



Community Action Campaign to
End Family Violence and Abuse

**74% of Albertans report they
know someone who has been
or is being abused**

**Most of those victims (68%)
will turn to a relative, friend or
co-worker like YOU for support**

DO YOU KNOW HOW TO HELP THEM?

RECOGNIZE

family violence
and abuse in all
its forms

RESPOND

to victims
in supportive,
non-judgmental
ways

REFER

victims who
may want more
support to the
appropriate
specialized
services

www.CalgaryWomensShelter.com

24-Hour Family Violence Helpline: 403-234-SAFE (7233)



Violence affects all of us and many people want to reach out and be supportive of victims.

But, the number one reason identified by community members for not intervening is that they aren't sure how.

We can change that.

RECOGNIZE

Offering non-judgmental, compassionate support is a powerful way to help end violence and make positive change in our community.

Studies show that with the appropriate education and training, bystanders increase their capacity and confidence, and get involved supporting victims more often. This can make all the difference in the world.

The majority of victims of violence turn to someone they know first for help, as opposed to a shelter, police or some other formal service. How these family members, friends, neighbours or co-workers respond, is incredibly important in shaping what the victim does next. These reactions, or “social responses” as they are known, can have very positive or very negative impacts for the victim.

Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter teaches how to support victims of violence and abuse through the Community Action Campaign. It empowers Calgarians to better support their family members, friends, co-workers, and neighbours who may be experiencing family violence.

This public education program offers free skill building workshops to any and all groups to:

- Educate the community about family violence and abuse
- Learn how best to support victims
- Make a positive change in our community

Family Violence can only be solved if everyone gets involved and takes a stand. Together, we CAN make a difference.



Types of Abuse and Some Common Examples*

Emotional and Psychological Abuse:

- Name calling; Belittling; Constant criticism.
- Screaming at her; Mocking her; Putting down her family/friends.
- Threatening her about the kids (e.g. telling her she will lose custody, saying he will leave town with the kids).
- Demanding household chores be done a specific way.
- Abusing/neglecting kids and not letting her intervene; Telling her she's a bad mother.
- Not speaking to her for days at a time.
- Using her lack of legal knowledge to control her (e.g. threatening her deportation).
- Kick her out with nothing.
- Stalking, harassing in person or via technology.
- Making her feel like she's "going crazy".

Economic/Financial:

- Stopping her from making money; Making her hand over money; Keeping money from the family.
- Making her account for every dollar spent.
- Forcing them to live in poverty when money is available.
- Racking up debt in her name, to impact her credit rating.

Isolation/Social:

- Stopping her from having access to family/friends.
- Using jealousy to justify questioning and controlling her movements and activities.
- Listening to her phone calls, or checking text messages, monitoring mileage on car, calling/texting/emailing repeatedly.
- Putting her down in front of others.
- Trying to keep her from doing things (e.g. job, school...).
- Creating a "scene" in public situations to get her to stop wanting to attend public/social activities.

Physical:

- Slapping, hitting, kicking, biting, punching, pushing, grabbing, throwing, shoving, bruising, cuts, broken bones, sprains etc...
- Preventing her from leaving a room.
- Locking her in or out of the home.
- Abandoning her in an unsafe place.
- Hurting others she loves (children, pets, family...).
- Throwing, hitting, kicking, burning, or smashing objects (e.g. furniture, walls, dishes, possessions).
- Choking, strangling, cutting off air supply.
- Threatening to become physically abusive towards her or those she loves.
- Threatening her with a knife, gun, or other weapon/object.
- Attempting to kill her or murder.



Intimidation, Threats and Controlling:

- Destroying property; Giving her angry looks.
- Making her do something humiliating (e.g. begging for forgiveness, having to ask permission to use the car or go out, to use bank card, buy groceries).
- Saying things to scare her (e.g. threatening to commit suicide, hurt others etc...).
- Bossing her around; Turning others against her.
- Making rules about what she can say, do, wear, who to talk to; Changing rules without telling her.
- Reminding of past abuse (e.g. "You remember what happened the last time you didn't listen to me."...).
- Threatening to spread rumours about her to friends and family if she doesn't comply.

