

## Press Kit for Media Professionals Reporting On Domestic Violence

This press kit provides domestic violence resources, facts, and tips on interviewing survivors of domestic violence. Unfortunately many myths about domestic violence are still prevalent in our culture and society and those myths may stand in the way of victims and perpetrators of this crime from getting the help they need. Domestic violence is not a “family matter” nor is it a “private issue.”

By educating yourself on the dynamics and facts about domestic violence in Wake County, North Carolina and the nation, you can help inform and educate the public about this crime and help advance a society that will not tolerate domestic violence. When reporting on the issue, we ask the media to take into careful consideration the safety of these victims.

Please include InterAct in your story to connect audiences with support:

### **InterAct 24 Hour Crisis Hotlines**

Domestic Violence: 919-828-7740

Rape/Sexual Assault: 919-828-8304

Solace Center: 919-828-3067

Spanish Hotline: 844-203-8896

### **What Is Domestic Violence**

- The threat of or use of violence or intimidation, by an intimate partner, to gain and maintain power and control over another person.
- Intimate relationship.
- Pattern of violence by one partner.
- Violence may be mental, verbal, social, financial, sexual and/or physical.
- Violence creates fear in partner.
- It is all about power and control.
- Domestic violence happens in all kinds of families and relationships. Persons of any class, culture, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, age, and sex can be victims or perpetrators of domestic violence.

### **Domestic Violence Statistics**

- More than 1 in 3 women and more than 1 in 4 men in the United States have experienced rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime. (CDC, 2010)
- On average, nearly 20 people per minute are physically abused by an intimate partner in the United States (National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, 2010).
- Women between the ages of 18-24 are most commonly abused by an intimate partner (USDOJ, 2014).

## **About Domestic Violence**

### Warning Signs and Red Flags of Abusive Behavior

- Controlling who you see, where you go, or what you do
- Telling you that you can never do anything right
- Showing jealousy of your friends and time spent away
- Keeping you or discouraging you from seeing friends or family members
- Embarrassing or shaming you with put-downs
- Taking your money or refusing to give you money for expenses
- Preventing you from making your own decisions
- Telling you that you are a bad parent or threatening to harm or take away your children
- Destroying your property or threatening to hurt or kill your pets
- Intimidating you with guns, knives or other weapons
- Pressuring you to have sex when you don't want to or do things sexually you're not comfortable with
- Pressuring you to use drugs or alcohol

### Barriers to Leaving

- Fear
- Love
- Children
- Economics
- Guilt, Shame and Embarrassment
- Religion
- Denial
- Low Self-Esteem
- Commitment to Marriage

The question isn't "*Why doesn't she just leave?*" Leaving is a process, not an event.

## **Covering Domestic Violence**

### Tips on Interview Questions

When questioning a victim of domestic violence, please consider the following:

- Do not refer to the domestic violence as a "relationship problem." Domestic violence is tool that a batterer uses to keep a victim under his/her control. It is not a mutual way of handling problems in the relationship.
- Do not focus on why the victim of the domestic violence did not leave, but on why the batterer continued to choose to abuse.
- In addition to physical trauma, individuals who have been victims of domestic violence may feel guilty or responsible for the abuse, question their own judgment, and/or feel betrayed. When questioning alleged victims, avoid questions that imply fault on the part of the victim.

For example, avoid questions about:

- What the victim did to provoke the attack. Domestic violence is a system of power and control — it is not a crime of passion or anger. Asking what the victim did to provoke the attack is a type of victim-blaming.
- Whether the victim was drinking alcohol or taking drugs at the time of the assault, unless it is directly at issue in the case. Domestic violence is a crime.

- Period. A victim whose house was burgled wouldn't be quizzed as to whether he or she was intoxicated prior to the crime.
- Sexual violence between married spouses is a crime and can be one of the means by which a domestic violence perpetrator dominates and humiliates his or her victim.
- A finding of "not guilty" in a domestic violence case does not mean that a crime was not committed and that the accused is "innocent". It means simply that a jury believed there to be reasonable doubt.
- Refrain from referring to an alleged incident in ways that imply the abuse was mutual.
- Be very careful when interviewing family, friends, and neighbors of either the victim or the accused that their statements don't blame the victim or attempt to exonerate the accused.

For example, statements by witnesses that the perpetrator "is such a nice guy" or "would never do something like that" do not add to the facts of the story and only further traumatize the victim and call his or her credibility into question.

### **About InterAct**

- Who We Are: InterAct provides domestic violence and sexual assault services reaching more than 60,000 Wake County residents annually by saving lives, rebuilding lives and securing safer futures.
- Mission: Dedicated to ending the cycle of domestic and sexual violence in Wake County, North Carolina, InterAct saves lives, rebuilds lives, and secures safer futures for victims and survivors and their families.
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If you are a member of the media on deadline and are reaching out after hours or on a weekend, please contact the InterAct Media Cell Phone at 919-706-9755.

Adapted from SCCADVASA