

Domestic Violence Overview

Framing the Conversation

Language is paramount when working with domestic violence issues. The ways one speaks about domestic violence reinforces one's perceptions and beliefs about it, clarifies the issue, and creates consistent responses to victims and perpetrators.

Knowing what domestic violence is and is not will empower a faith leader to recognize, respond, and refer in ways that will best help the victim.

Domestic violence is not:

- A DV relationship: The term relationship implies both are equally involved, equally harmful OR that the relationship is at fault (e.g. they're just not good together) instead of a perpetrator purposefully controlling and harming a loved one.
- Gender symmetry: In the context of domestic violence, people identifying as men and women are not equally violent to their intimate partners. Research showing gender symmetry is faulty, while most of the studies over the past forty years have consistently found women to be the majority of victims of heterosexual perpetrators. This doesn't mean men aren't victims; it simply means that women are the majority of victims.
- A violent incident: Domestic violence is a pattern of coercive and sometimes assaultive behaviors. Violence doesn't just occur, but is a result of a pattern of escalating abusive behaviors perpetrated by an abuser.
- A dangerous family: Another term that implies most or all members of a family are in some way at fault for the abuse. Again, only the perpetrator is dangerous.

Terminology

Throughout the document, the following definitions will be used:

Faith "is a deep personal conviction and or relationship with the Divine and religion is the structure that is built around faith and the allegiance of an individual to the specific beliefs and practices of a group or social institution."

Faith leader is inclusive of all faith communities. Faith leaders are not necessarily officially ordained and may not only belong to traditional organized religions.

Clergy are faith leaders that are recognized as official leaders both by the faith community and by the state.

Inclusive language Although the majority of domestic violence is perpetrated by people who were socialized as male against children and people who were socialized as female, *they* is used as a singular pronoun throughout this document to connote that anyone can be a victim or perpetrator of domestic violence. Keep in mind the overwhelming gendered nature of this crime.

Abuser is a person that is harming their intimate partner. Because most of their actions are criminal, abusers will also be referred to as *perpetrators*.

Victim refers to intimate partners abused by partners, as well as the children of the victim. NOTE: Despite the abuse, victims are surviving every day and to acknowledge their strengths, they are also referred to as *survivors*.

Violence can have many connotations and must be understood here in the context of domestic violence. *Physical violence* in domestic violence is a smaller part of the ongoing pattern of abusive behaviors. Violence is used to retaliate, instill fear, and to regain control. It may or may not be frequent or severe, yet is horrifyingly effective. Violence is contextualized in abuse; physical violence by a perpetrator is not situational, but ongoing.

The motivations and intentions behind perpetrator's and victim's use of physical violence in intimate partnerships are markedly different. Victims' use of violence, called *resistive violence*, is not intended to control or even dominate the abusive partner. Rather, victims use violence to stop physical and or sexual abuse, protect their children or to momentarily regain some control. Victims do not use violence as a first line of defense or even regularly to defend themselves. They use what works in the moment to mitigate the abuse.

Domestic Violence is an intimate partner's pattern of coercive and assaultive behaviors used to gain and maintain power and control over their partner.

Domestic violence is complex. The importance of understanding the language of DV is evident: the terms hold key meanings and these meanings hold instructions for successfully working with victims and perpetrators.

Magnitude

Domestic Violence

- 1 in 4 women & 1 in 7 men will be physically or sexually abused by an intimate partner
- Women who leave their abusers are at 75% greater risk of severe injury or death than those who stay with abusive partners
- Up to 45% of all female victims are abused during pregnancy

Domestic Violence Homicide

- Women are more likely to be killed by male intimate partners than all other homicide categories combined. Four out of 5 women are killed in their own homes
- 5 to 11 women are killed daily by an intimate partner, between 1,800 & 4,000 a year
- For every domestic violence-related homicide, 9 more victims are almost killed by their abusers. Abusers intend these attacks to be fatal, but victims are saved because of improved medical care

Child Abuse

- Men who abuse women are 6 to 19 times more likely to sexually abuse their children than non-abusive fathers & are more likely to do so post-separation

- 75% of victims report that their children had been physically and/or sexually abused by their abusers
- Children born to victims of prenatal physical abuse have an increased risk of exhibiting aggressive, anxious, depressed, or hyperactive behavior

Teens and Young Adults

- 1 in 3 girls & 1 in 5 boys have been a victim of abuse by an intimate partner
- Among female adolescent victims, 24% report experiencing extremely violent incidents such as rape or the use of weapons against them
- Adolescent girls who experienced physical or sexual relationship violence are **6 times more likely** to become pregnant than their non-abused peers

Marginalized Communities

- Victims from marginalized communities have significantly lower rates of arrests made on their behalf
- Research on the prevalence of violence among same-sex couples reveals that DV among this group is as frequent & severe as violence among heterosexual couples
- Age-adjusted rate of non-fatal violent crime against persons with disabilities was 1.5 times higher than the rate for persons without disabilities

Perpetrators

- Convicted abusers who attend anger management or substance abuse programs are significantly more likely to re-offend than those who attend state-certified batterer intervention programs
- Many abusers don't pay child support, & are at least twice as likely to bitterly contest custody -- particularly of sons
- 25% of abusers threaten to hurt their children during visitation, 25% threaten to kill their children's mother at visitation exchanges, & many more physically hurt the mothers

Local Statistics, Franklin County 2014

- Columbus Division of Police went on 7,883 domestic violence runs in 2013
- Franklin County Municipal Court had 3,910 DV cases
- In Franklin County Court Domestic Relations Division 2,085 domestic violence civil protection orders were filed
- 5,020 children lived in homes where an adult reports domestic violence is occurring
- 7,009 cases of child abuse were investigated and substantiated

Myths

Society has a range of answers for the question “What causes abuse?” Many of these explanations or answers are actually false and do not accurately reflect the realities and dynamics of domestic violence. These so-called myths are an attempt to explain (away) the abuser’s motives and behavior.

Knowing the reality about what a victim is experiencing and what you can do to support and assist will enable you to best serve them.

The list of myths and realities below, while comprehensive, is certainly not exhaustive.

Myth: Abusers who seek custody always do so out of love for their children and a desire to be a good parent.

Reality: Custody litigation frequently becomes a way abusers attempt to extend or maintain their power and control over their partner after separation. Fathers who abused the mother are twice as more likely to seek sole custody of their children than are non-violent fathers. Abusers in same-sex relationships can legally take the biological children.

Myth: Domestic violence is an impulsive, uncontrollable act of anger.

Reality: An abusive person is very much in control of their anger; they are able and willing to direct it only at their partner. Anger does not cause domestic violence and anger management classes will not help an abuser. Domestic violence is an issue of power and control.

Myth: After a victim leaves an abusive relationship, the abuse stops.

Reality: Physical and sexual violence and stalking increases by 75% after a victim leaves a relationship. This increase is due to the abuser’s escalation of tactics to regain control over the victim. Over 85% of victims report that leaving does not stop the abuse.

Myth: Victims exaggerate the violence that happens to them. If it were really bad, they would just leave.

Reality: This statement is 100% backward. Victims usually minimize the abuse that is perpetrated against them. There are many reasons victims remain in abusive relationships; it is actually remarkable that they are able to leave.

Myth: Hey, a person drinks too much and loses control. It happens.

Reality: This is an excuse. There is a high correlation between alcohol, drug use, and domestic violence, but they are all separate problems. Substance use does not cause abuse but can make an abuser more dangerous and more visible to the community. Uninhibited while under the influence, abusers may take their violent behavior further, or commit abusive acts more publicly.

Myth: Beatings occur when a person is stressed; a person can only take so much.

Reality: This is another excuse. Everyone is stressed. Most people do not abuse their loved ones because they are stressed.

Myth: Domestic violence doesn’t happen, or at worst is rare, in my faith community.

Reality: Unfortunately, domestic violence occurs at the same rates in faith communities as it does in other communities. The more attention we pay to the issue, the more decrease we will see.

There is no abusive personality, which means abusers are found in all walks of life. There are, though, many shared behaviors of an abuser that researchers were able to compile into an abuser profile. The abuser is a predator. This means that nothing was inherently wrong with the victim to cause the abusive relationship and that victims are anyone at any point in their lives. No matter if one is confident, from a healthy family, employed, or educated, one may be a victim of domestic violence.

Recognize Abuse

Power & Control

Power and control is a pattern of coercive and assaultive behaviors. Defining domestic violence as power and control gives a context in which to place the physical violence and other abusive tactics.

There is only one abuser and one victim in an abusive relationship. If domestic violence were defined only by the violent acts of either party, it could appear that both partners are abusive to each other; however, domestic violence is one partner's control and power over another.

The partner that possesses the power and control in the relationship is the abuser—always and despite whom hits first. Consequently, this also means that the role of abuser does not go back and forth between partners.

This, then, leads to the conclusion that “a hit isn't always a hit.” That hitting or yelling is not, by definition, domestic violence.

There is a difference between violence, abuse, and self-defense. When a victim of abuse “hits back,” they have reacted to the abuser. Self-defense is not abuse or an equal action taken in an equal fight. Therefore, when an abuser physically assaults their partner, it is always domestic violence, whether or not the victim attempts to protect themselves.

To mitigate this complexity, one must recognize power and control and the way in which an abuser creates these dynamics in a relationship over time. Researchers at the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project created the Power and Control Wheel (please see the handout in the Appendix) as a model to understand this.

In the center of the wheel is power and control, the crux of the relationship; the spokes that surround the center are the tactics an abuser uses to obtain and maintain that power and control. The physical and sexual violence on the outer edge are what the abuser does to regain power and control.

The Power and Control Wheel is a model of the abuser's behaviors. The abuser is not a loving partner that occasionally loses control or has an anger problem. Instead, they use these tactics, including good behaviors, to control their partners.

Types of Abuse

An abuser will gain and maintain power and control using whatever tactics work. The abuser builds the coercive, controlling environment using subtle emotional, relational and rights abuses while establishing the relationship. These tactics are similar from one abuser to another, despite demographic and or cultural influences. The expression of the tactics, though, is impacted by culture.

The *Types of Abuse* are:

- Coercive control
- Reproductive Coercion / Birth Control
- Sabotage
- Emotional
- Verbal
- Sexual
- Physical
- Financial / Resources
- Spiritual
- Pet

Refer to the *Abusive Behaviors* handout in the Appendix for examples of the behaviors listed above.

Coercive Control

Coercive control is denial of a victim's needs, rights, and wants. As the abuser begins to break down any of the partner's boundaries, and rights, they can begin to create dependency and isolation.

Coercive control operates through four main domains:

1. **Assault** denies the right to security, but is usually repeated, minor, and routine.
2. **Control** denies the right to autonomy through deprivation, exploitation and regulation.
3. **Isolation** is denial of the right to associate and support, and forces a sense of reality that life doesn't exist without the abuser.
4. **Intimidation** denies the right to live with dignity and without fear.

The intended result of coercive control is to ensure that the victim is constantly focused on the abuser's needs, wants, and possible retaliation.

Spiritual Abuse

Spiritual abuse is frequently used by abusers. Typically, abusers will reflect spiritual abuse that may have been modeled for them in their faith tradition. This makes it difficult for victims to be safe. This also gives abusers the permission—and excuses—they need to continue their behavior and to avoid consequences.

Sacred texts do not necessarily condone domestic violence or mistreatment of family. The term domestic violence isn't found in scriptures because it's a modern term. But the concept is just as ancient as the texts. Some religious leaders have twisted their sacred texts to fit their culturally oppressive goals. Clergy need to be sensitive to these messages and be willing to put them in perspective in order to promote safety and healing in survivors and families. Be willing to discuss scriptures that have in the past been used to justify abuse. If one carefully examines the texts and adheres to the tenets of one's religion, one sees that the truth—and the path for eradicating it—has been there all along. The majority of instructions for households point to health, respect, equality.

