

**MY CHILD  
WITNESSED VIOLENCE  
at home and he can't  
sit still or pay attention.  
HE'S OFTEN GETTING  
INTO TROUBLE...**

**MY DAUGHTER  
MAKES GREAT GRADES  
and behaves perfectly.  
But when her schoolwork  
is too hard, she  
JUST FALLS APART.**

**MY SON  
is constantly told he is not  
trying hard enough.  
THEY SAY HE'S  
SMART, BUT HE  
JUST DOESN'T CARE.  
I know that's not true.  
WHAT DO I DO?**



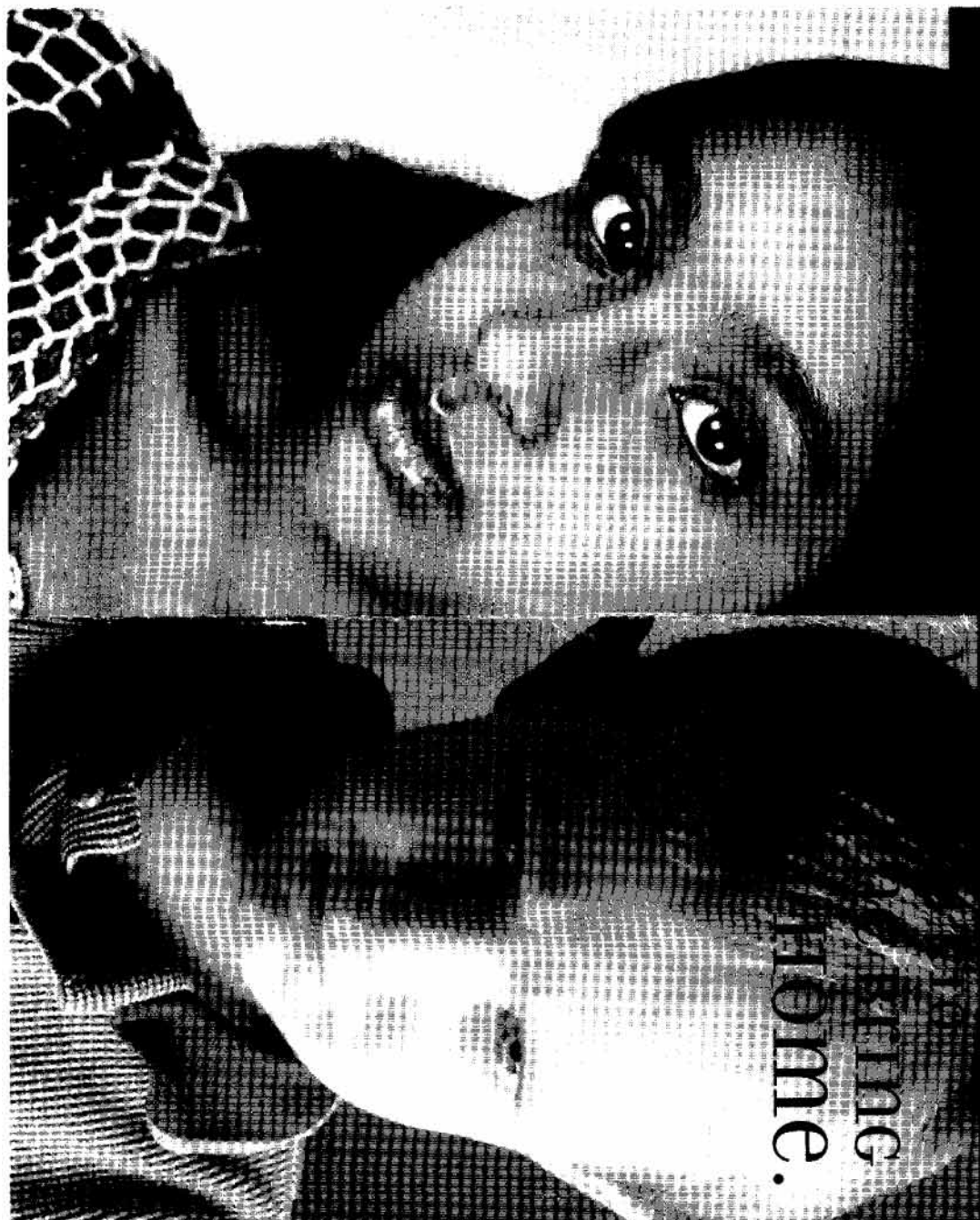
Parents' PLACE  
at the Federation for Children  
1135 Tremont St., Ste. 420  
Boston, MA 02120

Parents Learning About  
Children's Education

**DOMESTIC  
VIOLENCE  
can AFFECT  
YOUR CHILD  
AT SCHOOL**

**SAMMY WORRIED  
ABOUT ME ALL DAY  
AT SCHOOL...  
HE'D TEMPER  
TANTRUM  
UNTIL THE TEACHERS**

**BRING  
HOME.**



## CHILDREN are EXPOSED TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

when they live in a home where their primary caregiver is being abused or assaulted or where they are the direct targets of abuse.

