

What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence* is typically a pattern of coercive behaviors, used by an individual to gain and/or maintain power and control over another individual in the context of an intimate or dating relationship.

Domestic violence occurs between people of all ages, races, ethnicities, economic, educational and religious backgrounds, in heterosexual and same-sex relationships, living together or separately, married or unmarried. Statistics indicate that domestic violence is a major cause of emotional and physical injury to women; however, men and children also are victims of such violence.

*Definition differs from Virginia Code (§ 16.1-228) definition of Family Abuse, which focuses on physical harm and includes additional familial relationships such as violence between adult siblings.

- Threatens to take your children away and not allow you to see them if you try to leave.
- Forces you to have sex or disregards your wishes about sexual activity or birth control.
- Bites, slaps, hits, kicks, or chokes/strangles you.
- Physically abuses or neglects the children.
- Embarrasses or humiliates you in public in an attempt to control you.
- Causes you to lie to others (for example, explain away injuries).
- If you are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender, threatens to out you to friends or family members.
- If you are an immigrant, whether undocumented or documented, threatens or tries to have you deported or turned in to the authorities.

How to Spot an Abusive Partner: Are you in a healthy relationship?

Domestic violence can consist of physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological actions or threats of actions that can influence another person. You may be a victim of domestic violence if your partner does one or more of the following:

- Calls you names, insults you, or constantly criticizes you.
- Tries to isolate you from family and friends or prevents you from having contact with them.
- Keeps track of where you go and whom you are with.
- Keeps you from working outside the home or has forced you switch jobs.
- Prevents you from having access to your own money or shared financial accounts.
- Damages property out of anger (for example, breaks your cell phone or punches a hole in the wall).
- Blames you for the abuse or for being the cause of the problem or stress.
- Threatens you or your children with physical violence or the use of a weapon.

To speak to an advocate or trained professional, please contact:

**Fairfax County
24-hour Domestic & Sexual
Violence Hotline
703-360-7273**

or

**Fairfax County
Domestic Violence
Action Center
703-246-4573**

