

# POLICE REPORTS OF CHILDREN'S EXPOSURE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN SAN FRANCISCO

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**Education, Training, & Research Associates**

5616 Geary Avenue, Suite 207  
San Francisco, CA 94107

[www.etr.org](http://www.etr.org)

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## Behind the Numbers

With the support of the SafeStart Initiative and through a contribution from Polaris Research on behalf of the San Francisco Greenbook Project, Education, Training, & Research Associates (ETR) collected data from nearly three thousand case files in the San Francisco Police Department's Domestic Violence Response Unit. Although this report focuses primarily on "the numbers," the following case vignettes are provided first as illustrations of the real life experiences of families and children exposed to domestic violence in San Francisco.

- ◆ In January of 2003, a mother and father begin fighting over their children. The father has been drinking and is yelling at the kids. When the mother tries to defend her children, he grabs her hair and hits her in the face three or four times, knocking her out of her chair. He then kicks her five or six times on the left side of her head. Their five year old son begins screaming and is taken out of the room by the suspect's brother. The man then grabs a knife and brings it to the victim's face, repeatedly threatening to kill her. The suspect continues to hit and kick the woman until officers arrive.
- ◆ In January of 2003, a mother pleads with the father not to drive drunk with their three year old son in the car. The father responds by grabbing the mother's hair, throwing her to the ground, and kicking her six times in the head. The son tries to help his mother but is shoved to the side. This couple has a long history of unreported domestic violence.
- ◆ In May of 2003, a man beats and chokes his girlfriend in front of their three month old daughter. He threatens to kill her, their three month old daughter, and himself. He punches the woman more than fifteen times in the face, head, and stomach and attempts to stab her with a pen. A neighbor calls police and the man resists arrest when they arrive. He continues to threaten the woman. This is the third time the police have been called to this house.
- ◆ In June of 2003, an ex-boyfriend attempts to rape the mother of a five year old boy. The son hears a commotion in the bedroom and his mother screaming for help. The child attempts to get into his mother's room, but can only bang on the door and yell for the offender to stop. Both mother and son escape to the son's room and lock the door behind them. The ex-boyfriend punches through the door and chases the mother into the living room. He grabs a chef's knife and starts swinging it back and forth, threatening to kill the woman. The mother and son flee out the front door to a friend's house to call police. The police are unable to locate the ex-boyfriend at the time of the report.
- ◆ In June of 2003, a two year old and a nine year old witness their mother being beaten by her husband. The woman is beaten for an extended period of time in several rooms of the home. She is strangled, hit, kicked and threatened with death. The woman fights back with an iron and screams repeatedly for help. Her two year old calls 911.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In June 2003, the San Francisco Superior Court issued a court order for Education, Training, & Research Associates (ETR) to collect data from case files located in the San Francisco Police Department's (SFPD) Domestic Violence Response Unit (DVRU). Over an eight week period, ETR reviewed and gathered data from 2,904 case files based on police-investigated domestic violence incidents occurring between January 1, 2002 and June 23, 2003.

The following report summarizes the data collection process, examines current SFPD policy and practice, presents a descriptive analysis of the available data, and concludes with a new estimate of the prevalence of children's exposure to domestic violence in San Francisco.

## **BACKGROUND**

In recent years, children's exposure to domestic violence has been recognized as a serious problem. The potential consequences of children's exposure to domestic violence include emotional and behavioral disturbances such as low self-esteem, social isolation, nightmares, and aggression against peers, family members and property (Peled, Jaffe, & Edleson, 1995).

Available data indicate that many children, and young children in particular, are at risk of exposure. Children are disproportionately present in households affected by domestic violence and children under the age of five are overrepresented among those children (Fantuzzo, Boruch, Beriama, & Atkins, 1997). Researchers have found that about half of the women who experience domestic violence have children under the age of 12 in their households (Fantuzzo & Mohr 1999). The National Family Violence Survey estimates that approximately 3.3 million children each year are exposed to domestic violence. Other researchers estimate that up to ten million children witness physical and verbal partner abuse each year across the nation (Carter, Weithorn, & Behrman, 1999).

The existence of wide-ranging prevalence estimates (3.3 to 10 million children per year) leads us to examine the processes by which children's exposure becomes known to society and how those processes help inform stakeholders about the nature and prevalence of children's exposure. Several public and private organizations – such as schools, day care providers, women's shelters, community-based organizations, and medical service providers – often help identify children who exhibit symptoms of being exposed to violence. In some cases, Child Protective Services may intervene if the domestic violence situation results in an injury to a child or puts a child at significant risk of physical injury. However, it is likely that the police play the most vital role in identifying adult and child victims as they are often the first to respond to domestic violence situations.

Despite existing efforts of the police and others to identify and serve victims of domestic violence, many incidents are never reported to authorities (Carter, et. al., 1999). Recent literature indicates that only one third of actual incidents are reported to California law enforcement (Bugarin, 2002). Women may be reluctant to notify police for a variety of reasons, including economic dependence on the batterer, shame, and fear of reprisal. A recent literature review indicates that this phenomenon may be particularly present for women of color, who often face cultural and language barriers that discourage them from reporting intimate partner violence to official sources (Erwin and Vidales, 2001). Other people do not report domestic violence because they believe it is a personal matter or that it is not serious enough to report (Hart & Rennison, 2003).

