

## Domestic Violence Hitting Home for Apartment Managers Too

One out of four women in the United States will be affected by Domestic Violence in their lifetime. You've seen it before - in your hallways, on the balconies, in your parking lots – the slap, the punch, the shove. You've heard it in your hallways, through the closed doors, in the laundry rooms. You have asked the responding police officers what the trouble was when they rolled up on your property. You know what you've seen and heard. Let's label it for what it is – domestic abuse and or violence. As an apartment manager or owner, can you recognize the warning signs of domestic violence before it becomes an incident that threatens you or your tenants?

Linda Blozie, a veteran of 20 years in the field of domestic violence says, "If it isn't you, it is someone in your immediate circle of friends, family and co-workers... Domestic Violence affects us all." Husbands, former husbands, boyfriends and ex-boyfriends committed more than one million violent acts against women.<sup>1</sup> Do the members of your site management team know how to recognize domestic violence and ensure the residents at your properties will stay safe and secure? Let's start with describing this behavior.

### **What is it?**

*Domestic Violence* is a pattern of controlling behaviors carried out by one person in an intimate relationship to maintain power and control over the other. *Domestic Violence* is also defined as partner violence - violent or controlling behavior by a person toward a partner, usually a wife, girlfriend, or lover. Although the partner is the primary target, violence is often directed toward the children as well, and sometimes toward family members, friends and even bystanders in an attempt to control their partner.

"*Battering*" is a word used over and over again. But it refers not only to the physical hurting, but the emotional wounding as well. It is the pummeling of one's spirit. Emotional abuse may occur along with the physical abuse or by itself. It is a very effective tool on its own to gain and maintain power and control over someone.

### **How do I recognize it?**

- Name-Calling or Put-Downs
- Humiliation
- Withholding of money
- Actual Physical harm
- Threatened Physical Harm
- Sexual Assault
- Manipulation-Controlling
- Blaming-undermining
- Trivialization
- Angry Outbursts

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture Domestic Violence Awareness Handbook

The website, [www.beatinghearts.net](http://www.beatinghearts.net), authored by Kate Sartor Hilburn & Terry Queen Autrey offers various letters that effectively describe the types of controlling behavior described above.

**Why Women Stay** - Why doesn't she just leave? It is the first question people ask. She stays because she hopes it will get better. Maybe they can get help. Maybe she will make them happy again. Maybe it will stop. She stays because she is ashamed that they have come to this that she has allowed him to treat her this way, that she has taken him back so many times before. She stays because she does not have enough money to start all over again. She hasn't held a job before, or she doesn't have enough money to support herself and the kids. She's scared to try and make it alone. She stays because she is afraid. He has told her she had better never try to leave him. He will find her no matter where she goes. He will track her down and kill her. She knows he means it.

**Falling** -My mother never told me how it happened –her fall from grace. In high school she was a beauty queen-beautiful, popular, fun. We would look at her scrapbooks together and for a few minutes her eyes would shine, making her look more like the girl in the pictures. Once, I asked her why she didn't have fun like that anymore. She stopped smiling. I was in high school when I learned the real story-how she had shocked everyone by coming up pregnant in her senior year. I was in college when I learned my dad wasn't my father. He married my mom later, to make an honest woman of her. I was working at a shelter when I learned how she paid for her respectability. How he beat her up on their wedding night. How he had knocked her down the stairs when she was eight months pregnant with me. Somehow she forgave him and they reunited. But somewhere between the fall from grace and the fall down the stairs, the light left my mother's eyes.

**The Window** -First he just wanted me to stop working. He was making plenty of money, and if I wasn't working we could travel. This way, we would not have to pay for separate bank accounts either. He'd just give me any money I needed. Then, he just wished I'd stop inviting my mother over. She always ended up criticizing me and getting upset. Besides, she never really liked him and he knew it. Then he didn't really approve of my best friend. After all she's divorced and kind of wild. Every time she visits, he says I have a bad attitude for a few days. Then he decided we should sell my car. After all I wasn't working or anything, so where would I be going that he couldn't be with me? Then he began to unplug the phone and take it with him everyday. I don't know why he didn't trust me enough to leave me with a phone. What if something happened to me? But he said I was just being paranoid. Finally, it got to where I never saw or spoke to anyone anymore. But I could look out the window and see the house across the pasture. The kids there wave at me sometime. But today he took a hammer and nails and boarded up the window.

Escalating acts of violence fray the fabric of peaceful existence. You, your tenants, their neighbors all feel less safe and secure when they witness or experience acts of violence. As a property manager, you can be of assistance. You can point your victim tenants in the

right direction. October is National Domestic Violence and Abuse Awareness Month. You can host an on-site awareness event. You can point people in the right direction for help.<sup>2</sup> Call the **National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE**. The service was established through efforts by President Clinton to prevent domestic violence, punish it and stop the learned cycle of violence.

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<sup>2</sup> If you would like more information about Domestic Abuse training for your residents or for your staff, contact Huffmaster Crisis Response or your SecurPLACE coordinator.