Cultural/Spiritual:

- Attacking or ridiculing her belief system and/or culture.
- Attempting to stop her from practicing or participating in spiritual practices.
- Using spirituality or religion as a way of controlling her.
- Attempting to force her to accept spiritual beliefs or engage in spiritual practices.

Sexualized:

- Emotionally pressuring her and/or physically forcing her to have sex when she doesn't want to; forcing her to have sex with other people, animals or objects.
- Threatening to "out" her as gay or bisexual.
- Demanding she wear more (or less) provocative clothing; Denying her sexuality; Making degrading sexual comments.
- Making threats if she doesn't comply with sex.
- Forcing her to have sex for money or pornography.
- Threatening to expose intimate details or photos.
- Having sex with her while she is asleep or unconscious.

RECOGNIZE

** Please note this not a comprehensive list, many other examples exist.*



Some Concerns You May Have About Getting Involved

POINTS OF CONCERN

You feel like it's none of your business.

You don't know what to say.

You might make things worse.

You think it's likely not serious enough to get involved.

It will resolve on its own.

You might offend the person if you're wrong in thinking they're a victim.

You're afraid it'll be unsafe for you/ your family or the victim.

POINTS TO CONSIDER

Family violence and abuse is a community issue. It is everyone's business. We all have a role to play in helping to end it.

Saying you care and you're concerned for them is a good start. Don't tell them what they "should" or "have" to do. See the back of this booklet for some helpful examples.

Saying/doing nothing might make things worse. You might help improve things and are at least offering compassion.

Victims often feel very alone and appreciate non-judgmental support. They may be minimizing what is happening, it could be more serious than you think.

Abuse escalates over time and does not go away on its own.

Showing you think there is nothing shameful about being a victim and asking in a sensitive way, rarely leads to offence. If they do get offended you can apologize and say you're here if they ever need you in the future.

Speak to the victim in confidence when the time is right and you have privacy. Call our 24-Hour Helpline if you are unsure.

** Adapted from the Neighbours, Friends and Family Campaign*



Some of the Barriers to Leaving that Victims Face

There are many reasons why women stay and even those who leave may return. Each of these barriers are real, legitimate concerns. Her fears have merit and are based on actual risk. Her hope for a happy family when he can be genuinely remorseful is a powerful motivator. As supporters, we are more helpful if we respect the valid challenges victims face in deciding whether to leave or stay. Rather than focusing on why she stays, a better question is: Why doesn't he stop? We must also consider the role perpetrators play in deliberately creating barriers like these and others.

Fear

- That her abusive partner will harm her or her children if they leave.
- That she will be unable to support herself and/or her children.
- That she may lose custody of her children.

Guilt

- Perpetrators may be relentless in blaming her for "breaking up the family".
- Repeatedly being told/coerced into believing the abuse is her fault.

Social

- Societal beliefs that normalize violence.
- Messages that pathologize and blame victims for their circumstances and excuse the perpetrator.
- Social Responses to victims are often very negative and judgmental.

Systemic

- Many systems hold the victim accountable for creating safety, and do not hold the perpetrator accountable for the abuse and for stopping it.

Lack of support

- Victims are expected to leave everything behind in order to be safe. There are few supports for starting over.
- People often do not believe her, think she's exaggerating or is being "dramatic".

Hope

- People may not help her or may not know how to help her.
- Her partner may be very remorseful and make a commitment to change.
- Her partner may give explanations for the abuse (e.g. stress, accident, drinking...).

Love

- Because she still loves him—not the abusive behavior. The kids may love him.
- Partner is loving and respectful between the incidences of abuse.

