



# How to support a woman experiencing domestic violence

**TACTICS**

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### 1 Enabling dialogue

#### Building trust

When a survivor of domestic violence enters the police office, treat her with **respect and empathy**, bearing in mind that she may be in post-traumatic shock.

Use statements such as:

We are here  
to support you.

I'm worried about you,  
can you give me a little  
more detail about what  
happened?

If possible, a **female police officer** should be assigned to cases of domestic violence, preferably in civil clothing.

#### Providing safe spaces

Provide a safe space, where she can **speak privately and freely**.

Ensure that the survivor is interviewed separately from the perpetrator and without them being able to see each other.

If the survivor is accompanied by another person, offer that she can remain accompanied by them if she wants.

Offer a separate, safe room **if children are present**. If children are being interviewed, the mother should be present, and the police officer trained in interviewing minors.

## ✓ Facilitating communication

Allow **sufficient time** for the woman to explain her version of what happened including the current violent event, but also any other info they may want to share.

Listen to the woman without interrupting, giving your opinion, or any judgement, and tell her:

I am listening to you, I will not judge you.

Show that you are **actively listening** to victims through your facial expressions, body language, and comments such as

Take your time; I'm listening.

We can take a break if you like.

Double check to ensure you understand correctly the victim's statements. Repeat or rephrase what you think you heard the victims say. For example,

So, as I understand it, ...  
Is this correct?

Let's see if I understood you correctly. Did you say...?

Address the issue of violence openly and **encourage them** to share what happened through open questions.

Ask survivors about any specific needs or concerns they have.

## ✓ Informing on what's next

Explain that the **role of the police** is to provide an initial response and that victim services can provide specialised support.

Inform her of the availability of domestic violence **services in the area** who can provide support.

Explain to her what will and can happen next. Respond to any question and request of **clarification** she may have.

## 2 Assessing the risk

Always perform a **risk assessment** when a survivor comes to the police.

A new risk assessment may have to be carried out in case the survivor returns to the police after another **event of domestic violence**.

Inform the survivor what the risk assessment is for, which is to identify risk factors that determine the level of risk she is in, to ensure she receives the support needed for her **safety and protection**.

When conducting the risk assessment, try to be as accurate to the survivors' statements as possible, letting her tell **her story** without interrupting her and without making judgements or suggestions.

If the tool in use allows, gather information on risk factors of the **perpetrator** (escalation of violence, change in circumstance, presence of weapon/alcohol/substance misuse).

Take into account the victim's own assessment of her safety and **her perception** of being in danger as much as possible.

## 3 Reporting the abuse

Explain how filing a report works and the **effects** and possible results of it.

Assist the survivor to **prepare** the report, give the woman sufficient time, and help structure the complaint effectively.

Ask objective questions and **avoid judgement**. Do not question the facts reported or blame her for her delay in reporting.

Explain what works as evidence and **collect evidence**.

Ask the women to read the report and support her to **review it** before signing it in order for the report to be valid for legal purposes.

Explain officers' **duty to report** in cases where domestic violence is suspected, even if the victim chooses not to report.

Make sure to gather information about the history and context of the violence.

# 4

## ✓ After reporting

Explain clearly to the survivor what happens next, including any further police and judicial **proceedings** and any restraining order toward the perpetrator and how he will be notified.

The woman must be informed in detail about what **protection measures** she will receive, how often and for how long.

Inform the victim about any medical forensic examinations she may be asked to undergo and the importance of gathering this **documentation** for law enforcement.

Give the victim in writing the name and **contact information** of a police officer she may call in case of repeated violence. Encourage her to contact this officer if she has any questions or requires further help, when she is in a safe place away from the perpetrator. As far as possible, let the police officer be the one who took the complaint.

In the first follow-up contact with the victim, **repeat** the information already given to her.

# 5

## ✓ Referral to other agencies

Provide an **updated list of resources** available for victims of domestic violence, including public and non public services, in paper form if this is safe for her to keep. As well as delivering the list, explain it.

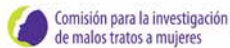
If the woman has children under the age of 18, make sure the list includes resources for them, and contact child services if necessary.

Be proactive in referral. In addition to providing a list of services, ask the survivor if you can contact the victim support service on her behalf. If she agrees, **make contact** with national or regional services to effectively and safely refer the victim to specialised support services.



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[work-with-perpetrators.eu/tactics](http://work-with-perpetrators.eu/tactics)



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