

# Intimate Partner Violence

## An Unrecognized Influence on Workforce Outcomes

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) impacts millions of American workers each year. It includes physical violence, sexual violence, threats, and emotional abuse by current or former partners. Across the country, one in four women and one in seven men has been a victim of physical violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime and one in three female murder victims is killed by an intimate partner.<sup>1</sup>

It is estimated that IPV costs \$1.8 billion per year in lost worker productivity alone<sup>2</sup> and women who are victims of IPV can lose almost eight million days of work because of violence against them—the equivalent of more than 32,000 full-time jobs.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, between 21 and 60 percent of victims lose their jobs due to reasons related to abuse.<sup>4</sup> The total estimated costs of IPV can exceed \$8.3 billion per year including medical care, mental health care, police services, social services, and legal services.<sup>5</sup>

In part, the #MeToo Movement has increased awareness of gender-based violence and the personal experiences of victims and survivors. Although this has been a long-standing issue, renewed public pressure has helped put a face to victims and survivors, lessen social stigma, dispel myths and stereotypes, and spur conversations around the realities of this topic.

## Impact on Work and Workforce Development

IPV impacts a victim's ability to participate in the workforce and job-training programs. Stable employment is a key factor enabling survivors to be able to leave an abusive partner; survivors cite financial stability—or lack thereof—as the number one reason for staying with, or returning to, an abusive relationship.

Yet, the effects of IPV, abusive partner behaviors, and mental health struggles make it much more difficult for survivors to secure a job or to take part in the economy.<sup>6</sup> Even after an individual leaves an abusive partner, the ramifications of financial abuse such as debt, credit problems, and lack of work history can take years to overcome.

Because work can provide an opportunity for victims to make social connections that promote safety, increase self-esteem and purpose in life, and gain financial independence, all of which could assist in leaving an abusive situation, many abusers attempt to stop or prevent partners from working. In a recent survey, 32 percent of job-training program administrators cited IPV recovery resources as one of the five greatest unmet needs for women in their job-training programs.<sup>7</sup> Other surveys have found abusers may even try to disrupt work patterns of victims who are employed by engaging in behaviors that negatively impact their employment.<sup>8</sup> This can lead to declines in an individual's work performance and affect relationships in the workplace.



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Traditional job-training and workforce development programs generally do not screen their participants for IPV, and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act does not recognize victims as a special population for priority services.<sup>9</sup> However, governors have the authority to add other barriers to the list, and more than half of states have laws that extend eligibility for unemployment insurance to IPV victims.<sup>10</sup> The failure to see the consequences of IPV may result in the unintentional creation of additional barriers that can hinder the success of those who experienced IPV.

## Implications

Public Policy Associates, Inc. has identified the following questions and practices workforce development boards, employers, and others should consider as they seek to support victims of IPV:

## Key Questions to Consider

- What IPV resources—including agencies that specialize in IPV—exist in the community that could advise staff and to which client referrals could be made?
- How might supportive services be used or expanded in the workplace to encourage safety and provide anonymity to better support individuals who disclose violence?
- How might workforce development staff identify and better respond to signals that might indicate IPV?
- How can workforce development boards collaborate with job-training partners to better support those who have left violent situations or are still in those circumstances?
- How can IPV screening be integrated into the intake process? Often a guarded secret, questions should be framed carefully to identify IPV; for instance: “Is there

anyone who would not want you to complete this program or does not support you returning to school or work?” or “Do you feel safe and supported at home?”

## Suggested Practices and Policies

- Implement mandatory IPV training for workforce development staff.
- Integrate violence screening questions on intake forms.
- Develop a formal referral process to appropriate services when IPV is first suspected or identified and follow up.
- Tailor programs and training to take confidentiality, gender, and ethnic or cultural background factors into consideration.
- Recognize experiencing domestic violence as a barrier to employment and as costly to employers.

## References

- <sup>1</sup>“Learn More,” National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, <https://ncadv.org/learn-more>; Matthew J. Breiding et al., *Intimate Partner Surveillance: Uniform Definitions and Recommended Data Elements Version 2.0* (Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015).
- <sup>2</sup>National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), *Costs of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in the United States* (Atlanta, GA: CDC, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2003).
- <sup>3</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>4</sup>“Statistics,” National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, <https://ncadv.org/statistics>.
- <sup>5</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>6</sup>Carole Warshaw, Cris M. Sullivan, and Echo A. Rivera, *A Systematic Review of Trauma-Focused Interventions for Domestic Violence Survivors* (Chicago: National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma & Mental Health, 2013), accessed October 10, 2018, [http://www.nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/NCDVTMH\\_EBPLitReview2013.pdf](http://www.nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/NCDVTMH_EBPLitReview2013.pdf).
- <sup>7</sup>Cynthia Hess, Emma Williams-Baron, Barbara Gault, and Ariane Hegewisch. *Supportive Services in Workforce Development Programs: Administrator Perspectives on Availability and Unmet Needs* (Washington, DC: Institute for Women’s Policy Research, 2016), IWPR #C449.
- <sup>8</sup>Gladys McLean and Sara Gonzalez Bocinski, *The Economic Cost of Intimate Partner Violence, Sexual Assault, and Stalking* (Washington, DC: Institute for Women’s Policy Research, 2017), retrieved from [https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/B367\\_Economic-Impacts-of-IPV-08.14.17.pdf](https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/B367_Economic-Impacts-of-IPV-08.14.17.pdf).
- <sup>9</sup>Training and Employment Guidance Letter WIOA No. 19-16 Operating Guidance for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (Washington, DC: Employment and Training Administration Advisory System, U.S. Department of Labor, 2017), [https://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/attach/TEGL/TEGL\\_19-16\\_acc.pdf](https://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/attach/TEGL/TEGL_19-16_acc.pdf), 8-9.
- <sup>10</sup>“Unemployment Insurance State Law Guide,” Legal Momentum, January 20, 2015, accessed October 22, 2018, <https://www.legalmomentum.org/resources/state-law-guide-unemployment-benefits-victims-domestic-or-sexual-violence>.

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