

*****SAMPLE*****

SUBJECT: Reporting Domestic Violence
PURPOSE: To establish a standardized process for diagnosis and reporting of suspected domestic violence.
POLICY: It is the policy of _____ (IPA/MD NAME) to ensure that suspected domestic violence cases are recognized and followed up by telephone and written documentation.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Responsibility:

It is required that when a case of domestic violence is observed by a health care practitioner within the scope of his/her employment it will be reported by telephone and followed up with a written report to a local law enforcement agency within two working days of receiving information regarding the injured person.

PROCEDURE:

1) Guidelines for Assessment

The healthcare practitioner should identify any symptoms or signs of abuse and report this information to the proper authorities. The possibility of assault should be considered if a patient's explanation of an injury does not seem plausible or when there has been a delay in seeking medical attention. There are certain types of injuries and/or behaviors, which are commonly associated with abuse. The injuries listed below may be indicative of abuse; however, an overall assessment of the individual may need to be done to produce conclusive findings.

- A.** Minor lacerations, contusions, abrasions, fractures or sprains.
- B.** Injuries to the head, neck, chest, breasts, or abdomen.
- C.** Injuries during pregnancy, such as spontaneous abortions.
- D.** Multiple injury sites.
- E.** Chronic or repeated injuries.
- F.** Medical problems which indicate chronic or psychogenic pain.
- G.** Physical symptoms related to stress, anxiety disorders or depression.
- H.** Chronic diseases such as asthma, seizures, arthritis, etc.
- I.** Multiple gynecological problems.
- J.** Frequent use of prescribed tranquilizers or pain medications.
- K.** Psychiatric symptoms such as panic attacks, substance abuse, inability to cope, feelings of isolation, suicidal tendencies.
- L.** Behavioral problems such as an appearance of fright, shame or embarrassment.

Domestic Violence cont'd

2) Documentation of Abuse

Well documented medical records must be maintained by the health care practitioner and should include the following information:

- A.** The name of the injured person.
- B.** The location of the injured person.
- C.** The extent and character of the injuries.
- D.** The name or identity of the alleged abuser.
- E.** A description of the abusive event or description of the major complaints in the patient's own words whenever possible.
- F.** The medical and relevant social history of the injured person.
- G.** A map of the location of the injuries on the victim's body documented at the time of the health care service.

3) Reporting

- A.** A report of abuse must be made by telephone as soon as practically possible and be followed up with a written report to a local law enforcement agency within two working days of receiving information regarding the injured person.
- B.** Regardless of the seriousness of the injury, a report must be made if it is obvious the injury is current and caused by physical force prohibited under the Penal Code.
- C.** In the case of spousal rape even though there may be no injury, a report must be made.

4) Immunity

Individuals who are required to report domestic violence are immune from civil and criminal liability for reports of known or suspected abuse.

5) Penalties

Failure to report domestic violence is a misdemeanor and is punishable by imprisonment in the county jail for up to six months or by a fine of up to \$1000.00 or both.