

Pastoral Care Guidelines in Response to Abusers

Goals for intervention:

- **SAFETY** for survivor & children
- **ACCOUNTABILITY** for the abuser
- **RESTORATION** of individuals and, **WHEN APPROPRIATE, relationships**
OR
- **MOURNING** loss of the relationships.

Do's and Don'ts for working with an abusive partner:

- If he has been arrested, **DO** approach him and express your concern and support for him to be accountable and to deal with his violence.
- **DON'T** meet with him alone and in private. Meet in a public place or in the church with several other people around.
- **DON'T** approach him or let him know that you know about his violence unless a) you have the survivor's permission, b) she is aware that you plan to talk to him and c) you are certain that she is safely separated from him.
- If the survivor has separated from him, stress the importance of his respecting her decision and observing any no-contact orders.
- **DO** address any religious rationalizations he may offer or questions he may have. **DON'T** allow him to use religious excuses for his behavior.
- **DO** name the violence as his problem, not hers. Tell him that only he can stop it, and that you are willing to help.
- **DO** refer to a state-certified domestic violence perpetrator intervention program.
- **DO** assess him for suicide or threats of homicide. **DO** warn the survivor if he makes specific threats towards her.
- **DON'T** pursue couples' counseling with him and his partner.
- **DON'T** go to him to confirm the survivor's story.
- **DON'T** give him any information about his partner or her whereabouts.
- **DON'T** be taken in by his minimization, denial or lying about his violence.

- DON'T confuse his remorse with true repentance. DON'T forgive him quickly or easily. Doing so could endanger her and the children and keep him from facing what he has to face and doing the hard work he has to do to become a person of integrity again.
- DON'T accept his blaming her or other rationalizations for his behavior.
- DON'T be taken in by his "conversion" experience. If it is genuine, it will be a tremendous resource as he proceeds with accountability. If it is phony, it is only another way to manipulate you and the system and maintain control of the process to avoid accountability.
- DON'T advocate for the abuser to avoid the legal consequences of his violence. DON'T provide a character witness for this purpose in any legal proceedings.
- DON'T send him home with just a prayer. Work with others in the community to hold him accountable.
- DO pray with him. Ask God to help him stop his violence, repent and find a new way. DO assure him of your support in this endeavor.
- DO find ways to collaborate with community agencies and law enforcement to hold him accountable. For information addressing religion and abuse, refer to www.faithtrustinstitute.org or contact FaithTrust Institute at (206) 634-1903.