



Community Education Newsletter

October 2010

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

Domestic Violence is an issue that affects 1 in 4 women (although men can be and are victims of Domestic Violence, too). Think of 4 women you know. At least one of those women has been, will be, or know someone who has been the victim of Domestic Violence. That fact makes Domestic Violence more personal. It could be your neighbor, your grandmother, your friend, or yourself. Regardless of who it is, Domestic Violence affects you!

At Domestic And Sexual Abuse Services (DASAS) we want to pause during October and raise awareness about Domestic Violence. From 2008-2009 DASAS served a total of 838 residential and non-residential clients, survivors of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, and had a total of 701 referrals concerning others seeking services related to Domestic Violence.

With your help we can lower the number of those affected by Domestic Violence. But, first, we must understand the The What, Where, How, Who, Why, and When of Domestic Violence.

WHAT

Domestic Violence includes 4 different types of abuse:

- Mental/Emotional
- Financial
- Physical
- Sexual

Does your partner call you names; blame you for their actions; threaten to hurt you, your family members, or your pets; keep your paycheck; prevent you from seeing family or friends; physically push, choke, or hit you; force you to do or watch sexual acts against your will?

If so, that is Domestic Violence.

WHERE

Domestic Violence is a complex issue. Domestic Violence can be between a husband and a wife, two people who have children together, two family members, two people who are intimate partners, or two people who have had any of these relationships with one another in the past.

One thing is true of Domestic Violence, no matter where it occurs. Domestic Violence is a means for the assailant to impose their power and control their victim. Domestic Violence is not about the assailant being angry or unable to control themselves. A batterer knows what they are doing and attempts to control their victim in a space they know they can have power over their victim, often in their a home or at another private place.

HOW

Domestic Violence does not just begin or suddenly stop. Battering is a learned behavior used to control another person. When a batterer creates fear in their victim using abuse, they can often get their way and control that person to do what they want them to do. Therefore, they continue such behavior and often take more drastic means to reach the same results as their abuse continues.

Domestic Violence is not the result of a substance abuse or anger problem, although such issues can contribute to a Domestic Violence situation. Abuse is also not something that involves one particular partner. A batterer carries their abusive tactics to each relationship.

Inside this issue:

Page 1- What, Where, How?

Page 2- Who?

Page 3- Who (*continued*), Why, When?

Page 4- Sources, Information about Domestic And Sexual Abuse Services (DASAS)

WHO is the abuser?

Stereotypes

Unfortunately, there are many stereotypes surrounding Domestic Violence. Many think Domestic Violence only happens to women “in trailer parks, among people who have drug and/or alcohol problems”. The facts say differently.

Statistics report around 1.3 million women are the victims of physical assault by an intimate partner each year and that an average of 3 women a day are murdered by an intimate partner. Furthermore, it is estimated that 40% of Domestic Violence victims are male and that a vast majority of assaults are not even reported, particularly when the victims are male. So, imagine how much more common Domestic Violence actually is!

These extreme numbers show us that Domestic Violence, whether physical, emotional, financial or sexual, is common among all ages, sexes, races, classes, sexual orientations or any other category. In fact, it is plausible that abuse happens just as often, if not more often, in wealthy, comfortable neighborhoods with their typical white picket fences. This is because abusers with power have the ability to manipulate the system in order to maintain control over their victims at any cost. And, the victims of those who hold positions of power (e.g. a mayor, a CEO of a company) may be hesitant to report the abuse to avoid ruining the abuser’s reputation or because, if they came forward, the abused feel they would not be believed due to their abuser’s high social standing.

“DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS AN ISSUE THAT AFFECTS 1 IN 4 WOMEN.”

Forget everything you thought you knew about Domestic Violence and realize it is an issue that affects everyone.

Warning Signs

Although stereotypes about Domestic Violence are not accurate, there are several warning signs that might hint that a person is or will become an abuser. Much of the time these warning signs are present at the beginning of a relationship that will develop to have Domestic Violence. However, excuses are sometimes made for why these characteristics are present in a person (e.g. “He had a bad day”, “She just has anger problems”, “It’s just the kind of person they are”, “It will go away because he loves me”) but, if ignored or dismissed, they can grow to become something repetitive and dangerous. So, whatever you do, pay attention to your partner’s words and actions. It might be the difference between life and death.

