

Effect of Domestic Violence on Children

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Conference themes addressed: Challenges of government and civil society in the eradication of domestic violence

Introduction:

Statistics indicate an increase in incidences of Domestic Violence in KwaZulu Natal with tragic outcomes for victims and children.

Cases referred for Restorative Justice Processes:

Total Domestic Violence referral for the period Mar to Dec 2007 = 55

Total referrals received for the period Jan – Aug 2008 = 173

Disguised DV cases = 43

Total Number of all DV and related DV cases: = 271

(statistics from the Justice and Restoration Project established in Phoenix in 2006 by Khulisa Crime Prevention Initiative to provide holistic crime prevention initiatives and restorative justice processes, to promote healing in the community through dialogue and conflict resolution methodology including Victim offender Mediation).

What effect does domestic violence have on children?

Violent behaviour is learnt from a young age, children are taught how to behave by their parents and if their parents are violent they will learn that violence is acceptable. From an early age children are manifesting their rage and anger emanating from their helplessness at home by engaging in risky and challenging behaviour in and out of school.

Approximately 88% of children in conflict with the law come from broken or dysfunctional homes and have been exposed to some form of Domestic Violence. (Khulisa statistics on children diverted from the criminal justice system from March 2006 – August 2008 – 995 children referred to Khulisa for Diversion).

Cycle of Violence



Can Interventions Assist Children?

Interventions have the ability to provide children the platform to discuss deep seated issues pertaining to their emotional wellbeing. Allows children the release mechanism they need to cope with stressful situations.

Children in domestic violence situations need to be equipped with Life skills, personal development, resilience building and coping mechanisms. The intervention has to be holistic in nature and sustainable. Support services in the form of “Circles of Support” must form part of the intervention to be successful. Support mechanism can take the form of “Ubuntu Clubs”, dialogue circles or community service. Children find it removes the feeling of isolation and creates a nurturing environment that allows for meaningful discussions.

Conclusion:

The Domestic Violence Act was promulgated in 1998 to offer legislative support to victims of Domestic Violence. The Domestic Violence Act is further supported by other legislation regulating assistance to family members who are victims of Domestic violence. However, there is not enough awareness created on the benefits of the Act for victims of violence, as a result it is used as a short term measure to dissuade the perpetrator from violent behaviour which constitutes “fear tactics” resulting in an

increase in violent tendencies by the perpetrator. This often results in violent acts against victims with tragic circumstances and children often become the secondary victims.

Have a look at the picture below and try to identify 10 indicators of domestic violence.