

UNDERSTANDING PHYSICAL VIOLENCE



Definition:

Physical violence is the intentional use of force to hurt someone. Physical violence can include hitting, kicking, throwing things, restraint, or using a weapon. It can come from someone we know and love, in the form of domestic violence or child abuse, or from a total stranger. It can be expected or without warning, a single event or a regular experience. Physical violence can cause emotional trauma, even if our bodies fully heal, and can make it harder for us to move freely and safely through our lives.

**1 in 4 women
and 1 in 7 men**

in the US have been the victim of severe physical violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime.¹

30% to 60%

of intimate partner violence perpetrators also abuse children in the household.²

Citations: ¹The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS), 2010.

²National Institute of Justice, 2006.

Warning Signs of Physical Violence:

- Pulling your hair or punching, slapping, kicking, biting, choking, or smothering you
- Forbidding or preventing you from eating or sleeping
- Using weapons against you, including firearms, knives, bats, or mace
- Preventing you from contacting emergency services.
- Harming your children or pets
- Driving recklessly or dangerously with you in the car
- Forcing you to use drugs or alcohol
- Trapping you in your home or preventing you from leaving

From the National Domestic Violence Hotline, 2025.

Warning Signs of Physical Abuse in Children:

- Physical signs, such as welts and bruises, fingernail marks, human bite marks, burns, lacerations, abrasions, and missing, loose, or broken teeth
- Injuries that do not fit the explanation given by the parents or child
- Regular absence from or lateness to school without a clear reason
- A child wears long-sleeved or high-collared clothing to school on hot days, as a way to hide their injuries
- A child displays awkward movements or difficulty walking, if they're in pain from repeated injuries

From The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2009.

Our Resources:

Safe Horizon offers victims, survivors, and their families emotional and concrete support immediately after violence, including trauma focused counseling, shelter, safety planning, lock replacement, and advocacy with police and the courts. Immediate and long term supports include counseling, support groups, and shelter. We also advocate to raise awareness and change laws to protect survivors of physical violence.

Each year, we support 62,500 survivors of physical violence, including assault and child physical abuse.



Our Programs:

- **Child Advocacy Centers:** Support for children who have experienced severe abuse
- **Community and Restorative Practices:** Counseling, safety planning, and more for survivors experiencing trauma
- **Criminal and Civil Justice Programs:** Assistance navigating criminal and civil justice systems
- **Domestic Violence Shelters:** Emergency and long-term safe housing
- **Hotline:** 24/7/365 personalized support and safety planning via phone and chat
- **Immigration Law Project:** Support for immigrant survivors of violence and abuse in securing secure status and protection
- **Streetwork Project:** Housing, healthcare, community, and more for youth experiencing homelessness

GET HELP:

**Call our 24-Hour Hope Hotline
1-800-621-4673 (HOPE).**