

---

# Helping Battered Women and Their Children in Rural Communities: A Guide for Cosmetologists

Developed by  
Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence

YOUR LOCAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAM IS:



ALL SERVICES ARE FREE AND CONFIDENTIAL

---

# **Helping Battered Women and Their Children in Rural Communities: A Guide for Cosmetologists**



*Developed by*  
Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence

*Funding provided by a grant from*  
Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency

**WHEN IN DANGER, CALL 9-1-1  
OR THE LOCAL POLICE.**

**YOUR LOCAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAM CAN HELP.**

Emergency assistance, information and referral, crisis counseling and other services are available 24-hours a day, every day of the year, from your local domestic violence program. Please call if you, or someone you know, is in need of help.

Your local domestic violence program contact information is found on the cover of this booklet.

Additional resources and training on domestic violence are available from your local program. Please contact them for more information.

**ALL SERVICES ARE FREE AND CONFIDENTIAL.**

**NOTE ABOUT GENDER LANGUAGE**

Throughout this resource, victims of domestic violence are assumed to be female and abusers male – as reflected in the body of domestic violence research. This is not meant to take away from instances where the victim and abuser may be the same sex or the victim may be male and the abuser female.

**PERMISSION TO REPRINT**

The contents of this publication may be reprinted with the following acknowledgement:

This material was reprinted from the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence publication entitled *Helping Battered Women and Their Children in Rural Communities: A Guide for Cosmetologists*.

---

This booklet was adapted from materials produced by the Tri-State Rural Collaboration Project – a joint effort between the North Dakota Council on Abused Women's Services, the Montana Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence and the Wyoming Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault.



## Introduction

---

**“ When you’re out on a farm at night, there’s no one to hear you scream. And there’s nowhere to go except out on a dark road... ”**

---

These are the words of a battered woman from one of Pennsylvania’s rural communities. They capture the feelings of desperation, isolation and hopelessness that often come with being a victim of domestic violence living in remote corners of the commonwealth.

What can someone do when she lives in a home where fear and violence are a way of life? When there’s no one around to hear her cries for help because she lives miles away from the closest neighbor, police station or highway?

No matter where a battered woman lives in this state, **FREE AND CONFIDENTIAL** help from a local domestic violence program is just a phone call away.

**➤ As a cosmetologist, you may be in a position to link your clients who are being battered to this program.**



## **Use This Resource To Guide You**

**Inside this booklet you'll find the following information on how to talk and offer support to a client who is being abused:**

- ✓ An explanation about domestic violence – who is abused and who does the abusing
- ✓ Information about the services available to battered women and their children from local domestic violence programs, such as:
  - shelter or safe home to hide in
  - trained counselors to talk to
  - someone to go to court with them
  - help with filing for welfare assistance
  - programs for children
  - advice on how to make a safety plan for living in an abusive relationship or for when trying to leave the relationship
- ✓ Tips to help keep battered mothers and their children safe
- ✓ A promise that battered women and their children don't have to struggle on their own, behind closed doors, with the violence in their lives

**Please read this booklet and call your local domestic violence program. It could mean the difference between life and death for one of your clients.**



## **Battered Women Often Confide In Cosmetologists**

Clients often share very personal information with their stylists. Most women see a cosmetologist on a regular basis over many years. In that time, trusting relationships are built as clients and stylists share stories about their families, jobs and views on a variety of subjects. Cosmetologists are interested in their clients' wellness and are experienced listeners. They have a track record of referral work and pioneering health awareness promotion, including tackling difficult subjects, such as cancer and HIV/AIDS.

As a cosmetologist in a rural area, you are likely to be trusted with confidential information, including disclosures of domestic violence and child abuse. You can become more knowledgeable and sensitive to the issues and learn how to create an atmosphere of openness and safety.

Victims of domestic violence who live in rural areas face special challenges. While batterers tend to isolate their victims in any geographical setting, for women in rural areas, this isolation is often even more severe. They may live miles from their nearest neighbor, friend or family member. Lack of available childcare, few job opportunities, inadequate public transportation, poverty and economic dependence are just some of the barriers that can make escaping a violent relationship even harder for rural women.

A lack of anonymity and confidentiality also makes it more difficult for victims of abuse to come forward and seek help. In small towns, it can seem as if everyone knows everyone else. Judges and police officers who know both a batterer and his victim socially may be less likely to recognize the severity of an assault. Underserved rural populations, including immigrants, African Americans, Native Americans, and gays and lesbians, face additional barriers as well.



## **Cosmetologists Can Link A Client To Safety**

This booklet is intended to give you some basic information about domestic violence and some tips on how you as a community member and often confidant can help women who are facing danger from their intimate partners. It will explore the following topics:

- How Much Help Should I Give?
- What You Should Know About Domestic Violence
  - Understanding the Dynamics
  - The Facts about Domestic Violence
  - Specific Examples of Abuse
  - Children and Domestic Violence
  - Barriers to Leaving and Getting Help
- What You Can Do
  - Helping Victims of Domestic Violence: Specific Tips for Cosmetologists
  - When the Battered Woman and Batterer Are Your Clients
- Resources on Domestic Violence

The intent of this booklet is NOT to turn you into a crisis worker; instead we hope it will answer some of the more commonly asked questions, assist you in responding effectively to victims/clients who confide in you, and help you to link them to the help they need.

Thank you for joining in this community response project. It is our hope that someday we will all be safe in our homes. Until then, your participation could literally be a lifeline for any of your clients who are victims of domestic violence.



## How Much Help Should I Give?

Only you can answer this question. Before making a decision, consider the following:

### WHAT SHOULD I OFFER TO HELP WITH?

Victims of domestic violence usually need many things: a listening ear, emotional support, safe shelter, shelter for pets or farm animals, transportation, money, assistance with finding a new place to live, help with moving and child care. But your most important role is to link victims with domestic violence resources. This booklet offers ideas on actions you can take to help your clients, who may be in danger from an abusive partner, to stay safe. If you decide to offer assistance, make sure your decision still feels right. Start with small steps; you can always add other help later. Know that your client can get **FREE** and **CONFIDENTIAL** help from her local domestic program at any time. The local program can also provide support to you and help you to assess your role in this work.

