



## **Issue Advisory: Batterers are Often Sociopaths – October is Domestic Violence Against Women Awareness Month**

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**Abusers Often Sociopaths** - Those of us who work to end domestic and sexual violence know that physical or emotional abuse is just that: abusive, destructive behavior. Unwanted sexual touching is a form of sexual violence and rape is an act of extreme violence, motivated by a desire to overpower and hurt someone. Verbally, emotionally and/or physically abusing an intimate partner is domestic violence – and, in many cases, the perpetrator is impelled to do it because they have a psychologically disordered personality.

**A Continuum of Violence** - Advocates for battered women and survivors have been educating the public and lawmakers for decades about the continuum of violence against women, ranging from unwanted sexual touching, sexual harassment or bullying, controlling behavior, isolation, threats, beatings, rape and ultimately murder. It is vitally important that we recognize that the profiles of many abusers are sociopaths who have a stunning lack of concern for the effects their actions have on others, often having no sense of guilt or remorse, and who shrug off personal responsibility for any of their misdeeds. Some even blame their victims as causing the perpetrators' abusive actions.

**Dealing with a Sociopath** – Because protecting oneself when an abuser is also a sociopath can be tricky, it is important to be aware of certain characteristic behaviors. A website and e-newsletter, **Lovefraud**, is an excellent source of information and the e-newsletter does not require a paid subscription. Go here, <http://www.lovefraud.com/>, to find out more. Lovefraud explains that “approximately 12 to 16 percent of the people around us have exploitive personality disorders, noting that there are several distinct diagnoses, but that these disordered people have one thing in common: they are exploiters and manipulators.”

**DV Awareness Month** - As the Domestic Violence Awareness Month of October reminds us, violence against women remains widespread and the need to counter it is as urgent as ever. Every nine seconds in the U.S., a woman is assaulted or beaten. In 2015, 1,005 women were murdered by their intimate partners; 265 men were murdered by intimate partners, according to the FBI. Just before the passage of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) in 1994, the total was dramatically higher at just over 2,000 victims annually, as reported by the Violence Policy Center using FBI data.

**DV Affects Are Widespread** - The statistics of domestic violence in American society continue to demonstrate the significance and systemic nature of the issue. Victims of domestic violence lose a total of eight million days of paid work each year. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that the cost of domestic violence exceeds \$8.3 billion annually in medical bills and lost work hours. Up to 60 percent of survivors of domestic violence lose their jobs due to reasons stemming from the abuse.

**Murder Rate Drops, but Higher for Black Women** - Domestic violence accounts for 15 percent of all crime. The presence of a gun in a domestic violence situation increases the risk of homicide by 500 percent. Of all of the homicides in which a weapon could be identified, 54

percent of female victims were shot and killed with a gun, according to the Violence Policy Center (VPC). The Violence Policy Center has published data on women murdered by men for 19 years and found that the rate of women murdered by men in single victim/single offender incidents have dropped by 31 percent. Ninety-three percent of women killed by men were murdered by men they knew; 63 percent were wives or other intimate acquaintances of their killers, according to the VPC. Their study also found that black women are disproportionately impacted by fatal domestic violence. In 2014, black females were murdered by men at more than twice the rate for white women murdered by men.

**Still Falling Short** - Progress since VAWA's 1994 adoption has been impressive, but as an indication of how we as a nation are still falling short in protecting violence survivors, the National Network to End Domestic Violence's annual one-day survey in 2015 of 1,752 DV programs found more than 12,000 requests for help had to be turned away because of a lack of staffing and resources. Multiply the 12,000 turned-away requests for help by the number of days in a year and the estimated total of unmet need is over 4.3 million annually! Additionally, national, state, and local hotline staff answered over 21,300 calls in the one-day survey period: the need for daily support is massive.

**Countless Lives Saved** - VAWA has put more police on the street, funded training of law enforcement, established a national hotline to direct survivors to help in their communities, funded more shelters and local hotlines, supported networks to promote education and prevention, funded studies and data collection and underwrote other important services. Federal, state and local funding for – plus private donations – have saved countless lives. But additional funds are needed.

**Better Funding Welcomed** - VAWA programs are at the heart of our nation's response to domestic violence. Each of these programs is critical to ensuring that victims are safe, that offenders are held accountable, and that our communities are more secure. All VAWA programs must be funded - at minimum - at their full authorization levels in order to address the continued epidemic of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking. Increased funding would be wonderful.

**Advocates are Key to Congressional Action** - Reauthorization of the **Violence Against Women Act** (VAWA) is critically important and advocates will soon be working on the next reauthorization effort. If experience is a guide, it could be a tough battle in a Republican-controlled House. Hopefully, the Senate will return to Democratic control and provide the kind of leadership needed to get VAWA reauthorized. Advocates for battered women and their families are essential in getting VAWA reauthorized. Your continued calls and messages to senators and representatives will be needed in the coming 115<sup>th</sup> Congress.

#### **More Information:**

Fact Sheet, The Violence Against Women Act, by the White House, [https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/vawa\\_factsheet.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/vawa_factsheet.pdf)

When Men Murder Women – An Analysis of 2014 Homicide Data, by the Violence Policy Center, <http://www.vpc.org/press/more-than-1600-women-murdered-by-men-in-one-year-new-study-finds-2/>

Domestic Violence Counts 2015 – A 24-Hour Census of Domestic Violence Shelters and

Services by the National Network to End Domestic Violence,  
[http://nnedv.org/downloads/Census/DVCounts2015/DVCounts15\\_NatlReport.compressed.pdf](http://nnedv.org/downloads/Census/DVCounts2015/DVCounts15_NatlReport.compressed.pdf)