Domestic Violence

Healthcare providers have many opportunities to identify victims of domestic violence, whether they have come for treatment of injuries or for vague somatic symptoms without clear cause, or through routine screening at initial and annual exams. Referral to community resources is always appropriate. In addition, a report is required in cases of current physical injury.

Legal Requirements
According to California law (PC 11160), a health practitioner is required to make a report if he or she "provides medical services for a physical condition to a patient whom he or she knows or reasonably suspects is:

1. "suffering from any wound or other injury inflicted by his or her own act or inflicted by another where the injury is by means of a firearm," and/or
2. "suffering from any wound or other injury inflicted upon the person where the injury is the result of assaultive or abusive conduct."

Assaultive or abusive conduct includes "murder, manslaughter, torture, battery, sexual battery, incest, assault with a deadly weapon, rape, spousal rape and abuse of spouse or cohabitant."

Medical Record Documentation
The medical record should include:
-- Comments made by the patient regarding the injury, how it occurred, the name of the person who caused the injury and any past domestic violence (whenever possible, use direct quotations).
-- A map or sketch of the patient’s body identifying the injuries and bruises, including shape, color, and size.
-- A copy of the law enforcement reporting form.

Referral to Community Resources
If you suspect that a patient is in an abusive relationship, whether there is evidence of physical evidence or not, it is important to refer to groups and resources that can provide assistance. Contact information for useful resources is listed here:
- CORA (Community Overcoming Relationship Abuse) Hotline (650) 312-8515 or (800) 300-1080
- National Domestic Violence Hotline, (800) 799-7233
- Rape Trauma Services (650) 692-7273
- Teens Concerned About Dating and Domestic Violence www.teenrelationships.org
- Keller Center for Family Violence Intervention (medical and social services) (650) 573-2623

Telephone report
A telephone report must be made immediately or as soon as practically possible to the law enforcement agency where the injury occurred while the patient is in your office. A list of law enforcement jurisdictions is included with these guidelines.

Written report
In addition, a written report must be sent within two working days both to the law enforcement agency where the injury occurred (see list), and also to Disease Control and Prevention.

Disease Control & Prevention
San Mateo County Health Dept.
225 37th Avenue
San Mateo, CA 94403
A copy of the Domestic Violence and Assault reporting form is on the next page.

For questions on reporting, call the Keller Center Family Violence Intervention, (650) 573-2623.

Liability
Health professionals and facilities who report known or suspected assault cannot be held civilly or criminally liable for making a report. Failure to report by a mandated reporter is a misdemeanor, punishable by a $1,000 fine and/or six months in jail, and may result in civil suits or damages for subsequent injury to the patient.