



There is hope.

*Information for
Faith Based
Leaders on
Domestic Violence*

*Ending Domestic Violence Against Women
and Children in the Rural South*

Mississippi Voices for Women in the Rural South

A Message from the Grant Partners

"We consider the information within this booklet to be valuable and life changing. The materials included have been derived from living experiences from across the nation. We have found that domestic violence is about abnormal abuse of power, control and/or force over another human being. Statistically, the highest number of recorded domestic violence cases are against women. We acknowledge that men can also be abused. For the purpose of this project we direct our attention to the effect of domestic violence on women and their children. We will attempt to address the fact that abuse can include anything that frightens, intimidates, terrorizes, manipulates, hurts, humiliates, blames, injures, or wounds another human being. We would like to thank the hundreds of women who have shared their stories; who took the risk, and broke the conspiracy of silence. We would like to thank the hundreds of advocates (faith based leaders, law enforcement officials, and community leaders) who work in the field to end the violence against women. It is our desire that this booklet will provide you with information that will assist you in "Speaking Out" against domestic violence."

Mississippi Voices for Women in the Rural South

"Quote"

For a more detailed reference manual for clergy and information about offering workshops on domestic violence for your congregation or community, please call Our House, Inc.: New Birth to Violence Free Living at 1-888-884-LOVE or The Domestic Violence Project, Inc., at 1-800-227-5764.

Office of Violence Against Women
Rural Domestic Violence and Child Victimization Grant Partners
Mississippi Voices for Women in the Rural South

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Our House, Inc.  
New Birth to Violence Free Living  
Greenville, Mississippi

State of Mississippi  
Division of Public Safety Planning  
Office of Justice Programs  
Jackson, Mississippi

The Domestic Violence Project, Inc.  
Oxford, Mississippi

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*Let her know that there is help for getting out of an abusive relationship.*



### *Domestic Violence in the Christian Home*

*"The majority of women in the United States were raised in Christian homes or as adults have affiliated themselves with a Christian church. This is a sociological reality. Therefore, when a woman is battered by a member of her family, she will likely bring to that experience her background and values as a Christian woman. Also likely is that **her experience of violence in her family will not be only a physical and emotional crisis but also a Spiritual crisis.** She will probably have many questions about her faith: What guidance does Scripture give her? What is God's will for her? How can she deal with this situation in her life as a Christian woman?"*

*Marie M. Fortune, Author  
Keeping the Faith, Guidance for Christian Women Facing Abuse  
(Emphasis added.)*

*"The relationship of the Bible to domestic abuse is one of the most heartbreaking and misunderstood issues of our day. By not considering the whole counsel of Scripture, our well-intentioned efforts to save marriages can increase the burden of those who need our help the most. . . . original intent for marital permanence was never meant to provide a cover for conditions of marital abuse that are worse than divorce."*

*Mart De Haan, Contributing Writer  
Our Daily Bread Devotional and the Discovery Series Bible Study Booklets*

## *Some Facts about Domestic Violence\**

- There are an estimated 28 million battered women in the United States, more than half of all married women in the country.
- In the United States, one woman is beaten by her husband or partner every nine seconds.
- Battering is the single major cause of injury to women between the ages of 15 and 44 in the United States -- more than car accidents, muggings, and rapes combined.
- Domestic violence is a crime. In all 50 states, police can arrest the abuser.
- Three out of five women in the United States will be battered in their lifetime.
- Battering occurs in all socioeconomic, cultural, racial, and religious groups.

*\*SOURCE: Southern Connecticut State University Women's Center, New Haven, CT*

- On average, more than three women a day are murdered by their husbands or boyfriends in the United States. In 2005, 1,181 women were murdered by an intimate partner. (Source: Catalano, Shannon. 2007. *Intimate Partner Violence in the United States*. U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.)
- Mississippi ranked 5th in the United States in domestic violence homicides. This is not just violence but homicides. Only Nevada, Alaska, Louisiana and New Mexico ranked higher (reported by *The Clarion-Ledger*, October 3, 2007).