### HOW MUCH CAN I EMOTIONALLY HANDLE?

If you have offered to be a listening ear and you feel emotionally drained after speaking with a client who is being abused, suggest that next time she speak with a counselor or battered women's advocate at the local program. Perhaps instead you can provide a safe place for her to telephone the domestic violence program. You also can get support from the domestic violence program.

### HOW SAFE IS IT FOR ME TO HELP?

Batterers do not usually end the abuse when the relationship ends and sometimes their target includes those who have helped the battered woman. Your first and safest action should be to link her with a domestic violence program. You may also decide to offer limited assistance like arranging a safe place for the battered woman to make a telephone call or meet with a counselor, storing a few important papers, offering a ride to the courthouse or providing other kinds of assistance. Every situation will be different. While there are no guarantees of safety, you can work with the staff at the domestic violence program to assess your risk and make a plan to enhance your safety.



However you decide to help a battered woman, know that your support is vital to her safety and overall well being. Sometimes, people think they are not doing enough, when they fail to realize that a kind word or gesture can be the key to making another person feel valued and cared for. **Linking her to the domestic violence program may really be offering a lifeline.**

The materials in this booklet will help you learn more about domestic violence and offer tips and actions you can take to help. Only you can decide what assistance you're able to offer. At minimum, we suggest you read this booklet, learn more about this community issue and meet the staff at your local domestic violence program. Then decide.



# **What You Should Know About Domestic Violence**

## ***UNDERSTANDING THE DYNAMICS***

The first step you can take to help your client is to learn more about domestic violence. Society's lack of understanding about domestic violence often is the greatest obstacle a battered woman faces in her efforts to end the violence in her life. With this in mind, here is some information to help you more fully understand the dynamics of this crime:

### **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ISN'T JUST A FAMILY MATTER.**

Domestic violence is never just a family problem. It is a crime that could be deadly for your client. Domestic violence affects her, her children and the entire community. It is probably difficult for her to talk about and may be dangerous for her to even reach out for help. You should get involved. Start by reading this booklet and then help her safely place a call to the local domestic violence program for free and confidential assistance.

### **WHAT IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?**

Domestic violence is an ongoing pattern of behaviors in a relationship that is used to gain and/or maintain power and control over another. These behaviors are often described as emotional, psychological, sexual or physical abuse.

Domestic violence is also called battering, family violence, wife beating, intimate partner violence, spouse abuse and woman abuse.

- Batterers who are violent also use nonviolent tactics of control. Even those batterers who do not use violence regularly remind their battered partners that failure to meet their demands and rules may lead to violent assaults.
- Incidents of violence may be frequent or infrequent, prolonged or brief, severe or mild.
- Many victims suffer all forms of abuse. Emotional and psychological abuse may be more subtle than physical harm, but this does not mean that it is less destructive. Many battered women report that this abuse is more difficult to experience. Physical injuries may heal; however, the emotional scars of domestic violence can last a lifetime.

- Unless there is intervention where the batterer is held accountable for his actions, domestic violence usually increases in frequency and severity over time. As the batterer's violence progresses, he may begin to abuse the children and he may direct violence or threats of violence against friends, helpers or extended family.

## **THE FACTS ABOUT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

### **MOST VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ARE WOMEN.**

The only factor that most victims have in common is gender, because most victims of domestic violence are women. The following is a list of behaviors that might indicate that a woman is being abused:

- fear of intimate partner's temper or jealousy
- lack of access to money, car, friends or family
- repeated mental health and stress-related issues, such as depression, suicide attempts, substance abuse, headaches and ulcers
- repeated injuries that do not seem accidental

### **A BATTERED WOMAN CAN BE ANY WOMAN.**

Domestic violence occurs among all ages, races and religions. It occurs regardless of sexual orientation, mental or physical ability or geographical region. It happens to people of all educational and income levels. It happens in dating relationships, new marriages and in long term intimate partnerships. Women can be beaten in any town, near any mile marker. It happens in rural communities as often as in cities or suburbs. Battered women are factory workers, nurses, homemakers, lawyers, police officers, college students and farmers. They are grandmothers and they are teenagers. She may be your neighbor, your sister, your daughter-in-law or your niece.

***Women in rural areas are just as likely as women in cities and suburbs to be victims of intimate violence, but its frequency often goes unnoticed, due to geographical isolation, cultural values and the tactics of the batterer.***

– Websdale, Neil. *Rural Battering and the Justice System*.  
Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998.

## **A BATTERER CAN BE ANY MAN.**

Batterers are our neighbors, service providers and respected members of the community. They are computer experts, farmers, unemployed workers, pastors, car salesmen, university professors, truck drivers, psychiatrists and house painters. Behind closed doors, they may also terrorize their family members. Many abusers are not violent in other relationships. They can be charming and lovable in a social situation, yet display extreme violence in the privacy of the home.

## **BATTERING IS A LEARNED BEHAVIOR, NOT A MENTAL ILLNESS.**

The abuser's experience as a child, or the messages he gets from society in general, may tell him that violence is an effective way to achieve power and control over his partner's behavior. Men who batter must be held accountable for their own actions. Viewing him as "sick" wrongly excuses him from taking responsibility for his behavior.

## **ALCOHOL OR DRUG USE DOES NOT CAUSE VIOLENCE.**

Abusers use violence whether drunk or sober. Many abusers don't drink or use drugs at all. Using drugs and alcohol as an excuse relieves the abuser of responsibility for his actions. An alcoholic or drug addicted abuser must be treated for two separate problems – violence, as well as drug and alcohol abuse. An abuser may not stop abusing if he becomes sober.

## **STRESS DOES NOT CAUSE VIOLENCE.**

Battering is not caused by the loss of a job, the death of a parent or any other stressful event.

