

SIUSLAW OUTREACH SERVICES

“DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC...A PERFECT STORM”



Domestic Violence is a stressful and uncomfortable topic to discuss. The Coronavirus Pandemic is also a stressful and uncomfortable subject to discuss. So get ready to be uncomfortable. This past year we have all been met by challenges, hardships, failed relationships

and economic uncertainty. Social media and the news outlets are filled with stories of people screaming and yelling at each other for any number of reasons. Many feel their lives are spiraling out of control.

Domestic violence is based upon one's attempt to control. The abuser (the person inflicting abuse) has a need to have total control over their partner or family member. Ironically, most abusers see themselves as the victim. They feel events and circumstances pit the world against them. They felt justified by their abusive actions because they are bringing "order to chaos." To them, it is not abuse but simply how things should be. Now, you add the uncertainties brought about by the COVID-19 Pandemic along with the ever-changing government mandates to the life of someone who was already grasping at ways to control their lives and others, you get the perfect storm for the abused. Many do not realize that domestic violence takes many forms. We often associate it with physical violence. Perhaps because that is the most visible and it is the one that most will agree is wrong. However, domestic violence includes things such as forcing a partner or spouse to perform sexual acts against their wishes, emotional and mental abuse, child abuse, and stalking. It can also take the form of forcing a spouse or intimate partner to stay somewhere against their will, controlling who they have contact with, preventing them from speaking to a family member and so on. It is all about total control, doing anything to maintain that control. They may be so desperate for control that they perceive the only answer is death. In some cases, for the abused, they may feel the only way to escape the abuse is suicide.

I am often asked, "Why don't they just leave? Why do they continue to subject themselves to that?" The answer is often fear. Fear is a tool of the abuser. Fear of harm that may come to them if they try to leave. Fear of where they could go. Victims are constantly told they cannot make it on their own or the harm they or a loved one could experience if they try to leave their control. Some survivors will endure the abuse if that means keeping a roof over their child's head and food in their bellies. In Oregon, domestic violence is the number one cause of homelessness for women and children. For others, it is cyclical or trained behavior. In other words, they grew up in a home filled with violence and this kind of behavior is perceived as the norm. They often think everyone else is living the same way. This "normalcy" creates a sense of reality that says, "There is no other way to live." Adding the uncertainty of the pandemic to the situation, this sense of fear is now doubled. The pandemic has brought about some unforeseen chal-

lenges. The government mandates forced the shutdown many businesses during the past year, making many victims are more isolated than ever. Many services and programs reduced services or completely closed their doors. More than 80% of the shelter programs in the state closed their doors due in part to health related concerns as well as lack of available staff and volunteers. During the past year, SOS saw a 65% increase in reported cases of domestic violence. Sexual assaults more than doubled. Referrals from outside agencies increased over 200%. Almost 70% of registered volunteers stayed home because of concerns for their health and safety. Despite those challenges, SOS staff adapted to continue to safely provide services throughout the pandemic.

Put aside the issues related to the pandemic. Domestic violence is a problem that plagues our entire community. We are all affected directly or indirectly by domestic violence. Consider this:

Domestic Violence is the number one cause of homelessness for women and children in the state of Oregon

In 2020, 477 individuals residing in the Florence area sought help in escaping domestic violence.

75% of those in substance abuse treatment programs witness or experience domestic violence.

3 million youth witness domestic violence each year.

62% of males ages 11 to 14 who witness their mother being abused, were injured while trying to protect their mother.

23% of youth who attempted suicide experienced some sort of domestic violence.

During 2020, 73% of all homicides in the U.S. were the result of domestic violence.

1 in 3 women and 1 in 7 men have reported being a victim of domestic violence. It is estimated that only half of the victims report such violence for a variety of reasons. In some cases, they think it is the norm because they grew up in a home filled with violence.

In Oregon, over 5,000 children reported witnessing a parent abused in 2018.

Insurance rates are higher for women due in part to domestic violence statistics.

The US Department of Labor reported in 2019, the US economy lost over 8.5 billion dollars in revenue directly due to domestic violence. Employees who have suffered physical abuse, often called in "sick" to work to hide bruises. Business

owners would have to bring in subs or would lose production for a few days because they did not have that employee there. Many US companies now have to hire security services to protect employees who are victimized by domestic violence. Work place violence due to domestic violence is a factor in determining commercial insurance rates.

In 2018, the medical industry spent 8.3 billion dollars in services to victims of domestic violence.

In the state of Oregon, 128,786 individuals reported being victimized by a family member in 2019.

Now, for what you can do about it. Please consider doing the following;

Demonstrate patience, listening to different points of views and to learn and grow from those differences.

Second, to define respect as a noun in the sense that respect is a gift, to be given freely and to be cherished and responsibly cared for by the recipient.

Actively demonstrate and model respect as defined above in all our relationships. Particularly for our youth.

Recognize abuse. Let others know that a home experiencing domestic violence and other forms of abuse is NOT the norm. They do not have to accept and live with abuse and there are those out there who care and willing to support them.

Speak up when you see someone being abused.

Encourage those who are abused to seek help.

Let those abused know they do not deserve such treatment.

Financially support agencies serving survivors of abuse.

Understand that when someone makes the decision to leave that it is the most dangerous time.

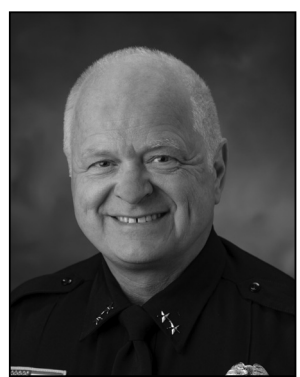
Seek the assistance of professionals.

Reach out to lawmakers to help stiffen the penalties for abusers and provide resources to those addressing the issue.

