DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

PRESENTED BY:
FRANCINE STARK
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

OBJECTIVES:

_Upon completion of this module participant will be able to:_

- Discuss the historical context of domestic violence, history of the movement, the diverse population it impacts, current statistics, prevalence, reporting issues, and common myths.
- Discuss the dynamics of domestic violence including power and control issues, barriers to leaving, and minimization.
- Discuss the civil and legal options available to victims of violence.
- Discuss the roles and responsibilities of various advocates for victims of domestic violence and challenges/opportunities for collaboration.
Safety Planning

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What is safety?

- Home
- Food
- Health
- Transportation
- Communication
- Being free of scrutiny
- Feeling fearless and hopeful
- Sharing hopes, concerns, and pleasure with friends
- Sleeping soundly

What Compromises Safety?

- Life
- Perpetrators
Social Risks and/or Resources

Cultural
- Religion and faith community
- Race
- Class
- Responsibility for family honor and integrity
- Children
- Childhood socialization
- Cultural norms and standards

Social Risks and/or Resources

Immediate Personal
- Homelessness
- Financial responsibility
- Addiction
- Criminal charges
- Poverty
- Sexual identity
- Age
- Abilities
- Language

Institutional
- Child Protection
- Criminal justice system
- Immigration status
- Civil justice system
- Law enforcement
- Transnational laws
- Tribal laws/federal laws
- Social service
- Welfare

Perpetrator Generated Risks
- Manipulation of life-generated risks
  ◦ Convince victim that help is unavailable
  ◦ Using his/her own vulnerability to discrimination to convince victim not to seek help, particularly from legal system
  ◦ Presenting themselves as the only resource for life needs
    ◦ Threatening to use CPS to remove children from victim's custody
    ◦ Threatening immigration status
    ◦ Threats against family, friends and children
- Physical, Sexual, Psychological, Financial, and Social Harm
What is a Safety Plan?

Strategies to reduce a perpetrator’s ability to use power and control over the lives of his/her victim(s) and to increase the victim’s safety and capacity to act in his/her own best interest.

• Specific to context
• Impactful
• Evolutionary

Kinds of Safety Plans

• Immediate – What should I do right now?
• Short term – How will I get through the next …?
• Long term
  ◦ Can I keep the perpetrator away from me forever?
  ◦ Is the relationship over? Will he/she change?
  ◦ How do I live with the loneliness?
  ◦ How do I live with the fear, anger, and hurt I feel?
  ◦ How will I get by financially?
  ◦ How can I keep the children safe and happy during visitation, after school, at daycare?

Collaborative Process

• Create a safe place to talk (privacy, environment)
• Listen (hear, validate, explore, clarify, summarize)
  ◦ Hear past safety strategies
  ◦ Hear current safety plans
• Offer additional strategies
• Over time, assess perpetrator lethality
• Respect victim’s right to make decisions for him/herself
• Identify ongoing or future role for advocate (if any)
Take into account

- What is the victim hoping you can do?
- What may s/he fear you will do?
- What is your role?
- What is your potential impact?
- Do you have the time and skill?
- Who else is involved?
- What do you do when you don’t like the victim’s choices
- What assumptions you shouldn’t make…

Brenda
USING COERCION AND THREATS
Making and/or carrying out threats
To do something to hurt her
• threatening to leave her, to commit suicide, to report her to welfare • making her drop charges • making her do illegal things.

USING ECONOMIC ABUSE
Preventing her from getting or keeping a job • making her ask for money • giving her an Allowance • taking her money • not letting her know about or have access to family income.

USING MALE PRIVILEGE
Treating her like a servant • making all the big decisions • acting like the "master of the castle" • being the one to define men's and women's roles.

USING CHILDREN
Making her feel guilty about the children • using the children to relay messages • using visitation to harass her • threatening to take the children away.

USING ISOLATION
Controlling what she does, who she sees and talks to, what she reads, where she goes • limiting her outside involvement • using jealousy to justify actions.

USING MINIMIZING, DENYING AND BLAMING
Making light of the abuse and not taking her concerns about it seriously • saying the abuse didn't happen • shifting responsibility for abusive behavior • saying she caused it.

USING EMOTIONAL ABUSE
Putting her down • making her feel bad about herself • calling her names • making her think she's crazy • playing mind games • humiliating her • making her feel guilty.

USING INTIMIDATION
Making her afraid by using Looks, actions, gestures
• smashing things • destroying her property • abusing pets • displaying weapons.

Domestic Abuse Intervention Project
205 West Fourth Street
Duluth, Minnesota
55805
218-722-4134
Safety Planning
By: Susan Bradford and Francine Stark

Strategies to reduce a batterer’s ability to use power and control over the lives of his/her partner and children

Battered women, while unable to prevent their abuser’s violence, can make plans to increase their safety. Friends, family, and service providers may all be part of helping to develop and/or implement safety plans.

