

## Why do people attend domestic violence treatment options?

Some people voluntarily enrol in domestic violence treatment programs or access counselling services to address their abusive behaviours (emotional, verbal, physical and/or sexual). Others seek professional help only after their partner has left, threatened to leave or obtained a protection order against them. In other cases, people are expected to attend domestic violence treatment as a requirement of the Domestic Violence Treatment Option Court.

## Can my partner change?

Change is possible. However, progress will happen only when the person acting abusive recognizes their behaviour as such and accepts full responsibility. The choice to change is theirs alone!

Change is a gradual and lifelong process; it takes a long-term commitment and hard work. Some individuals choose to drop out before completion; others do not participate to the extent necessary for real change to occur. While long-term improvement is more likely for those who complete treatment, some continue to be violent and controlling.

## Does being sorry mean change will occur?

It is common for people who are abusive to be sorry after an incident. Abuse generally occurs as a cycle where increased tension leads to a violent/abusive incident that is followed by a period of remorse. Apologies may be sincere, but they are not enough to change behaviour. Your partner will need to commit to and develop an action plan to change.

## Does drinking or taking drugs cause abusive behaviour?

Alcohol and other drugs do not cause people to be violent or abusive. Those who are violent and also misuse alcohol or other drugs, have two separate problems to take care of.

## Will couples' counselling work?

Couples' counselling implies shared responsibility for the abuse. Abuse is an individual problem, not a relationship problem. Sometimes couples' counselling can be misused to avoid taking personal responsibility for abusive behaviour. It is important that people take responsibility and work on their own behaviours before couples' counselling is appropriate. Victims must feel completely safe to share in counselling without fear of being punished or abused.

## What about "anger management"?

Abusive behaviour is not only about problematic anger. It is about a person's desire to control their partner by using whatever behaviours are necessary. An anger management program alone is not an appropriate alternative to domestic violence treatment.

When your partner is under a protective court order, any form of contact with you is a breach and is against the law.



## What happens during domestic violence/abuse treatment?

Domestic violence treatment programs use a variety of ways to help people recognize and change violent, abusive and controlling behaviour. During the program, your partner will typically be required to attend weekly group sessions. The sessions are generally 2 to 2-1/2 hours in length. During treatment, people are expected to focus on their use of violence and abuse and to take responsibility for their abuse.

Do not feel pressured to stay with your partner while they attend treatment. If someone is serious about changing, they will respect your right to make your own choices about the relationship.

## What are the goals of domestic violence/abuse treatment?

The main goals of domestic violence treatment are to increase your partner's:

- Motivation to change.
- Acceptance of responsibility for their abuse.
- Self-awareness and knowledge of abuse.
- Understanding of the thoughts/beliefs that contribute to abuse.
- Awareness of the impact of their abuse.
- Ability to change their abusive behaviour and problem thinking patterns.
- Ability to identify high risk situations and to manage these non-abusively in the future.

## Does Treatment Guarantee Change?

It is important to understand that attending and completing a domestic violence treatment program does not guarantee that your partner will be non-violent in the future. Domestic violence programs can only offer people the opportunity to take ownership of their behaviour and learn new and more responsible ways of behaving. Changing problem thinking and abusive behaviour patterns takes time, and your partner will need to continue working on these issues long after completing treatment.

## What is my partner's role in treatment?

It is your partner's responsibility to attend treatment regularly and to meet the requirements of the program, regardless of whether you stay in the relationship or not.

## What is my role?

For your safety and the safety of your children, your message to your partner must be that you will not tolerate mistreatment. The decision to leave or stay is yours. It is important to make the physical safety and emotional wellbeing of you and your children a priority. Regardless of whether your partner is working towards change or not, taking care of your own needs and those of your children will help you build a better future. Your local domestic violence or victim services program will be able to help you with information, support, referrals, accompaniment and advocacy.

