

The Facts About Domestic Violence

Intimate partner violence made up 22 percent of the violent crimes against women and 5 percent of the violent crimes against men in 2010.¹

In 2010, 407,700 women and 101,530 men were victimized by an intimate partner.²

In 2010, 37.5 percent of all female murder victims were killed by a current or former spouse or boyfriend.³

From 2001 to 2005, one-half of female intimate partner violence victims were physically injured and 18.5 percent were treated for their injury.⁴

Approximately one in three adolescent girls in the United States is a victim of physical, emotional, or verbal abuse from a dating partner.⁵

During 2008, the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs documented 3,419 cases of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender domestic violence victimization, 9 of which resulted in murder.⁶

In 2008, 1 in 10 children under the age of 18 (9.8%) had witnessed one family member assault another; 1 in 5 (20.3%) reported witnessing a family assault sometime during their lifetime.⁷

ENDNOTES

¹Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2011, *Criminal Victimization, 2010*, Washington, DC.

²Ibid.

³Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2011, *Crime in the United States, 2010*, Washington, DC.

⁴Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2007, *Intimate Partner Violence*, Washington, DC.

⁵A. Davis, September 2008, "Interpersonal and Physical Violence Among Teens," *Focus: Views from the National Council on Crime and Delinquency*.

⁶National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, 2008. *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Domestic Violence in the United States in 2008*, New York.

⁷D. Finkelhor et al., 2009, *Children's Exposure to Violence: A Comprehensive National Survey*. Bulletin. Washington, DC. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Resources for Information and Assistance

National Domestic Violence Hotline
1-800-799-SAFE or 1-800-799-7233
1-800-787-3224 (TTY)
www.thehotline.org

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
303-839-1852
www.ncadv.org

National Center for Victims of Crime
202-467-8700
www.ncvc.org

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THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR
Victims of Crime

OVC HELP SERIES for Crime Victims

Domestic Violence

NATRONA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
VICTIM SERVICES
201 NORTH DAVID; 2ND FLOOR
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What Is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence is a term that covers many types of acts committed by a current or former intimate partner against another, or within a family. It can take the form of physical violence, sexual abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, financial abuse, or other controlling behavior. It can include threats, such as threatening to commit suicide or take the children away from the victim. Victims of domestic violence can be of any age, racial or cultural background, education level, financial level, religion, gender, or sexual orientation.

Domestic violence is usually not a single event and often becomes more severe and frequent over time. Many batterers are not violent in other relationships, such as at work or with friends. They routinely deny that the abuse occurred, minimize its severity, or blame the victim for the abuse.

Many factors contribute to domestic violence and abusive behavior—abusive family background, feelings of inadequacy, and stress. But ultimately it is driven by an abuser's need for power and control. Being drunk or high may intensify existing violent behaviors, but alcohol or drug abuse does not *cause* domestic violence. Regardless of the underlying factors, the batterer is responsible for his or her actions—not the victim.

Domestic violence affects not only the direct victim, but also those who witness it. Children are particularly affected: those living with family violence are more likely to have problems with anxiety, self-esteem, depression, anger, and temperament.

If You Are a Victim of Domestic Violence

The most difficult step for you to take is to admit that you are being or have been abused by your partner. Remember, your partner's violence is the problem, not you. You do not provoke it. You do not deserve it.

The physical and emotional suffering you experience may have long- and short-term effects. The suffering may seem to use up all of your energy. You may feel trapped, alone, and that you have lost control of your life. You may question yourself and your reactions. Regardless of your reactions, it is important to remember that every victim is different, as is every response to domestic violence. The reactions you are having to your abuse are normal.

Your safety is the first priority. Every person in an abusive relationship should have a safety plan—concrete steps you can take to stay safe or to get to a safe place if you or your family is in danger. Domestic violence shelters and advocates in your community can help you develop a safety plan that is tailored for your individual situation. The people closest to you can be part of your safety plan. Let trusted friends and family members know about your situation, unless doing so will endanger you in any way. Know where to get help. Tell someone what is happening to you.

Remember, as a domestic violence victim, you are not alone. Do not lose hope.

Where Can You Get Help?

A domestic violence advocate can help you learn about your rights as a victim of domestic violence and provide you with information about your legal options, such as reporting the crime to local law enforcement or obtaining a protective order. An advocate can also connect you with your local women's center, shelter, or domestic violence program, which can be another important resource for emotional support, shelter, or financial assistance. Local police, hospitals, churches, family or conciliation courts, crisis intervention services, or departments of health and human services can also give you information about local resources.

All states have crime victim compensation programs that reimburse victims for certain out-of-pocket expenses, including medical expenses, lost wages, and other financial needs considered reasonable. To be eligible, you must report the crime to the police and cooperate with the criminal justice system. Victim assistance programs in your community can give you more information about applying.

