

**THE STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE**



**GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

**THE CLERGY:  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROTOCOL**



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**Prepared by the  
Governor's Commission on Domestic Violence**



# GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROTOCOL COMMITTEE

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## PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Twenty five percent of the people in an average congregation have been victims of sexual or domestic violence. Religious institutions may be the first place an abuser or a battered woman seeks help. In other cases, it may be the last place that someone is willing to admit to the violence. If the response of the church involves shaming the victim for being victimized or denial that there is a problem, the victim may feel hopeless to escape the violence. However, well informed and committed religious leaders are in a good position to provide support and referral to available community resources.

An example of this ability to help comes from the Catholic Conference of Bishops who developed guidelines that support greater education among the Catholic clergy and lay ministry, detailing ways to help victims and child witnesses of family domestic violence.

Another example of a dedicated religious community can be found in Canada where religious leaders have said that when men abuse women, they “reflect a lack of understanding in our society about how men and women ought to relate to each other. They violate the basic Christian values of justice, equality, respect, dignity and peace; they go against the call to practice kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, mutual support and to love one another as ourselves.” (From Florida’s Governor’s Task Force Report on Domestic Violence, 1993).

Broward County in Florida provides an example of a religious community’s support on multiple levels. The Jewish Family Services of Broward County delivers kosher food to Jewish women in shelter, has produced a family violence brochure and has sent letters to local rabbis asking them to bring the issue of domestic violence to the attention of their congregations.

The Center for Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence in Seattle, WA focuses its resources on training clergy and lay leaders to deal with the problems associated with domestic violence. They make available several books, pamphlets, videos and news journals dealing with the problems of domestic and sexual violence.

The purpose of these protocols is to invite the clergy and lay leaders of New Hampshire to participate in our state’s struggle to end domestic violence. To this end, these protocols will identify and discuss some key domestic violence-related concerns facing clergy today.

Due to the broad range of denominations represented within and outside of New Hampshire, much of what is written may have to be modified to fit particular denominations, communities, religious leaders or situations.

Also, there may be several areas of concern or services provided by certain religious organizations which unfortunately will not have been addressed within this document. Some services discussed in this document (e.g., Baptism preparation) will apply to some denominations but not others. Therefore, it is our hope that what is written here will serve as a good starting point and will encourage feedback and suggestions for improvements or expansions. Religious groups are encouraged to prepare their own protocols by modifying guidelines presented here to suit their own practices.

## MARRIAGE PREPARATION

In some counties in New Hampshire, when couples with children divorce, they are now required by law to attend a “Child Impact Seminar” in recognition of the impact of divorce on the lives of their children. Just as much attention should be paid to the impact of relationship changes on couples and children BEFORE marriage begins as after a marriage ends. Perhaps, such education would have an impact on the success of marriage and family life.

Marriage preparation is an attempt by members of the religious community to provide such education and guidance. Pre-marital counseling provides a valuable opportunity for a pastoral counselor to assess how well each partner deals with a range of feelings including anger, fear, disappointment and frustration. It also provides an opportunity to detect warning signs such as alcohol or other drug abuse, physical abuse

during courtship, cruelty to animals, possessiveness and jealousy, police records for violent crimes and an inflated sense of entitlement. Pre-marital counseling should include an assessment for and discussion of domestic violence. Five areas of marriage preparation can be especially useful in this process.

## INTERVIEWING THE COUPLE

It is good pastoral practice to conduct part of the premarital interview with both parties present, and to conduct part of it with each party separately. This becomes a serious consideration when exploring issues related to abuse in a relationship.

**Seeing the couple together** is acceptable for general issues, such as:

- Education about domestic violence;
- Teaching about healthy relationships;
- Exploring issues related to their families of origin (unless those issues relate to the use of violence. In that case, it may be safer to discuss those individually).