Spiritual Abuse: from Faith Community

- We the forgive abuser, so the victim should, too
- We need to counsel the abuser, so the victim should, too
- Stay with the abuser while going through counseling
- Won't protect the victim at the place of worship
- Collude with the abuser

Spiritual Abuse: from the Abuser

- Attacking partner's faith
- Using the holy book to keep victim entrapped
- Not allowing victim to freely attend services
- You bring on your own suffering
- Be a better (christian/muslim/jewish) wife
- Forgive every abuse

Spiritual Abuse: Victim Internalization

- I just need to forgive
- This is my cross to bear
- My suffering is because of my actions
- My tradition teaches submission
- Pray harder, have more faith
- We made vows
- Nuclear family is what God intended

Abusers Feel Entitled to Special Privileges

Entitlement is the key to an abuser's belief system & is their core attitude. Abusers set their own needs as primary importance in the family. They perceive any freedoms or attention given to partners or children as acts of benevolence above and beyond the norm. If their partners request more attention and participation from them, abusers feel unappreciated, wronged, and justified in retaliating. Perpetrators are typically disrespectful and contemptuous & dismissive of victim's ideas, needs, wants.

Additionally, the abuser works to prevent or confuse their victim's self-care, e.g. not allowing healthcare appointments, buying new clothes, making the family planning decisions.

Abusers Are Manipulative

Using denial, minimization, and blaming tactics, abusers work to make victims, officers, judges, and others sympathize with them in order to avoid responsibility and consequences for their abusive, criminal behavior.

Abusers try to twist things into their opposites, often claiming to be the victim. They may accuse partners of infractions (e.g. cheating) to force them to comply with their restrictions to prove innocence.

Abusers also employ good behavior to manipulate their victims. Some victims later report feeling the good behavior to be the worst of the abuse because the abuser isn't genuine, because it is simply more manipulation.

These good behaviors reinforce that an abuser knows all along what they are doing. The fact that the good behaviors show up throughout the relationship proves that an abuser uses it as a form of abuse.

Abusers Are Bullies Who Escalate When Defied

When abusers are defied they may escalate their good behaviors, but when these tactics don't work, they usually escalate their aggressive behaviors to regain control.

Abusers feel entitled to exclusive and unrestricted access to their partner. At any time, abusers feel it is their right to demand emotional or physical caretaking (including sex) regardless of their partner's wishes or inclinations. Typically, abusers will use levels of

physical and sexual violence to restore their power when defied by partners and or children. The more a perpetrator's sense of ownership is violated, the more they increase the rules and surveillance to maintain control.

Abusers Make Victims Dependent

The effects of domestic violence on a victim's economic stability are purposefully debilitating, making resource abuse an effective means of entrapment.

Violence at home often impacts the workplace. Abusers sabotage an individual's ability to safely and securely perform their duties at work by

- Harassing 74% of employed victims at work
- Causing 56% of victims to be late for work at least 5 times per month
- Causing 28% of victims to leave early at least 5 days per month
- Causing 54% of victims to miss at least 3 full days of work per month
- Causing 20% of victims to lose their jobs

Without a job, then, a victim may be without savings, have no transportation, or no means of securing an apartment. A victim has no means of permanent escape.

Abusers Use Fear

Fear silences a victim and changes how they see themselves, their world, and themselves in the world.

Of course, fear is defined in terms of physical threat. Yet, fear presents in various and sometimes obscure ways. Victims live every day thinking about the impact their decisions will have on their safety and of what the abuser's response will be.

This is what it's like to live in fear: constantly rethinking decisions, daily planning, and actions in order to mitigate abuse.

Almost half of abusers are reported to keep track of whom the victim talks to on the phone.

Close to 60% of abusers destroy property in the household when angry.

About 1/3 have threatened to kill someone in the victim's family.

About 10% of the perpetrators have a handgun, and 40% of those have threatened the victim with it in the past.

About 4% of the perpetrators have a rifle, and slightly less than 40% of those have threatened the victim with it in the past.

Entrapment and How Survivors Survive

"A psychological trap disguised as love."

Entrapment

"Why does she stay," is a question most people ask. Many are bewildered that someone would remain with an abuser, particularly when support is available. This question is problematic, though, and isn't helpful in supporting a victim.

The victim is in no way at fault for the abuse. An abuser has implemented a carefully laid trap and purposefully made it difficult to escape.

When a victim stays in an abusive relationship, they are not responsible for the continued abuse. When an abuser stays and continues the abuse, this abuser is committing a crime and doing whatever they can to get away with it. The question of staying should, instead, be asked of the perpetrator.

Many factors go into a victim's decision-making process of staying or leaving. These factors are complicated and not easily fixed.

The victim has chosen, to an extent, to stay. Yet, this choice is made in a context in which all of the options are difficult at best and life-threatening at worst. If one can simply leave a relationship without fear for safety or retaliation, then the relationship was not abusive.

Staying and leaving the abuser is an ongoing coping strategy and process for the victim. Victims leave upward of 7 times before finally leaving the abuser but only 65% of them finally do so.

A more helpful question is to ask what is preventing the victim from leaving. This is not a matter of fussy language or wording, but is entirely an issue of understanding and appropriate support. Believing that victims choose to stay means that the solution to stopping the abuse is to leave the abuser. This is very different than believing that a victim is facing numerous barriers that prevent leaving.

At whatever point a victim requests help and services, the best help one can give will address abuser and life-generated risks. The availability of effective resources will greatly determine the extent that their plans are plausible and safe. This point is crucial: victims can make any and all decisions that one thinks are best, but if resources and educated workers are not available to help facilitate a stable, safe outcome, than the decisions are, at least, intangible and, at worst, setting the victim up for a dangerous failure.

Leaving an abuser may not be the goal for victims and may be far from a realistic solution to ending the abuse. Most victims report that it doesn't work. Instead of telling a victim to leave, offer support to victims and work to mitigate their barriers.

Fear

Fear is usually the primary explanation for a victim's return to an abuser. Abusers increase their violent tactics when a victim threatens to leave or has left the abusive partner. Reports to the police of physical and/or sexual assault, stalking and harassment increase after a victim leaves.

Most intimate partner homicides occur in the first 3 months after a victim leaves the abuser. This dangerous timeframe extends up to 2 years in which a survivor is in danger of being killed by an intimate partner.

Post-separation Risks

Not only is the post-separation period the most dangerous, it also comes with a new set of issues as most abusers escalate their behaviors in order to coerce the victim to return.

Examples of these abusive tactics may include:

- Retaliatory litigation
- Taking children without legal consequences
- Unsupervised access of and or visitation with the children
- Sabotaging the relationship between the survivor and the children
- Neglecting the children when in their care

Abuser-generated Risks

Economic hardship, isolation, ruined credit are some examples of ways abusers make their victims dependent on them. Further, abusers make use of any number of threats and manipulations to convince a victim that it is better and perhaps safer to remain with them. The abuser's coercion and manipulation tactics center on shrinking the victim's world.

Hope/Love

Good or kind behavior and promises to change feed a victim's hope, intentionally so. Some abusers even go as far as threatening suicide if the victim leaves. But beyond this, victims often truly love their partners and hope for the abuser to change or revert back to their behavior in the beginning of the relationship.

Lethality

Five to eleven women are killed each day by an intimate partner in the U.S. For each of these homicides, 9 near-fatal attacks occur and though the abusers intend these attacks to be fatal, victims survive because of improved medical care. These homicides may also involve third party relationships, such as the abuser, victim, and the victim's new intimate partner. Nineteen percent of all domestic violence homicides are of innocent bystanders:

- Children
- Family members
- Neighbors and/or friends
- Co-workers
- Bystanders

Women are killed by intimate partners more often than by another acquaintance or stranger. Most of these murders were preceded by psychological abuse, coercive control, and physical/sexual abuse. Of female homicides in 2011 in which the relationship of victim and offender could be identified, 94% were murdered by a male they knew.

Domestic violence homicide is preventable. One can recognize the factors and provide early intervention and assistance by social services and the legal system. Because domestic violence-related homicides could be prevented, all have a responsibility to achieve the goal of zero-tolerance for domestic violence.

Lethality is a measure of how dangerous a perpetrator is to the victim. Research shows that certain factors can better predict which abusers will become seriously and fatally violent. These factors are listed below:

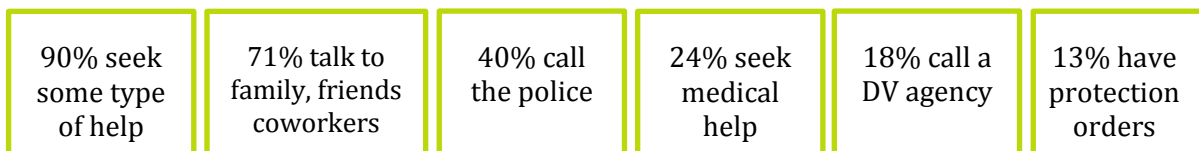
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|----------------------|----------------------------|
| Victim is separating | Stalking / Harassment |
| Victim isolation | Threats with weapons |
| Escalating control | Threats to kill victim |
| Ownership | Threats to harm children |
| Prior serious injury | Protection Order Violation |
| Strangulation | Abuser's suicidal threats |
| Sexual abuse | Abuser is unemployed |

Domestic violence usually does not end so tragically, but supporters can mitigate the likelihood by acting as though it could. Look to the victim as the best source of information and as the one to determine the safest next steps. They know their limits, their partner's limits and those of their children.

How Survivors Survive

Over time abusers escalate their abusive behaviors, usually in response to victims resistance or helpseeking. This escalation has long been recognized as the general trend in most, if not all, abuse perpetrators.

The context for understanding victim’s behavior is their survival—mentally and physically—and learning curve of coping and helpseeking. When assisting domestic violence victims ensure that the options offered work with the victim’s strengths and empower their decision-making.



Victims’ behavior may appear passive, erratic, or illogical to those outside of the situation. But logical is not always safe and passive behavior is one strategy to cope and remain safe.

Actions victims take to stop the abuse usually are a mix of strategies that keep them and the kids safe, help the abuser, and or avoid momentary escalation. In the end, victims just want the abuse to stop and are creative and active in survival.

Most Helpful Strategies	Strategies That Don’t End the Abuse
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staying with friends or family • Knowing important phone numbers to call for help • Calling a domestic violence agency • Hiding important documents for emergencies • Sending children to stay with family or friends • Safety planning • Legal remedies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing their own behaviors • Pleasing the abuser • Alcohol or drug treatment for abuser • Couples counseling • Anger management for the abuser • 87% left the abuser, but only 50% found that to be helpful • 87% refused to do what the abuser said, but less than half found that to be helpful • Resistance and placating strategies are most common, but least helpful

“Repeat abuse over time is more likely to occur among battered women with the fewest resources.”

While a victim is strategizing, they may also be internally debating what to believe about the abuser and their self, trying to discern the truth from the abuser’s lies. The abuser’s coercions, manipulations, and charming behaviors throw a wrench into their strategy.

It’s “important to recognize that a victim works hard on her own to survive and be safe and end abuse, *but she shouldn’t do it alone.*” Victims survive daily with coping strategies, but the most effective strategies come from pairing their personal, unofficial strategies with official agencies.

Communities and systems have power the victim does not: to hold the abuser accountable and to thwart their future actions.

