

No one deserves to be abused

Everyone knows a victim of domestic violence. They are our neighbors, our co-workers, our friends, and our relatives. Although we may not be aware of the domestic violence around us, this crime occurs in every community regardless of age, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation/identity, mental or physical ability and religious background.

The victims

Gender is the only consistent risk marker for being battered. Adult victims of domestic violence come from a wide spectrum of experiences but most often are women. Men are sometimes abused and same-sex intimate partner violence occurs. However, the majority of victims are women who are brutalized by the men they have loved:

- n In 1992, **almost 4 million American women** who were married or living with intimate partners were physically abused and 20.7 million were emotionally abused by their partners.

(First Comprehensive National Health Survey of America Women. The Commonwealth Fund. New York, July 1993.)

There is no evidence to suggest battered women fit a particular personality profile. **Being a victim is due to the behaviors of the batterer**, not the personal characteristics of the individual being abused. Every woman, every person — by virtue of being human — has the right to a life free of violence.

Yet, battered women are forced to live in fear, isolation, and desperation. **They long for safety and control over their own lives**, but the abuse inflicted by someone they once trusted denies them these fundamental rights.

The batterers

Batterers use violence to reinforce **power and control** over their partners. The abuse is not impulsive or out of control. To the contrary, **batterers deliberately choose** :

- n **who** they abuse (i.e., an intimate partner and not a co-worker)
- n **when** they abuse
- n the **severity and frequency** of the abuse
- n **where** they abuse
- n the **method** of the abuse (e.g., a fist, gun, intimidation)
- n **how** they abuse (i.e., visible injuries or non-discernable)
- n **who witnesses** the abuse

There is **no psychological profile** of batterers. Generally:

- n they are not violent in any area of their lives outside the home
- n they have varied personalities and experiences that influence the likelihood of abusive behavior
- n they believe they will not suffer adverse physical, legal, economic, or personal consequences

When confronted about their abuse, batterers often deny or minimize it. They rarely acknowledge their actions and are likely to **blame their victims** for causing the violence.

Too often society reinforces and supports batterers who believe they are entitled to use tactics of control with their partners. However, **there is absolutely NO EXCUSE for domestic violence.**

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The statistics

A 1996 U.S. Department of Justice report indicates:

- n **Women are at a higher risk than men to be victimized by an intimate partner** for both fatal and non-fatal violence.
- n In 1992-93, **29% of female victims of violence reported that the offender was an intimate partner** (includes spouse or ex-spouse, boyfriend or girlfriend, and ex-boyfriend or ex-girlfriend).
- n **Female homicide victims are far more likely to have been killed by husbands or boyfriends** than male victims are to have been killed by wives or girlfriends.
- n In cases where the victim-offender relationship is known, **husbands or boyfriends killed 26% of female murder victims**, whereas **wives or girlfriends killed 3% of male victims**.

(Craven, D. *Female Victims of Violent Crime*. Bureau of Justice Statistics Selected Findings, U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs, Dec. 1996.)

A 1995 Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine survey of 2,000 anonymous female patients found:

- n **one of every three women had experienced domestic violence as a child or an adult**
- n **one of every five had experienced domestic violence in her adult life**
- n **one of every 20 had experienced domestic violence in the previous year**

(McCauley, Jeanne, et. al. *The "Battering Syndrome": Prevalence in Primary Care Internal Medicine Practices*. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, Vol. 123(10), Nov. 1995.)

A 1994 U.S. Department of Justice report shows:

- n **Domestic violence is repetitive in nature.** About one in five women victimized by a spouse or ex-spouse reported she had been a victim of a series of at least three assaults in the last six months.
- n According to National Crime Victimization Surveys, **women injured by intimate partners are more likely than men to require medical care** (27%) and hospitalization (15%).
- n **Compared to men, women experience over 10 times as many incidents of violence at the hands of intimates.** Overwhelmingly, women are victimized by intimates or family members whereas men are far more likely to be victimized by acquaintances or strangers.

(U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs. *Domestic Violence: Violence Between Intimates*. Bureau of Justice Statistics Selected Findings, Nov. 1994.)

Call your domestic violence program or PCADV

For more information, call your local domestic violence program or the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence (PCADV) at (800) 932-4632. To get the phone number of your local program:

- 1) look in your telephone book's blue pages under Abuse/Assault
- 2) call directory assistance
- 3) call PCADV

A local program staff member or volunteer can provide additional information about available services, volunteer opportunities, and ways you can help prevent the crime of domestic violence in your community.



Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence

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PCADV TELEPHONE LINES ARE BLOCKED AND WE DO NOT USE CALLER ID