



Toward Healing

**A manual for supporting
women and ending
domestic violence.**

**Saint
Martha's**

A MINISTRY OF CATHOLIC CHARITIES

**Safe places for women,
for children, for good.**

Your Role is Vital

Our challenge is to end domestic violence. Catholic Charities of St. Louis meets this challenge with the healing, help, and hope of Jesus Christ through the work of our ministry, Saint Martha's.

Your efforts have the potential to save lives, stop violence, and create new opportunities for families to move toward peace. By its very nature, your work to address domestic violence is an ethical endeavor that furthers the Church's teachings.

Empowering women to live free of violence since 1983.

24/7 Crisis Support:

314.533.1313 | saintmarthas.org

Table of Contents

Overview **2**

TYPES OF ABUSE	4
POWER & CONTROL	6
OBSTACLES TO LEAVING	6
SAFETY PLANNING	6
WHAT TO DO WHEN A PERSON DISCLOSES THEY'VE BEEN ABUSED	7

Resources: Things to Do or Say **8**

THINGS TO DO OR SAY WHEN HELPING A VICTIM	9
THINGS NOT TO DO OR SAY WHEN HELPING A VICTIM	12
THINGS TO DO OR SAY TO ABUSERS	14
THINGS NOT TO DO OR SAY TO ABUSERS	15

Resources: Domestic Violence **16**

DILEMMAS IN LEAVING AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP	17
HOW ABUSERS USE POWER AND CONTROL	20
PERSONALIZED SAFETY PLANNING	22
PERSONALIZED SAFETY PLAN WORKSHEET	24

Resources: Pastoral **30**

PRAYERS FOR THE FAITHFUL	32
SAMPLE HOMILY	33

Acknowledgements **34**

People often think of domestic violence in terms of black eyes and bruises.

Domestic violence is a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors that an abusive person uses to control their intimate partner.

While domestic violence has certain similarities to other forms of family violence—such as child abuse, child-to-parent violence, sibling violence or elder abuse—it has certain unique characteristics that make it distinct. Domestic violence distorts what is supposed to be a partnership of mutual respect. When domestic violence is present in a relationship, the abuser and victim no longer share equal rights and responsibilities within the partnership.

Victims of abuse face an overwhelming number of barriers to escaping violence.

People who have never experienced abuse may find it difficult to imagine why victims do not leave and how the abuse can continue for years. In addition to the real threat of harm or death to themselves and their children, victims must contend with the accompanying financial, emotional, and spiritual hardship. They grapple with cultural and religious values that emphasize keeping families intact.

Some coping mechanisms victims have developed to manage trauma can present challenges to leaving an abusive relationship as well.



A victim might have conflicted feelings about their partner.

Many relationships begin based on strong emotional connections, trust, or intimacy. Even though the relationship has become violent, these feelings do not automatically go away.

Relationships rarely start out abusive. It is important to remember that love precedes the abuse, which can make it difficult to break away. Abusive relationships are not violent all the time. There are periods of time when victims are reminded why they fell in love with their partners.

Victims of domestic violence may also feel confused about the recurring nature of the abuse they experience in their relationship. It may seem to them

to be unpredictable and impulsive. Domestic violence, however, is neither random nor haphazard. It is a complex pattern of increasingly frequent and harmful physical, sexual, psychological, and other abusive behaviors used to maintain power over the victim. The abuser's tactics are strategic and carried out precisely to control their partner.

Types of Abuse

Physical Abuse

This type of abuse is easier to recognize and understand than other types of abuse. It can be indicated when the abusive partner:

- ➔ **Scratches, bites, grabs, or spits at a current or former intimate partner.**
- ➔ **Shakes, shoves, pushes, restrains, or throws them.**
- ➔ **Slaps, punches, strangles, or burns the victim.**
- ➔ **Throws objects at them.**
- ➔ **Subjects them to reckless driving or otherwise endangers their safety.**
- ➔ **Refuses to help when they are sick, injured, or pregnant, or withholds medication or treatment.**
- ➔ **Threatens them with weapons or kills them.**

Sexual Violence and Abuse

This type of abuse can be extraordinarily difficult for victims to talk about because of the ways in which this type of violence is perpetrated. Sexual violence or abuse can be indicated when the abusive partner:

- ➔ **Is jealous or angry and assumes their partner will have sex with anyone.**
- ➔ **Withholds sex and affection as punishment.**
- ➔ **Calls them unwanted sexual names.**
- ➔ **Pressures them to have sex when they do not want to.**
- ➔ **Insists that their partner dress in a more sexual way than they want.**
- ➔ **Coerces sex by manipulation or threats.**
- ➔ **Physically forces sex or is sexually violent.**