## **BATTERING DOES NOT REPRESENT A LOSS OF CONTROL, BUT RATHER A WAY OF ACHIEVING IT.**

Men who batter typically make excuses for their violence, claiming a loss of control due to alcohol/drug use or extreme stress. A batterer is selective about who he hurts; he is not usually choosing to assault his boss, a neighbor or the mail carrier. Batterers target their intimate partners and children. In fact, some batterers, even those who drink alcohol until they are intoxicated, are in control enough to be selective about where they hit their partners so that the injuries will not show.

## **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS NOT “MUTUAL BATTERING.”**

Many times in homes where there is domestic violence, women will fight back against their abusers in an attempt to defend themselves. This does not mean that the violence is “mutual.” We must consider the dynamic of power and control in the relationship. Does one partner live in constant fear of another? Is one partner afraid to speak, to go to work or tell anyone about the violence?

## **A VICTIM MAY LOVE HER ABUSER, BUT SHE DOES NOT LOVE BEING ABUSED BY HIM.**

Despite the faults a victim may have, she never deserves abuse. Having personality flaws does not ever justify abusive behaviors.

Attitudes such as those listed below are all excuses that allow the violence to continue:

- “She should just keep her mouth shut – she knows what provokes his anger, so she should just stop.”
- “She’s not a very good wife. If she would take care of her responsibilities in the family, he wouldn’t have to discipline her.”
- “She exaggerates what he does to her. He’s a nice guy and she’s just trying to hurt him.”

Whatever problems exist in a relationship, the use of violence to resolve them is never justified or acceptable. If your client is the victim of battering; she is not to blame nor does she ever deserve such treatment.

## **ANY ACT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS SERIOUS.**

Domestic violence can involve threats, pushing, punching, slapping, strangling, choking, sexual assault, assault with weapons and murder. It is rarely a one-time occurrence and usually increases in frequency and severity over time. Any act of domestic violence is something to take seriously.

## **TIP**

*As a cosmetologist, you may be in a very good position to notice missing chunks of pulled hair, physical injuries around the face and neck and bruising on the neck and throat that may have happened as a result of strangling. Strangling is an especially dangerous assault. Less than eight pounds of pressure over a very short time span can kill a person.*

### **ABUSE ALSO OCCURS WHEN PEOPLE ARE DATING.**

Many young women in high school report abuse in their relationships. Teenagers who are abusive use various tactics of control against their partners. Physical abuse in relationships rarely starts out as severe violence. Some behaviors which show the possibility that a dating partner may eventually become physically violent include extreme jealousy, blaming others for all problems, never being able to admit to wrongdoing, cruelty to animals, and holding rigid beliefs about sex-roles for men and women.

Make sure your teenage female clients know that:

- No one has the right to hurt them as a way to control them.
- It's against the law for someone to hit them.
- If they get assaulted, they can call the police.
- If they are being abused, they can call their local battered women's program. All services are free and confidential.

Ask them to consider these questions:

- Does your boyfriend strike out at you or make you feel afraid or uncomfortable?
- Do you change your behavior to try to keep him happy?
- Are you afraid you will get hurt if you try to end the relationship?

## **SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF ABUSE**

- EMOTIONAL ABUSE** includes hurting another person's feelings by saying cruel, unfair comments or by name calling, and may include:
- ✓ cursing, swearing and/or screaming at her
  - ✓ repeated harassment, interrogation or degradation
  - ✓ attacks on self-esteem and/or insults to her person (name-calling, put-downs, ridicule)
  - ✓ attacks on and/or insults about people she cares for, her family and friends
  - ✓ threatening to "come out for her" (to reveal a lesbian identity) at work or to her family or anywhere that the information had been kept private
  - ✓ threatening to report her to "welfare to work" programs, Immigration and Naturalization Service, the Internal Revenue Service or to discredit her in the local community or with her employer
  - ✓ disclosing personal or damaging information (e.g., current or former psychiatric care, HIV/AIDS status or a criminal record)
  - ✓ controlling and/or limiting her behavior (e.g., keeping her from using the phone or seeing friends, not letting her leave the room or the house, following her and monitoring/limiting her phone conversations, checking mileage on her car, or keeping her from reading material, activities and places that he does not approve of)
  - ✓ interrupting her while she is eating, forcing her to stay awake or waking her up
  - ✓ blaming her for everything that goes wrong
  - ✓ forcing her to do degrading things (e.g., making her kneel, beg for money)
  - ✓ using the difference in physical size to intimidate her
  - ✓ criticizing her thoughts, feelings, opinions, beliefs and actions
  - ✓ treating her like a servant in matters of household chores and decisions
  - ✓ being extremely jealous, constantly accusing her of flirting or cheating
  - ✓ forcing her to commit illegal activity

- ✓ using money to control her (e.g., taking money from her, giving her an allowance, controlling how extra money is spent, forcing her to ask for and account for any money she gets, and acting like the work she does at home is of no economic value to the family)
- ✓ telling her that she is “sick” and in need of therapy
- ✓ using her physical disabilities against her or putting her down for her disability
- ✓ forcing the children to “report” on her activities: “Who did Mommy see today?” “Who did she talk to on the phone?” “Where did she go?”

### TIP

*If you notice signs of abuse as you are working with a client, wait until you have a moment alone, until you have absolute privacy, to ask her if she needs help.*


**PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE** is any threat to do bodily harm to a partner, a child, a family member, friends, pets or one’s self (suicide). Psychological abuse involves not only hurt and anger, but also intimidation, fear and degradation. The purpose of psychological abuse is to make her emotionally insecure about her own self-worth and cause her to feel helpless and/or not able to escape further physical, sexual or psychological abuse.

Examples include the abuser...

- ✓ threatening to punch, hit, slap or kick her
- ✓ threatening to use a weapon
- ✓ threatening to harm himself or to commit suicide if she leaves
- ✓ threatening to punish children to “get back” at her
- ✓ threatening to kidnap the children or gain custody
- ✓ threatening to harm or kill beloved pets
- ✓ throwing objects in her direction
- ✓ making vague threats such as: “You’re going to get it,” or “I’m really going to let you have it.”
- ✓ minimizing the abuse, saying it didn’t happen or that she caused it
- ✓ harming or killing a pet to “get back” at her
- ✓ smashing and breaking things



- ✓ throwing objects around the room
- ✓ punching walls, slamming doors
- ✓ hiding, stealing or destroying her possessions
- ✓ damaging her car
- ✓ spitting on or near her


 **SEXUAL ABUSE** is any non-consenting sexual act or behavior.

Examples include the abuser forcing sexual activity when...

