



GUIDELINES FOR IMAMS ASSISTING AN ABUSIVE PERSON*

Remember the Goals:

1. SAFETY for the woman and the children
 2. ACCOUNTABILITY for the abuser
 3. RESTORATION of individuals, and, IF APPROPRIATE, relationships OR MOURNING the loss of the relationships.
- If he has been arrested, DO approach him and express your concern and support for him to be accountable and to deal with his violence.
 - DO pray with him. Ask Allah to help him stop his violence, repent and find a new way. DO assure him of your support in this endeavor.
 - DO find ways to collaborate with community agencies and law enforcement to hold him accountable.
 - DO address any religious rationalizations he may offer or questions he may have. DON'T allow him to use religious excuses for his behavior.
 - DO name the violence as his problem, not hers. Tell him that only he can stop it; and you are willing to help.
 - DO refer to a program that specifically addresses abusers.
 - DO assess him for suicide or threats of homicide. DO warn the victim if he makes specific threats towards her.
 - DON'T meet with him alone or in private. Meet in a public place, or in the *masjid* with other people around.
 - DON'T approach him or let him know that you know about his violence unless a) you have the victim's permission, b) she is aware that you plan to talk to him and c) you are certain that his partner is safely separated from him.
 - DON'T pursue couples counseling if you are aware there is violence in the relationship.
 - DON'T go to him to confirm the victim's story.
 - DON'T give him any information about the victim or her whereabouts.

- DON'T be taken in by his minimization, denial or lying about his violence. DON'T accept his blaming her or other rationalizations for his behavior.
- DON'T be taken in by his claims that he has changed. If he is genuine, this will be a resource as he proceeds with accountability. If it is not genuine, it is only another way to manipulate you and the system and maintain control of the process to avoid accountability.
- DON'T advocate for the abuser to avoid the legal consequences of his violence.
- DON'T provide a character witness for this purpose in legal proceedings.
- DON'T forgive an abuser too quickly and easily. DON'T confuse remorse with true repentance.
- DON'T send him home with just a prayer. Work with others in the community to hold him accountable.

*Adapted from "Responding to Domestic Violence: Guidelines for Religious Leaders," FaithTrust Institute, www.faithtrustinstitute.org