

## The cycle of violence in domestic abuse:

Domestic violence and abuse can happen to anyone, yet the problem is often overlooked, excused, or denied. Noticing and acknowledging the warning signs and symptoms of domestic violence and abuse is the first step to ending it. No one should live in fear of the person they love. If you recognize yourself or someone you know in the following warning signs and descriptions of abuse, don't hesitate to reach out. There is help available.

Domestic abuse falls into a common pattern, or cycle of violence:



- **Abuse** – The abusive partner lashes out with aggressive, belittling, or violent behavior. The abuse is a power play designed to show their victim "who is boss."
- **Guilt** – After abusing his victim, the abuser feels guilt, but not over what he's done. He's more worried about the possibility of being caught and facing consequences for his abusive behavior.
- **Excuses** – The abuser rationalizes what he has done. He may come up with a string of excuses or blame his victim for the abusive behavior—anything to avoid taking responsibility.
- **"Normal" behavior** — The abuser does everything he can to regain control and keep the victim in the relationship. He may act as if nothing has happened, or he may turn on the charm. This peaceful honeymoon phase may give the victim hope that the abuser has really changed this time.
- **Fantasy and planning** – The abuser begins to fantasize about abusing his victim again. He spends a lot of time thinking about what his victim has done wrong and how he will make them pay. Then he makes a plan for turning the fantasy of abuse into reality.
- **Set-up** –The abuser sets his victim up and puts his plan in motion, creating a situation where he can justify the abuse.

The abuser's apologies and loving gestures in between the episodes of abuse can make it difficult to leave. He may make his victim believe that she is the only person who can help him, that things will be different this time, and that he truly loves her. However, the dangers of staying are very real.

## Speak up if you suspect domestic violence or abuse

If you suspect that someone you know is being abused, speak up! If you're hesitating—telling yourself that it's none of your business, you might be wrong, or the person might not want to talk about it—keep in mind that expressing your concern will let the person know that you care and may even save her life.

Do:	Don't:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask if something is wrong.</li> <li>• Express concern.</li> <li>• Listen and validate.</li> <li>• Offer help.</li> <li>• Support her decisions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wait for her to come to you.</li> <li>• Judge or blame.</li> <li>• Pressure her.</li> <li>• Give advice.</li> <li>• Place conditions on your support.</li> </ul>

# Domestic Violence and Homelessness

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## **BACKGROUND**

Domestic violence is defined as emotionally and/or physically controlling an intimate partner, often involving tactics such as physical assault, stalking, and sexual assault. Approximately one out of every four women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime and 1.3 million women are victims of domestic violence each year. Victims of domestic violence lost about 8 million days of paid work because of the violence that they experienced. 4.1 million dollars is spent directly to on mental health and medical services for domestic violence victims (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence). Considering the cost and prevalence, as well as the direct relationship between housing and domestic violence, a majority of homeless women are victims of domestic violence. 28% of families were homeless because of domestic violence in 2008 (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2008). 39% of cities cited domestic violence as the primary cause of family homelessness (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2007).

## **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AS A CONTRIBUTING FACTOR TO HOMELESSNESS**

When a woman decides to leave an abusive relationship, she often has nowhere to go. This is particularly true of women with few resources. Lack of affordable housing and long waiting lists for assisted housing mean that many women and their children are forced to choose between abuse at home and life on the streets. Approximately 63% of homeless women have experienced domestic violence in their adult lives (National Network to End Domestic Violence). Moreover, shelters are frequently filled to capacity and must turn away battered women and their children. In 2008, a majority of cities saw an increase in family homelessness, though a large number of foreclosures has also influenced this number. Yet, cities have been responsive. Barely any homeless families were found living on the streets in 2008 compared to 2007 when 25% of people living on the streets were families (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2008).

Some cities have decided to combat the increase of homeless families by providing motel vouchers for the nights when the shelters are full. But, because of the nature of being a homeless family, it takes a longer period of time to find permanent housing. Compared with single men and women, families remained in emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing longer. There are a number of reasons for this finding, but domestic violence victims in have particular difficulty. Victims often have poor credit records and employment histories because of the violence they have experienced. Landlords often discriminate against victims if they have a protection order or any other indicator of domestic violence. If violence occurs in the home, landlords can evict their tenants, resulting in a victim becoming homeless because she was abused.

Currently, victims of domestic abuse have unmet needs for both short and long-term housing. On a given day, 1,740 people could not be provided emergency shelter and 1,422 could not be provided transitional shelter (National Network to End Domestic Violence, 2007).

Shelters provide immediate safety to battered women and their children and help women gain control over their lives. The provision of safe emergency shelter is a necessary first step in meeting the needs of women fleeing domestic violence.

A sizable portion of the welfare population experiences domestic violence at any given time. Thus, without significant housing support, many welfare recipients are at risk of homelessness or continued violence. In the absence of cash assistance, women who experience domestic violence may be at increased risk of homelessness or compelled to live with a former or current abuser in order to prevent homelessness. Welfare programs must make every effort to assist victims of domestic violence and to recognize the tremendous barrier to employment that domestic violence presents.

Long term efforts to address homelessness must include increasing the supply of affordable housing, ensuring adequate wages and income supports, and providing necessary supportive services.



# Want to make a difference? Volunteer at Russell House

Russell House has amazing volunteers who are dedicated to helping the women and children who have been subjected to domestic violence. We are so grateful for all the support our volunteers have given us. As our shelter grows, so does our need for volunteers. If you or someone you know is interested in volunteering at Russell House or would like more information, please contact Volunteer Coordinator Kimberly Steelman at (573) 364-0579 or at [ksteelman.vc@gmail.com](mailto:ksteelman.vc@gmail.com). We currently need volunteers to assist with providing shelter relief, transportation, childcare, donation pick-up, and moving residents out of the shelter. Russell House provides general domestic violence training and more specific training depending upon the volunteer position. Our next volunteer and advocate training is scheduled to begin soon. Please contact us for more information.

You're happiest while you're making the greatest contribution.

**Robert F. Kennedy**