- ✓ she says "no" and her limits are not respected
- ✓ she is sleeping
- ✓ she is afraid to say "no"
- ✓ she is drunk or high and is unable to say "no"

***Other examples include when the abuser..***

- ✓ insists that she dress in a more sexual way than she wishes to dress
- ✓ makes demeaning remarks about how she is dressed
- ✓ makes insulting comments about her body and/or body parts
- ✓ minimizes her feelings about sex
- ✓ berates her about her sexual history; blames her if she was sexually abused in the past or as a child
- ✓ criticizes her (calling her "frigid," for example)
- ✓ insists on touching her sexually when she does not want to be touched, alone or in the presence of others
- ✓ accuses her of sexual activity with others
- ✓ calls her a "whore" or a "slut"
- ✓ has affairs with other women (often flaunting them) after agreeing not to have sex with anyone but her
- ✓ physically attacks sexual parts of her body, (e.g., grabbing her breasts, pinching her buttocks, burning, biting or cutting genitalia)
- ✓ forces her to perform any sexual act that she does not wish to do (e.g., oral sex, watching or acting out pornography or prostitution)

 **PHYSICAL ABUSE** is any forceful or violent physical behavior.

Examples include:

- ✓ slapping
- ✓ choking
- ✓ punching
- ✓ kicking
- ✓ pinching
- ✓ pushing
- ✓ strangling
- ✓ shoving
- ✓ biting
- ✓ pulling hair
- ✓ twisting limbs
- ✓ tripping
- ✓ spanking
- ✓ scratching
- ✓ grabbing
- ✓ burning
- ✓ restraining by force
- ✓ throwing objects at the partner
- ✓ using or threatening to use a weapon of any kind (stick, ruler, belt, whip, knife, spoon, gun, etc.)

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS EVERYONE'S ISSUE.  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CAN HAPPEN TO ANYONE.**

## **CHILDREN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

Your client is probably doing her best to protect her children from the violence. She may feel that the abuse is only directed at her and does not yet realize its effects on the children. Perhaps she believes that her children need a father, or she lacks the resources to support them on her own. The children may beg her to stay, not wanting to leave their home or their friends. She fears that if she leaves she will lose custody of her children due to threats made by the abuser.

Reactions of child witnesses to violence are as varied as the personalities and experiences of the children. Many factors come into play: age of the child, cultural context, intensity and frequency of abuse, coping skills of the child, degree of isolation, availability of external support persons, etc. However, certain patterns of behavior and beliefs frequently emerge.

### **POTENTIAL IMPACT**

**Isolation**, vital to the abuser's successful use of power and control over the adult victim, creates a situation wherein children, particularly preschoolers, are limited to family feedback regarding their self-worth and their ability to interact with others. Verbal abuse (shaming, blaming, intimidation and threats) is a common technique the abuser employs to control the children's behavior. From these verbal assaults, the child may acquire a **sense of worthlessness**, getting the message that he or she is unlovable and incapable of success.

Children may experience **decreased parent availability** in violent families. The abused parent may be unable to provide adequate care for the children because of injuries, emotional exhaustion or depression.

Another factor faced by children in these situations is the **chronic, elevated level of tension and stress** in the family. Children in violent families may live in **constant fear of injury or death** for themselves and every member of the family. In response to that fear, children may become hyper-vigilant, hoping to monitor adult behavior and provide protection for their mother, siblings and self.

Finally, child witnesses live in homes where **violence is seen as the norm**. They have no understanding of the dynamics and may view power and control, aggression and violence as the only means to get needs met. While some children may model violent behavior, others may withdraw and become passive, adopting the victim role in interactions with others.

**Experts agree the best way to protect children is to protect their mothers. There is strong evidence that intervention, support and safety can often reverse the negative impact of domestic violence on children.**

### **TIP**

*It is heartbreaking to know a child's home is not a safe place to be. If you suspect any of your child clients are witnessing or experiencing domestic violence, let them know you are concerned. Speak softly to them and touch them gently on the head and shoulders when you are styling their hair. Take your cues from the child.*

*Children in homes where domestic violence is occurring need to know that there are adults who are caring and kind. The most important thing you can do for the child is to speak with the mother privately and offer to link her with resources that can help her and her children.*

### **A RESOURCE FOR CHILDREN**

Your local domestic violence program also works with children and many programs have children's advocates on site. These advocates run groups and one-on-one sessions for children. If you are concerned that a child is the target of abuse, you can call the program for information and assistance. You can also encourage the child to talk with a safe person, such as a teacher or guidance counselor.

## **BARRIERS TO LEAVING AND GETTING HELP**

People often believe that a battered woman will be safe if she just leaves the batterer. But a battered woman is not free to separate from an abuser at any time and there are many barriers to her leaving. **The biggest reason that a battered woman stays in an abusive relationship is fear – a very real fear for her safety and the safety of her children. She knows, and the evidence has shown, that leaving is potentially the most deadly time.**

A batterer is likely to increase the violence to persuade the woman to get back together or to punish her for “rejecting and leaving” him and their relationship. Men who believe they “own” their female partners view a separation as an ultimate betrayal that justifies his violent response. Leaving can be extremely dangerous. The domestic violence program can help a battered women conduct a risk assessment and assist her in developing a plan to enhance her safety, whether she chooses to stay or is able to leave.

### **BARRIERS ALSO MAY INCLUDE:**

- **Fear that her children will be taken from her** – Batterers threaten that they will take the children from the battered woman (either legally or illegally), if she dares to leave the relationship.
- **Children** – Children may miss their father and the battered woman may feel guilty for splitting up the family. She may have trouble finding reliable childcare since rural areas face a severe shortage of this resource.
- **No transportation** – A rural battered woman often cannot leave her home because she doesn’t have access to a car or a driver’s license. If she does have a car, her abuser may check her mileage; he may also disable the vehicle so it appears that she has a car but, in actuality, it isn’t driveable. Usually there is no public transportation available.
- **Economics** – In rural areas, poverty is harsher than people may realize and there is a lack of available services and safety nets. Seasonal jobs mean unemployment during the off-season. Rural areas have few, if any, job training programs. Access to assistance programs may be limited because of distance and transportation issues. She may be financially dependent on the batterer and lack the necessary resources to leave or the work skills needed to provide for herself and her children.

