

Domestic Violence

WHAT DOES "DOMESTIC VIOLENCE" MEAN?

Domestic violence is a learned pattern of physical, verbal, sexual and/or emotional behaviors in which one person in a relationship uses force and intimidation to dominate or control the other person. The partners may be married or not married; heterosexual, gay or lesbian; living together, separated or dating. Domestic violence occurs in all ages, races, genders and social classes.

The violence takes many forms and can happen all the time or once in a while. Examples of domestic violence are:

- physical assault or abuse -- hitting, pushing, shoving, slapping, choking, punching, kicking, grabbing, beating, throwing her down, tripping, twisting arms, biting, using a weapon
- threatened physical harm
- sexual assault or abuse -- unwanted, forced sexual activity, making her do sexual things against her will, physically attacking the sexual parts of her body, etc.
- stalking
- intimidation
- emotional abuse -- mind games, name-calling, put-downs, making the victim feel bad about herself
- jealousy -- a sign of possessiveness and lack of trust
- controlling behavior and forced isolation (from family or friends) -- controlling what the victim does, who the victim sees or talks to, where the victim goes, relocating to a remote area, etc.
- economic abuse -- preventing the victim from getting or holding a job, and controlling the purse-strings by withholding money, taking her earned money, giving her an allowance, making her ask for money, etc.

An important step to help yourself or someone you know prevent or stop violence is recognizing the warning signs.

If you are in an abusive relationship. . .

You are not alone!
You are not to blame!
You can get help!

Get medical attention if you have been physically injured.

✓ Save evidence to document the abuse (medical records, photographs of injuries and damage to your property, etc.)

- ✓ Make a safety plan, which may include figuring out the "warning signs" that come before abuse:
- ✓ Work out signals with neighbors to call the police
- ✓ Ask a friend or relative to stay with you
- ✓ Decide where you can go and what to take with you if you must leave (money, important documents, spare clothes, car keys, etc.)
- ✓ Protect your children

Report domestic violence and stalking to the police! They can and will:

- Protect you from immediate danger, and help you and your children get out of the house safely;
- Arrest the abuser without a warrant when there is reasonable cause to believe that an assault has taken place or that the abuser has violated a Personal Protection Order or a restraining order;
- Advise you of available shelter programs and other services in your area;
- Write out a police report which can be used to help prove the abuse occurred and show good cause for a judge to grant a personal protection order or a restraining order.

▪ **SHELTERS**

Domestic violence shelters can provide safe, short-term housing, information, and assistance in considering all the options available to victims. They can also help break down the isolation victims have experienced in their abusive relationships and provide support from others who have been through similar experiences. Shelters provide a variety of supportive services which are confidential and free of charge:

- 24 hour confidential crisis hotline
- shelter for victims and their children
- crisis intervention
- information and referrals
- legal advocacy
- housing assistance
- transportation
- child care
- individual counseling and support groups
- assistance in developing a safety plan

Did You Know . . . ?

- Domestic violence affects a large percentage of our community?
- According to the FBI, 1 out of every 4 women is a victim of domestic violence at least once in her lifetime.

- In 55% of the cases where men are assaulting their partners, they are also assaulting their children. The battered mother may be suffering from physical and psychological injuries to the point that she cannot meet the needs of her children appropriately.
- Battering is not just a "momentary loss of temper."
- The Surgeon General of the United States reports that 1 out of 5 women battered by their partners have been victimized over and over again by the same person.
- The American Medical Association defines domestic violence as an ongoing, debilitating experience of physical, psychological, and/or sexual abuse.
- Domestic violence frequently produces serious injuries.
- Domestic violence is the leading cause of injury for women age 15 to 44. More women are injured from domestic violence than rapes, muggings and auto crashes combined.
- Leaving an abusive relationship is not "easy."
- A study by the United States Department of Justice states that the most dangerous time for a woman who is being battered is when she leaves.
- Most battered women leave violent relationships.
- Many battered women do leave their abusers permanently and succeed in building a life free of violence. Almost all battered women leave at least once.
- Domestic violence knows no boundaries.
- People of all socio-economic classes, races, religions, ethnic backgrounds, and sexual orientations can be victims of domestic violence. Many statistics have been gathered from lower-class families, but only because lower-class women are more likely to request assistance from agencies, so their problems are more visible. Many upper-class victims fear making their battering public because of social embarrassment and fear that it may harm their husband's careers.
- Married women are not the only victims of domestic violence.
- People who are dating, separated, living together, divorced, have a child in common, and/or are married, can be abused. Domestic violence can occur in any of these situations.