

OPENING DOORS



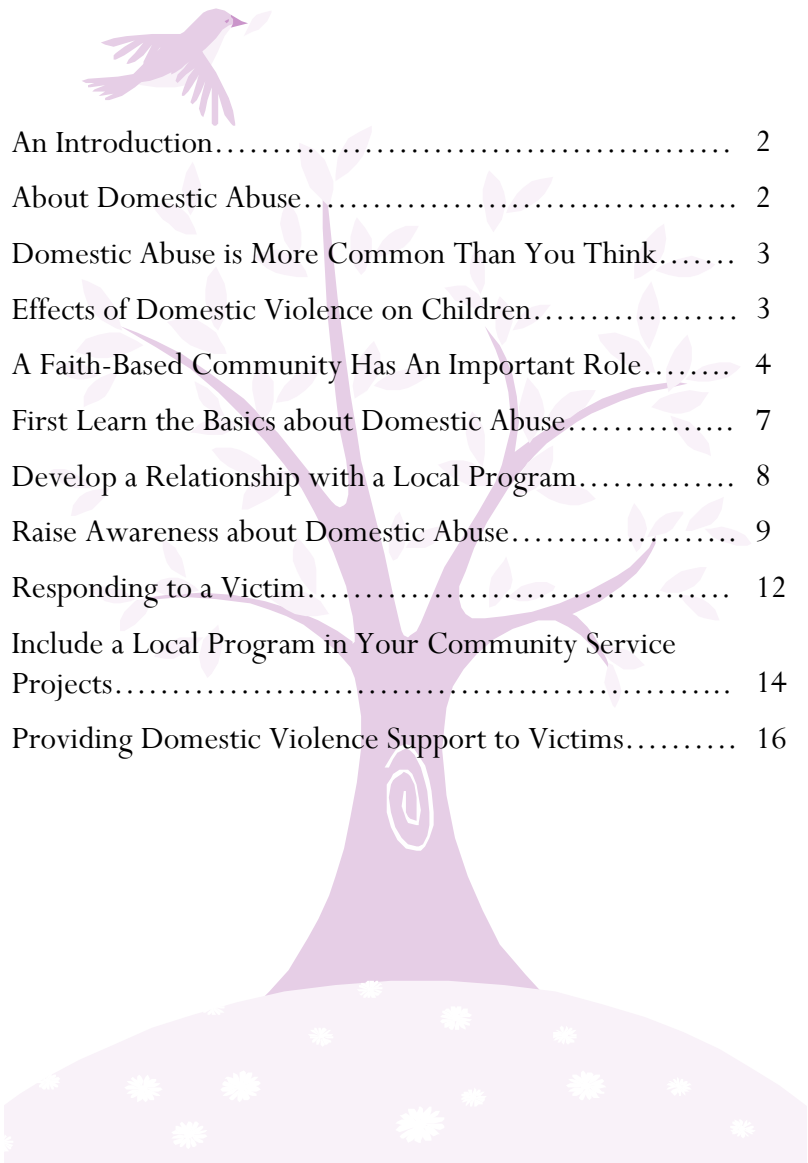
*When Faith-Based Communities
Respond to Domestic Abuse*



Maryland Network
Against Domestic Violence



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An Introduction

According to a 2011 Gallup Poll, 81% of Americans rank religion as very important or fairly important in their lives.* Not surprisingly, many victims turn to their faith-based communities for support and guidance in dealing with domestic abuse. In turn, many faith-based communities provide victims with well-informed, practical, and spiritual guidance, including referrals to other organizations. Faith-based communities are often essential resources for, and have strong relationships with, immigrant communities who may hesitate to seek assistance from secular or mainstream domestic abuse service providers. The faith-based community is uniquely positioned to identify the needs of victims whose pain and suffering are often swept under a religious or spiritual carpet and connect them with local domestic violence programs.

About Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse is a **pattern** of coercive behavior used by one person in order to maintain **power and control** in an intimate relationship. Domestic abuse comes in many forms, including actual or threatened physical, sexual, verbal, economic, psychological or emotional abuse. **Many acts of domestic abuse are illegal.** It usually occurs between persons who are current or former sexual or intimate partners or who live in the same household, regardless of sexual orientation, but can include older adults as well. Victims and abusers come from all age groups, social classes, religions, and nationalities. Approximately 85% of victims of domestic abuse are women.** Because so many victims are women, this booklet uses “she” to refer to victims.

*www.gallup.com/poll/151760/christianity-remains-dominant-religion-united-states.aspx

**<http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/ipv01.pdf>



Many people mistakenly assume that if a person is not being *physically* harmed by their partner they are not being abused; this is not true. Psychological and emotional abuse are indirect forms of violence that can systematically wear away at a victim's self-confidence, sense of self-worth, and sense of self-perception. This kind of abuse can be as dangerous as physical violence; it destroys the heart and soul by cutting to the very core of a person, creating internal scars that may be far deeper and more lasting than physical ones.

Domestic Abuse is More Common Than You Think

Domestic abuse is so prevalent that it is almost certain that there are both victims and abusers in every faith community. According to a 2010 survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nearly one in four women and one in seven men reported being severely physically abused by a spouse or dating partner in their lifetime.* In 2010, the FBI found that over 1,000 women and less than 300 men are killed by a spouse or dating partner annually.** Hard as it is to believe or understand, the fact is that victims and abusers can be found in all institutions within the community, including faith communities.

Effects of Domestic Violence on Children

Researchers estimate that 10 million children are exposed to domestic violence each year.*** Exposure to domestic violence can include watching or hearing the violent events, direct involvement (for example, trying to intervene or calling the police), or experiencing the aftermath (for example,

*www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs_report2010-a.pdf

**www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/crime-in-the-u.s/2011/crime-in-the-u.s.-2011/tables/expanded-homicide-data-table-10

***Straus, M. A. 1992. Children as witnesses to marital violence: A risk factor for life-long problems among a nationally representative sample of American men and women. Report of the Twenty-Third Ross Roundtable. Columbus, OH: Ross Laboratories



seeing bruises or observing maternal depression). In addition, research estimates that about half of children who are exposed to domestic violence are also victims of physical abuse.*

Children are often the forgotten victims in the abuse between adult partners, but they may be seriously traumatized by abuse. Ignoring the consequences of exposure to violence on children can negatively impact their cognitive development, as well as their emotional and physical health. When addressing violence within the family, children must be considered equally as important as the adult partners. Remember, if and when the victims of domestic violence leave the abuser, they and their children are most vulnerable and at the point of greatest risk. With the help of the local domestic violence program, victims and their children can be assisted in developing a safety plan and making prudent decisions on how to protect themselves to the best of their abilities.

A Faith-Based Community Has An Important Role

Faith-based communities can play a unique and pivotal role in the effective response to domestic abuse within their congregation and in their community. This is because victims of domestic abuse often turn to their faith community for spiritual guidance and support before or in lieu of community-based domestic violence programs. It is important for victims to know that they are accepted and supported by their faith-based community.

*Straus, M. A., & Gelles, R. J. 1996. Physical violence in American families. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.



This wheel demonstrates the ideal response of community faith leaders to domestic violence.

UNITED TO END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Adapted with permission from the "Power & Control and Equality Wheels," developed by Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, Duluth, MN.

Provided by:



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UNITED AGAINST VIOLENCE



Victims may struggle to understand the abuse they suffer in light of their religious beliefs. Faith-based communities can help victims recognize and acknowledge the challenge of their inner conflict and to understand that the responsibility for the abuse lies with the abuser. Providing an appropriate and **safe** response to victims is not an action that can be taken lightly; in fact, **inappropriate intervention can make a difficult situation worse**. Informed, compassionate support for the victim is critical to her complex restoration and healing process.

