Domestic Violence Response Protocol

For families impacted by domestic violence

Someone to listen.
Someone to help.
That someone is YOU.
Whether it happened once or many times.  
Whether it is a coworker, parent, or neighbor.  
Whether their pain is physical or emotional.  
Whether we call it abuse, assault, or we don’t know what to call it.  

Anyone can help a survivor.

The [insert name of] School District strives to create a culture of care where all individuals feel safe, valued, and respected. It is the policy of the district to provide trauma-informed responses to those in our community who have been impacted by domestic violence. The purpose of this guide is to empower you to identify and respond to domestic violence.

Domestic violence exists when relationships are based on the power and control of one person over another and can include physical, emotional, sexual, and economic abuse. It is an experience that impacts many of us and that is sometimes hard to identify and acknowledge. The shame surrounding this topic and the fact that many of us do not know what to say or do contributes to the persistence of this problem.

Your role is to believe, support, and validate survivors of abuse. It is more helpful to listen and make affirming statements than to ask questions. You are not responsible for investigating or finding out details. If you do ask questions, they should be related to making sure the person is okay, exploring their needs, and building empathy, options, and choices.

Adult survivors often need information, support, and options. For children who have witnessed domestic violence, the presence of a consistent, caring adult is the key to healing and resilience.
You are someone who can help.
Use this guide to learn how.

Contents

Children ........................................................................................................ Pages 4-5
  Children: Behaviors you might see or hear about ................................. Page 4
  Children: What to do and say ................................................................. Page 5

Adults .......................................................................................................... Pages 6-10
  Adults: Behaviors you might see or hear about .................................... Page 6
  Adults: What to say to a survivor .......................................................... Page 7
  Adult Response Protocol ...................................................................... Page 8-10

Community Resources ............................................................................... Page 11
Behaviors you may see or hear about:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviors</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>aggression</strong>, name-calling, bullying</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>excessive or <strong>constant irritability</strong> and/or crying</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>more tired</strong> than usual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>physical symptoms: <strong>frequent illness</strong>, tummy aches, or headaches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>loss of bowel or <strong>bladder control</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rigid or <strong>sexist ideas</strong> about gender roles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>cruelty to animals</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>excessively <strong>needy of time</strong>, attention, and touch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>impulsiveness</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rejecting or <strong>withdrawing</strong> from physical touch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>lack of empathy</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>hypervigilance</strong>: anxious about or sensitive to noises</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>withdrawn or <strong>excessively quiet</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>lack of confidence</strong> in beginning or trying new tasks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chronic or <strong>increased absence</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>excessive fear</strong> of breaking rules or making mistakes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>apathy or <strong>lack of emotion</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>increased <strong>separation anxiety</strong>: afraid to leave parent or caregiver</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ignoring privacy <strong>boundaries</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>changes in play</strong>: less able to play creatively or spontaneously</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trouble maintaining <strong>focus</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>acting younger</strong> than developmentally typical (bed wetting, tantrums, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you are concerned that a child has experienced or witnessed domestic violence, *follow these steps*:

1. Believe, support, and validate them (see page 5).
2. Tell them that there are people who can help.
3. Talk to your school’s counselor.
Children

What to say and do:

**Believe, Support, and Validate:**
- Let’s walk to the office right now to see if we can talk to the counselor.
- Violence isn’t okay.
- This was not your fault.
- I am here to help, please go on.
- It is not your job to fix what is happening in your family.
- If you want to share, I can handle it.
- I believe you.
- Is your body ok? Do you need a doctor?
- I’m so glad you came to talk to me.
- I will do everything I can to help you feel safe at school.
- I’m sorry to hear this has happened to you.
- Sharing can be hard—take your time.
- It’s ok to be confused or to have mixed feelings about either of your parents.
- This is important. Your safety is important.

