

# Domestic Violence:

## A Prevention Toolkit for Bartenders and Salon Professionals



NETWORK TO  
ELIMINATE  
VIOLENCE IN  
RELATIONSHIPS

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## **How to Use this Toolkit**

This toolkit is designed to allow you, as a salon professional or bartender, to recognize the signs of domestic violence in your clients, and to respond appropriately. Use this toolkit as a resource to increase your knowledge and skills, or as a reference to refresh information you learned in a training session. The toolkit is not intended as an exhaustive resource; rather, it is designed to serve as a practical, introductory guide tailored to meet the needs of the service industry.

The toolkit is divided into specific sections to allow you to quickly locate what you need. Companion resources (brochure) provide a brief overview of the practical aspects of the toolkit, and can be used as a quick reference. An accompanying wallet guide is a resource you can provide to clients.

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## What is Domestic Violence?

Violence in relationships occurs when an individual exhibits abusive behaviours towards their partner or their former partner. These behaviours include physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological abuse, and emotional abuse. Domestic violence is also known as spousal abuse, wife assault, or intimate partner violence.

Domestic violence is a social and health issue that affects individuals of all ages, genders and ethnicities. Domestic violence occurs within a relationship between current or former spouses, current or former common-law partners, current or former girlfriends or boyfriends, or between individuals who are in a dating relationship (RCMP, 2012). Within this toolkit, the term “partner” will refer to individuals within any of these types of relationships.



Figure 1: The purple ribbon is a unifying symbol of courage, survival, honour, and dedication to ending domestic violence

### Table 1: Forms of Domestic Violence

#### Physical Violence

Hitting, slapping, pushing, throwing objects, kicking, beating, sleep deprivation, failing to provide basic needs (food, clothing etc.) if abused partner relies on the other partner.

#### Psychological/Emotional Abuse

Unremitting criticism, emotional blackmail, enforcement of petty rules, neglectful behaviors such as ignoring signs of distress and pleas for comfort, or prolonged refusal to communicate, isolation from friends, family and other support networks, surveillance of everyday tasks such as grocery shopping, intercepting mail, phone calls and text messages, threats to harm, or stalking behaviors.

#### Financial Abuse

Taking full control over finances and financial decisions, refusal to contribute to family incomes, depriving a person of access to cash and/or credit, running up debts in a person’s name, forcing a person to engage in illegal activities such as theft.

#### Sexual Abuse

Rape, forced prostitution and pornography, cutting or disfiguring of genitalia, refusal to practice safe sex, refusal to adhere to religious prohibitions.

#### Controlling Behaviours

Isolating an individual from their friends and family, monitoring an individual’s movement and/or schedule, restricting an individual from accessing financial resources, education, medical care, or employment.

(Adapted from Trevillion, Agnew-Davies & Howard, 2013; World Health Organization, 2012)

## Who is Affected by Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence can affect both men and women and those of any ethnic background, socioeconomic group and age. Although many groups of individuals can be affected, there are some that are at a greater risk and these include Aboriginal women, Immigrant/refugee women, younger women, older women, women with disabilities, and gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender people. Children are also affected by domestic violence. Even when they are not directly abused, children who are exposed to domestic violence in the home can suffer severe negative effects on their physical and mental health in the long term (Lee, Kolomer & Thomson, 2012). Furthermore, individuals who have been exposed to domestic violence during childhood are at higher risk of experiencing domestic violence themselves, either as the abuser or the victim (Abramsky et al., 2011). In relationships in which one partner or both partners misuse alcohol, there is a higher risk of domestic violence (Abramsky et al., 2011). One study revealed that, when alcohol is involved, physical abuse rates were 44.86% higher, psychological abuse was 68.22% higher, and sexual abuse was 10.28% higher (Shah et al., 2012, p.141).

