

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

WHAT IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

It is abusive and violent behavior between people who have an ongoing or prior intimate relationship. Couples can be married or living together. They may also have children in common.

The abuse can range from pushing and slapping, to punching or using a weapon. It can also include threats that make you fear for your safety.

CYCLES OF VIOLENCE

Three Cycles of Violence

Tension Building Phase

Here your partner becomes edgy. You may be told you are stupid. You may feel depressed, anxious, and have headaches. There will be minor acts of violence, like pinching, slapping or shoving.

Acute Battering Incident

The tension building phase ends with an explosion of violence. The abuser will tell you that what happened was not a big deal or problem.

Loving Reconciliation (Reunion)

The abuser will now feel sorry for what he or she did and fear that you will leave. You will hear “I’m sorry” and “it will never happen again”. Your partner may also shower you with love and praise. You may feel guilty and blame yourself.

WHAT CAN I DO IF I AM BEING ABUSED?

- Call the police.
- Leave if you feel you are in danger and can do so safely.
- Get medical help if needed.
- Contact your local shelter, support group or victim assistance center.
- Save all the proof that you can, like pictures of the injuries.
- If you can do so safely, ask your abuser to go to counseling.
- Always keep a cell phone with you, if possible.
- Go to court
- Make a safety plan.

WHAT IS A SAFETY PLAN?

It is a plan that can help keep you safe from domestic violence. A safety plan helps you to think about how to protect yourself and have a way out. Below are some ideas for safety plans.

If you are still together:

- Avoid rooms with weapons or no exits.
- Keep change with you at all times.
- Memorize all important telephone numbers.

- Have a “code word or sign” to give family, friends, or co-workers, so that they know you need help.

If you are no longer with the abuser:

- Change your phone number.
- Screen calls.
- Save all messages from the abuser.
- Change the locks, if the abuser has a key.
- Plan how to get away if the abuser comes near you.
- If you have to meet with your abuser, do it in a public place.
- Change your routine, so he cannot easily know where you will be at any time.

If you leave the abuser or are thinking of leaving the abuser, take keys and important papers. Take social security cards and birth certificates for you and your kids. Take your marriage license, lease, or deeds. Take your checkbook, credit cards, and bank statements. Take insurance policies, W-2s, and proof of income for you and your partner. Take anything that can show past abuse, like photos, police reports, and medical reports. But, if you can not safely get these before you leave, do not take a chance by staying – just leave without them.

Once violence begins, it usually happens more often and gets worse.

HOW CAN GOING TO COURT HELP ME?

If you go to court you can ask for a protective order. A protective order is a court order that tells your abuser that he must stop hurting you. It will also tell your abuser that he must stop contacting and stalking you. Protective orders can also tell the abuser that he must stay away from your house, school or job. If the abuser violates this order he can go to jail. By going to court you can also try to get temporary custody of your children. You may be able to get child support. This may also cause him to be charged with a crime.

HOW ELSE CAN I PROTECT MYSELF?

- Find out about shelters BEFORE you need them.
- Have photos taken of your injuries; you can use them later.
- Teach your kids to use the telephone to call the police in case of an emergency.
- Make a safety plan and practice it with your children.
- Contact an advocate.

WHAT IS AN ADVOCATE?

An advocate is someone who trained and knowledgeable about domestic violence. She is there to help you. She is on your side.

HOW CAN AN ADVOCATE HELP ME?

An advocate can help in a number of ways, including:

- Finding you safe shelter.
- Getting you legal information.
- Helping in filling out protective order paperwork.
- Getting you transportation.
- Helping you obtain clothing.

- Helping you find resources like housing, social services, and counseling.
- Going to the hospital or to court with you.

WHO CAN I CALL FOR HELP?

- The Police
 - 911
- National Domestic Violence Hotline
 - 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
 - 1-800-787-3224 (TDD)

REMEMBER

- It is not your fault.
- No one has the right to abuse you.
- Know that relationships based on fear, power and control are abusive.
- Know that it is not always easy to leave an abuser.
- Know that waiting for an abuser to change and trying harder to please him or her will not work.

This is not all of the information that you need to know about domestic violence. Speak to an attorney.

If you do not have a lawyer, the South Carolina Bar Lawyer Referral Service can give you the name of a lawyer who is willing to meet with you and advise you at a lower rate. For the name of a lawyer in your area; call the Lawyer Referral Service (800) 868-2284 statewide or (803) 799-7100 in Columbia.

If you have a very low income, your local legal services office may be able to help you. To get in touch with them, call the Legal Assistance Telephone Intake Service for a referral (888) 346-5592 statewide or (803) 744-9430 in Columbia.

REVISED JUNE 2012

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