

# **SERVING THE INVISIBLE VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: FOSTERING THE WELL-BEING, SAFETY, AND RESILIENCY OF CHILDREN WHO ARE EXPOSED TO VIOLENCE**

A Report of the Subcommittee on Children Exposed to Domestic Violence  
of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women  
National Advisory Committee on Violence Against Women

## **Executive Summary**

The final report of the Subcommittee on Children Exposed to Domestic Violence of the U. S. Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women's (OVW) National Advisory Committee on Violence Against Women (NAC) is the product of that body's examination the problems that these children may face and the challenges associated with meeting their needs. It reflects the Subcommittee's efforts to identify opportunities to raise awareness of the problem and enhance capabilities and capacities to serve these children.

As charged by the NAC, the Subcommittee has produced recommendations for consideration by the U. S. Departments of Justice and Health and Human Services (HHS) to improve their respective agencies' responses to the problem of children exposed to domestic violence. Several core principles guided the Subcommittee's development of its recommendations. These principles are:

- Children's exposure to domestic violence is a dimension of family violence.
- Children exposed to domestic violence are victims of that violence.
- The capacities and capabilities of existing services should be utilized to serve children exposed to domestic violence.
- The overarching strategic goal of programs and services for children exposed to violence should be to build resiliency in these children.
- Government policy should support family, church, school and community networks to provide safety and security to children, and only as a last resort should government become the protector of children exposed to violence.
- The federal government can both directly and indirectly act to mitigate the effects of children's exposure to violence and reduce both future victimization and the risk of perpetuation of violence.

The key recommendations of the Subcommittee were as follows:

- 1. It is the opinion of the subcommittee that Federal agencies should take steps to increase their coordination with state agencies in making decisions concerning the award of grants to service providers.**
- 2. It is the opinion of the subcommittee Federal agencies should make the case for early identification and screening of children who witness violence in any initiative that they implement under their auspices or finance at the state and local level through grants or contracts.**

- 3. It is the opinion of the subcommittee the Department of Justice and Department of Health and Human Services should explore opportunities to leverage existing resources to improve this nation's awareness of and response to, the problem of children exposed to violence.**

**Children Exposed to Domestic Violence Subcommittee:**

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