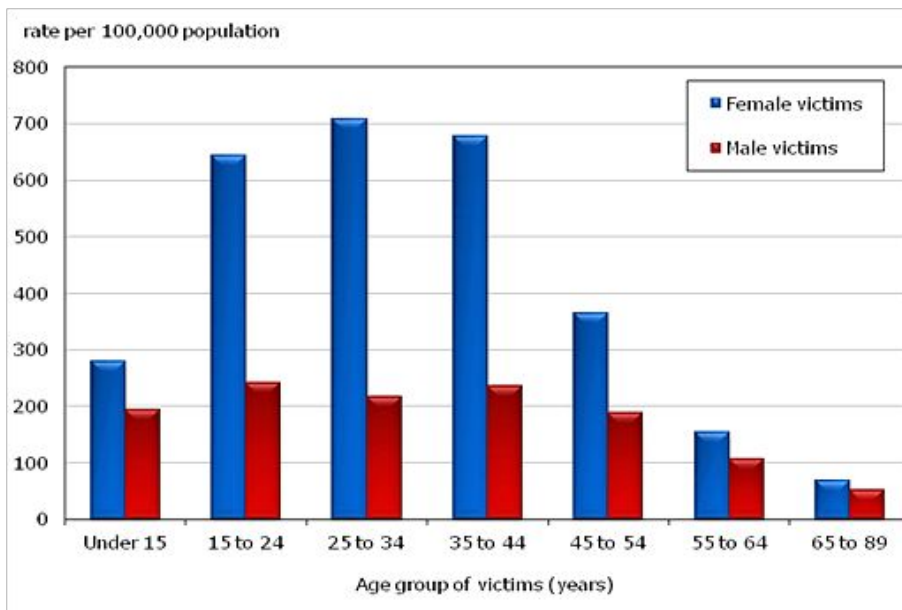


Figure 2: Victims of police-reported violent crime, by sex and age group of victim, 2010. (<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2012001/article/11643-eng.pdf>)

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# Prevalence of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is underreported, which makes it difficult to accurately estimate its extent. Although only a small percentage of cases are disclosed to police, these reported cases account for one in every four violent crimes (Sinha, 2012). Furthermore, “every six days a woman in Canada is killed by her intimate partner” (Shadpour, 2014). According to the Canadian Women’s Foundation, “67% of all Canadians say they personally know at least one woman who has been sexually or physically assaulted” (Shadpour, 2014). Domestic violence in Canada costs roughly \$7.4 billion each year, including emergency room visits, and other costs such as loss of income and funerals (Shadpour, 2014). Although these statistics demonstrate that domestic violence is a widespread issue, they do not represent the full magnitude of domestic violence because victims are often reluctant to report their abuse or reach out for help.

## TABLE 2: Global, National and Local Violence Statistics

### Global Statistics on Violence Against Women:

- Domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women – more than car accidents, muggings, and rapes combined (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 2011).
- There are over a 100 million women missing worldwide due to practices such as: female infanticide, sex selective abortions and neglect of girls (Sen, 2003).

### Statistics on Violence Against Women in Canada:

- Women were almost four times more likely than men to be victims of violence (Sinha, 2013).
- In 2011, men were responsible for 83% of police-reported violence committed against women in Canada. 8 in 10 victims of police-reported intimate partner violence were women (Sinha, 2013).
- “According to police-reported data, about 173,600 women aged 15 years and older were victims of violent crime in 2011. This translates into a rate of 1,207 female victims for every 100,000 women in the population, slightly higher than the rate for men (1,151)” (Sinha, 2013).
- While pregnant 63,300 or 11% of women experienced assault from a marital partner (Sinha, 2013).
- Aboriginal women have a higher likelihood of being victimized compared to the rest of the female population (Brennan 2011, Perreault 2011).

Adapted from Etheridge, Gill, & McDonald, (2014)

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## Why is it Important to Know about Domestic Violence as an Employee in the Service Industry?

Domestic violence is a serious health issue that is present in all groups in our society. Because more than two thirds of Canadians personally know at least one woman who has been sexually or physically assaulted, your chance of encountering a woman who has been somehow impacted by domestic violence is high (Canadian Women's Foundation, 2015). Most people experiencing domestic violence do not report their abuse to the police, or seek professional assistance - but many will talk about the abuse with a person they trust.

Those in the service industry are in a unique position to support victims of abuse. Bartenders and salon professionals are experienced, skilled listeners. They have ongoing relationships with their repeat customers, which allows them to build rapport and establish trust. Salon professionals in particular may be in close proximity to individuals and see physical signs of abuse, and staff in both bars and salons may also observe various relationship dynamics at both an individual and partner level.

