

# You're not alone. Our door is open.

If you are a victim of abuse, you are *never* to blame. It is not your fault.



We offer Nine Core Services including:

- 24-Hour Hotline
- Assessment of Children
- Direct Service Information and Referral
- Emergency Shelter
- Community Education
- Counseling
- Professional Training
- Safety Planning
- Service Management

Also available:

- Assistance with Victim's Compensation Claims
- Courthouse Advocacy
- Outreach Services
- Survivor Support Groups

**All Services are Free and Confidential**



Studies show access to shelter services leads to a 60-70% reduction in incidence and severity of re-assault during the 3-12 month follow-up period.



## It's About Victim Safety!

Safety is important and making informed decisions about staying or leaving an abusive relationship is critical to a victim's safety. Victims are the experts in their own life and the only one who knows what is right and safe for them. Peace River Center Victim Services has trained advocates who are dedicated to assisting with finding options and developing a safety plan.

## Do I Need a Safety Plan?

A safety plan is for:

- Individuals living with an abuser – because danger can occur at any time.
- Individuals planning to leave—because few abusers allow their partners to leave peacefully. Leaving is the time of highest lethality.
- Individuals living away from the abuser—because danger often increases after a survivor leaves or ends the relationship.

Contact Peace River Center Victim Services, your local certified domestic violence center, for assistance with Safety Planning.

## What Are the “Warning Signs” of an Abuser?

Anyone can be an abuser. They come from all groups, all cultures, all religions, all economic levels, and all backgrounds. There is no one typical, detectable personality of an abuser. An abuser may be pleasant and charming between periods of violence and is often seen as a “nice person” to others outside the relationship.

Red flags and warning signs of an abuser include but are not limited to:

- Extreme jealousy
- Possessiveness
- Unpredictability
- A bad temper
- Cruelty to animals
- Verbal abuse
- Extremely controlling behavior
- Antiquated beliefs about roles of women and men in relationships
- Forced sex or disregard of their partner's unwillingness to have sex
- Sabotage of birth control methods or refusal to honor agreed upon methods
- Blaming the victim for anything bad that happens
- Sabotage or obstruction of the victim's ability to work or attend school
- Controls all the finances
- Abuse of other family members, children or pets
- Accusations of the victim flirting with others or having an affair
- Control of what the victim wears and how they act
- Demeaning the victim either privately or publicly
- Embarrassment or humiliation of the victim in front of others
- Harassment of the victim at work

## What is Domestic Violence?

It is a pattern of controlling behaviors— violence or threats of violence—that one person uses to establish power over an intimate partner in order to control that partner's actions and activities. Domestic violence is not a disagreement, a marital spat, or an anger management problem. Domestic violence is abusive, disrespectful, and hurtful behaviors that one intimate partner chooses to perpetrate against the other partner.

You may be experiencing domestic violence if your partner is doing any of these or other unwanted behaviors:

- Hurting you physically—slapping, hair pulling, strangling, hitting, kicking, grabbing, excessively squeezing or shaking, twisting your arms, burning you, or intentionally injuring you in any way
- Using your children against you
- Calling you names and hurting you emotionally
- Harming your pets
- Acting with extreme jealousy and possessiveness
- Isolating you from family and friends
- Threatening to commit suicide or to kill you
- Controlling your money
- Withholding medical attention
- Stalking you
- Demanding sex or unwanted sex practices
- Hiding assistive devices
- Minimizing the destructive behavior
- Threatening to “out” you if you are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual or transgender
- Controlling you with “that certain look in his eyes” or certain gestures

**Stalk** means willfully, maliciously and repeatedly following, harassing, or cyberstalking.

**Cyberstalk** means to engage in a course of conduct to communicate, or to cause to be communicated, words, images, or language by or through the use of electronic mail or electronic communication, directed at a specific person, causing substantial emotional distress to that person and serving no legitimate purpose. f.s.784.048(1)(d)

**Harass** means to engage in a course of conduct directed at a specific person that causes that person substantial emotional distress and serves no legitimate purpose.

## What is Florida's Legal Definition of Domestic Violence?

As defined in law:

741.28 Domestic violence; definitions. --As used in ss. 741.28-741.31: “Department” means the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. “Domestic violence” means any assault, aggravated assault, battery, aggravated battery, sexual assault, sexual battery, stalking, aggravated stalking, kidnapping, false imprisonment, or any criminal offense resulting in physical injury or death of one family or household member by another family or household member.

“Family or household member” means spouses, former spouses, persons related by blood or marriage, persons who are presently residing together as if a family or who have resided together in the past as if a family, and persons who are parents of a child in common regardless of whether they have been married. With the exception of persons who have a child in common, the family or household members must be currently residing or have in the past resided together in the same single dwelling unit.

“Law enforcement officer” means any person who is elected, appointed, or employed by any municipality or the state or any political subdivision thereof who meets the minimum qualifications established in s. 943.13 and is certified as a law enforcement officer under s. 943.1395.



It is the policy of Peace River Center to provide equal opportunity in employment and the provision of services to all persons without regard to race, color, creed, sex, national origin, age, sexual orientation, religion, veteran status, disability, genetic information or genetic identity or other protected classifications.



## Domestic Violence Emergency Shelter and Outreach Services

### 24-Hour Crisis Lines

Hardee and Highlands County:  
863.386.1167  
TTY: 863.733.4410

Polk County: 863.413.2700  
TTY: 863.733.4411

Victim Services TTY: 863.733.4412

Collect Calls Accepted  
Se Habla Español

