A Fact Sheet About Domestic Violence

What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behavior used by one person to gain and maintain power and control over an intimate partner or an ex-partner. It occurs in both dating and long-term relationships.

Tactics may include physical, sexual, emotional, and economic abuse, isolation, coercion, and intimidation. Over time, domestic violence results in a significant gap in power and personal freedom between an abusive partner and a victim or survivor. Abuse impacts every aspect of a relationship and of a survivor’s life including mental and physical health, friend and family relationships, parenting, and financial status.

It also has long-lasting effects on the family and community.

Domestic Violence: Cause and Effect

Abuse is a learned behavior and a choice, rooted in an abuser's beliefs. Abusers frequently see their behavior as justified and/or harmless.

Over time, abusers often escalate their tactics. An abuser who uses verbal and emotional abuse will frequently begin to use intimidation, coercion, and sometimes physical and/or sexual violence at some point in the relationship.

Abusers frequently continue to be abusive or can escalate their tactics after a victim attempts to end the relationship.

Domestic Violence is not caused by substance abuse, lack of relationship skills, or mental health issues.

See examples of abusive tactics on the Power and Control Wheel on the back of this page.

Domestic Violence Doesn’t Discriminate

Domestic violence occurs at similar rates in same-sex and heterosexual relationships. In heterosexual relationships, most perpetrators of domestic violence are men abusing female partners. Abusers and survivors of domestic violence may be of any age, gender or gender identity, sexual orientation, race, culture, class, economic status, ability, education or any other group of people.
Victim Reactions

Each person responds to domestic violence in their own way and there is no typical reaction to it. Whatever the victim’s feelings, they should always be validated and respected. Please call the VT Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-228-7395 to reach a program near you.

Some Statistics

Vermont

- In 2012, the 14 member programs of the Vermont Network served 8,778 victims of domestic violence.
- The Network’s member programs fielded 12,507 hotline calls in 2012.
- Member programs of the Vermont Network housed 1,065 adult victims in shelters and safehomes in 2012.

National

- 1 in 4 women have been the victim of severe physical violence by an intimate partner while 1 in 7 men experienced severe physical violence by an intimate partner. (The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2010.)

- Female victims experienced multiple forms of violence (physical violence, rape, stalking) while men most often experienced physical violence. (The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2010.)

- Approximately 2.3 million people each year in the U.S. are raped and/or physically assaulted by a current or former spouse, boyfriend or girlfriend. (National Institute of Justice and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Extent, Nature, and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey.” July 2000).

- Approximately 37% of women seeking injury-related treatment in hospital emergency rooms were there because of injuries inflicted by a current or former spouse/partner. (Rand, M. Violence-Related Injuries Treated in Hospital Emergency Room Departments; Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1997.)