

WHAT IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

Domestic violence is a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors that one partner uses against a current or former intimate partner. It happens in relationships where the abuser and the victim are currently or were previously dating, living together, married or divorced. Domestic violence is purposeful behavior. A batterer's pattern of abusive acts is directed at gaining and maintaining control over the victim. Tactics that work to control the victim are carefully chosen by the batterer, aiming to permeate every aspect of the victim's life.

Victims of domestic violence come from all walks of life, are predominantly female and are likely to take the blame for the battering or feel responsible. Perpetrators of domestic violence also come from all walks of life, have the capacity to be very charming, move quickly into relationships and have a need for power and control. They use both charm and assault behaviors to gain control over their victim. Methods of power and control include:

- ❖ Isolation
- ❖ Verbal abuse & threats
- ❖ Destruction of property
- ❖ Physical battering
- ❖ Sexual abuse and coercion
- ❖ Stalking
- ❖ Financial control

Leaving is not easy. It involves many internal and external factors. A complex combination of psychological, cultural, religious, familial and financial factors contribute to a victim's decision to remain in or leave an abusive relationship. Behind fear, domestic violence victims frequently cite income, employment and financial stability as the strongest, most immediate deterrents to leaving abusive situations. The devastation of leaving a home, income, benefits and economic security behind are scenarios that all victims of domestic violence must overcome, regardless of their education, job skills and personal earning potential, if they are to care for their families and live more safe and secure lives.

Victims and survivors of domestic violence struggle for economic empowerment in every community in this nation. Survivors and current victims of domestic violence are over-represented in the welfare population, and many women and children are homeless because of domestic violence. However, leaving an abusive situation often increases risk.

- ❖ Batterers escalate in their assaultive and coercive behaviors when the victim is trying to separate.
- ❖ The majority of homicides occur when the victim has left the abuser or is attempting to leave.
- ❖ The risk of being assaulted or stalked in the workplace increases as this is often one of the places the batterer is sure to find the victim.