

**June 2026**

## **A Safer Naper --- Domestic Violence Awareness**

According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 1 in 4 women and 1 in 9 men experience severe intimate partner physical violence, intimate partner sexual violence and/or stalking by an intimate partner. As much as we want to believe these types of violence are not a part of the lives of the people that we know and care about, from a statistical standpoint, it is quite possible that you know someone who is living through regular victimization. In fact, Naperville Police responded to more than 1,200 incidents of domestic trouble in 2025. More than one-third of those incidents involved physical contact.

With these statistics in mind, our Social Services Unit wants to make you aware of some of the signs that may indicate that someone is living with abuse and provide you with information that may be helpful if/when someone you know discloses to you that they are living with abuse. You do NOT have to have all the answers or feel pressure to come up with what you perceive to be the “perfect” response; it is most important that you believe what the person is sharing with you, listen to them without judgment and direct them to resources that are best equipped to comprehensively support their needs moving forward.

### **SECTION 1 – Signs of Domestic Abuse**

Possible signs that someone might be experiencing domestic abuse or other sensitive issues include:

- Unexplained bruises, cuts, burns or other injuries, especially if they are frequent and have no explanation or unreasonable explanations of how they were obtained. The victim may also wear inappropriate clothing for the season in an attempt to hide injuries such as wearing long sleeves in the summer heat or wearing excessive makeup to cover up marks.
- Changes in behavior such as seeming increasingly anxious, fearful, distracted, depressed, secretive or demonstrating conduct that seems out of character. Low self-esteem or statements about their unworthiness or blame for problems in their relationship.
- Increasing isolation from family, friends and other social networks. Plans may get canceled frequently.
- Inability to communicate freely; they may not respond to messages as they once did, or you may notice unexplained changes in their tone or the topic of the conversation when speaking with them on the phone.

### **SECTION 2 – Responding to Disclosures**

Learning that someone you care for is enduring abuse can be highly shocking and upsetting. You may struggle to manage your own emotions and reactions to the information. It’s important to make sure that even though you may be having a lot of personal feelings about the situation, you allow the survivor to make decisions about what happens next. Ultimately, people who are experiencing abuse generally share these traumatic and private events with only a select group of very trusted people. More than anything, it is important to acknowledge that they likely trust you, it was difficult for them to share this, and you are glad they reached out for support.

**Do** let them know that you are glad they confided in you and trusted you with such personal information.

**Do** listen without judgment; focus on open-ended questions that allow the person to disclose whatever information they feel comfortable sharing. Avoid questions or comments that can seem accusatory or directive (“Why don’t you... or, “You should ....”)

**Do**, if you are comfortable doing so, ask them if there is anything specific you can do to support them moving forward. (more on this in the resource and safety section below)

**Do** encourage them to build a support network of other trusted people and professional providers. Offer to make phone calls with them if you are comfortable doing so and that would make the outreach easier on the victim.

**Don’t** share information with anyone else (family members, fellow friends or acquaintances, etc.) without their consent. Doing so could violate their trust and make them feel powerless. Never confront the offender directly about the abuse.

**Don’t** make their disclosure of abuse the focal point of your relationship moving forward; ask how/if they would like you to periodically check in with them to see how things are going and respect whatever decision they make.

**Don’t** forget to prioritize your own wellbeing; it can be easy to become highly invested in supporting a victim through this traumatic journey. Be clear about your limitations and boundaries. Remember you should be a support for them, not a savior.

### **SECTION 3 – Resource Sharing and Safety Information**

These are challenging conversations to have, but don’t be afraid to be clear about your limitations and what you do and do not feel comfortable assisting with. The most important thing you can offer someone in their time of need is your belief that what they are sharing with you is important. Reiterate that you believe them and that you believe they deserve support. Most importantly, do not underestimate just how impactful your kind and compassionate response can be to someone who is enduring violence. While you cannot answer every question for them or solve the problems they are currently facing, you can absolutely make a difference in their journey and path to healing.

Although domestic violence is prevalent, it often lacks visibility. It can be hard to figure out meaningful ways to intervene to assist those experiencing abuse if they are not coming to you directly for support. There are many dedicated victim service agencies that support the needs of thousands of survivors each year and need the backing of the community to continue to provide these critical services.

The [city’s website](#) is a great place to start to seek additional support or information. The section on [safety planning](#) is critical.