In order to contribute to her safety and not cause harm, it is important to appreciate and build on the strategies that a battered woman has already identified. As you talk with a woman about safety planning, know that this woman has thought many times and for many hours about how to make herself safe and free from abuse and has tried a number of strategies. If she is still being abused, those strategies have not worked completely. The fact that she is still able to lead a functional life means that they have worked to some degree.

Anyone offering assistance to battered women must remember two critical facts: only the batterer controls the abuse; the battered woman and children will live with the consequences of the strategies used in the attempt to decrease the batterer’s ability to abuse them.

What is safety?

Safety is not simply having a place to go where the batterer cannot find her, although that may be part of a larger safety plan. In reality, safety involves many things that most of us take for granted. These are a few examples:

- Having a place to live (long term)
- Having enough food
- Having enough money to maintain housing, healthcare, food, and transportation
- Being free of scrutiny (being watched in the course of daily life)
- Having the right to establish a routine – going to the same grocery store every week or taking a walk in the park every lunch hour,
- Living without fear
- Sharing hopes, concerns, and pleasure with friends and family
- Sleeping soundly

What kinds of safety plans are there?

It takes time, experience, and a variety of strategies to create personal safety. Battered women may be seeking help in accomplishing any number of different safety goals.

- Immediate -- How do I get away tonight? Should I call the police?
- Short term -- How do I survive the next month?
- Longer range – How can I keep him away from me? Is there any realistic possibility he’ll change – How will I know? How do I live with the loneliness? What can I do about how hurt and angry I feel?
How can I remain safe while exchanging the children for visitation? How will I support myself and the children?

How do battered women make safety plans?

Most of us have been in situations where we had to make difficult decisions. For example, even when we may recognize that we are unhappy with our job, few of us are able to simply walk away from that job immediately. There are many things to be taken into account: How will I pay my bills? What will future employers think? How long will I be unemployed? Am I qualified or worthy of a better job? What will my choices mean to my family? What will happen to the projects I have started? Will I lose the friendships I’ve made through this job? Until there are answers to at least several of these questions, leaving our job, however unsatisfying, is not a viable option. Sometimes the process of changing jobs takes years for people in such a situation.

For battered women, making plans to get free from abuse follow a similar path, but she is considering her options and developing plans under the constant scrutiny of her abuser, subject to his abusive tactics to keep her from making any changes. Battered women’s safety plans may include a wide variety of things. The following pages list some of the things she may consider. She recognizes the threats to her safety, thinks of ways to reduce them, tries out her plans, learns from what happens, and reassesses her situation, options, and plans for the future.

Helping battered women with safety plans

One thing that everyone can do is to be sure that their place of work, worship, or community gathering place (such the library) has easily accessible information about contacting the local domestic violence project.

Domestic violence advocates have been helping battered women with safety plans for many years and are uniquely able to provide accurate information in response to battered women’s questions. They have specialized training in active listening and crisis intervention skills. Hotlines allow women to remain anonymous and take as much time as they need to express their feelings, tell their experiences, and engage in problem solving. They are expert at supporting battered women in their safety planning process, without telling the woman what she should do. Hotline workers recognize that battered women are experts on their experience of abuse and know best what strategies may enhance their safety or increase their danger.

Because domestic violence advocates have heard many battered women describe their experiences and the threats they were able to overcome, domestic violence advocates are more likely to be able to explore the question ‘what will happen if …?’ and will be well informed of local services and other options.

It is difficult for most of us to avoid giving advice, particularly when we are afraid of what will happen to someone we are concerned about. However, the helper must recognize that, no matter what, only the battered woman and her children will live with the consequences of the choices she makes. Whatever strategy she chooses, only the batterer controls future abuse.

A battered woman may have many people involved in her life who can be helpful in a variety of ways:
Domestic violence projects – someone to talk to, validation, support, information, advocacy, shelter, problem solving, and safety planning

Family/friends – a place to stay, childcare, transportation, money, people to talk to

The criminal justice system (police officers, the district attorney, judges) – arresting the batterer, following up on conditions of release, prosecution of charges, informing the battered woman about the criminal process

Clergy – offer information about local services, especially the domestic violence project, addressing her theological questions in ways that prioritize her safety, autonomy, and right to a violence-free life; offer assistance with shelter, childcare, transportation, money, and the support of a caring community.

