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How is Your Relationship?

Yes	No	
		I am afraid of my partner.
		I am scared to tell my partner how I feel because I am afraid of his/her reaction.
		I have to ask my partner for permission to see family or friends, spend money, or buy some- thing for myself.
		I sometimes feel numb inside.
		I try to fix the relationship and to please my partner but nothing I do is enough.
		I am confused about the differences in the way my partner views our relationship and the way I see it.
		I often feel alone.
		I sometimes believe the terrible things my partner says about me. Sometimes I am not sure what is real anymore. Sometimes I think that I'm going crazy.

How do you feel about what is happening to you? Begin to trust your instincts about your situation. Listen to your "gut" feeling. If you feel that you are being emotionally and/or physically abused, you are probably right. If you aren't sure, but answered "yes" to most of the questions above, you may be a victim of your partner's abusive behavior.

Identifying your partner as an abuser does not mean that you are to blame for what is happening in any way, whether you stay in the relationship or if you leave. Sometimes staying in the relationship is the safest option at the moment. Identifying that you are being abused does not mean that you should automatically leave. Your safety is what is most important.



Understanding Domestic Violence

eing physically or emotionally abused by a spouse/partner is a frightening and lonely experience. You may feel that you are the only person to whom this is happening. In reality, millions of people of all ages, gender, cultural and economic backgrounds in the United States experience domestic violence every year. Knowing that you are not the only one experiencing violence in an intimate relationship can help to free you from the shame and embarrassment you may be feeling. It also may help you understand that the abuse does not occur because you are doing something "wrong" or that you do something to cause it to happen.

Signs of domestic violence include:

Domestic violence is a pattern of abuse and coercive tactics used to establish and maintain power and control over one's intimate partner. Examples include:

- You have been slapped, shaken, pushed, bitten, punched, beaten, pinched, kicked, stabbed, had an object thrown at you, strangled, been hit with a weapon or shot.
- > Your personal freedom has been limited, such as:
 - You have been isolated from friends and family members.
 - You have been locked in or out of the house or abandoned somewhere.
 - You have not been allowed to practice your religious beliefs, and/or participate in other activities that are important to you.
- You have no access to money and resources, have no part in making financial decisions, are prevented from seeking employment or have been forced to hand over your earnings.
- You have been denied medical care, including reproductive health options or medical care when pregnant.
- You have been threatened, accused of having affairs, constantly criticized, humiliated in public, called derogatory names, had your thoughts and feelings constantly ignored, ridiculed or denied.
- You are scared to deny sex to your partner, or you have been forced to perform unwanted sexual acts, raped, forced to have sex with others or to watch others, or called demeaning sexual names.

Your children have been threatened or abused to punish you, affection has been withheld as punishment, property or pets have been harmed or destroyed, you have been manipulated with lies, promises and contradictions.

It is still abuse if . . .

- The incidents of physical abuse seem minor when compared to those you have read about, seen on television or heard other people talk about. There isn't a "better" or "worse" form of abuse; you can be severely injured as a result of being pushed, for example.
- The incidents of physical abuse have only occurred one or two times in the relationship. Studies indicate that if your spouse/partner has injured you once, it is likely he/she will continue to physically assault you.
- The physical assaults stopped when you became passive and gave up your right to express yourself and to make decisions and stopped spending time with friends and family. It is not okay for you to have to give up your rights as a person and a partner in exchange for not being assaulted!
- There has not been any physical violence. Many people are emotionally and verbally assaulted. This can be as equally frightening and is often more confusing to understand.

Abusive behavior is a pattern which often includes intimidation, isolation, lies, threats and verbal abuse in addition to physical attacks and/or the threat of physical and sexual violence. All are part of a pattern of power and control and should be taken seriously.

While the violence may be infrequent and seem minor in the early stages, it will probably get worse in intensity and frequency as time goes on.

In the past, you may have tried to minimize or deny the violence—telling yourself and others that what is happening is not really serious or that it is only a minor issue in an otherwise good relationship. You may have hidden what is taking place from family and friends. You may have been dishonest with doctors and others about the cause of injuries. If you are in a same sex relationship, you may have denied the abuse to keep your relationship a secret. Do not feel guilty about these decisions; they are coping skills you have developed to help you survive. It is not uncommon for people to minimize and deny dangerous and traumatic situations in their lives.



You may have thought or been told that you are responsible—at least partially—for the violence. You may have been told by others, especially your partner, that it is your fault. People who use violence often blame others for the violence. **This is not true.** The first step in understanding your situation is to put responsibility for the abuse where it belongs—with your partner and his/her choice to abuse you.

Nothing you do or say causes your partner to abuse you emotionally, physically or sexually. The abuser is solely responsible for the violence.

Abuse can happen in any type of relationship, including if . . .

- > You are not married.
- You are in a same-sex relationship.
- > You have formally or legally ended the relationship.
- You are not living with your partner but he/she is abusive to you.

Abusive behavior usually results from a combination of learned behavior and entitled attitudes about male/ female roles.

As one batterer put it, "She couldn't make me hit her if I didn't want to." Traditionally, a woman's role was seen solely as a caretaker – that of keeping her partner and children happy and comfortable. You cannot make everything okay by yourself. Such beliefs may cause women in abusive relationships to take blame for the violence. We have all heard sayings such as, "What did you do to deserve this?" or "If you would just be a better parent, spouse, cook, etc., this would not be happening."

By refusing to take responsibility for your partner's abusive behavior, you can begin to make changes in how you feel about yourself and your situation. You may need to forgive yourself for past events and behaviors which produced guilt and self-blame. Identifying as a victim can be difficult.

