



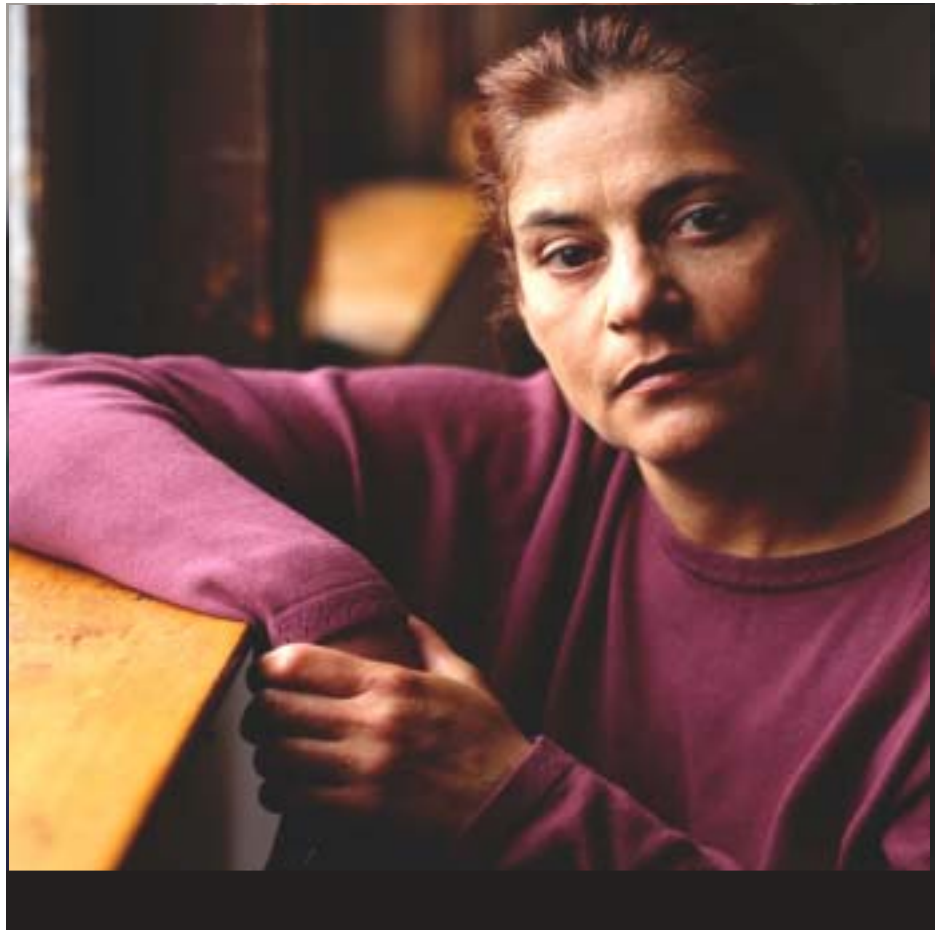
County of
San Diego

VIOLENCE AND ABUSE RESOURCES

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A PUBLIC
SAFETY ISSUE
THAT HAS
COME OUT
OF THE SHADOWS
TO IMPROVE
THE SERVICES
FOR VICTIMS:

“DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE & ABUSE



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ACT • MHSA • PROP 63

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**A PUBLIC SAFETY ISSUE THAT
HAS COME OUT OF THE SHADOWS
TO IMPROVE THE SERVICES FOR VICTIMS:**

“Domestic Violence & Abuse”

OVERVIEW

Domestic violence affects all types of people, regardless of gender, ethnicity, race, sexual identity, socioeconomic status, and religion. Many people have experienced domestic violence. It is estimated that 25% of women and 8% of men in the United States have been physically and/or sexually abused by an intimate partner at some point in their adult lives.

