

## Domestic Violence Month

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October is “Domestic Violence Awareness Month”. Scarborough Police Department joins Family Crisis Services in bringing awareness to this crime, a serious public health problem. Domestic Violence negatively effects women, men, and children in every socioeconomic class and every age group. Scarborough is not immune to this problem.

Domestic violence may include verbal, emotional, economic, physical and sexual abuse. All forms of domestic abuse have one purpose: to gain and maintain control over the victim. Abusers use many tactics to exert power over their spouse or partner: dominance, humiliation, isolation, threats, intimidation, denial and blame.

In 2018 we had 55 reports of Domestic Violence. In a town of approx. 20,000 people we believe Domestic Violence continues to be grossly underreported. In the United States 10–35% of the population will be physically aggressive towards a partner at some point in their lives. According to studies, less than 1% of Domestic Violence cases are reported to the police.

Abuse can happen to any individual, as 1 in 4 women have been the victim of severe physical violence by an intimate partner and 1 in 7 men have experienced the same. When you stop and think about the reasons these crimes go unreported it makes sense. Perhaps the victim is worried about where they will go if they leave their partner, and what will happen to their children. Maybe the financial strain will be too much and they don't think it's possible to leave. Maybe they think if they love the person more, or change their own behaviors they can stop the abuse. Or maybe, and this is a strong maybe, it's the shame. Let's be clear – it is NEVER the victim's fault. It is the abuser, male or female, who makes the conscious choice to abuse, to overpower, to control, and to humiliate. As a society there is a lot of victim-blaming surrounding Domestic Abuse. Each of us can make the decision to stop this behavior.

Domestic Violence is not a private matter, it is a community issue, a moral issue, and above all a crime. A crime as serious as any other violent crime. It is not something to make excuses for or downplay, whether you are directly involved or not. By failing to speak out against this crime, we condone it. By minimizing it, we give violent men and women social permission to continue their abuse.

If you are in an abusive relationship there are ways out. Reach out to your local police department for help and advice. If you are a resident of Cumberland County you can also reach out to “Through These Doors” at 1-800-537-6066. If you are looking for a way to help, “Through These Doors” collects no-longer used wireless phones, batteries, chargers and accessories from any service provider to benefit survivors of domestic violence. These can be lifelines for survivors who have left abusive relationships and no longer have their old mobile device. If you are not a resident of Cumberland County you can call the Statewide Domestic Abuse Hotline at 1-866-834-HELP to find local support.

During the month of October we ask that everyone join us in remembering all those lost to Domestic Violence murders, to do what you can to raise awareness, and show those still being victimized that they do not have to suffer alone. We will continue to do what we can to move beyond awareness and into taking action to end domestic abuse.

We take action because every human deserves safety in their relationships. Why will you?