



## Domestic Violence

Contrary to what many believe, domestic violence is not caused by an anger control problem, substance abuse, mental illness, the actions of the victim, or stress. Domestic violence is a pattern of behavior chosen by an offender to establish power and control over another person through fear and intimidation, often with the threat or use of violence. **Domestic violence is a crime.**

Domestic violence poses significant risks for children. Nearly half of domestic violence offenders also abuse their children. Children face dual threats: the threat of witnessing traumatic events and the threat of direct injury.

The US Department of Human Services states:

“Domestic violence and child abuse often occur in the same family and are linked to several consequences for all family members, as well as for members of the larger community. Children who are exposed to domestic violence are at greater risk for substance abuse, juvenile pregnancy, and criminal behavior than those raised in homes without violence. Many studies have noted that children from violent homes exhibit signs of more aggressive behavior, such as bullying, and are up to three times more likely to be involved in fighting. Research has shown that prevention and early intervention efforts are effective in reducing domestic violence and child abuse behavior.”

### Myths and Facts About Domestic Violence

**MYTH:** Domestic violence is not common.

**FACT:** Every 9 seconds in the U.S. a man beats a woman. In Oregon, crisis service hotlines annually receive more than 50,000 emergency calls and 37,000 non-emergency calls from survivors of domestic violence.

**MYTH:** Domestic violence only happens in low-income families.

**FACT:** Domestic violence happens in all kinds of families, rich and poor, urban, suburban, in every part of the country, in every racial, religious, and age group.

**MYTH:** Alcohol and drugs cause domestic violence.

**FACT:** Alcohol and drugs do not cause domestic violence. Domestic violence is a choice. Many abusers will make sure they have alcohol or drugs on hand, in order to use them as an excuse for their actions. Abusers will also claim their actions resulted because they could not have the alcohol or drugs.

**MYTH:** Domestic violence is an anger control issue.

**FACT:** Domestic violence has nothing to do with anger. Anger is a tool abusers use to get what they want. We know abusers are actually very much in control because they can stop when someone knocks on the door or the phone rings; and they often direct punches and kicks to parts of the body where the bruises are less likely to show. They are not abusing everyone who “makes them angry,” but will wait until there are no witnesses to abuse the one they say they love.

**MYTH:** Abusers an/or victims have low self-esteem.

**FACT:** Abusers do not have low self-esteem. They believe they are entitled to have power and control over their partner. Abusers will pretend to have low self-esteem, if it will make others believe the abuse is not their fault.

**FACT:** Survivors of abuse may have had great self-esteem at the beginning of the relationship, but the abuser often uses emotional abuse: calling them names, putting them down, telling them it is all their fault in order to destroy their self-esteem. Some abusers look for victims with low self-esteem, as they believe they will be more likely to blame themselves, and less likely to report their behavior. Other abusers will seek victims with high self-esteem, as they may represent a greater challenge to control over time.

**MYTH:** Most assaults are really just a couple of slaps and they are not really harmful.

**FACT:** More than 30% of hospital emergency-room admissions are woman who have been abused. Domestic violence is the single greatest cause of injury to women in the United States.

**MYTH:** Domestic violence happens only once or twice in a relationship.

**FACT:** Abusers usually escalate violent behaviors in frequency and intensity over time.

**MYTH:** Some women want to be beaten. They ask for it. They deserve it. Some women go from abuser to abuser- it must be something about them.

**FACT:** No one deserves to be abused. Everyone has the right to live free of violence. No one would want to have his or her partner be abusive. Women who find that their second or third partner are abusers will often be blamed by others for the violence- "It must be something about her" or she will blamer herself- "I always seem to pick abusers." In reality, the abuser uses the tactic of charm early in the relationship to find out that she was previously abused. He uses this information to blame her for the violence- "It must be something that you are doing wrong, or there would not have been two of us" or to silence her -"you are not going to tell anyone, because if you do they will never believe you because you said that before."

**FACT:** Domestic violence is a crime. It is against the law for anyone to physically harm or harass another person. In Oregon, the law says police shall arrest a person who they have reason to believe has abused another person.

For more information go to: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/domviolence/prevention/>. This site contains resources on prevention and early intervention efforts to reduce domestic violence and child abuse in families. It also includes teen dating violence prevention resources.

To read more about intimate partner violence, myths and facts, and services in Oregon, go to: [www.ocadsv.com](http://www.ocadsv.com) the website for the Oregon Coalition Against Domestic And Sexual Violence. The website [www.mvwcs.com](http://www.mvwcs.com) for Mid-Valley Women's Crisis Service in Salem has handouts that you can download off the Internet in several different languages.

**For Immediate Assistance  
Call the Statewide Crisis Hotline:  
1-888-235-5333**