

## ABOUT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behaviors in a romantic relationship or between family members. This may include abuse by a boyfriend, girlfriend, spouse or parent. The abusive behaviors can include physical, sexual, verbal and/or emotional abuse. Often, an abusive partner does this to have power and control over their victim.

Domestic violence is a serious problem that affects all communities.

- About 2.3 million people in the U.S. are assaulted each year by a current or former spouse, boyfriend or girlfriend.<sup>i</sup>
- Girls and women between the ages of 16 and 24 have the highest rates of domestic violence.<sup>ii</sup>
- A woman is more likely to be injured, raped or killed by a current or former partner than by any other person.<sup>iii</sup>

### What do I need to know?

Because every relationship is unique, domestic violence can take many forms. The types of abuse may range from verbal attacks and controlling behaviors, to physical and sexual assaults. It is important to remember that everyone deserves to be in a safe and healthy relationship, free from violence and fear.

It may be hard to recognize the early warning signs of abuse, and often the early incidents of abuse are minimized. Usually domestic violence is not a one-time incident and many find that the abuse occurs in a repeating cycle of violence. Each act of abuse may be followed by an apology, or the abusive partner may blame others for the abuse. As the relationship continues, the abuse may get worse and occur more frequently.

### What can I do?

The impact of domestic violence is felt by everyone, but you can make a difference.

- If you are experiencing abuse, talk to someone you trust and consider getting help to end your relationship safely.
- If you are abusing your partner, take responsibility for ending the abuse by getting help for yourself.
- If you know someone experiencing abuse, educate yourself to be an important source of information and support.
- Take action in your community by speaking out about the fight to end domestic violence.

<sup>i</sup> National Institute of Justice and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Extent, Nature, and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey." July 2000.

<sup>ii</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Intimate Partner Violence and Age of Victim, 1993-1999." October 2001.

<sup>iii</sup> World Health Organization, Department of Injuries and Violence Prevention, "Violence Against Women: A Priority Health Issue." July 1997.

You have the right to a safe and healthy relationship...  
free from violence and free from fear.