

can have a big impact. This year let's add Earth to our Holiday List and turn December into Sustainability Season!

## Gifts

- Share the gift of a meal – Make a dinner date or buy some specialty ingredients. Gift basket ideas can include non-perishables such as a Breakfast Basket with pancake mix, maple syrup, and ground coffee or an Italian themed basket with pasta, jarred sauce, and a bottle of wine.
- Embrace the idea of buying used items - thrift stores offer many treasures.
- Create a wishlist for family and Secret Santas to prevent giving and receiving gifts that aren't wanted.
- Give an experience with memberships to a museum, zoo or gallery.
- Donate to a charity or plant a tree in someone's name.

## Gift Wrapping

- Considering the amount of packaging when purchasing items.
- Reuse packaging paper or newspaper to wrap gifts.
- Utilize reusable wrapping such as bags

or cloth bags.

- If you're purchasing decorations, choose items that can be reused and passed on.

## Food Waste

- If you plan a potluck at work to celebrate the holiday season, have a sign-up list to reduce redundancies and make sure everyone knows how much food to prepare.
- Whether you're celebrating at work or home - guests can bring reusable containers to take leftovers home.
- Bring your own containers to restaurants for leftovers.

## Travel

- When possible, carpool to events.
- Decide on designated drivers to get everyone home safely.
- Use mass transit to reduce impact.

## New Traditions

- Connect with nature as a family. Plan a holiday walk or run around the neighborhood.
- On New Year's Day – visit state parks, trails, or historic sites as part of New York State's First Day Hikes initiative.

- Think about old traditions that you can let go of while creating new traditions.
- Incorporate necessity items into your traditions - such as buying everyone new pajamas at Christmas

This holiday season brings the opportunity to create new sustainable traditions while maintaining the magic of the season. Remember, even one or two small changes can make a big difference! Let's celebrate in a way that not only honors tradition but also gives back to our planet—a gift that will continue to benefit future generations, keeping the magic of the season alive for years to come. ■

## References

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# Every Encounter Counts: What New York Nurses Should Know About Domestic Violence

By Lorien Castelle and Jennifer Clark, New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NYSCADV)



Domestic violence is a silent epidemic, affecting tens of thousands of New Yorkers every year. As a nurse, you are not

only a caregiver—you are often the first trusted professional a survivor meets. Every patient interaction is an opportunity to screen for abuse, provide education, and connect individuals with life-saving support.

**“Nurses are often the first safe person a survivor encounters. That trust is powerful—don’t underestimate it.”**

— NYS Domestic Violence Advocate

## Why Nurses Are Key in DV Prevention

Survivors don't always present with visible injuries. Some show signs such as anxiety, frequent unexplained visits, sleep disturbances, or chronic pain. That's why routine, compassionate screening in a private setting is essential—even when there are no obvious signs. It's also important to understand that legal definitions of domestic violence—such as those used in criminal statutes or protective order processes—

are often narrower, focusing primarily on physical harm or sexual assault. However, from a public health perspective, intimate partner violence (IPV) encompasses a much broader spectrum of behaviors that negatively impact health and well-being. These include emotional abuse, social isolation, intimidation, stalking, reproductive coercion, and other forms of coercive control. These behaviors may not leave visible marks but can have profound physical and psychological effects. Nurses equipped with this broader understanding are better prepared to identify, validate, and respond to survivors in meaningful ways.

In New York State, [Public Health Law §2805-z](#) requires hospitals to screen for domestic violence and establish referral protocols. But nurses across all settings—from school nurses to primary care—can and should play a vital role in early identification, education, and connection to support.

## Best Practices for Nurses

1. Make Screening Routine and Private; Ask every patient—privately and without partners present.
2. “Because violence is common in many people’s lives, I ask all my patients: Do you feel safe at home?”
3. Use a Trauma-Informed Approach; Let the patient guide the conversation. Validate their experience without judgment: “I believe you. You’re not alone, and help is available when you’re ready.”
4. Document Clearly; Stick to facts. Use quotes when possible. Avoid assumptions. This protects both the patient and the healthcare provider.
5. Know Your Local Resources; Each county in NY has at least [one designated domestic violence program](#) offering services like shelter, counseling, legal advocacy, and safety planning.
6. Support Without Pressure; Patients may not be ready to act. It’s also important to remember that leaving does not equal safety in IPV. Abuse is often

escalated post separation. Your role is to keep the door open and provide resources they can use when and if they’re ready.

**“Every time you screen, you’re opening a door. Even if they say no today, they’ll remember your compassion tomorrow.”**

— NYS ER Nurse

### New York State Resources for Nurses

24/7 NYS Domestic and Sexual Violence Hotline

- Call: 800-942-6906
- Text: 844-997-2121
- Chat: [opdv.ny.gov](https://opdv.ny.gov)

#### Training & Education

- [OPDV Online Courses for Healthcare Providers](#)
- [NYS Domestic Violence Program Directory](#)

**Quick Tip:** A universal notification approach is a critical counterpart to screening. Post hotline information, educational posters, pamphlets, and local resources in waiting rooms, break rooms, bathrooms, and exam rooms. Survivors may see it and understand that you are a safe person to talk to. Even if they don’t speak up right away they may make a plan to disclose at a later encounter.

## October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month

October marks Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM)—a time to honor survivors, raise awareness, and strengthen our collective commitment to prevention and support. Throughout the month, local domestic violence programs across New York State will be hosting events, vigils, trainings, and community actions. We encourage nurses and healthcare practitioners to show their support by attending a local event, sharing resources, or simply starting a conversation within your

facility. Connecting with your regional DV program is a powerful way to build partnerships and better serve patients experiencing abuse. Explore events happening in your area by visiting [NYSCADV’s calendar](#).

## Join Us This Fall For Our Prevention Summit

To explore how healthcare intersects with violence prevention, ANA-NY members are invited to attend the 2025 Primary Prevention Summit, hosted by NYSCADV on November 17–18, 2025, at Rivers Resort & Casino in Schenectady, NY. Learn more and [register here](#).

### Sessions will focus on:

- Trauma-informed care in clinical settings
- Building healthcare-community partnerships
- Addressing health equity in prevention

**“You don’t need to have all the answers. You just need to open the conversation.”**

Nurses are not expected to fix domestic violence, but your compassion, your questions, and your ability to connect patients to support can change—and even save—lives.

## About NYSCADV

The New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NYSCADV) works to prevent and end domestic violence through policy advocacy, training, and coalition-building. We partner with advocates, survivors, and professionals—including nurses—across New York to promote safety and justice for all. Learn more at [www.nyscadv.org](https://www.nyscadv.org). ■