

Domestic Violence and Disabilities

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What is Domestic Violence?

- Abuse or battery that occurs in a close and personal relationship
- Means of exercising power and control over another person
- Affects people of all ages, races, religions, socio-economic backgrounds and education levels

Statistics:

- Every 9 seconds
- 4 – 6 million victims each year
- 4000 murdered

Prevalence

- Women with disabilities are almost twice as likely to experience abuse than women without.
- More than 90% of victims with disabilities report being abused on multiple occasions.
- In one survey, only 37% of victims with disabilities reported the abuse to authorities.

Types of Domestic Violence

- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Psychological Abuse
- Economic Abuse
- Isolation
- Use of Children
- Attacks or threats on property, pets, family heirlooms

Key Points to Remember

- Relationships do not start off violent. They begin like all relationships: exciting, kind and loving.
- Abusers often spend months or years using the escalating tactics to control the victim before the first physical assault.
- Abuse does not happen because of something the victim did.

Indicators of abuse:

- Bruises
- Burns
- Abrasions
- Cuts, scratches
- Sprains, dislocation, missing teeth
- Internal injuries

Neglectful Conditions

- Poor hygiene
- Improper clothing
- Untreated medical conditions
- Over or under medicated
- Lack of necessary equipment
- Dehydration malnourishment

Continued

- Animal or insect infestation
- Crowded living space
- Inadequate sanitation
- Hazardous substances
- Mismanagement of finances by caregiver or relative

Reactions to abuse

- Regression
- Anger
- Fear
- Alcohol or substance abuse
- Eating disorders
- Nightmares

More Reactions

- Shakes
- Hyper alert
- Obsesses, worries
- Self injures
- Resistant to taking medication

Mindset of an Abuser

- Control
- Entitlement
- Externalization of responsibility
- Manipulation
- Superiority and disrespect
- Possessiveness

Barriers to Help Seeking

- Mobility or communication barriers
- Fear of retaliation by abuser
- Stigma, shame, self-blame
- Social and/or physical isolation
- Perceived lack of options
- Previous negative experiences or fear they will not be believed
- Fear of losing children

Why Victims Stay?

- Children
- Hope for change
- Limited financial resources
- Fear
- Concern for provision of care
- Lack of knowledge of support and help available.

Support for Victims of Abuse

Let your client know:

- They are not alone.
- You take this issue very seriously.
- They won't make you uncomfortable if they talk about the victimization.
- Help is available.



Silence: The Loudest Sound of All!

How and When to Ask

- Incorporate routine questions about domestic violence at an early point when working with a client.
- Some clients may not disclose abuse until they trust you.

Safety Planning

- Assess the client's immediate danger
 - Are you safe right now?

DVSC Services for Victims

- Emergency shelter for battered victims
- Transitional housing programs
- 24 hour hotlines
- Counseling and support groups
- Court accompaniment
- Children's programs

Questions???



Thank You!!!
