

TANF and Domestic Violence: Building Opportunities for Victim Safety and Economic Stability

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When we say “domestic violence”, what do we mean?

A pattern of abuse and coercive behaviors, including physical, sexual, and psychological abuse as well as economic coercion, used against an intimate partner.

Domestic violence often involves the use of a combination of tactics aimed at establishing control of one partner over the other.

Not just physical violence...

- ◆ stalking and threats to kidnap, kill, or otherwise harm family, friends, or property
- ◆ threats to commit suicide
- ◆ repeated use of degrading or coercive language
- ◆ controlling access to food or sleep and withholding access to money, credit cards or medical care
- ◆ denying contact with friends or family

What do we know?

- ◆ Nearly 1 in 4 women are beaten or raped by a partner during adulthood.
- ◆ Each year approximately 2.3 million people (disproportionately women) are raped and/or physically assaulted by a current or former spouse, boyfriend, or girlfriend.

National Violence Against Women Survey (2000)

What do we know?

Every day in the United States,
an average of 3 women
are killed by
a current or former intimate partner.

Bureau of Justice Statistics (2005)

What do we know?

- ◆ Leaving an abusive relationship does not guarantee the reduction or elimination of violence or risk.
- ◆ In fact, leaving may create new risks or increase existing ones (kidnapping, threats against family and friends). The rates and seriousness of physical abuse increase during periods of separation or divorce.

What do we know?

- ◆ While age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation or economic circumstances do not protect against domestic violence, *poor women experience violence by their partners at higher rates, partly because they have fewer options.*
- ◆ The combination of poverty and violence creates complicates attempts to achieve self-sufficiency. *Access to independent economic resources, including welfare, is central to abused women's decision-making and safety planning.*

Domestic Violence and Economic Support

- ◆ Women with abusive partners often use welfare as a bridge out of these relationships.
- ◆ Numerous studies have found that between 40-60% of current welfare recipients have experienced domestic violence at some point in their lives. *Up to 25% report that the abuse is a current problem.*

Domestic Violence and Economic Support

- ◆ Most domestic violence victims want to work (and do work) if they can do so safely.
- ◆ Most domestic violence victims want to pursue child support, if they can do so safely.

*Meeting Survivor's Needs:
A Multi-State Study of
Domestic Violence Shelter Experiences*

Surveyed 3,400 shelter residents in 8 states in 2008.

Found that 93% of these survivors reported needing help with economic issues, including finding affordable housing, job training, transportation, and education and assistance managing money.

*University of Connecticut, School of Social Work
and National Resource Center on Domestic Violence (2009)*

**Each
domestic violence
victim's circumstances,
risks and resources
will be different,
and may change
as the tactics used by an
abusive partner change.**

Not Enough: What TANF Offers Family Violence Victims

*Findings from a national survey
conducted in late 2009 by
NRCDV and Legal Momentum*

www.vawnet.org > Search: Not Enough

THE SURVEY - Fall 2009

- Nearly 600 respondents from all 50 states and Washington, D.C.
- The majority (78%) of respondents work at domestic violence or dual domestic violence/sexual assault programs. Respondents also included staff from legal aid or other anti-poverty programs (13%) and from TANF/CSE agencies (5%).
- Most respondents (82%) provide direct services to victims.

KEY RESULTS

- TANF is important to domestic violence victims (96% of respondents).
- When it works well, TANF can make a significant difference for victims.
- TANF doesn't work well for too many victims.

KEY RESULTS

When TANF *does* work well for victims --

- Collaboration between DV, TANF and Child Support agencies
- Trained responders
- Flexible use of TANF funds
- Streamlined processes
- Benefits for immigrant victims

KEY RESULTS

When TANF *doesn't* work well for victims --

- Application process creates barriers
- Benefits too low and often delayed
- Screening is often inconsistent and ineffective
- Notification of FV specific waivers, services is often ineffective
- Disclosures may not lead to needed help
- Some responses make things worse = less safe
- Child support enforcement is also inconsistent in addressing safety and financial concerns

Making TANF More Effective for Domestic Violence Victims

(top ranked from 1st)

- Employment services
- Child care
- DV training for CS/TANF workers
- Relocation assistance
- Transportation
- Improve DV screening
- Increase TANF benefit levels

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

- Shorten application process/less documentation
- Flexible FV exemption and work requirements
- Access to mental health, substance abuse, and trauma services
- Onsite advocates, TANF workers
- Pre-sanction screening for domestic violence
- Improve confidentiality
- Remove barriers for immigrants
- More specialized services