Since Domestic Violence is a learned behavior caused by the abuser wanting to control their victim, many abuser-like tendencies can be a predictable and serve as warning signs that the person might be or become an abuser. Some characteristics to look for are the following: jealousy, controlling behavior, self-isolation, cruelty to animals or children, past violence or threats, manipulative tendencies, “playful” use of force during sex, unpredictability, hypersensitivity, believing in rigid sex roles, quick to become committed (e.g. want to get married, move in together), and blames others for problems, feelings and actions. Of course, if a person possesses some of these qualities, it does not mean they are or will become an abuser, but it is important to monitor the way your partner treats you in order to protect yourself from harm.

“IT MIGHT BE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH.”

The Affected

One might think that the only people affected by Domestic Violence are the two in the intimate relationship. However, just like any other violence, Domestic Violence affects everyone: the victim and the abuser, but also any children involved and society as a whole.

Anywhere from 3-10 million children witness violence in their homes each year, and children are smart. Even if you think you are protecting your children from the violence, they know that mommy and daddy don’t get along and that sometimes someone gets hurt. And, if they are not actively taught that it is *not* okay to harm someone with whom you have a relationship, chances are they will eventually display the same patterns of violence. Furthermore, it is estimated that in 30-60% of families that experience Domestic Violence, there are *both* adult and child victims. No one, especially the children, are unaffected by Domestic Violence.

Moving beyond the actual household, society also has to deal with the effects of Domestic Violence. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention records that the health-related costs of intimate partner violence in the U.S. exceeds \$5.8 billion per year. Not only is Domestic Violence directly affecting the finances of our country, Domestic Violence also impacts the victim’s self-esteem and work performance, often causing a lack of concentration, the need to take sick leave, or the cessation of regular activities, causing a general decline in productivity. Because of its prevalence, Domestic Violence has the potential to destroy families and destabilize society if we do not confront and address it.

Interestingly, society is affected negatively by Domestic Violence yet it also tends to glamorize such violence. In recent news, we hear about domestic disputes between celebrities Rihanna and Chris Brown, Mel Gibson and Oksana Grigorieva. We also are exposed to songs that offer confusing and contradictory messages about Domestic Violence like the recent release of Eminem’s “Love The Way You Lie”.

In the case of Rihanna and Chris Brown, many accused Rihanna of “making him angry” or “doing something to make him hit her” because he is “too nice of a guy” to do that. But, the truth is, it was probably not the first time he had hit her. In an interview

(continued on page 3)

The Affected, continued

after the incident, Rihanna mentioned there had been two previous incidents of violence involving Chris Brown where the police were called. What does that tell us? Clearly, relationship, whether the police were called for a one-time-thing.

Such accounts, however, are surrounded year after the attack, Rihanna released a single, including lyrics like "I like the way you pull my hair". More recently, Eminem collaborated with Rihanna to produce *Love The Way You Lie*, a relationship that has Rihanna repeating things Eminem stating "If she ever tries to f***ing house on fire". As if this isn't enough, the music the couple attacking each other and exchanging the violence by wondering if the couple is Domestic Violence. Some praise the presence of awareness. However, if the glamorization of the Domestic Violence are going to be perpetuated.



Rihanna

by mixed messages of Domestic Violence. Almost a *Rude Boy*, telling of an aggressive sexual encounter, "I like the way it hurts" and ends with leave again, "I'mma tie her to the bed and set the video for *Love The Way You Lie* alternates between passionate kisses, causing the viewer to downplay possibly masochistic and not "true" victims of Domestic Violence in the media, claiming it creates violence still exists, myths thought to be true about

WHY?

Much of the time questions like the following (and, if you notice, these are similar to comments made about Rihanna concerning her dispute with Chris Brown) are asked of victims: "Why don't you just leave?", "What is wrong with you- do you like getting hurt?", "What did you do to make him/her angry, because they wouldn't have done this otherwise?". However, we need to be reminded that the violence is *not* the fault of the victim, just like would be true any other crime. Even the label of *Domestic Violence*, and not simply violence, is misleading because it makes us think that abusing one's intimate partner is somehow less serious than hitting someone random you don't know. Both types of violence involve pain and the requirement for the abuser to take responsibility for their actions. So, instead of blaming the victims, society needs to help victims get the assistance they need.

The question "Why don't you just leave?" is a legitimate concern. However, if one thinks through the complications of any relationship, the answer is obvious. Why would you stay in a relationship with an intimate partner? Some reasons may be that your friends and/or family wouldn't approve if you left, you are not sure where else you would go, you are comfortable in the home that you own/rent together, you wouldn't want to cause complications for the kids, you are financially dependent on your partner, and, most importantly, you love that person. These same barriers to leaving are true for victims of Domestic Violence, yet the situation is even more complicated because a victim might fear the abuser would steal their things, abuse their children, or kill themselves if they left.

