

University of California Systemwide VAWA Training

Identifying Warning Signs:

It is important to know some of the warning signs that may lead to an offense of sexual assault or an act of sexual violence. These behavioral warning signs may include:

- **Jealousy:** excessive questions about who a partner spends time with, displeasure at partner's activities that don't involve them.
- **Controlling Behavior:** getting angry at a partner who is "late" coming back from work, not allowing a partner to make personal decisions themselves.
- **Isolation:** Curtails a partner's social interaction; doesn't allow partner to use phone or car, stops partner from working or gaining further education or qualifications.
- **Verbal Abuse:** says things to or about a partner that are meant to be cruel and hurtful, either in public or in private. Makes comments like "You could never manage without me."
- **Blame-shifting for feelings and problems:** blaming a partner, family, or the University for their inabilities and lack of taking responsibility, or comments like "I wouldn't be mad if you hadn't"
- **Making threats of violence:** "If you talk to him/her again, I'll kill you." Or "If you leave me, I will kill myself."

What to Say:

If you suspect someone you know is a victim of a sexual offense or an act of sexual violence, talking with them about it can be difficult. The most important thing you can do is to let them know that they have support and that they do have options to leave the relationship. Some guidance on what to say and do can include:

- Offering your support without judgment or criticism. Often times a victim may wish to stay in abusive relationship, or leave and return to the relationship. Let him or her know it's not their fault and that they are not alone. Respect her/his decisions, even when you don't agree. Do not criticize or make him or her feel guilty; he or she needs you to be helpful, not hurtful.
- Not being afraid to tell him or her that you're concern for their safety. Help your friend, co-worker or family member recognize the abuse while acknowledging that he or she is in a difficult and dangerous situation.
- Trying to avoid a confrontation. Often times individuals experiencing abuse don't reach out to others for help. It's important to recognize if he or she is ready to talk about his or her experiences while offering support.
- Encouraging him or her to get help. Suggest ways to get additional support. Help him or her look into available resources, such as the National Domestic Violence Hotline number (800-799-SAFE) or a local domestic violence agency within their community with specially-trained advocates to help him or her out of the situation.