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LEARNING NETWORK

LearningNetwork Brief 03

Children in Danger of Domestic Homicide

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Children in Danger of Domestic Homicide

While we recognize that children are harmed by exposure to domestic violence, we often overlook the direct harm connected to domestic homicide. As many as 1 in 5 child homicides occur in the context of domestic violence. Domestic violence death review committees in Canada and the United States have reported on the significant risks to children that are often not recognized by professionals in the field. According to the review of many tragedies, children's risks are minimized when the risks to women are recognized and safety plans are put in place.

Traditionally, it has been assumed that children who are not abused or threatened directly by a parent are not in danger. However in many child homicides, the children had not been abused in the past. The child homicide may be motivated by revenge against the mother for leaving the abusive relationship. The perpetrator can no longer access the victim but he may still have regular unsupervised contact with the children.

Current research and practice does not demonstrate certain factors that suggest greater harm for children. Promising practice is that when a woman's life is at risk based on existing risk assessment scales, the children may also be at risk. This finding has important implications for all professionals working in the health care, social service, education and justice sectors. In particular, there is a need for close coordination amongst family and criminal courts professionals to ensure that the safety plan for a parent in these

circumstances extends to the children as well.

To learn more, you can access the following studies through your local library or online databases (e.g., PsycINFO; ProQuest; PubMed):

Jaffe, P.G., Campbell, M., Hamilton, L.H.A. & Juodis, M. (2012). Children in danger of domestic homicide. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 36, 71-74.

Jaffe, P.G., Wolfe, D.A., & Campbell, M. (2011). *Growing Up with Domestic Violence: Assessment, intervention & prevention strategies for children & adolescents*. Cambridge, MA: Hogrefe & Huber.

Jaffe, P.G., Crooks, C.V. & Bala, N. (2009). A Framework for addressing allegations of domestic violence in child custody disputes. *Journal of Child Custody*, 6, 3, 169-188.