



SPECIAL EDITION

DOMESTIC ABUSE



Domestic Violence

Domestic Violence is a criminal matter and must be never viewed as a private matter.

Contact 911 if you believe that a domestic assault is taking place.

It is important that victims have a Safety Plan. For Safety Tips, refer to the pamphlet *Domestic Violence: Protect Yourself* or call a Transitional Housing & Support Worker.

Housing providers often comment, "Our job is to provide housing - we can't keep up with the needs of our tenants/members and all the agencies that might be able to help them".

The degree of support or assistance available from housing providers varies. At times, housing provider staff can be overwhelmed with the day-to-day responsibilities of managing housing communities and may not have the time to assist residents to find the appropriate agency to help them.

It has been proven, however, that residents who are supported by the right agency leads to improvements in other housing-related areas, such as lower arrears, improved social relationships, and a reduction in number of evictions.

To assist housing providers in identifying the warning signs, and the agencies that are available to residents, NRH has issued this "Special Edition" Newsletter dedicated to domestic abuse issues.

Domestic Abuse is on the Rise



Detective Sergeant Richard Cizek, the Domestic Violence/Victim Services Coordinator for Niagara Regional Police Services, has observed that the number of incidents of reported domestic violence has risen from past years. He has noted that:

"The current economy may be one factor in the rise of domestic violence. These are extraordinary times for individuals, families, and communities. The instability of our economy has resulted in job losses and pension insecurity. People have invested almost all of their working lives into their company and are being laid off or their jobs terminated with no certainty for their future. This significantly challenges an individuals' self-esteem and those values of fairness and equity and may make a situation more ripe for a violent dynamic to occur in a family."

The current economic downturn can make it more difficult for households to find and retain work. As financial pressures increase, tensions in the home can escalate to a breaking point. As a result, providers may experience increased instances of domestic violence in their housing communities. Housing providers are encouraged to take action if they suspect that a household member is (or has been) a victim of abuse.

What is Domestic Abuse?

Domestic abuse is the abuse of power in a personal or intimate relationship. It takes many forms including physical, psychological, sexual, financial or spiritual.

- Physical abuse is the most commonly understood form of abuse. It includes hitting, choking, pushing, punching, slapping, kicking, hair pulling, slapping, or mutilation. All forms of physical violence are crimes under the Criminal Code of Canada.
- Psychological or emotional abuse can include threats to leave, commit suicide and/or kill pets, as well as insults, criticisms, and damage to belongings.
- Sexual abuse can include sexual exploitation, unwanted sexual touching, rape and other sexual activities considered by the victim to be degrading, humiliating, painful, and committed without consent.
- Financial abuse occurs when the abuser takes away economic/financial control.
- Spiritual abuse prevents the victim from expressing spiritual or religious beliefs and can include preventing them from attending a place of worship, and putting down or making fun of the person's religious beliefs, traditions, or culture.

Although anyone can be a victim of family violence, people with disabilities, women, and seniors are more vulnerable to abuse than others.

Useful Web-sites

Niagara Region

www.niagararegion.ca

Niagara Regional Police

www.nrps.com

Family & Children's Services

www.facsniagara.on.ca

The Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse

www.onpea.org

WARNING SIGNS

The following are warning signs of Domestic Abuse:

- Abuser is demeaning to the victim
- Abuser does all the talking and dominates the conversation
- Abuser checks up on victim all the time, even at work
- Abuser tries to suggest he/she is the victim and acts depressed
- Abuser tries to keep victim isolated
- Abuser acts as if he/she owns victim
- Abuser lies to look good or exaggerates their own good qualities
- Abuser acts superior and of more value than others in the home
- Victim may be apologetic and make excuses for abuser's behaviour or becomes aggressive and angry in abuser's defense
- Victim is nervous about talking when abuser is present
- Victim seems to be sick more often and misses work
- Victim tries to cover up bruises
- Victim makes excuses at the last minute to avoid social situations or tries to avoid you on the street
- Victim seems sad, lonely, withdrawn and is afraid
- Victim uses drugs or alcohol to cope

Pay special attention if...

- Residents are complaining about loud noises or yelling
- Victim is rarely seen
- Police are at the unit regularly
- Home has damages beyond normal wear and tear
- Household falls into arrears

A home should be a place of safety, comfort, love and stability. Domestic Abuse shatters this important foundation and can even destroy family values and lives.



Domestic Abuse is everybody's business. We all have a responsibility to take action when we suspect abuse.

Many people experiencing abuse blame themselves

Transitional & Housing Support Program

Transitional and Housing Support Program is a support system for women and their children who have experienced abuse.

Support Workers offer free and confidential services to help women to:

- Find or maintain housing
- Develop safety plans for themselves & their children
- Develop and implement individualized transition plans



Support Workers provide services or referrals in the following areas:

- Counselling, parenting support, education upgrading, job training, income support, legal services, health and wellness services, court support, appointment accompaniment, budgeting and education on abuse issues

Support Workers also provide:

- Emotional support
- Advocacy and liaison with third parties
- Arrangements for interpreter services

Housing providers are encouraged to provide the contact information of the Transitional Housing Support Program (TSHP) Worker to residents who have experienced abuse. If providers are unsure of how to approach the residents or how to deal with the abuse situation, call a TSHP Worker for advice.

The Transitional & Housing Support Program Worker from your area will be giving you a call or dropping in this fall to introduce themselves and provide you with any additional information you require.

Many people hesitate to speak with possible victims of abuse because they don't know what to say or how to say it. You don't have to be an expert and your role is not to be a counsellor. There are professionals in your community who can provide expert services and advice.

For information on the THSP worker in your area, please refer to the fact sheet and contact information attached to this newsletter.