What is domestic violence?

Domestic violence is the use of power by one person in the family to gain control over another person.

Domestic violence includes:

- verbal abuse
- emotional or psychological abuse
- spiritual abuse
- financial abuse
- physical abuse
- sexual abuse
- criminal harassment and stalking
- cultural or immigration abuse

Anyone in the family can experience abuse, including:

- spouse or intimate partner
- children
- elderly parents
- disabled adults
- roommates
- pets

It can happen to anyone regardless of their:

- gender
- sexual orientation
- social class
- age
- economic status
- ethnic background

Domestic violence may consist of occasional outbursts triggered by a specific situation: stress at work, the loss of a job, a misunderstanding, or a difference of opinion about a sensitive topic. It may lead to screaming, swearing, broken dishes, or a hole in the wall. Sometimes even physical assault.

In many cases, the incident passes and things return to normal.

But sometimes, the abuse continues and is used as a means of controlling the other person and forcing them to behave in certain ways. This is the type of abuse that tends to become worse over time. It is the type of abuse that this Toolkit addresses.

Frequently Asked Questions

What about violence against men?

Very often domestic violence is treated as if it is abuse of a woman by a man. In fact, both sexes can cause harm and both can experience domestic violence. It can also happen to same sex couples. However, women most often experience domestic violence that is reported to police. They are most likely to experience serious physical violence and even killed.

Handy Resources

Domestic Abuse Intervention Program

Power and Control Wheel – website

Alberta Government

Consumer Tips: Safer Spaces for Victims of Domestic Violence – booklet

Utilities Consumer Advocate – website

Sagesse

REAL Talk – guide

Centre for Public cplea Legal Education Alberta

*You should **NOT** rely on this publication for legal advice. It provides general information on **Alberta law only.*** © 2025

This project was made possible by the Alberta Government