

United Communities Advocating Non-Violence Inc.



Domestic Abuse Awareness Guidebook for the Community and Workplace

A manual of tips and suggestions to help make Alexandria and Douglas County free of Domestic Abuse

Vision Statement of the
United Communities Advocating Non-Violence
Inc. Committee

“To be an abuse free community”

Our Mission Statement

“To transform the community and lives of those affected by abuse through support, awareness, education and involvement”

How does Domestic Abuse Affect the Community and the Workplace?

Domestic Violence tears at the very fabric of our society. Every child and person has a right to live in a home that is supportive of each of its members. Children who witness domestic violence have permanent changes that occur in their brain chemistry. Violence is learned behavior and these children may grow up to be the perpetrators of a new cycle of violence if there is not a successful intervention in the cycle of abuse they are currently experiencing. Children from abusive homes experience trouble in school and in society. Many of the people in prison grew up in homes that experienced domestic violence.

In the workplace the company can experience low productivity, chronic absenteeism or lateness, or requests for excessive amounts of time off. They can also experience on-the-job harassment by the abuser, either in person or over the phone. They can also experience a poor employment history and loss of employment.

In putting this guidebook together we have used the word “he” in spots. We realize that domestic violence may be committed by both genders. Statistics show that approximately 95% of domestic violence is male on female. So when you see the word “he” in a sentence, please understand that it is gender neutral. “He” & “She” can be used interchangeably.

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What is Domestic Abuse?

Domestic violence is a pattern of assaults and controlling behavior, including physical, sexual, and psychological attacks and economic control, that adults and adolescents use against their intimate partners. The behavior is purposeful. The intention is to create fear and intimidation so control is possible.

Domestic violence is lethal, common, and affects people of all cultures, religions, ages, sexual orientations, educational backgrounds and income levels. The majority of adult domestic violence victims are women and perpetrators are generally men.

Acts of domestic violence generally fall into one or more of the following categories:

- **Physical Battering** - The abuser's physical attacks or aggressive behavior can range from bruising to murder. It often begins with what is excused as trivial contacts which escalate into more frequent and serious attacks.
- **Sexual Abuse** - Physical attack by the abuser is often accompanied by, or culminates in, sexual violence wherein the woman is forced to have sexual intercourse with her abuser or take part in unwanted sexual activity.
- **Psychological Battering** - The abuser's psychological or mental violence can include constant verbal abuse, harassment, excessive possessiveness, isolating the woman from friends and family, deprivation of physical and economic resources, destruction of personal property, mistreatment of pets, and threats.

Battering escalates. It often begins with behaviors like threats, name calling, violence in her presence (such as punching a fist through a wall), and/or damage to objects or pets. It may escalate to restraining, pushing, slapping, and/or pinching. The battering may include, kicking, biting, sexual assault, tripping, throwing. Finally, it may become life-threatening with serious behaviors such as choking, breaking bones, or the use of weapons.

Nearly one-third of American women report being physically or sexually abused by a husband or boyfriend at some point in their lives.

Predictors of Domestic Violence

- Did he* grow up in violent family? They have grown up learning that violence is normal behavior.
- Do they tend to use force or violence to “solve” their problems? Does he have a quick temper? Does the person overreact to little problems and frustration? Is he cruel to animals? Does he punch walls or throw things when he’s upset? Any of these behaviors may be a sign of a person who will work out bad feelings with violence.
- Does he abuse alcohol or other drugs? There is a strong link between violence and problems with drugs and alcohol.
- Does he have strong traditional ideas about what a man should be and what a woman should be?
- Is he jealous of your other relationships - not just with other men that you may know - but also with your women friends and your family? Does he want to know where you are at all times? Does he want you with him all the time?
- Does he have access to guns, knives, or other lethal instruments? Does he talk of using them against people, or threaten to use them to get even?
- Does he expect you to follow his orders or advice? Does he become angry if you do not fulfill his wishes or if you cannot anticipate what he wants?
- Does he go through extreme highs or lows, almost as though he is two different people? Is he extremely kind one time, and extremely cruel at another time?
- When he gets angry, do you fear him? Do you find that not making him angry has become a major part of your life?
- Does he treat you roughly? Does he physically force you to do what you do not want to do?

**Caveat - he and she can be used interchangeably in this booklet depending on who the alleged perpetrator is.*

Checklist - Does your partner.....

