



**Office for the
Prevention of
Domestic Violence**

**Governor's Office of
Faith Based Community
Development Services**



Domestic Violence and Faith Communities: Guidelines for Leaders

In cooperation with the New York Theological Seminary

While Waiting for Change

While waiting for change,
I'm praying and fasting.
While waiting for change,
Enduring and long-suffering.
While waiting for change,
I'm loving and caring.
While waiting for change,
I'm patient, but hurting.
While waiting for change,
My feelings are changing,
My heart is breaking,
I'm fearing and dreading,
Each day that I'm living.
Living with someone,
Who refuses to change,
States, he won't change.
In the midst of my waiting,
For him to change,
A Miscarriage,
Mentally breaking down,
Slowly dying inside,
From stress and disease.
Can't live this painful song,
Tolerated it too long,
I've gotta change,
And move on.

Cecilia Thomas
While Waiting for Change
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Note: Domestic violence is among the most serious health and safety issues facing women today. Because the vast majority of victims of domestic violence are women who are abused by their male partners¹, this document, in part, will refer to victims as female and abusers as male. However, most of the information contained in this document will apply to all victims regardless of their gender or the gender of their abusive partner. This includes individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, transgender and/or bisexual, as well as men who are abused by their female intimate partners.

¹ According to the U.S. Bureau of Justice, “From 1994 to 2010, about 4 in 5 victims of intimate partner violence were female.” <http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=4536>



Introduction

Domestic violence is a serious moral and spiritual concern. It violates the dignity of human beings and the basic moral principles of all religious faith traditions. Religion is fundamentally concerned with the well-being of individual people and the common good of society. Religious practices seek not only to bring about healing in the world, but justice and mutuality as well. All of the world's religious traditions, in their own way, call upon their adherents to be especially mindful of those individuals and groups who are without power and privilege, and who represent the most vulnerable within a society.

Faith communities can play a significant role in providing support for victims of domestic violence and in holding abusers accountable. Spiritual leaders are often the first place a person turns to in times of trouble and turmoil, and are in a position to provide counsel, support and safety.

This document is designed to assist faith leaders in responding to domestic violence within their communities by providing guidelines and information about working with individuals who are abused, and by encouraging them to raise awareness of the issue within their communities.

Domestic Violence 101: An Overview

Domestic violence exists when an individual exerts, or threatens to exert, physical, psychological, financial, and/or sexual power and control over his or her current or former intimate partner.

Individual abusive acts such as hitting, punching, strangulation (often referred to as “choking”), intimidation, menacing, stalking, emotional and/or sexual abuse of a partner in an intimate relationship generally occur over time, and often escalate in levels of severity and dangerousness. Since most domestic violence is committed in private and much of it is non-physical in nature, an individual can be abused for many years before anyone becomes aware of the need for intervention. In fact, many victims of domestic violence never disclose their abuse to anyone, since their abusers are likely to use such disclosures to justify more violence against them, their children, their pets, their family and friends, even their coworkers. The level of power an abuser establishes within an intimate partnership can happen very quickly, but more often, the shift in power occurs slowly, over a period of time, so that the victim cannot even remember when or how it began or happened. This shift can occur after there is some sort of commitment, such as engagement or marriage, or some change in the level of intimacy, such as separation or divorce, or even pregnancy or the birth of a child. In fact, many victims wonder if what is happening to them even is domestic violence because their partner hasn't been physically abusive.

While physical abuse is probably what most people think of when they think about domestic violence, it is just one of the many ways that an abuser might try to gain power and control in a relationship.

Some of the ways a person might try to gain power and control over their partner include:

- Isolation: making it hard for the victim to see friends and family or participate in

- activities such as choirs, prayer groups, bible study
- Economic abuse: taking total control of the finances
- Verbal, emotional, psychological abuse: demeaning the victim; embarrassing the victim in front of other people; criticizing the victim's parenting abilities
- Intimidation: making the victim afraid with a look, action, gesture
- Coercion and threats: displaying weapons and threatening to use them; threatening to "out" victims who are gay or lesbian; threatening to harm victim's family, friends, and anyone who might help
- Physical abuse: pushing, grabbing, hitting, slapping, punching, or kicking, or limiting their access to things necessary to sustain physical, emotional or spiritual well-being
- Sexual abuse: forcing the victim to have sex; making the victim engage in uncomfortable or degrading sex acts; forcing the victim to engage in non-consensual sex, prostitution
- Using children: undermining victim's parental authority; threatening to take the children away; asking children to spy on the victim and report back
- Minimizing, denying, blaming: convincing the victim that the abuse is his/her fault; saying the abuse was caused by stress, alcohol, or problems at work; denying that the abuse happened at all

More Facts About Domestic Violence:

- Domestic violence happens in all socioeconomic, ethnic cultures and sexual orientations.
- Domestic violence is caused solely by the abuser's conscious choice to abuse, regardless of any excuses or justifications the abuser may provide.
- Domestic violence is not defined by the abuser's "intention" to harm the victim, but by the fact that the victim was harmed in some way.
- Gay, lesbian and transgender individuals can be victims of domestic violence.
- No one asks for or deserves to be abused.
- Domestic violence is often, but not always, a crime.
- Individuals stay with abusers for a variety of reasons including:
 - * Lack of economic resources,
 - * Fear of losing children,
 - * Love for partner (but not the abuse)
 - * Religious values, and
 - * Fear of abuser.
- The abuser often will act one way in public and another way in private. It may be difficult for a non-family member to imagine the abuser as violent or abusive. The abuser may appear charming or enjoy a position of leadership in the community. The victim may describe the abuser as a Jekyll and Hyde.
- Over time, abuse tends to escalate in severity and frequency. The victim may endure several violent events before leaving the abuser permanently. It is important to support victims even if they never leave the situation. Violence often increases at the time of separation or thereafter. With time and support, many victims eventually decide to leave and safely act upon that decision.

Healthcare Implications

Domestic violence is a serious public health issue. Victims of domestic violence are at greater risk of physical, mental, reproductive and other health consequences over their lifetime than non-victims.

Since physical health is closely linked to spiritual health, it is helpful for faith leaders to understand that domestic violence may lead to both acute and chronic issues and illnesses for victims of domestic violence. In some cases, the health-related consequences of domestic violence may impair victims to the point of no longer being able to attend services or participate in events and services within the faith community.

Current research² shows that:

- Forty-two percent of women who have experienced physical or sexual violence at the hands of a partner have experienced injuries as a result.
- Women exposed to domestic violence are:
 - * twice as likely to experience depression;
 - * almost twice as likely to abuse alcohol;
 - * 16 percent more likely to have a low birth-weight baby; and
 - * 1.5 times more likely to acquire HIV and contract syphilis infection, chlamydia or gonorrhea.
- Thirty-eight percent of all murders of women globally were reported as being committed by their intimate partner.

Although this list is not exhaustive, these numbers are significant and indicate the severity of domestic violence and the need for a greater understanding of and appropriate response to victims and abusers of domestic violence.

Legal Implications

Certain acts – including physical assault, strangulation, stalking and menacing – are crimes under New York State law. Victims of domestic violence may seek to address these acts in both civil and criminal court, separately or simultaneously, and may request an order of protection from either court.

Legal definitions of the behaviors that constitute domestic violence can be found in a variety of locations, including, but not limited to: the Penal Law, Family Court Act, and Social Services Law. Other definitions may be found in research studies, in general articles on domestic violence, in policies and protocols and in publications or training materials from domestic violence service providers.

