# APPENDIX 1: OBSERVABLE SIGNS OF TRAUMA THAT MAY INDICATE FAMILY VIOLENCE

## Table 1: Signs of trauma in adult victims

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| Form | Signs of trauma that may indicate family violence is occurring for adult victims | |
| Physical | * bruising * fractures * chronic pain (neck, back) * fresh scars or minor cuts * terminations of pregnancy | * complications during pregnancy * gastrointestinal disorders * sexually transmitted diseases * strangulation |
| Psychological | * depression * anxiety * self-harming behaviour * eating disorders * phobias * somatic disorders | * sleep problems * impaired concentration * harmful alcohol use * licit and illicit drug use * physical exhaustion * suicide attempts |
| Emotional | * fear * shame * anger * no support networks | * feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness * feeling disassociated and emotionally numb |
| Social/financial | * homelessness * unemployment * financial debt | * no friends or family support * isolation * parenting difficulties |
| Demeanour | * unconvincing explanations of any injuries * describe a partner as controlling or prone to anger * be accompanied by their partner, who does most of the talking | * anxiety in the presence of a partner * recent separation or divorce * needing to be back home by a certain time and becoming stressed about this * reluctance to follow advice |

## Table 2: General signs of trauma in a child or young person

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| General observable signs of trauma for a child or young person that may indicate family violence is occurring |
| Signs of trauma can manifest as either physical, emotional or behavioural and can include:   * Being very passive and compliant * Showing wariness or distrust of adults * Demonstrating fear of particular people and places * Poor sleep patterns and emotional dis-regulation * Becoming fearful when other children cry or shout * Developmental regression (i.e. reverting to bed-wetting) * Bruises, burns, sprains, dislocations, bites, cuts * Fractured bones, especially in an infant where a fracture is unlikely to have occurred accidentally * Poisoning * Internal injuries * Wearing long-sleeved clothes on hot days in an attempt to hide bruising or other injury * Being excessively friendly to strangers * Being excessively clingy to certain adults * A strong desire to please or receive validation from certain adults * Excessive washing or bathing * Unclear boundaries and understanding of relationships between adults and children * Excessive sexualised behaviour/advanced sexual knowledge * Violence or sexualised behaviour to other children. |

## Table 3: Signs of trauma for a child (unborn to young child)

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| Observable signs of trauma that may indicate family violence for: | | |
| an unborn child | a baby (under 18 months) | a toddler |
| * Poor growth and neural development caused by rushes of maternal adrenalin and cortisol * Injuries sustained via injury to mother or by the perpetrator targeting the unborn child directly (such as inflicting blows to mother’s abdominal area). | * Excessive crying * Excessive passivity * Underweight for age * Significant sleep and/or feeding difficulties * Reactions to loud voices or noises * Extreme wariness of new people * No verbal ‘play’ (such as imitating sounds) * Frequent illness * Anxiety, overly clingy to primary caregiver | As for baby (under 18 months), and also:   * Excessive irritability * Excessive compliance * Poor language development * Delayed mobility * Blood in nappy, underwear |

## Table 4: Age-related signs of trauma that may indicate family violence in a child or young person

Many indicators may be expressions of trauma that may be observed through the presentation, behaviour or circumstances of a child or young person. Some indicators are related to trauma from specific forms of family violence, including sexual abuse (indicated by #) or emotional abuse (indicated by \*), or indicate signs of neglect.

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| Observable signs of trauma that may indicate family violence for: | | |
| a pre-schooler | a primary school-aged child | an adolescent |
| * Extreme clinginess * Significant sleep# and/or eating difficulties * Poor concentration in play * Inability to empathise with other people * Frequent illness * Poor language development and/or significant use of ‘baby talk’ * Displaying maladaptive behaviour such as frequent rocking, sucking and biting# * Aggression towards others * Adjustment problems (for example, significant difficulties moving from kindergarten to school) * Anti-social play or lack of interest in engaging with others | * Rebelliousness, defiant behaviour * Limited tolerance and poor impulse control * Temper tantrums or irritability, being aggressive or demanding\* * Physical abuse or cruelty of others, including pets * Avoidance of conflict * Showing low self-esteem\* * Extremely compliant behaviour, being passive, tearful or withdrawn\* * Excessively oppositional or argumentative behaviour * Risk-taking behaviours that have severe or life-threatening consequences * Lack of interest in social activities * Delayed or poor language skills\* * Experiencing problems with schoolwork# * Poor social competence (few or no friends, not getting on well with peers, difficulties relating to adults)\*# * Acting like a much younger child\* * Poor school performance * Poor coping skills * Sleep issues# * Bed wetting# * Excessive washing * Frequent illness * Complaining of headaches or stomach pains# * Self-harm * Displaying maladaptive behaviour# * Displaying sexual behaviour or knowledge unusual for the child’s age# * Telling someone sexual abuse has occurred# * Complaining of pain going to the toilet * Enacting sexual behaviour with other children * Excessive masturbation | * As for primary school aged children, and also: * School refusal/avoidance (absenteeism/disengagement) * Criminal or antisocial behaviours, including using violence against others * Eating disorders * Substance abuse * Depression * Suicidal ideation * Risk-taking behaviours * Anxiety * Pregnancy * Controlling or manipulative behaviour * Obsessive behaviour * Homelessness or frequent changes in housing arrangements |

## Table 5: Signs and indicators of neglect

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| Observable signs and indicators of neglect of a child or young person | |
| * Being frequently hungry * Being poorly nourished * Having poor hygiene * Wearing inappropriate clothing, for example, wearing summer clothes in winter * Being unsupervised for long periods * Not having their medical needs attended to | * Being abandoned by their parents * Stealing food * Staying at school outside school hours * Often being tired and/or falling asleep in class * Abusing alcohol or drugs * Displaying aggressive behaviour * Not getting on well with peers. |