WE are ALL, affected by domestic violence. WE ALL, have an obligation to help one another. WE ALL, can make a difference.

Bob Teter, SOS Executive Director

No town is immune, reflections on domestic violence



When I was asked if I would contribute an article about domestic violence I was sure I could easily prepare something. And as I thought about it, going over my thirty-three years in law enforcement several ideas came to mind. I could write about various stories involving domestic violence that have stayed with me over the years, and I could relate some of the very personal issues that I think about almost every day, as a person, a father, a husband, boss, and most importantly friend.

You learn early in your police career that some of the most dangerous and most unpredictable calls involve domestic violence. That's because it is left only to the imagination what people can do to each other, physically and mentally, that would surprise most people...the real tragedy is it WOULD NOT surprise people who have been involved, sometimes in

the most minor of ways, but nonetheless they would only really be shocked by your ignorance.

Police tactics will always tell you that it is very unsafe to try and deal with a violent situation by yourself. Often it has been referred to as "tombstone courage" by police trainers and coaches. I have had this drilled into me by the police departments I have worked for, the police academy, and many of the police survival seminars I have attended. But when it comes right down to it, in the middle of the night, when you are first officer at the residence of a domestic violence call, your cover officer is miles away, and you can hear sounds of a very physical altercation, often one-sided, dynamically and horrendously happening in front of you, often the tactics go out the window.

The main call that comes to mind is waiting outside of a residence, nothing special - ranch house in the valley, in a normally quiet neighborhood. I could hear lots of yelling and screaming, both from a man and a woman inside, as I am standing near the front door, waiting for my cover officer who is only two minutes away. As I'm waiting and trying to look through the window, I start to hear body impacts against the inside walls. More screaming and yelling inside as I am giving the updates on my portable radio. The front door is a decorative three panel door, the kind where all three panels are inset a bit. Suddenly a woman gets forcefully thrown through the door from the inside and lands on the front porch. I remember seeing the splintered wood and broken door pieces covering her and the outside porch area. Her husband, we later found out, comes storming out of the hole in the door to continue his attack on his wife. He had not observed me there and I was able to easily grab him and get him in handcuffs without any real problem...mostly because he was so surprised. The story is chilling but the really sad part to me, as a relatively new officer, was that the wife would only say that she fell down. She never told me she had been injured by her husband in any way and did not want to press charges. The husband, very intoxicated, claimed he didn't know anything about what had happened. Thru the years I've seen this same scenario, to a lesser or

greater extent, replay hundreds of times. Often the event is fueled by alcohol use by at least one of the people involved. Usually the male half of the fight was the aggressor but not always.

My next very memorable call involved, again, the call of a family dispute, this time at a large apartment complex. I had a cover officer with me this time and a recruit officer in training. The apartment was quiet when we arrived and ultimately we knocked on the front door. A very small slender man answered the door, in only a bathing suit, and asked what he could do for us. I noticed he was wet from head to toe; his feet were so wet he had left foot prints on the floor leading up to the front door. I advised him that we had been called to a family dispute at this location. When I began questioning him, I noticed he started slowly swaying back and forth. As he was trying to answer (he was also very intoxicated) I saw blood dripping from under his chin to the middle of his chest in big flowing drops. Two of us reached out to hold him up as he began to lose his balance. We assisted him to sit down on the sidewalk in front of his apartment door at which time we could see that his throat was slashed from ear to ear and he began to bleed heavily. Upon interviewing witnesses, we learned that the victim had been swimming with a female in the pool at the apartment complex. The man's girlfriend discovered this, went to the pool, grabbed him out of the water, broke a nearby beer bottle, and slashed his throat. According to the witness she then told the man to go back inside. In the end he survived and she went to jail. It took five officers to get her arrested and in the car.

So there are two stories...even though I think of them only on occasion, stories just like these, and often much worse happen everyday...statistically about every minute of every day in the United States. No town is immune, no matter how quaint. Every one of these incidents should alarm us, every one...but they just don't. First responders, police, fire, and ambulance, will tell you they get a regular diet of family disputes, resulting in domestic violence calls for service almost everyday. Larger populated areas will have multiple calls per day. The number of people affected by domestic violence is almost impossible to calculate; the spouse, partner, child, relative, neighbor etc. could be affected by a full range of possibilities, from intimidation to homicide.

I don't have any great answers or advice, but domestic violence cannot ever be kept a secret. Refusing to acknowledge domestic violence is a huge part of the problem. The psychological and physical issues are very complex, and people who are involved cannot deal with their problems alone. To try and give advice using phrases like "you should just leave him" or "never let him/her treat you that way", doesn't even scratch the surface.

The police often become the "protectors" who get called in middle of the night, in the middle of alcohol fueled fights and arguments. When victims just want the chaos to stop, we are the only hope that some people have to keep them safe. And once that momentary stability is established, we need support service organizations such as Florence SOS to assist that person in gaining a better life.

Tom Turner, Chief, Florence Police Department

Domestic Violence Hurts Everyone

1 in 4 women are abused daily

1 in 7 men are abused daily

60% of victims lost jobs due to domestic violence

56% of victims lost multiple days of work to hide injuries

70% of abusers who received either jail time or had to attend intervention programs lost jobs.

Over 13,000 deaths in the US related to domestic violence in 2020.

8 Billion dollars in lost revenue as the direct result of domestic violence

8.3 Billion dollars in medical and legal services for victims of domestic violence

477 locally reported victims of domestic violence, including 92 children, in 2020.

You are not alone. There is help.

24/7 CRISIS HOTLINE

541-997-4444



SIUSLAW OUTREACH SERVICES



**OCTOBER IS
domestic violence
awareness
MONTH**