

October 2004 Health Bulletin

Cooperative Extension Service

This publication compiled and edited by the H.E.E.L. Program
(Health Education through Extension Leadership) Staff

OCTOBER IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

"Why Don't They Just Leave?"

Victims may not report abuse to police or seek help because they may be:

- **intimidated** by the abuser or the protection and service systems
- **scared** of the abuser
- too **embarrassed**
- **exhausted** from the efforts to survive and fend off more violence
- **depressed**
- **isolated** and cannot get to services or there are no services available locally
- **financially dependent** on the abuser

Victims may believe:

- ☞ "This is just the way things are."
- ☞ "I do not deserve any better treatment."

The more often the abuse occurs and the less the victim takes action to address the abuse, the more often negative self-talk messages are repeated until the victim begins to believe the messages and accepts the abuse.

October is **Domestic Violence Awareness Month**, a time to stop and consider the rate and impact of this life-threatening problem. It also designates a time to think about what we can do, as friends, neighbors, and communities to erase this problem.

Numbers can be misleading and fail to show the real human impact of violence. Albert Einstein once said: "Not all things that can be counted count and not all things that count can be counted." This statement certainly holds true in the case of domestic violence.

Not all victims of domestic violence are going to be counted in data. They will not show up in police records, court records, domestic violence and adult protection reports, hospital admission and discharge records, or records that indicate the cause of death. Because of the sensitive nature and implications of the problem, some victims will not come forward with information. We will probably never know how often domestic violence occurs.

WHO TO CALL FOR HELP:

KY Domestic Violence Hotline
1-800-656-HOPE (4073)

National Domestic Violence Hotline
1-800-799-SAFE (7233)



If you or someone you love
is a victim of Domestic Violence,
please make the call.

The Evidence Speaks When the Victims Cannot

- ☞ The National Institute for Justice and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that nationally “women make nearly **700,000 visits** to the health care system **per year** as a result of injury **due to physical assault.**”
- ☞ The KY Intimate Partner Violence Surveillance Project (IPV) and the KY Injury Prevention and Research Center found that **72% of abused women in KY reported at least one injury** from abuse and **81% of those women reported sustaining more than one type of injury** in 2003.
- ☞ In the same survey, Kentucky IPV found that only **30% of the women who sustained injuries as a result of abuse and sought medical attention.**
- ☞ KY IPV also reports that **74% of abused women reported psychological stress as a result of their abuse.**
- ☞ In Kentucky in 2001, **26% of all the adult women treated at community mental health centers that they had been victims of physical abuse by a spouse or partner.** That is an increase from 19% in 1998.
- ☞ **Domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women 15-45**, more than rape, muggings and automobile accidents combined.
- ☞ **Seventy-five percent of women murdered by their abuser were killed as they attempted to leave the relationship or after they left.**

Although these numbers may be alarming, few women (8%) tell their physician that they have been abused by their partner or spouse. It has also been reported that **only about 10% of primary care providers screen for domestic violence.**

How Can I Reduce Domestic Violence in my community?

- ☞ Educate your family, friends and neighbors about domestic violence
- ☞ If you know someone who is in immediate danger, call **9-1-1.**
- ☞ If you know someone who is being abused, offer your help and understanding.
- ☞ Let them know they are not alone.
- ☞ Refuse to allow violent behavior in your own family.
- ☞ Teach your own children to respect and honor relationships.
- ☞ Report suspected child abuse and neglect. Children who grow up being abused are more likely to continue violence in their own families.
- ☞ Discourage the abuse of drugs and alcohol. Both are major contributing factors to family violence.
- ☞ Practice anger management and teach your children the pitfalls of uncontrolled anger.
- ☞ Work to make sure your community has domestic violence services available and accessible.

For more information on health issues in Kentucky, visit: www.ca.uky.edu/HEEL

Sources:

- Adkisson, Missy R. (2004). Statewide strategic plan: A public health approach to the prevention of violence against women. Frankfort, KY. Office of Women's Physical and Mental Health, Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services.
- Fritsch, Travis A. & Wu, Hong. (2003). 2002 Population Based Telephone Survey, Lexington, KY. Kentucky Intimate Partner Violence Surveillance Project.
- National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Predictors of Domestic Violence. Retrieved September 16, 2004 from <http://www.ncadv.org/problem/predictors.htm>
- National Institute of Justice and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (1998). Prevalence, Incidence and Consequences of Violence Against Women: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey. Washington, D.C. National Institute of Justice and CDC.
- Rhodes and Levinson. (2003). Interventions for intimate partner violence against women. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 289 (5), 601-605.
- Rodriguez, M., Bauer, H., McLoughlin E., & Grumback, K. (1999). Screening and intervention for intimate partner abuse: Practices and attitudes of primary care physicians. *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, 282 (5).
- Tjaden, P. & Thoennes, N. (2000). Full Report of the Prevalence, Incidence and Consequences of Violence Against Women: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey. Washington, D.C. CDC.

UK
UNIVERSITY
OF KENTUCKY
Health Education
through
Extension Leadership