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## NATIONAL COUNCIL OF JUVENILE AND FAMILY COURT JUDGES

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### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND CHILDREN

#### Fact Sheet

- ◆ Estimates range from 960,000 incidents of violence against a current or former spouse, boyfriend, or girlfriend per year<sup>1</sup> to three million women who are physically abused by their husband or boyfriend per year.<sup>2</sup>
- ◆ Nearly one-third of American women (31 percent) report being physically or sexually abused by a husband or boyfriend at some point in their lives, according to a 1998 Commonwealth Fund survey.<sup>3</sup>
- ◆ An estimated 2.8 million children were reported as suspected child abuse or neglect cases in 1998 and over 900,000 of them were confirmed as victims of child abuse and neglect.<sup>4</sup>
- ◆ The U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse suggests that domestic violence may be the single major precursor to child abuse and neglect fatalities in this country.<sup>5</sup>
- ◆ Data from a 1995 Gallup Poll of family violence suggest that from 1.5 million to 3.3 million children witness domestic violence each year.<sup>6</sup>
- ◆ In a national survey of more than 6,000 American families, 50 percent of the men who frequently assaulted their wives also frequently abused their children.<sup>7</sup>
- ◆ In 200 substantiated child abuse reports, the Massachusetts Dept. of Social Services found that 48 percent of the case records mentioned adult domestic violence.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, *Violence by Intimates: Analysis of Data on Crimes by Current or Former Spouses, Boyfriends, and Girlfriends*, March 1998

<sup>2</sup> The Commonwealth Fund, *Health Concerns Across a Woman's Lifespan: 1998 Survey of Women's Health*, May 1999

<sup>3</sup> The Commonwealth Fund, *Health Concerns Across a Woman's Lifespan: 1998 Survey of Women's Health*, May 1999

<sup>4</sup> Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, ACF Press Room: HHS News, *HHS Reports New Child Abuse and Neglect Statistics*, April 10, 2000

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *A Nation's Shame: Fatal Child Abuse and Neglect in the United States: Fifth Report*, 1995

<sup>6</sup> Gallup, GH Jr., Moor, DW, and Schussel, R. 1997. *Disciplining Children in America*. Princeton, NJ: The Gallup Organization.

<sup>7</sup> Snyder, Howard N. Winter 1996. *The Juvenile Court and Delinquency Cases*. In *The Future of Children: The Juvenile Court*. Center for the Future of Children, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation. Vol. 6,3

- ◆ Children who witness domestic violence are more likely to exhibit behavioral and physical health problems including depression, anxiety, and violence towards peers.<sup>9</sup> They are also more likely to attempt suicide, abuse drugs and alcohol, run away from home, engage in teenage prostitution, and commit sexual assault crimes.<sup>10</sup>
- ◆ Slightly more than half of female victims of intimate violence live in households with children under age 12.<sup>11</sup>
- ◆ In a 1993 study, the Oregon Department of Human Resources reported that domestic violence was present in 41 percent of families experiencing critical injuries or deaths due to child abuse and neglect.<sup>12</sup>
- ◆ Children who grow up in violent homes can become violent themselves. Exposure to domestic violence can cause behavioral and emotional problems that last for a lifetime. Youth violence is unacceptably high. From 1989 to 1993, the caseload in juvenile courts rose 23 percent while the juvenile population rose by less than eight percent. During that same period, personal offense cases processed by juvenile courts increased by 52 percent.<sup>13</sup>
- ◆ Men who as children witnessed their parents' domestic violence are twice as likely to abuse their own wives than sons of nonviolent parents.<sup>14</sup>
- ◆ One study of 2,245 children and teenagers found that recent exposure to violence in the home was a significant factor in predicting a child's violent behavior.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Hangen, E. 1994. Department of Social Services Interagency Domestic Violence Team Pilot Project: Program Data Evaluation. Boston: Massachusetts Department of Social Services.

<sup>9</sup> Jaffe, P. and Sudermann, M., "Child Witness of Women Abuse: Research and Community Responses," in Stith, S. and Straus, M., *Understanding Partner Violence: Prevalence, Causes, Consequences, and Solutions*. Families in Focus Services, Vol. II. Minneapolis, MN: National Council on Family Relations, 1995.

<sup>10</sup> Wolfe, D.A., Wekerle, C., Reitzel, D. and Gough, R., "Strategies to Address Violence in the Lives of High Risk Youth." In Peled, E., Jaffe, P.G. and Edleson, J.L. (eds.), *Ending the Cycle of Violence: Community Responses to Children of Battered Women*. New York: Sage Publications. 1995.

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, *Violence by Intimates: Analysis of Data on Crimes by Current or Former Spouses, Boyfriends, and Girlfriends*, March 1998

<sup>12</sup> Oregon Children's Services Division. 1993. Task Force Report on Child Fatalities and Critical Injuries Due to Abuse and Neglect. Salem, OR: Oregon Department of Human Resources.

<sup>13</sup> Snyder, Howard N. Winter 1996. The Juvenile Court and Delinquency Cases. In *The Future of Children: The Juvenile Court*. Center for the Future of Children, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation. Vol. 6,3.

<sup>14</sup> Strauss, Murray A., Gelles Richard J., and Smith, Christine. 1990. *Physical Violence in American Families; Risk Factors and Adaptations to Violence in 8,145 Families*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.

<sup>15</sup> Singer, M.I., Miller, D.B., Guo, S., Slovak, K & Frieson, T., *The Mental Health Consequences of Children's Exposure to Violence*. Cleveland, OH: Cayahoga County Community Health Research Institute, Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences, Case Western Reserve University, 1998