

MYTHS ABOUT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

MYTH: Domestic Violence is/should be a "private" affair and not a matter for criminal justice intervention because it occurs within/affects only the parties involved.

FACT: Because of the prevalence among families and the intergenerational "passing on" of the violence, the cost to us as a society (in medical costs, lost productivity, and the emotionally crippling effect on children) is staggering. Behind closed doors or not, Domestic Violence is a crime against society and needs to be treated as such.

MYTH: "It takes two to tango."

FACT: When one is violent, it takes **only** that one to create a violent incident, often even after the survivor has tried to end the relationship and move on.

MYTH: The truth lies somewhere in the middle.

FACT: Because of the minimization and denial of the violence characteristic of battering relationships (by the batterers because of their unwillingness to take responsibility, by victims because of their fear in acknowledging it), the truth is often far worse than either admits.

MYTH: The victim is responsible for the violence because she "provokes" him.

FACT: With the exception of true self-defense, no amount of "provocation" should be considered a valid excuse for criminal behavior. A batterer has many options for dealing with someone towards whom he is feeling anger. He **chooses** violence.

MYTH: Domestic Violence is usually "mutual combatants" who are both violent - therefore the incident "cancels out" and requires no intervention.

FACT: Often the second party is a battered woman who was self-defending...after a long period of escalating violence. The parties are generally **not** equal in power or [degree of] violence, and criminal justice system intervention can be the essential element in preventing a future homicide.

MYTH: Batterers don't mean to be violent, but just "lose control".

FACT: Battering is purposeful behavior aimed at acquiring power and control. The violence is deliberate and the target specific.

MYTH: Alcohol causes D.V.

FACT: Although alcohol abuse is often present in battering relationships, it is an **excuse** for violence, not a cause. Taking away the alcohol does not take away the abusive personality. Therapeutic intervention requires a focus on violence **separate** from substance abuse.

MYTH: Domestic Violence does not affect children unless they themselves are physically injured.

FACT: **By definition**, children who are exposed to violence between parents are **emotionally abused**. They also learn societal norms by modeling parental behavior and often repeat the pattern in their own lives.

MYTH: If a criminal history is not found, this must be the first time the perpetrator has been violent.

FACT: On the contrary, by the time a perpetrator comes to the attention of the criminal justice system, he is usually well into an escalating pattern of abuse. The police may have been called **this** time because of a change in the nature of the violence or an intensification in her fear of him.