Employers – involving workplace security in the enforcement of any court orders, screening phone calls for her, offering flexible hours and time off for things she need to do (court, house hunting, caring for children)

Support groups – a place to talk, gain perspective, make friends, and create a sense of community

Maine’s domestic violence projects provide safety planning assistance through their 24-hour hotlines, support groups, and shelters. Encouraging people to use these free local resources helps break their isolation, establish new contacts, and gain a greater sense of personal power and hope. At the very least, be sure to give them the hotline number, and, if possible, offer them access to a private phone to make the call.
The Impact of Domestic Abuse on Women
By: Francine Stark and Susan Bradford

Physical violence in the home is a crime. It may take many forms, including pushing, shoving, spitting, throwing things, choking, kicking, stabbing, and shooting. Some of the impact of physical abuse is obvious: bruises, broken bones, and black eyes. Physical violence reinforces and intensifies the impact of all other forms of abuse, but it is only one of the many tactics batterers use to exert and maintain control. Some abusers are never physically violent.

Some women respond to such tactics by breaking off the relationship quickly – though it may take years for the batterer to leave her alone. Other women may believe that their partner’s abusive behavior is the result of a bad childhood, stress, or some other issue which she may be able to help her partner overcome. She may think that a short-term compromise of her own choices is a reasonable sacrifice for the long term happiness she believes possible for herself and the partner she loves. Some believe the justifications the batterer gives for the abuse and lose their ability to accurately name their experience as abuse. People who are abusive blame their victims for their violence, saying such things as ‘it was because of the way she kept the house, the tone of her voice, the look on her face, the way she spent the money’.

An abused woman may respond initially by trying to prove herself to him, changing how she looks and acts, hoping that he will come to trust and appreciate her. She may hope that if she proves her love, he will be kind and loving in return. As the abuse intensifies, she responds by focusing all her time and energy on monitoring his moods, looks, demands, and slightest movement in a desperate attempt to avoid abuse.

For women, the experience or threat of physical violence becomes the context for future choices. Her emotional and physical survival depends on being in tune with him and complying with his wishes. He may be warm and loving one day, telling her she has no reason to be afraid, while being threatening, violent, or sullen the next. This serves to keep her off-balance and feeling crazy, one day hopeful about the relationship, the next terrified and seeking a way out. Her eating and sleeping patterns may be disrupted and injuries left untreated. Her overall health may deteriorate.

Once these patterns are in place, it becomes extremely difficult to break away.

At some point, intent upon ending the abuse in her life, a battered woman may leave, hoping that her leaving may inspire her abuser to recognize the impact of his behavior and change. She may or may not want to end the relationship. She does, however, want the abuse to end. The abuser usually responds by apologizing, promising to go to counseling, to support her goals for schooling or employment. He’ll say whatever it takes to win her back. She may go back, hoping his promises will come true. She may feel defeated by the challenges and loneliness she faces in establishing a separate life for herself and the children.

The real and perceived threat of physical violence does not immediately cease when a battered woman ‘leaves’ the person who is abusing her. Abusers often are the most dangerous when they realize that their partners are preparing to leave or have left -- when it becomes clear that the tactics that have persuaded her to stay with him in the past are no longer effective. The batterer may continue to abuse her even if she leaves, using such tactics as telephone harassment, stalking, and manipulating visitation arrangements with children, as well as ongoing threats to her emotional and physical well-being.
One might reasonably ask, “What could be worse than staying in a relationship with someone who is abusive?” Here are some answers from battered women:

**Worse battering** – Unsuccessful attempts to get away may lead to escalated violence. Perhaps the abuser will carry out threats of suicide and/or homicide.

**Harm to the children** – Most battered women and some batterers try to protect their children from the worst of the violence. Few battered women are willing to leave their children unprotected in the care of a batterer, and some do not have sufficient resources to take their children with them when they leave. In addition, many batterers threaten that they will gain full legal custody of the children if their wives leave.

**Retaliation against parents, other close relatives, friends, or others** – Some batterers make a point of threatening to kill their in-laws if their partners ever leave them. Some threaten to harm anyone who helps her to leave.

**Starvation and homelessness** – Many batterers are careful to keep their partners economically powerless. Property and bank accounts are kept exclusively in the batterer’s name. With no money available to them, how can the women leave without starving? Where will they stay if their husbands have socially isolated them from friends and relatives? Those women who do have friends with whom they could stay often fear endangering their friends by hiding out at their homes. Many battered women do not understand their legal rights to household property or are afraid to take anything when they leave.

**Shame, failure, and public sin** – It is common for battered women to take responsibility for the continuation of even a violent marriage. The shame of admitting failure can be very great. In the case of women who religious, staying in violent marriages and protecting the children as best they can are the only ways to avoid being defined as painfully irresponsible. They may believe that their personal sacrifice is their duty to God.

**Loss of social identity, loneliness, and one’s entire way of life** – Violence has a way of creeping into an otherwise comfortable life, increasingly polluting it but never changing it too much all at once. Thus, battered women may maintain their social identities through most if not all of the abuse. Leaving the abuser often means losing all that is familiar in their lives. In cases where the couple is part of a small cultural or ethnic community, leaving could result in isolation from the woman’s heritage and from others who speak her language.

