

OPENING DOORS



*When Faith-Based Communities
Respond to Domestic Abuse*



Maryland Network
Against Domestic Violence

This project was supported by Grant No. 2013-TA-DW-0030 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Dept. of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions and recommendations expressed in this publication, program, and exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Dept. of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.

Funding for the printing of this brochure was provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services/Administration for Children and Families/Family and Youth Services Bureau. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of HHS/ACF/FYSB.



Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| An Introduction..... | 2 |
| About Domestic Abuse..... | 2 |
| Domestic Abuse is More Common than You Think..... | 3 |
| Effects of Domestic Abuse on Children..... | 3 |
| A Faith-Based Community has an Important Role..... | 4 |
| First Learn the Basics about Domestic Abuse..... | 7 |
| Develop a Relationship with a Local Program..... | 8 |
| Raise Awareness About Domestic Abuse..... | 9 |
| Provide Education, Training, and Resources..... | 9 |
| Take Action to Support Survivors..... | 10 |
| Responding to a Survivor..... | 12 |
| Include a Local Program in Your Community Service Projects..... | 14 |
| Offer Financial Support..... | 14 |
| Offer Physical Space..... | 14 |
| Offer to Adopt the Shelter..... | 14 |
| Offer Your Know-How..... | 15 |
| Offer Your Time..... | 16 |
| Providing Support to Survivors..... | 16 |
| Types of Survivor Support..... | 18 |
| Further Resources..... | 19 |
| Websites..... | 20 |
| Comprehensive Domestic Violence Programs in MD..... | 21 |



An Introduction

According to a 2011 Gallup Poll, 81% of Americans rank religion as very important or fairly important in their lives.* Not surprisingly, many survivors turn to their faith-based communities for support and guidance in dealing with domestic abuse. In turn, many faith-based communities provide survivors with well-informed, practical, and spiritual guidance, including referrals to other organizations. Faith-based communities are often essential resources for, and have strong relationships with, immigrant communities that may hesitate to seek assistance from secular or mainstream domestic abuse service providers. The faith-based community is uniquely positioned to identify the needs of survivors whose pain and suffering are often swept under a religious or spiritual rug and connect them with local domestic violence programs.

About Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse, also known as domestic violence or intimate partner violence, is a **pattern** of coercive behavior used by one person that results in gaining and maintaining **power and control** in a relationship. Domestic abuse comes in many forms, including actual or threatened physical, sexual, verbal, financial, psychological, or emotional abuse. **Many acts of domestic abuse are illegal.** Domestic abuse can impact current or former dating partners or spouses, people of any gender or sexual orientation, and also includes older adults. Survivors and abusive partners come from all age groups, social classes, religions, and nationalities. Approximately 85% of victims of domestic abuse are women.**

*www.gallup.com/poll/151760/christianity-remains-dominant-religion-united-states.aspx

**<http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/ipv01.pdf>



Many people mistakenly assume that if a person is not being *physically* harmed then they are not being abused; this is not true. Psychological and emotional abuse are indirect forms of violence that can systematically wear away at a person's self-confidence, sense of self-worth, and sense of self-perception. This kind of abuse can be as dangerous as physical violence; it destroys the heart and soul by cutting to the very core of a person, creating internal scars that may be far deeper and more lasting than physical ones.

Domestic Abuse is More Common than You Think

Domestic abuse is so prevalent that it is almost certain there are both survivors *and* abusers in every faith community. According to a 2010 survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nearly one in four women and one in seven men reported being severely physically abused by a spouse or dating partner in their lifetime.* In 2010, the FBI found that over 1,000 women and less than 300 men are killed by a spouse or dating partner annually.** As hard as it is to believe or understand, the fact is that survivors and abusers can be found in all institutions within our society, including faith communities.