For stylists and other salon professionals, the focus on a client's appearance may allow them to spot signs of abuse that are not apparent to others. Being up close, washing hair, etc. allows stylists to see areas where abuse is often hidden, such as the neck and around the scalp. Often, the salon is one of the few places an abused woman may be able to visit without her partner, which creates an ideal environment for seeking support (Professional Beauty Association, 2015). By educating yourself on how to recognize and respond to signs of abuse or disclosures of violence, you have the potential to make a meaningful difference in people's lives. The Cut It Out program, which is run in many salons in the United States and Ontario, works on the principle of the three R's:

**Recognize the problem,  
Respond to it,  
and Refer victims to appropriate outlets for assistance**

(as cited in Townes, 2014)

For those working in bars or pubs, the relationship with clients may be slightly different but the opportunity to advocate for change remains. Your client's relationship dynamics with their partner may be more obvious if they are together in your establishment. Abusers may be more violent when drinking, so the presence of alcohol may make abusive interactions more likely, and more apparent when they do occur (de Campos Moreira, 2011). Alcohol is often marketed as an essential part of masculinity - and this same image of masculinity reinforces the idea that males should be dominant over their partners, which enhances relationship inequality (Townes, Parker & Chase, 2012). Men



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who associate alcohol with these ideas of masculinity might be particularly likely to assert dominance when they are drinking. Places where alcohol is served are also more likely to serve customer populations that are at high-risk for being abused or may be frequently visited by abusers themselves (Waller et al., 2013).

While bar staff might not have the same physical closeness or level of trust as salon professionals, their ability to recognize and respond to violence is no less. Having knowledge and resources to respond to violence, and making resources visible in your workplace, can help raise awareness and make a difference in your customers' lives.

While every individual should be knowledgeable and aware of domestic violence. Those in the service industry are in a rare and valuable position to get involved in helping to decrease the prevalence of domestic violence in our society. Even simple changes like displaying resources, and being comfortable and knowledgeable about the issue can benefit victims by decreasing shame and guilt surrounding abuse.

## **Risk Factors for Domestic Violence**

While no one is immune to experiencing domestic abuse, there are some factors that put both victims and perpetrators at higher risk for being involved with violence in relationships. Keep these factors in mind when you encounter potentially abusive relationships.

Factors consistently associated with an increased chance of experiencing violence in relationships include (WHO, 2012; CDC, 2015a):

- young age
- low level of education
- witnessing or experiencing violence in childhood
- harmful alcohol or drug use
- the belief that a man has a right to beat his partner
- past history of partner abuse
- exposure to violence between parents
- sexual abuse in childhood
- accepting of violent behavior
- exposure to other forms of prior abuse
- low self-esteem
- low level of income
- mental health concerns (depression, personality disorder, etc.)
- anger and hostility
- not having many friends or being socially isolated

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Factors in relationships can also indicate a higher risk of abuse (WHO, 2012; CDC, 2015a):

- not satisfied with relationship/conflict
- male dominance in family dynamic
- financial stress
- one party has multiple partners
- members have differing levels of education
- unhealthy family relationships

In addition to these factors, certain community and social aspects can also increase the risk of violence. These factors include poverty, gender inequality, low social status of women, lack of women's rights and no legal sanctions protecting women from violence in marriages or relationships (WHO, 2012; CDC, 2015a). In addition, some cultural and ethnic considerations should be accounted for, and will be elaborated on later in this document. For example, it has been suggested that women of Aboriginal descent are 8 times more likely to be killed by their partner and 3.5 times more likely to be in an abusive relationship than non-Aboriginal women (Canadian Women's Foundation, 2015).

## Recognizing a Client Who is Experiencing Domestic Violence

Recognizing the signs of domestic abuse is one of the most vital things you can do to help a client who is in a violent relationship. In addition to witnessing abuse first-hand, you may notice the victim seems isolated, frequently misses appointments, has physical injuries, or makes excuses for injuries (Green & Ward, 2010; Perry, Hockenberry, Lowdermilk & Wilson, 2013).

