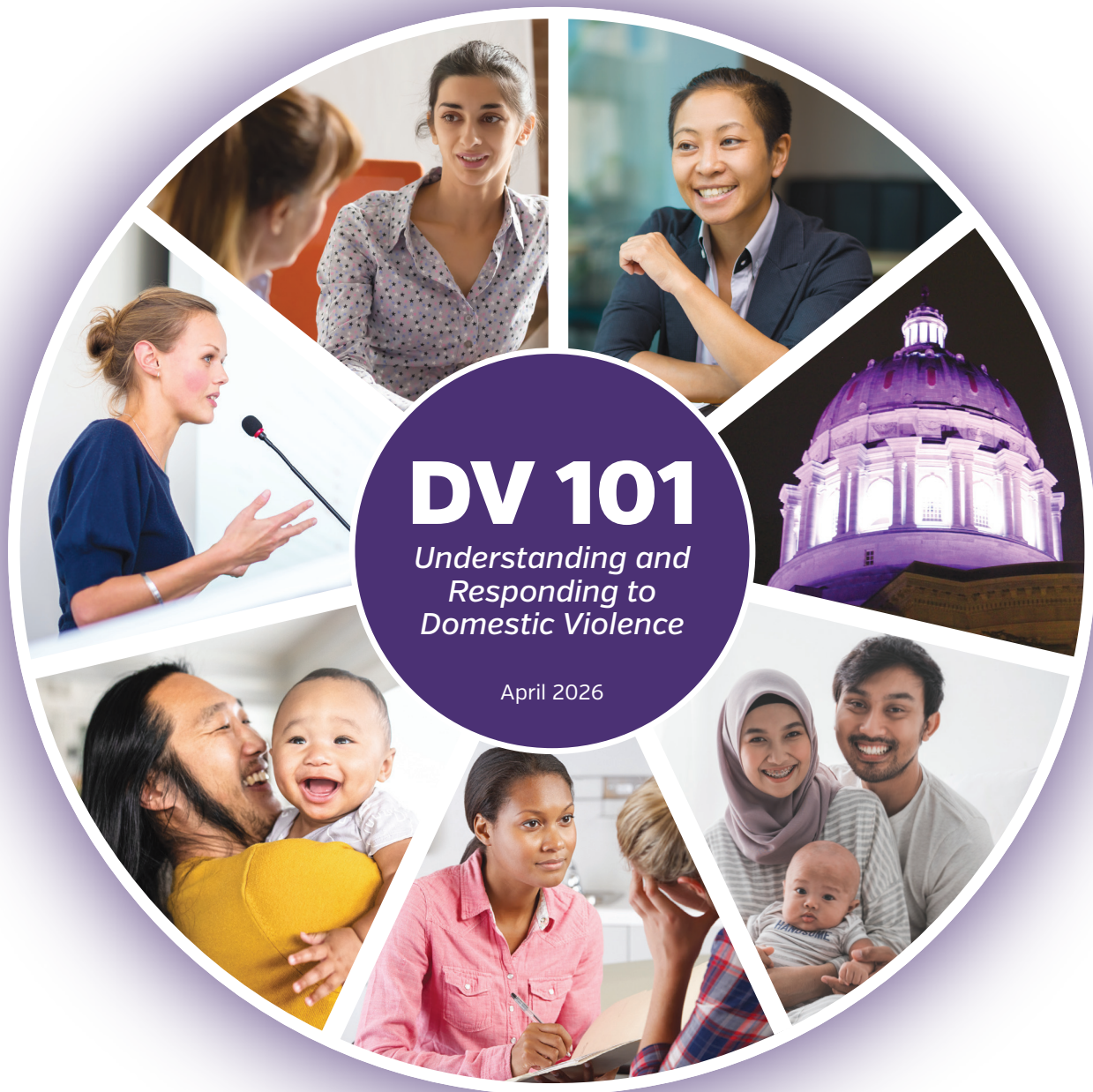




DV 101

*Understanding and
Responding to
Domestic Violence*

April 2026



mocadsv
Missouri Coalition Against
Domestic and Sexual Violence

*The Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence (MOCADSV)
unites Missourians with a shared value that rape and abuse must end,
and advances this through education, alliance, research, and public policy.*

To purchase additional copies of this publication, contact MOCADSV at 888.666.1911. This publication is available online as a downloadable PDF on MOCADSV's members-only Resource Manager webpage.

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The women, children and men pictured in this publication are models and are used for illustrative purposes only.

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Chapter 1

The Dynamics of Domestic Violence

People often think of domestic violence only in terms of the black eyes and bruises that can be seen. In reality, domestic violence is a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors that an abusive person uses to control their intimate partner. As adaptive and resilient as they are, survivors of abuse nevertheless face a daunting number of barriers to escaping the violence. In addition to the very real threat of harm or death to themselves or their children, victims must contend with the accompanying financial and emotional hardship. They also weigh cultural and religious values that emphasize keeping families intact and respond to the violence in spite of justice and social service systems that don't always provide adequate safety and support. There is ever-increasing research on the impact of trauma and greater awareness of survival strategies and responses to trauma. Some things that survivors do to cope with trauma can also present challenges in leaving an abusive relationship.

People who have never experienced abuse often find it difficult to imagine why survivors don't leave and how the abuse can continue for years. Relationships almost never start out abusive. It is important to remember that love and intimacy precede the abuse, which can make it difficult to break away. Abusive relationships are not violent all the time. There are periods when survivors are reminded why they fell in love with their partners. Abusers effectively weave together intimacy and abuse to control their partners.

Survivors of domestic violence sometimes express confusion about the recurring nature of the abuse they experience in their relationships. It seems to them to be unpredictable and impulsive. Domestic violence, however, is neither random nor haphazard. It is a complex pattern of increasingly frequent and harmful physical, sexual, psychological and other abusive behaviors used to control the victim. The abuser's tactics are devised and carried out precisely to control their partner.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS UNLIKE OTHER CRIME

While domestic violence has certain similarities to other forms of family violence — such as child abuse, child-to-parent violence, sibling violence or elder abuse — it has certain unique 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 is present in a relationship, the abuser and victim no longer share equal rights and responsibilities within the partnership. Their relationship might have been based on a strong emotional



What is domestic violence?

Domestic violence is a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors that adults or adolescents use against their current or former intimate partners. Domestic violence occurs in intimate relationships where the perpetrator and the victim are currently or previously have been dating, living together, married or divorced. They might have children in common or not.



About the use of pronouns

The greatest single common denominator among victims of domestic violence is that the overwhelming majority are women.

Women are more than twice as likely to experience domestic violence during their lifetime. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, more than 1 in 3 women and more than 1 in 6 men experienced sexual violence, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner.

For these reasons, gendered pronouns are often used when referring to victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. However, because some victims are men, transgender or gender-non-binary, this publication uses gender-neutral pronouns to be inclusive of all survivors.

Zhang Kudon, H, Zhu S, Chen B, Breiding MJ, Leemis RW, Zhang X, Schwank A, Basile KC. *The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2023/2024 Intimate Partner Violence Data Brief*. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control; 2026.

connection, trust or intimacy. Even though the relationship has become violent, these feelings do not automatically go away. A survivor might have conflicted feelings about their partner.

SAFETY SHOULD BE PARAMOUNT

Safety must be the fundamental guiding principle in any and all efforts to assist those escaping the violence and control of their intimate partners. All contact and interventions with a survivor must account for the risks they face when seeking help. The reality for survivors of domestic violence is that the risk of danger increases when they leave their abusive relationships.

A survivor of domestic violence further risks their safety and the safety of their children through the process of disclosing the abuse, separating from the abusive partner, seeking child support or reporting the abuse of their children. There will be unintended consequences if interventions are not based on safety and the survivor's assessment of the situation.

EMPOWERING SUPPORT IS ESSENTIAL

The survivor experiencing domestic violence is the expert on the violence in their life. They have the best sense of whether their abusive partner will carry through on threats if they tell their story, go to work, or pursue child support. Anyone seeking to help a victim of domestic violence must encourage and respect the choices the victim makes. This reinforces their autonomy and can empower them with the knowledge that they can survive outside of their abusive relationship.

In a non-emergency situation, some of the primary reasons a survivor tells you their story are to seek services, gather information and resources, investigate their options, and be encouraged by a nonjudgmental, helpful person. **The responsibilities of anyone who works with survivors of domestic violence can be summarized as follows:**

- Help them plan for future safety
- Listen to them and acknowledge their experiences
- Affirm the injustice of the violence against them
- Respect their autonomy
- Promote their access to community services
- Respect and safeguard their confidentiality.

THE ROLE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICE PROVIDERS

There are more than 100 domestic violence shelters and support programs throughout Missouri. However, fewer than half of the state's 114 counties and the city of St. Louis have emergency shelters. Consequently, domestic violence program staff are accustomed to using creative and inventive approaches to providing services in a variety of settings. Many survivors don't need emergency shelter, but they do need someone to talk to beyond office hours. Almost all can benefit from the common ground found in a support group.

Survivors often come to agencies needing more than just safety from the violence they are experiencing. Advocates are available to connect survivors

with resources and local referrals to assist with a wide range of issues, including substance use and mental health care. The majority of domestic violence shelters and service providers have hotlines that allow them to serve multiple counties so they can help create safety plans, offer support and provide legal advocacy and other resource information — even from a distance. Some agencies have outreach staff who can work with victims to make plans for obtaining services in their communities. When working with survivors and their children, it is important to provide information about a wide range of options and resources to ensure that all of their needs are met.

YOUR ROLE IS EQUALLY VITAL

The challenge for all of us is to do what we can. We can meet the challenge with hope, for the truth is that people commit domestic violence, and people can stop it. Your efforts have the potential to save lives, to stop the violence and to create new opportunities for families living in fear and danger. By its very nature, your work to address domestic violence is an ethical endeavor that furthers social justice.

Different types of abuse

Abuse can take many forms. Some types are more subtle than others and might never be seen or felt by anyone other than the survivor experiencing the abuse. The abuser uses a combination of tactics that work to control the victim. The abuse also usually increases in frequency and severity over time.

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical abuse is easier to recognize and understand than other types of abuse. **It can be indicated when the abusive partner:**

- Scratches, bites, grabs, or spits at a current or former intimate partner
- Shakes, shoves, pushes, restrains, or throws them
- Slaps, punches, strangles, or burns the victim
- Throws objects at them
- Subjects them to reckless driving or otherwise endangers their safety
- Locks them in or out of the house
- Refuses to help when they are sick, injured or pregnant, or withholds medication or treatment
- Withholds food as punishment
- Abuses them at mealtime, which disrupts eating patterns and can result in malnutrition
- Abuses them at night, which disrupts sleeping patterns and can result in sleep deprivation
- Threatens them with weapons or kills them

“

They tell me I wouldn't make decisions on the job without somebody's okay. I could not make decisions on my own. That's the biggest drawback that I've had — learning how to make decisions and feeling comfortable with what I can do. That I am allowed to make a decision and I don't have to check with someone to make sure that this is the way it should be. The people in the office say I was afraid to do anything without making sure that somebody said it was okay for me to do so.

— Survivor of domestic violence





The people harmed by domestic violence

- About 1 in 3 women and 1 in 6 men have experienced sexual assault, physical violence or stalking by an intimate partner that caused injury, concern for their safety or a need for services.

Zhang Kudon, H, Zhu S, Chen B, Breiding MJ, Leemis RW, Zhang X, Schwank A, Basile KC. *The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2023/2024 Intimate Partner Violence Data Brief*. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control; 2026.

- 45.2 percent of women and 41.2 percent of men who are survivors were between the ages of 18 and 24 the first time they experienced some form of intimate partner violence.

Ibid.

- 25.6 percent of women who are survivors and 14.6 percent of men who are survivors were 17 years or younger at the time of the abuse from an intimate partner.

Ibid.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

Sexual violence and abuse can be extraordinarily difficult for victims to talk about because of the ways in which this type of violence often is perpetrated.

Sexual violence or abuse can be indicated when the abusive partner:

- Is jealous or angry and assumes their partner will have sex with anyone
- Withholds sex and affection as punishment
- Calls them sexual names
- Pressures them to have sex when they do not want to
- Insists that their partner dress in a more sexual way than they want
- Coerces sex by manipulation or threats
- Physically forces sex or is sexually violent
- Coerces them into sexual acts that they are uncomfortable with, such as sex with a third party, physically painful sex, sexual activity they find offensive, or verbal degradation during sex
- Inflicts injuries that are sex-specific
- Denies the victim contraception or protection against sexually transmitted infections and diseases

PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE

It is the abuser's use of physical and sexual force or threats that gives power to their psychologically abusive acts. Psychological abuse becomes an effective weapon in controlling a victim — victims know through experience that their abuser will at times back up the threats or taunts with physical assaults.

Psychological abuse can be indicated when the abuser:

- Breaks promises, doesn't follow through on agreements, or doesn't take a fair share of responsibility
- Verbally attacks and humiliates their partner in private or public
- Attacks their vulnerabilities, such as language abilities, educational level, skills as a parent, religious and cultural beliefs, or physical appearance
- Plays mind games, such as when they deny requests they have made previously or when they undercut the victim's sense of reality, such as changing the rules or hiding things
- Forces them to do degrading things
- Ignores their feelings
- Withholds approval or affection as punishment
- Regularly threatens to leave or tells them to leave
- Harasses their partner about affairs they imagine them to be having
- Stalks them
- Always claims to be right
- Is unfaithful after committing to monogamy
- Threatens to kill themselves if the victim leaves



ECONOMIC ABUSE

Economic abuse can be indicated when the abuser:

- Controls all the money
- Doesn't let their partner work outside the home or sabotages their attempts to work or go to school
- Refuses to work and makes their partner support the family
- Ruins their credit rating or accrues debt in the survivor's name

Tactics of control

Domestic violence is not an isolated, individual event but rather a pattern of ongoing abusive behaviors. Assaults are repeated against the same victim by the same abuser. These assaults occur in different forms, including physical, sexual, psychological and economic. While physical assaults might occur infrequently, other parts of the pattern can occur daily. The use of these other tactics is effective because one abusive episode builds on past episodes and sets the stage for future episodes. All tactics of the pattern interact and have profound effects on the victims. **Examples of commonly used control tactics include:**

ISOLATING THE VICTIM

- Initially, an abuser might cut off the victim from supportive relationships with the claims of “loving you so much” and “wanting to be with you all the time.”
- The intent is to control their partner's time and isolate them from their support system of family and friends who might question the abuser's actions. For example, they might refuse to have telephone service or reliable transportation, monitor their partner's email or force the family to change residences frequently.
- The abuser might constantly criticize their partner's family and friends or harass them all so much that it is easier to cut off contact with others. They might make it impossible for their partner to have contact with others by using coercion, threats or force.
- A victim might believe what their abuser says because they are so isolated that they have no access to information that might contradict their partner.

USING THE CHILDREN

- The abuser might punish the children as a way to hurt the victim
- They might sexually abuse the children or force them to watch the abuse of the victim

“

What really got to me was the way that he abused me. You know, he would not leave me alone until we had sex. He was like that. I would be there, tears rolling out of my eyes from our fighting and him hitting me, and he would want to have sex. But I had no choice, because if I didn't have sex with him, well, what would happen to me next? Right after the fights is when he wanted it, and I couldn't stand it.

—Survivor of domestic violence



There were signs all along: He was very jealous and very possessive, but he was also very, very, charming. He brought me roses and diamond rings, all kinds of stuff. He treated me like a queen for years until we bought this house and moved in together.

— Survivor of domestic violence

- They might use the children to spy or report on their partner's activities
- They might threaten to kidnap or kill the children if their partner leaves
- They could gain legal custody, take the children, or use custody and visitation arrangements to harass or harm their partner
- They might undermine or sabotage their partner's parental authority

DAMAGING RELATIONSHIPS

- The abuser might discredit the victim's relationships with others in the community — such as employers, clergy, friends and neighbors — by spreading rumors or distorted information. For example, they might tell others that their partner is crazy or a liar or send messages from their email address to alienate them from friends and family.

ATTACKING PROPERTY AND PETS

- The abuser might hit the wall next to where the victim is standing or throw objects at them. They might pound the table next to their partner or break their partner's favorite possessions. They might say, "Look what you made me do" or "You'll be next."
- The abuser might harm pets to hurt and intimidate their partner
- The abuser might destroy belongings that are important or precious to the victim

STALKING PARTNER OR EX-PARTNER

- The abuser might follow, threaten, harass and terrify their partner or ex-partner, especially after they have left or separated
- The abuser might monitor the victim's whereabouts, daily activities, phone conversations, or email to prove that they cannot conceal anything from them

Survival strategies

People who have been abused are survivors. Asking them why they don't leave an abusive relationship ignores the complex set of factors they must weigh to decide how best to protect themselves and their children. Implying that it is the responsibility of the victim to end the violence blames them for the abuse and does not hold the abuser accountable for their offenses.

FOR SOME SURVIVORS, STAYING MAY BE SAFER

Not all survivors want to leave their relationships. They want the violence to stop. There are times when it might be safer for a survivor and their

children to stay. Quite simply, a victim of domestic violence might be told that they will be killed, or their children will be killed, if they leave or refuse to return. Past violence has taught them that their partner's threats often translate into action. Leaving also might harm their children if the abuser gets custody or visitation. If the victim is still in the relationship, they can monitor their partner's interactions with the children. Indeed, the decision to leave an abusive relationship is not as straightforward as it might seem. The table on page 8 outlines some of the crucial factors a victim must consider, especially if they have children.

PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN ABUSED LEAVE ALL THE TIME

It is important to remember that survivors do escape the violence in their lives. Friends, family, and a network of service providers within a supportive community can be instrumental for a survivor who chooses to make the difficult decision to uproot their life.

What at first might appear to an outsider to be self-defeating behaviors on the part of the victim, such as being afraid to seek the services of an agency for victims of domestic violence or wanting to return to the abuser in spite of severe violence, in fact might be normal reactions to significantly frightening situations. A victim uses different strategies to cope with and resist abuse. These strategies might appear to be the result of passivity or submission, when in reality they have learned that these are sometimes-successful, temporary means of stopping the violence.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POVERTY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence permeates all social groups defined by race, ethnicity and economic circumstances, yet it is clear that the combined experience of poverty and violence raises particularly difficult issues for survivors and their children. Survivors living in poverty experience more barriers to leaving an abusive relationship partially because they have fewer options. Access to independent economic resources, including public assistance, is vital to a survivor's decision making and safety planning.

The high rates of domestic violence in the lives of people experiencing poverty, along with higher rates of physical and mental health problems, mean that economically disadvantaged people, including those experiencing homelessness, are likely to have more, and more complex, needs than those who have more resources. It is important to note that people who experience violence and poverty can be remarkably resilient and strategic in using the resources they do have. Each survivor has their own experience and is affected by the violence in their life in different ways and to different degrees.

Economic independence and employment are central considerations in survivors' safety. For a survivor with limited resources, obtaining safe and affordable housing is often difficult and can lead to homelessness, which increases the risk of future victimization. Each victim faces unique risks and thus has unique needs for safety and self-sufficiency. In many instances, determining what a particular survivor needs is as simple as asking them.

Poverty and intimate partner violence

- People living in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods are almost three times more likely to experience intimate partner violence.

Bonomi, A. E., Trabert, B., Anderson, M. L., Kernic, M. A., & Holt, V. L. (2014). Intimate partner violence and neighborhood income: A longitudinal analysis. *Violence against women*, 20(1), 42-58.

- A survey of individuals receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) found that 35.5 percent had experienced domestic violence in the past year. According to the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, about 1 in 20 or 5.2 percent of women and 1 in 44 or 2.3 percent of men had experienced domestic violence in the year before responding to the survey.