It is important to understand that New York State has mandatory arrest laws, which mean that under certain conditions, police must make an arrest when responding to a Domestic Incident call. For mandatory arrest to apply, both the victim and abuser must be considered members of the same family or household.

This means that the victim and abuser, regardless of gender or sexual orientation:

- Are currently married;
- Have been married in the past;

² Black, M.C., Basile, K.C., Breiding, M.J., Smith, S.G., Walters, M.L., Merrick, M.T., Chen, J., & Stevens, M.R. (2011). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010 Summary Report. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

- Have a child in common;
- Are related by blood;
- Are currently in an intimate relationship;
- Have been in an intimate relationship in the past;
- Are living together; or
- Have lived together in the past.

In New York State, mandatory arrest laws apply under any of the following conditions:

- A felony has been committed by one “member of the same family or household” against another.
- There has been a violation of a stay-away provision of an order of protection.
- A family offense has been committed in violation of an order of protection. Certain crimes are designated by law as family offenses if the people involved are considered members of the same family or household.

Please always be aware that when you provide information to victims about services or legal relief, there may be limitations imposed by the legal and social services systems.

Working with Immigrant Populations

An immigrant is someone who has moved to the United States from another country. The terms “documented” and “undocumented” refer to documents (papers) saying whether someone has the legal right to be in this country or not. Undocumented immigrants are sometimes called “illegal aliens.”

Some immigrant women are brought to this country by people who lie to them and promise a good job or marriage, arranged or otherwise, once they arrive here. When they arrive, however, their money and documents are taken from them and they are forced to do work that puts them in danger, demeans them physically and/or sexually, and provides little or no compensation. This is sometimes called “trafficking” and is a crime under federal and state law.

Abusers often tell immigrant victims that seeking help will result in the victim being deported, so it is important to understand the additional barriers and fears that immigrant victims of domestic violence face when they decide to disclose the abuse and reach out for support. The most helpful thing you can do in these situations is refer victims to the local domestic violence service providers or a legal service program.

Religion and Culture: Distinguishing between the Two

There is a tendency to mix the sacred teachings of religious tradition with behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs that are better understood to be the result of cultural traditions and practices. What pass for religious beliefs are often inherited cultural traditions or practices. Culture is something that human beings collectively produce. It is the body of customs, behaviors, symbols, meanings, and achievements of a particular people over time that create their collective identity. Issues like sexism, masculinity, and sexualization are often used as justifications for domestic violence, particularly when the victim attempts to subvert such cultural expectations by challenging the abuser’s power and control.

Like language, to which it is closely related, culture is always changing. Religion refers to those dimensions of life that are beyond immediate human control or even experience. We often refer to them as “spiritual” or “the sacred.” While religion is not separated from culture, it transcends it in a more enduring manner. When religious teachings may appear to support domestic violence, it is inevitably a matter of cultural traditions or practices being inappropriately elevated to the level of divine or sacred truth.

Religion and Domestic Violence

Religious traditions are often misinterpreted, particularly by abusers, to justify their abusive behaviors. Usually such support comes from citing selected passages from sacred scriptures or teachings of a particular religious community, or from arguing for the authority of traditional practices from the past that justify violence, especially against women. Similar arguments could be made for any number of social behaviors that are deemed unjust or oppressive today, such as racism and economic enslavement. At the same time, religious beliefs can also be a source of spiritual and moral strength. Religious teachings are often sources of hope and inspiration. A wider community motivated by faith can provide sanctuary in the form of support, shelter, and safety from domestic violence.

Spiritual Abuse

In addition to physical, sexual, psychological and/or financial abuse, domestic violence may also include spiritual abuse. This could result in people questioning their spiritual and religious beliefs and values, and could also make them fearful of escalating the abuse if their partner has forbidden them to practice their faith. Religion and spirituality can often be a source of support and healing for those experiencing domestic violence. However, religion and spirituality can also be used as a way to control another person.

Examples of Spiritual Abuse:

- Using beliefs to manipulate someone
- Preventing someone from practicing their religious or spiritual beliefs
- Forcing someone to violate their religious beliefs or practices
- Ridiculing, denying or minimizing someone’s beliefs
- Forcing children to be reared in a faith that has not been agreed to
- Misusing scripture to justify abusive, dominating, or oppressive behavior
- Using religious guilt to manipulate someone into doing what they want
- Questioning someone’s sense of reality
- Discounting someone’s sense of right and wrong
- Denying a person’s value
- Using marital entitlement to justify sexual demands, including marital rape
- Forcing someone to witness or participate in ritual abuse, such as animal sacrifice
- Manipulating others in the religious community to control and ostracize you

The Spiritual Impact of Domestic Violence:

In addition to the effects that domestic violence has on a victim’s everyday life, victims also suffer the spiritual impacts of abuse, including:

- Isolation from religious or spiritual community

- Broken relationships with a support network
- Loss of belief in their faith
- A need for spiritual reassurance that they are supported and not at fault
- Questioning core values and religious or spiritual beliefs
- A search for meaning and justice
- Feelings of divine punishment
- Disconnect from God
- Questions about the value of prayer and ritual
- Struggles with faith traditions

The Role of Faith Leaders

Leaders of faith communities have an important role to play in ending domestic violence in all forms.

Faith leaders, including priests, pastors, rabbis, imams, babalawo, iyalawo, sensei, monks, nuns, spiritual directors and others, are often in a position to assist in situations of domestic violence. Adherents of particular faith traditions often will seek out these leaders for spiritual or moral counsel, or will come to them for advice. Faith leaders play an important role not only as guides and confidantes, but as voices of moral authority in supporting victims of domestic violence and assisting them in seeking help. They can also hold offenders accountable for their abusive behaviors. Faith leaders also can play an important role in the wider society, advocating for public policies that address domestic violence, and securing both public and private resources for providing support.

Every county in New York State has at least one domestic violence program that is licensed by the state's Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS). These professionals are a tremendous resource for faith leaders, as they are trained to address a victims' safety, legal, and advocacy needs. Faith leaders are encouraged to refer victims to these professionals who specialize in victim services, so that they can use their expertise to help victims heal and survive spiritually at a time when victims are vulnerable and in need of guidance, support, and a strong and consistent sense of community support and acceptance.

Information about the local domestic violence programs in every county can be found by visiting <http://www.nyscadv.org/statewide-dv-directory/> and/or by calling the New York State Domestic and Sexual Violence Hotline at **1-800-942-6906**.

How Faith Leaders Can Help

Victims of domestic violence are often reluctant to talk to their faith leaders. They may have heard conflicting messages and may feel that they will not be supported, or that they will be shunned, or not believed. Faith leaders may be hesitant to assist because they lack training and may not be sure how to support victims without unintentionally re-victimizing them.

It is important to acknowledge when biases and/or previous experiences may impact an individual's ability to be present and helpful when a victim of domestic violence seeks help and support. Like all professionals, faith leaders bring their own set of biases to their

work, and acknowledging this is critical to helping those most in need. In the absence of being able to provide guidance that is in the best interest of the victim – because it may contradict their personal and/or spiritual beliefs, practices, or experiences – faith leaders can still be of great assistance by referring victims to the local domestic violence program for the help they need. Making such connections between victims and those who can help them can be lifesaving.