See the table below for the common warning signs associated with domestic abuse.

HE	SHE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● puts her down</li> <li>● does all the talking and dominates the conversation</li> <li>● checks up on her all the time, or won't let her go anywhere alone</li> <li>● tries to suggest he is the victim and acts depressed</li> <li>● tries to keep her away from you</li> <li>● acts as if he owns her</li> <li>● lies to make himself look good or exaggerates his good qualities</li> <li>● acts like he is superior and of more value than others in his home</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● is apologetic, makes excuses for his behaviour or becomes aggressive and angry</li> <li>● is nervous talking when he's nearby</li> <li>● seems to be sick more often and misses work</li> <li>● tries to cover her bruises</li> <li>● makes excuses at the last minute about why she can't meet you or she tries to avoid you on the street</li> <li>● seems sad, lonely, withdrawn and is afraid</li> <li>● uses more drugs or alcohol to cope</li> </ul>

**Note: While most abuse occurs in intimate heterosexual relationships, with female partners most commonly victimized, it can occur in gay and lesbian relationships as well. Any gender can be abused, or perpetrate abuse. The suggestions in this table are equally applicable regardless of gender.**

(Adapted from "Help, Hope & Healing" by Government of British Columbia, 2006, retrieved from <http://www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/victimservices/shareddocs/pubs/helphopehealing-someone-being-abused.pdf>)

Physical signs of domestic abuse are easier to spot. You may see bruises, welts, cuts, scrapes, broken teeth, or other visible injuries including broken bones (WHO, 2012). Ongoing abuse is often apparent when injuries are in different stages of healing - for instance, you may see bruises that are fresh, and some that are almost faded away (WHO, 2012). Other effects can be harder to identify.

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Your client may tell you about health-related conditions that include irritable bowel syndrome, fibromyalgia, chronic pain syndromes, bladder infections, joint disease, migraines and increased asthma attacks (WHO, 2012; CDC, 2015b). Violence in relationships can also be associated with alcohol and drug abuse, eating and sleep disorders, physical inactivity, poor self-esteem, post-traumatic stress disorder, smoking, self-harm, and unsafe sexual behaviour (WHO, 2012). Some of these signs may be things you can observe directly, such as alcohol abuse. Others may be things a client mentions or that you merely suspect. In addition to these signs, if the abuse is of a sexual nature, the client might mention sexual problems including pain, or may have unintended pregnancies (CDC, 2015b).

## **What to do if you Suspect Domestic Violence**

If you notice signs of violence or suspect that your client is in a violent relationship, there are ways you can help. The most important actions you can take are paying attention to the signs of abuse, and supporting your client in a respectful, sensitive, nonjudgmental manner. You are not a trained counsellor or health professional, so not knowing exactly what to do or say is perfectly normal. Your role is not to rescue your client, but to be supportive, provide information, and encourage her to seek help. If your client is alone and talking to her will not jeopardize her safety, then express your concerns and validate her feelings. If you are concerned for your client's safety or your own, call the police.

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### **Ways you can help if you suspect abuse:**

- Talk to her about what you see and assure her that you are concerned. Tell her you believe her and that it is not her fault.
- Encourage her not to confront her partner if she is planning to leave. Her safety must be protected.
- Encourage her to find a safe place where her partner cannot get to her, her children, or any pets she may have. This may be a friend's or family member's house, or a shelter.
- Encourage her to pack a small bag with important items and keep it stored at a safe place away from the home.
- Let her know that you or she can call VictimLink at 1-800-563-0808, your local transition house or safe home. In an emergency call the police or 911

### **If she denies the abuse:**

- Assure her she can talk to you any time.
- Don't become angry or frustrated with her decisions. It is important to understand that she may be afraid or not ready to take the next steps.
- Try to understand why she might be having difficulty getting help. She may feel ashamed.
- If she has children, let her know gently that you are concerned about her and her children's safety and emotional well-being. She may be more willing to recognize her situation if she realizes her children may also be in danger.

