



# **HOPE, HELP AND HEALING – A CATHOLIC RESPONSE TO DOMESTIC ABUSE**

## **IMPLEMENTING A DOMESTIC ABUSE RESPONSE PROGRAM IN YOUR DIOCESE OR CATHOLIC CHARITY AGENCY**

**Dennis Butler, SPHR, SHRM-SCP**

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## THE USCCB SAYS...

"Violence against women, inside or outside the home, is never justified. Violence in any form—physical, sexual, psychological, or verbal—is sinful; often, it is a crime as well"

(U.S. Catholic Bishops, When I Call for Help, 2002).

# **DOMESTIC ABUSE: EXACTLY WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?**

**Domestic abuse is a pattern of coercive behavior, including acts or threatened acts, that is used by a perpetrator to gain power and control over a current or former spouse, family member, intimate partner, or person with whom the perpetrator shares a child in common.**

**For Example, it may include physical violence, injury, or intimidation, sexual violence or abuse, emotional and/or psychological intimidation, verbal abuse, threats, or harassment, stalking, or economic control.**

# WHO DOES IT AFFECT?

- **1 in 3 women affected by abuse in her lifetime**
- **1 in 7 men affected by abuse in his lifetime**
- **1 in 5 full-time employed adults affected by abuse**
- **14% of US children either witness or directly experience abuse**
- **1 in 25 elderly people experience some type of abuse**

**It happens in every community, regardless of age, race, religion, sexual-orientation, socio-economic or cultural background.**

# DOMESTIC ABUSE IN THE MINISTERIAL WORKPLACE

**“Central to our understanding of stewardship and development is the concept of accountability. Dioceses, parishes, schools and other church-related organizations that seek to develop urgently needed human and financial resources need to show that their programs and services truly “make a difference” in meeting the spiritual, educational and social needs of the people they serve.**

**...This is a basic requirement of stewardship and development-to render an account of the organization’s use of the time, talent and treasure entrusted to its care.”**

**Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response  
US Bishop’s Pastoral Letter on Stewardship, USCCB, 1993**

# WHY ADDRESS DOMESTIC ABUSE IN THE MINISTERIAL WORKPLACE?

**The “National Declaration by Religious and Spiritual Leaders to Address Violence Against Women” acknowledges that**

- Domestic violence exists in all communities, including the church
- Too often sacred texts, traditions, and values have been misused to condone abuse.

**Certain responses to abuse can increase the risk to a survivor, especially if a church leader prioritizes forgiveness for an abuser before safety for a survivor.**

***Faith leaders are often first responders in cases of domestic abuse.***

# OTHER REASONS TO ADDRESS DOMESTIC ABUSE IN THE MINISTERIAL WORKPLACE...

## **It is a security and liability concern**

- *Everyone is at risk - survivor, clergy, ministry leaders, laity etc..*

## **It is a performance and productivity concern**

- *Lateness, absenteeism, turnover due to domestic abuse affects the bottom line*

## **It is a health care concern**

- *Significant physical and psychological health effects and more susceptibility to illness and disease*

***Domestic abuse is a sin of oppression, and oftentimes, a crime***

## **SURVIVORS' WORDS ABOUT HOW DOMESTIC ABUSE AFFECTED THEM AT WORK:**

- I took time off work to enable bruising to go away**
- I resigned - I was too ashamed to face my colleagues with my injuries.**
- The bruises and disfigurement as well as my anxiety should have prompted my manager to refer me for some support or counseling.**
- It wasn't the physical violence because bruises and cuts go over time, it was the psychological abuse which stayed with me and affected my whole life.**



# OBSTACLES WITHIN THE CHURCH

- **Misguided definitions of submission**
- **Prioritizing forgiveness before safety**
- **Confusion between forgiveness and reconciliation**
- **Lack of accountability for the crime and sin of abuse**
- **Commonly held myths regarding issues of domestic abuse**
- **Lack of understanding regarding survivors, abusers and abuse**