**Seeing them individually** is best for addressing issues specific to this couple due to the primary concern for safety. For example, an abused partner who discloses incidents of violence in the presence of that partner risks retaliation after the couple's session has terminated. There are many documented cases of partners being severely abused, even killed, within hours of a couple's counseling session:

- Current physical violence or other abuse;
- Fear of or concern about potential violence;
- Ambivalence about discussing issues like anger, oppression, jealousy or episodes of explosive rage;
- Any history of abuse in the relationship.

## PRE-MARRIAGE QUESTIONNAIRES

Pre-marriage questionnaires provide opportunities to assess current attitudes and behavior in the relationship regarding the presence of or potential for domestic violence. They also provide a framework for education about spousal abuse, Church teaching about domestic violence, and prevention. Organizations such as The Center for Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence in Seattle can provide information about the questionnaires currently available to clergy.

## PRE-MARRIAGE PREPARATION PROGRAMS

Weekend experiences or pre-cana days should include the following elements:

- Printed materials, a pamphlet or brochure defining domestic violence and what victims and perpetrators can do in response to it;
- An invitation to contact clergy or other church staff if there is concern about abuse and a promise to provide assistance for those seeking help;
- Strict confidentiality;
- An updated list of agencies, with phone numbers, who will respond to any victim who seeks help;
- At least one married couple who will address in their talk the issue of violence in marriage and what can be done in response. Only couples who are no longer experiencing violence should provide such a talk;
- A statement by a priest, rabbi or pastoral minister addressing the issue of domestic violence, with special attention given to the misuse or misunderstanding of the Scripture and Church teachings about the Sacrament of Marriage.

## PRE-MARRIAGE COUNSELING

Clergy must be careful while conducting pre-marriage counseling not to offer or recommend couples counseling where violence or the threat of violence exists. See Section V for guidelines on interviewing and intervening with both the victim and perpetrator.

Sometimes after counseling, a woman with a violent or potentially violent partner, even after discussing the issues of violence or even acknowledging that violence exists, may still choose to marry her partner. It is important for clergy to support her decision. She may need to depend on that continual support throughout the relationship.

## FOLLOW-UP

Follow-up or aftercare is an important part of marriage preparation and consists of contact with and support for newly married couples during the first few years of marriage. Studies show a large number of young marriages in crisis (one out of three couples separate in the first two years; half of all divorces occur within the first five years).

Efforts to remain in contact with newly married couples and concrete demonstrations of support for them should include sharing information about domestic violence; what healthy relationships look like; how to handle conflict and anger; and how to recognize warning signs of violence. Such contact should also include asking about the current state of the relationship.

## BAPTISM PREPARATION

Baptism preparation is founded on the principle that new members are initiated into the church during the Sacrament of Baptism by the community of faith. During this initiation, the values of the church can be examined and conveyed to the newly arriving member. During the Sacrament of Baptism, there has been an increasing focus on topics that until recently were not considered open for discussion in the Church (or anywhere else outside of the family). Domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse are examples of such topics.

Baptism preparation provides groups of couples a chance to compare their experiences, fears, expectations and hopes for themselves and their newly forming families. While this approach affords them the opportunity to address issues common to new parents and growing families it also provides them an opportunity to ask themselves whether there is any abuse in their relationship which would create an unacceptable environment in which to raise their children. Clergy should keep in mind that pregnancy is often the point at which physical abuse begins or escalates (especially in the second or third trimester).

Themes that could be included in the Baptism Preparation process are:

## ASSESSING THE RELATIONSHIP

By the time most couples come for the baptism of their first child, they have been married more than two years. They tend to have more insight into the relationship and less likelihood of minimizing or denying problem areas. But even if a couple has been married for a long period of time, the possibility of denial of abuse exists.

**For very young couples or immature couples**, special attention should be given. They have a greater propensity to deny or minimize problems, even as they tend to experience greater stress and conflict in their marriage than older or more mature couples. They may be defensive in a group discussion of stressors in their life.