Consider thinking about yourself in new ways:

- > I am not to blame for being beaten and abused.
- > I am not the cause of my partner's abusive behavior.
- > I do not deserve to be abused and do not have to take it.
- I am an important human being.
- > I deserve to be treated with respect.

- > I do have power over my own life.
- > I can decide for myself what is best for me.
- > I am not alone. I can ask others to help me.
- > I deserve to make my own life safe and healthy.
- > I am a worthwhile person and deserve a positive life.
- As a human being and as a partner, I have rights.
- I can still love my partner and protect myself emotionally, sexually and physically.
- I can allow my partner to be responsible for himself/ herself.

Consider what rights you have with your partner. The happiest, most fulfilling and longest-lasting relationships are those that are equal. That is, relationships in which each partner is an equal of the other in decision-making, parenting, career, and finances, and where both partners are free and able to express their thoughts, feelings, and ideas to the other. Each person may have different skills and strengths, however, both people are respected and their contributions are valued.

You are an adult in an adult relationship. It is not necessary or appropriate that you be treated like a child or subjected to "discipline." As an adult, you are capable of competent, responsible thought and action—and you deserve to be treated that way. Even if your partner has more experience in some areas, you also have the right to explore and develop your own skills in any area you choose.



Dynamics Of Domestic Violence

Common misconceptions about domestic violence

There are a number of misconceptions about domestic violence that contribute to society's denial of the problem. Most of these focus on blaming the victim for the violence instead of addressing the issue of why some people choose to use violence against their partners.

Myth: A person, through words or behaviors, provokes the violence.

Fact: The use of violence has little to do with the victim's behavior and everything to do with the partner's need to control others, the choice to use physical force, his/her own attitudes and expectations about male/female roles, and the lack of negative consequences experienced for the use of violence. If you are being abused, you have probably been told at one time or another that you do things which "cause" your partner to be violent. Remember, regardless of your behavior, it is your partner's choice and decision to use violence. Blaming you for the abuse is just one of the ways someone denies responsibility for the abuse.

Myth: People who stay in abusive relationships are asking to be beaten, and therefore must "enjoy the abuse."

Fact: This myth is especially insulting to someone who is being abused. No one wants to be beaten and, in fact, many people do leave. The reasons a person may remain in an abusive relationship are varied and complex. It may be out of economic necessity, hope the abuse will end, religious beliefs or values about marriage, desire to remain in the relationship, and parenthood which make it difficult for the person to leave. Most victims are also threatened with and/or experience severe harm to themselves by the abuser or to their children if they attempt to leave. This danger is real.

Myth: Domestic violence is caused by external factors or events, such as job stress, financial problems, alcohol/ drug use, or mental illness.

Fact: While some or all of these factors may be present in an abusive relationship, none, separately or together, are the cause of your partner's violence. There may be a connection in the frequency and severity of the abuse. For example, some people have experienced more severe forms of physical

abuse when their partner has been drinking. However, other forms of power and control occur when the partner is sober. Additionally, factors such as stress, alcohol or other substance use are often used as convenient excuses for the abuse. It is important to know eliminating alcohol/drug use or minimizing the amount of stress in your relationship or in the environment around you will rarely stop all forms of abuse.

Myth: People who use violence are "out of control" and/or just have a problem expressing anger.

Fact: Abusers often report they "just have a bad temper" and temporarily "lost control" during the assault. In reality, however, most abusers control their use of violence quite well. Usually they are NOT physically violent toward you in the presence of others, nor are they abusive to their boss, their friends, or their neighbors. They often only use violence against their partners or their children. They choose the time, place and people they will abuse. Individuals with anger problems usually have less control and use that anger toward multiple people.

Remember, violence is a learned behavior. Your partner uses it to establish and maintain power and control over you. This is not being out of control. Rather, it is exerting control.

Myth: Abuse does not affect the children in the family. Usually, they do not even know it is happening.

Fact: Abuse can have a devastating impact on children. Most children and youth know what is happening in the home, even at a very early age. The children learn what to expect from a relationship—to use abuse or be abused

There are certainly other myths that perpetuate domestic and sexual violence by minimizing the seriousness of the situation and focusing on the victim's behavior instead of the abuser's choice to use violence. If you have believed these myths, you have probably been torn between your need for safety and the desire to preserve your relationship. Keep in mind an abuser will encourage a belief in these myths to avoid responsibility for the abuse.

The progression of violence and tactics of control

It's likely that your partner was not physically abusive in the beginning stages of your relationship and, even now, may not always use physical violence. It is less common for an abuser to physically assault a partner prior to beginning a pattern of verbal and emotional abuse. As you look at the

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relationship, you can begin to recognize how the abuse began in very subtle ways—through verbal attacks on your feelings of self-worth and your abilities as a person, and by slowly isolating you from friends, family, and coworkers. Often it is not until a person feels "trapped," either emotionally, financially or socially, that she/he recognizes how destructive and abusive the partner has become. Frequently, the physical violence begins to increase in severity and intensity after an abuser is reasonably sure the other person is isolated and cut off from a support system.

The tactics used by a batterer also involve much more than physical abuse. In addition to being assaulted, whether it is once a week, once a month, or once a year, most abusers engage in other behaviors which make their partners fearful and afraid. On the following page is a diagram of the "Power and Control Wheel," developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project in Duluth, Minnesota. The wheel serves as an illustration of the many tactics an abuser will use. It is often the use of the non-physical tactics which have the greatest impact on a person's feelings of self-worth. Recognizing the tactics that have been used by your partner may help you to understand how difficult it has been for you to see your options and how the abusive tactics have limited your freedom, your safety and your self-determination.

