

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE INTERVENTION TIPS

From “*Domestic Violence: Cultural Competency In The Health Care Setting*,” Trainer’s Manual For Health Care Providers, Family Violence Prevention Fund (1998).

Goals for effectively responding to domestic violence victims

- increase victim safety and
- support victims in protecting themselves and their children by validating their experiences, providing support and providing information about resources/options.
- The goal is not to get them to leave their abusers or “fix” the situation or the relationship for the patient, but to provide support and information.

1. Listen to the patient and provide validating messages:

- “You don’t deserve this. There is no excuse for domestic violence. You deserve better.”
- “I am concerned. This is harmful to you (and it can be harmful to your children).”
- “This is complicated. Sometimes it takes time to figure this out.”
- “You are not alone in figuring this out. There may be some options. I will support your choices.”
- “I care. I am glad you told me. I want to know about domestic violence so we can work together to keep you safe and healthy.”

2. Listen and respond to safety issues:

a. Encourage victims to make their own safety plan for when a batterer is present in the medical setting, a victim fears leaving the medical setting or a victim is returning to the batterer.

b. See separate handout on safety planning.

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3. Provide information about domestic violence to the patient:

- a. Domestic violence is a health issue for patient (and children). Violence can escalate; damage from the abuse escalates over time.
- b. Stopping domestic violence is the responsibility of the perpetrator, not the victim.
- c. Victims, with assistance and support from others, can increase their own safety (and their children's).
- d. List whichever supports are available: within the health system; legal options; community advocacy services, etc.

4. Make referrals to local resources:

- a. Advocacy and support systems within the health care setting
- b. Advocacy and support services within the community (if any).

5. Follow-up steps for health care practitioners:

- a. Schedule future appointments. Ensure the patient will have a connection to a primary care provider. Ask what happened after the last visit.
- b. Review medical records and ask about past episodes of domestic violence in order to communicate a concern for the patient and a willingness to address this health issue openly.
- c. Domestic violence, like other health issues (smoking, poor nutrition, high blood pressure, etc.), often requires multiple interventions over time before it is resolved.