When battered women leave, they face numerous challenges in the community, for example:

- Lack of real alternatives for employment and financial assistance

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1Many of these battered women’s responses are included in *A Battered Woman’s Problems are Social, Not Psychological*, by L.H. Bowker in *Current Controversies on Family Violence*, R. Gelles & D. Loseke, eds., Sage Publications, 1993, pp. 158.
Lack of affordable legal assistance to obtain a divorce, custody order, or permanent protection from abuse order

Limited availability of subsidized housing and lack of public transportation, particularly in rural communities

The structure of family law, which approaches parental rights and responsibilities with the presumption that joint custody is best, and that spouse abuse is an exception that requires careful proof.

Public disdain for single parents

Lack of affordable childcare and health care

Every individual person who is abused has a unique story to tell, resources to muster, and fears to overcome. Amazingly, many women muster the strength from within and break free.

About half of the people who call Spruce Run for support have already separated physically from the abuser and are trying to establish abuse-free lives for themselves and their children. Others have plans to leave in the future if the batterer fails to follow through with promises to change.

The process of safely separating from an abuser can take a long time. Essential to their successes are the responses of the people and institutions in their lives.

Any of us may play a crucial role in helping people who have been abused to establish emotional and/or physical safety in their lives. For example, if the police aggressively enforce orders of protection and conditions of release, the abuser is more likely to get the message that they cannot continue to control this woman, that law enforcement supports her demand for safety. Health care providers who continually give the message that they are concerned for her well being and offer support may give a battered woman the encouragement she needs to make positive change.

To be helpful, however, we must be open to receive the information she gives us, willing to ask questions, and recognize the limits of legal remedies and social services. Above all, we must consistently give the unequivocal message that everyone has the right to be treated with respect and that there are no justifications for abuse.
Programs of the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence

See reverse side for contact information for Maine organizations and tribes providing domestic violence services.
Programs of the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence

Aroostook
Hope and Justice Project
formerly Battered Women’s Project
www.hopeandjusticeproject.org
754 Main St., Presque Isle, ME 04769
Admin: 207-764-2977  Hotline: 1-800-439-2323

Piscataquis
Womancare
www.wmncare.org
P.O. Box 192, Dover-Foxcroft, ME 04426
Admin & Hotline: 207-564-8165
Hotline: 1-888-564-8165

Penobscot
Spruce Run
www.sprucerun.net
P.O. Box 653, Bangor, ME 04402
Admin: 207-945-5102  Hotline: 1-800-863-9909

Kennebec & Somerset
Family Violence Project
www.familyviolenceproject.org
P.O. Box 304, Augusta, ME 04332

Cumberland & Sagadahoc
Family Crisis Services
www.familycrisis.org
P.O. Box 704, Portland, ME 04104
Admin: 207-767-4952  Hotline: 1-800-537-6066

Hancock
The Next Step
www.nextstepdvproject.org
P.O. Box 1466, Ellsworth, ME 04605
Admin: 207-667-0176  Hotline: 1-800-315-5579

Washington
The Next Step
Admin: 207-255-4243  Hotline: 1-888-604-8692

Androscoggin, Oxford & Franklin
SafeVoices
formerly Abused Women’s Advocacy Project
www.awap.org
P.O. Box 713, Auburn, ME 04212
Admin: 207-795-6744  Hotline: 1-800-559-2927

Knox, Lincoln & Waldo
New Hope for Women
www.newhopeforwomen.org
P.O. Box A, Rockland, ME 04841-0733
Admin: 207-594-2128  Hotline 1-800-522-3304

York
Caring Unlimited
www.caring-unlimited.org
P.O. Box 590, Sanford, ME 04073
Admin: 207-490-3227  Hotline: 1-800-239-7298

Wabanaki Tribes of Maine
Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services

Aroostook Band of Micmac
www.micmac-nsn.gov
7 Northern Rd., Presque Isle, ME 04769
Admin: 207-764-1972 or 1-800-750-1435

Maliseet Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Program
www.maliseets.com
690 Foxcroft Rd., Houlton, ME 04730
Admin: 207-532-3000  Hotline: 207-532-6401

Passamaquoddy Peaceful Relations
www.wabanaki.com
P.O. Box 343, Perry, ME 04667

Penobscot Indian Nation Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Services Program
www.penobscotnation.org
12 Wabanaki Way, Indian Island, ME 04468
Admin: 207-817-7469  Hotline: 207-631-4886

Culturally Specific Organizations Providing Domestic Violence Services

United Somali Women of Maine
www.uswofmaine.org
207-753-0061

Sudanese Development Institute of Maine
207-879-2281

Tengo Voz
207-553-2252