- _____ Embarrass or make fun of you in front of your friends or family?
- _____ Put down your accomplishments or goals?
- _____ Make you feel like you are unable to make decisions?
- _____ Use intimidation or threats to gain compliance?
- _____ Tell you that you are nothing without them?
- _____ Treat you roughly - grab, push, pinch, shove, or hit you?
- _____ Call you several times a night or show up to make sure you are where you said you would be?
- _____ Use drugs or alcohol as an excuse for saying hurtful things or abusing you?
- _____ Blame you for how they feel or act?
- _____ Pressure you sexually for things you aren’t ready for?
- _____ Make you feel like there “is no way out” of the relationship?
- _____ Prevent you from doing things you want - like spending time with your friends or family?
- _____ Financial control - no access to money or your name is on all the bills.
- _____ Try to keep you from leaving after a fight or leave you some somewhere after a fight to “teach you a lesson”?

Do you.....

- _____ Sometimes feel scared of how your partner will act?
- _____ Constantly make excuses to other people for your partner’s behavior?
- _____ Believe that you can help your partner change if only you changed something about yourself?
- _____ Try not to do anything that would cause conflict or make your partner angry?
- _____ Feel like no matter what you do, your partner is never happy with you?
- _____ Always do what your partner wants you to do instead of what you want?
- _____ Stay with your partner because you are afraid of what your partner would do if you broke up?

If any of these are happening in your relationship, talk with someone safe, like a doctor, clergy, crisis center....etc.. Without some help, the abuse will continue.

Why Do Men Batter Women?

Many **theories** have been developed to explain why some men use violence against their partners. The bottom line is that the batterer begins and continues his behavior because violence is an effective method for gaining and keeping control over another person and he usually does not suffer adverse consequences as a result of his behavior.

Batterers come from all groups and backgrounds, and from all personality profiles. However, some characteristics fit a general profile of a batterer:

- A batterer objectifies women. He does not see women as people. He does not respect women as a group. Overall, he sees women as property or sexual objects.
- A batterer has low self-esteem and feels powerless and ineffective in the world. He may appear successful, but inside he feels inadequate.
- A batterer externalizes the causes of his behavior. He blames his violence on circumstances such as stress, his partner's behavior, a "bad day", alcohol or other factors.
- A batterer may be pleasant and charming between periods of violence, and is often seen as a "nice guy" to outsiders.
- Some behavioral warning signs of a potential batterer include: extreme jealousy, possessiveness, a bad temper, unpredictability, cruelty to animals and verbal abusiveness.

These are theories and should be considered as such. They are not hard and fast rules. There are other theories and you are encouraged to do more research on this subject.

Why do Women Stay?

A woman's reasons for staying are more complex than a statement about her strength of character. In many cases it is dangerous for a woman to leave her abuser. Leaving could mean living in fear, of losing child custody, fear for safety for self and children, losing financial support, and experiencing harassment at work.

Although there is no profile of the woman who will be battered, there is well documented syndrome of what happens once the battering starts. Most battered women experience shame, embarrassment and isolation. A woman may not leave battering immediately because:

- She realistically fears that the batterer will become more violent and maybe even fatal if she attempts to leave. Research shows that the most dangerous time is when the victim leaves;
- Her friends and family may not support her leaving;
- She knows the difficulties of single parenting in reduced financial circumstances and she has no access to money;
- There is a mix of good times, love and hope along with the manipulation, intimidation and fear;
- She may not know about or have access to safety and support.

Barriers to Leaving a Violent Relationship

Reasons why women stay generally fall into three major categories:

Lack of Resources:

- Most women have at least one dependent child.
- Many women are not employed outside of the home.
- Many women have no property that is solely theirs.
- Some women lack access to cash or bank accounts.
- Women who leave fear being charged with desertion, and losing children and joint assets. This threat is repeated over and over.
- A woman may face a decline in living standards for herself and her children.

Institutional Responses:

- Government and the private sector have been slow and measured in their response to domestic violence. This would include the units of local government, clergy, marriage counselors, police and prosecutors.
- Minnesota is one of the leading states in the nation in terms of its efforts to reduce domestic violence.

Traditional Ideology:

- Many women do not believe divorce is a viable alternative.
- Many women believe that a single parent family is unacceptable, and that even a violent father is better than no father at all.
- Many women are socialized to believe that they are responsible for making their marriage work. Failure to maintain the marriage equals failure as a woman.
- Many women become isolated from friends and families, either by jealous and possessive abuser, or to hide signs of the abuse from the outside world. The isolation contributes to a sense that there is nowhere to turn.
- Many women rationalize their abuser's behavior by blaming stress, alcohol, problems at work, unemployment and other factors.
- Many women are taught that their identity and worth are contingent upon getting and keeping a man.
- The abuser rarely beats the woman all the time. During the nonviolent phases, he may fulfill the woman's dream of romantic love. She believes that he is basically a "good man".