Psychological Abuse

Psychological abuse is the abuser's use of physical and sexual force or threats that give power to their psychologically abusive acts. Psychological abuse becomes an effective weapon in controlling a victim—victims know through experience that their abuser will back up the threats with physical assaults. Psychological abuse can be indicated when the abuser:

- ➔ Breaks promises, does not follow through on agreements or does not take a fair share of responsibility.
 - ➔ Verbally attacks and humiliates their partner in private or public.
 - ➔ Attacks their vulnerabilities, such as language abilities, educational level, skills as a parent, religious and cultural beliefs or physical appearance.
 - ➔ Plays mind games, such as when they deny requests they have made previously or when they undercut the victim's sense of reality, such as changing the rules or hiding things.
 - ➔ Forces them to do degrading things.
 - ➔ Ignores their feelings.
 - ➔ Withholds approval or affection as punishment.
 - ➔ Regularly threatens to leave or tells them to leave.
 - ➔ Harasses their partner about affairs they imagine them to be having.
 - ➔ Stalks them.
 - ➔ Always claims to be right.
 - ➔ Is unfaithful after committing to monogamy.
 - ➔ Threatens to kill themselves if the victim leaves.
-

Economic Abuse

Without financial and educational freedom, a victim is forced to depend on the abuser, maintaining their control. Economic abuse can be indicated when the abuser:

- ➔ Controls all the money.
- ➔ Does not let their partner work outside the home or sabotages attempts to work or go to school.
- ➔ Refuses to work and makes their partner support the family.
- ➔ Ruins their credit rating or accrues debt in the victim's name.

Power & Control

Domestic violence is not an isolated, individual event but a pattern of ongoing abusive behaviors.

While physical assaults might occur infrequently, other parts of the pattern can occur daily. The use of these other tactics is effective because one abusive episode builds on past episodes and

sets the stage for future episodes. All tactics interact to create patterns and have profound effects on the victims.

Obstacles to Leaving

Leaving an abusive relationship is not a simple matter. Many factors must be weighed carefully.

There are two important things to remember. First, the only person who can truly stop the abuse is the abuser. Second, people can and do find safety for themselves and their children after leaving abusive relationships.

Asking people why they do not leave an abusive relationship ignores the complex set of factors they must weigh to decide how best to protect themselves and their children. Implying that it is the responsibility of the victim to end the violence, blames the victim for the abuse and does not hold the abuser accountable for their offenses.

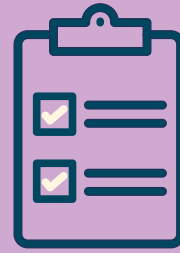
Safety Planning

A safety plan should always start by asking, “What does the victim want?”

Advocates at local domestic violence programs are available to develop safety plans with victims to prevent further acts of trauma and abuse. A safety plan is tailored to each victim’s

unique situation and is based on their needs and priorities. Multiple options and resources should be explored to identify the best course of action.

What to do when a person discloses they've been a victim of abuse:



Remember:

- ➔ Never counsel a victim and abuser together.
- ➔ Never go to the scene of an incident in progress.
- ➔ Assist the person to get medical, legal or social services.
- ➔ Listen. She needs the affirmation of listening.
- ➔ Allow the person to make their own decisions.
- ➔ Be cautious about giving advice.
- ➔ Be patient: the first disclosure may be confused or partial.
- ➔ Look for and appreciate the inner strength of each person.

What you can say:

- ✓ I believe you.
- ✓ You are not alone.
- ✓ You have good reason to be afraid.
- ✓ What do you see as the next step?
- ✓ What can I do to help you right now?

Do not say:

- ✗ This is God's will.
- ✗ We all have burdens.
- ✗ You must forgive and take your partner back.

If there is an immediate threat of violence call 9-1-1.

If there is no immediate risk of violence, ask the individual if the police have been called, if she would like to contact the police or file for a protective order. If the person does not want to contact the police or obtain a protective order, respect that choice. Victims know their situation best.

Many people suffer psychological, emotional, and economic abuse and need individual counseling and support. Individuals may not realize that some situations are extremely dangerous. Guns, threats of murder or suicide, a recent or planned separation indicate increased risk of lethal violence.

Resources



**“ Saint Martha’s
is base camp when
you’re climbing
Everest.”**

- Saint Martha’s shelter resident

Things to do or say when helping a victim

Evaluate Your Goal

Is it your goal to get them to leave? If so, you may end up frustrated, angry and alienated from her. We cannot control others, only ourselves. Shift your goal to something you can control such as establishing yourself as a person they will want to confide in through the suggestions below.

Reset the Table (if necessary)

How would she describe her ability to confide in you? If it's not great, have a specific and direct conversation where you explain that you are committed to behaving differently than you have in the past and give them specific examples of how you will be different. You may need to do this several times. Be honest with yourself as well, if you aren't the best person or can't agree to being supportive in a non-judgmental way then help her figure out who that person is in her life.

