

Domestic Violence

WHAT IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

Domestic violence is not a private matter. It is a serious crime that can include physical, sexual, psychological, or emotional abuse of one current or former intimate partner by another. You can be a victim of domestic violence no matter how old you are, what your racial or cultural background may be, what type of education you have, how much money you have, or what your religious beliefs may be. Domestic violence is usually not a single event and often becomes more severe and frequent over time.

IF YOU ARE A VICTIM

The most difficult step for you to take is to admit that you are being or have been abused by your partner. Remember, your partner's violence is the problem, not you. You do not provoke it. You do not deserve it. You may feel trapped, alone, and that you have lost control of your life. You may have nightmares or flashbacks of abusive incidents. Your eating and sleeping habits may change. You may feel depressed or hopeless and lack interest in things you once enjoyed. The physical and emotional suffering you experience may seem to use up all the energy you have. Your safety is the first priority, and only you can truly judge what will be the safest and best way to handle your situation. Leaving an abusive relationship is not always the safest solution. Many domestic assaults occur while a victim is trying to leave the relationship. If you are being abused, you should consider all options when trying to find a way to

end the violence as safely as possible. Every person in an abusive relationship needs a safety plan that has been developed for that person's situation and circumstances. Domestic violence shelters and advocates can help you develop one for your situation. If you feel it is safe, let trusted friends and family know about your situation. They can be part of your safety plan. Know where to get help. Tell someone what is happening to you.

GETTING HELP

Remember, as a domestic violence victim, you are not alone. Do not lose hope. The support network in your community may include counseling services, hotlines, support groups, legal resources, and shelters that can give you support, advice, financial assistance, counseling, and legal help. Your local women's center, shelter, or domestic violence program can help you obtain support and protection. To locate a domestic violence program in your local community contact the Alabama Coalition Against Domestic Violence at (334) 832-4842 or visit their website at www.acadv.org

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