Create a Culture of Safety and Support

It is important for faith leaders to identify themselves as aware of and knowledgeable about domestic violence. Faith leaders can help bring attention to the issue of domestic violence in a variety of ways, which enhances the environment of zero tolerance within their faith community, and increases the likelihood that victims may feel safer coming seeking support and information. Faith leaders can:

- Provide information on domestic violence in bulletins and other communication materials.
- Be supportive of victims of abuse by believing them and by providing them with as much information as possible without insisting that they make any decisions right away, or at all.
- Refer victims to appropriate community agencies. For information about the nearest domestic violence programs, you can visit www.nyscadv.org/statewide-dv-directory/ or call 800-942-6906. Information and assistance is available in all languages.
- Meet with local domestic violence providers, develop relationships with them and show support for their work by partnering on projects to benefit the shelter, raising funds for the shelter program, and bringing domestic violence advocates into the community to provide workshops and presentations to the faith community.
- Place posters, wallet-sized cards, and brochures on domestic violence in bathrooms and wherever information is displayed. Educational materials should represent awareness of cultural diversity and of gay and lesbian domestic violence.
- Begin support groups for victims and their children in collaboration with local domestic violence programs; offer facilities for support groups and events.
- Speak out about domestic violence during meetings and sermons.
- Do not offer abusers domestic violence support groups or psychological counseling.
- Hold abusive members of your faith community accountable for their behavior. Don't accept excuses or be misled.
- Work with the local domestic violence program to provide training to members of the faith community about how to affirmatively challenge beliefs and attitudes that condone abuse or support an environment where abuse can thrive.
- Work with the local domestic violence program provide training to members of the faith community on holding abusers accountable and supporting victims.
- Be willing to see and acknowledge the problem.
- Use the influence of the institution or religious mandates to speak out against the injustice of domestic violence in every form.
- Learn the appropriate ways to respond to abusers and victims.
- Have local phone numbers, resource materials, and contact information available at all times.

- Assist those who are in danger of abuse or who are being abused in developing a safety plan.
- Recognize that if abusers are not held accountable, they will abuse their families again, and the abuse will likely get worse.
- Encourage victims to reach out and assist them with their choices, without judgment.

Focus on Prevention

Some faiths believe – and teach – that evil is expressed in three main ways: by deed, by speech, and/or by thought. Such beliefs often lead faith communities to develop preventive efforts that support a culture of loving-kindness, compassion, and equanimity because it is believed that such characteristics encourage people to connect more deeply with others, and that they are therefore less likely to harm them.

Since domestic violence professionals believe that prevention (addressing domestic violence before it happens) is always preferred to intervention (responding to domestic violence after the harm has already occurred) guiding the entire faith community in practices that are nurturing to self and others can be very useful in preventing violence in all forms.

That being said, since domestic violence is a unique type of violence, given the nature of the relationship between the abuser and the victim and the social stigma and the secrecy that often surround domestic violence, all faiths are encouraged to develop and communicate domestic violence-specific guidelines and policies in addition to their faith-based practices and teachings.

Domestic violence workshops and trainings for the entire faith community can be useful preventive opportunities to engage in thoughtful conversation about domestic violence, and can convey, to victims and abusers, that such behavior is not condoned by their faith or within their community. It can also inform everyone about available resources and supports, so that if they do need assistance at some point, they will know where to turn and that others will support and assist them.

Additionally, while some faiths may routinely reach out to and support abusers in a healing capacity, it is imperative that leaders consistently and repeatedly affirm, to the entire community, that such outreach is solely in an effort to support and help victims heal and move forward, and that this often involves working with abusers who remain an active part of the family in the home and in the faith community. It must be made imminently clear, however, that this in no way condones the abuse.

Complexity of Religious Marital Bonds

Although faith can bring great comfort and healing to all members of the faith community, it can also be a barrier to those who believe that breaking the marriage bonds for any reason, even within the context of domestic violence, is an unforgivable sin. Victims of domestic violence may also feel ashamed to admit to other members of their faith community that they are being abused, often believing that the abuse is their fault, and that staying with the abuser is the only way to repent and/or atone for the suffering they have caused themselves, their partners, their children, and their community. This thinking is often exacerbated by cultural norms, creating a dual trap for victims.

While faith leaders are often focused on keeping families together, families dealing with domestic violence cannot remain safely intact unless the abuser has stopped abusing, the victim and children feel safe, and the abuser has been – and continues to be – held accountable for all the harm they have caused.

Since physical abuse is only one part of what a victim of domestic violence experiences, the victim is the only person who knows what is happening within the relationship to make decisions regarding safety. The threats, intimidation, degradation, isolation, and financial and spiritual abuse a victim suffers, often in front of others who may not even recognize the signs, erode the victim over time. Not only do they have to contend with the ongoing abuse, but also with judgments about how they respond to the abuse, whether by leaving the relationship or remaining with the abuser. When shame and fear about breaking marriage bonds become part of this equation, the victim is left feeling defeated and hopeless, often risking their safety to honor what they believe to be the demands of their faith. Abusers not only take advantage of victims' fears and confusion, they are often the guiding force behind the inaccurate information victims acquire about their roles as devoted spouses and parents within their faith communities.

It is critical that faith leaders understand and accept their role as a supportive and loving guide without giving orders or making decisions for the victim about what “should” and “should not” happen. It is also important that faith leaders understand how abusers often misuse scriptures to convince victims that abuse is an accepted – and expected – part of their faith.

Note: Though it may seem counterintuitive, many victims of domestic violence love their abusive partners and do not want to sever their relationship; they simply want the abuse to stop, and to know that they are supported in the decisions they are making. Other victims may want to leave their abusive partners, but may not be able to do so for a variety of reasons. It is imperative to treat offenders humanely while simultaneously holding them accountable for their violent, unacceptable, and in many cases, illegal behavior, not only because faith leaders are models of behavior and conduct, but because when abusers are criticized and judged, victims often feel criticized and judged for remaining with them. This kind of response, on the part of the faith leader, is a complex and delicate balance, and is best achieved when preventive efforts are taken and communicated to the entire faith community before violence occurs.

When a victim of domestic violence reaches out for help:

- Only professionally trained counselors should provide counseling. However, it is important to remind the victim that no one deserves to be abused, that no excuses justify abusive behavior, and that help is available.
- Understand that it may be very difficult for victims to talk about abuse.
- Be prepared to suggest appropriate options. For example, staying with another member of the congregation may be an option if safety is an issue.
- Make the safety of victims and children, and the larger congregation, primary concerns.
- Speak with the victim privately, out of sight and hearing of both their partner and any children who can talk. Don't make assumptions about the relationship between a victim and any adult accompanying them; this includes family members of the victim

or the abuser. Sensitivity to the possibility that a victim is in a same-sex relationship can make it easier for them to disclose abuse, and keep you from endangering them by asking about abuse in front of a partner whom you don't recognize as such.

- Pay attention to victims' non-verbal communication.
- Provide an interpreter for victims who don't speak English. Do not use anyone who accompanies a victim as an interpreter – especially their partner, children or other family member. AT&T provides interpreters through Language Line, 1-800-752-6096; there is a charge for this service. Interpreters can also be found through colleges and organizations serving immigrants, the American Red Cross or missionary groups.
- Immediately disclose limitations regarding confidentiality, available resources, etc.
- Provide a telephone in a private location if they want to call a domestic violence program.
- Understand that they may not be ready to contact anyone.
- Support victims' rights to decide what is safest for themselves and their children.
- Recognize and accept victims' ambivalence in the midst of their struggles.
- Accept this gesture as a first step, not the end of the road.
- Let them know you will always be a resource, whenever they need you.

You can support victims of domestic violence in many ways. It is always important to prioritize victim safety and make every effort to hold abusers accountable for their behavior. While there is no single right way to work with victims, the following recommendations may be helpful in guiding your response.