* Adapted from Provincial Association
of Transition Houses and Services
of Saskatchewan



5 Principles of Supporting Victims

1 Naming the Violence

When the victim is talking about her experience of abuse, it is important to pay close attention to the violence and abuse she's experienced. Victims find it helpful when supporters notice the violence they are experiencing, and when others listen carefully when they talk about being scared of their partners. They do not find it helpful when others minimize the abuse and fail to notice the extent to which their partner is really hurting and scaring them.

2 Being clear that the one who perpetrates abuse is the one who is responsible

Victims are usually clear that the abuse is not their fault, and that their partners are responsible for their abusive behaviour. They find it helpful when they have conversations with supporters who are also clear that the abusive person is the one responsible.

3 Honouring the victim's resistance to violence

Victims always resist being treated badly. Alongside each story of abuse is an equal story of the victim's resistance to the abuse. Victims appreciate being asked and attention being paid to all they have done to resist their partner's abuse, try to protect themselves and/or their children, or to stand up for their dignity and integrity. It is important to notice resistance even when victims have resisted in quiet ways that might

not get noticed. Victim's resistance is often subtle because often it is not safe for them to resist directly. Victims feel disrespected if others assume they have done nothing in the face of abuse.

4 Challenging the victim-blaming messages the victim has received from others

Many victims receive messages from others that suggest it is their fault that their partner is abusive to them. They get the message that they are damaged or sick in some way, or there is something wrong with them because they are with an abusive partner. For example, they may be told they are not strong enough, or that they picked an abusive partner "because abuse is all they know from an abusive childhood." It is really important to listen to the stories victims tell. Listen carefully, it becomes clear that victims are not to blame. Challenging victim-blaming messages they may have received can be really helpful.

5 Allowing the victim the right to judge their own choices

While we always seek to challenge victim-blaming messages, and work hard to make it clear that the perpetrator always had a better choice than to abuse another person, we have also found that it is helpful to allow victims the space to talk about their regrets if they



wish to. Like all of us, victims often feel they have made poor choices, and that they could have done better.

Allowing victims the space to judge their own decisions helps them view their situation in a more balanced and objective way, to explore the dilemma and difficulties they face, and explore the options that seem the most reasonable to them given their partner's abusive behaviour and their personal situations.

Responding to Perpetrators

- The perpetrator is the only one responsible for the violence and abuse. Only he can stop the abuse to keep the victim safe.
- Trust your own instincts when deciding if you will address the abuse with the perpetrator. If you feel safe to be available to the perpetrator as someone who can listen in a non-judgmental way, this may be helpful. However, if you don't feel safe, trust your gut and do not feel obligated to intervene with the perpetrator.
- If you do feel safe addressing a perpetrator, do not disclose that a victim has confided in you. Respect the victim's confidentiality and only address things you have personally witnessed.
- If you do feel safe addressing a perpetrator, don't be judgmental. Avoid making personal criticisms or observations about what kind of a person they are.
- Do not get in the middle of a physical assault. Call 911. Document as many details as you can in writing as soon as possible.
- It is upsetting to witness violence against women. You can call our 24-Hour Family Violence Helpline at 403-234-SAFE(7233) for support and discuss how to handle a particular situation. Since each situation is so different and family violence is so complex, it can be helpful to get support for yourself.
- Please refer to our handbook, "Choosing to Change: A handbook for men concerned about their abusive behaviours towards those they love" (downloadable PDF at: www.CalgaryWomensShelter.com).

RESPOND



Safety Planning for Victims

Because the perpetrator is the one choosing to act in violent, abusive and/or dangerous ways, only he can guarantee the safety of the victim, by choosing not to abuse. Women know their partner best so we encourage her to trust her instincts about the best ways to increase safety. What works for one woman may not help another.

Comprehensive safety planning is available at our 24-Hour Family Violence Helpline. It's free, safe, and confidential. Get support creating a personal safety plan for any situation, without judgment or being told what to do.