Effects of Domestic Abuse on Children

Researchers estimate that 10 million children are exposed to domestic abuse each year.*** Exposure to domestic violence can include watching or hearing the violent events, direct involvement (for example, trying to intervene or calling the police), or experiencing the aftermath (for example, seeing

*www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs_report2010-a.pdf

**www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/crime-in-the-u.s/2011/crime-in-the-u.s.-2011/tables/expanded-homicide-data-table-10

***Straus, M. A. 1992. Children as witnesses to marital violence: A risk factor for life-long problems among a nationally representative sample of American men and women. Report of the Twenty-Third Ross Roundtable. Columbus, OH: Ross Laboratories



bruises or observing maternal depression). In addition, research estimates that about half of children who are exposed to domestic abuse are also being physically abused at home.* It is important to remember that the responsibility of the abuse rests solely with the person who is choosing to be abusive.

Children are often the forgotten victims, but it is important to remember that they may be seriously traumatized by exposure to domestic abuse. Ignoring the impact of exposure to violence on children can negatively impact their cognitive development, as well as their emotional and physical health. Remember, if and when a domestic abuse survivor leaves the abuser, they and their children are most vulnerable and at the point of greatest risk. It is important to recognize that survivors often try numerous strategies to keep themselves and their children safe before they get to you. With the help of the local domestic violence program, strategies that survivors employ can be strengthened with specialized information and resources. Faith-based communities are positioned to make that vital connection.

A Faith-Based Community Has An Important Role

Faith-based communities can play a unique and pivotal role in the effective response to domestic abuse within their congregation and in their community. This is because survivors of domestic abuse often turn to their faith community for spiritual guidance and support before, or in lieu of, community-based domestic violence programs. It is important for survivors to know that they are accepted and supported by their faith-based community.

*Straus, M. A., & Gelles, R. J. 1996. Physical violence in American families. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.



This wheel demonstrates the ideal response of community faith leaders to domestic violence.

UNITED TO END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Adapted with permission from the "Power & Control and Equality Wheels," developed by Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, Duluth, MN.

Provided by:  Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence
220 SW 33rd Street • Topeka, KS 66611
785-232-9784 • FAX: 785-266-1874 • E-Mail: coalition@kcsadv.org

UNITED AGAINST VIOLENCE



Survivors may struggle to understand the abuse they suffer in light of their religious beliefs. Faith-based communities can help survivors recognize and acknowledge the challenge of their inner conflict and to understand that the responsibility for the abuse lies with the abusive partner. Providing an appropriate and **safe** response to survivors is not an action that can be taken lightly; in fact, **inappropriate intervention can make a difficult situation worse**. Informed, compassionate support for survivors is critical to their complex restoration and healing process.

Here are some questions that a faith-based community should ask itself before embarking on the mission of providing domestic abuse assistance to its members:

- Does your faith-based community have a clear and well-informed understanding of the problem of domestic abuse and how it differs from marital conflict?
- What qualifications or training does your faith-based community have for helping survivors of domestic abuse?
- What limitations does your faith-based community face when addressing domestic abuse?
- What organizations exist in your area that specialize in providing domestic abuse services?
- What policies does your faith-based community have in place to safely respond to and effectively prevent domestic abuse?
- Does your faith-based community know how to provide spiritual help, hope, and healing to survivors using religious texts?



First Learn the Basics about Domestic Abuse

- What are the **myths, dynamics, and effects** that constitute domestic abuse?
- How does domestic abuse **differ from marital conflict**?
- What is the **emotional, physical, and spiritual impact** on survivors and their families?
- What are the **signs** of domestic abuse?
- Why do people **choose** to abuse?
- Why do survivors often feel like they have **no choice** but to stay in the relationship?
- How do you **make referrals** to existing programs in your community that specialize domestic abuse services?

A good starting point for faith leaders to broaden their knowledge about domestic abuse is with local domestic violence service providers. To become aware of local service provider(s), see the provider list on the inside back cover of this booklet or call the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (301-429-3601). There is at least one program serving every county in Maryland and Baltimore City.

The Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence posts informational materials that can be printed directly from its website, mnadv.org, which includes a Spiritual Response to Domestic Violence Guide for faith leaders (mnadv.org/faith). MNADV also mails limited quantities of brochures upon request. The website also includes a list of training opportunities as they become available. Some of the most valuable online resources are listed in the last few pages of this booklet.



