

## Domestic Violence - What is it

As domestic violence awareness has increased, it has become evident that abuse can occur within a number of relationships. The laws in many states cover incidents of violence occurring between married couples, as well as abuse of elders by family members, abuse between roommates, dating couples and those in lesbian and gay relationships.

In an abusive relationship, the abuser may use a number of tactics other than physical violence in order to maintain power and control over his or her partner:

- **Emotional and Verbal Abuse.** Survivors of domestic violence recount stories of put-downs, public humiliation, name-calling, mind games and manipulations by their partners. Many say that the emotional abuse they have suffered has left the deepest scars.
- **Isolation.** It is common for an abuser to be extremely jealous, and insist that the victim not see her friends or family members. The resulting feeling of isolation may then be increased for the victim if she loses her job as a result of absenteeism or decreased productivity (which are often associated with people who are experiencing domestic violence).
- **Threats and Intimidation.** Threats - including threats of violence, suicide, or of taking away the children - are very common tactics employed by the batterer.

The existence of emotional and verbal abuse, attempts to isolate, and threats and intimidation

within a relationship may be an indication that physical abuse is to follow. Even if they are not accompanied by the physical abuse, the effect of these incidents must not be minimized.

## Who are the Victims

- Women were attacked about six times more often by offenders with whom they had an intimate relationship than were male violence victims.
- Nearly 30 percent of all female homicide victims were killed by their husbands, former husbands, or boyfriends.
- In contrast, just over 3 percent of male homicide victims were killed by their wives, former wives, or girlfriends.
- Husbands, former husbands, boyfriends and ex-boyfriends committed more than one million violent acts against women.
- Family members or other people they knew committed more than 2.7 million violent crimes against women
- Husbands, former husbands, boyfriends, and ex-boyfriends committed 26 percent of rapes and sexual assaults.
- Forty-five percent of all violent attacks against female victims 12 years of age and older by multiple offenders involve offenders they know.
- The rate of intimate-offender attacks on women separated from their husbands was about three times higher than that of divorced women and about 25 times higher than that of married women.
- Women of all races were equally vulnerable to attacks by intimates.

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- Female victims of violence were more likely to be injured when attacked by someone they knew than female victims of violence who were attacked by strangers.

## Myths Feed Denial about Family Violence

**Myth:** Family violence is rare....

**Truth:** Although statistics on family violence are not precise, it's clear that millions of children, women, and even men are abused physically by family members and their intimates.

**Myth:** Family violence is confined to the lower classes....

**Truth:** Reports from police records, victim services, and academic studies show domestic violence exists equally in every socioeconomic group, regardless of race or culture.

**Myth:** Alcohol and drug abuse are the real causes of violence in the home.....

**Truth:** Because male batterers also abuse alcohol and other drugs, it's easy to conclude that these substances may cause domestic violence. They apparently do increase the lethality of the violence, but they also offer the batterer another excuse to evade responsibility for his behavior. The abusive man - and men are the abusers in the overwhelming majority of domestic violence incidents - typically controls his actions, even when drunk or high, by choosing a time and place for the assaults to take place in private and go undetected. In addition, successful completion of a drug treatment program does not guarantee an end to battering. Domestic violence and substance abuse are two different problems that should be treated equally.

**Myth:** Battered wives like being hit, otherwise they would leave....

**Truth:** The most common response to battering - "Why doesn't she just leave?" - ignores the economic and social realities facing women. Shelters are often full, and family, friends, and the workplace are frequently less than fully supportive. Faced with rent and utility deposits, day care, health insurance, and other basic expenses, the woman may feel that she cannot support herself and her children. Moreover, in some instances, the

woman may be increasing the chance of physical harm or even death if she leaves an abusive spouse.

## What can Each of Us Do?

- ✓ Call the police if you see or hear evidence of domestic violence.
- ✓ Speak out publicly against domestic violence.
- ✓ Take action personally against domestic violence when a neighbor, a co-worker, a friend or a family member is involved or being abused.
- ✓ Encourage your neighborhood watch or block association to become as concerned with watching out for domestic violence as with burglaries and other crimes.
- ✓ Support someone whom you believe is a victim of domestic violence and/or talk with a person you believe is being abusive.
- ✓ Help others become informed, by inviting speakers to your church, professional organizations, civic group, or workplace.
- ✓ Support domestic violence counseling programs and shelters.

## Where Can I Get Help?

CT Coalition Against  
Domestic Violence  
135 Broad Street  
Hartford, CT 06105  
860-282-7899  
24-hour, toll-free Hotline  
1-888-774-2900

National Coalition Against  
Domestic Violence  
PO Box 18749  
Denver, CO 80218  
303-839-1852  
24-hour, toll-free Hotline  
1-800-799-SAFE  
TDD 1-800-787-3224

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Information Provided by:  
Bureau of Justice  
Violence Against Women Office, 1996