(Adapted from Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children, 2006, retrieved from <http://www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.ca/how-to-help/helping-abused-women>)

## **Understanding Why Women Stay in Abusive Relationships**

It is important to recognize that there are many reasons why women stay in abusive relationships, and to take this into consideration when discussing domestic violence with those you believe are being abused. While there are many possible reasons for staying, women often stay in relationships because the abuser has threatened to kill her or her family, or kill himself (Government of BC, 2006). These are not empty threats that can be ignored: 25% of women in Canada who were murdered by their spouses had recently left the relationship (Canadian Women's Foundation, 2015).

A woman may also stay in abusive relationships because:

- She loves her partner, despite the abuse.
- She is financially dependent on her partner, and has no way of supporting herself or her children if she leaves.

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- She has strong beliefs about keeping the family together.
  - She is isolated from support and friends, or has no transportation.
  - She believes the partner will change, and stop abusing her.
  - She feels ashamed of the situation.
  - She is not aware of the available resources.
  - She is an immigrant, sponsored by her husband, and is unaware of her rights. She may believe she will be deported if she reports the abuse or leaves him.

(Government of BC, 2006; WHO, 2012).

## Tips on Talking to Clients about Abuse

- **Make sure you have privacy** and won't be distracted or interrupted. If you are in a setting where you cannot have privacy, such as in the bar, or in a crowded salon, do not directly approach the topic. You may find a covert way to provide resources, such as talking about the domestic violence program your workplace is taking part in, or displaying resources (posters, stickers, coasters, or pamphlets with the VictimLink BC phone number prominently displayed). Talking about your concerns in public could trigger strong emotions and shame for your client, and could compromise her safety.
- **Let your client know you're concerned about her safety.** Be honest. Tell her the specific reasons you are worried. Let her know you want to help.
- **Avoid labelling the abuse.** Refer to specific behaviours, rather than calling it “domestic violence” or “abuse.” Often, victims of violence are reluctant to associate their situation with these labels.
- **Be supportive.** Listen to your client. Keep in mind that it may be very hard for her to talk about the abuse. Tell her that she is not alone, and that people want to help.
- **Offer specific help.** You might say you are willing to just listen, to provide resources, or to stay with her while she calls a violence hotline or the police. Do not make promises you cannot keep. Know your own limits.
- **Don't place shame, blame, or guilt.** Don't tell her what she should do. Instead, say something like, "I get scared thinking about what might happen to you." Tell her you understand that her situation is very difficult.
- **Help her make a safety plan.** Safety planning includes packing an emergency bag of important items, identifying a safe place to go if she leaves, and planning an escape.
- **Encourage your client to talk to someone who can help.** Provide her with the VictimLink BC number (604-563-0808) and print resources as appropriate.
- **If she decides to stay, continue to be supportive.** Your friend may decide to stay in the relationship, or she may leave and then go back many times. It may be hard for you

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to understand, but people stay in abusive relationships for many reasons. Be supportive, no matter what your friend decides to do.

- **Encourage your client to do things outside of the relationship.** It's important for her to see friends and family.
- **If she decides to leave, continue to offer support.** Even though the relationship was abusive, she may feel sad and lonely once it is over. Check in with her when you see her to let her know you are supportive.
- **Keep in mind that you can't "rescue" your client.** She has to be the one to decide it's time to get help. Support her no matter what her decision

(Adapted from Office on Women's Health, 2015)

**Say:**

"I've noticed you have a lot of bruises whenever you come in"

"I'm concerned about your safety"

"I know it's hard to discuss, but please know you can talk to me about anything"

"It's not your fault - no matter what, you do not deserve that kind of treatment"

"You are not alone. I am here for you, and there are resources out there to help you"

"What can we do to keep you safe?"

"Here's the number for the Domestic Violence Helpline. They can help with finding a place to go, navigating the legal system, and finding personal support"

**Don't Say:**

"You're in an abusive relationship"

"You need to leave him"

"He's such a jerk. I can't believe he would do that"

"Tell me if he's hitting you"

"How can you put up with that?"

"Why didn't you stop him/say something/do something about it?"

"Why don't you leave?"










