

HELP! FROM WHATCOM LIBRARIES

RESOURCES AND INFORMATION YOU CAN TRUST

Topic: Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

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In these challenging times there may be increases in incidents of domestic violence and sexual assault in our county. There may be extra stresses on families and heads of household during this time, but there is no excuse for physical, emotional or sexual abuse. If you or someone you know is experiencing violence, there are options and choices for you, so that you can find a safe and supportive environment.

What is domestic violence?

Domestic violence – or intimate partner violence – is not physical violence alone. It's any behavior intended to gain or maintain power and control over a spouse, partner, girlfriend, boyfriend or intimate family member. Abuse is a learned behavior; it's not caused by anger, mental problems, drugs or alcohol or other common excuses.

A few of the most common ways abusers control victims:

- Isolation
- Emotional abuse
- Using children
- Dominating finances, family resources and access to healthcare
- Physical and sexual assault

What is sexual violence?

Sexual violence – or sexual assault as it may be referred to – is a profound violation of a person's body, sexuality and sense of self and safety. The effects of sexual assault can last a lifetime, rippling out to family members, school and work, communities and down through generations.

Sexual assault is an “umbrella” term that includes a wide range of victimizations. It occurs when a person is forced, coerced and/or manipulated into unwanted sexual activity. Sexual assault is part of a range of behaviors one may use to take power from their victims. It can begin with words, gestures, jokes and intimidation. It can progress to coercion, threats and actions that involve sexual touching or intercourse, and may involve other forms of violence.

<https://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/InjuryandViolencePrevention/SexualandDomesticViolence/DomesticViolence>



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Whatcom County 24-hour Helpline

The 24-hour helpline (1-877-715-1563) with DVSAS (Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services) provides one-on-one support for anyone feeling unsafe from violence. The advocacy counselors will talk with you and assist with safety planning, emotional support, crisis intervention, and referrals through their helpline, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Advocacy Counselors

The advocacy counselors at DVSAS can help you plan for your safety, answer legal questions, connect you with services like housing and counseling, and stand by you as you recover and heal from domestic violence and sexual assault. Most of the services through DVSAS are free of charge.

On-going support from DVSAS advocacy counselors can include:

- Help with shelter, emergency and medical needs
- Assistance with mental health and substance abuse
- Assistance with filing protection orders
- Court preparations and accompaniment to the court
- And if you or someone you know, has a sexual assault forensic exam at St. Joseph Hospital, advocacy counselors will be on the phone to support the victim and family and friends through the process.

Safe shelter is important. Any person who needs emergency shelter due to domestic violence or sexual assault is encouraged to call the 24-hour hotline 1-877-715-1563. The DVSAS Safe Housing Program provides safe, confidential shelter to individuals and families fleeing domestic violence. Clients have access to basic food, clothing, personal items, and bedding if needed.

<https://www.dvsas.org/>

National Hotlines and Websites

The following resources are available to anyone feeling threatened or abused.

The National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-7233 www.ndvh.org

The National Teen Dating Abuse Hotline toll-free at 1-866-331-9474 www.loveisrespect.org

The Childhelp Hotline is toll-free at 1-800-422-4453 for text, call or chat. www.childhelp.org

Events are changing rapidly so to confirm details in this document, call 1-360-305-3600 between 1:00 – 5:00 pm. Library staff will work hard to give you current and valid information. (updated 5/6/2020)