Clearinghouse on Supervised Visitation
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FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY 1851

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
MyFLFamilies.com

Domestic Violence Awareness Month

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month

- Domestic violence is prevalent in every community and affects all people

- 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men are physically abused by an intimate partner

- Domestic violence can have long-lasting physical, emotional, and social impacts

What can you do?

Make sure you are supporting the people in your life, and spread awareness about the harms of domestic violence

If you or someone you know is being abused, call:
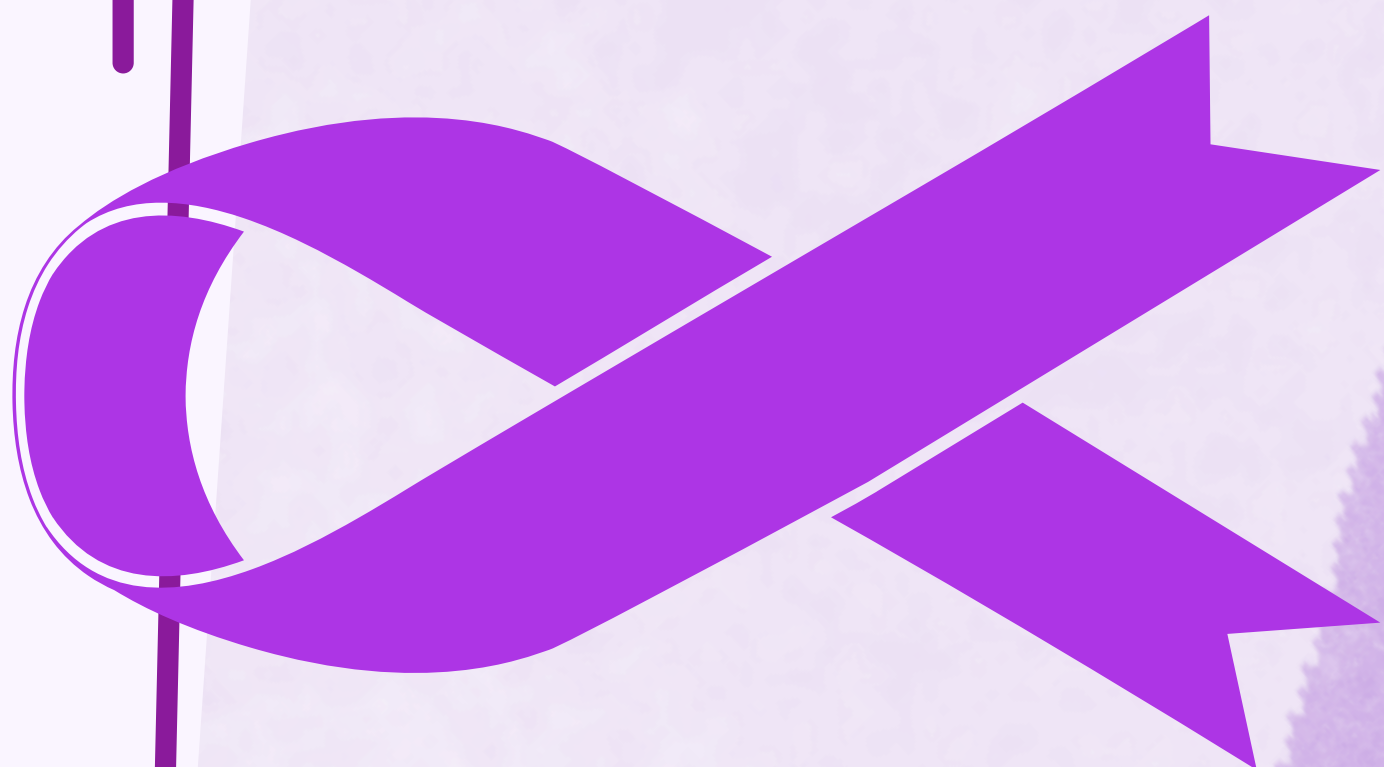
1-800-799-7233
(National Domestic Violence Hotline)

1-800-787-3224
(TTY)

For a list of local resources, visit
https://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/domestic-violence/map.shtml

End Domestic Violence

(The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, n.d.), (Domestic Violence, 2022)

An Introduction to Domestic Violence in Child Welfare

This training provides crucial information about more complex issues for supervised visitation professionals. The introduction below sets a common framework for learning about those advanced concepts.

Definitions

Throughout this training, we refer to the crime of domestic violence. Other states may use different terms, such as intimate partner violence. Generally, domestic violence is abuse or threats of abuse against someone of a current or past intimate relationship, as well as individuals related by blood or marriage. Domestic violence can include inflicting physical violence, sexual assault, threats of harm, or behaviors such as harassment, stalking, and destruction of property. Abuse can take many forms and does not always include physical violence. Abuse can be perpetrated in any form in which the abuser elicits power or control over the victim (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence [NCADV], 2020).

In Florida, domestic violence is defined as "any assault, aggravated assault, battery, aggravated battery, sexual assault, sexual battery, stalking, aggravated stalking, kidnapping, false imprisonment, or any criminal offense resulting in physical injury or death of one family or household member by another family or household member" (Fla. Stat. § 741.28, 2022).

Terminology

Because domestic violence is a crime in Florida, the law refers to those who have been abused as "victims." This term is typically used in the justice system, but may be less useful in the social services systems that exist to help people heal and thrive after being victimized. Thus, many agencies use the term "survivor." This training uses both of these terms -- victim and survivor -- with the goal that each training participant develops the skills to assist "victims" to transition into "survivors."

Prevalence

Now that we've provided definitions of domestic violence, you should know how common it is. **More than 10 million adults in the United States experience domestic violence annually** (NCADV, 2020). The number of intimate partner violence victims increased by almost half between 2016 and 2018. The prevalence of domestic violence varies based on geographic region and the presence of various mediating factors.

- In 2018, domestic violence accounted for **20% of all violent crimes**.
- **Almost half** of all men and women in the United States will experience psychological aggression by a partner in their lifetime.
- DV hotlines nationwide receive approximately **19,000 calls daily**.
- **19%** of intimate partner violence involves a weapon.
- Access to a firearm increases the risk of femicide by **400%**.

(NCADV, 2020)

Women
- **1 in 4 women** will experience severe physical violence by a partner in their lifetime (Black et al., 2011).
- **1 in 10 women** will be raped by an intimate partner in her lifetime (Black et al., 2011).
- Domestic violence is most commonly experienced by women between the **ages of 18 and 24**.

Men
- **1 in 7 men** will experience severe physical violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime.
- **1 in 12 men** have experienced contact with sexual violence by a partner in their lifetime.
- Data on sexual violence against men is **underreported**.
- **1 in 19 men** have experienced stalking victimization during their lifetime

(Black et al., 2011)

LGBTQ+ Individuals

The following represents statistics of domestic violence (including rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner) LGBTQ+ individuals experienced in their lifetime:

- **43.8% of lesbian women** and **26% of gay men**
- **61.1% of bisexual women** and **37.3% of bisexual men**

In contrast with rates of their heterosexual counterparts:

- 35% of heterosexual women and 29% of heterosexual men.

(NCADV, 2018; Peitzmeier et al., 2020)

LGBTQ+ survivors of intimate partner violence may be less likely to seek protection orders:

- In 2012, **less than 5%** of LGBTQ+ survivors pursued protection orders.

LGBTQ+ victims have higher risks of violence:

- Transgender victims **have a higher likelihood** of experiencing **intimate partner violence in public**
- When compared to those who identify as cisgender, transgender victims **have a significantly higher** prevalence rate of **intimate partner violence**
- Bisexual victims have a **higher risk** of experiencing forms of **sexual violence**
- Black/African American victims who are LGBTQ+ are **more likely to encounter physical intimate partner violence**

(NCADV, 2018; Peitzmeier et al., 2020)

Sexual Assault
- Rape and sexual assault victimizations in the U.S. increased by 146% between 2016 and 2018. These crimes can be perpetrated as part of domestic violence dynamics in a relationship.

(NCADV, 2020)

Homicide
- 50% of female murder victims are killed by intimate partners.
- Less prevalent, 1 in 13, males murdered are by former intimate partners.
- Over half of all murder-suicides are committed by previous romantic partners.
- Firearms are utilized in most homicides involving former romantic partners.

(NCADV, 2020)

Stalking
- Over half of stalking victims reported being stalked by a current or former intimate partner.
- 38.9 million women (1 in 3) and 19 million men (1in 6) in the U.S. have been stalked in their lifetime.

(Centers for Disease Control & Prevention [CDC], 2021a; NCADV, 2020)

Physical and Mental Impact
- Victimization by an intimate partner is correlated with higher rates of depression and suicidal behavior.
- Victims of intimate partner violence are at increased risk for contracting sexually transmitted infections.
- About 34% of victims of intimate partner violence receive medical attention for their injuries.

(NCADV, 2020)

Prevalence in Florida:
- 37.9% of Florida women and 29.3% of Florida men experience intimate partner dating violence, intimate partner sexual violence, and/or intimate partner stalking in their lifetimes.
- An estimated 721,000 Florida women have experienced stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetimes.
- In 2019, 105,298 domestic violence incidents were reported to police in Florida
- In 2019, 221 Floridians were killed in domestic violence incidents
- In 2020, 217 individuals died as a result of domestic violence homicide, representing approximately 20 percent of all homicides in Florida
- From 2020-2021, there were 3,139 child removals involving domestic violence in Florida

(NCADV, n.d.-a; Office of Domestic Violence [ODV], 2022)

Intersection of Domestic Violence and Child Maltreatment

Studies show that in 30 to 60% of families where domestic violence is identified, child maltreatment is also present (Casey Family Programs, 2021). Additionally:

- Children in homes where domestic violence is present experience physical abuse or neglect **9 to 15 times** more than the national average.
- **87% of children** in homes where domestic violence occurs witness it.
- Mothers of abused children tend to be victims of abuse themselves.
- Mothers experiencing domestic violence are **8 times more likely** to abuse their children.
- Children living with battered mothers are **12 to 14 times more likely** to experience sexual abuse than children with mothers that have not been abused.