Even though many domestic violence incidents do not get officially reported, police departments likely remain one of the most vital sources of information for providing much needed insight into

the phenomenon of children's exposure violence. However, there may be several limitations to using police report data, especially those data related to domestic violence incidents. First, as stated above, domestic violence often goes unreported to police – it is likely that police records reflect only a proportion of actual incidents in the community. Second, the reliability of police data depends greatly on the reporting and training policies of police departments and the practices of its personnel. For example, since police departments are not traditionally trained on the need to identify exposed children, reports about the presence of a child at the scene of a domestic violence incident other than as a witness are rare (Lemon, 1999). Research also indicates that if a situation *is* reported to the police and an arrest is *not* made, there is a good chance the incident will never be officially recorded (Maltz, 1999).

To improve the quality of information about domestic violence and children's exposure in San Francisco, SFPD issued a revised version of their policy regarding police response to and documentation of domestic violence (for the complete text, see appendix A) in March 2003. The policy requires that SFPD "will treat all acts of domestic violence as criminal conduct and when the elements of a crime exist, police officers will arrest instead of using dispute mediation or other police intervention techniques."

The policy also states that officers should "investigate and write an incident report for any crime that involves domestic violence." Required reporting mechanisms include the completion of a routine incident report and a domestic violence supplemental checklist (480A and 480B) for every domestic violence related incident, including court protective orders, threats, and stalking. The supplemental forms were designed to capture detailed information on the nature of the incident and the status of the family, including information on the presence of children.

This report will describe data collected from the routine incident report and supplemental checklist and provide detailed information about rates and findings found in the aggregate data. Comparisons will be made between data reported by police and the data police are required to report, pursuant to police policy. However, these data cannot tell us how and whether officers have been trained and encouraged to use the forms. This report also focuses on providing insight into the nature and prevalence of children's exposure to domestic violence in San Francisco.

## **DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

ETR designed a database that included all relevant variables from the incident and supplemental forms. Although the files were reviewed in detail, no identifying information was ever collected. A team of trained data collectors extracted information from files in the DVRU for eight weeks in the summer of 2003.

After consulting with the DVRU Lieutenant, a decision was made to focus resources on investigated case files, which include the more serious and substantiated domestic violence incidents most relevant to SafeStart. Officers examine several factors when determining whether a case warrants further investigation, including the severity of the offense, the willingness of the victim to cooperate with authorities, and the availability of the offender. Therefore, ETR only collected data from *investigated* case files. The data collection effort focused on three core sections of the case file, including the *narrative* (a free-form section used to generally describe the incident/situation), the *incident report* (a generic incident report form), and the *supplemental checklists* (a domestic violence specific report which includes detailed family and child information).

Investigated case files could contain information about multiple incidents related to a single domestic violence case. For example, if a domestic violence incident occurred in March of 2002

and a restraining order violation related to the case occurred in May of 2002, both incidents would be filed in the same case file. In files including multiple incidents, ETR gathered information from the most recent domestic violence incident. If there were multiple reports for a single incident, ETR gathered data from the report which included the most complete information.

ETR collected basic information from every reviewed investigated case file, including: report date; police district; victim's zip code (not the location of the incident); offense type; and the presence of supplemental checklist forms. When the case file indicated that there was at least one child on the scene *and* that one or more of the supplemental checklist forms were present, detailed information from the supplemental checklist was gathered. The supplemental checklist forms 480A and 480B are provided in Appendix B. The 480A provides details about medical treatment received, the nature of the injuries and information about the victim's gender, language, and appearance. The 480B contains information about the offender-victim relationship, domestic violence history, and existing restraining orders. The 480B also contains a section detailing the age, demeanor and any statements made by any children at the scene.

Data were collected from all investigated case files with incidents occurring between January 1, 2002 and June 23, 2003 – resulting in a total of 2,904 reviewed files.

## **FINDINGS**

### **POLICE PRACTICES RELATED TO INFORMATION GATHERING**

An analysis of the data indicates that fewer than 60% of the case files contained the required supplemental checklist forms (59% of the 2,904 case files reviewed included 480A forms and 55% contained 408B forms). When officers did fill out a 480A or 480B, they often left items or entire sections blank. For example, officers did not record whether or not the suspect was on parole or probation in nearly a third of investigated case files. (According to SFPD, parole status is generally ascertainable. However, probation conditions may not always be computerized and require the DVRU to find this information in follow-up investigations.)

**Fewer than 60% of the case files reviewed contained the required supplemental checklist forms.**

If the presence of one or more children was recorded by officers in the narrative section, the supplemental checklist forms were more likely to be included in the file. A 480A was found in 68% of the case files where a child was identified at the scene, and a 480B was found in 65% of the case files. In contrast, officers recorded the presence of at least one child in the narrative section and failed to subsequently complete the supplemental checklist forms in 16% of the case files. According to SFPD, victims often report the incident to police at a location other than the scene of the incident. If the children are absent when a report is made, the officer may not complete the section on the supplemental checklist that refers to children.