Because of these complications it might be more comfortable and safe for a victim to stay in their current situation for fear of retaliation. A victim knows the threats an abuser has given them and knows whether, if she does leave, he will kill the pets. He might know if his abuser will actually kill herself. Victims who flee a Domestic Violence relationship are more likely to be killed by their batterer than those who stay because their batterer realizes their loss of control over their victim and will go to the greatest length to control them once and for all by taking their life. The batterer believes, "If I can't have them, nobody can". Therefore, hesitations by victims to leave their situation are valid as should be respected as such in order to preserve their life.

WHEN?

If you would like to take a public stand against Domestic Violence, here are some upcoming DASAS events in which you can participate:

- **Hispanic Heritage Celebration** at St. Joseph County Intermediate School District on October 6th at 5pm. In honor of DASAS' 25th year as an agency, we are celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month with our special guests from the Mexican-American Consulate, Hispanic-American Council of Kalamazoo, Hispanic-American Council of Sturgis, and Michigan Supreme Court with the unveiling of our new Domestic Violence Victim-assistance Handbook translated into Spanish.
- **Project Connect** on October 6th. Agencies and businesses around the area unite for a day of assistance for families and individuals that are in need of services.
- **Candlelight Vigil**, A service is held in honor of those who have lost their lives to Domestic Violence.
 - **Cassopolis County** at *Broken Wing* (301 Main St., Dowagiac) on October 7th at 7pm.
 - **St. Joe County** at the St. Joe County Courthouse lawn on October 14th at 7pm.
- **Purple Tie Event** at Carnegie Center in Three Rivers on December 4th from 5-8pm. This fundraising event, complete with entertainment and socializing, helps support DASAS' mission to provide services to victims of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, and Stalking.

SOURCES

The Advocates for Human Rights, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting and protecting human rights in the U.S. and around the world: www.stopvaw.org/Community_Costs_of_Domestic_Violence.html

Alabama Coalition Against Domestic Violence: www.acadv.org/facts.html

Annual Report, Domestic And Sexual Abuse Services, published October 2009-September 2009.

Equal Justice Foundation, a nonprofit organization of citizens from all walks of life working to be advocates for those in need: www.dvmen.org

The National Center for Victims of Crime: www.ncvc.org/ncvc/main.aspx?dbName=DocumentViewer&DocumentID=32347

Oakland County Coordinating Council Against Domestic Violence: www.domesticviolence.org/what-is-abuse

"Spousal Homicide Risk and Estrangement" by M. Wilson and M. Daly in **Violence and Victims** Vol. 8, No. 1, 1993

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Child Welfare Information Gateway: www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/domesticviolence.cfm

Domestic and Sexual Abuse Services

*Ashley Carter
Youngblood*

*Community & Law
Enforcement Liaison*

*P.O. Box 402
Three Rivers, MI 49093*

*Phone: 269-273-6154,
ext. 109*

Fax: 269-273-9465

ashleycy@dasasmi.org

DASAS Mission:

Domestic And Sexual Abuse Services will lead efforts to end domestic violence and sexual assault in southwest Michigan. DASAS will assist domestic violence and sexual assault survivors in clarifying their options, accessing community services that support personal choice, and will provide a safe place for survivors and their children.

DASAS Philosophy:

Domestic And Sexual Abuse Services shall promote the empowerment of survivors by providing information, resources, and advocacy. DASAS will treat survivors with dignity and respect, and will value their right to self-determination. DASAS is committed to improving community systems' response to domestic violence and sexual assault by focusing on enhanced protection, empowerment, and support for survivors and their children and on increased accountability for abusers. DASAS will lead prevention efforts by providing accurate information on domestic violence and sexual assault issues to the community and to youth through school based initiatives.

Programs:

From community education and prevention programs to supportive counseling services and assisting survivors in crisis situations. DASAS provides comprehensive services to those impacted by sexual assault and domestic violence.

- 24-hour Toll-free Help Line 1-800-828-2023
- Safe Shelter- Available 24/7
- Advocacy/Supportive counseling
- Sexual Assault Program
- Domestic Violence Program
- Weekly Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence support groups
- Assistance in obtaining a personal protection order
- Legal advocacy and accompaniment to court proceedings
- Information and referral to other services in the community, including obtaining clothing, emergency medical services, financial assistance, transportation and child care
- Assistance developing parenting skills

NO ONE DESERVES TO BE ABUSED.