"You shouldn't provoke him"

"You should tell him off and get out of there"

"I can't believe you went back to him"

## Overcoming Hesitation about Helping

Often, it seems difficult to talk to individuals about abuse and you may have concerns about discussing these matters. The following table addresses some common misconceptions and concerns about speaking up:

Points of Concern	Points to Consider
You feel like it's none of your business	 It could be a matter of life or death and therefore violence is everyone's business
You don't know what to say	 Saying you care or are concerned is the best place to start
You might make things worse	 Doing nothing could make things worse
It's not serious enough to report to police	 Police are trained to respond to these situations and can offer more resources
You are afraid the violence will turn towards you or your family	 Speak to the victim alone. Also let police know if you experience threats
You believe the victim wants to stay in the relationship because he/she keeps going back	 The victim may not have had the support they needed
You are afraid the victim may become angry with you	 Maybe, but he/she will know you care about them
You believe that if the victim wanted help, then they would ask for it	 Victims are often too ashamed to ask for help
You believe domestic violence to be a private matter	 It isn't when someone is getting hurt

(Adapted from "Help, Hope & Healing" by Government of British Columbia, 2006, retrieved from <http://www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/victimservices/shreddocs/pubs/helphopehealing-someone-being-abused.pdf>)



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## Talking to the Abusive Partner

If you suspect your client is abusive to his partner, it can be a challenge to decide what to do. Many people worry about making the situation worse, but helping the abusive partner address his behaviour is an important part of preventing domestic violence. Abuse and violence will not go away on their own. There are services available to help.

The Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children (2015) offers the following tips on what to do if you recognize the signs of abuse:

- Choose the right time and place to have a full discussion. Ensure the abused partner is not present.
- Approach him when he is calm.
- Be direct and clear about what you have seen. Only discuss things you have seen or heard yourself.
- Avoid making judgmental comments about him as a person. Don't validate his attempt to blame others for his behaviour.
- Do not approach him based on suspicions or things you have been told by others. This could jeopardize the abused partner's safety.
- Tell him that his behaviour is his responsibility, and that it needs to stop. Tell him help is available.
- Don't try to force him to change or to seek help. Tell him that you are concerned for the safety of his partner and children.
- Never argue with him about his abusive actions. Recognize that confrontational, argumentative approaches may make the situation worse and put her at higher risk.
- Call the police if the woman's safety is in jeopardy.

If he denies the abuse:

- Men who are abusive will often minimize the impact and deny that they have done anything wrong. They may state that it isn't that bad, or they might blame the victim for the abuse. This type of behaviour deflects his own responsibility for his actions.
- Keep your conversation focused on your concerns for his family's safety and well-being and reiterate that abuse is never an answer.
- Keep the lines of communication open and look for opportunities to help him find support.

***Always keep yourself safe. Don't get in the middle of an assault. Call the police in an emergency.***

(Adapted from Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children, 2015)

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## Cultural Considerations

While there may be significant social or cultural factors in a woman's experience of domestic violence, service providers should recognize diversity within groups and not perpetuate stereotypes based on culture or ethnicity (Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, 2007). Since BC has a diverse population with many different cultures and traditions, service providers may encounter many clients with various cultural backgrounds.

They should therefore be aware of cultural and social norms which may influence how a woman experiences violence, how she seeks support, and her willingness/ability to leave a violent relationship - but these norms will not uniformly apply to every woman.

Cultural and social norms may influence individual behavior. For instance, what triggers violence and what are considered "appropriate" responses to violence varies between cultures (Vandello & Cohen, 2003). Examples of norms affecting violence include the belief in some cultures that men have a right to control women or that reporting abuse is disrespectful (WHO, 2009). These types of norms and beliefs may make women more vulnerable to physical and other forms of violence, or make a woman experiencing violence less likely to report the abuse or otherwise seek help (WHO, 2009).



Figure 3: Saudi Arabia's First Campaign against domestic violence  
<http://www.worldcrunch.com/rss/culture-society/saudi-arabia-0-s-first-law-on-domestic-abuse-but-husbands-still-have-control/c3s13239/>

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### Examples of the Types of Cultural Norms

- A man has a right to discipline or correct a woman's behavior
- Men are socially superior to women
- A man has a right to sexual intercourse in a marriage
- A man's honour is linked to a woman's sexual behavior
- It is acceptable to resolve interpersonal conflicts using violence
- A woman has a responsibility to tolerate violence in order to keep a marriage together
- A woman's freedom should be restricted
- Divorce is shameful
- Talking about domestic violence is taboo

(Adapted from: *Preventing Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Violence Against Women: Taking Action and Gathering Evidence*, WHO, 2010; *Understanding and Addressing Violence Against Women: Intimate Partner Violence*, WHO, 2012).

