

WHAT YOU CAN DO AS A MEDICAL OR MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDER IF YOU SUSPECT THAT A WOMAN IS BEING ABUSED BY HER PARTNER

- 1) **EDUCATE YOURSELF ABOUT DOMESTIC ABUSE AND ITS EFFECTS ON WOMEN, CHILDREN, AND THE MEN WHO ARE ACTUALLY PERPETRATING THE ABUSE**

- 2) **NOTICE POTENTIAL SIGNS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE OCCURRING IN THOSE WHO SEE YOU**
 - **DEPRESSION/ANXIETY**
 - **FATIGUE/EXHAUSTION**
 - **APPEARING FRIGHTENED/FEARFUL/UNSURE OF HERSELF**
 - **BRUISES ON HER BODY/BLACK EYES**
 - **FREQUENT “ACCIDENTS”**
 - **HER PARTNER BEING CONTROLLING OR DEMEANING IN PUBLIC (I.E. IN FRONT OF YOU, IN A WAITING ROOM)**
 - **HER ACTUALLY TALKING DIRECTLY WITH YOU ABOUT A PARTNER BEING CONTROLLING AND ABUSIVE WITH HER**
 - **UNREALISTIC EXPLANATIONS ABOUT HER INJURIES (E.G. “I WALKED INTO A DOOR”/“I FELL DOWN THE STAIRS”)**
 - **HER PARTNER BEING INTIMIDATING OR CONTROLLING WITH YOU AS A PROVIDER OR WITH YOUR SUPPORT OR OFFICE STAFF**

- 3) **ASK HER ABOUT WHAT IS HAPPENING IN HER LIFE AND IN HER RELATIONSHIP (BE DIRECT AND SPECIFIC BUT ALSO BE RESPECTFUL WITH HER)**
 - **BUT DO NOT DO THIS IN FRONT OF HER PARTNER**
 - ...“ARE YOU IN A RELATIONSHIP AT HOME WHERE YOU FEEL BADLY TREATED OR UNSAFE?”**
 - ...“DO YOU FEEL LIKE YOUR PARTNER IS TRYING TO CONTROL YOU?”**
 - ...WHO YOU ARE, WHAT YOU FEEL, THINK, SAY, AND DO**
 - ...“WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOUR PARTNER LOSES HIS TEMPER AND BECOMES ANGRY WITH YOU?”**
 - ...“WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU AND YOUR PARTNER DISAGREE OR HAVE CONFLICT AT HOME?”**
 - ...“DO YOU HAVE ANY CONCERNS ABOUT HOW YOUR PARTNER EXPRESSES HIS ANGER TO YOU OR TO OTHER PEOPLE?”**
 - ...“DOES YOUR PARTNER EVER PUT YOU DOWN, CALL YOU DEMEANING NAMES, OR CURSE OR SWEAR AT YOU WHEN HE IS ANGRY WITH YOU?”**

...“HAS THERE EVER BEEN ANY PUSHING, GRABBING, OR HITTING WHEN YOU AND YOUR PARTNER ARGUE OR HAVE CONFLICT?”
...“DO YOU EVER FEEL AFRAID OF OR INTIMIDATED BY YOUR PARTNER?”

- 4) LISTEN TO HER IN A NON-JUDGMENTAL AND NON-SHAMING WAY**
 - AVOID STATEMENTS LIKE “WHY DO YOU LET HIM DO THAT TO YOU?” OR STATEMENTS THAT IMPLY THAT SHE IS TO BLAME OR IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ABUSE OR VIOLENCE THAT IS BEING DIRECTED AT HER**

- 5) BELIEVE WHAT SHE SAYS AND BE SUPPORTIVE ABOUT WHAT SHE IS TELLING YOU**
 - SOME PEOPLE HAVE DIFFICULTY BELIEVING THAT A MAN COULD ACT IN A CONTROLLING AND ABUSIVE WAY WITH HIS PARTNER**

- 6) TALK TO HER ABOUT WHAT ABUSE IS, ABOUT THE LIKELIHOOD OF ABUSE RECURRING IN THE RELATIONSHIP IF IT IS NOT DIRECTLY ADDRESSED, AND ABOUT THE POTENTIAL FOR AN ACTUAL ESCALATION OF ABUSE FROM EMOTIONAL AND VERBAL ABUSE TO PHYSICAL AND/OR SEXUAL ABUSE (IF THE LATTER HAVE NOT ALREADY OCCURRED IN HER RELATIONSHIP)**

- 7) ENCOURAGE HER TO TRUST HER PERCEPTIONS ABOUT HOW HER ABUSIVE PARTNER TREATS HER AND THINKS ABOUT HER**
 - SHE MAY BELIEVE WHAT HE HAS TOLD HER THAT SHE IS “JUST BEING PARANOID” ABOUT HIM OR THAT SHE “EXAGGERATES AND IS JUST TOO SENSITIVE”**

- 8) CHALLENGE THE ABUSE AND VIOLENCE DIRECTLY AND LET HER KNOW THAT DOMESTIC ASSAULT IS WRONG AND IS AGAINST THE LAW AND THAT EVEN EMOTIONAL AND VERBAL ABUSE CAN AFFECT HER AND HER CHILDREN IN A POWERFUL AND DAMAGING WAY**

