

Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women

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When A Tenant Is A Battered Woman

Site managers of public and private housing face a variety of situations when a tenant, who is a battered woman, is threatened or assaulted within the housing site by an abuser. It is easy to blame the battered woman for these troubles, but stopping the epidemic of domestic violence in our community requires a response that holds the batterer accountable for his use of violence. Housing managers can play an important role in supporting a woman's escape from a violent partner by following these reminders.

1. **Keep the safety of a battered woman and her children utmost in your mind.** Each year in Minnesota, an average of 20 women are murdered as a result of domestic violence. Thousands of others are severely injured.
2. **Refrain from judging a battered woman's behavior.** Battered women are forced to use various survival techniques, which are often judged by others in a victim-blaming manner. **Keep your focus on the behavior of the abuser.**
3. **Domestic violence is a crime.** Call the police and provide witness information when officers arrive. Minnesota state law *allows* officers to make a probable cause arrest for fifth degree assault up to four hours after the assault occurred, even if they did not witness the assault. If you are not satisfied with a police officer's response, call a supervisor.
4. **An Order for Protection (OFP)** is a civil remedy providing a court order from judge that controls the behavior of the abuser, not the battered woman. An OFP may order various forms of relief, including:
 - Restraining an abuser from committing further acts or threats of abuse; and
 - Excluding an abuser from the dwelling that the partners shared or from the victim's residence.
5. **Violation of an OFP is a misdemeanor and requires mandatory arrest.** (Even if the battered woman admits the abuser to the dwelling, **it is the abuser** who is in violation of the OFP.) Call the police and provide witness information when officers arrive.
6. **Know about community resources** to help battered woman and make referrals when needed. Battered women's programs can provide resources or cards for you to keep handy.
7. **Assist battered women with a protection plan** by agreeing that a certain signal from her means you should call police. Help to change locks and repair any doors or windows broken by an abuser. Allow flexibility if possible by moving her to another apartment, floor, or location.
8. **If an abuser is living in a unit** in violation of a woman's lease, understand that this may be happening against her will. Provide her adequate warning of the violation and offer assistance in getting the abuser removed. Warn women that an eviction can greatly jeopardize any future chance of obtaining housing. Use eviction only as a last resort.

Local battered women's program _____ Phone _____