





**Do not hesitate to phone the police in an emergency:
Tel: 117 or 112.**



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In Cooperation with Representatives of
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Intervention Projects and Services against
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Stop! Domestic violence

Domestic violence is a crime.

If someone is hurting his or her partner at home, he or she¹ is committing a crime and can be prosecuted.

If you call the police, they will intervene.

They will act on behalf of the authorities to protect the victim, and may arrest the abuser and file charges.

This brochure shows how the police respond to reported domestic violence and what the victim, the abuser, family, friends and neighbours can do.

Footnotes

¹ This brochure often uses as an example the most commonly reported type of situation, that of a woman affected by the violence of a male partner. However, domestic violence can be experienced by anyone, male or female, adults or children, elderly or handicapped people, and the information in the brochure is for all.

What is domestic violence?

Crimes are described as domestic violence when they happen between people who are close to each other, e.g. couples who are married or live together and families, and also couples and families who have broken up.

It can be:

- Psychological abuse
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Financial /economic abuse

Here are a few examples of abusive behaviour which are against the law in Switzerland:

- Hitting you or others in your family
- Locking you up
- Insulting you, threatening you, threats involving a weapon
- Using a weapon
- Sexual harassment, rape

Domestic violence may also include the following behaviours:

- Neglect
- Withholding money
- Bullying
- Controlling you to an extreme
- Isolating you, forbidding you to have contact with others





Are you affected by the violence of someone close to you?

Break your silence

Are you afraid? Isolated or lonely? Do you feel ashamed?

It is important to know that many victims feel this way.

These are absolutely normal reactions in your situation.

What is not normal is the situation you are living in.

There is no reason to justify the violence. You are worthy of being loved and respected.

Our law does not tolerate such violence under any circumstances. You have rights which you can make use of.

Do not hesitate any longer. Break your silence and get help.

Are you affected by the violence of someone close to you?

What can I do if I am in danger?

- Call the police if you feel you are in danger. Tel: 117 or 112.
- Talk to your children and tell them what you want them to do in an emergency. Tell them they can also phone the police.
- File charges (“Strafanzeige”) against the violent person.
- Contact one of the agencies listed on page 13 if you need to talk, wish to know your legal rights, or get psychological or material support. See also the overview in the internet under www.verbrechenspraevention.ch and www.frauenhaus-schweiz.ch and www.sodk-cdas-cdos.ch.
- File for an Order for Protection (“Schutzverfügung”). For example, the court can make over your house or apartment to you, give you custody of your children and define the monthly payments to be made by your partner.
- Take your personal belongings to a safe place, in particular your identity card, bank cards, residence permit, but also other items which are of personal importance to you.
- If you want to leave your home, prepare well for your departure. Pack a bag with everything you need. Work out in advance where you can go at short notice.



What will happen if I call the police?

- They will come to the house and separate you and the abuser.
- They will ask you in separate interviews to tell them what happened. If possible, a female officer will speak to a female victim.
- They will speak to your children, taking their age into account in the way they approach them and inform them.
- They check whether something has happened which is against the law.
- If you or any others are hurt, you should show the officer any bruises, marks, cuts or other injuries. If necessary, they will take you to a doctor or hospital.
- The police will inform you about possible legal action.
- They will either provide you with contact details of a victim support helpline or a women’s refuge or will provide direct contact with one of these agencies.

There are often particular measures in place to protect foreigners. Legal proceedings or a separation can affect your residence rights, work permit, etc. Ask the residents’ registration office (Einwohnerdienst) which measures exist in your canton.



Are you affected by the violence of someone close to you?



What will happen to the abuser?

- The police will prevent the abuser from committing further acts of violence and will conduct an investigation.
- They will secure any evidence and take statements from witnesses.
- They pass on the charges to the authorities for investigation ("Untersuchungsbehörden").
- They may arrest the abuser and file charges against him. In some cantons there is also a "Wegweisungsrecht", a law which will forbid him to go near your home.
- They can also provide addresses of agencies to help your partner.

Information, help and counselling

In many cantons there are advisory centres and agencies which can help you in cases of domestic violence.

