

Important Numbers

Family Violence Info Line
310-1818 (no area code needed)
www.familyviolence.alberta.ca

Toll Free in Alberta, 24 Hours a day, 7 days a week. Help is available in over 170 languages.

Child Abuse Hotline
1-800-387-KIDS (5437)

211 (for Edmonton area)
If 211 is not yet available in your area, call **780-482-INFO (4636)**
Confidential, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Alberta Council of Women's Shelters
1-866-331-3933
www.acws.ca

Support Network Distress Line
Edmonton
482-HELP (4357) (no area code needed)
24 Hours a day, 7 days a week.
Confidential and anonymous support and information.

Distress Centre Calgary
403-266-1605

Emergency Protection Order Program
In Edmonton: 780-422-9222
In Calgary: 403-355-4868
www.legalaid.ab.ca

Victim Services Unit in Alberta
780-427-3460
www.victims.alberta.ca

DO YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHO IS EXPERIENCING FAMILY VIOLENCE?

ARE YOU CONCERNED AND WANT TO HELP?



**IF YOU BELIEVE SOMEONE
AND/OR THEIR CHILDREN
ARE IN IMMEDIATE
PHYSICAL DANGER
CALL 911
OR YOUR LOCAL
POLICE OR RCMP**

Alberta

HAS A FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER APPROACHED YOU AND TALKED ABOUT BEING ABUSED? DO YOU SUSPECT SOMEONE CLOSE TO YOU IS EXPERIENCING FAMILY VIOLENCE AND YOU ARE UNSURE WHAT TO DO?

It can be really upsetting when someone you care about is being hurt, but your help and support can make a difference. The following information provides suggestions to help support those experiencing family violence.

Recognizing Signs of Violence

You might be unsure if what your friend or family member is experiencing is family violence. Maybe you have a sense something is wrong. Sometimes there are obvious signs of family violence, but often you may not notice anything.

Some physical signs of violence may include:

- Unexplained bruises, marks, scars or sprains.

Other signs may include:

- Their partner orders them around or controls aspects of their life including: where they can go, what they can wear and how they spend their money.
- They have stopped seeing their friends and family, or cut conversations short when their partner enters the room.
- Their partner criticizes or humiliates them in front of others or in private.
- They often talk about their partner's jealousy, bad temper or possessiveness.
- They have become anxious or depressed, lost self-confidence and/or are unusually quiet.
- Their children seem afraid of their partner, have behavioural problems, or are withdrawn.
- They are reluctant to leave their children with their partner.

Why doesn't my friend or family member leave?

It can be hard to understand why someone would stay in a relationship if they are being treated badly. Leaving may appear to be a simple solution. You might think the violence is partly their fault

because they put up with it, or they are weak if they stay. While it may seem easier to leave, leaving can be extremely difficult and sometimes quite dangerous. This is important for friends and family to understand.

Should I get involved?

Many people worry they are interfering if they get involved but your support can make a difference. Don't wait for your friend or family member to tell you about the situation. Bring up the subject yourself and let your friend or family member know that you are concerned for their safety. You might risk some embarrassment if you approach them and they reject your support or tell you that your suspicions are wrong. If you approach them sensitively without criticism, most people will appreciate an expression of concern.

Your response is really important and can make a difference. If your response supports and encourages your friend or family member to talk about the situation, they may feel stronger about exploring their options.

When approaching your friend or family member it's helpful if:

- They are alone and it's safe for them to talk.
- You approach them in a sensitive way. You could say "I'm worried about you because I've noticed..."
- You respect their decision if they don't want to talk about it. They may not be ready or may feel ashamed. It may take some time for someone to feel comfortable talking about their situation
- Don't push them, but let them know that you are there when they are ready.

How you can help:

Listen to what your friend or family member has to say.

- When your friend or family member is ready to talk, the most important thing you can do is to listen.

Believe what your friend or family member tells you and take it seriously.

- You might find it hard to imagine that someone you know could behave violently. But many people who use violent behaviour can appear very caring and charming around others. Family violence can be damaging physically and emotionally. Don't underestimate the danger they may be in.