- **Isolation** – The batterer may have cut off access to her support systems, not allowing her to see friends, make phone calls, attend meetings, etc., so she is not able to talk about what is happening or reach out for help. She may live miles from a closest neighbor. In bad weather or during seasonal unemployment, she may be alone with the abuser for extended periods of time.
- **Lack of telephone service** – She may not have a phone and a lack of 9-1-1 services is often a reality. It may be too far to go to use a neighbor's telephone and cell service may not be available in her area.
- **Nowhere to go** – For some rural battered women, the nearest shelter may be more than an hour away. In addition, leaving a batterer often means leaving the community because of a lack of permanent housing.
- **Concern for pets and farm animals** – Many abusers harm or kill family pets and farm animals to threaten and hurt their partners. She may feel like she can't leave because the animals would be unprotected.
- **Religious reasons** – Many rural women are deeply religious, committed to their marriage vows and are deeply opposed to breaking up the family. Some faith leaders advocate for a continuation of the marriage even though the abuser has broken the vows by becoming violent to his spouse. Some religious communities in rural areas prohibit divorce and may "excommunicate" or "shame" a person who leaves a marriage or the community.
- **Extended family** – Family often plays a huge role in the lives of rural people. Family relationships are important and widespread. A battered woman may have relatives throughout the community; those ties to extended family may pose an increased risk for her or may be a resource for enhancing safety. Homes, businesses and farms are often shared among extended family members. Leaving can affect business relationships, as well as personal ones.
- **Hope for change** – Some battered women stay with their partners because they love them and have made a serious commitment to the relationship. They may believe that there is hope for change, especially when the abuser promises he will never harm her again.

- **Loss of Security** – She may not have the support of family, friends, her religious group or other community members. Leaving the relationship may mean leaving her entire community. Many rural women have never lived anywhere else, and leaving the security of a family is a giant step into the unknown.
- **Lack of awareness that domestic violence is wrong and is a crime** – Communities may give a message that domestic violence is permitted, if there are no actions taken to interrupt and condemn violent behavior. Also, some rural women and children do not leave their communities very often, and they may be unaware that violence against them is a crime.

Most battered women leave and return several times before permanently separating from the batterer. Leaving is a process. The first time a battered woman leaves may be a test to see whether her abuser will actually get some help to stop his terrorism. When he is violent again, she may leave to gain more information about resources available to her. She may then reconcile to get some economic and educational resources together in case she decides that she must leave later. She may next leave to try to break out of the isolation in which the batterer has virtually imprisoned her. Most battered women do eventually leave.

**It is very important that a battered woman be referred to a domestic violence program for information and assistance with safety planning and emergency assistance, as well as information about economic supports, including job training and employment opportunities.**



## **What You Can Do**

### **HELPING VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: SPECIFIC TIPS FOR COSMETOLOGISTS**

#### **PROTECT HER CONFIDENTIALITY**

Confidentiality is especially important to maintain when a client discloses domestic violence. A slip to another client or to another stylist can result in increased danger to the battered woman. If the abuser finds out that she reached out for help, he may double his efforts to control her and make sure she doesn't ask for help again.

- Be sure everyone else is out of earshot before asking a question or raising the topic – especially if her partner also is at the salon.
- Place brochures on domestic violence in the women's bathroom.
- Remember that the salon is often the hub of all local information; catch yourself before sharing information that might endanger a battered woman.
- Inform and remind staff and clients of how important it is to be careful when reaching out to a battered woman.

#### **REALIZE SHE MAY BE IN GREAT DANGER**

- Do not underestimate this fact.
- Be careful to approach her in private and keep any information she gives you confidential.
- Slip her a note in a style magazine, ask her to look at page X for a sample style.
- If she is being assaulted, call the police.

#### **PROVIDE ACCURATE INFORMATION ABOUT ABUSE**

- Attend a training on domestic violence for salon staff.
- Use this booklet as a reference.
- Provide resources, pamphlets and information from your local domestic violence program.
- Keep a library of books (use the resource list at the end of this booklet) at the salon.



## **OFFER THE MESSAGE... DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS WRONG AND A CRIME**

- Post information about domestic violence around the shop.
- If the topic comes up in conversation, say something like, **"I think domestic violence is wrong and I know it is a crime in Pennsylvania. I'm glad we have (insert the name of your local domestic violence program here) to help us in this community."**

## **LISTEN AND BE SUPPORTIVE**

- Listen with an open heart. When your client trusts you with information about the violence in her life, treat her disclosure like a precious gift. Be respectful and kind.
- Let her know that you want to hear about her experience and support her.
- Learn about some of the feelings that are common for battered women.

### ***Feelings Often Experienced by Battered Women***

- ✓ **Fear** – Fear for her and her children's safety is often overwhelming. She may also fear losing her children, livelihood, resources and becoming homeless.
- ✓ **Confusion** – The battered woman may believe her partner when he promises to change or to stop abusing her. She may feel confusion over the change in the partner's behavior from day to day.
- ✓ **Hopelessness** – She may have been trying everything possible to try to stop the violence, without success. There may be no access to resources, friends or family. Each abusive incident often decreases her hope, her belief in herself and her ability to leave the situation.
- ✓ **Shame and Guilt** – She is told that she deserves the abuse and she may try to change her behavior to stop the abuse. She may be told that it is up to her to solve the "problem." This makes her feel worse about herself, because nothing stops the abuse. She may be ashamed about staying in the relationship.
- ✓ **Denial of the Abuse** – The abuser constantly tells the battered woman that the abuse is deserved, or even that it did not occur at all. Victims begin to think they may be exaggerating or view the abuse as "normal."
- ✓ **Powerless and Tired** – When all power is taken away, it requires all of a victim's energy to survive. She may be exhausted from protecting herself and her children.