## **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE “101”**

Education about domestic violence should include:

- Information about the nature of domestic violence and warning signs;
- Clear condemnation of violence in or out of marriage;
- The importance of accepting responsibility for one’s own feelings and behaviors;
- Information on the impact of domestic violence on child witnesses;
- Assertiveness training and conflict resolution;
- Stress management skills;
- The importance of social support from family, friends, co-workers and church;
- A listing of resources for victims and perpetrators of abuse.

### **DISCUSSION OF MARITAL ISSUES IN GROUPS**

Preparation programs should also include opportunities to present information and to lead discussions with groups of women and with groups of men. For instance, in a men’s group, a discussion of male responses to anger, as well as the feelings underlying the anger is helpful. It might also be helpful to discuss men’s sense of entitlement and the perceived need to dominate in a relationship. The responsibility men have for their behavior might be more effectively communicated when they are in an environment where they feel less of a need to be defensive.

The preparation process should also be attentive to those who are currently in an abusive relationship or who are in fear of violence. Individual sessions to facilitate referrals to domestic violence services should be provided. Couples sessions are not only counterproductive for those under the threat of violence but can also serve to further endanger the battered partner.

### **FOLLOW-UP**

As with the marriage preparation services, follow-up contact with parents after the baptism is helpful for many reasons. New parents often feel socially isolated as the infant makes demands on their time and energy. They may experience a heightened intensity of stressors and fewer healthy outlets to release tensions. A potentially abusive father may become explosive as he notices priorities in the marriage change to embrace the new child. The perceived lack of availability of his wife causes distress to the over-controlling or over-demanding male. It should also be noted that when a pattern of spousal abuse is present in a marriage, it is often reinforced by social isolation; the Church may be one of the few outlets an abused wife is permitted to have. But over time she may be disallowed this outlet as well. See Section VII on Spiritual Abuse for a further discussion of this form of abuse.

## **CRISIS COUNSELING**

If you receive a call from a victim who has just been beaten, is in crisis and is asking for help, we suggest the following:

- First ask her if she is safe. Offer to call the police for her if needed.
- Do not go to the home. The violence may still be occurring and could be dangerous to you, her or the children. Offer to call the police.

- Ask her if the violence is over and how she is at this point. Does she need medical attention? Does she fear her abuser will be back? Where are the children? Does she have somewhere safe to go and the means to get there safely? If a shelter is her only option, provide her with the phone number and encourage her to call. **The New Hampshire Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence (224-8893)** can supply the number of the closest or most appropriate service. (see Appendix) Twenty four hour assistance for victims is available by calling **1-800-852-3388**.
- Encourage her to make contact with the local domestic violence crisis center, whatever she decides. Most domestic violence programs, in an effort to empower a woman to take responsibility for her safety and her other needs, prefer a victim to call for help directly. Strongly encourage her to do so.
- If a couple comes to you for counseling because of episodes of violence, recognize that this visit rarely occurs without pressure from civil authorities or under threats from relatives. Occasionally, the victim has compelled the abuser to go to couples counseling by stating that she will not see him under any other circumstances. In this latter case, you will be a third party to their “visitation” and have little room for counseling interventions.
- The success rate for treating violent relationships in couple counseling is extremely low. Most abusers are looking for easy, quick solutions and for immediate ways of getting back together with their partner-victim. Most victims do not want to separate from or leave their partner-batterer and wish to believe that if they confront their abuser in the presence of a third party (e.g., the pastoral counselor), the abuser will be forced or embarrassed into changing his behavior. Unfortunately, this rarely happens.
- Even more importantly, many battered women who attend couples counseling are physically punished (sometimes fatally) by their partner for what they shared during the counseling session. Physical abuse even DURING a couples counseling session is not unheard of! Not even the most talented counselors can protect a battered spouse from abuse that may occur between counseling sessions.
- If a couple comes to you for counseling because of violent episodes in the relationship or if you discover in the course of counseling a couple that violence occurs in their relationship, we strongly recommend that you refer them to a domestic violence program or to a counselor trained in treating domestic violence situations. In most cases, each partner will be referred to separate counselors or to a group situation for victims or for batterers. The victim’s goal is to take responsibility for her safety needs. The batterer is to take responsibility for his violent behavior and to stop it.
- A goal for clergy is to recognize their limitations and be certain not to undertake dangerous work for which they are not prepared.
- There are opportunities for the congregation to help through volunteerism. Individuals can become members of the local domestic violence program.

## INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

### BATTERED WOMEN

When a woman comes to you for help or you suspect there may be violence in the home, there are some specific things to keep in mind. Problems associated with domestic violence are difficult to work through. Usually patterns of abuse have existed for a long time, and unless you are a professionally trained counselor, you should not enter into a long-term counseling or therapy situation. You are in a unique position to relate and minister to all parties and these pastoral relationships need to be preserved.

It is important to note that most of the clergy in New Hampshire are male. It can be very hard for women to talk about issues of abuse with males! One of the most sensitive approaches a male pastor can take is

to ask a woman who is experiencing abuse if it would be easier for her to talk to a clergywoman. If the response is affirmative, then the pastor needs to make an appropriate referral. That is relatively easy within our mainline denominations; it is much more difficult in denominations with few if any clergywomen. In any event, it is important for male clergy to recognize that it may be extraordinarily difficult for women to trust them.

The response of clergy and laity to the religious crisis caused by domestic violence can be a great resource for victims. The following guidelines may prove helpful; however, as a clergy person, you need to be aware that the life of the victim may be in immediate danger and that safety is the primary concern.

- **Confidentiality is crucial.** A woman's consent should be obtained in writing for anyone who needs to know about the abuse. Just as importantly, use this opportunity to empower the victim to make these contacts for herself. Offer the use of your phone. This provides an opportunity to be supportive throughout the process.
- **Do not disclose information about the victim to the batterer.** Be aware that many who batter experience a need to control others, and that this is often achieved through manipulation. Someone who batters may desire to control anyone (e.g., clergy, counselor, etc.) willing to help the victim. The batterer may try to obtain information about the victim from clergy. Try not to participate in this cycle.
- **Listen empathically.** Reflect back to her the information which she has given you. Your primary role is to be her spiritual support person; therefore, listen. A common complaint voiced by women who have been battered is that counselors from all professions are often too quick to tell them what to do and too slow to listen. Silently pray that God's grace is present as the healing process toward wholeness begins.
- **Validate her feelings and affirm her courageous act of coming to you.** You may be the first person whom she has approached. Hope and healing begin when the victim speaks of the violence and names it as such.
- **Be direct and ask the question.** Many women will not acknowledge that there is "violence" in the relationship. However, they may acknowledge that he hits, pushes, slaps, restricts her movement, calls her names, etc. By being direct, you tell her that it is O.K. for her to discuss this difficult issue. By being specific, you help her to identify behavior that may be abusive.
- **Counsel the battered woman without physically touching her.** Give comfort without putting your arm around her shoulder or holding her hand (unless she makes it clear that this is O.K. with her). If she has been sexually or physically abused, any touch may recall painful memories.
- **Beware forgiveness (by the battered woman) without repentance (by the batterer).** Battered women often mistakenly believe that the only word the church has to offer is the message that she should forgive him. What is needed is a clear understanding by clergy that repentance on the part of the perpetrator must come before there can be any conversation about forgiveness. And that repentance must be tangible: e.g., joining an abuser's group, abiding by the terms of a restraining order, etc. Forgiveness by itself is simply not an appropriate topic for conversation. This is an area where inexperienced clergy are likely to make serious errors and cut off communication with battered women.
- **Know your limits.** It is wise to know how well you are prepared to deal with domestic violence. Unless you are clinically trained on the issues of domestic violence, refer her to someone who can be a healing resource leading her toward recovery. Be honest and clear about the reason for the referral so that she does not feel rejected.
- **Be aware of your own emotional reactions.** As you hear her painful story, your feelings and emotions will come to the surface. This is when many counselors too quickly offer theological or practical answers rather than continue to listen with an empathic ear.
- **Believe her! Do not question her accuracy.** She needs to trust you and to experience you as compassionate. Remember that she is probably minimizing the violence. What you hear may only be only the beginning. In time she may share more with you.