## **Mississippi Facts**

In the state of Mississippi, the following services were provided to victims of domestic violence and their children over a 12 month period. This is based on information received from twelve (12) domestic violence shelters (all shelters serve rural jurisdictions) as reported to the Mississippi State Department of Health (July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2008).

- Shelter services were provided to a total of 1,002 women and 1,140 children whose average income was under \$5,000 and the most frequently reported level of education for victims was grades six to twelve
- Of the women sheltered, 623 went to a new living situation; 206 returned to previous situations; and, in 104 cases, the outcome remains unknown
- There were 67,099 bednights of services provided to domestic violence victims and their children during this period of time
- Domestic abuse related calls to crisis hotlines/helplines: 16,244 and information and referral calls: 25,907
- 1,501 educational programs were provided to 69,435 participants

*Let the victim know that making the decision to leave is tough, but empowering. Help her realize that she deserves a better life.*



### *What is Domestic Violence and Why Does it Happen?*

Domestic violence is the systematic pattern of physical, sexual, emotional or psychological abusive behaviors used in a relationship by one person to control another.

Whether physically, sexually, or psychologically, the batterer may choose to use coercion and force to control the victim. He makes this choice for several reasons which include:

- He thinks it is his right, that is, part of his role.
- He feels entitled to use force.
- He has learned this behavior in his past.
- This behavior works.

***Battering is not the result of a batterer's being out of control but rather is the attempt of the batterer to stay IN control.***

In this regard, his behavior is under his control. He chooses when and where he batters. He chooses what parts of the victim's body he hits so as to hide the evidence from others. He chooses to direct his violence only towards the victim or those whom he perceives may be helping her. His need to control family members seems to increase with stress in his life.

### *Physical Abuse*

Physical abuse is usually recurrent and escalates in severity and frequency. Domestic violence in the form of physical abuse IS A CRIME. It may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Pushing, shoving, slapping, punching, kicking, biting, choking, throwing things at the victim, shooting, stabbing, fingers in the nose and boxing the ears
- Threatening to hit with weapons or objects
- Holding, tying down, or restraining

## *Emotional or Psychological Abuse*

Emotional or psychological abuse may precede or accompany physical abuse as a way of gaining control of the victim through fear and intimidation. It may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Abandonment in a dangerous place
- Neglect, refusing to help when the victim is hurt or sick
- Not letting the victim eat or sleep
- Threats of harm to self, children or other family members
- Physical or social isolation, i.e., denying access to family support or choosing with whom the victim may associate
- Extreme jealousy or possessiveness
- Repetitive degradation
- False accusations, consistently blaming the victim for everything
- Lying, breaking promises, destroying trust
- “Mind games”, i.e., insisting something is one way when it really is another
- Driving fast or recklessly to frighten or intimidate

## *Sexual Abuse*

Sexual abuse may also exist within an abusive relationship. This may be extremely difficult to discuss because of embarrassment, or religious or cultural attitudes toward sex. It is important to build a foundation of trust with the victim and to allow her to discuss the situation on her own terms and at her own pace. It may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Force or threat of force to perform any sexual act against her will
- Infliction of pain during sexual intercourse
- Limiting reproductive freedom including use of birth control
- Sexual harassment
- Calling of sexually derogatory names

## **Cycle of Abuse**

### Phase I: Tension Builds

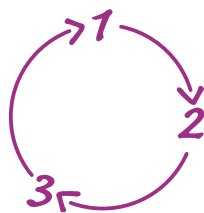
Perpetrator: increasingly irritable, frustrated, may feel he is losing control  
Victim: frightened, tries extra hard, withdraws, may precipitate incident

### Phase II: Explosion

Perpetrator: yelling, degradation, threats, hitting, beating, choking  
Victim: very dangerous time; serious injury or death can result

### Phase III: Honeymoon

Perpetrator: contrite, loving, tender, courting behavior, promises reform  
Victim: loving, forgiving, believes abuser has changed



## **Characteristics of Battered Women**

She may be rich or poor; a high school dropout or college educated; young or old. Victims come from every social class, race and economic background. She most likely will not be what you expect. A victim who comes to you will be fearful, vulnerable and scared. Her trust may have been violated in the past by other members of the clergy, lay ministers, or spiritual leaders. She may feel abandoned by her church and even by God. She may blame herself for being in an abusive relationship. She may not know where to turn for help or whom she can trust. She needs patience and gentleness.

