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School Issues Facing Children in Domestic Violence Shelters

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Sanctuary for Families | **What is Domestic Violence?**

- Domestic violence (DV) is the willful intimidation, assault, battery, sexual assault, or other abusive behavior perpetrated by an intimate partner against another.
- Abuse can be psychological, sexual, physical, emotional, financial, and verbal.
- DV is an epidemic affecting all communities, regardless of age, economic status, race, religion, nationality, immigration status or educational background.
- The impact of domestic violence on survivors, their children, and the community is detrimental.


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Sanctuary for Families | **McKinney-Vento Protections**

- Students and their families who flee domestic violence have important educational rights.
- McKinney-Vento is a federal law that protects students in temporary housing who are displaced by violence. We will review some of the key protections for students in a few minutes.

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Sanctuary for Families | **DV 101: Types of Abuse**

Emotional/Psychological Abuse

- Playing mind games
- Trying to make a partner feel guilty
- Humiliating partner
- Isolating or attempting to isolate partner from family and friends
- Jealousy and possessiveness
- Making all the decisions in the relationship
- Threatening to harm self or others

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Sanctuary for Families | **DV 101: Types of Abuse**

Emotional/Psychological Abuse cont'd

- Threatening to kidnap children
- Harassment and blackmail
- Destruction of pets and/or property
- Preventing the victim from using the phone and/or transportation
- Instilling or attempting to instill fear by using intimidation
- Repeatedly making and breaking promises

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Sanctuary for Families | **DV 101: Types of Abuse**

Physical Abuse


- Grabbing, pushing, kicking
- Slapping, punching, choking
- Biting, pinching, hair-pulling
- Burning, stabbing, shooting
- Withholding access to medication, medical care, wheelchair, food, fluids, and sleep
- Forcing alcohol and/or drug use
- Physically restraining partner
- Killing

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Sanctuary for Families | DV 101: Types of Abuse

Verbal Abuse

- Name-calling
- Put downs
- Harsh tone of voice
- Verbal attacks



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Sanctuary for Families | DV 101: Types of Abuse

Sexual Abuse

- Making unwanted comments about partner's body
- Pressuring partner into having sex or performing sexual acts
- Forcing partner to have sex with other people
- Rape or sexual assault
- Assaults to the genital area or breasts

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Sanctuary for Families | DV 101: Types of Abuse

Economic Abuse

- Withholding information about family finances
- Taking money away
- Preventing the victim from attending school or from getting/keeping a job
- Requiring justification for all money spent
- Forced welfare fraud
- Running up bills that the victim is responsible to pay

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Cycle of Violence



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Effects of Domestic Violence on Children



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Sanctuary for Families | **Statistics**

- Events can be witnessed in many ways, not just by sight. Children can hear their mother's screams and crying, abusive partner's threats, sounds of physical violence. Children also witness consequences of the abuse after it has occurred. They also feel the tension in the house and in their mother.
- Many fathers/partners inadvertently injure children while throwing furniture or other household objects when abusing their female partners. The youngest children sustain the most serious injuries, such as concussions and broken bones and ribs.
- Many parents minimize or deny the presence of children during domestic violence incidents. However, children of battered women reveal that they have seen and heard violence, and can describe detailed accounts of violent behavior that their parents never realized they witnessed.
- Abusive partners use children as pawns in custody fights to coerce their female partners to reconcile with them. Often, these coercive incidents occur during court-ordered visitation.

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Sanctuary for Families | **Effects of DV on Child Development**

- *Children can experience school and social problems.*
 - Such as developmental delays-lower verbal, cognitive & motor abilities, and poor concentration.
 - less social competence-poor conflict resolution skills and poor coping skills.



