

MYTH VS. FACT

Myth: Family violence is not a crime: it is a private matter that does not affect anyone else.

Fact: Any physical attack against a person is a crime, no matter where it happens or who does it. Violence within the family threatens the entire community. Children of abusive parents are often physically or sexually abused. In many cases, these children perpetuate the cycle of violence by later abusing their own children.

Myth: Family violence is not widespread.

Fact: Federal Bureau of Investigations' Uniform Crime Report states: Spousal abuse comprised 43% of all family violence reported in 1998; 71% of family violence victims are women; and 15.1% of family murders, the offender used his/her feet, hands or fist to kill his/her victim.

Myth: Wives and Children seldom get hurt, and when it gets bad, they simply leave.

Fact: The victim needs medical attention in 20% of all self-reported assaults by a spouse. Economic dependence, fear, complex family emotional ties, and lack of a safe place to go, make leaving almost impossible for many abused women.

Myth: No one can help. Police, the courts and social workers either don't want to get involved or cannot do anything effective about a family's problem.

Fact: Women's health centers, mental health agencies, victim advocates, shelters and law enforcement in more areas are trying to help victims of family violence by providing safe shelters, counseling, emergency assistance, legal aid and mediation groups.

The Cycle of Violence

Most people, when beaten or intimidated by someone in their own family, feel helpless, afraid, embarrassed and guilty. These emotions, plus the belief that what happened was not really a crime, often keep victims from taking any action. Everyone hopes it won't happen again. Unfortunately, abusers usually follow a predictable cycle- tension builds, and erupts into an attack, remorse and a period of reconciliation follow until the tension again builds and is released by violence.

How Can You Protect Yourself Against Abuse?

Leave Home if you feel you are in real physical danger. If you think relatives may not want to help, seek a shelter for battered women. Police, Sheriffs, hospitals, churches and community mental health centers can give you information...

Save evidence of the assault Keep torn or bloodied clothing. Have photographs taken of bruises, scratches and scrapes resulting from the assault. Go to the hospital for treatment and get copies of your treatment records. See if witnesses will testify.

Report the assault to the police or sheriff as soon as possible. They will investigate to see if they can make an arrest. They also can tell you about local assistance, counseling, shelters, and take you to the hospital. If you decide to leave home temporarily, they can stay while you pack clothing and other personal items.

Don't leave children alone with the batterer. They may be in danger of abuse. In addition, leaving them could constitute abandonment in the eyes of the court and hurt your chances of getting custody in the future.

How Can The Legal System Help Me?

Many battered women do not report abuse because they don't want to break up the family, or they worry about loss of income if their spouse is jailed. In reality, abusers who are arrested will be taken to police station, booked and probably released the next day, or as soon as an appearance is made before the Magistrate Judge.

When offenders in family violence cases plead guilty to the charges, judges usually impose a fine and possibly an order of counseling rather than a prison sentence. The victim should let her wishes be known that she doesn't want the abuser to be released.





What Else Can I Do?

*The abuser's power is based on secrecy. Abuse must be brought into the open and talked about. Many women's health centers and mental health agencies sponsor groups for abused women and children. Call and give yourself a chance to talk to other victims. You will find out you are not alone.

*Mediation centers usually operate by the courts or law enforcement, have been successful in helping couples resolve their conflicts, particularly when the abuser has relied more on threat and intimidation, and when incidents of physical abuse are infrequent.

*No single tactic may work by itself. In many cases, a combination of legal intervention and counseling is the best way to help victims, help the batterer, and minimize damage to family relationships.

*Do not let yourself believe it won't happen again. Tell someone and help protect your future.

IF IT HAPPENS TO SOMEONE YOU KNOW:

- ❖ Share this pamphlet
- ❖ Urge the victim to call the police, a community mental health center, a battered women's shelter or the Victims Services Office
- ❖ Look at your community's resources for victims of family violence. Are they adequate and do people know about them? Volunteer to help. Call the Victim Services Office or the National Domestic Violence Hotline
- ❖ Encourage friends and family to channel anger constructively. Talk, walk around the block, hit a pillow or seek help
- ❖ **REMEMBER: Domestic Violence is Everyone's problem.**

Hart Haven (Shelter) (706) 376- 7111
Harmony House (Child Advocacy) (706) 245-7900
Battered Women's Justice Project 1-800-903-0111
Child Help USA National Hotline 1-800-4-A-Child
National Center for Missing And Exploited Children:
1-800-843-5678
TDD Hotline 1-800-826-7653
National Clearing House in Child Abuse and Neglect:
1-800-394-3366
National Organization for Victim Assistance: 1-800-TRY-NOVA

The Victim Services Program does not discriminate against individuals or groups on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex or disability. If you believe you have been the target of discrimination, you have the right to file a civil rights complaint. Information on how to file a civil rights complaint can be found on the Office of Justice Programs website...www.ojp.gov

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Victim Services

Serving Madison, Franklin,
Hart, Elbert and Oglethorpe

FAMILY VIOLENCE HURTS EVERYONE



VICTIM SERVICES

706-795-6322 (Madison, Franklin)

762-338-8825 (Elbert, Oglethorpe)

706-376-3128 (Hart)