Responding to a Disclosure

- Listen to the survivor;
- Be nonjudgmental; tell your friend that you are glad she/he confided in you. You can never say these phrases too often: I'm worried about you; It's not your fault; I'm glad you told me about what you're going through; You deserve better; I'm here for you;
- Believe the disclosure;
- Be aware of your own feelings and remain calm - an emotional response can silence the person disclosing;
- Communicate to the survivor that she/he is not responsible for the violence;
- Communicate to the survivor that her/his survival means that they did the right thing;
- Explore and dispel myths;
- Facilitate the survivor taking control of her/his life back into their own hands;
- Provide accurate information; keep educating yourself on domestic violence;
- Ensure that she/he has the opportunity to make decisions about events that affect her life; e.g. whether to report the crime, tell family and friends;
- Accept differences of opinion while remaining supportive; and
- Provide appropriate referrals (see list on page 19);
- Work on a personalized safety plan (pages 15 & 16)
(This is important to work out ahead of the time it is needed)

How Can I Help a Friend or Family Member?

DO:

- **Approach her** about the abuse in a sensitive way. For example, “I’m worried about you because....”
- **Believe** what she tells you. It will have taken a lot for her to talk to you and trust you.
- **Take the abuse seriously.** Abuse can be damaging both physically and emotionally, and is very destructive to someone’s self-confidence.
- **Focus on her safety.** Talk to her about her safety and how she could protect herself (see safety plan p. 15)
- **Help her to recognize the abuse** and understand how it may be affecting her. Recognize and support her strength and courage.
- Help her to understand that **the abuse is not her fault** and that no one deserves to be abused, no matter what they do.
- **Listen** to her and help her to think about her relationship, whether she wants to break up or stay, and how she can protect herself from any more abuse.
- **Offer help to protect her** *but only if you are not putting your own safety at risk.* For example, you could offer to be around when the abuser is there, give her a ride home, take phone messages from the abuser, etc.
- **Encourage her to talk to a counselor or an advocate**, or talk to a counselor yourself about what you could do to support her.
- **If you feel overwhelmed** or frightened yourself, get help. Talk to someone or call a community service agency (see phone #s p.19) for help.

DON'T

- Don’t blame her for the abuse or ask judgmental questions like, “What did you do to make him treat you like that?” or “Why don’t you just break up with him?”
- Don’t focus on trying to work out the abuser’s reasons for the abuse. Concentrate on supporting her and on what she can do to protect herself.
- Try not to be impatient or critical of her if she is confused about what to do, or if she says that she still loves her boyfriend. It’s difficult for anyone to break up a relationship, and especially hard if they are being abused.

Questions you could ask:

- “What can I do to help?”
- “How has his behavior made you feel? How is it affecting you?”
- “How have you been coping with the abuse?”
- “What can you do to make yourself safer?”
- “What are you afraid of if you leave?”
- “What are you afraid of if you stay?”

For Parents:

It is not easy for a young person to talk to their parents about abuse.

- **Don’t be critical** of her. Be encouraging and supportive.
- **Try not to criticize her boyfriend or partner**, as this may only serve to make her defensive and stop her from telling you honestly how she feels. Let her know that his behavior is unacceptable, that no one has the *right to abuse her*, and that it is not her fault.
- **Let her know you care about her** and are concerned about her safety.
- **Try not to tell her what to do**, as she may have experienced this from her boyfriend.
- **Think carefully and listen to your teenager before deciding to take action yourself.** Forcing her to “break up” before she is ready may be counterproductive. She needs to be ready. It is important to try to take into consideration your daughter’s wishes. Let her know of your concerns for her safety.
- **Offer help to protect her.** Be careful not to put her safety or your own safety at risk by intervening.
- **Contact** a community service yourself for support, or to find out about legal options.
- **Talk to an advocate together.**

Basic Support Tools

- **Universalizing**

Links the experience of the survivor to the experiences of others, e.g., “Many other women I have spoken to say they feel like they are to blame”.

- **Individualizing**

Recognize any features that are specific to that person’s situation that make their feelings, thoughts and behaviors unlike those of others.