Thomas, J., Collier-Tenison, S., Maxwell, D., & Check, C. (2017). TANF participation and intimate partner violence: Exploring barriers to self-sufficiency. *Int'l J. Soc. Sci. Stud.*, 5, 20; and Smith, S.G., Chen, J., Basile, K.C., Gilbert, L.K., Merrick, M.T., Patel, N., Walling, M., & Jain, A. (2017).

Zhang Kudon, H, Zhu S, Chen B, Breiding MJ, Leemis RW, Zhang X, Schwank A, Basile KC. *The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2023/2024 Intimate Partner Violence Data Brief*. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control; 2026.

- Women who experience intimate partner violence are four times more likely to experience homelessness.

Montgomery, A. E., Sorrentino, A. E., Cusack, M. C., Bellamy, S. L., Medvedeva, E., Roberts, C. B., & Dichter, M. E. (2018). Recent intimate partner violence and housing instability among women veterans. *American journal of preventive medicine*, 54(4), 584-590.

Dilemmas in leaving an abusive relationship

Leaving an abusive relationship is not a simple matter. Many factors must be weighed carefully, and the benefits and drawbacks to leaving are similar. There are two important things to remember. First, the only person who can truly stop the abuse is the abuser. Second, people can and do find safety for themselves and their children after leaving abusive relationships.

PHYSICAL

POSSIBLE RISKS IF A SURVIVOR STAYS

- **Physical injury** from the abusive partner. The abuser can continue to hit and injure the victim.
- **Death, or death of a child.** The abuser might kill the victim or their children.
- **Risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), HIV or other medical complications** if the abuser denies safe sex practices or sexually assaults the survivor. The victim might not have any choice regarding safe-sex practices. They might be sexually assaulted by their abusive partner.

POSSIBLE RISKS IF A SURVIVOR LEAVES

- **Physical injury** if the abusive partner stalks, assaults or escalates violence. The abuser might continue to injure and abuse them. The violence might escalate after the victim leaves.
- **Death, or death of a child** if the abusive partner attacks them after leaving. Leaving does not ensure that the abuser will not find them.
- **STI, HIV or other medical complications.** The unsafe sexual behavior might continue; they might be sexually assaulted by their abusive partner.

CHILDREN

POSSIBLE RISKS IF A SURVIVOR STAYS

- **Physical injury or psychological harm** to children who witness violence, are targets themselves or are hurt trying to protect others.
- **Loss of children** if the abusive partner makes false allegations of child neglect or abuse. Failure-to-protect arguments could be used to remove children or terminate parental rights.

POSSIBLE RISKS IF A SURVIVOR LEAVES

- **Physical injury or psychological harm** to children who witness violence, are targets themselves or are hurt trying to protect others. They might be at greater risk during unsupervised exchanges and visitation.
- **Loss of children** if the abusive partner legally gains custody, simply takes the children, or makes false allegations of child neglect or abuse.

FINANCIAL

POSSIBLE RISKS IF A SURVIVOR STAYS

- **Lower standard of living** if the abusive partner controls all the money, quits or loses employment or makes the victim quit or lose employment.
- **Loss of income/employment** through an abusive partner's sabotage.
- **Loss of housing** if the violence causes an eviction of the entire family.
- **Loss of or damage to victim's possessions** by the abusive partner.

POSSIBLE RISKS IF A SURVIVOR LEAVES

- **Lower standard of living** if a victim must rely on one income instead of two or has to change jobs or move to a new community.
- **Loss of income/job** if a victim has to become a stay-at-home parent or the abusive partner sabotages employment efforts.
- **Loss of housing** if the victim must move out, leave town, divorce an abusive partner or go into hiding.
- **Loss of or damage to possessions** if a victim has to leave things behind or the abuser deliberately destroys things of importance or value.

FAMILY AND FRIENDS

POSSIBLE RISKS IF A SURVIVOR STAYS

- **Physical injury or threats** to family or friends, particularly if they offer assistance.
- **Loss of support** if the victim is isolated from friends and family, or if they stop supporting the victim as punishment for staying in the relationship.

POSSIBLE RISKS IF A SURVIVOR LEAVES

- **Physical injury or threats** to family or friends, particularly if they offer assistance.
- **Loss of support** from friends and family who want the victim to stay in the relationship or marriage.

PSYCHOLOGICAL

POSSIBLE RISKS IF A SURVIVOR STAYS

- **Psychological harm**, including verbal, emotional and physical assaults, will continue.
- **Use of substances** such as alcohol and drugs to cope with the emotional and physical pain. Includes a potential for substance use.
- **Suicide** might be threatened or attempted by the abusive partner.

POSSIBLE RISKS IF A SURVIVOR LEAVES

- **Psychological harm** if the abusive partner continues to be in contact, especially if they have children in common.
- **Substances** might be used to cope with the past abuse and new situation.
- **Suicide** might be threatened or attempted by the abusive partner in response to leaving.

BARRIERS TO ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Not everyone who has experienced domestic violence has problems that interfere with their taking steps toward financial independence. Other survivors, however, do have lingering safety concerns or trauma that interferes with job training or employment. For a significant number, domestic violence is a major barrier to being able to support themselves. Abusers often feel threatened by a partner's efforts to become more financially independent, and they actively interfere with or sabotage job training, education, or employment activities.

Trauma and a survivor's experience

Domestic violence can cause profound trauma in the lives of survivors and their loved ones. The impact of abuse can affect survivors in many ways for years to come. The healing process can be long and difficult. Professionals, friends, family, and partners often fail to understand survivors' experiences and respond in ways that are not supportive and are sometimes harmful.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration defines trauma as “an event or series of events that a person experiences as emotionally or physically harmful that has a lasting adverse impact on their ability to function and their overall well-being.” It is an emotional response to a threatening event that can happen directly to a person or to someone they love. It can happen to an individual person, a couple, or a group of people. It can be a response to an isolated event, an ongoing situation, or a set of circumstances. Trauma is subjective; what one person experiences as traumatic, another person might not. Although the impact of trauma can be severe and long-lasting, it is not irreversible. With supportive trauma-informed care, survivors can overcome many symptoms of trauma exposure and restore their sense of safety and well-being.

Familiarity with common reactions to domestic violence is essential to providing a trauma-informed response. Advocates can help survivors process what happened to them by connecting some of the reactions they are having to the trauma they experienced. When a survivor asks for help, they need to hear that their responses are normal and that they are not alone.

Every survivor will react differently to the violence they experienced. A survivor's reactions could be based on life experiences, prior knowledge or perceptions about domestic violence, factors unique to their assault, responses from others, and a variety of other factors — each unique to the survivor's own experience. They might exhibit a wide range of behaviors and emotions that seem counterintuitive to someone unfamiliar with common reactions to domestic violence. Whatever reactions a survivor has, they are normal responses to an abnormal situation.

The full range of trauma responses connected to survivors' experiences is better understood due to emerging research that confirms how the human brain functions in response to threats and violence. These findings are helpful to survivors as they seek to understand what happened to them and are looking for ways to heal. Advocates can help by explaining basic neurobiology and brain function as it relates to trauma.

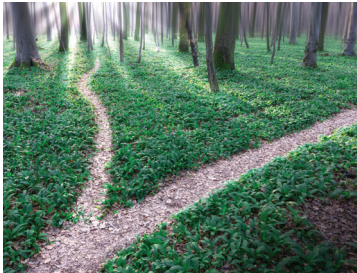
“

After a traumatic experience, the human system of self-preservation seems to go onto permanent alert, as if the danger might return at any moment.

—Judith Lewis Herman,
psychiatrist and author

Herman, J. L. (1997). *Trauma and recovery*.
New York: BasicBooks.





Neurobiology of trauma

During a traumatic event, we make split-second decisions about how best to survive. This process can happen quickly and unconsciously, without necessarily having the ability to control it.

A person experiencing trauma will record information in their brain differently than under other circumstances. This allows a person to process information related to their immediate survival better.

TRAUMA AND THE BRAIN

People experiencing intensely threatening situations function differently than they would under normal circumstances. The human brain responds to threats in ways that protect us and keep us safe from harm. During a traumatic event, we make split-second decisions about how best to survive. This process can happen quickly and unconsciously, without having the ability to control it.

During the event, a person's brain will attempt to protect their body from physical and emotional attacks. A stress hormone known as cortisol is released into the body, causing temporary damage to the cells in the prefrontal cortex, which is the part of the brain that controls rational thinking. These hormones can override a person's ability to think in "IF this, THEN that" patterns. The fear circuitry in a person's brain relies on primary instincts and reactions instead of allowing time to sort through information to make decisions. This can cause some survivors to say they "couldn't think straight" or don't know why they acted the way they did during an assault. Some survivors also report feeling numb, unaffected or detached from what was happening to them. Others say they felt sleepy during the attack. This range of trauma responses can also include feeling paralyzed, removed from the body, screaming, crying, or biting. No matter how a survivor reacts, these responses are natural and normal given the trauma they have experienced.

The brain interprets and stores information differently when experiencing trauma. When a person feels threatened or fearful, the amygdala — the part of the brain responsible for feeling fear — will set off a series of internal alarms. The amygdala is the part of the brain that makes us act at our most basic levels and makes the body act reflexively to protect itself. When the amygdala signals other parts of the brain that danger is present, stress hormones flood the body. The release of the stress hormones can cause reactions that can seem counterintuitive to survivors and to those whom they turn to for help. This can affect a survivor's memory of what happened or the details leading up to a traumatic event. They might have a flat affect or appear unemotional. Stress hormones act in a protective manner by numbing pain and blocking harmful thoughts, feelings and memories. Some survivors respond to trauma by acting excited or hyper. This reaction is caused by the release of a hormone that the brain releases to increase happy feelings and prevent intense feelings of fear or despair. This wide range of trauma responses can cause many people to doubt or distrust survivors, even though they are acting in ways that are directly related to the trauma they experienced.

FIGHT, FLIGHT, FREEZE AND FAWN

Until recently, the common understanding of people's response to trauma was "fight" or "flight." However, researchers confirmed other responses are "freeze" and "fawn." The freeze response is caused by the threat-induced release of stress hormones that act as a damper on the body's energy. Victims who experience a freeze reaction might dissociate from their bodies, go numb, feel sleepy or find it hard to move. Some survivors describe feeling like a rag doll during the assault. They either can't move, or their brains don't

let them try. Some survivors feel confused about the way they froze or shut down during an assault. Some of the common expressions of self-blame we hear are, “But I didn’t fight back,” or “I didn’t try to stop it.” Advocates can help survivors diminish their feelings of self-blame or guilt by explaining that a freeze response to trauma is a survival-based, physical reaction that is as natural as the fight or flight responses. A person’s brain signals that if they were to try to run or fight back, it could incite more violence.

A victim whose body freezes up — or who becomes sleepy, feels foggy or dissociates from their body — is exhibiting the same survival instincts as a victim who tries to push the perpetrator away. Many victims experience this type of trauma-induced paralysis, referred to as tonic immobility. A related experience is referred to as collapsed immobility, when a victim’s heart rate and blood pressure drop and they become lethargic, passive and sleepy.

The fawn response is when a victim complies with the demands made upon them — not because they want to, but because it is their best chance of surviving.

TRAUMA AND MEMORY

A person experiencing trauma will record information in their brain differently than under other circumstances. This allows a person to process information related to their immediate survival better. For this reason, they might not recall information about everything going on at the time of the trauma. Many survivors’ memories of domestic violence are based on the senses — such as a physical sensation, sight or smell. These memories are what researchers refer to as central memories. Survivors will recall central memories but might not remember other details, referred to as peripheral memories. The human brain does not necessarily store memories from a traumatic event in a linear order, and survivors might have fragmented, sensory-based memories of what happened to them.

Individuals who abuse

Domestic violence is not impulsive but purposeful and manipulative. Perpetrators can be perfectly agreeable with or conciliatory to police officers, employers, neighbors, co-workers and friends. But perpetrators don’t use those skills with their intimate partners because they choose not to. Individual abusers harm individual victims to make them do what they want — to keep them living in a state of constant fear and under their control.

The violent abuser is not “out of control.” They are at work on their own agenda, which is to condition their partner to be what they want them to be all the time. This is impossible because abusers constantly change their demands. The abuser chooses tactics that work to achieve compliance or control. Their behavior is directed at controlling most aspects of their partner’s life.



Domestic violence is not impulsive but purposeful and manipulative

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How abusers choose to carry out their violence

- Nearly half of all women murdered in the United States are killed by a current or former intimate partner, and more than half of these intimate partner homicides are by firearm.

Websdale, N., Ferraro, K., & Barger, S. D. (2019). The domestic violence fatality review clearinghouse: introduction to a new National Data System with a focus on firearms. *Injury epidemiology*, 6(1), 1-8.

Zeoli, A. M. (2018). Multiple victim homicides, mass murders, and homicide-suicides as domestic violence events. *Battered Women's Justice Project*.

- 79.66% of survivors of intimate partner violence interviewed in a hospital setting experienced attempted (11.70%), completed (30.16%), or multiple (37.80%) strangulation. Strangulation is a primary warning sign of homicide and a reliable indication that a survivor is in critical danger.

Messing, J. T., Patch, M., Wilson, J. S., Kelen, G. D., & Campbell, J. (2018). Differentiating among attempted, completed, and multiple nonfatal strangulation in women experiencing intimate partner violence. *Women's health issues*, 28(1), 104-111.

- According to another study, weapon use and/or strangulation is common, occurring in 44% of all incidents police responded to.
- IPV incidents were significantly more likely to occur on Saturdays and Sundays and during the months of May through August.

Campbell, A. M., Hicks, R. A., Thompson, S. L., & Wiehe, S. E. (2020). Characteristics of intimate partner violence incidents and the environments in which they occur: Victim reports to responding law enforcement officers. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 35(13-14), 2583-2606.

- Another study found that 47% of incidents of intimate partner violence occurred in the daytime.
- 19% of offenders were using alcohol at the time of the violent incident and 2% were using drugs.
- 14% of these incidents happened in a public location, 3% in a semi-public location, and 81% occurred in a private location.

Overstreet, S., McNeely, S., & Lapsey Jr, D. S. (2021). Can victim, offender, and situational characteristics differentiate between lethal and non-lethal incidents of intimate partner violence occurring among adults? *Homicide studies*, 25(3), 220-238.

Perpetrators use violence because violence works. Domestic violence is a socially supported behavior, learned through observation, experience and reinforcement. It is learned through our culture, families, schools, and peer groups. Domestic violence is not caused by illness, genetics, substance use, stress, the behavior of the victim, or problems in the relationship.

Communities and societal accountability should be one of the primary means to stop domestic violence. In the vast majority of communities, this does not exist. Until it does, communities have an obligation to reduce the prevalence of domestic violence and hold perpetrators responsible. Prosecution of offenders has the potential to protect the victim from additional acts of violence, reduce children's exposure and possible injury, deter the abuser from committing further acts of violence, and reinforce a community's refusal to tolerate domestic abuse. Unless perpetrators of domestic violence are truly held accountable, they have little incentive outside of the legal system to stop their abusive behaviors.

ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS OF INDIVIDUALS WHO ABUSE

Abusers do not necessarily look different from anyone else, and there is no way to spot an abuser in a crowd. Domestic violence is not a matter of class, race or socioeconomic status. It is primarily a gender issue. Even though most abusers are men, most men are not abusers.

Perpetrators of domestic violence often share the following characteristics:

INTIMIDATION AND VIOLENCE

- Resolves conflict with intimidation, bullying and violence
- Holds partner down, restrains them from leaving a room, pushes or shoves them
- Uses threats and intimidation as instruments of control or abuse. This includes threats to harm physically, to defame, to embarrass, to restrict freedom, to disclose secrets, to cut off support, to abandon, to kidnap children, and to commit suicide.

VERBALLY ABUSIVE

- Says things that are meant to be cruel and hurtful
- Degrades their partner, curses and insults them and/or minimizes their accomplishments
- Might wake the partner up to yell at them or not let them go to sleep by yelling at them

MINIMIZES ABUSE

- Redefines a violent incident, for example, by saying, "It wasn't that bad," or, "I didn't hit them that hard; they bruise easily"
- Accuses their partner of exaggerating the abuse or of being crazy

SUBSTANCE USE

- Cites alcohol or drug use as an excuse or explanation for hostile or violent conduct (e.g., "That was the booze talking, not me; I was so high, I was crazy")
- Forces their partner to use drugs or alcohol

BREAKS OR STRIKES THINGS IN ANGER

- Beats on tables with a fist, throws objects around or near their partner
- Uses symbolic violence (e.g., tearing a wedding photo, marring a face in a photo)

HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

- Has been abusive in prior relationships
- Has previous police encounters for behavioral offenses (e.g., threats, stalking, assault, battery)

PROJECTS BLAME

- Refuses to take responsibility for their actions
- Blames their partner for their problems to justify the violence
- Often blames other ethnic groups, coworkers or women in general for their problems

CRUELTY TO ANIMALS OR CHILDREN

- Treats children cruelly or is insensitive to their suffering
- Treats animals cruelly or is insensitive to their suffering
- Expects children to be capable of doing things far beyond their ability or teases children until they cry
- Forces children to watch the abuse of the victim or engages them in the abuse of the victim.

EXTREME JEALOUSY

- Becomes jealous of anyone or anything that takes their partner's time away from their relationship
- "If I can't have you, nobody will"
- Requires partner to account for all of their time
- Accuses partner of flirting or of having affairs
- Calls frequently at work or refuses to let their partner go to work

CONTROLLING BEHAVIOR

- Makes all the decisions about the house, joint finances, their partner's clothing, or where they go and whom they may or may not visit
- Is extremely impatient and might exhibit poor impulse control. Believes their needs and wants should be fulfilled immediately
- Uses money to control their activities, purchases and behavior

ISOLATION

- Cuts partner off from resources
- Accuses people who support them of causing trouble
- Might not let them use the car, work or go to school

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

- The abuser sends mixed messages and denies saying things they said
- Has sudden and extreme changes in mood
- Is alternately loving and abusive
- Can behave explosively

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We found our client work, but when her abuser got out of jail, he applied to the court for visitation rights for his daughter. It turned out that this visitation was just one way for him to get in closer with her. Even when he had the child, he would come over and throw rocks at the window if she didn't come out, wanting to make sure what she was doing while he had the child. It wasn't just about visiting with his daughter. He wanted to keep tabs on her. Unfortunately, she took him back. The violence is now interfering with her work. We have actually gotten calls from the employer. She is emotional, it is hard to get her to focus on her work, she calls in sick. She tells me that she cannot come to work with her black eyes and bruises.

— Job Placement Counselor





Animal abuse and domestic violence

The association between animal abuse and domestic violence is significant. Many survivors report that their pets have been harmed by their abusive partners. A study of men arrested for domestic violence offenses found that 41 percent also had perpetrated an act of violence against an animal as an adult. Only 3 percent of the general population were found to have perpetrated violence against an animal as an adult.

When a survivor decides to leave an abusive relationship, they must find a place for their pets to go. Pets can represent a major barrier to leaving an abusive relationship, and many survivors will choose to stay with their abusive partner rather than leave their pets behind. Some domestic violence shelters are removing this barrier by providing a safe space for pets or allowing pets to accompany survivors during their shelter stay.

Febres, J., Brasfield, H., Shorey, R. C., Elmquist, J., Ninnemann, A., Schonbrun, Y. C., ... & Stuart, G. L. (2014). Adulthood animal abuse among men arrested for domestic violence. *Violence against women*, 20(9), 1059-1077.

