Responding to Domestic Violence

A Resource for Parishes
Introduction

Violence is a scourge on families. The outcomes of domestic violence and child abuse can be catastrophic for individuals and have far reaching consequences in communities and society. Violence, however, is entirely preventable. With appropriate supports, families can thrive.

Members of the church are viewed by victims of violence as safe and trusted individuals to which to turn when they need help. This guide is intended to provide representatives of the Church with an array of tools to help them respond professionally and compassionately.
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Domestic Violence

- Is a pattern of abusive behavior
- Is not just physical abuse
- Is an attempt to gain power and control
- Is not an anger problem
- Often worsens over time
- Can have a devastating impact on the children
Power and Control Wheel

The Power and Control Wheel

Power & Control

Emotional Abuse:
- Teasing, invalidating feelings, using guilt, blaming me for everything
- Jealous, threatening, withholding affection, making me up silent, treatment, stalking

Intellectual Abuse:
- Having to prove things to him, mind games, demanding perfection
- Making me feel stupid, attacking my ideas and opinions, manipulation of information, telling me I'm crazy

Financial Abuse:
- Calling welfare, limiting access to money, making me account for every penny
- Controlling the money, closing bank accounts, wanting, creating debt

Pets & Property Abuse:
- Killing or threatening pets, punching walls and doors, throwing things
- Damaging the vehicle, smashing and breaking things

Psychological Abuse:
- Intimidating gestures or actions, threatening suicide, threatening to kill me, displaying weapons
- Denying he said things, making light of the abuse

Physical Abuse:
- Blocking exits, driving too fast, locking me out of the house
- Intimidating me, punching or kicking me, spitting on me, choking me, hitting me, restraining me

Sexual Abuse:
- Using church and faith to his advantage, soul destroying, sexualizing
- Using scripture against me, forcing or manipulating sex, sexual practices, criticizing how I dress, withholding sex, comparing me to others, using pornography, demanding sex as payment

Verbal Abuse:
- Name calling, swearing, yelling at me, insulting me, being condescending, being sarcastic

Sexual Abuse:
- Abusing children, threatening to harm or take children away, refusing to make support payments
- Battering me in front of my children, using victimization as leverage

Social Abuse:
- Using his culture as an excuse for abuse, putting down my culture, forcing me to adopt his cultural practices
- Doesn't allow me to participate in mainstream culture, isolating me from my friends and family, monitoring phone calls or mileage, dictating who I can see, preventing me from working

Spiritual Abuse:
- Using church and faith to his advantage, soul destroying, sexualizing
- Using scripture against me, forcing or manipulating sex, sexual practices, criticizing how I dress, withholding sex, comparing me to others, using pornography, demanding sex as payment

Using Culture:
- Using his culture as an excuse for abuse, putting down my culture, forcing me to adopt his cultural practices
- Doesn't allow me to participate in mainstream culture, isolating me from my friends and family, monitoring phone calls or mileage, dictating who I can see, preventing me from working
Bringing an end to violence is easier when we know the factors that contribute to it. As with any issue, there are certain factors that protect against it and others that are correlated with it. These are known as Protective and Risk Factors.

**Protective Factors**

These positive influences in families increase the potential that a family and/or any of its individual members will not use violence and will thrive.

Family Connectedness, Clear Family Rules and Expectations, the Development of Social Skills, and the Development of Problem Solving Skills are all protective factors that can keep family members safe.
Risk Factors

Although, not a direct cause of violence, a risk factor increases the potential that a family member will become a victim or perpetrator of violence.

Poverty, Substance Abuse, Witnessing Domestic Violence, Trauma, Social Rejection, Lack of Parental Involvement or Negative Parental Involvement are all risk factors for violent behavior.
Strengthening Families

Four ways to Respond to Domestic Violence

1. **Educate**
   - Teach families the alternatives to violence to create healthy homes
   - Learn to recognize the signs and symptoms and how to respond
   - Help victims understand what the church teaches and how to be safe

3. **Challenge It**

Although it may be scary to say something when we know there has been domestic violence, challenging the behavior is a way to make it stop. Men, especially, have the ability to influence the behavior of other men by letting a batterer know his behavior is unacceptable.
Four ways to Respond to Domestic Violence

2. **Talk about it**

Keeping silent about violence of any kind creates a breeding ground for it. Talking about it sets the tone and lets victims and batterers know that violence is not acceptable. Homilies, public speaking engagements, and private conversations are all appropriate venues to talk about this evil.

4. **Create Opportunity**

Victims of violence often stay with their abuser because they have no other financial options. Increased opportunity to employment, education, or transportation can provide an avenue to safety.
Catholic Charities offers multiple educational options to help families and those in ministry. Among the ways we educate are:

- **Family Strengthening Workshops**
  Because domestic violence is often a secret, victims may hesitate to expose themselves by attending a presentation specifically on domestic violence. They may, however, be motivated by a desire to be good parents.

Catholic Charities is able to provide an individual or a series of educational workshops that seek to address both the risk and protective factors for violence.
• **LISTEN, BELIEVE AND REFER:** As a Catholic Faith Community, we are called to hope, help, and healing to all harmed by domestic abuse and violence. Abuse is not God’s will.

• **Call the National Domestic Violence Hotline:** 800-799-SAFE (7233) - 24 hours, toll free www.ndvh.org

The workshops, which are fully interactive, offer participants the opportunity to ask questions in a safe, non-judgmental atmosphere.

