

DVS1031W: Domestic Violence and its Impact on Children

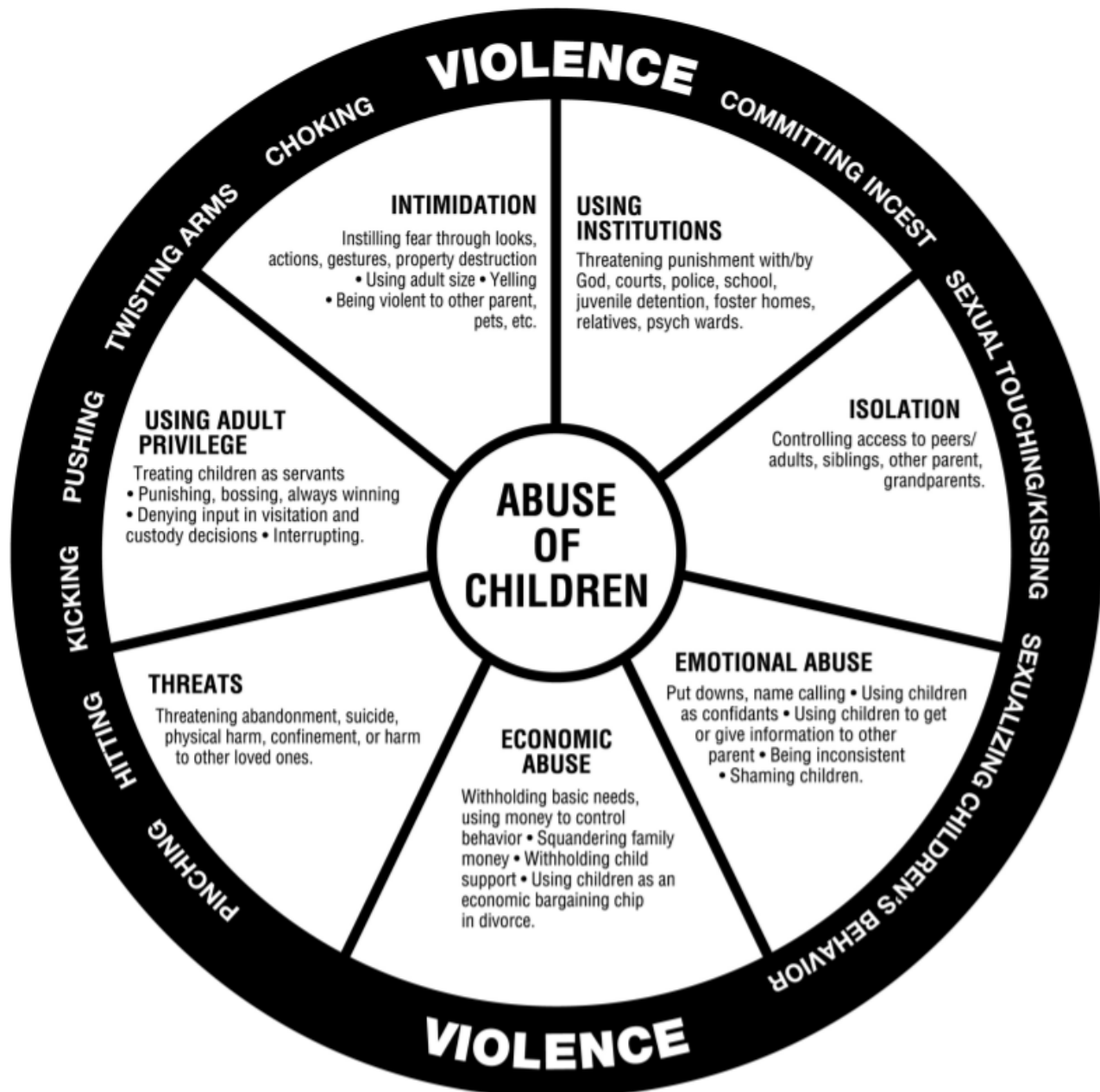
LEARNER HANDOUTS



**VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL SERVICES**



ABUSE OF CHILDREN WHEEL



THE WHEEL ON NURTURING CHILDREN



JOHNNY

Johnny is eleven years old. In spite of the violence in his family, Johnny has maintained an “A” average in school.

One day Johnny’s mom and dad started to argue while his dad was driving the car. Johnny’s dad hit his mom. When he attempted to hit her again, Johnny placed his notebook between them to stop him. Johnny’s dad pushed him back in his seat, snatched his notebook from him, and threw it out of the window. Johnny screamed. His dad slapped him and told him to shut up or he would throw him out of the car. Johnny’s face started to bruise.

The next day Johnny’s teacher requested the notebook. Johnny stated that he did not have it. The teacher knew Johnny had his notebook because she had seen him working with it the day before. She asked Johnny to stay after class. Johnny started to cry, and his classmates started to laugh and tease him. The teacher took Johnny outside to discuss the problem with him. When they were outside, she noticed the bruise on his face.

