

## WHAT IS IT?

The purpose of Women's Services Medical Advocacy Program ("MAP") is twofold. First, we provide trainings for health care providers to improve their response to domestic violence victims seeking medical treatment. Second, we assist companies and organizations with drafting and implementing workplace domestic violence policies and procedures.

## THE NEED

Unfortunately, interpersonal violence (IPV) also known as domestic violence (DV) is all too common, with devastating health effects and substantial health care costs. Screening for violence exposure is an essential component of quality health care delivery. The recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey found victims who experienced high rates of severe IPV, rape and stalking, reported long-term chronic disease and other health impacts like Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms.

In the US, each year there are 211,000 new cases of breast cancer, 484,000 women dying from cardiovascular disease while two million women are injured annually due to domestic violence. Given the overwhelming number of women who are impacted by DV compared to other important life-threatening conditions that affect women, you wonder why more attention isn't paid to this health issue.

## CRITICAL ROLE

Health care providers play a critical role in helping victims of DV. More than three quarters of DV victims who report the incidents to police seek health care in emergency rooms, but most of them are never identified as being victims of abuse during their hospital visit. These findings, from a 2011 University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine study, point to a missed opportunity to intervene and offer help to individuals who suffer violence at the hands of an intimate partner.

Victims of DV report that one of the most important aspects of their interactions with a physician or other health care worker was being listened to about abuse. Too often though, health care providers do not discuss abuse with their patients or screen patients for DV. Health care providers are in a unique position to help victims of abuse if they know how to detect domestic violence and provide victims with referrals and support.

In February of 2013, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force issued new set of recommendations to support screening and response to DV and designated it with a "B" grade - recommending that health plans provide the service. With this and other new coverage requirements for screening and response, addressing DV in the health setting is becoming the standard of care.



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## LOCAL IMPACT

Violence against women is widespread and pervasive with **1 in 3** women and girls in the world experiencing physical or sexual violence during her lifetime, usually by someone she knows - a husband, a boyfriend, or friend. It is a global health problem of epidemic proportions<sup>2</sup>, and *it's happening in our neighborhoods too!*

In 2015, the ex-boyfriend of a 53-year old ran her car off the road, smashed her windshield with a baseball bat and stabbed her to death.

In 2012, a 20-year-old woman was brutally beaten, bludgeoned with a shovel and buried alive in the woods near the Cochran home of her two accused perpetrators.

In 2011, a 26-year-old man shot a 31-year-old mother at point-blank range inside her apartment in front of her two children and then turned the gun on himself.

In 2010, A 63-year-old Conneautville man was fatally shot in the chest with a 12-gauge shotgun in the bedroom of the home he shared with his 53-year-old wife.

Also in 2010, a 23-year-old Titusville woman died of asphyxiation due to blunt force trauma to her throat. She was found buried in the snow behind her apartment complex. Her 35-year-old boyfriend confessed to police that he killed her after a fight at her apartment.

<sup>1</sup>US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<sup>2</sup>World Health Organization

## WORKPLACE



As a part of the MAP, Women's Services can work with your business to define and implement a workplace violence policy. These policies demonstrate the priority a business

places on employee safety and its intolerance of violence in the workplace.

One-third of women killed in U.S. workplaces were killed by a current or former intimate partner according to one multi-year study. Another study found that nearly one in four large private industry establishments reported at least one incidence of domestic violence, including threats and assaults.

Domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking does not stop when a survivor arrives at work. The violence is devastating for victims and takes a toll on the entire workplace as victims are often traumatized, harassed and terrified by abusers while at work. Victims are often forced to take time off work to go to court to obtain a restraining order or to seek medical and mental health care. Many are forced to leave their jobs altogether.

Policies and procedures that are grounded in victim safety and perpetrator accountability will help employers to promote a healthy, productive workplace for all employees.

## EMPLOYER IMPACT

Employers face numerous human resource concerns with limited time and money. Often a decision to focus on a specific problem is not made until the problem becomes significant and costly. Problems with a social stigma tend to be less likely to receive attention as employers and employees may be reluctant to acknowledge that these problems exist.

Some compelling reasons that employers should take action on this issue are:

- At least one million women and 371,000 men are victims of stalking in the U.S. each year. Stalkers often follow the victim to the workplace.
- 94% of corporate security directors surveyed rank domestic violence as a high security problem at their company.
- The national health care costs of domestic violence amount to nearly \$4.1 billion a year for direct medical and mental health care services for victims of domestic violence.
- Domestic violence victims lose a total of nearly 8 million days of paid work each year - the equivalent of more than 32,000 full-time jobs as a result of the violence they experience.

A PARTNER AGENCY OF  
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## MEDICAL ADVOCACY PROGRAM

**NO MORE** | TOGETHER WE CAN END  
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