

## **How Prepared is Your Church to Serve Victims of Abuse?**

### **Have sermons condemned abuse in the home?**

- Has the pastor ever preached a full message on abuse or family violence?
- When families are discussed, does the pastor mention that many families do not fit standard cultural and church ideals for family life?

### **Is abuse discussed in premarital counseling programs?**

- Is printed information on abuse (such as brochures) given to all couples who undergo premarital counseling prior to their wedding?
- Are couples asked whether there has ever been an incidence of violence in their relationship?
- Are couples admonished to live violence-free lives and offered suggestions for dealing with anger and disappointment?

### **Is dating violence discussed in youth groups?**

- Has the youth pastor been informed about the prevalence and severity of dating violence even among church teens?
- Has information on dating violence been provided in a place where a teen can see it in privacy?
- Has the issue been raised from time to time in youth meetings, together with suggestions on how to respond to violence and how to help friends who have been abused?

### **Are safety mechanisms in place?**

- Have abuse victims been counseled to ensure that they have made some advance preparations in case they need to leave their home quickly?
- Who can be called on short notice if there is an emergency facing a family in your congregation?
- Are there people in the congregation who are aware of the important safety issues for women and children in your area?
- Are there any members who are trained to provide emergency services?
- Does the church have a support group for victims of violence?

### **Have you asked the shelter about its needs?**

- Has a contact been made between the women's organizations in your church and the nearest shelter for battered women?
- Has the pastor ever called the shelter to inquire how the church might assist in its work (e.g., painting a room, moving a woman and her children, childcare, food treats at Christmas, spiritual counseling)?

### **Do you know the transition worker by name?**

- Does the pastor know the location of the nearest community shelter for battered women?
- Has the church established some contact with at least one worker at the shelter?
- If there are no community based housing resources, has the congregation itself made some provision for emergency shelter?

### **Is information available in safe locations?**

- Where is the safest location in your building to place information that abuse victims can look at in privacy (such as the washrooms)?
- What information can be offered to women in immediate crisis or those in relationships that are sometimes abusive?
- Is a contact name and phone number provided on the literature?

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