It is very difficult for most women to leave an abusive relationship. Often, her abuser has threatened to do additional harm to her, to her children, or to other family members and friends if she leaves. Other factors which contribute to the victim remaining in the abusive relationship include: economic dependence, isolation, a desire to keep the family together and the hope that the battering will stop.

Common characteristics of battered women include the following:

1. Have low self-esteem.
2. Believe all the myths about battering relationships.
3. Are traditionalists about the home, strongly believe in family unity and the prescribed feminine sex-role stereotype.
4. Accept responsibility for the batterer's actions.
5. Suffer from guilt, yet deny the terror and anger they feel.
6. Have severe stress reactions with psychophysiological complaints.
7. Use sex as a way to establish intimacy.
8. Believes that no one will be able to help them resolve their predicament except themselves.

## Characteristics of Abusers

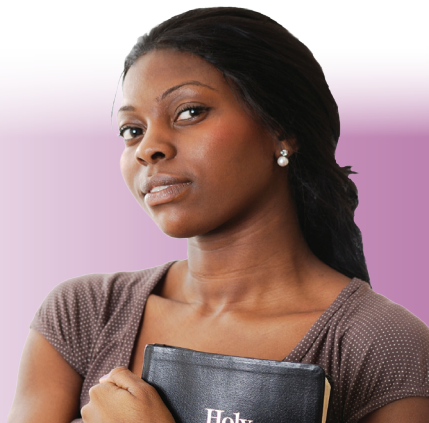
The batterer is not an ogre. He may appear to be a good father, a good provider, a sober and upstanding member of the community, and an active member of his religious congregation. He may well be charming and gregarious. His partner loves him and may be emotionally dependent on him. And, the victim may not be a saint some of her behavior may have given her partner cause for complaint. ***But no behavior could ever justify beating and abusing someone.***

Remember that a public and a private persona for the batterer is common. Instead of going by public perception of this individual, it is important to listen to those who know him in private. A member of the clergy may know this individual in a public context and may find him to be charming and effective. It is sometimes difficult, then, when the man's wife comes to the clergy person and tells a horrendous story about the abuse that she experienced in private. Her story contradicts the clergy person's perception of her husband. The tendency is to trust one's own experience and to disbelieve her story.

Common characteristics of batterers include the following:

1. Have low self-esteem.
2. Minimize the violent behavior.
3. Show extreme jealousy.
4. Attempt to isolate victims.
5. Have low tolerance for stress.
6. Lack skill in handling frustration.
7. Have a high need for control and domination.
8. Express most emotions as anger.

*Whether she stays or leaves,  
encourage her to seek help to get  
through her struggle.*



*Help her to understand that staying in a violent relationship may not be safe for her or her children.*



### *Why Victims May Not Tell Faith Based Leaders About the Abuse*

- She feels responsible for causing the abuse and believes it is her job to make it better.
- She believes that she is the only one in the congregation who has been abused.
- She may not know that information told to clergy will be **considered confidential**.
- She fears retribution from the abuser.
- She may have interpreted scripture or had the Bible used to justify her mistreatment.
- She has never been asked if she is being abused.
- Her batterer may be well respected and in a position of authority within the church or social community.
- She may be isolated and not be able to see her minister without the batterer being present.
- She believes that the church leaders will not understand or will be unwilling to get involved.
- She feels protective of her relationship and responsible for keeping the family together.
- She feels shame and is humiliated that this is happening to her.
- She hopes that her abuser will change and wants to believe his promises that violence won't happen again.
- She believes that she is the only one who can change him.

