

When to Look for Help

- If a child is physically hurting him/herself or others
- If a child's problems have gone on for 3-4 months with no change
- If a child shows several of the behaviors listed in this brochure

If you are worried about a child you know well, remember that you play a very important role.

CALL FOR HELP!

Who to Go to for Help

- Teacher or School Counselor
- Clergy
- Health Care Providers
- Counselors

If the first person you talk to does not know how to help, try someone else or call one of the programs listed on the back page.



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Where to Find Help

BOSTON AREA SERVICES

**Child Witness to Violence Project
Boston Medical Center- Boston, MA**
617-414-4244

(Counseling for children ages 8 and younger and their families who have witnessed violence; professional training and consultation)

**Living After Murder Program (LAMP)
Roxbury Comprehensive Health Center-
Roxbury, MA**

617-541-3790 x733 or x719
(Support groups for people who have lost a family member or friend to murder)

Children's Charter- Waltham, MA
617-894-4307

(Trauma clinic for children and families)

**Children with Voices Program
Cambridge Youth Guidance Center –
Cambridge, MA**

617-354-2275 x139 or x116
(Counseling services for children affected by violence: Cambridge and Somerville area residents)

STATE WIDE SERVICES

SafeLink Domestic Violence Hotline
1-877-785-2020

Boston Area Rape Crisis Center (BARCC)
617-492-RAPE (7273)

Child Abuse Hotline
1-800-792-5200

**Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance
(MOVA)**
617-727-5200

Parental Stress Line
1-800-632-8188

TIPS FOR PARENTS AND OTHER CAREGIVERS

*Raising our Children
in a Violent World*



*Support Through
Difficult Times*

Child Witness to Violence Project

Boston Medical Center
One Boston Medical Center Place
Boston, MA 02118
Phone: 617-414-4244
www.childwitnessstoviolence.org

We All Want the Best For Our Children

However, many things may interfere with the way children grow, learn and behave. Some are obvious, such as the death of a loved one. Others are less clear, such as growing up with violence at home or in the community.

Although we think that children are not aware of violence, they usually see and hear more than we believe they do.

“I heard a loud noise and I thought it was a monster, but it wasn’t. It was my Daddy. He makes loud monster noises.”

It is helpful to listen carefully to children’s worries and let them know that adults are doing everything possible to keep them safe.

“After what happened in my neighborhood, I don’t go outside anymore. I’m too scared.”

Children often communicate difficult feelings with their actions rather than words.

A three-year-old boy loves to play animals at his pre-school. Teachers report that the story he plays over and over again is big animals violently assaulting the smaller animals.

What You May See if a Child is Having Trouble

- Sleep troubles, nightmares, fear of falling asleep
- Headaches, stomach aches, aches and pains (somatic symptoms)
- Increased aggressive behavior and angry feelings
- A very high activity level (hyperactivity)
- Constant worry about possible danger (hypervigilance)
- Loss of skills learned earlier such as toilet training (developmental regression)
- Withdrawing from friends and activities
- Not showing feelings about anything (emotional numbing)
- Worrying a lot about the safety of loved ones
- Having trouble concentrating
- Repetitive play about the violent event

These are some of the problems that might show up at home, school or another familiar setting when a child sees or hears violence. These same problems can also come up because of other things. If a child you know has several of these problems, witnessing violence may be one of the causes.

Supporting Children

- Healing begins with relationships. A helpful, supportive adult is the most powerful tool that we have to help children feel safe.
- Give children permission to tell their stories. It helps children to be able to talk about the violence in their lives with trusted adults.
- Give clear, simple explanations about scary events. Young children think differently than adults. They do not really understand the true causes of violence and will often blame themselves.
- Help children know what to expect. Have rules and routines so that children can predict what will come next.
- Build self-esteem in children. Children who live with violence need daily reminders that they are loveable, competent and important.
- Teach alternatives to violence. Help children learn to solve problems and play in non-violent ways.
- Take care of your own physical and emotional needs. Find someone to talk to in a safe, confidential setting about your worries.