

Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Assessment & Response

Success is asking, listening, validating and referring to expert service providers.

Assess ALL patients for abuse:

- Talk with patient alone in a safe and private environment.
- Discuss any reporting requirements prior to inquiring.
- Begin with a simple statement like:
 - “Because we have learned that health is impacted by many things in a person’s life, I routinely ask my patients about their personal relationships...” or
 - “Because violence is so common in many people’s lives, I’ve begun to ask all of my patients about it.”
- Use simple, direct questions such as:
 - What happens when you and your partner have a disagreement?
 - Does your partner control what you do, who you see or talk to, or where you go?
 - Have you ever been hit, hurt, threatened or made to feel afraid by anyone close to you?
 - Have you ever been touched sexually against your will or without your consent?
 - Have you ever been forced or pressured into sexual activities?
 - I’m concerned about your injuries. Has anyone hurt you?

If the patient says NO:

If you or someone you know ever needs information about domestic violence or sexual assault, please contact me and I will give you information about providers who are experts in these areas.

If the patient says YES:

Send important messages to patient:

Do NOT blame or shame the abused person. Patients may not recognize abuse, be self-blaming and/or afraid. Be nonjudgmental and supportive of the patient’s decisions.

- I’m sorry this happened to you
- You are not alone
- This is not your fault
- There is help available
- You do not deserve to be treated this way

Make appropriate referrals:

Dane County Service Providers

Domestic Abuse Intervention Services (DAIS)..... (608) 251-4445
Rape Crisis Center (RCC)..... (608) 251-7273
Meriter Hospital Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Program.. (608) 417-5916

State-wide Information

WI Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WCADV)..... (608) 255-0539
WI Coalition Against Sexual Assault (WCASA)..... (608) 257-1516
UNIDOS Against Domestic Violence (Info for Spanish speakers)... (608) 256-9195

National Hotlines

National Domestic Violence Hotline..... (800) 799-SAFE
Rape and Incest National Network (RAINN)..... (800) 656-HOPE

After giving referrals, ask:

- Is there anything you need right now?
- Would you like to have more information about reporting to law enforcement?
- Are you safe to go home today?

If there is ongoing domestic violence, additional safety questions may be helpful:

- Do you feel you are in danger?
- Have there been threats of homicide/suicide?
- Are there weapons present?
- Do you have family/friends that could be of help?
- Do you need a safe place to stay?

Document:

- Use patient's own words: "Pat began to choke me..."
- Use the abuser's name or relationship to the patient when possible.
- Avoid the term "alleges" – use "states"
- Include excited utterances: "I thought I was going to die"
- Legibly document all injuries – use body map
- Take photographs of injuries with the patient's permission
- Discuss with patient the possible implications of documenting sexual assault.

Reporting by Health Care Provider:

- Whenever possible, competent, adult patients should have control over the decision of whether or not to report.
- Reporting of gunshot wounds or life-threatening injuries is required.
- Reporting of suspected child abuse or neglect is mandatory.

For more information - <http://projects.hsl.wisc.edu/DVSA//>