



Violence Against Women and Children Position Statement

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COINN (Council of International Neonatal Nurses, Inc) acknowledges that limited resources and/or personnel may restrict opportunities to implement the recommendations and action points. However, to improve health outcomes, the global neonatal care community must strive to uphold these recommendations.

SUMMARY

Violence against women and children is an urgent priority to protect their rights to a safe and nurturing environment. Nurses, facilities and associations have a responsibility to provide information and advocate for the elimination of violence and to support healthy relationships.

BACKGROUND AND FACTORS

A positive start during pregnancy and the early years is crucial for children to have healthy outcomes across the life span ([Lähdepuro](#), [Lahti-Pulkkinen](#), [Pyhälä](#), et al., 2022). A positive pregnancy is a time of heightened fetal receptivity to maternal and environmental signals which contribute to the neonate's adaptation after birth (Davis & Narayan, 2020), as well as to develop a secure attachment with their parents as a foundation for their future development and relationships (Karakas & Dağlı, 2019; Van Ilzendoorn, 2022).

The United Nations (1993, cited by World Health Organization, 2021) defines violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.” The World Health Organization (2023) designates violence against children to include all forms of violence against people under 18 years old. For infants and younger children, violence mainly involves child maltreatment (i.e. physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect) at the hands of parents and other authority figures.

A global report released by the World Health Organization (WHO) provided figures on the prevalence of two forms of violence against women: violence by an intimate partner (intimate partner violence) and sexual violence by someone other than a partner (non-partner sexual violence).

Findings include:

- Nearly 30% of women worldwide have experienced either intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime, or both. The situation can be exacerbated by a variety of factors such as humanitarian crises, poverty and displacement.
- The impact of violence can have short and long term effects, specifically in pregnancy, which can lead to an increase risk of miscarriage, and preterm birth.

COINN RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION POINTS:

1. Violence against women and children is unacceptable and impacts our most vulnerable population, and should be prevented (World Health Organization, 2020).
2. Children have the right to a safe place to live, and should be protected from harm. They should be provided with the necessary means for their growth, development and health. They are entitled to a clean environment and to be empowered for participation in society (Amnesty International, 2023).
3. Nurturing care of children is crucial in the early years to lay the foundations for healthy brain development with lifelong implications for learning, health and well-being (World Health Organization, 2023).
4. The principles of RESPECT to prevent violence against women should be implemented as suggested by the World Health Organization (2020):
 - R**elationship skills strengthened
 - E**mpowerment of women
 - S**ervices ensured
 - P**overty reduced
 - E**nvironments made safe
 - C**hild and adolescent abuse prevented
 - T**ransformed attitudes, beliefs and norms.
5. Advocate autonomy and support parents regarding healthy relationships (Amnesty International, 2023; World Health Organization, 2020).

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