



American College of
Emergency Physicians®

ADVANCING EMERGENCY CARE 

POLICY STATEMENT

Approved April 2019

Domestic Family Violence

Revised April 2019

Reaffirmed June 2013

Originally approved
October 2007, replacing
rescinded policies: Child
Abuse; Domestic Violence;
Emergency Medicine and
Domestic Violence;
Management of Elder Abuse
and Neglect; Support for
Victims of Family Violence;
Mandatory Reporting of
Domestic Violence to Law
Enforcement and Criminal
Justice Agencies

The American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) encourages emergency personnel to assess all patients for family violence in all its forms, including that directed toward children, elders, intimate partners, and other family members. Such patients should be appropriately referred for help and detailed evaluation. Identification and assessment can be difficult as violence and maltreatment can encompass abuse in many different forms including neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, financial exploitation and intimidation.

ACEP opposes mandatory reporting of domestic violence to the criminal justice system. Instead, ACEP encourages partnering with and reporting of domestic violence to local social services, victims' services, the criminal justice system, or any other appropriate resource agency to provide confidential counseling and assistance, in accordance with the patient's wishes. Safety planning should be an important component of any screening process. In jurisdictions that have mandatory reporting requirements, persons reporting in good faith should be immune from liability for compliance.

ACEP recommends that:

- Emergency personnel assess patients for intimate partner violence, child and elder maltreatment and neglect.
- Emergency physicians, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants are familiar with signs and symptoms of intimate partner violence, child and elder maltreatment and neglect.
- Emergency medical services, medical schools, and emergency medicine residency curricula should include education and training in recognition, assessment and interventions in intimate partner violence, child and elder maltreatment and neglect.
- Hospitals and emergency departments (EDs) encourage research regarding the epidemiology of intimate partner violence, child and elder maltreatment and neglect as well as best practice approaches to screening, assessment and intervention for victims.
- Hospitals and EDs are encouraged to participate in collaborative interdisciplinary approaches for the screening, assessment, safety planning and intervention of victims of intimate partner violence, child and elder maltreatment and neglect. These approaches include the development of policies, protocols, and relationships with outside agencies that oversee the management and investigation of family violence.

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- Hospitals and EDs should maintain appropriate education regarding state legal requirements for reporting intimate partner violence, child and elder maltreatment.