

Responding to Domestic Violence · Guidelines for Faith Community Leaders · Side A

OPTION 1: Woman (or man) reports that she has been assaulted, abuser is present, she cannot speak freely. There may be a weapon in the house. **Be sure to ask:** “Are you in immediate danger? Do you think he could get violent again?”

Give the following information:

Police: 911

Virginia Family Violence & Sexual Assault Hotline: 1.800.838.8238 (v/tty)

Local Magistrate (for warrant/protective order): _____

Local Domestic Violence Program: _____

OPTION 2: Woman reports history of abuse, unsure about leaving, needs a plan for future.

IF she is not in immediate danger, or if she plans to stay with abuser, make an appointment for one-on-one counseling. Call the Virginia Family Violence & Sexual Assault Hotline for local resources that can provide one-on-one counseling. **Suggest that she consider taking the following steps:**

- Pack and hide a suitcase with essentials including extra keys, important documents, and money.
- Have a pre-arranged safe place to go (friend, relative, shelter, etc.)
- Call the statewide or local domestic violence hotline for more information, options, and support.

OPTION 3: Woman fears abuse or has been threatened. **Offer counseling and make an appointment.**

Front above - Back below
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She may need to hear:

- “I believe you.”
- “You are not alone.”
- “Nobody deserves to be abused.”
- “I am concerned for your safety.”
- “It is not God’s will for anyone to accept violence in a relationship. Violence is a violation of the marriage covenant.”
- “Under no circumstances are you responsible for his abusive behavior.”
- “Physical violence is against the law – from slaps to broken bones – whether by a partner or a stranger.”
- “Your love is not enough to stop the abuse. Until he takes responsibility for his actions, the abuse will likely continue or get worse.”
- “You deserve to get support.” (Encourage her to let her family and friends know what is going on.)

Remember:

- Keep the focus on safety for the woman and her children and accountability for the abuser.
- DO NOT minimize the potential for serious injury or death.
- DO NOT recommend couple’s counseling or approach her partner and ask for “his side of the story.” This could be very dangerous for her.
- DO NOT tell her what to do. Give information and support. Make referrals. Pray or meditate with her.
- For more information, you can call 1.800.838.8238 (v/tty) 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Adapted with permission from a resource created by the Domestic Violence Awareness Task Force of the Catholic Diocese of Richmond