**Promote Safe and Positive Coping Skills:**
- Teach them to call 9-1-1 in an emergency.
- Help them identify names and phone numbers of trusted adults (friends, family members, and neighbors) that they could call if needed.
- Encourage them to try to stay out of the middle of fights or arguments.
- Help them think about safe hiding places to go to if adults are fighting.
- Support by actively listening and believing them.
- Be kind: Convey warmth and understanding and offer an open door to talk again.
- Encourage them to:
  - Eat healthy snacks or meals
  - Rest, sleep
  - Be gentle and positive in their self-talk
  - Carry something comforting in difficult moments (like a stuffy, poem, or blanket)
  - Spend time outside or do something creative: like dancing, drawing, or doing crafts
  - Read or ask someone to read to them
  - Play with a sibling or neighbor
  - Make a mental picture to calm down or feel safe (think of the beach, or your grandma, for example)

**Don't:**
- Minimize or downplay the situation.
- Ask a lot of questions or press for details.
- Make promises you can’t keep.
Adults

Behaviors you may see or hear about:

- extreme jealousy, possessiveness, or insecurity
- manipulating and using children or visitation to manipulate and control
- short temper
- threats to involve CPS, disclose drug abuse or mental illness, or take children away
- frequent mood swings
- physically inflicting pain or hurt in any way
- controlling or dominating in meetings or conferences
- using children to relay messages
- suspiciousness or accusations of cheating
- monitoring or stalking behaviors

- telling a partner what they can and cannot do
- belittling, name-calling, or put-downs
- excessive texts, especially wanting to know their partner’s location
- isolation from family and friends
- distributing pictures or videos of sexual or physical violence
- ignoring privacy boundaries
- rigid concept of gender roles
- showing up unexpectedly to conferences or events
- appears afraid of the other person

Adult survivors of domestic violence need:

- To build connections
- Information that will help them make decisions about their own life
- Emotional and financial support
- People who trust that they know their situation and child(ren) best
- Someone to listen to them
- Recognition of their strengths and their capabilities
- To be believed & validated
- Meaningful access to resources
Adults

What to say or do for adult survivors:

Believe, Support, and Validate:

• This sounds like a difficult experience.
• I’m really sorry to hear this happened to you.
• I can see how much you love your child/children.
• This was not your fault.
• You deserve to be treated with respect.
• What do you need?
• Are you okay? Do you need medical attention?
• I believe you.

Respond in a healing-informed manner:

• Talk to the parent in a safe setting, away from their partner.
• Support by actively listening.
• Recognize that the parent may be fearful, confused, protective about their privacy, and/or vulnerable.
• Be kind. Convey warmth and understanding.

• I’m so glad you came to talk to me.
• Do you feel safe?
• This is important.
• I am here to help, please go on.
• I know this might be uncomfortable. Please take your time.
• If you want to talk about this again, you can talk to me.
• How can we help you feel safer at our school?

Don’t:

• Minimize or downplay the situation.
• Lecture them about what you consider to be poor parenting or choices.
• Ask about their behaviors, as this can be interpreted as victim-blaming.
• Give advice or tell them what to do.
• Make promises you can’t keep.

• Believe them. It takes a lot of courage and strength to tell someone and it can be devastating to hear that someone doesn’t believe you.
• Tell them it’s not their fault. Many survivors blame themselves, so it is crucial to tell them it isn’t their fault and remind them that the other person is responsible for their actions.
• Ask them what they think will make them feel safer and if they feel comfortable telling friends or family what is going on.
• Respect their privacy. Only tell the people who need to know about the situation.
• Offer an open door to talk again in the future.
• Trust that they are doing the best they can in this situation.
If you believe a parent/guardian is experiencing sexual or domestic violence, **follow these steps:**

1. **Approach the person privately.**

2. **Share your observations and concern, with the goal of offering support, not to do an investigation.** People who are experiencing abuse or assault are most likely to disclose to a person they have a trusted relationship with—**you.**

3. **Share a validating, supportive statement.** Many survivors feel judged and worried that they are at fault and responsible for their and their children’s trauma. **Often, the abuser uses shaming and put downs about a victim’s parenting to manipulate and control them. It is helpful to observe and build on the strengths that they may have difficulty seeing in themselves.**

4. **Do no harm.** Your role is important and may open a door to healing. If you do not feel prepared to offer supportive statements, you can skip directly to: “**I am going to find someone who can help**” and contact the school counselor.