Since supplemental checklist forms were not present in all files, the remaining results presented in this report have limitations due to missing and/or incomplete data. First, according to prevailing research, the information gathered by police is likely to represent just a fraction of the actual amount of domestic violence occurring in San Francisco. Second, the quality of much of the available data is poor - results contained in this report might have been quite different if a more complete dataset was available. Therefore, it is important to consider the following descriptive results with caution.

Finally, the findings that follow are based on the data contained within the sample of supplemental checklist forms that were associated with incidents of domestic violence where

officers recorded *that at least one child was present*. That is, the following results describe the characteristics of police-documented *families with children* involved in domestic violence in San Francisco, and not domestic violence incidents in general.

### ARRESTS AND EMERGENCY PROTECTIVE ORDERS (EPOs)

The following section uses available police data to identify suspect arrest rates and the proportion of victims with Emergency Protective Orders (EPOs) administered at the scene. Data are presented geographically to facilitate interpretation. In San Francisco, the SafeStart Initiative focuses on the implementation of a community-based family support model that extended service coordination, case management, and clinical services to families in five zip codes (94108, 94110, 94115, 94117, & 94124) and is looking to expand into zip code 94134.

The data reveal differences across police districts and zip codes. However, further study is needed to examine why these differences exist. While the differing sample sizes across police districts are likely to account for some of the variation in arrest rates presented in Tables 4 and 5, it is also likely that other factors, including differences in the neighborhoods served and differences in resources and practices across police districts, may also be important. The data reflect arrest rates for investigated cases only. Several factors (e.g., the severity of the offense, the willingness of the victim to cooperate, and the availability of the offender) are considered before a case is investigated. However, the arrest rates presented here do not take into account the differences in the severity of the incident within investigated cases. Therefore, difference in arrest rates may also be explained by the distribution of more serious crimes in some neighborhoods.

1. ARRESTS BY ZIP CODE: Overall, officers reported that suspected perpetrators were arrested in 85% of the case files reviewed. However, rates of arrest varied greatly across zip codes (see Table 1). For example, officers reported lower than average arrest rates in two of the SafeStart zip codes, 94115 and 94134.

*Table 1: Domestic violence suspect arrest rates by victim zip code\**

Service Area	SF Victim Zip Code (# of Files Reviewed)	Percent of Suspects Arrested
SafeStart service delivery area	94110 (n=67)	90%
	94124 (n=113)	85%
	94134 (n=37)	76%
	94115 (n=16)	69%
	<b>Average in SafeStart Area (n=233)</b>	<b>84%</b>
Areas not currently served by SafeStart.	94102 (n=28)	89%
	94109 (n=18)	89%
	94112 (n=37)	89%
	Missing zip code (n=76)	87%
	94122 (n=18)	83%
	Out-of-town (n=21)	81%
	94132 (n=15)	73%
	<b>Average outside SafeStart Area (n =213)</b>	<b>86%</b>
	<b>Citywide Arrest Rate (n=446)</b>	<b>85%</b>

\*Zip codes with less than 15 reviewed case files were excluded from this analysis.

2. **ARRESTS BY DISTRICT:** As shown in Table 2, rates of arrest also varied greatly by police district (69% to 100%). Officers in the Northern district reported the lowest rate of arrest, while officers in the Tenderloin district reported making arrests in all of the reviewed case files. Please note that there is not perfect overlap of SafeStart service delivery areas and police districts.

*Table 2: Domestic violence suspect arrest rates by police district\**

Service Area	SF Police District (# of Files Reviewed)	Percent of Suspects Arrested
SafeStart service delivery area	Central (A) (n=23)	91%
	Mission (D) (n=64)	91%
	Bayview (C) (n=152)	84%
	Northern (E) (n=39)	69%
	<i>Average in SafeStart Area (n=278)</i>	84%
Areas not currently served by SafeStart.	Tenderloin (J) (n=20)	100%
	Richmond (G) (n=17)	94%
	Taraval (I) (n=68)	94%
	Southern (B) (n=24)	92%
	Park (F) (n=18)	83%
	Ingleside (H) (n=89)	83%
	<i>Average outside SafeStart Area (n=236)</i>	89%
<b>Citywide Arrest Rate (n=514)</b>		<b>87%</b>

\*Zip codes with less than 15 reviewed case files were excluded from this analysis.

3. **EMERGENCY PROTECTIVE ORDERS:** An Emergency Protective Order (EPO) is a temporary protection order that legally protects the victim from the presence of the suspected offender for five business days. Officers provide the court commissioner or duty judge with the circumstances surrounding the domestic violence incident and the commissioner or judge determines whether an EPO will be applied. One of the goals of the EPO approach is to temporarily protect a victim until a more permanent restraining order is sought by the victim. Officers reported an EPO was issued at the scene in 89% of the case files. According to Table 3, officers in SafeStart zip codes reported issuing EPOs at about the same rate as the citywide average.