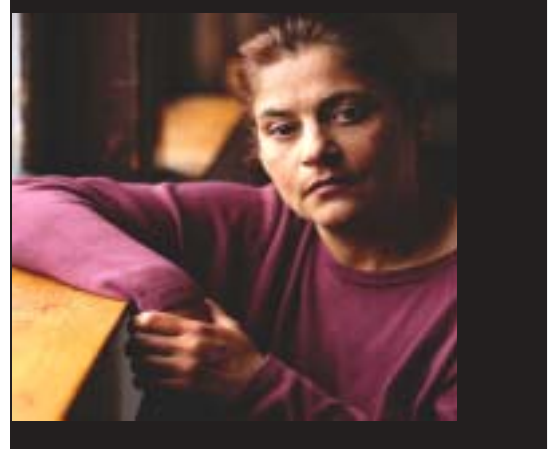
Healthy relationships involve love, care, respect, trust, sharing and consideration for the other person. Since problems and disagreements arise in all relationships, and conflict of interest may present itself in the relationship, this conflicts need to be resolved. Couples in this situation may experience strong feelings, gets stressed, upset and angry. Anger and arguments are normal parts of relationships and many relationship counselors suggests the best way to resolve a relationship problem or conflict is to speak about it until an agreement is reached. There are strategies, techniques and marital conflict resolution skills to find ways to address the negative feelings. What is unhealthy and wrong is when someone gets physically hurt in the process. Releasing negative feelings when arguing to the point of being out of control, can reach a crisis level, and can escalate into violence leading to threats, emotional abuse or hurting physically the other person.

Most couples and marital relationships have conflicts in their relationship and at times express strong feelings during stressful and difficult times. Learning how to handle these situations and problems is key to a successful relationship.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE. WHAT IS IT

Although most people think domestic violence is about anger, it really is about instilling fear and wanting to have power and control over the person or the relationship. It is the use of violence and aggression. The abuser may use varying tactics to gain power and control. Once abuse starts, it usually gets worse if steps are not taken to stop it.

Domestic violence often starts with threats, name-calling, and slamming doors or breaking dishes, and escalates to pushing, slapping, and other violent acts that can lead to a crime.



ONE OF THE FIRST STEPS IN DEALING WITH ABUSE IS TO IDENTIFY IT.

Identifying domestic violence is difficult because it can manifest itself in different forms: Physical, emotional, verbal, or sexual abuse. When it occurs between spouses, partners, and relatives, or in a dating relationship, it is called domestic abuse or domestic violence.

Domestic violence and family abuse is complex. It can occur in a number of circumstances and in a range of ‘family’ settings and can take the form of abuse of the elderly, sibling abuse, violence between same-sex couples, adolescent and children being violent towards parents, caregivers and teachers, caregivers being violent towards elders or people with a disability, or female to male partner violence. In the overwhelming majority of cases, however, family violence is perpetrated by males against their female partners.

It may not be easy to identify abuse, especially at first. While some relationships are clearly abusive from the outset, abuse often starts subtly and gets worse over time. For example, abuse may begin with occasional hurtful comments, jealousy or controlling behavior. As it gets worse, the abuse may become more frequent, severe or violent. Domestic violence is part of a continuing cycle that’s difficult to break. As the cycle of abuse worsens, the person’s safety or the safety of the children may be in danger.

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THREAT AND CONTROL ARE THE TWO KEY ELEMENTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE:

Domestic violence is any kind of behavior that a person uses, or threatens to use, to control an intimate partner. Though there are no typical victims of domestic violence, abusive relationships do share similar characteristics. In all cases, the abuser aims to exert power and control over his partner.

FEAR AND MAKING AN ABUSE REPORT

Social isolation can provide a clue that a family may be in trouble, and it also can be a risk factor for abuse. Social isolation can be a strategy for keeping abuse secret. Isolation is dangerous because it cuts off family members from outside help and support they need. Studies show that the highest risk for serious injury or death from violence in an intimate relationship is at the point of separation or at the time when the decision to separate is made. Victims of domestic violence are reluctant to report abuse.

In an abusive situation, many battered women will try to solve the problem by talking it out with the abuser, by fighting back, or by trying to change their behavior to meet the demands of the abuser (of course, then the demands change). When they fail to stop the abuse, women may become passive, which may reduce the immediate danger, or may go into a state of emotional withdrawal and depression.

