



Email [outreach@wadvocates.org](mailto:outreach@wadvocates.org) with any questions or to schedule a free presentation

Website: [www.wadvocates.org](http://www.wadvocates.org)

In a crisis, call Women's Advocates 24/7 Crisis Line: 651-227-8284

Instagram: @womensadvocates | Facebook: @wadvocates

## Women's Advocates and Domestic Violence Handout

### Women's Advocates:

- Founded in 1974 at a Victorian home in St. Paul, MN, making it one of the **first domestic violence shelters in the nation**.
- Provides a continuum of safety from abuse through 3 sections:
  - **Prevention and education:** addressing violence where we live, learn, and work through community presentations
  - **Shelter & 24/7 crisis line:** 50 women and children stay with us daily, support groups, licensed mental health therapist, advocates, drop in child care
  - **Aftercare program:** women can enroll in this after their 90 day stay to receive housing support for 6 months to a year after
- **Mission:** Women's Advocates walks with victim/survivors and our community to break the cycle of domestic violence.

### Domestic Violence Statistics:

Minnesota Statewide 24/7 Crisis Line: 1.866.223.1111 or text 612.399.9995 or visit <https://www.thehotline.org/>

- **Minnesota Statistics:**
  - We could fill the Target Field 17 times with the MN women who have experienced domestic and/or sexual violence
  - More than 65,000 adults receive DV services from programs each year
  - Less than 50% of people who experience domestic violence ever reach out for services
  - In 2015 there were 29 domestic violence homicides
- **National Statistics:**
  - 1.5 million high school students report physical abuse by a dating partner each year.
  - It is a public health issue that **can affect everyone** no matter their race, age, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, ability, or religion.
  - **But affects certain populations more than others:** women with disabilities (66%), bisexual women (61%), multiracial (56.6%), Black (45.1%), and American Indian women (47.5%).

### What Really Is Domestic Violence?

- Rooted in *power and control* over another person that causes fear, impacts their quality of life
  - Using the following tactics: intimidation, emotional abuse-gas lighting, isolation, minimizing, denying, blaming, using children, using gender privilege, using economic abuse, using coercion and threats
  - **Different forms of violence:** verbal, children, culture, emotional, financial, intellectual, pets & property, physical, sexual, social, psychological, spiritual, reproductive, digital ([www.techsafety.org/resources-survivors](http://www.techsafety.org/resources-survivors)),
- **Warning signs** to look out for: jealousy, control, intensity, sabotage, blame, anger, isolation, criticism

### **Intersectional Issues:**

- **Homelessness:** housing is the #1 unmet need for DV survivors, **1 in 3** homeless women in Minnesota are fleeing domestic violence and 58% return to their abusers, 16% become homeless, 6% end up living in their cars
- **Firearms:** every month, an average of 52 women are shot and killed by an intimate partner, approx. 4.5 million American women alive today have been threatened by intimate partners with firearms
- **Financial instability:** financial abuse occurs in 99% of abusive relationships to some degree, unemployment is very common
- **Human trafficking:** forced marriages have already placed over 5.5 million children (majority girls) at increased risk of experiencing forced labor, sexual abuse, and all forms of domestic violence
- **Incarceration:** 86% of women in jail are sexual assault survivors, 77% are survivors of intimate partner violence, “criminalized survivors” are not uncommon in which they are incarcerated for self-protection

**Why some victims can't leave:** threats, fear of increased violence, insufficient institutional responses, lack of resources (housing, money), love and sympathy for one's abuser, hope for change, feelings of responsibility, threats of suicide or homicide, believing abuse is normal, embarrassment or shame, cultural/religious reasons, language barriers/immigration status/disability, **leaving is the most dangerous time!!** (75% greater risk of being killed by their abuser when they attempt to leave, compared to those who stay)

**What if they don't realize it's abuse?** Support them. Remain a safe, trusting person for them to reach out to. Have them take the relationship quiz on [loveisrespect.org](http://loveisrespect.org). Invite them to create a safety plan. Show them a related video, like Mary Kay's Don't Look Away video and discuss it. Promote documentation of any incidents. Write down actions and behaviors from abuser. Write down what their desires are (love, respect, loyalty). See if they align. Focus on the impact on the victim rather than criticizing the abuser.

Protective Factors: mental health support/nourishment, chemical dependency support/services, having a strong social support system. financial literacy and independence, education, employment

**Why do abusers choose violence:** Abuse is a learned behavior. Societal messaging can contribute to the validation that violence is acceptable. An abuser's choice to use violence is rooted in beliefs. Beliefs that they are superior, beliefs about how their partner should be in a relationship, beliefs about gender and expectations and roles. Some view it as the only way to obtain control.

### **How you can make a difference:**

- Volunteer at a local organization (<https://www.wadvocates.org/support-us/volunteer/>)
- Donate money or needed items to a shelter. Funding for DV programs are declining significantly
- Talk about domestic violence. Talk about healthy relationships. Make this issue visible!
- Challenge social norms that contribute to domestic violence narratives. Teach young children what is healthy and what isn't healthy.
- Continue to learn about this issue. Read Rachel Louise Snyder's Book, "No Visible Bruises"

### **How to respond to someone who is experiencing domestic violence:**

- Know about national and local domestic violence organizations, keep crisis cards in your car or wallet
- Validate, believe, don't look away, don't judge. Everyone can be an advocate. Saying "I believe you" and "You don't deserve this" is powerful and contrary to what they have been told

### **How to connect people to resources:**

- Let them set the timeline and determine when they're ready. Ask if it is safe to provide a crisis card or put the number under a discrete name in their phone. Survivors are the experts of the situation, not you. Never address the abuser yourself. Offer to sit and call an advocate with them or even drive them to a local organization. Explore resource websites or assist them in creating a safety plan at <https://www.wadvocates.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Creating-a-Personalized-Safety-Plan.pdf>