(Florida Courts, 2022)

Pattern of Behavior

Now that you've read the definitions and prevalence of domestic violence, it's important to understand the core dynamic of the crime. Domestic violence is often a *pattern of behavior* used by an abuser to establish power and control over a spouse or family member through violence, fear, and intimidation.

Why do abusers act this way? In short, they believe that they are entitled to control their victims. They believe threats and violence are acceptable and will produce the desired results. Therefore, domestic violence is purposeful and instrumental behavior. Additionally:

- Abuser's behavior is directed at restricting a victim's independent thought and action.
- Abusers often isolate victims from their social support and ability to work.
- Abusers select specific tactics that work to control the victim.
- No amount of victim compliance typically satisfies an abuser's need for control.
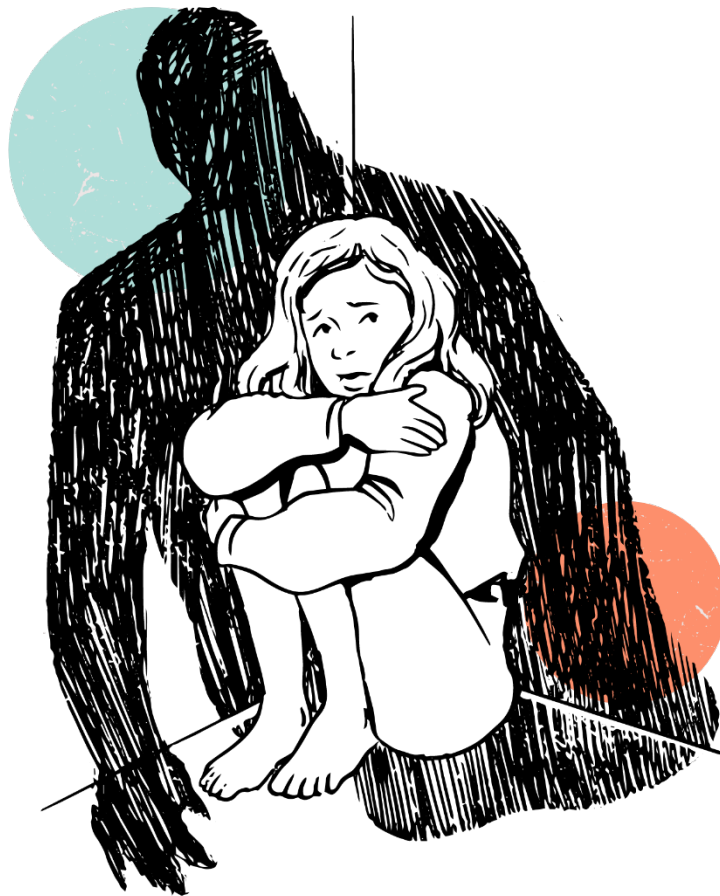
Common Types of Abuse

An abuser can assert and maintain power over an intimate partner or family member in several ways. When an abuser uses whatever tactics work to exert control over a victim, these are often seen as the *dynamics* of an abusive relationship. These are described below and include:

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Financial abuse
- Psychological abuse

Type of Abuse	Description	Behaviors
Physical Abuse	Indirect or direct physically aggressive behavior, threats of violence, and restricting physical needs. (Arizona Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence [ACESDV], 2022)	• Pushing, kicking, slapping, punching, scratching, strangling, or biting • Pulling or ripping out hair • Spitting at or throwing objects at or near the victim • Withholding physical needs like sleep, meals, money, safe transportation, or access to the home • Violence that results in injury, disability, disfigurement, or death (ACESDV, 2022)
Emotional Abuse	Behaviors which expose and take advantage of an individual's vulnerability, lack of confidence, or character. (ACESDV, 2022)	• Degradation • Intimidation • Manipulation or gaslighting • Brainwashing • Controlling someone to their detriment • Threats of hurting or taking away important people or things (ACESDV, 2022)

Type of Abuse	Description	Behaviors
Sexual Abuse	The use of sex in a way to exploit or force sexual activity on another person. Sexual abuse can also include verbal and physical behavior. (ACESDV, 2022)	• Sabotaging methods of birth control • Calling a partner a derogatory name • Exploiting a victim who is unable to consent to sexual activity • Using force, coercion, guilt, or manipulation to make the victim engage in sexual activities • Making offensive or derogatory remarks regarding the victim's sexual preferences
Financial Abuse	Also referred to as economic abuse, this form of control and manipulation involves a person using another person's finances against them to gain power over them. (ACESDV, 2022)	• Not allowing or limiting the victim's access to funds • Controlling family income and expenses • Keeping secrets regarding finances or hidden accounts • Preventing or keeping the victim from maintaining a job • Misuse of a partner's name for financial gain • Forcing a partner to sign documents that will affect their economic status
Psychological Abuse	This term is used to describe all threatening, intimidating, or fear-causing behavior. (U.S. Department of Justice, n.d.)	• Preventing the victim from communicating with friends or family • Threats of violence • Blackmailing the victim • Preventing the victim from leaving the house • Controlling where or what the victim does with their time

Remember that although the chart above describes many common tactics used in domestic violence, behaviors can also include stalking, verbal abuse, spiritual abuse, cyberstalking, and using technology to exploit or harm victims (Women Against Abuse, n.d.).

The Effects of Domestic Violence on Children

Since domestic violence is so common, in the United States alone, an estimated 3.3 million to 10 million children are exposed to adult domestic violence every year (Resource Center on Domestic Violence: Child Protection and Custody, n.d.). The impact of domestic violence is profound. Family violence is more traumatic for most children than street violence. Below we describe the specific effects of domestic violence on children.

- **Psychological effects**: Depression, low self-esteem, anxiety, anger, shame, withdrawal, hypervigilance, and inability to sustain good relationships (Casey Family Programs, 2021; Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019).
    - Children exposed to domestic violence risk cognitive, psychological, and emotional impairments more than those not exposed (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019).
- **Physical effects**: Chronic fatigue syndrome, headaches, malnutrition, breathing problems, bowel disease, and more (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019).
- **Academic effects**: Poor school performance, truancy, absenteeism,
- difficulty concentrating, school failure, and dropping out (Casey Family Programs, 2021; Herrnkohl et al., 2008).
- **Social and behavioral effects**: Difficulties building trusting relationships, problems with alcohol/drugs, aggressive behavior, violence towards others, and running away (Florida Courts, 2022). Adolescents who run away frequently may do so to escape domestic violence (Florida Courts, 2022). Many victims and children become homeless because of leaving a domestic violence situation (Florida Courts, 2022).
- **Long-term effects**: Higher rates of substance use, chronic mental health issues, delinquency, eating disorders, and other health problems (Casey Family Programs, 2021; Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019; Florida Courts, 2022).

Professional Interaction with Victims

In order to provide nuanced and effective support to children and their families, all professionals, including child welfare professionals, should understand the often complex dynamics present in cases where domestic violence exists. Yet these cases are notoriously difficult for all professionals – including lawyers, judges, doctors, and child welfare staff. The cases are difficult because victims are often:

- Experiencing negative physical symptoms from the violence, including depression and anxiety
- Exhausted by the violence, and afraid of not being believed by people in positions of authority
- Experiencing emotions such as guilt, grief, anger, irritability, numbness
- Fearful of having their children removed from them
- Scared that the violence will be denied or minimized; and that the perpetrator will use the children against them and never be held accountable
- Terrified that the perpetrator will retaliate against them and hurt them further
- Frightened of being blamed for the violence

This training provides opportunities to explore such complexities of domestic violence with practical implications to benefit the victim, parent, and children.

Risk Factors for Perpetration of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence and other violent relationships are typically based on power and control. However, there are multiple determinants of domestic violence. To better understand the complexities of domestic violence and its root causes, we review below the various risk factors that increase the likelihood of domestic violence perpetration.

When considering the cause of domestic violence, it is important to remember that there is no single reason for the crime. Additionally, domestic violence is not caused by victims: Even if a victim does everything possible to please an abusive partner, the perpetrator is still likely to control the victim through intimidation, threats, violence, and other coercive behavior.

The following tabs explore the complexities between individual, relationship, community, and societal risk factors for perpetration of domestic violence, and prevention strategies for intervention.