Develop a Relationship with a Local Program

The most important thing a faith-based community can do is collaborate with local programs that specialize in domestic violence services. Meet with program staff to explore opportunities for meaningful involvement. This collaborative partnership, combining common ground and shared interests, will ensure that both the spiritual and secular needs of the survivors are met once they are referred.* The local programs can be an invaluable resource for faith communities by:

- Providing **support to survivors** who are referred for services.
- Providing **services to partners** who are being abusive.
- Offering **education, training, and consultation** on domestic abuse.
- Assisting faith communities with developing an **action plan and domestic abuse policy** to enhance its response to survivors.
- Addressing concerns regarding **confidentiality and safe practices**.
- Providing **informational materials** for congregations or attending health fairs or ministry events.
- Providing **guest speakers** to address congregations or faith-affiliated groups.

**Remember: Domestic violence service providers are experts in meeting the secular needs of survivors, their children, and abusers. They are not experts in spiritual matters. However, this is an area in which faith communities can be of great help. Faith leaders who refer a member of their community to a domestic violence program, with the survivor's permission, should be willing to partner with staff there to help address their spiritual needs. Domestic violence programs should not be expected to be able to do that without help. Faith leaders can offer themselves as a resource and become strong collaborators.*



Raise Awareness About Domestic Abuse

The faith community can have a powerful impact on people's attitudes and beliefs about domestic abuse. Here's what faith communities can do:

Provide Education, Training, and Resources

- Display **informational materials and referral numbers** to local programs in private areas like restrooms.
- Display **posters** about domestic abuse in common areas.
- Organize **trainings** by a local service provider for the congregation and other faith-affiliated groups.
- Identify and disseminate already existing **resources** and develop informed resources where none exist.
- Sponsor activities and events that help **raise awareness** about domestic abuse.
- **Integrate information** about domestic abuse in the congregation's programs, youth groups, marriage preparation classes, study groups, etc.
- Establish a **committee to promote awareness** of the problem of domestic abuse and how the congregation can help.
- Sponsor **educational seminars** on domestic abuse for members of your congregation.
- Routinely include information about domestic abuse in **weekly bulletins, monthly newsletters**, and on your **website**.



Take Action to Support Survivors

- Create a climate of sensitivity where members of the congregation know they will **receive understanding and assistance** when they disclose that they are survivors of domestic abuse.
- Have an **action plan** in place when someone calls for help.
- Make **appropriate and informed referrals** to local programs that have the expertise in place to help survivors navigate the legal, health care, and child welfare systems.
- Do the **theological and scriptural homework** necessary to better understand and respond to domestic abuse survivors who seek support (*see resources at the end of this booklet*).
- Create safe opportunities for survivors of domestic abuse to **discuss their experiences and seek healing**.
- Offer your **space** to domestic violence programs to hold a support group for survivors.
- Urge **abuser accountability**.
- Arrange for a **van** to pick up shelter residents who want to attend a worship service on a regular basis.

Take a Stand Against Domestic Abuse

- **Encourage men**, particularly faith leaders, to use their influence to communicate intolerance for abuse against women and girls in all forms.
- **Publicly denounce common myths** and misconceptions about domestic abuse; reject excuses for abuse openly and routinely.
- Teach boys and girls about what constitutes a **healthy, non-violent relationship**.



- Participate in **domestic violence awareness activities** in the community.
- Join in the **national observance** of “Domestic Violence Awareness Month” in October. **Encourage a sermon** about domestic abuse to be given during that time.
- Dedicate at least one weekend in October to **educate parishioners** about domestic abuse and its presence in your faith community.
- **Publicly acknowledge** domestic abuse as a serious public health, safety, and spiritual concern.
- **Contact and write letters to governmental leaders** about domestic abuse legislation and policies that affect your community.
- **Encourage training and education** for all religious leaders, lay leaders, religious teachers, and seminary students to increase their awareness of domestic abuse.
- **Urge other faith communities** to share compassion and comfort with those afflicted by the tragedy of domestic abuse.
- **Network with domestic violence programs** to locate religious and secular allies on the local, regional, state, and national levels.
- Develop **theologically-based materials** that emphasize a survivor’s right to safety and support as well as an abuser’s personal responsibility for ending the abuse.
- Urge the **development or expansion of core curricula** on abuse against women in the basic education for religious leaders, including theory- and practice-oriented course work such as counseling or pastoral care.