Domestic Abuse Intervention Project

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www.theduluthmodel.org

USING USING INTIMIDATION Adver affaid by

PHYSICAL

USING ECONOMIC ABUSE

Preventing partner from getting or keeping a job • making partner ask for money • giving partner an allowance • taking partner's money not letting partner know about or have

USING PRIVILEGE

Treating partner like a servant making all the big decisions acting like the master of the castle being the one to define men's and

threats to do something to hurt partner • threatening to leave partner - threatening to commit suicide - threatening to report partner to welfare • making partner drop charges · making partner do illegal things

Making partner afraid by strong looks, actions, gestures - smashing things - destroying partner's property - abusing pets - displaying weapons

USING EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Putting partner down · making himself - calling partner names - making partner think they're crazy - playing mind games - humiliating partner - making partner feel quilty

POWER AND CONTROL

USING CHILDREN

Making partner feel guilty about the children using the children to relay messages using visitation to

USING ISOLATION

Controlling what partner does, who they see and talk to, what they read, where they're going · limiting partner's outside involvement · using

MINIMIZING **DENYING AND BLAMING**

and not taking partner's concerns about it seriously saying the abuse didn't happen

messages • using visitation to harass partner • threatening to take the children away

concerns about the saying the abuse didn't happen saying the abuse behavior • saying partner caused it

SEXUAL SEXUAL

SECTION

Emotional abuse

Most people who are being physically abused are also being emotionally abused. The most obvious type of emotional abuse is being constantly criticized or degraded. Your partner may also be emotionally abusive by ignoring you, withholding affection, calling you names, accusing you of having affairs, or telling you that you are an unfit parent, friend or spouse. Emotional abuse can be subtle and is often hard to recognize; however, it can be very damaging. It is an effective tactic to keep you from feeling you are deserving of love and respect.

Isolation

Most abusers will isolate their partners, geographically, emotionally, or socially. They move the family miles away from friends and relatives or discourage or forbid their partners from having close relationships with others. People often report they are not allowed to see friends or family, get a job, have access to transportation, participate in religious/spiritual activities, or have outside interests or activities. Even if these activities are not strictly "forbidden," you may find it easier to stop doing activities due to your partner's actions. Your partner may have put limits on you by monitoring phone calls, questioning you about your whereabouts, or publicly humiliating you.

Minimizing, denying and blaming

Abusers blame their partner for the abuse by making them feel like they are "overreacting" to the violence. They may say that you "made them do it." Abusers will minimize or deny the severity of their actions, and may refuse to acknowledge any abusive behaviors. If they do acknowledge the violence, they will point to the other person's behavior or attitude as an excuse for why they used violence. This tactic is extremely effective at increasing your sense of responsibility, because you are aware that the batterer will simply blame you for the assaults if you tell others about the abusive behavior.

Economic abuse

Many people report their partners frequently control access to their finances by withholding money from them, sabotaging their efforts to get or keep a job, berating them about how they spend money, and by lying about assets. Some abusers keep all bank accounts and credit cards in their name so you have no access to funds without their permission. Not having access to finances keeps many people economically dependent on their abusers and is a major barrier to an individual who wants to leave the relationship.

Using children

One of the most frequent, yet often minimized, forms of abuse is using your children to make you feel bad about yourself. Perhaps your partner has repeatedly told you that you are not a good parent and if you ever attempt to leave, he/she will fight you for custody. Your partner may have even threatened to kidnap or kill the children if you make any effort to escape.

Many abusers also try to turn children against the other parent by telling lies or by threatening them with harm. These threats are very real to a person in an abusive relationship and may make you too afraid to leave.

Using coercion and threats

Your partner may threaten to increase the use of violence toward you or your children if you do not obey him/her. He/she may threaten suicide or threaten to harm other members of your family or your friends if you attempt to leave. If you are in a same-sex relationship, your partner may threaten to "out" you by revealing your relationship to those whom you might not want to know. Coercion can also include forcing you to commit illegal activities and subsequently threatening to report you to child protective services or law enforcement. These behaviors are designed to keep you afraid and to keep you from ending the relationship.

Using privilege

Your partner may believe he/she has a "right" to control you. Part of an abuser's belief system is a feeling that they "own" their partners and children, and are entitled to demand absolute obedience from them. They often have very rigid attitudes about gender roles, acting like the "master of the castle" and treating their partner as a servant.

Intimidation

Intimidating behaviors and actions can range from threatening looks or gestures to slamming objects, destroying property, hurting or killing pets, and displaying weapons. An abuser will often destroy an item that has special meaning to his/her partner. This implies that the other person could be the next target.

Even though your partner might not always use physical violence, it is likely he/she is constantly utilizing many of these tactics to control and degrade you. If you have heard over and over again how worthless you are, how everything is your fault, and how you deserve to be "punished," you are likely to begin to believe it. This is especially true if there is no one around to support you as a worthwhile person and who

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sees your partner's abusive behavior as destructive and inappropriate.

Given the isolation, the constant negative reinforcement and the violence you are experiencing, it is not uncommon for you to become confused about what is happening. You may begin to feel numb inside as your perceptions of yourself and your relationship become more and more distorted. You may be feeling like you are unable to take any action—recognizing the dangers you face if you leave and realizing there is nothing you can do to stop the abuse if you stay. It is not uncommon for victims to begin to exhibit symptoms similar to prisoners of war - they are disoriented, may be suffering from sleep deprivation, interrupted eating patterns, and shock. These symptoms are normal reactions to abnormal circumstances and do not mean you are "going crazy."