**An EPO was issued in 89% of the case files reviewed.**

*Table 3: Proportion of EPOs issued as reported on 480B by zip code\**

Service Area	Zip Code (# of Files Reviewed)	Percent of Files with EPOs Issued
SafeStart service delivery area	94110 (n=67)	91%
	94124 (n=117)	90%
	94134 (n=38)	89%
	<i>Average in SafeStart Area (n=222)</i>	90%
Table 3 continues on next page...		

Table 3 Continued...		
Service Area	Zip Code (# of Files Reviewed)	Percent of Files with EPOs Issued
Areas not currently served by SafeStart.	Missing zip code (n=71)	93%
	94102 (n=26)	92%
	94122 (n=20)	90%
	94112 (n=36)	89%
	94109 (n=17)	88%
	Out-of-town (n=22)	86%
	94132 (n=12)	83%
	94103 (n=18)	78%
	<i>Average outside SafeStart Area (n=222)</i>	89%
<b>Citywide Arrest Rate (n=444)</b>		<b>89%</b>

\*Zip codes with less than 15 reviewed case files were excluded from this analysis.

4. RESTRAINING ORDERS: Although officers report issuing EPOs to most victims, they report that just 17% of victims held *current* restraining orders.

### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HISTORY

Police forms include a section for the reporting of previous domestic violence.

1. DOCUMENTED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HISTORY: Thirty-three percent of the reviewed 480Bs indicate prior *documented* domestic violence history.
2. UNDOCUMENTED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HISTORY: Officers reported *undocumented* domestic violence histories in 55% of reviewed case supplemental checklist forms

### CHILDREN'S EXPOSURE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Officers are mandated by police policy to document the presence of children (age 18 and under up to eighteen years) in the investigated case files. The following section analyzes available police data to describe observed characteristics of children exposed to violence in San Francisco. It should be noted that SFPD has reported that some confusion may exist over the need to list victims in both the initial report and the supplemental checklist. This issue will be reviewed and clarified once a DVRU committee is convened.

1. DOCUMENTED CHILD EXPOSURE: The review of the police reports (including the incident report, the officers' narratives, and the supplemental checklist forms) identified 862 case files where at least one child was exposed to the domestic violence incident. That is, officers indicate the *actual presence* of children during the domestic violence incident in about 30% of reviewed files.

According to officer narratives, children were either directly involved in the violent incident (see case vignettes on page 3), in direct view of the incident, within earshot of the incident, or in the vicinity at the time of the incident. It should be noted that the supplemental checklist forms only included reference to 738 children. That is, despite having recorded the presence of at least one child in the narrative, officers failed to

subsequently report required child information in the supplemental checklist forms in about 16% of the case files.

2. **PHYSICAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN:** According to data in supplemental checklist forms, a child was also identified as a victim of physical abuse in about 6% of the reviewed files.
3. **CHARACTERISTICS OF EXPOSED CHILDREN:** When the presence of at least one child was found in the case files (either in the narrative or in the supplemental checklist forms) and when the files contained at least one of the two required supplemental checklist forms, more detailed information was gathered. As shown in Table 4, about 68% of the case files that documented the presence of children included the required supplemental checklist forms. Some case files included multiple 480A forms. Therefore, a total of 611 forms were reviewed.

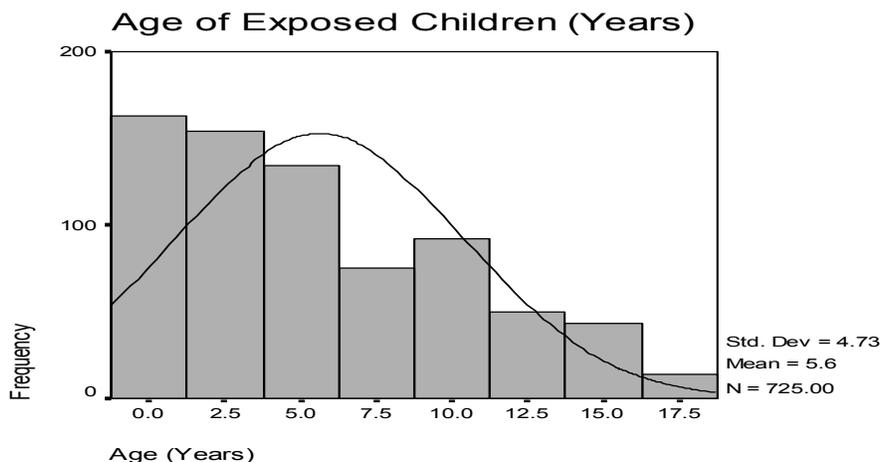
*Table 4: Number of case files and supplemental checklist forms with evidence of the presence of at least one child.*

	Number of Case Files	Percent of Total
Number of case files where at least one child was present (as documented in the narrative and/or supplemental checklist forms)	862	n/a
Number of case files where a child was present and a 480A form was present	585	67.8%
Number of case files where a child was present and a 480B form was present	559	64.8%

4. **AGE OF EXPOSED CHILDREN:** In case files where the presence of at least one child was documented *and* a 480B was included, officers recorded information about the children in 84% of the reviewed case files. When they did record child information, officers reported the age of the child about 98% of the time. The average age of exposed children is 5.6 years. As shown in Figure 1, the majority (62%) of exposed children were between birth and 6 years of age.

