Diocese of Dallas
Safe Environment Program for Parishes & Schools

St Pius X Catholic Community

Safe Environment Training Update

Please Note:
This is a SE training renewal option only. If you have not already completed the Family of Faith Safe Environment Training (featuring either Bishop Grahmann or Bishop Farrell), you must complete that initial program before being eligible to utilize any of the "update-training options"

DOMESTIC/FAMILY VIOLENCE

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Read this document.
2. Then do one of the following:
   a. Complete the on-line test or
   b. Print out and complete the self assessment form and return to the church office (mail or drop off) to the attention of the Safe Environment Coordinator. Be sure to print your name **legibly** and indicate your primary ministry.

By doing so, you will have *fulfilled your annual training requirement* that is mandated by our Parish's Safe Environment Program.

Based on material prepared by Pat Scott, Safety Officer, St. Gabriel the Archangel Catholic Community, (McKinney), as well as material from the Texas Department of Family & Protective Services, Texas Council on Family Violence, and Texas Health & Human Services Commission

NOTE TO VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF

You have previously completed the initial basic training requirements of our Safe Environment Program as part of being screened and cleared for service. This packet provides you with additional information related to safety and protection issues, as well as expands upon and/or updates information that you learned or received when you participated in other Safe Environment Awareness sessions.

OUR MANDATE

As you learned when you became a Safe Environment Cleared Adult, our Diocese and Parish have each accepted that as Christian adults, we all have a moral and legal responsibility and are entrusted by God with the spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being of children and vulnerable adults. As they participate in activities within or sponsored by our Diocese and Parish, it is our responsibility and commitment to provide an environment that is safe and nurturing.

OUR PARISH'S COMMITMENT

We are committed to assuring that all clergy, staff, and volunteers who serve in our church or school receive appropriate ongoing training to help them meet their responsibilities for providing an environment that is safe for children and vulnerable adults. We hope you will find the information in this package helpful in enhancing your knowledge and awareness of these issues. If there is anything in these materials about which you have questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact the St. Pius X Safe Environment Director at 972-279-6155.

Mandate to report under the policy of the Diocese of Dallas:

The Diocese, through its schools, institutions, agencies, and organizations, has numerous daily contacts with many children and vulnerable adults. It is therefore, most important that all persons responsible for ministry to these individuals , particularly all staff members of parishes, schools, and agencies in the Diocese of Dallas, protect their rights and be alert to the possibility for abuse. It is the policy of the Diocese of Dallas not only to fulfill the reporting law but to cooperate fully with the investigating civil authorities. Individuals must report incidents or suspicions of abuse. Situations involving suspected abuse (minors or vulnerable adults) must be reported to Texas Department of Family and Protective Services at 1-800-252-5400 or in emergency to the appropriate local police authority, usually by calling 911. Individuals with knowledge about violations of Diocesan policy should call the Chancellor or the Director of Safe Environment of the Diocese at 214-528-2240, or they may write to them at:

Diocese of Dallas
P.O. Box 190507
Dallas, TX 75219

"*Let the husband render unto his wife due benevolence and likewise also the wife unto the husband."*
1 Corinthians 7:3

Domestic Violence & Communities of Faith

Statistics indicate that victims of domestic violence are everywhere – even in our faith community. 74% of all Texans have either been a victim of domestic violence or know someone who has (according to a quantitative study conducted for the Texas Council on Family Violence). Each year, thousands of American children witness domestic violence within their families. Witnessing violence is a risk factor for long-term physical and mental health problems, including alcohol and substance abuse, or becoming a victim or perpetrator of abuse. Because there is a need for outreach and education in faith communities, the faith family can be a critical resource for spiritual renewal and guidance.

As a member of a faith community, you can provide an informed and supportive environment for victims, survivors and perpetrators of domestic violence. Safety should be the priority for victims, survivors and their children.

The Role of Religion

Religious teachings can be misinterpreted, taken out of context or used as a tool by some batterers to further their control.

Victims and survivors may struggle to understand the abuse in light of their religious beliefs. As a faith community, you can help victims recognize and acknowledge the challenge of their inner conflict, and be clear that the responsibility for the abuse lies with the abusive partner.

Speak Out

Speaking out against abuse sends a message to the victim and survivor, as well as the batterer, that domestic violence is unacceptable and contrary to the will of God.

