



Memphis Area WOMEN'S COUNCIL

CONVENE COLLABORATE COMMUNICATE  CHANGE

Domestic crime remains a persistent and devastating social ill in our community. It takes place in homes across Memphis and Shelby County every day.

A telephone survey of women in Memphis found that prevalence of domestic violence in Memphis is 27.5% – slightly higher than the national prevalence rate of 21.45%. Memphis women reported abuse by their current partner (14 percent), death threats made by a past partner (16 percent), and sexual assault by a past partner (9 percent).

HOW JUDGES, ATTORNEYS AND OTHER LEGAL PROFESSIONALS CAN RESPOND.

In 2010 the Memphis Police Department took reports on 26,00 domestic violence cases. Of those, 6,180 were referred for prosecution by the Shelby County District Attorney General's Domestic Violence Unit.

These thousands of victims approach the legal system for assistance in formulating a plan to escape their abusive environments. It is crucial to the health and well-being of our community that the legal system participate in crafting a solution for these victims and in lessening system barriers that block their access to justice and discourage them from escaping the violence.

To help stop domestic violence and assist victims to survive, the legal community can:

1. **UNDERSTAND** and recognize the various forms of abuse that place victims in dangerous situations. Forms of abuse include emotional, sexual, physical, financial as well as damage to property and abuse of pets.
2. **LISTEN** to the victim. Carefully determine who the victim is. Your demeanor demonstrates to the victim that you are concerned about his/her circumstances and underlying events.
3. **IDENTIFY** the abuse. Often in attempts to explain the victimization, victims will deny, rationalize and minimize the behavior of the abuser. The first step in your role of ending the violence is to identify it as such. The court should take advantage of all resources available to provide safety for the victim.
4. **PROVIDE** a courtroom atmosphere free of intimidation. A judge can use his or her authority to instruct sheriff's officers not to permit interaction between litigants or their families during court recess. Years of prior exposure to intimidation by the abuser can lead a victim to perceive such interaction as confirmation that the abuser is immune to the court's authority.
5. **EXPLAIN** all the options available to victims. Abuse victims are often on an emotional roller coaster. Comprehending all the available options becomes difficult. A judge or an attorney must take the time to explain the available options and ask enough questions to ensure that the victim understands those options.
6. **BUILD TRUST** with the victim. At every opportunity presented, the attorney or judge must instill a sense of trust of the system in the victim. In order for any domestic violence intervention to be successful, the victim must trust the court and the judicial system to provide safety and to hold the batterer accountable for his/her actions. Victims will not access systems in which they have no confidence.
7. **EDUCATE** yourself and your staff on the dynamics of domestic violence. Understand why a victim would stay in an abusive environment and what the cycle of violence is. Know where to tell a victim of abuse to go for help.
8. **SCREEN** your clients for domestic violence. Given the prevalence of domestic violence in our community, it is likely that some of your clients are in, or have been in, violent relationships that will impact the legal advice that you give them. To ensure you are ethically representing your client and to avoid malpractice, it is critical that you learn if she is a survivor and consider how this information affects your representation. Also, if their safety is at risk while you are representing them, your safety may be at risk as well.

9. DEVELOP a safety plan with your client. In domestic violence situations, safety planning is crucial. Seeking legal advice is a step to independence for victims. This threatens an abuser's sense of power and control and could lead to increased violence to your client. To learn more about how to develop a client safety plan, contact the Memphis YWCA at 725-4277 or Shelby County Crime Victim Center at 545-4357 or go to erasedomesticcrime.com for guidelines.

Safety Planning

Identify "safe" areas in your house. These are areas with more than one exit and areas that do not contain items which could be used as weapons.

Tell people you trust in the neighborhood or at work what is happening and make a plan with them in case you need help.

If possible, always have an easily accessible phone.

Keep important items (documents, medications) together in a place you can get to quickly if you need to leave.

Talk to your children about safety. Tell them not to get involved in violence between you and your partner. Teach them how to get help and practice your safety plan with them.

Circle of Inspiration Outreach Program
Inspirational Faith Lutheran Church
Semi-monthly Christian support group; victim advocacy
(901) 359-8516
3595 N. Thomas Street

Cocaine Alcohol Awareness Program
Serves disadvantaged domestic violence victims; 24-hour crisis line
(901) 367-7550
4023 Knight Arnold Road

Community Legal Center
Legal assistance
(901) 543-3395
910 Vance Avenue

Department of Children's Services
Social services, child protection
(901) 578-4371
170 N. Main Street, 4th floor

Exchange Club Family Center
Comprehensive services for victims, perpetrators and children; lethality assessments, custodial evaluations
(901) 276-2200 8:30 a.m. -5:00 p.m.
2180 Union Avenue

Family Safety Center**
Comprehensive services for families who are victims of domestic violence
www.fscmemphis.com
(901) 864-2081
1750 Madison Avenue*

The Healing Word Counseling Center
Counseling and various services
(901) 370-4673
3910 Tchulahoma Road

Memphis Area Legal Services
Comprehensive legal services to domestic violence victims
(901) 523-8822 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
109 N. Main St., 2nd floor

Memphis Area Women's Council /
Erase Domestic Crime Collaborative
Community awareness and education; system coordination, change and support; prevention
(901) 378-3866
2574 Sam Cooper Blvd.

Memphis Child Advocacy Center
Counseling for child victims of sexual and severe physical abuse; houses Child Protection Investigation Team
(901) 525-2377
1085 Poplar Avenue

Memphis Police Department Domestic Violence Bureau*
Assault investigation, transport to victim services
(901) 636-3741
201 Poplar Avenue

Midsouth Sexual Assault Resource Center*
Services 24/7 to victims of sexual assault and abuse
(901) 272-2020 8:30 am -5:00 pm
2675 Union Extended

Shelby County Citizens Dispute*
Assists victims obtaining orders/warrants
(901) 545-2520 8:00 a.m. -4:30 p.m.
201 Poplar Avenue

Shelby County Crime Victims Center*
Court assistance, counseling, support groups, other services
(901) 545-4357 or (901) 545-5164 8:00 a.m. -4:30 p.m.
600 Adams Avenue

Shelby County District Attorney General's DV Unit*
Prosecution of DV cases; victim advocacy and links to services
(901) 545-5900
201 Poplar Avenue

Sophia's House
Shelter, other services for women and children victims
(901) 728-4229 or (901) 722-4700

Victims to Victory Incorporated
Support groups for victims of homicide; court advocacy
(901) 274-6828 9:00 a.m. -5:00 p.m.
1548 Poplar Avenue

YWCA of Greater Memphis
Shelter for abused women, children under 12 ; counseling, court advocacy, Immigrant Women's Services
24-Hour Hotline (901) 725-4277

*Agencies moving to 1750 Madison fall 2011 - see website for updated info.

**Family Safety Center opening late 2011 with multiple co-located partner agencies.