Individual Level Risk Factors

Biological and personal history factors may increase the likelihood of becoming a perpetrator of violence. These factors include:

- Young age
- Low education
- Low income, economic stress, and unemployment
- Heavy substance use
- History of being abused as a child
- History of being a physical abuser
- Low self-esteem
- Feelings of anger, hostility, and insecurity
- History of depression and suicidal attempts
- Accepting of violence, and hostility towards women
- Belief in strict gender roles and hostility towards women
- Impulsive behavior and inability to regulate emotions
- Traits associated with antisocial and borderline personality disorders

Relationship Level

Close relationships may increase the risk of experiencing violence as a perpetrator. These relationships include:

- Peer pressure from friends/family who accept violence and show antisocial and aggressive traits
- Relationship conflicts that involve jealousy, separations, or possessiveness
- Uneven power dynamics - one partner has more control than the other
- Witnessing domestic violence and poor parenting as a child
- Experiencing corporal punishment as a child
- Conflict over children
- Access to firearms
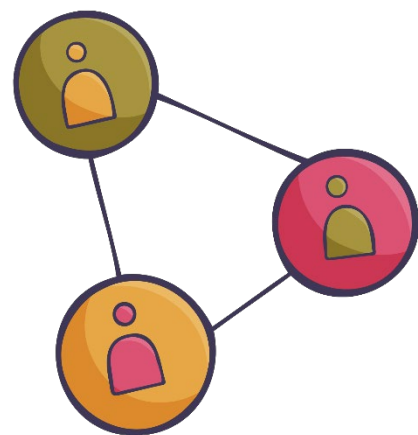
Community Level

Characteristics of settings, such as schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods, that may be associated with individuals becoming perpetrators of violence. For example, communities with

- High levels of poverty, unemployment rates, violence, and crime
- Restricted educational opportunities
- Low community involvement and unwillingness to intervene
- Easy access to substances

Societal Level

The broad societal factors may help create a climate where violence is encouraged or inhibited. These factors include:

- Health, economic, and educational policies that help maintain economic or social inequities between groups in society
- Cultural acceptance of aggression and violence
- Beliefs in sexism, gender-role stereotyping, homophobia, etc.

(CDC, 2022a; Krug et al., 2002)

Knowledge Check

Match a domestic violence scenario involving a man named Fred, who has just been arrested for domestic violence. Identify the risk factor level for each scenario; Individual, Relationship, Community, and Societal.

Which risk factor level fits these scenarios?

- Fred's brother Eddie brags that he "keeps control" of his wife, Debbie. (Answer: Relationship Level)
- Fred was abused as a child by his father (Answer: Relationship level)
- Fred lives in an apartment complex where he hears couples yelling and fighting at night (Answer: Community Level)
- Fred believes that women are inferior to men (Answer: Individual Level)
- Fred never graduated from high school and was raised in a community where he rarely encountered women in positions of authority (Answer: Societal Level)

Perpetrators

By examining nationwide data, researchers have been able to describe common perpetrator characteristics and traits. While you explore these characteristics, keep in mind that individual perpetrators may not always share all of these characteristics.

Who are the Perpetrators?

People of any race, age, gender, sexuality, religion, education level, or economic status can be a victim — or perpetrator — of domestic violence.

- Perpetrators can belong to any socioeconomic, ethnic, or racial group.
- Perpetrators may have been victims of direct abuse, or witnessed domestic violence in their home.
- Perpetrators often exhibit a pattern of jealous and controlling behavior that isolates, threatens, and frightens their victim.
- Perpetrators may see their partner as central to their existence.
- Perpetrators often are only violent within the domestic relationship.

(NCADV, n.d.-b)

Common Behaviors

Although no two perpetrators are exactly the same, some common behaviors are displayed by those who commit domestic violence. A few of these include

- Extreme jealousy
- Possessiveness
- Narcissism or low self-esteem
- A desire to control the partner
- Manipulative behaviors
- Unpredictability
- Explosive rages used to intimidate

"Invisible" Perpetrators

Identifying a perpetrator of domestic violence may be difficult because perpetrators have learned to hide the warning signs of their violence. Perpetrators may be extremely friendly and outgoing when they are among their friends, family, or co-workers. Often friends, family, or colleagues are surprised or skeptical when they hear about a domestic violence incident. Researchers have noted that some perpetrators may have the following traits:

- Gainful employment or holding a well-respected position of power in their community and/or workplace
- A charming, charismatic demeanor
- High social functioning within their social group
- Deliberate perpetration of abuse in private rather than in public
- Jekyll-Hyde personality: a personality type characterized by dramatic mood swings, fluctuating sporadically between idealizing and devaluing their victim
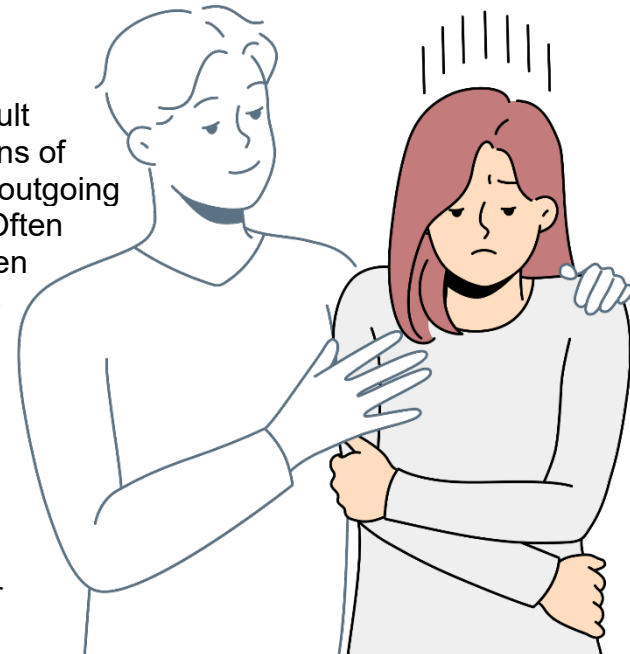
Drug and Alcohol Abuse

- Studies show a positive correlation between both alcohol and substance abuse and domestic violence for abusers. **This does *not* mean that substance abuse causes domestic violence.** Many people abuse substances and do not abuse their partners. Still, abusers may try to shift the blame for their domestic violence to the substances they abuse (Klein, 2009).
- According to the Memphis Night Arrest Study, 92% of perpetrators used drugs or alcohol on the day of assaults, and roughly half were described as daily substance abusers throughout the prior month (Brookoff, 1997).
- Even though heavy use of alcohol or drugs does not cause domestic violence, it is a significant predictor of the **reoccurrence** of domestic violence (Klein, 2009).
- Substance and alcohol abuse are also large indicators of how **lethal** the violence could be (Kyriacou et al., 1999).

Mental Illness

- Abusers are not more likely to be mentally ill than the general population (Gondolf & White, 2001).

Crime and Reoffending

- Recurrence of domestic violence is difficult to predict. Still, studies show that when perpetrators are deprived of their victims, they are likely to reoffend with a different victim (Klein, 2009).
- There is a recurrence of abuse in a short amount of time in approximately one-third of abusive relationships; there is a greater reoccurrence of abuse in longer amounts of time (Klein, 2009).
- Anywhere between 49% and 89% of perpetrators have prior criminal offenses. Most perpetrators are likely to have a prior criminal history, including violent and nonviolent offenses against both men and women (Hirschel & Dawson, 2000; Jolin et al., 1998; Ventura & Davis, 2005).
- Prior arrest history is an important risk factor: perpetrators with one or more prior arrests on their criminal record for any crime are more likely to commit multiple acts of domestic violence (Buzawa et al., 1999; Davis et al., 1998; Gondolf, 2000; Orchowsky, 1999; Rempel et al., 2008).
- Prior arrests for drug and alcohol offenses correlate with higher abuse rates (Goldkamp, 1996).

Firearms and other indications of lethality

- The use of firearms in domestic violence dynamics includes threats to shoot the victim, cleaning, holding or loading a gun during an argument, threatening to shoot someone the victim cares about, and firing a gun during the argument (Block, 2004; Rothman et al., 2004).
- A household with a firearm is over six times more likely to experience the death of a family member. If a woman has been threatened or assaulted with a firearm, she is 20 times more likely to die of domestic violence (Campbell et al., 2003a; Campbell et al., 2003b; Koziol-McLain et al., 2006).
- According to the CDC, it is more likely for female intimate partners to be killed by firearms than by all other means combined (Paulkossi et al., 2001).
- The risk of lethality is increased when a child of the victim by a previous partner is living in the home (Campbell et al., 2003a; Campbell et al., 2003b).
- Behaviors increasing lethality risk also include:
    - **Threats to kill**: Whether perpetrators have threatened to kill in the past, making those women 14.9 times more likely to die.
    - **Strangulation:** Perpetrator attempts to strangle a victim make lethality 9.9 times more likely.
    - **Forced Sex:** Using forced sex makes lethality 7.6 times more likely.
    - **Control of Partner**: A perpetrator's control of a partner's daily activities makes lethality 5.1 times more likely (Klein, 2009).
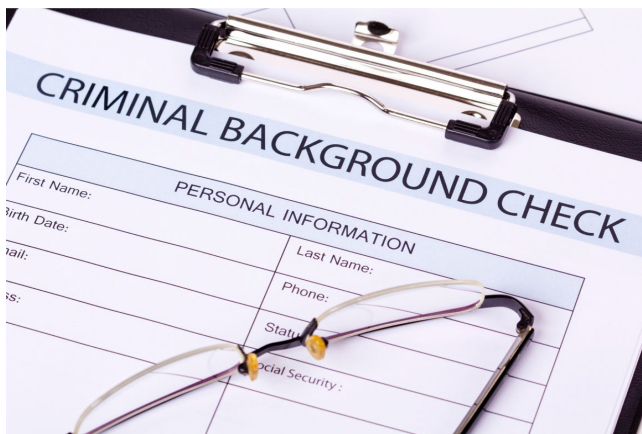
Coercive Control

Domestic violence is often about coercive control. Even though the law focuses on specific and **individual violent acts** to define domestic violence, it is important to understand that domestic violence often occurs within the context of controlling behavior. Researcher Evan Stark has published widely on the concept of coercive control as the core element of domestic violence. Coercive control is a pattern of dominating behavior used by an abuser to establish power and control over a spouse or family member using the following:

- Fear
- Isolation
- Degradation
- Exploitation
- Intimidation
- Physical and sexual violence

(Stark, 2007)

The coercive control model of abuse examines how abusive partners use specific tactics to hurt victims while also isolating and controlling them. Coercive control defines a cycle of psychological control and manipulation (Stark, 2007).