Commit to Being Supportive

"I will always be here for you." This is not an easy or direct journey. There will be ups and downs. It is as important to be there and listen when they are feeling empowered and wanting to leave as when it is 2 a.m., and they are lonely and wanting to call the abusive partner. It's easy to be there in the first scenario but much harder (and much more important) to be there in the second one.

Take the Initiative to Learn About Domestic Violence

One of the best things you can do is educate yourself about the dynamics of domestic violence and resources in your community. There are many misconceptions about what abuse is and why women stay. Educating yourself will provide you with tools on how best to help and who to turn to with questions or when you need support.

Open a Dialogue

“Are you ever afraid of _____’s temper?” Domestic violence is not merely someone with a “bad temper.” A “bad temper” is often easier to talk about initially than abuse. Meet them where they are in their process. Or, talk about someone else (coworker, friend, celebrity) who is in an abusive relationship and express your sympathy and concern for her. Establish yourself as a non-judgmental and safe person to confide in.

Listen

“If you ever need to talk, I promise to just listen and not give advice.”...but then you must follow through and not give advice. Brainstorming options and helping find community resources is fine but should be at her request. Ask first. Reflective listening is key; it lets them know they have been heard. Be thoughtful about what you say. Try to think before you talk. When in doubt as to the right thing to say, don’t say anything, just listen. This can feel very uncomfortable. Most people don’t like silences in conversations and fill in with chatter when it occurs. Resist this urge. It is during silences when a lot of connecting can happen.

Let Her Know How You Can and Cannot Help

Being supportive to a friend, family member, or parishioner who is being abused requires a large investment of time and emotional energy. Offer to help in ways that you can, are comfortable with, and will not later become resentful about (i.e. financial help, babysitting, a place to stay, transportation, etc.). Don’t offer help if you cannot follow through. Be aware of your own needs and take action to fulfill them.

Ask Questions

The questions should focus on their feelings and not press for decisions or use sarcasm. “That sounds scary. How did it make you feel?”

Not, “So, what are you going to do about it?” or “What were you thinking marrying a guy like that?” Avoid lecturing.

Respect Her Decisions

It is helpful to respect her decisions. It is not helpful to judge her decisions as either good or bad. Sure, you probably have your own strong feelings about the way she should do things or should feel, but who is to say you are right? If you have never lived with an abusive partner, you can’t possibly understand the conflicting issues and feelings she is balancing. If you don’t agree with a decision she has made, you can say nothing or simply say that you don’t agree with the decision, but you support her. “I fear for your safety, but I support your decision.”

Compliment Her

Help counter the toll that the verbal abuse may be taking on her self-esteem. For example, if the abuser tells her she is a bad mom, make a point to notice the next time she is particularly caring to her kids. Try to be honest and specific. Generalizations like “You’re awesome!” usually feel a little hollow. Remember to compliment the person and not the thing. “You have a great sense of style,” instead of “I like your shirt.” Focus on what you see she does well, rather than her failures.

Separate Domestic Abuse from Substance Use

The use or abuse of drugs/alcohol and domestic violence sometimes occur within the same relationship, but one does not cause the other. Some women may think if their partner would only stop drinking the abuse will stop. This is untrue. Abusers who abuse drugs or alcohol have two distinct problems: 1) domestic abuse and 2) substance use disorder, neither of which the woman is capable of fixing. Both require separate and specific interventions from professionals. Sometimes it is the woman who may use substances to numb the pain of abuse. Her substance use does not justify the domestic abuse against her. Use compassion when addressing her substance use issues, and express your concern that her drinking or drug use may impair her ability to make safe choices for herself and her children.

Things **NOT** to do or say when helping a victim

Don't say, "Just leave."

This trivializes their experience and will make you appear to not understand. Also, separation is the most dangerous and potentially deadly time for a victim. Leaving safely often requires careful planning (when possible) and it may be beneficial to consult with a victim's advocate to develop a safety plan.

Don't Give an Ultimatum

Telling them that if they don't leave then they should stop calling you– or threatening to stop helping if they go back– only assists the batterer in their quest to isolate the victim. Never, never give an ultimatum. Remember that the batterer is best able to abuse when the victim has no one to talk to about the abuse. If you turn your back, you are doing just what the abuser wants. "Tough love" is not a good idea.

Don't Make Assumptions

You'll never know their full story. Don't assume anything. Her partner's control may have prohibited her from learning many things - not just the resources and options available to her, but also life skills like how to budget or apply for a job.

Don't Give Advice – Education is Key

Remember, domestic violence is about power and control – if a victim is going to heal, they must regain control of their situation. As hard as it may be, do not give advice or tell them what they need to do, or should do, or what you would do if you were them. It is good to help them discover their options, but the decision must be theirs alone. It is crucial they make their own decisions because she is the one who has to live with those decisions. Therefore, avoid giving advice. Be careful not to impose your own values.

