



What You Can Do to Support Victims of Sexual and Domestic Violence In Your Congregation

- ❖ **Learn more** about sexual and domestic violence so that you can respond safely and effectively when someone asks for help.
- ❖ There are many overlaps between sexual violence and domestic violence, and there are important differences as well. **Think creatively** about how your congregation can address both so that all victims and survivors can get the support they need. Consider how sexual and domestic violence may affect congregants across the lifespan, how various forms of violence may compound one another, and how domestic and/or sexual violence experienced as a child may affect adults in your congregation.
- ❖ **Connect** with your local sexual and domestic violence advocates and develop programming for your congregation.
 - ❖ Work with your advocates to train clergy and lay leaders within your congregation who can form a safe and effective congregational response team.
 - ❖ Invite advocates to speak, to lead an adult education session, or to address your youth group about healthy relationships. Refer victims and survivors to these community experts.
- ❖ **Identify resources** from within your faith or denomination that are available for survivors.
 - ❖ Are there scriptures or prayers that are helpful? Traditions that support healthy relationships, justice, or peace in the home? Spiritual practices that promote healing? A denominational statement that condemns sexual and domestic violence? Leaders who have spoken out on this issue?
 - ❖ Stock your congregational library with domestic and sexual violence information, books, and videos.
- ❖ **Break the silence** to let congregants know that sexual and domestic violence are issues in the congregation and community, and that this is a place where they can talk about it.
 - ❖ Use sermons, newsletter articles, speakers, or special events.
 - ❖ Put up posters with domestic and sexual violence hotline numbers throughout your building. (See Safe Havens' website at www.interfaithpartners.org.)
 - ❖ Print state and national hotline numbers in every program and/or newsletter.
 - ❖ Publicize your newly created congregational response team.
- ❖ **Partner** with other congregations, schools, law enforcement, and sexual and domestic violence advocates to present programming during **Sexual Assault Awareness Month** in April and **Domestic Violence Awareness Month** in October. (See www.nsvrc.org or www.ncadv.org for resources.)

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