

# Domestic Violence Awareness

Sterling Police Department  
Crime Prevention  
(978) 422 - 7331

# Domestic Violence Awareness

## *What is Domestic Violence?*

*Domestic Violence* is abuse that occurs between a family or household members.

“*Abuse*” is defined as:

- a. Attempting to cause or causing physical harm.
- b. Placing another in fear of imminent serious physical harm.
- c. Causing another to engage involuntarily in sexual relations by force, threat or duress.

“*Family or household members*” are defined as:

- a. Are or were married to one another.
- b. Are or were residing together in the same household.
- c. Are or were related by blood or marriage.
- d. Have a child in common regardless of whether they have ever been married or have lived together.
- e. Are or have been in a substantive dating or engagement relationship.

## **Warning signs that you may be in an abusive relationship...**

Abuse is about power and control. Abuse is a range of behavior that may take many forms such as physical, emotional or mental abuse, verbal or sexual abuse. Abusers often control the finances and, over time, isolate the victim from their family and friends. Abusers often keep track of and control of the victim (where they go and whom they are with, etc.) Abusers often display extreme jealousy and/or use intimidation, threats and violence.

“*Battering*” is a physical force used to control or keep power over someone. Some examples of battering are hitting, slapping, kicking, pushing, or sexually assaulting the other person. Women sometimes batter their partners, but more commonly it is men who get violent and the women who are battered.

“*Emotional abuse*” is also a form of violence. Batterers use threats, shouting, name-calling and other types verbal abuse to frighten the other person.

**Domestic Violence can happen in all families:**

- Rich or poor.
- Young or old.
- Heterosexual or homosexual relationships.

Abuse usually gets worse over time, unless something is done to stop it. ***It can lead to serious harm or even death.***

***Signs of Domestic Abuse***

A woman who is being battered by a man may:

- Worry that he will be jealous.
- Be afraid of his temper.
- Go along with just about anything he says or does.
- Avoid friends.
- Seldom be seen with him in public.
- Have a low self-esteem.
- Constantly apologize for his behavior.
- Allow him to make all the decisions.
- Drink heavily or use drugs.

A man who is battering a woman may:

- Be very jealous.
- Have a very bad temper.
- Have difficulty showing his feelings other than anger.
- Threaten to hurt her, himself or the children.
- Criticize and put her down, especially in front of others.
- Believe that women are not as good as men.
- Abuse pets.
- Control all the money.
- Drink heavily or use drugs, often insisting that she join him.
- Throw things at the woman, hit, shove or kick her.

## *The Cycle of Violence*

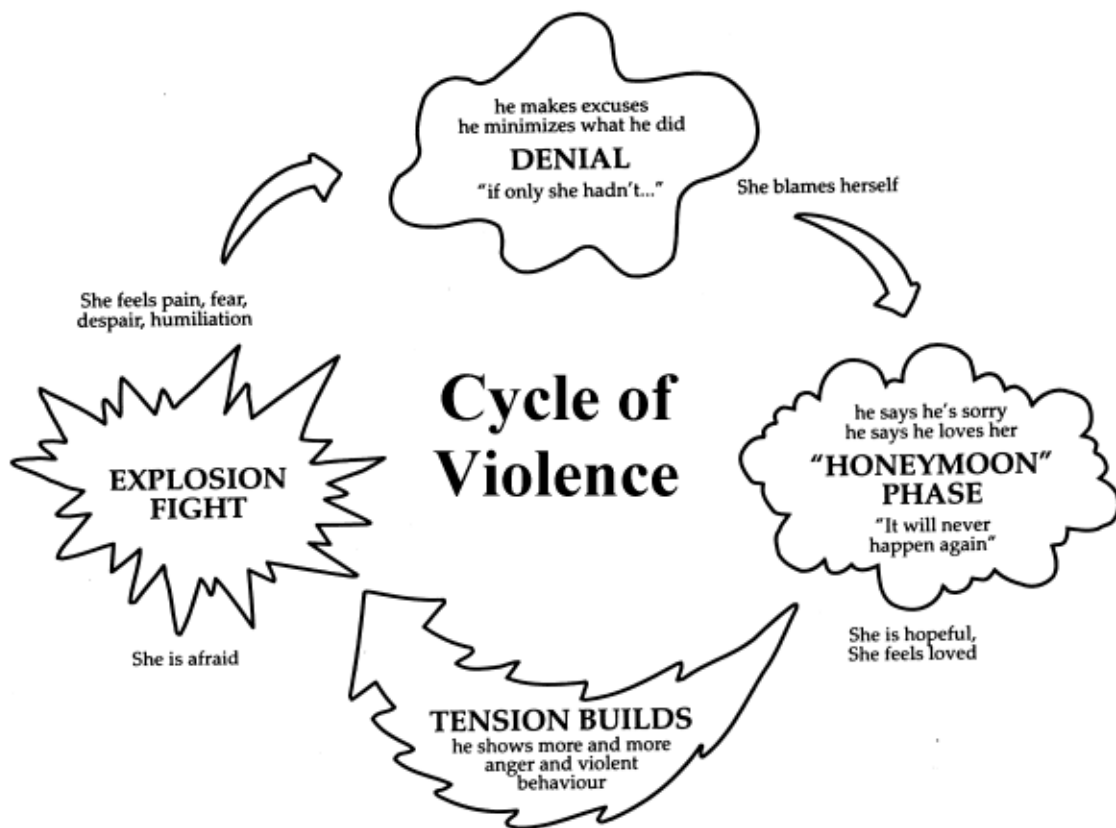
In a violent relationship, some things happen over and over again.