## *How You Can Help*

When a victim comes to you for help or you suspect there may be violence in the home, there are some specific things to keep in mind. Problems associated with domestic violence are difficult to work through. It may be helpful to remember that unless you are a professionally trained therapist, it is best not to attempt to provide therapy. Do, however, continue to provide support and help. She may need to know that no one deserves to be abused, no excuses justify abusive behavior, and there ARE places to get help. Remember that it may be very hard for women to talk about issues of abuse with males. And, never forget that safety is the primary concern. There are four goals to keep in mind as you respond.

1. **Protect the victim (and children) from further abuse.** This may mean calling the police in an emergency situation where the victim or her children are in immediate danger, referring the woman and her children to a shelter or safe home, or helping her go out of state to stay with a relative. The point is that she needs immediate safety, and we need to find a way to provide that as best we can.
2. **Stop the abuser's violence.** This may also mean calling the police to make an arrest, referring the abuser to a treatment program, or simply confronting him using your role as a pastor and telling him that his violence has to stop. We should not try to accomplish this alone. We need to call on the resources in the community to help him.
3. **Strongly maintain confidentiality.** Let the victim know that you will not share any information in any way about her – even as an anonymous reference in your sermon. (For more information about confidentiality procedures, contact your local shelter and ask about training materials and updated laws on confidentiality).
4. **Restore the marriage and family if possible. If restoration is not possible, help her recover from the relationship and move on.**

*Help her realize she is not the  
blame for the abuse.*



## *Suggested Guidelines*

- **Believe her! Do not question her accuracy.** Remember that she is probably minimizing the violence. What you hear may only be the beginning.
- **Confidentiality is critical.** A woman's consent should be obtained in writing for anyone who needs to know about the abuse. Just as importantly, use this opportunity to empower the victim to make contacts for herself. Offer the use of your phone. This provides an opportunity to be supportive throughout the process.
- **Do not disclose information about the victim to the batterer.** Be aware that many who batter experience a need to control others. Someone who batters may desire to control anyone (e.g., clergy, counselor, etc.) willing to help the victim.
- **Validate her feelings and affirm her courageous act of coming to you.** You may be the first person whom she has approached for help.
- **Ask direct, specific questions.** Many women will not acknowledge that there is "violence" in the relationship. However, they may acknowledge that he hits, punches, slaps, calls her names, etc. By being direct, you tell her that it is OK for her to discuss this difficult issue. By being specific, you help her identify behavior that may be abusive.
- **Counsel the battered woman without physically touching her.** To touch her may cause her to recall painful memories.
- **Unequivocally denounce the violence.** No one deserves to be abused. Do not ask her what she did to provoke the violence. She in no way caused the abuse!
- **Tell her she is not alone.**
- **Offer her alternatives from which to choose.** Many battered women find it difficult to see, let alone act on available options. Some of these options may be individual counseling, support groups and education. Use this opportunity to empower the victim to choose options for herself. **Support her decision to act or to not act.** She must be allowed to make changes in her own time – even if you are convinced that she should be doing something different. She already probably has someone at home telling her what to do and when to do it. Encourage her to verbalize her decision.
- **DO NOT SUGGEST MARRIAGE or COUPLES COUNSELING.** Unless the violence has completely stopped and the batterer has gone through a batterer's program, couples counseling could increase the level of violence. The immediate goal is to keep the victim safe.



