



**GOVERNOR'S CONFERENCE
FOR THE PREVENTION OF CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT
LEGAL INSTITUTE**

**The Impact of Child Trauma on System-Involved
Children and Youth in Kansas**

Part IV

Domestic Violence and Child Trauma

**Part IV Overview: Domestic Violence
and Child Trauma**

- The prevalence of domestic violence in Kansas
- Recognizing symptoms of exposure to domestic violence among children
- The long-term impact of domestic violence on children
- How child welfare workers and courts can help

What is domestic violence?

An act or threatened act of violence against a person with whom the offender is involved or has been involved in a dating relationship, or an act or threatened act of violence against a family or household member by a family or household member.

--Definition of "domestic violence" as adopted by the Kansas State Legislature

(1) Intentionally or recklessly causing bodily harm by a family or household member against a family or household member; or (2) intentionally causing physical contact with a family or household member by a family or household member when done in a rude, insulting or angry manner.

--Definition of "domestic battery" as adopted by the Kansas State Legislature

Kansas Domestic Violence Incident and Arrest Trend

YEAR	NUMBER OF INCIDENTS	PERCENT OF CHANGE	INCIDENTS PER / 1,000 POPULATION	NUMBER OF INCIDENTS WITH ARRESTS
1994	18,775	12.5%	7.4	10,408
1995	20,183	7.5%	7.9	10,740
1996	19,653	-2.6%	7.6	10,366
1997	19,159	-2.5%	7.4	11,083
1998	18,966	-1.0%	7.2	10,958
1999	20,901	10.2%	8.0	10,958
2000	23,236	11.2%	8.6	15,136
2001	19,870	-14.5%	7.4	11,406
2002	22,434	12.9%	8.3	11,474
2003	18,287	-18.5%	6.7	10,373
2004	18,042	-1.3%	6.7	9,833
2005	19,222	6.5%	7.0	10,951
2006	23,077	20.1%	8.4	11,754
2007	22,429	-2.8%	8.1	11,423
2008	21,500	-4.1%	7.7	11,887
2009	23,864	11.0%	8.5	12,584
2010	23,828	-0.2%	8.3	14,194
2011	24,159	1.4%	8.2	14,550
2012	24,373	0.9%	8.2	14,102
2013	23,508	-3.5%	7.9	12,607
2014	22,887	-2.6%	7.7	12,450

One
Domestic Violence
Murder Occurred
every 22.8 Days

One
Domestic Violence
Incident Occurred
Every 23 Minutes

Law Enforcement
Made One Domestic
Violence Arrest
Every 42 Minutes,
12 Seconds

Children's Exposure to Domestic Violence

- Even when children are not direct targets of DV, they can be harmed by witnessing it
- The potential harm falls into 3 categories:
 - Behavioral, social and emotional problems
 - Cognitive and attitudinal problems
 - Long-term health problems
- Factors influencing the impact of DV on kids:
 - Nature of the violence
 - Age of the child
 - Time lapse since exposure
 - Gender
 - Presence of child physical or sexual abuse

Children's Exposure to Domestic Violence

- Children as witnesses
 - One parent threatens the other
 - A parent is out of control or reckless with anger
 - One parent assaults the other
 - A child hears a threat to the safety of their caregiver
- Children who live with domestic violence are at increased risk of direct child abuse
- Domestic violence poses a serious threat to children's emotional, psychological, and physical well-being (especially if chronic)

Signs and Effects of Exposure to DV

- Short-term:
 - Generalized anxiety
 - Sleeplessness
 - Nightmares
 - Difficulty concentrating; poor school performance
 - High activity levels
 - Increased aggression
 - Increased anxiety about separation from parent
 - Intense worry about the safety of a parent
- Long-term:
 - Physical health problems
 - Behavior problems in adolescence
 - Emotional difficulties in adulthood

Possible Reactions to Domestic Violence		
Birth to age 5	Ages 6–11	Ages 12–18
Sleep or eating disruptions	Nightmares, sleep disruptions	Antisocial behavior
Withdrawal or lack of responsiveness	Aggression and difficulty with peer relationships in school	School failure
Intense and pronounced separation anxiety	Difficulty with concentration and task completion in school	Impulsive or reckless behavior, such as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Truancy • Substance abuse • Running away • Involvement in violent or abusive dating relationships
Crying inconsolably	Withdrawal and emotional numbing	Depression
Developmental regression, loss of acquired skills such as toilet training, or reversion to earlier behaviors, such as asking for a bottle again	School avoidance or truancy	Anxiety
Intense anxiety, worries, or new fears	Stomachaches, headaches, or other physical complaints	Withdrawal
Increased aggression or impulsive behavior		Self-destructive behavior such as cutting
Acting out witnessed events in play, such as having one doll hit another doll		

It is important to remember that any of these symptoms can also be associated with other stress, traumas, or developmental disturbances. They should be considered in the context of the child's and family's functioning.

Domestic Violence and Child Trauma: When the victim parent loses custody

When the intersection of domestic violence and child maltreatment is overlooked, non-offending battered mothers are often blamed for the abuse of their children and children can suffer from injury in the course of violence against their mother, the harmful effects of living in a violent home, and even traumatic separations from their protective parents by child welfare systems that aren't equipped to be flexible in their responses.

--National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges

Domestic Violence and Child Trauma: Principles for Intervention

- Safety first
- Therapies for children and families
 - Within the context of case management and advocacy
 - Children: groups, individual therapy, dyadic treatment with nonoffending parent; priority on strengthening this relationship
 - Important to normalize experience and decrease sense of isolation
 - Creation of a “trauma narrative”
 - Victims: support groups and individual counseling

Domestic Violence and Child Trauma: what can judges and attorneys do?

- The American Bar Association has produced a child safety guide for judges and attorneys to assist them in understanding safety issues
- Fundamental definitions:
 - Safe child: no threats of danger, or sufficient protective capacity
 - Unsafe child: threats of danger exist, and children are vulnerable, and parents have insufficient protective capacities
- The Guide provides guidance and flow charts for deciding whether children must be removed

Domestic Violence and Child Trauma: What can judges and attorneys do?

- NCTSN and NCJFCJ have produced Bench Cards for trauma-informed judges
- The Cards help judges and attorneys understand when disruptive behavior results from traumatic stress

Domestic Violence and Child Trauma: What can judges and attorneys do?

- Trauma-informed questions help judges decide which children need trauma-informed care from a mental health professional
- Judges must obtain complete information from all systems working with the child
- Ensure that trauma is fully considered in deciding where the child will live
- Insufficient information? Request an assessment (see the next Bench Card)

Domestic Violence and Child Trauma: Court-ordered mental health evaluation

Questions for the mental health professional:

- What were the results of your screening and assessment of the child and caregivers?
- What are the child's strengths, coping approaches, and resilience factors?
- Please rule in and rule out PTSD criteria (DSM-V).
- Has this child ever received Trauma-Focused, Evidence-Based Treatment?