RAPE OR USE OF FORCE IN SEX

- Has no concern about whether their partner wants to have sex
- Uses sulking, anger, harassment or coercion to manipulate them into compliance with sexual demands
- Forces them to have sex while they are sleeping or demands sex when they are ill, injured after a beating, or soon after childbirth

SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS ABUSE

- Misuses religious passages or beliefs to reinforce abuse (e.g., emphasizing their partner's forgiveness and not their own repentance and responsibility)
- Manipulates their partner's religious beliefs or spiritual values (e.g., refusing to allow them to attend church or spiritual gatherings or claiming that they are condemned and unwanted by their God or their congregation)

USE OF PRIVILEGE

- Treats their partner like a servant; makes all of the "big" decisions
- Threatens to "out" the victim if it is a same-sex relationship
- Mistranslates information if the victim has limited English proficiency
- Withholds medical attention or necessary intervention if their partner has a mental illness or physical or communicative disability
- Uses social status or job/status in the community to question their credibility
- Uses racial or ethnic slurs within an interracial couple
- Makes threats based on their partner's immigration status

FACTORS FOR CHANGING ABUSIVE BEHAVIORS

Criminal justice and mental health systems are increasingly becoming more involved in domestic violence interventions. Frequently, the focus of interventions is to hold abusers accountable, educate them about the effects their actions have on the victim, and underscore that they must learn and decide to act differently. These "batterer intervention programs" are only one part of a coordinated community response that delivers consistent support to survivors and consequences to abusers.

Because abusers usually do not voluntarily attend batterer intervention programs, intervention strategies must emphasize zero tolerance for new incidents of abuse. The message must be constantly reinforced that their abuse will be exposed and that they will not get away with it. Well-established and respected batterer intervention programs recognize and clearly stress that the goals of any program should parallel those of probation: Victim safety must be the first priority, followed by offender accountability and behavior change. Effective batterer intervention programs consult with advocates who work directly with victims of domestic violence to help keep victims safe and to evaluate program practices.



While important, the content of batterer intervention programs seems secondary to the degree to which these programs are integrated into coordinated community responses to domestic violence. A successful batterer intervention program is part of a process that begins with an arrest or the issuance of a protection order. It also includes prosecution, sentencing and oversight of the abuser's subsequent behaviors by the justice system. The effectiveness of batterer intervention programs as a whole is inconclusive, and the limitations of all batterer interventions should be explained to victims to reduce the chance they will have a false sense of security that their partners will be "helped" simply by attending an intervention program.

It is important to note that anger management and impulse-control classes, and sometimes marital counseling and mediation, are frequently used as misguided intervention strategies with abusers. These approaches don't generally take into account the power imbalances in abusive relationships and the pattern of coercive and controlling behavior, and they don't adequately emphasize to the abusers that they will be held accountable for their actions.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The early violence against women movement focused on social change through education about the dynamics of domestic and sexual violence, legislative changes, finding and building resources to assist women, making alliances with law enforcement and increasing perpetrator accountability. Prevention in this movement continues to focus on these areas while also embracing new and innovative approaches toward increasing community health and wellness.

There are multiple reasons why people commit domestic violence. Some factors are related to the experiences of the individual abuser, but many are related to the conditions within our society and communities that in some ways support, excuse, and encourage domestic violence. Through observing popular culture, families, schools, and peer groups, people internalize views on femininity, masculinity, and violence. These attitudes and beliefs lead to a culture in which some people perpetrate domestic violence and in which other people often fail to hold them accountable.

There are risk and protective factors for the perpetration of domestic violence. We use risk and protective factors to better understand the problem and to inform planning for prevention. A risk factor is a condition or experience that increases the likelihood of perpetration. These factors identify who is at risk for perpetration of domestic violence. A protective factor decreases the likelihood of perpetration. These factors identify what protects against perpetration.

Identifying risk and protective factors for domestic violence is necessary because they highlight modifiable conditions or experiences that can lead to causes of violence. Limited evidence exists on the risk and protective factors for domestic violence. However, evidence suggests that because domestic violence is a complex problem, there is no one risk or protective factor that can predict it with certainty. For example, if someone is abused as a child, it cannot be predicted with certainty that they will grow up to abuse or be



Abusers must accept responsibility

Abusive men can learn respect and equality — if we insist that they do so. But they won't make those changes unless they are subjected to tremendous pressure, because their cultural values as well as their privileges are pushing them so hard to stay the same.

There has never been a better time than the present to apply the pressure, to demand that abusers accept responsibility for the destruction they cause. We live in a period of mounting international pressure for the respect of human rights for everyone, of insistence on the recognition of the worth and dignity of each person, male or female, young or old, wealthy or poor, and of whatever color.

Bancroft, L. (2003). *Why does he do that? Inside the minds of angry and controlling men*. Penguin.



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My 3-month-old woke up in the middle of the night with an ear infection and temperature. My husband screamed, "Shut the baby up, I'm trying to sleep." I was trying to comfort her, but nothing worked. He got up, took her from my arms and whacked her. She had a black-and-blue rear end. Now what should I do? I thought. If I take her to the doctor, they'll take her away from me because I am the mother, and I allowed this. My husband told me, too, "No matter what you say, I'm going to tell them that you did it."

— Survivor of domestic violence

abused. Many factors are associated with domestic violence perpetration and victimization, but none is causal. Additionally, all risk and protective factors are not equal; a one-to-one relationship does not exist. Addressing or prioritizing a single risk factor to prevent domestic violence is not sufficient, as multiple risk factors need to be taken into consideration.

RISK FACTORS FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PERPETRATION INCLUDE:

SOCIETY

- Traditional gender norms
- Societal norms supportive of violence
- Institutional structures that promote unequal power and social hierarchies
- Cultural institutions and traditions that uphold inequality
- Historical and societal values that glorify violence
- Negative portrayal of women, people of color, and other marginalized groups in the media

COMMUNITY

- Weak community sanctions against violence
- Poverty
- Unemployment
- Low social capital (lack of shared awareness and trust)

RELATIONSHIP

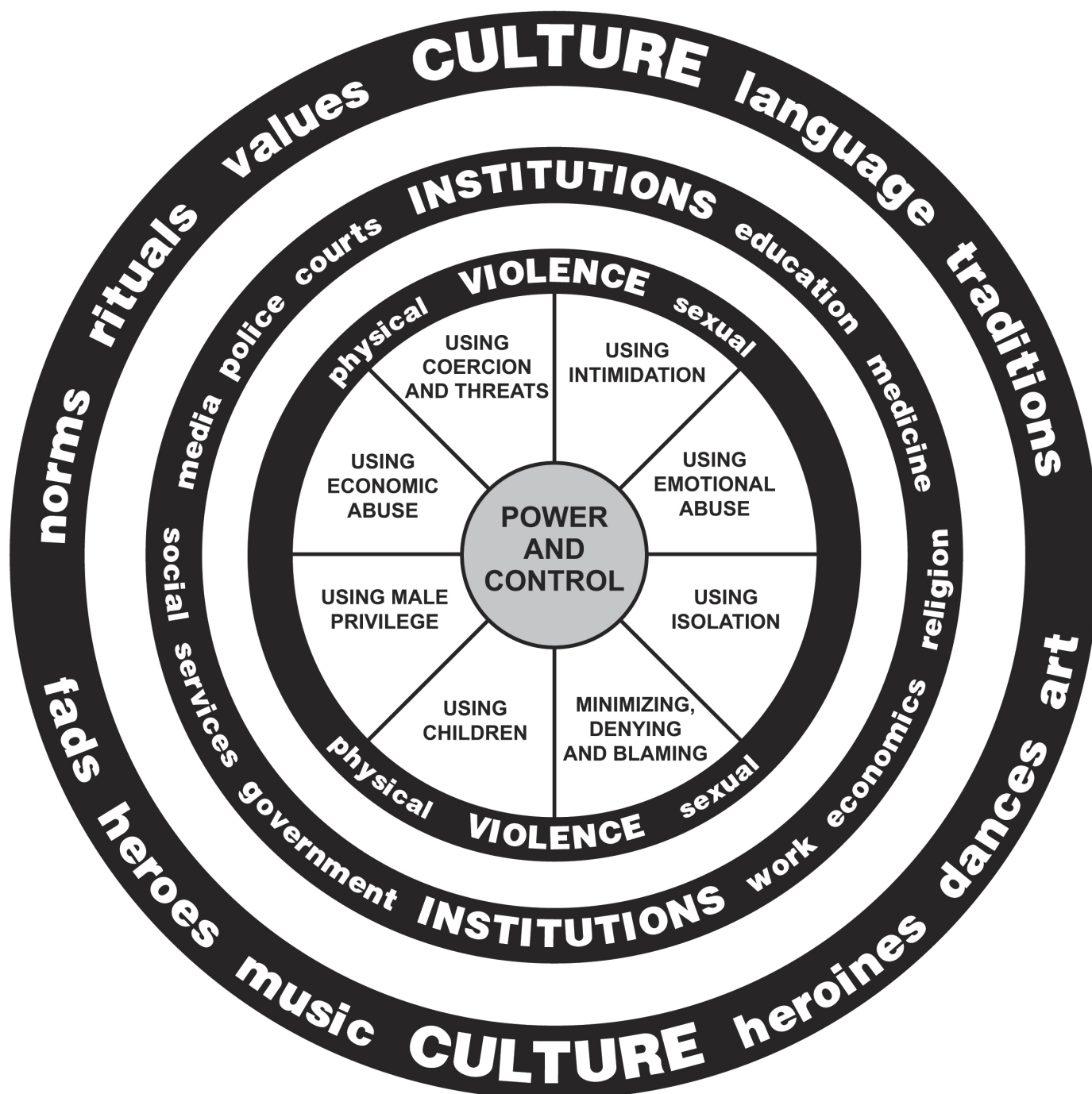
- Fear of losing power and control
- Patterns of interpersonal communication
- Economic stress
- Unequal power dynamics in the family
- Poor family functioning
- Unresolved family of origin conflicts

INDIVIDUAL

- Observing or experiencing violence in family of origin
- Issues with power and control
- Low self-esteem
- Lack of empathy
- Stress
- Intimacy problems
- Gender role conflict
- Heterosexism, homophobia, and transphobia
- Depression
- Heavy drinking or substance use
- Young age

Power and Control Wheel

Domestic violence is a socially supported behavior, learned through observation, experience, and reinforcement. It is learned through our culture, institutions, families, schools, and peer groups.

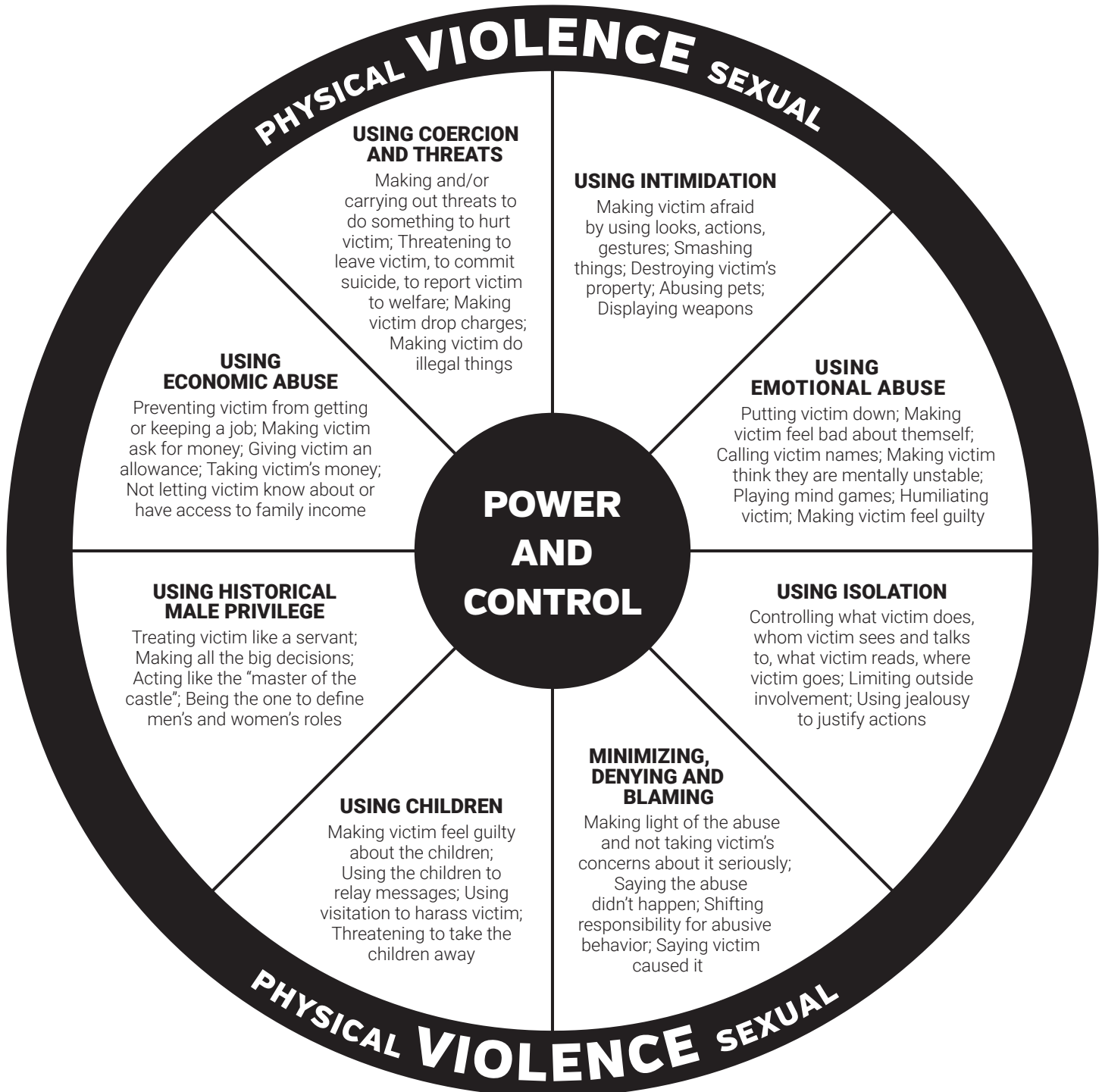


This is an adaptation of materials developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs in Duluth, MN.



How abusers use power and control

Domestic violence is not impulsive, but purposeful behavior. The abuser chooses a range of abusive tactics that are reinforced by violence or the constant threat of violence.



This is an adaptation of materials developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs in Duluth, MN.

The impact of domestic violence on children and parents

Like their abused parent, children from homes where domestic violence has occurred often live in an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty. Quite simply, domestic violence can deprive children of the joys of childhood. It can disrupt their sense of safety and security and can threaten their well-being, development and social adjustment. In spite of these negative effects, it is important to note that each child's response to domestic violence is unique and is affected by the frequency and severity of the abuse, their relationships with adult caregivers, and a host of other complex factors.

The safety and security of survivors and their children are closely linked. A parent victimized by domestic violence who has children often makes decisions about their relationship with an abusive intimate partner based on their beliefs of what will be in the children's best interests. These decisions are not simple. An abused parent must determine how to protect themselves and their children from physical danger. They also must contemplate how much they want to uproot their children's lives by fleeing to a shelter, changing schools, losing financial security, or having them see their abusive partner arrested.

Some policymakers, child protection workers, and judges mistakenly assume that if a child is exposed to domestic violence, then the child is in immediate danger and must be removed from the home. In a majority of families where domestic violence occurs, the mother is the primary caregiver and the father is the perpetrator. Mothers victimized by domestic violence are sometimes also criminally prosecuted for "failure to protect" their children, even if those mothers believe that leaving the relationship will put themselves and their children at greater risk of harm. Men are rarely prosecuted similarly, as there is a lower societal expectation of a father's duty to care for his children. These types of punitive responses to victims do not hold the abuser accountable and can cause even greater unintended harm to the children and their abused parent. Such actions ignore the reality that survivors are at greater risk for assaults after they leave their abusive partner.

There also is evidence that in a significant number of homes where either child abuse or domestic violence is occurring, the other form of violence also exists.

TRAUMA FROM WITNESSING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Millions of children are exposed to domestic violence each year in the United States. They can be harmed by:

- Intentional injuries inflicted by the abuser
- Unintentional injuries from violence directed at the abused parent
- An atmosphere in which they directly witness violence or the aftermath of an attack
- Emotional abuse when they are used as pawns to coercively control the abused parent



Family relationships

Children's safety and well-being are dependent upon their parent's safety. Holding the abuser, not the protective parent, accountable for the violence and protecting the abused parent from further harm are critical in providing a safe environment for all members of the family. A child's protective parent might be the child's one constant.





Children and domestic violence

- According to the National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence, 8 percent of children saw a family member assault another family member in the past year, and 20 percent have witnessed violence between family members at some point in their lifetimes.

Finkelhor, D., Turner, H. A., Shattuck, A., & Hamby, S. L. (2015). Prevalence of childhood exposure to violence, crime, and abuse: Results from the national survey of children's exposure to violence. *JAMA Pediatrics*, 169(8), 746-754.

- In one study, children (under age 18 years) were present in the home during 59% of the IPV incidents police responded to.

Campbell, A. M., Hicks, R. A., Thompson, S. L., & Wiehe, S. E. (2020). Characteristics of intimate partner violence incidents and the environments in which they occur: Victim reports to responding law enforcement officers. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 35(13-14), 2583-2606.

- A study of homicides of children ages 2 to 14 years found that intimate partner violence was related to 20.2% of the deaths.

Adhia, A., Austin, S. B., Fitzmaurice, G. M., & Hernenway, D. (2019). The role of intimate partner violence in homicides of children aged 2-14 years. *American journal of preventive medicine*, 56(1), 38-46.

An abuser's use of violence against a child's parent can affect that child in varied and complex ways that can be exhibited in emotional, behavioral, social, and physical development. Some children might exhibit aggression, depression, anxiety, lower levels of self-esteem, and below-average academic performance, while others might show no response.

Some children might also lose respect for the abused parent — and women or men in general — if the abuser constantly tells the parent they are worthless and unable to care for their children. These children also must contend with conflicting emotions about an abusive parent they both fear and love.

The effects of domestic violence on children also illustrate how their reactions can mimic so-called diagnosable disorders, including attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder. These reactions can be exaggerated in crisis situations, such as when a child is temporarily residing in a domestic violence shelter, and should be considered normal responses to abnormal situations.

MODERATING FACTORS IN A CHILD'S RESPONSE

The impact of witnessing violence can be magnified or reduced by a number of factors, with some children showing great resilience in the face of adversity:

- Age and gender of a child. Younger children in particular have fewer resources to draw upon to make sense of their experience. Gender is an important factor because of the way children are socialized. Girls tend to internalize their responses more than boys. Girls are likely to exhibit more depressive and anxious behaviors, while boys might exhibit more aggressive behaviors.
- Other violent experiences. Whether a child also has been battered or abused will have a significant influence. Consideration also must be given to the level of violence in the child's larger environment.
- Severity and frequency of violence. Varying degrees of violence and how recently it occurred will have different effects.
- Social supports available and the extent to which the child can accept support. A child's relationships with adult caregivers, both within the family and community, strongly influence the child's adjustment.

WHAT CHILDREN NEED

Children who have experienced domestic violence are not hidden, but the reality of their lives is all too often overlooked or misunderstood. They attend school, childcare, or church. Many already have contact with healthcare providers and mental-health professionals, government social workers, police, and the justice system. At the very least, every child needs and deserves these basic services:

- Education and support. Children need to learn what domestic violence is and hear that it is not their fault.
- Communication with others about what happened to them. Children need to talk about their experiences and learn that their situation is not unique. Talking with a group of peers can be helpful.



- Safety planning. Children need to develop a safety plan so they can feel and be safe. A safety plan can give them control of situations in which they often have little power, and it will increase their chances of escaping harm.

Anyone who has contact with children should be aware of the possibility that domestic violence can occur in any home. Clearly, greater screening is required, both routinely and when children demonstrate behavioral or emotional problems.