- **Should one clergy counsel both victim and batterer?** Consider whether it would be a conflict to work with both of them. There is a dangerous potential if the two should come into contact through counseling (especially if there is a Protective Order in place).
- **Do not confront the abuser about what the victim has said.** Holding the abuser accountable, though important, is never as important as physical safety.
- **If the abuser confronts you.** He may deny that any abuse took place or he may blame her for his actions. You need to be unrelenting in your statements that violence is not tolerated. The abuser may have a long history of violence in his own family and will need help in seeing his behavior clearly and identify the patterns of violence in his life. This should be a learning process to affect change and NOT an exercise in finding excuses for the violent behavior.
- **Do not attempt to intervene during an explosion.** Unless helpers are specially trained and carry the authority to law-enforcement officers, not only will they not be helpful but they could be killed stepping into a violent incident. Rely on the police to stop an assault.
- **Do not attempt to intervene during the reconciliation phase.** Doing so may be a waste of time. Everyone's energy is usually focused on denial. No one is going to be willing to hear an outsider's efforts to refer the batterer to treatment and the victim to a safe place.
- **Do not minimize or deny the abuse/violence.** Do not participate in the minimization of the violent episode or in attempts to talk the victim into returning home. Be clear that you believe this battering will happen again and that you are available to help when it does. Do not encourage the victim to tolerate or endure the abusive acts. Help her to understand that the offender is responsible for his own behavior.
- **Do conduct private interviews with each partner.** The victim needs to feel safe to tell the truth of what is happening in her home. She may not be able to express herself if her batterer is sitting next to her.
- **Do attempt to intervene during the brief reality period after explosion.** If the victim is hospitalized, go to her there and if appropriate let her know that you feel she is in danger and needs to be in a safe place. Be sure she knows what resources are available to her. Encourage the victim to consider use of women's shelters, protective orders, and legal and police assistance is necessary.

#### Resources

Crime Victim Compensation Program  
Mississippi Attorney General Office  
Post Office Box 220  
Jackson, MS 39205  
1-800-829-6766  
601-359-6766  
[www.ago.state.ms.us](http://www.ago.state.ms.us)

Mississippi Department of Public Safety  
Division of Public Safety Planning  
Office of Justice Programs  
[ Grant Partner ]  
3750 I-55 North Frontage Road  
Jackson, MS 39211  
601-987-4990  
[www.dps.state.ms.us](http://www.dps.state.ms.us)

Mississippi Attorney General Office  
Domestic Violence Division  
Post Office Box 220  
Jackson, MS 39205  
601-359-4251  
[www.ago.state.ms.us](http://www.ago.state.ms.us)

## *Information to share with Victims*

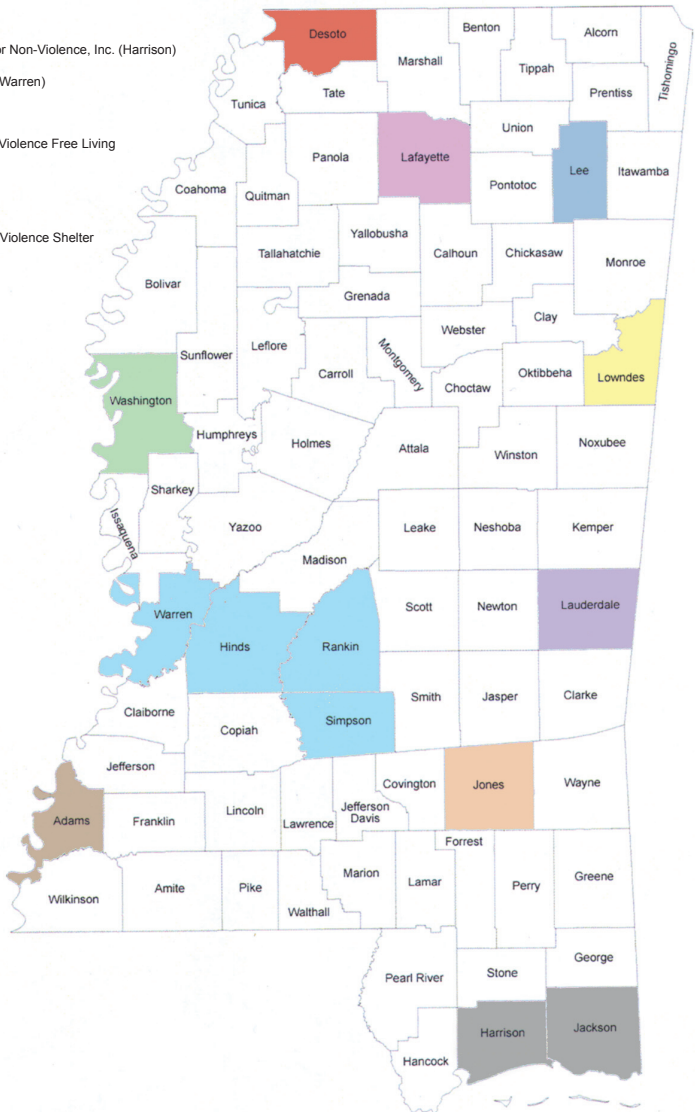
1. Gather all important documents (i.e. birth certificates, valuables, marriage license, bank accounts, Social Security cards, children's school records, etc.) and retain.
2. Use 911 when you need law enforcement and medical assistance, if injured.
3. Pack a small bag with clothes for self and children for at least one night and keep in a safe, hidden place.
4. Keep "getaway" money hidden.



