

October -- Domestic Violence Awareness Month



NCCW *Women Healing the Wounds* **Implementing an Effective Domestic Violence Awareness Program** **Introduction**

In 1989 Congress designated October as **Domestic Violence Awareness Month**. This is a special time to mourn those who have died because of domestic violence, celebrate survivors, and work to end the violence. The National Council of Catholic Women developed the ***Women Healing the Wounds*** program and as a continuation of that work NCCW has put together this guide to help you and your organization plan an effective and productive Domestic Violence Awareness program of outreach to your council and/or parish.

The guide first presents a checklist to help you organize your program. Next, it offers ideas that you can use within your council or parish. Suggestions are given to help you effectively use the weekly Bulletin and Social Media in conjunction with the ***NCCW Women Healing the Wounds*** educational brochure and ***Women Healing the Wounds*** domestic violence resource.

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An Effective Planning Guide to Engage Your Community

Months in Advance

- ☐ Check with the parish calendar for openings/potential of conflicting events.
- ☐ Approach those in charge and seek approval of your ideas to involve the parish.
- ☐ Have a list of all the dates, times, and places of your plan i.e. Mass, bulletin, who would be involved. etc.
- ☐ Once that has been approved meet with the person(s) responsible:
 - ☐ **The bulletin coordinator:** provide the pre-written items, and the dates for each item to be placed in the bulletin during each weekend of the month. (attached)
 - ☐ **The website coordinator:** provide short awareness information, articles, pictures, etc. to be placed on the parish website and the CCW Website during the entire month. (attached)
 - ☐ **The liturgy coordinator:** give them the list of *Prayers of the Faithful* and ask if there is appropriate music to be included when bringing up the gifts. (attached)
 - ☐ **The coordinator of the ushers:** suggest the ushers wearing the purple lapel ribbons each weekend in October.
 - ☐ **The coordinator of Ministers of the Eucharist:** suggest wearing the purple lapel ribbons each weekend in October.
 - ☐ **The coordinator of lectors/readers:** suggest wearing the purple ribbons each weekend in October.
 - ☐ **The Religious Ed coordinator:** suggest integrating this guide in the October curriculum planning.
- ☐ Contact your local **Catholic newspaper** and/or community paper. Provide information listed under Social Media section in this document.
- ✓ **Provide them written areas of involvement, dates, and times.**
- ✓ **Provide them with any written material that will be used:**
i.e.: Prayers of the Faithful, symbol of peace to be included in bringing up the gifts, pre-written items to be placed in the bulletin and the website (with dates attached to each item.) Items Attached.

Make a list of each department with the coordinators' name, phone number, home or cell, if they receive text messages; email address; time of day that is best to reach them if necessary. This will be useful during the entire planning.

Three Weeks Before October 1

- ✓ Double check with each of the above departments.
- ✓ Make sure everything is still on target and they have all materials. This will allow time to correct any possible mix-ups.
- ✓ Gather/purchase items needed for use in the visuals section: ¼ to ½" narrow dark purple ribbon for pins, 2" to 3" wide purple ribbon to tie around the trees, small safety pins, medium colored purple construction paper and light purple construction paper, small craft size clothes pins, light weight string to make a clothes line for cutouts of the children, large cardboard, and black paint.
- ✓ Precut the ¼" to ½" wide dark purple ribbon 4 to 5 inches long. See section on Parish Involvement.

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- ✓ Cut sheets of the 8 ½" by 11" purple construction paper into 1" wide strips that can be used to make a chain(s).
- ✓ Cut out silhouette of small children or tiny t-shirts shapes from colored construction paper. See section on Using Visuals
- ✓ Using a very large cardboard, cut out a full-size silhouette of a woman, paint it black. Several are good. i.e. see section on visuals.
- ✓ Order the **Women Healing the Wounds** educational brochures from nccw.org.

One Week Before

- ✓ One more check and see if there are any questions or clarifications.

Ideas to Raise Awareness of Domestic Violence during the month of October

- Check with your parish NOW to see if all or any of these ideas can be implemented.
- The CCW Committee should consist of: One over-all chair and a person in charge of each area: parish, bulletins/social media, involving the youth, using visuals.

Utilizing the Commission/Committee System

The NCCW Commission System offers a good example of how to set up your committee structure and may be helpful in putting together your program:

- **The Chairman** - A person willing to take charge of the overall program. She does not have to be a commission chair/officer but will work with each commission/committee and the President.
- **The Service Commission** - Domestic Violence Awareness comes under this commission/committee,
- **The Spirituality Commission** - The spiritual side of this issue and the involvement of the Church fall under this commission/committee,
- **The Leadership Commission** - The publicity for this project falls under this commission/committee,
- **The Legislative Advocacy Committee** - Can work to bring awareness to current laws that help or hinder victims.