VIOLENCE & PREGNANCY

Pregnancy is a special time for a woman and her family. It is a time of many changes—in a pregnant woman’s body, in her emotions and in the life of her family. As welcome as they may be, these changes often add new stresses to the lives of busy pregnant women who already face many demands at home and at work. However many mothers during pregnancy face extremely stressful circumstances. They may be confronted with unhealthy situations as the break-up of their marriage, physical or emotional abuse, open infidelity or simply disinterested and uninvolved partners who prefer staying out to staying home and supporting their pregnant partners. These mothers experience constant stress, shame, loneliness and sometimes, clinical depression during pregnancy or after giving birth.

Pregnancy can be an especially dangerous time for women who are in abusive relationships. Studies also suggest that high levels of stress may pose special risks during pregnancy. According to March of Dimes chronic stress may play a role in premature delivery.

An estimated 6% of all pregnant women are battered. Abuse may increase in severity or even start during pregnancy. Women who are battered may become homeless or with serious financial problems and may be more likely to deliver prematurely. Problems during pregnancy, such as low weight gain, anemia, infections, and bleeding, are higher for these women. The babies of these mothers are exposed to a variety of stress hormones, toxins and malnutrition inside the womb. . Not surprisingly, the mentioned problems during pregnancy are more common for women who are abused. The March of Dimes has



concluded that the battering of women during pregnancy causes more birth defects than all the diseases put together for which children are usually immunized. Abuse during pregnancy increase the baby's risk of low birth weight, premature birth, and death.

FACTS ON VIOLENCE AND CHILDREN

To learn and grow into a healthy adult, children must feel confident in the world and in themselves. Domestic violence can wipe out a child's confidence and leave them shocked.

Infants and toddlers who witness violence show excessive irritability, immature behavior, sleep disturbances, emotional distress, fears of being alone, and regression in toileting and language. Preschool children may develop enuresis and speech problems, such as stuttering. Exposure to trauma, especially family violence, interferes with a child's normal development of trust and later exploratory behaviors, which lead to the development of autonomy and personality.

Over half of men who abuse their female partners also abuse their children. Children often suffer directly. Men who batter their wives also frequently assault their children. Violence or the threat of violence toward a victim's children is often used to control a battered woman. In 30% to 60% of these violent homes, the children are also abused. The child may be abused

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by the mother's intimate partner, by the abused mother, by an abused sibling imitating the parents or by a relative.

Abusive relationships can also be particularly damaging to children, even if they're just witnesses. Children who witness domestic violence can suffer long-term consequences.

Many studies have shown that children who grow up witnessing abuse suffer from emotional, behavioral, and cognitive problems. They are at greater risk for depression, poor school performance, withdrawal, and complaints like stomachaches and headaches. Often, on the playground and at school, boys display to some degree, the aggressive behavior they witness at home.

Underlying all these "symptoms" of domestic violence are children's emotional responses: i.e. anger - misery - intense terror - fear of dying - fear of the loss of a parent. Children may feel rage, guilt, or a sense of responsibility for the violence, which can stifle emotional and social development.

The legacy of domestic violence is passed on when children are raised to believe that violence is a normal way of life. Children who witness domestic violence are more apt to be involved in violent relationships as adults, either as abusers or victims.

Exposure to violence in the home teaches children that violence is a normal way of life and increases their risk of being part of a violent relationship as adults, either as abusers or as victims. Children often believe that somehow they are the cause of the violence in the home. "You can help your children by assuring them that they are loved and not at fault. Children need to feel that they are protected and safe. When you leave an abusive relationship, you show by example that violence is wrong".

Seeking help is the best way to protect and save your children — and yourself — from an abusive relationship.

ELDER ABUSE FACTS

It's hard to believe, but elder abuse can happen anywhere. It can take place at home by family or friends or in a nursing home by professional caregivers. Many people don't think of elder abuse as a crime, but it is.

Every year, tens of thousands of elderly Americans are abused in their own homes, in relatives' homes, and even in facilities responsible for their care. They are harmed in some substantial way often people who are directly responsible for their care. More than half a million reports of abuse against elderly Americans reach authorities every year, and millions more cases go unreported.

As elders become more physically frail, they're less able to stand up to bullying and or fight back if attacked. They may not see or hear as well or think as clearly as they used to, leaving openings for unscrupulous people to take advantage of them. Mental or physical ailments may make them more trying companions for the people who live with them.

