

If You See Domestic Abuse Speak Up!

Podcast Transcript

This podcast is brought to you by Military OneSource.

Helping victims of domestic abuse can be tough. You might not know how to help, who to talk to or may question whether it's your place to intervene. But domestic abuse is everyone's problem, and if you see something you need to step up and say something. In order to help, you need to know what to look for and what you can do.

Be aware of the signs of domestic abuse. If you notice that someone is afraid of their spouse, or seems anxious about making decisions without their partner's consent, they may be in an abusive relationship. Victims may have unexplained bruises or injuries caused by pinching, shoving, hitting or grabbing. As abuse often includes threats of violence against a victim or loved ones, victims may become socially isolated and withdraw from friends, family and co-workers. Finally, victims of abuse may receive threatening phone calls and have increased or unexplained absences from work.

If you think you know someone who is being abused, you should reach out and offer support. You may hesitate to offer help, because you think it's none of your business or you're afraid that revealing your suspicions will increase the risk of abuse or adversely affect the service member's career. It's important to get past these fears, because domestic abuse tends to escalate over time and can be a matter of life and death.

You can help by reaching out to the victim and showing your concern for their health and safety. You can encourage them to contact the Family Advocacy Program to speak to a victim advocate, contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 800-799-SAFE (7233) or call Military OneSource for confidential non-medical counseling at 800-342-9647.

Victims may be reluctant to report their abuser because they are concerned about consequences to their service member's career. Service members who are victims of abuse may also be reluctant to report and often feel that they should be able to control the situation without help. Let them know there are two reporting options available. If no child abuse has occurred, the victim can choose to make a restricted report by contacting a Family Advocacy Program supervisor or clinician, victim advocate or healthcare provider. A restricted report allows victims to evaluate their relationship choices while controlling what and how much information is shared with law enforcement and chain of command. Victims can also make an unrestricted report with the Family Advocacy Program, military police or chain of command if they want an investigation of the abuse and command support. If the victim is in imminent danger of physical abuse, call 911 or your installation law enforcement office.

Victims of domestic violence may feel scared, confused and alone. Family Advocacy Program victim advocates are available around-the-clock to provide confidential information and support tailored to each victim's needs and concerns. Services include safety planning, emotional support, help with military and civilian resources, legal or law enforcement matters and accompaniment to court. Victim advocates help empower victims to understand their options and make decisions about what's best for themselves and their family.

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For more information, visit Military OneSource at <http://www.militaryonesource.mil>, an official Department of Defense website.