

which is comprised of four specialty units: Domestic Violence, Criminal Harassment, Threat Assessment and Elder Abuse. DVACH has partnered with Family Services of Greater Vancouver (FSGV) since 1997, providing a collaborative response to incidents of domestic violence in the community. The program's goals are to increase safety of victims and their families, and to increase offender accountability. Violence within relationships has distinctive dynamics not found in other violent crimes, and often escalates or worsens if the person leaves the relationship. There is usually a power imbalance between the partners in the relationship. The VPD has adopted the Ministry of Attorney General guidelines for police and crown prosecutors in the Violence Against Women in Relationships (VAWIR) policy.

The main points of these guidelines are:

- all incidents involving domestic violence will be investigated thoroughly
- if there is enough evidence to support an arrest and charge, police officers will do so
- officers will make an arrest when an investigation supports a criminal charge (with an emphasis on victim safety)
- officers are encouraged to seek further guidance/clarification from DVACH when required.

DVACH also provides education and training to VPD members and to the public.

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## **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

Domestic violence is one of the most prevalent forms of violence dealt with by police officers on a daily basis. The police, being the frontline social institution to deal with incidents of domestic violence, have a vital role in assisting victims of domestic abuse. The police not only represent state policy but also act as an important link to both the prosecution process and to the provision of services to victims in a community. Thus, as "gatekeepers" to the criminal justice system, police play an important role in shaping victims' initial experiences of it.

According to the most of sources domestic violence is violence or other abuse in a domestic setting, such as in marriage or cohabitation. Domestic violence may be used as a synonym for intimate partner violence, which is

committed by a spouse or partner in an intimate relationship against the other spouse or partner. It can take place in heterosexual or same-sex relationships, or between former spouses or partners. In the broad sense, domestic violence can also involve violence against children, parents, or the elderly. It takes a number of forms, including physical, verbal, emotional, economic, religious, reproductive, and sexual. They can range from subtle, coercive forms to marital rape and to violent physical abuse. Abuse may be choking, beating, female genital mutilation and so on. Domestic murders include stoning, bride burning, and honor killings.

Globally, the victims of domestic violence are generally women. The women tend to experience more severe forms of violence. They are also likelier than men to use intimate partner violence in self-defense. In some countries, domestic violence is often seen as justified, particularly in cases of actual or suspected infidelity on the part of the woman, and is legally permitted. Research has established that there exists a direct and significant correlation between a country's level of gender equality and rates of domestic violence. It means where countries with less gender equality experience higher rates of domestic violence. Domestic violence is among the most underreported crimes worldwide for both men and women. Men who are victims of domestic violence face an increased likelihood of being overlooked by healthcare providers.

Domestic violence often occurs when the abuser believes that abuse is an acceptable, justified, or unlikely to be reported. It may produce an intergenerational cycle of abuse in children and other family members, who may feel that such violence is acceptable or condoned. Many people do not recognize themselves as abusers or victims. That's because they may consider their experiences as family conflicts that got out of control. Awareness, perception, definition and documentation of domestic violence differs widely from country to country.

Domestic violence often happens in the context of forced or child marriage. In abusive relationships, there may be a cycle of abuse during which tensions rise and an act of violence is committed, followed by a period of calm. Victims of domestic violence may be trapped in domestic violent situations through isolation, power and control. These traumatic situations occur due to bonding to the abuser, cultural acceptance, lack of financial resources, fear, shame, or to protect children. As a result of abuse, victims may experience physical disabilities, dysregulated aggression, health problems, mental illness, limited finances, and a poor ability to create healthy relationships. Children who live in a household with violence often show psychological problems from an early age.

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