Child welfare professionals should remember that abusers believe they are **entitled** to control their victims. They believe threats and violence are acceptable and will produce the desired results.

Context of Violence in Coercion and Control
Domestic violence incidents may not be taken seriously when viewed as individual incidents, and perpetrators are rarely held accountable. Examining individual incidents of domestic violence can be problematic: the problem is that such an approach does not encompass the history of the relationship and all of the other controlling and entrapping tactics that are a part of the relationship. In addition, when victims repeatedly seek help for repeated individual incidents, they are sometimes stigmatized by service providers and law enforcement. (National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges [NCJFCJ], 2011).

The power and impact a violent incident has on the victim can be better understood when viewed in the context of a pattern of controlling and coercive behavior.

(Stark, 2009; Stark, 2012)

The Dynamics and Tactics of Control

Research has described how perpetrators control their victims. Perpetrators do not always begin a relationship with the intent of physically harming and/or threatening victims. Instead, over time the perpetrator gains and maintains power through subtle and overt tactics that enforce fear and intimidation. Such tactics escalate when the perpetrator fears losing control of the victim. Some tactics of domestic violence include:

- Objectifying victims and seeing them as property and/or sexual objects
- Externalizing the cause of the violent behavior and blaming something/someone else for it (blaming, for example, economic stress or stress caused by the victim in some way)
- Exhibiting a pleasant, charming, attentive, or apologetic demeanor between periods of violent episodes
- Intimidating/demeaning the victim (publicly or privately) through constant criticism
- Discrediting the victim to others, so the victim has no credibility to outsiders
- Socially and physically isolating the victim by limiting interactions with friends and family (this disconnects the victim from their sense of what is normal; it becomes difficult to see themself as a victim)
- Monopolizing household finances without the partner's consent
- Accusing the victim of being hypersensitive, hysterical, or mentally unbalanced (in attempts to invalidate the victim's reaction to their violence and deny the abuse)
- Denying or minimizing the seriousness of the violence and its effect on the victim(s)
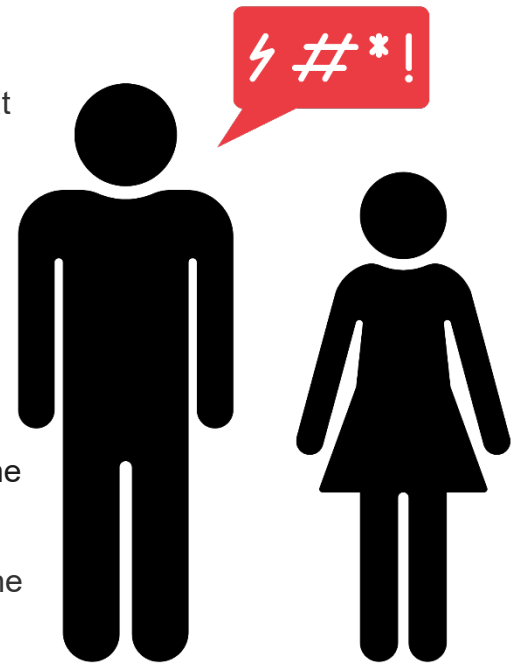
Gaslighting
Gaslighting is a form of manipulation where an abuser uses tactics to make the victim question reality. Gaslighting has historically been considered a psychological form of manipulation and abuse. In recent years, researchers have argued that it is rooted in social inequalities. This means that gaslighting often occurs when there is a power imbalance between the parties. Like other forms of abuse, gaslighting stems from a perpetrator's need to exert control over their victim through coercive means (Sweet, 2019).

Types of gaslighting
To understand gaslighting, it's necessary first to examine what gaslighting looks like

- **Abuser pretends to be confused:** The abuser will pretend they do not understand what the victim is saying when recalling abuse or will refuse to listen when confronted about the present or past abuse.
- **Abuser uses countering argument:** The abuser will question the victim's memory of events, even when the victim remembers them correctly.
- **Abuser uses diversion:** The abuser will change the subject when the victim wants to discuss the abuse. The abuser I also questions the victim's thoughts and memories.
- **Abuser trivializes the abuse:** The abuser will make the victim's fears, injuries or concerns seem unimportant, irrelevant, or exaggerated.
- **Abuser denies the abuse:** The abuser will pretend to be unable to recall what happened; denies promises made to the victim or changes the details to fit their narrative.

(National Domestic Violence Hotline, n.d.)

Below are more examples of a perpetrator's gaslighting behavior:

- Telling blatant lies
- Denying saying or doing something, even when there is proof
- Confusing the victim by alternating episodes of verbal abuse with positivity and praise
- Projecting their behavior onto the victim (such as an unfaithful partner accusing their partner of cheating)
- Turning friends and relatives against the victim
- Telling others that their partner is crazy or a liar
- Attacking their partner's core values or beliefs
- Acting in a way that does not match their words or promises
- Wearing their partner down gradually over time

(National Domestic Violence Hotline, n.d.; Women's Centres Connect, 2021)

How Victims Respond to Gaslighting

Experiencing gaslighting is unique for every victim; however, gaslighting often warps a victim's perspective, making it easier for abusers to exert control over them. Victims may:

- Constantly second-guess themselves and feel as if they can't do anything right
- Repeatedly ask themselves, "Am I being too sensitive?"
- Feel confused, "crazy," hopeless, and joyless
- Apologize to their partners constantly and wonder if they are "good enough" for their partner
- Experience a cognitive dissonance between all the supposed good things in their lives and the sadness they feel.
- Frequently have to make excuses for their partner's behavior or withhold information from their friends/family.
- Start lying to cope with the shifting views of reality they must deal with

(National Domestic Violence Hotline, n.d.; Women's Centres Connect, 2021)

Effects on Victims

The goal of gaslighting is to wear down the victim's sense of self. Abusers want the victim to question their sanity and ability to make decisions and think rationally. Victims of gaslighting will often begin to experience the following as a result of the abuse:

- Anxiety and depression
- Trauma
- Isolation and loss of hope
- Increased dependence on the abuser
- Trauma-bonding with the abuser, who may provide comfort and shelter in addition to the violence
- Confusion and/or disorientation
- Loss of sense of self-agency, freedom, and confidence
- Isolation from friends and family, encouraged by the abuser, who is threatened by the presence of others who may see the relationship more clearly.

(Sweet, 2019)

When working with victims of abuse, professionals should have strategies to provide the best service possible. These strategies can include referrals to local certified domestic violence centers, safety planning, encouraging victims to reach out to friends and family, and, most importantly, helping them understand the abuse. In offices where domestic violence advocates are co-located with CPIs as a part of DCF's CPI Project, domestic violence advocates can assist providing support for victims. The goals of the CPI Project are to increase collaboration between child welfare professionals and domestic violence advocates, improve family safety, reduce removals from non-offending parents, create permanency for children, and increase accountability for batterers.
(Florida Department of Children & Families [DCF], 2019)
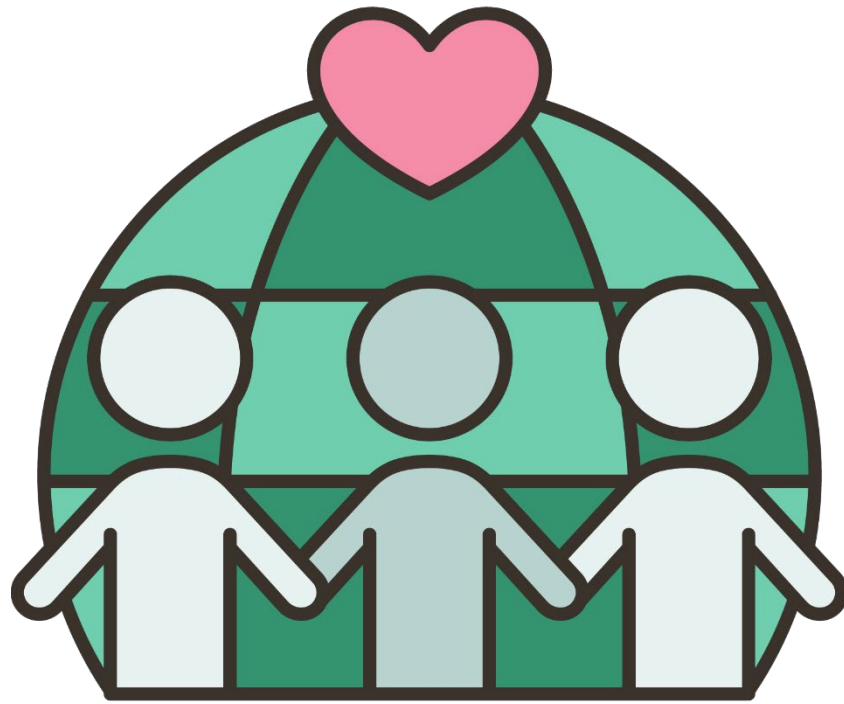
Perpetrators & Parenting

Abusers can be from any walk of life, which means they could be parents. Parents as abusers commonly behave in ways that can negatively affect their children and partner. Some examples of ways abusive parents may act include:

- ***Authoritarianism*** - Abusers with an authoritarian parenting style may have unreasonable expectations for their children that are impossible for them to meet. Despite unattainable expectations, these perpetrators still order their children and refuse objections or hesitance. Behaving in such a demanding manner can make children feel unsafe and put them at risk for physical abuse. Parents who are authoritarians may have short tempers and tend to use more severe forms of physical punishments.