Strangulation, Stalking, and Partner Rape

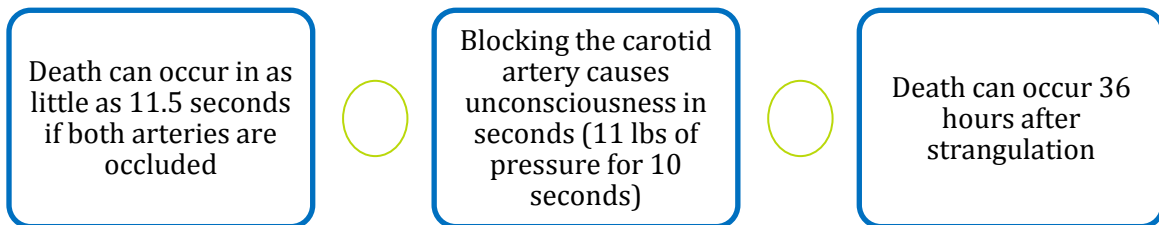
Non-fatal Strangulation

Non-fatal strangulation is a common form of severe violence used by perpetrators and is an indication that an abuser is more likely to kill their victim and may attempt to kill first responders. In one study, 68% of victims were strangled at least once, with an average of 5.3 experiences per woman.

Abusers use strangulation to frighten and silence their victims, to immobilize and terrorize their victims. The victim's life is literally in the abuser's hands. This form of power and control has a devastating psychological effect on victims, long-term serious health outcomes, and a potentially fatal outcome.

Strangulation is a form of asphyxia, characterized by closure of the blood vessels and/or air passages in the neck as a result of external pressure on the neck.

The facts about strangulation prove just how serious this crime is:



Death from non-fatal strangulation can occur months or even years after the event. Cryptogenic strokes, in which the veins in the brain swell, can occur during strangulation and eventually, sometimes 20 years later, lead to death.

Stalking

Stalking is a crime of violence, control, and intimidation. A victim attempting to leave an abuser is particularly vulnerable to stalking by the perpetrator:

- 76% of female murder victims have been stalked
- of these, 67% had been physically abused by their partner/stalker

Stalkers do not adhere to predictable stalking patterns. In some instances, stalkers limit harassment to annoying phone calls and messages. Escalating stalkers may follow the victim, commit acts of vandalism, or leave gifts. Furthermore, "stalkers commit various types of crimes against their victims," such as identity theft, stealing money, property damage, threats, physical assault, injuries and threats with weapons.

Stalking Behaviors

81% of women stalked by a current or former intimate partner are also physically assaulted by that partner. 31% of women stalked by a current or former intimate partner are also sexually assaulted by that partner.

More than half of victims lost 5 or more days from work.

1 in 20 feared being killed.

Stalking is a leading factor & predictor in domestic violence-related homicides.

Though this list is extensive, it is not exhaustive. Some of the behaviors below may seem commonplace but the perpetrator's INTENT is what makes it criminal and dangerous.

- Unwanted phone calls, text messages, emails, letters
- Tapping phones, reviewing TTY histories, checking caller ID or call histories
- Following or spying on the victim
- Use of malware to track or spy
- Use of GPS to follow or spy
- "Checking up on" the victim
- Showing up at the same places without legitimate reasons
- Waiting at places for the victim to show up
- Leaving unwanted items for the victim, i.e. presents, photos, flowers
- Stealing & reading mail
- Making threats
- Unsolicited & unrecognized claims of romantic involvement
- Posting information or spreading rumors on social media about the victim

Partner Rape and Sexual Abuse

"When you are raped by a stranger, you have to live with a frightening memory. When you are raped by your husband, you have to live with your rapist."

Rape is a crime of violence and power. Victims that are raped by their partners are more often seriously threatened, are more severely injured, and have longer-lasting sexual health consequences. Partner rape has been linked to an increase—up to 5 times more—of victims' suicidal attempts and has been found, over and over, to contribute to a decline in the mental health of victims.

Partner rape is the physical force or threat of force by a present or past intimate partner to coerce or force another into unwanted sexual activity.

The abuser's sexual assault tactics can be grouped into three categories: coercion, degradation, and force.

Most DV victims report that, forced sex or not, they are not comfortable with the sexual relationship they have with their abuser.

Moderate to severe sexual abuse has shown up in all lethality measures as a strong indicator of severe physical injury and death for the victim. For a partner that has so degraded the value of a partner's dignity, the value they place on their life is very low.

40-50% of victims are forced into sex by male partners. 62% of these women report 4 + rapes

20-30% are raped as part of the abusive pattern

41% of abusers admitted to threatening physical violence "if she didn't submit"

10% of abusers raped their partner when she was ill and medically prohibited from sex

26% of women raped by intimate partners report that pregnancy resulted from the attack

Effects of Domestic Violence

Physical and Mental Health Effects

Victims live much of the time in a heightened state of stress and continually experience traumatic incidents and forms of abuse; their health and quality of life is negatively impacted. Domestic violence and the stress accompanying it are far more reliable predictors of a victim's mental and physical health status than is the victim's "mental health history, demographic, cultural or childhood characteristics."

The extent of the physical effects of domestic violence go beyond a broken arm healing or bruises fading and can manifest and continue years after the abuse has ended. Just as many victims seek long-term care from family physicians and specialists as those who seek emergency medical care.

Victims also consistently report health problems during pregnancy, problems with their sexual health, and health problems related to strangulation.

The psychological effects of domestic violence are insidious and can have long-lasting and destructive effects on a victim's life.

- Victims suffer depression, anxiety, dissociation, personality disorders, psycho-sexual dysfunction, obsessive-compulsive disorder, substance abuse, somatization & Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
- Victims had a 92% higher cost of general health care & 800% higher cost of mental health care
- Victims have "much higher rates of social isolation, self-harm & suicide attempts"

Children Exposed to an Abuser

Children exposed to domestic violence are at a greater risk for abuse and neglect if they live with an abuser and are more likely to develop social, emotional, psychological and or behavioral problems. One in four children is exposed to at least one form of family violence in their lifetime. A child directly exposed to extreme, ongoing and or frequent violence is more likely to be seriously emotionally harmed.

For some time, children have been called the "silent witnesses" of domestic violence. But this label seems inappropriate and even a misleading description about the children's experience. To clarify what the children experience, the term "children exposed to abusers" is used to more accurately describe their experience and victimization and to indicate that the responsibility for the trauma is on the abuser.

The younger the child, the more harmful the impact may be. Brain development is impacted as chronic violence exposure can result in changes in the brain that affect attention, memory, and abilities to solve problems.

Fifty to seventy percent of children exposed to domestic violence are also victims of child abuse. Abusers often disallow their partner to bond or care properly for the children, e.g. preventing the mother from picking up their crying infant. Abusers often intentionally injure or threaten to injure children. Many domestic violence perpetrators are also incest perpetrators; the two crimes are very similar crimes of power and control in which a perpetrator considers their victims to be objects and their property.

At the very least, children usually become tools of manipulation used by the abuser with their victim; thus the children can develop unhealthy ideas about relationships, their roles and boundaries.

Clearly, these kids are not able to be children and many spend their childhoods devoting much of their energy to preventing fights and abuse. Children learn that home is an atmosphere of terror and tension. They learn that violence wins, violence works, that anger equals violence, that violence against women is accepted by society, that conflict is resolved through violence.

<p style="text-align: center;">Adolescents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Behavior problems become more severe •Emotional difficulties •Delinquent behavior •Increase in teen relationship abuse •Increase in alcohol/drug abuse •Increase in risky sexual behavior •Forced to choose sides 	<p style="text-align: center;">All Ages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Hears/sees threats & assaults •Taken hostage to force victim to return home •Forced to watch or participate in violence •Sees aftermath of violent incident •Loss of a parent due to murder/suicide •Decreased IQ •Fear
<p style="text-align: center;">Infants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Impede developmental milestones •Problems eating & sleeping •Decreased responsiveness to adults •Increased crying •Development of higher brain functions disrupted •Emotional regulation is difficult •Harmed while held in mom’s arms 	<p style="text-align: center;">School-Age</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Guilt •Reluctance to leave victim-parent •Lack of empathy for others •Eager to please or hostile •Inability to concentrate •Lower verbal, motor, cognitive skills •Forced to choose sides •Lower GPA & graduation rates •Decreased school attendance •Increased expulsions & suspensions •Poor reading ability

Children’s Resiliency and Healing

Some factors determining the extent children are affected by domestic violence are the coping strategies they have learned, the coping resources available to them, the extent of available supports, and the use of these supports.

Knowledgeable and skilled professionals who understand and respond effectively to families can play a significant role in how children are impacted. The single most critical factor in how children handle exposure to domestic violence is the presence of at least ONE loving and supportive adult in their life. Staying with the non-offending parent is key to a child’s resiliency and healthy recovery.

Help Survivors Help Their Kids

- Developmentally appropriate experiences to heal the brain
- Babies learn best through social interactions
- Increase child-adult time

- Reduce exposure to media violence & “media parenting”
- Active, experiential learning, enrichment programs
- Talk to kids in age-appropriate language about the abuse
- Educate parents about the impact of exposure

Most importantly, children need a sense and place of safety, structure, and predictability to heal from exposure and abuse. Necessary to this healing space is a strong bond with the non-offending parent that creates feelings of protection and respect for the parent. From their communities, these children need clear social messages about responsibility for violence and support for their relationship with the non-offending parent.

Recognizing Signs/Disclosures

Victims and perpetrators of domestic violence are rarely going to simply disclose abuse. Instead, the work of recognizing and responding to abuse is incumbent on friends, family, and community to recognize and respond. Domestic violence thrives in silence. Silence condones a perpetrator’s behaviors and isolates a victim. Members of a faith community are responsible for knowing what domestic violence could look and sound like.

Are these disclosures of abuse?

<i>Victim</i>	<i>Abuser</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ My partner gets too angry when our son misbehaves ○ I don’t think I can be the wife my spouse expects me to be ○ I’m not a good parent, I feel like I’m unable to parent my kids well ○ I have friend... ○ I need to be more spiritual or make my marriage more spiritual ○ We can’t have people over to our house...my partner can’t handle it ○ My partner feels led to make our family decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I always seem to let things build up. I go off on my partner and kids. • I don’t know how to make my wife understand me. She doesn’t respect me. • I’m worried that I’m like my dad. I need help. • I’m afraid that I scare my kids. I don’t mean to. • I need help with my marriage. My partner is crazy and I can’t deal with it. • My wife is trying to get me in trouble. She twists what I say or do. She’s going to put me in jail and take my kids.

