

When Children Are There: Responding to Domestic Violence Calls With Children In the Home

February 25th, 2026
1:00–2:30 pm CST



Housekeeping

- If you'd like a copy of the presentation slides today, you can access them in the chat box.
- Please look out for an email later this afternoon that will explain how you can complete the evaluation form & receive your certificate.
- If you have any questions during the presentation, please submit them in the Q & A Box.



Upcoming Events

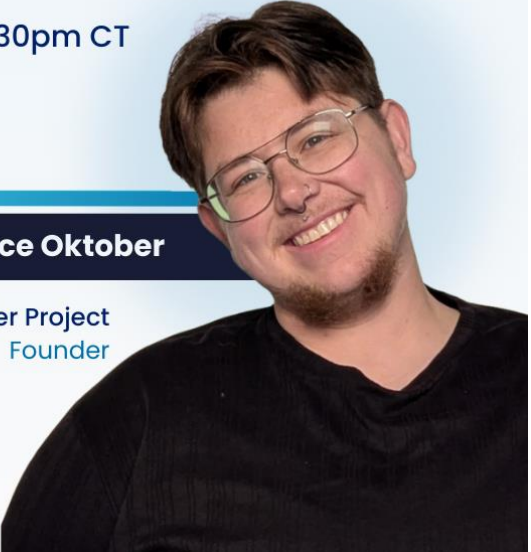
Live Webinar

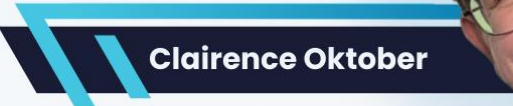
 Guardify

 **Lessons from the Frontlines:
Preventing Burnout for
Healers and Helpers** 

 Thursday, March 26, 2026

 1:00pm CT-2:30pm CT



 **Clairence Oktober**

The Lavender Project
Founder







**REAL
EVIDENCE
PODCAST**

 Guardify





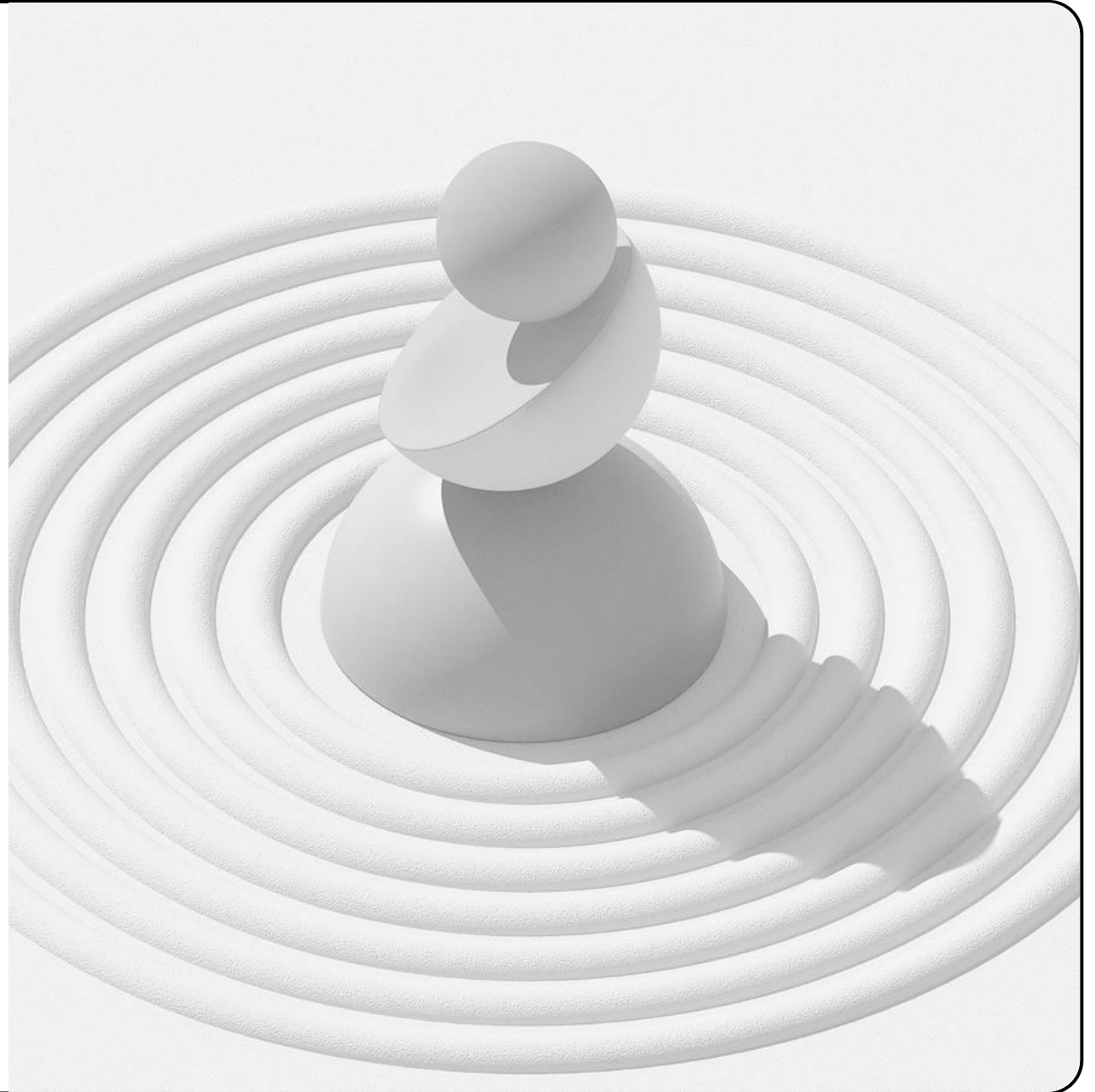
Ashley Holman

Chief Prosecutor – 489th Judicial District Court
Kaufman County District Attorney's Office