**Sixty-two percent of exposed children were between birth and 6 years of age.**

*Figure 1: Distribution of age of exposed children*



5. LOCATION OF CHILDREN EXPOSED: As shown in Table 5, about 47% of the children identified on the supplemental checklist forms live in zip code areas currently served by SafeStart or in the proposed expansion area. Thirteen percent of the cases where children were listed on the 480Bs were missing victim zip code information. Eight percent live in zip code 94112.

Table 5: Number of children exposed in SafeStart areas

Geographical Area	Zip Code	Number of children	Percent of Total
SafeStart Service Delivery Area	94124	174	24%
	94110	91	12%
	94134*	49	7%
	94115	18	2%
	94117	7	1%
	94108	5	1%
	<i>Number in SafeStart Area</i>	344	47%
Areas not currently served by SafeStart	Missing zip code	95	13%
	94112	57	8%
	94102	37	5%
	Out-of-town	30	4%
	94103	25	3%
	94133	10	1%
	94122	29	4%
	94109	20	3%
	94132	20	3%
	94107	12	2%
	94116	12	2%
	94130	10	1%
	94118	9	1%
	94121	9	1%
	94104, 94123, 94111, 94127, 94143	8	1%
	94114	6	Less than 1%
	94131	5	Less than 1%
<i>Number outside SafeStart area</i>	394	53%	
<b>Citywide Total</b>		<b>738</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*Total may not add to 100% due to rounding.

## DERIVING A NEW PREVALENCE ESTIMATE

Data gathered from DVRU's case files provide insight into the nature of domestic violence in families with children, the characteristics of families living with domestic violence, and the challenges of gathering reliable information through law enforcement agencies.

Additionally, the data gathered from the DVRU provide a foundation for the extrapolation of a usable range of estimates of the prevalence of children's exposure to violence in San Francisco. According to the data collected, at least one child is exposed to domestic violence in about 575 families each year. Since the police data also indicate that there are an average of 1.6 children per family, the data lead to an estimate that at least 920 children are exposed to domestic violence each year. However, based upon a review of the literature, discussions with

researchers and law enforcement officials, and an analysis of the case file data, it is likely that the actual prevalence rate is much higher. This conclusion is based on the following points.

- For many reasons, domestic violence often goes unreported. The most recent literature indicates that only one third of actual incidents are reported to law enforcement in California (Bugarin, 2002).
- More than 40% of the case files did not include the required supplemental checklist forms used to identify and describe children at the scene. When the forms were included, officers did not report information about children at the scene 16% of the time.
- Police officers recorded the presence of children in about 30% of the reviewed files. However, the literature indicates that young children are overrepresented in families experiencing domestic violence. In fact, researchers have found that about half of the women who experience domestic violence have children under the age of 12 in their households (Fantuzzo & Mohr 1999). The proportion of women who experience domestic violence who have children age 18 and under must be even higher. Therefore, it seems likely the proportion of domestic violence incidents with at least one child under the age of 18 present is likely to be closer to 60%.
- Based on the data collected, we estimate that the average San Francisco family living with domestic violence includes about 1.6 children. However, families served by SafeStart have an average of 2.75 children per family.

The formula for calculating a new range of prevalence estimates includes the following critical factors:

- *Number of DVRU case files with at least one child:* This constant is the number of files in which ETR determined at least one child was recorded in the narrative and/or the 480B.
- *Underreporting factor:* This number represents the factor by which domestic violence crimes are underreported. Prevailing knowledge suggests that only one-third of domestic violence is reported to the police.
- *Officer error factor:* This number represents the factor by which officers do not report the presence of a child at the scene of a domestic violence incident. As detailed above, the data lead to an estimate of the number of children at the scene to be twice as high as reported by the police.
- *Average number of children:* Current data indicate the average number of children per family exposed to domestic violence ranges between 1.6 and 2.75.
- *Per year factor:* This constant adjusts for the fact that the data collected by ETR represent a year and a half worth of data. Data are transformed into yearly estimates for ease of interpretation.

Six graduated estimates for each of the factors were generated based on current results and previous research (Table 6). Factors in the “actual” column are based strictly on the data found in the DVRU case files. The factors in the “Est. 1” to “Est. 5” columns represent a range of estimates from the most conservative to the most liberal, based on current knowledge. The factors in the “Average” column are based on an average of all the estimated factors. Factors in each column were multiplied (i.e., Number of case files with at least one child \* Underreporting factor \* Officer error factor \* Average number of children per family \* Per year factor) to create a

range of prevalence estimates. Estimate 4 (Est. 4) is likely to be the most reliable “best” estimate based on a review of the literature, discussions with researchers and law enforcement officials, and an analysis of the case file data. The conservative number (Average) is based on an average of the factors, which assumes that there is some error in reporting, but that the error may not be as high as current knowledge leads us to believe.

