



MARRIAGE initiative

Diocese of San Bernardino

Domestic Violence Protocol

Impact Statement

IMPACT STATEMENT

"We, the church of San Bernardino, are a community of believers in Jesus the Christ, called to impact family, neighborhood, and society with the gospel so that people's lives are filled with hope."

Family is the basic unit of the Church where faith is transmitted. Realizing that the family relationships shape the direction of one's life more than all other experiences, and that one's experience of God is directly related to one's experience of family, our parishes and faith communities must be committed to nurturing and supporting family life. Because the family provides a foundation experience of God, parishes must make meaningful connections between the reality of family life and the message of the Gospel. We continually seek to understand the diversity of family life, its developments and stages, and the contemporary experience of the family."

Diocese of San Bernardino, Impact Statement, 1997.

Program Description

Our parishes provide direct services to individuals and couples across different ages and stages of marriage. The curricula provide education in the following areas: Youth, Engaged/ Marriage Preparation, Marriage Enrichment, and Troubled Marriages.

Scope and Purpose of Protocol

Diocese of San Bernardino (DSB) is composed of parishes which recognize and affirm the vital importance of strong and healthy marriages. In a professional and respectful manner, DSB seeks to address the needs of married and engaged couples of every ethnicity, faith, and socioeconomic status to develop and maintain healthy relationships.

The DSB recognizes that domestic violence is a complex problem and which psychological, physical and emotional abuse are serious obstacles to stable and healthy relationships. An important message to convey in all aspects of this initiative is that individuals involved in healthy relationships do not engage in violent, abusive, or coercive behavior.

Shared Principles and Values

- Our aim is to provide healthy marriage activities and programs in a manner that does not compromise the safety of any family member.
- In promoting healthy marriages and responsible parenthood.
- We recognize the diversity of the diocese population and the importance of providing culturally sensitive approaches.
- We believe that relationship skills training and marriage education are important and effective measures to prevent domestic violence.

Defining Domestic Violence

Definition:

For the purposes of this initiative, the term “domestic violence” is defined as a range of behaviors used to exert control or establish power by one intimate partner over the other. The range of behavior can include psychological, emotional, verbal, sexual, financial, and physical abuse, as well as stalking and threatening behaviors. This includes any behaviors that frighten, intimidate, terrorize, manipulate, hurt, humiliate, blame, injure or wound someone.

Domestic violence can happen to anyone of any race, age, sexual orientation, religion or gender. It can happen to couples who are married, living together or who are dating. Domestic violence affects people of all socioeconomic backgrounds and education levels.

Indicators of Domestic Violence:

Indicators in adult victims:

- Unexplained bruising and other injuries
- Social isolation
- Never making a decision without referring to partner
- Low self-esteem
- Anxiety/depression/post-natal depression
- No access to transport
- Being submissive/withdrawn
- Frequent absences from work or studies
- ‘Accidents’ during pregnancy
- Repeated visits to emergency departments
- Psychosomatic and emotional complaints
- Sometimes there are no obvious indicators

Indicators of perpetrator behavior in adults:

- Values/attitudes about ‘ownership’ of partner and/or children
- Controlling behavior
- Always speaking for the partner (or child)
- Describing the partner as ‘incompetent’, ‘stupid’ or other derogatory terms
- Being overly concerned towards the suspected victim

- Admitting to some violence, but minimizing the frequency and severity
- Holding rigidly to stereotyped sex roles
- Not allowing partner or child to access service providers alone
- Threatening and/or intimidating behavior directed towards workers
- Sometimes there are no obvious indicators

Providing Safe Opportunities to Disclose and/or Self-Identify

In all DSB sponsored Marriage Education, faith formation and Relationship skill training classes, we provide safe opportunities for participants to self-identify as victims of domestic violence and contact information for resources /materials to which victims can turn to. These materials, resources, and response will vary depending on the specific type of class/workshop provided.