Signs of Victimization

- Behavior changes when around the abuser
- Focused on partner’s reaction to decisions or events
- Limited social life, isolated from friends and family
- Blames self for most conflicts
- Multiple or severe bruises, cuts, or burns
- Injuries not consistent with explanation
- Specific burn patterns

- Delay in seeking medical care
- Poor medical compliance
- Risky behaviors
- Frequent canceled or missed appointments or events
- Frequent calls to EMS, visits to hospitals
- History of “doctor shopping”
- Unexplained physical injury
- Illness or injury not improving
- Claims of being “clumsy” or “accident prone”
- Heavy makeup or heavy clothing
- Isolation
- Harassing phone calls, text messages, emails, notes on cars
- Signs of distress, anxiety, depression, crying or poor concentration
- Comments about stress at home
- Talking about a spouse or partner’s anger or temper

Signs of an Abuser

- Makes most, if not all, decisions for the couple/family
- Controls the finances and access to them
- Doesn’t work and makes partner provide for them/family
- For heterosexual couples, has sexist, strict gender roles
- Speaks for their partner
- Doesn’t allow their partner to socialize
- Forces submission or a dominating interpretation of the scripture/religious teaching
- Talks about family as problems or objects
- Authoritarian parenting style
- Frequently calls and/or checks up on partner
- Stalks partner while at work
- Controls partner’s clothing
- Flirts with others in front of partner
- Unwanted public displays of affection with partner
- Disallows money for lunches, necessary resources, controls transportation
- Engages others in humiliating partner, name-calling
- Talks about losing cool with family
- Creates intense, stressful environments
- Coerces & controls friends into treating their partner same way
- Describes partner as crazy, disrespectful

Faith Community Response

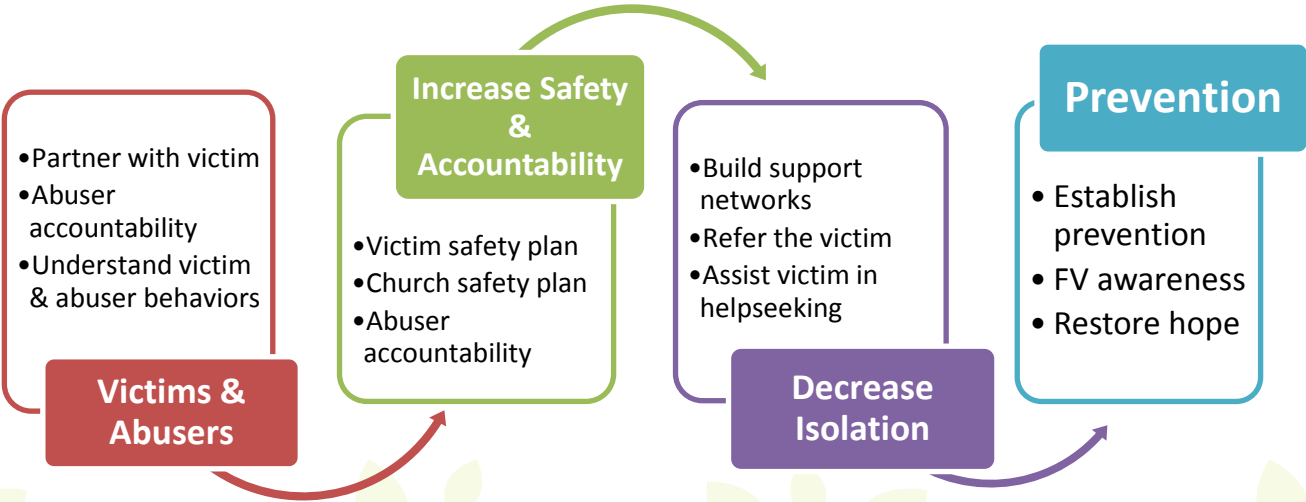
Calling and Role

Often, victims and survivors of abuse will first disclose to their faith leader looking for guidance, strength, and restoration. Leaders and congregations in the local community have made great strides in responding to these survivors and families.

Religious communities have unique opportunities to influence their larger community. They can work to shape the values of the community, as well as reflect the best of the community. All faith communities must recognize their calling to this work. For domestic violence to be eradicated, perpetrators must be held accountable and must be stopped. This means that religious leaders play a major role in stopping domestic violence. *(Refer to Community Accountability Wheel.)*

In faith communities, leaders can operate on several fronts to engage with family violence. Leaders can instruct their community about it, can intervene with families individually, and can work broadly in communities on primary prevention. Religion and spirituality bring this world and the divine together for love, justice, and harmony. As one leader said: "justice is what love looks like in our communities."

The goals for faith communities in developing family violence intervention and prevention programming are to decrease isolation, increase safety of the victim, hold the abuser accountable, and work toward prevention.



Screening

Domestic violence is a complex and difficult problem. But the response to it doesn't have to be complex. The goals of faith leaders are straightforward: to increase victim safety, decrease victim isolation, and hold the perpetrator accountable (if abuser is a member). Using teachable moments is a great way to screen congregants for family violence. The screening process is as simple as engaging in conversation with the member(s). The act of screening alone is educational on three levels:

- 1) Educates individuals that it's a problem the faith community is concerned about
- 2) Informs a victim that their faith community cares
- 3) Alerts all to the resources available.

By asking questions similar to those listed below, leaders will learn about the lives of those in the faith community. These questions will help in determining who the primary aggressor is, who the victim is, and the extent of the power and control.

- What happens when you and your partner disagree?
- Who makes the decisions in your relationship?
- How aware are you of the needs and feelings of your partner?
- Have you ever hurt your partner intentionally or unintentionally? How often?
- Do you lie to your partner? Does your partner lie to you? What is the goal?
- How does your spouse/potential spouse express anger or disagreement?
- How does your spouse respond to your mistakes?
- How did your families of origin handle anger?
- Was there ever any abuse or violence in your family of origin?
- Is there concern about potential abuse?
- Are there any signs of ambivalence about discussing issues like anger, dominance of one person in the relationship, or episodes of explosive temper?
- How is stress handled?

Please note: If asking questions about physical or sexual violence, be sure to ask questions that get to the heart of the intent of the behavior. Ask context questions to assess for resistive violence or self-defense:

- Who is the first to use violence? Why?
- What do you hope to gain with your violence?



Increase
Safety

Decrease
Isolation

Additionally, the chart below lists behaviors of victims and perpetrators that may make it easier to recognize a victim from a perpetrator claiming to be a victim.

Victim	Abuser
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discusses incident details.• Ashamed to disclose victimization.• Is afraid and confused.• Blames self; may minimize partner's violence.• Feels guilty about self-defense; may exaggerate their own "abusiveness."• Protective of partner.• Unsuccessful attempts to leave, repair the relationship, or get partner to seek help.• Life has shrunk over the course of the relationship.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vague about events, omits details.• Demands to be seen as a victim.• Feels victimized and angry.• Blames partner, minimizes own behavior, makes excuses.• Exaggerates own injuries and minimizes partner's.• Dismisses partner.• In prior relationships, says everything was partner's fault.• History of threats, other violence, crime, weapons use.

Often, victims have many barriers that may prevent them from disclosing. These barriers typically are issues that faith leaders can work to mitigate in their faith community to encourage disclosures. Victims state that fear of not being believed, shame/guilt, and fear of retaliation from the abuser are among the reasons for not disclosing. Just as frequently, faith leaders have put up barriers that also prevent the victim from disclosing about abuse. Typically, these barriers reflect larger cultural norms: silence, minimizing domestic violence, or oppressive faith traditions and values.

If they choose not to disclose, no further questions or speculations need to be made. A referral and validation should be given at the end of the conversation.

Mandated Reporting and Confidentiality¹

For faith leaders, unlike secular helping professionals, confidentiality rests in the context of spiritual issues and expectations. Despite popular belief, clergy are mandated reporters. Beyond the legal mandate, however, clergy can be leaders in doing the right thing to protect the vulnerable and harmed.

The law has traditionally respected "privileged communication" between clergy and congregant if four fundamental conditions are met:

- 1) A specific context of confidentiality and function as a professional
- 2) Necessity of maintaining confidentiality in order to maintain relationship
- 3) A relationship which ought to be protected in the opinion of the community

¹ This section adapted from Faith Trust Institute resources.

- 4) Injury to the relationship resulting from disclosure would exceed benefit to the community to be gained by disclosure. The law cannot force a clergy person to testify against a congregant in a legal proceeding.

Confidentiality means to hold information in trust and to share it with others only in the interest of the person involved, i.e. with their permission, in order to seek consultation with another professional, or in order to protect others from harm by them. Confidentiality is not intended to protect abusers from being held accountable for their actions or to keep them from getting the help that they need. Shielding them from the consequences of their behavior likely will further endanger their victims and will deny abusers the repentance which they need.

Another ethical principle to apply is that of justice-making as a response to family violence. Responsibility lies with the community and faith leader to protect those in its midst who are vulnerable to harm.

To avoid any misunderstandings between clergy and congregant, have a frank conversation with the individual regarding the duties to report. This allows the congregant to decide how much they will disclose to their leader.

Reports for Child Abuse

Critical to the ethics of confidentiality and reporting is keeping in mind the context of sexual and physical child abuse as the reference point for this discussion. There are aspects of these criminal behaviors which must be considered:

- Abusers or incest offenders will re-offend unless they get specialized treatment
- Offenders against children minimize, lie about, and deny their abusive behavior
- Offenders cannot follow through on their good intentions or genuine remorse without help from outside intervention
- Treatment of offenders is most effective when it is ordered and monitored by the courts
- The secret of the child's abuse must be broken in order to get help to the victim and offender
- Faith leaders do not have all the skills and resources necessary to treat offenders or to assist victims
- Quick forgiveness is likely to be "cheap grace" and is unlikely to lead to repentance

According to ORC 2151.421, clergy have a legal duty to report child abuse or neglect. This involves calling the local Child Protective Service agency and making the report; some cases may also warrant a call to the local police.

Domestic Violence Reporting Requirements

Domestic violence is not a mandated report. This allows victims more freedom to decide how to handle the abuse that is being perpetrated against them. Frequently, police and court intervention is helpful, but also as frequently, police and court intervention is not helpful.

That said, according to ORC 2901.01, clergy are mandated to report all felony injuries to law enforcement. These felony injuries are:

- Gunshot wounds
- Stab wounds
- Serious burns
- "Serious Physical Harm"

Working with Victims and Perpetrators

The dynamics of domestic violence must be clearly understood by pastoral caregivers working with couples in their congregations. The faith community is responsible for advocating for victims. Additionally, faith communities are called to counsel and hold the abuser accountable. Faith leaders will have to guard against ostracism of the victim while holding the perpetrator accountable.

This is not a simple dynamic. Victims remain with abusers for months, years, a lifetime. Clergy should attempt to help perpetrators after they have helped the victim to be safe. The faith community has a responsibility to ensure that a victim doesn't have to choose between safety or their faith community.

Working with a Victim

An effective approach to understanding victim behavior is learning how living with an abuser has impacted their life. Victims are not simply weak personalities or mentally unwell, but have endured an impossible environment.

On one hand trauma erodes a victim's ability to deal with the abuse. On the other hand, as abuse increases, so does a victim's attempts to seek help. Two realities converge: the victim is working to survive and possibly leave the abuser while their physical and mental capacity to do so may be diminishing. Consequently, it is imperative that they have accessible resources and support from the community.

Don't expect to be working with a passive or "good" victim. Instead, expect someone who is living in chaos and trauma every day to be fighting to survive meanwhile experiencing great emotional and mental distress.

The goal, first and foremost, is not to convince a victim to leave the abuser—no matter how much one would like to or believe it is in the victim's best interest. The goal is support: educating the victim about their options and helping them to those options.

Upon Disclosure

- Listen and believe
- Assess danger
- Make appropriate referrals and work cooperatively with other helping professionals
- Do what you do as a faith leader
- Don't minimize what a victim discloses

Address Religious Concerns

- Confidentiality MUST be maintained, within the bounds of mandated reporting
- Understand that faith is likely a primary concern for the victim and address the concerns
- Affirm the victim's faith no matter where they stand
- If you disagree with their faith stance, use I statements: "God is with you in your suffering. I believe, however, that God doesn't want you to be a victim of DV."
- Offer options for healing and safety
- Quote scriptural passages that are liberating & offer hope.
- Challenge oppressive interpretations of scriptures and traditions

Offer Referrals and Support

- Find out what the barriers are to help the victim participate
- Be resource & confidant
- Help the victim to remain in their faith community
- Avoid judgment statements
- If a victim decides to leave, how can the leaders and community support them?

Working with a Perpetrator²

Typically a batterer or abuser does not easily admit to the violent behavior. They will blame the victim, drugs, alcohol, the police, anyone or anything for as long as possible. But admitting to violent behavior toward an intimate partner is the first step to getting the help needed in order to change the behavior.

Because of the nature of the crime of domestic violence, abusers are master manipulators. Abusers are *GOOD UNDER OBSERVATION!* Perpetrators can be very charming & perform well in public. Faith leaders must be keenly aware of the manipulations an abuser will likely employ. A frequent manipulation is to portray themselves as the victim or as the partner in pain. Though a leader may be working to build a relationship with the perpetrator, one must be stridently careful that the discussion doesn't redirect to the abuser in the victim role. Instead of counseling the abuser about their pain, hold the abuser responsible and encourage the abuser to work on change.

