violence

The adult victim of Domestic Violence is not the only victim. Children are negatively impacted by the abuse, even if the child has not been directly abused. Across the country, exposure to Domestic Violence is recognized as child neglect and worthy of child welfare intervention and falls under mandatory reporting requirements. Children living in this environment may experience the world as unstable, violent, and fearful. Extensive research has found significant detrimental effects on brain and nervous system development. Children exposed to Domestic Violence demonstrate physical, emotional, and behavioral disturbances which are barriers to healthy development. The good news is it has also been found, with early intervention, these disturbances can be minimized and managed.

Based on information provided by the Colorado Department of Human Services, the following check list can be used to identify the negative impact of Domestic Violence exposure on a child. If your child is experiencing any of these symptoms, please contact a trusted professional.

Academic

- ☐ Absenteeism or Truancy
- ☐ Declining grades
- ☐ Identifying as inadequate such as referring to themselves as "stupid" or "an idiot"
- ☐ Decreased concentration or attention span
- ☐ Over or under achieving

Emotional

- ☐ Anger, rage, irritability
- ☐ Excessive anxiety and fear
- ☐ Shame, guilt, self-blame, low-esteem
- ☐ Grief (losing one parent, losing positive image of perpetrator)
- ☐ Depression/Suicidal ideation/withdrawal
- ☐ Excessive distress (easily prompted to cry, difficulty separating)
- ☐ Explosive feelings
- ☐ Feels responsible for the violence
- ☐ Hopelessness, powerless, helpless

Physical

- ☐ Victimization (physical, sexual, etc)
- ☐ Chronic illness/premature birth
- ☐ High pain tolerance
- ☐ Low energy
- ☐ Poor hygiene
- ☐ Unintended injuries

Behavioral

- ☐ Aggression and/or Fighting with other children
- ☐ Easily startled
- ☐ Changes in eating habits/eating disorders
- ☐ Excessive Defiance
- ☐ Excessive sleep or struggle to sleep (nightmares, difficulty falling asleep)
- ☐ Reenacts trauma in play
- ☐ Running Away
- ☐ Easily startled
- ☐ Poor impulse control
- ☐ High risk play/activities

If you suspect
Domestic Violence,
please contact the
National Domestic
Violence Hotline at
(800)799-7233

Adapted from <https://endingviolence.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Colorado-DV-CPS-Practice-Guide-4.14.131.pdf>