Don't Underestimate the Danger of Leaving

Most victims who are murdered by an intimate partner are murdered during or after leaving that partner (or at the point of expressing their desire to leave). Help them identify the warning signs of escalation and encourage them to take all threats, stalking and violence seriously. These behaviors are not normal, nor should they be dismissed as merely “a bad break-up.” It is always better to take threats seriously and be overly cautious than live with the regret of inaction.

Not all victims want to leave their relationships. They want the violence to stop.

Things to do or say to abusers

Abusers need help, too. Here are ways that you can support them.

Express empathy for the difficulties experienced by this person WITHOUT offering or believing excuses for the abusive behaviors.

Advise the batterer to stop the violence.

Maintain that there is no excuse for abuse or violence.

Remind the person that only he/she controls his/her behavior. No one makes him/her “lose control.” Neither is substance abuse to blame.

Remind the person that stalking is frightening, abusive, and a crime.

Say, “I’m concerned. It’s clear you feel a lot of anger/pain over this. What can we do to make sure nobody gets hurt?” or, “I feel uncomfortable with the way you treat your partner,” or, “What will you do to make sure your partner and children are safe?”

Help the person understand how acceptable it is to seek professional help.

Take all threats and signs of escalation seriously.

Refer the individual to a counselor who has been trained on domestic violence. Provide referral numbers to detox, mental health hotlines, parenting classes, etc., as needed.

Take the initiative to stay in touch with this person. Their isolation can increase her risk of harm.

Things **NOT** to do or say to an abuser

Do not say, “Your partner told me. . .” or, “Your children said. . .”

Do not align with complaints about the victim.

Do not deliberately or inadvertently help the abuser stalk the victim. Set a clear boundary with him/her that you will not share any information about the victim.

Do not attack or physically harm the abuser.

Do not recommend couple’s counseling.

Domestic Violence Resources



Dilemmas in leaving an abusive relationship

It is not an easy decision.

Leaving an abusive relationship is a complicated matter, particularly when children are involved. The victim must carefully weigh the risks of staying or leaving.

Physical

Possible Risks if a Victim Stays

Physical Injury

The abuser can continue to hit and injure the victim.

Death, or Death of a Child

The abuser might kill the victim or their children.

Risk of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), HIV or other Medical Complications

if the abuser denies safe sex practices or sexually assaults the victim. The victim might not have any choice regarding safe-sex practices. They might be sexually assaulted by their abusive partner.

Possible Risks if a Victim Leaves

Physical Injury

The abuser might stalk or continue to injure the victim. The violence may escalate after the victim leaves.

Death, or Death of a Child

if the abusive partner attacks them after leaving. Leaving does not ensure that the abuser will not find them.

STI, HIV or other Medical Complications

The unsafe sexual behavior might continue; they might be sexually assaulted by their abusive partner.

Children

Possible Risks if a Victim Stays	Possible Risks if a Victim Leaves
<p>Physical Injury or Psychological Harm to children who witness violence, are targets themselves or are hurt trying to protect others.</p> <p>Loss of Children if the abusive partner makes false allegations of child neglect or abuse. Failure-to-protect arguments could be used to remove children or terminate parental rights.</p>	<p>Physical Injury or Psychological Harm to children who witness violence, are targets themselves or are hurt trying to protect others. They might be at greater risk during unsupervised exchanges and visitation.</p> <p>Loss of Children if the abusive partner legally gains custody, simply takes the children, or makes false allegations of child neglect or abuse.</p>

Financial

Possible Risks if a Victim Stays	Possible Risks if a Victim Leaves
<p>Lower Standard of Living if the abusive partner controls all the money, quits or loses employment or makes the victim quit or lose employment.</p> <p>Loss of Income/Employment through an abusive partner's sabotage.</p> <p>Loss of Housing if the violence causes an eviction of the entire family.</p> <p>Loss or Damage of Possessions by the abusive partner.</p>	<p>Lower Standard of Living if a victim must rely on one income instead of two or has to change jobs or move to a new community.</p> <p>Loss of Income/Employment if a victim has to become a stay-at-home parent or the abusive partner sabotages employment efforts.</p> <p>Loss of Housing if the victim must move out, leave town, divorce an abusive partner or go into hiding.</p> <p>Loss or Damage of Possessions if a victim has to leave things behind or the abuser deliberately destroys things of importance or value.</p>

Family & Friends

Possible Risks if a Victim Stays

Physical Injury or Threats
to family or friends, particularly if they offer assistance.

Loss of Support
if the victim is isolated from friends and family, or if they stop supporting the victim as punishment for staying in the relationship.

