



Children and Youth Exposed to Domestic Violence

- It is estimated that about 15.5 million children and youth are exposed to DV every year ^[26].
- A study examining over 1,500 police reports of DV in a Northeastern United States community found that 22% of Latin@ children and youth reported having witnessed DV in the past year ^[10].
- Exposure to DV can look differently for different families, children and youth may directly witness violence between their caregivers, they may hear it, or they may witness the aftermath, bruises, and other marks of abuse. Children and youth may even be asked to participate in the abuse of a parent (e.g., to report actions and whereabouts of a caregiver to the other caregiver) ^[14].

Impact of Exposure to Domestic Violence

The negative effects of exposure to DV on children and youth has been well documented in research:

- Psychological, physical, and social consequences of exposure to DV are seen across ages, cultures, and socioeconomic backgrounds ^[15].
- Infants who witness DV have been found to show symptoms related to PTSD such as trouble sleeping, refusing to eat, and having trouble keeping food down ^[4].
- Preschool aged children exposed to DV may have lower self-esteem and poorer social skills ^[15]. Another study found that 46% of Latin@ preschool aged children who were exposed to DV also experienced PTSD symptoms such as reexperiencing the event (e.g. being upset at reminders of the event, repeating statements from the event, reenacting parts the event, etc.), and heightened arousal (e.g. increased irritability, startling easily, and having trouble sleeping, etc.) ^[20].
- School aged children who witness DV, are at an increased likelihood of developing maladaptive peer relations and experience greater difficulties in developing and maintaining friendships. They also have trouble concentrating in school and experience greater internalizing and externalizing symptoms than youth not exposed to DV ^[8, 15].
- Adolescents who witness abuse may act out in negative ways, boys may become more aggressive fighting with peers and parents, while girls are more likely to withdraw and experience depression. Furthermore, adolescents may engage in delinquent and risky behaviors, such as skipping school, and using alcohol or drugs ^[27, 15].