## Abusive Relationship

**Physical Abuse:** Punches, strangles, kicks, bites, restrains, uses weapons, pushes, slaps, grabs, pulls hair, hits, trips, twists arms, throws objects, or uses any other form of unwanted physical contact or force

**Sexual Abuse:** Forces you to participate in any unwanted, degrading or unsafe sexual activity, physically attacks sexual parts of your body, treats you like a sex object, sexually exploits you.

**Intimidation:** Charming in public and menacing in private, makes light of the abuse/violence, puts you in fear by using looks, actions, gestures, loud voice, smashing things, destroying your property or pets.

**Entitlement:** Makes all the decisions, acts like the “boss” of the household, expects obedience.

**Control:** Calls you names, plays mind games, isolates you from friends, work and loved ones, dictates what you do, who you see and talk to and where you go.

**Emotional Manipulation:** Blames you or others, uses jealousy, passion, stress and frustration to justify inappropriate behaviours and actions, makes and/or carries out threats to do something to hurt you or a loved one emotionally, threatens suicide.

**Economic Control:** Tries to keep you from getting or keeping a job, makes you ask for money, gives you an allowance, takes your money.

**Using Children:** Makes you feel guilty about the children, uses the children to give messages, uses visitation to harass you, threatens to take the children and/or report you to Child Protection.

**Stalking:** Follows you, spies on you, calls or leaves messages repeatedly, discloses damaging or embarrassing personal information about you, any actions that control, track or frighten you.

## Non-Abusive Relationship

**Physical Safety:** Respects your physical space, cares about your physical wellbeing and expresses self in a non-violent manner.

**Sexual Respect:** Accepts that “no means no,” shares responsibility for both partners’ sexual and reproductive health, sees sexual relations as mutual and consensual.

**Respect:** Respects your right to differing feelings, friends and activities, listens to you non-judgementally, is emotionally affirming and understanding and values your opinions.

**Partnership:** Makes decisions jointly, shares household responsibilities.

**Support and Trust:** Listens and understands you, values your opinions, supports your goals in life, respects your right to your own feelings, friends, activities and beliefs.

**Emotional Honesty:** Feels safe to admit and share fears and insecurities, does not try to manipulate conversations to suit their own needs.

**Economic Partnership:** Makes decisions about money together, makes sure that both partners benefit from financial arrangements.

**Responsible Parenting:** Shares parental responsibilities, acts as a positive, non-violent role model for the children, teaches the children to respect both parents.

**Non-harrassing:** Respects your privacy, accepts time you spend alone or with others, acknowledges your individuality and need for independence.

## Support and Options for Victims

You will be contacted by a domestic violence or victim services worker and offered information and support services. Whether you intend to use them or not, we recommend that you learn about your options and the resources available to you.

**Safety is important.** Even if you do not think it will be necessary, plan various safe places you may go if you have to leave home quickly. Talk to your children and have a safety plan for them as well. Under no circumstance should your children place themselves in danger by trying to protect you. You can ask your domestic violence worker for information and resources to assist you with your safety plan.

Your partner may already be subject to a protection order. If not and you are afraid, you may obtain an order that will require your partner to stay away from you, your home (regardless of ownership) and your places of education and work. A domestic violence worker can assist you with this. It is important to notify the police if your partner disobeys it. Not reporting a breach will leave your partner believing you are not serious about wanting the abuse to stop.

A life free of violence is one of the greatest gifts you will give yourself and your children.

## What about the children?

Experiencing and/or witnessing abuse or violence will affect the emotional wellbeing of your children. Although they are often silent victims, almost all children know the abuse is going on. They need an opportunity to safely talk about their feelings. Find support for your children as soon as possible.

# Regina Domestic Violence Treatment Option Court Information and Services for Victims of Domestic Violence

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## Important Numbers

Family Service Regina  
Domestic Violence Unit .....757-6675  
Regina RCMP Victim Services.....780-6694  
YWCA: Children Who Have  
Witnessed Violence ..... 525-2141  
Regina Mental Health  
Alternatives to Violence.....766-7800  
Regina Police Service.....777-6500  
Regina RCMP Detachment.....780-5560  
Mobile Crisis Services.....757-0127

