

Tip Sheet: Domestic and Intimate Partner Violence

Domestic violence is when one person in a relationship purposely hurts another person physically or emotionally. Domestic violence is also called intimate partner violence because it often is caused by a husband, ex-husband, boyfriend or ex-boyfriend. Women also can be abusers. People of all races, education levels and ages experience domestic abuse. In the United States, more than 5 million women are abused by an intimate partner each year.

Domestic violence includes:

- Physical abuse like hitting, shoving, kicking, biting or throwing things
- Emotional abuse like yelling, controlling what you do or threatening to cause serious problems for you
- Sexual abuse like forcing you to do something sexual you don't want to do

Some key points about domestic and intimate partner violence:

- **If you are in immediate danger, you can call 911.** It is possible for the police to arrest an abuser and to escort you and your children to a safe place.
- **Often, abuse starts as emotional abuse and then becomes physical later.** It's important to get help early.
- **Sometimes it is hard to know if you are being abused.** Reach out to friends, loved ones, or mental health professionals if you are unsure.
- **Your partner may try to make you feel like the abuse is your fault.** Remember that you cannot make someone mistreat you. The abuser is responsible for his or her behavior. Abuse can be a way for your partner to try to have control over you.
- **Violence can cause serious physical and emotional problems.** Some of those mental health concerns can include depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. It's important to try to take care of your health. If you are using drugs or alcohol to cope with abuse, get help.
- **There probably will be times when your partner is very kind.** Unfortunately, abusers often begin the mistreatment again after these periods of calm. In fact, over time, abuse often gets worse, not better. Even if your partner promises to stop the abuse, make sure to learn about hotlines and other ways to get help for abuse.
- **An abusive partner needs to get help from a mental health professional.** But even if he or she gets help, the abuse may not stop.

Being hurt by someone close to you is heartbreaking. Reach out for support from family, friends and community organizations for help.