- **Unequivocally denounce the violence.** No one deserves to be abused. It is not God's intention that she should suffer and be violated. All responsibility for the violence rests with the abuser. Do not ask her what she did to provoke the violence. She in no way caused the abuse!
- **Tell her that she is not alone.** It is important and empowering for a battered woman to realize that millions of women suffer abuse at the hands of their partners.
- **Affirm her faith no matter where she stands theologically.** At this time of crisis her present faith stance may be the only thing she has to hold on to. It may not be "theologically correct" in your mind, but at the moment of crisis, this is all she has. Respond with positive statements about God ("God loves you and is with you in your suffering"). Respond with "I" statements ("I believe, however, that God does not want you to suffer or to be a victim of violence").
- **Offer the woman alternatives from which to choose.** Many battered women find it difficult to see, let alone act on, available options. Some of these options may be individual counseling, career counseling, support groups, education, separation, help for the battered, divorce or legal aid (e.g., help in filing restraining orders).
- **Offer her options in her search for wholeness.** Give her choices within her faith stance as she searches for a faithful understanding of what is happening to her. Also, remember that there is no right way and, concerning one's theological stance, no one person has all the right answers.
- **Quote Scripture that addresses victim safety, well-being and empowerment.** Quoting Scripture which is oppressive and which calls her to be submissive only encourages her to endure more violence at home. See Appendix A for sample Scriptures addressing such topics as: anger, control, jealousy, and violence.
- **Encourage her to contact the domestic violence program in your area.** There she will connect with counselors and support groups, receive legal advice and begin to bond with other victims/survivors and other women offering support and nurturance. See Section VI. "Relating to Service Providers" for more information on referrals.
- **Help her find a safe place.** Only complete separation from the abuser prevents further violence. The church historically has offered sanctuary. Today the church can offer a safe home or a referral to a shelter for the victims of domestic violence. Other potentially safe places may include motels, friends or relatives' houses, or shelters. Realize, however, that many women are seriously hurt, even killed AFTER they attempt to leave their abusive partners. Therefore, the act of leaving does not by itself guarantee her safety; it may put her at further risk.
- **Ask about and confront any child abuse.** Are there any children being abused by either her husband or by her? Does she want this kind of future for them? Sometimes concern for the welfare of her children can motivate a woman to act. In New Hampshire there is a legal obligation to report any known child abuse.
- **Help her develop financial and other resources.** For a variety of reasons many battered women have difficulty finding sufficient income to meet the needs of herself and her children. This is one of many reasons women choose to stay in violent homes. Try to find a victim advocate in the congregation who can help her secure public aid and/or other forms of economic assistance, especially if she chooses not to contact a domestic violence program.
- **Support her decision to act or to not act.** She must be allowed to make changes in her own time (even if you are convinced that she should be doing something different). She already probably has someone at home telling her what to do and when to do it. This may be what she is trying to get away from. Encourage her to verbalize her decision. This will help to clarify issues for both of you. Do not assume that any decision will be final (e.g., to either stay with or leave her partner).

- **Be with her in her suffering and in her healing.** Do not stand withdrawn from her. Acknowledge your fears and pain as you hear her stories. This may help to validate her own feelings and reactions. But also praise her as she moves toward wholeness.
- **Confidentiality is crucial.** She has come to you because she needs your help and trusts that you will be willing to help. That which she shares with you must be kept confidential. Unless you have her specific consent, you are ethically bound to tell no one, especially her partner.
- **She may need support rather than therapy.** To some, saying that she needs therapy suggests that the problem lies within her. However, she need not be mentally ill to be victimized. Consequently, not all battered women will wish to or need to seek therapy. Remember that it is your role to empower her, not to control her choices. Behavior is often influenced as much by situations as it is by personality or “mental illness.”
- **DO NOT SUGGEST MARRIAGE or COUPLES COUNSELING.** Unless the violence has completely stopped and the man has gone through a batterer’s program, couples counseling could increase the level of violence a woman experiences. She faces the fact that if she talks about the situation she might be beaten later, and not being able to talk about the situation nullifies the counseling process. **The immediate goal is not to save the marriage, but to stop the violence.**
- **Utilize the power of the faith community.** Battered women may experience great shame and find it difficult to draw on the resources of their own faith community. Clergy can be reassuring around that issue, mentioning in a variety of ways how much the church members care for this person, how much they would want this woman to care for herself and take steps to be in a safe environment.
- **Should one clergy counsel both victim and batterer?** Consider whether it would be a conflict to work with both of them. It may be appropriate to refer the second party if you already work with the first party. There is a dangerous potential if the two should come into contact through counseling (especially if there is a protective order in place). Help protect the victim from further violence.

