

Effect of COVID-19 on Domestic Violence & Homelessness: Prevention and Treatment Strategies

Doncy J Eapen PHD,MSN,APRN,FNP-BC
Assistant Professor

Cizik School of Nursing at the University of
Texas Health Science Center at Houston

Objectives

At the conclusion of this activity, participants should be able to:

1. identify the impact of COVID-19 on domestic violence and homelessness
2. discuss effective strategies to identify victims of violence
3. discuss the role of providers in addressing domestic violence and homelessness.

Disclosures

- No actual or potential conflict of interest in relation to this presentation.



“I found myself homeless when I turned three months pregnant. I ended up losing my job due to COVID. The company that I was working for was a small company, and they closed down. I didn't qualify for unemployment at first, so I ended up falling like three months behind. I ended up moving into the vacant apartment, hoping that I would be able to get income coming in, but due to me being high risk, I wasn't able to go back to work. So I stayed there until I came here two weeks before I delivered.”
Tanika (40 year old single mother)

Domestic Violence

- Domestic violence is the willful intimidation, physical assault, battery, sexual assault, and/or other abusive behavior as part of a systematic pattern of power and control perpetrated by one intimate partner against another. It includes physical violence, sexual violence, threats, economic, and emotional/psychological abuse.” (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 2020)
- Prevalent in every community, affects all people regardless of age, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, gender, race, religion and nationality



Domestic Violence & Homelessness

- Nearly 20 people are physically abused by an intimate partner in the United States every minute
- >10 million adults (women and men) experience physical abuse annually
- 1 in 4 women and 1 in 10 men experience physical or sexual abuse by an intimate partner during their lifetime
- The number of IPV victimization increased by 42% from 2016 to 2018
- Access to firearm increases the risk of homicide by 400%
- Cost to U.S. Economy- Between 5.8 billion to 12.6 billion annually.
- Domestic violence – leading cause of homelessness for women and children
- Nearly 80% homeless mothers and children had previously experienced domestic violence

COVID-19, Domestic violence and Homelessness – A Dangerous Intersection

Shadow Pandemic (UN Women, 2020)
Hidden Pandemic (Xue et al., 2020)
Pandemic within a Pandemic (Evans et al., 2020)

- COVID-19 – intensified domestic violence
- Increased calls to suicide hot lines and mental health crisis services
- Report of relapse among those with substance abuse issues
- Decreased resources- law enforcement, community resources

Factors

- Financial entanglement with an abusive partner
- School and child care closure causing increased stress at home
- Balancing work during COVID-19



Response during COVID-19

Domestic Violence Hotline Calls

- Husband threatened to throw her out if she coughed
- Strangled by partner but afraid to go to hospital because of COVID-19
- Immunocompromised male caller- girl friend hiding cleaning supplies and hand sanitizer

(The Guardian, 2020)

Domestic Violence Shelters

- Risk for contagion- fear of infection is a barrier to seeking help
- Overcrowded facilities
- Limited Resources
- Reduced Capacity

Actions

- Gaps in healthcare system
- Allocation of resources
- Call for enhanced cooperation between public health authorities, homeless service systems, and other partners at the local level (HUD, 2021)



