



# Planning for Action

## A Guide for Hosting a PRIVATE VIOLENCE Advocacy Event

*"We need to change the culture of what it means to be a man."*

-Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings at PRIVATE VIOLENCE event

Everyday, through your advocacy on behalf of domestic violence victims, you are making the world a safer place for victims. We are thrilled and honored that our film, PRIVATE VIOLENCE, will be used to support your important work. By screening PRIVATE VIOLENCE, you can help build public awareness and foster a rational discussion about domestic violence. *Most importantly, the event offers the opportunity to publicly ask "what happens when an abused woman in my community asks for help?"*

We offer this guide as a way to share what we have learned from some of the amazing communities that have held advocacy-driven screening events.

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### About the Documentary PRIVATE VIOLENCE

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PRIVATE VIOLENCE explores a simple but deeply disturbing fact of American life: the most dangerous place for a woman in America is in her own home. Through the eyes of two survivors - Deanna Walters, a mother who seeks justice for the crimes committed against her at the hands of her estranged husband, and

Kit Gruelle, an advocate who seeks justice for all women - we bear witness to the complicated and complex realities of intimate partner violence. PRIVATE VIOLENCE begins to shape powerful, new questions that hold the potential to change our society: Why does he abuse? Why do we turn away? How do we begin to build a future without domestic violence?

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### Use the Film to Tell YOUR Story

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When the news is about domestic violence, what makes it to the public is never the whole story. Most people do not see beyond the headlines of brutality. Missing is the reality of what happens when victims try to leave violent relationships, what happens when children witness domestic violence, and how terribly frustrating the legal system is. Also missing is the story of the everyday heroes, the advocates, that work with victims within a cultural and legal system that is often stacked against women.

*That* is your story. *That* is the story of PRIVATE VIOLENCE.

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### Planning Goals

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The overall goal for planning an advocacy event is to increase the ability for your community to work together to affect the conditions in which domestic violence is perpetuated, intervened with and prevented.

The most effective events have well-thought out goals.

Your goals might include:

1. Celebrating Domestic Violence Awareness Month
2. Recognizing the anniversary of an important local accomplishment (e.g. the development of a regional network; significant policy change; opening of a DV program, etc.)
3. Increasing general public awareness
4. Training
5. Honoring:
  - A local hero, someone who went above and beyond
  - A survivor

- An advocate
  - A strong male advocate
  - Community members lost to domestic violence and the children and family members left behind
6. Fundraising
  7. Recruiting volunteers
  8. Thanking DV constituencies
  9. Create awareness about local resources



*"Battered women do not have a character flaw."*

*-Kit Gruelle, subject of PRIVATE VIOLENCE*

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## Forming Your Planning Team

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You can always host a screening event on your own, but we encourage you to consider using this opportunity to build relationships with others that can last far beyond this event. To have the most impactful event, you will need to involve other people and organizations. In addition to assuring the success of your event, the actual event planning process can serve to build new and strengthen existing relationships. Thus, it is *exceptionally important to be inclusive* and apolitical in your planning team building.

### *The core work team*

If you've planned anything before, you know that it is often the hard work of a few people that bring an event to life. Those few people will form your *core work team*. If you are reading this guide, chances are, you are already one of those people. As you think about your goals and the time it will take to plan your event, who else in your DV network has the time and talent to partner with you? Think outside your own organization! Remember...planning is a leadership opportunity and thus, a great learning experience. You may be honoring someone when you ask them to work with you on the event.

Tasks for the core work team may include:

1. Hosting planning meetings (including agenda setting and note taking)
2. Creating and managing the timeline
3. Managing invitations, reminders and RSVP's

4. Securing and managing outside vendors (caterers, photographers, etc.)
5. Working with the PRIVATE VIOLENCE team to arrange for speakers, DVD licensing, etc.
6. Working on venue logistics
7. Venue walk-throughs prior to the event

### *The Event Committee*

The best planned event will not be successful if no one shows up. The most successful events have a diverse representation of planners. Invite partners that can lend credibility and promote the event within their constituents and social media networks.