- **Believing, validating feelings and statements**

Do not ignore or misinterpret what a survivor says. Recognize and reinforce their strengths so that they can reclaim the control they feel they lost, e.g. “It is understandable that you didn’t scream or try to get away, if you had tried either of these things you might have been killed”.

- **Encouraging the survivor to speak for herself.**

Support the survivor in developing or redeveloping direct, assertive communication rather than covert, manipulative or physically aggressive communication.

- **Re-labeling the experience**

Explore and reframe the significance or meaning that can be given to a feeling, thought or behavior. This is particularly important for survivors who blame themselves.

- **Contracting**

Openly acknowledge the contradictions and the conflict between expectation of the client, counselor and the agency.

The ABCDE Model of Intervention

A - Ask to be alone. This is to ensure that the survivor is able to disclose if she chooses to do so. A disclosure is highly unlikely if health staff/police/crisis staff attend to the survivor with their partner present.

B - Believe the disclosure. No matter how unbelievable or bizarre the story, believe it as survivors rarely lie about the violence they have survived, if anything they minimize it.

C - Call in resources. Be aware of agencies who can assist the survivor, for example, women’s shelters/safe houses, domestic violence advocates, sexual assault referral centers.

D - Document history and injuries. This is vitally important as this documentation may be used in court to support a survivor’s case.

E - Ensure safety. The safety of the survivor and any children involved is paramount. The health worker/police/crisis staff should ask the woman if she fears for her safety or for the safety of her children. The worker should always be aware that the severity of previous violence is no indicator of future violence, and that many survivors minimize the violence. Research has clearly shown that violence generally escalates both in frequency and severity. Never treat any threat of domestic violence as idle.

Personalized Safety Plan

Suggestions for increasing safety - in the relationship

- I will have important phone numbers available to my children and myself.
- I can tell _____ and _____ about the violence and ask them to call the police if they hear suspicious noises coming from my home.
- If I leave my home, I can go (list four places): _____, _____, _____, _____.
- I can leave extra money, car keys, clothes, and copies of documents with _____.
- If I leave, I will bring (see checklist).
- To ensure safety and independence, I can: Keep change for phone calls with me at all times, open my own savings account; rehearse my escape route with a support person; and review my safety plan on _____ (date).

Suggestions for increasing safety—When the relationship is over

- I can: change the locks, install steel/metal doors, a security system, smoke detectors, and an outside lighting system.
- I will inform _____ and _____ that my partner no longer lives with me and ask them to call the police if she/he is observed near my home or my children.
- I will tell people who take care of my children the names of those who have permission to pick them up. The people who have permission are: _____, _____, and _____.
- I can tell _____ at work about my situation and ask _____ to screen my calls.
- I can avoid stores, banks, and _____ that I used when living with my battering partner.
- I can obtain a protective order from _____. I can keep it on or near me at all times as well as leave a copy with _____.
- If I feel down and ready to return to a potentially abusive situation, I can call _____ for support or attend workshops and support groups to gain support and strengthen my relationships with other people.

If you are planning to leave - Items to Take Checklist

- Identification
- Birth Certificates for me and my children
- Social Security cards
- School and medical records
- Money, bankbooks, credit cards
- Keys - house/car/office
- Driver's license and registration
- Medications
- Change of clothes
- Welfare identification
- Passport(s), Green Card(s), work permits
- Divorce papers
- Lease / rental agreement, house deed
- Mortgage payment book, current unpaid bills
- Insurance papers
- Address book
- Pictures, jewelry, items of sentimental value
- Children's favorite toys and/or blankets

Workplace Guidelines

What to Do.....

If you are experiencing domestic violence:

- Notify your supervisor and the human relations manager about the circumstances regarding your situation.
- Discuss options available to you, e.g. Scheduling, safety precautions, employee/family assistance benefits.
- Submit a recent photo of the perpetrator to your safety manager in the event of a confrontation at work.
- Request that all information be treated with confidence to provide for your safety and well-being.

If you are the coworker of someone experiencing domestic violence:

- If you suspect a coworker is suffering abuse, do not directly confront her/him since it is important for the individual to self-disclose for her/his own safety and well-being.
- Express concern and a willingness to listen and be supportive if needed.
- Offer support by listening and assisting, when an individual is ready, she/he will confide.
- If a coworker confides in you, encourage communication with the human resources manager and her/his supervisor.
- If you witness an incident at work, contact your safety manager or law enforcement immediately. Make sure that the incident is documented.

