

INTERVIEWING: QUESTIONS TO ASK WOMEN WHEN YOU SUSPECT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

When interviewing, remember these tips:

- Interview her alone
- Ask open-ended questions
- Be non-judgmental
- Be careful not to put down the abuser's character; address the behavior
- Match your physical level with hers. . . don't stand over her
- Avoid lingo
- Be supportive

Here are some examples of supportive things you can say:

1. I believe you.
2. No one deserves to be hurt.
3. I'm afraid for you or your children's safety. (Never tell her she should leave - it may not be safe to leave)
4. It is not your fault.
5. I'm here for you.

Here are some beginning questions:

- Tell me about your relationship.
- How do decisions get made in your relationship?
- If your partner disagrees with how you feel, think, or believe, what happens?
- If you partner gets jealous or possessive, what does he do?
- Have you ever felt afraid of your partner? If so, in what ways? When?
- Has your partner ever physically used force on you (e.g. pushed, pulled, slapped, grabbed, held you down, punched or kicked you?) If so, what happened? When?
- Have you ever been afraid for the safety of your children? If so, what happened? When?

The following questions will help us identify the offender's controlling behavior and the amount of freedom the woman has to act independently.

Has your partner. . .

- Prevented you from going to work, school or your religious organization? Time you when you went out on errands?
- Has your partner ever gone to your work? How did this make you feel?
- Checked the odometer on your car?
- Stolen your money?

The following questions will help you identify patterns of verbal, emotional, physical and sexual abuse.

Has your partner. . .

- Put you down? Blamed you for his behavior?
- Called you degrading names?
- Threatened to injure you, himself, your children or other family members?
- Hit, slapped, kicked, strangled or burned you?
- Forced you to perform sexual acts that made you uncomfortable?

The next group of questions will help you assess the level of risk to the children.

Has your partner. . .

- Threatened to take the children from you? Called or threatened to call SCF?
- Accused you of being an unfit parent?
- Hurt you in front of the children?
- Attempted to be sexual with you in front of the children?

Has your child. . .

- Overheard the yelling and/or violence?
- Behaved in ways that reminded you of your partner?
- Tried to stop the violence?
- Hurt him/herself?

This section of questions will help you understand the woman's history of seeking help:

Have you. . .

- Told anyone about the abuse? What happened?
- Seen a counselor? What happened?
- Left home as a result of the abuse? Where did you go? Did you take the children? If not, what happened?
- Called the police? What happened?

General Questions:

1. How dangerous do you think your partner is?
2. What do you think he is capable of?
3. Do you have any current injuries or health problems? If so, have you seen a doctor, or do you need to see one?
4. How has your relationship affected how you feel about yourself, your children and the future?
5. How do you explain the violence to yourself?
6. How do you believe the children understand the violence?
7. What do you believe would keep you and your children safe?

REMEMBER, SAFETY ALWAYS COMES FIRST!