

Resource Guide For **FAITH COMMUNITIES**

RAISING AWARENESS • SUPPORTING FAMILIES • STRENGTHENING THE COMMUNITY



MISSISSIPPI
COALITION AGAINST
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
www.mcadv.org

PREFACE

On September 14, 2016, 13 out of 13 identified domestic violence programs in Mississippi participated in the National Census of Domestic Violence Services. 484 victims were served on that day, 78 hotline calls were answered, and there were 32 unmet requests for services—100% were for housing.¹ The 2015 census reveals that 338 victims were served on census day, 176 hotline calls answered.² The 2014 census indicates 465 victims were served, 181 hotline calls answered.³ All of these statistics report **one** day's activities statewide and only reflect the persons who chose or were able to access service.

In every faith, religious leaders and spiritual teachers are often the first responders to victims of domestic violence. Sometimes, they are the only ones the victims of abuse turn to for help. Faith communities can shine the light on domestic violence by raising awareness about its prevalence, promoting healthy relationships and actively partnering with local domestic violence shelters. The shelter advocates are the experts in dealing with family violence and are an excellent resource to support victims, abusers, their families and the faith communities of which they are a part.

The purpose of this manual is to assist the faith community in the addressing of domestic violence. It should not to be used as a substitute for professional counseling or consultation, nor should it be used as a basis for any medical, mental or emotional diagnosis.

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(Endnotes)

¹National Network to End Domestic Violence; 2016 Domestic Violence Counts: A 24-Hour Census of Domestic Violence Shelters and Services.

²National Network to End Domestic Violence: 2015 Domestic Violence Counts: A 24-Hour Census of Domestic Violence Shelters and Services.

³National Network to End Domestic Violence: 2014 Domestic Violence Counts: A 24-Hour Census of Domestic Violence Shelters and Services.



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INTRODUCTION

“Domestic violence is an epidemic, no matter what statistic you look at, yet as a society we often close our eyes to it.” Amy Sanchez, Director of Break The Cycle, an organization on the NO MORE steering committee.^{iv}

Nearly 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men experience domestic violence in their lifetime.^v

90-95% of domestic violence victims are women.^{vi} Intimate partner violence may be perpetrated by either men or women; however, in the majority of cases, the victims are women and the batterers are men. For ease of written conversation, the batterer will be referred to as He and the victim as She.

FACTS

- Any abuse involving violence or physical harm or threat of violence is a crime, even when the victim is a spouse.
- Domestic abuse happens in relationships of all ages, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, culture and sexual orientation.
- Domestic abuse is defined by the victim’s perception – not the perpetrator’s excuses or explanations.
- No one asks for or deserves to be abused.
- Abuse victims are predominately women.
- Individuals stay in abusive relationships for a variety of reasons including:
 - lack of economic resources
 - fear of losing custody of their children
 - lack of awareness of available support (e.g. shelter programs, hotlines)
 - love for the partner (not the abuse)
 - family members’ encouragement to remain in the relationship
 - religious values
 - fear of the perpetrator
- Abuse may include forms of isolation resulting in limited accessibility to resources.
- Over time, abuse tends to escalate in severity and frequency.
- **The most dangerous time for the victim is when she tries to leave.**
- With time and support, many eventually decide to leave and safely act on that decision.
- Often the perpetrator will act one way in public and in an abusive way in private making it difficult for others to imagine the perpetrator is abusive.

^{iv} Good Housekeeping, “Domestic Violence Statistics: The Horrific Reality,” Jennifer O’Neill, February 23, 2016, <http://www.goodhousekeeping.com/life/relationships/a37005/statistics-about-domestic-violence/>

^v American Psychological Association Violence and the Family: Report of the American Psychological Association Presidential Task Force on Violence and the Family (1996), p.10.

^{vi} A Report of the Violence against Women Research Strategic Planning Workshop sponsored by the National Institute of Justice in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, (1995).

