

# **Ways to Improve Parish Response to Domestic Violence**

## **Raise Awareness**

1. Place palm cards with national and Illinois hotline numbers in women's bathrooms.
2. Post posters that say no to domestic violence in parish office, church hall and lobby. Local agencies can provide posters or [www.domesticviolenceoutreach.org](http://www.domesticviolenceoutreach.org) has resource information to download.
3. Assign someone to assure there is a prayer of the faithful dedicated to domestic violence once a month, whether for victims, children, or perpetrators.(see [www.domesticviolenceoutreach.org](http://www.domesticviolenceoutreach.org) for sample prayers)
4. Print monthly short articles or announcements about domestic violence in bulletin (see archdiocesan website). Three sentences that might include statistics or a story or news report with a graphic are sufficient.
5. Develop a mission statement for the ministry group.
6. Design and print and place in the church entrance a brochure defining the ministry. The brochure might have the mission statement, statistics, excerpts from US bishops statement When I Call for Help, national and state hotline #s, contact info for the group, how to recognize DV, how to respond to a victim.
7. Be present and provide your ministry with brochures at key parish events.
8. Invite speakers on different topics, e.g., DV agency, police, social service providers, impact on children, human trafficking, college students to reflect on The Hunting Ground (a documentary video on sexual assault on campuses). For Chicago police, invite Aileen Robinson, DV Operations Coordinator for CPD 312-745-6340 pax 0348 or [aileen.robinson@chicagopolice.org](mailto:aileen.robinson@chicagopolice.org)
9. Organize a training for committee members and parish /school staff and catechists and youth minister which is open to all parishioners.
10. Send at least one member of the parish ministry committee for 40-hours training.
11. Have a directory or manual in parish reception office (see website for resources).
12. Organize a prayer service on a special occasion
13. Use testimonies in the pulpit on special occasions to sensitize the congregation, e.g.,
  - a. On Mother's and Father's Day have victims and/or reformed abusers testify.
  - b. International day of women – March 10 – organize an event for women but include domestic violence.
14. Organize a special activity or activities in October, domestic violence awareness month, see list of activities on archdiocesan website ([www.domesticviolenceoutreach.org](http://www.domesticviolenceoutreach.org))
15. Participate in biannual assembly of parishes working on domestic violence held at Holy Name Cathedral (next assembly at 9:30 pm on March 23, 2019).

16. Collaborate with neighboring parishes and churches to make an area ministry, especially those in your area.
17. Attend the annual archdiocesan Mass on domestic violence on Saturday September 29, 2018 at 5:15 pm.
18. Announce your meetings and activities in the parish bulletin, keep the list of your members and interested supporters, be sure to contact people who miss a meeting to inform them of progress.

### **Connect to Services**

1. Decide to what local agency or agencies you want to refer victims for assistance. Before deciding, invite them to speak in the parish about what they provide and how to access.
2. Place a permanent box in the parish bulletin that states something like “If you have a problem in your relationship and want help, please call \_\_\_\_\_. Include your local DV agency and the national hotline 800-799-7233 and Illinois hotline 877-863-6338.
3. Help recruit volunteers for local shelter and domestic violence programs and support their events.

### **Prevention**

1. Introduce teaching on healthy relationships to parish school, religious education, especially confirmation program.
2. Organize a viewing of selected chapters from The Hunting Ground for high schoolers and college students and their parents. See our website for a design of the event.

### **Preach about domestic violence**

1. at least one sermon per year
2. use explicit examples of DV victims in other sermons, e.g., for faith, courage, etc.
3. correct distortions of scripture
4. explain DV includes physical, emotional, sexual, economic abuse is never justified

### **Use pastoral interviews and programs to discover and help victims and prevent more.**

1. marriage and marriage preparation – ask questions about DV individually not as couple
2. confession, e.g., anger with partner, follow up with DV questions
3. investigate when dealing with family problems of all kinds
4. educate teen group and middle school students about domestic and teen dating violence
5. have men’s group be active on speaking out against domestic violence

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