---

**You can say...**

| I have noticed [insert behavior] lately. I want you to know that I care about [child’s name]’s and your safety and well-being. What do you think we could do better to support him/her/them at school? |
| Your and your child’s safety are important. Working with children over the years, I have learned that nearly everyone needs help in some area of their life at some point. **Here are some resources in case you ever need them.** You can always ask me or [school counselor’s name] about these if you have a question. |
| I was concerned about how you were treated in that meeting. It is not okay for a partner to belittle you or call you names [or other behavior you noticed]. You are a good parent and I want to make sure that you are safe. |
| Our school counselor is a great resource if you ever want to talk with someone about your or your child’s safety and well-being. My child’s counselor helped me a lot when we were going through some personal challenges. |
Domestic Violence Response Process

Talk to adult survivor privately to support safety needs and share information

Offer to Contact DVSAS or Lummi Victims of Crime

Get copies of orders or paperwork that will support safety for parent and/or child

Create a plan together for supporting the safety of the child at school

Ask about having contact with other systems and how to best support their and their children’s safety
If you learn that someone is a survivor of domestic violence:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Belief, support, &amp; validate</th>
<th>Determine if a report is required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Believe, support, &amp; validate (see examples on page 7).</td>
<td>3. Determine if a report is required (see policy #__________).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Tell the parent you are going to contact the School Counselor.</td>
<td>4. Contact the school counselor, then follow the steps below.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The school counselor should:

1. Reach out to the parent who has experienced abuse or assault.
2. Believe, support, & validate the parent.
3. Ensure that the parent has their immediate medical and safety needs met.
4. Offer to call a DVSAS or Lummi Victims of Crime (LVOC) advocate who can meet with them to provide support and information in person or on the phone.
5. Ask the parent if there is a parenting plan, Order for Protection, or other paperwork to share that would help support their safety (see policy #__________).
6. Ask how the school can support their child’s immediate and ongoing safety.
7. Ask if there are other people or systems that you should be in touch with to support their safety → if yes, take down contact information and get a release of information.
8. Share contact information for DVSAS or LVOC.
9. Ask if they would like another appointment.
10. Follow-up with the original staff involved, CPS, law enforcement, DVSAS advocate, etc.

Mandated reporters should:

1. **Tell the parent** that you are required to make a report to law enforcement or CPS, and invite them to participate.
2. **Do not investigate** the report.
3. **Inform** your administrator.
4. **Report** to CPS or law enforcement—with the parent, if possible.
5. **Offer to have a** DVSAS or Lummi Victims of Crime (LVOC) advocate meet with the parent during the police or CPS interview.
6. **If yes,** call DVSAS or LVOC to inform them of time/location of the interview.
7. **Ask** the parent if you can support them by staying connected to other systems. → **If yes,** take down contact information of the people responding, ask about the best way to follow up, and get a release of information.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Directory</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DVSAS</strong>&lt;br&gt;Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services</td>
<td>1-877-715-1563&lt;br&gt;360-715-1563&lt;br&gt;<a href="http://www.dvsas.org">www.dvsas.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>24-hour confidential helpline</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School-based advocacy</strong></td>
<td>Prevention Education Specialist&lt;br&gt;360-671-5714&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:schools@dvsas.org">schools@dvsas.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LVOC</strong>&lt;br&gt;Lummi Victims of Crime</td>
<td>(360) 312-2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>24-hour confidential helpline</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School-based advocacy</strong></td>
<td>Olivia Solomon&lt;br&gt;(360) 312-2015&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:olivias@lummi-nsn.gov">olivias@lummi-nsn.gov</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>24-hour confidential helpline</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resources for LGBTQ+ Survivors</strong></td>
<td>(206) 568-7777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The NW Network of Bi, Trans, Lesbian, and Gay Survivors</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This project was supported by Grant No. 2015-CY-AX-0012 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication/program/exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.