## *General Guidelines for Leaving an Abusive Relationship*

- You may request a police stand-by or escort while you leave the home.
- If you need to sneak away, be prepared.
- Make a plan for how and where you will escape.
- Plan for a quick escape.
- Put aside as much emergency money as you can.
- Hide an extra set of car keys.
- Pack an extra set of clothes for yourself and your children and store them at a trusted friend or neighbor's house. Try to avoid using the homes of next-door neighbors, close family members and mutual friends.
- Take with you important phone numbers of friends, relatives, doctors, schools, etc., as well as other important items, including:
  - » Driver's license
  - » Regularly needed medication
  - » Credit cards or a list of credit cards you hold yourself or jointly
  - » Pay stubs
  - » Checkbooks and information about bank accounts and other assets
- If time is available, also take:
  - » Citizenship documents (such as your passport, green card, etc.)
  - » Titles, deeds and other property information
  - » Medical records
  - » Children's school and immunization records
  - » Insurance information
  - » Copy of marriage license, birth certificates, will and other legal documents
  - » Verification of social security numbers
  - » Welfare identification
  - » Valued pictures, jewelry or personal possessions

- Angel Wings Outreach (Simpson)
- Care Lodge
- Catholic Charities, Inc., Shelter for Battered Families (Hinds)
- Center for Violence Prevention (Rankin)
- Domestic Abuse Family Shelter (DAFS)
- Domestic Violence Project, Inc.
- The Guardian Shelter
- Gulf Coast Women's Center for Non-Violence, Inc. (Harrison)
- Haven House Family Shelter (Warren)
- House of Grace
- Our House, Inc., New Birth to Violence Free Living
- S.A.F.E., Inc.
- Safe Haven, Inc.
- The Salvation Army Domestic Violence Shelter (Jackson)



For service area information, please visit <http://www.ourhousenb.com>, click on "Safety Plans" and then click "MS Shelters."

# Domestic Violence Shelter Listing

[ \* GRANT PARTNERS ]

Angels Wings Outreach  
Post Office Box 787  
Mendenhall, MS 39114  
Crisis Line: 1-866-847-5802  
Admin. Line: 601-847-5802  
Fax Line: 601-847-5357

Care Lodge  
Post Office Box 5331  
Meridian, MS 39302  
Crisis Line: 601-693-HOPE (4673)  
Admin. Line: 601-482-8719  
Fax Line: 601-482-8718  
Email: [carelodge@bellsouth.net](mailto:carelodge@bellsouth.net)  
Website: [www.carelodge.com](http://www.carelodge.com)

Catholic Charities, Inc.  
Shelter for Battered Families  
500 George Street  
Jackson, MS 39202  
Crisis Line: 1-800-273-9012  
Crisis Line: 601-366-0222  
Legal Clinic: 601-206-9339  
Shelter Fax: 601-362-8223  
Web: [www.catholiccharitiesjackson.org](http://www.catholiccharitiesjackson.org)

