

The Family Advocacy and Victim Advocate Program

We assist individuals involved in family violence by ensuring the safety of the victim, providing support and service linkage to installation and community resources. The program provides 24/7 seamless coverage by a professional advocate ready to address questions and concerns regarding domestic violence. The advocate may also assist with accompaniments to various appointments where advocacy or support is needed, crisis intervention, and safety planning, applying for subsidies, assistance with Protective Orders and educating the victim on the dynamics of domestic violence. The advocate plays an intricate role in assuring the victims' rights are protected.

Victim advocates conduct annual Troop trainings on the Dynamics of Family Violence and Child Abuse/Neglect for military service members, civilian personnel and community agencies. Educational classes are provided to various installation groups and community organizations which address the importance of safety planning and reporting. A support group has been established to assist female survivors of domestic violence by providing a safe arena to talk about the abuse they have sustained, obtain support from others who have also experienced domestic violence at various levels and education on the dynamics of spousal abuse. The goal is to empower women into becoming independent and living a life free from abusive behaviors.

What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic Violence is the intentional injury and/or pattern of intentional acts that affect the psychological and physical well-being, safety and security of an intimate partner. Domestic abuse essentially involves the misuse of power and exercise of control by one person over another with whom there is or has been an intimate relationship.

What are the types of Domestic Abuse?

- **Physical Abuse** occurs when one person uses physical pain or threat of physical force to intimidate another person. Actual physical abuse may involve simple slaps or pushes, or it may involve a full physical beating complete with punching, kicking, hair pulling, scratching, spitting, threatening with a weapon and real physical damage sufficient in some cases to require hospitalization.
- **Sexual Abuse** of children or adults includes any sort of unwanted sexual contact perpetrated on a victim by an abuser. Molestation, incest, inappropriate touching (with or without intercourse), and partner or date rape are all instances of sexual abuse. Sexual abuse also occurs if one partner has agreed to a certain level of sexual activity and another level is forced upon her (or him) without prior explicit consent being given.
- **Verbal Abuse** occurs when one person uses words and body language to inappropriately criticize another person. Verbal abuse often involves 'putdowns' and name-calling intended to make the victim feel they are not worthy of love or respect, and that they do not have ability or talent.
- **Psychological Abuse** (also known as mental abuse or emotional abuse) occurs when one person controls information available to another person so as to manipulate that person's sense of reality; what

is acceptable and what is not acceptable. Psychological abuse often contains strong emotionally manipulative content designed to force the victim to comply with the abuser's wishes. It may be emotional abuse in this sense when it is designed to cause emotional pain to victims or to "mess with their heads" in attempts to gain compliance and counter any resistance.

- **Financial abuse** can take many forms, from denying you all access to funds, to making you solely responsible for all finances while handling money irresponsibly him/herself. Money becomes a tool by which the abuser can further control the victim, ensuring financial dependence on the abuser, or shifting the responsibility of keeping a roof over the family's head onto the victim while simultaneously denying your ability to do so or obstructing you.

Cycle of Violence

Tension Building/Escalation:

Be moody, sullen, faultfinding and very critical, withdraw affection, isolate partner, belittle partner, and make threats

Explosion/Acute Battering:

Beat partner, often severely, rape partner, and attack partner with weapon, become extremely verbally abusive

Seduction/Honeymoon:

Apologize, cry, and beg for forgiveness, promise to get help, to go for counseling to AA, to do "whatever it takes" send flowers and presents, promise it will never happen again.

It is hard for victims to break free from this cycle. Most of the time, victims are in love with their abuser. After the seduction stage, women have hope that their partners will keep their promises to stop the violence. At other parts of the cycle, women stay because of fear. Their partner may make threats to harm or kill her, her children, or other members of the family.

Over time, this cycle becomes more frequent and escalates. Without intervention, the abuse gets worse and the relationship becomes more dangerous.

Myths

"It was a one-time incident, he's really sorry and it won't happen again"

Once a man/woman has started to abuse it is likely to happen again. Abuse is rarely an isolated, one-time incident. Usually it is part of a pattern of controlling behavior that becomes worse with time.

"Abusers are violent towards their partners because of unemployment, drugs, alcohol, childhood experiences etc."

Factors such as unemployment, alcohol and drug dependency and so on, do not cause domestic abuse but are contributing factors which can exasperate the abuse.

"Domestic abuse only happens in certain communities; usually in poor or working class, Asian or black families."

Domestic abuse occurs within all communities, classes, races and cultures. There is no typical abuser and there is no typical abused man/woman. Anyone can be abused.

"It's just the odd domestic tiff, everybody has arguments."

The difference between the occasional argument and domestic abuse is that domestic abuse is deliberate behavior which is used by the abuser to exert power and control over the other person.

"She must get something out of it, or else she would leave."

There are many reasons why a woman stay in an abusive relationship but none of them are related to getting something out of the violence and abuse.

"It's not just men, there are loads of violent women too"

Statistics show that 97% of reported incidences of domestic violence and abuse are perpetrated by men against women.

What are the reporting options?

The Department of the Army currently encourages victims of domestic violence to utilize the following reporting options:

Restricted

- Restricted reporting allows a victim of domestic abuse the option of reporting an incident of family violence to the Victim Advocate, Family Advocacy Program Manager, Social Work Services or the Chaplain and receive victim advocacy services and medical care without starting a law enforcement investigation or having command involvement. It is intended to give victims the care and support they need and the extra time to make more informed decisions regarding reporting to command or law enforcement.

Unrestricted

- Unrestricted reporting involves a victim making a report to the service members command, Family Advocacy Program or Law Enforcement. The incident will be fully investigated and the victim will have access to victim advocacy services and FAP clinical services.

What can I do to ensure safety?

- If the situation is lethal and you can leave safely, do so.
- Contact a victim advocate or local shelter for safety planning and resources.
- Seek a civilian or military protective order.
- Explore staying with family/friends or in a Domestic Violence Shelter.
- Change locks, add lighting and a possible alarm system or door/window sensors.
- Inform family, friends and neighbors of your situation so that they may also keep a look out.
- Tell your supervisor and/or school about your situation so that they may assist.
- Always let someone know your whereabouts, be aware of your surroundings.

Who to call for help?

- Army Community Service: 410-278-7572
- National Domestic Violence Hot line: 1-800-799-7233 or www.ndvh.org
- Victim Advocate 24/7 Hotline: 410-652-6048
- Directorate of Emergency Services (DES): 410-306-2222
- Shelters throughout MD: <http://www.peoples-law.org/finding/commres/commres.html>
- Vine: <https://www.vinelink.com/vinelink/initMap.do>
(Victim Information and Notification Everyday), the National Victim Notification Network. This service allows crime victims to obtain timely and reliable information about criminal cases and the custody status of offenders 24 hours a day.
- Military One Source: 1-800-342-9647
- Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV): <http://mnadv.org/index.html>
- The Women's Law Center of Maryland: 410-321-8761 or <http://www.wlcmd.org/index.html>

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