

## **DAWN FARM GUIDELINES FOR WORKING WITH SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

Dawn Farm has spent a great deal of time examining the interface between addiction and domestic violence. We recognize that there is great promise for increasing opportunities for enhancing the survivor's safety as well as serious potential pitfalls that can lead to harming the survivor. These guidelines are intended to avoid the latter.

The following are Dawn Farm's beliefs about treating addicted survivors of domestic violence. These beliefs should guide all of our work with survivors.

- The **only** person responsible for the abuse is the **abuser**.
- Survivors stay with batterers for a variety of reasons, chief among them is safety. The survivor is the best judge of what will compromise their safety.
- The goal of addiction recovery can not be placed ahead of personal safety.
- Addiction and domestic violence are both primary problems. Addressing one problem will not solve the other. Both problems need to be addressed, ideally at the same time.
- Domestic violence is a barrier to recovery and therefore addressing it is Dawn Farm's responsibility.
- Getting the survivor sober/clean does not equal getting them safe.
- Couples counseling is an inappropriate and potentially dangerous intervention for domestic violence.
- The concepts of "powerlessness" in relation to AOD and "empowerment" **are** compatible.

To ensure that safety and empowerment are provided to every survivor, Dawn Farm has established the following practices:

- All clients are screened for domestic violence. Any client identified as a survivor will be offered immediate access to DV services.
- Dawn Farm counselors make every effort to support the practices and philosophies of the DV program.
- It must be understood that we can't ask survivors to put their recovery ahead of their safety. Recovery is difficult enough for all addicts, but especially so for survivors who have a violent partner who is generally invested in keeping them from recovering.
- All Dawn Farm residential clients will receive educational services on DV. Other Dawn Farm programs will have DV information easily accessible for clients.
- Dawn Farm will take any reasonable measures to ensure the safety of the survivor. In residential services, this may mean warning all staff of the possibility of the abuser attempting to contact the survivor by phone or in person at the facility or in the community. In outpatient, this may mean encouraging the client to get help developing a safety plan or Dawn Farm staff developing a safety plan with the client.
- Due to the potential for retraumatization, DV issues are addressed at whatever pace/level the client determines is helpful. Clients are not to be "pushed" to work on these issues. Even when the client decides not to address these issues Dawn Farm can offer assistance in developing coping skills to address any ongoing effects of trauma.
- Addicted survivors of domestic violence should never be referred to or treated as "codependent." There are at least two potential problems with this approach that include:
  - Treating the survivor as "codependent" could arguably be considered "blaming the victim."
  - Counseling the survivor to emotionally detach from abuser could put the survivor in danger. Behaviors that counselors might consider codependent may serve as self-preservation for the survivor. Stopping "enabling" behaviors may result in an increase in violence.
- Clients are given the opportunity to make requests regarding their counselor.
- Dawn Farm avoids facilitating contact between the survivor and the abuser. When it is deemed necessary the decision is made by the treatment team and the Clinical Director. If the batterer is involved in a BIP and/or the victim is receiving DV services, those programs should be consulted.
- Dawn Farm challenges any suggestion that the survivor has any responsibility for their abuse.
- Dawn Farm recognizes the potential for the 12 steps and 12 step wisdom to be interpreted in a way that may disempower the survivor. (e.g. - powerlessness, accepting the things we can not change, etc) Further, Dawn Farm recognizes that AA/NA sponsors are generally unaware of this potential problem. Therefore, Dawn Farm takes responsibility for educating clients in an attempt to avoid these potential problems.