

Dear friend,



Thank you for requesting the *Health Cares About Domestic Violence Day* Organizing Packet. *Health Cares About Domestic Violence Day* is an annual event organized by the Family Violence Prevention Fund that takes place on the **second Wednesday in October**. This nationally recognized day involves thousands of health care providers, domestic violence advocates and other concerned individuals who organize events in their settings to strengthen the health care response to domestic violence.

Domestic Violence is a problem of epidemic proportions in this country. Nearly one third of American women (31 percent) report being physically or sexually abused by a husband or boyfriend at some point in their lives. The rates of abuse among adolescents and within lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender communities are also staggering. Because victims of domestic violence interact with the health care system when seeking routine or emergency care, health care providers are in a unique position to identify and assist victims, but only if they know how to properly screen their patients for abuse.

The immediate health consequences of domestic violence can be severe and sometimes fatal. In addition, new research also links a history of victimization to long term chronic and behavioral health risks. *Healthy People 2010*, a prevention agenda for the nation developed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, identifies ten leading health indicators to measure the health and well-being of Americans. Eight out of ten of these – including access to health care, responsible sexual behavior and substance abuse – have been directly correlated with domestic violence. So this year, our *Health Cares About Domestic Violence Day* materials underscore the serious immediate and long term health consequences of domestic violence and the importance of routine screening for abuse in health care settings.

The packet provides strategies to strengthen health care responses to violence. Use the information in this packet to:

- Contact your elected representatives and get involved in domestic violence health policy.
- Copy the consensus guidelines on routine screening and distribute them to the different departments in your health facility.
- Begin advertising your health setting as a safe place for victims of domestic violence by hanging posters in exam rooms, stocking safety cards in bathrooms and distributing buttons to staff.

Domestic violence is a health care issue, and routine screening for abuse can be a life-saving intervention. Thank you for your willingness to involve yourself in this critical issue.

Sincerely,

Esta Soler,  
President

end abuse

FAMILY VIOLENCE  
PREVENTION FUND

100% PCW