

HOW ARE CHILDREN AFFECTED BY EXPOSURE TO WOMAN ABUSE: AN OVERVIEW

- ✓ Serious emotional and behavioural problems are seen at greatly elevated rates (e.g., between 10 and 17 times greater) than in children from non-violent homes (Jaffe, Wolfe and Wilson, 1990).
- ✓ Children exposed to woman abuse often experience symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), including fear, anxiety, irritability, difficulty concentrating, intrusive memories of the abuse, anger outbursts and hyper arousal (Lehmann, 1997; Graham-Berman and Levendosky, 1998).
- ✓ Aggression against peers, teachers, and mothers is increased in children who witness woman abuse, particularly among boys, but also among girls (Jaffe, Wolfe, Wilson and Sluszczyck, 1986; Kerig et al., 1998).
- ✓ Emotional problems, such as depression, worry, school refusal, withdrawal from social interactions, and difficulty separating from the mother are frequently seen (Sternberg et al., 1993; Sudermann and Jaffe, 1997).
- ✓ School achievement and social development are frequently compromised, as is the development of social competence (Moore and Pepler, 1989).
- ✓ Symptoms are dependant on factors such as whether the abuse has stopped, feelings of safety by children and mother, duration and intensity of abuse witnessed, and the child's coping style and other strengths or vulnerabilities.