# DOMESTIC ABUSE AND THE WORKPLACE: WHAT DO EMPLOYEES EXPERIENCE?

- **Survivors say their ability to work is affected by domestic abuse, e.g., Distraction, fear of discovery, harassment at work, unexpected visits by abuser, ability to complete assignments and job loss**
- **Co-workers of those involved in partner violence feel obliged to cover for them, do their work, are concerned for their own safety...and often resent the survivor.**
- **Abusers use workplace resources, are distracted, are late or absent from work.**

## WHAT IS AN EMPLOYER'S ROLE?

**Recognize** – the signs of domestic abuse

**Respond** – appropriately within the context of the ministerial workplace

**Refer** – to the appropriate resources to assist the employee; in the community *AND* in the ministerial workplace

# ONE SURVIVOR'S STORY...

**"My life seemed a quintessential New York success story. I graduated Phi Beta Kappa and Magna Cum Laude from Smith College and married an Ivy League graduate. Everyone thought I had married the perfect man. We lived in a brownstone just off Fifth Avenue and belonged to a country club. I was on the management track at Time, Inc., and my husband worked across the street at one of the city's leading investment banks. My life was a perfect hell."**

Brooke McMurray, Domestic Abuse Survivor and former Chair of Safe Horizon's Board of Directors

# CRITICAL EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

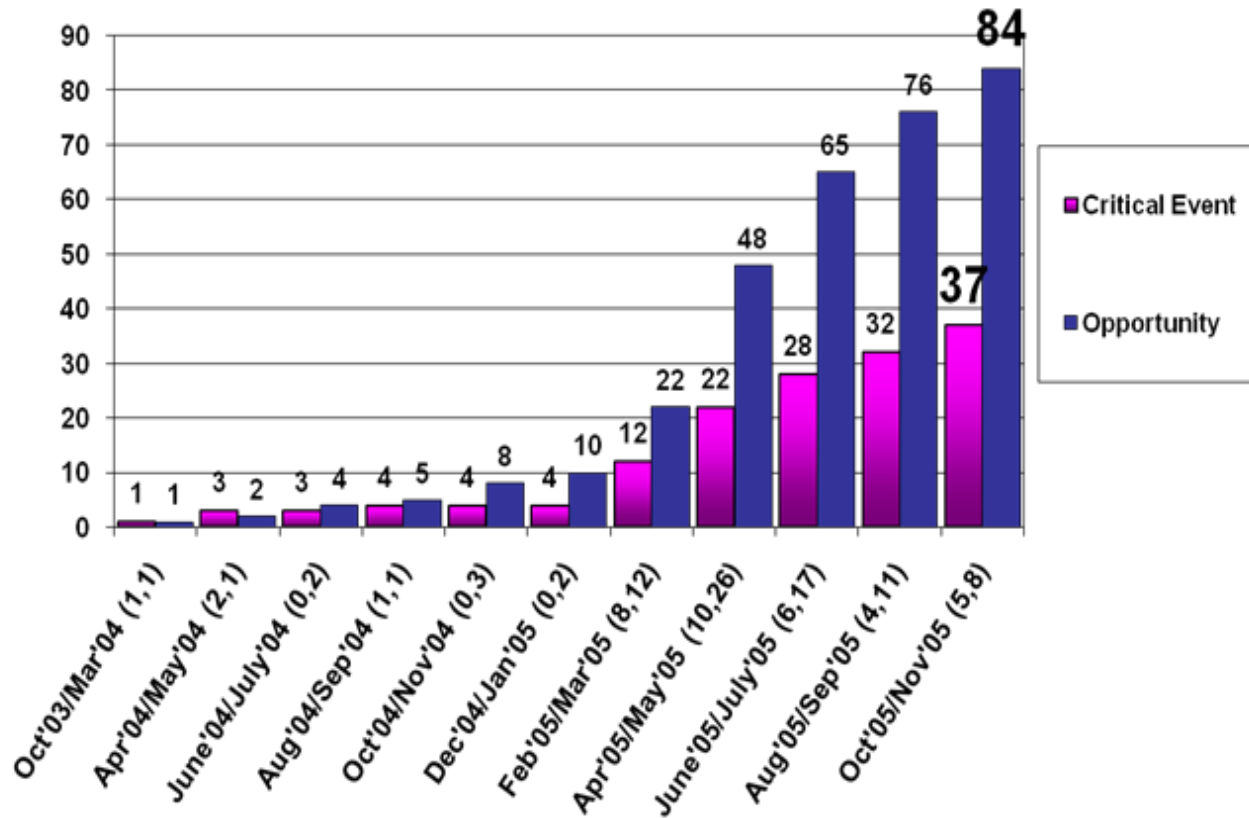
## Critical Events

- *Visible warning signs and risk factors*
- *Should raise possibility of danger*