NOT ALL ADVOCATES ARE MANDATED REPORTERS

By Missouri law, not all advocates are considered mandated child abuse reporters. “Mandated reporter” is a legal term. Legally mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect, as identified in [Section 210.115 RSMo.](#), are:

Any physician, medical examiner, coroner, dentist, chiropractor, optometrist, podiatrist, resident, intern, nurse, hospital or clinic personnel that are engaged in the examination, care, treatment or research of persons, and any other health practitioner, psychologist, mental health professional, social worker, day care center worker, juvenile officer, probation or parole officer, jail or detention center personnel, teacher, principal or other school official, minister as provided by [Section 352.400 RSMo.](#), peace officer or law enforcement official, or other person with responsibility for the care of children.

Domestic violence agencies have policies that address the specific procedures by which staff who are legally mandated to report child abuse and neglect must comply with the mandated reporting provision of Missouri law [Section 210.112 RSMo.](#) These policies take into account the provisions for such reporting in compliance with the strict confidentiality requirements for the shelter service information and records in Missouri law, [Section 455.220 RSMo.](#) This Missouri law, as upheld by the Supreme Court of Missouri in *State ex rel. Hope House* (2004), forbids domestic violence shelter staff and volunteers from disclosing records or testifying about those to whom they provide services unless that information is subpoenaed for a court case and the survivor whose records are sought consents to the release in writing.

For anyone who works with survivors of domestic violence and their children, it is important to know the Missouri Department of Social Services Children’s Division’s definition of child abuse and the procedures the Children’s Division will follow after a report of abuse. If a report is necessary, it is vital to keep the survivor informed throughout the entire process. In most instances, a more positive outcome for the family can be achieved by providing support and services to a survivor before, during, and after they make a child abuse report themselves.



Advocates emphasize confidentiality

Confidentiality is paramount to victims of domestic violence. Program advocates are bound by strict state laws and federal guidelines regarding the release of survivors’ information. These restrictions sometimes might appear to be a barrier to collaboration.

Domestic violence advocates will not acknowledge a person’s presence or participation in their program without a written release of information from the survivor. Keep in mind that domestic violence advocates are bound by state law ([Section 455.220 RSMo.](#)) and their programs’ confidentiality requirements. A domestic violence advocate’s insistence on written releases is a function of safety and self-direction for survivors and their children.

In addition, state law gives domestic violence shelter staff members and volunteers certain legal protections from being forced to testify about a program participant unless the individual waives confidentiality protections ([Section 455.220 RSMo.](#)). This law was upheld in *State ex rel. Hope House* (2004).





Active listening

By listening to a survivor talk about what has happened to them, you will have a greater understanding of their situation and can discuss options that are grounded in their experience, hopes and fears.

Chapter 2

Empowerment Through Trauma-Informed Advocacy

Empowerment affords victims of domestic violence the opportunity to see themselves as strong survivors who know more about community resources, options, and ways to plan for their safety in the future. An abuser takes power and control from their partner through the use of physical force, threats, and coercion. Therefore, empowerment restores a survivor's power and control over their own life and affords them the opportunity to see themselves as a strong survivor who can participate actively in securing safety for themselves and their children.

A person victimized by domestic violence deserves to tell their story to a nonjudgmental, empathetic person. It is critically important to let them know that they are believed and that the violence is not their fault. This might be their first — and perhaps last — opportunity to be fully heard. By listening to a survivor talk about what has happened to them, you will have a greater understanding of their situation and can discuss options that are grounded in their experience, hopes, and fears.

When working with a person who has been abused, inform them of available resources and let them empower themselves through education — instead of taking control and making decisions for them, it is more likely that they will be equipped to advocate for themselves both immediately and throughout their life. Advocates should provide additional assistance securing resources when asked by the survivor with whom they are working.

Victims of domestic violence are, first and foremost, capable individuals. All too often survivors who are abused by their intimate partners are saddled with labels and diagnoses by well-intentioned, yet misguided, people who simply want to help. Unfortunately, the labels that are applied to survivors in particular moments in their lives do not reflect the total context and complexity of their experiences. People who work with survivors should keep in mind that these individuals can and do harness the enormous power of their own experiences to move beyond the violence.

Domestic violence agency services

Domestic violence agencies provide survivors with many services. These include:

- **Hotline.** Crisis intervention, information and referrals provided 24 hours a day, seven days a week on a telephone line, text line or online option answered by qualified, trained staff or volunteers.
- **Crisis intervention.** Interactions and activities performed by telephone, text, online, or in person by qualified, trained staff or volunteers with an individual in crisis to stabilize emotions, clarify issues and provide support and assistance to help explore options for resolution of the individual's self-defined crisis and needs.
- **Shelter.** Emergency housing and related support services provided in a safe, protective environment for adult individuals and their children who have been victimized by domestic violence.
- **Transitional housing.** Non-emergency housing for a length of stay of more than six months that is free or low-cost subsidized and directly available through the program.
- **Support groups.** Interactive group sessions that might be non-directed, topic-oriented or informational and educational, and facilitated by a qualified, trained staff member or volunteer.
- **Services for children.** Structured programs that include information, activities, support, and assistance provided to children.
- **Professional therapy.** Individual or group therapy delivered by an individual who is in compliance with state licensure rules and regulations pertaining to a psychologist, counselor or social worker and who has specific training in addressing domestic violence.
- **Case management.** Tangible, goal-directed interactions, advocacy, and assistance provided to aid a survivor in obtaining needed services and developing short- and long-term resource and safety plans.
- **Court advocacy.** Provision of information, support, assistance, accompaniment, and intervention with any aspect of the civil or criminal legal system on behalf of a service recipient.

Shelters and other domestic violence agencies will not always be able to accommodate a survivor and their children. Shelters are sometimes filled to capacity. Some shelters only serve survivors of domestic violence, not sexual violence. Even if an agency cannot offer services to a survivor, they will provide referrals to other supportive resources in the community.



Providing referrals

Even if a program cannot offer services to a survivor, they will provide referrals to other supportive resources in the community.

Visit www.mocadsv.org and click on the map of Missouri to find service providers in your area.



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Activists and advocates need to be continually reflective about how institutions, such as the criminal justice system, reproduce relations of domination in society, whether gendered, racialized, or classes. And the workings of power are often far more visible to women on the margins of society, or those situated in the intersections of different relations of inequality, than to those nearer the center.

— Ellen Pence, cofounder of the Domestic Violence Intervention Project

SOCIAL CHANGE ADVOCACY

While some domestic violence agencies provide direct services, many are also actively working to end rape and abuse in other ways. Direct service advocacy at the individual level is closely connected to opportunities for change at institutional and cultural levels. Survivors and advocates alike have a powerful role to play in bringing about social change.

A comprehensive approach to social change advocacy includes:

- **Individual.** Advocates work with individual survivors to provide support and information that is useful to the process of healing.
- **Institutional.** Advocates seek to improve the way that institutions respond to domestic violence. This can include law enforcement, the justice system, and other social services. Institutional advocacy can include changing systems and/or establishing new partnerships to coordinate institutional responses to domestic violence.
- **Cultural.** Advocates work to change the root causes of violence in culture and society. This means changing traditions, social norms, and beliefs that create and perpetuate violence.

CORE ACTIVITIES OF ADVOCACY

The Advocacy Learning Center of Praxis International outlines six core activities to social change advocacy:

1. **Connect** with survivors and supportive networks to strengthen community and create solidarity
2. **Understand** the nature of domestic violence and how it affects survivors, individually and collectively
3. **Analyze** what it is that will alleviate the problems caused (for individuals and for survivors as a group) and prevent them from occurring in the future
4. **Strategize** a course of action (steps, details and preparation) to create change
5. **Implement** the strategy: Take the collective actions and steps necessary to create the change
6. **Reflect and adapt** in relation to shifting conditions, success or failure of strategies used, and intended or unintended consequences



The LIFE process of assisting survivors of domestic violence

Listening, informing, and educating can lead to empowerment for a victim when the LIFE process of assistance is used. Through this process, survivors gain knowledge, and knowledge is power.

LISTEN

- Provide a safe place for a survivor to talk and tell their story
- Afford sufficient time for them to become comfortable and able to discuss the details of their abuse
- Begin with their story, history, concerns, and questions; affirm their experience and what they are saying; clarify anything you do not or they do not understand
- Identify their hopes and fears and the resources they are currently using or might need
- Help them create a personalized safety plan

INFORM

- Tell them about available resources
- Explore their circumstances and discuss the worst- and best-case scenarios as they relate to each option available to them
- Assist in identifying their inherent strengths

FACILITATE

- Help them to critically assess their chosen course of action (including their safety plan) and to understand the likely consequences of each action
- Schedule specific times and dates for ongoing contacts or follow-up
- Explore all contingency plans

EMPOWER AND ASSIST

- Support them so they can advocate for themselves, thereby taking control of their life and making it safer for themselves and their children

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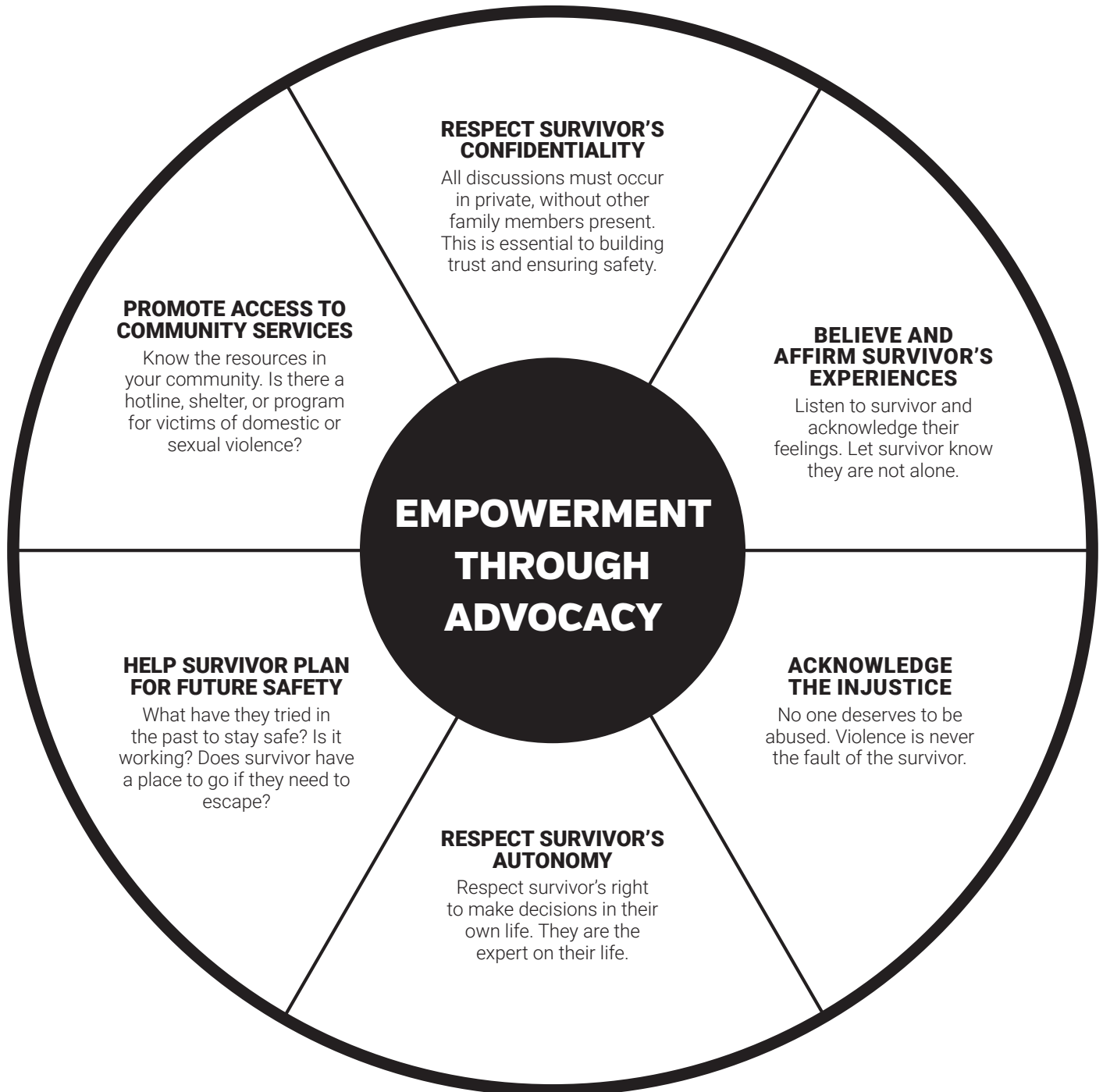
You cannot emerge a whole human being when you escape someone who constantly beats you and berates you physically, emotionally and spiritually until that searing of the soul has been attended to. There is something that happens to the psyche. The wholeness of the individual must be looked at. They must begin to understand what has happened to them, and why.

— Survivor of domestic violence



Empowerment is the core of advocacy

In the empowerment model, a survivor seeking help needs understanding, concrete information, support, and resources to make changes.



This is an adaptation of the "Empowerment Wheel" developed by the Domestic Violence Project, Inc., in Kenosha, WI, and is based on the "Power and Control and Equality Wheel" developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs in Duluth, MN.



A guide to working with individuals in crisis

REMAIN CALM

Be well-informed on procedures and resources. Know yourself and learn to gauge your own emotional reactions, and get to know the individual you are working with so you can help them separate objective reality from their immediate sense of fear.

LET PEOPLE DECIDE THEIR OWN PACE FOR CHANGE

Allow individuals you are helping to decide on their own plan of action. Some people in crisis have never recognized their own resources. Others have lost touch with their resources. Respect and believe in a person's capacity to heal.

EXPLAIN ALL KINDS OF INFORMATION THOROUGHLY

Don't assume that everyone knows about their rights or available services. Don't talk down to anyone, but do be thorough in explaining information about your services and other community resources. If someone looks or sounds confused, ask if they have any questions. Listen to them.

DO NOT IMPOSE YOUR OWN VALUES

This does not mean you cannot express concern about a person's choices, but it does mean you must be careful not to reject them even if you disagree with their behavior.

ENCOURAGE EACH INDIVIDUAL TO ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR FUTURE

There might be a tendency for you to want to do things for people that they can do for themselves. Even though you can and should help them, they will become stronger and more self-sufficient as they assume responsibility for their own lives.

DON'T CONVEY DISAPPOINTMENT ABOUT A SURVIVOR'S PATH TO HEALING

They will have enough conflicts. They might feel like they are failing you. You can point out your concerns about their well-being while still accepting them. Respect their decisions and remind them that you are available if they need you in the future. Always work with them to create a safety plan for their physical and emotional health.

BE ABLE TO TOLERATE YOUR OWN ANGER AND THE SURVIVOR'S ANGER

Have some personal outlets for your anger, anxiety and frustrations. You will be better equipped to help people in crisis if you can avoid "burnout" and overwhelming stress. Talk to other staff members if you need help dealing with your anger or a survivor's anger about the violence they have survived.

MINIMIZE EDUCATIONAL, SOCIAL, AND ECONOMIC DIFFERENCES AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE

Avoid focusing on your own personal history. If you are distant, however, the person you are trying to help might feel hurt. Strive for a comfortable balance. Answer questions about yourself with minimal detail and turn the conversation back to their life. Convey warmth, respect and concern.





Intimate partner violence and people with disabilities

A study found that women with a disability were significantly more likely to have experienced a type of domestic violence in the last 12 months. They reported experiencing four times more incidents of rape, three times more incidents of stalking, and twice as many incidents of physical violence, psychological aggression, and control of reproductive or sexual health by an intimate partner. Men with a disability were found to experience more incidents of stalking and psychological aggression by an intimate partner in the 12 months prior to being surveyed.

Breiding, M.J., Armour, B.S. (2015). The association between disability and intimate partner violence in the United States. *Annals of Epidemiology*; 25(6): 455-457.

Considerations for providing inclusive services

Domestic violence affects all groups in society, including as defined by gender, race, ethnicity, religion, age, sexual orientation, geographic location, socioeconomic status, immigration status, and physical or mental ability. Because our society is very diverse, it is important to understand that domestic violence and cultural issues can intersect in multiple ways for each individual. A person's identity, cultural background, and life experience can impact their vulnerability to violence, as well as their ability to access supportive resources. To effectively provide inclusive survivor-defined advocacy, advocates must recognize that each survivor comes to an agency with different needs and might experience unique barriers to obtaining relevant and meaningful services. Service providers must become familiar with the needs of people in their communities and develop outreach strategies to ensure that all survivors of domestic violence are aware of their services and are able to gain access to them. Having a staff that is culturally representative of the local community should be a goal for all programs and services.

To increase the inclusivity of services, considerations should be made for, but not limited to, the following survivors.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The term "people with disabilities" is often used to describe a diverse group of individuals including those with cognitive, physical, or sensory disabilities, and people experiencing mental health challenges. Trauma and injury from domestic violence might cause temporary or permanent disability. Many individuals with disabilities are at an increased risk of domestic violence. Abusers often choose to target people with disabilities because they perceive them to be vulnerable, unable to defend themselves, and/or unlikely to report an assault.

People with disabilities can be more vulnerable to domestic violence for a variety of reasons. Some might depend on their partners to meet their basic needs. As care providers, they might be involved in the more intimate parts of their disabled partner's life, which can increase the opportunity for abusive acts. Some people with disabilities are taught to be obedient or passive; this socialization to comply might inadvertently make them more vulnerable to abuse. People with physical disabilities might face greater difficulties than those without physical limitations if they try to defend themselves or seek to escape a violent situation. Those with cognitive disabilities might be overly trusting of others. They might not understand the difference between abusive and non-abusive behavior and might think abuse is normal.

People with disabilities are often less likely to seek advocacy services because they fear they will not be believed, do not realize that what happened to them was abuse, or assume services will not be accessible to them. Barriers to communication also can cause problems in gaining access to services.

When working with people with disabilities, it is important to remember that each individual is very different in terms of needs and abilities. Advocates should never make assumptions about a person's abilities based on appearance and, when in doubt, should not be afraid to ask the individual what support they need. Advocates should be open, respectful and flexible — as they are when working with all survivors.



To maximize an agency's accessibility, facilities and services should be designed in ways that ensure all survivors are able to use them. Universal design is an approach to developing environments that can be used by all people without accommodations having to be made. For example, a domestic violence agency might provide chairs in their office of several heights, sizes and styles so that a survivor is able to choose one that they can easily get in and out of and will be comfortable sitting in.

Guided by “nothing about us without us,” survivors with disabilities should be given the opportunity to define the domestic violence services they receive. Any agency working with survivors should collaborate with local agencies that provide services for people with disabilities in order to share resources and receive education and support.

IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE SURVIVORS

Immigrant and refugee survivors of domestic violence might face difficulty in obtaining advocacy services because of cultural isolation and language barriers. They might be unfamiliar with the community and unaware of resources available to them. Because of experiences in their country of origin or discrimination in this country, they might have little trust in the justice system or might not be aware that agencies even exist to meet the needs of survivors. If they are undocumented, they might fear deportation if they choose to report to law enforcement. Immigration relief in the form of VAWA, T, and U visas is available for immigrant survivors of domestic and sexual violence, human trafficking, and other violent crimes, and for their children. Reporting the violence to law enforcement is not always a requirement, depending on the type of visa and the individual's situation. Immigrant and refugee survivors should be connected to legal services to help them address their immigration concerns. At a minimum, these survivors should be informed that there are several ways for victims of domestic violence to apply for residency, and they should speak with an attorney to see if they are eligible.