- 9) REINFORCE THAT THE ABUSE IS NOT HER FAULT, THAT NO ONE DESERVES TO BE YELLED AT, PUT DOWN, OR PUSHED AND HIT, AND THAT ABUSE GENERALLY WILL NOT GET BETTER OR STOP ON ITS OWN UNLESS HER PARTNER SEEKS OUT TREATMENT FOR HIMSELF THAT DIRECTLY ADDRESSES THE ABUSE AND THE VIOLENCE (IF THIS IS PRESENT)**

- 10) EXPRESS YOUR FEARS AND CONCERNS DIRECTLY AND HONESTLY TO HER**
- ABOUT HER SAFETY, HER CHILDREN'S SAFETY, AND WHAT THE CHILDREN ARE LEARNING FROM THE ABUSE THAT IS GOING ON AROUND THEM
 - BE A "REALITY TEST" FOR HER ABOUT WHAT IS ACTUALLY HAPPENING IN HER LIFE AND IN THE LIVES OF HER CHILDREN
- 11) ASSURE HER THAT HELP IS AVAILABLE FOR HER **AND** HER PARTNER**
- IF HE IS WILLING TO ACKNOWLEDGE AND ADDRESS HIS CONTROLLING AND ABUSIVE ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS DIRECTLY
 - WOMEN OFTEN STILL LOVE THEIR PARTNERS; THEY SIMPLY WANT THE CONTROL AND ABUSE IN THE RELATIONSHIP TO STOP
- 12) HELP HER DEVELOP A WRITTEN "SAFETY PLAN" (WHETHER OR NOT SHE REMAINS WITH HER PARTNER):**
I.E. STEPS FOR HER TO TAKE IF THERE IS POTENTIAL FOR ABUSE IN THE FUTURE
- HOW TO RECOGNIZE WHEN SHE IS IN DANGER
 - MAKING A LIST OF PEOPLE AND RESOURCES SHE CAN CALL OR CONTACT IN AN EMERGENCY SITUATION
 - IDENTIFYING A SAFE PLACE TO GO ON A TEMPORARY BASIS IF THIS IS NECESSARY (E.G. FRIENDS, RELATIVES, A WOMEN'S SHELTER)
 - HIDING A SUITCASE OF CLOTHING, MONEY, IMPORTANT PERSONAL DOCUMENTS (E.G. SOCIAL SECURITY CARD, BIRTH CERTIFICATE, SCHOOL OR MEDICAL RECORDS, MARRIAGE LICENSE, BANK BOOKS) AND OTHER THINGS SHE MAY NEED IF SHE HAS TO LEAVE HOME ABRUPTLY AND QUICKLY DUE TO OR AFTER A SIGNIFICANT ABUSIVE INCIDENT
- 13) HELP HER LOCATE COMMUNITY SERVICES THAT ARE AVAILABLE TO HER**
- A BATTERED WOMEN'S SHELTER
 - LEGAL ADVOCATES OR ATTORNEYS WHO CAN EXPLAIN HER LEGAL OPTIONS
...E.G. ORDER FOR PROTECTION (OFP), ASSAULT CHARGES, SEPARATION, DIVORCE
 - FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE
 - SAFE PERMANENT HOUSING ASSISTANCE
 - COUNSELING AND/OR A SUPPORT GROUP TO HELP HER SORT OUT WHAT HAS HAPPENED, HOW IT HAS AFFECTED HER, AND WHAT SHE WANTS TO DO TO TAKE CARE OF HERSELF (AND HER CHILDREN, IF SHE HAS CHILDREN)
...COUPLE THERAPY IS GENERALLY NOT RECOMMENDED INITIALLY IF THE DISRESPECTFUL AND EXPLOSIVE ANGER AND CONTROLLING AND ABUSIVE BEHAVIOR HAVE NOT BEEN ADDRESSED DIRECTLY

- 14) BE PATIENT WITH HER (EVERYONE HAS HER OWN TIMELINE FOR LEAVING AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP)**
- **FOCUS ON AND BUILD ON HER STRENGTHS AND SURVIVAL SKILLS**
...SHE HAS MADE IT THIS FAR: HELP HER UNDERSTAND WHAT SHE HAS TRIED TO DO TO PROTECT HERSELF AND HER CHILDREN (IF SHE HAS ANY)
 - **DON'T SIMPLY "TELL HER WHAT TO DO"**
...DO NOT BECOME CONTROLLING WITH HER YOURSELF DUE TO YOUR FEAR FOR HER AND ABOUT HER SITUATION
...RESPECT HER PERSONAL LIMITS
...RESIST THE IMPULSE TO GO FOR A "QUICK FIX"
 - **LET HER MAKE HER OWN DECISIONS (SHE IS ALREADY FEELING VERY CONTROLLED BY HER PARTNER)**
...DON'T BECOME JUST ANOTHER CONTROLLING PERSON IN HER LIFE
...AFTER ALL, IT IS ULTIMATELY HER LIFE, HER PROCESS, AND HER JOB TO MAKE THE DECISIONS THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO HER AT THIS POINT IN HER LIFE
 - **"LEAVE THE DOOR OPEN" BY LETTING HER KNOW THAT YOU SUPPORT HER IN MAKING HER OWN DECISIONS AND THAT SHE CAN TALK WITH YOU AGAIN IN THE FUTURE IF NECESSARY AND IF SHE WANTS TO DO THIS**