DEFINITIONS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence is a pattern of coercive behavior within a relationship in which one person attempts to control another person through threats or actual use of physical, emotional, psychological, financial, sexual or spiritual abuse.

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical abuse is usually recurrent and escalates in severity and frequency. Domestic violence in the form of physical abuse IS A CRIME. It may include, but is not limited to the following:

- Pushing, shoving, slapping, punching, kicking, biting, throwing things at the victim, shooting, stabbing
- Threatening to hit with weapons or objects
- Holding, tying down or restraining
- Strangulation (which is a felony)

EMOTIONAL or PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE

Emotional or psychological abuse may precede or accompany physical abuse as a way of gaining and maintaining control of the victim through fear and intimidation. It may include, but is not limited to the following:

- Abandonment in a dangerous place
- Neglect, refusing to help or seek help when the victim is hurt or sick
- Not allowing the victim to eat or sleep
- Threats of harm to self, children or other family members or pets
- Physical or social isolation
- Extreme jealousy or possessiveness
- Lying, breaking promises, destroying trust
- Gaslighting, also known as "mind games," i.e. insisting something is one way when it really is another
- Driving fast or recklessly to frighten or intimidate

SEXUAL ABUSE

Sexual abuse may also exist within an abusive relationship. This may be extremely difficult to discuss because of embarrassment, or religious or cultural attitudes toward sex. It is important to build a foundation of trust with the victim and to allow her to discuss the situation on her own terms and at her own pace. It may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Force or threat of force to perform any sexual act against her will
- Intentional infliction of pain during sexual intercourse
- Limiting reproductive freedom including use of birth control
- Sexual harassment
- Use of sexually derogatory names

VERBAL ABUSE

Verbal abuse is a pattern of using words to demean another person in order to gain and maintain control in a relationship. In her book, *The Verbally Abusive Relationship*, Patricia Evans identifies several forms of verbal abuse. These include but are not limited to:

- Countering: a tendency to be argumentative
- Discounting: an attempt to deny that the victim of the abuse has any right to his or her thoughts or feelings. It may come out as criticism
- Verbal abuse disguised as jokes
- Judging and criticizing: involves a negative evaluation of the partner; it is similar to accusing and blaming
- Trivializing: makes most things the victim of the abuse does or wants to do seem insignificant^{vii}

RELIGIOUS or SPIRITUAL ABUSE

Religious abuse is the use of one's faith, religious beliefs or practices to manipulate her. It may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Preventing the partner from practicing their religious or spiritual beliefs
- Ridiculing the other person's religious or spiritual beliefs or forcing the children to be reared in a faith that the partner has not agreed to
- Using scripture, traditions, or cultural norms to impose gender roles that are abusive or coercive, to assert authority, to reinforce male privilege, to encourage a victim to submit, to give commands, or to punish a victim

FINANCIAL ABUSE

According to the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV), financial abuse includes tactics to limit the partner's access to assets or conceal information and accessibility to the family finances. While less commonly understood, financial abuse is one of the most powerful methods of keeping a survivor trapped in an abusive relationship and significantly diminishing her ability to stay safe after leaving an abusive relationship. Research indicates that financial abuse is experienced in 98% of abusive relationships and surveys of survivors reflect that concerns over their ability to provide financially for themselves and their children was one of the top reasons for staying in or returning to a battering relationship.^{viii} It may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Withholding or limiting economic resources such as money or credit cards
- Stealing from or defrauding a partner of money or assets
- Exploiting the intimate partner's resources for personal gain
- Preventing the spouse or intimate partner from working or choosing an occupation

^{vii} Psychology Today, Berit Brogaard, D.M.Sci, Ph.D., "The Mysteries of Love; 15 Common Forms of Verbal Abuse; <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-mysteries-love/201503/15-common-forms-verbal-abuse-in-relationships>

^{viii} National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV); About Financial Abuse; <http://nnedv.org/resources/ejresources/about-financial-abuse.html>

