

What to do if you suspect domestic violence

If you know or suspect that a family member, friend or work colleague is experiencing domestic violence, it may be difficult to know what to do. It can be very upsetting that someone is hurting a person you care about. There are things you can do to help make her and her children safer:

What can you do to help?

- Talk to her and help her to open up. You may have to try several times before she will confide in you. Be patient.
- Be empathetic, attentive and respectful. Start by saying something like, "I'm worried about you because" or "I'm concerned about your safety..."
- Listen to her and believe what she tells you. Do not judge or criticize her. Reassure her that the abuse is not her fault and that you are there for her.
- A woman's safety and the safety of her children is paramount. Don't make plans for her yourself, but encourage her to think about her safety more closely and focus on her own needs and those of her children.
- Help her to stay safe -- Agree on a code word or action that is only known to you both so she can signal when she is in danger and cannot access help herself
- Focus on supporting her and building her self confidence.
- Help her to develop or to keep up her outside contacts. This can help to boost her self esteem and prevent her from feeling isolated.
- Offer to keep spare sets of keys or important documents, such as passports, benefit books, in a safe place for her so that she can access them quickly in an emergency. **Call 911 for her if needed.**
- Find out information about local services for her. Encourage her to seek the help of a local domestic violence agency that understands what she is going through and offers specialist support and advice.