Working with an abuser is not something that faith leaders or communities should try to do alone. Reach out to the programming services available in the larger community. Working with abusers also doesn't mean that faith leaders should protect them from or prevent the real consequences of their abusive and criminal behavior. Faith leaders can explain that their role in keeping the abuser accountable is to encourage and check on the abuser's commitment to changing harmful and criminal behaviors into healthy, egalitarian behaviors. Finally, leaders need to recognize how an abuser may still participate in the faith community without continuing to control the survivor and avoiding accountability.

Upon Disclosure

- Express concern, but be clear that abusive behavior is unacceptable. This is the first priority. Clarify the position of the faith community on family violence
- Listen and offer support
- Hold the perpetrator accountable. This may also mean calling the police
- Assess the danger the abuser poses to the victim
- Offer the abuser hope that they can change. Tell them about available Batterer Intervention Programs (BIP)
- Recognize that it's usually necessary for the couple to separate for physical, emotional, & spiritual wellness

Address Religious Concerns and Spiritual Abuse

- Look for behavior change, not apologies or promises. Do not accept an abuser's rationalizations, spiritual conversion or enlightenment, or victim-blaming. Promises to change are tactics of coercion and control
- Be aware of the perpetrator's use of spiritual abuse and manipulation tactics against their victim and their faith community. Challenge their claims

² This section adapted from materials from the Ohio Domestic Violence Network, Lundy Bancroft's works, Rolling Thunder CrimeThinc, and the Catholic Diocese Calming the Storm.

- Give affirmations to the perpetrator:
 - You have the potential for change
 - You can help yourself. You can begin to change
 - By not stopping this abuse, you may go to jail and or lose your family
 - There is a part of you that desires to change for a better life
 - You must ask for help and begin to change
- **Do not recommend or do marital counseling. In relationships of unequal power, couples counseling is not appropriate. To work with them together only endangers the victim.**

Referrals, Support, and Accountability

- Batterer Intervention Programming (BIP) is the best resource for perpetrators of domestic violence. Anger management and couples counseling are **dangerous** alternatives
- As one counsels the perpetrator, continue to provide accountability and work with the local BIP facilitators
- Check in the victim (if they have given permission and without the abuser's knowledge) about the perpetrator's progress
- Quick forgiveness helps no one and could be dangerous. Faith leaders can support an abuser while also holding them accountable
- If after a faith leader has helped and supported the victim, and admonished—in love and without condemnation—the abuser while supporting their behavior change and use of BIP services, and the perpetrator still doesn't stop all of their abusive behaviors...
- ... Honor the survivor & the survivor's faith. **Don't force a survivor to choose their faith home or their safety.** A leader must ask the perpetrator to leave

Safety

Safety is a paramount need for victims and there are practical ways faith communities can support and offer safety options to victims.

Most victims, especially those who have children with the abuser, will be in contact with their abuser. The goal is to simply increase victim safety in the interactions between a victim and their faith community. Support the victim's right to be free from control and violence. To do this, leaders must focus on reducing:

- Batterer-generated risks
- Life-generated risks

Survivors are the experts on their safety! Allow the victim to determine the safest options. Creating safety for the victim will be difficult if the perpetrator is a member of the same community. Clear communication is necessary to establish safety within the faith community and any shared spaces. Faith leaders should assess what community spaces, programs, etc. the victim and abuser share and plan for safety. Ask the survivor what level of contact—if any—they feel comfortable with. Weigh how important these spaces are and how beneficial they are to the victim and abuser. Allow survivors to make specific requests for access to community space without the perpetrator present and for the perpetrator's role and visibility within the community to be diminished. Always privilege the victims safety and healing above all else. Finally, be aware of the ways an abuser may manipulate the spaces to gain social capital and continue their abuse.

Options for safety that faith communities offer should cover plans when coming, going, and participating in programs, services, or at worship houses. Options for increasing safety could include:



Safety First

Before engaging in true response for victims and perpetrators, faith leaders and communities must first address their own safety. Opening up the community to addressing this issue does come with increased risk for harm from abusers. Faith leaders need to be aware of the seriousness of crisis intervention involving domestic violence & need to be well-trained.

Leaders must be aware of the particular risks that comes with an abuser that is using alcohol or drugs or that is stalking their victim. These behaviors increases the risk of harm to the helpers and the community. Of special note: Knowing an abuser for years does not mean the abuser is safe for the community or worship place or that they won't turn against the leader or community. Rather, the abuser may interpret the intervention as betrayal and this could increase the risk of harm.

Help Parents Talk about Teen Relationship Abuse

It's never too early to talk to a child about healthy relationships and dating violence. Starting conversations is one of the most important steps leaders and parents can take to help prevent dating violence. Here are some sample questions to start the conversation:

- Are any of your friends dating? What are their relationships like? What would you want in a partner?
- Have you witnessed unhealthy relationships or dating abuse at school? How does it make you feel? Were you scared?
- Do you know what you would do if you witnessed or experienced abuse?

- Has anyone you know posted anything bad about a friend online? What happened afterwards?
- Would it be weird if someone you were dating texted you all day to ask you what you're doing?

Here are some other ways leaders and parents can prepare to talk to children about healthy and unhealthy relationships:

- Provide the child with examples of healthy relationships, pointing out unhealthy behavior. Use examples from television, movies or music
- Ask questions and encourage open discussion. Make sure to listen to the child, giving them a chance to speak. Avoid analyzing, interrupting, lecturing or accusing
- Keep it low key. Don't push it if the child is not ready to talk. Try again another time
- Be supportive and nonjudgmental so they know they can ask for help if their relationship becomes unhealthy in the future
- Admit to not knowing the answer to a particular question. This response builds trust
- Reinforce that dating should be fun! Stress that abuse is never acceptable
- Discuss the options the child has if they witness dating abuse or experience it themselves
- Remind the child they have the right to say no to anything they're not comfortable with or ready for. They also must respect the rights of others
- If a child is in a relationship that feels uncomfortable, awkward or frightening, assure them they can come to a leader for their parents
- And remember -- any decisions they make about the relationship should be their own

If A Child is a Victim or Perpetrator

Knowing that a child is in an unhealthy relationship can be both frustrating and frightening. But faith leader and parents are critical in helping children develop healthy relationships and can provide life-saving support if they're in an abusive relationship.

What Do I Need to Know?

Look for some early warning signs of abuse. Some of these signs include:

- A child's partner is extremely jealous or possessive
- A notice unexplained marks or bruises
- A child's partner emails or texts excessively
- A child is depressed or anxious
- A child stops participating in extracurricular activities or other interests
- A child stops spending time with other friends and family
- A child's partner abuses other people or animals
- A child begins to dress differently

What Can I Do?

- Tell the child about concerns for their safety. Point out that what's happening isn't "normal." Everyone deserves a safe and healthy relationship
- Offer to connect the child with a professional, like a counselor, attorney, or advocate who they can talk to confidentially
- Be supportive and understanding. Provide information and non-judgmental support. Let the child know that it's not their fault and no one deserves to be abused. Make it clear that they aren't to blame and that their choices are respected
- Believe them and take them seriously. A child may be reluctant to share their experiences in fear of no one believing what they say. As one validates their feelings and shows support, they can become

more comfortable and trust a leader or parent with more information. Be careful not to minimize a child's situation due to age, inexperience, or the length of their relationship

- Help develop a safety plan. One of the most dangerous times in an abusive relationship is when the victim decides to leave. Be especially supportive during this time and try to connect a child to support groups or professionals that can help keep them safe
- Remember that ultimately the child must be the one who decides to leave the relationship. There are many complex reasons why victims stay in unhealthy relationships. Support can make a critical difference in helping a child find their own way to end their unhealthy relationship

Opportunities to Address Family Violence³

Clergy can look for—and create—times, places, and opportunities to do prevention education and for victims to disclose. There are certain occasions, ceremonies, and life stages within faith traditions and communities that present natural opportunities to discuss the issue of family violence:

- Marriage and divorce
- Pregnancy and births
- Retirement
- New to the faith community/new member at a place of worship
- Commitments to faith (baptism, sacraments, etc.)
- Coming of age/dating/courtship
- Young children entering school
- Singles groups, elder groups
- Anytime someone seeks guidance and counsel
- Family-oriented religious holidays and or festivals

Note that marriage, moving in together, pregnancy, and the birth of a child are major triggers for abusers to escalate.

Marriage Preparation

Pre-marriage preparation should include an assessment and discussion of family violence. Faith leaders may feel reluctant to bring up this topic when a couple comes in to make preparation for such a happy event as their wedding. Yet, bringing up this problem lets the couple know that their faith community cares about them, giving them permission to raise the topic again, should they ever have a need. This discussion also gives them permission and space to disclose. Finally, they may learn through these discussions that their fiancée is using abusive behaviors.

Efforts to remain in contact with newly married couples and concrete demonstrations of support for them should include sharing information about domestic violence, particularly information that shows what healthy relationships look like, how to handle conflict and anger, and how to recognize potentially abusive behaviors.

Infant Ceremonies

All major religions practice some type of ceremonies or rites related to the birth of a child. These traditions are founded on the principle that a community of faith is, of course, the family. Increasingly, faith communities are adopting a model of preparing families for these ceremonies that focus on the real life issues those families are facing.

³ This section adapted from the Diocese of Cleveland, Department of Marriage and Family Ministry.

During this time of preparation and ceremony, offer opportunities for couples to reflect with each other, with other couples, and with faith caregivers about their current life experience.

The leaders and family can take time to reflect on elements of their marital relationship that they find problematic, (possibly abusive), and unacceptable as an environment in which to raise their children and pass on their faith.

Suggestions for Preaching

The scripture reading or discussion at almost every gathering affords clergy the opportunity to speak about values of love, respect, kindness, and gentleness to others, especially within families. A simple reference to family violence in a teaching lets people know that it is okay to approach their clergy about the matter for help.

Just as it's important to teach about Divinity, preservation of the religion's values and traditions, and parsing the sacred texts, it's also important to ensure domestic violence and spiritual abuse isn't able to thrive because of clerical silence.

Four Cs of Prevention

To end domestic violence, intervention programs must be done in tandem with prevention. As intervention methods and partnerships are beginning to be provided by faith communities, efforts in prevention work can also begin.

Prevention should not be inoculation. Prevention is not a one-time training or event, not a session on skill-building, not finalizing a protocol. Prevention is an on-going process, requiring leadership and commitment to integrate loving, peaceful, and egalitarian notions of relationships into the community infrastructure. Prevention values become part of the dialogue and teaching.

Clergy and lay leaders in faith communities are a perfect fit to work on prevention; they have the respect and ear of the community to spread this message. The congregation is both for itself but also for the larger community and can be a tool for the faith leader to employ. The leader spreads the message to the faith followers and the followers spread that word to the larger community. From one candle many are lit.

Call your congregation to be bystanders

Create a supportive environment

- Talk openly about abuse
 - At gatherings: parse difficult passages
 - In small groups
 - With staff, lay leaders
 - As ministry
 - Awareness materials
- Clear & accurate information about FV and resources
- Clearly condemn any form of FV

Coach members in teachable and or vulnerable stages of life

Contract with members

For example: create a group to read sacred texts and books, discuss, and role play the ways gender and cultural norms have obscured the religion's values for families and relationships. This group can then reach out the larger community and share what they've learned.

Risk and Preventative Factors

“A risk factor for perpetrating DV can be characteristics of an individual or conditions present in the environment that increase the likelihood that someone will be an abuser. Some risk factors are more causal in, and some are more situational. Communities can work to change the causal factors while maintaining an awareness of the situational factors which can increase risk.” To do effective prevention education, faith leaders can implement dialogue or programs around the risk and protective factors listed below.