Parish Involvement

- Use the pre-cut purple ribbons and attach a pin to each piece. See photo for design. Distribute the ribbons to members of the faith community to wear, explaining to them that purple is the color of awareness for the victims of domestic violence. ***Wearing the ribbon gives witness to their opposition to domestic violence and provides them an opportunity to explain their position when people ask about the ribbons they are wearing.***
- If this is not possible, try to have all Council members wear them at whatever mass they attend.
- **Encourage Ministers of the Eucharist and Lectors** to wear purple ribbons in October as a sign of their solidarity with victims of domestic violence. It reaffirms the stand of the U. S. Catholic Bishops (USCCB) that the church is against domestic violence.
- **Ask your pastoral staff to preach on domestic violence abuse** one weekend in October (attached are ideas). Also, the NCCW ***Women Healing the Wounds*** resource contains



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the statements of the bishops and much more. Available to download, at no charge, from nccw.org under the **Commissions** tab; or purchase by calling NCCW 1-800-506-9407.

- **Ask to include at least one *Prayer of the Faithful*** for each Sunday in October to invoke God's love and comfort for those who suffer violence in their own homes and for the conversion of perpetrators. (attached samples)
- **Include a symbol of non-violence and peace** to be included with bringing up the gifts in the Offertory Procession at Mass.
- **Host a table near or in the gathering spaces** featuring the NCCW *Women Healing the Wounds* educational brochures with the sticker attached on the back showing the name and number of the local Domestic Violence Shelters. They can be ordered from the National Council of Catholic Women at no cost or postage, www.nccw.org 1-800-506-9407. (Thanks to our generous donors.)
- **At Sunday services**, ask members to write prayer intentions for victims on a strip of pre-cut purple paper (provided in the pews or given when they enter church), gather and link them in a chain to be hung in the vestibule or another significant place. This symbolizes that with education and prayer together, we can be stronger against domestic violence.
- **Have large purple ribbons** either encircling the tree trunks or hanging from trees on parish grounds



Using Bulletins and Social Media

- Place the **planned activities on the parish calendar** well in advance.
- Place a **short educational paragraph** in the bulletin each week. The NCCW *Women Healing the Wounds* educational brochure has many ideas you could choose from to inform the parish community. (attached are some of the items from the brochure.) See suggestions in the “Ideas to be Used Weekly” section.
- Each week place the nationwide, state, or local shelters **hotline number** in the bulletin
- One week include the **National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline** number. Teen dating abuse is on the rise. <http://www.loveisrespect.org/>
- **Update information** on your Council and/or parish website. Sometimes more information, than can fit in the bulletin, can be placed here.
- Create your own list of 31 statements, facts, etc., to post each day on your Facebook page or your website. (ideas attached)
- **Encourage others to create “posts”** on their social networks about healthy relationships.
- Ask (early) for an article in your local Catholic newspaper. Provide them with background information: supply them with the NCCW *Women Healing the Wounds* educational brochure and the *Women Healing the Wounds* resource, or a portion from the resource that would be helpful to include in the article.
- If you have a **Catholic radio or TV station approach them** (early) about doing a segment on domestic violence during October.

Creative Ideas for Youth of the Parish

(These activities need plenty of advance notice.)

- Take posters/music that portray negative messages about women, teens, violence, etc., and create new posters that reframe those messages into positive statements.
- Invite your schools and teen groups to have students create their own media campaign on how to recognize domestic violence and what the community can do.

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- Encourage them to ask the local bakery if they would make purple frosted and/or sprinkled cupcakes and cookies during October. Also, ask to have a flyer posted in their place of business.
- Work with the school and teen group organizer: Ask parish junior high students to create healthy teen dating/ non-violence posters for display in the school lobby and parish gathering spaces.

Using Visuals to Create Attention to The Reality of Domestic Violence

- Draw and cut out life-size silhouettes of women on cardboard. Paint them black. On each cut out image, write a **“Victim’s Plea to Stop Domestic Violence”** across the front.

Carry these images in a procession to a significant place and/or at Mass and display in the sanctuary during Mass or in the church vestibule.

Legislative Advocacy: Take these with you when going to a legislator’s local office (when not in session) or when they are in session to the Capitol. Be prepared with pertinent information why they should push for protection. Make them aware of why and where protection is needed, provide factual information and real life stories. Work with the Legislative Advocacy Committee (local shelter could provide current detailed information)

- Utilize the small children or t-shirt cut outs on colored paper. (Details in the “Three Weeks in Advance” Section.) On the cut outs write a **“Child’s Plea for Peace in their Home”**. Hang the cut-out shapes on a clothesline with small clothespins. Display in the parish office or vestibule of the worship space. One of the worst places for a child to live is in a house of domestic abuse or violence. The results can affect their lives and future behavior.



