**WHAT IS FORENSIC NURSING?**

Forensic nursing is the specialty practice of nursing at the intersection of the healthcare system and the legal system.

**WHAT DOES A FORENSIC NURSE (FN) DO?**

The FN cares for and treats individuals, families, and communities that experience intentional and unintentional injury.

**WHO CAN BE A DOMESTIC VIOLENCE EXAMINER (DVE)?**

A registered nurse (RN) who completes specific education and clinical preparation for conducting assessments and exams of the patient who experiences domestic violence, also known as intimate partner violence (IPV).

**WHAT IS IPV?**

IPV encompasses a continuum of harmful, neglectful, abusive, or violent behavior that occurs between people in intimate relationships. Such relationships do not require sexual intimacy and are not limited to one age group, but range instead from adolescent dating violence to abuse by intimate partners in later life. This type of violence can occur among family members and couples (heterosexual or same-sex) and may be intergenerational, affecting the patient who is abused, the offender, and members of the extended family and community.

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**ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION**

The International Association of Forensic Nurses is a professional specialty organization comprised of FNs and other forensic professionals worldwide.

Our mission is to provide leadership in forensic nursing practice by developing, promoting, and disseminating information internationally about forensic nursing science.

**RESOURCES**

ForensicNurses.org  
Intimate Partner Violence Education Guidelines

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**HEALTHCARE’S RESPONSE**

IPV is a primary cause of traumatic injury to women and one of the leading causes of death of pregnant women. The health consequences of IPV are significant; in the United States alone the financial burden exceeds $5.8 billion annually, of which $4.1 billion is spent providing for direct medical and mental healthcare. The World Health Organization states that studies from a range of countries show that 40–70% of female murder victims were killed by their husband or boyfriend. Many hospitals now routinely screen for IPV and some provide specialized forensic nurses to care for these patients. Our Association and the Emergency Nurses Association developed a joint position statement asserting that all nurses should routinely screen patients for IPV and use forensic nurses to help care for these vulnerable patients. Additionally, in the U.S. the Affordable Care Act encourages that all women be screened and briefly counseled.

**WHAT DOES A DOMESTIC VIOLENCE EXAMINER DO?**

The Domestic Violence Examiner (DVE) assesses for IPV across age groups, populations, and practice settings. Yet, the DVE does not simply identify the possible presence of IPV, but rather, effectively addresses its adverse health implications through planning, evaluation, intervention, and follow-up. The DVE serves the patient through intervention and prevention.

Using a patient and trauma-informed model of care, the DVE provides specialized care that includes taking a patient’s complete health history, performing a physical examination (including screening for strangulation and other injuries), treating the patient’s injuries, addressing his or her medical concerns, where applicable, medical photo-documentation of injuries, providing culturally competent referrals to the patient and family members, and implementing preventive measures using models such as the Spectrum of Prevention Ecological Model.

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6International Association of Forensic Nurses, supra, note 1.