



NEWS RELEASE

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Domestic violence is a health problem.

Health care providers have an opportunity to end the violence.

(Salt Lake City, UT) – Health care professionals have the unique opportunity and responsibility to identify victims of domestic violence and to refer and intervene on their behalf. Often, health care providers are the first or only professionals to see the injuries of the abused. As domestic violence recurs, emergency department identification may interrupt the cycle of violence and help prevent further incidents of abuse and violence.

Pediatricians, Family Medicine, OB/GYN's, Internists and other specialists also need to be educated on the health impact of domestic violence; not only for the victim, but also for the victim's children because exposure to domestic violence may have negative physical and mental health consequences for children. In addition children who are exposed to domestic violence are at an increased risk for child maltreatment. A local pediatrician, Dr. Kathy Franchek says, "We know that many millions of children are exposed to violence in their home. As a result, children are learning about violence, not from strangers on the streets, but from their own parents and relatives. Educating the medical community on how to identify and intervene with victims and their families may be the first step in helping to end the cycle of violence."

All physicians and other health professionals are gatekeepers within a community who can assist domestic violence survivors and help keep them safe. To assist them in this responsibility, an updated version of the professionals training manual, 'Clinical Guidelines for Assessment and Referral for Victims of Domestic Violence: A Reference for Utah Health Care Providers' was released this week. The health care provider manual includes the resources professionals need to screen, assess and report incidences of domestic violence. With this manual, providers are equipped with the skills needed to properly treat victims of domestic violence and treat the victims' children.

"Emergency departments are often the first line of defense for battered women," said Ned Searle, Director of Utah's Office on Domestic and Sexual Violence. "These results point to a prime opportunity for Emergency Department directors to train their staff to recognize intimate partner and family violence. If providers know what to look for, they'll be better able to ask the right questions, identify survivors and give the care they need to help these individuals and families."

Once abuse is uncovered, victims need to know where to go for help. Only when health care providers are educated and have knowledge about how to properly deal with a domestic violence situation, can victims be linked to the services they need. The health care professional response to domestic violence can contribute to a patient's understanding of the seriousness of their abuse and their ability to end the violence.

Other facts about domestic violence include:

- In 2005 and 2006, 60 percent of Utah's homicides were domestic violence related.
- In Utah, from 2003-2007, 130 individuals have lost their lives related to domestic violence.
- From 2000-2002, a current or former intimate partner perpetrated 64.2 percent of female homicides in Utah.
- As many as one in four Utah families suffer from some level of domestic violence.
- At least 50 percent of female victims of domestic violence have children less than twelve years of age in the home.

For more information about domestic violence visit www.udvc.org or call the Utah Domestic Violence LinkLine at 1-800-897-LINK (5465).

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PRESS CONFERENCE: October 10, 2008, 1:00 P.M.

**PLACE: Intermountain Medical Center
5121 South Cottonwood Street
Murray, Utah 84107
Trauma Room 1, Emergency Department**

Please enter Emergency Department through east side entrance

Following the press conference the following individuals will available for interviews:

Barbara Ferrara RN	Care Manager, Emergency Room, Intermountain Medical Center
Kathy Franchek M.D.	Director of Pediatric Center at U of U, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics
Ned Searle	Director, Office on Domestic and Sexual Violence
Debbie Delany	Domestic Violence Survivor
John C. Nelson M.D.	OB/GYN, Past President American Medical Association
Jerry Blackburn	Immediate Past Chair, Utah Domestic Violence Council
Thomas Weed M.D.	Emergency Room Physician