## PARTNERS WHO BATTER

- **Do not confront the abuser** about what the “victim” has said. Confrontation with abusers by untrained practitioners may endanger victims and should be avoided at all costs. Holding him accountable, though important, is never as important as everyone’s physical safety. Appendix C is a Lethality checklist used by programs for those who batter to determine whether a victim of domestic violence is at particular risk of being severely hurt or even killed.
- **If the abuser confronts you.** He may deny that any abuse took place and may not even be able to remember the episodes of violence. Or he may blame her for his actions. You will need to be patient with him, yet unrelenting in your statements that the violence must cease today. The abuser may have a long history of violence in his own family and will need help in seeing his behavior clearly and beginning to identify the patterns of violence in his life. This should be a learning process to effect change and NOT an exercise in finding excuses for the violent behavior.

There is no short term solution to what may be a life of violence (i.e., do not assume that will-power will be enough), therefore it should be your goal to involve him in a program for those who batter as soon as possible. See Section VI. “Relating to Service Providers” for more information on referrals. Following are a few guidelines that “batterers” programs follow to support his efforts to change:

- **“Invite” him to accept responsibility.** The more he is invested in change the more likely that the abuse will stop. Ultimately, no one can force another to be nonabusive.



- **Acknowledge the courage to disclose.** This encourages him to continue the process of accepting responsibility while not minimizing the harmfulness of the abuse.
- **Avoid enduring labels.** Calling him a “batterer,” involves making a statement about who he is rather than what he has done. Some programs refer to their clients as men who have battered (suggesting that they can also choose other ways of behaving) rather than as “batterers.”
- **Reinforce his concern or love for his family.** It can be helpful to view those who have been abusive as people who have attempted to meet their own needs in ways that are harmful to themselves or others. Viewed this way, no one abuses just to hurt another. By helping him to see the impact of his (abusive) actions, he may develop internal motivation to stop.
- **Validate feelings, not behavior.** Help him draw the distinction between feeling angry and acting ragefully. No one has ever died because of another’s anger. Harm does not occur until the anger (or other feelings) are expressed. Men often feel entitled to oppress their partners because their partners “make” them feel certain ways. Programs for those who batter are designed to challenge this sense of entitlement.
- **Challenge excuses.** No one but he is responsible for his behavior. Alcohol or other drugs, violent upbringing, low self-esteem, a provocative partner, stress, unemployment and, lack of control are some of the excuses commonly used to explain one’s choice to be violent. Quite simply, people are violent when they choose to be.
- **Redefine “strength,” “power,” and “control.”** Many men have an easier time ending their abuse when they come to believe that it takes more “strength” to control their own feelings than it does to control their partner.
- **Listen for all-or-none thinking.** Many men who batter report “having no options.” The world is either black or white, right or wrong. They are either passive and feeling resentful because their needs are not being met or aggressive and harming their partner. Programs often help these men to think more flexibly so that they can see more options and develop a more assertive lifestyle.
- **Identify exceptions to the problem.** No one is abusive 100 percent of the time. Everyone has been supportive, assertive, and caring from time to time. By helping to identify exceptions to the problem, a sense of hope can be created. He can build upon those exceptions to develop a nonabusive lifestyle.
- **Confront his reference to scripture** which seems to justify his use of violence. Some men believe that certain scriptures entitle if not encourage men to oppress their intimate partners. Pastors, ministers, rabbis, and other religious leaders are in a powerful position to challenge such beliefs.

