

Domestic Violence and 'the Holidays'

The Question: Does domestic violence increase during the winter holiday season (the time period beginning the week of Thanksgiving through New Year's Day)?

The Answer: **No**

The holidays can be stressful, but domestic violence is not caused by stress. It is caused by the choice of one partner to control and dominate the other.

Like most of us, victims of domestic violence may experience additional stress and unique challenges over the holiday season. Some victims may turn to advocates at domestic violence organizations or to other community resources for needed support, such as food, gifts for their children, safety planning specific to the holidays, etc. This may result in increased calls to local DV programs, but not necessarily requests for shelter or intervention.

In fact, data from the National Domestic Violence hotline for the years 2004 through 2010, indicates that the number of hotline calls drops dramatically during the holidays.

However, in families where violence is already present, holidays often mean more time with family and therefore more chance that violence incidents.

So how do we reconcile those two facts? A lot of victims will try to keep the peace so that they and their children don't have to spend holidays in a shelter or otherwise away from loved ones or extended family.

Many communities experience increased media and public attention to domestic violence during the holidays.

The holidays are certainly an opportunity to increase public awareness that domestic violence does not stop during the holidays and that the abuse and violence experienced by victims may be exacerbated (although not caused) by the financial stress and alcohol consumption that often accompany the holidays.

Take Action

Victims of domestic violence and their children may not be fortunate enough to experience the joy of the holidays within safe, loving families.

Members of the community who want to offer their support can:

- Contact the local DV non-profit organization serving their community. A listing of all such organizations in the state is available at ccadv.org
- Raise awareness on social media. Like and follow CCADV on Facebook and Twitter for great information, posts, and resources
- Remember: DV happens year around in all of our communities. We are working to create a Colorado where DV is no longer tolerated. Donate to CCADV to become part of the movement to create a safer Colorado! www.ccadv.org/online-donation

Resources for Statistics

*An analysis of statistics from small studies and available data on calls to the National Domestic Violence Hotline indicates some contradictory patterns.

Summary of Available Data:

- A 2005 study examining police incident reports of domestic violence in Idaho suggests that there is a strong relationship between particular holidays and incidence reports of Intimate Partner Violence. This study found that domestic violence reports are higher than the normal daily average on New Year's Eve and New Year's Day averaging 2.7 times more incidents of domestic violence than the normal daily average.¹
- A 2010 study examining calls for law enforcement assistance in a large U.S. city also found that the number of incidents reported was higher on New Year's Day compared to the daily average.²
- On the other hand, data from the National Domestic Violence hotline for the years 2004 through 2010, indicates that the number of hotline calls drops dramatically during the holidays. For instance, call volume drops by approximately half on Thanksgiving Day. Call volume decreases by an average of 53% on Christmas Day and 30% on New Year's Day.

More Resources

*Vasquez, S. P., Stohr, M. K., Purkiss, M. (2005). Intimate partner violence incidence and characteristics: Idaho NIBRS 1995 to 2001 data. *Criminal Justice Policy Review*, 16(1), 99--114.

*Joshi, M., & Sorenson, S. B. (2010). Intimate partner violence at the scene: Incident characteristics and implications for public health surveillance. *Evaluation Review*, 34(2), 116--136.

*NDVH provides a very different data source than is used in the other two studies. While the two studies examine law enforcement statistics, NDVH call data reflect individuals reaching out on a toll-free helpline for assistance, including victims, friends and family, and less frequently, offenders. Also, data analyzed by the three sources referenced here are from different time periods.