

Domestic Violence Response Protocol

For families impacted by domestic violence

Someone to listen.

Someone to help.

That someone is YOU.



COMMISSION
ON SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Whether it happened once or many times.
Whether it is a coworker, parent, or neighbor.
Whether their pain is physical or emotional.
Whether we call it abuse, assault, or we don't know what to call it.
Anyone can help a survivor.

The **[insert name of] School District** strives to create a culture of care where all individuals feel safe, valued, and respected. It is the policy of the district to provide trauma-informed responses to those in our community who have been impacted by domestic violence. The purpose of this guide is to empower you to **identify and respond** to domestic violence.

Domestic violence exists when relationships are based on the power and control of one person over another and can include physical, emotional, sexual, and economic abuse. It is an experience that impacts many of us and that is sometimes hard to identify and acknowledge. The shame surrounding this topic and the fact that many of us do not know what to say or do contributes to the persistence of this problem.

Your role is to **believe, support, and validate** survivors of abuse. It is more helpful to **listen** and make affirming statements than to ask questions. You are not responsible for investigating or finding out details. If you do ask questions, they should be related to making sure the person is okay, exploring their needs, and building empathy, options, and choices.

Adult survivors often need information, support, and options. For **children** who have witnessed domestic violence, the presence of a consistent, caring adult is the key to healing and resilience.

You are someone who can help.

Use this guide to learn how.

Contents

Children Pages 4-5

Children: Behaviors you might see or hear about Page 4

Children: What to do and say Page 5

Adults Pages 6-10

Adults: Behaviors you might see or hear about Page 6

Adults: What to say to a survivor Page 7

Adult Response Protocol Page 8-10

Community Resources Page 11

Behaviors you may see or hear about:

aggression, name-calling, bullying

excessive or **constant irritability** and/or crying

more tired than usual

physical symptoms: **frequent illness**, tummy aches, or headaches

loss of bowel or **bladder control**

rigid or **sexist ideas** about gender roles

cruelty to animals

excessively **needy of time**, attention, and touch

impulsiveness

rejecting or **withdrawing** from physical touch

lack of empathy

hypervigilance: anxious about or sensitive to noises

withdrawn or **excessively quiet**

lack of confidence in beginning or trying new tasks

chronic or **increased absence**

excessive fear of breaking rules or making mistakes

apathy or **lack of emotion**

increased **separation anxiety**: afraid to leave parent or caregiver

ignoring privacy **boundaries**

changes in play: less able to play creatively or spontaneously

trouble maintaining **focus**

acting younger than developmentally typical (bed wetting, tantrums, etc.)

If you are concerned that a child has experienced or witnessed domestic violence, *follow these steps*:

1. Believe, support, and validate them (see page 5).
2. Tell them that there are people who can help.
3. Talk to your school's counselor.

What to say and do:

Believe, Support, and Validate:

- Let's walk to the office right now to see if we can **talk to the counselor**.
- Violence **isn't okay**.
- This was **not your fault**.
- **I am here to help**, please go on.
- It is **not your job to fix** what is happening in your family.
- If you want to share, **I can handle it**.
- **I believe you**.
- Is your body ok? Do you need **a doctor**?
- I'm **so glad** you came to talk to me.
- **I will do everything I can to help** you feel safe at school.
- **I'm sorry** to hear this has happened to you.
- Sharing can be hard—**take your time**.
- It's **ok to be confused** or to have mixed feelings about either of your parents.
- This is **important**. Your safety is important.

Promote Safe and Positive Coping Skills:

- Teach them to **call 9-1-1** in an emergency.
- Help them **identify names and phone numbers of trusted adults** (friends, family members, and neighbors) that they could call if needed.
- Encourage them to try to **stay out of the middle** of fights or arguments.
- Help them think about **safe hiding places** to go to if adults are fighting.
- Support by **actively listening** and **believing them**.
- **Be kind**: Convey warmth and understanding and offer an open door to talk again.
- **Encourage them to:**
 - Eat **healthy snacks** or meals
 - Rest, **sleep**
 - Be gentle and **positive in their self-talk**
 - **Carry something comforting** in difficult moments (like a stuffy, poem, or blanket)
 - Spend time outside or **do something creative**: like dancing, drawing, or doing crafts
 - Read or ask someone to **read to them**
 - **Play** with a sibling or neighbor
 - Make a **mental picture** to calm down or feel safe (think of the beach, or your grandma, for example)

Don't:

- **Minimize** or downplay the situation.
- Ask a lot of questions or **press for details**.
- **Make promises** you can't keep.