IF: A victim tells you of domestic violence and at any time you have reason to believe that they or their children are in danger, have been harmed, or are being prevented from seeking safety

THEN: Call the non-emergency police line and let them know you are concerned for the welfare of the person, request a "welfare check," and follow up with the victim/police to make sure that they are out of danger.

IF: A victim needs to leave home because they are afraid of their partner

THEN: Ask how you can help and whether they want you to call 911. Refer them to the local domestic violence hotline. Offer assistance with transportation. Let them know they can call you for support. Knowing that their faith community is supportive could make the difference in whether they stay or leave.

IF: A victim needs information or counseling about domestic violence

THEN: Refer them to the local domestic violence service provider. Offer to meet with them and the domestic violence advocate so that you can find out more about how to be helpful and follow up with domestic violence provider as needed.

IF: You see signs of domestic violence in a parishioner/congregant (man, woman, or child)

THEN: Talk to the victim alone and assess the situation. Find out what they want done and whether they need your help. Refer to the local domestic violence provider.

IF: A victim wants to know how to file charges or get an order of protection

THEN: Refer to the local domestic violence service provider.

IF: A parishioner/congregant is in the domestic violence “system” (legal, counseling, etc.) and wants your help

THEN: Find out how you can help and, if appropriate, get written permission to contact the “system” on the person’s behalf and get involved as directed by the victim and provide continued support. Follow victim’s lead.

Develop a Domestic Violence policy

In addition to being a place of worship, faith communities and institutions are also workplaces and, as such, may want to consider developing or adapting a domestic violence workplace policy to respond to domestic incidents that take place on site, either against or involving staff members, including faith leaders. The state Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence (OPDV) has created a Domestic Violence and the Workplace policy, publishes Domestic Violence and the Workplace: A Handbook for Employers, and can provide additional guidance and training on implementation and resources. Such a policy makes it clear to the entire organization that domestic violence will not be tolerated, no matter who perpetrates it, and will be dealt with swiftly and consistently.

Be Clear About Confidentiality

Confidentiality means that faith leaders may not disclose information that has been shared with them without the explicit consent of the individual sharing the information. When someone reveals domestic violence to a faith leader in the context of spiritual counseling or confession, leaders are both legally and morally bound to maintain confidence. Unauthorized disclosure is both a moral and a legal offense. Individuals can take legal action against a faith leader who breaks confidentiality and discloses the information without consent on the grounds of violating privacy, especially when harm arises out of such disclosure.

A conflict often arises for the faith leader when non-disclosure will clearly result in a new harm being committed. Here the dilemma is similar to that of a health care provider presented with the twin imperatives of “do no harm” (non-maleficence) and “maintain privacy” (confidentiality). For the faith leader, confidentiality is a privilege that is extended to an individual and not an absolute principle: it must be tempered by the requirement to do no harm. The preferred means of breaking confidentiality in such situations is to obtain the consent of the individual who has shared the information. But in some situations, such as when abuse of children is suspected or when faced with evidence of harm about to be committed, it becomes imperative for the faith leader to report to the appropriate authorities. What is never permissible is breaking confidentiality in a manner that will bring further harm upon a person, such as when a faith leader shares with the abuser or others in the community who are not in positions of authority the information someone has shared. The only justification for breaking confidentiality is to prevent further harm.

It is important to note that a faith leader cannot be compelled to break confidence in a court of law without explicit written permission to disclose by the affected person. New York State law (CPLR §4505) states that “Unless the person confessing or confiding

waives the privilege, a clergyman, or other minister of any religion or duly accredited Christian Science practitioner, shall not be allowed to disclose a confession or confidence made to him in his professional character as spiritual advisor.”

While a faith leader may not testify in a court of law regarding a confession that was made in confidence without an explicit waiver of the privilege, a faith leader cannot refrain from seeking to intervene on behalf of a victim to secure help, nor from speaking out against domestic violence in public forums and otherwise engaging in activities intended to end such practices. In such cases, silence is a moral and spiritual failure.

One noteworthy exception to the confidentiality policy stated above may involve chaplains in healthcare settings. New York State does not require mandatory reporting by healthcare workers who suspect cases of domestic violence, except when there is obvious evidence of burns, knife or gunshot wounds, which must be reported to law enforcement (Penal Law § 265.25 and § 265.26). These guidelines apply as well to chaplains working with the healthcare system. In addition, healthcare providers (including chaplains) in hospitals and other centers who suspect someone is the victim of domestic violence are required to provide the suspected victim with a state “Victim Rights Notice” and counsel the person in confidence about these rights.

When the Abuser is a Member of Your Faith Community

Abusers come from all socioeconomic backgrounds, age groups, faiths, cultures, genders, and sexual orientations. They don’t fit into any specific category and are not easily identifiable when in public.

It will be difficult to have both the victim and the abuser as part of a congregation/group, but please remember: the primary concern is the victim’s safety and the safety of the faith community. An abuser can be supported, without supporting the abusive behavior, by providing information and resources if they request it. An abuser should not be approached first, even out of a desire to help, because doing so may be the first indication that the victim has disclosed the abuse, which could further compromise victim safety. Be aware of the excuses that the abuser may present to justify their behavior: stress, financial problems, use of alcohol or drugs, impotence, or jealousy, among others. The important thing to keep in mind is that abuse is a choice and that the abuser must be held solely accountable for perpetrating it.

Offender Accountability

Faith communities can play a significant role in holding abusers accountable. Here are some ways to hold an abuser accountable within a faith community and place of worship:

- Focus on behavior; not characteristics.
- Be careful not to conspire with the abuser in any way.
- Don’t let anxiety or fear prevent you from holding the abuser accountable.
- Develop policies for the abuser’s participation in the organization.
- Know where the abuser is when present in the building.
- Consider removing the abuser from any leadership roles, committees, or groups.
- Take orders of protection seriously.
- If there is an order of protection, the abuser should not be allowed access to the

victim or children except as specifically allowed by the order.

- Consider placing the abuser in another congregation, if possible.

What if the Abuser Confronts You?

Be firm in statements and the position that violence in any form is not acceptable. Many abusers will deny that any abuse took place, and most will blame someone else – the victim, the children, the faith community or the community at large – for their actions.

An abuser in a traditional male head-of-household family generally believes that:

- men are superior to women
- he is the head of the household
- it is his right, and his responsibility, to control his partner and family
- he is entitled to use force as he deems necessary
- he will not be held accountable unless the behavior is public
- his behavior is not his fault
- violence in the home is a private matter
- he is the victim

Abusers need to understand that:

- their behavior is under their control
- they choose when, where, and how they abuse
- they choose to direct their violence only towards the victim, the children, or those who might be considered helpers
- they must be held accountable for their actions

When dealing with the abuser:

- As mentioned previously, never approach the abuser. They should disclose the information first.
- Evaluate the potential effects of any interactions with the abuser on the victim, in terms of victim safety.
- Speak to the abuser only with the victim's express permission and knowledge of the conversation, and only when the victim is in a safe location away from the abuser, in order to minimize harmful repercussions.
- Be clear with both yourself and with the abuser about why you are speaking to or engaging with the abuser. Is your goal realistic and appropriate?
- Never share any information with the abuser that the victim has shared. Doing so could further compromise the victim's safety and comfort level with seeking help in the future.

Keep in mind that domestic violence is not the result of an abuser being “out of control.” Quite the contrary. It is an attempt by the abuser to exert and maintain control of the relationship and over their partner.