IN LGBT RELATIONSHIPS

Domesticshelters.org reports, “The facts about LGBT partner abuse/domestic violence are often hidden by numerous myths and misconceptions. Common myths and misconceptions include the belief that women are not violent, that men are not commonly victims, that LGBT domestic violence is mutual, and that there are no significant differences between heterosexual domestic violence and same-gender domestic violence. However, people who are lesbian, gay and bisexual have an equal or higher prevalence of experiencing intimate partner violence, sexual violence and stalking as compared to heterosexuals.”^{ix}

Violence in LGBT relationships may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Threatening to “out” the partner by exposing the partner’s sexual orientation or gender identity
- Telling the victim that authorities are unwilling to help lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender persons
- Telling partner that leaving the relationship is an admission that LGBT relationships are deviant

**MOST PEOPLE DO NOT WANT TO END THE RELATIONSHIP,
THEY WANT THE ABUSE TO STOP.**



^{ix} Domesticshelters.org; LGBTQ and Domestic Violence; <https://www.domesticshelters.org/domestic-violence-statistics/lgbtq-and-domestic-violence#.WbgS74WcE2w>

WHY DOES IT HAPPEN?

CYCLE OF ABUSE

Domestic violence tends to become more severe over time and usually requires some form of intervention or professional treatment to overcome the behavior. Abuse generally follows a predictable pattern of recurring behavior: the buildup, the explosion, the remorse. Often after an incident, the batterer is contrite, offers promises that the behavior will never occur again and asks for forgiveness. For many victims of faith who have been taught to value forgiveness, this becomes a trap. Often, the batterer is nicer for a period of time, sometimes for long periods of time, but inevitably the battering is repeated.

Battering is not the result of a batterer's being out of control but rather is the attempt of the batterer to stay IN control. In this regard, his behavior is under his control. He chooses when and where he batters. He chooses what parts of the victim's body he hits so as to hide the evidence from others. He chooses to direct his violence only towards the victim or those whom he perceives may be helping her. His need to control family members seems to increase with stress in his life.

MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT BATTERING

Battering is not caused by alcohol or drugs. Because alcohol and drug abuse are epidemic in our society, it is inevitable that some batterers will have both problems. However, this is not a causal relationship: the alcohol or drug use does not cause the violence. Alcohol or drug treatment will not (in most cases) stop the violence.

For the victim, alcohol or drugs may also be a factor. A victim may be abusing alcohol or drugs (including prescription drugs) as a means of coping with the abuse. Alcohol or drug treatment for the victim will be useful to her only if she is safe and no longer threatened with violence.

Battering is not caused by the relationship. The relationship between the batterer and the victim may be stressful. Their relationship may be strained in multiple areas, but the violence does not result from these problems. There are other couples who have similar problems but who do not have a batterer-victim relationship. The batterer brings violence to a relationship, and often the relationship deteriorates as a result of the violence. Understanding this means that the batterer must deal with his abusive behavior separate from the relationship.

Battering is not caused by the victim. Her behavior does not cause the batterer's violence. Helping her to change her behavior will not stop his violence. It doesn't matter what she does or doesn't do (e.g. having dinner on time, cleaning the house, looking "prettier"). Although she may have learned enough about the pattern to know when violence may occur and make efforts to postpone it until a later time, the batterer is in control of his violence, not the victim.

"Your abusive partner doesn't have a problem with his anger; he has a problem with your anger. One of the basic human rights he takes away from you is the right to be angry with him. No matter how badly he treats you, he believes that your voice shouldn't rise and your blood shouldn't boil. The privilege of rage is reserved for him alone. When your anger does jump out of you—as will happen to any abused woman from time to time—he is likely to try to jam it back down your throat as quickly as he can. Then he uses your anger against you to prove what an irrational person you are. Abuse can make you feel straitjacketed. You may develop physical or emotional reactions to swallowing your anger, such as depression, nightmares, emotional numbing, or eating and sleeping problems, which your partner may use as an excuse to belittle you further or make you feel crazy."