Possible Risks if a Victim Leaves

Physical Injury or Threats
to family or friends, particularly if they offer assistance.

Loss of Support
from friends and family who want the victim to stay in the relationship or marriage.

Psychological

Possible Risks if a Victim Stays

Psychological Harm
will continue, including verbal, emotional and physical assaults.

Use of Substances
such as alcohol and drugs to cope with the emotional and physical pain.

Suicide
might be threatened or attempted by the abusive partner.

Possible Risks if a Victim Leaves

Psychological Harm
if the abusive partner continues to be in contact, especially if they have children in common.

Use of Substances
might be used to cope with the past abuse and new situation.

Suicide
might be threatened or attempted by the abusive partner in response to leaving.

**As many as
ten million children
a year witness
domestic violence.**



How abusers use power and control

Domestic violence is not impulsive, but purposeful behavior. The abuser chooses a range of abusive tactics that are reinforced by violence or the constant threat of violence.



**This is an adaptation of materials developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs in Duluth, MN.*



Personalized Safety Planning



Safety plans help victims anticipate the physical and emotional dangers they might face. They are adaptable tools to help increase their safety and wellbeing in an ever-changing situation.

The following safety planning guidance and worksheet are provided by Saint Martha's for you to share with victims to help ensure their and their children's physical safety whether they stay in or leave the abusive relationship.

➔ **When to Use a Safety Plan**

Safety plans can be made for a variety of situations: for dealing with an emergency, such as when you are threatened with physical assault or an assault has occurred; for continuing to live with or date a partner who has been abusive; or for protecting yourself after you have ended a relationship with an abusive partner.

➔ **Use What You Already Know**

If you have been abused, you probably know more about safety planning and risk assessment than you might realize. Being in a relationship with an abusive partner—and surviving—requires considerable skill and resourcefulness. Any time you do or say something as a way to protect yourself or your children, you are assessing risk and enacting a safety plan. You do it all the time; it's just not always a conscious process.

➞ **Look at the Risks**

It can be a helpful strategy to evaluate risks and make safety plans in a more intentional way. Whether you are currently with your partner or have ended the relationship, and whether you choose to use available services or to involve the police, there are certain things that are helpful to consider in planning for your future safety.

➞ **Be Aware of the Dangers**

If you are planning to leave your partner or already have left, be aware that abusers often escalate their violence during times of separation. Making a separation safety plan can help reduce the risks to you and your children.

➞ **Evaluate Your Options**

Only you can judge who is safe to tell about your situation and who to ask for help. Sometimes people who don't have good information about domestic violence respond in ways that aren't helpful, even when they mean well. On the other hand, you might feel comfortable asking for help from someone you know. It's your decision. The important thing is for you to identify all the people who might be willing and able to help you. Make a list of their phone numbers and attach it to your safety plan for easy reference.

➞ **Plan Ahead**

You don't have to wait for an emergency to ask for help. In fact, it's a good idea to talk to people who can help before there's a crisis. Find out what they are willing and able to do for you. That way, you'll know in advance if you have a place to stay, a source of financial assistance or a person to help you in other ways.

➞ **Reduce Your Risk**

No one has control over a partner's violence, but people can and do find ways to reduce their risk of harm. The following safety plan is a tool to help you identify and evaluate your options and assist you in creating a personalized plan to reduce your risk when confronted with the threat of harm or with actual harm. Use what applies or change it to reflect your particular situation. Your safety plan does not need to be written down (especially if you fear your abuser will find it), though you may choose to. There's no right or wrong way to develop a safety plan. Make it your own, and review it regularly to make changes as needed.

➞ **Keep Your Plan in a Safe Place**

Only you can decide if it is safe to have a written safety plan. If you decide to keep a written plan, find a place to keep it where the person who assaulted you won't find it. Ask a friend to keep a copy for you. Whether it's safe to write down your plan or not, it's still important to make one.

Personalized Safety Plan Worksheet

Safety During a Violent Incident

- ☐ I will use my judgment and intuition. If I think my partner is going to hurt me, I will try to move to a space that has lower risk, such as _____.
(Often bathrooms, garages, kitchens, areas near weapons or rooms without an outside exit are most dangerous.)
- ☐ If the situation is serious, I can try to calm down my partner by giving in to demands. I have the right to protect myself until I/my children are out of danger.

Safety if Staying

- ☐ I can tell _____ about the violence and request they call 911 if they hear noises coming from my home.
- ☐ I can teach my children how to use the phone or call 911 to contact the police or fire department and/or how to contact a safe neighbor for help. I will make sure my children know our address.
- ☐ I can put emergency numbers in my phone.
- ☐ I will use _____ as the code word with my children or my friends so they will call for help if needed.
- ☐ If I have to leave my home, I will go to _____.
If I cannot go there, I can go to _____.
- ☐ The local domestic violence agency's hotline number is _____.
I can call it or the national hotline at (800) 799-SAFE (7233) for help.