**The batterer's anger begins to build.** The woman will often try to make things better or make things work. She is often aware at this point that she may get hurt if she does not do what pleases him.

**The batterer explodes and acts out in anger.** After the violence, both parties may feel angry, confused, shocked, tired and hurt.

**A "loving" stage or "denial" stage often follows.** Neither partner wants to believe what has happened.

**The batterer says he is sorry.** He may cry, send flowers, make promises or beg her not to leave. He may often threaten to kill himself (or her) if she leaves.



\* The cycle can cover a long or short period of time

\* The violence usually gets worse

\* The "honeymoon" phase, then the denial phase, will eventually disappear

***Factors which suggest a high risk to the victim...***

- Present threats to kill the victim.
- Past threats to kill this victim and other victims.
- Use of weapons (guns, knives or other potentially lethal weapons).
- Possession of lethal weapons.
- The degree of obsession, possessiveness and/or jealousy regarding the victim.
- Violations of restraining orders. Shows little or no interest or worry in the consequences of arrest and jail time.
- Past incidents of violence.
- Present or past threats of suicide.
- Access to the victim and/or the victim's family.
- Hostage taking.
- Depression.
- Other mental illness.
- Drug or alcohol abuse.
- History of domestic violence already documented.

### ***Why does a person stay in an abusive relationship?***

- The victim wants to believe that things will get better.
- The victim wants to believe that things will go back to the way they were in the beginning of the relationship.
- The batterer promises that it (the abuse) will never happen again.
- There are good parts to the relationship.
- Financial hardship.
- Children.
- The victim actually believes that they deserve to be treated badly.
- Low self-esteem.
- The victim has been alienated from all family and friends.
- The batterer has threatened to kill the victim, family member of the victim or maybe even himself if she leaves.
- The victim may suffer from depression.
- If the victim is dependent on drugs and/or alcohol, they may be dependent upon the batterer as the sole provider of these substances.

## ***Police Intervention***

### **Police are called to the scene of possible domestic violence:**

The police dispatcher will be looking for the following information from the caller or reporting party of a possible domestic violence incident:

1. Is the domestic violence presently happening or is it a past domestic violence incident?
2. Are/were there any weapons involved?
3. Is anyone hurt? If so, what kind of injuries are involved?
4. Has the batterer left the scene?
5. Are there children in the household?
6. Is there a history of domestic violence between the two parties?

Please be patient with the person on the other end of the line. The dispatcher or officer on the other end of the line is trying to get as much information as possible to give to the responding officers.

Usually two or more officers will be sent to the scene of a domestic violence incident. This is due to the nature of the call, as well as the safety of anyone present upon the police arriving on the scene.

Upon arriving on scene, the officers will assess the scene for weapons and check the involved parties for injuries. The officers will investigate the situation further.

If there was violence by both parties, the challenge is to sort the situation out. A ***primary aggressor*** will be determined through investigation.

*Who in this relationship poses the most danger to the other?*

*Who is at most risk of future harm?*

*The relative severity of the injuries inflicted on each person.*

*Whether one of the persons acted in self-defense.*

### **An arrest is made.**

### ***Police Intervention continued...***

The victim is advised of their domestic abuse rights.

The victim is provided a safe place. Officer remains on scene until safety can almost be guaranteed.

An emergency restraining order (R.O.) is offered to the abused person.

The victim is advised of the suspect's right to bail.

The domestic violence unit may perform a follow-up investigation.

***If you, or someone you know, are in an abusive relationship, try to seek outside assistance before it is too late. If you witness or hear domestic violence happening, call the Sterling Police Department at (978) 422 - 7331. Police will respond immediately.***

## **IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

**National Domestic Violence Hotline**  
**(800) 799-SAFE**

**Massachusetts Domestic Violence Hotline**  
**(877) 785-2020**



# **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SAFETY PLAN GUIDELINES**

These safety suggestions have been compiled from safety plans distributed by state domestic violence coalitions from around the country. Following these suggestions is **not a guarantee** of safety, but could help improve your safety situation.