- ***Dismissive (Maltreatment & lack of involvement)*** - Abusers who lack physical and emotional availability for their children are rarely involved in everyday parenting tasks. Perpetrators with partners may focus all their energy on controlling their partner to meet their needs. They may feel like their children interfere with their life and are a nuisance. A parent's lack of attention may result in neglect if the child's needs are not being met. Children may feel their love and affection are not reciprocated, leaving them longing for their parent's attention.

- ***Belittling the victim's parenting (Undermining the Victim)***- When abusers use threats and forceful actions toward their partner in front of their children, it can impact how the children view the victim parent. The perpetrator may shame the victim's parenting while their child is present to sway the child to believe them. Children may stop seeing the victim parent as an authority figure and treat them similarly to the abuser.

- ***Egocentric (Self-Centeredness)*** - Abusers tend to feel like the world revolves around them and may require others to stop everything they are doing to meet their needs. These abusers could make it their children's responsibility to meet their emotional needs and be there whenever they need them. Placing so much responsibility on children can make them feel overwhelmed and like their needs are being pushed aside.

- ***Influencing others for their gain (Manipulation)***- Abusers desire to have control over the people around them. To achieve control, perpetrators may try to persuade their children to oppose the victim parent. In addition, abusers may use their children against the victim parent to control and frighten them. The perpetrator might persuade their children by acting in ways that make the children unsure who is causing the abuse. Abusers frequently put the victim parent down to make themselves seem better and as the more fit parent.

(Bragg, 2003)

Perpetrators & Parenting

Many abusers are also parents.

Although abusers vary tremendously in parenting styles, they often use behaviors that that can have harmful effects on their children including:

Maltreatment & Lack of Involvement

- Infrequently involved with children
- Views children as hindrances
- Become easily annoyed with children

Undermining the Victim

- Coercive or violent behavior towards partner can send a message to a child that it is acceptable to treat victim parent in the same manner.

Manipulation

- Align children against victim
- Make confusing statements or exhibit behaviors that confuse children regarding who is responsible for abuse.
- Use children to control and intimidate victim

Authoritarianism

- Rigid
- Demanding
- Unrealistic expectations
- Obey without question or resistance

Self-Centeredness

- Use children to meet emotional needs
- Expect their child to be available only when they are interested
- Overwhelm children with their problems

(Bragg, 2003)

Knowledge Check:
Match the scenario to the parenting style explained above.

- *Authoritarianism*
  - John, 11, plays baseball. John's dad tells him that if he makes any errors during the game or strikes out, he will be grounded from all electronics and activities with friends for 3 weeks. John has tried telling his dad that he does not want to play baseball and that his punishment is unfair, but he never listens.
- *Maltreatment and lack of involvement*
  - Susan is a mother to 6-year-old Jane. On Tuesday afternoon, Jane missed her bus after school. The office called Susan to come to pick Jane up. Susan was annoyed at the request and waited 30 minutes to pick her daughter up.
- *Undermining the victim*
  - Mason witnesses his dad verbally abuse his mom daily. Mason's dad is out of town for work this week. Mason has been disrespectful to his mom all week and, during their last argument, yelled, "Dad hates you and so do I!"
- *Self-centeredness*
  - Amanda was laid off today. She went to her daughter's school and checked Samantha, 12, out for the day. Samantha was in the middle of a math test when she was called out. When Samantha got in the car, Amanda immediately started crying and telling her about her financial concerns for their family.
- *Manipulation*
  - Ken has been verbally and physically abusive towards his wife, Carol. Carol has expressed wanting to leave Ken, but he threatens to petition for full custody of their son and move across the country each time.

Practice Tips

When interviewing parents, it is important to be aware of the following indications of abuse:

- One parent continually stops to allow the other parent to talk before them.
  - When the abuser waits for the other parent to talk, it could be a sign of controlling behavior.
  - When the victim waits for the other parent to talk, it could be a sign of apprehension.
- One parent always looks at the other parent when they talk to examine their reaction.
  - When the abuser looks at the other parent after they talk, it could be a sign they are threatening the victim.
  - When the victim looks at the other parent after they talk, it could be a sign they are afraid the abuser will punish them.
- Either parent disregards all conversations on their arguments/disagreements.
  - When the abuser or victim disregards conversations concerning arguments, it may show they are trying to downplay the abuse.
- One parent makes facial expressions at the other parent.
  - When the abuser makes facial expressions at the other parent, it could be a sign of coercive behavior and an attempt to restrict the victim from acting of their free will.
  - When the abuser makes facial expressions at the other parent, it could be a sign of worry or remorse.
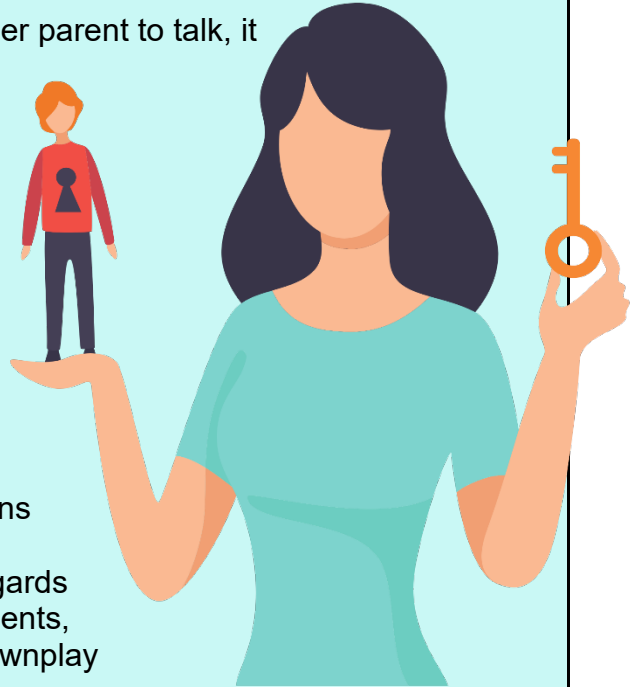
(Florida Courts, 2022)

Perpetrator Accountability

Unfortunately, because domestic violence occurs behind closed doors, many perpetrators are not held accountable for their violence. Still, it is useful to know what accountability looks like. Domestic violence perpetrators are held accountable when they admit to their victim, community, and themselves that they have assaulted and controlled their partner and that this behavior was unprovoked and wrong. Other important admissions include:

- Admitting that the pattern of abusive control hurt their partner
- Acknowledging that their behavior was unprovoked and inexcusable
- Understanding that their behavior was immoral and criminal
- Understanding their behavior was not caused by stress, chemical dependency (alcohol and drug use), or any other outside factor
- Recognizing the pain and suffering they have caused
- Understanding that they are not entitled to the partner's forgiveness
- Realizing that they need help to prevent further use of violence

(Center for Relationship Abuse Awareness, 2022)

Why is Perpetrator Accountability Important in Cases of Domestic Violence?

Sometimes professionals who deal with domestic violence cases erroneously place blame on the victim of violence rather than on the perpetrator. In these cases, the victim –not the perpetrator – becomes accountable for their child's exposure to violence, a crime called "failure to protect." Blaming a victim ignores the myriad of social, financial, and physical factors preventing victims from leaving the abuser.

Professionals also often expect victims to report the abuse to authorities. Many professionals cannot imagine why a victim would not report abuse. Remember, though, that seeking help may be unrealistic for many victims. Victims often do not have anywhere else to go and often have no support system or financial resources. Victims also know they will face repercussions, including escalated violence and having their children removed from their care when the abuser finds out they have reported the abuse (Mahoney, 2019).
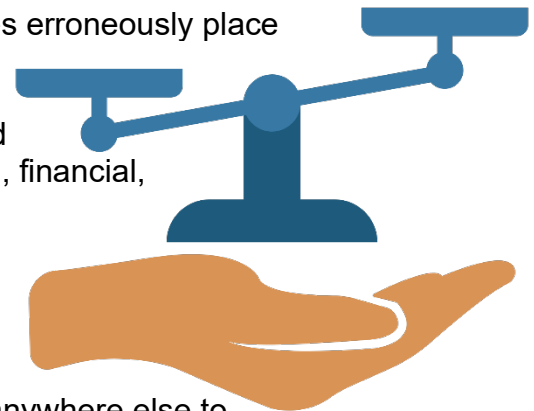
Barriers to Holding Perpetrators Accountable for Family Violence

The Bureau of Justice Statistics revealed that in 2017 only 47% of domestic violence or intimate partner violence cases were reported to the police (Morgan et al., 2018). In Florida, 106,515 domestic violence crimes were reported to Florida law enforcement agencies in 2020 (Florida Department of Law Enforcement [FDLE], 2020). However, only 60% of those cases lead to arrests (FDLE, 2020a). These statistics show that many domestic violence perpetrators never face accountability for their crimes. Child welfare professionals should understand the barriers associated with perpetrator accountability.

(CDC, 2021b; DCF, n.d.; NCADV, 2020)
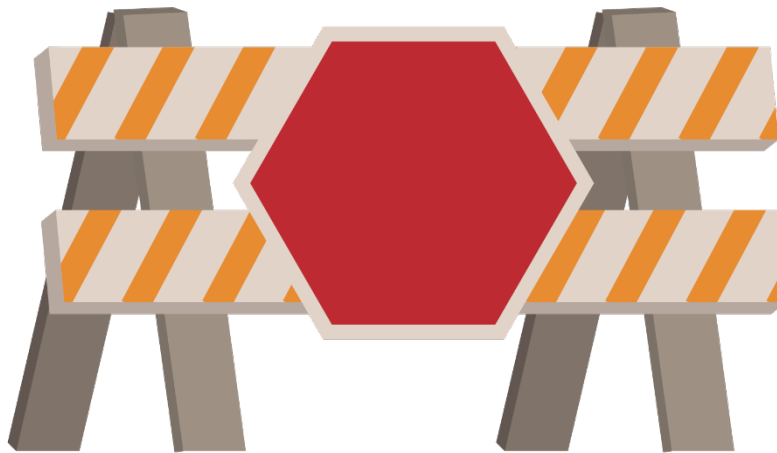
Legal Systemic Vulnerabilities

When abuse is reported, the victim's story, parenting skills, and personal history are often called into question, which can be twisted and misunderstood, leading to the perpetrator being released or not being arrested. The justice system may erroneously allow perpetrators to escape accountability and continue their abuse and punish the victims for reporting the abuse. Additionally, there are systemic vulnerabilities that perpetrators exploit to escape accountability. Below are a few examples of the biases victims face and perpetrators exploit within the justice system.