Faith leaders can hold abusers accountable by setting clear boundaries about acceptable and unacceptable behaviors in the community. Just as there is no single right way to work with victims, the following recommendations may be helpful in guiding the response to abusers.

DO:

- Support the abuser in taking responsibility for the abusive behavior, dealing with the violence, and changing the violent attitudes and behaviors.
- Encourage them to comply completely with any court order.
- Address any religious rationalizations they may offer or questions they may have.
- Name the violence as the abuser's problem, not the victim's.
- Offer to help, but reinforce the fact that only they can stop the abuse.

DON'T

- Meet with the abuser alone and in private. Meet in a public place or when other people are around.
- Meet with the abuser unless the victim has consented and knows the conversation will occur and when.
- Offer to serve as a character witness for the abuser to get the domestic violence charges dismissed or reduced, or custody granted.
- Provide couples counseling if you are aware that there is violence in the relationship.
- Conspire or collude with the abuser in any way.

Unintentional Collusion

Collusion allows abusers to avoid accountability by enlisting support and validation for their abusive behaviors. Many abusers will minimize their actions by blaming others, including family, friends, job stressors, economic and/or health challenges, and, most often, the victims themselves. While well-intentioned helping professionals may think these explanations seem rational and reasonable, they are actually manipulations intended to excuse abusers from facing consequences for their behavior.

It is crucial for faith leaders to remain aware of these dynamics and refuse to avoid unintentionally colluding with the abuser. Be a voice of reason and compassion while simultaneously stating – and following through on – the fact that domestic violence will not be tolerated. Prioritize victim safety and abuser accountability by remaining clear that domestic violence is as a choice that the abuser makes, regardless of any other factors. For example, when an abuser holds a leadership position within the congregation, it can be compelling to believe that the abuse was not intentional, or was the result of factors beyond the abuser's control.

There is absolutely no excuse for domestic violence, and nothing can force an individual to be violent or controlling. However, abusers often attempt – and succeed – in getting faith leaders to collude when:

- general conversations about the abuser's behavior turns into discussions about anything other than abusers' responsibility for their behavior
- abusers are no longer challenged about their sexist attitudes and entitled beliefs
- abusers are permitted to use derogatory language to describe their partners
- abusers feel supported in condemning and blaming their victims.

Counseling

In cases where domestic violence is suspected or disclosed, do not suggest marriage, couples or family counseling, or mediation. Joint counseling is contraindicated when domestic violence is present. Unless the violence has completely stopped and the victim

feels safe, joint counseling could increase the level of violence. The immediate goal is not to save the marriage, but to stop the violence and create safety for the victim.

Note: Just because the abuser and/or victim say the violence has stopped, it does not mean that it has. Victims may say they feel safe to participate in couples counseling just because the abuser is pressuring them to do so, or they believe that it required by their faith.

Should one faith leader work with both victim and abuser? In the context of spiritual counsel, consider whether it would be a conflict to work with both parties, keeping in mind safety of the victim. If the two should come into contact through counseling, this could be dangerous for the victim and for everyone within the close physical proximity. In addition, if there is an order of protection in effect, the abuser would be in violation of the order, and would be breaking the law. In such cases, it is recommended that counseling be discontinued with both parties until an alternative plan is devised.

Working with Children

When children see, hear, or know about abuse by one parent against the other, they may have many feelings, thoughts, and questions. It may not be easy for children to talk about what's happened; but many children who've experienced and/or witnessed domestic violence need to talk about it. They may misunderstand what happened or why it happened. They may blame themselves, blame the victim, or blame the systems involved for intervention or lack thereof. They may feel ashamed about what happened in their family or fear being taken away.

Engaging children takes patience and sensitivity. Use simple, clear words, encourage questions, ask for examples, and use calm, reassuring tones of voice. Meet with the child alone if possible, in a quiet and confidential room. **DO NOT** question a child in front of the abuser. Offer children markers, crayons and paper, play dough, or other tactile material to play with while talking to help reduce their anxiety level.

Remember the following:

- Working with children requires a different set of skills than working with adults. While some children will be very open about what is happening or has happened at home, others may not trust adults or may be afraid to disclose the abuse. They may worry they will get their caregivers or themselves in trouble; they will lose their family, or will put their parent, siblings or themselves in further danger by telling the truth. These are all legitimate concerns.
- Create a “safe space” for children to share information. Interview privately, let the child take the lead in the interview, be patient with their form of storytelling, and allow them to share information in an age appropriate manner. It may take several meetings to establish a connection with a child so that they will begin to talk about their experience. If the child cannot tolerate a private interview, include the victim but never the abuser. It is never safe to question a child about domestic violence in front of the abuser.
- Do not “pepper” the child with questions, and avoid asking leading questions. Remember that the child is being asked about potentially traumatic events in her/his

life, and proceed with appropriate sensitivity.

- Children do not think in a linear fashion, like adults. Children’s experiences may be expressed indirectly through storytelling, play-acting, drawing, or other means. It may take longer to get information from a child and their stories may not make sense sequentially.
- Remember that children may not have an accurate understanding of the dynamics between adults. For example, a child may identify the victim as the person who “started the fight” because s/he hit their partner, but not be able to articulate the pattern of behaviors of the offender that led to that specific incident. When interviewing a young child, view their answers and explanations as a source of information that may need to be verified in some other way.
- Whatever feelings children have about the domestic violence are appropriate. Some children believe telling anyone about the domestic violence is a betrayal of their parent/caregiver. Assure the children that it is okay to talk about what is happening or has happened in their home, and whatever feelings they are having about the abuse are okay, including anger or protectiveness toward either parent/caregiver.

Children who are exposed to domestic violence also have an increased risk of harm to their physical, social, cognitive and emotional development. They are more likely to have post-traumatic stress disorder and engage in high risk behaviors that can lead to involvement in the juvenile justice system and health problems. Physical, mental and behavioral health issues of all members of the faith community may be an indicator of domestic violence. Children exposed to frequent or severe violence are more likely to be negatively impacted than those exposed to less serious forms of violence, or exposed less frequently. However, any level of violence and coercion can have a harmful effect on a child.

A Note about Clergy Malpractice

People are often concerned about assisting victims of domestic violence, whether because they fear for their own safety, or because, if they are assisting in a professional capacity, they are concerned about liability and/or malpractice.

However, intervention entails much more than attempting to physically stop the abuse or directly confront the abuser. Faith leaders are uniquely positioned to support and comfort victims, to pray with them, to help them stay connected to their faith communities, and to be a voice of compassion, belief, and understanding. Additionally, faith leaders are often the first people to whom victims confide and disclose, so it is essential for leaders to be able to refer them to professionals who have been trained to help and who specialize in providing individualized resources and safety planning.

Because they are helping professionals, faith leaders may feel obligated to take on the role of “counselor” in domestic violence situations, but if they are not appropriately trained to address the complexity of issues, needs and safety, the best thing they can do for a victim is provide strong, consistent faith-based support and guidance in conjunction with the services provided by the local domestic violence program.

Faith leaders can also be trained, or have at least one person on their ministerial team trained, as a domestic violence resource within the faith community. They can also work

to hold abusers accountable within their faith communities and places of worship by:

- Removing an abuser from leadership positions within the faith community
- Refusing to discuss the victim with the abuser (refusing to collude with the abuser)
- Treating the abuser with dignity and respect, while maintaining strict boundaries and not engaging with the individual unnecessarily (i.e., social engagements, personal discussions, or anything else that the victim could perceive as colluding with or supporting the abuser's abusive behavior)
- Developing an understanding (verbal or in writing) with the abuser about when they may attend services and functions. It may not be realistic to tell the abuser to leave the community altogether, but faith leaders can put limits on when the abuser is welcome on the property, which should always be determined by when the victim will not be present.
- Continuing to promote the message that violence in all forms is unacceptable within the community and within the faith, by integrating such messaging into written and spoken communications to all members of the community at every opportunity.

