



CONTACT THE
FAMILY GUIDANCE
CENTER AT
828-322-1400

#17 Hwy 70 SE
HICKORY, NC 28602
FGCSERVICES.COM



Spotlight On Domestic Violence

*First Step Newsletter
A Program of
The Family Guidance Center*

THE MISSION OF FAMILY GUIDANCE CENTER'S FIRST STEP DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAM IS TO PROVIDE NEEDED SERVICES TO VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND TO INCREASE THE COMMUNITY'S AWARENESS ABOUT THE PROBLEM.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE and the Holidays

Most of us think of the Christmas holidays as a joyous time, a time of celebration and family gatherings. This is not true; however, for many victims of domestic violence. They think of the holidays with dread and increased anxiety. For victims with children, it can be a time of great sadness because the abuser won't allow her to have a Christmas tree or to give presents to her children. Their home is bleak; there is no celebration, no excitement.

Domestic violence is more likely to occur when stress levels are high. During the holidays, unrealistic expectations, financial strain, and the consumption of alcohol can increase stress – these factors increase the potential for a domestic violence incident.

If you are living in a domestic violence situation, it's important that you have a safety kit in case you have to flee a dangerous situation quickly. Be sure it's hidden in a safe place and somewhere you can get to it easily. The safety kit should contain emergency numbers, a bag of clothing and toiletries, important papers, i.e. birth certificates, driver's license, medication, car keys, house keys, bank accounts, and cash. It's also very important to develop a safety plan.



If you or anyone you know is being abused, or sexually assaulted, We're here to help
Call 828-322-1400 or Crisis Line 828-228-1787



Peace on Earth

TIPS FOR STAYING SAFE

1. Keep your cell phone charged and with you at all times. Be sure to put needed numbers on speed dial, i.e., local DV Crisis Line, 911.
2. Create a "Safe" word/phrase. In an emergency, you may not be able to text or say much. Have an agreed safe word or phrase with a family member or friend so you can signal the need for help.
3. Download a safety app. If you have a smart phone, download a safety app for women such as P.F.O. and Circle of 6, which automatically alerts your support people that you are in danger.
4. Decide on a safe place to go in your home if an argument occurs; avoid rooms with no exits (bathroom) or rooms with weapons or upper/ lower levels of home.
5. Decide upon a signal of danger, like having your porch light on or a raised shade, and tell your neighbor to call the police if they see the signal.
6. Make a safety plan in advance. Determine your escape options, where you will go, hide your keys outside, have your important papers, have money hidden where you can get it, etc.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HURTS CHILDREN

National research shows that in about half of reported incidents, children are present. In about 80 percent of these cases, children directly see or hear the violence. Every year, between 10 and 15 million children witness domestic violence.

Witnessing high levels of domestic violence can have lifelong effects on a child's cognitive, emotional, and social development. For example, adults who witnessed domestic violence as children are more likely than others to have relationship difficulties and emotional problems.

Children younger than six are at higher risk than older children for directly witnessing domestic violence. There is a general belief that infants and young children are less affected than older children by seeing or hearing violent conflict. However, research shows that exposure to domestic violence affects even very young children:

- ⇒ Some effects can be seen as early as infancy; one-year-olds who have been exposed to domestic violence are more disturbed than other babies when they hear adults arguing.
- ⇒ Children under three who witness violence toward a family member are at increased risk for psychological problems.
- ⇒ Cognitive development can also be affected: Children exposed to high levels of domestic violence in early childhood have IQs at age 5 that are up to 8 points lower than those of other children.

Women who stay in an abusive relationship because they don't want to break-up the family, may want to re-consider their decision.

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

During this season of sharing and caring, your financial support will save a victim's life and keep her safe. You may not know that our life-saving Shelter and domestic violence services are provided at no cost to victims. We depend on caring people, like you, for support to ensure victims receive the help they need.

Your gift will make a difference for victims today and impact their future life. You may securely donate through PayPal (fgcservices.com, click donate) or mail to Family Guidance Center, 17 Highway 70 SE, Hickory, NC 28602.

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New Year's Eve, New Year's Day, Memorial Day and the 4th of July have higher reports of Domestic Violence than the daily normal.

Early stressful experiences, including exposure to violence, can influence an infant's stress reactivity – the ability of her brain's stress response system to turn on or off appropriately. This can have lifelong effects of psychological and physical health. Moreover, domestic violence can affect a child even before she is born. Domestic violence often begins or grows more intense during pregnancy and the resulting maternal stress can interfere with fetal brain development.

Tips for Holiday Shopping without Debt Stress

The holidays can be particularly difficult for those who are struggling with their finances, are unemployed or facing foreclosure. Even if your situation is not that serious, we're living in tough economic times. No one needs to be spending money they don't have or adding new debt on top of old debt. Our Credit Counselors here at Consumer Credit Counseling Services offer the following tips to avoid the after-Christmas Blues:

- ⇒ Develop a spending budget to determine how much money you have after your monthly expenses are paid.
- ⇒ Stick to your spending budget. Don't make impulse purchases. Resist the temptation to buy anything just to be able to mark it off your list. A thoughtless gift isn't worth the paper it's wrapped in.
- ⇒ Make your shopping trips short by having a shopping strategy. Know what you want, where you're going to get it, and how much you're going to spend. Your goal is to get in and get out of the stores, thus limiting the temptation to spend.
- ⇒ While shopping, take frequent breaks and track your spending. Staying on budget equals staying in the black.
- ⇒ Resist paying steep rush shipping charges. It's better to find an alternative gift than to spend as much in shipping as you did on the gift.
- ⇒ If you can't find the right gift, know that a gift card always fits. Further, the recipient can use it during the after-Christmas sales and maximize the value.

Play it safe and inquire about the return policy before you buy. If the store offers a gift receipt, be sure to include it with the package, thus making a return much simpler.

Being financially responsible this holiday season is a gift to yourself and to those you care about.



We invite you to shop for great finds at our Purple Ribbon Thrift Store. All proceeds go to support our shelter and domestic violence services.

Store hours are Monday—Friday 10:00—5:00, Saturday 10:00—3:00

Located at 360 Highway 70 SW Hickory, NC 28602

(Across from U-Haul)

828-322-3423