Safety if Leaving

Preparing to leave

- ☐ I will call a domestic violence agency to get help making my plans. The hotline number for the nearest agency is _____.
- ☐ I will leave money and an extra set of keys with _____ so I can leave quickly.
- ☐ I will leave extra clothes with _____.
- ☐ I can open a post office box and have personal mail and bills (credit cards, cellphone, etc.) sent there.
- ☐ I will ask _____ and _____ to see who would be able to let me stay with them or lend me some money.

- ☐ I can increase my independence by opening a bank account and getting credit cards in my own name; by taking classes or getting job skills; and/or by getting copies of all the important papers and documents I might need and keeping them with _____.
- ☐ I can rehearse my escape plan and, if appropriate, practice it with my children.
- ☐ If it's not safe to talk openly, I will use _____ as the code word or signal to my children that we are leaving, or to my family or friends that we are coming.
- ☐ I can keep my purse or a wallet and car keys ready and put them _____ so I can leave quickly.
- ☐ I can take my pet to _____ if I need to leave.

Items to Consider Taking if You're Leaving

The following items may be helpful to have if you decide to leave.
(Remember that almost all of these items are replaceable.)

- ☐ Identification for myself
- ☐ My and my children's birth certificates and Social Security cards
- ☐ Credit, debit and ATM cards
- ☐ School and vaccination records
- ☐ Money, checkbook and bankbooks
- ☐ Cellphone chargers and phone plan records
- ☐ Medication and medical supplies
- ☐ Medical records for all family members
- ☐ Keys — house, car, work
- ☐ Driver's license, car registration

- ☐ Insurance papers
- ☐ Public assistance ID/EBT and Medicaid cards
- ☐ Passports, Alien Registration Receipt Cards, work permits, green cards for myself and my children
- ☐ Divorce or separation papers
- ☐ Lease, rental agreement or house deed
- ☐ Car/mortgage payment book
- ☐ Children's toys, security blankets, stuffed animals
- ☐ Sentimental items, photos, jewelry
- ☐ Small objects to sell
- ☐ My personalized safety plan (if written down)

Safety at Home

If my partner and I are no longer living together

- ☐ I can, or ask my landlord to, change the locks on my doors and windows.
- ☐ I can, or ask my landlord to, replace wooden doors with metal ones.
- ☐ I can, or ask my landlord to, install security systems, including additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, etc.
- ☐ I can buy rope ladders to be used for escape from second-floor windows.
- ☐ I can install smoke detectors and put fire extinguishers on each floor in my home.
- ☐ I can provide my onsite property manager and/or trusted neighbors with a picture of my partner and ask them to notify the police if they see him near my home.

Safety at Work

- ☐ I can inform my boss, the security supervisor and the employee assistance program (EAP), if available, about my situation. The number of the EAP office is _____.
- ☐ I can ask _____ to screen my calls and visitors at work.
- ☐ When leaving work, I can _____.
- ☐ If there's trouble when traveling to and from work, I can call 911 or _____.

Safety in Public or if Being Stalked

- ☐ If I suspect I am in imminent danger, I will locate a safe place for myself.
(police stations, residences of family or friends, domestic violence shelters, local churches, public areas, etc.)
- ☐ I can document my partner's actions and keep it in a safe place. This may include taking photos of destroyed property/vandalism, saving voicemails, keeping texts/email/letters/notes, etc.
- ☐ I can change my patterns — avoid stores, restaurants, banks, doctor's appointments, self-service laundries and other places where my partner might find me based on my regular schedule.
- ☐ I can tell _____ and _____ about the situation and provide them with a photo or description of my partner and any possible vehicles. I can ask them to call the police if they believe I or my children are in danger.
- ☐ When I am out of the house, I will try not to travel alone and will try to stay in public areas.

With an Order of Protection

- ☐ I will keep my protection order _____.
(Always keep it on or near you.)
- ☐ I will give copies of my protection order to the local police or sheriff and to departments in towns where I visit friends and family.
- ☐ I will give copies to my employer, my religious adviser, my closest friend, my children's school and child-care center and _____.
- ☐ If my partner destroys my order or if I lose it, I can get another copy from the court that issued it.
- ☐ If my partner violates the order, I can call the police and report a violation, contact my attorney, call my domestic violence program advocate, and/or advise the court of the violation.
- ☐ I can call a domestic violence agency if I have questions about how to enforce an order or if I have problems getting it enforced.
- ☐ I will document all instances, including dates and times, of abuse and/or violations of a valid Order of Protection.

