

What are Providers' Reporting Requirements for Children Who Witness Domestic Violence?

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Each year, 3.3 to 10 million children are exposed to domestic violence/abuse (DV). Providers' reporting obligations for these children are unclear. The child maltreatment statutes available on states' web sites (through August 2003) were reviewed. Only Alaska defines DV in the presence of a child as child abuse within its juvenile code. Within their child abuse definition and reporting statutes, many states include language such as "substantial risk" or "imminent danger" of "physical harm" or "mental injury." Although knowledge of the state law is an important first step, abiding by it may be challenging because most statutes are open to wide interpretation. As a result, providers are encouraged to seek advice from local child maltreatment specialists who understand the local legal interpretation and resources.

Clinical Pediatrics. 2004; 43: 449-460.