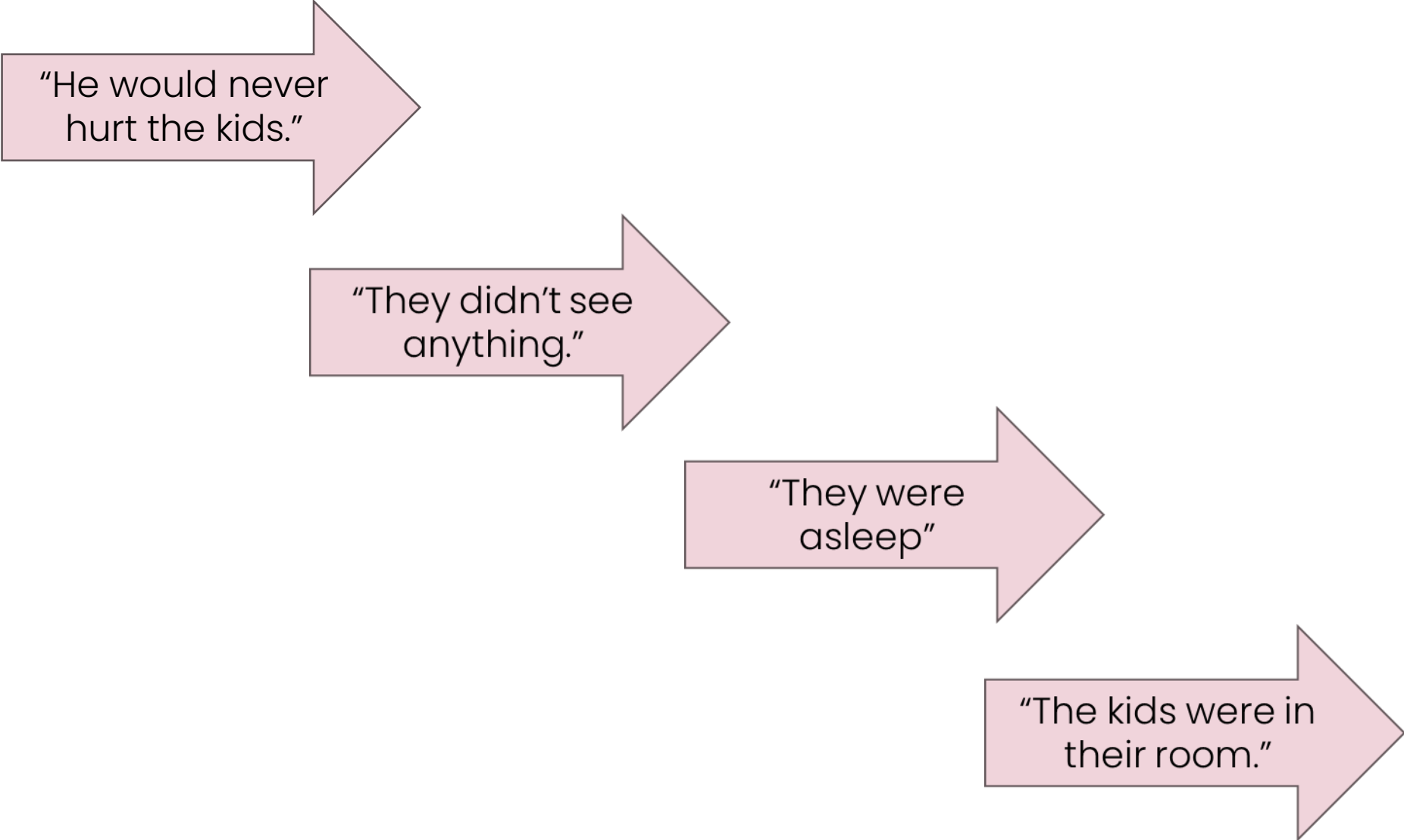


OBJECTIVES:

- Discuss the realities of these types of cases and assumptions
- Discuss legal & investigative duties when children are involved
- Gain practical guidance and tools for using an MDT approach
- Discuss the real impact on prosecution and strategies for trial



ASSUMPTIONS VS. REALITY



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graph LR; A["He would never hurt the kids."] --> B["They didn't see anything."]; B --> C["They were asleep"]; C --> D["The kids were in their room."];
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"He would never hurt the kids."

"They didn't see anything."

"They were asleep"

"The kids were in their room."



BY THE NUMBERS:

- 2 out of every 3 nonfatal victimizations of female intimate partners in the United States occur in the home. (Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Center for Violence Prevention, n.d.)
- Self reports by mothers who had experienced IPV found that 44% of their children had been exposed to the IPV. (Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Center for Violence Prevention, n.d.)