For More Details on workshops and presentations turn to the next page.
Family Strengthening Workshop

Components

Presentations between 45 and 90 minutes focus on various aspects of family life including the impact violence has on children and families. Each session will focus on both the risk and protective factors necessary to end violence.
Sample Workshop Topics

- Three Keys to a Healthy Pregnancy
- All Babies Cry
- Why Read?
- Good Touch/Bad Touch
- Look What I Can Do: Child Development
- When Love Hurts
- Helping Children do Well in School
- Create a Stable Financial Future
- Creating an Envelope of Security Around your Children
- Social and Emotional Competence

For a full list of presentations or to request a customized workshop contact Sylvia Loumeau at 856-342-4162
Educate Clergy and Religious

- **Presentations to those in ministry**

  Catholic Charities is able to provide presentations of all lengths to priests, sisters, deacons, and lay ministers that will help them learn how to recognize the warning signs of domestic violence, breakdown the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ statement on domestic violence, and share information and resources that can help to provide a professional and compassionate response to victims and batterers.

To request information on any of these Educational options, contact Sylvia Loumeau at 856-342-4162.
Talk About It

- Counseling Services
  The counselors at Catholic Charities recognize the hidden nature of domestic violence, so rather than waiting for victims to share that they have been abused, our counselors know to ask. Every new request for individual, couple, or family counseling includes an assessment for domestic violence, and we often meet with spouses separately in order to give victims the freedom to disclose abuse without fear of reprisal from the abuser.

  Victims are given the opportunity to process their experiences and to rebuild self-esteem, while abusers are given the opportunity to discuss
the early life experiences that shaped their behavior while still being held accountable.

- **Homily Talking Points**
  Priests and deacons hold an especially powerful role in ending domestic violence if they talk about it and educate their congregation from the pulpit. Batterers and victims alike respond when they know and understand the Church’s teaching on violence.

  **Catholic Charities** is able to assist clergy in the development of their homilies by sharing a number of talking points.
• The Church does not encourage victims to remain in dangerous situations and while sad, divorce is sometimes a necessary option.

• The Gospels should never be used to support abusive behavior in any form
  
  • Wives be subordinate to your husbands…(Col 3:18)
  • When someone strikes you on your right cheek…(Mat 5:39)

• In homilies, include a reference to domestic violence when appropriate. Just a mention of domestic violence lets abused women know that someone cares. Describe what abuse is so that women begin to recognize and name what is happening to them.

• Include intercessions for victims of abuse, people who abuse people, and those who work with them.

• Domestic violence is not God’s punishment for some other wrong.

To request more information on homily talking points, contact
When we see domestic violence and say nothing, we collude in its perpetuation. Here are a few ways to challenge it:

- Post anti-violence materials in vestibules, waiting rooms, and other easily visible places
- Call the police when hearing or witnessing an incident
- Do not laugh when others make jokes about violence and let them know it is not funny

Catholic Charities is able to challenge domestic violence in a therapy group setting. While still recognizing their dignity, batterers are challenged by professional counselors and their peers to end the use of violence as a means of dealing with frustration and powerlessness.
Women often remain in violent relationships when they do not have the resources to leave. Lack of money, information, an inability to speak English, or fear around immigration status can be significant barriers. Parishes can create opportunity for victims of violence by:

- Offering ESL classes
- Making domestic violence materials available around the parish
- Know the services Catholic Charities provides

Catholic Charities may have short-term funding to help relocate a victim. We can also determine whether a victim might be eligible for participation in a matched savings program that might qualify her to pursue an education or purchase a house of her own.
In 1992, The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, issued their first letter on domestic violence: When I Call For Help, A Pastoral Response to Domestic Violence. In it, they tell us that this issue is a priority to be addressed and that we must work to end the cycle of violence. Ministers are often first responders following an incident of violence, and must be prepared to respond appropriately.

[Click here](#) for a copy of the Bishops’ letter.
Domestic Violence Resources

NJ Statewide Hotline—1 (800) 572-SAFE (7233)

**Atlantic County**
Atlantic County Women's Center
Toll free: 1-800-286-4184
TTY: (609) 645-2909

**Camden County**
Camden County Women's Center
(856) 227-1234
TTY: (856) 227-9264

**Cape May County**
CARA, Inc. (Coalition Against Rape & Abuse, Inc.)
Toll free: 1-877-294-CARA [2272]
TTY: (609) 463-0818

**Cumberland County**
Center for Family Services
1(886) 295-SERV (7378)
1-800-286-4353

**Gloucester County**
Center for Family Services
(856) 881-3335

**Salem County**
Salem County Women's Services
Emergency Shelter 24-Hr. Hotline: (856) 935-6655
Toll free: 1-888-632-9511
TTY: (856) 935-7118

Catholic Charities Counseling Services—1-866-682-2166
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Catholic Charities, Diocese of Camden, Inc.

Atlantic City 609-345-3446
Bridgeton 856-200-0654
Camden 856-342-4100
Penns Grove 856-299-1296
Rio Grande 609-886-2662
Salem 856-339-4102
Vineland 856-691-1841
Westville 856-845-9200

Outpatient Counseling Services
1-866-862-2166

Website for Domestic Violence information:
https://catholiccharitiescamden.org/our-services/

To schedule a Strengthening Families Series at your parish, contact Sylvia Loumeau, Director of Clinical Services at 856-342-4162.