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What is Domestic Violence?



Domestic violence is different than other types of assaults because of the dynamics of the crime. Domestic violence is a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors that people use against someone they have a domestic relationship with. Under Michigan law, domestic relationships are defined as former or current spouses, former or current boyfriend/girlfriend, parents of the same child, and residents or former residents of the same household.

Domestic violence has similarities to other forms of family violence—child abuse, child-to-parent violence, sibling violence or elder abuse—but it has characteristics that make it distinct. Domestic violence distorts what is supposed to be a partnership based on mutual respect. Neither partner has a legitimate role in disciplining

or controlling the other. When domestic violence permeates a relationship, the abuser and victim no longer share equal rights and responsibilities within the partnership.

There is no stereotypical situation of domestic violence. The victim and abuser can be of any age, gender, race, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, education level, and occupation. A victim of domestic violence can be the high school cheerleader, the girl who works at Walmart, the guy you watch the football game with, or the older woman your son mows the lawn for.

Domestic violence is much more than a black eye or a broken arm. Domestic violence includes physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and financial abuse. Physical abuse includes kicking, slapping, punch-

ing, biting, scratching, throwing objects at the victim, and depriving the victim of medical attention, food, water and sleep. Emotional abuse includes threatening, name calling, stalking, playing mind games, and threatening to hurt or take away children, pets or other family members. Sexual abuse includes physically forcing sex or sexual acts, coercing sex or sexual acts, inflicts injuries during sex, denying contraception or protection, and coercing sexual acts that the victim is not comfortable with. Economic abuse includes controlling all aspects of the finances, refusing to work and forcing the victim to be the sole moneymaker, and prohibiting the victim to work.

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Michigan Statistics

In 2007¹:

- 73,927 domestic violence offenses were reported
- 2,082 domestic violence victims were from Cass, St. Joseph and Van Buren counties
- 1,468 of the victims were female
- 614 of the victims were male

One out of five, 21% of Michigan women with current partners reported sustaining some type of violence in that relationship².

Over half (58%) of Michigan women over the age of 16 experienced some type of violence by a man².

National Statistics

Females ages 20-24 are at the highest risk for domestic violence³.

One in four women will experience domestic violence within their lifetime⁴.

20 percent of the violent crime committed against women was domestic violence, compared to 3 percent of violence crime against men⁴.

30-60 percent of those who abuse their domestic partner also abuse their children³.

Only half the victims of domestic violence reported incidents to the police. Of those, 20 percent were immediately arrested⁴.

Sources found on the last page.

Victim Behavior

Survivors of domestic violence display many of the same behaviors as survivors of any life-threatening situation. However, the ongoing nature of domestic violence, the relationship between the abuser and the victim, and the pattern of the abuser's behavior result in additional reactions in domestic violence victims. Victims usually focus on the protection and survival of themselves and their children.

Victims may seem angry, panicked, or excited. They may speak very loudly or quickly, skipping words and thoughts. A victim's inability to relate events in accurate chronological order does not mean they are

lying. Head injury, alcohol or drugs, or mental illness may account for such behavior. Also, when a victim is focused on immediate survival, they are not focused on accurate memory processing.

On the other hand, victims may shut down or become unresponsive. They may withdraw from family, friends or police. They may not recognize or take advantage of escape opportunities.

Victims may try to minimize or deny the violence. They are acting out of fear, love, or the resignation that nothing will help. Victims may ask the police to leave and try to protect the abuser. This is for the



fear that the abuse may be worse once released from custody, the shame of having everyone know what happened, or the love that the victim still has for the abuser.

Abuse rarely starts at the beginning of a relationship. The victim may believe the "old" abuser will return or that this time will be the last. The abuser may use honeymoon phases after the violence to buy gifts, send flowers or act very affectionately towards the victim.

Abuser Behavior

Domestic violence is not impulsive but purposeful and instrumental. Abusers can be perfectly agreeable with police officers, employers, neighbors, co-workers and friends. Batterers do not use those skills with their intimate partners because they choose not to. The abuser does not have anger issues and is not out of control. The batterer uses fear tactics and torture to gain control over the victim.

Domestic violence is a socially supported behavior, learned through observation, experience and reinforcement. Domestic violence is not caused by illness, genetics,

substance abuse, stress, the behavior of the victim, or problems in the relationship.

