SUMMARY: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND CHILD MALTREATMENT

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Pregnancy is a high risk time for domestic violence. The batterer may see the child as competition and therefore be more abusive during pregnancy.

1. As a result of an assault, the mother may miscarry (child fatality).
2. The fetus may be injured during the assault (physical abuse).
3. The mother may not be able to focus on the baby's needs if she is being battered, e.g. pre-natal care; planning for baby (neglect)
4. Being battered during pregnancy may decrease maternal capacity to attach, especially if the baby is the assailant's and is a male (emotional neglect)

Domestic violence can be closely related to child maltreatment.

1. Battering behavior is highly correlated with physical abuse of children.
2. Women who are being battered may neglect their children.
3. Women who are being battered may in turn abuse their children.
4. Children may be caught in the crossfire during situations of domestic violence.

Leaving the battering relationship may increase risk for serious harm.

1. Many homicides occur when women try to leave their batterers (resulting in child endangerment and need for placement).
2. Children may be neglected when their mothers are concentrating on getting out of a battering relationship.
3. Children may become homeless when their mothers leave a battering relationship.
4. Children may be at increased risk of being kidnapped by the batterer when their mothers leave the batterer.
5. Domestic violence marriages may be characterized by instability and frequent moves, which impede children's sense of safety and school performance.
6. In order to seek safety for themselves, battered spouses may flee, leaving their children behind.

Being a victim or perpetrator of battering may lead to parental absence (and therefore need for alternative care arrangements for children).

1. Women who are battered may require hospital treatment for injuries.
2. Women who are battered may have mental health problems and need hospitalization for these problems.
3. A batterer may be incarcerated.
4. A batterer may be disallowed access to his children.
5. When parents are killed in battering incidents, alternative care is needed for children.
6. Sometimes batterers are given custody of children when their battered partners cannot take care of them (endangerment).

Observing battering of a parent or mutual parental assault can have detrimental effects on children.

1. Children may be traumatized by seeing a parent assaulted (psychological abuse).

2. Once a child has observed assault of a caretaker, the child may live in constant fear of assault recurring.
3. Children, who have observed the physical and verbal abuse of a mother, may incorporate demeaning and negative views of women.
4. Boys in situations of domestic violence may devalue their mothers and sisters, resulting in physical or verbal abuse of females.
5. When parents are verbally and physically assaultive to one another, children may come to view intimate relationships as characterized by conflict and aggression.