Self-Care for Faith Leaders

The violence individuals experience in their lives can be very difficult to hear. This may be especially true when it is from someone in a leadership role, or who may be disclosing abuse by someone in a leadership role, someone you know and trust. Realize that the information is not going to be pleasant. It may touch issues from your personal life. Or, it may mean you have to confront dilemmas that domestic violence poses for you professionally.

Taking Care of Yourself:

- Recognize limitations. (You cannot fix the abuser.)
- Recognize that there are very few absolutes. This is one of the reasons these situations are so difficult.
- Avoid isolating yourself with the problem. Find and use a support system.
- Do not underestimate the importance of listening. You may be the first person to take the victim seriously. It is not necessary to have an immediate answer to be helpful.
- Adjust your idea of success and failure. It is a success that the victim told you about the abuse, whether or not they remain in the relationship.
- Respect your perception of a situation. If you have talked to a couple and feel unsettled, anxious, angry or fearful, you may need to explore further with the victim about the violence and their safety.
- Establish a working relationship with the domestic violence provider now, so that you will have a trusted resource to turn to when the need arises. See the section about Domestic Violence Service programs in the next section.

Domestic Violence Programs

As noted earlier, every county in New York State has at least one local domestic violence program that is licensed by the state.

Domestic violence programs are vitally important when dealing with a victim, and faith leaders should make it a priority to know the program in their community. Programs can provide the victim with shelter and other services, such as support groups, counseling, services for children and much more. Advocates also have the expertise to help with the situation, and develop a safety plan for the victim.

New York State's Domestic & Sexual Violence Hotline (**1-800-942-6906**) also can help faith leaders and victims access local resources and support, with information available in a variety of languages other than English. The individuals who staff the hotline are well trained in providing culturally-appropriate, language-specific, trauma-informed crisis intervention.

Resources

Below are suggested websites and organizations for more information and guidance.

Websites

- Special Collection: Domestic Violence and Religion (from www.VAWnet.org) <http://www.vawnet.org/sc/domestic-violence-and-religion>
- Religion and domestic violence: books, web sites and organizations (compiled by Nancy Flanakin, Librarian, National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence) <http://www.ncdsv.org/images/Religiondomesticviolencebooks.pdf>

Agencies and Organizations

- **Faith Trust Institute:** <http://www.faithtrustinstitute.org/>
A national, multi-faith, multicultural training and education organization with global reach working to end sexual and domestic violence
- **Safe Havens Interfaith Partnership Against Domestic Violence:** <http://www.interfaithpartners.org/>
An interfaith organization that promotes hope and justice for victims and survivors of domestic violence and elder abuse.
- **Transforming Communities: Technical Assistance, Training, and Resource Center (TC-TAT):** <http://www.transformcommunities.org/>
A national technical assistance, training, and resource center that works to prevent domestic violence, sexual assault, teen dating violence and gender-based bullying.
- **CONNECT Faith:** <http://www.connectnyc.org/program/connect-faith>
Founded by several veterans of the domestic violence movement. Offers individual, community and systemic programs to end violence against women and girls by providing training and tools to individuals, social service professionals and community and faith leaders.
- **JWI:** <http://www.jwi.org/>

JWI is the leading Jewish organization empowering women and girls – through economic literacy; community training; healthy relationship education; and the proliferation of women’s leadership. JWI works to ensure that all women and girls thrive in healthy relationships, control their financial futures and realize the full potential of their personal strength.

Materials

- **Finding Safety & Support:** <http://www.opdv.ny.gov/help/fss/fss.pdf>

This publication from the NYS Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence is designed to help people who have been abused by their intimate partner. It is intended to guide individuals, and those assisting them, in identifying what resources and services may be available to assist them.

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About this Document

This document was created in partnership between the Governor’s Office of Faith Based Community Development Services and the New York State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence.

The Governor’s Office of Faith Based Community Development Services builds upon Governor Andrew M. Cuomo’s commitment to support nonprofits and faith-based organizations to better serve communities across the State. The office assists faith-based organizations in applying for grants from state agencies and provides informational resources for faith-based organizations to build their capacity in order to provide effective services, improve performance and increase sustainability. The office also creates a network of faith-based organizations to better coordinate efforts, build coalitions and develop effective partnerships.

The New York State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence (OPDV) is charged with improving the response of state and local communities to domestic violence. The agency provides guidance to the Governor’s office on policy and legislation; conducts statewide community outreach and public education programs; and trains professionals on addressing domestic violence in a variety of disciplines, including child welfare, law enforcement and health care.

To order or download additional copies of this document, please visit the OPDV website at: www.opdv.ny.gov

Appendices

The materials and resources listed below are available on the next few pages:

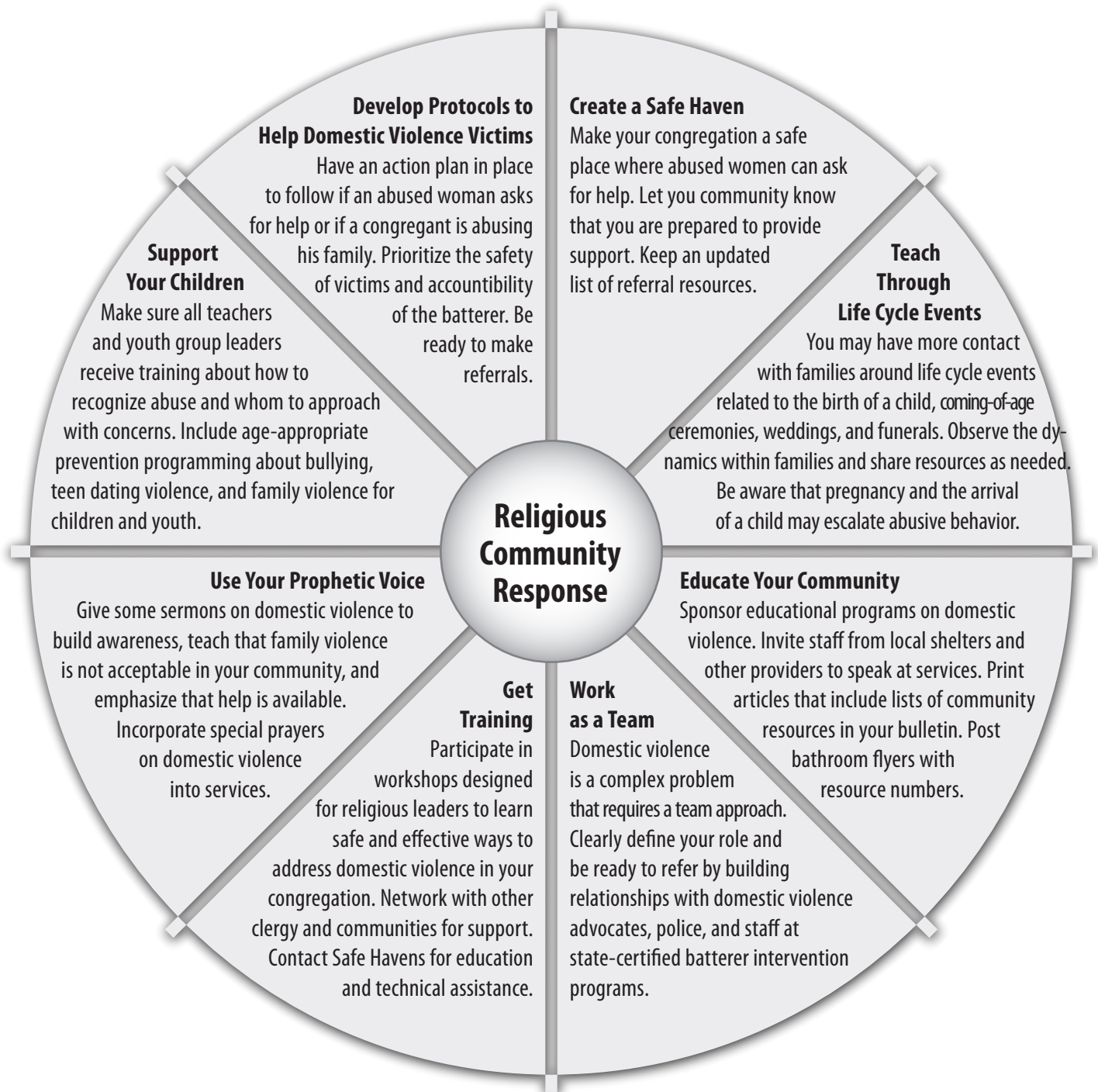
- **The Power and Control Wheel** ([The Duluth Model](#))
- **The Religious Community Response Wheel** ([Safe Havens Interfaith Partnership Against Domestic Violence](#))
- **The Spiritual and Religious Abuse Wheel** ([Safe Havens Interfaith Partnership Against Domestic Violence](#))
- **10 Ways of Walking with Her: What Muslim Leaders Can Do About Intimate Violence** (Dr. T.A. Bashir, [House of Peace](#))
- **Clergy Response to Domestic Violence** (Adapted from resources at the [Institute for Peace and Justice](#))
- **The Six Temptations for Faith Communities** ([CONNECT](#))