Lundy Bancroft,
Why Does He Do That?: Inside the Minds of Angry and Controlling Men

INFORMATION ABOUT THE BATTERER

A significant difference between the public persona and the private reality for the batterer is common. He may appear to be a good father, a good provider, a sober and upstanding member of the community, and an active, generous member of his religious congregation. He may be charming and gregarious. He may not only appear to be this person, but these traits may actually be true of his public persona. His partner loves him and may be emotionally dependent on him.

It is important to listen to those who know the batterer's private persona. At times when a member of the clergy is only familiar with the charming, public aspects of a batterer, it may be difficult to believe his wife when she tells a horrendous story about the abuse that she experienced in private. Her experience contradicts the clergy person's perception and the tendency is to trust one's own experience and to disbelieve her story.

INTERVENTION GUIDELINES

As a faith leader or a member of a faith community, the spiritual and emotional support that you can offer a victim is critically important. Think now about faith-based resources you can provide to victims that will help them use their faith as a resource. Counteract areas where faith or scripture is being used as a weapon against the victim or where faith is a barrier to safety. If it is safe to do so, help survivors remain connected to the faith community or to spiritual practices. Help victims understand that they are not to blame for the abuse.

Get to know your local advocates, and have resources (brochures and flyers from your local domestic violence shelter) handy for the time when you need them. A list of domestic violence shelters in the state of Mississippi is included at the end of the manual. Each of these agencies is staffed with advocates who are trained to assist victims of interpersonal violence.

When a victim comes to you for help or you suspect that there may be violence in the home, these are some specific things to keep in mind:

Believe her! Do not question her accuracy. Remember that she is probably minimizing the violence. What you hear may only scratch the surface. Do not minimize the abuse.

Confidentiality is crucial. A woman's consent should be obtained in writing for anyone who needs to know about the abuse. Just as importantly, use this opportunity to empower the victim to make contacts for herself.

Do not disclose information about the victim to the batterer. Be aware that many who batter experience a need to control others. They may also try to control anyone (e.g. clergy, counselor, etc.) who is willing to help the victim.

Validate her. Affirm her courageous act of coming to you. Affirm that no one deserves to be abused.

Do not blame or judge the victim. There are no perfect people, so there are no perfect victims. We all, in extreme situations, make decisions or do things that we later wish we hadn't. At the same time, none of us deserves to be abused. It is important to support victims, to allow them to make their own decisions, and to allow them to make mistakes.

Ask direct, specific questions. Many women will not identify the abusive behavior as "violence" or abuse. However, they may acknowledge that he hits, punches, slaps, calls her names, etc. By being direct, you tell her that it is OK for her to discuss this difficult issue. By being specific, you help her identify behavior that may be abusive.

Support the battered woman without physically touching her. To touch her may recall painful memories, or may invite an emotional bond that is unhealthy for both the victim and the clergy.

Support her decision to act or not to act. The victim must be allowed to make her own decisions and to make changes in her own time—even if you are convinced that she should be doing something different.

DO NOT SUGGEST MARRIAGE OR COUPLES COUNSELING. Couples counseling can be dangerous and could increase the level of violence. It also shifts the attention from the abuse and tends to minimize the seriousness of the violence. Also, it may keep a victim in a relationship longer than she would otherwise stay.

It may be very hard for women to talk about issues of abuse with a man. If you are a male faith leader, offer opportunities for victims to talk to a woman in the congregation who has been trained about domestic violence, and refer victims to counseling or a support group through your local domestic violence service agency.

Do not confront the abuser about what the victim has said. Holding the abuser accountable, though important, is never as important as the victim's physical safety.

Be cautious about validating or promoting a batterer's spiritual renewal or tearful confession. If the abuser has actually changed his abusive behavior, he will be willing to allow time to validate it. It is not unusual for a batterer to make proclamations of deeper or renewed faith commitments when he fears he is losing control of his partner. Only time will tell whether the abuser has actually changed. Victims should not be encouraged to return to the relationship based on the batterer's assurances that he has changed.