## **Personal Safety with an Abuser**

Identify your partner's use and level of force so that you can assess danger to you and your children before it occurs.

Try to avoid an abusive situation by leaving.

Identify safe areas of the house where there are no weapons and where there are always ways to escape. If arguments occur, try to move to those areas.

Do not run to where the children are, as your partner may hurt them as well.

If violence is unavoidable, make yourself a small target; dive into a corner and curl up into a ball with your face protected and arms around each side of your head, fingers entwined.

If possible, have a phone accessible at all times and know the numbers to call for help. Know where the nearest pay phone is located. Know your local battered women's shelter number. Don't be afraid to call the police.

Let trusted friends and neighbors know your situation and develop a plan and visual signal for when you need help.

Teach your children how to get help. Instruct them not to get involved in the violence between you and your partner. Plan a code word to signal to them that they should get help or leave the house.

Tell your children that violence is never right, even when someone they love is being violent. Tell them that neither you nor they are at fault or cause the violence, and that when anyone is being violent, it is important to keep safe.

Practice how to get out safely. Practice with your children.

Plan what you will do if your children tell your partner your plan or if your partner otherwise finds out about your plan.

Keep weapons like guns and knives locked up and as inaccessible as possible.

Make a habit of backing the car into the driveway and keeping it fueled. Keep the driver's door unlocked and others locked – for a quick escape.

Try not to wear scarves or long jewelry that could be used to strangle you.

Create several plausible reasons for leaving the house at different times of the day or night.

Call a domestic violence hotline periodically to assess your options and get a supportive, understanding ear.

### **Getting Ready to Leave**

Keep any evidence of physical abuse, such as pictures, etc.

Know where you can go to get help; tell someone what is happening to you.

If you are injured, go to a doctor or an emergency room and report what happened to you. Ask that they document your visit.

Plan with your children and identify a safe place for them (for example, a room with a lock or a friend's house where they can go for help). Reassure them that their job is to stay safe, not to protect you.

Contact your local battered women's shelter and find out about laws and other resources available to you before you have to use them during a crisis.

Keep a journal of all violent incidences, noting dates, events and threats made if possible.

Acquire job skills as you can, such as learning to type or taking courses at a community college.

Try to set money aside or ask friends or family members to hold money for you.

### **General Guidelines for Leaving an Abusive Relationship**

You may request a police stand-by or escort while you leave.

If you need to sneak away, be prepared.

Make a plan for how and where you will escape.

Plan for a quick escape.

Put aside emergency money as you can.

Hide an extra set of keys.

Pack an extra set of clothes for yourself and your children and store them at a trusted friend's or neighbor's house. Try to avoid using next-door neighbors, close family members and mutual friends.

Take with you important phone numbers of friends, relatives, doctors, schools, etc., as well as other important items, including:

- Driver's license.
- Regularly needed medication.
- List of credit cards held by self or jointly, or the credit cards themselves if you have access to them.
- Pay stubs.
- Checkbooks and information about bank accounts and other assets.

**If time is available, also take:**

- Citizenship documents (such as your passport, green card, etc.).
- Titles, deeds and other property information.
- Medical records.
- Children's schools records and immunization records.
- Insurance information.
- Copy of marriage license, birth certificates, will and other legal documents.
- Verification of social security numbers.
- Welfare identification.
- Valued pictures, jewelry, or personal possessions.

Create a false trail. Call motels, real estate agencies, and schools in a town at least six hours from where you plan to relocate. Ask questions that require a call back to your house in order to leave phone numbers on record.

**After Leaving the Abusive Relationship:**

**If getting a restraining order and the offender is leaving:**

- Change locks and phone number.
- Change work hours and route taken to work.
- Change route taken to transport children to school.
- Keep a certified copy of your restraining order with you at all times.

- Inform friends, neighbors and employers that you have a restraining order in effect.
- Give copies of restraining order to employers, neighbors and schools along with a picture of the offender.
- Call law enforcement to enforce the order.

**If you leave:**

- Consider renting a post office box for your mail, or using the address of a friend.
- Be aware that addresses are on restraining orders and police reports.
- Be careful to whom you give your new address and phone number.
- Change your work hours if possible.
- Alert school authorities of situation.
- Consider changing your children's schools.
- Reschedule appointments that offender is aware of when you leave.
- Use different stores and frequent different social spots.
- Alert neighbors and request that they call the police if they feel you may be in danger.
- Talk with trusted people about the violence.
- Replace wooden doors with steel or metal doors; install security systems if possible.
- Install a lighting system that lights up when a person is coming close to the house (motion sensitive lights).
- Tell people you work with about the situation and have your calls screened by one receptionist if possible.
- Abandon social media programs.
- Change online passwords / accounts.