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How might the domestic violence affect Johnny emotionally?
2. How might the domestic violence affect him developmentally?
3. What is the expected impact on his ability to function at school?
4. What is the expected effect on his view of his mother/all women?

ASSESSMENT FACTORS IN CHILD INTERVIEWS

1. The nature, extent, and severity of any current or past child maltreatment.
2. How the child describes their own relationship with each parent and their own role in the family.
3. The child's perceptions about how their parents view and feel about him/her.
4. How the child presents self and their own parents, both behaviorally and emotionally.
5. The current status and condition of the child; e.g., age, specific illness, or physical condition.
6. How the child describes parenting practices; e.g., who is responsible for discipline, who manages the household, controls the finances, and cooks meals. In addition, where domestic violence has occurred, and the child has been affected, ascertain:
7. What the child knows about the parents' relationship with one another, and particularly, about instances of violence.
8. What the child believes each parent's reactions to CPS intervention are likely to be.
9. What physical, behavioral, cognitive, or emotional effects seem apparent as a result of violence against the parent.
10. What the child has seen or heard regarding violence against the parent.
11. How the child tried to intervene to help the parent. (This is especially relevant with older children.)
12. Whether the child has begun to identify with the abuser and their control, power, and rationale.

INTERVIEWING IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SITUATIONS

Five goals for interviews with domestic violence survivors:*

1. Validate the survivor's experience.
2. Explore options and advocate for the survivor's safety.
3. Build on the survivor's strengths; avoid blaming.
4. Be transparent.
5. Respect the survivor's right to self-determination.

Interviewing Guidelines

1. Determine whether anyone else has interviewed the client (e.g., police officer, teacher, nurse, or other first contact authority), and coordinate to obtain content, background, and possible impact.
2. NEVER interview the victim/survivor about suspected domestic abuse in the presence of their suspected abuser. Whenever possible, conduct these interviews in total privacy.
3. Always interview the alleged abuser last and the survivor first.
4. Ascertain if the client is afraid or otherwise not free to respond.
5. Ask questions that are clear and direct, not leading or suggestive. For example, ask, "Did someone hit you?" rather than "Someone hit you, didn't they?" Ask, "What happened to your eye?" rather than "What happened?"
6. Ask questions that focus on symptoms. For example, say, "Your son is really concerned about these bruises on your face and arms. Can you tell me what's been causing these marks?"
7. Relate the specific abuse and violence to similar experiences of anonymous persons to stimulate further disclosure.
8. Use tone of voice that is encouraging, nonjudgmental, and value-free. Guard against exhibiting your own emotional reactions to the situation.

9. Validate the survivor's feelings even when it is difficult to do so. For example, if the client expresses love for the offender after recounting graphic details of abuse. Acknowledge that the topic is upsetting.
10. Ask as many clarifying questions as necessary to ensure you obtain an accurate picture of the abuse situation and background.
11. Obtain as much historical and background information as possible, in a respectful way. Ask if the client has experienced other violent or painful times in their life at the hands of the current offender or other abusers in the past. Cycles of abuse and patterns of reporting abuse may emerge to help identify risk to the client, as well as treatment needed.
12. Identify other knowledgeable individuals who may have heard, witnessed, or know firsthand about the situation. For example, a client may have told a friend or other family members. Inform the client that additional contacts may be needed.
13. Provide encouragement throughout the process. Use prompts. For example, ask, "Then what happened?" "What happened next?" "Tell me more about..." "Tell me everything about..."
14. Be patient and persistent. Do not give up too easily if the client denies abuse, cries, changes stories, or becomes uncooperative. Coax them back into a constructive discussion so facts can be ascertained, and a plan developed.
15. Let the client know you are available when and if needed. This allows further development of facts if the client overlooked or failed to provide some information. Ensure the client knows how to get in touch with you. Advise them of the next steps in the investigation. Provide service referrals as appropriate. Note that any materials given to the survivor may place them in danger if the abuser finds them. You may need to problem-solve about whether to give materials like the Power and Control Wheel to the survivor.
16. Conclude the interview and thank the client for their participation, cooperation, and information. Promise a follow-up, and be sure to deliver on this promise.

DOCUMENTING IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SITUATIONS

Important Reminders for Documentation:

1. Any information pertaining to a confidential address of the victims (e.g., shelter location or relocation to new housing) should be flagged and never shared with the abuser.
2. Disclosures made by the victim and children regarding their safety plan or their accounts of the violence should not be shared with the abuser.
3. When information must be shared in court proceedings, victims should be notified in advance of the court date so they may plan for their safety.
4. In cases where disclosure of the domestic violence is made during court proceedings, the parents' attorneys may want to share privately with the judge the possible consequences of such disclosure and ask that it be kept sealed.
5. The safety of the survivor and the children must be considered in the planning of case transfer.
6. Write in a manner that holds the abuser responsible and avoids blaming the victim.