

Domestic Violence—

A Barrier to Successful Employment

Remember that you are not to blame for another adult's behavior and have the right to be safe.

ONE OF THE BIGGEST (AND MOST HIDDEN) BARRIERS to women finding and keeping employment is domestic violence. The vast majority of domestic violence is man-on-woman violence, although it does occur in same-sex relationships and, rarely, woman-on-man. Unfortunately, domestic violence is very prevalent and occurs in all age groups, races, and economic levels of society. Even more unfortunate is that victims keep silent because they feel ashamed and blame themselves for the situation.

Often, a woman who is battered at home is also prevented from working by her abuser, who fears she will become too independent and leave him. Or, if a working woman is battered, the abuser may harass her at work and even bring the violence to her workplace.

Domestic violence is not a family problem or a personal problem; it is a CRIME—and a serious one. Despite the remorse, tears, pleading, and flowers that often follow battering, the violence in these relationships tends to increase. It may start out with verbal and emotional abuse—put-downs, public humiliation, name-calling, mind games, isolation, and extreme jealousy. These tend to increase to physical violence, serious threats, and even the harming of pets. The longer the violence is kept secret, the more it escalates, sometimes to the point of murder. One thing is certain: the violence will not end without breaking the silence and getting outside help.

The best way to break the cycle of violence is to treat it like the crime it is, and report it. Nothing gets through to an abuser better than being arrested and held accountable for his actions by the laws of society. And, when the crime is reported, it opens the door to help for the victim, children, and perpetrator.

Any domestic violence situation, or emotionally abusive relationship, is a barrier to work success. What can you do if you're being abused?

Make a safety plan. Here's how:*

- Think about all your possible escape routes (home, car, work, etc), and practice using them.

- Choose a place to go. It can be a women's shelter or the home of a supportive friend or relative where you will feel safe.
- Pack a bag to grab and take with you. It should include money, a change of clothes, extra house and car keys, medications, insurance information, checkbook, credit cards, legal documents and other important papers (divorce papers, protective orders, birth certificates), address & phone lists, small valuables (like jewelry), and papers that show jointly-owned assets. Conceal this bag at home or leave it with a trusted neighbor, friend, or relative. Cash and/or important papers can also be kept in a bank deposit box.
- If you have pets or children, plan for their protection as well. You can take your children to a shelter with you, but you'll need to have your pets protected some other way. Seek out that help in advance.
- Try to start an individual savings account. Have bank statements sent to a trusted relative or friend if you live with the abuser.
- Avoid arguments with the abuser in areas with potential weapons—such as kitchens or garages—and in small spaces without access to an outside door.
- Know the telephone number of your local shelter or domestic violence hotline. Contact them for help.

Above all, remember that you are not to blame for another adult's behavior—ever—and you have the right to be safe, especially in your own home.

Many resources exist throughout Utah to help victims of domestic violence. Listed at the right (next page) are some web sites for more information. However, be aware that many abusers check the web site history on home computers to see where their partner has been.

The toll-free 24-hour number for the statewide domestic violence line is **1-800-897-LINK (5465)**. If you are in immediate danger, call 911. ☞

*Adapted from: "Preventing Domestic Violence" by Laura Crites in *Prevention Communicque*, March 1992, Crime Prevention Division, Department of the Attorney General, Hawaii.



WEB SITES

Utah Domestic Violence Council
•<http://www.udvc.org>

Commission on Criminal and Juvenile
Justice
•<http://www.justice.utah.gov>

Utah Department of Safety
•<http://www.bci.utah.gov>

Utah Governor's Office on Violence
Against Women and Families
•<http://www.nomoresecrets.utah.gov>