It is important to remember that the abuser is the only one who can change his or her violent behavior. Many communities have batterers' programs, which try to help abusers learn how to control or change their behavior. Participation in these programs is often a court-ordered condition when batterers are convicted of domestic violence charges.

Whatever type of domestic violence situation you are in, resources are available to you. You deserve help. You deserve support. You deserve to feel safe.

What Else Can You Do?

- ▶ The abuser's power is based on secrecy. Abuse must be brought into the open and talked about. Many women's health centers and mental health agencies sponsor support groups for abused partners and children. Call and give yourself the chance to talk to other victims. You'll find out that you are not alone!
- ▶ Mediation centers, usually operated by courts and law enforcement, have been successful in helping couples resolve their conflicts, particularly when the abuser has relied more on threat and intimidation than physical abuse.
- ▶ Through the ADT Aware® program, ADT Security Services, Inc., donates and installs electronic security systems (which include hold-up alarm pendants and 24-hours-a-day monitoring) in the homes of domestic violence victims. Victims in need of the program should contact their local battered women's shelter or domestic violence unit at the police department to see if they qualify.
- ▶ No single tactic may work by itself. In many cases, a combination of legal intervention and counseling is the best way to protect victims, help the batterer, and minimize damage to family relationships.

If It Happens to Someone You Know...

- ▶ Urge the victim to call the police, a community mental health center's crisis hotline, or a battered women's shelter.
- ▶ Look at the community's resources for victims of family violence. Are they adequate and do people know about them? Volunteer to help.
- ▶ If no local resources are available, contact the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 1532 16th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036; phone: 202-745-1211; fax: 202-745-0088; the National Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-799-SAFE (7233).
- ▶ Encourage friends and family to channel anger constructively. Anger management classes, offered at community centers and mental health clinics, may be helpful.

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NATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION COUNCIL

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FAMILY VIOLENCE HURTS EVERYONE



THE CYCLE OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

Most people, when beaten or intimidated by someone in their own family, feel helpless, afraid, embarrassed, and guilty. These emotions, plus a belief that what happened was not really a crime, often keep victims from taking any action. Everyone hopes it won't happen again. Unfortunately, abusers follow a predictable cycle—tension builds and erupts into an attack, then remorse and a period of reconciliation follow until tension again builds and is released by violence.

MYTH: *Children do not suffer long-term effects from family violence.*

FACT: Children of abusive parents often are abused physically or sexually. In many cases, they continue the cycle of violence by abusing their own children. Statistics show that children who witness violence are more likely to commit acts of violence later.

MYTH: *Family violence is not widespread.*

FACT: Domestic violence is a widespread and serious problem in America, with devastating consequences for individuals, families, and communities.

MYTH: *Family violence happens only to women in low-income groups.*

FACT: Although violence in families is drastically underreported, it affects all kinds of people regardless of gender, race, culture, age, sexual orientation, class, or citizenship status.

MYTH: *Victims of family violence can easily leave before violence becomes a serious threat.*

FACT: Economic dependence, fear, complex family emotional ties, low self-esteem, and lack of safe places to go make leaving almost impossible for many abused family members.

MYTH: *Family violence is not a crime. It occurs in the home and is strictly a private matter that doesn't affect anyone else.*

FACT: Any threat or attack against a person is a crime, no matter where it happens or who does it.

MYTH: *No one can help. The police, courts, and social workers either don't want to get involved or can't do anything effective.*

FACT: Women's health centers, mental health agencies, volunteer groups, and law enforcement agencies throughout the country are helping victims of family violence by providing safe shelters, counseling, emergency assistance, legal aid, and mediation programs—even arrests and prosecutions, with or without victims' cooperation.

How To Protect Yourself Against Abuse

- ▶ Call 911 or leave home immediately if you feel you are in real physical danger. If you think relatives may not want to help, seek a shelter for battered women. Police, sheriffs, hospitals, churches, and community mental health centers can give you information.
- ▶ Save evidence of the assault. Keep torn or bloodied clothing and go to the emergency room for treatment. Get the names, addresses, and phone numbers of any witnesses.
- ▶ Report the assault to your local law enforcement agency as soon as possible. Officers will investigate to see whether they can make an arrest. They can tell you about local assistance, counseling, and shelters, and take you to the hospital. They can also stay while you pack clothing and other personal items if you choose to leave.
- ▶ If you have children, don't leave them alone with the batterer. They may also be in danger of abuse. Also, leaving them may constitute abandonment, which could hurt your chances of getting custody in the future.

How Can You Use the Legal System?

Many battered family members do not report abuse, perhaps because they fear breaking up the family, retaliation by the abuser, or loss of income if the abuser is jailed. Depending on the charges, judges usually impose a fine and an order for counseling rather than a prison sentence when offenders in family violence cases plead guilty. The victim may request that the abuser receive counseling rather than jail time.

Why bother to have someone arrested? It lets the abuser know that violence will not be tolerated. It gives you as a victim some control over the situation and allows the court to mandate treatment for the abuser.