

Family Services, Inc. Position Statement on Domestic Violence



The intent of this position statement is to acknowledge domestic violence as a significant community issue and the role of Family Services, Inc. in addressing this issue.

In the United States, four million women are physically abused each year and many more suffer emotional/psychological abuse from their partners. In 5% of cases, men experience abuse. Victims are found in all age, ethnic, religious, socioeconomic, sexual orientation, and educational groups. It is estimated that 35% of women who visit hospital emergency departments are there for symptoms of ongoing abuse. Forty-five percent of the women killed in the United States die at the hands of husbands or boyfriends.

In Forsyth County, Family Services has been providing services to victims of domestic violence for more than 30 years. In 2009, 278 women and children were housed at the Family Services Shelter for Domestic Violence. The agency has aided more than 1,400 victims of domestic violence request restraining orders from their abusers.

Family Services, Inc. is committed to the prevention and increased awareness of interpersonal violence. Through professional, community and youth education, the agency seeks to increase knowledge, to foster a caring response to victims, and to create a community free from violence. Last year, 4,935 people in our community were reached through our community education initiatives.

In addition to services for victims, the Safe Relationships Division of Family Services also provides the county's offender treatment program.

Definitions

For purposes of this position statement, **domestic violence** is defined as physical, sexual, or emotional/psychological violence directed toward women, children, men or elders occurring in current or past familial or intimate relationships whether the individuals are cohabiting or not and including violence directed toward dating partners.

Physical violence is the intentional use of physical force with the potential for causing death, injury, or harm. Physical violence includes, but is not limited to scratching, pushing, shoving, throwing, grabbing, biting, choking, shaking, poking, hair pulling, slapping, punching, hitting, burning, and use of restraints or one's body, size, or strength against another person. Physical violence includes use of a weapon (gun, knife, or other object) against a person (CDC Committee on Violence Definitions, 1997).

Sexual violence is divided into three categories: The use of physical force to compel a person to engage in a sexual act against his or her will, whether or not the act is completed; an attempted or completed sex act involving a person who is unable to understand the nature or condition of the act, decline participation, or to communicate unwillingness to engage in the sexual act due to age, illness, disability, influence of alcohol or other drugs, intimidation or pressure; and/or abusive sexual contact (CDC Committee on Violence Definitions, 1997).

Psychological violence is abuse, often verbal, which is intended to control another individual through degradation, humiliation, and fear. This abuse may include threats of harm, physical and social isolation, intimidation and harassment, false accusations and blaming, ignoring or ridiculing needs, name-calling and constant criticism and insults (Brygger, M., Matricciani, R., Tulonen, J., & Campbell, J., 1995).

It is the **position** of Family Services, Inc. that:

- Domestic violence is unacceptable in any form
- Domestic violence is a complex issue requiring a balance between protecting the victim's right to choice, confidentiality and personal safety, with that of promotion of assistance for the perpetrator and all others affected by the acts of violence
- Victims of domestic violence have the right to access comprehensive services, including our:
 - 24-Hour Crisis Line
 - Family Services, Inc. Shelter for Domestic Violence
 - Counseling and support group services for children and adults
 - Safety Planning
 - Court advocacy and legal assistance
 - Referrals to community resources, including for financial assistance

References

American Association of Colleges of Nursing. (1999). Position statement: Violence as a Public Health Problem. Washington, DC: Author

Brygger, M., Matricciani, R., Tulonen, J., & Campbell, J. (Eds.). (1995). A guide for nurses: Responding to domestic violence. Maryland Physicians' Campaign Against Family Violence. Baltimore, MD: Medical and Chiurgical Faculty of Maryland.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (1997). Committee on Violence Definitions. Atlanta: Author.

Committee on Women 1 of the Council on National Affairs. (1993). Position statement: Domestic Violence against women. Arlington, VA: Author.

Additional Information

Visit the Reference Library page of the Family Services, Inc. website: fsifamily.org

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Family Services, Inc. Safe Relationships Division

Restoring dignity, instilling hope, creating safe communities