

## Screening for Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is a **pattern of controlling or violent behaviors**, including emotional, verbal, physical, sexual and economic abuse that adults and adolescents may use against their intimate partners. It can take on many forms and be different in each relationship.

### Things to Look For...

- Scratches or bruises that look like fingerprints around the neck, arms and waist
- Individual is isolated from friends and family or unable to see you alone
- Exhaustion, confusion, memory loss, sleep disturbance
- Significant changes in mood or body language when partner is around; loss of confidence
- Clothes that conceal or that are inappropriate for the season
- Misses work often or receives unusually high number of calls from their partner
- Overly cautious about making minor decisions, being late or spending money

### Things to Ask...

- Do you feel safe at home?
- Does your partner ever hit, kick, grab, push or choke you?
- Does your partner constantly criticize you, call you names or put you down?
- Does your partner control your everyday life?

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### Things to Say...

- You don't deserve to be treated this way.
- Your safety is very important. I can connect you with an advocate that can support you with:
  - \* Protective Orders \* Children's Groups
  - \* Safety Planning \* Talking Through Options
  - \* Legal Assistance \* Shelter Housing
  - \* Support Groups \* Community Referrals

### Things to Do Right Away...

- **Provide the number for Georgia's 24-hour confidential statewide domestic violence crisis line—1.800.33.HAVEN (1.800.334.2836) V/TTY.**
- Seek interpretative services for a limited-English speaker instead of relying on family, friends or children.
- ONLY talk about domestic violence when the partner and children are not around.
- Understand that **danger may increase for victims when they attempt to leave the relationship** or when their partners are depressed, suicidal, own weapons or abuse substances.
- Learn as much as you can about domestic violence, and get connected with other helping professionals in your community including attorneys, physicians, counselors, etc., that can provide information, referrals and support.

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### Primary Aggressor Assessment

When both parties have used violence, investigators must determine which person acted in self-defense.

#### Always report the following items:

- All evidence collected or statements** made during interviews
- History of violence** including prior arrests, criminal records and TPO filings
- Comparisons of height and weight** between victim and suspect
- Absence or presence of any physical disabilities, medical conditions or impairments**
- Claims of self-defense**
- Specific injury patterns** found on the victim or suspect which commonly include:
  - Fingernail or other scratches to suspect's neck, face and arms caused by victim in self-defense
  - Bite marks on suspect's arms, hands or chest caused by victim in self defense
  - Groin or genital injuries to suspect caused by victim in self defense
  - Bruises, lacerations and abrasions on the forearms and hands of victims from attempting to block punches, kicks, or other strikes with a weapon

**Remember bruising will not always appear immediately!**

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### Information for the Victim

**Encourage the victim to contact Georgia's 24 Hour, Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-33-HAVEN (1-800-334-2836) V/TTY.** Explain that she can talk to an advocate about shelter and additional services.

Explain her rights and inform her that she might qualify for a Family Violence Protective Order and/or Victim's Compensation.

### Making A Good Domestic Violence Case

- Document parties location upon arrival and interview them separately (including children)
- Have victim and witnesses write (or tape) a statement
- Take pictures of crime scene, injuries, etc.
- Describe in detail victim's and suspect's injuries (or lack of), crime scene, etc.
- Document any spontaneous utterances (in quotes)
- Note any history of abuse including court orders/TPO filings
- Describe victim's and suspect's emotional and physical condition, including height and weight
- Identify and interview person calling 911, if not victim
- Record names/ages of any children present
- Impound weapons
- Follow Miranda. Ask if suspect wants to make a statement (write/record)
- Record permanent and alternative phone number and address for victim and witnesses
- Obtain signed medical release form from victim
- Record name and badge number of all officers present
- Note emergency personnel information