Protecting My Children

- ☐ I can teach developmentally appropriate safety strategies to my children.
- ☐ I can teach my children how to make a phone call to me if they are concerned about their safety.
- ☐ I can teach my children how to use the phone or call 911 to contact the police and fire departments and how to contact a safe neighbor for help. I will make sure they know our address.
- ☐ I can tell my children's caretakers who has permission to pick them up and make sure they know how to recognize those people.
- ☐ I will give the people who take care of my children copies of custody and protection orders, as well as emergency numbers.
- ☐ I can arrange care for my pets ahead of time and keep them supervised when outside.

Safety and Technology

- ☐ Each day there are advances in technology. I can ask someone familiar with technology or domestic violence about the ways that my partner might monitor me.
- ☐ I will use a computer that my partner doesn't have access to when I look for help, a new place to live, etc. It might be safest to use a computer at a public library, community center or _____.
- ☐ I can ask my friends and family to be careful about whom they give my email address to and to use the Bcc: option when copying me on an email.

Safety and Technology (continued)

- ☐ When making or receiving private calls, I will not use a cellphone that I share with my partner because my partner might have access to cellphone billing records or might have put settings on my phone to track my whereabouts. My local domestic violence shelter might have a donated cellphone I can use.
- ☐ I will ask the court systems, post office and other government agencies how they protect or publish my records and request that they seal or restrict access to my files to help protect my safety.
- ☐ I will ask a domestic violence advocate about the address confidentiality program, Safe at Home.

My Emotional Health

- ☐ If I am feeling down, lonely or confused, I can call _____ or the domestic violence hotline _____.
- ☐ If I have left my partner and am considering returning, I will call _____ or spend time with _____ before I make a decision.
- ☐ I can attend support groups, workshops or classes at the local domestic violence agency or _____ so I can build a support system, learn skills or get information.
- ☐ I will look at how and when I drink alcohol or use other drugs. If I am going to drink or use other drugs, I will do it in a place where people are committed to my safety.

My Safety Planning as an Immigrant or Refugee

Additional items to consider collecting

- ☐ Copies of important papers, including those I might need for my immigration case, such as my I-94, copies of visa applications, work permits, etc.
- ☐ Photos of my spouse and I when we were dating
- ☐ Wedding invitation
- ☐ Marriage certificate
- ☐ Photographs of my wedding
- ☐ Love letters, emails or cards from my spouse when we were dating and after our marriage
- ☐ Copies of police reports and medical records
- ☐ Photos of my injuries
- ☐ Copies of my spouse's birth certificate/Social Security card/green card/or certificate of naturalization
- ☐ Divorce papers from my previous marriage or from my spouse's previous marriage, papers that show I have lived with my spouse in the United States
(e.g., copies of my lease/rental agreement, utility bills or any envelopes or documents with my name and my spouse's name listed at the same address)

If law enforcement becomes involved

- ☐ I will consider contacting an attorney or organization that provides immigration legal services to learn more about what forms of help and immigration relief might be available to me or in the event that I am detained and need their assistance.
- ☐ I can consider appointing a power of attorney over my minor children in case I am detained and separated from my children (a possible power of attorney might be a trusted friend or family member).
- ☐ I will educate myself about my rights as an immigrant or refugee.
- ☐ I can become familiar with my consulate and the assistance it provides.

How can a domestic violence agency help me?

Local domestic violence and sexual violence agencies are a vital resource, providing free and confidential assistance to adults and their children victimized by domestic violence, rape, sexual assault and stalking. They provide emergency safety services such as shelter and 24-hour crisis hotlines. You don't have to stay in a shelter to get help from an agency. Most also provide a full range of non-residential services to those who have been abused. Domestic violence agency advocates are experienced in providing assistance to victims and their children. They understand the criminal, legal, family

court, immigration and social service systems. They are familiar with other community resources that might be useful to you.

In addition to giving you helpful information, advocates often can accompany you to court, to the police station, to the hospital or to social services offices. They can provide you with practical and emotional support. Getting help from someone who has experience working with victims of domestic or sexual violence and who knows how to work with the different systems can make things easier for you.

- ☐ The local domestic violence agency in my area is _____ and their phone number is _____.

Saint Martha's

Shelter (24/7 Hotline):

314-533-1313

Drop-In Center (M-F 9:00a.m. - 5:00p.m.):

314-487-2062

Pastoral Resources





Prayers for the Faithful

Developed by the
Archdiocese of Chicago

For women and men who are victims of domestic violence, may God help them free themselves from abuse and live safely in the peace of Christ. Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer.

For women who are suffering physical, emotional, economic, or sexual abuse in their own homes, may they find the strength to free themselves from the violence and live in peace. We pray to the Lord...Lord, hear our prayer.

For children traumatized by violence in their own homes, may God protect them from the violence, free them from the abuse and heal their wounds. Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer.

For all men and women who abuse their partners, whether physically, emotionally, economically or sexually, may God help them recognize their abusive behavior and find help to turn lives around and be instruments of peace. Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer.

