



## **Press Release**

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### DOVE Center highlights financial abuse in Domestic Violence Awareness Month with Purple Purse Challenge

St George, UT – What can a purse tell us about domestic violence?

When you think of a woman's purse, what comes to mind? Do images of Mary Poppins and her seemingly bottomless magic carpet bag pop up? Do you picture your grandma's purse full of loose change, scrunched up tissues, and errant candy? Or perhaps you envision your mother's purse full of everything she could think of that she might need for that day: water bottles, a mini first-aid kit, snacks, wet wipes, and hand sanitizer.

Whatever you see, a woman's purse can be an essential part of her identity and her independence.

"A woman's control is in her purse," said Shonie Christensen, owner of Allstate – The Shonie Insurance Group and a member of the board for DOVE Center, a local nonprofit resource for survivors of domestic abuse and sexual assault.

But what happens to a woman when access to her purse is controlled by an intimate partner or family member?

Speaking broadly, the purse — and access to it — becomes a metaphor for a common, though less visible, form of domestic violence known as financial abuse.

Often when people think of domestic abuse, they think of verbal abuse and physical violence, but studies have shown that 99 percent of all domestic abuse situations contain some form of financial abuse, meaning an abuser controls a victim's access to cash, credit cards, or other resources or her ability to work or go to school.

This was certainly true for Cami, a local survivor, who in her own words described what financial abuse looked like in her home.

“Before I left, my ex-husband actually decided he was kicking me out because ‘we just didn’t work together,’” she said. “I had just barely started a part time job getting paid less than \$10 and only getting a paycheck once a month. I had stayed home with our kids most of our relationship, working outside the home on and off as we needed it. I had no way to find a place for myself without help and absolutely no family in the area.”

The effects of financial abuse can be devastating to the victim who not only has to deal with feelings of inadequacy and uncertainty but often goes without food and other necessities because they have no access to their own household money.

Financial abuse often begins innocuously. For example, an intimate partner, including a spouse, could suggest that he or she wants to “take care of you” or be the one to provide for the family and allow the other partner or spouse to remain in the home. Similarly, a partner might suggest that he or she be the sole handler of the bills and bank account access.

“It may seem like a gallant gesture, but in an abusive relationship, it often leads to lack of education and work history in one partner so that he or she remains essentially prisoner in his or her own home,” said DOVE Center executive director Lindsey Boyer.

Many victims of financial abuse who wish to leave their abusers face poverty and homelessness. This tends to perpetuate the cycle of violence because they either feel too stuck to leave or end up returning when they can’t pay their own rent.

Of all the forms of domestic violence — physical abuse, emotional abuse, and spiritual abuse among them — financial abuse can cause the most isolation and keep a victim feeling stuck with no recourse.

“Without resources, without finances, without access to our own money, we really do remain stuck,” Boyer said.

October is Domestic Violence Awareness month, and while it is important to educate communities on all aspects of domestic violence, financial abuse can easily be overlooked because it doesn’t leave a physical mark.

But according to Boyer, there doesn’t have to be physical violence or other types of abuse present to validate financial abuse as domestic violence.

All throughout October, DOVE Center is participating in the Allstate Foundation Purple Purse Challenge. This online fundraising challenge is designed primarily to raise awareness about financial abuse but also to give local service providers like DOVE Center a platform to raise funds in support of survivors of financial abuse. The ultimate goal is to help them find safe ways out and facilitate a chance to thrive in life.

“Purple is the color of Domestic Violence Awareness Month, so the Purple Purse Challenge is a way to tie the color to a need to educate our communities that financial abuse happens everywhere and that most people know somebody it is happening to,” Christensen said.

“Everything a woman needs, from her identification to prove who she is to her checkbook and the cash that is in there, everything can be grouped together in her purse.”

Here’s how you can help.

DOVE Center invites our entire community to join this exciting and important challenge by making a donation to our Purple Purse fundraiser. DOVE Center has set a goal of raising \$10,000 — money that will help put empowerment, control, and more purses back into the hands of survivors.

To donate, visit DOVE Center’s Purple Purse Challenge page.

The Allstate Foundation Purple Purse Challenge launched Oct. 2 and continues through Oct. 31. Follow DOVE Center on Facebook and Instagram for updates about the Purple Purse Challenge and more information about Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

If you are experiencing financial abuse, or any form of domestic violence, call DOVE Center's 24-hour helpline at [\(435\) 628-0458](tel:435-628-0458) to speak with an advocate, or visit [dovecenter.org](http://dovecenter.org) to learn more.

Everyone deserves to be safe in their relationships, and DOVE Center can help.

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*(Written by Hollie Reina)*