Creating a Positive Message and Thank You

- Select several agencies or individuals to receive achievement awards for helping victims of DV or for their efforts in taking a stand against domestic violence.
 - Examples of agencies/individuals: law enforcement, legislators, community agencies, county attorney, volunteers, hospitals, nurses, a school, local shelters, councils, pastors, etc.
 - Awards can be as simple as a certificate made on the computer; it is the thought that counts.
 - If possible, present the awards in front of the group, their peers, take pictures, and notify the press ahead of time.
 - In November, host an Achievement Recognition event. Ask every group that participated in the October awareness efforts to submit their details by email by a certain date (a free email address can be created for this effort.) After the deadline, recognize the best efforts of the group or groups that went *“Above and Beyond”*.
 - This can be sponsored by a parish, deanery, vicariate, diocesan council, province, or nationwide.

Ideas to be Used Weekly in the Bulletin, Website, or Daily on Facebook.

*Used with permission: These excerpts taken from the National Council of Catholic Women's educational brochure **Women Healing the Wounds** available at nccw.org*

If You Know a Victim

- Believe them. Doubting or minimizing the abuse only heightens the victim's feelings of guilt, fear, and helplessness.
- Support them. Give them encouragement, information, and referrals to agencies/services but never in front of the abuser. Do not just tell them to leave.
- Speak out. Make the problem of abuse heard. Awareness precedes choice and choice precedes change.
- Strongly suggest individual counseling for the victim. Experts report that counseling the couple together may be too intimidating and dangerous for the victim.
- Always approach the victim in private.
- Use non-judgmental language and an empathetic approach such as: "I am afraid for your safety." "I am afraid for the safety of your children." "You deserve better than this."

Dangerous Myths

I shouldn't get involved. It is none of my business.

- Not getting involved won't make the violence disappear; it only ensures that more will suffer.

Why doesn't she just leave him?

- Many factors make it difficult for the victim to escape: financial problems, breakup of the family, impact on the children, pressure from family members, fear of future violence, concern for what will happen to the abuser, and feeling responsible for the abuse.

She doesn't look like a battered woman.

- Domestic violence may involve verbal, mental emotional, or sexual abuse, social isolation, or financial dependence. 95% of domestic violence survivors are women. 5% of the victims are men. Clothing covers some bruises; others are felt in the heart.

At least the children weren't abused.

- Nearly 75% of men who abuse their partners also abuse their children. What children witness in the home of domestic violence is abuse. Children who grow up in abusive households are 42% more likely to perpetuate the cycle of violence as adults, either as abusers or victims.

It's the victim's fault.

- No one has the right to inflict bodily injury upon another. Blaming a victim won't save his or her life; it only justifies the abuser's behavior.

He hits her because he drinks

- Substance abuse does not cause domestic violence but it may be a contributing factor. Batterers will abuse their partners whether they are drunk or sober. Treating the alcoholism without treating the violence will only result in a sober abuser.

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Did You Know?

- The Bishops of the United States in their document, *When I Call for Help: A Pastoral Response to Domestic Violence Against Women*, declared domestic violence in the relationship is not acceptable.
- October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month **BUT** abuse happens all year long.
- Abuse takes many forms: emotional torment, verbal, sexual assault, threats, and physical force or injury.
- Domestic Violence is a learned behavior that increases in frequency and severity.
- Domestic Violence behavior is not inherited, it is a learned behavior. You may learn it from what happens in your home, in the community, or media. It can be changed but it takes work.
- Domestic Violence is behavior that happens because the abuser has to have complete **power and control** over their partner.
- Pregnancies have been terminated due to physical abuse.
- Battery is the single greatest cause of injury to women of all ages, more common than auto accidents, muggings, and rapes. Most assaults are never reported.
- In this country, a woman is beaten every 15 seconds. One-third of all female homicide victims are killed by their husband or partner.
- One out of four women will be abused during their lives.
- Teenage dating abuse is on the rise in middle school age students.
- Domestic Violence occurs in 33%-66% of all adult cohabitating relationships regardless of age, race, sex, religious affiliation, marital status, education, income, or social standing. Similar statistics apply to teenage date abuse.

Prayers of the Faithful

Use one or more at each Mass during October: Domestic Violence Awareness Month

- Help us to be instruments of your peace and to assist the victims of domestic abuse and their families with finding safety and hope for a better future, we pray to the Lord.
- For transformation of our society that often finds it easier to judge the victims of violence than to solve the problems of injustice, we pray to the Lord.
- For perpetrators of abuse in our homes, may they know God's love and seek help for conversion and healing, we pray to the Lord.
- For our youth, may they experience healthy relationships, free from abuse and controlling behaviors, we pray to the Lord.
- For those who witness domestic violence, especially children, that they may understand that violence is never an expression of love, is never acceptable and must never be imitated, we pray to the Lord.
- For victims of domestic violence that they may know their suffering is not a cross to bear or a punishment from God, we pray to the Lord.
- For our families, may they know God's love and may they share this love with kindness and consideration for one another, free from abuse and controlling behaviors, we pray to the Lord.

Permission granted from Fr. Chuck Dahm and the Domestic Violence Outreach program of the Archdiocese of Chicago to use these Prayers of the Faithful and other assorted pieces of information.
NCCW Women Healing the Wounds educational brochure: Kathy Bonner, Author

Production: Kathy Bonner Editing/Formatting: Jeanie Illian