- Perpetrators can make false allegations about the victim.
- Perpetrators can exploit the survivor's vulnerabilities, including substance abuse used by victims as a coping skill, the victim's lack of financial resources, a victim's housing instability, and a lack of support system.
- Perpetrators can use their status, power, finances, and privilege to intimate and discredit a victim
- Courts often fail to view domestic violence perpetration as a **choice.**
- Some courts may have higher expectations of mothers than fathers.
- Individual judges may not have a thorough understanding of the dynamics of domestic violence
- Courts may not have an established way to communicate with agencies that provide services to victims and their children.

(Mandel et al., n.d.)

Child Welfare System Vulnerabilities

Every system has strengths and weaknesses. Below we summarize vulnerabilities that researchers report within the child welfare system and describe how perpetrators exploit them to avoid accountability.

Child Welfare System Vulnerabilities	Examples of Perpetrator Manipulation of Child Protection Services
• Child welfare policies may promote definitions of domestic violence that do not recognize the concept of a perpetrator's coercive control. • Professionals may misunderstand the roots of domestic violence • Professionals may erroneously believe that violence is accepted within marginalized groups. • The child protection system may focus more on the non-offending parent's "failure to protect" the children than on addressing the harmful consequences of domestic violence on children. • In court cases, professionals with little training in trauma and domestic violence-informed practice (e.g., lawyers, evaluators, etc.) may make recommendations to the court that ignore research findings about the impact of violence.	• When accused of violence, perpetrators may contact child protection services and make false allegations of child neglect or abuse against the victim. • Perpetrators may make false allegations of substance misuse or mental health issues about the victim. • Perpetrators may accuse the victim's new partner of abusing the child. • Perpetrators may entrap victims in illegal behaviors (such as substance misuse or criminal activity), then blackmail the victim or threaten to use the information to have the children removed. • Perpetrators may use the victim's mental health treatment to characterize them as poor parents. • Perpetrators may weaponize the victim's mental health and/or addiction issues against them.

(Mandel et al., n.d.)

Family Court System Vulnerabilities

Below, we summarize research on the vulnerabilities reported within the family court system and how perpetrators exploit them to avoid accountability.

| Family Court System Vulnerabilities	Examples of Perpetrator Manipulation in Family Court
- There is a systemic belief in the myth that domestic violence is only relevant to children when the parents are still together - Courts have been accused of a history of erroneously using the term "parental alienation" against mothers who are victims - Legal professionals have a lack of understanding of the dynamics of coercive control and its intersection with child abuse and neglect - Members of the justice system often hold a mistaken belief that child protection services will take all responsibility for securing the child's safety - Judges have been criticized for only believing allegations against perpetrators who are unemployed and poor; and believing the denials of perpetrators who are affluent, educated, and well-resourced	- Perpetrators use false allegations of parental alienation against the victim - Perpetrators use motions and legal processes as a form of harassment or intimidation - Perpetrators smear the victim's credibility by using their mental health diagnoses or addiction issues - Perpetrators constantly accuse the victim of being a bad parent - Perpetrators use the victim's protective efforts against them (e.g., calling a victim's efforts to take the child to safety "kidnapping")

(Mandel et al., n.d.)

Law Enforcement System Vulnerabilities

Below, we summarize research reporting systemic vulnerabilities within law enforcement and how perpetrators have exploited those vulnerabilities to avoid accountability.

| Law Enforcement System Vulnerabilities	Examples of Perpetrator Manipulation within Law Enforcement System
• Law enforcement often takes an incident-based approach to domestic violence cases instead of assessing the history of the domestic violence, contributing to the wrongful arrests of survivors. • Law enforcement focuses heavily on physical forms of violence instead of including other forms of abuse (e.g., coercive control). • There have been studies that show that some police officers have used domestic violence at home. Such officers may minimize a victim's allegations and align with the perpetrator.	• Perpetrators pretend to be the victim and accuse the victim of being a perpetrator. • Perpetrators coerce victims into committing crimes as part of the abuse, or taking the blame for crimes to protect the perpetrator. • Perpetrators may call the police on family members who intervene to protect victims or children. • Perpetrators weaponize the use of police wellness checks to harass or intimate victims/children.

(Mandel et al., n.d.)
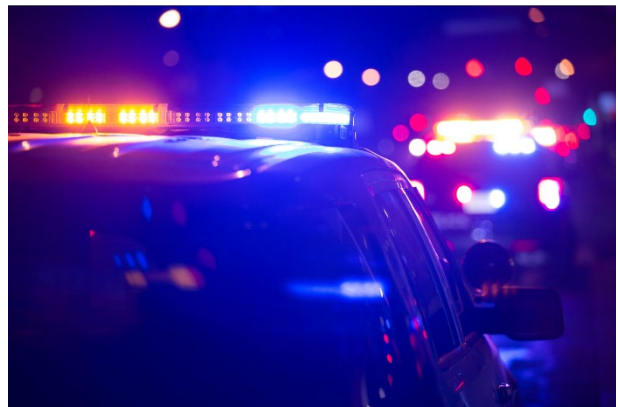
Public Health Model for Intervention and Prevention of Domestic Violence

This short video (1min 44sec) "What is Intimate Partner Violence?" from the CDC (2018) provides an introduction to domestic violence and the public health approach to preventing domestic violence.

Insert video here: https://youtu.be/VuMCzU54334

Public health focuses on all populations' health, safety, and well-being. It draws from a scientific base but includes knowledge from various disciplines. Intimate partner violence is a significant public health issue with considerable societal costs. Supporting the development of healthy, respectful, and nonviolent relationships can reduce the occurrence of domestic violence and prevent its harmful and long-lasting effects on individuals, families, and the communities where they live (Niolon et al., 2017). Evidence-based prevention efforts developed to prevent domestic violence include:

- **Teach Safe and Healthy Relationship Skills**
  - Social-emotional learning programs for youth
    - Typically found in school-based settings, these programs aim to help youth develop social-emotional skills, and positive communication skills and conflict resolution skills to promote safe and healthy relationships.
  - Healthy relationship programs for couples
    - Often utilized as a prevention method, these programs work to improve effective communication, emotional regulation skills, and conflict management.
- **Engage Influential Adults and Peers**
  - Men and boys as allies in prevention
    - These programs aim to encourage boys and men to take a proactive, outspoken approach to intervention, as well as learn skills and social norms that reduce their likelihood of perpetration.
  - Bystander empowerment and education to increase bystander efficacy
    - While similar to the men and boys
    - as allies programs, this program takes a step further to teach specific strategies for intervention when witnessing violent situations.
  - Family-based programs to involve parents and caregivers
    - Family programs target norms and values of the family to promote positive behaviors, increase parental awareness, and improve communication and monitoring skills.
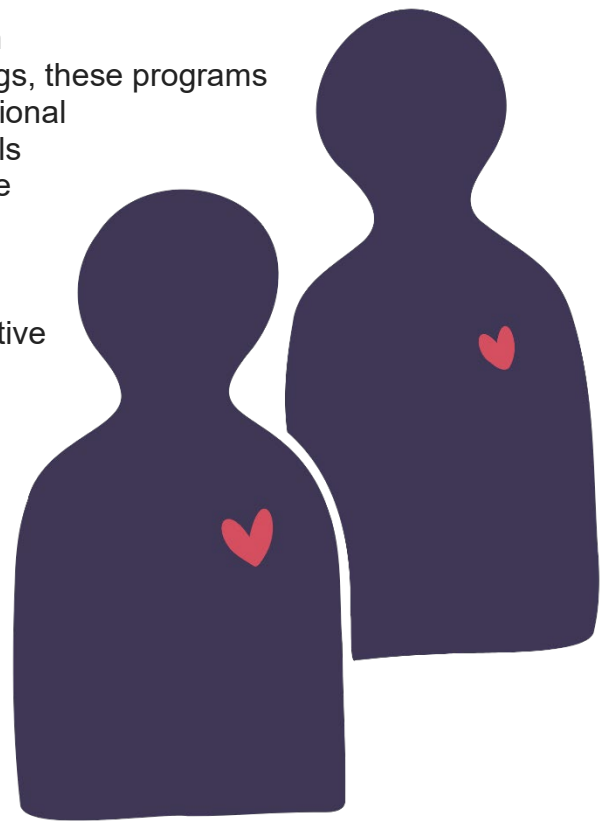
- **Disrupt Developmental Pathways that Lead to Domestic Violence**
  - Early childhood home visitation
    - These programs vary in structure, but are aimed at providing information, support, and training to families regarding children and their development.
  - Preschool enrichment with family engagement
    - These programs are geared towards low socioeconomic families who wish to participate in not only an early-education program, but building a foundation for future learning and development with the involvement of the family unit.
  - Parenting skill and family relationship programs
    - These programs tailor the delivery to the child's developmental stage and provide the family with support while teaching skills intended to reduce the child's involvement in crime or violence.
  - Treatment for at-risk children, youth, and families
    - Involvement in these programs typically stems from referrals from agencies that hope to reduce any consequences from exposure to violence and prevent its continuation and escalation.
- **Create Protective Environments**
  - Improve school climate and safety
    - This approach to prevention includes raising awareness, promoting safety and healthy relationship characteristics, and adapting a zero tolerance policy for violence within academic settings.
  - Improve organizational policies and workplace climate
    - This prevention approach in workplace settings includes implementing and enforcing policies that foster safety and motivate individuals to practice help-seeking behaviors when necessary.
  - Modify the physical and social environments of neighborhoods
    - This approach focuses on reducing social disorder and neighborhood disadvantage while bolstering community relationships and collective efficacy.

