



Welcome to Nebraska Domestic Violence Sexual Assault Coalition

committed to the prevention and elimination of domestic and sexual violence

Domestic Violence Information Sheet

Definition

Domestic violence can be defined as a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors, including physical, sexual, and psychological attacks, as well as economic coercion that adults or adolescents use against their partner.¹

Demographics

Domestic violence can happen to anyone, regardless of economic status, ethnicity, education, family structure, sexual orientation, or age. It occurs in relationships where the current or former partners are or have been dating, cohabitating, or married.

A recent review of research on domestic violence and gender, found that men and boys are more likely (than women and girls) to be perpetrators of intimate partner abuse, and women and girls are more likely (than men and boys) to be the victims of intimate partner abuse. The research review also found that while some women and girls are abusive and violent to their male partners, it is estimated to be 5% or fewer of the cases.²

As with the victims, perpetrators of domestic violence cannot be identified merely by their appearance or socio-economic background. Many abusers have a “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde” personality. Their demeanor in their public life may be quite different from that of their private life.

Domestic violence, marital rape, and sexual assault are all crimes in the state of Nebraska. The blame for these actions should be placed with the abuser/perpetrator. No one deserves to be abused, and victims should not be blamed. Everyone deserves the right to a violence free life.

Victims of domestic violence do not stay because they enjoy the abuse. They stay for a variety of other reasons (i.e., fear, children, economic reasons, lack of support, love). Many battered women do leave abusive relationships. Others leave but are forced to return not only because of the perpetrator’s actions, but also due to the societal response toward disclosure of domestic violence.

Causes of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is not caused by genetics, illness, alcohol/drugs, anger, stress, problems in the relationship, or the behavior of the victim.¹

Domestic violence is a learned behavior. Perpetrators learn to be abusive from a variety of sources, including: observation, experience and reinforcement, by family, communities (schools, peer groups, etc.), and in their respective cultures.¹

Domestic violence is an attempt to exert power and control over a partner. It is a conscious, deliberate choice by the perpetrator.

Danger & Lethality

A woman is more likely to be assaulted, injured, raped, or killed by a male partner than by any other type of assailant.³



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Forty-two percent of murdered women are killed by their intimate male partners.⁴

Women who leave their batterers are at a 75% greater risk of being killed by the batterer than those who stay.⁵

Prevalence

Domestic violence is an epidemic in the United States as well as here in Nebraska. Estimates range from 960,000 incidents of violence against a current or former spouse, boyfriend, or girlfriend per year to 3.9 million women who are physically abused by their husbands or live-in partners per year.⁶

Domestic violence affects everyone, not just the people in the relationship. Others affected include family, friends, neighbors, case workers, school personnel, coworkers, etc.⁶

Effects on Children & Youth

The majority of studies indicate that between 30%-60% of families where either child maltreatment or domestic violence is occurring, the other form of violence is also present.⁷

Researchers have estimated that 3.3 to 10 million U.S. children annually witness assaults by one parent against another.⁸

Problems among children who witness domestic violence include a greater likelihood of aggressive and anti-social behavior, traumatic stress reflected in higher levels of depression and anxiety, and slower development of cognitive skills.⁸

Some children who witness domestic violence suffer significant effects as a result of the exposure. However, it is important to note that children react in different ways to the violence. The effects of the violence vary, depending on a variety of factors such as: type and history of the abuse; age, gender and developmental level of the child; the child's interpretation of the violence; how the child has learned to survive and cope with stress; the support system available to the child; and the child's ability to accept support and assistance from adults.

Help is Available

If you or someone you know is in a domestic violence situation, or if you would like more information, contact the domestic violence/sexual assault crisis center nearest you or call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233).

¹Ganley, A. and Schechter, S., *Domestic Violence: A National Curriculum for Children's Protective Services*, 1996.

²Belkap, J. and Melton, H., *Are Heterosexual Men Also Victims of Intimate Partner Abuse?*, March 2005.

³Costello, M. and Thurber, S. *Bruised Faces and Broken Hearts: Violence in the Home*, Family Safety & Health, Winter 1992-1993.

⁴Analysis by the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, Institute for the Behavioral Science, University of Colorado-Boulder. Data obtained from the FBI's 1988-91 Uniform Crime Reports.

⁵Hart, B. "Assessing Whether Batterers Will Kill You", PCADV. 1990

⁶U.S. Department of Justice, *Violence by Intimates: Analysis of Data on Crimes by Current or Former Spouses, Boyfriends, and Girlfriends*, March 1998, 2. The Commonwealth Fund, *First Comprehensive National Health Survey of American Women*, July 1993.

⁷Edleson, J. "The Overlap Between Child Maltreatment & Woman Battering", 1999.

⁸*Ending Violence Against Women: An Agenda For The Nation*, 2000.