## Opportunities

- *A chance to intervene*
- *Can be missed because of uncertainty or missing information*

# ACCUMULATION OF CRITICAL EVENTS & MISSED OPPORTUNITIES DUPONT INQUEST



# RECOGNIZING DOMESTIC ABUSE –SURVIVORS

- **Signs of fear, anxiety, depression, fatigue or other stress-related problems**
- **Unplanned absences/ requests for time off, lateness for work**
- **Sudden or sustained drop in productivity**
- **Frequent, upsetting phone calls, flowers, gifts at the workplace**
- **Isolation, unusual quietness, keeping away from others**

# RECOGNIZING DOMESTIC ABUSE –SURVIVORS

- **Discussing relationship problems in pre-marital counseling; actively reaching out for help/ intervention**
- **Unexplained injuries or injuries that do not fit the explanations of how they occurred**
- **Inappropriately dressed/excessive makeup**
- **Minimization and denial of harassment or injuries**
- **Sensitivity about home life or hints of trouble at home**
- **Making excuses for partner's abusive behavior**
- **Making suicidal or homicidal comments**



# RECOGNIZING DOMESTIC ABUSE – ABUSERS

- **Most abusers report being distracted and preoccupied at work.**
- **Some abusers make costly and dangerous mistakes on the job as a result.**
- **May seem perfectly “normal” to others**
- **Most abusers use employer phones, email, and vehicles to perpetrate domestic violence.**

# RECOGNIZING DOMESTIC ABUSE – ABUSERS

- **Abusers commonly use anger, addictions or mental illness as an excuse to rationalize or blame their abusive behavior**
- **These might co-occur, but are not the root cause**
- **Anger is not a root cause, but is present**

***Abusers have a flawed belief system where they believe they have the right to control and abuse their partner – sense of entitlement***

## RESPOND – SURVIVORS

- Believe survivor
- DON'T minimize or blame
- Remain neutral; don't take sides
- Respect her/his decisions; don't judge her/him
- DON'T give advice, recommend couples counseling or marriage enrichment or communication workshops
- Control yourself, not the survivor
- Encourage survivor to consider a safety plan
- Safety 1st priority for those suffering from the abuse, both adults and children

***THE BEST THING YOU CAN DO IS GIVE THE SURVIVOR  
CONTACT INFORMATION FOR A LOCAL DOMESTIC ABUSE  
ADVOCATE OR A NATIONAL CENTER***

## RESPOND – ABUSERS

- **Make clear intolerance for abuse and discipline guidelines according to the principles of the faith community**
- **Provide Scriptural Support for holding abusers accountable and encourage recognition of the abuse and change in his/her ways**
- **Offer pastoral support and referral information to abusers about Batterer Intervention Programs and other community resources**
- **Implement**

***Goal is NOT to condemn the person, but rather the abusive behaviors and encourage sincere change.***

# RESPOND – CREATING A DIOCESAN/PARISH/ AGENCY/SCHOOL DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY

## **Organize a multi-disciplinary team to oversee the process**

- Parish staff/Human Resources, Pastoral Care, Family Life, etc.
- Priests, Clergy, Deacons, etc.
- Legal Expert
- Subject Matter Experts
- Your EAP (Employee Assistance Program)
- Victim Assistance Coordinators
- Local Domestic Abuse Agency
- Catholic Charities Agencies

# RESPOND – PROVIDE TRAINING & EDUCATION

## **Protocol to recognize, respond & refer survivors of abuse**

- Clergy (Priests, Deacons), Directors/Managers
- Early Education/ School Leadership Staff and Administration
- Laity/Administration Staff
- Designated Key Contact (s) or local DV Shelter Liaison
- Ministry Leaders
- Volunteers