- Research suggests that in an estimated 30% to 60% of the families where domestic violence is identified, some form of co-occurring child maltreatment is also present. (Alliance For Children, 2022)



BY THE NUMBERS:

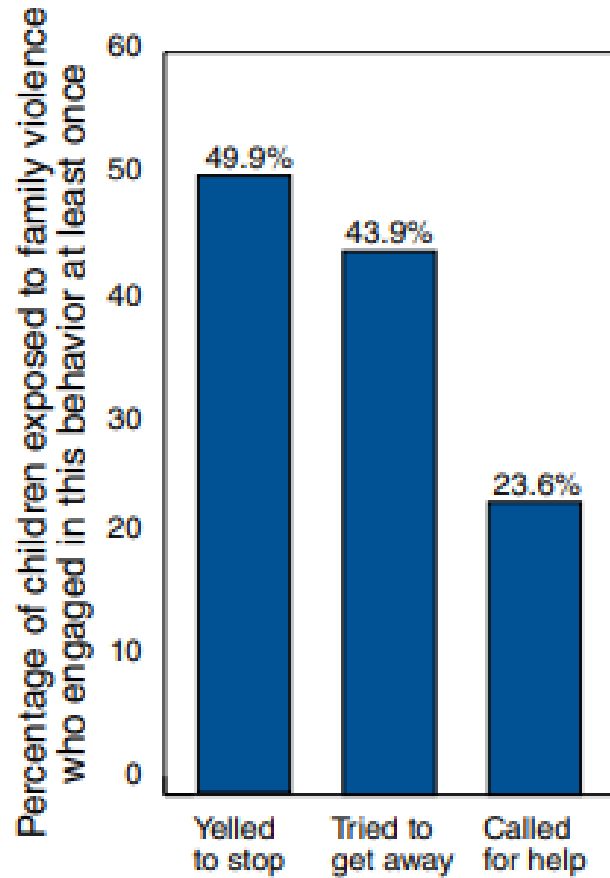
- 65% of adults that abuse their partner also physically/or sexually abuse their children. (Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Center for Violence Prevention, n.d.)
- In 2023, a nationally estimated 2,000 children died from abuse and neglect in the United States with the highest mortality in infants (< 1 year of age). (Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Center for Violence Prevention, n.d.)
- Children exposed to maternal IPV, without experiencing child maltreatment, were 40% more likely to have behavioral problems than children not exposed to IPV. (Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Center for Violence Prevention, n.d.)



