



# ChildSavers

## Trauma Response

ChildSavers Trauma Response provides **FREE** trauma treatment to children ages 2-17.

*Childhood trauma doesn't have to last a lifetime.*

### Domestic Violence Affects Everyone in the Home

The rate of domestic violence incidence has continued to increase in the United States and has become a critically serious problem for our society. Although research on the effects of domestic violence on children in families is also growing, children continue to remain the invisible victims of domestic violence.<sup>1</sup> An estimated 3.3 million to ten million children in the United States witness some type of domestic violence including assaults against a parent by an intimate partner.<sup>2,3</sup> Domestic violence knows no limits, it crosses lines of race, culture, nationality and gender.<sup>4</sup> Domestic violence is often most disturbing for children because both victims and abusers are the adults who care for them and who are most closely attached to them. Children who live in a home with domestic violence can lose their feeling of safety in the home, creating an environment of uncertainty and helplessness.

*If your child has witnessed or been involved in a traumatic event, please call us at 804-644-9590.*



*Watching, hearing or later learning of a parent being harmed by a partner threatens children's sense of stability and security typically provided by their families.*



#### What is domestic violence?

Domestic violence is a term that describes a pattern of behaviors that are used to establish power and control over another person. Often these behaviors include acts of physical, emotional or sexual violence between spouses, cohabitants and even non-married intimate partners.<sup>2,3</sup> Acts of domestic violence can include many types of behaviors ranging from screaming, making threats, pushing or shoving, and even forced rape. Contrary to what many people think, abuse isn't just physical battering. Domestic abuse may also include emotional abuse, economic abuse, sexual abuse, coercion, isolation and a variety of other behaviors used to maintain fear, intimidation and power.

#### Impact of domestic violence on children

Children witnessing domestic violence and living in an environment where violence occurs may experience some of the same trauma as abused children. Not all children are affected by domestic violence in the same way. Children may experience some of the following;

- Aggression or irritability
- Acting younger than their age
- Behavior problems
- Depression or distractibility
- Emotional changes
- Fear
- Nightmares or flashbacks
- Poor performance in schoolwork
- Seeming numb to their surroundings
- Truancy

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View from our clinic

**Possible Effects in Children Who Witness Domestic Violence**

Children react to traumatic events such as domestic violence in different ways and the age of the child largely determines the types of behaviors that may present in children who have witnessed domestic violence.<sup>5</sup> Children exposed to domestic violence have an increased risk to repeat their traumatic experience in adulthood, either as victims or perpetrators of violence in their own intimate relationships. The table below gives age specific examples of potential effects domestic violence can have on children.<sup>4</sup>

<b>Potential Effects in Children Who Witness Violence*<sup>4</sup></b>	
<u>Age</u>	<u>Potential effects</u>
Infants	Needs for attachment disrupted Poor sleeping habits Eating problems Higher risk of physical injury
Preschool children	Lack feelings of safety Separation/stranger anxiety Regressive behaviors Insomnia Nightmares, night terrors or sleepwalking
School-aged children	Self-blame Physical symptoms for no reason you can think of (called somatic complaints) Aggressive behaviors Regressive behaviors (thumb sucking, bed-wetting, asking to sleep in parents' bed)
Adolescents	School truancy Delinquency Substance abuse Early sexual activity

\*table adapted from reference 4.

**ChildSavers Trauma Response**

Our Trauma Response program is the City of Richmond's only program devoted to immediate response and trauma counseling services for children exposed to trauma. Our services are free of charge to any child or adolescent between the ages of 2-17 who has experienced a recent traumatic event. Through our partnerships with the city's first responders, the Trauma Response team is able to provide a comprehensive set of services that aims to reduce the effects of violence on children.

**Additional Resources**

**YWCA Hotline**

24-hour hotline for free crisis intervention, emergency shelter, counseling and support  
804-643-0888

**National Domestic Violence/Abuse Hotline**

1-800-799-SAFE  
1-800-799-7233  
1-800-787-3224  
TDD 24-hour-a-day hotline staffed by trained counselors ready to provide immediate crisis intervention assistance to those in need. Callers can be connected directly to help in their communities, including emergency services and shelters and may also receive information and referrals, counseling and assistance in reporting abuse.

**References**

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**"I can be changed  
by what happens to  
me, but I refuse to  
be reduced by it."**

*--Maya Angelou*

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