Here are some questions a faith-based community should ask itself before embarking upon the mission of providing domestic violence assistance to its members:

- Does your faith-based community have a clear and well-informed understanding of the problem of domestic abuse and how it differs from marital conflict?
- What qualifications or training does your faith-based community have for helping victims of domestic abuse?
- What limitations does your faith-based community face when addressing domestic abuse?
- Are there existing organizations in your area that specialize in providing domestic abuse services?
- What policies does your faith-based community have in place to safely respond to and effectively prevent domestic abuse?
- Does your faith-based community know how to provide spiritual help, hope, and healing to victims through the Word of God?



First Learn the Basics about Domestic Abuse

- What constitutes domestic abuse—**the myths, dynamics, and effects**?
- How does domestic abuse **differ from marital conflict**?
- What are the **emotional, physical and spiritual impact** on victims and their families?
- What are the **signs** of abuse?
- Why do people abuse and why do victims often feel they have **no choice** but to stay in the relationship?
- How do you **make referrals** to existing programs in your community that specialize in providing expert domestic violence services?

A good starting point for faith leaders to broaden their knowledge about domestic abuse is with local domestic violence service providers. To become aware of local service provider(s), see the provider list on the inside back cover of this booklet or call the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (301-429-3601). There is at least one program serving every county in Maryland and Baltimore City. Local programs offer education and training opportunities to faith-based communities such as yours.

The Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence posts informational materials that can be printed directly from its website, mnadv.org, and mails limited quantities of brochures upon request. The website also includes a list of training opportunities as they become available. Some of the most valuable domestic abuse web resources are listed in the last few pages of this booklet.



Develop a Relationship with a Local Program

The most important thing a faith-based community can do is to collaborate with local programs that specialize in domestic violence services. Meet with program staff to explore opportunities for meaningful involvement. This collaborative partnership, combining common ground and shared interests, will ensure that both the spiritual and secular needs of the victims are met once they are referred.* The local programs can be an invaluable resource for faith communities by:

- Providing **support to victims** who are referred for services.
- Providing **services to partners** who are being abusive.
- Offering **education, training and consultation** on domestic abuse.
- Assisting faith communities with developing an **action plan and domestic abuse policy** to enhance its response to victims.
- Addressing concerns regarding **confidentiality and safe practices**.
- Providing **informational materials** for congregations.
- Providing **guest speakers** to address congregations or faith-affiliated groups.

**Remember: Domestic violence service providers are experts in meeting the secular needs of victims, their children, and abusers. They are not experts in spiritual matters. However, this is an area in which faith communities can be of great help. Faith leaders who refer a member of their community to a domestic violence program, with the victim's permission, should be willing to work with staff there to help address their spiritual needs. Domestic violence programs should not be expected to be able to do that without help. Faith leaders can offer themselves as a resource and become strong collaborators.*



Raise Awareness about Domestic Abuse

The faith community can have a powerful impact on people's attitudes and beliefs about domestic abuse. Here's what faith communities can do:

Provide Education, Training, and Resources

- Display **informational materials and referral numbers** to local programs in private areas like women's restrooms.
- Display **posters** about domestic abuse in common areas.
- Organize **training** by a local service provider for the congregation and other faith-affiliated groups.
- Identify and disseminate already existing **resources** and develop informed resources where none exist.
- Sponsor activities and events that help **raise awareness** about domestic abuse.
- **Integrate information** about domestic abuse in the congregation's programs, youth groups, marriage preparation classes, study groups, etc.
- Establish a **committee to promote awareness** of the problem of domestic abuse and how the congregation can help.
- Sponsor **educational seminars** on domestic abuse for members of your congregation.
- Routinely include information about domestic abuse in **monthly newsletters and on bulletin boards**.



Take Action to Support Victims

- Create a climate of sensitivity where members of the congregation know they will **receive understanding and assistance** when they disclose they are victims of domestic abuse.
- Have an **action plan** in place if an abused person calls for help.
- Make **appropriate and informed referrals** to local programs that have the expertise in place to help victims navigate the legal, health care, and child welfare systems.
- Do the **theological and scriptural homework** necessary to better understand and respond to domestic abuse victims who seek support (*see resources at the end of this booklet*).
- Create opportunities for victims of domestic abuse to **discuss their experiences and seek healing**.
- Form **support groups**, in collaboration with local domestic violence programs, for victims who desire faith- or spirituality-based healing.
- Urge **abuser accountability**.