Language barriers present a unique challenge for some immigrant and refugee survivors of violence. Creating a plan to ensure language accessibility for all survivors will prepare agencies' advocates to serve immigrant and refugee survivors. Conducting outreach in immigrant and refugee communities, becoming aware of community resources and making accommodations for particular cultural considerations also can help agencies provide quality services to immigrant and refugee survivors of domestic violence.

Before making a referral, have a clear understanding of the victim's immigration status and the policies of that agency. While immigrants and refugees are eligible to receive many services, some services might not be available to everyone. Some agencies might be risky for an immigrant or refugee to contact directly.

LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND QUEER/QUESTIONING SURVIVORS (LGBTQ)

Heterosexism and homophobia increase lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people's risk of experiencing domestic violence. LGBTQ survivors are more vulnerable to certain tactics of abuse. The small size of many



The extent of intimate partner violence

Rates of intimate partner violence vary significantly among survivors based on race. Asian and Pacific Islander women and men tend to experience lower rates of intimate partner violence. African American and American Indian/Alaska Native experience higher rates, and multiracial women and men experience the highest rates.

Smith, S.G., Zhang, X., Basile, K.C., Merrick, M.T., Wang, J., Kresnow, M., Chen, J. (2018). National intimate partner and sexual violence survey (NISVS): 2015 Data Brief. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.





LGBTQ survivor experiences

Intimate partner violence in same-sex or gender-diverse relationships is equally and sometimes more prevalent and can be more lethal than in heterosexual relationships.

Lesbian women and gay men experience rates of domestic violence equal to or a little higher than heterosexual couples. Bisexual men and women experience higher rates of domestic violence; 61 percent of bisexual women reported having experienced domestic violence, the highest rate reported.

Because rates of domestic violence are high in LGBTQ relationships, service providers must be aware of unique barriers that LGBTQ survivors face.

Abusers use social stigma and oppression against LGBTQ communities to manipulate and control their partners in LGBTQ relationships. The small size of some LGBTQ communities and a lack of inclusive services can make it difficult for an LGBTQ survivor to get help. These issues are especially challenging in small towns and rural areas. Some LGBTQ survivors might hide, ignore or minimize the abuse or express reluctance to receive assistance from domestic violence programs that might or might not understand the dynamics of abuse in LGBTQ relationships.

Walters, M.L., Chen J., & Breiding, M.J. (2013). National intimate partner and sexual violence survey (NISVS): 2010 Findings on victimization by sexual orientation. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

LGBTQ communities and lack of visible resources, especially in smaller towns and rural areas, can make it difficult for survivors to seek help. Internalized homophobia causes some LGBTQ survivors to minimize or blame themselves for the abuse.

The abusive partner might isolate the victim from contact with the community by preventing their partner from attending social events and seeing friends within the LGBTQ community. The abuser might have tried to turn others in the community against the victim. Isolation is a powerful tool used by abusive partners to create distance between friends, family, neighbors, service providers, and law enforcement. The survivor is much easier to control and maintain power over when isolated from support systems. LGBTQ survivors are more likely to have the same social network and support system as their abusers, which decreases their opportunities to get help.

The stigma society imposes on LGBTQ people can prevent survivors from seeking assistance from domestic violence programs or reporting the violence to law enforcement. Some LGBTQ survivors might not recognize what they are experiencing as intimate partner violence or might choose not to disclose the violence. They might be concerned about being publicly “outed” if they seek outside assistance. Transgender and/or gender-nonbinary (not exclusively masculine or feminine) survivors experience an increased risk of domestic violence but often face challenges when trying to access services. Agencies should affirm every survivor’s gender identity and follow their lead in using their preferred pronouns. Services must be relevant and meaningful to promote healing from the trauma of domestic violence.

LGBTQ survivors face unique threats to their safety, and service providers should be aware of these. They can support LGBTQ victims by reassuring them that they are believed and that the violence is not their fault. If an LGBTQ victim chooses to report the violence to law enforcement, advocates can provide support by helping them safely navigate the criminal justice system.

Using gender-inclusive language while providing services can help LGBTQ survivors feel more comfortable with advocacy services. The need for a survivor to freely tell their story without worrying about being judged is critical to serving survivors. Follow a survivor’s lead; wait for them to identify their own pronouns and relationship terms. Use gender-neutral language such as “partner” or “significant other” until you know for certain the abuser’s pronouns and the nature of their relationship. LGBTQ survivors might be looking for inclusive language and will interpret your use of gendered language as a lack of sensitivity and understanding.

MALE SURVIVORS

People of all genders are victimized by domestic violence, including men. Men can be hesitant to report abuse as they are socialized to believe that domestic violence only happens to women. Men who are victimized by domestic violence often struggle with their internal perception of masculinity, sexuality, isolation, and powerlessness. As a result, survivors who are men might experience rage, self-blame, or guilt, among other common reactions. If the survivor is in a same-sex relationship, then seeking services might force him to publicly disclose his sexual orientation — something he might not want to do.



Domestic violence agencies should ensure that men feel welcome in obtaining whatever services they need. State and federal funding requires that survivors be provided equal access to community-based agencies, regardless of gender. Letting a male survivor know that he is believed and that the violence was not his fault is central to helping him become more comfortable in obtaining supportive services.

SURVIVORS OF COLOR

In addition to challenges imposed upon all survivors of violence, people of color often face additional difficulties in their ability to report the violence and/or access supportive services. If their perpetrator also is a person of color, the survivor might fear isolation or alienation from their community if they report what happened to them to law enforcement. Experiences of racism, systemic oppression, and negative interactions might cause some survivors to distrust law enforcement, government agencies, and even advocates. People of color might struggle with feelings of betraying their racial identity or heritage by seeking services. They might fear disapproval or rejection from their family, friends or congregation. They might feel reluctant to discuss “private matters” with a person outside of their community and might be guarded in their communication. Build trust by listening to, believing, and validating their experiences. Provide inclusive services by hiring a staff that is racially diverse and reflects the demographic backgrounds of survivors in need of support.

ABUSE LATER IN LIFE

Because of age and life experiences, domestic violence might present older survivors with issues different from those experienced by younger survivors. Older people can be more vulnerable to domestic violence for a variety of reasons, including isolation, physical abilities, health and/or dependency on caregivers. Many have been raised in a culture and during a time when domestic violence was not openly discussed, making it difficult or even humiliating to disclose. This, in turn, makes them less likely to report. Older survivors also might choose not to report because they fear younger professionals would not believe them or because they might not define the violence as a crime. Service providers can reduce some of these barriers by engaging older survivors in conversation about available services and discussing their concerns directly. Training and increased awareness of the nature of domestic violence later in life are needed to identify and support older survivors.

Domestic violence, including sexual assault by an intimate partner, is not included under the mandated elder abuse reporting law in Missouri unless certain conditions exist. An “eligible adult” under Missouri elder abuse reporting law is defined as someone 60 years of age or older who is unable to protect his or her own interests or adequately perform or obtain services which are necessary to meet his or her essential human needs ([Section 192.2400\(6\) RSMo.](#)). These eligible adults are those to whom the mandatory elder abuse reporting laws apply.



Elder abuse reporting law

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Inclusive services

- The median lifetime prevalence of intimate partner violence for individuals who identify as transgender is 37.5%. In one study, 16.7% reported experiencing intimate partner violence in the past year. These rates are significantly higher than violence experienced by cisgender individuals.

Peitzmeier, S. M., Malik, M., Kattari, S. K., Marrow, E., Stephenson, R., Agénor, M., & Reisner, S. L. (2020). Intimate partner violence in transgender populations: systematic review and meta-analysis of prevalence and correlates. *American journal of public health*, 110(9), e1-e14.

- 55.5 percent of American Indian and Alaska Native women and 43.2 percent of men have experienced physical violence by an intimate partner. These are among the highest rates of domestic violence experienced by a racial group.

Rosay, A. B. (2016). Violence against American Indian and Alaska Native women and men: 2010 findings from the national intimate partner and sexual violence survey (NISVS).

- Immigrant women are at particularly high risk of experiencing domestic violence and often feel trapped in abusive relationship because of immigration laws, language differences, and social isolation.

Park, T., Mullins, A., Zahir, N., Salami, B., Lasiuk, G., & Hegadoren, K. (2021). Domestic violence and immigrant women: a glimpse behind a veiled door. *Violence against women*, 27(15-16), 2910-2926.

ADVOCATES WHO ARE SURVIVORS

Many are called to advocacy work after a personal experience with domestic violence, either in their own lives or in the life of a loved one. Including survivors' voices in the development and implementation of services continues to be a priority of the movement to end domestic violence. Some survivors choose to become a part of the movement as a means of empowerment. Some survivors might choose to be on a domestic violence program's board of directors, some might choose to work as advocates, and others might volunteer to be a part of an agency's speakers' bureau to tell their stories to others. Survivors providing direct services should be aware that advocacy with others might bring back memories of their own victimization and should identify their own coping strategies.

It is important to remember that each survivor has a different experience that is not necessarily reflective of all victims. Although there might be similarities among survivors' stories, each individual has their own unique experience of domestic violence.

Providing trauma-informed care

Understanding trauma and the ongoing impact it has on individuals who experience or witness domestic violence is essential to providing effective trauma-informed domestic violence advocacy. Trauma-informed care recognizes signs and symptoms caused by trauma exposure and uses them to guide and inform a program's policies, procedures, and practices. It seeks to understand how a survivor's experience might cause them to act in certain ways or need specific accommodations. In other words, trauma-informed care is about asking, "What happened to you?" rather than "What is wrong with you?"

Trauma-informed care is focused on avoiding potential triggers and minimizing risks that could be retraumatizing to survivors. Relationships are valued, and advocacy is approached as a partnership. Time and resources are invested toward developing trust and cultivating lasting connections between advocates, survivors, and other agency participants. Advocates consider what they know about trauma and use this to understand a survivor's choices and behaviors. Services are tailored to meet a survivor's individualized needs for healing and wellness. Trauma-informed care attends to both the physical and emotional safety of survivors and supports healing that sets survivors on a path toward wellness.

The concept of trauma-informed care originated with mental health professionals in the late 1990s. It is now widely used throughout many types of health, mental health and social service programs. Whether it was domestic violence or another type of abuse, trauma exposure is the one thing that unites every survivor seeking advocacy services. Understanding trauma and providing trauma-informed care has become a priority for most agencies available to support survivors of domestic violence.

Incorporating trauma-informed care into domestic violence advocacy begins with recognizing signs of trauma exposure and connecting them to what a survivor has experienced. Survivors might not associate their thoughts, feelings, or behaviors to what happened to them, and these insights can be validating. It can reduce shame and guilt that survivors project onto themselves. **A survivor of domestic violence might experience all, some, or none of these common reactions to trauma:**

- Intrusive thoughts
- Visual images of the traumatic event(s)
- Nightmares
- Insomnia
- Loss of memory
- Loss of ability to concentrate, inability to focus
- Inability to control and manage emotions
- Loss of interest in other people and things
- Inability to get along with other people
- Inability to trust other people
- Overwhelming feelings of sadness, hopelessness, guilt, shame, or self-hatred
- Irrational or exaggerated fear
- An inability to imagine a positive future
- Unexplainable physical pain felt throughout the body
- Feeling numb or unresponsive
- Paranoia
- Hypervigilance
- Panic attacks
- Mood swings

Long-term signs of trauma include:

- Cognition and communication problems
- Agitation
- Outbursts of anger
- Hypersensitivity and defensiveness
- Disorientation and confusion
- Diminished relationships
- Overly critical of self and others
- Rigid worldview, lacking compassion for others



Trauma-informed care

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Bearing witness to trauma

The act of bearing witness to the suffering of others takes a toll on advocates. Sometimes referred to as vicarious trauma, secondary trauma, compassion fatigue or burnout, it is an inevitable response to providing empathetic care to survivors of trauma. Recognizing this kind of trauma and having a plan to manage it is necessary for advocates to sustain supportive advocacy.

PRINCIPLES OF TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

The guiding principles of trauma-informed care can be adapted based on a survivor's priorities and the mission of an advocacy agency. These principles are:

- **Safety:** Establish a safe environment by listening to survivors and responding compassionately without judgment. Trauma-informed advocacy supports survivors in sharing their experiences with whomever they choose. Services are tailored to meet the emotional and physical safety needs of each survivor's unique situation.
- **Trustworthiness and transparency:** Survivors might be cautious with new relationships because they have been hurt or treated badly in the past. Trust develops over time as a result of proven support and direct and kind communication. Trauma-informed advocacy builds trust by being transparent about policies, procedures and practices.
- **Collaboration and connection:** Shared power fosters connection and is essential to trauma-informed care. Advocacy is approached as a partnership — the advocate's role is to provide support and information while recognizing that a survivor's decisions are theirs alone to make. Advocates facilitate connections that decrease isolation and increase supportive relationships.
- **Empowerment, voice and choice:** Survivors are leaders throughout trauma-informed advocacy services. Autonomy and self-determination are valued. Advocates inspire hope and maximize options available to survivors. Survivors' choices are respected.
- **Cultural, social and historical issues:** Advocates create welcoming environments that are accessible to all survivors of domestic violence. Accommodations are made for survivors based on their cultural needs. Issues related to societal oppression and historical trauma are incorporated into advocacy services.

PREVENTING TRAUMA

Advocates at local domestic violence agencies are available to develop safety plans with survivors in order to prevent further acts of trauma and abuse. A safety plan is tailored to each survivor's unique situation and is based on their needs and priorities. A safety plan should always start by asking, "What does the survivor want?" Multiple options and resources should be explored to identify the best course of action to take.

The safety planning tool on pages 35 to 40 can assist advocates and survivors throughout the safety planning process.

Personalized Safety Plan – Domestic Violence

Safety plans help survivors anticipate the physical and emotional dangers they might face. A safety plan is an adaptable tool to help increase your safety and well-being in an ever-changing situation.

WHEN TO USE A SAFETY PLAN

Safety plans can be made for a variety of situations: for dealing with an emergency, such as when you are threatened with physical assault or an assault has occurred; for continuing to live with or date a partner who has been abusive; or for protecting yourself after you have ended a relationship with an abusive partner.

USE WHAT YOU ALREADY KNOW

If you have been abused, you probably know more about safety planning and risk assessment than you might realize. Being in a relationship with an abusive partner—and surviving—requires considerable skill and resourcefulness. Any time you do or say something as a way to protect yourself or your children, you are assessing risk and enacting a safety plan. You do it all the time; it's just not always a conscious process.

LOOK AT THE RISKS

It can be a helpful strategy to evaluate risks and make safety plans in a more intentional way. Whether you are currently with your partner or have ended the relationship, and whether you choose to use available services or to involve the police, there are certain things that are helpful to consider in planning for your future safety.

BE AWARE OF DANGERS

If you are planning to leave your partner or already have left, be aware that abusers often escalate their violence during times of separation. Making a separation safety plan can help reduce the risks to you and your children.

EVALUATE YOUR OPTIONS

Only you can judge whom it's safe to tell about your situation and whom to ask for help. Sometimes, people who don't have good information about domestic violence respond in ways that aren't helpful, even when they mean well. On the other hand, you might feel comfortable asking for help from someone you know. It's your decision. The important thing is for you to identify all the people who might be willing and able to help you. Make a list of their phone numbers and attach it to your safety plan for easy reference.

PLAN AHEAD

You don't have to wait for an emergency to ask for help. In fact, it's a good idea to talk to people who can help before there's a crisis. Find out what they are willing and able to do for you. That way, you'll know in advance if you have a place to stay, a source of financial assistance, or a person to help you in other ways.

REDUCE YOUR RISK

No one has control over a partner's violence, but people can and do find ways to reduce their risk of harm. The following safety plan is a tool to help you identify and evaluate your options and assist you in creating a personalized plan to reduce your risk when confronted with the threat of harm or with actual harm. Use what applies or change it to reflect your particular situation. Your safety plan does not need to be written down (especially if you fear your abuser will find it), though you may choose to. There's no right or wrong way to develop a safety plan. Make it your own, and review it regularly to make changes as needed.



KEEP YOUR PLAN IN A SAFE PLACE

Only you can decide if it is safe to have a written safety plan. If you decide to keep a written plan, find a place to keep it where the person who assaulted you won't find it. Ask a friend to keep a copy for you. Whether it's safe to write down your plan or not, it's still important to make one.

SAFETY DURING A VIOLENT INCIDENT

- ☐ I will use my judgment and intuition. If I think my partner is going to hurt me, I will try to move to a space that has lower risk, such as _____. (Often bathrooms, garages, kitchens, areas near weapons or rooms without an outside exit are most dangerous.)
- ☐ If the situation is serious, I can try to calm down my partner by giving in to demands. I have the right to protect myself until I/my children are out of danger.

SAFETY IF STAYING

- ☐ I can tell _____ about the violence and request they call 911 if they hear noises coming from my home.
- ☐ I can teach my children how to use the phone or call 911 to contact the police or fire department and/or how to contact a safe neighbor for help. I will make sure my children know our address.
- ☐ I can put emergency numbers in my phone.
- ☐ I will use _____ as the code word with my children or my friends so they will call for help if needed.
- ☐ If I have to leave my home, I will go to _____.
If I cannot go there, I can go to _____.
- ☐ The local domestic violence agency's hotline number is _____.
I can call it or the national hotline at (800) 799-SAFE (7233) for help.

SAFETY IF LEAVING

Preparing to leave

- ☐ I will call a domestic violence agency to get help making my plans. The hotline number for the nearest agency is _____.
- ☐ I will leave money and an extra set of keys with _____ so I can leave quickly.
- ☐ I will leave extra clothes with _____.
- ☐ I can open a post office box and have personal mail and bills (credit cards, cellphone, etc.) sent there.
- ☐ I will ask _____ and _____
to see who would be able to let me stay with them or lend me some money.
- ☐ I can increase my independence by opening a bank account and getting credit cards in my own name; by taking classes or getting job skills; and/or by getting copies of all the important papers and documents I might need and keeping them with _____.
- ☐ I can rehearse my escape plan and, if appropriate, practice it with my children.
- ☐ If it's not safe to talk openly, I will use _____ as
the code word or signal to my children that we are leaving, or to my family or friends that we are coming.
- ☐ I can keep my purse or a wallet and car keys ready and put them _____
_____ so I can leave quickly.
- ☐ I can take my pet to _____ if I need to leave.

ITEMS TO CONSIDER TAKING IF LEAVING

The following items may be helpful to have if you decide to leave, but remember that almost all of these items are replaceable.

- ☐ Identification for myself
- ☐ My and my children's birth certificates and Social Security cards
- ☐ Credit, debit, and ATM cards
- ☐ School and vaccination records
- ☐ Money, checkbook, and bankbooks
- ☐ Cellphone chargers and phone plan records
- ☐ Medication and medical supplies
- ☐ Medical records for all family members
- ☐ Keys — house, car, work
- ☐ Driver's license, car registration
- ☐ Insurance papers
- ☐ Public assistance ID/EBT and Medicaid cards
- ☐ Passports, Alien Registration Receipt Cards, work permits, green cards for myself and my children
- ☐ Divorce or separation papers
- ☐ Lease, rental agreement, or house deed
- ☐ Car/mortgage payment book
- ☐ Children's toys, security blankets, stuffed animals
- ☐ Sentimental items, photos, jewelry
- ☐ Small objects to sell
- ☐ My personalized safety plan (if written down)

SAFETY AT HOME

If my partner and I are no longer living together

- ☐ I can, or ask my landlord to, change the locks on my doors and windows.
- ☐ I can, or ask my landlord to, replace wooden doors with metal ones.
- ☐ I can, or ask my landlord to, install security systems, including additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, etc.
- ☐ I can buy rope ladders to be used for escape from second-floor windows.
- ☐ I can install smoke detectors and put fire extinguishers on each floor in my home.
- ☐ I can provide my onsite property manager and/or trusted neighbors with a picture of my partner and ask them to notify the police if they see him near my home.