REFERRALS

Tragically, many victims of abuse never reach specialized domestic violence services. It is difficult for victims to reach out, especially if they don't know about available services or don't know the advocates. However, victims often do trust and reach out to their faith leaders and members of their faith communities. This means that faith leaders can be instrumental in building bridges of trust to local services, providing information and brochures, and building trust for the service agency in the congregation and community. All of this will make it easier for victims and survivors to connect with life-saving domestic violence services. When you refer victims to community services you support safety for the victim and for her family members and children. You can offer to sit with a victim while she makes the call.

Problems associated with domestic violence are complicated and difficult to work through. It takes a community to respond. Faith-affiliated victims need the spiritual support of their congregations and faith leaders. They also need safety planning, lethality assessment, counseling, support groups, individual therapy, shelter, and many other services. It is important that you support survivors AND refer them to expert services. Your local domestic violence shelter is available 24/7 (through the hotline) to assist victims, batterers, and their families. Services are free and are available to survivors whether or not they are in the shelter.

Always remember that the victim's safety is the primary concern. The advocates at your local domestic violence shelter are trained to help a victim to create a safety plan and to let the victim know about resources that are available to keep her (and her children) safe. In addition, many domestic violence service providers can help victims think about the dangerousness of the situation and to assess potential lethality.

RESOURCES

Domestic Violence Shelters in Mississippi

Angel Wings Outreach Center **Crisis Line: 1-866-847-5802**
Mendenhall, MS Admin: 601-847-5802
www.angelwingsoutreach.com

Counties Served: Hinds, Issaquena, Madison, Rankin, Simpson, Warren, Yazoo

Services: Emergency Shelter, Childcare, Advocacy Services, 24-hour crisis line, Community Education, Referral Services

Care Lodge..... **Crisis Line: 601-693-4673**
Meridian, MS Admin: 601-482-8719
www.carelodge.com

Counties Served: *Clarke, Kemper, Lauderdale, Leake, Neshoba, Newton, Noxubee, Scott, Winston*

Services: Emergency Shelter, Transitional/ Supportive Housing, Childcare, Advocacy Services, Batterer Intervention Program, 24-hour Crisis Line, Residential Counseling, Non-Residential Counseling, Emergency Transportation, Community Education, Referral Services

Catholic Charities, Inc. Shelter for Battered Families **Crisis Line: 1-800-273-9012**
Jackson, MS Admin: 601-366-0222
www.catholiccharitiesjackson.org/services/domestic.violence.html

Counties Served: *Hinds, Issaquena, Madison, Rankin, Simpson, Sharkey, Warren, Yazoo*

Services: Emergency Shelter, Transitional/ Supportive Housing, Childcare, Advocacy Services, 24-Hour Crisis Line, Residential Counseling, Non-Residential Counseling, Emergency Transportation, Community Education, Referral Services, Legal Services

The Center For Violence Prevention **Crisis Line: 1-800-266-4198**
Pearl, MS Admin: 601-932-4198
www.ms cvp.org

Counties Served: *Hinds, Issaquena, Madison, Rankin, Sharkey, Simpson, Warren, Yazoo*

Services: Emergency Shelter, Transitional/ Supportive Housing, Childcare, Batterer Intervention Program, 24-Hour Crisis Line, Residential Counseling, Non-Residential Counseling, Emergency Transportation, Community Education, Referral Services

Domestic Abuse Family Shelter..... **Crisis: 1-800-649-1092**
Laurel and Hattiesburg, MS Admin: 601-428-1707
www.domesticabusefamilyshelter.org

Counties Served: *Covington, Forrest, Greene, Jasper, Jefferson Davis, Jones, Lamar, Marion, Perry, Smith, Wayne*

Services: Emergency Shelter, Childcare, Advocacy Services, Batterer Intervention Program, 24-Hour Crisis Line, Residential Counseling, Non-Residential Counseling, Emergency Transportation, Community Education, Referral Services

