

Break the Silence - Make the Call



By Greg Abbott
Attorney General of Texas

Domestic violence is a crime that all too often goes unreported. Many victims of domestic abuse suffer in silence, too afraid to speak out. That is why all Texans should take a more active role in combating domestic violence, especially when the victim is a loved one.

A study on domestic violence in Texas by my office and the Texas Council on Family Violence (TCFV) found that among Texans who identified themselves or a family member as a victim of domestic abuse, 35 percent said they did nothing to stop it or report it.

Looking the other way can be devastating. Last year alone, one hundred forty women were killed during acts of family violence in Texas, according to figures from the Texas Department of Public Safety and local law enforcement. That is more than two deaths per week.

Due to these alarming statistics my office and the Texas Council on Family Violence joined together to raise public awareness about this important issue.

“Break the Silence - Make the Call” is a campaign financed in part by a \$2 million grant from the Attorney General’s

Crime Victims’ Compensation Fund. The first phase, “Break the Silence,” began in 2002.

We initiated the second phase of the campaign, “Make the Call,” with press conferences in Austin, Houston and Dallas this summer.

Make the Call is not only aimed at victims of family abuse, but also their friends and relatives. Many times victims are unwilling or unable to reach out for help on their own. They need our support and encouragement. The National Domestic Violence Hotline (800) 799-7233 provides advice on how to approach victims of family violence.

I was joined at the press conferences by three courageous survivors of domestic violence. The survivors’ stories were similar: they suffered years of physical and verbal abuse by their spouse or partner and were unable to break the cycle of violence on their own. Intervention by their friends and loved ones finally gave them the courage to leave their abusive relationships and seek shelter.

My office provides benefits for victims of domestic abuse through the Crime Victims’ Compensation Fund. This program is paid for out of court fees incurred by those who break the law, at no expense to taxpayers.

The Crime Victims’ Compensation program acts as a payer of last resort to cover expenses associated with violent

crimes against people. Benefits may cover medical expenses, counseling, lost wages and, in some cases, travel. Certain eligibility criteria apply.

Some of the benefits available to crime victims are of particular value in cases of family violence. For example, some funds are available to help pay the cost of relocation when domestic abuse victims are trying to move away from the abuser. Help with relocation costs are also available to victims who have been sexually assaulted in their homes.

Every law enforcement agency in Texas is required to provide victims of crime with information about the Crime Victims’ Compensation program and an application. Applications are also available from prosecutors’ offices. Their victim assistance coordinators may assist victims in completing the form or may provide referrals for further assistance. Hospitals and medical centers may also have applications. You can also contact my office directly for an application.

Remember, you can help “Break the Silence-Make the Call.”

POINTS TO REMEMBER

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

National Domestic Violence Hotline
(800) 799-7233

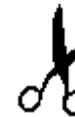
NOVA
National Organization for
Victim Assistance
(800) TRY-NOVA (24 hours/day)

National Center for Victims of Crime
(800) FYI-CALL
(8:30 am- 8:30 pm EST)

Family Violence Legal Hotline
(800) 374-4673
(Recording announces
operating hours)

Crime Victim Services Division
Office of the Attorney General
(800) 983-9933

Texas Council on Family Violence
(800) 525-1978



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
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Information on this and other topics is available on the
Attorney General’s Web site at www.oag.state.tx.us.