



Intersections of Domestic Violence and Primary Healthcare

Established in 1996 by the Violence Against Women Act, the National Domestic Violence Hotline is the only national organization that provides direct services to anyone affected by domestic abuse. Services are available 24/7 and are completely free and confidential. Highly trained advocates offer lifesaving tools, immediate support, and hope to empower people to break free of abuse.

To gain insight about the intersections of domestic violence and primary healthcare, a focus and post-interaction survey of The Hotline’s users was conducted. The surveys were administered by the National Domestic Violence Hotline as part of the Survivor Health Connection Project (SHCP); a collaboration supported by the Administration of Children and Families (ACF), Family and Youth Services Bureau, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Bureau of Primary Health Care (BPHC), and HRSA Office of Women’s Health.

Post-interaction surveys commenced on March 29, 2021. More than 3,400 surveys were administered. For the period June 23 - August 1, 2021, 242 of The Hotline’s anonymous users voluntarily participated in the focus survey.

53%

reported that a partner who chooses to abuse has also controlled and/or restricted healthcare access

46%

of those respondents indicated the frequency or intensity of abuse increased during COVID-19

42%

agreed their healthcare provider spends time or talks with them without their partner present

Words most frequently used to describe barriers to accessing healthcare included:

finances

insurance

childcare

transportation

25%

felt that telehealth or virtual appointments were not safe for them

61%

affirmed having current health (physical, mental, or emotional) needs related to their abusive experience

66%

of those who didn’t view telehealth / virtual healthcare appointment options as safe disclosed an increase in abuse during COVID-19

41%

were somewhat or extremely likely to be comfortable sharing their abuse experience with a healthcare provider

26%

affirmed the frequency / intensity of abuse increased during COVID-19 & expressed a need for assistance to address the increased abuse

“When it comes to my personal experience with the difficulties of health care, mental health is the toughest. To really get the support and guidance needed, weekly therapy appointments are crucial. If financial restraints are put on a survivor by their abusive partner, it’s almost impossible.”

“I wish it was faster to get help. Making an appointment and waiting for weeks gives me time to change my mind. I feel like I’m not good enough to get help, or I feel judged by the health care workers.”

“What has made me comfortable was finding care that didn’t judge me and was exceedingly compassionate and trauma informed.”

“My partner never let me do anything alone, including going to the doctor. They would go with me into the doctor’s office so I couldn’t seek help or advice.”