UNDERSTANDING ABUSE

What is domestic violence?

Domestic violence is a **pattern of behavior** one person uses to gain or keep **power and control** over a partner, ex-partner or family member. It isn't always physical, and it can happen to anyone of any age, gender, culture, income or sexual orientation.

Abuse can look like...

Physical
Hitting, pushing, choking, restraining, using or threatening with a weapon.

Emotional & verbal
Name-calling, humiliation, threats, blaming you, making you doubt yourself.

Sexual
Any sexual contact without consent, pressure, or refusing to use protection.

Financial
Controlling money, taking your pay, ruining your credit, keeping you from working.

Digital & stalking
Tracking your phone or location, following you, threatening to share private images.

Immigration
Threatening to call immigration, hiding your passport or papers, refusing to help with your status.

Isolation
Cutting you off from friends, family, community, school or work.

Using children
Threatening to take the kids, using visits to harass you, turning children against you.

Cultural & spiritual
Mocking your culture or beliefs, keeping you from ceremony, church or community.

Does your partner or family member ever...

- [ ] Make you afraid of how they'll react?
- [ ] Blame you for their anger or violence?
- [ ] Threaten to hurt you, your kids, pets or themselves?
- [ ] Check who you talk to or where you go?
- [ ] Keep you from money, a car or your phone?
- [ ] Pressure you into sex you don't want?

If you checked any of these, you deserve support. An advocate can talk it through with you, with no pressure to leave or report.

⚠ **Been choked or strangled, even once?**
It can cause serious injury that you can't see, sometimes hours or days later. Get checked at an ER or First STEP, **(406) 329-5776**. Strangulation is also a strong warning sign that the abuse may become deadly.

It is not your fault.

No one deserves to be abused. Help is free and confidential.

YWCA 24/7
(406) 542-1944
Emergency: 911

YOUR PLAN, YOUR PACE

Safety planning checklist

Check off what fits your life. Whether you're staying, getting ready to leave or have already left, a plan can help.

Keep this somewhere safe, like at work or with a friend, where the abuser won't find it.

Staying safe right now

- [ ] Pick a code word that tells friends or kids to call 911.
- [ ] Know which rooms have a way out. Avoid kitchens, bathrooms and rooms with weapons.
- [ ] Memorize a few key phone numbers.
- [ ] Keep your phone charged and your car keys handy.
- [ ] Ask a trusted neighbor to call 911 if they hear trouble.

Pack a go-bag (keep it with someone you trust)

- [ ] ID / driver's license
- [ ] Social Security cards
- [ ] Medications & prescriptions
- [ ] Cash & bank card
- [ ] Phone charger
- [ ] Passport, visa, green card
- [ ] Birth certificates
- [ ] Tribal ID / enrollment card
- [ ] Insurance / Medicaid cards
- [ ] Spare keys, lease
- [ ] Order of Protection copy
- [ ] Kids' & pets' essentials

Phone & online safety

- [ ] Change passwords from a device the abuser can't reach.
- [ ] Turn off location sharing; check for unknown apps or trackers.
- [ ] Make a new email account the abuser doesn't know.
- [ ] Review shared accounts: phone plans, cloud photos, streaming, banking.

Children & pets

- [ ] Teach children how to call 911 and say their address.
- [ ] Pick a safe place or neighbor they can go to.
- [ ] Tell school or daycare who may and may not pick them up.
- [ ] Give school a copy of any Order of Protection; ask for it to cover the kids.
- [ ] Plan for pets: vet records, food, a leash or carrier. YWCA's shelter takes pets.

After you leave

- [ ] Change locks; vary your routes to work, school and stores.
- [ ] Tell your employer or security; share a photo of the abuser.
- [ ] Carry your Order of Protection. Ask about a **Hope Card**.
- [ ] Ask an advocate about the **Address Confidentiality Program**.

Keep a record

- [ ] Take photos of injuries and damaged property.
- [ ] Save threatening texts, emails and voicemails.
- [ ] Write down dates, what happened and any witnesses.
- [ ] Store copies with an advocate or someone you trust.
- [ ] Immigrant? Ask about VAWA or U visa options: IRC (406) 833-0985.

A person I can call

_____

A safe place I can go

_____

Make a plan with an advocate. They can help you think through each step.

YWCA 24/7

(406) 542-1944

Tribal advocates (CSKT): (406) 675-2700