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FACT SHEET ON INTIMATE PARTNER ABUSE

Intimate partner abuse has been at the forefront of the national news making this an appropriate time for the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society to once again shed light on misperceptions about violence against women.

FACT:

- Nearly 85% of all reported cases of adult intimate partner abuse victims are women.
- Abuse occurs regardless of race, age, ethnicity, religion, education, income, employment, profession, immigration status, marital status, sexual preference or physical ability.
- Men also are victims of domestic violence as are partners in same-sex relationships.
- Many abusers never physically assault their partners. Rather, they engage in a pattern of increasingly coercive behaviors to gain and establish control over their partner. These are just some examples: they isolate her from family and friends; they ridicule how she looks; they embarrass her in front of others; they threaten to take the children away from her; they deny her access to money; they make her afraid and intimidate her by smashing or destroying property.
- Battering frequently begins when a woman first becomes pregnant – a time when she is most vulnerable.
- Abusers deny or make light of the abuse – they describe an incident as a “love pat” when it was a punch or a kick.

FACT:

- Men abuse because they believe they have the right to control their partners.

FACT:

- Many victims blame themselves for the abuse in large part because the abuser tells her that it is her actions and her behaviors that provoke his anger and abuse. But, it is not the victim who is to blame. The ONLY person at fault is the abuser and the ONLY way the abuse will stop is when the abuser takes responsibility for his actions.

FACT:

- Couple counseling should not be recommended in cases of domestic violence – in fact, it can harm the victim as whatever the victim says in session can be used against her once she and her partner go home.

WOMEN STAY OR RETURN TO AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP BECAUSE

- They love their partner – they want the abuse to end, not the relationship.
- They believe their partner when he says he is sorry and will never hurt them again.
- The violence occurs behind closed doors, and as a result, few people believe her since the abuser publicly presents himself as a good partner, a good father and a good provider. Many abusers are active in their church communities.
- They have nowhere to go and fear becoming homeless; if they have children, they fear making their children homeless.
- Cultural traditions teach them to keep secrets; their families expect women to keep their families together.
- If they reveal what is happening, they are afraid they will become the topic of gossip.
- The most dangerous time for the victim is when she tries to leave or shortly after she has left – on average, three women die at the hands of a current or former intimate partner every day.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Believe her! Tell her she is not alone, she is not to blame and she has the right to be safe.
- Don't judge why she is remaining in the relationship based on what you would do.
- Tell her that God is neither punishing her nor “allowing” the abuse to occur.
- Help her develop a personalized safety plan to help her identify her options and commit to a plan to reduce the risk of harm to herself and her children.
- And, to help victims confidentially reach out to local domestic violence programs, post in the women's rooms of your organization the 24 / 7 National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1.800.799.SAFE (7233)

MORE INFORMATION:

The Social Services Department of the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society published a manual entitled, “*Domestic Violence: Identifying and Responding to Domestic Violence in the Greek Orthodox Community*” to raise awareness about this issue and to identify ways that we, as a women's faith-based organization can respond. Download a copy, along with other social service resources at: www.philoptochos.org/socialservices