What You Should Know

- Domestic violence includes physical, sexual, emotional, economic or psychological actions or threats of action that are used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner. It is rarely a one-time occurrence and usually escalates in frequency and severity over time.
- Domestic violence can happen to anyone of any race, age, religion, socioeconomic status or gender. It can happen to couples who are married, estranged, or who are dating.
- Victims of domestic violence often remain in abusive relationships because of fear – for their lives, the safety of their children and homelessness. A victim may feel strong emotional ties to his/her batterer. The reality of family violence-related injuries and deaths, which occur after a victim has left their abuses, means that leaving doesn't always mean safety.
- Religious or cultural values can in advertently pressure a victim to keep the family together at all costs.

- Marriage and couples counseling when domestic violence is present or suspected can endanger the life of the victim. Counseling the couple individually or referring them individually to domestic violence and Batterer Intervention and Prevention Program counseling is a priority for the safety of the victim and his/her children.
- Batterers may use faith and religion to exert control over the victim through the misinterpretation of scripture and teachings.
- Domestic violence is not a private family matter. It is a crime with serious repercussions for the victim, the family and the community. Keeping quiet about what you observe could be very dangerous for your brother or sister in the faith community.
- Batterers may make excuses for their violence, claiming loss of control due to alcohol or drug use or extreme stress. External factors like these do not cause domestic violence, although they may intensify already existing violent behavior. Batterers choose to use violence in order to control their partner.

Warning signs that a "potential partner" may be a "potential batterer:"
If you recognize a pattern of behavior that is threatening, it is time to seek help!

- Gets too close, too fast. *Comes on strong. Abusers pressure for an exclusive commitment almost immediately.*
- Is excessively possessive. *Calls constantly or visits unexpectedly; prevents you from going to work because "you might meet someone."*
- Is controlling. *Interrogates you, especially if you're late, asking "Where were you and who did you talk to?"*
- Has unrealistic expectations. *Expects you to be perfect all the time and to meet every need, regardless of how unreasonable it may seem.*
- Isolates you. *Tries to cut you off from family and friends and accuses your supporters of "causing trouble."*
- Blames others for problems and mistakes. *Whether it's the boss, a teacher, a coach, your friends or you – it's always someone else's fault.*
- Refuses to take personal responsibility for feelings. *Says things like, "You make me angry." Instead of, "I am angry." Or, "You're hurting me by not doing what I tell you."*
- Is hypersensitive. *Is easily insulted claiming "You hurt my feelings," when anger is the real emotion.*
- Is cruel to animals and pets. *Has violent tendencies towards animals, like excessive punishing, hurting or killing.*
- Displays "playful" use of force. *Enjoys throwing or holding you down against your will, or forces you to kiss and doesn't accept "no" for an answer.*
- Verbally assaults you. *Constantly criticizes you or says cruel, hurtful things; degrades you, curses and insults you.*
- Insists on rigid roles. *Expects you to serve and obey because "You belong to me."*
- Displays sudden mood swings. *Quickly switches from sweet and loving to explosive and violent.*
- Has battered in the past. *Admits to being abusive in the past, but blames it on someone or something else.*
- Threatens you with physical violence. *Says things like, "I'll break your neck," or I'll kill you," followed by "Everybody talks that way," or "I didn't really mean it."*

Domestic Violence and The Faith Community

More than 800 Texas women were killed by their current or former husbands or boyfriends from 1998 to 2006. Domestic violence shelters in Texas housed more than 38,000 adults and children per year between 1999 and 2006. All too often, domestic violence goes unreported so the actual number of victims is probably much higher.

In times of crisis, faith leaders and their communities are often the first to be contacted by an abused woman or concerned family member. It is important to know the resources that are available to serve those who seek help.

Three Basic Types of Domestic Violence: Physical, Sexual and Emotional

Physical abuse includes shoving, restraining, hitting or kicking. Physical abuse can occur frequently or infrequently, but it tends to escalate in frequency and severity over time.

Sexual abuse is any unwanted or forced sexual behavior by an intimate partner. In Texas, husbands who coerce their wives into having sex are breaking the law.

Emotional abuse includes isolation from family and friends, forced financial dependence, verbal abuse, threats, intimidation and control over where and when the partner can go and what he/she can do.

Domestic Violence in Texas

In the state of Texas, "domestic violence" is synonymous with "family violence" or "intimate partner violence". The Texas Family Code defines family violence as: "an act by a member of a family or household against another member of the family or household that is intended to result in physical harm, bodily injury, assault, or sexual assault, or that is a threat that reasonably places the member in fear of imminent physical harm, bodily injury, assault, or sexual assault, but does not include defensive measures to protect oneself." (Chapter 51) Studies indicate that approximately 85% of domestic violence victims are women.

