

Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence
ACTION

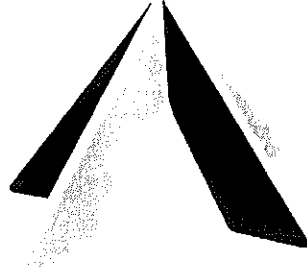
Definition of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is a pattern of coercive behaviors that may include, but are not limited to physical assaults, threats, intimidation, sexual manipulation and control over economic resources. This pattern of behaviors is used by one party in a family or relationship to maintain power over another individual in the family or relationship.

While any individual can engage in violent, controlling behaviors, the victims of domestic violence have in common that they are members of groups that are oppressed in our culture. These groups have limited access to resources and power in the family, and in the community. They include women, children, lesbians and gays, the differently abled and the elderly.

The oppressions that exist in our larger society create a context for devaluing groups and individuals. Historically, violence against these groups has been sanctioned, and even encouraged. Domestic violence exists because for years the attitudes, institutions and laws of our country supported that violence as a normal and even necessary behavior. Ending domestic violence will require changing those attitudes, institutions and laws. It will also require the elimination of oppression as a part of our culture.

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As a part of the development of the Sexual Violence Training for Trainers, an ad hoc committee of 15 advocates and allied professionals worked together to develop a definition of sexual violence.

The definition is as follows:

Sexual Violence is conduct of a sexual nature which is non-consensual, and is accomplished through force, threat, coercion, exploitation, deceit, force, physical or mental incapacitation, and/or power of authority.