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Kids with abusive moms may suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder

Many children whose mothers are emotionally or physically abused develop symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, according to a University of Michigan study forthcoming in the *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*.

More than half of the 64 children studied suffered from unwanted, intrusive memories or "flashbacks" of the violence, and 42 percent had sleep problems, difficulty concentrating or other symptoms of traumatic arousal, such as extreme vigilance.

About 2.3 million children each year are estimated to witness the domestic abuse of their mothers.

A related study, forthcoming in the January 1998 issue of the *Journal of Emotional Abuse*, by U-M psychologist Sandra Graham-Bermann and Michigan State University psychologist Alytia Levendosky, found that exposure to their mother's emotional or physical abuse was linked to significant behavioral and emotional problems in children as young as preschool age.

"You don't have to wait for

years to see the effects on children when their mothers are abused," says Graham-Bermann. "It shows up while they're still very young in a variety of ways, especially the way they act toward other children."

For the preschool study, pairs of trained observers recorded the social interactions and emotional adjustment of 25 children of battered women and 26 children from nonviolent homes. Each child was observed at play in a small group setting on three separate occasions.

Children of battered women showed higher rates of sadness, depression, worry and frustration than peers from nonviolent homes. Their emotional responses to events were less appropriate, and they were more likely to express anger and frustration by hitting, biting or slapping others, even when unprovoked. They were also found to verbally abuse their peers, by insulting them and calling them names, more than did children from non-violent families.

Children of abused mothers were also more likely to cope

with stressful situations by withdrawing or avoiding interpersonal contact. "Since a crucial developmental task for preschoolers is to develop appropriate and successful social relationships, the use of avoidance and withdrawal sets the child apart and reduces the possibility of learning to resolve problems with others," note Graham-Bermann and Levendosky.

These damaging effects occurred even when the actual physical abuse of mothers was infrequent, the researchers report. "After a woman has been hit once, you don't have to do it again for a long time," says Graham-Bermann. "The trauma caused by one incident of physical violence becomes chronic, for the child as well as the mother. They both live with the fear that someone's going to get hurt."

For the study examining how post-traumatic stress symptoms in school-age children were related to exposure to the mother's abuse, the researchers studied 64 children ranging in age from 7 to 12. During the last year, 60 percent of these children had

been eye witnesses to violence against their mothers. The violence ranged from verbal threats to severe physical aggression, including punching and kicking. In the course of a year, the children were exposed to an average of 72 such incidents.

Using information from the children's teachers as well as their mothers, the researchers found that 13 percent of the children met all the criteria for a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder. These included being exposed to, and intensely upset by, the violence toward the mother. About one-third of the children either had intrusive memories of the violence or tried to avoid thinking about it. About 25 percent were hyper-vigilant and startled easily. Half the children were irritable and had trouble thinking or paying attention. Boys were as likely as girls to display these and other symptoms of PTSD.

"When children are having problems in school, it's important to ask questions about violence that may be going on in the family," says Graham-Bermann.

Ameritech contributes to local groups

Ameritech has contributed \$1,000 each to six area non-profit groups to honor local Ameritech employees' volunteer efforts and dedication to the organizations.

This fall, the Ameritech Foundation is contributing a total of \$189,000 in grants to 161 eligible non-profit organizations in Michigan through a unique employee program designed to increase support for volunteerism and community service. The Ameritech Pioneer Program for Employee Volunteerism and Community Service, now in its third year, provides contributions of up to \$1,000 to organizations for which Ameritech employees have volunteered eight hours a month for at least six months in 1997. There were 201 employees in Michigan who participated in the program this year; 125 of them volunteer in

the Detroit area.

The program provides each non-profit organization \$1,000 for the first Ameritech employee who met the volunteer requirements and submitted an application and \$500 for each additional employee who also completed an application.

A number of area residents who are Ameritech employees participated in the program. Money was donated to the following organizations, listed by employee, nonprofit group and hometown:

Brenda Jenkins, Woodward Academy, Southfield
Michael Johnson, Tri-County Dental Health Council, Southfield
Mathilda David, Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic, Lathrup Village
William Livingston, DO-RE-MI Learning Centers, Inc., Farmington Hills

Sandra Provost, DO-RE-MI Learning Centers, Inc., Farmington Hills

Joseph Vryser, HAVEN, Troy
This fall, the Ameritech Foundation has awarded a total of \$752,500 in such grants to 642 organizations throughout the country. Some 790 Ameritech employees participated in the program this year, up from about 500 employees last year.

"This unique and innovative program provides a structure for Ameritech's charitable giving so that employees can help us direct our resources," said Lisa Hamway, director of corporate contributions for Ameritech in Michigan. "The program's goals are threefold: to recognize Ameritech employees who volunteer their time to community service, to provide an incentive for other Ameritech employees to

donate their time, and to link the Ameritech Foundation's grant making with employee involvement."

"The heart of any corporation can be measured by how enthusiastically its people give back to their communities. Day in and day out, the men and women of Ameritech increase the size of Ameritech's heart through cheerful giving."

"They have a long-standing desire to strengthen their communities and empower their neighbors, and they willingly offer their time and talent to make a difference," Hamway added.

Ameritech provides a full range of communications services, including local and long-distance telephone, cellular, paging, security monitoring, cable TV, electronic commerce, on-line services and more.

Hospital wants volunteers for its hospice program

William Beaumont Hospital Hospice is inviting people to become part of its hospice team by volunteering their services to support the care of patients with

terminal illness and their families.

Volunteers must be age 18 or older and have excellent listening skills, flexibility to changes

in assignments, and sensitivity to the needs of terminally ill patients and their families. Most hospice volunteers work in patients' homes in Oakland

County and the surrounding tri-county area.

For more information or to volunteer, call the Beaumont Hospice office at (248) 828-9514.

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