PERSONALIZED SAFETY PLAN

SAFETY AT WORK

- ☐ I can inform my boss, the security supervisor and the employee assistance program (EAP), if available, about my situation. The number of the EAP office is _____.
- ☐ I can ask _____ to screen my calls and visitors at work.
- ☐ When leaving work, I can _____.
- ☐ If there's trouble when traveling to and from work, I can call 911 or _____.

SAFETY IN PUBLIC OR IF BEING STALKED

- ☐ If I suspect I am in imminent danger, I will locate a safe place for myself (police stations, residences of family or friends, domestic violence shelters, local churches, public areas, etc.).
- ☐ I can document my partner's actions and keep it in a safe place. This may include taking photos of destroyed property/vandalism, saving voicemails, keeping texts/email/letters/notes, etc.
- ☐ I can change my patterns — avoid stores, restaurants, banks, doctor's appointments, self-service laundries and other places where my partner might find me based on my regular schedule.
- ☐ I can tell _____ and _____ about the situation and provide them with a photo or description of my partner and any possible vehicles. I can ask them to call the police if they believe I or my children are in danger.
- ☐ When I am out of the house, I will try not to travel alone and will try to stay in public areas.

WITH AN ORDER OF PROTECTION

- ☐ I will keep my protection order _____. (Always keep it on or near you.)
- ☐ I will give copies of my protection order to the local police or sheriff and to departments in towns where I visit friends and family.
- ☐ I will give copies to my employer, my religious adviser, my closest friend, my children's school and child-care center and _____.
- ☐ If my partner destroys my order or if I lose it, I can get another copy from the court that issued it.
- ☐ If my partner violates the order, I can call the police and report a violation, contact my attorney, call my domestic violence program advocate, and/or advise the court of the violation.
- ☐ I can call a domestic violence agency if I have questions about how to enforce an order or if I have problems getting it enforced.
- ☐ I will document all instances, including dates and times, of abuse and/or violations of a valid Order of Protection.

PROTECTING MY CHILDREN

- ☐ I can teach developmentally appropriate safety strategies to my children.
- ☐ I can teach my children how to make a phone call to me if they are concerned about their safety.
- ☐ I can teach my children how to use the phone or call 911 to contact the police and fire departments and how to contact a safe neighbor for help. I will make sure they know our address.
- ☐ I can tell my children's caretakers who has permission to pick them up and make sure they know how to recognize those people.
- ☐ I will give the people who take care of my children copies of custody and protection orders, as well as emergency numbers.
- ☐ I can arrange care for my pets ahead of time and keep them supervised when outside.

PERSONALIZED SAFETY PLAN

SAFETY AND TECHNOLOGY

- ☐ Each day there are advances in technology. I can ask someone familiar with technology or domestic violence about the ways that my partner might monitor me.
- ☐ I will use a computer that my partner doesn't have access to when I look for help, a new place to live, etc. It might be safest to use a computer at a public library, community center or _____.
- ☐ I can ask my friends and family to be careful about whom they give my email address to and to use the Bcc: option when copying me on an email.
- ☐ When making or receiving private calls, I will not use a cellphone that I share with my partner because my partner might have access to cellphone billing records or might have put settings on my phone to track my whereabouts. My local domestic violence shelter might have a donated cellphone I can use.
- ☐ I will ask the court systems, post office and other government agencies how they protect or publish my records and request that they seal or restrict access to my files to help protect my safety.
- ☐ I will ask a domestic violence advocate about the address confidentiality program Safe at Home.

MY EMOTIONAL HEALTH

- ☐ If I am feeling down, lonely or confused, I can call _____ or the domestic violence hotline _____.
- ☐ If I have left my partner and am considering returning, I will call _____ or spend time with _____ before I make a decision.
- ☐ I can attend support groups, workshops or classes at the local domestic violence agency or _____ so I can build a support system, learn skills or get information.
- ☐ I will look at how and when I drink alcohol or use other drugs. If I am going to drink or use other drugs, I will do it in a place where people are committed to my safety.

MY SAFETY PLANNING AS AN IMMIGRANT OR REFUGEE

Additional items to consider collecting:

- ☐ Copies of important papers, including those I might need for my immigration case, such as my I-94, copies of visa applications, work permits, etc.
- ☐ Photos of my spouse and I when we were dating
- ☐ Wedding invitation
- ☐ Marriage certificate
- ☐ Photographs of my wedding
- ☐ Love letters, emails or cards from my spouse when we were dating and after our marriage
- ☐ Copies of police reports and medical records
- ☐ Photos of my injuries
- ☐ Copies of my spouse's birth certificate/Social Security card/green card/or certificate of naturalization
- ☐ Divorce papers from my previous marriage or from my spouse's previous marriage, papers that show I have lived with my spouse in the United States (e.g., copies of my lease/rental agreement, utility bills or any envelopes or documents with my name and my spouse's name listed at the same address)



PERSONALIZED SAFETY PLAN

If law enforcement becomes involved:

- ☐ I will consider contacting an attorney or organization that provides immigration legal services to learn more about what forms of help and immigration relief might be available to me or in the event that I am detained and need their assistance.
- ☐ I can consider appointing a power of attorney over my minor children in case I am detained and separated from my children (a possible power of attorney might be a friend or trusted family member).
- ☐ I will educate myself about my rights as an immigrant or refugee.
- ☐ I can become familiar with my consulate and the assistance it provides.

HOW CAN A DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGENCY HELP ME?

Local domestic violence and sexual violence agencies are a vital resource, providing free and confidential assistance to adults and their children victimized by domestic violence, rape, sexual assault and stalking. They provide emergency safety services such as shelter and 24-hour crisis hotlines. **You don't have to stay in a shelter to get help from an agency.** Most also provide a full range of non-residential services to those who have been abused. Domestic violence agency advocates are experienced in providing assistance to survivors and their children. They understand the criminal, legal, family court, immigration, and social service systems. They are familiar with other community resources that might be useful to you.

In addition to giving you helpful information, advocates often can accompany you to court, to the police station, to the hospital, or to social services offices. They can provide you with practical and emotional support. Getting help from someone who has experience working with survivors of domestic or sexual violence and who knows how to work with the different systems can make things easier for you.

- ☐ The local domestic violence agency in my area is _____
and their phone number is _____.

NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE

800-799-SAFE (7233)

Toll-free, 24-hour crisis intervention and referrals
to domestic violence programs in your area.

24-hour chatline:
www.thehotline.org



Chapter 3

The Justice System

For many survivors, becoming a victim of a violent crime is their first introduction to the legal system. It can be complicated, confusing, frustrating, intimidating, and often, insulting. The stress of dealing with the bewildering proceedings and the frequently encountered gender, race, and class bias of the justice system adds to a victim's trauma. And, while the court system is able to respond to some of the needs of survivors, it is equally important that both survivors and those who work with them understand its limitations in ending domestic violence.

Because a victim's danger often increases as they try to escape their abuser, it is vitally important that they have a well-thought-out safety plan, like the one on pages 35 to 40. Survivors are experts on their situations and have been using all of their skills to survive so far. It is likely that an abuser will retaliate or that the violence will escalate as victims try to engage the justice system. Testifying in court against an abuser can be a frightening and dangerous thing for a survivor to do. It might be the first time they face their partner since the last attack or when they were able to leave. They have every reason to believe that their abusive partner's anger and violence will escalate as a result of the steps they are taking to free themselves.

Because victims recognize the danger associated with testifying against their abusers, or because of threats from their abuser, they might recant accusations of abuse or refuse to cooperate with law enforcement and/or prosecutors. While recanting or refusing to cooperate might appear to be counterintuitive — if their abuser goes to jail, they cannot hurt them — abusers often threaten harm and have ways of controlling their victims even while incarcerated (e.g., using friends, family, or children). Also, most abusers do not go to jail, and those who do might seek revenge once they are released. Recanting or refusing to cooperate with the prosecution of their abuser is an often-misunderstood survival strategy sometimes employed by victims of domestic violence.

Domestic violence laws

The legal system provides two ways to be protected from domestic violence. One is based on civil law and the other on criminal law. Sometimes these two overlap. Both civil and criminal remedies can be useful to survivors of domestic violence.

“**Civil law**” responses to domestic violence include Orders of Protection, which serve to keep an abuser away and to get other types of help because of



The importance of safety planning

Because a victim's danger often increases as they try to escape their abuser, it is vitally important they have a well-thought-out safety plan, like the one on pages 35 to 40. Survivors are experts on their situations and have been using all of their skills to survive so far.





How can a victim stay informed about civil and/or criminal cases?

- Inquire about cases in Missouri courts by visiting Casenet at www.courts.mo.gov/casenet. Only a respondent's information is available for Orders of Protection cases.
- Find out about offenders in custody by registering for the Missouri Victim Automated Notification System (MOVANS) at the Office of Victim Services, 573.526.6516.
- Contact the Victim Advocate at the Prosecuting Attorney's Office.
- Contact the Court Advocate at a local domestic violence agency.

the domestic violence victims have experienced or are afraid might happen again. Orders of Protection are civil court orders issued by a judge. Protection orders are not a part of an abuser's criminal record. However, it is a crime for a person to violate an Order of Protection that is issued against them.

"Criminal law" responses to domestic violence include the arrest and prosecution of the person who has perpetrated abuse. The purpose of a criminal action is to hold abusers accountable for their criminal conduct. The criminal law system involves law enforcement officers, prosecutors or district attorneys, criminal court judges and jail or probation officers.

A survivor does not need to decide between seeking help through the civil legal system or the criminal legal system. They may choose to pursue both remedies for the same incident or ongoing incidents of domestic violence.

Civil domestic violence laws

CIVIL COURT AND ORDERS OF PROTECTION

The laws that establish Orders of Protection, which are a part of the civil legal process for help in addressing domestic violence, are in [Chapter 455](#) of the Revised Statutes of Missouri (RSMo.). In these laws, domestic violence abuses are defined as assault, battery, coercion, harassment, sexual assault, or unlawful imprisonment. Assaults might include threats or other offensive behavior. Stalking and sexual assault not related to domestic violence also are covered by this law.

ORDERS OF PROTECTION CAN BE OBTAINED WITHOUT AN ATTORNEY AND WITHOUT COST TO THE VICTIM

Missouri law allows a victim of abuse, stalking, or sexual assault to seek and obtain an Order of Protection without an attorney and without cost. While an attorney is not required to obtain a protection order, sometimes people will hire an attorney to help them through the process. For victims of abuse, this most often happens if the person they are seeking protection from hires an attorney to represent them in the court process for an Order of Protection. Survivors should be able to access the process 24 hours a day — if the abuse occurs after business hours when the courts are closed, survivors in some communities are able to file an emergency petition at their local police department or sheriff's office. Contact the civil courts, police department, or local domestic violence program to find out if this is an option.

HOW DOES MISSOURI LAW DEFINE ABUSE, STALKING, AND SEXUAL ASSAULT FOR ORDERS OF PROTECTION?

Missouri law on Orders of Protection contains the following definitions of what are considered acts of abuse and threats of abuse. **This law is in [Section 455.010 RSMo.](#)**



- | | | | | |
|---|---|-------------------------|--|---|
|  | IN THE _____ JUDICIAL CIRCUIT _____
County of _____, MISSOURI
Petition for Order of Protection - Adult
Notice to Petitioner: Respondent will receive a copy of this petition with service. | COUNTY, MISSOURI | | |
| Judge or Division

Petitioner: _____

Respondent: _____

Address/Residence: _____

Respondent's DOB: _____
(MM/DD/YYYY, last four digits)
Race: _____ Sex: ☐ M ☐ F
Height: _____
Eye Color: _____ Weight: _____
(provide information for use by Law Enforcement) | <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> Case Number: _____
 MSF Number: _____
 Missouri Law Enforcement (OLE) #: _____
 Return Cases: _____
 Respondent's Victim Address: _____
 Home Phone Number: _____
 Respondent's Work Address: _____
 Work Phone Number: _____
 Other Locations Where Respondent May Be Served: _____ </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> Respondent's Victim Address: _____
 Home Phone Number: _____
 Respondent's Work Address: _____
 Work Phone Number: _____
 Other Locations Where Respondent May Be Served: _____ </td> </tr> </table> | | Case Number: _____
MSF Number: _____
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Work Phone Number: _____
Other Locations Where Respondent May Be Served: _____ | Respondent's Victim Address: _____
Home Phone Number: _____
Respondent's Work Address: _____
Work Phone Number: _____
Other Locations Where Respondent May Be Served: _____ |
| Case Number: _____
MSF Number: _____
Missouri Law Enforcement (OLE) #: _____
Return Cases: _____
Respondent's Victim Address: _____
Home Phone Number: _____
Respondent's Work Address: _____
Work Phone Number: _____
Other Locations Where Respondent May Be Served: _____ | Respondent's Victim Address: _____
Home Phone Number: _____
Respondent's Work Address: _____
Work Phone Number: _____
Other Locations Where Respondent May Be Served: _____ | | | |
| Include identifying details (e.g. address, telephone, email address, social media handles, etc.) of Respondent: _____
(provide information for use by Law Enforcement) | | | | |
| Respondent's Relationship to Respondent pursuant to 16.01 C.S. § 601.0(3)(3) and § 602.0(3)(3) shall be determined by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ Immediate family member ☐ Former spouse ☐ Current or former intimate relationship together ☐ Current or former sexual relationship ☐ Current or former intimate relationship of a nonconsensual nature ☐ Related by blood, marriage, or adoption ☐ Related by marriage, De facto relationship ☐ Related by marriage, De jure relationship ☐ Dating relationship ☐ Dating relationship ☐ Dating relationship | | | | |
| 1. PETITIONER INFORMATION | | | | |
| I, I am Petitioner and ☐ at least 17 years of age ☐ under 17 but emancipated (_____) (_____) | | | | |
| I reside in the County of _____ (_____) | | | | |
| 2. RESPONDENT INFORMATION | | | | |
| Respondent is ☐ at least 17 years of age or emancipated ☐ under 17 (_____) (_____) | | | | |
| Respondent may be found in the County of _____ (_____) | | | | |
| III. LOCATION WHERE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, STALKING, OR SEXUAL ASSAULT OCCURRED | | | | |
| An act of domestic violence, stalking or sexual assault occurred in the County of _____ (_____) | | | | |

Victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and/or stalking can seek an Order of Protection. A parent or guardian can also apply for a protection order on behalf of a child younger than 17.



Full Faith and Credit

An Order of Protection from Missouri is valid in every other state and should be upheld by law enforcement officers in every state. This also means that if a person has an Order of Protection from another state, it is valid in Missouri.

include, but is not limited to, following the other person or unwanted communication or unwanted contact.” *(Examples include when an abuser repeatedly acts in ways that make their partner feel frightened, intimidated or emotionally distressed. This can include unwanted communication or contact such as following them, texting or phoning them repeatedly, showing up at their workplace, etc.)*

- **Child Abuse:** “Any physical injury, sexual abuse or emotional abuse inflicted on a child other than by accidental means by an adult household member, or stalking of a child. Discipline including spanking, administered in a reasonable manner, shall not be construed to be abuse.” *(The law provides for protection against violence toward children as well. If a child has been the victim of any physical injury, sexual abuse or emotional harm by an adult household member, their parent or guardian may file for a Child Order of Protection. This includes sexual abuse of children, such as fondling or rape. The abused children do not have to be the children of the person against whom the Order of Protection is filed.)*

HOW AN ORDER OF PROTECTION CAN HELP

A victim of abuse, stalking or sexual assault can seek an Order of Protection from a court without charge and without having to hire an attorney. In the legal process, a person who seeks an Order of Protection is called a “Petitioner” and the person against whom an order is sought is called the “Respondent.”

After a survivor of abuse completes the written request for a protection order, a judge may issue an Order of Protection to order the abuser (the Respondent) to stop abusing, sexually assaulting, harassing or stalking the survivor (the Petitioner) and require the Respondent to stay away from their home or workplace. An Order of Protection also can be filed on behalf of a child — any person younger than 17 unless otherwise emancipated — if that child is being abused or is in danger of being abused. An Order of Protection from Missouri is valid in every other state and should be upheld by law enforcement officers in every state. This also means that if a person has an Order of Protection from another state, it is valid in Missouri ([Section 455.067 RSMo.](#)).

THERE ARE TWO TYPES OF ORDERS OF PROTECTION:

***Ex Parte* Order of Protection**

This is a temporary emergency order issued by the court to protect the survivor as the Petitioner. It is issued by a judge without a court hearing. Once issued, an *Ex Parte* Order of Protection remains in effect until a court hearing, which is held within 15 days after the protection order is filed. Sometimes there is a delay when either the Petitioner or the Respondent has “good cause” to ask for the hearing to be rescheduled. This is called a continuance. A continuance also may be granted to give additional time to “serve” the order. For an order to be served means a copy of the *Ex Parte* Order of Protection is physically delivered to the Respondent by a law enforcement officer. The *Ex Parte* order will remain in effect even if the court hearing is delayed after a continuance request by the Petitioner, the Respondent or an attorney representing either party.



Full Order of Protection

This is the longer-lasting order that is issued after the judge holds a court hearing. The Petitioner must attend that hearing. If they do not appear for the hearing, their request for the Order of Protection will be dismissed. If the Respondent has been properly served and does not appear for the hearing, a full Order of Protection may be issued after the Petitioner has presented their evidence. This evidence can include the survivor's testimony about the threats, harm, or abuse they experienced from the Respondent and can include testimony from anyone who witnessed the abuse, police reports, medical records, or records of texts, phone calls, and voicemail from the Respondent. During the hearing, both the Petitioner and the Respondent (or the attorneys, if you or the Respondent have one) can speak to the judge. During the court hearing, a Respondent can "consent" to the Order of Protection being issued without providing any testimony or evidence for why it shouldn't be issued.

ENFORCING AN ORDER OF PROTECTION

A violation of an Order of Protection is a criminal offense, and a survivor should contact law enforcement immediately if the order has been violated. The Respondent can be arrested and prosecuted for certain crimes such as: if they continue to abuse, contact, frighten, or stalk their partner; if any provision of the child custody order is ignored; if they enter the survivor's residence or place of employment or school or go within a certain distance of the survivor or their children. If the violation is not one of these crimes or the Respondent has not complied with other provisions of the order, the Petitioner can file a Motion for Civil Contempt. For example, when an Order of Protection requires the Respondent to pay child support and maintenance, but they do not pay it. After the Motion for Civil Contempt is filed, a court date for a hearing will be scheduled. On the court date, if the Respondent doesn't have a good reason for disobeying the Order of Protection, the judge can find them in contempt of court that day. Jail time and/or additional fees may be ordered.