- Women's refuges ("Frauenhaus")
- Emergency telephone help lines ("Nottelefon")
- Counselling/advisory services ("Beratungsstelle") specialised in helping victims of abuse, women, immigrants and violent men

You can also phone the helpline 143 ("Die Dargebotene Hand") to talk about the problem anonymously.

Most consultations are free of charge. All information you give will remain confidential. Further steps will only be taken if you agree to them.

You will find information about the services available in your canton on the website www.verbrechenspraevention.ch. You can also download this brochure from the website in pdf format.

**Do not hesitate to phone the police in an emergency:
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Have you ever hit someone who is close to you?

Break the vicious circle

Are you afraid of losing the person you are attacking and so you try to use force to make him or her stay with you? You don't want to be like this, but it "just happens". Sounds familiar? There is no excuse for violence – not even on your home territory. You can be prosecuted for what you are doing. Only you can bring an end to this vicious circle. Get help – before it is too late.

What can I do if I am violent?

- Contact a help agency for violent men. You will find a list on the website www.verbrechenspraevention.ch.
- Speak to someone you trust about your feelings. Observe how others deal with pressure and anger.
- Work out what you plan to do the next time you feel powerless or are tempted to get aggressive.
- It is helpful to withdraw from potential conflict and stress situations. Go out of the house, if you notice "it" is starting. Take a walk or talk to a friend.
- Seek help from your doctor, a psychotherapist or counsellor, or contact a help agency. Perhaps there is a social counsellor at work with whom you can talk about the problem.

Taking responsibility

People who are violent are driven by the compulsion to hit out, as a reaction to undesirable feelings like anger, fear and powerlessness. They may try to repress these feelings but find they keep breaking out again. Perhaps they blame their situation or someone else for their feelings. They do not want to accept that they themselves are fully responsible for how they react in situations they find difficult. But there is no excuse for violence – not even in the privacy of one's own home.





What can you do if you suspect violence is going on?

Guidelines for family, friends and neighbours

Do you hear cries for help or notice other indications of abuse?

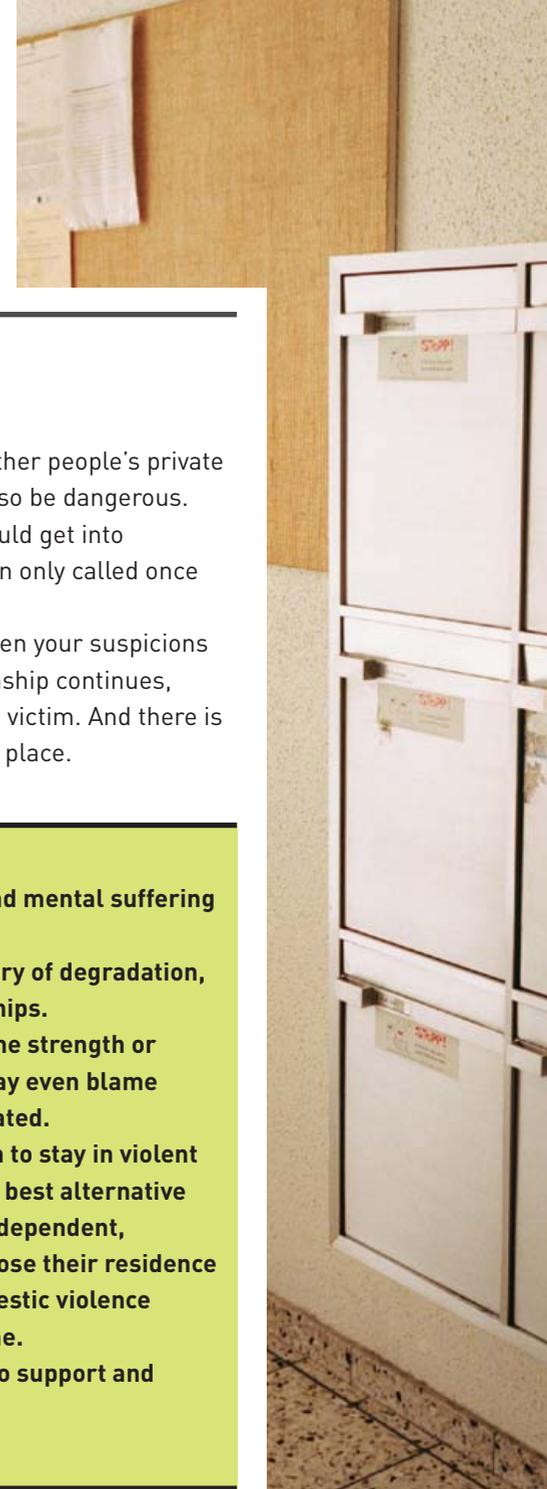
Check with other neighbours or family members as to whether they have also noticed something or have even taken action. The most important thing is that you act.

