TYPES AND INDICATORS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE
Kathleen Coulborn Faller

One of the challenges of working with clients whose problems are perceived and defined differently by themselves than by society is that they may not be forthcoming when "helpers" try to help them. This challenge may be present in situations of domestic abuse. Accordingly, helping professionals need to have a good grasp of the spectrum of behaviors included in situations of domestic abuse and indicators of its presence.

Perpetrators of domestic abuse often deny and/or minimize their abusive behavior. Victims may also hide the abuse because of threats related to disclosure, shame associated with the abuse, a belief that it is their fault, or an assumption that it will stop on its own. On the other hand, some assailants do not minimize their behavior because they see nothing out of the ordinary or nothing wrong with their behavior.

Patterns of domestic violence vary in terms of frequency, severity, and contextual dynamics. Some battering is very infrequent. Some is intermittent, or it may be defined as cyclical. Although infrequent, intermittent, or cyclical battering may be associated with stress, being under stress may also be the batterer's excuse for his behavior or a way of deflecting blame onto others or the environment. Moreover, some battering may appear infrequent or intermittent because "only the tip of the ice berg" is known to outsiders and professionals. Some battering is progressive. Sometimes battering gets worse when the woman tries to exert her autonomy or extricate herself from the battering relationship.

Domestic abuse can be categorized as follows: 1. physical abuse, 2. sexual abuse, 3. threats, 4. intimidation, 5. emotional abuse, 6. economic abuse, 7. isolation, 8. minimizing, denying, blaming, 9. using children, and 10. using male privilege (Pence & Paymar, 19). Each of these types of violence has signs and indicators. They are listed below.

1. Physical abuse
    - Threw something *at* her
    - Pushed, grabbed, or shoved her
    - Slapped or spanked her
    - Kicked, bit, or hit her with a fist
    - Hit her with an instrument
    - Beat up or choked her
    - Burned or scalded
    - Threatened her with a gun or knife
    - Used a knife or fired a gun

2. Sexual abuse
    - Forced sex
    - Unwanted sexual practices
    - Forced prostitution
    - Unsafe sex

Uses her in pornography

3. Threats
    - Threatens to kidnap, harm, kill children
    - Threatens to harm or kill family members, pets
    - Threatens to commit suicide
    - Threatens to cause trouble with employer, friends
    - Threatens to turn her in to cps, welfare, court

4. Intimidation
    - Looks, gestures, actions remind of violence potential
    - Smashes things, destroys property
    - Displays weapons
    - Abuses pets
    - Stalks
    - Accuses woman of affairs

5. Emotional abuse
    - Calls woman names
    - Swears at the woman
    - Screams at the woman
    - Treats the woman as an inferior
    - Belittles woman's sexuality
    - Calls woman a bad parent
    - Calls woman a bad wife
    - Makes woman feel she is crazy
    - Calls woman promiscuous

6. Economic abuse
    - Gives woman too little or no money
    - Makes her account for every penny
    - Takes her earnings
    - Makes all family purchases
    - Uses family money on himself

7. Using the children
    - Threatens to seek custody through the domestic relations court
    - Uses children to relay messages
    - Uses visitation to harass
    - Undermines her parenting
    - Manipulates the children
    - Harms the children

8. Isolation
    - Prevents access to family

Prevents access to friends
Prevents woman from working
Prevents her from doing things for herself, e.g. getting an education
Restricts or denies access to car, phone
Is jealous or suspicious of her friends and relationships
Monitors her whereabouts; makes her account for her time

9. Using male privilege
Is the absolute authority at home
Makes all the important family decisions
Expects the woman to wait on him
Defines gender roles, that is what men should do; what women should do

10. Minimizing, denying, blaming
Makes light of the abuse
Says the abuse didn't happen
Blames her for the abuse
Blames woman for his problems
Tells her what she needs to do to keep him from having to abuse her again
Blames her family, the children for the abuse

It is important seek information from a variety of sources, rather than relying on the suspected victim and batterer. Professionals should be alert as they work on cases, to others persons involved and other sources of information about potential domestic violence.

At the same time, professionals should be aware of the potential safety issues for victims, both adults and children. Victims should not be interviewed about possible domestic violence in proximity to the suspected offender. In addition, information from victims should not be employed to confront offenders, unless the victims are or will be in a place of safety.

The following are potential sources to be considered.

Sources of information about domestic abuse:

The woman—In cases in which the woman is describing greater violence than the suspected batterer, it is generally good practice to place greater weight on her accounts.
The batterer
The children
The environment—home. For example, the professional may note that evidence of violent activity, such as hole in the walls, broken furniture, or weapons.
Friends, neighbors, relatives, child care providers
Professionals involved in the family
Law enforcement

Courts
Schools
Social agencies—treatment programs for abuse or substance abuse
Domestic violence shelters or other domestic violence programs