Potential representatives can come from:

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| DV service providers                        | Law enforcement (Judges, DA Office and Police)                                       |
| DV advocacy organizations                   | Victim Witness programs  |
| The state coalition                         | Batterer Treatment Program   |
| Government based DV task force              | Dentists   |
| Foundations/Private donors                  | Healthcare (Ob-Gyn, Primary care, family health, Emergency Room, Planned Parenthood) |
| Universities/Colleges (state and community) | Mental Health  |
| Private attorneys                           |  |

|   |                           |
|---|---------------------------|
| School Personnel (administrators, teachers, coaches, counselors, SRO's) | County/City Commissioners |
| Guardians Ad Litum  | Animal Control            |
| CPS Social workers and administrators                                   | Pharmacists               |
|   | Clergy                    |
|   | Dispatchers               |

The event committee members should be willing to commit the time that it will take to work as part of team that will set goals, build audience, promote the event and support the core work team.

Specific responsibilities of the event committee might include:

1. Watch the film prior to the event!
2. Set goals and call-to-action (e.g. What do you want audience members to do as a result of attending your event?)
3. Set the date, time, and venue
4. Set budget and secure funding sponsorships
5. Select and recruit event sponsors
6. Approve invitations
7. Develop the event program (event agenda, select speakers, facilitate Q & A, etc.)
8. Develop the call-to-action
9. Build audience
10. Promote the event through their own social media networks



### *Event Sponsors*

The more event sponsors you have, the more credibility and reach your event will have. Event sponsors will not be expected to help plan the event, but they will be expected to help build audience and show up for the event.

In addition to sponsors that are already deeply engaged (and that includes all of the planning committee organizations!) in domestic

violence prevention, think about those that might be engaged to do more.

Depending on the specific sponsor, consider offering benefits to your sponsors, such as:

1. Recognition in printed materials (event program, banners, etc.)
2. Mention and thanks from the stage
3. Potential of giving welcoming/closing remarks
4. Recognition in press releases, social media, etc. Find a Venue

### *Vibe*

PRIVATE VIOLENCE is a very intimate look at domestic violence. As you are aware from your own work, and as we have experienced, the film can trigger strong emotions from audience members, particularly those whose lives have been personally impacted by domestic violence. Therefore, it's important to plan for this by creating a relaxed and supportive atmosphere regardless of the venue. The more intimate the venue is, the safer the event will feel. A clean space with comfortable seating goes a long way!



### *Location*

The primary consideration for location is to make getting there as easy as possible for your targeted audience. If you are targeting legislators and policy makers, consider finding a screening room within a government building. If are targeting a public audience, consider locations that are centrally located. No matter what the location, it is important that parking be effortless, and that it be wheelchair accessible. If you are in a city, a location that is easily accessed by public transit is equally important. If the screening is embedded in a training or conference, consider working with the training venue to create appropriate space in the building. Asking people to leave the conference venue will result in a smaller audience.

### *Day and time*

As with location, depending on your audience, the day and time of your event will be integral to its success. Is your audience targeting policy makers? Consider a day time event. General public? Thursday nights and Sunday afternoon tend to work best.

Volunteers, advocates, funders? An weekday evening event might be the most conducive. Times to try to avoid...weekdays before 6; and weekend mornings.

Depending on your event, the minimum amount of time to allow for is 2 hours (the film runs approximately 90 minutes). Be sure to give yourself time for technical snafus, later arrivals, etc.

### *Size*

The size of your space should reflect a realistic estimate of the size of your audience. If the space is too large and the space is not filled, people will feel lost in the room and less likely to participate in the Q & A. Psychologically, your event will feel less successful to the planners, so set realistic expectations!



