

Possible Scenarios- How to Respond

Below are some very general scenarios and responses/options to help guide you on how to handle each situation. Obviously, these answers may vary depending on the details of the situation, so this should be viewed as a loose guide. If you have questions while on a chat, reach out to someone for support.

You can...

Ask the other person on the chat line (if there is someone).

Call the Support Line to ask for Guidance: 315-468-3260

Call or text Julie: 719-252-8178 (DO NOT GIVE THIS NUMBER TO ANY CLIENT)

Support Line Number: 315-468-3260

Submitting an Advocacy Referral:

- Fill out the Advocacy Referral Form and submit it along with the chat information form to Julie.
 - Advise the person that, “The advocacy referral is being submitted now. Your assigned advocate should get in touch with you asap.” Advocates try to reach out within 24 to 48 hours of receiving the referral.
 - If you feel the person needs an EMERGENCY REFERRAL (for example, needs to hear from the advocate first thing the following business day) send the advocacy referral to jlovenberg@verahouse.org, jmoran@verahouse.org, and ostroman@verahouse.org This will assure that it’s seen quickly and given to an advocate to right away.
 - **VH Advocates can only serve clients in Onondaga County. We cannot cross county lines.**

Looking for Support/Advocacy/Shelter for DV/SA in another county in NY:

- Vera House only Serves Onondaga County. If someone needs services in another county **IN New York**, go to <https://www.nyscadv.org/find-help/program-directory.html> and look up the program in their County. If they are OUTSIDE New York, you can try googling “Domestic Violence Agency in _____ County, State”.

Looking for Shelter:

- Encourage them to get to a safe location to call the support line. They **HAVE TO** talk to shelter staff to find out if there is space and shelter can bring them in. *This can't be done through the chat.*

Needs Legal advice:

- Gather details around the topics they have questions about and submit a legal referral (use the advocacy referral form, but note that it’s for a legal referral) along with the chat information sheet. Advise that they should hear from our legal department soon.

Wants to file for Divorce/Custody/Child Support:

- For help with the paperwork and filing it, have them call the Volunteer Lawyer Project at 315-471-3409 or <https://www.onvlp.org/intake> to do an intake online. *(This process may change after COVID)*

- If they do not work or are low income, they may qualify for assigned representation through Hiscock Legal Aide (HLA). The court will assign someone to them if so.
- If they have income and know or believe they are over the income for HLA, submit a legal referral. We can NOT guarantee that our staff attorney will represent them! But... she will contact them, talk about the situation and either take them on as clients for representation OR refer them to another appropriate fit.
- Offer an advocacy referral: Advocates can be a great resource when someone is going through a court process! Advocates can attend court dates, provide emotional support, and help them understand the process and next steps.

Wants to Apply for an Order of Protection:

- Get the person's name (first and last), DOB, and safe phone number.
 - Email this information to jlovenberg@verahouse.org, imoran@verahouse.org, and ostroman@verahouse.org
- At the beginning of the following business day, one of us will send this information to the person who is doing orders of protection. That person will call the client to complete the paperwork over the phone. *(This process may change after COVID)*

Doesn't know if they should leave relationship:

- This might be a good advocacy referral. Advocates can talk through the situation with the person and present all their options to help them decide what they want to do. Often times, leaving a relationship safely requires getting some ducks in a row. Advocates are great at helping to make this plan and thinking through all the steps.

Need Financial Assistance:

- Vera House does not provide direct financial assistance. We may be able to assist someone apply for support benefits (help complete the paperwork) such as SNAP (food stamps), PA (Public Assistance), Section 8, etc. And in some cases, if the person is a victim of domestic violence, they get *some* priority for programs. If this seems like what they need, you can talk to them about an advocacy referral.
- If they just want help paying a bill or need some other temporary support/relief, advise them to call 211 to inquire about possible supports. If there is something available, 211 should have that information.

Other times to refer to 211:

- 211 is a number people can call to ask about resources for a TON of things. They dial 211 on their phone just like they would dial 911. Anytime someone needs help with something that isn't domestic or sexual violence (or elder abuse) related, refer them to 211. This could be things like needing additional food support, help finding new housing, financial help, getting placed in another local shelter, etc. Sometimes someone is asking for a resource for something I'm not even sure there would be a resource for, and I tell them that IF there is a resource for that, 211 would know about it.
 - Side note, 211 is everywhere. So if someone is chatting from another state, tell them to call 211 for local resources. Their phone server will connect them automatically to their local 211.
 - There's also a website if you want to see for yourself all the things they have resources for. <http://211cny.com/>

Was just sexually assaulted:

- If the person reports JUST being sexually assaulted, encourage them to go to the hospital to get checked out. While there, they will be offered a forensic exam (AKA: "Rape Kit"...we do not call it this) to potentially collect DNA evidence. They can choose to do this exam or not. No one will make them do it if they go to the hospital.
 - They can have this exam within 4 days of the assault (96 hours).
 - Encourage them not to shower or change their cloths if it just happened.
 - Even if they DO NOT want the exam, they can get checked medically to make sure they were not injured during the assault AND they will be offered medications to help protect and prevent sexually transmitted infections (STI's) and pregnancy.
- Offer a clinical ("Therapy") referral. All victims of sexual abuse/assault can receive therapy from VH.