✓**Hope and Love** – Many battered women will say that they want the violence to stop but the relationship to continue. She may still love the abuser and remember the good times. He may be the father of her children; she may hope for a change in his behavior so they can continue the relationship.

✓**Loss** – If she leaves, she may feel sad about losing the relationship or giving up hope for change.

### **GIVE NON-BLAMING FEEDBACK**

- Say something like, “You are not to blame for the abuse.” “It’s not your fault.” “There is no excuse for being violent.”
- Do not say something like, “If my partner ever abused me, I would leave the first time it happened.”

### **OFFER SUPPORT AND CHOICES**

- Offer her the domestic violence program’s hotline number for support and information.
- Offer a safe place at the salon for her to make phone calls.
- Depending on her needs, you may know of other resources that could help her. Offer those.

### **DO NOT OFFER ADVICE**

- Especially, do not advise her to leave, without knowing how dangerous such a choice might be for her.
- If you are afraid for her safety, say so.
- Let her know that leaving is an option and that there are people available who can help her leave safely. The staff at the domestic violence program can help her sort this out.
- Offer to help set up a call to the local program for support and options.
- Don’t blame the battered woman if her choices are not the ones you would make.

### **PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR HER TO TALK**

- Let her know she is not alone. Believe her story.
- Remember it is more likely that she will minimize the violence, not exaggerate it. She is probably in more danger that she is telling you.
- If she is alone, offer her information to read.
- Call her a few days after the appointment to talk. If someone else answers the phone, say you wanted to follow up on her cut or style or that you have a new product or service to discuss.

## **PUT HER IN TOUCH WITH RESOURCES THAT CAN HELP**

- She should decide her course of action, unless she is in immediate physical danger.
- If she is in immediate physical danger, call the police.
- Tell her about your local domestic violence program.
- Make the telephone line at the salon available for calls to the program.
- Provide brochures and other information on domestic violence. Ask her if it is safe to take written materials with her.
- Invite a worker from the domestic violence program to the salon for an information session so women can meet to talk before or after an appointment.

## **IF YOU ARE CONCERNED FOR HER SAFETY, SPEAK UP**

- If you notice an injury, inquire about it if you feel comfortable. Be sure you make a private connection with her to enhance her safety.
- Ask a question like: **“I have seen other women who have this type of injury, and they have been hurt by their partners. I wonder if this is happening to you?”**
- Use the following **“7 Things to Say to a Battered Woman”** as a guide:

### **7 Things to Say to a Battered Woman**

(Adapted from a speech by Sarah Buel\*, 1995.)

1. I am really sorry to hear this is happening to you.
2. I am afraid for your safety or I'm scared for you.
3. I am afraid for the safety of your children.
4. I am afraid it will only get worse.  
(Said in a non-blaming way.)
5. I will help you find someone who can help.
6. You don't deserve to be abused.
7. I won't tell anyone what we discussed.

---

\*Sarah Buel, a formerly battered woman, is a national expert and trainer on domestic violence.

## HELP HER FIND SAFETY

The first priority is to link the battered woman with a domestic violence program. Written materials such as brochures or cards are available from your local program. Offer them to her, but be cautious that she has a safe place to keep them where the abuser will not find them. Some battered women do not have any privacy for personal items and their abusers monitor everything.

**Other actions you can take to help victims find safety:**

- **Offer the use of a private telephone** for her to call the domestic violence program or other places to get support and information. She may not have access to a telephone at home or may not have any way to make a private call. Often the abuser will monitor phone calls, use Caller ID and other services to track who she talks to. If you are not able to support the cost of long distance calls, ask that she have her party return the call to the salon or provide a phone card. (Collect donations for the card; call it the *Safe Calling Fund*.) Using her telephone company calling card is not a good idea, as the bill will be sent to the home and the calls will be listed.
- **Provide a meeting place for a worker from the domestic violence program or for other helpers.** The batterer may track mileage on her vehicle, time her errands or provide all her transportation. All of these actions limit her ability to meet with anyone who might provide support or information and assistance. The salon may be one of the few places she is "allowed" to go, but even her time at the appointment may be limited. By providing a space at the shop for meetings to occur, she would be able to get the help she needs without having to make another trip out of the house.
- **Talk about safety.** When you have the opportunity to talk with her privately, discuss ways she can be safe and keep her children safe. You could talk with her about her protection plan, often called a safety plan. Many battered women have a plan already in place; offer to help her review her strategy or work on developing resources or new ideas for difficult issues. Her plan might address:
  - Identifying signs and events that often occur prior to the increase of the violence
  - Identifying an emergency safe location if she needs to flee

- Collecting emergency items and finding a safe place to store them:
  - ✓ money
  - ✓ credit cards
  - ✓ checks
  - ✓ keys
  - ✓ few days of any needed medication
  - ✓ copies of identification and Social Security cards for self and children
  - ✓ other important documents
  - ✓ address book
  - ✓ a change of clothes
  - ✓ favorite item for each person
  - ✓ anything else that would be critical if she needed to flee
- Listing who to call in an emergency: 9-1-1, local police, etc.
- Obtaining a free emergency 9-1-1-cell phone (available from the local domestic violence program).
- Helping her identify what other issues she might want to include in her plan. A complete safety plan is important and will change as her situation changes. Advocates at domestic violence programs are available to help battered women review their safety plan and address other issues. You can help most effectively by informing her that those free and confidential services are available.
- **Offer a safe and confidential mailing address and limited storage location at the salon.** A private mailing address may allow her to apply for a credit card or obtain information about an assistance program. You could store her small emergency bag, a file of important written documents, and/or a small sentimental item that the abuser is likely to destroy (e.g., photographs).

## **KNOW THE LEGAL OPTIONS**

In Pennsylvania, victims of domestic violence may have several civil legal options available to them, including: filing petitions for a Protection From Abuse order (PFA), divorce and/or custody of children. Criminal charges for the abuse, including assault, stalking, criminal trespass, rape and/or other crimes may be an option, depending on the batterer's actions. Criminal charges may result in the abuser being ordered to attend a batterers' treatment program, pay fines and/or serve jail time.

