Family Violence

Family Violence Is Not Just A Family Problem - It Is A Crime!

WHAT IS FAMILY VIOLENCE?
Family violence is physical or mental abuse by someone you care about.

WHAT IS BATTERING?
Battering is physical or mental attacks that are meant to control or hurt. The attacks are by a family member or someone very close to you. The attacks may happen more than once.

FORMS OF ABUSE
Abuse take many forms. You may have been hit, strangled, choked, cut, burned or bitten. You may have been forced to have sex. You may have bruises, broken bones, cuts, burns, female problems or are very upset. Your clothes or other things may have been damaged. You may have been hurt by:

- Hands.
- Fists.
- Teeth.
- Guns.
- Knives.
- Shoes.
- Furniture.
- Cigarettes.
- Anything else.

You may have tried to hide these injuries from others to:

- Hide your embarrassment.
- Protect the attacker because he or she is a family member or someone close to you.

Other times the abuse may be far less visible or even invisible because it leaves no marks. This abuse may come from mental or emotional attacks. You may be mentally abused if any of these are happening to you:

- You are made fun of, or put down.
- You are not free to come and go as you wish.
- You are often yelled at.
- You are often accused.
- You are spied on, followed or harassed.
- Your feelings are not respected.
- You feel threatened and afraid.
- You have no one to help you.
- You have nowhere to get help.
- You are left in a dangerous place.
- You are refused help when you are sick or hurt.
- You have been yelled or screamed at.

Often times both physical and mental abuse occur.

YOU ARE NOT THE ONLY ONE EFFECTED

Many times adults feel if their children do not see the abuse, they will not be affected by it. This is not true. Children are usually aware that something is not right. In most cases, children see or hear the abuse or the

crying of the adult family member. Children carry the pain and fear and the bad example of how relationships work into their own lives. Many times children are the victims of the abuse. Children are helpless without protection from the adults in their lives.

REMEMBER:

- Abuse is not your fault.
- No one has the right to hurt you.
- Protect yourself and your children - call for help!

Call your local emergency service (911 in U.S.).

PHYSICAL AND MENTAL ABUSE IS A CRIME!

You may want to make excuses for the person who is abusive because he or she is a family member. You may even love this person or feel they love you. You may want to believe it will never happen again. However, abuse tends to become more severe. The abuse can end in murder or suicide unless you take action. Report the family violence to the police. Tell the police if you, your child, or any other household members have been injured. Tell the police if you feel you are going to be in danger when the police leave or later.

YOU CAN PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS INCLUDING YOUR CHILDREN. REMEMBER YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO:

- Ask the local prosecutor to file a criminal complaint against the person committing family violence.
- Apply to a court for an order to protect you. (You should consult a legal aid office, a District Attorney, or a private attorney). For example, the court can enter an order that states:
  - The abuser may not commit further acts of violence.
  - The abuser may not threaten, harass, or contact you at home.
  - The abuser has to leave your household.
  - There can be temporary custody of the children.
  - The abuser may not interfere with the children or any property.

Taking action to stop the violence is the most loving act:

- You protect yourself.
- You protect your children.
- You help the abuser make positive changes.

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