Struggling emotionally with sexual trauma (past or present):

- Offer a clinical referral. A "Clinical" referral means therapy. All victims of sexual abuse/assault can receive therapy from VH. Our therapists are specifically trained to assist victims of sexual abuse.
 - Fill out the Clinical Referral Form- Advise the person they should hear from a clinical supervisor in 5 to 7 days. *(During COVID, therapy services are being offered remotely through phone or zoom)*
 - ****Crisis Appointments**** for therapy are available. There is a special calendar that staff have access to with the crisis appointments available for the current and following week. If someone you're talking to needs a crisis therapy appointment, contact shelter (call the support line) and have the staff person look up this calendar to tell you when the next available appointments are. Once your chatter has chosen one of the available times, you will need to have the shelter staff person add them to the calendar. Please then email me that you scheduled a crisis appointment. jlovenberg@verahouse.org

Therapy for Domestic Violence Only (no sexual abuse)

- If an **adult** wants to do therapy to help them regarding Domestic Violence ONLY... meaning the abuse did not have anything to do with sexual abuse/assault, then refer them to the Salvation Army Domestic Violence Therapy. 315-565-7369
- If a parent is asking for Domestic Violence Therapy for their minor child, submit a clinical referral along with the chat information form and make sure to note that the referral is for "Child DV counseling"
 - ****Just an FYI:** Vera House does not do DV only counseling for adults. Our clinical services are funded through the Office of Victim Services and the grant is to provide services for sexual abuse/assault victims. *However, we can do DV only counseling for children.* The grant for Domestic Violence counseling went to the Salvation Army, so that's typically who we refer to.

Family member or friend chatting with you about someone who is being abused:

- Provide emotional support and give VH service information they can share with their loved one. Advise them that the person will need to contact VH directly to get a referral for services for themselves.
 - We DO NOT reach out to anyone who has not asked us for services for themselves.
 - Remember how difficult it is for someone to watch a person they love be abused. They may not understand why the person doesn't leave the situation or the abuse may bring up some STRONG emotions for them. Validate how difficult it is to see someone in an abusive situation

and how important it is for them to let the person make choices for themselves, even if it's hard to do so.

- Tell them they can share information about Vera House services with their loved one and encourage them to contact us. *Give Support Line number.*

Chatter is experiencing an active domestic incident:

- It is rare that people contact us during an active domestic incident rather than police, but it does happen. Especially if they cannot make a phone call and talk out loud, they may chat with us instead.
 - You can offer to contact law enforcement for them to send help.
 - Get their name, date of birth, and address or location where they are. Tell them you're going to send police (if they agreed to this) and call 911.
 - Tell the 911 operator you are a volunteer for Vera House working on the web chat and that a person reached out for help. Give the person's information and any details about the situation that you have.
 - After you are off the call with law enforcement, contact Julie by phone for support (even if you are still on the chat). It's very important to process calls like this with someone!
 - Please make a note on the chat information sheet that you called police for the person so that it's well documented.

Wants to apply for compensation following a crime against them:

- Any "Innocent Victim of a Crime" can apply for compensation from the Office of Victim Services. You don't need to know or understand ALL of the details, but if someone would like to apply for compensation, offer them an advocacy referral. Advocates can talk to them more about their eligibility and help them fill out and file the application.
 - An advocacy referral might also be helpful because, after being victimized, they may also benefit from support through a court process or safety planning, etc.

Commonly Used Abbreviations:

- DV- Domestic Violence
- SA- Sexual Abuse or Sexual Assault
- OVS- Office of Victim Services
- NYSCADV- New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence
- FC- Family Court
- CJS- Criminal Justice System
- DA- District Attorney
- HLA- Hiscock Legal Aide
- DSS- Department of Social Services
- CPS- Child Protective Services
- CPEP- Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Program (Our local CPEP is at St. Josephs)
- OoP- Order of Protection
- DOB: Date of Birth
- SPD: Syracuse Police Department

- APU: Abused Persons Unit
- TW: This writer
- TC: This caller/chatter