

# Perpetrator's Use of Children to Control Adult Partner

There is a high correlation between domestic violence and child abuse. Many perpetrators abuse everyone in the home (adult partner, children, pets). Children may be the direct victims of abuse, they may be hit indirectly as the perpetrator hurts the mother, or they may be used to control the mother or adult partner.

Examples of how batterers use children to control their adult partner include:

- threatening to and/or physically abusing the child if the mother attempts to leave the relationship so the mother stays to protect the children (i.e., physical abuse of the child or their pets),
- forcing the child to witness the abuse of the adult victim,
- making adult partner feel guilty about the children (i.e., criticizing the children's behavior and blaming the adult victim—"they'd do better in school if you weren't such a bad mother"),
- undermining the adult mother's authority with the child, manipulating the child to take sides,
- not taking responsibility for the child, breaking agreements or promises with the child, being an absent father,
- threatening to take the children away (i.e., leaving the state with them, abusing the children and then calling CPS to blame it on the mother, or making false reports to CPS about the adult mother so the court will be more favorable to the perpetrator during custody issues),
- controlling the child's access to his/her support system (i.e., mother, grandparents, siblings, friends),
- using the children to relay messages, especially if there is a protection order, if the parents do not live together, and/or if the parents are separated,
- using visitation to harass the adult partner (i.e., controlling her schedule by demanding visitation rights and then not showing up or deliberately choosing inconvenient times, using visitation as a way to verbally abuse partner, not returning the child at the designated time),
- asking the child to spy on the mother, interrogating the child about the mother's activities (this is particularly common during a separation and/or protection order),
- not paying child support or contributing to the financial needs of the children, and
- using the children as an economic bargaining chip in divorce proceedings.