If you are the supervisor or manager of an employee who is experiencing domestic violence:

- Be aware of unusual absences or behavior and take note of bruises or emotional distress.
- Contact the human resource manager to discuss concerns, resources available and ways to support the employee.
- Be familiar with community resources and referrals.
- Maintain confidentiality at all times; be sensitive to the seriousness of the situation.
- Discuss who is appropriate to speak with the employee; agree on all forms of communication, e.g., providing the safety manager with a photo if there is a risk at work.
- Assist the employee in documenting all incidents with the batterer.
- Support anti-domestic violence campaigns and programs.

What Can Communities do to Prevent Domestic Violence?

- Expand education and awareness efforts to increase positive attitudes toward nonviolence and encourage individuals to report family violence.
- Form a task force to assess the problem, develop an action plan, and monitor progress. (*Douglas County Domestic Abuse Task Force*)
- Mandate training in domestic violence for all social services and criminal justice professionals. (*an ongoing process*)
- Advocate laws and judicial procedures at the state and local levels that support and protect battered women.
- Establish centers where visits between batterers and their children may be supervised, for the children's safety. (*Safe Exchange Center*)
- Fund shelters and victim services agencies adequately.
- Recruit and train volunteers to staff hotlines, accompany victims to court, and provide administrative support to shelters and victim services. (*Someplace Safe Volunteers*)
- Improve collection of child support.
- Establish medical protocols to help physicians and other health care personnel identify and help victims of domestic abuse.
- Provide legal representation for victims of domestic violence.
- Advocate for the accessibility of services for all population groups, especially under served populations which include immigrants and refugees, gays and lesbians, racial and ethnic minorities and the disabled.

If you are interested in finding out how you can help, please call WINGS Family Supportive Services (320-763-6638) or Someplace Safe (320-762-1995) and volunteer. Your help is needed.

Community Resources & Important Phone Numbers

Emergency	911
Alexandria Police Department	320-763-6631
Douglas County Sheriff's Office	320-762-8151
 Other Resources	
Douglas County Hospital	320-762-1511
Douglas County Mental Health	320-762-2400
Douglas County Social Services	320-762-2303
Douglas County Public Health	320-763-6018
 Someplace Safe	 320-762-1995 1-800-974-3359
Wings Family Support Services	320-763-6638
The Village Family Service Center	320-762-8851
National Domestic Abuse Hotline	1-800-799-7233
(TTY)	1-800-787-3224
 Other Numbers	
Counselor	_____
Your Workplace EAP	_____
Your Local Church	_____
Friend	_____
Other _____	_____
Other _____	_____

Web Sites

Family Violence Prevention Fund	http://www.fvpf.org
Domestic Violence Awareness Handbook	http://usda.gov/da/shmd/aware.htm
Men Stopping Violence	http://menstoppingviolence.org
American Bar Assoc. Commission on Domestic Abuse	http://www.abanet.org/domviol/mrdv/home.html
The White Ribbon Campaign	http://www.whiteribbon.ea
The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence	http://ncadv.org
Minnesota Men as Peacemakers	http://menaspeacemakers.org
Untied Communities Advocating Non-Violence Inc. (Alexandria)	http://ucanalexandria.com
Someplace Safe	http://someplacesafe.info/
WINGS	http://www.wingsfamilyservices.com

End Abuse Pledge

I acknowledge domestic abuse is a serious social problem that everyone must work to end.

I acknowledge that all people deserve to live in a safe and loving environment.

I acknowledge that ending domestic abuse and violence begins with me.

I commit to learn more about the causes and forms of domestic abuse.

I commit to end the silence about domestic abuse and its effects on children, women and men.

I commit my support to organizations working to end domestic abuse.

I commit to treating all people I meet with dignity and respect.

I confirm my commitment by signing this pledge.

Signature

Date

**If you would care to help UCAN Inc. in it's efforts to end domestic violence in our area with a financial donation please make your Check payable to UCAN Inc. and forward
It to:**

**UCAN Inc.
Box 1246
Alexandria, MN. 56308**

**Your donation is tax deductible.
UCAN Inc. is a 501 c 3
Tax exempt organization.**

**Your donation will be put to work
Supporting our efforts to reduce
Domestic violence in a variety of ways.**

**Each Monday morning a positive thought
e-mail is sent out to those wishing to be
on the list...if you would care to get
the e-mail...send a request to:**

peaceinalexandria@hotmail.com