

# Understanding the problem of domestic violence

**Domestic violence** is a pattern of abusive behaviors used by one individual intended to exert power and control over another individual in the context of an intimate or family relationship.

- **pattern:** Domestic violence involves more than one or even several isolated incidents of violence. It involves an interrelated pattern that includes a wide variety of abusive behaviors and usually increases in frequency and intensity over time.
- **abusive behaviors:** Abusive or coercive behaviors may include, but are not limited to, physical assaults, verbal assaults, threats, intimidation, use of weapons, destruction of property, violence toward other significant people or pets, sexual manipulation and control over economic resources.
- **intended to exert power and control:** The pattern of behaviors is not a matter of coincidence or the result of a time-limited crisis. Rather, it is an ongoing pattern in the relationship whereby the abuser acts to control the other person.
- **intimate or family relationship:** A relationship between two adults intended to provide emotional and physical intimacy.

It is very important to recognize that domestic violence is not always physical. Verbal, emotional, and economic abuse can have long-lasting effects, even if a victim is never physically or sexually assaulted.

## *Recent news in Virginia:*

- **May 23, 2007:** A Virginia man was sentenced to 40 years in prison for burning his girlfriend.
- **June 9, 2007:** A 21-year-old woman was shot in the throat following a domestic dispute. She was believed to be several months pregnant with the suspect's baby. The suspect is still at large and the Martinsville Police Department is offering a \$5,000 reward for information that leads to an arrest.
- **July 9, 2007:** A 28-year-old mother of three was fatally stabbed in Richmond by her boyfriend as a result of a domestic dispute. The assailant turned himself in to the authorities the day after the crime. All three children witnessed the murder.
- **July 11, 2007:** A Richmond man pled guilty to kidnapping, stabbing, choking, and leaving his girlfriend to die in a locked storage unit after she suggested breaking up. His girlfriend was able to kick through a wall within the storage unit and escape through an adjoining one. The assailant faces 40 years in prison.