



## Jackson County Department of Public Health

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2020-31  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
October 19, 2020

### OCTOBER IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month and the Jackson County Department of Public Health (JCDPH) wants to shine a light on the importance of this month. Domestic violence, also known as Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), is a serious, preventable public health problem that affects millions of Americans. IPV describes physical violence, sexual violence, stalking, or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse. This type of violence can occur among heterosexual or same-sex couples and does not require sexual intimacy. It is incredibly important to pay attention to how anyone in your life is treating you, and how you are reacting to their actions towards you.

According to the CDC, IPV includes four main types of behavior:

- **Physical violence** is when a person hurts or tries to hurt a partner by hitting, kicking, or using another type of physical force.
- **Sexual violence** is forcing or attempting to force a partner to take part in a sex act, sexual touching, or a non-physical sexual event (e.g., sexting) when the partner does not or cannot consent.
- **Stalking** is a pattern of repeated, unwanted attention and contact by a partner that causes fear or concern for one's own safety or the safety of someone close to the victim.
- **Psychological aggression** is the use of verbal and non-verbal communication with the intent to harm another person mentally or emotionally and/or to exert control over another person.

Unfortunately, IPV is common. It affects millions of people in the United States each year. Data from CDC's National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) indicate:

- About 1 in 4 women and nearly 1 in 10 men have experienced contact sexual violence, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner during their lifetime and reported some form of IPV-related impact.
- Over 43 million women and 38 million men have experienced psychological aggression by an intimate partner in their lifetime.

IPV can start early and if so, usually continues throughout the lifespan. When IPV occurs in adolescence, it is called teen dating violence (TDV). TDV affects millions of U.S. teens each year. About 11 million women and 5 million men who reported experiencing sexual violence, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime said that they first experienced these forms of violence before the age of 18. If you are an adult and have observed any actions between younger family members or friends that you think may be a form of IPV, please consider helping them before it gets worse. There is no shame in being in a relationship where IPV is occurring. There is also no weakness in seeking help for yourself if you feel that you may be contributing to the IPV, including talking to a mental health counselor or therapist. Please give yourself the time that you need to be mentally, physically, and emotionally healthy. If you feel the need to end the relationship, please reach out for help to do so. You



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can even take the opportunity to ask for help during a doctor's visit. Listed below are some local resources for you if you decide you would like to talk with someone about your situation:

- Center for Domestic Peace: <https://www.cdjaxcountync.org/>
- REACH of Macon County: <https://www.reachofmaconcounty.org/>
- Jackson County Department of Public Health: <http://health.jacksonnc.org/>

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