Risk Factors

•Individual

- Previously witnessing or experiencing violence
- Hostility toward another gender, ethnic, racial or SES group
- Heavy drinking or drug use
- Depression
- Personality disorders
- Low academic achievement
- Low income
- Young age

•Relationship

- Marital conflict, instability
- Male dominance in the family
- Economic stress
- Poor family functioning

•Community

- Weak community sanctions against domestic violence
- Weak community sanctions against sexual violence perpetrators
- General tolerance of sexual assault within the community
- Lack of institutional support from police and judicial system
- Poverty
- Low social capital

•Society

- Traditional gender norms
- Weak laws and policies related to gender equity
- Social norms supportive of violence
- High tolerance levels of crime and other forms of violence
- Societal norms that support male superiority and sexual entitlement

Protective Factors

•Individual

- Belief in the positive value of, and commitment to, caring, equality, and social justice
- Skills to experience healthy sexuality and engage in health relationships
- Willingness and ability to be active participants in a thriving community

•Relationship

- Parents, adult authority figures, and peers of diverse backgrounds model and teach positive interpersonal relationship across diverse populations
- Families and /or other figures provide a caring, open, encouraging environment that actively promotes positive development
- Peers, families, and intimate partners effectively identify and respond to unhealthy/problem

•Community

- Diverse people engaged within their communities in activities promoting healthy relationships and sexuality
- Principles and skills of healthy relationships and sexuality demonstrated across institutions
- Presence of just/fair boundaries and expectations about healthy relationships

•Society

- Social norms strongly support development and maintenance of healthy relationships
- Shared responsibility for developing and maintaining thriving communities
- Ensuring accountability and expectations of people to interact respectfully
- Culture equitably values and relies on experiences and leadership from all members of society.

Theological Considerations

A Common Goal

No woman should ever be forced to choose between safety and her religious community or tradition. She should be able to access the resources of both community-based advocacy and shelter and faith-based support and counsel. For her to do so, she needs these two resources to work collaboratively so that they can provide consistent advocacy and support for victims and survivors and participate in the process of holding perpetrators accountable.

(Fortune & Enger, 2005)

Religious leaders must be careful not to misuse or misinterpret religious traditions in ways that would compromise the safety, health, spirituality, and well-being of congregants. Faith and religious traditions can provide relief and sanctuary to survivors; however, misrepresentation and misunderstanding of traditions can have detrimental effects on families surviving violence.

Religion can be a resource and redemption for victims and survivors. Religion can also be a roadblock for survivors and communities, even complicit to the abuse perpetrated in the home. The path a particular faith community chooses often depends on the theological debates and cultural applications of sacred texts. Often, for communities that act as barriers to survivors and families, cultural misinterpretation has led the way instead of the true spirit and beliefs of the religion.

Roadblocks for People of Faith

Many barriers faith communities have to addressing family violence mirror those of secular communities. That said, there are other barriers that are specific to faith communities that are harmful and have lasting impact. Roadblocks further entrap the victim and impair a faith community's ability to support the victims and hold the perpetrator accountable.

Faith barriers aren't usually a problem of theology, but seem to be linked to cooptation by oppressive cultural values that aren't necessarily borne out by the sacred texts or spiritual values. Some faith leaders may be teaching culture instead of teaching the religion's beliefs, values, or doctrine.

One noticeable barrier is simply choosing male narratives or examples over those of women found in sacred texts, traditions, or religious histories. Wonderful examples of women exist in all religions. If gender equality is a protective factor against family violence and a key to successful primary prevention, then prevention work can start by holding up bold heroes of faith that represent all genders.

Below are roadblocks related to family violence that many faith communities have struggled with at one time or another in their history:

- Misunderstanding texts to be submissive
 - Numerous religions have ancient texts that have been used against women and other marginalized populations. When it comes to domestic violence, many perpetrators and their apologist faith leaders have cited texts—typically out of context or without regard for their historical context—to approve of everything from inequality in intimate relationships to domestic violence. An example is the Christian faith, in which Ephesians 5:22 is often cited as the source for submission of female, Christian wives to their male husbands. However, often ignored is the

verse right above that states spouses should be submissive to each other...and all of the other texts that talk about treating wives and children well.

- Role of forgiveness
 - While difficult for both secular and religious communities, the concept of forgiveness has caused many barriers for those who want to support survivors and for survivors themselves. Forgiveness is not for the perpetrator but for the survivor so that the harm no longer controls or defines the survivor. Forgiveness can be granted regardless of an abuser's behavior change and doesn't mean reconciliation or even require communication between the survivor and abuser. Acts of forgiveness never need to be done in such a way that a survivor's safety is compromised. Several things are important to keep forefront when talking about forgiveness and abuse:
 - Confession of wrongdoing is only a first step. Abusers must change their abusive behaviors. To do this, they need help. Forgiveness by the victim will not allow an abuser to change, nor should it be expected just because the abuser has confessed.
 - Forgiveness can't be put on a timeline. It is part of the healing process for the survivor and typically is more than a one-time event. A survivor should not be made to feel guilty or condemned when they struggle to forgive their perpetrator.
- View domestic violence resources as a secular movement
 - Some faith traditions sometimes view their religious values as contradictory to secular values and institutions and prefer to handle issues within their faith community. While this may work for some issues, intervention work for domestic violence requires partnerships with local entities that are likely secular.
 - Some faith communities believe that the family violence/domestic violence-serving agencies are anti-family and therefore are not always willing to refer a victim or perpetrator to these agencies. But, without this alliance, these faith communities may, in the end, cause more harm trying to guide these families.
- Often, divorce or leaving a partner is necessary and wise
 - Various faith communities value family unity but when domestic violence happens, leaders need to ask:
 - Who benefits when survivors are convinced to remain with abusers?
 - Have the children been considered when a survivor is being talked into staying with the abuser?
 - Divorcing an abuser is the public show of the spiritual reality that already exists between the partners. Survivors are in no way obligated to stay with an abuser, even if the abuser has committed to behavior change.
 - Several faith traditions offer fair methods of spiritual divorce from spouses. Let's avoid confusing cultural values that disparage divorced families with the spiritual values of freedom to be safe and healed offered by all religions.
- Belief that suffering is a result of one's own actions, whether current or in the past
 - Suffering is not pleasing to God, the Universe, or Divinities. In fact, many religions teach believers to reach out to their gods particularly in times of suffering for peace, if not for ending the suffering.
 - Involuntary suffering (as opposed to the voluntary suffering of, say, an ascetic monk) is sometimes explained by those in faith communities as the fault of the one who is suffering. That somehow, by some act in their past or in a past life, they caused the suffering to happen to them. Suffering abuse is never intended and should never be allowed to continue. Suffering is not a teacher; Divinity and faith leaders are teachers and are the ones to lead followers to peace and out of suffering.

Faith leaders and communities are victims' first resource. If these leaders and/or communities are isolated from community resources, refuse to recognize all families, allow racial and class divides and remaining silent, then domestic will thrive in these communities. Perpetrators are smart and look for these vulnerabilities and see these types of leaders as their allies.

Marginalized Communities

Domestic violence isn't more or less prominent across cultures, nationally, or around the world. The rates of physical victimization in the U.S. are only very slightly lower than the rest of the world. The rates for domestic violence homicide are higher in the U.S. than many Western countries and cultures. Cultural values, beliefs, and structures do not cause domestic violence, but can perpetuate and condone abuse in unique ways. These differences can be found in the values around perpetration, victim helpseeking, available resources, and access to those resources. All cultures and marginalized communities have problematic values and structures that inform, perpetuate, and condone domestic violence. At the same time, these same cultures and communities have strong values and structures that inform and perpetuate healthy relationships and abuser accountability.

Below are discussions about the perpetration of and response to domestic violence throughout various and marginalized cultures and communities in the U.S.

Why Discuss Culture & Oppression?

Because oppressive cultural structures perpetuate domestic and family violence. For intervention and prevention strategies to be successful, the cultural roots of domestic violence must be addressed. We address them so that we can change them. A basic definition of culture is:

“historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which [men] communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life.”

Though America is composed of many culturally diverse groups, the emphasis has been on assimilation, that is, conformity with Anglo-American values. Services rendered to culturally diverse groups are judged and categorized in accordance with adherence to white values. Yet, cultural diversity remains a reality and should be a reality in service responses.

Because oppressions create barriers for victims seeking help. If culture transmits and condones abuse, then it is sending the same messages to victims. Further, oppression—racism, sexism, classism, etc.—works in the abuser's favor, making it harder for victims who are members of marginalized communities to successfully leave an abuser. Providers and faith leaders must not deny the harmful realities of oppression that can impact the helpseeking of victims who are coping with the effects of abuse.

Because community is where help & change can happen. It's up to members of communities to take on the work of supporting victims and holding abusers accountable. Particularly for faith leaders: if one truly believes that the mission in life is the betterment of humanity, to bring humanity closer to the divine, then this is part of the mission. Time and again, research has shown that survivors look to friends, family, and faith leaders—community—for help more often and much earlier than official resources.

“Being oppressed means the absence of choices” bell hooks

Intersections of Oppression

Cultural Power and Control is one cultural group obtaining and maintaining power over another group; this group's power is transferred generationally through culture structures and socialization.

Based on this statement, it's plain to see how this intersects with domestic violence and how various oppressions will interfere with a victim's attempts at understanding helpseeking.

Gender stereotypes and sexism contribute to perpetration of domestic violence and the responses to domestic violence. Because domestic violence is a gendered crime, healthy understanding of gender is a key issue to preventing domestic violence. But beyond this, racism and classism also allow domestic violence to continue. Many victims already face oppression and barriers in their lives that, if not addressed by service providers and faith leaders, will render these victims more vulnerable to their abusers. It would be inaccurate to assume that every victim needs "generally the same" response from those they reach out to for help.

African-American Communities⁴

To effectively work with African-American victims, faith leaders must be able to understand the ways in which institutional racism and faith inform domestic violence perpetration, victim helpseeking, and resource response.

"Given the significant role of spirituality and religion in the Black community, it is not surprising that Black women look to their spiritual roots for solace and relief when coping with intimate partner violence.... Black women in abusive relationships are more likely to employ prayer as a means for dealing with their situation than other racial groups.... because of its standing and influence, the Black Church has an exceptional opportunity to play an active role in addressing intimate partner violence in the African American community."

[Gillum, 2009]

Clergy can work with survivors in a manner that addresses and mitigates the additional oppressions that an African-American domestic violence victim may encounter.