A person experiencing this type of violence is likely to feel unsure about what to do. However, the more you understand what is happening, the better you will recognize that your partner is responsible for the behavior, and what is happening to you is not your fault.

Exploring your options

A message to people who have been abused . . .

We are here for you. We won't judge, condemn, or tell you what to do. We will believe you. We will listen to you. We will offer our support, a safe space, food, transportation, emergency assistance and advocacy. We will do our best to meet your needs as you become a survivor.

The ultimate choice that you face is whether to stay or to leave, either temporarily or permanently. You may have left or tried to leave several times in the past, only to change your mind and return a few days later. You may feel weak or embarrassed because you did return and found yourself being abused again.

Ending an important relationship in your life is not easy. At times you may be pressured by friends, family members and others to leave or stay in your relationship. You may feel undecided and confused, sometimes wanting nothing more than to get away and at other times wanting to cling to the relationship and preserve it. Do not let self-blame immobilize you.

As you are considering your options, be aware of the following information about domestic violence:

- It will probably happen again. The violence usually becomes more severe and more frequent over time.
- The partner's promises to stop abusing you are often a way to manipulate you to keep you "in line" and to prevent you from leaving.
- There is no guarantee that, even with the counseling or involvement in a battering intervention program, your partner will change. Most abusive people resist counseling and deny that they need help. Even if the physical assaults stop temporarily, be aware of how the partner may still be controlling you through isolation, intimidation and threats.
- You and your children deserve to feel safe and be safe from physical, emotional, and sexual abuse.

If you stay

If you decide at this time it is safest to stay with the abusive partner, there are some things that you can do to plan for safety.



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- Contact the domestic and sexual violence program in your area. They can provide emotional support, advocacy, safe emergency housing, information, and other services while you are in the relationship, as well as if you decide to leave.
- Build as strong a support system as your partner will allow. Whenever possible, get involved with people and activities outside your home and encourage your children to do so.
- Be kind to yourself! Develop a positive view of yourself. Use positive statements to counter the negative comments you get from the abuser. Allow yourself time for doing things you enjoy.
- Make a safety plan. It is likely that the abuse will continue, having a safety plan can make the difference between being severely injured or killed and avoiding such a tragedy. A plan may include:
 - 1. Designate a place to hide a set of car keys.
 - **2.** Create a hidden emergency fund. Even if you can only manage to save one or two dollars at a time, begin building an emergency fund for the time when you may need some cash to get away.
 - 3. Pack a bag with a couple changes of clothes for yourself and your family and leave it with a trusted friend or hide it where your partner won't find it. If possible, include copies of birth certificates, social security cards, and other legal papers for everyone in the family who will flee. You may need them. Also gather financial records, e.g. rent, mortgage, utility receipts, insurance cards, and checking and/or savings account books. If packing a suitcase isn't possible, fill one drawer of your dresser with items you will need (if it is safe to do so).
 - **4.** Develop a plan for calling the police in an emergency. Older children might be taught to use a cell phone or go to the neighbors if you cannot reach the phone. Some people work out signals with understanding neighbors. The local domestic and sexual violence program may be available to provide a 911 cell phone to call for help.
 - **5.** Know where you can go and how you will get there in case you have to leave suddenly.
 - **6.** Make arrangements for sheltering your pets.

- 7. Communicate with your children. Learn non-violent means of disciplining your children, such as using time outs. Since children often model adult behavior, it is very important you teach your children nonviolent problem solving. There are resources in your community that can support you and provide you with suggestions. Be honest with your children. They are probably very aware that something is not right. Help them to understand that hitting someone is wrong and that they are not responsible for the abuser's behavior. They need to know the violence is not okay.
- **8.** When you are in immediate danger, get out! You can always return the next day if you wish. Planning for your safety and recognizing your options can help you protect yourself and your children. The domestic and sexual violence program in your area can offer you assistance with many of these services and advocates are available 24 hours a day.
- Remember that you can change your mind and decide to leave at any time. Choosing to stay may be the best option now, but if that changes, do not hesitate or feel guilty. You have a right to change your mind and make your own decisions.

If you leave

Leaving does not mean your partner will stop being abusive. In fact, your partner may become more abusive as you attempt to leave and/or after you leave. This can be one of the most dangerous times in the relationship. He/she may feel like they are losing control over you and increase any threats to hurt you, the children or himself/herself. You are the best judge of how dangerous your situation may become if you attempt to leave.

You may also feel overwhelmed by financial concerns, including where you will live and how you will afford to take care of yourself and your children. Thinking about economic survival can be discouraging and frightening. The domestic and sexual violence program in your area can help you sort through the many challenges you have ahead and may help you get the emotional and financial support you may need.

If you have made a decision to leave, allow yourself to feel the natural grief at the loss of your relationship. No matter how bad it was, there were good things too, and it was a very important part of your life. Leaving is often a process. Many people who have been abused leave and return several times before permanently separating from the relationship. Be patient with yourself.



You may feel emotions of loss, sadness, and depression. Accept these feelings as natural and allow yourself to experience them. If you find yourself thinking, "I'm stupid to care after what I've been through" or "I shouldn't feel this way," remind yourself, "It's okay for me to be feeling this way now."