Table 6: Prevalence formula factor estimates

	Actual	Est. 1	Est. 2	Est. 3	Est. 4*	Est. 5	Average**
Number of case files with at least one child (constant)	862	862	862	862	862	862	862
Underreporting factor =	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	2.25
Officer error factor =	1	1.3	1.6	1.9	2.1	2.4	1.72
Average number of children per family =	1.6	1.9	2.1	2.4	2.7	3	2.28
Per year factor (constant)	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67
Total number of kids	919	2140	3881	6584	9824	14489	5071

\*Best estimate

\*\*Conservative estimate

This process leads to the conclusion that the actual rate of children’s exposure to domestic violence is up to ten times the current prevalence documented in police records. The current analysis indicates at least 5,071 children (our conservative estimate) and as many as 9,824 children (our best estimate) are directly exposed to domestic violence in San Francisco each year. Based on the numbers found in the examination of DVRU files, approximately 60% of those children are likely to be under six years old. Using the latest U.S. Census figures for the number of children living in the city (111,754), we conclude that nearly 5% to 9% of San Francisco’s children are directly exposed to domestic violence each year.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SAN FRANCISCO SAFESTART INITIATIVE

### POLICE POLICY & PRACTICE:

The data show that fewer than 60% of the case files we examined included the supplemental checklist. When the forms were included, they were often missing critical information. According to SFPD, the 480A and 480B forms were developed in November 2001 and made available to all districts in early 2002. In February 2002, DVRU began conducting trainings in the district stations. These trainings are in addition to training officers receive at the Police Academy on the proper completion of incident reports. However, completion of the supplemental checklist was not required by the General Order until March 2003.

Other factors may also provide an explanation for missing data. Poor form design, the victim’s reluctance to divulge information about the incident, their family or the offender, and unclear policies about the need to list victims in both the initial report and supplemental checklists may all affect data quality. Furthermore, while most districts received roll call trainings in early 2002, the SafeStart liaison had not conducted any roll call trainings by June 2003, when data collection began. Therefore, some districts may not have received all of the training needed to fully integrate the supplemental forms into day to day police practice.

These findings are preliminary and further study is needed to identify areas for future improvements at SFPD. Additional training and reinforcement of police policy will ultimately improve the overall quality of data related to children's exposure to violence. However, we are encouraged by the amount of reporting that officers are doing despite the fact that the General Order was not issued until March 2003. Continued improvements are expected as the forms are assimilated and become a routine part of police incident reporting.

In response to this paper, the DVRU has proposed conducting further roll-call trainings with a special emphasis on completion of the 480A and 480B forms. In addition, inspectors from the DVRU will form a separate committee to review the reporting procedures and make recommendations for improving the overall effectiveness of documenting all victims of domestic violence. Finally, the DVRU has suggested that additional data collection take place to determine whether form completion has increased since June 2003. ETR and the SafeStart Initiative look forward to collaborating with SFPD in the future.

#### PREVALENCE:

According to our estimates, the number of children being exposed to violence is much higher than first thought. Furthermore, a high proportion of exposed children are likely to be under six years old. The police continue to under-detect and under-report children at the scene of domestic violence incidents. SafeStart should continue to collaborate with the DVRU to increase police awareness of the problem, encourage officers to improve their documentation of exposed children, and to increase police referrals to SafeStart.

#### ARRESTS AND EMERGENCY PROTECTIVE ORDERS:

**ARRESTS:** Officers reported that the offender was arrested in about 85% of the case files we reviewed. However, this varied greatly across zip codes and districts. Differences in arrest rates may reflect differences in resources or practices across police districts or may reflect differences in the severity of the crime reported. SFPD maintains that police officers are trained in the same manner and consistency as established by the Peace Officer Standards and Training for the state of California. However, variation across districts may still exist. Clearly, further study is needed to examine this issue. Determining why arrest rates differ may result in changes in policing practices. Cross-district education about children exposed to violence may decrease these differences over time. SafeStart should continue to collaborate with the DVRU to educate officers and encourage completion of the 480 forms.

**EMERGENCY PROTECTIVE ORDERS (EPOs):** Officers reported that EPOs were issued in 89% of the case files we reviewed. As with arrests, these numbers varied greatly by zip code. Further information is needed in order to determine why these differences exist. Again, the rate of EPOs issued may represent differences in police practices or the events themselves.

**RESTRAINING ORDERS:** The low number of current restraining orders in place leads us to suspect that very few victims take their case to the courts to file a formal order. To encourage victims to file restraining orders, SafeStart should continue to coordinate with legal services and programs that help victims apply for restraining orders.

#### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HISTORY:

Not surprising, given current research in the field, the data collected indicates a disparity between documented domestic violence incidents (the number of incidents that get reported to the police) and undocumented violence incidents (incidents that go unreported). SafeStart can

help educate communities about the risks and consequences of domestic violence on children, which may encourage more victims to step forward.

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## ADDENDUM

The following descriptive information was extracted from DVRU case files:

### CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FAMILY

1. GENDER: About 88% of the adult victims were female. This proportion is consistent with figures provided by the Bureau of Justice Statistics in 2003.
2. SPOKEN LANGUAGE: Seventy-two percent of the victims spoke English and about 15% spoke Spanish. Three percent of the victims spoke Chinese or Cantonese.
3. PREGNANCY: Officers reported that the victim was pregnant in 10% of the case files reviewed.
4. ALCOHOL USE: Officers reported that the victim was under the influence of alcohol in seven percent of the case files reviewed.
5. MEDICAL TREATMENT: Table 1 displays the officer's report of medical treatment given to the victim at the time of the report. Nineteen percent of the victims were treated at the scene and another 9% were treated at a hospital. Forty-two percent of the victims refused medical treatment.