## **RELATING TO SERVICE PROVIDERS**

Domestic violence programs and their staff receive special training and education for their work with the large numbers of victims and perpetrators that they work with on a daily basis. They are skilled and experienced with handling the complicated and difficult issues of domestic violence. Clergy should develop a partnership with them by actively participating on the domestic violence coordinating council. The staff of programs can support the clergy’s ongoing pastoral care to victims, and their families, relatives and congregations. Clergy can support the domestic violence programs’ ongoing efforts to provide safety, legal recourse, counseling and support to those involved.

Learn what resources and services are available to victims and batterers before you need to consult with or refer to them. The community agencies you should be in contact with include:

- Victim services;
- Local police department;
- Programs for those who batter;
- Substance abuse counselors trained in domestic violence work;
- Therapists who specialize in domestic violence work;
- The local prosecutor's office;
- The local domestic violence coordinating council.

Questions to ask a potential referral source to ensure their helpfulness include:

- Are they trained to handle and have experience with domestic violence cases?
- How long is their waiting list, if there is one?
- Do they offer couples counseling even when the threat of violence is alive? If so, do not make that referral!
- What do they charge for their services, if anything?
- How do they envision your ongoing role as a pastoral counselor in terms of treatment or support?
- Is their service philosophy consistent with that of the victim/survivor?

It is helpful to the religious community to know how domestic violence programs operate and what their philosophy is.

New Hampshire has programs for victims in every county. (see Appendix) Related programs for non-resident victims, children who witness violence, and for perpetrators are scattered throughout the state. Clergy and religious communities can support these programs in the following ways:

1. Post in a prominent place the phone numbers for emergency hot lines, victim services and programs for violent partners;
2. Visit and collaborate with counselors in the above programs;
3. Survey programs for basic needs that the congregation could assist in gathering. This might include supplies such as: clothing, food, furniture, toys, linens, and books;
4. Recruit volunteers for training and ongoing assistance at the shelter, at other victim services or at supervised visitation centers;
5. Write to local, state, and national legislators encouraging them to support local programs;
6. Offer to sponsor a woman who needs a place to live or to assist her in finding and furnishing a place to live.
7. Offer space at church owned property (e.g., churches, retreat sites, etc.) for support groups, meetings, temporary shelter, etc.
8. Sponsor a series of forums on domestic violence;
9. Subscribe to newsletters of local programs and to national networks and post the phone number of local programs in church bulletins;
10. Form a study group to consider some of the religious issues raised by domestic violence and make the group's discoveries available to those experiencing domestic violence.

# SPIRITUAL ABUSE

Professional domestic violence counselors speak of several forms of abuse or violence that one person may perpetrate against an intimate partner. These include physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, economic, and spiritual forms. Abuse can also involve psychoactive substances or using children as pawns in a dispute. Appendix B is a diagram which illustrates the ways in which some people use these forms of abuse against an intimate partner. The diagram also suggests that such abuse is in an attempt by the perpetrator to feel a greater sense of power and control in his life.

As stated above, spiritual abuse is but one set of tactics with which one partner can harm another. However, these tactics can inflict considerable harm upon one's spiritual being. It is helpful for clergy to be alert to some of the most common examples. A partial list of behaviors that women may experience as abusive follows:

- Citing scripture to justify abusive, dominating or otherwise oppressive behavior;
- Denying one's partner the freedom to practice the religion of her choice;
- Forcing one's partner to violate her religious beliefs (e.g., forcing an orthodox Jewish women to eat non-kosher food);
- Shaming or belittling one's partner for her religious practices;
- Humiliating her in church so as to isolate her from the support of the clergy and her congregation;
- Making oppressive demands based on his interpretation of scriptures or other religious material (e.g., "the Bible says that you need to obey me because you are my wife [and by implication, my possession]").
- Instilling religious guilt for not doing what he wants her to (e.g., "How can you call yourself a Christian if you don't forgive me for a mistake [physical beating] I made?");
- Demanding and/or forcing sex out of a sense of marital entitlement or "religious contract;"
- Involving or forcing children to witness ritual abuse (e.g., sacrificing pets).

## OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

There are many religious communities and institutions in New Hampshire. Expertise and effort can be shared so that we can collect data, train and educate, and raise public awareness in the faith community.

### SUGGESTED ACTIONS ON A LOCAL LEVEL

- A. Participate in victims' rights observances** (e.g., third week in April each year is Victims' Rights week the "Clothesline Project," the "Day of Unity" in October) and related efforts.
- B. Religious leaders can discourage domestic violence by personal example.** By preaching against it, by making literature on the subject available to their followers, by observing October as "Domestic Violence Awareness Month," and by developing relationships with domestic violence centers, religious leaders can discourage battering and help those being battered.
- C. Develop curricula** for young people's classes that address domestic violence and other forms of oppression. Violence against women or against other family members must be seen as morally unacceptable.

**D. Reach out to members in the congregation involved in same-sex relationships.** Gay and lesbian couples experience domestic violence too. However, they may be particularly reluctant to seek help from the religious community for fear that they will be condemned for their lifestyle.

## **SUGGESTED ACTIONS ON A STATEWIDE LEVEL**

### **A. An Advisory Committee should be established to:**

1. Identify New Hampshire religious groups. This can be done with the assistance of domestic violence coordinating councils.
2. Collect data from identified groups: How do they address domestic violence? What referrals do they provide?
3. Collect data from domestic violence centers concerning their relationships to religious groups in their area.
4. Identify religious institutions and organizations that can serve as role models for others.
5. Develop curricula for training religious leaders in domestic violence or identify others who may be able to do this.
6. Identify statewide religious groups whose leadership may be contacted for future conferences and forums at which presentations on domestic violence may be made.
7. Identify the needs of religious leaders in addressing domestic violence, and develop a response to such needs.

### **B. Develop an information packet on domestic violence for the religious community.**

**C. Develop statewide conferences** between religious leaders and domestic violence experts to collaborate on ending violence between intimate partners.

## BIBLE VERSES REGARDING ANGER

The AMEND program for men who batter in Denver Colorado published a workbook that contains a list of Scriptures applying to anger and to the use of time outs. The list that follows borrows from and adds to that list of Scriptures. Self-control, jealousy and violence are also considered. The following Bible quotations invite men to reconsider their attitudes and use of violence.

### **Psalms**

37:8 Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret. It leads only to evil.

### **Proverbs**

14:17 A quick-tempered man does foolish things, and a crafty man is hated.

14:29 A patient man has great understanding, but a quick-tempered man displays folly.

19:19 A hot-tempered man must pay the penalty; if you rescue him, you will have to do it again.

28:13 He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.

### **Ecclesiastes**

7:9 Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools.

### **Ephesians**

4:26, 27 In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.

### **James**

1:19 My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.

## BIBLE VERSE REGARDING JEALOUSY

### **Song of Solomon**

8:6 For love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave.

## BIBLE VERSES REGARDING SELF-CONTROL AND TIME OUTS

### **Proverbs**

16:32 Better a patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city.

17:14 Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam; so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out.

19:11 A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense.

20:3 It is to a man's honor to avoid strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel.

20:22 Do not say, "I'll pay you back for this wrong!" Wait for the Lord, and he will deliver you.

21:23 He who guards his mouth and his tongue keeps himself from calamity.

25:28 Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control

29:11 A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control.

## BIBLE VERSES REGARDING VIOLENCE

### **Luke**

3:14 Do violence to no man.

### **Proverbs**

5:21 For a man's ways are in full view of the Lord, and he examines all his paths.

16:29 A violent man entices his neighbor and leads him down a path that is not good.



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