

## **How To Help** someone you think is being abused

### **If Someone You Know is Being Abused...**

- You may have a friend, relative, or neighbor who is being abused. You may have witnessed the violence, heard it, seen physical signs of it, or merely suspected it for various reasons. What should you do?
- Ask direct questions, gently. Give the victim ample opportunity to talk. Don't rush into providing solutions.
- Listen - without judging. Victims often believe their abuser's negative messages. They feel responsible, ashamed, inadequate, and are afraid they will be judged.
- Let the victim know that you support and care about them, that they are not responsible for the violence, that only the abuser can stop the violence.
- Explain that physical violence in a relationship is never acceptable, at any time. There's no excuse for it - pot alcohol or drugs, not financial pressures, not depression, not jealousy.
- Tell the victim that they are not alone - that millions of Americans from every ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic background suffer from abuse, and that many victims find it difficult to leave.
- Also explain that domestic violence is a crime - as much of a crime as robbery or rape - and that they can seek protection from the justice system.
- If the victim has children, reinforce their concern for them, letting them know that domestic violence is damaging to children. In fact, you may want to reach out to support their children, and let them know you're there for them too.
- Let the victim know that it is likely that, in spite of the abuser's promises, the violence will continue, and probably escalate.
- Emphasize that when they are ready, they can make a choice to leave the relationship, and that there is help available.
- Provide the victim with information about local resources - the phone number of the local domestic violence hotline, support groups, counseling, shelter programs, and legal advocacy services.
- The victim may need financial assistance, or help finding a place to live, or a place to store their belongings. They may need assistance to escape. Decide if you feel comfortable helping out in these ways.
- Contact your local domestic violence program yourself for advice or guidance.
- If victim is planning to leave, remind them to take important papers with them, such as birth certificates, passports, health insurance documents, etc.
- If the victim remains in the relationship, continue to be their friend, while at the same time firmly communicating to them that they and their children do not deserve to be in this violent situation.
- If you see or hear an assault in progress, call the police. But because these assaults are often dangerous, do not physically intervene.