### *Light and sound*

PRIVATE VIOLENCE will be sent to you on a DVD prior to your event. The last thing you want to do is show up for the event, only to find that the room is inadequate equipped to show a high-quality DVD. Your venue needs to either have or have access to a high-quality sound and DVD

playback system. The room must be able to darken nearly completely. If you haven't experienced the space before, before committing, ask for a walk through.

### *Other equipment*

If you are planning to have speakers and/or a post-screening Q & A panel, be sure that the venue has cordless microphones, speakers and chairs for panelists. If you will have resource tables, make sure there are tables and seating available.

## Cost

Don't let the cost of a theater rental deter you. Very often, theater managers will donate or give a greatly reduced fee for their venue if you are willing to use "off hours." It's also an opportunity to give back to their community, so don't be afraid to ask them to waive their costs completely. Depending on the size of your event, other venues to consider are university theaters, libraries, performance centers, large churches, museums, or community centers.

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## Programming Your Event

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### *Purpose of your event*

Your event might have a single purpose (e.g. public awareness) or multiple purposes. You might consider the following possibilities for your event:

Celebrate Domestic Violence  
Prevention Month

Honoring leaders in your  
community

Celebrate a local/regional  
milestone (formation of a network,  
passage of a law, etc.)

Advocate Recognition

Cultivation

Fundraising

Training

Response to well-publicized media  
case (local or national)

### *Creating a Call-to-Action*

Watching a character-driven documentary is a powerful experience. Afterwards, it's not uncommon for audience members to ask "what can I do?" So, be prepared with an answer!

The best calls to action are concrete and specific. Samples include:

1. Online letter writing campaign (if you pursue this option, make sure the process is exceptionally simple)
2. Donations to a fund that solely and directly supports victims and advocates
3. Clothing/Furniture drive
4. A community wish list
5. Volunteer (offer specific ways in which people can volunteer and the specifics about how to sign up)



6. Get audience member's communities involved (through hosting a screening in their home, church, workplace, etc.)

Whatever your call-to-action is, it's important that your event planning group agree on it. If certain agendas are pursued over others, this may deter the planning process and influence your event negatively. Good meeting facilitation will go a long way to avoid this problem.

### *Selecting Speakers*

Guest speakers can add vitality and importance to your event. Most importantly, they bring validation to the problem of domestic violence and can strongly reinforce your call-to-action from the stage.

The event planning committee should suggest and approve speakers. Someone from the committee should be tasked with securing the speaker(s). Especially with speakers who are elected officials, it's important to have a back up plan (or two).

When asking someone to speak, be prepared to tell them the time, place, how long you would like them to speak, who the audience will be and what you would like them to say.



Many communities invite the film's director, Cynthia Hill or film subject and domestic violence expert, Kit Gruelle to make remarks and/or participate on the Q & A panel. Information about inviting Cynthia or Kit to your event can be found at: XXXXXX.

(See section on "Questions You Should be Prepared to Answer")

### *Fundraising*

While some communities add a fundraising component to their event, given the diverse nature of the event planning committee, most communities avoid using the public event to fundraise. However, if the timing works, organizations may want to consider hosting separate fundraising events the day before or after the public event. (Note: additional screening fees may apply)

## *Reception*

Receptions before or after the screening can be a wonderful touch. Receptions before a screening can set the stage for the rest of the event as they are an opportunity to welcome participants, network, include resource tables, etc. If funding allows, having popcorn, candy and soft drinks are always appreciated. Receptions after a screening allow for the conversation to continue. Be prepared for audience members who have been directly impacted by domestic violence to seek out a speaker or representative from a domestic violence program.