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Sanctuary for Families | **Effects of DV on Child Development**

- *Children can experience emotional problems*
 - Confusion about taking sides with mother or father.
 - Powerlessness and child lacks sense of security or control over her/his daily life.
 - Ambivalence towards the abusive partner – both rage and longing for that parent.
 - Fearfulness even when things are calm, awaiting the next incident.
 - Guilt and exaggerated sense of responsibility for protecting the abused parent or sibling.

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Sanctuary for Families | **Effects of DV on Child Development**


- *Children can exhibit behavioral problems*
 - Generalized anxiety. Child may act overly anxious even when violence is not presently occurring. This fear can also manifest through recurring nightmares.
 - Depression. Child may engage in defiant or hyperactive behavior in order to mask his/her depression.
 - Separation anxiety. Child is often needy and clingy in attempt to gain attention and reassurance from adults. Child may even behave in a needy manner toward complete strangers, which in turn, puts him/her at risk for further victimization.

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Sanctuary for Families | **Witness**

- See violence
- Hear violence
- Awareness of aftermath
- Awareness of power dynamics between parents

Some of the biggest victims of Domestic violence are the smallest.



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Sanctuary for Families | **Protective Factors**

- Resilience
- Good parenting – need for parents to be emotionally available to their children despite their troubles, modeling assertive and non-violent responses to violence.
- The need for one reliable source of support and comfort.
- In adolescence, the peer group can be a positive influence.



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 **Sanctuary for Families** | **Protective Factors**


A stable school environment can be crucial to a child or youth in crisis.

State and federal law protect students in temporary housing, giving such students the right to:

- Immediately enroll in their new local school, or
- Remain in their original school, and to receive transportation.



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 **Sanctuary for Families** | **Protective Factors**

Students in temporary housing are entitled to **immediate enrollment in school**, even if they do not have:

- School records,
- Medical records **including immunization records**,
- Proof of residency,
- Guardianship papers,
- Birth certificate, or other documents normally needed.

N.Y. Educ. Law § 3209(2)(e)&(2-a); M-V Section 722(g)(3)(C)


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 **Sanctuary for Families** | **School Records**

- Enrolling school has the responsibility to request student's previous school records.
- Previous school must send records within 5 days of receipt of record request.

N.Y. Educ. Law § 3209(2)(f).

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 **Sanctuary for Families** | **Protective Factors: Meals**

All students identified under McKinney-Vento are entitled to free school meals.

- Completed meal application is not required.
- Liaisons and shelter directors should submit a list of students in temporary housing to school district Food Service staff.

U.S.D.A. Memo (July 19, 2004), www.naehcy.org/dl/usda_sp4.pdf;
U.S.D.A. Memo (April 4, 2002), www.naehcy.org/dl/usda_04_04_02.pdf

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 **Sanctuary for Families** | **School Choices**

Students in temporary housing can enroll in:

1. The school attended where the student was most recently permanently housed, or
2. The school where the student most recently attended, or
3. The school located in the attendance zone where the student is temporarily living, (or any other school that *permanently housed* students who live in the same attendance zone may attend.)

N.Y. Educ. Law § 3209(2); M-V Section 722(g)(3)(A)


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 **Sanctuary for Families** | **How Long Can a Student Stay in the Selected School?**

- **Entire time** student is temporarily housed **AND**
- Through the **remainder of the school year** in which the student moves into permanent housing **AND**
- **Possibly one additional year** if it is the student's last year in that school building (e.g. 8th grade or 12th grade).

M-V Section 722(g)(3)(A)(i)(II); N.Y. Educ. Law § 3209(2)(b)&(c); 8 N.Y.C.R.R. § 100.2(x)(2)(ii)&(iii)

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Sanctuary for Families | Who Decides Where a Student Goes to School?

- Parent
- Person in Parental Relation
- Youth, together with the homeless liaison if the youth is unaccompanied
- Director of a runaway and homeless youth residential program in consultation with the youth.

Liaisons should encourage parents to keep their children in the school of origin if it's in their best interest.


