



## Supporting Children Exposed to Violence: The Facts

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### What Is Children's Exposure to Violence?

Children's exposure to violence occurs when children directly experience, witness, or are indirectly affected by violence in their homes, schools, neighborhoods, online spaces, or communities.[2] This exposure may include abuse, maltreatment, neglect, domestic violence, cyberbullying, school violence, sexual victimization, and forms of witnessing and indirect victimization.[3] Children do not have to be physically harmed for violence to have lasting effects. Living with ongoing threats or fear of a caregiver can negatively affect children's emotional, behavioral, and social well-being.[6] Exposure to violence is not always an isolated incident and often occurs alongside other forms of violence. When children experience multiple types of violence, this is known as polyvictimization, which can create a greater risk than exposure to only one type of victimization [5]. Overall, children's exposure to violence includes both direct and indirect harm in environments where children live, learn, and develop.

### Have You Heard?

- Exposure to intimate partner violence in the home may result in different emotional, behavioral, and developmental effects depending on a child's age and developmental stage [6].
- In a national study, 17.8% of youth ages 10 to 17 were classified as polyvictims, experiencing multiple forms of victimization in settings such as home, school community, and on the internet [7].
- Family, school, and peer support systems are protective factors that can help children exposed to violence [8].

### What Are the Consequences?

Children exposed to violence may suffer from psychological, mental, and behavioral challenges, with effects on educational performance and social abilities.[2] Exposure can also increase the risk of externalizing behaviors, including aggression, delinquency, and later justice-system involvement.[4] Among justice-involved youth, family violence exposure can shape recidivism risk, especially when combined with weak social support or delinquent peers.[1]

### How to Raise Awareness and Support Survivors

Adults can support children exposed to violence by recognizing that victimization can occur in a variety of spaces and forms. Because polyvictimization is linked to greater psychological harm and long-term effects, children should be connected to trauma-informed services early.[4,5] Supportive caregivers, positive peer relationships, school support, and self-regulation skills can help promote resilience.[8] Awareness efforts should focus on educating and informing families, educators, and service providers to identify warning signs and symptoms.[2] For justice-involved youth, support should also address family violence, peer influences, and social support.[8]

### Resources

#### Texas

- **Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas** – <https://cactx.org/?>
- **Texas Attorney General's Office - Crime Victims' Services** – <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/crime-victims>

#### National

- **National Child Traumatic Stress Network** – <https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/about-child-trauma>
- **Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) Vicarious Trauma Tool Kit** – <https://ovc.ojp.gov/program/vtt/introduction>
- **Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP)** – <https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/programs/children-exposed-violence>

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## Resources

- Aging and Disability Resource Center 855-937-2372
- Cyber Civil Rights Initiative 844-878-2274
- Mothers Against Drunk Driving 877-623-3435
- National Child Abuse Hotline 800-422-4453
- National Domestic Violence Hotline 800-799-7233
- National Human Trafficking Hotline 888-373-7888
- National Sexual Assault Hotline 800-656-4673
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 988
- Texas Abuse Hotline 800-252-5400
- Texas Council on Family Violence <https://tcfv.org/survivor-resources/>
- Texas Association Against Sexual Assault <https://taasa.org/get-help/>
- Victim Connect Resource Center 855-484-2846
- Victims Of Immigration Crime Engagement (VOICE) 1-855-48-VOICE (1-855-488-6423)