



Women's Center & Shelter
of Greater Pittsburgh

Domestic Violence Myths and Facts

DV Media Resource – October 2021

The Issue:

- **More than 1 in 3 women** have experienced sexual violence, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner.
- **Half of all women and men** in the U.S. have experienced psychological aggression by an intimate partner.
- Worldwide, domestic violence was the **single most reported category of violence** from January to May 2020, comprising one-third of all violent incidents.
- The “most dangerous place” for women around the world is at home. Over **half of female homicide victims** are killed by a current or former male intimate partner.
- **54% of trans individuals** have experienced some form of domestic violence, including coercive control and physical harm.

Pittsburgh-Area Resources

Name	Hotline Phone Number	Website
Women's Center & Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh	412-687-8005	wcspittsburgh.org
Alle-Kiski Hope Center	888-299-4673	akhopecenter.org
Center for Victims	866-644-2882	centerforvictims.org
Crisis Center North	412-364-5556	crisiscenternorth.org
Pittsburgh Action Against Rape (PAAR)	1-866-363-7273	paar.net

Myth: *A PFA Is Just A Piece Of Paper*

Reality: *A PFA Has The Full Power Of The Court Behind It*

Protection From Abuse (PFA) orders have protected hundreds of thousands of PA domestic violence survivors. A study in the Journal of the American Medical Association found that PFAs (issued for 12 months or longer) are likely to reduce police reported physical violence by 80%. A PFA is never intended to be the only option for victims, who are encouraged to also work with an advocate at a DV program to create a safety plan that may include a shelter stay, relocation, pursuit of criminal charges, etc. It's important to recognize that a PFA is only as effective as the enforcement behind it, and lax and inconsistent enforcement by the courts and police can have deadly consequences.

Myth: *She Can Just Leave*

Reality: *It's Much More Complicated Than That*

Victims stay with or return to their batterers for multiple reasons, including:

- Fear the violence will intensify if they leave.
- Fear their batterers will retaliate against their children if they leave or seek custody.
- The hope their abusers can change if they seek therapy.
- The lack of support systems to help them escape because their abusers have systematically isolated them from friends and family that could help.
- The lack of available, affordable housing and economic resources.
- Cultural or religious beliefs that compel them to try to make even an abusive marriage work.

Myth: *Children Are Unharmed*

Reality: *Children Are Always At Risk Of Harm*

Every risk, injury, and disruption that DV victims endure, their children also endure. Their educational, social, emotional, and behavioral development may be adversely affected.

Myth: *It Doesn't Happen In My Neighborhood*

Reality: *It Can Happen Anywhere*

Domestic violence happens in all communities, at all income and education levels, with victims and perpetrators representing a diverse cross-section of society. Where someone lives has little to do with the people they live with and what goes on behind closed doors.

Myth: *It's Love Gone Wrong*

Reality: *Love Has Nothing To Do With It*

Domestic violence is about obsession, possession, revenge, power, and control. An abuser doesn't just "snap." The violence most often is methodical, calculating, and intended to cause fear.

Myth: *It's Just A Domestic Dispute*

Reality: *It's Actually A Deadly Crime*

It's against the law to abuse a family or household member or intimate partner. Domestic violence often is more brutal and deadly than stranger-on-stranger assault. Without appropriate intervention, the violence may only get worse and continue into the next generation.

Myth: *It's COVID-19*

Reality: *It's DV Made Worse by COVID-19*

For victims, domestic violence has been a "pandemic within a pandemic" during COVID-19. The pandemic has forced some victims into isolation with their abusers and away from their support systems making it more difficult for them to seek help. Feeling out of control, abusers have increased the frequency and severity of their abuse.

This material was adapted from WHEN CRISIS STRIKES: A Toolkit for Critical Incident Response and Management, published by the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence.