

## Children & Domestic Violence Checklist (Investigation Guidelines)

### 1. Upon Arrival at Scene

- Locate children. Determine their whereabouts.
- Identify each child by name, sex, and age
- Determine child's proximity/involvement with incident

### 2. Check on Child's Well Being and Physical Condition

- Note child's demeanor and emotional state
- Note any evidence of injury

### 3. Provide Reassurance/Support to Child

- Identify yourself and explain your role
- Talk to each child in a safe place away from suspects, victim, and siblings
- Try to get the child to relax
- Tell them you are there for their safety
- Tell the child that the violence is not their fault

### 4. Talk to Child (Ask simple non-leading questions)

- Get down on your knees or sit to face the child
- Do not force the child to talk
- Ask "Why do you think I am here"
- Ask "Tell me what happened"
- Ask "What did you see or hear?"
- Ask "Has this ever happened before?"
- Ask the child if they were hurt during the incident
- If child or caregiver reports injury, call EMS for assessment

### 5. Assess for Risks of Imminent Harm to Children

- Determine if perpetrator has violated any court order in effect for the child
- Determine if domestic violence has been increasing in frequency and intensity
- Assess perpetrator for lethality indicators such as display/use lethal weapon(s) at the scene, threatening suicide or homicide, hostage taking or stalking, inflicting severe violence when using alcohol/drugs and/or with an untreated psychosis or mental health disorder
- Determine if child can remain safe at scene

### 6. Determine if Need for Protective Custody

- Consider protective custody when the child is at imminent risk of abuse/neglect if not taken into custody

### 7. Child and Family Resources

- Offer Children and DV booklet
- Give DV Protection Act Victim's Right Forms and available resources

### 8. Completing Incident Report/DV Supplemental Report

- Document child's name, age, location, level of fear, and risk of imminent harm on the DV supplemental report
- Indicate if child is a witness or a victim in the incident report
- Describe the nature of assaults or threats
- Describe child's involvement with the incident
- Document child's demeanor and emotional state
- Record what the child saw/heard at scene
- Document any assistance/referrals given, or CPS reports
- Document EMS assistance and names of EMS personnel

## Guidelines for CPS Referral in DV Cases

**King County Day Time, Mon-Fri Intake Number:**  
**1-800-609-8764/FAX Number: 206-389-2442**  
**Statewide After Hours Intake Number:**  
**1-800-562-5624/Fax Number 206-464-7464**  
**Police Press 9 for next available intake worker**

### 9. Telephone CPS Immediately to Triage Child/Youth's Safety Needs at the DV Scene When:

- KCSO places child into protective custody
- The child is assaulted or injured during the DV incident
- Perpetrator violates child NCO and/or protection order
- Discharge of a firearm or use of a lethal weapon in the presence of child
- The child expresses fear that perpetrator will kill or injure someone in the home
- Perpetrator commits severe acts of violence and threatens to kill the child
- Perpetrator displays a pattern of lethality indicators (See section 5). The child remains at high risk of severe injury or death if perpetrator has access to the child.

This card provides guidelines for officers responding to domestic violence incidents where children are present. The checklist is intended to assist officers by highlighting common investigation steps. The guidelines on this card will not always be applicable in their entirety because of differing circumstances.

**10. Must Make CPS Referral Within 24 Hours When:**

- ❑ The child/youth is at risk of substantial harm from the domestic violence. Examples may include:
  - *Perpetrator interference with child/youth's attempts to report DV*
  - *Perpetrator throws object that could hit and injure the child (reckless endangerment)*
  - *Child in physical jeopardy during assault or destruction of property (child gets caught in DV cross-fire but not injured or child attempts to intervene in DV)*
  - *Perpetrator forces/coerces child to participate in the DV*
  - *Perpetrator displays firearm or lethal weapon in child's presence*
  - *DV patterns escalating in severity or frequency in last 90 days*
  - *Child/youth is witnessing or forced to participate with perpetrator in killing or torturing of a family pet*
  - *Child experiences changes in patterns from exposure to repeated DV incidents (such as sleep deprivation, increased aggressive behaviors, wetting the bed, chronic fear, anxiety or depression)*
  - *Perpetrator interferes with the provision of the child's minimal needs of food, shelter, health, or safety*

**11. Should Consider a CPS Referral When:**

- ❑ Consider CPS referral when the child may be at risk of harm. When in doubt, contact your supervisor, call CPS Intake or FAX report to CPS.
- ❑ Examples may include:
  - *Perpetrator acts in a cruel, humiliating, and dehumanizing manner to child at a DV scene*
  - *Perpetrator blames child for the domestic violence*
  - *Perpetrator has a history of abuse to children*

**This pocket guide was developed in partnership with the following agencies:**

King County Sheriff's Office

King County Department of Community and Human Services

King County Prosecuting Attorney

Public Health – Seattle & King County

Region Four,  
Washington State Department of Social and Health Services

## King County Sheriff's Office

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### Children/Youth and



### Response

