



# Children's Exposure to Domestic Violence Action Sheet

To commemorate October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month, the Serving Our Youth team has compiled a list of tangible ways grantees and their communities can take action to support children who are exposed to domestic violence.

## Community Based Programs Who Work with Youth

### **Build trusting, supportive, and dependable relationships with the youth you work with.**

Having positive adults in their lives who consistently make time to check in and offer support can be a major [protective factor](#) for youth who have witnessed domestic violence.

### **Disrupt hurtful or oppressive language and behavior when you see it. Co-create community agreements to set expectations in your space.**

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### **Audit your agency's youth-facing programs for safety and climate.**

Doing an organization-wide audit can help you understand what gaps in your services there are, and where safety for youth can be increased to avoid re-traumatization. [The BE SAFE Project has developed an evaluation form](#) that can help with assessments.

### **Understand what evidence-based practices support children exposed to violence.**

The U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [has compiled a list of evidence-based practices](#) for prevention, intervention/treatment, and systems response programs for children exposed to violence.

### **Understand and communicate your mandated reporter status.**

Make sure that the youth you work with understand what your mandated reporter status means for them, so they don't feel betrayed if you have to call child protective services. If you have to call, notify a non-abusing caregiver and evaluate the immediate safety needs of the child.

# Creating Safe & Supportive Schools

**Be prepared to support safety planning at school with trauma-informed policy that all school staff are trained on and understand how to implement.**

Students who have been exposed to domestic violence may have additional safety needs at school (e.g. enforcing orders of protection or making sure only a non-abusing caregiver picks them up from school).

**Communicate to families and youth what resources and services are available through your school and in the community.**

Building partnerships with domestic & sexual violence resource organizations can help streamline the referral process to get children and/or non-abusing caregivers counseling, court advocacy, and safety planning.



**Embrace trauma-informed practices school-wide.**

Experiencing trauma can impact students' mental health, behavior, academic performance, and feelings of safety. Trauma-informed practices understand the role of trauma in context and promote students' resilience. To learn more about trauma-informed schools, visit [the National Education Association's Trauma-Informed Schools](https://www.naep.org/trauma-informed-schools) page, or [TraumaAwareSchools.org](https://www.trauma-aware-schools.org).



**Promote healthy relationships messaging and programming school-wide and for all grade levels.**

Violence prevention programming can help assert healthy/unhealthy relationship behaviors and de-normalize violence. If possible, have a youth advocate or counselor in the room who can respond to potential disclosures from students.

# Engaging Men and Boys

## Be a loving and consistent presence.

We know that mentoring boys and young men requires nurturing and structure as key ingredients to healthy development--whether you're a relative, teacher, coach, or a youth-serving professional. These two elements are the main philosophy of guiding boys and young men, especially those exposed to violence.



## Lead with empathy.

As Dr. Brené Brown points out, empathy is something you do—it's an action that doesn't seek to fix things, but instead seeks to create a healthy, supportive connection. If someone discloses to you, remember to begin by listening and offering an empathetic response, before moving into how you can help.

## It's okay to wait on the tough issues.

Domestic violence can bring complicated feelings that are difficult to name or talk about, especially given stigmas unique to boys and men. Give yourself time to build relationships to create a solid foundation for the hard discussions later.

## Define your own manhood, and share with other boys and men.

Consider how common messages like “don't let a woman push you around” play a role in creating unhealthy versions of manhood and unsafe relationships for women and children. Men can decide to define themselves through healthy actions and language, and the boys and young men you work with can learn from you.