Barriers Related to Oppression

- Racist "stereotypes have been identified as controlling images that cause men to objectify African American women and reflect the dominant group's interest in maintaining African American women's subordination. These stereotypes may prevent a victim from leaving or seeking help because she wants to avoid the stereotype."
- Societal racist tolerance for violence against African Americans, and internalization of the racist belief that African-American families are more violent, causes systems' responses to violence to be problematic
 - Further consequence is victims feeling that they may not be understood or welcomed at shelters
- Perceptions of African American women as protectors of African American males from racism and disparities are external sources of relationship tension, thus causing a victim's resistance to formal interventions
 - Wanting to avoid hindering him from assuming his role as a man who is free to claim all the rights he is entitled to

⁴ This section relies heavily on the works of Dr. Carl Bell and Dr. Theresa Gillum

- Supporters may tell a victim to be patient with the abuser and to try harder to understand the overwhelming stressors he experiences in this society
- Wants to avoid the stereotype that African-American men are violent
- Inaccessibility to & mistrust of formal services because of institutional racism
 - Police brutality and racial profiling against African American males is widely reported.
 - Concern and fear about child protective workers investigating domestic violence due to the reality that children are more frequently removed from African American homes than other communities
- Half of African American male domestic violence perpetrators endorsed conservative religious teachings that dictate men should be leaders and decision makers and that promotion of female-male equality was in conflict with this religious teaching
- Informal sources of support (family and friends) within the African American community are usually supportive but limit that support due to concerns of being involved in family business and then exposing the community to formal systems.
- Stigma of victimization is particularly strong as many expect an African American woman to “handle herself”
- Many victims desire to remain in the nuclear family no matter the cost as a way of fighting racist stereotypes about African American families

Mitigating Barriers

- African American women, specifically, have mentioned social support as a motivating factor in intervention efforts
 - Assist survivors in building support networks with people who share common cultural values can be particularly helpful and validating
 - Faith communities can create support programs that include opportunities for individual and group support mechanisms
 - Include the supportive immediate and extended family whenever possible in the intervention process
- Application of the African-centered principles of fundamental goodness, self-knowledge, communalism, interconnectedness, spirituality, self-reliance, language and oral tradition, and thought and practice when working with African American survivors and perpetrators is paramount
- Center the work on unpacking the ideologies and family dynamics that lead to the vulnerability of each woman
 - And address the blame and shame the African American victims experience because of not achieving perfect families or enjoying the safe and ideal nuclear family
- Intervention for African American perpetrators must be capable of communicating disapproval of battering behavior without perpetuating racial stereotypes. Recognize the oppression and other negative experiences that African American men encounter without excusing their behavior
 - Further, educate them about the origins of stereotypes about African American women and make them aware of the ways in which they permeate society and how they negatively affect their relationships with African American women

Latina/o Communities⁵

Faith in Hispanic cultures can be a protective factor but can also be associated with increased risk. Catholicism, the predominant religious experience for Latinos, considers the maintenance of the family unit to be of primary importance. Sometimes, this importance has been emphasized over and above the victim’s

⁵ Information adapted from *Casa de Esperanza Advocacy Framework*

safety and wellbeing and can affect a victim's helpseeking. A higher percentage of Latino women seek assistance from religious organizations before going to a shelter. In addition, some Latinos practice curanderismo, the art and science of using herbs, prayers, and rituals to cure physical, spiritual, and emotional ills. Before some of the Latino women seek help from agencies, they will first practice curanderismo.

That said, associations between ethnic and cultural variables and risk of domestic violence among Hispanic subgroups are difficult to determine as Hispanics are unfortunately frequently treated as a homogeneous group. Gender roles vary and continue to change rapidly, especially as more Latinas become economically and socially independent. Within more traditional families, the father or eldest male is considered the protector, provider and primary decision maker. In accordance with the ideal of family unity and preservation, Latinas in traditional households are often groomed since childhood to become good wives and mothers, often placing the needs of the family over their own.

Barriers Related to Oppression

- Abusers often manipulate cultural values placed on family unity and preservation to justify their abusive behavior, imploring their partners to stay with them despite the abuse. In these circumstances, extended families may collude with the abuser if not well informed about the dynamics and dangers of domestic violence
- Male gender roles or concepts of masculinity within Latino culture rely on the notion of machismo (similar to most other patriarchal cultures). One definition of machismo is a strong sense of masculinity stressing attributes such as physical strength, courage, virility, domination of women, and aggressiveness
- Latina women are more likely to seek help from family than from friends, valuing "la ropa sucia se lava en casa": one must keep family problems within the family.
- Daily decisions are based on the good of the "whole," not the "individual"
- For many Latinas, identity and self-esteem have been intertwined with the ability to fulfill the ideal of being a good daughter, wife, and mother. Domestic violence often engenders a sense of failure and emptiness
- Many immigrant victims face system barriers as they seek help:
 - Lack of information about legal rights, options, and availability of domestic violence services
 - Fear that reporting domestic violence could result in denial of residency and or citizenship application or that reporting would lead to deportation
 - Low literacy and lack of Spanish-speaking provider staff
 - Distrust and fear of the police, or a marked failure of police to adequately respond to domestic violence disputes

Mitigating Barriers

- Supportive extended families can serve as a very powerful influence and agent of change with the potential to hold abusers accountable for changing their behavior
- Believe in the strength of survivors within the context of family and community
- Use an understanding of Latino cultures, histories, religions, and oppression in the US to inform the services provided. Know that great importance is placed on traditions, cultural celebrations, sharing of food, music, art, and dance
- Support victims and understand that decisions are often based on cultural norms and practices
- Framework for service needs to be family-centered, highly relational, and collective
- Develop culturally based guidance for Latino abusers

- Help Latino men to understand, proactively address, and heal from the multiple oppressions they and their communities encounter (e.g. racism, anti-immigrant sentiment, poverty and unemployment)
- Employ cultural values and strengths to help them unlearn violent and abusive behaviors
- Reframe being a macho as historically that of protector and provider for the family and community; someone who is responsible, hardworking, honorable

Immigrant Communities⁶

Abusers are adept at using their victim's immigrant status against them to further abuse them.

Barriers Related to Oppression

- Severe isolation by inhibiting contact with family in the home country and other support systems
- Sexual violence particularly affects refugee and immigrant women who may have been raped in war zones, refugee camps, on unsafe immigration routes or because they were cultural or religious minorities in their home countries
- Forced abortions, sex-selected abortions when the fetus is female, or multiple, repeated pregnancies to bear sons in the family
- False reports and accusations by abusers intended to cause mothers to lose custody of their children. This is achieved by manipulating social service, child protection, immigration, child custody, and criminal and civil legal systems to the advantage of the abuser and family
- Using culture and cultural norms to separate mothers from their children by sending children to paternal grandparents in the home country, abducting/ kidnapping the couple's children and returning to the batterer's home country, stigmatizing divorced mothers and gaining custody based on cultural beliefs that children belong to their father.
- Making false declarations to I.C.E. (formerly INS) about a partner's immigration status, claiming that they entered into a fraudulent marriage, and or not proceeding with applications to regularize a spouse's status
- Threats of deportation if the victim reports domestic violence
- Withholding or hiding passports and other important documents
- Being forced to accept a husband's existing relationships in the U.S. The new wife's vulnerable immigration status forces her to accept whatever arrangements he insists upon
- Pressure from the natal family to stay in the marriage and tolerate the abuse
- Systems barriers facing immigrant women, their lack of familiarity with systems and resources in the U.S., and community attitudes toward them are exploited by batterers and incorporated into their abuse

Mitigating Barriers

- Assess the victim appropriately to learn about multiple abusers in an extended family and for any immigration issues that may come up
- Know the resources needed for victims to seek a U-Visa or a T-Visa
- Understand the barriers immigrants face and work to mitigate them
- Connect victims to their community domestic violence resources
- Use appropriate interpreters that have been certified and adhere to strict confidentiality rules
- Develop culturally based guidance for the relevant abuser's culture
- Educate or connect a victim with resources that will educate them about the role and resource that law enforcement and the courts could play in safety planning

⁶ Information adapted from Firoza Chic Dabby, *Domestic Violence Against Asian and Pacific Islander Women*

Asian Communities⁷

In this population of domestic violence victims, in addition to language and cultural barriers, there are two distinguishing dynamics that typically frame their experience: they have multiple abusers in their home and the abusers use tactics to push victims out of marriages and or to pull them back into relationships.

As in various cultures, living with extended family is a typical situation and these families can wield a great deal of influence and power. When these family members are also perpetrators, victims receive a greater number of injuries. Where shame and honor are foundational structures, women can be particularly vulnerable to shame and retaliation for violating traditional family values. Conversely, the honor bestowed on women for upholding family traditions can be just as harmful for victims.

Barriers Related to Oppression

- Perpetrators can include a husband, mother, father, sister, and or brother-in-law, the partner's or husband's ex-wife or new wife, other members of his extended family and sometimes hers as well
- Greater family collusion accompanies multiple abusers. Others in the home may not automatically be allies or friends. E.g., family members may lie, claiming that the victim/survivor was trying to commit suicide and they were trying to stop the victim
- Push factors are those behaviors abusers use to push victims out of the relationship and or home and are sometimes more frequently used than entrapment behaviors. Push factors may sound like: "leave the house", "give me a divorce", "I can always find another wife." Pull factors are those behaviors that entrap victims.
- Abusers may exert push factors in arranged marriages or forced marriages by iterating that because they did not select their partner, they matter even less to them (e.g., "I didn't even chose you, my parents did")
- Intensive surveillance, cyber-stalking, monitoring activities and visitors, exercising controls from afar utilizing multiple technologies by the intimate partner abuser and or by members of the extended family
- Hyper-exploitation of women's household labor to serve all members of the extended family
- Homicides that encompass a broader range of deaths than murder by an intimate, including honor killings, contract killings, dowry or bride price related deaths, killing of family members in the home country, or being driven by one's husband and in-laws into committing suicide.
- Religion used to justify domestic violence and to threaten loss of children, social status, financial support and community
- Victims are silenced by and blamed for bringing dishonor to the family because of the strong nexus of shame and public disclosure
- Victim may experience sexual harassment from family members, community leaders, clergymen
- Forced marriages (not to be confused with arranged marriages) to unknown and generally much older men; marital rape is exacerbated in such situations
- Uncomprehending systems are likely to respond inadequately. Given their lack of understanding about multiple abusers, police, health professionals, courts often do not respond properly

Mitigating Barriers

- Assess for multiple abusers in the extended family to ensure that all types of abuse are understood and that services will be appropriately rendered
- Assess the severity of push and pull factors and incorporate them into safety planning

⁷ Information adapted from Firoza Chic Dabby, *Domestic Violence Against Asian and Pacific Islander Women*

- Include children early on in safety planning. Issues about children are influenced by push factors. Push factors also govern victim's decisions about leaving with or without their children. What may look like an inexplicable decision to leave without the children could in fact be a function of push factors exerted by multiple batterers.
- Recognize that reactions to separation differ when only push factors operate in that victims who have been pushed out with very little or no space to make their own decisions will react differently
- Consider "pushed out" in determining the kinds of emotional, post-separation support a victim will need from the faith community

Appalachian Communities

Being one's self and not putting on airs, being truthful and not boastful, being strong and self-reliant are all cultural values in Appalachia. Neighborliness and hospitality are also highly valued within Appalachian communities, but a distrust of strangers often exists. Appalachian people are often hesitant to ask for help. Self-identity for many women is likely to come from family roles of daughter, sister, wife, and mother. A woman's role as mother may be more highly valued than her role as wife and sexual partner. People in rural areas tend to rely on the family, even when it is dysfunctional, for problem solving.

Barriers Related to Oppression

- A survivor may be resistant to sharing personal information with a social service provider
- Pride may keep Appalachian women from seeking help, especially from strangers
- For some Appalachian women, geographic isolation and distance can inhibit awareness of, and access to, service facilities
- The family and community may greatly influence family violence reporting. Family and friends may persuade a victim that the impact of reporting will have a negative impact on the fabric of the community
- Lack of anonymity and confidentiality in small communities may prevent victims from reporting to law enforcement or seeking counseling services. Often in small communities the power structure is also interconnected
- A survivor may be disbelieved or experience strong pressure or harassment if she reports an assault perpetrated by someone within the community power structure
- Appalachians believe that whatever goes on in the home is the family's own business. Therefore, an assault of one family member on another is often not seen as a crime
- Traditionally, public provision of human services in general is suspect. Any form of service that by its very nature crosses the boundaries of the family is especially distrusted

Working with Victims

- Most people in small communities are interconnected in some way. Providers can reframe this interconnectivity as a support network for the victim in times of crisis
- Make the process as confidential as possible. Be creative in establishing meeting places and reasons for meeting
- Use of formal services may not always be best. Discuss these options thoroughly with victims
- When resources are lacking for victim and or perpetrator intervention, faith communities can take the lead and partner with organizations to fill the service gaps
- Faith communities may need to take the lead in establishing prevention programming if the community lacks resources

LGBTQI Communities⁸

Domestic violence in the LGBTQI community occurs at similar rates as domestic violence among straight couples. Victims of same-sex domestic violence face added challenges when attempting to receive help. Though more victims are reporting the abuse as the public has become more accepting of same-sex relationships, barriers to equal treatment for same-sex couples remain. Same-sex partners lack the resources needed to help them get out of abusive relationships and these survivors lack even the same legal recognition and protection as straight survivors.