N.Y. Educ. Law § 3209(1)(b) www.sanctuaryforfamilies.org



Sanctuary for Families | Children in Shelter

- Observed behaviors
- Adjusting to new schools
- Adjusting to the rules and regulations created by the shelter system
- Special issues related to teenagers in shelter
- Services provided in the shelter specifically for children and their families


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Sanctuary for Families | School issues for children in DV shelters

- Registration difficulties related to confidential location, lack of documentation
- School staff not always aware of McKinney Vento Act
- Need for Special Education evaluation or services, especially for families from out of state
- Busing services
- Safety concerns related to domestic violence
- Behavioral issues related to witnessing DV and transitioning to a new school and environment

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Case Example: The Lawrence Family

Ms. Lawrence moved into our shelter with her three children during the summer. She had a 7 year old son, Patrick, who is diagnosed with autism, an 8 year old daughter, Melinda, and a 16 year old daughter, Tisha.

Prior to entering shelter, Patrick had been attending a specialized school in the Bronx, where the family used to live. Since moving into shelter, the mother requested that busing services be put into place to transport her son from shelter in Queens to his school in the Bronx. Ms. Lawrence also stated that she had lived in a previous DV shelter where they had not arranged busing for her son, which caused him to miss too much school, ultimately causing the family to leave the facility.

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Lawrence family, page 2

We requested busing services through the Office of Pupil Transportation, during the summer, which took a week to put into place. During this time, Patrick didn't attend school because due to his autism, he is unable to ride the subway for an extended period of time. Once the busing was in place, he was able to attend school for the rest of the summer.

At the start of the 2009-2010 academic year, Patrick's bus reverted back to his previous unsafe address in the Bronx. Therefore, we had to contact OPT again and try to have the bus route from the shelter to the school reinstated. The family had to wait 2 weeks for the new bus route to begin, and 2 days later, the family was accepted into a Tier II shelter and had to move to a new location, which would require a new request to OPT for a new bus route for Patrick.


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Sanctuary for Families | What Can Be Done?

- Talk with your school district's McKinney-Vento Liaison
All liaisons are listed online at www.nysteachs.org
- Call NYS-TEACHS for assistance: 800-388-2014, or
- In NYC, contact the STH Program Office for assistance.
Contact information is available on the NYC Department of Education website, or through NYS-TEACHS.

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Lawrence family, page 3

Ms. Lawrence planned to have her 8 year old daughter, Melinda, continue to attend school at her previous school in the Bronx. Once the 2009-2010 academic year began, and the family was traveling for hours a day from Queens to the Bronx, she decided she wanted to enroll her daughter in a local school near the shelter. At that point, the schools in the district were full and they did not have space for another student. She was then referred to a different school in the area, where she was able to enroll.

Due to Ms. Lawrence having to pick up Patrick in the Bronx from his school until the bus route went into effect, she was unable to pick up Melinda on time because their schools dismissal time were both at 3pm. Therefore, Ms. Lawrence spoke with Melinda's school to see if they could arrange for Melinda to leave early or be picked up later until her brother's bus route was set up.

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Lawrence family, page 4

Ms. Lawrence took her oldest daughter, Tisha, to be enrolled in an alternative high school. After going through the interview and application process, Tisha was accepted and started attending at the beginning of the school year. When she was enrolled, our agency provided a letter documenting that the family was residing in our DV shelter, that the address is confidential, and therefore requesting that the school use the PO Box mailing address as the child's address in the system.

The school officials informed Ms. Lawrence that her daughter was not officially registered because they did not have proof of address and that although she was given permission to attend the classes, she would receive no credit for any work she completed. At the same time, the school was unwilling to provide Tisha with a Metrocard for her to travel to and from school each day. We contacted our Family Assistant who was able to explain to the school that the family was in a DV shelter and that the PO Box address was sufficient. Once that was arranged, the Family Assistant also was able to secure a full-fare Metrocard for Tisha.

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QUESTIONS ???

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