# RESPOND – BUILD AWARENESS & CREATE A CULTURE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

- **Post literature to establish a healthy and safe worship environment and ministerial workplace**
  - *Bulletin inserts, posters, brochures, and tear sheets with information and contacts for survivors)*
- **Designate a “Go-To” person or Ministry to serve as Liaison with local DV shelter**
- **Collect used cell phones to give to survivors or sponsor donation drives for local domestic abuse shelter**

# RESPOND – BUILD AWARENESS & CREATE A CULTURE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

- **Integrating Domestic Abuse Program with other programs or parish ministries**
  - *Pre Cana/Marriage Preparation, Youth Ministry, Safe Environment Training, Family Life Programs and other parish initiatives*
- **Offer Educational Workshops or encourage participation in Diocesan Wellness Programs**
- **Offer Support Groups for Survivors**
- **Broaden communications to include members of the diocese including parishes, schools, agencies and other ministries**



# RESPOND – BUILD AWARENESS & CREATE A CULTURE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

## Distribute Available Resources:

- *USCCB Bishops Statement: When I call for Help: A Pastoral Response to Domestic Violence Against Women*
- *USCCB Bishops Statement: Walk in the Light: A Pastoral Response to Child Sexual Abuse, 1995*
- *USCCB Bishops Statement: Confronting a Culture of Violence: A Catholic Framework for Action*

# REFER - RESOURCES

## DON'T act as a Counselor

### Know the right referrals/advocates

- *The National DV Hotline 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)*
- *Your Local Domestic Abuse Agency*
- *Employee Assistance Program (EAP)*

### Federal Leave and Discrimination Laws

- *FMLA, Title VII and ADA, etc.*

### State and Local Domestic Violence Employment Rights Law

### Ministerial Workplace Safety-Plan

### Injunctions and Safety Plans

# KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

- **Integrate Programs/Parish Initiatives**
  - Performance Management
  - Pre-Cana
  - Safe Environment
  - Family Life Ministry
- **Partnering with your Employee Assistance Program (EAP)**
- **Focus on safety for survivor and workplace**
- **Diocesan or Parish representatives don't act as counselors – we are conduits to experts**
- **Knowing right referrals is most effective**
- **Policies and protocols are guidelines only**
- **Environment must be open and comfortable**

## WEBSITES

- **Catholics For Family Peace:** [www.CatholicsForFamilyPeace.org](http://www.CatholicsForFamilyPeace.org)
- **USCCB - When I Call for Help: A Pastoral Response to Domestic Violence Against Women**  
<http://old.usccb.org/laity/women/violence.shtml>
- **Faith Trust Institute** [www.faithtrustinstitute.org](http://www.faithtrustinstitute.org)
- **Workplaces Respond – National Resources Center -**  
[www.workplacesrespond.org](http://www.workplacesrespond.org)
- **Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence** [www.caepv.org](http://www.caepv.org)
- **The NO MORE Project** <http://nomore.org>
- **Telling Amy's Story** <http://telling.psu.edu/film/index.html>

## NEXT STEPS...

**Make a commitment today to do something about addressing Domestic Abuse in your Diocese or Parish...**

“If you are not doing something to stop domestic violence, you may as well be lending a hand to the abuser.”

## FACILITATOR:

**Dennis Butler, SPHR, SHRM-SCP**

Chief Human Resources & Compliance Officer

Diocese of Paterson

[dbutler@patersondiocese.org](mailto:dbutler@patersondiocese.org)

973.777.8818 Ext. 241

Vice President and Co-Founder

Catholics For Family Peace



# WHEN I CALL FOR HELP: A PRAYER

Listen, God to my prayer;  
Do not hide from my pleading  
Hear me and give answer.  
If an enemy had reviled me,  
That I could bear;  
If my foe had viewed me with contempt,  
From that I could hide.  
But it was you, my other self,  
My comrade and friend,  
You, whose company I enjoyed,  
At whose side I walked  
In procession in the house of God.  
But I will call upon God,  
And the Lord will save me.  
At dusk, dawn and noon  
I will grieve and complain  
And my prayer will be heard.