

Since 1981, National Crime Victims' Rights Week has been celebrated annually in April. It is a week long dedication that focuses on victimization, the effect victimization has on individuals, families, friends, and the community, and to promote laws, policies, and programs to help victims of crime.

This year's theme, **Seek Justice | Ensure Victims' Rights | Inspire Hope**, is symbolic in Domestic Violence Cases. The Domestic Violence Unit utilizes 2 circular tools to educate victims on the dynamics of Domestic Violence. One is the Power and Control Wheel. This wheel demonstrates patterns of abusive and violent behaviors, which are utilized by a batterer to establish and maintain control over his partner. These behaviors include threats, intimidation, emotional abuse, isolation, using children, and economic abuse.

The second one is the Cycle of Violence which reflects the repetitive behaviors perpetrators use to hinder a victim's ability to leave an abusive relationship. The cycle includes the tension building phase, violent episode phase, and the remorseful / honeymoon phase. These cycles have long lasting effects on not only victims and their children but also their family, friends, and community.

National Crime Victims' Rights week is a reminder to all that Domestic Violence is a community issue that is unlike any other crime. It is violence from someone you know, who claims to love you, in sanctity of your home. It is most often hidden from even one's closest confidants and leaves lifelong physical and emotional scares.

Our Domestic Violence Unit strives to create an environment that supports self-empowerment and safety while navigating the Criminal Justice system. Advocates aim to break the cycle of violence by providing services that include crisis intervention, safety planning, domestic violence education, and community referrals. Our goal is to make the justice system more helpful to those it was designed to protect. National Crime Victims' Rights Week is an opportunity to restore victims' loss of faith in the criminal justice system with a renewed emphasis on the rights of victims.

For assistance please contact the Bonnie Bondi, Domestic Violence Victim Assistance Coordinator at 504-934-6646 or 911 in case of emergency.