Relationship Skills Training Classes for Youth:

Objective: Provide information about healthy versus unhealthy relationship patterns so that youth becomes aware and identify violent behaviors and has access to the appropriate resource. This information may prevent youth entering into a potentially unhealthy relationship in the future.

Suggested Materials:

Distribute a copy of each of the following to each participant:

1. The Dibble Institute's "Facts About Dating Violence" handout (available at: http://dibbleinstitute.org/free_resources.htm)
2. Pocket card for teen dating violence national hotline (order by calling 1-866-331-9474 or visit www.loveisrespect.org resource page)

Premarital Education Classes for Engaged/ Seriously Dating Couples:

Objective: Provide information for participants to become aware and identify violent or unhealthy relationships. This information may assist those in violent or unhealthy relationships to exit the relationship before additional commitments are made.

Suggested Materials:

1. Distribute a Fact sheet on healthy v. unhealthy relationships to each participant.
2. Distribute a Community Resource Referral Sheet to each participant (sample template attached).
3. In ladies' restrooms, place pocket cards with contact information for your local domestic violence hotline/ resource.

Marriage Education for Married Couples:

Objective: Provide information for participants to become aware and identify violent or unhealthy relationships. This information may help those in violent or unhealthy marriages to understand their options and access appropriate resources.

Suggested Materials:

1. Distribute a Fact sheet on healthy v. unhealthy relationships to each participant.

2. Distribute a Community Resource Referral Sheet to each participant (sample template attached).
3. In ladies' restrooms, place pocket cards with contact information for your local domestic violence hotline/ resource.

Rationale for Suggested Materials

The Dibble Institute's "Facts About Dating Violence": This handout defines abuse for teens and gives specific information about what to do and where to get help if the teen or someone they know is in an abusive relationship. Every teen should receive this handout so that they are able to identify and appropriately deal with unhealthy dating relationships.

National Teen Dating Violence Hotline Pocket Card: The pocket card is a discrete resource for teens to take with them to obtain help for himself/herself or a friend, and is small enough to be hidden if necessary.

Fact Sheet on Healthy versus Unhealthy Relationships: This one sheet handout succinctly lists behaviors that indicate whether a relationship/marriage is healthy or unhealthy. Participants are enabled to self-identify unhealthy behaviors in their relationship, and also work toward building healthy behaviors. Distributing this handout to all participants eliminates the possibility of abusers perceiving their partner as being singled out to receive the information, which may put the victim at a greater risk of harm.

Community Resource Referral Sheet: This sheet lists resources in the community for a myriad of social services, including healthcare, mental health, counseling, job assistance, and domestic violence resources. Again, distributing this resource to all participants eliminates the suspicion of a couple being singled out.

Domestic Violence Hotline Pocket Cards: These pocket cards should be placed only in ladies' restrooms, so that victims have access to a discreet resource for obtaining help that their partner will not be aware of. This protects the safety of victims of domestic violence.

Response to Disclosures

Most Marriage Education and Relationship Skills Training classes conducted under this initiative are group sessions. Based upon past experience with this service model, it is anticipated that the frequency of disclosures of domestic violence to facilitators will be rather low. If and when these disclosures do occur, our primary objective is to protect the safety of the victim. If a disclosure of domestic violence is made, the facilitators should strongly encourage the victim to contact one of the local domestic violence resources listed in their handout materials. Facilitators should not engage victims in extended conversations regarding this topic, as this may put the victim at increased risk, especially if the perpetrator is on the premises at the time.

Exception:

If the victim is in immediate danger, the local police department should be immediately notified.

Maintaining Confidentiality

Perpetrators who discover that a victim has told someone about their abuse may retaliate with further threats and violence. For this and other ethical reasons, it is important that information related to disclosures of domestic violence is handled with utmost care and that victims' privacy and confidentiality of their information receive the highest priority.

Appendices/ Sample Handouts

The Dibble Institute's "Facts About Dating Violence" handout
Sample Community Resource Referral Sheet
Healthy v. Unhealthy Relationships handout