

Domestic Violence Accountability Program **Classes for Men**

A Partner's Guide

The purpose of the **Domestic Violence Accountability Program: Classes for Men (DVAP)** are to provide an additional disposition for the court, or an agent of the court, to utilize with men in response to acts of domestic violence.

When ordered, participants attend a weekly 75-minute class for six months (26 classes) or one year (52 classes) as specified by the court. This is the court's order or disposition when they send an individual to our program.

DVAP provides a fully developed curriculum of information about men's violence against women and how to end it in our communities. It is noteworthy that the curriculum includes the same material used in community education, professional training and outreach.

Domestic abuse will stop when the entire community recognizes domestic violence as a human rights violation and a social justice issue. Domestic violence is not an individual mental health, interpersonal or relationship problem.

In DVAP's Classes for Men, instructors clarify that any man who chooses to stop all acts of domestic abuse - is (and always has been) able to do so. He has to want to - and be willing to live his life differently. Be aware that most men who complete these programs continue to use some form of abuse to maintain control over their partner. Completion of a program does not mean that he will stop being abusive to you.

Participants are taught about all aspects of domestic abuse, including the impact it has on family members. Importantly, material is taught about the efforts being made in the community to improve services to battered women and their children. Participants are also taught about what is being done to make the criminal justice system effective in domestic abuse cases. There is great emphasis on the work being done with all segments of our community to create a climate where men and everyone else - know that domestic abuse is wrong, must stop and will not be tolerated.

Women who are abused always are hopeful that their partners will change. Although men are capable of stopping their abuse, it is unlikely that participation in this or any program will result in them doing so. This is because men's abuse to their partners is rooted in history, laws and cultures that have entitled men to act in these ways. Men's abuse against their partners has been and continues to be supported by communities that have not taken domestic abuse seriously.

Many factors are required to motivate men to want to change. Most important are legal and financial sanctions, as well as a change in the public's attitude about this crime. Each man himself must want to stop being abusive and must decide if he is willing to do what he has to do - to stop.

- Some men decide that they want to see a therapist or counselor while they are taking the course. It is OK for them to participate in individual counseling. Some men, however, may say they want to go to therapy or counseling. In fact, they may be using individual counseling as a way to “get out” of the order to attend the DVAP. This is *not* OK. *If your partner is serious about ending his abuse and wants therapy or counseling, he will find a way to participate in it at the same time or after he has complied with his court order.*
- You should not participate in family or couples counseling with a partner who is abusing you. It is dangerous for you to do so.
- If your partner is court-ordered to attend a batterer education program, no service or program should replace it.
- In some cases, men who attend DVAP increase the frequency and/or severity of their violence against their partners. Some men diminish or stop their physical abuse while increasing emotional abuse or other threatening behavior. In either case, please note the following:

Whether or not your partner continues to be abusive to you, it is strongly suggested that you have contact with:

New York City Domestic Violence 24-Hour Hotline
1-800-621-HOPE
1-800-621-4673

If you are confused about what to do about any aspect of your relationship with your partner:

- An advocate will listen
- Discuss your options
- Develop a plan and
- support you to make your own decisions.

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