BY THE NUMBERS:

- National Survey on Children's Exposure to Violence found 1 in every 4 children were exposed to at least one form of family violence in their lifetime (Hamby, Finkelhor, Turner & Ormrod, 2011)
- 90% of those children surveyed reporting seeing the violence as opposed to just hearing it. (*Id.*)

Figure 6. Children's Immediate Responses to Violence Against Parents



Total Sample Size: 4,549 Children

1 in 4 had been exposed

Almost half of youth surveyed reported yelling to try to stop the violence

43.9% had tried to get away

23.6% had tried to call for help

Source: (Hamby, Finkelhor, Turner & Ormrod, 2011)

RESPONDING TO THE
SCENE:

SCENE CONTROL VS. EVIDENCE GATHERING

1. Avoid interrupting or stopping a victim from speaking on initial arrival.
2. The time for calm will come.
3. Identify all those present in the home currently, but also those who regularly reside in the home.
4. Names, D.O.B.s, schools or places of employment
5. Do not assume or take an adult's word that minor victims or other home members did not hear the assault



WORKING WITH CHILDREN ON SCENE

- Always speak with the children away from both victim and perpetrator.
- Make sure body cam is activated or some sort of recording device.
- To interview or not to interview?
- Use your police AND your human instincts
- Be a calm presence, reassure them that they've done nothing wrong and police are there to make sure everyone in their home is safe.
- Take a photograph of the child.



ON THE SCENE:

1. Once children and other parties have given statements do a video walkthrough of the home or visually document layout with photos.
2. Connect them with resources that night and explain protective order process.
3. Include children in your protective order.
4. Set up forensic interview, or make sure there is a connection to your investigator who will be taking over.



NOTIFYING CPS

1. Notification of CPS where appropriate.
 - A. Make a thorough referral
 - B. Take note of any details provided to you in lethality assessment or family violence supplements
 - C. Note any concerns you have for victim safety or contact with the offender
 - D. Notify them of any protective orders being sought or in place.
2. Investigators USE YOUR CPS WORKERS!
3. Cases that do not start with CPS referrals may go there.