Building a strong support system is essential when freeing yourself from an abusive partner and when making a healthy transition to being a survivor. This support system could include:

- Concerned family and friends (they may need to do some reading or talk to an advocate to better understand your experience).
- An advocate from a domestic and sexual violence program.
- A trained mental health counselor or therapist (if you decide to seek counseling).
- A member of the clergy, spiritual leader, and/or someone else from your faith community.
- A support group.

While there are additional questions and considerations you may face while you decide to stay or leave, these may be a place to start. It may also be helpful to list the positives and negatives, or pros and cons, of both staying and leaving. Questions other people have asked are:

- What do I gain by staying/leaving? How will my safety be affected?
- What do my children gain by living with someone who is abusive? What do they gain if we leave?
- What are my goals for the future? How can I work to get them?
- What am I willing to do without, if necessary—material things, my health, my emotional stability, my self-esteem, etc.?
- What is the price I've been paying to stay in this relationship?
- How will staying/leaving affect me one year/five years from now?
- What do I want and need from myself and others?

You have been strong enough to keep your family together under difficult circumstances. Now, with the help of a support system you can regain your inner strength and start to build a life without violence.

Help is available

Whether you decide to stay or to leave, there are resources throughout Nebraska that can help you.

Although it is not possible to list the resources available in every community for legal assistance, law enforcement intervention, medical care, housing, transportation, financial assistance and other needed services, the domestic and sexual violence programs listed in this booklet can help you find out about these services in your area and provide you with crisis intervention and support.

A domestic violence/sexual assault advocate is a specially trained professional who provides assistance to survivors of domestic abuse and their dependents. Advocates are aware of your rights to social services, legal and medical assistance and are familiar with the procedures of these agencies/ services. They can accompany you to court for civil and criminal court proceedings, provide on-going emotional support and advocacy, and referrals to community resources for therapy, housing, employment, job training opportunities, educational programs, and others. They will usually provide you with agency names and telephone numbers for you to obtain needed appointments. However, if you have difficulty doing these things on your own, or feel uncomfortable about doing so, an advocate will be available to help you. All domestic and sexual violence programs in Nebraska provide access to the following core services.

Crisis intervention and advocacy

Each program has a 24-hour crisis line you can call to request emergency shelter, transportation, and medical and legal referrals. You do not have to give your name if you choose to remain anonymous. You can call at any time to talk with an advocate. Staff and trained volunteers are available to listen to you, provide you emotional support and give you information about your options. They will support the decisions you make and assist you in carrying out those decisions.

Emergency transportation

All programs can help you get to a place of safety. This might be transportation to the hospital, the shelter, or an appointment with an attorney, human services or other community agencies.

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Emergency financial assistance

Although most programs have extremely limited funds, they can assist you with referrals for items such as food, clothing, child care and long-distance travel. Advocates can also help you access financial assistance from other sources for items such as housing, medical and legal assistance.

Emergency shelter

Each program in Nebraska provides emergency shelter services where you and your children can stay, or they can make referrals to other resources for shelter. The shelter facility is a safe refuge and is usually in a confidential location to make it harder for the abuser to find you. The shelters are comfortable and home-like. During your stay, you can start to regain emotional and physical strength, make some decisions about your needs, and begin to put those decisions into action. Each shelter houses from one to several families at a time, so you will likely be in touch with other people who have had similar experiences. The programs have shelter guidelines that you are asked to follow for the safety and convenience of everyone at the shelter. Program staff is available to answer questions, provide emotional support and assist you with reestablishing yourself and your children.

In communities where formal shelter facilities do not exist, domestic and sexual violence programs provide shelter by alternate means. This may include a short-term stay at a local motel/hotel. They will also assist you in getting to a nearby shelter, if you wish. Most programs have some means of helping people relocate to another town or even another state, if needed. They can help you obtain the resources to relocate, if you wish to do so. Advocates can get information about the availability of shelter programs and other services anywhere in the United States.

Making a decision to go to a shelter does not necessarily mean you are leaving forever. If you decide to go back home, the staff will support you in that decision and help you prepare a safety plan for you and your children.

Support groups

Most programs offer a weekly support group for people who are in or have been in an abusive relationship (both those who stay in the shelter and those who do not). The support group is a safe place to share experiences and feelings with others who have been abused and to find new skills and tools for moving forward in life.

Other services

In some areas of the state, the local program also provides support groups specifically for children and groups for abusers. Staff and volunteers are also trained to assist survivors of sexual assault and can assist you or your children in working through incest, rape, or child sexual assault issues.

Domestic and sexual violence programs can be a very helpful resource to you. The advocates are specifically educated about domestic violence and sexual assault. They also have information and knowledge of what local services are available and the procedures for obtaining these services. They can talk with you about your feelings of fear, and help you identify ways to work through them. They can provide vital support to you as you make important decisions about your life and the lives of your children. The services are available to you 24 hours a day and are free of charge.

The domestic and sexual violence program in your area will:

- > Provide emotional support during a crisis.
- Give you information about resources and options.
- > Treat you with respect and dignity.

The domestic and sexual violence program will not:

- > Pressure you into making any certain decision.
- Deny services if you decide to return to the abuser.
- Reveal confidential information about you to anyone outside the program without your written permission.

Any information you give to the program will be held in strict confidence. The exceptions are suspected child abuse or neglect, suspected vulnerable adult abuse, or a court order.

