

PASTORAL CARE

IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



MAKE SAFETY YOUR FIRST PRIORITY

- Do not minimize the seriousness of the situation.
- Do not talk about the abuse with a victim when the abuser is in close proximity.
- Never confront an abusive person alone.
- Never bring a couple together to try and settle their "differences" if there is current abuse in the relationship.
- Determine the victim's immediate level of safety.
- Develop a safety plan to reach a safe place, when necessary.
- Determine whether she or he needs medical attention.

BE AN ACTIVE LISTENER

- Acknowledge the victim's pain and fears.
- Be aware of your tendencies for denial and minimizing.
- Refrain from blaming or judging.
- Assure the victim that she or he is not alone in suffering.
- Offer comfort without physical touching or getting too close.
- Be aware of the cycle of violence.
- Resist telling him or her what to do or trying to "fix" the situation.
- Assure the victim that the congregation will not abandon her or her family (and follow-through).

CREATE AN ATMOSPHERE FOR CONVERSION

- Avoid using "religious" phrases; rather model of open compassionate embodiment of your faith.
- Help adjust any toxic theology, like "forgive and forget."

ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR LIMITATIONS;

PREPARE YOURSELF IN ADVANCE TO MAKE APPROPRIATE REFERRALS

- Encourage the person to seek professional help and call the local support services.
- Don't press the person to report the situation.
Give her or him the power to decide what is best to do.

MAINTAIN CONFIDENTIALITY.