

Be A Change Maker: Action Guide

Recognizing And Responding To Domestic Violence As A Faith Leader



As An Faith Leader, You Are Uniquely Positioned To Help

As a faith leader you are often in a unique position to advise and support members of your community. Just as faith can transform hearts and minds, faith leaders teaching spiritual practices that prioritize healthy relationships can be part of transforming families into safer and more loving places.

Recognizing Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is a pattern of behaviors used by one partner to maintain power and control over another partner in an intimate relationship. Abuse may include any combination of physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, reproductive, spiritual, and financial abuse or control. Some abusive relationships never include physical violence, but the effect on victims can be as or more severe. Abusers with a faith background may attempt to twist and weaponize sacred text in order to solidify a moral high ground for their behavior.

Starting The Conversation

- Often, you may be surprised when a survivor/victim comes to you. The abusing spouse may be effectively managing their appearances to appear loving and kind, even the perfect couple. Begin with the assumption the victim is being honest. Victims will often downplay abuse and even feel ashamed. Assure them the abuse is not their fault and no one deserves abuse.
- Be discreet. Speak with the survivor/victim privately, away from their partner and children. It is not safe to enter into joint counseling.
- Disclose limits of confidentiality (see more on your duty to report child abuse/neglect and Mandatory Reporting [here](#)).
- If you suspect someone is experiencing abuse, their safety and the safety of their children is the most important thing.
- Leaving an abusive relationship is not always the safest option at any given moment in time.
- If a survivor/victim discloses abuse, work with them to create a safety plan (whether they are staying or leaving). It may be helpful to make a joint call to the National Domestic Violence Hotline (1.800.799.7233) or to an advocate in your county. Local advocates can help the survivor/victim create a plan to stay safe and locate resources.
- If a survivor/victim is yet to disclose their abuse, begin a conversation by simply stating your concern and the reasons you are concerned. Aim to be a supportive and trustworthy resource whom members of your faith community can talk to. If and when they feel comfortable, offer information and resources.
- Victims/Survivors have had their voice taken away, they need to be heard and believed, and to hear that the abuse is not their fault.
- They also need to feel empowered. Help by asking what they need and meeting those needs if possible.
- Mirror their language. Some survivors/victims will identify with and use words like abuse, victim, survivor, violence, rape, etc. and some will not.
- Address the victim/survivor's religious concerns, without telling them to leave or to stay with the abuser.
- Beware of minimizing the danger to the survivor/victim. They are the expert on their own safety.

Example Scripts

Tailor To Your Style And The Situation.

1. What happens when you and your partner disagree?
2. Are you ever afraid of your partner?
3. When I see an injury like this, I wonder if someone is hurting you. Can you tell me what happened?

Know The Resources

- [NCCADV](#)
- [Domestic Violence Support | National Domestic Violence Hotline \(thehotline.org\)](#)
- [100 Sermons on Violence | Sojourners](#)
- [About - CATHOLICS FOR FAMILY PEACE](#)
- [Peaceful Families Project | Working toward preventing all types of abuse in Muslim families - Home](#)

Communicate That Survivors/Victims Are Safe At Your Business By:

- Addressing the topic of domestic violence in everyday conversations, meetings, sermons, etc.
- Placing flyers, brochures, and other resources in restrooms, in newsletters, on social media, and wherever your faith community may see it.
- Developing and sharing a statement that your faith community will believe and support members who disclose abuse.
- Publicly calling for the end of domestic violence and justice for victims/survivors.
- Supporting all survivors/victims of all forms of abuse.
- Partnering with local Domestic Violence agencies for resources and help.
- Preventing abuse by discussing healthy relationships with children and youth in your community.

To view the resources referenced in this guide and to connect with your agencies, please visit <https://nccadv.coalitionmanager.org/resourcemanager/resourcefile/details/689> or scan the QR code below.

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