Often times, the violence comes in waves. After a round of abuse, the batterer may buy the victim presents, take the victim out on special dates, or act very affectionately towards the victim. These honeymoon times are when the victim feels that things will change and the violence will stop.

Abusers often try to rationalize their own behavior as having been caused by the victim. They may also complain that they are the real victim and that the victim is an alcoholic or mentally ill. Batterers

may also file complaints against the victim in an attempt to counter any complaint the victim has already made.

Abusers will usually try to minimize or deny the violence when confronted with evidence of their behavior. They may say the victim bruises easily or that they just got out of control. The batterer may also try to draw officers in by asking them what they would do in that situation or saying "You know how it is."

There is no excuse the violence abusers inflict on the victim. Domestic violence is a crime, and should be treated like one.

Working with Victims in Crisis

The key to working with victims, no matter how they cope with the trauma is to listen and believe them. Whoever is the first to respond- friend, neighbor, advocate or police- needs to be calm and compassionate towards the victim.

Victims are experts in their own situation. This means that they know the dangers of leaving for themselves. They are aware of what it takes to survive.

A victim of abuse must escape the abuse at their

own pace. It takes an average of 7 attempts to finally leave the abuser. Victims must decide on their own plan of action, whether it is staying, leaving or waiting to make the proper arrangements before they leave. If a victim feels forced to go into shelter, it is one more instance that they feel powerless and coerced.

First responders should be careful not to impose their own values or beliefs on the victim. They may voice their concern if they

believe the victim is in danger, but should not show disappointment is the victim decides to return to the abuser.

All information given to a victim should be explained plainly and thoroughly. Many victims are unaware of their rights or the services available to them. The victim may not be able to retain all information given to them, so paper copies of information should be given.

Empowerment affords victims who have been battered the opportunity to see themselves as strong survivors who can participate actively in securing a life free from violence. What makes it possible for batterers to entrap victims is not their greater physical strength, but the social strength they derive when unequal power relationships are reinforced, rather than countered, in helping endeavors.

Personal Protection Orders (PPO)

A Personal Protection Order (PPO) is a Circuit Court order prohibiting an abuser from certain behaviors. A PPO allows the police to make an immediate arrest that would not otherwise be criminal. A PPO is effective upon the judge's signature and remains in effect for no less than six months.

There are two types of PPOs- Domestic and Stalking. A domestic relationship exists when an abuser is the spouse or former spouse, has a child in common with the victim, is a resident

or former resident of the same household as the victim, or is a former boyfriend/girlfriend of the victim.

It is not necessary to hire an attorney to file for a PPO. The courthouses have advocates that can assist victims in filing for a PPO. The forms can be found at the Clerk's office.

The victim may have to report to the court on two occasions. If the judge denies the PPO, the victim may request a hearing so the judge can hear their story. The abuser also has

the right to file a motion to terminate the PPO. If this occurs, the victim must appear at the scheduled hearing.

It is the victim's responsibility to have the PPO served to the abuser. Any adult except the victim can serve the PPO. The PPO may also be mailed to the abuser via registered restricted mail. For a fee, the Sheriff's department will serve the PPO to the abuser.

Victim Story

"The officer came in. My husband was calmly sitting in the living room and he said, 'I never touched her officer. It's all in her mind.'" I said to the officer... "Would you like to see the bruises?"... I proceeded to roll up my pants leg, held out my arms, and showed him the big, fresh bruises. I ran my fingers through my hair, and it came out by the handful where he had beaten me."

Testimony before the Michigan

Women's Commission



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**No one deserves to be
abused.**

Outreach Newsletter

Resources:

1. Michigan State Police. Michigan Incident Crime Report. 2007. http://www.michigan.gov/documents/msp/Bb-DV07_263705_7.pdf
2. Michigan Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence. Violence Against Women in Michigan Fact Sheet. <http://www.resourcecenter.info/files/stats/Violence%20Against%20Women%20in%20Michigan.pdf>
3. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Statistics. Intimate Partner Violence in the United States. <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/intimate/ipv.htm>
4. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice. Full Report of the Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence Against Women.

About Domestic and Sexual Abuse Services

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
- 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
- Safe Shelter— Available 24/7

