



# **Public Safety Announcement**

## **Recognizing Signs of Children Exposed to Violence**

The Greenwich Police Department is mindful of the issue of children exposed to violence. This exposure has the potential to cause trauma, and if left unrecognized, unaddressed trauma can have dramatic negative consequences in both the short and long-term. The officers of the Greenwich Police Department have received training on this issue and apply the training when needed. Traumatic or violent experiences can range from being assaulted or witnessing domestic violence or seeing or being involved in a vehicle collision.

### **How You Can Help**

Some children respond well to talking over the events with an adult they trust. The conversation can help them feel less alone and give the child time to ask questions. For some children talking about what happened may be hard for them to handle which then causes more stress. In these cases professional assistance may be appropriate. Recognizing your child's reaction is essential and is the first step towards helping the child recover.

### **What Happens When Your Child Is Exposed to Violence**

Experiencing violence and other traumatic events can be overwhelming for children and teenagers. These experiences can lead to:

- Sadness and nervousness
- Behavioral problems
- Trouble in school with concentration and learning
- Relationship problems with family, friends, and other adults such as teachers.

### **What a Caregiver Should Watch For**

In the days or weeks following an incident of violence, you may notice one or more of the following reactions:

#### **Young Children**

- Clinginess to mother or caregiver
- Irritability, fussiness, difficulty being soothed
- Bedwetting or problems with toileting
- Frequent nightmares or restless sleeping

#### **Older Children**

- Problems paying attention at school
- Fighting with family, peers, or other adults

#### **All Ages**

- Being easily startled or uneasy
- Repeating events over and over in play or in conversation
- Being quiet, upset and withdrawn
- Being tearful or sad

If you observe any of these signs after your child experiences a violent act or traumatic event, getting help early for your child can start the process of making things better for the child and prevent long-lasting difficulties. Seek advice from your pediatrician or one of the several agencies in the Town of Greenwich that handles behavioral problems for children and teens.