For our community of faith, that we become as compassionate and sensitive toward victims of domestic violence as Jesus would be. Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer.

For all of us and our parish that we might not judge victims of domestic violence but offer them the support they need to free themselves from abuse. Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer.

For those who suffer domestic violence that they may know they are not alone, they are loved and help is only a phone

call away. Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer.

For those who witness domestic violence—especially children—that they may understand that violence is never an expression of love, is never acceptable and must never be imitated. Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer.

For victims of domestic violence that they may know that their suffering is not a cross to bear or a punishment from God. May they be guided to help, support and safety. Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer.

For victims of physical or emotional domestic violence, that they may find the courage needed to seek help, the affirmation, support and shelter they and their families need to heal and the strength to move forward in new ways. Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer.

Help us, too, to be instruments of your peace and to assist the victims of domestic abuse and their families with finding safety and hope for a better future. Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer.

That your protective love enfolds all who suffer or witness violence in their own homes and brings them through these dark days and nights. Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer.

For transformation of our society, which often finds it easier to judge the victims of violence than to solve the problems of injustice. Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer.

Sample Homily

To anyone suffering today with violence at home...To anyone with friends or family suffering violence at home: This parish is here to help you. Come talk to us. Look in the bulletin today and see the organizations in our county ready to help.

To those who use violence at home... Help is available for you. Call one of the organizations listed in our bulletin. Get help before you lose your family. Change is possible particularly for people who have been abusive – if they seek professional counseling and make a dedicated effort to change. At a recent Catholic retreat, participants were invited to share memories of abuse suffered by family members and friends. The results were very challenging. Person after person shared abuse suffered by their own family members writing:

“I overcame domestic violence from my family and spouse.”

“Remembering my cousin who was a victim of domestic violence. May she rest in peace.”

“I honor my grandmother who survived 18 years of physical abuse at the hands of my grandfather.”

“My sister is going through emotional abuse right now with her husband. She needs love and support right now to get through this time.”

The month of October is domestic violence month, a time when we can share more openly about an epidemic of violence in our own families

that affects every parish and every community in our country. Let's set aside for the moment all the concern about Russia and North Korea as possible enemies. For many women, children and also men, the enemy is their cherished loved one - right in their own home.

One out of every four women and one out of every seven men have or are experiencing high levels of physical abuse in their own home and relationships: hitting, strangling, being threatened or injured with knives, guns, being humiliated, insulted in their own homes. Withholding money and opportunities. Being prevented from getting an education or a job. The children in these families suffer greatly too. They may also be abused, or suffer higher levels of anxiety, trauma as they try to protect themselves and their beloved parents or siblings from abuse.

The United States Catholic Conference of Bishops urges parishes and communities to respond clearly and forthrightly, writing: “Violence against women, inside or outside the home is never justified. Violence in any form – physical, sexual, psychological, or verbal is sinful: often it is a crime as well.”

What to do: Let us decide that together we will make our parish a place where we can talk about this, where we can support each other, where we can look for solutions and healing. The gospel brings hope to all of our relationships, including our intimate partners: husbands, wives, fiances, young adults dating.

Thank You

Like you, we express our faith through service - to bring the healing, help, and hope of Jesus Christ to those in need with a compassionate, caring presence. Your role as a trusted spiritual leader is vital for our mission. Thank you for your partnership and steadfast support of women and children affected by domestic violence.

A special thank you to the individuals who shared their gifts of wisdom, time, knowledge, and passion to support those who minister to women and children impacted by domestic violence.

Most Reverend Mitchell T. Rozanski – Archbishop of St. Louis

Most Reverend Mark S. Rivotuso, J.C.L. – Auxiliary Bishop of St. Louis

Amy Diemer, JD – Managing Attorney, Catholic Legal Assistance Ministry, a service of St. Francis Community Services, a Ministry of Catholic Charities

Marie Kenyon, JD – Director, Office of Peace & Justice

**Hon. Amanda B. McNelley, Associate Circuit Judge –
21st Judicial Circuit**

We also extend our gratitude to the Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence for granting us permission to use their materials.



ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. LOUIS



St. Francis
community services

A MINISTRY OF CATHOLIC CHARITIES



ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. LOUIS
Office of Peace & Justice



mocadsv
Missouri Coalition Against
Domestic and Sexual Violence





**“It is here, at Saint Martha’s,
we are learning
to open our hearts.
Building a new and better
version of the person
we were told we could
never be.”**

**- Former Saint Martha’s
shelter resident**

Saint Martha's

A MINISTRY OF CATHOLIC CHARITIES

Shelter

314.533.1313
PO Box 4950
St. Louis, MO 63108

Drop-In Center

314.487.2062
4733 Mattis Road
St. Louis, MO 63128

saintmarthas.org