Substance abuse has been identified as the most frequently cited risk factor associated with elder abuse and neglect. It may be the victim and/or the perpetrator who has the substance abuse problem. Substance abuse is believed to be a factor in all types of elder abuse, including physical mistreatment, emotional abuse, financial exploitation, and neglect. It is also a significant factor in self-neglect.

Alcoholic or substance abusing older persons are at risk for several reasons. They may have substance abuse related impairments, such as cognitive loss, that reduces their ability to resist or detect coercion or fraud. Physical disabilities associated with substance abuse increase risk by rendering the older person dependant on others for assistance or care, and giving caregivers physical access to the older person and their home. Caregivers are also likely to have access to an older person's financial resources and to wield significant influence.

Seniors may be encouraged to take drugs or drink excessively, or even forced to do so. A perpetrator's motive may be to make the older person easier to exploit financially or, in the case of illegal drug use, less likely to report. Abusive caregivers may encourage older people to drink excessively or use drugs to make them more compliant or easier to care for.

Elder abuse victims often live in silent desperation, unwilling to seek assistance because they unfortunately believe their cries for help will go unanswered and they fear retaliation from their abusers. Many remain silent to protect abusive family members from the legal consequences of their crimes, or are too embarrassed to admit that they have fallen victim to predators. Others fear that no one will believe them — chalking up their allegations to the effects of old age.



Intervention can often save the assets, health, dignity or even the life of an elder. If you suspect Fraud and Elder Abuse report it.

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MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ACT, (MHSA) PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION (PEI) : KEY TO TRANSFORMATION

San Diego County, Health and Human Services Agency, Mental Health Services (MHS) has been conducting an extensive community process over the past nine months to identify community needs that can be addressed with the PEI component of the MHSA. Approximately \$16 M has been allocated to this initiative and approximately 10 programs have been identified for development.

WHAT IS PREVENTION IN MENTAL HEALTH

Prevention in mental health involves reducing risk factors or stressors, building protective factors and skills and increasing supports, prevention supports positive cognitive, social and emotional development and encourages a state of well-being that allows the individual to function well in the face of changing and sometimes challenging circumstances.

WHAT IS EARLY INTERVENTION?

Early interventions is directed toward individuals and families for whom a short-duration (usually less than one year), relatively low-intensity intervention is appropriate to measurably improve a mental health problem or concern very early in its manifestation, thereby avoiding the need for more extensive mental health treatment or to prevent a mental health problem from getting worse.

Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) programs bring mental health awareness into the lives of all members of the community through public education initiatives and dialogue. To facilitate accessing supports at the earliest possible signs of mental health problems and concerns. PEI builds capacity for providing mental health early intervention services at sites where people go for other routine activities (e.g. health providers, education facilities, community organizations). Mental health becomes part of wellness for individuals and the community, reducing the potential for stigma and discrimination against individuals with mental illness.

COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

- 1) Access and Crisis Line
1800-479-3339
- 2) Battered Women Hotline
(619) 234-3164
P. O. BOX 126398
San Diego CA 92112
- 3) Violence Unit -
Probation Department
Domestic Violence Unit
(619) 531-5069
3977 Ohio Street
San Diego, CA 92104
- 4) SD County Department
of Social Services,
Child Protective Services
(619) 338-2888
1255 Imperial Avenue, Suite 864
San Diego, CA 92101
- 5) SD County
Adult Protective Services
1-800-523-6444
9335 Hazard Way, Suite 100
San Diego, CA 92123
- 6) San Diego County
District Attorney's Office
(619) 531-4040
330 West Broadway
San Diego, CA 92101
- 7) Aging and Independence Services
1-800-510-2020
9335 Hazard Way,
San Diego, CA 92123
- 8) South Bay Community Services
(619) 420-3620
315 Fourth Avenue, Suite E
Chula Vista, CA 92101

For further information visit Network of Care:
www.sandiego.networkofcare.org/mh

Article edited by Dr. Piedad Garcia, Ed.D. LCSW, Assistant Deputy Director, County of San Diego, Mental Health Services.

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