Shadow Pandemic

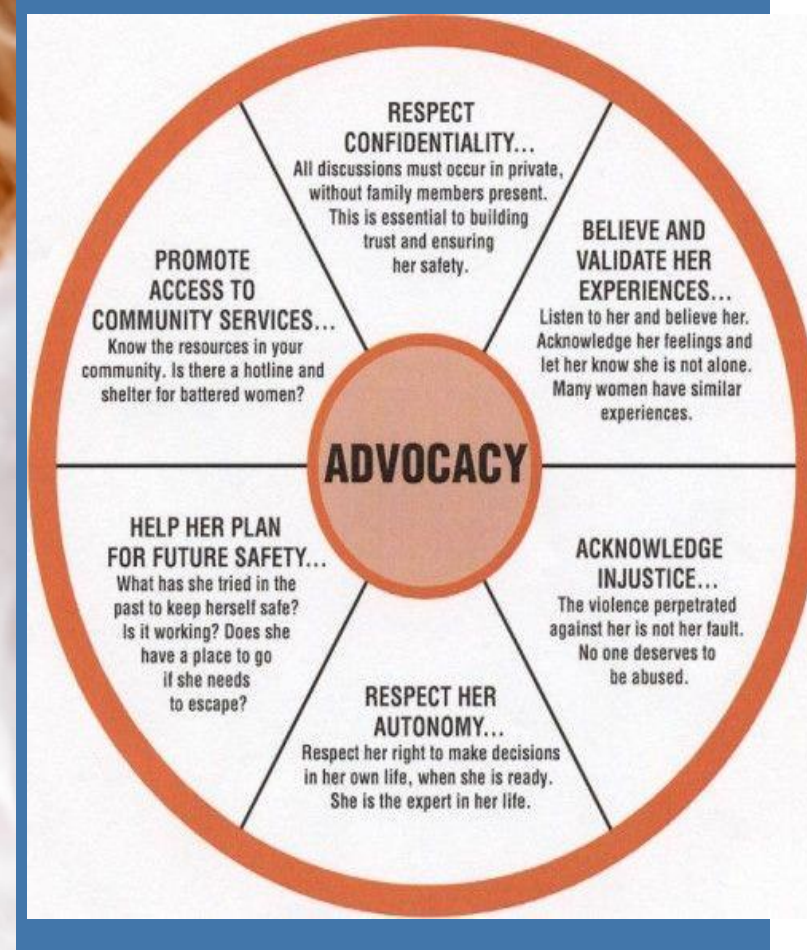


Pregnancy Related Inter-personal Violence(IPRV) – Qual Study

- “Well, it was very stressful, you know, because I had a lot of insecurities about where I was going to sleep, what I was going to eat. I basically had to panhandle for food. There was no electricity in the apartment. There was running water, but no electricity. It was summertime. It was very hot. When I did reach out for help, he would tell me I'm a stupid..... "I hate that baby. I hate you. If something happens to y'all, I don't care." It was pretty much a lot of hateful things he was saying.”
- “I was going to the doctor. I didn't let them know what was going on because I was afraid that they would put protective services on me when I gave birth because I didn't have a home. You had to have an address to bring your baby to. So I didn't let them know.”
- “Maybe somebody would have asked directly to me just—I mean, she saw—she's a doctor. You know what I'm saying? She saw that I wasn't eating. She could see the rings under my eyes. I was unkempt. You saw, but you didn't say nothing. You just—”
- “Yeah, in a safe way like, "If there's something you need to let us know, you're safe enough. Just let us know." You know what I'm saying? "We know you might be concerned about the baby. There's always that concern. You could talk to us, or you can write it." I mean, there's a way anonymously or some kind of way where a person can feel safe letting them know that they're in trouble, you know?” (Tanika, 40 year old single mother)

What can providers do?

- Trusting relationship with victims – Providers are available to help and support
- Screening- Ensure safety and keen observation virtually or in-person
- Observe for non-verbal signs – Bruises, Hygiene
- Offer follow up in-person visit
- Advocacy for victims
- Collaboration with healthcare services- Referral to social Services
- Education



What can providers do?

Screening

- Screen every women of child bearing age (The U.S. Preventive Task Force)
- Screening Methods- Virtual Screening, Online forms, Self-administered/ Computerized screening, Posters with QR codes
- Prioritize patient's privacy
- Use alternate forms of communication- Yes/ No questions if needed, STAT tool (Slapped, Threatened, Throw)

Referral to community resources- <https://www.womenshealth.gov/relationships-and-safety/get-help/state-resources> (search for resources by state)
<https://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/get-updates-information-covid-19/> (Resources during COVID-19)

Education

Safety Planning Checklist

- **Ask for help** –Friend/ Family member
National Domestic Violence Hotline -1 800 799 SAFE(7233)-Chat/ Text START to 88788
Texas Advocacy Project – 1 800 374-HOPE (4673)
- **Study your space-** Know the safest place in your home
- **Gather Essentials** – important documents, prescription medications
- **Have a place to go-** Prepare your car, have spare key available
- **What is next?-** Change passwords/ apply for protective order/ report violence/ threats to police
(Family Violence Prevention Services,2021)

Current Research Studies

- Pregnancy related Interpersonal Violence among Women who Experience Homelessness: A Qualitative Exploration.
- Positive Parenting: Empowering Young Mothers Experiencing Homelessness with a History of Inter-personal Violence to Improve Parenting Strategies

The End

“Becoming a victim is not a choice, becoming a survivor is”

“Together we can break the silence and bring a voice to domestic violence”



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