Families that experience abuse – especially women who have been abused – have special needs. They need to know that help (such as accurate information, resources and trustworthy people to confide in) is available to them 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Children need help dealing with their fears and confusion as well.

Signs That Someone may be a Victim of Abuse:

- Does the victim have visible injuries, such as black eyes, bruises or broken bones?
- Does the victim tend to miss work or services because of frequent "accidents"?
- Does the victim's partner exert an unusual amount of control over their activities? Do you notice the partner controlling family finances, the way the victim acts or dresses or the victim's contact with family members or friends?
- Does the partner ridicule the victim publicly?
- Have you noticed changes in the victim's or the children's behavior?

- Do they appear frightened, exhausted or on edge?
- Do the children seem to be easily upset? Are they experiencing sudden problems in school or other activities?

When Religion is Used to Justify Abuse

Religious teachings of various cultures can be misinterpreted, taken out of context or used as a tool by some batterers to further their control.

Victims who have been abused may struggle to understand or explain away the abuse in light of their religious beliefs. Christian victims may believe that they deserve the punishment because of original sin or that suffering may be a way to salvation. Jewish victims may fear they are not maintaining "shalom bayit," or peace in the home. As a faith leader, it is vital that you recognize and acknowledge the challenge of a victim's inner conflict. Address the guilt they may feel, empathize with them, but be clear abuse is unacceptable behavior and that the responsibility for the abuse lies with the abuser.

Speaking out against domestic violence sends a message that it is unacceptable and contrary to religious teachings.

" Indeed, I have singled him [Abraham] out that he may direct his sons and his posterity to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just . . . "
Genesis 18:19

RECOGNIZING THE EARLY WARNING SIGNS FOR VICTIMS

As adolescents, boys and girls are forming their first conclusions about what to expect and accept in intimate relationships. Teenagers may be predisposed to accept physical violence because of their exposure to it in homes (either as victims or witnesses) or in the media. Given this early learning experience, it is critical for adults to recognize and respond to the early warning signs. The following are common clues that you may be experiencing or witnessing family violence or dating violence:

Physical bruises or other signs of injury
Bear in mind that victims will often attempt to hide their injuries due to embarrassment. Be alert to sudden changes in dress or make-up, as well as the explanation of injuries that seem out of character.

Truancy, failing, withdrawal from activities, dropping out of school
An abusive relationship usually drains the victim of energy. The energy he/she still has may be spent trying to make things right for the abuser.

Sudden or increased social isolation
Due to shame or jealous accusations on the part of his/her dating partner, the victim may withdraw from friends and become increasingly isolated.

Difficulty making decisions
A victim may appear anxious about making independent decisions because he/she may usually have to "get permission" from his/her abuser. Another sign is the victim's avoidance of eye contact.

Sudden changes in mood or personality
These changes may include depression, withdrawal, acting out, secretiveness, increased insecurity or feelings of inadequacy, anxiousness or preoccupation with dating partner.

Use of alcohol or drugs
This may be in response to direct pressure from his/her abuser or an attempt to numb his/her pain or emotional ambivalence about the relationship.

Pregnancy
Many teenage girls feel pregnancy will help them get out of a bad situation. More than 70% of pregnant or parenting teens are beaten by their boyfriends/husbands. Pregnancy significantly increases the risk of violence in teenage relationships.

Crying easily; getting "hysterical" or overreacting to minor incidents
The victim who lives in fear of another incident is living under extreme tension. He/she is constantly trying to second guess his/her abuser's moods in an attempt to avoid violence. Reacting to this stress, he/she may explode or become hysterical in response to something minor (like being asked why he/she is late for class).

"Husbands, love your wives, and avoid bitterness toward them. Children, obey your parents in everything for this is pleasing to the Lord. Fathers do not provoke your children, so they may not become discouraged." Collossians 3:18-21

Signs that a member of your family or faith community may be abusing his/her partner:

- Misinterpretation of religious scriptures, beliefs, practices, teachings or traditions
- Disrespectful references such as bad names or put downs in public
- Disrespectful behavior such as shouts and curses directed to the partner
- Control of access to family finances
- Actual or threatened physical harm
- Destruction of property, personal possessions or keepsakes
- Acts of jealousy and suspicion
- Isolation from family and friends
- Demonstrations of anger such as throwing things around the house
- Forced sexual contact or denied intimacy
- Control over what a partner wears, who they talk to or where they go
- Mistreatment of children and/or pets
- Attribution of abusive behavior to cultural traditions or male superiority

These behaviors can happen all at once or periodically over time and are known to escalate in frequency and severity.

