

Domestic Violence: Types of Violence

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a critical component when providing any type of services to victims of domestic violence. A victim's trust, willingness to reach out for assistance, safety, and self determination hinges on strict adherence to confidentiality. A victim will not reach out for assistance if they feel their request will be discussed with others. Any agency providing information and referrals to victims of domestic violence should have guidelines in place concerning professional ethics and boundaries with regard to confidentiality.

Types of Violence/Form of Abuse

Physical Abuse: pushing, punching, choking, burning, shooting, dragging, restraining, locking in the house, throwing down the stairs, kicking, poking, slapping, cutting, tripping, raping, holding down, hair pulling, squeezing, suffocating, kidnapping, etc.

Verbal Abuse: name calling, yelling, making demeaning comments, nagging, cussing, threatening, belittling, constant phone calls, actively undermining her authority with children, telling her that she is a bad parent, telling her she can't control her kids, setting her up so that he can humiliate her in public or in front of family and friends.

Sexual Abuse: making degrading sexual comments, forcing sex, assaulting breasts or genitals, forcing a partner to have sex with a third person, criticizing appearance, bragging about infidelity, forced cohabitation.

Emotional Abuse: making threats of violence, forcing a woman to do degrading things, controlling her activities, frightening her, or using her children or grand children as leverage against her, killing a family pet, creating crisis, embarrassment, threatening to tell others about sexuality in case of gays/lesbians.

Financial (Economic) Abuse: destroying property, prized possessions, relatives' property; taking her money; denying her money; restricting access to household finances and withholding medical treatment; not allowing her to work or attend school; forcing her to work.

Neglect: omitting or failing to do what a reasonable person should do under the circumstances. It includes failure to provide food, shelter, clothing, and personal hygiene to a dependent person who needs such assistance; failure to take care of the needs of the dependent person; and the failure to protect the dependent person from health and safety hazards.

Verbal Abuse and Controlling Behavior: Verbal abuse and controlling behavior are part of the dynamics of domestic violence. They occur early in the relationship and continue throughout as they increase in severity. Victims often report that this type of abuse is more difficult to heal from than the physical injuries because they are such betrayals of trust and injurious to self esteem.

Verbal abuse is almost always added to controlling behaviors. Its purpose is to undermine the victim's independence, make her feel bad about herself, and get her to take the responsibility for whatever is wrong.

Controlling behavior can begin with dating relationships and continue for a long period of time. It is initially interpreted as love by both abuser and victim. These behaviors include: jealousy, mistrust, obsession, isolation, and sabotage of the victim.

Definition of Domestic Violence

"A pattern of coercive control that one person exercises over another."

Domestic violence is not limited to physical violence, but also includes verbal abuse, emotional abuse and economic abuse. It can be progressive social isolation, deprivation and intimidation. Remember that domestic violence is a power game; its purpose is for the abuser to control the victim in whatever form(s) it takes.

95% – 97% of the domestic violence cases have women as the victims and men as the perpetrators. For the purpose of this manual, male pronouns will be used to refer to the perpetrators and female pronouns will be used to refer to the victims of domestic violence.

Please note: Domestic Violence is a very serious problem nationwide. This article does not begin to cover the complexities or magnitude of this problem. It is only meant to provide some insight into the needs of victims and the important part you will be playing in providing them with referral/information they request.