Be supportive.

- Let them know you are available to help by asking, "What can I do to help you?"

Help them recognize the violence and reassure them that it's not their fault.

- Help them recognize that what's going on isn't healthy, and no one deserves to be abused. Recognize and support their strength and courage.

Focus on their safety. Help them develop a safety plan.

- Whether your friend or family member is staying or has separated from their partner, discuss the ways they can increase safety for themselves and their children.

Encourage them to talk with people who can provide help and guidance.

- Gather information about local family violence agencies that can offer assistance. Provide your friend or family member with contact numbers and let them know there are people available to assist.

Maintain some level of regular contact.

- Having the opportunity to talk regularly to a supportive friend or family member can be very helpful.

Remember that you can't "rescue" your friend or family member.

- Respect their right to make their own decisions. Although it's difficult to see someone you care about getting hurt, ultimately they have to be the one to decide what to do. It's important for you to continue to support their decision.

What to avoid:

When talking to someone who may be in a violent relationship, some things may not help, or may stop them from wanting to confide in you. You should avoid the following things when talking to someone you believe is experiencing family violence:

- Don't blame them for their abuse or ask: "Why do you put up with it?" or "How could you love someone that treats you violently?" These questions suggest that somehow it's their fault. They may also blame themselves for the violence or may even say "It's my fault." It's important not to agree as no one deserves to be treated badly.

- Don't be critical. If they say they still love their partner or if they leave and return, avoid judging the behaviour. Understand that leaving a violent relationship takes time.

- Avoid making negative comments about the partner. Pay attention to the words you use. People in violent relationships may not see themselves as being a 'victim of violence.' Criticism of someone's partner is more likely to make people want to defend the violent person. Instead, address the abusive behaviour.

- Don't give advice or tell your friend what to do. This will only reduce their confidence to make their own decisions. Listen and give them information.

- Don't pressure them to leave. Focus on listening and supporting so that they can make their own decisions. This will also help them regain self-confidence. Ending a violent relationship can be extremely difficult.

- Avoid confronting the violent partner about their behaviour. You may be putting yourself or your friend or family member in danger.

What if I'm confronted by the abusive partner?

Be careful, and don't place yourself in a position where the person could harm or manipulate you. Don't try to intervene directly. If you witness your friend or family member being assaulted, call the police.

Looking after yourself:

Supporting someone in a violent relationship can be frustrating, frightening and stressful. It's important to take care of your own well-being. You may be feeling:

- Frustrated or angry that they have not left the relationship. Don't give up on them, regardless of their decision. Explain your fears, but let them know you will still support them.

- Pressured to help more than you're able. Don't push yourself beyond your own limits.

- Overwhelmed and frightened. Get help. Talk to someone. Services are available - See important numbers in this pamphlet.

How to increase safety by creating a Safety Plan:

Help your friend or family member think through the steps that should be taken when their partner becomes violent.

- Help them create a phone list with emergency contacts that can be hidden in a wallet.

- Help them set up a safe room in the home where they and their children can go when their partner becomes violent. Safe rooms are places where there are no weapons, ground level (if possible), with access to a door or window and cordless phone.

- Plan places where they and their children may be able to go in case of an emergency or if they decide to leave.

- Agree on a code word or action that they can use to let you know help is needed.

- Together or on your own, find out information about local services. Offer any practical help you feel comfortable providing, such as keeping spare keys, overnight bags or important documents.

- Help them prepare a safety pack just in case they have to leave quickly. Help find a safe place to store the safety pack where the violent partner will not likely find it. Offer to keep the safety pack for them.

Items to include in the safety pack:

- ID (driver's license, health cards, social insurance cards, birth certificates, passports, status cards)

- Cash, debit, credit cards

- Information about bank accounts, etc.

- Important documents (Emergency Protection Orders, restraining orders, custody papers, work permits, immigration papers)

- Keys (house, car, work, safety deposit box)

- Prescribed medications for self and children

- Picture of your friend, the abuser and children

- Address book and important contacts of friends, family, shelters, doctor, police, etc.

- Essential clothes for your friend and the children