*Table 1: Type of medical treatment received by victim*

Medical treatment	Percent
None (n=596)	58%
Treated at scene (n=595)	19%
Treated at hospital (n=595)	9%
Will seek treatment elsewhere (n=595)	3%
Refused medical treatment (n=597)	42%

*\*Officers who checked "None" may have also checked "Refused medical treatment"*

### CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE INCIDENT

The following section analyzes available police data to describe observed characteristics of investigated cases of domestic violence. The following data clearly underscore the violent nature of the reviewed case files.

1. OFFENSE TYPES: Officers recorded more than 4,000 criminal offenses in the 2,904 case files we reviewed (Table 2). Violent offenses made up 67% of the criminal offense types. Violent offense made up 78% of the offense types in cases where at least one child was present.

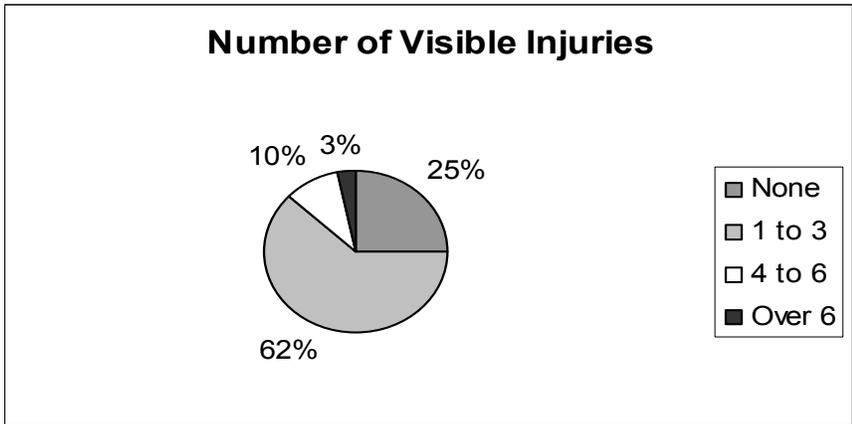
Table 2: Offense types

Offense type	Number	Percent
Spouse, parent of child, inflict injury	1179	28%
Battery	639	15%
Domestic violence	543	13%
Terrorist threat/ Verbal threat	514	12%
Aggravated assault	334	8%
Violation of restraining order	148	3%
Other*	134	3%
Malicious mischief	117	3%
Warrant arrest	101	2%
False imprisonment	101	2%
Stay away order violation	76	2%
Suspicious occurrence	62	1%
Harassing/ threats, phone calls	61	1%
Elder abuse	54	1%
Stalking	49	1%
Resisting, delaying, or obstructing peace officer	48	1%
Injuring phone, cable, television, or other line	37	1%
Robbery	36	1%
Criminal threats	34	1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4267</b>	<b>100%*</b>

\*Other includes all categories that individually made up less than 1% of the total, including: Trespassing; Vehicle vandalism; Theft; Attempted homicide; Aided case; Rape; Violation of protective order; Firearm offense; Under the influence in public, alcohol; Forced entry; Kidnapping; Other - investigative or evidence; Carrying concealed weapon; Protective order or restraining order served; Child inflict pain; Mental health; Violation of probation or parole; Case closure; Drug offense; DV- general recode \*\*Total may not add to 100%, due to rounding

2. **NUMBER OF INJURIES:** Officers routinely capture information about the number and nature of visible physical injuries when they respond to domestic violence incidents. Chart 1 displays the range of the numbers of visible injuries reported by officers in reviewed case files. Overall, officers documented that the victim had at least one visible injury in about 75% of reviewed files. One to three injuries were reported in 62% of reviewed case files. Officers also indicated that the victim was strangled in about 17% of the 480A forms reviewed.

Chart 1



3. LOCATION OF INJURIES: As shown in Table 3, officers reported that injuries were most often found on the victim's head and neck area (69%).

Table 3: Location of injury on the body (n=457)

Location of injury	Percent of Total
Head and neck	69%
Upper torso	44%
Lower torso	13%

### RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OFFENDER AND VICTIM

The police also document the nature of the relationship between the suspected perpetrator and the victim. Table 7 displays available information gleaned from supplemental checklist forms. Caution is particularly advised when interpreting the information shown in Table 4. The nature of the form itself appeared to have supported inconsistent completion by officers. That is, the form included a checklist for relationships where officers were able check more than one appropriate category. However, many officers checked just one category, when it was clear from the narrative that many categories could apply.

1. CHILDREN IN COMMON: Officers reported that the offender had children in common with the victim in 54% of the 480B forms reviewed.
2. CHILDREN IN HOUSEHOLD: Officers reported there were children in the household in 17% of the case files.
3. COHABITATION: In 39% of the case files, the offender and victim were spouses. In 30% of the case files, the offender and victim were cohabitants.
4. DATING: The offender and victim were reported as *dating* in a little over one quarter of the reviewed case files.
5. SAME SEX RELATIONSHIPS: According to these data, only about one percent of the reviewed domestic violence case files occurred in same sex relationships. Only one percent of reviewed domestic violence incidents involved female couples, and less than one percent involved male couples.

