

Supporting Children and Families Experiencing Violence: How athletic coaches can help!

“Why Do You Coach?”

Unanticipated Challenges of Coaching?

What are the unanticipated emotionally loaded challenges of coaching you experience?

OR

What are the different hats you wear as a coach?

What are Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)?

The ACE Questionnaire asks about:

1. Verbal abuse
2. Physical abuse
3. Sexual abuse
4. Emotional neglect
5. Physical neglect
6. Separation or divorce of parents
7. Exposure to domestic violence
8. Use of drugs or alcohol by caregiver
9. Caregiver with mental illness or suicide attempts
10. A caregiver going to jail



What are Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

What are adverse childhood experiences and why do they matter?

Why should they matter to us as coaches?

The ACEs and DV Connection



ACEs are relatively common- 60% of population has experienced at least 1 ACE

20% of the population has experienced 3 or more ACEs

12.4% of population experienced 4 or more ACEs

12.7% of participants reported their mother was treated violently

Once a child witnesses domestic violence, their chance of experiencing every other ACE significantly increases



FAIRFAX COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF
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Defining Domestic Violence

Pattern of coercive behaviors used by an individual to gain and maintain power and control over another individual in the context of an intimate/dating relationship.

Manifestations of violence and coercive behaviors can include:

- Emotional
- Physical
- Spiritual
- Financial
- Verbal
- Sexual
- Use of technology
- Use of children

How Children Witness Domestic Violence

Witnessing the actual violence occurring

Hearing the violence

"Feeling" the violence

- "Every time the floor moves, mommy is getting hit"

Being used in the violence

- Often to control or manipulate the victim

Participating in the violence by coercion or force

Intervening to protect

- Being assaulted in the "line of fire"

Dealing with the aftermath

Using Children in Abuse...

...As a pawn to control the survivor

...to demean the survivor as a parent

...to try to gain allegiance of children

...as direct victims of abuse

How Many Children?

1 in 4 children in our community live with domestic violence in their homes

- 4 kids on a baseball team
- 3 kids on a soccer team
- 3 kids on a basketball team

On a single day, **39% of the families** in Shelter House's housing programs reported having a child or children who had participated in athletics.

Of those families, **39% reported** that at some point, their child or children had to **stop participating in sports due to a barrier the family could not control** (such as loss of income, violence in the home, or relocation).

Coaches Can Make a Difference

Intervening around domestic violence in the home is a community-wide intervention to prevent future violence

If we focus on this now, we are creating a safer community

Coaches Can Make a Difference

- **Violence can show up on the field:**
 - Aggressive parents or parents hyper-focused on their child's performance
 - Players' mental health or behavior challenges
 - Missed practices
 - Poor performance
 - The “perfect” athlete - failure is not an option

You're coaching the *holistic athlete*.

Resiliency in Children- “3 to Succeed”

Resiliency: "The ability to cope with stress caused by challenging situations."

Early intervention can prevent or mitigate the consequences of early adversity

“Protective Factors” refers to the supports, opportunities and relationships our youth need across all aspects of their lives to achieve their potential.

The Fairfax County Youth Survey shows that when youth have three or more positive protective factors, they are more likely to:

- Manage stress
- Make better choices
- Develop healthy habits

Protective Factors- Athletics play a critical role in building the resiliency of a child!

Stable, caring
relationships with
adults*

Ability to form
relationships*

Intelligence

Outgoing, flexible
temperament

Extra-curricular
activities*

Connection to
culture

Understanding family
life:

- Someone else has a problem and I'm not to blame

Physical health*

High self-esteem*

Opportunity for
mastery*

Caring 4 Kids Video on DV

Rob Hunt, from the South County Athletics Association, speaks about the importance of supporting kids experiencing domestic violence.

[Step Up 4 Kids: Child Witness to Domestic Violence - YouTube](#)

How a Coach Can Help When Worried About a Child

Show team members how to solve conflict peacefully

Encourage and build a child up, especially if their parent or caregiver is critical of the way they play.

Take a quiet minute after a game to remind a child you care about them and they are more important than their performance on a field or in the gym.

Help a child find things they are good at doing or highlight them

Help a child see failure as a chance to learn something new.

Notice the child might be having a hard time, ask how you can help

- I saw you were having a hard time with batting practice today, I'm wondering if you're okay or if there's anything you want to talk about.

How You Can Help When A Child Discloses DV

Build a trusting relationship with child

Let the child know you're concerned

Remind a child the bad things happening are not their fault

Do not make promises you cannot keep

Tell the child you will need to tell other adults who can help

Check in regularly with the child

Know your resources, use them, and share them with others!