Take a Stand Against Domestic Abuse

- **Encourage men**, particularly faith leaders, to use their influence to communicate intolerance for abuse against women and girls in all forms.
- **Publicly denounce common myths** and misconceptions about domestic abuse; reject excuses for abuse openly and routinely.
- Teach boys and girls about what constitutes a **healthy, non-violent relationship**.



- Participate in **domestic violence awareness activities** in the community.
- Join in the **national observance** of “Domestic Violence Awareness Month” in October. **Encourage a sermon** about domestic abuse to be given during “Domestic Violence Awareness Month” in October.
- Dedicate at least one weekend that month to **educate parishioners** about domestic abuse and its presence in your faith community.
- **Publicly acknowledge** domestic abuse as a serious public health, safety, and spiritual concern.
- **Contact and write letters to governmental leaders** about domestic abuse legislation and policies that affect your community.
- **Encourage training and education** for all religious leaders, lay leaders, religious teachers and seminary students to increase their awareness of domestic abuse.
- **Urge other faith communities** to share compassion and comfort with those afflicted by the tragedy of domestic abuse.
- **Network with domestic violence programs** to locate religious and secular allies on the local, regional, state, and national levels.
- Develop **theologically-based materials** that emphasize a victim’s rights to safety and support and a perpetrator's personal responsibility for ending the abuse.
- Urge the **development or expansion of core curricula** on abuse against women in the basic education for religious leaders, including theory- and practice-oriented course work such as counseling or pastoral care.