Timely action can save lives. You do not have to intervene directly. And you do not have to act alone.

What can you do if you suspect violence is going on?

What should I do if I suspect violence is going on?

- In emergencies, phone the police. Do not put yourself at risk by intervening.
- Speak to the victim alone. Show understanding and sympathy. Take her comments seriously.
- Tell the victim that domestic violence is a crime, not a private problem. Point out that there is a law in Switzerland which protects all victims.
- Offer personal help (listening, somewhere to escape to in an emergency). But be patient if your offers of help are initially refused.
- Get hold of information about local agencies which support victims and give this to the person.
It is important that you recognise your limits and do not feel you have to solve the problem for them.
- If you know the violent person well, question his behaviour without judging. Tell him about the help which is available.



When should I take action?

It takes a lot of courage to get involved in other people's private lives. Where violence is concerned it can also be dangerous. Many people fear that as witnesses they could get into trouble. Because of this, the police are often only called once the victim has been seriously injured. However it is important to react earlier, when your suspicions are aroused. The longer the violent relationship continues, the greater the damage to the health of the victim. And there is increased danger of a serious crime taking place.

Understanding the victim

Domestic violence causes both physical and mental suffering to those affected by it.

Many victims can look back on a long history of degradation, oppression and violence in their relationships.

Their self-esteem is damaged, they lose the strength or courage to defend themselves and they may even blame themselves for the way they are being treated.

There are also obvious reasons for women to stay in violent relationships. They may believe this is the best alternative for their children, they may be financially dependent, or as foreigners they could fear they will lose their residence permit. For these reasons, victims of domestic violence may react quite differently than we imagine.

What such people need most is someone to support and understand them.



Background information for the community

Changing attitudes

Family life is not always idyllic. Living with others can easily cause conflicts. Reports of domestic violence have recently increased. Does this mean there is suddenly more violence among people who are close to each other? No. As women's refuges and counselling agencies have reported over the years, violence has always existed among couples and families. But now public awareness of the problem is increasing and society's thinking on the subject has changed. Violence within the privacy of the home is no longer just a personal problem between two people. It is now recognised as a public matter and is not tolerated. Protection against violence is a human right, also in the home. The government and the police wish to enforce this protection.



Who is affected?

Although violence against men exists too, it is usually women and children who are affected by domestic violence. According to a study, every fifth woman in Switzerland is physically or sexually abused by her partner at least once in her life. Violence against women is usually an expression of an unequal balance of power or control in a relationship.

It is estimated that in Switzerland around 10,000 women call the police each year to obtain protection from domestic violence. The consequences of domestic violence cost the Swiss economy well over 400 million francs per year.

Domestic violence usually starts with small incidents. Over time the violent incidents increase, taking different forms at the same time and the violent person develops criminal behaviour.

Domestic violence – the police will intervene immediately!

When they are alerted to an incident involving domestic violence, the police will intervene, inform victims of their rights and conduct an investigation against the abuser.

They may file charges against him or report him to the authorities. A case of domestic violence is treated no differently than other cases involving violence.

The privacy of someone's home is not a taboo area for the police where violence is concerned.

They have a policy of zero tolerance of domestic violence and will take every phone call, every report very seriously.

The role of the police is to:
- stop the violence
- protect victims
- investigate the crime