- **Strengthen Economic Support for Families**
  - Strengthen household financial security
    - Improving a family's financial circumstances reduces the amount of risk factors they would face if they experienced poverty or financial insecurity.
  - Strengthen work-family supports
    - Implementing policies that protect an individual's job and income while they are experiencing something like intimate partner violence or health issues that may cause them to miss work can address financial stress and other needs.
- **Support Survivors to Improve Safety and Reduce Harm**
  - Victim-centered services
    - Victim-centered services address the needs and safety of the victim and can include, but are not limited to risk assessments, supervised visitations, and custodial exchange.
  - Housing programs
    - Programs that address the need for fast and affordable housing for individuals help decrease the barriers to individuals seeking safety.
  - First responder and civil legal protections
    - These protections promoted further safety for individuals and their children in the aftermath of violence, including long-term needs as well.
  - Trauma-informed treatment and support for survivors of IPV, including teen dating violence
    - These evidence-based interventions are designed to reduce the impact of intimate partner violence on survivors and their children.
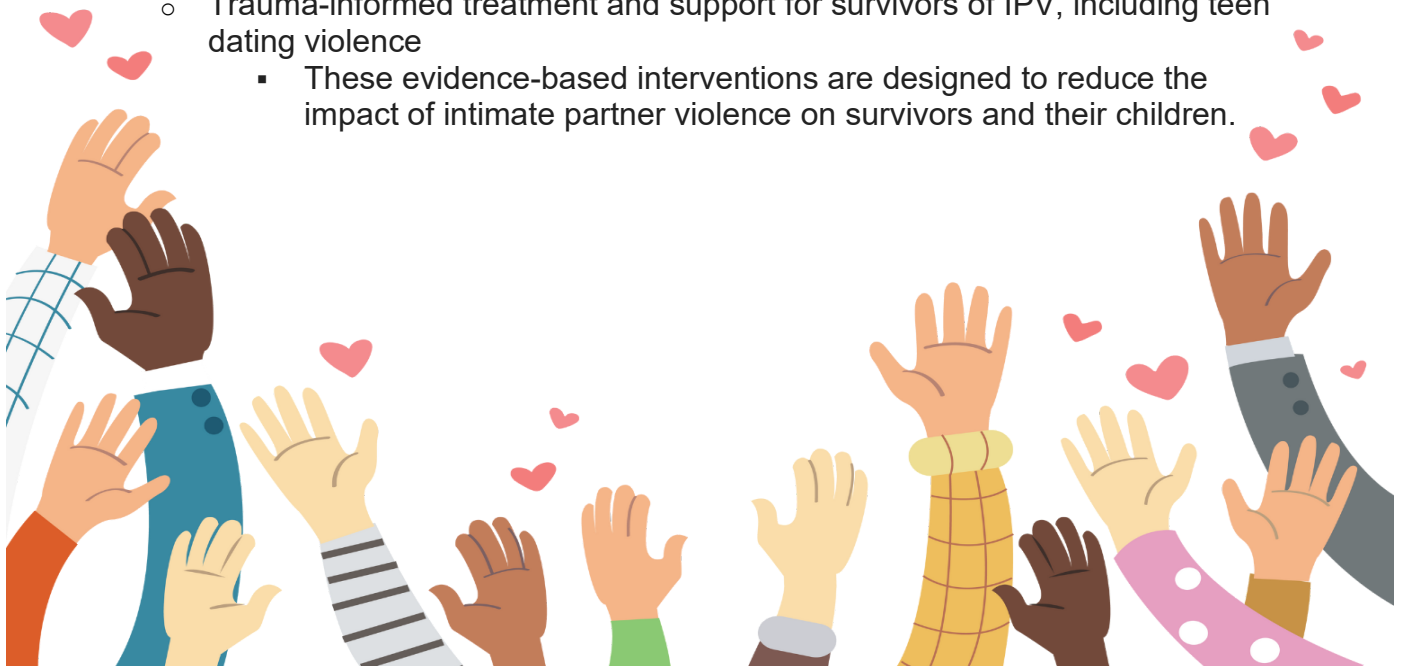
If you are interested in learning more about evidence-based prevention efforts around domestic violence, see the resource below:

Preventing Intimate Partner Violence Across the Lifespan: A Technical Package of Programs, Policies, and Practices from the CDC:
https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/ipv-technicalpackages.pdf

(CDC, 2022b).

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Human Trafficking Dynamics Training for Florida's Supervised Visitation Programs

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What is Human Trafficking?

Human trafficking is considered a modern-day form of slavery. Human trafficking is a crime under federal law, international law, and is a crime in every state in the United States. Human trafficking is defined as the use of force, fraud, or coercion to compel a person into commercial sex acts or labor or services against their will. When commercial sex involves a minor, it is considered human trafficking regardless of the use of force or coercion. Human trafficking is generally divided into two types of crime: sex trafficking and labor trafficking.

Who can be a victim of human trafficking?

- Victims of trafficking can be any age, gender, socioeconomic class, and ethnicity.
- People living in poverty or in unstable housing situations, as well as people with a history of trauma or addiction are more at risk.
- LGBTQ+, immigrants, and people of color are at a higher risk of human trafficking because of discrimination and inequality.
- More than half of child sex trafficking victims are runaways.

Five Reasons Why You Need to Know about Human Trafficking

1. It is preventable.

2. By learning about the red flags, you can identify and prevent human trafficking.

3. It is illegal, and you are mandated by law to report suspicion of child abuse.

4. Children with past trauma are more susceptible to becoming victims.

5. Human trafficking is detrimental to children and its effects will be felt for a lifetime.

What factors make someone more at risk of human trafficking?

According to the National Human Trafficking Statistics Report, the top risk factors for human trafficking in the U.S. are:

- Recent migration/relocation

- Unstable housing

- Substance use concern

- Runaway/homeless youth

- Mental health concern

- Self-reported economic hardship

- Criminal record/criminal history

- Involvement in the child welfare system

(Human Trafficking Trends in 2020, 2020)

How do traffickers target children?

One in seven children reported to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children became victims of sexual trafficking. 88% of these children were in the care of social services or foster care when they ran away. (Anderson, 2021)

Children are particularly vulnerable to trafficking when they are in unstable family situations. Without proper supervision, they can be forced into trafficking situations including forced labor, domestic servitude, and commercial sexual exploitation.

Traffickers may target minor victims through social media websites, dating apps, gaming platforms, at large social events, in clubs, or through family, friends, or acquaintances (Human trafficking of children in the United States, 2013).

Sex Trafficking

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act defines sex trafficking as a commercial sex act induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age (22 U.S.C. § 7102(9)).

Sex traffickers force their victims into activities such as:

- Pornography
- Prostitution
- Sexually explicit performances
- Fake marriages

- Child marriages
- Forced marriages
- Agencies that promise work in modeling, au pair work, other promises of legitimate employment

(Polaris Project, 2017)

What tactics do sex traffickers use to recruit victims?

The "boyfriend" tactic – Traffickers will flatter the victim with compliments and attention and profess their love for the victim. They might buy them gifts. The victims believe they are in a relationship with their trafficker. The trafficker will be intermittently violent, which creates a trauma bond between the victim and trafficker. A trauma bond is a bond between the victim and trafficker that develops when the victim is totally reliant on the trafficker for food and shelter.

Florida is the third-highest state for human trafficking cases. It ranks second for labor trafficking cases.

(https://floridaallianceendht.com/)

The "helping" tactic – Traffickers will help runaways by giving them shelter, drugs, and safety from law enforcement. They become the "only person the victim can trust".

Gang involvement – The victim may be a member of a gang, or romantically involved with a gang member. The gang member will pressure the victim into prostitution, sometimes as an initiation tactic to become a gang member.

Grooming children – Traffickers will groom the child by talking about and making jokes about sex, showing them pornography, and/or taking explicit photographs of the child. Traffickers may also rape the child.

Preying upon intellectually disabled individuals - Traffickers may target individuals who are unable to realize they are being exploited due to an intellectual disability.

Once they recruit their victims, sex traffickers control their victims using tactics such as:

Shame/Blackmail – Traffickers convince their victims that they are worthless. They may use threats of sharing explicit pictures with their family.

Obligation – Traffickers convince their victims that they saved them from a bad situation, and that they need to be loyal. They may also supply drugs so that the victim becomes addicted and will then stay for access to drugs.

Complicit in crime – Traffickers force their victims into committing crimes (i.e., shoplifting, prostitution, recruiting victims) which makes them feel trapped.

Pregnancy/children – Traffickers may impregnate victims or threaten to harm their children.

Isolation – Traffickers may take away their victim's phone or may hold them against their will.

Financial Control – Traffickers may take control of their victim's money.

Intimidation/violence – Traffickers may threaten harm against their victim or the victims' family. They may also use violence such as physical assault, rape, tattooing, or branding.

Hope/community/faux family – Traffickers will convince their victims that nobody else will love them, and that they are part of a family. Victims may form a trauma bond with their trafficker.

(Polaris Project, 2017)

How are victims recruited?

