

**WHAT IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?**

Domestic violence is more than just a “family problem” – it is a crime! Domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behaviors used by one individual to exert power and control over another individual in the context of an intimate relationship. It involves not only hitting or pushing, but includes sexual, psychological or emotional abuse as well. You may be a victim even if you have no physical injuries. Domestic violence crosses all social, economic and cultural boundaries. *ABUSE DOES NOT DISCRIMINATE!*

Although public awareness of domestic violence has increased dramatically over the past decade, it continues to be a pervasive and often misunderstood problem in our society.

The Suffolk Commonwealth’s Attorney’s Office’s Reduction in Domestic (R.I.D.) Violence Program officially began on June 4, 1998. Every year the number of victims assisted increases because of the concerted efforts of our prosecutor, law enforcement and other agencies that assist the victims of domestic violence. Prior to June 4, 1998, a victim of a misdemeanor domestic violence case was forced to appear in court against the defendant and his/her lawyer without the benefit of an attorney, victim/witness assistance or a referral source to other agencies that could assist her/him. Since this program’s inception, literally thousands of domestic violence victims have been assisted by this office.

The prosecutor not only prosecutes domestic violence cases, but also conducts training throughout the state and coordinates a citywide task force. Suffolk’s program has received local, regional and national acclaim. The bulk of the funding is provided through a state grant, yet 100% of the services are going to the citizens of Suffolk.

**DID YOU KNOW...**

- Almost four million American women were physically abused by their husbands or boyfriends in the last year alone.
- A woman is physically abused every 9 seconds in this country.
- Two-thirds of attacks on women are committed by someone the victim knows – often a husband or boyfriend.
- Women are more often victims of domestic violence than victims of burglary, mugging, or other physical crimes combined.
- More than 1 in 3 Americans have witnessed an incident of domestic violence. Nearly 9 out of 10 Americans say that women being beaten is a serious problem facing many families – and cuts across race, gender, socio-economic and age lines.
- 42% of murdered women are killed by their intimate male partners.
- Men are also victims of domestic violence.
- Domestic violence affects all of us, in one way or another.

These startling statistics indicate the continued need for increased prevention and public awareness campaigns. Generally, it is the spouse or partner who is physically assaulted or abused, however, among the greatest victims of domestic violence are the children, who can be permanently scarred by the observing of this violence.

**TYPES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES PROSECUTED IN SUFFOLK**

Our office prosecutes cases of felony physical violence, misdemeanor assault and battery pursuant to Virginia Code Section 18.2-57.2, stalking, and violation of protective order where the victim is the spouse of the defendant OR the victim has cohabitated (lived) with the defendant within the last 12 months OR the victim and the defendant have a child in common. The prosecutor also handles all ancillary charges that accompany a domestic violence felony or misdemeanor.

**CYCLES OF VIOLENCE**

The most frequently asked question concerning a battering situation is “Why does she/he stay?” While reasons range from children, love, guilt, fear, pride, embarrassment, financial dependence – or a combination thereof – it is very possible the woman/man may be locked into a violence cycle.

**Tension Building**

Starts Again



Acute Battery Incident

“Honeymoon”

Children are often pulled into the cycle of abuse at a young age, and this is indicative of an escalating problem of youth violence occurring across our country.

**WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF IT HAPPENS?**

- ✓ Call 911 immediately.
- ✓ Run to safety outside of the place of occurrence.
- ✓ Tell the police every little detail and be cooperative.
- ✓ Seek medical attention as soon as practical.
- ✓ Do not return home until assured that you are safe from another attack or retaliation because of report.
- ✓ Cooperate with the Commonwealth’s Attorney and remain truthful about the details of the offense.
- ✓ Get a protective order.

**WHAT IS A PROTECTIVE ORDER?**

Protective orders prohibit the abuser from committing further acts of violence and can grant the petitioner (the abused party) with possession of the premises occupied by the parties. There are three types of protective orders:

- Emergency Protective Order may be given at the time of the offense and remains in effect 72 hours.

- Preliminary Protective Order. Granted by the court at the request of the petitioner in absence of abuser if he/she does not appear for the hearing. May grant the petitioner exclusive possession of the car owned by the parties. Remains in effect for 15 days.
- Protective Order. A hearing is held with all parties present and presenting evidence. Remains in effect for one year and may be extended for one more year.

