



Children: The Silent Victims

- Children who witness domestic violence at home often display emotional and behavioral disturbances that range from withdrawal and low self-esteem to aggression against peers and property.
- 90% of children from violent homes witness their fathers beating their mothers.
- Studies show that child abuse occurs in 30 to 60 percent of family violence cases that involve families with children.
- A survey of 6000 American families found that 50 percent of men who assault their wives also abuse their children.
- Over 3 million children witness domestic violence occurrences in their homes each year.
- A child's exposure to the father abusing the mother is the strongest predictor for transmitting violent behavior from one generation to the next.

<http://www.acadv.org/children.html> and

<http://www.ncccev.org/violence>

All children are affected first and most deeply by those things that work against health and wholeness . . . (*A Vision for Children and The Church*)

A slammed door - voices raised in anger - then blows being delivered, furniture broken, the sobs of an abused spouse. These are the sounds in the night in a home where domestic abuse occurs. Though parents may hope that a child sleeps through the noise of abusive behavior, this is rarely the case. Too often, young ears hear the frightening sounds of violence.

Often children are visual witnesses of violence in the home. Even infants are traumatized by the sight of a parent being abused. Young children are terrified and feel powerless. Older children who attempt to intervene to help the abused parent may pay for it with broken bones and bruised bodies.

Where there is shame, children's spirits are wounded . . .
(*A Vision for Children and The Church*)

And children pay in other ways as well. Broken spirits and bruised psyches are less obvious, but damaging nonetheless. Children who witness violence are profoundly affected when they must live in an environment of ongoing fear and insecurity. These wounds to their spirits are not easily healed, and they have a lasting effect on a child's growth and development.

We believe that all children depend upon adults for safety and security in a world that does not always value children . . . (*A Vision for Children and The Church*)

In homes where domestic abuse occurs, children have no safe place. Whether they stay in the home or flee with a parent, their security is fragile and their safety uncertain.

Therefore we hope for a world where all children can find a safe place . . .

We hope for a church . . . where we bring good news to all those places where children are in need;

We covenant to act so that this vision may be made real for all children, now and in times to come . . . (*A Vision for Children and The Church*)

Make your church a place where children who witness domestic abuse can find safe sanctuary and healing. For resources, go to www.pcusa.org/padvn/previous-packets.htm. Scroll down to 2004 Focus on children who witness domestic violence and download the packet.