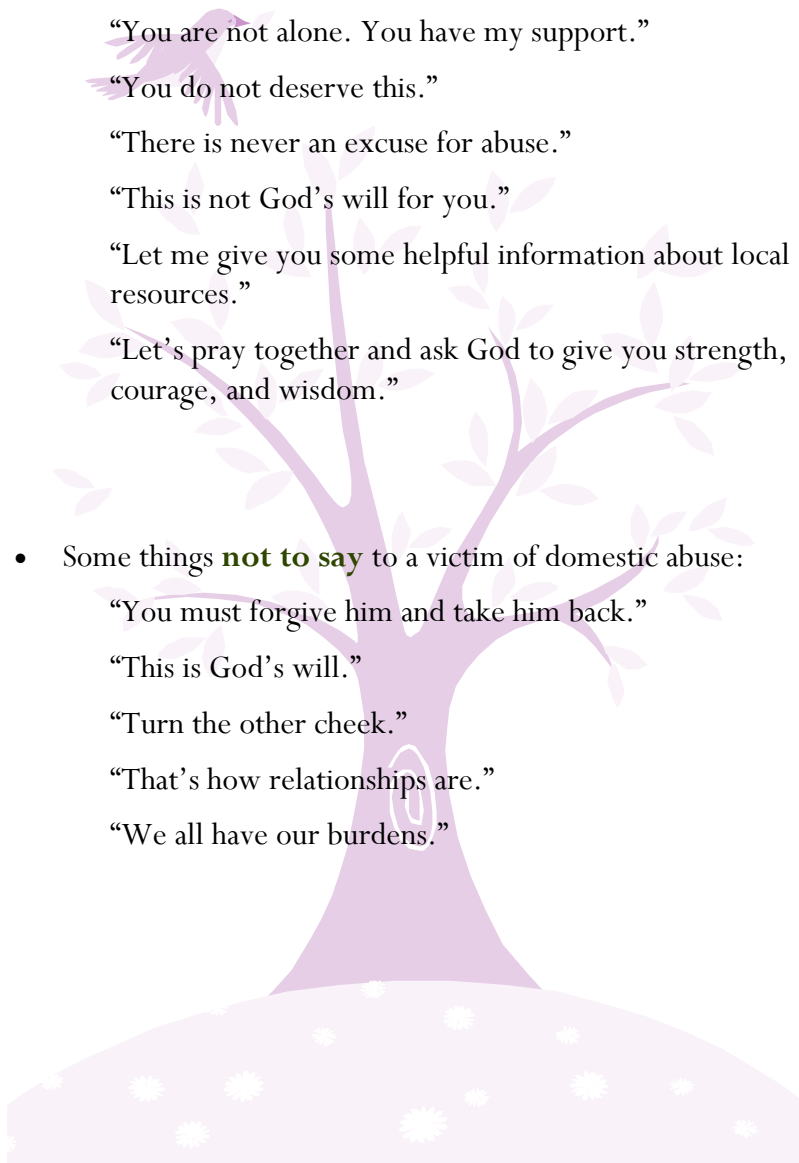
Responding to a Victim

An increased level of knowledge about domestic abuse will help make a faith-based community aware of some needs that would not have otherwise occurred to them, and will lead them to dismiss some approaches that might have made sense before. Here are some helpful tips to keep in mind when responding to victims:

- **Victim safety** *must always* be the first priority. Help the victim plan for safety. Encourage her to think about a safety plan; have her consider setting aside: some money; important papers for her and the children; a change of clothes hidden or in care of a friend if she decides to go to a shelter. Plan how to exit the house the next time the abuser is violent. Plan what to do about the children if they are at school, if they are asleep, etc.
- Protect the **victim's confidentiality**. Do not give information about the victim or the victim's whereabouts to the abuser or to others who might pass information on to the abuser. This can put the victim and children in increased danger.
- **Refer, refer, refer!** If abuse is known or suspected to be occurring in a relationship, refer the victim to the local domestic violence service provider for expert services. ***Do not suggest or attempt couple's counseling or mediation.*** *While such approaches may be effective in a relationship in which there is equality, they can be very dangerous in a relationship characterized by power and control by one partner over the other. In short, they do not address the problem of domestic abuse and can endanger the victim.*



- Some things to **say** to a victim of domestic abuse:
 - “From what you have told me, I am very much concerned for your safety.”
 - “You are not alone. You have my support.”
 - “You do not deserve this.”
 - “There is never an excuse for abuse.”
 - “This is not God’s will for you.”
 - “Let me give you some helpful information about local resources.”
 - “Let’s pray together and ask God to give you strength, courage, and wisdom.”
- Some things **not to say** to a victim of domestic abuse:
 - “You must forgive him and take him back.”
 - “This is God’s will.”
 - “Turn the other cheek.”
 - “That’s how relationships are.”
 - “We all have our burdens.”





Include a Local Program in Your Community Service Projects

Support local domestic violence service providers, in accordance with their needs and policies, by encouraging faith community members to donate money, time, and other material resources. Note: A program's most pressing needs can change from one month to the next, but financial contributions are *always* needed.

Offer Financial Support

- Encourage those responsible for preparing the **annual budget** at a place of worship to **include a line item for the local domestic violence program**.
- Organize or participate in a **Walk or Run** and gather pledges to raise funds to benefit victims so they can rebuild their lives after a shelter stay.
- Conduct a **fundraiser** to maintain and expand victim services at a local domestic violence program.
- Dedicate a worship day during "Domestic Violence Awareness Month" when the **weekly offering** can be donated to domestic violence programs to benefit the victims who seek their help.

Offer Physical Space

Provide space in your sanctuary, classrooms, and multi-purpose rooms for educational seminars or weekly support groups, or serve as a supervised visitation site when parents need to safely visit their children.

Offer to Adopt the Shelter

- Conduct a **canned food drive** for a shelter.



- Collect **hygiene items/toys/paper products/blankets/books** to give to a shelter.
- Make **welcome baskets** for new shelter guests.
- Collect and distribute **art and school supplies** for shelters.
- Make **pillows, fleece tie blankets, and stuffed toys** for children who are in a shelter.
- Collect items to make **baby bags for new mothers** in shelters (e.g. diapers, bottles, pacifiers, burp cloths, formula, baby food, etc.). Organize a **diaper drive** to collect disposable diapers for use in shelters.
- Provide **foster care for pets** of shelter residents.
- **Distribute program information** about domestic abuse at health fairs, festivals and other community events.
- Organize a **cell phone drive**. Cell phones can save lives when used by victims to call 911 in emergencies.
- Collect **holiday gifts** for children and adults in shelters.
- Throw holiday or birthday **parties**.