Other considerations

Regardless if you decide to stay or leave the relationship, some survivors seek help from therapists or faith leader. While most of these individuals can be a valuable resource and extremely helpful, there are others who may not recognize the seriousness of the abuser's actions or who do not have an understanding of how the abuser's actions affect a person. Some people report they have been told they are contributing to the abuse and they have to change their behaviors to become more assertive and understanding of their partners. Others are incorrectly labeled as suffering from "low self-esteem," being "codependent," "enabling" the abuse by staying, or not being "a good spouse."

SECTION THREE:

All of these are placing the responsibility for the violence on you and could increase the risk that you'll be seriously hurt or killed.

If you are talking with anyone who says that the violence is caused by these things, it may be wise to seek assistance from another individual who has a better understanding of domestic violence and does not place the responsibility for the violence on you. Those beliefs and actions, even if they are done with the best intentions, indicate the person does not understand domestic violence. They could be encouraging you to do things that could be harmful to your safety.

Legal Options Available to You

(Note: This section provides general information about legal options. It is not meant to provide specific advice, and may not be totally applicable in any particular case. It is important to remember that laws change and the information in this booklet is based on the laws in effect in January 2017. If you have additional questions about your situation or your legal rights, you should seek the professional advice of an attorney.)

The legal system, though by no means perfect or totally adequate, can provide you assistance. Below is a brief description of some of your legal options. Involving the legal system should be an individual choice. However, it is important to know that the decision can impact other forms of relief available to you. You may contact your local domestic and sexual violence program for further information and for referrals to other agencies that can provide legal assistance and resources.

Arrest

Anytime your partner physically assaults you, he/she is committing a crime. You have the option to call the police during or after you have been assaulted; however, it is important to realize that the police may not arrest your partner if there is not enough evidence (proof). If your partner is not arrested, it does not mean the police do not believe you. It is just that there isn't enough evidence for an arrest. If your partner is arrested, he/she may be taken into custody and transported to the jail, or he/she may simply receive a violation in the form of a written ticket requiring an appearance in court at a later date.

If the abuser is arrested, you can ask the officers about the legal process (e.g., bail, arraignment, trial, and sentencing) and what to expect. It is important for you to know that pressing charges against the abuser is not your choice. The county attorney will make that decision and will likely ask you to testify against the abuser.

Making a decision to report a domestic violence incident is difficult. Making a statement, signing a report, and giving court testimony can be frightening and overwhelming. Advocates from your local domestic and sexual violence program can help explain the legal process and help you through the necessary procedures by providing you with



SECTION FOUR:

emotional support, accompaniment to appointments and hearings, and referrals for legal assistance.

If a report is made and you become involved with the legal system, there are resources available to you. In addition to the local domestic and sexual violence programs, there are numerous Victim Witness Units (VWUs) in Nebraska. Also called Victim Assistance Programs, these agencies are usually part of the local police department or part of the county attorney's office.

Victim witness units provide free services to victims of crime. They can assist someone with understanding the legal process, obtaining information about the case, writing victim impact statements, and referrals to other organizations.

Victim witness units have different confidentiality requirements than the local domestic and sexual violence programs. Since victim witness units are linked with the legal system, information that you provide to the victim witness unit may be shared with law enforcement, the county attorney, or others within the court system.

A crime victim's bill of rights and a list of the victim witness units in Nebraska can be found at the website of the Nebraska Coalition for Victims of Crime: www.nebraskacoalitionforvictimsofcrime.typepad.com

Other information for victims of crime is provided by the Nebraska Crime Commission at: www.ncc.nebraska.gov. The site includes information about the crime victims reparation program in Nebraska, the Victim Information Notification Everyday (VINE) Program, a victim's guide to the Nebraska criminal justice system, and more.

Domestic abuse protection orders

Under Nebraska's Protection From Domestic Abuse Act, you can file for a protection order. This order is available to the following individuals who have been subjected to abuse as defined in the Act: spouses or former spouses; persons who are not married but are living together or who have lived together in the past; persons who have a child in common whether or not they have been married or have lived together at any time; children; individuals related by blood or affinity (in-laws, for example); and individuals who are presently involved in a dating relationship or have been involved in a dating relationship with each other.

A domestic abuse protection order can:

> Forbid the abuser from restraining you.

- Forbid the abuser from threatening, assaulting, molesting, attacking you or other disturbing acts affecting your peace.
- > Forbid the abuser from contacting you.
- Remove and exclude the abuser from your residence, regardless of ownership of the residence.
- Order the abuser to stay away from certain locations, such as work.
- > Grant you temporary custody of your children.
- > Forbid the abuser from possessing or purchasing a firearm.
- Order other relief which is considered necessary to provide for your safety and well-being, or the safety and wellbeing of any designated household or family member.

It is important to know that although a protection order may allow you to obtain temporary custody of your children, the custody provision will only last up to 90 days. If you do not have legal custody of your children and you believe your partner may attempt to take the children, contact an attorney as soon as possible to proceed with divorce, legal separation, paternity or other court action to deal with the issues of custody and child support. A protection order should not be used for the sole purpose of obtaining temporary custody.

If you are interested in applying for a protection order, the forms and instructions can be found online through the Nebraska Online Legal Self-Help Center (www.supremecourt. nebraska.gov/self-help) and at the clerk of the district court's office. The local domestic and sexual violence program has the forms and can explain and assist with the filing process. However, they cannot provide legal advice. You should not be charged a fee for filing a protection order nor for subsequent court appearances (should they be necessary).

You can file for a protection order without filing for divorce. You do not need to hire an attorney to file for a protection order, though you may hire an attorney to assist you, if you wish. The information on the Nebraska Online Legal Self-Help Center is not meant to be a substitute for legal advice.