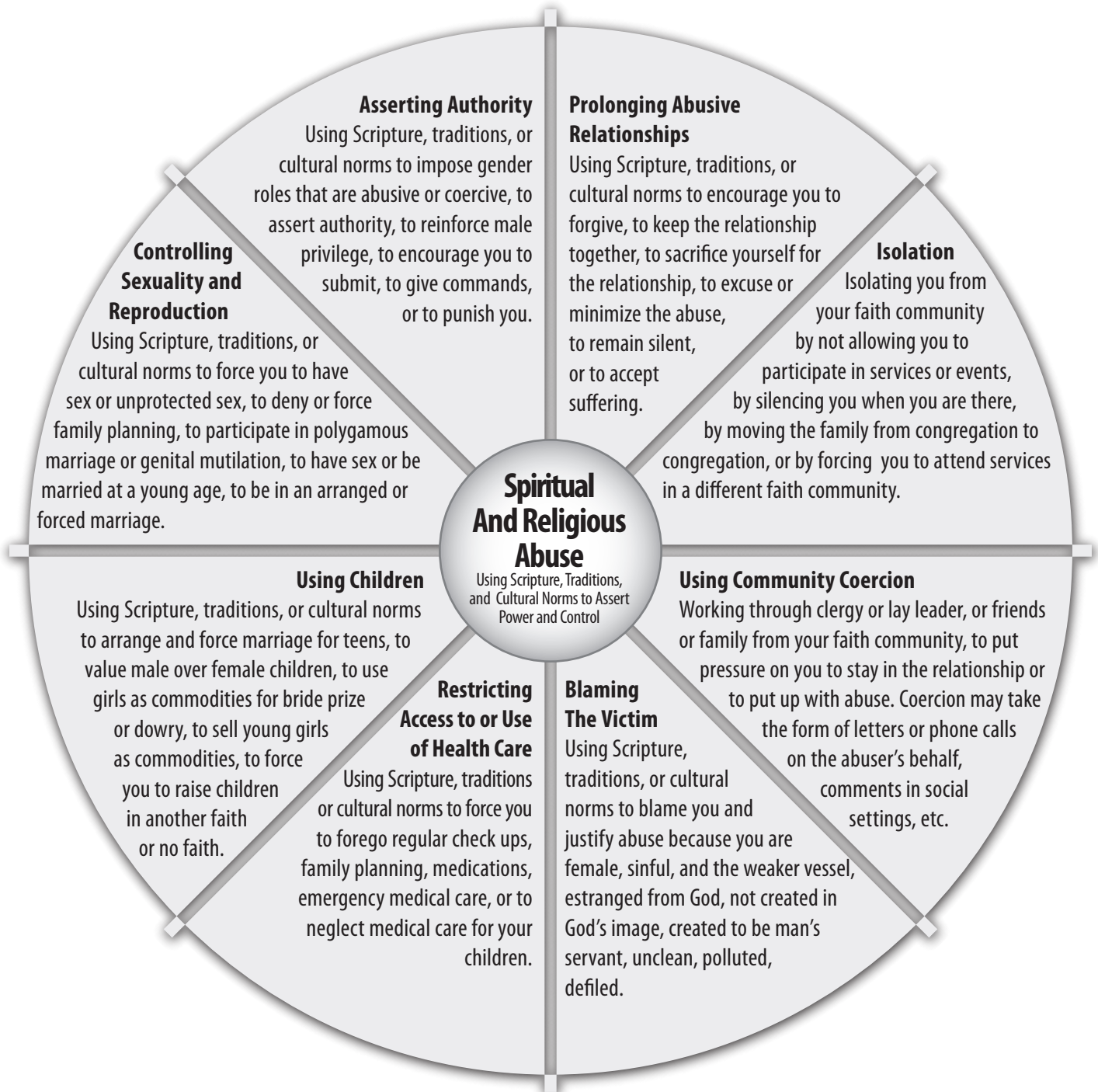




DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROJECT

202 East Superior Street
Duluth, Minnesota 55802
218-722-2781
www.duluth-model.org





10 WAYS OF WALKING WITH HER

WHAT MUSLIM FAITH LEADERS CAN DO ABOUT INTIMATE VIOLENCE

1. **LET THE MASJID BECOME A SAFE PLACE** where victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and dating violence can come for help and healing. Display materials that include local and state hotlines for domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking and dating violence victims in bathrooms for each sex.
2. **EDUCATE the Masjid.**
Provide ways for members of the congregation to learn as much as they can about domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and dating violence. Include information in monthly newsletters, on bulletin boards, and in marriage preparation classes. Sponsor educational seminars for your congregation on violence against women.
3. **SPEAK out.**
Use the mimbar to talk about domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and dating violence. As a faith leader, you can have a powerful impact on people's attitudes and beliefs.
4. **LEAD by example.**
Volunteer to serve on the board of directors at a local domestic violence or sexual assault program or attend a training to become a crisis volunteer.
5. **OFFER space.**
Provide meeting space for educational seminars or weekly support groups or serve as a supervised visitation site when parents need to safely visit their children.
6. **PARTNER with existing resources.**
Include your local domestic violence or sexual assault program in donations and community service projects. Adopt a shelter for which your place of worship provides material support, or provide similar support to families as they rebuild their lives following a shelter stay.
7. **PREPARE to be a resource.**
Seek out training from professionals in the fields of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and dating violence.
8. **PREVENT**
Make domestic violence counseling a part of pre marriage and teen counseling.
9. **INTERVENE.**
If you suspect violence is occurring in a relationship or in a family, speak to each person separately. If you suspect an individual is being or has been victimized, speak to them privately. Help the victim plan for safety. Refer individuals to the community resources available to assist them. Couples' counseling may compromise the safety of the victim.
10. **SUPPORT professional training.** Encourage and support training and education for clergy and lay leaders, chaplains, and seminary students to increase awareness about domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and dating violence.

