

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Safety, security resources, education leads to prevention of abuse

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It is a social problem that spreads through all ages, genders, races, educational backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses. It is a societal issue with no demographic boundaries that is known by many names. It is an unfortunate riddle that affects most of society. Many have experienced it or know someone who has experienced it.

Domestic violence knows no stereotypes, and it is often referred to as partner abuse, spouse abuse or battering. Unfortunately, many people fall prey to its clutches but do not know they are experiencing it. A partner often brushes off the signs of domestic violence because they do not know its full definition.

Domestic violence is when one person inflicts injury, whether physical, emotional or mental, on someone he or she has, or has had, a relationship with.

Because of the rampant issue of domestic violence, October is now nationally known as Domestic Violence Awareness Month. It is a month when people everywhere renew commitments to stop domestic violence by holding perpetrators responsible, offering safe and secure resources to victims and recognizing that domestic violence affects all its victims, said Regina Schofield, assistant attorney general for the Office of Justice Programs. It is a time to "make sure that victims have access to services and that criminal justice professionals and service providers have the best tools available for responding to their needs — training, the latest research, and data to help us understand the nature and extent of the problem."

In 2005, 552,000 women were victims in domestic disputes with their partners, and men had about 217,000 similar domestic violence experiences. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, these victimizations accounted for about 26 percent of all violence against women and eight percent of all violence against men. It is also to be taken into account, though, that women are seven to 14 more times more likely than men to report suffering from severe physical assaults from a partner.

Although it is a scary thought, domestic violence can lead to domestic homicide if not dealt with properly. In 2000, a study showed that partner homicides accounted for 33.5 percent

of murders for women and only four percent of murders for men. Through research, it has been proven that pregnant women and recently pregnant women are more likely to be victims of homicide than of any other cause, and a significant portion of these homicides are because of partners.

However, spousal abuse is not the only issue with domestic violence. Domestic violence also affects children. In a national survey, it was noted that more than 50 percent of men who frequently assaulted their partners also abused their children. This is unfortunate, since studies show that slightly more than half of female domestic violence victims live in a house with children under the age of 12.

Unfortunately, there are groups that are usually left out of domestic violence issues, but they experience problems as well. These groups are teenagers and the elderly. It has been noted that about one in five female

high school students reports being physically or sexually abused by a dating partner, and 40 percent of girls ages 14 to 17 know someone their age who has been hit or beaten by a boyfriend.

Many victims of domestic violence experience physical, emotional and mental trauma; however, most people do not realize the victims also feel isolated from friends and family. They experience decreased educational and employment opportunities, poverty and homelessness.

With so much at stake, it is an issue that needs prevention, and prevention takes planning. Being in a relationship with an abusive partner and surviving requires considerable skills and ingenuity. Whenever a battered partner has to protect his or herself and children, he or she is assessing the risk at hand and enacting a safety plan. People do not always realize this, though, because it is

more instinct than conscious effort.

There are generally three situations involving domestic violence that need planning: when someone is threatened with a physical assault, when someone continues to live with or date an abusive partner or when someone needs to protect himself or herself after ending a relationship with an abusive partner.

When creating a safety plan, consider other resources besides local domestic violence programs, the police and the courts. Find people who are trustworthy and supportive, such as counselors, friends, religious congregation members, teachers, and others. However, remember that not

everyone has useful information to respond to domestic violence.

Also, remember to plan ahead. No one should wait for a crisis before beginning to plan. If someone plans in advance, he or she can have options for a place to stay, financial assistance and a location where there are duplicates of legal documents and other important papers.

The National Domestic Violence Hotline, which is for victims of violence from people they love, is available at all times at (800) 799-SAFE. The staff offers crisis interventions and referrals. Also, if requested, they can connect women to a shelter and send out written information.

Fortunately, almost every county in North Carolina has a domestic violence service provider that assists victims by providing information, support and emergency response. Cumberland County offers CARE, a family domestic violence program, with a crisis line contact at 323-4187. Harnett County offers SAFE with a crisis contact line at 893-7233. Robeson County offers the Southeastern Family Violence Center with a crisis line at (800) 742-7794. Sampson County offers U-CARE with a crisis line at 506-0931.

"We provide individual counseling, support groups, shelter, court advocacy, and batterer's treatment," said Crystal Black, CARE program director. "People don't realize it affects any and every family."

"The best thing you can do if you see or hear domestic violence happening is to call the law enforcement. For the most part, it never ends without some type of intervention."

(Editor's note: Information was gathered from www.ojp.usdoj.gov, www.ednabuse.org and www.acep.org.)



Illustration by Stacy Avian Robinson

Domestic Violence Prevention Month activities on Fort Bragg

Couples Fair

<http://www.fortbraggmwr.com/calendars/ACScalendar.htm#Couples>
Oct. 20 • 9 a.m. until noon
Hedrick Stadium
Free, open to everyone. No registration necessary.

Marriage Enrichment Workshop

<http://www.fortbraggmwr.com/calendars/ACScalendar.htm#CCouples>
Oct. 24 • 9 a.m. - Noon
Van Epp (couples and singles are welcome)
Noon until 4 p.m. — (two workshops to choose from; one for singles and one for couples)
Childcare provided at Rodriguez Child Development Center. Register online at <http://www.fortbraggmwr.com/acsclasses.html>, or call at 396-5521/4175.
For more information, go to <http://www.fortbraggmwr.com/ACS/DomesticViolencePrevention.html>

Fort Bragg offers opportunities for couples, singles during domestic violence awareness month

Army Community Service

October is domestic violence awareness month and Army Community Service has created several great opportunities during the month for couples to improve or deepen their relationships.

The second annual ACS Couples Fair will showcase the wealth of services and programs in the Fort Bragg, Fayetteville, and Pope Air Force Base community that supports couples in either improving their relation-

ships or finding all the support and entertainment they need.

Everything at the fair will be free, including dance workshops, massage techniques, cooking, relationship, self-defense classes and a wealth of other mini workshops with loads of free educational resources and books.

Soldier and Airmen families are welcome to bring their preschoolers for face painting, balloons and plenty of fun and games. The fair takes place Oct. 20 from 9 a.m. until noon at

Hedrick Stadium, on the corner of Reilly and Long Street roads.

ACS is offering a marriage enrichment workshop Oct. 24. This one-day workshop will be hosted by John Van Epp, author of *How Not to Marry a Jerk* and creator of the Life Changers Marriage Workshops that teach couples to improve their relationship through creative perceptions. Free childcare and free books autographed by Dr. Van Epp are available. Call 396-5521 or 4175 to register or for more information.

The Fort Bragg Family Advocacy Program reminds military affiliated families, parents and couples that there is no excuse for domestic abuse and that there are many ways to get help to either escape an abusive relationship or find help in healing.

The Fort Bragg Victim's Hotline is available 24 hours a day at 322-3418, to provide callers with information on how to find help or support. The military has initiated new programs that greatly increase the

privacy and support available to victims of partner abuse or sexual assault.

If you or someone you know in the military community still has privacy concerns, call the hotline and get help and information about military and civilian services without giving your name.

Persons can also call the toll free National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233 or the Cumberland County Care Center/Domestic Violence Shelter, at 677-2532 for help.