Table 4: Offender relationship to victim as reported on 480B

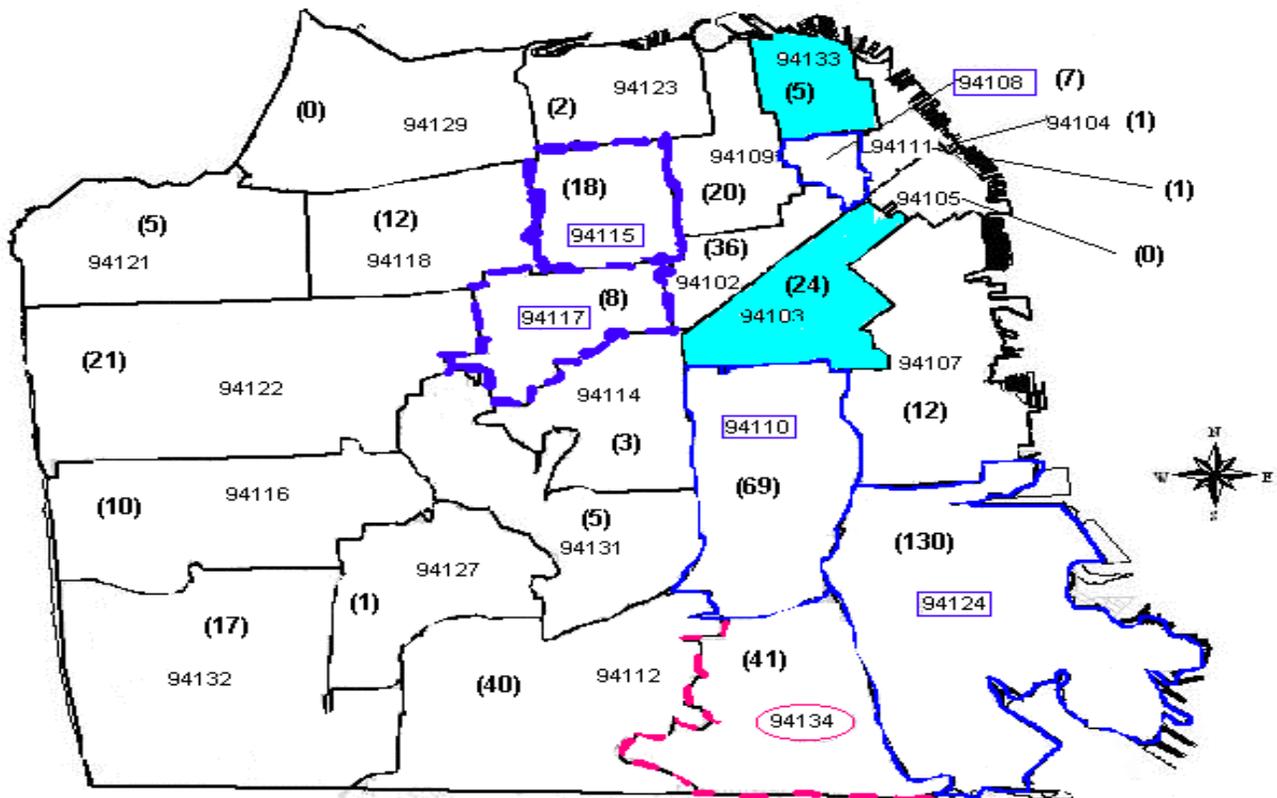
Relationship	Percent of Total
Children in common (n=551)	54%
Spouse (n=550)	39%
Cohabitants (n=550)	30%
Dating (n=552)	27%
Children in household (n=551)	17%
Former dating (n=552)	8%
Former cohabitants (n=550)	5%
Former Spouse (n=550)	1%
Engaged (n=550)	1%
Same sex FF (n=552)	1%
Same sex MM (n=552)	0%
Elder abuse (n=552)	0%

## GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASE FILES

Since officers often reported the zip code of the victim, we were able to plot the distribution of police-documented domestic violence across a map of San Francisco (Figure 2).

1. SAFESTART SERVICE AREA: Although available data indicate that the officers investigated case files of domestic violence in almost every zip code in San Francisco, the highest number of incidents occurred in Bayview Hunter's Point [Zip Code = 94124 (n=130)], the Mission [Zip Code= 94110, (n=69)]. As shown in figure 2, 43% of police-reported victims live in areas served by SafeStart. Another seven percent live in the proposed expansion area (zip code 94134). The outlined areas represent SafeStart zip codes and the proposed expansion area. The shaded areas represent zip codes served by SafeStart, but are not included in the official service delivery area.

Figure 2: Distribution of Police-Documented Victims\*



\*The outlined areas represent SafeStart zip codes and the proposed expansion area. The shaded areas represent zip codes served by SafeStart, but not included in the official service delivery area.