

When to Seek Help

Changes in your child's mood and behavior are normal after an upsetting event and usually start to go away once the stress has gone down and the child feels safe again. But if trauma and violence continues, it can affect the brain and nervous system and lead to long-term consequences. Seek help for your child if:

- Your child's behaviors don't go away or they get worse.
- Your child is unusually sad, angry, or withdrawn.
- You are concerned that your child may harm themselves or others.
- You are overwhelmed by your child's behavior.
- The violence in the home has been extreme.
- You see a bruise on your baby before 7 months of age. Unlike older children, physically abused babies and toddlers often have no outward sign of broken bones, brain damage, or other injuries, but sometimes there are signs. Bruises are never normal before a baby tries to walk and should always prompt a visit to the doctor. Ear, cheek, neck, or buttock bruising in any age child should raise concern for abuse.

What Happens if There Are Concerns

About Your Child's Safety:

1. People can report concerns about child abuse or neglect to child protective services (CPS) and law enforcement. CPS sends workers to investigate about half of these calls.
2. When CPS determines the child may be in danger, the investigation continues. As part of the investigation, a child may be seen at the Child Advocacy Center for a medical evaluation and video-recorded interview.
3. A team of doctors, nurses, social workers, police, and prosecutors work together to help keep children and families safe.
4. A case may be referred to criminal or children's court. In most cases, CPS provides services and support to a family such as therapy, support groups, community resources, and more. Only a small number of cases lead to children being placed out-of-home.

Dear Survivor, As fellow survivors of domestic violence, we want you to know you are not alone. Help and support are available when you're ready. There are hope and options for you and your children. For many of us, reaching out for support was the first step in finding safety and healing for ourselves and our children. **You are worthy of love and respect.**

- The Sojourner VOICES Advisory Committee, a group of domestic violence survivors



GETTING HELP FOR CHILDREN & TEENS AT THE FAMILY PEACE CENTER

Front Desk:
414-276-1911

24-Hour Domestic Violence Hotline:
414-933-2722

619 West Walnut Street, 8:00 am – 5:00 pm

Families can find help at the Family Peace Center. For the most efficient service, call the front desk for an appointment. Walk-ins are also welcome. Bring this form to the front desk. Childcare is available 9am -5pm when caretakers are receiving services in the building.

- **Sojourner:** Sojourner's advocate can talk to you about family safety without sharing information with police, prosecutors, or child protective services. In addition to services for adult domestic violence victims, Sojourner provides advocacy, support and educational groups, safety planning, emergency shelter with a guardian, a summer camping program, connections to community resources, and art therapy for children and teens. 414-933-2722
- **Children's WI Behavioral Health Clinic:** Provides mental health diagnoses, therapy, and treatment to children and families. 414-810-3548
- **Children's WI Project Ujima:** Provides victims of community violence with social/emotional support, mentoring, mental health, and medical services. 414-266-2557
- **Milwaukee Public Schools Liaison:** Helps navigate and address school-related issues including enrollment, address and transportation changes, safety planning, academic concerns, social and emotional wellness, Homeless Education Program enrollment, and more. 414-810-1928
- **Wraparound Milwaukee:** Provides services for Medicaid eligible children and young adults age 5-23 who are in need of support with behavioral or mental health needs. A drop-in space for youth in crisis is available at the Family Peace Center. 414-257-7607
- **Children's WI Milwaukee Child Advocacy Center (CAC):** Provides advocacy and community resources as well as medical and mental health services for children and families referred to the CAC by medical professionals and investigators. 414-277-8980

Other Resources:

- **National Child Traumatic Stress Network:** www.nctsn.org
- **Impact 211:** A free, confidential helpline for people in need of information and help. Simply dial 2-1-1.

Children, Family Violence, and Trauma



Family Peace Center



Family violence is violence between any family members (e.g., two adults, adult and child, etc). The behavior may be verbally, emotionally, physically, financially, or sexually abusive.

Trauma can occur when a child experiences scary things that are beyond what they can cope with and can harm their developing brain. This is especially true for young children. Their sense of safety depends on whether they think the adults taking care of them are safe.

Children experience family violence in many ways. They may hear a parent threaten or insult the other, or see a parent who is angry or afraid. They may see or hear a parent physically hurt the other, cause injuries, or destroy property. They may fear future violence or that they may be hurt themselves. All children living with family violence are impacted. Up to 60% of these children may also be physically abused themselves.



1 in 4 Children in the U.S. Experience Family Violence

Reactions to Family Violence and Trauma

All children, even babies and toddlers, who live in homes with violence are affected. Children display behaviors that are clues to their distress. Signs of trauma include:

- Fear, terror, clinging to you, needing constant support
- Heart pounding, vomiting, loss of bowel or bladder control
- Throwing tantrums, aggression, resisting your authority
- Infants can be hard to soothe, and have feeding and sleeping problems
- Embarrassment, guilt, or feeling that the abuse was their fault
- Depression, anxiety, low self-confidence
- Trouble sleeping, not wanting to sleep alone, having nightmares
- Loss of skills they mastered (stop talking, lose toilet training)
- Difficulties in school, skipping class
- Confusing/conflicting thoughts and feelings about both parents
- Engaging in risky behavior (drugs, alcohol, unprotected sex)

sexual
emotional
VERBAL
PHYSICAL



What You Can Do to Help Your Child...

Children who live with family violence **can recover and heal** from their experiences. Studies show that many children who experience family violence are able to cope and stay on track developmentally. A strong relationship with a caring, nonviolent parent is one of the most important factors in helping children despite their experiences. That person can be **YOU**.

What Your Child Needs to Hear:



Tips to Help Your Child



- **Make time for your child.** This shows that no matter what's happening, they are special and loved.
- **Praise your child and celebrate their strengths.** Tell them what they do well and what you love about them.
- **Keep up routines.** Routines like a regular bedtime, mealtimes, and reading time makes the world feel predictable and secure.
- **Play with your child.** Children build relationships by playing. Playing is one of the best things you can do to help them feel more secure and connected to you.
- **Keep your child out of the middle of family violence.** Tell them to avoid breaking up fights in the home. Don't make them take sides. Don't have them talk to the other parent for you.
- **Make a safety plan.** Speak to an advocate for help. If there is no longer danger, reassure your child that s/he is safe.
- **Think about which behaviors you can ignore.** Challenging behavior is normal after trauma. Behaviors you ignore will usually go away in time. Make consequences of unacceptable behavior clear and always follow through.
- **Avoid physical punishments.** Violence teaches violence.
- **Supervise media time.** Children who watch or play violent video games, TV, and movies may act more violently themselves.
- **Talk to your child.** Children have many thoughts and questions about family violence. It may not be easy for you to talk about what happened, but talking lets your child know they are not alone with their thoughts and worries.