Criminal charges can be filed by the state or local police or through a private criminal complaint made by the person who was the target of the abuse. Free, confidential assistance is available from the local domestic violence program to help explain the criminal justice process, accompany victims to court and provide support and information.

Many battered women benefit from obtaining a PFA – a civil court order that, at minimum, directs the batterer to refrain from further abusing his victim(s). Additional relief is sometimes available in the court order. Violation of the order may result in the abuser being required to attend a batterers' treatment program, pay fines and/or serve jail time. A PFA is obtained through a legal process that has specific requirements; it is not guaranteed to everyone. Advocates from the domestic violence program also are available to provide free information and assistance regarding a PFA.

### **TIP**

*Free materials may be available from your local domestic violence program about legal options. Consider keeping this information in your salon.*

## **HELP HER CONNECT WITH THE LOCAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAM & OTHER COMMUNITY RESOURCES**

The most important referral you can make for a victim of domestic violence is to the nearest domestic violence program. In rural areas, programs often serve more than one county. Advocates can arrange for transportation to shelter or for someone to meet with the victim in your community.

The services offered vary from program to program, but advocates may be able to offer some or all of the following:

- one-on-one support and listening
- shelter or safe housing
- emergency transportation
- assistance with finding permanent housing
- assistance with obtaining a PFA and other types of legal advocacy
- 24-hour crisis hotline
- assistance with emergency and basic living needs
- assistance with finding permanent housing or obtaining welfare

- referrals to other resources
- battered women's support groups
- child advocacy services
- medical advocates at local hospitals

In addition, battered women's advocates are able to offer information and referrals to many community agencies. If you have a client who needs help, the domestic violence program can work with her to identify local resources.

## **HELP OTHER BATTERED WOMEN IN YOUR COMMUNITY**

Thank you for your work to help women who have been the target of domestic violence who patronize your salon. A battered women needs to know that help is available. Your participation in this linkage program may be her lifeline.

All victims of domestic violence should have access to the information and assistance they need; you can help ensure that services continue to be available in your community. Here are a few suggestions on how you and your salon can support your local domestic violence program:

- Donate a percentage of your profits during October, National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, to the local domestic violence program.
- Organize a fundraiser or cut-a-thon to benefit your local domestic violence program.
- Send product samples to the shelter.
- Collect financial donations at the salon for moving costs, an emergency fund or for boarding pets.
- Offer free haircuts before court appearances or job interviews.
- Join with other salons to offer "Makeover Monday" to residents at the shelter.
- Volunteer! There are many opportunities. You could work on the hotline, train other salon owners, raise money or become a board member. Call your local program for information.
- Make a monthly financial contribution. Regular financial donations – even if they are small – are really helpful to meet on-going costs.
- Invite your friends and family members to get involved in this community issue.
- Say NO to domestic violence, everywhere, all the time.

## **WHEN THE BATTERED WOMAN AND BATTERER ARE YOUR CLIENTS**

### **KEEP THEM APART**

As a cosmetologist in a rural area, you more than likely have both battered women and abusers as clients. This can present a very difficult situation for you; especially if they have appointments at the same time, and you are not allowed any privacy with the woman. If you have a small salon, you may wish to make a friendly suggestion that the abuser go have coffee while you cut her hair. If your salon is larger with room for privacy, ask the abuser to wait in the waiting area. Make sure to do the same when it is the abuser's appointment, so it doesn't appear you are trying to approach her alone.

### **BE CAREFUL REACHING OUT**

If you are able to speak to the battered woman alone, use the time to provide support as outlined earlier. If you can't speak to her alone, perhaps you could ask her to call you after a few days to tell you how her style, perm, color, etc., is working out. You could say that you are seeking feedback from clients. If she does call you back, you can then attempt to talk with her about domestic violence.

When on the phone, it is critical to first ask if she is alone and free to talk. Say something like:

- **"I wanted to talk to you about something of a personal nature. Are you able to speak freely right now?"**

If you have the opportunity to speak to her, you might want to say:

- **"I have noticed that when you come into the salon, you... (have injuries, seem sad or depressed, seem scared, etc.). I don't mean to pry, and you don't have to tell me anything, but I am wondering if someone is hurting you. If so, I know of places that can help."**

### **DON'T RAISE BATTERER'S SUSPICIONS**

When you know that a client is an abuser of a partner or children, it can become very difficult to work with that person. While it may be tempting to intervene and try to stop the abuse, an appearance of neutrality is the best policy. If you say anything that might indicate you know what is going on in the home, the battered woman may be in greater danger.



Be courteous and professional. If the abuser does confide in you about his abusive actions, you may call the domestic violence program for a counseling referral to share with him or suggest that he call a mental health professional or batterers' treatment program directly. Do not suggest that he call the domestic violence program – unless he is the target of violence and needs protection from his partner. It cannot be overemphasized that domestic violence is a crime that can result in serious physical injury and even death. If you need support and additional information, you can also call the domestic violence program.





## **Resources On Domestic Violence**

### ***PA DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAMS***

A booklet on domestic violence for family members and friends is available from your local domestic violence program. Please contact them for copies or for further information.

#### **Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence (PCADV)**

The nation's first state domestic violence coalition ensures the availability of effective and appropriate services to victims through training, technical assistance, program development and monitoring of programs. Contact PCADV for a listing of all domestic violence programs throughout the state.

800-932-4632 (Business hours)

800-553-2508 TTY

### ***NATIONAL RESOURCES***

#### **National Domestic Violence Hotline**

800-799-SAFE (7233) (24-hours)

800-787-3224 TTY

Provides 24-hour, toll-free crisis intervention line, referrals to domestic violence agencies and other resources.

#### **National Resource Center on Domestic Violence**

Offers comprehensive information and resources, policy development and technical assistance to enhance community response to, and prevention of, domestic violence.