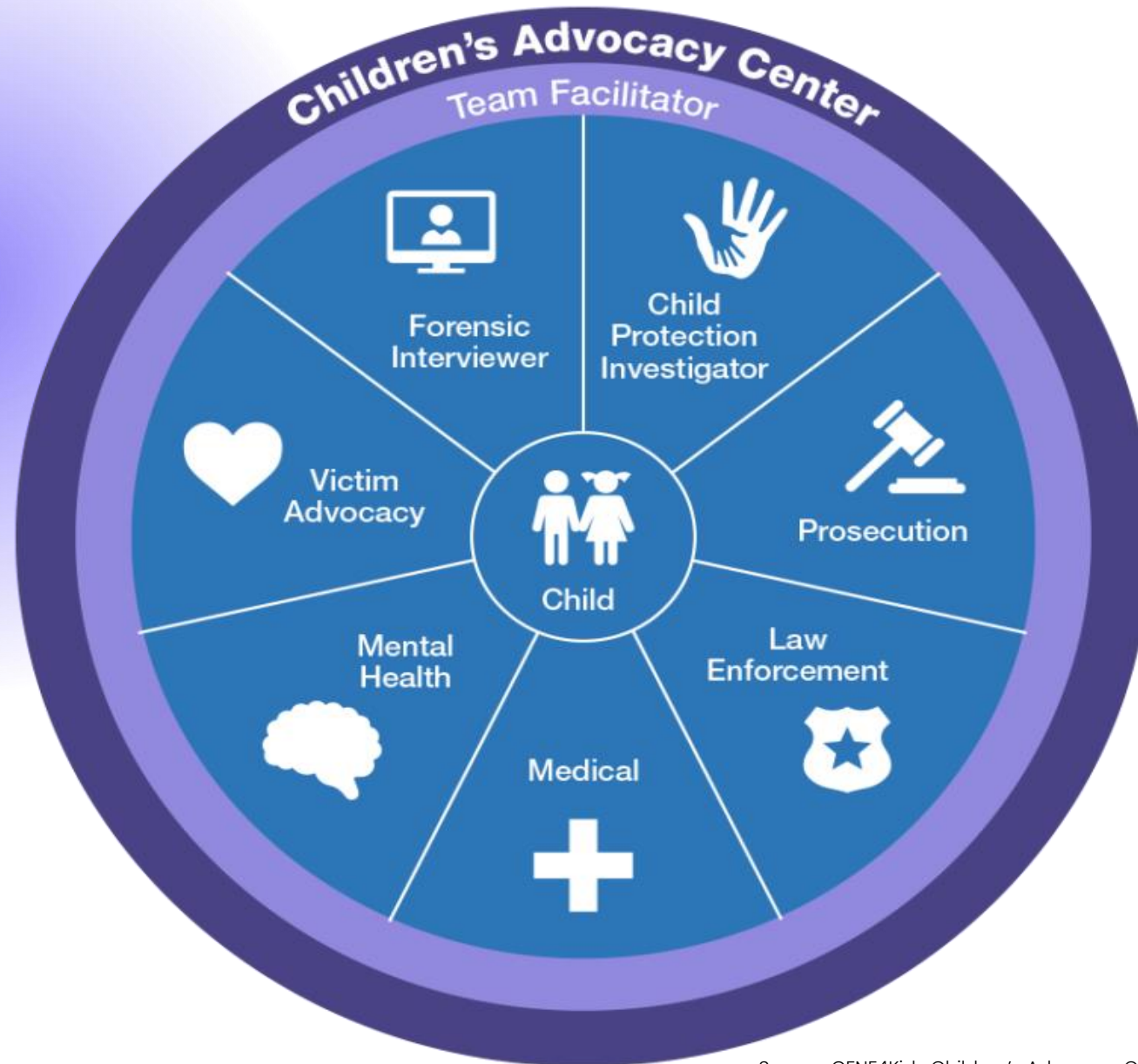


COMMON CPS SCENARIOS:

CASE SCENARIOS

SCENARIO	SCENARIO	SCENARIO
#1 Child was being held while mom was assaulted.	#4 Victim is initially cooperative and CPS closes investigation. You receive information that the perpetrator is back in the home and driving the kids to daycare with an EPO in place.	#7 You learn through interviewing your child witness, that last year defendant shoved them into a wall when they tried to get them off mom. The police were never called.
#2 After assaulting mom, perpetrator tells her if he can't have her and his family, then no one will, and if she leaves he'll kill her and the children.	#5 Police are called out to the home of a domestic violence victim for a second assault. The children were not present for defendant's first arrest. However, they are now.	
#3 Father is waving a gun towards mom and throwing plates across the room. Children are not harmed but are in and out of the room while this takes place.	#6 You learn through jail calls that not only were the children in the home the night of the assault, they heard and saw the assault and were told not to say anything.	

THE VALUE OF THE MDT APPROACH:



Source: GFNF4Kids Children's Advocacy Center: Guardians for New Futures Inc.

VALUE OF THE FORENSIC INTERVIEW:

- Details from before, during, or after the assault
- Corroborative timelines for victim
- Information on family dynamics
- History of abuse in the home
- Screen for abuse to child or other siblings
- Pre-interview screening tools/ post advocacy for the family
- Powerful for plea negotiations

Source: The National Child Traumatic Stress Network: Immediate Reactions and Long Term Effects of IPV; nctsn.org

EFFECTS OF IPV EXPOSURE:

Birth to 5	Ages 6 to 11	Ages 12 to 18
• Sleep and/or eating disruptions • Withdrawal/lack of responsiveness • Intense separation anxiety • Inconsolable crying • Developmental regression, loss of acquired skills • Intense anxiety, worries, and/or new fears • Increased aggression and/or impulsive behavior	• Nightmares, sleep disruptions • Aggression and difficulty with peer relationships in school • Difficulty with concentration and task completion in school • Withdrawal and/or emotional numbing • School avoidance and/or truancy	• Antisocial behavior • School failure • Impulsive and/or reckless behavior, e.g., — School truancy — Substance abuse — Running away — Involvement in violent or abusive dating relationships • Depression • Anxiety • Withdrawal

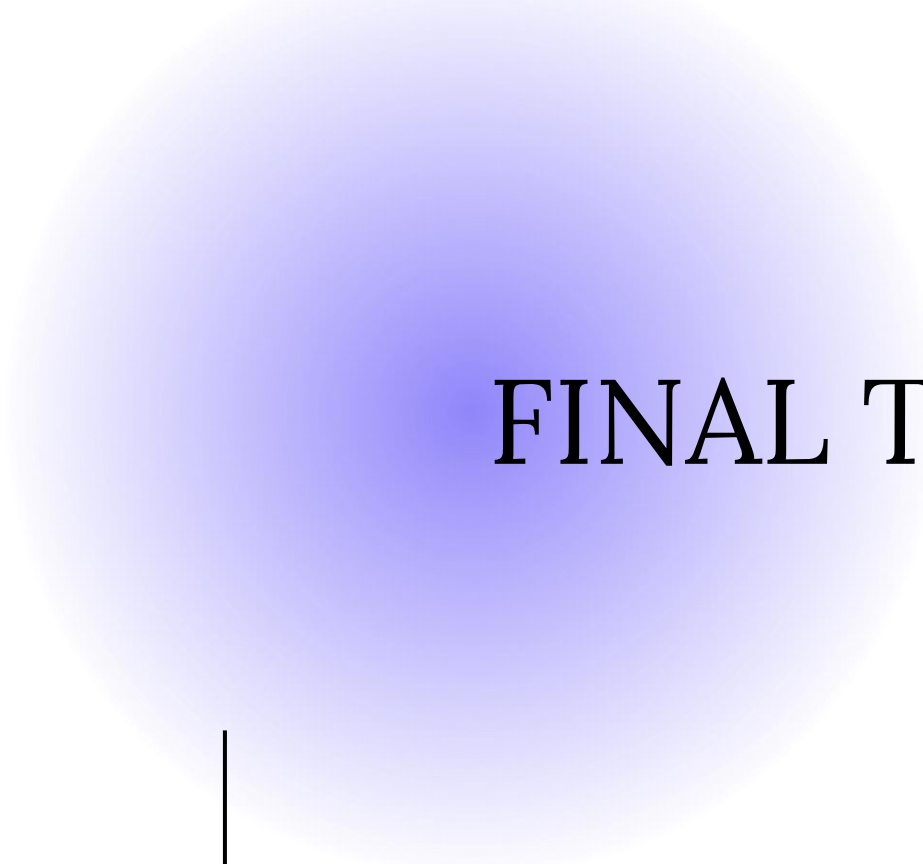
Source: *The National Child Traumatic Stress Network: Immediate Reactions and Long Term Effects of IPV*; nctsn.org

RECEIVING THE CASE AT THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

1. Confirm CPS reference number is in case file, or that the appropriate report has been made.
2. Review the report for child witnesses and their info
3. Are they subject to the protective order or conditions of bond as a protected party?
4. Do follow up forensics need to be scheduled?
5. Have they been offered any services and are they using them?
6. Subpoena CPS Investigative Records
7. Determine what if any role a child witness will play in your case early and start building rapport.

PREPARING A CHILD TO TESTIFY:

1. Rapport building meeting
2. Lay out ground rules with victim and child
3. Encourage and connect with appropriate resources
4. Court room visit
5. Explain what you will be asking them.
6. Explain what a cross examination may look like.
7. Plan for courthouse safety and security



FINAL THOUGHTS...





THANK YOU FOR WHAT YOU DO!

CONTACT:

ASHLEY HOLMAN
CHIEF PROSECUTOR-489TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT
COURT
KAUFMAN COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S
OFFICE
ASHLEY.HOLMAN@KAUFMANCOUNTY.NET

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- <https://gfnf4kids.org/cac-multidisciplinary-team/>