## Cultural Considerations - Aboriginal Women

Aboriginal women are almost three times as likely as non-Aboriginal woman to be the victim of a violent crime (Brennan, 2011). Along with the increased prevalence of violence, Aboriginal women face further barriers to disclosing and reaching out for support when experiencing domestic violence. These include fear of stereotypical attitudes and stigmatization, family or community denial that abuse is occurring, lack of services or support in remote or rural communities, or a fear of isolation by the community if the abuse is reported (Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, 2007).

## Cultural Considerations - Immigrant and Refugee Women

Women who have emigrated from another country and are experiencing domestic violence may also experience barriers to seeking support along with some of the cultural norms described above. Some of these barriers include:

- Language and cultural barriers
- Dependence on partner for immigration status and a fear of deportation if the abuse is disclosed
- Lack of knowledge of her rights; and/or a mistrust of the authorities including the justice system
- Fear of being rejected or ridiculed by her community
- Losing her children and/or economic insecurity
- Separation from her family and support system from her home country

(Provincial Office of Domestic Violence, 2014; Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, 2007; Kulwicki, Aswad, Carmona, & Ballout, 2010).

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With the aim of improving cross-cultural communication, service providers may utilize “non-psychological terms” and listen to the client’s perspective. It’s important for service providers to “...never accept culture as an excuse for domestic violence. Everyone deserves the right to be safe in their own home” (Trevillion, Agnew-Davies & Howard, 2013, p. 39).

## **Advocacy**

Advocacy in all its forms seeks to ensure that people, particularly those who are most vulnerable in society, are able to have their voice heard on issues that are important to them, defend and safeguard their rights, and have their views and wishes genuinely considered when decisions are being made about their lives (SEAP, 2015). Advocacy is a process of supporting and enabling people to express their views and concerns, to access information and services, to defend and promote their rights and responsibilities, and to explore choices and options (SEAP, 2015).

Therefore, it is important for every citizen to come forward and raise their voices against violence in relationships. Creating awareness is an important factor in advocacy, and in showing people that there is help and hope for their situation. This awareness can reduce the stigma, shame, and guilt around abuse, which might help victims come out and express their views and concerns. There are many different ways to advocate for someone who is suffering from violence. By building a trusting relationship with clients and showing them your support, you can encourage clients to seek help to work towards a better, healthier future. By recognizing the signs of abuse, and by listening, supporting your client, and referring them to community resources, you can become an advocate in guiding women toward a healthier, safer situation (Feder, Ramsay, Dunne, Rose, Arsene, Norman, Kuntze, Spencer, Bacchus, Hague, Warburton, & Taket, 2009).

## **Legal Considerations**

It is important to understand the legalities surrounding domestic violence for safety and protection of the victim, abuser, and witness. Are Canadian citizens held legally responsible for reporting domestic violence? If someone knows that violence is occurring in a relationship and does not notify the police, can they be held responsible for neglect and therefore the harm of another individual?

Currently there is no official crime called “spousal abuse” or “violence against women/men”, but there are crimes that violence in relationships can be categorized as. These potential crimes include: assault, sexual assault, criminal harassment, threats of violence, forcible confinement, and homicide (Justice Laws Website, 2015). Domestic violence is illegal and is punished severely.

There is no legal obligation for an individual to report domestic violence (Victims of Violence). However, your province, and/or profession may have acts and policies that make you legally responsible to report violence. Under section 22 of the Criminal Code, there are certain

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circumstances that may cause an individual to be held responsible if they have witnessed abuse and aided/abetted the crime to occur (Justice Laws Website, 2015). Although this is a rare offense, it is a possibility and is something to consider.

