

## Myths and Facts about Domestic Violence

There are many myths about domestic violence that perpetuate a distorted view about its nature and causes. This list is a starting point; we hope that it will prompt you to examine your beliefs and provide you with helpful information.

**Myth #1:** Anger causes domestic violence.

Batterers are not angrier than the rest of us. They use anger as an excuse and justification for their behavior. We all experience anger, but many of us don't have to express it by abusing others.

**Myth#2:** Batterers "lose control" of their temper.

Battering is not loss of control; it is the exertion of power and control of one partner over the other.

Batterers are usually violent only toward their partners or their children. They make sure that others are unaware of the abuse; they abuse behind closed doors and make sure no one talks about it. If they assault physically, batterers often inflict injuries on parts of the body that are covered by clothing, or they pull hair, or they choke—injuries that rarely leave obvious marks. Many assaults last hours. Many are planned.

**Myth #3:** Domestic violence occurs only in uneducated, minority or dysfunctional families.

Domestic violence touches every demographic group—regardless of race, ethnicity, economics, class, sexual orientation, occupation, or education. There are doctors, ministers, psychologists, police, attorneys, judges, and other professionals who beat their partners. Approximately 50% of all couples experience domestic violence at some time in their lives.

**Myth #4:** If a battered woman really wants to leave, she can.

Any woman who considers leaving her abuser faces risks. 65% of battered women who are killed are murdered by their abusers when—or after—they leave.

**Myth #5:** Domestic violence is a woman's issue.

Men have a significant role in supporting women, holding other men accountable, and teaching young men about respectful, nonviolent relationships.

- In 2001 approximately 15% of the victims of intimate partner violence were men.<sup>1</sup>
- Domestic violence occurs in GLBT relationships.
- Domestic violence is the leading indicator of juvenile delinquency.



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**Myth #6:** Drugs and alcohol cause domestic violence.

Drugs and alcohol can increase the danger level and have been present in at least 50% of domestic violence cases. However, many alcoholics or drug users do not batter, and many batterers do not use drugs and alcohol. Stopping the abuser's drinking will not end the violence.

Batterers who are alcoholics or use drugs have separate issues to confront if they want help—their addiction and their abusive behavior. Each problem must be addressed independently.

1 Bureau of Justice Statistics Crime Data Brief, Intimate Partner Violence, 1993-2001, February 2003.