Myths & Facts about Domestic Violence

MYTH	FACT
Domestic violence occurs when men and women assault each other. Women are just as violent as men	Abuse occurs in a relationship when one person coerces, intimidates or dominates another. The National Crime Victimization Survey of the Bureau of Justice reports that 85% of serious spousal assaults are perpetrated by men against women. Domestic violence can't be assessed by asking, "Who hit whom how many times?" You must ask, "Who is terrified, hurt repeatedly or afraid to speak out?"
Stress causes abusive behaviors.	Most people who are living under severe stress do not abuse. Stress may be a contributing factor, but reducing stress will not necessarily reduce violence in the family. Psychological, physical and financial control of an intimate partner is a problem, not a symptom of stress.
Drugs and alcohol cause batterers to abuse their intimate partners	Domestic violence and substance abuse are two separate problems, however, they may occur simultaneously. Elimination of substance abuse doesn't necessarily eliminate physical, emotional or sexual abuse. Substance abuse is not an excuse for battering, but society often views it as a reason for the abuse.
Survivors and victims of domestic violence (especially women) are masochistic; they provoke the violence.	Abused women are not a personality type. They don't enjoy being assaulted. Women may act in ways that their husbands or partners don't like. This should not be confused with provocation. Disagreement doesn't justify assault.
Victims of domestic violence do not seek help and will not use it when offered.	A study of women in Texas family violence shelters found that most shelter residents had repeatedly sought various forms of help before entering the shelter. In many cases, women found that friends, family, the medical community or police often discounted their abuse, sided with their batterers or did not believe their stories.
What goes on within a family is a private matter.	Domestic violence is a community problem. The harmful, hurtful and dangerous behavior that we have outlawed in public places should not be tolerated in our homes. Victims of domestic violence need support and assistance, and abusive people should be held accountable for violating criminal laws.
Some religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam sanction violence or ill treatment of women.	According to scriptures in these religions, a woman should be respected and never ever abused.

Do you know how to support a family member or friend experiencing violence?

Get Educated!

- Learn what family violence is and how it harms children and families.
- Seek information from your local family violence center and other resources.
- Assess your behaviors and relationships. Is there something you could change to benefit your children, family, and yourself?

Be a positive role model and teacher with your children!

- Teach your children that bullying and violence are not acceptable.
- Practice positive discipline that excludes hitting and negative verbal messages.
- Model for your children how to express anger and resolve problems without using violence.
- Treat children and others with respect and dignity.
- Seek help when having family or personal problems. Everyone needs help sometime.

Be a good friend and neighbor!

- Immediately call 911 if family violence is occurring.
- Help child and adult victims make a safety plan.
- Listen.
- Help find resources to deal with the family violence and negative family life.
- Access what help you may personally be able to offer.
- 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) is the National Domestic Violence Hotline (ndvh..org). Callers can receive crisis intervention assistance and information about local resources for women's shelters, social services, legal assistance, and other programs. The hotline is open 24 hours with English and Spanish speaking attendants. Interpreters are available to translate another 139 languages.
- 1-800-98-YOUTH is the Texas Youth Hotline. This 24-hour hotline provides prevention services for youths and their families.

Advocate for safe and healthy families in your neighborhood and community.

- Support programs that teach children and youth the social skills they need for healthy, nonviolent relationships.
- Advocate for more organized after school programs that offer children and youth the opportunities to have healthy, interpersonal relationships and constructive activities.
- Support your community's family violence prevention and intervention programs.
- Support your local family violence centers and their programs. Learn their needs and how you can donate your time and resources.

FAMILY VIOLENCE STATISTICS FOR TEXAS

	2006	2004	2002
Family violence incidents	186,868	182,087	183,440
Women killed by intimate Partners *(husbands, ex-husbands, Common-law husbands, boyfriends, and ex-boyfriends. More than 800 Texas women were killed by an intimate partner from 1998 – 2006.)*	120	116	117
Adults sheltered	12,356	11,983	11,257
Children sheltered	16,968	17,619	17,629
Hotline calls answered	182,459	179,394	184,245

(From Texas Department of Public Safety and Texas Health and Human Services Commission)

SOME NATIONAL FAMILY VIOLENCE STATISTICS

33% of female homicide victims were killed by their husbands or boyfriends and 2.7% of male victims were killed by their wives or girlfriends in 2004. (Uniform Crime Report, FBI)

A child's exposure to the father (or male authority figure) abusing the mother is strongest risk factor for transmitting violent behavior from one generation to the next. (American Psychological Assn.)