### HAS YOUR CHILD BEEN EXPOSED TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

#### Does your child:

- Feel afraid of trying new things or meeting new people?
- Become tense or frustrated?
- Have a hard time dealing with changes in surroundings?
- Have trouble making choices?
- Act as if she doesn't care about the future?
- Have trouble paying attention or following rules at home?
- Take unreasonable risks or try to test limits?
- Not trust adults?
- Have trouble making friends?
- Feel guilty and embarrassed about the violence occurring at home?
- Struggle with depression or thoughts of suicide?
- Have physical problems (particularly younger children), such as insomnia, sleepwalking, nightmares, stomachaches, headaches, diarrhea, ulcers, or asthma?
- Have trouble expressing himself?
- Have a hard time remembering new information yet remembers things adults find unimportant?

*Some or all of these may be symptoms of trauma.*

### THESE SYMPTOMS can occur even IF:

- Children are not in the same room when violent episodes occur (for example, if they are in their bedrooms and overhear fighting).
- Children were very young when violent episodes occurred. These children are least able to express their suffering and have the fewest coping skills; they are more likely to develop the physical problems described above.
- Children are no longer in an abusive environment. Their emotional and/or behavior problems may even get worse for a while when they enter a safe environment, a phenomenon known as the "Safe Harbor Syndrome."
- Children themselves were never physically or sexually abused.
- Children's symptoms are not disruptive or obvious.

### AT SCHOOL, many CHILDREN EXPOSED TO VIOLENCE can seem TO:

- Always be on the lookout for danger.
- Be unmotivated both in and out of class.
- Be a "people-pleaser" or "overachiever."
- Have trouble following rules.
- Be tense and fearful at drop-off time or be afraid to go to school at all.
- Have difficulty understanding teacher's instructions.
- Have trouble communicating his needs.
- Have difficulty reading, writing, or expressing herself.
- Have unrealistically high expectations and become upset if he fails to achieve his goals. (Some of these children become perfectionists.)
- Have attention or behavior problems.
- Struggle with feelings of powerlessness that cause aggressive behavior or withdrawal.
- Challenge teacher's authority to compensate for feelings of vulnerability or lack of self-control.
- Overreact to minor conflicts, slights, and misunderstandings.
- Be "impulsive."

## ADULTS can MISUNDERSTAND THESE SYMPTOMS:

- Many children with undiagnosed disabilities who are not exposed to domestic violence will also exhibit these behaviors.
- Some children exposed to domestic violence will not exhibit these behaviors.

## THESE BEHAVIORS COULD BE THE RESULT OF TRAUMA AND/OR UNDIAGNOSED DIABILITIES

- Diagnoses such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Conduct Disorder and Oppositional-Defiant Disorder; Anxiety Disorder, post traumatic stress disorder, Major Depression, as well as reading and language disabilities can be present in children exposed to chronic violence.
- Such children may be entitled to special education services that address their individual needs.

**YOU can GET HELP.** If your child has been exposed to any kind of violence, he or she may need services to aid his or her emotional, physical, and educational adjustment. These services are available to low-income families at low- or no-cost.

Safelink 24 hour statewide domestic violence  
1-877-785-2020

Brockton Family and Community Resources (Brockton)  
508-583-2045

South Shore Women's Center, Inc. (Plymouth)  
508-746-2664

Child Witness to Violence Project (Boston)  
617-414-4244

Worcester Youth Guidance/Community Health (Worcester)  
508-791-3261

The Guidance Center, Inc. (Cambridge)  
617-354-2275

Children Charter/Key Trauma Clinic Project We Can Talk About (Waltham) 781-894-4307

Holy Family Hospital (Lawrence)  
978-687-0156

Women's Crisis Center of Greater Newburyport (Newburyport)  
978-465-0999

Berkshire County Children's Advocacy Center (Pittsfield)  
413-499-2800

Massachusetts General Hospital (Chelsea)  
617-887-4305

YMCA of Western MA (Northampton)  
413-732-3121

For advice on how to work with the school if your child is having academic or behavioral problems, please contact your local legal services office or:

The Federation for Children with Special Needs  
617-236-7210

Disability Law Center  
800-872-9992 Voice  
800-381-0577 TTY

Massachusetts Advocates for Children (formerly Mass. Advocacy Center)  
617-357-8431

Children's Law Center  
888-KID LAW8  
(888-543-5298)



**Massachusetts Advocates for Children**  
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