

RISK IN FAMILIES WITH SUBSTANCE ABUSE CONCERNS

Specific Risks:

- Alcohol seems to produce the greatest violence. Alcohol and other substance use often causes fighting between adults. Children caught in between, sometimes inadvertently used as shields, may suffer physical harm.
- Prolonged alcohol usage causes **BLACKOUTS**; (ex., the user cannot recall activities during a blackout, such as abuse of a child).
- Cases of incest and sexual abuse often occur with alcohol abuse; alcohol lowers the inhibitors allowing the individual more easily to ignore the taboos.
- Parental crack/cocaine causes children at particular risk for neglect of proper nourishment; cocaine is an appetite suppressant. Those using the drug, as a result, do not concern themselves with eating.
- Crack/cocaine causes heightened sexual feelings, thus putting children at greater risk for sexual abuse.
- People on crack have poor impulse control and can be extremely abusive; they are often guilty of “overkill,” (ex. news reports of persons stabbed repeatedly).
- Illegal drugs tend to put children at risk for neglect because the user leaves the home in search of the drug.
- Illegal drugs often put children at risk because of the parent’s illegal actions in buying, dealing, and etcetera.

Risks during Withdrawal and Recovery:

- When the cocaine addict comes down from a high, she/he is often very irritable.
- Tranquilizer withdrawal (Valium in particular) is very debilitating and can last for months.
- People in recovery struggle to be clean, sober and learn new ways of living. Such stressors often cause them to be very irritable during this period.

RISK IN FAMILIES WITH SUBSTANCE ABUSE CONCERNS (CONTINUED)

Specific Children at Risk Include:

- Infants and young children who cannot care for themselves;
- Colicky or sickly infants and children;
- Children who need specific medications (ex., diabetic children);
- Disabled children;
- Withdrawn children;
- Stepchildren; and,
- Children whom individuals deem as not particularly attractive.

Other Concerns:

- We consider newborn children of addicted women as high-risk. Some possible effects are: low birth weight and length, small head size, other long-term medical consequences, (ex., cerebral palsy), and have increased likelihood of dying from SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome). Withdrawal symptoms often occur after birth, as a result, individuals find these infants hard to console; consequently, this situation places the child at a higher risk for physical abuse.