In recent years, online recruitment has become the most common method used by traffickers to find their victims. The most common recruitments tactics include:

<u>Dating apps</u> – Traffickers use dating apps to recruit their victims. They look for vulnerabilities and prey upon them.

<u>Social media</u> - 55% of domestic minor sex trafficking survivors who entered the life in 2015 or later, reported meeting their trafficker using text, a website, or a mobile app.
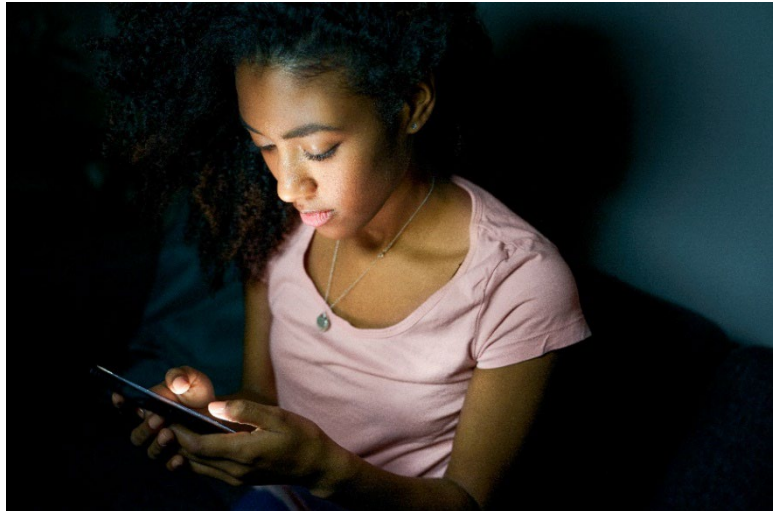
<u>Large crowd events</u> - Large crowd events such as sporting events like the super bowl, music concerts, and professional conferences are used by traffickers to lure and exploit their victims. Traffickers will also use websites, like Craigslist, to advertise and solicit victims.

<u>Bars and clubs</u> - Bars and clubs are a common venue for traffickers to locate new victims. Traffickers may use "date-rape" drugs or encourage alcohol consumption to increase the vulnerability of potential victims.

In 2020, 42% of trafficking victims were brought into trafficking by a member of their own families and 39% were recruited via an intimate partner or a marriage proposition.

(Human Trafficking Trends in 2020, 2020)

Labor Trafficking

Labor trafficking is defined by the Trafficking Victims protection act as the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery (22 U.S.C. § 7102(9)).

The most common types of labor that victims are forced into are:

- Domestic work (childcare, house cleaning)
- Construction work (carpentry, renovation, tile laying)
- Hospitality services (hotels & motels, bars, restaurants)
- Agriculture (fruit sector, greenhouse, farming)
- Food industries (slaughterhouses, canneries)

How are victims recruited and kept from leaving the situation?

Traffickers use a variety of tactics to recruit and control their victims. These include:

Fraud – Traffickers will give victims false information about an employment opportunity and may pressure them into paying start up fees before they are able to begin working.

Coercion – Traffickers pressure victims into signing contracts and agreeing to work without the victim understanding what they are agreeing to.

Victims can be recruited by their own family members – Family members who have debt or a drug habit may use children as a bargaining tool.

Once victims have been recruited, traffickers use intimidation, violence, and isolation to control their victims and keep them from leaving the situation. Some of these tactics include:

- Physical, sexual, and verbal abuse
- Threats of abuse and harm
- Threats of retaliation against the victims' family
- Gaining financial control by decreasing wages and increasing the victim's debt
- Threatening the victims with deportation or other legal involvement

(Polaris Project, 2017)

Common signs that someone is being trafficked:

Showing signs of physical and/or sexual abuse – Victims may have bruises or cut marks on their body.

Victims appear malnourished, sleep-deprived, or weak - Deprivation of food, water, sleep, or medical care, may cause health issues for the victim.

The National Human Trafficking Hotline (NHTRC) received a call from Allison, a young woman in her 20s who had just left a traveling sales crew situation. Allison reported that she had learned of the sales crew job from a job placement center in her small hometown and it seemed like a good opportunity to travel and earn some money. After Allison joined the sales crew, she learned that there were daily sales quotas and if the crew members did not meet their quota, they would be forced to work longer hours and would not be allowed to eat. Additionally, Allison described the crew leader as verbally abusive and very controlling of the crew members. Allison was able to escape the potential trafficking situation but was left stranded in an unfamiliar rural town. She didn't know where to go for help or how to return home. She didn't know her exact location and called the hotline for help. The NHTRC worked closely with advocates within the community and was able to connect Allison with law enforcement and a victim advocate to assist her in reporting her situation and returning home.

(Labor Trafficking | Sales Crew, 2015)

Tattoos of names, phrases, or monetary symbols on their body – Victims may be tattooed to show that they are the property of a trafficker.

Displaying paranoid behavior – Victims may seem afraid or act as if they are being followed or watched.

Victims have inconsistencies in their explanation of circumstances or events – Victims may hide their circumstances by providing false information to family, friends, or law enforcement, out of fear of retaliation from their trafficker.

Acting fearful when speaking to law enforcement officers – Victims may refuse to answer questions and may claim that they "aren't allowed" to speak to law enforcement.

Owning high-end goods and clothing without explanation of how they paid for it – They may report having no job but are dressed and groomed in a way that would require an income.

Protective factors that lessen the risk of human trafficking include:

- Family support and supervision

- Participation in legitimate work and the ability to earn a livable wage

- Educational opportunities including awareness and education about human trafficking.

- Adequate food and nutritional support

- Community resources including health care, mental health services, stable housing, and access to transportation

What are some prevention strategies to help end human trafficking?

Trafficking vulnerabilities exist all around us. Traffickers prey upon victims who lack basic physical needs, like housing and food, and those who lack emotional support, like love and belonging. Prevention strategies must include concurrent approaches in a variety of levels and settings, such as:

- <u>Violence and crime prevention</u> – Community programs and safe spaces that strengthen support systems for adolescents can reduce the likelihood that they will become a victim of human trafficking. Educate law enforcement and evaluate current police intervention strategies.
- <u>Housing and urban development</u> - Addressing risk factors related to housing issues and homelessness can reduce the number of people without stable housing who are most vulnerable to human trafficking.
- <u>Businesses</u> - Conduct thorough investigations of and forced labor. Educate businesses on labor trafficking and encourage them to monitor their supply chains.
- <u>Health care training</u> – Educate and prepare health care professionals so they are better able to identify victims and connect them with available resources.
- <u>School and child welfare education</u> – Educate youth to recognize and respond effectively to signs of potential exploitation. Safety plan with children who are at risk of running away. Create school-based behavioral interventions that improve socio-emotional wellbeing and teach coping skills.

(Community Psychology, 2017-2022)

What should you do if you suspect human trafficking?

It is mandated in all fifty states to report suspected cases of children who may be experiencing child maltreatment, abuse, or neglect. Mandated reporters of child maltreatment include, but are not limited to the following:

- Teachers
- Other school officials
- Social workers
- Health care providers Law enforcement officers
- Day care workers

(Atkinson, et al.,2016)

All people, regardless of profession, have a social and moral responsibility to report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to law enforcement officers to protect and enhance the well-being of children.

I was 16 and he was in college. Our relationship got really intense, really fast. At first, it was a lot of fun. He had money and everyone loved him. We went to parties and there were a lot of drugs. There were always porn movies being shown, which I thought was weird. I had it in my mind that this was what adult relationships were. I was being groomed, but I didn't know it.

Slowly, he started to control everything. He said he didn't like my friends, so I stopped seeing them. He'd drive me everywhere, so I didn't have to take the bus. Every time I went anywhere, I'd call him just so he knew I got there safely. If he called and I missed it, I would freak out. By the time I graduated high school I had left home and moved in with him.

He had always encouraged me to have sex with other people. He said we were cool, we were swingers, this is what adults did. He never mentioned it was for money. He was my whole world; I would do anything for him.

Eventually, though, it started not to feel right. He started leaving instead of waiting for me. He would just take me to a hotel room and drop me off. I started to feel really lonely. I would say I didn't want to do it, and he'd get violent.

I got away eventually, but for years after I was in these exploitative relationships. That's what I thought love was.

- Chelsea, (Survivor Stories, n.d.)

Who do I call?

The Florida Abuse Hotline accepts reports 24 hours a day and 7 days a week of known or suspected **child** abuse, neglect, or abandonment and reports of known or suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a vulnerable adult.

1-800-962-2873

Florida Relay 711 or

TTY: 1-800-955-8771

Or report it online at: **https://reportabuse.dcf.state.fl.us/**

Within the United States, if you suspect adult human trafficking, a representative from the National Human Trafficking Hotline (1-888-373-7888) can provide guidance.

To reduce trafficking at the massive scale of the problem of human trafficking, we need to work together as a society to increase supports and services for vulnerable people and change conditions – like homelessness, family violence, poverty, and discrimination – that make people vulnerable to the lure of traffickers.

(Understanding Human Trafficking, n.d.)

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When to Seek Professional Help for Trauma

Trauma reactions often subside within a few weeks. But for some, trauma reactions may be severe or prolonged.

Signs that an individual should seek professional help include:

- Intense feelings & reactions are too much to handle
- Continued feelings of numbness and emptiness
- Continued physical symptoms of stress
- Continued sleep disturbances or nightmares
- Intentional avoidance of anything related to the traumatic event

- Inability to maintain daily responsibilities
- Continuing to relive the traumatic event
- Feeling on edge or being easily startled
- Relationships with friends and family are deteriorating
- Increased drug or alcohol use
- Inability to return to work

Questions?
Contact the Clearinghouse at 850-644-1715