

## Medical Records

Thorough, well-documented medical records can provide concrete evidence of violence and abuse, and may be crucial to the outcome of a legal case. If the medical record and trial testimony are in conflict, the medical record may be considered more credible.

### **Records should be kept in a precise, professional manner and should include the following:**

- Date and time of arrival
- Name, address and phone number of the patient and anyone accompanying the patient. Also include the Victim's relationship to the abuser
- Major complaint and description of the abusive event, using the patient's own words. "My husband hit me with a bat" is better than "Patient has been abused."
- Detailed description of old and new injuries, including type, number, size, location, possible causes and explanations given by the patient. Where applicable, the location and nature of the injuries should be recorded on a body chart or drawing.
- Your opinion of whether injuries that are symptomatic of domestic abuse, were adequately explained
- Documentation that you asked the patient about domestic violence and notation of response
- If a weapon was involved. If the response is affirmative note the weapon or weapons described.
- Results of all pertinent laboratory and other diagnostic procedures
- Color photographs and imaging studies of any injuries, if applicable. Also, note the time period since the injury and schedule follow-up photographs or imaging studies as appropriate.
- If the police are called, documentation of the investigating officer's name, badge and phone numbers and any actions taken by law enforcement. Also, note any other responders and referrals made such as DSS, My Sister's House or People Against Rape.
- Your name and the name of any other medical professional involved in treating the patient
- Discharge plan and plan for follow-up care

### **If the patient does not admit to domestic violence:**

- Document that screening for domestic abuse was conducted and that the patient did not disclose abuse
- If you suspect abuse, document your reasons for concern: i.e. "Patient presents with indications of abuse."