Center for Violence Prevention  
Post Office Box 6279  
Pearl, MS 39288  
Crisis Line: 1-800-266-4198  
Admin. Line: 601-932-4198  
Fax Line: 601-936-7749  
Web: [www.msccvp.org](http://www.msccvp.org)

Domestic Abuse Family Shelter (DAFS)  
Post Office Box 273  
Laurel, MS 39441  
Crisis Line: 1-800-649-1092  
Admin. Line: 601-428-1707  
Fax Line: 601-428-3180

**\*Domestic Violence Project, Inc.**  
Post Office Box 286  
Oxford, MS 38655  
Crisis Line: 1-800-227-5764  
Crisis Line: 662-234-5085  
Admin. Line: 662-236-5026  
Fax Line: 662-236-4708  
Email: [familyviolence@hotmail.com](mailto:familyviolence@hotmail.com)

The Guardian Shelter  
Post Office Box 1225  
Natchez, MS 39121  
Crisis Line: 1-800-273-6938  
Admin. Line: 601-442-0142  
Fax Line: 601-442-6525

Gulf Coast Women's Center for Non-Violence, Inc.  
Post Office Box 333  
Biloxi, MS 39533  
Crisis Line: 1-800-800-1396  
Crisis Line: 1-228-435-1968  
Admin. Line: 228-435-3809  
Fax Line: 228-435-0513

Haven House Family Shelter  
Post Office Box 57  
Vicksburg, MS 39181  
Crisis Line: 1-800-898-0860  
Crisis Line: 601-638-0555  
Fax Line: 601-638-0021  
Email: [unitedway@vicksburg.com](mailto:unitedway@vicksburg.com)  
Web: [www.unitedwayvicksburg.org/PartnerAgencies/HavenHouse.html](http://www.unitedwayvicksburg.org/PartnerAgencies/HavenHouse.html)

House of Grace  
Post Office Box  
Southaven, MS 38671  
Crisis Line: 662-342-1432  
Admin. Line: 662-253-0242  
Fax Line: 662-342-4427

**\*Our House, Inc., New Birth to Violence Free Living**  
Post Office Box 3956  
Greenville, MS 38704  
Crisis Line: 1-888-884-LOVE (5683)  
Crisis Line: 662-332-LOVE (5683)  
Admin. Line: 662-334-6873  
Fax Line: 662-334-6875  
Email: [ourhouse@ourhousenb.com](mailto:ourhouse@ourhousenb.com)  
Web: [www.ourhousenb.com](http://www.ourhousenb.com)

S.A.F.E., Inc.  
Post Office Box 985  
Tupelo, MS 38802  
Crisis Line: 1-800-527-7233  
Shelter Line: 662-841-2273  
Fax Line: 662-680-5785  
Email: [staff\\_safe@comcast.net](mailto:staff_safe@comcast.net)  
Web: [www.safeshelter.net](http://www.safeshelter.net)

Safe Haven, Inc.  
Post Office Box 5354  
Columbus, MS 39704  
Crisis Line: 1-800-890-6040  
Shelter Line: 1-800-890-6040  
Fax Line: 662-329-1939  
Email: [safehavencolumbus@yahoo.com](mailto:safehavencolumbus@yahoo.com)

The Salvation Army Domestic Violence Shelter  
Post Office Drawer 630  
Pascagoula MS 39568  
Crisis Line: 1-800-382-7649  
Shelter: 228-762-8267  
Fax Line: 228-762-7227

## State-wide Resources

Mississippi Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
Crisis Line: 1-800-898-3234  
Web: [www.mcadv.org](http://www.mcadv.org)



*There is hope.*  
*Call In. Speak Out.*

**1-888-884-LOVE (5683)**

Mississippi Delta

*or*

**1-800-227-5764**

North Mississippi