"You [wives} are her [Sarah] children when you do what is good and fear no intimidation. Likewise, you husbands should live with your wives in understanding, showing honor to [them], since we are joint heirs of the gift of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered." 1 Peter 3:6-7

Some Questions to Consider

Before YOU initiate contact with a domestic violence victim, survivor or perpetrator to provide advocacy or faith-based counseling, ask yourself these questions:

1. What qualifications do I have for helping victims, survivors, or perpetrators of domestic violence?
2. What are my limitations?
3. What information and resources can I offer to help victims, survivors and perpetrators of domestic violence in my community?

Local Resources and References:

THE FAMILY PLACE CRISIS HOTLINE (English and Spanish)
214-941-1991 www.familyplace.org

GENESIS WOMEN'S SHELTER HOTLINE (English and Spanish)
214-946-HELP (4357) www.genisisshelter.org

COLLIN COUNTY WOMEN'S SHELTER HOTLINE
(214 or 972)-422-7233

COUNSELING CONSIDERATIONS:

Only those with sufficient professional training should undertake the job of "counseling" anyone involved in a domestic violence situation.

A non-professional can be a good listener when a victim or survivor decides to tell their story. Encourage the victim by believing the victim, assuring the victim that the abuse is the responsibility of the abuser and by urging the victim to seek escape from the situation and good professional assistance – legal, physical, and psychological. Know where to find qualified assistance such as local shelters and/or service organizations.

The trauma a victim experiences may make it difficult to make decisions. You may be able to help by asking the victim to assess personal strength, resources and support systems without making decisions on the victim's behalf. By presenting information and options and allowing the victim to make his/her own decisions, you will strengthen the victim's self-esteem. Let the victim know that you support the decisions they make, whether it means leaving the abusive relationship or even returning to the abuser. Everyone's safety must be secured before work to preserve the family can begin. The victim may feel that their safest option I to stay in the relationship. In this scenario, faith leaders can provide options, support and safety planning by believing that the victim is the expert in his/her own situation.

Safety should be the priority for the victims of domestic violence and their children. Victims should develop a safety plan by identifying a safe place to go in the event of an emergency. (The National Domestic Violence Hotline or your local domestic violence shelter can help). Talk to the victim about setting aside money, keys, medication, important papers, clothes and whatever else is needed in an emergency. Provide the victim with resources if the abuse occurs again. Family Violence Programs may include shelter, a crisis hotline, referral to emergency medical care, counseling services, emergency transportation, legal assistance, employment assistance and more. A directory of Texas programs for domestic violence victims can be found at www.tcfv.org or by calling the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233). Local shelters include The Family Place in Dallas (214-692-8295) and Hope's Door in Plano (972-472-2911). Planning a victim's safety and the safety of their children may help ease feelings of guilt and betrayal of family loyalty.

Help for Batterers

A batterer can present one face to the community and another at home. They may be outwardly charming, congenial and an active member in their religious community. However, in the privacy of their home, they could be controlling, cruet and violent. They often blame others for their violence and deny responsibility for their behavior. Working with batterers can be complex and difficult. Faith communities can hold batterers accountable and provide intervention that does not place a victim in danger. When there is violence in a relationship, the safety of the victim and their children should be the main concern.

Some group counseling has been found to be effective with batterers through Batterer Intervention and Prevention Programs. The Texas Council on Family Violence can provide information and referrals.

WAYS ANY ADULT CAN HELP END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Cultivate a respectful attitude toward everyone in your family and at your workplace, especially the women.

Avoid behaviors that are demeaning or controlling.

When circumstances make you angry with your partner or children, respond without hurting or humiliating them. Model a non-violent, respectful response to resolving conflicts. Seek out a domestic violence or child abuse prevention program if outside assistance is needed.

If you have a friend or co-worker who is afraid of his/her partner or who is being hurt, offer support and refer to the 24-hour, toll free, National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-SAFE (7233).

Call the police (911) if you see or hear violence in progress.

Do not be afraid to speak up if friends or neighbors belittle women, make jokes about violence, or ignore a battered woman.

Do not patronize music producers, movie companies, internet businesses, video game producers, etc who are purveyors of domestic violence AND be sure to communicate with these companies why you have chosen not to spend your money on their products.

Try to live a violence-free life. Remember that those around you, especially children, learn much more from watching your actions than from all the words every spoken.