

Domestic Abuse and Suicide Risk

Domestic abuse is physical, sexual, or psychological harm by a current or former intimate partner or spouse. It is a situation in which someone in a marital or close personal relationship tries to control a partner through fear, intimidation, threats of physical violence, or actual force.

Backgrounds of domestic abuse have been found in adult suicide victims and histories of suicidal behavior are common in those who have experienced domestic abuse or violence:

- Female victims of intimate partner violence who have a chronic illness or disability are at increased risk of threatening or attempting suicide
- Women who experience intimate partner violence, particularly sexual abuse, are at risk for suicidal ideation or behavior
- Battered women seeking care in hospital emergency departments are likely have histories of suicidal behavior
- Parental violence increases the lifelong risk of attempting suicide in children

Repeated abuse may lower the victims' capacity to care about themselves and make them indifferent about living. It may weaken the ability to resist thoughts of self-harm. Individuals who abuse others may also be at risk for the same reasons. Abuse is often associated with other suicide risk factors.

Health and other human services providers should screen persons who have experienced ongoing domestic violence or abuse for suicide risk or arrange for such an assessment.

Persons who have voiced serious suicidal ideation, threatened suicide with intent, cited a specific plan, or made a potentially lethal suicide attempt should be screened for exposure to domestic abuse.

Some useful 24/7 resources:

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| • National Suicide Prevention Lifeline | 800-273-8255 |
| • National Domestic Violence Hotline | 800-799-7233 |
| • MCES Crisis Center and Hot Line | 610-279-6100 |
| • Montgomery County Adult/Elder Protective Services Hot Line | 800-734-2020 |
| • Women's Center of Montgomery County | 800-773-2424 |
| • Laurel House Domestic Violence Hot Line | 800-642-3150 |

Montgomery County Emergency Service (MCES)
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