

## Domestic Violence

### What is Domestic Violence? Is it when someone hurts me physically?

Yes. But it is not just when someone hurts you physically. Domestic Violence (DV) or Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) can take different forms. Domestic Violence is essentially the exercise of **power and control** by one individual against the other in a relationship.

Physical	Hitting, kicking, pushing, shoving, punching, slapping and any other act that would physically hurt your body.
Psychological	Taunting and tormenting to the extent that it makes you feel "crazy"
Sexual	Forced sexual acts including rape, calling you vulgar names, criticizing your physical appearance
Emotional	Attacking your self-esteem and making you feel worthless, humiliating you, making you feel guilty
Verbal	Calling you names, threatening
Financial	Controlling and threatening you by manipulating the way you spend or use money, not giving you access to money or bank accounts or credit cards
Immigration	Using your immigration status and fear of deportation to control you
Spiritual	Controlling and attacking your religious and spiritual beliefs
Intimidation	Threats or actual attack of your property or pets to control you.



## How do I know I am the target of domestic abuse?

You can be in an abusive relationship, for weeks, months or years and not realize that you have been the target of domestic abuse.

These are some of the symptoms that should give you an indication that something is not right in “my” relationship –

1. Feeling anxious or depressed.
2. Fear of being judged or blamed.
3. Fear of your children’s safety and welfare when your partner is around.
4. Mentally and emotionally disturbed.
5. Lack of interest in things that you enjoyed doing before.
6. Lack of trust in your partner due to fear of retaliation.
7. A feeling that you have not been able to maintain your relationships with family and friends because your partner discouraged or did not approve.

## Everyone tells me –“How can you say that about him/her? He/She is such a gentle soul!!” Am I seeing/hearing things?

May be not. Trust your instincts and take measures to keep you and your children safe. Most abusers are charmers. They present themselves as pleasing, charming, calm and respectable people in their community. They might even be seen as the more stable parent, with a decent job, working really hard to provide for their family.

## Where can I get help?

There are several resources in the community that can help you. Neighborhood Legal Services and Volunteer Lawyer’s Project can help you with legal representation. Organizations like Haven House and Crisis Services can help you with immediate crisis intervention and support and their services are available to you 24/7 in Erie County. Family Justice Center is another resource, where many different agencies like law enforcement, Haven House, Crisis Services, District Attorney’s Office, Probation, and the International Institute of Buffalo provide services in one place for the victims of domestic violence.

Neighborhood Legal Services, Inc. (NLS)	(716) 847-0650
Haven House 24 hour DV Hotline	(716) 884-6000
Family Justice Center	(716) 558-7233
Family Court DV Victim Advocate	(716) 845-2751
Volunteer Lawyer’s Project	(716) 847-0662
Crisis Services 24 hours	(716) 834-3131
Central Referral Services	(716) 851-5555
Hispanics United	(716) 856-7110
NY State Coalition Against DV Hotline	800-942-6906 (English) 800-942-6908 (Spanish)

Getting the necessary relief through the Justice System can sometimes be time-consuming. It is extremely important that you take care of your emotional and mental health during this time so that you can make the right choices for yourself and your children. There are several agencies that have Domestic Violence Counseling and Support Groups.

Haven House – Child and Family Services	(716) 884-6000
Family Mental Health – Mary Talbert Center	(716) 881-2591
Advocate Program – Rape Crisis Center	(716) 834-3131
Family Mental Health – Buffalo	(716) 842-2750
West Side Family Counseling Center (Catholic Charities)	(716) 854-3622

## **If I have to get away from my abuser, what should I do?**

Before you plan to get away from your abuser, you have to develop a safety plan. This is because studies have shown that the violence escalates when separating. But you do not have to do this alone. There are Domestic Violence Advocates at Haven House who can help you make a safety plan.

The safety plan will be your roadmap to protecting yourself and your children. It is not a generalized plan, but the Advocate will work with you to develop a plan that will best work for your family's needs. The plan will include various aspects like when to call 9-1-1, how to stay safe in the house when the abuser is being violent, packing a bag with few clothes and other important documents and keeping it handy at home or at a family or friend's house, etc..

## **What should I take with me when I leave my abuser?**

- Medication
- Keys – house, car, office, safe
- Government-issued identification for self and children
- Birth certificates for self and children
- Social Security cards for self and children
- Passports, green cards, work permits, visas
- Public Assistance ID/Medicaid Cards
- Order of Protection, police reports
- Money, checkbook, bank books, ATM cards, tax returns, credit cards
- Divorce or separation papers
- Paternity papers, as necessary
- Address book
- School/vaccination records
- Insurance papers
- Lease, rental agreement, or house deed
- Car/mortgage payment book
- Children's toys, security blankets, stuffed animals
- Sentimental items, photos
- Personalized safety plan

## **Once I get away from the abuser, where can I go? I need a place to live.**

Definitely. And friends and family may not be willing or able to provide you with accommodation. There are shelters available for victims of domestic violence, which provide a safe and secure environment by offering shelter, food and protection. Some shelters also provide social workers, legal services, childcare, on-site medical clinic and job training. All shelters keep their location strictly confidential to protect the victims from their abusers. Locating a local shelter for most victims will begin with a call to a domestic violence help hotline and for others it will be through contacting your local police department to report the domestic violence incident.

Most shelters provide group living with shared common areas like kitchen, dining room, recreation area and laundry. You will have separate bedrooms with bathroom and closet area for clothes and other personal belongings.

## **How long can I stay at the shelter?**

Some shelters have limits on how long a woman can stay, some do not. Although women will have more time to get back on their feet and protect themselves and their children if she can stay longer at the shelters, it also limits the number of women who can be served at a given time. The shelters that do not limit the stay note that the victims will return home or find accommodation when the crisis has passed. Shelters that limit may have definite limitations or individual length-of-stay

worked out with the residents based on their needs and requirements.

Some shelters are able to combine temporary shelter with transitional housing options; women stay in the temporary shelter at first, but later move to longer-term transitional housing where they may stay for a year or two until they find permanent alternate housing.

**Will they help me get back on my feet so that I can support myself and my children?**

Sometimes yes, but not always. Some shelters have on-site job training available. Your case worker will work with you in educating you about your various options. Some shelters have transitional housing options so that you will have enough time to get back on your feet before you have to move from under their wings.