## *Creative “add ons”*



The domestic violence community is a creative one! Event “add-ons” can be a wonderful touch. Events have included:

1. DV Advocacy Time Line. Hang a long piece of horizontal butcher block paper with columns representing decades of the year in which an audience member got involved with domestic violence work (have markers available). If the audience is heavily advocacy based, this add-on can create a real sense of history and experience.
2. Featured artwork. Many DV programs have art therapy programs for victims and/or children. Getting permission to hang some of the artwork is a powerful reminder of the direct impact violence has.
3. Small recognition gifts. Several online stores such as Awareness Ribbons Gifts (<http://awarenessribbongifts.com/shop/domestic-violence/>) have token gifts sold in bulk that could be purchased as participant gifts.
4. Decorations. Some communities have used simple decorations and lighting to lend pizzazz to their event. Ideas include: Purple draping over resource tables, using purple plastic table cloth as “theater entrance flooring,” purple stage lighting, etc.
5. Pre/Post-event commemoration activities. Activities may include a local march, candle-lighting, ballon lift off, writing messages of hope on postcards that can be delivered to DV shelters, etc.

### *Post-Screening Panel*

One of the most important components to your event will be a Question and Answer panel. Having an opportunity for the audience to ask questions, make statements and publicly process the film provides a “finger on the pulse” mechanism for your planning group to sense where your community is in regard to domestic violence prevention. A few considerations:

1. Ideally, your speakers and panelists will have an opportunity to see the film prior to the night of the screening.
2. Before the film, let the audience know there will be a Q & A panel discussion following and ask them to stay.
3. The size of the venue directly influences the intimacy of the event. Designate volunteers to run a cordless microphone in the aisles to audience members with questions. Larger venues can intimidate some from standing and asking questions. An option is to have “question runners” collect written questions that they deliver to the panel.
4. Your panel will be most effective if it includes a moderator and no more than 4 panelists. Serving on the panel, may be an honor for some on the planning committee...don't be shy about asking for representation!
5. While bringing differing points of view to your event planning committee can serve to build relationships, bringing a debate to the public forum can be confusing and difficult to manage.



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### Promoting Your Event

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Invite! Promote! Create Buzz!

You cannot invite too many people, and you cannot do too much publicity and promotion for your event. Bringing awareness to your event is also bringing awareness to domestic violence, whether they attend the event or not. Use the screening event to the largest extent possible to promote the services in your community and bring awareness to the problem.

### *Partner organization promotion*

|                         |                                  |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Email lists             | Newsletters                      |
| Mailing Lists           | Website Features                 |
| Blogs                   | Mentions at other related events |
| Social Networking Sites |                                  |

### *Media contacts to consider approaching*

|                               |                                  |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Daily newspapers              | Niche papers/ethnic press        |
| Local PBS station             | Weekly alternative paper         |
| Local radio PSA's             | Social networking sites          |
| Blogs                         | Online neighborhood news sources |
| College/University newspapers |                                  |

### *Outreach strategies*

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| Speak at other events                                   | Hand out postcards                                  |
| Bulletins (church, community groups)                    | Contact educators at local schools and universities |
| Post flyers (medical facilities, dorms, churches, etc.) |   |

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## Timeline

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### *Three months or more prior to event*

- Organizing core work and event planning teams
- Select venue
- Select date and time
- Develop event budget
- Start securing sponsorship (ongoing)
- Select and invite VIP speakers

### *Two-three months prior to event*

- Generate 'save the date' cards

“Deep level” planning for the goals for your event and the call-to-action

Start mentioning the event in constituent circles (board, staff and volunteer meetings, etc)

Continue securing sponsorship

Select online invitation and RSVP program

### *One-two months prior to the event*

Start announcing the event on social media, newsletters, etc.

Send out first wave of invitations

Finalize event program agenda

### *Three weeks*

Resend invitations (most RSVP’s come in one-two weeks prior to actual event)

Secure volunteers

Organize resource table logistics

Select vendors for food and drink

Finalize design of any printed materials

Contact broadcast media

### *Two weeks*

Resend invitations

Step up all social media announcements

Send announcement out on all relevant membership lists

Print relevant materials

Confirm speaker and panelist attendance

Secure the DVD

Send out press-releases

Venue walk-through with manager to test DVD, lighting, etc.