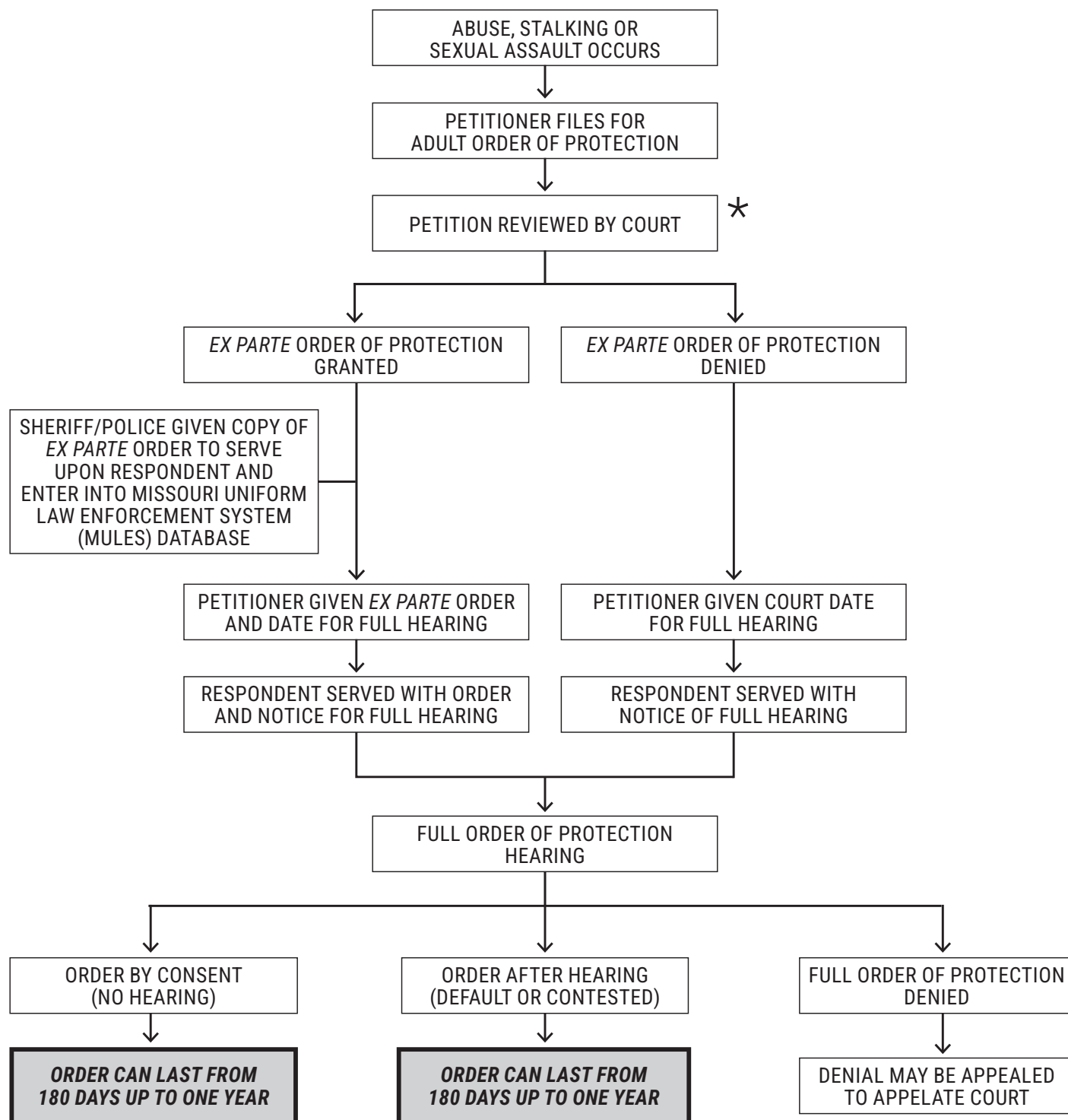


Advocates are available to provide support

Both the criminal and civil legal systems require a certain amount of cooperation from the victim. Cooperation can range from attending a hearing for an Order of Protection to testifying in a criminal case. Advocates are available to provide support through them all.



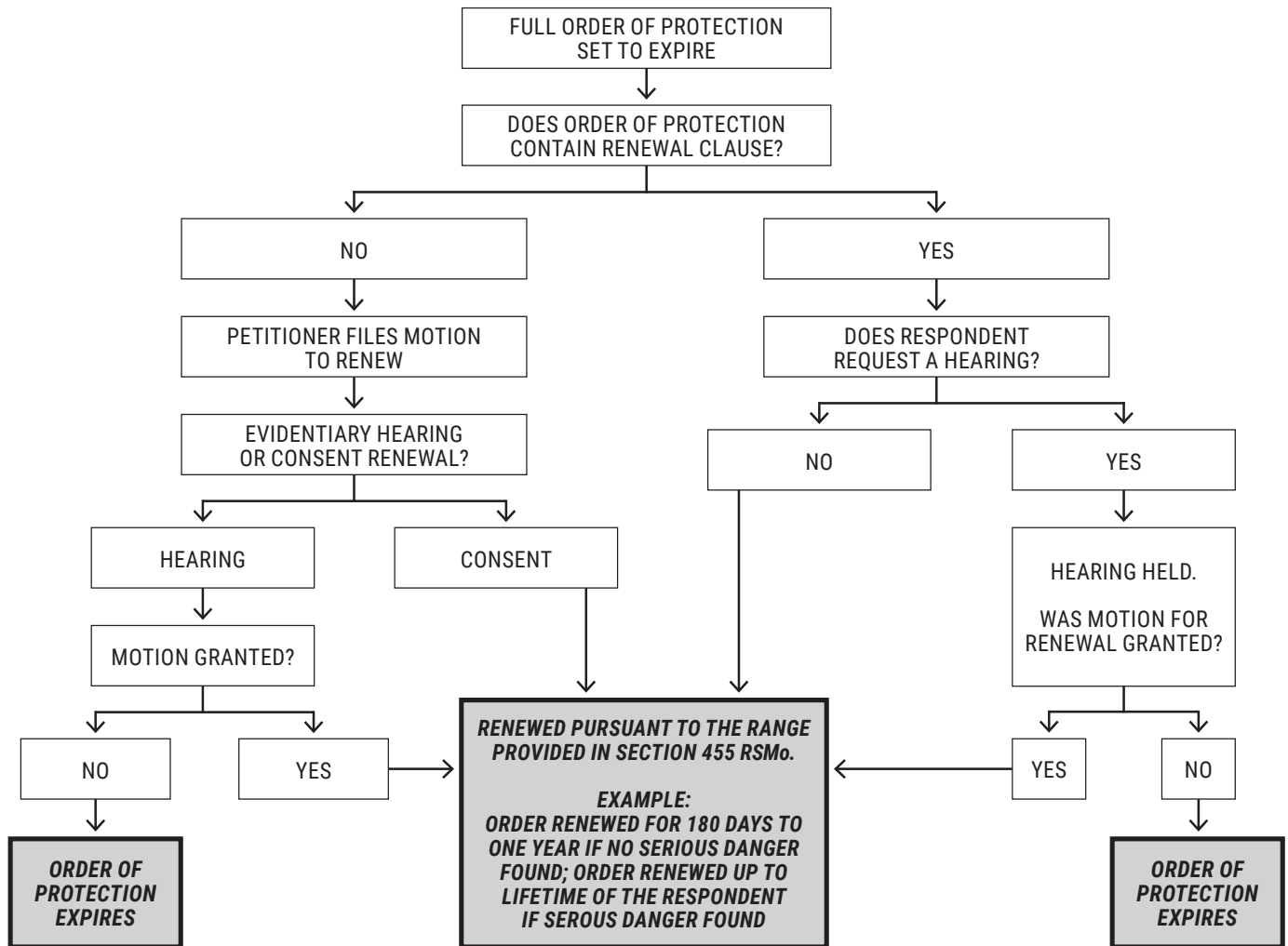
Procedure for obtaining an Order of Protection



* Note: A court has the right under Section 455.035 RSMo to dismiss your petition if the allegations do not meet the legal requirements to grant an Order of Protection. To find a local domestic and sexual violence agency, please visit www.mocadsv.org. This chart was developed by the Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence.



Renewals of Adult Orders of Protection



Missouri Order of Protection laws at a glance

WHO CAN GET AN ORDER OF PROTECTION?

Adult Order of Protection: (Section 455.010 RSMo) The person who files for the Order of Protection is called the petitioner. The petitioner is any adult, defined as a person 17 years of age or older, or otherwise emancipated (Section 455.010 RSMo).

Child Order of Protection: (Section 455.010 & 455.503 RSMo)

The petitioner is any parent, guardian, guardian *ad litem*, court-appointed special advocate or juvenile officer on behalf of a child (any person younger than 17 years of age).

WHOM CAN THE ORDER BE ISSUED AGAINST?

Adult and Child Orders of Protection: (Section 455.010 RSMo) The person the Order of Protection is filed against is called the respondent. The respondent can be any family or household member (a spouse, a former spouse, any person related by blood or marriage, any person residing together or who resided together in the past, any person who is or has been in a continuing social relationship of a romantic or intimate nature with the victim, or anyone who has a child in common, regardless of whether they have been married or have resided together (Section 455.010 RSMo)) and/or a person alleged to have committed an act of stalking or sexual assault. Petitioners can file protection orders for sexual assault and stalking against people who are not their family or household members. In addition, an Order of Protection can be filed against a child, a person younger than 17 years of age.

WHAT ACTS BY THE ABUSER FORM THE BASIS FOR RELIEF?

Adult and Child Orders of Protection: (Section 455.010 RSMo) Abuse, which includes, but is not limited to, the occurrence of any of the following acts, attempts, or threats against a person who may be protected under Missouri law: assault, battery, coercion, harassment, abuse of petitioner's pet(s), sexual assault, or unlawful imprisonment, except abuse shall not include abuse inflicted on a child by accidental means by an adult or household member or discipline of a child, including spanking, in a reasonable manner. Stalking and sexual assault also are covered by this section of law.

WHAT ARE THE LAWS THAT ESTABLISH ORDERS OF PROTECTION?

Adult Order of Protection:

(Section 455.045 RSMo) *Ex Parte* Order of Protection.

(Section 455.050 RSMo) Full Order of Protection.

Child Order of Protection:

(Section 455.520 RSMo) *Ex Parte* child Order of Protection.

(Section 455.523 RSMo) Full Child Order of Protection.

HOW DO YOU APPLY FOR AN ORDER OF PROTECTION?

Adult Order of Protection: (Sections 455.015 to 455.038 RSMo) The petitioner files a petition with the court asking for an *Ex Parte* Order of Protection (a temporary Order of Protection) if there is an immediate and present danger to the petitioner. An *Ex Parte* Order of Protection is not always granted, but the court always should set a hearing date. A hearing on a Full Order of Protection should be held within 15 days after the petition is filed, unless there is good cause for a continuance (Section 455.040 RSMo).

Child Order of Protection: (Sections 455.503 to 455.510 RSMo) First, the petitioner files a petition with the court asking for an *Ex Parte* Order of Protection (a temporary Order of Protection) if there is an immediate and present danger to the child. An *Ex Parte* Order of Protection is not always granted, but the court always should set a hearing date. A hearing on a Full Child Order of Protection should be held within 15 days after petition is filed unless there is good cause for a continuance (Section 455.516 RSMo).



HOW LONG CAN AN ORDER LAST, AND IS IT RENEWABLE?

Initial Adult Orders of Protection: (Section 455.040 RSMo) An initial Order of Protection, after a hearing or by a consent order, can be issued for a minimum of 180 days to a maximum of one year if there is no finding that the respondent poses a "serious danger" to the physical or mental health of the petitioner or a minor household member of the petitioner. If after a hearing the court makes a finding that respondent poses a serious danger to the petitioner, then the court can issue the initial Order of Protection for a minimum of two years and a maximum of ten years.

Renewal of Adult Orders of Protection: (Section 455.040 RSMo) There are two ways to get an Order of Protection renewed: automatically or through a hearing requesting the renewal. A judge may not allow automatic renewals. In that case a petitioner would have to petition the court for the renewal. If the Order of Protection is automatically renewed, it shall be for any term of renewal of a Full Order of Protection as set forth in Section 455.040 RSMo. The respondent may request a hearing by thirty days prior to the expiration of the Order of Protection to contest automatic renewal.

If an Order of Protection is not automatically renewed, the petitioner may file a motion with the court requesting the order be renewed. After a hearing on petitioner's motion for renewal, the Full Order of Protection may be renewed periodically and shall be valid for at least one hundred eighty days and not more than one year from the expiration date of the previously issued Full Order of Protection. If after a hearing the court makes specific written findings that the respondent poses a serious danger to the physical or mental health of the petitioner or of a minor household member of the petitioner, the renewed protective order may be renewed periodically and shall be valid for at least two years and up to the life of the respondent.

Initial Child Orders of Protection: (Section 455.516 RSMo) A Child Order of Protection can last for a minimum of 180 days and a maximum of one year. The order can be renewed twice; each renewal can last up to one year. No new incident of abuse is required if the order is renewed before the old one expires.

Renewals of Child Orders of Protection: (Section 455.516 RSMo) The court may, upon a finding that it is in the best interest of the parties, include a provision that any Full Order of Protection for one year shall automatically renew unless the respondent requests a hearing by 30 days prior to its expiration. You may check the box on your petition requesting an automatic one-year renewal.

WHAT HAPPENS IF A CUSTODY ORDER IS ALREADY IN PLACE OR PENDING BEFORE AN ORDER OF PROTECTION IS GRANTED?

Adult and Child Orders of Protection: (Sections 455.050 & 455.523 RSMo) A court may not change custody in an Order of Protection if a child custody order is in place or is pending. A custody order is pending if there is a date set for a custody hearing. Local practice may require modification of the protective order to remove the custody terms.

WHAT HAPPENS IF ANOTHER COURT MAKES A CUSTODY ORDER AFTER AN ORDER OF PROTECTION IS GRANTED?

Adult Order of Protection: (Section 455.060 RSMo) The portion of the Order of Protection relating to custody, visitation, support and maintenance is no longer valid, but the prohibitions regarding abuse might remain in effect. Local practice may require modification of the order to remove custody terms.

Child Order of Protection: (Section 455.528 RSMo) The portion of the Order of Protection relating to custody, visitation, support and maintenance is no longer valid, but the prohibitions regarding abuse, sexual assault or stalking might remain in effect. Local practice may require modification of the order to remove custody terms.

CAN AN ORDER BE MODIFIED?

Adult Order of Protection: (Sections 455.060 & 455.065 RSMo)
Yes. Upon the filing of a motion and a showing of changed circumstances.

Child Order of Protection: (Sections 455.528 & 455.530 RSMo)
Yes. Upon the filing of a motion and a showing of changed circumstances.



ARE ORDERS OF PROTECTION FROM OTHER STATES ENFORCEABLE IN MISSOURI?

Adult Order of Protection: (Section 455.067 RSMo) Yes. Missouri law provides that orders from other states must be given “full faith and credit” in Missouri. A procedure for registering these “foreign orders” is contained in the statute. However, registration does not have to occur for such orders to be enforced.

Child Order of Protection: (Section 455.067 RSMo) Yes. Missouri law provides that orders from other states must be given “full faith and credit” in Missouri. A procedure for registering these “foreign orders” is contained in the statute. However, registration does not have to occur for such orders to be enforced.

WHAT HAPPENS IF AN ORDER IS VIOLATED?

Adult and Child Orders of Protection: (Sections 455.085, 455.090, 455.538 and 455.524 RSMo) The respondent can be arrested and prosecuted for a crime. Arrestable violations of the terms and conditions of a protection order include abuse, sexual assault, stalking, disregard of child custody provisions, communication initiated by the respondent, or entrance upon the premises of the petitioner’s dwelling unit, place of employment or school, or being within a certain distance of the petitioner or child of the petitioner. If the violation involves the failure to surrender custody of a minor child to the person to whom custody is awarded, the respondent must be arrested and the child turned over to the custodial parent. A contempt of court action can be brought in the issuing court, and the violator can be held in contempt of court. (This sometimes results in a fine and can include jail time.) The court may schedule compliance review hearings to monitor the respondent’s compliance with the order regardless of whether there has been a violation.



BENEFITS AND DRAWBACKS OF PROTECTION ORDERS

Survivors and their children might face increased danger when they leave their abusive partners or seek assistance from law enforcement officers, the court system or social service providers. As a result, it is very important to develop a well thought-out safety plan.

Survivors are the experts on their situation, and they have been using all of their skills to cope with abuse against them so far. The decision to leave an abusive relationship or seek a protection order for stalking or sexual assault is complicated because the person who harmed them might try to retaliate or continue their abuse in other ways. There is a risk that the threats, abuse, or violence might worsen as a survivor tries to file an Order of Protection or get other help from the legal system, and safety planning is a necessary first step.

It is important that survivors are fully informed about the benefits and drawbacks of getting an Order of Protection. It must be made clear that it is not an ironclad shield against the abuser's renewed assaults. Even law enforcement agencies that have strong resolve to respond to domestic violence cannot provide officers to be with a survivor 24 hours a day. Furthermore, a survivor's ability to rely on assistance from police and sheriff's deputies often depends upon the particular officer who answers a call. Even at best, the violence might happen suddenly so that a victim can call for help only after an assault has occurred.

Some survivors might harbor general doubt and distrust of law enforcement or might be fearful to go to court and encounter their abuser. Consent Orders of Protection provide survivors the same level of protections as a full Order of Protection without requiring them to testify in court. However, because they do not include a legal finding of abuse that can support custody, criminal, and immigration cases, survivors should consult with an advocate or an attorney before agreeing to a Consent Order.

Experience suggests that Orders of Protection are most effective with abusers who ordinarily obey the law and have something to protect, such as their standing in the community or their employment. For the abuser who has contempt for all authority, has a history of other criminal behavior or is determined to control their partner at all costs, an Order of Protection might offer little increased safety to a victim.

Yet, having an Order of Protection can enhance local law enforcement's efforts to assist the victim, and repeated violations of a protection order could eventually result in legal consequences and accountability for a perpetrator.

ENFORCEMENT OF PROTECTION ORDERS

A violation of an Order of Protection is a criminal offense, and a survivor should contact law enforcement immediately if terms of the order have been violated. If the officer is shown the order and has reason to believe the violation has occurred, the law enforcement officer should arrest the abuser. For this reason, survivors are encouraged to keep a copy of their order with them at all times. If an order has been violated, the abuser can be arrested and prosecuted for certain crimes. The abuser can be arrested for continuing to contact the Petitioner, threatening or stalking behavior, disregarding any provision of the child custody order, or entering the Petitioner's home, place of employment or school, or coming within a certain distance of

Address Confidentiality Program

safe at home

Denny Hoskins • Secretary of State

How can survivors protect their contact information or address?

If a survivor with a protection order does not feel safe with the Respondent knowing where they live, or if they have moved to a new address unknown to the Respondent, they have the right to request that their address not be disclosed in the court documents. They also can ensure that their address is not revealed in public records by applying for the Safe at Home program through the Secretary of State's office. This program allows a survivor to establish a post office box in Jefferson City that is not part of any public record. The Secretary of State will receive the survivor's mail, then forward the mail to their actual address. An abuser who tries to get an address of someone enrolled in the program can be charged with felony stalking ([Section 565.225 RSMo.](#)).

You can get more information about the Safe at Home program at 866.509.1409, or www.sos.mo.gov.



For further information about civil and criminal issues related to domestic violence, refer to *Domestic Violence and the Law: A Practical Guide for Survivors*. This publication is helpful to both survivors and advocates navigating the justice system in Missouri. Copies are available at www.mocadsv.org or by contacting the Missouri Bar at 573.635.4128.

the Petitioner or their child. If the violation involves the abuser's failure to surrender custody of the children as ordered, they can be arrested and the children turned over to the victim. Even if the abuser is not arrested, survivors should keep a detailed record of all violations, noting the date, location and a description of the incident. This documentation can help prove an ongoing pattern of abuse if there are multiple violations of the Order of Protection.

Criminal domestic violence laws

PREPARING FOR INVOLVEMENT WITH THE CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEM

Becoming involved with the criminal legal system and going through a criminal trial as a victim of crime is a long and difficult process. Safety planning will be important. Part of a survivor's safety plan might include taking care of their emotional well-being with the help of a victim advocate, counselor, support group, or with supportive family, friends, or faith community.

As a victim of crime, a survivor cannot "file charges" against the person who has committed a crime against them. It is the role of the prosecuting attorney (called the district attorney in some Missouri cities) to file criminal charges against an abuser (who, if charged, becomes the defendant). Prosecuting attorneys' offices have employees called "victim-witness advocates" who should keep in contact with a survivor before the trial date to discuss the case and the evidence of the crime(s) committed against them. If there are any witnesses to the abuse or violence that the prosecutor does not know about, a survivor can inform that advocate or other staff in the prosecutor's office about these witnesses. It also is important for a survivor to let the prosecuting attorney know if the defendant attempts to contact them after charges are filed and during the time the case is pending.