Although protection orders can be very useful and necessary, they do have their limitations. As you probably know, the abuser may or may not be deterred by a court order, and could still assault you before you are able to call law enforcement for assistance. You may want to discuss other options for your safety with an advocate from the local domestic and sexual violence program.



Divorce

Divorce is the dissolution of marriage. Divorce actions decide issues of child custody, child support, alimony, division of property and division of debts. Nebraska has a "no-fault" divorce statute, which means it is not necessary to prove one party caused the breakup of the marriage or is at fault. Divorce proceedings are lawsuits that begin with filing a complaint in district court.

The spouse who files the complaint is the "plaintiff" and the other spouse is the "defendant." A complaint is simply a sworn statement to the court stating that the marriage is irretrievably broken and certain rights as to property and children must be determined.

You must wait a minimum of 60 days after your spouse has been given notice of the proceedings before the court can hold a final hearing (or trial) on the divorce. If at the trial, the judge determines that your marriage is in fact irretrievably broken, they will sign a decree so stating. This decree is final 30 days after the date it is issued; however, neither party may marry until 6 months after the decree is issued.

Legal separation

Legal separation is a method where a married couple lives separate and apart. It provides for the division of property, custody of minor children, and child support. Essentially, you can get the same legal provisions you would in a divorce proceeding without dissolving the marriage. If you decide before the final hearing that divorce is what you want, your attorney can petition the court for a change in the decree.

If you decide you want a divorce after a decree for legal separation is entered, a new divorce action will have to be filed. Legal separation is used most often by people who:

- 1. Have religious objections to a divorce;
- **2.** Are not sure they want a divorce, but the situation is too volatile for the person to continue living with the partner; or
- **3.** Have not met the one-year state residency requirement for divorce.

After awhile you learn the subtle difference

Between holding a hand and chaining a soul,

And you learn that love doesn't mean leaning

And company doesn't mean security,

And you begin to learn that kisses aren't contracts

And presents aren't promises.

With your head up and your eyes open,
With the grace of a woman and not the grief of a child.
And you learn to build all your roads on today
Because tomorrow's ground is too uncertain for plans,
And futures have a way of falling down in mid-flight.

And you begin to accept your defeats

After awhile you learn

That even sunshine burns if you get too much.

So you plant your own garden and decorate your own soul,

Instead of waiting for someone to bring you flowers.

And you learn that you really can endure...

That you really are strong.

And you really do have worth.

And you learn and learn . . .

With every goodbye you learn.

~ An Anonymous Survivor ~



Services in Nebraska

The following services are the core services offered by the Nebraska Network of Domestic and Sexual Violence Programs. Some programs may offer additional services.

24-hour crisis line

Confidential support, information and access to services are available 24 hours each day by calling the program in your area.

Emergency shelter

Providing a safe place to stay is an important service of the programs. Using a combination of shelters, hotels and other options, programs offer people a place to escape further violence.

Transportation

Emergency transportation to a safe place is available 24 hours a day. Programs may also provide transportation to court proceedings, medical services or to other community agencies.

Medical advocacy and referrals

Staff and volunteers are available on request to accompany survivors to hospital emergency rooms and local medical offices for treatment of injuries or an exam following an assault.

Legal referrals and assistance with protection orders

Although programs cannot give legal advice, they can provide assistance with obtaining a domestic abuse protection order, emotional support through court proceedings, and referrals to local attorneys.

Ongoing support and information

Individual ongoing support is provided to survivors. Support groups for survivors of domestic violence and sexual violence are available in many communities. Some programs offer groups for teens experiencing abuse, as well as child witnesses and adult survivors of childhood abuse. Some programs also offer educational groups for people who batter.

Education and prevention programs

Prevention programs are provided for children and young adults on topics such as child sexual abuse, sexual assault, dating violence, stalking, and healthy relationships. Staff and volunteers are also available for presentations to community groups and other organizations.

Bright Horizons

(Counties served: Antelope, Boyd, Holt, Knox, Madison, Pierce, Stanton, Keya Paha, Rock, Brown) 601 East Norfolk Avenue, Norfolk, NE 68701 (877) 379-3798

www.brighthorizonsne.org

The Bridge

(Counties served: Burt, Cuming, Dodge, Saunders, Washington) P.O. Box 622, Fremont, NE 68026 (888) 721-4340 www.bridgefromviolence.com

Catholic Charities - The Shelter

(County served: Douglas) P.O. Box 4346, Omaha, NE 68104 (402) 558-5700 www.ccomaha.org

Center for Sexual Assault & Domestic Violence Survivors

(Counties served: Boone, Butler, Colfax, Nance, Platte, Polk) P.O. Box 42, Columbus, NE 68602 (800) 658-4482

www.centerforsurvivors.net

The Crisis Center, Inc.