Responding to a Survivor

An increased level of knowledge about domestic abuse will help make a faith-based community aware of some needs that would not have otherwise occurred to them, and will lead them to dismiss some approaches that might have made sense before. Here are some helpful tips to keep in mind when responding to survivors:

- **Survivor safety** *must always* be the first priority. Help survivors plan for safety. Encourage them to think about a safety plan; have them consider setting aside: some money; important papers and documents; a change of clothes hidden or in care of a friend if they decide to leave. Plan how to exit the house the next time the abuser is violent. Plan what to do about the children if they are at school, if they are asleep, at your place of worship, etc.
- Protect the **survivor's confidentiality**. Do not give information about the survivor or the survivor's whereabouts to the abusive partner or to anyone else without the survivor's permission. This can put the survivor and children in increased danger.
- **Refer, refer, refer!** If abuse is known or suspected to be occurring in a relationship, refer the survivor to the local domestic violence service provider for expert services.
- **Important: Do not suggest or attempt couple's counseling or mediation.** While such approaches may be effective in a relationship in which there is equality, they can be very dangerous in a relationship characterized by power and control by one partner over the other. In short, they do not address the problem of domestic abuse and can endanger the survivor.



- Some things **to say** to a survivor of domestic abuse:
 - “From what you have told me, I am very concerned for your safety.”
 - “You are not alone. You have my support.”
 - “You do not deserve this.”
 - “There is never an excuse for abuse.”
 - “This is not God’s will for you.”
 - “Let me give you some helpful information about local resources.”
 - “Let’s pray together and ask God to give you strength, courage, and wisdom.”
- Some things **not to say** to a survivor of domestic abuse:
 - “You must forgive and take your partner back.”
 - “This is God’s will.”
 - “Turn the other cheek.”
 - “That’s how relationships are.”
 - “We all have our burdens.”



Include a Local Program in Your Community Service Projects

Support local domestic violence service providers, in accordance with their needs and policies, by encouraging faith community members to donate money, time, and other material resources. Note: A program's most pressing needs can change from one month to the next, but financial contributions are *always* needed.

Offer Financial Support

- Encourage those responsible for preparing the **annual budget** at a place of worship to **include a line item** for the local domestic violence program.
- Organize or participate in a **Walk or Run** and gather pledges to raise funds to benefit survivors to assist with rebuilding their lives.
- Conduct a **fundraiser** to maintain and expand services at a local domestic violence program.
- Dedicate a worship day during “Domestic Violence Awareness Month” (October) when the **weekly offering** can be donated to domestic violence programs to benefit the survivors who seek their help.

Offer Physical Space

Provide space in your sanctuary, classrooms, and multi-purpose rooms for educational seminars or weekly support groups, or serve as a supervised visitation site when parents need to safely visit their children.

Offer to Adopt the Shelter

- Conduct a **food drive** for a shelter. Nutritious, high protein, and shelf-stable food are most appreciated.



- Collect **hygiene items/linens/toys/paper products/books** to give to a shelter.
- Make **welcome baskets** for new shelter guests.
- Collect and distribute **art and school supplies** for shelters.
- Make **pillows, fleece tie blankets, and stuffed toys** for children who are in a shelter.
- Collect items to make **baby bags for new mothers** in shelters (e.g. diapers, bottles, pacifiers, burp cloths, formula, baby food, etc.). Organize a **diaper drive** to collect disposable diapers for use in shelters.
- Provide **foster care for pets** of shelter residents through the domestic violence program.
- Organize a used **cell phone drive**. Cell phones can save lives when used by survivors to call 911 in emergencies.
- Collect **holiday gifts** for children and adults in shelters.
- Donate copies of **holy books and sacred texts** to shelters.

Offer Your Know-How

- Share **skills**.
- Share **hobbies and areas of interests**.
- Provide **business or professional services** free-of-charge.
- **Translate** program literature into different languages or become a trained **interpreter**.
- Provide pro bono **legal services**.
- Provide a **job or job training** for survivors.