Barriers Related to Oppression

- LGBTQI abusers threaten to out their victims to colleagues, family, and friends. This threat is amplified by the sense of extreme isolation among LGBTQI victims since some are still closeted, have fewer civil rights protections, and lack access to the legal system
- LGBTQI victims may not contact law enforcement agencies because doing so would force them to reveal their sexual orientation or gender identity
- Victims are also reluctant to seek help out of fear of showing a lack of solidarity in the community
- Many LGBTQI victims hide their abuse out of a heightened fear that society will perceive same-sex relationships as inherently dysfunctional
- Gay and lesbian victims are more likely to fight back than are heterosexual women and thus are arrested more frequently when law enforcement don't identify them as victims
- Abusers can take away the children from the victim. In some states, adoption laws do not allow same-sex parents to adopt each other's children. This can leave the victim with no legal rights should the couple separate. The abuser can easily use the children as leverage to prevent the victim from leaving or seeking help
- Transgender parents may lose custody of their children, be ordered to supervised visitation, or required to dress in accord with their birth sex in order to see their kids
- Too often, the criminal justice system overlooks violence in LGBTQI relationships because of systemic heterosexism. They may do a poor primary aggressor assessment, ignore the violence, or incorrectly believe that LGBTQI domestic violence victims are not protected by criminal law
- Domestic violence shelters rarely admit gay male and transgender women victims. Further, transgender women may fear that shelter staff will see them as men, and respond to them with distrust and hostility
- Loss of mutual friends who side with the abuser. Even those who would support women abused by men may not want to hear about LGBT domestic violence for fear of reinforcing negative LGBTQI stereotypes
- Loss of relationship with family and friends due to partner outing them and the consequent loss of family support
- Victims may not have readily available legal processes for getting assets divided fairly. Their partner may have put joint assets in their own name

Mitigating Barriers

- Use inclusive language so that LGBTQI clients feel they can talk honestly about their relationships. If LGBTQI persons aren't able to freely talk about their relationships, they certainly won't freely talk about abuse
- Post LGBT-friendly materials to let faith community members know they can expect respect and sensitivity

⁸ Information adapted from *Domestic Violence in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Communities*, New York State Office for Prevention of Domestic Violence, 2010

- Remember that the LGBTQI faith member – especially if transgender– may have been treated with hostility or in a physically rough manner by other providers
- Work with LGBTQI abusers in ways that hold them accountable for their abusive behavior but that accounts for the oppression they have experienced
- Be aware that faith leaders will likely get false positive answers from faith community members who are actually abusive
- Don't let stereotypes about domestic violence based on heterosexual relationships or general social ideas about gender stop the leaders and or community from recognizing female abusers and male victims

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Communities⁹

Deaf people view themselves as members of a cultural minority group with their own language, culture, history, and norms. This is contrary to the view of mainstream society that views Deaf people exclusively as a disability group.

Domestic violence is taboo in Deaf culture and is believed to be a private family matter that people and systems ought to avoid. Much of the domestic violence movement has not been made accessible to the Deaf community. Additionally, the Deaf community is an extraordinarily strong and close community across the nation making anonymity or confidentiality difficult and isolation more harmful.

Lack of understanding about the Deaf-World in which the victim lives and projecting Hearing cultural norms and expectations onto the victim can result in repeated exposure to perpetrators.

Barriers Related to Oppression

- Abusers use Deaf Culture and deafness against the victim, e.g. abuser justifies abuse saying communication and touch in Deaf culture is rough
- Isolation:
 - Abuser move away from the Deaf community
 - Hearing partner disallows the children to use ASL to communicate with the victim
 - Hearing partner interferes with and or excludes the victim from phone calls
 - Doesn't include the victim in social situations with hearing people
- Abuser takes advantage of the lack of accessible services for Deaf survivors
- Abuser disallows victim access to have Deaf culture or puts down Deaf community
- Abuser interprets for the victim to take control of a situation to their benefit
- Abuser uses the closeness of the Deaf community to track the victim throughout the Deaf community all over the United States
- Interventions provided via an amateur interpreter as opposed to being provided directly via sign-skills professionals can create an air of reduced privacy and reduce the chance of the victim feeling connected with the service provider
- Interpreters not trained for crisis situations cause a reduction in the quality of interpreting
- Non-signing staff using family or friends of the victim as an interpreter for interventions rather than using a certified interpreter
 - Often the role of interpreter is assigned to the Hearing children of the fighting couple. This places the children at risk for repercussions from the abusive parent as well as taints the information shared as the accuracy and comprehension will be limited to the skills of a child.
- It is a myth that speech reading, or lip reading, is effective for communication
- English-based literature is often inaccessible due to limited English proficiency

⁹ Information developed in partnership with Stephanie Day, PCC and DWAVE

- Victim's lack of awareness about available services, their rights, and roles of the systems in responding to abuse

Mitigating Barriers

- When both parties are Deaf, two sets of interpreters will be required. Find out from the Deaf individuals—not others—what form of communication they prefer
- Understand that Deaf persons use increased levels of eye contact that are not meant to be perceived as aggression or defiance, but are simply an important component of communication
- It is rude to look away from eye contact and could be understood by the Deaf person as cutting off communication with them
- Facial expressions and body language are incredibly relevant; a Deaf person's facial expressions contain much of their meaning and the grammar of their language
- When a Deaf victim is using American Sign Language to re-tell the story, they will be very demonstrative and emotional and may seem as if they are reliving the incident; however, this is how the language works
- When using an American Sign Language interpreter:
 - Face your interviewee or client and be sure to eliminate physical barriers so that they have a clear line of sight
 - Use a well-lit environment
 - If possible, schedule more time for assessments and meetings due to the time it takes for translation
 - Speak directly to the client, in a normal tone of speech and do not face interpreter
 - Emphasize confidentiality

Resources for Referrals

LOCAL

BRAVO (LGBTQ Services)

BRAVO is a link to survivor advocacy and assistance for hate crimes, discrimination, domestic violence and sexual assault. They work to help ensure a victim's safety and provide the support needed with: help in crisis, hate crimes reporting & documentation, hospital advocacy, domestic violence support safety planning, support for sexual assault survivors, emergency housing assistance, working with local police (including help with filing reports), support groups, and court accompaniment and advocacy. For assistance, call their 24/7 line at (866) 862-7286 or visit their website at www.bravo-ohio.org.

CHOICES for Victims of Domestic Violence

CHOICES for Victims of Domestic Violence have advocates available to provide services to victims of domestic violence available on a 24-hour crisis hotline. They also provide shelter services for women, men and children in imminent danger, case management, counseling, support groups, legal and community advocacy. For more information, call the CHOICES Business office at (614) 224-7200 or the CHOICES 24/7 week crisis line hotline at (614) 224-4663 or visit their website at www.choicescolumbus.org.

The Center for Family Safety and Healing

The Center for Family Safety and Healing offers a continuum of research-based prevention, intervention and treatment programs for individuals who have experienced family violence. These programs fully address all aspects of family violence including child abuse and neglect, teen dating abuse, domestic violence and elder abuse. For more information, call The Center for Family Safety and Healing at (614) 722-8200 or visit our website at www.familysafetyandhealing.org

STATE

The Ohio Domestic Violence Network

The Ohio Domestic Violence Network (ODVN) is the statewide coalition representing the collective voice of domestic violence programs and allied professionals in Ohio. ODVN's comprehensive reference collection of over 1,400 books, videos and articles are available for loan by individuals, agencies and corporations. They offer an extensive training program and technical assistance on a wide variety of domestic violence related topics. In addition, ODVN operates an information line that provides access to local domestic violence programs in Ohio. However, please note, ODVN is not a direct service provider. For more information, call (800) 934-9840 or visit the website at www.odvn.org.

NATIONAL

Futures Without Violence

Futures Without Violence is a national organization working to develop innovative responses to the epidemic of domestic violence. Established in 1980 by Esta Soler, Futures Without Violence is widely respected for its pioneering and award-winning work. They have created policy, advocacy, prevention and education programs that have been replicated in all 50 states and several foreign countries. For more information about Futures Without Violence, call (415) 252-8900 or visit their website at www.futureswithoutviolence.org

www.futureswithoutviolence.org.

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV)

The mission of the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV) is to organize for collective power by advancing transformative work, thinking and leadership of communities and individuals working to end the violence in our lives. Their programs involve and support battered women of all social, racial, ethnic, religious and economic groups, ages and lifestyles. NCADV also serves as a national information and referral center. To learn more, visit their website at www.ncadv.org.

National Domestic Violence Hotline

The National Domestic Violence Hotline receives more than 23,500 calls per month from victims, survivors, friends and family members, law enforcement personnel, domestic violence advocates and the general public. Hotline advocates provide support and assistance to anyone involved in a domestic violence situation, including those in same-sex relationships, male survivors, those with disabilities and immigrant victims of domestic violence. All calls to the National Domestic Violence Hotline are anonymous and confidential. The crisis hotline (800)-799- SAFE (7233), (800)-787-3224 (TTY) is available seven days a week, 24 hours a day, or visit their website at www.thehotline.org.

Additional Local Resources

EMERGENCY

911

Services for Children & Teens:

Buckeye Ranch	614-875-2371
Community for New Direction	614-272-1464
Directions for Youth & Families	614-294-2661
Franklin County Children Services	614-229-7000
Huckleberry House	614-294-5553
National Dating Abuse Hotline (24-hour)	866-331-9474
National Youth Advocate Program	877-692-7226
Nationwide Children's Behavioral Health Services	614-355-8080
St. Vincent's Family Centers	614-252-0731
The Center for Family Safety and Healing	614-722-8200

Services for Adult Victims:

Beit Ohr (Light House) Contact Michael Broidy	614-449-4200
BRAVO (Buckeye Region Anti-Violence Organization) (LGBTQ Services)	866-862-7286
CHOICES, 24-hour crisis/shelter	614-224-4663
Mount Carmel – Crime, Trauma and Assistance Program (CTAP)	614-234-5900
National Domestic Violence Hotline (24-hour)	800-799-7233
Ohio Domestic Violence Network	800-934-9840
Shalom Task Force	888-883-2323
The Center for Family Safety and Healing Adult Counseling Services	614-722-8200

Services for Seniors:

Adult Protective Services	614-525-4348
Franklin County Office on Aging	614-525-5230
Long Term Care Ombudsman Program	800-282-1206

Legal Resources:

Capital University Family Advocacy Clinic	614-236-6779
Columbus City Prosecutor's Office Domestic Violence Unit	614-645-7483
Franklin County Prosecutor's Office Victim/Witness	614-525-3555
Legal Aid Society of Columbus	614-224-8374

Batterers Intervention Programs:

Africentric Personal Development Shop	614-253-4448
Crossroads, Solution to Domestic Violence	614-445-0352
Southeast, Inc.	614-225-0990

Other Programs & Services:

ASHA – Ray of Hope	614-565-2918
Asian American Community Services	614-220-4023 x235
Capital Area Human Society	614-777-7387
Safe Haven Program	614-315-0102
Catholic Social Services	614-221-5891
Jewish Family Services	614-231-1890
NAMI Ohio (National Alliance on Mental Illness)	800-686-2646
New Directions Career Center	614-849-0028
Ohio Attorney General Crime Victim Services	800-528-2877
Ohio Hispanic Coalition	614-840-9934
RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network) (24-hour)	800-656-4673
SARNCO (Sexual Assault Response Network Central Ohio)	614-566-4414
Rape Crisis Helpline (24-hour)	614-267-7020
Somali Community Association of Ohio	614-262-4068
Suicide Prevention Hotline (24/7)	614-221-5445