(Counties served: Hall, Hamilton, Howard, Merrick) P.O. Box 5885, Grand Island, NE 68802 (866) 995-4422

www.gicrisis.org

Domestic Abuse/Sexual Assault (DA/SA) Services

(Counties served: Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Red Willow)
P.O. Box 714, McCook, NE 69001
(877) 345-5534

www.dasas.net

DOVES Program

(Counties served: Box Butte, Banner, Cheyenne, Dawes, Kimball, Morrill, Scotts Bluff, Sheridan, Sioux) P.O. Box 98, Gering, NE 69341 (866) 953-6837

www.dovesprogram.com

Nebraska Network of Domestic and Sexual Violence Programs



Nebraska Network of Domestic and Sexual Violence Programs

Friendship Home

(County served: Lancaster) P.O. Box 85358, Lincoln, NE 68501 (402) 437-9302

www.friendshiphome.org

Haven House Family Service Center

(Counties served: Cedar, Dakota, Dixon, Thurston, Wayne) P.O. Box 44, Wayne NE 68787

(800) 440-4633

www.havenhousefsc.com

Healing Hearts and Families

(Counties served: Blaine, Custer, Garfield, Greeley, Loup, Sherman, Valley, Wheeler)
P.O. Box 96, Broken Bow, NE 68822

(800) 942-4040

www.healingheartsandfamilies.com

Heartland Family Service Domestic Abuse/ Sexual Assault Program

(Counties served: Cass, Sarpy) 302 American Parkway, Papillion, NE 68046 (402) 292-5888 or (800) 523-3666 www.heartlandfamilyservice.org

Hope Crisis Center

(Counties served: Fillmore, Gage, Jefferson, Saline, Seward, Thayer, York)
P.O. Box 365, Fairbury, NE 68352
(877) 388-HOPE (4673)
www.hopecrisiscenter.org

Parent-Child Center

(Counties served: Dawson, Gosper) P.O. Box 722, Lexington, NE 68850 (800) 215-3040 (866) 351-9594 en español www.dawsoncountyne.net/pcc/

Project Response

(Counties served: Johnson, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee, Richardson) P.O. Box 213, Auburn, NE 68305 (800) 456-5764 www.projectresponse.org

Rape/Domestic Abuse Program (RDAP)

(Counties served: Hooker, Lincoln, Logan, McPherson, Thomas, Cherry)
P.O. Box 393, North Platte, NE 69103
(888) 534-3495

www.nprdap.org

The S.A.F.E. Center

(Counties served: Buffalo, Franklin, Harlan, Kearney, Phelps) 620 East 25th Street, Suite 14, Kearney, NE 68847 (877) 237-2513

www.safecenter.org

Sandhills Crisis Intervention Program (SCIP)

(Counties served: Arthur, Deuel, Garden, Grant, Keith, Perkins) P.O. Box 22, Ogallala, NE 69153

(308) 284-6055

www.scipogallala.com

Spouse Abuse/Sexual Assault (SASA) Crisis Center

(Counties served: Adams, Clay, Nuckolls, Webster) 220 South Burlington Suite 4, Hastings, NE 68901 (877) 322-7272 or (402) 463-5810 www.sasacenter.org

Voices of Hope

(County served: Lancaster) 2545 N Street, Lincoln, NE 68510 (402) 475-7273 www.voicesofhopelincoln.org

Women's Center for Advancement (WCA)

(County served: Douglas) 222 South 29th Street, Omaha, NE 68131 (402) 345-7273 (402) 672-7118 en español www.wcaomaha.orq Nebraska Network of Domestic and Sexual Violence Programs



Native American Tribes and Domestic and Sexual Violence Services In addition to the Nebraska Network of Domestic and Sexual Violence Programs, there are several tribal programs in Nebraska that provide services to victims of sexual and domestic violence.

Omaha Tribe of Nebraska

Omaha Against Violence Program P.O. Box 368, Macy, NE 68039 (402) 837-4050 (402) 837-5391

Omaha Nation Community Response Team – Rural Domestic Violence Program 312 Main Street, Walthill, NE 68067 (402) 846-5280 – office (402) 922-3712 or (844)299-9612 (toll free) - crisis line

Ponca Tribe of Nebraska

Ponca Tribe of Nebraska Domestic Violence Program 1800 Syracuse Avenue, Norfolk, NE 68701

(402) 438-9222 - Lincoln area

(402) 371-8834 - Norfolk area

(402) 857-3391 - Niobrara area

(402) 734-5275 - Omaha area

(712) 258-0500 - Sioux City area

Santee Sioux Nation

Otokahe Teca Tipi (New Beginning House) Rt. 302 Box 5254, Niobrara, NE 68760 (402) 857-2316

Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska

Domestic Violence Intervention / Family Preservation Program P.O. Box 645, Winnebago, NE 68071 [402] 878-4308

National Domestic Violence Hotline 24-hour Crisis Line (800) 799-SAFE (7233)

(800) 799-SAFE (7233 www.thehotline.org

Rape, Abuse, Incest National Network 24-hour Crisis Line

(800) 656-HOPE (4673) www.rainn.org

National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline 24-hour Crisis Line

(**866**) **331-9474** www.loveisrespect.org

StrongHearts Native Helpline Monday-Friday, 9:00am-5:30pm (Central Time) (844) 7NATIVE (762-8483)

For additional information and copies of this publication contact:

Nebraska Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence (402) 476-6256 www.nebraskacoalition.org State and National Hotlines



NEBRASKA COALITION TO END SEXUAL AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The Nebraska Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence enhances safety and justice by changing the beliefs that perpetuate domestic violence and sexual assault. We envision a world where domestic violence and sexual assault are a distant memory and healthy relationships prosper.

The Nebraska Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence is a statewide advocacy organization that provides information, support and guidance by:

- Working with the local network of domestic and sexual violence programs;
- Working with other organizations to enhance responses to victims and perpetrators and prevent violence from occurring;
- Providing training on the regional, statewide and national levels;
- Disseminating educational materials; and
- Working to ensure that laws and public policy initiatives support victims and hold perpetrators accountable.

For more information, visit the website at: www.nebraskacoalition.org or call (402) 476-6256

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