



NEW ENGLAND LEARNING CENTER FOR WOMEN IN TRANSITION

479 Main Street, PO Box 520, Greenfield MA 01302 – (413) 772-0871 – fax (413) 772-2743 – www.nelcwit.org

Domestic Violence in Rural Areas

It is common for batterers in all types of locations to isolate their victims as one tactic of maintaining power and control over them. For example, they may:

- Refuse access to family vehicles or prevent a woman from getting a driver's license.
- Ridicule her in front of friends and family so that she's reluctant to have them come to her home.
- Accuse her of flirting or having affairs and because of this suspicion, beating her for even limited contact with another person.
- Remove the telephone when leaving the home or calling her every hour to monitor her whereabouts.
- Threaten or beat her when she returns from an outing with women friends.
- Threaten to kill her if she tells anyone about the abuse.

Women living with domestic violence in rural areas have certain experiences and face certain barriers that are unique to rural settings. For rural women, the isolation becomes magnified by geographical isolation and other facts of rural life.

- Public transportation is rare in rural areas. The woman who decides to leave her abuser has to use a family vehicle, get a ride from someone else, or walk.
- Police and medical providers may take a long time to arrive in response to a call.
- Poor roads and distance make it hard to get to jobs, childcare, housing, health care, and other resources.
- Cold, snow, and mud affect life in rural areas, and may result in a woman isolated with her abuser for extended periods.
- Women may be trapped at home with abusers during long periods of unemployment from seasonal work.
- Hunting weapons are common in rural homes. Tools like axes, chains, and pitchforks are potential weapons.
- Alcohol and drug use often increase in winter months when rural people are underemployed and isolated in their homes. This often affects the frequency and severity of abuse.
- If a woman has been physically injured by domestic violence, working with farm tools and equipment can provide an easy explanation of her injuries. Visible bruises may fade or heal before she sees a neighbor.
- Women in one-income farm families:
 - may not have their own money to support themselves and their children if they leave.
 - may fear that if they leave the business will fail or their partners will be left with no means of income.
- Court orders restraining abusers from contact with their victims may be less viable in farming areas, as abusive partners cannot be kept from the family farm if it is their only source of income.

- Rural women frequently have strong emotional ties to the land and to farm animals. A woman who is attached to her animals may fear that they will be neglected or harmed if she leaves.
- A rural woman who wants to escape from domestic violence may be intimidated by the idea of traveling to the “big city,” where everything is different from what she knows. City attitudes may seem strange and city dwellers may be unaccepting of her way of speaking, dressing, etc.
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While unique problems face rural women living with domestic violence, HELP IS AVAILABLE.

A domestic violence program can provide personal support, safety planning, information about transportation, legal, shelter, financial assistance, job training, and education resources.

Get Help and Find Safety:

Call NELCWIT’s hotline, 24 hours/day, 7 days/week.

(413) 772-0871 in Franklin County, or (888) 249-0806 outside Franklin County.

Walk-in hours at 479 Main Street, Greenfield

Monday-Thursdays 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m., Fridays 9:00 a.m.-12 noon

Thank you for the above information to:

Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women, 590 Park Street, Suite 410, St. Paul MN 55103

651-646-6177 – www.mcbw.org