Keep a copy of the protective order with you at all times. Keep copies of any of the batterer’s criminal convictions. Show these to the police officer, magistrate, prosecutor or judge if the order is violated. *Remember, however, that the protective order does not guarantee your safety.*

**A WAY OUT**

Everyone has the right to be safe from threats and beatings – but *you* must take that first step. Once you recognize that it *isn’t your fault* and it is possible to change your situation, seek the help you need to correct your situation.

Suffolk Police Department	Emergency 911 Non-emergency, 923-2350
Court Services Unit (protective orders, petitions for custody, visitation, support issues)	514-4311
The Genieve Shelter (emergency shelter, crisis counseling, etc.)	925-4365 or 1-800/969-4673
VA Family Violence & Sexual Assault Hotline	1-800/838-8238
National Domestic Violence Abuse Hotline	1-800/799-SAFE (7233)
Navy Family Service Center	NFSC Little Creek 462-7563 NFSC Norfolk 444-2102 NFSC Newport News 688-NAVY

The problem of domestic violence is complex, but services are available. Working together – individuals and families, your local government and the private sector – we can help prevent this crime.

### **PLAN FOR YOUR SAFETY**

It is important to try to plan for your safety and the safety of your children. Do as many of the following as possible, but remember, *your safety is first*:

- Plan for a quick escape. Know where to go and how to get there, any time of the day or night. Think this through now, before an attack. Consider going to a domestic violence shelter or the home of a family member or friend. If that is not possible, try a public place such as a library, hospital, shopping center, police or fire station. Know where each is located in our community.
- If you believe you are about to be assaulted, stay out of rooms where there are weapons such as guns or knives. Do not attempt to threaten the abuser with a weapon, as it may put you in an even more dangerous situation.
- Keep a list of telephone numbers of family, friends, doctors, safe shelter, etc.
- Gather important documents such as: birth certificates, passports, prescriptions, social security numbers, copies of any protective orders, records of the abuser's prior convictions (if any), marriage license, insurance information, children's school records, immunizations (shots) records, medical records, information about bank accounts, and any other information you feel is necessary if you need to leave quickly.
- Put aside extra emergency money.
- Hide an extra set of car keys.
- Keep an extra set of clothes and shoes for you and your children with a trusted friend or neighbor.

- Let the people that you trust know about your situation and the violence you are experiencing.
- Trust yourself and your decisions. You are the one who can best determine how to stay safe.

### **SUFFOLK VICTIM/WITNESS SERVICES**

Suffolk's Victim/Witness Services (514-4366), located within the Office of the Commonwealth's Attorney, is available to assist you with information, referrals or support. They can also answer questions about court procedures and make arrangements for you to meet or speak with a prosecutor.



### **TAKE A STAND**

Reach out to someone in the community if you believe they are a victim of domestic violence, and are being abused. Do not give up easily – change takes time. Part of the abuser's power comes from secrecy. Victims are often ashamed to let anyone know about their violent partner. Ending the isolation is a critical first step. Victims of domestic violence rarely complain. They will not tell friends, relatives, neighbors or the Police Department. Victims of domestic violence come from all walks of life, all cultures, all incomes, all ages, and all religious backgrounds. They share similar feelings of guilt, helplessness, isolation, fear and shame. They hope in vain it won't happen to them again, but hope does not stop the violence.

Victims must know that we stand together to provide support, and abusers must know that violence will cost them their families, their livelihood and their freedom.

### **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND CHILDREN**

Domestic violence affects every member of the family – even if they are not the ones being directly abused. Research has provided evidence that children who observe domestic violence may grow to accept it is a natural part of adult, especially intimate, relationships and may grow up to become offenders or victims themselves. Children who witness violence learn that violence is an acceptable way of coping with anger and frustration. Statistics also show that in homes where partner abuse occurs, children are 1,500 times more likely to be abused.

### **HAVE YOU HURT SOMEONE IN YOUR FAMILY?**

- Accept the fact that your violent behavior will destroy your family. Be aware that you break the law when you physically hurt someone.
- Take responsibility for your actions and get help.
- When you feel tension building, get away. Work off the angry energy through a walk, a project, or a sport.
- Call a domestic violence hotline or a health center and ask about counseling and support groups for people who batter.



*Commonwealth's Attorney C. Phillips "Phil" Ferguson is proud to include a Domestic Violence Prosecution Program among the many programs and services his office provides to the community. Domestic Violence is a crime that quietly poisons our families and society behind the closed doors of our homes. His office will continue to attack this cowardly crime on all fronts to ensure the women and children of Suffolk can live their lives free from terror and abuse.*

# Let's Stop

# Domestic Violence



## It Breaks Homes...

## It Breaks Hearts...

## It Breaks Lives.

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