Offer Your Know-How

- Share **skills**.
- Share **hobbies and areas of interests**.
- Provide **business or professional services** free-of-charge.
- **Translate** program literature into different languages.
- Provide pro bono **legal services**.



Offer Your Time

- Become trained as a **volunteer on the hotline, as a legal advocate, or ER companion.**
- Serve on the **board of directors** of local domestic violence programs.
- Answer phones, make copies, file, assist with mailing, input data into a database, and perform other general **office functions.**
- Assist with the **resource library**—catalog materials, create a system for filing, add and retrieve information, and maintain library collection.
- **Copy, fold, and distribute literature** throughout the community, including hospitals, women’s health centers, ob/gyn offices, and universities. Stock and restock.

Providing Domestic Violence Support to Victims

If, after learning more about domestic abuse and existing program services in the area, a faith-based group may believe they can and should provide support assistance, there are some important considerations that should not be overlooked.

Domestic abuse assistance must be driven by the **needs of the victim**, and the victim must be “in the driver’s seat.” Each person’s situation is different, and no one has more knowledge about it than the victim. Explore, along with victims, the best options for *their* situation and **don’t tell them what to do**— they have certainly had enough of that.

By being **nonjudgmental** and **supporting the victim’s self-identified goals** (even if you don’t agree), you can form a positive, trusting relationship with victims.



- **Confidentiality** is an important feature of domestic abuse assistance—sharing information can put victims in danger.
- **Make referrals** as often as necessary. It is important to be aware of the resources in the community and, to the extent possible, what will actually happen when a victim seeks services there.
- Domestic abuse victims, like anyone else, often face a **range of situational issues** in their lives. Be aware that the victims seeking help may be confronted with **multiple barriers to self-sufficiency, including a lack of education, employment skills, English-speaking ability, affordable housing, transportation, health care insurance, or child care alternatives**. These factors, which can compound the suffering victims must endure, may have preceded or resulted from the abuse.
- A domestic violence shelter is not a place to simply “hide out.” It means **safety in a secure, confidential location** with the assistance victims need when they are in great physical danger and emotional turmoil.

Types of Victim Support

A faith-based community has a great potential to contribute to a victim’s healing process through emotional and practical support. Faith-based groups, through their compassion and commitment, can work in conjunction with local domestic violence programs to provide:

- **Domestic abuse information and referrals** to community programs.
- **Support groups for domestic abuse victims** for emotional support and encouragement.



- **Emergency funds** to alleviate a victim's short-term financial constraints.
- **Transportation** for victims who need to get to court hearings, support meetings, or medical appointments.
- **Education assistance** to help victims meet their employment goals.
- **Transitional housing** with full support services that provides victims with the second stage of housing after leaving emergency shelter.
- **Assistance in obtaining affordable housing** for victims so they can afford to live independently.
- **Parenting programs** to give victims the skills they need to address their children's emotional well-being as they cope with change.
- **Child care** services for victims who need to get to court hearings, support meetings, or medical appointments.
- **Foster homes for pets** to provide victims will the relief of knowing their pet will be lovingly cared for in a safe environment while they are in shelter.
- **Telephone buddy support** for victims who give their permission to know they are not alone and that someone cares about them.
- **"English as a Second Language" lessons** for immigrant victims as they strive to become more proficient in their English-speaking skills.
- **Employment assistance** with job placement and job-building skills.



Further Resources:

Domestic Violence: What Every Pastor Needs to Know. Miles, Rev. Al. Augsburg Fortress: Minneapolis, MN 2000.