Guardian Shelter..... Crisis Line: 1-800-273-6938
Natchez, MS Admin: 601-442-0142

www.catholiccharitiesjackson.org/natchez/shelters

Counties Served: Adams, Amite, Claiborne, Copiah, Franklin, Jefferson, Lawrence, Lincoln, Pike, Walthall, Wilkinson

Services: Emergency Shelter, Childcare, Advocacy Services, 24-hour Crisis Line, Residential Counseling, Non-Residential Counseling, Emergency Transportation, Community Education, Referral Services, Legal Services

Gulf Coast Center For Non-Violence..... Crisis Line: 1-800-800-1396
Biloxi, MS Admin: 228-436-3809

www.gcwcfn.org

Counties Served: George, Hancock, Harrison, Jackson, Pearl River, Stone

Services: Emergency Shelter, Transitional/ Supportive Housing, Childcare, Advocacy Services, Batterer Intervention Program, 24-hour Crisis Line, Residential Counseling, Non-Residential Counseling, Emergency Transportation, Community Education, Referral Services, Legal Services

Haven House Family Shelter..... Crisis Line: 1-800-898-0860
Vicksburg, MS Admin: 601-638-0021

www.myhavenhouse.org

Counties Served: Hinds, Issaquena, Madison, Rankin, Sharkey, Simpson, Warren, Yazoo

Services: Emergency Shelter, Transitional/ Supportive Housing, Childcare, Advocacy Services, Batterer Intervention Program, 24-hour Crisis Line, Residential Counseling, Non-Residential Counseling, Emergency Transportation, Community Education, Referral Services

House of Grace.....Crisis: 662-253-0252
Southaven, MS Admin: 662-342-3900

www.houseofgracems.org

Counties Served: DeSoto, Tate, Tunica, Yalobusha, Marshall, Panola, Lafayette, Coahoma, Benton, Quitman

Services: Emergency Shelter, Transitional/ Supportive Housing, Advocacy Services, 24-Hour Crisis Line, Residential Counseling, Non-Residential Counseling, Emergency Transportation, Community Education, Referral Services, Legal Services

Our House..... Crisis Line: 1-888-884-5683
Greenville, MS Admin: 662-334-6873

www.ourhousenewbirth.com

Counties Served: Attala, Bolivar, Carroll, Grenada, Holmes, Humphreys, Leflore, Montgomery, Sunflower, Sharkey, Washington

Services: Emergency Shelter, Childcare, Advocacy Services, Batterer Intervention Program, 24-Hour Crisis Line, Non-Residential Counseling, Emergency Transportation, Community Education, Referral Services

S.A.F.E., INC.....Crisis Line: 1-800-527-7233
Tupelo, MS Admin: 662-841-9138
www.safeshelter.net

Counties Served: *Alcorn, Benton, Itawamba, Lee, Pontotoc, Prentiss, Union, Tippah, Tishomingo*

Services: Emergency Shelter, Transitional/ Supportive Housing, Childcare, Advocacy Services, Batterer Intervention Program, 24-Hour Crisis Line, Residential Counseling, Non-Residential Counseling, Emergency Transportation, Community Education, Referral Services

Safe Haven.....Crisis Line: 1-800-890-6040
Columbus, MS Admin: 662-327-6118

Counties Served: *Attala, Calhoun, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Clay, Lowndes, Monroe, Montgomery, Oktibbeha, Webster*

Services: Emergency Shelter, Childcare, Advocacy Services, 24-hour Crisis Line, Residential Counseling, Non-Residential Counseling, Emergency Transportation, Community Education, Referral Services

MISSISSIPPI COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE..... 1-800-898-3234

NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE..... 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

MISSISSIPPI COALITION AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT..... 1-888-981-9011

NATIONAL SEXUAL ASSAULT HOTLINE..... 1-888-987-9011

We have been asked on multiple occasions by faith leaders, advocates and attorneys regarding the Mississippi Domestic Violence laws. For easy reference, all of those laws may be found on our website www.mcadv.org/laws.

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