The province of British Columbia has legislation specifically related to child abuse, and these laws apply to anyone, regardless of profession. These are outlined in the Child, Family and Community Service Act. In section 14, this law states that “a person who has reason to believe that a child needs protection...must promptly report the matter” (Child, Family and Community Service Act, 2015). Therefore, if you believe that a child is being abused or endangered, you are legally obligated to report. The penalty of not reporting the abuse of a child is a possible \$10,000 fine and/or 6 months of imprisonment (Child, Family and Community Service Act, 2015).

British Columbia also has legislation regarding the abuse of adults and the public’s duty to report such offenses. The Adult Guardianship Act, section 46 states that anyone who, fails to report the abuse of an adult who is unable to seek support or assistance by themselves, will not be held legally responsible but is encouraged to notify the authorities (Adult Guardianship Act, 2015).

Depending on one's profession, the reporting of violence may be mandatory. Nurses, physicians, and other professionals have a legal responsibility to report violence that may be inflicted on, or by, their clients. Ensure that you are aware of your professions responsibilities and legalities.



Figure 4: [http://www.victimlinkbc.ca/local/vlbc/documents/vlbc\\_rackcard.pdf](http://www.victimlinkbc.ca/local/vlbc/documents/vlbc_rackcard.pdf)

## Reporting

If you know or suspect someone is in immediate danger or may cause harm to someone else, **call 911-- Never intervene yourself!** If it is not an emergency, or you are unsure about the domestic violence, call VictimLink BC at 1-800-563-0808 or visit [victimlinkbc.ca](http://victimlinkbc.ca), or call the non-emergency number for police in your community.

If you suspect a child is in danger, these concerns must be reported. Call VictimLink BC or call The Helpline for Children at 310-1234 (no area code required). These services can guide you in reporting.

If you suspect domestic violence, speak up! The only way to help is to reach out. Find a quiet private place to have the conversation with someone. Never ask someone about abuse when their abuser is present, or when you are in public. The table below offers guidance on how to have the conversation with someone you suspect is experiencing domestic violence.

Do:	Don't:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ask</li> <li>● Express concern (I have noticed..., I am worried about...).</li> <li>● Listen and validate (paraphrase their feelings).</li> <li>● Offer to help come up with a plan.</li> <li>● Refer to resources, such as VictimLink BC</li> <li>● Support the decision that is made, even if you don't agree.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Wait for them to come to you.</li> <li>● Approach them in public or in front of their partner.</li> <li>● Judge or blame (let them know it is not their fault).</li> <li>● Pressure them.</li> <li>● Give advice.</li> <li>● Place conditions on your support.</li> </ul>

(Adapted from NYS Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence, Retrieved from <http://www.opdv.ny.gov/help/fss/fss.pdf>)

If a person decides to report an incident of domestic violence, you can support the person by providing them with information and staying with them while they call the police or VictimLink BC.

<b>What you can do:</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Display posters and/or have resources about domestic violence on hand at your establishment. This is the first step to raising awareness and identifying and finding help for potential victims.</li> <li>2. Advocate to have a training session in your establishment about recognizing warning signs and knowing how to respond.</li> <li>3. Be aware of the risk factors, prevalence and common warning signs of domestic violence.</li> <li>4. Have the VictimLink BC number on hand.</li> <li>5. If you suspect a child or vulnerable adult is in danger, notify the appropriate authorities.</li> <li>6. If you suspect an adult is in danger, speak up.</li> <li>7. Support the individual by providing them with the appropriate resources.</li> <li>8. <b>Don't stop there</b>--Encourage others in your industry to get involved and join the movement to end violence in relationships.</li> </ol>



Figure 5: Have these wallet sized cards available in your establishment. They are easily accessible and downloadable in multiple different languages at [victimlinkbc.ca](http://victimlinkbc.ca)

## Conclusion

Domestic violence prevention begins with equipping individuals with the necessary knowledge and support to recognize, respond and refer those who may be at risk. Individuals in the service industry are in an opportune position to get involved and support those who are experiencing domestic violence. The tools provided here offer guidance on raising awareness of prevention measures for domestic violence in your workplace. By implementing a domestic violence prevention plan within your workplace, employees will be able to speak up and take action against domestic violence.

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