Behaviors you may see or hear about:

extreme jealousy, possessiveness, or insecurity

manipulating and using children or visitation to manipulate and control

short temper

threats to involve CPS, disclose drug abuse or mental illness, or take children away

frequent **mood swings**

physically inflicting pain or hurt in any way

controlling or dominating in meetings or conferences

using children to relay messages

suspiciousness or accusations of cheating

monitoring or **stalking** behaviors

telling a partner what they can and cannot do

belittling, name-calling, or put-downs

excessive texts, especially wanting to know their partner's location

isolation from family and friends

distributing pictures or videos of sexual or physical violence

ignoring privacy boundaries

rigid concept of **gender roles**

showing up unexpectedly to conferences or events

appears afraid of the other person

Adult survivors of domestic violence need:

- To build **connections**
- **Information** that will help them make decisions about their own life
- Emotional and financial **support**
- People who **trust** that they know their situation and child(ren) best
- Someone to **listen to them**
- **Recognition** of their strengths and their capabilities
- To be **believed & validated**
- Meaningful access to **resources**

What to say or do for adult survivors:

Believe, Support, and Validate:

- This sounds like **a difficult experience**.
- **I'm really sorry** to hear this happened to you.
- I can see how much **you love your child/children**.
- This was **not your fault**.
- You deserve to be treated with **respect**.
- What do **you** need?
- Are you okay? Do you need **medical attention**?
- **I believe you**.
- I'm **so glad** you came to talk to me.
- Do you **feel safe**?
- This is **important**.
- **I am here to help**, please go on.
- I know this might be uncomfortable. Please **take your time**.
- If you want to talk about this again, **you can talk to me**.
- **How can we help** you feel safer at our school?

Respond in a healing-informed manner:

- Talk to the parent in a safe setting, **away from their partner**.
- Support by **actively listening**.
- **Recognize** that the parent may be fearful, confused, protective about their privacy, and/or vulnerable.
- **Be kind**. Convey warmth and understanding.
- **Believe them**. It takes a lot of courage and strength to tell someone and it can be devastating to hear that someone doesn't believe you.
- Tell them **it's not their fault**. Many survivors blame themselves, so it is crucial to tell them it isn't their fault and remind them that the other person is responsible for their actions.
- Ask them what they think will **make them feel safer** and if they feel comfortable telling friends or family what is going on.
- **Respect their privacy**. Only tell the people who need to know about the situation.
- **Offer an open door** to talk again in the future.
- Trust that **they are doing the best they can** in this situation.

Don't:

- **Minimize** or downplay the situation.
- **Lecture** them about what you consider to be poor parenting or choices.
- Ask about their behaviors, as this can be interpreted as **victim-blaming**.
- **Give advice** or tell them what to do.
- **Make promises** you can't keep.

If you believe a parent/guardian is experiencing sexual or domestic violence, *follow these steps:*

1. **Approach the person privately.**
2. Share your observations and concern, **with the goal of offering support, not to do an investigation.** People who are experiencing abuse or assault are most likely to disclose to a person they have a trusted relationship with—**you**.
3. **Share a validating, supportive statement.** Many survivors feel judged and worried that they are at fault and responsible for their and their children's trauma. **Often, the abuser uses shaming and put downs** about a victim's parenting to manipulate and control them. It is helpful to observe and **build on the strengths** that they may have difficulty seeing in themselves.
4. **Do no harm.** Your role is important and may open a door to healing. If you do not feel prepared to offer supportive statements, you can skip directly to: **"I am going to find someone who can help"** and contact the school counselor.

You can say...

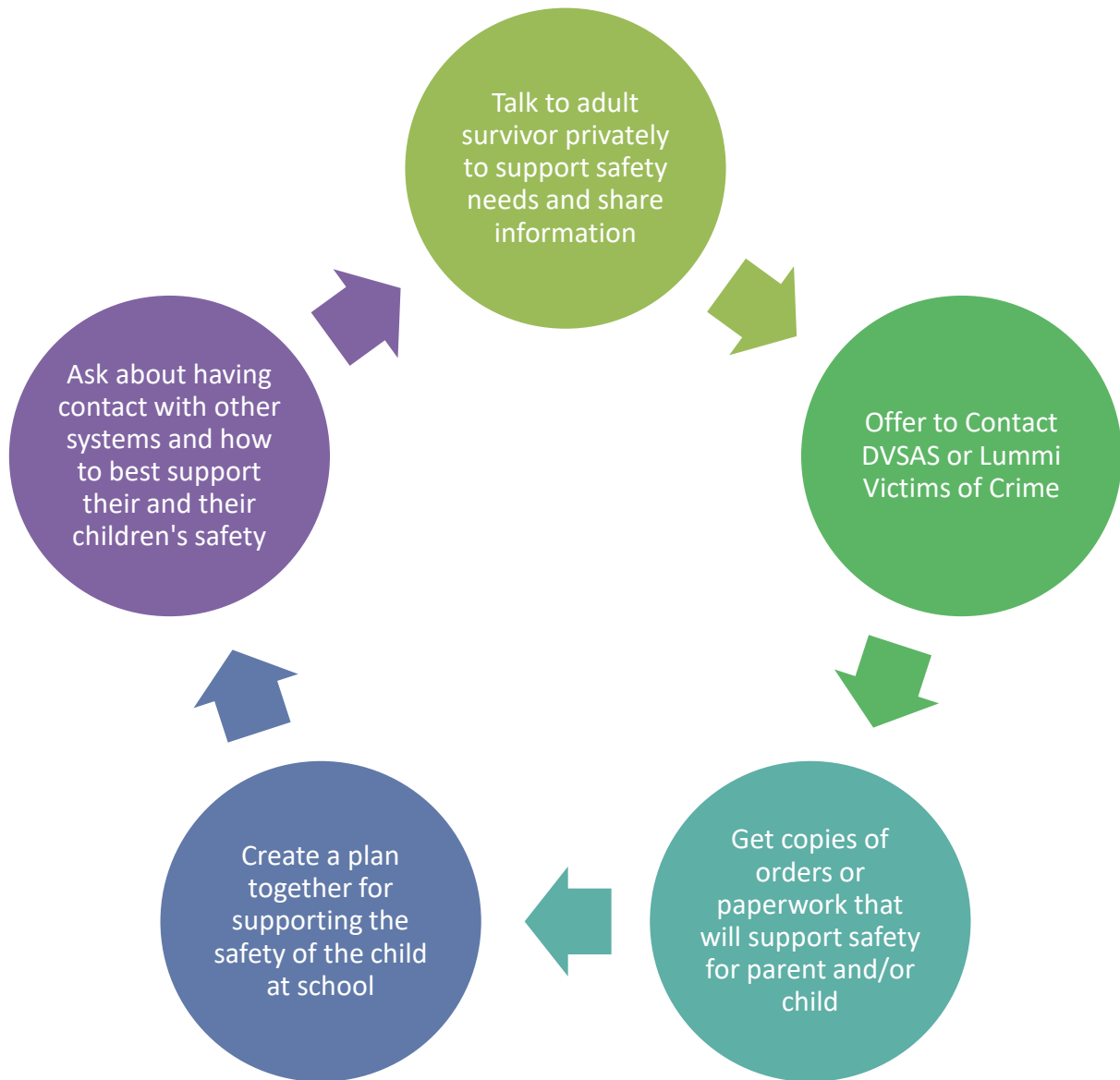
I have noticed [insert behavior] lately. I want you to know that I care about [child's name]'s and your safety and well-being. **What do you think we could do better to support him/her/them at school?**

