***Myth #1: “The problem of domestic violence is greatly exaggerated.”***

***“Domestic violence is rare.”***

**Fact:** There are nearly 5.3 million incidents of intimate partner violence each year among U.S. women ages 18 and older. Statistics show that one in four (25%) women in the United States will experience domestic violence in her lifetime. On average, more than three women are murdered by their husband or boyfriend each day.

***Myth #2: Men and women have always fought; it is natural.***

**Fact:** All couples will disagree at one time or another. It is important to remember that anger is a feeling while violence is a behavior. It is possible to be angry without becoming violent. Battering is a crime of power and control. Financial, psychological, emotional and spiritual abuse are also forms of domestic violence predicated on power and control.

***Myth #3: Domestic violence only happens in lower economic classes and minority populations.***

**Fact:** Domestic abuse occurs in families from all social, racial, economic, educational, and religious backgrounds. It occurs in towns, suburbs, rural areas, and the inner city.

***Myth #4: Pregnancy will protect a woman from being abused.***

**Fact:** Between 4-8% of pregnant women are abused at least once during their pregnancy. It is estimated as many as 324,000 women each year experience intimate partner violence during their pregnancy. **There is no subgroup of women immune to the threat of domestic violence.**

***Myth #5: If a person wanted to, they could leave their abusive partner.***

**Fact:** On average, an abused woman leaves her partner 6-8 times. There are many reasons a person stays in an abusive relationship:

• The victim loves the abuser and values his/her good qualities

• The victim is economically dependent on the abuser

• Because the abuser has destroyed the victim’s other relationships, the victim has no other emotional support

• Fear of failure. Culture places significant emphasis on the value of a successful marriage

• Religious beliefs about marriage

• Not wanting to deprive children of their other parent

• With each incident, there is a promise it won’t happen again

• Fear of more violence

***Myth #6: Domestic violence does not affect children since they are not usually aware of the abuse.***

**Fact:** Although many adults believe they have protected their children from exposure to domestic violence, 80-90% of children in those homes can give detailed descriptions of violence experienced in their families. Further, children in homes where domestic violence occurs may experience many effects:

• cognitive or language problems

• developmental delay

• stress-related physical ailments (headaches, ulcers, rashes)

• hearing and speech problems

• difficulty in school • difficulty concentrating

• feelings of shame and guilt

• experience low self esteem5

***Myth #7: Marital rape does not really happen.***

**Fact:** In the U.S. every year, about 1.5 million women are raped or physically assaulted by an intimate partner. This translates into about 47 intimate partner violence assaults per 1,000 women. Additionally, 25% of women have been raped and/or physically assaulted by an intimate partner in their lifetime.

***Myth #8: People who abuse their partners are mentally ill and not responsible for their actions.***

**Fact:** Batterers are not out of control. They use violence as a means to gain and maintain control over their partner and the relationship. Domestic abuse is a crime, and as with all other crimes, the batterer is responsible for his or her behavior and its consequences.

***Myth #9: Alcohol and drug use cause domestic violence.***

**Fact:** There is little evidence to support this theory. It should be noted that many people who abuse their partners report no history of addiction or misuse of alcohol or any other substance. Similarly, many people who do misuse alcohol and other substances do not abuse their partners.

***Myth #10: Women abuse men just as often as men abuse women.***

**Fact:** Studies show that 85% of domestic violence victims are women. In over ¾ of all family violence situations, the perpetrator of the violence was male. Domestic violence is the most common cause of injury to American women between the ages of 15-44.

***Myth #11: Couples counseling is the solution for domestic violence.***

**Fact:** Couples counseling is NOT recommended for couples trying to end the violence in the relationships due to the power and control underlying the violence. It is recommended that abusers attend a certified program for abusers and victims seek assistance from a trained domestic violence counselor.

***Myth#12: Victims of abuse are crazy if they choose to stay in abusive relationship.***

**Fact:** Many survivors do no exhibit behaviors that, to those of us outside the intimate relationship, may seem unusual or even bizarre. It is important to remember that, as an outsider to the abusive relationship, we are not living with the daily threat and fear of abuse or death. What may appear bizarre behaviors are frequently survivals strategies.

***Myth#13: Affluent women do not get battered as frequently as people in lower socio-economic strands.***

**Fact:** Domestic violence occurs in all socio-economic groups. In fact, middle and upper class women often face barriers to get public assistance when they decide to leave because they are above the poverty line. Middle and upper class women also face social stigma from law enforcement, legal professional and judicial personnel.

*References:*

*http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/ipvfacts.htm 2. National Coalition Against Domestic Violence http://www.ncadv.org 3. http://www.endabuse.org/resources/facts/ 4. http://healthyminds.org/factsheets/LTF-Domestic Violence.pdf 5. http://www.letswrap.com/dvinfo/kids.htm 6. http://www.vawnet.org/NRCDVPublications/TAPE/Packets/NRC\_Children.pdf 7. United States Department of Justice http://www.ojp.gov/bjs/abstract/cnh05.htm*