Ending Violence in Teen Dating Relationships: A Resource Guide for Priests and Pastors. Miles, Rev. Al. Augsburg Fortress: Minneapolis, MN 2005.

Family Violence and Religion: An Interfaith Resource Guide. Volcano Press: Volcano, CA 1995.

Websites

www.faithtrustinstitute.org (resources and training for faith-based organizations)

www.vawnet.org (online resource library on domestic violence)

www.ncdsv.org (National Center on Domestic & Sexual Violence: training and advocacy)

www.ovw.usdoj.gov (Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women)

www.thehotline.org (National Domestic Violence Hotline)

www.ncadv.org (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence)

www.interfaithpartners.org (Save Havens Interfaith Partnership Against Domestic Violence)

www.hotpeachpages.net (International Domestic Violence Directory)

www.theraveproject.com (Religion & Violence eLearning: online training and interfaith resources)

www.jwi.org (Jewish Women International: advocacy, training, and programs for Jewish women and girls)

www.peacefulfamilies.org (Peaceful Families Project: resources and training on domestic violence in Islamic families)

www.safeplaceministries.com Safe Place Ministries (Christian education and support for victims and clergy)

www.religiousinstitute.org/search/statements (Religious Institute: denominational statements on domestic violence, child abuse, sexual abuse, and other topics)

www.dovesnest.net (policies on children exposed to violence for faith communities)

COMPREHENSIVE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAMS IN MARYLAND

ALLEGANY COUNTY

Hotline 301-759-9244
Family Crisis Resource Center
301-759-9246

ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY

Hotline 410-222-6800
YWCA Domestic Violence Services
410-626-7800

BALTIMORE CITY

Hotline 410-889-7884
TTY 410-889-0047
House of Ruth Maryland
410-889-0840

Hotline 410-828-6390
TurnAround, Inc.
410-837-7000

BALTIMORE COUNTY

Hotline 410-828-6390
Family & Children's Services of Central MD
410-281-1334
Family Crisis Center of Baltimore Co., Inc.
410-285-4357 410-285-7496 (Shelter)
TurnAround, Inc.
410-377-8111

CALVERT COUNTY

Hotline 410-535-1121
Metro Hotline 301-855-1075
Crisis Intervention Center

CARROLL COUNTY

Hotline 410-857-0077
Family and Children's Services of Central MD
410-876-1233

CAROLINE, KENT, DORCHESTER, QUEEN ANNE'S, & TALBOT COUNTIES

Hotline 1-800-927-4673
Mid-Shore Council on Family Violence
410-479-1149

CECIL COUNTY

Hotline 410-996-0333
Cecil Co. Domestic Violence/Rape Crisis Ctr

CHARLES COUNTY

Hotline 301-645-3336
Metro Hotline 301-843-1110
Center for Abused Persons
301-645-8994

FREDERICK COUNTY

Hotline 301-662-8800
TTY 301-662-1565
Heartly House

GARRETT COUNTY

Hotline 301-334-9000
The Dove Center
301-334-6255 (Oakland)
301-895-4300 (Grantsville)

HARFORD COUNTY

Hotline 410-836-8430
Sexual Assault/Spouse Abuse Resource Ctr.
410-836-8431
410-879-3486 (Baltimore)

HOWARD COUNTY

Hotline 410-997-2272/1-800-752-0191
Domestic Violence Center
410-997-0304

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Evening & Weekend Hotline 240-777-4673
Business Hours Hotline 240-777-4210
Abused Persons Program

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY

Hotline 1-866-382-7474
Family Crisis Center, Inc.
301-779-2100
House of Ruth Maryland (Legal and Counseling)
240-450-3270 or 301-699-7790

ST. MARY'S COUNTY

Hotline 301-863-6661
Walden / Sierra, Inc.
301-863-6677

SOMERSET, WICOMICO & WORCESTER COUNTIES

Hotline 410-749-4357/410-641-4357
Life Crisis Center
410-749-0771

WASHINGTON COUNTY

Hotline 301-739-8975
Citizens Assisting and Sheltering the Abused
(CASA) 301-739-4990



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