800-537-2238 (Business hours)

800-553-2508 TTY

#### **Face to Face Plastic Surgery Program, Give Back a Smile and S.C.O.R.E.S. Programs**

Sponsored by National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, these joint projects with the American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry and the American Society of Dermatological Surgery provide free plastic surgery and other services to survivors of domestic violence in removing the scars of abuse.

FACE TO FACE: 800-842-4546 (Business hours)

Give Back a Smile: 800-773-GBAS (4227) (Business hours)

S.C.O.R.E.S 888-892-6702 (Business hours)

## **SUGGESTED READING ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

Berry, Dawn Bradley. *The Domestic Violence Sourcebook: Everything You Need To Know*. Chicago, IL: Contemporary Books, 1995.

Evans, Patricia. *The Verbally Abusive Relationship: How to Recognize It and How to Respond*. Holbrook, MA: Adams Media Corporation, 1996.

- In *The Verbally Abusive Relationship*, survivors will find validation, understanding and encouragement for their efforts to change the situation. Author Patricia Evans explores the damaging effects of verbal abuse on children and the family, and offers valuable insight and recommendations to therapists, as well as those who seek therapeutic support. ISBN: 1558505822

Jones, Ann. *Next Time, She'll Be Dead: Battering and How to Stop It*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1994, 2000.

- If you ever thought that women who stayed in abusive relationships must somehow like it, or deserve it, or if you're a woman who ever thought "It could never happen to me," then you should read this book. A revealing look at battered women and abusive men and society's response. ISBN: 0807067717.

Jones, Ann and Susan Schechter. *When Love Goes Wrong: What to Do When You Can't Do Anything Right*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992.

- Full of moving first-person stories and drawing on the authors' 15 years of experience working with women in controlling and abusive relationships, *When Love Goes Wrong* provides guidance and practical options for the millions of women whose partners have crossed the line between love and control. ISBN: 0060923695

Klein, Ethel, Esta Soler, Jacquelyn Campbell and Marissa Ghez. *Ending Domestic Violence*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1997.

Levy, Barrie. *In Love and in Danger: A Teen's Guide to Breaking Free of Abusive Relationships*. Seattle, WA, The Seal Press, 1998.

- According to author Barrie Levy, as many as one out of three high school and college-age youth experiences violence in his or her intimate or dating relationships. *In Love and in Danger* is a guide designed to help teens help themselves. Chapters provide profiles of dating abusers,

help readers identify whether their relationships are abusive, and offer suggestions for coping and making a difference. The quasi workbook format is helpful for young people embroiled in abusive relationships – whether they are abused and looking for escape or abusers looking for a means to change.

Lobel, Kerry, Editor. *Naming The Violence: Speaking Out About Lesbian Battering*. Seattle, WA, The Seal Press, 1986.

- Sponsored by the Lesbian Task Force of the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, this book is “by and for battered lesbians and those who work to support their empowerment.” Lobel alternates personal histories with commentary by counselors, activists and others who offer advice on how to treat victims and how to deal with the problem generally. This collection constitutes a challenge to lesbians who abuse their lovers and to those who tolerate such abuse.

Miller, Mary Susan. *No Visible Wounds: Identifying Nonphysical Abuse of Women by Their Men*. Chicago, IL: Contemporary Books, 1995.

- Domestic violence against women is not limited to physical assaults. In *No Visible Wounds*, Mary Susan Miller breaks the silence that surrounds this devastating form of abuse, identifies the many types of nonphysical battering, and explores why this outrageous treatment of women continues unabated in our society. ISBN: 0449910792

NiCarthy, Ginny. *Getting Free: You Can End Abuse and Take Back Your Life*. Seattle, WA: Seal Press, 1982, 1997.

- Although *Getting Free* was written in 1982, it is still called the bible of all domestic violence texts. It's not just the content of the book – 24 chapters covering a gamut of issues – but the tone. The problems of and solutions to, domestic violence are clearly defined through the voices of women as they share their experiences and carve out their steps toward freedom. At the time that *Getting Free* was first published, the more common feeling about domestic abuse was that women brought it on themselves. This landmark book changed that perception, not only bringing a social problem to light, but also offering a lifeline to thousands of women. It continues to do so. ISBN: 1878067923.

NiCarthy, Ginny and Sue Davidson. *You Can Be Free: An Easy to Read Handbook for Abused Women*. Seattle, WA: Seal Press, 1989.

Stenack, Richard J. *Stop Controlling Me! What to Do When Someone You Love Has Too Much Power Over You*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, 2001.

- Control issues are a major factor in the nearly 50 percent of American marriages that end in divorce. Women with low self-esteem are most likely to attract a dominating partner. This book offers exercises to uncover mistaken beliefs, identify unacceptable compromises and regain self-worth, as well as step-by-step tools to end relationships that can't be saved. ISBN: 1572242469

Websdale, Neil. *Rural Woman Battering and the Justice System*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998.

White, Evelyn C. *Chain, Chain, Change: For Black Women Dealing with Physical and Emotional Abuse*. Seattle, WA, The Seal Press, 1985.

- Offering practical information for African-American women in physically or emotionally abusive relationships, the editor of *The Black Women's Health Book* discusses identifying abuse, the cycle of violence, agencies and shelters and using the legal system. Also addresses how to protect yourself using methods to reduce battering to making the decision to stay or leave.

Zambrano, Myrna M. *Mejor Sola Que Mal Acompañada: For The Latina In An Abusive Relationship*. Seattle, WA, The Seal Press, 1985.

- For Latinas involved in a physically or emotionally abusive relationships, *Mejor Sola Que Mal Acompañada* offers support, understanding and practical information, including: what abuse is, family and cultural expectations, getting police, medical and legal assistance, housing resources, what the church may say, protecting children and dealing with discrimination. *Mejor Sola Que Mal Acompañada* is an invaluable resource for counselors, shelter workers and activists, and an empowering handbook for the Latina who wants to break free from the cycle of abuse.



**PENNSYLVANIA COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**  
3605 Vartan Way, Suite 101, Harrisburg, PA 17110  
Phone: 800-932-4632 ■ TTY: 800-553-2508 ■ Fax: 717-671-8149  
[www.pcadv.org](http://www.pcadv.org)