For 24 hour assistance call Safe Horizon Hotline 1.800. 621. HOPE (4553)

For immediate access to legal information and advocacy concerning law enforcement, family and criminal court and social services such as shelter housing and public assistance. Direct representation for immigrant survivors of domestic violence **call CONNECT's Legal Advocacy Helpline Mon, - Fri. 9:30 – 5, 212 683 0605**

IF YOU ARE IN IMMEDIATE DANGER CALL 911

For technical assistance, education and support for addressing intimate violence in your Masjid, call The House of Peace 718 276 6135.

Clergy Response to Domestic Violence

Acknowledging the existence of violence in our society, communities and homes, we, leaders of communities of faith, understanding our common ideals and bonds of compassion, service, justice, peace, and concern pledge to play a vital role in making our places of worship, our homes, and communities safe from violence in all its forms by:

1. Recognizing that members in our congregations are victims and perpetrators.
2. Challenging messages that promote violence in the print media, television, movies, and music and on the Internet.
3. Accepting both a personal and collective responsibility to be informed about violence and its effects on relationships, families and communities.
4. Asking questions which inform and empower instead of blame.
5. Making prevention part of the programming of the congregation's life including pre-marriage counseling, youth groups and adult education classes.
6. Planning worship services that promote domestic violence prevention.
7. Showing informed, caring support and promoting the well being and safety of persons victimized by violence.
8. Understanding and challenging dynamics of power and control as they are manifested by those who abuse.
9. Offering appropriate referrals to community services and actively maintaining affiliations with local shelters, local domestic violence agencies and those organizations challenging sexism, promoting equality and safety for all.
10. Joining with other community leaders to prevent violence in our communities of faith and the communities, which we serve.
11. Displaying prominently prevention brochures, posters and hotline numbers in our places of worship.
12. Building bridges with other congregations across lines of denominations and faith to promote understanding, well being and the prevention of violence.

Sources:

Adapted from resources at the Institute for Peace and Justice, 4144 Lindell Blvd. Suite 408, St. Louis, MO 63108. www.ifpj.org

1991 Statement on Inter-Religious Relations, produced by the Inter Faith Network for the United Kingdom, as quoted by Paul Weller, "Faith and Justice: Issues of Justice Within Differing Faith Communities," originally published in *World Faith Encounters*, No. 22, March 1999, pp. 16-18.

We invite other faith leaders to join us in our commitment as we continue to learn how to effectively carry out this vision.

- Rev. Fr. C. Michael Abraham
Chapel of the Archangel Gabriel at the Glen at Hilland Meadows
- Rev. John E. Barclay
First Presbyterian Church, Glens Falls
- Pastor Edd Blanchard
First Baptist Church, Bolton Landing
- Rev. Joseph G. Busch
Our Lady of the Annunciation Church, Queensbury
- Rev. Joseph M. Byrne
Coordinator, Brother Fire Contemplative Outreach
- Rev. Cheryl N. Colt
First Presbyterian Church, Glens Falls
- Pastor Tom Cosey
First Church of Granville
- Rev. Joe Dworak
Church of St. Mary/St. Paul, Hudson Falls
- Rev. Debbie Earthrowl
Salem and West Hebron United Methodist Churches
- Mr. George S. Forshey, P.L.D.
St. Alphonsus Church, Glens Falls
- Fr. Charles A. Gaffigan
Pastor of Holy Infancy, Lake Luzerne and Immaculate Conception, Corinth
- Pastor Marsha Garrett
Saint Andrew Lutheran Church, South Glens Falls
- *Rev. Caspar James Green
First Baptist Church, Glens Falls
- *Regina Baird Haag
Adirondack Friends Meeting, South Glens Falls
- Chaplain Bruce Hersey
Director, The Open Door, Glens Falls
- Sister Linda Hogan, C.S.J.
St.Cecilia Church, Warrensburg
- *Sister Donna Irvine, SSND
- Rev. David Leferegy
Hudson Falls United Methodist Church
- Rev. Angela Pace Lunz
- Rev. James Mackay
St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church, Glens Falls
- Rev Jerry McKinney
Peniel and Middle Granville Presbyterian Church, Granville
- Rev. Shannon Meacham
Pastor, Bethany Presbyterian Church, Menands
- *Rev. Brooke Newell
Ballston Spa United Methodist Church
- Rev. Robert A. Nugent
St. Michael's Rectory, Glens Falls
- Rev. Jeffrey W. Palmer
Coordinator of Pastoral Care Services, Glens Falls Hospital
- Rev. Deane Perkins
Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Glens Falls, Queensbury
- *Rev. Jim Peterson
Granville Baptist Church
- Rev. Trudy Pettibone
Minerva and North Creek Baptist Churches, North Creek
- Rev. Judith Pratt
First Baptist Church, Plattsburgh
- Rev. Jason Santalucia
First Presbyterian Church, Hudson Falls
- *Pastor Ila Smith
Village Baptist Church, Fort Edward
- *Rev. Scott Smith
First Baptist Church, Hudson Falls
- Rabbi Richard Sobel
Temple Beth El, Glens Falls
- Pastor Sandra Spaulding,
Lakeville Baptist Church (ABC-USA), Cossayuna
- Rev. Hal Stockert
Saints Peter and Paul Church, Granville
- Rev. Bernard R. Turner
Sacred Heart Church, Lake George
- Rev. Christopher Welch
Pastor, St. Joseph, Greenwich
- Father Joseph Xavier
St. Joseph's Church, Fort Edward
- Father Tom Zelker
Pastor of the Roman Catholic Community of Granville
- *Jeanne Noordsy
Coordinator, Domestic Violence Community Coordination Council.

*Member of the Clergy Domestic Violence Workgroup.

***For more information, please contact any member of the Clergy Domestic Violence Workgroup**



The Six Temptations¹

1. The temptation of disbelief
2. The temptation to protect the faith community's image
3. The temptation to blame the victim
4. The temptation to sympathize with the abuser
5. The temptation to protect the abuser
6. The temptation of cheap grace

GOALS

1. Protect the vulnerable from further abuse (*hospitality*)
2. Call the abuser to accountability (*confrontation, confession, repentance*)
3. Restoration of the relationship (between victim and abuser) if possible (*restitution, healing*) If not possible then mourn the loss of that relationship and work to restore the individuals (*comfort for the grieving, binding up the broken hearted*)

PRINCIPLES

1. The faith communities' priority must be the safety of and pastoral care for victims of abuse.
2. In order to stop abusers, faith leaders must use wider community structures of accountability
3. Faith leaders must be able to combat the secrecy and deception that abusers use to hide their crimes
4. The faith community must not allow a misuse of confidentiality to prevent it from acting to intervene in situations of abuse.
5. In order to stop abuses faith leaders must work cooperatively with other professionals
6. Faith communities must institute effective structures of accountability and consequences for leaders who abuse their power. ²

¹ Marie Fortune and James Poling, "Calling to Accountability: The Churches Response to Abusers" in Adams and Marie Fortune eds., *Violence Against Women and Children: A Christian Theological Sourcebook*. (New York: Continuum, 1995)

² Ibid.