Your and your child's safety are important. Working with children over the years, I have learned that nearly everyone needs help in some area of their life at some point. **Here are some resources in case you ever need them.** You can always ask me or [school counselor's name] about these if you have a question.

I was concerned about how you were treated in that meeting. It is not okay for a partner to belittle you or call you names [or other behavior you noticed]. You are a good parent and **I want to make sure that you are safe.**

Our school counselor is a great resource if you ever want to talk with someone about your or your child's safety and well-being. My child's counselor helped me a lot when we were going through some personal challenges.

Domestic Violence Response Process



If *you* learn that someone is a survivor of domestic violence:

1. Believe, support, & validate
(see examples on page 7).

3. Determine if a **report is required**
(see policy # _____).

2. Tell the parent you are going to contact the School Counselor.

4. Contact the **school counselor, then follow the steps below.**

The *school counselor* should:

1. **Reach out to the parent** who has experienced abuse or assault.
2. **Believe, support, & validate** the parent.
3. Ensure that the parent has their **immediate medical and safety needs met**.
4. Offer to **call a DVSA or Lummi Victims of Crime (LVOC) advocate** who can meet with them to provide support and information in person or on the phone.
5. Ask the parent if there is a parenting plan, Order for Protection, or other **paperwork to share** that would help support their safety (see policy # _____).
6. Ask how the school can support their child's **immediate and ongoing safety**.
7. **Ask if there are other people** or systems that you should be in touch with to support their safety → if yes, take down contact information and **get a release of information**.
8. **Share contact information** for DVSA or LVOC.
9. Ask if they would like another **appointment**.
10. **Follow-up** with the original staff involved, CPS, law enforcement, DVSA advocate, etc.

**Believe,
Support,
Validate**

Mandated reporters should:

(See policy # _____)

1. **Tell the parent** that you are required to make a report to law enforcement or CPS, and invite them to participate.
2. **Do not investigate** the report.
3. **Inform** your administrator.
4. **Report** to CPS or law enforcement—with the parent, if possible.
5. Offer to have a **DVSA or Lummi Victims of Crime (LVOC) advocate** meet with the parent **during the police or CPS interview**.
6. If yes, **call DVSA or LVOC** to inform them of time/location of the interview.
7. **Ask** the parent if you can support them by staying connected to other systems. → If yes, take down **contact information** of the people responding, ask about the best way to follow up, and get a **release of information**.

Domestic & Sexual Violence Service Directory

DVSAS

Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services

24-hour confidential helpline

1-877-715-1563

360-715-1563

www.dvsas.org

School-based advocacy

Prevention Education Specialist

360-671-5714

schools@dvsas.org

LVOC

Lummi Victims of Crime

24-hour confidential helpline

(360) 312-2015

School-based advocacy

Olivia Solomon

(360) 312-2015

olivias@lummi-nsn.gov

Tl'ils Ta'á'altha

Nooksack Tribe Victims of Crime Program

24-hour confidential helpline

(360) 306-5090

<https://nooksacktribe.org/departments/youth-family-services/tlils-taaaltha-victims-of-crime-program/>

Resources for LGBTQ+ Survivors

**The NW Network of Bi, Trans,
Lesbian, and Gay Survivors**

(206) 568-7777

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