

Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women

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Actions You and Others Can Take to Stop the Violence

Individuals, organizations, businesses, clubs, fraternities/sororities, schools, elected officials, and others have a lot of power to help eliminate violence against women. The Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women has compiled the following suggestions. It is not all-inclusive but it's intended as a starting point for discussion and action. Add to it. Use it. Together we can stop the violence.

Educate yourself about local resources:

Contact your local battered women's program (which can be found on our web site at www.mcbw.org). They have been working to stop violence against women for years and can provide valuable leadership on what is needed in your community.

- Ask them what is needed and what role you can play in making changes locally.
- Support them financially. Battered women's programs operate on shoestring budgets.
- Volunteer—a variety of rewarding opportunities exist in domestic violence programs.
- Ask whether law enforcement and/or criminal justice response is adequate in your area. Ask how to help solve existing problems.
- Ask them to speak to your group or provide training to your group.

Something every citizen can do:

Call your local elected officials, state legislators, and the Governor's office and urge them to prioritize domestic violence and to support increased funding for domestic violence programs.

Do an inventory of the climate towards women in your group or community:

Violence against women is encouraged by a climate of hostility towards women. Jokes, graffiti, or stories that put down women abound and are often used as a way to break ice between men. Although ostensibly harmless, such jokes are insidious in terms of supporting a climate of a lack of respect for women. Have the courage to speak out against jokes that trivialize violence against women or objectify women.

Religious leaders:

Begin to speak out against violence against women in your houses of worship. Examine messages you give women about escaping abuse and messages about the relationship between men and women, husbands and wives or partner and partner. Bring in speakers from your local domestic violence programs for services. Start a donation drive for your local program.

Business/workplace leaders:

Examine your workplace to see if attitudes about violence against women are tolerated. Which is your policy on sexual harassment? Are jokes that trivialize/minimize violence against women and other forms of degradation of women the norm? Is your workplace hostile to women in other ways? Do you know? Have you asked women at your workplace? Are women in legitimate leadership roles within your business?

Coaches:

Discuss attitudes toward women and confront jokes and other behavior that is anti-woman. Take disciplinary action when you receive information that an athlete has been abusive toward women. Make harassment or violence against girls and women as unacceptable for all athletes as using illegal drugs.

Fraternal and business organizations:

Examine how much of your philanthropy is directed at eliminating violence against women. Have you contributed to the battered women's programs in your community? Have you educated your membership on these issues?

Educators:

Implement curriculum that addresses the messages that kids learn on the street, in their homes, and from the media about violence against women. Implement family violence prevention curriculum in your school.

Boy Scout leaders:

Begin units on what being a man is about and what it means to respect women and girls. Teach that masculinity does not have to be equated with putting girls down or being abusive.

Criminal justice system representatives:

Examine your policies and practices regarding domestic violence. Are perpetrators arrested, charged, and convicted? Or is your system failing to treat these crimes as serious ones? Are you blaming the failure of your system on inaction by the victim? Have you received training on domestic violence? What is your arrest and/or prosecution rate for domestic violence crimes?

College fraternities:

Explore your group's tolerance for violence against women in all forms, from sexual harassment to gang rape. How much bonding among members revolves around putting women down? What happens when members are confronted on the issue? What is your fraternity's policy on members sexually harassing, physically or sexually assaulting women? What can your fraternity do to learn more about domestic/sexual violence and be a leader in speaking out against it on your campus? Contact your campus' women's center for assistance.

Media professionals:

Examine your coverage of domestic violence. Do you convey myths about the causes of these crimes? Do you attribute the killing of a woman to stress, chemical dependency, economic hardship, gambling, etc? Do you refer to the relationship of the victim and perpetrator as "troubled?" These are not causal factors of domestic violence.

Advertisers and other purveyors of mass cultural forms:

Examine the messages and images about women that you create or transmit. Decide to stop creating/transmitting those that objectify women. Donate time and services to battered women's programs to develop media campaigns to reverse the tolerant attitude of violence against women that pervades our culture.

Legislators and public officials:

Support increased funding for battered women's programs. Contact your community's program to determine problems within the system that could be addressed through legislation.

EVERYONE:

If you know someone who you suspect is being abused by her partner, call your local domestic violence program to find out what you can do help her find safety. Do not attempt to help her without finding out what is the safest and best way to do this. Remember that domestic violence IS your business!

Get Help and Find Safety:

For assistance in finding help for all types of abuse, call the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women during business hours at **(651) 646-6177** or our after hours crisis line at **(651) 646-0994**. Out of the Metro area? Call the Minnesota Domestic Violence Crisis Line toll-free at **866-223-1111**.