

Victim Advocates' Perspectives on Domestic Violence in Florida during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Samia Taoulost Malik, Meghan McCallister, Anisha Kesarwani, Alyssa Allem, Jessica De Leon, PhD, and Suzanne Harrison, MD

Background

- Domestic violence (DV) is an important public health issue with far-reaching implications and significant burden for individuals, communities, institutions and society.
- Approximately 1 in 4 women have experienced DV by an intimate partner during their lifetime.
- Global rise in DV during COVID-19 implies the pandemic is serving as a "multiplier" that worsens the impact and access to services to this already vulnerable population.
- Stay-at-home orders exacerbated domestic violence in homes where it already existed, and incited new violence in others.
- Understanding the magnitude and the impacts of this crisis is critical to designing more effective public health interventions

Objectives

- This qualitative study elicited responses from domestic violence advocates to explore the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on DV in Florida. Objectives are to:
 - Analyze domestic violence trends during COVID-19 pandemic through exploratory research
 - Identify existing & new resources available to domestic violence victims and advocates in Florida

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Recruitment: Potential subjects were recruited via a flyer stating the purpose and objective of the research project. The flyer was sent to a victim advocate network, state agencies, and law enforcement. Snowball sampling was additionally used. Upon receiving queries, all potential subjects received emails from the team inviting them to participate and schedule an interview.

Study Design: Mixed methods

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Interview Domains:

- pandemic

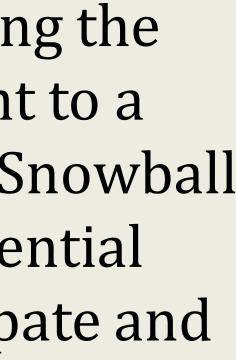
Data Analysis: Descriptive analysis of survey results and exploration of categories and themes of qualitative responses. The qualitative data was categorized into large domains of barriers and potential interventions.

Methods

Qualitative semi-structured one-hour Zoom interviews Quantitative demographic/professional survey

• Barriers encountered by victims of domestic violence during the

• Barriers encountered by victim advocates in providing services • Strategies employed by victim advocates to overcome these barriers • Perceptions of "lessons learned" to be prepared for the next crisis







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•	Results		Q U	Health and Wellness	 Fear of exposure for themselves and their families Frustration from not being able to meet victims' needs Increased worry for victims 	
Q U A		N ENDER 2	Percent 66.7	A L I Advocate	Professional Life	 Insufficient funding, budget cuts and hiring freezes
N T	Non-binary	2 1 AGE	33.3	T I T T		 Social distancing and PPE creates an impersonal context for very personal and sensit Masks make it difficult to communicate, portray or read emotions and impedes relati Must have negative COVID test for Sexual Assault Nursing Exam Hesitancy to perform home visits for own and client's safety
I T A	18-24 years 25-34 years 45-54 years	1 1 1	33.3 33.3 33.3	A T I	Legal & Law Enforcement	 Delay in filing and implementing injunction for protection orders and subpoenas Unable to attend court hearings with victims Need for physical evidence for arrest of abuser
T I V	White	RACE 3 IONAL LEV	100.0	I V E	Underreporting Violence	 Victims isolated at home with abusers Lack of "excuses" to leave home and escape perpetrators Fear of being reprimanded for breaking social isolation rules Fear of being judged by society
V E	Bachelors Masters	1 2 MENT STAT	33.3 66.7		Lack of Resources	 Limited housing and shelters and lack of transportation to shelter Economic instability due to loss of income Lack of childcare resources Lack of transportation options, especially in rural areas
	Full Time PROFESSIO Law Enforcement	3	100.0	Victim BarriersHeath and Wellness		 Fear of safety for personal health Lack of mental health resources Avoidance of healthcare system Fear of exposure to COVID-19 Adherence to messages about not overwhelming the system
	DV Shelter University/College YFARS AS	1 1 A DV ADVO	33.3 33.3 CATE		Legal & Law Enforcement	 Need for physical evidence for arrest of abuser Fear to engage with police in the climate of police brutality Procedural change of filing injunction reports
	Range Mean		1-19 years 7.33		Intersectionality increases Vulnerability	 Low income Rural areas with resource deficits Alcohol and/or substance abuse Older adults
	Std. Deviation		10.116		vunciability	 Homelessness, housing insecurity

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	Housing and Shelters	 Increased Dedicate campuses
	Leverage Technology	For filingCommunity
Suggested Solutions	Education and Advocacy	 Educate t the cycle circumsta Educate v victims to Service Person health
	Facilitating Communication	 Dealing work on facial e Audible Speak r

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Discussion

d funding for alternative housing and shelters safe rooms for DV victims across college

of legal documents, preventing delays icating safely with victims

the public, law enforcement and policy makers on of violence and difficulty for victims to leave their ances

victims about DV and COVID-19 and encourage o seek the services, care, law enforcement needed es are available and open

nnel, agencies, shelters etc. are taking public measures against COVID

with PPE: Communicate differently without relying expressions

e laughter

rather than use facial expressions or gestures

Next Steps

- To conduct focus groups and more interviews.
- To increase recruitment efforts and reach advocates serving other counties in Florida
- To inform interventions and policy recommendations to better prepare and protect human rights during future pandemics and natural disasters.

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