

WHAT IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

Domestic abuse is a pattern of violent or coercive behavior that an abuser uses to gain and maintain power and control over an intimate partner. Abuse can be physical, emotional, economic, or sexual. Abuse comes in many forms and can affect anyone regardless of race, age, gender, income or education status, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

Physical Abuse: Physical abuse is any intentional and unwanted contact with you or something close to your body. Physical abuse includes slapping, punching, biting, kicking, or using a foreign object to inflict pain to one's body. Physical abuse can also include the threat of contact caused to inflict pain.

Emotional Abuse: Emotional abuse is the most common form of control and can often exist in relationships where there is not physical violence. This includes put-downs, insults to the survivor's intelligence and abilities, name-calling, etc. In so doing, the abuser systematically breaks the victim's spirit and self-esteem. The victim may begin to feel as if the abuse is their fault or that they must deserve it.

Economic Abuse: By controlling and limiting a person's access to financial means, a batterer can assure that their victim will have limited resources if they have thoughts of leaving. Economic abuse includes limiting or restricting one's access to employment or education, withholding basic needs, not allowing a partner access to the family's money, or only allowing an allowance of minimal funds.

Sexual Abuse: Sexual abuse is unwanted sexual activity, with perpetrators using force or coercion and taking advantage of victims not able to give consent. Perpetrators and victims do not have to be strangers in order for the sexual activity to be considered abuse. In fact, most victims of sexual abuse previously knew their abuser.