Secure decorations

Update planning and sponsoring organizations of current RSVP’s

Secure a photographer

### *One week*

Finalize food and drink menus

Email reminder to volunteers, organizations providing resource tables (include time, place, etc.)

Prepare any information or program packets to be handed out during event

Resend invitations and announcement

Strong social media announcements

Send out press releases

Update planning and sponsoring organizations of current RSVP's

### *Day before your event*

Send out final reminders

Final confirmation of VIP speakers

Final venue walk-through, including A/V equipment check

Visualize audience flow before/after event (e.g. if there are resource or catering being tables set up, anticipate the impact if another venue event or screening happens simultaneously)

Final social media 'blitz'

Update planning and sponsoring organizations of current RSVP's

### *Day of event*

Depending on the complexity of your event, give yourself enough time and people to set up, walk-through and manage any last minute needs

Prep speakers and panelists. Remind them of the event call-to-action and ask them to acknowledge it from the stage

Final "tech checks"

If you are using sign-in sheets, be sure they are located in easy to find spaces

Put signage in place

If not in a theater, ensure that the chairs are set up and that there are enough of them

### *Follow up*

If possible, hold a post-event meeting to talk about next steps (in regard to the call-to-action).

Thank the sponsors

Call or email any press contacts

Post any press or news about the event on social media networks

Let the PRIVATE VIOLENCE team know how it went! Send photos!

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## Resources

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### *Questions You Should Be Prepared to Answer*

The following represents common questions that arise during Q&A sessions:

#### **What happens when an abused woman in my community asks for help?**

If a woman calls law enforcement, how will they respond to and investigate the assault?

Does the sheriff's department/police department have dedicated DV officers?

Does the district attorney's office have dedicated DV prosecutors?

What is the elected DAs official policy on domestic violence crimes?

How do the judges respond?

What happens in civil court when she goes to obtain her Order of Protection?

Are there attorneys in the community to help her, through legal aid or private attorneys who take pro bono cases?

How does the local Child Protective Services agency respond to domestic violence? Are they punitive towards her or are they trained to work positively with the non-offending parent?

### **What happens to batterers in my community?**

Is there a local Batterers Treatment Program for him to be referred to through the courts?

What is the difference between a batterers treatment program and an Anger Management program?

### **How do the laws in a particular state reflect the seriousness of the crime?**

What constitutes a misdemeanor assault?

If there are victims in the audience that are willing to speak, ask them what legislative issues need attention.

### **Are there cutting edge programs we should know about?**

### **What do I say to someone who is in a domestic violence situation right now?**

### *Online Invitation and RSVP Services*

Facebook Event

Google Calendar

Evite

Pingg

PaperlessPost

### *PRIVATE VIOLENCE Publications*

5 Things to Say and Not to Say to a Domestic Violence Victim card

Meetup WWW.MEETUP.COM/PRIVATEVIOLENCE JOIN OR HOST A MEETUP TO SEE **PRIVATE VIOLENCE** AN HBO DOCUMENTARY FILM PREMIERING OCT. 20TH @ 9PM

#### WHAT TO SAY

- Are you afraid of your partner when he is angry?
- You are not alone; there is help for you, your children, and him.
- May I help you find some local resources?
- You deserve to feel safe in your home at all times, especially when you and your partner disagree.
- I'm not here to judge you; I'm here to listen.

#### WHAT NOT TO SAY

- Why don't you just leave?
- I'd never put up with that.
- What did you do to make him angry?
- He/she seems nice to me.
- It's just stress

IF YOU NEED HELP OR KNOW SOMEONE WHO DOES, THE NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE IS OPEN CALL 1-800-799-7233 OR VISIT WWW.THEHOTLINE.ORG

#ENDPRIVATEVIOLENCE • WWW.PRIVATEVIOLENCE.COM

“Be That Man” card

PRIVATE VIOLENCE Information Cards

Posters

Press Kit

*Samples*

Press release

Invitation

Event Programs

Event Budget

Planning meeting agenda

Pre/Post Surveys