Helping Yourself or Someone Else In an Abusive Situation

**IF YOU ARE THE VICTIM/SURVIVOR:**
You can protect your safety by:

- Telling trusted friends, family members, and neighbors what is going on.
- Contacting a counselor or other resource to learn about your options
- Making a Personal Safety Plan in case you have to leave quickly:
  - Use your knowledge of the abuser’s actions and behaviors to plan ahead.
  - Teach your children how to call 9-1-1.
  - Arrange to have a safe place to go to. A domestic violence shelter is one option. Ideally a safe place is one that your abusive partner doesn't know about.
  - Prepare a bag of clothing, medications, and other essentials for yourself and your children to use if you have to leave quickly. Hide the bag where you can get to it in a hurry.
  - Make several copies of your important papers and keep one set in the bag (other copies could go to trusted friends or family). You may need things such as your identification, birth certificates, financial and insurance information, social security cards, any court Order for Protection. Keep your address and appointment books with you.
  - If you have a car, make an extra set of keys and hide them where you can get to them if you need to. You could hide them on the car; a magnetic key holder is one way to do that.
  - During an incident of abuse or violence, get out if you can. Call 9-1-1 for the police, if you feel it is safe. If you cannot get out, stay away from the kitchen, bathroom, garage, or other potentially dangerous rooms. Call for help; if neighbors hear, they may call 9-1-1.
  - If your abusive partner has left the home, you might change the locks and the phone number and you might need to reinforce doors and windows. Have a plan in case you encounter your abuser.
  - Considering obtaining a restraining order to protect yourself.

**IF YOU ARE THE FRIEND OF SOMEONE BEING ABUSED:**
- If someone discloses or you suspect that he/she is being abused, don't be afraid to privately express your concern and offer to help.
- Believe their experience - don't minimize it. Even if the abuser seems nice, even if the abuser is also your friend. Don't give up or criticize them.
- Possible ways to help include:
  - locating resources,
  - encouraging safety planning,
  - respecting confidentiality,
  - being there to listen.
- Understand that leaving an abusive relationship is difficult. Allow him or her to make his/her own decisions and to take back control of his/her life at his or her own pace. Let your friend know that you will be there regardless.
- Offer him or her a place to stay.
- Refer him or her to sources of support.

**IF YOU ARE THE FRIEND OF SOMEONE WHO IS ABUSIVE:**
- If someone you know is being abusive, tell them that violence and abuse are unacceptable.
- Encourage and support them in getting help to stop the violent behavior.
- Hold them accountable for their actions and the need to change.