Resources

Step Up 4 Kids Posters

Caring 4 Kids Videos

Children and DV Resource Card

Step Up 4 Kids Athletics Website

How the Athletic Council can help

Incorporate Caring 4 Kids videos into annual pre-season training for coaches.

- All coaches sign off that they have received the training and know who to call etc. Can embed in website.

Hang posters in clubs that have offices or locker rooms

Professional Resource Card hard copy and electronic – get to CYA/SYA/Annandale/Mt Vernon offices?

- Consider how to include smaller clubs is where there will be a gap.
- Could send it out virtually through athletic field scheduling system

Domestic Violence Can Follow Kids for a Lifetime

I can't be soothed when I cry
because one adult in my home is afraid of the other.

I may be less likely to explore
because I am afraid.

You can help!
Provide consistent comfort, stability
and routine to an infant.

fairfaxcounty.gov Search: **Step Up 4 Kids**

Domestic and Sexual Violence
24-Hour Hotline 703-360-7273



Where a TTY number is not indicated, use 711/Virginia Relay. Reasonable accommodations provided upon request, call 703-324-9493.

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Domestic Violence Can Follow Kids for a Lifetime

I hit my classmates

because I see adults using physical violence at home.

I am more likely to be a victim

or use violence in the future.

You can help!

Help a child learn how to resolve
conflict without violence.

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Domestic Violence Can Follow Kids for a Lifetime

I fall asleep in class
because I hear my parents yelling at night.

(Because of violence)

I am more likely to use
substances in the future.

You can help!
Talk with youth about their home life.

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Domestic Violence Can Follow Kids for a Lifetime



I outperform on the athletic field
because I'm afraid of being in trouble if I fail.

I am more likely to experience
anxiety and depression now or in the future.

You can help!
Help a youth learn to manage disappointment.

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Domestic Violence Can Follow Kids for a Lifetime



I outperform on the athletic field
because I'm afraid of being in trouble if I fail.

I am more likely to experience
anxiety and depression as I grow and as an adult.

You can help!
Help a youth learn to manage disappointment.

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Step Up 4 Kids

Working with Victims and Children Experiencing Domestic Violence

Domestic violence can exist in many forms and is not just physical. It is also:

- Emotional/psychological
- Verbal
- Spiritual
- Financial
- Sexual
- Cultural
- Abuse of children
- Digital

Keep in mind that **it takes time to build a relationship** with a child or potential victim that **helps them feel safe enough to disclose violence. Sometimes disclosure happens over time.**

If a child discloses:

- **Allow** them to take their time telling their story in their words
- **Stay calm and thank the child** for sharing
- **Validate** their concerns and feelings
- **Ask** if anything makes them feel unsafe or worried
- **Reassure** the child the violence is **not their fault**
- **Avoid making promises** about things not in your control
- **Refrain** from communicating with the alleged offender
- **Explain** to the child how you can help and provide regular check-ins

**Fairfax County 24-Hour
Domestic & Sexual Violence Hotline:
703-360-7273**



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If a parent discloses:

- Ask the victim if they have concerns for their or their child's immediate safety
- If so, ask if you can call the 24-Hour Domestic and Sexual Violence Hotline (703-360-7273) together; this is known as a warm handoff

Take Action

Within 24 hours of a disclosure:

- **If you have a concern about child abuse or neglect**, call Child Protective Services: **703-324-7400** (victim permission not required).
- If the victim does not want to call the 24-Hour Domestic and Sexual Violence Hotline, **call the Hotline yourself to obtain referrals and resources.**
- Obtain consent to **connect the victim to other services** and call with them to make the connection.
- **Follow your agency's mandated reporter policies** regarding alerting supervisors about domestic violence.

Within 48 hours:

- **Follow up** with the victim about any immediate referrals
- Determine whether additional referrals may be helpful

On an ongoing basis:

- Check-in regularly with the victim and child about safety and services
- Obtain consultation as necessary from supervisors or colleagues
- Call the 24-Hour Domestic and Sexual Violence Hotline as necessary for additional support or referrals

FairfaxCounty.gov Search: **Step Up 4 Kids**

The Step Up 4 Kids Initiative shares the vision of One Fairfax in providing equitable access to services for all. All services, including the 24-Hour Domestic and Sexual Violence Hotline, are available in multiple languages.



Where a TTY number is not indicated, use 711/ Virginia Relay. Reasonable accommodations made upon request; call 703-324-5730.

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