To get your free **safety planning**, call our
24-Hour Family Violence Helpline:
403-234-SAFE (7233)

Some women have found the following helpful:

- If you are in an emergency, you can call 911.
- If it is safe and you are considering leaving, and are able to, keep a "Go Bag" in a safe place that won't be found. In it keep some money, ID and copies of important financial documents. None of these things are essential however, if you need to leave with out them, it's ok, they can be replaced if needed.
- If you are able to, keep a charged cell phone on you at all times. You can also hide one somewhere only you know of to access in an emergency.
- It can be very helpful to let one or two neighbours, relatives or co-workers know to call 911 if they hear or see anything suspicious. If you give them "permission" ahead of time, they won't wait until it's too late.
- Letting the perpetrator know you are planning to leave, can greatly increase your danger. If you need help planning to leave, you can call our 24-Hour Helpline for support and/or guidance.
- Turn off any technology GPS or location settings.

These safety planning tips do not in any way suggest the victim is responsible if the perpetrator abuses her, whether she chooses to act upon these suggestions or not. Violence and abuse is always the responsibility of the perpetrator.



Programs and Services provided by the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter

24-Hour Family Violence Helpline

- Counsellors available 24 hours, 365 days a year.
- Service in 14 different languages.
- Everyone is welcome to call 403-234-SAFE(7233) or 1-866-606-7233.

Women's Community Services

- Over 90% of our clients are served through our community programs and do not live in shelter.
- Provides family violence and abuse counselling, safety planning, goal setting, system navigation and referrals to community resources.
- Counselling in various community locations.
- Pet safety assessments and arrangements.

Emergency Shelter

- Free, safe and confidential accommodations, food, clothing, referral services, counseling and support navigating systems.
- Services for children and youth.

Children's Program

- Innovative childcare.
- Child-centered counselling in the shelter and outreach.
- Safety planning.
- Support and referrals to connect with the community resources.

Court Support

- Supports for women and their children who need to access legal services.
- Connects women with legal advice, duty counsel, court workers, Crown Prosecutors, and Police.
- Accompanies clients to court and appointments.

Men's Counselling Services

- Voluntary program for men who are concerned that their anger and abusive behaviours are negatively impacting their family.
- Individual and group counseling are available.
- Safe, respectful and non-judgmental programs.
- Call 403-299-9680 for more information.

Healthy Relationships

- School-based violence prevention education and therapeutic groups for youth 12-18.

Community Action Campaign

- Skill building workshops to empower community members to support victims and take action.
- Call 403-539-5315 or email endabuse@cwes.ca for more info or to book your free workshop.

Social Responses

Social Responses are the collective reactions (in words, behaviours and attitudes) that others have towards victims.

Social Responses come from informal supports (like family members, friends, co-workers, neighbours, hairdresser, etc.) and from formal supports (police, healthcare professionals, counsellors, shelters, etc.).

Social Responses have tremendous impact!

Victims who receive **POSITIVE** social responses:

- tend to recover more quickly and fully
- are more likely to work with authorities
- are more likely to report violence in future
- are more likely to access safety services and supports

Victims who receive **NEGATIVE** social responses:

- are less likely to cooperate with authorities
- are less likely to disclose violence again
- are more likely to receive diagnosis of mental disorder
- are less likely to access protective measures

Some ways to respond to victims of family violence and abuse that may be helpful...

- Believe the victim
- Be compassionate (empathy not pity), non-judgmental and respectful of their choices
- Be clear that it's not the victim's fault
 - "I'm sorry this is happening to you."
 - "You don't deserve this, it's not your fault."
 - "I'm concerned for you."
"You have the right to feel safe and respected in your relationship."
 - "It sounds like you're doing the best you can in a difficult situation."
 - "I'm here to listen and will support your decisions."

Some negative responses that are **NOT** helpful...

- Express disbelief or imply the victim is exaggerating or isn't being truthful
- Judgmental and/or victim-blaming about her situation and her choices
- Tell her what she "has", "should" or "needs" to do
 - "You need to leave him."
 - "You have to call the police."
 - "You need marriage counselling."
 - "Really? He seems like such a nice guy."
 - "If that's true, why are you still with him?"
 - "What do you do to make him so angry?"

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