Offer Your Time

- Become trained as a **volunteer on the hotline, as a legal advocate, or hospital companion**.
- Serve on the **board of directors** of a local domestic violence program.
- Answer phones, make copies, file, assist with mailing, input data into a database, and perform other general **office functions**.
- **Distribute literature** throughout the community, including hospitals, health centers, OB/GYN offices, and universities.
- Offer to come on-site to provide **worship services, sacraments, and prayers** for survivors who are unsafe worshipping in public.

Providing Domestic Violence Support to Survivors

After learning more about domestic abuse and existing program services in the area, a faith-based group may believe that they can and should provide support and assistance to survivors. There are, however, some important considerations that should not be overlooked:

- Advocacy and assistance must be driven by the **needs of the survivor**, and the survivor must be “in the driver’s seat.” Each survivor’s situation is different, and no one has more knowledge about it than the survivor. Explore, along with survivors, the best options for *their* situation and **don’t tell them what to do**— they’ve certainly had enough of that.
- By being **nonjudgmental** and by **supporting the survivor’s self-identified goals** (even if you don’t agree), you can form a positive, trusting relationship with survivors.



- **Confidentiality** is an important feature of domestic abuse assistance—sharing any information without the survivor’s permission can put them in danger.
- **Make referrals** as often as necessary. It is important to be aware of the resources in the community and, to the extent possible, what will actually happen when a survivor seeks services there.
- Domestic abuse survivors, like anyone else, often face a **range of situational issues** in their lives. Be aware that the survivors seeking help may be confronted with **multiple barriers to self-sufficiency, such as lack of education, employment skills, English-speaking ability, affordable housing, transportation, health insurance, substance abuse, or child care struggles**. These factors, which can compound the suffering that survivors must endure, may have preceded or resulted from the abuse.
- A domestic violence shelter is not a place to simply “hide out.” It means **safety in a secure, confidential location** with the assistance survivors need when they are in great physical danger and emotional turmoil.
- Reactions to traumatic experiences are often complex and can be severe. **Specialized training and expertise on trauma** is needed in order to respond to survivors in a way that is emotionally safe for them.



Types of Survivor Support

A faith-based community has great potential to contribute to a survivor's healing process through emotional and practical support. Faith-based groups, through their compassion and commitment, can work in conjunction with local domestic violence programs to provide:

- **Domestic abuse information and referrals** to community programs.
- Form **support groups**, in collaboration with local domestic violence programs, for survivors who desire faith- or spirituality-based healing.
- **Emergency funds** to alleviate a survivor's short-term financial constraints.
- **Education assistance** to help survivors meet their educational and employment goals.
- **Transitional housing** with full supportive services that provides survivors with the second stage of housing after leaving emergency shelter.
- **Assistance in obtaining affordable housing** for survivors so they can afford to live independently and safely.
- **Parenting programs** to give survivors the skills they need to address their children's emotional well-being.
- **Child care services or transportation** for survivors who need to get to court hearings, support group meetings, or medical appointments.
- **Foster homes for pets** to provide survivors will the relief of knowing their pet will be lovingly cared for in a safe environment while they are in shelter.



- **Telephone buddy support** for survivors who give their permission to know they are not alone.
- **English as a Second Language lessons** for immigrant survivors who wish to become more proficient in English.
- **Employment assistance** with job placement and job-building skills.
- **Financial literacy courses** or **tax preparation assistance** to support survivors' financial health and self-sufficiency.

Further Resources:

Domestic Violence: What Every Pastor Needs to Know. Miles, Rev. Al. Augsburg Fortress: Minneapolis, MN 2000.

Ending Violence in Teen Dating Relationships: A Resource Guide for Priests and Pastors. Miles, Rev. Al. Augsburg Fortress: Minneapolis, MN 2005.

Family Violence and Religion: An Interfaith Resource Guide. Volcano Press: Volcano, CA 1995.



