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## **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE – FOLLOW-UP TO THE 2012 CONVENTION PANEL DISCUSSION**

*The document shown below was submitted by Erin Callinan, Training Coordinator, Arizona Coalition Against Domestic Violence who spoke to over 400 delegates and guests at the 2012 Philoptochos Convention as a panelist at the Department of Social Work program on domestic violence.*

*In addition to the suggestions shown below as well as those in the partner document, “What To Say to a Woman You Think is Being Abused,” we recommend that you refer to the Philoptochos manual, “Domestic Violence: Identifying and Responding to Domestic Violence in the Greek Orthodox Community” as a resource. It can be found at:  
[http://philoptochos.org/assets/files/socialservices/factsheets/DVmanual-REV\\_2012.pdf](http://philoptochos.org/assets/files/socialservices/factsheets/DVmanual-REV_2012.pdf).*

### **WHAT TO DO WHEN A WOMAN CONFIDES IN YOU**

When a woman talks to you about her problems with a controlling partner, your reaction is vitally important. Here are some recommendations:

1. **Believe her.** She will not lie about abuse. Many controllers are so charming and gracious to outsiders that what you see of his behavior may deceive you. Even if the incidents she describes seem incredible, listen to her story and respect the way she tells it. Because abuse is so painful to experience, she may recall details slowly and in disjointed fragments. The pieces may not seem to fit together or make much sense. Remember that the violence itself is arbitrary and irrational. So no matter what she tells you believe her and let her know that you do.
2. **Acknowledge and support her for talking to you.** She has taken a risk: her partner could hurt her or you could reject her. Let her know you appreciate what she has done.
3. **Let her know that you consider her feelings reasonable and normal.** It is common for her to feel frightened, confused, angry, sad, guilty, numb, and hopeless.
4. **Let her lead the conversation.** You can ask questions like 'How can I help you?' but don't expect her to have answers the first time she talks. She needs you to be a good listener. And if she asks you to do anything within reason, do it.
5. **If she asks you to do something you can't or don't want to do, say so.** Talk it over with her, and try to find both (a) another way of meeting the particular need she presented, and (b) another thing you can do to help. Be careful not to impose your ideas of help on her.
6. **Tell her you care about her and her safety.** Take her fears seriously. Feel free to express your genuine feelings of concern with statements like 'I think you are in danger.' 'I'm worried about your safety.'

7. **Don't blame her for the abuse.** Let her know that the abuse is not her fault. But remember that her feelings about her partner probably are confused and mixed. If you express too much anger at her partner, she may feel the need to defend him.
8. **Offer your help to find resources in the community for protection, advocacy or support** -- that is if you are actually prepared to follow through. (Don't ever offer things you can't deliver.) If she wants to go to an agency or battered women's program, volunteer to go with her. If she is in immediate danger, call the police. Always encourage her to get more support and information. Give her newspaper articles, books and pamphlets produced by your local shelter for abused women.
9. **Respect her pace and be patient.** No one decides to give up a relationship overnight. She may also face threats and escalating assaults. So help her make plans, but let her make the decisions. As you plan, seek the advice of experts about abuse in your local community.
10. **Remind her of her strengths, accomplishments, and positive attributes.** Avoid treating her like a child or a helpless victim.
11. **Always support her when she acts on her own behalf.**
12. **Remind yourself that many communities still don't protect women's rights.** Don't assume that police, courts, and public agencies will protect and help her. And don't be surprised if she feels safer taking no action. Do not mistake her strategy of doing nothing for passivity or indifference. Instead, find out what help actually is available for her in your community and offer to take her side with agencies, family, and friends. Try to find her a legal advocate from a program for abused women.
13. **With permission of the woman you're trying to help, work on expanding her circle of support.** Find out if there is a support group for abused women at your local shelter or women's center, and encourage her to join. With her permission, enlist other coworkers or friends to help with childcare or go along to court. (You can support one another in your efforts to help the woman in trouble.) The more supporters she has, the stronger she may become.

*Suggestions from 'When Love Goes Wrong', by Ann Jones and Susan Schechter, 1992 Harper Collins, Chapter 13 'For Family, Friends and Helpers'*

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