

## What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behavior that is used by one intimate partner to gain dominance, power, and control over the other partner. It includes the use of illegal behaviors (like physical or sexual violence), and legal behaviors (like controlling what the victim does or playing mind games to make the victim think they are crazy).

Domestic violence affects the victim's sense of self, free will, and safety. It also affects the victim's health, financial independence, and relationships with other people including their children. Living in fear is emotionally and physically harmful and batterers (people who use domestic violence) are solely responsible for their behavior.

## Your Support Matters

It can be difficult to learn that someone you care about is being physically or emotionally abused. If someone you know is a victim of domestic violence, your support can be an important part of their safety and healing.

While leaving the relationship may seem like the answer for stopping the abuse, the reality is that leaving can be the most dangerous time for victims and their children. Domestic violence is

about domination, power, and control. If a batterer feels like they are losing control because the victim leaves the relationship, they may increase their use of violence or force. Contact your local domestic and sexual violence program to learn about safety planning (see *Advocate Response*).

The following are some red flags that someone may be experiencing domestic violence in their relationship:

- Mentions of “falls” or “accidents” resulting in bruises, broken bones, or other injuries
- Weighing their partner's needs and wants as far more important than their own
- Mentioning their partner's bad moods, anger, or temper
- Their partner has made suicidal or homicidal threats or attempts
- Being afraid of their partner or what their partner might do
- Their partner criticizes or makes “joking” remarks that make them feel bad about themselves
- Their partner is overly jealous, “attentive”, accuses them of having affairs, controls their every move, or makes them report or justify the time they spend with others
- Their partner ignores the children or abuses them emotionally, physically, or sexually

- They are often late, take frequent breaks to check-in with their partner, are absent from work regularly, or had to quit their job because of their partner

## Getting Started

The hardest part in talking about domestic violence with someone you care about is getting started. They may want to share their story or they may not. If they do share, listen carefully. Do not interrupt and do not blame. Do not let your facial expressions or body language show doubt or judgment. Your support and belief in them may be critical to their safety and healing. Keep their story private because telling others can put them and their children in danger.

**Remember:** If someone you care about refuses to talk to you, they have reasons. Share your concerns. Remind them that emotional, physical, and sexual abuse are wrong and that they deserve to be safe. Let them know that you will be ready to provide support when they need it.

## Starting the Conversation

Seek out a private, quiet place to begin talking. Allow plenty of time to talk. You may be the first person that they have told about the domestic violence.

The following might help get the conversation started:

- You seem so unhappy. Do you want to talk about it? I would like to listen, and I will keep it between us.
- I overheard you and your partner arguing last night, and I was worried about you. Are you okay? Were you hurt?
- What is it like for you at home? What does a typical day look like for you?
- What happens when you and your partner disagree or argue?
- How does your partner handle things when they do not get their way?
- Are you ever afraid of your partner? Do they threaten you?
- Does your partner ever follow you? Do they make you report or justify spending time with others?
- Does your partner ever prevent you from doing things you want to do?
- Is your partner jealous, hard to please, irritable, demanding, or critical?
- Does your partner ever push you or hit you?
- Does your partner ever put you down, call you names, yell at you, or punish you in any way?
- Does your partner ever make you have sex? Does your partner ever make you do sexual things that you do not like or want to do?

## Ways You Can Help

- Believe them.
- Acknowledge the courage they showed in talking to you. They have taken a risk by confiding in you.
- Let them know that their feelings are reasonable and normal and that everyone has the right to be safe and happy.
- Be patient, and do not treat them like a child or helpless victim.
- Help them make plans, but let them make the decisions and support the decisions they make for themselves. They are the expert in their situation.
- Keep the information they share with you private.
- Provide the phone number for the local sexual and domestic violence program or the Kansas Crisis Hotline for safety planning and information about services (see back panel).
- Offer support like driving them to an appointment or being with them if they decide to call the hotline.
- They may need financial help, help finding a place to live, help finding a place to store their belongings, or help caring for pets.
- Many people feel like calling the police can be a way to help. Before calling the police, ask them what they want to have happen. Calling the police without the victim's permission can put the victim in more danger.
- Explain that domestic violence is a crime and that they can contact a sexual and domestic violence program to talk about options for reporting the abuse or for help in getting a protection order.
- Make sure they know they are not alone. Many people experience domestic violence and there is help available.

### Advocate Response

Kansas sexual and domestic violence services can provide the support, safety, and help victims and survivors often need. These services are offered 24 hours per day, seven days a week. Services include crisis hotlines, crisis intervention, personal advocacy, medical advocacy, court advocacy, law enforcement advocacy, emergency accommodations, safe shelter, supportive counseling, support groups, and child and youth advocacy.

All of these services are free and confidential. Any information shared is kept private and cannot be shared with anyone outside the organization, unless:

- In limited circumstances, the organization is required by law to disclose the information.
- The victim signs an informed, written, time-limited release allowing them to disclose the information.

Visit [www.kcsdv.org/find-help](http://www.kcsdv.org/find-help) for the list of Kansas sexual and domestic violence service providers and contact information.

**For 24/7 confidential support, contact the following:**

#### Kansas Crisis Hotline

1-888-END-ABUSE (1-888-363-2287)

#### Kansas Sexual and Domestic Violence Services Nearest You

Visit [www.kcsdv.org/find-help](http://www.kcsdv.org/find-help) for the list of service providers in Kansas and contact information

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## HOW TO SUPPORT VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

 **Kansas Coalition**  
against sexual & domestic violence

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[facebook.com/kcsdv](https://facebook.com/kcsdv)  
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