

# Silent victims—an epidemic of childhood exposure

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Over 15 million children are exposed to intimate partner violence (IPV) each year, and the health consequences of this exposure are well-documented. The Institute of Medicine and the United States Preventive Services Task Force recommend routine screening for intimate partner violence (IPV) in women of childbearing age. These recommendations represent an important step forward in improving the health of women affected by IPV.

In discussions about healthcare providers' role in IPV screening, however, the significant impact of IPV on child health is often missing, according to Boston Medical Center (BMC) pediatrician Megan H. Bair-Merritt, MD, author of a perspective in this week's *New England Journal of Medicine*. "Therefore, the healthcare community now has an important opportunity to mitigate the adverse impact of IPV on both women and children.

When the occurrence of IPV is disclosed, hospital and community IPV programs are essential partners that can help clinicians and their patients develop sound management plans that protect women and children's safety and abide by state-specific reporting laws.

"The health care system has effectively tackled critical [health problems](#) and led the charge to address many public health problems. We now have the opportunity and obligation to identify women and children who are experiencing IPV and to promote evidence-based interventions to prevent, or at least attenuate, the [health consequences](#) of childhood IPV

exposure," added Bair-Merritt.

Provided by Boston University Medical Center

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