Websites

www.faithtrustinstitute.org (resources and training for faith-based organizations)

www.vawnet.org (online resource library on domestic violence)

www.ncdsv.org (National Center on Domestic & Sexual Violence: training and advocacy)

www.ovw.usdoj.gov (Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women)

www.thehotline.org (National Domestic Violence Hotline)

www.ncadv.org (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence)

www.interfaithpartners.org (Save Havens Interfaith Partnership Against Domestic Violence)

www.hotpeachpages.net (International Domestic Violence Directory)

www.theraveproject.com (Religion & Violence eLearning: online training and interfaith resources)

www.jwi.org (Jewish Women International: advocacy, training, and programs for Jewish women and girls)

www.peacefulfamilies.org (Peaceful Families Project: resources and training on domestic violence in Islamic families)

www.safeplaceministries.com Safe Place Ministries (Christian education and support for victims and clergy)

www.religiousinstitute.org/search/statements (Religious Institute: denominational statements on domestic violence, child abuse, sexual abuse, and other topics)

www.dovesnest.net (policies on children exposed to violence for faith communities)

www.jcada.org (Montgomery County-area services for Jewish victims and prevention programs for youth for interfaith audiences)

**COMPREHENSIVE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
PROGRAMS IN MARYLAND**

MNADV STATEWIDE HELPLINE: 1-800-MD-HELPS

ALLEGANY COUNTY

Family Crisis Resource Center
Hotline 301-759-9244
Office 301-759-9246

ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY

YWCA Domestic Violence Services
Hotline 410-222-6800
Office 410-626-7800

BALTIMORE CITY

House of Ruth Maryland
Hotline 410-889-7884
TTY 410-889-0047
Office 410-889-0840

TurnAround, Inc.
Helpline 443-279-0379
Office 410-837-7000

BALTIMORE COUNTY

County-wide Hotline 410-828-6390
Family & Children's Services of Central MD
Office 410-281-1334
Family Crisis Center of Baltimore Co., Inc.
Office 410-285-4357 Shelter 410-285-7496
TurnAround, Inc.
Office 410-377-8111

CALVERT COUNTY

Crisis Intervention Center
Hotline 410-535-1121
Metro Hotline 301-855-1075

CARROLL COUNTY

Family and Children's Services of Central MD
Hotline 410-857-0077
Office 410-876-1233

**CAROLINE, KENT, DORCHESTER,
QUEEN ANNES, & TALBOT COUNTIES**

Mid-Shore Council on Family Violence
Hotline 1-800-927-4673
Office 410-479-1149

CECIL COUNTY

Cecil Co. Domestic Violence/Rape Crisis Ctr
Hotline 410-996-0333

CHARLES COUNTY

Center for Abused Persons
Helpline 301-645-3336
Metro Hotline 301-843-1110
Office 301-645-8994

FREDERICK COUNTY

Heartly House
Hotline 301-662-8800
TTY 301-662-1565

GARRETT COUNTY

The Dove Center
Hotline 301-334-9000
Oakland Office 301-334-6255
Grantsville Office 301-895-4300

HARFORD COUNTY

Sexual Assault/Spouse Abuse Resource Ctr.
Hotline 410-836-8430
Office 410-836-8431

HOWARD COUNTY

HopeWorks
Hotline 410-997-2272/1-800-752-0191
Office 410-997-0304

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Abused Persons Program
Hotline 240-777-4850

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY

Family Crisis Center, Inc.
Hotline 301-731-1203
Office 301-779-2100
House of Ruth Maryland (Legal and Counseling)
Office 240-450-3270

ST. MARY'S COUNTY

Walden/Sierra, Inc.
Hotline 301-863-6661
Office 301-863-6677

**SOMERSET, WICOMICO &
WORCESTER COUNTIES**

Life Crisis Center
Hotline 410-749-4357/410-641-4357
Office 410-749-0771

WASHINGTON COUNTY

Citizens Assisting and Sheltering the Abused
(CASA)
Hotline 301-739-8975
Office 301-739-4990



**Maryland Network
Against Domestic Violence**

4601 Presidents Drive

Suite 370

Lanham, MD 20706

Phone: 301-429-3601

Fax: 301-429-3605

Email: info@mnadv.org

Website: mnadv.org

Helpline: 1-800-MD-HELPS