MYTHS AND FACTS

MYTH

Battering and abuse do not exist in lesbian and gay communities.

FACT

Domestic violence does exist in lesbian and gay communities; it is not a problem limited to heterosexual relationships. Despite fear and community denial, more and more lesbians and gay men are breaking silence and speaking out about violence and abuse in their relationships.

MYTH

In lesbian and gay relationships, the problem is "mutual battering" and not domestic violence.

FACT

Domestic violence is an issue of power and control. A survivor's needs are subordinated and behavior is changed in order to accommodate or anticipate the abuser's demands. This unequal power relationship distinguishes battering from fighting. In an abusive relationship, fighting back is self-defense not "mutual battering."

MYTH

Lesbian and gay men can easily leave an abusive or violent relationship.

FACT

Battering relationships are rarely only violent or abusive. Love, caring and remorse are often part of the cyclical pattern of abuse. This can leave a survivor feeling emotionally confused and ambivalent about what to do. Shame, isolation and fear can make leaving seem impossible.

WEST VIRGINIA LICENSED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAMS

Beckley Area	(304)255-2559
Charleston Area	(304)340-3549
Elkins Area	(304)636-8433
Fairmont Area	(304)367-1100
Huntington Area	(304)529-2382
Keyser Area	(304)788-6061
Lewisburg Area	(304)645-6334
Martinsburg Area	(304)263-8292
Morgantown Area	(304)292-5100
Parkersburg Area	(304)428-2333
Welch Area	(304)436-8117
Wheeling Area	(304)232-0511
Williamson Area	(304)235-6121

National Domestic Violence Hotline
1-800-799-SAFE

STATEWIDE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
Prevention Office
West Virginia Coalition Against Domestic Violence
FOR A SAFER STATE FOR FAMILY
Elk Office Center
4710 Chimney Drive, Suite A
Charleston, WV 25302
(304)965-3552
(304)965-3572 fax

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE in LESBIAN and GAY RELATIONSHIPS

There's No EXCUSE FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence is a pattern of coercive behavior used to maintain power and control in a relationship. Lesbians and gays can be battered or abused by a lover, ex-lover, former spouse, roommate or family member.

BREAK THE SILENCE

In West Virginia domestic violence is a crime that will no longer be tolerated or excused. While looking for solutions to end the violence keep these things in mind:

- No one has the right to batter or abuse you.
- You are not responsible for the violence or abuse perpetrated against you.
- Confide in a trusted friend or family member.
- Contact the domestic violence program nearest you for support, safety and advocacy.
- Legal protections exist for battered lesbians and gay men in West Virginia. You have the right to file for an Order of Protection in the magistrate court of any county.

TACTICS OF CONTROL

PHYSICAL ABUSE:
Hitting, pushing, choking, slapping, burning, punching, kicking

ISOLATION:
Controlling personal and social contacts, access to information, and participation in groups and organizations

EMOTIONAL ABUSE:
Constantly criticizing, ridiculing, trying to humiliate or degrade, lying, undermining self-esteem

THREATS:
Threatening physical harm to you, your children, family or friends, threatening to make reports to authorities in order to jeopardize child custody, immigration or legal status

HETEROSEXIST INTIMIDATION:
Threatening to reveal lesbian or gay identity to family, neighbors, employers, ex-spouses and/or city, state or federal authorities

ECONOMIC ABUSE:
Controlling resources, fostering dependence, stealing money, running up debt

SEXUAL ABUSE:
Forcing sex or specific sexual acts, assaulting "sexual parts" of partner, withholding sex, criticizing sexual performance in order to humiliate

PROPERTY DESTRUCTION:
Destroying mementos and cherished items, hurting pets

BUILD SAFE COMMUNITIES

Family, friends, neighbors, co-workers and concerned citizens are key to increasing public awareness about domestic violence and to creating communities that are safer for all people.

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Dispel the myths of lesbian and gay battering.
- Become familiar with local and statewide domestic violence services.
- Volunteer time, donate services or make a financial contribution to a domestic violence program.
- Learn about homophobia and its impact in the lives of us all, gay as well as straight.
- Consider becoming a member of the Board of Directors of a local domestic violence program.
- Support the WV Human Rights Commission's statewide campaign, "Not in Our State."
- Keep in mind the ancient African proverb that still holds true today: "The destruction of a nation begins in the homes of its people.

DEVELOP A SAFETY PLAN

- Plan a strategy ahead of time in case you have to leave quickly.
- Have essential papers with you or easily accessible.
- Establish contacts with family and friends; know where you can go in an emergency.
- Get information on your legal rights.

GETTING THE WORD OUT...

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

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