

Domestic Violence Affects Everyone

**Province-wide
Domestic Violence Abuse Crisis Line
(24 hours)
Toll free: 1-877-977-0007**

The Impact of Domestic Violence on Children



Where can I get help for my child?

Winnipeg

Aurora Family Therapy Centre	204-786-9251
Family Dynamics	204-947-1401
Fort Garry Women's Resource Centre Children's Counselling Program	204-477-1123
Ikwe-widdjiitiwin (Shelter)	204-987-2780 (Ext: 114)
Toll free	1-800-362-3344
Klinik (24-hour Crisis Line)	204-786-8686
Toll free	1-888-322-3019
Klinik (Evolve)	204-784-4208
Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre Spirit of Peace Program	204-925-0342
Native Women's Transition Centre (Shelter)	204-989-8240
Osborne House (Shelter) 24-hour Crisis Line	204-942-3052
Wahbung Abinoonjiiag Inc.	204-925-4610
Women in Second Stage Housing (WISH Inc)	204-275-2600
A Woman's Place: Nor'west Domestic Violence and Legal Services	204-940-6624

Brandon and Area

Child & Adolescent Treatment Centre	204-578-2700 1-866-403-5459
Elsbeth Reid Family Resource Centre	204-726-6280
Brandon Friendship Centre	204-727-1407
Samaritan House Ministries - Resource Centre	204-726-0758
YWCA Westman Women's Shelter	204-727-3644

The Pas and Area

The Pas Committee for Women in Crisis (Aurora House - Shelter)	204-623-5497
Snow Lake Centre on Family Violence	204-358-7141
Women's Safe Haven Resource Service (Flin Flon)	204-681-3105

Dauphin and Area

Parkland Crisis Centre (Shelter)	204-638-9484
Swan Valley Crisis Centre	204-734-9368

Interlake

Fisher River Healing Centre Toll free	204-645-2750 1-800-692-6270
Interlake Women's Resource Centre (Gimli)	204-642-8264
Lakeshore Women's Resource Centre	204-768-3016
Nova House (Shelter) Crisis Line	204-482-7882 204-482-1200
Peguis Counselling and Resource Centre	204-645-2605

Steinbach and Area

Eastman Crisis Centre (Agape House-Shelter)	204-346-0028
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Portage la Prairie and Area

Portage Family Abuse Prevention Centre	204-239-5233
South Central Committee on Family Violence (Winkler)	204-325-9800

Thompson and Area

Thompson Crisis Centre (Shelter)	204-778-7273
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Children exposed to the sights, sounds and stress of domestic violence are affected at every age and stage of development. They are at greater risk for emotional, behavioural, social and psychological problems. Children can be affected as if they are being directly abused themselves, and the effects can be long lasting.

Prenatal Stage:

Domestic violence may begin or increase when women become pregnant. Pregnant women may feel more dependent on their partners for emotional and financial help during the pregnancy. They may also rely on their partners to fulfill their desire to be a family.

Abusive partners may use this dependency to gain further control in the relationship. They may be jealous about the pregnancy and may use violence to make sure their needs are being met. Physical violence may cause women to deliver early or have a miscarriage. Violence can also cause stress which may affect women's eating habits and coping behaviour (ex: smoking, substance abuse). This can affect the baby's weight or cause Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. As a result, children may be affected by domestic violence even before they are born.

Infancy (birth to 12 months):

Babies may become upset in a loud and chaotic home where there is no routine. This can cause babies to have eating and sleeping problems or to become sick.

Parents may not be able to meet the needs of the baby because of the negative effects of domestic violence (ex: physical injuries, emotional exhaustion, depression, substance abuse, money concerns). The abusive parent may be jealous of the baby because of the time and attention that is required to care for an infant. To try and avoid further abuse, the parent may not always put the baby's needs first. This affects the relationship between the parent and baby and the baby's ability to grow in a healthy way.

Toddlers/Preschool Children (2 to 4 years):

Children at this age often find it hard to say what they are thinking or feeling. Instead, they may show their thoughts and feelings through their behaviour. Children may also act the same as their parents who are in an abusive relationship. This may include hitting others or keeping to themselves too much.

Children may also complain of physical problems (ex: head and stomach pain) or have nightmares. Seeing abuse can also cause behavioural problems such as stuttering, hiding, and yelling or being highly active, demanding, whiney or clinging. Feeling sad, anxious or scared can affect how well children eat and sleep, which can affect their emotional and physical growth.

School Age Children (5 to 12 years):

Children this age may be violent and have difficulty following rules or making friends. They may feel fear, anxiety, guilt, shame, depression and have low self-esteem or possibly Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, which may include flashbacks about the violence. Children may have difficulty concentrating and focusing on tasks which can lead to a diagnosis of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

Children learn to believe that violence is a normal part of relationships and a way to get what you want. To feel like they have some control in their lives, they may become bullies at school. Or, these children may be the ones who are bullied, because they don't have many friends.

Adolescents (13 to 18 years):

Young people are at risk of dating violence and getting into trouble with the law. They may also do poorly in school, drop out or run away. Young people may be depressed, suicidal, or develop Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. To deal with these feelings they may try to hurt themselves, abuse substances such as drugs or alcohol, develop eating disorders and/or engage in risky sexual behavior.

Many teens act like parents by caring for the younger siblings and trying to predict or prevent future violence. After seeing abusive relationships throughout childhood, the cycle of abuse may continue as they find themselves in similar abusive relationships.

What can I do to help my child who has been exposed to domestic violence?

- Ensure children know the abuse is not their fault and they are not responsible for the family problems. Allow them to speak openly about their feelings and teach them healthy ways to deal with these emotions.
- Maintain a routine with regular rules and discipline.
- Praise your children for who they are and for good behavior. Exposure to domestic violence can have long-lasting effects on self-esteem.
- Allow children to be "kids" and discourage them from acting like parents or dealing with adult problems.
- Create age-appropriate safety plans with your children (ex: call 911). Teach them not to become involved during a violent incident and discuss a safe place to go (ex: neighbours or police station).
- Ensure children go to school regularly where they can keep positive relationships. Talk to teachers and school staff and include them in the safety plan.
- Get professional help if you have concerns about your child's emotional wellbeing. Negative behavior and emotional issues may vary depending on the child's age and how often and serious the exposure to domestic abuse.
- End the child's exposure to domestic violence. Children need to feel loved and protected in a safe environment. Talk to someone you trust and consider ending the relationship safely.