Victims of crime in Missouri are guaranteed certain rights about their participation in the criminal legal system. To find out more about crime victims' rights, contact the local prosecuting attorney's office, the Missouri Attorney General's Office at 573.751.1338, or the Missouri Department of Public Safety Crime Victim Services Unit at 866.334.6682. Further information is available in the Missouri Victims' Rights laws in [Chapter 595 RSMo.](#), available online at www.revisor.mo.gov.

Criminal cases are routinely continued for several weeks or even months to allow the defendant to hire an attorney or to subpoena witnesses. While waiting for a trial, a survivor can stay in touch with staff in the prosecutor's office to help prepare for the trial in which they will be called to testify. Community-based advocates can help contact the prosecuting attorney's office for information to help the survivor keep track of the scheduled date for the case and any changes to the dates of hearings or trial date. Make sure to contact that office before the scheduled date to determine whether they need to be present in court. Again, survivors can gain support and assistance through this long process from local domestic violence agencies.



It can be helpful for a survivor to know and understand the criminal charges against the person who has abused or harmed them. When the defendant is found guilty after a trial or pleads guilty to a criminal offense, the punishment will depend on the criminal charges filed and the circumstances of the case. A judge will issue the sentence but will consider the prosecuting attorney's recommendations as well as other factors, such as whether the defendant previously committed a similar crime. If there is a jury trial, the judge might be limited by the jury's recommendation. For most convictions of felony-level crimes, the sentence may include a prison term. A defendant found guilty of a misdemeanor-level crime might receive a suspended sentence, a jail sentence, a fine, or probation. Depending on the circumstances of the case, a survivor may want to ask the court to order the defendant to participate in what is called a "batterer intervention program (BIP)," obtain substance abuse counseling and/or to stay away from them and their family.

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR CRIMINAL OFFENDERS

Domestic violence charges ought to be accorded the same prosecution efforts as any other violent offense. Communities and the justice system have a critical interest in reducing the prevalence of domestic violence, particularly because such violence tends to escalate in frequency and severity if unchecked. Domestic violence is widespread throughout communities and represents a major threat to public health and safety. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (CDC NSVIS), nearly 1 in 5 women and nearly 1 in 12 men have experienced severe physical violence by an intimate partner. Another recent CDC report found that more than half of female homicide victims are killed by an intimate partner.

In addition to holding criminals accountable for their conduct, there are other significant reasons that underscore the importance of a diligent response to domestic violence from members of the criminal justice system. Offender prosecution in domestic violence cases can protect the victim from additional acts of violence, reduce children's exposure and possible injury, deter the abuser from committing further acts of violence and reinforce a community's refusal to tolerate domestic abuse.

Collaboration: Expanding services with community partners

Working collectively provides opportunities to secure results we are more likely to achieve together than alone. These joint efforts, which are commonly known as collaborations, demand relating to and working with one another in innovative ways. In the context of addressing domestic violence, it is essential to bring together diverse service providers and community members, meld their resources, and stretch their minds to embrace new ideas and strategies.

What is a BIP?

Batterer Intervention Programs (BIPs) are available to people who are abusive to their intimate partners. The goal of BIPs is to increase accountability for the violence that has occurred, provide education about the impact of domestic violence and develop skills and resources that will prevent participants from using violence in the future. MOCADSV Service Standards for BIPs require that these programs include information about:

- What a person gains from perpetrating abuse
- The importance of accepting responsibility for abusive/violent actions and behaviors
- Cooperative and non-abusive forms of communication
- Various forms of abuse — so as to not minimize non-physically abusive behaviors
- Tactics of power and control. Identification of tactics shall include isolation, emotional abuse, economic abuse, use of children, use of privilege, intimidation and covert/overt threats
- Equality and power-sharing in relationships. Identification of relationship skills shall include respect, trust, support, honesty and accountability, economic partnership, negotiation and fairness, and responsible parenting
- Long- and short-term effects of violence on partners and children
- Exercises shall build empathy to understand the perspective of survivors
- Attitudes, myths and excuses for abuse from the perspective that abuse is the sole responsibility and choice of the person who commits that abuse





Community coalition-building

Community collaboration and coalition-building is an essential aspect of domestic violence advocacy. For change to occur, community stakeholders must be engaged, educated on the dynamics of domestic violence, and willing to change. Coalition-building fosters collaboration among agencies, systems and individuals in the community. Through this collaboration, participation and leadership, communities can mobilize toward taking action against domestic violence. There is so much more that can be achieved by working together than by working alone.

For the sake of justice and human rights, communities have an interest and obligation to end domestic violence. The health, economic and social costs of domestic violence warrant attention as well. Living in an atmosphere dominated by domestic violence harms children and adults. Every community owes these individuals respect and competent services that provide safety and restore their well-being and sense of security.

Communities throughout Missouri are already effectively responding to domestic violence. Known as coordinated community responses, these efforts are often formed and maintained by individuals and organizations that most frequently assist survivors of domestic violence. Groups of concerned civic leaders, law enforcement and justice system officials, social service and health care providers, educators, and clergy can have a significant effect upon their communities when they unite for a common purpose. Some groups meet formally on a regular basis; others have an informal structure that relies upon regular and honest communication among the participants.

Collaboration is a process that gets people to work together in new ways. To most effectively collaborate, each community partner needs to know what resources partner agencies have to offer, how the referral and networking connections should be structured, and what services they can expect to be offered to the population of survivors and children all partners are striving to serve. To facilitate a cooperative alliance with domestic violence advocates, it is important to know their philosophy about providing services, confidentiality requirements, and how they can assist survivors and their children by providing support and safety.

Chapter 4

Preventing Domestic Violence

Domestic violence prevention can take many forms, but at the heart of prevention is social change. Preventing domestic violence means changing our society by addressing attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, environments and policies to eliminate those that contribute to domestic violence and to promote those that prevent domestic violence.

Work in the movement to end domestic violence focuses on social change through: education about the dynamics of violence; legislative changes to hold perpetrators accountable; finding and building resources to assist survivors; forming alliances with law enforcement and courts; and increasing perpetrator accountability. As time goes on, the goals and priorities of the movement continue to change in accordance with changes in society. Prevention is the natural evolution of a movement intent on creating social change.

Prevention can sometimes seem overwhelming because the oppression that underlies domestic violence is deeply rooted in society and is difficult to change. Prevention also can seem like a luxury when there are not sufficient resources to help victims. Certainly, the movement to end domestic violence can provide quality services and advocate for victims of domestic violence, but the question remains: How can advocates better address the larger issue of the oppression of women, people of color, as well as gender and sexual minorities, among other marginalized groups? What can advocates do to prevent domestic violence?

Domestic violence can have long-lasting and harmful consequences on individuals, families and communities. All violence is preventable, and the goal of preventing domestic violence is to stop it before it starts.

Much of today's domestic violence prevention language, models and research come from the public health field. The public health model is an effective way to approach violence prevention, as it focuses on the health and well-being of the community rather than an individual. Instead of only addressing isolated incidents of domestic violence, a focus on public health seeks to inform, educate and empower all members of the community. It looks at large-scale ways to prevent disease or injury from occurring rather than treat disease or injury. It is grounded in principles of social justice and equality and is focused on changing norms that perpetuate and condone violence.

Prevention efforts should reduce the occurrence of domestic violence through promoting healthy, respectful and nonviolent relationships. Addressing domestic violence on multiple levels (individual, relationship, community, and society) and in multiple ways is key to prevention.



Prevention is the natural evolution of a movement intent on creating social change

Prevention can sometimes seem overwhelming because the oppression that underlies domestic violence is deeply rooted in society and is difficult to change. But prevention at its core works to address the larger issues of oppression in order to reduce the number of victims who need services.





Changing society

Domestic violence prevention can take many forms, but at the heart of prevention is social change. Ultimately, prevention requires changing social norms that allow and condone domestic violence. Preventing violence means changing our society — addressing attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, environments and policies. Prevention means eliminating factors that contribute to violence and promoting those that prevent the violence.

Prevention efforts are varied and community-specific. Some communities implement school-based educational sessions to address attitudes, skills, beliefs and behaviors. Other communities focus on bystander intervention or on teaching individuals to safely intervene and interrupt abusive situations. Social marketing campaigns have been used to promote positive media messages responding to domestic violence. The most effective programs are culturally relevant and reflect the values of their intended audience. Although evidence is still limited about which approach works best, many communities have implemented multiple strategies toward preventing domestic violence.

Preventing intimate partner violence (IPV) across the lifespan

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention developed Preventing Intimate Partner Violence Across the Lifespan, a comprehensive framework that outlines promising strategies for preventing domestic violence. The framework identifies three components needed for domestic violence prevention: strategy, approach and evidence. **Strategy** refers to the action taken to prevent domestic violence. This could include targeting vulnerable populations or abusers. **Approach** refers to the ways in which the strategy will be implemented. This could include programs, policies and practices such as education in schools or new laws that increase abuser accountability. Evidence refers to how effective these approaches are in preventing domestic violence.

LEVELS OF PREVENTION WORK

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention uses the following definitions to describe the three levels of violence prevention:

Primary Prevention: Activities that take place before violence has occurred to prevent initial perpetration or victimization. Examples of this include education in schools about healthy relationships.

Secondary Prevention: The immediate responses after violence has occurred to address the short-term consequences of violence. This includes emergency domestic violence shelters and victim advocate programs.

Tertiary Prevention: The long-term responses after violence has occurred to deal with the lasting consequences of violence. This includes additional services for survivors that support healing and foster independence. Tertiary prevention also includes the work of batterer intervention and sex offender treatment programs.

The *Preventing IPV* framework focuses on primary prevention but also addresses secondary and tertiary levels of prevention.

THE PREVENTING IPV FRAMEWORK INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING EVIDENCE-BASED STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES:

STRATEGY: Teach safe and healthy relationship skills

Approach: Offer learning programs for youths

Domestic and sexual violence agencies throughout Missouri are visiting classrooms at schools in their local communities to teach healthy relationship skills to young people. These programs also provide educational sessions and support groups outside of school settings.

Approach: Strengthen leadership opportunities for girls

The oppression of women and girls is a primary cause of domestic violence. Programs that provide leadership skills to girls at a young age narrow the gender power gap and promote equality.

STRATEGY: Engage influential adults and peers

Approach: Mobilize men and boys as allies in prevention

This strategy includes campaigns focused on uniting men and boys in Missouri to prevent and end violence against girls and women. Other efforts target men in fraternities and athletic teams. Preventing domestic violence requires boys and men to get involved in the movement, collaborate with existing programs and take action to draw other men and boys to support survivors and be a voice for change.

Approach: Promote bystander empowerment and education

The term “bystander” refers to a person who witnesses an act of violence. Bystanders sometimes passively stand by watching an event take place without getting involved. For primary prevention — stopping violence before it happens — a bystander is someone who actively intervenes when witnessing situations that promote or condone violence. This shift is important for a few reasons. First, empowering active and visible bystanders to stand up and speak out against violence shifts the cultural norm to make it more acceptable to speak up against violence. It makes violence less acceptable and, therefore, less likely to occur. Second, bystander intervention moves us away from the notion that men are perpetrators and women are victims, and instead holds us all responsible for being active bystanders and preventing violence.

STRATEGY: Strengthen economic supports for women and families

Approach: Strengthen household financial security

Income-generating programs for survivors decrease the gender pay gap and connect survivors to resources and opportunities that lessen their vulnerability to domestic violence. Examples of this are microloans and referrals to trade organizations.



Stand up and speak out

Empowering active and visible bystanders to stand up and speak out against violence shifts the cultural norm to make it more acceptable to speak up against violence.



Awareness versus prevention: What's the difference?

It is important to understand the difference between awareness and prevention. Awareness activities, such as one-time events or education sessions, will not change beliefs, attitudes, or behaviors required to prevent domestic violence. However, without a basic understanding of the nature and dynamics of domestic violence, a community does not have the context or sense of urgency to do true prevention work. Institutional and community awareness of the issue is needed, as is an understanding of the concept of prevention. Thus, awareness is necessary but not sufficient to achieve social change. Awareness must mobilize the community to take action and engage in prevention efforts in order to bring about social change. Comprehensive primary prevention programming can foster that change.

STRATEGY “P”: Create protective environments

Approach: Improve organizational policies and workplace climate

Workplace policies that are flexible and encourage survivors to seek help increase their ability to leave an abusive relationship and prevent further acts of domestic violence from occurring. An example of this is unpaid-leave policies that allow survivors to leave work to attend to issues such as seeking counseling, obtaining medical care or pursuing legal matters.

Approach: Modify the physical and social environment of neighborhoods

The impact of domestic violence reaches beyond individual survivors; the entire community is affected in varying ways. Communities that struggle with higher rates of domestic violence often face inequities in other forms that contribute to high levels of community trauma and harm. Laws and regulations can improve the stability and environment of the community to decrease exposure to violence, improve social interactions and decrease domestic violence. Examples of this include creating green spaces and reducing the number of locations where alcohol can be purchased.

STRATEGY “SV”: Support survivors to increase safety and lessen harm

Approach: Provide survivor-centered services for survivors

Domestic violence programs throughout Missouri provide outreach advocacy, emergency hospital response, counseling, support groups, legal advocacy, and many other services to survivors of domestic violence. These programs implement a trauma-informed and survivor-defined approach to ensure their services are relevant and meaningful to survivors.

EVIDENCE

The final component of the Preventing IPV framework requires ongoing monitoring and evaluation to assess the effectiveness of these approaches. To what extent do these policies, practices, and programs meet the goals of the Preventing IPV strategies? To what extent do they prevent domestic violence? Some approaches will be more effective than others. Local culture will influence what is relevant to certain audiences, and evaluation results will vary based on the community that the approach is implemented in. No single strategy will be entirely effective; multiple strategies are needed and act simultaneously toward preventing domestic violence.



Health equity and community wellness

Promoting healthy relationships is essential to preventing domestic violence. Many agencies have focused their attention on primary prevention efforts that educate community members and provide information about critical interpersonal skills for building healthy relationships. Core lessons of these programs include boundary-setting, mutual respect, shared decision-making, compassionate communication, and healthy sexuality. The majority of these programs are designed for youths and are implemented in school settings.

Domestic violence has a devastating impact on the overall health and wellness of communities and yet is widely viewed as a social issue rather than a health issue. Some innovative agencies have shifted their prevention efforts to focus on health and wellness. They engage in community-level projects that increase access to protective environments, such as safe housing and quality education, and implement changes that decrease risk factors, such as improving law enforcement response. Other agencies address health directly by connecting survivors to health insurance and medical care.

The ultimate goal of prevention is to produce healthy communities free of domestic violence. Agencies that promote healthy relationships and public health are at the forefront of domestic violence prevention. As they make inroads toward improving the health of communities, they also represent a solid path forward for the movement to end domestic violence.

Progress is occurring

The harm caused by domestic violence is undeniable. It reaches into the lives of individuals, families, and entire communities. It has a lasting impact on our culture and represents who we are as a society. Yet, survivors heal and lead fulfilled lives. Advocates continue to provide creative options and facilitate positive changes on behalf of survivors and the systems they interact with. We face challenges with hope. We meet each day with renewed energy. Our progress is mounting, and each step forward moves us closer to ending domestic violence.



The ultimate goal of prevention is to produce healthy communities free of domestic violence

Programs that promote healthy relationships and public health are at the forefront of domestic violence prevention. As they make inroads toward improving the health of communities, they also represent a solid path forward for the movement to end domestic violence.



Recommended websites

National resources

- **The Battered Women's Justice Project**
www.bwjp.org
- **The Domestic Abuse Intervention Project**
www.duluth-model.org
- **Domestic Violence Evidence Project**
www.dvevidenceproject.org
- **Faith Trust Institute**
www.faithtrustinstitute.org
- **The Full Frame Initiative**
www.fullframeinitiative.org
- **Futures Without Violence**
www.futureswithoutviolence.org
- **National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence**
www.ncdsv.org
- **National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma and Mental Health**
www.nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org
- **National Coalition Against Domestic Violence**
www.ncadv.org
- **National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs**
www.avp.org/ncavp
- **National Domestic Violence Hotline**
www.ndvh.org
- **National Electronic Network on Violence Against Women (VAWnet)**
www.vawnet.org
- **National Link Coalition**
www.nationallinkcoalition.org
- **National Network to End Domestic Violence**
www.nnedv.org
- **National Resource Center on Domestic Violence**
www.nrcdv.org
- **National Stalking Resource Center**
www.ncvc.org/src



- **National Teen Dating Violence Hotline**
www.loveisrespect.org
- **The Northwest Network of Bisexual, Trans, Lesbian and Gay Survivors of Abuse**
www.nwnetwork.org
- **Praxis International**
www.praxisinternational.org
- **PreventConnect**
www.preventconnect.org
- **Promising Futures: Best Practices for Serving Children, Youth and Parents Experiencing Domestic Violence**, www.promisingfutureswithoutviolence.org
- **U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Division of Violence Prevention**
www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence
- **U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics**
www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs

Missouri resources

- **Crime Victims' Compensation**
www.dps.mo.gov/dir/programs/cvc
- **Department of Public Safety, Crime Victim Services Unit**
www.dps.mo.gov/dir/programs/cvsu
- **Department of Corrections, Office of Victim Services**
www.doc.mo.gov/director/office-victim-services
- **Department of Corrections, PREA (Prison Rape Elimination Act) Unit**
www.doc.mo.gov/programs/PREA
- **Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence**
www.mocadsv.org
- **Missouri Office of Prosecution Services**
www.prosecutors.mo.gov
- **Missouri Victims Automated Notification System (MOVANS)**
www.dps.mo.gov/dir/programs/cvsu/movans.php or www.vinelink.com
- **Safe at Home**
www.sos.mo.gov/safeathome



The mission and purpose of MOCADSV

**The Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence (MOCADSV)
empowers people to be a part of something constructive and significant.
We unite Missourians to end rape and abuse.**

Since 1980, MOCADSV has been the statewide leader of individuals and organizations working to end rape and abuse in Missouri. Today MOCADSV's mission remains focused on this work of "uniting Missourians with a common value that rape and abuse must end, and advances this through education, alliance, research and public policy."

MOCADSV provides opportunities to engage in and meaningfully address domestic and sexual violence at a statewide level. We provide a positive connection to these issues that all people can be a part of. No one has to confront, manage, or struggle with violence alone. We advocate to secure money for programs that help survivors, work to advance laws that protect Missourians, and ensure advocates are trained on evidence-based and data-driven practices. MOCADSV continues to be recognized nationally and internationally for our innovation in tackling the chronic questions and problems faced by local domestic and sexual violence programs.

THERE ARE SEVERAL WAYS TO JOIN AND SUPPORT MOCADSV:

- **Organizational Members** are the nonprofit programs in Missouri that directly serve victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and dating violence.
- **Affiliate Members** are programs or services that have a different primary mission than domestic or sexual violence but, through their work, also serve individuals experiencing violence.
- **Professional Members** are individuals who work in related fields who wish to attend trainings and receive information about the work of MOCADSV.
- **Supporting Members** are individuals who wish to support the work of MOCADSV through donations and stay connected with the organization and the efforts to end rape and abuse in Missouri.
- **Corporate Supporters** are businesses that wish to demonstrate a commitment to ending rape and abuse.

For more information, please visit www.mocadsv.org or contact us at 888.666.1911.



mocadsv

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For D/deaf and Hard-of-Hearing and
Late Deafened, dial 711 for Relay Missouri.

